
The WINDSHEET



Newsletter of the NORCAL THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY www.theatreorgans.com/norcal
PO Box 625, Berkeley, CA 94701-0625 510/644-2707 March 2009

JIM RIGGS AT BCT SUNDAY, MARCH 15 AT 2:30 PM

We haven't had the pleasure of hearing **Jim Riggs** play NorCal's Berkeley Wurlitzer since November 2004 and we are delighted that we were able to coordinate our schedule and bring him to our audience once again.



Jim is a well known artist in Northern California and throughout the national theatre organ concert and silent film accompaniment circuit. He is a staff organist at the Oakland *Paramount* theatre and a familiar performer

at the *Stanford Theatre* in Palo Alto, the *Castro Theatre* in San Francisco, and the *Grand Lake Theatre* in Oakland. Jim has recorded five theatre organ CDs, including one that features unique duets with the *Wurlitzer* and vintage *Ampico* reproducing piano rolls.

Jim is especially known for his interpretations of *Classic American Pop*—the music produced between the wars. His programs highlight the great tunes of **Gershwin, Porter, Berlin, Kern, Arlen, Warren** and many more. His musical stylings are always orchestral and often

evoke dance orchestras and big swing bands. If audiences walk into a theatre expecting the monotonous drone of the typical pipe organ, they're in for a big, uplifting surprise!

Of the handful of touring theatre organists worldwide, Riggs is one of the few who also specializes in the presentation and live scoring of silent films. He has composed and performed scores for the films of such greats as **Douglas Fairbanks, Greta Garbo, Harold Lloyd, Lon Chaney, Buster Keaton, Gloria**

Swanson, Joan Crawford, Laurel & Hardy and many others. His scores are always dramatic and creative, blending seamlessly with the action on screen without overwhelming it.

His music has been heard on *National Public Radio* in the USA and the *BBC* in the UK. Riggs was featured in the *Public Broadcasting System* television documentary, *Pulling Out All The Stops—A History of the Pipe Organ in America*.

ERRATA

Is my face red? In the Upcoming Events in the February *Windsheet*, the **Harold Lloyd** film *Safety Last* was erroneously announced as *Safety First*, obviously wrong.[Ed.]

DONATIONS

NorCal gratefully acknowledges a donation from **Mr. Thurston Graham** of Oakland.

NorCal gratefully acknowledges memorial gifts in remembrance of **Robert Mayer** from **Mr. Clarence Fry** of Beaverton, MI,

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Heath of Lawrence, KS, **Mr. and Mrs. William Kaplan** of San Francisco, and **Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Tom** of Danville.

NorCal gratefully acknowledges the generous matching gift from **FM Global Foundation**, on behalf of **Ann & Bert Atwood** of Kelseyville, CA.

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CHAIRMAN Neal R. Wood 523 Corbett Avenue San Francisco, CA 94114 415/861-7082 nealwood@pacbell.net	VICE CHAIRMAN Kevin J. King 2851 Creston Road Walnut Creek, CA 94597 925/256-7436 kevjking@juno.com	SECRETARY Arthur Woodworth 600 Coventry Road Kensington, CA 94707 510/524-7452 awoodworth@bigfoot.com	TREASURER Frank La Fetra 3167 Falls Creek Dr. San Jose, CA 95135 408/532-1044 frank@lafetra.com	EDITOR Don Ravey 127 Chukker Ct. San Mateo, CA 94403 650/573-8027 don@ravey.net	PROGRAM Gordon A. Pratt 15942 Via Cordoba San Lorenzo, CA 94580 510/276-8102 aznme2@webtv.net	MEMBERSHIP Neal R. Wood 523 Corbett Avenue San Francisco, CA 94114 415/861-7082 nealwood@pacbell.net
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When emailing, include ATOS in the subject line. Otherwise, if you are unknown to the recipient's computer, its SPAM filter may divert your mail.

