

THE ESTEY ORGAN

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The Estey Labs Experience

Estey Organ Museum Begins Playful Programs for Inventors, Tinkerers, and Makers of All Ages

by Christopher Grotke

The Estey Organ Company, first and foremost, was a maker of musical instruments. They employed creative, inventive craftspeople in Brattleboro. For over a century, they worked wood, leather, metal and cloth to build organs, made and used their own tools, and developed pioneering electronic devices for producing sounds.

Today, we are experiencing a resurgence of interest in creativity and making things. The do-it-yourself spirit is alive and growing, but it is often hidden from view. People tinker in their homes and often have no place to share their work or master new skills. The Estey Organ Museum is creating the Estey Labs to fill that void.



Kids building a Waring Box Banjo

The Estey Labs concept is to provide a central workshop hub in southern Vermont for today's experts to teach and inspire others through project-based hands-on classes and workshops. It will become the regional destination for creative "makers" of all ages.

The Estey Labs will not only boost skills and sponsor inventiveness, it also keeps the Estey legacy of practical invention alive with an intelligent, interactive program for family members of all ages. It has the power to make connections between generations, as knowledge and experience combine with enthusiasm and energy.

The Estey Labs Plan

Using the Estey Organ Museum and the original Estey factory buildings as the backdrop, instructors will lead students through do-it-yourself (DIY) projects and associated skill building workshops. There will be opportunities for beginners, amateurs, hobbyists, semi-pros and professionals.

A core curriculum will be developed to provide basic mastery of skills (like soldering) so that students can be prepared for advanced topics (such as building circuits). Specialty classes (build a telescope) would also be available as opportunities arise.

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The goal is to bring the Estey factory spaces alive with invention once again. The Labs will provide excellent collaborative space for those willing to share their expertise. Skills gained by students will expand and elevate the available technical and creative expertise in the region. Projects will allow experimentation using science, math, logic, physics, chemistry, art, construction, and other disciplines.

Ideally, people using the Labs will be inventing things - new forms of musical instrument, power generation, transportation, and so on. The Estey Labs will attract like-minded tinkerers to a creative beehive of activity in Vermont.

At its core, the Labs will be a creative space that the community can use to reinvent

Educational Projects Galore

The Estey Labs will honor the legacy of the Estey Organ Company, starting with a hands-on instrument and music making activities. Under the guidance of instructors, kids and grown-ups will be exploring creative approaches to making musical sounds and instruments.

In June, the Estey Labs will be at the **Strolling of the Heifers** with a parade float and an activity tent where hand-made instruments of recycled materials, decorated steel barrels, and musical performances will be featured.



Instruments from recycled materials

You can celebrate one of Brattleboro's greatest inventors (and Governor) on August 4th with **Make! Tune! Play! - The 2nd Annual Levi Fuller Extravaganza**. Using recycled materials, participants will make improvised instruments tuned to a standard pitch of A435, originally proposed by Levi Fuller over 100 years ago.

In September, the labs become busy as Super Saturdays kick off.

Ethnomusicologist Dennis Waring will lead two-hour **instrument-making workshops** from 10 am to noon each Saturday from the 8th through the 29th. Parents and children will work together to build a real musical instrument to play and take home with them. Look for chances to build a banjo from a box, stretch your own drumhead to build, decorate and tune a rawhide drum, create your own xylophone, and make your own flute from a tube.

On Saturday afternoons in early September, musical maestro Ned Phoenix will lead learners on an exploration of **Organs as Sound Machines**. Participants will learn how and why organs make sound, create original musical pieces using organs, then perform improvised pieces for one other.

Les Nicholas, a pioneer in the development of electronic organs and former Estey employee, will present afternoon workshops covering **Basic Electronics** and practical theory. Students will build working circuits and be treated to an inside look at the history of electronics.

September 30th is **Estey Day**, celebrating the birthday of the founder of the Estey Organ Company, Jacob Estey. Cake and performances at the Engine House.

This fall, looking for special days devoted to an expanded array of projects.

Cynthia Parker-Houghton will be helping you **make a limberjack** - a traditional dancing puppet on a stick.

