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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 17 No. 4

April 2006

A Chapter of American Theatre Organ Society

Coming May 7...

IT'S SHOW TIME!

With a wonderful afternoon
of your favorite

Toe Tapping Music from the Big Band Era!

Featuring ANDY CROW at the

WURLITZER

with

HENRY REED'S

Good Times Band



ANDY CROW is well known throughout the entire Pacific NW for his skill at both the piano and pipe organ, and is excited about this chance to play with the band! The 5-member **GOOD TIMES BAND** plays wonderful music from the great Swing Era, with Henry playing bass guitar, and Anne Gillette, the piano. The sax man plays tenor, alto and soprano sax. The brass man plays pocket trumpet, flugelhorn, and sings. The drummer sings as well. The group plays frequently at senior centers, weddings, and church functions. But they rarely have a chance to play with a theatre pipe organ! *This will be a fun day for everyone!*



Admission—\$10 per person, under 18 free

Please bring a small plate of your favorite cookies to share. All beverages furnished.

Sunday, May 7, 2–4 PM

Haller Lake Community Club
12579 Densmore Ave. N., Seattle

DRIVE DIRECTIONS –Northbound I-5, use Exit 174 onto NE 130th St., turn left over freeway one long block to 1st Ave. NE. Turn left (south) one block to 128th. Right on NE 128th a few blocks to Densmore. Left on Densmore, clubhouse is on the right. Parking both front and rear. **Southbound I-5**, use Exit 175 onto NE 145th, turn right one block to 1st Ave. NE. Turn left (south) through NE 130th to NE 128th. Continue where underlined above. **New handicap parking and elevator at rear entrance.**

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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 \$15 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

I have a friend who thinks my interest in theatre pipe organs is absolutely crazy! He can't

understand why anyone would be interested in something so unusual. He has seen my storage units full of dusty, dirty organ parts. He has also seen the beautifully restored parts installed in my home that have taken literally hundreds of hours for me and my PSTOS friends to bring back to life. But he is still flabbergasted as to why anyone would spend time doing this, let alone modify their entire house, as I have done, just to fit a pipe organ.

My friend has no room to talk. His hobby is antique farm tractors. He is nuts about them. He has dozens of the small ones stowed in multiple garages at his house. The large ones are parked on a friend's "half acre" in Kent. Some of them don't even look like tractors to me. As far as I'm concerned, they are rusty, greasy piles of metal and some of them weigh 5 tons! During summer, he travels throughout the Northwest and even as far as Minnesota just to attend tractor shows where hundreds of other tractor nuts gather. The amazing thing is he can spend at least 10 minutes telling me about each part on a tractor, how it functioned when new and why it is special and unique. He's the one who's crazy!

What is the point of this story, you ask?

Well, it's all about getting behind something you are passionate about... no matter what it is. We in PSTOS share a common passion for theatre organs. It might be a love of great music, the mechanical aspects of pipe organs, 1920s theatres, or just meeting some really fun and interesting people. Whatever it is, many of us are willing to do whatever it takes to keep these wonderful musical instruments playing. And just like my tractor friend, we can see the great potential in these old neglected instruments that have been discarded by time.

Over the years, my tractor nut friend has beautifully restored many of the greasy, dirty tractors. Now they are shiny, like-new and fully functional once again. Many of the tractor shows are attended by hundreds of the general public (including me in Lynden, WA last year). There are educational exhibits, demonstrations, music and it's generally a fun time. I hate to admit it but I am starting to appreciate why he finds tractors so interesting. And, I think maybe, just maybe, he is intrigued by pipe organs as well. His enthusiasm is contagious and so it is with PSTOS members and their love of the theatre pipe organ and its music.



PSTOS Coming Events

◆ The Big Band Sounds of HENRY REED & His GOOD TIMES BAND with ANDY CROW and the PSTOS Pipe Organ!

It's back to the days when music was music—an afternoon of the wonderful rhythmic songs of the Big Band Era! Haller Lake Community Club.

