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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. 7 July 2006

A Chapter of American Theatre Organ Society

Coming Saturday, August 19, first ever for PSTOS…

Walking Tour of Historic Downtown Theatres

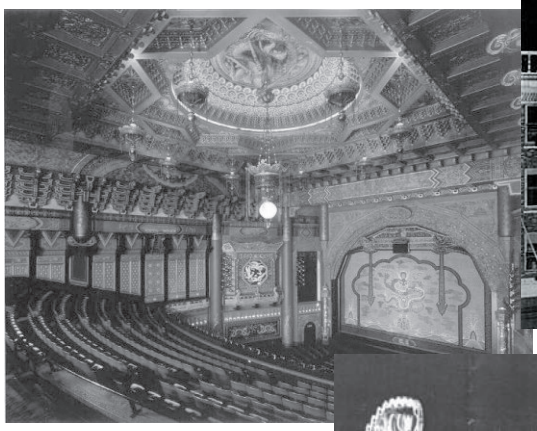
We'll be led by an expert guide from the Seattle Architecture Foundation on a private two-hour walking tour of historic downtown theatres. This tour, arranged specially for PSTOS members, will feature a "behind the scenes" view and wealth of information about Seattle's rich theatre scene in the 1920s including interior stops at the 5th Avenue Theatre, the former Embassy Theatre (now the Triple Door night club) and the impressive Eagles Auditorium (now the ACT theatre). We will also see the ornate terra cotta facade of the Coliseum Theatre (now a Banana Republic store).

But that's not all! Following the tour, we'll head to the Westlake Mall food court with over 15 restaurants for a quick no-host lunch, followed by a short walk to the Paramount Theatre. We'll tour the beautifully restored Louis XVI interior and see and hear the original Knabe Ampico reproducing piano on the mezzanine level. If the Paramount stage crew is not working that day, we will also be able to tour the backstage areas and see, hear and play the 4/20 Mighty Wurlitzer!

The total walking distance is less then one mile and the course is mostly flat. Reserve early. The price is $12 with all proceeds benefiting the Seattle Architecture Foundation. Rain or shine.

The tour will begin at the Seattle Architecture Foundation, 1333 5th Avenue, Suite 300 in the Rainier Square Atrium, 3rd Floor. The Atrium is located between Union and University, 4th and 5th Avenues. You may enter the Atrium from either 4th or 5th and take the stairs or elevator to the Foundation.

BELOW: Interior of the beautiful 5th Avenue Theatre.
TOP RIGHT: Throngs mob the 5th on opening night.
BELOW: Embassy Theatre during its heyday.



A rare opportunity to learn more about these historic theatres and enjoy a look behind the scenes.
Saturday, August 19, Check-in begins at 10:15 a.m.
LIMITED TO 40 MAXIMUM.
Pre-payment of $12 per person required.
All proceeds benefit the Seattle Architecture Foundation
This event will sell out quickly, RESERVE NOW
by phoning Tom Blackwell at 206-784-9203
or email him at *tom@pstos.org*

Then mail check for $12 per person payable to PSTOS to
Reservations c/o Tom Blackwell
9717 Dayton Ave. No.
Seattle WA 98103-3127

Drive directions and parking information as well as bus routes and times will be detailed in the August Pipeline.

LEFT: Eagle's Auditorium as it appeared in 1925. Today it houses the ACT Theatre.

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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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Nat'l Magazine Reporter–Jo Ann Evans

LIAISONS

AMICA & POF–Carl Dodrill • **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 $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.

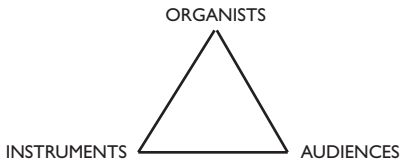
PRESIDENT'S *Message*

Your PSTOS Events & Program Committee is in the process of reorganizing to better serve the membership. The committee recently met to discuss possible event ideas for 2007. This is the perfect time to let us know the type of events you'd like to have and how frequently we should have them.

