

# THE DETROIT THEATER ORGAN SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2010

VOLUME XLIX, ISSUE VI

## Dave Brewer Remembered



June 15th marks the two year anniversary of the passing of our friend Dave Brewer. Dave passed away in his sleep at the age of 71 and just eight days shy of his birthday. The official cause of death was Arteriosclerotic heart disease or hardening of the arteries in his heart.

Dave was introduced to the theater organ by his dad and for the last 45 years was the curator of the Wurlitzer at the Senate. In 2005, the board of directors directed him to start the process of rebuilding the Wurlitzer, a project that he physically could not accomplish. Dave then offered to finance the repairs through several donations to the pipe organ fund and hired Scott Smith to do the work. He later agreed to add Ken Holden pipe organ service to refurbish the entire relay system.

Dave's contributions enabled Scott and Ken to complete over fifty percent of the job before his death and he was able to

hear the progress being done through a reduction in siphors in the middle of performances and comments from long time members that the instrument has never sounded this good.

Dave's untimely death left the organization with an instrument that was only halfway through the rebuilding process and no way of financing it ourselves. The board had no choice but to halt all work until a solution was found.

Dave's family later contacted the organization and offered us his personal instrument that was in his basement.

(See Brewer page 3)

## COMING TO THE SENATE:

◆ **June 12:** Members of the board are getting together for a work day at the Senate. Activities start at 10am and the membership is encouraged to participate. Lunch is usually provided to the crew courtesy of the Society.

## Closing of Senate met with Delay's

This month's update brings more delays in closing on the sale of the Senate.

The buyer reported last month that everything between him and the City of Detroit had been going very smoothly. In fact, he was very surprised at the progress he had made with little resistance. All of his construction plans had been approved.

Shortly after placing his deposit with the title company for the purchase of the Senate, he filled out an application with the

City of Detroit to obtain a liquor license for the Senate. It was not until the end of May that he went to pick up the license and pay the associated fee that the City declined his application because of the location of the Senate. He was made aware of an ordinance on City books that does not allow two establishments within one thousand feet of each other to sell liquor, thus halting all the plans. The buyer now has to apply for a variance to the ordinance which may take

between 30 and 60 days to approve.

The buyer has stated that even with this delay, he has too much invested in construction and renovation plans to walk away from this deal. He is committed to close on the properties as soon as possible and has requested a meeting with the Board of Directors.

We will keep the membership posted on a monthly basis as we continue to work hard at getting this deal to a final closing date.

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## Organist Rosa Rio passes away at 107



May 13th was a sad day in the organ world as word had spread that Rosa Rio passed away at her home in Florida at the age of 107. Rosa started playing the organ at the age of eight and this year would have marked her 100th year tickling the ivories.

We were blessed to have

Rosa play for us at the Senate a total of four times starting in 1970. Her last performance at the Senate was May 16, 1992. All we have left now are the vintage recordings of these concerts in our library and the images of her sitting at the console entertaining our membership and guests.

Rosa was well known for her ability to accompany silent films and was doing so all the way up to her death.

During the transition from silent films to sound, Rosa made a career out of playing spots on several radio stations and was the staff organist for

NBC from the late 1930's to 1960. In addition, she provided live music for popular shows like "The Shadow" and the "Bob and Ray Show". Her television credits include "As the World Turns" and the "Today" show.

For the last several years, she had been living in Florida and playing several times a week at the Tampa Theater. She would start her show out with her signature tune "Everything is coming up Roses" or as she preferred to call it "Everything is coming up Rosa".

(See Rosa on page 3)

### COMING TO THE REDFORD:

- ◆ June 13– OPEN CONSOLE
- ◆ June 25 and 26 - A SPACE ODYSSEY in 70mm, 1968
- ◆ July 9 and 10 - REAR WINDOW, 1954

All open console dates are open to DTOS playing members. Hours are 2pm - 5pm.

Admission to all concerts are free to DTOS members and 3 of their guests. Concerts start at 3pm.

## Audit on the Horizon for the Society

An audit of the Society's financial records could be on the horizon.

In a motion by Gary Grzebienik and seconded by Chris Dengage, the Board has authorized Glen Rank to provide the Board with three bids from outside firms to conduct an audit on our financial records of the Society and to provide a

report on its findings. To the best of everyone's knowledge, this has never been done in our 46 year history.

Once the three bids are received, the Board will have to vote to release funding for the project. The Board hopes to have the bids by August.

The Society currently utilizes Quickbooks for record

keeping as well as a CPA on an annual basis to review our records, prepare our taxes and complete any forms necessary for the Internal Revenue Service.

## Board pursues new Location

At last month's regular Board of Directors Meeting, the Board authorized funding set aside to secure a new home for the organization.

A letter of intent has been submitted to the owner of a 16,000sf building in Troy that the Board visited early last month. The letter includes a number of contingencies including approval by the members of the organization. Should any of the contingencies not be met, the funds would be returned to us with-

out penalty.

Prior to setting a membership meeting up for approval, the Society must apply for a use variance with the City of Troy because the building is currently not zoned for our use. We have a good chance at obtaining this variance because of the uniqueness of our instrument and the size requirements it needs. There is no building that meets these needs currently in the proper B-2 or B-3 section of the City.

