

The Organ Log

LOS ANGELES

THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY

ISSUE 46

January 2024

In This Issue:

Cover Page:

A Note From Our President,
by Angie Hougen

Page 2:

Incoming 2024 Board Bios, by
Pete Eveland, Gary Reisch,
Randy Woltz

Page 3:

New Console for Wilshire Ebell,
by Edmond Johnson

Page 9:

A Toast to the Holidays,
by Andre Rigden,
Donations Received Last Year,
Upcoming Events

Page 11:

Mail-in Membership Form

Page 12:

LATOS Officers and Directors

Editor, Vicki Yearian,
Phone; 951-943-1747,
Email, fodofixer@msn.com

A NOTE FROM OUR PRESIDENT



Happy 2024!

Thank you to everyone for your unwavering support of the Los Angeles Theatre Organ Society. Your enthusiasm and attendance at many of our events have been encouraging, and I have enjoyed our conversations and visits. We are a splendid group of like minded people, and I hope that together, we can accomplish a lot in 2024!

We enjoyed the talents of many fine organists last year, including Jelani Eddington, Mark Herman, David Marsh, Russ Peck, Edward Torres, Brett Valliant, Randy Woltz, and Robert York. Our sponsorships of the artists at Bob Baker Marionette Theater, San Gabriel Mission Playhouse, and Old Town Music Hall have been well received, and the silent film series at both San Gabriel and OTMH are thriving thanks to your support!

Look forward to more great events in the months ahead, including open consoles and membership socials. We hope to meet in places around Southern California so there's something for everyone, and hopefully you'll find something you like and attend some of our events.

We have a full board of dedicated volunteers who look forward to planning these occasions. If there's something you'd like to see us hop into in the new year, please send us an email through our website at latos.org.

Happy New Year!

Angie Hougen, President, LATOS

LATOS incoming board for 2024



Pete Eveland:

Musical Experience:

1. Professional organist, pianist, and composer since age eleven.
2. Staff Organist for the Cincinnati Bengals football team.
3. Staff Organist, Cincinnati Stingers hockey team.
4. National Staff Organist, Wurlitzer Music Company
5. Conceived and built a fine dining restaurant that featured singing waiters.
6. Significant radio and television experience including The British Broadcasting Company's Wild Road to Adventure, The Nick Clooney Show, The Bob Braun Show, The Phil Donohue Show, and Hallmark Productions of Hollywood California.
7. Delta Queen Steamboat, at age 16 playing the Hammond organ, piano, banjo, clarinet, and the Queen's own steam Calliope.

(Continued on page 10)

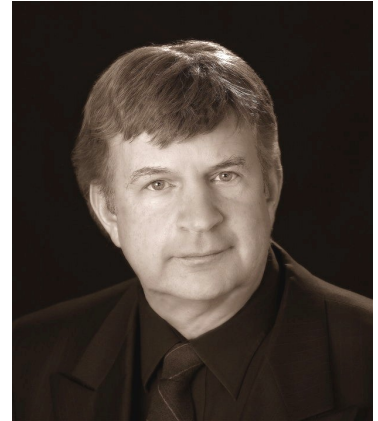


Gary Reisch:

Gary was bitten by the theater organ bug when he was a youngster growing up in the San Francisco Bay Area, and hearing several of the Capn's Galley Pizza and Pipes organs played. He was particularly smitten with the Redwood City location where Tom Hazelton was the primary organist at the time. As fate would have it, Gary's family business in the motion picture industry kept him close to the Pizza and Pipes organs, and at Tom's hand really got introduced to the instrument which now resides under LATOS' purview at Whittier High School. Gary also holds an affinity for the Hollywood El Capitan organ, as his grandfather was one of the managers of the great San Francisco Fox Theater where that organ worked in its heyday at the hands of the late, great Everett Nourse.

Having grown up playing keyboards Gary's fascination with the

(Continued on page 10)



Randy Woltz:

Randy has been playing the organ since age 14 when his first teacher was Karl Bonawitz, a famed theater organist from the Stanley Theater in Philadelphia in the 1920s. Since then his teachers have included Richard Purvis and Virgil Fox as well as study in Europe. A church organist for many years, he has the Associate diploma of the American Guild of Organists. His theater organ experience includes playing for the silent film theater on Fairfax in Hollywood and the Wurlitzer Weekend at Fullerton High School. Randy has been the house organist at Old Town Music Hall since August of 2021. ■



The Barton op. 350 console in 2012 at the residence of Phil Maloof in Las Vegas. (Photo by Kim Cochrane, Desert Spirit Photography.)

