
The WINDSHEET



Newsletter of the NORCAL THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY
PO Box 625, Berkeley, CA 94701-0625 510/644-2707

www.theatreorgans.com/norcal
April 2009

LEW WILLIAMS AT BCT Sunday MAY 3 – 2:30 PM



Lew Williams, of Phoenix, AZ, last played our Wurlitzer at the Berkeley Community Theatre in May of 2006 and we are delighted that he is able to return to wind up our 2008-2009 concert season.

A native of Lafayette, Louisiana, Lew began playing the organ at age ten and started formal piano studies five years later. At *Texas Christian University*, he won several competitions in organ playing, gave numerous recitals, and graduated with a Bachelor of Music degree and Performers Certificate, studying with **Emmet G. Smith**. He studied at the *Conservatoire de Musique* in Geneva, Switzerland, where he studied organ improvisation with **Pierre Segond**. At *Southern Methodist University*, Lew earned a Master of Music degree as an organ pupil of **Dr. Robert T. Anderson**. He also won the regional competition of the American Guild of Organists (AGO). From 1979 until 1987 he was staff organist at *Organ Stop Pizza* restaurants in Phoenix and Mesa, Arizona.

He currently has six recordings to his credit: *At Last* (Alabama Theatre, Birmingham, 4/22 Wurlitzer), *Live at Pasadena Civic Auditorium* (5/29 Moller) and, at the Organ Stop Pizza (4/74 Wurlitzer), *Rhapsody in Blue*, *Give My Regards to Broadway*, *Fanfare*, and *Holiday Pipes*.

Concert work has taken Lew around the USA several times. He has played seven concert tours in England, where he was engaged twice as a clinician at the annual *Cinema Organ Society Workshop* in London. A frequent recitalist at conventions of both the American Guild of Organists (AGO) and the American Theatre Organ Society (ATOS), he was named **Organist of the Year** by the ATOS in 1988.

Lew Williams has now returned from the business world and endears himself to Theatre Organ fans around the world with his unique upbeat registrations, re-creation of big band-era arrangements, his witty humor and audience rapport.

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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.

Last Call * * * * **MORTON MADNESS XV** * * * * *Last Call*
SATURDAY, APRIL 18



Harmony Wynelands - Blue Barn - Lodi
 Ironstone Vineyards - Murphys



The popular young rising star, **Mark Herman** will be featured at this year's Morton Madness. 'MM' is now an annual tradition with *NorCal* and *Sierra* chapters of ATOS. Through the cooperation of two Northern California winery venues with *Robert Morton* theatre pipe organs, we have a full day of theatre organ music, delicious food, and a Spring day in the foothills of the Sierras. Our Artist plays early in the afternoon at *Harmony Wynelands* in **Lodi**, then we all drive up to *Ironstone Vineyards* in **Murphys** and after a buffet dinner there in the Music Room, we are treated to a second concert by the same Artist, All this is for one admission ticket, which is \$50 this year.

Mark Herman is from Indiana and has played concerts at Berkeley Community Theatre to rave reviews, and similarly elsewhere on the concert circuit the past couple of years.

Mark will begin at 1:00 PM in Lodi. Come early and bring snacks or a picnic lunch. If this is your first visit to *Harmony Wynelands*, allow extra time to find the location. Maps are available.

Following this concert and much socializing, the trek continues to the foothills community of Murphys, where we will enjoy a buffet dinner and another Morton **Mark Herman** concert 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 the Bay Area.

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:

www.SierraChapterATOS.org



DONATIONS

NorCal gratefully acknowledges a memorial gift in remembrance of **Robert Mayer** from **Ms. Judith L. Sharp** of Fremont.

NorCal also gratefully acknowledges a donation from **Roger Inkpen** of Sunnyvale.

CHAIRMAN'S WINDLINE



NORCAL BOARD MINUTES

Every NorCal member is entitled to request copies of the Minutes of meetings of the NorCal Board of Directors, which meets 6 times a year. Requests should be sent to the Secretary, whose email address and telephone number are published at the bottom of Page One of every issue of the Windsheet.

It is amazing through the years, how one Wurlitzer organ found so many homes. Here is an example of a Wurlitzer organ and console that perhaps many of you enjoyed listening to:

- 1928 Opus 1835 Style 210 Special, State Theatre in Fresno
- 1935 Radio Station KMJ, Fresno
- 1950 Bob Kates Residence, Berkeley
- 1957 Vern Gregory, San Francisco
- 1962 (*Answer at the end of the column*)

- 1966 Console, Warren Blankenship, Pacific Grove
- 2000 Console, NorCal TOS
- 2000 Console, Bob Coffin, Santa Rosa
- 2009 Console, Dick Taylor, Hayward.

In 1962 this Wurlitzer Console graced the *Ye Olde Pizza Joint* in San Lorenzo. I had the chance to help move the old forgotten console for the last time. It will never be played again, but its parts will be used in other consoles. I wonder if the medical profession got their idea for *organ donations* from Wurlitzer? *Neal*



JIM RIGGS

Review of March 15, 2009 Program

One of our Bay Area favorites, **Jim Riggs**, treated us to an afternoon of vintage music, opening with an *up-console* medley from *The Wizard of Oz*, following Jim's standard fanfare of *Paramount on Parade*, celebrating his many years of presiding at the console of the *Oakland Paramount*. The selection of the *Wizard of Oz* theme acknowledged that Jim will be relocating in just a few weeks to **Wichita, Kansas**, where he will become the house organist on the *New York Paramount* organ that was reportedly **Rudolf Wurlitzer's** favorite specific product. Jim promised to make frequent return visits to the Bay Area, noting that his mother and his two daughters continue to live here.

