



# DETROIT THEATER ORGAN SOCIETY

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## M arquee Work Postpones Shows

Michael J. Fisher, DTOS Vice President

To some reading this letter it may be an update and to others it will be headlines. In any event, it should be at least mildly informational and hopefully give you the information you need to be informed about this topic, our beloved and proven vintage form of advertising.

*What's the issue?*

Our sign needs work. We have known for years that our sign has been in need of some tender loving care and restoration. We have tended to some of that in recent times. See our freshly lighted neon letters! We are now facing a costly, but necessary repair and partial replacement of our sign. This is being REQUIRED by the city and must be dealt with in a timely fashion.

*What's happening?*

We have voluntarily opted to temporarily close our theater to the public while the required (by the City of Detroit) repairs and renovations to our marquee are tended to. Getting this done as soon as possible so we can continue normal operations of the theater is our paramount concern.

*What are we doing about it?*

The board of directors has appointed a committee to deal with this issue and is currently working diligently with the city of Detroit's building department in coordination with a team consisting of: a struc-

tural engineer; a former city council person, Miss Sheila Cockrel, as a liaison; a contractor/construction company; a member at large from our membership, Drew Esslinger; President, Lance Luce and Vice President, Michael Fisher.

*What's the problem?*

The horizontal portion of the sign contains some steel structures supports that have become rusted and compromised and could potentially cause a safety issue to our members, patrons, and pedestrians.

The vertical portion of the sign (Senate), which in itself is structurally fine, is at least partially support by the horizontal portion, thus, entangling the two signs in some fashion as one. Therefore, to fix one, we have to temporarily structurally support the other and then reconnect the vertical steel substructure to the new steel substructure of the horizontal portion of the marquee.

*What's the solution?*

The horizontal portion of the sign has to be removed. This means systematically disassembling and removing the letter-board face and steel substructure and replacing it for the FUTURE placement of a new, yet historically accurate signboard area of our marquee.

Currently this plan is in

place, including permits, schematics and other drawings to facilitate this process and will hopefully be visibly underway before week's through.

*Will we get a new "vintage" style sign?*

It is our hope, through fund raising and perhaps some form of a grant that we can get a new sign as soon as possible. This, however is not our immediate goal. We are working as expeditiously as possible to satisfy the immediate structural concerns, thus allowing us to pass an inspection with the city and get back to our business as soon as possible. We are aiming to have this accomplished by the end of the month. Fingers crossed!

*Will the vertical portion of our sign continue to light and attract attention and customers during this process?*

Simply put, yes!

*When do we plan to reopen?*

We are guided to believe that we can have this done before the end of the month! This would allow us to resume programming in October.

*How much is this going to cost?*

We don't have exact answers right now. We are currently "guesstimating" the required controlled demolition of the horizontal portion, the temporary support of the vertical Senate portion and the new steel substructure and the reuniting of the two to cost somewhere in the range of \$20,000.00. This is not including our someday

# Marquee Work Suspends Shows

*Continued from front page*

(hopefully not so far off) designed vintage horizontal sign-board portion of the marquee.

*How can I help?*

The DTOS is graciously accepting donations to help de-

fray these costs. Please indicate on your check's memo line "marquee" and we will know where to apply your gift.

Hopefully, this at least in part, answers some of the ques-

tions you may have. Please trust that the Board of Directors is pursuing this very carefully and realizes the importance and the timeliness of this issue. We are here to an-

swer questions, if need be. We are glad to be working with a good team and expect great results!

# Music Archivist Needs Your Help

Christopher Dengate  
DTOS Archivist

The music archivist for the Detroit Theater Organ Society, Christopher Dengate, is in need of help from the members of the organization.

He is currently in the process of archiving the entire music library of our wonderful instrument but is missing some of the

master recordings. Chris has been keeping an accurate record of what is located at the Senate library and is taking two years worth of recordings at a time home to transfer them to an external hard drive.

He needs the members help in finding these recordings to

borrow and transfer. He will gladly return them to you after they are transferred. Any format at this point will be accepted. Reel to reel, cassette, Compact Disc and DAT.

