

Rosa Rio, Legendary Theatre Organist, Dies at 107!

Rosa Rio peacefully passed away at her home in Sun City Center on May 13, 2010 with her husband, Bill Yeoman, by her side. She was 107 years old.

Her prolific career began with a simple declaration to her family at age eight, "When I grow up, I want to play a big piano, wear pretty clothes and lots of jewelry, and make people happy."

She was extraordinarily positive, motivated and determined. She was able to seamlessly adapt to changes in the entertainment industry (silent films, talkies, radio, TV, and finally, back to silent films). "I can't believe that I've been so fortunate to have been in so many things that went out and I bounced back," she said in 2007. Her path was not without challenges. As the only woman in the orchestra pit, she routinely challenged men who considered her to be second fiddle because of her gender. She allayed those stereotypical reactions with talent, charm and a (sometimes bawdy) sense of humor.

Tara Schroeder, Tampa Theatre's Director Programming and Marketing, had become best friends with Rio. "Rosa's talent and passion for music and the theatre organ was remarkable, and in fact I am certain that her passion was the key to her longevity. I feel so fortunate to have become so close to her. She is a testament to the will of spirit," Schroeder said.

Rosa began taking piano lessons at eight, and at ten landed her first job at a silent movie theater in hometown of New Orleans. After studying music at Oberlin College and silent film accompaniment at The Eastman School of Music, Rosa accompanied silent films in movie palaces in New York and New Orleans. The balloon burst in 1927 with the advent of "talkies."

In the 1930s and 40s, Rosa was dubbed "Queen of the Soaps," having provided organ accompaniment for 24 soap operas and radio dramas, sometimes dashing from one studio to another with seconds between shows. On average, she played for five to seven shows per day, including "The Shadow" with Orson Welles and "The Bob and Ray Show," "Cavalcade of America," "My True Story," and "The Goldbergs."

Rosa was hired by NBC as a temporary replacement while they searched for a man. "I asked them if they were

looking for a man or an organist," Rosa said. She stayed for 22 years and was the first woman hired into an orchestra of 156 men. It would be ten years before another woman was hired, and would kindle Rosa's life-long passion for women's rights.

Transitioning to television, Rosa played the organ for many network series, including "The Today Show," "As the World Turns," and "The Guiding Light."

On piano, Rosa worked with many vocalists, most notably Mary Martin, whom she accompanied at her audition for Cole Porter.

Since 1996, Rosa performed for over 30 silent film presentations for full houses at the Tampa Theatre's 1,400-pipe Mighty Wurlitzer Theatre Organ. Her last performance at Tampa Theatre was on August 30, 2009 when she provided the accompaniment for a Buster Keaton silent comedy. While the sold-out audiences always thanked her with standing ovations, she graciously returned the accolades, saying "I have such gratitude for the wonderful people who have such love for the theatre organ, silent pictures and Tampa Theatre."

John Bell, Tampa Theatre's President and CEO said, "We were so fortunate to have Rosa as part of the Tampa Theatre family for the past 14 years. She was an amazing woman with remarkable talent who introduced tens of thousands of people to the magic of silent films and the theatre organ. While I am very saddened by her passing, I am so thankful that she was able to share her musical talents throughout her long and fulfilling life. She was an inspiration to so many people, young and old."



If you would like to express your condolences to Rosa's family, you can send cards and letters to Tampa Theatre, Attn: Rosa's Family, 711 N. Franklin St., Tampa, FL 33602. Please no flowers. Emails can be directed to tara@tampatheatre.org.

Tampa Theatre will celebrate her life with a memorial on Saturday, June 5 at 11:00 am. The public is invited.

Reprinted with permission from Tampa Theatre



Board of Directors

President—Rick Parks..(10)
president@crtos.org

Vice-President—Richard Lawson..(06)
vicepresident@crtos.org

Secretary—Shirley Clausen..(08)
secretary@crtos.org

Treasurer—Ron Deamer..(09)
treasurer@crtos.org

Directors—
 Ron Briggs..(05)

Gary Nelson..(09)

Rob Kingdom..(10)

Fred Bish..(10)

Bob Shaffer..(09)

Membership—Shirley Clausen

Activities—Shirley Clausen

Communications—Carol Brown
carolmaxb@verizon.net

Webmaster—Paul Tichy
Webmaster@crtos.org

Newsletter Ed.—Terry Robson
robson@aol.com

The next CRTOS board meeting will be held Tuesday, June 15, 2010, location to be determined.

Columbia River Theatre Organ Society is a non-profit, educational organization dedicated to the preservation of the theatre organ and its music.

CRTOS Board Meeting April 27, 2010

President Terry Robson called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Board members present were: Dick Lawson, Bob Shaffer, Ron Deamer, Randy Rock, Ron Briggs and Shirley Clausen, and new board members, Robert Kingdom, Rick Parks and Fred Bish. Also present were: Paul Tichy, Steve Jarvis, Mike Bryant and Clayton Parks.

