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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 19 No. 1

January 2008

A Chapter of American Theatre Organ Society

Annual Fundraiser for the Paramount's Wurlitzer Restoration Fund was a big success!

Dear Tom and all of PSTOS,

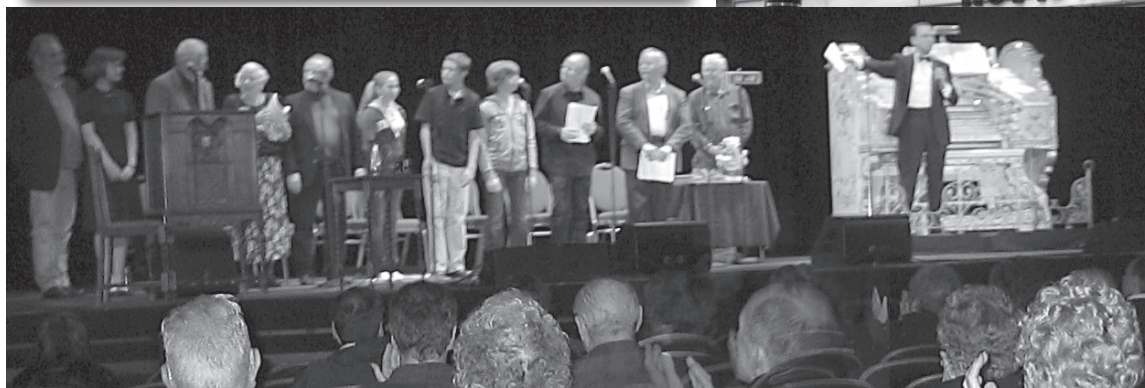
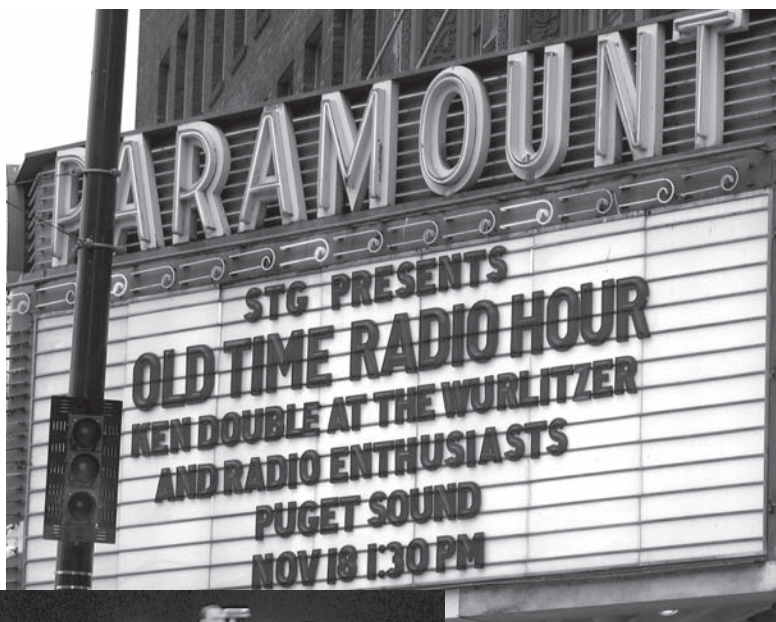
I want to say many thanks for the opportunity to join PSTOS and be part of the Paramount event this past Sunday.

Everyone came away with a great deal of respect for all members of your organization. We all had a great time and enjoyed everything from beginning to end.

It was great for REPS, too, for the added exposure for our club. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Paul Secord, REPS



The REPS players and Ken Double take a bow after their excellent performance.

Many thanks to all those who supported this event. It was a very enjoyable afternoon supporting a most worthy cause!

New PSTOS Board of Directors installed at the December Annual Meeting

PSTOS is looking forward with enthusiasm to 2008 with several new and creative board members.

Pictured, left to right, back row:

Tom Blackwell, President; Phil Hargiss, new board member; Ray Harris, Vice President; Joanie Rough-ton, Secretary; Tom Roughton, moving from Vice President to board position.

Front row:

Norman Miller, Treasurer; Dave Luttinen, new board member; Bob McCutchin, board member.

