

life. They were almost uniformly very intelligent, thoroughly nice, and highly motivated — young people with whom it was a pleasure to work. Other members of my committee shared this feeling very strongly. It was personally very rewarding.

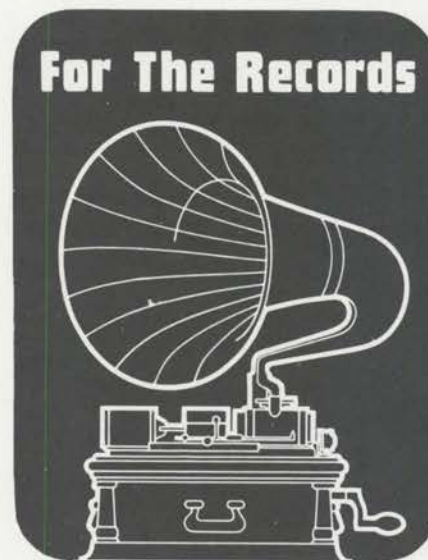
Speaking of rewarding, let me emphasize the need for offering significant prizes, probably money, as a means of motivating the young organists to devote the necessary amount of time out of their busy schedules. In Connecticut we awarded trophies to winners, and gave each contestant a framed photograph of himself or herself seated at the organ console, but it was the monetary prize that lured them. I do not say this in any demeaning sense; these youngsters have lots of needs which can only be met in monetary terms, and if they are to give up a great deal of their time and energy, there must be some chance of their profiting by it. However, they also liked the attention they received. We always arranged to get a photograph in their local newspapers of their receiving the award, they were asked to play a concert at a chapter meeting, and parents bragged to all their friends. For at least a brief time, they were stars. And now, with establishment of a national award, entering them into the national competition holds out the added allure of possibly becoming a national winner.

Realistically, it would be very difficult for a chapter which has never sponsored a competition to get it all together for 1983; however, it is none too early to begin working toward one for 1984. In all honesty, to do it and do it well will require that much time.

Please address any questions you may have to me: Mrs. Eleanor D. Weaver, 664 Litchfield Turnpike, Bethany, Connecticut 06525. I shall

be happy to give you the benefit of whatever advice or help I can offer.

See *London and South of England Chapter Notes*, page 40. □



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.

GEORGE WRIGHT: PARAMOUNT ORGAN PREMIER. Banda (stereo) No. KM 10468. \$10.00 postpaid from Banda Records, Box 392, Oxnard, California 93032.

It's a red letter day for the organ hobby when there is news of an organ going into a theatre, rather than being

removed. Such is the case of the threatened Oakland, California, Paramount. Its future was assured when it became the Paramount Theatre of the Performing Arts, the home of the Oakland Symphony Orchestra. With an increasingly catholic acceptance of a much wider range of music than in the past, the management of the Paramount, then under the leadership of Jack Bethards, noted the organ chambers left empty when the original Wurlitzer Publix No. 1 was removed years ago. There were suggestions that a classical organ would be more proper, but such an instrument would not be in keeping with the theatre atmosphere which the symphony people wanted to preserve. Then came the donation of a generous supply of vital organ components from J. B. Nethercutt, creator of the San Sylmar museum which houses a huge theatre organ. Much later Sandy Fleet donated an additional supply of Wurlitzer organ parts. Still, progress was very slow. And that became a touchy matter. We recall that several years ago a former THEATRE ORGAN columnist was soundly reprimanded by a Nor-Cal Chapter chairman for even mentioning the languishment in his column. Then, as the '70s faded, there was a spurt of activity and the organ took form. The album jacket notes mention that it is larger in number of ranks than the original installation, which would probably place it in the middle 20's rankwise (the information is not given on the jacket). The organ sounds large and full in the live acoustics of the refurbished 3000-seat house, as heard on this recording. Although it's an assembled organ, made from parts of several organs, the assemblers have managed to produce a balanced recording instrument from the tonal

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viewpoint, a long and tedious procedure involving the matching of ranks for volume and tone quality. Both technical knowhow and musical sensitivity are in evidence.

November 7, 1981, was selected for the premiere, with George Wright at the console. This recording was taped during that concert. Making a recording during a concert is always risky. The artist must get it right the first time because there can be no second takes. George comes through splendidly on that count. The unknown factor is audience noise. There is the inevitable applause to swamp the final chord of each selection, but it's the noise a few people in the audience make during the music that is distracting — mainly coughing. Even this can be minimized by judicious miking. Yet there was no special microphone placement to meet organ pickup requirements; the microphones used were in position to tape the symphony orchestra. This practice works well for large organ combinations but when George cuts down to soft strings or Vox alone, there is no microphone close to the sound source to bring it in. So the gain on the distant microphones must be brought up to catch the reduced volume. This tends also to bring in the coughs. Actually the volume of coughs is very low, never loud enough to mar the music. Yet the extraneous noise is there, and the coughers rarely bark on the beat.

