

unprepared organists. It was not merely envy that induced the low regard organists often received in musicians' union halls in the twenties. It was not ignorance or indifference or technical difficulty that prompted recording companies to keep small catalogs of organ records.

Very important is Miss Hagen's belief that the theatre should contribute to the spiritual life of the nation. Theatre organ music, too, should contribute to that spiritual life. Its best functions are to elevate, refresh, and inspire those who are closest

Mr. Muri's opinions expressed herein are his own and do not necessarily reflect the policies of ATOS or THEATRE ORGAN Magazine.

and dearest to us. National spirit (call it nationalism if you like) is not always chauvinism; it is sometimes a defense against subversion. Our task is to conserve and strengthen, not weaken or debilitate. As organists we daily help develop a world-view of our culture, and I kid you not, that's important. □



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.

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MUSIC FOR MAGICIANS, Verne Langdon playing "the Palace of Mystery Theatre Organ." No. PLP - 1913 (stereo). \$6.50 (plus sales tax where applicable) postpaid from Electric Lemon Record Co., 7001 Franklin Ave., Hollywood, Calif. 90028.

Here is a theatre organ used in a novel way. The composer/organist has conjured up a host of tunes to aid the professional (or amateur) magician in making his presentation more effective with an often esoteric musical accompaniment. Here is a theatre organ (size and location unspecified - apparently to heighten the aura of mystery) used quite differently. Verne Langdon is well equipped to handle the chore from the magician's standpoint; he is, in conspiracy with Milt Larsen, associated with the Magician's Club which meets at the obviously haunted Magic Castle, a brooding relic of another era which is perched on a hill overlooking Hollywood. On moonless nights it seems to provide its own luminescence. Verne has been heard previously as a wind merchant playing the "Circus Clown Calliope" release, and he produced the "Phantom of the Organ" record starring the diabolical "Erik," both by Electric Lemon. So, it

may be stated that Verne Langdon is "up to here" in musical oddities. This magician bit is probably his most ambitious effort to date. Unhindered by any customs, rules, or traditions connected with the production of a theatre organ recording, Verne proceeds to build a series of tone pictures suitable for "magic act" backgrounds, all being his own compositions. In the execution of his mysteriosos, fanfares, marches and macabre waltzes he often latches onto registration which obviously pleases him, so he continues it indefinitely. If there is a valid complaint regarding the arrangements it would probably be that there are not the frequent key and registration changes theatre organ buffs expect. And Verne is enamored of the key of A minor.

"Opening Fanfare" is preceded by a undulating gong crash of the calibre we haven't heard since Leon Berry's "Beast in the Basement" disc. The fanfare is an introduction to the magician, his beautiful assistant and the paraphernalia of magic which is seen on stage. "Dante's Inferno" is a full bodied waltz in the minor mode, marred by one horrendous "schmear," and played on full combinations. "Hypnotique" has oriental trappings which gives the organs drums a workout, plus a melody sometimes played in minor seconds!



"Pandora's Music Box" is played entirely on pitched percussions (Chrysoglott, Harp etc). It's billed as a "dream theme" and perhaps has the most charm of all these originals. "Dance of the Skeletons" alternates between the delicate and the energetic, with the reiterating Wood Block supplying the necessary rattle of skeletal terpsichore. "Thurston's Marvels" is a bright march which shows the magicians "on parade." The organist steps



Verne Langdon

to the grand piano for "Schwebethema fuer Princessin Irene", a somewhat Schuman-like lullaby which is a masterwork of piano recording — bright, but with depth perspective. Back to the organ for "Spirit Symphony" and the percussors carry the music for the first runthrough, then the pipes take over for a 3:53-minute seance in minor. For "Carnival of Souls", Verne does a spread-eagle, playing his right hand on his old friend, the Calliope, and all the rest on the organ, a not unpleasant mix. The "Closing Fanfare" hurries the performers off the stage with a majestic brassy cortege, another jarring "schmear" and a wham on that magnificent gong.

While this is not theatre organ music as such, it is played on a well-endowed theatre instrument by a musician who dares to be different, just as the recorded music of, say, Korla Pandit, Leon Berry, Paul Beaver and Barron Smith (on pipes) is different. It is not for everyone but it will find its fans, mostly among those with memories of vaudeville and its wonderful presdigitators. Recording is excellent.

