



The Art of Two Manuals

Jason Alden, Susan De Kam, Ronald Krebs, organists

Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church, Rockwall, Texas

The Institute of St. Joseph, Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin

St. Bartholomew Catholic Faith Community, Wayzata, Minnesota

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(Raven Records OAR-911, Box 25111, Richmond VA 23260; www.ravencd.com, \$14.98; also available from OHS).

Ronald Krebs, in his program notes, remarks, "For the best musical results when space or budget considerations are an issue, a well-conceived, two-manual organ will routinely outperform an incomplete three-manual organ." My own experience confirms this observation; I can think of instruments on which enough ranks for two manuals were spread sparsely over three. The three organs here are all by the Reuter Organ Company, and the program illustrates their versatility.

More than half of the selections are played on the 11/25 instrument at Our Lady of the Lake Roman Catholic Church in Rockwall, Texas. The stoplist shows an intelligent use of extensions and borrowings; for example, the Swell Nazard and Tierce are independent ranks, which is desirable if they are to produce actual rather than tempered overtone effects. (The Larigot is extended from the Nazard, which achieves the same purpose.) Four works are heard on a 11/3 home/practice instrument of 255 pipes. The third organ is a 11/40 installation in the St. Bartholomew Roman Catholic Faith Community in Wayzata, Minnesota. This last has a floating "Choral" division at the front of the nave, adjacent to the console and choir, while the main divisions are at the back of the nave.

Jason Alden and Susan De Kam share the program on the Texas organ. Standard works of J. S. Bach, Haydn, and Francois Couperin appear along with some relative novelties, including even an attractive salon piece by operetta composer Rudolf Friml. A charming *Gavot* by 19th-century composer Charles Neustedt comes from a 1916 collection of music for weddings and reflects in its style the tonal design of early 20th-century theater organs. Other pieces by George Shearing, Karg-Elert, and Lefebure-Wely complete this section of the program. Alden's sense of Period style graces the *Cromorne en taille* from the Gloria of the Couperin *Convent Mass*.

Ronald Krebs plays the portions of the program on the second and third organs. The 3-rank instrument performs nicely in modest repertory; John Bechen adds soprano saxophone (albeit with anachronistic principal-note trills) to a J. L. Krebs chorale-prelude. This combination works remarkably well and reminds me that, back in the 1960s, one orchestral conductor used a soprano saxophone rather than a D trumpet for a recording of the Bach *Second Brandenburg Concerto*!

The final set creates an effective multi-style suite from pieces by Walter L. Pelz, William Boyce, Louis Vierne, and John Philip Sousa (*The Liberty Bell* rather than *The Stars and Stripes Forever*). Judicious registrations and sensitive articulation and phrasing allow the Vierne pieces to sound quite convincing even on an organ essentially in the "American classic" style. And the Sousa once again recreates the grand theater organ sound.

In summary, this recording makes an impressive case for the extensive possibilities of a two-manual organ while wisely avoiding repertory that really does demand wider resources.