

Thomaston Opera House, he made it a must to learn to play that instrument.

David is now ten and he has never hesitated to play before an audience. I have seen that he has acquired the basic fundamentals: harmony, intervals, good fingering, etc. In other words, I wanted him to be recognized as a musician and not a sightless person. However, when he plays, everyone is overcome by his strong, emotional playing and his God-given talent.

For obvious reasons, I did not enter David in any contests until I felt him ready for competition. This year, I gave him the green light to enter the Junior Theatre Organ Scholarship competition, sponsored by the Connecticut Valley Chapter of ATOS. The contest used the 3/9 Marr & Colton in the home of Mr. & Mrs. Harold Weaver, and 18 students competed. To everyone's surprise, David Scrimenti was judged the winner over some very talented participants.

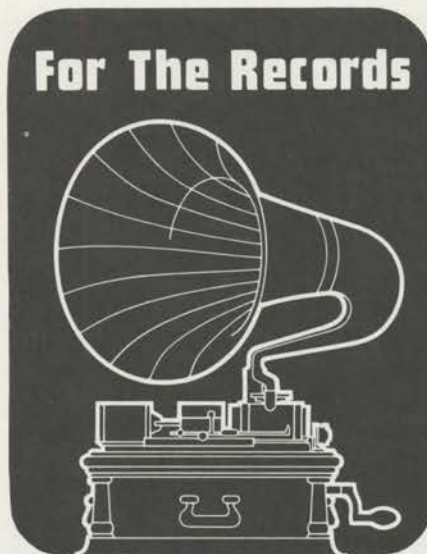
On April 12, 1975, David appeared with me at the Shelton Intermediate School in an organ concert, sponsored for the sixth year by the Huntington Congregational Church. He was sensational and well received by the audience who asked for more of his music. It was his first commercial venture where people paid to hear him.

So you see, "Our David's" musical prowess has evolved with his physical stature these past three years, and he's now preparing for a career in music. He receives normal schooling and has a special teacher for reading Braille. With a good foundation in music and his uncanny wit, the world is going to be his oyster. So watch your newspapers, magazines and television sets; Our David is on his way to stardom. □

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For The Records

EVERY NIGHT IS MUSIC NIGHT, William Davies at the Mighty Wurlitzer of the Gaumont, Manchester Theatre. Acorn label No. CF 250 (stereo), \$9.25 (air) postpaid from Mr. Tom Herd, Amsel Cottage, 19 Coupe Green, Hoghton, Preston, PR5 0JE, Lancashire, England. (checks on US banks made out to the Lancastrian Theatre Organ Trust are accepted)

William Davies might be described as a master of the frenetic; a majority of the selections on this recording are fast moving, in part or whole. This is not a criticism; in fact, all of the "fasties" are entertaining. And the moving selections are well balanced by slower ballads and standards sandwiched between them. The organ is the by now well-known 4/14 Wurlitzer formerly in the Manchester Gaumont. It is now removed, and in storage in care of the Lancastrian Theatre Organ Trust, a local group of British enthusiasts who depend on the income from records such as this one to relocate threatened organs in their areas to permanent homes.

Selections are *Tritsch-Tratsch Polka* (Strauss), *Butterflies in the*

Rain, Mexican Fire Dance, Knave of Diamonds, How Beautiful is Night, Cherokee, Passepied (De-Libes), *Scherzo* (Litloff), *Fantasy 'Up North'* (Croudson), *Selection of Gracie's (Fields) Songs, Little Serenade* (Tomlinson), *Toy Town Trumpeters* (Davies), *Selection from George Formby Memories*. Not too much here familiar by title but it's a fine opportunity to escape from the "old hat" repeats being recorded by too many US organists. The medleys contain a number of unlisted old favorites. All of the music is first rate and Mr. Davies' performances are fine except when he descends to the cheap tricks one might expect of a corner pub plug-in plunker. Luckily such backsliding is minimal although it also faulted a previous pipe recording by Mr. Davies reviewed in this column.

Recording is excellent and the organ is obviously in top shape. The jacket bears an excellent photo of the double stoprail console with Mr. Davies standing by. The console is a Wurlitzer style we've never before encountered. The keydesk is supported beneath the side jambs with ornate, wide gold-flecked double bolsters and the console endpieces above the bolsters are doubly wide. The jacket notes trace Mr. Davies distinguished career as a musician in broadcasting, theatres and with the Jack Hylton orchestra. He wrote his own jacket notes describing the music presented and Side Two is a tribute to his native Lancashire where he is a vice president in the Trust.

