


OCTOBER 2023

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

**NORCAL PICNIC AT
KEVIN KING'S STUDIO**

The afternoon of Saturday, September 2nd was overcast and quite cool for September in Walnut Creek. Those who came to the picnic, concert, and open console at Kevin King's back yard organ studio were treated to performances by four great artists!



Left to right: Host Kevin King, Jerry Nagano, Chris Elliot, Walter Strony

As advertised, Chris Elliott led off. Kevin spoke briefly about his organ and played a set, followed by guests Walter Strony and Jerry Nagano. Afterward was open console giving all who wanted a chance to play a truly great Wurlitzer.

- Chris played:
- “Veradero”
 - “Loving” (by the late Del Castillo)
 - Four Pieces by Charlie Chaplin:
 - “Sing a Song”
 - “Eternally”
 - “This is My Song”
 - “Smile”
 - “A Sylvan Idle” (by Richard Purvis)
 - Medley from *My Fair Lady*
 - “Turkish Towel”

Kevin played “Love Will Keep Us Together,” Walter played “Blue Chimes” and “Dance of the Blue Danube,” and Jerry played “Soon It’s Gonna Rain” and “I Get a Kick Out of You”

**22ND GEORGE WRIGHT MEMORIAL
CONCERT**

Walter Strony at the Mighty Wurlitzer

2:00 pm, Saturday, November 4th
Grant Union High School Auditorium
1400 Grand Avenue
Sacramento

Advance Tickets \$12, General \$15
Box Office opens 1:00 pm

For driving directions and more info, see
sierrachapteratos.org

RON RHODE AT RIO VISTA

On Saturday, September 16th Sierra Chapter and Geoff Hansen hosted Ron Rhodes for a wonderful concert full of his upbeat arrangements. His finale was a magnificent “Entrance and Procession of Bacchus.”

NOMINATIONS ARE OPEN

Nominations are open for members of the Board of Directors of the NorCal Theatre Organ Society. Directors must be members of both the NorCal Theatre Organ Society and the American Theatre Organ Society. Directors are expected to attend all board meetings unless excused in advance. Board meetings are held on the second Saturday morning of even numbers months plus January and the annual business meeting. Nominations will close November 15. For more information and a copy of a nominating letter, contact the NorCal Secretary, Art Woodworth whose contact information appears at the end of this copy of the Windsheet.

CLOSING CHORD

Bill Petty: April 16, 1951 – July 29, 2023. Chris Nichols writes:

Bill had cancer and had been in treatment for many years. At one point he went into remission for several years, but it finally came back and took his life. He went into hospice mid-July of this year and called me the day he entered. He related the following. After a while he had to hang up and said we would talk again soon. We never did.

In 1960 Bill was taken to the Organ Loft in Salt Lake City, and the organ bug bit him hard. His friend Curt Wood told me that Bill built the relay to run the 5 manual organ at the Organ Loft.

He was drafted into the army in January 1971, and was stationed at the Presidio in San Francisco in April 1971. He was rated an E-4 in the army.

He met Virginia Cheshire in San Francisco. I knew Virginia through Wes Cavett. She was quite the character. She was well on in years and had some trouble getting around. I would often drive her and

Wes to organ events. She had been a dancer in her younger years.

Bill met Ron Downer who was an old time organ tech from San Francisco. I got to know Ron too. He was quite the character. He had a small building in his back yard where he assembled a large organ with the 3-manual console from Grauman's Million Dollar Theatre in Los Angeles. Ron's father had been one of San Francisco's Civic Organists.

Bill met David Kelsey and they became good friends. David was playing at Page One (south of Market at 5th and Natoma) with an Allen Theatre Delux and piano. David later moved to House of Harmony. Eventually he moved to the New Bell Saloon on Polk Street.

Bill was very active in the organ scene in the Bay Area. He did much of the electrical work installing Ernie Wilson's organ at the Grand Lake Theatre. He was a regular attendee at the organ events at Asilomar. He worked as an organ technician and repaired electronic organs as well as maintenance on pipe organs. He moved to Honolulu, Hawaii in late 1980's. He did organ work there. He maintained and played the Robert Morton organ at the Hawaii Theatre in Honolulu.

They held a very nice service at Church of the Crossroads in Honolulu. It was streamed on Zoom and I joined. One of his sisters spoke and related stories about him. There were a large number of people at the church for the celebration of his life.

David Carleton Dillon: June 18, 1935 - July 21, 2023. From the Trident Society:

David was born in Saint Marys, West Virginia, He obtained his BSEE from West Virginia University and an MSEE at Texas Technological College while participating in the U.S. Air Force ROTC program. David then served for nine years, achieving the rank of Captain as a communications/radar officer at various North American duty stations. He also served as technical liaison to the U.S. Navy as a member of the Telemetry Working Group of the Inter-Range Instrumentation Group.

David held various government clearances and worked with Lawrence Livermore and Los Alamos Labs while a Senior Programmer/Analyst with Cray Research, perhaps the world's preeminent builder of supercomputers. He also worked as a technical consultant in San Jose, with Peritus International, Santa Clara; Sorcim Corporation of San Jose; Control Data Corporation in Bloomington, Minnesota and Sunnyvale; and Litton Industries.

Dave's musical interests went back to childhood. His father played piano in bands around their home, and Dave studied piano and organ and played in church. However, his primary interest was organ, both classical and theatre. The organ/computer connection came when some additions were made to the Ruffatti pipe organ in San Francisco's Davies Symphony Hall. That organ had a microcomputer control system that, like the organ itself, had been designed and built in Italy. No local technician knew how it actually worked, but the control system had to be expanded in order to accommodate the organ additions. David had already gained a reputation as a "Super" electrical/computer engineer and was engaged to create a solution. He studied the schematics and other notes of the original organ installer, consulted with then-principal organists John Fenstermaker and David Higgs, copied the base program from the controller's EPROMS; and then engineered improvements to facilitate the expanded organ and a faster processor, accomplishing all this while working in his "spare time" and living out of various local motel rooms. Today, the 1980s-vintage system works without fail.

David was a member of various societies: Eta Kappa Nu, the ANSI X3J3 FORTRAN Committee, IEEE, and the Telemetry Working Group of the IRIG. He was also a member of the Board of Professional Engineers of West Virginia.

David possessed great intellect and a generous spirit and was a friend to all who knew him. Per his wishes, a private time of sharing will be held later. David is interred at the Riverside National Cemetery, Riverside California.

OTHER VENUES

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

Paramount Theatre – 4/26 Wurlitzer. 2025 Broadway, Oakland. Organ again playing but no organ events currently scheduled.

www.paramounttheatre.com

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

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.oroillestatetheatre.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

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 \$50 you may join National ATOS per year for a full voting membership 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 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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