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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. PSTOS is a Chapter of the American Theatre Organ Society.

Volume 18, No. 5

May 2007

A Chapter of American Theatre Organ Society

***This is the big PSTOS Spring Event! Only a few seats left at press time! Hurry!***

## ★ **Jim Riggs** ★ **At Wurlitzer Manor's world-class 4/48 WURLITZER**

For over 25 years, JIM RIGGS has been the San Francisco Bay Area's most visible—and most listened to—purveyor of music on the "Mighty Wurlitzer" pipe organ. Having entertained well over a million toe-tapping patrons, it's no wonder he's referred to as the "Wizard of the Wurlitzer" by local media and emcees. Now in his eighteenth year as House Organist at the fabulous Paramount Theatre in Oakland, he also appears frequently at the Golden State Theatre in Monterey CA and the Fox Bob Hope Theatre in Stockton CA. He has performed at Oakland's Grand Lake Theatre, the Castro Theatre in San Francisco and at the Stanford Theatre in Palo Alto.

Riggs' music features mostly 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 often evoke dance orchestras and big swing bands. His music has been heard on National Public Radio in the USA and the BBC in the UK. Jim was featured in the Public Broadcasting System's television documentary, "Pulling Out All The Stops—A History of the Pipe Organ in America." We're excited to present this outstanding musician at Gig Harbor!



**Sat., May 19, 2:00 PM** At *Gig Harbor's spectacular WURLITZER MANOR*

*Seating limited to 90. Admission by donation. Suggested minimum \$35 per person, please.*

*Questions? Phone Tom Blackwell at 206-784-9203 and leave a message.*

***Coming Sat., July 21, a double feature event in Yelm & Olympia!***



Enjoy a delightful program with

## **ANDY CROW**

***playing Father Terence's Robert Morton theatre pipe organ at St. Columban Church in Yelm.***

***Refreshments!***

***Then drive the short distance to Andy's Olympia home—see, hear and try his newly installed Wurlitzer!***



***All this is happening Saturday afternoon, July 21<sup>st</sup>! Put it on your calendar NOW! Watch your June Pipeline for all the details.***

Andy Crow's newly installed residence Wurlitzer

## PUGET SOUND PIPELINE

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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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AMICA & POF—Carl Dodrill • Haller Lake Comm.Club—Bob Zat  
Paramount Theatre—Tom Blackwell • Wash. Center—Andy Crow

### 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.

**Joining Puget Sound Theatre Organ Society is quick and easy!** For a one year membership, send a \$20 check payable to PSTOS together with your name(s) as you would like them to appear on your name badges, your address with complete 9-digit ZIP code, and your email address (optional) to:  
Norman Miller, Treasurer, 2644 NW Esplanade,  
Seattle, WA 98117-2527.

## PRESIDENT'S Message



This month I'd like to take the opportunity to thank some of our "behind-the-scenes" volunteers who keep PSTOS running so smoothly. Like Doug and Terri Owen, handling all new member details, name tags, etc., plus always taking tickets and helping with kitchen work at events. Like Carl and Halie Dodrill, working enthusiastically to promote our Scholarship activities, staffing the Paramount lobby table at the silent movies and Halie ready to entertain at the piano. Like Jack & Mary Lou Becvar, who willingly host events at their home whenever asked (which is a WHALE of a lot of work). Like Bill Charles of the Mt. Baker Theatre Organ Society in Bellingham, who always publicizes our events in their newsletter, and organizes vans of folks to attend many of our events. Like Norman Miller who has served in the thankless job of Treasurer for nearly 14 years, always minding the ticket table, paying bills, handling ticket sales by mail. Like Mark Baratta and Dave Luttinen who are a dependable participants in almost every organ work party. Like Tom & Joani Roughton who have extended a warm welcome from Kenyon Hall to PSTOS members and stepped up to the plate as coordinators for several events. Like Cynthia and John McFalls who always help out where needed and offer their smiling faces at the Paramount lobby table on many occasions. There are many others as well and I apologize if I've forgotten anyone. Without each and every one of these giving individuals, PSTOS could not produce the variety of fun programs we enjoy each year.

