



Don Leslie showing a friend the elaborate model railroad system he designed and built.

pedal, organ tremulant, a non-tremulant channel, and an acoustical tremulant channel which sounded like a vibraharp on the keyboard sustained outputs found on the X77.

The console was designed for flexible switching into these channels from the two manuals, and a variety of effects could be obtained. The four 60-watt amplifiers produced a total of 240 watts of electrical output, making it very satisfactory for the commercial use for which it was designed.

After the design of the console and speaker cabinet was completed, Leslie produced the speaker and Hammond produced the organ. Dealers would purchase the console direct from Hammond and the speakers direct from Electro Music.

The success of the Leslie interested CBS,

which was in the process of acquiring music-related companies. They eventually acquired Leslie, Steinway, Rodgers, Gulbransen, Lyon & Healy and others. Don was retained as a consultant by CBS. Later, CBS had a change of heart on some of their acquisitions and finally sold Leslie to the Hammond Organ Company.

The battle between Don Leslie and Hammond was ended when he was honored by the Hammond Organ Company at their Frankfurt Fair dinner. "All these years my speakers have generally been looked on as necessary evils. To have Hammond — and where would I be today without Laurens Hammond? — publicly acknowledge that I shared importantly in the development of the electronic organ was my greatest reward." □

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

To: Members of the American Theatre Organ Society
From: David M. Barnett, National Secretary
Subject: Notice of Annual Meeting
Date: June 1, 1986

The Annual Meeting of the members of the American Theatre Organ Society will be held on Tuesday, July 8, 1986, at the Mosque Auditorium, Six North Laurel Street, Richmond, Virginia 23220, beginning at 11:30 a.m. The meeting will be held immediately following the 1986 Convention performance by Jim Roseveare.

David M. Barnett
 National Secretary

For The Records



*Manufacturers, distributors or individuals sponsoring or merchandising organ recordings are encouraged to send review copies to the **Record Reviewer, THEATRE ORGAN, 3448 Cowper Court, Palo Alto, California 94306.** Be sure to include purchasing information (post-paid price, ordering address) and a photo of the artist which need not be returned.*

COMMAND PERFORMANCES VOL. 3, Selected Gems from the Library of the Detroit Theater Organ Club. Stereo Dolby cassette only, available postpaid for \$10 from DTOC, 6424 Michigan Avenue, Detroit, Michigan 48210.

With Volumes 1 and 2 behind them, the folks from the land of American know-how have conjured up another formidable program from their extensive archives. First let it be said that the reproduction of the Wurlitzer 4/34 on tape is marvelous. The various new gimmicks introduced since most of these performances were mastered — whether digital, direct-to-disc, half-speed masters, or compact discs — really are no substitute for careful engineering at the source. Hats off to Ted Amano and Frank Laperriere. Nor is there any substitute for a superb Wurlitzer in the right theatre. Producers Don Jenks and Mac McLaughlin had the magic combination before they ever started this project. All they had to do was pick four odds-on favorites from the last two decades of DTOC concerts.

From his concert of December 1967, the legendary Don Baker couldn't do anything wrong. He opens with "Zing Went the Strings of My Heart," which he had probably played more times than Judy sang "Over the Rainbow," and the results are high voltage excitement all the way. The launch starts as a snappy march with full organ and then goes into orbit. The jazz riffs are perfectly registered, and Don's breath-taking "triple tongue" ef-

fects are as astounding as the first time we heard them. If this is what is meant by a *tour de force*, then forces just aren't being toured like this any more! Baker returns with an incredible romp through "Limehouse Blues." Reed stings punch out the main theme. Registration changes cause gasps of delight. Too busy to stop for applause, Don segues into "Suzie Wong," more oriental hokum. After showing us how to play "Chinese" without the usual clichés, the Master roars into an arrangement of "Cherokee" which is so infectious and downright funny that no one could resist — or would want to resist — being thoroughly mesmerized. If anyone you know should be foolish enough to question the genius of Don Baker, don't argue — just play them this tape.

Don Miller follows Baker with more of the same delightful bombast, but without the surefire tempos. His version of "You" is wonderfully inventive but with some edges which need sanding and polishing. Of course, Don Miller made this recording in February of 1969, so our suggestions for improvement may be a trifle tardy! Gershwin's "Our Love Is Here to Stay" has a gorgeous verse which is seldom heard, especially in instrumental versions. Don showcases it along with the more familiar chorus. It all comes out as toe-curling, dirty blues. Unfortunately, there are enough extra beats to qualify this performance for cardiac rehabilitation, but it's great for listening if not for dancin'. However, Don Miller's final ballad "People" demonstrates once and for all how a theatre organ should sound and how it should be played. It is a many-faceted diamond in a flawless setting.

