



THE HORSESHOE

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(N.Y. CHAPTER ATOS)

“STEAMBOAT BILL, JR.”

Silent Movie Comedy Classic

Starring Buster Keaton

Accompanied by John Baratta

at the NYTOS

3/12 MIGHTY WURLITZER

MIDDLETOWN PARAMOUNT THEATRE

SATURDAY, JANUARY 22, 2011

at 7:30 p.m.

OPEN CONSOLE—MINI-CONCERT

MIDDLETOWN PARAMOUNT

THEATRE

Middletown, NY

3/12 NYTOS MIGHTY WURLITZER

SUNDAY, MARCH 13, 2011

Open Console 1:00 until 3:00 p.m.

3:00 P.M. Mini-concert by Organist

John Baratta

--Refreshments--

The Middletown Paramount Theatre will open this year's classic film series with the silent comedy feature film *Steamboat Bill, Jr.* starring Buster Keaton. Organist John Baratta will be at the console of our NYTOS 3/12 Mighty Wurlitzer to provide the musical accompaniment for this 35mm big screen print.

Steamboat Bill, Jr. was released in 1928, and was the last film that Keaton made for United Artists before moving to MGM where he made one final silent feature. Keaton plays an effete young college graduate who is trying to make good by following in the footsteps of his father, a Mississippi steamboat captain. Of course, as with most of Keaton's films, there is a young lady involved, who this time happens to be the daughter of his father's business rival, and so the plot develops and ultimately becomes complicated by a cyclone sequence with many typical Keaton stunts, all of which he performs himself. Organist John Baratta has received accolades for his accompaniment of this film at several venues.

Since assuming operation of the Paramount in November, Nelson Page has made several upgrades to enhance your theatre going experience. Tickets are \$10, and will be on sale the night of the show. Directions to the Paramount are enclosed.

Plan to take a day off from shoveling snow (hopefully), and join us at the Middletown Paramount Theatre for a day of music on our magnificent 3/12 Mighty Wurlitzer theatre pipe organ. Members and guests will have an opportunity to play open console or just listen to and enjoy the music of this outstanding instrument. And, organist John Baratta will treat us to a demo mini-concert, giving us an opportunity to enjoy the organ in the hands of a truly talented artist. Thanks to the extraordinary acoustics of the theatre, our NYTOS Wurlitzer has a sound far grander and mightier than you would expect from its 12 ranks of pipes. With a beautiful French Style console, the Paramount Wurlitzer is fun and exciting to play and listen to.

Open console will begin at 1:00 p.m. and continue until John's mini-concert which will begin around 3:00 p.m. The general public is invited to attend open console and the concert. Refreshments will be provided. There is no charge for admission, and guests are welcome. So, bring along family and friends, and if you play, remember to bring your music. Hope to see you there. See enclosed directions to the theatre on page 4.

ELECTION RESULTS

As a result of the fall balloting, the following candidates were elected to two-year terms on the NYTOS board of directors: Bernie Anderson, Jr., Robert Kleinschmidt, Anders Sterner, and John Vanderlee. At the first meeting of the year on January 8, the following were elected to serve a one year term as chapter officers: Chairman, Anders Sterner; Vice-Chairman, Rob Kleinschmidt, Secretary, Tom Stehle; Treasurer, Bro. Robert Lahey. Other business discussed included financial and project reports, program planning, education programs, and efforts to increase attendance at events and to increase membership, among other issues. The board is scheduled to meet next at 1:00 p.m. on April 2 at Chaminade High School in Mineola.

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MEMBERS AND PUBLIC ENJOY A BUSY THEATRE ORGAN HOLIDAY SEASON

Those who came to Chaminade High School on November 27 were treated to a delightful afternoon of theatre organ music and entertainment by popular British organist, Paul Roberts. Paul's program on the Chaminade 3/15 Mighty Austin-Morton included many toe tapping pops standards along with a selection of both traditional and popular Christmas music that helped put us into the spirit of the holiday season. Paul also included several selections beautifully rendered on the piano. Many thanks to Brother Rob Lahey and Bob Atkins for preparing the organ for the event, and thanks also to John Valentino for his production assistance. And, of course, thank-you to the Chaminade administration for again allowing us use of their auditorium and wonderful organ.

