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**THE ORGAN PLAYS GOLDEN FAVORITES**, released as a 4-record set by Reader's Digest, Pleasantville, New York. \$7.88 monaural, \$8.88 stereo, by mail only.

In the October column we discussed two of the records of this set, the ones played by Dick Leibert and Paul Mickelson. Now it's on to Billy Nalle and Richard Purvis. The entire set was recorded expertly by RCA Victor and the only serious technical flaws were a couple of slightly off-center pressings in our review copies. RD assures us that pressings which "wow" are returnable.



Billy

We aren't going into a biography of Billy Nalle. As one of the most persistent and successful battlers for recognition of the theatre organ, he needs no introduction.

His first side is played on Dick Weber's 4/22 mostly Wurlitzer in the Plattsburgh (N. Y.) Strand theatre. Billy can either "play it straight" (as written) or arrange it "Nalle style." His initial selection is an almost pedantic "Kammenoi Ostrow" (as written) which, nevertheless, echoes the beauties of nature as composer Rubenstein intended. Next comes "Only a Rose" and it has more of the Nalle touch. But it's the third tune which gives Billy's puckish musical impudence an opportunity to assert itself — "Parade of the Wooden Soldiers." Partly due to good registration, partly because of the pixie variations, it's the best "Parade" since Eddie Dunstedter's thundered out of Minnesota 40 years ago. With "Che Gelida Manina" Billy illustrates how well-adapted opera music is for theatre organ presentation. He takes no liberties with Puccini; just lets the original music sound out with satisfying results. But he seems much more at home embellishing Irving Berlin's "Always" with what are perhaps best described as "Nallisms." He's at home in Vienna, too. His "Emperor's Waltz" has that flair of Austrian emotion in tempo and changes of tempo which distinguish the Vienna Philharmonic or Sepp's Biergarten trio versions from the often monochrome "boom trap-trap" applied to Strauss elsewhere.

While we flip to side 2, Billy skeddaddles from Plattsburgh to Detroit and the DTOC 4/34 Wurlitzer, playing "Jalousie" for a starter, easily the most imaginative since George Wright's 13 years ago. It's back to Vienna for a go at Fritz Kreisler's "The Old Refrain," a love song embellished with a few Nallisms. There is much embellishment heard during "Blue Tango." Billy was having great musical fun and he shares it with his listeners. He brings out what might be termed "inspirational" qualities in the Youmans ballad, "Through the Years" which he makes soar. Billy adds an Irish touch to "Londonderry Air," for his own well-registered arrangement, and closes with a very Crawford-like "My Hero" which eventually resolves into pure Nalle.

Both instruments used have a captivating sound and Billy Nalle manages to get great variety from each. Pedal work is especially interesting. The selections offer a wide variety of music types and Billy masters them all with apparent ease. A-plus for Billy!

Now to Richard Purvis and the Aeolian-Skinner organ in Symphony Hall, Boston. George Wright calls him "a swingin' cat," and indeed he did start his playing career broadcasting on a theatre organ as "Don Irving." But

here he's given the task of playing many tunes suited to theatre organ on instruments designed for classical organ literature e.g. "Serenade" by Romberg, and "Love Sends a Little Gift of Roses." Luckily such mismatches are few and Purvis sticks to opera choruses and marches which come through with the magnificence a big concert organ can supply. Thus Victor Herbert's "March of the Toys" and "Grand March" from "Aida" are thrillers, while "Musetta's Waltz" (Puccini) and "My Heart at Thy Sweet Voice" cry for theatre organ registration.

On side 2 much the same condition exists. Wagner is a composer who revels in the big brass sound. He is represented by the "Bridal Chorus" and "Overture to Act III" (both from "Lohengrin") and "Prize Song" from "Meistersinger," all played with good effect. The "Prize Song" introduces interesting solo reeds. This side is played on the 101-rank Aeolian-Skinner in Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, and has some almost theatrical stops which Purvis puts to good use for "Clair de Lune" and "Goin Home" (Dvorak), especially solo reeds. "Monastery Garden" also comes off well with straight organ registration.

