



# Detroit Theater Organ Society

July 2011 Newsletter

Volume 50, Issue 6

## OPEN CONSOLE FOR EVERYONE!

Senate Theater

Sunday, July 17, 2011 2:00 p.m.—5:00 p.m.

This month's event at the Senate Theater is a departure from our normal concerts. This month, all of our members and their guests get a chance to sit at the console of our Mighty Wurlitzer and play some selections for all of the others to enjoy.

While not a formal concert, everyone is invited to come to this informal afternoon to socialize with fellow members and organ enthusiasts, as well as to sit

down and play a favorite song or two at the organ. Various members of the organization will be available to help familiarize newer musicians to our unique console.

The doors to the Senate will open at 1:00 p.m.. The concession stand will be open

for refreshments. Feel free to come early and look through the theater and see the magical transformation that is still ongoing with the renovation of our home.

Come out and enjoy an afternoon of music provided by other fellow members. Bring a friend that would like to try the organ out! See you all at the Senate on July 17th!



## FROM THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Lance Luce  
Chair, Membership Committee

Keeping track of the membership, gaining new members and getting people involved is no small task. We are pleased to announce the formation of a committee of four board members that are now assigned to membership related tasks. Chairman Lance Luce, aided by Dave Calendine, Connie Masserant and Fr. Andrew Rogers will be keeping in contact with you via this newsletter as well as our web site and regular mail.

We are pleased that we have added some new members to our roster recently, and we would like to add more. The best way to increase interest in our club is to bring a friend with you to see and hear the Mighty Wurlitzer. Also we would like to get YOU more in-

involved. A member of our committee will be calling you in the near future to see if you'd be interested in helping out on a work day, or assisting at one of our concerts, or any other way that you might be able to participate. We would love to have you help out in any way that you'd like.

You don't have to wait to hear from us, you can contact us with any help, ideas or suggestions you might have to offer. You can contact us through our web site, [www.DTOS.org](http://www.DTOS.org) or call Lance Luce at (248) 321-3596. Thank you, we look forward to hearing from you.

**YOU ARE INVITED!**  
Board Meetings are held on the last Tuesday of every month. Meetings start at 7:00 p.m.  
Come and be an active member of your organization!

## IN MEMORIUM

Dave Calendine  
DTOS Board of Directors

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of two long-standing members of our organization since last month's publishing of our Newsletter.

Dick Dalley and Shirley Jenks passed away in June. Their presence at the theatre for many years will

be remembered by many of our members.

The Board of Directors of the Detroit Theater Organ Society wish to extend our deepest condolences to the families for their loss. Their presence will be missed.

# THEATER RENOVATION UPDATE

Connie Masserant  
DTOS Board of Directors

Projects have slowed down a bit but only temporarily. We did get 8 downspouts installed – 4 on each side of the building – which will help with the water situation and allow us to move forward for more restoration.



Painting has once again begun. This time it is on the outer side of the eight doors in the outer lobby. They didn't quite get completed in Phase I. We move into the inner lobby and see that all of the vinyl wall paper has been stripped off. Two of the three walls have been sanded and now need spackle and more sanding before painting can begin. There are big plans for this lobby so you must stay tuned.

The ladies' lounge sitting area has a new chandelier. Not only is it beautiful to see when in the lounge, but when you stand in the aisle of the auditorium, look up through the window, and see the sparkle come from that room, it's gorgeous. A **Big** Thank You to the member who made this wonderful donation.

We are still waiting on the brick work to be started on the west side of the building. Due to all of the rain, our contractor is behind with his

