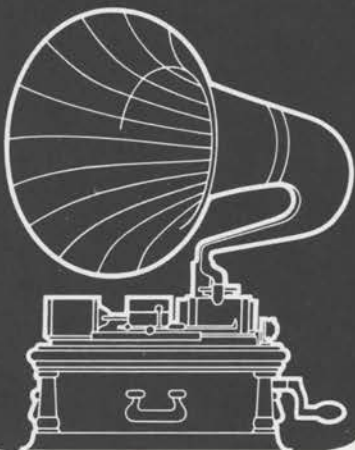


## For The Records



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 (post-paid price, ordering address,) if applicable, and a black and white photo of the artist which need not be returned.

**MAGIC ORCHESTRAL SOUNDS OF DAN SEMER** playing the DIOC Senate Theatre 4/34 Wurlitzer. No. VRDS 10012. \$10.00 postpaid from Village Records, Box 633, La Verne, California 91750.

We first met Dan Semer at one of Bill Thomson's seminars, held near Lake Tahoe, California, a few years ago. Dan, then a teenager, gave a creditable account of his ability on a theatrical electronic organ. We knew then that we'd hear from him again. Meanwhile Dan grew up and started taking concert bookings, ones usually followed by enthusiastic reviews. So the quality of playing on this album comes as no surprise. It simply indicates that Dan Semer has arrived.

One entire side of this album is devoted to the music of Edvard Grieg; the other brings pops and standards. One of Dan's notable accomplishments is in the use of the swell pedal; those players who either pump the pedal at random or open the shutters at the start of a tune then close them at the end could learn valuable lessons

from this recording.

The organ heard is the universally known 4/34 Wurlitzer originally in Detroit's Fisher Theatre and now kept in top shape by the Detroit Theater Organ Club in the club's Senate Theater, by Dave Brewer and his technical staff. It's one of the finest recording organs, providing every conceivable tonal combination a skilled orchestrator could desire, and Dan's arrangements are demanding. Besides Bill Thomson, he studied with Ron Walls and Richard Purvis, providing a wide spectrum of styles.

As Mr. Webster defines it, a *Fantasia* can be "a medley of familiar airs — a musical composition not restricted to the usual laws of form or time." Dan Semer has here arranged and played themes by Edvard Grieg, ones from many of his works, and not necessarily related by other than the musical style and tendencies of the composer. We are happy to report that he has succeeded tremendously. The only instrumental sounds not supplied from the console of the Wurlitzer are the tympani which are so important for emphasis effects (as per the orchestrations). At first we assumed that the excellent piano was a double track job. Not so, advises Dan; the piano heard here is the organ piano played from the console. How the organ's champions achieved such an expressive range of piano dynamics is another story.

The Grieg *Fantasia* includes generous portions of the composer's "Piano Concerto in A Minor," "Anitra's Dance," "Wedding Day at Troldhaugen," "Norwegian Dance," "To Spring" (a fragment), "Nocturne," "Strange Music" and "Grand Finale," from the 3rd Movement of the A Minor Concerto.

All of the pieces and fragments are performed with an appreciation of the composer's intent (Dan's piano passages sometimes approach brilliance, which is especially noteworthy when one considers that the playing is done not directly on a piano keyboard but through the relays and switches of an organ manual — sorta second hand). This is a thoroughly enjoyable romp through many Grieg melodies, played with a most sympathetic feeling for the Grieg mystique, the best since Maria Kumagai's (playing a Rodgers organ). Registration is as orchestral as Dan can make it, and that's plenty. This side will be a de-



Dan Semer.

light to Grieg fans.

Side Two demonstrates Dan's skills with pops and standards. He opens with Bud Cooper's "You" (1923) which was popular in the early days of the theatre organ. It's up-tempo, happy, and indicative of the post-WWI abandon which marked a great musical age in the USA. Lots of registration and key changes keep interest high.

We don't feel that "Evergreen" provides interesting source material as an organ piece. It may have been great underscoring the *Star is Born* movie but alone it doesn't say much to this reviewer, so we'll class it as a forgettable choice with which the organist struggled to maintain interest. If he succeeded, good for you.

"Miami Beach Rumba" is a typical and ordinary rumba, embellished by a good performance by Dan Semer, especially when he tackles the second chorus. It's pleasant to experience the rarely heard rumba rhythm again, and Dan makes it top drawer.

Elmer Bernstein's score for the film *Hawaii* (from James Michener's novel) has long been a neglected item. Happily, Dan has revived the sweeping theme plus the exotic mood and essence of the 1966 island epic. There are suggested surf sounds and gentle winds as interpolated by wind chimes. Heady stuff!

