
The WINDSHEET



Newsletter of the NORCAL THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY
PO Box 27238, Oakland, California 94602-0438 510/644-2707

www.theatreorgans.com/norcal

June 2007



Remember—concert is SATURDAY not usual Sunday

England, and studied the classical organ at the Cathedral there with **William Whitehead**. Following that, Richard became the Organ Scholar of *Exeter College* at *Oxford University*, where he studied the classical organ with **David Sanger**.

Having completed his studies at Oxford, Richard spent a year as the Organ Scholar of *Portsmouth Cathedral* before being appointed to the Organ Scholarship of London's *Westminster Abbey*, where he performed regularly on the five-manual Harrison & Harrison organ and worked with the world-famous Abbey choir.

Richard left *Westminster* in September 2004 and is now pursuing a career as a freelance musician. In addition to his theatre and classical organ performances, Richard presides over the fine four-manual Hill organ of *All Hallows' Church* in Gospel Oak, London, where he is Director of Music. Richard has

recently been made a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists.

Richard last performed for us at Berkeley just five years ago. In those years both Richard and our *Wurlitzer* have grown—Richard from 21 to 26, our *Wurlitzer* from 35 to 41 ranks (the 42nd will be playing soon).

We are also expecting to see a number of our friends from *Sierra Chapter ATOS*. They will charter a bus and make a whole day of it.

Don't miss this concert!

RICHARD HILLS joins us from England

He plays NorCal's BCT Wurlitzer, SATURDAY, June 9, 2007 at 2:30 PM

Winner of the ATOS International Young Theatre Organist of the Year competition at the tender age of 14, **Richard Hills** is one of the world's most highly regarded theatre/classical organists.

Richard is a native of England, but has toured Europe, Australia and the United States, invariably to wildly enthusiastic audiences. His brilliance and personality are notable in the world of theatre organists.

He has been a featured artist at five international ATOS conventions, giving

his debut concert in 1998 at the *Oakland Paramount* theater at the age of 17. [*Pub note*—Richard Hills had such poise at that age that he played (he told me later, unrehearsed) a game of 'hide and seek' with the Follow Spot Operator. That, added to his outstanding performance, remains in my memory to this day.] He has appeared many times on national and international radio and TV and has several recording credits.

Richard was awarded the Organ Scholarship at *King's School* in Rochester,

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When emailing, include ATOS in the subject line. Otherwise, if you are unknown to the recipient's computer, its SPAM filter may divert your mail.

FIRST TIMERS ARE 4 FREE

Remember: first time concert goers are admitted free, so bring your friends and neighbors who have never experienced the power and drama of a theatre pipe organ concert.

Admission Prices

Except for **FIRST TIMERS ARE 4 FREE**, admission at the door is \$15.00. Advance ticket sales, seniors, students, NorCal members, or groups of 8 or more are \$12.00. Children 12 and under are admitted free with paid adult. No babes in arms, please.

JUNE CONCERT DATE CHANGED

As announced in several prior issues, **Richard Hills** from England, will be presented **Saturday**, a day earlier than our customary Sunday performances. Previously issued tickets with the Sunday date will, of course, be honored. Please take special note of the date:

SATURDAY, JUNE 9, 2007, 2:30 PM

CHAIRMAN'S WINDLINE

It's the day after the **Jonas Nordwall** concert, that I am writing this column. Again I was able to experience the pre-concert preparations required to prepare the organ and the auditorium for a concert. Jonas prepared and practiced at the console while the organ and concert crew worked efficiently in the background. Sometimes, one of the perks of being on the crew is to listen to the artist prepare for a concert. It was fun to hear Jonas play the organ just for the enjoyment.

On a personal note, after all these years, I finally overcame my 'stage fright' and got a chance to play the *Wurlitzer*. Not familiar with the stop layout, **Chris Nichols** changed the registrations while I concentrated on hitting the right notes. I thought it sounded great, and I am my own worst critic. For those of you with 'stage fright' like me, I recommend a seat at the mighty *Wurlitzer* at Open Console.

Lastly, I would like to thank all the respondents to our 'SOS' insert in the *Windsheet*. I look forward to your participation in the upcoming events.

