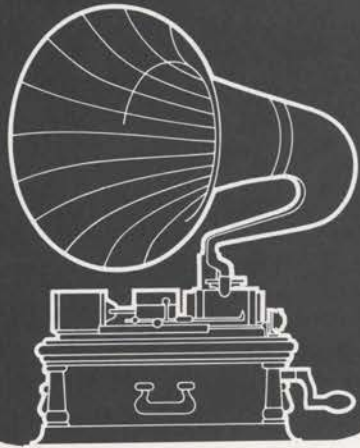


For The Records



Manufacturers, distributors or individuals sponsoring or merchandising theatre pipe organ records are encouraged to send pressings to the Record Reviewer, Box 3564, Granada Hills, California 91344. Be sure to include purchasing information, if applicable, and if possible a black and white photo which need not be returned.

HELEN DELL AT THE MISSION PLAYHOUSE. MAS-2023 (stereo), available at \$5.50 postpaid from Malar Productions, Box 3104, Glendale, Calif. 91201.

Between 1968 and 1972, readers of this publication traced the progress of a style 260 Wurlitzer from its removal from the Brooklyn Albee theatre, it's journey across the country to eventual installation in the San Gabriel (Calif.) Civic Auditorium, or Mission Playhouse, as it was originally named. The transfer was a project of the L. A. Chapter of ATOS and how well the club has succeeded with regard to the now 16-rank instrument is well illustrated in these grooves. The impression is greatly enhanced by the warm and original stylings of Helen Dell, who has a way of playing that is all her own. Helen is one of those rare musicians whose years of professional plug-in playing doesn't show when she plays on pipes; she is then completely "theatrical". Of course, she learned on a wind-powered instrument — an accordion. Whatever the reasons, this is one of her finest efforts, a real beauty. So is the instrument and the manner in which Dick Stoney recorded it, placing his microphones and setting his at-

tenuators to compensate for what seems like a rather light pedal bass when the listener is present in the auditorium.

Helen Dell is a curious musician; she explores all the possibilities of an instrument — then uses them. Thus, the Wurlitzer's unique solo reeds get "soloed," and she makes effective use of second touch and pizzicato effects. The instrument is an especially cohesive one from the tonal standpoint; there's an exceptionally tasty blend to Helen's combinations. Yet, there's contrast between solo and accompaniment registration. If there's a "Dell style" it is probably most prominent in the sensual "bounce" inherent in such rhythm tunes as "I Like the Likes of You," "Isn't This a Lovely Day," "Time After Time," and "Let's Do It" (the last two soloing exquisite vox-heavy combinations). So much for style; there is much more to recommend the record. For example, an interesting reading of "Dam Busters' March" by that fine British light music composer, Eric Coates. Almost one-third of Side 2 is devoted to it, and rightly so. "You'll Never Know" features a scintillating massed string chorus and a sweet solo reed. "That's Entertainment," "Ridin' High" and "Cheek to Cheek" are played in bright "spotlight solo" style. "Churchmouse" and "Buttercup" are attractive novelty tunes. It's a most unusual record, to paraphrase another tune offered.



Helen Dell (shown here at the Wicks console, Orange theatre, Orange, Calif.) — (Stufoto)

Of course, there has to be a flaw, and luckily it's not in the music nor grooving, but only in the printed list of selections on our review pressing. Malar's nutty jacket note writer has mixed up the tune list completely on both disc and jacket. All the tunes listed are there, but they are so scrambled that it's rather fun trying to identify them. Because most are familiar, it's no problem. That minor flaw in no way touches the music, which is probably Helen's best since her "Sugar and Spice" album.

DENNIS AND HEIDI JAMES, PUTTIN' ON THE RITZ, No. DIP-103 (stereo). Available at \$5.50 postpaid from Dennis James Productions, c/o Ohio Theatre, Capitol Square, Columbus, Ohio 43215.

