



RELAY CHATTER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE JOLIET AREA THEATER ORGAN ENTHUSIASTS

WWW.JATOE.ORG

Sept / Oct 2026



JATOE MEETS WITH RIALTO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO DISCUSS CONCERNS

On July 15th at 10am JATOE Officers Bob Vorel, Don Walker, Joel Martis and Crew Chief Lee Rajala met with Executive Director Wade Welsh to discuss our concerns. The JATOE Board had become very frustrated with the restrictions being placed on our socials and work crew. See the agenda and Wade's answers on page 2. We had previously asked for a list of what we could not do, but we never received one so that is why the meeting. It turned out to be very positive and a productive meeting. Our biggest issue was communications between JATOE and Wade. It basically didn't exist. We never knew we couldn't do something until we did it. Case in being our April social when members could not go into the balcony and the rotunda lights could not be on. Here is a list of things that have changed. So please follow the rules that have been told to us.

1. Members can go into the balcony, but **DO NOT** use the grande staircase in the rotunda to access the balcony. The theater wants us to use the back staircase in the hallway or the elevator in the rotunda to get to the balcony. We don't know why the grand staircase cannot be used and we didn't ask. We were just happy that members can go to the balcony. Please put the seats back up when you leave the balcony. We also ask if you are seated on the main floor, please put those seats up too.
2. The lights will be on in the rotunda, hallways and staircases.

Wade's biggest concern is liability. He said we look at the theater from a historical perspective while he looks at from a business perspective. He is correct, he has to that's why he was hired and he is doing a great job. Booking shows and taking care of a 100 year old building and always have it running thru your mind the what if's. We understand that, it is a business, one that has for decades was barely able to keep its head above water because it was severely neglected. He told us how the new Hollywood casino has affected the theater. They have taken 12 of the shows that played at the theater. Hollywood pays more money and only requires them to play for one hour. They want those patrons in the casino. Where as the theater pays less and requires a two hour show. Who wouldn't want to work less and get paid more.

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He also told us at the last performance before they closed for the summer the stage curtain, which has been there since the 1980's started to slowly rip and the curtain came down. No one was hurt. It had dry rotted. The audience thought it was part of the show. Now they have to get a new curtain and find one that will match as close as possible to what was there. The orchestra lift is still broke and there is so much more that needs attention. So we can certainly understand his concerns for peoples safety. He has a lot on his plate and there is only so much money. And in a 100 year old building he has to prioritize the repairs and maintenance. We are happy progress was made with this meeting. He learned where we were coming from and we learned where he was coming from. He suggested that we meet a couple times a year to discuss any concerns.

We hope you understand why we have to do some things a different way.

Agenda for July 15, 2026 meeting with Wade Welsh at the Rialto Theater

JATOE needs the Rialto Managements support.

Let JATOE put our brochures back in front by the box office. It is because of our members that pay dues that we can do what we do to keep the organ in the best possible condition.

Wade said that was no problem. We just need to give them our brochures and they will put them out by the box office.

Insert a picture of the organ on the "Reels of the Rialto" web page with the wording "The Barton Grande Theater Pipe organ plays half an hour before the movie with house organist Taylor Trimby. (See Attachment A). It is part of the theater's glorious past too.

Wade will turn this over to their Marketing Coordinator so it can be done. This has been completed!

JATOE has always supported the theater in many ways that had nothing to do with the organ. (See Attachment B for some examples).

Wade's big concern is about liability. He does not want us to do anything that does not pertain to the organ proper. He does not want us taking care of the organ lift anymore, greasing, oil bath for the screw jack, lubrication on the lift motor, lubrication on the main blower, lobby organ blower, etc.

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Agenda for July 15, 2026 meeting with Wade Welsh at the Rialto Theater

Communications between Rialto Management and JATOE.

Communications have to improve between us. How do we make this happen?

This meeting was very productive and Wade suggested that we get together a couple times a year to go over concerns. He will also put Bob on his scheduling calendar so he can see what is going on at the theater.

Miscommunications have caused confusion and much frustration especially to our members.

Wade did not know about a lot of things about JATOE.

Who speaks for you Wade when we do not hear it directly from you?

This would be Shane.

Who may “override” what you tell us?

No one, If the stage manager or Shane tell us something different then what Wade told us, then one of them will see Wade about it. Something may have come up he does not know about.

What can JATOE NOT do or use during socials?

Are we allowed in the balcony?

Yes, but they do not want us using the grand staircases in the rotunda. We can use the back staircase or the elevator in the rotunda.

Are we allowed to turn on the lights in the Rotunda and hallways?

Yes, the lights will be on.

Are we allowed to “show off” the theater to perspective members?

Yes, we can “show off the theater” as we have in the past. No grand tours like they have on Tuesdays. Just the theater proper and the rotunda.

What happens if no Rialto employee is available for a social? It’s canceled? We would like proper notice if that were to ever happen.

Yes, the social would be canceled if no employee is present. It an insurance requirement.

JATOE carries its own two million insurance policy for our socials.

Wade did not know this. We will furnish a copy of our policy for their records. It still does not over ride the need for a theater employee to be present.

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What can the Work Crew NOT do?

Can they work in organ chambers NOT accessed by the stage?

The work crew can not be present, even in the basement when shows are loading in.

