

piano and the replacement of the Tuba with a Trumpet. The installation and the environment have made this organ sound like much more than eight ranks — a truly superb Wurlitzer. Both artists know how to get the best from this instrument.

Side I: Howard Beaumont. While being a rather traditional theatre organist, Mr. Beaumont brings flair and life to his performances. There are, however, three selections that have weak chord progressions which detract from his solid style.

Side II: Byron Jones. As outstanding a ballad organist as you might want to hear, "Always" has never been played better, and "L'Amour, Toujours L'Amour" is truly outstanding. Ballad organists are not often exciting, but Byron Jones certainly is!

The recording is excellent, and the pressing is good. This album is a must!

BOB SHAFTER

COUNTRY GARDENS, Nigel Ogden at the organ of Tatton Hall, Knutsford, Cheshire. Available from Mr. V.A. Drinkall, 4 High Elm Road, Hale Barns, Altrincham, Cheshire, England. International money order \$12.00 postpaid airmail.

Originally built by Henry Willis and Son in 1935, and modified considerably by Alfred E.

Davies in 1938 and 1950, this 3/34 is an interesting example of English residential Romantic/Orchestral organ building. Restoration began in 1975, by the Lancastrian Theatre Organ Trust, and was completed in 1977. This organ has some incredible lush sounds, but the upper work screams — partly because it is not in tune and partly because it is just too loud.

Mr. Odgen's credits are many and varied, but here it will suffice to say that he has a thorough understanding of classical, orchestral and theatre music. His performances are flawless and tasteful, and he utilizes the resources of this organ to their best advantage. His program is, as the title of the album suggests, "The Flower Dance," "My Wild Irish Rose," "We'll Gather Lilacs," "Country Gardens," etc.

The recording engineer slipped up a bit here. The recording sounds as though the microphone was placed too close to the organ, and that it was recorded too loud. It actually distorts in a couple of places, and there were a couple of rather loud, annoying pops on the review copy.

This album would make an interesting addition to a collection because of the uniqueness of the instrument, or if you happen to be particularly fond of the type of music presented.

BOB SHAFTER

BURNS, ROBERT ("Bobby")

West Coast organist in the 1920s. Organist of the Liberty Theatre in Seattle, Washington, in 1926 and organist of the Broadway Theatre in Portland, Oregon, in 1927.

BURRSTON, PERCY

Organist in the Salem, Oregon, area, who opened the Elsinore Theatre in Salem in 1926 and remained there as organist.

BURRIES, MAY W.

Organist of the Broadway Theatre in Richmond, Virginia, in 1925.

BURRIS, DOROTHY

Organist of the Pekin, Illinois, Theatre in 1930.

BURROUGHS, W. RAY (Wesley)

Organist of the Regent Theatre in Rochester, New York, in 1914. Organist of the Madison Theatre (Wurlitzer) in Rochester, New York, and Lyndhurst's Kohl organ in Rochester in 1927. Later Contributing Editor to *Diapason*, where he wrote articles and submitted news clips on the theatre organ to that periodical.

BURTON, HOWARD

Born August 6, 1901, near Woodburn, Iowa, in Clark County. Burton began playing the piano and organ for silent movies at the Strand Theatre in Creston, Iowa, in November of 1923. He played a winter engagement at the Rex Theatre in Geneseo, New York, in November 1926, then returned to the Strand Theatre in Creston, playing there until August 1929. He then entered the Knauss School of Theatre Organ Playing at Allentown, Pennsylvania, for an advanced seven-month course in theatre organ study. He broadcast over Iowa radio stations KMA in Shenandoah and KSIB in Creston. He played for many special events such as horse shows, clubs and dances. Burton's last theatre engagement was at the Paramount Theatre in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where he was featured soloist on the Wurlitzer from November 1958 to 1961.

BURTON, MARTHA

Played the Rembert Theatre in Longview, Texas (a 1/4 Seeburg combination piano-organ).

BUSHONG, ERNEST

Played the Ligonier Theatre in Ligonier, Indiana, in 1926.