GOLDEN MOMENTS with Frank Cimmino at two Wurlitzer pipe organs. HMR-932 (stereo). \$5.50 postpaid from HMR Productions Inc., 574 West Court, Scotch Plains, New Jersey 07075.

Harry Randel and Bob Balfour have been recording theatre organ for about 15 years, mostly for release on other labels. Often dissatisfied with the final results on discs, they decided to strike out on their own and follow through in all aspects, from initial taping to licking the stamps on record mail orders. They have some ambitious plans for future releases which promise a recording by Jim Leaffe and another by Frank Cimmino.

Frank is the popular resident organist at the Suburban restaurant in Wanaque, New Jersey, where buffs may go to munch on a Lasagne while enjoying the sound of pipes (circa 15 ranks), thanks to the acumen of owner Jim Provesserio. But that instrument is not involved here; rather we are treated to the magnificent sound of the Broadway (New York) Beacon Theatre's 4/19 Wurlitzer on Side One and the engaging and bright tones of the Rahway (New Jersey) Theatre's 2/7 Wurlitzer on Side Two. This provides an opportunity to compare the recorded qualities of a large and small Wurlitzer as played by one artist. We are happy to report that the smaller organ stands up very well in the comparison, with the larger one being superior chiefly when the organist makes sudden demands for volume and also in the more random tremming of the larger instrument.

Quite naturally, the platter opens with an Italian medley ending with *Funiculi Funicula* (the selection of tunes hints strongly toward those requests which encourage record sales across the console), then a medley of "Amour" — *My Way* and *So In Love*. Then *Tea For Two* and an engrossing *September Song*. These tunes are played on the 4/19 Beacon Theatre organ. Side Two, played on the Rahway 2/7, opens with that fine old Italian tune *Sunrise Sunset*, continues with the fine new Italian tune, *Somewhere My Love* (yes, again!) and then goes into that fine old Italian tune, *Three Coins in The Fountain*. All are nicely phrased and Frank even conjures up an attractive solo from the 2/7's resources. We can't vouch for the nationality of *Hernando's Hideaway* (other than Tin Pan Alley) but *My Own True Love* is obviously Italian (via Dixie) although composed by Austrian Max Steiner. We aren't being facetious. There's a certain charm in the Cimmino approach to a selection which we like to think harks back to the unquestioned musicality of his lineage.

Poinciana is a next-to-closing tune and for the closer Frank, again thinking of those spumoni nibblers who request tricks from the organ, offers *Bye Bye Blues* with a steam train takeoff. For the benefit of those organists who like to attempt this effect, the weak point is always



Frank Cimmino at the 2/7. Good, except for the 'schmears.'

the locomotive bell. That stationary brass rectangle is no match for the doppler effect of the tolling bell — so, for an authentic sound glom onto a real bell, or record one. Frank's huffing and puffing effects are well done and may arouse nostalgia in the minds of anyone old enough to remember steam trains.

Playing is generally good (Frank has an interesting way of using trem during the Beacon Theatre segment), although he too often reveals that he was raised on plug-ins, judging from his use of less-desirable "Hammond honkers'" tricks. Frank's registration is excellent on both organs and he knows how to use expression pedals and volume contrasts. Technical pickup of both organs is tops. The review pressing was pocked with far more clicks and pops than is usual, although the recent and enduring petroleum shortage may be responsible for a lower grade of record surface, a flaw we have noted also in the products of such majors as RCA (formerly Victor).

Jacket notes provide information about Frank and the two instruments. A very good first bid by a new record producer.

THE NIGHT IS YOUNG, Dan Bellomy playing the Casa Manana Theatre (Ft. Worth, Texas) 3/11 Wurlitzer. No. CR-0144 stereo. Available at \$6.00 postpaid from Concert Recording, Box 531, Lynwood, Calif.

Here we go again. Another "first" recording for both artist and instrument. The latter is the model 235 Wurlitzer installed in Fort Worth's Worth Theatre and premed by Paul H. Forster in 1927. When the Worth

Theatre was doomed the organ was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Howard Walsh and donated to the local Casa Manana theatre-in-the-round where it was dedicated by Rex Koury and Paul Forster (at 80) in the early '70s. So much for history.

Dan Bellomy has been up to here in music since roughly his 5th birthday. He became a "product specialist" (e.i. demonstrator) with Thomas following a stint as staff organist at the Casa. Dan is certainly one of the most promising of the younger generation of pop wind merchants and this recording offers a sampling of his talents.