We have long awaited some proof that Dennis James survived both his sojourn as a pizza parlor organist and matrimony. This is it; we have learned through this recording what concert audiences have known through personal experience. We can't say what the pasta parlor experience may have done to the James charisma but apparently matrimony has improved it. Of course, any ATOSer who has followed the career of Dennis James in recent years has come to expect musical excellence, but would the addition of a performing wife to the act add or detract? Dennis seems like such a complete musical entity on his own. No problem. The incisive percussion of Heidi's piano added to the organ voices only makes the ensemble more orchestral. Together they are magnificent, and when soloing each of them does beautifully.

The organ is the magnificent 3/20 Robert Morton in the Ohio theatre in Columbus, an instrument described by Gaylord Carter as one of the finest theatre organs he has played. It has been recorded previously but never with such an ambitious program as offered here.

In the days when "Puttin' on the Ritz" was new, it was the practice of jazz orchestra musicians on radio and records to avoid the melody like poison, feeling their improvised variations were an improvement. Not many trumpet leads were of the Beiderbeck nor James (Harry, that is) calibre, so results, when played by Joe College's Saturday Night Stompers

were often crude. Thank goodness, Dennis is too young to have suffered through the "takeoff" era; his melody line is clean and there's no problem in identifying the tune (this for the benefit of those who think the old days of the '20s and '30s were all that good).



Heidi and Dennis James. They make beautiful music together.

Dennis' *Ritz* is jazzy and to the point. He doesn't do quite as well with his tinkly "Japanese Sandman" despite the Crawfordian overtones, due to a gimmicked chorus with a simulation of "Nola" as a counter melody. It's corny, contrived, well performed, and pure Lawrence Welk.

Heidi solos on the 88's with a Gershwin medley, "Do Do Do" and "I Got Rhythm." She captures the composer's mood but not his fire; more pedantic than jazzy. Or perhaps the somewhat muffled piano miking filtered out some of the brilliance. Her treatment of both tunes is interesting; the composer would approve.

"Warsaw Concerto" was composed by Richard Addinsell as a theme for the war time propaganda film, *Suicide Squadron*, just at a time when the US public was in the midst of a love affair with the "piano concerto" fad of the early '40s. Freddy Martin was busy bowdlerizing Tchaikowsky, Max Steiner's piano-oriented "Symphonie Moderne" (from the film *Four Daughters*) had been a favorite for several years and pianist Oscar Levant was in full thyroid with his dramatic readings of Gershwin. So the timely "Warsaw Concerto" found immediate ac-

ceptance. It was adopted by pop pianists who wanted to exhibit a little "class," and by classical pianists for a smashing encore. And it wears well, long after the parent film has been forgotten.

"Orchestral Transcriptions" have always been in the repertoires of skilled organists. This one is effectively performed by the duo, with Dennis playing the part of the orchestra. He gives loving attention to the orchestral shading and the organ sounds gorgeous in support of the solo piano. As mentioned before, the piano is on the "bassy" side and lacking brilliance. Yet, Heidi plays her part with a distinctive clarity. Together, the instruments present a thrilling sound, the "feature selection" of Side 1.

The closer for side 1 is by Dennis, soloing the "Great Escape March," with lots of traps and brass.

One half of side 2 is devoted to Dennis' transcription of the Richard Rodgers orchestral score for *Victory at Sea*, a durable WWII series now back on the small screen. For this we dusted off our Robert Russell Bennett recordings for comparison (he was the orchestrator and conductor both for the RCA record releases and the TV soundtrack). While the Bennett recording is longer, there is nothing essential missing from the James version. In fact, in Dennis' hands the organ becomes the "unit orchestra" envisioned by Hope-Jones. If we may be permitted the use of a non-original description, the Morton plus Dennis add up to the "sound of magnificence." The "Guadacanal March" alone is guaranteed to raise goosebumps on the hide of many a veteran.

After *Victory*, almost anything runs a chance of being an anticlimax. So Dennis shifts to a contrasting mood — Duke Ellington tunes. "Sophisticated Lady" and "Mood Indigo" are exquisitely orchestrated, but Dennis gets into trouble when he tries a fast and jazzy "Don't Get Around Much Anymore," mostly due to a faulty melody — unless he's trying for one of those 1920's trumpet "rides" we hoped he'd missed.

