

Farney were the featured performers, and a young student of Farney's, Scott Gillespie, entertained during dinner. This young artist has since become a staff organist for the Organ Loft. Open console at that meeting continued until six the next morning, an indication that the participants at that convention must have found the great 5/19 Wurlitzer to be an exciting instrument.

Over the years many famous organists have played and/or recorded this unique organ. Artists Lyn Larsen, Tony Wilson, David Reese and Gus Farney are among those who have recorded albums at the Organ Loft.

Larry Bray's interests ranged beyond his Organ Loft to civic projects in the Salt Lake City area. In addition to hosting frequent visits by school groups to see and hear the great theatre organ, Larry was involved in the attempt to save Saltair, the famous amusement park on the shore of Salt Lake. He also helped to maintain the organ in the Capitol Theatre in Salt Lake City.

The dream of Larry Bray will not end with his death; his nephew, also named Larry Bray, plans to continue to operate the Organ Loft and to expand the present 5/34 Wurlitzer as time and money allow. Staff organists JoAnn Harmon, Scott Gillespie, and Linda Carlisle will continue to entertain during the Saturday night dinner shows, and organ lovers from across the continent will continue to honor one man's vision of a living memorial to that unique twentieth century phenomenon, the theatre organ. □

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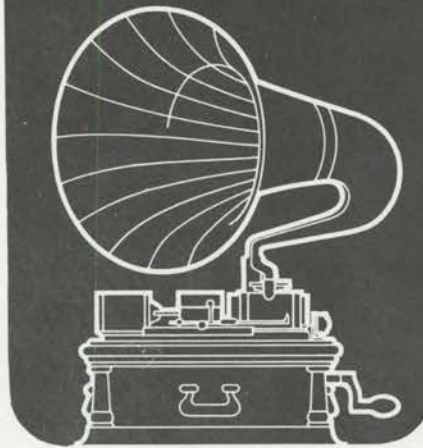
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For The Records



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ROSEMARY BAILEY AT THE MIGHTY WURLITZER. Wallyn label No. WE 101 (stereo). \$8.98 post-paid from Wallyn Enterprises, 2736 Hollyridge Drive, Hollywood, Calif. 90068.

College professor Alfred Ehrhardt started his organ project about the time ATOS was founded. He purchased the Style 235 Special Wurlitzer from the doomed Dome Theatre, removed it to storage and started looking for a residence large enough to house a 3/15. He found one and moved in — but not for long. It was the era of burgeoning super highways, or Freeways, as they are called in the West. Before long the "eminent domain" boys stopped by and told Al he'd have to move — or have a freeway running through his living room. So, Al moved.

Al's troubles were not over; he was also evicted from the next place he rented. This time oil was discovered under the house. Evicted by a developing gusher! In all, Al moved the organ five times.

To guard against proliferating thoroughfares and spouting oil wells, Al started looking for a high spot, an eagles' nest well above the areas eyed by road builders and other land grabbers. All of this took time and the years passed.

Al retired from teaching and devoted his full energy to his organ project. He finally located an ideal home in the Eagle Rock area of Los Angeles. Perched high on a hillside it has a spacious living room with a picture window overlooking a verdant, tree-covered residential area.

Ehrhardt is a perfectionist. He must have invested ten years in the installation of his instrument. Every part was cleaned, sanded, polished or varnished, as the case may be. The result is an immaculate display of pipe-work, with chests and regulators looking factory fresh. Al's story spans twenty years of dedication and work, but the end result is something to be proud of. The organ was first played for Los Angeles ATOS conventioners by Ann Leaf in the late '70s; Ann praised it. So much for history.

We first heard Rosemary Bailey playing a promotional concert on a Hammond at one of those regional electronic organ gatherings sponsored by the commercial magazines which plug the instruments. When she broke into a jazz improvisation she was simply magnificent. Jazz improvisation can't be faked; the player "has it" or he doesn't. Experts in the field who come to mind would include Benny Goodman, Al Hirt, Ella Fitzgerald and the late Louis Armstrong. From what we have heard from Ms. Bailey, she belongs to this rather exclusive club.

