



The Bombarde reviews recordings for official ATOE publications. Manufacturers, distributors or individuals sponsoring or merchandising theatre pipe organ records are encouraged to send pressings to the Bombarde, Box 5013, Bendix Station, No. Hollywood, Calif. 91605. Be sure to include purchasing information, if applicable.

THE ORGAN PLAYS GOLDEN FAVORITES, a four-record set featuring four organists playing eight organs (four of them theatre organs). Released by Reader's Digest, Pleasantville, N. Y. \$7.88 monaural, \$8.88 stereo. The organists are Paul Mickelson (playing the 4/141 Aeolian-Skinner organ in St. John the Divine Cathedral in New York and the 6/451 behemoth in Wanamaker's store, Philadelphia), Richard Leibert (at the 4/58 Wurlitzer at Radio City Music Hall and the 4/22 RTOS Wurlitzer in the Auditorium theatre, Rochester, N. Y., whose work we will review in this issue) and Billy Nalle and Richard Purvis whose records we'll cover next time.

The title of this set tells much of the story. In a gigantic effort to create the organ nostalgia collection of all time, Reader's Digest has assembled a well-recorded and well-played assortment of old chestnuts which merit this often sentimental rehash. Nearly all the selections are of the type which are best presented on theatre organs. The reason RD insisted that half of them should be presented on huge straight organs can only be guessed at and our guess is for the additional promotional value the four churchly instruments afford.

Paul Mickelson, whose name is well-established in the sacred music field, is completely at home on the theatre organ. Yet he must struggle to make a pair of instruments designed for classical organ works sound theatrical enough for the presentation of such selections as Handel's "Largo", "Liebestraum", Wagner's "Evening Star" and

Schumann's "Traumerei." That he succeeds in fair measure is a tribute to Mickelson's musicianship. The overall result is good. Much of it is of the "soothing" type we used to buy on Victor 12" blackseal 78s, straight organ records of relaxing music played by Mark Andrews or Archer Gibson. There are some raucous moments during the "Wedding March" when Paul unmuzzles the en chamade "State Trumpet" in St. John's (the rank records with all the subtlety of an air horn on a Mack truck) but manages to keep the two monsters under control for "Trumpet Voluntary", Mendelssohn's "Consolation", "Pilgrims' Chorus" and "Caprice Viennois" which come through with good effect. Also heard are Godrad's "Berceuse" and the familiar high school graduation ceremony favorite, "War March of the Priests" by Mendelssohn, during which the melody line is obscured in spots. Lots of action noise (probably the harp) and shutter squeaks are audible during "Liebestraum" and "Star". Generally the miking is above average. Due to the tremendous dynamic range of the instruments, considerable compression is evident. Otherwise, it succeeds in being what was intended—a tender reprise of old favorites in the light classic standard category. It's a proper introduction to the organ artistry of Paul Mickelson. More will be seen about him in these columns, especially regarding his theatre organ prowess.

Next we examine Dick Leibert at the Rochester ex-Palace 4/22 Wurlitzer and the RCMH 4/58 Wurlitzer. Let us start by stating that we have never heard a better recorded performance by the man who opened the Music Hall organ and who still presides there. Unlike Mickelson, who played his tunes mostly according to the notes, the Leibert selections are laced with generous slices of "Leibertiana"—arrangements which often include offbeat harmonies, tempos, rhythms, phrasings and scintillating progressions of the types heard at the Music Hall. Dick offers such goodies as a very different "Battle Hymn of the Republic", Ketelby's "In a Persian Market" (with a much easier-listening "state trumpet" passage), "La Paloma", Massenet's "Meditation", "La Cumparsita", "Pomp & Circumstance No. 1" (all played on the Rochester Theatre Organ Society instrument), "March Slav", "Humoresque", "Song of India", "None But the Lonely Heart", Boccherini's "Minuet", "Love's Old Sweet Song" and an original "Bacchanale" (these played on the RCMH 4/58). There is a grandeur and majesty in the "Leibert sound" which this reviewer finds "goose pimp-

ly." Both instruments contribute to this impression. The Rochester organ has always sounded good on records and we believe this to be the first release since the Music Hall organ underwent a major face lifting. It is truly Leibert at the best we have yet heard him on records.

Jacket notes provide a little about each instrument and artist, brief anecdotes about each tune but not a word about registration or how the organist interprets the music (other than stating that Leibert's "Bacchanale" isn't as rowdy as some).

The set (all 4) is highly recommended. Next time we'll examine the remaining two recordings, those by Dick Purvis and Billy Nalle.

* * *

BRAVO! Lyn Larsen playing the Carson residence 3/24, Wurlitzer. Rapture label No. 11113, \$5.95 (plus 30c sales tax for California) postpaid, Rapture Records, 2825 Hyans Street, Los Angeles, Calif. 90026. Stereo only.