Dennis and Heidi return as a duo for the closer, a fast folk dance from spaghetti-land, "La Danza."

The well-chosen program has a wide appeal; so do the performances of the two beautiful young people responsible. And let's hear one for that wonderful Robert Morton organ!

MELODY ON THE MOVE, David Shepherd playing the 3/13 Compton/Christie organ in Osset Town Hall. Amberlee (stereo) No. AML 305X. Available at \$5.50 postpaid from Doric Records, Box 605 Alamo, Calif. 94507.



David Shepherd

This import from England has the fine technical quality we have come to expect. The instrument is new to this column; it's an assembled organ, mostly Compton but with a Christie Diapason, Wooden Tibia and Clarinet, plus some Wurlitzer percussions and traps. The organ also has its original Compton metal Tibia, as well as both an open and a stopped Flute. Outside of a Krummet the remaining stoplist is straightforward — 3 strings, Tuba, Trumpet, and Vox to total 13 ranks. The console is intriguing; unification has been carried out to the hilt, resulting in 186 stopkeys in three solid tiers around the stoprail. There are many couplers, combo buttons, toe studs and six tremulants. Chambers are under the stage.

The instrument was assembled and installed in the Ossett (Yorkshire) Town Hall by members of the Northern Theatre Organ Trust, a non-profit organization devoted to saving theatre organs in their area.

Organist David Shepherd is also new to this column. The young man presents a tastefully selected list of tunes which largely avoids the pot-boilers. He opens with a lively march by Britain's version of John Philip Sousa, "On the Quarterdeck" by Kenneth Alford, then goes into "Melody on the Move," a 1946 spinoff of "Holiday for Strings" with plenty

of plinking percussers. Next a single chorus of "When Day is Done" in ballad style, but the harsh "upper-work" registration nearly swamps the contemplative mood intended. David seems to be more at home while beating out oldies such as "You're the Cream in My Coffee" and "Varsity Drag," and letting his "Hammondry" show by closing the latter with a "schmear glissando." But he atones for that slip with a sensitively played "Demande et Réponse" by Coleridge-Taylor. The piano and assorted percussers permeate "We Just Couldn't Say Goodbye," as do assorted cutie Spike Jones effects (e.g. siren, block). The same might be said for some of the tunes in David's *Selection from the Boyfriend*. However, he gives us plenty of registration variety. The organ's Trumpet and Tuba are real zingers. The acoustic pedal 32-footer can be heard at the close of side 1.

One of the most scintillating tunes on the record is Zez Confrey's "Buffoon" which opens Side 2. One rare effect used here is a 5-1/3' coupler, a Super Quint effect which David uses sparingly but with good effect. He also does a nice job on "Misty." The brass carries the ball through part of Moszkowski's "Spanish Dance No. 4," a pleasant concert piece from piano literature. The fast-trem'd Tibia carries a portion of "Stardust" and David one-fingers a piano melody during a portion of "The Nearness of You" in a tribute to Hoagy Carmichael. Show

tunes "Cabaret" and "Tea For Two" are played with appropriate vigor, while "Hernando's Hideaway" gets a sneaky hesitation tango treatment. Also heard are "I Don't Know How to Love Him" and David's signature tune, "You and the Night and the Music."

Playing is entertaining and satisfying but rarely brilliant. Arrangements are varied and registration always interesting. The organ has some excellent solo reeds. However, the ensemble sound is a bit on the strident side, or perhaps lacking in cohesion for ears tuned to the mellow instruments heard on this side of the pond. Yet, some may prefer the bright sound, so this may be merely an opinion, not a fault. The recording is technically tops. Jacket notes provide some background on the organist and the music.

SOUNDS LIKE BLACKPOOL, Ernest Broadbent at the Mighty Wurlitzers in the Manchester Odeon (4/20) and Gaumont (4/14) theatres. Acorn CF 235 (stereo). Available at \$6.49 air-postpaid. Make out checks on U.S. banks to the Lancastrian Theatre Organ Trust and send order to Mr. Tom Herd, Amsel Cottage, 19 Coupe Green, Hoghton, Preston Lancs, England.

