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WHO IS RAY BRUBACHER – AND WHAT'S HE DOING WITH THOSE PIPES? Ray Brubacher playing the 2/8 Wurlitzer in the Tivoli Theatre, Frederick, Md. No. CR-0074 (stereo). Available at \$4.89 postpaid from Concert Recording, Box 531, Lynwood, Calif. 90262.

The question posed has an easy answer for ATOSers because Ray has been a pillar of this publication, an associate editor and frequent contributor, for many years. A much in demand concert artist in his home area (the eastern states), this recording should do much to earn Ray fans far from the Potomac Valley Chapter diggins. Ray's approach to theatre pipes (he's equally adept on the big church Diapasons) is tasteful, usually orchestral, marked with variety, and, with the exception of "More" and the Beatles' "Yesterday", the selection of tunes is offbeat.

One might wonder why an artist of Ray's ability would limit his musical expression to the facilities of a relatively small instrument. Hearing the instrument provides answer enough; it's a little gem on which much tender loving care has been obviously languished by its restorers. The Tibia/Vox

combinations are exquisite, the Kinura crackly, the Trumpet mellow; a credit to restorers (especially young Doug Miller) who had the rough material and knew how to extract the best from it. The little Wurlitzer does very well on the ballads but seems to strain a little during the sweeping climaxes of the *Gone With the Wind* score and parts of the Viennese medley.

Ray opens with a lampoon of concertizers who ride their consoles skyward with everything on and played lickety-split — Julius Wechter's "Brazilia"; 1.56 minutes of drums, bells, clackers and usually frantic full organ, untrem'd a sure-fire eye-opener.

Then the artistry starts. The Tibia and Vox carry a well phrased "Yesterday", with interesting backing from a silvery Concert Flute for the ballad chorus. This is followed by a String/Reed chorus with heavy rhythm accents then a return to balladry for the bridge and closing. "More" is a tune which offers an organist with imagination many possibilities and Ray seems to have fathomed most of them in his treatment which ranges from percussion-flecked rhythm to a soaring improvisation indicative of Ray's absorption with theatrical music. Next the organist exhumes an oldie, "Here Comes the Sun", and gives it a 1928 theatre organist treatment, but with much finesse and no effort to make it sound dated. The Viennese medley includes "Two Hearts in Three Quarter Time" and a portion of Kreisler's "Liebesfreud." The medley is beautifully mounted with a soaring intro, and Ray does a masterful job playing the more difficult of the two, the Kreisler tune. "Two Hearts" is slightly faulted with melodic digressions and a brief "schmear."

Although it's only 1:14 minutes in length, Richard Rodgers "Maine" says a lot. It's played in a spirited manner and the conversation between Kinura and Trumpet is earthy. Stage show music is represented by "I Have Dreamed" and "Getting to Know You" from *The King and I*, the first as a romantic ballad, the second on a highly quinted flute combination, complete with the dance step breaks.

Film music is beautifully represented by 10:38 minutes of themes from *Gone With the Wind*. A pity that it's composer couldn't have lived to hear Ray's treatment of selections from this great score. Max Steiner, who died earlier this year, was dissatisfied

