PUGET SOUND PIPELINE

PUGET SOUND THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY

Volume 36, Nos. 7-8 July-August 2025 www.pstos.org

Puget Sound Theatre Organ Society presents

Pops on Pipes

Theatre Organ at its Best with

Richard Hills

in concert

Saturday, July 19, 2025, 2 p.m.

Calvary Christian Assembly, Seattle

Richard Hills is one of the premier theatre organists is in the world! This is a must-see-&-hear concert for all!!

Richard Hills is widely acknowledged as one of the very few musicians to have bridged and mastered the divide between the classical and theatre organ worlds. His classical studies were at Rochester Cathedral, Exeter College Oxford, Portsmouth Cathedral, & Westminster Abbey in England, his home country. In the U.S., he was named "Organist of the Year" by ATOS in 2010. He has appeared many times on international TV and radio programs and made numerous recordings. He is a fellow at the Royal College of Organists and a strong supporter of the UK's Cinema Organ Society as well as a favorite of ATOS. He now pursues a freelance career as well as serving as organist at St. Mary's, Bourne Street, London. He also maintains a practical interest in organ building. **If you only make it to one concert this year, make it this one!**

Tickets $20 at pstos.org or cash at the door - 16 & under free with adult - Free parking

Driving directions to Calvary Christian Assembly, 6801 Roosevelt Way NE

Southbound I-5
Take exit 171 toward NE 71st/NE 65th St. Merge onto 6th Ave. NE
Take a slight left at NE 71st St. Continue onto NE 70th St.
Turn right at Roosevelt Way NE. Destination will be in the right.

Northbound I-5
Take exit 171 for WA-522/Lake City Way toward Bothell
Take a slight right at NE 73rd St.
Take the 1st right onto Roosevelt Way NE
Destination will be on the right.

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Puget Sound Theatre Organ Society is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization furthering the appreciation, restoration, and use of the historic Theatre Pipe Organs of the 1920s through education.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

PSTOS is sailing along as ever. We recently had a superb concert with Donnie Rankin (see write-up in this issue), and on July 19 we'll have another for sure with Richard Hills, visiting from the UK on his way to the ATOS convention in Milwaukee. I'll be attending, and I hope to see many of you there!

The Nominations Committee is now identifying potential candidates to serve in 2026, including President, Secretary, and Program Team Chair, as well as positions on the Board, and other volunteers. Here's a summary of the tasks:

President –
☐ Prepare Board meeting agendas, chair meetings
☐ Write President's Message for Pipeline
☐ Handle miscellaneous requests received from members & others

Secretary –
☐ Attend Board meetings, prepare and distribute minutes

Program Team Chair –
☐ Prepare team meeting agendas, chair meetings, send minutes
☐ Work with team members to accomplish these Program Team tasks:
○ Contact potential concert artists, negotiate dates, fees, report to team, etc.
○ Coordinate with venues on event scheduling, practice times, etc.
○ Do event promotion (flyers, eblasts, calendars, ticket vendors, retirement homes)
○ Coordinate reciprocal promotion with other venues and organizations
○ Prepare & send info to update PSTOS website for upcoming events
○ Coordinate with AGO on ticket table at concerts
○ Track organ prep for upcoming events
○ Organize event setup, refreshments, cleanup, etc.

Other tasks –
☐ Write event reviews for Pipeline
☐ Proofread and distribute Pipeline
☐ Update member, complimentary, event-news distribution lists as needed
☐ Help with lobby setup/ cleanup & promo cards at Paramount silent movies

This is all fun and worthwhile volunteer work, and we're definitely in need of "new blood," so if you're willing and able to help out, please let us know.

Happy summer!
Jamie Snell, President
jamie@pstos.org

PSTOS Summer Social

At the home of Russ & Jo Ann Evans
August 3rd, 2025
2:00 p.m.
6521 NE 191st Street, Kenmore, 98028

One of our favorite informal gatherings of the year is our **Summer Social** which is always entertaining and friendly. It's our best opportunity to chat with fellow PSTOS members and get to know each other better as well as to share some yummy treats!

Sawyer Best & Murl Allen Sanders will be the featured entertainers. Jo Ann & Russ are gracious hosts who make everyone feel relaxed and welcome in their home and on their deck. Suggested donation: $10 or pay-what-you-can to cover costs of program and refreshments. Thank you!

Be sure to join us on August 3!!! See you there!

Final 2025 Concert

Saturday, September 27
Calvary Christian Assembly, Seattle

Nick Renkosik

In addition to playing theatre organs, Nick is an organ restoration technician, so he can work on them too!! You're sure to enjoy his concert.

