



THE POST HORN

Winter 2024
Official Newsletter of the
Bluegrass Chapter
American Theatre Organ Society

www.bgatos.org

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KY THEATRE ORGAN RESTORATION PROJECT

The Bluegrass ATOS Chapter's project to restore the Kentucky Theater's Wurlitzer theatre organ (Opus 562) is making great progress. Chapter members have participated in weekly work sessions and their efforts are visible in the accomplishments that have been made.

Members who have worked with project leader Tim Jones on the project include Brian Hunt, Garry Marsh, Scott Marsh, Dana Ross, Lynn Vera and Pedro Vera.

WIND CHESTS:

The current activities are focused on the two wind chests, the five rank and the three rank, which will comprise the initial configuration of the organ. *(After it is installed in its new home, a future task will be to complete the additional six ranks to bring it up to the organ's historical 3/14 configuration).*

The old components of the two wind chests were removed. *(much of the old leather had deteriorated).* The chests themselves were broken down into their individual cabinet boards which were then resurfaced and finished to look better than new. Over 530 new secondary valves were individually positioned and glued into place. Then the spring rails were given a new felt cushion and installed. The three rank cabinet chest has been re-assembled and is ready for the top boards *(which were previously completed)* to be attached. Work is proceeding to complete the re-assembly of the five rank chest cabinet.

The next phase of the project has two focus areas. First we are cutting the leather for the wind chest gaskets and installing them on the cabinet shells. The second and larger effort is to restore the bottom boards. This involves removing the magnet assemblies and the old primary pneumatic valves. The old primaries have essentially disintegrated over time. Most of the hardware from the bottom boards will be reused. For instance,

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Scott Marsh (l) and Brian Hunt working on the reassembly of the three rank wind chest for the Kentucky Theatre Organ restoration project.



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DR. LANDON DONATES PART OF HIS COLLECTION TO THE ATOS ARCHIVES



Dr. Landon putting some of his records in an archive box

Among his many accomplishments, Bluegrass chapter historian Dr. John Landon has accumulated what could easily be the most extensive collection of theatre organ music in existence. He has recordings in multiple formats from the early cylinders to thick vinyl, 78's, 45's and CD's.

Dr. Landon grew up in the late 30's and 40's on a farm in the thumb area of Michigan, north of Detroit and east of Saginaw. There was a lot of theatre organ music available on the radio in those days and Dr. Landon spent many an evening listening to Billy Geyer on WFDF in Flint, Dick Liebert at the Radio City Music Hall, the Moon River show on WLW in Cincinnati and any radio program which used theatre organ music for their opening or closing.

One summer he started off on his bicycle with its wire basket and went from farm to farm asking if any of them had any records they didn't want anymore. Surprisingly he found that many of those households were glad to get rid of their old records. All of them were 78 RPM LP's as 33 1/3 and 45's had not yet come into being.

He got a lot of records, but very few of them were theatre organ records. Although they were few in number, they proved to be the start of his collection. The first record he acquired going from house to house and farm to farm was that of an organist named Harry Chrysler "When Your Hair Has Turned to Silver/I'm Alone Because I love You". Years later he discovered Harry Chrysler was a pseudonym for George Epstein who recorded for several companies under a variety of false names.

Dr. Landon continued to collect theatre organ music in all formats and today his collection numbers in the thousands of discs. He literally has a room in his house completely occupied with theatre organ music and there are theatre organ records, discs and music tucked away in every nook and cranny throughout the rest of the house.

The time has come, however, to transfer a part of this collection to the ATOS national archive.

On September 27, 2023, Bill Gelhaus, National ATOS Board member and Archivist (among his many duties) made a visit to Dr. Landon. Along



William Webber, Dr. Landon, Brian Hunt and Tim Jones putting some of Dr. Landon's collection in archive boxes.



Bill Gelhaus, ATOS Board Member, with Dr. Landon's donation loaded in his car.

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DR. LANDON DONATES PART OF HIS COLLECTION TO THE ATOS ARCHIVES

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with help from William Webber, Brian Hunt, Tim Jones and Dana Ross, a great deal of his collection of 78 RPM records was loaded up for Bill to transport to the ATOS archives.

Dr. Landon has always been an advocate for preserving the history of theatre organs and the organists who played them. Archives are witnesses to the past. They preserve the history as a basic function. They also enable education, research and entertainment to people who want to know more about this grand musical instrument. This donation will ensure that his collection will continue to be available for many generations to come and that it will continue to benefit everyone who seeks out the majestic story of the theatre organ.



