



Detroit Theater Organ Society

December 2011 Newsletter



Volume 50, Issue 11

DAVE CALENDINE AT THE WURLITZER

Sunday, December 11, 2011—3:00 P.M.
Senate Theater, Detroit MI

The final concert of 2011 brings Dave Calendine to our Wurlitzer to perform many of our Christmas favorites.

Dave is no stranger to the Senate Theater and its Wurlitzer. He has been an active member of the Board of Directors for several years. He is also editor of the Newsletter that you are reading right now.

Music has always been a major part of Dave's life. There was a player piano in his house, and he played it often. He started playing along with the rolls when he was only five years old. He started piano lessons soon after, and took them for several years.

When Dave was fifteen, he started teaching himself how to play the organ at his church. Shortly after that, he was filling in when needed for various services at both his church and his grandmother's church.

After one particularly "upbeat" offertory, the organist at

Dave's church suggested he travel to Akron Ohio to hear the organ at the Akron Civic Theatre. It was here that he first heard the Mighty Wurlitzer Theatre Pipe Organ with Lyn Larsen at the console. From then on, Dave knew that he had to get his hands on that instrument.

Less than a month later, when he was still 16, Dave made the drive several times to the theatre after school to try and get into the theatre to play the organ. After several attempts, the management finally let him in to try out the organ. Liking what they heard, they



DAVE CALENDINE ... (continued from first page)

offered him a position on their staff as organist. From there on out, he was been involved with not only the theatre organ, but also with the operation and restoration of classic movie palaces that they are in.

Dave's other hobby with music is with mechanical musical instruments. He is active with the Musical Box Society International, and has helped with their annual Meetings and chapter events. His love of mechanical music has grown from his player piano (which he still has!) to nickelodeons, band organs, orchestrions and dance organs. Dave will be performing for the 2012 Annual Meeting of the Musical Box Society International at the Oakland Paramount Theatre in Cali-

fornia. For his Christmas concert, Dave will have a guest vocalist at the Senate joining him. Bob Taylor of Westland will be singing many of your Christmas favorites. Bob is the Music Director at St. Timothy Presbyterian Church in Livonia. Bob will also lead everyone in a Christmas Sing-A-Long during the program.

Join us for the last concert of the year as we celebrate the season of Christmas with some of your favorite Christmas songs. Don't forget our Christmas Cookie Buffet during intermission!

See you at the Senate on December 11th!

UPCOMING EVENTS AT THE REDFORD THEATRE

December 10 8:00 p.m. —Walt Strony in concert on the Barton Theatre Pipe Organ, also featuring the Laurel & Hardy silent film, "Big Business"

December 16 & 17 – It's A Wonderful Life

January 6 & 7—Seven Brides for Seven Brothers

January 20 & 21—Forbidden Planet

February 3 & 4—Charade

February 17 & 18—The Apartment

March 2,3 & 4—Gone with the Wind

March 16 & 17—The Quiet Man

March 23 & 24—Three Stooges Festival

March 30 & 31—Shirley Temple Double Feature

April 21—Silent Movie Night—"Suds" accompanied by Dave Calendine

April 28—James Cagney Double Feature

All of these great films are shown Friday and Saturday evenings at 8:00 p.m. as well as Saturday afternoon at 2:00 p.m. (unless otherwise noted)

Organ overtures start thirty minutes prior to each show time.

Sit back and enjoy the movies under the Redford's star-lit sky!

Visit the Redford Theatre on the web at www.redfordtheatre.com



RENOVATION UPDATE

Connie Masserant
DTOS Board of Directors

This was the month for painting. The front of the stage received a much needed coat of paint. The final décor on the facing is yet to be determined. Ideas anyone?



Dick Dengate, Connie Masserant, and Gil Francis freshened up the back chamber wall with a new coat of black paint.



Lynn Walls offered a hand to help paint our newly installed steel exit doors. They came primed but needed that final coat of Rustoleum.

Once the doors were painted, Dave Masserant installed the much needed signs on the door to help prevent people from parking in the alley and blocking our exit.

While work was going on outside, the guys were busy inside soldering piano wires to the connect-



ors. This will allow us to disconnect the piano from the organ and move it when we have rentals using the stage.



