

PUGET SOUND
THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY

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PUGET SOUND PIPELINE

Published monthly by Puget Sound Theatre Organ Society, a non-profit organization
furthering the appreciation, preservation and use of the Theatre Pipe Organs of yesteryear

Volume 13, No. 9

September 2002

PSTOS For The First Time Ever In The U.S.

presents

A Dazzling Young Organist from England!



The solid-state action was switched on. **CHRIS POWELL** swung onto the Wurlitzer bench, pressed his pistons, and pushed the "Lift Up" button. As he rose up into the brilliant stage lights he had a feeling of déjà-vu. Because this WASN'T the Blackpool Ballroom back home in England, but rather it was on the other side of the world—the 2/12 Wurlitzer in the Hollywood Theatre in Auckland, New Zealand!

Chris began piano and organ lessons early in life, and at the age of 13, saw a Phil Kelsall recording in a record shop, bought it, and was hooked on theatre organs for life. One Saturday afternoon the Powell family visited Blackpool and happened to go into the Tower complex. Chris was bowled over by the Ballroom, and of course, the Wurlitzer. He said to his father, "One day I'm going to play in here."

That was in 1977. In December of 1990, sure enough, Chris Powell pressed the button and came up on the lift with the white and old Wurlitzer console, to begin playing in England's world-famous Blackpool Tower Ballroom.

Before achieving this prestigious position, of course, Chris worked his way up. He managed to get practice sessions on the Free Trade Hall Wurlitzer in Manchester, England. He played cameo spots on the Paramount Studios Compton pipe organ. He played for dances and gave concerts. Then, in 1990, a friend had a gig playing piano for a Labor Party conference in the Blackpool Winter Garden complex. But he'd double-booked and asked Chris to substitute for him. Two weeks later, an organist in a bar in the Winter Garden had family problems and also asked Chris to substitute. People had begun to notice.

That winter the Wurlitzer in the Tower Ballroom was due for a major overhaul and some of the staff team were laid off. Then the overhaul was delayed, giving a staff shortage. Chris was contacted and was successfully auditioned by Phil Kelsall. So, at last his dream was fulfilled and he began playing for the dancers in the Tower Ballroom.

The Tower connection opened many doors. In 1991, Chris played in front of the Princess Royal in the Winter Garden and was filmed for a TV program about Blackpool. He became demonstrator for Lowrey and several other electronic companies, both at home and abroad. He produced demonstration discs for Yamaha organs. He has performed in Holland, Switzerland, Germany, Tenerife and the Isle of Man, plus three tours to Australia and New Zealand. He has recently made a recording on the 3/20 Wurlitzer in Perth, Australia.

Chris is an exciting young organist! Just last week he packed the house in Perth, Australia, with a standing-room-only crowd!

Chris Powell plays Pipe Organ Pops

**On the wonderful Gig Harbor
4/48 Wurlitzer**



Sunday, September 8th, 2 PM
Wilcox-Wurlitzer Home in Gig Harbor
(formerly Johnson Home)

Proceeds from this event will benefit our Scholarship Fund

Don't miss this event...come out and show your support for PSTOS, and welcome Barbara and Raymond, new trustees/owners/caretakers of the "Wilcox/Wurlitzer Home" (formerly Johnson home.) Let's show CHRIS POWELL that we have an energetic and enthusiastic membership! SEATING IS LIMITED. DON'T DELAY! Order your tickets NOW. Please use the Ticket Order Form printed on the back page.

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Puget Sound Theatre Organ Society is a non-profit organization furthering the appreciation, restoration, and use of the historic Theatre Pipe Organs of the 1920s, through education.

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*Listing of non-PSTOS events
in the Pipeline*

PSTOS, upon request, will list non-conflicting non-PSTOS theatre organ events in the "Other Events" column of the two Pipelines immediately preceding the event, providing Pipeline editors receive sufficient prior written notification. Venue, artist, type of event, date, and contact information will comprise the included information.