His interpretation and phrasing are good and his registration well-selected — except for one area: Dan seems to have a thing for tintinnabulation. Therefore, the sound of reiterating orchestral bells (often in full chords) frequently tops full combinations. Luckily, the timbre and volume of the pipes tends to deflect or cover the worst of the unpleasant clashing of too close intervals at high pitches. Yet, the selections where this effect is used would be much pleasanter to listen to if the bells had simply been omitted. But that's Dan's problem. The bell dissonance isn't heard in a majority of the selections.

Everything's Coming Up Roses is played in a snappy console riser style with plenty of bells and glockenspiel throughout. *You'll Never Walk Alone* enjoys a subtle, understated treatment. The slow build in volume required for this tune gives Dan an opportunity to exploit the excellent strings and Vox as the re-



Dan Bellomy. O' — those blessed bells! (Stufoto)

strained crescendo progresses. Then it's the well-regulated Tibia for some skillful open harmony. The climax is never overpowering and it's followed by a *sotto voce* Coda. One of Dan's best arrangements through its entire 6:10 minutes. It's back to rhythm, fire sirens and the Klaxon horn for a riproaring *Thoroughly Modern Millie*. One of Dan's talents is in the imitative area; he can duplicate the sound and much of the essence of his favorite organists, although he normally avoids just copying, except in special cases. An allowable case is *Open Your Eyes*, a tune forever entwined with the memory of Eddie Dunstedter. And the way Eddie played it was deceptively simple. Dan comes about as close as one can come to catching the Dunstedter charisma in this version, the only recreation we've heard which comes anywhere near the original. Next, its 6:21 minutes of tunes from *Fiddler on the Roof*, all good — but those blessed bells!

Dan brings the console up on Side 2 with *Who Cares*, both as in big band rhythm (plus bells) and as a Tibia-heavy ballad. There's a hint of George Wright here but only by device. It's not a copy. But the next selection, *Just My Bill*, smacks strongly of Millie Alexander's fine arrangement recorded at the Wiltern. That little chromatic run from the chord 7th down to a flatted 5th then up a half tone is one of several typical "Millie-isms" which color the arrangement. And there's a touch of "George" in *That's My Desire*, which features a sharp reed melody line with the exaggerated variations recalled from the Wright arrangement. *The Lady is a Tramp* is played "four to the bar" in the pedal department to accent an interesting rhythm variation on the melody line, or "ride" as it was called in the "Swing" era. The closer is the Casa's theme tune, *The Night is Young and You're so Beautiful*, played with lots of emotional wallop.

Generally, the organ sounds best during the softer passages where individual sections or solo voices carry the ball. The big combinations seem to be made a bit harsh by too prominent "upperwork." But this does little to mar Dan Bellomy's performance; he'd sound good on a harmonium. Come to think of it,

even those damn bells can't diminish his performance.

Recording, by Mark Muntzel, is good and Jim Peterson, who installed the 3/11, put it in excellent shape for the recording session.

The Classic Corner

THE ENTERTAINER, Virgil Fox at the Mighty Wichita Wurlitzer. RCA Red Seal ARLT-0666 (stereo). Available at music stores from \$5.00 to \$6.00.

This one is difficult to categorize; mainly classical stylings played on a theatre organ. As all buffs must know by this time, the organ is the ex-Times Square Paramount organ now transplanted to a safe home in Wichita's Century II civic center by Wichita Theatre Organ Inc, a local club. Now a 4/37, this is the first recording released since the transplant and it seems a little strange that what is considered the world's No. 1 theatre organ is heard in its first recording in its new home in a basically classical concert.

The tunes on the recording were taped during a concert and the audience is very much in evidence through applause and noise heard during the selections. The full house is generous with its applause and there is no dearth of enthusiasm. Some of Mr. Fox's remarks to the audience are retained on the pressing and sometimes they help explain the *raison d'être* of some selections, especially Charles Ives' *Variations on America* which can use all the help it can get.



Virgil Fox lets his classical hair down.

The jacket photo of Mr. Fox walking a tightrope stretched across Niagara Falls sets the mood for the musical content of this recording — don't take it too seriously, it's all in fun. And Mr. Fox does his best in both performance and MCing to carry out the premise, sometimes inviting his audience to whistle and clap in tempo.

