

The WINDSHEET



Newsletter of the NORCAL THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY
 P.O. BOX 27238, Oakland, California 94602-0438 • (510) 644-2707

www.theatreorgans.com/norcal
 May 2005



Ron has been a part of the theatre organ scene for quite some time. As of 2005, Ron Rhode is beginning his 31st year in this demanding profession. His recordings have received "Top Rating 10/10" from *CD Review Magazine*, and he was awarded "Theatre Organist Of The Year – 1989" by the American Theatre Organ Society. He has played virtually every major theatre organ installation in the world.

Ron is a native of Illinois, where he began his musical career on the piano. He quickly advanced to classical pipe organ, and in 1968 held his first theatre organ job playing for roller skating. In 1973 Ron moved to Phoenix, Arizona, to start a long association with the Organ Stop Pizza restaurants. In 1975 Ron moved to Mesa, Arizona, where he held the Featured Organist post and played for pizza patrons until November, 1986. In July, 1988, Ron again joined the staff as Associate Organist until his retirement in 2000. In Phoenix, he has been the Featured Organist for the Orpheum Theatre Silent Sunday Series, a silent movie series, since its inception in May, 1999.

Since leaving the pizza parlor on a regular basis, Ron has completed a Bachelor of Education degree in Early Childhood Education at Arizona State University, and in 1995 he earned a Master of Elementary Education degree from Northern Arizona State University. He is currently a Media Specialist at Roosevelt Elementary in Mesa, Arizona. In addition to teaching, recording, and concertizing, Ron is the organist for the Church of the Beatitudes, U.C.C., in Phoenix, Arizona.

Ron Rhode in Concert 2:30 PM

Sunday, May 1 2005, Berkeley Community Theatre

Our plans have changed—now we have another excellent artist in place of our planned performer, Lew Williams, who had to cancel his scheduled visit to entertain us on the BCT Wurlitzer. Lew had an accident that put his arm in a cast. We now have the opportunity to hear Ron Rhode, another artist who makes his home in the Phoenix area, and who also has had experience entertaining on the large-scale Wurlitzer instruments that have been installed in the Organ Stop restaurants.

Although Ron is held to the classroom through the week, he still finds time to maintain an active concert and recording career. He continues to perform professionally across the United States, Canada, England, and Australia. He is a favorite at American Theatre Organ Society national and regional conventions. He has more than twenty recordings to his credit.

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Concert Review: Morton Madness XI featuring Tom Hazleton

(Art and Evelyn Woodworth give us this recap of a very full and exciting day—Ed.) Friday's gray skies had given way to a scattering of small fluffy white clouds as we arrived at Bob and Linda Hartzell's Harmony Wynelands. The larger than usual MM crowd had arrived and was enjoying their picnic lunches and were busily socializing.

Tom opened with the appropriately titled "Strike Up the Band," starting with the rarely heard verse. He followed this with a medley of April songs - "April in Paris", "April in Portugal", and "April Showers." Tom next played "I Guess I'll Have to Change My Mind" in the style of Larry Vannucci, as remembered by Tom from his visits to the Lost Weekend bar. This was followed by a medley from *Carousel* consisting of "Carousel Waltz", "If I Loved You", "This Was a Real Nice Clambake", "June Is Bustin' Out All Over", a reprise of "If I Loved You", and "You'll Never Walk Alone." He then played a bouncy version of "You, You, You" with many variations. This contrasted nicely with Richard Purvis' "Night in Monterey." "Falling In Love With Love" finished the first half.

Tom opened the second half with a tremsoff "Hallelujah Chorus" by Handel leading into a tremson "Hallelujah" by Vincent Youmans. After a sing-along "Happy Birthday" for Irma, Tom played "Zigeuner." Following a Vannucci-inspired "Honey-suckle Rose," Tom played "Ave Maria" in tribute to the late Pope John Paul II. A thoughtful exploration of "Send In The Clowns" was followed by the traditional closer for concerts at Hartzell's blue barn. This was a patriotic medley including "Battle Hymn of the Republic", "America", "This is My Country", and "God Bless America" with audience participation.

The Sierra foothills were as green as they could be as we drove up to Murphys. At the Ironstone winery, we were greeted by containers of every imaginable color and shape of tulip. The as-always delicious buffet dinner was accompanied by more socializing.

Tom got the second concert off to a rollicking start with "Sing, Sing, Sing." "Don't Get Around Much Any More" was followed by "Hot Dog." (Tom said that he would not be playing it exactly the Sidney

Torch way.) A medley from My Fair Lady included "Get Me to the Church On Time", "On the Street Where You Live", "With a Little Bit of Luck", "Wouldn't It Be Lovely", "Show Me", "I've Become Accustomed to Her Face", and "I Could Have Danced All Night."

In honor of Prince Charles' upcoming marriage, Tom played "A Foggy Day in London Town." He finished the first half with a series of "blue songs." These were "Birth of the Blues", "Blue Prelude", "Blue Moon", "Blue Hawaii", "Serenade in Blue", and a reprise of "Birth of the Blues."

