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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 14, No. 7

July 2003

Put this on your calendar now!

PSTOS Summer Social

Sunday July 20, 2:00

With Music, Food and Fun!



DON WALLIN, familiar to all from his many years at Tacoma Pizza & Pipes, will entertain on the Wurlitzer, which takes center stage in the Becvar's unique home. They have doubled its size to accommodate the 1920 instrument originally from the Blue Mouse Theatre. A lengthy process, the organ rebuild and reinstallation required several years to complete. Sadly, Jack and Mary you have reached a "downsizing" point in their lives and will soon put the house complete with organ on the market, planning to divide their time between a smaller home here and a condo in Hawaii. If you've ever dreamed of owning your own Wurlitzer, check it out!

Featuring our own
DON WALLIN

with your favorite tunes on the
Becvar 3/16 Wurlitzer
Sunday July 20, 2 PM

Open Console follows!
Home of Jack & Mary Lou Becvar
11617 S.E. 258th, Kent

Admission \$5 per person
Entertainment & refreshments furnished

DRIVE DIRECTIONS—

From the north: Use I-405 (from I-5, exit to I-405 at Southcenter) and take Exit #2 off I-405 to Hwy 167/Auburn southbound. From Hwy 167 take the 212th ST exit and drive east (212th becomes 208th) to 116th AVE SE. Turn South on 116th SE and continue to SE 258th ST. Turn left into the cul-de-sac.

From the south: From I-5 take Exit 142A onto Hiway 18, drive approximately 3 miles to Hwy 167 and turn north. Proceed north to the 277th ST exit, turn east and drive up the Hill (East Hill). 277th turns into 116th AVE SE. Turn right into the culdesac at SE 258th ST. Becvar home is in the southeast corner.

*Due to limited parking you may have to park on 116th.
Car pooling is suggested.*

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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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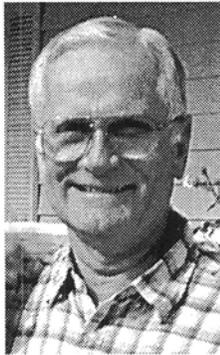
Listing of non-PSTOS events in the Pipeline

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



LES LEHNE—a name not instantly recognized by many of us. But Les was involved in just about every theatre organ project in the greater Puget Sound area. He never looked for recognition, just excellence in workmanship. Les left us a year ago and our program at St. Columban's was a tribute to him.

Les played a large part in getting the Wurlitzer into Olympia's Washington Center for the Performing Arts. When the February '01 earthquake severely damaged the organ and repair funds were not available from the Center's self insured plan, Les paid the \$35,000 repair bill himself. He then endowed a maintenance fund. Finally, he left the bulk of his estate to the Center to ensure continued use of the organ. It has been a long time since the Wurlitzer has been heard. You might want to let the Center know you are interested in an organ program. Of course, you then must buy tickets—that is the way it works!

It has been said that the forest would be mostly silent if only those birds sang which sing the best. We had our star "song birds" play first at St. Columban's and Bill Keller's home, then the rest of us added our best efforts. It was a fun time. Doris Cooley gave us a red hot rendition of *You Gotta See Momma Every Night* which should have been recorded for posterity. Doris communicates!

The next generation of organists is one of our two most important commitments (the other is competent maintenance technicians). Teenager Felix Hell will be in Seattle in September to play two programs. He is considered to be the best classical organist in the world by most accounts. Check out his program and dates at www.pipeorganfoundation.org.

PSTOS Coming Events

Summer Social & Program with Don Wallin at the Wurlii!

Jack & Mary Lou Becvar home in Kent. A program on their 3-manual Wurlitzer. Open Console follows. Refreshments furnished. \$5 per person.
Sunday, July 20, 2 PM

Home party!

Ray & Muriel Whelpley home, Bellevue. Another opportunity to hear and play a beautifully restored Wurlitzer!
Saturday, August 9, 2 PM

AMICA Convention, Portland

(Automatic Musical Instrument Collectors' Association) Let's charter a bus or even a train car! Hear Jonas Nordwall at the Oaks Park Rink and many other terrific programs. See page 6 for complete information.
August 20-24

Big Autumn Event at Haller Lake Community Club

Stay tuned for more details!
Sunday, October 5

RAGMATAZZ featuring Ragtime Pianist BOB MILNE & Organist JONAS NORDWALL at Gig Harbor.