Considering most PSTOS member households consist of more than one person, our membership roster of about 250 households reaches approximately 400 people. But only 15-20% of those attend most events! We realize there are many choices of things to do on any given day, but we'd like to believe we're offering special events that our members will really enjoy. If we're missing the boat, we want to hear from you.

We're definitely a theatre organ group and there's no doubt our mission is to further the appreciation of this grand old instrument. However, many other organ groups have found their members enjoy programs that combine the organ with other musical or entertainment acts. Do you agree? Perhaps a barbershop singing group? Some jazz instrumental players in addition to the organ? Would you like to see unique vaudeville acts? How about another organ-and-big band event?

In the past we've had a chili feed, white elephant sale, Oktoberfest, Valentine's party, St. Patrick's Day party and Halloween party. We've had home parties, a youth concert, events at which several members played short mini-concerts. We've had organ crawls, several bus trips. And of course we've had the wonderful events at Gig Harbor's Wurlitzer Manor. Of particular note is our first-ever Downtown Seattle Walking Tour of Historic Theatres coming up on August 19th.



Remember it takes three things for a successful organ event—

1) AN ORGANIST,
2) A GOOD INSTRUMENT, and
3) AN AUDIENCE!

The organist must work hard to prepare a program for you. Our organ maintenance teams must put in many hours to be sure the organ will perform flawlessly. And YOU, the audience, must be there to complete the triangle. Not to mention all the planners, kitchen helpers, food preparers, and setup crew. There's SO much that goes on before the doors even open.

Barbara Graham is Chair of the Events & Programs Committee. She'd like to receive an e-mail, phone call or post card, listing your top three program ideas. You may email her at barbara@pstos.org, phone her at 206-525-7859 or contact her by mail at 2823 NE 105th St., Seattle WA 98125-7722.

... Tom Blackwell, President

PSTOS *Coming Events*

◆ Walking Tour of Downtown Seattle Historic Theatres

A private two-hour walking tour of historic downtown theatres led by an expert guide from the Seattle Architecture Foundation. This tour has been arranged specially for PSTOS members. See details on front page.

Saturday, August 19, 11AM sharp

The PSTOS Program Committee has an interesting and fun-filled lineup of programs in the works for the balance of 2006 and into 2007. The details are being finalized now and you'll soon see a great list of upcoming events in this column.

WATCH FOR IT!

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 7PM & Fri/Sun at 5PM.

◆ **Columbia River Organ Club**

KEN DOUBLE to perform at Salem's Elsinore Theatre

Ken is back to entertain his Pacific NW aficionados. He was a big hit last year in Bellingham. You'll love hearing him again!

Sunday afternoon, Sept. 24th

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

◆ **Paramount Silent Movie Monday Summer Series**

—August 7

Don Juan, starring John Barrymore, 1926

—August 14

Prisoner of Zenda, starring Ramon Navarro, 1922

—August 21

Sparrows, starring Mary Pickford, 1926

—August 28

The Iron Mask, starring Douglas Fairbanks Sr., 1929

Accompanied on the Wurlitzer by Dennis James.

All begin at 7:00 pm.

www.theparamount.com

Closing Chord

Jean Caddey

We are saddened to learn Jean Caddey passed away on June 3rd. An enthusiastic member of PSTOS for many years, Jean lived in the Tacoma area.

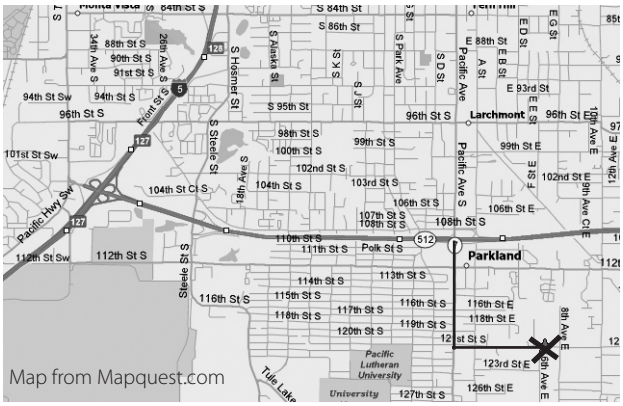
Sincere PSTOS sympathy is extended to Jean's family and friends.