The second half of this second concert of the day started with "Lover." Tom based his introduction fanfare on "There's No Business Like Show Business." As a contrast, Tom played Fritz Kreisler's "Caprice Viennoise." This was followed by a Cole Porter medley consisting of "It's Delovely", "Don't Fence Me In", "I've Got You Under My Skin", "My Heart Belongs to Daddy", "I Love Paris", and "Just One of Those Things."

Tom said he was going to play a sleepy song - one that Virgil Fox called a people song (as opposed to the hard stuff). It was a very beautiful "At Dawning." He then played a series of songs from 1935, a year when the organ was still in Sacramento's Alhambra Theatre. They were "Cheek to Cheek", "Begin the Beguine", "My Romance", and "I Know That You Know." Saying "I'm pooped," Tom thanked both venues and all the people who made the event happen. He then played a number with which he often closed the Redwood City Capn's Galley, the appropriately titled "That's All." After a standing ovation, Tom asked the audience to rise to sing one more verse of "God Bless America." A fine close to a wonderful day.

Every number or medley Tom played was a complete arrangement. His great variety of registration and skillful playing showed off both organs to their very best advantage.

Open Console

Chris Nichols hosts this opportunity to play the chapter's BCT Wurlitzer. Tentative dates are April 24, May 8, and June 12 from 1-5PM. Important: Call the Nor-Cal message number, (510)644-2707 on that Sunday morning to confirm theatre availability. If there will be Open Console, enter via the back-stage door at 1930 Allston Way.



Chairman's Windline
Kevin King

Greetings to my fellow Nor-Cal members.

Well it seems like I am always asking for help. Here I go again...

It takes a LOT of talented volunteers to keep Nor-Cal running. We have dedicated members who produce the *Windsheet* you hold in your hands; the quality of which is far superior than many newsletters done by other groups. We have the organ crew and concert producing crew working countless hours getting our public concerts organized and literally running the show. Other members give their time to take care of mailings, tickets, printing, membership, CD sales, the list goes on and on.

Today I am asking if there is a member out there who has experience in accounting and/or business book keeping. I know that some people just love to work with numbers. We would like to find someone who can step up and help Nor-Cal with organizing our record keeping. Our treasurers have done a fine job keeping records and information up to date. We just need a knowledgeable person to help guide us in getting more organized. Perhaps someone is familiar with some software that would be just right for our purpose. You will get plenty of support from Jack O'Neill, (who knows everything about Nor-Cal), and Don Siefert, our current treasurer. This is a crucial job that needs to be done. It may be fairly easy and simple for anyone with some accounting experience.

Please contact me or any of the board members or workers listed on the front of the *Windsheet* if you can help. Please don't assume that someone else will step forward. We count on having just the one right person step forward at just the right time to keep our whole "Nor-Cal Machine" running smoothly. This may be your time to give a little back to our organization and enjoy the rewarding feeling of being involved with us.

Many thanks,

The Fox California/Bob Hope Theatre Organ Dedication Concert

(Neal Wood submits this report--Ed)

Stockton provided us a bright sunny day for our attendance at the newly renovated Bob Hope Theatre. As we arrived at the theatre, the new marquee greeted us with all the lights aglow. Even before entering the theatre, one could appreciate the detail and care that went into the restoration of this grand old theatre.

Upon entering the main lobby, you could not stop marveling at the detail. In place of the fountain that once graced the middle of the lobby is now a beautiful mosaic tile floor. The grand stairway that leads to the balcony allows one to view of the majesty of the main lobby.

In the main auditorium, the Baroque interior has been carefully and beautifully restored, retaining all of the craftsmanship of the '30's. Gold gilt abounds. Accent lighting behind the ceiling grills and the restored chandeliers made the auditorium glow. All seats are new, and comfortable. A new burgundy curtain graces the stage. It was a treat to marvel at the level of detail and care that had gone into the restoration of this theatre.

The lights in the auditorium began to dim, signaling the concert. Walt began, of course, with "Thanks for the Memory", along with "Rhapsody in Blue" and "Swanee." During these pieces, the organ rose from the pit, ever so slowly. Walt had finished the medley before the console had reached its concert level.

When the decision was made to install an organ in the theatre, one major requirement was the organ had to be powerful enough to speak through the relatively small openings for the chambers and the acoustically transparent tapestries that cover the two chamber openings. The Robert-Morton easily fulfilled the volume level requirements as Walt played a Duke Ellington medley, and also one of Walt's signature pieces, "Malagueña."

Walt finished the first half of the concert with, Andrew Lloyd Weber's, "Phantom of the Opera", and Ethel Smith's rendition of "Tico-Tico".

