



Music Review

by Walter J. Beaupre, Ph.D.

Lee Prater and Bill McMains, ICING THE CAKE: Volume I & Volume 2, Keyboard Designs: Division of Writers Equity, Ltd. (available by mail from Harmony Cottage, Ltd., P.O. Box 706, College Park, MD 20740, at \$4.50 per volume).

There is much to admire in the new "How to . . ." books of Lee Prater and Bill McMains. The Accordafolo feature (fold out pages eliminate page turning during the playing of arrangements) of their earlier *Cinema Organ Styling* books has been wisely retained. Light-hearted humor in the instructional commentary is another plus, although this reviewer found the cook-book-cuteness of it all a bit much in spots. Don't expect complex, sophisticated arrangements of newer songs in these two books. Such is not the function.

The avowed purpose of *Icing The Cake: Volume I* is, according to Prater and McMains, "a totally new way to play tunes." It is intended for the very new organist who can read music well enough to pick his way through the stuff that came with the new organ as "ten easy lessons." General pop organ playing is the ultimate goal rather than theatre styling *per se*. But the approach is truly unique and — to my way of thinking — well worth trying. Here's how it works:

First you play "Hua Hua' i" as a very simple arrangement with a single note melody line, sustained triads in the left hand, and sustained pedal notes. No sweat, this establishes the basic melody and harmony of the piece. The second chorus becomes a fox trot by virtue of alternating root and fifth pedal notes and rhythmic left hand triads. You seesaw between foot-hand-foot-hand. The third chorus of "Hua Hua' i" introduces "pivot tones" in the left hand along with the seesaw pattern of the fox trot chorus. Now the tune has a counter melody and sounds more

professional. Essentially, what you now have is a three chorus arrangement with each chorus a bit more "jazzy" to add variety. By keeping all choruses in the key of G and the notes essentially the same, Prater and McMains figure that you'll discover the process and be able to do likewise with other tunes. It seems logical to the reviewer that home organists with any sense of "closure" at all will, in fact, benefit from this approach.

"Love's Old Sweet Song" shows you how to do the same thing with a waltz. "House of the Rising Sun" demonstrates how to convert a waltz into a fox trot. "Down By the Riverside" introduces what the writers call Aunt Fanny's Favorite Fill — which turns out to be a descending counter melody in the left hand for added interest. Victor Herbert's "Isle of Our Dreams" adds chromatic glissandos a la Jesse Crawford. This arrangement contains a serious notation goof. The 9th measure in the second chorus (page 19) should fill out the E⁷ chord in the left hand with notes D and E above middle C. The chord is misprinted as E-F, and the resulting discord is hardly a "dream."

"Somebody's Knockin' At My Door" is a nothing tune but introduces the important technique of phrasing the melody line. Key changes and a rhythmic bass to contrast legato melody are added attractions. As a learning piece it works well. "Lonesome Road" is a good vehicle for demonstrating the differences between Chicago style and 4-to-the-bar jazz bass. Prater and McMains again make very sure you know exactly what you are doing and why. "Long Tall Daddy" introduces duet harmony in the right hand, while "Worried Man Blues" — another eminently forgettable original — demonstrates the use of a walkin' jazz pedal line. Some of the tunes named have only two choruses; others require three choruses to

make points.

Registration tips at the end of *Volume I* are very good, especially for pipe and tab instruments, and probably should be studied carefully by every new organist. I liked their suggestions concerning the over-use of tremolo and vibrato: short, but very much to the point.

Icing The Cake: Volume 2 builds upon the skills introduced in *Volume I*. Various rhythms are skillfully introduced: jazz waltz, latin beat, gentle rock and beguine. Block chords, pyramid chords and scale tone fills round out the techniques demonstrated in various selections.

Some of the public domain tunes you'll recognize from the titles: "Amazing Grace," "Ay Ay Ay," "Dark Eyes," "Go Down, Moses," "My Heart at Thy Sweet Voice," "Martha" and "Two Guitars."

"Moonlight Concerto" is better known as the theme from the Rachmaninoff Second Piano Concerto or "Full Moon and Empty Arms." The other mystery title "Bach on the Rachs" may make more sense to readers as the bright instrumental novelty tune of a few years back called "Lovers Concerto" which also borrowed from Johann Sebastian Bach.

An original tune by Lee Prater "Siempre de la Ti" is an exercise in mastering the beguine. An open harmony bridge provides the necessary tempo variety.

In general, *Volume 2* doesn't strive for any degree of harmonic sophistication beyond the jazz seventh. The melody line as prescribed by Prater and McMains for "Go Down, Moses" bothered me, and it may jar others also. The musical phrase ". . . let my people go" usually has an F# (with a D major chord) for "people." This arrangement uses F-natural with a D-minor chord consistently, so it was obviously intentional and not a printer's error. So chalk up one to musical license!

At the end of *Volume 2* Prater and McMains provide specific recipes for jazzing up all the pop tunes in the *Robbins C&G Chord Organ Series*. Simply use their handy-dandy chart — and you can't go wrong! I haven't tried it, but I wouldn't be at all surprised if it works.