Can they work in the basement if not allowed on stage?

No, not during load ins.

Please have the sewer line fixed in the basement.

Wade did not know about this. He will look into it. We offered our pvc pipe that we don't need if he want to replace the cast iron pipe.

The Organ Lift controls need to work as they were intended. Not doing so puts the organist's safety a risk. This is a very simple and inexpensive fix.

Since Wade is very concerned about liability, we told him how the Taylor has had to crawl on top of the organ and over the railing to get out because the lift was not taken all the way down. We painted the picture if he were to slip and get hurt. Patrons are paying for something they didn't pay to see, movie is delayed because of paramedics, etc. It's a simple as putting in the correct switch. Wade will look into this.



Janice Challender

July 16, 2026

Eternal Rest Grant unto her
Lord.

[Janice Lee Challender Obituary Jul 16,
2026 - Blackburn, Giegerich, Sonntag
Funeral Home](#)



Some Good News

The Chicago City Council has declared the portion of Milwaukee Avenue in front of the Portage Theatre as the honorary Jay Warren Way to recognize Six Corners own Jay Warren a/k/a Dennis Wolkowicz organist for the Silent Film Society of Chicago and former operator of the Portage Theatre from 2006 to 2015 as well as the Copernicus Foundation (formerly The Gateway Theater) from 1985 to 2004 and The family business on Milwaukee Ave. Dennis spent most of his life owning and working businesses up and down Milwaukee Avenue and was proudest of his time in Six Corners and his accomplishments with the Portage Theatre and the Silent Film Society of Chicago. The new Jay Warren Way sign will be installed with a short ceremony on Thursday, August 20 at 6:30 pm with a reception to follow at the Silent Film Society of Chicago, [4054 N. Milwaukee Ave.](#)



September Picnic Social at Lee Rajala's With Lori Moreland on the Allen Organ



Lori Moreland is best known as the **official organist for the Chicago White Sox**, a role she has held since April 2011, stepping in after longtime organist Nancy Faust retired. Born and raised in Fort Wayne, Indiana, Moreland began playing the organ at age 7 when her father brought home an electronic Hammond organ. By 12, she was playing in church, and by 14, she was teaching organ lessons.

She moved to Chicago to study organ at the American Conservatory of Music with Robert Lodine, the carillonneur at Rockefeller Memorial Chapel. Her repertoire during her studies included works by Bach, Hindemith, Sowerby, and Messiaen [WFMT](#). Alongside her music studies, she worked in sales for Baldwin Piano and Organ Co. and played occasional cocktail hours.



Moreland's appointment to the White Sox came after an audition and interview. On her first day, she played "My Kind of Town" to a crowd of over 35,000 fans, describing the experience as "overwhelming" but deeply rewarding. Her job involves not only playing music but also interacting with fans, responding to cues through a headset, and adapting to the pace of the game.

Lori continues to perform organ music in her community, including regular services at Our Lady of Knock in Calumet, Illinois. She has described her career as a "once in a lifetime opportunity" to play in a ballpark and said she is "so honored" to be part of the team's tradition.

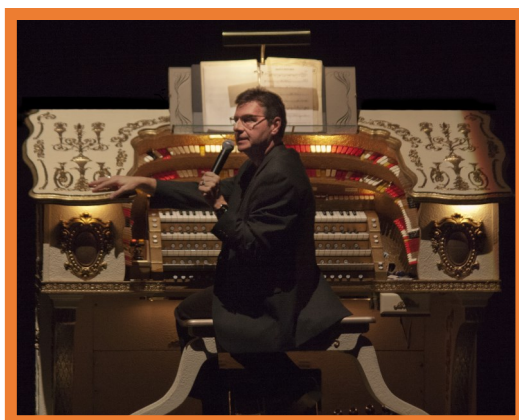


September 20th at 2pm. JATOE will provide the hamburgers and hotdogs with the fixin's. Please bring a dish to share.

Lee's address is 1310 E. Division St Lockport, IL



SUNDAY, OCT 11, 2PM
CARL DESANTI
ON THE
BARTON GRANDE THEATER PIPE ORGAN



Carl is currently Music Director at Nativity of Our Lord & St. Gabriel Parish in Chicago, Illinois. Prior liturgical work included organist at Santa Lucia Parish in Chicago, St. Mary's Parish in Riverside, Illinois and Music Director at Unity Church of Oak Park.

Carl has performed as organist for various special events at Orchestra Hall, The Chicago Theater, the Arcada Theater in St. Charles, Church of the Jesu at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and at Chicago's former Medina

Temple. Carl is locally known in the Western Suburbs of Chicago for his live organ playing at roller skating rinks, starting out at the Westmont Skate Center during his teen years, was house organist at the Orbit Skate Center in Palatine, Illinois for fifteen years and is currently organist at the Aurora Skate Center.

Carl has performed for socials at the Coronado Theater in Rockford, Illinois; JATOE (Joliet Area Theater Organ Enthusiasts) at the Rialto Theater in Joliet; CATOE (Chicago Area Theater Organ Enthusiasts) at the Tivoli Theatre in Downers Grove and St. John Cantius Church in Chicago; and for CTOS (Chicagoland Theater Organ Society.)



Enter 121 Scott St. Stage Doors open at 1:30 pm Show starts at 2:00 pm. Bring Refreshments!