



THE POST HORN

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

www.bgatos.org

KENTUCKY THEATRE WURLITZER ORGAN RESTORATION PROJECT

The Bluegrass ATOS Chapter's project to restore the Kentucky Theater's Wurlitzer theatre organ (Opus 562) is making great progress. We have completed the cabinets and toe boards for both the three rank and five rank wind chests. They have both been shrink wrapped for protection and moved to our finished goods storage area while we continue work on the bottom boards. While there is still a lot of work to do before the organ can make music, finishing this stage of the project has freed up a lot of space in our workshop to enable us to work on the next phase.

Chapter members who have worked with project leader Tim Jones on the project these past few months include Brian Hunt, Scott Marsh and Dana Ross.

WIND CHESTS:

There are two wind chests (*a five rank chest and a three rank chest*) which will comprise the initial configuration of the organ. The initial configuration for the five rank chest is Concert Flute, Clarinet, Viole d'Orchestre, Viol Celeste and Open Diapason. The three rank chest will be VOX Humana, Tibia Clausa and Tuba Horn. (*After the initial configuration is installed in its new home, a future task will be to complete the additional six ranks needed to bring it up to the organ's historical 3/14 configuration*).



Tim Jones with the finished five rank wind chest.



Scott Marsh and Brian Hunt with the two completed shrink wrapped wind chests in our climate controlled storage area.

To get to this state, for both chests, we completed the installation of new gasket leather to the chest cabinets which involved the seals to the toe boards as well as lining the inside joints to eliminate any possibility of air leaks. The toe boards were then installed and vacuum pressure was used to test the interaction of the secondary valves with the pallet valves. Adjustments were made now while access to the chests was open. Once everything was working well, the chests were shrink wrapped and moved to our climate controlled storage area to wait for the completion of the bottom boards.

The bottom boards break down into five individual wood components which first have to have the old gasket material removed. They are then sanded and planed to get a smooth finish followed by cleaning any remaining residues including some 1920's era coal dust. They are then given a new coat

Continued on next page

KENTUCKY THEATRE WURLITZER RESTORATION PROJECT

(continued from previous page)

of shellac. Since the set of material for a given bottom board needs to stay together, Tim designed and build a custom jig/ holder to hold the the bottom board components which insures the parts stay together but also provides easy access.

Attention then turned to the hardware components of the bottom boards. There are 527 pipes combined on the five rank and three rank chests (There are 70 more pipes on the offset chests). Each of these 527 pipes has a magnet on the bottom board which needs to have the magnet cap removed along with the old copper coils. This is a time consuming job as each one must be done by hand using a punch and a utility knife. It's taken a while but we are down to less than a hundred remaining!

Going forward we will finish the cleanup of the bottom boards and then start installing new primary valves, new magnet coils and new wiring for each of the pipe locations on these two chests. The project team has already completed making the 527 primary valves that will be needed. Most of the original hardware from the bottom boards will be reused including the wood screws and dag screws which will all be refinished to their original state.

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.

The project team members working on the organ restoration project find it to be 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 camaradie 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:

ORGAN RESTORATION PROJECT PICTURES

Five Rank Chest Gaskets



(Left and right): Tim Jones installing gaskets on the five rank chest



(left and right): Scott Marsh and Tim Jones installing gaskets on the five rank chest.



Top side of the chest with all the gaskets installed



Bottom side of the chest with all the gaskets installed

Rack Board Installation



(above): Brian Hunt and Tim Jones installing the first rack board on the five rank chest.



(above): Brian Hunt tightening the rack board



(left): Brian Hunt and Tim Jones installing rack boards on the five rank chest

(right): Brian Hunt and Tim Jones installing rack boards on the five rank chest



(left): Brian Hunt and Tim Jones with four of the five rack boards installed.

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ORGAN RESTORATION PROJECT PICTURES

Testing



(above and below): Tim Jones checking the action of the valves.



Two views of the new secondary valves and the refurbished pallet valves in the five rank chest



(above and right): smaller hands would be nice when making adjustments to the valve action in the five rank chest.



Brian Hunt and Tim Jones holding the three rank chest with all the gaskets installed



Tim Jones and Brian Hunt installing the toe boards.



Tim Jones getting a look at the insides of one of the Offset chests

ORGAN RESTORATION PROJECT PICTURES

BOTTOM BOARDS



(above): Brian Hunt and Tim Jones sanding bottom board components.



