

The WINDSHEET



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

BERKELEY COMMUNITY THEATRE
 Allston Way betw'n Milvia St & MLK, Jr Way

www.norcaltos.org
 July 2012



WARREN LUBICH at Grand Lake Console -LaFetraphoto

CONCERT & OPEN CONSOLE at GRAND LAKE THEATRE Saturday, August 18, 2012 - 9 AM

Warren Lubich will play the first NorCal concert that our Chapter has been able to put on for quite some time. With things looking up for use of the BCT (see below) it is time for our members to get back into the swing of our own concerts.

Not only will Warren play a short program, an Open Console will follow, giving members a chance to play **Kevin King's** Better Than Ever 3/18 Wurlitzer organ.

Warren is well known to NorCal members

both for his activities as a member, but also for his talent at the keyboard. As a staff organist at the *Grand Lake* he knows how to bring the very best out of this wonderful organ. Warren's concerts are always a delightful event, so plan to get up early as the 9 AM opening is necessary for the theatre to open for its regular Saturday movie program.

Sierra Chapter HOT AUGUST PIPES! Sunday, August 5, 2012 at 2:00 PM NorCal's **Bill Coale** at

Fair Oaks Community Clubhouse
 7997 California Avenue
 Fair Oaks, California

Sierra Chapter Ice Cream Social
 Donation \$5
 Directions From the Bay Area —

Take I-80 to Sacramento
 Merge LEFT to CAPITAL CITY FRWY
 Merge LEFT to HIGHWAY 50
 Take the SUNRISE BLVD exit
 Turn LEFT on SUNRISE BLVD
 Turn RIGHT on CALIFORNIA AVE

DONATIONS FOR The Youth Camp

- Mr. and Mrs. Carleton
- Dr. William Coale
- Elbert Dawson
- Neal Wood

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CHAIRMAN William L. Coale 11740 San Pablo Av Apt 306 El Cerrito, CA 94530 510/778-9117 wmcoale@comcast.net	VICE CHAIRMAN Judson H. Owens 1730 Virginia St. Berkeley, CA 94703 510/848-8714 jud.owens@gmail.com	SECRETARY Arthur Woodworth 600 Coventry Road Kensington, CA 94707 510/524-7452 awoodworth@bigfoot.com	TREASURER/ MEMBERSHIP Neal R. Wood 523 Corbett Avenue San Francisco, CA 94114 415/861-7082 nealwood@pacbell.net	EDITOR Janice La Fetra 32500 Cristo Rey Dr #521F Cupertino, CA 95014 650/968-2091 jan@lafetra.com	PROGRAM Gordon A. Pratt PO Box 275 San Lorenzo, CA 94580 510/504-4780 aznme2@webtv.net	PUBLISHER Frank La Fetra 32500 Cristo Rey Dr #521F Cupertino, CA 95014 650/968-2091 frank@lafetra.com
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When emailing, include ATOS or NorCal in the subject line. Otherwise, if you are unknown to the recipient's computer, its SPAM filter may divert your mail.

♪ ♪ FINAL NOTES ♪ ♪

Ron Downer

March 18, 1938 - June 22, 2012

Jon Johnston

July 2nd, 1942 - April 29, 2012

Remembering Ron Downer — The characteristic I remember most vividly about **Ron Downer** was his generosity. Ron was ALWAYS ready to help his friends with their projects. He helped me many times in numerous ways. It was always a treat to visit his little, but complete, shop and see his collections of everything telephone, steam, organ and machine related. His organ installations had a definite Ron Downer style, which was neat and workmanlike. Ron was a really nice and friendly guy. I am glad I had the good fortune to know him.

— **Jack Bethards**

President and Tonal Director
Schoenstein & Co

Ron Downer had a lot of friends, fellow organist enthusiasts throughout the organ world. He had a list of fellow organ enthusiasts telephone numbers. The list filled a small book! Ron kept in frequent contact with many on the list, so he was always aware of the latest organ enthusiast news.

His Mother worked in the office of the Southern Pacific Railroad where he spent much of his free time as a youngster with crews at the SP round house in South San Francisco. Ron's dad's second job was as a church organist. No wonder Ron became a steam and organ enthusiast!

He built an organ studio behind his parents' home and installed a 3-manual Wurlitzer, which grew to over 20 ranks including many 16-ft extensions. Several young enthusiasts learned the basics of organ restoration and installation by helping Ron work on that organ.



Ron Downer & Tuba

— Dave Schutt

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Ron was a charter member of NorCal. While he didn't work on the organ crew, he made significant donations of parts to the club's Wurlitzer installation in the Berkeley Community Theater, and was always available to offer advice.

He is survived by his wife **Alexis**, a sister in Redding and a nephew out of state.

Ron will be buried at sea by *Neptune Services* in August. There will not be a public service.