The donation packing and loading team, from left: Tim Jones, Brian Hunt, Bill Gelhaus, William Webber and Dr. John Landon. (picture taken by Dana Ross)





St. Louis Theatre Organ Society

The Mid-America Theatre Organ Festival

Party on the Pipes

April 13th - 15th, 2024

Early Bird Registration \$595.00 per person thru 1/31/24
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Open Console all venues including the Fabulous Fox!
All meals and transportation furnished with
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Code: Party On The Pipes
or
St. Louis Theatre Organ Society

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TIM BAKER and THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

On Friday the 13th, 2023, the audience at the Kentucky Theatre was thrilled with the showing of "The Phantom of the Opera" accompanied by Tim Baker on the theatre organ.

This 1925 silent film starring Lon Chaney and Mary Philbin is a classic horror film which remains famous for Chaney's ghastly, self devised make-up which was kept a studio secret until the film's premiere.

This event took the audience back in time to experience the movie as movie goers saw it when it first came out on September 6, 1925.

The theatre added to the atmosphere of the movie as there was a chandelier laying in the middle of the auditorium seats which apparently had fallen from the ceiling. There was a mysterious phantom figure in the balcony as well as something very strange behind the stage curtains. And no one could miss Red Death in the entrance lobby.

The theatre management dressed for the occasion as did multiple members of the audience.

Tim's mastery of the theatre organ was evident as he skillfully wove the music to match the tone, mood and tension of each scene in the movie as well as utilizing the special sound effects that only a theatre organ can provide.



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OFFICERS:

PRESIDENT: Dana Ross

VICE PRESIDENT: Tim Jones

SECRETARY: Lynn Vera

TREASURER: Brian Hunt

DIRECTORS: Tim Baker, Grant Holcomb, Bill Johnson, Garry Marsh, Rhonda Marsh, David W. Pilkinton, William Webber, Cade Dundon (Youth Representative)

HISTORIAN: Dr. John Landon

RESTORATION: Tim Jones

SOCIAL MEDIA, WEBMASTER: Lynn Vera

NEWSLETTER: Dana Ross

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TIM JONES & DANVILLE HS CHOIR PERFORM "A SPECIAL CHRISTMAS EVENT"

The Kentucky Theatre held a special Christmas event on Saturday December 16th, 2023. They combined a Christmas Sing-A-Long with a showing of "It's a Wonderful Life" to create a truly wonderful evening.

The musical accompaniment was performed by Tim Jones on the Allen theatre organ and the songs were led by members of the Danville High School Advanced Choir which is directed by Dee Ann Gray.

The sing-a-long featured a mixture of songs which were guaranteed to bring out the Christmas spirit in everyone in attendance. As part of this special event patrons were also invited to enjoy a glass of eggnog or a holiday cocktail.

The audience came ready to sing and their energy matched the enthusiasm of the choir members leading the singing. Although there were a few eye rolls when the Twelve Days of Christmas started, everyone stayed with it.

With the warm atmosphere of the theatre, a classic movie and a fun sing-a-long, it was clearly a memorable evening.

The students who led the sing-a-long will be part of the Danville High School choir who will be taking their talents to the Big Apple in April of this year. They have been invited to perform at Carnegie Hall in New York City. This is a huge honor, and they are thrilled to represent Kentucky in this iconic music venue. To help with the costs of the trip, the Kentucky Theatre donated a portion of every ticket sold to the choir's travel fund.

The students will be in New York City April 10- April 14. Their performance at Carnegie Hall is on April 13th. They will be singing Elaine Hagenberg's work, "Illuminare". Elaine will be there for the performance. The conductor of this work will be UK professor Dr. Elizabeth Wilson. The choir has also been invited to sing with the Westminster Choir for the world premier of Dr. James Whitbourn's "Requiem Canticorum" under the direction of Dr. James Jordan.

The students are eager for the opportunity to perform at Carnegie Hall but it is also a bit overwhelming. "The students are a little nervous, the music is all in Latin," said Director Gray. "It is five songs along with an orchestra. We are going with Woodford County High School and Lexington Christian Academy. We are so excited, it is such a great opportunity for these kids from Danville to go to New York City. Many of them have never been."

BRIAN HUNT PERFORMS WITH LEXINGTON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA



Although it happened a while ago, we would be remiss in not congratulating chapter member Brian Hunt on his performance with the Lexington Philharmonic on Feb 18th, 2023. Brian performed with the orchestra on the Singletary Center's 5/90 M.P. Moller organ for the last movement of Edward Elgar's "Enigma Variations". This was an exciting opportunity and Brian's performance was outstanding.

