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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 12 No. 4

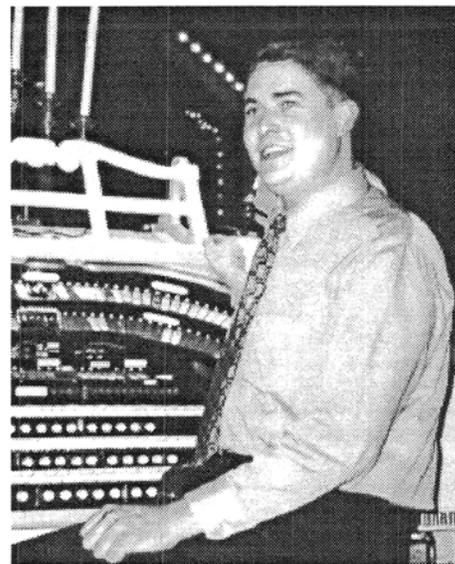
April 2001

## Join your PSTOS friends for **THE KENT EXPERIENCE** Saturday, May 19

Meet at 1:00 to tour the  
**KENT HISTORICAL MUSEUM**

Then visit the residence of  
Jack & Mary Lou Becvar for  
**"Organ 'n' Scones"** with  
**ERIC SHOEMAKER**  
at the Becvar Wurlitzer

**Admission \$5 per person**  
**Includes Museum,**  
**Concert and Refreshments.**



Eric is a gifted musician, playing both jazz piano and theatre pipe organ. He was featured during the 1999 One Big Weekend extravaganza, formerly played at Tacoma Pizza & Pipes, and is currently found on the lineup at Hokum Hall. Eric is also a full time piano technician.

**LIMITED TO THE FIRST 60 WHO RESERVE.**

Please reserve at 253-852-2011, or by email at [tibia61@aol.com](mailto:tibia61@aol.com)

The museum is located in downtown Kent.

The Becvars reside at 11617 S.E. 258th in Kent.

Complete driving instructions will be included in the May Pipeline.

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Vol. 12, No. 4 – April 2001

Published monthly by

Puget Sound Theatre Organ Society

6521 N.E. 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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**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



Thank you all for your good wishes. I'm well on the mend and catching up after almost nine weeks of being out of commission. A special

thanks to Marilyn Schrum for sitting in for me and handling the last two Board meetings, and to the PSTOS Board for doing what they do SO WELL! I was so sorry to miss the Valentine Party at Hokum Hall – understand it was great.

Thankfully we survived the earthquake; many must wonder if we will survive the stock market fiasco; and question how Boeing's shenanigans will affect our community. As long as we can keep the pipe organs playing – right?

The line-up of PSTOS events for the remainder of 2000 looks very impressive. You won't want to miss the Kent Museum Tour and "Organ 'n' Scones" at Jack and Mary Lou Becvars on May 19th. Jack has been involved with the Museum since it's inception and will undoubtedly give us a top-notch tour with lots of banter. The event is limited to the first 60 people who call to reserve. Do it now!

Then in July, a "Saturday Social" at the Evans. That should be a treat! Again, this is limited to 65 people – watch your Pipeline for details.

One Small Weekend in September (remember, we're only having our One Big Weekend event with CROC every other year now) takes us back to Yelm to hear Father Terrance's Robert Morton. And, yes, they'll be lunch served by the St. Columban church ladies!! Not to miss this one.

Finally, our Halloween and Christmas Parties complete the year.

In addition to all of the above, there may be a couple of surprises thrown in too.

We count on your continued support and look forward to seeing you.

