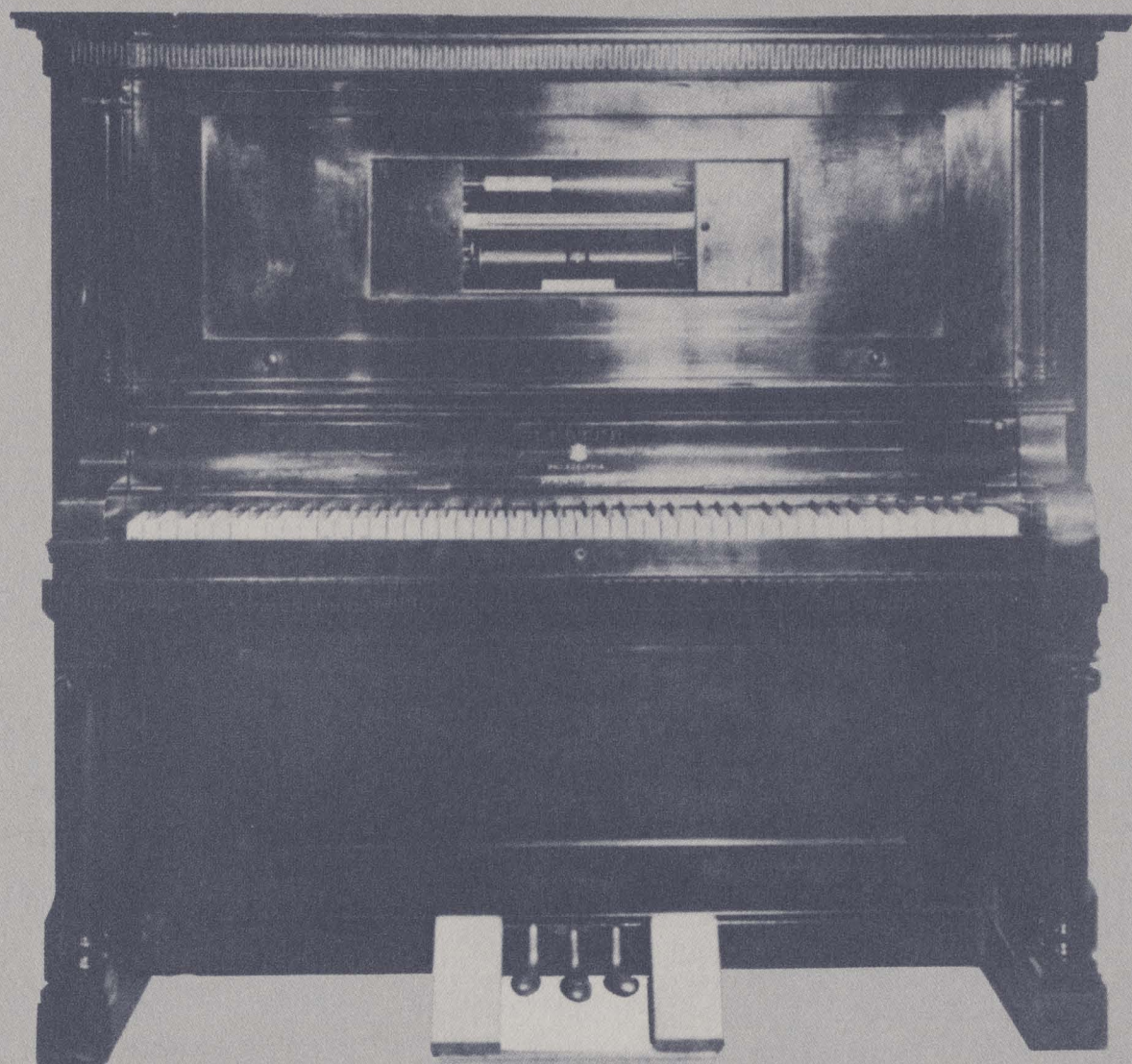


RAGS PLAYED TO POPULAR TUNES OF THE 1920's

RBF 43

COMPILED AND ANNOTATED BY DAVID A.JASEN

The Piano Roll Artistry of Max Kortlander



GULBRAMSEN PIANO PLAYER, 1916, PHOTO BY JOHN E. GILBERT

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

SIDE ONE

Total Time: 23:39

1. BLUE CLOVER MAN (Kortlander)
2. NO, NO, NORA (Fiorito-Erdman-Kahn)
3. DEUCES WILD (Kortlander)
4. HAS ANYBODY SEEN MY CORINNE?
(Johnson-Graham)
5. AMERICAN BEAUTY RAG (Lamb)
6. DEAR OLD DADDY LONG LEGS (Von Tilzer)
7. DERBY DAY IN DIXIE (Whiting-Egan)
8. SHIM ME SHA WABBLE (S. Williams)
9. CLIMAX RAG (Scott)