George opens with the Paramount News fanfare followed by a chorus of "Paramount on Parade." Then, directly into an energetic "I Got Rhythm." Of the seventeen selections heard (some in medleys) about half have been grooved previously by George. The first title on his trip down memory lane is his exquisite treatment of "The Boy Next Door," an arrangement not recorded on pipes since his very first HI-FI label platter circa 26 years ago, the LP which started George's rise to national recognition. It's a very welcome repeat.

After a Straussian introduction, "Dancing in the Dark" takes off on color reeds, then a waltz interlude. The overall arrangement is best described as "commanding," although there are delicate moments. The Vox Humana denouement is a beauty. "Norwegian Wood" is a strange tune which seems to be asking a question. Very musical cricket chirps color the woodland scene. Note the bass figures



George Wright.

against bells at one point. "Some Harry Warren Songs" includes "42nd Street," "Shuffle Off to Buffalo," "Shadow Waltz" (on Vox, Chimes and coughs) and "Lullabye of Broadway" (all titles unlisted, but familiar). These tunes are a reprise from George's previous Banda platter, *42nd Street and Other Goodies*. The show tunes continue with an electric "Flying Down to Rio" with aircraft sounds, clackers, some Samba treatment and an interpolation of "Orchids in the Moonlight." Really Posthorny!

"Little Sir Echo" (called "The Voice of the Organ" here) starts on full, mellow combinations plus a brief Brass Trumpet solo. The second chorus is heard as a wordless song voiced by soprano Luana DeVol. Several who were present at the concert report it was a striking effect, visually and musically. On the record, the solo comes through as an off-mike voice which doesn't do much for the music. The Tibia does it better.

Old favorite "Creole Love Song" is bluesy in styling and tempo. It features a striking, well-quoted "mixture" briefly.

The closer is entitled "Hats Off to Irving Berlin," and includes "We Joined the Navy to See the World," "Change Partners," "Let Yourself Go," "Let's Face the Music and Dance" plus a hint of "Cheek to Cheek." No titles are listed. It's a fitting salute to the USA's grand old man of pop music (Berlin is in his 90's) and George's arrangements do the selections full justice. In fact, we

can extend that last comment to all the selections on the record; we can detect no weak spots in the Wright playing technique despite the fact that all cuts are "take ones."

The review pressing had a few rough areas, but not many. Ron Muselman's portion of the jacket notes tell the story of the Paramount's new organ in an interesting style devoid of "geewhiz" aspects, and George Wright's portion adds further pertinent info. Rarely does a jacket include notes of a negative nature; normally they are highly positive. In this case, this jacket departs from the norm. It includes a review-commentary by a retired newspaper reporter, one with little knowledge of nor interest in organs. The lady looks down her cultured nose at the audience members seen in the lobby, describes Oakland in terms of some Gertrude Stein bafflegab, and describes the earlier Paramount organ as a "foolish delight." But she has a redeeming feature; she approves of George and his music, even to the point of mentioning the comment of a fan that Wright "could make good music on a Kazoo." So much for George's organ technique! We hope only that the photo which shows George at the console, glowering over his shoulder, is aimed at this uninformed observer.

No matter, the music is fine, George Wright here upholds the enviable reputation he has earned over the years in whatever area of music he has engaged. Recommended.

UNCLE MILT'S PIPE ORGAN PIZZA CO. Wendy Kieffer and Rob York playing the theatre organ. No. UM101 (stereo). \$7.50 postpaid from Uncle Milt's Pipe Organ Pizza Co., 2410 NE Grand Boulevard, Vancouver, Washington 98661.

This album was obviously produced to sell over-the-console to enthusiastic pizza chompers; although the jacket boasts six photos and a history of the organ and pizzeria there is no information as to where it is located. It took a little sleuthing to obtain the address above.

Here we have a fairly typical pizzeria recording designed as a souvenir for visitors, and containing tunes played in the styles the pasta partakers prefer. Don't expect theatre organ music as such. Although the playing is done on a theatre organ, it's



Wendy Kieffer.

“pizza music” nearly throughout (there is one exception). So, much use is made of unenclosed tonal and fixed-pitch percussions. We are not demeaning the style, just warning purists. In fact, it’s a very fine sounding instrument and both players perform very well within the parameters of the style.