Top view of a bottom board being sanded. (finished side is on the left)



(above); the individual wood components of a bottom board.

(Left): the separated bottom boards in their holder.



Tim Jones using a block plane to finish part of a bottom board.



(above): to keep the individual wood components of the 16 bottom boards together, Tim designed and built a custom jig/ holder. It is working even better than expected.



Tim Jones putting a coat of shellac on one of the bottom boards.



Brian Hunt removing old magnet coils from the magnet assemblies.



Scott Marsh using a punch to remove the magnet caps.



Scott Marsh and Brian Hunt removing old magnet coils from the magnet assemblies.



A bowl full of copper from the old magnet assemblies. We plan to recycle it.

ORGAN RESTORATION PROJECT PICTURES



Brian Hunt and Tim Jones sorting through the organ's original hardware.



Tim Jones sorting through the original dag screws.



Tim Jones repairing one of the original dag screws.



Tim Jones cleaning one of the rack boards.



Sometimes you need something off of the top shelf. Unfortunately, our top shelves are pretty high up.



The finished five rank and three rank wind chests begin their journey from our workshop to our climate controlled storage facility.



(left): The wind chests in the hallway of the climate controlled storage facility waiting to move into their new home.

(right): Scott Marsh and Brian Hunt with the finished wind chests in our climate controlled storage facility.



ATOS DIRECTOR'S CORNER - 2: THE WORK CONTINUES

By William Webber



I remember the day I received the email from Tedde Gibson welcoming me to the ATOS Board of Directors. To say that I was stunned would be an understatement. But I had decided to run so that I could help in three specific areas that I was concerned about, so after the shock wore off a bit I was ready to get to work with the board to accomplish my goals.

In my first Director's Corner, I shared with you the three things that I wished to accomplish as a director. Those three goals were (1) to contact all the chapters to get updates for our atos.org website 'chapters' pages, (2) to attract more women to both the ATOS board and as performers at our conventions, and finally (3) to support and encourage more young organists to learn theatre organ styles of playing and registration possibilities. I need to share with you how this is going so far.

I had experience with building chapter membership in both ATOS and the AGO. As the founding dean of an AGO chapter, I had to start from scratch because there had not been an organized chapter in that particular area. The same is true for my experience with my first ATOS chapter involvement. The membership was low and not much was going on at that time. Over the years and working as a team, our chapter has grown and gotten more active at The Kentucky Theatre as organists there. Our current chapter officers and local members have developed a wonderful working relationship with the theatre management and the city officials who own the building. Everyone seems to now be on board with the restoration and reinstallation of our Wurlitzer that is native to our theater. By using one of my gifts in recruiting members I learned early on in my life and career that a phone call is often better than an email to show that personal touch. That is one of the reasons that Taylor Trimby asked me to contact all our chapters and affiliates to gather current information for our atos.org updates. So far, I am at least 2/3 of the way there, and I am meeting awesome ATOS chapter officers along the way who are more than pleased to share what their chapter is doing. If I have not reached some of you yet, that will soon happen.

As for my second goal of recruiting more of our women ATOS members to be involved, I am happy to announce that your ATOS board will be gaining a new member who is a very talented woman and chapter president. I had been encouraging her to run for the board for nearly a year, and I am very happy to work with her in the future. Add to that, Taylor Trimby also appointed me to the scholarship committee as chair. Rosemary Bailey is vice chair and together with assistance from Donna Parker, we are restarting the student scholarships program which can now be awarded year-round. I am also pleased to announce that we have three students who have now been awarded scholarships, both male and female. So, with these developments, my goals (2) and (3) are just beginning to take shape.

If you ever have a question or need to speak with me, you may reach me at my atos.org address or by phone. My contact information is on the BOARD DIRECTORY page which is on the front pages of Theatre Organ magazine.

Respectfully,

William Webber

LOUISVILLE CONNECTION

by David Schroth



We've done a number of projects on the Memorial Auditorium Pilcher organ. We rebuilt all of the capped wood flutes and went through and did some regulation and repair of wind leaks. The largest project was going through the 32' Bombarde chests. We have made all of the necessary repairs so that every note works.

Meet Our Members - SCOTT MARSH



SCOTT MARSH

Scott Marsh is a member of BG ATOS and is currently a dedicated supporter of the KY Theatre organ restoration project.

