

Record Reviews

THE SONG IS YOU - The Music of Jerome Kern. Jesse Crawford, Organist. Decca DL8861 Mono.

SONGS OF LOVE - The Music of Sigmund Romberg. Jesse Crawford, Organist. Decca DL8841 Mono. Available in Stereo.

How do you review a Jesse Crawford album? How do you act as a critic of Rembrandt? How do you review Kreisler? Indeed, how do you? This reviewer is most humble when it comes to reviewing a Crawford masterpiece. Crawford has probably recorded more organs than most organists have seen.

Like U.S. currency, many have tried to counterfeit it and many have come close, but none have succeeded. And so it is with Crawford. Many have tried to imitate his phrasing, his registration, his interpretation, but none have succeeded. In point of years of recording he is probably the oldest artist, and this experience has not been forgotten or mislaid in these two albums. These are genuine Crawford all the way through, and like sterling silver, they bear his mark. No counterfeit, these.

It is immaterial what numbers these albums contain; the composers' names are too well established to comment on them. Crawford's playing, however, adds a new sheen, a new outlook. You are suddenly transported back, and think: this is the way Kern wanted it played, or this is what Romberg was thinking when he composed this.

Crawford has the ability to do more with two stops than the average organist can do with a score of stops. This is no accident, no lucky choice., this is the voice of experience of many, many hours of practice playing under all kinds of circumstances, playing many different types of organs. How else can you account for it? Genius, you say? Maybe it is genius. Who else can you name who has that subtle touch on the swell pedal, that inimitable modulation, the choice of registration?

Poet of the Organ. Feeble words indeed to match this artistry. Decca has had the good fortune to give Crawford the engineering he deserves in capturing the sound that flows from the magic of these sensitive hands. The organ sound is lush and well voiced. No electronic tricks have been played with it, no attempt has been made to give it a so-called "HI-FI" sound. It is good clean recording with a full frequency range, solid all the way through. The pressings this reviewer used were excellent with very quiet surface, no scratches.

If you like theatre type organ at its best, you will like these records. If you like Crawford's style, you will not be able to wait until you secure them! - F.R.K.

RAY BOHR AND THE RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL ORGAN - Design DLP-128 Mono.

Here is a straight-forward recording of the small Wurlitzer organ in the broadcasting studio of Radio City Music Hall, a 3/14 organ which has been recorded many times. Bohr does a nice workman-like job on this record, playing the following numbers: The Wedding of the Painted Doll; Whiffenpoof Song; I'll See You in my Dreams, Hi-Lili, Hi-lo; Chant of the Jungle; and on Side Two, At Sundown, Ramona, I Cried for You, Waltz: You saved For Me and Stumbling.

From the program notes we learn that the organ contains 14 sets of pipes, and a complete percussion division. Some of the notable features are the brass trumpet and saxophone as well as an exceptionally beautiful tibia clausa.

The following is a breakdown of the instruments pipe work: MAIN CHAMBER; Diapason, concert flute, clarinet, tuba, vox humana, saxophone, viole d'orchestra, viole celeste; SOLO CHAMBER; Tibia clausa, oboe horn, trumpet, quintadena, solo string and krumet.

Ray Bohr has been a Radio City Music Hall organist for more than 12 years, and this recording shows what continuous playing can do to keep an organist in top trim.

The Organophile will quickly detect that this is a studio organ, as it does not have that roundness and reverberation associated with an organ recorded in a theater. The recording is clean, and from the program notes was done on the finest of professional equipment. This reviewer suspects that the recording equalizer was cranked up a little bit on the tape transfer to give it a little more presence. Could be.

If you do not have an example of the Radio City Music Hall Studio Organ in your library you would do well to check this one. - F.R.K.

LET GEORGE DO IT - George Wright, Organist. Solo Records, SM 267 Stereo. 267 So. Fair Oaks Ave., Pasadena, California.

AND GEORGE DOES! This without question is one of the finest records the versatile George Wright has ever made in his long and distinguished career. As the reader well knows, George has recorded for many different companies, but in this record the canny George has had full sway in playing it and recording it exactly the way he wanted it, and the results show it.

The lead off is "I Know That You Know", a good "up" tune show stopper, with lots of the Wright touch and registration. He then changes pace with "What is this Thing Called Love?", a Cole

Porter tune that gives George a chance to display some of the fine shading of the Organ. Next is the novelty number "The Trouble with Harry", which displays some very tricky piano work.

Listen for the sustained cymbal, and try and figure out how it is done. Incidentally, the program notes state that no recording or other electronic gimmicks were used to enhance or change the natural organ sound, and this we can believe, because it sounds right. Wright concludes Side One with an artful interpretation of "Temptation".

Side Two starts off with the oldie, "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles", which features some of the cleanest cascading bell and percussive sounds to which this reviewer has ever had the pleasure of listening. Several other good tunes follow, with the feature piece being the last number, "Espanharlem". George goes all out on this one and again demonstrates that there is only one George Wright.

The organ is Wurlitzer plus. Three DIFFERENT Wurlitzers; plus, we suspect, pipes that never saw the inside of

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Tickets to George Wright Concert, Fox Theatre, San Francisco at midnight, Saturday 15 October. \$2.00. Write: Al Ringer, 2402 California Street, San Francisco 15, Calif.

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the old Wurlitzer factory. Recording is clean and wide range. The stereo effect is excellent. D.J. Leslie of organ speaker fame lent his wizardry in helping devise special equipment to record this masterpiece. - F.R.K.

MORE THEATER ORGAN IN HI-FI - Leonard MacClain playing the Tower Theater Organ. Epic LN3655 Mono.

From the title, one would conclude that Epic had other theater organ recordings by the same artist or some one else, but in reading the program notes there is no indication of all the fine recordings made by this well known artist. Reviewing can be frustrating; however, we are quick to add that by devious methods we found that Mr. MacClain has recorded "Theater Organ in HI-FI", "Operetta For Theater Organ" and "Joy to the World", an organ record of Christmas numbers. We have also learned that he has a new record which will be released this fall. All of the above records were recorded on the Tower Theater organ in Upper Darby, Philadelphia, according to the program notes, and will be reviewed in future issues.

Leonard MacClain is a real "pro" on the organ, whether it be Theater, Church or Electric. He has played them all and with distinguished success. He is well known in the Philadelphia area as "Melody Mac". MacClain started studying organ at the age of 10, and when he was 12 he played his first theater job and has been at it ever since.

In this day of moving theater organs into homes, studios, barns, etc., it is becoming exceedingly difficult to obtain recordings of theater organs in their native habitat, i.e., theaters. This recording is a good example of what a sensitive recording engineer and a top-flight organist can do when turned loose on a theater organ in a theater. It has that rich full-bodied sound that comes only from the large cubic space found in a theater, and reveals the true voicing of the organ. No gimmicks were used except proper microphone placing, and the artist had full control of the dynamics. This is a "must" for your library.

F.R.K.

ED. NOTE

ATOE board member Frank Killinger conducts our "Record Review Dept." Members are invited to direct their own reviews, or comments, to Frank. Address to P.O. Box 167, Vallejo, California.

MORE THEATRE ORGANS IN THE NEWS.

AN ILLUSTRATED newspaper article from Rochester, New York, tells of the re-conditioning of the RKO Palace Wurlitzer of that City. A.T.O.E. members Daniel Schultz, Lloyd Klos and Jess Littlefield of the Niagara Frontier Chapter have been the key men behind this monumental project. Tentative plans include concerts by Tom Grierson, recently featured in these pages.

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