An Exceptional Afternoon with Donnie Rankin

by Jamie Snell

It was a gorgeous sunny afternoon on July 7, as theatre organ fans gathered at Calvary Christian Assembly to hear Donnie Rankin at the mighty 3/25 Kimball-Wurlitzer, his first-ever PSTOS concert. Though some in the audience might not have been familiar with his playing, many had surely heard him on YouTube, and some in person at ATOS conventions. It's safe to say, this concert lived up to all expectations.

Rankin resides in his birthplace of Ravenna, Ohio, where he has his own piano teaching studio, among other enterprises. He's a staff organist at the Civic Theatre in nearby Akron, and also plays at Cleveland's Playhouse Square. He studied with noted organist Jelani Eddington, and has won several theatre organ awards, including the ATOS Young Theatre Organist Competition in 2007, and ATOS Organist of the Year in 2023. He has performed at several ATOS conventions, and has played concerts across the U.S. and abroad, including Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. He has also presented playing clinics as part of the ATOS Summer Youth Adventure, and at Indiana University Jacobs School of Music.

After an introduction by PSTOS-CCA liaison Jeff Snyder, Rankin opened with "King Kong March," the Max Steiner theme from the same-named 1933 horror film, and then two jazz standards: Jimmy McHugh's "Don't Blame Me" from 1932 show *Clowns in Clover*; and a haunting arrangement of the 1946 Walter Gross tune "Tenderly," recorded by Ella Fitzgerald, Duke Ellington, Oscar Peterson, et al. That was followed by a wide-ranging medley of tunes from the *Star Trek* TV series and movies, with a finale of all the themes interwoven. Next up, Antônio Carlos Jobim's "The Girl from Ipanema" (1962), famously performed by Stan Getz with Astrud Gilberto, and played by Rankin with several layers of percussion he had previously recorded on the organ's Uniflex system. To round out the first half, two older standards: the 1931 Frank Sinatra hit by Einar Aaron Swan, "When Your Lover Has Gone," which Rankin introduced by reciting the sorrowful lyrics of two verses; and Haydn Wood's 1928 tune "I Love to Hear You Singing," as arranged by the legendary organist Jesse Crawford.

A brief intermission followed, featuring sumptuous cookies and coffee, with Rankin in the lobby conversing with attendees. Back at the console, he continued with a rousing rendition of the 1937 Harry Warren classic "All's Fair in Love and War," from the film *Gold Diggers of 1937*; "Louise," made famous by Maurice Chevalier in the 1929 film *Innocents of Paris*, and later recorded by Bing Crosby, Dean Martin, and others; and from the *Star Wars* films scored by John Williams, "Princess Leia's Theme," first heard in *Episode IV: A New Hope* (1977) when the princess is captured by Darth Vader. Returning to vintage standards, Rankin presented a medley of Nat King Cole hits: "Avalon," "L-O-V-E," "Lush Life" (with a nod to "Stardust"), "Walkin' My Baby Back Home," "Nature Boy," "Almost Like Being in Love," and "Unforgettable." Next, an unusual arrangement combining two tunes: Bernard Herrmann's "Scène d'amour" from the 1958 Hitchcock film *Vertigo*; and the beloved Jerome Kern tune "All the Things You Are," from the 1939 musical *Very Warm for May*. And to close the planned program, the theatre organ favorite "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue," from the ballet within the 1936 Rodgers and Hart musical *On Your Toes*.

The thunderous applause having subsided, Rankin returned to encore with "Roller Coaster" (1952) by Lou Busch and Milton Delugg, among the best known theatre organ virtuoso pieces, famously recorded by George Wright. Rankin did it full justice, and the audience expressed its appreciation in kind.

After the concert, one attendee commented "I loved it! Donnie played my kind of music!" Another opined "He played a superb performance, and was delightful in person." Others remarked on his humorous commentary, exceptional arrangements, and imaginative registrations.

Many thanks to Donnie Rankin for a first-rate concert, and to the many CCA and PSTOS volunteers who helped to make it a success!

Silent Movie Mondays at the Paramount Theater

Monday, August 25, 2025
The Freshman (1925)
Tyler Pattison on the organ
Paul Hansen on Foley Sound

Harold Lloyd shines as the loveable underdog Harold Lamb, a naïve and eager freshman who dreams of becoming popular by joining the school's football team. Despite his enthusiasm, Harold becomes the butt of jokes and is unaware that he is the laughingstock of the school. Through his perseverance and genuine nature, Harold finally earns the respect and popularity he sought. A delightful blend of physical comedy and sweet charm.

All shows begin at 7 p.m. $12 general admission / $10 for seniors

Welcome new members!