MEMORIES OF THE FABULOUS FOX (VOL. IV), Everett Nourse and Tiny James playing the 4/36 Wurlitzer in the San Francisco Fox Theatre. No. DO 1406 (stereo). \$5.95 postpaid from Doric Records, Box 282, Monterey, Calif. 93940.

When the theatre closed its doors over 10 years ago, theatre buff/audiophile Frank Killinger felt the

same strong desire to "save the Fox" which caused San Franciscans to petition city officials to take the house for a civic auditorium. The efforts failed and the Fox, like so many other fine theatre auditoriums, was levelled. But not before Killinger had put in his bid toward perpetuating at least the memory of the lavishly decorated house by recording many reels of tape with Messrs Nourse and James at the console.

Over the years the music recorded in 1963 has been released on the Fantasy and Doric labels; three volumes of *Farewell to the Fox* with both artists participating, plus one solo album by Everett Nourse. All of the discs reflect careful miking to pick up the ensemble sound while still catching softer voices and percussions (e.g. Harp, Marimba) in closeup perspective. The result is an opportunity to hear the Fox organ like no one seated in the theatre ever heard it.



Tiny James

(Nascke Photo)



Everett Nourse

This latest, and last, Fox release maintains the same high technical standards set by its predecessors. The organists' work matches the technical quality. Both play in the lush, big organ style associated with theatre

intermissions, providing many changes of registration and tempo.

Everett Nourse's offerings are *Coquette*, *Love is a Many Splendored Thing*, *You Made Me Love You*, *Time Was*, *September in the Rain*, *I Aint Got Nobody* and *The Sheik*.

Tiny plays an enchanting 7½ minute medley of tunes from Lehar's *Merry Widow* score, plus Victor Herbert's *A Kiss in the Dark*, *The World is waiting for the Sunrise*, and *Linger Awhile*.

Whether one is completing a Fox record set or making initial auditory contact with a great organ in its original acoustical setting, *Memories* is a "must."

REX KOURY AT SAN SYLMAR, 3/25 Wurlitzer organ in the J.B. Nethercutt Museum, Sylmar, Calif. NCR-1124 (stereo). \$5.95 postpaid from Rex Koury Productions, Box 197, Steamboat, Nevada 89436.

This is Rex Koury's finest recording to date. This time he has located an exquisitely voiced organ with expression on percussions as well as on pipes, and the technical side is tops, too. This is the initial recording to be made on the San Sylmar organ and it lives up to all the expectations generated by many items and a recent feature article in this publication.

By now most of us are aware that the basic instrument, a style 260 Wurlitzer, was originally installed in the Atlanta Roxie theatre and moved west in 1967 when purchased by cosmetics magnate J.B. Nethercutt for his planned museum. The magic started when the instrument was turned over to organ builder Dick Villemin (Porterville, Calif.), who, with the aid of his able assistant Gordon Belt, enlarged it to 25 ranks and managed to maintain the instrument's integrity by judicious choice (and revoicing) of the added ranks. The result is any buff's dream organ. Of course it's loaded with such extras as a recording and playback computer which adds to the instrument's versatility in often constructive ways. This recording is a fair example; Rex noticed the organ was a bit out of tune when he was preparing for the recording session. No problem. He went ahead with the session anyway, and let the computer record his tunes on its tape — impulses only, no sound.

Then, a short time later, when the



Rex Koury and the San Sylmar console.

instrument had been tuned, the miking session was held and the sounds called out by the computer were put on tape. Rex didn't even have to be there — but he was. So, in effect you'll be hearing a concert played by a computer from tape impulses fathered by Rex Koury.

We have only one reservation concerning the sound of the instrument on this disc; to us the tremulant on the strings is a bit too wide to do them full justice. The complex string waveform is best served by a trem which just shimmers; here it sometimes seems on the edge of chopping. But that will be noted only by purists and doesn't reduce enjoyment of the music; the strings aren't that much in the spotlight.

Rex has selected a program of mostly "oldies" and his subtle arrangements bring out their best qualities. It's a selection which avoids over-recorded titles and his treatments often apply modern-sounding harmonizations to vintage tunes as well as to such current favorites as *Yesterday* *Once More*.

