

of a Kansas City (Mo.) chicken-house (population 10,000) saying that not only do chickens like pipe organ music, but that the music improves their egg-laying capacity. In 1938 we read (again *The Diapason*) about the installation of a small electric organ in a fine new home. A visitor asked the lady of the house whether she played; she said she didn't. The guest then asked if it was the children who were learning. She answered in the negative, but then she added, "But the Fuller Brush man comes in and plays quite often." Oh yes, Oscar, our tradition is growing by leaps and bounds. □



**JUST PLAYIN' JANE.** Jane McKee Johnson at the 3/17 Wurlitzer in Tacoma's (Wash.) "Pizza & Pipes." Angulus (stereo) No. WR-5144 \$5.95 postpaid from McKee Organ & Piano Center, 5915 6th Ave., Tacoma, Wash. 98406.

The USA's Pacific Northwest has always been an inspiring source of theatre organists — Oliver Wallace, Jesse Crawford, Don Simmons, Jonas Nordwall, "Ron and Don," and Dick Schrum, names which come immediately to mind, belong in a list which could go for pages. While many, in the past, sought their fortunes far away, others did their playing at home, as did Jane McKee Johnson, our "Playin' Jane." On hearing this recording, her initial disc release, we can't help asking — where has Jane McKee been all these years?

The instrument, too, has had a long career. Originally installed in the Fort Wayne (Indiana) Paramount in 1930 as either a style 235 or 240 (11 or 12 ranks), it came to Tacoma via Dallas. Along the way somewhere, it was enlarged to 17 ranks, the added pipes most likely being solo and color reeds. Whatever the changes were, the instrument, as recorded, exhibits none of the blatancy of the usual pizzery organ. Or perhaps its the organist who knows how to make it speak with warmth and tenderness, as she does during "Yellow Days." This selection alone is worth the price of the record. On some tunes she plays "pizza style" with all the noisemakers in evidence, but mainly she presents concert arrangements of the varied selections. Her one tango is pure "Valentino," the polka potpourri ("Whoop de Doo") is solid corn, and her marching band ("Under the Double Eagle") might be led by a guy named Sousa. Each tune is treated individually and delightfully, with much registration and mood variety. What we believe to be 2nd touch leakthroughs result in

*Manufacturers, distributors or individuals sponsoring or merchandising theatre pipe organ records are encouraged to send pressings to the Record Reviewer, Box 3564, Granada Hills, California 91344. Be sure to include purchasing information, if applicable, and if possible a black and white photo which need not be returned.*

what seem to be unplanned "emphasis effects" which may have some shock effects but in no way mar the music. Jane's playing is always neat and accurate.

We are informed that most of the excellence of the Tacoma installation is due to the combined skills of Terry Hochmuth and Bill Carson, who set the organ up in a building especially designed to show it off to best advantage. They have succeeded admirably.

The other selections are "It Had to Be You," "Fiddle Faddle," "Feelings," "The Nearness of You," "Music Makes Me," "Ecstasy Tango," "It's Impossible," "Don't Blame Me" (a beauty), "June is Bustin'



Jane McKee Johnson at the 3/17 Tacoma Wurlitzer. She plays the Sunday-Monday stint at "Pizza & Pipes."



Out" and "If I Loved You."

Jane's playing defies classification, Sometimes it's easy listening, then majestic, then super sentimental, then lilting. It's pizza music only when she wills it, and that's rarely. It's a fine variety show played on a most attractive instrument.

**WALTER STRONY PLAYS THE CHICAGO THEATRE WURLITZER. Stereo. \$6.75 postpaid from Walter Strony, 1570 No. Prospect Ave., Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 53202.**

Much of the excellence carried in these grooves must be credited to the CATOE crew which undertook the rehabilitation of the 4/29. This feat has been chronicled over the past two years in this publication, but lest we forget, let's toss in a few names — Dick Sklenar, Bill Rieger, John Peters, Bill Hansen, Joe Duci Bella, Scott Smith, Don Matson and many others, including theatre manager Peter Miller.

With such well-deserved credits out of the way, we can turn attention to organ and organist. The restorers have done their work well; the sound is in turn, mellow and sharp. There's always the presence of Jesse Crawford in the over-all sound, and with good reason, because Jesse first hit the big time playing it, and did some honing of his own to adapt the instrument to his style of playing.

