

(BP)---FEATURES

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Versatile Composer Unveils
New Religious Operatic Work

By John D. Carter

DALLAS (BP)--Don Gillis did everything but sell popcorn.

The former NBC radio executive, now chairman of the arts division at Dallas Baptist College, delegated few responsibilities in the recent world premiere of his religious opera, "The Nazarene."

Gillis wrote the original story, libretto, score and arrangement for the production and then, as chairman of the Dallas Baptist College Cultural Arts Festival, handled promotion, publicity and helped round up talented people to work on and off stage for the premiere performance.

Starring in the opera were four talented singers from the Southwest: William Pickett, Anne Criswell (daughter of Southern Baptist Convention President W. A. Criswell of Dallas), Andrew White and Christine Palmer. Leading the orchestra and chorus was A. Clyde Roller, associate conductor of the Houston Symphony Orchestra.

"The Nazarene" centers around the resurrection morning, as tragedy turns to triumph and the followers of Jesus gradually shake off their grief and see the dawning of hope. Often poignant, occasionally light-hearted, but eventually triumphant, the opera reflects the many hours of research by the author to lend authenticity to his plot.

This production was the feature event in Dallas Baptist College's first festival venture. Theme for the festival was "The Arts in Texas--And Texas in the Arts."

Festival Chairman Gillis is a renowned composer of popular symphonic, chamber music and opera. His works have been performed by Arturo Toscanini, Sir John Barbirolli, Victor Alessandro and Leonard Bernstein.

He has been guest conductor of the Baltimore, San Antonio and Atlanta Symphony Orchestras.

For 10 years, Gillis was producer for Arturo Toscanini, later writing and producing the NBC radio series "Toscanini--Man Behind the Legend."

Prior to his association with Dallas Baptist College, his faculty posts have been with Southern Methodist and Texas Christian Universities, the latter awarding him an honorary doctorate.

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John D. Carter is press representative for the Baptist General Convention of Texas public relations department, and is a staff writer for the Baptist Press Regional Office in Dallas.

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General Baptists Feel Results
Of Crusade of the Americas

POPLAR BLUFF, MO. (BP)--The effects of the Crusade of the Americas have begun to be felt among churches affiliated with the General Association of General Baptists, the executive secretary of the association and the editor of its national paper reported here.

Kenneth R. Kennedy, top executive of the 65,000-member denomination, said that one crusade ended in Southeast Missouri with a total of 390 decisions. "We praise God for this."

Edwin Runyon, editor of the General Baptist Messengers, reported details of the crusade, saying it started at the Idalia Baptist Church near Bloomfield, Mo., when a high school senior spoke at youth services. Because of the interest and response, the student was asked to continue to speak each night as long as interest justified.

At the end of one week, 198 persons has made decisions for Christ, and the size of the crowd had grown so large that the services were moved to the Second General Baptist Church in the neighboring town of Dexter, Mo. At the end of another week, nearly 200 additional decisions had been made.

A neighboring rural church, near Bernie, Mo., reported 10 decisions during the first week of a crusade, again with a high school student doing the speaking.

Runyan said the decisions have come largely, but not entirely from high school age young people, and in each instance, the young people have been very active participants. "It is clearly a matter of young Christians being able to communicate with their own age group," he said.

Kennedy, in a letter to Crusade of the Americas North American Coordinator Wayne Dehoney of Louisville, wrote: "Thank you for inviting General Baptists two years ago to be a part of the Crusade of the Americas."

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Young Evangelist Named
Radio Show Commentator

(4/22/69)

FORT WORTH (BP)--A 22-year-old evangelist and associate pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Del City, Okla., Richard Hogue, has been named commentator and ministerial consultant for "PowerLine," a new contemporary rock music radio show for teenagers.

Hogue, a senior at Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee, Okla., was named to the post by officials of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission here which produces the radio program now being carried by 38 "top-40" rock stations.

The "PowerLine" show features 30 minutes of top rock music each week, along with messages for contemporary living. Hogue will do brief vignettes of 15 seconds to 1½ minutes in length.

Hogue's role will be to comment on the lyrics of the rock music, and to translate these lyrics into positive thought and relate them to modern teen life, said Claude Cox, producer of "PowerLine" for the SBC Radio-TV Commission. Cox added that many of the prominent rock tunes have a solid message, some actually founded on Biblical teachings.

"PowerLine" is now being carried by stations in such cities as San Francisco, Denver, Pittsburg, Cleveland, Houston and Fort Worth, and new stations are being added at a rate of about five per week, Cox said.

Although the program has been on the air only seven weeks even with the first few stations to accept it, response letters asking for reprints of the vignettes or help with personal problems have been coming in at a rate of 10 to 20 per week, Cox said.

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