



Nov / Dec 2007

P.O. Box 667 Lyons, Illinois 60534 / Online www.catoe.org

The Newsletter Voice of the Chicago Area Theatre Organ Enthusiasts

CATOE December Social Info

Spread the holiday spirit with area favorite **Jim Kozak**, at **10am- Saturday, December 1st** at the **Tivoli Theatre** 5021 Highland Ave, Downers Grove.

Jim will perform at the Tivoli Theatre's Wurlitzer organ in a joint social for CATOE and JATOE members and our families. Remember to bring samples of your favorite holiday recopies to share with our JATOE friends! After the social there will be limited open console time but that's not all....

Our members are invited by 'Classic Cinemas' owners **Shirley and Willis Johnson** to return to the Tivoli for a special showing of "It's a Wonderful Life" on the big screen starting at **2pm**. (Pre-show music on will be performed by the Dickens Festival Chorus.) During this event, the Tivoli will be seeking \$5 donations to be directed to "**Sharing Connections**", a resource for household items for the disadvantaged families in our communities.

Lunch is easy to find in Downtown Downers with several great restaurants within walking distance of the theatre. Rail-fans can try the "2 Toots Grill" while Italian lovers can sample "Falbo's". For a lighter fare try afternoon tea at "Nancy's Teahouse" or "Pine Cone Cottage". Pizza, beer, and pub grub can also be found at specialty restaurants: Emmitt's Ale House, Ballydoyle Irish Pub, and Giordano's.

Be sure to call ahead for reservations, seating availability, and operating hours for these locations! For more suggestions visit: <http://visitor.downers.us>

Kozak Home For the Holidays

Jim Kozak is a native of Berwyn, Illinois. At the tender age of 5 he began piano lessons. When 13, at the suggestion of his best friend, Scott May, he took up the organ as his main instrument. He began organ studies, eventually being the student of Allan Day, who introduced him to the theatre organ, and taught him authentic theatre organ technique.

In the early 1970's Jim was the organist at the Oak Lawn Roller Rink for ten years from 1971 o 1981, subbed often for Tony Tahlman at the Elm Roller Rink on its 4/24 hybrid, and provided organ accompaniment for many Illinois and Wisconsin State Skating competitions.



In 1981 Jim moved to Houston, Texas where he has been organist at all three Pipe Organ Pizza establishments in that city, has often played for the Houston Area Theatre Organ Society on their recently restored and augmented 3/17 Wurlitzer, and has played during the Summer Film Festival on the 3/8 Robert Morton in the Jefferson Theatre in Beaumont, Texas.

Jim has, recently played for CATOE and JATOE and was featured in a cameo at the Robert Ridgeway Benefit. Jim, is a full time concert piano technician. Visit Jim's page at: www.myspace.com/jimkozak

A Downers Grove Christmas

Join the **West Towns Chorus** along with David Rhodes for the 2007 Christmas Extravaganza "**The Magic of Christmas**" at the Tivoli Theater in Downers Grove on Friday December, 7th at 8pm and Saturday, December 8th, at 2pm and 8pm.

This annual holiday tradition features Chicagoland's premier men's four-part harmony chorus: The West Towns Chorus, along with Alchemy, The Skinkers (mixed quartet), Scrambled Craigs Comedy Quartet, Chancel Ringers of First United Methodist Church of Downers Grove, Affinity String and Brass Ensemble, Flautist Martha Farahat, Santa, The Snow Queen and much, Much, MORE! A great evening of Christmas entertainment. **All seats \$22 (reserved).** Visit www.westtowns.org or call **630-201-5544** for information. (Call for groups of 10 or more.)

In addition to the chorus, the Tivoli is hosting it's annual "Holiday Film Fest" from December 9th - 13th.

*** Sunday, December 9 at 7:00 & 9:30 p.m.**

Meet Me in St. Louis, starring Judy Garland, Margaret O'Brien, Tom Drake, Mary Astor and Lucille Bremer.

