

BLACKWOOD NOTES

Published periodically for the information of friends and supporters of Blackwood and the Blackwood Theater Organ Society, and for patrons of the arts in general -- and the musical arts in particular. Editor: Betty Digby; Staff: Jim Robertson

SPRING 2016

ESTEEMED MUSICIANS PERFORM AGAIN

What does it take to be invited back to Blackwood multiple times? The camaraderie and respect between the audience and performer--or is there some other special ingredient? After each captivating concert, Ben is inundated with requests to bring back the performer—and this year, three of the most esteemed artists will be returning: **Ron Rhode** for the Make-A-Wish concert, **Dave Wickerham** to accompany Harold Lloyd in his famous silent film “**Safety Last,**” and **David Gray** to wow those attending the scholarship dinner concert. Please see individual articles for details.

NATIONAL TREASURE COMES TO TOWN



A new man is coming to town! **Bob Milne**—a new face to the Blackwood scene--is driving in with his much-traveled Winnebago to entertain us on

Sunday, August 21, with the best ragtime and barrel-house playing show we'll ever experience! Can't wait to sway to “Frankie and Johnny,” Joplin's “Maple Leaf Rag,” Stephen Foster, or some of that Louisiana roots music. Bob Milne is regarded as “the finest ragtime/boogie-woogie pianist on this planet.” In the U.S., he's referred to as a “national treasure,” after being documented for future generations by the U. S. Library of Congress in 2004. Japan made him an honorary citizen following his ground-breaking ragtime tour in 2000. Ben Robertson (one of our ever-smiling hosts and President of BTOS) signed Milne for a Blackwood concert immediately after hearing him perform in Florida a few months ago.

Reviews of Bob's concerts confirm that his “playing and interpretations are so exuberant, competent, and complex, he often is a one-man orchestra. Milne's left hand on the bass notes is consistent percussion, while his right hand is dazzling. **He is fun and excitement!** He will take us from the blues, to ragtime and boogie – and more. We'll travel to the Caribbean, along the Mississippi, to Southern Gospel tent meetings and, of course, to NEW ORLEANS!

GRAY AMAZES DINNER PATRONS

David Gray, one of the most exciting pianists and theatre organists of the current generation, is returning for the Scholarship Dinner on **October 9th** to perform a concert that most musicians could only imagine.

For the piano portion, David will be playing *Appassionata* - Beethoven's *Piano Sonata No. 23 in F minor, Op 57*, one of Beethoven's greatest and most technically challenging piano sonatas. For the organ program, David will include a selection of John Williams' music. Williams has composed some of the most



popular and familiar film scores in cinematic history. His score to 1977 *Star Wars* was chosen by the American Film Institute as the greatest American film score of all time.

David Gray received his Bachelor of Music (performance) degree from the prestigious Royal Academy of Music in London, which he attended on a full scholarship. He considers the theatre organ to be fun and schedules as many concerts as he can. David is a popular organist at American Theatre Organ Society conventions and last year was named Theatre Organist of the Year. We are fortunate that he has been able to include Blackwood in his limited engagements in the USA.

This Dinner Concert is included with the Contributing Membership. There is only one performance. Reservations should be made immediately, for the Music Room can accommodate only 70 guests.

WICKERHAM CHEERED FOR INTENSIFYING FILM ANTICS



On **September 11**, **Dave Wickerham** returns to Blackwood to excite his fans with **Harold Lloyd's** signature film "**Safety Last.**"

The audience stood up and cheered after Dave adroitly took them through the New York City chase scenes in "Speedy" last year, and they wanted him back to accompany another classic film. Harold Lloyd's "Safety Last" was unanimously chosen that day because, when it comes to perilous, pulse-racing, gravity-defying stunt work, Lloyd is "King of the World" -- and when it comes to accentuating such activities, Wickerham is "King."