"Tea for Two," according to Dan's jacket notes has become his trademark, based on a recent standing ovation he received for an electronic organ performance of the 1924 Vincent Youmans classic. Here he goes through a venerable if not entirely original set of variations which add up to compelling listening, especially the pedal melody sequence. A good closer.

Frank Laperriere and Ted Amamo's recording captured the huge in-

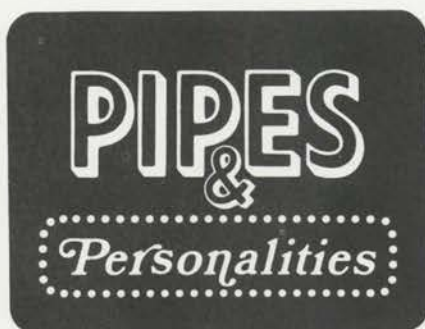
strument expertly. The review pressing was smooth but warped, resulting in a tossing of the stylus which in time could result in audible wear. (As always, those who receive faulty records may return them for better pressings.)

The insert bearing Dan's notes about the music show much attention to research. However, the puffery on the back of the album concerning Dan (presumably written by well-meaning friends) is superfluous. Dan doesn't need that type of super hype. His music speaks for him more forcefully than verbiage.

This is a much better than average

first recording. Coupled with reports from Detroit covering Dan's excellent showing as a 1982 ATOS Convention artist, his future looks bright.

*In our recent review of "Cincinnati Fats," the album featuring Dick Hyman making like Fats Waller, we credited John G. Strader as the author of the excellent insert bearing the story of Waller's sojourn at radio station WLW in Cincinnati. Not so, writes organophile Strader, the brochure was written by his wife, Joan. Whom the theatre organ has joined together, let no reviewer put asunder. Our apologies.* □



### Junchen Writing Project Expands

Organ builder-turned-author David Junchen now has plans for three separate books about theatre organs. Junchen spent six weeks on an extensive driving trip through the eastern United States this past summer doing research for a projected volume to be called "The Encyclopedia of American Theatre Organs." He spent much time tracking down installation lists of the nearly 100 builders who put organs in theatres. Many doors were opened by very cooperative organ firms which have made available a wealth of previously

unpublished photographs and other materials. Junchen will return to the East Coast from his Pasadena home for additional research in October.

### Amberlee to Release Nourse/Warnor Record

Frank Killinger phoned to report that he was back from his three-month safari in Europe and Britain. Said he and his wife had a great time, but it was good to be home. Amberlee Records will release a record of the tunes Everett Nourse recorded on the Fresno Warnor 4/14 Morton. Jacket notes will be done by the same writer who has done them for previous Killinger albums.

### New Catalog Issued

The Organ Literature Foundation has just issued its new Catalogue Q, which is available for \$1.00 in the United States. Overseas orders should include four international reply coupons for surface mail delivery, or eight coupons for airmail.

Established over 32 years ago, the Foundation offers in its new catalog

over 1700 items, including 473 books of which 52 are new listings; 1061 classical organ recordings (423 new); and 234 theatre organ recordings of which 150 were not previously listed.

The address for ordering is: The Organ Literature Foundation, 45 Norfolk Road, Braintree, Massachusetts 02184.

### Detroit Technical Session Well Attended

One of the projects of the new ATOS administration is to provide technical aid to amateur organ builders. In line with this, Lance Johnson, "Questions and Answers" columnist for THEATRE ORGAN, conducted a session on tremulants at the convention in Detroit.

During the hour-and-a-half session tremulants on theatre organs were discussed at length. Using the acronym "STAF," it was possible to break down theatre organ tremulants into four variables: 1) shape, 2) tuning, 3) amplitude, and 4) frequency. By the use of an "X-Y" diagram on the chalkboard, it was shown how problems arise when too much weight is placed on a small regulator. Also discussed was how to properly wind a tremulant and to adjust them to obtain the desired characteristics. A list was outlined of problems which occur when tremulants are improperly installed, resulting in complete lack of control.

Following the seminar, participants came forward to ask questions about their own tremulant problems, and to study the special "Magnehelic" precision wind gauge on display. It was evident that more time could have been spent on this controversial subject. Many of the 120 participants commented afterward that the seminar was of great benefit to them. □

Organ builder/author David Junchen displays his other talent, gourmet cooking, at a reception hosted by Walter Strony and Tom Lind for The Phoenix Hour Pro Musica, which had just played a benefit concert at the Mesa Organ Stop pizza restaurant. Assisting in the preparation of Fruit Salad Princesse is Marian Cook, herself a gourmet cook.



Lance Johnson leads seminar at the Detroit Convention.