Oh yes, and one last reminder that our *final concert of the season*, featuring **Richard Hills** from the U.K., will be on **SATURDAY, June 9th, at 2:30 PM.**

Neal

JONAS NORDWALL CONCERT on May 20, 2007

Jonas Nordwall is no stranger to NorCal and he never disappoints us. He has the reputation of playing every stop on our instrument (41 ranks) at some point in his concert, and all the tuned percussions and traps, too, often in wonderful combinations that we haven't heard before, but always appropriate to whatever music he is playing. "Leave no stop unplayed!" could be his motto.

Jonas has a precision, crisp touch that brings out melodies and counter melodies. In this concert, in particular, I enjoyed his treatment of **Leonard Bernstein's** music for *Westside Story*, using intricate rhythms in the accompaniment that are usually heard only in full orchestrations. Also, in the beautiful rendition of *España*, the Latin rhythm maintained the romance of the piece.

The first number to be introduced after the rousing *up-console* music was *Night Train*, dedicated to the memory of **Tom Hazleton**, and was played in the 'down-and-dirty' honky-tonk style that Tom was so well known for playing, at times.

Jonas really cut loose on the old **Benny Goodman** arrangement of **Louis Prima's** composition, *Sing, Sing, Sing*, with a driving drum beat in the pedals and accompaniment that created the *big band* feeling that so many of us remember fondly.

Playlist

Console Up: Everything's Coming Up

Roses – Jule Styne

Night Train – Forrest, Washington, Simpkins

Gladiolus Rag – Scott Joplin

Medley from Westside Story - Bernstein

- **I Feel Pretty**

- **Somewhere**

- **Tonight**

Carillon – Louis Vierne

Medley:

- **Sunny Side of the Street** – McHugh

- **Lullaby of the Leaves** – Petkere

- **Sing, Sing, Sing** – Louis Prima

Serenade from The Student Prince

- Romberg

Ritual Fire Dance – Manuel de Falla

Intermission

Console Up: Olympic Fanfare – John Williams

Medley of tunes from the '70s:

- **Both Sides Now** – Joni Mitchell

- **I'm Never Going to Fall in Love Again** – Bacharach

- **The Hustle** – ?

Capriccio on the Notes of the Cuckoo

- Richard Purvis

España – ?

Smoke Gets In Your Eyes – Kern

Medley:

- **Way Down Yonder in New Orleans** – Creamer, Layton

- **Send In the Clowns** – Sondheim

- **Poet and Peasant Overture** – von Suppé

Encore: I Love To Hear You Singing

- Wood, Glanville, Stickle

Before rendering his encore, Jonas told us that he would first play the main melody *straight*, then as **Jesse Crawford** arranged it, to demonstrate how a simple ballad can be interpreted as an energetic and joyful musical experience.

In total, to no one's surprise, Jonas brought to us a varied program of familiar music, performed with the most sophisticated of stylings, employing the gorgeous voices of our *Wurlitzer* to the utmost. He received a standing ovation.

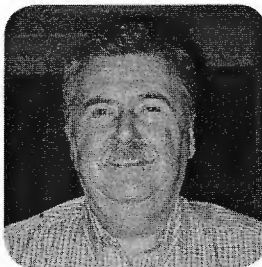
— Don Ravey

SHINGLE SPRINGS POTLUCK in July

Sierra Chapter invites **NorCal Chapter** to join them at **Pete & Dianne McCluer's** residence in Shingle Springs (northeast of Sacramento) for a Potluck Picnic and Open Console on Pete's 3/12 *Wurlitzer* on **Saturday, July 21**. This is *tentative* at this time, and more information will be forthcoming, but we want to give you a *heads up* now, as we go to press.

ERRATA—Last month your **Publisher** took leave of the laws of Physics in his comments on **Page 3** about NorCal's 32-foot Diaphones. The **low 'C'** they produce is 16 Hz, about the lowest tone humans hear. Thanks to **Bill Schlotter**.

**OPEN
CONSOLE**
Hosted by
Chris Nichols



This is an opportunity for NorCal members to try their hand at playing the Chapter's Wurlitzer at the Berkeley Community Theatre. When the theatre is available, these sessions run from 1:00 to 5:00 PM. The next scheduled dates are:

Sunday, June 3, 2007

Sunday, July 8, 2007

Open Consoles are informal and our genial host, **Chris Nichols**, ensures that any NorCal member feels comfortable. He lends help and support to anyone who needs it. Depending on how many members are present, each has one or more 15-minute sessions at the console.

