

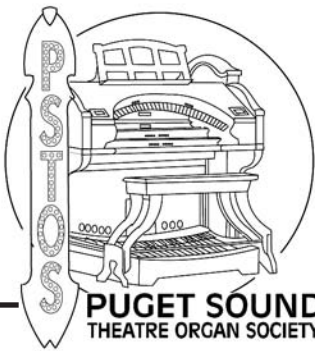
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PUGET SOUND PIPELINE

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. 6

June 2007



PUGET SOUND
THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY

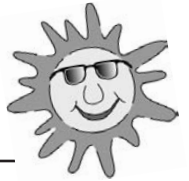
A Chapter of American Theatre Organ Society



Coming soon—A Fun "Triple-Play Day" to Remember! Summer Organ Adventure

Saturday, July 21

A full day of Fun, Food and Music for just \$10! Don't miss it!



Special Sneak Peek Open House—Open Console... 10 to 11:30 AM

Visit Centralia's Fox Theatre to see, hear and play the newly installed 3/7 Wurlitzer donated to the theatre and Opera Pacifica by PSTOS members Fred and Eva Beeks. Lunch on your own and then...



Main Event... 1:30 PM featuring **ANDY CROW**

Head for Yelm where you'll enjoy a delightful program of organ favorites with ANDY CROW playing Father Terence's 3/16 Robert Morton theatre pipe organ at St. Columban Church. Open console follows for one and all.

Enjoy a yummy Dessert Buffet and beverages by the Church Ladies!



ADMISSION \$10 per person • Kids 16 and under FREE with adult

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED! Phone Barbara Graham, 206-525-7859 or barbara@pstos.org

DEADLINE for reservations—Wednesday, July 18

After-Glow...

Andy Crow's newly installed residence Wurlitzer



Then drive the short distance to Andy's Olympia home—see, hear and try his newly installed 2/12 Wurlitzer! Everyone who has been there says this is a great sounding installation!

Complete DRIVE DIRECTIONS will be published in the July 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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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

Hello PSTOSers:

Summer is coming up fast and we have two great events planned. We've heard from you that you like the more informal events where everyone has a chance to socialize. In July we have a great triple play lined up featuring a veritable feast of theatre organs in Centralia, Yelm and Olympia. Two of these instruments have never been heard by PSTOS members before and all three will feature open console! In August, we have another fun Summer social at Jack & Mary Lou Becvar's and their fine 3/19 Wurlitzer... always a great time.



Paramount Wurlitzer update

Our Paramount fund-raising efforts are in full swing. To date, over \$18,000 has been raised by PSTOS to support the Mighty Wurlitzer restoration plan and we recently submitted a grant proposal for another \$10,000. If we get this grant, we will have enough money to begin working on the most urgent projects. This includes re-leathering of all regulators (the "bellows" that control the wind supply to the pipes), re-leathering of all windchests (the valve boxes that supply wind to the pipes) and a complete re-wiring to meet current electrical code. Most of this work will be done by PSTOS members so look for many new technical volunteer opportunities in the Fall 2007 timeframe.

Charlie Chaplin films coming in fall

Speaking of the Paramount, the Harold Lloyd silent film series has just wrapped up. Dennis James did a great job in expertly accompanying these films and the attendance routinely exceeds 1,000 for each show. Many of your fellow PSTOS members are involved in making these films more fun for everyone, whether it be behind-the-scenes organ maintenance work, education outreach efforts or staffing the PSTOS informational table in the lobby. If you missed this most recent series, I hope you will consider attending one or more films in the upcoming September/October series featuring the

PSTOS Coming Events

*Don't miss these fun
summer events planned
JUST FOR YOU!*

◆ Head south for a Triple Play Day!

SUMMER ORGAN ADVENTURE

Begin your day at the Centralia Fox with Open Console at its newly installed 3/7 Wurlitzer. Lunch on your own, then on to Yelm to hear ANDY CROW at Fr. Terence's outstanding Robert Morton pipe organ. More Open console, a wonderful dessert buffet and beverages presented by the St. Columban Church Ladies! Then a short drive to Olympia to visit Andy's home and hear his newly installed Wurlitzer. What a fun day! Lots of music, lots of opportunities to play, lots of food and camaraderie.

Saturday, July 21

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

Featuring Tom Roughton, Jo Ann Evans, Roger McNair 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

art of Charlie Chaplin. Dennis James is in top form, the Wurlitzer sounds great, fully restored film prints are shown and the theatre itself is beautiful. To quote Dennis, "It just doesn't get any better than this!"