A New Console for the Wilshire Ebell Theatre

By Edmond Johnson | December 2023

In January 2023, the Los Angeles Theatre Organ Society acquired the last theatre organ console manufactured by the Barton Organ Company. The console was originally part of Barton's op. 350, a 10-rank instrument that was ordered for the Paramount Theatre in Newport News, Virginia, and installed in 1931. Over the last 90-plus year, the console has resided in many different venues—most recently as part of the collection of the late Phil Maloof.

The newly-acquired console is currently being refurbished in preparation for installation at the Wilshire Ebell Theatre. There it will control the 1927 Barton organ that was installed by LATOS members in 1984. The console that was previously connected to the Ebell organ was traded to the Phil Maloof Foundation as part of the acquisition of the new console.

The Last Barton

When op. 350 left the Barton factory in 1931, the market for theatre organs was quickly evaporating. The advent of sound films, along with the Great Depression, caused a dramatic decrease in the number of new instruments being ordered. In 1929, the firm had changed its name to the Maxcy-Barton Organ Company, incorporating the last name of long-time company president W. G. Maxcy in an ultimately



(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)



Above: An advertisement for the Paramount Theatre that ran in the Newport News *Daily Press* on September 27, 1931. **Above right:** A photograph of Organist Gladys Lyle in the *Daily Press* (January 28, 1934). **Below right:** An undated postcard showing the Paramount Theatre and surrounding cityscape.



unsuccessful attempt to appeal to the church organ market.

The organ was one of three new theatre instruments sold by Maxcy-Barton in 1931, all of which were unusual in adopting a Wurlitzer-influenced "French Style" console design, as well as stop lists that were identical (or nearly so) to the equivalent Wurlitzer models. David Junchen attributes the distinctiveness of these instruments to Dan Barton's talent as a salesman and his willingness to adapt to his customer's specific preferences. For the Paramount Theatre in Newport News, Barton provided a 3-manual, 10-rank instrument installed in two chambers with the console placed on a lift in the orchestra pit.

The Paramount Theatre, Newport News

Opening on October 2, 1931, the Paramount Theatre was developed by the Newport News Theatre Organization and operated as part of the Paramount Publix chain. At opening, the theatre had 1,350 seats, with the interior decorated in a "modernistic style":

The entire treatment of the walls is one of sharp, though not glaring, contrast. The sidewalls are stippled in green and gold, with huge mythologi-

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

cal figures superimposed in part of the panels. In other panels futuristic floral designs are used.

The first organist to play at the Paramount was Bob Hess, an experienced player who was employed by Paramount Publix to perform at their newly-opened theatres for a time before moving on to his next appointment. In 1934, the theatre hired Gladys Lyle



Above: The console as it appeared in the Virginia Theatre.

Below: Woody Wise sits at the console (photo from the 1972 ATOS National Convention program booklet).

(1901-1984) to serve as their staff organist. Contemporary accounts often noted that the “Tiny Mistress of Melody” was only 4’10” tall, weighing in around 80 pounds; a retrospective published decades later likened the appearance of her petite figure seated at the console to “a circus queen atop an elephant.” Lyle would hold the position for 15 years, only leaving the Paramount in 1949.

In addition to providing pre-show organ music, Lyle hosted a popular Saturday morning “Junior Club” that featured cartoons and weekly talent contests where local children would perform with Lyle’s accompaniment on the organ. For years she also gave

regular performances on the Barton for the WGH radio station.

The Virginia Theatre, Alexandria

Following Lyle’s departure, the Paramount organ was played only infrequently, and by the 1960s it had gone completely silent. In 1968, the Potomac Valley Chapter of the American Theatre Organ Enthusiasts began searching for an instrument to install in the 1,100-seat Virginia Theatre in Alexandria, Virginia. Woodrow “Woody” Wise, Jr., served as the theatre’s manager and was a founding member of the chapter. The Barton organ was ultimately purchased, with removal from the Paramount requiring a crane to lift the blower and relay from the building’s third floor.

