



PUGET SOUND PIPELINE

Volume 31, Nos. 9 – 10 • Sept. - Oct. 2020

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Looking forward to seeing you In 2021!



Brett Valliant



**The CCA
3/25 Kimball-Wurlitzer
Theatre Pipe Organ**



Justin Stahl



Clark Wilson



Simon Gledhill

Meanwhile...stay safe, stay healthy!

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Vol. 31, Nos. 9-10, Sept. – Oct. 2020

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Puget Sound Theatre Organ Society is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization furthering the appreciation, restoration, and use of the historic Theatre Pipe Organs of the 1920s, through education.

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DIRECTORS

Fred Rowe, fred@pstos.org • Ellen Sullivan, ellen@pstos.org
 Phil Hargiss, phil@pstos.org • Jacob Buys, jacob@pstos.org

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Membership Coordinator—Jeff Snyder, jeff@pstos.org
Hospitality HLCC—Ellen Sullivan
Facebook—Jacob Buys

NEWSLETTER & WEBSITE

Pipeline Co-Editors—Jamie Snell, jamie@pstos.org
 Jo Ann Evans, joann@pstos.org
Pipeline distribution—Terry Perdue
Pipeline Online Website—Tom Blackwell, tom@pstos.org

LIAISONS

AMICA, POF, and AGO—Carl Dodrill
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JOINING PUGET SOUND THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY IS FAST AND EASY!

Simply click on the link below and select your preferred level of membership.

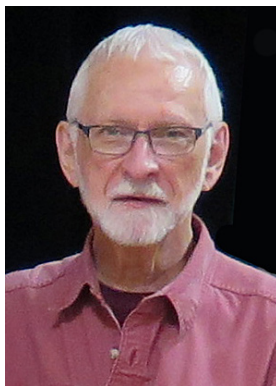
- Secure!
- No checks!
- No stamps!
- A few clicks and it's done!



<http://www.pstos.org/membership/new-member.htm>

PRESIDENT'S Message

Greetings PSTOS Members and Friends



Thanks to all of you who shared your stories of coping with the COVID-19 shelter-in-place orders. I'm sure there are elements of each story we can all relate to. If you haven't

sent us your news, please consider doing so for publication in the next Pipeline. Since we can't meet in person it is nice to hear from our PSTOS family to help us all stay connected.

For the next Pipeline, please consider sharing with us how you became interested in Theatre Organs or organs in general, and any experiences you had along the way that really got you "hooked." If you have pictures of those encounters or articles about an organ you saw or played, or a concert you attended that was memorable, the editors would love the information and images.

Also, what was the first organ you played? If you had an organ at home, what was it? When I was a kid my father had a 1950s Hammond spinet, so I grew up in a home with organ music being played almost on a daily basis. I was hooked at a very early age, but more on that later.

Send your stories to either Jo Ann Evans or Jamie Snell, whose addresses can be found in the masthead under NEWSLETTER & WEBSITE.

Who knows when we will be able to gather at Haller Lake or Calvary Christian Assembly to hear real live pipes and socialize with our friends! In the meantime check out the links to online organ events and programs. You will have a front row seat and be able to see and hear instruments you might never have thought existed.

Please stay safe and be well.

Bob Zat, President,

Links to a variety of theatre organ videos

Wanamaker Grand Court organist Peter Richard Conte plays the Midmer-Losh organ at Boardwalk Hall. The clip is 28:26 long. <https://tinyurl.com/yx9jcgzs>

Ken Double in concert at the Atlanta Fox. This clip is 1:01:42 long. <https://tinyurl.com/yyrgp-kov>

John Lauter posted this on Facebook: "Here's a track featuring my late friend Dan Bellomy, playing what was the greatest theatre organ on the face of the earth, the Castro Wurlitzer. The best playing the best. Beautifully captured by Dick Clay." The audio clip is 8:39 long. <https://tinyurl.com/yyoh4o64>

Lew Williams plays a full set at Organ Stop Pizza. There is some background noise from customers. The clip is 40:33 long. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Jtclx-sArHk>

