

The Organ Log

LOS ANGELES

THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY

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ROB RICHARDS CONCERT Review by Doug Backman

Review: To Disney With Love- A three-hour artistical triumph for the most ardent lovers of Disney music and the theatre organ.

By Doug Backman

For 20 years, theatre organist Rob Richards has been the House Organist for the El Capitan Theatre on Hollywood Boulevard. During that time, he has played for over 750,000 patrons in the course of 8,000+ pre-show performances. Since Disney owns and operates the theatre, most of the shows presented are new releases of Disney films. This unique relationship provides Richards with much-envied access to the entire Walt Disney music library when planning his extended melodies and improvised arrangements on everything from well-known tunes to some obscure themes only heard through the musak in the parks.

Naturally, these pre-show concerts are limited in a variety of ways. However, on the night of February 4th, the Mighty Wurlitzer was really able to stretch her legs as the solo attraction. In honor of all of the joy and entertainment Richards has brought to hundreds of thousands of patrons over the past decades, Disney invited him to star in his very own concert, on the instrument which he loves the most.

This concert would not be a simple, 90-minute or so run of Dinsey songs, this would be an evening of such passion in the theatre organ world, that I haven't witnessed such an event since Gaylord Carter's last performance at the Paramount on his 90th birthday or Jack Moelmann's Radio City extravaganza in August of 2008. This was a well thought out and meticulously planned expression of musical works that had extreme personal meaning to Richards.

Even the finest soloist sometimes needs the accompaniment of another musician and this concert was no different. Throughout the course of the evening, Richards was joined onstage by singer Bonnie Gordon for numbers such as He's a Tramp and "Baby Mine", and pianist Alex Zsolt for "Part of Your World" and others. The high-point of the concert was Richards extended tribute to the Sherman Brothers, whose most noted contributions include: Mary Poppins, The Jungle Book, Winnie the Pooh, and works used in Disneyland such as "It's a Small World".

As stated before, this was not a just concert for Disney fanatics. There was a nice range of repertoire from theatre organ favorites

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such as “Hooray for Hollywood”, to a no-trems, classical rendition of Handel’s Hallelujah Chorus, and even a MIDI-backed Overture to Lloyd Webber’s Phantom of the Opera.

After the concert, I was unable to ask Richards what he has planned for the next 20 years, but I’m sure it will be made up of many more “magical moments”.

The Los Angeles area is blessed to have such an important Wurlitzer in fine, restored, recital ready shape. I was amazed at the stability of the instrument’s tuning and regulation. A huge amount of recognition is due to Kevin Cartwright for his expert technical knowledge and skills in the continued maintenance of this instrument, which sometimes goes unappreciated since there is no visual indication of any of the thousands of pipes, percussions, traps, and other mechanism hidden behind the walls.



About the reviewer: Doug Backman is a lifetime member of the AGO, originally joining the Boston chapter during middle school and switching to Philadelphia during his freshman year at Drexel University. After receiving both bachelor’s and master’s degrees in communications and marketing, he is currently completing his dissertation for a doctorate in organizational development from Northeastern University. In the past decade of being a part of the Philly chapter, he has been associated with the EM Skinner at Girard College, Wanamaker Grand Court Organ, and music program at St. Charles Borromeo seminary. He is also known for being the live-in personal assistant of the late Philadelphia Orchestra organist Michael Stairs between 2011-2016 and founding member of the Girard College Organ Guild. On September 23, 2018, Doug married his wife Brittany at Church of the Redeemer Bryn Mawr, in a musically lavish service accompanied by over 30 musicians.



FINANCIAL REPORT

From Treasurer Bill Campbell

I want to bring you, the membership, up-to-date on the financial condition of our ATOS Chapter. Here are some facts that I gathered to tell you where we are financially.

Revenue from the 2018 ATOS Convention was \$107,515.22 which is great for us. However, you have to consider the expenses involved in producing the convention which came to \$53,038.79. That left LATOS with a net income of \$54,473.43. When we take into account LATOS’ regular operational expenses, that left us with a net income of \$37,008.19. That is the best year the chapter has had in a long time. When I looked back at our financial records over the last four years, the chapter lost money. The results show that LATOS lost \$15,544 in 2015, \$13,275 in 2016 and another \$9,500 in 2017. That adds up to a total loss of \$38,319 for those three years. So over that time period considering the net income from 2018, the chapter almost broke even.

One other fact I wanted to state is that LATOS used to have a healthy reserve of money, around \$150,000 when I joined in 2004. However, due to the lack of funds and the decisions made over those years, our checking account balance fell to about \$10,000 about this time last year. That wouldn’t have been enough to operate LATOS for 2018 and beyond. While we have money to operate the chapter at this time, I wanted to inform all members that we need to find new sources of revenue and rethink our spending habits. For that purpose, the Board has formed a budget committee to examine the possibilities and advise the full Board on what future direction we can take.

