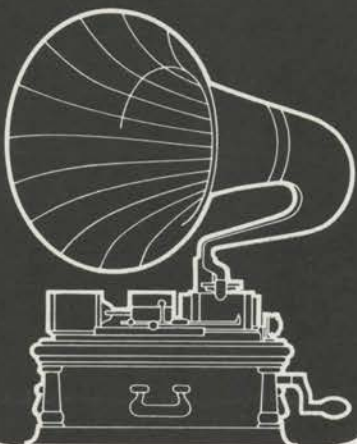


## For The Records



Manufacturers, distributors or individuals sponsoring or merchandising theatre pipe organ records are encouraged to send pressings to the Record Reviewer, Box 3564, Granada Hills, California 91344. Be sure to include purchasing information, if applicable, and if possible a black and white photo which need not be returned.

**REX IN CENTER CITY; REX KOURY AT THE WICHITA WURLITZER. Advent No. 5027 (stereo). \$6.50 postpaid from Rex Koury Enterprises, Box 197, Steamboat, Nevada 89436.**

At last, here's the "Queen Mother" (or "Dowager Empress," if you prefer) of Wurlitzers, the famed 4/36 from the New York Paramount Theatre (now a 4/37), recorded by an honest-to-goodness theatre organist. Recently, an organist famous for his excellence in interpreting Bach, and the inner meaning of varie-gated light displays, tried hard on an RCA release, to mixed reactions. But this time, it's the real thing. Now enjoying a permanent home in the Wichita Century II Civic Center, thanks to the efforts of a local club, Wichita Theatre Organ, Inc., the organ sounds wonderful on this record. The installation in the Exhibition Hall provided the excellent acoustical conditions required by the one-time Jesse Crawford organ to really reach full potential. And in Rex's able hands, sounds out she does.

By now Rex Koury is well known

to all aficionados, so we won't repeat. For those in need of further info about this fine organist, we refer them to Lloyd Klos' feature article in the Dec. '76/Jan. '77 issue of THEATRE ORGAN. Needless to say, he's right at home at this instrument; he played it first in 1926 during his studies with Crawford.

Rex starts his program with a selection he usually reserves for a feature number, his 7:24 minute arrangement of major themes from Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue." We mention the time for the record, because the "Rhapsody" runs more than twice the length of Rex's rendition when played in its entirety. Lest we forget. But we doubt the cuts will be missed.

Rex's "Rhapsody" is often orchestral in concept, from the vaguely unsatisfying opening Clarinet trill, through brief passages played on the organ's piano. But mostly it's just solid organ, in the magnificence of the Wurlitzer's unique tonal qualities. This one will be difficult to top.

Rex comes nearer to the present in subject matter with "Here's That Rainy Day" which shows off some of the twists he learned from Crawford, but without resorting to imitation. It's a lovely ballad interpretation in which those gorgeous Tibias play a leading part. Phrasing is excellent and there's plenty of registration variety. "People" is enhanced by a plethora of counter melodies played on treble Flutes against a baritone melody and richly-conceived harmonies.

"Caravan" gets all the schmaltz effects remembered from a hundred "desert sands" movie epics beginning with Valentino's *The Sheik*.



Rex Koury (Bob Hill Photo)

Starting with a "voice from the minaret," there are jazzy non-trem'd passages on full, throaty combinations punctuated by riffs from the instrument's topnotch brass section. Through it all, Rex displays a tongue-in-cheek sense of humor. He knows there never was an Araby as seen through a Hollywood camera finder.

It will be recalled that Rex Koury was the organist selected to play the rededication concert when the 4/36 was premiered in its Wichita home in 1972. In celebration of the extended life bestowed upon the historic instrument by Mike Coup and Wichita Theatre Organ Inc., Rex composed a lively march, "Center City USA." It is presented here in marching band style, complete with Flute/Piccolo ornamentation. There's even a hint of "Paramount on Parade" but only an offhand reference. The march, as presented by Rex, is a thriller.

"In the Still of the Night" employs the ballad facilities of the instrument and the ingenuity of the organist, who weaves an intriguing counter melody sequence and plants occasional crescendos to mark appropriate highlights.

"Pink Panther" is loaded with interesting variations, with at least one referring to that age-old practice "in the southern part of France." Rex reflects a light, humorous mood but with lots of inventiveness.

