


Theatre Organists As Composers

PART I

Compiled by Lloyd E. Klos



A professional musician hasn't fully "arrived," it has been stated, until he has written and published a composition. Through the years, we have seen periodic references to organists who have written songs or have collaborated with others in the evolution of their works.

In this feature, we offer an alphabetical listing of theatre organists and their compositions, some of which may be familiar, but many will prove new to the readers of THEATRE ORGAN.

Note: This should not be considered a complete listing as time will have elapsed between this list's compilation and the date of publication.

ELMER ALBRECHT. Born in Chicago in 1901; died there in 1959. Private piano study. Was organist and pianist in theatres; later led his own band.

Songs:

"Don't Ever Darken My Door"
"Elmer Done It Again"
"Elmer's Tune"
"How Can I Live Without You?"
"How Was I To Know?"
"Memories of An Old Bouquet"
"Sea Shells on the Sea Shore"
"Take the Whole Darn Farm"
"You're In It — I'm In It Too"

DON BAKER. Born in St. Thomas, Ontario, Canada, February 26, 1903. Pianist in pit bands, organist at Rivoli and Rialto theatres in New York; Bernstein theatres in London;

New York Paramount Theatre 14 years; toured for Rodgers and Conn organ companies. Inducted into Theatre Organists Hall of Fame in 1971.

Collaborator: Edward Lane

Songs:

"Bless You For Being An Angel"
"Snowtime Serenade"
"You're the Only Pebble on the Beach"

ELSIE THOMPSON BOYD. Born in St. Paul, Minn., May 27, 1904. Was organist at 15 in silent film theatres. Organist-singer, beginning in 1929 in Brooklyn and N.Y. Paramount theatres; later staff organist at CBS. Has had concert and TV appearances.

Song: "So Grateful"

ALBERT JOHN "BERT" BUHRMAN, JR. Born in Springfield, Mo., April 19, 1915. Studied with Glen Stambach. Organist at WOQ, WHB in Kansas City. Music Director at KCMO. Played theatres, was staff organist on CBS radio and TV. Since 1963 at School of the Ozarks in Missouri.

Work: *The Bald Knobbers* (Opera)

PAUL CARSON. Born in Illinois. Died in Mexico. Educated at Northwestern University, studied under Edwin Lemare. Starred as organist on *Bridge to Dreamland*, *One Man's Family* and *I Love a Mystery* radio series.

Song: "Patricia"

WILLIAM R. CARTER. Born in Philadelphia, May 2, 1908. Educated at Temple University School of Music. Organist in silent film theatres. Pianist in small bands; night club, radio and TV soloist. Recording star.

Songs:

"Come Back To Me"
"Crystal Polka"
"Fly a' Polka"
"Lady in the Rain"
"Lucie Waltz"
"Lost Lady"
"Savannah Beauty"
"Wanderin' Road"

JESSE CRAWFORD. Born in Woodland, Cal., December 2, 1895. Died in 1962. Studied composition with Joseph Schillinger, George Gershwin and Glenn Miller. Organist in theatres in Washington, California, Chicago and New York. Toured England and United States. Recorded for Victor, and played over CBS and NBC. Inducted into the Theatre Organists Hall of Fame in 1970.

Songs and Instrumentals:

"Harlem Holiday"
"Hawaiian Honeymoon"
"Lonely"
"Louisiana Nocturne"
"March of the Matadors"
"Mood Tragic"
"Starlight Rendezvous"
"The Swiss Doll"
"Vienna Violins"

MRS. JESSE (HELEN) CRAWFORD. Born, August 20, 1899 in Cincinnati. Died in 1943. Organist in Chicago and New York theatres. Toured with orchestra in thirties. Inducted into Theatre Organists Hall of Fame in 1971.

Songs:

"So Blue"
"The Moonlight Reminds Me of You"
"Within the Prison of My Dreams"

LLOYD G. DEL CASTILLO. Born in New England in 1893. Graduate of Harvard. Played theatres in Boston, and on radio. Opened theatre organ school in 1927. Moved to California and has continued as a concert artist, arranger, writer, and teacher. Inducted into the Theatre Organists Hall of Fame in 1972.

Works:

Stepladders

Around the Sundial
Babillage
Slumber Boat
Wiltern Fanfare

HELEN DELL. Born in Los Angeles. Studied accordion and organ. Appeared in clubs. Has played for organ clubs and ATOS chapters around the country, and for three ATOS conventions. Has arranged music for several TV shows. Named Los Angeles Dodger organist in 1972.

Collaborator: Ray Blasdell

Songs:

"Buttercup"
"Coffee Cake"
"Up"

COLLINS H. DRIGGS. Born in Manchester, Conn. in 1911. Organist for Paramount theatres and billed as "World's Youngest Featured Organist." On CBS. Led Ford Ensemble at N.Y. World's Fair in 1939. Consultant in development of Hammond electronic organ.

Collaborator: W. Edward Breuder

Songs:

"All This I Pray"
"Fantasy"
"I Alone Shall Never Be"
"It's a Law-aw-aw-aw Way Back Home"
"Sleep Happy"
"The Day That I Was 17"
"The Templed Hills"
"You're Sweeter Than Any Bouquet"

EDDIE DUNSTEDTER. Born in Edwardsville, Ill., 1897. Died in 1974. Played in dance bands, theatres in the Middle West, with film orchestra and on TV. Inducted into Theatre Organists Hall of Fame in 1970.

Songs and Instrumentals:

"Hello, Mom"
"Pi Ka Ke"
"San Francisco Beat"

MICHAEL EDWARDS. Born in Hazleton, Pa., 1893; died in 1962. Organist in Pennsylvania theatres. Collaborators: Bud Green and Gladys Shelley

Instrumentals:

"Aladdin and the Princess"
"American Seamen"
"March Modernistic"
"My America"
"National Unity"

"Nimble Fingers"

"Sword Dance"

Songs:

"I Whisper Good Night"
"Love Isn't Love"
"Music In the Zoo" (12 songs)
"Once In Awhile"
"Tell Me Why"

LEE O. ERWIN, JR. Born in Huntsville, Ala., 1908. Played theatres in the South; over WLW in Cincinnati; staff of CBS on Arthur Godfrey shows. Written scores for a number of silent film classics. Inducted into the Theatre Organists Hall of Fame in 1971.

Songs:

"Dance Me Loose"
"Goggle-Eye-Gee"
"Hello, Sunshine"
"Let's Have a Picnic"
"Mariners' Song"
"Mighty Navy Wings"
"Minnequa"
"There Ought to be a Society"

FREDERICK FEIBEL. Born in Union City, N.J., 1906; died May 16, 1978 in Florida. Organist in film theatres, including New York Paramount 7-1/2 years. With CBS 22 years. Organist at First Presbyterian Church, Vero Beach, Fla. Inducted into Theatre Organists Hall of Fame in 1971.

Works:

Eastern Postlude
Elegy to a Deserted Homestead
The Pixie Patrol
Toccata In Blue
Modern Etudes (Books 1, 2 & 3)
Master Course in Organ Playing in Popular Style

WALTER FREED. Born in Spokane, Wash. 1903. Theatre organist 10 years. Teacher 10 years. Organist at Fraunces Tavern in N.Y. 10 years. Author of five teaching books on organ.

Works:

Concerto In Miniature (piano)
Fiesta
The What-Not Shelf (ballet suite)
Songs:
"Dawn of a New Day"
"Ev'ning Reverie"
"High In the Hills of God"
"I Find Solace"
"I Heard a Prayer"
"Last Night"

(Continued in next issue) □