

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-



Console of the NETOA Wurlitzer on its lift. Formerly in the New Victoria cinema in Bradford, Yorkshire, now at Howden-Le-Wear in Durham County.

lightful Aeolian-Weber grand piano. I have personally seen this organ and hall taking shape over several years, and I was overcome with emotion for all the wonderful people concerned in March of this year. This area of England is sadly starved of organs, particularly a good quality organ like this 3/11. Nigel Ogden and Joe Marsh did a wonderful job playing at the concert, with sounds and slides showing the organ's original home and famous players of the past. The organ settled down well, and very little alteration, if any, will be need to be carried out. The temptation has been overcome, thankfully, to enlarge and spoil this delightful organ.

John Heslop, Joe Marsh, Max Sennett, Dennis Elmes and others have all our thanks for their outstanding work and long hours — it's well worth it! Joe Marsh, a great player and a stickler for getting proper adjustments of tremos, and John Heslop, with his knowledge of projection and presentation, have seen that these myriad details get priority, not often the case in many organ transplants. Sadly, Joe's father, Joe Marsh, Senior, didn't live to see the project completed; he was a brilliant organ builder by trade (ex Hill, Norman & Beard), and he would have been proud.

Two years ago, the Bijou Cinema in Mablethorpe in Lincolnshire installed a brand new 3/4 theatre organ by David Hill. The same owner is now equipping another cinema, the

Kinema-in-the-Woods (what a delightful name for a cinema) in Woodhall Spa, also in Lincolnshire, with a very rare vintage Compton that once played in one of London's earliest supercinemas, the Tatler Cinema, Charing Cross Road in London. One of the few consoles to be decorated with Japanese lacquer by artists of the London School of Art in the 1920s, it was a 2/8. After being in storage for a great many years, Nigel Turner purchased it for his home at Harpole in Northamptonshire. He had a solid state, capture 7 relay system and reproducing unit fitted. When he and his wife, Sue, designed their now world-famous Turners Musical Merry-Go-Round in Northampton, with its 3/19 Wurlitzer and museum, they sold the Compton, so now it's going to go back to a cinema. Incredibly, this cinema started off as a cricket pavilion and was converted to a cinema in the 1920s. The beautiful, unique console will be put on a lift, something it wasn't in London, and a rare Compton Melotone unit has been found and will be fitted. Lovely to think that a vintage Compton, made when the firm called their instruments a "Kinestra," will be given a new lease on life.

During May the nation, aided by the BBC radio, celebrated the eightieth birthday of one of the greatest of all theatre organists, Robinson Cleaver. A special concert was held at the Davenport Cinema in Stockport near Manchester, a perfectly restored supercinema of 1937 vintage complete with fiery 3/7 Compton. Audicord Records brought out a cassette, AC-172, called "Three Score Years and 20," made a few years ago on this very organ, and EMI issued a most interesting LP called "Let's Break the Good News," a title of one of the tracks. It features a group now legendary over here in its way, "The Organ Dance Band and Me." Billy Thornburn was a dance band leader in the 1930s, and after the success of a broadcast by Reg Foort one evening, which included a dance band playing alongside Foort at the Compton BBC organ, the public thrilled at the result and clamoured for more. EMI quickly rushed in with a series of 78s that lasted from April, 1938, until incredibly June, 1953, the longest running organ



Beautiful, rare Japanese lacquered console of 2/8 Compton to be installed in Kinema-in-the-Woods at Woodhall Spa in Lincolnshire.

series ever, I shouldn't wonder. All discs mostly featured Robbie Cleaver playing the celebrated 3/8 Compton and Melotone of EMI Studios in Abbey Road, London. One of the most recorded organs in world history, it was a 2/8 dating from 1928, installed in the Beaufort Cinema, Birmingham, and recorded and broadcast many times by Reginald New in the early thirties. It had a haunting vintage Compton sound then, and in 1937 the Beaufort was rebuilt and the organ sold back to Compton. They enlarged the scope of the console and added the Melotone unit and a third manual and sold it to EMI where it went into the famous Number One Studio, a huge room. It had a Tromba which had replaced the earlier Trumpet rank and could sound grumpy and shrill in the wrong hands. Fats Waller loved it and recorded it. Cleaver will always be linked with it as he played for so many big singers and instrumentalists. There was a previous LP on President Records of many 78s in the series, and EMI realised how potty they were not to issue it themselves and have celebrated Robbie Cleaver's eightieth birthday with this treat for us fans.

Another great of the straight console, the "Doyen" of British concert organists, was, in June, 90 years of age. He is Sir George Thalben-Ball of Temple Church fame, the first known organist to sell well over one million records in the late 1920s with Mendelssohn's "Oh, For The Wings of A Dove," with boy soprano Master Ernest Lough. Sir George became a legend in his own lifetime. The Queen knighted him a few years ago. And what a character — an incredible player still.

Another remarkable man over here is Bob Barratt. No, he doesn't play the organ, but he is the most celebrated producer of theatre organ records. The mighty EMI can be proud that he has had the most popular organists under his control for some years now. Reginald Dixon, the most popular theatre organist of all time, Ernest Broadbent and now young

View from front balcony of the New Victoria Centre. The chambers are behind grilles, and the Aeolian-Weber grand piano is on the right. Percussions are above the top of proscenium.



top-star Phil Kelsall are his star names today. Star name at the Tower Blackpool in Kelsall's case, but also Nicholas Martin at Turners Merry-Go-Round, and Robert Wolfe at Cushings Thursford Museum, the three most commercial players today, all under Bob Barratt's wing; what a job! Yes, each of the young players brings out a record each year: Kelsall's new one at the Tower is "Fascinating Rhythm," Nicholas Martin's is "I Can't Smile Without You," and Robert Wolfe's is "Dizzy Fingers." All are thoroughly enjoyable and, needless to say, well-recorded. The lads are all in their twenties and have fan clubs and all this fame.

