

DETROIT THEATER ORGAN SOCIETY

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DTOS
Executive Board
& Directors

2015 Concert Series Announced

Paul Jacyk, DTOS Program Committee Chairman

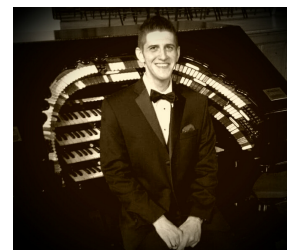
- **President**
Lance Luce
lanceluce@wowway.com
- **Vice President**
Michael Fisher
fisher.michael65@yahoo.com
- **Treasurer**
Dave Calendine
dave@calendine.net
- **Corporate Secretary**
Kevin Werner
kevwer@comcast.net
- Joan Brown
jbeethoven@netzero.com
- Gil Francis
ggf@juno.com
- Paul Jacyk
paul5jacyk@aol.com
- Dick Leichtamer
tibiaplana434@buckeye-express.com
- George Orbits
orbitsgc@gmail.com
- Bob Weil
robertjweil@yahoo.com
- Chris Werner
rolandefleur@gmail.com



Cletus Goens
Sunday, March 15



Walt Strony
Sunday, April 19



David Rhodes
Sunday, May 17



Ron Rhode
June 28



Bill Tandy
September 20



Ken Double
October 18



Nathan Avakian
November 15



John Lauter
December 6

The Detroit Theater Organ Society is pleased to announce their theater pipe organ pops concert series for 2015.

All concerts are on Sunday afternoons at 3:00 p.m. Doors to the Senate open at 2:00 p.m. Membership in the Detroit Theater Organ Society

includes all concerts in the series. Membership also lets you bring in up to four guests with you to each concert. Guests will be required to fill out a guest admission card once you arrive, so please arrive early so that all necessary forms can be filled out in time

for the concert.

General admission tickets are \$15, children 12 and under are \$5. Discounted tickets for groups are also available!

We look forward to seeing you at the Senate for these fine concerts!

Correction: Better Late Than Never

Scott Smith

Back in 2011, as DTOS was ramping up to revive and continue operations as an operating concern, I committed to a full year of written contributions for the DTOS News covering a wide range of subjects. Chief among those was a heavily researched piece in which I was determined to tell the whole truth about the development of the Fisher Theatre and its Mighty Wurlitzer. At that time, I drew my inspiration from one member in particular, who seemed bent on telling his version of the story to anyone who would listen, which I had long suspected to be made up on the spot.

One important aspect of the story that I was hopeful to source and verify was regarding the question of who designed the Mayan Revival themed console. While I could then and now only speculate, logic should tell us that the theatre architects had at least some say in the matter. During my research, I discovered a 1983 interview taken by former Detroit Free Press writer Greg Piazza of legendary Detroit architect Charles N. Agree, a portion of which appeared on the DetroitYes discussion forum. The interview was taken late in Agree's life, during which he said that he had been commissioned by the Cohen Brothers to design the Hollywood Theatre which stood on Fort St. (at Ferdinand) near 18th from 1927 until 1963. For Agree, the problem existed that he was not an experienced theatre designer whatsoever, and, for whatever reason, the developers absolutely insisted he do the job; end of discussion. Desperately seeking experienced help, Agree then approached Chicago architects and theatre designers Rapp & Rapp to come on board

