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Editor of Bombarde



LYN LARSEN'S FIRST CONCERT "ON HIS OWN" WELL ATTENDED

by BERT BROUILLON

Pasadena, Jan. 31 — If the ability to pull a goodly number of organfans to the out-of-the-way Rialto theatre on a week night is any indication of stature, Lyn Larsen's star has risen considerably since his concert last year for the LA ATOE chapter at the Wiltern. This time Lyn was strictly on his own, with no organization behind him other than a little knot of friends and well wishers — his first venture into the hurly-burly of commercial concerts. He came off better than good.

There was no official head count because the ticket man's hand counter broke down before even half the crowd had filtered into the house. Never trusting official attendance records anyway, we made our own row-by-row count just before intermission and counted a few over 600, among them some of the top hobbyists in the LA area, including a good ATOE turnout.

Lyn's big opener was *Swanee*, played in musical comedy overture style with lots of speed, volume and that skillful injection of personality which spells "Lyn Larsen." After a big hand, Lyn greeted his audience and mentioned that it was nice to see his fans at night for a change (his previous concerts at the Fresno Wilson and LA Wiltern were on Sunday mornings). His second tune on the 2-10 Wurlitzer (style 216) was that very special arrangement of *Dream* which he plays with many clues in the music as to what the subconscious mind of the dreamer is cogitating—obviously the slow peel of a burlesque stripper (and we thought he was such a nice young man!)

For a lesson in ancient history Lyn produced a Pleistocene Brunswick 78 rpm platter of *Me, Too*. He read the entire label very carefully and thanked "Ernie Goldman and his Hotel McElvin orchestra" for the inspiration. The next few minutes were invested in a recreation of a '20s jazz band beating out *Me, Too*. It was cornball but wonderful nostalgia, an area in which Lyn Larsen is expert. The next one followed well, *Sonny Boy*, played to the hilt for tear-jerking schmaltz and memories of Al Jolson's grief when his movie son, little Davy Lee, did a "little



Eva" in *The Singing Fool*.

But Lyn Larsen is by no means limited to recreations of the past. His treatment of Paul Beaver's hauntingly lovely *Our Song* was as modern as tomorrow. Later, during intermission, we encountered Beaver in the lobby, guzzling a "Rialto Zombie" (faintly colored crushed ice) and he stated that Lyn played *Our Song* better than its composer. A generous compliment.

Next, Lyn read off the label on the flip side of *Me, Too*, also played by Ernie Goldman's Orchestra. It was *It's a Wonderful World, After All* and Lyn proceeded to transport his audience backward in time with a 1920's treatment which made subtle use of effects and clichés usually considered corny.

After giving a plug for his current recording, *An Evening at Home With The Mighty Wurlitzer*, he played a tune from it entitled *I Could Be Happy With You*, a real show stopper. Then he had a long distance conversation with "Auntie Agnes Day" (his "cover girl" on the record)

with Auntie "transmitting" by crystal ball and coming through the theatre horns with crisp sibilance. Auntie seemed somewhat detached as though she couldn't hear the lines Lyn was feeding her and Lyn really broke up at the admonition to "stick to the script!"

After "deconjuring" Auntie, Lyn went into a dramatic version of *Be My Love* with the Tuba holding down the melody against String accompaniment. Then Intermission with its usual lobbyful of orangab, expensive soft drinks and clouds of tobacco smoke. The audience represented something of a "Who's Who" in the LA area organ hobby and probably the proudest doll was Lyn's attractive mother who was accepting compliments for her son by the score.

Lyn's post-intermission curtain raiser was an oldie, *Song of the Wanderer*, after which he talked a little about "tributes" stating that "everyone knows the father of our country was Jesse Crawford—but I'm going to be different—this is a tribute to George Wright." For *The Lady is a Tramp*, Lyn drew liberally from the GW bag of tricks, including those stupendous "rides" on the melody, accents and off-beat harmony.

Lyn concluded his Wright tribute with a line which drew a laugh, ". . . and everyone thought I couldn't play like him!" The humor, of course, was that Lyn learned much of his theatre organ stylings from listening to Wright platters, and it took him some time to break away and establish his own style, so engrossed was he in the obvious musical excellence of Wright.

But Lyn is no longer dependent on the stylings of others, which was proved in his presentation of *Sunny Side Up*, *La Rosita* and *The Way You Look Tonight*.

Lyn is always generous in introducing tunes of merit by little known composers and a delicious moment was evolved when he played *Helen* by his friend, Paul Estes. It's an involved tune with many key changes but a really stunning composition. Mr. Estes beamed from the front row. Lyn then played *Broken Rosary* and *I've Got a Feelin' I'm Falling*, both of which were reminiscent of Jesse Crawford's old 78s of them, and then went into his feature tune which was all Larsen, *Bess You is My Woman* from the opera *Porgy and Bess*.

Summing up, young Larsen further consolidated his bid for top billing both through his finely polished and extremely musical stylings and also by his handling of MC chores. His announcements were informative and never too wordy; he stuck to the subject and got his point across, no more. In brief, Lyn Larsen has become an entertainer as well as a fine organist. He could have encored with *Everything's Coming Up Roses*. Perhaps next time.