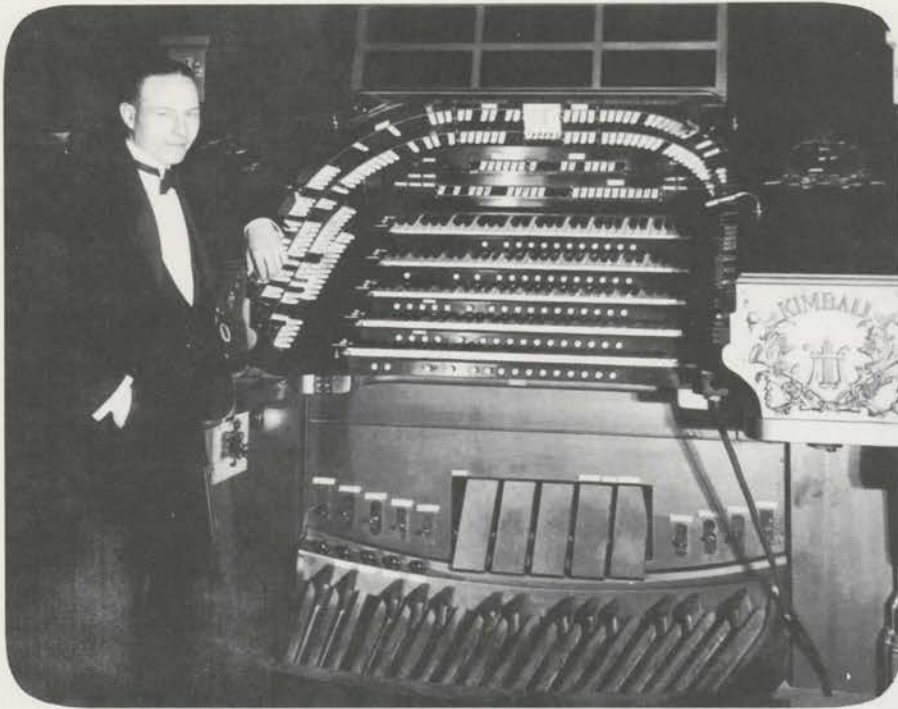
with every orchestral record of GWTW music except the one conducted by Muir Mathieson in England. He once told this reviewer of his hope of conducting a new version of the music, taking advantage of the improved recording techniques developed since the soundtrack was recorded in the late '30s. He never did but it isn't stretching things to suggest that Steiner would approve Ray's treatment of this selection of themes because the organist has captured the spirit of the music, even during modulations and improvisations between themes, although he avoids any hint of civil war music. Of course "Tara" is there as are several less familiar secondary themes. GWTW alone would make the disc worth owning. All the other goodies included add to the value.

Of Special Interest . . .

ORGAN FAVORITES FROM WAY BACK WHEN, C.A.J. Parmentier at the 4/21 Wurlitzer in the N.Y. Paramount Theatre Building. Monaural; available from C.A.J. Parmentier, 35-60 Seventy-Sixth Street, Jackson Heights, N.Y. 11372. \$5.50 postpaid.

Why Dr. Parmentier never recorded commercially has remained a long unanswered question. We recall hearing his broadcasts. His style was different; it had a lilt and light-hearted impudence which suited the pops of the day perfectly, a style which set him apart. There was no mistaking C.A.J. for any of the other CBS staffers.

So, finally, here it is; an LP release in which the masters were made in 1933, privately, during rehearsals, practice sessions, and after the daily radio stint. The original cuts were made on aluminum platters and not intended for commercial production, therefore some surface noise and distortion is apparent as these aluminum discs were no doubt replayed many times. It must be remembered that in playing back an aluminum recording it was necessary to use a carefully sharpened bamboo stylus, the grooves being exceedingly vulnerable. The listener should also bear in mind that we are listening to recordings made 39 years ago, and at best, the equipment used was very primitive by today's standards. The frequency range is understandably narrower than today's fidelity.



Roxy Theatre, New York City — C.A.J. Parmentier in March 1927.

Yet, these imperfections are largely lost in the sweep and freshness of the Parmentier style. He plays effortlessly through 18 pops and standards to provide a nostalgic sampling of the treats a 1933 radio listener might expect daily. There is sometimes abrupt cutting into and out of selections but we understand Dr. Parmentier's editing was governed by the quality of the cuts and whether or not parts had been damaged beyond repair. Obviously, part of a good arrangement is better than none of it.

So, forget "hi-fi" and "stereo" for a half hour and enjoy one of the finest theatre style studio organs played in its natural habitat by one of broadcastings finest organ practitioners (not forgetting C.A.J.'s theatre experience; he played at both the Music Hall and the Roxy, and was on the opening staffs of both houses).