Body and Soul - Simon Gledhill plays the Chicago Theatre Wurlitzer. The audio clip is 4:19 long. <https://tinyurl.com/y5y2yuer>

Simon Gledhill Plays David Shepherd's 4/22 Residence Organ in Holbeach. The clip is 12:52 long. <https://tinyurl.com/y2v7aojj>

Jonas Nordwall plays Veradero on the 5 manual Allen organ. This instrument reposes in a studio located in a private residence in Oregon City, Oregon. The clip is 2:48 long. <https://tinyurl.com/y4472vyv>

Jonas Nordwall plays the Judy Garland hit "Rock-a-Bye Your Baby" on the five manual Allen organ. The clip is 2:39 long. <https://www.facebook.com/Columbiarivertheatreorgansociety/videos/211122850315039>

Seamus Gethicker performs a concert on a 3/51 Walker theatre organ. It is located in a private home in York Pennsylvania. This is on Facebook, but you don't have to be a member to view it. The clip is 51:48 long. <https://tinyurl.com/y3hlctff>

This is not organ but well worth watching. Noel Coward - "Deep in the Heart of Texas" (1955) singing to Mary Martin. The clip is 2:16 long. Coward is a genius, not just an astounding musician, but a wonderful performer. <https://tinyurl.com/yy9alpzs>

The Organist Entertains 1995 - Tribute to Bryan Rodwell. In 1995 the Organ World lost one of its biggest names. On this program, Nigel Ogden gives a tribute to Bryan Rodwell. With interviews from Robin Richmond and Keith Beekingham. As well as music from the maestro. The clip is 18:53 long. <https://tinyurl.com/y4wzp67k>

What PSTOS members are doing during our COVID summer

Dave Johnston, Leavenworth WA

Snowfall in Leavenworth tapered off towards the end of January so Jennifer and I were looking forward to the possibility of an early spring. A couple years ago the heaviest snows saved themselves for February so we both had our fingers crossed. Thankful for cooperating weather, we packed our bags and made a drive to Fairfield, California at the tail end of February to visit Jennifer's sister. News of COVID-19 was just breaking and after we returned home to Washington the lockdown was underway. Being retired and always having projects around home to occupy our time, it wasn't a big deal for us. But having children and grandchildren, there are so many other reasons to be concerned.

Having acquired the Moller roll player from the Jack Becvar estate, I spent some time assessing whether I wanted to connect it to my home organ. Ultimately I decided it



Moller roll player from the Jack Becvar estate

was not a good fit for me and offered it up for sale. Much interest came from folks on the east coast but shipping costs nixed their ambitions. One fellow pipe organ owner, and not a player like myself, phoned from Wisconsin and expressed an interest in the rolls but already had a restored player. As our communications progressed I proposed a donation to him of the rolls and player if he will pay shipping and then help place the player with someone who will care for it. Deal. The roll player found a new home with a fellow in New York who is doing a restoration and will use it in a church setting. My friend in Wisconsin added rolls to his collection and passed the duplicates on to New York with the player. In the end the roll player did not go to the landfill (it was close!) and two folks are benefiting from Jack's little piece of history. That fellow in Wisconsin? Paul Woelbing of Carma Labs, owner of one of the world's largest theatre pipe organs.

Jeff Snyder

Since I am a teacher, before school got out for the summer, I spent most of my day at my computer either on Zoom with my students, or planning or helping students with work. We also recorded on Zoom the class play that I usually do in the classroom. It was different but gave us something to look forward to as we recorded a little bit each day. I would then edit what we recorded later in the day. We had a "premiere" party once it was finished and watched it at the same time on YouTube while we were on Zoom together.

Over the summer we've been trying to explore parks around Seattle and spent a week at a campground in Bend, Oregon.

I've also been enjoying all the virtual organ concerts online throughout this time. I sure miss being with groups of people and hearing live music, though.

