

The organist is a Political Science senior at Louisiana State University—Dolton McAlpin, a young man who has successfully combined his text books with sheet music. Dolton has been playing week-end intermissions at the Paramount for nearly two years and his interest shows no signs of slackening. But then, music comes naturally to Dolton. He started picking out tunes on a piano at the age of 4. By the time he reached 8, he transferred his affection to the organ, a decision further solidified when he heard the Robert Morton organ in the Century Theatre, Jackson, Miss., being played during intermissions. It was only natural that he should gravitate toward Baton Rouge when college loomed—especially after he learned that an organ was being readied there for theatre presentations.

Restoration of the Paramount organ didn't just happen. It was a long, hard struggle plus lots of stubborn persistence on the part of Donald May. But the fact that the current Paramount manager, Tom Mitchell, is a dedicated ATOer augurs well for the continuation of organ music in the house. Baton Rouge isn't exactly a "T.O. oasis." Within a 250 mile radius there are no less than seven playable organs in theatres. But the Paramount is the only house making use of its treasure.

What kind of music does Dolton play during week-end evening intermissions? He seems to attract a young audience



HELEN DELL, pert Los Angeles Chapter organist, had a 'hard act to precede' when she played an introductory concert last December 10 at the Chapter's annual election meeting held at the Elks Temple in Los Angeles. This was the occasion of George Wright's surprise appearance and concert for the Chapter.

At this year's National Convention, however, she will star in her own right. During the visitation organ, crawls Helen will be heard at the 2-10 Wurlitzer at Tubes, Inc.

many being sophisticated college students, so he offers current pop tunes. He feels that the organ is more popular with the college kids than with older folks. However, a previous organist, Bob Courtney (who also helped with the restoration) did very well with programs of pops from the '20s—for the "older folks." But Dolton is college-oriented and who could resist the flattery of being recognized on campus as "the Paramount organist" and being asked to play request tunes for the week-end while walking between classes? Be that as it may the enthusiasm of week-end patrons is unmistakable. They appear to be "hooked" on live pipes.

And although the youthful organist admits he must "grind" to maintain his average at the university while playing a different role at the theatre, he's contemplating a broadcast series from the Paramount. He has already cut a recording on the Morton which is being released by Concert Recording to "Organ of the Month Club" members.

McAlpin is deeply impressed by the thoroughness of May's restoration job. "He's done a terrific job of rebuilding the organ. There's not an air leak to be heard, anywhere—and that claim can't be made for many organs!"

During the past year May added an octave of 16-foot Diaphone pipes to the Pedal Division of the Morton in order to overcome a deficiency in the bass (it's a somewhat "dead" house, from the acoustical viewpoint). And May has added what he calls "Trap Transfer" switches, a method of juggling Pedal and Accompaniment division traps between first and second touch on Pedal and lower manual—an idea he got while listening to a similar effect on a George Wright recording—thus increasing the little instrument's versatility. He has also added more combination pistons to increase the instrument's "quick change" capability.

"Everything is working well, and the organ is tuned and ready to go—and visiting ATOers are welcome to give it a try," states the young man who is doing a lot of practicing, as much as time permits. But he doesn't plan a career as a professional organist. When he graduates he'll enter law school.

Meanwhile, he's having a wonderful time playing at the Paramount. And next fall—who knows? LSU has a fine law school.

—Peg Nielsen



The BOMBARDE reviews organ recordings for official ATOE publications. Manufacturers, distributors or individuals sponsoring or merchandising theatre pipe organ records are encouraged to send copies (Monaural, if possible) to the BOMBARDE, Box 5013, Bendix Station, N. Hollywood, Calif. 91605. Be sure to include purchasing information, if applicable.

**THOROUGHLY MODERN MORTON**, Dolton McAlpin at the Robert Morton organ in the Baton Rouge Paramount theatre. Concert Recording CR-0027, stereo only, available only by mail from Concert Recording, Box 531, Lynwood, Calif. 90262. Also available in 4-track 7½ ips stereo tape at \$7.50.

The instrument has been well documented in these pages. The sounds brought forth by the youthful organist are as much a credit to the organ's restorer, Donald May, and the fine tonal balance built into small Mortons, as to McAlpin's artful use of the facilities.

