



Manufacturers, distributors or individuals sponsoring or merchandising theatre pipe organ records are encouraged to send pressings to the Record Reviewer, Box 3564, Granada Hills, California 91344. Be sure to include purchasing information, if applicable, and if possible a black and white photo which need not be returned.

THEATRE ORGAN TREASURES

Stereo organ records at \$2.84 each is the offer of Concert Recording, 3318 Platt Avenue, Lynwood, Calif. 90262. Twelve brands of organ and a variety of organists are heard on the seven record set: 4/19 Wurlitzer (Tony Fenelon), 2/7 Robert Morton (Dolton McAlpin), Christie (George Blackmore), 5/17 Compton (Gerald Shaw), 3/10 Barton (Wendell Kennedy), 5/24 Marr & Colton (Dick Schrum), 4/42 Moller (Bob Van Camp), 4/22 Conacher (Jackie Hlyer), 3/10 Hilsdon (Frank Olsen), 3/16 Wicks (Kay McAbee), 4/15 Page (Buddy Nolan), 4/40 Hill, Norman and Beard (Douglas Reeve), plus two sides of music played on nickelodeons, orchestrions, Reginas and similar automatic players. All are complete sides from previously released albums and the T.O. discs have all been reviewed here over the past four years. We don't recall a bad one in the bunch. The set was originally priced at \$35.00 but Concert has about 700 sets left and has reduced them to clear at \$19.87 postpaid, an attractive price for the 14 sides. The set is guaranteed; it may be returned within 15 days for a full refund if the buyer is dissatisfied.

THE FORGOTTEN SOUND — A THEATRE ORGAN SING-ALONG, Rodger Garrett at the (Columbus) Ohio theatre 4/22 Robert Morton. Available by mail at \$2.30 postpaid from Central Ohio Theatre Organ Society, 4642 Musket Way, Columbus, Ohio 43228.

There's a lot of nostalgia on this 7-inch souvenir stereo record of a gone era. Organist Garrett returned to the scene of his console triumphs in the '30s and '40s to recapture, with the aid of an audience of 3300 and the 4/22 Morton, an 11-minute 45-second slice of the spirit of those dear, dead days. He succeeds completely. The organist acts as MC and reviews his career at the Ohio theatre with memory-teasing snatches of "Wearing of the Green," "Sonny Boy," "The Day You Came Along," "Sweet Mystery of Life," "San Francisco," "A Pretty Girl is Like a Melody," "Praise the Lord & Pass the Ammunition" and the "Marines' Hymn," all interspersed with brief comments. He solos his radio theme "Romance" but the large audience is heard singing lustily through choruses of "California Here I Come," "Dinah," "Popeye the Sailor man," "Turkey in the Straw" (with the audience whistling) and "South of the Border." He uses the familiar showman's tricks of pitting the balcony denizens vocal volume against the rest of the house, and stopping the organ abruptly to let the audience carry on alone. Roger Garrett has the sing-along trick down cold and the enthusiasm of the audience makes one a little sad to realize that today's entertainment seekers no longer have that warm, wonderful fun. All proceeds from the sale of this record go into a club organ restoration fund. Members have done a fine restoration job on the Ohio Theatre Morton, so we may anticipate equal success in their more recent Wurlitzer project.

NOSTALGIA — BERT BUHRMAN STARRING AT THE MIGHTY WURLITZER, American Artists label AAS-1003-LP (stereo) available by mail at \$5.50 postpaid from School of the Ozarks, Point Lookout, Missouri 65726.

This 3/15 Wurlitzer was originally in the RKO Keith's theatre in Flushing, N.Y. and was donated to the School of the Ozarks by the RKO Stanley Warners theatre chain for re-installation at the School. Enroute to



Burt Buhrman during CBS radio days.