These organs are familiar to readers of this column through reviews of the previous four "Double Touch" series releases, but let us repeat that pro-

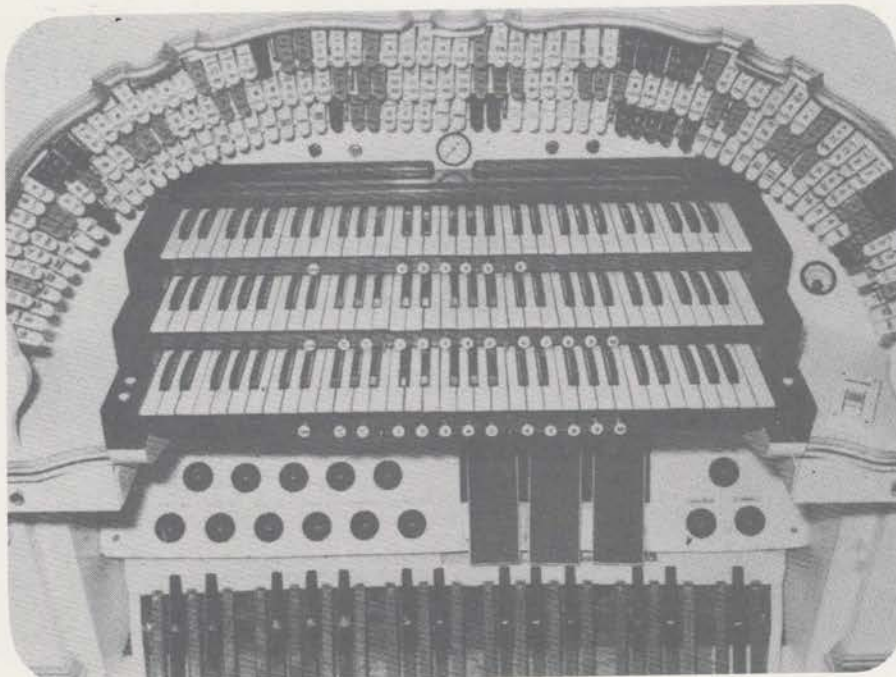


The Manchester Odeon (Paramount) console. A Publix No. 1 seeks a permanent home far from North Tonawanda. Chances look good.

ceeds from the sale of the Trust's records are used to rescue Britain's remaining Lancaster area theatre organs, including the two heard on this recording. The larger one is already removed and in storage, and perhaps the 4/14 is also out of its theatre and into storage by now. As in the case of the 3/13 Compton in the previous review, there seems to be emphasis on brightness in the upper ends of registers which edges on harshness. But, perhaps that's the way the English fans prefer the sound. Anyway, these Tibia tremulants don't chop, on either organ.

Ernest Broadbent has been a prominent theatre organist in Britain since the late '30s (his first BBC-cast was in 1938) and he now holds down the coveted post as organist at the Wurlitzer-equipped Tower Ballroom in the resort town of Blackpool. He serves as President of the Lancastrian Theatre Organ Trust and he plays like an old pro — smooth, knowledgeable, and effortlessly ("no sweat" in US parlance). Mr. Broadbent apparently has a liking for US tunes because with two or three exceptions his selections are American pop oldies.

First it's concert time on the Odeon 4/20 Wurlitzer, and after the opening radio theme, "For You," we again meet Britain's Sousa, Kenneth Alford, and "Great Little Army" march played with plenty of spirit but no traps. Next an overture, "If I Were King" by Adam, a selection often played by theatre orchestras in the '20s and one particularly adapted to organ presentation, with ever-changing patterns ranging from light and slow to full and violent in the best von Suppé style. There's plenty of nostalgia in the Noel Coward medley. He's as much



The Osset Town Hall console. A sea of stopkeys heightens the 'whale's mouth' vision.

ours as he is Britain's after filling our ears for years with such tunes as "Zigeuner," "Mr. Keen's" "Some Day I'll Find You" (nice Tuba solo, then lush Tibias) and "I'll See You Again." It's Viennese waltz time with Kalman's "Gypsy Princess Waltz" and then there's a difficult to describe novelty titled "Sammun."

