

CENTURY II

EXHIBITION HALL PURE WURLITZER STARRING BILLY NALLE MONDAY 8 30 P M

WICHITA ENDS FIRST SEASON WITH NALLE SELLOUT!

by W. C. Pearce

A page was added to theatre organ history on June 18 when Billy Nalle played to a sellout crowd of over 2500 in Wichita, ending the first season concert series for the New York Paramount Wurlitzer in "her" new home in Wichita's Century II Civic Center.

Most of the hall is in a warm cream color. At the platform end, the area is framed by a Chinese red curtain and top skirt. Under that you see the stereo band of chambers which are constructed to jut out from the platform wall. The dark area under that is covered during concerts with dark blue velvet which beautifully frames the white and gold console. Purposely there is no stage, only a fully adequate platform area (with storage out of sight to the left for the console and to the right for the concert grand Steinway). This means no compromise to placement of chambers and egress of sound. The player at the console can hear *fully every* sound and hear it *fully* in perfect balance with all other sounds. The sound leaps directly into the big hall and there enjoys fine acoustics no matter where you sit. There is no compromise, no nonsense anywhere in this installation and the organ retains every bit of its fiber and ensemble and soul it had in New York. The only difference is that now it can be heard in even more direct fashion and is nothing short of hair-raising.

ABOVE: The big marquee of Century II Center sits on large pylons in the center of the square on the main side of the building. Downtown building and street lights can be seen a bit under it. — (Jed Closson Photo)

◀ Note the extra pistons and cancel buttons. There are 15 regular pistons for each manual plus ten pedal pistons under the accompaniment manual. As on all the largest Wurlitzers, the second touch of the great pistons affect the entire organ. — (Jack Ridley Photo)

OCTOBER, 1973



The new console is a dream with all the placement of stoptabs improved and unification far further and better than on the original one. You can reach and work on any interior part within seconds.

Nalle's playing was beyond all expectations. The return to the instrument that gave him his theatre organ career brought forth an excitement that must have been equalled only by his initial recording made in New York at the Paramount console. "She always sounded great," said Nalle, "but now she sounds hairraising."

Using all sixty pistons, Nalle wove an ever changing tapestry of sound. Always adding to the impact of the music, never distracting, is Nalle's mastery of registration. Few organists have his ear for perfectly balanced combinations; there never is an unnecessary stoptab in any of his combinations.

While he often is termed a jazz organist, the title is unfair. Such old standards as "Marie" and "Who?" (which he recorded originally on this organ) are jazz rooted, but to place Nalle in a narrow category is a mistake. Just as some of his playing could be termed jazz, parts could be termed broadly orchestral, as in the two Gershwin selections, "Fascinatin' Rhythm" and "Bess," "You Is My Woman," and the more recent "The Summer Knows." The playing included material as diverse as "Shen-

andoah," "Copenhagen" and two original compositions, one in the rock idiom, the other in a classical vein. The point is this: If you have not heard Billy Nalle *live*, then you have not heard Billy Nalle.

At the June 18 concert the series of Wurlitzer Pops was announced for the 1973-74 season. It will consist of three events, a concert by Bill Thomson, a

silent movie with Gaylord Carter and a concert by Virgil Fox. Season tickets include reserved seating at tables, Boston Pops style, and refreshments. Those desiring further information should contact Central Ticket Agency, Century II, 225 West Douglas Avenue, Wichita 67202. □



BOOK REVIEW

by Francis Hibbard


THE WURLITZER THEATRE ORGAN REVISED INSTALLATIONS LIST

By Judd Walton. Available through Doric Records, P.O. Box 605, Alamo, Calif. 94507. \$20 Postpaid in U.S. \$1 additional Canada, other countries \$2.

This recently released document is the culmination of over twenty years of research. It turned out to be far more than just a list of Wurlitzer pipe organ shipments. The author has correlated several different lists that are in existence together with factory

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The "Mother Wurlitzer" enjoys fine acoustics at Wichita's Century II exhibition hall.