— **Rudy Frey**

Remembering Jon Johnston — Jon was a well known and respected pipe organ technician, tuner, voicer, and finisher.

He apprenticed to the brilliant **Paul Schoenstein** where he learned skills that he would exhibit throughout his life. Jon was also an accomplished theatre organist who shyed away from public playing but wowed all who were lucky enough to hear him play. He had the rare gift of 'perfect pitch' which gave him amazing tuning skills.

He had a wild sense of humor that often caught you off-guard in moments and situations where you dared not laugh out loud. For nearly 20 years Jon cared for and tuned the *Avenue Wurlitzer*. Visiting artists would comment on the tight tuning and finishing for which Jon was largely responsible.

Jon was a great teacher who shared his extensive knowledge with everyone who sought it. Those of us in NorCal who knew Jon for 50 years will miss his humor, talent, and kindness.

— **Al Sefl**

NORCAL WEBSITE

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

We also have an up-to-date Calendar of Events online, and under the Recordings page is **Jonas Nordwall's** newest CD.

Be sure to visit our website!

norcaltos.org

Windsheet

EDITOR'S



As many of you know, Frank fell on May 15th due to a worsening aortic valve problem, and spent the next six weeks doing medical tests and preparing for surgery, which was done on June 26th. He is recovering nicely, but tires easily, as is expected.

But as a result of all the chaos in our life, the Windsheet is a couple of weeks late. I'm particularly sad that we cannot get this WS out in time for the *Schoenstein Open House*. However, the notice was posted on the NorCal website (www.norcaltos.org) so I hope many of you were aware of it. And this is a lesson to all - check the website regularly, there are all sorts of interesting things there.

In addition, we did not receive information about the San Francisco Silent Film Festival in time to be included in the last Windsheet. But it also was on NorCal's website and I hope many of you were able to get to the *Castro Theatre* during the event (July 12 to July 15). Especially for **Dennis James** on the Wurlitzer for *The Mark of Zorro* and **Lubitsch's** last German feature, *The Loves of Pharaoh*.

JAN

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. Send requests to the Secretary; his email address and telephone number is published at the bottom of Page One.

THIS & THAT

Mesa, AZ Organ Pipe Pizza
celebrates 40th Birthday

After decades of silence, the Atlantic City Boardwalk Hall organ plays again.

July 2012

CHAIRMAN'S WINDLINE



School's out, and lots of things are happening at BCT. From looking at the organ crew's report (a new feature for the Windsheet to help keep our membership informed regarding the great things our talented organ crew is working on), you'll notice that we're doing some 'Spring Cleaning' of sorts.

Over time, we've accumulated many ranks of pipes and other organ components, and we really need to get them organized, and get what we don't need into hands of others who can put them to good use. The crew has done a super job in the inventory process!

We also want to minimize the amount of storage space that we're utilizing in the BCT, in light of looking forward to building a strong relationship with the new theatre management, as well as the school district itself.

My recent discussions with Al Wilright, Operations/Facility Manager, indicated that the 'follow-on' project for BCT, which includes handrails and safety curbing in the auditorium, should be completed sometime this summer, which would then allow for the 'release' of the Berkeley Community Theatre to public use. That would be tremendous news, and allow NorCal to once again plan for a concert season. Keep those fingers crossed!

On another note, Berkeley High School has received funding through donations to hire a technical manager to support the theatre. The position will be filled beginning with the 2012-13 school year. This is welcome news for NorCal and hopefully will allow our scheduled concert seasons to continue.

Because part of the funding for the stage manager position will come from Federal Perkins Vocational Education funds, the position will involve teaching this course to BHS Students in addition to the management duties.

July 2012

In other happenings, it was wonderful to see a good turnout of NorCal and Sierra Chapter members at the national ATOS convention held in Los Angeles. This was my first opportunity to hear all of those great instruments (with the exception of Old Town Music Hall, where I performed last year). That, on top of seeing the amazing automobile collection at San Sylmar, and a fantastic day at Universal Studios (no, that wasn't on the convention docket), made for a fantastic week. Even better was the chance to meet and chat with theatre organ aficionados from all over, including the two chaperones of the Rye Academy students from the UK. In my mind, the convention was absolutely terrific, and I'm also looking forward to another great one next year in Atlanta. Hope to see you there!

Bill ♪

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

SUNDAYS

August 12, September 9

Note the previously published July 22nd was changed to July 15th (Publ. Note – Jul 22nd was the Schoenstein Open House. That date and the July 15th were missed by the Windsheet being delayed)

Open Consoles are informal and our genial host, **Chris Nichols**, ensures that every NorCal member feels comfortable.

Chris 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 **the** Sunday morning to confirm that the theatre is available. If there will be Open Console, enter via the backstage door at 1930 Allston Way.

