

JAMES LYONS

(1926-1973)

James Lyons, editor and publisher of The American Record Guide since 1957, died November 13, 1973. He was 47 years old. Mr. Lyons, who was born in Peabody, Massachusetts, had a wide ranging career as a writer and editor. Over the years he contributed articles and reviews to a number of publications and received a variety of awards.

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Jim Lyons found his way quietly into The American Record Guide. On hearing the sad news of his passing the other day, I began to think back over the years since I have known him and have tried to recapture my first impressions. And so I looked into my bound set of ARG. Just over twenty years ago--March, 1953--the initials "J.L." appeared under a review of the Rachmaninoff Symphonic Dances (Jim didn't think much of the work). But who was J.L.? In those days the masthead with the list of contributors appeared only occasionally, and this was one of the months that did not have it. It was there in the April issue, but with no introduction to J.L. However, the issue did contain a review, signed James Lyons, of the complete Bach Clavierübung played by Ralph Kirkpatrick and Paul Calloway (this music was more to his taste). By June he was listed as an associate editor. In 1957 he bought the magazine from Peter Hugh Reed, its founder. From its beginnings as The American Music Lover in 1935, ARG had always been a family paper, reflecting the personality of its editor. In the years that followed, Jim made it over in his own image, but without changing its essential character. This is something which I personally felt, for I had been writing for Peter since Volume I, no. 1 (actually even before that); when Jim took over, I came with the magazine. Keeping so personalized a periodical going, especially in the past few years, was not easy and, as we all know, ARG was not notable for arriving on time. But it kept its independence; it also kept a sizeable and loyal readership.

It would be difficult to say whether the qualities that set Jim apart were his knowledge and enthusiasm for all kinds of music or his mastery of language and style. His major at Boston University was in journalism, and even in his student days he was writing book reviews for the New York Times. His first job after graduating was on the staff of the Miami Herald. After coming to New York in 1952, he was an assistant editor of Musical America, and this experience led him directly to ARG. Along the way he wrote numerous record liner notes as well as articles for the New York Herald-Tribune, High Fidelity, Stereo Review, and other periodicals. He contributed the chapter on the contemporary scene to the 1957 edition of John Tasker Howard's Modern Music and wrote many program notes for the Boston Symphony. As early as 1947 he was awarded an essay prize of \$500 by the American Newspaper Publishers Association, and in 1966 he won the ASCAP-Deems Taylor award for his writings. He was always actively working for the betterment of the record industry and the raising of standards. His influence as a trustee of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences was strongly felt and deeply appreciated. He also built up a following as a radio commentator on music and the dance.

It may be a little more surprising that he served for a time on the board of the Society for Asian Music. But his interests extended far beyond the sphere of music. In 1964 he earned an MA in psychology at New York University, and had it not been for the pressure of work, and then his final illness, he would have gone on to a doctorate.

All this may sound like a formidable personality, but I am sure my readers know better. Even those who knew him only through ARG must have sensed a warm and genial human being. There was never much ice to break in getting acquainted. For several years he and his wife Paige kept a regular open house in their big Seventh-Avenue apartment, and there one met people from all walks of life. This meant a great deal especially to his younger reviewers for whom it was an opportunity to make important contacts.

As "senior critic" I know I speak for the other

contributors to ARG in expressing my thanks for a long and happy association. Jim was an editor who never edited my thoughts or opinions; he did not, in my experience, change a word except to clarify. His reviewers were carefully chosen with a view to preserving a kind of overall harmony, yet they were always on their own, expressing their own opinions without fear of the advertisers. It was this that made the magazine's reputation and held its subscribers.

Philip L. Miller

also deceased

Jack Argo of Hudson, N.H.

Arthur M. Black of Denver, Colo.

Carolyn E. Brouillard of Long Island City, N.Y.

Leon H. White of Kalispell, Montana