

# arts/entertainment

## Bluegrass musician, pops team for class act

By Bill Graf

Teaming bluegrass John Hartford with the Lincoln Symphony Orchestra at first seemed like the mad pipe dream of a man who has spent a life time trying to mix oil and water.

However, Hartford and the symphony proved at the "September Pops and Bluegrass Too" concert Saturday night that although the two are from different ends of the musical spectrum, they have one thing in common—class.

### concert review

The symphony kicked off the show with a collection of classical pieces that were enjoyable to even the most passive classical fan. And as usual the Lincoln Symphony Orchestra are top flight.

Lincoln's music scene is extremely rich, and with Dr. Robert Emile at the helm of the symphony, Lincolinites can be proud.

Hartford soloed the second set. But it was hardly a solo in the truest sense. Hartford is a one-man-band once he's cut loose on his amplified sheet of plywood with fiddle in hand. Hartford "clogg danced" all through the second set and into the third.

"Clogg dancing" requires doing three things at once: singing, playing and dancing a simple step to keep the beat going.

When it comes to clogg dancing, Hartford is the master. But dancing is not by far his greatest claim to fame. For the last couple of decades he's written enough material to fill 15 albums—songs that have been a major force behind the revival of bluegrass and other traditional American music forms.

#### Black vest and gray corduroys

Although time limited the performance of all the favorites, Hartford took the stage dressed in an old black vest and gray corduroys with a patch on the seat and played a cross section of tunes that are as much John Hartford as anything else.

Tunes like "Skipping in the Mississippi Dew" and "Slumberin' on the Cumberland" tell of his love for life on the big rivers. Hartford, 42, was raised in St. Louis. His childhood fascination with the Mississippi and riverboats has led to a number of tunes about river life and eventually

earned him his riverboat pilot's license, which to him is one of his more prized accomplishments.

Other tunes played during the second set broke with the river theme, but still reflected his preference for a slower, simpler way of life. For example, "Aereo Plane" is a tune about how when traveling on a 747 "you can't tell if it's sunshine or rain." Instead, Hartford sings that he'd rather be "sittin in a deck chair, high above Kansas City in a genuine old-fashioned, authentic steam-powered aeroplane."

Also Hartford showed that he is as good as any kid on the block at making strange sounds with his cheeks and lips. One song about the difference between new and old-fashioned washing machines cheered every one up when he mimicked washing machine sounds.

Later he broke into "Boogie," which was a real surprise, considering the song contains a lot of heavy breathing and lyrics like, "Hey babe you want to boogie. We can boogie on the floor, we can boogie on the table, we can boogie on the lamp, if ya think ya might be able."

"Boogie" was especially surprising to hear, considering that the majority of the crowd was Lincoln's wine-sipping, *Wall Street Journal*-reading elite.

For the third set Hartford joined the symphony to perform his rework of "The Dusty Miller Hornpipe and Fugue in A-Major for Strings, Brass and Five-String Banjo," "Six O'clock Train and the Girl with Green Eyes" and his biggest hit "Gentle On My Mind."

#### Not a one-tune musician

Afterward, he was asked how he felt about having to do "Gentle On My Mind" all the time when he isn't a one-tune musician.

"I'm perfectly glad to play it. I'll always be appreciative to Glen Campbell for making it a hit. And I'll always be appreciative of what it's done for my career. I don't mind singing it," he said.

To date, "Gentle On My Mind" has been recorded by more than 300 musicians.

Hartford also said it was nice to play with an orchestra for a change.

"It's been four or five years since I've done something like this. I enjoyed it. The last time I did a show like this the orchestra was doing tunes like "Raindrops Keep Fallin' On My Head." That kinda bummed

me out. But I've really enjoyed doing this concert," he said.

Also during the third set the symphony let the highest bidder conduct the orchestra. This yielded the crowd a few laughs and the symphony more than \$1,000. The winning bidders were Walt Broer, Bob Nettleland, Jim Stewart and Bill Albrecht.

The Pops concerts have always been enjoyable and this one was equally entertaining. However, if the crowd can't hear what the performers are playing, it doesn't make any difference how good the musicians are. This was the only problem with the show at Pershing.

The crowd seated to the right of the stage were at the listening end of a speaker column that would be more useful as a door stop. Also, those in the cheaper seats are reminded, by the echo, that Pershing is for basketball games and not musical performances.

