



The incomparable Wurlitzer

of the New York Paramount Theatre

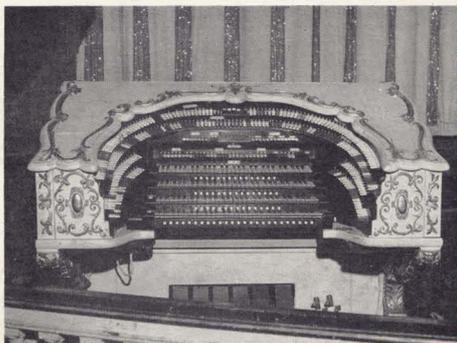
in Times Square

... memories of spotlighted intermissions from the

lushest period of popular music

THE KING OF ORGANS

played by Bill Floyd



It was 2 A.M. The last moviegoers straggled out into the chilly streets. Cleanup crews took over the New York Paramount Theater. Out of the shadows of the orchestra pit, looking like a dusty and forlorn ghost, rose the console of the giant Wurlitzer on its pneumatic elevator. In the glare of the work lights its gilt carvings, its four manuals and its framing of 300-odd colored tablets showed the scars of 30 hard years.

(con't overleaf)

THE KING OF ORGANS

Bill Floyd playing the Wurlitzer of the Paramount Theater, Times Square, N.Y.

Inside the towering pipe chambers were the mechanisms that had made this the world's most beautiful and most versatile theater organ, freshly renewed by the sutures and scalpels of their organ surgeons. In the auditorium below, with the gleam of fanaticism in their eyes, a group of men converged on the console—organophiles who had learned through the grapevine that something exciting was going to take place, and they were staying up all night to participate.

Bill Floyd appeared from below stage where he had cautiously supervised the starting of the blowers, and began to practice the tunes he would record.

"Sabotage", cried one of the experts. "Listen to that tremulant!" And within moments, another was crawling into the offending chamber, to slow down the nervous bellows. Everybody relaxed as that voice recovered its sensuous almost human vibrato.

Perched in the first row of the balcony with his stereo tape machine and flanked by a pair of condenser microphones, assorted testing devices and spare parts, Emory Cook masterminded the session. "Let's have a full organ fortissimo for level, Bill," he called, and the auditorium shook to the diapasons and tibias while Emory checked his meters. After that it was a matter of running through the twelve numbers, making new takes when Bill happened to tap a wrong note or Emory ran into an electronic snag. Twice a pipe ciphred and some organophile climbed into the chamber and wandered around among the forest of pipes until he found and silenced the miscreant.

No matter how soulful the music—whether on the fatuous tibia or the sentimental strings, shirtsleeved Bill Floyd remained unperturbed, letting his fingers run through a four-bar phrase with a calculating look in his eye as he drew a bead on the tablets he was about to tap to change the registration for the next four. Bill Floyd plays tablets the way some organists play keyboard notes. When the fast numbers came up, the great console rocked back and forth like a fast freight. When the tunes waxed lyrical, he indulged in the melodic swoops and rolls that would make a mere church organ gasp with horror.

At 6 A.M. breakfast was called and at 9 the last re-takes had been made and the equipment packed. At 9:30 the doors opened and early moviegoers straggled in from chilly morning streets.

Maestro Bill Floyd is the latest in a distinguished line of organists who have been privileged to pilot the Paramount Wurlitzer. The instrument was launched by Jesse Crawford in the year of its completion, 1926, and he continued to play it, sometimes with the assistance of his wife, until 1933. Then followed two years of public silence, before it was revived by the famous Reginald Foort (who can be heard on Cook records Nos. 10501, 10523, 10545, 1057, 1058, 1059). Foort's

brilliant organism built such a fabulous success that when his 10-week engagement was over, and before the box office dropped off, the management rushed in Don Baker as staff organist and retained him for the next ten years. After another year of silence, it was played (until 1951) by George Wright, and again was silent for a couple of years until the appearance on the scene of Bill Floyd, who may now be heard whenever the Paramount decides to put on a stage show. At all other times Bill presides at St. Rocco's Church, Newark, which keeps him busy full time with weddings, funerals and regular services.

The Paramount Wurlitzer is alternately powered by a pair of 50 H.P. Spencer turbines producing 16,000 cu. ft. of air per minute. The electro-pneumatic key and stop-action, with remarkably quick response of pipe to control, is divided into 40 circuits. The instrument is divided into four complete unit ensembles each in its own expression-chamber and capable of a complete characteristic tone spectrum. In addition, it contains an enormous stable of percussion instruments: piano, a giant indoor carrillon, orchestral chimes, 2 chrysoglotts (celestas), 3 marimba harps, 3 xylophones, glockenspiel, 2 snare drums, an octave of tuned timpani, plus many other musical impedimenta too numerous to catalog.

The pipe ensembles are built around 4 diapasons of various scaling. Woodwinds consist of 3 individually voiced tibia flutes, concert flute (bourdon), stopped diapason, Leiblich Gedeckt and a metal flute harmonic. There is a chorus of strings and celestes totaling 9 ranks of shimmering beauty. The powerful reed chorus includes 2 tubas mirabalis, tuba horn, 2 brass trumpets, 2 English post horns. Other flute and reed stops include a lovely quintadena, 3 vox-humanas, orchestral oboe, oboe horn, clarinet, French horn, 3 variations of the musette family—musette, krumet and kinura, the latter being a high pitched reed stop adding harmonics to the reed ensemble.

Side A

- 1—Anything Goes (Porter)
- 2—Have You Met Miss Jones? (Rodgers and Hart)
- 3—Blue Prelude (Ellington)
- 4—Someone to Watch Over Me (Gershwin)
- 5—Swing Low, Sweet Chariot (Spiritual)
- 6—Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen (Spiritual)

Side B

- 1—I Married an Angel (Rodgers and Hart)
- 2—Body and Soul (Green)
- 3—Birth of the Blues (DeSylva-Brown-Henderson)
- 4—Fascinatin' Rhythm (Gershwin)
- 5—Spring is Here (Rodgers and Hart)
- 6—Andalucia (Lecuona)

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NOTICE

This record contains the full, unattenuated pedal response of the instrument. But the grooves have not been overcut, and any failure to track will be the fault of playback equipment.