Until she played a concert on the San Gabriel (California) 3/16 Wurlitzer for the Los Angeles Chapter last November we didn't know she had any interest in pipes (although her bio states she studied classical pipes some years ago). For one reason, jazz is difficult on pipes, compared to the fast attack electronics. Not many organists' names have been associated with jazz. Fats Waller, perhaps. And Rex Koury. And maybe Helen Crawford. Milt Herth left us many recordings of his trio playing jazz but his instrument was the lightning-fast Hammond. The field isn't overcrowded and Rosemary is very welcome. With all this discussion of jazz playing one



Rosemary Bailey. A good first try.

might get the idea that Ms. Bailey is confined to that field. Far from it! Jazz is just one of her specialties and organists who can do it justice are too

few. As the tunelist will indicate, the lady is versatile.

Before discussing the selection we must observe that, on the technical side, this is a flawed recording. Somewhere during the recording process far too much reverb has crept into the tracks. This tends to reduce the crispness of attacks and generally make the sounds run together. And it reduces definition in registration. In some cases it makes the high frequencies sound harsh. This is most obvious during the more staccato selections, but a degree of blur permeates all of the tracks. Stereo separation is minimal. Despite this, Rosemary's talent, performing ability and originality come through with power to spare.

The show opens with a sprightly Gershwin medley which includes "Fascinatin' Rhythm," "It Ain't Necessarily So," "Someone to Watch Over Me," a lowdown, dirty "The Man I Love" and a bouncy "I Got Rhythm." She takes some unique liberties with rhythms and harmonies here, and they all fit the tunes well.


Another of Rosemary's strong

points is in phrasing. This is very evident during the 1940s ballad "Stella by Starlight," which Victor Young wrote to underscore a movie dealing with the supernatural. The Tuba carries the melody in the low and middle registers while the mostly-string accompaniment weaves an aura of both mystery and romance.


For starts, "Wunderbar" has the feel of a Viennese waltz, then it becomes a bright USA-style waltz with Glockenspiel embellishment. The lady couldn't resist a Straussian ending. A solid ear pleaser! "After the Lovin'" glows with a sophisticated slow jazz styling wherein Rosemary proves that a 1925 instrument is quite capable of expressing current music in warm tones.

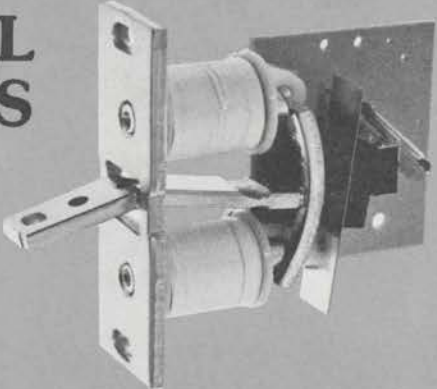
Side Two opens with a spirited "New York, New York" which oozes showbiz references such as a stoptime sequence to suggest tap dancers. "Through the Eyes of Love" is the theme from the movie *Ice Castles*. Rosemary expresses every tender nuance the composer put into the ballad. Again she rates an "A" for

THE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS

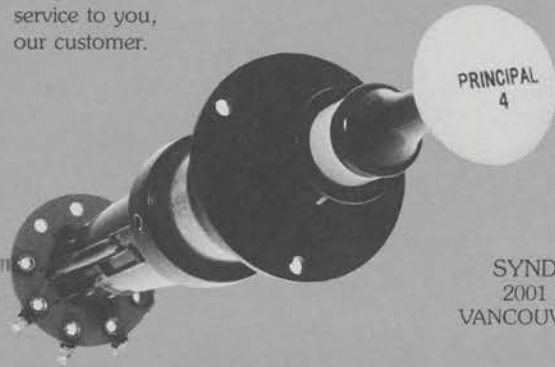


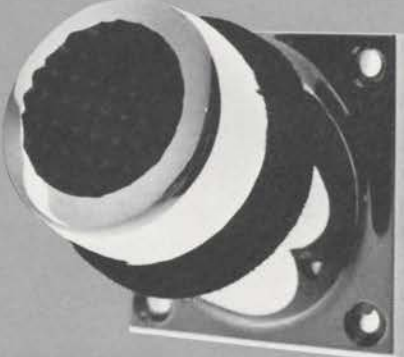
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phrasing while creating a romantic mood. Ms. Bailey is right at home exploiting the full-blown charms of pneumatic "Sweet Georgia Brown." She uses the tune as a take-off point, then goes into her own fantasy of variations in a frenzy of cascading notes which boggle the mind. Words fail, in this case. But Fats Waller would approve.

"All the Things You Are" gets a full theatre organ treatment, with emphasis on strings (perhaps trem'd a bit too fast) and reeds. The harmonic virtuosity is arresting!

