

# Cornelia Otis Skinner Is Town Hall Opener

By EVELINE OEN  
Arts Editor

The "past" and the "present," history and the range, yet consistency of feminine human nature all formed the basic elements of Cornelia Otis Skinner's performance at Town Hall last Thursday and Friday.

Her appearance, which opened this year's Town Hall season, was in itself historical for she gave the very first Birmingham Town Hall program 10 years ago.

THIS TIME Miss Skinner did six character sketches, which she wrote herself, of "The Wives of Henry VIII." This constituted the second half of the program.

Preceding "The Wives," she did a number of skits, also written by herself—the first humorously looked at a series of women selling "beauty" products and services running from skin moisturizers to weight reducing techniques. This was followed by four sketches lampooning ancestor worship.

IN THE LATTER she followed

a pattern of picturing the present-day ancestor-worshipper first, then flashing back to the ancestor and artifact to whom the first had alluded, beginning with "the center of ancestor worship, Boston."

Here, conversation first centered on a silver teapot bought directly by a great-grandmother from Paul Revere. The great-grandmother, of course, was somewhat less than her venerable descendant. She "liked her tea, and knew where she could get it" and denounced the patriot's Boston Tea Party in no uncertain terms.

NEXT, THE SETTING shifted

to California, where a "descendant" worshipfully contemplated wearing a black mantilla to a costume ball for which all comers were to dress like their Spanish ancestors. The "ancestor" was portrayed, with mantilla, arm on chair (or window-sill), chatting with a Spanish sailor in the street below, in the end inviting him up.

The third scene, set in Chicago, focused on a niche in a fine deck brought there in a Conestoga wagon

by a great-grandmother. Flash-back grandma brought "the ugly old thing" for defense during inland attacks. The mar was acquired guess how.

THE LAST sketch was pervaded by the odor of magnolia. First a "lady guide" with superficial hospitality ("It was I before I discovered that 'damned Yankee' wasn't all one word.") shows her old Charleston mansion to tourists. Then the

"courtly" female ancestor is seen playing cards, mauveated by the odor of the "stinking magnolia trees" and her husband who is getting himself ready for bed with three bottles of Bourbon, sitting "with his shirt open as wide as his mouth."

THE ATTACK on romanticism continued throughout "The Wives of Henry VIII" sketches. In rich, beautiful, authentic costumes of the period Miss Skinner dramatically dissected the characters of the six queens, frequently with humor, frequently without it.

The first wife, the Spanish Catherine of Aragon, tells her young daughter, "Give her (Ann Boleyn) your hand to kiss, child. Where are your manners?" and in speaking with King Henry of his intention to her say, "Affairs of state? We no longer call them that in Spain."

ANNE BOLEYN, portrayed in the Tower of London, waiting to be beheaded, sarcastically remarks, "I can hold any man as long as I'm his mistress . . . wife—there's too much beer and skittles in that word."

The third wife, Jane Seymour, talked with young Princess Elizabeth who was playing in a garden. "Why are you pulling all the heads off the flowers?" she asks. "Oh, I see, you are the queen and they are your subjects. You learned the game from your father, you say . . . What game would you like to play? . . . Tower of London? No, let's not, that's not a nice game."

NEXT CAME the wholesome, unassuming, red checked Anna, who told of her father's advice: "No matter what a man tells you about your beauty, Anna, you're still a good girl," and informs Henry, as he comes "courting" that all she has to offer him is her "maiden heart and womanly devotion." (See SKINNER, 8-D)

## Things Never Remain Static For a Landscape Architect

By EVELINE OEN  
Arts Editor

"We work in three dimensions—and a fourth, time. When we do a 'picture,' it's never static," said Birmingham landscape architect Edward H. Laird.

A landscape architect is primarily

concerned with developing land and arranging the objects on it for added human enjoyment, according to Laird, a lively senior member of the firm Wilcox and Laird. He has been in the business about 40 years.

IN PRACTICE, this means ana-

lyzing the problems involved, developing solutions and drawing the plans so as to provide what is ultimately desired. This involves working closely with architects, engineers—and the elements. Wind, rain, the climate—all play a part in the functioning of "the design."

One aspect of the profession is more at the fore at this time of year—an awareness of the color of foliage.