FINAL NOTES

Robert M. Gilbert (1917 – 2/10/2009)

Bob was a life member of NorCal and a member of ATOS, and it was he who rewrote our Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation, and obtained legal counsel to obtain the 501(c)(3) tax exempt status for NorCal TOS. Bob served as Editor of the *Theatre Organ Journal* from August 1981 to August 1986. He was of invaluable assistance with the NorCal-produced 1983 and 1991 ATOS San Francisco Conventions. His dear wife Beth preceded him in death in 2006, just a month after their 65th wedding anniversary. Bob is survived by his children, **Judith Pohlmann** of Alexandria, VA and **Don Gilbert** of San Jose, CA.

Beth Gilbert typeset the Windsheet for years, before the advent of computers.



Jacques Littlefield (1949 – 1/7/2009)

Jacques Littlefield was both a serious organist and a renowned collector of tanks and armored vehicles, two interests that would seem rather divergent. He studied organ under the late Stanford organist Professor **Herbert Nanney** and had a 45 rank *Fisk* organ in a purpose-built hall attached to his home. He was also considered a scholar and expert on the history of armored warfare. He built a miniature live-steam railroad with bridges and a tunnel on his Portola Valley ranch.



FOR SALE

I have my **Allen 317** theatre organ for sale. It is a seven channel instrument and has both theatre and classical voices. It is in excellent condition. Anyone with questions can contact me at:

Vern Bickel
(707) 994-4436
v.m.bickel@att.net

MORTON MADNESS XV — SATURDAY, APRIL 18, 2009

Morton Madness continues an annual tradition with NorCal and Sierra chapters of ATOS

Through the cooperation of two Northern California winery venues. Young **Mark Herman** will play two *Robert Morton* theatre pipe organs. [Publ. note: of very similar specification, but in different acoustical environments and with a five-year difference of manufacture date.] We will have a *whole day* of wine, women and song—well, you'll have to provide the



Above—Interior at Hartzell's Wynelands Blue Barn in Lodi
Below—Music Room at Ironstone Winery at Murphys



women, with *one* concert artist who plays early in the afternoon at **Harmony Wynelands** in *Lodi*, then we all drive up to **Ironstone Vineyards** in *Murphys* and are treated to a second concert by the same artist, plus a *buffet dinner* at the Ironstone Vineyards, all for one admission ticket, which is \$50 this year.

This year's artist is the popular young rising star, **Mark Herman** from Indiana. Mark has played concerts at

Berkeley Community Theatre to rave reviews, and similarly elsewhere on the concert circuit the past couple of years.

Festivities will begin at **1:00 PM** in Lodi. Bring snacks or a picnic lunch. If this is your first visit to *Harmony Wynelands*, allow extra time to find the location.

Following the concert and much *schmoozing*, the trek continues to the foothills community of Murphys, where we will enjoy a buffet dinner and another Morton concert by **Mark Herman** at *Ironstone Vineyards*.

This is a good event to coordinate with some friends, to share the considerable driving that is involved, some 80 miles or so from San Francisco to Lodi, another 60 miles from there to Murphys, and perhaps 140 miles back to San Francisco.

Tickets and more information are available by calling **Neal Wood** at **415-861-7082**.

More information, including photos and descriptions of the organs can be found on the Sierra Chapter web site:

**OPEN
CONSOLE**
Hosted by
Chris Nichols



This is an opportunity for NorCal members to try their hand at playing the chapter's Wurlitzer at the Berkeley Community Theatre. When the theatre is available, these sessions run from **1:00 to 5:00 PM**. The next scheduled dates are:

Sunday, March 22, 2009

Sunday, April 26, 2009

Open Consoles are informal and our genial host, **Chris Nichols**, ensures that any NorCal member feels comfortable. He lends help and support to anyone who needs it.

Depending on how many members are present, each has one or more 15-minute sessions at the console, in rotation.

Important: Call the NorCal voice mail at (510) 644-2707 on that Sunday morning to confirm theatre availability. If there will be Open Console, enter via the backstage door at 1930 Allston Way.

CHAIRMAN'S WINDLINE

I hope you had a chance to hear Ron Reseigh's wonderful concert at Berkeley. I want to thank him for not playing tunes such as *Raindrops Keep Falling on my Head*, *September In The Rain*, *Singin' in the Rain*, and all the other 'wet' tunes. We had a very good attendance of brave souls, despite the very damp Sunday. Lots of *First Timers*, too.