Advertising in the Pipeline

Classified-type ads for member-owned electronic, electric, or pipe organs, and/or pipe organ parts, will be published at no charge. Please limit copy to include brief description, contact name and phone number. Prices will not be listed. Ads may be edited for content and length. Mail ad copy to address above. Other advertising is not accepted.

President's Message



Many thanks to Nita and Bill Masterman for sharing their wonderful collection of music machines and paraphernalia on Saturday, August 10th. A big thanks, too, to Bill Keller for opening his home and instruments to about 51 PSTOS members for our Picnic. Good turnout! Shall we do it again next year? Please read the overview of this event on Page 3.

Just as it takes people attending an event to make that event successful, it takes members to make an organization. We'd like you to help us spread the word about PSTOS. You must know someone who loves theatre pipe organ music. Talk it up, invite them to one of our events. You might even consider giving a membership to someone for Christmas—it's not too early to start shopping you know.

I trust you have your tickets to the Chris Powell Concert at the Wilcox/Wurlitzer Home (formerly Johnson Home) on Sunday, September 8th. This will be another wonderful event at this beautiful home on an equally beautiful Wurlitzer!

I'm looking forward to our Oktoberfest celebration on mOctober 27th. This is a new event for PSTOS and we're hopeful it will be a fun-packed event complete with German sausages, sauerkraut, beer and other beverages, all with a German flair. Watch for more details. ...Barbara Graham

•••••
Become a PSTOS member!
 • Joining Puget Sound Theatre
 • Organ Society is fast and easy!
 • For a one year family membership,
 • send a \$15 check payable to
 • PSTOS together with your
 • name(s) as you would like them to
 • appear on your name badges,
 • phone number and your address
 • with complete 9-digit ZIP code to
 • Norman Miller, Treasurer,
 • 2644 NW Esplanade
 • Seattle WA 98117-2527
 •••••

PSTOS Coming Events

Oktoberfest at HLCC

Big plans for German music on the organ (and more!), German food, and a great time. Plan now to celebrate Autumn in a big way. More information on page 6. And watch these pages! Haller Lake Community Club
Sunday, October 27

Annual Christmas Party

Our big annual holiday fun get-together with lots of music, food, and fun. Haller Lake Community Club
Sunday, December 8

OTHER Events of Interest

Paramount Theatre**Silent Film Series with****Dennis James at the Wurlitzer**

Girl Shy, 1924, starring Harold Lloyd
Monday, Aug. 26

The Gold Rush, 1925, Charlie Chaplin
Monday, Sept. 9

The Cameraman, 1928, Buster Keaton
Monday, Sept. 16

The Strong Man, Harry Langdon, 1926
Monday, Sept. 23

Information: 206-428-7469 or online
 at www.theparamount.com

Historic Everett Theatre**Silent Movie Series, with****Dennis James at the Wurlitzer**

Girl Shy (Harold Lloyd, 1924)

Tuesday, Aug. 27, 7 PM

The Gold Rush (Charlie Chaplin, 1925)

Tuesday, Sept. 10, 7 PM

The Cameraman (Buster Keaton, 1928)

Wednesday, Sept. 18, 7 PM

The Strong Man (Harry Langdon, 1926)

Wednesday, Sept. 23, 7 PM

England's Simon Gledhill**at the Everett Theatre**

Simon is an internationally acclaimed organist. Don't miss him.

Saturday, Sept. 21, 3 pm

Information and tickets: 425-258-6766.
 Box office hours, 12 to 5, Tuesday – Saturday

A great time was had by all at the August Extravaganza...

The August Extravaganza was an enjoyable summertime event with fun things to see and do, good food, friendship and great organ music!

Bill and Nita Masterman were the gracious hosts for our first stop. On the street in front of their home was a fully restored—and functional—1948 Mack fire truck, which Bill drives in parades and other events. A Wurlitzer band organ was next, followed by a second band organ. Both play beautifully. Just inside is an unbelievable collection of instruments, most of which are connected with one another. One group of music makers, for example, consists of 24 different instruments plus more than 300 organ pipes. There are player pianos plus orchestrions and other musical instruments including Wurlitzers of various types. An 1892 orchestrion with approximately 10 instruments including an accordion is perhaps the most prized single instrument, but all are highly collectible. All but one of these plays from paper rolls, and they instantly respond when a coin is inserted from the jar of coins placed at each instrument.

