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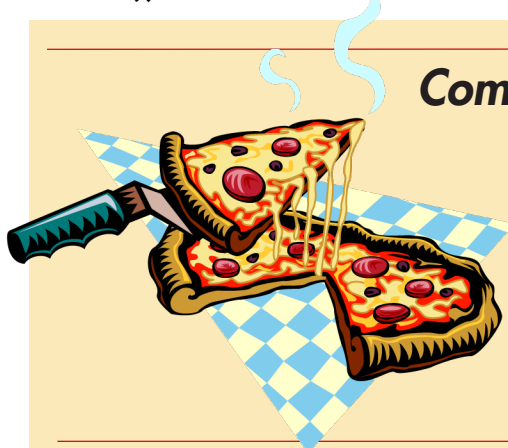
PUGET SOUND PIPELINE

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 22 No. 5

May 2011

A Chapter of the American Theatre Organ Society



Coming Sunday, June 5th...

**Recreating the
Pizza & Pipes ambience!**

PIZZA & PIPES

at Haller Lake Community Club in North Seattle



Featuring

DONNA PARKER

at the Mighty Wurlitzer

- *Pizza lunch complete with dessert*
- *Beer, soda, coffee*
- *Concert*
- *Silent movie cartoon*

**Taking you back
to the Good Old Days!**

Donna's theatre organ career began in Los Angeles at age 15. She has been staff organist at pizza parlors across the country, served as organist for the Los Angeles Sports Arena, has concertized extensively both in the U.S. and abroad, and is a member of *Trio con Brio* with Jonas Nordwall and Martin Ellis. She was honored as ATOS Organist of the Year in 1996. She has been on the staff of several electronic organ companies, has numerous recordings to her credit, and currently teaches several students in the Seattle area. Donna resides in Portland.

ADMISSION – PSTOS members \$20 per person.

Non-members \$24. Age 12 and under \$10.

A real entertainment bargain!

RESERVATIONS, PLEASE, to help us plan for pizzas.

**Reserve by Wednesday June 1 with Ray Harris at 206-546-8959
or by email at rayh@prosserpiano.com**

**Celebrate the NEW CHAIRS
at Haller Lake Community Club!**

Sunday, June 5, 1:00 pm

Haller Lake Community Club

12579 Densmore Ave N., Seattle

Drive directions on page 6

PUGET SOUND PIPELINE

Vol. 22, No. 5 –May 2011
Published monthly by
Puget Sound Theatre Organ Society
6521 NE 191st ST
Kenmore, WA 98028-3453

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

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Paramount Theatre—Tom Blackwell • Wash. Center—Andy Crow

Listing of non-PSTOS events in the Pipeline

PSTOS, upon request, will list non-conflicting non-PSTOS theatre organ events in the "Other Events" column of the two Pipelines immediately preceding the event, providing Pipeline editors receive sufficient prior written notification. Venue, artist, type of event, date, and contact information will comprise the included information.

Advertising in the Pipeline

Classified-type ads for member-owned electronic, electric, or pipe organs, and/or pipe organ parts, will be published at no charge. Please limit copy to include brief description, contact name and phone number. Prices will not be listed. Ads may be edited for content and length. Mail ad copy to address above. Other advertising is not accepted.

Joining Puget Sound Theatre Organ Society is quick and easy! For a one year membership, send a \$20 check payable to PSTOS together with your name(s) as you would like them to appear on your name badges, your address with complete 9-digit ZIP code, and your email address (optional) to:

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

PRESIDENT'S Message

Sunday, April 17th, found PSTOS members and friends on board a 50-passenger bus headed north to Bellingham for the day's adventure, "Tibias and Tullips." I would like to thank the PSTOS Program Committee members for conceptualizing the idea and to the volunteers who helped put the pieces of this puzzle together so that everyone could enjoy the day. A BIG thank you to Ray Harris and Prosser's Piano and Organ for allowing their parking lot to be used as a staging area for those attending the event, and to all of the friends of Prosser's on board, who have enthusiastically supported PSTOS events for many years.



