

# The WINDSHEET



Newsletter of the NOR-CAL THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY  
 PO Box 27238, Oakland, California 94602-0438 510/644-2707

[www.theatreorgans.com/norcal](http://www.theatreorgans.com/norcal)

March 2004

**CHRIS GORSUCH**



**SUNDAY, 14 MARCH - 2:30 PM  
 BERKELEY'S COMMUNITY THEATRE**

Chris Gorsuch began formal studies on the organ at age fourteen. He was soon playing for several different churches in his hometown of Springfield, Ohio. At the age of twenty, Chris moved to San Diego, California to take a staff position with Organ Power Pizza restaurants equipped with theatre pipe organs. One of the instruments that Chris played was the famed five manual Reginald

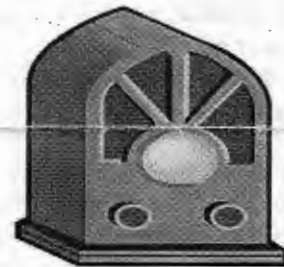
Foort Travelling Moller Theatre Pipe Organ, now installed at the Pasadena Civic Center. While playing for the restaurant, Chris became a student of Lyn Larsen. Chris gained invaluable knowledge from Lyn in the areas of registration and phrasing. Many musicians have contributed their influence to Chris' musical style. Music of the Big Band era is a particular favorite, as well as

classical, jazz and the music of the 20's and 30's.

Chris has a fascination with electronics. In 1979, he formed his own company with the purpose of designing and manufacturing electronic systems for pipe and electronic organs. The company has created many new and innovative products including digitally sampled sounds and computer software.

Chris is a competent pipe voicer and tonal finisher. He feels as much at home in a pipe organ chamber as he does on the bench playing the finished product. He is the tonal finisher of several major instruments in the United States.

Developing new arrangements, concertizing, recording, improving the sounds of both electronic and pipe organs, and running a business make for a very interesting life. In all of this, Chris has demonstrated a remarkable capacity to strive for excellence in a demanding profession.



**RADIO ORGANISTS**

Leon Fletcher

At least fifty-six organists provided music for radio stations and their programs, according to an online listing by Harry Heth, former president of ATOS, and by the ATOS. You probably remember at least some of the organists named in this sampling:

Federal Employer Identification Number 23-741594-7 • State Charitable Trust No. CT 45966 • State Organization Number D-072 6636 NT20S M12

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**Charles Paul** was apparently the most prolific, having played organ for at least twelve programs. His shows included the mysterious "The Shadow," The optimistic "A Brighter Tomorrow," and the action-packed "Behind the Front Page."

**Gaylord Carter** seemed to be almost as busy on radio, having played organ for at least eleven programs. Perhaps most famous and long-running was "Amos N' Andy." But Gaylord also played for such diverse programs as "The Big Payoff" and "Phantom of the Opera."

**Rosa Rio** was another busy organist, who also played for some eleven shows. They included "Between the Bookends," "Cavalcade of America," and "Court of Missing Heirs."

**Del Castillo** played for "Affairs of Ann Scotland," "Skippy Hollywood Theater," "Tell It Again," and others.

**Paul Carson** was widely known as a leading San Francisco area organist, played for the radio show "One Man's Family." That program was on the air for 27 years, the longest non-interrupted run of any radio serial. Paul wrote the show's theme song, "Patricia." He also played for the dramas "Bridge to Dreamland" and "I Love a Mystery."

**Lee Erwin** played for several leading radio shows, including "Arthur Godfrey Time," "The Barbasol Man," and "Singin' Sam." He was also on the staff of WCKY, which is now an all-sports station proclaiming itself to be "The Sports Animal."

**Station Staffers**—Among the radio stations that had staff organists was WCFL, Chicago: **Al Carney** had that position for years. The station claims it was the first and longest-running station broadcasting for union labor. That was from 1926 to 1978; now that station focuses on religious programming.