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first time the instrument has been commercially recorded since the Marsh, '78s played by Crawford were released in the mid '20s. To Crawford, they were an experiment, and they convinced him that the "big hall" sound was not for him. Thereafter, his records were miked in the closeup perspective of studios. His reasoning was probably correct for the time, considering the limitations of a craft which had just converted to electrical recording, after 25 years of playing music into acoustical horns, a system that compromised both the organ's frequency range and tonal finesse. But we are digressing, although history is fascinating.

Our point is that if Crawford had then had a recording engineer with the equipment and skills of Robert Schulein, who recorded the Strony

album, the whole Crawford legacy of recorded music might be vastly different (e.i. records made on the N.Y. Paramount Theatre 4/36 instead of the 4/21 studio Wurlitzer). Schulein always maintains a good balance but it is when Strony pits a brass chorus against tinkly percussions that Schulein's skill is miking a large organ, without losing musical perspective, really shines. Recording is first rate throughout.

We have left Mr. Strony until last, on purpose. We first encountered his musicianship when he was 10 or 11, during a Chicago-based ATOS convention. He looked like a tiny dot seated at the enormous expanse of stopkeys and manuals which comprise the Chicago Stadium 6/61 Barton console. His music was uncomplicated but cleanly played with no showy diversions. This would be a lad to watch. Later we exchanged considerable correspondence; Walter had the boyish dream of building a tracker action theatre organ. Fortunately, this ambition was lost in the process of growing up, and the Al Melgard pupil concentrated on sharpening his musical acumen. Now Walter Strony has come of age, and he has fulfilled our musical hopes. There is ample proof in these grooves.

He opens with a lively salute to ATOS' 1977 convention city with an upbeat "Chicago" and "Chicago Is." In the former he employs some interesting "how'll he get out of the harmonic cul-de-sac?" suspense harmony. But get out, he does — and gracefully.

"Send in the Clowns" is a mournful, repetitious ballad which points



Walter Strony (Stufoto)

up the "Pagliacci" aspects of clowning. Walt makes the most of sparse material by following the ballad treatment with a brief bolero segment.

If you like Crawford's "Confessin'" and "Where the Shy Little Violets Grow," you'll like "You Don't Have to Tell Me." There are marked similarities in treatment as well as material. Walt wraps it up nicely.

Of course, "I Love to Hear You Singing" is the familiar Crawford arrangement, but with somewhat stouter instrumentation (or is the Chicago theatre organ just naturally big sounding?) Jesse would approve of the Strony rendition.

"The Man I Love" has some delicious moments. A somewhat distant brass melody line is fondled by what must be the loveliest of Tibias. The subtle beauty is broken briefly for a bravura treatment of the verse.

Like Lyn Larsen, Walt Strony has discovered the old Viennese operetta music of Oscar Straus. It's a relatively vanilla treatment of schmaltz, but pretty — "My Hero."

The first cuts on both sides open with a tremendous cymbal crash which sounds manmade (rather than "organ made"). "Cabaret" recovers quickly for an upbeat chorus before a rather subdued and introspective chorus played on mixing reeds. Then the slambang closing, a fit ending for a potboiler.

"Waters of the Perkiomen" was once used by several radio organists as a broadcast theme, and was recorded by Crawford. It has a graceful, meditational quality which takes some doing to make it come off. Walt does.

Walt's treatment of "Broadway Rhythm" is, in turn, emphatic and subtle, but the power of the great organ is always evident.

The Strony treatment of "Forgotten Melody" brings out the ballad beauty of a finely balanced instrument. The "JC Theme" is played with sensitivity and sensual registration (those gorgeous celested Strings!).

The closer is a bravura treatment of "Tonight" from *The West Side Story*. First a bolero beat against a Tibia/mixing reeds melody line which builds to an untrem'd full passage, wherein Walt prolongs a climactic moment with a heavily reg-



istered downward chromatic passage. A gimmick, but it works. The final moments include fistfuls of vaguely related but dramatic, ear-catching chords for a "Paramount Publix" ending.

To Walt Strony's credit, there is hardly a bobble during the performance. It's one helluva headstart as a first try. Highly recommended.