Officers and board members may be contacted easily by email at board@pstos.org

You are encouraged to send your comments, positive or negative, to the board!



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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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LIAISONS

AMICA & POF—Carl Dadrill • Haller Lake Comm.Club—Bob Zat
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 PSTOS Friends:

Happy New Year! As we look forward into 2008, PSTOS will tackle two exciting projects that highlight the need for new member volunteers, the first being our major restoration work on the

Paramount Theatre's Mighty Wurlitzer. We now have over \$30,000 raised meaning we can start the work. Yeah! The second is to make major progress on our 2010 ATOS Convention planning efforts. If you have not already raised your hand to help out, won't you please consider getting involved in either or both of these worthy projects? Contact any Board member, call me at (206) 784-9203 or e-mail tom@pstos.org.

Fall Benefit/Fundraiser at the Paramount

Those of you who attended the OLD TIME RADIO HOUR program on November 18th know that it was great fun and very professionally presented. Our partnership with Radio Enthusiasts Puget Sound (REPS) was a great success and Ken Double's work as M.C., organist and capable vocalist was absolutely top notch. Nearly \$6,000 was raised for the Paramount's Wurlitzer restoration fund and the event

was a great success financially. By measure of attendance, it was not successful... only 300 attended. ☹ Those of us involved in producing this event were disappointed that more PSTOS members did not turn out to support the worthy cause and enjoy some first class entertainment. I hope that more members will attend our 2008 fundraiser at the Paramount, details still being worked out. If you have suggestions for a program idea that would be more appealing to PSTOS members and the general public, please let me know.

Holiday Party at Kenyon Hall

What a great time we had on Sunday December 2 at Kenyon Hall. This year your PSTOS Board decided to move the event to the smaller Kenyon Hall venue and to make the event free to all PSTOS members. This included an afternoon of great entertainment from veteran silent film accompanist Bob Mitchell, as well as a free lunch, beverages and desserts. Nearly 80 PSTOS members and their guests packed Kenyon Hall. We have traditionally held this annual event at the larger Haller Lake Community Club where our club Wurlitzer is installed, but welcomed the invitation from Kenyon's Lou Magor to hold the event at "The Hall" this time around. If you did not attend, you should definitely plan to come next year. Many thanks to Lou Magor, Tom and Joani Roughton for making the event possible. Thanks also to Bob White for his superb maintenance work on the Kenyon Hall's Wurlitzer. Sounds great!

Continued on page 6



Coming Sunday, March 9—Save the date!

Ray Harris

Piano, Pipes & the Roaring 20s

Jo Ann Evans



Ray and Jo Ann at the piano and Wurlitzer with a fun afternoon of your favorite tunes from the great Roaring Twenties!

Watch for all the details in the next Pipeline.

At Haller Lake Community Club in North Seattle

Other NW Theatre Organ Events

◆ Kenyon Hall in West Seattle

Latest news can be found on the web at www.kenyonhall.org or by email at kenyonhall@earthlink.net

◆ Lincoln Theatre in Mt. Vernon

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

◆ Columbia River Organ Club

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

In Memoriam

Carl Helander 1919 – 2007

A lifelong fixture of the local organ scene, Carl Helander was a child prodigy who began



studying organ at age twelve. During World War II he served as post organist, entertaining our troops. After the war, he detoured briefly to Chicago and Music Corporation of America. But his heart was in Seattle, and he returned to become organist at KOMO, KOL and for three years at KJR.

Carl was a versatile musician, entertainer, church organist and teacher. He played for funerals, radio and TV, Boeing Christmas parties, at Frederick & Nelson's tea room, Rhodes Department Store, and accompanied silent movies. Over the years he maintained a teaching studio in the Fischer Bldg., then at Sherman Clay, and later at N.W. Piano & Organ.

Carl enjoyed good health until having a small stroke in 2005. He recently suffered a broken hip, and moved to an assisted living facility.

FOR SALE Organ Stuff

A lifetime collection of pipe organ and classical organ vinyl records, including a near complete collection of George Wright and other artists like Johnny Seng. I would love to see my collection go to a good home!