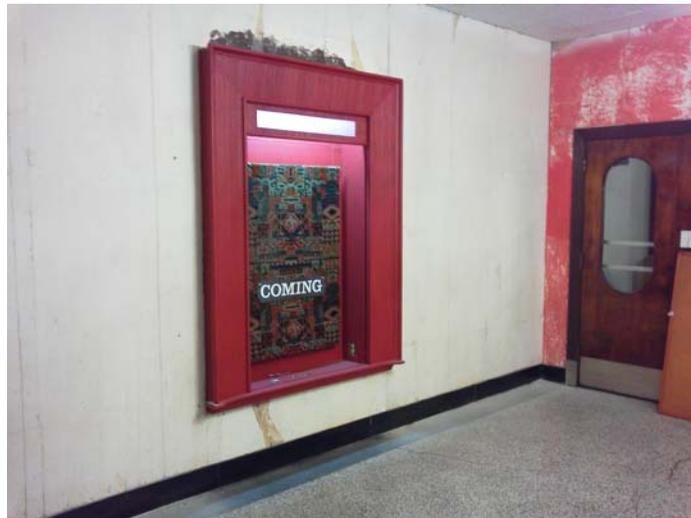
jobs that were scheduled before us. Hopefully it will get started before the end of July. We are also waiting on the pair of double doors that are to be upgraded on the west side of the building. They should be arriving within the next two to three weeks.

There are still a few more decorating surprises in store that will take your breath away but you will just have to keep reading your newsletters and coming to the theater.

In the meantime, on a more serious note, we still need volunteers. It seems it is the same handful of people that is making this happen. I believe that some of you are under the assumption that we have several volunteers carrying out this work – not true. We have a handful who have been faithful and worked very diligently. This is everyone's club so please stop in and see what little bit you can do to contribute. After all, we all enjoy it.

Work sessions are almost every Saturday. I always include my contact information if you want to confirm that we will be there, simply email or call me. I would love to hear from you.

Connie Masserant, Director  
734-652-6004  
Email: [cmasserant13@gmail.com](mailto:cmasserant13@gmail.com)



# NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

Dave Calendine  
Newsletter Editor

The summer months are normally a time when things slow down at the Senate Theater, but this year that is not the case. There is still much to do, and there is still a small group of volunteers carrying on the task of renovating our theater. Won't you consider being a part of the work force to help make our theater beautiful again? There are tasks of all kinds, and you do not need to be an "expert" at any of them. Connie Masserant will gladly show you what needs to be done. Check out her article earlier in this Newsletter.

Would you be interested in receiving the Newsletter electronically? Once the Newsletter has been published, it is formatted in electronic form and could be sent to you for free as a PDF file. This would help reduce the cost of publishing the Newsletter. If you would be interested in this option, please let me know by sending me an e-mail at [Dave@Calendine.net](mailto:Dave@Calendine.net). Also, previous newsletters are available on our website, just follow the links provided to read the Newsletter from there!

Do you have your new gate remote? If not,

you can easily obtain one by contacting Connie Masserant. A deposit of \$15 will get your remote and allow you to open and close the new electric gate to our parking lot.

Do you have any information that may be of interest to other members of our organization? I am always looking for interesting articles that could be published in our Newsletter. You don't have to be a writer. Just let me know of your ideas and I could work with you on putting it in print!

I want to thank each and every one of you for being a member of the Detroit Theater Organization. This has been an exciting year as we changed gears and reopened the Senate Theater. Now that it is open, please become an active member of the organization and help out with one of the many posts that need to be filled, be it with renovating the theater, or helping with all of the activities on concert days (selling tickets, taking tickets, concessions, etc.). This is your organization. Please help out and be an active member!

## UPCOMING EVENTS AT THE REDFORD THEATRE

July 22 & 23—Star Trek II—The Wrath of Kahn (in 70mm)

August 5 & 6—Somewhere in Time

August 19 & 20—Sabrina

September 9 & 10—The Treasure of Sierra Madre

September 23 & 24—National Velvet

October 1 ONLY —Second Annual Classic Animation Festival

October 7 & 8—Three Stooges Festival

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!

# MEET IN THE MIDDLE!

Grand Ledge Opera House, Lansing MI  
Sunday, August 7, 2011 1:30 p.m.

The Lansing Theatre Organ Society is finalizing plans for "Meet In The Middle!" at the Grand Ledge Opera House.

Sunday, August 7, 2011 is a day not to be missed. Activities start at 1:30 p.m. with a catered lunch. After the meal, a concert on the Grand Ledge Opera House's Barton Theatre Pipe Organ will be performed by Fort Wayne's Cletus Goens. Open console at the 3-manual, 20-rank Barton organ will be enjoyed after the concert.