A benefit program for both PSTOS and Children's Home Society of Washington.
Sunday afternoon, November 9

Annual PSTOS Christmas Party Sunday, December 7

Closing Chord

Leonard Westbo

Sincere PSTOS sympathy is extended to the family and friends of Len Westbo, long time member, who passed away May 25. Len's love of and interest in the organ kept him a faithful PSTOS member, though he was rarely able to attend events. Many thanks to his friends who found several Pipelines among Len's possessions and thoughtfully notified us of his passing.

From The MAILBOX

A letter from Jon Bish was published in the June Pipeline about David Di Fiore's acclaim following recent appearances at the XXXVII International Organ Festival of Morelia, Michoacan, Mexico, as well as numerous repeat performances in many prestigious locations throughout Eastern Europe & Mexico. Jon mentioned a CD made by the Auburn Symphony Orchestra with David as soloist.

The conductor/music director of the Auburn Symphony is Stewart Kershaw, who is also the conductor for the Pacific Northwest Ballet, and many of the players are from that orchestra and/or the Seattle Symphony.

Like all other arts groups, this one is needy, and appreciates all CD sales! The disc is available and can be ordered by email at auburnsymphony.org, or by phone at 253-939 8509.

—Diane Whipple, Board Member

TONY FENELON receives prestigious award...



TONY FENELON, Australia's most recognized Theatre Organist for the past 40 years, was recently awarded the highly prestigious

Order Of Australia Medal (OAM) in the Queen's Birthday Honours list, "For service to music, particularly as an organist and pianist in Australia and overseas."

Congratulations to Tony from all the PSTOS members who have enjoyed his many concerts. We look forward to many more opportunities to experience his outstanding musicianship!

PIPE ORGAN Terminology

What are PERCUSSIONS?

Percussion sounds are generally created from "something being struck by something else"—i.e., a mallet strikes the wooden bars of a marimba.

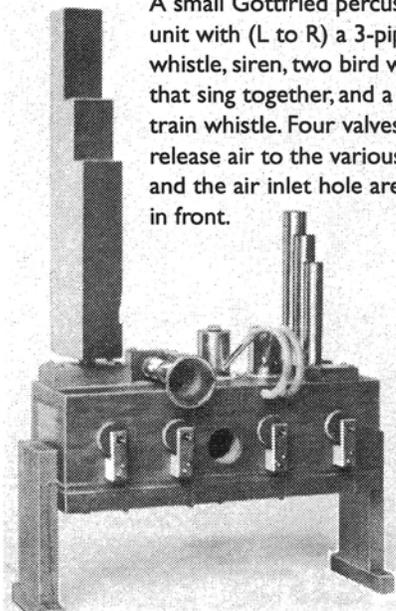
The term, **TUNED PERCUSSION**, describes the percussive voices in the organ with a pitch matching those of the pipes—i.e., if an E is played, the ear hears an E.

Tuned percussions in the smaller theatre organs were often limited to only a xylophone, glockenspiel and chimes. As the organs became larger, a chrysoglott, marimba, tuned sleighbells, and a piano were often added. Each note of such a percussion unit is played by the corresponding key on the pipe organ keyboard.

UNTUNED PERCUSSIONS have no specific pitch—the ear hears an identical pitch and sound regardless of what key is played. Included among these are snare drum, bass drum, castanets, tambourines, wood block, cymbals, triangle.

A group of non-musical sounds that provide excitement to silent movies are the so-called "**TOYS**" consisting of a boat whistle, fire gong, door bell, bird whistle, surf sound, train whistle, horses' hooves. These sounds are created by various gadgets.

A small Gottfried percussion unit with (L to R) a 3-pipe boat whistle, siren, two bird whistles that sing together, and a 3-pipe train whistle. Four valves to release air to the various toys, and the air inlet hole are visible in front.



Other Northwest Theatre Organ Events

Hokum Hall Happenings in July

Andy Crow at the Wurlitzer, July 4th Costume Party, July 4, 8PM

Pastor Wright & The Total Experience Gospel Choir, July 11, 8PM

Big Hokum Hall Variety Show! July 18-19, 8PM

The Bidlows, Warrender, Silverman Comedy night, July 25-26, 8PM

Enjoy the wonderful Hokum Hall Wurlitzer!