Everyone loves Dave Wickerham. He has been named "Theater Organist of the Year" by the American Theatre Organ Society. He plays repeat concerts throughout the world—and when he comes to

Blackwood, his shows sell out immediately.

Harold Lloyd is ranked with Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton as one of the most popular and influential film comedians of the silent film era. He is best known for his "horned-rimmed glasses" character. "Safety Last" was highly successful in the 1920's and is still viewed as one of the great film comedies. Lloyd's ultimate thrill feature—his memorable "clock-dangling" sequence—is one of the most enduring cinema images.

There will be only one concert, beginning at 2:00 p.m. Hot dogs and popcorn will follow.



RON RHODE RETURNS FOR MAKE-A-WISH

Ron Rhode is a big fish in the pool of theatre organists. There's a lot of BIG talent in that pool, and Ron is one of the most popular and gifted. He will be back on **July 10th** because he connects so well to our Make-A-Wish audience.

Over the years, Ron has played in skating rinks, pizza parlors, silent movie theatres, at numerous ATOS conventions and private concerts – in basically every major theatre organ installation in the world. His music touches the hearts of all who hear him, and that is important when it comes to raising money for children with life-threatening illnesses. But what is just as significant, Ron remembers and connects with all of his followers.

In 2014, Joyce Spark wrote a poignant article for the Newsletter telling the inexplicable story of how she connected with her mother through Ron's performance. Joyce's mother, the daughter of Hungarian immigrants, played the Hawaiian guitar and loved everything Hungarian. Joyce's 75th birthday coincided with the 2013 M-A-W concert. During his performance, Ron played *Ukulele Lady* and wished her a "Happy Birthday;" and for his last number, Ron played a Czardas, her mother's favorite Hungarian dance. Joyce was wholly conscious of her mother's presence that day. A "pipe-organ nut," Joyce has traveled the country to hear her favorite organists.

She talks to them, sends them special music. That day was her birthday; Ron remembered! That's what makes him special.



Joyce Spark and Ron Rhode

After leaving the pizza parlors in 2000, Ron received a Bachelor of Education degree in Early Childhood Education and is a Media Specialist at Roosevelt Elementary school in Mesa, Arizona. He also is organist for the Church of the Beatitudes in Phoenix. Ron leads a busy life, but he still finds time to maintain an active concert and recording career.

Contributions received at Blackwood's concerts since 1991 have enabled the Make-A-Wish Foundation to fulfill wishes for **ONE HUNDRED** special children in the Butler area. Your generous giving to this worthy cause is beyond measure.

Concerts are scheduled for 2:00 and 4:30 p.m., with refreshments in between. **Reservations are required. Checks—payable to "Make-A-Wish"—will be received at the concert.**

**YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO ATTEND A RECITAL
BY THE 2016 BTOS SCHOLARSHIP AWARDEES
AT BLACKWOOD ON MAY 22 AT 2:00 PM**

The Blackwood Theater Organ Society is honored to award scholarships to the following exceptional student musicians, who will perform a recital at Blackwood on May 22: (in alphabetical order) Kyle Johnson (cellist from Peters Township High School), Steven Kozlowski (marimbist from McKeesport Area High School), Megan McKelvey (clarinetist from Franklin Regional High School), Maxwell Nudi (drummer from General McLane High School), and Geana Snart (cellist from Spring City, 21st Century Cyber Charter School). Caleb Will (clarinetist from General McLane High School) received a grant for further study at a college of his choice.

If you ever have witnessed one of the recitals, you know the talent is outstanding! Now that the performance is held at Blackwood, it has become a special event for the awardees, for it introduces them to the place where the scholarship program began. Everyone has an opportunity to mingle with friends, the scholars, and their families in the wondrous setting of Blackwood at springtime. The recital is free. Share it with a friend.

Music In Their Souls

For 16 years, the BTOS Scholarship Committee has carefully evaluated the applications from students eager to fulfill their dream of a career in music performance. Some of the scholarship winners have become outstanding performers; some are still pursuing their education. Over the next few pages, we're covering prodigies mainly from the early years, for there are many stories to tell. There will be a "tomorrow" – another issue – when you'll hear more.

