

**Richard Chigley Lynch, Broadway on Record: A Directory of New York Cast Recordings of Musical Shows, 1931-1986. Westport, Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 1987. 260 pp. plus chronology and indexes. (hardcover)**

Perhaps it's wrong to quibble with such an important work as this one, but I'd prefer to get it over with and proceed to those areas which Mr. Lynch has successfully covered in his book. Considering the research that has been done in this field before, it is rather surprising that, in a book of this scope, the author has consistently ignored the sort of information which makes a discographical work complete and important: information on the recording itself and on its issuing history.

The groundwork has been laid out for Mr. Lynch by Steven Smolian in his excellent 1970 publication, A Handbook of Film, Theatre and Television Music on Record, 1948-1969. In that book, Smolian dutifully gives both the monaural and stereophonic issue numbers for the listed albums. He notes the album numbers, issue dates and cut-out dates for all versions of the record including reissues, ten-inch and twelve-inch versions. Let's look at an example: Annie Get Your Gun.

Lynch tells us that there are three recordings of this show with its original casts. For the 1946 cast recording, he lists two albums: Decca 8001 mono, reissued: MCA 1626. For the 1966 revival he mentions one: RCA LSO 1124 stereo. That's fine, but let's have a look at Smolian on this particular show. He also lists Decca 8001 mono but he tells us that this particular long-playing disc was issued in 1949 and cut out of the catalog in 1955 at which time Decca reissued the show album as DL 9018 mono as well as in an electronically enhanced for stereo version numbered 79018e. This reissue undoubtedly called for new packaging and, most likely, different liner notes.

Smolian also notes that the star of the show, Ethel Merman, recorded seven songs from the show on Decca DX-153, a two record set, in 1956 and five songs on Reprise R-6062 mono and RS-6062 stereo in 1963 (cut-out in 1966). As for the revival, Smolian notes the above RCA recording in both its stereo version and its mono version RCA LOC-1124. Mr. Lynch's book gives us principal players in alphabetical order, music and lyric credits, musical director credits and a list of all musical numbers with an indication of the sidebreak. This is all valuable and helpful information but, discographically, not necessarily the information we are seeking.

That's the quibble. Outside of this one major flaw, the new work is an excellent volume that offers a wealth of information between its covers. Taken together, the Lynch book and the Smolian book make an excellent reference set for data on recorded musicals on LP.

The chronology of the musicals listed in Lynch's book, including number of performances is quite a handy addendum and

the performer index is long overdue. The "Technical" Index, cross-referencing composers, lyricists, musical directors and pianists is especially handy; it is always easy to locate the creator of the music for a show, but the distaff member, whose words help you remember the tune, is often overlooked in musical theater reference sources.

It's also nice to know where to look for recordings of Gordon Connell or Paul Trueblood, but I am sorry that this particular avenue wasn't pursued to its ultimate end. So many shows have pianists featured on stage and in their recordings, but the fine musicians whose excellent skills have made such an impact on our senses often go uncredited on the albums. It is possible to pursue the recording information which lies off the record album cover, and thus it is a pity that the credits in this book were obtained at the record shelf rather than at the offices of the recording companies.

Perhaps someone other than myself cares to know where a recording may be found of Ray Henderson at the piano. He and Don Dollarhide can be heard on Verve V-15024 and, I suspect, its stereo equivalent, performing in the original cast recording of "Elsa Lanchester, Herself," an intimate musical revue presented in New York at the East 41st Street Theatre back in 1961. But that's not a Broadway show, is it? That's Off-Broadway. Well, although Lynch includes Off-Broadway shows, he doesn't have all of them. For example, he doesn't list George Fischeff's "The Prince and the Pauper," a 1963 offering available on London AM 28001 mono and AMS 98001 stereo. He misses out on "Merry Christmas New York From the Radio City Music Hall," an original cast recording of the mammoth Christmas spectacular presented on the most famous stage in New York; this dates from 1972 and is available on Continental Records CR 1004 stereo. He does include the Music Hall's version of the Walt Disney "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," however, which cannot possibly qualify as a Broadway show and is, in fact, a children's show. It would follow, therefore, that the book should include an original stage musical on the same subject, ostensibly the longest-running Off-Broadway children's show, paired with the same producing company's version of "Beauty and the Beast" on the Take Home Tunes label, record number THT775. Lynch does not include this album at all.

He mentions a recording of a single song from "Merrily We Roll Along" on a special album entitled A Collector's Sondheim, but he doesn't include Elaine Stritch's original cast rendition of her first big hit, "Civilization" from the show "Angels in the Wings" on a Ben Bagley album, Make Mine Manhattan and Great Revues Revisited.

Where's the reasoning? To be fair to the compiler, it must be said that Lynch does justify himself in the book's introduction. He states as his goal the "listing of the songs and singers who performed them as recorded on commercially available

original cast albums of the popular Broadway and Off-Broadway New York musical theatre." He announces the exclusion of "...operas, children's shows, radio broadcasts, archival recreations, one-person shows, folk revues and recorded plays that may have included a song or two..."

Following his announced precepts he excludes the original cast recording of "The Second Shepherd's Play," the first, and I believe only, Off-Off-Broadway musical to be recorded. However, he does include a few questionable items. For example the recording of the Schmidt/Jones "Philemon" on Gallery Records, OC-1. Presented at the authors' experimental Portfolio Studio for a limited run to an almost exclusively subscription audience, this show does not qualify as either a Broadway or Off-Broadway show, but rather an extended showcase. There are others in the same category scattered throughout the book. I am rather glad to have them included, but they don't conform to the stated ideals of the work at hand. There are cabaret and night club shows included which also fail to qualify as Broadway or Off-Broadway.

Lynch includes "Paris '90," a one-woman drama with songs, conceived by and starring Cornelia Otis Skinner, "Billy Bishop' Goes to Way," a mono-drama with songs, as well as the solo-turn by Bernadette Peters, "Song and Dance;" he ignores, however, other, one-person shows. "Sing Out, Sweet Land!" a "folk-music" show from 1944, is in the book, in spite of Lynch's earlier protestations. And although he does include Leonard Bernstein's MASS, as presented at the Metropolitan Opera House at Lincoln Center for a limited run, he does not include the Lincoln Center presentation of the intimate revue "2", a 1978 Equity Library Theatre presentation. It seems to me that either both should be included or neither. Instead, a value judgment seems to have been made by the author, deeming one worthy of note and not the other.

Finally, it is a pity that he draws the line at 1931 when there are other, earlier shows which enjoyed some "original cast" recordings. Many of these individual recordings have been gathered together into albums, notably in the Smithsonian series. One other case shines forth and cries out to be mentioned. It is the recording of "Lew Leslie's Blackbirds of 1928." Miles Kreuger's extraordinary 1968 reissue of the 13 sides (including an exploitation recording made by the show's creators advertising the recordings) must be included in any compilation of Broadway shows on record. No list is complete without it.

Come to think of it, I had more than just one quibble with this book.

J. Peter Bergman