7904 35th Ave. SW, Seattle • 206-937-3613 • hokumhall@earthlink.net

Paramount Theatre Summer Silent Movie Series

Buster Keaton in GO WEST, July 7

William Wellman's HELL'S HEROES and Tom Mix in RIDERS OF THE PURPLE SAGE plus Thomas Edison's THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY, July 14

William S. Hart in TUMBLEWEEDS, July 21

Wurlitzer accompaniment by Dennis James. All shows start at 7:00 with a lecture about the film and the music, the film begins at 7:30PM.

Everett Theatre Summer Silent Movie Series

James Cruze's THE COVERED WAGON, Tuesday, July 1, 7pm

Buster Keaton in GO WEST plus THE PALEFACE, Tuesday, July 8, 7pm

Tom Mix in the GREAT K&A TRAIN ROBBERY plus Thomas Edison's THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY, Tuesday, July 15, 7pm

Organ accompaniment by Dennis James.

Everett Theatre, 2911 Colby Avenue, Everett, WA, 425.258.6766

Pages From The Past..

Spokane's American Theatre had a varied history from 1910 to 1972

By George Lufkin, as published in *Marquee, Journal of the Theatre Historical society*, 1973

"GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN"

was the announcement on the marquee of the Post Theater in Spokane on May 31, 1972, telling of another showhouse meeting the fate of many others like it in the preceding decade. Few Spokane theater-goers were aware of its closing, as no notice was given to the public. Instead, the management decided to cease operations quietly with no celebration.

The life of the Post Theater began in April, 1909, when the Shubert brothers, owners of some 90 legitimate theaters in the U.S., disclosed through a Spokane newspaper their intention to build a theater in which their plays would be presented. They preferred to buy an existing theater, but none was available. They named the proposed theater the Shubert.

The southeast corner of Post Street and Front Avenue (later Trent) was selected as the site of the \$200,000 theater. Commissioned to design the showplace was E.W. Houghton, Seattle architect, the man for whom the late B. Marcus Priteca, prolific designer of theaters, first worked when he arrived in Seattle from Scotland.

A 52-room hotel occupied the five floors above the main entrance to the theater, with the auditorium and stage comprising the remainder of the lot back to the alley.

The exterior of the building affected the classic Grecian theme. Six huge terra cotta columns 30 inches in diameter and 25 feet high supported the main entrance on Front Avenue up to the second floor. These were fluted with Ionic caps, and on the entablature rested six Grecian lamps.

The interior was the ultimate in design at the time, an exact duplication of the Maxine Elliott Theater in New York city, except for seating capacity. The Maxine Elliott had 800 seats, the new Spokane theater, 1,650. Modern throughout, the theater had several



A crowd assembles outside Spokane's American Theatre

innovations including a slanted, cement floor, cantilevered balcony and gallery, upholstered seats, and a ventilating system that gave the auditorium a complete change of air every six minutes. No combustible materials were used in the construction of the building.

An imposing 32 x 35 foot lobby was finished in marble and mahogany. Twenty dressing rooms were located under the 36 x 40 foot stage.

The auditorium was decorated with light buff on ornamental plaster walls and had Dutch linen paintings on the side walls of every floor.

The theater opened its doors on Christmas Day, 1910, as the American, under the Klaw-Erlanger banner, the Shuberts having withdrawn their interests in the meantime. The Del Lawrence Dramatic Stock Players had the honor of beginning the theater's 62 years of entertainment history before a

packed enthusiastic audience. The featured three-act play was *The Walls Of Jericho*.

The American Theater, known variously through the years as the Woodward, Maylon, Post Street, and Post, presented a wide range of entertainment. This included dramatic stock, musical comedy, operettas, musical and dramatic religious offerings, concert artists, symphony orchestra concerts, ballet, lectures, motion pictures, vaudeville, and burlesque. Many touring operettas, such as *Rio Rita* and *Blossom Time*, plays of the *Green Pastures* and *Strange Interlude* type, and numerous follies on the order of *George White Scandals* were featured during the 1920s.

There were several attempts at vaudeville and motion picture combinations in the twenties. The going was rough mainly because of the strong

Pages From The Past.. continued

Old Pantages Vaudeville had in Spokane and partly because of the competition from a budget vaudeville theater, the Hippodrome. Vaudeville and resident musical comedy and stock companies came and went in rapid succession, many of them being plagued with union difficulties. Sudden closures were common. However, Gertrude Huntington, an impresario of the first order, was successful in presenting outstanding concert artists at the American during the last three years of the 1920s. The great depression put an end to her venture, unfortunately.