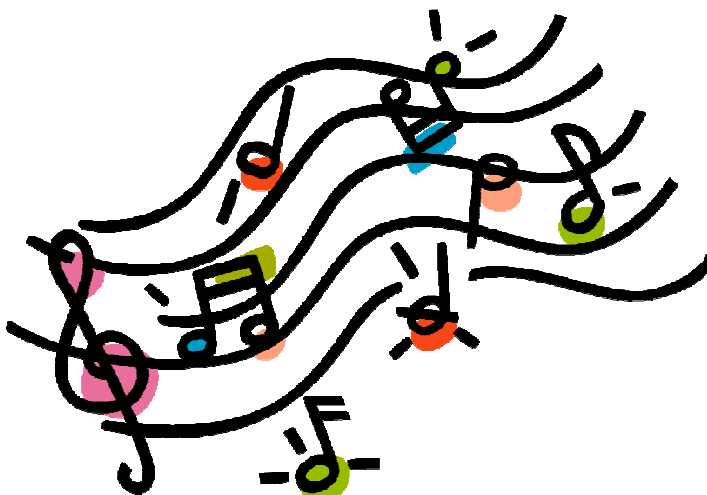
as associate architects, but the noted firm wanted the entire commission for themselves, and turned him down flatly. Through a third party, Agree was to meet two young architects, employees of Rapp & Rapp who wanted to strike out on their own. They were Anker Sveeve Graven and Arthur Guy Mayger, who agreed to come to Detroit and work out of Agree's office until the design for the Hollywood Theatre was complete. At the conclusion of that project, they were free to return to Chicago and open their own architectural firm, should they choose. In accordance with the agreement, the two would be credited as associate architects on the Hollywood Theatre project. While successful in acquiring some notable projects, including several plum theatre jobs, the architectural firm of Graven & Mayger lasted but a mere fifteen months, during the years of 1927-1928. Among those projects was the design for the interior of the Fisher Theatre, considered among many to be their finest collaborative work. Comparing the historic photographs available, one could easily conclude that the Wurlitzer console and theatre were visually compatible enough that it would appear the architects directed the console design to some degree.

I can only speculate that by the time the interview with Greg Piazza was taken, Charles Agree's memory was fading a bit, and he probably said some things that were not necessarily or at all true. In describing the architectural duo, whose names he couldn't even get right, he said, "they turned out to be bums, drunkards, left their wives, just nothing...absolutely no good."

In a recent Internet search, I came across a strong denial of Agree's comments by Peder Graven, the son of Anker Sveeve Graven. This was on the spytwin-cities.com site which features items of historic and general interest in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, and appeared under the title of "Our Storied Past: The Minnesota Theatre." He said that his father died in 1932 in a duck hunting accident near Minneapolis, that his mother was well taken care of, and that funds for his college education had been put away. Furthermore, he speculated that Mayger may have been the real problem, as Graven's mother liked (Mrs.) Vaughn Mayger and felt sorry for her. He offered no particular reason for her empathy and said his mother had no further contact with Mrs. Mayger following the dissolution of the architectural firm. He further stated that his father went on to design several more noted structures until his death. As I also discovered in my own research, he stated that there appears to be only sparse information about Mayger after the breakup, except that he died in 1948 at the age

of 58. Finally, Mr. Graven says that his father was a fine man, respected by everyone who knew him, and does not deserve the "rotten propaganda by an ill-informed source." This posting was made in July, 2010, a year before the series of articles I wrote was published, but never made it to my eyes until just recently. My apologies to Mr. Graven and his family. Had I discovered this site (which never came up on any search engine that I used during my research), I certainly would never have repeated Mr. Agree's comments without at least offering up a disclaimer.

This all points out the need for any thinking person to question even the most heavily researched historical documentation, no matter how trusted or reliable the source. Recorded history is only as good as the memory and communication skills of those who were actually present. While historical accuracy is always implied in a retelling of the past, one must always take into account the possible intent of the author or historical witnesses.



A rchives Being Computerized

Joan Brown
DTOS Board of Directors

Joan Brown has begun the task of scanning, editing and filing all DTOS documents including every newsletter. At this time she has not finished but would expect a few copies to be 'missing'. If you have

newsletters please save and watch for a list of those missing in a future newsletter. At some point these should be available for all to view.

Thank you.

Editor's note: If by chance you have any interesting records regarding our organization and our prized Wurlitzer, please let us know. We would love to have a chance to scan the information in and have it for our records. Any

documents you bring in will be returned to you after being scanned. Any help that you can provide in this regards would be most welcome. Please see either Dave Calendine or Joan Brown for more information.

U pcoming Movies at the Senate

Dave Calendine
DTOS Board of Directors

Two movies will be coming soon to the Senate Theater.

Ghost, the 1990 hit starring Patrick Swayze, Demi Moore and Whoopi Goldberg fills the Senate screen on Sat-

urday, February 28.

One week later on March 7, the animated classic story of *The Secret of NIMH* from 1982 will be shown.

