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## Features

**You're out!**  
It's a growing trend in baseball stadiums nationwide

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By ERIN AUERBACH / The Press-Enterprise

When the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim take the field Tuesday for opening day, fans may notice something different.

The team's name isn't the only change. Peggy Duquesnel, organist for the team since 1998, has been laid off to make room for more canned music, videos and corporate sponsorship.

"I always played on opening day," Duquesnel said. "Often times someone would sing 'God Bless America' or 'America the Beautiful' and I'd accompany them ... then I would play a pre-game set."

Her dismissal reflects a growing trend in baseball stadiums nationwide: the death of live organ music. The San Diego Padres stopped using it in 1998, opting for pre-recorded bits and music videos. While the Los Angeles Dodgers still have Nancy Bea Hefley at every home game, she spends a lot more time sitting quietly than she used to.

"As a musician, you don't like to see it happening," Hefley said by phone. "But it's no different than offices being downsized because of computers taking over jobs. At first it bothered me, and it bothers my husband more than me. I finally had to sit him down and say that I had to go with the flow."

Duquesnel played a wide repertoire of music from patriotic songs to jazz standards such as "In the Mood" to classic rock such as "Brown-Eyed Girl" and "Ticket to Ride." She played "We're Talkin' Baseball" for the player lineups and "Jump Jive and Wail." She played Nat King Cole and The Beatles. She also played popular Christian contemporary crossover songs such as "I Can Only Imagine."

"In recent years, I added more Latin type things like 'Girl from Ipanema,' bossa nova songs and Santana's 'Evil Ways,'" she said. "I just gave them a lot of variety."

Angels' representatives say it's time to take game entertainment in a new direction.

"We're going to a different approach in our presentation," Tim Mead, vice president of communication for the Angels, said by phone. "We're not using the organ quite as much. There may be some taped organ music sometime."

The decision to terminate Duquesnel's employment was strictly a change in direction, not a financial matter, Mead said.

"We did away with mascots four of five years ago for the same reason," he said. "The presentation has changed."

Duquesnel remembers it differently.

"When (entertainment director) Peter Bull talked to me in January, he told me that I was being let go because of budget and real estate," she said. "They wanted to use the organ booth for something else ... I think for (operating) the geysers and neon signs."

Hefley, who begins her 18th season with the Dodgers, occasionally substituted for Duquesnel at Angels' games. When she heard about the decision, she called Bull, who told her that the budget was the reason they were cutting live music.

Duquesnel was originally brought on board when Disney still owned the team. She played for the Mighty Ducks from 1993 to 1997.

"The Angels didn't have an organ player in 1997 and a lot of fans complained, so Disney asked me to audition," Duquesnel said.

An organ will remain at Angel Stadium of Anaheim in case it's needed for special events, and Mead said that Duquesnel was told that she might be asked to play.

"I want to keep the door open and would be happy to play for these events," she said.

Erik Meyer, director of entertainment for the San Diego Padres, said that computer technology allows their DJ to pull from pre-recorded organ music when necessary, such as for rallies, fanfare, stingers (on a third out), and the seventh inning stretch.

"The decision was made (to not use live accompaniment) before I was in this position," Meyer said by phone. "So I couldn't speak to why the decision was made, but it's pretty easy to do it without a live person."

While organ music still has its place in baseball, Meyer sees game entertainment veering more toward video and popular music.

"Now you've got more sponsorships," Mead said. "We have commercials and a lot of videos and we have the best (multimedia) board. ... The organ has its spot in baseball, but it's been altered."

Hefley, whose organ used to provide most of the music for the games, has seen her time reduced to an abbreviated pre-game show, an early inning and the seventh inning stretch.

"When I questioned it (playing cuts) they said they wanted to go toward the younger fans and play newer music..." she said. "And yet I get young people coming up to me and saying, 'I wish you would play more.'"

Duquesnel saw the same changes in her playing time over the last few years as well. She will return to Angel Stadium of Anaheim on April 17, but not for a game. She'll play for Saddleback Church's 25th anniversary celebration.

She continues to write and record music.

"To me live music is very valuable and organ music is a staple of baseball. And the kids get excited about it," she said. "You want kids to learn it's special to hear live music. That's what's sad to me. The tradition shouldn't have to die."

Reach Erin Auerbach at (951) 368-9599 or eauerbach@pe.com



Paul Alvarez / The Press-Enterprise  
Peggy Duquesnel, organist for the Angels baseball team since 1998, is being replaced with commercials and canned music.

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