

when one is playing a small organ. Use only a few stops for most of the program. Then, when you open up later, the audience will feel a "big" sound. A respectable program may be done on even a five-ranker, but it requires special concentration by playing in different keys and tempos to make the few stops hold interest until the moments when you can use the weak full organ and make it actually sound impressive.

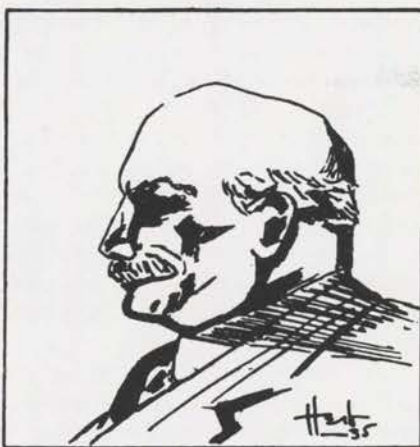
The key-word here is obviously *relativity*. You can make a small organ sound big by holding it in check and letting it roar infrequently. You can make a big organ sound harsh and noisy through over-play. You can't afford to let the instrument intoxicate or master you into a public indulgence of mawkishness or exuberance. You have to show it who's boss — all the time. □



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 ART OF FIRMIN SWINNEN AT LONGWOOD GARDENS. Available at \$5.95 postpaid from Swinnen Art, 1907 Veale Road, Wilmington, Delaware 19810.

Firmin Swinnen is best remembered as the organist at the Longwood Gardens estate of Pierre Dupont at Kennett Square, Penna., where he spent nearly half of his long life (87 years) playing for the gunpowder



Swinnen

magnate, his friends and family, mostly on the 4/177 Aeolian organ installed on the grounds in 1929. Swinnen and his wife, Augusta, came to the USA in 1916 after their native Belgium had been overrun by the "Huns." He had been in New York only a week when he was hired by Samuel "Roxy" Rothafel to play a huge (3/56) Austin in the Broadway Rivoli. But it was later at the Rialto that he came more into the public eye with spectacular organ/orchestra show pieces, playing an Estey church organ (which was discarded for a Wurlitzer in 1925). In addition to solo work, Swinnen gained a name as a film accompanist. In the days before the widespread installation of sound effects on organs used in theatres, Swinnen used his pipework and a fertile imagination to conjure up such sounds as train wrecks, sneezes, traffic jams, and even uncorking a bottle — on an Estey yet! Actually he was somewhat out of place as a film accompanist; he was basically a skilled concert organist with a record of hundreds of recitals in Europe. As an immigrant he needed work and for a time he confined his effort to cueing films and doing it well. His last theatre job was at the Philadelphia Aldine in 1923, where he quit to take the job offered by DuPont. This proved to be his niche; his name as a concert organist grew among the DuPont circle of friends, and by occasional public recitals. Strangely, Swinnen was not interested in making commercial recordings but he allowed his friends with amateur equipment to make occasional cuts. This recording consists of an assortment of such tracks, all made between 1950 and 1969 when Swinnen was 84. The technical quality varies from fair to good and the

presence of considerable surface noise on some cuts indicates they were probably dubbed from acetate discs. Loud passages suffer most with a sometimes high distortion content.

However, the platter serves to provide a profile of the organist and an absorbing picture it is. From the first track, Swinnen establishes himself as a master of the romantic style orthodox organ. Some selections illustrate his flair for showmanship, especially the opener, his own improvisation, "Daybreak," with its off-mike percussions, lush Vox chorus and bright brass. Five of the selections are Swinnen originals. These provide the best representation of the organist's theatrical style. His Saint-Saens, Brahms, Dvorak and Schubert go strictly by the book and the instrumentation is usually austere, but the originals reveal a theatrical leaning despite the limitations of an orthodox organ, although we noted a few luscious crash cymbal liberties during "Eastern Romance" by Rimsky-Korsakoff. Among the classical renditions are Schubert's "Ave Maria," Dvorak's "Humoresque" (with T.O. registration) and Saint-Saens' "The Swan," all in the easy listening class and making no great demands on the player. However, the skills are showcased during Brahms' "Hungarian Dance No. 6" and moreso during Tchaikowsky's dramatic "March Slav," a real zinger. Playing is technically correct and the over-all renditions warm. Swinnen's originals include "Soir d'Automne," "March Talleyville," "Aria," and "Soir de Printemps," with "Daybreak" the most like silent movie accompaniment. The sound of the 7-division organ is often lush, despite its "straightness," but by no means theatrical. Some interesting solo reeds show up with pleasant regularity.

This sampling of the work of a

moving?