Local pipe organ company, Paul Fritts Pipe Organs, invites PSTOS members to celebrate completion of major new organ

Dear Friends,

I am glad to announce a long awaited open house featuring our sixty-six stop organ for St. Joseph Cathedral, Columbus, Ohio, on Sunday, July 23 beginning at 2pm. We look forward to seeing you all!

Paul Fritts Organ Workshop:
630 - 121st Street East
Tacoma, Washington
253-535-3374



DRIVE DIRECTIONS:

From I-5 in Tacoma take Exit 127 eastbound onto Hwy 512. Drive east to Pacific Ave. S. Turn right and drive south to 121st St. E. Turn left onto 121st St. E, drive a few blocks to the Fritts workshop located on the right. There is very little signage but look for the natural wood buildings.

Your PSTOS Board of Directors works hard for you

FROM LEFT: Mark Baratta, Board member; Norman Miller, Treasurer; Carl Dodrill, Scholarship Committee; Barbara Graham, Programs and Grant Writing; Tom Blackwell, President; Clint Meadway, Past President and Publicity; Bob Zat, Board member, History & Archives; Russ Evans, Vice President. BELOW: Joani Roughton, Secretary; Tom Roughton and Mark Baratta, Board members. Missing: Cynthia McFalls, Board member.

Your PSTOS Board of Directors gathers monthly for an often-lively meeting. President Tom Blackwell has instituted an expanded committee structure to facilitate a smooth operation. His goal is to get much of the business formerly handled at Board meetings moved to the committee level for discussion and planning. The Chair will then bring to the Board a final report/recommendation for approval. The Committee heads are charged with the task of writing a 'charter' detailing the Committee's mission, responsibilities, and goals. To date, several are complete, with the Committees beginning to function well under the new setup.

Some longtime members find it challenging to move into the new system, but as it is instituted, the benefits will begin to be evident.

At the June meeting, the Board voted to switch from an all-manual accounting method to a computerized system. Clint Meadway, an accountant, and Treasurer Norman Miller, will work together to get the system in place and running.

A method of storage and organization of our archives, consisting of both legal records and memorabilia, is the responsibility of the History & Archives Committee headed by Bob Zat. This is a major undertaking. If any members have experience in this field, Bob would like to hear from you, bob@pstos.org

Board meetings are open for any member to attend. If you'd like to attend a Board meeting, or have a topic you'd like to bring up, contact President Tom Blackwell at tom@pstos.org

The Short Subject - Forgotten Voice of the Talkies

It's hard to remember the way it was, but in the 1920s America was having a love affair with movies. To prove their ardor and constancy 40 to 80 million people flocked to movie theaters every week. The legitimate theater flourished too. The Great White Way was brilliant with names like Cohan, O'Neill, Ziegfeld. And there was vaudeville. Live acts – comedy teams, sopranos, Olga and her Birds, acrobats, the Dancing Cansinos (who would bring us Rita Hayworth), Roy Smeck (banjo and ukelele virtuoso extraordinaire) – toured big towns and tank towns, playing the Place on Broadway and the Brook in Bound Brook, New Jersey.