**Marian Payne Louisfell** was resident organist for WCOU, New York. Organists for WGN, Chicago, included **Howard Peterson**, **Len Salvo**, **Preston Sellers**, and **Harold Turner**. Organists **Mildred Fitzpatrick** and **Freddie Hause** were staff organists for WBBM, another Chicago radio station.

**Fred Beck** and **Harry Zimmerman** were staff organists for the Chicago radio station WJJD. The slogan of that station: "The home of the

Western gentleman." After 73 years of operating, it went off the air in 1997. In 2003 it began broadcasting again, in Tallahassee, playing gospel, country, and nostalgic hits. In the words of some of its promotional material, the station is now a "replicated version ... a nonprofit endeavor to preserve radio history."

**Korla Pandit**, who played for the radio show "Chandu the Magician." When TV came along, he became one of the early stars. He had his own programs of mystical organ music. But do you know Korla's real name, and his actual background? For more about him, see the next edition of "Windsheet."

Till then, for more info about radio organists, go to [http://atos.stirlingprop.com/kbase/radio\\_organists.htm](http://atos.stirlingprop.com/kbase/radio_organists.htm).

[*Publisher's Note*—Leon did a wonderful summary of the National Radio scene. Locally a very important artist to Theatre Organs on radio was **Richard Purvis** the esteemed Organist/Composer who presided over the 5 manual, 135 rank Aeolian-Skinner at San Francisco's Grace Cathedral. Purvis, under the pseudonym of **Don Irving**, presented weekly radio programs of Theatre Organ music from the The Chapel of the Chimes in Oakland in the 40s and 50s. The organ, a composite Wurlitzer/Moller still exists, but is unplayable at present. *fel*]

## FEBRUARY CONCERT REVIEW

(I was delighted when Dean Cook, "Ace 'Cub' Reporter" and our artist at Berkeley for the December club concert, submitted this review of Jelani's recent public concert for Nor-Cal—*Ed.*)

For Nor-Cal's public concert on Sunday, Feb. 22, Bay Area lovers of fine music were treated to an outstanding programme of popular, orchestral, and pure Theatre Organ music on Nor-Cal's 4/35 Wurlitzer Unit Orchestra, piloted by **Jelani Eddington**. Things got off to a rollicking start with a Gershwin console-riser, *Of Thee I Sing*, with Jelani showing his rock-steady rhythm. *Wake Up & Live* followed, and the artist scored again with his inclusion of the seldom-heard verse. A new song for

the reviewer, *Like Someone In Love*, featured very attractive phrasing, with a 'jazz' chorus played with impeccable meter. This guy can Swing! *Fiddle Faddle* has run the risk of becoming a chestnut, but Jelani's flawless technique and original approach made the tune fresh. *South Pacific* was up next, and it's clear that Mr. Eddington has very closely studied orchestral arranging, as this arrangement could serve as a complete overture. There was great 2<sup>nd</sup> touch technique here, resulting in a spontaneous burst of applause...before the medley was half over! A soft, beautiful *Stars Fell On Alabama* was followed by another overture transcription, *William Tell*, finishing the first half.

A bit o' Berlin started the second half, *Let's Face the Music & Dance*. Two relatively little-known composers were next presented, Morton Gould's *Pavane*, and Kurt Weill's *My Ship*. All true music lovers were next treated to what can only be described as a Musical Happening. Jelani's transcription of Borodin's *Polovitsian Dances*, displaying the most thorough orchestral arranging since John Seng's *Nutcracker Suite*, or Lew Williams' *Rhapsody in Blue*. Not only was the combination action given a workout, but manual jumping, double pedaling, and astounding 2<sup>nd</sup> touch technique produced a performance of a calibre rarely noted in live performances. A lovely, a-tempo *Over the Rainbow* fronted a snappy *Give Me the Simple Life*, and *Fantasia Impromptu* 'closed' the concert. Audience demand brought Jelani back for three encores, Billy Joel's *Root Beer Rag*, a *Tico Tico* that owed nothing to a famous Ethel (Smith), and finally some relaxing *Dizzy Fingers!*

Advertising by Nor-Cal ensured a good turnout for what turned out to be a really first-class presentation on a world-class instrument.