Members of the Detroit Theater Organ Society as well as other theatre organ clubs, committees and museums within a two-hour drive of Lansing have been invited to be a part of this now-annual afternoon.

Cost per person in only \$25 for the buffet lunch and entertainment, and you are asked to pre-pay and reserve by Sunday, July 24th.

The Grand Ledge Opera House is located at 121 S. Bridge St. (M-100) @ River St., Grand Ledge (just West of Lansing), Michigan.

See old friends, meet new ones! Have a meal, hear a mini-concert and enjoy open console at the 3-manual, 20-rank Barton organ!

Send checks or money orders to:  
Lansing Theatre Organ, Inc.  
P. O. Box 26154  
Lansing, MI 48909

Questions?  
Email: LTOPOPS@AOL.COM  
Call the LTO Office: 517-394-9881



This year's artist: Cletus Goens



# FROM THE BENCH

Scott Smith  
Shaping Us

Have you ever stopped to ponder how different your life may have been had it not been for the people in it? My own father, a career pessimist, preached the gospel about how one person can't possibly make a difference, so why bother? How right he was about most things, but how wrong he was about this, and how unhappy his life was for not allowing others in. When I stop to think about those who helped shape me into who I am, many of them had some connection to the Detroit Theater Organ Society. The ones I'm thinking about in particular at this moment were all music teachers of one sort or another, and at different times, they made tremendous contributions to my life. Likewise, the Fisher Wurlitzer has changed their lives in addition to my own.

It's been long enough ago that few members will remember Mary Harrison, but hers was a brilliant beacon that shone in the brightest daylight. She and husband Jim were club members starting in the late 1960s, and both were always active in one sort of club activity or another until they moved to the West Coast. Negativity had no place for her. She was a positive steamroller and her infectious laugh could melt the coldest of hearts. Mary was always open to new ideas and new methods. She was highly intelligent, and read extensively the popular self-help and "head" books of the time, usually written by psychologists or professors. Mary was always attempting to apply them to her life and her music in some manner. While she never played a solo concert for the club, she was always happy to play for members concerts and open console sessions with just a simple request. Her quality playing was always upbeat and rousing; a reflection of her personality. I never tired of hearing her play, and I always treasured the time spent in her presence. I studied with Mary almost through high school, starting just before my tenth birthday. I still remember when she and Jim first discovered DTOS in the late 1960s. A whole new world opened up to her, and she soaked it up like a sponge. Everything about the experience stimulated

and fascinated her, but particularly the stylistic differences and methods employed by the various organists. Moreover, she was most interested in the use by each of those organists of the vast tonal resources offered by the Fisher Wurlitzer. Mary was an incredibly generous person, both of her time and of her property. If she heard something she liked in a concert, she would work hard to deconstruct what she thought the organist was doing and immediately pass it on to us. Out of her rather sizeable number of students, there were two of us that she thought might be good candidates for interest in the club and the Fisher Wurlitzer, and as soon as she thought we were ready (I was all of 15!), she saw to it that that we were exposed in a quality manner. For her, life was all about mining for new experiences, but she certainly hit a mother lode when she discovered DTOS and the Fisher Wurlitzer. Perhaps Mary's greatest influence on me was to be always open to new ideas and new experiences, never knowing how they might affect other parts of my life.

Gordon Krist would be insulted if we called him a "theatre organist," but he did play willingly for the club on four occasions. There was a little bit of genius tucked away in that ever-working brain of his. Gordon was a nightclub organist who played in East Lansing, and was somehow "discovered" by the program committee rather early in the club's life. His first concert was at the Iris Theatre, and went on to play three more concerts at the Senate. He might have played more had it not been for a brain aneurysm and several debilitating strokes that left him paralyzed on the left side of his body for the second half of his life. Sadly, he was only twenty-nine when he was struck down in the prime of his musical life, and spent another twenty-nine trying unsuccessfully to reverse their effects. We can only speculate why a guy like Gordon would have taken on the challenge of playing the theatre organ, and such a large one at that, when it was definitely not his calling in life. Nonetheless, he approached it in a similar manner to all of his other musical endeavors. A

