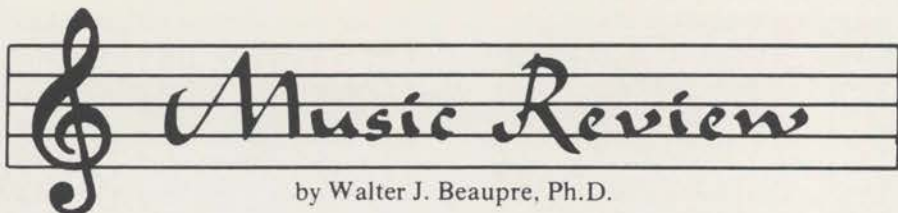


one of the few Austin theatre organs, a 3/8, in his home.

During the years when he was becoming established in his own Centerless Grinding Company, he also tuned pianos and restored player pianos. Frank and his daughter, Lynnette, spent many hours rebuilding the combination action of the Thomaston console in 1969. He also stored major parts of the Shelton organ in his shop for years, and made the shop available for the first restoration efforts recovering all the pneumatics in the chests.

Frank Manion passed on the chairman's gavel in December, 1972, and after many years of devoted service to the chapter, he took time out to enjoy his hobby of sailing which he pursued avidly until he became seriously ill on a cruise to the Virgin Islands earlier this year. Although doctors removed a cancerous lung, they were unable to halt the spread of the disease to which he succumbed. He is survived by his wife, three sons and four daughters.

Memorial donations to the Thomaston Organ Fund or the Shelton Organ Fund, both projects close to Frank's heart, may be sent to Mr. Bertrand Rankin, Treasurer, CVTOS, 33 Brace Road, Newington, CT 06111. □



Music Review

by Walter J. Beaupre, Ph.D.

THEATRE ORGAN GREATS: A Salute to Radio City Music Hall, Bradley Publications, 1979 (available by mail from Bradley Publications, 43 W. 61st St., New York, N.Y. 10023; price \$9.95 plus 75 cents postage).

The publication of *Theatre Organ Greats* rates a standing ovation for producer Don Wallace and assistant Mark Dunham. Be advised by this reviewer to order two copies; one to wear out on the music rack and one to store in a safe place for your great-grandchildren. The fifteen contributors range all the way from the legendary to those who are only extremely talented, from the immortals to the exciting new organists. In short, it's 112 pages of great theatre music. Now, with well deserved raves out of the way, let's get down to cases.

The late, great Richard Leibert provides a stunning overture for the

folio with fifteen pages of his hit waltz "Come Dance With Me." Leibert's breathtaking inventiveness carries one through chorus after chorus with ever-changing ideas. The arrangement is really not that difficult to play if you're good at changing registrations quickly and don't mind umpteen key changes. Oh yes, and recruit a page turner, you'll need one! Ken Rosen has faithfully given us Leibert at his show biz RCMH best with glissandos for fingers and palms and a very soft finale which suggests that the Wurlitzer console is sliding back into its cubicle as the houselights dim and the newsreel flashes on the giant screen.

Reginald Foort's conception of "Blue Tango" starts out nice 'n easy in five flats and doesn't get too tricky until you are hooked (about five pages along). The suggested registrations work well if your console is blessed with three manuals and a

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Posthorn. Otherwise you'll be forced to adapt. So it's a small price to pay for such a fine arrangement.

Before you sit down to play Jesse Crawford's "Smile" as transcribed by Ken Rosen, don't forget to correct the printing error by changing the F clef to a G clef so that the first chord for the left hand reads "C-G-B" starting at middle C. Play it as printed, and the angels will weep!

Once that minor goof is resolved, the introduction to Chaplin's lovely theme from *Modern Times* precedes with all thirds and many grace notes and crushed tones which alternate on the manuals for tonal variety. The "Smile" melody itself continues in mostly thirds an octave higher, alternating every four bars with open harmony or thirds in the left hand. It's pure, late Crawford and extra smooth. For the second chorus Jesse modulates from C to F and uses a single note "horn line" solo with only one semi-chromatic slide.

For the coda you must sustain a high F note for nine measures while the left hand echoes the theme in thirds and then winds down in a Crawford orgy of grace notes and turns. On paper it all looks boringly simple, but on the organ... ah! That's a different story! If you can play with Jesse Crawford's genius for phrasing and expression, it will sound gorgeous. Leave out the poetic feeling and it's just another pretty tune.

Ashley Miller demonstrates conclusively that "The Song Is You" can be played for chorus after chorus in the key of C and never get dull. Nor does he stoop to doing the bridge in waltz time either. This reviewer's only gripe is that A.M. avoided a key signature change in the bridge at the expense of endless sharps and double sharps. Sight reading becomes a nightmare. Nevertheless, one can't help but admire Miller's endless musical ideas. What a creative musical mind! Ironically, the registration suggestions for "The Song Is You" were the only ones in the entire collection that were a complete bust on the reviewer's organ. The 5-1/3 Quint was too heavy.

Rosa Rio provides an extra bonus for Crawford fans by arranging Jesse's tune "Forgotten Melody." Be warned in advance that you'll need a set of chimes which you can activate independently of the two manuals (or

at least turn on and off instantaneously) if you hope to play the piece as written by Rosa. The arrangement is super. The melody itself — perhaps Jesse said it best in the title.