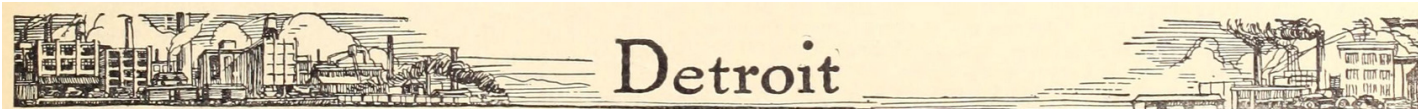
All movies are shown at 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. Tick-

ets are only \$5.00!

Doors to the Senate Theater open one hour prior to each movie, with music on our Wurlitzer theater pipe organ starting thirty minutes before each show, as well as during

intermission.

If you would be interested in helping volunteering at the theater for any of these showings, please contact Michael Fisher. Any help would be appreciated!



W. C. BACHMEYER, district manager for Fox, paid a short visit to the Detroit branch during the week.

P. C. Schram, who controls several theatres in Kalamazoo, expects to leave for Los Angeles, Cal., where he intends to spend the winter months.

The new Senate Theatre, which is controlled by Arthur Baehr, was

robbed last Sunday night of \$1,500. The safe crackers used nitroglycerine to open the safe.

Hunter Robbins, of the Robinhood Theatre, in Grand Haven, Mich., has reached California, where he will remain until next spring.

Jim Allen, manager of the local Warner exchange, has returned

from Chicago, where he had spent a week on business.

Joe Ferte, the singing P. D. C. salesman from the Cleveland branch, came to Detroit last week and sang way on top of the Book-Cadillac Hotel, where his voice was broadcasted through station WJR.

Pretty Lucille Nitzkorski, formerly connected with the East Side Theatre as cashier, is now juggling

cash at the box office of the Blackstone Theatre.

Harry Brown, formerly State salesman for A. B. C., is now covering the same territory for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

Jack Mason has tendered his resignation from Warner Bros. this week. Jack has not made any future plans at present.

Thanks to member William Coale for sending in this article from the November 27, 1926 issue of "Motion Picture News," which mentions an unfortunate event happening at the "new" Senate Theatre.

Visit our friends at the Redford Theatre for their classic film series.

March 6 & 7—Breakfast at Tiffany's

March 20 & 21—Three Stooges Festival

March 28—SILENT MOVIE! Pandora's Box accompanied live by John Lauter

April 3 & 4—Singin' in the Rain

April 17, 18 & 19—Gone with the Wind

Full schedule of events, including times and prices, can be found on the web site

WWW.REDFORDTHEATRE.COM

Hector Olivera at Jefferson Avenue Presbyterian Sunday, March 22 4:30 p.m.

A rare opportunity to hear virtuoso organist Hector Olivera in concert will be happening at Jefferson Avenue Presbyterian Church. The church's original E. M. Skinner organ will be used for the performance.

Internationally acclaimed organist Hector Olivera has performed throughout the world on many classical and

theatre organs.

Jefferson Avenue Presbyterian Church is home to a four-manual, 68-rank E. M. Skinner Organ, installed in 1926. DTOS member Stephen Warner is Music Director and resident organist.

Hector's concert is part of the music series being offered at JAPC and admission is free!

The church is located at 8625 E. Jefferson Avenue in Detroit. More information can be found online by visiting www.japc.org.



Parking Lot Work Completed

Dave Calendine
DTOS Board of Directors

Work has been completed in our parking lot with a new exit gate from our parking lot. This change, however, created another problem as there was a large concrete barrier blocking access to the new exit.

Thanks to the work of Board member Christopher Werner, workers came to the parking lot and were able to lift the barrier and re-locate it. No easy task, since it was winter, it was cold, and that bar-

rier was heavy!

The new exit gate was put in for emergency exit from the parking lot in case the power went out and the electric gate could not be opened. The gate will be marked, and a "no

parking" sign will be placed in front of it to keep access to the gate uninhibited.

Pictures of the work are below.



Lansing Theatre Organ Concerts

Our friends at the Grand Lodge Opera House in Lansing have two great concerts left in their concert series.

Sunday, March 29 will have Ken Double at the organ console. Ken is the President and Chief Executive Officer of the

American Theatre Organ Society. His concert in Lansing will be a fun concert of all sports-related music from films, TV and popular music.

Sunday, May 3 will have DTOS member Stephen Warner and his wife Rose Randall

Warner in concert featuring the music of Stephen Sondheim.

