

STRATEGIC PLAN DRAFT
American Theatre Organ Society
Contributed by Doug Powers, January 12, 2010

Our Raison D'être:

Keeping the viability and strength of the theatre pipe organ and its future at the center of every thing we do.

Mission Statement:

The American Theatre Organ Society (ATOS) is the international leader dedicated to pursuing a positive difference in conserving and promoting the theatre pipe organ and its music, preserving original instruments where possible. We provide support and guidance to all ATOS chapters and others, with promotional and educational opportunities to both those within the Society, and to the public worldwide through the Internet, publications, conventions, and personal contact. We are passionately devoted to providing professional leadership and resources so the theatre pipe organ will thrive in the 21st century.

Vision Statement:

A growth in the number of active theatre organs, membership expansion, and public awareness brings a new generation of theatre organ audiences, supporters, technicians, and artists into the fold of a flourishing ATOS. Professional leadership provides abundant financial, technical, and educational resources, facilitating a thriving theatre organ presence worldwide.

ATOS' History and Situation:

ATOS was established in 1955 as a national society dedicated to further the use and support of the theatre pipe organ, a unique musical instrument endogenous to the United States, and built mostly in the 1920's. These instruments brought a versatile and entertaining medium to the early days of silent film; replacing or augmenting the theatre's orchestra; hence, the name "Unit Orchestra" was coined. In the early 1930's, theatre organs were no longer produced (due to the advent of "talkies") and many of these instruments became silent. However, a modest popularization of the organ emerged, which was lead by radio broadcasts, in-theatre concerts, recordings, and eventually rescues of instruments otherwise left to decay or be destroyed as theatres were demolished or stopped using their organs. This movement was lead in the 1950's and 60's by hobbyists who restored or otherwise relocated them into homes, auditoriums, churches, and other locations.

At that time, ATOS membership grew substantially (approximately 10,000), many members were relatively young, and there were several instruments still available for private ownership or "transplants". Resurgent concert attendance at local theatres was lively and enthusiastic whether a silent film was shown, or the organ used as a solo

instrument. Over the next few decades, membership and awareness of the theatre organ was maintained or slightly diminished, as organs found their way into pizza parlors, restaurants, and other locales. The improvement and sale of electronic organs soared for many years as well.

In the last several years, the members' average age has increased (over half are now above 70 years old), membership has dropped below 4,000, and fewer theatre pipe organs are available for public enjoyment. Competition for one's entertainment dollar has both changed and grown tremendously, and interest in promoting the theatre pipe organ has declined. While there are examples of "transplants" of organs in some theatres or auditoriums, these are the exceptions. There remains support and desire for the theatre pipe organ to remain a viable part of America's musical landscape, yet the human and financial resources, skilled experience, availability of organs, and leadership required are all becoming scarce and challenging to retain and execute.

The ATOS chapters and other local efforts are what will carry the brunt of what is needed to keep the theatre pipe organ an important and valued part of America's musical landscape. As a national force, ATOS can provide guidance, professional leadership, education, financial, and other valued assistance to those local efforts. *This has become the 21st century challenge in which our Society must succeed.*

BUSINESS OBJECTIVES

- **Maximize revenues** through an organized program of fund raising.
- **Expand and utilize a formal development committee** with experienced professional involvement.
- **Ramp up efforts and focus on creating a membership committee** responsible for aggressive recruitment and retention.
- **Establish a formal nominating committee**, responsible for recruiting quality candidates for ATOS leadership roles.
- **Streamline the ATOS organizational structure.** Refine and reshape the Board of Directors' function, responsibilities, and accountability.
- **Develop an effective liaison network**, with structure and accountability.
- **Establish an ATOS national headquarters**
- **Sustain financial stability** through endowment building.
- **Continue to systematically build strategic alliances** with compatible associations, entities, and granting organizations.

KEY STRATEGIES

Continually assess the needs of the chapters through liaison communications, on-line surveys and Q&A, and other methods as deemed prudent.

Continue to increase donor bases through an effective marketing strategy aimed at high level quality use of media kit, direct contact from CEO, direction from development committee, and proven progress toward mission accomplishments.