Although things are running smoothly, there are still many areas where more help is needed. This includes events & programs, organ maintenance, history & archives, promotion, grant writing, scholarship and membership. If any of these areas tickles your fancy, please contact Dan Warner, PSTOS Volunteer Coordinator at 206 632-3723, or by e-mail at dan@pstos.org. One area where we will need several additional volunteers is our new "phone tree" to help in promoting PSTOS events by calling fellow members in your local dialing area. If this is something you can help with, please let Dan know.

Tickets for the upcoming May 19th Jim Riggs concert at Raymond & Barbara's Wurlitzer Manor are nearly gone! Proceeds from this event will go toward sending one or more of our PSTOS Scholarship students to the new ATOS "Theatre Organ Adventure" Summer Camp with instructors Jonas Nord-

## PSTOS Coming Events

### ◆ JIM RIGGS at Gig Harbor's Wurlitzer Manor

It's been a long time since we've had the chance to welcome Jim to a console here. He'll send you away tapping your toes! Don't miss this event. Reserve now!

**Sat., May 19, 2:00 PM**

### ◆ Take an enjoyable drive to Yelm, hear Fr. Terence's outstanding Robert Morton pipe organ

Featuring ANDY CROW at the organ. Refreshments, then a short drive to Olympia to visit Andy's home and hear his newly installed Wurlitzer!

Mark your calendar now!

**Saturday, July 21**

### ◆ PSTOS Member Cameo Extravaganza at the Jack & Mary Lou Becvar Home

Featuring Ray Harris, Jo Ann Evans, Roger McNair, Tom Roughton and others at Becvar's 3/19 Wurlitzer. Enjoy "make-your-own" strawberry shortcake, cookies and beverages on the deck. More details coming soon.

**Saturday, Aug 11, 1:30 PM**

wall, Jelani Eddington, Donna Parker and Jeff Weiler. More information is available on the ATOS website: [www.atos.org](http://www.atos.org).

May is an action-packed month for silent film and theatre organ at the Paramount Theatre. The first three Mondays (May 7, 14 & 21) will feature Harold Lloyd silent comedies accompanied by PSTOS member Dennis James. A special Friday evening show on May 25th completes the series. All shows begin at 7PM. In addition to the movies, on May 21 there will be a special 10AM presentation by Dennis James who will give a one-hour lecture/demonstration with discussion on the silent film era, composing/scoring for silent film and a screening of a short segment of 1928 Harold Lloyd film "Speedy." Tours of the theatre will be available afterward for interested groups. Please RSVP to 206 784-9203 or by e-mail [tom@pstos.org](mailto:tom@pstos.org) if you would like to attend. Hope to see you there!

...Tom Blackwell, President

# Other NW Theatre Organ Events

## ◆ Kenyon Hall in West Seattle

Latest news can be found at:  
kenyonhall@earthlink.net or on the  
web at [www.kenyonhall.org](http://www.kenyonhall.org)

## ◆ Lincoln Theatre in Mt. Vernon

Hear the Wurlitzer every Mon/Tue at  
7PM & Fri/Sat/Sun at 5PM.

## ◆ Columbia River Organ Club

For info and latest news go to  
[www.croconline.org](http://www.croconline.org)

## ◆ Paramount Theatre *Silent Movie Mondays* to feature Harold Lloyd *Retrospective Series*

All accompanied by Dennis James at the  
Paramount's original 4/21 Wurlitzer

**Monday, May 7, 7PM**

*Why Worry* and *Hot Water*

**Monday, May 14, 7PM**

*Movie Crazy* (This film is a "talkie.")

