



# Spinning Organs

. . . BY THE EDITOR

A letter from our "Reviewer" brings up a matter that has been a concern to many of our readers and alluded to only briefly heretofore in this column. His comments, under the title "Thoughts On Record Jackets," are worthy of inclusion here:

"The recent appearance of the new Ray Bohr album, reviewed in this issue, brings on these mutterings from this dejected organ-fan. I can only speak for myself, but I have a faint suspicion that there are others who perhaps have these same, or similar, ideas.

"The typically inane jacket notes that we seem to be able to count on from Victor (and there are others) are to be found in fullest bloom on this aforementioned release. For the amount of space that the average jacket allows for written material, it is amazing that they manage to say so little. The space is there to be filled, and it doesn't seem to make too much difference with what it is filled.

"In this instance a few paragraphs are devoted to the history of the pipe organ in Nero's day, the rest, a rundown of the various shows from which the tunes found in the album have been selected. All of which may look very fine to someone sitting in a 'front office' at RCA Victor, but what does it mean to the average record buyer . . . and to the organ fan in particular?

"We don't expect a company the size of Victor to issue a record with only organ fans in mind—but I would wager, with a release of this type, that more records are bought by people attracted by the words 'Pipe Organ' than those who are impressed by a superimposed photograph of a cosmopolitan-looking couple standing on top of a street sign! If this be true, as I believe, why not cater to that interest in the 'pipe organ' and tell the buyer something about the particular instrument that was used for the recording! Is such information a big, deep, dark secret? Why the reticence to reveal a few fundamental facts — such as the organ used, location, etc. Or doesn't the \$3.98 plunked down by the record buyer entitle him to such information.

"Maybe the reason is that someone who happens to have nothing else to do and no interest or knowledge of the pipe organ, is appointed to write some copy to fill up the back of the jacket on Release No. 'so and so'. The information that would make for interesting and informative reading would require no more research and time than the chasing down of show names, the years they appeared, the stars, etc.

"If the producers would cater to supplying desired data, they would build up interest and knowledge that would in all probability lead to greater sales in this particular field of recorded music. Is not that good business?

"Give us the date of the recording session; any interesting side-lights that may have occurred during the recording, and perhaps some technical data on the equipment used, such as the number of microphones, where they were placed, and so on. Victor, or any recording company, would be definitely catering to both the general buyer, as well as the organization, due to the general over-all interest in sound equipment these days on the part of the record buyer. This widespread interest would indicate that consideration of these points would be a matter of good policy on the part of any recording company.

"I trust that Victor will forgive me for citing them as a specific example of one of my 'pet peeves.' They have given us several fine organ recordings in the past year or so. We organ fans do appreciate

them. Now we would like to see the jacket notes match the quality of the contents!" (A.C.)

We think "A.C." has something here. Let's hope certain recording companies take heed and give us the information we want.

## MERCURY RECORDS

**Robert Elmore** (Kimball, Ballroom, Convention Hall), Atlantic City, New Jersey).

**MG-50109-12"-33. "BOARDWALK PIPES"** Sel.: Stars and Stripes Forever; Stars in my Eyes; Caprice Viennois; Old Refrain; Liebesfreud; Fantasy on Nursery Themes; Eklog; Squirrel; Marche Champetre; Trumpet Voluntary.

This one should have been titled *Big Sound On The Boardwalk*. There is a wealth of sound caught by the single microphone that Mercury used to record this huge organ. And there is a wealth of information in the Jacket Notes. Though no credit is given to the writer of these notes, I do feel that every organ fan owes him a vote of thanks for having set a splendid example for others to follow in their endeavors to fill up that "reverse side" of the record jacket. Only one item of interest was overlooked. No mention is made of the fact that this organ was built by the Kimball Organ Company.

The notes do state, however, that it was built in 1929, and then go on to explain that, "strictly speaking, this is not a true theatre organ. Partly 'straight' and partly 'unit,' it is a compromise between the radical theatre organ and the normal concert instrument. Besides the percussions and special effects, it has 19 straight and 23 unit voices and 55 ranks of pipes . . ."

