

The Organ Spiel

NEWSLETTER FOR THE SIERRA CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY

Silent Movie – Stockton



May 2012



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Clark Wilson

Clark Wilson is one of the most prominent and recognized scorers of silent photoplays in America today. He works exclusively with the Organ in developing accurate and historic musical accompaniments as they were performed in major picture palaces during the heyday of the silent film.

Clark was personally influenced by Chicago area organist John Muri, who was an original master of picture accompaniment and practiced his art well into the 1980s. His (and Wilson's) historic style was that of utilizing fine music as a basis for developing a score of musical value. If the original score is no longer extant, a new one is prepared from the organist's library and is normally transferred to a cue sheet – somewhat of a "road map" of suggested themes and notated screen actions which keep the organist fully on course. The development of themes in serious pictures is obtained exclusively in this way and it must be considered the truest way to properly underscore screen action. Nothing is left to chance and wholesale improvisation is not relied upon. Further, the musical style of the time remains intact; no attempt is made to distract from the picture by using themes or styles that entered the musical scene years later. Most important of all, the film remains the focus and star of the performance.

Wilson began his scoring career in 1980 and has successfully toured North America with hundreds of film presentations. His work has led to performances for the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, where he re-premiered "Wings" for Paramount Studios' 100th Anniversary. He is the organist of choice for many of the American Theatre Organ Society's international convention silent film presentations. Clark has been organ conservator and Resident Organist at the Ohio Theatre for the Columbus Associate for the Performing Arts since 1992 and is responsible for all music during the annual classic movie series, which also features one or more major silent films each season. In addition, he has led courses in

Sunday, May 20 2:00PM

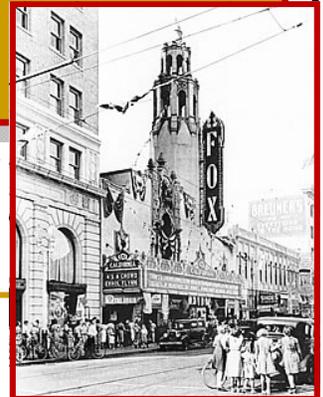
Bob Hope Theatre
242 East Main
Stockton

Box office opens at
1:00PM

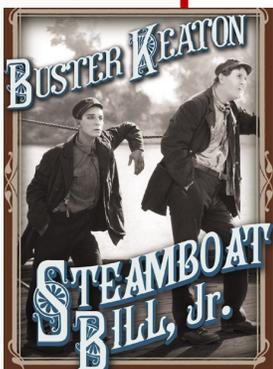
theatre organ styling and silent film accompaniment at the Indiana University School of Music and he is heavily involved in the development of a similar degree program at the University of Oklahoma.

About the (Stockton) Fox Bob Hope Theatre:

The opening of the Fox on October 14, 1930, was one of the most grandiose events in the region. Approximately 20,000 people attended the celebration. Opening acts included the latest "talkie" movies and comedy skits. The Fox was the largest vaudeville house in California, with 2,170 seats. The theatre was also one of the safest buildings of the time, built entirely with cement and steel, with the ability to evacuate guests within two minutes. One of the jewels of the theatre was the \$40,000 (in 1930) three manual Wurlitzer pipe organ with twin pipe lofts. With a steady decline in the '70s, the organ was removed and the building faced demolition. Eventually, the theatre was saved, renovated and donated back to the City of Stockton. In 2000, **Bob Hartzell**, president of *Friends of the Fox*, a nonprofit organization that supports the Fox Theatre, orchestrated the refurbishment of a 1928 Robert Morton pipe organ placed in the renovated Theatre. Now restored, the organ is worth between \$160,000 - \$200,000.



Steamboat Bill, Jr. (1928)



This is the last of physical comedian **Buster Keaton's** (the Great Stone Face) nine independent feature films and one of the last silent comedies. The film - actually co-written, co-produced, and co-directed by actor Keaton (with director Chas. F. Reisner) was derived from a story by Carl Harbaugh, although Keaton only took credit for acting.

The two most amazing sequences: (1) Keaton's dare-devil, death-defying stunt (Keaton performed his own) when a three-story building facade crashes down on top of him, saving him because the third floor window opening clears his head, and (2) the destructive cyclone sequence. The farcical film, probably Keaton's funniest, was his second to last silent feature film.

The story involves the father-son tale of an educated, effeminate, accident-prone, college-educated but simple-minded son - an archetypal underdog American hero - who ultimately is transformed and triumphs when he assists and impresses his burly, red-necked, hard-working Mississippi steamboat captain father in combating the threatening efforts of a rival tycoon to take over the Mississippi steamboat business in the South - and also wins over the business rival's daughter.

IL TEMPIO DI MUSICA

Saturday, July 7 at the Trabucco Ranch

A duet of **Mimi Blais and Larisa Migachyov** will be playing mostly classical, but with some ragtime and other things thrown in.

More to come in a future Spiel, or contact Bill for details. **(530) 273-4252**

Oroville State Theatre - Fundraising Event

Ragtime Extravaganza - Featuring **Mimi Blais**
Saturday, August 4th

This event will support the Theatre and Organ restoration project.
More details to come in a future Spiel.

