


JULY 2024

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 AND ANNUAL MEETING AT KEVIN KING’S STUDIO

Mark Herman at Kevin’s Wurlitzer
Saturday, August 10th, Noon to 4:30
Kevin King’s Organ Studio
2851 Creston Road, Walnut Creek



Mark and Kevin after Mark’s 1999 NorCal concert

The gate will open at 12:00 noon for socializing. You are welcome to pack your picnic basket and maybe a bottle of wine, or just come and visit with friends. Mark’s concert will start right after a very brief (and required) NorCal TOS Annual Business Meeting which will start at 1:00.

NORCAL THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

Saturday, August 10th at 1:00 pm at Kevin King’s studio, just before the start of Mark Herman’s concert. The meeting agenda is as follows:

1. Call to order
2. Board Member Introductions
3. Chairman's Acknowledgements
4. Approval of Minutes of 2020 Annual Business Meeting
5. Treasurer's Report
6. Membership Report
7. Program Chairman's Report
8. Organ Crew Chief’s Report
9. Old Business
10. New Business
11. Questions and Comments from the Floor
12. Adjournment

Copies of the various reports will be passed out at Kevin’s before the meeting for you to read in advance, so it is hoped that the meeting will only take a few minutes.

CONSOLES RETURN TO BCT!

Saturday, June 15th. A crew of eight NorCal members assembled at our off-site storage location in San Leandro to return our two consoles to Ber-



The Center console was the last item to be removed from the storage unit. Photo by Chris Nichols

keley Community Theatre. We had removed them from BCT on May 9, 2020 to make room for the major building renovations about to start. They had spent just over four years in storage.



CCN Photo

The crew consisted of Ted Hubbard, Kevin King, Wayne Joseph, Chris Nichols, Judson Owens, Gordon Pratt, Neil Wood, and Art Woodworth. Ted had arranged for our use of the same stake-sided truck with lift gate that we had used to take the consoles to San Leandro. Perhaps because we had been through this drill before, we were loaded up and out the gate (and out of paid storage!) in an even hour



CCN Photo



Art Woodworth Photo

Arriving at BCT, we reversed the process and offloaded the consoles and other items onto the stage at BCT.

Saturday, June 22nd. A crew of eight met at BCT. They were Rudy Frey, Ted Hubbard, Kevin King, Chris Nichols, Judson Owens, Gordon Pratt, Neil Wood, and Art Woodworth. Our task was to remove the Toledo console from its dolly and then move the console and dolly to safe storage on the Level 3 balcony. This was because the school district had asked that we store only one of our two consoles at stage level.

Our decision as to which console should remain at stage level was based on their sizes. Removed



Toledo console back at BCT - CCN Photo

from its dolly, the Toledo console fits in the backstage elevator, as shown in the photo below.

The Center Theatre console is the larger Fox Special size and is too wide to fit in the elevator. Also, while the Toledo console is a beautiful architectural console, it is a standard sized four manual Wurlitzer console and does not have space for enough stop tabs to control all of our organ.



Toledo console on the way to safe storage on the stage house balcony - CCN



*Center console to remain on stage at BCT
– CCN photo*

ABOUT THE BERKELEY COMMUNITY THEATRE RENOVATIONS

So, what was going on with the building? And why did we need to remove the consoles? BCT and the adjacent north and south wings were completed back in 1950, so it was time for major structural upgrades to meet current seismic standards. Also, major remodeling was overdue to meet the changed needs for classes in music, drama, and stagecraft. The stage is now shallower so an interior hallway parallel to Allston Way could be added. And the storage space beneath the stage is now a complex of dressing rooms and other performance support activities.

We had to remove our two consoles from the building because there would not be a safe location for them there during construction. During that period we were able to make number of site visits to BCT and were gland we had made that choice.

Also, we had to remove the blowers and their motors from their stage-right basement location to make way for temporary removal of part of the blower room floor to allow foundation strengthening. At least we were able to move the two blowers and their motors to a safe location in the

back of the auditorium. They are now back in the blower room.

NOW: WHEN WILL WE HEAR OUR ORGAN AGAIN?

NorCal Organ Crew Chief Kevin King writes:

As most members know, it has been approximately four years since our Mighty Wurlitzer at Berkeley Community Theatre has been playable. This was because of the extensive construction project at the theatre. The massive re-configuring of the stage and attached classroom areas required our organ crew to do several things. We had to take down the huge 32 foot Diaphone pipes located on the upper backstage steel storage loft. That area was removed and a new, larger concrete storage loft was constructed. Thankfully space was reserved in the construction plans to reinstall those giant pipes. We also had to completely disassemble and remove the two 20 horsepower blowers in the basement blower room along with cutting the 20 inch diameter windlines and all electrical controls. That area received structural steel and concrete upgrades required in the project.

We also had to put both Wurlitzer organ consoles onto temporary dollies in order to remove them from the theatre for safekeeping. They were kept in a paid storage facility until recently, when they were returned to the theatre. Of course, one of our main priorities was to protect the rest of the organ remaining in the theatre during construction work. The pipes in the chambers were carefully covered in plastic sheeting to keep out dust, as were the unenclosed percussions in the tone chute area. Countless smaller steps were taken in order to label and protect the many parts of the organ's other mechanical components.

