

**PUGET SOUND  
THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY**

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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 16 Nos. 6-7

June - July 2005

A Chapter of American Theatre Organ Society

*Be among the first to hear and play Merlyn Johnson's newly installed  
3/17 Robert Morton Theatre Pipe Organ!*

*At a big July*

## **Home Party And Celebration**

Hear  
**DON  
WALLIN**

**put the organ  
through its  
paces!**



### ***Following up on a May, 2003, story...***

This most unusual residence pipe organ installation has been masterminded by none other than our own Don Wallin over the last several years. The Robert Morton instrument was shipped in 1924 to the Antlers Theatre, later named the Indian Theatre, in Roseburg, OR. A flute, tibia, trumpet, violin and vox humana were the original ranks. In 1944 the organ was moved to the Roseburg First Methodist Church and a diapason and dulciana were added.

Everything was fine until the early hours of August 7, 1959, when a parked truck loaded with 2 tons of dynamite and 4-1/2 tons of Car-Prill (a mixture of ammonium nitrate fertilizer and oil) caught fire and exploded in downtown Roseburg, leaving a crater fifty-two feet in diameter and twenty feet deep. Thirteen people were killed and 115 injured, and a 30 block radius of downtown Roseburg was in shambles. The First Methodist church was virtually destroyed but the Robert Morton organ managed to survive.

Leonard Vernon of Astoria, OR, bid on the salvage job, was awarded the organ, and spent two weekends hauling it to Astoria, a round trip of 600 miles.

After an extensive home remodel, Vernon began the installation and three Gottfried ranks—clarinet, kinura and post horn—plus a chrysoglott from the Hollywood Theatre Wurlitzer in Portland were added. The first program was played by Bill Blunk in 1960.

Merlyn Johnson and her husband purchased the organ about 4 years ago and began modifying their large attached garage to provide chamber space. Additional ranks have been added. The Morton console has been replaced with a new 3-manual console with electric stop actions and solid state relay. It has both theatre voices and a straight (classical) division, all of which speak into the living room area. The sound is magnificent!

***Music! Refreshments! Open Console! Fun!***

***Admission \$5 per person***

***to cover entertainment and food.***

***Saturday, July 16, 2:00 PM***

**Home of Walter & Merlyn Johnson**

**1314 Mountain View • Tacoma**

***Please see page 6 for driving directions.***

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Vol. 16, Nos. 6-7 – June-July 2005

Published monthly by

Puget Sound Theatre Organ Society

6521 N.E. 191st St.

Kenmore, WA 98028-3453

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

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#### Listing of non-PSTOS events in the Pipeline

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

#### Advertising in the Pipeline

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

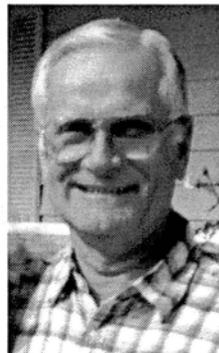
#### Joining Puget Sound Theatre Organ Society is quick and easy!

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

We get lots of requests for bus transportation to our events. Your Program Committee has arranged for luxury buses for the August event in Bellingham. They have even arranged convenient parking in Tacoma and North Seattle.



Make your reservations early because this is sure to be a sellout event!

If you weren't at the Evans home last month you missed hearing a rare sound. Russ has installed a Saxophone rank in the organ. This is not your typical Wurlitzer brass saxophone and it doesn't look like any other sax rank any of us have seen. Ron Hemmi identified it as a very rare Kilgen rank. It is a really beautiful sound and fits the Evans' instrument quite well. There are many good reasons to be at our informal home gatherings—new sounds, old and new friends, good music, food.

Very few of us have heard any of the wonderful sounds emanating from Merlyn Johnson's Robert Morton theatre organ. So be there when Don Wallin shows off this, his latest installation. All reports are that it is a "must see and hear."

Some of our PSTOS members get involved with (gasp!) classical organs, believe it or not. Barbara Graham, Bill Iverson, Carl Dodrill, Halie Dodrill, Russ Evans, Loretta Moore, Dan Warner and Clint Meadway were recently recognized for their contributions of time and money to the installation of a pipe organ at Mercer Island Presbyterian Church. You are invited to stop in and hear it any Sunday morning.

