



# Music Review

by Walter J. Beaupre, Ph.D.

**Lee Prater and Bill McMains, A PRIMER OF CINEMA ORGAN STYLING (Parts 1 & 2: Bass Clef Edition), Frank Music Affiliates, 166 Boylston Street, Boston, Mass. 02116. Price \$2.95 each.**

Lives there a home organist who wouldn't secretly give his (or her) right Tibia to sould like George, Rosa, Don, Millie, Jesse or Ethel? Of course, when we get right down to the ranks and manuals, it's really the theatre style we covet, not the specific talents of any one (ahem) organ-person. Just what is theatre style and why does it turn us on?

Lee Prater and Bill McMains in their *Primer of Cinema Organ Styling* have come along way towards showing and telling us both the *what* and the *why*. There are, as you probably guessed, two primers, and whoever buys one should get both to take advantage of the continuity of ideas which Lee and Bill develop.

Who should invest in these Primers? I would say anyone who can play comfortably from those typical "Pop Hits for All Organ" collections; anyone who has a two manual organ of sorts with at least an octave of pedal notes; and anyone who can truthfully say NO to the question "Wouldn't you really rather have a Dutch tracker positif?"

Having said "Yea" to all of the above conditions, I sat down at the console with Primer #1 and followed instructions. Prater and McMains waste no time getting down to essentials: "lush legato chords" with correct fingering for smooth movement of voices. Nothing is superfluous. The exercises become an intro for the piece *Barcarolle*. Registrations are specific and good. I did find that I had to play *Barcarolle* at a rather fast clip to keep the sustained voices from becoming an awkward bore. *Aura Lee* is next introduced to show on this and subsequent visits how an arrangement is built from scratch.

Finger substitutions and phrasing

tips get us ready for *Liebstraum* in duet-style harmony. Incidentally, your *Dream of Love* will be rudely shattered in the 8th measure if you don't repair the misprint (it should be the same A-seventh chord as in measure 7). All fixed? OK. Back to *Barcarolle* and *Aura Lee* to see how sustained chords with moving melody notes really work. They work well except that the inner voices in the *Barcarolle* still fight back at a slow tempo.

Onward and upward to open harmony. Here is where Lee and Bill do a beautiful job. The rewarding theatre sound during your playing of *Chouchoune* is a genuine thrill. More good stuff on pages 18-23 as they take you to basic Crawford glissandos. By the end of Part 1 you understand the Chicago style four beat accompaniment, right hand chords and open harmony. Except where noted, the trip was painless and never a drag. The advice on registering is a bit skimpy but certainly correct and solid as far as it goes.

The pictures and "titles" interspersed throughout the Primers are sly, witty, and in good adult taste. "How to..." books are rarely, if ever, this much fun.

On to Primer #2 where chords are broken down to form arpeggios. Again, the exercises are not wasted. You are being set up for a Prater, McMains, and Allen original called *Whistlin' The Blues Away* — a catchy tune with Chicago style bass which doesn't fall apart until the last two measures. Now if you can transfer what you've learned to *Swingin' Shepherd Blues* you'll have it made!

More good stuff in Primer 2 on glissandos, more good humor, — and it's on to block chords where the left hand duplicates the melody. And that, we learn, is where theatre styliness is at!

By this time *Barcarolle* and *Aura Lee* are really beginning to take shape. Two delightful encores,

*Andantino* and *Toyland*, bring it all together and show you how far you've come. The last "grim" page of advice in book two is as genuinely practical as it is hilarious. You'll have to take my word for it. I wouldn't dream of spoiling their fun.

Seriously, the content of these two Primers is very, very good instruction: clear, breezy and gutsy. You also have a right to know in advance what's missing. Nothing is said about the expression pedal and phrasing (the stuff Don Baker did so well in his workshops for Conn). Who knows? Maybe Lee and Bill did write all this on a Dutch baroque organ minus swell shades, but I don't really think so. I strongly suspect that the authors and their talented designer Robert Allen have a Part 3 in mind for a future project. If that's the case, you guys, then please say something about basic jazz harmonic theory, the swell pedal, more about registrations and something about playing for slide sing-alongs... and something about modulations... and something about movie cue-ing and...

Put another way, if Lee Prater and Bill McMains get all the "Bravos" they deserve for *A Primer of Cinema Organ Styling*, they just might get that other welcome message — which is "Encore!"