Our next event took us to Roosevelt High School in Hyde Park on December 11, where an audience of some 500 people attended the *Christmas Spectacular* organized and directed by NYTOS board member, John Vanderlee. The show featured organist John Baratta and the school's new Allen Q324 digital theatre organ along with a host of performers, including singers, dancers and actors. John accompanied a short silent comedy and a holiday sing-along, and provided the music for the many talented dancers from the Poughkeepsie City Ballet and the New York Academy of Ballet, as well as the other performers. The finale featured a living nativity scene. John Vanderlee is already making plans for next year's *Christmas Spectacular*.

On Saturday morning, December 18, we gathered at the beautiful Lafayette Theatre in Suffern where members had an opportunity to play open console on our 2/11 Ben Hall Memorial Mighty Wurlitzer, and enjoy refreshments in the lobby before the doors opened to the general public for what has become an annual holiday community event, the Lafayette Christmas Show. Nelson Page pulled out all the stops this year and again sold out the 1,000 seat house for the Christmas movie classic, *It's a Wonderful Life*. As the long line of patrons began

entering the theatre an hour before movie time, they were greeted first by Nelson dressed in his formal full length usher uniform complete with top hat, and then by organist John Baratta at the Mighty Wurlitzer along with the Bergen Brass playing selections of holiday music. Jeff Barker then accompanied the Laurel and Hardy short silent comedy, *Big Business*. Next, dressed in his Father Christmas robes, Nelson and his daughter stepped into the spotlight and read "The Night Before Christmas" while Jeff softly played a beautiful accompaniment on the Wurlitzer, followed by the arrival of Santa and his white pony. Following several holiday shorts and cartoons, an impeccable print of the feature film was presented on the big screen. Thanks to Nelson Page and his staff for their warm hospitality, and thanks also to Don Hayek, Tom Stehle and Jeff Barker for preparing our Mighty Wurlitzer for this delightful event.

Meanwhile back on Long Island, NYTOS along with the Queens and Nassau chapters of the American Guild of Organists, presented four days of Christmas music from December 14 to 17 performed by organists Ralph Ringstad, Jr. and Nathan Avakian on our Allen digital touring organ at the Broadway Mall in Hicksville, and at Terminal Four of JFK International Airport. This very successful program exposed thousands of people to the wonderful sound of live holiday music on the theatre organ, and was extremely well received by shoppers, travelers and employees alike in both venues. Many thanks to Vince Alukonis, Dean of the Queens AGO Chapter for arranging the event, and to Henry DeVries, Dean of the Nassau AGO for his support, as well as to generous donors from both NYTOS and the AGO for their financial support. Thanks also to John Vanderlee for transporting and setting up the organ. Sadly, we were shocked to learn of the untimely death on Christmas Eve of Ralph Ringstad, Jr., one week after his last performance at JFK (see Closing Chord).

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BERNIE ANDERSON, JR. AND HAROLD LLOYD SILENT FEATURE COMING TO CHAMINADE

Mark off Saturday, April 2, on you calendar for our next NYTOS program at Chaminade High School in Mineola. Organist Bernie Anderson, Jr. will be at the Chaminade 3/15 Mighty Austin-Morton accompanying the 1924 Harold Lloyd silent comedy feature film, *Girl Shy*. Watch for details in the next "Horseshoe" newsletter.

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OTHER NEWS AND UP-COMING EVENTS

SATURDAY, JAN. 29-7:00 p.m. DICK SMITH concert. **Dickinson High School**, Wilmington, DE. 3/66 Kimball. 302-995-5630. DTOS. www.dtoskimball.org. \$12 advance; \$14 at the door.

BARDAVON: Classic film series continues in Poughkeepsie on **Friday, Jan. 28** with *Clockwork Orange*. Movie time is 7:30. Juan Cardona, Jr. plays the house in starting at 7:00 on the NYTOS 2/10 Mighty Wurlitzer, and also on **February 11** with *An Affair to Remember*. Admission is still just \$5, and parking is free.

FEBRUARY 5—8:00 p.m. LONGWOOD GARDENS, Kennett Square, PA. Organist **PETER CONTE** will rededicate the newly restored 4/147 famous Aeolian Symphonic Organ at this beautiful DuPont landmark site. 215-893-1999 for tickets and information or check www.longwoodgardens.org.

