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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 23, No. 5

May 2012

A Chapter of the American Theatre Organ Society

Sharon Stearnes

Brings you the

PIZZA & PIPES EXPERIENCE



Enjoy...

- A full evening of great music
- Silent movie comedy
- Pizza • Salad
- Beverages • Dessert



SHARON STEARNES was staff organist for many years at all three Pizza & Pipes restaurants in Seattle, Bellevue, and Tacoma, where she enjoyed a loyal following of fans. When Tacoma P&P burned in the late 1990s, Sharon's happy times on the Wurlitzer bench came to an end. She has since raised three children, played for churches and various events, and now is thrilled to be back entertaining her fans.

Saturday, June 9, 6:00 PM

Haller Lake Community Club

12579 Densmore Ave. N., Seattle

ADMISSION... PSTOS Current Members \$10 • Non-Members \$15 • Age 16 and under \$5

Drive directions

Northbound I-5: Use Exit 174 onto NE 130th St., turn left over freeway one long block to 1st Ave. N.E. Turn left (south) one block to 128th. Right on N.E. 128th a few blocks to Densmore. Left on Densmore, clubhouse is on the right. Parking both front and rear. Handicapped entry with parking and an elevator at rear of building.

Southbound I-5: Use Exit 175 onto N.E. 145th, turn right one block to 1st Ave. N.E. Left (south) continuing through N.E. 130th to N.E. 128th. Continue where underlined above.

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Puget Sound Theatre Organ Society
6521 NE 191st ST
Kenmore, WA 98028-3453

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
Calvary Christian Assembly—Jeff Snyder • **AGO**—David Locke

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:

PSTOS, Clint Meadway, Treasurer
9594 1st Ave. NE #453,
Seattle WA 98115-2012

PSTOS *Coming Events*

▶ SHARON STEARNES will bring the Pizza & Pipes experience to Haller Lake Community Club

Sharon is excited about again playing for all her fans from her days at Pizza & Pipes. Make this event a special night out!

Sat., June 9, 6PM



▶ Rising young star NATHAN AVAKIAN to play at Merlyn Johnson's home

Nathan has wowed audiences everywhere he has played. An ATOS Young Organist Competition winner, he is in high demand. Mark your calendar! Seating is limited.

Opening for Nathan will be our very own PSTOS Scholarship recipient **JESSE ZYLSTRA**.

Jesse is making remarkable progress studying with his Wenatchee teacher as he prepares to enter the University of Idaho in the fall. We welcome Jesse and look forward to hearing him!



Sat., July 14, 1:00



▶ JIM RIGGS presents a special SUNDAY AFTERNOON AT THE PARAMOUNT!

Jim will pair with another surprise musician to bring you an afternoon of his signature rhythmic music. This is a rare chance to enjoy the Paramount Wurlitzer in a theatre organ program. Don't miss it!



Sunday, July 29, 2:00 PM

▶ JONAS NORDWALL CONCERT and WORKSHOP at Bill Keller's home



Plan to attend a workshop from 10:30–noon, then enjoy a full concert at 2:00, all on Bill's fantastic 5-manual Allen! Watch for details.

Saturday, September 15

▶ Annual PSTOS HOLIDAY PARTY with Portland's MIKE BRYANT at Haller Lake

Our annual holiday extravaganza! Music! Food! Fun! A great time for all.

Sunday, December 2, 2012

FOR SALE *Organ Stuff*

ESTATE SALE.

HAMMOND X-77 with two X-77 speakers.

Owned at one time by popular Seattle area organist Dick Kimball.

Organ is in playing condition.