- Barbara Graham

# PSTOS Coming Events

**"THE KENT EXPERIENCE"**

## **Kent Museum Tour followed by Eric Shoemaker program at the Becvar Wurlitzer**

The first 60 who reserve will enjoy a tour of the Kent Museum followed by "Organ 'n' Scones" at the unusual and fun Becvar home. Eric Shoemaker will be featured at the Becvar Wurlitzer. Reserve now at **253-852-2011** or email at **tibia61@aol.com** Saturday., May 19, 1:00 at the Museum

## **Saturday Social at the Evans' residence, Kenmore**

Music, food and fun on a Summer Saturday. Enjoy the 3/16 Wurlitzer. Artist to be announced. Limited to 65. Some folks have already reserved at **425-485-5465**, or **rjevans@aa.net** Sat., July 14, 2:00

## **The Famous Yelm Luncheon Buffet and Concert**

The earthquake cancelled the possibility of an event at Washington Center in Olympia, but do mark your calendar now for another memorable day at Yelm, including the famous buffet lunch served by the ladies at St. Columban Church.

**September 15th, 1:00 p.m.**

## **Another great PSTOS Halloween Party**

A fun event at Haller Lake Community Club. More details later.  
**Sunday, Oct. 21, 2:00**

## **Annual PSTOS Christmas Party**

Another happy holiday event.  
Haller Lake Community Club  
**Sun., Dec. 2, 2:00 p.m.**

**Remember to wear  
your name badge!**

# OTHER

## Events of Interest

### **The Organ Symphony at Vancouver's Orpheum Theatre**

The Vancouver Symphony with Wayne Marshall at the Wurlitzer playing Sorcerer's Apprentice, and Saint-Saens Organ Symphony. Marshall is a virtuoso organist and pianist with a genius for jazz. Special cabaret on stage following the concert. Contact Barry Jakel at 604-684-9100 for information.  
**Sat., June 9, 8:00 p.m.**

# From the Mailbox



### **Thanks from Clyde and Adeline Hook**

To all our wonderful friends in Puget Sound ATOS, overwhelmed was our reaction to being presented with the Honorary Life Membership, the beautiful embroidered jacket designed by Bill Keller, and the complimentary pizza. Our love and appreciation of Theatre Pipe Organ has brought us much pleasure through the years, but not as much as having very special friends like you. Again, thank you so very much.

Clyde and Adeline Hook

### **Theatre Organ enthusiast to relocate in Seattle**

Dear PSTOS:

We would like to join PSTOS since we plan to move to the Seattle area during the summer of 2002. We were charter members of the now-defunct Southwest Michigan TOS. We were referred via the link from MPR's Pipedreams website.

We are "entry-level" senior citizens, as my wife will retire from elementary school teaching. I am a real estate appraiser and hope to make connections with a Seattle-

area appraisal firm. We plan to have a modular home constructed (full basement a 'must' to have room for our Wurlitzer) and plan a trip this summer to look for a home site in the north Seattle area.

We own the console only of Opus 277 (a style 135 2-manual scroll-style), originally installed in the Portland Hippodrome in 1920, later repossessed by Wurlitzer and installed in the Billings, MT Liberty Theater. Once we relocate we plan to obtain a 5-rank unit chest and the basic 5 ranks of pipes, then add percussions, toy counter, and electronic stops to fill out the ensemble.

Is there a Pizza & Pipes in the Seattle area? We really miss the one we used to have until owner Charlie Balogh sold it to Damon's and moved to Mesa, AZ and bought into the pizza & Pipes there. Charlie was my organ teacher for awhile.

Sincerely, Ron Kemper

### **Message to Norman Miller from Owen Cannon, our Scholarship Recipient**

I heard about the earthquake in Seattle. Was your area affected by it? I hope there wasn't too much damage done.

Just yesterday I got back from Buffalo, NY. Luckily, all the flights were on time, so my trip home went well. The recitals I played Wednesday and Sunday were really fun, too. There were no major memory problems or other registration accidents that I had feared.

The organ itself is actually more like two organs put together. That means that I had to use two different divisional buttons to change all the stops on one manual, although the generals controlled everything. The instrument sounded quite nice, but there is going to be a new console put in that will solve a lot of problems.

