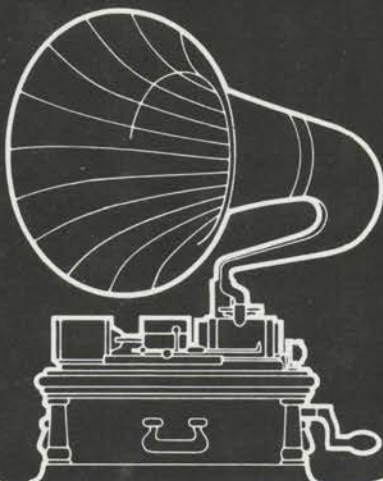


For The Records



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DOWN BY THE RIVERSIDE, Walt Strony plays the 3/14 Wurlitzer, DTOS. 101 Dolby Stereo cassette. Available from Dairyland Theatre Organ Society, 2420 Springdale Road #101, Waukesha, Wisconsin 53186. Price \$10.00 postage included.

Thankfully, the story of the Riverside Theatre in Milwaukee has been repeated in a number of major American cities: jaded movie palace restored to showcase civic cultural events. The original 240 3/13 Wurlitzer now has more unification and an additional Posthorn rank. Consequently, at age 58, both theatre and theatre organ are better than ever. A much younger Walt Strony and Dairyland Chapter of ATOS combine labors to celebrate Milwaukee's good fortune.

The opener and title cut, "Down By the Riverside," is an obvious PR bow to local sensibilities. Kinura plus ensemble is snappy and staccato, the xylophone is clearly evident along with the new Posthorn. Walt includes a bit of Don Baker double-digit dexterity to spice up the proceedings. All the arrangement lacks is a big burst of live audience applause at the end.

Operetta moves front/center as Strony pays homage to Victor Herbert and his "Kiss In the Dark." Registration strikes a nice balance between sentimental and not-too-soupy. Tibias are in residence, but the arrangement has backbone with lots of intricate counter melodies for added color. For some reason Walt interjects hints of "Holiday For Strings" around the big finish.

Strony is that healthy combination of the talent and the optimism it takes to do a theatre organ recording of Maurice Ravel's "Bolero." The original version by the French master of orchestration generally runs from 15 to 16 minutes, depending upon how thirsty the conductor gets just before intermission. What we are served via the Riverside Wurlitzer takes only 3 minutes 56 seconds, so this is obviously mini-Strony. Walt features an Oboe, some nice strings and the Tuba as the Andalusian cachuca plods towards its climax. The idea for the "Bolero" came when the composer couldn't sleep because of the rhythm of the saws in a mill near his home. To keep himself from going bonkers, Ravel invented the piece at his piano. Does the music have aphrodisiac qualities? This reviewer was able to make it through Walt Strony's performance without the urge to light a cigarette.

The organist pedals and pipes his way through a 14-minute *Show Boat* finale to side one of the tape. "Another theatre organ recording of *Show Boat* tunes?" you ask? Yup. But this one is worth the return visit. Walt nicely shows off the organ with the inevitable opening hints of "ole man ribbu," a Tibia and Vox duet of "Make Believe" with lots of pizzazz in the upper registers, the lovely, lush waltz strains of "You Are Love," a dirty blues version of "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man" — with the RCMH Rockettes joining in the melee. Then the OMR theme returns as a single melody line to usher in "Bill." Walt Strony never overworks the tremos, even though the arrangement of "Bill" is a bit busy. This reviewer liked the dramatic prominence given to the verse of the tune. "Bill" finishes with all of the subtlety found in those New York Liberty Weekend production numbers. When we finally meet up with "Ole Man River," it's something of an anti-climax. Pipe voices are appropriately plaintive — body all achin' and racked with decibels. It's loud, and then a surprise key change. Walt returns to the verse treatment which began all this and ends with a chimes flourish. This visit to *Show Boat* seems shorter than it really is, and that says much for the quality of Walt Strony's inventiveness.

"Malaguena" kicks off side two with a massive opening flourish. After that, pistons pop cheerfully in the background, and the Tambourines could be steam escaping. Strony's footwork is mighty impressive and exciting. The piece is so well registered that you won't miss the piano at all. For some reason the artist switches to a pizza-parlor, grand-slam-bang finish. Ernesto Lecuona's original conclusion wasn't schlocky enough?