*Up, Up and Away.* The most striking realization on hearing this tune is that it's coming from only 6 ranks; it's a truly big organ sound in the 1200 seat house. "Up, Up" is rhythmic and loaded with enthusiasm.

*I May Be Wrong.* Much emphasis on the word "modern" is apparent in the jacket notes, because McAlpin plays for a college crowd. It's nice to know the coming generation approves of a nice old-fashioned theatre organ styling of a vintage tune. It's played at an even pace with lots of combo changes.

*I Got Plenty of Nuttin'* Brassy afterbeats mark many changes in the bright melody combinations in a version in keeping with Gershwin's intent. McAlpin seems to be feeling his way through the first couple of minutes of this marathon reading of *Quiet Village* (no wonder; the conflicting rhythms in the tune are rough), but a greater degree of smoothness is achieved as the 6 minutes and 16 seconds of jangle mad-



ness develops. Lots of birds, sensuous rhythms, and effective registration. *Blue Moon* in a rumpy-tum, upbeat, slam-bangeroo (cha cha cha). A highly individual interpretation.

*Tea For Two* also gets the "cha cha" treatment, with traps and percussers a flyin' in a lively playing replete with some unexplained "thuds" from the big drum.

*A Taste of Honey* at first sounds like it had been recorded in a room full of ringing telephones but later shifts its fast tempo to the little Morton's staccato brass. Lively!

*Young Love Medley* spotlights such ancient love-ditties as a languorous "Love is the Sweetest Thing" (music box effects, then sweet strings), a beguine tempo "The Moon is Low" (ah, shades of Joan Crawford!) with bells galore, and a stringreed-spiced "Spring is Here" in rhythm-ballad tempo with a too-heavy pedal marking the beat.

*Goldfinger* is the only poor choice of selection of the platter. It is probably played better than most of us have ever heard it, but it remains second rate music and memories of that overexploited and over-orchestrated sound track recording with the bellowing dame are slow to fade.

*Michelle* finds McAlpin very much at home with this "slow fox" version of the tuneful "battlefield." Pedal cymbal marks the tempo and how the organist coaxes so many voice changes from so few ranks remains a secret in his favor. Oops, the ending is left "hanging."

*On a Clear Day* is Dolton McAlpin at his finest. The little Morton, capable of so much variety, seems to soar under his deft touch, and the "view" below is colorful.

*Our Day Will Come* is another fine job of adapting an "oldie" instrument to recent music, although the "bumps" are straight out of Minsky, 1934.

For some reason, organists are attracted to the *Green Dolphin Street* movie theme; it has been recorded many times, but, so far as we know, this is its first recorded version as a beguine, a tempo seemingly quite attractive to McAlpin. The result is also very attractive to the listener.

**SUMMARY:** If this record represents the kind of "modern" music demanded by Louisiana State University students, this reviewer should either feel 30 years younger (and go protest something) or congratulate student Dolton Alpin for schooling his youthful audiences in the tenets of good taste, perhaps both. Either way, its plus listening—even for modern old codgers.

PS: The "title" tune (inferred) doesn't materialize.

**IT'S WONDERFUL, Ron Curtis playing the Compton Organ in the Davenport Cinema, Stockport, England. Concert Recording label CR-0026, stereo only, \$4.50, ordering procedure same as for the previous listing.**

Another little organ (7 ranks) and it's as much a gem as the one on the platter reviewed above. Although subject to a misleading subtitle which links it with "the Golden Era of the Silent Cinema" (only 5 of the 15 tunes were written before 1930) the recording is a delightful surprise. Both instrument and artist are excellent. The organ pipe complement differs from the usual American 7-rank installation in that a Krumet replaces the usual Vox, a String Celeste replaces the usual Clarinet, and a 16-8-4 Tromba replaces the tame but lovely "Style D" Trumpet. The Tromba (especially when used with the Krumet) makes a brass section with a "bite" somewhere between a Brass Trumpet and a Posthorn. All of which fits with the Curtis 1940 "swing band" style of jazz; it provides a sharp "riff" instrument for emphasis and punctuation effects. While rhythmic jazz stylings make up a goodly part of the Curtis program, his approach to ballads is tender and sweet.