Glenn Rank and George Orbits soldering wires to the connector.



RENOVATION UPDATE ... continued

The most forgotten area of the theater is the basement. To the right you see Dave Masserant cleaning the French drains. These drains help keep our basement dry when we have much rainfall. However, he was unable to get to all of the drains. This is where some volunteers are needed. Several members have already filled one dumpster with



much debris. But, another work session is needed to finish the job of emptying the basement so that the drains can be reached and cleaned. Won't you help when we have our next dumpster day?

The next jobs to be completed are the 2 exit stairwells. A small plaster job followed by painting needs to be done. Volunteers are needed to see that this is accomplished. Who of you will step up to help?

We have work sessions every Saturday beginning at 10:00 am. There are many different jobs that can be done requiring different skills. Please come and donate a few hours of your time. If there are other days that you are available, please let me know and we can schedule an additional work session.

My contact information is:

Connie Masserant
Phone: 734-652-6004
Email: cmasserant13@gmail.com



Please consider helping the society save money each month by electing to receive this Newsletter electronically. The savings on paper, printing, and mailing are quite significant. It is quick and simple to sign up.

Just send an e-mail to:

Dave@Calendine.net

and ask for your Newsletter to be sent to you each month in your e-mail.

FROM THE BENCH

Scott Smith
The Modern Organ, Part III

Among the "musts" we see in modern specifications is the inclusion of the color reeds appearing at the 16' pitch on the Great manual, not to mention the great proliferation of 16' stops in general vs. the sparse number to be found on a vintage 1920s theatre organ. Specifically, those include the Orchestral Oboe and Krummet, and for organs that have them, the Musette (Opus 1953 does not). A modern Fisher organ might even have the Cor Anglais at 16' on the Great manual. Generally, we don't see the ever-mocking Kinura at that pitch (although I've seen it done), but similar sets made by other manufacturers are mild enough to be used to color the Tibias without being distracting. In fact, I've encountered Kinuras on Robert-Morton organs that were so mild, you could use them in place of a Saxophone, an Orchestral Oboe, in fact, nearly any reed but a Kinura! During the pizza parlor rage of the 1970s, Kimball Kinuras were highly prized for their ability to act somewhat as musical chameleons, but in their case, they work well in their original intent first, which is why the consultant on many of these jobs in the Midwest specified them. Having those color reeds at 16' pitch can be achieved on vintage Wurlitzers like the Fisher organ by simply coupling the 8' color reeds down at sub pitch from the Solo, but, this ties up a manual and temporarily reduces the instrument to a three-manual organ. There are other instances when it has to be effectively reduced to three manuals, particularly at times when one wants, say, a 16' Trumpet on the Bombarde, or an 8' Trumpet or 8' Tuba Mirabilis on the Accompaniment. Since concertizing organists are generally accustomed to playing three-manual organs, this isn't really a problem, but it would be nice to have those stop tabs available.

The following subject is like opening a can of agitated worms, but one cannot speculate on what the modern incarnation of a basically original pipe organ might be like without considering if other stops would or should be included instead of, or in addition to what is already there. Acknowledging that the original intent of the organ was to have at least some concert organ

influence, the author finds it curious that a Lieblich Flute was never included, even at limited pitches. This would be a stopped flute that would be the same scale as the open Concert Flute, but would offer a different tone color. The closest example of same would be at the Detroit Fox Theatre, and was in fact included in the specification of all the so-called Fox Specials. A small stopped flute is on even the smallest of church instruments, so why not here? The answer may simply be that it would have required a larger console, or that it exceeded their budget, although knowing of the Fishers' new-found wealth at the time and their willingness to spend it freely on their new building, the latter hardly seems plausible. It may also have been that whoever determined the eight extra ranks in addition to the Publix #4 model may not have been organist enough themselves to recommend that set. Most likely, it could simply be that there was no more space in the cramped chambers of the Fisher Theatre. In organ design, that which goes into the chambers is determined first (or should be), with an appropriate-sized console to follow. In a recent conversation with George Orbits and some of those assisting him in the removal of the organ at the Fisher Theatre, all agreed that, save for the Foundation Chamber, which went up two levels, the remaining three chambers could not accommodate any more pipe organ. Even if we assume that additional stops could be stacked overhead of those that were in that chamber, it's safe to assume that it would have been necessary for the Fishers to order the larger Fox box console, as the truncated Fisher console could not accommodate many more stop tabs in any division. Once again, this brings up the question of: why this odd-sized console that was only used a handful of times during Wurlitzer's output? Furthermore, it was the Fishers' theatre. If they wanted something bigger (and that certainly included the pipe organ), we know they could have easily afforded it.