For information and details, contact

Greg Smith

425-485-0979



JoAn Andenes
Seattle

Jayne-Alice Batie
Shoreline

John & Jane Lindstrom
Blanchard OK

Eric Matthes
Seattle

Other NW Theatre Organ News

Kenyon Hall in West Seattle

www.kenyonhall.org or email
kenyonhall@earthlink.net

Lincoln Theatre in Mt. Vernon

The Wurlitzer is usually played a half hour
before movies. lincolntheatre.org

Columbia River Theatre Organ Society

www.croonline.org

Bellingham's Mt. Baker Theatre Organ Society

www.mountbakertheatre.com

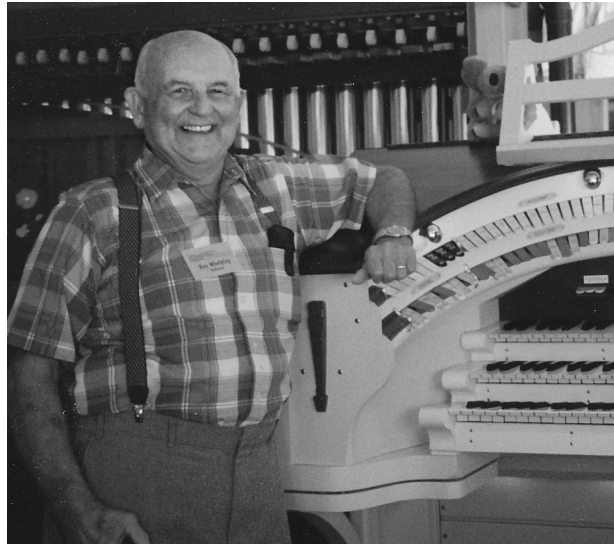
Spokane's First Nazarene Theatre Organ Society

www.sfnatos.org

Oregon Chapter ATOS, Portland

[http://www.theatreorgans.com/
oregon/ocatos/ocatos2.htm](http://www.theatreorgans.com/oregon/ocatos/ocatos2.htm)

Remembering RAY WHELPLEY



Longtime PSTOS supporter and theatre organ aficionado, RAY WHELPLEY, passed away recently at age 93. Ray was one of the finest craftsmen you'll find, and the meticulous quality of his work is worthy of the highest praise. Not only did he totally restore his 3/12 Wurlitzer, he also acquired a player piano severely damaged in a fire. Ray painstakingly brought it back to life to be played from the Wurlitzer console.

His Wurlitzer was previously installed in two Puget Sound area skating rinks: 1938 – Playland Amusement Park Skating Rink in Seattle, then in 1943 – Rollerfair Rink (aka Skateland) in Everett. Ray acquired the organ in 1965.

Ray and his wife, Muriel, opened their home for a number of PSTOS organ crawls and home parties over the years, and members will recall many good times there. Special sympathy is extended to Ray's family and many friends.

Smiles to brighten your day... *From the William Bunch archives.*

Gems quoted from various old periodicals, church journals, church histories, county histories, and newspapers, exactly as they appeared, complete with misspelled words and (unintentional) humorous writing.

- ☺ The exciting moment came as the organist, Miss -----, put on a flute and string stop for full organ to accompany the him singing.
- ☺ The three rank organ completely fills the forty-foot wall of the church.
- ☺ The organ has four manuals: Great, Swell, Pedal, and a keyboard for the chimes. The memorial chimes are the outstanding feature of the organ.
- ☺ Unfortunately at the opening recital the concert artist used too much organ, and the walls of the church cracked in several places.
- ☺ Mr. Peter ----- has donated his Farfisa organ to the church, thus enabling the congregation to have a true church organ of great dimensions.
- ☺ Using full organ for the prelude, offertory, postlude, and background music, Miss -----, the gifted 15-year-old organist showed her ability.
- ☺ Mrs. -----, having had six years of piano and a year of organ, has been appointed organist. Her talent and ability are surpassed by few people.
- ☺ An organ fund, accumulating over eighteen years, enabled the congregation to purchase a Hammond Spinnet organ, one of the finest instruments in this city. *[City has 40,000 population.]*
- ☺ Installed in his home is a mammoth pipe organ of four ranks and one manual. The instrument can easily be heard at the far end of the block.
- ☺ Only the best-trained organists will be allowed to play the new single-manual Everett Orgatron which will be kept under lock-and-key.
- ☺ Two ancient organs, a Hutchins in the sanctuary and a Kimball in the Chapel, the larger being a three-manual of 24 ranks, and the smaller a two manual of a dozen ranks, were dismantled and sold. Far better instruments, tonally and in every other way, are the new Thomas electronic organ in the Chapel and the Wurlitzer electronic in the sanctuary.
- ☺ The church installed a Lowrey organ. A new pastor came. The congregation unfortunately lost over forty members.
- ☺ The organ is used for hymns, but the organist plays the piano for the anthems. The church is fortunate in having two excellent organists...
- ☺ The console also has foot pedals controlling the bellows which provide air for the pipes above. A large electric blower provides wind.
- ☺ A new heating plant will be placed in the church. Also given as a memorial will be the new pipe organ. The reason was that it did not get the church hot enough.

