



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.

A KING AND THE QUEEN, Simon Wright playing the 5/64 Cavaille-Coll concert organ in Manchester Town Hall and Gerald Shaw at the Manchester Odeon Theatre 4/20 Wurlitzer. Acorn label No. CF 220 (stereo). Available by air mail from the Lancastrian Theatre Organ Trust at \$7.20. Checks on US banks are accepted and should be made out to the Trust (as above) and sent to Mr. Cyril Castle, 66 Athlone Avenue, Astley Bridge, Bolton, Lancs., BL1 6RA, England.

Alas, inflation and devaluation of US currency have forced the Trust to increase prices on exports to the USA, thus the \$7.20 tag on this deluxe limited edition record. The "Double Touch" and "Side By Side" albums we reviewed earlier are now available at \$6.40 postpaid.

Roughly one half of the music heard on this disc is played on a theatre organ. Yet the classical "King" instrument will also be of interest to theatre organ fans; its builder, Cavaille-Coll, represents the finest in romantic French organ building in the period just before Hope-Jones entered the scene. It has been stated that Hope-Jones often built on foundations laid by Cavaille-Coll.

Simon Wright is a young (21) Eng-

lish classical organist who isn't afraid to tackle difficult selections. He handles big fistfulls of chord clusters (played against rumbling but agile pedal patterns) as easily as the simple melodies. Outside of Mulet's "Carillon Sortie," Wright's selections will be unfamiliar to most US theatre organ-oriented ears, but nevertheless fascinating: Whitlock's morose "Folk Tune," "A Fancy" by Harris, a bombastic modern "Ite Missa Est" by Roger Nichols and Choveauz' regal "March in A" (this last played on the Odeon Manchester Wurlitzer which Wright makes sound like a straight organ). Performance is tops but we have some doubts that the material will cut much ice with US fans.

The other side of the disc is something else. The "Queen" is the Manchester Odeon 4/20 Wurlitzer and it is played by veteran Gerald Shaw, London's last "full time" theatre organist who may be heard daily at the Leicester Square Odeon's 5-deck Compton. Record collectors will recall Shaw's brilliant performance at the Compton released by Concert Recording a few years ago. With the exception of one tune, Shaw's program is mainly semi-classics: Curzon's majestic "March of the Bowmen" (effective brass), "Claire de Lune" (color reeds and Tibia), a progressively exciting "In The Hall of the Mountain King," Scott's whimsically meandering "Dance Negre," Kreisler's "Caprice Viennois" (very correct but not spirited), Rawicz' fast-moving "Spinning Wheel" (not the pop tune), and "Hot Dog" by Clair.

All are meticulously played with a little more restraint than one might expect from Shaw — all but the final selection. "Hot Dog" is played on the ancient 64-rank Cavaille-Coll with uninhibited exuberance and a driving beat. Naturally the performance invites comparison with the recently exhumed performance of "Hot Dog" played 40 years ago by Sidney Torch on the Christie 4/36 in the Marble Arch Regal Cinema (Doric DO(s) 1212). Torch had the advantage of the orchestral facilities required by such a novelty tune and his glissandos are a little neater. Otherwise, Gerald Shaw's version is right up there with the Torch performance. The surprise is that the ancient Cavaille-Coll responds so effectively to the 1920's pop novelty style. "Hot Dog" is a gasser, easily the most exciting selection on the disc

for the T.O. fan and a huge plus for both Shaw and the builder.

Recording is good throughout. The elaborate "book format" jacket offers photos of instruments and artists, and stoplists for both organs.

The Lancastrian Theatre Organ Trust is a non-profit organization. Earnings from the sale of records are invested in the rescue and preservation of remaining theatre organs in Great Britain. A most worthy cause.

SHIRLEY! Shirley Hannum playing the Carson 3/26 studio Wurlitzer. MAS-2021 stereo. \$5.50 postpaid from Malar Productions, Box 3104, Glendale, Calif. 91201.

Easterner Shirley Hannum made a solidly plus impression during her January concert at the LA Wiltern Theatre. Until then, few westerners had even heard her name. But those who attended her LA concert, probably expecting little from an unfamiliar artist, were pleasantly surprised and perhaps somewhat jolted to find such profound musicianship in such an unaffected miss. This recording captures the artistry of Shirley Hannum effectively. It should do much to enlarge her circle of fans.

The organ is the familiar 3/26 former CBS studio Wurlitzer, one of three designed for top tone quality in a situation where volume is not a factor. The result is one of the finest studio installations. Shirley handles it on this disc as though she had been playing it for years.

