

BILL THOMSON RETURNS TO THE WILTERN

Ruthella Carson

Los Angeles, Sept. 11 -- Organist-Aviator-Composer Bill Thomson played his second concert for the Los Angeles ATOE Chapter at the Wiltern theatre this morning with a program spiced with variety. A good turnout of 625 "church skip-pers" showed much enthusiasm for the varied fare which ranged from movie themes, standards and classics to Bill's own compositions. He seemed to have no difficulty in transferring his abilities from the Baldwin and Rodgers electronics he normally plays to the 4-37 Kimball.

If one characteristic stands out in Bill's approach to the organ, it is his skill at what might be called "understatement." His music is rife with pastel colors with which he is adept at making his point. He avoids the blatant, loud or repetitious—the garish colors—and he doesn't need them. The accent is on taste.

He brought the great white console up to the "Washington Post" march, a treatment which emphasized the organ's extensive brass and followed with "On a Clear Day" which rode on a cloud of subtle harmony. The "Dr. Zhivago" theme was accented in its slow rhythm by "rum-te-tum" castanets over soft Tibia/Vox harmony with baritone Tuba embellishment.

It was a "Brassmen's holiday" in the Black Forest as Bill conducted the tour, using the Horst Jankowski pop as a vehicle. The Kimball's buried piano

tinkled some but had to be reinforced with bells and percussions. The velvet brass carried the burden. "Poinciana" was a fine example of the Thomson flair for understatement. Yet, not far underneath the surface was a bolero-like driving rhythm with much insistence. Bill closed his first half with "Falling in Love with Love."

After a few minutes of lobby talk, the flickering lights brought the faithful back to the comfortable Wiltern seats for a driving console riser, "Just One of Those Things". The post-intermission program



Bill talks to his audience between tunes.

was rich with pops and standards — "Call Me", "The Shadow of Your Smile", "Black Magic" and a Serpent-riffed



He acknowledges applause for his "Bahama Suite."

"Come Fly With Me." A refreshing change of pace was provided by the 60-year old "Juba Dance," one tune in a suite describing plantation life, Nathaniel Dett's "In the Bottoms."

Then came a first; Bill gave the premiere public performance of his recently completed "Bahama Suite," his musical observations and remembrances of a vacation in the Bahama Islands. The trilogy consists of "Flight to Harbour Island" (in his own plane), "Pink Sands Hill" and Dunmore Town." Judging from the brightness of the music and its ability to communicate gaiety and happiness, we'd venture to say that Bill had a ball, especially in Dunmore Town where Bill's scoring reflects some of the local rhythms he heard in that obviously jumping little burg. He received a fine ovation for the top performance as well as for the music.

The audience was packed with Thomson organ students who came to find out whether "the old man practices what he preaches." He does.



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