The playlist for the remainder of the program was:

Isn't This A Lovely Day To Be Caught In The Rain? – Irving Berlin

How Long Has This Been Going On?
– George Gershwin

Medley of Songs from Movie Musicals:
But Definitely
We Should Be Together
An Old Straw Hat
When I'm With You

Waltzing in the Clouds – Robert Stolz
You're A Sweetheart – Jimmy McHugh
Forgotten Melody – Gus Kahn
Dedicated to his daughters, Georgia and Rosemary:

Georgia On My Mind – Hoagy Carmichael

Love Goes Where My Rosemary Grows
Dedicated to his mother:

Home

Chatanooga Choo Choo – Warren, Harry, Gordon, Mack

(with themes from Alabama Bound and I've Been Workin' On the Railroad)

– INTERMISSION –

Sunshine And You – Mr. & Mrs. C. E. Brando

Medley from Warner Brothers movies:
Pretty Lady
By A Waterfall
I'll String Along With You
A Quarter To Nine
The Apartment Theme
42nd Street

Medley from Kid Millions with Eddie Cantor and Ethel Merman:
I Love To Be A Minstrel Man
When My Ship Comes In
Your Head On My Shoulder
An Ear Full of Music

Over the Rainbow – Harold Arlen
—by Don Ravey



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

NORCAL WEBSITE

We now have copies of the current and two previous *Windsheets* on our web site – and **in color!** They are in **.pdf** format, which requires that your computer has a copy of the *free* Adobe Acrobat Reader.

We also have an up-to-date Calendar of Events online. Be sure to visit it!

TheatreOrgans.com/norcal/

**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, April 26, 2009

Sunday, May 17, 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.



**EDITOR'S
RAVINGS**

This month is another full month for the *Windsheet*, which is good news. At the same time, this month is a rather empty month for my brain, which is not so good news. It has been a busy month for me, with not much time for me to be creative about writing a column, so I hope you will excuse this short one and perhaps look forward to something more tangible next month.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Friday, April 17th, 2009, 6:30 PM —
Bob Hope Theatre, Stockton, CA —
 Classic Silent Film, *Safety Last* (Harold
 Lloyd) with live organ music by **Jim Riggs**
 on the *Robert Morton*. [Change since
 previous announcement.]
 BobHopeTheatre.com

Saturday, April 18 — **MORTON
 MADNESS** — The artist at both venues is
Mark Herman. (See article on Page Two
 about this traditional tour of *Robert Morton*
 organs at two wineries in the Central
 Valley.)

Sunday, April 26 — **Open Console** for
 members at the Berkeley Community
 Theatre.

NorCal presents—



Friday, May 22, 8:00 PM — **Towe Auto
 Museum in Sacramento**. Classic silent
 film *Seven Chances* (1925) with **Jerry
 Nagano** providing live music on the
 Wurlitzer.

Sunday, June 14 — Members' free
 Concert at **Grace Baptist Church**, San
 Jose. [time tba]

Sunday, August 23 — Members' picnic at
 the *Grass Valley* home of **Ron Bingaman**.

NorCal presents—



NorCal presents—



OAKLAND FOX THEATER OFFICE BLOCK TO CONTAIN CHARTER SCHOOL

— Gary Lee Parks

On January 2nd, my wife Rebecca and I joined an enthusiastic group of Middle and High School children, their parents, staff, other relatives and friends for a tour of the new school in two floors of former office space which wrap around the Oakland Fox Theater. As anyone who has been watching the construction knows, new extensions have been added along the sides, which have minimal aesthetic impact on the historic structure.

The architecture is clean and functional, but once within the boundaries of the 1928 structure, the scene changes. While the classrooms are thoroughly modern, the 1928 windows flood every room with natural light, and old style window blinds serve to filter it, if needed, while still giving a period look to the windows from the street. In the halls, every effort has been made to retain and restore what had survived the decades. Original dark stained crown molding runs the length of the halls, and each classroom door has the original door and transom window, most of which bear original or replicated textured glass. The Men's and Women's restrooms have retained their original grey and white honeycomb tile floors, restored and replaced in a few spots where needed. Original marble stalls and white tile wainscot likewise remain.

While this tour did not take in the theatre proper, one replicated feature of the theatre

was proudly shown: a replica of the original window of hammered, glue chipped, and beveled glasses, leaded together in a fretwork pattern similar to motifs found throughout the theatre replaces the 1940's wall of glass block in the Hindu style arch of the theatre façade. Originally, this window illuminated a lofty entrance lobby, but in the 1940s, the office wings were joined together by halls passing through this space when the entrance was given its Skouras style remodel. Today, areas lit by the leaded glass on each floor will serve as reception spaces. One small critique is that now the floor structure which cuts behind this window is visible behind the glasswork. Inserting panels of matte black material between the window and the floor structure would easily remedy the way this appears from the street.

Encouraging to us was the enthusiasm that faculty, families, and especially the children have for their new school facility. This school covers all academic areas, with an emphasis on the performing and fine arts, with the idea that all students will be going on to college. The children applauded and cheered when it was announced that the school will be using the actual Oakland Fox Theater for ten to twelve events per year, and both the Middle and High Schools will hold their Commencement ceremonies on the Oakland Fox stage. Within the renovated school portion of the building, a versatile black box theatre has been included for the majority of the smaller arts events. We overheard one boy telling his friend about how the historic theatre has "these cool statues and stuff." One student asked the faculty docent if there was going to be an organ, and expressed disappointment when told that at the present time it is not in the plans. Nevertheless, it was heartwarming to see the enthusiasm given by all present, especially the students, to both the school facility and the prospect of using the historic theatre.

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.