



# DETROIT THEATER ORGAN SOCIETY

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## Mark Herman Returns to Senate

Sunday, September 13, 2015  
3:00 p.m.

The concert date for September has been moved up one week to enable Mark Herman to perform for us at the Senate Theater. The concert is now on Sunday, September 13, 2015. The doors to the Senate will open at 2:00 p.m., with the concert starting at 3:00 p.m.

Mark Herman is no stranger to the Detroit Theater Organ Society, having performed for us three times in the past.

Mark is the youngest person to ever be given the prestigious honor of being named

the American Theatre Organ Society's Organist of the Year back in July of 2012.

Keeping a busy concert schedule, he performs over 30 concerts and silent film presentations each year across the United States and abroad.

Mark studied theatre organ with John Ferguson of Indianapolis, who is recognized worldwide for his skills as a teacher. His classical piano studies were with Christine Freeman of Fort Wayne, Indiana. He earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Theatre

Arts / Management from DePaul University in Chicago.

Currently residing in Los Angeles, he is President and Tonal Director of the Los Angeles Organ Company, the Allen Organ dealer for the Greater Los Angeles Area. He is in demand as a voicing specialist and tonal consultant for Allen Organs and is proud to be an Allen Artist, showcasing new Allen Organs in the US and beyond.

Make sure to mark your calendars for the date change so that you don't miss this concert.



SEPTEMBER ARTIST AND DATE CHANGE!  
Mark Herman in concert  
Sunday, September 13, 2015 3:00 p.m.

# A natomy of a Restoration

## Part 4: Installation & Completion

Today's organists have a somewhat different and somewhat elevated notion of what to expect of a console, and perhaps rightfully so. Tabs are expected to work without having to wiggle them repeatedly, things that are identified as such are expected to play when tabs are down, nothing is expected to play when tabs are off, but of equal importance is the expectation of the speed of response once the piston button is depressed. Let's face it; the all-electric (non-air) console has come of age. Surely we've all seen and heard organists with virtuosic technique hit pistons buttons in the flash of an eye when they perform on electric consoles. What?? You've never seen an electric console?? I suppose the fact that the Detroit metro area remains "air-friendly" and has no all-electric theatre consoles may have something to do with it, if that is the case. Take my word for it...they're fast! However, I'm of the opinion that an air console can be equally responsive or very nearly, but the wind source must be close by. In recent months, I've played a number of air consoles in concert, and can attest to the fact that the more distant the regulator and the smaller the supply line, the slower the response, especially in the cold, dry Winter months. Even taking into account Wurlitzer's tiny pneumatics with short travel, return spring action and good engineering, they had about the most efficient design going, but it isn't enough to overcome the issue of distance or restricted volume. Some builders put an equal amount of thought and design into their combination actions, but made the tolerances so close that they required constant adjustment. Still others didn't bother with a

regulator to their consoles and ran them on static wind pressures with "soft" tolerances. There was no mistaking when a piston button had been depressed on one of their consoles. The combination action was usually so loud, it could be heard in the back row of the theatre! Effective? Yes, but momentarily distracting and the extra wind pressure had a decided effect on the life expectancy of the leather.

Anyone who has worked with me has heard me say, "we are problem-solvers first, and organbuilders second!" Back in the day, large commercial organbuilders tended to adopt a "take-it-or-leave it" attitude when it came to fitting their instruments into a tight or oddly-shaped spot. That was especially true of Wurlitzer. You can't blame them. They were business people first, and musical instrument makers second. Those clever people in the organbuilding wing of the business were clearly instructed to adapt whatever they already were using for odd or unique circumstances, rather than trying to reinvent the wheel for every challenging situation. Consequently, the competition often made it their business to do what Wurlitzer wouldn't do, like make up a one-off chest or some other part to fit into a space that wouldn't accommodate something standard. Wurlitzer did what they did best, and rarely veered from the path in order to achieve the prime directive, which was of course, to make a tidy profit. In many ways, given their business model and their marketing strategies, Wurlitzer resembled a contemporary corporation more than one of its time.

Had Wurlitzer been faced with the challenge of making the Fisher or other large con-

soles work faster, they would have undoubtedly suggested strongly that we either daisy-chain two to three equalizers or extend the back of the platform another foot to accommodate one of their standard regulators, or quoted the price so high for a custom unit that no one in their right mind would pay the price. In other words; "WE'RE not changing! YOU change!" It must have been nice to be successful enough to be in that sort of position, but they didn't call themselves Mighty Wurlitzer for nothing.

As problem-solvers, the first thing that needs doing is to define the problem. In scientific theory, it is just as important to identify what the problem is not as what it is, and in fact, what it is not ought to be defined first. The problem is not a faulty design nor a faulty mechanism. We know that the console will perform ideally under ideal circumstances. The problem is not that the console has been put onto a cart, nearly forty feet from the reservoir. Simply put, the problem is that the console cannot respond to the demands of organists with the wind system configured as it currently is. What we need to do now is to devise a plan that will overcome the problem in an efficient, workable manner and in the case of this historic instrument, a plan that is sensitive and respectful of the instrument and the needs of the venue that it serves.