Organist/musicologist Paul Beaver, while listening to his collection of Jesse Crawford records, noted how well the phrasing of simple Neapolitan tunes fitted the late maestro's style of playing, and vice versa. He discussed the matter with organist Lyn Larsen, and the result is this collection of vintage Italian tunes, offered here in almost traditionally simple treatments. Lyn was so enthusiastic to take on the Neapolitan project he got permission from Essential, his regular label, to record this one for Rapture.

It should be made clear that these songs are not played in imitation of the Crawford style, other than phrasing (which is mostly coincidence). Nor does producer Beaver allow the Larsen personality to protrude very often. The emphasis is on the basic melodies and rhythms, and beautiful registration. The Carson organ, a fully romantic instrument (even for a theatre organ) is the perfect facility for the emotion-packed presentations of Italy's folk music.

Opening with a spirited "Funiculi-Funicula," Lyn does a beautiful job on "Mattinata" which employs Crawford-like registration, as do "Torna a Surriento," "Santa Lucia" and "Maria, Mari." Of course "Donna e Mobile" and "Ciribiribin" are included as well as the less familiar "Serenata d'e Rose", "Dicitencello Vuie", "Vieni Sul Mar" and a wonderful "O Sole Mio" closer. Simplicity is the keynote, both in material and treatments, but with just enough dramatic flair to give the tunes a continental accent.

Recording is excellent, made even

better through use of the Dolby noise-reducing system which blanks out background noise (amplifier hiss etc). The surface of the review disc is flawless.

You don't have to be Italian to appreciate this one.

* * *

ON THE WINGS OF LOVE, Ed Pegram at the 2/7 Wurlitzer in the Ellen theatre, Bozeman, Montana, Stereo CR-0046, available postpaid at \$4.50 from Concert Recording, Box 531 Lynwood, Calif. 90262. Also available on 7½ ips 4 track stereo tape at \$5.95.

Screwy album title, unknown organist, small organ in an out-of-the-way theatre. Could anything interesting evolve from that combination? It most certainly can, and does. The moment after the Ellen's manager-owner-organist starts his first tune ("Amour"), he has captured the musical attention of the listener, and the interest continues to grow. Ed Pegram is not a brilliant performer but he has that spark of musicianship which makes his playing irresistible. And the organ, while small, is in excellent shape and offers a wide tonal variety in registration (it is obviously well-unified).

Pegram treats his listeners to no less than 18 tastefully played selections (some in Medleys). All are well registered, and the phrasing is excellent. The approach is subtle. The over-all sound is best described as "velvety."

Among the many selections are: Serenade in Blue, I Wish You Love, To a Wild Rose, Ghost Riders in the Sky, Bloody Mary, It Has to be Tonight, Baby Elephant Walk, The One I Love, Shadow of Your Smile, Edelweiss and 5 minutes and 20 seconds of a very different and intriguing "On the Trail" in pastel hues.

Recording is good. The transfer to disc has been made at a comparatively low level which permits a wide dynamic range with low distortion. A rarity these days.

A combination of good organ, talented organist and good recording make this an attractive package — even though we still don't understand the meaning of the title.

* * *

JOHNNY SENG playing his 4/23 Concert organ in Mundelein Seminary. CR-0057, stereo, available at \$4.50 postpaid from Concert Recording, Box 531, Lynwood, Calif. 90262. Available also on 7½ ips 4-track stereo tape at \$5.95.

John Seng doesn't record very often but when he does it has been our experience that he has something to say musically. This time is no exception. It may also be stated that this recording



JOHN SENG

puts John "up there" with the toppers in the arranging field. Before examining the selections some explanation is in order regarding both performer and instrument. John's conception of a pop pipe organ is somewhat different from the usual theatre organ specification. He rejects the sweet Tibia sound, preferring a hard, flutey Tibia. And the dominant sound of John's organ is that of fiery reeds. Add very prominent tonal and toy counter percussions plus some electronic frippery (e.g. Krugertype pedal stop) and you have John's concert organ. It also has some stops for the presentation of classical organ music.

To this reviewer the organ records more like a theatre organ than it sounds like one in the hall; much of the reedy harshness heard "in person" seems to have been lost in recording. But we still miss the authentic tibia sound. With these exceptions, it's a most impressive recording, loaded with musical gems in novel arrangements. John starts out with a big brash "To Russia With Love," music to end all contrived "secret operator" "Gebrauchsmusik," a sly spoof. Next is a conglomeration of sounds which in turn sound like "I Got Rhythm", "The Old Grey Mare" and "Turkey in the Straw" until the light bulb goes on and its "Down by the Riverside" with the tune a bit obscured by embellishment. The final chorus with that dishpan pedal cymbal marking every beat is especially wild. "My First Love Song" is one of the few "sweet" treatments. It's John at his sentimental best. "Love is Blue" gets a Bach trio pseudo-classical playing, one of the most extraordinary numbers on side 1, and "My Heart Belongs to Daddy" gets a varied rhythm arrangement with lots of registration changes, percussion plinks and plunks. "La Danza" is played as a silent movie "hurry" and "Mood Indigo" offers lots of slow jazz inventive-

ness in the horn solo while a string/vox chorus wails the harmonic structure and the pedal is quite electronic. Side 1 closes with a sprightly "Promenade" with many changes of registration, with emphasis on brass and percussors. So ends side 1, and the best is yet to come.