*** Monday, December 10 at 7:00 & 9:30 p.m.**

Key Largo, starring Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall, Claire Trevor, Edward G. Robinson, and Lionel Barrymore.

*** Tuesday, December 11 at 7:00 & 9:30 p.m.**

The Way We Were, starring Barbra Streisand, Robert Redford, Patrick O'Neal, Viveca Lindfors, and Bradford Dillman.

*** Wednesday, December 12 at 2:00, 7:00 & 9:30**

White Christmas, starring Bing Crosby, Danny Kaye, Rosemary Clooney, Vera Ellen, Dean Jagger, and Sig Rumann.

*** Thursday, December 13 at 7:00 & 9:30 p.m.**

The Seven Year Itch, starring Marilyn Monroe, Tom Ewell, Sonny Tufts, Evelyn Keyes, Robert Strauss and Oscar Homolka.

Admission **\$3.00** for all movies. Tickets for these events will be available beginning November 23rd.

Due Time for Increase in Dues

After what some believe to be nearly 20 years at the same rate, CATOE membership voted at the business meeting (held before last month's social) to increase member dues to \$30. The increase was necessitated by the July, 2007 postal rate increase (mailing the VOX), organ storage costs, and talent fees for our organists. Renewal forms will be mailed to you by the membership director. Please join us again for more great theatre organ events in 2008.

Upgrade for the Tivoli Organ

With a busy season planned for the Tivoli and almost non-stop use of CATOE's Wurlitzer organ, a rebuilt motor and blower was installed in early November. Glen Johnson rebuilt the motor for the new blower. Installation was provided by our organ crew members Dean Rosko and David Rhodes supervised by Gary Rickert, and his father Ed.



Top: Ed Rickert gathers the tools. Middle: Motor and Blower. Bottom, Dean Rosko works in the confines of the blower room.

Donnie Shines at Mundelein

Thanks to Jon Habermaas for the following review about CATOE's recent social and encouraging words and commentary about some of our younger artists.

It was a beautiful day in the country when CATOE members met together at the George Cardinal Mundelein Auditorium at University of St. Mary of the Lake. On the outside the fall colors were bright and on the inside the music was bright. Ohio young artist Donnie Rankin provided an excellent program of theatre organ music. Donnie returned to the Chicago area for our social, his second visit to Illinois this year, the first was a successful week at the ATOS organ camp held at member Paul Van Der Molen's Wheaton Fox organ.

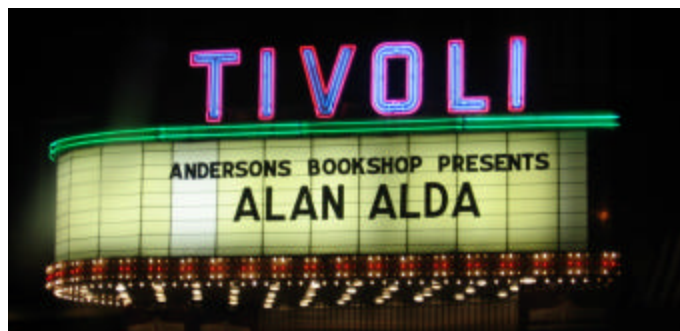
Donnie's program provided a variety of musical fare with something on the menu bound to please the appetites of most theatre organ fans. He appeared comfortable performing before our audience, handled the big 4/19 with ease, choosing registrations which were both appropriate for his selections and that showed off the best of the tone colors of the organ. To remember the former master of the Wurlitzer console when it was at the Chicago, Jesse Crawford, he played the Lyn Larsen arrangement of the Crawford's "Broken Rosary". Because "Bali Ha'i" is a family favorite, he dazzled us with a medley from South Pacific, which of course featured "Bali Ha'i" along with "Some Enchanted Evening", "Nothing Like a Dame" among others from the musical.