Next, once the solution is established in our role as problem solvers, the next thing to do is to transition to our role as organbuilders and get the job done. Some people rib us about clinging to the notion of integrity with regard to our respect of the Wurlitzer product (i.e. "tree-hugging"), but dealing with a historic pipe organ is really no

different than dealing with a historic building or an historic automobile. In this case, we're "hot-rodding" a standard mechanical component in order to make the instrument function in a more efficient manner, while still respecting the manufacturer's intent, including their engineering and identifiable cosmetic appearance. While we hold steadfastly to the notion of undying respect and admiration for our favorite pipe organ builders, we need to remain mindful of how they achieved their intended (and sometimes unintended) goals. Aside from what Wurlitzer got from Robert Hope-Jones plus their own good engineering that followed, any improvements in that pre-computer era were surely made at the hands of that famous team of Trial & Error.

When Wurlitzer bought out Robert Hope-Jones, it was almost like a modern corporate takeover. Hope-Jones was in severe financial straits, due in part to the financial panic of 1910, and due in no less measure to his own business practices. As a result, Wurlitzer was able to buy out not only the company, his plant and his patents for pennies on the dollar, but also the use of certain key members of his staff and RHJ himself. Wurlitzer had the means to hold Hope-Jones right where they wanted, regularly providing the itinerant genius with a "want list" of items they wished for him to invent; a blow to his creative ego, especially when he was paid a regular salary with the stipulation that he was to stay out of the factory. They also had the financial means to steal away good people from other companies; a practice that continues in business to this very day. Twenty years ago, while working on a pipe organ tonal job in Sarasota, Florida,

colleague Jeff Weiler and I met Charles J. Hull, who happened to be a member of the church where we were working. He had worked for Capehart of Ft. Wayne, Indiana, a company known for their technologically advanced radios, phonographs and television. In 1936, Wurlitzer was able to steal away Hull and key members of his engineering team from Capehart to come work for them to help develop their jukeboxes in North Tonawanda, New York. They bought the patents and concept from the inventor in 1933, and were seeking a way to build and market them; ostensibly with talented people who were already dealing with similar products. Mr. Hull was later promoted to Chief Engineer by the early Forties and to Works Manager by the early Fifties. The latter promotion was due in part to his role in the development of the "VT Fuse" during World War II, a top secret assignment given to Wurlitzer by the federal government. Also known as a "proximity fuse," this device could be triggered to automatically explode bombs and artillery shells as they neared their targets, many with television guidance. Hull said that right up to the end, there was concern whether or not the atomic bomb would actually work, and the government felt they needed to be ready with a backup plan. The work was accomplished by four different companies in far-flung geographic areas, and none of them knew who the other three were until after the war. Aside from Wurlitzer, the other three were the Brunswick-Balke-Collender Company (bowling equipment, located in Muskegon, Michigan), Singer Manufacturing Company (sewing machines) and Western Aircraft (not the modern company of the same name). Shortly after the war's end, the Navy Department awarded Wurlitzer and certain key members of the VT Fuse's development team with the

Naval Ordinance Development Award, the highest honor awarded by the Navy. Hull also applied for and received patents for various improvements in the automatic phonograph. Clearly, Wurlitzer did not hire just anybody. To achieve their financial goals, the company made it their business to hire the best engineers in the country for whatever they required, and possessed the financial power to do it.

In order to make everything fit onto the platform, a new wind trunk needed to be fabricated. While Wurlitzer normally ran their regulators perpendicular to the wind trunks so that small wind lines could take regulated air to the chests from holes cut on the underside of the regulators, there was no room for that in this case. Instead, we more-or-less copied the standard Wurlitzer wind trunk, turned it sideways (parallel to the regulator), and sent the regulated air to the console out the opposite end of the trunk from the entry. A well-gasketed wall separates the static from the regulated air in the center of the trunk. We've seen all manner of material used to make up wind trunks over the years, but we believe that the Baltic (Russian) birch plywood is the best and remains more pleasing to the eye than standard plywood. This particular plywood is also known as "voidless," as it has many more layers than the standard, and is made so that there are no voids allowing air to escape. Of course, that little detail is reflected in the cost of the material.

Nobody dislikes compromise more than me, but we needed to establish a permanent location on the back of the platform that would also allow us to continue to work on the interior of the console from the backside without too much inconvenience. This was accomplished by making up a platform that hinges in the rear; a "book," if you will that allows the regulator to pig-

gyback onto the console, but moves out of the way when the console requires service, and to do so at the hands of one person. Maybe it's the only child in me, but, when it comes to service, I believe it's important to think in those terms.

