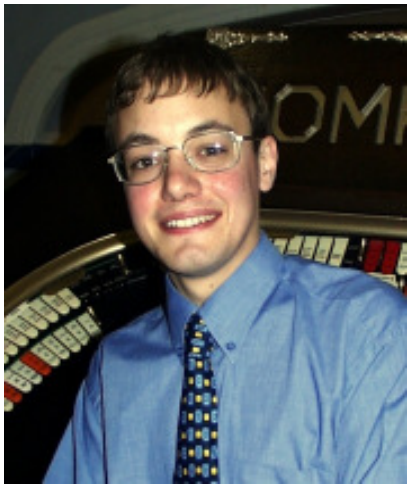


# STOPRAIL

Arizona Chapter of  
The American Theatre Organ Society

Since 1976  
Volume Thirty Four ♦ Issue Eight ♦ August ♦ Two Thousand Nine

## Matthew Bason from the UK to play at the Orpheum July 26



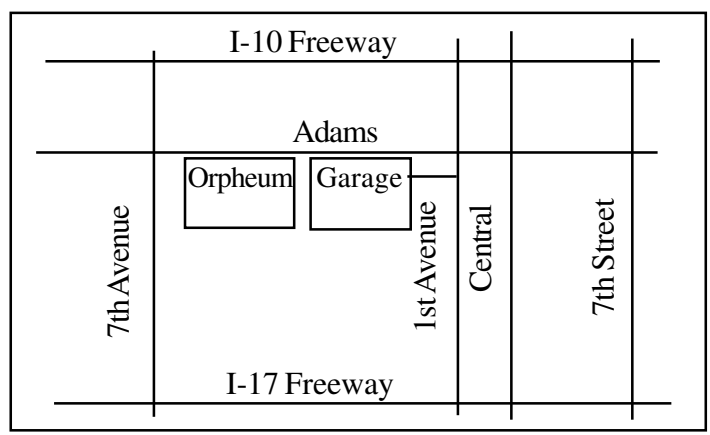
You won't want to miss this concert at the Orpheum, **July 26th, 2:30pm**. We are featuring it as a fundraiser, so bring your friends and family. Parking is free on Sundays both on the street and in the parking garage. If you choose the garage, both you and your car

will be in the shade! The Orpheum is always cool cool cool! Matthew played a great program for us at the Orpheum in August 2008. He won the ATOS Young Organist of the Year award in 1999. His travelling music show occasionally includes a silent film comedy classic accompanied on the organ – a highly entertaining performance from start to finish with a huge range of music played with total competence. Matthew began his performing career in 1994. Originally classically-trained on the piano, at the age of 12 he began to teach himself the organ. In 1998 he went on to study Music and Education at the University of Reading, U.K. From 1997 to 2004 he was resident pianist at Sopwell House, St. Albans where he played as a solo jazz pianist and accompanied singers and cabaret acts. In 1999, Matthew made his European debut playing pipe organ

concerts in the Netherlands, where he has made many return visits to very enthusiastic audiences. In the UK, Matthew has travelled almost every inch of the country and surrounding islands. He is pianist for the Radio Days Big Band. One of Matthew's strengths is playing for ballroom and sequence dancing. As a teacher, he spent 4 years with the Northamptonshire Music and Performing Arts Service teaching piano and theory to all age groups around the county.

**ORPHEUM PARKING** The Orpheum Theatre is at 203 West Adams in downtown Phoenix. You will find parking in the garage directly East of the theatre. The entrance to the garage is off First Avenue South of Adams. It's best to use a freeway exit near the West side of downtown, 7th Avenue is a good choice. Or you can find a parking space on the street near the Orpheum. See you there!

*North*



### Make a difference in 2010

It's not too soon to think about running for a board position for 2010. A nominating committee will

be appointed soon. If you don't want to commit to this much responsibility, you can volunteer to work with one of many committees. Everyone has

their own talent and expertise and can play a part in making our VOTS a success! We need you now and in 2010.

## 2009 Elected Officers & Board Members

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## Christian Cartwright Tames The Wurlitzer!