The Mastermans are not only members of PSTOS, but also of the Automatic Musical Instrument Collectors' Association. Carl Dodrill, himself an AMICA member, said, "This is one of the finest collections of automatic musical instruments anywhere in the Pacific Northwest."



Folks eagerly gathered to enjoy the various performers on Bill's theatre organ.



Chris Kollar, a very talented young organist to watch!

An unexpected surprise and a highlight was hearing 12-year-old Chris Kollar perform. This young lad, brought to the event by Mike McDonald, is already a fine up-and-coming young musician, worthy of our encouragement and support. Don't forget his name!

Many thanks to both the Mastermans and to Bill Keller for making this wonderful day possible!



Bill Keller and his outstanding Allen Theatre Organ

The Bill & Carol Keller home was the next stop. Tables were set up around his spacious deck for the picnic. The weather couldn't have been nicer as old friends caught up on organ happenings.

Our famous Adeline Hook acted as emcee as many folks took a turn at Bill's outstanding three manual Allen theatre organ. Andy Crow, Don Wallin, Clint Meadway, Jo Ann Evans, Doris Cooley, Diane Whipple, Ron Chemmi, and others entertained. Not to mention Wendell Graham at Bill's piano, who played several of his famous piano/organ duets with both Jo Ann and Doris.

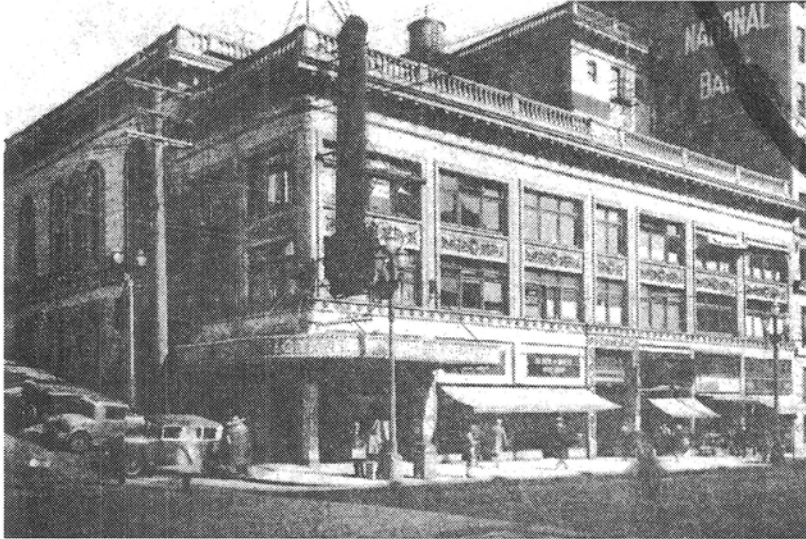
The sound in Bill's specially designed music room is superb and the organ is a thrill to hear, as well as to play.

*A big PSTOS Thank You to
Bill & Nita Masterman,
and to Bill Keller
for providing such an
enjoyable day!*

Pages From The Past...

Vaudeville wars: Office tower going on theater site

As reported by Rick Anderson, *Seattle Times* staff columnist, in July of 1981...



"Grew and Pates head a sketch team which will present a humorous playlet labeled 'Ha! Ha! Ha!' while Reeder and Armstrong in their 'Piano Diversion' both pound the ivories at once."
—from a Palace Hippodrome playbill, 1922

LEFT: The Palace Hippodrome at Second and Spring in 1930

BELOW: The old theater, turned into a parking garage, seen as it awaits demolition in 1981.

There is a Volkswagen where once sang Miss Ray Dooley and her Metropolitan Minstrels, and over there is a Toyota at the spot where Charlie Chaplin used to dance for \$100 a week.