**Monday, May 21, 7PM**

*The Kid Brother* and *Speedy*

**Friday, May 25, 7PM**

*The Freshman* and *For Heaven's Sake*

## ◆ Jeff Fox to play at Lincoln Theatre

Jeff will present the Mt. Vernon Lincoln's  
original Wurlitzer in a program of  
favorites. The public and PSTOS  
members are invited. Admission by  
donation, to cover use of the facility.

**Saturday, May 26, 12:30 PM**

## ◆ Mark Andersen will play at Wenatchee Museum

Mark will play a concert followed by  
the silent film, *The General*, for which he  
wrote his own score when in N.Y.

**Sat., June 2, 7 PM**

*Note date change!*

## ◆ HLCC 3rd annual Chili Palooza

Chili cookoff and entertainment,  
including Tom Roughton, Jo Ann Evans  
and others at the Wurlitzer. Haller Lake  
Community Club.

**Saturday, June 23, 12-5 PM**

## PSTOS Development/Grant Writing Committee Outlines 2007 Goals

**Mission Statement:** Identify and pursue  
grants to help fund interest in, renovation  
of, and, otherwise, promote theatre pipe  
organs for PSTOS members, young  
people, and the general public.

### 2007 Goals include:

1. Develop grant boilerplate information  
available in a computer file for use in  
future grant applications. Most grant  
applications require similar informa-  
tion so having information in boiler-  
plate form should make applying for  
grants a bit less burdensome.
2. Develop a 'master' list of potential  
grant funding sources and keep the list  
updated.
3. Submit a 2007 Endowment Fund  
proposal to ATOS to cover a portion  
of the Paramount restoration work.
4. Continue to keep up to date on the  
Roosevelt High School pipe organ  
re-installation. A new auditorium has  
been constructed at the school with  
space for the console and pipe organ  
chambers. The original Moller organ  
has been removed and is being stored  
by the City awaiting funds for reinstal-  
lation.

### Committee Members:

Barbara Graham, Chair, Tom Blackwell,  
Carl Dodrill, Bob Zat

## A warm PSTOS welcome to our newest Members and Associates

Kat Brightwell – Seattle  
Paul & Marta Hammack – Bellevue  
Chuck Huffington – Edmonds  
Karen Kirchoff – Seattle  
Mike McDonald – Spokane  
Donna Parker – Aloha OR  
Chris & Al Pride – Seattle  
Alain Rhone – Lynnwood  
Elmer & Pat Skold – Kenmore  
Mike Young – Wash. D.C.

## Free To good home



Robert Morton two-manual console. Orig-  
inally installed 1927 in the Liberty Theatre,  
LaGrande Oregon. Later purchased by Bill  
Bunch (of Balcom & Vaughan) for installa-  
tion in his residence. The console has a lot  
of nice detailing but would require a full  
restoration. Includes bench, pedal board,  
three swell shoes and a set of toe pistons.  
Contact Tom Blackwell, [tom@pstos.org](mailto:tom@pstos.org)  
206 784-9203

## Remembering "UNCLE MILT" KIEFER

Born Milton Eugene Kieffer July  
2, 1929, "Uncle Milt" died peacefully  
from complications of pneumonia, in  
Vancouver, WA., March 19.

Known to the community as "Uncle  
Milt," Mr. Kieffer was the owner and  
driving force behind Uncle Milt's Pipe  
Organ Pizza Co. on Grand Blvd in  
Vancouver. Many will remember him  
as a fiery, hands-on, multi-talented,  
kind-hearted and generous man who  
provided a place to showcase and  
share many fine organists and musi-  
cal talents. While children chased the  
bubbles falling from the ceiling or

waited excitedly for the Pink Panther  
to come by, others would play games  
in adjoining rooms. Most would sit  
and enjoy the organ music while dining  
with family and friends. This was Uncle  
Milt at his happiest, sharing a glass of  
wine with wife Shirley and his friends  
while listening to "Time Was" as only  
daughter Wendy could play it. Uncle  
Milt would have wanted to raise a glass  
of wine to so many people; to those  
who loved to fish, to fly, or just share  
good pizza, and to those who helped  
create Uncle Milt's and the organists  
who played there.