The opening trio of tunes are "S Wonderful," "Love is" (with a bridge which smacks of "Dream") and "A Fine Romance," all in the big band era jazz style, with perhaps just a little too much repetition of the brassy syncopated "(rest) da, (rest) da" device, but otherwise interesting toe-tappers.

The Compton people seem to have solved the dilemma of the small organ designer, if this instrument is typical. The problem was to provide, in a limited number of voices, both solo instruments and a good ensemble sound. This little job has both, at least in the able hands of Ron Curtis. The Diapason provides body without sounding "churchie" and the Flute mutations add color. The two ranks of strings (on one stopkey) are properly "celested" and the Tibia is round and mellifluous (although the trem could be a little slower). In all, it's a fine-sounding instrument.

The vintage ballad, "Garden in the Rain" is given the sweet treatment with an effective string and raindrop (Glock plink) intro and a Tibia ballad chorus, then a beat accents the bridge, as fine a rendition as we've heard since organist Maurice Cook cued in the John McCormack platter to provide a vocal refrain for his "Organogue" in the '30's. "They Say it's Wonderful" is in the same

ballad mood. "Button Up Your Overcoat" is '20's theatre organ, with Curtis mixing rhythm and ballad styles within a tune. "Toujours L'Amour," however, is purely ballad, for which Curtis should have consulted the notes for the sake of accuracy. "There's a Blue Ridge Round My Heart" is a rhythm-fun tune in old-time style, an interesting interpolation of an early '30's dance orchestra.

The same applies to "Tangerine," which sports some "ride" style variations on Glock with cymbal accents and a Trumpet impersonated by the Tromba. "Sleepytime Gal" is straight from the '20s, especially in the between-phrase comments. "Song of the Tree," fails between ballad and rhythm treatment but the remaining tunes, "Sylvia," "Love's Serenade," "Tammy" and "The Party's Over" are purely listening music with deft phrasing and skilled use of the Compton's facilities.

Informative jacket notes are by Britain's dean of the theatre organ hobby, Ralph Bartlett.

**SUMMARY:** Pure delight.

**JACKIE HELYER AT THE (4-22) CONACHER PIPE ORGAN, ODEON THEATRE (we think), NOTTINGHAM, ENGLAND, Concert Recording No. CR-0025, stereo, same purchasing procedure as previous listings.**

This one is something of an enigma. Just having reviewed two small organ records, we looked forward to a return to the "big organ" sound. But, alas, we must admit that there is more registration variety in evidence of the 6 and 7 rankers discussed in the previous reviews, for all the 22 ranks of this Conacher. The same goes for the playing. Jack Helyer, a veteran of the cinema organ, plays pleasingly but does some untidy digital work during undifficult passages. Conversely, he comes through difficult passages with ease. This disc is either badly recorded or the Conacher 4-22 is more "straight" than theatre organ. There is little variety in registration throughout. The program undertaken is an ambitious one, consisting mostly of potpourris. However, the jacket notes omit some of the most interesting titles, such of the Lehar "Gold & Silver Waltz" from the waltz medley. The march medley list omits the Elgar "Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1" (not the familiar one, but a far superior work from Elgar's suite of five).

A 13 minute and 40 second operatic medley finds Jackie tackling familiar themes from "Lohengrin", "Aida", "Mignon", "Sampson and Delilah", "Faust", "Butterfly", "Pagliacci" and others with usually good results but with enough "clinkers" to take the edge from "com-



plete satisfaction." Helyer's best tunes are his own "Brush Off" and that ancient novelty-with-dissonance, "Orient Express."

Jacket notes are confusing, never quite stating the exact location of the 4-22 Conacher (perhaps due to changes in name of the theatre).

We refuse to believe this disc is representative of the playing of a musician of Jackie Helyer's repute, and we are reserving judgment as to the Conacher's theatrical qualities until a more comprehensive disc is available.

SUMMARY: only if you are curious.

#### ALSO OF INTEREST

**ORGAN MAGIC, Al Bollington** playing Wurlitzer model 4520 Electronic Theatre Organ, Concert Recording No. EO-E029, stereo, same purchasing procedure as previous listings.