It is quite evident from the sound on this record that we have a truly *different* instrument, with perhaps the "straight" side predominating. In the specifications, which are a part of the notes, one fails to find any Tibia rank listed.

Mr. Elmore does a fine job of contrasting the powerful voices of full organ with many soft and placid passages. And Mercury does a fine job of recording. Just to have a recording of this famous organ in one's collection makes this record a good buy. But I think that most organ fans will also find much of it worthwhile musically. Just don't expect to find the sobbing Tibia's of a New York Paramount Wurlitzer coming through your speaker.

ONE COMPLAINT: Why couldn't we have had a photo of the console of this instrument? Guess you just can't satisfy these organ fans! (A.C.)

## Reviews of Recent Recordings

### MGM

**Richard Ellsasser**

**E3490-12"-33. "MUSIC OF DAID ROSE."** Sel.: Our Waltz; California Melodies; Holiday for Strings; Dance of The Spanish Onion; I've Been Away Too Long; Manhattan Square Dance; Gay Spirits; 4:20 A. M.; Serenade to a Lemonade; Magic Music Box; The Mask Waltz; Deserted City.

Everyone that has heard the superb work of Richard Ellsasser in his many straight-organ recordings has probably longed for the day that they might hear him at the console of a theatre organ. For those that are hearing him for the first time, there may be a mixed reaction. Certainly, everyone will recognize the true perfection of technique that is displayed here, but the fact that Ellsasser has limited the selections on this record to the works of one composer, David Rose, may be a bit of a disappointment to some fans. This is due, I believe, to the fact that often there is a similarity among the various selections that is a bit noticeable in the works of Rose, as one might notice also in the compositions, say, of LeRoy Anderson.

On first listening the impression is more of a "recital" than a

"Holiday" on the Whitney Studio Robert Morton. But with subsequent hearings one is bound to lose this thought and be taken with the multitude of tonal variations and the great variety of registrations that are there for all to hear and to enjoy.

Some organ enthusiasts that have heard Ellsasser at both the N. Y. Paramount console and that of the S. F. Fox, know just what he is capable of in this medium. I think that such items as 4:20 A.M.; *Magic Music Box*; *Serenade to a Lemonade*; will give all of us a pretty good indication of just what they have been "hinting" at. Let's hope that in his next recording (and the sooner the better) that Ellsasser will not restrict himself to the works of any one composer, but will break out with some items more familiar to theatre organ fans. His reputation as a Classic Organist cannot possibly suffer from any excursion into the popular field, and he will make many organ fans happy.

The cover of this record will leave many organ fans wondering why the money spent on the art work of a few bronze-toned organ pipes could not have been spent on a photo of Ellsasser at the console of the R-M. There is not much exciting in the way of notes, but you'll find your reward in just listening to this fine organist turn out a perfect little masterpiece in each number (A.C.)

MGM

Richard Ellsasser

MGM-E-3505-12"-33. "MORE LEROY ANDERSON."

Recording not available for review this issue

PRESCOTT RECORDS CO. (18450 Livernois, Detroit 21, Mich.)

Ed Gress (Wurlitzer, Fox, Detroit, Mich.)

PR1002-12"-33. "MIGHTY WURLITZER, MIGHTY SOUND, MIGHTY GOOD." Sel. Granada, On The Street Where You Live, Linger Awhile, It's Only a Paper Moon, Penthouse Serenade, Blue Room, Oklahoma Selections, Lullaby of The Leaves, Besame Mucho, I'll Never Love You, Alexander's Ragtime Band.

Many records have sought to catch the unwary organ enthusiast with the label of "Mighty Wurlitzer." Here is one that *does* deserve the right to appropriate Mr. Wurlitzer's trade-mark!

The recorded sound of this fine organ of the Fox Theatre, Detroit, cannot help but stir up all kinds of mental images in the mind of any listener. Soft lights, lush curtains bathed in varying colors, music coming from behind ornamental plaster work and filling a huge theatre, all of these memories are stirred and impelled to new life.

Ed Gress has contributed many articles to *The Tibia* and here he has the opportunity to prove that he knows what he has been writing about, and that he does most conclusively. Ed has worked on the "innards" of this Wurlitzer and brought it back to its former glory. He then proceeds to give a very capable and enjoyable demonstration of his talents as applied to the keyboard, as well as to the lofts.