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**VI THOMPSON
THEATRE ORGAN
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classics-oriented organist with a feeling for showmanship is unique. If even rough comparisons can be made, the astute listener might find points of reference in some of the recorded work of Lynwood Farnam and Reginald Foort. This one is for the enthusiast who appreciates often inspired playing which makes itself felt despite the weak link of those \$59.98 recorders. Interesting jacket notes.

LYN LARSEN AT THE ORGAN LOFT, played on Larry Bray's 5/32 Wurlitzer in the Salt Lake City Organ Loft. PRS-01, stereo. Available at \$5.50 postpaid from P.I.P.E. Records, Box 2634, Riverside, Calif. 92506.



Lyn Larsen

The Organ Loft Wurlitzer hasn't been much in evidence in micro-grooves since the memorable series released by Warner Bros. Records in the early '60s starring the late Gus Farny. It's quite fitting that Lyn Larsen's first recorded venture for his new management/recording setup should be played on this magnificent instrument. Lyn maintains the high standards of musicianship which marked his previous efforts for the Malar and Essential labels. His selection of tunes, including a couple of originals, avoids the "usuals" and provides a framework for a variety of styles, from '20s jazz to the best organ rendition of Eric Coates' "Knightsbridge March" we've heard to date (we can hardly wait until Lyn discovers the same composers' "London Again" suite). Lyn's oldies include a bouncy "Doin' the Raccoon," "Swanee," "Taking a Chance on Love" and "I'll Take Romance." His originals are "Unfinished Dream" and "I Just Don't Under-

stand," tenderly registered ballads of considerable merit. Selections of current interest are "For Once in My Life" and "Dear World." One tune, "The White Dove," is followed by the words, "To Ruth." Only insiders would know that the selection is in memory of the late Ruth Carson, who as "Nora Peters" was Lyn's confidant and manager through the formative years of his career. Lyn feels the loss very keenly.

Larry Bray's miking is tops. Jacket notes are mostly factual data on the instrument which consists basically of the twin console 3/19 Staten Island Paramount Wurlitzer plus the 10-rank Wurlitzer from the Egyptian theatre in Ogden, Utah, and a few odds and ends Larry has added over the years, always with impeccable taste concerning the ensemble sound. The P.I.P.E. label is off to an excellent start with this release.

THIS IS KARL COLE, playing the 3/11 Wurlitzer formerly in B.F. Keith's Theatre, Syracuse, N.Y. ERS-1011, stereo. Available at \$5.00 postpaid from Essential Records, Box 3544, Glendale, Calif. 91201.

This reviewer has sometimes been accused of favoring the artist rather than the buyer. Objectivity is an almost impossible goal, tastes and preferences varying as they do from listener to listener — but we try. However, the following will be prejudiced, so be forewarned. Yet the leaning is not



Karl Cole



Carleton James — (Alvah Finch Photo)

toward the artist (as good as he is) but for the instrument; it's the organ we considered the best in town during those all important formative years. The memory of hearing Carleton James and Byron Severance play it for silent movies at Keith's Theatre as well as the daily A.M. broadcasts by Carleton, these long ago experiences are brought to mind on hearing Karl Cole's record. The Wurlitzer, now in the care of the Empire State Theatre and Musical Instrument Museum (ESTMIM), sounds better in its current NYS Fairgrounds home than it ever did in the theatre where its full impact was buried in remote chambers.

Most of Karl's selections would place him in the illustrious theatre organ past, tunes such as "Blue Skies," "Zing Went the Strings of my Heart," "Birth of the Blues" and "Strike Up the Band," but there is nothing dated about his treatments. Arrangements offer much variety in tempo and registration. Listeners with an acute sense of pitch will note that Karl rarely ventures away from the key of B (yes, B!). However, excitement in the arrangements offsets any monotony from lack of key changes. He makes the most of the instrument's exceptionally lovely Tibia and occasionally solos the fine Tuba. Registration gets a little thick at times but rarely for long stretches.

Karl is especially effective when playing bouncy jazz such as "Sweet Georgia Brown" but his ballad treatments (e.g. "Look for the Silver Lining") score heavily, also. He has been very successful in his home area during the past 10 years, teaching and playing club dates. Now he's hitting the concert trail and doing equally well. Most readers know about Karl's recent pinch hitting job for ailing Leon Berry for the Niagara Chapter. Later

he drew an audience of 1800 at the Rochester Auditorium Theatre for RTOS.

Karl is representative of the young talent which Essential Records is intent on promoting, just as the firm did for such artists as Lyn Larsen in the past. This platter indicates Essential has another budding winner. Other selections are "Charade," "I Got Rhythm," "Things I Love," "Love Me or Leave Me," "Lida Rose" and "Somebody Loves Me."

Tom Anderson's miking catches the full glory of a beloved instrument. There's often a wide variation in the volume level between tracks which probably occurred during dubbing but that doesn't mar the music.