Missouri a horrendous accident befell the disassembled giant, but we won't take the edge off Lloyd E. Klos' story about it here. Enough to say it triumphed over adversity and is singing effectively and happily in its new home. Of course, the fact that veteran theatre and radio organist Bert Buhrman is the pilot (both for the organ project as well as for this record) helps greatly. Bert, whose console career started in Kansas City theatres and radio stations (1932), eventually hit the big time at CBS New York. Now a teacher/organist back in his home territory, Bert longed for the sound of the theatre organ, luckily for us. The last recording by Bert we reviewed was a Columbia disc which he played on the Byrd theatre in Richmond, Va. in the late '50s. At the time we noted his liking for heavily mutated combinations. He still has it, but displays much more registration variety than on his "And the Pipes Will Play" release.

The selection, aside from the ballad of that haughty "Ipanema" hussy, avoids the over-recorded cliché tunes. The opener is an emotion-packed "Lover" on full combinations, played as a waltz ballad in "big feature presentation" style. The "Ipanema" broad is treated much too kindly by Bert; she's downright attractive as she swivelhips nonchalantly past those banks of cloying Tibias and shimmering reeds and strings. Bert's approach is usually orchestral, which is marked by brief untremmed passages and considerable Chrysoglott harp tinkling, as during "You Are Too Beautiful." "Springfield Missouri" is Bert's favorite, a tune which over the years helped steer him back to the Ozarks to stay circa 1961.

"Gypsy Airs" is an effective presentation of mostly Hungarian folk tunes, music which is alternately fast, then slow, then fast. A bright combination of reeds subs for the inevitable freewheeling violin solos.

A lush reed combination carries the verse of "You and the Night and the Music" while an attractive Tibia mutation combination starts the first chorus. Memories of Bea Wain and Larry Clinton's danceband are brought to mind by "Reverie," a tune excerpted from the classics (Debussy) and here given a more tasteful rendition on the Wurlitzer's Tibias, Clarinet and Harp.

"You're Blasé" was heard on Bert's first organ broadcast in 1932. In our opinion it's the most fascinating tune on the record. Played in *bravura* style, with Buddy Cole-like counter melodies against lush reeds, it creates some of those electric moments too seldom experienced while listening to grooved music nowadays. Well unified Tibia sound marks "Street of Dreams" (wonder if Bert recalls that it was the Hit Parade station break tune in the B.A. Rolfe days?). A tasteful and very gemütlich "Tales from the Vienna Woods" closes the show and it's a good one. The old maestro has lost none of his touch. If we can apply a little critical hindsight, we would prefer more expression through use of the swell pedals. They seem to be usually wide open. As for the recording, groove modulation seems very high, resulting in some distortion. Our review copy suffers from a pressing fault; it is nearly 3/32" off center on side one and a little less on side two, a condition which results in a slow "wow" in the music throughout but worst on the inside cuts. This should not discourage purchase because it is usually an isolated condition (out luck to get the faulty one). Record sellers are always willing to exchange defective discs for perfect ones.

As for the organ, it gives out with a typical Wurlitzer sound which we believe can be vastly improved by a different setting of the trem. This is a highly subjective area of discussion, pivoting on personal preference, but we felt the Tibia trem was a little choppy and too fast. The instrument has six tremulants. Yet during some tunes it seemed as though the other five were beating in sync with the Tibia trem, a condition which defeats

the purpose of multiple trem. But this is one man's opinion and what bugged us may bother no one else.

Bert Buhman, who is the official organist at the School of the Ozarks, worked hard and long to make the Wurlitzer a reality for the school. He has a style all his own, one which is always pleasant to hear, but which sometimes soars. The record is both interesting and entertaining.

DAY IS DYING IN THE WEST. Paul Mickelson playing the NBC Pipe Organ, No. CS-6001, stereo. \$5.25 postpaid from Console Records, Box 352, Glendale, Calif. 91209.



PAUL MICKELSON

Remember when the radio announcer declared "*I Love a Mystery!*", and immediately there followed a broadly played "Waltz Triste" on theatre pipes which put listeners in the mood for another Morse broadcast adventure? This is not a recent recording, but it gives a good tonal demonstration of the long gone NBC Hollywood studio organ (even the studio building at Sunset and Vine has since vanished). The organ, played for the Morse broadcasts by Paul Carson, was a hybrid of about 10 ranks but had a thoroughly theatrical sound.