The second half opened with "Jealousy", one of the first George Wright organ recordings that Walt heard and that inspired Walt to pursue his very successful career as

a concert organist. By the way, George Wright started taking organ lessons in this theatre from his music instructor, Ms. Inez McNeil. Her granddaughter, Liz McNeil, was in attendance at this concert. Next Walt played "Love for Sale" followed by a medley he dedicated to the local eateries (and late night bars) in Stockton, that kept the Walt and the organ crew fed. Since it was Sunday, the next piece Walt played was "Joyful, Joyful", in both at classical and theatre organ style. Following, South Pacific suite, and finally requests from the audience.

The Bob Hope Theatre, The Friends of the Fox, The Robert-Morton organ and crew, the Staff, the Volunteers, Bob Hartzell, Walt, and all, made this day a memorable event.

Solo Stringer: Adventures In Organ Playing

(Member Dean Cook, who plays Thurs-Sat and cues silent films (next: May 22, "The General") at Angelino's restaurant in San Jose is a frequent contributor.--Ed))

Any theatre organist who spends any time at all playing in entertainment venues will tell you that lots of strange, interesting and downright funny things happen to us. Here's some recollections of stuff I've experienced in my 20 years playing of playing pizza parlors, theatres, etc.

Years ago at Redwood City Pizza N' Pipes, a nice lady came up to me after playing some John Williams selections, and asked me to "play something you wrote." "What makes you think I've written anything?" asks I. She promptly replied, "Oh come on. I've been a piano teacher for years, and I know this: show me an organist, and I'll show you a frustrated composer!" Couldn't argue with that, so I did!

Back in the "eighties," I was Relief Organist at The Grand Lake Theatre, and during the early intermission for "Cocoon," I noticed a strange banging sound coming from the Main (right side) Chamber, followed by a huge crash, a great rushing of wind, and all the manual chest ranks went immediately dead. A quick call to Ernie Wilson, the late original owner of the instrument (right after shutting down the blower, or course!), brought him to the theatre that night; turns out, a large lead weight had come loose from on top of the Main chest regulator, had bounced its way across the top of the regulator, fell onto the windline at an "elbow joint," and severed it. A quick application of PVC cement after re-attaching the windline, and the organ was ready to play for the late intermission.

Back at Redwood City, there came a time when Bob Patterson, then-owner, decided it was time to replace the aging ovens with more modern infra-red, conveyer-belt units. The change-out occurred while I was playing a shift, and as Bob and his Manager were removing the top oven (they were stacked), they dropped it! From the sound of the crash, I thought a car had driven into the front of the place! Bob did compliment me on the fact that I just kept right on playing, without missing a beat. The show must go on!

And should I mention the pair of black, cotton, size 16 women's panties I found on the console at The Music Box Theatre as I pulled the cover off one night?

But, my favorite incident occurred at Regger's Pizza, Lansing, IL, during my Chicago tenure. It was a slow Monday, 9PM or so, and there was one table occupied in a dining room that seats about 300. I was tired, and decided to pack it in for the night. Giving the night's finale (Anything Goes, I believe) a big old-fashioned "Mr Showbiz" ending. I hear the sound of one person applauding, and I thought "How nice!" So, I turn around on the bench with a flourish, give a wave and a big smile, and see a young lady seated alone at a table way in the back, busily "tamping down" a fresh pack of cigarettes! The sort of thing that really lets an organist know where exists on the "musical food chain."

New Members

We welcome Bruce Hassell, San Jose; Nancy Siegel, San Mateo; Robert Bindt, Walnut Creek; Jerry and Anna Bonifacio, Vacaville, and Katrina McCurdy of San Leandro

Donations

We thank Bank of America, James Parker (Santa Rosa), Edward Stout (Hayward) and Dennis Fertitta (Reno) for their donations which will help us in our efforts to preserve of the theatre organ and present it in performances in our community.

For Sale

Conn 652, Type 1 with Leslie 540, Leslie 705 and "Pipes" speakers. Cost \$6000 when new in 1987. Call Mrs. Daniel Littlefield of Morgan Hill (408) 779-3483.

Board Meeting

June 15, 7:30 at Harry's Hofbrau Restaurant
14900 14th St. at Hesperian, San Leandro
All members are encouraged to attend

Again—Invite your Friends

We're happy to let you know that once again Nor-Cal is opening its final public concert of the 2005 season to those you know who would enjoy spending a happy afternoon with the sounds of the Mighty Wurlitz. This time played by Ron Rhode, another outstanding artist.

The Friends (First Time) Free program is your invitation to introduce people—be it one or a dozen—to the exciting sounds and varied moods of this magnificent instrument when played by an excellent artist, Ron Rhode. If you've not saved your coupons, please use the one on the right.

Also remember that each person who graduates from the Friends 4 Free program to become a Nor-Cal member gives you, the sponsoring member, another entry to the contest where the Nor-Cal member who brings in the most new club members wins tickets to all of the next season of Nor-Cal BCT public organ concerts.



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FRIENDS 4 FREE
 —FIRST TIME—

The WINDSHEET



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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. Neal R. Wood at (415)861-7082 <nealwood@pacbell.net> , 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.