Side 2, played on the 4/14 Gaumont Wurlitzer is an almost continual parade of US memory tunes, an Astaire/Rogers set from their films; a "dream" medley ("Dream, Dream a Little Dream of Me" and "I'm a Dreamer"); a Latin set of Paso Dobles, Beguines and a Samba by Sidney Torch; an Irving Berlin waltz medley ("All Alone," "What'll I Do?" and "Because I Love You") and a closing medley of "weather" tunes which includes, among others, "Keep Your Sunnyside Up" and "Singin' in the Rain." This last set is played in a tempo the British refer to as "quick-step" – fast, that is. The bright reeds and pizzicato coupler get a workout here.

Whether Ernest Broadbent is playing a concert overture or a "quick-step," such as "Powder Your Face With Sunshine," he plays with an easy expertise. His tempos, registration and arrangements are impeccable. His music has a nuance which leaves mere words inadequate. His stylings also do much to point up the differences and similarities of the two Wurlitzers. Note that he played his concert pieces on the larger instrument and the pops on the smaller, the latter being a better pop organ, say the jacket notes. The 4/14 seems to have a greater selection of mutation voices in evidence, but both instruments are beauties. We believe this to be the best effort of the Lancastrian Trust to date.

– THE PLUG-IN CORNER –

VARIETY, BUD IVERSON PLAYING THE CONN (Model 650) THEATRE ORGAN, MAS 2012 (stereo). Available at \$5.50 postpaid from Malar Productions, Box 3104, Glendale, Calif. 91201.

Bud Iverson, a well known name in the California Bay Area, is enjoying increasing concert calls from more distant points, resulting in concerts at such separated points as Seattle and Los Angeles, and played on pipes. For some years Bud has been associated



Bud Iverson. A superb Conn-man.

with the Conn organ, playing concerts for Conn at such nationally known events as the September Annual Home Organ Festival at Asilomar, Calif. So the Conn is his favorite "plug-in" (there are still a few readers who think of the term "plug-in" as a put-down; it is not). In Bud's able hands the Conn often becomes a thing of beauty – when it isn't expressing his pixie humor or ripping off a wild jazz ride. After a rather straight reading of Lecuona's "Malaguena," Bud lets his imagination soar during "Dream a Little Dream of Me," a colorful arrangement with many tempo and registration changes. For "Josephine" he turns on the humor and a touch of corn. Next a novel original, a study in chromatics in three-quarter time – "The Half-Step Waltz." "You Made Me Love You" gets a soupy sentimental reading, but subtle. The current interest in the "rag" as a musical form no doubt prompted Bud to include the lively "Grizzly Bear Rag" to close Side 1. The Side 2 opener is a sprightly reading of Leroy Anderson's "Promenade" which sticks closely to the notation, then an Iverson arranged "Taking a Chance on Love" during which we noticed a huge improvement in the Conn Brush Cymbal effect. It's been a long time since Glenn Miller set the standard for "Tuxedo Junction" and we had forgotten just how lowdown and dirty the Coleman Hawkins classic could sound. Bud milks it for all its unlauded wealth. "Sparkling Burgundy" is a tune with "class," the kind of moving theme silent movie organists used to accompany high society scenes, and that's the way Bud plays it. He's back in a sentimental mood for "Lover Come Back to Me," painting the plea in terms of lush harmonies and subtle shading – until the rhythm

chorus when he lets loose with that top manual full of Tubas, Kinuras and Posthorns. WOW! But our organist saved the best until last, violinist Fritz Kreisler's "Stars in My Eyes." The verse, played on Strings complemented by off-mike piano cascades is novel. Again, all the Iverson skill to make "Stars" a thing of beauty is brought into play and the Conn 650 meets his exacting demands all the way. A remarkable and worthwhile recording.

MONTAGE, Ron Walls plays the Rodgers model 340. Ronson (stereo) No. RR 101. Available postpaid for \$5.50 from Ronson Records, 2423 Rebecca Layne, Niles, Michigan 49120.