Sunday, May 7, 2 PM

◆ MARK ANDERSEN to be featured at a WURLITZER HOME PARTY at Jack & Mary Lou Becvar's Kent residence



The Becvars welcome PSTOS members to hear MARK ANDERSEN perform on their 3/19 Wurlitzer, and enjoy a fun summer picnic.

Saturday, June 24

◆ SUMMER SIZZLER at YELM!

Once again we'll hear Father Terence's exciting 3/16 Robert Morton and enjoy the famous Church Ladies' Buffet Lunch! Artist TBA. This is always a great event. Mark your calendar!

Sat., Aug. 12

In the March Pipeline, we featured the Organ Restoration & Maintenance committee and announced the upcoming organ maintenance "Boot Camp" on April 23 at Haller Lake Community Club. We've been encouraged by all the interest shown in organ maintenance and we're counting on a large turnout. As mentioned previously, we have six theatre organ restoration projects currently underway and we'll be assigning new volunteers to crews at this meeting. If you have an interest in pipe organ maintenance, please contact Mark Baratta, Organ Restoration & Maintenance Committee Chair, at mark@pstos.org or (206) 962-1879 to RSVP for April 23.

But organ maintenance is just part of the picture. We also need capable young organists to play these special instruments. That is why, in the February Pipeline, we featured the Scholarship Committee whose task it is to identify talented young organists and get them exposed to theatre organ. For those of

Continued page 3, column 2

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/Sun at 5 PM.

◆ Columbia River Organ Club

Latest news can be found at
www.croconline.org

◆ Olympia's Washington Center

Presents "Larger Than Life," the silent
films of Douglas Fairbanks, Sr. Organ
accompaniment by Dennis James.

Mon., Apr. 3, 7 pm, Robin Hood

Mon., Apr. 10, 7 pm, The Gaucho

Info 360-753-8585, or at
www.washingtoncenter.org

◆ Mt. Baker Theatre, Bellingham



Australia's outstanding
NEIL JENSEN in a
wonderful afternoon of
Wurlitzer Pops. Definitely
worth the drive!

Sunday afternoon, May 28

Info: billcharles1@yahoo.com, or phone
Eileen Parker, 360-392-3686

◆ Theatre Organ Cruise to Alaska featuring internationally famous WALTER STRONY, July 23-30

7-Day Alaskan

Explorer, departs July
23 for Juneau, Sitka,
Ketchikan, Victoria.

Enjoy special concerts
and workshops by the
inimitable Walt Strony
playing a beautiful Allen theatre organ.
Organized by PSTOS members Gary
Marks & Ryan Dye, owners of North
Pacific Organ & Sound in Redmond,
this will be a special vacation indeed
for all theatre organ aficionados. For
brochure and details contact Denise
Vogel, www.azumanotravel.com
1-800-395-5578



Organ Maintenance Boot Camp Sunday, April 23, 10AM-3PM

Would you like to be on a crew helping to preserve and maintain local instruments? The work is interesting, involving wiring, soldering, releathering, cleaning, shellacking, etc. While it helps to have good manual dexterity, experience with these tasks is not required. Training is available!



If you'd like to find out more about PSTOS volunteer opportunities, and have some fun working on a couple of easy repair projects, be sure to come to the next Organ Maintenance Orientation/Workshop, at Haller Lake Community Club, 12579 Densmore Ave N., Seattle, on Sunday, April 23, from 10 to 3.

If you're planning to come, or have any questions, please contact Mark Baratta, by email at mark@pstos.org or by phone at 425-640-7320.

President's Message, continued...

you who have supported the PSTOS Scholarship Fund with contributions, we had great "payback" in February when Nathan Avakian performed for us, along with Tyler Pattison, at Kenyon Hall.

Money, however, is just part of what's required. We also need enthusiastic new volunteers to work with young students and organ instructors. Only in this way can we expand our Scholarship efforts. I hope you'll consider getting involved in this most important part of our PSTOS mission. Please contact Carl Dodrill, PSTOS Scholarship Committee Chair, at carl@pstos.org or (206) 236-3492 to learn more about how you can help.