I saw the Eastman campus, and stayed in Rochester overnight with a former student. The music school is rather small, but they have many practice rooms and recital halls. There are a lot of nice tracker organs there too, which is really nice. I had a lesson with David Higgs there which went really well, also.

Now I'm swamped with a week's worth of homework, and am hoping that I was able to finish everything correctly.

I had a lot of fun being able to see the Buffalo and Niagara Falls area, and staying there for the week.

# Earthquake

## **6.8 Earthquake Damages Local Theatre Organs**

Olympia's Washington Center Wurlitzer is not currently playable. Located near the epicenter, the instrument sustained damage to the structural components and pipework. Repair work has started but it will be some time before the organ is again playable.

On Tuesday March 6th, a visual inspection (no wind) of the Seattle Paramount Theatre Wurlitzer found no major structural damage other than a fallen trem cover and several treble pipes dislodged from their holes.

Everett's Everett Theatre Kimball, Yelm's St. Columban Morton, Seattle's Hokum Hall Wurlitzer and Haller Lake Community Club Wurlitzer withstood the tremors with no noticeable damage.

Most of the Seattle-area residence organs had little or no damage. We are still waiting for damage reports for the residence organs in the South Puget Sound area.

Several church installations sustained damage including the large Flentrop at St. Marks in Seattle. Damage to that instrument is estimated at \$150,000-\$200,000, requiring six months to a year to repair.

This report is from the PSTOS website and was last updated March 19th. Watch the site for further updates.

[www.pstos.org](http://www.pstos.org)

## **A hearty PSTOS Welcome to**

- Rose Ramage  
Seattle
- Ron & Sue Kemper  
Portage, MI
- Mark & Debbie Steen  
Spanaway

# Pages From The Past...

## The Short Subject – Forgotten Voice of the Talkies

By Robert Finehout, Modern Talking Picture Service

It's hard to remember the way it was, but in the 1920s America was having a love affair with movies. To prove their ardor and constancy 40 to 80 million people flocked to movie theaters every week. The legitimate theater flourished too. The Great White Way was brilliant with names like Cohan, O'Neill, Ziegfeld. And there was vaudeville. Live acts – comedy teams, sopranos, *Olga and her Birds*, acrobats, *The Dancing Cansinos* (who would bring us Rita Hayworth), Roy Smeck (banjo and ukulele virtuoso extraordinary) – toured big towns and tank towns, playing the Palace on Broadway and the Brook in Bound Brook, New Jersey.

Every town, every whistle stop, had its movie theater. The bigger ones boasted a pit band, mighty Wurlitzer, weekly change of vaudeville acts and, yes, a silent movie.

Young men affected the Latin look: Lucky Tiger, hair slicked back and voila – Valentino! The girls vamped ala Vilma Banky or shortened their already short skirts to become – Clara Bow! The really daring ones even rouged their knees. And a thousand pulpits cried out: "What Next!"

What next, indeed. The talkies, that's what. Boon, bane, boom. The talkies were all of these. No event before or since has had quite so cataclysmic an effect on entertainment. Even television. Five little words – and a few ad libbed sentences from a phonograph record changed movie-going – and communications – forever.

In 1927 – when the movies learned to talk – nobody, even the Warner Brothers, anticipated what might happen. At most, they predicted it would be possible for the "smallest theater" to bring its patrons the "greatest orchestras" through the miracle of Vitaphone. In other words they would shoot the piano player. Perhaps Edison had the key to it all when, fifty years earlier, he had spoken these words onto a wax cylinder: "Mary had a little lamb, its fleece was white as snow..." On the night of October 6, 1927, *The Jazz Singer* premiered at the Warner Theater on

Broadway. And Al Jolson proved what Edison, Dr. Lee De Forest and a cast of thousands had labored over: The people wanted movies that not only moved but talked.

Silence was golden, but talkies were where the green was. Overnight America went wild for talkies. Weekly attendance in 1930 skyrocketed to 110 million, even as bread lines lengthened.