At the Virginia Theatre, new chambers were constructed for the organ and three new ranks were added: a Dennison Post Horn, along with a 16’ Tuba Mirabilis and a 16’ Gross Flute for the pedal (24 pipes each, both by Moller). As the theatre lacked an orchestra pit, a new alcove was created to the left of the of stage with a large opening from which the console, newly painted in gold, could be rolled out onto a platform at the touch of a button. The



(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

instrument made its Virginia Theatre debut on April 16, 1969, with a performance by Jimmy Boyce, who would go on to serve as the theatre's staff organist.

The organ was prominently featured during the July 1972 ATOS National Convention, which was hosted by Potomac Valley Chapter and made use of venues within the greater Washington, D.C. metro area. During the convention it was played by five different organists, including Rosa Rio, Dick Smith, and Don Thompson. In 1974, an LP was produced on the organ and released on the Mark Stereophonic label under the title: *Jimmy Boyce Plays the Woody Wise Grande Barton*. Despite being regularly played, the organ only stayed in Alexandria for seven years. In a review of the Boyce recording in the February 1975 issue of *Theatre Organ*, the unsigned reviewer praised the recording before noting, "This may be the only chance to hear the Woody Wise Barton under theatrical conditions because its record debut is probably also its swansong, so far as the Virginia Theatre is concerned; the organ has been sold." The Virginia Theatre itself was demolished the following year.

Two False Starts

The Barton had been purchased by the Cedar Rapids Area Theatre Organ Society (CRATOS), which soon began preparations for an installation in the Englert Theatre in Iowa City. After several years, and with the installation nearing completion, the theater management decided to "twin" auditorium, a decision that made it impossible for the organ project to move forward.

No longer having a suitable venue for the organ, CRATOS donated the instrument to the Kansas City, Missouri ATOS chapter (KCTPO), where it was originally slated to go into the city's 3,000-seat Midland Theatre. This plan was scuttled, however, when a much larger "Wonder Morton" became available,

undoubtedly a better fit for the cavernous venue.

The Granada Theatre, Kansas City

Soon the organ found a new home, just across the Missouri River in Kansas City, Kansas. There Bob Maes and Wade Williams had recently founded the non-profit Granada Theatre Historical Society, Inc. to restore the beautiful 1928 venue and bring it back into active use. They received a 20-year lease of the Barton from KCTPO for one dollar per year.

David Junchen oversaw the installation of the organ at the Granada. At that time, the organ was expanded to 20 ranks, along with an addition of a Devtronix relay. The organ made its Kansas City debut in November 1986 with a performance by Kay McAbee (1930-2012). Around this time, the console was painted white, with gold accents on the trim and ormolu.

For the next decade, the organ was regularly used for concerts and to accompany silent films, with many prominent theatre organists giving performances. Even with its owners and creative program-



Tom Hazleton at the console with Mark Gifford looking on.
(Photo credit: Mark Gifford)

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

ming, the Granada faced persistent financial challenges, eventually folding in 1996.

The Phil Maloof Residence

Around the same time that the Granada Theatre was closing its door, businessman and theatre organ enthusiast Phil Maloof (1926-2020) became interested in acquiring the instrument for his residence. Bob Maes was engaged not only to install the organ, but to help find a property that could properly accommodate it. Maloof purchased a house in the Rancho Bel-Air neighborhood of Las Vegas, only a short distance from the Strip, and large music room was added to the back of the house. By the end of 1997, much of the organ was installed and playable in its new home, and over the next few years the instrument would be expanded to 34 ranks.

Soon after, Maloof acquired another piece of Barton history: the massive six-manual console from the legendary Chicago Stadium organ. To take advantage of this impressive new acquisition, the organ was further expanded and made controllable from multiple consoles via a Uniflex relay. The Las Vegas-based artist Rebecca Conway was engaged to paint the music room and refinish both consoles; she can be credited with the predominantly gold and red scheme, with additional accent colors, that currently bedecks the op. 350 console. Bob Maes oversaw the maintenance and continued expansion of the organ, while Kay McAbee served as the resident organist.