SIDE TWO

Total Time: 22:37

1. LET'S TRY IT (Kortlander)
2. BO LA BO (Fairman)
3. HUNTING THE BALL (Kortlander)
4. IDA! SWEET AS APPLE CIDER (Munson-Leonard)
5. BIGAMOUS BLUES (Kortlander)
6. TRIANGLE JAZZ BLUES (Leclere)
7. FUNERAL RAG (Kortlander)
8. CHICAGO (Fisher)
9. RUSSIAN RAG (Cobb)

CREDITS

Compiled & Annotated: DAVID A. JASEN

Remastering: Carl Seltzer

We wish to thank David A. Jasen, Joel Markowitz and Trebor Jay Tichener for the use of their rare piano rolls. Additional material may be found in the book RAGS AND RAGTIME: A MUSICAL HISTORY by David A. Jasen and Trebor Jay Tichener, Continuum Books, New York City.

© © 1981 FOLKWAYS RECORDS & SERVICE CORP.
43 W. 61st ST., N.Y.C., 10023 N.Y., U.S.A.

The Piano Roll Artistry of Max Kortlander

RAGS PLAYED TO POPULAR TUNES OF THE 1920's
COMPILED AND ANNOTATED BY DAVID A. JASEN

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

The Piano Roll Artistry of Max Kortlander

COMPILED AND ANNOTATED BY DAVID A. JASEN

Max Kortlander was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan on September 1, 1890. Upon finishing high school, he enrolled at Oberlin Conservatory for specialized music courses and at the American Conservatory in Chicago for piano lessons.

Through a friend, he was introduced to Lee S. Roberts, pianist-composer and Vice President of the Q. R. S. Music Company, largest manufacturer of piano rolls whose headquarters was in Chicago. Under the tutelage of Lee Roberts, Kortlander became adept at arranging and performing for piano roll recordings. He was personally well-liked at Q.R.S., and the public liked his hand-played rolls so much that he had to resort to a pseudonym. "Ted Baxter" became Kortlander's most famous pseudonym and we find many rolls "played by Ted Baxter and Max Kortlander."

Max Became General Manager of the Q.R.S. Recording Laboratories by the late teens and then President of Q.R.S. in 1931, which he owned until his death in New York City on October 11, 1961.

This album is a tribute to Max Kortlander as composer of extraordinary rags, brilliant roll arranger of pop tunes of the day, and magnificent performer of hand-played piano rolls.

SIDE ONE

BLUE CLOVER MAN was copyrighted by Max on June 18, 1920. His piano roll performance is the most sophisticated ever produced. His use of exotic harmonies and totally different rhythms within the same ragtime composition was unique for its time.

NO, NO, NORA was written by orchestra leader Ted Fiorito, composer Ernie Erdman and super-lyricist Gus Kahn in

1923. Kortlander's interpretation not only enhances the tune, but creates an additional atmosphere, not considered by the original composers.

DEUCES WILD, another of Max's original rags, was copyrighted on November 17, 1923 and published by Jack Mills, Inc. However, Max made his piano roll in early 1919! It is an example of his creativity and the performance is the equal to what other top-ranking composer/arranger/performers were doing at that time (see also ZEZ CONFREY, CREATOR OF THE NOVELTY RAG, Folkways RBF-28; ROY BARGY: PIANO SYNCOPATIONS, Folkways RBF-35).

HAS ANYBODY SEEN MY CORINNE was the 1918 entry of blues-and-jazz composer Lukie Johnson and writer-publisher Roger Graham. Max arranged this number in the hottest, most syncopated manner of the time. It is an incredible dazzler. How many people of that day listening to this roll really understood what Max was doing?

AMERICAN BEAUTY RAG was published by John Stark & Son in St. Louis on December 27, 1913. It was Joe Lamb's fifth published rag and one of the greatest rags ever composed. Max's 1917 roll version is proof positive that these rags were not meant to be performed "as written." Kortlander's approach to piano roll arranging and performing was the same no matter what kind of music he was doing. This near-contemporary roll was a good seller and the public was pleased with his conception.

DEAR OLD DADDY LONG LEGS was an early example of a title song for a movie. The film in question, a 1919 silent-flick, starred Mary Pickford and was written by prolific composer-publisher Albert Von Tilzer. While Max created the arrangement, he had Zez Confrey perform this duet with him. An honest duet, not one of Max's fake duets with himself. It is a fine performance of a great arrangement on a rather thin melody.

DERBY DAY IN DIXIE was written by these two elegant writers of Tin Pan Alley, Richard A. Whiting and Jack Egan.

In a most forceful arrangement, Max whips it up to a reusing finish.

SHIM ME SHA WABBLE turned out to be a jazz standard which was originally published in 1916. It was transferred to large publisher Joseph W. Stern & Co. a year later, and they made sure that this fine tune by Spencer Williams got good treatment on records and rolls. The firm certainly had nothing to complain of when they heard what Max did to it.

