

My First Painting of an Organ Façade (Wurlitzer Style 153)

Beth Edellapietro

Introduction

I recently had an organ façade built by Paul Dyer. I searched for someone to paint the façade and found someone quite good, Beth Edellapietro. Beth agreed to author a short piece on her experience and this is her story.

Tom Billy

Painting the Façade

I have loved painting for as long as I can remember. I have been an artist for many years, and my work includes portraits, landscapes and murals. All of which were painted for private homes and buyers. Several of my works are located in public spaces. My education includes studying art at Brookdale Community College and self-taught. Every so often a job opportunity comes along that I know will be an individual challenge, as well as spark my interest in a new area of art.

Around two years ago I was contacted by Tom Billy, a private collector of musical instruments. He introduced me to a particular challenge, a Wurlitzer Style 153 organ façade painting job. We met on several occasions and discussed at length what he wanted from my work. We thought about different styles and techniques including hand painting versus spray painting the individual sections of the organ façade.

Tom made the right decision when he decided to have the raw wood façade entirely hand painted. The body of the organ façade, the carvings (scroll work), and the mural paintings would all be painted by brush.

I began the majority of the work on the organ façade after Tom had chosen a soft cream color for the drum wings, front and top board (**Figure 1**). The raised panels (murals) were removed from the façade body, sanded and primed. Once the primer was thoroughly dry, I lightly sanded the wood with fine grade sand paper. It was now time to begin painting the individual panels.



Figure 1. The center façade with with the soft cream color background applied.



Figure 2. The painted bottom mural (with waterfalls and forest scenes) ready to be attached to the organ façade.

Tom chose waterfalls and forest scenes as an overall theme for the façade (**Figure 2**). The final step to painting the organ front was to do the carving (scroll) work, in which a metallic gold and silver as well as a softened dark blue was used.

Upon completion of the individual mural paintings I began to paint the carvings. Each carving was sanded and primed with a gray-tinted primer. The gray primer is what



Figure 3. One of many painted carvings.

I like to use under the silver metallic paint, which covered all of the carving. The metallic gold paint was then applied to the larger recesses. Lastly, the same dark blue that was used to trim the murals was used in the deepest areas to enhance the fluidity of the shapes and tie everything together.

All of the mural paintings were done using Winton Artists paint and Reeves Artist paint. The carving were painted with a water-based latex. The drum wings, front and top board were painted in sections—each sanded, primed and painted with three to four coats of semi-gloss acrylic paint.

After completion of each section, Tom would take the pieces back to be reattached to the organ façade. The next time that I saw the organ, Tom had it completely assembled with the newly painted organ façade attached.



Figure 4. The author touching up a mural on the façade.

Just like most things in life, this needed a few touch-ups (Figure 4). I made some small adjustments on the paintings to ensure that the color depth was consistent with each individual mural. We were both very happy to see the organ façade back together and were impressed with the end results (Figure 5). I even received a private recital, which was wonderful to hear. This is one of those jobs that come along ever so often, and I was glad to have the opportunity to do it.

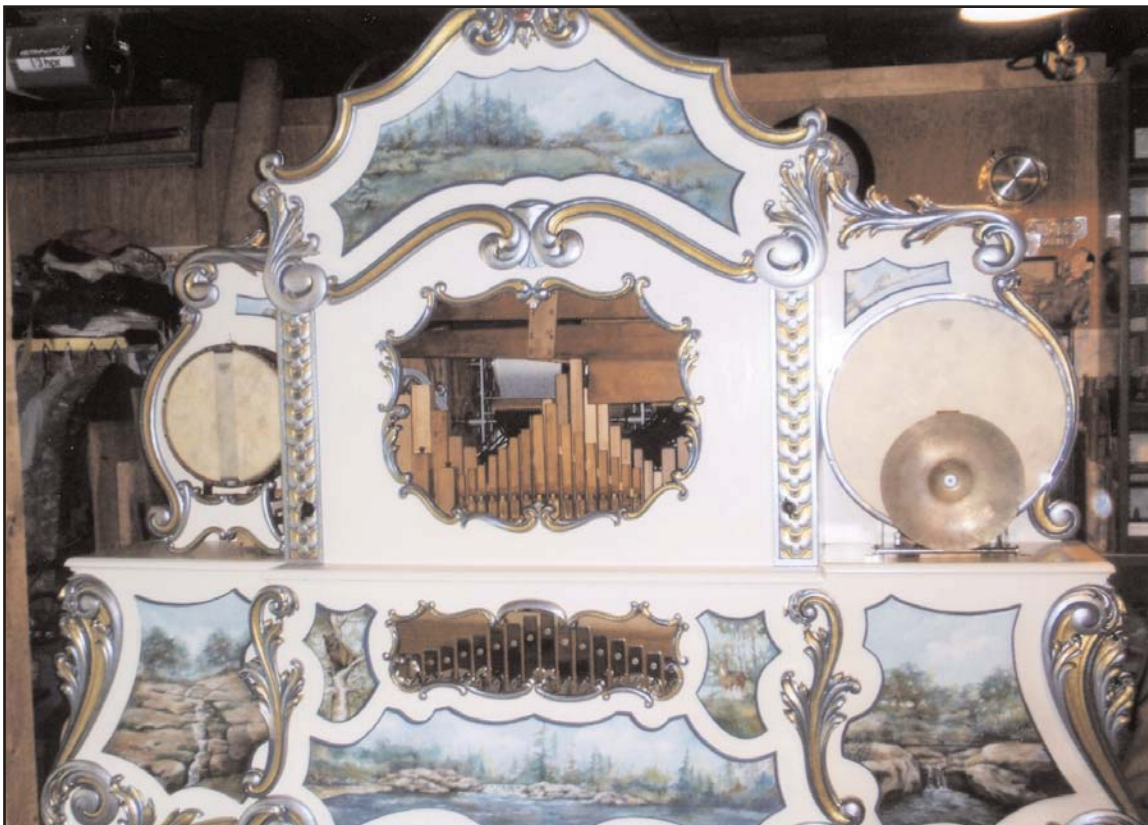


Figure 6. The completed façade, now attached to the organ chest.

I live in the highlands (Monmouth County), NJ. I have been painting and drawing starting at a very young age. I have been professionally painting for approximately 19 years. My contact information is edelliapietro@Gmail.com.