Pages From The Past..

The Robert Morton Unit Organ

Its history as published in *The Console Magazine*, 1966. Fifth and final part.

Part 5, the final part of a continuing history of the Robert Morton theatre pipe organ.

A Financial Roller Coaster

From its inception in 1917 to the day it was put into receivership, the Robert Morton Pipe Organ Company was on something of a financial roller coaster. Seldom was the operation what might be termed a smooth one. Several times the doors were closed for weeks, and in one case, for about six months when operating capital evaporated. There were orders for theatre organs, but no funds with which to purchase materials and pay employees. The amount of money needed to keep the plant open was not readily obtainable and Werner was obliged to seek a loan wherever he could find a receptive banker.

On June 15, 1919, the company doors closed for their longest period, not opening again until October of that year. This closing date was furnished by Wilbur Bergstrom, who was able to provide other important dates from a small notebook he kept while employed as head of the machine shop.

During this shutdown, Paul Carlsted recalled that he returned to work for the Kimball Organ Company in Chicago and came back to Morton when the refinancing had been arranged.

There are notations that appear in the issues of *The American Organist* at various times from 1920 to 1924 stating that the firm had closed temporarily for one week to one month and that the management was hopeful of resuming operations again very soon. These were not frequent news items, but they appeared often enough to disclose that all was not well in the Morton Company, financially speaking.

Business was brisk indeed during 1922 and 1923. But during the early part of the year in 1923, an ugly rumor cropped up concerning hypothecation of contracts. It was talked about by local bankers but only a few of the factory personnel were aware that perhaps something very serious was taking place. Quite naturally, the charge was directed against H.J. Werner. There were intimations that he was selling organs in the East, obtaining the money for them and then pledging the contracts again in the West to get additional money.

Coincidental with this rumor, Stanley

Williams had been approached by Robert P. Elliott, who had formerly held a position with the Morton Company and left to accept the sales manager position with W. W. Kimball Company, to go to work selling Kimball pipe organs.

Williams was one of the few Morton men who had heard the rumor. "I noticed that finances were rather strange. But I had nothing to do with them; I was hired as factory superintendent to look after the product. But one morning a friend of mine at the bank in Van Nuys said, "You know, Williams, it's rather strange, we advance the payroll on Saturday and we don't get a check until Monday to cover it. And we don't know where the check is coming from. Sometimes it's from New York, other times from St. Louis, and it all seems very odd."

"This was very disturbing to me because we got enormous prices for these machines. And then a more extraordinary thing happened—word came to me through the bank that an organ would be hypothecated twice. If an organ were sold in St. Louis, the purchaser, unsuspectingly, it was said,

would sign two contracts. One was supposed to be for the New York office and the other for the local office. What happened, I was informed, was the same contract was being hocked twice, one in the East and one out here.

"This was just about the time I dreamed of making a change to sell organs instead of build them."

Williams tendered his resignation almost one year before the firm finally collapsed.