Bob Straub, Malaga WA

I'm coping with COVID by pretty much following the rules. My wife and I have been taking car trips to local back-roadsy places that we've been wanting to explore. I'm part of the Wenatchee Valley Museum Wurlitzer maintenance team, and also have a couple of other hobbies. The organ team was beginning work on supplementing the piano-player-based automatic demo system with a new MIDI-based system from Artisan Instruments. Parts have been purchased, but the museum is closed, so most of the work has been in design details and drawings.

Fred Rowe, PSTOS Director

It's been several months of staying home and working in the garden, and believe me the garden has been my salvation. My local nursery offers online ordering with curbside pick-up. Ed and I have occasionally had meet-ups with one or two friends but only in the garden where we socially distance and everyone brings their own beverage and food. We have also been doing a lot of Zooming, which helps to keep in touch with family and friends. Here are three photos of the garden. Take care and stay safe. Cheers Fred



Phil Hargiss, Paramount Wurlitzer Team

I wasn't able to access the theatre recently. The loading dock was full of cars, with what looked like stage crew members milling around. There's nothing on the STG public calendar, but the marquee displays RE:DEFINITION, which is the art exhibit in the lobby bar area. STG schedules a private event there whenever the exhibit changes, but that doesn't require stage crew involvement, so I'm not sure what was going on. Perhaps some other private event, or continuing work in the auditorium. There hasn't been any significant organ work since March, except for correcting the curvature of one Oboe Horn reed.

The recently-cleaned east wall of the building already sports fresh graffiti, which is really annoying.

I hope everyone is staying safe, and finding productive things to do.

Cheers! Phil

Ed Axton

Getting in some needed practice time to brush up on my favorites of the '20s, '30s & '40s plus some of the old, great gospel songs.

This time off since the middle of March I know and believe is a blessing that better times are coming!

Blessings to all.

Ed

More PSTOS member news

Wenatchee Museum Wurlitzer Team

The Wenatchee Valley Museum Wurlitzer organ was installed in the Liberty Theater up the street 100 years ago. Like most, it fell into disrepair, but was rescued in 1989, when it was refurbished and moved to the Museum, thanks to its owners, the Gellatly family, and the efforts of enthusiasts spearheaded by the late Bill Starkey. Originally a 2/7, it is now a 2/10.

At some point, the maintenance crew modified a typical piano roll player to play through the Solo keyboard. Stop selection is at the discretion of the person demonstrating. That system has been used continuously over the years. Never totally reliable, its age is showing now. Work has begun on an additional MIDI-based auto-player. Parts have been purchased from Artisan Instruments, and design work has begun.

For many years the maintenance team has met on Mondays when the Museum is closed to the public. Bill Starkey and other older team members Herb Sinclair and Don Walton are all now deceased. Suddenly and sadly last November, we lost another great crew member, Cliff Wells. Things won't be the same without him.



The maintenance team, with a "How it Works" model recently resurrected from the basement.

LEFT TO RIGHT: Dave Johnston, Cliff Wells (recently deceased), Brent Cunderla, Sally Wren, and Bob Straub. ABSENT: Jesse Spurgeon.



Barb Graham



I have been on Whidbey Island for over two years now and am so, so glad I made the move from Seattle! I live on 10 acres and maintain about two of those by mowing (both a riding yard mower around the house, and my Yanmar



tractor for the rest); cutting back blackberries; planting shrubs and flowers the deer don't like; splitting firewood; and general maintenance around the house. It is quiet and I don't have to deal with people unless I want to. I do 'socialize' by having people (usually 2-4) stop by with their own food and drink - we socially distance and catch up with what we've been doing and exchange comments on the world as it is right now. Zoom is fine but it isn't anything like talking face to face. My life has changed very little from before COVID - I live in the middle of 10 acres, I live by myself, I'm healthy, and I keep up the property. I did lose my Scottie 'Hunter' just as COVID was starting - I sure could have used his company the last six months! I feel truly blessed. My greetings to all PSTOS members. Like you I do miss live theatre pipe organ events.

Jo Ann & Russ Evans

COVID is getting pretty monotonous, but we're behaving . . . staying home and staying well.



Russ busies himself making winecork birdhouses for the grandchildren. No, we aren't the big wine consumers! We put the word out to wine-drinking friends and the corks magi-

cally appear by the bag!