By 2012, Maloof's collection of consoles had grown considerably. In addition to the two Barton consoles, the music room also became home to the two-manual Wurlitzer console from the United Artists



The interior of the Wilshire Ebell Theatre with the former console on stage. Stirling Yearian at the console. (Photo: Wendell Benedetti)

Theatre in Chicago; the four-manual Kimball console from the Wiltern Theatre in Los Angeles; and the five-manual Kimball console from the Roxy Theatre in Manhattan. The organ controlled by these consoles had also been expanded. As Bob Maes wrote in a 2012 article in *Theatre Organ*:

Today the organ(s) consist of five consoles and about 95 ranks. The reason for approximately 95 ranks is because the organ is constantly evolving and ranks come and go as things are being upgraded.

While Barton op. 350 had served as the core of the original house organ when it was installed in 1997, by 2012 the stoplist contained ranks mostly by Wurlitzer and Kimball, along with some ranks by Wicks to make up a "classical" division. Only three tuned percussion stops, a Tuba Mirabilis, and a Kinura were attributed to Barton.

Wilshire Ebell Theatre, Los Angeles

Following Phil Maloof's passing in 2020, the non-profit foundation that bears his name decided to search for a new home for the op. 350 console. At the same time, LATOS was looking for a solution for the failing and increasingly fragile console connected to their 1927 Barton organ at the Wilshire

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

Ebell Theatre. In January 2023, the deal was completed, and the op. 350 console was moved to a temporary storage space in Los Angeles while the next steps could be determined.

After close examination of the console, it became clear that several repairs would be necessary prior to installing the console at the Ebell. The proposed work includes:

- Installation of an Opus-Two control system
- Replacement of all stop action magnets
- Repair or replacement of toe and thumb pistons
- Replacement of expressions shoes
- Repair or replacement of manuals
- Refurbishment of existing pedal board
- Fabrication of a new platform for moving the console on stage and into a new storage area

The Opus-Two system will provide both enhanced console functionality (multi-level memory, record and playback, etc.), as well providing a solid-state replacement for the Wurlitzer relay that has been connected to the Ebell organ since 1984.

The richly-decorated gold and red console should beautifully complement the elegant interior of the 1,270 seat Ebell Theatre. And though the Ebell's 1927 Barton organ, built under contract by Wangerin during one of the Barton Organ Company's busiest periods, was constructed four years before op. 350, the tonal resources it offers will be similar to what was available to organists at the Paramount and Virginia Theatres.

While there is much to be done, LATOS is very excited to be providing the op. 350 console with a new home. If all goes according to plan, the console will be installed at the Ebell by the end of 2024. ■

Author's Note: This is a preliminary version of this article, which I hope to publish once the console project is completed. Comments and suggestions are welcome.

Version: December 15, 2023

¹David L. Junchen, *Encyclopedia of the American Theatre Organ*, vol. 1 (Pasadena: Showcase Publications, 1985), 84.

²Junchen, 82. While Junchen writes that the three 1931 Bartons were "stop-for-stop identical" with the equivalent Wurlitzer models, there appears to have been a few differences between the op. 350 stoplist and that of the 3/10 Wurlitzer models. The Wurlitzer influence, however, is very apparent.

³"Hundreds Turned Away at Opening of New Theatre," *Daily Press* [Newport News] (October 3, 1931), 4.

⁴"Paramount Theatre to Hold Formal Opening Tonight at 8 P. M.," *Daily Press* [Newport News] (October 2, 1931), 2.

⁵Lloyd E. Klos, "Bob Hess: Much-Traveled Theatre Organist," *Theatre Organ* (January/February 1983), 16.

⁶Parke S. Rouse, "Gladys Lyle's Music Part of History," *Daily Press* [Newport News] (January 31, 1982), 27.

⁷Ray Brubacher, "The Grande Barton Pipe Organ in the Virginia Theatre," *Theatre Organ Bombarde* 11, no. 3 (June 1969), 5.

⁸Brubacher, 5-6. The writer notes, "Since this instrument did not possess any couplers, it was decided to add a sub and super octave coupler to the great and solo manual, an accompaniment super coupler to that manual, and a great to pedal 8 foot coupler and pedal octave coupler to that division."