For those home organists who yearn to learn the tricks of faking pop songs on their own without bene-

fit of a live teacher, these two *Icing The Cake* volumes should be both a boon and a bargain. The tricks are there for the taking with very little left to chance. Prater and McMains have a decided talent for making their "How to . . ." books crystal clear and great fun. However, dyed in the wool theatre organ buffs will probably find their *Cinema Organ Stylings* more satisfying. Before you invest, it might be wise to check our Music Reviews of earlier Prater/McMains books along with other reviews of methods by Fred Feibel or Al Hermanns to get a better idea of what would be best for you — considering your own personal musical goals and tastes.

Erno Rapee, MOTION PICTURE MOODS FOR PIANISTS AND ORGANISTS, (facsimile of 1924 G. Shirmer ed. published at \$30.00) Available for \$3.98 plus \$1.60 handling as catalog item 4258 AE, Marboro Books Inc., Dept. 802, 205 Moonachie Road, Moonachie, N.J. 07074.

I couldn't believe that this all-time classic was available for mere peanuts, so I ordered a copy to inspect before alerting other T.O. fans. Yep! It's the real thing! Be warned that the arrangements are strictly for piano and presuppose your ability to adapt for organ. There are no chord symbols and the massive hard-back tome is bulky and awkward to manage on your music rack. No matter. *Motion Picture Moods* is so loaded with gems you won't find elsewhere at any price that it's silly to quibble. Would you believe the "National Hymn" of Uruguay, "Aeroplane" music by Mendelssohn, "Fire Fighting" by Otto Langley, "Music Box" by Rudolf Friml, "Monotony" by Frederic Chopin? Just the titles will keep you happy for weeks. Every page of music has a quickie index so that you know right where to flip for Birds, Horror, Orgies, Purity, Railroads, etc.

I just opened the book at random to page 367 — "Indian Agitato: dramatic excitement for Indian emotional scenes, rivalry, jealousy, expectancy, apprehension, etc." and it's by Otto Langley. You're a winner before you ever play the opus! And it's all good clean fun: no special

themes for Arab Oil Interests, Legionnaires Disease or Anita Bryant — but that would be expecting a bit much from a book published in 1924. Mr Rapee also warns you that he has avoided foxtrots and two-steps because these are "readily available in music stores." Even if you don't own an organ or can't play a note, this can be a fun book for you.

Bob Ralston, THE BOB RALSTON TOUCH: VOLUME 1, T.B. Harms Music Co. (distributor, Belwin Mills Publishing Corp., Melville, N.Y. 11746, \$3.95).

Certainly the Lawrence Welk Show did much to further the phenomenal success of Bob Ralston as the crowned prince of plug-ins. Lesser known is the fact that young Bob was blessed with excellent training and the blue blood of talent from the outset, making him ready for fame and fortune as few are ready. Any doubting Thomases (or Hammonds, Lowreys, Yamahas, Conns, etc.) would do well to take a close look at a collection recently published as *The Bob Ralston Touch*. It is a decided departure from the usual "pop classics arranged for organ."

Ralston claims — and it's true — that nowhere in any of his arrangements will you find either the left hand or the right hand playing more than one note at a time. "The advantage of this," according to Bob, "is that you will avoid the heavy, thick sound that all too frequently turns people away from organ music." What Ralston modestly doesn't tell you is that he is a past master of the art of devising solidly written counter melodies. Be further advised that these "no chords" arrangements are not so easy to play well as they first appear on the printed page. One flubbed pedal note, buster, and you're in trouble. These are not for the beginner nor for the casual amateur.

Nine of the fifteen tunes are by Jerome Kern and Richard Rogers. Perhaps the most successful of the Kern arrangements is "The Last Time I Saw Paris" which stands tall as a one chorus solo. "All The Things You Are" maintains the harmonic integrity of the original but is thin in spots, especially the bridge. Ralston's

economy of notes is excellent discipline, but doesn't make for a totally satisfying performance. "Look for the Silver Lining" fares better with its mostly-thirds verse and chromatic glissandos. To add interest the melody line is shifted to the left hand. "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes" shows one how to avoid the monotony of the same notes by playing the repeat on the upper manual with the right hand so that the melody line switches from reeds to strings and Tibia. The bridge is not much of an improvement over other printed arrangements for organ. "Make Believe" and "Yesterdays" are both charming in their simplicity and again demonstrate Ralston's flair for counter melodies. The effect is that of a small, intimate chamber orchestra.

Richard Rogers contributes three tunes: "My Romance" and two from *Carousel*. "If I Loved You" is the best of the trio. "You'll Never Walk Alone" is tastefully done as a Bach-Gounod-type prelude with melody first in the left hand and later in the right. It sings quietly, which is a welcome change from the usual "big finish" production numbers heard at so many theatre organ concerts. However, if you buy the tape which Bob Ralston has produced to illustrate these selections, he explains how to manipulate your Leslie speakers to achieve the big sound. Clever, if your speakers rotate mechanically.

