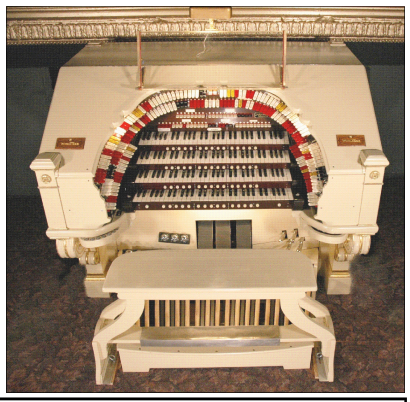
Volume 54, Number 4 December 2018

RTOS Blower

Official Newsletter of The Rochester Theater Organ Society Inc.
Founded 1964



Jelani Eddington Makes Tenth Appearance with RTOS

During the years that Jelani Eddington has given concerts, he has easily established himself as one of the most prominent and sought-after artists on the concert circuit. Jelani has performed in most of the major concert venues throughout the United States, has toured extensively abroad, and has received numerous awards and recognitions, including his selection as the 2001 Theatre Organist of the Year.

Jelani Eddington was born in Muncie, IN and grew up in a very musical family. Between the interests of his mother, a professional music teacher of many years, and those of his grandmother, a well-respected piano instructor, it was no surprise when Jelani demonstrated an inclination toward music at a very early age.

Shortly after beginning piano instruction at the age of four, Jelani began studying classical piano under the direction of his grandmother. At the age of eight, a trip to hear the 4-manual 42-rank Wurlitzer theatre pipe organ installed in the Indianapolis, IN restaurant, the Paramount Music Palace, introduced Jelani to the sounds of John Ferguson, whose skills as a theatre organ instructor have been highly acclaimed internationally.

Jelani Eddington
Auditorium Theatre
885 E. Main St.
Sunday, December 9, 2018
2:30 PM
(Doors open 45 min early)

At age 13, Jelani won the American Theatre Organ Society's Young Theatre Organist Competition, prevailing over competitors ages 13-21 from the United States, England, Australia, and New Zealand. He remains the youngest competitor ever to

Jelani went on to graduate Magna Cum Laude from Indiana University in 1996, and later received a Juris Doctor degree from the Yale Law School in 1999, after which time he was admitted to practice law in New York and later in Wisconsin.

During the course of his concert career, Jelani has been featured at numerous national and regional conventions of the American Theatre Organ Society, and has toured extensively throughout the world. He has also produced and marketed over 30 theatre organ albums on some of the best-known and most dynamic instruments in the country.

In 2014, Jelani became the first—and to date only—musician to have a video of his theatre organ performance go "viral." Within a few short weeks, Jelani's performance of John William's *Star Wars Symphonic Suite* was viewed on YouTube over 1 million times in more than 200 countries around the world. As of 2018, that video has earned more than 3 million views worldwide.

Jelani first performed for RTOS in 1991 at the age of 17. This performance will be his tenth for the Rochester audience.

Rochester Theater Organ Society
(Founded 1964)
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JUST $1

Help RTOS keep the music playing. If everyone drops $1 into a donation box at each concert it will pay the yearly cost for the *Blower* & Concert Programs.

A LETTER FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

I am writing this on Election night and wondering if "my good folks" will win. Regardless of the outcome, your RTOS will win again!

We are starting to work with the Eastman School of Music students who will form this year's edition of "The Eastman Bunch" on February 3. It's hard to believe this will be the 12th year for this outstanding and unique program. We are extremely proud that two of the students who have performed with the 'Bunch' (Jon Ortloff and Alex Jones) in past years have gone on to win the Young Theatre Organist Competition at annual ATOS conventions. Joining the students this year will be the 2018 winner of the ATOS Young Organist Competition, 21 year old Luke Staisiunas from West Chester, PA. He attends the University of Oklahoma where he studies with Dr. John Schwandt. You can hear him play his degree recital on a theater organ by searching Facebook for his name.

