

## Chris Elliott Concert Review

by Mark Dresden

Editor's note: This review appears in *The Vox Humana* newsletter, Summer 2007. It is a review of Chris Elliott's appearance on the Dickinson Kimball, June 9, 2007.

For his final piece, Chris played "That's Entertainment", written by Arthur Swartz and Howard Dietz in 1952 for the MGM musical "Band Wagon." This song is a sort of show biz anthem, and I mention it now because it does such a good job of summing up Chris' program. It was entertaining.

The first half of the program contained music from popular Broadway shows and movies along with a number of interesting but perhaps less familiar pieces.

His opening, console up, number was "From This Moment On" written by Cole Porter for his 1950 Broadway musical "Out Of This World." It was a nice arrangement with plenty of variety in tempos, key modulations and registrations. This was followed by the song "Beautiful Love," written in 1931 by Victor Young, Wayne King and Egbert Van Alstyne and revived for the 1944 Universal wartime musical "Sing a Jingle" known also as "Lucky Days." The music and Chris' rendition had a haunting quality. It was generally subdued with the use of celested flutes, tibias and the vibraharp. For those who remember Wayne King, it seemed somewhat reminiscent of his orchestral style.

"The Dance of the Blue Danube," a syncopated fox trot written by Fred Fisher in 1928 with many a tip of the hat to the original Strauss waltz, followed. This piece was made famous for organ enthusiasts by Jesse Crawford and Chris' arrangement, although original, was quite Crawford like. On a side note, Fisher wrote music for the silent films and the early talkies. Perhaps his most widely known piece is the familiar "Peg of My Heart."

After the up tempo ". . . Blue Danube", Chris chose for his next selection the soft, almost hymn like "I Would Be True" composed by Joseph Peek in 1911. The rendition we heard was Chris' own arrangement which he published in 2000.

Then it was time to show off the Dickinson reeds, notably the trumpets, tubas and post horn. The piece, "Festive Trumpet Tune" was written in 1990 by David German. It was an intricate piece, and a piece that would be perfect for a wedding or other processional. It was well played and Chris did a great job of demonstrating what the Dickinson Organ has to offer in the reed department.

And just to show there were still more reeds yet to be heard, Chris next offered a snappy rendition of "The Lady is a Tramp." This was written by Rogers and Hart for the 1937 Broadway musical "Babes in Arms" and used again in the 1957 film "Pal Joey" starring Frank Sinatra.

Chris next played "Night in Monterey" in honor of his two friends and mentors Richard Purvis, who composed the piece, and Tom Hazelton, whose arrangement he used. Then

we were musically transported from California to England with “Covent Garden (Tarantelle),” from the 1932 “London Suite” written by Eric Coates, who is known as “the father of British light music”.

The first half of the program ended with a wonderful medley of Cole Porter tunes from the acclaimed 1947 Broadway Musical “Kiss Me Kate.” The medley started with an introduction and a few bars from “So in Love.” It was followed by an up tempo “Wunderbar,” then a down and dirty “Why Can’t You Behave” and then a rousing “Another Op’nin’ Another Show,” a naughty “Always True to You in My Fashion” and finally the very beautiful “So in Love.” And then, to much applause, the first half of the program ended.

The second half of the program was comprised of screening the famous and funny 1927 Paramount silent film “It” starring the beautiful and sexy Clara Bow. There was also a mini appearance as a reporter by a very, very young Gary Cooper. It was a good film then, and in 2007, some eighty years later, it is still very entertaining. Chris’ accompaniment was skillful causing one to quickly and completely forget it was a silent film. From the opening credits to the final “The End” frame, some 70 plus minutes, the organ accompaniment was continuous and always appropriate for the on-screen action. It is amazing how much the music enhances this action without intruding upon it. Chris has a well deserved reputation as a silent film accompanist and as a serious student of the genera.

After the film, and as mentioned at the outset, the concert program was summed up by the encore number, “That’s Entertainment.” It was entertaining as was the entire evening.