


JUNE 2020

Newsletter of the NorCal Theatre Organ Society
www.norcaltos.org (510) 644-2707
P. O. Box 625, Berkeley, CA 94701-0625

Berkeley Community Theatre
1930 Allston Way, Between Milvia Street &
Martin Luther King, Jr. Way

Not an official NorCal event but of great local interest! We just learned about this exciting concert on Sunday June 14 so we apologize for getting the word out so late.



MARK HERMAN ORGAN WEBCAST LIVE FROM KEVIN KING'S STUDIO

SATURDAY, JUNE 20 AT 5:00 PM

Use this link to Mark's page to see and hear the concert:

<https://www.facebook.com/markhermanproductions>

NorCal last heard Mark play NorCal's Wurlitzer in concert at Berkeley Community Theatre on April 2, 2017. Here is a chance to hear a great artist playing another outstanding Wurlitzer pipe organ!

Born in 1987, Mark Herman is one of America's busiest young theatre organists, performing over 30 concerts and silent film presentations each year across the US and abroad. In 2012, he was named the American Theatre Organ Society's Organist of the Year and is the youngest person ever to receive the prestigious honor. Previously, he was overall winner of the Society's Young Theatre Organist Competition in 2004.

He studied theatre organ with the late John Ferguson of Indianapolis, who was recognized worldwide for his skills

teaching the art of the theatre organ. His classical piano studies were with Christine Freeman of Fort Wayne, Indiana. He earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Theatre Arts/Management from DePaul University in Chicago.

Mark has been featured on several episodes of American Public Media's *Pipedreams* program, and has performed for countless conventions of the American Theatre Organ Society, American Guild of Organists, and Organ Historical Society. On the international stage, he has toured in Australia, New Zealand, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

MAY 24 CONCERT CANCELLED

The May 24 concert was to feature Justin LaVoie at the NorCal Wurlitzer. By mutual agreement between Justin and NorCal the concert has been cancelled due to the COVID-19 virus.

NEXT NORCAL EVENT

Due to the COVID-19 virus, all Berkeley schools have been closed until the fall semester. This, of course, includes Berkeley Community Theatre and any other possible concert venue.

Your NorCal Board of directors will keep you posted as to the next NorCal event via both our website and the next issue of the Windsheet.

NORCAL TOS MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Due to the Pandemic and the Berkeley Community Theatre renovation, NorCal Theatre Organ Society will not have access to the building for the immediate future. Therefore, the NorCal Board has decided to extend all current memberships for a period of 6 months or until a time when we can become operational.

BERKELEY COMMUNITY THEATRE TO BE CLOSED FOR CONSTRUCTION

As previously reported in the Windsheet, construction work is scheduled to start Monday, June 15 and finish in August 2022. During this two-year period, NorCal will have no access to the building. Your NorCal Board of Directors has been working with Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD) staff and BUSD's

construction manager to assure protection of NorCal's Wurlitzer during construction.

Since the April Windsheet, both consoles have been moved to a secure off-site storage facility. The space is on the ground floor of a two-story building. The walls and ceiling are steel. The second story above has a concrete floor. The space is fire-sprinklered so the consoles have been carefully covered with heavy-duty plastic sheeting. The site will be checked regularly over the next two years.



Off the lift-gate and onto the truck



The storage unit where our consoles will reside for the next two years

At Berkeley Community Theatre, there will be no construction work in the pipe chambers and adjacent spaces, the space above the ceiling grille (aka "the fan"), and the blower room. Since we expect the construction work to generate a considerable amount of dust, we have wrapped the pipes and percussions with heavy-duty plastic sheeting. In addition, 4-foot high plywood enclosures have been erected around the pipes and percussions at the speaker shelf level where there will be construction work.



Protecting the pipework on the speaker shelf

CHAIRMAN'S WIND LINE

A lot has transpired since our last edition of the *Windsheet*. That was the first line in this column in the last issue, and it's still true! Several times I made trips to Ken Crome's shop in Los Angeles either carrying parts or riding with Bill Schlotter in his pickup truck, taking the Toledo Paramount console down to be overhauled, or bringing it back to Berkeley, after Ken's overhaul was complete. After Ken moved his shop to Reno, he overhauled our Center Theatre console. Not only an incomparable craftsman, Ken was a font of information about theatre organs and the people involved with them. Some of our rarest ranks, such as the Tibia Plena, were purchased from Ken. I will sincerely miss his friendly conversations.

At this time we don't know the plans of Steve Hansen or others in the Crome Organ Company regarding the completion of organ work for their customers, in particular, the Oakland Paramount.

Once again, sincere thanks on behalf of NorCal, to the organ crew: Ted Hubbard, Neal Wood, Kevin King, Art Woodworth, Judson Owens, Gordon Pratt, Chris Booras, Chuck Hagstrom, and Mike Abram for their work in removing some components and safeguarding remaining components of the organ in preparation for the reconstruction of the Berkeley Community Theatre. Contractors will be starting their work this month.

Buddy

KEN CROME, RIP

Please see the Chairman's Windline above for Rudy Freys's remembrance of Kenny. The following are reprinted with permission from the LATOS Organ Log:

Ken was born February 6, 1947 in Los Angeles California. He married his high school sweetheart Rose Marie Costantino and had two children, Gina and Katie. As a member of a multi-generational pipe organ building family, Ken worked closely with his father throughout his early years and his lifetime of work has been proudly showcased across the country. Ken passed away on May 1st, 2020.