The Philharmonic was conducted by music director Melisse Brunet. The repertoire included: 1) ELLEN TAAFFE ZWILICH - Symphony No. 1: Three Movements for Orchestra, 2) BÉLA BARTÓK - Viola Concerto (Serly Edition) Jordan Bak, viola and 3) EDWARD ELGAR - Enigma Variations which consists of fourteen variations on an original theme each representing one of Elgar's close friends.

The Moller is the largest pipe organ in Lexington. It was installed in Singletary Center in 1979 and received a new solid state console from Randall Dyer & Assoc in 1995.



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BG ATOS MEMBERS HONORED AS KENTUCKY THEATRE ORGANISTS

Dr. John Landon has been recognized as the Organist of the Kentucky Theatre.

BG ATOS members Tim Baker, Cade Dundon, Brian Hunt, Grant Holcomb, Tim Jones, David Pilkinton, Lynn Vera, Patrick Valentino and William Webber have been recognized as Associate Organists of the Kentucky Theatre.

These recognitions were presented to the organists by Hayward Wilkerson and Lisa Meek of the Kentucky Theatre at the chapter's annual meeting. Each organist received a certificate signed by the management of the theatre. *(Dr. Landon was recognized at the annual meeting but received his certificate at a later date as he was unable to attend the meeting).*

This honor reflects the contributions these organists have made by performing at the Kentucky Theatre. Collectively, these individuals have played for the Summer Movie Classic series for many years as well as performing for other events at the Theatre.

The Bluegrass Chapter, the Kentucky Theatre and the Lexington patrons of the Kentucky Theatre are all appreciative of their efforts and musical contributions.



Dr. John Landon receiving his certificate as Kentucky Theatre Organist. (from left: Brian Hunt, Dr. Landon, Dana Ross, William Webber)



Tim Baker



Cade Dundon



Brian Hunt



Grant Holcomb



Tim Jones



David Pilkinton



Lynn Vera



Patrick Valentino



William Webber

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KY THEATRE ORGAN RESTORATION PROJECT

(Continued from page 1)

the wood screws and dag screws on the bottom boards will all be refinished to their original state. Some of the components such as the magnet cores and the wiring to the magnets will need to be replaced as the originals are no longer viable.

Current status of the wind chests: The gaskets are installed on the top of the 3 rank chest and the threaded brass inserts have all been epoxied in. There are about half of the bottom gaskets remaining to punch out and then they'll be ready to glue on.

Tim has been making custom tools and jigs at all stages of this project to make the work go easier. In this case he has made a stand which will allow us to emboss the leather gaskets and then punch them out right next to the wind chest all at a good working height.

CONSOLE

The console has been professionally restored and is in climate controlled storage waiting for the organ itself to be completed.

RELAY

The chapter has a Uniflex 4000 relay ready to be used. Once the organ is completed, this relay will need to have the appropriate wiring connections completed and the unit will need to be programmed to reflect the configuration of this organ.

REGULATORS

These have been professionally restored and are waiting for the remaining components of the organ to be completed.

BLOWER/WIND LINES

Work on these components has not yet started.

PIPES

The original pipes are in storage. They will need to be inspected to determine any restoration work that will be needed.

Working on the organ restoration is both a rewarding and a fun experience. The rewarding feeling comes from knowing that you are helping restore a historic Lexington treasure. While the work is meticulous, everyone on the project helps to make it a fun experience with the fellowship and camaraderie that comes from being part of the team. You don't have to be an expert at restoration or even an organist to work on this project. Our project leader, Tim Jones, will explain and demonstrate each task as we need to perform it. We would love to have you join us at one of our work sessions. If you are interested, send an email to Tim Jones (tim.jones@uky.edu) and he will let you know when the next work session will be held.

The following pages have pictures of the chapter members in action working on the restoration project:

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ORGAN RESTORATION PROJECT PICTURES



Brian Hunt removing the old gaskets from the five rank chest.



Dana Ross removing the old gaskets from the five rank chest.



Brian Hunt and the five rank chest with all the old gaskets removed.



Brian Hunt disassembling the five rank chest.



Tim Jones disassembling the five rank chest.



Brian Hunt and Tim Jones using their hammers to delicately dis-assemble the five rank chest.



Brian Hunt cleaning one of the cabinet boards.



Tim Jones drilling out a dowel rod which didn't cooperate during dis-assembly.



