Walt Strony has been a performer who has continued to entertain the theatre organ audience with new and satisfying approaches to arranging music for an increasingly sophisticated audience. Styles change, and so does Walt’s selection of pieces to perform and the way he presents them on the organ in concert. What you will hear in concert now will not be the same as what you would have heard a few years previously. That’s one sign that this artist, who has now been appearing in public theatre organ venues for thirty years, will be a vital performer now and in the future.

Walt is well known for his many recordings, such as his first CD, “Phoenix”, that was rated 10/10 by CD Review—the highest rating given by this prestigious publication. Others of his recordings have received similar acclaim in Theatre Organ, Keyboard World, and Cinema Organ—He recently completed his 25th recording.

As an author, he is well known in theatre organ circles for his book “The Secrets Of Theatre Organ Registration”, which has already become the standard reference book on the subject.

Going way back, Walter Strony was born in Chicago in 1955, and began music lessons at the age of seven. He studied theatre organ under the famous Chicago organist Al Melgard, who for many years was the Staff Organist at the Chicago Stadium. His classical studies were with Herbert L. White and Karel Paukert.

After living in the Phoenix area for 22 years, Mr. Strony relocated to Las Vegas, Nevada in 1999. He was organist at Roxy’s Pipe Organ Pizzeria in the Fiesta Casino, Las Vegas during its entire run, and is currently organist at First Christian Church, Las Vegas.
COMMENTS ON MORTON MADNESS X—SATURDAY APRIL 17, 2004

The Woodworths agreed that this had been a great event and what follows are their selective notes on this year’s Morton Madness.

As we approached Bob and Linda Hartzell’s blue barn and Harmony Wynelands, we were greeted by the sight of their lovely rose garden, which was then bursting into full bloom. With the fluffy clouds in the sky, we were put in a beautiful mood for a day’s worth of music.

Bill Schlotter thanked Dave Moreno for all the TLC he gives to the Hartzell and Kautz Robert Morton pipe organs, as well as numerous other pipe organs throughout northern California. Bob Hartzell then gave an update on the exciting Stockton Fox project.

Jonas was introduced and proved to be in fine form: a hard-driving boogie-woogie version of “Big Bad Leroy Brown” opened, followed by a Hawaiian medley, which included “Tiny Bubbles”, “Aloha Oe”, “Little Grass Shack”, “Hawaiian Wedding Song”, and “Hawaiian War Chant.”

“Veradero” was played true to George Wright’s arrangement. Then a quiet and lovely “Smoke Gets in Your Eyes.” As is the blue barn custom, the final number was a patriotic medley—“National Emblem March”, “American Patrol”, “Columbia the Gem of the Ocean”, “Stars and Stripes Forever,” with the audience joining in the song “God Bless America.”

Driving through the beautiful green of the Sierra foothills to Murphys, we arrived at Kautz’s Ironstone Vineyards, our second venue, where container after container of tulips were blooming in every imaginable color. After exploring the grounds and enjoying wire tasting, we feasted on a delicious dinner (cheese blintzes for dessert). Craig Peterson of Sierra Chapter then re-introduced Jonas.

Opening with “Beer Barrel Polka”, Jonas then adopted a smoky bluesy registration, for a gentle playing of “Sentimental Journey”, followed by an up-tempo “Waltz In Swing Time.” Next came themes by John Williams from the movie Harry Potter, including “Hedwig’s Theme” and “Harry’s Wonderful World.” “Love for Sale” was in the style of George’s x-rated production, which we all love to hear. Jonas referred to his medley from Fiddler on the Roof as “wedding music,” since “Sunrise, Sunset” is often requested when he plays for weddings. This followed by “Matchmaker, Matchmaker”, “If I Were a Rich Man”, “Sunrise, Sunset”, and “Fiddler on the Roof.”

Billy Joel’s “Root Beer Rag,” a real knuckle-buster, Jonas pulled off with style and precision. Descending blues motifs first in the solo, then in the main, and then on the grand piano led into “The Stripper”. A slightly different and very delicious take on this number.

For the second half, Jonas led off with a rousing “76 Trombones.” As a contrast, he next played J. S. Bach’s “Fugue in G Minor,” followed by a medley of three Andrew Lloyd Webber songs: “I Don’t Know How to Love Him” from Jesus Christ Superstar, “Memory” from Cats, and “Music of the Night” from Phantom of the Opera. From this accordion-playing youth, Jonas offered a spectacular accordion solo, a fast pas-doble by Pietro Frossini called “Jolly Caballero.”

Jonas then asked we avoid thoughts of Warner Brothers cartoons, radio programs, etc., for the overture from Rossini’s opera, William Tell was his concluding selection. It proved to be an outstanding and thoroughly satisfying transcription. Jonas, as an encore, played “Colonel Bogey March.”

We are definitely looking forward to next year’s Morton Madness. This is the tenth such joint effort of Nor-Cal and Sierra Chapters. Lunch time at Hartzell’s, and the time before and after dinner at Kautz’s, gave us ample time to renew old friendships and make new ones, as a dozen or more of the attendees were from other chapters.