Aggressively seek strategic alliances and partnerships in areas relevant to the theatre organ, its place in entertainment sectors, educational institutions, and maintenance of the national leadership functions.

Increase use of electronic delivery of member and potential information, including the Theatre Organ Journal; implement redesigned www.atos.org, and webcasts.

MAJOR GOALS BY FUNCTION

Note: the “ATOS Operating Plan” recently submitted has seven major divisions. This plan proposes five divisions or functions. Each division is to be chaired by one ATOS representative. Note the chart on the next page. These major functions are:

1. **Communication** - public relations, member recruitment, liaisons, website, journal, direct contact
2. **Education** - Adult amateur organist competition, adult theatre organ getaway, youth organist competition, university studies, youth scholarship, mentor program, and GWMF program, and creating sample chapter business plans.
3. **Technical** - “How to” examples, multimedia resources online, publications, journal articles, workshops, manuals, instructional DVD’s.
4. **Fund Raising** - Everything that relates to this on both national and assisting local chapters such as grants, loans, how to’s - 501 c (3) applications, development programs, etc. And, of course, national fund raising and investment strategies.
5. **Administration / Operations** - Financial management, planning and development, scheduling, committee work, and general operations.

COMMUNICATION

- **Public Relations**
- **Member Recruitment**
- **Liaisons**
- **Website Journal**
- **Direct Contact**

EDUCATION

- **Adult Amateur Organist Competition**
- **Adult Theatre Organ Getaway**
- **Youth Organist Competition**
- **University Studies**
- **Youth Scholarships**
- **Mentor Program**
- **GWMF Program**
- **Creating Chapter Business Plans**

ADMINISTRATION - OPERATIONS

- **Centralized Financial Mgt.**
- **Committee & Organizational Structure**
- **Nominations Committee**
- **Membership Recruitment**
- **Board of Directors, Officers and Staff**

TECHNICAL

- **"How to" examples**
- **Online Multimedia Lessons**
- **Publications**
- **Journal Articles**
- **Workshops**
- **Manuals**
- **Instructional DVD's**

FUND RAISING

- **Grants & Awards**
- **Loans**
- **501 c (3) Process**
- **Development Programs**
- **National Fundraising**
- **Investment Strategies**
- **Manuals**
- **Instructional DVD's**

1. COMMUNICATION

- **ATOS will increase its membership by 3% per year, each year.** This is managed by an aggressive and active membership committee who shall work directly with the Chairman of the Board on a regular basis.
- **Restructure the ATOS liaison functions.** On a monthly basis, the individual in the chapter relations position will create a set of bullet points of information to be emailed to each chapter president, vice president, and secretary. This information shall remain identical for every liaison to use, but each liaison will have the opportunity to add his/her individual comments. These bullet points may consist of key discussions or decisions made in teleconferences or other developments as they occur. An email copy of this communication will be sent by each liaison to the chapter relations staff member in order to assure timely communications.
- **Provide Timely Meeting Minutes to the Membership.** After each teleconference and in-person board meeting, minutes of those meetings will be posted on atos.net within two weeks. The Journal shall contain minutes of meetings most recent to the publication date of that edition.
- **Launch Redesigned ATOS Website.** This website shall have more functionality:
 1. More user friendly
 2. Easy navigation / search functions
 3. Increased use of multimedia
 4. Interactive capabilities
 5. Enlistment of contact editors
 6. Leveraged with the Journal
 7. Increased use of advertising
 8. Create specific eye-catching and relative segments such as:
 - a. Youth Corner
 - b. Technicians Guide to Restoration
 - c. Sample Organ Lessons (e.g. select clips from DVD project)
 - d. On-line surveys of all kinds
 - e. "Ask a Question" link to allow anyone to send a question or comment to anyone in ATOS.
 - f. Donation link
 - g. Fund raising techniques, etc.
- **Direct contact with chapters.** When appropriate and cost-effective, the CEO and/or Chairman of the Board shall arrange town hall type meetings with chapter members while traveling. Sharing of information, concerns, etc. will be discussed and salient points shared with the board or appropriate committees.
- **Journal articles.** The "Director's Corner" segment, and "From your President" segment shall continue to run in each journal. In addition, regular segments will be published highlighting the following categories:

1. *Youth Corner* – articles about youth camp, lessons, biographies of young artists, stories about their performance work, what drew them to the theatre organ, etc.
2. *Technical* – restoration, repair, installation technique, etc.
3. *Fundraising* – information on progress at the national level, examples of what other chapters have done, and so on.
4. *Membership* – this will primarily be used to offer solutions to membership recruitment, possible contests for membership drives, and success stories from chapters on their strategies, etc.