Scott was born in Ft. Thomas, Ky. He was 3 years old when the family moved to Lexington. His dad, a chemical engineer, transferred here to help the new IBM facility get started. Scott's brothers and sister are still in the area and he feels fortunate that he gets to see them often.

He attended Henry Clay High School in Lexington. He finds it interesting that the School Board is planning to build a new building for the school as he was part of the first class of students to attend school in the current building. It just doesn't seem like that long ago. In high school, he was part of the pep club which provided numerous support functions during the games.

During his high school years, he had the opportunity to be part of a special community relations program in Lexington which had him working with various city departments. Lexington was changing the downtown streets to one way and they needed information on the traffic. Scott, along with his other team members, would monitor the various intersections and report on the number of cars and whether they turned right or left or went straight. The city then used this information to time the traffic lights. Scott still knows what it takes to go down Main St and hit all the lights green.

Working for the police department, he manned the 911 switchboard. He then got the assignment which became his favorite. He worked as a nurse's aide at the UK Hospital. After his initial training, he would work after school and on weekends for the next two years. He loved the hospital experience and getting to meet people all while providing a very valuable service.

His future career came into focus when he completed the electronics program at what is now KCTCS. He had always been interested in electronics growing up. He and one of his brothers collaborated on many projects as kids. One of these projects was a home built radio station. While there are no recordings of their broadcasts, the two of them enjoyed being on the air and talking to the world (or at least their neighborhood). They played records and told stories using the call letters WEAK at 1000 on your radio dial. Unfortunately, it turned out that you need a license to operate a radio station, so WEAK had to go off the air.

Working in the IBM development lab, he was part of the team that developed the first ink jet printer. He then moved on to GTE where he put his electronics background to good use going from a switch technician to operations management, to sales and then to project management.

Mergers were a big factor for phone companies during this time and Scott worked for GTE, Verizon, AllTell and Windstream, often staying at the same desk with the same job while the company changed around him.

He worked on some very interesting projects including the first video distance learning network connecting hospitals, government offices and universities. *(This was before that*

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Hard at work at the phone company

Meet Our Members - SCOTT MARSH

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thing called the internet). The college remote learning classrooms would feature a big screen TV and a microphone at each desk for students to interact with the remote instructor.

He led the project to set up tele-medicine for small clinics in Eastern KY to be able to use two way video to talk to doctors in the larger facilities such as the UK Hospital and Appalachian Regional Hospital. (*Again long before the internet*).

One of his biggest projects was the implementation of e911. As the phone company Project Manager, he worked with the Post Office to map every address in a county and then identify the location of every phone number so that the address of the caller would show when they dialed 911.

Scott is a PMP (Project Management Professional). This is one of the top project management certifications you can obtain.

While Scott is retired, he stays about as busy as when he was working. He is an avid DIY'er when it comes to home improvement and it seems there is always something waiting to be done.



He loves working on older cars especially his 1988 Alpha Romeo. Clearly, he favors Italian sports cars as his first vehicle was a Fiat Spider at age 16. He has met many friends with similar interests in the Bluegrass Antique Auto club.

He can't get away from his love of electronics as he enjoys operating his Ham Radio station as well as just listening to the world on his short wave radio.

Scott spends part of his weekend working on the BG ATOS project to restore the KY Theatre Wurlitzer organ. Scott has a special relationship with this organ as he had a ring side seat to listen to it being played while it was installed locally at the home of Oscar Wilson. His brother lived on site providing security and Scott would visit often. He was there when the organ was installed and was taken back at the mechanical complexity of the instrument. Then, he would listen to the organ being played by Oscar and others on multiple occasions and marvel at the amazing sounds the organ could produce.



Installing new pallet valves on the organ

Being fascinated with the intricacy of the 1920's technology of the organ, it was a natural progression to become part of the restoration project. On any given Saturday, you can find Scott disassembling magnets, putting leather on valves or assembling the various components of the organ. The project is a major undertaking and Scott's efforts are invaluable toward accomplishing the chapter's goal. Scott encourages everyone to join him in this endeavor as we need all the support we can get.



Heat setting the glue on new leather gaskets for the organ.

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FRIDAY NIGHT CONCERTS AT THE MOVIES

Chapter members Brian Hunt, Tim Jones, Patrick Valentino and Lynn Vera have been providing the patrons at the Kentucky Theatre's Friday night feature movie with a pre-show concert on the Allen organ. Each of the organists plays for about 30 minutes prior to the start of the movie. They select their own music and perform in their own style which gives the audience a wide appreciation of the musical capabilities of the theater organ. Often when the movie has a distinctive theme, the organists try to incorporate some of that music in their performance.