For a moment, let's assume that, had the Fisher Wurlitzer included the Lieblich Flute, its compass would have logically followed the Fox Special specifica-

FROM THE BENCH ... *continued from previous page*

tion. That means it would have been a 73-note set, starting at 8' in the bass and extending upward no further than 4'. The Fox Special has it appearing: not in the Pedal at all, the Accompaniment at 8' and 4', the Great also at 8' and 4' and not on the Bombarde or the Solo. That's only four stop tabs. Now look at the Fisher console. The two long stoprails are jam-packed with not a lot of space for much of anything. If you look at the extreme right end of the long, lower stoprail containing the Bombarde stop tabs, you'll see only one blank tab. In fact, the only division that appears to have any extra space at all is the Pedal, which, while it could benefit from a few more tabs (like the 8' Tibia in the Foundation chamber), is relatively complete as it stands. It has been speculated that the Fishers and/or Wurlitzer may have preferred the visage of the more jam-packed stoprails on a truncated console over the larger Fox box with some gaps here and there. After all, the Fisher console has 281 tabs, while the Fox has 346. That's a difference of 65 tabs. Even if Wurlitzer used up the same number of tabs for a Lieblich Flute as were used at the Fox, there are still 61 blank spaces.

Famed organist George Wright's expanded interpretation for the use of the Lieblich Flute is demonstrated clearly in his four-manual "Hollywood Philharmonic Organ" spec, where it appeared: not in the Pedal at all, the Accompaniment at 8', 4', 2-2/3' and 2', the Great at 16', 8', 4', 2-2/3' and 2', the Orchestral (not Bombarde in this case) at 8' and the Solo at 8'. Granted, the organ was in a much more intimate speaking area than the Fisher Theatre (Wright's living room), but also is quite similar in the use of this stop on the pizza organs of the 70s and 80s, which tend to reflect modern thinking overall. If the reader questions why the author dwells on this stop so much, it is that when voiced and regulated properly, it offers a tone of that "transparent" quality of which the Fisher organ has so much, yet shakes on tremolo in such a way that is similar but not as overwhelming as a Tibia. Wright's influence with regard to this stop can be seen in many modern organs, although there are those who steadfastly refuse to include stopped flutes, citing a conflict with originality.

One can already see that Wurlitzer was dab-

bling in the murky waters between church and theatre toward the end of the Golden Era, at least when they were called upon to do so. The famed Radio City Music Hall Wurlitzer (1932) included a Mixture and a few other sets that at least suggested a concert organ. Cautious wisdom prevailed at Wurlitzer, who did not pretend to know how to build one up, and allegedly ordered the pipes for the Mixture from Moller. In their defense, Wurlitzer built up the RCMH organ from a specification basically designed by Kimball (for the Atlantic City Ballroom), and came as close as they could with those stops and components they already were building. They were in the midst of dramatically reducing their pipe organ operations in North Tonawanda, and producing something "new," like a Mixture would not be prudent business sense. Considering that many of the 1970s incarnations of theatre instruments in pizza parlors contained a Mixture, we might see one today, especially taking into consideration that this speculative venture is along the lines of an interpretation of a modern incarnation of the Fisher Wurlitzer in its role as a concertizing instrument, and not just a vehicle for entertainment. Keeping with that thought, in the opinion of the author, the en chamade trumpets, principals, rohr flutes and mixtures added to those "pizza organs" at that time were not especially well scaled or voiced for ensemble with the rest of the organ(s). They intentionally stood out, rather than blend in, and appears they were simply there for sonic effect.