The Orpheum was not the star this time. Christian Cartwright, from England, was in the USA for the National Convention along with two friends, Tony and Dave, who all work on pipe organs in England. Dave has an automotive shop and they move the cars out and have concerts in the building. There is a theatre pipe organ there. Is that where the dancing bird



whistles are? The three guys have been coming to Arizona following the convention for several years, and enjoying our organs and people. Christian graciously accepted friend Arnie Dale's invitation to play our Wurlitzer at the Orpheum. The program was planned with short notice and we had three dozen or so people who could make it to the performance at the last minute. It is hard to tell whether he or we enjoyed it more. He began his program with his signature tune, *On A Beautiful Day Like Today*. It was actually a nice bright day with a temperature reaching 118 in our desert, far different than England. He continued his program with *Berlin Melody* and later played a tune from *Les Miserables* (made famous now by Susan Boyle), *I dreamed a dream*. Off we went with *Hernando's Hideaway*, (nobody enjoys that song more than the McFadden's), and *Mama Mia, Yesterday* and a really fun rendition of *Mr Sandman*. He played *Secret Love, Lover Come Back To Me, In Otherwords I Love You, Pietro's Return, and Around The World*. We encouraged him to continue and he played a lovely rendition of *Tenderly* for an encore. Christian is a self-taught theatre organist and never had a lesson. It is hard to imagine this kind of talent entirely on its own. He plays a well rounded selection of new and old tunes, and is very creative with our Orpheum Wurlitzer. He and his friends were only in Arizona for three days and they spent many hours enjoying the music at Organ Stop Pizza and the organ at the Dale's house. He was able to play after hours at OSP. You can come and play here anytime, Christian. We loved your performance and style!

## The Stoprail

Published monthly by The Valley of The Sun Chapter of the  
American Theatre Organ Society PO Box 36151, Phoenix, AZ 85067-6151

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Membership Fees: Local Chapter Dues \$25.00 Name Tag \$9.00

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The Valley of the Sun Chapter of the American Theatre Organ Society is a recognized tax exempt educational and charitable organization under section 501-C-3 of the Internal Revenue Code and is a nonprofit corporation organized in the state of Arizona.

## 2009 Calendar of Events

**Sunday July 26-2:30 pm** Matthew Bason at Orpheum Theatre

**July 27-31** Youth Camp

**Sunday September 21-2:30 pm** Phoenix College to be announced

**October 24-7:00 pm** Fright Night! Phantom of the Opera at Orpheum

**November** - Annual meeting 2010 election results announced.

**December** - Christmas Potluck

**Silent Films** - October 24 & November 21, 2009. January 9 & March 20, 2010

For more information : Fred Watson 602-993-7266 mrfgw@cox.net

### Phoenix College Organ Work Dates

If you want to work at Phoenix College, call Bill Carr at 623-694-1746 for more information and to let him know you are coming.

## Letters to the editor



### Babe

Bob Mitchell has passed away. He was the founder of the famous Mitchell Boys Choir. You might remember them from the movies in the 1940's and 50's He was a well known theatre organist and played for the Los Angeles Theatre Organ Society, and for The Los Angeles Conservancy's Last Remaining Seats Program, plus venues around town. Bob worked until the end.

### Madeline adds:

Bob Mitchell was a silent-movie organist and house musician for the Dodgers. The longtime director of the Robert Mitchell Boys Choir played at the Silent Movie Theatre in Los Angeles. Bob was the last surviving working accompanist from the silent-film era.. He was 96.  
The complete article can be viewed at: <http://www.latimes.com/news/obituaries/la-me-bob-mitchell9-2009jul09.0,1836294.story>

### Madeline LiVolsi

OOPS!! Birthday box says March instead of July. Otherwise, looks great! Nice info on the two British organists on the front page.

### Beverly Fizzell

Several people called to tell me the Birthday box listed the month as March instead of July. It was a copy and paste error on my part. Sorry

### Ed Rogers

Dear Beverly, I enjoyed the music and movies at the Church a few weeks ago. I appreciate your keeping the members so well informed. You do a wonderful job with the newsletter.

### Susan Fancher

Thanks so much, Great Newsletter, for sure! P.S. CORRECTION: Jack's Chemo treatments are for Pancreatic cancer, not lung.

### Alabama Jubilee 2009

The final touches are being made for the Alabama Jubilee 2009, Nov. 27 thru 29. The registration form is available for downloading and mailing back. We are still working on a way to do online registration. Don't delay. We only have 2200 seats left. here is the link: <http://www.alabamatheatreorgan.com/convention.html> Hope you can make it. Info from Larry Donaldson of the Alabama Chapter of ATOS.

## Help With Camp Dinner

Cheri Carr & Delores Sheak would like help or donations for the dinner that is being held for the Youth Camp at First Christian Church next week. Call Cheri at 623-694-1746 to see what they need. (Inside information suggests that one item they might like is pie.)