Greg & Jenny Swanson, Renton, WA

2025 Upcoming Events:

Richard Hills, July 19, 2 pm
Calvary Christian Assembly, Seattle
Summer Social, August 3, 2 pm
Evans Residence, Kenmore
Nick Renkosik, September 27, 2 pm
Calvary Christian Assembly, Seattle
Holiday Party, December 7, 1 pm
Haller Lake Community Club, Seattle

2026 Concert artists:

Ken Double
Ben Forsthoffer
Dave Wickerham

Free to a new home:
Bench from Gulbransen organ & Model 710 Leslie speaker.
Contact Patty Bailey: 206-523-5164 or 206-396-7586.
Email: pbguitar62@gmail.com. Seattle area.

AGO Programs

Classical organ events for your enjoyment
More information at www.agoseattle.com.

Saturday, July 12, 6:00 p.m.
An evening of music for viola, piano and organ at Magnolia Lutheran Church, 2414 31st Ave. W, Seattle, 98199. Suggested donation $15. Reception to follow.

Sunday, July 13, 7 p.m.
Caleb Haskins will play an organ recital at Bethany Covenant Church, 1318 S. 18th St., Mt. Vernon, WA.

Friday, July 18, 12:10 noon
Third Friday concert at Christ Episcopal Church, 310 North K St., Tacoma, WA 98403. Free-will donation at the door.

Sunday, July 20, 10:00 p.m.
Organ by Night, St. Mark's Cathedral, 1245 10th Ave. E, Seattle, 98102. Wyatt Smith at the Flentrop organ after Compline. Free.

Thursday, July 24, 7 p.m.
Kraig Scott play organ concert including composers from the Pacific Northwest, St. James Cathedral, 804 9th Ave., Seattle, 98104. Doors open at 6:30. Suggested donation $12-$20.

Sunday, August 17, 10:00 p.m.
Organ by Night, St. Mark's Cathedral, 1245 10th Ave. E, Seattle, 98102. Mark McDonald at the Flentrop organ after Compline. Free.

Friday, September 26, 7:30 p.m.
Stephen Price play the 3/85 Casavant organ at Lewis & Clark College, 615 S. Palatine Rd. Portland, OR 97219.

Friday, October 17, 7:30 p.m.
Stephen Tharp plays the organ at St. James Cathedral, 804 9th Ave., Seattle, 98104. Suggested donation $12-$20.

Saturday, November 1, 5:30 p.m.
All Souls Requiem Mass, St. James Cathedral, 804 9th Ave., Seattle, 98104.

Saturday, November 22, 8:00 p.m.
Cathdral Cantorei, St. James Cathedral.

Friday, December 19, 7:00 p.m.
Readings & Carols with Youth Music choirs. St. James Cathedral.

Reminder—
It's time to renew your membership for 2025. Renew online or check the website pstos.org. $25 per family

Also consider joining ATOS. $35 for the first year or returning members. *www.atos.org*.

ATOS membership includes the bi-monthly Theatre Organ magazine and other benefits!

This year's **ATOS Convention** will be in Milwaukee, WI. **July 21-27, 2025.** Marvelous concerts & other fun events. Jamie would love to have you join him! Others will also attend.

The Pipeline publishes, at the editor's discretion, one-time free ads submitted by PSTOS members, no larger than 2 column inches, including a brief description of the item, contact info, and optionally an image, but not the price of the item.

Online Opportunities to hear organ concerts—

https://youtu.be/CF5J7Qyn-Ok Zach Frame at Organ Piper Pizza, 45 minutes, some background noise (it's a pizza parlor!)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wZJhICfSWww Wanamaker Organ, 30 minutes

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A8p8xSjMTtw&authuser=0 George Gershwin, Rhapsody in Blue, Lew Williams, Organ Stop Pizza, 10 min.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zeTHsRL2kvU&authuser=0 Reel Stories, Clive Polden, 10 minutes

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=byI6zCPF96I&authuser=0 Secrets of the Mighty Wurlitzer Documentary, 18 minutes

https://hotpipes.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=b5f804889e3b85f8d78cc5f67&id=8f84365e57&e=ea5bce0091 Hot Pipes, one hour

Pages from the Past

World photo/Kathryn Stevens

Above: Brad Miller, organist, fine-tunes the Wurlitzer organ at the Wenatchee Valley Museum & Cultural Center Friday before the Pipes, Camera, Action! movie night with organ accompaniment Saturday. **Below:** Bill Starkey stands among the 754 pipes he has restored.