Here we have about 45 minutes of a full and wonderful theatre sound. According to the jacket notes this was one of the primary aims of the recording engineers, as well as Ed Gress. That they have succeeded is "on record" for all to hear. And on the cover we find featured a fine color photo of the console with Ed on the bench.

A fine group of selections is offered in a wide range that should please most every taste. This reviewer was particularly attracted to *Linger Awhile*; *Penthouse Serenade* and the ballad *I'll Never Love You* (A.C.)

REPLICA RECORDS

Al Melgard

518-12"-33. "THIS IS MELGARD." Sel. - Hot Foot Blues (Melgard), Clarinet Polka (Nanyslowski), Sugar Blues (Williams), Oui Marie (Di Capua), In The Mood (Razaf), Hokey-Pokey (La Prise et al), Italian Theme (Giacomazzi - Hamilton), Shine On Harvest Moon (Norworth), Waltz Medley (Siezynski - Robledo), My Melancholy Baby (Burnett), Carolina In The Morning (Donaldson), Lovely Hula Hands (Anderson), Beautiful Ohio (Earl), Harbor Lights (Kennedy - Williams).

This record is slanted towards the hi-fi addicts, rather than to the avid organ fan. It is an interminable collection of so-called "hot" music on one side, and the background type of thing on the other. Organ fans, in general, can take some consolation in the fact that the name "Wurlitzer" does not appear on the front cover. Unfortunately, the instrument is referred to as a "Wurlitzer Unit Orchestra" on the back; but no mention is made of the various instrumentalists who also appear. (A. C.)

SOMA RECORDS (29 Glenwood Ave., Minneapolis, Minn.)

Ramona Gerhard

MG1203-12"-33. "INTERMISSION TIME." Sel. - Petite waltz (Heyne), Dizzy Fingers (Confrey), My Fair Lady medley, Toy Tiger, Ramona (Wayne), Granada (unspec.), Narcissus (Nevin), Wunderbar (Porter), Estrellita (Ponce), Gershwin medley.

Ramona Gerhard is a name long associated with the theatre organ, and her past-playing of the WCCO Wurlitzer endeared her to many in the Minneapolis area. At long last, the rest of the country has an opportunity to find out what all the raving has been about.

Unlike so many lady organists, Miss Gerhard displays an original style—one filled with gusto.

The organ used for this recording is the Wurlitzer in the KNX studios in Hollywood where Miss Gerhard's husband, Robert Sutton, is program director. Three microphones were used in the pick-up—one placed *inside* the chamber containing the percussions. The result is a high-level recording with a strong emphasis on the percussive qualities. This is not a recording to relax with, but rather one which will command your attention.

For the most part, this is a Wurlitzer: but the console (pictured on the cover with Miss Gerhard) was built by Balcom and Vaughn Organ Co. and some of the reeds are Gottfried work—which highly color this organ giving it a special personality.

SOMA has seen fit to press this recording on pure, red vinylite which will give it extra appeal to the hi-fi enthusiast, as will, perhaps, the close-up approach to the percussions. (R.G.)

SOMERSET RECORDS (Miller International Co., Media, Penn.)

George Montalba (Wurlitzer, Nice, France).

P-2400-12"-33. "PIPE ORGAN FAVORITES." Sel.: Waltz of the Flowers (Tchaikovsky), Aura-Lee (Love me tender), Anitra's dance (Grieg), Melody in F (Rubenstein), Stars Fell On Alabama; The Secret (Gautier), Diane, Put the Moon Back In The Sky, Charmaine, Evening Star (Wagner), Washington Post March (Sousa).

Who said there was nothing new under the sun? How many organ fans are aware that there is a Wurlitzer (and a nice sounding one at that) in Nice, France? And who has heard of George Montalba before? Not many of us, if anyone. But this reviewer hopes that we'll be hearing more, both of the Wurlitzer, and Mr. Montalba.

