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OCTOBER 2021

Newsletter of the NorCal Theatre Organ Society  
[www.norcaltos.org](http://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

**NORCAL BOARD NOMINATIONS OPEN**

Nominations for members of the NorCal Board of Directors are now open. Each nomination must be submitted in writing. The text of the nomination letter must include the nominee’s consent and agreement to serve. The nomination letter must be signed by the proposed candidate and at least two NorCal Members. The nominee and the nominators must all be Members of the American Theatre Organ Society (ATOS National) as well as be members of NorCal TOS. Deadline for receipt of nominations is November 10.

Nominations shall be mailed to:

Kevin King, Nominating Committee Chair  
NorCal Theatre Organ Society  
P. O. Box 625  
Berkeley, CA 94701-0625

**WALT STRONY AT THE OROVILLE THEATRE JULY 3RD**

On the first Saturday in July, it was 103 degrees in Oroville. About half a dozen NorCal members drove up to the city by the reservoir to hear the premier of the Oroville State Theatre’s 3/16 Wurlitzer with Walter Strony in recital. Members of Sierra Chapter were also in attendance. The State Theatre Arts Guild has now taken over the ownership and management of the theatre from the City of Oroville. The City had twinned the auditorium, but the Arts Guild has returned the theatre to a single auditorium. Replacement of

carpets and painting of the balcony remain to be completed, so the balcony seating was not available.



*Walt Strony at the Oroville State*

There was a line of people waiting to enter the theatre at 12:30 pm. The majority of the main floor seats were filled with patrons for the 1 pm program. This was not the case before the 4 pm program.

Delightfully, the theatre is comfortably air conditioned. The theatre marquee has been fitted with new electronic annunciator signs which flashed sequentially: *“A Patriotic Pops Concert and Silent Film, American Patriotic and Show Tunes, Performed on our Mighty Wurlitzer, (and) With Organist Walt Strony.”*

“Welcome Back!” was projected on the side wall of the auditorium, an enthusiastic greeting signifying either the reopening of the theatre following its management change and restoration,

and/or its reopening following pandemic restrictions.

When the theatre opened in 1928, it was equipped with a Style D (2/6), Wurlitzer Opus 1832. Now a 3 manual 16 rank instrument, assembled from the ranks from several Wurlitzers, has been installed by Dave Marino. The organ is more than adequate for the theatre and it sounds beautiful, with many more tone colors than would have been available in the instrument originally installed.



And, being played by Walter Strony, the organ was a special treat to hear. Walt played two sets with an intermission. In the first set he played a medley of Broadway songs all written in 1928, the year of the Oroville State Theatre's opening. In the



second set, he scored Laurel and Hardy's comedy short film "Liberty", and he also played additional tunes and an encore.

Oroville is less busy than it would normally be on a summer weekend as the low level of the reservoir, due to the lack of rain, has limited boating and fishing, so it's quite pleasant in the town.

*Rudy*

### CHAIRMAN'S WIND LINE

Gail and I enjoyed pandemic relief by attending the delightful premier organ concert program at the Oroville State Theatre July 3rd. The one fine current option for hearing live theatre pipe organ music in the Bay Area is the Grand Lake Theatre in Oakland on Friday and Saturday nights.

The Berkeley Community Theatre is now slightly less than half way through its reconstruction project. We saw and talked with Sierra Chapter President Randy Warwick in Oroville. Sierra Chapter has a problem in common with NorCal in that the Fair Oaks Community Club House, where their chapter organ is installed, is also undergoing renovations. They currently have no estimate on the completion date of the Club House renovation.

I recently spoke on the telephone with Tom DeLay, who is monitoring the project to install the original organ console, new organ computer relay, and repaired 5-rank main chamber manual chest at the Oakland Paramount Theatre. The work was to have been done by the Chrome Organ Company. With the recent passing of Ken Chrome the completion of the work was in question. Fortunately Steve Hansen, who worked with Ken Chrome, is continuing to complete some - if not - all of Ken's projects. Currently he is finishing work on a Kimball in, I believe, the Milwaukee area. He will then come to the Oakland Paramount. While the Paramount Wurlitzer is currently playable, the one five rank main chest is not usable. The installation of the new, more dependable computer relay will be an improvement over the present relay.

For those NorCal members who don't belong to National, the Annual Convention this year, due to the pandemic, was produced virtually on line, a unique opportunity for everyone. The posts will be available, I believe through December. You can go to the ATOS website, ATOS.org, and follow the links to the virtual concerts. "Six great concerts, seven great organists, a playing techniques seminar, the Awards Ceremony, and more await you as we take the conventional virtual to places that are rather unconventional for a theatre organ to be." So says the web site. Several of the installations I had never seen or heard before.



### WENDELL JACOB

*From Randy Warwick, Sierra Chapter*

Wendell Jacob of Davis, CA, owner of the studio housing the San Francisco Fox lobby Moller passed early in the morning of September 27 at age 92. Wendell died in the same home where he grew up as the son of one of the first professors of viticulture at UC Berkeley's then new "University Farm" in Davis.



*Wendell Jacob*

After receiving an engineering degree Wendell eventually ended up in Southern California working for one of the tech giants of the first 80 years of the 20th century, RCA (originally known as Radio Corporation of America)

Eventually Wendell and a business acquaintance saw the need for very high quality electronic connectors primarily for aerospace applications. They started their own business in Irvine that continues now under ownership of several of their key employees.

Wendell had worked as a projectionist while in school, which instilled a love of the movie theatre that he revisited in his later years when he was able to move back to his childhood home in Davis, buying the San Francisco Fox Moller from the widow of Hal Wilmunder (Hal had removed it from the Fox) out of a studio in Fair Oaks, with Dave Moreno installing the organ



*Wendell with Matias Bombal*

A significant contribution to the theatre organ world, with anticipation of little or no return, Wendell was the primary funding source of Bill Coale's thorough bio of George Wright.

Access to the studio and organ by Sierra Chapter was never denied and Wendell often had open house gatherings for neighbors and friends. We will miss Wendell, a man who seemed to live as if the glass was always more than half full.

We are told that Wendell Jacob's family intends to keep the former San Francisco Fox Theatre Lobby Moller Organ in the studio building in Davis. Hopefully, there will continue to be occasional theatre organ events there.

## **GEORGE WRIGHT MEMORIAL CONCERT CANCELLED**

At the October 9<sup>th</sup> virtual NorCal Board meeting I was asked to check on whether the annual George Wright Memorial Concert will be held, as usual in November, at Grant Union High School in Sacramento. I called Sierra Chapter Chairman Randy Warwick who informed me that the school has a problem with its water system and the students have to drink bottled water. Therefore, it was decided to cancel the event. There is hope for rescheduling the event to April, 2022.

## **FAIROAKS CLUBHOUSE UPDATE**

*NorCal Chairman Rudy Frey reports:*

Various delays have been experienced in the construction updates of the Fair Oaks Community Center where the Sierra Chapter organ is located. The reconstruction is not expected to be completed until December 2022.

## **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 next in January 2022.

## **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 early October. 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](http://www.renaissancerialto.com)

**Paramount Theatre - 4/26 Wurlitzer.** 2025 Broadway, Oakland. No organ events currently scheduled but their first public event was be August 7. [www.paramounttheatre.com](http://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](http://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. According to their web site, the Organ Concerts will resume on November 13<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 pm.

<https://legionofhonor.famsf.org/education/organ-concerts>

## **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)  
P.O. Box 625  
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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