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JULY 2023

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

### NORCAL PICNIC AT KEVIN KING'S STUDIO

Chris Elliott at Kevin King's Wurlitzer  
Saturday, September 2<sup>nd</sup>, Noon to 4:30  
Kevin King's Organ Studio  
2851 Creston Road, Walnut Creek



*Kevin King's Studio*

The gates will open at 12:00 noon. At 1:00 pm Chris Elliot will play a mini-program. Then Kevin will talk about the organ and answer questions. This will be followed by open console for those who wish to have a go at the Mighty Wurlitzer.

You are welcome to pack your picnic basket and maybe grab a bottle of wine, or just come and visit with friends.

If you are unvaccinated; or if you would just feel more comfortable, feel free to bring a mask.

### SIERRA CHAPTER EVENT

Edward Torres at the  
Hunter Hall Wurlitzer Pipe Organ  
Mini-Concert & Ice Cream Social  
Saturday, August 5<sup>th</sup>  
Doors open at 1:00, Concert at 2:00 PM  
218 California Street, Rio Vista  
Suggested Donation \$10.00 Cash or Check

### ATOS 2023 CONVENTION IN CHICAGO

*Chris Nichols Writes:*

First let me say that it was a great convention. The only negative thing was the location of the hotel. There was no shuttle service and it cost \$57 each way with UBER (plus tip) to and from the airport. There were no restaurants or convenience stores within walking distance. The convention crew set up a buffet breakfast every day at \$12, which is pretty good. They did have a dinner buffet which I had once, and it was ok. The hotel "restaurant" was actually a bar with bar sandwiches. I had a burger there once and it was good. We mostly took UBER to either a nearby mall, which had lots of restaurants, or we went to downtown Naperville. It's a cute town with lots of restaurants. Both locations were not very far.

Now to the convention. I don't have a list the of songs played at each venue. Each of the venues was a 30 to 45 minute bus ride.

*Pre-glow (Sunday).* The Pre-glow was in the late afternoon on Sunday at the Sanfilippo estate. This is the third time I've been there and it is still very

impressive. We had plenty of time to wander around before the concert started. Richard Hills was the artist. His entire program was amazing. I think it is the best I've ever heard the organ.



*Sanfilippo Console - Photo by Esther Joseph*

His encore was his version of the 12<sup>th</sup> Street Rag. He started on the organ. They had prerecorded some organ parts. He ran from the organ to the grand piano and accompanied himself. On stage there is something which looks like an upright piano. It is a vibraharp with a keyboard. It does play from the organ console. Richard ran from the piano to the vibraharp. He then ran off the stage to play the Deagan Chimes from a small keyboard. He then ran back to the organ console and finished up there. He must have been exhausted with all that running. It was a great show and quite the grand finale. We



*Walter Strony - Photo by Rudy Frey*

then were able to go down to the carousel barn for about an hour. I rode the carousel and I think the last time I was ever on one was 65 years ago

**Convention Day 1 (Monday).** We loaded the buses for Mundelein. This is the famous 4/21 organ John Seng put together. Our artist was Walt Strony and he did a great job. The weather was kind and the hall was not hot. Walter was very familiar with the organ and it showed.

In the afternoon they had the Membership Meeting at the hotel. I took a nap

In the evening we drove to Joliet to hear David Wickerham at the Rialto and the 4/27 Barton. Since it was the 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend we were given one of Dave's great Patriotic Medleys at the end of his program.



*Rialto Theatre - Photo by Esther Joseph*

**Convention Day 2 (Tuesday).** First was the Young Organist Competition at the Tivoli Theater in Downers Grove. The three competitors were Ian Fraser from Plainfield, New Jersey; Jared Goldinger from Jackson Township, Ohio; and Declan Poole from the UK. After the three played, last year's winner, Aaron Hawthorne from Scotland, did a min-concert while the judges were deliberating. (See "Rudy Frey Writes" below for more about Aaron.) Ian Fraser was the winner.

In the afternoon at the Hotel, Lowery had set up a showroom. Rosemary Bailey was the guest artist.

Later in the afternoon there was a seminar by Dennis Hedberg on the organs he had been involved with. Lots of photos and interesting information.

In the evening they had a party in the ballroom at the hotel. They had the console from the Oriental Theatre in Chicago. It has been beautifully restored and is now a VTPO running the Hauptwerk Paramount 450 samples. The artist for the evening was Luke Stasiunas.



*Oriental Theatre Console - Photo by Rudy Frey*

Rudy Frey reminds us that this very ornate 4-manual console is from Chicago's equally ornate Oriental Theatre. It is the same Wurlitzer that Walt Strony played without pistons in the Oriental Theatre, at a young age, at the Chicago Convention in 1977. Tedde played it without pipes.