Simple arithmetic tells us that Allen Mills was considerably younger in January 1968, and at least a half year nearer knee pants when he played for the ATOE Convention in Detroit the preceding summer. Nevertheless, most of the seasoned talents noted in his '85 record releases were very much in evidence when he was taped playing the Ethel Waters hit "Am I Blue." Mills gets a quite different sound from the DTOS Wurlitzer with clever use of a few solo voices (some untremmed) which alternate with "full band" in the style of Duke Ellington. The low-down, "dirty blues" arrangement is very long, but Allen is inventive enough from chorus to chorus to keep his ideas fresh.

From the 1967 Convention concert the producers have wisely selected "King William March," which demonstrates Allen's uncanny control of Wurlitzer percussions. The slow military dirge begins with reiterating snare drums and other goodies from the toy counter. Bag pipes join the salute followed by spine tingling reeds. The only thing lacking on the tape is the tumultuous applause this performance so richly deserved.

The last artist, Bill Thomson, played for DTOS in April 1979. His opener "Almost Like Being in Love" suggests the Don Baker influence. It is a muddied performance, however, and there is too much flapping of the swell shades. Bill quickly hits his stride in a brilliant performance of "Holiday for Strings." Yes, the melody during the bridge is

sometimes buried in the obligato — but WHAT an obligato! Judicious use of the piano provides just the right amount of pizzicato. Fantastic! Vox, Tibia and Glockenspiel pave the way for a quiet, peaceful reading of "Evergreen." Bill Thomson gives us plenty of time to hear how lovely the voices of the organ can really be. Is there a better sounding Wurlitzer anywhere in the world? Bill convinces us that there is not — and that's what makes this such a great performance.

Thomson's grand finale, Rachmaninoff's "Prelude in G Minor," has been sure-fire piano fare for generations. Bill begins with piano, but sneaks in the bigger orchestral sounds of the organ until the orchestra dominates. This is not just another clever organ imitation of an orchestral work. It is a masterful orchestral interpretation of a piano piece. Oh, sure, the mental images it evokes are early Buck Jones or even Yvonne DiCarlo; but it's musical, it's boggling and it's fun.

Command Performances Vol. 3 is simply packaged with a sepia-toned photo of the four-manual Wurlitzer console. The plastic cassette box will do nothing for your coffee table. What's on the generous tape will, however, do great things for your hi-fi. Highly recommended.

TY WOODWARD PLAYS THE AEO-LIAN-SKINNER PIPE ORGAN AT THE KENNEDY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS, Washington, D.C. Available from Ty Woodward Productions, P.O. Box 3845, Manhattan Beach, California 90266. \$11.98 plus \$1.50 postage and handling.

Ty Woodward, whose musical career began in Phoenix and who now lives in Southern California, has traveled across the country to record this newest release, and the result is, in our opinion, an elegant concert which will please even the most discriminating listener. The 76-rank Aeolian-Skinner was installed in the Kennedy Center in 1972 by Irving G. Lawless and John Caspers. The recording is technically as fine as we have yet heard.

Side I begins with Charles Ives' whimsical "Variations on 'America,'" which Woodward treats with meticulous accuracy. The five variations on this American (and British) classical melody demand a technique which is at once both forceful and subtle, and Woodward appears to be exceptionally sensitive to Ives' intent.

The second number, Marcel Dupré's "Cortege and Litany," contrasts markedly with the Ives, as a quietly funereal passage builds to a powerful liturgical statement. The artist's precision and prowess are again clearly evident as he moves skillfully through the mood changes in this selection.

"Tuba Tune," by Craig Sellar Lang, is a rollicking exercise in manual dexterity — and on an organ without a Tuba! The Fanfare Trumpet, however, speaks brilliantly and with spirit, and the piece is delightful.

The Welsh lullaby, "All Through The Night," arranged by Dale Wood, is this re-



Ty Woodward

viewer's favorite. The gentle expression with which Woodward articulates this well-known folk tune evokes childhood memories of a pleasantly nostalgic nature. This is beautifully performed.

Side II is given entirely to the first, fourth and fifth movements of the *Symphony No. 5 for Organ* by Charles-Marie Widor. The unique combination here of organ and artist give a fresh and vibrant treatment to what has often been considered an "overworked" opus.

Ty Woodward has produced a virtuoso quality program on one of this country's finest concert organs. This is a recording we recommend with absolutely no reservations.

