

Show in Idaho

Live theatre organ returns to Idaho. In the Gem State, where the number of theatre organs was quite small in comparison to other states, an original Robert Morton installation is still intact in the theatre, and a public concert has been scheduled for the instrument.

Gaylord Carter will present two shows Monday, April 21, 1975 on the 2 manual 8 rank instrument. The purpose of the shows is to raise money for the restoration of the organ, and to acquaint Boise residents with what they have to enjoy in theatre organ music in the "City of Trees."

The instrument was purchased December 31, 1974 by the Egyptian Foundation of Boise, a group of local businessmen, after it was put up for bids by its former owner, Plitt Inter-mountain Theatres. The organ occupies its original location in the Ada Theatre in Boise, formerly known as "The Egyptian." The theatre building is owned by the Boise Redevelopment Agency, and the building's future is unknown. However, the organ is welcome to stay within the building as long as it stands, and there is hope to preserve the theatre as a municipal auditorium.

Volunteers from Boise and Twin Falls, Idaho, have been restoring the organ. Some pipework, part of the toy counter, and all of the Chrysoglott bars were pilfered several years ago, and steps are being taken to try to replace these items. Also, water damage and general wear and tear on the instrument is being repaired. Things are looking up for theatre organ in Idaho. □

Silents in Buffalo

Who says the silent movies are dead? For the eighth year a Silent Movies series is running at the Buffalo Museum of Science. Dr. Charles W. Stein (charter member and early moving force behind the Niagara Frontier Chapter) has come up with an interesting 13 programs.

He's even found a silent serial "The Power God" made in 1925 starring Ben Wilson and Neva Gerber.

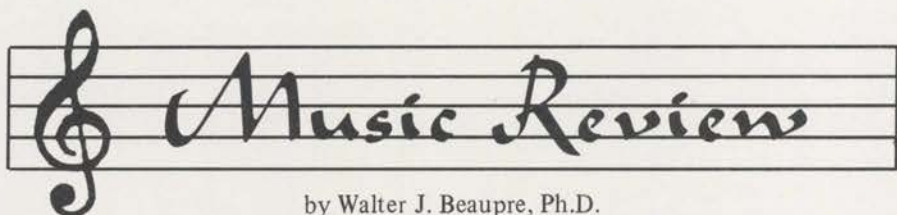
They're shown every other week at the museum with organ accompani-

ment (A new Allen) by the good Dr. Edward Bebko of Olean, a T.O. veteran, and Harvey Elsaesser, soloist for the Buffalo convention and in Rochester and Detroit.

The series began Oct. 19 with "The Lost World," 1925 with Wallace Beery, and Lewis Stone and will end April 18 and 19 with three Charlie Chaplins. In between you can see Douglas Fairbanks, Emil Jannings, Greta Garbo, Adolphe Menjou and of course Rudolph Valentino with Vilma Banky.

Interesting also is a series of

Revolutionary War films (a Bicentennial project) being shown at the Buffalo Historical Society. The first three in the series are silent films and are accompanied on the Society's Aeolian player organ (circa 1910 about 2 manual, 17 or so ranks) played by Harvey Elsaesser. Alas, after three weeks the movies are no longer silent. The silents by the way included an 1894 (?) "Paul Revere's Ride" filmed by Thomas Edison, "The Hessian Renegades" (1909) by D.W. Griffith, "Man without a Country" (1917), and "America" by Griffith (1924). □



by Walter J. Beaupre, Ph.D.

THE CADENCE COLLECTION OF PIANO CLASSICS: TRANSCRIBED FOR ORGAN, BY LEE ERWIN. CADENCE PUBLICATIONS, INC. 119 West 57th Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 (See advertising T.O. June 1974).

The publication in 1974 of *The Cadence Collection of Piano Classics: Transcribed for Organ* by Lee Erwin is an event worthy of celebration by THEATRE ORGAN readers, especially those who play their own pipes or electronics. Ironically, THEATRE ORGAN which has done an outstanding job of reviewing records and major concerts for many years has been curiously silent on the subject of printed music for theatre organ. I for one have never seen a printed word about those widely available transcriptions by Jesse Crawford, Dick Liebert, George Wright, Dave Coleman, Al Bollington, Ethel Smith and many others. Even Lee Erwin's "Overture to The Eagle" was ignored as printed organ literature in these pages — and the "Eagle" was composed expressly for theatre organ performance. All of which brings us back to his new *Cadence Collection*. How does the reader know if this is his cup of tea?

Perhaps if one reviewer points out what he sees as the merits and the drawbacks of the *Collection*, other potential buyers will be able to decide if this is music they should own. Granted, there are pitfalls for re-

viewing music *to be played* rather than music *already performed* on records. It's a whole new show! Obviously the reader should know something about the performing capabilities and "hang-ups" of the reviewer. This reviewer was raised on classical piano and took on the pipe organ as a teen-ager. He plays organ as a hobby and generally feels more comfortable playing his own arrangements of tunes than memorizing the transcriptions of better musicians who are professionals. But this same amateur organist learns a lot from struggling through the arrangements and transcriptions of the masters. Although he would never attempt to play the "Eagle" *in public*, he finds that playing through the "Eagle" *in private* gives him a far greater appreciation of both the composition and the performing composer. If that makes sense to you and if you can identify with the reviewer, then you will probably find his opinions helpful.