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Estey Pipe Organ in Windham Orchestra Concert

by *Kimi Hasegawa*

The venerable Estey organ of Brattleboro's First Baptist Church (Opus 300) will be featured in the Windham Orchestra's concert "Community" on Sunday, March 25 at 3 pm in the Latchis Theatre. Organist James Wallace will join the orchestra in Camille Saint Saëns' Symphony No. 3 in C minor, nicknamed the "Organ Symphony."

The Estey organ, located two blocks up Main Street from the orchestra and audience in the Latchis Theater, will participate in the concert with real time audio and video streaming. Such a technological feat could not even have been imagined in 1909 when the Estey organ Opus 300 was built as a gift to the Baptist Church from Julius and Jacob Estey in memory of their father General Julius Jacob Estey.

Organist James Wallace, music director at The Putney School, received his undergraduate degree at Pacific Lutheran University where he majored in church music and organ performance. Currently Wallace is building an organ at the Putney School.

As part of the Windham Orchestra's collaboration with the First Baptist Church, the concert audience will be invited to join orchestra members in supporting the church's Overflow Homeless Shelter. Other collaborations include works from the Arts Council of Windham County's Student Art Month, and the presentation of this year's winner of the Windham Orchestra Concerto Competition for area high school students. Dorian Elgers-Lo, a senior at the Amherst (MA) Regional High School will perform the Prokofiev Piano Concerto No. 1 in D flat major, Op. 10.

This concert is made possible by contributions from Sovernet Communications, the McKenzie Family Charitable Trust, and Douglas Cox, violinmaker, who sponsors the Concerto Competition.

The Orchestra is pleased to offer members of the Estey Organ Museum a **discount on advance ticket sales** for this concert. Present your EOM membership card at the Brattleboro Music Center office to receive general admission tickets for \$10 and senior and student tickets for \$5. Tickets at all other ticket outlets and at the door are \$15 for adults and \$10 for students and seniors.

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Eric Newquist and Rolf Parker-Houghton will present a program of practical produce propulsion, and help you **build a catapult** for that cantaloupe you've been thinking of flinging.

Cynthia and Rolf Parker-Houghton will present a workshop on how to **make floating jack o'lanterns**.

The Estey Labs will also be home to other special guest presentations, performances, and special events.

As time goes on, the variety and number of projects and programs will grow. Community members with special talents will be encouraged to propose hands-on projects, events, and workshops that they'd like to lead. The Labs will provide a structure so experts can profit from sharing skills, and students can get a top-notch hands-on education in useful technologies.

The Estey Labs hopes to attract and develop projects relating to important community issues such as sustainable energy, transportation, art, food, and manufacturing.

Get Involved

You can get involved. There are opportunities for volunteers to assist, donations of Lab materials and equipment are needed, and advice is welcome and appreciated. If you have an idea for something you could demonstrate or teach, or would like to show off what you're making, get in touch. This project is a bit like the story of Stone Soup... the program can only improve with your contributions and efforts.

Sign-up for upcoming classes will be available soon at esteyorganmuseum.org

Upcoming Estey Organ Museum Events

June 2 – **Strolling of the Heifers** will feature the Estey Organ Museum parade float and a special Estey Labs tent with instrument-making at the expo on the Common. All day.

July 4 – **Brattleboro Goes Fourth** parade at 10 a.m. sharp on Brattleboro's historic Main Street features the Estey Museum float.

August 4 – **Make! Tune! Play! - The 2nd Annual Levi Fuller Extravaganza** at the Engine House.

September 30 - **Estey Day** - an annual celebration of Jacob Estey's birthday

Schedule a private tour of the Estey Organ Museum's Engine House by calling 802-246-8366.

Your generosity is greatly appreciated. Please consider making a tax-deductible donation today.

SPECIAL NOTES:

~ Make a donation to the new Estey Labs program today!

~ You can give a gift membership to the Estey Organ Museum any time of the year!

~ The museum's web site is being updated to better serve our members.

Watch for improvements at esteyorganmuseum.org

~ *Thank you for your support!*

Address Service Requested

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