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# The WINDSHEET



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

www.theatreorgans.com/norcal

June 2004

**Kevin King**  
**Saturday 12 June**  
**The Bella Roma**  
**4040 Alhambra Road**  
**Martinez**  
**Doors open for LUNCH**  
**at NOON**  
**Program at 1 PM**



re-specified and upgraded the Wurlitzer installed at Oakland's Grand Lake Theatre, and now serves as Nor-Cal vice chairman and Board member. He is the Senior Staff Organist at the console of the Wurlitzer at the Bella Roma restaurant, and is happy to host us to a concert as we enjoy a fine meal. Depending on the time, following his performance, club members with an interest may enjoy short open console.

So come early—doors open at noon, partake of the fine food and socialize with other club members as you enjoy your meal.

The Bella Roma is a few short blocks north on Alhambra from the interchange with Highway 4 in Martinez. To get to this stretch of Highway 4, from Interstate 80, head East from the Highway 4 interchange, or head West from the Highway 4 exit on Interstate 680.

dates and details about his life, but there's general agreement on most of the essentials.

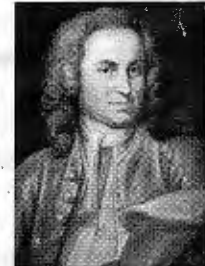
He was born on March 21, 1685, in Eisenach, Germany. More than one source says, "He came from a musical family." But that's certainly an understatement: during the 300 years before he was born, his family included more than 53 professional musicians.

His father—"a talented violinist" according to one article, a "town and court musician" says another—taught Bach to play string instruments.

When Bach was 9 years old, his mother died; when he was 10, his father died. He moved into the home of his brother, 24 year old Johann Chrisoph, a church organist who tutored him on playing organ.

## The Masters' Master

by Leon Fletcher



Johann Sebastian Bach

Kevin King is one of the stand-out members of our chapter. He is an approachable man who has developed quite well as a theatre organ artist. He helped with the original work of installing the BCT Wurlitzer, acquiring important skills as an organ technician enhancing the excellence of the BCT instrument. He acquired ownership,

Many say he's "the greatest composer in musical history." Others take him down a peg and call him but "one of the greatest composers." Yet whatever title is bestowed on Johann Sebastian Bach, most agree that he's immortal in classical organ music.

Bach biographers differ on some

Bach was first employed when he was 18—as a "lackey and violinist" in a court orchestra in Weimar. From then on, he quickly progressed upwards in the musical world. He became organist at various churches and then, at age 29, he was promoted to being a *Kapellmeister*—a director of music.

He held such a position, at various churches, for most of the rest of his

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life. But he often disagreed—often vehemently—with what he considered to be the low musical standards of his employers and of his fellow musicians. That resulted in his being fired from some assignments, leaving others on his own initiative.

He wrote in every musical genre of his day, except opera. One listing of his compositions names 374 selections for organ alone.

He was indeed prolific: he wrote more than 1,000 compositions which survived him. And he fathered 20 children.

Bach reportedly said, “Anyone who studied and practiced with sufficient diligence could (write music of the same level as he did).”

Some hear and see a connection between Bach’s music and mathematical devices. An unnamed online writer says, “Bach indeed seemed to enjoy strewing his works with special complicated technical tricks and he rapidly acquired an unfortunate reputation for being the ‘Master Nerd of All Music.’”

When Bach was testing a new organ made by “Master Organ Builder” Gottfried Silbermann, he was warned about a quirk in the organ. Bach’s reply: “Herr Silbermann builds them the way he likes, and I play them the way I like.”

During much of his life, Bach worked in poor light. In his last few years he suffered from failing sight. In 1749, at age 64, he became blind, yet continued to write music. A year later he died of a stroke. His unmarked grave was lost, but rediscovered in 1894.

As recently as April, 2000, the supposedly last piece of music composed by Bach was discovered. It’s a selection he reportedly wrote to be performed at his own funeral.




## Walt Strony Concert in Review Dean Cook, Nor-Cal TOS *‘Solo Stringer’*

Sunday, May 8<sup>th</sup> marked a return engagement on the magnificent Wurlitzer Unit Orchestra at the Berkeley Community Theatre of one of our favorites, Walter Strony. Something new graced the stage at BCT: several faux potted trees and shrubs decorated the stage area behind the Orchestra Lift, causing this reviewer to wonder if we were going to hear two hours of “Potted Palm Music!” This turned out to be anything but the case, as Walt rode the Center Theatre Console up with a bouncy “Hallelujah!”, complete with a few injections of trem-less Handel for good measure!