Your Scholarship Committee voted to grant \$500 scholarships to two young men to attend the CSU Theatre Organ Workshop in Ft. Collins CO this summer. The instructor is Jonas Nordwall. Do something special for yourself—if you can't make the ATOS 50th Anniversary Celebration in Los Angeles, this outstanding Colorado workshop August 7-11 would make a fine alternate.

## PSTOS Coming Events

### Home Party at Merlyn Johnson's home in Tacoma

Don Wallin has recently completed a superb theatre pipe organ installation in this lovely Tacoma home. He will be the featured artist in this inaugural showing to PSTOS members. This will be a very enjoyable event!

**Saturday, July 16**

### Ken Double in concert for PSTOS, CROC & MBTOS!

Bellingham's Mt. Baker Theatre boasts one of only four remaining original theatre pipe organs in the entire state, and it's a beauty! An original Wurlitzer, lovingly maintained all these years and in pristine condition. This will be a big event! The time to reserve is NOW.

**Sunday, August 28th**

### Daniel Goltz (our scholarship recipient) in concert at Seattle's St. Mark's Cathedral

What a feather in a young person's cap! This will be a classical concert of the highest quality, and worth your effort to attend. Let's all show our support to Daniel by attending this event!

**Sunday, September 18**

### Annual Holiday Celebration

Haller Lake Community Club

Sunday, December 4

Help! If you're stopping your mail for a vacation, please notify us. When your Pipeline is returned marked "Temporarily away," we must pay 37¢ return postage. A quick call to 425-485-5465, or email to joann@pstos.org is all it takes, and we'll hold your Pipelines until you return. Many many thanks!

## FOR SALE Organ Stuff

SACRIFICE—Conn 650 Theatre Organ, excellent condition with two additional factory external speakers. For information phone Tom Endresen at 760-328-6160.

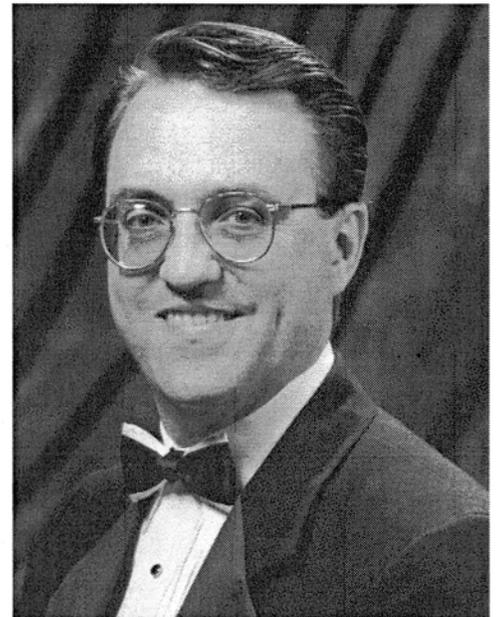
PSTOS, MT. BAKER THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY and COLUMBIA RIVER ORGAN CLUB have joined together to organize this outstanding event! Don't miss it!

**Sign up NOW for this luxury "bus cruise" to MT. VERNON and BELLINGHAM to enjoy the highly entertaining**

# **KEN DOUBLE** and a musical afternoon of **WURLITZER ORGAN POPS**

**Ken is known internationally for his rhythmic toe-tapping music and entertaining rapport with his audience!**

With the exclamation "I get paid to have fun in TWO different professions," organist and sportscaster Ken Double has spent more than 25 years on radio and television, and at the console of the great theatre pipe organs, providing entertainment for his audience. During his concert career, he has performed all over the U.S., at the famous Casa Loma in Toronto, and two six-week tours throughout Australia. He will make his third trip "down under" in July of this year. In addition to his hundreds of concerts, he has recorded six CDs. Ken has been the Master of Ceremonies of choice for no fewer than 14 American Theatre Organ Society annual and regional conventions. Don't miss this exciting performer!



**Board the bus early Sunday, August 28**

**Destination: Bellingham's MT. BAKER THEATRE to enjoy KEN DOUBLE at the fabulous**

**Mt. Baker WURLITZER—an original 1927 installation**

**With intermediate stops at**

**Mt. Vernon's LINCOLN THEATRE for Open Console, and the Royal Fork Buffet Restaurant for lunch**

**A special full-day event, all for just \$45!**

**Includes round trip luxury coach transportation, a visit to Mt. Vernon's Lincoln Theatre, all-you-can-eat buffet lunch, and KEN DOUBLE concert. A real entertainment bargain!**

### **SCHEDULE:**

7:00 AM Bus departs Park & Ride at I-5 and Hwy 512 in Tacoma for North Seattle.