"Color is such a vague and big thing in life that we have to study it all the time. So do you," said Laird. "In summer, the green is rather monotonous; it just has various tones. This all comes to more vivid action in the ripening, harvesting period."

"IN LANDSCAPE architecture, we are very conscious of the units that will produce and maintain color. We use these seasonally—from spring through the growing season into fall—even in winter we employ evergreens as a background and use bark color for interest," said Laird.

"At this time of year, we have an accentuated interest in color because of a dramatic show of leaves," he noted.

HOW DOES the color come about?

"The mineral part of the leaves oxidizes, exposing the color. The minerals are contained in the chlorophyll," he explained. "As the growing season wears off, the chlorophyll production becomes less." (See ARCHITECT, 8-D)



EDWARD H. LAIRD, Birmingham landscape architect, works on a two-dimensional sketch of a "four-dimensional" design. Landscape architecture involves a fourth element—time, said Laird, in addition to the normal three. The "picture" doesn't remain static, he said.

## WITH THE VILLAGE PLAYERS

### 'Pillow Talk' Gets Party Line

Reviewed by CHARLES N. LORD

No pillows but a number of laughs, chuckles and a stray titter or two were in evidence Friday and Saturday evenings as the Birmingham Village Players amused full houses with an adaptation of the Stanley Shapiro-Maurice Richlin screenplay, "Pillow Talk."

On the screen "Pillow Talk" was Technicolor Doris Day-Rock Hudson extravaganza, and a stage presentation by a non-professional

theater group is an ambitious undertaking indeed. On the whole the Players rose to the challenge nicely.

IN THE FIRST place, the script is well-written—full of amusing lines and funny situations.

Even if the lines were badly read, and they were not, the evening would have been worth our while.

The authors have used telephones as Ibsen used pistols—to give

the play unity. Jan Morrow (Barbara Pitt) is forced by fate and New York Bell Telephone into sharing a party line with wolf songwriter Brad Allen (Ben Benson).

Jonathan Forbes (Bob Wyatt), Harvard-educated millionaire and producer of Allen's songs, falls in love with his interior decorator, Jan Morrow, and the play is on.

BARBARA HITT as Jan has the almost impossible job of being Doris Day, and though turning in an often amusing, credible performance, she seemed just a little stiff and straight.

Ben Benson as Brad was at his best impersonating Ben Stetson, an imaginary Texas oilman.

Bob Wyatt as Jonathan was natural on stage, with more presence than any other actor, but at times he did not project as well as he might have, probably because he was unsure of some lines.

OUTSTANDING in the character part of the gum-chewing Marie—one of Brad's young "lady friends"—was Peg Korpschot. One could almost see her in a line at the Con.

Mention must also be made of Mark Farrell (Pierot) whose "You wouldn't really have hit me?" is one of the best lines in the play. Best cast were Bessie (Jean Tucker) and, from a Princetonian point of view, the newing Harvardian Tony (Jim Halteman).

THE SETS were well thought out and painted, though the St. Regis might have had a chandelier and the outside drop could have stood some shadow outlining.

The lighting was uncomplimentary at times adequate. However, some actors forgot to step into the light in scenes lighted by "special spots."

Work on making the scene changes quicker and less noisy would have paid dividends, though lighting speed is admittedly difficult on stages with small wings and flies.

IT IS UNFORTUNATE that directors of amateur companies leave rehearsal of the last act un-

(See "PILLOW TALK," 8-D)



## Sterling Steel

Here last Friday for the opening of an exhibition of stainless steel jewelry she designed was Mary Scherr, Mrs. Scherr designed the jewelry (being shown at America House, 555 E. Maple, Birmingham, through Oct. 26) on a commission from U. S. Steel Corp. The strength of the steel makes possible designs not possible with other more frequently used materials. Gallery hours are from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesdays and Wednesdays and from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Mondays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

## All Lovers of Nature Will Love This Art!

Reviewed by KATHARINE SMITH

The work of two artists, Ms. A. W. Christ-Janer and Mr. Chen Chi, now being shown at the Jacobson Gallery through Oct. 31, appeals directly to the lover of nature.

No one who is moved to pleasure by the changing of the seasons can fail to be stirred by Chen Chi's beautiful evocations titled "Winter," "February," "Springtime" or "October." They are large transparent watercolors—often with a minor point of reference for the viewer who wants "reality."