If interested please contact me by email at jvbrhg@seanet.com

Randall Greseth, Seattle, 206-935-2093

City of Centralia Approves Buyback of Fox Theater from Opera Pacifica

City Council: Repurchase of Theater Approved, City Plans to Continue Restoration

By Amanda Haines, The (Lewis County, WA) Chronicle



The Centralia City Council recently authorized city staff to purchase the theater for \$90,000 (plus about \$10,000 in real estate fees and insurance) from Opera Pacific Education and Repertory Association, the non-profit Olympia-based theater company the city sold the theater to in 2003.

Centralia Mayor Tim Browning said the re-purchase of the theater was "a disappointment," but it was necessary to get the project back on track. The city hopes to continue efforts to restore the historic theater and use it as an entertainment and convention venue.

"The speed we wanted it [the renovation] completed and the speed Opera Pacifica was able to get it completed did not match," Browning said, later adding, "In no way is the council unhappy with Opera Pacifica other than they didn't have \$5 million to throw at this building."

The nearly \$100,000 to repurchase the theater will come from the city's hotel/motel tax fund, a state tax collected at local hotels and motels that is returned back to the city to distribute for tourism and promotion efforts.

Multi-Million Dollar Project

The city will need between \$2.5 million and \$3.5 million to fully restore the ailing theater, said Polo Enriquez, economic development director.

"I have a vision for that," he said. "I would like the city to come up with some money. I'd like an effort to be made to go to the Congress and Senate to find funds, and I'd like a local campaign to help raise that money."

Enriquez said the goal is to have enough repairs made to use the theater in a year to 18 months, with full restoration expected in the next three to four years.

"I'd like to have the roof and bathrooms fixed first," he said. "Then I'd like the marquee fixed and restored to show the community we mean business."

Enriquez expects the theater will draw plays, light operas, and traveling performers once it is completed. Such activity will continue the process of drawing more tourists, businesses and industry to downtown and its surroundings.

He said the theater will "energize the south end of Tower Avenue."

Shared Concerns

The city owned the theater for only a short time before selling it to Opera Pacifica in 2003 for \$235,000. The theater company paid an initial down payment of \$23,500 and has made no payments since, per the sale agreement. On Dec. 17, 2008, a \$50,000 balloon payment would have been due, with the remaining balance due by 2013.

In October 2003, Opera Pacifica Director and tenor singer Bob Corl predicted it would take three to five years to finish the art deco restoration of the theater.

But the city noticed the slow pace of the restoration and approached the owners in July, said Enriquez.

"We went to them and found they had the same concerns and the same thoughts," he said.

Though Enriquez noted a number of successful events and completed restoration projects, including new seats and a restored Wurlitzer organ donated by an Anacortes couple.

Still, he said, "it has been slow and despite their best efforts, it's clear it will take too much time and too much effort."

Increased Equity

Per the new sale agreement, the city will pay almost \$90,000 to buy back the theater it sold for just \$23,500. The increase, Enriquez said, factors in about \$40,000 in additional equity and includes all improvements, including the Wurlitzer, seats, extensive painting and similar restoration, and replaced wiring and lighting.

The sale agreement allows Opera Pacifica rent-free use of the building for four days in 2008 and four days in 2009.

"We are all disappointed, but we see this as a wonderful opportunity," Enriquez said.

Representatives from Opera Pacifica were not at the council meeting Tuesday.

Councilman Lee Coumbs made a point to mention the repurchase is in no way a "foreclosure."

Pages From The Past. . January 14, 1968

Reprinted from *The Tacoma News Tribune and Sunday Ledger*, published 40 years ago.

By Bruce Johnson, News Tribune Fine Arts Writer

Dick Schrum stepped into the cockpit and dropped into the pilot's seat, inserting an ignition key into the instrument panel. A push on a button started the motor and Schrum scanned a complex array of switches and buttons.

Finally, he flicked a few switches, pushed in on several buttons and placed his feet on the floor pedals. Releasing the brakes, Schrum reached for—the keyboards?

An ear-shattering and rib-rattling crescendo erupted from four-story pipe chambers on each side of the gigantic, four-manual console as Dick Schrum, theater organist, filled the auditorium with sound.

With all the glorious sound of an entire orchestra, a big band and a complete sound-effects section, Schrum pushed down on the accelerator and opened up 20 ranks of pipes like an automobile racer burns up the dragstrip.