Board member Ken Wilson has asked me to remind everyone of his ongoing efforts expand the RTOS email contact list. I realize that some of you do not use email. However, if you do, we would really like to add you to the list. I promise that we will not bombard you with email spam. We would, however, like to send you our concert poster prior to each concert in hopes that you will print it and post it at your church, school, senior center, or local businesses. It will also be a way to inform you should bad weather forces us to cancel or reschedule a concert. Ken has a signup sheet available at concerts or you can go to the RTOS website and find a form on the home page to enter it. Also, when you fill out your yearly membership renewal card you can enter it there. It's also important to let us know if your email address changes.

We continue to work on details for the 2019 ATOS Convention which is being hosted by RTOS next summer. I thank those who have volunteered to help out. There are still some important positions to fill. If you would like sign up, please contact Chris Van Stean or any of our board members in the lobby at intermission.

For the first time in several years, Tim Schramm will not be headlining a Christmas show this year. 2018 has been a very trying time for Tim, and we all agreed that he take a year off. Not to worry, our good friend **Jelani Eddington** will be here to put us all in a Holiday mood as we close out the year.

Please consider attending the RTOS annual meeting which will be at the Eisenhart Auditorium on **Sunday, December 16 at 3 PM** following the open console session. Election results will be announced and board members will report on the state of RTOS.

On behalf of the Officers and Directors of RTOS, we wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a safe, healthy and Happy New Year.

Paul A. Law
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2019 ATOS Convention Preview - Elmira's Clemens Center

Submitted by Russ Shaner

When RTOS hosts the 2019 ATOS Convention, in addition to concerts at Rochester's Auditorium Theatre and Eisenhart Auditorium, attendees will visit theaters in North Tonawanda, Buffalo, and Elmira.

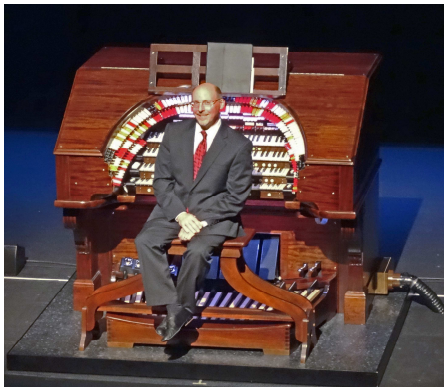
On Wednesday, July 3rd, buses will travel to Elmira for two concerts on the restored and expanded Marr & Colton/ Wurlitzer theater organ located in the beautifully restored Clemens Center PAC.

The Theater

Since 1925, the theater has survived the era of vaudeville, silent films and extensive damage from two floods. Several remodels over the past nine decades have chopped the building down and added on to it and repainted and restored its interior. The nonprofit Clemens Center today is Chemung County's arts and entertainment hub, with 80,000 people attending performances annually.

The 2,600-seat Keeney's Theater opened on Dec. 21, 1925 as "a vision of gold and old rose, mural paintings and old ivory." In an era before films had sound, the Keeney's Marr & Colton theater organ served as a big draw for audiences, supplying not just the music but also the "special effects" as the action unfolded onscreen. Like many old movie houses, the focus changed once "talkies" replaced silent films.

After Chemung River flooding damaged the building in 1946, it was remodeled and reopened as the Elmira Theater in 1952. The opulent touches such as the theater boxes had been



removed, and the interior was repainted white.

When Hurricane Agnes hit the area in1972, the river overflowed again and the theater barely escaped demolition. $750,000 was raised to save the facility and rename it for Elmira's favorite adopted son - Samuel Clemens, better known as Mark Twain. The renovations reduced balcony seating to add a new, larger projection booth shrinking capacity to 1,650 seats. Resident theater organist David Peckham oversaw the restoration of the Marr & Colton organ.

In 1999, a $7 million Phase I project added a new lobby, box office, and patron amenities along with new HVAC systems. Then in 2007-08, a $19 million Phase II project expanded the stage, upgraded the seating and restored the decor as close as possible to how it looked in 1925.