# Pages From The Past..1971

## Seattle's Balcom & Vaughn firm worked over 2½ years building Wichita's Century II replacement console, after original was destroyed by an arsonist

By Val Varney —Reprinted from a *Seattle Times* article published November 11, 1971



Bill Bunch put a nameplate on the Wurlitzer console

The sounds of the grand old pipe organ will accompany the silent movies again. But this time it will have new paint, parts and owners.

The organ is one of five built by the Wurlitzer firm in 1926, specifically for movie houses. The new console is being built by Balcom & Vaughn of Seattle.

It was designed by Jesse Crawford, a Seattle organist who later played it at the Paramount Theatre in New York City from 1927 to 1933.

The player can make it sound like an entire orchestra.

Bill Bunch, Balcom & Vaughn owner, said the New York Paramount was torn down about three years ago. A Los Angeles group bought the organ but could not keep it.

**THE ORGAN** then was bought by a Wichita, Kansas, group which planned to use it for silent movies and concerts there. But an arsonist set fire to the console.

The pipes and pedalboard were saved. The Balcom & Vaughn firm of 12 employees has spent 2½ years, or more than 4,000 man hours, on the console.

About 95 per cent of the console was made here, Bunch said. The manual keys were made in England, but the Seattle firm put in the components. A total of \$40,000 worth of work has gone into the one-ton console.

Also replaced were 366 stops, which activate the pipes plus sounds of sleigh bells, automobile horns and other devices. There are 2,700 wires for the connection keys, and 36 pages

explaining the wiring.

The organ's 3,000 pipes are in Wichita.

Ormolu (hand-carved decorative designs, painted and mounted on the console) will be done in Wichita, Bunch said. This job, by a first-class cabinet maker, will cost an additional \$10,000.

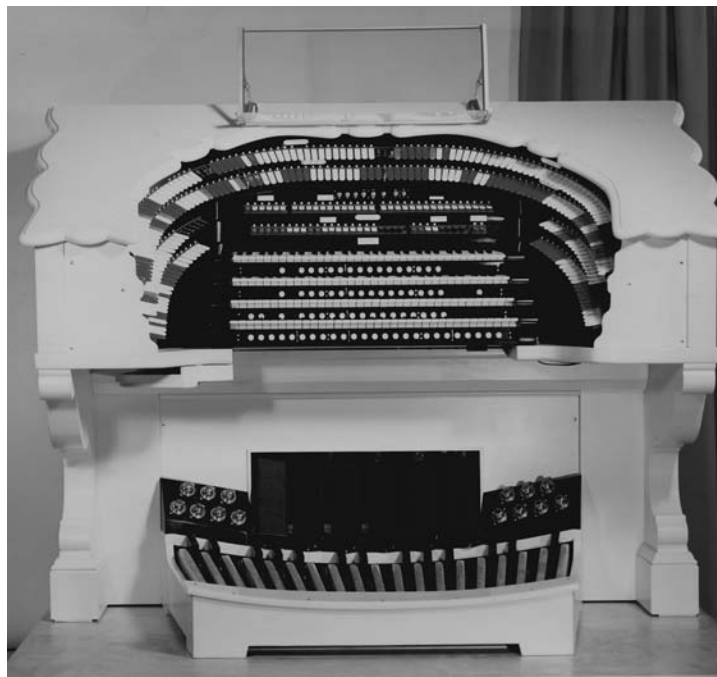
Bunch estimated that the organ and console could not be made for less than \$500,000 today.

The four other organs were installed in Detroit, St. Louis, Brooklyn and San Francisco. They each weigh about 30 to 40 tons.

Bunch got the basic measurements for the console from one of the four other organs.

"We have tried to make everything authentic," Bunch said. "Actually, the only changes are to make it more serviceable."