The short notes on the record jacket fail to reveal very much, either about the organ or Mr. Montalba, aside from the fact that he is a Frenchman and in his early thirties. He is evidently well known as a theatre organist in France and Belgium. It is also stated that he expects to make a tour of the U. S. A. in the spring of 1958... which might be well worth watching for.

This record, on which we must judge Mr. Montalba's talent for the present, offers a little bit of everything. He seems to be capable of handling both the popular idiom and the semi-classic in an easy style. This is one of those records that you will have to hear for yourself, if you wish to form a judgment of his talent. Some will find it too "English" in style—others will welcome it as a bit of freshness, and relief, from the artists we hear so often.

Perhaps some of our readers can give a little information about this Wurlitzer installation, and maybe about Mr. George Montalba also. If you have anything that you think would be of interest, why don't you drop a line to the Editor and tip him off? He'd be glad to hear from you.

One last note... If you like your pianos just "slightly" out of tune, you'll *love* the one on this Wurlitzer! This record is selling for only \$1.98, so how can you go wrong? (A. C.)

\*(According to our correspondent in England, Mr. Mander, knows of only two Wurlitzers in France—a 2/5 for Madeleine, Paris, and the 3/10 for Paramount, Paris. ED.)

URANIA

Gordon Kibbee (Wurlitzer, Rich Vaughn residence, L. A., Cal.)

UCS-57-12"-33. "MUSIC FROM OKLAHOMA & SOUTH PACIFIC."

Gordon Kibbee and the Vaughn Wurlitzer are, to my mind, an almost unbeatable combination. Here we have a master at the console of a beautiful instrument, and the result is a record of beautiful music. True, it is music that we have heard many times over, but these arrangements bring new glory with them. You will

hear new voices and tonal qualities from this Wurlitzer that haven't been brought out before.

It is unfortunate that Mr. Kibbee has not had more of his material on LP records. To my knowledge there has only been one previous release, although there have been several tapes on the market. I think that most of us would like to hear more. This recording seems to be a little on the subdued side when compared with what we have heard on tape, and it sounds really fine. There seem to be a few rough spots of tape editing, but nothing could minimize the all around pleasure that the average organ fan should find in listening to this performance.

The one thing that this reviewer would wish for is the opportunity to hear Mr. Kibbee record some theatre installation. With his many years of experience at theatre consoles it should result in something of a knockout. Just a sample of what one might expect is to be found in his arrangement of *Bali Hai*. (A.C.)

#### RCA VICTOR

Ray Bohr (Wurlitzer)

LPM-1339-12"-33. "THE BIG SOUND ON BROADWAY." Sel.: The big sound on Broadway (Ramin), I whistle a happy tune (Rodgers-Hammerstein), This nearly was mine (Hammerstein-Rodgers), I could have danced all night (Lerner-Loewe), The rain in Spain (Lerner-Loewe), Once in love with Amy (Loesser), Papa won't you dance with me (Styne-Cahn), So in love (Porter), Whatever Lola wants (Adler-Ross), You'll never walk alone (Hammerstein-Rodgers), March of the Siamese soldiers (Rodgers-Hammerstein), Grey dawn over cool city (Ramin).

This record has caused something of an "inner conflict" among the editors of *Tibia*. Since the jacket notes failed to mention any information as to the organ used for the recording, we were left to the doubtful pleasure of testing our ears, and memories, and matching them with one another in an effort to pin-point the source of Mr. Bohr's rhythmic capers.

That he has assembled a group of lush arrangements is here for all to hear. In general they follow the somewhat bouncy and brassy type of thing that we heard on the original *Big Sound* release some time back. Most every fancy will be pleased, whether you find your favorite in *You'll Never Walk Alone* (with Bach's *Jesu Joy* interpolated) or his extremely clever handling of *Whistle A Happy Tune* or *I Could Have Danced All Night*.

The problem remained, however, what organ was used? Some of us were inclined to think that it was the Radio City Studio Wurlitzer, while others thought that it was the N. Y. Paramount Wurlitzer. These opinions were batted back and forth until one of our better informed spies said that he had two witnesses to prove that it was the Paramount Wurlitzer that is heard on this record.