**GAYLORD CARTER: 'FLICKER FINGERS' MAS-2027 (stereo). \$6.00 postpaid from Malar Productions, Box 3104, Glendale, Calif. 91201.**

Besides being a fine collection of silent movie cues, this release is an answer to those who figured Malar Records, one of the most faithful sources of theatre organ music, would fold after the death a couple of years ago of its founder, and guiding light, Bob Carson. Malar is very much alive, with Bob's widow, Helen Dell at the helm. If releases are spaced more widely it's because Helen has other interests, such as concert appearances, TV stints and

playing for the LA Dodgers home games. She assures us Malar is here to stay, and that a coming release will be the long anticipated Eddie Dunstetter record.

Gaylord Carter! His name is as closely associated with silent film scoring as his descriptive slogan "Flickerfingers." Gaylord has recorded movie music before, one of theme songs on the Simonton Grande Wurlitzer years ago, and more recently "50 Years of Chasing," also a Malar release. These last two offer actual musical cues (rather than tamer concert versions), themes Carter has used in his film shows, exactly as they were heard. This disc offers no less than 17 selections and they illustrate a variety of moods, as some of the titles indicate: "Monster Music" (a ghastly horror theme), "Hurry," "Comedy Clowns" (Keystone Kops music), "Dance of the Huns," "Weird theme" (ghost-to-ghost stuff), "Oriental love Song," "Rube Theme," "Birth of Passion," "Just an Old Love Song," Finale from *Kings of Kings*, "Fanfare" and "Hail America" — a generous sup-



Gaylord Carter at the San Gabriel 3/16 console.


(Stufoto)

ply of cues for the home "syncher," or just music to whomp up imaginery scenes to. In addition, Gaylord throws in some soulful portions of Bizet's *Carmen* score, and as usual takes the opportunity to "plug my own tunes," represented here by "South Dakota Waltz" and "Melody in E-flat." For that matter most of the dramatic cues are also Carter originals. One of the most entertaining items is Gaylord's improvisation on "Jingle Bells."

With a couple of exceptions, subtlety is not a factor here; it's all solid "Gebrauchsmusik" played as one might have heard it during a silent film in the '20s. But there can be no denying it's entertaining. For years, organists avoided recording cue music, preferring to play recognizable titles and "concert versions." Carter was probably the first to take a chance with cue music, and it paid off. And Hollywood followed; it was 25 years after the release of *Gone With The Wind* that an album consisting of cues dubbed from the soundtrack was released, although four or five of the "symphonic synthesis" genre preceded it. That rather makes Mr. Carter a trailblazer in more ways than one. But helping rekindle interest in the silent film when few others were doing it will remain his greatest contribution. And the cues offered here are the tools of his trade.

No need to go into matters of tempo and registration for this one. The old pro knows what he's doing. Besides, who knows his originals as well as he does?

The organ is the 3/16 Wurlitzer which the Los Angeles chapter installed and maintains in the San



# GEORGE WRIGHT

## In Concert

**WHAT THE CRITICS SAY. . . .**

". . . . A master arranger for the instrument. His original and daring registration gives the organ rhythmic vitality and zip in performance. . . . He makes it swing."

*The New York Times*

"On stage to play a Bach chorale or a Gershwin song, he seems to be recreating the music. He apparently does nothing that no other organist does, yet he accomplishes results that none of them seem to come near accomplishing."

*Hollywood Citizen-News*

"His program had humor and was always musical. He has brought theatre 'pops' organ back to a nation which had forgotten it."

*The Theatre Organ*

"Sponsored by the San Jose Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, he gave a display of musicianship that must be heard, live, to fully appreciate. He had them in the palm of his hand."

*Tabs and Drawbars*

For concert information and availability contact:  
**J. NELSON MANAGEMENT**  
 900 Andersen Drive, San Rafael, California 94901  
 (415) 457-0255



Gabriel (Calif.) Civic Auditorium. It meets all of Gaylord's considerable demands.

Dick Stoney's miking is tops and our preview copy has a pleasingly smooth and noiseless surface. As for the jacket notes, they are rather sparse. We could have absorbed lot's more info about the tunes, the circumstances of their composition, films they have been applied to and similar color. But that's about the only fault we can find with this entertaining record production. Recommended.