During the journey north, Russ Evans briefed passengers about the Mt. Baker Theatre and its Wurlitzer, providing interesting background and details about what they were about to see and hear. Thank you Russ! The recent renovations to the theatre and ongoing maintenance of the Wurlitzer make this performing arts center a very special and enjoyable destination.

The first stop was at Roozengarde Display Gardens & Store in Mt. Vernon, where folks shopped for gifts and wandered through the beautiful tulip gardens. After a brief stop for lunch at a nearby restaurant, the bus continued north to Bellingham where it was greeted by the hospitality of the Mt. Baker Theatre Organ Society. Jeff Fox was at the Wurlitzer to accompany a Buster Keaton hilarious classic silent film comedy, "Our Hospitality," a boisterous satire of family feuds and southern codes of honor. This silent film was a new one to most of those in attendance. Thank you MBTOS and Jeff Fox.

Prepare yourselves for June at Haller Lake Community Club, where Donna Parker will preside over the Marr & Colton/Wurlitzer for a "Pizza and Pipes" day. Details are in this Pipeline. Reservations are necessary for food planning, so please reserve soon!

If you have ideas for programs you'd enjoy, please email or contact a board member or speak directly to one of the Program Committee members, whose names appear in the "committees section" of the newsletter. Member input is extremely helpful, and valued by the entire board.

Happy springtime,
...Bob Zat, President

PSTOS Coming Events

► **Recreating PIZZA & PIPES at Haller Lake Community Club, featuring DONNA PARKER at the Mighty Wurlitzer!**

Always a favorite, Donna will entertain you with her toe tapping style of pop music and a short silent comedy, all reminiscent of the fun days we all enjoyed at Pizza & Pipes in times past! Reservations required. Details on page 1.

Sunday, June 5, 1:00PM

► **MAGICAL MUSIC at MERLYN'S**

Special summer party at the Tacoma home of Merlyn Johnson will feature PATTI SIMON and DON WALLIN

Merlyn welcomes members to her lovely Tacoma home to hear her newly upgraded theatre pipe organ. This will be a special day. Don't miss it!

Sunday, August 21, 2011

► **Annual PSTOS HOLIDAY PARTY at Haller Lake Community Club**

Don your holiday finery and enjoy another fun holiday extravaganza! Music! Food! Fun!

Sunday, December 4, 2011

FOR SALE Organ Stuff

Bobbie Thorson loved her Hammond Elegante! Sadly, we lost Bobbie recently, (see page 3) and her beloved Hammond needs a new home. Her son John is eager for it to go to someone who will truly appreciate it.

It's a model 340300 full-size home organ in very good condition (driven by a little old lady, says John!). ☺

For details, please contact Bobbie's son John Thorson at 425-830-0033 or by email at johnthorson@hotmail.com.

Free Stuff

Gulbranson Rialto II theatre organ free to a good home. External Leslie speaker available. Needs a little TLC. For more information, please contact Jack Driscoll, 360-863-6799.

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

The Wurlitzer is usually played Mon/Tue/Fri/Sat at 7PM and Sun at 5PM. If there is a live performance, the organ may not be heard. Check www.lincolnthatre.org

► Columbia River Theatre Organ Society

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

► Bellingham's Mt. Baker Theatre Organ Society

Mt. Baker Theatre Organ Society presents monthly theatre organ events in the beautifully restored Mt. Baker Theatre. Visit their website at www.mountbakertheatre.com

► Spokane's First Nazarene Theatre Organ Society

Meetings are Mar., Jun., Sept. and Dec. For up-to-the-minute news and events calendar, go to www.sfnatos.org

Used musical instruments needed for disadvantaged kids

If you have a **guitar, trumpet, coronet or music stand** no longer being used, please consider donating it to the Salvation Army. Donations will serve over 60 children in Seattle, Renton, Bellevue, White Center and Puyallup who are learning to play in free after school programs run by the Salvation Army.