BUSWELL, BILL

Buswell started his professional career at the age of 16, at the Comerford-Public Roosevelt Theatre in Scranton, Pennsylvania, where he was billed as "Scranton's Youngest Organist," and where he gave daily radio broadcasts from the organ console of the Masonic Temple. For 15 years he played intermission solos at theatres in Newark and Irvington in New Jersey, and at Cleveland, Ohio. When sound movies displaced theatre organists, he turned to playing and selling

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1986

**BIOGRAPHICAL
DICTIONARY
OF
THEATRE ORGANISTS**

by Dr. John W. Landon



BURCHARD, E. (MRS.)

Vice President of the Cleveland Theatre Organist's Club in 1923.

BURKETT, BURTON

Organist of the Strand Theatre in Muncie, Indiana, in 1924.

BURLAND, HERBERT W.

Organist of the Rialto Theatre in Los Angeles, California, in 1922 and 1923.

BURNHAM, FRED

Organist of the Irvington Theatre in Portland, Oregon, in 1927.

BURICH, S. J. (Mrs.)

Broadcast over Radio Station WOC, Davenport, Iowa, in 1922.

Herbert Burland

(Photo from Larry Widman)





Howard Burton at the 3/11 Wurlitzer, Paramount Theatre, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 1958-1961.

electronic instruments in the Pocono Mountain resorts, in Baltimore and Cleveland. One engagement had Buswell playing piano and organ simultaneously each evening for ten years. At the same time he was Staff Organist at Radio Station WGAR with his own shows, *Top of the Morning*, and *Give Billy a Hand*. Baseball fans enjoyed his artistry at the Cleveland Municipal Stadium for two seasons. In 1957 he joined the sales staff of the J. L. Hudson Company of Detroit in their piano and organ salon and subsequent engagements have been in hotels, clubs and restaurants in the Detroit area. He played several concerts for the Detroit Theater Organ Club and for the Motor City Chapter of the American Theatre Organ Society.

BUTLER, EDDIE

Born in Council Bluffs, Iowa, Butler began studying piano at the age of four at St. Francis' Academy in Council Bluffs. At age seven he learned the rudiments of playing the organ and by 11 years of age he began accompanying silent films at the old Liberty Theatre. At the same time he was taking organ lessons in Chicago once a week. His father worked for the railroad, so Eddie Butler used his father's pass, took the seven o'clock sleeper on Friday nights, and awakened the next morning in

Franklin Butte at the Kimball Organ, 20th Century Theatre, Juneau, Alaska, 1954. (Franklin Butte Photo)



Chicago, ready for his lessons.

Butler's career has taken him around the world. He has performed at church and theatre organs in Rome, Paris, London, Vienna, Madrid, Prague, Budapest, New York City, Mexico City and Los Angeles. In 1969 he gave a private recital before Pope Paul VI at the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican. He has recorded with Mario Lanza and Andre Segovia, classical guitarist. He served for a time as official organist for the Academy of Motion Picture, Radio and Television Arts and Sciences. Yet, of all his experiences, none was more memorable than becoming organist of the 3/13 Wurlitzer in Omaha's Orpheum Theatre. It was a case of "local boy makes good." The Orpheum, designed by Rapp and Rapp, seated more than 3000 people, boasted a ceiling of ivory and gold, walls lined with marble imported from Italy, and a \$7000 chandelier. Advance publicity described it as "a triumph of beauty, elegance and majesty." Opening night, October 9, 1927, featured guest artist J. Earl Estes at the organ accompanying a silent film, *The Fighting Eagle* (starring Omaha's own Hollywood star, Rod La Rocque).

Butler, long associated with the Omaha Orpheum, now plays the organ at St. John's Church on the Creighton University campus (Omaha) each Sunday. He plays an electronic organ for the appearances of the Kansas City-Omaha Kings at the City Auditorium, and operates his own recording company in Harlan, Iowa, where he now makes his home.

BUTTE, FRANKLIN

Butte was a radio engineer from Portland, Oregon, assigned to Juneau, Alaska, in September 1953 by the U.S. Army Signal Corps. He restored the Kimball organ in the 20th Century Theatre, Juneau, and played intermissions daily from 1953 to 1955. Also, because of Butte's involvement as a radio announcer-engineer, the organ was featured on a live radio morning show and in Sunday afternoon broadcasts. Butte played requests sent in by listeners. This instrument was subsequently sold to Mr. Howard Remly of Douglas, Alaska, who later presented it to the State of Alaska. In 1976 it was installed in an enclosed courtyard of the State Office Building in Juneau.