Rosemary isn't as much at home with selections from *Carmen* as she is with "Georgia." Her sinuous "Habenera" is plenty sexy but when she lights into the "Overture," "Gypsy Dance" or "March of the Toreadors" she speeds up to Keystone Kops comedy tempo. The same applies to "Smugglers Theme" (none of the titles is listed). We can't determine what she was striving for in this grouping. If the *Carmen* selections are intended to demonstrate her speed and digital dexterity, she succeeds (although the reverb tends to run fast passages together as in "Gypsy Dance."). This one is not for opera purists. One just can't take the same type of liberties with Bizet's music as with a pop tune, *Carmen Jones* notwithstanding. Yet, it's still an interesting experiment if the listener can shed long ingrained proprieties.

The review pressing was glassy-smooth and free of clicks. Two photos of the attractive organist adorn the jacket. Notes by musicologists Richard Bradley and Don Wallace provide well-written info about artist, organ and music. "Wallyn" is a new label dedicated to organ music. Although technical aspects leave something to be desired, this pipe debut of a skilled and individualistic organist is worth owning.

ORGAN FANTASIA: LYN LARSEN playing a special 3-manual Rodgers electronic organ with nine ranks of pipes extra. MCI - 103 stereo. \$7.98 postpaid from Musical Contrasts, Inc., 415 So. Main Street, Royal Oak, Michigan 48067.

This is the groove debut of the long-awaited Rodgers electronic organ with pipes, as played by a popular



Lyn Larsen. Pipes, transistors and kettledrums.

artist. The instrument is a special design fabricated for St. Benedict's Church, Highland Park, Michigan, and is claimed to be the equivalent of 51 ranks (including the nine ranks of real pipework). There are many pluses and minuses here, and we are not convinced that this recording gives the Rodgers effort to wed pipes to solid-state tone generation a fair shake. For one thing, there are two percussionists whamming away on cymbals and kettledrums through some of the selections. Their efforts add nothing to the organ presentation.

Selections are: "Paraphrase on Trumpet Tune in B-Flat" (Johnson), "Prelude in D Minor" (Bach), "The Old Refrain" (Kreisler), "Concerto in A-Minor" (Bach-Vivaldi), "Ave Maria" (Bach-Gounod, with synthesizer "soprano" lead), "Psalm XIX," *Star Wars* excerpt (Williams), "Evening Star" (Wagner), and "War March of the Priests" (Mendelssohn).

This is a very curious recording. Fortunately, the pressing is of very high quality. The noise level and distortion are very low, and the frequency response and dynamic range are very wide. The acoustics at first seem to be the kind that would make an organ builder's mouth water. However, on close listening at least three "environments" seem to emerge; one for the percussionists, one for the real pipes, and another for the electronics. The latter fights the other two at times and causes a bad blur and a clashing of different sounds. The pedal definition is very poor and the pedal line disappears at times.

The first selection raises a big question. Is the organ sound big or small? Compared with the percussion it is tiny. A very unsatisfactory balance here. The opening of "Prelude in D Minor" brings to mind an old Baldwin Model 5. The attack and release of each note is so slow that all excitement is lost along with Lyn's phrasing. Lyn gives "The Old Refrain" the most beautiful reading within memory. It is unfortunate this selection is not played on a theatre organ, but the classic Rodgers is at its best here. The Bach-Vivaldi "Concerto" suffers the same problems as the Bach "Prelude" plus a little too much romanticism. The term "romanticism" here denotes dependence on great volume changes rather than pitch emphasis and contrasting tonal colors for the presentation of the selections. And adding the 32' pedal near the end of a baroque piece is rather anachronistic. The synthesizer in "Ave Maria" provides much tonal interest.

"Psalm XIX" is the most articulate sounding of all the selections and contains the least acoustical fighting of voices. "Star Wars" brings more overbearing percussion and would be far better on a theatre organ. "Evening Star" features Strings and the dynamic range is carried to its softest. "War March of the Priests" played very fast is perhaps the best selection on the disc. A Larsen favorite ever since he heard it on the soundtrack of "Dr. Phibes," it is very well played and has a minimum of acoustic problems.

Lyn's ability has been proved on past recordings. His style is always clean and in good taste. Lyn's talent deserves a more responsive organ than that recorded on this disc. Closer miking might have improved clarity, but not what sounds like a slow key attack.

JUST PLAYIN' JANE: THE SECOND TIME AROUND. Jane McKee Johnson playing three theatre pipe organs. JMJ-4 (stereo). \$7.95 postpaid from McKee Organ-Piano Center, 5915 Sixth Avenue, Tacoma, Washington 98406.