GRACE E. MCGINNIS

WAKE UP AND LIVE, Ron Rhode at the Vandiver Residence Wurlitzer, VE 101-Ct Dolby stereo cassette tape available from Vandy Enterprises, Inc., 515 South Esquire Way, Mesa, Arizona 85202. Price \$11.00 postpaid.

It's a story book romance. Famished for pizza, Glenn and Barbara stumble upon Ron Rhode playing Wurlitzer pipes, and seven years later their home is blessed with an eight thousand pound 2/12 bundle of joy. Poetic justice demands that Ron be the artist to reunite Opus 1419 (formerly of the famed Apollo Theatre in Harlem) with eagerly awaiting fans.

Let it be said up front that this is one of the more satisfying home transplants. Lyn Larsen had a hand in the engineering of the recording, and even the studio-added reverb can't be faulted. Glenn and Barbara Vandiver have every reason to celebrate, and the rest of us can't be blamed for breaking — or at least badly bending — the Tenth Commandment (Exodus, [the Book, please, not the movie] 20:17). It's an installation well worth coveting.

Ron's playing is crisp, clean, and authoritative. He coaxes a fine ensemble sound that has depth and character for his opener



Ron Rhode

"Wake Up and Live," a hectic but cheerful ditty from an early talkie. Rhode is one of the foremost interpreters of the "voh-dee-oh-doh" school of pre-swing dance music. Counter melodies often overwhelm the song line, but in this instance there was little resistance. Xylophone and Glock are expertly used in a mid chorus. Cymbals are a-crashin', and it's fun-time, folks!

A herd of jogging rhinos is our first intimation that we are to be treated to many, many laps of "Chariots of Fire." The Tuba solo is rich and earthy while the strings seem a trifle thread-bare. More Glock accents abound, and counter melodies work manfully to take our minds off the business at hand. Ron calls on the GW "Quiet Village" effect to add a touch of the exotic. It is conceivable that there are people in this complex world who secretly (or perhaps openly) enjoy "Chariots of Fire," and what they listen to in the privacy of their homes is not for us to deride or condemn.

"Please" was an early Crosby classic which gets a 16'-2" Tibia solo line with light reeds for contrast. Ron likes his counterpoint heavy and his piano solos honky-tonk. The third chorus features a 2' contrasting melody which is very clever. Final statements are spirited and full-bodied. Ron Rhode does this early '30s style wonderfully well. More Orchestra Bells lend tribal mystery to "Similou," a hollow-sounding tango which is lush enough to please arch romantics. The Vandiver Wur-litzer is enhanced by some studio reverb. Nice sound.

On the organ, the Theme from "Masterpiece Theatre" is even more ponderous and pompous than when it is heralding Alistair Cooke on PBS. Ron demonstrates a convincing "churchy" sound on the home installation, which is probably reason enough for playing what this reviewer considers the second most irritating theme music on TV. First prize goes to the dopey music used to introduce Vincent Price on "Mystery!" Ron spares us that little gem!

Side I ends with "Czardas," which as played by Ron Rhode is the epitome of what the theatre organ once stood for, beautifully rendered sentimentality. If this is your cup of

Twinnings, no one does it more skillfully. Ron gets a fine ensemble sound that's as breathy and chuffy as divinely possible.

One must certainly credit Ron Rhode for digging way down in musty trunks for the likes of "Zorba." It has all the riveting charm of "Chopsticks," except that Ron plays it skillfully. It eventually ends with a cymbal crash. The Arizona organist next invokes the Crawford mystique for as lovely a reading of "One Alone" as we've heard in many a year. Incidentally, the pedal line is superb. Listen to it a few times and you'll appreciate just how fine a craftsman Ron is.

"Black and White Rag" is Rhode being relentlessly peppy and, we suspect, with tongue planted firmly in cheek. Ingenious use of Piano and Xylophone call attention to the high calibre of the artist — if not the composition. "Sleepy Time Gal" is another case in point. It's a great old tune, and Ron Rhode takes considerable pains to let us hear the verse as well as the chorus. The verse, however, is strictly from Alpo. In the immortal words of Bette Midler, "Why bother!"

Amazing Bagpipes serve as an intro to "Amazing Grace." Harmonies get murky and do not always have the ring of inevitability. Rhode treats the spiritual as a mood piece and works for variety of registrations. Happily he resists the temptation to tack on a big finish. One may argue about his choice of tunes to record, and even question his interpretations, but there is never any doubt that Ron Rhode is always thoroughly professional every second.