In 1965 Butte purchased a 2/8 Wurlitzer from the Northern Lights Presbyterian Church, Juneau (he had previously owned and sold this instrument), and installed it in his home. In 1971 he moved the organ to a larger residence, adding a console from the Rivera Theatre, Chicago, which was shipped to Anchorage via Northwest Orient Airlines jumbo jet. Since 1971 thousands of school children from the Anchorage School District and hundreds of adults have toured the installation.

Butte has also performed at the 3/8 Robert-Morton pipe organ installed in 1975 at Uncle's Pizza in Anchorage.

BYERS, GENE

Organist of the Rainbow and Climax Theatres in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1927.

BYRD, DESSA

See biography in THEATRE ORGAN, March/April 1984.

BYRD, VIRGINIA (Mrs. Stephen Rechteris)

Virginia Byrd Rechteris is the younger sister of Dessa Byrd. She was born August 12, 1914, to William N. Byrd and Emma Holt Byrd in Robinson, Illinois. William Byrd was quite musical, playing several instruments without formal training. Sister Dessa was 16 years of age when Virginia was born and brother Noel Byrd was 14. William Byrd died shortly after Virginia was born. When Dessa won a scholarship to study piano at the Indianapolis Conservatory of Music, mother Byrd moved her family to Indianapolis to a house on Walnut Street where the Scottish Rite Cathedral now stands.

Virginia attended Shortridge High School and Arthur Jordan Conservatory of Music. Theory, counterpoint, music history and composition were everyday classes, along with piano lessons. At age 14 Virginia began to study organ with Dale Young, organist at Roberts Park United Methodist Church. While studying music, Virginia found practical application by playing for weddings, dance classes, parties and banquets.

In 1936 Virginia was employed by the Pearson Music Company, Indiana agents for the new Hammond organ. The first Hoosier demonstrators of the new instrument were Dessa and Virginia Byrd. Virginia traveled to Pearson's stores in Indiana to give programs and demonstrate the versatility of the Hammond organ.

Outstanding mastery of the Hammond organ led to her selection as demonstrator of the instrument at the National Music Dealers Convention in New York City in 1941.

In 1940 Virginia entered the field of radio, doing programs for WIRE (with studios on the ninth floor of the Claypool Hotel). The Novachord, with tone produced entirely by oscillating radio tubes, had been invented by Laurens Hammond of the Hammond Instrument Company. Virginia's Hammond organ and Novachord talents aired on a daily feature, "Editorially Speaking." Virginia became staff organist at WIRE when sister Dessa married in 1942.

In January of 1942 Virginia married Stephen Rechteris. When daughter Beverly was born, big sister Dessa took over for Virginia to play her programs. Beverly Ann Rechteris is now a graphic artist with WRTV, Channel 6, Indianapolis, Indiana.

During the eight years with WIRE Virginia was organist on the *Trolley Trio*, featuring Harry Bason and vocalist Frank Parrish. On *The Block's Make-Up Program*, heard daily from the WIRE studios at 12 noon, Virginia played Deagan chimes amplified through large speakers on the roof of the Claypool Hotel. A most popular program aired each night at 11 for Hook's Dependable Drugs was *Starlight Trail*, with Sidney Mason reading poetry.

In September 1949 Jimmy Boyer returned to Cornell University to finish his college de-

gree. He offered to Virginia, and she accepted, his staff position with WISH-TV, a new station started in 1943. Her first program was in 1949 from the Indiana State Fair WISH studios. Virginia had many commercial programs while at WISH (with studios located in the Board of Trade Building).

Virginia Byrd Rechteris has a number of firsts with WISH and WISH-TV. By playing at their inaugural program, she was the first organist to play at their new studios at 1440 North Meridian Street. On July 1, 1954, almost four years later, Virginia played the background music for the dedicatory program of the second television station of WISH-TV, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Virginia Byrd Time, an all-request program, was on radio for several years. Virginia was featured soloist on *The Catherine Daniels Show*, and the *Laugh With The Ladies* show.