The console will be shipped to Wichita by a furniture van.



The unadorned console, completed and ready to ship. Gold decorative ormolu was applied later in Wichita at an additional cost of \$10,000.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The construction period for the replacement console extended over a period of nearly three years. There were no blueprints to follow, only pictures and measurements taken from the identical San Francisco Fox console.

# Pages From The Past...continued

## Photos from the PSTOS archives showing work at the Balcom & Vaughn shop



Pictured in the upper assembly room are seven employees hard at work. Including Sandy Balcom, shown pointing and wearing glasses. Besides the employees mentioned, there were at least three key people who worked diligently on the Wichita project. Ken Mayberry was shop superintendent, Don Myers, a long time employee (PSTOS member, recently deceased) who lent his talents in all phases of the construction, and Harold Shawver who assisted Homer Toombs in the console construction phase.



Homer Toombs was the master cabinet maker, pictured holding a tape rule, responsible for creating as nearly as possible an identical basic console shell. He was a serious taskmaster. Pieces of the shell had to fit perfectly and it had to match the original in every respect.



Joining in the work progress at the Balcom & Vaughn shop was Antinett Rameau (Nettie) pictured here preparing the wiring using standard cotton covered wire. No color-coded wire was used, every wire was the same as the next!



Sandy Balcom had retired at this time, but often showed up at the shop. He is pictured with Dean Bottker, Dan Adamson, and Ted Leamy, working on a church project. Deane, Dan and Ted all worked on the new Wichita console. The Wichita replacement console work was sandwiched in between scheduled church organ construction, thus the longer than normal period to complete the job.

In the next three issues of the Pipeline the story behind the Balcom & Vaughn firm will be featured. It's an amazing story of Sandy himself, the firm he created, and the influence he had on the history of theatre organs all up and down the Pacific coast. It's a rich history with loads of pictures taken over a period of 50+ years.

**Seattle Theatre Group offers  
FREE EVENT FOR SCHOOL  
GROUPS**

Bring your students to the Historic Paramount Theatre in downtown Seattle to step back in time to the 1920s! Hear the Paramount's own Mighty Wurlitzer organ, see a segment of a silent film and learn about the silent film era – a perfect opportunity for students to learn about theatre, music and history!

**Monday, May 21, 10 AM  
The Paramount Theatre  
Grades 4 and up**

**PUGET SOUND THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY**

Russ & Jo Ann Evans, Newsletter Editors  
6521 NE 191st ST  
Kenmore, WA 98028-3453



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**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**



One hour Lecture/Demonstration with organist Dennis James. Program will include: demonstration of the organ; discussion on the silent film era and composing/scoring for silent film; and a screening of a short segment of 1928 Harold Lloyd film "Speedy." Tours of the theatre available afterwards for interested groups (please specify when RSVP)

**The Mighty Wurlitzer:** Installed at a cost of over \$100,000 in the 1920s, the Paramount's Mighty Wurlitzer includes an entire grand piano and drum-set built into the side panels of the auditorium. Next to these run hundreds of pipes and bells, chimes, whistles, and horns. Only three remain in their original environments, and one of them can be found at The Paramount Theatre.

**Harold Lloyd:** Silent film comedian Harold Lloyd personified the go-getter spirit of the 1920s and is regarded as one of the greats of the silent film era. Having made more films than Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton combined, Lloyd began his career with his iconic short films before he helped pave the way for the advent of the "feature-length" film.

**Dennis James:** For over 35 years Dennis James has played a pivotal role in the international revival of silent films with live music. James tours worldwide professionally performing to silent films with solo organ, piano, and chamber ensemble accompaniments, plus presentations with major symphony orchestras. He is the Paramount's house organist for the Silent Film Series.

**To RSVP, please email [lizy@theparamount.com](mailto:lizy@theparamount.com) or call (206) 467-5510 ext 1171 with name of group and number of attendees.**