

DETROIT THEATER ORGAN SOCIETY

A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

Senate Theater • 6424 Michigan Avenue • Detroit, MI 48210

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Whats New?

Welcome 2021! Once more with feeling.

"**Auld Lang Syne**" is a Scots-language poem written by Robert Burns in 1788 and set to the tune of a traditional folk song. It is well known in many countries, especially in the United States and Great Britain in its traditional use being to bid farewell to the old year at the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve. By extension, it is also sung at funerals, graduations, and as a farewell or ending to other occasions. Well, I think we can all agree to wish goodbye, adios, sayonara and take a hike to 2020 for obvious reasons. For some of us however 2020 may have offered some bright moments to be thankful for. Perhaps you welcomed a new family member. Got a new job, got engaged or married. Or after many years were finally able to retire and relax. Congratulations if you fall into one or more of these categories or another I did not mention. For the most part however the year left much to be desired. Except for maybe our four-legged friends



who hit the jack pot for they now found themselves living the life of Riley. Having company all day long from their "working from home" humans. Not having to wait for a treat or waiting all day to go outside for a break. Ah the life.

Fear not, however, today is

the beginning of great things to come in 2021. Great concerts, movies, silent movies, and other events are on the horizon this year. Let's try it again, shall we? Stay tuned!



We're in good company!

Before this year it would have been un-heard of to even suggest that some major events had to be canceled or postponed because of the coronavirus outbreak, like the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, Burning Man, The Cannes International Film Festival, the Boston Marathon, and the 74th Annual Tony Awards. The Kentucky Derby had to be postponed.



Major league sports were cancelled and/or postponed, The Masters Golf tournament was postponed until November. The 2020



summer season at the Hollywood Bowl was canceled on May 13, for the first time in 98 years, and of course the dagger of them all, The Jonas Brothers canceled their eight-performance residency scheduled for April at the Park MGM in Las Vegas.

We are certainly not alone in the arena of fun things to do, club or society activities, general extracurricular activities and pretty much any social event you can think of that was cancelled or postponed this year due to the virus. We gave refunds where we could and hoped our patrons and members would be understanding at the last-minute decision making that was forced on us to cancel some events. And they all were, and we are thankful. But the bills still had to be paid. Through dues, donations, merchandise sales, a few movies, our dedicated volunteers, and our reserves we were able to weather the storm. Many places are not as fortunate as we are. Some are gone for good. But like the other venues that are not we are now picking up the pieces and preparing to move on.



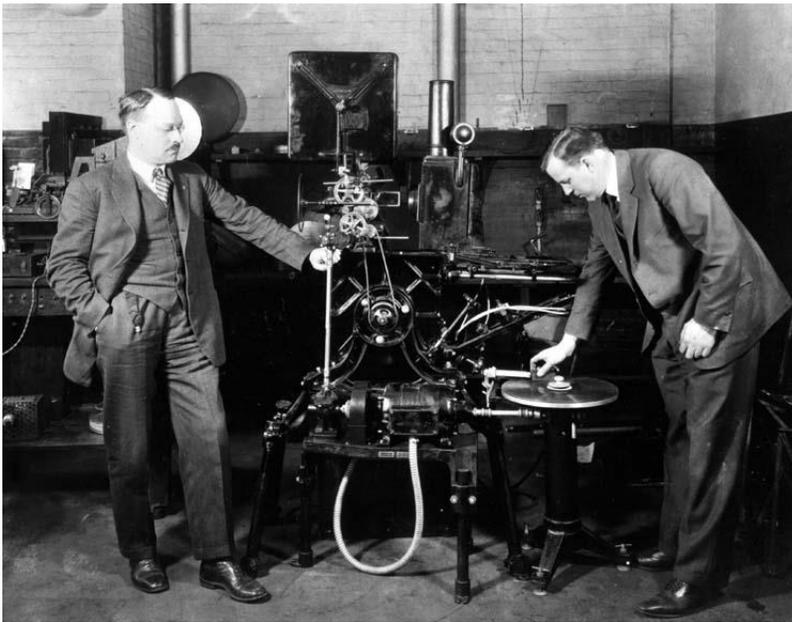
What did you say?

In the 1890s, Edison invented moving pictures, or movies. A long strip of tiny photographs was captured on film by a special camera, so that each picture was just a little bit different from the ones before and after it. The strip of film was later run through another machine, a projector, that would blend the different pictures together to create the illusion of motion and project the movie onto a large screen in a theater. Edison thought that, if he could unite the sound of his phonograph with his moving pictures, he could create the illusion of life itself—a picture of a person that could move and speak, as if it were alive.