Chapel Door, a 15-minute interdenominational religious program, debuted on television in 1954. It ran for a full 16 years, becoming the longest running religious program in the Middle West. Virginia was co-director of the show and played for the respective singers who assisted the minister with the program.

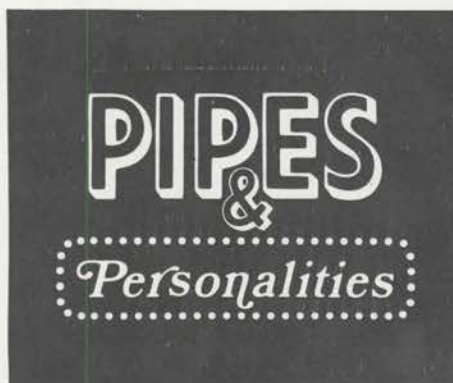
Currently, Virginia is heard on *Meditation*, a sign-on and sign-off program for WISH-TV. Each week Virginia programs ministers of different denominations, taping seven three-minute sign-on and seven sign-off programs. Virginia plays a piano background for the programs, which are taped on Monday. They are viewed 14 times the following week. On occasion, Virginia also appears on the current *Indy Today Show* with Alpha Blackburn.

Along with her musical association with WISH-TV, Virginia has found time through the years to devote many hours to civic work. She received the TSP Award for her many civic and volunteer projects. "TSP" stands for "Those Special People," and is an honor conferred by the Women in Communications group.

Presently, Virginia is a member of the Civic

Theatre Board of Directors, Repertory Theatre of Christian Theological Seminary, American Theatre Organ Society and the American Guild of Organists.

Husband Stephen Rechteris is treasurer of Hugh J. Baker Steel Company. □



Silents Set for TV Showing

Subscribers to Bravo cable service were delighted last summer when they tuned in and viewed the most complete version of D.W. Griffith's controversial *The Birth of a Nation* yet to be seen on TV. Best of all, it had a fine organ score but failed to credit the organist who improvised an original musical setting rather than use the now-dated score issued at the time of the film's original release in 1915. A little digging revealed that the scorer was Rosa Rio, and the only sour note was that the score was played on a Hammond. Rosa explained that she would have preferred a pipe organ, but since the Marr & Colton in the Thomaston Opera House is not available, and the Austin in Shelton High School can't be rented on a regular basis, there are no pipe organs near enough to her Connecticut home for practical use, so she settled for the Hammond B3000 which, she says, "has two kinds of piano and a snazzy Post Horn."



Rosa Rio

(Photo courtesy Stu Green)

Bravo Cable Service reveals that it plans to run six or eight silent classics each year since they received such favorable comments about the first one. These films are distributed in video cassette form by Video Yesteryear, Sandy Hook, Connecticut, which we hope will locate some suitable pipes for Rosa so her work at the manuals and pedals will be that much more authentic.

Good News from Hawaii

Honolulu, a magazine published in and for Hawaii, ran an excellent article in August about theatre organs and the Aloha chapter of ATOS. The author, Ben Hyams, writes a column entitled "Classical Music," and the occasion for this article was a joint meeting/concert for Aloha Chapter and Hawaii Chapter AGO which featured John McCreary at the Hawaii Theatre Robert-Morton. McCreary introduced long-time ATOS member Frank Loney who played music from *Show Boat* plus the introduction to the third act of *Carmen* with "an unbelievably realistic flute sound," which turned out to be a real flute played by Bob Alder. Aloha Chapter is, according to Mr. Hyams, the "caretaker, repairer, restorer and, in general, foster parent of the organ."

Carillon Player Chimes in to Play Rock Songs, Requests

Can you imagine "Material Girl" being played on a carillon? How about the theme from *The Jetsons*?

It's happening every day on the DePauw University campus at Greencastle. Martin Ellis, a freshman music major from Monrovia, plays the 37-bell carillon atop the Performing Arts Center between classes and varies the music menu to include popular rock songs and old TV theme songs.

"It's something I thought was interesting and kind of fun," Ellis said. "Sometimes I just go up there and klunk around; it depends on how I feel."

Traditionally, the carillon is programmed

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1986

Dessa Byrd at the piano in her home in Indianapolis; Virginia Byrd Rechteris, her sister, standing beside her.

(Virginia Byrd Rechteris Photo)