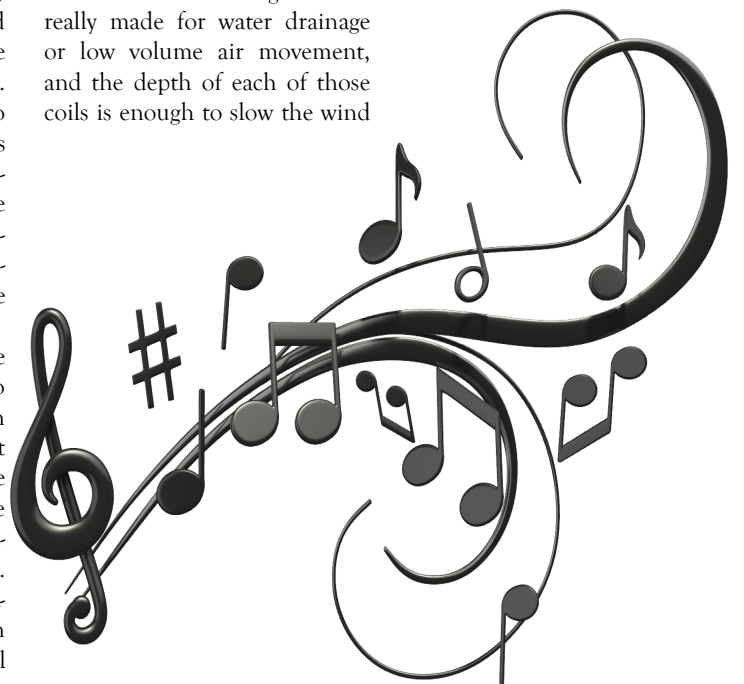
For cosmetic and safety reasons, we added a box made from MDF (medium density fiberboard) over the top of the regulator, and painted it flat black so that it would disappear into the darkness. Aside from the unit looking out of place if we left it uncovered, we were concerned that the tension springs on the four corners of the regulator might catch someone's fingers, potentially causing pain and injury. This cover unit is completely removable, so that the regulator can be serviced if necessary.

A new 4" hose replaces the orange one. This is called Flexaust, and is the most rugged of the flexible wind conductors available to us through the commercial market. It is a wire-reinforced, fabric-covered conductor with a wire coil extending the entire length of the conductor and is made for maximum efficiency of air movement. The reason for replacement is that the orange hose is really made for water drainage or low volume air movement, and the depth of each of those coils is enough to slow the wind

and consequently reduce the wind pressure. In the previous plan, the air was regulated down from about 22-1/2" static pressure to roughly half of that at the regulator under the stage, and then went on its way over a length of about 40'. With the new plan, the static wind pressure comes right up to the regulator just behind the console, where it is regulated down to the same pressure as before, but this time, only has to travel a few feet to do its job, and in a far more efficient manner.

One of my favorite modern definitions is that for "insanity." That's doing something repeatedly the same way and expecting different results. I don't think we needed an excuse for accomplishing our intended goal of a more efficient and fast responding console combination action in an out-of-the-box manner, but I do think it warranted an explanation, and a thorough one at that. The length of this written piece should say something about the complexity of the means that was required toward that goal, but in the end, everyone's happier; you, me, other club members, the organists who perform for us, and especially...the console.

Scott Smith





# Senate Theater, Detroit

**presents** Afternoon Concert, Historic Building, Historic Music

# Rathskeller Ragtime!



## Bob Milne & Kerry Price

**Sunday, Sept. 27, 2015 3:00 p.m.**

### SENATE THEATER

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## We need your help!

With more events at the Senate comes the need for more volunteers. Everything is needed from ticket sellers, ticket takers, concession stand workers, raffle table workers, clean-up crew, and everything else that needs done for each event.

Please contact Lance Luce, Michael Fisher, Dave Calendine or Kevin Werner if you are able to help.

It would be greatly appreciated!

### Upcoming Senate Events:

September 13 - 3pm - Pops Organ Concert featuring Mark Herman

September 26 - 8pm - Movie - Dirty Dancing

September 27 - 3pm - Boogie Woogie/Ragtime with Bob Milne & Kerry Price

October 3 - 8pm - Movie - Curse of the Demon & Evil Dead (Double Feature)

October 18 - 3pm - Pops Organ Concert featuring Ken Double

October 24 - 8pm - Silent Movie - Phantom of the Opera

November 15 - 3pm - Pops Organ Concert featuring Nathan Avakian

Visit our friends at the Redford Theatre for their classic film series and organ concerts

September 11 & 12—The King and I

September 25 & 26—The Three Stooges Festival

October 2 & 3—SILENT MOVIE—Metropolis—Accompanied live by Clark Wilson

October 9 & 10—The Night of the Hunter

October 16-18—Alfred Hitchcock Weekend

October 21—Back to the Future 2

October 23—Young Frankenstein

October 24—Son of Godzilla and Godzilla vs. Monster Zero

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

[WWW.REDFORDTHEATRE.COM](http://WWW.REDFORDTHEATRE.COM)

  
DETROIT THEATER  
ORGAN SOCIETY

*Over 50 Years of Entertainment!*

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WE'RE ON THE WEB!

[WWW.DTOS.ORG](http://WWW.DTOS.ORG)

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**2015 Concert Series**  
September 13—Mark Herman  
October 18—Ken Double  
November 15—Nathan Avakian  
December 6—John Lauter



photo: Lance Luce