Most of these students include the Blackwood Scholarship in their Resumes; some have expressed appreciation for the "affirmation and support received from the Blackwood Theater Organ Society," and state it meant a great deal to them as they prepared for college. We are proud of the fact that so many of you "affirm and support" the program. Patrons come from as far away as California, Chicago, Philadelphia, West Virginia, and Arkansas (last year they flew in from Ireland) for the dinner concert. To date, BTOS has awarded \$266,500 in scholarships and grants to 77 recipients. Our hearts are with the scholars as they journey towards their goal; our hands remain open for gifts to help those to come.



MARY CATHRINE LEVRI (2002) is the Assistant Director of the Notre Dame Liturgical Choir and Assistant Organist at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart at Notre Dame. A "double Damer," Mary Catherine graduated from Notre Dame in 2006 with a Bachelor's degree in Liberal Studies and Organ

Performance, then again in 2011 with a Master's degree in Sacred Music. She also graduated from the John Paul II Institute in Washington, D.C. in 2008 with a Master's in Theological Studies. Mary Catherine considers herself to be a theology student by nature and a musician by adoption; both are integral and beloved parts of her life. Previously, Mary Catherine served as an organist and choir director in parishes in Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia



MICHAEL MITNICK (2002) was a "USA Today Top 10 high school graduate," and he continues to break the mold. In High School he was a pianist and writer of his first musical. After graduating from Harvard, Michael received a MFA in playwriting from Yale, hoping to pick up some odd jobs like his

teachers. Instead, he ended up in a Los Angeles studio hearing Meryl Streep recite the dialogue he wrote for *The Giver* and staying up late to play piano-guitar duets with Jeff Bridges. Other screenplays include *Pinocchio*, for Warner Brothers and Robert Downey, Jr. His songs have been performed at Lincoln Center, Joe's Pub, 54 Below, The Cutting Room, and The Guggenheim; he has written plays and musicals performed in major on and off-Broadway theaters, and now has commissions with The Roundabout and Manhattan Theatre Club.

MUSIC IN THEIR SOULS



HEIDI VAN HOSEN GORTON (2004) is Principal Harpist with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Heidi has performed solo recitals the world over and has been described as one of the most outstanding solo, chamber and orchestral musicians of her generation. As an orchestral player, she has performed with the

Pittsburgh, Boston and Hartford Symphony Orchestras, has been a member of the Sun Valley Summer Symphony since 2001, and has participated in the Strings Chamber Music Festival as well as the Music Festivals at Aspen, Tanglewood and Interlochen. Heidi earned two degrees in harp performance from Julliard. She has won many awards and competitions, and is hailed as a performer who plays “with a flair that we are coming to know well.”



ROSS SNYDER (2003) an avid chamber musician, plays on a 1937 violin on loan from the Joseph Rashid Foundation. After receiving a Bachelor degree from the New England Conservatory and a Master of Music from Julliard, Ross went to the University of Colorado--Boulder for his Doctorate of Musical Arts. In

2008--while at Julliard--Ross was founding first violinist of the Tesla Quartet, which just completed its tenure as the Graduate String Quartet-in-Residence at University of Colorado-Boulder. Ross has performed with the Pittsburgh and University of Colorado Symphony Orchestras. He has a tenured first violin chair in the Allentown Symphony and recently spent one year with the New Haven Symphony. As assistant concertmaster of the UBS Verbier Festival Orchestra in Switzerland, Ross participated in their 2008 European tour, and that same year traveled to China with Julliard. He has toured the U.S. as a guest member of A Far Cry (Boston) and The Knights (Brooklyn), two self-conducted chamber groups.