Contact Jo Ann Evans at **425-485-5465** or by email at rj.evans@frontier.com. She will see your donation gets to the right place. It will help a disadvantaged young person begin a music learning program that would otherwise be impossible!

Remembering "Bobbie" Thorson

Barbara "Bobbie" Thorson, a long time PSTOS member and regular attendee at events, passed away recently just shy of her 90th birthday. Bobbie's friendly smile will be missed at our programs. We extend sincere sympathy to her family and friends.

Welcome to our recent new PSTOS members!

Ed & Sharon Axton, Stanwood

Bernice Beck, Edmonds

Jonathan & Lauren Biard, Woodinville

Carole Browning, Redmond

Dan & Judy Danko, Kennewick

Gil Drynan, Issaquah

Marty & Mary Duke, Renton

Roxanne Gihl, Bremerton

Bill Hunter, Seattle

J.R. Combley & Lynn Landry, Edmonds

Barbara Matthes, Seattle

Margie Park, Edmonds

Chuck & Gail Richardson, Burien

Tom Tinsley, Seatac

Your PSTOS Program Committee says, "Please give us just ten minutes of your time!"

The PSTOS Program Committee has been meeting monthly to plan programs through 2012. **This is a BIG JOB!** Hours and hours of time and effort go into planning and executing each and every event, and it's SO disappointing when just a small percentage of our membership attends.

Please let the Program Committee hear from YOU! A quick email is all we ask.

1—List 2 or 3 local artists you'd like to hear.

2—List 2 or 3 national artists you'd enjoy.

3—Rate your favorite types of events:

a—Full concerts with a top artist

b—Home parties

c—Bus trips to hear other organs

d—Combined music/social events at Haller Lake or Kenyon Hall

Send your email to either Barbara Graham or Ray Harris at:

barb@pstos.org

ray@pstos.org

Also on the committee: Bob Zat, Jamie Snell, Joani Roughton, Halie Dodrill and Jo Ann Evans.

The entire committee THANKS YOU!



The Powers That Be!



DAVID LOCKE, President elect of the local chapter of American Guild of Organists, BOB ZAT, President of PSTOS, and JONAS NORDWALL surround the console at Calvary Christian Assembly following Jonas' well attended program on March 13.

Jesse Crawford—The Poet of the Organ

In September 1968, Richard Simonton wrote this lengthy history of Jesse Crawford for the Chicago Chapter of American Theatre Organ Enthusiasts (later ATOS). Dick Simonton played an instrumental role in the creation of ATOE. This is the first of two parts.

Jesse's career launched in Spokane

Spokane served as one of the many stepping stones to fame for Jesse Crawford. It was here, in an obscure theatre, that a salesman for one of the film companies heard him, was impressed and finally carried the word to Sid Grauman that there was indeed an outstanding artist who could put life into the silent films through his music.

Hitting the *Big Time* at age 21

It is unknown whether Grauman himself went to Spokane to hear Jess play, but in any event, he was engaged to open the Million Dollar Theatre in Los Angeles in 1918. The theatre was not scheduled to open for an additional four months and in order to keep his new artist under contract and in shape to present to the public, Grauman loaned him out to the little theatre on Market Street in San Francisco, then known as the United Artists. Later, another theatre was to bear this name and much confusion arose as to which Jess played in prior to his Los Angeles debut.

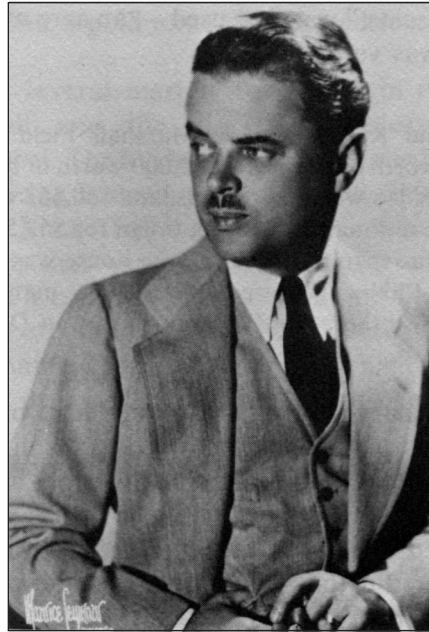
The grand opening of the Million Dollar Theatre was set for the fall of 1918. Jess arrived full of great expectations, only to be bitterly disappointed in the organ which had in reality been added as an afterthought. The house opened with a Style D Wurlitzer in a swell box on stage, hastily installed by the local office of the Wurlitzer company.