"My Cousin From Milwaukee" is a fun Gershwin tune that would be worth hearing, even if it weren't celebrating the land of the free and the home of the Riverside Wurlitzer. Strony's clever use of percussion gives it snap and spice, and there's just a hint of "Rhapsody in Blue" to aid in a grander finale.

The technical advances in recording really show up in the pedal line of "My Heart At Thy Sweet Voice." Even the reviewer's new set of Allison speakers were pushed to their limits by the pedal tones. Spine tingling stuff!



Walt Strony

Very Vox-y and dramatic as one would expect. Camille Saint-Saens gets an encore with "Bacchanale," a Near-Eastern orgy seen through the eyes of Victorian sensibilities, and about as authentic as a kooch show. Pedal notes build nicely with a strong rhythmic thrust. Excitement mounts — thanks to Strony's playing and registration skills — and the artist manages to keep the smile out of his playing until the very end, when the whole event turns into a happy Jewish wedding dance.

The tape as a whole is a refreshing change from pop ballads, "Nola," and "Stars and Stripes Forever." Recording is flawless, and Dairyland has done a neat packaging job, despite the limitations of plastic cassette boxes, with a reasonably clear color miniature of the left-front expanse of the Riverside. The stamp-sized head of Strony in B & W is a pleasing likeness of the artist. Program notes are adequate and accurate. A recommended must for followers of the Phoenix fellowship.

WALTER J. BEAUPRE

GLORY SOUNDS, Tom Hazleton Plays the 3/18 Robert-Morton. Stereo cassette tape available from Wheaton-Fox Productions, O N. 468 Willow Road, Wheaton, Illinois 60187. Price \$15 (add \$2 shipping and handling).

Although this dual-tape offering is pre-ordained for the non-secular market, only the most profane in our midst could resist Tom Hazleton playing evangelical protestant hymns in theatre organ style. Cassette tapes rarely come so handsomely packaged. The sturdy plastic album (9½" × 10") was tastefully designed by John Sweemer. It won't fit alongside your other dinky tape boxes, but you may have some of the new talking books which are similarly packaged. Inside the front cover are program notes of general audience interest by Clark Wilson. The sell is oh-so-soft. The two 45-minute tapes are safely nestled in the plastic innards of the album, surrounded by black-and-white pix of the organ console and Van Der Molen studio. Outside

covers are equally non-denominational toy counters, trumpets, Morton consoles, and Tom Hazleton looking pensive and dimpled.

The Van Der Molen organ is mostly from the Loew's Fairmont (1928) in the Bronx, New York. The *Orchestral Oboe*, *Vox* and *8' Flute* are Wurllitzer; the *Posthorn* is Trivo; *Kinura* and *Trumpet* out of *Kimball*; and the *16' Bourdon* from a *Barton*. "Martha," as the ecumenical instrument is affectionately called, is on her best behavior for the artist.

"Glory Sounds" isn't quite what you might expect if you regularly buy recordings of gospel hymns. Except for the titles, many of the tunes could pass for beautifully arranged ballads very much in the orthodox T.O. tradition. Imagine, if you will, a lovely *Oboe/Flute/Strings* arrangement of "My Buddy," and you'll be close to what happens in "For Those Tears I Died." The J.C. influence (Jesse Crawford) abounds. Buddy Cole is also present in spirit. The "cockles and muscles, alive, alive-o" figure at the end is a nice touch. So is the fifth interval on the pedal clavier.

There is a strong pedal line in "He Touched Me," and something resembling a Hawaiian music effect. Chimes in the final chorus make it all too clear that these are organ solos — not background music for a funeral parlor. "Sweet, Sweet Spirit" begins as a Buddy Cole arrangement with alternating block chords in the left hand for an easy beat. Very pretty soon becomes very exciting.

This reviewer particularly liked Tom Hazleton's arrangement of "Great Is Thy Faithfulness," but others may find their personal favorites among the 22 selections equally satisfying. "He's Everything To Me" opens with *Clarinet* and *Vox*; then progresses from simple and serene to complex and emotional. "Like A Lamb" combines J.S. Bach with a dramatic ballad. "Charity" and "Gentle Shepherd" are also creative arrangements far from the beaten path.