The original instrument was a 3/13 Wurlitzer from Seattle’s Orpheum Theatre. But for pizza parlor use, owner Milt Kieffer added components from four other theatre organs but doesn’t state the total number of current ranks in the jacket notes. It’s sufficient to note that the instrument fills the hall (formerly a church!) quite adequately, although miking is in closeup perspective.

Each organist fills a side of the disc. Wendy Kieffer, whose previous playing assignments included an Alaskan gig, studied with Jonas Nordwall and Don Simmons, the latter famous for his jazz stylings. She opens with some space music guaranteed to knock the socks off the unprepared listener. There is a small inaccuracy in the opening fanfare of “2001 Space Odyssey” but nothing the pizza customers will notice. Then *Star Wars* music which includes a rollicking rendition of the Cantina music heard in the movie as the camera moves among some strange and eerie denizens of the space saloon. It conjures repeat visions of those multi-limbed, piano-faced critters. The March tune comes off well, too. Happy bombast!

“Serenade in Blue” is well phrased and registered. There’s a pleasing brass solo followed by a rich color reed combination. The Pedal Cymbal marks the second bridge.

Shades of Kermit, it’s Muppet time! The TV series fans will love “The Muppet Theme” which Wendy plays with the verve and variety of the ten-man British orchestra (remember “Zoot,” the bald saxophonist?) which scored those memorable episodes. Good fun!

“Birth of the Blues” opens with a lowdown, sultry solo Clarinet intro. Then a big and broad conception of the timeless standard with ear-catching variations and key changes. Lots of brassy punctuation and Pedal Cymbal.

“Behind Closed Doors” is a question and answer tune with a very rinky-tink piano doing much of the questioning. Nice color reed registration.

“Ease on Down the Road” is a spirited rhythm tune which offers solo reeds, Glockenspiel and other percussions, including the Pedal Cymbal. Driving tempo with brassy punctuation.

Next, an original, co-authored by Wendy. “Just to Myself” is first heard in ballad form on mellow reeds, then the rhythm section takes over for a bluesy, rhythm denouement. It’s a forceful closer for Wendy, who proves here that her ability on pizza pipes has a value beyond being the boss’s daughter.

Side 2 belongs to Rob York, a well-schooled young man whose classical education in no way inhibits his organ jazz. Rob opens with that most requested of pizza tunes, “Chattanooga Choo Choo,” complete with train whistle, bell and much huffing and puffing. It’s interesting to note that most requests for this tune come from people who have never experienced a steam-propelled train. Rob’s recreation of the sounds of a long-gone day hit on target. He even includes a hint of “Take the A Train.”

We mentioned one exception to pizza stylings. It’s a purely theatre organ ballad rendition of “The Rainbow Connection” from *The Muppet Movie*. It is delightfully phrased and played with sensitivity and subtlety on the most appropriate registration. A goodie for the TO fans.

Back to the pizza atmosphere for a selection of themes from the movie *Fame*, a story about youngsters trying to break into show biz. There’s some balladry, some dance music and some rock styling, always energetic and a bit epicene in spots.



Rob York.

“Pink Panther” is one of those timeless tunes kept alive through the many Pink Panther movies which are re-issued regularly thanks to the matchless comedy of the late Peter Sellers’ bumbling “Inspector Clouseau.” This Henry Mancini theme shows up in most of them and it’s as fresh as when first released. Rob plays it for comedy with sometimes garish registration which fits the mood of the tune to perfection.

Rob’s closer is Fats Waller’s “Aint Misbehavin’.” It gets the works in the treatment department, from slow drag to highly ornamented “rides,” often with a touch of Fats coming through.

The recording engineers have captured the essence of the instrument. The review pressing had a slight warp, also some noisy spots (mostly pops) but never enough to damage the music. There are photos of both organists, the costumed pink panther greeter and the marquee of the pizzeria which is a huge representation of a three-deck horseshoe console with suggested pipework above it. Jacket notes deal with history of the organ and pizzeria, and the remarkable organ enthusiast whose effort culminated in the establishment, “Uncle Milt” Kieffer. Organbuilder Dennis Hedberg produced the album.

As we stated, this is pizzery music, but well done in its genre. We suspect that both artists are capable also of theatre organ stylings (Rob proves it here) and we’d love to hear them in concert or on a record playing theatrically. Until then we’ll order another pizza and soft drink and enjoy the fruits of Uncle Miltie’s efforts. For him it’s a dream materialized. □