Stephen is not only a performer on classical and theatre pipe organs, but he also maintains and restores them as well.

Rose has been in the performing arts on and off the stage for

several years and currently teaches voice at her home studio as well local youth theatre programs.

Both concerts start at 3:00 p.m. Tickets are available by calling 517-394-9881

Membership Renewal Reminder

To those of you who have not sent in their 2015 DTOS membership dues, consider this a friendly reminder. We've had at least one person tell us that they didn't receive their membership renewal form in the mail. Perhaps you didn't either, and maybe that's why we haven't heard from you. If for some

reason you have not received your DTOS membership renewal form in the mail, please contact us, and we can get one sent to you. If you have been intending to renew but just haven't taken a moment to mail back your form, we would appreciate you doing so before the March 15 concert. We have an

exciting line-up of concerts for you this year, and have already added a bonus event at the end of May featuring John Lauter playing a full-length silent movie. Admission to this special event is normally not part of your DTOS membership, however we are including this event into your 2015 membership because of

having to cancel two shows last season because of the marquee removal. Show your 2015 membership card at the door and you and your guests can enjoy an evening with Buster Keaton accompanied by the Mighty Wurlitzer on us!

Lance Luce
President, DTOS

Silent Movie Night at the Senate

The Detroit Theater Organ Society is pleased to present a full-length silent film on Saturday, May 30 at 8:00 p.m.

Buster Keaton in *Three Ages* will be accompanied live by DTOS' own John Lauter.

Silent movies are not normally included with the yearly concert series as part of your membership, however with having to cancel two concerts last year due to the removal of our marquee, we are offering this movie free of charge to all DTOS members, and their guests (limit of four guests per member).

John Lauter is no stranger to the theatre organ scene here in Detroit, having played regularly

at the Redford, Senate and Fox Theaters for the past several years. John is currently artist in residence and Musical Curator for the Stahl Automotive Foundation in Chesterfield, where he oversees not only a magnificent Wurlitzer theatre pipe organ, but also several mechanical musical instruments.

Three Ages, originally released on September 24, 1923, is a story of misadventures of Buster in three separate historical periods, the Stone Age, the Roman Age and the Modern Age.

Doors to the Senate Theater will open at 7:00 p.m. The lights dim and the show starts

at 8:00 p.m. This is a FREE event for all DTOS members and their guests (up to four people). Tickets for the general

public will be available at the door for purchase.

Join us for a fun evening with John Lauter and Buster Keaton!

Three Ages
Saturday, May 30 8:00 p.m.



D TOS—The Early Years

Gil Francis
DTOS President, 1996-1998

The early years were exciting times for the young men and women who became interested in the disposition of the Fisher Theater 4/34 Wurlitzer, opus 1953.

When the possibility of obtaining the instrument became a reality, the question of what to do with it became a real challenge.

George and Muriel Orbits purchased the organ in February 1961. The enormity of the removal and re-installation project caused them to involve the ideas, expertise and labor of a group of people who were drawn together by a mutual interest in theater pipe organs.

This group eventually became the Detroit Theater Organ Club.

They brainstormed the possible disposition of the organ, and found a vacant theater just a few blocks down Grand Boulevard from the Fisher, the

old Iris Theater, which they leased.

Many days and weeks of frantic disassembly at the Fisher, temporary storage, extensive modifications to the Iris interior, and then re-assembly at the Iris followed.

A joyous and exciting open house for members, tentative members and guests, was held in August 1961 to show off the progress of the installation and the theater.

On September 25, 1961, Fred Bayne played the first sounds to be heard from the newly installed instrument. It was an exciting moment when he played a very rough rendition of Valencia on just six ranks of untuned pipes.

In October 1961, the great John Muri played the first concert for members. Twenty concerts were held at the Iris, ending May 3, 1963. The owners of the Iris Theater raised the rent,

causing the club to look for another place.

The Club's first newsletter was published on 27 May 1962, and continues today, 40 years later, providing us with a printed record of the club's continuing pipe organ activities.

The Senate Theater on Michigan Avenue was discovered and purchased from the City of Detroit/State of Michigan when the DTOC sealed bid of \$1000 was accepted on December 13, 1962.