SATURDAY, MARCH 12—7:00 p.m. JELANI EDDINGTON/CHRIS GORSUCH concert. **Dickinson High School**, Wilmington, DE. 3/66 Kimball. 302-995-5630. DTOS. www.dtoskimball.org. \$12 advance; \$14 at the door.

LAFAYETTE THEATRE: Enjoy the NYTOS 2/11 Mighty Wurlitzer played by **Jeff Barker** on Friday evenings, and **Earle Seely** on Saturday evenings before the first run feature films. Also, *Big Screen Classics* returns to the Lafayette on Saturday, March 19; films will be posted on www.bigscreenclassics.com. Jeff Barker is at the Wurlitzer at 11:00 a.m. for 11:30 shows.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS: Thomas Bagwell, Brooklyn, NY; C. Allan Breen, Union, NJ; Mr. & Mrs. Henry Buchholtz, Mineola, NY; Richard Cardozo, Westbury, NY; Stephen Dente, Englewood Cliffs, NJ; William Diggs, Yonkers, NY; Betty Englert, Howard Beach, NY; Joan Fitzpatrick, Massapequa, NY; Carl Kranz, Union, NJ; Frederick Muller, Newton, NJ; John Stoltz, Middletown, NY.

PIPES & PIZZAZZ—Check out John Vanderlee's weekly Theatre Organ radio show from Vassar College on WKVR 91.3 FM, every Monday from 11:00 a.m. to noon or via www.wvkr.org

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CLOSING CHORDS

NEIL D. CARLSON

Longtime NYTOS and ATOS member Neil Carlson passed away on December 23 after a brief battle with pancreatic cancer. Although Neil resided in Minneapolis and also had a residence in Philadelphia, he was a very generous and supportive member of NYTOS, and was a true enthusiast of the organ who regularly attended theatre and classical organ concerts in the New York area. Neil could always be identified at an event wearing his farmer overalls whether at LIU, Trinity Church, Juilliard, or New York Military Academy, where he attended his last NYTOS event, Ralph Ringstad Jr.'s concert in June. Neil was 71. Our sincere sympathy goes out to his family and friends. We will miss him.

RALPH RINGSTAD, JR.

(August 7, 1961—December 24, 2010)

With the passing of Ralph Ringstad, Jr. on Christmas Eve, the theatre organ world lost a truly gifted and talented artist and a staunch advocate of the theatre organ and its music. Ralph was a long time member of ATOS and of the New York and the Garden State Chapters.

Born in Passaic, NJ, to Ralph and Marie Ringstad, Ralph, Jr. lived most of his life in nearby Whippany, NJ, where sadly he died an accidental death on December 24. Ralph graduated from Whippany High School in 1979, and went on to Ithaca College, in Ithaca, NY, where he earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in music performance in 1983. A multi-talented musician, Ralph received formal training not only in classical and theatre organ, but also in piano, cello, French horn, and tuba. He began his formal musical training at age seven, and at age 13 began studying theatre organ with the late Frank Cimmino, who was to become his mentor and dear friend. By age 17, Ralph was performing regularly along with Frank on the 3/17 Wurlitzer at the Suburban Restaurant in Wanaque, NJ.

Ralph played his professional concert debut on March 8, 1980 on the 4/33 Mighty Möller concert-theatre organ at New York Military Academy in Cornwall-on-Hudson, NY. He returned to the Academy many times over the past 30 years to perform, and ironically played his final formal concert billed as *A Grand Finale Concert* on the Military Academy Möller on June 6, 2010, after the Academy had announced that it would be suspending operations and possibly closing. Over his 30 year professional career, Ralph concertized at many major theatre organ venues throughout the country, including the Senate Theatre in Detroit, The Auditorium Theatre in Rochester, Long Island University (Brooklyn Paramount), the Trenton War Memorial, The Middletown Paramount, The Thomaston Opera House in Connecticut, Chaminade High School, the Newark Symphony Hall, and Loew's Jersey Theatre.

Ralph was among the artists who performed at the Garden State Chapter's "Wonder Weekend" program of concerts dedicating the 4/23 Wonder Morton at Loew's Jersey in October 2008, where he also had served as house organist. Ralph also worked along with his father, Ralph, Sr., as part of the Garden State Chapter's volunteer crew that restored and installed organ at Loew's Jersey, and he and his dad also worked on the crew that restored the rare Griffith-Beach theatre organ at Newark Symphony Hall, which he played regularly for many of the city's high school graduations. For many years Ralph also introduced scores of young people to the organ, playing for elementary school field trips to the music studio of Bob and Cathy Martin in Little Falls, NJ, where he would demonstrate the organ, play requests from the students, accompany a short silent comedy, and help the kids who wanted to try playing themselves.