If John took a few improvisational liberties with the tunes on side 1, the emphasis during side 2 is strict discipline because the program consists of eleven selections from the Gershwin folk-opera "Porgy and Bess," a situation which sent us scurrying to our Leonard Bernstein, Andre Kostelanetz and "cast" recordings of the work for a basis of comparison. Gershwin had a talent for writing descriptive opera music which sets a mood and does much to underscore a story when played instrumentally with no words to explain things. But making it come off is a tremendous task for any performing group, not to mention one organist. We spent a Sunday afternoon listening, first to the big orchestras play the music, then to Johnny's recording. Johnny came through the ordeal "smelling like a rose." His registration is his own, and his tempos differ from established versions in places, but the important thing is that at no time does Johnny allow himself to stray from what might be described as the intent of the composer. The moods of the tunes as they are heard in the opera are preserved, and the tunes offered cover nearly the whole opera—Summertime, A Woman is a Sometime Thing, My Man's Gone Now, I Got Plenty of Nothing (too much pedal cymbal!), Bess You is My Woman, It Ain't Necessarily So, There's a Boat Leaving Soon for New York, On My Way, and all the rest, beautifully and authentically performed. This is a truly monumental undertaking and a milestone for Johnny. Forget all our carping about side 1; side 2 is a gem to fire the imagination over and over. There's something new to hear with each playing.

For some reason the jacket cover presents a fine color photo of Jack Leynwood's West Coast 2/8 home installation pipework and the photo of Johnny could have been lifted from the cover of a long ago BOMBARDE. But no matter, the music is great.

Also of Interest

THE ELECTRIC TOUCH OF HELEN DELL, Helen at the X77 Hammond, MAS2007, Stereo, available from Malar Records at \$5.00 postpaid, box 3104, Glendale, Calif. 91201.

This disc is remarkable not only for the crisp bounce of the Dell rhythm tunes but also for Helen's conjuring of a presentable Vox Humana voice from the 2-1 electronic's drawbars for "Jean-nine." Other tunes include: Come Dance with Me, The Nearness of You, Downtown, Do You Know What it Means to Miss New Orleans, Opus One, Green Dolphin Street, You Are Too Beautiful, plus a digital obstacle course called Kitten on the Keys.

FLASH!!

We have just received notice that the New York Chapter and the Long Island University have reached a preliminary agreement on a joint project to rehabilitate the Brooklyn Paramount 4/28 Wurlitzer (the old Brooklyn Paramount auditorium is now the Long Island University Gymnasium—the world's most luxurious basketball court). Clem Young, east coast professional organ builder, will be the technical director of the project and Lee Erwin, the famous Moon River organist, will supervise the tonal work. No further details are available at this time.

Mildred Alexander At The Wiltern

On Sunday morning, August 24th, Mildred Alexander went through what was probably the roughest musical ordeal of her life at the Wiltern theatre in Los Angeles. On rather short notice she had been asked by the LA chapter to present a concert on the Kimball organ (her second) and had accepted. But when practice time came, it was discovered that the intense summer heat had played havoc with the tuning of the instrument. So, instead of practice time, Millie stood by while the maintenance crew made a valiant and partially effective effort to get the monster's 28 playing ranks (the echo isn't used) into presentable shape for the concert.

So Millie went to work with one formidable strike against her, knowing that an out-of-tune organ can sabotage the most skilfully-played music. Yet, during her announcements she was apologetic in her own behalf and never said one word about the condition of the organ, preferring to cover with such remarks as "That'll teach me to play a tune without practicing it" or "I sure blew that one."

She really didn't need the alibis because the total result added up to good entertainment. Her musicianship made up for that precious practice time she had foregone. The Alexander personality, just a little subdued from the frustration of trying to tame the hoarse beast, came through beautifully, as always, and she had her audience (700) solidly with her.

After intermission, with an hour of experience behind her, Millie was able to select the stops which were more in tune and the musical interest picked up. She came up out of the pit with a lilting "Thoroughly Modern Millie," followed by an outstanding selection of themes from Gordon Jenkin's love song to an island, "Manhattan Tower" (an Alexander standard), and the mood exemplified by her earlier remark — "The first time I played this organ I was nervous — and nothing has changed!" — was gone. She had fun this time with songs about May and Manhattan and



MILLIE — An ailing organ and short practice time couldn't stop her. STUFOTO

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