Contributions—We thank and acknowledge **Wm. O. Schlotter** and **Donald R. Burford** for their recent donations which will help to perpetuate theatre organ preservation and presentation in the Bay Area.

**E**ditor's Notes—We are happy to receive contributions to this publication to share with Nor-Cal. Special thanks to Dean Cook for his perceptive review of Jelani's performance of February 22.

**N**ext Windsheet Deadline: April 2<sup>nd</sup>—I will be out of town when putting together this issue, and will be working only via computer and telephone to receive items and prepare the next issue. Contact me: by email [bshiple1@atmc.net](mailto:bshiple1@atmc.net), by phone (650) 968-3290, or by US mail 1734-9 W. El Camino, Mountain View 94040.

*Bob*

**O**pen Console for members will be held Sunday, March 7 from 1 to 5 PM at the Berkeley Community Theatre. Call the Nor-Cal voice mail at (510) 644-2707 on Sunday morning to confirm theatre availability. If there will be Open Console, enter via the back stage door at 1930 Allston Way.

**B**oard Meeting Highlights—From the minutes of the February 10 board meeting we note: Nor-Cal's retained profit from the 2003 convention was \$29,326.42...**Gordon Pratt** has suggested a chapter E-Tones group that would have monthly meetings in members' homes. It would operate somewhat like the electronic organ clubs...Chairman Don Siefert is still looking for interested members to form a committee to recommend improvements in the Annual Meeting format and timing to attract better attendance...**Bill Schlotter** reported that work on the BCT building is being considered which may cut off our access to the organ for maybe a year. He also noted that the new computer controlling the instrument is installed and operational.

## FUTURE BOARD MEETINGS

**April 13** - Neal Wood (ph415-861-7082)

**June 8** - Don Siefert

**A**ll members are encouraged to attend. Please contact the meeting host so that there can be sufficient chairs and refreshments.

## APRIL 17 MORTON MADNESS with JONAS NORDWALL



Hartzell's 'Blue Barn', Lodi (above)—(and) Ironstone Vineyards, Murphys

§

Two concerts plus buffet dinner

§

First Concert starts at 1:00 PM.

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**T**ickets are \$40 (outside seating at Lodi) or \$45 (inside seating at Lodi) for the whole shebang. Order soon from Jack O'Neill (address on Page 1) to receive your package including tickets, maps and driving directions.

**T**his is the 10<sup>th</sup> Morton Madness—an outstanding artist, and this gives us chance to socialize with Sierra chapter members.

## OTHER FUTURE EVENTS

### NOR-CAL TOS EVENTS

#### Berkeley Public Concerts

Chris Gorsuch - March 14

Walter Strony - May 9

#### Morton Madness

Jonas Nordwall - April 17

### OTHER CHAPTERS' EVENTS

#### Sierra Chapter

**1929 Douglas Fairbanks silent *The Iron Mask***, Towe Auto Museum, Sacramento, Friday, 12 March at 8 PM—Tickets \$10—See further info. below.

### S' Louis Chapter

'Meet me in Saint Louis' weekend - March 19-22 <[www.sltos.org](http://www.sltos.org)>

### Atlanta Chapter

'Fabulous Fox Weekend' – an ATOS Regional convention in Atlanta: May 28-30

<[www.theatreorgans.com/atlanta](http://www.theatreorgans.com/atlanta)>

### ATOS Convention in Milwaukee,

July 1-7 (dates include pre-glow and after-glow) <[www.atos.org](http://www.atos.org)>

### Valley of the Sun Chapter (Phoenix)

'Desert Winds featuring the Magnificent Seven' event.