8:30 AM Bus departs Prosser's 185th & Aurora store for Mt. Vernon.

10:00 Arrive Mt. Vernon and the historic LINCOLN THEATRE. Open console on the 2/7 Wurlitzer.

11:15 Board bus for Royal Fork Buffet Restaurant in Mt. Vernon for lunch, included in "cruise" package.

12:15 Board bus for Bellingham

1:15 Arrive Bellingham's MT. BAKER THEATRE in time to stretch a bit, relax, and inspect this beautifully restored facility.

2:00 KEN DOUBLE CONCERT

4:30— Board bus for return to Seattle.

6:30 Arrive N. Seattle

8:00— Arrive Tacoma Park & Ride

Your PSTOS Program Committee has been working long and hard to organize this very special summer event at which you will see and hear two of only five theatre organs still in their original theatres in all of Washington State! (The other three are in Seattle's Paramount Theatre, Tacoma's Temple Theatre, and the Raymond Theatre in Raymond.)

Many have asked for bus transportation to events. This has been arranged, with two locations at which you may park your car and board the bus, one in Tacoma, the other in North Seattle. Many thanks to Prosser's, and to member Ray Harris in particular, for making it possible to park at their N. Seattle store location at 185th & Aurora Ave.

Advance reservations and payment are necessary to enable bus arrangements to be finalized.

**Questions— 425-485-5465, russ@pstos.org**

# Pages From The Past..

**A bit of history of the theatres you'll visit on the Luxury "Bus Cruise"**

## **Bellingham's Mt. Baker Theatre has colorful history**

The Mt. Baker Theatre opened on April 29, 1927 following a 14-month construction project. The massive celebration was estimated at 5,000 people, and equaled in emotion and ebullience in Bellingham history only to the parties that marked the end of World Wars I and II.

More than a dozen contractors and 80 craftsmen skilled in stone masonry, plasterwork and carpentry joined forces to create a 130-by-250-foot, \$425,000 state-of-the-art palace designed in a Moorish-Spanish theme. The creation was worthy of Hollywood's finest in an



Mt. Baker Theatre grand opening April 29th, 1927.

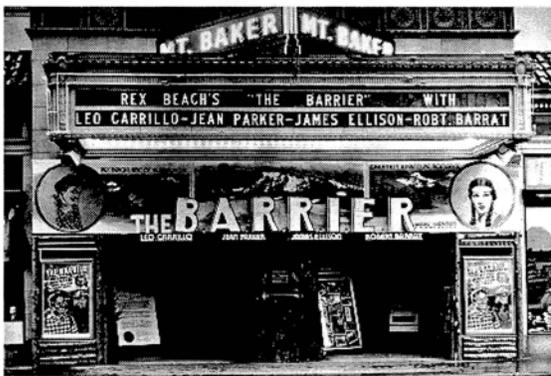
beyond, from Blaine and Lynden to Anacortes and Burlington. The 15,000-watt spotlight shone from the 110-foot octagonal Moorish tower, made of steel and stucco.

Once in the theatre, the audience luxuriated in 2,000 seats of Spanish leather and mahogany in both the balcony and main floor. People looked up in awe at the 80-foot concrete dome, centered with a 600-pound antique bronze and glass chandelier, replete with stained glass, golden chains and golden sunbursts.

The theatre's designer, Robert C. Reamer, was also famed for designing Seattle's classic Chinese-style Fifth Avenue Theatre, which opened shortly before the Mt. Baker.

The Mt. Baker Wurlitzer is an original Style 215 two-manual Wurlitzer, opus 1558. This two-chamber Wurlitzer was the only one of the West Coast Theatre chain not to go to a California location.

The console is raised to stage level by means of a hydraulic lift installed by



Theatre entrance circa 1937, courtesy of Jeff Fox

era when Hollywood itself was in its infancy. In today's dollars, the Mount Baker cost more than \$6 million!