Of course there's no point to having organs and organists unless there's an audience to enjoy them. This month we're spotlighting the Promotions & Media Relations Committee headed up by Clint Meadway. I hope that you read Clint's inspirational overview on page 6 and consider lending your creative support to the committee. Clint can be contacted at clint@pstos.org or (425) 327-9467.

And now for my monthly pitch for discuss@pstos.org, the new PSTOS e-mail discussion group. It's designed to encourage discussion of Northwest theatre organ topics: organs, organists, program suggestions, organs for sale, news items and generally anything PSTOS or Northwest theatre organ related. Another important function of this group is to connect individuals who are interested in carpooling to PSTOS events. Any PSTOS member can join the group by simply e-mailing webmaster@pstos.org and asking.

That's it for this month! Please consider jumping in and getting involved!

...Tom Blackwell, President

FOR SALE Organ Stuff

Gubransen Rialto II with Leslie, almost-real Tibia sound. Jack Driscoll, 425-483-7014.

3-manual Conn Organ model 651, excellent condition, 3 large satellite Leslie speakers, Johannus room expander variable delay settings and speakers in 4 corners of room, tubular chimes, glorious sound. For more information phone Hal Logan, 604-542-2078

Closing Chord

Bob Hallgren

We are saddened by the news of Bob Hallgren's recent death. Bob resided in Olympia, and was a long-time PSTOS member and staunch supporter, attending many activities. Sincere PSTOS sympathy is extended to all Bob's friends and family.



Walter Johnson

Sympathy and condolences are extended to Merlyn Johnson, whose husband, Walter, recently passed away unexpectedly.

Many PSTOS members and friends attended the grand opening last summer of Merlyn's beautifully installed new Wurlitzer in Tacoma.

What's in the Mystery Box?

The story of the PSTOS theatre pipe organ at Haller Lake Community Club.

Visitors to the hall often ask what's hidden in 'the big box in the corner!'



First, a bit of pipe organ history...

There are four basic components of a pipe organ: it must have pipes that produce sound; the pipes are placed on a wind chest that stores air; the air must be under pressure that has been mechanically generated; the air to the pipes must be controlled by a keyboard.

The first device meeting these criteria was called a Hydraulis in the third century B.C. This early instrument was very much a part of the musical life of ancient Rome, but what music was played, or for what use, is unknown.

The earliest approach to movie accompaniment was a plain ordinary piano, with somebody playing "something!" Soon a drum, a bell, a boat whistle were added so the pianist could pull a rope and activate one of these action sounds to punctuate the movie—a giant step forward.

The larger theatres had small orchestras to accompany vaudeville shows, the usual bill of fare at that time, and these orchestras often provided music during the silent movies.

The big period of the building of theatre organs was 1910–1930. There were many many companies building these instruments, the largest of which was Wurlitzer—to the extent that Wurlitzer became virtually a generic term for Theatre Organ.

Every theatre needed "sound" to bring life to the silent screen. Again the earliest instrument used was the piano. Then some pipes and sound effects were added to the piano. Orchestras were used in the very largest downtown theatres. The full-fledged theatre organ enabled one person to accompany the film more effectively than an entire orchestra, since he could precisely synchronize sound effects with the film—something extremely difficult for an entire orchestra.

The Wurlitzer firm was huge, making every conceivable musical product from violins to pipe organs.

In 1920 an Englishman named Robert Hope-Jones joined the Wurlitzer firm and created the first full-fledged theatre organ

as we know them today. In 1914, the first truly successful theatre organ was built by Wurlitzer for the Seattle Liberty Theatre. Until this time Wurlitzer had produced about 40 large theatre organs but with many problems or failures. Hope-Jones brought to Wurlitzer numerous innovations, helping to set the company apart from the rest. The Seattle Liberty instrument set Wurlitzer on the path to becoming a huge financial success for the next 20 years. In the mid-1920s the firm was shipping one complete theatre organ every day. Interestingly enough, Wurlitzer sold theatre organs to hotels, churches, homes AND theatres.