Please contact any member of the board for more information and specifics as to which record-

ings are needed. E-Mail Chris at [dengates@att.net](mailto:dengates@att.net). We would like a complete library of all the concerts performed and we are well on the way to completion.

# From the President's Desk

Lance Luce  
DTOS President

The news media called it a 100 year storm, and some places called it a 200 year storm. I know the storm itself only lasted a few hours, but it was long enough to flood a lot of basements in the Detroit metro area.

The basement of our theater saw a lot of water in a short period of time as well. There were two things that worked out in our favor. Our sump pumps did work, both of them. They just couldn't keep up with the volume of water that was flowing into the basement from our crawl spaces

that run the length of the theater all the way out to Michigan Ave. Fortunately the organ blower is sitting on a platform that raises it off the ground about fifteen inches. Judging by the "water line" mark on the walls, the rain water came within an inch or two of the bottom of the blower. We were very fortunate that the blower and other organ related items were up off the floor far enough, just far enough, to avoid a problem. I don't know who's idea it was to build a raised platform to put the blower on, but I'm glad they

thought of it.

The boiler, on the other hand, didn't fair as well. It basically sits on the floor, and the lower section was submerged. Thank goodness it's summer and the boiler is shut down anyway.

Ironically Rick, our "boilermaker" is in the process of some maintenance, including replacing some more aged pipes. His list of items to fix now includes a new gas regulator which is down by the ground, as well as an igniter and electronic circuit.

As part of our alarm system

upgrade, which you will be reading about in another article, we will now have high water sensors that will alert the alarm company to a potential flood in the future. No alarm would have been able to avert this situation that Mother Nature threw our way.

We came out of it a lot better than some. The organ has been checked by our technicians, and operates fine. Our boiler will be fixed before the snow flies and we should be dry and warm for our upcoming concert season.

# From the Vice President's Desk

Michael J. Fisher  
DTOS Vice President

Exciting and challenging times at the Senate!

There are so many things going on at the Senate. The D. T. O. S. has maintained a "dark house" over the last couple of months, but it has been anything but quiet! There are many things going on that have kept your board of directors, several members, and myself quite busily engaged at 6424 Michigan Avenue.

In June, as most of you remember, we were able to light up the Senate's vertical sign, replacing several transformers and refilling the neon gas in the letters spelling out our theater's name. We received a lot of recognition on Facebook and several other media sources. We all delighted in phase one of our potential marquee restoration program. It is lit even as I write this update and is quite delightful to drive down Michigan Avenue in the evening and see the big red letters begin to come into

focus as much as a half mile away in either direction. If you haven't taken the trip down to see it at night, treat yourself to Dairy Queen or one of our friendly neighborhood businesses and gander to the East and take it in. We are all proud of this.

With all this "hoopla" over the restored neon portion of our prominent vintage sign, we not only attracted much attention from the media, our neighbors, passerby foot and passenger traffic, but we also gained attention from the city of Detroit. Cutting to the chase, the city has found some "structural issues" with our horizontal sign, thus requiring us to voluntarily and temporarily close our building to the public while these repairs are dealt with. This has not interfered with our members coming to practice or other various members coming to the theater to work on and lead various projects even as recently as

this week. We are diligently dealing with our sign situation and addressing other ongoing maintenance issues and some recent weather related repairs.

This has caused us to have to cancel two movies to date, namely "Viva Las Vegas" in early June and "It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World." We are also having to postpone this month's organ concert and the ragtime piano concert event on September 29. We hope to resume operations for all events in October.

Please stay tuned to our website, Facebook page or even a good old fashioned phone call, as this situation continues to be resolved. Please see the other article here-within with further detail about the sign and the progress that we continue to make.

We are stepping forward in securing our future as a viable theater and a wonderful home to our "Mighty Wurlitzer" Orbits/Fisher Theater Pipe

Organ in such areas as our first floor restrooms, securing several rental events for the rest of this year and also in other areas such as expanding our present parking area as we strive through yet another generous donation to purchase the next home on Gilbert Street. Further, our Program Committee is busy scheduling organ concerts for the next season, and the Movie and Special Events Committee strives to bring great movies and events to our theater.