A two-manual Robert Morton pipe organ was installed in the mid-

twenties. The acoustics of the theater were ideal for pipe organ music. The organ pipes were installed in the upper boxes on either side of the auditorium. The instrument was removed from the theater around 1928 and moved to Wallace, Idaho.

Twice in the 1920s the theater was traded for ranch property in Montana, the first time for a wheat farm, the second for a cattle ranch. In each transaction, the amount of money involved was reported as \$200,000.

The theater was renamed the Post Street in 1930, when it presented Fanchon and Marco stage revues under the management of Ray Grombacher, who at that time had four other first-run theaters in Spokane. The revues

were discontinued after a few months and the theater resumed its usual come and go of vaudeville-motion pictures, motion pictures only, dramatic stock, and burlesque.

In the depth of the depression in 1933, two courageous theater men, Arthur O'Neil and W.L. Evans, who had experience with the John Hamrick Theaters in Portland, took over the operation of the then feeble and almost dead Post Street. They gave it new life by investing \$8,000 to refurbish the interior, re-equip the sound system and redecorate the main entrance relocated on Post Street, a more desirable and profitable location than the one on Front Avenue. The theater was clean, comfortable, and respectable, and the films shown were suitable for family viewing. A ten cent matinee and fifteen cent evening and Sunday admission for third and fourth-run pictures from major studios appealed to families. The team of O'Neil and Evans was so successful that they won a bet with certain theater managers who said they would go broke within two months.

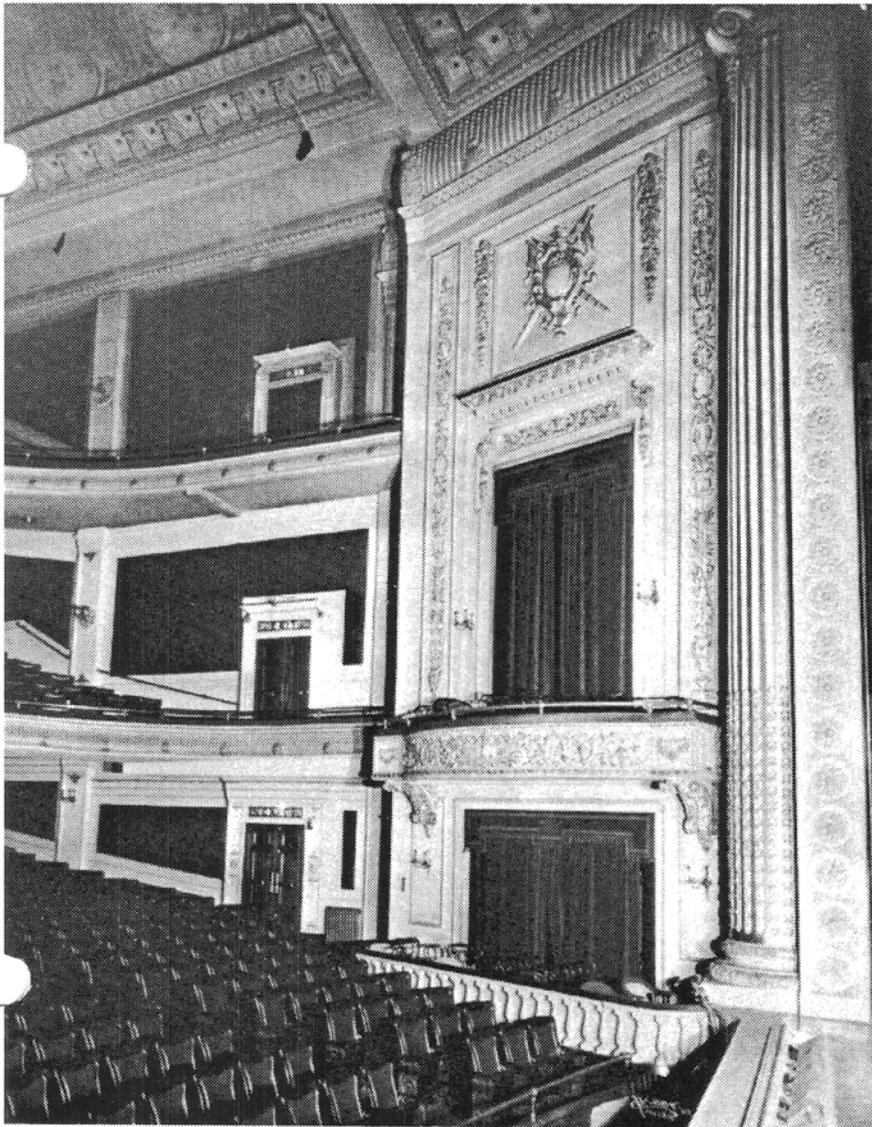
The two enterprising men brought vaudeville back to Spokane in the fall of 1937, presenting it seven days a week with first-run films from major studios.

