

# NORTH AND SOUTH (CALIFORNIANS) ENJOY TWO-ORGAN WEEKEND AT MIDPOINT FRESNO — Bert Brouillon, Fresno

October 16 — Fresno, Calif. — The North and the South bid one another goodbye just after noon today with the conclusion of the Lyn Larsen concert at the 3-11 (style 235) Wurlitzer in the Wilson theatre here. Thus ended a two day theatre organ weekend which included concerts on two distinctive instruments played by the best talent the Northern and Southern groups could muster to represent each.

The Northern California Chapter's entry was Larry Vannucci who played an after-midnight pop concert on the 4-14 Robert Morton in the Warner theatre. Larsen represented the South. Groundwork for the two-Chapter weekend was laid by Program Chairman Bob Carson (L A) and Al White (NorCal), later by Vice Chairman Jack Bethards when Chairman White was transferred away from Oakland by his company.



The "INTERWOVEN PAIR" — Jim Roseveare (incognito) and Jack Bethards toast one another while raking in attendee's cash.

Arrivals started checking in at the Hacienda Motel (about five miles north of Fresno) on Saturday afternoon to be signed in by Bethards and Jim Roseveare who greeted the arrivals with a prepared verse which they spouted, each taking an alternate line, at the drop of a five dollar bill (the "family rate"; single registrations went for three bucks). The lobby of the Hacienda was alive with organ talk all afternoon and the bar was even fuller. With several other meetings and conventions in progress the giant Hacienda complex of buildings was a lively place. Just before 5, a busload of Angelenos arrived to swell the organ-oriented bedlam. It had been a



The Warner theatre, home of a 4-14 Morton.  
—Foto by Bill Taylor

pleasant 225 mile trip from LA in bright blue fall weather. As the Angelenos alighted from the bus each took a deep breath and asked "What's that funny smell?" John Gallagher (Alameda) was right there with the truth, "That's just fresh air."

The Hacienda is the largest combination of buildings we've ever seen labelled a "motel." Actually it's a tiny community for transients, complete with shops, a bar and a crystal clear swimming pool stocked with a plentiful supply of superbly shaped bikini-unclad mermaids.

So, the afternoon went pleasantly whether one lolled about the lobby organgabbing with Judd Walton, Lorraine Cagle, Les and Olive Pepiot, Clare Vannucci, Peg Nielsen, Major (AF) H. A.



ANTICIPATING — AF Major H. A. and wife Mary Sommer smile in anticipation as they look forward to the weekend concerts.

Sommer and spouse Mary, the entire organ-lovin' Taylor family (4), or joined the conviviality of the bar with such stalwarts as Stu Green, Ron Downer, Ray Bonner, Fred Clapp, Emory Stevenson,

Ralph and Frau Ehat, Rose Diamond and Bill McCoy, or stood around the pool ogling the mermaids with Tiny James, Harvey Heck, George Missbach (all the way from Atlanta, Ga.), Paul Beaver, Stan Weisbard, Dewey Cagle, Warren White, Jack Shemick, Ben Brown and—Stu Green? (don't ask how he managed to be two places at one time). So much for name dropping.

Most attendees scattered to nearby ham 'n eggeries for evening chow to escape the over-abundance of conventioners crowding the Hacienda dining room. No matter, there was lots of time until the 9 p.m. event scheduled at the Towne and Country lodge "down the road a piece" — half a mile.



EXCHANGE OF VIEWS — Northerner Fred Clapp and Southerner Ron Mitchell discuss the price of Post-horns over a hot salami before the show.

There was an unfortunate situation extant at the T&C Lodge. Bill McCoy was there, as promised, making beautiful music on the most advanced Thomas organs we've encountered, both from the tonal standpoint and the clutter of gadgetry. The trouble was that the room was directly next door to the bar where a quartet of loud musicians was tooting wildly while fair goers (yes, there was also a Fair in progress) gyrated in terpsichorean abandon. The trumpet, cymbals, drums and a thudding Hammond seeped through the thin walls to add an undesired and discordant obligato to the subtle artistry of the real McCoy. Finally, Dewey Cagle went out with fire in his eye and the noise diminished some; he'd got the manager to shut off the nearest loudspeakers.