As you can imagine, it has been anything but "dark" at the Senate. Please stay tuned and consider becoming "active" with us as we press forward in our shared interest of the Detroit Theater Organ Society and the Historic Senate Theater. I am proud to belong to such a worthy organization and historic jewel here in the Great City of Detroit!

Visit our friends at the Redford Theatre for their classic film series.

September 12 & 13 - Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom

September 21 - Bullit

September 26, 27 & 28 - West Side Story

October 10 & 11 - Three Stooges Halloween Festival

October 17 & 18 - The Phantom of the Opera - live accompaniment by Tony O'Brien

October 24 & 25 - Sir Graves Ghastly Tribute featuring The Wolf Man

October 26 - Cody High

October 31 - Evil Dead 2: Dead By Dawn

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

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

# Rentals! Rentals! Rentals!

Even with all that is going on here at the Senate, we get a steady stream of rental inquiries. We receive phone calls, Facebook and website inquiries weekly. Many are simply that, queries, but we are making headway and continue to grab attention from all sorts of groups from all over the metro area. We are onto something good here gang - no doubt!

Newsflash!

We have just booked a rental for Friday, October 17, when our theater will host a "semi private" Halloween costume double feature, horror movie night! Wow a mouthful!

A local trio of gentlemen have booked our venue to host this charity focused event. This group is made up of a fireman, a police officer and a paramedic. They are hosting this event for their fellow workers, their family and friends for the benefit of the "Friends of Clark Park" here in southwest Detroit. They are

expecting an estimated attendance of between 300 and 400 hundred fellow fireman, policemen, paramedics, their family and friends.

The evening will begin with our doors opening at 7:00 p.m. and the first movie screening at 8:00 p.m. The classic Stephen King book based movie, starring Jack Nickelson and Shelly Duvall, "The Shining," will be shown. After that there will be a time of mingling, socializing and judging of the costumes ending with a screening at 11:00 p.m. of the silent classic, "Nosferatu," with musical accompaniment by our own Steven Warner! Sounds like a great evening!

We are going to need to call in the troops! We need 23 volunteers! It is going to be a lot of work for sure! We need ticket sellers, ticket takers, concessions workers, clean up crew, "runners," door attendants, audio & video people, etc. As

you can see, this is where you come in! We truly need your support! There is a job for each of you, no matter your limitations.

Please contact me to let me know of your support and attendance for this night. I am asking all volunteers to arrive at the theater at 6:15 p.m. Even if you cant "work" standing or bending, we need you! We need to man our membership desk, sell 50/50 tickets and watch the doors, even in a seated position! So please, please become active with your fellow members and support our mutual cause and also have some fun!

Now if that isn't enough excitement, I am currently working on another rental event with the "Preservation Detroit" folks for the next week, Friday, October 24, to show another Halloween movie. This group will officially sign our contract very soon, so stay tuned! We are going to need equally as much help that

night, if not more than the week before due to the fact that these folks are predicting a bigger crowd than the fireman and the policemen friends, then, if this isn't all good enough, we have our scheduled movie, the next night, Saturday the 25th! Oh yes, don't forget. Our screening of "Poltergeist" on Saturday, October 11.

As you can see we are have been, and will be very busy at the Senate and we need each one of our members to become involved in our rentals and movies. Please remember to continue to recommend our unique, historic venue to your friends, family, groups, clubs, churches and so on. With your help and support we will continue to grow our business and secure our future and preserve our past!

I'm looking forward to working with each of you at one or all of these great upcoming events!

See you at the Senate Soon

Michael J. Fisher  
DTOS Vice President

# Alarm System Upgrade

As many of you may know, our alarm system is old and outdated. As a result, some of you have had difficulty getting in to the building. The board has been aware of this problem and has subsequently taken steps to correct the issues with the alarm system. Over the years the system has been retrofitted, modified and repaired so many times that it couldn't be saved any more.