Optional segments might include:

1. *Chapter Management* – sharing techniques used across the different chapters, articles on what has worked or not worked, and eventually a “Chapter Management Series” that will be part of another goal, below.
2. *Performance Techniques* – tips and ideas on performance, registration, and so on.

2. EDUCATION

- ***Create a functional Chapter Management guide.*** This publication will draw upon input from successful chapters’ methods and procedures used to maintain their missions and keep their membership actively involved. Also, strategies adopted by ATOS as a result of work with its development committee, and the theatre management committee (see below). Available by 2011, it will provide a business plan containing a systematic approach toward fund raising, concert production, marketing, membership recruitment, creating alliances with local theatre organ venues, consideration for obtaining a chapter-owned instrument, and so on. This would not be a technical pipe organ restoration manual.
- ***Establish a Theatre Manager Consortium.*** This will consist of at least five theatre managers or owners from across the country where a theatre pipe organ plays an active role in that venue’s productions. The objective is to create both alliances and develop strategies to teach local chapters how to increase the exposure and involvement of theatre organs in their locale. This consortium will primarily meet via electronic means and it will be chaired by one or two ATOS officials.
- ***Increase youth involvement in theatre organ pursuits.*** This is done through the youth organist competition, youth scholarships, mentor program, and the George Wright Memorial Fellowship. Facilitating contribution to and involvement with the “Youth Corner” segment of both the website and journal are to be strongly encouraged.
- ***Establish a Successful National Concert Tour*** by 2010. This will provide a cost-effective format toward producing a public concert featuring a theatre pipe organ and other appropriate entertainment at select theatres across the country. There shall be the opportunity to partner with local chapters where they exist. The main purpose is to extend the exposure of this medium while marketing the Society to potential new members and supporters.

- ***Produce a series of three instructional DVD's.*** They will include: performance instruction, pipe organ technical restoration, and a general “who we are” marketing promotion to be used with schools, venues, local granting organizations, and so on. This will be completed by July, 2011.
- ***Establish a series of annual chapter management workshops.*** Each year, there will be a two or three-day workshop that is done in collaboration (and budget) with chapter leaders. Costs are to be shared between ATOS and the chapters represented at each workshop. However, ATOS will subsidize the majority of the cost. Topics will include areas of interest to chapters such as restoration, maintenance, fund-raising, chapter leadership, concert promotion and production, membership drives, performance, and so on.
- ***Develop a forum for electronic organ owners.*** In particular, virtual theatre organs and other digital instruments will have a means by which they may share information on their pursuits, seek assistance from others, and so on. Periodic articles shall appear in the Journal, and the website will have a segment dedicated to this purpose. Paid advertising and participation from vendors will be welcomed.

3. TECHNICAL

- ***Finalize the reprint of the ATOS Shop Manual*** which will be completed and made available through the ATOS Marketplace in 2010.
- ***Establish new restoration and preservation guidelines*** that offer user friendly achievable, and proper methods to restore, install, and maintain a theatre pipe organ
- ***Promote an aggressive profile of the Technical Consultation program*** for chapters' use by marketing this resource through the Journal, website, and liaison communications.
- ***Increase the amount of dollars available for the Technical Consultation program*** from \$500 to \$1,000 per use, with a total pool of \$10,000.
- ***Maintain the Junchen Scholarship*** with the intention of making it's availability more known among ATOS chapters.
- ***Provide content, structure and lesson plans for a regional technical workshop***, to be held initially in 2010, and repeated as frequently as demand and budget allow.
- ***Increase the technical expertise available to chapters*** by participating in broader discussion and plans to establish systems and procedures for this purpose.