"All The Things You Are" gets a subtle ballad treatment, employing some of the darker voices during the intro. There is much understatement during the exposition, with occasional sharp dynamic changes.

"The Girl That I Marry" is a vehicle for the famous Wurli's massed Strings. Nicely phrased, it features some close-up Glockenspiel jewelry.

"When Johnny Comes Marching Home" is the Koury adaptation of the Civil War tune which retains its popularity to the present. Not as dissonant as the Morton Gould orchestral version, it is played in a number of arresting variations, each more absorbing than the last. There's a countrapuntal "cathedral" sequence, a cavalry charge with high-pitched frippery, and an excursion into the major mode with victory fanfares and a bravura ending which features a 32' effect (probably a pedal 5th) which is guaranteed to exercise playback woofers.



This combination of exceptional organist-arranger, the "Queen Mother" of Wurlitzers and a tunelist which guarantees top interest, adds up to a most attractive package. The jacket displays a pen sketch by Daryl Murphy of the brand new console and a history of the instrument, as well as biographical notes on Rex Koury. Recording is good. Highly recommended.

**BRYAN RODWELL ON THE ORGAN OF THE GRANADA (Theatre) CLAPHAM, LONDON. Deroy No. 870, electronic stereo. \$5.50 post-paid from Stanley C. Garniss, 35 Union Street, North Easton, Mass. 02356.**

The theatre organ world is indebted to England's Derreck Marsh for his farsightedness. Back in the '50s when Britain still had a goodly number of organs in theatres, Marsh was there with his recorder, taking down concerts and recording sessions which in all too brief a time would no longer be possible. Going back further, we can also compliment those often unknown geniuses who drew up the stoplists for the imported Wurlitzers. Unwilling to accept the standard order of a Flute-Salicional-Vox-Diapason (or Trumpet)-Tibia-Clarinet etc. factory spec as peddled in the USA, especially in the case of smaller organs, the British designers threw Wurlitzer some interesting curves. The instrument heard in these grooves is a 3/8 — but what a 3/8!

Main	Solo
Diapason	Eng. Posthorn
Flute-Bourdon	Tuba
Gamba	Tibia
Gamba Celeste	Saxophone

No Vox, but it's never missed. It's the Posthorn and Saxophone which make the delightful difference.

This is by no means a recent recording. It was first taped in mono by Marsh in 1955. Eighteen years later it was remastered in "studio stereo" and released by Deroy, Marsh's Company name. The combination of offbeat instrument and virtuoso organist make this a collector's item well worth the expenditure.


Bryan Rodwell didn't show up on the scene until after World War II.

His playing shows every indication of a solid classical background, one which doesn't stand in the way of his energetic approach to rhythm and pop tunes. Bryan did a stretch broadcasting the BBC Moller between 1948 and 1951, but it was when his 1952 programs from Clapham hit the airwaves that the organ fraternity sat up and took notice. Never before had such emotion-dominated music, played with flawless technique, been experienced via the ether. Bryan plays fast and slow, loud and soft, much like a gypsy violinist. His arrangements are imaginative. His jazz "rides" are well conceived and executed. Sometimes the raw vigor of his performances seem a little too much for the average listener, but never for the musician listener. Bryan uses the organ like an orchestra, and each selection is treated to its particular needs. But over-all is that aura of — well, for lack of a better word — "wildness." Rodwell is a truly untamed organist, but that doesn't mean he lacks discipline. What he attempts in his offbeat arrangements comes off with ease and

expertise. We are never left hanging — "how'll he get out of this harmonic cul-de-sac?" Rodwell never paints himself into a musical corner, despite the arresting ornaments and extras.

The selections most USA listeners will recognize are: "Black Eyes," "Speakeasy," "Louise," "Malaguena," "Harlem Nocturne," and "Toy Trumpet." Less familiar but just as interestingly performed tunes are: "Punch" (from a *Puppet Suite*), a gypsy tune called "Embrujo Gitane," "Samun," "Valse Grise," and a wild "Jet Journey."