## Organ Progress Reports

*Hi All... Here is an update at the Phoenix College Project... We have made great strides at Phoenix College... All the main pipes ( the four ranks I requested) have been washed and regulated on the voicing bench by Chris Gorsuch... All the missing treble pipes have been fixed and others replaced and should be installed this next week... It is also possibel the the Clairnet and maybe the Oboe Horn will be done shortly... The digital 16' pedal extensions have been installed and work flawlessly... The Artisan Micro MiDi control system worked perfectly also... The summer camp kids will get to play and hear the organ.... AT LAST...*

*In the next few days we will have crossed a mildstone of having a playable organ... Yea.... Future work will slow to a reasonable rate and alott of the stress and presure will finnaly be gone.. Yea again...*

*As money is raised we would like to pay for the blower and add an amplifier and speakers to the main so the Diaphone(bass) will be in the main instead of the solo... We can also add a sampled Wood Harp/ Marimba at the same time... Next projects include, working on the solo chests and 8' English Horn, 8' Orch. Oboe, 16' Salicional (sampled digital 16' & 8' octaves are already there) all in the solo... We will need to raise the money for the missing 3 chests and 1 more regulator.. 8' Tibia ofset will be off trem next week... Thanks to all the help of the CREW and the DONATIONS... Bill Carr, Crew Cheif*

## VOTS/ATOS Board Meeting Minutes

The VOTS/ATOS Board meeting was held Saturday, June 13, 2009 at the Beatitudes Campus. Attending were Bill Carr, Fred Watson, Madeline LiVolsi, Warren Bechhoefer, Don Reasor, Ed Benoit, Tom Fizzell and Beverly Fizzell. Absent were Adrian Phillips and Pete Knobloch. The meeting was called to order at 2:35 pm. The secretary read the minutes from the April 4, 2009 meeting. Fred asked for clarification of the term "promotions committee." Bill said that Fred and Beverly were the "promotions committee" for the October "Fright Night." Warren moved to accept the minutes as read, second by Don. The motion passed. In the absence of the treasurer, Bill gave the treasurer's report. We have money. Bill had gone back through the checks and reissued some that had not been processed. He has paid all of the Desert Winds refunds. He sent checks to EMGEE ("Navigator" rental) and the lawyers dealing with the hotel issue. Current checking balance is \$5198.67, money market is \$1465.00, savings is \$1,015.70, for a total balance of \$7679.37. This does not include an insurance check, which makes the new balance \$6929.37. There were also donations from the silent movie Saturday, and donations to the Phoenix College organ fund. Bill has access to our accounts online. He can check balances even if Adrian isn't here. Fred moved to accept the treasurer's report, second by Don. The motion passed.

**Vice-President/Program Chairman** - Fred spoke about upcoming chapter events. The July 26 chapter meeting at the Orpheum will feature Matthew Bason at the organ. July 30, the chapter will host the ATOS Youth Camp attendees for a potluck at the First Christian Church Fellowship Hall.. Cherie Carr and Delora Sheak will work to put a dinner menu together, with information to go in the newsletter. There is nothing currently planned for August. The September meeting will be at Phoenix College, with date and artist to be announced. We need to have a business meeting in October to have nominations for the November board member elections. October will also feature our Halloween extravaganza at the Orpheum. A TV producer, Liz Petroff, is to help out with the production. We may have a fund raiser in November. A silent film is also scheduled. December will be the Christmas party, with date, location and artist to be announced. Beverly suggested the First Christian Church Fellowship Hall for the Christmas party, since they have a very convenient kitchen. Fred will check into that. There is a possibility that Christian Cartwright from England can play for the chapter, July 11 or 12. It may be at Arnie Dale's home, FCC or the Orpheum

**Crew Chief Reports** - Orpheum - Tom reported that there is a lot going on, but he has not been on top of it and Pete is in Colorado. Bill played the organ for a city open house and some tours, Don Story played for a children's

choir, and Donna Parker played for a real estate association's "All Starrs." This is all good publicity for us. We did not ask a fee for these events, did them as a public service. Pete was there to take care of the organ for all activities.

FCC -Work has been done on the toy counter. Tom needs Adrian's scaffolding to rewire the snare drum. The xylophone was fixed and tuned. The building and grounds supervisor has said that there is no rush to get the organ out of the building.

Phoenix College -Chris Gorsuch should be here July 1-7, with plans to rough tune and regulate the pipes. Everything is ready for him to connect with. If Bill gets help for the next couple of weeks, nine ranks will be playable after Chris is done. We may be able to use the organ for the youth camp.