Thanks to Barbara and Raymond, our much appreciated Gig Harbor friends and supporters

And finally, thanks to Raymond and Barbara for another wonderful Wurlitzer Manor event with Jim Riggs on May 19th. We could not ask for more gracious hosts or such great supporters of the theater organ and PSTOS. We are truly lucky to have Raymond & Barbara as PSTOS members and our friends.

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

◆ Lincoln Theatre in Mt. Vernon

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

◆ Columbia River Organ Club

For info and latest news go to
www.croonline.org

◆ 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

From The MAILBOX

Howdy PSTOS,

Looks like we will be doing a 30th Birth-
day Bash for the Kimball Theatre Organ
in Alaska's State Office Building on July 6
during the noon hour.

It was 30 years ago that the organ was
opened to the public with a big dedication.
Governor Jay Hammond was present along
with many dignitaries.

John Moir of Balcom and Vaughn is in
town this week fixing dead notes, tuning,
tweaking and cleaning etc., so the Kimball
will be ready for the "Season."

More as we find out what may transpire.
So, come on up for the party!

Allan MacKinnon

A warm PSTOS welcome to these new Members & Associates

Warren & Ruth Henderson, Edmonds

Lawrence Jacobson, Seattle

Carl & Barbara Carlsen, Lake Stevens

Jim Riggs played to a full house at Wurlitzer Manor May 19th

It was a lovely spring day as folks began arriving at Wurlitzer Manor in anticipation of another unique musical experience. They were not disappointed! From the very first melody, bodies swayed and heads moved in time to the bouncy music of the ever-popular JIM RIGGS.

It was Jim's first return trip to the Puget Sound area since the early 1990s when he played a concert for PSTOS at Bellevue Pizza & Pipes. Most certainly all those in attendance will agree—fifteen years is much too long to wait for his next visit!

Jim specializes in up-tempo tunes from the 1920s, '30s, and '40s. This is his niche, and he does it well.

The organ performed flawlessly, thanks to the tender loving care provided by its caretakers, Ed and Patti Zollman. Headquartered in Wichita, they make the trip to Gig Harbor each time a major event is held there.

Due to restrictions on street parking and the number of folks who may occupy the home, it's no longer permissible to seat several hundred guests. However, the lesser number makes for a comfortable ambience enjoyed by both those attending and the organist.

Many sincere thanks to Barbara and Raymond for once again inviting PSTOS members to share their unusual home, their one-of-a-kind 4/48 Wurlitzer, and their unbeatable hospitality!



Guests relax in anticipation of another enjoyable theatre pipe organ experience!



Barbara, Jim and Raymond enjoy a moment in the spotlight after a successful day.

Pages From The Past..

The first of several articles relating the story of

Clyde M. "Sandy" Balcom—Mr. Pipe Organ on the West Coast

It is very likely Sandy alone had more influence on theatre organs up and down the West Coast than anyone else. This is the story of the man and the firm he built, Balcom and Vaughan Pipe Organs.

Mr. Balcom was born December 23rd, 1899, at Fourth Prairie, near Orchard, Washington. The location is ten miles east of Vancouver, Washington, toward the town of Camas. The family was of French-Canadian origin, partly Scotch from around Quebec City. In the latter quarter of the nineteenth century, the family migrated to the orchard area of an 1800 acre farm, to make their fortune raising prunes. The family name was originally Beurthume (pronounced Barshome), from which the father changed it to Balcom upon coming to the United States. A division of the land deed in Father Beurthome's will divided equally the farm, giving 900 acres to the Church upon his death.

Sandy Balcom was one of six boys and six girls. One of the first jobs Sandy ever had was working for the Portland Oregonian in Portland. Having had experience in driving horses and teams, in 1914 he was wholesaling and delivering papers in the downtown area.

Off to San Francisco and a job at age 14

In this same year, he went to San Francisco. After purchasing his bus ticket, exactly \$142.00 was left which represented his entire savings with which to stake his future in the Land of Milk and Honey. In looking around for work in the Bay Area, he began as a "dust boy" in the Ehlers Music Company in 1914-1915. One of his jobs was to keep the booth clean at the 1915 San Francisco Exposition.

About this time, Mr. Johnson, president of the Ehlers Music Company, took \$5500 from the safe and went down to Los Angeles to buy the California Art Organ Company, which he renamed the Johnson Organ Company. After that time the Johnson and Kimball Organs were sold in the entire area by the Ehlers Music Company. When asked to replace the original investment, he felt no obligation since as he told his director, it had been his in the first place.