Our Youth Camp matching fund is progressing slowly, obviously due to the economic downturn. I thank the folks who have contributed so far, and hope that a few more folks will step up to the plate, so that we can reach our matching goal of \$1500. We need more artists like **Ron Reseigh**, **Mark Herman**, **Eric Fricke**, and **Donny Rankin** if we are going to promote the theatre organ sound into the future. Okay, I'm now off the soap box.



And speaking of young organists ... **Mark Herman** will be the featured artist this year for *Morton Madness* on Saturday, April 18th. He's back again after a packed house concert at Grant Union High School. I already have my ticket. Tickets are available through NorCal by contacting me: **Neal Wood**, nealwood@pacbell.net or phone 415-861-7082 for more information. *Neal*

RON RESEIGH CONCERT, FEBRUARY 15



ARon Reseigh concert always brings spontaneity as well as wonderful music to the audience. Ron lives in Milwaukee, where he is a staff organist at the *Organ Piper Pizza*. Playing in a pizza restaurant requires unique performing talent, where patrons are always requesting favorite tunes, and *segues* from one number to the next are *de rigeur*. As he has done at previous concerts, Ron took requests from the audience at the beginning of the second half of his program and added a few tunes and twists of his own to deliver *continuous musical entertainment* for nearly an hour!

For his first half, Ron brought up the orchestra lift with **America, I Love You** (a *WWI* march by *Archie Gottler*). This was followed by the old *ZeZ Confrey* favorite, **Stumbling**, then a favorite of mine that was sung by Carly Simon in *The Spy Who Loved Me*, **Nobody Does It Better** (by *Marvin Hamlisch*), showing off our Wurlitzer's *Style D Trumpet* to good effect. Ron employs some lovely, minimalist registrations on many of his quieter arrangements. Another rousing march followed, **Bonds Of Unity** (by *Karl King*).

Then Ron presented a *tour de force* (I can't explain why I'm using all these French phrases this month—maybe it was Windsheet

something I ate), *Aaron Copland's Hoe Down* from the ballet *Rodeo*, which I have only heard before from a full orchestra.

Slowing the tempo and acknowledging our weather that afternoon, Ron played a beautiful arrangement of **Here's That Rainy Day** (by *Jimmy Van Heusen*). Ron then introduced a composition by NorCal's own **Kevin King** and recorded by him on his *On The Lake* CD, **What Was Your Name?**

To bring the first half to a close, Ron treated us to his own **Theme and Variations on Tico Tico**, which quoted many familiar musical phrases in addition to the old **Ethel Smith** melody. I believe I recognized snippets from *Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody*, the theme from **E.T.** (*John Williams*), the theme from **Ice Castles** (*Marvin Hamlisch*), **I Could Have Danced All Night** from *My Fair Lady* (*Frederick Loewe*), a Sicilian Tarantella, **Bach's Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor**, and also his "Little" **Fugue in G Minor!**

Returning after intermission with *Cole Porter's* classic, **It's De Lovely**, then *Henry Mancini's Moon River* (in which he artfully quoted *DeBussy's Clair de Lune* and *Jerome Kerns' Ol' Man River*, and used the 32' diaphone diapason to blend with a soft, quiet accompaniment—very nice!).

Ron then solicited requests from the audience and proceeded to string together the remainder of the second half of the concert, beginning with **Limehouse Blues**, **Satin Doll**, **The Entertainer**, **Beer Barrel Polka**, **On Wisconsin**, **Maria** from *Westside Story*, the **Mickey Mouse March** (M-I-C, K-E-Y, M-O-U-S-E)—*but I heard something that sounded like a Bach fugue in it!*, **Summertime**, a *boogie woogie* number, **Raiders of the Lost Ark**, the theme from **Superman**, **I'm Beginning To See the Light**, a medley from *Andrew Lloyd Webber's Phantom of the Opera*, and finally, a very respectable rendition of *George Wright's* classic, **Roller Coaster** (by *Milton de Lugg*).