Up front, the 42-foot proscenium arch, with a battery of twenty-four 1,000-watt spotlights, curved over an 80-by-30-foot stage, still the largest in northwest Washington, and highlighted a Wurlitzer style 215 pipe organ built by the Rudolph Wurlitzer Co.

The organ, maintained for many years by the Mount Baker Theatre Organ Society, is in pristine condition, with a sound thrilling to everyone, players and listeners alike. The cost in 1927 was \$25,000.

The opening-night throng was attracted by a spotlight from a Spanish-American war battleship, the U.S.S. Oregon, that reportedly could be seen all over western Whatcom County and



Mt. Baker Theatre as it appeared circa 1950.

# Pages From The Past... continued

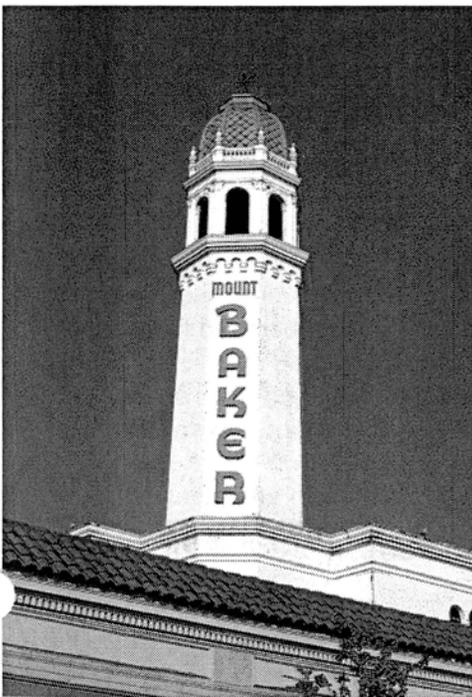
Otis Elevator. When originally installed in 1927, the lift had limited travel due to a solid mass of rock under that portion of the building.

This elevator is still in use today. The extended stage apron can be opened to allow the console to rise to stage level.

This instrument is maintained by the Mount Baker Theatre Organ Society, with approximately one hundred members in Northwest Washington and British Columbia. The group presents an organ concert each month.



Famous theatre organist Jesse Crawford played the organ many years ago. More recently, Walter Strony has been a concert artist. He commented that it was one of the finest two-manual Wurlitzers he has played.



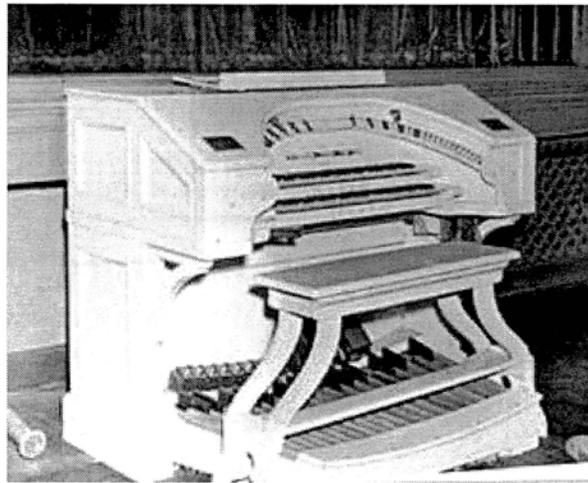
The Mt. Baker tower.

## Mt. Vernon's historic Lincoln Theatre still serves the community

The Lincoln Theatre is still a 1926 movie theatre, during a time when most such old theatres are being remodeled into six-plex movie houses, or torn down.

Designed by noted architect William Aitken with a Spanish flavor, the facade features checkerboard sandstone designs, Moorish arched windows, cobblestone entryway and a marquee that uses hand-cut masonite letters painted mahogany.

Inside, the walls are hand-stenciled in bright-colored lattice-work designs. The original artwork was preserved by black draperies that covered them up for years. The original main curtain of rich orange velvet remains intact



although a bit grimy from many years of dust.

In front of the stage is the centerpiece of the theatre, the mighty Wurlitzer organ, which is one of just a few left in the country still intact in their original theatres. An advertisement from 1926 boasted that the Wurlitzer "all but talks," imitating sounds such as fire sirens, sleigh bells, rain and wind, Spanish castanets and car horns, with drums, bells, xylophone, marimba and chimes. The theatre paid \$22,500 for the organ, not



including weeks of installation, and the building cost about \$100,000.