With so many theatre organists performing transcriptions and classical works specifically written for the organ, we can only speculate what would be included in a modern version of the Fisher Wurlitzer. This notion is not without precedence or recent activity. About a year ago, at their home base of the Hilbert Circle Theatre in downtown Indianapolis, Indiana, the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra unveiled a three-manual, fifteen-rank Wurlitzer plus nine-rank classical division, dubbed "Orchestral." The nine ranks are: IV-rank Mixture, 4' Octave, 2' - 1' Super Octave, 8' - 2' Harmonic Flute, 8' - 2' Lieblich Flute and 16' - 4' Tromba. As much as possible, vintage pipework from other Wurlitzer organs, both theatre and classical was used. The idea there is for something that can play alongside the or-

chestra, as well as providing popular music for other events. It's an interesting idea and one that we can only hope is successful for them, as it might just pave the way for similar venues in the future.

In the unlikely event you didn't know it, that plated button mounted on the General (collective) swell pedal is used for piano sustain when any of the piano tabs are depressed. Some of Wurlitzer's most deluxe organs (including the Fox downtown) used it for an effect known as "sostenuto," which locks and holds the last note or chord played on an assigned manual whenever the button is depressed, even after the organist's hands are free from the keys. Most of us think the button is a pain in the tokus, and these days, a switch mounted on the right side of a swell pedal performs the same duty, or perhaps double duty as piano sustain and manual sostenuto. It resembles one of the old Lowrey "Hawaiian Glide" pedals, and works well for this application. Now there is an effect that would get a lot of attention if it were available on a pipe organ!

While rare, so-called "trick" or "harmonic" couplers were incorporated into some of the lesser-known brand theatre organs, like Geneva and Page. What are they, you ask? These are couplers that brings in a note other than a sub (16') or super (4') octave version of the note you're holding, and are intended to create various effects. If enough of these are at your disposal, you can play whole chords with one finger. If you've registered an 8' stop and you're holding middle

"C," for example, adding the 6-2/5' coupler will add that same stop with the "E" above it. Drawing the 5-1/3' coupler adds it at "G". There you have a complete C-E-G triad. The Mundelein Organ had not only those two trick couplers, but also at sub pitches with a 12-4/5' and 10-2/3' on the Solo manual. Today, software-based relay systems can bring those sub pitched trick couplers in "blindly" by activating a command that quite literally couples the couplers; a feature not available on vintage organs. To the author's knowledge, Wurlitzer never engaged in such tomfoolery back in the day, but try to find a modern specification without them!

Couplers are plentiful on the Fisher Wurlitzer, but that was an anomaly of its time. Save for church instruments, few Wurlitzers had many couplers at all, aside from the usual handful found on nearly all instruments of any size. Expanding the complement of couplers on the standard Publix #4 spec to that which appeared on the Fisher organ was undoubtedly a part of the whole combination concert/theatre organ concept. Today, we feel completely hamstrung without a battery of couplers similar to those on the Fisher console at the bare minimum. You can clearly see that it truly was ahead of its time. Having said that, some new couplers would want to be added today for more versatility, including 16' and 4' couplers on the Solo manual, 4' Great to Accompaniment Second-Touch and a 4' Great to Pedal, just to name a few.

NEXT MONTH: PART IV OF THE MODERN ORGAN



GET READY FOR OUR FIFTIETH!

Connie Masserant
DTOS Board of Directors

Preparations have begun for our club's 50th Anniversary. June 9th will be an afternoon of events, presentations, music, and more. Hors d'oeuvres and a catered dinner will follow the afternoon activities. Lance Luce will close the festivities with an evening concert.

Displays are being put together of old photos, newspaper clippings, newsletters, etc. to help you reminisce.

Many items have already been donated for copy. This is what we need from you. If you have any of the above, there are several ways you can get them to Connie. We realize some of these items are valuable to you and you might be afraid to let go of them. Therefore you can use any of the following ways to get the info to us.

Send your photos, clippings etc. to Connie's address and I will return them to you once I have copied them.

You may make copies of your items yourself and send her the copies.

Bring them to the theater on any Saturday and I will copy them on the spot and return them to you the same day.

Bring them to any of the next concerts and I will copy them during the concert so that you may take them home with you.

