

Quimby Makes Music Happen

By JEFF MURPHY
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With his scaffold securely in place, Mike Quimby, 605 Broad St., yesterday went about his work patiently as he inserted rows of silver-colored pipes along the wall of a church at Mitchell and Jefferson streets. In less than one month, when his project is complete, the sound of pipe organ music will permeate the sanctuary of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

Installing pipe organs is old hat for Quimby, who formed his own full-time business in 1979. With the assistance of one full-time employee and a part-time worker, he now builds, maintains, and installs pipe organs throughout a four-state area. His work often takes him throughout Missouri, Kansas, Iowa and Illinois.

Although people in his profession do not seem to be in abundance, Quimby is quick to point out that it is "not a dying art." He estimates there may be as many as 500 individuals throughout the United States who share his trade.

In Missouri, "there's about 12 other firms who deal in the same thing," he remarked.

Quimby said he has been fascinated with the pipe organs since he was in elementary school. He carried his interest to Central Missouri State University where he earned a bachelor's degree in music education in 1973 and a Master of Arts degree in music history and literature in 1975.

A music degree at the college level is almost a necessity for a builder, he said. It can provide additional knowledge in creating an organ for a particular building.

He began work on his latest project at the RLDS Church on July 5. It should be ready for use by Aug. 7.

Installation is only a small portion of time involved in Quimby's occupation.

"From when we start something of this size, it usually takes about 12 months to get everything organized and ready to go for installation," he said.

The first step involves planning and ordering the materials which



JEFF MURPHY/staff

MUSICAL NOTES SHOULD ring with clarity once Mike Quimby, 605 Broad St., completes installation of a pipe organ at the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints at Jefferson and Mitchell streets. Quimby, who earns a living building, installing and maintaining pipe organs was assisted by Leo Endel, (below) Knob Noster. Quimby said the organ should be ready to use by Aug. 7.

will be necessary in building the instrument. Parts are made by hand or are ordered from a manufacturer.

"The biggest things we get from outside sources are keyboards, pipes, blowers and wire," he said.

Parts of the cabinetry often are made by professional cabinet makers. Poplar is among the most popular woods used by all major organ builders in the United States. The wood, which is used in the cabinetry which houses the pipes,

can withstand temperature changes better than many varieties.

According to Quimby, careful consideration of the need for the instrument, its appearance, and the budget are involved before any ordering of parts takes place.

In designing the instrument, styles must be considered. He said trends change in his business much as they do in the fashion industry.

"The instrument's just the gist of the current style that's going on in

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society.”

He said the organ at the RLDS Church is one of 11 in Warrensburg, but is the only modern pipe organ in town, with the exception of one at Central Missouri State University. In modern organs, most of the pipes are exposed. Pipes from the largest to the smallest can be seen.

In old styles, Quimby said, pipes often were hidden.

His latest work, however, will have many of the largest pipes hidden in a room behind the exposed portion of the organ.

He stressed the number of cylindrical devices used to produce sound as among the most interesting facets

in creating an instrument.

The new organ will feature 616 pipes of a variety of shapes, the longest of which will be about 8 feet tall. All pipes which are more than 4 feet long are made of zinc. Others are made of an alloy of 50 percent tin and 50 percent lead.

Assembling the instrument can be time-consuming as Quimby has discovered. He said an organ at the World RLDS Headquarters in Independence, which consists of 6,800 pipes, took approximately one year to install. Quimby did not install the instrument, but he was appointed in February to maintain it on a regular

basis.

Once the instrument has been assembled, it not only produces a magnificent sound, but it can last for many years, if proper care is given.

Quimby and his workers spend a large amount of time performing maintenance work on 120 organs located within the four-state area.

“We take care of some instruments that are over 125 years old.”

With proper maintenance, he said, it would not be unusual for the new organ to provide music for as long as the building in which it is housed remains standing.



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The inaugural recital for the new organ of the Warrensburg, Missouri, congregation, was held October 9, 1983. The organ has nine ranks of pipes playable from a two-manual console, and was built by Quimby Pipe Organs, Inc., Warrensburg, Missouri. Quimby is in charge of maintaining the organs at the Auditorium. Pictured are (front row, l. to r.) Michael Quimby, organ builder; Harold Craven, chairman, organ committee; Norma Van Zee and Nancy Barbee, members of the organ committee; (second row, l. to r.) Leo Endel, organ builder; Ammon Roberson, organ committee member; John Obetz, recitalist and consultant; Julie VerDught, organ committee member; Floyd Hursh, pastor.