Richard Purvis turns in a flawless performance on both instruments and if there is any preference, ours perhaps leans toward the Grace Cathedral side. Purvis seems more at ease on his home-ground organ (with its new horseshoe console). We only wish he had some of the voices necessary to register the sentimental tunes. But this amounts to minor carping about a magnificent set of records. The price is right, too.

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**TONY!** Tony Fenelon at the Dendy theatre (Melbourne, Australia) 3/15 Wurlitzer. Festival label. Available in stereo (SFL-933-500) (mono on special order, FL-33-500) at \$5.85 postpaid from Tony Fenelon in America, 3633 Colegrove, suite 25, San Mateo, Calif.

Tony Fenelon, the young Australian who swept across the USA in a flurry of concerts which caused US orgophiles to love Australia as never before, is presented here with all the personality and exuberance which marked his concentrated month-long October US tour.

Tony starts his recording with an unfortunate "Mrs. Robinson" during which he uses the same bugle calls for punctuation over and over. Boredom. Once that is over, the recording is sheer delight. The Dendy Wurlitzer sounds amazingly like the Bob Carson studio organ and many of Tony's combinations have the crisp quality of those

used by Lyn Larsen on the studio organ, especially the reed mixes.

Tony's second tune is a soporific "Spanish Eyes" followed by an energetic "Sabre Dance." There are overtones of Widor's 5th Symphony "Toccatà" in the intro to his treatment of the "Big Country" theme and "Quando Quando" is indicative of the elfish impudence which often characterizes Tony's approach to fast pops. The Vox gets a sentimental workout during "Unchained Melody" with a mellow Tibia taking over later.

Side 2 includes a cleanly played "Cumbanchero" with lots of combo changes, a non-Beatly approach to "Yesterday" (on Tibia-Vox mainly), and "Flapperette" straight from the corn-laden '20s, one of the best performances on the record. For the "mods" Tony offers a lively "When I'm 64" which manages also to sound very "twentyish." Then a fast waltz entitled "Boom Bang a Bang," presumably an Australian pop and, if so, the only "down under" tune on the platter. Tony closes with a question — "What Kind of Fool Am I?" Beautifully phrased and registered.

Those who missed Tony in person will enjoy hearing him on this record. They might even like "Mrs. Robinson." For insatiable Fenelon fans, three other pipe organ records played by him are available at the same source and price: "Academy Award Songs" (reviewed in the December 1968 TOB), "With a Song in My Heart" and "Hymns of all Churches" on which he accompanies a singer.

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**LARRY FERRARI AT THE MIGHTY WURLITZER** (Detroit DTOC Senate 4/34 Wurlli). Sure label, No. 706 (stereo). Available by mail from Sure Record and Music Co. Box 94, Broomall, Penn. 19008. Price not furnished.

We had heard much about Larry Ferrari (especially from his fan club) and this recording does much to explain his Eastern boosters' enthusiasm. Larry starts with a peppy "Those Were the Days" and follows with a blockbusting march, the "Repasz Band" with full brass, bells and traps. A toe-tapper.

This is followed by a slow-starting "Climb Every Mountain" which builds in tempo and volume as it progresses. Continuing his up-beat trend Larry gives out with a fast moving "Dear World" then to a rhythmic "On a Clear Day," a study in correct Posthorn punctuation. Even Larry's ballad treatment of "Who Can I Turn To?" develops a beat in spots.

"If I Were A Rich Man" features a conversation between Posthorn and Bells, then the Posthorn talks to itself

as the fadeout comes. "I Feel Pretty" gets about the same treatment and registration. We'll skip any comment on "Lara's Theme" (only because it's been done to death). "I'll Wait For You" features the bells, then full organ. He gives "Impossible Dream" the full treatment, too.

