

# ENGLISH CONSOLE STARS

## No. 2: Bryan Rodwell

... Frank Hare

I SUPPOSE IT is only natural that one takes a special interest in people from one's own country, and, being a Yorkshireman, I am proud that several well-known names in the theatre organ world hail from there, the most famous including Reginald Dixon, Neville Meale, Reginald Porter-Brown, Henry Croudson (from my own City, Leeds) and Bryan Rodwell, who was born at Keighley in June, 1929. Within the last few years Bryan has made such a name for himself as a theatre organist, that it is easy to overlook the comparatively short time he has been at the job.

He first took an interest in piano music at the age of four, and commenced training some four years later. He made his first public appearance at ten, and as time went by, played as both solo and dance pianist, giving several piano broadcasts when he was thirteen. At fourteen he made an extensive tour with Henry Croudson's "Youth Symphony Orchestra." Shortly afterwards, Bryan started organ lessons, becoming assistant organist, and later organist, at the local Parish Church, and in the course of various engagements, he gave a piano and organ recital at the Leeds Town Hall.

It was in Leeds that Charles Saxby introduced Bryan to the cinema organ, and he could not have found a better instrument on which to learn than the Odeon's fine Wurlitzer. Soon he was playing guest dates at various Yorkshire and Lancashire cinemas, as well as the Tower Ballroom, Blackpool, but it was after an appearance in Bradford in 1946, that he was invited to join Associated British Cinemas. He was posted to the Forum, Southampton, where Reginald Porter-Brown had been such a sensation just a few years earlier, and he also did some touring as guest organist, until his time came for call-up into the Royal Air Force in 1947. Being attached to the R.A.F. Central Band, he was able to continue with music, and while serving in Germany was invited to broadcast over both the British Forces Network and the N.W.D.R. at Hamburg. In 1948 came the first of his many broadcasts on the B.B.C. Theatre Organ.

Upon demob in 1949, he rejoined A.B.C. at the Ritz, Hereford, remaining there, on one of the smallest organs in Britain, until 1951, when he left to freelance with a Hammond organ in Yorkshire and Devon. In March, 1952, he joined Granada Theatres as resident organist at their East Ham theatre, playing for cine-variety in conjunction

with his co-organist/pianist Bernard Worster. Since the introduction of CinemaScope, he has on alternate weeks been frequently touring the circuit, with well-received organ solos—some of them straightforward performances without the aid of slides.

Of recent times Bryan's organ broadcasts have been augmented by excellent ones from the Granadas at Clapham Junction and Tooting, as well as a few from Rugby for the B.B.C.'s Midland Service, and a number on the Hammond. British listeners already know the high standard of his work in both the classical and rhythm spheres, but those who have not been able to personally sample his musical ability may judge from the fact that he gained the A.L.C.M. as long ago as 1943, the F.R.C.O. in 1946, the L.R.A.M. (Perf.) in 1947, and the Mus. Bac. degree in 1950.

To end on a personal note—Bryan lives with his wife and young daughter in the Manor Park district of London, which he finds quite handy for the East Ham Granada. His signature tune—that famous evergreen "You Made Me Love You."



Bryan Rodwell at the Mighty Wurlitzer

## DISCOGRAPHY

(Continued from page 11)

353. 508—33—'56. THE BEAUTIFUL GARDEN OF PRAYER: The old Rugged cross (*Bennard*), My faith looks up to Thee (*Converse*), Blessed assurance (*Crosby*), Near the cross (*Doane*), What a friend (*Converse*), God be with you (*Tomer*), Peace, perfect peace (*Galbraith*); I need Thee every hour (*Doane*), Sweet hour of prayer (*Bradbury*), Come ye disconsolate (*Webbe*), The beautiful garden of prayer (?), God will take care of you (*Tomer*), Now the day is over (*Weber*), Holy, holy, holy (*Dykes*), Faith of our fathers (*Hemy*).
354. 509—12—33—'56. BELOVED HYMNS: Abide with me (*Monk*), Safe in the Arms of Jesus (*Doane*),

Blest be the tie (*Naegeli*), I am praying for you (*Sankey*), I love to tell the story (*Fischer*), Sometime we'll understand (?), No night there (*Danks*); Rock of ages (*Hastings*), Jesus, Saviour, pilot me (*Gould*), Lead kindly light (*Dykes*), Have Thine own way, Lord (*Stebbins*), Jesus calls us (*Jude*), He leadeth me (*Bradbury*), Love divine (*Zundel*), Higher ground (*Gabriel*).

355. 510—12—33—'56. DREAMS OF PARADISE: Nearer my God to Thee (*Mason*), Jesus, lover of my soul (*March*), Close to Thee (*Vail*), Face to face (*Gabriel*), Beulah land (*Carter*), Saved by grace (*Stebbins*), It is well with my soul (*Bliss*), Softly and tenderly (*Thompson*), In the garden (*Miles*), In the sweet bye and bye (*Von Tilzer*), Shepherd, show me how to go (*Brackets*), Oh! gentle presence (*Fisher*), Saw ye my Saviour (*Root*), Jesus loves me (*Bradbury*), When He cometh (*Root*).