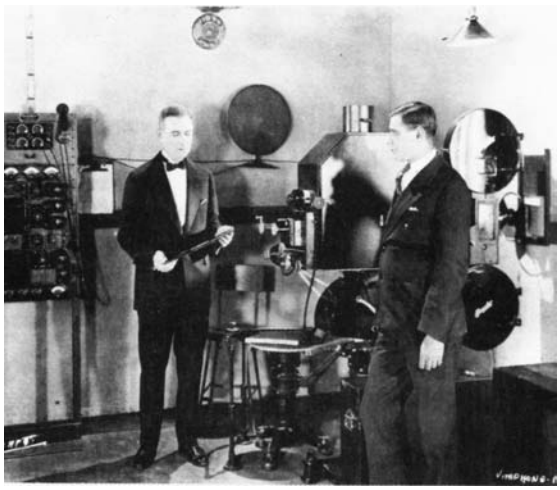
Every town, every whistle stop, had its movie theater. The bigger ones boasted a pit band, mighty Wurlitzer, weekly change of vaudeville acts and, yes, a silent movie.

Young men affected the Latin look: Lucky Tiger, hair slicked back and voila – Valentino! The girls vamped ala Vilma Banky or shortened their already short skirts to become – Clara Bow! The really daring ones even rouged their knees. And a thousand pulpits cried out: "What next!"

What next, indeed. The talkies, that's what. Boon, bane, boom. The talkies were all of these. No event before or since has had quite so cataclysmic an effect on entertainment. Even television. Five little words – "You ain't heard nothin' yet" – and a few ad-libbed sentences from a phonograph record changed movie-going – and communications – forever.

In 1927 – when the movies learned to talk – nobody, even the Warner Brothers, anticipated what might happen. At most, they predicted it would be possible for the "smallest theater" to bring its patrons the "greatest orchestras" through the miracle of Vitaphone. In other words they would shoot the piano player. Perhaps Edison had the key to it all when, fifty years earlier, he had spoken these words onto a wax cylinder: "Mary had a little lamb, its fleece was white as snow…"

On the night of October 6, 1927 "The Jazz Singer" premiered at the Warner Theater on Broadway. And Al Jolson proved what Edison, Dr. Lee DeForest and a cast of thousands had labored over: the people wanted movies that not only moved but talked.



E. B. Craft, left, making a sound picture for demonstration at the Vitaphone Studios in the Manhattan Opera House in 1926. He exhibited the first electricity recorded sound picture in 1922.

Silence was golden, but talkies were where the green was. Overnight America went wild for talkies. Weekly attendance in 1930 skyrocketed to 110 million, even as bread lines lengthened. Except for "Amos 'n' Andy" on radio, the talkies were the people's entertainment.

This is the Golden Anniversary of when it all happened. [October 1977] We recall "The Jazz Singer" and the first outdoor talkie, "In Old Arizona" (with Warner Baxter as the Cisco Kid), and "The Broadway Melody," the first all-talking all-singing, all-dancing musical. But we've forgotten the role short subjects played in giving movies their voice. Feature films took time. Shorts, on the other hand, were quick and easy to produce. So Hollywood went to Broadway where stage and vaudeville talent was in abundance.

Theaters that wired for sound could bring their patrons a silent feature and a sound short subject program that might include Bernard Shaw "granting" an interview to the "Movietone," Fred Allen doing a witty monologue, Kate Smith singing "When the Moon Comes Over the Mountain," and such young comics as Jack Benny, Joe E. Brown and Bert Lahr doing their vaudeville turns.

From 1926 through 1931 Warners produced more than 1000 Vitaphone short subjects. Even the full-length musical features were little more than collections of vaudeville and variety acts. Warner's "The Show of Shows" (1929), a Vitaphone extravaganza, offered audiences a sound-on-disc smorgasbord that included John Barrymore doing a few lines from "Richard III," Beatrice Lillie, Ted Lewis ("Is Everybody Happy") and "enough more for 20 average pictures," so the ads proclaimed. Incidentally, Vitaphone not only had its audio effect, but according to Warner it "eclipses the sun in splendor."