And for me, there never seems to be a shortage of jobs when one works for free . . . as in doing graphics. I not only create this newsletter, but two others as well, for my local garden club, and for the Kenmore Heritage Society.

Additionally, since last September I've been helping 15-year-old Estelle McMaster learn chords, harmony, left hand & pedal rhythms, intros, endings, fills, and how to create the-



atre organ arrangements from scratch. She also studies both classical organ and piano.

Since March we've gotten together via Skype and Zoom. Above is a screen shot during a Zoom session. That's me in the upper right corner.

You may soon be seeing Estelle's name in PSTOS program announcements!

Meet new member ANDREW LINSON



Hello all, my name is Andrew Linson. I have been researching the fascinating world of organs and organ building, and starting to get my feet wet with building my own organ. I'm planning a compact pipe organ until I have more space, and right now I'm experimenting with construction of pipes and how it affects sounds.

In addition, I am looking into how I can combine a reed organ and Hammond C-3 organ as stops to that organ as well!

I hope to learn more from everyone's expertise!

Andrew

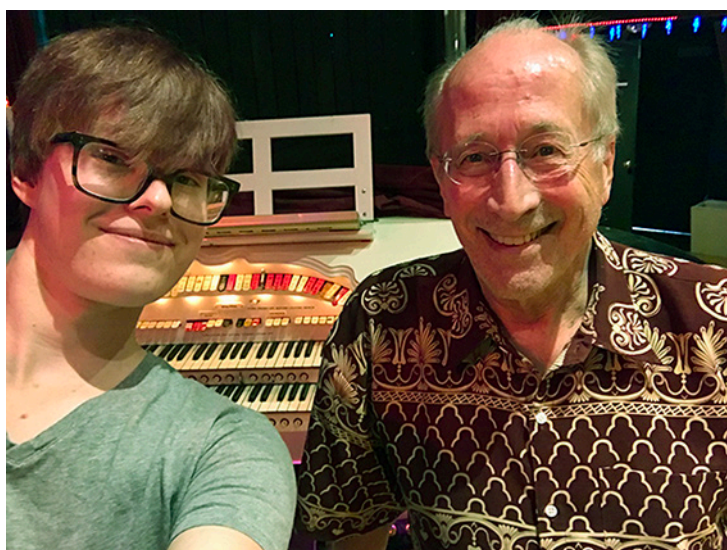
linson.andrew@gmail.com (If link doesn't work, please copy/paste into your email address box. Thank you.)

Meet Sawyer Best, young theatre organ aficionado with big plans

I heard my first theatre organ at Kenyon Hall in West Seattle during the 2015 Christmas radio play. Louis Magor was playing along to ‘A Christmas Story.’ I was fascinated by the sound, which was unlike any instrument I had ever heard before. After that show, I started frequenting the hall to hear the 2/17 Wurlitzer as often as I could. I play the accordion, and have some self-taught piano experience, but after seeing the Wurlitzer, I knew that was the instrument I wanted to play.

I was able to pick up a small electric Conn organ from my school for free, and now practice on a Rodgers Trio 321. Until very recently, that has been the closest thing to a theatre pipe organ I have ever played.

Now, thanks to Lou Magor, I have access to the very 2/17 Wurlitzer that cultivated my interest in the instrument.



Sawyer and Lou Magor at Kenyon Hall

When I started teaching myself theatre organ music, I started searching for other people my age on the internet who also played theatre organ. I primarily used Discord, which is a chat app with voice and video chat capabilities. This led to the creation of a Discord group for young theatre organists. We called it the Worldwide Theatre Organ Society, due to the very widespread locations of many of the members, such as Germany and Britain. At first the group primarily ran weekly livestreamed concerts. Now we have several large projects, such as using midi over the web to control a 2/11 Welte theatre organ in Germany.

The project that we have focused on the most, however, is the acquisition of a pipe organ of our own, so the group can learn about restoring and maintaining an instrument, and use the documentation of the project to attract more people to the instrument.