Eighteen of the twenty selections in the *Cadence Collection* are decidedly romantic and therefore grist for the theatre organ mill. The two non-romantic pieces are hardly worth quibbling about because both entered romanticism via the back door: the Mozart sonata movement later became *In An Eighteenth Century Drawing Room* (thanks to Raymond Scott) and the Bach prelude became *Ave Maria* before we were born (thanks to Charles Gounod).

Most of the selections have been printed as organ transcriptions before in other collections, but a few are hard to find nowadays and in my opinion are gorgeous surprises. Lee's transcriptions of MacDowell's *To A Water Lily* and Grieg's *Nocturne* are, in and of themselves, well worth the high price of the collection. If anything, these two are better as organ pieces than they are as piano compositions.

Debussy's *Clair de Lune* and *Reverie* and the Brahms' *Waltz* are readily available in other collections. Lee Erwin has changed the key of *Clair de Lune* from D^b to C major to make it fit the organ keyboard — but so have other transcribers. What makes Lee's transcription by far the best on the market is his faithful translation of the mood. He has skillfully redistributed the chords to accommodate the dynamics of the organ. True, you'll find some notes missing from the left hand accompaniment of the piano version, but don't be fooled. The loveliness of the original is still there — and so are the playing difficulties. This no "watered down" caricature of a masterpiece. Debussy's other entry *Reverie* has been easier to play in other organ transcriptions, but never more lush and full. The Brahms *Waltz* is also loaded with musical integrity and at least as good as the best transcriptions by other organists.

The *Collection* is heavy with Chopin — in my opinion too heavy. The most satisfying arrangements to play are the *Prelude in C Minor* and the *Prelude in A Major*. The chords are expertly distributed for organ dynamics. You'll need an AGO pedal-

board if you want to play the *Prelude in E Minor*, and you'll have to figure out your own pedal strategies. Lee gives no helpful right/left, heel/toe cues for any selections. The remaining Chopin selections were lovely on the piano. Perhaps that's where they belong. I found them tough to play and not very satisfying. But in fairness to the *Collection*, if you must have your Chopin on the organ, these are excellent transcriptions with absolutely no compromises. Lee has seen to that.

Of the four Beethoven entries I found *Fur Elise* the most satisfying and a pleasant surprise. It plays well, and the interplay of voices gives it a new dimension on the organ. Probably the most radical surgery in the *Collection* (the Lee Erwin equivalent to a heart transplant) was done on the *Moonlight Sonata*. Lee has simplified and heightened the melody line to allow the organ to sing — and sing it does. But the simplification tends to throw the amateur who knows the piece too well as a piano warhorse. Perhaps the musician whose "first language" is the organ won't be bothered by this. Beethoven's *Minuet in G* is fun to play but more tricky than one would suspect from glancing at the music. The same great composer's *Pathetique* is just as impossible to play on the organ as it is on the piano. Only the virtuosos and child prodigies will try the *Pathetique* more than once!

The easiest selections to play in the *Collection* are MacDowell's *To A Wild Rose* and Schumann's *Traumerei*. Try these two first when you get your copy and pay close attention to phrasing and expression markings. You'll like what you hear and you'll sound very professional.

The only piece in the entire *Collection* that I couldn't warm up to was the last, *Promenade* from Mousorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*. But unless you are a much better musician than the reviewer, the first nineteen will keep you so busy you'll never make it to page 88! There's a whale of a lot of beautiful music between the two handsome maroon covers.

The overall printing job is a joy: large, easy-to-read notes on crystal clear staves. If you're a member of the "bifocal set" — as I am — this is no small virtue! The suggested registrations are helpful and worked well on my home organ. Be sure to try

Lee's before you invent your own.

Only one feature really annoyed me as I went from one selection to another. The directions for expression switched from plain English to esoteric Italian. Lee, I'm with you all the way when you write "In a dreamy, swaying rhythm" or "The accompaniment very softly throughout" or "gradually increase and accelerate." But I come to a screeching halt when I turn the pages and find "Teneramente e grazioso" or "poco slentando" or (are you ready for this . . .) "Allegro giusto, nel modo russo; senza allegrezza, ma poco sostenuto." Very few theatre organ buffs carry around a pocket dictionary of 19th Century Italian musical terms, so watch that stuff!

For the moderately accomplished theatre organ amateur who would enjoy a musical change from the intricacies of *Granada*, *Dancing Tamborine*, or "Variations on Seventy-Six Trombones" I heartily recommend *The Cadence Collection*. It will give you hours of playing pleasure and some very special insights into beautiful music written for piano — but played by you on the organ. □



BOOK REVIEW

by Lloyd E. Klos

AT THE MIGHTY ORGAN, by Geoffrey Wyatt. Distributed by Vestal Press, Vestal, N.Y. 13850. 98 pages, 76 pictures and diagrams. Price: \$10 (N.Y. State residents add 7% sales tax).

For some time, there has been a need for a complete text about the British theatre organ scene, embodying its development, history, organists, and a list of remaining instruments. This need has been adequately met by Geoffrey Wyatt in his new book.

Excellently written, the work contains ten chapters: Origin of the Species, Early Days, The Golden Age, Stars of the Console, Musical Signatures, Decline and Fall, Organ Specifications, Organ Transplants, The Organ in the Parlor, and The Future.

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