Leo Schoenstein, a member of the well known family of organ builders in San Francisco, was hired to succeed Williams as superintendent at Morton.

When he left the Morton Company, Williams settled his finances with H. J. Werner. In lieu of a bonus, he was guaranteed to be given a certain amount of stock in the company each year. Werner was scrupulously fair and issued the certificates to Williams. "He certainly kept his word and treated me beautifully," Williams said, "but after I sold my stock and received cash for it, my name was not crossed off the stockholder's list and I later was to experience trouble because of it. When the firm blew up, the



A modern truck fleet leaves the Robert-Morton plant early in the morning bound for San Diego and the Balboa Theatre to deliver the new organ. The year was 1921.

Pages From The Past...continued

stockholders were liable for the amount of stock listed for them. I finally got hold of an attorney and got off the hook. The company had gone broke, and in this case, the stockholders were held accountable. It was quite a mess.”

An exact date is lacking for the actual filing of the receivership of the firm, but the State of California suspended the company on March 1, 1924 for failure to pay franchise taxes or license taxes, and this, in effect, forfeited its right to transact business in California.

Behind the scenes there was quiet activity—some of the executives of the American Photo Player Company who knew the precarious position of the organization were seeking new capital to keep the business going. This particular activity was going on without the knowledge of Werner.

The fact that Werner had carelessly permitted the finances of the company to disintegrate to the point where the rumors were beginning to be heard more frequently started to bear bitter results. The creditors stepped in and forced receivership of the organization. It was then that Mortimer Fleishacker entered the financial scene. One of the wealthy Fleishacker family of San Francisco, he had been interested in the great potential of theatre organ building by the executives who had been working to locate just such a financial backer. His great wealth was needed to put the company back on its feet, and when he took charge of the Morton Company there was nothing more, financially, to hold the firm back.

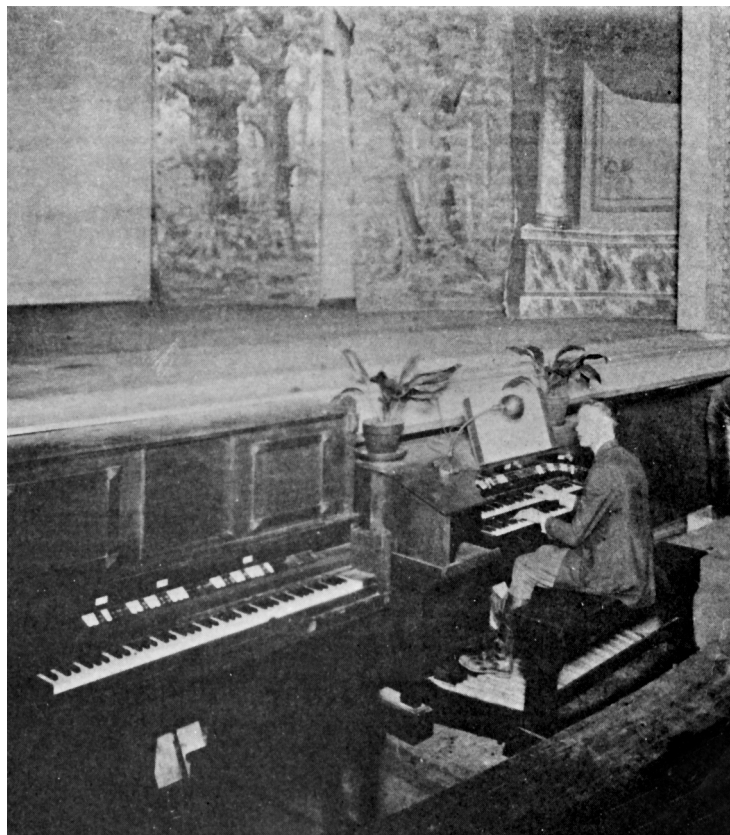
Policy changes were slight—organ building continued during the reorganization period and the employees, for the most part, were totally unaware of what was taking place in the front office.