**THE HOLLYWOOD YEARS, ROBIN RICHMOND AT THE THEATRE ORGAN. DJM label No. DJM 22050 (stereo). \$6.00 postpaid (surface mail) from Robin Richmond, 16 Bathurst Mews, London W2 25B, England. Checks on US banks okay.**

For some time we've been asking why British organists include so many US-originated tunes on their records (and we are starting to get some answers). Now, here's one who has gone the whole route and plays nothing but US tunes in these grooves. Robin Richmond, well-known for his BBC *The Organist Entertains* radio shows in Britain, enjoyed doing a mini-concert tour in the eastern USA in 1976, and plans a return this year. This album should help land some engagements.

The organ is a 3/19 Wurlitzer transplanted from the Paramount Odeon, Newcastle, to the Kitchen Brothers auto showroom at Diss, Norfolk. The spaciousness of the showroom insures a live acoustical setting. The instrument has a large, lush sound and the tremors seem to be beating about right for US ears (we said he went the whole route!).

We reviewed a Robin Richmond record a few issues back, one made for another label, about which we couldn't work up much enthusiasm. Please don't be influenced by that review with reference to this recording; there's a great difference. The two records don't sound as though they were played by the same organist.

Richmond explains, "I had more preparation time for this record." It shows.

The tunes are hoary film classics



Robin Richmond (John D. Sharp Photo)

from Hollywood's better days: "As Time Goes By" (*Casablanca*), "It Can't Be Wrong" (*Now Voyager*), "Sunnyside Up" (*Sunnyside Up*), "Over the Rainbow" (*Wizard of Oz*), "Lullaby of Broadway" (*Gold Diggers of 1935*), "Yankee Doodle Dandy" (*Yankee Doodle Dandy*), "Waltzing in the Clouds" (*Spring Parade*), "Cheek to Cheek" (*Top Hat*), "I'll String Along With You" (*My Dream is Yours*), "Song of the Dawn" (*King of Jazz*), "On the Good Ship Lollipop" (*You're My Everything*), "Long Ago and Far Away" (*Cover Girl*), "I'll Get By" (*A Guy Named Joe*), "By a Waterfall" (*Footlight Parade*).

Richmond's ballads are nicely phrased and registered, and we are glad they outnumber the rhythm tunes because Robin plays some of the latter in the typical British "quick-step" style. The "thump-thump" left hand and strict tempo don't allow for much variety. "Yankee Doodle Dandy" and "Cheek to Cheek" get this treatment but "Lollipop" is provided an interesting setting despite the rhythm emphasis.

The selections, as presented, are real memory floggers. Who could forget girlish Janet Gaynor and young Charles Farrell in that very early (1929) "talkie," *Sunnyside Up*? Or the haunting theme from *Now Voyager*? (which may not actually be classed as a US-originated tune; composer Max Steiner once told the writer that he "brought it along" when he emigrated from Vienna). Then there's youthful Ruby Keeler and Dick Powell disporting "Be-

side a Waterfall," little Shirley up to here in lollipops, and Dooley Wilson ("Sam") ignoring Bogart's order never to play "As Time Goes By" in his Casablanca dive. But we're intruding on your memories and impressions!

We especially enjoyed Richmond's non-rhythmic, and harmony-rich, "I'll Get By" and his "Waterfall" is worthy of the orchestration played by Leo Forbstein and the big Warner Bros. Vitaphone orchestra on the '30s movie soundtrack.

There is considerable variety in Richmond's arrangements, and he knows his registration. Recording is good. The jacket is studded with photos of many of the film stars involved with the music and John Gain's prolific jacket notes fill in the details. The only things we found wrong were some out-of-tune reeds which surface briefly, notably in "I'll String Along." Otherwise, it's an attractive production.

## PLUG-IN CORNER

**ORGAN DREAMS OF MARIA KUMAGAI. Played on the Rodgers model 340 electronic theatre organ. Stereo, No. SR 1003. \$6.00 postpaid from Sunrise Records, Box 559 Camarillo, Calif. 93010.**

This is Miss Kumagai's third release. By now, fans are aware that her passion for the theatre organ, which developed while listening to records from the USA, caused her to



Maria Kumagai



leave her native Tokyo for Southern California, in order to study theatre organ, an instrument which never caught on in Japan. Intense application, and teachers Bill Thomson and Richard Purvis, brought her to concert readiness within 5 years.

