



BOOK REVIEW

MEMOIRS OF A SAN FRANCISCO ORGAN BUILDER, Louis J. Schoenstein. Order from The Organ Literature Foundation, 45 Norfolk Road, Braintree, MA 02184-5915. Phone 617/848-1388.

The streets of San Francisco, with names that bring either genuine or imagined nostalgia, furnish an organwise armchair adventure in 694 pages. Louis, son of Felix Schoenstein who founded the 114-year-old organ company, recalls experiences that he and his father encountered over some 60 years beginning with the city's 1906 earthshaking tragedy.

Readers will benefit by having a San Francisco map at hand to identify locations described, most of them associated with organs, the people who built them, the institutions (or the "Bonanza Kings") who owned them, as well as the resident and visiting artists who performed on them. Orchestrions — automatic organs with pipes and percussions — were an early specialty of the family, and comments are given about the mechanism and the procedure for recording written music by attaching pins on a cylinder.

The theatre organ merits a chapter of its own, and the author explains why these beasts were his least favorite from the standpoint of maintenance conditions. Tales both sad and laughable sprang from problems with pipes, pneumatics, and personalities.

In a dozen pages, Mr. Schoenstein gives the organ history of Grace Cathedral from 1860, including the present organ specifications, and states that "The Consecration Services of the Cathedral were held on Friday, November 20, 1964. The music was composed and arranged by Richard Purvis. Mr. Hazleton presided at the organ."

Hugh Lineback

GRANADA. Jim Riggs plays the Grande Barton Organ. Selections are: Granada, Can This Be Love, The Peanut Polka, Remembering Duke: An Ellington Tribute, Once In Awhile, In a Cafe on the Road to Calais, A Walter Donaldson Medley, An Evening in Carolina, When It's Sleepytime Down South, Chanson Dansette, You Don't Like It - Not Much, Deep Night, Karma, Selections from Kid Millions, The High School Cadets, A Garden in the Rain. Available from: Riggs-Granada, P.O. Box 10042, Oakland, CA 94610. CD postpaid \$20.00. Cassette post paid \$12.00

ORGAN: GUTSY
PERFORMANCE: SUPERB
RECORDING: DYNAMIC

A very exciting recording that combines the incomparable talents of Jim Riggs and Jim Stemke. In my opinion Jim Riggs is currently the organist with the best ability to play big organ in a big room. He has an almost uncanny ability to exploit the acoustics of a big room to their best advantage. This recording also includes more ballads, which Jim Riggs does so well. The lovely, lush sounds of this tremendous instrument are given equal care with the big bombastic sounds which this organ also does very well.

In my opinion the job of a recording engineer is to make you believe you are in the room. Jim Stemke has once again succeeded where so few others do. The recording possesses a tremendous dynamic range and is very clean. He is able to record the organ loud without losing musical integrity.

The organ has a large cohesive sound. The ensemble is very pleasing. Of particular note is the post horn which does not dominate full organ as so many do, but rather it penetrates and adds the top. The only minor drawbacks are what I would call rather odd room acoustics.

A highly recommended recording.

Bob Shafter

Manufacturers, distributors or individuals sponsoring or merchandising organ recordings are encouraged to send review copies to the Record Reviewer, THEATRE ORGAN, 4633 S.E. Brookside Drive, #58, Milwaukie, Oregon 97222. Be sure to include purchasing information (postpaid price, ordering address) and a photo of the artist which need not be returned.

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