As might be expected, the organist seeks registration of the type he's familiar with in his classical work and the Wurlitzer does admirably in its effort to counterfeit the classical sound. Yet, this very thing too often defeats the purpose of the Wurlitzer, which is to sound like a theatre organ. We consider Mr. Fox to be one of the foremost interpreters of "horizontal" music (all right, counterpoint) and his playing of the old masters of that mode often brings out new and different aspects of their music. And he does his classical thing with freshness and flair. No complaint there.

Yet, to transplant this fine classical artist to a horseshoe console and expect him to play theatre organ style seems a little unfair. So, the overall result is a mostly classical concert played on a theatre organ. Let's examine the selections.

Star Spangled Banner is played on pseudo-straight heavy registration, a little stilted, followed by a rousing *Hail Hail the Gang's All Here* with the tremors on. He misses the free and easy swing of Joplin's *The Entertainer* a mile with a so carefully fingered and slow interpretation that one wonders if he has a feeling for the ragtime idiom. The question is soon answered; he has, as proved later by his playing of the same composer's *Maple Leaf Rag*, where he comes much closer to the ideal. Seth Bingham's *Roulade* is a well played and mostly fast-moving selection in the classical mode, a little reminiscent of some of Cesar Franck's heroic organ pieces. *Londonderry Air* is played on theatrical registration and in its quiet way is one of the most satisfying selections from the T.O. standpoint because it exploits some of the Paramount Wurlitzer's distinctive voices effectively. Nice phrasing and lush combinations, sounds theatre organ buffs have been waiting for since the start of Side 1.

Virgil Fox exhibits a touch of the

showman even during his purely classical concerts and he enjoys being in the limelight of controversy. One way is to play selections by controversial composers, such as Charles Ives, who just may be recognized one day as one of the USA's great composers. However, Ives' liberal use of dissonance to the point of cacophony in his big symphonic works often shocks the musical conservatives who like their music pretty. Result: verbal static.

Even when he's kidding, Ives dishes out the dissonance in great gobs. His *Variations on America* is a prime example. The composer did it as a gag in his youth, used it once and threw it in a trunk in his barn — where it was unearthed years later to haunt his memory. Years ago E. Power Biggs recorded a much more sedate version on one of those dullsville organs he so loves. If Mr. Biggs' version is "gospel" then Mr. Fox has taken some liberties in his interpretation of *America*, brightening it considerably in the process. But whether one listens to the Biggs or Fox version, there are parts which sound as though Donald Duck's little nephews,

Hughie, Louie, and Dewey are tromping across the manuals simultaneously. Good fun music but with a large pinch of salt.

Elgars' *Pomp & Circumstance No. 1* is sheer magnificence from any viewpoint, easily the most inspired recording of that old warhorse since the one played by the late Richard Ellsasser on the Hammond Museum classical organ. This selection, as played by Virgil Fox, transcends fine distinctions about theatrical or straight organ characteristics. It's a goosebump generator.

No Virgil Fox concert would be complete without some Bach. The closer is a rousing Jig Fugue (it used to be Gigue) during which the audience is encouraged to clap in tempo and even to dance jigs in the aisles. It's all fine Saturday night fun and the audience contributes much to the mood of merrymaking. As for the playing, it is accurate, well phrased and largely classical. A theatre organist Virgil Fox is not but he's a topflight musician and he's viewed here letting his hair down for a public romp among encores and the stuff that earns approval at his concerts.

The jacket offers notes about the artist and the instrument. The review pressing was warped and had far too many surface clicks for the product of a firm with RCA's years of experience. □

Closing Chord

Anson C. Jacobs, 81, theatre organist and composer, died on June 7 in his home in Franklin, Pa.

Born in North Tonawanda, N.Y., he was educated there, and when a young man, became a theatre organist, having a repertoire of 45,000 songs. He played three theatres in Tonawanda, three in Jamestown, N.Y. and the Orpheum in Franklin, Pa. For awhile he served as demonstrator for the Wurlitzer Co. in their theatre organ and piano roll divisions.

Mr. Jacobs started composing in 1912, and by his estimate, wrote over 500 songs, including "Take Me to the Movies," "Won't You Come Back to Me?" and "When I'm Alone, I'm Lonesome." He taught accordion, piano and organ and was active musically at the time of his death.

He is survived by his wife, a son, two daughters, two sisters and four grandchildren.

Barbara Koons, daughter of Joe and Ida Mae ("Spud") Koons, Long Beach, Calif., died in an auto accident near Salt Lake City, Utah on



Barbara Koons

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November 28, 29 and 30, 1975