**Convention Day 3 (Wednesday).** In the morning we were off again to Mundelein to hear Justin Stahl. He showed off the organ well.

In the afternoon we had the Awards Ceremony/Banquet at the hotel ballroom.

Here are the awards which were given out:

- Hall of Fame – Dennis Hedberg
- Organist of the Year – Donnie Rankin
- Honorary Member – Charlie Briggs and Dr. John Landon
- Industrial Achievement Award – Larry Chase and Allen Miller

There was another seminar by Bill Coale about digitizing for preservation. Here is the link for his notes: [https://www.geniusofgeorgewright.com/uploads/4/5/5/6/45567231/2023\\_atos\\_convention\\_presentation.pdf](https://www.geniusofgeorgewright.com/uploads/4/5/5/6/45567231/2023_atos_convention_presentation.pdf)

The Lowery Room was open again with Rosemary Baily.

In the evening in the ballroom on the Oriental VTPO there was a concert and the silent film, *Captain January*, with ATOS Chairman Tedde Gibson at the console.

**Convention Day 4 (Thursday).** In the morning we were off again to Mundelein to hear Brett Valliant. Brett is the organist at Organ Stop in Mesa. Another very nice concert. It is always interesting to hear different people play the same instrument and see what they do with it.

In the afternoon was the Members Forum. There was some discussion about the archives. They are now at the OHS archives in Pennsylvania. They have their own private section. Although access might be less, they seem to be very safe.

The final concert of the convention was Simon Gledhill at the Rialto Barton. Another great concert.



*Organ Piper Pizza – Photo by Esther Joseph*

**After-glow (Friday).** They split us into two groups, A and B. I was in Group A. We had an hour and a half ride up to Organ Piper Pizza in Greenfield, Wisconsin for a one-hour concert by Zach Frame, followed by a pizza lunch. It was so much fun being in a pizza-and-pipes venue again. Zach knows that organ backwards and forwards and really showed it off. Of course, he had to play Rubber Ducky using the tuned ducks.

We then bussed a short distance to Carma Labs. It is a warehouse. It has a motorcycle museum in it. It also has a 4/90 theater pipe organ. It has four 32's and fourteen 16's. Jelani Eddington was our artist.

He was integrally involved in the design and certainly showed off many of its sides.

All in all, the organs were all in very good shape and artists were excellent choices. It was a great convention.



*Jelani Eddington at Carma Labs -  
Photo by Donnie Rankin*

### **Rudy Frey Writes:**

The 2024 Convention is tentatively set for Columbus, Ohio. Nothing has been determined for 2025 but 2026 will be in Rochester with a visit to Shea's Buffalo's Theatre in Buffalo, which will be celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

ATOS Vice-Chairman Taylor Trimby will replace Tedde Gibson as ATOS Chairman next year.

Some of the rarer things seen at this convention included the twelve tuned ducks on the Organ Piper Pizza organ in Milwaukee. The idea for their creation came from past ATOS Chairman Jack Moleman, who also had a set on his home organ. Yes, each actually squawks in pitch and jumps up when played, activated by a large pneumatic.

2019 Young Organist's Competition Winner Aaron Hawthorne played a mini-concert at the Tivoli theatre in Downers Grove while the judges were deliberating on this year's young artists' competition. Aaron is from Scotland and was the 2019 competition winner. He has a Master of Arts (with Honors) degree from the University of Glasgow. He hadn't had the opportunity to perform his winner's concert because the COVID epidemic cancelled several ATOS conventions. In the inter-

vening years he has been performing professionally in Europe.

Before playing his last selection, a song popular in Scotland, Aaron claimed to have the best bagpipe sounding registration of any theatre organist. He began the selection and indeed the registration sounded like bagpipes. As the song proceeded, the bagpipe sound became even more dominant. A Scotsman in kilts was coming down the aisle playing bagpipes coordinating perfectly with the melody being played on the Wurlitzer!

The piano at Mundelein sounded exceptionally good. It is a grand piano in the orchestra pit. A Vorzetter connected to the organ relay is used to play the piano. The Mundelein console is on a Barton lift, which avoids the necessity of excavation for a piston type lift. These lifts can be found in various venues, I think the Grand Lake Theatre has one, but they are less common than piston lifts.

### **Wayne Joseph Writes:**

I particularly enjoyed the variety of venues offered at the convention concerts. Not only were there two tradition theatres with organs but, one at a private residence (Sanfilippo), one at a university (Mundelein), a pizza parlor, a warehouse, and the hotel ball room for a silent movie. (Paramount 450 Virtual Theatre Pipe Organ.) A little something for everyone!

Also, transportation to and from went smoothly for the most part, but at times felt a little rushed or pushed to get back on board quickly for the return to the hotel.

