



The Reservoir

The Official Publication of The Detroit Theater Organ Society

The Senate Theater

www.dtos.org

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Michigan at Livernois, Detroit, Michigan

No concert in August; members invited to potluck picnic; next show is in September

While the Club takes a little hiatus in the heat of the summer, there will be no concert scheduled for August.

But, that doesn't mean we completely "shut-down." The annual potluck picnic will be held on August 24, at the lakefront home of Dave Voydanoff and Glenn Rank, *Wurlitzer House III*, at 5953 Pointe Tremble Road, in Pearl Beach.

Members have received an invitation, complete with all information including details on plans for the day.

"The way we have organized the event in the past has been very successful," Dave noted. "When members RSVP by phone, we can coordinate who brings what so that we don't wind-up with ten bowls of potato salad." Our hosts graciously provide sloppy joes, hot dogs, lemonade, coffee, and cake. Members are encouraged to bring folding lawn

chairs and perhaps a table.

Of course the picnic is a big part of the day, but so is some great organ mu-



sic. Their home features a 3/10 theatre pipe organ installed in the garage. The organ was originally from the Lancaster Theatre in River Rouge. According to Dave, "Wurlitzer built 201 Style D organs that were 2/6. Apparently, they only

made three of the three-manual Style D consoles. I've had the organ since the early 1960s, except for about five years when Jim Walgreen had it.

"We hope to have lots of our talented members take turns at the console and entertain the other members with some great organ music," Dave said.

In years past, the annual picnic has been hosted by Dave and Glenn except for 2005 and 2007 when it was at the home of Dave Brewer. "Last year, Dave wanted to have the picnic at his place," Glenn said. "We agreed to have the party this year at our place. It's tragic that we have lost Dave, and it was always a treat to be a guest in his home."

The next concert at the theatre will not be until September 21 when Rich Lewis returns to the Senate. The September issue of the *Reservoir* will provide a complete bio on this young artist and details on the show.

Members gather for the annual concert and a tribute to Dave Brewer

It was an afternoon to remember as more than an estimated 75 people gathered for the annual Members' Concert and a tribute to the late Dave Brewer.

Organized by Lance Luce, a host of players stepped up to entertain and to remember the man who was totally devoted to the Club.

Those playing selections included, Lance Luce, Emily Seward, Reuben Seward, Dr. Bob Gosling, Paul Kline, Stephen Werner, Dick Dengate, Paul Jacyk, Scott Smith, and Fr. Andrew Rogers.

"There was a wide variety of styles of playing at the concert, from jazz to

sacred," Lance explained. "Many words were spoken of how Dave Brewer contributed to the Club; his whole life in his later years was DTOS."

Lance has been responsible for coordinating the Members' Concert for the past several years. "At first, organizing this concert wasn't going so well when it was just going to be a 'Members Concert,'" Lance said. "As soon as it became a tribute to Dave Brewer, my phone was ringing off the hook with volunteers to play."

As a special event in addition to the concert, members and guests provided snacks for intermission. "There was a

line into the auditorium to get some of the great food provided by the club and by the members and their guests who brought items," Lance said.

Of course, the focus was on Dave Brewer, his untimely passing, and remembering how much he contributed to the theatre and the organization. "Dave was a one of a kind," Lance noted. "We're glad he was 'ours' for as long as he was."

Other members and playing artists dedicated pieces to Dave's memory, and president Chris Dengate gave a glowing tribute to the man who devoted his energies to DTOS.

A history of the Detroit Theater Organ Club

Editor's Note: When David Voydanoff was president of the Club back in the late 1970s, he asked George Orbits to write a chronicle of how we came to acquire the Fisher Wurlitzer. For the next few issues, we will publish George's story in installments – with his permission. Here is the first in the series. Remember, though, this was authored more than 30 years ago.

Of those people who originally conceived the concept of the Detroit Theater Organ Club, only a few remain. But because of these people, a unique organization dedicated to the preservation of theater organ has evolved. The Detroit Theater Organ Club has become a keystone in the theatre organ world.