For his first encore, Ron played **The Battle Hymn of the Republic**, the *Peter Wilhousky* arrangement. The audience wouldn't settle for just one, so Ron returned to play a brilliant **William Tell Overture** (*Rossini*). Even that didn't satisfy the appreciative audience, so Ron came back out briefly and treated us to **I Left My Heart in San Francisco**.

I'll certainly remember and relish this concert for a long time!

— Don Ravey
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UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday & Sunday, March 14 & 15, 2009
JONAS NORDWALL plays the *California Theatre 4/21 Wurlitzer* with Symphony Silicon Valley.

symphonysiliconvalley.org
 mercurynews.com/columns/ci_11854818

NorCal presents—



Friday, April 17, 2009, 6:30 PM —
Bob Hope Theatre, Stockton, CA —
 Classic Silent Film, *Safety Last* (Harold Lloyd) with live organ concert by **Tom Thompson** on the *Robert Morton*
 bobhopetheatre.com/

Saturday, April 18, 2009 — **MORTON MADNESS** — **Mark Herman** (see article on Page Two)

NorCal presents—



Sunday, June 14, 2009 — Members' and guests *free* Concert at **Grace Baptist Church**, 484 E San Fernando St, San Jose. (Exact time to be announced, but likely, early afternoon.)

Sunday, August 23, 2009 — Members' and guests picnic at the *Grass Valley* home of **Ron Bingaman**. (more information later—**Save the Date**)

NorCal presents—



NorCal presents—



EDITOR'S
 RAVINGS

Do you remember the 1964 **Bob Dylan** song *The Times They Are a-Changin'*? That's certainly true today, politically, economically and in so many other ways. Our natural inclination is often to wish that the world would stay the same, but it just won't cooperate with us. I was thinking about this inconvenient fact when I received a newspaper clipping from a friend of mine (who still follows the practice of clipping from a newspaper and mailing) about the *Oaks Park Skating Rink* in Portland, Oregon, which is home to the only roller skating rink in the country that still has a real pipe organ that is played regularly for the skaters. [Publ.Note—This Wurlitzer was, when I heard it at the Portland ATOS Convention in 1988, totally *unenclosed* high above the Roller Rink. It was a *totally different sounding instrument as the listener walked around the rink*. I am not a musician, but then realized how important the Chambers are to the the ensemble of voices .]

I was thinking of the heyday of pizza parlors with pipe organs, an arrangement that began right here in the Bay Area at *Ye Olde Pizza Joynt* in San Leandro and spread to at least a half dozen around here and many others all over the country. All those in the Bay Area have now disappeared.

Skating rinks and pizza parlors were certainly not the venues for which theatre pipe organs were designed, but they obviously captured the public's attention, at least for several decades. Actually, it's hard to imagine that those venues, with their high levels of ambient sound, would become popular, but the fact is, they did. Perhaps the patrons were not entirely music lovers, but then you might say the same of the movie goers of the 1920's, who were probably more drawn by the films and the actors than by the music that accompanied them, although of course the whole point of having live music was to enhance the movie experience.

The newspaper article I received describes one musician, **Ethan Rose**, who augments the voices of the Wurlitzer with electronic instruments and has just released a CD called *Oaks*. Such a combination may offend the tastes of some Theatre Organ fans, but I think of it as a metamorphosis that is inevitable if the Theatre Organ is going to survive for future generations. I haven't heard the CD, so I have no opinion on this particular musical adventure, but I see no reason to categorically reject such attempts at musical expression.

NORCAL THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY, Inc.

A Chapter of the American Theatre Organ Society

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 or write:

Mr. Neal R. Wood at (415)861-7082 <nealwood@pacbell.net> , PO Box 625, Berkeley, CA 94701-0625.

Dues are \$20 for NorCal TOS only and an additional \$40 for National ATOS (\$60 total) per year for full voting membership and subscription to *Theatre Organ* the six times a year glossy journal of ATOS. Spouse and children living at home may be included in your membership. We hope you will join us to help preserve and enjoy these great instruments.