Pipe organs in theatres were new

Until this time Sid Grauman had not been identified with theatres which had used pipe organs. In fact, they were not yet in general usage. As a consequence, he had not made the proper provisions. He soon rectified this by signing a contract with the Wurlitzer Company and before many months, a three manual instrument of modest proportions was delivered and installed in chambers created by a rearrangement of the theatre interior.

The shipping list is indicative of the numerous shipments to the Million Dollar Theatre, as the organ gradually grew to its ultimate size of about 18 ranks. It was of the older design with the cross-bar relay, the type previously associated with the

instruments of the Hope-Jones vintage. In 1918, theatre organs were still relatively scarce and Wurlitzer had only a few instruments to their credit.



Jesse in the early days

Jesse's appearance at the Million Dollar Theatre was a tremendous success and he soon shared top billing in the stable of artists which Grauman so skillfully assembled. The theatre was noted for its lavish productions, and some of the great names of the music world appeared there as staff musicians. The Million Dollar was a springboard for more than one artist into the spotlight of fame.

Jess, a mere youngster only recently past his 21st birthday, was nonetheless a mature artist of considerable stature. He was somewhat bedazzled by the glamour of the Grauman treatment and the fact that he was a personality in the movie capital.

A first marriage for Jesse

Before many months had passed, he met and married Olga, who was somehow connected with the performing staff of the theatre, possibly as a dancer. In due course, the first of their two children, Jean, was born and Jess was indeed a proud papa.

Sid Grauman a hard man to work for

Grauman was notoriously difficult to work for, and while he was a master showman, he was sometimes very capricious and arbitrary. He would go to any length to accomplish some form of practical joke, some of which are legendary in the annals of the film industry. After approximately one year with Grauman's showplace, the inevitable parting occurred, and Jess accepted a similar position at the California Theatre on Main Street, operated by the Miller Brothers.

Jesse moves to the California Theatre

This house boasted a much larger organ of the Robert Morton manufacture, one of their early attempts at a theatre organ. It had literally no distinguishing features and though Jess cared little for the instrument, he found working for the Millers somewhat easier.

He was enjoying this peaceful life when one day Sid Grauman came to see him in his dressing room. Apologizing profusely for whatever it was that had caused the rift, Grauman then offered Jess a salary twice that which had been previously paid. This offer was too good to pass up, so after one year at the California Theatre for the Miller brothers, he returned to the Million Dollar to start his second year there and his third year in Southern California.

Back with Sid Grauman once again

It was now the fall of 1920. Grauman's real purpose in begging Jess to return was to have him as one of his artists when the following year he would open the greatest of all Los Angeles movie palaces, the Metropolitan Theatre, which was to be constructed at Sixth and Hill Streets. The Metropolitan Theatre (later the Downtown Paramount) was destined to make history in more ways than one, though Jess was never to perform in that palace of the movie art. Certain promises were made to Jess that he would have a voice in the design of the organ as well as in its placement. Instead, he found a wall of resistance in the architects whom Grauman had engaged and Jess' voice became nothing more than a crying in the wilderness.

Pages From The Past...continued

Because of Sid Grauman's peculiar nature, his inability to delegate authority, plus the fact that he was under financed, the theatre took considerably longer to build and by the end of the next 12-month period, it was far from finished—nothing more than a hole in the ground. This sowed the first seed of discontent for Jess.