Casually browsing eBay one day, our group found Jack Gustafson’s 3/14 Kimball-Wurlitzer for sale in Palm Springs. We all agreed that it would be a really educational project to purchase, move, and maintain a theatre organ as a non-profit, so we started raising money with online concerts and donations from various friends of people in the group. We also began registering the WWTOS as a non-profit organization. We now have the



Jack Gustafson’s 3/15 Kimball-Wurlitzer
Sawyer and his friends hope to acquire

funding to purchase and move the organ, but need to learn more about the process before starting the project. We also have yet to find a location where the organ could potentially be installed short term while we look for a long-term public venue.

If anyone wishes to assist with any aspect of this project, or learn more, you can contact us at wwtosboard@gmail.com (If link doesn’t work, please copy/paste into your email address box. Thank you.)



ABOVE: The music room in the Gustafson home in Palm Springs
BELOW: A party at the Gustafson home



PAGES FROM THE PAST... 1927

Sandy Balcom, in 1927, was almost 30 years old, and was busy as ever selling and installing theatre organs for numerous companies including Kimball, Kilgen, and Estey. But never Wurlitzer. Late in 1927 the Robert Morton Organ Co. was pleased to have Sandy join their firm.



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VAN NUYS, CALIFORNIA
November 7, 1927

Mr. C. M. Balcom
114 East 51st St.
Seattle, Washington

Dear Mr. Balcom:

I have heard recently that there was some talk of your joining our forces. Mr. Charles came in today and was very glad to say that they had made a deal with you so that you are now with the Robert Morton Organ Co.

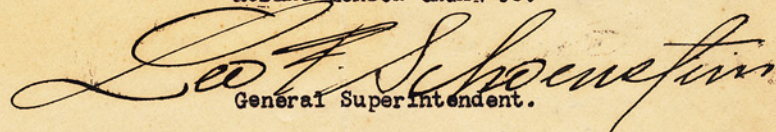
I take the time to write you to express my pleasure in knowing the I am again closely associated with you. It brings back pleasant memories and I do not hesitate to say that your career as an organ builder has been such that one of your teachers, at least, was not ashamed of your accomplishments. Other men who have had a greater opportunity than you had with me but who refused to benefit by them in the early days, are today walking the streets, half-baked organ men and regret their lost opportunities.

I shall be very pleased to work with you and whenever I send an organ up north I will think of my "Sandy".

With best wishes for you and hope you will have much success, I am

Very sincerely yours,

ROBERT MORTON ORGAN CO.



General Superintendent.

LFS:ER

PAGES FROM THE PAST...

As published in The Seattle Times, Wednesday, January 12, 1955

Leadership in Big Movie Chains Followed Vaudeville Boom Here

By BYRON FISH

THE vaudeville circuits, starting on Gold Rush prosperity, had spread out of Seattle into national importance. With the big names, Alexander Pantages, John Considine and John Cort, calling the city their home, and men like E.L. Drew and W. M. Russell still able to compete on a smaller scale, the precedent had been set.

As a more practical matter, the vaudeville and legitimate stage men had gathered a number of the eggs into fewer baskets.

They had formed chains in order to book the best acts into this remote territory.

When "movies" got beyond the nickel-odeon stage, into the "photoplay" with a plot, they edged away from being novel-ties sandwiched into vaudeville. Exclusively motion-picture theaters were launched, with a new circle of men as competitors.