MGM's "Hollywood Revue of 1929" had Jack Benny and Conrad Nagel as co-masters of ceremonies talking directly to movie audiences in front of a stage curtain. As the curtain parted, we might see John

Pages From The Past...continued

Gilbert and Norma Shearer doing a slangy version of "Romeo and Juliet," Marie

Dressler, Bessie Love and Polly Moran singing "Marie, Bessie and Polly," the inevitable Ukelele Ike, Joan Crawford singing and somewhat uncertainly dancing, and Laurel and Hardy, Buster Keaton and many other stars from the MGM galaxy. It was truly a Metro-Goldwyn-Melange.

Paramount's "Paramount on Parade" was a house ad for upcoming pictures and such promising newcomers as Mitzi Green, Gary Cooper, Fay Wray and Richard Arlen.

Mitzi, one of the most talented moppets to ever grace the talking screen, imitated Maurice Chevalier singing wiz a French accent, upstaging Maurice who had to be content imitating himself. William Powell played a suave Philo Vance-type and Ruth Chatterton stepped out of character to play a broken-hearted woman of the night. Photoplay magazine accurately summed up "Paramount on Parade" as glorified vaudeville.

Universal offered theaters a weekly sound-on-disc newsreel featuring its "Talking Reporter," non-other than radio's Graham McNamee, who years later became straight-man announcer to the Texaco "Fire Chief," Ed Wynn.

It is generally agreed that "Fox Movietone News" was pre-eminent among newsreels. It had the largest world-wide crew of any, at one time employing more than 1,000 staff and freelance cameramen. And it had Lowell Thomas, who brought dignity and authority to the newsreel. He was the voice of Movietone for many years, and only last year [1976] did his final CBS Radio newscast.

The one-time *New York Times* film critic Mordaunt Hall wrote in one of his reviews: "Al Jolson is seen, and of course, heard, in three songs… This Vitaphone assuredly destroys the old silent tradition of the screen." Was he reviewing "The Jazz Singer?" Not at all. The *Times* critic was describing a short subject that opened on October 8, 1926, exactly one year before "The Jazz Singer" made history.

So, on the 50th anniversary of the talkies, let's remember the part shorts played in giving movies their voice, and the exhibitors who wired for sound-on-film, sound-on-disc or both. Their faith in the future – and their show business instincts – helped pioneer a new medium of communication: the talking motion picture.

MAMMY!

A GREAT, big, fervent moment in the Drama is transferred to the screen. Here you behold Al Jolson, piteously imploring the world in general to take him back down South to Georgia, Alabama or Virginny to the sunny cotton fields, the little old cabin or Mammy's knees. This moment is the climax of "The Jazz Singer," his first movie vehicle.

Part of the crowd at the opening of "Don Juan" at Warner's Theatre in New York City, August 6, 1926.

MARK ANDERSEN played a great program of favorites at Becvar's "Wurlitzer Home Party"

Nearly 70 folks took advantage of the beautiful weather and the promise of good music and fun to attend the "Wurlitzer Home Party" at the Kent home of Jack & Mary Lou Becvar. They weren't disappointed! Mark's playing, adopting styles and arrangements of both George Wright and Jesse Crawford, was most enjoyable. The organ sounded great, the ambience was unbeatable, and the outdoor picnic topped the day off well with plenty of opportunity to catch up with friends.

The Becvar home is such an interesting place to visit. Another of Jack's hobbies is collecting clocks. And a trip to the lower level suggests he also collects electronic organs!

Many thanks, Jack and Mary Lou, for hosting such an enjoyable event!

PUGET SOUND THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY
Russ & Jo Ann Evans, Newsletter Editors
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RIGHT, clockwise from left: Phil Hargiss, Lee Isaacson, Walt & Bessie Cook, Mike Wallace, and host Jack Becvar.

ABOVE: Mark Andersen at the console. RIGHT: Marv Remillard, Marilyn Schrum, Rosemary & Bill Newell and Roger McNair enjoy the sun. BELOW: Don & Lorrie Shields, Rayetta Starkey. BELOW RIGHT: Folks enjoyed the picnic and beautiful weather.