

AMERICAN THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY

ROSA REMEMBERED, HONORED AT TAMPA THEATRE FAREWELL

Most certainly there were tears, but there were clearly more laughs, most generated by video stories and remembrances as Rosa Rio, in a fitting tribute, enjoyed the stage and spotlight at her beloved Tampa Theatre one more time.

For nearly two hours, the Mighty Wurlitzer sang forth, featured speakers paid tribute, Buster Keaton was seen on the silver screen, and Rosa Rio was remembered for her remarkable life and career. Hundreds of fans and patrons of her concerts at the Tampa Theatre, along with her husband of 62 years Bill Yeoman and many members of her family, were there to honor the organ world's beloved "Queen of the Soaps," whose career spanned nearly 100 years.

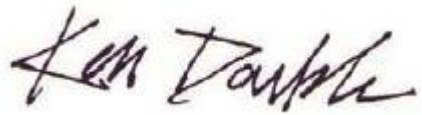
Yours truly, representing ATOS and its thousands of members, had the distinct honor of unveiling the Honorary Degree bestowed upon Rosa by the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY, where she studied silent film accompaniment in the early 20s. Those studies launched a career as a theatre organist, later performing on radio and television, and later after years of teaching, the full circle return to scoring silent films, which ended with her final performance at the Tampa Theatre last August at the age of 107.

What I will remember most about the glorious tribute to this singular woman were the stories--one after another--Orson Welles, Mary Martin, Cole Porter, George Gershwin, and even a line about Gershwin's mother, who apparently Rosa was not very fond of. Who would we ever know who might have had an opinion about George Gershwin's mother?!

And she told of that momentous trip to the movie theatre in Cleveland, and the first time she heard a pipe organ in a theatre. It was Rosa's "Wow" moment that so many of us can relate to, and that we so much try to provide to newcomers and youth. It was the visit that provided her the direction in a career unparalleled in music.

For two wonderful hours, we had the opportunity to say "Thank you" to Rosa for 107 years of "Wow!!" And so, most appropriately, we offer a toast to a life lived fully, from all of us who were touched by this woman's talent, tenacity, warmth and grace. We shall never see the likes of her again.

Ken Double

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Danks". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

President/CEO
American Theatre Organ Society

There is a full story online at the Tampa Tribune, located here:

<http://www2.tbo.com/content/2010/jun/06/060011/na-for-rosa-rio-it-was-final-curtain-call/>