Of the approximately 2,030 theatre organs built by Wurlitzer, the organ in Haller Lake Community Club is number 1432, shipped from the North Tonawanda, N.Y., factory, near Buffalo, in July, 1926.

It was a Style D, with a roll player and consisted of two manuals (keyboards) and six ranks (voices) of pipes. There were three voices each in the chambers on each side of the auditorium, thus creating one of the very earliest stereo effects.

The interesting thing about this instrument is that it was never installed in a theatre! Instead, it was sold to the Fraternal Order of Eagles, Dayton, Ohio, and was used for entertainment as well as club meetings for about 25 years. By the mid-1950s, Bingo had become really big and the organ was used less and less. It was decided to remove the console from the main auditorium along with its controlling relays. The main cable was cut and no one to this day knows what happened to the original console and relays. What you see in the big box is in fact a replacement console manufactured by another company busily making theatre organs.

In April, 1959, hobbyists throughout the United States were looking for theatres wishing to dispose of their now unused instruments. The Leonard McMahon family discovered this instrument and approached the officers of the Eagles. The instrument was offered to the McMahons for \$50—all

the pipework, everything in the pipe chambers, which had virtually been forgotten. There was no way to play the organ until it had a new console, and the family located in Toledo, Ohio, the console used today, purchasing it for \$325—seven times the cost of the basic instrument!

The family invested hours and hours of time re-leathering and rebuilding the instrument and installed it in their home. Soon thereafter, Mr. McMahon, who was employed by Boeing, was relocated to Seattle, with Boeing agreeing to pay for all the household moving expenses—never imagining the family owned a pipe organ which probably doubled the moving expense! Upon arrival in Seattle the family reinstalled the instrument in their new Queen Anne home.

In 1967, the McMahons attended a Puget Sound Chapter function, then left the next day for a motor trip. Sadly, in Idaho a truck came across the center line and in the accident Mr. McMahon was killed instantly.

Puget Sound Chapter was looking for an instrument upon which our members could practice, and which could be used for programs, and in due time, Mrs. McMahon sold us the instrument for \$4500.

Our Chapter, not having adequate funds, sold its members \$50 bonds, enabling the purchase of the instrument. But this was just a start. It was stored in a member's home in the Northgate area and the long search for a "home" was begun. We explored possibilities in the Magnolia Theatre, and the Roycroft Theatre, which was at that time the Russian Community Center, and they definitely were not interested! Numerous other venues were looked into with no success, until one day a light went on! Our president, Harry Harkness, was also at that time president of Haller Lake Improvement Club. Through his efforts with the Boards of Directors of both groups, an agreement was reached to install the organ in this building.

Haller Lake members Dick & Betty Chang and Doris Harkness were very

Pages From The Past...continued

involved in the organ installation during 1968–1969.



Dick and Betty Chang sorted pipes

One side of the stage area was in use as a storage room for a Masonic lodge which was meeting in the building. The other side of the back stage area was nothing less than a “Fibber McGee’s closet.”

An architect drew up the working plans to remodel the stage creating chamber space on each side. Our members did virtually all the construction and completed the chamber area as you see it today. We also brought in our own electric service with our own meter.

When finally installed, the stage end of the auditorium looked very nice, and the rest of the room, by comparison, needed a face-lift. So the Haller Lake Board authorized a new layer of plaster board around the entire room, and a change in lighting.

The opening program on our newly installed organ was in September 1969, with Australian organist Tony Fenelon—a great day that we called a Yankee Picnic!

We have now passed the 35-year mark, we’ve added three additional voices (kinura, string celeste, clarinet) to the original six in the organ, we have a renewed contract with Haller Lake Community Club, and we look forward to many years of continued sharing of the auditorium!