**Membership** - Ed reported that we currently have 107 local members, 48 of which are national ATOS members. Russ and Sharon Diaz have agreed to be greeters at the July meeting. Ed will have a membership table at the back door entry way.

**Newsletter** - Bill said that we needed to have two other board members check the newsletter for accuracy (dates, meeting time, etc.) before it is sent out. Beverly can send it to Madeline and Fred to be checked before sending it out to everyone.

**Old Business** - We still need a new name for Silent Sundays series, which will now be on Saturday nights. The new season dates are October 24, 2009; November 21, 2009; January 9, 2010; March 20, 2010. Fred needs to get together with Ron as soon as possible for film selections. We are looking in to the cost or donation of a DVD projector. Fred needs information from the treasurer to submit for the Piper's Trust grant.

**New Business** - Bill went over the tentative schedule for the ATOS Youth Camp. A Gulbranson Rialto I, with an external leslie, has been donated to the chapter. It needs a home. We would like to donate it to someone else. Don asked if e-mailing the newsletter has saved on postage. Beverly said yes, that mailing now costs about \$8 instead of \$40.

**Open Items** - Beverly asked about the planned audit. Bill said that we are going to have it done by an auditor who is not a member of the chapter. A local CPA will do it for a donation receipt for services rendered. This must be completed before the annual business meeting in November. Madeline will attend the chapter leadership meeting at the convention Fred moved to adjourn, second by Warren. The motion passed The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Madeline LiVolsi

## Convention Update Anyone? *by Larry Davis, Atlanta Georgia.*

Just got back from Cleveland. It was a very good convention and I enjoyed myself tremendously. It was definitely different, with a lot of organs in theatres, original installations, and other than Wurlitzer. Opened with tours of the four (!!!) theatres that Cleveland has been able to save, all right next to each other. The Palace (a Keith house and looks it), the State (big one), the Ohio, and the Allen. Each of them different and remarkable in its own way.

**Ron Rhode at the Cleveland Palace** (see above) 3/19 Kimball, which is installed in chambers that speak through tone chutes into the right and left proscenium. Ron is always entertaining.

**Chris Elliott**, who was awarded organist of the year, played *The Mark of Zorro* at an absolutely fabulous 3/19 Wurlitzer in a restored Ebersson atmospheric. Beautiful theatre, beautiful organ, A remarkable evening. This was at the Akron Civic, formerly the Akron Loews.

**On Thursday, Brett Valiant** played a really great program at the Masonic Auditorium. This was where the Wurlitzer was supposed to be playing but it turned out to be about a month away, even after all the 12-hour days. So Bob Walker placed at 335 in the auditorium. Brett played a lot of unusual things, including Freddie Mercury and other popular things.

**Thursday evening, Donnie Rankin** proved himself to be a consummate professional despite his age. He undertook the 3/10 Wurlitzer at the Palace Theatre in Lorain. The theatre is an unusual no-balcony auditorium style house, in the process of being renovated, and working on a budget but I found it a delightful place. They opened the snack bar, a wise choice for a theatre in need of funds. The organ is, by all reports, completely original. Original relay, original specifications, no general pistons, and there were some issues with the organ. The organ was not on a functioning lift so it sat down in the pit, and there was video of Donnie playing on the screen. It was easy to see the issues with the organ, contact problems in the relay it appeared, and someone said "reversible pistons," e.g. self-reversing. But Donnie's program was truly enjoyable and punctuated with his unique humor. I have to say that despite all the issues, I really enjoyed this one. Someone said that only Walt Strony could have done a better job since he has so much experience playing organs in need of help. And it was good to see a theatre manager and staff working hard to make a theatre on the edge actually succeed.

**Friday morning, John Lauter** did a great job at the Cleveland Armory. What a wonderful organ, very present in the room and with diaphones that shake the building. Quite a history as far as the building and the organization it represents. Got a chance to tour the chambers, which are built on the old band stand. This Armory was the first venue where the Cleveland Symphony performed. A great mornig and an entertaining program.

**In the afternoon was Jon Ortloff's** program and the young artist competition back at the Cleveland Palace.

**Then in the evening, the concert by Richard Hills** at the Aveni Mansion 60-rank Wurlitzer. The venue has glass walls and high swell shades, and the organ is marvelously voiced and regulated so that it is not overwhelming. It is a fabulous installation and Richard Hills was as fantastic as he always is. I think comments have been posted here on this

**.Saturday was the annual meeting**, where Ken Double announced a nascent partnership between Turner Classic Movies and ATOS with respect to silent films. There will be more on this later but there is a plan to screen a silent film at the Atlanta Fox, which is very near TCM headquarters, next summer, with the theatre organ in accompaniment and as a co-project of TCM, the Fox and the ATOS.