Is this a scene out of a movie palace of the 1920s or from one of those horror movies where the villain sits down at the grand console before the big kill? Hardly. The time is today and Dick Schrum is playing at the Seattle Paramount, at least on occasion.

As Real as Screen

The custom-built, French-designed console at the Paramount is as real as the motion picture screen. It has two chambers of pipes, each four stories high, which contain everything from a genuine piano to an elaborate room full of gadgets that produce sounds imitating thunder, the surf and bird whistles, just to name a few.



Dick Schrum at the Paramount Wurlitzer

What's more, while the Paramount organ remains the grandest of all in the Puget

Sound area, it isn't the only theater organ still remaining in a movie house. There's also a pipe organ at the Temple Theater in Tacoma, the Olympic Theater in Olympia and the Fifth Avenue in Seattle.

Chances are you've never heard one of these organs. That's because they're rarely played any more. Since talkies came in, the need for theater organs quickly decreased.

At one time, there were no less than 75 and probably closer to 100 theater pipe organs in Puget Sound area movie houses. That was during the 1920s when silent movies demanded grandiose accompaniment. Today, there are only the four organs in their original installations, says Schrum, a Seattle resident who was born in Tacoma.

What happened to all of these theater organs? At least half of them were dismantled or destroyed after silent movies went out, says Schrum with obvious concern. Parts of many of these units found their way into church organs.

Some Burned, Some Bought

As for the remaining organs, some were destroyed by fire and others were purchased by fraternal groups, funeral homes, restaurants or just plain organ enthusiasts who have either stored or installed these beautiful behemoths in their homes.

In Tacoma, the Roxy Theatre organ was purchased by a man in Mukilteo, another organ was destroyed in the Music Box fire and two more organs lost in the Tacoma Roller Bowl fire. In Seattle, four organs were wiped out at one time when the Aurora Avenue Roller Bowl burned. One was on the floor, another in a broadcasting booth and two more in storage.

So, why does Dick Schrum worry about the extinction of the great theater organs of yesteryear? Because he's a professional nightclub organist who fancies a dying breed of musical instruments much as many people cherish horseless carriages.

He happens to be in his second year as national president of the 3,200-member American Theatre Organ Enthusiasts, a group dedicated to the restoration and preservation of theater pipe organs. "You might say it's the Horseless Carriage Club of theater organ enthusiasts," observes Schrum.

For a man who never had an organ lesson in his life, how did Schrum manage to become a theater, indeed a professional, organist?

It all started when this 1951 graduate of Lincoln High took up roller skating. At

the old Tacoma Roller Bowl, Schrum began spending most of his time watching the organist at the console rather than on the floor skating. Schrum, whose musical experience had heretofore been limited to the tuba and trombone, began picking out some tunes after hours and was soon playing for skaters both in Tacoma and at a bowl in Federal Way.

Experience Not Forgotten

Schrum left Tacoma seven years ago to take up nightclub work in Seattle. But his experience on the pipes was not forgotten. It wasn't long before he was presenting occasional concerts on theater pipe organs to raise money to renovate these and other such organs.

And more recently, Schrum has been playing prior to motion picture premieres at the Paramount.

The former Tacoman is optimistic about the future of those theater organs that still exist. He feels the 12-year-old ATOE has promoted the preservation of theater organs to such an extent that very few of those still left will now disappear from the theater.

It's not easy to create an audience, for the big sounds from the theater organ are unfamiliar to two generations of Americans, Schrum notes. But he says there have been increasing attendance at organ concerts and growing interest in premiere performances in Seattle. It appears that Schrum is beginning to demonstrate that theater organs may once again be profitable.