## **JERRY NAGANO AT RIO VISTA**

### **Robert Woodworth Writes:**

Saturday, May 20, Rio Vista was in the mid 60's as Sierra Chapter presented Jerry Nagano at Hunter Hall. The hall was about half full, and we found the organ in great shape.

Jerry opened with "On the Air." "Moonlight On the Ganges" is a tune he and his mentor, Gaylord Carter, were both fond of. "The Nearness Of You" followed. A friend of Jerry's from his early years was Anne Leaf, who presented him with a copy of *The Musicians Guide to Dance Music*. This was a

thick stack of paper with an encyclopedic listing of dance tunes, composers, additional information, and most importantly, proper tempo. This was his introduction to "Brazil."

Fats Waller made several recordings on an Estey in New Jersey with a famously heavy tremulant. Jerry made sure to use heavy tremors on "Mean to me." He continued with "Our Love is Here to Stay" and "Our Director," Jerry commented about how often large combinations are more popular in theatre organ but he chose to use quiet combinations for George Shearing's "Lullaby Of Birdland." Next was a medley of five tunes: "Beyond the Blue Horizon," "Ain't We Got Fun," "Breezin' Along With The Breeze," "Louise," and "Hooray For Hollywood."

At this point, we broke for the interval, this time to the now available fellowship hall of the building. This gave us a larger area with seating for conversation over refreshments. It was less cramped than the lobby we used to use for the break.

Jerry resumed with "Comedy Tonight" from *A Funny thing Happened On the Way to the Forum* and "I'm Glad I'm not Young Anymore" from *Gigi*, "When I'm Not Around Anymore" from *Sweeney Todd*, Eric Coates "Dam Busters" march, a latin version of "Poinciana," and Jerome Kerns' "All the Things You Are."

The George Wright arrangement of "Whistler And His Dog" is famous, but Jerry played it in the "Blackpool Ballroom" style. His last selection was a medley of music from "Hello Dolly" including the overture, "Before The Parade Passes By," "It Only Takes Moment," and the big production number "Hello Dolly." Jerry's finale was aptly chosen, "The Party's Over."

## OAKLAND PARAMOUNT THEATRE OF THE ARTS

*Kevin King writes:*

As some of you know, over the past several months the pipe organ at the Oakland Paramount Theatre has had a major upgrade. The original 1931 Wurlitzer organ console has been rebuilt and re-

turned to the theatre after spending many years in several pizza restaurants across the country. The organ's problematic relay system has also been updated to a state of the art Uniflex relay system. This new system, along with the refined specification of the vintage Art-Deco console, have made this world class Wurlitzer even more impressive and versatile than ever. This homecoming dream was made possible by very generous support from the late Bill Schlotter, our NorCal organ crew chief and good friend.

The Paramount management has been very supportive and enthusiastic about the project. They would like to feature the organ to the public more often.

It has been my pleasure to play the Wurlitzer for several recent events. Last December I was asked to play an hour of holiday themed pre-show music for the on-going "Speaker Series" lecture program. On April 29<sup>th</sup>, the Pixar Movie Studio held a private preview of their latest animated feature for the film company and guests. Once again, I was invited to play the Wurlitzer for this exciting event. Most recently, on May 27<sup>th</sup>, the Art Deco Preservation Society held their annual black-tie ball at the Paramount. I worked together with the "Deco-belles" (a 1920's style dance group) to feature the Wurlitzer accompanying a classic kick-line on stage. (The link below will take you to a short video clip from that event.) We hope to be able to have NorCal members see and hear this "new-old" gem in person in the near future. The glorious sound of the Paramount Wurlitzer in the acoustics of that stunning theatre is something very special.

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/VuLFUgjR6ATx5wW47>

## OTHER 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. Organ again playing but no organ

events currently scheduled.

[www.paramounttheatre.com](http://www.paramounttheatre.com)

**Stanford Theatre - 3/21 Wurlitzer.** 221 University Avenue, Palo Alto. Open Thursday through Sunday.

[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>

**Oroville State Theatre – 3/16 Wurlitzer (former Towe Auto Museum organ).** 1489 Myers Street, Oroville, (530) 538-2470. Schedule unknown.

<https://www.oroVILLEstatetheatre.com>

**Palace of the Legion of Honor - 4/63 E. M. Skinner.** Lincoln Park, San Francisco Presidio. Saturdays at 4:00 pm.

<https://legionofhonor.famsf.org/events/organ-concert>

## 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 contact our Membership Chair Neal Wood:

[woodshed523@icloud.com](mailto:woodshed523@icloud.com)

P.O. Box 625

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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 per year for a full voting mem-

bership plus six issues per year of *Theatre Organ Magazine*.

## 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

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