



Music Review

by Walter J. Beaupre, Ph.D.

Lee Prater and Bill McMains, FRONT ROW . . . CENTER: CINEMA ORGAN STYLES, Frank Music Affiliates, 116 Boylston Street, Boston, Mass. 02116. Price \$3.95.

Lee Prater and Bill McMains have fashioned three separate collections of *Cinema Organ Styles*. These are the logical spinoffs, one would suppose, of their very successful *Primers* (Part I and Part II) reviewed in the last issue of THEATRE ORGAN. The best of the three — by many ranks of pipes — is one called *Front Row . . . Center*. Each of the eight tunes was deservedly a popular favorite in its day, and each as styled by Prater and McMains adds to the nice variety of moods in the collection. Most of the arrangements are full four page treatments which fold out across the music rack to avoid page turnings. *Moon of Manakoora* begins with lovely open harmony to establish the lush elegance of the tropics. The verse (which I'd never heard) emerges as a single note solo for the right hand with counter melodies on the lower manual. The second chorus proper (a right hand duet) slides ever so smoothly into a sultry 4/4 beat, then slinks back into a waltz for the finish. I found after a few playings that there were too many Crawford glissandos for my personal taste, so I just dropped a few. How nice to find this 1937 Dorothy Lamour hit so stylishly "gussied up" by Prater and McMains! Next in the collection comes *Slow Boat to China* with a charming oriental intro which gives way to a swinging Chicago style accompaniment. "Slow Boat" is a well built, tight arrangement with no awkward holes between choruses. The finale is the strongest in the collection — a bash. *Orange Colored Sky* was one of those big band "bop" specials of the early fifties, featured as I recall on Jerry Lester's Broadway Openhouse (TV). It plays well

and sounds better on the organ than I thought it might. Bill McMains obviously did the Tiffany quality arrangement of *Baubles, Bangles and Beads* because here it is a shorter version (sans the jazz waltz finale) of Bill's Accordafolo arrangement. What's left is easy to play and perfectly gorgeous theatre organ sound. Bill's stylings have many of the virtues of those Dave Coleman and George Wright transcriptions of a few years back. *In My Arms* was a dum-dum tune of the mid forties that has grown prettier with the addition of some counter melodies, courtesy of Prater and McMains. *Boo Hoo* remains faithful to the Guy Lombardo mystique. The arrangers work just a bit too hard to keep it interesting, but the results should please all home organists who like the sweetest music this side of . . . well . . . swell shades.

The collection is neatly rounded out with two romantic *Music Man* ballads, *Till There Was You* and *Goodnight, My Someone*. The Crawford influence is present but not overpowering and the harmonic progressions are lean without being square, sophisticated but not self-conscious. Seldom — if ever — does one find so many good moderately-easy-to-play arrangements of so many good tunes in one collection. Lee Prater and Bill McMains have hit the jackpot with *Front Row . . . Center*.

THE ENTERTAINER and THE RAGTIME DANCE, Arranged by Jerry Allen, Accordafolo Double Feature, Frank Music Affiliates, 116 Boylston St., Boston, Mass. 02116. Price \$1.95.

Perhaps Scott Joplin's *The Entertainer* is the most successful of the half dozen arrangements recently published by Jerry Allen in the Accordafolo format. It's no small triumph on Jerry's part to follow the

smash hit *Sting* recording with an organ transcription which is easy to play and yet satisfying because it captures the fun and flavor of the recorded version. The secret of Jerry's success lies in the two hand manual changes which are frequent and dramatic. For the home organist who has gotten into the rut of keeping his left hand on the lower manual and right hand on the upper manual come-what-may, this arrangement will open up a whole new world of nice contrasts. It's easy to predict that Jerry Allen's *The Entertainer* will become a favorite re-order item among teachers of pop organ who cater to adults.

The reverse side of the fold-out is another Joplin tune, *The Ragtime Dance*. Again Jerry uses manual shifts for variety of voices, but the charm of the "stop-time two-step" escapes this reviewer. Dyed in the wool Joplin fans should of course ignore that last observation. Jerry's arrangement makes good sense, although there is more than the usual "monkeying around" with registration changes. Basic registration instructions are fine, but the pipe and tab players will find the Tremolo instructions missing (a printer's goof).

LIDA ROSE and 76 TROMBONES, Arranged by Jerry Allen, same publisher and price as above.

Of the duo from Meredith Wilson's *Music Man*, Jerry Allen's arrangement of *Lida Rose* opens with a barbershop style intro in A-flat and then bounces along merrily until the dixieland second chorus where a Chicago style bass alternates with a modified beguine tempo. Thoroughly pleasant carryings on, I'd say. And if you are sick to death of hearing other organists play *76 Trombones* but still admire this truly great march, retaliate by playing Jerry's version yourself. His occasional left hand melodic excursions give a robust drive and dash to the whole affair. I should warn you that the five-fold spread-out is a challenge to your music rack, so be prepared to use sky-hooks, binoculars — or resign yourself to flipping a section of the Accordafolo. Both arrangements will take some patient practice, but neither is beyond the capabilities of the home

organist who can read music and follow directions.

HEART and ONCE IN LOVE WITH AMY, Arranged by Jerry Allen, same publisher and price as above.

If *The Entertainer* was the most successful of Jerry Allen's arrangements, it's only fair to note that this reviewer found *Heart* the least successful organ transplant. The Adler and Ross tune from the musical *Damn Yankees* begins appropriately enough as a "soft shoe" number with pleasant ricky-tick counter melodies. Then *Heart* becomes a "bright beguine" — then a waltz — then back to a beguine in time for the cardiac arrest. There doesn't

seem to be any rhyme nor reason for the tempo changes nor for the showboating arpeggios. Registration changes are frequent and frantic. Probably in the hands of a true virtuoso such as Jerry Allen the arrangement could be made to work as a personal tour de force.

Once In Love With Amy from the show *Where's Charley?* is another excursion into "soft shoe" — but with a difference. "Amy" plays it cool by staying safely in her soft shoe routine (and in the key of G) from introduction to finale. Jerry's stop-time accents are catchy, the shifts of melody to the left hand work well, and the pedal notes, although easy enough to play, add musical interest as well as rhythmic support. It's a sensitive

arrangement of a great song and it captures some of the humor and delight of dancer Ray Bolger as Charley's Brazilian aunt — "where the nuts come from!" Or don't you remember? □

ATOS ARTIST

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