The huge backstage area and attached school building is barely recognizable. Almost everything, from the grid at attic level, to the lower basement has been re-engineered. Not everything has been negative. There are sparkling new dressing rooms, storage areas, even a large backstage passenger

elevator that goes from the basement up four floors to the upper storage loft.

Ever since the crew has been able to return to the theatre, work has begun to bring the organ “back to life.” Our access has been somewhat limited since we do not yet have new keys to the building. We currently have to work when the theatre manager is there. A lot of cleaning has taken place and repairs to a couple of slightly damaged components is being done. As mentioned, the beautiful, irreplaceable Wurlitzer consoles are back home safe in the theatre. The mammoth Spencer organ blowers are back in the blower room and have been reassembled. A new backstage cabinet for the organ relay computer is in place. New electrical wires and data cables have been run to necessary areas for the upgraded organ relay.

What remains to be done is as follows: Electrical control boxes and power connections for the blowers must be installed. The severed metal windlines in the blower room need to be repaired and reattached to the blowers. Some relay data wiring remains to be finished. Once everything is done, we will “throw the switch.” Then the job of checking and tuning all the pipes can commence. A future BIG job will be bringing all the unwieldy 32 foot Diaphone pipes back to the theatre and reinstalling them on the new storage loft. This will require special planning and all new structural bracing. The exhausted organ crew hopes it will not be too long before our wonderful Wurlitzer sings again.

GIFT FROM ESTATE OF DAVID CARLETON DILLON

Our October 2023 issue included an obituary of NorCal member David Carleton Dillon. We recently received a generous check from his estate, which will go a long way toward paying our sizeable console storage bill. We all thank him for his generosity.

CLOSING CHORD

Bob Rhoads (1935-2024)



I'm saddened to report that Bob Rhoads died at home in Sonoma on February 10. He was 88 years old. It would take a long time to detail Bob's many accomplishments. I'll try to keep this primarily to organs and theatre organs

in particular.

When I first met Bob, he was in charge of maintenance at the Simpson Bible College in San Francisco. He met Dolores there. They were married in 1972; Dolores, their children, Ruth and Rob, and seven grandchildren survive him.

He had just installed a smallish Robert Morton organ in the chapel at Simpson. It had originally been in the UC Theatre in Berkeley. That was a very old (1917) theatre and the organ was more a glorified church organ than theatre organ. Later, Bob and master organ builder, Richard Stenger, added a Wurlitzer Tuba that gave the organ a lot more oomph. Simpson was also part of a radio network that produced tapes of gospel music. Bob built a radio studio in Simpson's basement including a 3-manual 10-rank Smith organ that had been in the Stanford Theatre in Palo Alto. This organ had lots of punch and it sounded surprisingly good. Larry Vannucci made it sound first-class.

With this background, Bob worked with Richard Villemen, an M. P. Möller representative in California. One of their biggest jobs where Bob assisted was the installation of the Wurlitzer from the San Francisco Fox Theater into Assemblyman Frank Lanterman's home in southern California. Later, Bob became the Möller representative.

While Bob had his own pipe organ installation and maintenance business, he played a large part in the installation of the current organ in the Oakland Paramount Theater. He also installed several theatre organs that were in various pizza parlors in northern California. When Ed Stout retired from the organ business, Bob and Dolores did the tuning and maintenance of the organs in Grace Cathedral, San Francisco.

In 1978, Rhoads Pipe Organ Service was purchased by Schoenstein & Co. Bob became shop manager and then vice-president and technical director. Perhaps his most noteworthy accomplishment there was the nearly impossible feat of installing the façade of the organ for the new Mormon Conference Center in Salt Lake City. Whenever I see this organ façade on TV, I think of Bob. It is an example of his "let's make it happen" against odds that would be impossible for anyone else I know.

When Bob retired, he remodeled his house in Vallejo. He loved going to the organ programs at Berkeley Community Theater. Later, he moved to a retirement apartment in Sonoma. He enjoyed listening to the enormous collection of organ music on YouTube. Few can list as many significant accomplishments over such a wide variety of endeavors. —*Dave Schutt*

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.

<https://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://www.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. Until we return to a regular concert series, we will publish 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 norcaltos.org for current & recent past Windsheets in [.pdf](#) format along with an up-to-date Calendar of Events. Or reach NorCal directly at NorcalTOS@outlook.com.

Chairman: Chris Booras
43241 Giovanni Terrace
Fremont, CA 94539

christopher@scooplight.com

Vice Chairman: Judson Owens
1730 Virginia Street
Berkeley, CA 94703

jud.owens@gmail.com

Treasurer: Ted Hubbard
1973 La Corso Court
Walnut Creek, CA 94598-2214
(828) 606-7721

effertaph@hotmail.com

Secretary & Windsheet Editor:

Art Woodworth
600 Coventry Road
Kensington, CA 94707
(510) 524-7452

arthurjwoodworth@gmail.com

Membership Secretary: Neal Wood
523 Corbett Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94114
(415) 515-4030

woodshed523@icloud.com

Program Chair: Gordon Pratt
PO Box 2785
San Lorenzo Ca 94580
(510) 303-6809 mobile
aznme2@webtv.net

Board Member: Kevin King
musicbarn20@gmail.com

Past Chairman & Ex-officio Board Member
Rudy Frey
2050 Willow Way
San Bruno, CA 94066
(650) 933-2513
RudyFrey@currently.com