The Tesla Quartet, won top prizes at numerous international competitions (including Gold Medal at the 2012 prestigious Fischhoff National Chamber Competition). It toured and performed throughout the U.S., the United Kingdom and France. For community outreach, it carried music to soup kitchens, children’s hospitals, libraries, retirement communities, and schools--and worked with other programs to provide lessons, master classes, and workshops for young string players. The quartet is featured in the April issue of *Chamber Music America*.



KATERINA ISTOMEN (2004), a Russian-American, is an international performer and educator. She has been principal viola of the Julliard Orchestra and the New World Symphony. Known for her powerful effect on young musicians, she has worked as a Fellow with the Music Advancement

and Gluck Committee Service programs with The Julliard School and as a teaching artist in Medellin, Colombia, with the New World Symphony. Throughout her experiences as a performer, Katerina has developed a commitment to bringing music to underserved areas through music education and community outreach. She earned her Bachelor of Music in Viola Performance from Julliard and her Master of Music in Viola Performance from the Universite de Montreal and the Hochschule fur Musik und Darstellende Kunst in Vienna, Austria. She received a Master of Science in Professional Counseling from Carlow University.



KATHLEEN CARTER (2008) is still going strong with her oboe performance studies. In the fall of 2010, she spent a semester in Vienna, studying oboe with the principal oboist of the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra and professor at the Vienna Conservatory. In 2012, she graduated Summa Cum

Laude from the Baldwin-Wallace Conservatory of Music, where she served as principal oboist of the Orchestra and Symphonic Wind Ensemble. Kathleen then accepted a “full ride” to Indiana University’s Jacob School of Music (Bloomington) for her Masters, as one of six Jacobs Fellows named that year. She obtained her Performer Diploma from Indiana University, and is now in the first year of her doctorate. Kathleen is an Associate Instructor at IU, providing lessons to 10 students and is the administrative assistant to one of the professors. Last summer, she had a full scholarship to Brevard Music Center. Kathleen is a “sub” in about half a dozen regional symphony orchestras.

♪ “Music can change the world

because it can change people.” Bono ♪

MUSIC IN THEIR SOULS



ZACHERY PIPER (2005) received his Bachelor and Master Degrees (violin) from Eastman School of Music. In 2012-2013, he was a Fellow at the Henry Mancini Institute, Frost School of Music in Miami, which assembles the

best classical and jazz student musicians from around the world and trains them to play a full range of musical genres—from classical styles, to pop, jazz, rock, hip-hop, Afro-Cuban, Latin, Asian, and other world music—thereby creating new musical works that attract younger, and more diverse audiences. As a HMI Fellow, Zach was a teaching assistant and violinist in the HMI Orchestra. He now lives in South Florida and works as Violin Director and teacher at St. Philip’s Episcopal School in Coral Gables, still playing solo and as a fiddler with professional groups like the South Beach Chamber Ensemble and the Klezmer Company Orchestra.



ARIELLE ROGERS (2003) received both her Bachelor and Master of Music (harp) degrees from Julliard. Most Julliard students are single-minded, but Arielle has had dual identities—in music and fashion—since childhood. She studied harp at Julliard because she had trained in that for so

long and was just beginning to find her technique. At Julliard, she performed with a lot of dancers while also working with them on costume and styling, and finished her Scholastic Distinction project on *clothing in classical music performances*. Now known simply as *Arielle*, she designs clothes and has become a regular on the New York Fashion Week scene. She’s the fashion editor and “creative catalyst” at Zeduce Media, an Australia-based photography company. And after a short hiatus from performing (prompted by a sprained thumb), she’s playing the harp again, reviving *Duo Mango*, which she formed with Chelsea Chen, organist, while they were at Julliard.