4. FUNDRAISING

- ***Solidify the Development Committee*** by creating a structure of purpose, goals and objectives, and reporting procedures.
- ***Increase the Endowment Fund balance to one million dollars by 2010.*** This can be done by transferring approximately \$682,783 from the Kenelm M. Lufkin donation.
- ***Increase Grant Levels to the Chapters*** by keeping the Endowment Fund investments at or above average rates of return; keeping their management under supervision by and by soliciting recommendations from the Finance Committee.
- ***Increase the Unrestricted Fund Investments to \$500,000 by 2010.***
- ***Create a National Headquarters by 2012.*** Ideal physical plant will be a theatre or auditorium to include an appropriate space to house a theatre pipe organ. At least one other theatre pipe organ would be installed for educational and training purposes. While a variety of functions would remain decentralized (to be determined), most of the various functions of ATOS would be centered in this location, providing a “home base” for the Society.

5. ADMINISTRATION / OPERATIONS

- ***Maintain Centralized Financial Management*** by controlling and protecting cash and other assets through coordination among the Treasurer, Fund Raising & Finance committees. Supervision is provided by the CEO/President, and oversight by the Board of Directors in order to execute prudent and profitable results.
- ***Streamline Committee Work and Organizational Structure*** by a critical analysis and reorganization of functions and responsibilities. Appropriate Volunteers and others appointed to serve on committees will report to an ATOS Director or other official as designated.
- ***Establish a Formal Nominations Committee*** responsible for recruiting potential committee volunteers and nominees for filling Board, Staff, and Officer positions within ATOS. This committee will report to the Chairman of the Board through the Executive Committee.
- ***Increase ATOS Membership by 3% per year, each year.*** There will be a redesign the Membership Recruitment Committee. This committee will have no less than a quarterly reporting mechanism, bringing aggressive plans to recruit and retain ATOS members to the ATOS Executive Committee. Innovation, creativity, and chapter partnership are chief expectations, bringing the trend of membership levels to an upward skew.

- ***Improve Annual and Regional Convention Attendance.*** An ad hoc convention planning committee shall review procedures, budgeting, marketing, and content of conventions. The Convention Planning Coordinator and others will make up this group.

- ***Improve Efficiency and Effectiveness of General Operations.*** ATOS will position its programs, resources, and efforts to maximize the local efforts of maintaining and improving the viability of theatre pipe organs and its music across the country. A reorganized structure, budget, and reporting system will create a paradigm shift toward keeping the theatre pipe organ a viable part of America's musical landscape well into the 21st century.

**APPENDIX - Data Points on How ATOS Can Help the Chapters
(taken from the 2008 ATOS Member Survey)**

Which of the following would you like ATOS to make available to your local chapter?

- 21.38%** Chapter concert promotion and marketing assistance
- 20.00%** Public relations and marketing tools to take to outside venues and schools
- 17.43%** Membership drive help
- 11.38%** Fundraising assistance
- 9.72%** Higher levels of grant money for your theatre pipe organ project
- 9.72%** More visible ATOS liaison
- 7.34%** Theatre Organ restoration/maintenance guidance
- 3.03%** Other

How can ATOS better support and aid your local chapter?

- Assistance in / improve national and local marketing, publicity and promotion (36)
- Improve communication and visibility between national ATOS and local chapters (i.e. frequent liaison visits, be more responsive and involved, contact members personally) (33)
- Financial assistance (sponsor events, funding, grants) (23)
- Financial guidance (writing grants, professional help, ideas for fundraising, budget examples, becoming legally recognized “non-profit” organization, tax exempt issues, being put in a will) (21)
- Supply chapters with print material / promotional material to hand out at concerts, print in newspapers, submit to local TV and radio stations, etc. (13)
- Increase membership (11)
- Better communication between chapters (Newsletter exchange, reports in the journal of successful ideas and ventures, up to date calendar) (10)
- Better chapter leadership/new officers; train local officers or provide code of conduct (9)
- Motivation, support, and encouragement (8)
- Help training technicians (i.e. workshops), publish technical notes, and offer technical support (6)
- It’s hopeless / we’re beyond help (4)
- Publish a list of contacts: names and telephone numbers of a local chapter’s members for travelers to use to avail current activities of local chapter. More than the list that appears in the front of the ATOS magazine (4)
- Make new and old members feel more welcome (3)
- Lower membership and convention fees (3)
- Help planning a regional convention (3)
- Bring in celebrity/guest artists and technicians (3)
- Have an ATOS official like Ken Double visit our chapter (3)
- Better website with more downloadable material (recorded music, videos, printable music, articles, etc.) and social networking features (i.e. Facebook or myspace type) (3)
- A theatre organ (3)
- A national touring concert series (3)