With board approval, the alarm company has recently installed a completely new system. This system has many features that will increase the number of things that can be monitored. We now have temperature sensors in the basement that will notify us if the temperature goes to low, or too high. We also have water level sensors in the basement as well to make sure

there is no flooding that could damage the boiler or organ blower to the Wurlitzer.

The procedure to enter the building has remained the same as it always has been. Your existing key fobs will still work. Simply swipe your key fob and enter the building. Turn on the lights and go play the organ. To exit, there is a slight change to the procedures. Upon exiting, there is a

new button that is located at the east side entrance at Gilbert Street (into the parking lot). This button is clearly marked and is to the left of the light switch. Push the button, turn off the lights and leave. Very simple, just one new step. Make sure the door is securely closed after you have exited. If you parked on Michigan Avenue, there is a delay to provide adequate time to exit as well.

Kevin Warner  
DTOS Board of Directors

# Board Meeting Updates

In order to keep the membership updated on actions taken by the Board of Directors, a summary of the minutes of each meeting are placed in the Newsletter as space permits.

Board meetings are held on the last Tuesday of each month in the lobby of the Senate Theater, and are open to any and all members of the Detroit Theater Organ Society. Attendance is encouraged, and we look forward to more members becoming an active part of the Detroit Theater Organ Society.

The following actions were taken by the Board of Directors over the past months:

## March, 2014

- The roof of the theatre and lobbies will be inspected once the weather breaks.
- Spectrum Neon will be out to investigate getting the SENATE vertical sign working again.
- A proposal from Guardian Alarm was received to upgrade our existing alarm system.
- Generic tickets will be used for events instead of event-specific tickets. This will cut down on printing costs.
- New membership name badges will be made.
- A proposal was received from the architectural firm that is working on the proposed restroom addition.

## April, 2014

- A presentation by Tim Weldon was given on a proposed new alarm system.
- A proposal by Guardian Alarm to install an upgraded alarm system was approved.
- Ice jams from the harsh

winter caused leaks in some of the walls in the men's restroom.

- The marquee structure needs to be evaluated.
- The lobby piano is in bad shape and is virtually unplayable.
- A list of projects that the organ crew is working on or needs to work on needs to be prepared for the Board.
- Drew Esslinger will help work with the "Friends of the Senate" membership category.
- A sign company came out and determined that the SENATE letters on the vertical portion of our marquee are in surprisingly good condition and could be re-lit with new transformers and wiring.

## May, 2014

- A list of members that have yet to renew were presented to the Board.
- Water bill was unusually high this month.
- Vertical portion of SENATE sign will be lit soon after work is done on the electrical lines to it.
- Plumber will provide estimates for boiler repair to be done over the summer.
- A quote for electrical work in the basement is being requested.
- Work in the men's restroom will need to be done once the leak(s) have been fixed.
- Two rentals in June will happen, with movies showing at each one.
- Chris Dengate to be appointed to the Recording Committee and given a set of keys.
- Arrangements for Tom

Hoehn's concert were discussed.

- The number of guards used for events was discussed.
- More transmitters will be ordered to open the parking lot gate.
- Due to a shortage of volunteers, we may have to look into a cleaning service to be used after events in the theater.
- Volunteer staffing levels were discussed with regards to operating the theatre efficiently, and also in staffing the pipe chambers for any chamber tours.
- The alarm system will be upgraded. New sensors will be added during the upgrade.
- The need to respond to phone messages in a more timely manner was discussed.

## June, 2014

- Lobby piano will be replaced by a new Young-Chang from Evola Music.
- A log book will be placed by the parking lot door entrance to note any repair work that needs to be done.
- Guardian Alarm is still waiting on parts to upgrade our alarm system.
- A quote was received to install gravel on lot next to fenced parking lot. It will be delayed due to cost.
- A quote was received to repair the southeast pilaster. Work will happen at the end of summer.
- The recently-burned house will be looked into to be acquired for the society to expand parking.
- Paul Jacyk presented a list of theater improvement projects and encouraged

## Dave Calendine DTOS Treasurer

board members to prioritize them for the next meeting.