The organ is a delight, from its well regulated (although trem'd a bit fast) Tibia to its raucous Posthorn. The Saxophone stands in very effectively in place of a Vox. Bryan does lots of soloing on the generous array of reeds between energetic blasts of heavy combinations. His speed and accuracy are phenomenal when he adds some orchestral noodling to spice a pop or standard. His portamentos (in harmony) are most ear-catching. The only complaint we can conjure is that there may be a



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" . . . A master arranger for the instrument. His original and daring registration gives the organ rhythmic vitality and zip in performance. . . He makes it swing."  
*The New York Times*

"On stage to play a Bach chorale or a Gershwin song, he seems to be re-creating the music. He apparently does nothing that no other organist does, yet he accomplishes results that none of them seem to come near accomplishing."  
*Hollywood Citizen-News*

"His program had humor and was always musical. He has brought theatre 'pops' organ back to a nation which had forgotten it."  
*The Theatre Organ*

"Sponsored by the San Jose Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, he gave a display of musicianship that must be heard, live, to fully appreciate. He had them in the palm of his hand."  
*Tabs and Drawbars*

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little too much emotional variance crammed into too brief a time period. One listener we asked to audition the record reported that hearing it only twice left him "drained — an emotional wreck." We can't agree that it's that hypnotic — but Bryan's technique, speed, imagination, mood changes, registration and general vivacity will get through to you if you don't watch out.

The 3/8 Wurli is well miked. The tennis match-watching head jerks of "studio stereo" have been minimized, so the "modernization" isn't bad, although there are spots which occasionally sound a bit distorted, possibly due to the remastering. Surfaces have a few pops and bumps which in no way interfere with enjoyment of the music.

An interesting tunelist, a very different 8-ranker and the volatile approach to the music by Bryan Rodwell make this a gem for collectors of unique discs.

**DAVID LEE, playing the Portland (Oregon) Organ grinder organ. DLC 888, stereo, \$5.95 postpaid from D. Lee Co., 5005 Eureka Way, Vancouver, Washington 98661. Washington state residents add 32 cents tax.**

Here's something different. The largest pizzery organ displays another side of its character, an ability to produce "mod" music. We have enjoyed excellent recordings of this fine instrument by Don Simmons and Jonas Nordwall, both of whom aimed their efforts chiefly toward the theatre organ enthusiast. This recording largely explores the mod and rock music possibilities of the instrument.

The music maker is 16-year-old David Lee, who started his somewhat precocious professional career at 14. Gifted he is, with an accurate ear and a sense of rhythm that won't quit.

He is presented here on three instruments, piano, trap drums and organ, which are mixed through overdubbing. Some of the cuts have no organ at all. They are among David's best numbers. One is the boogie-woogie treatment of the opening theme from Tchaikowsky's "Piano Concert No. 1," another is the McCartney tune, "Heart of the



David Lee

Country." David takes off on both tunes on piano and traps with the aplomb of a two-piece burlesk house pit band. The result, especially during "Heart," is not unlike the records turned out by pianist Lee Sims in the late '20s. Good entertainment. It helps show that David has a grasp of musical basics and that isn't always apparent when he turns to pipes. In fact, we can't help wondering why he selected pipes as a vehicle for his often frenetic rock arrangements such as "Bitter Fingers." It would seem that a Hammond B-3 would be a more appropriate vehicle for his one man "trio", although some of the tunes are mainly organ solos which make effective use of the pipes.

It is difficult to evaluate David's capabilities from the total impact

of this recording. His technique is devastating. A tendency to over arrange will be taken care of by a little maturation. His mastery of multiple rhythms is impressive. His registration is sometimes grotesque, but some listeners will be fascinated, especially during the very cinematic "Exorcist Theme" which is a zinger with a woofer-rattling pedal and a plethora of repeated bell patterns. But for an over-all evaluation we had to listen closely to the initial bars of Bach's "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring," before David broke into the inevitable rocked-up "Joy" sequence. He played a portion of this gentle chorale beautifully on relatively conservative registration, providing us, perhaps, with a window to what we may some day expect of David. It is as beautiful as the thunderous and speedy follow-up is tasteless.

When David tackles ballads such as "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" or "You Made Me Love You," he can't resist the rum-te-tum "mod" accompaniment, dubbed in drum breaks, "delay" phrasing, piano "cutesies" and pure bombast. However, his understated "Send in the Clowns," featuring untrem'd solo reeds, is top-rank theatre organ. Another tune David offers in mostly theatre organ terms is a Paul McCartney tune, "My Love." On the purely mod side is a tune with the

Wichita Theatre Organ, Inc.