The selections on this disc are a curious mix of fine old concert chestnuts (which predominate) and pop standards. Works by Georges Bizet (*Carmen* selections) and Tchaikowsky ("Nutcracker Suite") occupy most of these grooves, with Rachmaninoff's "Prelude in C-Sharp Minor" rounding out the classical side. The "Nutcracker Suite" is preceded on Side 2 by two pop-standards, Joe Reyne's "Petite Waltz" and David Rose's "Our Waltz," an arrangement which will not please the classical purests. We must admit that past experience has taught us that mixing pops and classics on records rarely has the desired effect — sales.

But bypassing this minor objection, the performances are excellent. Maria's musicianship causes the listener to become so entranced with the music, that any critical feelings he may harbor about electronics are lost. Anyway, it's Rodgers finest theatre instrument, and that's saying plenty.

The girl has taste and imagination, plus a way of handling classics which gives them an intriguing freshness. □

## BULLETIN!

**NEW  
1977 ATOS  
MEMBERSHIP  
ROSTER  
only \$1.00**

Send Check to . . .  
ATOS  
P.O. Box 1002  
Middleburg, Virginia 22117

Rosters will be on sale  
at the '77 Convention  
in Chicago

## \$150,000 LOSS

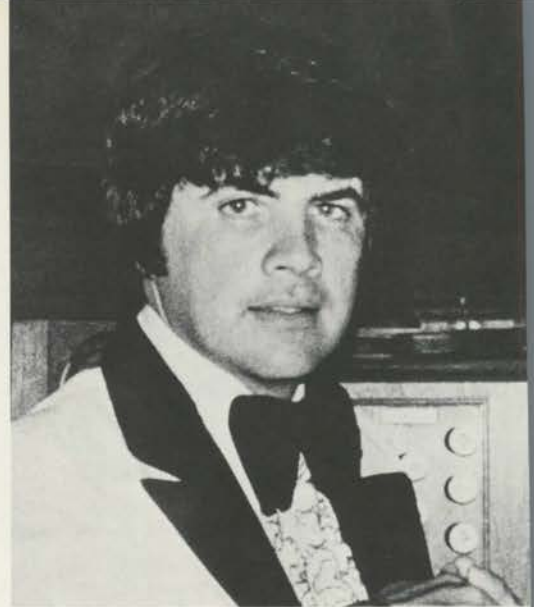
### Kirk of Dunedin Suffers

# FIRE DAMAGE

Terry Charles, the driving force behind the largely Wurlitzer installation in Clearwater's (Fla.) Kirk of Dunedin provides some details about the fire which damaged church and organ on the morning of March 6, 1977.

"Someone gained entrance to the Kirk's Artist's Room and set several fires. A lady in one of the neighboring condominiums couldn't sleep and, looking out her window, noted billows of black smoke mixed with the dense fog above the Kirk. She called the Fire Dept. and they got there in 8 minutes. New developments in fire fighting, which use almost no water, saved most of the organ. Thick, black smoke left deposits of 'suet' on every horizontal surface. Damage to the organ was caused by this soot, smoke and steam generated by the fire. Fire did not touch the organ except for the piano, but all internal parts of the console were totalled. All new parts have been ordered to restore it — to the tune of \$10,000. The percussion pneumatics high in the facade of the Kirk were ruined, of course, and Bells, Chrysoglotts, Chimes etc. have been sent to Deagan for restoration. Every pipe has been carefully removed and wrapped, except the large wooden Diaphones. Fifteen chests, nine tremulants and thirteen regulators have been sent to the (Dave) Junchen-Collins workshop at Woodstock, Illinois for restoration. It's amazing, the damage just smoke can do.

"The second console, a two-manual in the balcony, is a total loss and will not be replaced. While Dave Junchen is working on the chests, I, and several local volunteers, will re-install the organ, rebuild the console, rewire it, and reduct wind-



Terry Charles

lines. We hope to have it playing by August, then a formal rededication in October."

The Kirk organ project was started in 1964. Terry Charles has played 60 concerts on the one-time 3/11 Wurlitzer which has grown to beyond 20 ranks. In the interim, many famous theatre organists have been heard in concert (plus orthodox organist Virgil Fox).

At this writing, the arsonist(s) had not been apprehended nor could any reason for the fire setting be determined. □

Photo made during Billy Nalle's 1975 concert at the Kirk of Dunedin. Percussions mounted in the high arches suffered from smoke and steam damage, but the 4/21 Wurlitzer's pipework remained intact, although dirtied by layers of deposits caused by the smoke.

