

the middle of a phrase must be made up of tone-deaf personnel. Its commercial obsessions make no provision for entertainment that relieves its audiences momentarily from the burdens of life. Its moments of beauty and fine craftsmanship are rare.

We will need to be aggressive in our efforts to keep theatre organ alive. Whenever one of our seasoned players dies and leaves his possessions to be scattered by unappreciative legatees, whenever song-slides are thrown out with the garbage and music libraries are left to crumble in garages, a part of the tradition dies. One of our most important immediate tasks is the education of television station programmers and operators. Their ignorance of the kind of theatre we represent is abysmal. □



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.

THE GOLDEN YEARS OF THEATRE ORGAN, Leonard MacClain playing four theatre organs. Four sides, stereo. Ralbar SDLP 6300. \$10.00 postpaid from Mobile Music Mart, Box 195, Abington, Pennsylvania 19001.

In our October 1972 issue we reviewed Leonard MacClain's "Fabulous Stanton Theatre Organ" LP. It caused a rash of "where can I get more



Leonard MacClain. A fine artist remembered.

MacClain?" inquiries so our followup is a two record set we somehow missed when it was first released a few years ago. In the interim we have lost Leonard and the four organs have been either moved, dismantled, stored or scrapped and sold for parts. The only one now playing is the 4/22 Wurlitzer from the Rochester, N.Y. Palace, now in the Rochester Auditorium Theatre.

Five offbeat selections are heard on each instrument. On the Stanton (Baltimore) 3/31 Kimball it's "A Lovely Day Tomorrow", "Tell Me", "Indian Summer", "Through the Years", and a particularly lovely reading of a selection usually heard as a vocal solo because it's message is in the words; to anyone who has ever heard Campbell-Tipton's "A Spirit Flower" sung, Leonard MacClain's reading will hit with impact.

On the 4/18 Marr & Colton in Buffalo's Roosevelt Theatre, Leonard plays "I Could Write a Book", "Try a Little Tenderness", "Never on Sunday", "Call Me Irresponsible" and "I Got it Bad".

On the 3/19 Moller in the Sedge-wick Theatre (Philadelphia), Leonard offers "The World is Mine Tonight", "I Can't Begin to Tell You", "I'll Always Be in Love With You", "Sweet and Lovely", "By the Bend in the River" and "Toy Soldier March".

On side 4 Leonard plays the then 4/21 Wurlitzer in the RKO Palace (Rochester), offering such selections as "The Touch of Your Hand", "Darling, Je Vous Aime Beaucoup", "Stay as Sweet as You Are", "When You're a

Long, Long Way from Home" and "Little White Lies".

It's easy for a veteran organ fan to assume "everyone knows about Leonard MacClain," but that isn't true. Therefore, we recommend to newcomers to the hobby to get to know the artistry of this great man of the theatre organ through this fine record set, probably the most monumental of "Melody Mac's" long recording career.

Recording quality is good throughout and it's interesting to compare the four brands of organ from these representative examples as played by a master.

This set was originally equipped with an elaborate jacket, but the supply may be exhausted by the time orders are placed. We have been assured that sets sold minus jackets will be accompanied by a reprint of the 1963 THEATRE ORGAN biography of the artist plus a photo of Mr. MacClain. This is a closeout and not too many sets remain. It may be a last opportunity to hear some of the best work of a fine theatre organist.

SALUTE TO AMERICA, Lloyd del Castillo at the Giant Wurlitzer - Stereo. Available at \$5.00 postpaid from Castle Services, 229 Kenter, Los Angeles, Calif. 90049

For \$1.00 more Del will include a copy of his normally \$2.00 "Alphabetical Primer of Organ Stops," a whimsical, irreverent and delightful listing of organ voices as he sees, hears and embellishes them. Not for the humorless nor purists. Rated "G."

The organist explains the makeup of this recording as his desire to say something good about America at a time when so many people are panning it. Whether or not such a theme is timely in view of the fact that a portion of America, namely the United States, has so recently been divided into "doves" and "hawks", is something only record sales can decide. No one would deny that "America the Beautiful", Victor Herbert's "American Fantasy" and Gershwin's "Of Thee I Sing" are admirable Americana, and Del's presentation of these is tops. Yet, of the 22 titles more than half are war-associated or military-oriented to various degrees. We can't help but



Lloyd del Castillo gives cheers for the red, white and blue.

wonder whether the inclusion of so much military music will help or hinder Del's effort to "say something good" in the somewhat harsh light of today. Perhaps a followup might include Ernest Schelling's "Victory Ball Fantasy" for balance.

