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Mark E. Gifford, Theatre Organist

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Illinois State University
College of Fine Arts
School of Music



Mark E. Gifford, *Theatre Organist*

Center for the Performing Arts
October 27, 2006
Friday Evening
7:00 p.m.

This is the thirty-first program of the 2006-2007 season.

Please turn off cell phones and pagers for the duration of the event. Thank You.

About the Organist

Mark E. Gifford has been performing on the Barton Theatre Pipe Organ in Springfield High School since the Spring of 1993. It was at that first concert, that Mark started what has become a tradition in Springfield - a Theatre pipe organ concert full of surprises. You never know what Mark has up his sleeve when he sits down at the console. What you do know is that he will delight you with songs of yesteryear played in the Theatre Organ style. You'll smile with memories and tap your toes to the swing beat of Mark's unique style. Most of Mark's concerts include either a silent movie, or a sing-a-long, or a special guest. He's always got the latest jokes and makes sure that everyone has a good time.

In addition to playing the Barton Theatre Pipe Organ in Springfield High, Mark is one of the organists at the Lincoln Theatre in Belleville, IL, and the FOX Theater (lobby organ), St. Louis, MO. He has recorded a Christmas album on the Lincoln Theater pipe organ entitled "Pipe In A Swingin' Christmas", which was released in December of 1998. Mark is the Minister of Music for the Parkway Christian Church (DOC) in Springfield. Mark is a senior consultant with Rodgers Organs of St. Louis and has been representing Rodgers Organs since 1984. In addition, he also represents Steinway and Baldwin Pianos.

Mark's introduction to organ was quite a fluke. It was in 1965 that a music store in Belleville, IL, decided to put an organ in one sixth grade class room to see if it would create interest in the instrument. The classroom chosen was Mark's. It certainly caused interest. Mark was 11 at the time and had been given an opportunity that would set the course for the rest of his life. Mark played his first offertory in church at the age of 12. Mark graduated from McKendree College, Lebanon, IL, with a B.A. in Speech Communication and also holds a Masters in Religious Education from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, MO.

What others have said about Mark E. Gifford.....

"King of the [Springfield] Barton" - Illinois Times

"He can play the socks off a Theatre organ..." - Ann Kerr, Springfield (IL) Journal Register

"Versatile Organist Adds Music, Life, Vivacity To Silent Films" - Norma Mendoza, St. Louis Post-Dispatch

"You can set your watch to his tempo!" - Tom Hazleton, Concert Theatre Organist

"Gifford's a 'hoot'!" - College of the Ozarks, Point Lookout, MO

"Those of you who were at the movie (last night), heard it done magnificently." - Dr. Kelly Hale, Bay View Association Organist, Bay View, MI; University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio

"I have never heard a better accompaniment to The King of Kings." - Stan Kann, St. Louis, MO