The final psalm to the obvious from "Music Man" demonstrates this professionalism brilliantly. As he exhumes Meredith Willson's "76 Thromboses," we can't help noticing how well he plays it, how it skips along happily in the hands of a virtuoso. He shows us it doesn't matter that the organ doesn't have quite enough breathing space. Personal style counts for much in the enjoyment of theatre organ music.

Those who admire Ron Rhode's playing style as well as his awesome technique, and those who enjoy hearing a home pipe installation on its best behavior will like this tape. For those who expect great tunes as well, there may be a few disappointments.

THE BELL OF CREATION, Joy Frances and Tony Fenelon. Available on cassette or record from Creation Records, 102 Alpine Road, Ferny Creek, Melbourne 3786, Australia. \$10.00 plus \$1.70 postage for cassette, \$2.60 for record.

Australian soprano Joy Frances and organist Tony Fenelon have produced this recording to benefit World Vision's Ethiopian Famine Appeal. The entire album consists of sacred songs sung by Joy, accompanied by Tony on his own Lowrey Celebration organ.

The first side includes "The Holy City" by Adams, Gounod's "Ave Maria," Handel's "Rejoice" and "Love Ye The Lord," "The Bell of Creation" by Carter and Mozart's "Alleluja." On the second side, Joy has se-



Tony Fenelon and Joy Frances

lected "The Lord Is My Shepherd" by Grant/Ross, "The Lord of The Dance" by Carter, Franck's "Panis Angelicus," Dvořák's "O Sing unto The Lord," "Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring" by Bach, Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" and "The Lord's Prayer" by Malotte.

Joy Frances has a pleasant lyric soprano voice, but on a few occasions it is difficult to understand the words. It is evident that she has a genuine love of singing and her enthusiasm for this project is certainly commendable. Tony Fenelon, who has played many concerts in this country and has several records to his credit, provides a faithful reproduction of the orchestral accompaniment to all of the songs. We commend this album to those who particularly appreciate sacred music and to those who wish to contribute to the charitable cause of World Vision.

G.M.

THE TWO OF US, David Shepherd and his Residence Theatre Organ, Dolby Stereo cassette tape, COS 107. Available from Cinema Organ Society Sales, 23 Aveling Park Road, London E17 4NS, England. Price \$8.00 including airmail postage.

The British have always said "A man's home is his castle!" and we agree. Whether a theatre organist's home is always his Palace (or Odeon or Granada) is more debatable. If this recording of an organ transplant succeeds, it's because David Shepherd has the talent, taste and critical ear not to allow something slipshod to be associated with his good name. The organ itself is a clever assemblage of bits and pieces (three-manual Compton console) with pipes, percussions and electronics. Pipe ranks include Viola and Viola Celeste, Stopped Flute, French Trumpet, Orchestral Oboe and Vox Humana. Electronic circuits provide a Bourdon/Open Flute, Tibia Clausa, Diaphone/Diapason, Tuba and Clarinet. All percussions are "live" and on 12" wind. Program notes tell us that "eventually the aging Compton electronics will be replaced," which suggests that David isn't totally thrilled with the present sound of the organ. Nor was this reviewer.

David's concert is more than generous: close to a full hour of carefully polished gems and baubles. The opener, "Coliseum March," is crisply played and features the

French Trumpet. As recorded, one of the ensemble registrations is a trifle shrill, and the "reverb" seems to be limited to electronic sounds. A rubato treatment of "The Willow Waltz" keeps it fluid and interesting. The Glock is lovely and the final Vibraphone touch elegantly dramatic. Combination pistons are racy, and pipe voices don't always blend too well. Microphones as "ears" in a home installation can be ruthless.

"My Heart Stood Still" is typical of Shepherd's creative care in putting together an arrangement. The Chime accents in the first chorus are delightful. Key changes add sophistication and class. We get a little too close to the Chrysglott for comfort. David's lush and lovely treatment of "A Star Is Born" cries out for the acoustics of a big theatre. The more familiar Jerome Kern ballad "Long Ago and Far Away" is another gorgeous arrangement with full chords and grand sweep. "Horse Box" gets dashed off as though it were duck soup to play. It's a charming novelty and a welcome relief from the overplayed staples. David Shepherd likes to take us off the beaten path for musical enjoyment, and he does it through rediscovery of music which has been waiting in the files. Cases in point are "I Have Eyes to See With" and "You're A Sweet Little Headache." Played by David as a '30s medley, one muses "Yes, I remember those tunes. Wonder why they haven't been played more recently!"