THE PHANTOM OF THE ORGAN, ERIK AT THE MONSTER CATA-COMBS ORGAN. Available at \$6.50 (plus 5% sales tax for Californians) postpaid from Electric Lemon Record Co., 7001 Franklin Ave., Hollywood, Calif. 90028.

This one defies description. Played by a "mystery" organist on a huge but unidentified instrument, it tries for the mood of the unmasking scene from the classic *Phantom of the Opera*. The jacket notes by horror movie chronicler Forrest J. Ackerman add to the puzzlement by giving off a suspiciously fictitious odor.



Erik

"They're a lot of malarkey" stated Electric Lemon's "Veep," Verne Langdon, when we asked for a clarification. He added, "The Phantom (Erik) is still alive. He's 103 years old and we flew him to Hollywood to make this

recording. He is staying at Grauman's Chinese and does his shopping in broad daylight at the Hollywood Ranch Market where no one seems to notice him." Big help!

But we can believe the organist is pushing 104 when he plays such compositions as "The Devil's Love," "Depression," and "Dementia Macabre," all of which (plus three others) just happen to be originals by Verne Langdon who also produced the record. The music is for the silent movie enthusiast who likes to either prolong a horror scene or repeat it over and over. Most of the music consists of lengthy slow-moving dirges, "misereres" and "threnodies." Registration is usually on the bombastic side with a thunderous pedal — just what one would expect a well-schooled phantom to be playing on a musty old tracker deep in the Paris catacombs (winded, no doubt, by power from a water-wheel in an adjacent sewer). But how long can that mood be sustained? For maybe 28:00 minutes? If one is a dyed-in-the-gore horror film music fan, yes.

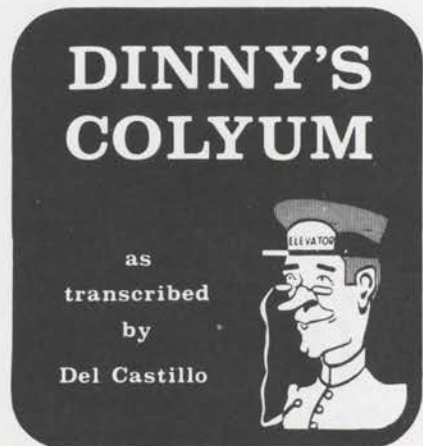
One 8:14 minute track breaks the music pattern by taking us on a sound effect trip to and under the Paris opera. We arrive in a horse-drawn carriage, then the buzz of voices in the lobby and the orchestra tuning up — then the chase: rapid footsteps in an echo chamber, dripping water, maniacal laughter, shots, splashes (catacombs always seem to have faulty plumbing) police whistles, a fist fight, splintering wood, creaking door opening, several uninspired screams and so on. Just improvise your own scenario.

Involved in the spoof is Electric Lemon's production chief, Milt Larsen, remembered for his still available "Smash Flops" album containing congratulatory songs for jobs well done to General Custer, Neville Chamberlain, Thomas Dewey, the Titanic and a Confederate victory song, among others. So this disc of elegiac trivia comes as no surprise. We can conceive an image of Milt and Verne with silly grins on their pans, conjuring up this 28:00 minute gag.

Trouble is, it's very apt to grow on one (like the "Blob"); for the second run through we turned up the volume of our reconverted Edison, installed a newly sharpened bamboo stylus, and allowed Erik's artistry, unhampered by polyphony, to crumple our asthmatic "woofers" and masticate the protesting

"tweeter." The mass of untrem'd minor chords piled up on one another to roof-raising climaxes. Yeeeeeay!!!!

When it was over and the last thunderous pedal grunt had died away we reached the conclusion that Erik's "style" was pretty much limited to what is in these grooves and we couldn't help but picture the consternation which might appear on that cadaverous visage should he find perhaps "Zing went the Strings of my Heart" on the rack of his cellar-bound 4-decker. But who cares? It's all in dirty, super-natural fun.



They is certainly a lot of different kinds of sounds comin out of organs than they was when I was a boy. The chief reason I remember about it is that I was a boy soprano in Boston in them days, and if they had ever been anything like a Pianny or Drums or Bells comin out of the organ in Emanuel Church where I sung the congregashun would of dropped dead of shock. I remember Mr. Hyde who was the quiremaster would oncet in a great wile cut loose with a couple chimes notes but mostly they was just that big full sound that I always got a kick out of in a church organ. I guess maybe they was a harp on the organ too, but I disremember ever a-hearin of it. I remember mostly how Mr. Hyde used to put on a pair of patent leather pumps to play the pedals better, and thats about as far as I ever got to knowin about a pump organ. Or about patent leather pumps, for that matter. I dont suppose you could even find a pair any more.

But then after I grew up was about the time theayter organs started to come in to play for the silent pitchers and we got to hear somethin entirely different. For one thing when the