Hazleton's imitations of a church organ on the Robert-Morton are impressive, if not particularly authentic. "All Hail the Power" is of the bombast school of hymn playing where the organist does his darndest to throw the singers off stride by changing keys, varying tempos, and introducing improvised bridges. The late, great Virgil Fox used to play that game most Sundays at Riverside Church in New York. We are subjected to a *Star Wars* treatment of "In Christ There Is No East or West." Many of these very short (eight bar) hymns tax the ingenuity of the organist to keep the endless choruses interesting. Tom is certainly equal to the task, but the original sentiments of the John Oxenham/Alexander Reinagle composition get lost in the shuffle.

If you were brought up to lisp "Jesus Loves Me" in Sunday School, Tom's fantasia on same may come as something of a jolt. He establishes the kiddie motif with bird whistles and a music box Glock. From there it's around-the-world Disney style: oriental, Viennese, Spanish tango complete with "cha-cha-cha," bagpipes a-snarling, some place that sounds suspiciously like Les Baxter's or G.W.'s "Quiet Village," downtown Toyko

and then a Paramount News finish which can only mean that California has not been over-shot. It's genuinely funny, but may scare the little people and offend some of their elders.

"Onward Christian Soldiers" as percussed by Tom Hazleton should get a standing ovation in the Pentagon. "Get All Excited" tries to capture the ecstasy of gospel, but comes about as close as Lawrence Welk to Louis Armstrong. And why Hazleton should try to imitate the Hammond organ sound on a pipe organ in "Soon and Very Soon" will simply require an act of child-like faith. Interesting — yes; jazz — no way! The "Kids' Songs Medley" takes tunes such as "Tell Me The Story of Jesus," "The B-I-B-L-E," and "Jesus Loves the Little Children" and lets us hear what Sunday School would be like in the "sweet bye-and-bye" of Anaheim or Orlando.

On these four tape sides, organist Tom Hazleton is marvelous, as always. The Van Der Molen Mostly-Morton has superb presence — if occasionally on the raw-sound side of presence. This album may prove an excellent introduction to the joys of theatre organ sounds for those unfamiliar with our interests. By the same token, those theatre organ fans who missed these wonderful old hymns the first time around have a legitimate excuse to become acquainted with the music — if not message. And to all those who believe that listening to good music, well played is always a genuinely religious experience, "Glory Sounds" should not be a disappointment.

WALTER J. BEAUPRE □

MUSIC FROM THE MOVIES. Gerald Shaw playing the (London) Odeon, Leicester Square 3/15 Compton organ. Available on stereo cassette only, \$9.95 postpaid from Pipe Organ Presentations, Box 20704, Castro Valley, California 94546.

Here's an opportunity to hear the representative Compton, Britain's major contribution to the theatre organ scene. This instrument has long been a favorite on the London scene, and a versatile organ it is. It is played here by the late Gerald Shaw, the last regularly working organist in a London theatre. The selections were recorded in the late '60s, and there is a distinct presence of "white noise" to be noted at quiet spots and at the close of selections. However, this does not interfere with the quality of the recording. What does bother us is the organist's use of devices more proper on electronic organs — mainly the "schmear glissando" (dragging the hand across keys rather than fingering the gliss).

Yet, this famed pipe organ has electronic voices, as many Compton organs did; the top (5th) manual plays a "Melotone," a variety of electronic voices employed skillfully here.

Let's examine some of the tunes, of which there is a generous supply (18).

"Tico Tico" is one of those tunes best suited to the Hammond, as Ethel Smith indicated. Played without expression on pipes, we'll pass — especially the closing schmear.

"April in Portugal" employs an attractive



Gerald Shaw at the Odeon 5-manual Compton.

variety of registration, interesting solo voices and a pleasant ballad treatment, but marred by palm schmears.

"The Lady Is A Tramp" gets a staccato rhythmic treatment, and lots of instrumental variety.

"Whistle Down The Wind" is an exquisite moody ballad. The treatment includes an impressive solo Clarion, open harmony and untrem'd flutes.