Joseph Rosenfield, a former manager for Fox West Coast Evergreen Theaters in Spokane, purchased the Post Street in 1944 from Evans, O'Neil. His shrewd management and his contacts made with major film producers when he was with Fox West Coast theaters allowed him to gradually develop the theater into a first-run, major studio release showplace. It held that status from 1947 until the theater closed in 1972.

According to the Junchen opus lists, two theatre organs were shipped to the American Theatre, a two-manual Marr & Colton, 1925, and a two-manual Robert Morton, 1925. The 1925 dates cannot be confirmed.

Fate of the Marr & Colton instrument is unknown. According to PSTOS member George Perks of Spokane, the Robert Morton instrument was moved to Wallace, Idaho, and played in either an Elk's or a Masonic temple, and was later moved to Spokane by Harold Currier who installed it in his South Hill home.

The organ was recently acquired by George Perks of Spokane.



A hearty PSTOS welcome to...

Gertrude Anderson, Bellevue
Martin & Joan Brashem, Gig Harbor
Wally & Dorothy Bucklen, Maple Valley
Nancy Clow, Renton
Carolyn Foss, Puyallup
Nancy Goodyear, Seattle
Bill Habermann, Tacoma
Richard & Betty McFarlane, Kenmore
Virgil & Alice Spilker, Des Moines

PUGET SOUND THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY

Russ & Jo Ann Evans, Newsletter Editors
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Kenmore, WA 98028-3453



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Join the fun...

PSTOS joins AMICA for their 2003 International Convention (Automatic Musical Instrument Collectors' Association)

JONAS NORDWALL
at the Oaks Park Roller Rink
Theatre Pipe Organ!

Ragtime Piano Concert by brilliant
young NATHAN BELLO!

All day tour of COLUMBIA GORGE
and the famous CAROUSEL
MUSEUM!

Tour of
SELLWOOD ANTIQUE ROW!

Banquet with entertainment
and dancing to the
DICK SAUNDERS ORCHESTRA!

AND MUCH MORE!

REGISTRATION INFORMATION—The registration fee of \$225 per person includes:

- Motor coach transportation to convention events
- Entrance fees to events
- FIVE meals (Thursday breakfast, sack lunch on Thursday tour, Friday breakfast, Saturday banquet, and Sunday breakfast.)

Registration does not include lodging. The host hotel is the Doubletree Downtown Hotel at 31 SW Lincoln, Portland. Guaranteed room rate is \$99 per night and is guaranteed for 3 nights before and after the convention for those wishing to spend more days in and around Portland. There is free parking at the hotel for registered guests.

For a full informational packet and Registration Form, phone Carl Dodrill at 206-236-0067 or email him at carl@dodrill.net

THIS WILL BE A GREAT SUMMER GETAWAY. PSTOS Board Member Carl Dodrill is a moving force behind the planning and every detail has been covered. There is talk of organizing group transportation to Portland for PSTOS and AMICA members. Interested? Check with Carl at the number above and let him know! Let's all give serious consideration to this superb event!

Scholarship recipient Daniel Goltz samples several local pipe organs...

Sixteen year old DANIEL GOLTZ, PSTOS scholarship recipient from Walla Walla, was recently in the area and had a chance to try out several home pipe organs. He visited the home of Norman Miller, whose fine classical organ thrilled Daniel.

Norman then took Daniel and his parents to check out the theatre organ owned by Russ and Jo Ann Evans...an entirely new challenge to classically-trained Daniel. His first word, after a quick look at the console, was "COOL!" Then, "...but where is the REST of it?" referring, of course, to

the pipes. After a chamber inspection, he was on the bench, and after a few classical numbers he asked for some theatre music to sight read. What a terrific sight reader! Very impressive.

It is apparent Daniel is quickly developing into a broad-based musician, unafraid of any new challenge, one who will be equally at home with both classical and theatre music as he develops.

It is hoped he can attend "Ragmatazz" on November 9th and perhaps put his fingers on the wonderful Wilcox Wurlitzer at Gig Harbor.

