

The Organ Spiel

NEWSLETTER for the SIERRA CHAPTER of the AMERICAN THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY

ORGAN CONCERT

NOVEMBER 2025

GUEST ORGANIST: WALT STRONY



Walt Strony is one of America's premier concert organists. Since his debut in 1974 at the age of 18, he has established himself as one of the few organists equally at home playing both theatre and classical organ.

Mr. Strony has performed from coast-to-coast in the United States as well as in Japan, Australia, England and Canada. He has performed for more conventions of the American Theatre Organ Society than anyone living and has also performed numerous times for chapters of the America Guild of Organists.

This well-rounded musician brings a wealth of experience to any organ console. This experience has brought him the reputation of being one of America's most original and interesting sounding organists. As one reviewer noted years ago -- "Strony has become one of the rare breed of today's younger theatre organists to have developed a style uniquely his own. While looking backwards, respectfully to the masters of theatre organ tradition, he manages to look forward with a refreshing approach in all his musical arrangements." "It is a style that is inventive, harmonically, interesting and above all, right for today."

Il Tempio di Musica

14328 Barr Ranch Rd

Near Grass Valley

**SATURDAY,
Nov. 15th
2:00 PM
Free**

THE STORY OF THE TRABUCCO PIPE ORGAN v5/2/25

By Bill Trabucco

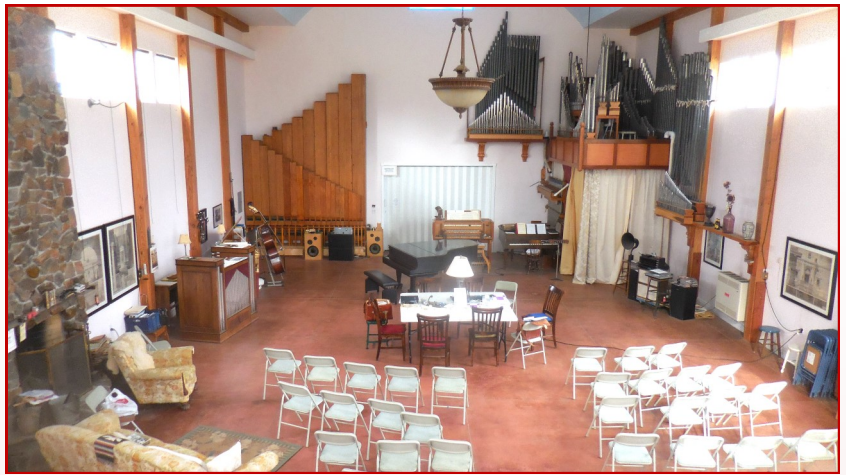


I started building the organ I have at Linden Lea, in **Il Tempio di Musica** during high school, from scratch, ca. 1960 in my parent's basement in San Francisco. After much experimentation, time poking around pipe organs (including the S.F. Fox Theater Wurlitzer and lobby Moeller thanks to an usher friend and Everett Nourse) and some reference books, I set out building a rank of stopped wood pipes and making my own Reisner/Wicks style direct electric pallet magnets for a wind chest. By 1963 I'd ended up with an 85 pipe rank of stopped wood pipes from 16' pitch played by a handmade 61 note keyboard and a 20 note pedal clavier. The pedal clavier was in use until 1998 when it was replaced by a 32 note, concave, radiating one I picked up at a Schoenstein sale. At that time, the organ operated with an electropneumatic relay system I designed and built in 1961 for an eventual 3 ranks. The relay was expanded to handle 7 ranks by 2000, and now operates 17 ranks, mixture ranks counted as individuals. I'm glad when I made the relay in 1962 that I put the full 32 note pedal compass into it. In 1970, I **DID** spend a short time working for Felix F. Schoenstein & Sons repairing and tuning with Paul Schoenstein, getting some professional experience.

Subsequent to initial air provided by a shop vacuum cleaner, the organ's wind was provided by my home-made blower run by an old (ca. 1920s) Fridgidaire repulsion start 1 hp motor. In 1999 I re-built the blower into a two stage one providing 9" static pressure with more air volume, and replaced the original motor with a quieter one from a salvaged vacuum pump. I'm amazed that my original 20" diameter blower wheel from 1961 did not fly apart and still worked fine as the blower's second stage until 2009 when the blower was replaced by a yet quieter Meidinger blower. Wind is regulated by two curtain valve regulator/reservoirs I built in 1962, a Moeller pedal division regulator, and a salvaged console pneumatic regulator for the lower pressure ranks. The organ runs on 4 -3/4" and 2 -3/4" pressure. I built a rotating valve tremulant for some treble ranks using an old 78 rpm phonograph motor, having given up on making a reliable, steady pneumatic one. In 2015 I added a second pneumatic tremulant covering some additional ranks. (continued on page 2)

(continued from page 1)

In 1996 the original, highly unified, 1 rank organ moved to Los Altos Hills into a space I'd built for it. The space had a glass enclosed, 28' tall stairway that permitted un-mitered 16' pipes. I quickly added a 16' viol rank (though it was mitered) obtained from a flooded church in Missouri, then a nice 8' diapason I got from Scott Nelson of Sacramento. That filled up the relay until it was expanded. I extended all ranks at the top to enable 4' diapason, 4' viol, and 2 - 2/3' stopped flute stops to play to the top of the keyboard, my original relay having provided for this. I'd had John Hupalo, pipe maker, at the time with Schoenstein & Co. (by then under Jack Bethards) repair some of the viol pipes that got smashed in shipping. When I asked John about making the small, top extension pipes, he said he'd teach me how to make metal pipes so I could make them myself. I ended up making the top octaves of 2 metal ranks and metal pipes for the top of my wood rank in his shop under his guidance during an "organ pipe camp".