Some of the recent adjustments made to the budget include emailing the newsletter. We cut the costs from about \$600 per issue to \$40 per issue; discontinuing the use of a bookkeeper which saved us \$1200 per year; and ending our sponsorship of movies at San Gabriel which cost us \$8,000 per year in past years.

One last piece of information I want to pass along to you is, our current membership count. We have only 73 full-voting members of ATOS as members of LATOS and about an 25 Friends-of-LATOS who usually contribute just \$20 to the chapter. Years ago we had hundreds of members. With a large membership base, our current expense structure would be ok. However, our operational expenses currently run about \$13,000 per year. At that level, membership revenue does not come close to covering our expenses each year. Obviously, some changes need to be made for us to continue.

Bill Campbell,
LATOS Treasurer

SOME FUN ORGAN PICTURES



Top Left, Edward Torres having some fun playing at Iceland. **Top Right**, More fun with Edward on St. Patrick's Day at Old Town Music Hall.

Center picture, a very young Mark Herman age 14, Warren Performing Arts Center.



UPCOMING EVENTS

April 7, 7:30-9pm, Cameron Carpenter, Organist, Walt Disney Concert Hall, 111 S Grand Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90012

April 13, 11-4pm, "April in Perris" Organ Social, Open Console and Potluck at the Yearians' home. 11-1:45pm Open to all music lovers. 2-4pm, after the potluck luncheon, we will meet at the Orange Empire Railway Museum for fun with the trolleys and trains which once moved Los Angeles! Contact Vicki for directions for the Organ Social at, 951-943-1747 or email fodofixer@msn.com

April 14, 2:30pm, Alfred Hitchcock's 1929 thriller "Blackmail" this film is a tale of crime and blackmail and is considered one of Hitchcock's earliest masterpieces. Organist, Donnie Rankin will be providing live accompaniment on the 1924 "Mighty Wurlitzer theater pipe organ." Silent Sunday Series; San Gabriel Mission Playhouse. 320 South Mission Dr, San Gabriel, CA 91776

April 19, 7:30pm. Dave Moreno. Silent Movie Night: Douglas Fairbank's "Thief of Bagdad." Harmony Wynelands, 9291 E Harney Ln, Lodi, CA, 95240

April 23, 7:30-10pm, Mr. Thomas Mellan plays Couperin and Vierne on French Hauptwerk virtual pipe organs. Stan's Music Parlor MidCity, Los Angeles. Private residence. To receive an invitation, please send your email address to; seh52@yahoo.com

April 27, 2pm. Dave Wickerham in Concert, TOSSD, Trinity Church, 3902 Kenwood Dr. Spring Valley, CA 91977

June 2, 2:30pm, "The Black Pirate" Brett Valiant. Silent Sunday Series; San Gabriel Mission Playhouse. . 320 South Mission Dr, San Gabriel, CA 91776

June 9, LATOS Sunday Social at Ken Rosen's house, Organ Program, with an Open Console to follow and a Cookout with Potluck food items.

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ONGOING EVENTS:

ONGOING: Concerts, Movies & Shows at the Old Town Music Hall, 140 Richmond Street, El Segundo. Many shows feature the 4-manual theatre pipe organ. Call (310) 322-2592 (recorded info) or visit <http://www.oldtownmusichall.org>

ONGOING: Concerts at The Nethercutt Collection. Visit <http://www.nethercuttcollection.org/Calendar.aspx> for dates & info.

ONGOING: The Organ Grinders every 2nd Sunday of the month at 2:00pm. Open console on a Roland At-

elier (also a volunteer pot-luck). Westminster Presbyterian Church. 1757 North Lake Ave., Pasadena, in the "Lawrence Chapel" (not in main sanctuary). Free parking in the rear. Contact Elly Reitz 626-281-3311 for more info.

ONGOING: Paramount Iceland, (3/19 Wurlitzer) organ is played for skating sessions every Tuesday 7-8:30pm. featured artist, Bill Campbell. 8041 Jackson St. Paramount. 562-633-1171

President:
Charlton Quinn, 815-218-6221
charlton.quinn@yahoo.com

Vice President:
Edward Torres, 424-228-0404,
Edwardtorres212@yahoo.com

Secretary:
Mark Herman, 626-524-0090
mark@losangelesorgan.com

Treasurer:
Bill Campbell, 414-248-4164
williamcampbellit@yahoo.com

Program Committee Chair:
Kevin Cartwright, 323-333-8922
kevin.r.cartwright@gmail.com

Andre Rigden, 213-435-3057
laandre@earthlink.net

Don Hibben, 626-590-1018
latos@lapostmaster.com

Stirling Yearian, 951-287-8235
rexgaloure@msn.com