"Heat Wave" (from an early '30s movie) is just plain jazzy, with lots of comments from both tonal and unpitched percussions.

A lively "It's A Lovely Day Today" is followed by a ballad style "I Get Along Without You," with an interesting key change and effective use of the Melotone. A fast and vigorous "Donkey Serenade" is followed by "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" with good use of the solo Melotone. "Around The World" features *Vox* accompaniment while the formerly haunting "Laura" is played as a rhythm ballad. "Anna's" strict tempo is measured by tonal percussions. The closer for Side I is that old warhorse, the "Toccata" from Widor's *5th Symphony*. Shaw plays it with theatrical hoopla, a fitting denouement for the first side. The Compton comes through with romantic classic organ registration for this one.

To open Side II Shaw goes to opera, the lively "Gypsy Dance" from *Carmen* (better known as "Beat out that Rhythm on a Drum" from *Carmen Jones*). There's an intriguing blend of Melotone with pipework during "I Only Have Eyes for You" and "I Could Have Danced All Night" is played fast and upbeat. The Melotone is soloed for "Too Late Now" with pipes handling the harmony and rhythm. A bouncing "Makin' Whoopee" is loaded with tonal percussions and a few smear glissandos, but the registration maintains interest. "Carioca" is marked by a first chorus brass solo. "Let's Fall in Love" again features the Melotone and there's an ear-catching modulation to the closing Tibia'd chorus. "Falling in Love with Love" is offered as a modern waltz but with strong Strauss overtones and attractive counter lines. There's Disney magic in "When You Wish Upon A Star," a truly lovely ballad presentation. Shaw's big feature selection is a rousing rendition of the WW2 concert favorite, "The Warsaw Concerto" (from the film *Suicide Squadron*). His encore is his broad-

cast theme, "A Song of Home."

The Gerald Shaw style might be well-described as "showmanship plus," with dramatic effects sometimes overpowering musical values. This is not an adverse comment; some of the most popular console artists during the organ's "great era" sometimes sacrificed musical finesse in favor of "hamming it up" a little. We know Shaw knew better. Some years ago Bill Johnson's Concert label issued an LP named "Fanfare" which starred Gerald Shaw at this same instrument. To our ears the music on "Fanfare" was played more conservatively, and with less slambang in evidence. Another way of saying there are no dull moments.

This adds up to a good show by Gerald Shaw, played on a very fine example of British theatre organ building.

AN OLD FASHIONED CHRISTMAS, Allen Mills Plays the Proctor's Theatre Wurlitzer. Available from Proctor's Theatre, 432 State Street, Schenectady, New York 12305. Price \$13.00 postage included.

"Old fashioned" is a broad term involving not only nostalgia for the era of Donner and Blitzen but for Kaiser and Fraser as well. The '40s are well represented. Granted, these tunes have been recorded by everyone from the Vienna Boys Choir to Alvin and the Chipmunks. All the more reason for hearing them on authentic theatre pipes played by the likes of Allen Mills.

The 12 tunes include ten holiday favorites with two traditional carols to open and close the program. "Deck the Hall" lets us know right off the bat that we are not to be subjected to either tracker action quaintness or synthesizer. These are genuine, 100% pipe ranks with tremas a-flyin'. Mel Torme's "The Christmas Song" gets a quiet, introspective Glock intro, followed by a plaintive Tibia chorus. Reeds, uncomplicated harmonies, and warm sentiment "help to make the season bright." Leroy Anderson's "Sleigh Ride" quickens the pace with percussions abounding. The tempo slips and slides on the ice a few times, but no one gets seriously hurt. Sleighbells add sparkle to the final chorus.

During the 1985 Christmas season everyone seemed to recall the tearful tune sung by Judy Garland to Margaret O'Brien in "Meet Me In St. Louis." Allen Mills' version of "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" is appropriately intimate with lots of pathos. String ensembles and a Chrysoglott do the honors. Some handy key modulations help to alter the mood from wistful to exultant. Perhaps the hallmark of a first-rate theatre organist is a style which doesn't seem reminiscent of any other artist. With very few exceptions Allen Mills plays it his way.