Despite philosophical questions concerning the content, the treatments are a joy. No tricky nor obscure use of harmony or rhythm cloud Del's straightforward statements of the basic melodies, and only a couple of unfortunate schmear glissandos give away Del's many years of honking an electronic. But long before that there was a brilliant career in silent film cueing in New England, followed by Hollywood radio and TV studio staff work as a composer, orchestrator and conductor. Not bad for a lad whose formal education stopped when he graduated from Harvard!

All the expected titles are present: "Star Spangled Banner", "American Patrol", "God Bless America", "You're a Grand Old Flag", "I'm a Yankee Doodle Dandy", "You're in the Army Now", "The Caissons", "Air Corps March", "Anchors Aweigh", "Marines' Hymn" and a rousing "National Emblem" which once more has the monkey wrapping his tail around the flagpole.

Less frequently heard are "Over There", "Keep the Home Fires Burning", "Til We Meet Again", "Pack Up Your Troubles", "My Buddy", "Mademoiselle from Armentieres" (re-

calling all those gamy WWI verses now heard only in Legion halls), "Wintergreen for President," "Love is Sweeping the Country" and "American Fantasy" which is a medley of such folk tunes as "Swanee River", "Dixie" (on Honky Tonk piano, yet), "The Girl I Left Behind Me", "Columbia the Gem of the Ocean" and "My Country 'tis of Thee".

Registration is brisk and uncomplicated with lots of use made of drums, orchestra bells, xylophone and other percussions. In brief its pure old-time theatre organ with treatments bound to please the veteran organ fan.

The instrument is that remarkable mostly Wurlitzer 3/22 installed in Joe Koons' cycle shop in Long Beach, Calif. It has the sound of a studio organ, with close miking and very little audible effort to reverberate it artificially into a "cathedral" sound.

- THE PLUG-IN CORNER -

REX KOURY MEETS THE RODGERS STYLE 260 SPECIAL THEATRE ORGAN. CR-E126, Stereo. Available Postage paid for \$5.50 from Koury Productions, 630 Robinhood Drive, No. 1, Reno, Nevada 89502.

It is said that a good organ will reflect the personality and musical prowess of its players. If that is true, the Rodgers in Bob Power's Camarillo (Calif.) home qualifies. To date this very special instrument (designed from the tonal specification and console layout of a Wurlitzer style 260) has been recorded by Lyn Larsen, Larry Vannucci and now Rex Koury. All three have contrasting ways of expressing themselves musically, and all found the means of personal expression in this superb instrument. It is as adaptable to the subtle reed-bright style of Rex Koury as it was to the sweeping, big organ style of Lyn Larsen or the swing band era offerings of "the Vanooch."

Rex Koury offers a varied list of selections devoid of overdone chestnuts. Treatments are individual; there is no apparent "Rex Koury Style." He presents each selection in the style which shows it off best, a result of his many years of orchestrating for Hollywood radio and TV shows. Note the lush Tuba in his own "Silent Treatment," and the happy lilt of "Falling in Love with Love," the varied regis-

tration in "A Little Street Where Old Friends Meet" (those mordants!), and the various horns and trumpets he conjures for a percussion-flecked "Toy Trumpet." "Moonlight in Vermont," "I Will Wait for You," and a fine jazz treatment of "Foggy Day." All illustrate the Koury preference for both ensemble and solo reeds, but never to the neglect of the other tonal families. The remaining selections are "They Call the Wind Maria," "Pieces of Dreams," "The Girl Next Door" and "Spanish Eyes," all equally well orchestrated, and in generous proportions (only two of the eleven selections run less than three minutes).

Miking is better than for the Larsen disc but not as good as for the Vannucci recording, the "big sound" having been sacrificed for the "presence" of a close pickup. In a way this enhances the Koury instrumentation by catching it in closeup perspective, but it makes the organ sound small. On our review copy the record labels were reversed. Rex Koury's artistry overrides such minor flaws.

TAKE BACK YOUR HEART, I ORDERED LIVER, Ed May and (daughter) Carol, organ duo (plus vocals by Carol). Available postpaid at \$5.00 from CEM Recordings, 893 N.E. 82nd Street, Miami, Florida, 33138.