# REX KOURY

at the WICHITA WURLITZER

The Wichita Wurlitzer lends itself to the mastery of Rex Koury in this new album of popular and classical melodies. The range of music highlights the versatility of both performer and the "Dowager Empress." The world-famous instrument was premiered in 1972 in its Century II Civic Center setting by the famous theatre organist.

REX IN CENTER CITY



REX KOURY at the WICHITA WURLITZER

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revolting title "Only Women Bleed." "Georgia Porcupine" is a go-for-broke organ boogie, as wild as one could imagine, on full registration.

This one is something of a puzzle-ment. To us, it's somewhat akin to the horrible fascination of witnessing a holocaust from a safe distance. Yet we can't help recalling John Muri's admonition in the Feb./March issue of this publication, "... we had all better remember that everybody has to move along with the times, one way or another, or get left." Perhaps that "safe distance" is only an illusion.

**PAUL QUARINO HEADS THE BILL AT THE ORPHEUM. In Quadrophonic Stereo. No. DO (Q) 1505. \$5.95 from Doric Records, Box 182, Monterey, Calif. 93940.**

This will be the last recorded opportunity to hear the most prominent organ featured at the 1975 ATOS convention in its natural habitat, the San Francisco Orpheum theatre. Shortsighted theatre owners and leasers wanted the 4/22 Robert Morton out, and it has been rescued by an "angel" for installation in an Oakland, Calif., high school. But that's another story.

The organ has been recorded previously for the Doric label by Tiny James and George Blackmore, each displaying his individual style. Now it's Paul Quarino's turn. Paul played a well-received concert for 1975 conventioners, and is currently in charge of the organ staff at the Portland, O., "Organgrinder" pizzeria. He was born too late, judging from his preference for old standards which date from post World War I. There's a sprinkling of "now" tunes, but the emphasis is on the oldies.

Selections are: "You," "Who," "To Each His Own," "While My Lady Sleeps," "The Gypsy in My Soul," "The Old Lamplighter," "Let the Rest of the World Go By," "It Looks Like Rain in Cherry Blossom Lane," "The Object of My Affection," "Penthouse Serenade," "Quentin's Theme," "Elmer's Tune," "The Twelfth of Never," "As Time Goes By," and "If."

Quarino's playing style is relaxed and uncomplicated. He likes the big organ sound but avoids possible monotony with frequent pas-

sages on lighter instrumentation or solo voices. His tunes are pleasantly arranged, richly harmonized and smoothly phrased. The program is about evenly divided between ballads and rhythm tunes. The oldies are played mainly in the style of the times when they were introduced. Actually, although Paul is too young to have had a lot of experience playing theatre intermissions, he fits all the qualifications of the intermission organist of the '30s and '40s. We did catch a couple of minor clinkers but they are difficult to spot.

The 4/22 Robert Morton has never sounded better on records, and listeners with "quad" playback equipment will enjoy the novelty of hearing the organ coming at them from front and back, as well as from the sides. It's an ideal instrument for "Quad" recording because its four chambers are located understage, in the rear of the balcony (Echo Division), as well as in the sides of the theatre's proscenium.

A generous quota of jacket notes provides background on the selections as well as a biographical sketch of the organist, who has enjoyed a varied career in his pursuit of music.

This one is for fans who enjoy the oldies played in a pleasing if unspectacular style. Recording is top quality and the Doric surface of our review pressing is glassy-smooth.

## The Classic Corner

**AIRS AND ARABESQUES, Keith Chapman playing the Wanamaker Grand Court Organ. SC-1724, stereo. \$6.00 postpaid from Stentorian Records, Box 1945, Philadelphia, Penna. 19105.**

Some of the most memorable moments of the 1976 ATOS Convention were while conventioners were standing in the aisles of Philadelphia's Wanamaker store and mainlining the music of Keith Chapman, a young man who is part showman, part classicist. In the relatively brief time he has been resident organist at the big store he has brought new life to what Philadelphians claim to be the largest pipe organ. It can't be denied that it is the largest regularly played and recorded organ. Regardless of its size, the instrument has an ingratiatingly mellow tonal quality impossible to describe in words, but which, despite its classic character, is guaranteed to soften the prejudices of the most hardnosed TO fan. Just that happened in the store during the evening the conventioners listened. Those masses of rolling sound, probably due to dozens of celestes, encompassed and captivated listeners. This giant of an organ can be both majestic and intimate, at the will of



Keith Chapman at the Wanamaker Grand Court console.



