

NICKELODEON NEWS

Inside: 2026 Raffles, Silent Movies, and Exhibition Updates!

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Museum YouTube Channel!

You can now enjoy professional quality videos of some of the museum's rarest music machines on our YouTube channel! Thanks to the generosity of the Phillips Trust we received funding to document these amazing machines for their long term preservation as well as the enjoyment of our audiences across the world!

We currently have videos of our Mills Novelty Co. "Race Horse" Piano and Artizan Air-Calio Calliope uploaded. More will be coming in the near future so make sure to subscribe to keep up with videos as they are posted!



youtube.com/@DeBenceAntiqueMusicWorld

UPCOMING EVENTS

Friday March 27th @ 7pm

"Under the Same Sky" Concert for voice, piano, oboe, and English horn.

April 1st 2026

DeBence Museum reopens for regular hours!

Friday April 17th 11am-4pm & Saturday April 18th 11am-6pm

National Record Store Day Clearance Sale on music media!

Saturday April 18th @ 7pm

Dennis Geib classical piano concert

Saturday April 25th

Community Scanning Day- Bring in your family photographs for professional scanning and receive digital copies. More details to be announced.



2026 Programming Schedule Announced!

As it is the start of a new year it is once again time to announce the museum's programming schedule! The included schedule lists concerts, talks, and special events for the museum throughout the year. Our 2026 concerts start this month with "Under the Same Sky." This exemplary performance weaves music with the writings of Etty Hillesum, a brilliant writer and victim of the holocaust. Her work showcases the power of love and acceptance in unimaginable times. This powerful performance is one you will not want to miss while it is in Venango County! In May the highly-requested Greenville High School Steel Drum Band and Dr. Samuel DePalma will be returning for back to back concerts during May Mart on May 1st & 2nd. Enjoy outdoor shopping during the day and exceptional musical experiences in the evening!

Other highlights during the year will include a debut performance from singer/songwriter Gabe Taylor, a trio of concerts celebrating America250, and the return of bluegrass band Gravel Lick! All concerts will be free except for our last fundraising concert with Dr. Amber Shay Nicholson. Details on that event will be announced later in the year including ticket prices and sale dates. We will be adding additional program dates throughout the year. If you would like to stay updated on any changes or additions made to our schedule please make sure to follow our Facebook page. Live music and performances are an integral part of the museum's mission to be a "see & hear" experience and we are committed to keeping these as accessible as possible!



2026 Program Schedule

- Fri March 27th 7pm** "Under the Same Sky" a concert for voice, piano, oboe, and English horn. Interweaving Yiddish Tangos and the writings of ETTY HILLESUM.
- Sat-Sun April 11-12th** DeBence Museum at the PA Trolley Museum Vintage Tech Fest
- Fri-Sat April 17-18th 11am-6pm** National Record Store Day Clearance Sale
- Sat April 18th 7pm** Dennis Geib, classical pianist concert
- Sat April 25th** Community Scanning Day at the museum
- Fri May 1st @ 7pm** Greenville High School Steel Drum Band Concert
- Sat May 2nd @ 7pm** Dr. Samuel DePalma, fundraising opera concert featuring the great American songbook
- Thurs June 4th @ 7pm** Freysinger demonstration and concert on set of shaker chimes
- Sat June 13th 7pm** Gabe Taylor singer/songwriter concert
- Sat July 11th 7pm** Venango Brigade America250 concert
- Sat July 18th 7pm** Mostly Brass America250 Concert
- Sat July 25th 11am-3pm** Family Day at the Museum!
- Sat July 25th 7pm** Carl Schubert America250 Concert
- Sat Aug 8th 7pm** The Last Chance Band, soft rock & more!
- Thurs Aug 13th 7pm** Director's Talk on Phonograph History & Mechanics
- Thurs Sept 3rd 7pm** Director's Talk, topic TBD
- Sat Sept 19th 7pm** Gravel Lick concert
- Sat Oct 24th 7pm** Dr. Amber Shay Nicholson fundraising concert

Looking for Volunteers!

As the museum operates on a small staff we are extremely grateful for all the help from our dedicated volunteers! As we are preparing for reopening on April 1st we are currently looking for additional volunteers who are able to help out during the year. We have variety of jobs available such as researcher, docent, event volunteers and more! Please reach out to the museum if you are interested in helping. We have a dedicated volunteer page on our website where you can download our volunteer form and get started. We appreciate all of our volunteers who help us run the museum on a day to day basis and hope you will consider joining our community!



Volunteers helping to decorate the museum's Christmas trees!

Check us out online!

On our pages you will be able to find fun videos about the museum highlighting specific pieces, hidden histories, weird instruments, and fun tunes!



Venango County Historical Society Director Eric Cook leading the Pittsburgh Silent Film Orchestra during a rehearsal.