The organ installations for the Ehlers Company were made by Leo Schoenstein

of the famous firm of Felix F. Schoenstein & Sons, in San Francisco. His employed help was a great big clumsy boy who, running to catch a streetcar one day, fell and broke his leg. This seemed to be the event which turned Sandy Balcom into organ building, when Leo Schoenstein hired him in 1916 as an apprentice to assist him in the organ work. Previous to this Sandy had been learning the art of piano tuning, wood finishing and general piano work with the Ehlers Company.

The year 1916 was a thriving era for the Schoensteins' and the Ehlers' companies. It was at this time that they were hired to move the mammoth Austin organ from the Fair to the new Civic Auditorium. Sandy's main job on this huge project was to "walk" cable for the new installations. This organ of four manuals and 105 ranks of pipes had over 7,600 pipes in its interior and was one of the largest instruments in the country at that time. Some 30,000 feet of lumber had been used in its building, and it required a chamber area 45 feet wide, 20 feet deep and 50 feet high. The largest Austin air chest is 40 feet long, 15 feet deep and 7 feet high, and the entire organ weighed over forty tons. The bottom C of the pedal 32' Diapason weighed 1,300 pounds. The 32' Violone CCCC was 41 feet long, 20 inches in diameter, and weighed 600 pounds. It was blown by two 20 hp Orgelblows and a 9 volt 20 amp generator. In the rear of the huge auditorium was installed the nine rank Echo Organ with a very large scale set of chimes.

Learned the organ profession at age 16

Sandy Balcom learned every facet of the organ profession in his apprenticeship years of 1916 to 1922 under Leo Schoen-



stein and his father. His father had come over from Germany's Black Forest about 1876 and after working briefly in the Reno area, had come to San Francisco to found the firm which still bears his name. Sandy explains with obvious pride the voicing and finishing techniques he learned from these two men, and the infinite care which Felix F. gave the pipework on which he was working, especially reed stops. He made practically all his own pipes and was very careful in the selection of the proper woods. All types of instruments were built during this time, tracker, tubular and early electric, and some of these are still serving California parishes today.

Joined Sherman Clay as organ installer at 22

In February, 1922, Sandy accepted an offer from the Sherman Clay Company to come to the Northwest as head of their organ department to direct their installa-

Pages From The Past...continued

tions. This meant working with a number of different organs which they sold, a great number which were photoplayers put into every conceivable form of amusement house.


Photoplayers popular in 1922

These instruments seemed the most practical in many houses, and although of fewer pipe ranks, gave much more variety than the straight church type tubular instruments which were their immediate predecessors. Only a year earlier, in 1921, such a tubular organ had been installed in the Georgetown Mission Theatre in Seattle, by Arthur D. Longmore, the Kimball representative for forty-four years. Before Mr. Longmore's death in 1937, he had sold many such organs in the Western states, and was the only representative that could have his way with the Kimball Company. Their Swedish background at Kimball made them hard to deal with in the way of new ideas. During Mr. Longmore's entire lifetime he never learned to trust electric action, and although installing some organs of this type at the request of the firm, he greatly preferred the tubular action. When the old St. Martins Cathedral organ of 33 ranks from the old church as late as 1930, Mr. Longmore outbid Sandy's bid of \$8,000 (for electric action and a new console) by doing the job for \$6,600 tubular with some new reeds.

Longmore further did not care for theatre organs. He had designed and installed one for the Neptune Theatre in Seattle, a half straight, half unit organ of 14 ranks, finished in 1921. (In 1943 Sandy Balcom and Vaughn moved this instrument to Seattle Pacific College.)

'Pop' Vaughan and Sandy became partners

The year 1922 also marked an important milestone. Sherman Clay's directions were specific and to the point. Not only was Mr. Balcom to sell and install organs for their firm, but he was to establish, at all large centers, a service organization or man capable of learning the service trade. In Seattle the Sherman Clay piano work was done mostly by Frank Cop and George Karn. But in Tacoma, the store was privileged to have one of the finest Steinway men on the coast as their service man, E.L. (Pop) Vaughan. Mr. Vaughan approached Sandy in this year to teach him to tune and learn about organs. He seemed to be a most apt and will-



Orpheum
THEATRE
SIDNEY HIRSHBERG
OWNER & MANAGER
THE LARGEST AND FINEST EQUIPPED THEATRE IN NORTHERN MONTANA
MOTION PICTURES OF SUPERIOR QUALITY—PERFECTLY PROJECTED.
Haare, Mont.

August 26th, 1923.

Sherman Clay & Co.
Kearney & Sutter,
San Francisco, California.

Gentlemen:

Your Mr. C. M. Balcom has today completed the installation of my Robert Morton organ and besides finding him a wonderful fellow personally, his work has been absolutely satisfactory in every respect. He has done everything possible to make my organ a success.

It will afford me great pleasure to recommend both him and his work at any time.