For those of us that subscribe to the **Theatreorgans-L** email list, a frequent topic is the future of the theatre organ. It laments the failure to attract young people to the instrument. This is not entirely true. With the emergence of young organists like Donnie Rankin there is definitely a future for our favorite instrument. The Chicago area is fortunate to have quite a few young artists who will keep theatre organ alive in this area. David Rhodes has done an excellent job of presenting theatre organ to the students at Downers Grove North High School on their former Lima Ohio, Ohio Theatre Wurlitzer. The Taller brothers are keeping theatre organ alive in Lansing at Beggars, and don't forget the cadre of young people helping John Peters maintain the organs.

As supporters of theatre organ and its music, we have a responsibility to encourage and support these young artists whenever possible. We are grateful to Donnie Rankin for sharing his talent with us and for the young CATOE members who are responsible for helping bring him here to entertain us. With young artists like Donnie Rankin and the talented young members of CATOE, the future of the theatre organ looks bright and will be in good hands.
~ Jon Habermaas

Ample Applause at Alan Alda's Anderson's Appearance

(Your editor *Apologizes for the Abundant Amount of Alliteration*)



Thanks to David Rhodes who took these shots from the organ console during the October event at the Tivoli. David even learned to play the theme from "M*A*S*H" (Suicide is Painless) for this special event.



Guest artist Donnie Rankin addresses the audience at last month's social in Mundelein. This was Rankin's first performance for CATOE. See "Donnie Shines at Mundelein" on this page for details about the social.

Thanks go to CATOE's Bob Boin for his tireless work preparing the console for public display, constructing the protective Plexiglas cover over the keyboards, and the lobby display sign. For those of you who have not been to the Oriental Theatre to see *Wicked*, here is a photo of the Oriental's Wurlitzer organ console as it currently appears in the lower level lobby. The text from the sign appears below.

Wurlitzer Theatre Organ Opus 1262

This 4 manual (keyboards) plus pedal keyboard console controls a 21 rank (sets of pipes-equivalent to an 80 piece orchestra) Wurlitzer Theater Pipe organ originally installed in this theater in 1925. The organ console case was delivered unpainted by the Wurlitzer Company to the Chicago firm of Decorator Supply where the composition ornament was applied and artisans painted the bird motif on the sides and top. Over the years, while the organ was still in the theater and the console was in the orchestra pit, it received quite a bit of use, even after talking pictures became the norm. Probably the most famous of the Oriental organists were Preston and Edna Sellars. While they did not have the luxury of an organ with two consoles as Jesse and Helen Crawford did, at the Chicago Theater, they alternated entertaining patrons at this theater for a number of years. Preston Sellars is probably best remembered as the organist who accompanied hundreds of canaries for Hartz Mountain bird food on the WGN pipe organ.

The organ remained playable for most of its life in this theater but during periods of non-use, the console suffered badly, losing much of its ornamentation. Luckily, Decorator Supply remains in business and still offers these pieces in their catalog. With the exception of the back panel, the console has been restored to its opening day appearance thanks to the discovery of an early photograph. The back is a new creation designed to match the overall decoration but missing the hand painted bird designs. The back was always plain and unseen against the wall on the organ lift in the orchestra pit. For many years it was not even on the console. It eventually was thrown out and then replaced with a sheet of painted plywood.

When the theater closed in the early 1980's, the building's owner Morrie Kalish, donated the organ to the Chicago Area Theater Organ Enthusiasts (CATOE) who had been maintaining it over the previous 15 years. It was allowed to stay in the theater for almost another 2 years as efforts were begun to save the Oriental Theater and maintain the distinction of Chicago as one of the few cities in the United States that had two playable theater pipe organs remaining in their downtown movie palaces (CATOE also maintained the Chicago Theater's historic Wurlitzer). In the mid 1980's word came that a tenant had come forward for the auditorium space and planned to put seven floors of offices within the theater's footprint. The organ would have to be removed. It took 4 long and hot weekends in the summer, but the organ was packed and removed. Shortly thereafter, the new tenant decided on another course of action in a different building and

the Oriental Theater sat vacant for a number of years until interest in a theater district reached the right point in the mid 1990's.

Now with the support of Broadway in Chicago, CATOE is pleased to exhibit the organ for the benefit of the people of Chicago in its original and rightful home.