**THE ACCORDAFOLO DOUBLE FEATURE SELECTIONS OF JIMMY BOYCE, Frank Music Affiliates, 166 Boylston Street, Boston, Mass. 02116. Price: \$1.95 per dual selection.**

Organ fans who are lucky enough to catch Jimmy Boyce either at his magnificent unenclosed Wurlitzer at the Alexandria Roller Rink, at the skater's ancient plug-in, at the Virginia Theatre during an intermission, or at the Filene organ at the Kennedy Center in D.C., know why Jimmy is an area attraction second only to Mount Vernon and the White House. Organist Boyce is a great entertainer, a solid musician, and a most gracious and patient host to visiting buffs. So when Jimmy publishes three original compositions and three arrangements of pop standards in theatre style, potential consumers should know what gives.

All six selections have been printed as "two siders" in the Accordafolo Double Feature format out of Writers Equity, Ltd. Two arrangements are back-to-back in the same folder for a package price of \$1.95. Accordafolo has advantages and limitations when compared to other printed music. On the plus side, the folo lets you see the entire selection without any page turning. This is a boon to the organist who doesn't memorize music and who has registrations and such on the brain. The music rack on my own electronic (a Rodgers Marquee) handled the *four*-page Accordafolo beautifully. But when some of the folo arrangements run longer than four pages — and some do — the convenience disappears. Of course you get the flip-side selection whether you want it or not. Now back to the contents.

#### **Hernando's Hideaway and Yellow Bird**

Hernando's Hideaway was originally a bouncy and slightly "camp" tango featured in the Broadway musical Pajama Game. Jimmy's arrangement is still very much tongue-in-cheek and should be played at a "bright tango tempo" or the fun gets a bit heavy handed. Jimmy uses block chords in both hands and some judicious manual changes for dramatic contrasts. Melody shifts from the left hand to the right hand to add variety and interest. If tricky rhythm patterns are not your cup of espresso, then you may prefer to sit this one out — or get your organ teacher to help you. On the other hand, the pedal notes are easy to play and the suggestions for fingering are generous and helpful. Perhaps you should try the registrations suggested by Jimmy while you are learning the piece, then branch out on your own. Be forewarned; the Accordafolo stretches across your music rack for five big pages. If you need a tango in your repertoire that hasn't been done to death in recent years, *Hernando's Hideaway* via Jimmy Boyce will be most welcome.

Personally I liked the flip-side *Yellow Bird* best of all the Boyce arrangements. It combines a variety of T.O. styles with a comfortable latin beat. The first chorus is open harmony style on the Tibias while

the release is a clever use of cumulative chords. An interlude with percussions switches to a single note solo with a lovely counter melody in the left hand. A key shift (F to G) takes you into the second chorus written in block chord style. The pedal work is interesting without being too demanding. A final short chorus is played right-hand duet style in the key of A-flat. Jimmy's *Yellow Bird* is not for the beginner who has just graduated from chords that light up under the fingers. It is more for the advanced amateur who enjoys trying the organ transcriptions by Crawford and Leibert.

#### **Charlie's Walk and On Broadway**

There are two Jimmy Boyce originals in the Accordafolo format that are welcome mainly because they are definitely theatre program material. *Charlie's Walk* is the better of the duo and may have been created by Jimmy to use with a Chaplin two-reeler. It could work well under the screen. As a novelty solo — minus Chaplin — it is pretty light weight stuff, "cute" rather than a subtle blend of comedy and pathos. The left hand accompaniment is reminiscent of the things done by the pro's to underscore Chaplin's meanderings. The right hand melody seldom rises above the level of cliches. *Charlie's Walk* is easy to play and is mostly in D major with a sixteen bar digression into G major. Keep percussions handy at all times!

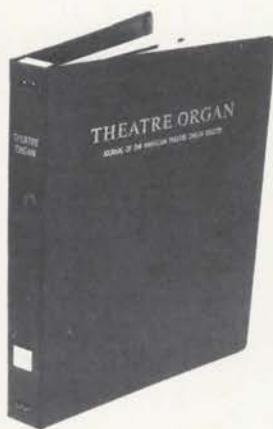
The flip-side *On Broadway* is a good humored caricature of every

hotshot who ever came up on the lift blasting out *Great Day* or *No Biz Like Show Biz*. Simple finger exercises, easy arpeggios and block chords get the show on the road — first in C, then in F, and finally in E-flat. *On Broadway* is fun to play if you see it as a put-on. You might just try it on some veteran ATOS fans sometime if only to hear them mutter "I know I've heard that before, but what the heck is it?"