**In the afternoon we headed out to the First Congregational Church** of Columbus which houses a 1931 66-rank Kimball and a 1972 Von Beckerath of 73 ranks, played by Dr. John Schwandt and David Peckham, individually and together (which was truly a magnificent sound). The off to eat and on to the absolutely magnificent Ohio Theatre in Columbus. I've never been here but my goodness, what a place and what an organ. It was a true delight to hear Clark Wilson play a concert program and what a program, with a nod to the history of the theatre & organ. Clark did as wonderfully as expected.

**Sunday morning, Jonas Nordwall** played a Walt Strony Allen, exceptionally well-voiced and well-installed in the State Theatre in Cleveland, which at one time housed a Wurlitzer 260 but no longer has an organ. The Allen was then used for the banquet that evening with John McCall of Moultrie, GA, provided delightful dinner music.

**In the afternoon, back to the Masonic Temple** for a piano/organ/band presentation with Chris Elliott, Jelani Eddington, & the Strongsville Community Band. There was organ and piano, organ alone, band alone & band with piano & organ.

Then the banquet and back to the Masonic Temple for a joint meeting with OHS featuring Peter Conte on the 1918 Austin. A beautiful instrument, reportedly in not-so-good condition. Sounded great but there were obviously issues. Glad we heard it but when the Wurlitzer is finished, it will run the Austin out of the room. Not that I have anything against the Austin. It truly is a wonderful instrument and deserves a full restoration.

**Monday we headed off to the Canton Palace Theatre**, and the 11-rank Kilgen, which has a surprising presence in the theatre, also an Ebersson atmospheric - and also with the concession stand open. Ken Double made the organ sound wonderful. One of those really perfect matches of artist and instrument and then Skip Stine joined him on trumpet for the second half, and that also was truly delightful.

**Then off to dinner and to the Mansfield Renaissance Theatre** and the 3/20 Wurlitzer in the capable hands of Jim Riggs. This is the so-called Kearn's Wurlitzer, and Jim opened with the theme from "Dennis the Menace." The organ sounds wonderful, a "classic" Wurlitzer sound and installation. Great end to the afterglow.

I'm not much the analyst, so I'll leave that to others, but that's the report. It was exciting to see all these different theatres and hear Kimballs, small Wurlitzer's, large Wurlitzers and the very surprising Kilgen. And the Austin, the Kimball and the von Beckerath... Kudos ad thanks to Doug Powers and the Western Reserve for hosting us in a wonderful week.

*Larry Davis Atlanta, GA*

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## Russell Johnston



Russ Johnston passed away at home on May 30<sup>th</sup> after battling cancer since 2007. He and Katy were long time members of VOTS. He grew up in West Hartford, CT where he attended Kingswood School and Trinity College. He went on to receive a degree in

mechanical engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and came to Cleveland to further his education at Case Western Reserve. It was in Cleveland that he met his wife Katy.

He worked in the Turning Machine Division of the Warner & Swasey Company in Cleveland, OH where he had various positions leading to Manager of Production Engineering. He then worked for the Fayscott Division of White Consolidated Industries, Dexter, Maine, where he was Chief of Design and then Director of Engineering. In 1982, he began teaching in the School of Engineering

Technology at the University of Maine in Orono and retired to Arizona in 1996.

He was an avid boater and held several offices in the United States Sail and Power Squadron.

A memorial service will be held on Thursday, July 30<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM at the Ahwatukee Recreation Center, 5001 E Cheyenne Dr., Phoenix, located one street south of Elliot between 51<sup>st</sup> Street and 48<sup>th</sup> Street.

## We wish you a Happy Birthday!

Birthday time! A slice of cake goes out to our August birthday cake eaters, John Diffendal, Myrra

Johnson, Bill McFadden, Glenn Vandiver, Henry Pfizenmayer, Gina Sheak, Nancy Resech, Ginny LaFave, Bill Peck and Gerald Blausey. If we missed yours, let us know. So, blow out those candles and have a good time!



## Our fearless Membership Man

Ed Benoit has been in the hospital fighting off an infection and is now home again. He barely was home when he got to work and sent the August birthday list for the Stoprail. Can't keep a good man down.