Frankly, this reviewer wishes that it had been the Studio "W." for then one could easily say that Victor had done a truly fine job of recording. Not only that, but it would have been evidence of how the individual talent can change the sound of any particular

instrument . . . such were our thoughts. But with it being the Paramount Wurlitzer, we fail to see how anyone can be particularly "thrilled" with the thought that Victor has succeeded in making the huge Paramount theatre nothing but a studio, and giving us what amounts to a "studio organ" recording. This, of course, is a personal reaction . . . others may not find it irritating. After all, we still have some fine music and a fine organist. But what ever happened to the "theatre organ"?

#### RCA VICTOR

Ernestine Holmes

LPM-1259-12"-33. "INVITATION TO DREAM."

Not received in time for review this issue.

#### WESTMINSTER

Richard Leibert

6045-12"-33. "LEIBERT TAKES A HOLIDAY."

Not received in time for review this issue.

## RECORDED TAPES

#### ALPHATAPE

Gordon Kibbee

ST-25 (Stereo) "POPS FOR PIPES." Sel.: Careless, The boy next door, I've grown accustomed to her face, I could have danced all night, When your lover has gone. Price, \$8.95.

#### OMEGATAPE

Gordon Kibbee

ST-7001 (Stacked or Staggered heads). Vol. 2 "MIGHTY WURLITZER PIPE ORGAN." Sels. from "Oklahoma!" — Oklahoma, Oh what a beautiful morning, Surrey with the fringe on top, All or nothing, Kansas City, People will say we're in love, I can't say No, Out of my dreams. Sels. from "South Pacific": Overture, Dites Moi, Cock-eyed Optimist, Turi soliquies, Unspoken thoughts, This nearly was mine, Happy talk, Younger than springtime, Bali-Hi. Price, \$12.95.

SB-7007 (Stacked or staggered heads) "HIGH FIDELITY SHOW-PIECES." Sel.: C'est si bon, Vienna city of my dreams, Granada, Baia, Begin the beguine, Somebody loves me, My heart belongs to Daddy, Tea for two. Price, \$12.95.

#### ALLEGRO

Edwin La Marr (Buddy Cole & Ken Wright)

1705-12"-33. "PIPE ORGAN POPS." Sel. - Buddy Cole: Rio Rita (Tierney), Crying for the Carolines (Young-Warren-Lewis),\* Sleepy time gal (Lorenzo et al)\* When I lost you (Berlin), It happened in Monterey (Wayne-Rose), I'm sitting on top of the world (Lewis-Young-Henderson), I love Louisa (Schwartz-Dietz), Ain't we got fun (Whiting-Kahn-Egan), Chant of the jungle (Brown-Freed) Ken Wright: Sunrise serenade (Carle), Poor butterfly (Hubbell), Mood indigo (Ellington), La Paloma (Yradier).

\*Previously included in Allegro-Royale disc 1536 under *non de plume* "Eric Silver." All selections from old masters.

## Our Cover Design

**B**ELATEDLY WE TENDER appreciation to Mr. William A. Steward (see photos in earlier issues) and Steve Singleton for their labors in making possible our attractive covers. Mr. Steward, member of the Conley, Baltzer and Steward Advertising Agency in San Francisco, did the layout while Mr. Singleton, a very capable advertising artist of the firm, did the final scratchboard rendering "This cover drawing," comments Mr. Steward, "was Steve's first close contact with a pipe organ. He worked from photos supplied by Judd Walton. To get the wood grain and detail, I loaned him an actual *Tibia* pipe that he carried home and used as a model." Bill Steward's interest in organs dates back to 1935 when he rebuilt a little reed organ,

followed by a succession of others each larger than the preceding. It was inevitable that the next step would be a pipe organ, and he eventually purchased a four-rank Wurlitzer from Judd Walton and Bob Jacobus. "We really enjoyed that Wurlitzer." But Bill admits that his wife, Anne, is the organist in the family. It was only a matter of time before the desire for a larger organ asserted itself, and a couple of years ago the Stewards acquired a six-rank Wurlitzer from the State Theatre at Marysville, California, and are at present combining it with their present organ to make a two-chamber, ten-rank job. We wonder if Mr. Single became infected with the organ bug. Thank you, gentlemen for a job well done!