Dick Chang at work



Dick Schrum wondering just how everything will fit together



Bob Jones and Tom Endresen hard at work in the Main chamber. [Bob just celebrated his 90th birthday, and is still an active PSTOS member. Tom, too, is still a member.]



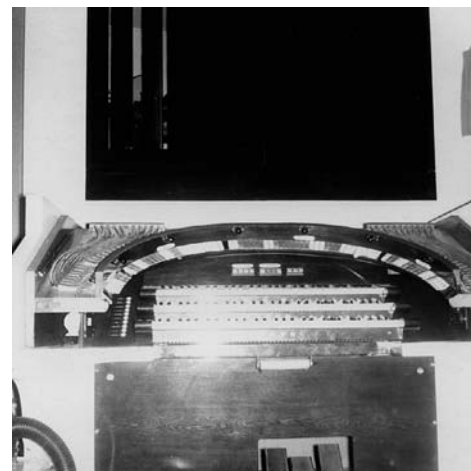
Harold Musolf soldering windlines.



Millie Lawrence wonders what’s next



Ernie Manley worked on relay wiring in the basement



Console open for servicing. Note chamber opening behind, not yet covered with its present-day grill cloth screen

Beautiful Wurlitzer Manor and Jelani Eddington—a perfect pairing—a perfect day!

What a wonderful concert! Jelani Eddington, winner of the 1988 ATOS Young Organist competition at just age 13, put on a spectacular show for theatre organ aficionados at Wurlitzer Manor.

Because the invitation from Barbara and Raymond was limited to just 90, it was much less crowded than at past events, making the day even more enjoyable.

Jelani is a highly accomplished and experienced theatre organist, thoroughly at home with the big 4-manual 48-rank Wurlitzer. He presented a broad range of music, from Broadway, to selections from Bizet's *Carmen*, to Leroy Anderson, to clever novelty numbers...definitely something for everyone. This was his first program here and he had nothing but high praise for the organ and the work of Ed and

PUGET SOUND THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY

Russ & Jo Ann Evans, Newsletter Editors

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Kenmore, WA 98028-3453



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Patti Zollman, who maintain it regularly.

A fundraiser to benefit the Homer & Jane Johnson Memorial Scholarship Fund, the event raised over \$2,200 after expenses.

PSTOS once again wishes to convey to both Raymond and Barbara sincere appreciation for their willingness to host these events to benefit such a worthwhile cause!



Raymond, Jelani Eddington, and Barbara share a happy moment after the concert.



Viewed from the upper balcony, Jelani chats with members of the audience between musical numbers.

New PSTOS Promotion and Media Relations Committee looking ahead with new ideas

Whipping up enthusiasm about the theatre pipe organ. Bringing the spotlight to bear on PSTOS. Getting folks away from the TV and internet and into buses and carpools for travel to really fun LIVE entertainment. These are some of the visions of the new Promotion and Media Relations Committee.

Hair raising question: where will the next generation of theatre organists come from? One of the less crazy ideas we came up with is to ask members with home pipe organs to invite piano teachers over for tea and crumpets and some time at the console. This first encounter should get them pumped up and have some of

their better piano students study theatre organ with PSTOS members who teach.

Second hair raising question: who is going to listen to the theatre organ when all us gray-haired folks are playing harps? Mixing it up with other musical and performance arts is how the theatre organ came about. So, how about designing multi-media events that will appeal to students and their parents and then get the crowds out through targeted promotion?

All of this activity should generate cash. Working with other arts and music groups by meeting their interests will allow PSTOS to advertise the events as fund raisers for schol-

arships, maintaining and improving the pipe organs in our care and provide funds for the other groups, too.

So, what could this look like? Let's see, Paramount floor flat for dining and dancing, Jonas Nordwall and Bob Milne playing jazz and ragtime on the Wurlitzer and Steinway, the award winning Garfield High School Jazz Band doing their thing, several antique automobiles and automatic musical instruments on stage, Joe's Lights (remember Virgil Fox's shows?), and.... well, you get the picture.

Come fly with us!

...Clint Meadway, Committee Chair