CATHERINE SCHILLING (2009) graduated with a Bachelor and Master of Music in Viola Performance from the Cleveland Institute of Music. She was also certified as a Suzuki teacher through Book Four by that Institute. Catherine previously worked with El Sistema University Circle in Cleveland and several other music schools. She played with the Cleveland Pops Orchestra and Erie Philharmonic before moving to New Orleans, where she now is a free-lancer, and a substitute violist with the Louisiana Philharmonic. In January, she joined the String Faculty at Louisiana Academy of Performing Arts. Catherine has a passion for working with children, and in her free time is Orchestra Teacher with Make Music NOLA!



ROBERT HLEBINSKY (2002) is an organist and pianist now living and working in Michigan. He serves as both Organist and Choir Director for the First Presbyterian Church of Grand Haven. Rob has a Bachelor’s Degree in Organ Performance from Indiana University Jacob’s School of Music in Bloomington. While

there, he began working with the American Guild of Organists. After graduation, Rob moved to Tallahassee, Florida, and served as Organist at the Trinity United Methodist Church, where he also conducted youth choirs and presented workshops on hymn playing. As founder of Blessed Notes Music Group, Rob works with churches to enhance music in their worship services. He continues to perform as a free-lance musician, entertainer, and instructor.



NOLAN PETOTE (2008) received a Bachelor Degree in Music Performance from Duquesne University, and Advanced Music Studies Degrees in Music Performance from Carnegie Mellon. At both institutions, he was a member of the University Philharmonic and Symphony Orchestras, and the Wind and

Contemporary Ensembles. Nolan won several concerto competitions, including the 2010 Duquesne University Symphony Concerto, and the 2012 Charles Bruno Wind Symphony Concerto Competitions. Nolan studied clarinet with Richard Page of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra; and after Richard retired, Nolan purchased his bass clarinet, and later was given Richard’s mouthpieces, reeds, metronome, tuner, and all of his music. Nolan substituted numerous times with the South Florida, Westmoreland, and Johnstown Symphony Orchestras. He is an active chamber musician with the Bel Suono Ensemble, maintains a private teaching studio, and is on the staff of the Pittsburgh Youth Concert Orchestra

MUSIC IN THEIR SOULS



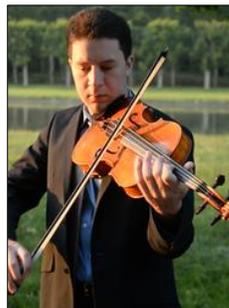
LAURA MANKO (2005) has won numerous viola competitions since making her solo debut with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra in 2005. She has performed with the Knoxville and Winston-Salem Symphony Orchestras, and was Principal Violist of the Cape Cod Symphony Orchestra, the Me2

Chamber Orchestra, and violist of the Boston Harp Trio. In addition, Laura has taught viola and violin at the Rivers School Conservatory, Boston School of Music Arts, and Boston University Tanglewood Institute. She has traveled across the United States and Austria performing recitals and concerts with the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra, and currently is playing with the Bilkent Symphony Orchestra, Bilkent Piano Quartet, and the Nodus Contemporary Music Ensemble in Ankara, Turkey. Laura earned a Bachelor of Music degree from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, her Artist Diploma and Master of Music degree from Boston University, and is completing a Doctorate of Musical Arts at Bilkent University, in Ankara.



MICHAEL KING-HON TSANG (2011) is in an overlap program for Bachelor and Master of Music Degrees (piano performance) at The Cleveland Institute of Music, and a Bachelor of Arts Degree (Major-Biological Sciences, Minor-Chemistry) at Case Western Reserve University. At

Case Western, he's a member of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars. Michael has performed in Music Festivals and benefit conferences, and has won major competitions. He has been Primary Tutor of Secondary Piano, Student Teacher of Piano Pedagogy Practicum, and a Teaching Assistant of the Summer Sonata Piano Festival at Cleveland Institute, while actively performing benefit shows throughout the Cleveland area and Pittsburgh. During the summer, Michael gives private studio lessons to students from 5–18 years of age.