The Organ

The organ, originally built by the Marr & Colton Company of Warsaw, NY had a three-manual console controlling twenty ranks in three chambers (Left, Right, and Echo). It experienced the typical life cycle of accompanying silent films and stage shows, then limited use following the advent of sound films until flood waters invaded the theater and submerged the console and blower in 1946. In 1960, Lauren Peckham (David's father), aided by two other enthusiasts began the daunting task of repairing the damaged components and replacing missing ranks. The purchase of a three-manual, fifteen-rank Marr & Colton from the Palace Theatre in Jamestown, NY greatly aided the project. The organ was finally again playable in 1963.

In June of 1972, the Chemung River again flooded. Glue joints in the console dissolved and the cabinet collapsed into a sorry heap of wood and mud. Another period of silence was to follow for several years. Eventually a four-manual Wurlitzer horseshoe console was purchased from Our Lady of Victory Basilica in Lackawanna, NY and the organ was included on the theater's opening night gala on October 22, 1977.

In response to numerous requests, David Peckham released a CD titled *Electro-Pneumatic Action* in 1995.

(continued on next page)

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RTOS EVENTS

Auditorium Theatre, 885 E. Main St.
All artists and dates subject to change. Please check out our website for latest information.

Jelani Eddington	**Dec 9**	**2:30 PM**
Open Console	Jan 13	11AM-4PM
Eastman Bunch	Feb 3	2:30 PM
TBA	Apr 14	2:30 PM
Clark Wilson	May 26	2:30 PM
Ron Rhode	Jun 16	2:30 PM

Rochester Museum & Science Center
Eisenhart Auditorium, East Ave. & Goodman St.

Open Console & Annual Meeting
Sundays from 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Dec 16

"Open Console" is when members are given a time slot to play one of the Society's theater pipe organs. Come to play, or enjoy the music.

UPCOMING REGIONAL EVENTS

Riviera Theatre & Organ Preservation Society (RTOPS)
(3/15 Wurlitzer) 67 Webster St, N Tonawanda, NY
Box Office: (716) 692-2413. Info: http://www.rivieratheatre.org/

Empire State Theatre & Musical Instrument Museum (ESTMIM)
(3/11 Wurlitzer) 581 State Fair Blvd., Syracuse (315) 687-3580
Info: http://www.empiretheatre.org/index.htm

Kingston Theatre Organ Society (KTOS)
Kingston Korean Church 89 Kirkpatrick St., Kingston, ON, CA
Info: (3/28 Kimball) Info/ticketing: http://ktos.ca/

Toronto Theatre Organ Society (TTOS)
Concerts currently held at: St. Andrew's United Church,
117 Bloor St. East, Toronto ON, CA. Check website for details.
Tickets: (416) 492-6262 email: box-office@ttos.ca
Info/ticketing: http://theatreorgans.com/toronto/

Binghamton Theatre Organ Society (BTOS)
236 Washington St, Binghamton, NY. Box Office (716) 692-2413.
Info/ticketing: http://www.binghamtontos.org/

Please visit the web sties for these venues for the latest information for their upcoming 2018 concert season

CONVENTION PREVIEW *(continued)*

In 2007, the theater closed for a one-year period of restoration. At this time David Peckham began a total rebuild and expansion of the organ, increasing the total rank count to 31 and restoring the long silent echo organ in the ceiling of the theater. While many of the pipe ranks of the original organ are retained, most of the original M&C chests and other parts have been replaced by Wurlitzer components. Many carefully chosen pipe ranks built by Wurlitzer and other makers have been added.

RTOSers who traveled to Elmira on our bus trip in 2015 will recall the excellent concert that David played for us that April. Wednesday, July 3rd is sure to be a high point of the 2019 ATOS convention.

Convention-goers will hear Great Britain's Simon Gledhill in concert in the afternoon followed by an evening public performance featuring David Peckham and the Paragon Ragtime Orchestra.

ANNUAL MEETING

The RTOS 2018 annual meeting will be held on **Sunday, December 16th at 3 PM** at the Eisenhart Auditorium following open console. Please plan to attend.