The Senate was an abandoned hulk with a lake in the basement and a hole in the roof. Members made repairs and re-installed the organ during the rest of 1963 and into 1964. During this time concerts were held using various electronic organs and visiting other organ venues.

The sheer volume of work by amateur volunteers can hardly be comprehended today.

Moving the organ parts many miles from the Iris to the Senate, bringing in electricity, fixing the roof, pumping out the basement, building organ chambers, installing seats, repairing plumbing, plastering and painting, installing a furnace and much more. In the process they had to raise funds and attend to all the legal details accompanying such a project.

On March 14, 1964, John Muri played the first Senate Theater concert, signifying the success of a great labor of love performed by many. Ownership of the organ eventually was transferred to the DTOC, which later became the Detroit Theater Organ Society, Inc., as we know it today.

In 2015 the beat goes on. Who would have predicted that 54 years later the Mighty Wurlitzer is still proudly displayed and regularly presented in concert.

Notes from the Editor

Dave Calendine
DTOS Board of Directors

Where has the month of February gone? I know the month is shorter than the others, but it also seems to have slipped on by much faster than usual. Perhaps it was due to all of the ice outside!

Much has been happening around the Senate Theater. Movies have been planned and are being booked. The concert committee, chaired by Paul Jacyk, has announced their great 2015 season of concerts, and we have more or-

ganizations interested in renting our theater for their events.

All of these events means that we could use your help, be it selling admission tickets, selling raffle tickets, working the concession stand, or helping us keep the theater clean during and after events. Any and all help would be greatly appreciated by your Board.

Speaking of the Board, recently, George Orbits was hospitalized in Ann Arbor follow-

ing a heart attack. As of the time of this printing, George is out of ICU and is recuperating well. We wish George a speedy recovery and hope to see him at the Senate Theater soon!

The auditorium looks great with the plaster repaired and a fresh coat of paint on the walls. Other improvements are still being made. The main floor restroom addition is still moving forward and of course, we are starting the process of

working on getting a new marquee.

Many of these projects will require a significant sum of money to be spent to get them done. Any and all donations, be it to the general fund, or to a specific project (restrooms, marquee or projector) would be greatly appreciated.

See you at the Senate. Until then ... stay warm!

Wall Repairs Throughout Senate

Dave Calendine
DTOS Board of Directors

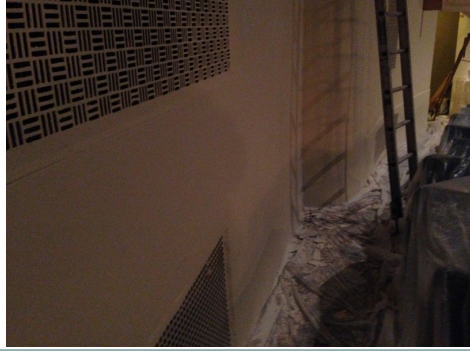
Thanks to Board member Kevin Werner, much-needed repairs to the walls throughout the Senate Theater were completed recently. More work still needs to be done, but major work in the auditorium has

been completed. The painting crew did a great job. The side walls of the auditorium are noticeably better than they were before.

Seats throughout the auditorium in the areas where work

was being done were covered, as was the Wurlitzer piano and organ console on the stage. Once the painters were finished, the plastic was removed and the theatre looked great. To make things even nicer, Kevin and his

mother came back to the Senate to wipe down every seat in the auditorium to make it ready for the next movie—that's 800 seats! We thank Kevin, his mom (and their backs!) for all of their hard work.



DETROIT THEATER
ORGAN SOCIETY

Over 50 Years of Entertainment!

Detroit Theater Organ Society

Dave Calendine, Editor
DTOS Newsletter
6424 Michigan Ave.
Detroit, MI 48210-2957

Phone: (313) 894-0850
Concert Hotline: (313) 894-4100

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

WWW.DTOS.ORG

2015 Concert Series

March 15—Cletus Goens

April 19—Walt Strony

May 17—David Rhodes

June 28—Ron Rhode

September 20—Bill Tandy

October 18—Ken Double

November 15—Nathan Avakian

December 6—John Lauter

Film Series

February 28—Ghost (2pm & 8pm)

March 7—The Secret of NIMH (2pm & 8pm)



photo: Lance Luce