The last time we reviewed a Paul Mickelson record was when he participated in a 4-organist Readers Digest record release in the late '60s. This record was made in the mid '50s. Later, when NBC decided to move to Burbank, Mickelson purchased the organ and it remains stashed, awaiting a home.

The recording would not normally come to the attention of T.O. fans because it's on a church-oriented label

distributed through stores which deal in religious items. One side consists of hymns played with theatre organ registration — "Day is Dying in the West," "At the End of the Road," "The Lights of Home," "No Night There" etc. Its secular standards on side 2 which will interest T.O. buffs.

The lush sound of Tibia and Vox, most appropriate to the title mood, dominates "Just a Song at Twilight," Wagner's "Evening Star," a somewhat somber "Moonlight Sonata" and the most captivating "When Day is Done" since Crawford's. Mickelson, whose talents are cast in the Loren Whitney-Brad Braley-Irma Glen mold of religious music in theatre organ style, does full justice to the selections, using the dominant Tibia/Vox combination effectively, with frequent diversions on a lush string section and a majestic Tuba. A good theatre style played on a fine sounding organ.

DENNIS JAMES AT THE RTOS WURLITZER. In stereo (no brand label). \$5.25 postpaid from Rochester Theatre Organ Society, Box 8114, Rochester, N.Y., 14617.

Every time we hear Dennis James he seems to sound better than last time, a rising affirmative which started when he subbed for ailing Leonard MacClain at the 1967 ATOS Convention at Detroit. He was just 16. His console prowess has grown consistently ever since, and this record proves it.

So much has appeared in print about the RTOS 4/22 Wurlitzer, we need not amplify here. Enough to say it's a rare gem.

One nice characteristic of the James approach to playing the organ is a complete lack of any set style. Each selection gets the treatment the organist feels will present it most effectively.

Dennis opens with a bubbly "If My Friends Could See Me Now" marked with Glockenspiel sparkle and "show opener" tempo. "Butterflies in the Rain," a bit of whimsy about a soggy lepidopteron is a light, rhythmic novelty tune which again calls for the Glockenspiel in best "golden era" corn style. Then the whistling of the bridge-builders is punctuated by drumbeats as the troops pass in review before "Colonel Bogey" and march into the sunset, doing a slow fade. Lush Tibias carry the bitter-sweet message of "Raining in My Heart," from that spoof of '30s musicals, "*Dames at Sea.*"

If there's a "best number" on this disc it's "Danse Macabre," Saint-Saens old warhorse about skeletons who cavort in best Disney bacchanale style when old Beelzebub whips the horse-tail across the catgut for some fancy fiddling. It's a dramatic bit of program music (definite story line) and Dennis uses the Posthorn to obtain the raucous sound an obviously non-union musician such as Old Nick would have to get from his asbestos Stradivarius. It is often difficult music, yet Dennis manages to represent all the ensembles and solos as they sound when played by a large orchestra. Fine phrasing, too, and effective use of expression. "Maple Leaf Rag" is Dennis' salute to the coin-operated player pianos, orchestrions and nick-elodeons of a bygone era. Lots of percussers hammering away. The big band era lives again in the Glenn Miller medley, which includes a lushly saccharine "Moonlight Serenade," a rhythmic "Pennsylvania 6-5000, a haunting "Serenade in Blue" and a jumping "Chattanooga Choo-Choo," all played to the hilt in danceband style of the '40s. Next, the "American Patrol" in march tempo with Sousa-style piccolo frippery embellishing the "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean" segment. The closer is a ballad treatment of "Someone to Watch Over Me," a bouncy "Fascinating Rhythm" and "I'll Build a Stairway to Paradise" which is only slightly marred by a schmear glissando (Dennis!!!). This one is recommended, a real happy combination of a fine artist and a particularly responsive instrument. Lloyd Klos' sometimes esoteric jacket notes also hit the spot.