It was possible to minimize the worst effects of the interference by moving as

(Continued Next Page)

close to the organ speakers as possible, which we did. Old "Gabby" McCoy was in fine spirits for his two hour marathon request program and he did a lot more than merely play the asked-for tunes. He offered real juicy arrangements of each request. Whether he was playing prepared and memorized arrangements or so-called "head" arrangements wasn't stated but his treatment of such tunes as "Begin the Beguine," "Danny Boy," "The Sweetheart Tree" and "Poor Butterfly" was complete and satisfying, concert quality playing with beaucoup key changes, variegated registration and all the color one could hope for from a plug-in. It might be said that Bill topped



Bill McCoy takes time out from his plug-in demo to smooch with a pretty girl.

his performance of a few weeks earlier at the Home Organ Festival where he also represented Thomas. Despite the interference problems Thomas pulled a master stroke in grabbing this "just before the concert" opportunity to demonstrate its vastly improved instruments. The audience was attentive and appreciative and the unhurried presentation gave Bill an opportunity to show off the many goodies built into the new products which were represented by a three-manual "Palace III" and a two-manual instrument with ample speaker equipment but not the overpowering type. It was quite obvious that Thomas had come up with a product which could hold the attention of a pipe-oriented crowd for a couple of informal hours — very much a test of the tapioca.

About 11:30 p.m. the group listening to the Thomas demonstration started to thin out. In twos, fours and sixes they made their ways out to cars and busses to travel the several miles to the center of Fresno and the Warner theatre. There was a brief wait in the lobby while the theatregoers (who had just seen "Dr. Zhivago") ambled out, surprised to find another group anxious to get in.

The festivities were started by that "interwoven pair," Jim Roseveare and Jack Bethards, who introduced the artist with a revolver shot snap of a bullwhip and another application of very blank verse, each taking alternate lines, "... now—Larry Vannucci!" All eyes focused on the huge circular well in the center of the pit area and waited for the blast of

music and ascending console—and waited—and waited. Nothing

From halfway up the aisle came a wail in Roseveare tones, "...and now—Larry Vannucci!" Still nothing. Gingerly the duo-MC's crept back to the gaping pit and gazed down into the well. Suddenly a loud voice shattered the unwelcome silence. "I can't get the console up!" wafted upward from the dark hole and it belonged to "the Vanooch." Larry had left the pit door open and the safety switch on it cut the elevator power off, a feature obviously installed to prevent a condition which could be described as "bifurcated organist." When Larry slammed the pit door the console shot skyward and in a moment the mahogany horseshoe with tux-attired Larry on the bench was in sight and the theatre was flooded with Morton sound.

His console riser was a fast and ornamented "Linger Awhile." After greeting his audience he explained that he'd done something rather drastic to "Susie" and it soon became apparent that he'd attired her in a revealing harem outfit. The Susie we thought we all knew slithered through a "March Slav" intro then gyrated to a snake charmer Oboe bit accompanied by cymbals, tamborines and the general atmosphere of an Arabian Nights procession. But before it was over Larry brought Susie home on a "By Jingo" magic carpet and a glock and Chrysoglott chorus accompanied by the Bird Chirp just for fun. She ended up as the All-American cutie we've always known with a slow chorus on a full mass of pipes.

Larry followed up with a mellow and sentimental "Stardust," then pitted the Posthorn against a Kinura-topped combination for a somewhat besotted "One for the Road." Next, a faithful rendition of "Malaguena" (with arpeggios on the Wooden Harp) followed by a rolling waltz, the "Song from Desiree." "You're Gonna Hear From Me" was something special with its cynical Tuba sneers and Posthorn accents then a furious "Dizzy Fingers" with a surprising total of stop changes for such a fastie. "Shadow of Your Smile" was all "Liz and Richard" while "Crazy Rondo" turned out to be fresh-water Mozart based on the boy wonder's Turkish March.