During a review of a previous Koury platter we remarked that Rex was especially fond of color reed

registration. He is here, too, but he also takes advantage of the fine Tibias and expressive percussions characteristic of this instrument, as well as the solo reeds. This is evident especially during *A Lovely Way to Spend an Evening*. The string intro to *Moonlight Becomes You* is a bit of *Claire d' Lune* and later the Tibias take over. But we couldn't possibly cover all the nuances and registration changes in a Rex Koury program, so we'll just list the remaining selections, each one being a gem: *Stairway to the Stars*, Chopin's *Waltz in C-Sharp Minor*, *East of the Sun*, Victor Young's *Love Letters*, *It's Impossible*, *As Long as He Needs Me*, *I Married an Angel* and *A Fine Romance*. Rex includes an original, a particularly appealing ballad, *Love Sonnet*, which brings out all that's lovely in the instrument's Tibias.

Our review pressing was slightly warped but not enough to throw the stylus or cause distortion in the music. As we have said many times, imperfect pressings of platters reviewed here are returnable for perfect ones. But one warped pressing isn't reason to declare the first release from San Sylmar other than a fine recording throughout.

THEATRE ORGAN and OTHER RECORDINGS by

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I'M ON MY WAY, Tony Fenelon playing the 3/15 Wurlitzer organ in the Dendy theatre, Melbourne, Australia. Festival label "Harlequin Series" No. L 25052. \$5.50 postpaid from Tom Lockwood, 19 Manor Dr., Rochester, N.Y. 14617.

Australian Tony Fenelon has been charming US audiences ever since his first concert tour here in 1969. His recordings have been more often good than otherwise, but we feel this one is his best yet, after comparison with three previous releases. It brings us a



Tony Fenelon (Harold Photo)

more mature Tony, more contemplative. There is still a now and then trace of the Lyn Larsen and George Wright influences, but mostly it's just Tony, and that's fine with us because what Tony says musically is usually laced with high interest value.

Apparently Tony was not thinking of export possibilities to the USA when he planned this platter because at least eight of the twelve selections are fine old "US of A" chestnuts which have hit US ears many times before, although not necessarily in better presentations. We've often wondered why overseas recording organists include usually a majority of US tunes on their biscuits, but we've never unearthed an answer. But the fact remains; foreign recording organists seem to prefer US selections — while we would like to hear the music of their tunesmiths. But we are digressing.

Not many of the US-originated tunes are in the "overcooked" class. For example, *I'm on My Way* from *Paint Your Wagon* (not *Porgy and Bess*) gets an upbeat treatment, as does *Cabaret*, including some "G.W." closing riffs. *Without a Song* is presented initially on spare reed solo combinations, while always moving patterns on the Concert Flute enhance the accompaniment. The the big, brash chorus with a gorgeous massed String ending. *Anything Goes* gets a "high kick" treatment with lots of registration coloring.

Others in the "USA" group include *Swanee*, *When You're Smiling*, *Try to Remember* and *Broadway Rhythm*, all played with plenty of pizzazz. *Man of La Mancha* hasn't sounded so good

since Bill Thomson featured it a few years ago. *Eriskay Love Lilt* is a lovely ballad and it finds Tony at his best. *Waltz in A-flat* (Brahms) features the Wurlitzer's piano. It's well played but a trifle overlong. But Tony's *Under the Double Eagle* march is the best rendition we've heard since George's Hi-Fi cut recorded nearly 20 years ago. And this one is without overdubbing.

Tony makes full use of the Wurlitzer's facilities, an instrument which has sounded especially good on records since the first residency at the Dendy of Lyn Larsen; he apparently did considerable balancing of voices.

The stereo recording is very good, and the surface is quiet. Side 2 of the review pressing was enough off center to cause "wow" when the near-center track was played. The jacket notes by Barry Sheehan provide background on the recording session and brief comments on the music.

— THE PLUG-IN CORNER —

ORGAN HITS BY LORETTA, Loretta Muralt Holstein playing the Gulbransen "Rialto" theatre organ, Monaural disc \$4.25 postpaid or stereo tape \$7.25 postpaid, from Loretta Holstein, 8710 SW O'Mara Street, Tigard, Oregon 97223.

