

Music Review

by Walter J. Beaupre, Ph.D.

Earl McCandless, MEDLEY OF MEMORIES: NO. 1, Dave Coleman Music, 1977 (available in music stores or by mail from Coleman Music, Inc., P.O. Box 230, Montesano, Washington 98563; price \$2.50 plus postage).

Many grand old songs have enjoyed a popular revival on the strength of a fresh new interpretation. How sweet it is when Americans rediscover a Scott Joplin or Fats Waller through a movie or Broadway hit. Then, of course, theatre organ buffs have been turned on to the likes of "Hard Hearted Hannah" or "Chattanooga Choo Choo" via George Wright or England's Len Rawle. But perhaps the sweetest of all is the discovery by a home organist of old favorites in fresh, stylish printed arrangements.

Organist-arranger Earl McCandless has struck gold again with a *Medley of Memories*. An eight bar intro with tasteful modulations sets you up for "Songs My Mother Taught Me." First the melody is stated simply by the right hand with piano-like chords in the left. Nice 'n easy pedal notes. It should be strictly "Ho-hum" but it isn't at all. The second chorus goes romantic with skillful counter melodies. Then a 3/4 time transition resets the mood for captivating arrangement of "Love's Old Sweet Song" where strong counter melodies in the chorus lend an added element of surprise to the familiar. It's a honey!

Along comes another superb modulation which suggests subtly the old Welsh air, "All Through the Night." This is rather tricky harmonically and rhythmically, but well worth playing just as written by McCandless. Back once again to a deceptively easy treatment of "Sweet and Low." Easy in this instance doesn't mean "square." The harmonies and counter-melodies will keep you surprised and delighted. All too soon a final modulation takes you from B-flat back to C with hints of the tune "Long, Long Ago." Parallel triads neatly distributed between the

two hands shouldn't work — but they do. Consequently the super-simple melody takes on a whole new allure. The chorus is open harmony which cries out for tibias and vox; then back to a restatement, and it's all over except for the applause.

Again, as in other medleys by McCandless reviewed in this column, tempo directions are bilingual for no really good reason, and registrations are Oboe 8' for the upper manual and Flutes 8', 4', 2' for the lower manual — all the way through. This reviewer knows from prior correspondence with Earl McCandless that the arranger realizes all too well that plug-ins and preferences differ enormously. True, except that some of us need to be prodded a bit now and then. We could play five different tunes without changing registrations, but we'd sound more polished with judicious variations.

Medley of Memories as it stands would be well worth working up for your next turn at "open console" or when great-aunt Minerva comes to visit. Better yet, play the *Medley* for your grandchildren so they'll know there was a lot of gorgeous music around long before Barry Manilow and Billy Joel. Of course, if you haven't discovered Messers Manilow and Joel — that's *your* problem!

Rex Koury, WALTZING ON A CLOUD: Dave Coleman Recital Series, 1973 (available in music stores or by mail from Dave Coleman Music, Inc., P.O. Box 230, Montesano, Washington 98563; price \$1.50 plus 75¢ postage and handling).

Anyone who has attended a Rex Koury concert knows that he is a multi-talented individual. While Rex-the-painter was showing slides of his pictures during a recent theatre organ blast, a friend who is not a T.O. buff whispered "I think I like his pictures better than his playing!" Rex would chuckle at that because he has a keen sense of humor along with his other assets.

We know that Koury is a fine arranger (see earlier reviews) and he was the composer of the music for TV's *Gunsmoke*. Now let's take a look at his published composition for organ "Waltzing on a Cloud." The piece begins with a languid cadenza faintly reminiscent of Debussy's *Nuages* and portions of Gershwin's *Rhapsody*. On first glance, the cadenza looks formidable. It's really very simple once you analyze the chord progressions. The bottom three notes are dominant seventh chords with flatted fifths which move chromatically down the scale. The top notes are descending sequences of two notes in a D-diminished chord plus a half step lead-in tone. If you find this description confusing, just play the top melody notes in the first four measures and you'll soon see that the pattern is both simple and obvious. Working it out this way saves reading all those flats, naturals, and sharps!

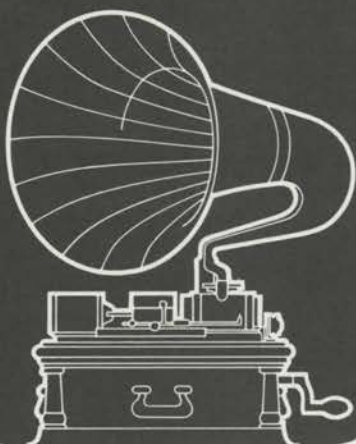
The main waltz is pleasantly melodic and reminds one of those Dave Rose originals of the late '40's: melody stated in thirds with strong counter melodies in the left hand and lush chords. The pedal line is simple and effective.