Next, everybody who thought they were familiar with the score for “Mame” were in for a real treat with Walter’s 20-minute medley from that show/movie. Walter has an approach to Theatre Organ registration that’s quite original...nobody plays “prettier,” even when he cuts to one of his patented “quasi classical” combinations, which he uses in a way that would never occur to most of us who play pop music on the Wurlitzer.

The beauty continued with “Clair De Lune,” which was everything one would expect of the combination of Walter Strony and the BCT Wurlitzer.

A three-selection medley of familiar tunes dedicated to the Berkeley Organ Crew was next, with the audience left to guess which tune was for which crew-member—My theory: “Put Another Nickel In” (Chris Nichols), “My Ship”

(Bill Schlotter, although I was hoping for “Schlotter on 10<sup>th</sup> Ave!”), and “The Stripper” (Kevin King, though I’ve never seen him do that at Bella!). The last selection also included some cute lighting effects by the Berkeley Lighting Crew—heretofore unseen Christmas Lights in the foliage placed around the console blinked in time to the “Bump & Grind” breaks in “The Stripper.”

Walter was obviously having a great time, as he suddenly realized the time, and brought the first half to a close with “42<sup>nd</sup> Street Medley,” a highlight of which was the transformation of “Shuffle Off To Buffalo” into a charming minuet!

Two beautifully executed orchestral transcriptions opened Act II, “French Military March” and the Third Movement of Grofé’s “Grand Canyon Suite—“On The Trail.”

The opening of the next selection had me thinking “Here’s one I’ve never heard before!” , and I was partially right—it was the rarely played verse to “Our Love Is Here To Stay.” As if that wasn’t enough, Walt turned it into a Gershwin Medley, with a slinky “How Long Has This Been Going On?” and a slightly toccata-ized “I Got Rhythm.” One thing about Walt—he doesn’t give short shrift to selections played in medley—each one is fully fleshed out and worthy of solo presentation.

A pop tune from 1975 was next, “Never Gonna Fall In Love Again,” which was based on a theme of Rachmaninoff, and Walt took the opportunity to interpolate (love that word!) several other themes from the master’s compositions, Symphony 2 and 18<sup>th</sup> Variation.

At a Walter program, tempus has a tendency to fugit rapidly, and before we knew it, it was time for the closer, Walter’s incomparable “Victory At Sea Suite.” One of my favorite scores, it’s a shame Richard Rogers is no longer around to hear Mr Strony’s vivid transcription.

The audience wouldn’t let Walt go without an encore, a sprightly “Nola”

to brighten our afternoon. Once again, Walter Strony reached into his limitless bag of musical tricks and produced a wonderful afternoon of beauty and power.

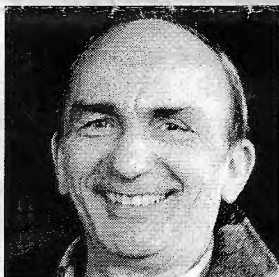
Nor-Cal has earned bragging rights not only for the quality of this Wurlitzer installation, but for the outstanding line-up of artists, both new and familiar, presented at our home venue, the Berkeley Community Theatre.



## Editor's Notes

Bob Shipley

We are happy to receive contributions to this publication to share with Nor-Cal. **Next Windsheet Deadline: June 24.** Contact me: by email [bshipley1@atmc.net](mailto:bshipley1@atmc.net), by phone (650) 968-3290, or by US mail 1734-9 W. El Camino, Mountain View 94040.



## For Sale

Gulbransen Rialto (Model K [Theater spec., Horseshoe Console]) Ebony Finish, Wooden Manuals (2x61 Keys, 25 Pedals, Bench), as is (no speakers, 4 channel capabilities [Main C & C#, Tibia & Bass]), Have Schematics, make offer. Craig (510) 654-5600; email [b3bopjazz@mailstation.com](mailto:b3bopjazz@mailstation.com)

**Closing Chord** We extend our condolences to Judson Owens, club member, friend, and house manager at the BCT on the passing of his father Robert Owens, who also had long tenure as a Nor-Cal member.