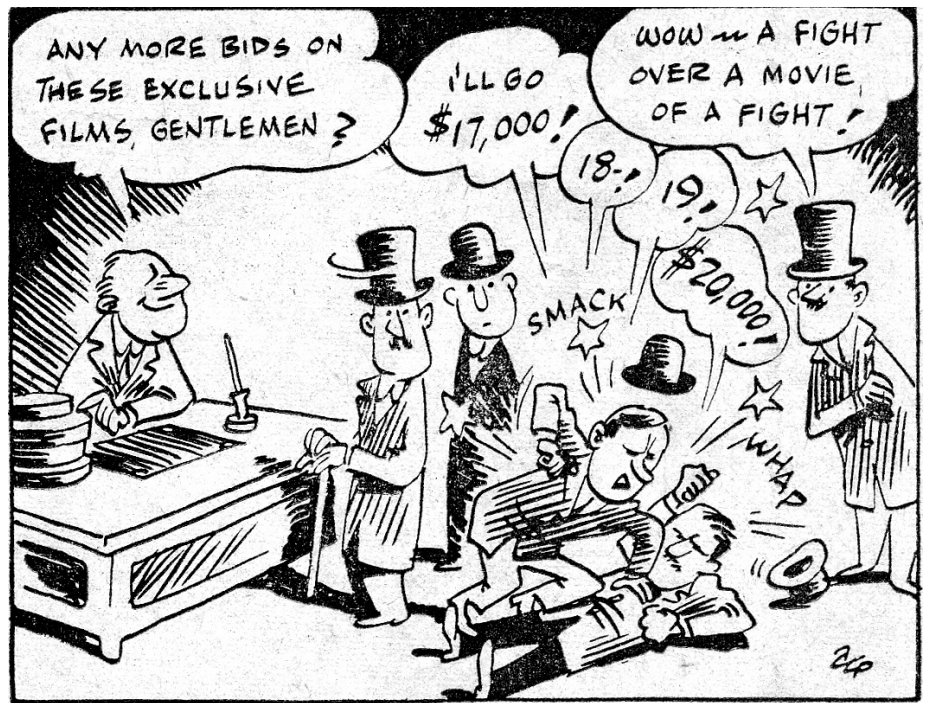
EUGENE LEVY

Eugene Levy, now a retired Seattleite, opened the Circuit Theater at Second Avenue and Marion Street in 1908. Being designed for its job, it went over big. Then he put in The Exhibit next door.

Admission to The Circuit, with live music, was 10 cents for an hour-long program. The Exhibit, 45 minutes of pictures only, cost 5 cents, but a movie fan could purchase a combination ticket to both for a dime.

MOVIE houses started popping up all over town, but Levy had the jump. In rapid succession, he opened The Bell, in First Avenue, Shell, in Second Avenue between Union and Seneca Streets, and The National, in Fourth Avenue between Pike and Union Streets. (The Shell was renamed The Ideal, and then The Black Cat.)

In 1910 Levy engineered a "scoop" that gained him newspaper publicity by the yard in Washington and Oregon,



and established him as the young man to watch in the Pacific Northwest.

Levy outbid everyone for exclusive Washington rights to the Jeffries - Johnson heavyweight fight, which had been filmed in Reno on July 4. The pictures cost him \$20,000.

The fight over the films went on for many more rounds than Jeffries and Johnson had punched each other. There had been 20 bidders, including a big Portland amusement corporation, which was floored by losing out.

Then the mayor of Spokane refused to let the pictures be shown, and had the theater raided when Levy tried. The celluloid battle moved outside the city limits, to Hillyard.

All that publicity did Levy no harm, either.

Aside from their title-bout interest, the pictures were considered sensational because they continued, reel after reel, for more than an hour. A single reel of 12 to 15 minutes was the standard of the day.

THE year after Levy turned the Jeffries-Johnson slamming into a grand

slam, there occurred one of the best examples of why Seattle was an early leader in the development of motion - picture - theater chains, as well as in the vaudeville circuits.

John Cort was the first of the vaudeville Big Three to lose ground. He had leased his Grand Opera House in Seattle to Levy and in 1911 he relinquished 19 more theaters, from Vancouver, B.C., to Salt Lake City.

Levy already had six theaters in Seattle and half a dozen more in Tacoma, Spokane and way points. The newspapers, who had been calling him "the youngest exhibitor," now referred to him as "the new Northwest vaudeville and motion-picture king."

Levy certainly was the motion-picture king of the moment, and he soon moved into No. 2 spot in vaudeville.

Cort went to New York and the legitimate stage, where he did all right and had a theater named after him. The Considine chain broke up about 1915, after sale to an Eastern syndicate, and Considine entered the motion-picture industry. The Pantages circuit went on growing.