

# LOS ANGELES AGO CHAPTER INVITES ATOE'rs TO SILENT COMEDY FEATURE SCREENING

Dec. 2, Hollywood, Cal. - - -

The famous Hollywood High School, sometimes known as the "incubator of stars", was the scene of a novel musical event tonight as organist Gaylord Carter cued a silent comedy feature on a "straight" organ.

The film was Harold Lloyd's *Safety Last*, which LA chapter chairman Dick Simonton borrowed from Lloyd for the chapter's contribution to a program staged by the LA American Guild of Organists (AGO) chapter. The AGO chapter invited the ATOE'rs to the show, which was held in the school auditorium. The house is equipped with a 3-39 E.M. Skinner concert organ, installed in the mid-'20s and kept in good playing condition.

The event was arranged between the AGO chapter dean, Halstead McCormac, and ATOE chapter vice chairman, Ray Bonner, the latter standing in for recuperating chairman Dick Simonton.

For the movie, veteran organist Carter tackled the Skinner just as though it had been a theatre organ, with sometimes amusing results. Before the film started Gaylord played both classical and pop selections to give his audience the "feel" of the instrument. It must be stated that something is lost in translation when *Love is Blue* is heard played on big Diapasons, sharp reeds and complex Mixtures, with little or no tremulant.

The Skinner was more effective during the film because it is an action movie, with lots of suspense, comedy and violent movement. For those who missed it during the 1968 ATOE convention, *Safety Last* is the story of an impoverished young department store clerk who sees a chance to earn \$1000 (so he can get married!) if he can attract a crowd to the store where he works. He does so by unmittingly becoming a "human fly" and climbing the out-

side of the store building. Of course, Harold succeeds, but not before some hair-raising moments during his ascent which consumes almost half the footage. This sort of comedy-melodrama is right up Gaylord's alley, even though the Skinner was lacking the sound effects which silent movies need. To compensate, he hauled in a hand-operated siren to cue the careening chase scene through 1923 Los Angeles traffic (how those model T's dodged!). But in the midst of the sequence the siren broke down with a dissonant descrescendo wail which trailed off to embarrassed silence.

Carter found the skinner to his liking for playing this type of film but stated, "I don't know what I'd have done if there were love scenes -- no Tibia -- not even a gooey Stopped Flute on Tremolo. There's just no way of making it sound like a theatre organ. It's another breed of cat."



GAYLORD CARTER — Drawknobs?? Fat diapasons and a fire siren that wouldn't.

About 350 AGOers and ATOErs attended. Although such co-op concerts are rare in LA, there has been a friendly spirit of cooperation between the two chapters since they staged a joint pop concert at the Wiltern theatre when their national conventions overlapped in 1962.

— G. Bandini

## SOONER STATE ATOE CHAPTER IS OFF AND RUNNING . . .

The newly formed Sooner State Chapter held its first concert on November 8, at the Christian Crusade in Tulsa, where the late Jim Orcutt made his *Organ of the Month* recordings. For our first effort we were privileged to have the services of Lyn Larsen, who at the age of 23 is what we believe to be one of the finest theatre organists alive.

Playing to a crowd of about 300, (we were hampered by other events occurring the same night) Lyn got a warm response as he explored the registrations available on the 3/10 Robert Morton. His musical style and his personality made a hit with his audience, and sensing this, Lyn has promised us that he will be back next year.

Mr. Larsen played the first half



Larsen Discusses his music with the appreciative audience during recent program.

of his program leaning heavily on the standards which sound best on the theatre organ and are sure to meet with the approval of the older organ fans who remember how it was "in the good old days".

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## More Home Organ . . . .

strument. But the Allen instrument probably suffered some from the absence of a sponsor on the spot to "push" it and therefore didn't hit with the same impact as when Tom Stevens' retail organization was in the picture.

Conversely, the Baldwin HT-2 theatre model couldn't have had better showcasing. It, too, was "un-sponsored" but two artists from the talent pool drew concert assignments on it, Lyn Larsen and Helen Dell. We are not certain whether the instrument has undergone extensive revisions or whether it was the artistry of these fine organists, but the Baldwin HT-2 was a sensation.