"It Had To Be You" was given the full Crawford treatment, during which a non-tremming Vox was shaken into palpitation by Larry's trilling on the stop-key. "Sunny Side of the Street" was smooth jazz played mostly on growly reeds with unheeded complaints from the Posthorn.

As most readers already know, the 4-14 Morton in the Warner theatre is one of those rare understage installations, a setup which can clobber the

front rows while being too soft in the back. Knowing this, Larry never let the Morton out loud enough to annoy the main body of listeners down front. The level was also adequate but never overpowering in the balcony which looks down down on the pit.



IN FINE FORM — "The Vanooch" charms his listeners with palaver and a top performance at the Morton.

An atmospheric String/Vox intro marked "Stella By Starlight" while the birth pangs of "The Blues" were expressed in very musical but distinctive wolf whistles. Larry put something very special into "As Long As He Needs Me" because it was dedicated to a very special girl in the audience, a gal named Claire who, in private life, is Mrs. Vannucci. It was sheer beauty, and the audience got the message. Other tunes heard were "Little Darling," some bull fight music, "Besame Mucho," "Domino" a jerky, boogied "Night Train," a Jesse'd "September Song" and "That's All"—afterwhich Larry took his bows and got a fine round of applause. Then he hit the elevator button and the organ went down so fast one could almost hear the "thud!" The time was about 2:30 and the "sack" was long overdue.

The next morning dawned sunny, bright and much too early, judging from the snail's pace gait of arrivals at the Wilson theatre, a wide, one-level (inclined) house with the organ installed in the expected place (at either side of the proscenium arch). The 3-deck console is permanently elevated to floor level at the left end of the pit.

Before going into the performance some credits are in order to those who organized the weekend. In addition to the aforementioned program chairmen (Bethards and Carson), attendees were indebted to Dick Cencibaugh and Dick Villemin who maintain the two organs, to theatre managers Korenbrot (Warner theatre) and Frederick (Wilson theatre) for use of the houses, to Jim Roseveare who snapped a wicked bullwhip (the opening "crack" at each performance) and to visitors Dick Stoney and Ron

(Continued Next Page)

Mitchell who did some last minute touchup work on the Wilson organ to correct defects (such as squeaking shutters) which had developed during rehearsal.



**COMPOSER**—Organist Emory Stevenson, whose deep interest in serious composition in no way diminishes his ability to do a perfect "Crawford," catches a snack before attending Larry Vannucci's "Late Show."

At the appointed hour the "dynamic duo" (Bethards and Roseveare) offered their "song and dance" style intro capped with the bullwhip snap and tossed the ball to Bob Carson. Bob had only one line and he made the most of it:

"Introducing a man who believes in America, motherhood and the ATOE—Lyn Larsen!"

Lyn opened with a rousing rendition of that fine old silent movie cue music, "Satyr Dance." He next presented "The Song is You" which started out with 4' Tibia frippery stated against a solid mass of String/Vox harmony and settled into a soulful tempo rubato offering with many instrumentation changes. "Teddy Bears' Picnic," a novelty misterioso, was followed by a very special arrangement of "Over the Rainbow" as heard on Lyn's current recording. It opened and closed on a snatch of "Chasing Rainbows." "From a typical 'talking picture' of the '30s" came "An Earful of Music," a real belting show opener, complete with Tibia'd "boop-boop-a-doops."

It was obvious to all who have followed Lyn Larsen's pop music career that the young (21) man had improved noticeably since his previous concerts, both in his MC'ing and in his music.

And, judging from the dedications it might be said that the lad has discovered girls. The first was for lovely Clare Vannucci who was sitting in the audience with some guy named Larry. More would come later. For Claire he played "The Girlfriend."