November 26-28. Info: <<http://www.bargainsail.com/desertwinds/>

[dwframeset.htm](http://www.bargainsail.com/desertwinds/dwframeset.htm)>

or call Don and Leota Reasor 623-877-0635

### OTHER VENUES

**Arlington Theatre**, 4/27 Robert-Morton, 1317 State St., Santa Barbara, CA. (805) 692-0939

**Bay Theatre**, 4/54 Wurlitzer, Pacific Coast Hwy. and Main St. Seal Beach, CA. (562) 431-9988.

<[www.baytheatre.com](http://www.baytheatre.com)>

**Castro Theatre**, 4/22 Wurlitzer, 429 Castro, SF, CA. Intermission music played daily by **David Hegarty** or **Warren Lubich**. (415) 621-6120

<[www.castrotheatre.com](http://www.castrotheatre.com)>

**El Capitan Theatre**, 4/37 Wurlitzer 6338 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood, CA. **Rob Richards, John Ledwon**

& **Ed Vodicka** play preview music 30 minutes prior to film. (800) 347-6396

<[www.elcapitantickets.com](http://www.elcapitantickets.com)>

**Grand Lake Theatre**, 3/18 Wurlitzer, 3200 Grand Ave., Oakland, CA. Intermission music: **Warren Lubich**

(Fridays) & **Kevin King** (Saturdays) (510) 452-3556

<[www.renaissancerialto.com](http://www.renaissancerialto.com)>

**Nethercutt Collection**, 4/74 Wurlitzer, 15200 Bledsoe St., Sylmar, CA. Concerts are free, but reservations are required. **Jelani Eddington** performs

June 18 at 8PM, June 19 at 2PM and 8PM. Reservations taken starting 9AM on May 18. Phone (818) 367-2251

<[www.nethercuttcollection.org](http://www.nethercuttcollection.org)>

Old Town Music Hall, 4/26 Wurlitzer,  
Check website for details and events.  
(310) 322-2592 <www.otmh.org>

Paramount Theatre, 4/26 Wurlitzer,  
2025 Broadway, Oakland. Public tours  
on first and third Saturdays of month at  
10AM. (510) 465-6400  
<www.paramounttheatre.com>

Towe Auto Museum  
3/15 Wurlitzer, 2200 Front St.,  
Sacramento, CA. Free Sunday concerts  
with Museum admission (exception,  
Sierra Chapter concerts.) March 21 -  
Jim Brown, April 18 - Bert Kuntz, May  
16 - Dave Sauer--all at 2PM.

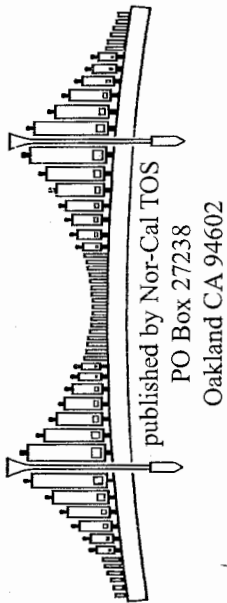
## BAY AREA GOURMET MEALS

**Angelino's Restaurant,**  
3/13 Wurlitzer, 3132 Williams Rd., San  
Jose. **Dean Cook** Thursday-Sunday.  
**Note:** *The Wurlitzer has a temporary  
problem. An electronic organ will be  
substituted in the interim.* Call Dean  
Cook (408) 629-5265 for the latest  
info.

**Bella Roma Pizza**  
3/16 Wurlitzer, 4040 Alhambra Rd.,  
Martinez, CA. **Dave Moreno**, Tue.,  
Wed, Sat.; **Bob Reichert**, Thu. & Fri.;  
**Kevin King**, Sun. (925) 228-4935

**New Member**—We wel-  
come **Larry D. Narietta**  
of Berkeley to the ranks.

The WINDSHEET



## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

### NOR-CAL THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY, Inc.

*A Chapter of the American Theatre Organ Society*



ATOS is dedicated to promoting the tradition of the theatre pipe organ and public understanding and appreciation of the instrument and its music, and shall aid in any way possible the preservation of theatre organs through rehabilitation of instruments and fostering the arts of playing, building, voicing and maintenance. If you would like to join us, please write or call:

**Mr. John O'Neill at (510) 632-9177, PO Box 27238, Oakland, California 94602-0438.**

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Your Spouse's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Dues are \$40 National ATOS and \$20 Nor-Cal (\$60 total) per year. Spouse and children living at home may be included in your membership. We hope you will join us to help preserve and enjoy these great instruments.