Windsheet

MEMBERSHIP BADGES

Have you admired the blue membership badges that many NorCal members wear to concerts? They are available for \$13 shipped to the member's address.

The badges are now totally engraved (no silk screening to rub off). Send your check and exactly how your name is to appear on the badge to:

Bill Schlotter

6203 Elderberry Dr.
Oakland, CA 94611-1621

MEMBERS LOBBY

ONLINE

For NorCal members only, there is now a link on our website home page, near the bottom, to the new Members Lobby. A password is required in order to view any of the Members Lobby. If you do not know the password and you are a paid (or honorary) member of NorCal, contact the Membership Secretary, **Neal Wood**.

BITS FROM THE ATOS CONVENTION

You can read all about the Convention in *Theatre Organ Magazine* but here are some 'tidbits' of interest.



Mark Herman at NorCal's Toledo Console

Mark Herman was named *Organist of the Year*. Mark first appeared at the ATOS Convention that NorCal sponsored in 2003 in Oakland. He has been a frequent guest artist for NorCal and we hope to hear him often in the future.

Stephen Kucera was named *Organ Student of the Year* and we look forward to hearing this talented young man in the future.

FUTURE ATOS CONVENTIONS

2013 Convention — Atlanta
2014 Convention — Indianapolis
2015 Convention — Salt Lake City

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UPCOMING EVENTS

3rd Annual Technical Experience

August 5-9, 2012

Marriott Courtyard, 770 Copperfield Dr.,
Norman, OK 73072, (405) 701-8900

ATOS is offering the 3rd annual Technical Experience for participants 18 years of age and older. This will be a technical learning session with hands-on experience. Tuition for the camp is \$300. Space is limited to 18 attendees.

Allen Miller is the primary instructor with teaching assistance from Clark Wilson, Don Phipps and other guests.

The 2012 Technical Experience takes place at the American Organ Institute shop at the University of Oklahoma.

The official hotel is the Marriott Courtyard. Mention ATOS for a special rate of \$79/day.

<http://www.atos.org/node/994>

NORCAL PRESENTS –

Open Console at BCT

Sundays

August 12, Sept. 9

(See Page Three)

norcaltos.org

Dennis James accompanies these silent films playing locally --

July 20, *Stanford Theatre*, Palo Alto
Rudolph Valentino in *Son of the Sheik*.

August 3, *Stanford Theatre*, Palo Alto
Lillian Gish in **D. W. Griffith's**
Way Down East.

August 17, *Stanford Theatre*, Palo Alto
Lillian Gish in MGM's *The Wind*.

OTHER VENUES

[Editor's note: Check websites for details of programs.]

Castro Theatre, 4/22 Wurlitzer, 429 Castro St. SF, CA. Intermission music played daily by **David Hegarty, Warren Lubich, Mark Putterbaugh**, or **Harry Garland**. (425) 621-6120. CastroTheatre.com

Grand Lake Theatre, 3/18 Wurlitzer, 3200 Grand Ave., Oakland, CA. Intermission music: **Warren Lubich** or **Gordon Pratt** (Fridays) & **Kevin King** (Saturdays). (510) 452-3556.

Los Angeles - www.latos.org

Orange County - www.octos.org

Palace of the Legion of Honor, 4/63 E.M. Skinner, Lincoln Park, San Francisco Presidio. Saturdays and Sundays from 4:00 to 4:45 PM. Free after museum admission. **David Hegarty** plays an *Organ Pops Concert* on the first full weekend of each month; other artists play classical concerts other weekends. (415) 750-3600.

LegionOfHonor.org

Paramount Theatre, 4/26 Wurlitzer, 2025 Broadway, Oakland, CA. Public tours on first and third Saturdays of the month at 10 AM. (510) 465-6400, and the Classic Film Series on many Fridays at 8 PM.

www.paramounttheatre.com

ORGAN CREW REPORT

Even though the concert season is still in limbo, the organ crew headed by **Bill Schlotter**, still meets every Saturday to maintain the *NorCal Wurlitzer*. Along with the usual maintenance, this summer the crew has embarked on a project that has been long overdue; that is to inventory the many organ parts that have been donated over the years.

Every crate of organ pipes and parts were counted, sorted, and their condition noted. Parts destined for the completion of the *NorCal Wurlitzer* (yes, there are still more pipes to add) will be stored in the upper relay room, and the rest will be sold to individuals or donated to other chapters for their organs. **Bill Coale** is working with ATOS to establish a national pipe organ parts registry so that chapters can coordinate the exchange of material. The good news is that we have already sold several ranks of pipes, and there are some more impending sales.

You are always invited to come and see the organ crew in action on Saturdays from 10:00am to 5:00pm. Because we are not always sure the theatre will be available to work on the organ, call the NorCal answering machine at (510) 644-2707 for status prior to leaving home for your visit on Saturday.

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.