COLIIN BROOKES (2007) describes himself as a “passionate and approachable violist who delights in drawing audiences into his warm and colorful sound world.” Colin holds a Bachelor of Music from Julliard, a Master of Music and Artist Diploma from Yale, and now is a candidate for the

Doctorate of Musical Arts at Stoney Brook University. He was a Teaching Fellow at Yale and faculty member at Fairfield School of Music. Colin has been a soloist with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra and has worked and performed with the American Ballet Theater. He has traveled the world to participate in Music Festivals. As a free-lance musician, Colin is a strong advocate of new music and unconventional collaborations. He has performed with A Far Cry Chamber Orchestra, Le Train Blue, the Knights, and others. In 2010 alongside members of the group X Ambassadors, Colin co-wrote the score and recorded the soundtrack for a short film titled “Let There Be Sol.”



DANIEL JOHNS (2012) is planning his senior recital at Berklee College of Music, which will be filled with a variety of styles on percussion. He will be playing some 4 mallet marimba, timpani, vibraphone, xylophone, a multi-percussion duet, and a few songs on drum set with a band.

Immediately after graduation, he will be heading on tour, playing drums in a pop punk band traveling around the northeast region and into Canada, and later playing drums on tour with a pop artist named Chaz Robinson. During summer breaks, Danny has performed in theme parks across America: in the Chocolate Covered Band at Hershey Park, in a show called Rockin' Country at Cedar Point, and in the Kickin' Country show at Carowinds in North Carolina. After all the touring has stopped, he may move to Nashville – depending on how things play out.

Our volunteers are UNPARALLELED! With constant demands on everyone's time, they search for ways to help. Last year, many of them even contributed and worked at a luncheon that was to pay homage to the volunteers! That tells much about the Blackwood team.

THANK YOU ALL . . . FOR ALL THAT YOU DO. WE LOVE YOU!

The Blackwood Theater Organ Society is recognized as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization by the Internal Revenue Service and all contributions to it are tax deductible, as allowed by law. If you are interested in membership or attending any of the special events, please return the reservation form at the bottom of this page.

There are two levels of membership for 2016:

- (1) A BASIC Membership of \$20/household, which is fully tax-deductible; and
- (2) A CONTRIBUTING Membership of \$125/person, which includes a donation to the Scholarship Fund and a reservation for the scholarship dinner concert. It is 50% tax deductible.

Any monies donated above the membership level price are greatly appreciated and are 100% tax deductible.

BLACKWOOD PROGRAM FOR 2016

SUNDAY, MAY 22 – 2 p.m. – RECITAL BY SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS. Reception follows. Free. Public is invited.

SUNDAY, JULY 10 – 2 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. – MAKE-A-WISH BENEFIT CONCERTS, RON RHODE, Organist. Seating is limited to 90 for each concert; **reservations are required.** Refreshments between concerts - at 3:30 p.m. Checks, payable to "Make-A-Wish," will be received at each performance.

***SUNDAY, AUGUST 21 -- 2 p.m. – RAGTIME CONCERT with BOB MILNE, Pianist,** Refreshments. *\$30 for each person.

***SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 11—2 p.m. – Silent Film "Safety Last" with DAVE WICKERHAM, Organist,** Refreshments. *\$30 for each person.

***If both concerts are reserved, price will be \$25 for each person, a total savings of \$10.**

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 9 -- 2 p.m. – DINNER CONCERT FOR CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS – DAVID GRAY, Organist and Pianist. This dinner concert can accommodate only 70 persons. \$125/person; 50% tax deductible.