From this invention rose the first of what we so affectionately call movie stars such as Charlie Chaplin, Gloria Swanson, Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, and countless others.



"We didn't need dialogue. We had faces!", Norma Desmond (Gloria Swanson) famously declared in *Sunset Boulevard*. This was certainly true of the first movie legends. Descriptive and intimate close-ups were the order of the day, whether of Greta Garbo and John Gilbert in *Flesh and The Devil* or of Lon Chaney in his ghoulish make-up in *The Phantom of the Opera*. Yet the faces were surprisingly diverse. There were demure, virginal heroines such as Lillian and Dorothy Gish or Mary Pickford ("America's Sweetheart"). Clara Bow and the "vamp" – first incarnated by Theda Bara, whose image as a mysterious, sexually self-confident femme fatale was carefully cultivated by Fox and she represented the jazz age and the "flapper" better than anyone could have. The diversity of the men was just as telling. From Douglas Fairbanks, and Rudolph Valentino to Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd and Fatty (Rosco) Arbuckle.



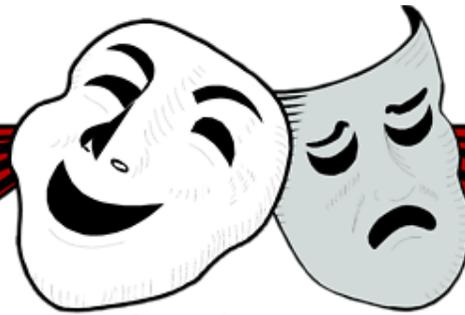
Then along came sound. (A Vitaphone machine in use)

In 1877, Thomas Edison invented the phonograph and for the first time ever, people could record sound, save it, then listen to it later at another time and place. To make a recording, a person spoke or sang into a big horn. This horn collected the sound energy and sent it to a needle, which wiggled up and down as if it were being tickled by the sound. As the needle wiggled, it cut a long wavy groove into a record made of soft wax, which was spun in a circle underneath the needle. After the recording was made, you could play the record back by placing the needle back at the start of the groove and spinning the record in circles again. This time, the needle rode

the wavy groove like a roller coaster. As it moved up and down, it recreated the sounds that had been recorded earlier, and it sent them out of the horn for people to hear again.

While sound in movies can be traced as far back as 1895 it was primitive and cumbersome to operate and not very good. Later after the turn of the century attempts of matching sound to movies were used by Warner Bros. and were called Vitaphone movies. Vitaphone movies simply put were recordings on a record and matching it up with the action on the screen. The problem with this was that it sometimes became difficult if the recording jumped or skipped. Despite this small issue, Warner brothers made more and more Vitaphone movies, and as a result, sound movies became even more popular. Eventually a new kind of film was invented where the sound recording was printed right onto the film itself, instead of being on a separate phonograph record. The sound was recorded as a squiggly pattern of light and dark, and it ran right alongside the pictures on the film. Audiences could not see the "soundtrack" on screen, but it now was easier for projectionists to keep the sound and picture in sync. So, there it is. A

simple history of sound in movies. A special thanks to Emily Thompson whose great article I gleaned some great tidbits and information. *EMILY THOMPSON is a Professor of History at Princeton University. She studies the history of technology and teaches a course at Princeton on the history of the phonograph.*



Back Stage Happenings.

Merchandise.

. We have shirts, hats, patches. Posters, coffee cups and sunglasses all at great prices. Visit the gift store at the Theater or visit

“senatetheater.com” for more details.



Membership Meeting

The annual membership meeting will be held at the theater at 3pm on January 10th. Social distancing, masks and all COVID protocols will be expected by all in attendance. Due to the pandemic this will be the just the annual membership meeting which will include election results. No meal or fellowship will follow.



Coming in 2021

March	14	3pm	Organ Concert.	Lance Luce
April	18	3pm	Organ Concert	
May	23	3pm	Organ Concert	
Sep	19	3pm	Organ Concert	
Nov	14	3pm	Organ Concert	
Dec	12	3pm	Organ Holiday Concert	

We would love to hear from you. Questions, Suggestions... We even take requests!!
Our Board of Directors are here to serve you. Email them at:

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Kevin Werner editor.