Suddenly, at the bottom of page 4, the clouds disappear and the organist finds himself in old Vienna. Although the feeling is Strauss, the seemingly endless key changes along with ascending and descending chromatic counter melodies are enough to make Johann's and Joseph's heads swim. It's more like "Vienna Life" as seen from the straps of a hang glider or a sail plane. This time Koury's music is just as tricky to play as it looks. Better fasten the Howard seat belt!

If you make it safely to page 9, Rex puts you back on his chromatic cadenza cloud and you repeat the opening waltz theme. The musical flight is finally resolved in a coda where you are instructed to end it all by "dying away gradually." Oh yes, other pithy instructions range from fractured French ("a la bright Viennese Waltz") to Italian ("cresc. accel. poco a poco").

But, you ask, how good *is* it? In the capable hands of a Rex Koury "Waltzing on a Cloud" could be a breathtaking *tour de force*, which roughly translated means "When you've got it, flaunt it!" It is prob-

For The Records



THE SENTIMENTAL GENTLEMAN FROM TOOTING, Vic Hammett plays the Wurlitzer organ in the Granada Theatre, Tooting, London. Amberlee (stereo) AML 311. \$6.50 (plus \$1.00 handling per order) from Doric Records, Box 282, Monterey, California 93940.

Since the death of Vic Hammett on December 29th, 1974, there have been a plethora of remembrances dedicated to an organist both skilled and likeable. Few who came in contact with Vic could resist his infectious sense of humor, nor his monumental and original musical stylings. He had friends and fans on four continents at the time of his death at 57.

ably not for the low-flying home organist.

Whether or not the individual player will cotton to the actual melodies is anybody's guess. However, "Waltzing" might be a good learning experience for the Kouryous minded, those who admire Rex and want to know how he does some of his things so wonderfully well.

Rex Koury, THE ENTERTAINER: A RAGTIME NUMBER BY SCOTT JOPLIN, Dave Coleman Recital Series, 1974 (Same availability at same price as above).

Although this reviewer enjoys some of the music of Scott Joplin he has always found this ragtime music curiously difficult to play. Sure, it sounds like it should be easy — but it

There have been memorial concerts and records eulogizing his fine ability as an organist (that he could successfully follow such a popular luminary as Sidney Torch in a British cinema is one of the legends which has persisted).

This album is the result of a visit to Britain by Vic's American friend and fan Doric Record's Prexy, Frank Killinger in the early days of the last decade. Frank was forever urging Vic to record. Vic agreed to knock out a few tunes informally for Frank, just as a remembrance, on a 2/5 Wurlitzer. The result was a posthumous Doric release of the tunes as *That will be 2 and 6 Extra*, a local jargon phrase often used by Vic in daily conversation. During the same visit, Frank recorded Vic playing the 4/14 Wurlitzer in the Granada Theatre, Tooting, a very famous organ, this for Britain's Amberlee Records. With its bright reed section (Posthorn, Saxophone, Kinura, Harmonic Tuba and Orch. Oboe), this instrument was a natural for Vic's upbeat style.

The selections: "Sentimental Gentleman from Georgia," "Charleston," "Stardust," "Down Yonder," "Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams," "One Dozen Roses," "Bugle Call Rag," "Rockabye Your Baby," "Bye Bye Blues," "You're Getting to be a Habit with Me," "I Got Rhythm," "All the Way," "Happy Feet."

isn't. Perhaps the chief virtue of Rex Koury's organ arrangement of "The Entertainer" is that it is surprisingly comfortable under the fingers and, therefore, great fun. Rex keeps most of the title music for "The Sting" in C with one brief sortie into F. The left hand provides straight-forward counter melodies with rhythmic accents, and the pedal line never gets exotic. Right hand melodies are in thirds or sixths when necessary, but Koury doesn't let this become a chore. Registrations are imaginative and well worth trying. Although rated for the intermediate or advanced player, "The Entertainer" seemed to be on the *easy* side of intermediate. So if after all this time you are still in the market for a good, solid arrangement of this Joplin classic — one that doesn't throw any technical curves — here it is. □

Six of the selections are played as moderate tempo ballads while seven are presented in that frenzied quick step style common to many British organists. This is not criticism: Vic does it expertly, and often with a touch of the Sydney Torch style which he could duplicate to perfection.

For this album Vic chose mostly full registration with octave couplers often emphasizing the "upper-work," and his preference ran to brass combinations, although there are a number of solo reeds in evidence, mostly those carrying the jazz

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 (post-paid price, ordering address,) if applicable, and a black and white photo of the artist which need not be returned.

"rides." And Vic was very effective in improvising those jazz variations. Not too many organists could do as well in that area of music. If he is less effective playing the ballads it might have been the pressure of the theatre recording session where so much has to be accomplished in a limited time. For example, Vic repeatedly missed (omitted) a very obvious and anticipated harmonic progression during "Wrap Your Troubles," and his "Stardust" suffers repeatedly from a distracting lead-in downward glissando. But the seven "ripsnorters"



Vic Hammett.

(Stufoto)