- More calls were received regarding renting the theater, including a wedding in 2015.
- A reservation form will be implemented for rentals so that all information can be found in one place.
- A carton of 30 Tom Hazleton at the Senate CDs will be sent to Indianapolis to be sold at the annual convention of the American Theater Organ Society.
- Architect working on building expansion for lower-level restrooms will be going through the crawl spaces under the theatre to assess the electrical and water utilities.
- Stephen Warner will be hosting a Youth Organ Encounter for the American Guild of Organists at the Senate Theatre in July.

## July, 2014

- Presentation by Penschansky regarding architectural design for the proposed restroom addition.
- Presentation by Drew Esslinger regarding the damage to the theatre marquee due to deterioration of structural supports. The theatre will have to remain closed until repairs are finished and the city inspectors approve all work. The interior of the theatre will be inspected by the city soon.
- Alarm system upgrade hit a snag when dealing with many old pieces of equipment. Recommendation to replace all equipment was made and approved.
- ATOS grant payments were received for restoration work on the organ.

# Board Meeting Update

Continued from page 5

- Voicemail on the phonelines through Comcast will be activated so answering machines can be removed.
  - More groups are inquiring about renting the theater.
  - Various forms of fundraising were discussed.
  - Highlights of the American Theatre Organ Society annual convention were discussed.
  - The success of the American Guild of Organist Youth Organ Encounter was discussed.
  - Chris Dengate continues his work on the concert recording archives.
  - Paul Jacyk is working on the 2015 concert series.
  - Revised procedures regarding the "Friends of the Senate" category were presented and approved.
- August, 2014
- Flood damage in ladies restroom. Ceiling damage. Water leaked down into main lobby as well. Roofer will be looking at doing repairs. Lobby ceiling will have to be repaired as well.
  - Marquee work requires removal of lower portion of sign. Structural steel will need to be erected to support vertical SENATE sign so that marquee can be demolished.
  - Boiler sustained damage from last flood. Repairs are under way and will be done before the heating season starts. Sump pumps were working, but could not keep up with the amount of water coming in.
  - Southeast pilaster will be repaired in September.
  - Main lobby carpet took on a lot of water from major rainfall and water coming in through side parking lot door. Carpet will be cleaned and remedied for mold before we re-open.
  - September concerts and movies were cancelled due to marquee work.
  - Fire extinguishers have been inspected.
  - Address numbers will be installed above Michigan Avenue doors in order to comply with city code.
  - Alarm system upgrades will be finishing soon.
  - Next house on Gilbert Street will be acquired by George Gilbert and then donated to DTOS.
  - Rentals have booked more shows in October.
  - Policies and Procedures will be updated to cover rentals.
  - A discussion was held on keeping humidity in the organ throughout the year.

For more information on what is happening at the theater, we highly encourage you to become an active member and attend Board meetings. We are always looking for help from our members. Now, more than ever, your help is needed to keep the Senate Theater and the Detroit Theater Organ Society operating.

To contact any of the members of the Board of Directors, use the Director listing on the front page of this Newsletter.



## Newer Used Piano for Senate Lobby

We recently upgraded the piano in the lobby of the Senate Theater. The old piano in our lobby was traded in on a much newer one! The newer piano is a Young Chang, and is a much needed update for pre-show music. The old piano's

pin block would no longer hold the tuning pins in place, so the piano would not stay in tune. As well, the bass bridge and sound board were cracked, so the piano had no resonance or tone. The old piano had become virtually

unplayable mostly because of its age. The new piano is a big step up in sound quality and should last the theater for a long time. It is now an instrument that can be played for pre-show music if so desired. Through the generosity

Lance Luce  
DTOS President

of George Orbits and Evola Music as well as other small donations, we are able to have an almost new piano for our inner lobby.

# Sign Work at Senate Theater

Lance Luce  
DTOS President

A few months ago, I was very excited to report that the neon in our "SENATE" letters and the blue stars on both sides of our vintage sign still work! And they have been lighting up the vertical portion of our marquee ever since.