The proper paperwork is being completed and should we be successful and the building passes all the inspections that will be done, it will then be put into the hands of the membership for their approval. Completing these steps prior to a membership meeting will enable the Board to provide up to date information on the condition of the building as well as the mechanicals within it so members can make an informative decision on this location.

## Brewer (from page 1)

The organization accepted the family's offer and Scott Smith took on the task of removing the instrument. Scott not only volunteered his services, but was key in finding an individual to purchase the instrument from the Society. The Society profited over \$16,000 by selling off the parts of Dave's instrument.

Months later, the family contacted our organization again to make a financial contribution. This financial donation was over \$100,000 which put the restoration of our Wurlitzer back on track. And, this would not be the last time

we heard from the family.

Last year, we were contacted again and accepted another donation in the amount of \$150,000.

Even after Dave's passing, we continue to celebrate his contributions to our organization. For over a month, the Senate marquee posted his name and the July members concert that year was dedicated to Dave. A large photograph was made in his honor and was placed in the lobby of the Senate. This same photograph will also be placed at our new home when it is found.



## Rosa (from page 2)

Rosa's first marriage to John Hammond, an organist, ended in divorce. She is survived by her second husband, Bill Yeoman whom she married in 1947; three grandchildren; and nine great grandchildren. A son John Hammond III passed away several years ago.

On September 1, 1939 the day that Germany invaded

Poland, she was summoned to the NBC studios at two in the morning where she would spend the next ten hours playing somber music in between news bulletins. After the United States entered the war, she had her own radio show "Rosa Rio Rhythms" which was broadcasted to the American troops overseas. Her life

of music is certainly one to admire and the organ world has without a doubt lost one of its pioneers.

*(Sources) The New York Times May 15, 2010 and records of the Detroit Theater Organ Society.*

## Appraisal for Opus 1953 Update

At the regular Board of Directors meeting last month, the Board accepted a very complex inventory list of the instrument which will be used in the next step of getting an appraisal.

The inventory list was compiled by Scott Smith Pipe Organ Service LLC and will be sent to three previously chosen companies not related to the organization to place bids on giving us an appraisal. The three company's are Jeff Weiler and Associates, Clark Wilson

and Associates and Carleton Smith. Once bids are received from them, the board will make a decision and select one of them.

The last appraisal on Society records is from the early 1970's at which time it was appraised at \$250,000.

As the organization moves forward and changes venues, it was felt that the instrument should have an updated appraisal for insurance purposes should it be stored for a period of time. It is also felt that it

should be insured after we install it in another venue when the time comes.

A big thanks to Gary Grzebienik for taking on the task of bringing this to the Board and following its progress through the various stages.

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### Executive Board

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Christopher Dengate, VP  
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Fred Brufloft, Director  
Jeff Cushing, Director  
Gil Francis, Director  
Gary Grzebienik, Director  
Tom Iwankovitsch, Director  
Lance Luce, Director  
George Orbits, Director



## Changes to the Board

At last month's Board of Directors meeting, a few changes to the administration were made.

Dick Leichtamer resigned as Vice President of the organization to take on the responsibilities of President. This is a very familiar position for Dick as he held the office for eight years previously.

Christopher Dengate then accepted the office of Vice President and its responsibilities.

The Board also gave Dengate the task of being the liaison between the organization and the real estate company as we continue to look for another venue and close on the sale of the Senate Theater and related properties.

Lastly, the Board approved the nomination of Fred Brufloft to the Board of Directors for a term ending on May 30, 2012. Fred is no stranger to the organization and has been our

audio technician for a very long time. His services were used with the production of Volume I of Tom Hazelton Live CD and he continues to record the concerts at the Redford for us as well. He continues to chair the Sound and Recording committee and the board also nominated him to work on the Publicity committee with Gary Grzebienik. Welcome to the Board Fred and thank you.

## Membership Information

DTOS membership chairperson Gary Grzebienik reports that he is working with the program committee planning concerts for next year. "We hope to get a head start on the planning so we are not scrambling so much like last year". The concerts will most likely be held at the Redford Theatre for another year but needs to be worked out yet as well.

Word has been received that long time member Bob Hanley had a heart attack late last month. He underwent heart valve replacement surgery as well as bypass but is doing well. He is scheduled to go to rehab for a short period of time but is expected to fully recover.

A get well card has been sent on behalf of DTOS however, the family is also accepting cards at his home address and will forward them to him.

Bob Hanley  
831 Sunrise Court  
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48103-3544

We are still looking for birthdays, celebrations and anniversaries that our members might want to publish in our newsletter. Have a special notice placed in the newsletter free of charge to surprise your family member. We can even print a picture if you pass it along with the information to the editor:

Christopher Dengate  
630 Alberta  
Ferndale, Michigan 48220

Have a story of interest? Pass it along to Chris for publication in next month's edition of the newsletter as well.



Can you name this long time member of the organization? Is it:

- A) Don Jenks
- B) George Orbits
- C) Dave Voydanoff
- D) David Brewer

Answer coming up in next months issue of the newsletter.