Silent Movie Night 2026

It was a sold out crowd! For our 2026 silent movie night the museum packed the ballroom with 120 people for a double feature of Buster Keaton & Harold Lloyd films. A highlight of the evening was the original compositions of Venango County Historical Society Director Eric Cook, as played by the Pittsburgh Silent Film Orchestra.

The performance also featured several historic instruments from the DeBence collection! Our recently acquired set of silent movie theatre bells were played again in their original context after nearly 100 years! In addition, the Lloyd film 'For Heaven's Sake' would not have been complete without a short performance on a pump organ! The organ chosen was an 1884 Story & Clark, played alongside the 2018 concert grand piano as loaned to the museum by our sponsor QRS Music Technologies! The evening was full of laughter and enjoyment of historic music proving whats old is new again! We will be hosting another silent movie in February of next year so stay tuned for that announcement!



Scopitone: American Music Video History!

In the mid-60s hulking refrigerator sized machines began invading high end cocktail bars and other such establishments through the U.S. Called Scopitones they were originally a post-war French invention, although the idea of a video jukebox dated back to the Mills Novelty Co. Panoram (see picture below). The Scopitone was able to immigrate to America though with the help of a key player; the mob. The mafia were familiar with jukebox enterprises, utilizing the popularity of these machines and their steady stream of cash to clean dirty money. In a deal involving George Wood, the influential talent agency William Morris, and New York's Genovese crime family American rights for the Scopitone machine were secured by Tel-A-Sign, a publicly-traded plastic sign manufacturing company

The summer of 1964 was the heyday for Scopitones in America. The higher price of plays on the Scopitone, 25 cents versus the traditional a nickel a play for jukeboxes, meant that the company positioned them in high-class drinking establishments.

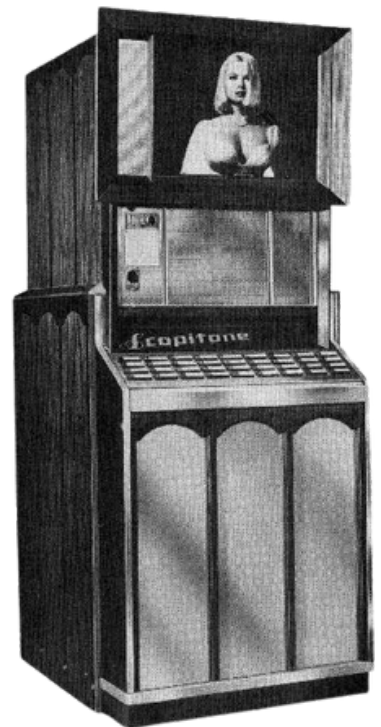
One only needs to watch a few of these high-camp videos to know exactly who they were marketed for. The scantily clad dancers and often ridiculous choreography appealed to the

traditionally male barroom crowd. The films themselves were produced by Harmon-EE, Debbie Reynold's production company. Each approximately 3 minute film featured somewhat passe pop-stars.

The medium wasn't willing to take a risk on the newly popular rock n'roll. This somewhat dated slate of technicolor films did not help the Scopitone. However it was an article from the Wall Street Journal that did the whole thing in in 1966 when it leaked news of the grand jury probe and mob connections to Tele-A-Sign. Distributors and stockholders quickly jumped ship and the company filed for bankruptcy in 1969. And just like that the Scopitone's day was over. The hulking 500 lbs. machines were scrapped, sold, and broken up. As a result they are now something of a rarity. This is why we were extremely excited to receive an original Scopitone this past October. The machine is largely intact however is in need of mechanical repair. We will be fundraising to return this amazing machine to original working condition and it will be on display in our upcoming exhibition!



A Mills Novelty Co. Panoram video jukebox.



A original American 450 Scopitone, courtesy of Scopitone Archive.

Exhibition Updates

On April 1st the museum will reopen to the public with some refreshed exhibition spaces including 'New Sounds & New Machines: American Music in the Postwar Period 1949-1970.' In our Fall newsletter you got an initial peek at the exhibition's contents! We wanted to give you an update on what has been going on to prep for this opening. Staff has been busy clearing the space, researching and writing interpretive panels, and prepping for the exhibit installation.



We are sad to say that, due to a conflict in display conditions, the exhibition will now no longer host the Bill Huber guitar collection. In the future we will be working to bring this collection to the museum however, in the short term we have had to put this off to focus on the larger project. Please keep your eyes on our social media for more updates and progress on this landmark exhibition! We would also like to thank the sponsors, without whom we would not be able to take on this monumental effort; QRS Music Technologies, Walmart, Rossbacher Insurance, Woods & River Coffee, the Franklin Elks, Liberty Electronics, the Franklin Eagles, Erie Insurance, and the Women of the Franklin Moose. Your support is invaluable to the work that we do!