Board Meeting

Saturday

May 12

10:00AM

East Lawn Memorial Park
43rd & Folsom

Poorman's Pipe Organ Convention



May 5th & 6th

Granada Theatre

**616 Kentucky Street
Bakersfield**

Come and visit with other pipe organ people.

Play the 4/24 Robert Morton.

Let us know if you would like to play a movie on the big screen. We have hundreds of silent movies and several formats of projection, carbon arc 35mm, DVD, VHS, Video, carbon arc 16mm, magic lantern. Bring your own movie to play. We can get it on the big screen.

- ◆ Bring a sleeping bag and crash in the theatre for a real adventure.
- ◆ Close to Basque and fast food Restaurants
- ◆ Close to Motels
- ◆ Soft Drinks, Hard Drinks and Snack Bar Food
- ◆ Play any kind of music you please; original theatre organ, classical, religious, rock, pop, marches, waltzes. I don't care what you play as long as you play. Even if you don't play come listen to those that do.

The artists for this convention are **you**, the attendees.
Help us keep the theater pipe organ alive.

Contact Jim Spohn with questions **(661) 326-1308** or e-mail: **jamespohn@gmail.com**.

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PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE – Randy Warwick

Another wonderful event again at Ironstone as **Brett Valiant** displayed a seeming long term familiarity with the instrument even though he had only played it several hours over a couple days. His tune selection and arrangements adeptly showed just about all of the organ's palette of tone colors and even revealed that the snortin' Morton does have a lush side. Very nice performance by Brett at his first West Coast appearance and we hope to see him back soon.

Thanks to **Dave Sauer** for once again handling details with Ironstone and arranging for the buses. Also to **Terry** and **Sherry Clifton** for hosting the Fair Oaks bus. Nice ride although I was puzzled by the driver going from Fair Oaks west on 50 to 99 then south to Liberty then back east, maybe the curves on part of 49 are a bit tight for the bus....oh well we got there in plenty of time.

Thanks to **Craig Peterson** for shuttling Brett from airport to Ironstone and back.

On May 20 at 2PM we hope to see everyone at the Bob Hope Theater in Stockton for **Clark Wilson's** accompaniment of *Steamboat Bill, Jr.* Clark is without a doubt one of the best at silent accompaniment. I happened to hear him last Halloween at Disney Hall in L.A. playing a silent on the big classical organ and he was terrific. Also, come on, for most of us this will not be as long a drive as going to Ironstone, plus if you have never been there, the theater is a

jewel having received a beautiful restoration several years ago. We are supporting the "Friends of the Fox" in their effort to keep this organ before the public.

Our own **Dave Moreno** is now the Hope's organist of record, **Tom Thompson** having retired, for the monthly Classic Films playing pre-show music on the Morton.

As a personal side note, the Morton at the Bob Hope has a special spot in my memory as the first theater pipe organ I ever played; that was in 1967 when it was in the Carl Greer Inn. And although not verifiable, it may have been the first I ever heard and planted the seed of interest in the theater organ when, as a kid of about seven or eight, in Seattle, I heard an organ with a big, bright, spot lit console, in a theater at intermission.

I do not remember the theater name or movie and have not been able to verify which Seattle theaters in the early 50's were using organs for intermission. I should mention for those unfamiliar with this Morton's history it was originally in a big Seattle theater until removal in 1964 when it went into Sacramento's then new Carl Greer Inn on Fulton at I-80.



Pristine - 1100 Series Hammond
 Contact Debbie Donahue at
 (916) 966-5910 or e-mail
BKEXPRESSDEB@AOL.COM
 for more information.



MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Welcome New Members:
Pat Fitzgerald

Renewing at the Benefactor Level:
Carol Zerbo

Renewing at the Patron Level:
Paul S. & R. Sue Brown



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MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR EVENTS

FRIENDS OF THE FOX EVENT

Bob Hope Theatre
242 East Main Street
Stockton, CA

Organ Concert and Silent Movie

Featuring:

Clark Wilson

Steamboat Bill Jr (1928)



Sunday, May 20

2:00PM

\$15/Adults
\$8/Children 12 &
Under

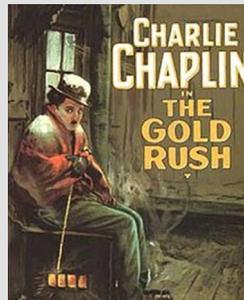
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The Cortopassi
Family Foundation

IRONSTONE

Ironstone Vineyards
1894 Six Mile Road
Murphys, California

Silent Movie

The Gold Rush



**Friday, May
25th**

Featuring:

Dave Moreno

**\$20 - Includes
Buffet Dinner and Movie
Reservations: (209) 728-1251 Ext 11**

STOCKTON FOX EVENT

On the Waterfront

Friday, May 11

6:30PM

\$8/Adults

Featuring

**DAVE
MORENO**



Playing "The music of 1954"

**ON THE
Mighty Morton
Theatre Organ**

The Chapter was organized in 1968 as a not-for-profit corporation under the statutes of the State of California and is recognized as tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and Section 23701d of the California Revenue and Taxation Code. It was organized for the purpose of preservation and promotion of the Theatre Pipe Organ and its music. Membership in the local Chapter also encourages membership in the National Organization, American Theatre Organ Society (ATOS.) www.atos.org