I am much less excited to report to you that the letter board sections that flank both lower sides of our tall sign are now in desperate need of repair.

It seems that the steel structure that supports the "horizontal" portion of our sign has corroded over the years, and now needs to be taken down

and replaced. This is not a small job. As you look at the sign from the street, the very right side of the sign is leaning away from the building slightly.

We have contacted a builder, a structural engineer and two sign companies. Our building managers are working feverishly to get the work started so that we can re-open our front entrance which at the moment is shut down for safety reasons.

Members can use the side entrance for private practice on the organ, but our public shows are temporarily cancelled until this sign work is completed. We

will have to pass an inspection once this work is complete in order to re-open the front entrance for our movie and concert going patrons. Michael Fisher and his assistant building manager, Drew Esslinger, have been meeting contractors at the theater so they can assess the situation and begin the process of removing the decayed portions of the sign. At this point it is thought that the "vertical" portion of the Senate sign is sound and will be able to remain. Chances are very good that we will need to fabricate a new lower sign area.

The first order of business is to remove the worn out sections of the letter board area, and secure the vertical section. We are going to re-schedule our September artist, Nathan Avakian for an organ concert in the future. We appreciate your patience with the uncertainty of our programs as we work through this process as quickly as possible.

Check the DTOS web site for program listings, and we apologize for any inconvenience this may cause.

# More Work Happening Than It Seems

Dave Calendine  
DTOS Board of Directors

To say that things have been a little hectic at the Senate Theater would be an understatement. All you have to do is read many of the previous articles to know that this "off season" has not been a time to slow down for many of us at the theater.

Hopefully by now you have read about the historic rains causing damage in the basement, and the major work that has to be done on our marquee. There are other things that have to happen as well while we are closed, and that is what is keeping many people busy at the theater.

The major rains that we have received this summer have done their damage not only in the basement, but other areas of the theater as well. The ladies restroom upstairs took on quite a bit of water when the gutters couldn't keep up with the tor-

rential downpours that we received last month. Water got into the building and brought down a part of the ceiling. Thankfully, nobody was in there so no one got injured when the ceiling became part of the floor. The area will have to be cleaned up and repaired to make it ready again.

The main lobby also received quite a bit of water from the parking lot, as the whole lot was under several inches of water. It was determined by the weather service that we received over five inches of rain in a very short period of time. Unfortunately, the carpeted areas around the parking lot door took on a lot of water when it came into the building. The entire carpeted area in the lobby is going to have to be professionally clean and mold-treated so that any damage

done by the water is remedied. If the carpet cleaners find that it is beyond repair, there will be the fun (and expensive) task of pulling the carpet. The original terrazzo floor is reported to be in good shape under the carpet, but it has been many, many years since it was last uncovered. Hopefully, the repairs will be able to be made quickly.

Chris Warner, one of the board members of DTOS, has looked into having the carpet cleaned, and through the gracious generosity of the owners of Centurion Services, Inc., the lobby carpets are being cleaned

at no cost to the society. We are very thankful to the owners and the staff at Centurion Services Inc., and look forward to seeing the fruits of their labor when they are done. Before this can happen though, all furniture in the lobby must be moved to the concessions lobby. This means the piano, couches, tables and chairs all need to be moved. Might you be able to help us with this project? Contact any board member to let us know!

Lots happening, and lots to be done. We're working hard to bring the Senate back to life!



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DETROIT THEATER  
ORGAN SOCIETY

*Over 50 Years of Entertainment!*

## **Detroit Theater Organ Society**

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WE'RE ON THE WEB!

WWW.DTOS.ORG

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NOTE: September 21—Nathan Avakian concert has been POSTPONED due to work being done at the theater. See article inside!

## **2014 Concert Series**

October 19—Tom Fortier

November 16—Melissa

Ambrose-Eidson

December 7—Donnie Rankin

All concerts are held at the Senate Theater.

Doors open at 2:00 p.m., concerts start at 3:00 p.m.



photo: Lance Luce