- Publish artists names, names contact information, and standard fees (3)
- Provide examples of operating agreements with venues (2)
- Publish upcoming concerts schedules in a timely manner (2)
- MTOS is currently working with the Charlotte Arts Council to restore the Carolina Theatre and install a

theatre organ in it. ATOS guidance and help will be needed at that time (hopefully next year) (2)

- I am not aware of anything ATOS does for my chapter (2)
- Establish relationship with / support AGO (2)
- Provide information on where to purchase organ music
- Public television documentary / program
- Get the pro organists to play modern music.
- ATOS sponsor (in part or whole) a major American theatre organist for outlying memberships, e.g.

Support and encourage national conventions in new areas.

- Create national headquarters
- Separate subscription to magazine from membership dues
- Get rid of the division between electronic and traditional theatre organs
- Don't be so greedy w/ convention profits
- Hold board to deadlines and standards of operation
- Blanket licensing agreements for silent films as is currently being done with ASCAP; a 15-minute

professional video to tell the TO story and solicit ATOS and local memberships

- Help w/ the Pilman Theatre Project
- Return the instruments to their original size and function. The mega instruments scare people off from playing them. Instruments w/out players do not have much use.
- Establishing a director's position w/ a fixed local office.
- They should allow currently unaffiliated groups some level of recognition
- Oversee historic installation at Chicago Theater and Oriental Theatre
- Answer correspondence for starters
- More people/chapters need to have more interest in applying for the programs ATOS has to offer. Many

older people say they only want to have fun in their remaining days, not work on or learn a new skill.

This is disturbing for younger people to see.

- At Puget Sound, help with restoration of Paramount Theater Organ Project
- Sooner State is located in Tulsa, OK. I live in OK City where there is no chapter. A major restoration of an Oklahoma artifact Kilgen restoration in OKC museum is never mentioned at Tulsa , Sooner State, nor the U of OK TO dept. mentioned. OK City is the largest city and the capitol!

• At this point we'd accept almost anything. Our r/ship w/ landlord isn't involved and doesn't have any

interest in keeping space available for us after 22 years.

- Our organ is still not reinstalled since hurricane Rita. We need some assistance with building owners to

get the chamber repaired so that we can put the pipes back in! (Jefferson Theater, BMT TX)

- By auditing its administrative and finance activities
- As with national, NEW BLOOD needs/must be allowed to get involved and serve (not just “grunt work” positions!)
- Institute a local chapter in West Palm Beach, Florida
- Crawford chapter is one that most of its members live no where near Billings, Montana. As far as I know, there are very few “local members.”
- Columbia Missouri is not yet affiliated with ATOS. I would like the Missouri Theatre Administration to be contacted by the ATOS. David white is artistic director. (www.motheatre.com)
- Give more concerts
- Encourage our local amateurs to enter amateur TO competitions.
- Not sure – NorCal is a saturated area. We have produced successful conventions but locally we have such competition for cultural events.
- Form a chapter for our theatre pipe organ at Crystal Theatre, Crystal Falls, MI 49920
- Stability at national level. Less in-fighting and splitting. Maximize openness and communication.
- By securing the aid of young volunteers to participate in designing our future
- In places w/ no active chapters, write letters personally to each member asking if they are interested in forming a chapter. Then act on the response.
- Our organ is in a technical school and we are limited in our access to it. We are limited in our technicians and helpers and our number of players is dwindling. At the same time, our attendance and membership is growing. People really come out for the silent movies, but a good professional does not draw as many
- Perhaps create an outline/sample plan to help chapter achieve goals outlined in the #25 above
- ATOS and NCTOS to work together as a team instead of as two entities