Crawford rolls introduce the seldom heard verse of "Winter Wonderland," and the tune plods surefootedly through a few choruses. Listen for the excellent counter melodies Allen invents to maintain our interest. Registration includes sparing use of the piano. Strings, Tibia, Vox and Chrysoglott affirm the Crosby classic "I'll Be Home For Christ-

mas." Counter melodies are a bit too heavy at times, but when tunes are this familiar, one can understand the urge to spring a few surprises.

Before "comin' to town," Santa and Allen Mills go for baroque, but once within city limits all Hallelujah breaks loose. It is a clever arrangement, and Allen is obviously having the time of his life. "Toyland" is the epitome of romantic theatre organ and one of the highlights of the album. Vox and strings are lovely. Tschaikowsky's "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy" is faithfully rendered on the Wurlitzer Glockenspiel with an untremmed Clarinet accompaniment. Another visit to Victor Herbert's "Babes in Toyland" produces "March of the Toys" with Xylophone touches amid very theatrical ensembles.

"Patapan" builds slowly to a stirring climax and then fades away with plaintive Oboe sounds. Coming on like the title music for *Ben Hur*, "O, Come All Ye Faithful" has some

fascinating chord changes. Allen follows a very church-like chorus with theatre voices, tremas and kettle drums. The effect is more deMille than Mills, but very few would object to that sort of enthusiasm. After all, Christmas comes but once a year!

These are personalized interpretations of holiday tunes played with skill and feeling. The organ sounds fine — because it is! The recording of Side II seemed a bit better miked than the opening cuts of Side I. The album can be ordered as either a record or cassette tape. The LP album cover features a festive likeness of Allen Mills about to hop aboard the handsome white and gold console gift-wrapped with a mammoth red bow. We trust that the bench was nearby. To those who are truly serious about Xmas shopping early this year, here's one to please those hard-to-buy-for folks on your list.

WALTER J. BEAUPRE

CINEMA ORGAN NEWS FROM BRITAIN



It's always a very great delight to see and hear the rebirth of any particular theatre organ, and especially so if it's such a delightful organ as Wurlitzer opus 2116. She started her life as a 3/10 when Leslie James opened her on September 22, 1930, in the splendid New Victoria Cinema Bradford, Yorkshire, in northern England. The elaborate picture palace seated 3318. There was a large pit orchestra, and the opening stage show was called "Follies of 1980," can you believe! The massive Gaumont-British circuit had taken over the P.C.T. circuit that had built the New Victoria as the building was being completed, otherwise there would have been no Wurlitzer, as Gaumont were exclusively Compton. The chambers were placed high over the stage and the sound never really got out. In fact, it was one of the early attempts at amplification, various organists have told me.

Over the years, the organ became a broadcast favorite, and the late David Hamilton made his first LP on it. Eventually it was removed. The Style 220 had one or two alterations over the years, the Krumet replacing the Kinura, and the Vox was replaced by an English Horn in 1947.

With the chambers a distant 80 feet above the organist, it was most awkward to remove even a ten-ranker. The organ was removed in November, 1968, by the North East Theatre

Organ Association, NETOA to us all, the new owners. They had a tough job to get the organ down and out of the massive house, which was being converted to two theatres. After the torment of having to find a location for any organ, it reopened in the United Services Club in West Cornforth in County Durham. However, things were not quite as they should be; a low suspended ceiling didn't help, and the ubiquitous Hammond organ (almost a fixture in these social clubs) was louder than the Wurlitzer! Eventually the NETOA called it a day, and in January, 1976, it was removed.

Sadly, it was not until March 2, 1986, that this super organ was unveiled to the public again in its very own home. After years of searching and fund-raising, the group purchased the Trinity Chapel in Howden-Le-Wear, a quiet village, and work commenced on March 11, 1977, converting it to a beautiful small version of a supercinema specially to house the Wurlitzer. It even has a fully equipped projection box and a Brenograph machine, a screen and stage curtains masking the well-designed chambers. It's been the hardest and longest struggle of any group, but well worth all the effort and years of waiting, for the organ is definitely one of the best-sounding Wurlitzers in England. Another Vox was purchased from America, so it's an 11-ranker now, and they have added a de-