

\$10,000 damage from broken water pipes and a torn roof above the stage. Budget cuts from governmental sources haven't helped, either. As of the middle of March, things didn't look bright for the future of Shea's Buffalo Theatre.

Music Review

by Walter J. Beaupre, Ph.D.



Lowell Ayars. He hit the concert jackpot. (Stufoto)

Lowell Ayars, the Singing Organist, reports he had a great time playing a concert for PATOS on September 21 at the South Hills Theatre. "I found the audience the quietest and most attentive I have ever experienced. They don't even cough while the performer is playing! It is a warm, out-going group and very nice to work with, especially with combinations, lighting and special effects. The theatre is just about the cleanest in which I've been in at least 30 years. It is plain, but immaculately kept; the brass is polished, the stage floor shines, and the electric bulbs aren't even dusty. In this day and age, wow!" □

Al Hermanns, ORGAN-IZING LEFT HAND COUNTER-MELODIES, The Big 3 Music Corporation (available in music stores or Al Hermanns Music Studio, 1120 Union St., Reading, PA 19604, price \$3.50).

Al Hermanns, whose *Organizing Open Harmony* was reviewed in this column recently (Dec.-Jan. 76-77), has published two more "Organizing" books. One of them is of rather general interest to any student of pop organ playing who may be having problems apportioning beats where they belong. The second, *Left Hand Counter-Melodies*, is of special interest to the would be theatre organist. In my opinion Al Hermanns has tackled a major problem with his usual directness, skill and efficiency. Teacher/organist Al breaks counter melody into six strategies and then proceeds to demonstrate how each strategy works. Nothing that he suggests violates good, sound theory of counterpoint. Particularly perceptive, I thought, was his advice about using a major seventh "for a counter-melody whenever the melody is the second, third, or fifth tone of the scale." There is nothing "square" about Al Hermanns methodology.

This book, like others in the series,

contains special arrangements of pop tunes which illustrate what Al has been saying. Two are certainly adequate; three are really fine. "Release Me" works very nicely as a demonstration of double counter melodies. "I'm Thru With Love" is a delight to play and sounds more tricky than it is. "When I Grow Too Old To Dream" — once you get beyond the overblown intro — is loaded with integrity. The way Al winds up a tune leaves something to be desired, but perhaps he'll deal with snappy endings in a future publication.

Hermanns, the realist, doesn't avoid asking us to do "sitting up" exercises in his books, but again I found these exercises sensible, pleasant to play and immediately applicable. Keeping counter-melody and rhythm independent variables is the important technical hurdle.

The more of these excellent Al Hermanns "how to" books I see, the more I become convinced that the teaching of pop organ has improved tremendously since we were kids. As for the teaching of theatre style playing, it has surely reached the millenium! □

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