Contributions from Art and Evelyn Woodworth, and Frank and Jan La Pietra.

Open Console for members will be held on both Sunday, May 2 and Sunday, May 23 from 1-5PM at the Berkeley Community Theatre. In addition, June 13 is tentatively scheduled. IMPORTANT: Call the Nor-Cal voice mail at (510) 644-2707 on Sunday morning to confirm theater availability. If there will be Open Console that day, enter via the back stage door at 1930 Allston Way.

Bob Shipley
Editor

We are happy to receive contributions to this publication to share with Nor-Cal. Next Windsheet Deadline: June 3. Contact me: by email bshipley1@alum.net, by phone (650) 968-3290, or by US mail 1734-9 W. El Camino, Mountain View 94040.

Bob

Future Board Meeting—June 8 at Don Sieffert’s, 1129 Augusta Poinsett Court, Ripon, CA 95366 Phone 209-299-7140. All members are encouraged to attend. Please contact the meeting to ensure that there can be sufficient chairs and refreshments.

May 2004
Watery Organ

While Nor-Cal certainly has some mighty big names playing its organ, there’s another organ in the area that’s played by a still bigger name—played by the San Francisco Bay itself.

It’s the Wave Organ—a “unique artifact, part musical instrument, part environmental sculpture,” according to writer James H. H. Lampert of Fountain Valley, CA, a self-proclaimed “organ geek.”

Certainly the Wave Organ is no theater pipe organ; but then, no theater pipe organ is a Wave Organ.

How It Works

The Wave Organ has 25 pipes, positioned vertically. One end of each pipe is submerged into the bay, the other end sticks out above ground, about three feet.

The pipes are made of PVC—Polyvinyl Chloride—the piping used extensively for in-the-ground watering systems. The Wave Organ pipes are covered with rough-finished cement; they look much like periscopes. The entire site looks like a pile of stone and cement debris.

“Sound is created by the impact of waves against the pipe ends and the subsequent movement of the water in and out of the pipes,” says Peter Richards, an “Artist in Residence” at the San Francisco hands-on museum, “Exploratorium.” Richards was a leader in designing and installing the organ, and now maintains it.

There’s of course more “music”—sound—coming from the organ when the bay is rough. Yet even on calm days, this organ keeps playing. It sounds best at high tide.

“The Wave Organ’s music is a symphony of land and sea, complex, subtle, powerful, hypnotic,” wrote one unidentified listener. Others have described the sound as “gurgling” or like “breathing” or “a toilet flushing.” Then there’s the visitor who said the sounds “range from subtly soothing to downright rude!”

In the midst of the pipes are seats on which you can relax to listen to the “concert.” Or, if you like your organ in stereo, there’s a booth you can duck into, sit on the wooden bench, and hear the pipes giving out sounds from three sides.

Sometimes the “music” is hard to hear, but if you get close to a pipe, you can hear. Some observers think the reduced sound may result from sand, seaweed, and other debris restricting or obstructing the pipe.

Getting There

Drive out San Francisco’s Marina Boulevard toward the Golden Gate Bridge. At the corner where signs show that you can drive straight ahead on to Crissy Field, or you can bend left to get on an approach to the Golden Gate Bridge, turn right. Drive through the parking lot, past the St. Francis Yacht Club on your left, the boat harbor on your right. Further on is another parking lot. Park.

Walk a block or so out the jelly. You’ll pass, on your right, a gray building prominently marked as the Golden Gate Yacht Club. The Wave Organ is some 300 feet beyond.

Reportedly the waters around the organ are good for crabbing and fishing. And the site is a truly great spot for sightseeing—you can see a broad sweep of most of the entire San Francisco bay area.

Publisher’s Note

I will be away to go to Atlanta’s Fabulous Fox Weekend. On my return, Jan and I leave for Oregon to pickup our new Golden Retriever puppy. The next Windsheet will thus come out in late June. Frank LaFetra

Windsheet
MARK YOUR CALENDAR
Maybe the ONLY Notice for Saturday June 12 Meeting! (see Page 3)

Nor-Cal’s Kevin King will present a concert for us at the Bella Roma, 4040 Alhambra Rd., just off Hwy 4 in Martinez with Kevin’s concert starting at 1 PM.

Doors open at noon, and, as always, the owners appreciate our coming for lunch to show our appreciation for their hospitality.

Kevin advises that afterwards, time permitting, he will have Open Console.

Other Venues Coming Events


Grant Union High School, 1400 Grand Avenue, Sacramento. Sunday, May 2 - 1:00 PM Tom Thompson plays the Grant Union George Wright Memorial Theatre Pipe Organ. Tickets $8 at the door.

Other Local Venues


Grand Lake Theatre—3/18 Wurlitzer, 3200 Grand Ave., Oakland, CA. Intermission music: Warren Lubich (Fridays) & Kevin King (Saturdays) (510) 452-3556 <www.renaissancealto.com>