IN "SPRINGTIME" this point is a tiny boat floating far below, but the painting is really concerned with the essence of spring light and pink flowering trees.

"Winter," also includes a small figure, but the quality of cold and snow is effected largely by the weight of a long, long, vertical expanse of white.

"October" is that arduous of gorgeous pink and scarlet leaves that, in real life, lose their beauty the minute you subtract them from their blue sky environment. Not so in Chen Chi's painting—here they will last indefinitely.

FOR SHEER virtuosity in the handling of watercolor, the signed reproductions of some of his earlier paintings are fascinating.

"Men Drinking" is a skilful row frize nearly three feet long—beautifully composed and executed.

"A Man" won the American Watercolor Society Prize for Watercolor of the Year in 1955. The subject here is a wall, scarred with fragments of posters, and one small man who could have been plucked from the skid row frize.

"SEARCHING" is a long vertical composition, meticulously painted from a limited palette, yet loaded with the emotional impact of big-city loneliness. The original of this painting is in the Metropolitan Museum in New York City.

In striking contrast is another long, vertical composition, "In the Opera Box," that glows with warm color and mysterious light.

Chen Chi gets a lot of effect from the use of unusual over-all shapes. A long vertical or horizontal painting may be four feet by 10 or 12 inches.

His painting of "February" is a perfect circle.

Add to this his irrefragable technique, his skilful use of the strengths of abstract painting, combined with a hint of story-telling and you have quite a combination.

His paintings have been bought by such notable collectors as Clare Booth Luce, Pearl Buck and Winthrop Rockefeller.

MR. CHRIST-JANER is also a painter of formidable technical skill. He is also an interpreter of the moods of nature, though perhaps his images are not as crystallized as Chen Chi's.



## They Like 'Living with Art'

Interest in the "Living with Art" exhibition at the Birmingham Art Center has been widespread and the number of gallery-goers higher than usual. Many groups have even chartered buses to see the show. Among the organizations viewing the exhibit last week, as part of the group's "Take Time to Appreciate Art" program, was Chapter CP of the PEO Sisterhood of Birmingham. Admiring

## Recital Will Be Her Debut

Carol Rosenberger, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. M. S. Rosenberger, 3460 Broadway, Bloomfield Village, will make her professional piano

debut in a recital at the Detroit Institute of Arts Nov. 1.

The concert, which has already been sold out, will be repeated Nov. 3.

The Nov. 1 performance will begin at 8:30 p.m.; the Nov. 3 one at 3 p.m.



CAROL ROSENBERGER

MISS ROSENBERGER, a graduate of Kingswood, has performed in this area since she was eight years old. She studied here with the late Edward Bredahl.

Later, at Carnegie Institute of Technology, she studied under Webster Aitken, during which time she received several awards including the Steinway Centennial Award.

Following college she spent a season at Fontainebleau, studying privately with Nadia Boulanger. After this she went on to Vienna, attending the Vienna Music Academy.

Since her return to the United States, she has pursued her musical activities on the West Coast.

Following her debut here she will return to Europe for a series of concerts which will take her to Scandinavia, Holland, Austria and Greece.

## 3 Birmingham Boys Get Scholarships To Cranbrook School

Three young men from Birmingham have been awarded scholarships to Cranbrook School for Boys.

The three are Peter Elliott, son of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Elliott, 428 W. Lincoln; Robert Heaverich, son of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Heaverich, 815 Ridgedale; and Dale Bosley, son of Mr. and Mrs. Earl L. Bosley, 575 Pilgrim.

Elliott received the Dawson Beatty Brown scholarship; Heaverich, the Ruth Air Klein scholarship and Bosley, the Class of 1940 Memorial Scholarship.

especially created for sports, travel and outdoor events!

WOOL PLAID  
PAK-A-ROBE  
in heavy vinyl case  
with built-in foam cushion

Great warm-up for stadiums, autumn sleek  
roasts, outdoor partying any time of the year... a generous size  
50"x70" fringed pak-a-robe of molproofed wool, closely woven  
for the toughest wear without shedding or pilling. Added bonus:  
the convenient tote-case with built-in foam cushion for bleacher  
sitting comfort. Brilliant red or green plaids. 12.98

Jacobson's  
Home Decorative  
225 N. Woodward, Birmingham

2 Hours Free Parking.  
Have Your Ticket Validated  
When You Make a Purchase  
at Jacobson's