Al Bollington's exploits have been recorded many times in these pages, and in reviewing them we can conclude that Al's career is colorful; never a dull moment. This is a first for Concert Recording, Pres. Bill Johnson's first purely electronic organ record. In all honesty, the result reads and sounds like an exploitation record for the latest effort of present day Wurlitzer to regain its place in the rush toward electronic simulation of its former glory personified by the theatre pipe organ. The jacket notes say that the model 4520 is modelled after the style 210 (9 rank) theatre pipe organ. The tunes are all old standards or recent pops and how close modern Wurlitzer has come toward electronic repro-

duction of the Chryso-glott, Trumpet, Tenor Sax, Piano, Tibia, Clarinet, Strings, and Vox Humana—we'll leave to the judgment of the listener. Al's musical acumen is evident throughout; although the model 4520 has no bird effect, that doesn't stop Al. He produces some "Birds" manually and they are very effective throughout "Quiet Village."

Among the tunes are: Third Man Theme (Zither), Nola (Piano and Sax), Twilight Time (Tibias), "I Left My Heart etc" (Strings), Java (Brass Horn), Lara's Theme (Russian Mandolins), Blue Hawaii (Surf), Spanish Flea (Bongos), and Al's own Hoedown (Fiddles, Banjos).

**MUSIC BOXES & AUTOMATIC PIANOS, Stereo (no number), available from Hathaway and Bowers, 11854 East Florence Ave., Santa Fe Springs, Calif. \$4.95 postpaid.**

The musicality of the 20 3/4" and 27" Reginas and the "Large Capital" and "Small Capital" music boxes spans a half century in continued ability to charm the listener. These largest of disc-principle, comb-style music boxes produce clear bell tones that display none of the "corny" characteristics of the somewhat later "orchestrations" which were sometimes overbalanced with traps. "El Capitan" march on a Regina is a most pleasant journey into a yesterday which is still musically satisfying.

The reverse side features a variety of player pianos, mostly with added pipe-work and percussors, and one with a remarkably realistic "Clarinet." For the collectors of irresistible old sounds.

## DISC SOUEALS

We regret to announce that **Martha Lake** has cut a recording. The greatest of secrecy prevails concerning the title, content and other data, but there is little doubt that it will feature the infamous "Abyssinian Stringed Oboe" which the "blowsy bunny of the butterball set" carries around in a locked mail sack for security reasons after the U.S. Patent Office refused a patent as a musical instrument on the grounds that mating a zither and a kazoo should be applied for under "plumbing." . . . **Lyn Larsen's** new Malar disc is entitled "Lyn Larsen—Coast to Coast, 1967" and is played in part on two of the organs encountered during his USA tour last year. Four of the tunes are played on the San Francisco Avenue theatre 3-13 Wurlitzer, three on the Salt Lake City "Organ Loft" 5-31 Wurlitzer and five on his old standby, the Bob Carson 3-26 Wurlitzer in Hollywood. Among the tunes, "Spin a Little Web of Dreams," "When You're Away," "If He Walked in My Life" and "Song of the Wanderer." . . . Those madcaps of automatic music, **Hathaway and Bowers**, (Coin-operated Orchestrons, band organs, Reginas and roll-operated pianos) created quite a stir when their hard-sell 4"x6" pitch appeared recently in the Wall Street Journal. They had 28 "Automatic Jazz Orchestras" for sale, an instrument described as an "automatic jazz band with pipe organ, accordion, drums, cymbals, wood block and other instruments" which operates from rolls. Described as "moneymaking—attention getting—fantastic" the updated hurdy-gurdies are deemed proper for "restaurants, cafes, bowling alleys, laundromats, shopping centers and motels,"—all for less than \$5,000! Just in case history seems to be repeating itself, the next issue of this mag will review a recording whose grooves are filled from one end to the other with nothing but "automatic jazz orchestra" music . . . Remember **Paul Carson's** "Bridge to Dreamland" broadcasts? And later the series of "Bridge" recordings? More than 40 of Carson's LP and stereo recordings are available from Alma Records, 18108 Parthenia Street, Northridge, Calif. Write for a free brochure, with pipe organ discs underlined (a few are plug-ins).

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