⁹Mark Stereophonic MC 8494.

¹⁰"For the Records," *Theatre Organ* 17, no. 1 (February 1975), 42-3.

¹¹Tom B'hend, "There is a Way!" *Theatre Organ* 28, no. 5 (September-October 1986), 14.

¹²Vickie L. Walton and Mike Weatherford, "Granada Theatre's Back to Lift," *The Kansas City Star* (November 23, 1986), 5B.

¹³Kahara Pavé, "Las Vegas: A New Theatre Organ Paradise," *Theatre Organ* 42, no. 3 (May-June 2000), 7.

¹⁴Pavé, 8.

¹⁵Bob Maes, "The Best Show in Vegas," *Theatre Organ* 54, no. 4 (July-August 2012), 30.

¹⁶Maes, 32.

¹⁷It is not clear which, if any, of Barton resources on the 2012 Maloof stoplist originated with op. 350.

A TOAST TO THE HOLIDAY

By Andre Rigden

On December 3, LATOS hosted a Holiday Open Console at the home of Andre Rigden. There was lots of music on the Allen Lyn Larsen LL-325Q organ. Several players, including some newer members, enjoyed some playing time on the organ. There was a sing-along of favorite Christmas songs and carols. Guests included nine-year-old piano student, Henry, who has been interested in organs and had his first time at the theater organ console. He quickly figured out how the divisions work. Henry later declared to his mom that "It was the best party ever! There was an organ, and cupcakes!"

Lunch was served with holiday beverages and deserts.

DONATIONS RECEIVED LAST YEAR

A big **THANK YOU** to all our members for their generous donations last year! Apologies if your donation did not get included in this list. Please let the editor know and it will be included in the next Organ Log.

First name	Last name	Amount
Thomas	Ruzika	1,500.00
Marilyn	Balduff	1,000.00
Neil	Beecher	200.00
Philip	Solomon	150.00
Ty	Woodward	100.00
Robert	Ficklin	100.00
Vicki	Woods	30.00
William	Campbell	25.00
Darrell	Fluehr	15.00
Sharon	Zelman	5.00

UPCOMING EVENTS 2024

Jan 6, Old Town Music Hall, Buster Keaton Silent, "The Cameraman", Live Accompaniment by Mark Herman on the Mighty Wurlitzer . Saturday, 7pm.

Jan 21, Old Town Music Hall, Silent, "Winds of Chance", Live accompaniment by Robert York on the Mighty Wurlitzer • • Introduced by Christopher Gray, Grandson of the Director-World Premiere Restoration Screening • 2:30pm

Feb 17, Old Town Music Hall, 1927-silent • "The General", starring Buster Keaton • With Live Accompaniment by Jelani Eddington on the Mighty Wurlitzer. 2:30 & 7pm.

Feb 24, Old Town Music Hall, "Rin Tin Tin" Frederick Hodges featuring fantastic tunes of the 1920s through the first half of our program. Frederick will then accompany an action-packed adventure film featuring the box office champion of 1926, that lovable German Shepherd Rin Tin Tin. 2:30 & 7pm.

Mar 2, Old Town Music Hall, "The Circus" 1928 – silent • Charlie Chaplin • Live Accompaniment by Randy Woltz on the Mighty Wurlitzer. 2:30 & 7pm.

Mar 16, Old town Music Hall, "The Freshman" 1925 • Harold Lloyd • Live Accompaniment by Bill Campbell on the Mighty Wurlitzer. 2:30 & 7pm.

Mar 17, Old town Music Hall, David Marsh concert on the Mighty Wurlitzer and Bösendorfer Concert Grand Piano! David will also accompany the Buster Keaton short silent comedy - "COPS". Sunday, 2:30pm.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR *I could not find any other venues with theatre pipe organ events listed in the near future. If you know of any please tell me and I'll include them in the next issue. Thanks.*

(Pete, continued from page 2)

8. Ragtime aficionado, jazz organist, and theatre organist.

Academic Info:

Dr. Peter Eveland is the Executive Vice Dean for University Relations and Admissions at the California University of Science and Medicine (CUSM) in Colton, CA. He has a faculty appointment at the rank of full Professor in the Department of Medical Education. Before joining CUSM, he served as the founding Associate Dean of Student Affairs and Admissions at Roseman University College of Medicine, founding Associate Dean of Student Affairs and Admissions at California Northstate University College of Medicine, Dean of Students at the University of Washington School of Medicine; founding member of the faculty and Associate Dean for Admissions, Student Affairs, and Diversity for the Florida State University College of Medicine, and tenured professor of psychiatry and community medicine and Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Affairs for Mercer University School of Medicine. ■

(Gary, continued from page 2)

theater organ became more of a thing to be admired and listened to, until one day when he heard about a piece of software in its early stages that was sampling majestic organs from all over the world called Hauptwerk, he then set out to build his own console from the keyboards he has been playing over the years and with MIDI and those keyboards created his Paramount 341. Recently, Gary obtained a beautiful 4 manual MIDI console and stepped up his game and now has his dream organ the Paramount 450 along with his own invention of virtual tab stop system to support it.

Gary has been an ATOS member for many years. After relocating to Southern California in the mid-1990's, he

brought his husband Charles, of 30 years, into the fold, as well as his family and friends, and taking them to the many venues here in Southern California to experience these magnificent instruments being played by the likes of Mark Herman, Jelani Eddington, and many other talented artists that we attract to the LA area.

Gary feels privileged to join the LATOS board and be able to help preserve these beautiful works of sound and sight for generations to come, and hopes to use his skills as a businessman and musician to further the goals of LATOS in his coming term. ■



Old Town Music Hall Christmas village train scene atop the Bösendorfer Grand piano at Old Town Music Hall, Christmas 2023. Notice the Mighty Wurlitzer theatre pipe organ in the background.



The Los Angeles Theatre Organ Society was founded in 1961, and owns organs at the Wilshire Ebell, South Pasadena High School, Pasadena City College and Bob Baker Marionette Theater. LATOS members have the opportunity to play pipe organs several times a year at open consoles. LATOS also has access to many other instruments for its events in the southern California area. In addition to its Mission Statement, its key focus today is membership growth, expansion of member activities, promoting the theatre pipe organ to local youth, and encouraging active involvement in the organization. For more information about LATOS, please visit <https://latos.org/>

This is your invitation to enjoy wonderful entertainment and memorable experiences! Join LATOS and enjoy our events while supporting the preservation of an increasingly rare and unique instrument and art form, the theatre pipe organ!

The easiest and fastest way to join or renew is online at <https://latos.org/>
 (Wild Apricot is our online membership platform)

or you can simply complete the form below and include your check for \$20 or more, then mail to:

PO Box 4545, West Hills, CA 91308.

(DO NOT MAIL CASH)

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

E-Mail: _____

Phone: _____

(LATOS is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corp.)

NOTE: If you would like to receive occasional email messages about important LATOS related news and events, please take a brief moment to register your email address on our website (using the "Sign Up" form on the bottom-left of the main page). Be assured that we will not share your email address with anyone, and that we will not barrage you with unnecessary information. We will only send important email reminders about key upcoming LATOS events. Thank you.

QUESTIONS? Contact our Membership Director; Vicki Yearian, at fodofixer@msn.com or 951-943-1747



LATOS MAILING ADDRESS:

PO Box 4545

West Hills, CA 91308.

**Los Angeles
Theatre Organ
Society**

Please, Join / Renew ONLINE

Go to www.latos.org, click on the MEMBERSHIP link

"The doors are always open for donations."

As a non-profit organization, LATOS depends on its membership fees and donations to pay the operational expenses of the chapter. If you would like to donate to our chapter, checks can be mailed to our PO Box 4545, West Hills, CA 91308. Or donate online at <https://latos.org/>

President: Angie Hougen, 818-667-4785

hougen@sbcglobal.net

Pete Eveland

Kyle Irwin

Vice President: Manuel Rosales, 213-925-8633

manuel@rosales.com

Edmond Johnson

Charlton Quinn

Treasurer: Dorsey Caldwell, 626-798-1820

dorsey.jr7765@sbcglobal.net

Gary Reisch

Andre Rigden

Secretary: Stirling Yearian, 951-287-8235

rexgaloure@msn.com

Randy Woltz