Except for *Amos 'n' Andy* on radio, the talkies were the people's entertainment.

The year 2001 is the 75th anniversary of when it all happened. We recall *The Jazz Singer* the first outdoor talkie, *In Old Arizona* with the Cisco Kid, and *The Broadway Melody*, the first all talking, all-singing all-dancing musical. But we've forgotten the role short subjects played in giving movies their voice. Feature films took time. Shorts, on the other hand, were quick and easy to produce. So Hollywood went to



Broadway where stage and vaudeville talent was in abundance.

Theaters that wired for sound could bring their patrons a silent feature and a sound short subject program that might include Bernard Shaw "granting" an interview to the "Movietone," Fred Allen doing a witty monologue, Kate Smith singing *When the Moon Comes Over the Mountain*, and such young comics as Jack Benny, Joe E. Brown and Bert Lahr doing their vaudeville turns.

From 1926 through 1931 Warners produced more than 1,000 Vitaphone short subjects. Even the full-length musical features were little more than collections of vaudeville and variety acts. Warner's *The Show of Shows* (1929), a Vitaphone extravaganza offered audiences a sound-on-disc smorgasbord that included John Barrymore doing a few lines from *Richard III*, Beatrice Lillie, Ted Lewis (*Is Everybody Happy*) and "enough more for 20 average pictures," so the ads proclaimed. Incidentally, Vitaphone not only had its audio effect, but according to Warner it "eclipses the sun in splendor."

MGM's *Hollywood Revue of 1929* had Jack Benny and Conrad

Pages From The Past... continued



# MAMMY!

Behold Al Jolson in the climax of "The Jazz Singer," his first movie vehicle.

**Facing page:** Part of the crowd at the opening of "Don Juan" at Warner's Theatre in New York City, August 6, 1926.

**Below:** On Broadway in 1926. Photos—Western Electric

Nagel as co-masters of ceremonies talking directly to movie audiences in front of a stage curtain. As the curtain parted, we

announced for the coming season: 104 issues of *Paramount News*, 104 *Paramount Acts*, 26 Paramount comedies (two reels); 18 screen songs; 18 *Talkartoons* (Max Fleischer cartoons) and 12 *Paramount Pictorials* ("a sparkling rotogravure section in celluloid").

Today, except for the increasingly large number of free films available, Hollywood-made short subjects are an ancient species. But who can forget *The March of Time*, Grantland Rice *Spotlights*, *This is America*, *The Magic Carpet of Movietone*, Fitzpatrick's *Traveltalks*, *Vitaphone Varieties* (Warners produced 400 of them during 1929-1930!), Paramount's *Popular Science*, and that weird series, *Strange as it Seems*.

might see John Gilbert and Norma Shearer doing a slangy version of *Romeo and Juliet*, Marie Dressler, Bessie Love and Polly Moran singing *Marie, Bessie and Polly*, the inevitable Ukulele Ike, Joan Crawford singing and somewhat uncertainly dancing, and Laurel and Hardy, Buster Keaton and many other stars from the MGM galaxy. It was truly a Metro-Goldwyn-Melange.

Do audiences miss short subjects? Shorts were part and parcel of every movie program, an "off Broadway" if you will for such promising young talents as Bing Crosby, Danny Kaye, Bob Hope, the Gumm sisters (yes, Judy Garland was one of them), Shirley Temple, Mickey Rooney and – believe it or not – Humphrey Bogart who appeared in a 1928 Vitaphone short with Ruth

Paramount's *Paramount on Parade* was a house ad for upcoming pictures and such promising newcomers as Mitzi Green, Gary Cooper, Fay Wray and Richard Arlen.

Mitzi, one of the most talented moppets to ever grace the talking screen, imitated Maurice Chevalier singing wiz a French accent, upstaging Maurice who had to be content imitating himself. William Powell played a suave Philo Vance-type and Ruth Chatterton stepped out of character to play a broken-hearted woman of the night. Photoplay magazine accurately summed up *Paramount on Parade* as glorified vaudeville.

