

held down continually, even when the tune calls for a beat. In fact he plays mostly a single note melody with lower manual accompaniment. He uses the prominent tonal percussions sparingly, possibly because they are somewhat overpowering. His melody lines sometimes stray and harmonic treatment is unsophisticated but pleasing.

The selections offer plenty of variety, including marches, a tango, US pop standards, a concert piece, and an appealing Viennese folk song. The titles are "Echoing Pipes" (march), "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You," "Vienna, City of My Dreams," "Exactly Like You" (ballad treatment!), "Don't Be Cross," "La Vie En Rose," "Julian" (tango), "Lonely Ballarina" (intermezzo), "Granada" and a medley which

covers half of side 2 and includes "Java," "Manhattan," "By the Fireside," "Wonderful One," "I'm Just Wild About Harry," "When You're Smiling" and "the World is Waiting for the Sunrise." Each is given individual treatment, not the "quick-step" bit.

At best, it's difficult for an 8-ranker to compete successfully with the normally much larger recording organs we review. Such comparison is not the purpose of this recording. Rather, it's a testament as to how one buff treated his instrument as a home installation. No artificial reverb has been added to give it a "big hall" sound. Hearing the record is probably much like sitting in the Matthews music room and enjoying an informal concert by an able demonstrator. As such it succeeds. □



by Walter J. Beaupre, Ph.D.

THE MIGHTY THEATRE ORGAN, edited by Lee Erwin, Edward B. Marks Music Corporation, 136 West 52nd Street, New York, N.Y. 10019. Price \$2.50 retail.

Five years back a collection of ten "organ solos in theatre organ stylings" was launched under the editorial surveillance of Lee Erwin and according to the cover blurb "published in cooperation with the American Theatre Organ Society." *The Mighty Theatre Organ* was advertised shortly after publication in this journal. I picked up a copy somewhere along the way, said "Amen!" to Ben Hall's beautifully written introduction, dabbled at a few of the easier-to-sight-read selections — and promptly forgot all about it. Not until recently, while hunting through some unfiled music did I pull out *The Mighty Theatre Organ* and resolve to take a second and more critical look. So here goes.

This Erwin-ATOS labor of love purports to be a collection of new music "expressly for the organ" —

and that it is. No one can quarrel with the fact that the contributors are all very talented performing artists with individual organ styles. The cast is a veritable "Who's Who" or, if you prefer, "Pipes' Peak." Selections promise both balance and variety: five ballad-type and five novelty-type solos with plenty of variety within each category. Playing difficulty also varies from quite easy to required virtuosity. The easiest ballads are by Rosa Rio, Jody Weaver, and Eddie Layton; more demanding are the ballads of Lee Erwin and Ann Leaf. The easier novelty solos are those by Al Bollington, Allen Mills, and Jeff Barker; the most difficult by Don Baker and Ashley Miller. Other home organists may question these rankings by playing difficulty, depending upon their personal skills and prior experience. For example, this reviewer doesn't mind reading music written in six flats, but high speed passages and cadenzas are always a major hurdle.

The first solo printed in the book, Editor Erwin's "My Best Girl," was

not new to me. I had heard a live performance of same under a silent film as well as Lee's Angel recording. Incidentally, I consider the recorded arrangement an improvement over the printed score (sustained pedal notes under the fanfare, extended counter-melodies, more sophisticated key modulations, etc.) so don't expect to sound exactly like the Master. The written arrangement still carries the lush, warm moods which make this pretty tune a joy to play. Lee's suggested registration warns us to stay away from 16' stops when playing big chords to close to the lower end of the manual. The opening fanfare generated anticipation with an abrupt modulation from E flat to G major. The main theme, boldly stated with both hands in unison, quickly gives way to a descending counter melody on the lower manual. The counter melody of the main theme becomes a boldly descending chromatic melody in the bridge. A key change to F keeps the tune from becoming repetitive while establishing deeper familiarity. Always the expert craftsman, Lee Erwin knows that we like to meet the same damsel again and again — but not wearing the same dress. He obliges with some stylish quick changes and a tasteful coda. Although hardly more than just another pretty tune, the fascination of "My Best Girl" lies in the stylish arrangement for organ. Harmonic patterns are interesting and satisfying without becoming too far out. The G9 and D13 add the right touch of esoteric.