This plus the fact that the architects insisted upon installing the organ, a Wurlitzer Style 285 (a total of 32 ranks) in five chambers, side by side, at the very top of the theatre structure behind the grille work which was to form the suspended ceiling and spread out in front of the stage house. The placement proved entirely inadequate and within a couple of years, the theatre was forced to close for major remodeling. New chambers were built where the balcony attached to the side walls, three on one side and two on the other.

When it was demolished years later, those engaged in the removal of the organ found the old original chambers still in place but containing only the relay and 32' diaphones. The balance of the organ had been moved to more advantageous locations on the side. Even so, the organ never sounded as great as it should have.

It is interesting to note that in spite of these obvious mistakes on the part of the architects, there was an innovation in this theatre which made a contribution to theatre architecture. It was the combined grille work and suspended ceiling in the center of the theatre on a 45° angle, creating a sunburst effect over the stage. This idea was later picked up and expanded upon and ultimately became the design concept around which New York's Radio City Music Hall was built.

Jesse divorces, loses custody of kids

During this same period of discontent in his chosen field, Jess' personal life also was disrupted. Sometime after the birth of their second child, Howard, he and Olga divorced. It was a contested divorce and Jess was ordered to put both of his children in a boarding nursery. He was also denied custody and was precluded from removing them from the state of California. He maintained the children in various boarding school establishments until they became of legal age.

Jesse moves to Chicago

In the last six months of his stay at the Million dollar, Sam Katz of the Balaban & Katz organization entered into the life of Jesse Crawford. He had come from Chicago, had heard Jess play and was extremely impressed with him, to the point of offering him a position.

Sam was an older man with a very sensitive nature. Being a good musician himself, he recognized the genius of Crawford, and for the next eleven years controlled Jess' fate.

With the going awry of Grauman's promises, as well as his personal life, Jess accepted the offer and left for Chicago, with a leaden heart that his children could not accompany him.

Sam Katz had the same idea for Jess that Sid Grauman had had. He wanted him to open a new house, the

Chicago Theatre, then under construction. It was still six months before the scheduled opening and again Jess was offered a voice in the selection and placement of the organ. In the meantime, he was assigned to duties at the Tivoli Theatre at 63rd and Cottage Grove Avenues on the south side. His name was never mentioned, he was literally being

kept on ice out

there until the big day in the Loop when the Chicago Theatre would open. When it finally came about, Jess was touted to the skies as a special import for the gala occasion, when in reality he had been playing in Chicago, unheard of, for six months.



The Chicago Theatre

The New York Paramount beckons

It was now 1921 and the Chicago Theatre lived up to its expectations, except that the organ wasn't to Jess' complete liking. Again the factory list indicates changes and additions which were made from time to time in order to bring it up to an instrument capable of our artist. The organ was always somewhat muffled and had a buried sound. It lacked the fire which Jess could so effectively use when the case demanded it. All these years Jess was limited in his artistry by the instruments he had to play, and it wasn't until his next move to the New York Paramount Theatre that he was able to give full expression to his artistry without limitations imposed by the instrument.

Watch your June Pipeline for Part 2.



Drive directions to

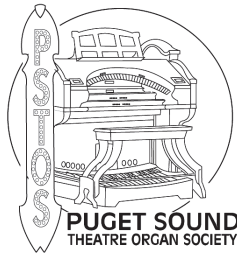
Haller Lake Community Club
12579 Densmore Ave. N., Seattle

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

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

PUGET SOUND THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY

Russ & Jo Ann Evans, Newsletter Editors
6521 NE 191st ST
Kenmore, WA 98028-3453



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Glimpses of “Tibias & Tulips,” a fun day with gorgeous spring tulips, tasty food, and an enjoyable program in a beautifully restored theatre!



Off for for a fun day, complete with travel music and commentary.



The gardens at Roozengaarde Tulips are spectacular!



ABOVE: Back to the bus after visiting Roozengaarde Tulips.

RIGHT: The Mt. Baker Theatre is a gem, a real treasure for the residents of Bellingham.



Dueling pianos! Members Don Moore and Vic Smiley made music at Prosner's while waiting for the bus.