Yours very truly,
Sidney Hirschberg.

SH/mp

Copy to: Sherman Clay & Co.
3rd Ave. & Pine.
Seattle, Washington.

ing pupil, and within a year's time became an expert technician in this field. This led almost simultaneously to the partnership of Balcom and Vaughan. Although Vaughan never actually held a financial interest in the firm, he became a full legal partner and a most happy relationship resulted which lasted until his untimely passing in 1947.

Pop Vaughan proved to be not only a real technician in the organ field, but was also an outstanding salesman, selling Robert Morton and other organs during the time. In 1925 he sold the original Bennett organ in the State Theatre in Seattle, mostly because of Sherman Clay's looking around

for the best deal, and this instrument was subsequently finished by Sandy Balcom.

Left Sherman Clay, wed Mary, at 24

Thus in 1924 Sandy was offered the installation and selling work for the Kimball Company in connection with their theatre installations. This was a momentous year, leaving Sherman Clay and also the year of his happy marriage to his wife, Mary, who had worked for John Hamrick for some years before this time.

Mr. Balcom worked in selling and install-

...Story continued on back page

Morton console update!

The Robert Morton console advertised for FREE in last month's Pipeline has a new home with Bruce Newman of Port Orford, Oregon. Bruce has an Aeolian residence organ from a mansion in California and he is adding many ranks of pipes. Plus he wanted to add a horseshoe-style theatre console. Bruce drove up to Seattle on Saturday May 19th with his large covered trailer and loaded the console for the trip back to Port Orford... a happy ending since the console was originally from the state of Oregon (LaGrande).

PUGET SOUND THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY

Russ & Jo Ann Evans, Newsletter Editors

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The Sandy Balcom story, continued...

ing Kimball theatre organs from 1924-1929. During this time he was actually able to get the company to make some much needed improvements, such as triple valve cone regulators, additional shutter areas and other ideas. None of these had ever been used before, and as before mentioned, only A. D. Longmore could get them to listen to anything new prior to this time. This was principally due to the superintendent of the organ department, having for so many years been a piano man, simply could not realize a need for improvement in the product. But toward the last installations they finally did give in to several items which were all important to the final results.

There has seldom been any difference of opinion about the workmanship on the Kimball Organs. They used very heavy lumber and the best of everything obtainable, and priced their organs accordingly.

Sandy sold, installed numerous local organs

Some of the instruments installed by Sandy Balcom at this time included a 2/8 in the Aberdeen Theatre (KPO 6735), the 2/12 in the Library at Centralia, the 2/6 (KPO 6748) in the St. Helens Chehalis, the 2/9 in the Everett Theatre (KPO 6760),



opened by Harry L. Reed and used only five years in the theatre, the 2/4 in the Gateway House in Kirkland, the 3/16 in the Columbia Longview, the 2/4 (KPO 6784) in the Brown Theatre (now Smith) in Snohomish, the 2/5 in the Dream Theatre Sedro Wooley, the 2/9 in the Tacoma Temple, the 2/5 at the Woodland in Seattle, the 2/9 at the Embassy, the 2/5 at the Ridgemont (KPO 6842), the 2/5 at the Stradley, the 2/8 at the Capitol, the 2/6 at the 45th Street (then called the Paramount), the 2/5 at Salem's Helig Theatre, and the 3/12 at the Portland Hawthorne

(later the Bagdad).

In 1927 he also journeyed to Alaska where he sold the 2/7 at the Empress in Fairbanks, (Opus 6968), and the 2/8 (KPO 7019) at the Liberty in Juneau, besides rebuilding a number of others in that territory.

—To be continued in next Pipeline

LEFT—Sandy at the Columbia Theatre Kimball, Longview WA. This instrument was eventually moved to Benson Poly in Portland, and is now installed in Portland's Cleveland High School and used regularly by Oregon Chapter ATOS.

KING 5 broadcast "live" from Paramount May 21

PSTOS President Tom Blackwell and Board member Ray Harris were featured on KING 5 TV's morning and noontime news broadcasts on Monday May 21st as part of a feature about the Paramount's Mighty Wurlitzer and Dennis James' Silent Movie Mondays. Tom gave some historical background on the organ and technical facts about the restoration program, while Ray was featured playing several numbers on the big Publix 1 Wurli. As a surprise bonus, PSTOS organ crew member Dave Luttinen was caught a bit off guard at 6:45am when the KING5 interviewer asked him to play a few bars for the camera due to a delay in Dennis' arrival. KING5 broadcast "live" from the theatre numerous times during Dennis' Master Class for approximately 300 local school kids. Several lucky students got a chance to play the organ and they received personal coaching from Dennis.