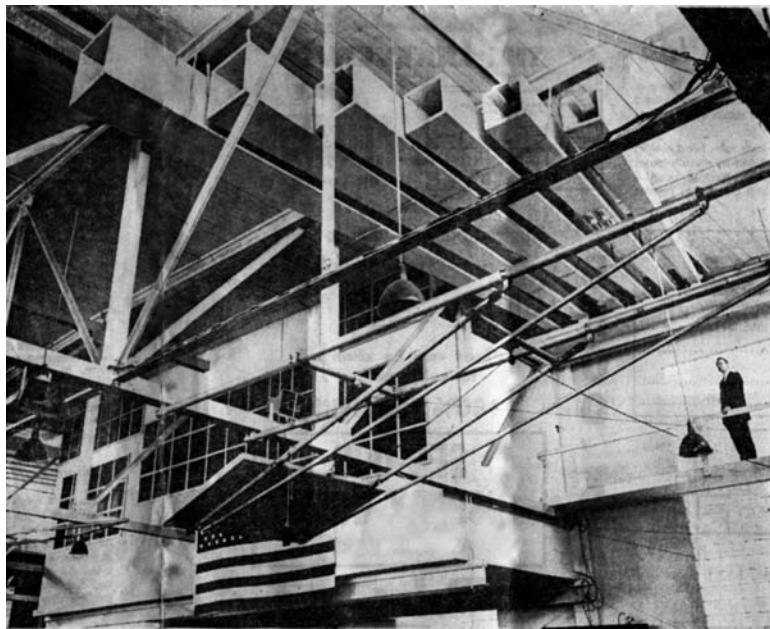
Pages From The Past...continued

There are about 125 ATOE members in the Puget Sound area, eight from Tacoma. One of them is Mrs. Lawrence McKee [Jane McKee Johnson, see photo, bottom of page 4], who played the Temple, Music Box and Roxy theater organs here on radio a number of years ago. She still plays the Temple Theater organ occasionally, but no public concert has been presented for more than two years.

The three-manual Temple Theater organ doesn't have the deafening power the two Seattle installations have. But it does have a fine mixing chamber high above the stage which makes for pleasing balance between the left and right pipe chambers.

Kept in Condition

The Temple organ is also probably one of the best maintained theater organs in the country because the Masonic Lodge, which owns the building, requires the lessee to keep the organ in operating condition. Many theater organs have suffered from neglect, which explains the need for ATOE money and labor to bring such organs back to their original splendor.



Seattle Liberty Theater Wurlitzer in the Pacific Lutheran University gymnasium during the 1960s

A person need not, however, be an ATOE member to be a theater organ enthusiast. Dr. R. Byard Fritts, professor of organ at Pacific Lutheran University, was so enthusiastic that he managed to acquire the original Liberty Theater organ in Seattle.

This three-manual organ, now installed in PLU's gymnasium, was built in 1914, making it one of the very first genuine theater organs. While at the Liberty in the early years, it served as a demonstration model, attracting

persons from all over the world.

For many years the old Liberty organ was hardly touched. But, since it was installed at PLU 12 years ago, Dr. Fritts frequently plays the organ. Its great variety of musical voices are applicable to reformation festivals and religious convocations as well as the all-out theater organ sound at basketball games.

The 22-rank installation boasts gigantic pedal (bass) pipes which hang from the ceiling. Largest of the wooden monstrosities is 32 feet long, which produces sound at 16 cycles per second, four cycles below the average human range of hearing. The effect is literally a man-made earthquake.

Most of the large theater organs in this area cost from \$40,000 to \$50,000 when they were installed in the 1920s or earlier. At today's prices, it would cost at least \$95,000 to replace an organ like the Liberty at PLU, says Dr. Fritts.

One Sold for \$1,000

Although such organs have become scarce, most of those purchased from theaters in recent years have sold in the \$2,500 to \$6,000 range. A large theater organ in Seattle was recently acquired for \$1,000!

Why so cheap? The fact is few people are interested in transplanting such complex installations to their homes or places of business. It takes a small army to remove a console with all its pipes,

electronic gear and sound-effects equipment. And, it usually takes an addition to the home in order to accommodate a theater organ.

Yet, some people do erect big pipe organs in their homes. Dr. Fritts is one of them. Although his installation is basically a church type of organ without the traditional theater voices, the sheer power of this organ when it is completed will rival any bona fide theater organ in the home, he says.

Dr. Fritts has literally built his organ from scratch. Unlike some people who have transplanted entire units into their homes, this

Parkland resident has acquired organ parts from all over the country and built his own organ. Most of the console, which he converted from two to three keyboards, comes from a church in Lynden. The pipe chest hails from a cathedral in Spokane. Most of the pipes are from San Francisco. The keys come from Maryland.