One summer day in 1960, an article appeared in a local paper reporting that the Fisher Theatre was to be rebuilt, primarily for legitimate stage shows. An inquiry of the Fisher management revealed that their plans for the magnificent Fisher pipe organ had not yet been formulated, but they explained that it was likely that the organ would have no place in the newly renovated theatre.

After some months and fruitless attempts of the owners to donate the pipe organ to various local organizations, contractors were ready to begin construction. The complete interior of the theatre was to be demolished and removed along with all the fabulous equipment and effects that surrounded the "golden days" of this historic movie palace (opened in 1928).

The Fisher brothers, desiring to keep the organ intact and in the Detroit area, decided to accept an offer from George Orbits to remove the instrument for use in his future home. During the following six weeks, Mr. Orbits with the aid of a few friends, removed the instrument, just one step ahead of demolition. The organ was stored in a nearby warehouse, and a few of the more rare sets of pipes were stored at his home.

During the removal process, it was suggested that an organ club be formed utilizing the Fisher Wurlitzer until Mr. Orbits was ready to install the instrument in his new home. After much discussion and some persuasion, it was agreed that if 60 individuals could be rallied to support the cost of maintaining such an activity, the organ would be made avail-

able for their use.

The original group of about 12 persons, some of those instrumental in the removal of the instrument from the Fisher Theatre and their friends, became the nucleus of the organization. The first meetings set the course for the newly formed club. During the next few months, meetings were held, and various locations were inspected in an attempt to find a suitable home for the instrument.

Additional support came as members were added to the group as time progressed. By June 1961, about 50 individuals comprised the list of members of the newly formed Detroit Theatre Organ Club. The members had inspected various locations, such as supermarkets, abandoned markets, warehouses, factory buildings, and stores, but one member, a projectionist in a local theater at that time, was aware of a theatre that had been closed down that might be suitable for use by the Club. It was the Iris Theatre, located on East Grand Boulevard at Joseph Campau.

After some negotiations with the theatre owner, an arrangement was made for the use of the building for a minimal fee, however, this included heat. Seats were removed from the main floor area in order to store organ parts while construction was begun in the stadium type balcony area where the chambers would be built. The blower was to be housed in the projection booth. In the fall of 1961, the first concert was held with only the foundation chamber operational. That concert was played by one of the members and literally brought tears to the eyes of many as the beautiful sounds of the giant Wurlitzer echoed forth. Succeeding months saw the completion of the organ and its availability for use by the members.

[To be continued in the September issue.]

Hazleton CD ready

Lance Luce reports that the first of the Tom Hazleton series on CDs, recorded on the Senate Wurlitzer, is now produced and is ready for distribution.

This first concert release, a limited edition, was recorded March 18, 1995 and was stored in the DTOS archives. The Hazleton family and estate approved the reproduction.

The cost is \$20 plus \$3 for shipping and handling, if you chose to have it mailed.

If you have not reserved your copy, you can go to the *Merchandise* page of the DTOS website (www.dtos.org) and place your order. Assuming there is a sufficient quantity, they will also be available for purchase at the record counter during the September concert.

Get your copy now before they are all gone.

Two fund-raisers

The Club is still earning extra money with two fund-raising projects.

The first is collecting expired/used ink or toner cartridges from printers. Please bring your old units to the theatre. They are sent in for recycling, and the Club receives a small fee for each acceptable cartridge.

The second is the on-going collection of cash register receipts for purchases from Vg's market. Simply save your sales register receipts, bring them to the Senate (or mail them), and Vg's will reimburse the Senate on a point basis. One point equals \$1 spent in their stores.

Even if you don't shop at the market, perhaps your family members or friends do. All we need is the printed receipts. It doesn't matter *who* does the shopping.

Both of these efforts can bring in much needed extra money that can be used for general operating expenses.

The 2008 DTOS Concert Season

Here are the remaining concert dates for this year.

- September 21..... Rich Lewis
- October 19..... Trent Simms
- November 16..... Paul Roberts
- December 7..... Dave Calendine Duo