The minutes of the last meeting were approved as printed in the Clarion.

The treasurer's report was given and approved. This led to a discussion of the high costs of presenting an organ concert when we do not draw a large enough audience to cover the expenses. The discussion included ways to reduce the costs, as well as ways to encourage more people to attend, for instance by increasing our publicity and perhaps more importantly, by adding more variety to the programs, rather than just Concerts, per se.

The committee (Bob Shaffer, Mike Bryant, and Paul Tichy) working on the proposal to have CRTOS become a member of the ATOS gave their report. The report gives the pros and cons of the proposal. The board approved the report and it will be sent out to the membership along with a ballot for members to vote on and return to the board by May 17th.

Bob Shaffer reminded the board members about the need to fill out and return their resumes so that we can forward them to a Grant Writer.

Paul Tichy gave a report on the club website, and requested more information on upcoming events so that he can put them on the website.

Randy Rock gave a report on the progress made on the Virtual Organ. The console is still at Mike Bryant's home but needs to be moved to the theatre soon. There is still some work to be done on it, some of which could be done after it is in the Hollywood Theatre. Randy is working on the new sound system. There is a collection of spare parts which can be sold. As the work progresses, he will need to consult with electrical contractors, etc.

There was a discussion of upcoming events, including a possible program/open house at the Hollywood in late May. The organ will be used several times during the Portland Rose Festival Events.

New Events included the election of officers for the coming year. Members going off of the board are: Bob MacNeur, Randy Rock and Terry Robson. New members are: Rick Parks, Fred Bish and Robert Kingdom. Officers elected were: President, Rick Parks; V. President, Dick Lawson; Treasurer, Ron Deamer; and Secretary, Shirley Clausen.

The motion to adjourn was made and approved at 8:30 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
 Shirley Clausen, Secretary

CRTOS Board Meeting May 18, 2010

President Rick Parks brought the meeting to order at 7:00pm. Additional board members present were Richard Lawson, Bob Shaffer, Fred Bish, Robert Kingdom, and Ron Deamer. Absent were Gary Nelson, Shirley Clausen and Ron Briggs. Guests attending were Catherine Couch, Steve Jarvis, Mike Bryant, Terry Robson and Paul Tichy.

The Treasurer's report was given. Motion to approve given by Bob Shaffer and seconded by Richard Lawson. Unanimously approved as presented.

Old Business: The next order of business was counting ballots to see if the membership approved the board action to seek association with nation American Theatre Organ Society as a chapter. The ballots were tallied by Ron Deamer, Catherine Couch and Steve Jarvis. The measure was approved by a tremendous margin—34 yes to 13 no votes. A motion to accept the results of the vote was presented by Ron Deamer and seconded by Bob Shaffer. It was unanimously approved.

Rob and Mike gave a brief update on the VTO, which is nearly ready to be returned to the Hollywood. Terry presented an update list of proposed activities, which includes our Summer picnic at Gary Nelson's home and a return visit to the Plunkett's in the Fall as well as plans for an open console at the Hollywood, a silent film at Halloween, plus the beginnings of a Holiday Variety Show also at the Hollywood in early December. Rick Parks suggested we do not schedule a Fall concert at the Elsinore Theatre while he tries to work out a better financial arrangement for CRTOS.

New Business: Rob and Mike also reported on the "Portland Day" concerts during the National ATOS convention. Tickets will be available for Cleveland High School and First United Methodist at \$20 each.

Paul Tichy talked about the need to begin work on a method to vote on local issues of CRTOS via email through our website.

Steve Jarvis is researching a new location to hold our board meetings. Even though we are in a private room, at our current location, there is no door and is often very noisy as well as being too small.

Bob Shaffer motioned to adjourn the meeting; it was seconded by Richard Lawson. A unanimous vote closed the meeting at 7:45.

Submitted by,
 Terry Robson, acting Secretary

Nathan Avakian, 2009 ATOS Young Theatre Organist Competition winner, re-visited his Outside the Box program on Friday May 7th, 2010 for the Oregon Chapter ATOS at Cleveland High School. Alongside his talented sister Claire Avakian, NW Fusion Dance Company and the ever entertaining silent clown Angel Ocasio, he gave us an evening over-flowing with music and entertainment.

What can I say about this young man that hasn't already been said?! Nathan's repertoire is broad and he touched on everything from classical to modern pop reminding us this instrument is truly one of the most versatile. In addition to an already full evening of organ music, we also witnessed some skillfully choreographed dance numbers by NW Fusion Dance Company set to Nathan's accompaniment. But it didn't stop there. We also got treated to the talented young Claire Avakian both with a solo vocal number and a duet with Nathan while he accompanied at the organ! Keep your eyes on her too... this is one talented family! To top it all off, we were also entertained by Angel Ocasio - accompanied by Nathan. Angel's zany and whimsical performances kept the audience smiling and laughing throughout.

