

Will there be another Don Marshall musical in the future? He would like to do another, but this time starting from scratch. He found that adapting material, even his own, is restricting. But at pres-

ent he is working on a novel and a play, and his interest in musicals will have to wait. I am sure those who were lucky enough to see *The Rummage Sale* hope it won't be a long wait.

Unsettling Organist

Concert and Recital, James B. Welch, Organist, private label. (James Welch, Department of Music, University of California, Santa Barbara CA 93106)

Reviewed by NICHOLAS SHUMWAY, Professor of Music, Yale University.

In all of Mormondom, only a handful of organs really deserve the name. The overwhelming and depressing majority of our instruments are electronic imitations (appliances, a friend of mine calls them) or cheap pipe organs à la Wicks whose clicks, pops and uneven voicing are almost as irksome as the acoustical smog generated by their electronic counterparts. Not that anything better is usually needed. Aside from playing a few decadent hymns, remnants of more exciting years, most Mormon organists get by quite nicely with easy-listening, "reverent" music, most of which sounds like supermarket music without the beat. Faced with inadequate instruments and mediocre musical tastes, often blamed on the Holy Ghost, many Church organists quite sensibly choose to study something else or seek a career and musical fulfillment in non-Mormon churches where good music is not only appreciated but paid for.

Despite the gloomy future confronting Mormon organists, very occasionally a talent appears that is just too bright to be

extinguished. Aside from the prosaic titles, *Concert and Recital* offer a worthy selection of music and an impressive display of James B. Welch's considerable gifts as an organist. Highlights of the first album include Walther's little known Third Organ Concerto and a flawless rendition of J. S. Bach's finger-breaking Fugue in G Major (the "Jig Fugue"), played in a crisp, detached style which recalls Schreiner at his best. The flip side presents the equally difficult *Prelude et Fugue sur le nom d'Alain* by Maurice Duruflé, a brooding work demanding exceptional technique and mature musical sensitivity; Mr. Welch fails on neither count. The final selection is a frothy bit of post-Romantic pap by Louis Vierne—which just happens to be hard as hell. For the second album, *Recital*, Mr. Welch joins forces with Robert Hubbard to perform Koetsier's hauntingly beautiful First Partita for Organ and English Horn. The rest of the album is devoted to several of Bach's smaller works, some Hindemithy pieces by Ernst Pepping and a delightful performance of a short sonata by the Portuguese composer João de Sousa Carvalho. (If anybody is wondering, Mr. Welch served a mission in Brazil.) Kudos are also in order for Dave Wilson, the audio engineer. Aside from some over-mixing of the English horn, both albums are superbly engineered, rivaling the best recordings of large, commercial firms.

The Book of Mormon as Faction

The Ammonite. By Blaine C. Thomsen. Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1979, 292 pp., \$6.95.

Reviewed by CHRISTINE HUBER SESSIONS of Bountiful, Utah.

Following the phenomenal success of his book-turned-TV mini-series, Alex Haley described his work *Roots* as "faction," a careful combination of history and fiction. Using what names, dates and places he could find in the records as a skeleton, he proceeded to flesh out the story with what *could* have happened. The Book of Mormon seems ripe for this same treatment, as has the Bible with its countless epics only sketchily covered in the record itself. (We have suffered through enough biblical novels and DeMille-type films to fill a good-sized urban dump.) While *The Ammonite*, a new Book of Mormon novel by a former LDS missionary turned RLDS, is not the first (nor will it be the last) attempt to make a "historical novel" out of the Mormon canon, it deserves attention because of its glaring problems and deficiencies if for nothing else.

As I was reading through the book the first time, I encountered one of the most serious problems with "factionized" scripture. My thoughts continually wandered from the story as I tried to recall Book of Mormon characters, events and places from my memories of the actual scripture. As the story became more complex and as I worked to remember from page to page, the ever-presence of the Book of Mormon and the additions to it the novelist felt impelled to make caused me more displeasure than the experience was worth. To follow the basic character Jarom was not difficult, but deciphering the rest and keeping them where they belong was absolutely tedious.

The cover blurb on *The Ammonite* tells of the research Thomsen did before beginning to write. In the preface, Thomsen tries to give his book an archeological flavor by having an Indian encounter a scholar and recite to him the legend that is supposedly the basis of the story. In keeping with this pseudo-scientific

flavoring, Thomsen calls his peoples Highlanders and Lowlanders instead of the more-familiar Lamanite/Nephites. The result is more confusion as the reader familiar with the Book of Mormon tries to keep separate or together (never knowing which Thomsen wanted) the novel and the Book of Mormon itself.

Even after a second reading of the Book of Mormon story, I found myself confused over many of Thomsen's impressions. For example, I find it hard to believe that Samuel the Lamanite, who turns up in the end of the book, had blond hair and blue eyes. Whether Thomsen felt that changing Samuel into a Nordic made him more heroic and therefore within his literary license seems beyond the point, although Thomsen does make Samuel only half Lamanite. There are numerous other aspects of the novel that make little sense in light of the Book of Mormon story itself. Indeed, it reminds me of Harry Anderson's paintings in which all of the characters from the New Testament appear as non-Semitic as an average Norwegian. Thomsen seems to think the Book of Mormon would be much better if rewritten in the same ethnocentric way.

While few novels based upon scripture hit the mark as first-class literature, it is unfortunate that the Book of Mormon, with all of its drama and pageantry, has not yet inspired good fiction. (This one might be interesting to someone with no Book of Mormon knowledge, but then the whole point of it is gone.) Haley's *Roots* might have been interesting without its genealogical implications, but it became an astounding success as literature *because* of them. *The Ammonite* is neither good fiction nor good faction. Either Thomsen should have written a novel faithful to what he could discern from the record, or he should have forgotten the pretense completely.

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