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APRIL 2021

Newsletter of the NorCal Theatre Organ Society  
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P. O. Box 625, Berkeley, CA 94701-0625

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

**NEXT NORCAL EVENT**

Due to the COVID-19 virus, everything in the San Francisco Bay Area is shut down until further notice. 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, NorCal Theatre Organ Society will not have access to any venues for the foreseeable future. Therefore, the NorCal Board has decided to extend all current memberships for one year.

**CHAIRMAN'S WIND LINE**

*EDITOR'S NOTE: The last two issues of Theatre Organ magazine have included extensive coverage of the history, construction, and features of Radio City Music Hall and the Center Theatre, including their Wurlitzers. Page 54 of the March-April 2021 issue features photos of the NorCal console from the Center Theatre and two views of the center chamber at Berkeley Community Theatre.*

Some of our NorCal Chapter members do not belong to The American Theatre Organ Society, our national organization. At our annual meetings, I have frequently encouraged our members to join the national organization. The national organization benefits the local chapters by coordinating payment of ASCAP fees when organists perform for the chapters. National also assists chapters hosting national conventions, by making cash advances to facilitate making hotel reservation deposits and other necessary convention production expenses. ATOS also produces an excellent bi-monthly magazine, Theatre Organ, which features articles about organ installations, organists, recordings and other interesting information related to our hobby.

The Nov/Dec and Jan/Feb issues of Theatre Organ feature articles about Radio City Music Hall in Rockefeller Center in Manhattan. Radio City Music Hall has probably the most elaborate theater stage. There are three platforms or elevators

in the stage floor, which can be raised during a performance so that performers on the rear (upstage) elevator can be seen above the successively lower middle and front (downstage) platforms. Or the 3 platforms can be locked together and there is a 60 foot diameter rotating platform which can be used to support various other choreographic displays. There is also a full orchestra lift in front of the stage with a moving orchestra platform, which can move off the orchestra elevator and onto any of the main stage elevators. The orchestra can be moved from the bottom of the orchestra pit up to the stage level and on to any of the three stage platforms, all while playing music! The Jan/Feb issue advised that the Mar/Apr issue would have a feature article on the Center Theatre in Rockefeller Center. These articles are very interesting and informative. Especially during this pandemic, they provide another source of theatre organ information. Perhaps for new members copies of past issues can be obtained.

Rockefeller Center opened in 1932. It's construction had begun during the earlier depression. The original 22-acre site, bounded by Fifth and Sixth Avenues and 48th and 51st Streets, contains 19 commercial buildings (one 70 stories high), NBC broadcasting studios, and two large legitimate theaters: the approximately 6,000 seat Radio City Music Hall and the 3,509 seat Center Theater. There are also many stores and restaurants. There were four Wurlitzer theatre pipe organs installed in Rockefeller Center; Opus 2178, a Fox scale console 4/34 in the Center Theatre; Opus 2179, a twin Fox scale console, twin relay 4/58 in Radio City Music Hall - the largest original Wurlitzer; Opus 2180, a 3/14 in a broadcasting studio above the Music Hall; and Opus 2185, a 3/10 in the Rainbow Room restaurant on the 65th floor of what was originally called the RCA Building. Only the Music Hall still has its Wurlitzer.

NorCal has a special connection to Rockefeller Center because it helped us to enlarge our original 20 rank Publix I Wurlitzer from the Toledo Paramount theatre to its present 41 ranks with two consoles. Appropriately, the Center Theatre was 3,509 seats, 18 seats larger than the Berkeley Community

Theatre's original 3,491 seats. And conveniently, the 34 rank Wurlitzer in the Center Theatre was installed in 3 chambers as is our organ in Berkeley. While the chamber placement in the theatres was not the same (Berkeley is a proscenium installation), the expression pedals did not need to be changed. There are three swell pedals, one master swell pedal, and one crescendo pedal.

John Clark McCall, Jr. has written a very interesting book about the Center Theatre and its Wurlitzer. The title of the book is *Epic of the Center*. It is available from Amazon. And no, I'm not on commission for selling books, but finding the history of the Center Theatre and its instrument is an important part of our organ as we have its console, four ranks of pipes, (Trombone, French Horn, Viola Diapason, and Cor Anglais), balanced volume Cathedral Chimes, and large compass 49 note Xylophone

*Rudy*

#### ABOUT THE MCCALL BOOK:

Chris Nichols has advised us that Mr. McCall's book is available in paperback and as a Kindle edition. To find them, go to Amazon.com and search on Center Theatre McCall.

#### NEXT ISSUE

We plan to publish in July and we hope to be able to announce a live meeting. And there may be an article about a German theatre organ in a musical museum on the Rhine River.

#### A SET OF 32 FOOT DIAPHONES DOWN UNDER

Chris Nichols sent us two pictures of the 32' Diaphones in the basement of the State, Sydney. He took these when he visited in 2010. So is this a case of "down under and down under?"



#### OPEN CONSOLE SCHEDULE

Due to 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](http://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 21<sup>st</sup> 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](http://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](http://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](http://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:

Mr. Neal R. Wood  
NorCal TOS  
[woodshed523@icloud.com](mailto:woodshed523@icloud.com)  
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Berkeley, CA 94701-0625

Normally NorCal Theatre Organ Society dues are \$20 per year. However, if you join now they will not be due until we return to having member meetings. For an additional \$50 you may also join National ATOS (\$70 total) per year for a full voting membership.

### **HOW OFTEN DO WE PUBLISH THE WINDSHEET?**

We had been publishing whenever NorCal had an event scheduled. During the Corona Virus shutdown we will publish quarterly or as copy accumulates. If you have anything to contribute, please do so. *Stay safe – hope to see you all soon!*

### **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 above.**

### **NORCAL THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY CONTACTS:**

Please see the NorCal website at [norcaltos.org](http://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](mailto:NorcalTOS@outlook.com).

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