We don't ask the Huskers to play their games in Kimball recital hall. Then why do we ask fine musicians to play in a basketball arena. It's easy to understand why the concert was at Pershing. But in the future, the quality can be improved tenfold if some effort is made to kill the echo and find a real sound system.



Photo by Mark Billingsley

John Hartford teamed up with the Lincoln Symphony Orchestra Saturday night at the "September Pops and Bluegrass Too" concert at Pershing Auditorium.

## Time, thought go into Sheldon exhibits—director

By Penelope M. Smith

A lot of us wander into the Sheldon Art Gallery to recover from our own hectic worlds; from professors who are abstract on a day when you don't know your ABC's or just to escape from the seething mass of bodies. At Sheldon we notice that the exhibitions change but there is always a feeling that they weren't hung, but materialized overnight.

A great deal of ingenuity and time goes into the workings of the Sheldon, however.

Norman Geske, Sheldon director, talked about the considerations that go into an exhibit, some of which are unique to Sheldon because of its affiliation with the university.

"Our budget is a little more than \$100,000 a year. This covers everything, salaries, operation, only general maintenance is done by the university. We're at the bottom of the list of galleries. A comparable gallery is at the University of Kansas at Lawrence. They have a \$300,000 or better a year budget and a professional staff of 15 to 20 people. We have a staff of five professionals," Geske said.

Geske said Sheldon concentrates on regional artists and purchases primarily 20 century American art.

Sheldon has planned 25 exhibitions for 1981. Exhibits usually are arranged at least a year in advance or longer. The arrangement of these exhibitions takes a great deal of time and thought. Sheldon's staff relies for the most part on finding their own material for exhibitions, Geske said.

"The staff of the gallery and the assistant director have an idea of whose work they want to show. We go out and find the material. Many museums can pay a great deal for

exhibitions to such organizers as the American Federation of Arts or the Smithsonian, but our budget is almost nil. We try to arrange it such that the exhibitions cost as little as possible," Geske said.

Because they arrange their own shows, the staff works on a one-to-one basis with the artist.

"We contact the artist and discuss the general problems. The invitation is issued to the artist at least a year in advance. We don't allow the artist to put up the exhibition but the artist is frequently present and has some input if we have editing because of space," Geske explained.

Because of its budget, Sheldon cannot afford publicity for shows.

"We pay for the insurance of the works and the shipping but because of our budget we do not print posters or catalogues, but the artist is free to do what he likes to promote his show," Geske said.

One of the reasons the gallery functions so well is the long-term support of the Nebraska Art Association. The association has been responsible for exhibits such as the Georgia O'Keefe show.

"Many times we've had to raise the money for a show through the Nebraska Art Association. They're nearing their 100th anniversary in Lincoln. They're purely a lay organization in the community with a membership of 800 or 900 people," Geske said. "Their primary purpose is to support the gallery and manage one major exhibition a year. Secondly, they support our permanent collection. About one-third of our collection belongs to the association. The art association is our historical source, they paid for our first picture."

The quality and response to the exhibitions attest to Sheldon's and the art association's ability to make the gallery work. Some shows such as the Duane Hansen sculpture exhibition in 1976 have had overwhelming response.

### International pianist performs at Kimball

Internationally recognized pianist Garrick Ohlsson will be performing at Kimball Recital Hall, Thursday, Oct. 2 at 8 p.m.

Harold Schonberg of *The New York Times* has described Ohlsson as "a powerful technician with a strong musical mind" and *Newsweek* praises him with having "... a spectacular technique and crystalline tone. . ."

Ohlsson began playing the piano when he was eight years old. At the age of thirteen, he left his home in White Plains, New York to study at the Julliard School of Music.

There his talents were nurtured by his teachers, Sasha Gorodnitzki and Rosina Lhevine.

Ohlsson was recognized and rewarded for his exquisite playing by being the first and only American to win the coveted Chopin International Piano Competition in Warsaw, Poland. Since winning the award ten years ago, he has recorded twelve albums and last year toured the United States and Europe with violinist Miriam Fried.

Tickets go on sale today at Kimball Box Office. Tickets will be \$3.50 for UNL students and \$7.00 for the general public.