At this point there was an unrehearsed disturbance. A fat guy approached the console to take Lyn's photo. Lyn, already "up to here" in clouds of "little green balls" from popping flashbulbs, grabbed the intruder by the scruff of the neck and

hustled him up to the console for all to see, stating "This is a Stu Green," among other things. A voice from the rear (it could only be THEATRE ORGAN editor George Thompson) roared "Throw the bum out!" and the intruder retreated, flashbulbs askew.

Drawing on his recent experience while playing the 3-27 Wurlitzer in the Panama Hilton hotel, Lyn next offered an example of the type of request he got in the "Canal Country," a "tamborito" which turned out to be nothing much in diverse and sometimes clashing rhythms.

While introducing "Dream" Lyn explained that it would be descriptive and



**JOURNALISTIC CONFLAB**—BOMBARDE Newshen Peg Nielsen, Adv. Mgr. Dewey Cagle and *Theatre Organ* Editor George Thompson discuss the high price of publishing outside the Wilson theatre while Thompson waited for his chauffeur to deliver his Pogo stick.

invited the audience to guess the subject of the dream. Judging from the "woowoods," bumps and grinds, the dreamer must have been conjuring up a burlesque show. A lovely, misty "Nearness of You" ended the first half of the show.

Out in the lobby the only loud noise was a vocal exchange between the THEATRE ORGAN and BOMBARDE editors whose magazine have been "Siam-essed" in a shotgun wedding, but not their diverse personalities, both being reasonably revolting.

Larsen opened his second half with another dedication to a gag, this time to "my girlfriend, Peg Nielsen" for whom he played "How Long Has This Been Going On?"

Many talented young theatre organist show a marked leaning toward the descriptive compositions of classical organist Richard Purvis. Lyn Larsen is no exception. He selected "March Grotesque" which he described as a humorous characterization of a somewhat beefy bishop puffing along in a church procession. It was full of Purvis humor — slyly pompous but always human.

After a bouncing "Satin Doll" Lyn paid his respects to Jesse Crawford with amazing recreation of the late maestro's old 78 rpm Victor recording of "Russian

Lullabye." While his attack during the "Volga Boatmen" intro was not as incisive as the Crawford original, the "Lullabye" was a good example of Lyn's "recording ear." Except for a few places where he changed the original harmony it was pure Crawford and this was Jesse at his best.

Following a moody "When Sonny Gets Blue" Lyn again drew on his Panamanian excursion for "Carioca" in danzon tempo, originally a Cuban rhythm. It came out about the way Don Baker has always played it, fast and bright.

Lyn's big "feature attraction" was a reading of Gershwin's "Bess, You Is My Woman" from the opera "Porgy and Bess." The music is symphonic in scope and Lyn came through with a highly sensitive performance to provide an exciting topper for his fine show.

His audience was reluctant to let him go and palm-beat him into an encore which he selected, apparently, by the loudest roared title from the audience—"SONNY BOY!" Bit it turned out to be a rousing, emotional close.

There was one gal bursting with pride in the audience, a spectacular red headed doll who looks much too young to be Lyn's mother. She was walking several inches off the ground as she left the theatre (after planting a lipsticky buss on Stu Green's left jowl), thankful that Lyn had been considerate enough to avoid



**THANKS FOLKS**—Lyn bows to the generous volume of applause bestowed by his appreciative audience. His full dress suit is his concert trademark.

one of his favorite tunes. "My Buddy." It always makes her cry.

That was the end of the weekend—around noon on a pleasant, sunny Sunday. Little knots of Northerners and Southerners gathered outside the theatre to discuss the events before going their separate ways and to watch Bob Carson march his LA platoon onto the bus for the return journey to Los Angeles. Ray Bonner shot some gag photos as Messrs. Bethards and Roseveare continued their clowning to the very end. It had been a good show and the festive spirit would follow those who attended back to their homes.