Wanting to get a bit more Baroque (my wife suggested she'd play more if the organ had Baroque sounds) I picked up an 8' rankette from Scott Nelson. It is a rather abrasive little rankette, but fun too. "Tuned ducks" is the best description. Then an 8' oboe from Scott Nelson. The 16' bottom octave pedal extension to the oboe is a fagot. A 4' spitzflute and an 8' Casavant corneopane came from a Schoenstein/Bethards warehouse clearance. I've built my own wind chests for all the pipework (except the 16' open wood pedal rank) due to the physical restrictions of the various venues of the organ. The oboe/fagot required much repair, but all of the above now play nicely. The organ moved to the shop at our ranch near Grass Valley in 2003 and into the adjacent "**Il Tempio di Musica**" in 2008. 2009 saw the addition of a 2' "fifteenth" and a 3 rank mixture to the ensemble. Pipes to do some additions came from the 5 rank "furniture" of an organ I helped remove from Old St. Mary's in S.F. 2010 saw the restoration and addition of a 16' open wood pedal rank from an 1887 Hutchings organ, along with a "Montre" style 8' diapason on the main keyboard. In 2015 I made 5 pipes to fill out the top of the formerly 27 note open wood pedal rank to 32 notes and added an 8' gamba to the pedal and solo. 2016 saw the installation of a viol celeste using 49 violin/cello pipes I'd got a few years ago on a chest I'd prepared for the celeste in 1996. In 2021 I made time to add a Cornet 2 rank mixture and a 32' resultant to the pedal facilitated by the console re-do described below. Toggle switches on the Cornet chest permit on/off of either 2' or 1-1/3'. Chimes, from St. Mark's Lutheran in S.F. got refurbished and connected in 2022.



The existing "console" consists of 2 key claviers; my original, plus one cobbled together from two short Hammond electronic organ keyboards. In 2020 I constructed an entirely new, very modular upper section housing the two keyboards that also incorporates a combination action; five presets with division and general cancels and LED lighting. However, as the sewing machine console has been immortalized in an article on home organs in "American Organist" by Jim Welch who played my organ when it was in Los Altos Hills, the treadle sewing machine is still incorporated.

Directions to 14328 Barr Ranch Rd (also known at Linden Lea Ranch on your GPS) can be obtained from your laptop or phone GPS. However, cell phone reception in the foothills near the ranch may be spotty so it is best to have directions on paper as a backup. Bitney Springs Rd is the road that gives you access to Barr Ranch Rd. Whether you are on Bitney approaching Barr Ranch from the East or West, just keep an eye out on the North side of Bitney for the intersection that looks like this photo.



Heading north on Hwy 49 there are two options to get to Bitney. The first is to exit Hwy 49 (just South of Grass Valley) to Hwy 20 West. Follow Hwy 20 for about 7.4 miles to Pleasant Valley Rd and turn right. Follow Pleasant Valley Rd for about 5.5 miles to Bitney Springs Rd on your right. From there it is about 2.3 miles to the intersection with Barr Ranch Rd on the left, as shown in the picture.

Option 2 is to proceed North on Hwy 49 to the Hwy 174 (Colfax) exit and turn left at the end of the ramp. Follow Auburn street north to Main street and turn left. Continue on Main for 2.6 miles which will become Rough and Ready Rd. Turn right at the Stop Sign for Bitney Springs Rd. Continue on Bitney Springs for 4.7 miles to the intersection of Barr Ranch Rd, on your right, as shown in the picture.

Now for both options, you are heading north on Barr Ranch Rd. Continue until Barr Ranch veers off to the right. Don't go that way; go straight. Total distance from Bitney Springs Rd is a little less than a mile. Bill usually marks the way with eighth notes. Allow at least 1.5 hours from Sacramento.

Nominations are still being accepted for Board positions beginning in 2026.

If you are a member of ATOS National and have not yet gotten involved at the chapter level...this is your opportunity!

We have two open positions.

*Ask not what Sierra Chapter can do for you...
ask, what can I do for Sierra Chapter?*

It takes a lot of people to keep the chapter machinery running and we have fun doing it! *The success of every nonprofit organization depends on its volunteers.*

Email sierrachapteratos@comcast.net

if you are interested.



Chapter Officers

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Randy Warwick
6th term expires Dec 2025
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Vice President

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Beverly Harris
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2 Board Member Positions Are Still Vacant

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P.O. Box 2017
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MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR EVENTS

SIERRA CHAPTER EVENT

Il Tempio Di Musica
14328 Barr Ranch Rd
Near Grass Valley

**Saturday
November 15
2:00PM**

Organ Concert

**On Bill's 2/17
American Classic
Organ**

WALT STRONGY

Free

FAIR OAKS PARK EVENT

Fair Oaks Community Clubhouse
7997 California Ave
Fair Oaks, CA

**Annual Meeting &
Christmas Party**

**Tentative date is
December 7**

Organist TBD.

SIERRA/GRANT UNION ALUMNI EVENT

Grant Union High School
1400 Grand Ave
Sacramento, CA

**24th George Wright
Tribute Concert
Tentative date is in
February, 2026**

Organist TBD.

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