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MEMBERSHIP AND	<input type="checkbox"/> BASIC	\$20/HOUSEHOLD	\$ _____
BTOS BENEFIT CONCERTS	<input type="checkbox"/> CONTRIBUTING	\$125/PERSON	\$ _____
	(Includes the David Gray Dinner Concert) Number Attending _____		
	<input type="checkbox"/> * Dave Wickerham/Silent Movie "Safety Last".....	*\$30/PERSON	\$ _____
	<input type="checkbox"/> * Bob Milne Ragtime Concert	*\$30/PERSON	\$ _____
	*\$25/person if both concerts are reserved		
	TOTAL PAYABLE TO "BLACKWOOD THEATER ORGAN SOCIETY" OR "BTOS"		\$ _____

OTHER RESERVATIONS: **RECITAL BY 2016 SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS (FREE)** NUMBER ATTENDING _____

MAKE-A-WISH BENEFIT CONCERT TIME _____ NUMBER ATTENDING _____

(Checks -- payable to "Make-A-Wish" will be received at the concert)

(Suggested minimum donation \$25/person)

I can volunteer or contribute "goodies" for one of the concerts this year.

NAME _____ **PHONE** _____

ADDRESS _____ **E-MAIL** _____

MAIL TO BTOS c/o BETTY DIGBY, 2428 HUNTINGTON DRIVE, PITTSBURGH, PA 15241
412-835-8056

2016 CALENDAR

May 22 – 2:00 p.m.

Recital by
2016 Scholarship Winners

JULY 10 – 2:00 and 4:30 p.m.

Make-A-Wish Concert
Ron Rhode, Organist

AUGUST 21 – 2:00 p.m.

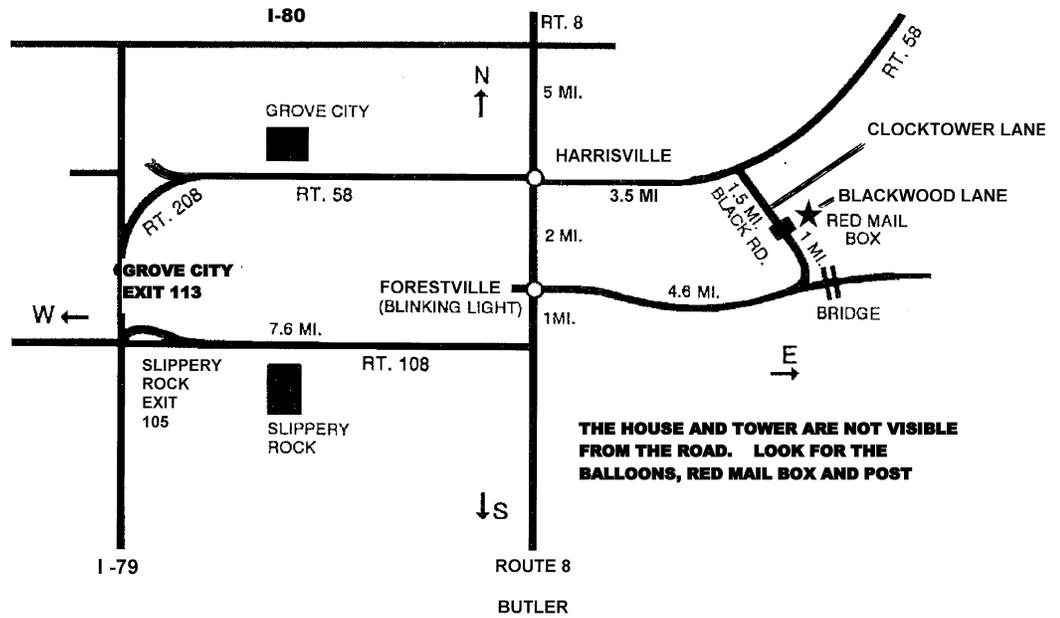
Ragtime Concert
Bob Milne, Pianist

SEPTEMBER 11 – 2:00 p.m.

Silent Film "Safety Last"
Dave Wickerham, Organist

OCTOBER 9 – 2:00 p.m.

Scholarship Dinner Concert
David Gray, Organist/Pianist



BLACKWOOD – 118 Blackwood Lane, Harrisville, PA (724)-735-2813

NEWSLETTER

Blackwood Theater Organ Society
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Harrisville, PA 16038