**Open Console** for members will be held on Sunday, June 13 from 1 to 5 PM. **IMPORTANT:** 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.

**New Member** David C. Dillon of San Jose is welcomed to the ranks.

**Donation** We thank Harry S. Exline of San Francisco, for his donation which will help us in our efforts to preserve the theatre organ and present it in performances in our community.

## Fabulous Fox Weekend

Frank La Fetra

My wife, Jan, and I attended the Atlanta Regional ATOS event at the Atlanta Fox in celebration of its upcoming 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, along with a least a dozen and a half Bay Area Theatre Organ Enthusiasts. What a glorious weekend it was. The Atlanta Fox is a rare treasure restored to its original glory, like the Oakland Paramount, but differing in style and that it has the original 4/42 Möller Concert Organ, completely restored to its 'as installed glory'. The organ speaks from multiple chambers on either side of the proscenium to an ornate 4200+ seat auditorium.

There were five concert events—The opening Friday evening at the

Egyptian Ballroom was a buffet dinner and program with Lyn Larson on an Allen Organ.

Saturday afternoon we were treated to a concert by Simon Gledhill on the great Möller. He included music of 'Duke' Ellington, selections from Rodgers and Hammerstein 'King and I', and three movements from Gustav Holst's 'The Planets Suite'.

Saturday evening Walt Strony played selections including music from Jerry Herman's 'Mame', 'The Battle Hymn of the Republic' and selections from a Joseph Jongen Symphony.

Sunday afternoon Richard Hills treated us to music including, Sidney Torch selections, Nuevo's 'Mexican Fire Dance' and a selection of British Folk Songs. All were intertwined with Richard's inimitable humor and poise.

Sunday evening was the closing of this great event. Clark Wilson treated us to the 'King Kong March' as an overture. Following this overture, Clark played to the just restored 1920's 'Metropolis', a wonderful early silent Sci-Fi film with great suspense and a happy ending.

*(Thank you to Bert Atwood for information about the selections played by the several artists.)*

A little about the Atlanta Fox is appropriate here—(excerpts taken from 'Atlanta Encore' given to us with our registration package):

"Atlanta's Fox Theatre... was designed in the late 1920's as headquarters for the 5,000-member Shriner's organization. It was a beautifully outlandish, opulent, grandiose monument to the heady excesses of the pre-crash 1920's, a mosque-like structure complete with minarets, onion domes, and an interior decor that was even more lavish than its facade.

"Its history has been as dramatic as its décor. Cost overruns threatened... from the outset. To generate additional funding, the Shriners worked out a deal with movie palace mogul William Fox, who made this his Southeastern jewel

with minor alterations in the original blueprints...

"The Fox opened as the Great Depression began. After 125 weeks, it declared bankruptcy. Revived after temporary city ownership, it scraped by during the 1930's. Under strong management, the Fox prospered as one of Atlanta's finest movie houses from the 1940's through the 1960's...

"(Then) The Fox faced yet another threat. Almost sold and demolished to make way for Southern Bell's headquarters, it was rescued (literally at the last moment) through the efforts of Atlanta Landmarks, Inc., a non-profit

organization of interested, energetic and committed Atlantans.

"Under Atlanta Landmarks' ownership, the Fox was once again put on a sound financial footing as a multi-purpose performing arts center. In 1976, documents were submitted qualifying the Fox to be designated a National Historic Landmark.

"The Fox has generated an operating surplus every year since Landmark's took over 29 years ago in 1975. It may be the only independent non-profit civic auditorium that can sustain its own operations financially."

### Other Chapters' Events

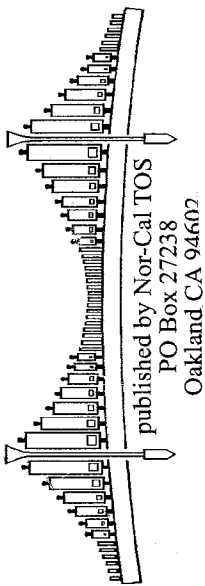
**Plummer Auditorium, Fullerton**  
Sunday June 20 @ 2:30, **Chris Elliott**  
at the Wurlitzer sponsored by Orange County TOS. (714) 529 5594

### NATIONAL ATOS Convention in Milwaukee

July 1-7 (dates include pre-glow and after-glow)

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

See Theatre Organ Mailing Wrapper



#### 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.