



DETROIT THEATER ORGAN SOCIETY

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Boiler Failure Caught Just In Time

Lance Luce, DTOS President

Drew Esslinger called me on Friday, January 3 and told me that the theater felt “cold” to him. Drew was there changing the movie posters for the next movie. I went down to the theatre, and indeed, it was forty degrees in the auditorium. However, in the basement the scene was even worse. There was ice hanging from a couple of the valves, and the boiler was not heating. We tried a reset switch that has been known to trip, to no avail. After checking all of the other normal things you would check: thermostat, circuit breakers, etc., Drew called the boiler company we have used in the past. Because of the frigid cold weather that we had been having, they were unable to come out until the next day. Drew and I both realized that this situation really shouldn’t wait another day. Drew was able to call a “boilermaker” person that he knew, and who has done work in the past for Michael Fisher, and for Marygrove College. Rick was able to drop what he was doing and come and help us.

Rick found that some of the shut-off valves wouldn’t turn in any direction because they had frozen. There is a large opening in the outside wall of the building that lets in fresh air for the combustion of the sixteen large burners un-

der the boiler. This louvered hole in the wall, was letting in -5 degree air that day, so the ambient temperature in the basement was well below freezing. Quickly, Rick determined that one of the valves that I had seen ice coming out of was damaged and would need replacing. He made a call on his cell phone to a parts supplier, and Drew was in his car, driving to pick up the new part. I learned a lot about boilers in the next two-and-a-half days. One thing I learned is there are a lot of safety switches or shut off’s that prevent things such as low water levels in the boiler, too high of pressure in the boiler, back flow preventers, etc.

Our “problem” was caused by a couple of things. First by the pressure sensor which usually cycles the boiler between about zero psi and five psi, was letting the pressure getting up to eight psi or so, and then tripping the safety high pressure switch. This switch requires a manual reset. With no one to push the button, the boiler sits, and gets cold. Secondly the metal float assembly wasn’t working and letting more water into the boiler. Another problem with the system is something that is hard, if not impossible to see. Clogged pipes. As Rick started taking things

apart, different sections of pipe were removed, various “floats” and gizmos were examined and they had crud built up inside of them. The other item that had ice dripping from it was the backflow preventer. It needed to be replaced, and one was ordered, and Drew was on his way. On the evening of the second day (Saturday) Drew and I made a shopping trip to Home Depot to pick up pipe pieces, elbows, T’s, etc. Using our cell phones, we went over the list with the boilermaker to make sure he had what he needed before the store closed, and so he could keep working while he shopped for the needed supplies.

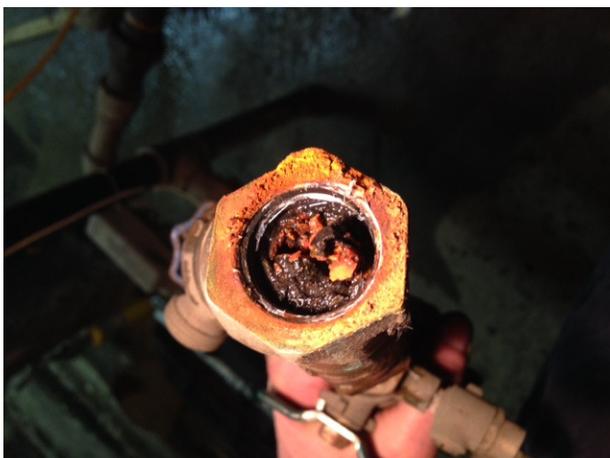
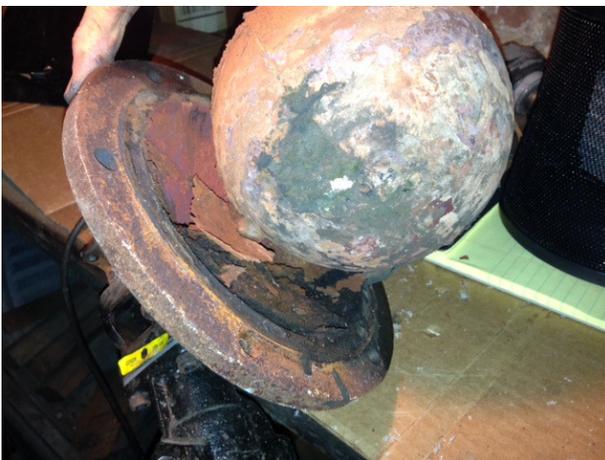
Heat was starting to warm the building up, and we were up to 55 degrees now. I learned another thing about frozen pipes. If while frozen they expand and crack a pipe, it doesn’t become evident until the pipe thaws. Water began dripping into the inner lobby from a cracked water line in the Ladies rest room. I can’t say that ever finding a cracked pipe can be good news. But, finding a cracked pipe, while you’re standing there, with a plumber, with his tools in the truck parked outside the door is pretty good luck!! Rick stopped working on the boiler, and began fixing the leak. This involved shutting the water off to the building. He had to cut the inside pipe out of