The opener is a rousing "Lucky Day" played in console-raising style with just a hint of 4-leaf clovers. "Smile Away That Rainy Day" displays a gentle beat and a Tibia Piccolo melody line which broadens to a fuller combination for the second chorus. "Moonlight in Vermont" suggests the brittle crunch of newly fallen snow underfoot and brisk winter air with its mix of pitched percussions (e.g. Vibraharp) and color reeds. "Baby's Birthday Party" is a typical rhythmic novelty tune from the early '30s with both "then" and "now" treatments. Shirley says her "Don't Blame Me" reflects ideas garnered from her teacher, the late Leonard MacClain. But "Melody Mac" must have been listening to Crawford recordings just before that particular lesson because the characteristic Tibia harmony and mordants of the Poet are much in evidence.



Shirley Hannum. A rendezvous with the Carson Wurlitzer paid off.

Shirley performs them beautifully, then goes on to add her own touch to the nostalgic ballad.

Side 2 opens with the current plea for recognition of the individual, "I Gotta Be Me." Then comes the brooding "Godfather Love Theme." Shirley conjures up a ghostly off-mike mandolin effect via the reiterating Marimba for a touch of Neapolitan atmosphere. "Nola" is given the light touch, almost flippant, and Shirley kicks up her heels with some melodic variations the second time around. Lots of registration variety here.

Probably only those familiar with Wagner's romantic opera, "Tristan and Isolde," will get the full impact from "Liebestod," Shirley's one bow to the classics on this disc. It's enough to state that her treatment has much greater emotional impact than the one recorded by Virgil Fox on the Wanamaker store organ (but how she could have used some of the Wanamaker store organ's strings!). Shirley's treatment is just plain sexy, which is exactly the way the composer intended it.

"I Can't Believe That You're in Love With Me" with a definite beat wipes away any lingering romantic thoughts from "Liebestod" (which should have been the closer). "Can't Believe" is given a lilting '20s treatment with hints of Crawford here and there. Shirley's closer is a tune that has become something of a trademark with her (and perhaps an unintentional slam at Womens' Lib), "I Enjoy Being a Girl," which rates an upbeat packaging

in an alluring arrangement. It's a good closer but the statement is superfluous; we knew that by the close of "Liebestod."

Some arrangements are not without what some listeners may consider a minor fault; Shirley seems to have an attachment to a phrase-end filler originally used by Crawford. It is heard several times during these selections. But the over-all freshness of style, crisp attack and orchestral registration outweigh any reservations. Shirley has something good to say and she says it musically.

Dick Stoney's miking makes the music come alive. Our review pressing has an especially quiet surface, a quality which makes the Dolby noise reduction system all the more effective. And for this disc, Malar's usually nutty jacket note writer has a stand in who reveals his identity.

THE CLASSIC ORGAN BACH ON THE BRUCKNER ORGAN IN LINZ CATHEDRAL, played by Kurt Rapf. Klavier label (stereo) No. KS-502. Available at \$5.95 postpaid from Klavier Record Co., 5652, Willowcrest Avenue, North Hollywood, Calif. 91601.

From time to time we hear a straight organ recording we feel will be of interest to those whose principal interest is the theatre instrument. In view of the recurring controversy over "baroque" and "romantic" concert organs, here's an instrument with voices to please both schools of thought. It's a 3/119 straight organ with plenty of foundation and enough articulation to give an "edge" to the more thinly registered contrapuntal passages but not so much that it sounds like percussions. Full combinations exhibit plenty of "upper-work" brilliance.

The selections are "Toccata and Fugue in D Minor," "Passacaglia in C

Minor," "Prelude and Fugue in C Major" and four choral preludes which provide absorbing examples of the musical forms with which Bach worked, most of which he originated. Kurt Rapf plays the difficult works with much attention to detail. His performance is meticulous, authentic and a little warmer than one normally gets from our homegrown Bach exponents.

Recording is good. The music has been "miked" to take full advantage of the live church acoustics without definition to be lost in excessive reverberation. For the light music enthusiast who now and then feels the need for the heavy stuff, who fills the bill better than Bach?

— THE PLUG-IN CORNER —

THEATRE ORGAN ENCORES, Volume III, Peter Dumser playing a Gulbransen "Rialto" electronic organ. Diapason label, No. 1918 (stereo). Available by mail from Peter F. Dumser, Ocean City, Maryland 21842. Price not stated.

Mr. Dumser's program consists of "Somewhere My Love," "Scotch and Soda," "Young at Heart," "Who's Fooling," "Cabaret," "Winchester Cathedral," "More," "Bye Bye Blues," "I Left My Heart in San Francisco," and "Satin Doll" — all hot items among aficionados of nightclub organ. Dumser treats his instrument with respect and some of his arrangements reflect theatre organ styling. Yet, the album title is misleading. Ten mostly current standards played on a plug-in might better be labelled "My Most Requested Tunes," or something similar.