The Gulbransen "Rialto" model was the first electronic organ which made a serious attempt to emulate the theatre pipe organ both in tonal qualities and appearance (the first electronic commercial model with a horseshoe console). Its chief claim to lasting fame is in its Tibia voice: although the "Rialto" model was discontinued long ago it has become a collectors' item because of that unsurpassed Tibia (Thomas admits trying to copy it for their 3-deck spinet). Not too many "Rialto" records were cut and they are becoming fewer and fewer. The playing is done by an attractive young lady with a "night club" style which smacks strongly of "Hammondry" but at the same time shows how effectively the "Rialto" bettered the "2/1" as a cocktail bar instrument.

While the "Rialto" is a Tibia-dominated organ, later speaker developments brought out reeds and string sounds which earlier ones played down. This Rialto sounds like a late model; reeds and strings are well defined.

Loretta goes through the inevitable

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"effects," notably a choo-choo train for "Orange Blossom Special," a whistling chorus for "Colonel Bogey" and his POW bridge builders, an almost convincing violin and marimba for "Melody of Love," tower chimes for "Get Me to the Church on Time," the surging sea and birds for "Ebb Tide," Glockenspiel and calliope for "Billboard March" and a grotesque, reedy "wah-wah" for "Getting to Know You." The effects are well integrated with the music and do not detract. Other tunes are "Do-Re-Mi," "Wonderbar," "Java," "Moonlight in Vermont," "Only You" (Viola with Harp accompaniment) and "Hey, Look Me Over." "Only You" is reminiscent of the beauty pageant theme, "Here She Is, Miss America."

Playing is clean, arrangements well conceived and considerable registration variety is in evidence. Ear-catching easy listening. □

ATOS LIBRARY MOVED

Lloyd Klos, chairman of the ATOS Historical Committee, announces that the ATOS Library has been moved to its permanent home in North Carolina. It is ready to serve the needs of the membership through the short-time loan of copies of material at moderate cost to ATOS chapters. Donations of music, cue sheets, scores, tapes, pictures, negatives, memorabilia may be made to:

Barry Simmons, Curator ATOS Library, Box 1021 Elon College, N. Carolina 27244.

Weekend of Music Coming in November

The Rochester Theatre Organ Society reminds all ATOS members of its "Weekend With the Wurlitzer," in observance of its Tenth Anniversary, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, November 1-3.

Festivities will begin on Friday evening with a 3-organist affair at the Auditorium Theatre, 875 Main St. E. David Peckham, 13-year-old Breesport, N.Y. organist, will present a half hour of music. He will be followed by Carleton James, Syracuse veteran theatre organist, who will accompany a silent newsreel and a short silent comedy. Luella Wickham, another veteran Syracuse organist, will wind up the evening with a half-hour of music.

On Saturday, Dennis James and the Singing Hoosiers will be featured in two concerts at the Auditorium at 2:30 and 8:15 P.M.

Sunday will feature Lawrence Welk's organist, Bob Ralston, in two concerts at the Auditorium Wurlitzer at 2:30 and 8:15 P.M.

There will be exhibits, socials and open console sessions on Saturday in locations within two miles of the Auditorium Theatre.

For those coming from out of town, the nearest hotel is the Colony East Inn at East Avenue and Alexander St. and is within 15 minutes' walking distance of the Auditorium. Within a two-mile radius are the Holiday Inn Downtown at 120 Main St. E., and the Nathaniel Rochester Motor Inn at 155 Broad St. E. All have parking facilities.

Additional information is obtainable by writing RTOS Weekend, Box 8114, Rochester, N.Y. 14617. □



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*

Your article in February 1974 THEATRE ORGAN concerning Shea's Hippodrome (see A Man - A Castle and A Wurlitzer) seems to have created some confusion as to my activities while in Toronto. I have received a number of letters from readers, especially in Canada, regarding this article.

Here are the facts:

In 1948 while organist of the Paramount, London, I accepted an offer to become Musical Director of Odeon Theatres Canada and to open the new Odeon Theatre in Toronto.

I had a Steinway grand in my home and an Ebbart grand in my dressing room at the Paramount. We sold the home but were unable to sell the grands so that the J. Arthur Rank organization shipped them along with my wife, two kids and a German shepherd dog to Toronto.

On arriving there I discovered that the Odeon had turned down a fine offer of a 4/22 Wurlitzer from Boston for \$2,000.00 (they were not about to have a used organ in a brand new theatre) so they paid \$33,000.00 for a rather limited Hillgreen-Lane.

I also found that the Musician's