Grosvenor Records has released an LP called "Happy Together," featuring 12-year-old Peter Holt at a 3/10 Compton in the Three J's Leisure Centre in Gomersal, Yorkshire. Peter has won numerous competitions already, such as the 1985-6 ATOS Young Theatre Organist of the Year. By and large, for a 12-year-old it is some feat! Grosvenor does a great job catering to us organ fans, either pipe or electronic. That's it for now. Next time we will take a look at yet another rebirth of a theatre organ in a major cinema chain. □

Closing Chord

Theatre organ buffs in the Southeast suffered an incalculable loss with the death on July 19, of **William Senton Granberry** of Laurel, Mississippi. Mr. Granberry was the victim of a heart attack. For more than 20 years, Senton was a member of ATOS and was a tireless promoter of the theatre organ hobby; he was the mainspring of many meetings, concerts and get-togethers at the 3/13 Robert-Morton in the Jeff Seale Studio in Laurel.

Senton was an avid recordist and photographer, and was responsible for our having audio and photo records of many theatre organ events. Several years ago, he recruited several of us into a tape-exchange group that came to be known as the Knights of the Round Robin, and which has enabled us to keep up with each other and theatre organ activities around the country. In "real life" Senton was a self-described country banker, being the senior vice-president and a director of the Richton Bank and Trust Company of Richton, Mississippi, as well as a director of Merchants and Manufacturer's Bank of Ellisville.

Senton's generosity and his wit were legendary among those who knew him, and his gentleness and openness endeared him to his dozens of tape correspondents in this country and in England. He is one of the few men of whom it can be truthfully said that he never uttered an unkind, harsh or derogatory word about anyone.

Senton is survived by his wife, Allison, and by two children, Allison and Bill.

DOLTON McALPIN □

IN SEARCH OF BETTER TIBIA TREMOLOS

by David L. Junchen

The tibia clausa is the one voice essential for successful performance of popular music on the organ. An organ without a tibia might be able to play jazz or orchestral transcriptions but is totally inadequate for romantic or sentimental popular tunes. The tibia is the backbone of the theatre organ's tonal structure just as the diapason is the foundation of the classic organ. And an organ with a bad tibia is almost as inadequate as one with no tibia at all. What makes a good tibia? Read on, MacDuff!

The tibia clausa was pioneered, if not actually invented, by a man often dubbed as the father of the theatre organ, Robert Hope-Jones. Without at all discounting Hope-Jones' contributions to the art of organ building, the author feels this sobriquet to be inappropriate. Hope-Jones never installed a theatre organ under his own nameplate, and many of the organs he designed for Wurlitzer, the firm which absorbed his bankrupt business, had no tibia at all. Those which had tibias were poorly unified, often appearing only at 8' pitch. (In contemporary practice, by contrast, tibias often appear at many pitches such as 16', 8', 5-1/3', 4', 3-1/5', 2-2/3', 2', 1-3/5', 1-1/3', and 1'.) As late as the early 1920s Wurlitzer was still producing standard models of organs as large as 2/7 without tibias (Style 185) and as large as 2/9 (Style 210) wherein the tibia appeared only at 8' pitch.

The relative unimportance of the tibia in early organs in theatres lay in Hope-Jones' concept of its place in the tonal hierarchy. He viewed it not as a solo voice but as a "thickener" to add depth and weight to other voices without altering their basic colors. Organist Jesse Crawford is often credited with pioneering the use of tibias as solo colors in their own right, not just as thickeners for other stops. Actually, by itself, the tibia is a rather dull and musically uninteresting sound because of the virtual absence of harmonic development. But just turn on the tremolo . . . and *voilà!* There's a sound which, more than any other,

endeared theatre organs to the general public and still tugs at our heartstrings today.

So what makes a good tibia? The secret lies in how the pipes are affected by the tremolo. The tremolo causes a variation in wind pressure at the pipes. In most organ pipes, lowering and raising the wind pressure causes the pipes to speak correspondingly softer and louder while their pitch varies relatively little. In a good tibia, however, the tremolo also causes a significant lowering and raising of pitch. It is this extreme pitch variation which the ear interprets as the characteristic tibia "sweetness." Two general factors determine the extent of that sweetness: 1) the degree of violence with which the tremolo disturbs the wind pressure at the pipe; and 2) the voicing of the pipes themselves.

Let's examine first the major mechanical factors which affect the effectiveness of the tremolo system. Keep in mind that the more violently the wind pressure varies, or "shakes," as I prefer to say, the sweeter the tibia sound will be. (By the way, the words 'tremolo' and 'tremulant' are synonymous and interchangeable. The use of one term or the other has no particular significance, representing only the whim of the author!)

1. Factors of the Tremulant Itself

- a) Degree of openness of the gate on the windline entering the tremulant: the more open the gate, the more effective the shake. On almost all tremulants except voxes the gate is usually adjusted wide open. In fact, the author often removes the gates altogether, thereby eliminating a particularly annoying source of leaks.
- b) Size of wind inlet hole: Anything smaller than 2" diameter will reduce the shake; 2-1/2 or 3" is better.
- c) Weights: Weight added to the tremolo bellows usually improves the shake.
- d) Trim height: This is the adjustment of how far open the trem bellows is at rest.