

# MUSIC in Mid-America

**KANSAS CITY PHILHARMONIC**, James Paul, conductor. Solists: Mary Mottl, piano. At Union station. Program: Ride of the Valkyries, from "Die Walkure," Wagner; Divertissement, from "The Nutcracker," Tchaikovsky; An American in Paris, Gershwin; Variations on "America," Ives; Rhapsody in Blue, Gershwin; Finale, from Symphony No. 4 in D Minor, Op. 34, Tchaikovsky.

By John Haskins  
 The Star's Music Editor

Although he has conducted the Philharmonic in a couple of youth concerts, Friday night's cabaret concert in Union Station marked the debut of James Paul as this season's associate conductor of the orchestra.

It was an auspicious debut. The programing was varied, good enough for listening but not too heavy to enjoy refreshments during the concert, and the 450 or so persons in the audience enjoyed good sound from David Beatty's acoustic-taming setup. Except for the piano, that is, which was miked to the point of sounding like an electronic instrument. A pity, for Mary Mottl played the Gershwin "Rhapsody in Blue" very well.

Perhaps the best moments of the evening came in the orchestrated version of the Charles Ives variations on "America." It is a charming and irrepressibly witty work, and it was very well played.

Outside the waiting room where the concert was given a Santa Claus mannikin (courtesy of Harold and Gale Displays, Inc.) welcomed the concertgoers, baton in hand. He had a good, if metronomic beat, and lent a nice touch to the evening.

The James Gang in concert at Municipal Auditorium: Dale Peters, bass; Jim Fox, drums; Roy Kenner, lead vocals; Dominic Troiano, lead guitar, vocals. With White Trash and R.E.O. Speedwagon.

By Nancy Ball

Despite efforts at resurrection, the James Gang is anything but alive and well. True, there were four guys pretending to be the James Gang at Municipal Auditorium Saturday night, but anyone with ears could penetrate their disguise.

Perhaps it's unfair to Dominic Troiano to keep comparing him to former guitarist Joe Walsh, who left the group to strike off on his own. But when Troiano and the remnants of the original James Gang still base their act almost entirely on Walsh's material, even using the same arrangements, they invite this type of criticism. And when put up against Walsh, Troiano doesn't fare very well.

The so-called James Gang had the temerity to begin their set with "Walk Away" and continued to impersonate their old sound. Peters and Fox, of course, had a good deal to do with the creation of the older material, but Walsh was such a dominating force that it took two men to compensate for his loss. An unimpressive rendering of "Asshtonpark" showed that though Troiano may have captured some of the basic techniques Walsh used, he has in no way mastered them. He lacks the clear singing tones and controlled ecoplex that characterized Walsh's playing.

Kenner, a "flashy" vocalist, has a nice voice, but his stage routine is so schlocky that it discredits the rest of the band. Peters and Fox should have known better.

Troiano showed skill when he added some of his own stylings, but this was infrequent. He was convincing, however, on his own song, "Getting Old," done as a solo acoustic number backed by a beautifully orchestrated tape of the Kansas City Philharmonic. They should have been helping out when the group attempted "Ashes the Rain and I." But there was evidence that Troiano is a guitarist who could be doing better things than standings in Joe Walsh's shadow.

The material created by the "new" James Gang, what there was of it, was mostly in the Sly Stone vein, but lacking inventiveness. The band and au-

dience seemed to be going through the motions, and the performance as a whole ranged from offensive to bland.

White Trash, like the James Gang, is without its former power source. Jerry La Croix used to share the driving with Edgar Winter, but now the band has to rely on its own strengths without Winter. They carry it off better than the James Gang, although they can't seem to sustain their occasional bursts of solidity. This weakness lies in the nature of their material—very raw and bluesy but burdened with unimaginative lead themes and rather lame lyrics.

The players themselves are pretty good. La Croix's vocals were best on a gusty version of Ray Charles' "I've Got News For You," filled in by some snazzy brass. Floyd Radford displayed a supremely light touch on his guitar solo, but he was overcome by the heavy-handed ending.

The opening band, R.E.O. Speedwagon, will probably do very nice things in the future but they didn't build up enough momentum to save the show. The whole evening was lacking in spontaneity, and the less than frenetic audience was badgered into participation by some cheap rabble-raising, mostly by Kenner. Most of the audience fell for it, even though there was a good deal of dissatisfaction in the crowd. Exit traffic became fairly steady as the James Gang began their mimicry.

The band that appeared Saturday night just wasn't the James Gang. Maybe the group can coast on its name, but without Walsh the James Gang won't ever ride again.

Christmas



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