Tim Jones



Lynn Vera



**Patrick
Valentino**



Brian Hunt

ANNUAL DUES ARE DUE

It's the start of a new fiscal year for the chapter and that means it's time to pay your annual chapter membership dues. You can pay by mail (send your \$15 check made out to BG ATOS to "Bluegrass Chapter ATOS; PO Box 910141; Lexington, KY 40591-0141) or pay online. Go to our website "BGATOS.ORG" and follow the payment instructions on the MEMBERSHIP Tab. Dues are important to the chapter as they provide the means for us to operate and they help with the restoration project of the Kentucky Theater Wurlitzer. We thank you for your support.

BGATOS is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. All donations are used to further the mission of the chapter which is to support and promote the theatre organ and its music in KY and WV. Our current project is the restoration of the Wurlitzer Theatre Organ which played in the Ky Theatre over 100 years ago.

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THE POST HORN

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BLUEFIELD'S HISTORIC GRANADA THEATER



The Granada Theatre in Bluefield, WV welcomed its newly restored Wurlitzer Theatre Organ (opus 1790) with a concert and musical accompaniment of a silent movie by Tedde Gibson on April 20th, 2024. Two members of the Bluegrass Chapter played significant roles in this occasion. Here are their stories:

GRANADA THEATER

by William Webber

It was a surprising and hopeful phone call that I received from Julie Hurley that day. She was the person organizing and directing the restoration of the Granada Theatre in Bluefield, West Virginia. Someone had mentioned to her that I was involved with theatre organs and she needed information. During that fateful call, Julie explained that the Granada had obtained its original Wurlitzer theatre pipe organ from Dr. Robert Edmunds and needed some ideas for its possible restoration to go along with the restoration of the theatre itself. I suggested that we have a meeting for me to see the theatre and the unrestored organ. I told her that I would bring Mac Abernethy to the meeting because he might agree to help with their situation.

After the phone call ended, I immediately called Paul (Mac) Abernethy who works with the Piedmont chapter to restore, rebuild and maintain several theatre pipe organs in the area just south of Bluefield. From my work with Mr. Abernethy, I knew he might be able to help.

THE GRANADA WURLITZER

By Tim Jones

It's been said that no two pipe organs sound the same. It should also be rumored that while some pipe organ take journeys similar to others, it is the journey that gives it character. The story of the Bluefield, West Virginia Granada Theater Wurlitzer's journey over the past several years has been both unique and "Character-building".

Rewind to 2015 in Huntington, West Virginia when Dr. Robert Edmunds was able to purchase the original Keith Albee Theatre Wurlitzer. His plan was to install it back in its original home. In the early 2000's, Dr. Edmunds, David Bottom, Woody Crouch and others had installed the former Bluefield Granada Wurlitzer (Opus 1790, Style EX) in the Main chamber of the Keith Albee theater. It was used for shows, graduations, silent movies and several concerts over the following years until the original Keith Albee instrument (Wurlitzer Opus 1780) became available. So this acquisition presented another problem. What should become of

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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

Granada Theatre

by William Webber

(Continued from previous page)

Mac met Julie and me in Bluefield shortly after this. We discussed that money would need to be raised and that Mr. Abernethy would be able to bring some volunteers into the project. Julie also recruited a couple of men who were volunteers from the theatre.

The next day, Mac and I met Julie at the theatre itself. There were no seats installed at that time due to the painting and repair work going on. A construction crew was renovating the main theatre and at that point it looked like a large shell of the inside of a building. The Main and Solo chambers were empty except for a couple of pieces of air conditioning equipment in the Main chamber that Mac said he and his crew could work around.

And then Julie took Mac and me downstairs to see Opus 1790, where it was stored in the damp basement area. To say the least, the Wurlitzer was not in very good shape, for as most of us know, pipe organs stored for a long time – especially in dark damp situations – will indeed deteriorate.

Fundraising began for the organ's rebuilding and restoration. Dr. Darrell Bailey, a native of the area and Professor of Music and Arts Technology at the University of Indiana in Indianapolis, started things off with a generous donation. He followed that donation by raising more funds for the organ from the community as well as donating a Baldwin concert grand piano which was used on the night of the grand opening.