challenge, for sure, but the ending result had to be not so much about having the perfect set of stops from which to choose, but more about the effect the organ could create under his hands, much in the same manner he approached electronic organs. One can clearly hear in those concert tapes that as time went on, Gordon continued to explore the organ's tonal resources to emulate whatever interesting sounds were in his head. I can tell you that from his perspective, there was the Fisher Wurlitzer first and foremost, and then there were all of the other theatre organs sarcastically lumped together into a nebulous pile of maladjusted, semi-playable, ill-sounding, poorly specified and poorly maintained noise boxes. Whether he would like what I'm saying or not, the Fisher Wurlitzer clearly helped shape Gordon into a theatre organist of sorts. Aside from the handful of stints in Detroit, we know he had little contact otherwise with theatre instruments, and was often critical of those who played them, although he had a great fondness for the playing of Ashley Miller and Buddy Cole. Gordon's contribution to my musical psyche was to help me become a better listener. He dwelt on that notion more than any other during our lessons. As fate would have it, Gordon lived in an apartment complex a block from my house. I spent as much time listening to selected cuts from tapes and LPs on his state-of-the-art hi-fi as I did at the keys of his very hot-rodded Conn Serenade. I learned how to listen to inner melodies, the complex layering of music and how to mix tones in my head, even while away from the keyboards.

The irrepressible Fr. Jim Miller touched the lives of people all around the world. His public persona was that of an outgoing, boyish, happy, friendly priest with an infectious laugh that won you over immediately. Oh-by-the-way, he played pretty well, too. Privately, his intellect and probing interest in music and life came readily to the surface, and while he was still all of those other things, he didn't have to put on the public mask to impress you. Whether as a friend or as a teacher, Fr. Jim was incredibly giving. He would delve deeply into a complex concept, learn it, master it, then distill it so that he could give it to his students. He gave you more in three lessons than you got in three months from other teachers. He would become so excited when a student grasped a concept, he would show it immediately with a hoot or a hug. It became an addiction for his stu-

dents, who always wanted more of his respect and would work hard to achieve it. Like Mary and like Gordon, Fr. Jim met the Fisher Wurlitzer with little preparation of its nearly infinite scope. He would often reserve practice time late at night in order to explore the organ's vastness without fear of interruption. He once told me of meeting George Wright at a convention of the National Association of Musical Merchants in Chicago, and asked for his advice. Wright told the budding young musician to imagine himself in the center of a giant symphony orchestra, and that he was the master of it all. Fr. Jim never stopped teaching and he never stopped learning. His ego never got in the way of absorbing something interesting, but by the same token, he never suffered fools gladly. Perhaps his greatest influence on me was to always apply the same basic notion of the literary manservant Jeeves in the books by P. G. Wodehouse, and that notion is: "there is always a way," no matter whether it was in music or in life.

Sadly, they are all gone now, but if we turn the kaleidoscope around for a moment, let us think about how the Fisher Wurlitzer has shaped our lives, as it did the lives of the three aforementioned people. In our exposure to this unique and fascinating instrument, how have we changed and what have we learned? What have we gleaned from the people who surround it? In my own case, I was lucky enough to be able to distill, weigh and absorb the different, but complementary philosophies of three mighty good musicians who themselves were forever changed by their exposure to the fabulous Fisher Wurlitzer. If I am anything approaching what and who they were, it is because of my exposure to each of them, and I am humbled by it.

Several years back, I recall hearing a motivational speaker on PBS tell the viewers that ten years from now, we would still be the same people we are today, except for the books we read and the people we meet. In this instance, if we modify that to add: the music we hear, I tend to think he was spot on, don't you?



Photo: Lance Luce

The Detroit Theater Organ Society

Senate Theater

6424 Michigan Avenue

Detroit, MI 48210-2957

Telephone: (313) 894-0850

Concert Hotline: (313) 894-4100

Website: [www.dtos.org](http://www.dtos.org)

Look for us on Facebook!

2011 Concert Series

SENATE THEATER

July 17 - Open Console

September 11—Members Concert

October 9—David Wickerham

November 20—Tony O'Brien

December 11—Dave Calendine