Michel LeGrand tunes from *Umbrellas of Cherbourg* require some rather tricky pedal support. "Watch What Happens" is the more difficult of the two; "I Will Wait For You" has its booby traps confined to the bridge. Both arrangements are worth the effort required for mastery. Bob has included two original songs in the album. The first, "Raindrops," is similar to the rhythmical effects achieved in "Last Time I Saw Paris." The second, "We Loved By Starlight," has far and away the most demanding right hand melody line in the book. You may want to save this one for that day when it hits the charts.

"Little Green Apples" and "Vanessa" complete the selections. The less said the better. Even the demonstration tape doesn't help much. The cassette (or 8 track, or record) does not come with the album. You must order it separately from Bob Ralston.

This reviewer had access to the cassette and found Bob's friendly, informal comments and his playing of the arrangements most helpful. Ralston only allows himself to be carried away once — a swing version of "Watch What Happens" which is fun to hear but bears little resemblance to the printed music.

The volume is quality printing throughout. Page turning has been avoided by eliminating a separate pedal stove; be advised that pedal notes appear on the bass clef staves.

One last consideration: could learning these Bob Ralston arrangements help the home organist create similar treatments of other tunes? Probably not, unless one has had considerable training in counterpoint. What the Ralston treatments will do, however, is to broaden one's perspective as to what makes for really good pop organ playing (*i.e.*, variety of approaches). This reviewer came away from *The Bob Ralston Touch* with a much better understanding of what separates the pro's from the dreamers. Unless you are truly satisfied with your present approach to playing pop standards, you'll welcome this one. □

Closing Chord

One of California's most beloved and respected pipe organ authorities, **Charles Hershman**, died in July at age 82 following a lengthy illness. He is survived by his wife of 52 years, Ruth.

Charles Hershman devoted over 60 years of his life to pipe organ building. He will be most remembered by clients and associates alike for his generosity of spirit and unyielding adherence to the highest standards of craftsmanship and business ethics. Toward the end of his career he devoted himself to giving freely of his knowledge to young people, who were ever grateful to receive the benefit of his unique experience.

Charles Hershman was thoroughly trained in all phases of pipe organ work from factory to installation and from church and concert instruments to theatre organs. He began his career with the M.P. Moller Co.

prior to the start of World War I. After serving in the Army overseas, he joined the Robert Morton Company of Van Nuys, Ca., becoming one of their prime installation and tonal-finishing experts. While there he was responsible for the installation of many of their most prestigious instruments, such as Loews New Orleans, the Orpheum (former Pantages) in San Francisco and the University of Southern California.

In the early 1930s, he settled in San Francisco to open his own pipe organ business which he continued until his recent retirement. Specializing in rebuilding and installation, his achievements were manifold and notable. He installed numerous sizable instruments for M.P. Moller, rebuilt and enlarged many instruments for prestigious churches and was a major participant in the theatre field, not only during the golden age of the movie palace but in the recent theatre organ revival.

Mr. Hershman often recalled as the highlight of his career his selection by the National Broadcasting Company to be fully in charge of all pipe organ installation and maintenance for the Pacific Network. In this capacity, he was responsible for two NBC organs in San Francisco, most notably the former Paramount Hollywood Studio Wurlitzer, which he so successfully reinstalled at the San Francisco Radio City studio where it was played by his friend George Wright.

What probably has become the most broadcasted and recorded organ in the world was designed, rebuilt and installed by Charles Hershman at the NBC Hollywood Studios. This was the famous "Bridge to Dreamland" organ built for Paul Carson and used on *One Man's Family*, *Amos 'n' Andy*, and so many other famous radio programs. This organ was created especially for NBC by Mr. Hershman, using the best of available pipes and components from both Wurlitzer and Welte instruments.

Charles Hershman was known and respected by numerous famous organists and organbuilders, as well as lesser-known musicians and enthusiasts. His ever humble and helpful attitude, knowledge and craftsmanship will be sorely missed by all who were fortunate enough to know him. □



the letters to the editors

Letters to the Editor concerning all aspects of the theatre organ hobby are encouraged. Send them to the editor concerned. Unless it's stated clearly on the letter "not for publication," the editors feel free to reproduce it, in whole or part.

Address:

George Thompson
Editor
P.O. Box 1314
Salinas, Calif. 93902

Dear Mr. Klos:

Your letter, notifying me of my induction into the Theatre Organists Hall of Fame, rekindled some fond old memories. Those early theatre days are among my most treasured remembrances.

I thank you for the honor of being included in the Hall. It's nice to be remembered. Please convey my thanks to the selection committee.

Bob Power gave me a dinner August 4th in recognition of the award, and he read your letter of notification to his guests.

Many thanks for your good wishes.

Sincerely,
Milton Charles,
Ojai, Calif.

Dear George,

I would like to take advantage of your column to express my gratitude to the fellows who took part in the jam sessions at the Music Grinder during the convention.

Many people remarked how well the artists played in the jam sessions, and everyone who attended got caught up in the spirit of having a good time. Rather than the artists being the stars of the event, the music was. This was exactly what we had hoped would happen.

Several of the artists who played