Once again Nathan has given us a "not your typical" organ performance. His technical skills are impressive. His love of theatre and the performing arts shines through. I can't wait to see what's next!

Steve Jarvis



Taken in 2007: Jon Paul Bish, Caroline Getty and Fred Bish

Caroline Getty former member of Columbia River Theatre Organ Society recently died at Hopewell Hospice after an illness of several weeks following a stroke and light heart attack.

She was born in Ireland 79 years ago, having immigrated to this country some 46 ago and worked for over 30 years for the telephone company. For some years prior, she worked as a florist at Clarence Walker Flowers. Also, at the same time, she was manager of Columbia Manor Apartments in Portland.

Caroline was a generous spirit, who enjoyed entertaining and having friends in for tea, dinners, and parties and hired an organist to play music for the occasion. She took lessons for about five years from Gary Russell, organ teacher and organist at Oaks Roller Rink. She continued to come to concerts on occasion with her friends, most recently Nathan Avakian's concert at the Elsinore. She is survived by a sister and a brother and many nieces, nephews, and friends who loved her. We will miss her!

Fred Bish

Theatre Pipe Organ for Sale: 8-rank Wurlitzer console, 8 ranks of pipes, traps, blower, regulators, and relay. Currently playing in Springfield, Oregon. The instrument also has a midi interface to use with an electronic keyboard. There are also many components in excess of the playing instrument all of which are in very good condition. The organ is a combination of Wicks, Wurlitzer, Kimball etc. All of the pipe chests have electric valve actions plus many new, never installed magnet valves. Please contact: John Otterstedt. 541-736-0273. johott38@msn.com

Terry Robson, Newsletter Editor
3422 SE 8th Ave.
Portland, OR 97202—2709

Forwarding & Address Service Requested



www.crtos.org

Upcoming CRTOS events *and other area organ activities...*

CRTOS Events

June—Rose Festival Week at the Hollywood Theatre. See schedule in box for the Youth Silent Film Festival

Conchords Chorale Friday, June 11 at 7pm & Sunday, June 13 at 3pm. At the Hollywood Theatre. CRTOS will provide organ music beginning about 45 minutes before each show along with piano solos at about 15 or 20 minutes before the show. **The show is titled: "Let's Go To The Movies"**

Late June—Open Console Hollywood Theatre

August—Summer BBQ at the home of Gary Nelson. August Date to be determined

September/October—Gathering at the home of Allan & Nancy Plunkett

October—Sunday, October 31 at 2pm. Halloween Silent Film at the Hollywood Theatre

December—Variety Show at the Hollywood Theatre. Date TBD

ATOS Events

June 28—July 4, 2010—National ATOS Convention hosted by Puget Sound Theatre Organ Society. There will be a **"Portland Day"** July 1, which will feature 3 of our area instruments: Cleveland High School, Oak Skating Rink and First United Methodist Church. **Two of these concerts are open to the public:** Cleveland High School at 2pm with Donna Parker, and 4:30pm at First United Methodist Church with Jonas Nordwall. Tickets will be \$20 each, but a package price will be offered. If you'd like to learn more about these concerts, go to www.orcatos.org

- Screenings of the entries for the **Youth Silent Film Festival** will begin on **Sunday, June 6, at 3pm.** A selection of 15 entries will be shown with Nathan Avakian providing accompaniment for all of the screening events.
- A special matinee has been added on **Tuesday, June 8, at 3pm** with the top 15 entrants being shown. Again, Nathan will be providing live accompaniment.
- At **7pm on Tuesday, June 8,** a different collection of 15 entries will be shown with Nathan accompanying.
- The following day, **Wednesday, June 9, at 7pm,** will be the final showing of 15 more entrants.
- **Saturday, June 12,** as part of the Rose Festival's evening program at the Hollywood Theatre, 3 award winners will be announced.

Admission General: \$10 – Students & Seniors \$6

Tickets may be purchased on-line at www.boxofficetickets.com



June 28 - July 4, 2010 • Seattle, WA

For additional convention information, visit Puget Sound's website:

www.pstos.org

For Sale—Rodgers 34E. Three manual theatre organ with 4 speaker cabinets. This organ is virtually identical to the one we had at the Hollywood several years ago. Nice console, great keyboards. Would make an excellent home for a Virtual Theatre Organ.

If interested, please contact Matt Miles in Longview, Washington at 360-425-7902

Rodgers Theater Organ Needs New Home

Rodgers 22E electronic theater organ, with two 61-note manuals and full 32-note pedal board, external amplifier and speaker cabinet, in fully working condition. Good choice for a serious student. Free to loving home. Details on request.

Jack Powers

503/492-4104

jackp@me.com