The theatre was closed to the public and to movie screenings in 1984. The Pickett family bought the building in 1985, but its future was unclear until a number of people interested in the preservation and restoration of the theatre met in October 1986.

The Lincoln Theatre Center Foundation was formed with its mission to preserve, improve, maintain and develop the theatre as a center for the

performing arts. A seven-member board and a crew of professional advisors, who donate their legal and accounting services, operate the foundation, a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization.

A core of dedicated volunteers usher, vacuum, clean and even sell popcorn at public events.

The Wurlitzer, although not up to concert standards, is playable, and will be available for Open Console for the

special August 28th event.



The Lincoln Theatre today.

**Drive directions  
to the Johnson home for  
July 16th HOME PARTY**

**FROM I-5**—Take Exit 132 to Hwy 16 West. Continue on Hwy 16 and take the Jackson Av. Exit. Turn left onto Jackson Av. and drive to the third signal (So. 12th). Turn right on So. 12th St. and continue down the hill for six blocks to Mountain View Av. Turn left on Mountain View. Merlyn's house is the 9th on the right, 1314. There is a tall tree in front of the RV garage.

**From Gig Harbor**—Cross the Narrows Bridge and take the first exit to Jackson Ave. Turn right on Jackson Av. and continue as above where underlined.

**PUGET SOUND THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY**

Russ & Jo Ann Evans, Newsletter Editors  
6521 N.E. 191st  
Kenmore, WA 98028-3453



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**AMICA invites you to a  
BAND ORGAN RALLY in  
Leavenworth Aug. 20-21**



Many PSTOS members are also avid supporters of AMICA—*Automatic Musical Instrument Collectors Association*. Coming in August is an exciting event to

which you are invited, a Band Organ Rally in the quaint little town of Leavenworth.

There will also be a Wine Tasting Festival happening on the same weekend, sponsored by the Cascade Foothills Farmland Association, with art booths and live music. The band organs will be spread around town, making it easy to entertain many folks at the same time.

This will be an opportunity to see and hear a lot of wonderfully restored automatic musical instruments of all types and sizes, and taste a little wine while you're there!

For more information contact Rob Wilson at 206-282-5248, or by email at [robjoan@comcast.net](mailto:robjoan@comcast.net). For housing information check this website: [www.leavenworth.org](http://www.leavenworth.org)

PSTOS members Carl and Halie Dodrill will be happy to tell you more about it, as well. Contact them by email at [carl@dodrill.net](mailto:carl@dodrill.net)

***Other Northwest Theatre Organ Events***

Washington Center for the Performing Arts in Olympia has announced a silent movie series with Dennis James at the Wurlitzer. **FALL SERIES:**

**Oct. 31, Phantom of the Opera (1925)** with Lon Chaney, Mary Philbin

**Nov. 7, The Cat and the Canary (1927)** with Laura LaPlante, Creighton Hale

**Nov. 14, The Bells (1926)**, with Lionel Barrymore, Boris Karloff

**Hear the Wurlitzer at West Seattle's Kenyon Hall (formerly Hokum Hall) every week.** For program information and reservations phone (206) 937-3613. On the web at [www.kenyonhall.org](http://www.kenyonhall.org)

**Over fifty PSTOSers and friends braved unpredictable weather to attend a get-together at the Evans home**

PSTOS is very fortunate indeed to have a number of fine organists and other musicians among the membership, many of whom so willingly share their talents for the pleasure of us all.

This was certainly in evidence at the get-together at the Evans home on May 21st. Clyde Hunnicutt, Tom Roughton, Maury Lawson, Don Moore, Halie Dodrill, Canada's Dorothy Watson, Don Wallin, Ron Hemmi and Jo Ann Evans all shared their talents with the approximately fifty members and friends in attendance. Don Moore and Halie, both excellent pianists, added a bit of variety. Don and Jo Ann played piano & organ duets, all pop tunes from the '30s and '40s. Doris Cooley, who just celebrated her 94th birthday (good for you, Doris!) finished off the day with several of her favorite numbers.

Many thanks to all who so willingly provided so much great music.

**A warm PSTOS welcome to these new members...**

Terry Hochmuth • Fort Lauderdale, FL

Erik Helgeson • Seattle

Bob Hinson • Portland

Jonas & Nancy Nordwall • Portland