If anyone has any additional ideas to offer to this event, please let Glenn Rank, Michael Fisher, or Connie Masserant know what you have and how we can add it to our program.

Let's all help to make this a very special event that it is. As always, thanks for your help and support.

Items may be sent to:
Connie Masserant
5966 Purple Martin Dr.
South Rockwood, Mi. 48179



CHRISTMAS DESSERT BUFFET

Connie Masserant
DTOS Board of Directors

As you know, our Christmas concert is December 9th. And as tradition will have it, we always have a cookie table set up for your enjoyment. Anyone who

would like to bring a tray of cookies for the occasion would be most welcomed. You may drop them off at the concession counter before the concert.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Dick Leichtamer
President, DTOS Board of Directors

The Christmas season is now upon us with all the glitter, pizzazz and busy times. There is shopping and cleaning and decorating. Whew! I am tired all ready thinking about it.

Before you get too tired and worn out set aside time on Sunday, December 11 to come to the Senate and hear some beautiful Christmas and other music with Dave Calendine at the organ. You need the relaxation. The Christmas concert is also a time to come and renew all those friendships at our extended

intermission Christmas party. You'll be glad you did.

And now on behalf of the Board of Directors and myself I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your support this last year. I would also like to wish you and your families a most Merry and Blessed Christmas and Holiday season and a most Prosperous and Happy New Year.

Your President,
Richard Leichtamer



TIME TO DECORATE THE SENATE

Dave Calendine
DTOS Board of Directors

The time has come to once again bring down all of the decorations from storage and make the Senate Theater festive for the Christmas season.

If you would be interested in helping to decorate the Senate, please let Dave Calendine know. He will be working various evenings throughout the next couple of weeks.

Please let Dave know if you would be interested in helping decorate by sending him an e-mail at Dave@Calendine.net.

And don't forget that after the Christmas concert, the decorations will have to be taken down and packed away until next year.

Your help with putting up and taking down the decorations would be greatly appreciated!



NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

Dave Calendine
Editor, DTOS Newsletter

It is hard to believe that I am putting together the Christmas edition of our Newsletter. It's also hard to believe that I have been practicing Christmas music for over a month now!

Many things have been happening with the Detroit Theater Organ Society. The restoration of the Senate continues. Read Connie's article earlier in this Newsletter to see everything that has been happening.

Our web site is being updated often by Lance Luce. One of the items that has been updated and improved is the console reservation system. It is much easier to use, and it also will keep you informed of any down-time of our prized organ due to the on-going restoration and maintenance. Information on using the console reservation system can be found on the website.

By now you should have received your membership renewal information form. We hope that you will continue your support of the Detroit Theater Organ Society

by sending in your dues for 2012. Please note that your dues can be split into payments if that would be easier for you. If you have any questions about your membership renewal, please contact Lance Luce.

The concert schedule for 2012 has been finalized and announced. The full concert schedule can be found on the back page of the Newsletter. 2012 brings an exciting time for our organization as

we will be celebrating our fiftieth anniversary of existence. An exciting event is being planned for the celebration that you will not want to miss.

As a member of the Detroit Theater Organ Society, you are invited to come attend all board meetings. Meetings are held on the last Tuesday of each month, except December. Meetings start at 7:00 p.m. and are usually done by 9:00 p.m.

On behalf of myself and the other board members, I would like to wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

See you at the Senate!



*The Board of Directors of the
Detroit Theater Organ Society*

*wishes you a
Merry Christmas
and a
Happy New Year!*

Dick Leichtamer, President
Gil Francis, Vice President
Bob Weil, Treasurer
Dave Calendine, Secretary
Fred Bruflodt
Jeff Cushing
Michael Fisher
Tom Iwankovitsch
Lance Luce
Connie Masserant
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Fr. Andrew Rogers



photo: Lance Luce

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Look for us on Facebook!

UPCOMING CONCERTS

March 18—Scott Foppiano
April 15 —Ken Double
May 20—Ron Rhode
June 9—Lance Luce
September 16—Pierre Fracalanza
October 21—Steven Warner
November 18—Melisa Ambrose-Eidson
December 2—Fr. Andrew Rogers