Personnel changes were almost nil, except for the one change that was made in the officers: Harold J. Werner was ousted as head of the companies he had started, sued and stripped of all his stock.

The dual deal developed when notes, or contracts were sent to several banks. Several of the banks concerned became involved in a merger. The contracts were transferred during the change and both banks ended up holding duplicates. The necessary book work undertaken between the institutions at that time brought to light the dual contracts and also was responsible for the discovery that there was some over-valuation of Morton assets. It was disclosed that no fraud could have been possible and Werner certainly had not been pocketing money illegally, and he was cleared of any financial chicanery.

Speaking of Werner, R.P. Matthews said, “Werner may have been a small man in stature, but he was really a big man in all other ways. He was dynamic, a terrific guy, a real wonder! He was the kind of fellow who never kept track of his finances. He never knew what his expenses were because he was not a man to worry about little things. Werner was an excellent organizer and was all the time doing things that on the surface did not look to be kosher, but were so as far as he was concerned, and he did them without trying to mislead anyone. He wanted to see the Morton organ become the leader in the field and worked toward that goal constantly. Werner did everything to start the American Photo Player Company and the Robert-Morton Pipe Organ Company. He alone was responsible for both. It was a terrible blow to him to be thrown out of the companies. However, he was a tremendous optimist and you couldn’t keep him down for long. He might be gloomy for a day or two, but he always bounced back to the bright side.

“After losing his two companies, he sold Möller organs and, I believe, was the man responsible for the big Möller going in the



A Robert-Morton Style 75 Special was installed in the Liberty Theatre, Pasco, Washington, during July, 1921 by C.M. Balcom, Seattle organ man. Notation on back of picture stated “Roll Fotopiano could be seen.” Apparently the piano was retained in the theatre and used during the time the organist was not at the console. It is doubtful that the piano was connected to the Morton organ.

Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles.

“Some time later he opened an insurance business in San Francisco. Returning to the Bay area from a business meeting in Los Angeles, he picked up a hitch-hiker and asked him to drive—he hated driving. There was an accident, a truck hit Werner’s car and both men were killed. The hitch-hiker was behind the wheel.

“In my opinion, Werner lost the two companies because he was careless about details. He would give you anything you wanted, and if he wanted something for the organization, he did everything in his power to get it.”

Thus in 1924 the Robert-Morton organ Company entered a new era. Gone were the founder and the designer, the two men who were responsible for the instrument recognized as the second leading pipe organ manufactured in the United States. Never again, until it was liquidated on orders from its financial backer, did the Morton Company close its doors due to money problems. And yet to come were some of the finest Robert-Morton organs ever built. Tonally they were improved over the earlier instruments. The workmanship and materials that went into their manufacture continued on a very high plane. Other organ builders could equal Morton standards but it is doubted they could be exceeded.

The Morton pipe organ served its purpose admirably.

John Atwell Wows Calvary Crowd with "Music! Music! Music!"

Reviewed by Jamie Snell

Internationally acclaimed organist John Atwell, visiting from Australia, wowed the crowd at his April 15 concert on the 3/19 Kimball-Wurlitzer at the Calvary Christian Assembly Church. About 135 enthusiastic attendees were present, including members of PSTOS, the local AGO chapter, and the Calvary congregation. The event was co-sponsored by the three organizations.

After introductions by PSTOS Past President Bob Zat and Calvary Pastor Steve Pecota, John opened with the rousing "Everything's Coming Up Roses," followed by

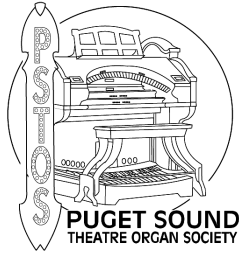


his "Here's to the Ladies" medley consisting of eleven songs with female names in the titles. Other numbers included medleys from the shows "The Band Wagon" and "Babes in Arms," and of course the song "Music! Music! Music!" He also played some pieces less familiar to most attendees, including Alex Lithgow's "Invercargill March," Fritz Kreisler's "Stars in My Eyes," and Max Rich's "Smile, Darn Ya, Smile!" Following thunderous applause at the end, he played as an encore the rarely heard "El Relicario" by José Padilla.