Important: Call the NorCal voice mail at (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.

DONATIONS

NorCal gratefully acknowledges a generous donation from:
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EDITOR'S RAVINGS

Do you believe that some people are just *born with talent*, perhaps even that it is inherited from their parents? If you do, you may accuse me of heresy, then, when I tell you that recent neurological research casts doubt on this theory.

Some ten years ago at Harvard Medical School, then-assistant professor of neurology **Mark Tramo** was quoted as saying, "We know much more about how we see than how we hear. What happens in hearing is harder to understand intuitively." Dr. Tramo is also a published songwriter.

There is a relatively good understanding of the *mechanics* of hearing, the way sound waves in the air are detected and converted into nerve impulses that are processed by specific functional areas of the brain. What

we don't understand nearly as well is the *emotional* responses evoked by music, or for that matter by the human voice – or fingernails scratching a blackboard.

"Music appreciation is definitely a culture-related phenomenon," says Tramo, "but there are universals that characterize it across the globe. *All musics are structured around the octave, all cultures sing*, and all have songs they associate with certain meanings and emotions. *All children love to be sung to*. Perhaps that's why people refer to music as *the universal language*."

"*All humans come into the world with an innate capability for music*," agrees **Kay Shelemay**, professor of music at Harvard. "At a very early age, this capability is shaped by the music system of the culture in which a child is raised. That culture affects the construction of instruments, the way people sound when they sing, and even the way they hear sound."

Another crossover musician/scientist is **Daniel Levitin**, an associate professor at McGill University in Montreal and one of the world's leading experts in cognitive music perception. As a rock producer, Levitin worked with **Stevie Wonder**, **The Grateful Dead** and **Chris Isaak**. In his new book, *This is Your Brain on Music: The Science of a Human Obsession*, Levitin explores research into how our brains process the works of artists as varied as **Beethoven**, the **Beatles** and **Britney Spears**, and why their music makes us feel so good.

Levitin says, "I think we've debunked the myth of *talent*. It doesn't appear that there's anything like a music gene or center in the brain that **Stevie Wonder** has, that nobody else has."

Levitin says further that while there is no evidence to support a belief that the brain of a musical genius (or any other talented person) is inherently any different from that of any ordinary person, there may be a genetic or neural predisposition toward things like *patience* and *eye-hand coordination*.

With music being so universal in human societies, why have we developed this cognitive ability? Levitin says, "There are a number of different theories. One theory is that music is an evolutionary accident, piggybacking on language: We exploited language to create music just for our own pleasure. A competing view, one that **Darwin** held, is that music was selected by evolution because it signals certain kinds of intellectual, physical and sexual fitness to a

potential mate."

There you have it: *music is sexy!*

Going further, Levitin says, "Music activates the same parts of the brain and causes the same neurochemical cocktail as a lot of other pleasurable activities like orgasms or eating chocolate – or if you're a gambler, winning a bet, or using drugs if you're a drug user. *Serotonin* and *dopamine* are both involved."

Another quote from Levitin: "Most people in Western society use music to regulate moods, whether it's playing something peppy in the morning or something soothing at the end of a hard day, or something that will motivate them to exercise. **Joni Mitchell** told me that someone once said before there was *Prozac*, there was her."

Finally, I can really identify with the *music/brain* phenomenon known by the Germans as *ohrwurm*, or *earworm*. According to Levitin, "It's the name the Germans give to these songs that get stuck in your head that you can't get rid of. If they're really bothersome, you can do what **Neil Young** told me: Become a professional songwriter. He writes songs to get them out of his head.

"Failing that, ... find an equally annoying song that's not bothering you right now, and it will replace the earworm with another one."

If you find this topic of interest, there is a lot of information on the World Wide Web. Just use the keywords *music emotions* in your favorite search engine and you will be able to satisfy your curiosity.

References:

Music, the Brain, and Ecstasy: How Music Captures Our Imagination by *Robert Jourdain*, William Morrow 1967
Harvard University Gazette, 11/13/97
Harvard University Gazette, 3/22/01
Wired Magazine, 8/23/06

MEMBER'S BADGES

Have you admired the blue membership badges that many NorCal members wear to concerts? They are available for \$13 shipped prepaid to the member's address.

The badges are now totally engraved (no silk screening to rub off). Send your check and exactly how your name is to appear to:

Bill Schlotter

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