Veteran organist Jane McKee cut her first disc a few years back; it sold so well that it generated this second stanza. Jane is well known in the Tacoma area from her pizzeria stints and theatre performances. Long ago she

developed an affinity for the theatre organ and knew that one day she would own one. Not being familiar with pipe organ mechanics, she solved that problem by marrying a guy who knows pipes inside out, Homer Johnson. This recording reflects the Johnson skills, starting with Jane's 3/8 (assembled) home installation. It's a well-balanced honey. Next heard is the 2/9 Kimball in the Tacoma Temple Theatre, an instrument Jane used to broadcast. She now plays occasional movie premieres and intermissions on it.

All of Side Two is played on the 3/17 Wurlitzer in the Tacoma Pizza & Pipe eatery, where Jane holds forth on Sunday nights. Each of the instruments has its distinctive personality, both tonally and in acoustic environment. Homer Johnson's maintenance is evident throughout the tracks. Jane selected her repertoire with the instrument used in mind. The result is a varied program of well-played selections, some familiar, some not. We can't fathom whether it is the array of organs, or simply a more emphatic application of Jane's artistry, but we enjoyed this set even more than the previous *Playin' Jane* release.

The introductory notes of "Spring Can Really Hang You Up" are reminiscent of Jesse Crawford's early Chicago showroom sound. This tune and the three which follow are played on Jane's 3/8 home installation. It has a glorious Tibia and Vox, plus articulate brass for a small instrument. The latter is used for punctuation during "Something's Gotta Give." A mellow brass reed carries the ball for the verse of a non-George "The Boy Next Door" while the Tibias sing the chorus. Acoustically, the sound is in close-up perspective. There is no evidence of added reverb; it's the residence organ sound and it is most satisfying. Those with playback frequency controls may want to attenuate the pedal bass some, for a better balance of voices. This goes also for the lively "Trolley Song." Yes, the spirit of Judy is still very much there, both shy and assertive.

A more spacious aura is evident in the three selections played on the Temple Theatre 2/9 Kimball, the first being a loving 4:40 minute "Caprice Viennois" which Jane plays nearer the tempo of the Kreisler recording than the "lazy stream of dreams" when it was the theme of radio



Jane McKee Johnson shown at the 3/17 Pizza & Pipes Wurlitzer.

WLW's *Moon River* series. "Walkin' My Baby Back Home" features spicy Kinura enrichment with some percussion glitter, all in upbeat tempo. "Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue" is bluesy in the Billie Holliday way, and features very attractive registration.

Side Two is played on the 3/17 Pizza & Pipe Wurlitzer, the organ heard on Jane's previous release. It has an even more spacious environment than the theatre Kimball (unless recorder Don Myers later added some reverb). This organ has the massive array of voices required for a brass band sequence such as "Strike Up The Band," which is decorated with brassy fanfares and a wealth of counter melodies. Jane's son, Rich Powers, wrote the organ arrangement of "We've Only Just Begun," which features pleasant tempo and key variety. Mama Jane plays it to the hilt.

For many years then Conn-man Don Kingston milked laughs from audiences with his poultry-oriented "Chicken Polka." Jane does it with references to some related cornpone tunes and even adds some non-barnyard sound effects. The cackles all register and no one lays an egg. Marvin Hamlisch first came into the spotlight via another composer's resurrected music — remember his credits for *The Sting* film score? This time

Jane plays a tune which is wholly Hamlisch, "Through the Eyes of Love," an empathetic adaptation by Jane.

The closer is a straightforward reading of Tchaikowsky's "Waltz of the Flowers," a selection familiar to *Fantasia* addicts (whether Stokowski purists or those who accept the recent rescoring). Jane makes no concessions to schmaltz; she plays it for Tchaikowsky, and he would easily approve her artistry. She gives much attention to selecting proper registration for the beloved classic; her "burnished brass" during the Trio is most orchestral. It adds up to a delightful closer.

Don Myers' recording, which covers three very different acoustical perspectives, does full justice to each. While there is no dearth of highs, low frequencies may need some reduction during some of the tunes. The review pressing had a few clicks here and there, which doesn't mean your copy will have them. Jacket notes are of a homey nature, obviously written with pride by Jane and including comments about her talented family. The jacket shows photos of the three consoles.

It's a good show for those who enjoy theatre organ styling played by a mistress — oops! — perhaps "master" still sounds better. □