Throughout the concert, John was in full command of the instrument and succeeded in showing off its wide range of tone colors to great effect. Thanks to a well-placed camera, the audience could watch a projected close-up of his keyboard work and deft registration changes. Comments overheard from audience members included "The organ sounds the best I've ever heard

PUGET SOUND THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY

Russ & Jo Ann Evans, Newsletter Editors
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it!" and "A top-notch program, what a talented performer!"

John Atwell has been entertaining theatre organ fans worldwide for 40 years. Now retired from his career as a medical research scientist, he is one of the house organists at the Regent Theatre, Melbourne, home to the 4/36 Wurlitzer originally installed in the Paramount Theatre, San Francisco. In June 2010, John, with his friend Tony Fenelon on piano, played the opening concert of the ATOS annual convention at Seat-

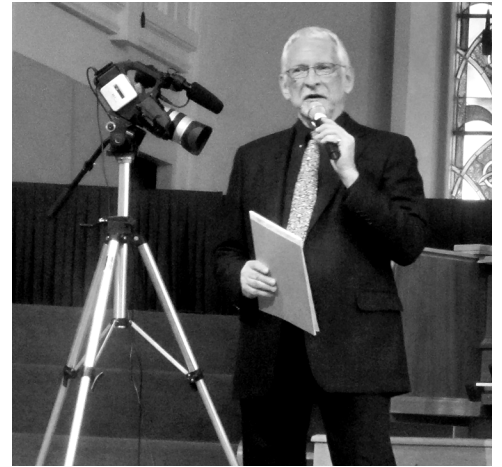
tle's Paramount Theatre. John has recorded several theatre organ albums and recently completed a concert tour of England.

This was the second spring concert at Calvary featuring a world-famous organist, the first being in March, 2011 with Jonas Nordwall. The PSTOS Program Committee is hoping to make "Music! Music! Music!" an event that we can look forward to every spring.

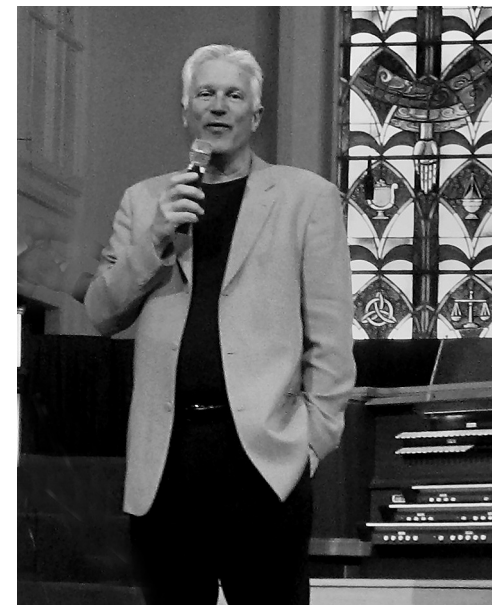
The Calvary organ was originally installed in 1942 and was based on a 2/12 Kimball from Centralia's Liberty Theatre. In 1970 it was rebuilt and enlarged with the addition of a Wurlitzer Style 215 "Special," formerly owned by Lorin Whitney and installed in California's Hollywood Theatre. The combined Kimball-Wurlitzer instrument has a total of 19 ranks, 1327 pipes, plus two sets of chimes, marimba, and chrysoglott. The organ is maintained by Greg Smith and members of PSTOS.

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Bob Zat emceed the event. The camera captured all of John's keyboard work and projected it to two overhead screens.



Calvary Christian Assembly Pastor Steve Pecota welcomed the crowd