You go outside, across the street from the old building, and look up through the morning mist. You remember reading that one of the building's co-owners was an insane Tammany Hall chieftain and the other shot and killed Seattle's police chief.

The old stories told of its grand design, the ornate stone and metal work, the arcade windows and elegant interior, up to a million dollars spent on a three-story building.

The reports said it was a beautiful theatre in a city filled with them. And in Seattle, where theaters are its history, this was a major piece of it.

The stories said that from 1909 to 1911, it was The Majestic. To 1916, it was the Empress. To 1929 it was The Palace Hippodrome.

Today [1981] it is a parking garage. And, tomorrow, rubble.

Soon there will be a 38-story office building. And then there will be just the old tales and faded pictures and no longer can you stand here and imagine what it was like when John Considine battled Alexander Pantages for control of America's vaudeville circuit.

Considine, with the financial backing of Big Tim Sullivan, a New York-Tammany chief, put up the grand house 72 years ago [1909] at the corner of Second and Spring, the home base of the Sullivan-Considine Vaudeville Circuit, an empire that grew to own and operate 37 theaters across the nation.

Although Sullivan later would be declared insane, and Considine — who, in self defense, shot and killed the city's



police chief in a gunfight — would sell his chain and retain only the Northwest Orpheum circuit, Considine had built a \$4 million business challenged only by a young, poorly educated Greek who made a few dollars in Alaska and began to spend it on his own vaudeville circuit and Seattle theaters — one of which he named after himself, the Pantages.

Eugene Clinton Elliott, in a 1944 booklet on the history of Seattle vaudeville, recalled:

"As the circuit grew, as more and more houses were added to the chain, a bitter enmity developed between Pantages and Considine. The rivalry soon became a mad scramble to secure acts, and devious tactics were resorted to, with each outfit striving to outwit the other.

"Representatives of the two firms met acts at the trains and tried to woo them from one another with offers of more money or better billing.

Pages From The Past... continued

"When an act was scheduled to arrive, Pantages would take some of his associates and a moving van and, while the Considine representative was meeting the players, would pick up the trunks and equipment and cart them off to his theater."

A xylophone trio found out exactly how this worked. Although booked at Pantages' house, the newly arrived trio was offered twice the money by Considine.

When they went over and broke the news to Pantages, he got his stage manager on the phone.

"Are those xylophones down there?" he asked. The stage manager said they were.

"Take them out in the alley and burn them."

One of the xylophonists began to tear out his hair.

"For 20 years I've played those instruments," he pleaded. "You couldn't do that to me!"

"Burn 'em," repeated Pantages into the telephone.

The trio appeared at his theater.

His cunning — if Considine announced the upcoming performance of a handcuff artist, for instance, Pantages would rush a similar act into town a day earlier — eventually led to domination by Pantages. And as vaudeville faltered, Pantages shifted into the movie-house business, operating up to 250 theaters and eventually retiring with millions that, as the story goes, sprang from an original \$24 grubstake given him in Alaska by Klondike Kate.

Despite their years of battle, the Pantages-Considine relationship led to a marriage of a Pantages daughter and a Considine son, which produced a onetime Disney actor, Tim Considine (who later starred in "my three Sons" on televi-

sion), and his brother, John, a writer-actor who played in, among other films, "Welcome to L.A." with Sally Kellerman. The late syndicated columnist, Bob Considine, was the boys' uncle.

In 1935, Considine's former theater at Second and Spring went dark. A year later, with a surfeit of movie houses around town, it was converted into part-office building, part parking garage, and for decades was home to an odd contrast of tenants including the Seattle Dental Clinic, the Newsboys labor Union, Marx Brothers Hatters and the United States Marines recruiting office.

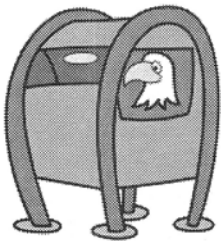
Later, the office areas were also converted into upper-level parking over Second Avenue, and now [1981] cars can be seen through open windows where Considine once sat and brokered an empire.

