

# LOS ANGELES SPOTLIGHTS LYN LARSEN

Youthful Lyn Larsen returned to the Wiltern Theatre on Sunday morning, October 22, for his fourth concert there at the Kimball organ on which he was "discovered" a few years ago while playing during an LA Chapter jam session. It was also the first in a series of theatre pipe organ concerts, the others set for Chicago, Detroit and Rochester, N.Y., during November.

Better than 650 enthusiasts turned out to hear the young man, a good score for Sunday morning when sleep and church compete for the average guy's time. There was a festive spirit in the lobby as the audience filed in. The solid hit which Lyn had made at the recent Home Organ Festival (playing a large Rodgers plug-in) was high on the discussion agenda. His audience was dotted with people who had heard him at the Festival and decided that perhaps an ear-view of what he could do on pipes might be worth the 500 mile journey from the Bay Area to L.A. They weren't disappointed.

After a brief announcement by Chapter Program Chairman Bob Gerdes, the lights faded down and a lively "Married I Can Always Get" soared out of the chambers and the great white Kimball console climbed slowly skyward. There was Lyn, spotlighted in his favorite concert attire (full dress suit and patent leather shoes), his tails trailing unfurrowed, thanks to the backless Howard seat.

After a brief greeting to his audience, Lyn announced that his first tune would be one that had become a favorite during his sojourn playing silent movies at the San Francisco "Avenue" Theatre,—"Poinciana." After a short Tibia/Marimba intro, and a quiet first chorus, the "tree" seemed to reach skyward in majestic grandeur.

"Dance of the Blue Danube" is a tune recorded by Jesse Crawford long ago. Lyn heard the old 78 rpm record recently. He noted that the late Maestro played it directly from the sheet music, therefore, this couldn't be classed as a "JC imitation" because Lyn's version was also from the piano score. Lyn used some stereo effects during which a well-Kinura'd combination on the right was punctuated by some snarly barks from the left-side Serpent.

As his fans know, Lyn seems to be a product of the '20's. His preferences in music and cars are antediluvian and the gals he refers to as "my girl-friends" aren't exactly in the "flapper" age group. So it isn't strange that when he tackles



a beloved oldie, it gets all the loving care a veteran organist, who had played "When You're Away" when it was brand-new, could supply. Lyn is accurately anachronistic.

He offered "Shine On, Harvest Moon" as an audience pleaser, then into a ballad growing fast toward a "standard" status, "If He Walked Into My Life," a tune that calls for the kind of sob Lyn knows how to coax from an organ. Then a little jazz with "Doing the New Lowdown," a Gershwin memory ballad, "You're Mine, You," following which the full brass band swung down the aisles for a toe-tapping "Washington Post March." Down went the console to a swell of applause and it was intermission.

Covering a Lyn Larsen concert is always something of a revelation to this reporter, partly because of the enthusiasm Lyn manages to generate in his audience. That it has staying power was demonstrated by the trend of intermission talk: "How could a lad so young show so much maturity in his stylings?" This summed up the direction of the conversation voiced by dozens of eager and happy audience members crowded around the coke machine in the lobby.

A full-voiced but never too loud "Fine and Dandy" brought the console up for the second half, followed by a seldom-heard novelty tune, "Midnight in Mayfair," which was a bit on the tricky side.

Needless to say, Lyn was his own M.C. throughout the program, making brief, to-the-point announcements, just enough to sharpen one's appetite for the music to follow. Occasionally he delved into audience participation, such as asking his audience to count the melody notes in

Chopin's "Minute Waltz." (We missed it!) And on one occasion he led his audience somewhat astray by suggesting that "Blue Prelude" might be appropriate music for a woodland picnic scene. According to the Larsen treatment, it must have been a torrid day! After a swinging "If I Had You," Lyn announced he would play all of a famous march which is usually reduced to just its middle, Elgar's most popular of the five symphonic "Pomp and Circumstance" marches. It was a crisp performance, rife with two-footed and fast pedaling, a musical moment to send chills up the spines of not only Britons present, but also those of the "colonists." It was a gasser which earned Lyn a standing ovation.

On the subtle side was a beautiful George Wright original, "Sonnet," for which Lyn found just the right registration for his sensitive treatment. Next to closing was a Crawford-style "Masquerade," snatched almost intact from that long-ago Victor 78-rpm during which the late maestro shared honors with Helen Crawford. Lyn's recreation combined the duet into a delicious solo which he dedicated to "my other girl-friend, Kay Chenoweth." She had come from Oakland to hear him. Lyn gets around. Lyn Larsen's closer was his now well-known reading of "Bess, You Is My Woman" from Gershwin's folk opera, "Porgy and Bess." It's a selection of full-orchestra caliber and symphonic in scope, a fitting closer for a young man who augments his natural musical ability and "feel" for music by continuous study and seemingly never-ending practice. Lyn has'nt any time to waste. He's already 22.

—STU GREEN