

Edward Norman



Edward Norman studied at the Royal College of Music, London, principally under Harold Darke and Dr. Osborne Peasgood, winning the Haigh Prize for organ performance. After emigrating to Canada, he studied with Hugh McLean at UBC, and later also taught organ there.

He has performed widely in Canada and the UK and in Poland and Germany. He has appeared in the Vancouver International Festival, the Spoleto Festival in Charleston SC, and twice with the YNSO in Tokyo. More recently he has given recitals at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, and at the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff. Over many years he has performed with the VSO (including maestro Bramwell Tovey's farewell tour) and has appeared regularly as organist at the bi-annual International 'Kathaumixw' Choral Festival in Powell River.

Ed was a music producer with CBC radio for ten years, including two years as Executive Producer of the popular drive-home program, Disc Drive. After leaving the Corporation he established his own professional recording business, which he continues to run. Two of his projects have been nominated for awards, and he has had the privilege of working with outstanding Canadian and international artists.

He has held several major church music positions, including First Baptist, Halifax, St. John-the-Divine, Victoria, St. John's Anglican Church Shaughnessy, Vancouver, First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh PA, St. George's Anglican Cathedral, Kingston, and St. Michael's Episcopal Church, Charleston SC. As well as at UBC, he has been on faculty at Lester Pearson College of the Pacific, Regent College, Vancouver, U. Vic and Trinity Western, Langley.

He and his wife, Susan, now live on Galiano Island. Ed continues to perform on and off the island, most recently appearing in the Monday Night Silent Movie series being presented at Vancouver's Orpheum, in conjunction with Vancouver Civic Theatres. He has been playing the historic Orpheum Wurlitzer Pipe Organ for over 40 years, usually accompanying the VSO and Bach Choirs, but recently he has been improvising accompaniments on the organ for silent movies to sold out audiences.

Welcome

Tonight's films come from the last, great years of silent cinema — made just before sound changed everything. Neither film has a spoken word in it, which is exactly why Ed Norman is at the keyboard: in the 1920s, the music was never an accompaniment added later, it was half the performance, played live, in the room, with the audience. That is what you will hear tonight.

Opening short: *Felix Gets the Can* (1925) – 7-minute cartoon

Felix was the first true cartoon star — before Mickey Mouse, there was this black cat with a magic tail he could turn into almost any tool the story required. The Felix shorts were produced by Pat Sullivan's studio and animated principally by Otto Messmer, whose name, in the custom of the time, never appeared on screen.

By 1925 Felix was an international celebrity, and the shorts were produced at a remarkable pace — a new one roughly every two weeks. Watch for how much story and personality Messmer gets out of a character who is, essentially, a few black shapes and a walk that generations of animators have copied since.

Feature: *Steamboat Bill, Jr.* (1928)

Directed by Charles Reisner (with Buster Keaton, uncredited). Starring Buster Keaton, Ernest Torrence, Marion Byron, and Tom McGuire. About 70 minutes.

William Canfield Jr. comes home from college in Boston to River Junction, where his father — "Steamboat Bill," captain of the worn-out paddle steamer **Stonewall Jackson** — has not seen him since he was a baby. The father expects a river man; what arrives is a ukulele-playing dandy in a beret. Worse, the young man promptly falls for Kitty King, daughter of J.J. King, the rival whose gleaming new steamboat is putting the **Stonewall Jackson** out of business.

The first half is Keaton building character out of mishaps — a famous sequence in a hat shop, where every hat he tries makes him look more ridiculous (watch for the moment he is handed his own trademark porkpie and recoils), and a hopeless attempt to break his father out of jail with a loaf of bread and a file.

Then the weather turns. The cyclone finale — roughly the last twenty minutes — is **one of the most celebrated sequences in all of silent film**: buildings collapse, floodwater rises, Keaton is carried through the air on an uprooted tree, and he saves his father, Kitty, and even old King himself. In the middle of it comes the single most famous shot of Keaton's career: the full front of a house falls directly onto him, and he survives untouched because he happens to be standing exactly where its open window lands. That was a real, full-weight wall, and Keaton stood on a marked spot with inches to spare. There was **no trick photography** to fall back on.

Steamboat Bill, Jr. was Keaton's last independent production before he moved to MGM and lost creative control of his films — which makes tonight's film, in effect, the end of an era, made in the same year sound arrived. Six months later, a young Walt Disney answered it with a cartoon whose title is a tip of the hat: **Steamboat Willie**.

A note on the music

Silent films were never silent. Ed Norman's live accompaniment tonight follows the practice of the period's theatre musicians, who underscored the action **by improvising on the spot**¹, underlined the jokes, and carried the audience through the storm. In the cyclone sequence especially, listen to how much of the wind you hear is coming from the keyboard.

¹ Traditionally, music was in the hands of a single keyboardist (pianist or organist) for whom there was no printed score and for whom on-the-spot improvisation was essential.

The Rodgers Four-Manual Hybrid Organ

The All Saints sanctuary is blessed with a four-manual Rodgers Hybrid (digital/pipe) Organ and wonderful acoustics. This instrument is a powerhouse that delivers the digital sound voices sourced from some of the finest pipe organs in the world. They are rich in colour and deliver a realism found nowhere else thanks to the care Rodgers sound engineers use in capturing long, detailed samples using up to eight microphones.



The Rodgers Hybrid organ retains 8 ranks of pipes from the original pipe organ installation that can be seamlessly combined with the digital sounds for a spectacular experience for the player and the audience. Combined with the beautiful acoustics of the All Saints Sanctuary the Rodgers Organ provides a wonderful listening experience.



**Silent
Film
Classics**



***“Felix Gets the Can” – cartoon short (1925)
and
Buster Keaton’s “Steamboat Bill, Jr. (1928)***

**Live improvised organ accompaniment by
*Edward Norman***

Friday October 23rd – 7:30pm

**All Saints by-the-Sea Anglican Church
Salt Spring Island BC**