A celebration of life for Ken will be held on Saturday August 29th, 2020

Walt Strony: Many of us are shocked and saddened by the passing of the legendary theatre organ expert Kenny Crome last night. Frankly, there is no one living that reached as many corners of the theatre organ world, in our lifetime, as Kenny did. He restored or rebuilt literally dozens, if not hundreds of theatre organs and/or restored or built MANY new consoles -- many of which concert artists play on a regular basis. In addition, he offered parts that no one else made. For example, the Piano pedals and mechanism that is used in my Allen STR4 signature model are made by his company. Kenny's passing will leave a major void in our world, and I'm not sure who will be able to replace him.

Kenny was like the Eveready Bunny. He kept going and going, at an energy level that most of us can only dream. Someone said that on a scale from 1-10, he was always at 11. While many others are merely at 4-5. And he did this in spite of the many MAJOR health issues that he dealt with in the last 40 (?) years. He lived to work.

While Kenny's reputation had been well established by the time I first came on the organ scene, it wasn't until 1984 that we ever worked together. Unfortunately, it was a situation that placed us both under duress. I had been engaged to play an organ dedication concert in Southern California. Unfortunately, the organ wasn't ready, and the installation was poorly planned/conceived. The installers knew they had a problem, and brought Kenny in at the last minute to get the organ playing. We got through the concert without killing anyone (or each other), but were both glad when it was over!

Our paths occasionally crossed in later years. When I moved to Northern California, I occasionally visited his shop in Reno -- which is about 90 miles from me. A lunch usually followed with much information shared! :-)

Kenny's final two projects are yet to be unveiled -- the restored Barton organ in Madison's Overture Center, formerly the Capitol Theatre, and the newly restored original console in the Oakland Paramount which will be unveiled shortly.

RIP Ken Crome.

From Christian Elliott: Ken Crome, a remarkably talented organ builder and friend, passed away last night. We first met when I was 11 years of age. Over the years we worked together on numerous projects including the rebuilding of my own Wurlitzer

console for the organ I enjoy at home. Ken was one of the most disciplined and productive people in the organ industry, responsible for the rebuilding and installation of many, many theatre pipe organs.

In later years it was an honor to have walked through some tough life chapters with Kenny, both with his own health and that of his beloved wife, Rose. Considering all that Ken dealt with in life, he was a true survivor. He was most assuredly an original character, leaving behind a tremendous legacy of his works. I take comfort that Ken and Rose are together again.

OPEN CONSOLE SCHEDULE

Due to limitations on access to BCT and the COVID-19 virus there will be no NorCal open console sessions anywhere until further notice.

OTHER VENUES

All of these venues are currently closed to the public due to the COVID-19 virus. LISTED PLAYING TIMES ARE FROM BEFORE THE SHUT DOWN. Their opening dates cannot be known at this time but will likely be announced on their web sites. Please note that the days/hours may change.

Grand Lake Theatre - 3/17 Wurlitzer. 3200 Grand Avenue, Oakland. Intermission music played by **Gordon Pratt** (Fridays) and **Bob Reichert** (Saturdays); **Bill Coale** Relief Organist. (510) 452-3556. www.renaissancerialto.com

Paramount Theatre - 4/26 Wurlitzer. 2025 Broadway, Oakland. Public tours on first and third Saturdays of the month at 10:00 am, excluding holidays and holiday weekends. No reservations are necessary for these tours. Tours begin promptly at 10:00 am at the Box Office entrance on 21st Street near Broadway. The tour lasts about two hours and provides a full and informative view of the Theatre. Cameras are allowed. Admission is \$5.00 per person. Children must be at least 10 years old and adult chaperones are required. Please note that some areas of the tour are not wheelchair accessible. www.paramounttheatre.com

Stanford Theatre - 3/21 Wurlitzer. 221 University Avenue, Palo Alto. See their **Silent Film Schedule**. The organ is played before and between films by **Bill Taylor, David Hegarty, or Jerry Nagano**. (650) 324-3700. stanfordtheatre.org

California Theatre, San Jose (Fox Theatre) - 4/21 Wurlitzer & 2/10 Wurlitzer. 345 South First Street. The 2/10 Style 216 Wurlitzer lobby organ is played before all scheduled performance. <http://sanjosetheaters.org/theaters/california-theatre/>

California Theatre, Pittsburg - 3/10 Robert Morton. 351 Railroad Avenue, Pittsburg. The 3-manual console is now playing. <http://www.pittsburgcaliforniatheatre.com/>

Palace of the Legion of Honor - 4/63 E. M. Skinner. Lincoln Park, San Francisco Presidio. Concerts Saturday afternoons at 4:00 pm. See legionofhonor.famsf.org and scroll to "visit/upcoming events."

ABOUT NORCAL THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY

NorCal Theatre Organ Society is a Chapter of the American Theatre Organ Society (ATOS). 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 call, email, or write to:**

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JOIN NORCAL THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY

Dues are \$20 for NorCal TOS only. For an additional \$50 you may also join National ATOS (\$70 total) per year for full voting memberships in both NorCal and ATOS as well as your subscription to *Theatre Organ* magazine, the six times a year glossy

NORCAL THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY CONTACTS:

Please see the NorCal website at norcaltos.org for current & recent past Windsheets in *.pdf* format along with an up-to-date Calendar of Events.

You may reach NorCal directly at NorcalTOS@outlook.com.

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journal of ATOS. Spouse and children living at home may be included in both NorCal and ATOS memberships. We hope you will join us to help preserve and enjoy these great instruments!

If you join NorCal now, you will be able to take advantage of the 6-month membership period extension as explained on Page 1!

HOW OFTEN DO WE PUBLISH THE WINDSHEET?

We publish whenever we have an event scheduled rather than monthly.

GET YOUR WINDSHEET BY E-MAIL!

Would you like to receive your copy of the Windsheet by email? It will be in full color; it will be wrinkle and tear-free; it will arrive sooner; and you will save NorCal the cost of postage and envelopes! If so, please contact our Membership Chair, Neal Wood at the address shown below.