Wurlitzer is the star of silent movies

◆ Volunteers keep old Liberty Theatre organ alive

By Rachel Schleif
World staff writer

WENATCHEE — After 90 years, Wenatchee's mighty Wurlitzer can still blow your socks off. On Saturday night, as the silent films played on, Brad Miller's hands deftly traveled the two antique keyboards. His feet hopped between the wooden pedals, his eyes glued to the movie screen before an audience of about 100 at the Wenatchee Valley Museum & Cultural Center.

"It's so natural, it's like typing," Miller said before the show. "I don't even have to think about what my hands are doing."

Miller, who taught music at Columbia Elementary School and owned two local music stores before moving to Spokane about 10 years ago, gets a kick out of being one of a few hundred people in the nation who can play theater organ.

"It's such a unique art form because of its connection with

Please see ORGAN, Page A9

From *The Wenatchee World*
November 15, 2010

Pages from the Past

World photo/Kathryn Stevens

Organist Brad Miller, learned to play the organ from his mother. He plays the pipe organ to accompany silent movies at the Wenatchee Valley Museum & Cultural Center.

Organ

From Page A1

the music," he said about silent movies. "I think we've lost that personal connection with the music and the performer. When I'm up here, it's not just about the movie. It's more like a variety show."

The movies were anything but silent. The audience laughed, groaned and talked back to the screen as a matching melody flowed through the Wurlitzer.

At the push of a button, Miller provided sound effects, too: the clip-clop of horse hooves on Buster Keaton's getaway carriage, the sirens of police cars chasing him and a comical slide as Keaton realized he just lit a cigarette with the fuse of a bomb.

The wooden organ itself looked stately and vintage. The audience couldn't see the 754 pipes, drum set, marimba, xylophone and whistles in the room behind the movie screen. Still, the Wenatchee Wurlitzer is relatively small compared to the other 20 known pipe organs in the state that survived the '50s and '60s.

"It's like antique cars. Pipe organs have this small cult following who restore them and enjoy playing them," said Miller, 59, who learned to play organ from his mother, who studied it in college and graduated just as soundtracked movies put theatrical organists out of work. "The people who remember organ music, that generation is dying off," Miller said. "We have to entice a new generation."

Bill Starkey took it all in from his seat in the back rows, listening to the organ he lovingly refers to as "her."

"I was born in Wenatchee and I remember when I was a kid I would sit down in the theater for hours and watch Ken Warner play it," the 84-year-old said.

"I used to love to listen to that thing when I was about seven or eight years old. Little did I know that I'd ever get so close to it as I have been."

Starkey was one of the key players behind the restoration

PLEASE SEE VIDEO at wenatcheeworld.com

of the old Wurlitzer when it was donated to the museum in 1988, moving from the Liberty Theatre.

The theater originally bought the Wurlitzer in 1919 to accompany its silent movies. As soundtracks replaced the silent movies, the old organ faded into disuse.

By the late 1950s, it was rarely played.

Thirty years later, Starkey said he "kept hounding" the owner, Dave Gellatly Sr., about restoring the old theater organ. After six months, he agreed.

"When I first looked at it the keyboards were gone," Starkey said. "It was just a couple of rails and a whole mess of connectors. I said 'Boy, I don't know what I got myself into.' "

Volunteers spent months cleaning the black, sticky residue inside the pipes, left by decades of coal and oil heating. The wiring, then 70 years old, was shot.

"I spent lots of hours in the pipe chamber putting in new contacts and leathering until finally we brought her back to life," Starkey said. He lost part of his thumb sawing a piece of wood for the organ.

Starkey, a retiree from a phone company, called the Puget Sound Theatre Organ Society to guide parts of the project.

Meanwhile, the museum raised $60,000 to contract with Wood N' Things to restore the wood console and a Seattle company for some of the restoration work.

The project took two years to finish.

More than 20 years later, Starkey and his fellow volunteer Herb Sinclair still visit the organ monthly to check the oil levels, the pipes, the wiring, everything. Tuning takes more than an hour, Starkey said.

The two are training Jessie Zylstra, a Wenatchee Valley College student, to do the maintenance work.

"It's just something I enjoy doing," Starkey said. "It's a never-ending task."

Rachel Schleif: 664-7139
schleif@wenatcheeworld.com

Puget Sound
THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY
presents…

POPS on PIPES

Theatre Organ at its best…featuring

RICHARD HILLS

Playing the 3-manual 25-rank Kimball-Wurlitzer

One of Great Britain's most talented theatre organists returns to Seattle to entertain you!

Don't miss it!

Saturday, July19, 2PM

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6801 Roosevelt Way NE, Seattle

ADMISSION – $20 at pstos.org, or cash at the door
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PSTOS.org

FREE PARKING

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