Hammond was represented by one lone model X77 without enough volume to satisfy the needs of Mildred Alexander, who turned to the Conn and Rodgers for some of her sessions. One of the most talked about happenings of the Festival was Miss Alexander's broadening of horizons to include the teaching of all makes of organ at her music schools, including a new headquarters studio in San Diego. The luxury of teaching just one type of instrument is fast disappearing; from now on, teachers must be able to cut the mustard on many makes and models of organ. The Alexander range will include pipes when she can locate one suitable for the "old southern" style mansion which houses her headquarters school.

One negative indication was the continuing trend toward including the easily conjured "gimmicks", which sales departments are said to demand to make instruments "competitive." Mute stops which control speaking stops are on the increase. These include such non-sounding effects as Attack, Reverb, Tremulant, Vibrato, "Emphasis" and an abomination called "*Repetition*" to which too many builders have succumbed. Other stops direct where another already functioning stop shall be heard (manual pedal, etc). Some silent stops are necessary, tremors for

example; there can be no argument there. But when there are more than twice as many nonspeaking stops on a stop rail as sound-producing ones, that's just too much dependence on clever circuitry and not enough on music making. I kid you not! Such an instrument was played at the Festival.

I won't go into the attractive social aspects of the Festival -- the many parties, the swimfest in Hoberg's giant pool, the "Trek to the Stars" costume ball, the nightly jam sessions -- for lack of space. But some contemplation as to why this year's show was the "best yet" (a rather universal impression among Festivalers polled on the final day) is in order. A successful Festival consists of many things, most of which are taken for granted by attendees -- such as the excellent food provided by the resort. Therefore, we must turn to what was different. First, the array of top artists, amplified by the Festival Talent Pool. Then, the staging was much improved, especially the subtle lighting effects which underscored the mood of every tune played during the concerts (credit here must go to former ATOE national president Tiny James, Les Fritze and Charlie Banks). And we shouldn't neglect the improved sound of many instruments. Also there were no speeches; MCing was brief and to the point. The shows moved at a fast pace.

Most of the gains were the result of careful planning. Lovely Kay Chenoweth was the same "sparker" she's always been. We rarely saw her when she wasn't perambulating to a hatching crisis or from a solved one. And Dewey Cagle was back this year, fully recovered from the heart attack which pulled him out of the 1967 Festival. Of all participants, these two rate the most credit for the nearly ten years of Home Organ Festivals (How Dewey Cagle finds time to act also as advertising manager for this magazine has long been a mystery!). Flo Lehtinen, the genial president of the Pacific Council for Organ Clubs, rates kudos, too.

## Sooner State Is Here

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Ending the first portion of his show, he played *Pomp and Circumstance* the whole thing! This was an unusual but pleasant surprise. For the first and last part he turned off the tremors and gave the organ a big crunch sound. (The organ sounds bigger than ten ranks anyway). The organ was in good tune and held up well to this treatment; unlike many that sound terrible without heavy tremulants.

After the intermission, Lyn continued to captivate his audience with a mixture of show tunes and other standards, including *Lara's Theme from Dr. Zhivago*, which was played as a tribute to Jim Orcutt who played the song quite frequently before his untimely death.

For a change of pace Lyn performed the Tocatta from the Suite Gothique by Leon Boellmann. Again the Morton's big sound and excellent voicing added to the magnificence of the work. It was performed with mature ability and feeling.

Possibly the greatest highlight of the program was the medley from George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*. Lyn played it to the hilt, in a style that Gershwin himself would have been proud of.

The Sooner State Chapter feels that our first venture has been a tremendous success and the people of Tulsa and Oklahoma are swiftly being converted to avid Theatre Organ Nuts, and that's what this organization is all about, isn't it? We're organ enthusiasts from the word "go!" The wheels are already in motion to plan for our next concert, so watch for more news from the Sooner State Chapter.

—Dennis Minear

The dates for the tenth Festival were announced during the 1968 session -- September 16 through 21, 1969.

—Stu Green, Hoberg's