Tim Jones cutting felt for the spring rails



Tim Jones removing the threaded inserts.



Brian Hunt gluing felt on the spring rails.

(continued on the next page)

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ORGAN RESTORATION PROJECT PICTURES



Tim Jones installing the spring rails on the cabinet boards.



The refinished cabinet boards with the spring rails installed.



Tim Jones and Brian Hunt gluing secondary valves on the cabinet board.



Scott Marsh gluing secondary valves on the cabinet board.



Tim Jones and Scott Marsh gluing secondary valves



Using a weight to hold down the secondary valve until the glue sets.



Scott Marsh and Garry gluing secondary valves onto the cabinet boards.



Lynn Vera and Pedro Vera gluing secondary valves onto the cabinet boards.



Tim Jones and Brian Hunt re-assembling the three rank chest.



Brian Hunt and Tim Jones re-assembling the three rank chest.



Brian Hunt gluing the end of the three rank chest



Brian Hunt re-assembling the three rank chest.

(continued on next page)

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ORGAN RESTORATION PROJECT PICTURES

(Continued from previous page)



Tim Jones re-assembling the three rank chest.



Brian Hunt re-assembling the three rank chest.



Tim Jones and Brian Hunt re-assembling the three rank chest.



Scott Marsh and Brian Hunt re-assembling the three rank chest.



Tim Jones and Brian Hunt putting finishing touches on the three rank chest.



The five fully assembled secondary boards for the five rank cabinet. Waiting for their turn to be re-assembled.



Brian Hunt and Tim Jones had to go outside to use a stong cleaner on the threaded inserts.



Rinsing off the cleaned threaded inserts



Tim Jones measuring the three rank chest for gasket leather.



Tim Jones and Brian Hunt cutting new cabinet gaskets.

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BG ATOS ANNUAL MEEETING AND DINNER

BG ATOS held its annual meeting and dinner on September 18, 2023 at the Columbia Steakhouse in Lexington Ky. Members enjoyed the fellowship of getting together in person to catch up with each other and to solve some of the world's great problems. *(ok, it was more catching up than solving problems, but everyone had a great time)..*



Attending from left: Dana Ross, David Schroth, Christina Schroth, William Webber, Steve Brown, Linda Crawford, Devon Williams, Julene Jones, Brian Hunt, Tim Jones, Jane Johnson, Bill Johnson, Jim Fitzpatrick, Garry Marsh, Lynn Vera, Holly Martin, Rhonda Marsh, Lisa Meek, Hayward Wilkerson, Patrick Valentino, Ryan Patrick, Cade Dundon, David Pilkinton, Tim Baker, Scott Marsh. Not pictured: Jane Fitzpatrick, Jessica Valentino.

BG ATOS MEMBERSHIP

We want you to join us!

To those of you who are not yet members, we would like to extend an invitation for you to join the Bluegrass Chapter of the American Theatre Organ Society (ATOS). You will love being part of the excitement and joy that theater organ music provides. Our local membership dues are \$15 per year which gives you access to all of our outings, dinners, concerts, and our organ restoration project. You will also receive this newsletter, The Post Horn, along with news and announcements regarding chapter activities.

You can join us (or renew your current membership) by either sending your name, address and email along with your \$15 to:

*The Bluegrass Chapter, ATOS
P.O. Box 910141
Lexington, KY 40591-0141*

Or you can pay by credit or debit card at our website BGATOS.ORG.

We are currently in the process of restoring the Wurlitzer organ which played in the Kentucky Theater 100 years ago and we would appreciate your assistance working directly on the project or by making a monetary donation. We are a 501(c)(3) charitable organization and all donations are tax deductible. We would appreciate your consideration.

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BLUEGRASS CHAPTER MEMBERS ATTEND “REMEMBER THE PARAMOUNT” CONCERT

Five members of the Bluegrass Chapter (Bill Johnson, Tim Jones, Brian Hunt, William Webber and Dana Ross) attended the nostalgic “Remember the Paramount” concert at the Hilbert Theater in Indianapolis on Sunday October 1st. The event was a musical salute to the Paramount Music Palace and its Mighty Wurlitzer featuring the original organists who played many of the favorite songs from the days when the Music Palace was one of the special places to be in Indianapolis.

The Paramount Music Palace was a restaurant on the southwest side of Indianapolis, IN where families came for the pizza but stayed to hear the Mighty 4/42 Wurlitzer organ. The Palace was a massive Art Deco theatre building on Washington St. near the I-465 interchange which operated from 1979 to 1995. Although the official name was the “Paramount Music Palace Family Pizza Restaurant & Ice Cream Parlour”, it wasn’t about the food. Make no mistake, it was about the music flowing out of that Mighty Wurlitzer.