The 4/21 Wurlitzer sounds gorgeous, despite the limited frequency range. Some of C.A.J.'s registration may sound familiar, but keep in mind there were other console giants setting and resetting the Wurlitzer combination buttons in those days.

Selections (a few truncated) are: "Laugh, You Son of a Gun," "Russian Lullabye," "Juba Dance," "Would You Like to Take a Walk?," "Le Secret," "Roses of Picardy," "Wedding of the Painted Doll," "I Wanna Be Loved," "Goin to Heaven on a Mule,"

"Flapperettee," "Polka (Dirgo)," "Nola," "La Rosita," "Gigue (Godard)," "Flight of the Bumble Bee," "Poor Butterfly," "Clavelitos," and "Waitin' at the Gate for Katy."

Each tune has much interest value due to the Parmentier treatment. The pops stylings range from ballads to rhythm, with an occasional touch of corn. The novelties, standards and light classics are played mostly straight, but with novel registration.

This is a collector's item guaranteed to conjure up nostalgia for the old timer and show the younger enthusiast what he missed. What a time that was — and C.A.J. can prove it!

The jacket notes are adequate, including an excellent photo of Dr. Parmentier at the 5 manual Kimball, Roxy Theatre, taken in 1927.

STAN KANN IN ST. LOUIS playing the Fox Theatre 4/36 Wurlitzer. MAS 2018 (stereo). Available at \$5.50 post-paid from Malar Productions, Box 3014, Glendale, Calif. 91201.

In order to fully appreciate the scope of Stan Kann's musicianship it is necessary to isolate the man from his music; the force of his personality, his ready wit, his story-telling talent, his mimickry and pantomime — these are

"turned on" all the time. Thus Stan's musical excellence may tend to be overshadowed, and that makes a recording a very effective method of separating the alter ego from the musician. No distractions.

The result is that the musician comes out much more distinctly than a live concert permits. On the record Stan is always master of the huge beast which he has played daily for many years.

The instrument is one of five designed, the first being the New York Paramount, others were for Fox luxury houses, four 36 rankers and one 37. It is not a "Crawford Special" as Malar's nutty jacket note writer misinforms us (the term is properly applied to the 4/20 Publix Wurlitzers for which JC prepared the stoplist). Only two of these 4/36's remain in their original theatres: the Detroit Fox has been recorded (as were the New York and San Francisco Fox installations before being removed) but this is a "first" for the St. Louis 4/36. And it's a good one.

If we have a complaint it's a technical one; the miking is on the intimate side and one rarely gets the feeling of spaciousness or the true size of the instrument as one does from the Tiny James and George Wright recordings of the San Francisco Fox 4/36 or the Ray Shelley, Reg Foort and Ed Gress recordings made on the Detroit Fox 4/36. Of course this is a minor beef which affects only the marches and novelties calling for a big organ sound; the ballads come through beautifully.



Stan Kann clowns for Malar's talent scout Helen Dell. — (Stufoto)

"It's Today" is a typical fast-paced console pusher-upper with an engaging melody line, interesting glock and post-horn punctuation and a fine Paramount-Publix closing fanfare. "Yesterday" is well phrased and provided with subtle registration. It also has some luscious "Gordon Kibbee" 9th chord harmony. The brass tops full combinations during "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang." The out-of-tune bar room piano is heard during "Deed I Do," which is taken in an easy swinging tempo on full combinations. "Sunrise, Sunset" is given a subtle ballad treatment with a touch of dialogue between color and solo reeds. Something is missing from Stan's version of Eric Coates' venerable "Knightsbridge March," perhaps too many shortcuts or omissions, or maybe the pickup didn't capture it in all its usually thrilling bigness. It seemed more effective when Stan played it in concert at the Los Angeles Wiltern recently.