Outside, with the original ornate facade faded but intact, it is still possible to imagine the big Irishman yelling, "Get me Chaplin!"

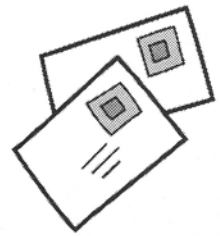
And, from a few blocks away at third and University where the old Pantages theater sat, comes an echo, laced in Greek: "Git ME Chaplin's suitcase!"

The Palace Hippodrome Wurlitzer...

The Hippodrome Theater in 1920 boasted a 2/4 Wurlitzer theatre pipe organ, a style 135B, Opus 280. In 1933 it was removed from the theater by Balcom & Vaughn, and installed in the West Seattle Christian church. In 2001 it was sold by the church and parted out.



From the Mailbox



Our PSTOS Board approved funding Owen Cannon's attendance at the recent Colorado State University Theatre Organ workshop. Several PSTOS members attended, including Norman Miller, Ray Harris and Bill Keller. Rosa Rio, famous theatre organist during the 1920s, was a featured clinician.

Rosa is a delightful individual and responds to inquiries about her age [most certainly in her 90s!] by saying that age is just a number and hers is unlisted!

Since returning from the Colorado State event, Treasurer Norman Miller has been in touch with Rosa, sending her photos and a Pipeline. Following are excerpts from her very gracious reply...

Dear Norman,

...It was interesting "watching" Owen [Cannon, PSTOS Scholarship recipient], then I finally got to know him. You, Ray [Harris] and those of your organ society are truly guiding a young talent toward a future in "The King of Kings"...carry on. Bless you all.

Thank you for thinking of "Forgotten Melody"...it's (a) pure Crawford; and (b) pure Theatre Organ. With voxes and tibias, etc., it's LUSH!

You gave me an idea, as a contrast, Owen could have "much fun" making "horse sounds," neigh, hoofs, etc. — "picture" the story and follow through

like a movie — explaining first (to his audience), then let go and have fun. So here is my autographed copy [Rosa included her personal published arrangement of Ferde Grofe's "On The Trail."]

And the entire *Pipeline* I enjoyed, plus Owen's article which I thought he wrote very well.

It's a tough road, particularly for me...#1 as a "female" in a macho world,... and #2, I hit the depression era, but I never gave up. What a blessing!

Thank you all! Keep your Tibias floating.

Best Wishes, Rosa Rio

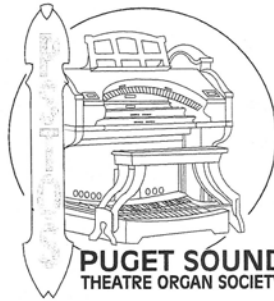
Nominations for Officers and Board Members needed now!

It's that time of year again...time to plan for 2003 officers and Board members. If you would like to get involved, or if you know someone who would enjoy being a part of PSTOS planning, please be in touch with Marilyn Schrum before October 15th at 206-364-5542, or email her at marilynschrum@hotmail.com

It involves meeting monthly for a no-host dinner and meeting, attending and participating in events, i.e., tickets, greeting, helping with refreshments, etc. Phone NOW! Many thanks!

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Celebrate Oktoberfest!



Great entertainment with Hokum Jeebs and others!
Yummy German food! (Sausage, sauerkraut, potato salad, desserts and beverages.)



**Sunday, October 27
Haller Lake Community Club**

TICKET ORDER FORM, CHRIS POWELL CONCERT • Sunday, Sept. 8, 2:00 PM

Paid PSTOS members \$10 • All others \$12



PLEASE CHECK ONE

- A stamped self-addressed envelope is enclosed—
Please mail my ticket(s) and complete driving directions.
- I will pick up my tickets at the door—please hold them for me there.

HERE'S MY ORDER FOR:

___ Member tickets @ \$10 \$____
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City _____ State _____ Zip+4 _____

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION

We're unable to process phone orders. Orders received without a self-addressed stamped envelope, or received within 6 days of the concert, will be held to be picked up immediately before the program. Ticket orders will be filled in the order received.