— THE PLUG-IN CORNER —

PRESENTING MISS DONNA PARKER, playing Conn models 650 and 580, stereo. Available postpaid at \$5.00 from Lesly Records, Box 154, La Verne, Calif., 91750.

Donna Parker first came to our attention during an L.A. chapter jam session at the Elks Club. The self assurance of a 13-year-old in tackling a finger twister such as "Dizzyfingers" on the great sluggish monster (4/16) was nearly as eyebrow-raising as the result; she actually made it come off. We've had our eye on Donna ever since — and not only because she's a very pretty girl. Her first recording com-

pounds that same self confidence with considerable experience — now that she's 15! The tunes she offers are mainly standards, with a preponderance of fast novelties, "Just One of Those Things," "Flapperette," "Nagasaki," "Kitten on the Keys," "Brazilian Sleigh Bells," and (of course) "Dizzyfingers." She performs these with great accuracy and all the musicality they deserve.



DONNA PARKER — (Stufoto)

They are flashy, fast and marred only by the use of a too deep tremulant on fast passages. But no matter, these tunes are outshone by Donna's way with such ballads as "Tangerine" (good '30s swingband style) and rhythm-ballad treatments of "Body and Soul" and "I've Got it Bad," which are downright sexy! This quality disappears when she goes mod for a well-performed "We've Only Just Begun" but it's back for a ballad-with-a-beat treatment of "Satin Doll." However, the selection which illustrates the great promise of Donna's musical future is not a pop, ballad or rhythm tune but a piece written for the organ by classical organist, Robert Elmore. "Pavanne" is a Debussyesque fragment of mood music which Donna performs with sensitivity and awareness far beyond her years. In short, it's a beauty.

The Conn organs come off well on the recording, suffering only an over-choppy trem on a too-prominent Tibia. Otherwise Donna's registration is appropriate and satisfying. Recording is okay. Good first recording for a little gal who would have fitted so well into the theatre organ's "golden age."

MOONLIGHT SONATA, Bill Thomson at his Rodgers style 340. BT-3401, stereo. Available at \$5.25 from Lift Music Co., Box 663, West Covina, Calif. 91790.

This is an important recording. It marks another step closer to pipe sound simulation via electronics. That's one reason it's important. The other is Bill Thomson's performance which brings the closer simulation into perspective. The Rodgers model 340 is an offshoot of the famous Bob Power "style 260" Rodgers, so named because an alleged \$52,000 was spent in getting it to sound as much like a Wurlitzer style 260 as research and development could make it. Rodgers Organs, under the able guidance of Rodgers Jenkins, was one of the pioneers of accepting the theatre pipe organ as a model to shoot for, and the only company to stick consistently to that ideal. With Rodgers Jenkins, who led the search for new ways of using electronics to make the Bob Power organ a reality, no longer in the Rodgers driver seat, engineer George Kirkwood developed the model 340, using most of the new circuitry developed for the Power organ. The stoplist, which appears on the record jacket, could be that of any 3-manual theatre pipe organ, including the Second Touches on the Accompaniment manual, and six tremulants.

The idea for Bill Thomson's "Moonlight Recital" is the result of a natural phenomeunon; on clear nights when Bill presents concerts on the 340 in his Woodland Hills, Calif., hillside home, he times an appropriate "moon" tune to coincide with the rising of the moon, which is visible to Bill's audience through a huge picture window. Titles are "Moonglow" (with the "Picnic" theme counter melody), "Moon Over Miami," "Moon River," "Old Devil Moon," "Fly Me to the Moon," Victor Young's "Moonlight Serenade," "Magic is the Moonlight" and "Moonlight Sonata." The temptation to play them all in a soporific "late night radio program" style has been resisted; arrangements are all different in treatment and tempo. The much improved organ voices are used with exceptional skill by Bill Thomson; excellent celested strings, raunchy solo and sparkling color reeds and the best Tibia since Gulbrandsen's late lamented "Rialto" model. Only the piano fails to come through on the record with a convincing sound. Everything else combines to produce a fine recording. □