Playing is clean and straightforward with full advantage taken on the instrument's facilities. Arrangements are uncluttered and counter melodies add color. The Rialto model

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consists of an excellent "Tibia" sound, a brassy "reed," pitched percussions, and a somewhat lacklustre "main." Therefore, the big flute sound is bound to dominate. Dumser handles his instrument's limitations expertly, relying on the "piano" effect, the wah-wah brass for riffs and a rather strident bell effect for variety. It adds up to generally pleasant listening.

Recording is good, with acoustic liveness achieved through reverb/echo. Our review copy was enough "off center" on both sides to put a noticeable "wow" in untrem'd percussions. We are informed that Volumes I and II of this series are available.

* * *

We have been asked what is meant by the term "off center" with regard to recordings. To state it simply this condition occurs when the spindle hole is not precisely in the center of the pressing with relation to the grooves, normally the result of careless presser operation — and, ultimately, poor quality control inspection. The off center flaw is usually heard as a pitch variation, or "wow," on sustained tones, especially during sustained percussion sounds. It is more evident on tones nearer the center of the pressings but on especially bad pressings it may be noted on the outside cuts as well. "Wow" is usually visible, too. If there is an audible pitch variation with each rotation of the table, look for a side-to-side swing of the pickup cartridge. We have measured a swing of up to 3/32" per revolution, resulting in a very marked "wow". However, as a rule of thumb, any visible side-to-side excursion of the stylus indicates the pressing is faulty and should be returned to the vendor for replacement. Sometimes the wow is not visible, only audible. Same procedure.

Vertical movement of the pickup head indicates a warped pressing. While this doesn't normally result in audible wow, it often causes distortion and early record wear. Send it back.

Returning the pressing may result in a replacement with precisely the same flaw, because the presser may have stamped out a large number of off-center pressings before discovering the defect. Sometimes it is necessary to return a pressing several times before receiving one free of audible wow.

Happily, off center pressings are

not the rule. Most vendors' quality control departments catch the faulty discs before they are sealed and delivered. Records sent to us for review are often received with the plastic seals broken, which indicates the pressings have been individually auditioned before shipment, a procedure we heartily approve.

Off center pressings occur most frequently among smaller sound processors but RCA, Columbia and Capitol have produced their share of "wobblers." However, no presser, vendor or artist wants a flawed record to mar his escutcheon; all of them we have consulted with are only too willing to replace imperfect pressings. So, if they wow, or are warped, send 'em back for replacements. □



Letters to the Editor concerning all aspects of the theatre organ hobby are encouraged. Send them to the editor concerned. Unless it's stated clearly on the letter "not for publication," the editors feel free to reproduce it, in whole or part.

*Address: P.O. Box 1314
Salinas, Calif. 93901*

Dear Editor:

I am writing in regard to the story about John DeMello (October, 1972 issue, THEATRE ORGAN) by Alice Blue and Stu Green. To be sure, the story and the pictures were interesting and gave John credit that he has long deserved; as Alice Blue mentioned, it has been John that has kept the theatre organ alive in Honolulu.

However, I wish to point out several errors, both implicit and explicit, that were evident in the biography. Please bear with me if they seem to be trivial.

The organ in the Kaimuki Theatre was a 3/14, NOT a 3/10. The organs in the Princess and Hawaii Theatres were

4/16's, NOT 4/17's. The Japanese word for tidal wave is "tsunami", NOT "tatsumi". The Princess Theatre was destroyed in 1969, NOT in the mid-sixties. Help on the organ's re-installation was NOT "soon forthcoming" from ATOS, as the Hawaii Theatre Organ Club did not affiliate with ATOS until 1971. The help came from a few members of HTOC. They had not entirely neglected the organ either, as they had been trying to arrange for the organ to be rebuilt before re-installation, and its possible installation in a pizza parlor. Without arguing the pros and cons of pizza parlors, suffice it to say that Alice despised the idea, and hurriedly got the instrument into the theatre as-is. The price is now being paid for that haste — endless attention to things that should have been re-done once and for all.

As for implicit errors, the tidal wave of 1946 was not mentioned, with the resulting implication that John DeMello played in Hilo from 1940 to 1960. He was actually there only half that time. Also, the caption on Alice Blue's picture implies that there would have been no biography of John otherwise, though that is far from true. While the story was good in terms of what it did say, much was omitted, though perhaps of necessity.

After all, THEATRE ORGAN is a chronicle, albeit belated, of theatres, theatre organs, and theatre organists, and will be used as a reference in years to come. Shouldn't we take care — as well as pride — in its contents?

My congratulations to you and your staff for your fine work. That I cannot discredit.

Sincerely yours,
Roger G. Angell