Universal offered theaters a weekly sound-on-disc newsreel featuring its *Talking Reporter*, non-other than radio's Graham McNamee, who years later became straight-man announcer to the Texaco "Fire Chief," Ed Wynn.

It is generally agreed that *Fox Movietone News* was preeminent among newsreels. It had the largest worldwide crew of any, at one time employing more than 1,000 staff and freelance cameramen. And it had Lowell Thomas, who brought dignity and authority to the newsreel. He was the voice of Movietone for many years.

The number of shorts produced during the talkies transition period was prodigious, to say the least. In 1930 Paramount

Etting. The one-time *New York Times* film critic Mordaunt Hall wrote in one of his reviews: "Al Jolson is seen, and of course, heard, in three songs... This Vitaphone assuredly destroys the old silent tradition of the screen." Was he reviewing *The Jazz Singer*? Not at all. The *Times* critic was describing a short subject that opened on October 8, 1926, exactly one year before *The Jazz Singer* made history.



Let's not forget the part shorts played in giving movies their voice and the exhibitors who wired for sound-on-film, sound-on-disc or both. Their faith in the future – and show business instincts – helped pioneer a new medium of communications: the talking motion picture.

From NATO 1977 Encyclopedia of Exhibition

## Town Hall Concert — A High Caliber Program!



David DiFiore and Charlotte Blackwell provided outstanding entertainment for PSTOS members, friends, church members, AGO members, and others on March 25th at University Temple Methodist Church. The recently installed Bosch pipe organ in the Chapel was certainly put to the test by David, internationally known as a top organist.

Charlotte Blackwell, a PSTOS member and very fine harpist, opened the program with a suite of Celtic music in celebration of St. Patrick's Day. The music went with a fantasy story, "The Harp of Brandiswhiere," in which eons ago a harper created the Isle of Spring. Nine musical offerings told the fantasy story of Brandiswhiere and his love, Telena.

David's program included a tribute to Bach in celebration of the 250th anniversary of his death. An outstanding and very interesting offering was "Mozart Changes," by Zsolt Gardonyi. David found this piece of music when performing in Europe. It could easily have been a Duke Ellington arrangement of a Mozart creation...complete with syncopation and thoroughly modern harmonies. Outstanding!

The event was followed by a reception for the artists, complete with lovely food and beverages. It was an enjoyable afternoon of outstanding music!

### ***Correction to the Chehalis St. Helens Theatre story published in the March Pipeline***

Thanks to member Andy Anderson for the following correction to the history of the St. Helens Kimball pipe organ published in the last Pipeline:

The Kimball theatre organ from the St. Helens Theatre, Chehalis, KPO 6748, was removed and sold in 1954 to Glen White, Sr.

In 1961 it was acquired by Reginald Stone and installed in the Fox Theatre, Victoria, B.C.

In 1966 it was purchased by Frank Mankin of Burnaby, B.C.

Later it went to the Saskatchewan area in Alberta, owner unknown. It is believed to have been moved once again in Canada, owner and location unknown.

### ***Would you attend a series of Theatre Pipe Organ Classes? A series of technical workshops?***

Our membership application includes a listing of activities sponsored by PSTOS. Such classes and workshops are listed among the educational opportunities sponsored from time to time.

It has been several years since either playing workshops, or technical workshops have been offered. Recently a new member inquired about these possibilities. We need to hear from YOU about your interests! If sufficient interest is indicated, such workshops will again be organized for the membership.

A series of four classes, one per month, has been workable in the past. We have found winter or early spring is a time folks are more likely to be available. Fall, i.e., October/November, is also a possibility. If you or someone you know would be interested in participating in such classes, please speak up and let your interests be known. It takes time to organize these classes, so let us know NOW of your interests. Phone Russ or Jo Ann Evans at 425-485-5465, or email at [rjevans@aa.net](mailto:rjevans@aa.net).