#### **Under the Double Eagle and Alexandria March**

Jimmy Boyce's third Accordafolo entry combines an arrangement and an original. Both are rousing marches, and good organ transcriptions of marches (rousing or otherwise) are hard to find. Look no further. Jimmy's *Double Eagle* is a winner with skillful use of block chords, single note and duet melody lines. The lovely counter melodies provided by Boyce give this old warhorse some welcome musical surprises. You may like the *Double Eagle* with a face lift better than you thought you would. I certainly did. If you've always wanted to try a pedal solo for 16 bars, Jimmy gives you a relatively easy one to master. But those who are not hep to alternate foot, toe-heel gymnastics should get help from a local organ teacher or enlightened buddy. It takes a bit of technique to make this pedal melody sing the way it should. The march is 2/4 time and mostly in E-flat with a Trio in A-flat. How well this arrangement suits you as a

## New!



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band-bash may depend upon the tonal and percussion resources of your own organ. If you have pipes and traps or one of the more lavish plug-ins, no sweat.

Turn over the fole for Jimmy's original in 6/8 time, the *Alexandria March*. Jimmy Boyce suggests that his composition is reminiscent of Sousa (I hear additional touches of Eric Coates). It's probably risky business to venture an opinion as to the "hit" qualities of an original tune. Tastes, as the saying goes, do vary. But from my organ bench, Jimmy's *Alexandria March* sings up a storm and could become a standard favorite with audiences far from the Virginia suburb. It has that elusive ingredient which makes us say, "Play it again, Sam." The march is easy to play with no pedal melody this time. You'll want to spend some concentration on the Coda which is loaded with right hand triplets while the melody sings in the left. Follow Jimmy's suggestions for fingering carefully. Registrations call for full organ whether tabs or drawbars. Oh yes, this time the Accordafolo is a distinct blessing. □

## Organ Safari to England in 1976

Tentative plans  
call for ATOS visits  
to ...

London  
Manchester  
Liverpool  
Blackpool



More details soon!

# LETTERS

*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 George:

I am writing with regard to the letter of Anna May Wyeth (April 1975 LETTERS). I would like to express some of my own feelings covering her two basic points; after all, she asked if anyone agreed with her.

With regard to "the OLD style, palm glissing, body English and the sort, I feel Ms. Wyeth might benefit from reading John Muri's *"The Typical Versus the Top"* (THEATRE ORGAN, October 1970). Mr. Muri brings forth many valuable points, but especially worthy of notice is paragraph #5 regarding "... the flying and flourishing of the hands ...".

She mentions Hector Olivera as doing his body English at his convention concert. Hector Olivera is, in my opinion, a fine organist and musician and this body English acts as a distraction from the already fine music he produces. Don't get me wrong, I don't wish to single out Mr. Olivera. I feel this should go for any and all organists, theatre and classical. The impression I get from the magazine critiques is; the ATOS writing staff is trying to better the professional organ field. That is, degrading body English, thrump-boom Hammond style, and palm schmears. How much easier and more beautiful it is to hear a well-fingered glissando than a skid across the ivories! If this is "OLD HAT" then so be it. At my age (21), I would

much rather be impressed by what I hear and not what I am supposed to see in terms of body English etc. Having not lived in the first theatre organ era, I can go only on what I see and hear today.

With regards to the record reviews, I have generally felt your reviewer does a good job in this highly subjective area. Again I feel he is trying to bring certain points to the attention of the recording artist as well as the potential customer. Having not heard O'Lyn Callahan's current recording, I do not feel I have the right to bark PRO or Con with regards to either Ms. Wyeth's objection to inconsistency (?) or the reviewers feeling. I can only go on my own impressions of hearing O'Lyn Callahan in concert, and that is good.

Your record critic has been doing a good job in his reviews, and I feel he is always improving his critiques. However, the only thing I wish might be accomplished in addition is: if the artist hits a clinker or plays a phrase inaccurately, it be said so — frankly and kindly in the critique. Thank you Mr. Record Reviewer.

Thank you for putting out a top notch magazine. Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,  
Tom De Lay

Dear Sir:

I have enjoyed John Muri's articles on organists, committees and audiences, and would like to comment on a subject which he missed — namely, the Prologue Stop Arranger. As an illustration: Several weeks ago we had a talented and well-known theatre organist play a concert for us. Due to his rumored excellence the house was filled and expectancy ran high. Promptly on time, the M.C. introduced the organist and there was thunderous applause — for a few seconds — until the artist failed to appear at the console, then everyone started to look around and there was our concert artist casually ending a conversation at the back of the room. He strolled down the aisle, climbed onto the bench and spent half a minute or more, adjusting his stops. He then swung around, stood up and announced his first number. By the time he had played his first note, there was a noticeable let down of the audience.