To say that the town of Bluefield and the surrounding area are excited about the organ and their downtown theatre would be an understatement. Looking at the theatre and the organ, it is easy to see the work and love that these mountain folks have put into every detail. To borrow an overly used expression, it DOES take a village.

The Granada Wurlitzer

by Tim Jones

(Continued from previous page)

the former Granada Wurlitzer? Eventually, the decision was made to donate it back to the Granada Theater, where hopefully it could find a home in the restored venue.

Once the instrument found its way home, the journey was far from over. If it takes a village to make a project like this happen, it usually boils down to an inquisitive person with an idea. When Julie Hurley, head of the restoration efforts of the Granada called ATOS Director Bill Webber and inquired about the possibility of installing the Wurlitzer back into the Granada, this conversation lit the spark and began the momentum to assemble a crew and some funding.

Once the instrument returned to its original home, it was stored in the theater's basement for seven years. Those years were not kind to the instrument, exposing it to damp conditions that caused a significant amount of deterioration. In the meantime, the restoration was underway and plans did not initially include the organ. But once Julie Hurley and Bill Webber's initial phone call occurred and Paul 'Mac' Abernethy was also contacted, she enlisted a couple of local volunteers, James Jenks and Harry Moore. Other volunteers heavily involved with the installation were Dr. Barry Simons Sr., Barry Simmons Jr. and Chance Parrish.

As re-installation began, it was evident that although the organ could be reinstalled in the original chambers, the design of the organ would have to adapt to the theatre restoration. The biggest hurdle was that new electrical conduit for the entire building now ran through the middle of the main chamber. This prevented the original manual chest from being easily accessed. But the

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THE GRANADA WURLITZER

By Tim Jones

(Continued from the previous page)

manual chest had also been modified for direct electric magnets, so a decision was made to replace the chest with Morton chests which would allow for the flexibility needed in the chamber. Mac's generosity by donating parts as needed truly helped make this project happen. When funds are limited, particularly in an economically struggling area, finding ways to make do with what's available is key.

Once the installation was nearing completion, it became clear that while the instrument was coming back to life, the console was in desperate need of attention. When some additional funding became available, the decision was made to rebuild the console electronically while giving it a refresh of paint. Remnants of the old combination action were removed, as were the pre-Keith Albee modifications for an old Peterson diode matrix relay. A new backrail was made, expanded for the slight re-specification. An effects tray was fabricated to handle the special effects. This work allowed for the console to be more organist-friendly and reliable.

Upon completion of the console rebuilding, along with several other hurdles, it was time to consider "Miss Havisham's" – as the organ had been informally named – debut to the Bluefield audience. The decision was made to invite Tedde Gibson for two programs. The first was for the local middle school children with Tedde accompanying the Laurel & Hardy film *Liberty* and a discussion session following. The second program was the following evening with Buster Keaton's classic *The General* as the feature presentation.

We in the theatre organ community can easily forget how rare it can be for the general public to encounter both a silent film and a theatre pipe organ. So it is truly a new experience, especially in an area previously devoid of a venue with an instrument. Tedde's program for the middle school children was professionally presented and the discussion that followed was inspirational. It might be easy for us to forget that these kids have never before taken a picture with a film camera, seen a silent film, heard a pipe organ, been to a century-old theatre or learned about special effects from a century ago.

The following evening turned into a spectacular event. The evening kicked off with a "meet and greet" with donors. The program that followed included Julie Hurley leading the audience in the "Star Spangled Banner" accompanied by Tedde at the organ and Dr. Darrell Bailey at the piano. Acknowledgments were in order, followed by Tedde's program. The set list showcased the versatility of the theatre organ through a diverse selection of music from the Great American Songbook ("Jalousie"), Broadway show tunes ("Get Me to the Church on Time"), relatively contemporary movie music ("Theme from Going Home"), 50's rock ("Tequila") and a short demonstration of the organ. The movie followed and before the evening ended, the familiar strains of a John Denver tune had everyone joining in singing "Country Roads".

Summer Movie Classic Organists

You still have opportunities to listen to our chapter members performing organ pre-show concerts as part of the Kentucky Theatre's Summer Movie Classic Series. There are three more movies in the summer series:

8/21/24	Cinema Paradiso	Patrick Valentino
8/28/24	Rocky	Tim Jones
9/4/24	The Big Lebowski	Tim Jones