CLIMAX RAG was composed by James Scott and published by the Stark Music Company of St. Louis on March 5, 1914. One of the finest rags, and also one of Scott's most inspired, it has become a favorite of dixieland jazz bands. Max's rendition is most creative and adds elements not present on the sheet music. His creative approach is consistent and forces his audience to sit up and listen intently to what he's done.

SIDE TWO

LET'S TRY IT was one of three unpublished rags on this side of the LP which didn't exist on sheet music or on recordings. His 1918 roll is a masterpiece of inventiveness.

BO LA BO was written by Tin Pan Alley composer-lyricist-publisher George Fairman in 1919. It was one of a myriad of songs dealing with the Orient which Tin Pan Alley was turning out just as fast as they could. It was usual at Q.R.S. to turn this kind of song over to Zez Confrey to arrange and perform. He had a knack for it. As we can see, Max was no slouch either and turns in a masterful performance.

HUNTING THE BALL, another original rag by Max, was made into a roll only in 1917, but unlike the other two roll originals, this one was copyrighted finally on June 12, 1922!

IDA! SWEET AS APPLE CIDER was written by Eddie Munson and blackface-minstrel Eddie Leonard in 1903. This 1918 arrangement by Max certainly put a new spin on the old ball. There were double-time endings and there were double-time endings. However,

with this arrangement, Max outdid himself and everyone else at Q.R.S. It is easily the most original and complex double-time chorus in the history of the piano roll as well as the most challenging - both to play and to listen to.

BIGAMOUS BLUES was composed, arranged and performed - and published - by Max Kortlander in 1919. It is, strangely, a real blues. And like Max's rags and pop song arrangements, a beautifully inventive blues, providing a marvelous contrast to the rest of this program.

TRIANGLE JAZZ BLUES, by New Orleans entertainer Irwin Leclerc, was published by him on February 21, 1917. Unlike the previous number, this is really a rag. He called it a "jazz blues" because it united the two newest kinds of popular music of his day and reflected, of only by implication, that his rag was something new. Max's contemporary version, again takes liberties with the printed score, but enriches the original concept with an inspired arrangement.

FUNERAL RAG is the last original rag made only for piano roll on this album. This composition is in the old tradition of "ragging the classics." In this case, it is Chopin's Funeral March, a most unlikely subject for a joyous rag, which gets the treatment. And Max makes it joyful.

CHICAGO was written by composer-lyricist-publisher Fred Fisher in 1922. It captured the spirit of the ebullient Second City wonderfully and demonstrated musically why it was the center of the new Dixieland jazz. In this performance, Max illustrates the famous adage applied to fine piano roll arrangements as "making mountains out of molehills."

RUSSIAN RAG was George L. Cobb's 1918 ragtime masterpiece. It was a hit for many years and the vaudeville virtuoso's favorite. In this contemporary roll arrangement, Max permanently endows this memorable performance with such goodies as his effective use of chromaticism in both the Introduction as well as in the breath-taking ending.

FOLKWAYS Records

AND SERVICE CORP., 43 W. 61st ST., N.Y.C. 10023
Long Playing Non-Breakable Micro Groove 33 1/3 RPM

**THE PIANO ROLL ARTISTRY OF
MAX KORTLANDER**

Compiled and Annotated by
DAVID A. JASEN

Side 1

RF 43 A

1. BLUE CLOVER MAN (Kortlander)
2. NO, NO, NORA (Fiorito-Erdman-Kahn)
3. DEUCES WILD (Kortlander)
4. HAS ANYBODY SEEN MY CORINNE?
(Johnson-Graham)
5. AMERICAN BEAUTY RAG (Lamb)
6. DEAR OLD DADDY LONG LEGS (Von Tilzer)
7. DERBY DAY IN DIXIE (Whiting-Egan)
8. SHIM-ME SHA WABBLE (S. Williams)
9. CLIMAX RAG (Scott)

© 1981 Folkways Records and Service Corp.

FOLKWAYS Records

AND SERVICE CORP., 43 W. 61st ST., N.Y.C. 10023
Long Playing Non-Breakable Micro Groove 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ RPM

**THE PIANO ROLL ARTISTRY OF
MAX KORTLANDER**

Compiled and Annotated by
DAVID A. JASEN

Side 2

RF 43 B

1. LET'S TRY IT (Kortlander)
2. BO LA BO (Fairman)
3. HUNTING THE BALL (Kortlander)
4. IDA! SWEET AS APPLE CIDER
(Munson-Leonard)
5. BIGAMOUS BLUES (Kortlander)
6. TRIANGLE JAZZ BLUES (Leclere)
7. FUNERAL RAG (Kortlander)
8. CHICAGO (Fisher)
9. RUSSIAN RAG (Cobb)

© © 1981 Folkways Records and Service Corp.