PLU's Dr. R. Byard Fritts in the pipe chamber of the organ installation in his Parkland home.

Another Owner

Homer Johnson, a sheetmetal worker, is another Tacoman who has installed a pipe organ in his home. He acquired it several years ago from the Bible Presbyterian Church and installed it in the basement of his Tacoma home. Since the organ, one of two at the church, was originally used by a fraternal organization, the two-manual unit has many theater-type voices that really rumble when Johnson sits down at the console.

Yes, the many sounds of the big theater organ are sweet music to some people. But it will take more than a few thousand enthusiasts to bring back the theater pipes. The interest of the public at large is needed to assure even a partial comeback of popularity.

Dick Schum's concerts are beginning. Perhaps, as the word gets around, more people will rediscover the spine-tingling sensation of hearing real theater pipes in action.

EDITOR'S NOTE: In the 40 years since this article was written, much has changed. Dick Schrum, Jane McKee Johnson, Homer Johnson and Dr. R. Byard Fritts are deceased.

The historic Seattle Liberty Theater Wurlitzer installed in PLU's gymnasium in 1955 was sold in the late 1960s to Spokane's First Nazarene Church where it is currently undergoing a complete renovation.

The Olympic Theatre Wurlitzer is now reinstalled in the new Washington Center for the Performing Arts in Olympia, and used for silent movies and concerts.

The Fifth Avenue Theater Wurlitzer went to a restaurant in California, and later to a private party.

President's Message, continued

Volunteer Recognition

As we reflect on the past year, it's time to recognize many of our new member volunteers who stepped up to the plate in 2007. These individuals are the life blood of PSTOS and make all of our theatre organ programming, restoration and educational efforts possible. Kat Brightwell (15 years old) performed for us as the "Radio Listener" at the beginning of each half of the Old Time Radio Hour and has also committed to helping with the Paramount restoration work. She and her mother Dawn faithfully attended most PSTOS events in 2007 and it has been great to have them as active, social members. Dave Luttinen performed an incredible amount of Paramount organ tech work in 2007 including taking on the organ demonstrations for school tours. He is also a new Board member for 2008-2009. Larry Mayer and Eric Helgeson joined the Paramount crew in Fall 2007 and have been a huge help. Larry even assisted with the "all-nighter" tuning session together with Dave Luttinen and Clint Meadway just prior to the Old Time Radio Hour program. Phil Hargiss, who is also a new Board member for 2008-2009, joined the Paramount crew team and brings solid technical knowledge through his past experience with several local theatre organ installations including the big Granada Organ Loft Wurlitzer in West Seattle. Finally, I'd like to recognize PSTOS members Fred & Eva Beeks and Gene Peden for their work on the Lincoln Theatre Wurlitzer and Centralia Fox installation. Although these projects are not officially coordinated by PSTOS, their efforts go a long way toward promoting the theatre organ in the Northwest. So a hearty Thank You! to one and all. PSTOS is alive and well thanks to your passion and commitment.

Tom Blackwell, President

PUGET SOUND THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY

Russ & Jo Ann Evans, Newsletter Editors

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Bob Mitchell brought joy to the PSTOS Holiday Party at Kenyon Hall

He's 95 and still going strong!



BOB MITCHELL, seated, with emcee **LOU MAGOR** at Kenyon Hall

In spite of its being a drenching and windy Seattle day, Kenyon Hall enjoyed a full house of PSTOS holiday revelers on an early December Sunday afternoon. The Hall was festooned appropriately, and the kitchen was dispensing a tasty array of sandwiches, sweets and beverages.

Bob Mitchell, in Seattle from the Los Angeles area for several weekend programs, was in top form. Bob has an interesting background, famous for his boys' choirs during the 1940s and '50s, some of which were featured in several well-known movies. One former choir boy, now retired (!), was on hand to surprise Bob, and what a nice surprise it was!

Bob's many years spent accompanying silent movies have given him the experience and expertise to still do a superb job. His accompaniments are both vigorous and delicate, depending upon the scene. It was truly a delight listening to him.

Lou Magor acted as emcee for Bob's presentation, and did his typically outstanding job.

Many thanks to all the volunteers who participated in making this such a successful event!



Audience members enjoy Bob Mitchell's presentation.