


JULY 2021

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

WALTER STRONG CONCERT

While this is not a NorCal sponsored event, it looks like the first theatre organ event since the start of the lockdown!

- Oroville State Theatre, Oroville, 1849 Myers Street (State Highway Business Route 70), corner of Robinson Street
- Saturday, July 3
- Two performances – 1:00 pm and 4:00 pm
- Tickets \$10.00, available at orovillestatetheatre.com.



Walt will be playing the three manual, 16 rank Wurlitzer previously installed in the Towe Auto

Museum in Sacramento. As part of his concert, he will accompany the Laurel and Hardy comedy short “Liberty.”

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. But we are looking forward to a possible holiday period event at Kevin King’s studio.

CHAIRMAN’S WIND LINE

Two Events of the Century

The original construction of the Berkeley Community Theatre began in 1941. Construction was halted by the 2nd World War and resumed in 1948. The building was completed in 1950, nine years after it had begun. This month is about a year since the reconstruction of the theatre stage and adjacent school building began and we removed the consoles and 32 foot Diaphones from the building.

In 2020 the Covid-19 Pandemic began. Not since the Spanish Flu in 1918, had there been such a health catastrophe. The Spanish Flu lasted from February 1918 until April 1920. If we can believe the media, the Covid-19 Pandemic is beginning to wane and we are looking forward to a return to normal.

The BCT and adjacent school building are being reconstructed to increase their seismic strength

(resistance to earthquakes) and accessibility for physically challenged students. Load bearing walls for the 50 foot wide proscenium opening of the stage are being strengthened all the way down to the foundation. The adjacent school building originally had four levels. The basement, a floor level matching stage level, where the stagecraft shop was located, another level 12 steps up to the first floor of the adjacent school building, and a second floor of the school building. Many of you will recall climbing steps whether you wanted to go to the men's or women's rooms. Amazingly the adjacent school building has been deconstructed completely to the ground, leaving only the outside wall, which is a Berkeley landmark. The reconstructed building will have a basement, first floor at stage level and a second floor; 3 levels instead of 4. We are looking to the completion of the reconstruction of the BCT in less than the original nine years!

Rudy

RIP MARK DEE PUTTERBAUGH

February 5, 1955 ~ April 26, 2021. Mark was a native of Rochester, Indiana but lived in Burlingame for many years.



Mark was a well known Funeral Director and accomplished embalmer, cosmetician, hair dresser and life agent at Chapel of the Highlands Funeral & Cremation in Millbrae. His family appreciates donations in Mark's memory to Mission Hospice at www.missionhospice.org/donate or to the American Cancer Society at www.cancer.org.

Mark was one of the substitute organists at the Castro Theatre. He was one of the many who worked on restoration and renovation of the NorCal Wurlitzer at BCT. He was on the crew that worked at Wes Cavets' shop in San Francisco. Chris Nichols tells us that on one occasion Mark arrived a little late as he had been working at the mortuary. When he walked into the room in his suit, Jim Roseveare looked up and immediately said, "Mark, how natural you look." Chris says that "The rest of us were rolling on the floor for about 10 minutes."

ORGANS ALONG THE RHINE RIVER

Your editor is also a recreational folk dancer. Some friends of his from Berkeley Folk Dancers arrange a yearly two-week trip somewhere in the world. At least half of the trip is on a boat or ship so they call it "Dance on the Water." The 2017 trip started in Amsterdam and ended in Zurich so they called it "Europe from A to Z." The water part was a boat trip up the Rhine River. It included some interesting members of the organ family.



While in Amsterdam I came across two barrel organs on the Kalverstraat, which is the main shopping street of central Amsterdam.



One night in Germany, when we were tied up for the night at Koblenz, a group of musicians came aboard. They were a traditional brass band (as in “oom-pah” band). They were quite good. One of them brought a barrel organ which had been built 2001 and was covered in beautiful wood inlays. The removable hand crank (not show in this photo) is large and heavy, probably to help the operator maintain a steady RPM.