## *Also of Interest*

**The following review was submitted furtively — and we think we know why.**

**"MARTHA!"** Martha Lake playing her favorites at the console of a theatre organ which had better remain unidentified. RS 102, 45 rpm, stereo only. \$1.50 postpaid from Relay Records, 8606 35th N.E. Seattle, Wash. 98115.

Here, at last, is the inimitable Martha Lake on record with her own arrangements of two old standards and a pair of more recent songs. This disc deserves a place of honor somewhere on the bottom shelf of every theatre organ buff's record library. Although it was cut at 45 rpm this reviewer finds that playing the record at 78 rpm gets it over with a lot faster.

The opener, "Martha's Theme", also known, I believe, as "Ah Superb!", is launched upward with a lurching-out-of-the-pit intro that would make any veteran theatre organist's heart stop; the auto horns, klaxons, and bird calls interrupting the howling of the untremmed heavy reeds add a touch of that playfulness for which Miss Lake is so infamous. The first chorus smacks of an old Wurlitzer Band Organ, with the addition of an obnoxious solo reed to aggravate the subtle dissonances of the accompaniment. There is an interesting misuse of piano and tambourine in the second chorus, which finishes with cymbal accents and a final arpeggio on hardware over untremmed reeds to stagger the imagination.

The faltering gaiety of the first piece is followed by a thing called "Satisfaction," which is fascinating. With bell and chime accents only too audible, the famed "Abyssinian Stringed Oboe" drags the melody unwillingly through the first chorus. The dissonant quality of this rare and beautiful instrument comes across so effectively that at times, it would seem to the untrained ear that the melody and accompaniment are actually being played in entirely different keys! A quiet bridge into the second chorus is enhanced by a jab at the "cough" piston, an interesting effect not found on many organs. In the last few bars full organ is detonated and the bellowing of the pipes almost succeeds in drowning out the Stringed Oboe as

it follows bell and pipe arpeggios, working its way up to a final, crunching chord.

"Zo Vot's Gnu?" is done up in "rickety-tick" style on piano and Stringed Oboe, while a mercifully obscure horn provides second touch counteroffensive. Martha's rocky piano-thumping technique is reminiscent of a willingly forgotten bad dream. Portions of "Nola" are thrown into the verse to counteract the melody and, after some more bird and klaxon accents during the bridge, she romps through the second chorus in a thwarted attempt at dazzling digital dexterity. The cymbal, introduced near the end, adds the final blow to this amazingly executed piece of "Roaring 20's" legerdemain.

"Climbin' Out of My Bed" is introduced by untremmed heavy reeds in the top and bottom registers, which slowly give out to become Xylophone and anaemically untremmed pipes pushing the melody along over a triangle and chinese block accompaniment. As she stumbles into the chorus Martha first cancels and then reapplies the tremms, as ranks pile up in a vain attempt to overcome the "toys" in the background. The smashing of glass is heard as Martha's bifocals shatter on the floor after sliding off the end of her nose. Unable to stop now, Martha blindly throws on the piano with pipes again untremmed, and then on goes the throb-motor for the riffs. The last chorus ends with a straight organ "rollantando" punctuated by a punch of the "flush" piston, whence the plumbing in the Solo loft washroom takes over for a bar. This authentic sound is augmented by a clever device called simply "soap dish," which crashes onto a tiled surface for a "crockery-smash" effect. A final chord with cymbal crashes and chopping tremms finishes off the disc. Completely.

A great deal of relaxation is obvious in this record. Miss Lake's loose, almost disjointed playing style, points to years of organ lessons she didn't waste time taking, and of the hours of practice before taping which she deemed unnecessary. Listening to the characteristic sound and recorded quality of the organ leads one to think wistfully of the hours that could have been spent tuning and voicing the pipes. The cumbersome pulse of the untamed tremulants is a tribute to the unerring lack of diligence on the part of technicians who refused to tamper with the organ's "natural" sounds.

Summary: A must for every theatre organ buff who thinks he has heard everything.

— J. Geoffrey F. Paterson  
(Guest Reviewer)