For a welcome change of pace Ray Bohr swings "As Time Goes By" with lots of big bold chords that make it sound like one of his RCMH solos. Other than an eight bar chorus in E-Flat the arrangement is in C. It's straight-forward and flashy. With a little practice on your part, friends will be saying "Play it again, Sam!"

Probably Ann Leaf didn't intend that her treatment of the tango "Inspiration" would be a killer, and if Don Baker or Hector Olivera were writing this review — it wouldn't be. For those of us with lesser technical savvy "little organ Annie" goes right for the juggler vein. Let's just admit that she is the Bach among theatre organists and save this one for later.

"Here's That Rainy Day" is love at first sight-reading, one of the most satisfying arrangements in the collection. Rex Koury's conception is romantic ballad all the way with con-

siderable Crawford overtones. It's all in G with a gentle dancing beat in the second chorus. Koury has an affinity for harmonic structure which is as right as it is inevitable. The music is simple only in the sense that "Less is more." Once you've conquered the notes, work on the hard part — subtlety of expression.

Plowing your way through "Limehouse Blues" is well worth the struggle even if the end result is merely a better understanding of what makes Don Baker impossible to imitate and so easy to admire. All of his technical tricks are right there on the staves. Anyone who can read music can play them. With years of practice and a superior nervous system a person might even learn to play them tolerably well. What's a little blood on the keys while one attempts his triad glissandos? So you break something attempting to play those rapidly alternating block chords up to tempo? Nobody said this was John Williams Book I. "Limehouse Blues" is a Don Baker barn burner.

Doreen Chadwick is enormously popular on the British theatre organ

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circuit. Her arrangement of "Musetta's Waltz" from Puccini's opera *La Boheme* seems on first glance to be simple to the point of no individual styling at all. The notes are easy to play with no fancy chords, exotic harmonies or flashy trills and glissandos. But the style, charm and individuality of Doreen are definitely there if you pay close attention to her constantly changing registrations. It's a good, solid lesson in orchestration. Follow the suggestions above and between the staves and you'll be rewarded with a lovely surprise.

For this reviewer the most welcome bonus in the entire collection is — at long last — Gaylord Carter's definitive version of "The Perfect Song." It is surprisingly easy to play if you ignore the opening scale run and the chromatic run involving both hands near the climax. The catch is that you simply can't ignore these two technical challenges without committing sacrilege. Better you should ignore the opening clarinet cadenza in *Rhapsody in Blue!* The first chorus or so is in G with the final half chorus in B-Flat. It's all big lush chords and bold counter melodies and precisely the way one remembers it from Amos 'n Andy days or a recent Carter concert. Of course, Amos 'n Andy are out of favor and fashion. So much for changing times. But any theatre organ fan who sneers at "The Perfect Song" deserves exile to Cuba or Iran, or maybe a quiet cell with padded walls. Let's face it, gang, we put the wrong Carter in the White House!

Now it can be told: Del Castillo has an "Eleventh Finger" and you can have one too! Complete directions for manufacturing same are included with Del's delightful version of "Peanut Vender." Fun is fun, of course, but there is no nonsense involved among the other ten fingers. It's a good, bouncy arrangement of a grand novelty tune.

As a dyed-in-the-wood Eddie Dunstedter fan the reviewer was disappointed with "Open Your Eyes." It's a big, flashy treatment of a nothing tune. Coordinating the rhythmic piano left hand with the pedal notes takes some fancy timing. Better she takes this one for the pros who do Dunstedter impressions.

Lee Erwin's "Sherlock Junior" is a charming, happy little song that was meant to create a mood for one of

the silent classics. On its own as listenable music, it ranks among Erwin's best. Lee Erwin's writing is flawless and has an inevitability about it that is tremendously satisfying. Try, for example, the last four measures on page 101. You'll hear a warmth of sound from the organ — there's no other way of describing it — which no one else does quite as well. Lee also does nice things with manual changes which add whimsy and delight.

The biggest surprise in the collection comes from the youngest contributor, Lance Luce. If the lyrics of the Gershwin song "Summertime" declare that "the livin' is easy," the same does not apply to this prize winning arrangement for organ. It is complex, tense, and exciting. The chord progressions go about as far as you can get and still remain in this galaxy. Lance suggests the use of an auto-rhythm jazz waltz along with a third chorus piano solo (both hands, yet). Yes, folks, the mechanical marvel known as the theatre organ of the '20s has come a long way; and with Lance Luce and his generation testing the limits we can expect a bright, creative future.

In summation, the batting average of *Theatre Organ Greats* is fantastic, something for just about everybody — and then some more! Even if you don't play a note, you'll enjoy the biographies and pictures of the fifteen artists. It's handsome international sampling of outstanding musicians and their music. Don't miss this one! □



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 President Haight:

Through the good offices of our mutual friend Judd Walton, I have just received the plaque commemorating your award of an Honorary Membership to your great society.

I very much hope you will believe me when I say that I am quite overwhelmed by this great professional compliment to me. I feel that my small efforts do not deserve such an honour, particularly in view of the fact that anything for which I may be remembered dates back to the nineteen thirties.

May I hope that you will express my deep gratitude to all members of your Board and assure them that I shall treasure your award always.

With my warmest appreciation and good wishes.

Sincerely yours,
Sidney Torch
August 23, 1980

Dear George,

Although I have seldom been lost for words, words did fail me when it was announced at the banquet in London that I had been named the "Theatre Organist of the Year 1980." It was an honor which was

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