After passing through the – shall we say – Wagnerian part of the famous Rhine River gorge, we moored at Rudesheim, Germany. One of our stops there was Siegfried’s Mechanisches Musikkabinett. The building is the Brömserhof, a former poor-house. It is one of the largest collec-

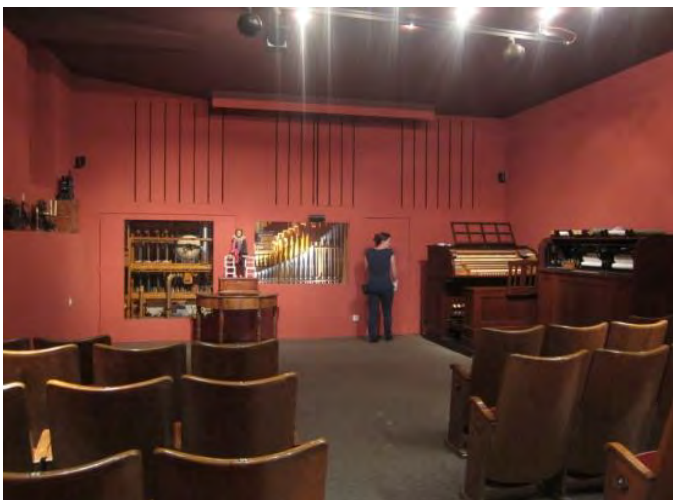
tions of mechanical musical instruments in Europe with exhibits ranging from sizable orchestrions and fairground organs to snuff boxes with mechanical singing birds. Everything restored to full working order and properly tuned and voiced.



As would be expected, the tour ended in the gift shop. I chatted with the young ladies behind the counter (as usual on this trip, no language problems) about the Wurlitzer at Berkeley High School and NorCal member, Roy Powlan who is one of the founders of AMICA (Automatic Musical Instrument Collectors Association). One of the ladies said “Oh but we are AMICA too! Come with me.” She took me through a door and down some stairs into a miniature cinema capable of seating around 100 people. Across the far wall was a set of swell shades above a large glass window showing the pipes of a cinema organ. This brought back a rush of memories of pipe organ-equipped pizza places. The organ is a Welte from a cinema in Bonn. The organ has a duplex roll-player and she played back a 1920’s novelty tune.

I was allowed to enter the chamber and go down the ladder to see the blower, regulators, and relay.

A review of the stop list, including the various “effects,” suggests that this is a true cinema organ, not a residence organ (as is the case with many Weltes).





The stops are, of course, labeled in German. It appears to be at least partially unified. There is some sort of color coding. There are red and green tabs as well as the blue, black, and yellow tabs in the close-up photo below. Black seems to be percussions and effects but why would the two bird whistles be yellow?

I have no idea of the purpose of the rows of white and black knobs above the stop rail. If one of our readers can fill me in, we will include it in our next issue.

Is this a real theatre organ? Check out all the percussions and sound effects in the bottom photo.



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.

NEXT ISSUE

We plan to publish in October and we hope to be able to announce a live meeting.

OPEN CONSOLE SCHEDULE

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

OTHER VENUES

As of June 16, this is the latest word we have received on the following venues

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. No organ events currently scheduled but their first public event will be August 7. www.paramounttheatre.com

Stanford Theatre - 3/21 Wurlitzer. 221 University Avenue, Palo Alto. Closed until 2022 for replacement of heating, ventilating, and air conditioning system. stanfordtheatre.org

California Theatre, San Jose (Fox Theatre) - 4/21 Wurlitzer & 2/10 Wurlitzer. Schedule unknown. <http://sanjosetheaters.org/theaters/california-theatre/>

California Theatre, Pittsburg - 3/10 Robert Morton. 351 Railroad Avenue, Pittsburg. Schedule unknown. <http://www.pittsburgcaliforniatheatre.com/>

Palace of the Legion of Honor - 4/63 E. M. Skinner. Lincoln Park, San Francisco Presidio.

Schedule unknown. See legionofhonor.famsf.org and scroll to “visit/up-coming 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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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 for current & recent past Windsheets in [.pdf](#) format along with an up-to-date Calendar of Events.

You may reach NorCal directly at

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