"Fenland Frolic" turns out to be an angular cakewalk with solo voices of the organ featured. "Always" is not the one by Irving Berlin, but well worth remembering, even if the registration tends to overwhelm. Side I ends with a grand flourish of what might be superb "chase music" or tea time fare for ravenous piranhas. "Satyr Dance" is the title.



David Shepherd holding down the pedals of his residence organ (mostly Compton). (John Leeming photo)

Side II begins with the lovely waltz "Haunted Ballroom," very much in the Dave Rose/Robert Farnon School of lush string confections. The high notes shriek occasionally as miked. "Whistling in The Dark" from the late '20s gets an early '30s treatment with tasty Vibraphone solo. This reviewer could have waited another 40 years for "Rip Van Twinkle." It's a novelty number faintly reminiscent of "Dixie." You may want to duck the last crashing note. However, David's respectful treatment is, as always, thoroughly professional.

Another dreamy waltz "Dusk" soars convincingly. This is followed by "Harlem Nocturne" done as a beguine with a bigger-than-life Oboe solo. The tempo switches to swing at the bridge with well-placed horn "stings" to add excitement. This and "Moonlight Madonna" which follows are perhaps the high points in a long program where playing is always Grade A. David Shepherd can interpret romantic semi-classics on theatre organ

as well as anyone, anywhere, anytime.

"June Night on Marlow Reach" may never make our Top 40's list, but at least we haven't been subjected to another recording of "Memory." This one is just as dramatic and equally deserving of a hearing. David bows out with "Spectre On A Spree," a skeleton-in-de-closet type of tune featuring the Xylophone and Vibraphone in opening choruses. The musical romp eventually becomes a gut-bucket boogie-woogie (untremmed) suitable for jitterbuggy and other terpsichorean indulgences.

David Shepherd recordings are for those who dislike sloppy playing and are a bit weary of paying for the same old tunes over and over again. Everything he does is beautifully crafted. Performances are flawless. However, the residence organ in its present state — as captured on tape — is at times unworthy of the artist. If the reviewer must rate "The Two Of Us," the answer is "ONE of you is terrific!" □

Letters to the Editors

Opinions expressed in this column are those of the correspondents, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors or the policies of ATOS or THEATRE ORGAN.

Letters concerning all aspects of the theatre organ hobby are welcome. Unless clearly marked "not for publication" letters may be published in whole or in part.

Address: Editor, THEATRE ORGAN
3448 Cowper Court
Palo Alto, CA 94306

American Theatre Organ Society:

Thank you for the two issues of THEATRE ORGAN with the article on Edward Swan. When I saw the picture of Ed sitting at the organ it really threw me for a few minutes. He passed away January 6, 1982, after a bout with cancer, ending a beautiful marriage of over 62 years. Our son lives in Jacksonville and I'm sending him one of the magazines.

I deeply appreciate and treasure your gift.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Edward Swan
Homestead, Florida

Dear Bob:

In the recent THEATRE ORGAN (January/February 1986) reference is made to the "White" organ in the Rialto Theatre, Butte, Montana. The organ here was a four-manual job but not built by a firm known as White. This instrument was built by the relatively unknown firm of American Master Organ Company, of Paterson, New Jersey. For any further information, one will have to read Dave Junchen's excellent work, *Encyclopedia of the American Theatre Organ, Vol. I.*

There are reports that the organ sported up to 32 ranks, but this is probably a bit exaggerated. The console of this organ still exists, and for the present is on display at Pizza & Pipes, Fresno, California. One interesting bit about this organ is that the combination action was

"blind." Lights above the two stop rails were energized when a stop or series of stops were brought into play. As a result, the actual stops did not move, as in a more expensive and traditional system. The instrument must have seen much use, as the lower 13 notes of the pedals are noticeably worn — the maple caps by as much as 3/4" where the organist's feet would strike.

In the same issue, a Mr. James Weber makes the point of drawing more public attention to the theatre organ. He mentions television exposure and so on. It should be mentioned most strongly that the theatre organ recently has been getting some valuable exposure.

In most metro areas with a Public Radio outlet, Garrison Keillor's highly popular *A Prairie Home Companion* is broadcast live each Saturday from Saint Paul, Minnesota's recently renovated World Theatre. It is my understanding that a 3/21 Wurlitzer is to be installed. If this comes to pass, live theatre organ could well return to weekly "live" radio. This past summer his program "went on the road" with programs coming from the Sheldon Auditorium, Red Wing, Minnesota, utilizing the 2/8 Kilgen for two broadcasts. The Wurlitzer of the Milwaukee Riverside Theatre was featured a week or two later. Others have been featured. Author Keillor deserves support from theatre and organ fans for the ex-