The Mighty Wurlitzer at the Paramount Palace

Each of the ‘rock star’ organists Donna Parker, Bill Vlasak, Ken Double and Dwight Thomas played their favorite memories individually and then they would combine to play duets on the organ and grand piano. Together they recreated the musical magic of the Paramount’s Mighty Wurlitzer and brought back memories of the giant black and gold organ rising from the pit as bubbles ascended into the air. Close to a thousand people came to the concert to relive some of their favorite memories and experiences from the Music Palace be it birthdays, important life events or just get together with family and friends. It was also a memorable time for the organists themselves as there was so much history between each of them and the Palace itself.

Afterwards, many of the concert goers, the organists and members of the Central Indiana Chapter of the American Theatre Organ Society met for a reception at a local home in Indianapolis.

(Pictures on next page)

PAST PRESIDENTS OF THE BLUEGRASS CHAPTER of the AMERICAN THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY

1977 - Jim Donovan

1978 - Dr. John W. Landon

1979 - Dr. John Courter

1981 - Mell W. Crouch

1982 - Bill Johnson

1985 - Bill Johnson

1986 - David A. Bottom

1990 - David A. Bottom

2009 - Dean McCleese

2012 - Dean McCleese

2013 - David Pratt

2015 - William A. Webber

2019 - Tim Jones

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“REMEMBER THE PARAMOUNT” IN PICTURES



Bill Johnson, William Webber, Dana Ross, Brian Hunt and Tim Jones outside the Hilbert Circle Theater.



The Hilbert Circle Theater stage



The Hilbert Circle Theater Wurlitzer Pipe organ console.



Bill Vlasak, Donna Parker, Ken Double and Dwight Thomas on stage.



Bill Vlasak and Donna Parker performing during the concert.



Dwight Thomas, Bill Vlasak, Donna Parker and Ken Double at the reception.



Tim Jones, William Webber, Brian Hunt, Bill Johnson and Dana Ross with Donna Parker.



William Webber (far right) deep in discussion at the reception.



Dana Ross, William Webber, Brian Hunt, Bill Johnson and Tim Jones at the reception.

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BLUEGRASS CHAPTER LEADERSHIP

Dana Ross and Tim Jones were re-elected for second terms as Bluegrass Chapter President and Vice President respectively at the BG ATOS Annual Meeting in September. Lynn Vera and Brian Hunt will continue as Secretary and Treasurer as their current terms run until 2024.

Tim Baker, Bill Johnson, Garry Marsh, Rhonda Marsh, David W. Pilkinton and William Webber have been re-appointed as Directors. Joining the board is Grant Holcomb as a Director. Cade Dundon will be joining as the youth representative to the board.



Tim Jones

Tim Jones is a founding member of the current incarnation of the chapter and has served in an official capacity in many ways including as a director, as President and currently as Vice President. He is currently leading the project to restore the Kentucky Theatre's Wurlitzer organ. He has performed at the Kentucky Theatre in various capacities for many years.

Dana Ross has previously served as a director. In addition to his role as President, he is also the newsletter editor.



Dana Ross

Grant is the Organist and Assistant Director of Music at Central Christian Church in Lexington. He has performed at the Kentucky Theatre Summer Move Classics series. He has both a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Music in Organ Performance from UK. He has previously served the chapter as Youth Representative to the Board. Grant is also the Executive Secretary for the Lexington AGO chapter



Grant Holcomb



Cade Dundon

Cade Dundon is the Organist at Gardenside Baptist Church. He is a double major in piano performance and music education at the University of Kentucky. He has performed at the Kentucky Theatre Summer Movie Classics series. He is active in the Lexington AGO chapter.

DONATIONS TO BG ATOS

Kroger Community Rewards

Go to <http://krogercommunityrewards.com>

Link your Kroger Plus Shopper's Card to our charitable organization, Bluegrass Chapter American Theatre Organ Society, organization number 42729.

Direct Donation to the Chapter

You can make a donation directly to the chapter by going to the DONATE page on our website "bgatos.org".

The Bluegrass Chapter of the American Theatre Organ Society is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. All donations are used to further the mission of the chapter which is to actively support and promote the theatre pipe organ and its music in the Bluegrass State and western West Virginia. Our current project is the restoration of the Mighty Wurlitzer theatre organ which played in the Kentucky Theatre over 100 years ago.