But he's back solid with his brief but tasty version of "Mame." "If I Had You" is to us, one of the best efforts on the disc, a ballad with fine registration and phrasing. Get the wail of that solitary trumpet which appears late in the tune! "Galloping Comedians" is one of those repetitive novelties which is best heard as a fast run through; Stan doesn't waste much time on it, possibly because there's lush rhythm ballad coming up — "The Glory of Love." Lots of invention and variety in this treatment. "All the Things You are" is a perfect selection for Stan's way with ballads; softer combinations with some Glock icing and a luscious Tibia and Vox denouement. The closer is a full scale march, "Before the Parade Passes By." It features all the big brass and parade percussers, although the traps were nearly buried. No matter; the Kann "Karisma" brings it all home with good effect.

We must note a certain lack of variety in registration which may be linked to the miking complaint mentioned earlier. This may also account for the absence of differences in dynamic level between normally loud and softer combinations. The dynamic level is mostly constant.

The problems of miking a large organ in a huge theatre are many and complex and they have been overcome sufficiently to make this a thoroughly enjoyable recording. Stan sees to that despite technical headaches.



IRMA GLEN

— THE PLUG-IN CORNER —

MUSIC, ECOLOGY AND YOU. Irma Glen speaking and playing on an Allen Theatre model. Available by mail \$5.95 (add 5% sales tax in California) post-paid from Numinus Recordings, 1119 San Pasqual Valley Rd., Escondido, Calif. 92025.

This one is for the Irma Glen fans. Like the previous Glen disc reviewed in these columns it's a sermon with incidental music. The big plus for theatre organ fans is the beauty of the improvisation behind the voice. The Allen theatre organ's celested strings are especially effective in carrying the often exquisite passages. This time Miss Glen is on an ecology kick and her sermon is delivered in the vernacular of the day. It's nebulously religious and there's no bible pounding. Such titles as "Ecology's Song," "Soul Soaring," "Every Day is Earth Day" and "Song of the Sea" (all Glen originals) provide some key to the content.

LET ME TELL YOU 'BOUT MY SECOND BEST FRIEND. Byron Melcher playing a Thomas Organ. CR-E088 (stereo). Available at \$4.89 post-paid from Concert Recording, Box 531, Lynwood, Calif. 90262.

This one was apparently released to prove pipe organist Melcher could also do interesting things with one of his employer's instruments. Although he never indicates a serious moment during these takes, he succeeds admirably. For example there's "Blue Skies" played as a Hebrew folk dance (on a very flutey transistor), "Sonny Boy" on weeping Tibias, a "mod" "Nearness of You" featuring the syn-

thesized accordion, "Under Paris Skies" overwhelmed throughout by that overbearing automatic rhythm, a lowdown "Frankie and Johnny" (dirty playing is a Melcher specialty), a Mancini-like "Mr. Lucky" (which actually had Buddy Cole at the Hammond) and a pleasant "Deep Purple" with Melcherized variations. Plus enough more to total 12 tunes which make the most of the instrument's facilities. Oh yes, Byron's "first best friend" is not pipes but his wife, Margie. □



BOOK REVIEW

by Lloyd E. Klos

"Organ Voicing and Tuning: A Guide to Amateurs" 39 pages Vestal Press, 3533 Stratford Drive, Vestal, N.Y. 13850 \$2.00 postpaid.

There have been many owners of pipe organs who have probably wished that there were a reputable book of advice on the subjects of organ voicing and tuning.

Now there is available the very text they have been seeking. A reprint of an 1881 booklet which was published by J. Church & Co. has been put on the market by Harvey Roehl's Vestal Press.

As explained in its preface, "this little work was written by a practical organ maker, especially as a guide to amateurs, and to supply information needed by organists."

There are seven chapters: organ construction in brief; tools for voicing and tuning; pipe materials, pressure and pitch; voicing of metal pipes; voicing of flute work; pedal stops; description of and tuning of reed stops.

There are several illustrations including one of a wind pressure gauge with instructions on how to make one.

The booklet is of handy size so it will easily fit into a pocket. Though published thirty years before the advent of the theatre organ, the basic instruction on voicing and tuning should be of assistance to those requiring it for maintenance of their unit orchestras.