**Heidi James, Gotham: A CONCERT FANTASY FOR PIANO AND THEATRE ORGAN, Gentry Publications, 1977 (available in music stores or by mail from Dennis James Productions, The Ohio Theatre, 29 E. State Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215, price \$5.95 + .75 postage and handling).**

It's comforting to know that there are music publishers who still have the creative daring to issue a handsomely printed original duet for piano and theatre organ. Granted, "Gotham" has already been performed to considerable public acclaim by the enormously talented James combine out of Columbus (Dennis and Heidi, that is). A recording of "Gotham" is also forthcoming. Nevertheless, the market for a complex mood piece requiring the skills of a concert pianist and a theatre organ with four manuals and twenty-odd ranks of pipes plus percussions is — let's say — limited.

Composer Heidi James reportedly studied with a student of Hindemith. I found the influences more closely akin to Gershwin, Milhaud and Louis Alter. The piano part, as one would expect, dominates; but if your resident virtuoso can play "Rhapsody in Blue" or some of the more demanding Ravel compositions, "Gotham" will pose no technical problems. The pleasure I derived from stumbling through the piano score was in the rich romantic chords. Heidi is definitely not just imitating former masters of this genre. She has new and beautiful things to say which make "Gotham" a treat for the ears. Watch out for what seems to be a printer's goof in the piano score. Don't try to play the 5th measure as written or you'll hurt yourself. The right hand must be played an octave higher than written.

The organ part is written to provide "orchestral" support to the piano and is not too difficult. The most serious challenge for me were the complex rhythms on pages 12-13. Playing 6/8 chords against 4/4 chords on the organ while the pianist is performing similar feats must pose some coordination problems in rehearsal. The pedal line is relatively simple, but be prepared for a couple of octave chords and a high G for

the right foot. Without pistons it would be virtually impossible to keep up with the suggested registration changes. Eleven generals\* are required. Time changes during the piece range from 3/4 to 7/8, 5/4, 9/8 and others similarly exotic. Probably the better part of valor would be to "Follow the piano player"!

The composition as a whole gets its movement and interest from changing moods and rhythms, a metaphors from "white blues" of the late Twenties through the swing era in Fun City. Don't expect a big, memorable rhapsodic theme or hints of pop tunes here and there. It stands or falls as a grand scale impression. To paraphrase a truism: "You never take "Gotham." — "Gotham" takes you!" "Gotham" comes with two copies for performance. You get to see the piano and organ parts on each page which makes for some fancy page turning.

For those of us who make room for just an organ and a Hi-Fi in the family music room it would be great to have a recording of just the piano performance by Heidi. Then we could play along. Why should Dennis have all the fun?

**Lyn Larsen, STANLEY: AN ORGAN SOLO IN HONOR OF STAN LAUREL, Gentry Publications, 1976 (available by mail from The Music Room, 16222 Parthenia St., Sepulveda CA 91433, \$1.50 + .75 via UPS.)**

Although the organ transcription credits belong to Ken Rosen, it is rumored that "Stanley" is a faithful transcription of a recorded performance by composer Larsen. "Stanley" emerges as a thoroughly likeable, reasonably uncomplicated soft-shoe novelty with broad hints of "T-4-2" in the counter melody. The whole treatment is gentle and good humored. You can almost hear Stan wailing "Ol-lie" from time to time and picture his guileless grin.

The initial chorus of what proves to be a 32 bar song is in the key of F while the repeat chorus drops a ma-

*\*Or one incredibly agile buck private with a screwdriver! The reference, of course, is to general pistons which activate all manual stops simultaneously.*

jour third to D-flat for variety. There are no rude surprises. The spirit of good fun continues through the coda complete with glock accent and chime.

This one should please everybody: those who can play arrangements of medium difficulty; those who are fans of this most talented South-west musician, and the remainder of the universe devoted to Laurel and Hardy.

Registration suggestions are for both tabs and drawbars; musical notation is large, clear — and purple; the cover design is outstanding. After this top quality job, Ken Rosen how about some further transcriptions of Lyn Larsen arrangements . . . and some Buddy Cole arrangements . . . and some George Wright arrangements . . . and some . . . Get the message? □

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