Jeff Barker's "El Samba Chico" serves as a novelty latin contrast. The rhythmic introduction establishes the underlying beat rather than any melodic pattern to follow. Once the melody begins the burden of the samba rhythm stays with the right hand theme in 3rds while the accompaniment is straight 4/4 oom-pah, oom-pah. This pattern changes when both hands descend to the lower manual for an open chord melody/rhythm interlude. "Chico's" trio introduces an extended right hand, single note solo in the lower registers. It's fun and adds variety when the repeat chorus is played still an octave lower. By contrast a final samba theme is played in the treble register. As you may have guessed, the right hand does all the

work in "El Samba Chico." This should please those home organists who avoid intricate pedal and accompaniment demands. The total effect of the solo is honest theatricality without a hint of "showboating." Granted it will never drive "Tico Tico" off the charts but, like Jeff Barker's playing, it is bright, clean, spirited and fun.

In my opinion Jody Weaver's "Arlene" could easily stand on its own merits as a tuneful waltz, but father Eddie's gorgeously simple arrangement makes "Arlene" one of the best in the book. Be sure to follow the suggestions concerning tempo which keep the waltz from becoming a syrupy lullabye. It needs to soar freely on the lower manual Tibias at times. The second chorus with its left hand melody and right hand cascading Tibias (remember those Mantovani orchestrations?) presents a nice contrast to the counter-melodies of the first chorus. As a theatre style arrangement for the home organist with limited technical abilities, "Arlene" is well-nigh perfect. You'll find yourself humming Jody's tune long after you've shut down the console for the night.

Al Bollington's "Pipe Organ Blues" is not a novelty solo in the strict sense, but it does contribute to the general spirit of variety among the ten selections. Al suggests that his "Blues" is for a three manual instrument (playable on two, of course) and his registration ideas are elaborate and creative — also necessary. More about that later. I was first intrigued by the funky, gut-bucket theme, suitable one would think for conjuring up visions of Anne Corio or Rose Hovick's first-born. The home organist will have fun playing the frequent gliss "schmears," but family and friends should not be subjected to the multiple repetitions of the same theme idea unless the performer can vary the registrations as Bollington suggests. The main charm of the arrangements lies in the skillful use of a jazz solo horn line. Al has written out his jazz horn solos wonderfully well, so study them carefully. The solid accompaniment reminds one of Artie Shaw's "Nightmare."

Don Baker's "Acapulco" gives us a modest sample of his unbelievable virtuosity. It wouldn't be fair to dwell upon the fact that the tune isn't

much. Don could earn a standing ovation playing "Chopsticks" (and for all I know probably has). It is enough that "Acapulco" lets us see on the printed staves the chromatic thirds and skipping triads, the big block chords beating against each other in climax after climax. One should struggle through a Baker transcription — if only to sharpen one's appreciation of this great performing artist. Did I forget to tell you that "Acapulco" is rumba to be played *moderato*? It is, and Mr. Baker reminds us in parentheses that *moderato* means "on the slow side." That man leaves nothing to chance!

I've never had the pleasure of meeting Rosa Rio, but as a teenager I dashed home from school regularly to hear her on the radio. Thanks to her inspired improvisations Rosa made a poetry reading gentleman named Ted Malone (remember *Between the Bookends*?) sound much more profound than he probably deserved. I mention this because Rosa's solo "Dreaming" reminds me of the heady mood stuff she used to play for Ted. Now I ask you, could any piece with the subtitle *En Rêvant* be written in any key other than G flat? No, but the reason for six flats is more practical than romantic — it makes the pedal cadenzas much easier to play. Thanks, Rosa. Here's another "in depth" observation: nine of the ten

solos in the collection provide chord cues above the music staves so that you can fudge your own accompaniment if you wish. In "Dreaming" the fake cues are missing, and wisely so. You play the chords and passing tones as Rosa Rio wrote them — or not at all! Is the reviewer suggesting a paradoxical "put down"? Not at all. The home organist should have a whole book of these Rosa Rio mood pieces. They are just what the doctor ordered for unwinding the cares of the day at the console.

The Allen Mills novelty "Rickshaw Ride" is both very pleasant and very predictable. Move Raymond Scott's "Siberian Sleighride" or Leroy Anderson's "Sleighride" a few degrees south and east, add a dash of "Dancing Tamborine" and some figures from something I vaguely remember called "Futuristic Rag" — and there is nothing new under the sun. But, hold on. Stark originality has never been essential in the novelty solo genre. No one bothers to complain that "Nola," "Flapperette" and "Sapphire" are similar to each other. Mills' "Rickshaw Ride" has all the essential ingredients of a good novelty tune: it's clever, catchy and filled with happy piccolos, chinese blocks and gongs. Mills was certainly not the first, but I hope he is the last composer to use that gawdauful, phoney Chinese intro that has been kicking around since "Limehouse Blues."

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