Ralph had the rare distinction to be featured in 2004 at Lamb's Theatre just off Times Square playing his Allen digital theatre organ as accompanist for the Off-Broadway production of *Silent Laughter*, a live stage performance of a silent film comedy directed by and starring Broadway personality, Billy Van Zandt. He also released a popular theatre organ CD, *One of a Kind*, recorded at the Trenton War Memorial, the master for which he amazingly recorded in just one take. Ralph also served as organist for several churches in New Jersey and in Florida, including the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Paterson, NJ, and he was looking forward to playing the Christmas Eve service at the Advent Lutheran Church in Warren, NJ, where he had been Organist and Music Director for the past several years.

Ralph played his last professional performances the week before his death on the New York Chapter's Allen digital touring organ at the Broadway Shopping Mall in Hicksville, NY, and at JFK International Airport as part of a program sponsored by the New York Chapter and by the Queens and Nassau Chapters of AGO. Doing what he enjoyed most, Ralph provided many hours of delightful Christmas music, and exposed thousands of shoppers, travelers and employees to the wonderful sound of holiday music played on the theatre organ. An avid New York Jets fan, Ralph wore his green Jets Santa hat while playing, which prompted comments from many passers-by. Perhaps his most appreciated reward came in the form of a compliment from a group of JFK Airport employees at the end of his last performance on December 17, when they thanked him for all the beautiful music that they said had helped get them through one of their busiest and most stressful work days of the year.

In spite of his extraordinary talent, Ralph was never pretentious, and he always displayed a sense of optimism and a willingness to do whatever he could to help. On many occasions he volunteered to play for events knowing that there would no pay involved. At chapter social events and open console sessions, Ralph was just one of the regular guys until he sat down at the organ or piano and it became immediately obvious that he did indeed have a special gift.

Ralph will be greatly missed, not only by his parents Marie and Ralph, Sr., and by his sisters Patricia and Karen and their families, but also by all who had the pleasure of knowing him and of enjoying his musical talent as a theatre and church organist over these many years. (Tom Stehle--with thanks to Garden State Chapter President, Mike Cipolletti, and Vice-President, Cathy Martin for their assistance with this article).

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DIRECTIONS TO MIDDLETOWN PARAMOUNT 17 SOUTH ST, MIDDLETOWN, NY 845-346-4195

FROM POINTS SOUTH: Take the New York State Thruway (I-87) north to Exit 16 (Harriman). The exit ramp becomes

Route 17. Continue west on Route 17 for about 12 miles to Exit 123 (Routes 6 & 17M—Middletown, Port Jervis) at Goshen. Follow 17M for about 7 miles (past shopping centers and fast food restaurants) to Fulton St. (8 traffic lights after crossing I-84). Turn left on to Fulton St. (at Southwinds Retirement Home and Rite Aid drug store), and go 2 short blocks to South St. Turn right on to South St. The Paramount Theatre is one block up the hill on the left. There is convenient free parking next to and across the street from the theatre.

FROM POINTS EAST: From Connecticut, Northern Westchester, Dutchess, Putnam Counties and points east, take I-84 to Exit 3 toward Middletown. Exit 3 puts you on to Route 17M (Dolson Ave.). Follow 17M through 8 traffic lights to Fulton St. (at the Southwinds Retirement Home and Rite Aid drug store), turn left on to Fulton St. and go 2 short blocks to South St. Turn right on to South St. The Paramount Theatre is one block up the hill on the left.

FROM POINTS WEST: From western Orange County, Pennsylvania and other points west, take I-84 East to Exit 3 at Middletown, and proceed as in "from points east" above.

FROM POINTS NORTH: From Kingston, Albany and other areas to the north, take the NY State Thruway (I-87) south to Exit 17 at Newburgh. After the toll, merge on to I-84 West. Take I-84 West to Exit 3 toward Middletown and proceed as in "From points east" above.

SHORTLINE BUS: Bus service is provided by Shortline/Coach USA from and to Port Authority Bus Terminal in Midtown from Manhattan. The Paramount is about a 4 block walk from the bus station in Middletown.

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