Here's another golden era veteran heard from and he's aided and abetted by his daughter, as heard during their organ duo act which plays such posh clubs as Deauville's (Florida) Cyrano Lounge. Eddie May is a well remembered name among TO enthusiasts with long memories. We recall him from vaudeville days when he played central New York state theatres. Details of his memorable career were chronicled by Lloyd Klos in the Summer 1966 issue of this publication. It is well worth rereading. Ed, now 70, has always remained with music, come talkies, depressions, wars, plug-ins and more than 3,000 (count 'em!) private students.

One of the nicest qualities about Ed May is his refusal to take life or himself too seriously (e.g. the title of this platter). Despite his many years of music making he considers the highlight of his career being photographed with Leo the Lion (both in the cage). Neither got bitten. This light-hearted philosophy is carried over into the



Eddie May

performance recorded. Ed and Carol aren't out to astound, but rather to entertain. On side 1, Ed and Carol offer duets in theatre organ intermission style, playing plug-ins (brands not revealed) and a single note instrument not unlike a Solovox. Playing is warm and unspectacular easy listening. No surprises but attractive versions of "Hey Look Me Over," "Five Foot Two," "Indian Love Call," "Rose Marie," Ed's "Y.O.U. March," "Twilight Time," "Cherry Pink," and "Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone".

Side 2 consists of six vocals by Carol accompanied by dad, which we will not discuss individually in view of



Carol May

our organ commitment. As a vocalist Carol is a "belter", not too much concerned with pitch nor melody line, but strong on personality projection. She probably makes a smashing personal appearance under the nightclub spotlight.

Recording is technically okay, although there's a higher than average surface hiss on the pressing which we reviewed. Whimsical jacket notes by Ed express some of his lighthearted philosophy but more of his history, the order for liver notwithstanding.

ONE IN A MILLION, Bill Million playing the Conn model 650. CR-CR06-S stereo. Available at \$5.50 postpaid from Bill Million, 1895 Stonesgate, Westlake Village, Calif.

Bill Million is a young midwestern (Lafayette, Indiana) musician who sought and found his niche on the west coast where he has become one of the most sought after musical entertainers on the Southern California saloon circuit. Bill was influenced at an early age by the theatre organ and he has developed a style of playing which combines that style with the spinoff sometimes called "night-club style" with traces of what has become known as "hammondry" showing through the more subtle theatrical playing.

The instrument is Conn's largest horse-shoe model, the 3-manual 650, with a third manual devoted especially to emphasis brass. Otherwise it's a transistor model of its predecessor, the two-manual 645, but minus that model's Tierce and Celeste effect. It also confines the fine Conn Vox Humana (still the best electronic simulation) to the middle manual, a voice available on all manuals of the spinet 580 and standard 2-decker 643. For all that, it's a formidable instrument in Bill Million's hands.

Bill offers a theatrical beguine treatment of "Serenata" with rhythm marked by the "clacker", a solid beat "Satin Doll," an inspiring "Climb Every Mountain" with the aforementioned Vox much in evidence, the best "You Didn't Have to Say You Love Me" since the late Johnny Duffy's (note the "phantom piano"), an upbeat "You're Just in Love" (which suffers in spots from too much 5th content in the registration), a languorous "Tiny Bubbles" and "Pearly Shells," the most appealing "Here's

That Rainy Day" since Lyn Larsen's; a "Valentino" tango, "Inspiration," a very subtle presentation of "Somewhere" (from *West Side Story*) featuring the Vox and off-mike piano, and a restrained but lively "76 Trombones" with percussors kept in the background. All tunes mentioned so far have been given a generally "theatre organ" presentation.

Now let us examine two selections which fall short, from the theatrical viewpoint, for reasons of unsatisfactory registration. "Edelweiss" and "Somewhere My Love" both employ a non-organ effect that has all the subtlety of tuned outboard motors putting chopped Tibia chords. The effect sounds like a faulty electronic



Bill Million

circuit "motor-boating" and has no place on a product merchandised as a theatre organ. Shame on Conn for its mimicry of cheapie builders who introduced the "regurgitational palpator" (probably marked "Repeat" on the stopkey). It is used only briefly but leaves a sour taste. And, Bill, you shoulda known better, although your cocktail lounge fans may be intrigued. They buy records too.

Outside of those two selections, the tunes are very satisfying. Bill's musicianship is impeccable. His rhythm, phrasing, tempos and general "feel" for theatrical stylings leave little to be desired. Best of all it's one of those records which sound better with each playing, with the exceptions noted. It shows off the Conn organ's theatre organ similarities much more effectively than George Wright's "The Sound of Conn" demo record listed in our last issue, especially in view of George's minimal theatrical playing thereon.