Boiler Repaired ... continued

a joint, without damaging the threads of the outside pipe, with his sawzall, under the vanity counter. I have done some plumbing in my day, but, under the conditions that he was working, it was a tricky task.

On Sunday, the water in the lobby was sucked up in an industrial shop vac, the leak is fixed. The boiler has a new float, new backflow preventer, new pressure switch, all new water pipes, and a huge steam leak was fixed also. The boiler is working very well after some much needed TLC. I am grateful for Drew's help in finding Rick, and for Rick who spent basically the whole weekend fixing our boiler.

We really were fortunate that this problem was resolved so quickly. Here are some pictures of some of the old parts, and of the new.



Volunteers Needed for Stage/Lighting Work

Fred Bruflodt, DTOS Secretary

Although there's no shortage of projects at the Senate to keep members and volunteers busy, there are several that will require some special skills and abilities.

Expanding the overhead stage lighting equipment and installing wiring for the three "stage boxes" at the front of the stage are two major projects which will require several volunteers.

The stage lighting expansion involves adding two more six-ft trusses which will hold additional lighting fixtures.

The present truss is twelve feet long and holds eight 500-watt PAR 64 lights. The plan is to add up to eight additional lights and the DMX dimmer packs.

Designing, obtaining and installing electric winches to raise and lower the longer and heavier truss will be a critical aspect of this project. In addition, wiring to power the additional lighting fixtures will be required.

Our enlarged stage now has three stage boxes recessed at the front of the

stage. The boxes are for AC power and audio connections and are typical of contemporary stage design. To make these stage boxes operational, AC power needs to be connected and audio wiring needs to be installed.

These projects will require work in the attic which covers the entire theater seating area. The audio wiring and power for the additional lighting will run through the attic. Also, the lighting truss is attached in the attic, and the winches will be located in the

attic.

These and many other DTOS projects can use professional expertise. There are volunteer opportunities for electricians, stage riggers, plumbers, plasterers, painters, and others. DTOS members, as well as those who want to help preserve the Senate Theater as the home of the DTOS 4/34 Wurlitzer organ, are most welcome.

Please contact Fred Bruflodt, or any Board member, regarding the lighting and stage projects.

UPCOMING MOVIE SCHEDULE FOR THE SENATE THEATER

Saturday, February 22—E.T.—8pm

Saturday, March 8—Chicago—8pm

Saturday, April 5—Easter Parade—8pm

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

Are there movies you would like to see on the Senate Theater's new large screen? Let us know! The movie selection committee will be meeting soon to pick the next movies to be shown. E-mail Michael Fisher with your movie selections!

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

February 21 & 22—Pam Grier Film Festival

February 28 & March 1—Wait Until Dark

March 14 & 15—The Lady Eve

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

DETROIT THEATER
ORGAN SOCIETY

Over 50 Years of Entertainment!

Detroit Theater Organ Society

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WE'RE ON THE WEB!

WWW.DTOS.ORG

2014 Concert Series

March 16—Lance Luce

April 27—David Wickerham

May 18—Justin Lavoie

June 22—Tom Hoehn

September 21—Nathan Avakian

October 19—Tom Fortier

November 16—Melissa

Ambrose-Eidson

December 7—Donnie Rankin

All concerts are held at the Senate Theater.

Doors open at 2:00 p.m., concerts start at 3:00 p.m.



photo: Lance Luce