

REGINALD DIXON 'LIVE' AT BATH



Much is known about "Mr Blackpool" as an entertainer, broadcaster and recording artiste, but what of the man himself? Reginald Dixon planned to be a concert pianist, but soon found that to earn money he had to be flexible, and gradually developed his church-organ playing by practising on the organs in local cinemas.

He not only played these organs, but he exploited their features to the full. He was left-handed, and soon learned the benefits that second-touch could bring to his playing. He was a fine musician, but had an ingredient that not all musicians possess but wish they had, and that is *joie de vivre*. He also learned very early in life that holiday-makers wish to be entertained, not educated, and he quickly developed a style of his own that set him apart from all his peers – and that many strive to emulate to this day.

Being organist at Blackpool's Tower Ballroom was a job that enabled him to set up home with wife Vera. The early years were very demanding and his popularity meant he was occupied throughout the long holiday season (not to mention Christmas), was making recordings (done at night, when the buildings were empty), and was broadcasting to the world – for the BBC, Forces' radio, Empire wavelength, and Radio Luxembourg. This left a short "off season" window during which Reg toured the Granada Cinemas in and around London, as well as visiting the EMI Studios and playing at exhibitions, etc.

He retired from full-time employment at Blackpool Tower with effect from Easter Sunday 1970, but it was soon apparent his retirement was going to be anything but quiet! He was soon being asked to play all over the country, and it did not seem to matter to Reg what make of organ, pipes or electronic, or the specification – he invariably managed to deliver the "Blackpool sound" everywhere he went. With the passage of time, Reg felt the need to engage an agent, if only to manage his time, because public demand showed no signs of waning.

Reg ended with a Final Farewell Concert in the City Hall, in Sheffield – although it had been stipulated that the after-concert gathering was for "family only", I am proud to say that Reg kindly insisted that Val, my daughter Dawn and myself were to join him and his family.

Reg was the finest organist/musician I have ever had the pleasure to know, and his popularity continues. I never ceased to be amazed at his modesty, humility and genuine surprise that people should want to keep on coming to hear him. He had a mischievous sense of humour, and there were times when Val and I would meet him before a concert (to give him a lift in my car), and I soon knew if the imminent concert was going to be "special".

This recording of Reginald Dixon, at the Wurlitzer organ in the Pavilion, Bath was made in 1976 – the organ was originally installed in the Regent, Brighton, but had moved to Bath in the 1960s. It was later acquired by Paul Corin, for his museum in Cornwall . . . sadly this has now closed, and the organ remains silent for the time being.

Peter J Ashman

This CD was mastered from an amateur cassette, made by a member of the audience on the 6th July 1976. We hope the odd blemish, won't distract from the performance. NB- there are two slight tape slips during Radetsky March, this is a fault with the original recording and not the CD.

REGINALD DIXON - 'LIVE' IN CONCERT AT BATH

- 01) I Do Like To Be Beside The Seaside
Radetsky March
Funiculi Funicula
With Sword And Lance March
Sons Of The Brave
La Reve Passe (The Soldiers Dream)
- 02) Waltz Medley-
Destiny
Dreaming
Jolly Brothers Waltz
Around The World
Cuckoo Waltz
Lara's Theme From Dr Zhivago
The Blue Danube
- 03) Radio & TV Themes-
Galloping Home
The Green Leaves Of Summer
Sleepy Shores
She
Clochemerle
Big Country
Upstairs, Downstairs Theme
Alone
Speak Softly Love
The Entertainer
Onedin Line Theme
Eye Level
- 04) Glen Miller Tribute-
Moonlight Serenade
American Patrol
In The Mood
- 05) Al Jolson Medley-
Swanee
- 05 cont.) Waiting For The Robert E.Lee
Pretty Baby
Anniversary Song
Toot Toot Tootsie
Avalon
Me And My Gal
California Here I Come
- 06) The Storm At Sea
- 07) Memories Of The Ballroom-
Fascination
Answer Me
Sally
I'll Be With You In Apple Blossom Time
Raindrops Keep Falling On My Head
Red Sails In The Sunset
Moonlight And Roses
South Of The Border
You Were Meant For Me
The Best Things In Life Are Free
Johnny Peddler (I Got)
Cheek To Cheek
Bye Bye Blues
Somebody Stole My Gal
- 08) Sing Song-
My Resistance Is Low
When You're Smiling
Carolina Moon
Lily Of Laguna
Oh! You Beautiful Doll
Pack Up Your Troubles
End Of The Road
I Do Like To Be Beside The Seaside