Ron Walls

When Ron Walls' first recording, made on a Hammond X66, was released we predicted he would gravitate toward pipes; he obtained so many orchestral effects from the X66 and approached the instrument and music from the theatre organist's viewpoint. Well, Ron is getting closer to pipes, if the listener will agree that the Rodgers 340 stands somewhere between the X66 and pipes. As before, Ron's approach is orchestral; he has the makings of a fine orchestral arranger in his grasp. His selections and treatments are chosen to appeal to both young and mature listeners: "I Got Rhythm," "Hymn to Love," "Til Love Touches Your Life," "How High the

Moon," "Begin the Beguine," "If," "Ecstasy Tango," "Brazilian Sleighbells" and "Cotton's Theme" (from "Bless the Beasts & Children"). Each is provided a distinctive arrangement designed to present it most effectively and musically. The Rodgers organ provides the proper facilities; this time Ron doesn't have to work so hard to get the desired effects and the resulting relaxation in his performance is apparent. That doesn't mean he's taking it easy. The complexity of his musical conceptions preclude that. Rather, he's enjoying his miking sessions. The Rodgers serves him well, providing good reed and string voices, a fair Tibia, a baroque sound, a good piano and a very good pizzicato effect. Recording is good and we note that our old friend, Gladys P. Muelbach, was loaned by Lift Records to write the precise jacket notes. You'll be hearing more from Ron Walls. His music wears well. □

— PERFORATED PAPER DEPT. —
GAUDIN MELODIES, the 65-key Victory Gaudin Fair Organ. Amberlee (stereo) AFL-101X. Available at \$5.50 from Doric Records, Box 605, Alamo, Calif. 94507.

This is an 8-rank roll player built about 1914 in Paris by Gaudin Freres. It's sound is more refined than that of most outdoor orchestrations, and therefore the limited registration doesn't pall quickly. At least nineteen of the twenty-seven selections played are familiar to US fans and range from tunes by Lennon & McCartney to Rossini ("Wm. Tell Overture"). This is fun music for the automatic player fans. Recording technique is good. □



BOOK REVIEW

by F. G. Hibbard

"MR. BLACKPOOL — REGINALD DIXON M.B.E." By Peter J. Ashman, 21 Great Break, Welwyn Garden City, Herts AL7 3EZ, England. Price including postage, \$3.00 Surface or \$5.00 Airmail.

Of all the famous theatre organists, Reginald Dixon stands out as one of the greatest, especially in his native country, England. Mr. Ashman, in this book, traces the career of Mr. Dixon from his earliest days and explores his forty year tenure at Blackpool.

The fact that Reginald Dixon held the Blackpool post for so many years is testimony to his popularity and musicianship. When one considers the great number of high quality organists produced in the British Isles during the golden era of theatre organ, it is amazing that one man could be good enough to retain the prized post for so long a period.

Mr. Ashman does a good job of shedding light on the life of Dixon which helps explain how he (Mr. Dixon) maintained his popularity over the years. Dixon comes through as a warm personality and a superb entertainer — a combination hard to beat.

Although the book has to be classed as a "paperback", the quality of paper is far superior to that usually used. Because of this, the 48 photos,

mostly candid, reproduce very well. The book of 179 pages covers the Dixon career, including his war service, anecdotes concerning Blackpool, as well as many reflections of Dixon including his command performances for Her Majesty the Queen.

It should be stated that not only did Reginald Dixon hold forth at Blackpool, but also maintained a series of radio programs and played theatre dates. This combination gave him a tremendous listening audience and ardent fans numbering in the millions.

This reviewer found Mr. Ashman's book very enlightening and well worth reading. □

Ingling Joins Newport Organs



Harry C. Ingling brings eighteen years experience in the pipe organ field to Newport Organs of Newport Beach, California. Well regarded in the San Francisco Bay Area for his rebuilding and maintenance work, Mr. Ingling will specialize in designing and constructing new and rebuilt instruments and revoicing pipes.

Newport Organs is one of the few firms specializing in custom building. Their activities include multi-rank electronic organs, small pipe units attached to electronic organs and rebuilding pipe organs. Mr. Ingling is presently restoring a 12-ranker for a Ventura, California church. □

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