

MEETING — SUNDAY, APRIL 19, 3:00 PM

TOM ALDERMAN, AT ROSWELL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

**THE EARLY DAYS OF THE
THEATRE ORGAN**
By Phillip Allen



About the artist... Tom Alderman is a home-grown Georgia native and hails from Savannah where he first developed his taste and love of the organ. As a growing musician, Tom was fortunate to earn his Bachelor of Music Degree in Organ Performance from Shorter College. Moving to the Atlanta area, he remembers the thrill of hearing the Mighty Mo at The Fox Theatre for the very first time, fell in love with the sound, and immediately began to learn and add the style of Theatre Organ playing to his repertoire. Tom has had the wonderful opportunity to serve many great churches in the Atlanta area as Organist; from Roswell Street Baptist Church in Marietta, to Second Ponce de Leon Baptist Church in Atlanta to his current position at Roswell United Methodist Church – leading in worship from the organ has been one of the joys of his life. Since 1987, Tom, along with his wife Pam and their family, have been active members of Roswell United Methodist Church where he has served as the Organist/Music Associate. He also played a major role in the design of the five-manual 94-rank Möller Pipe organ which was installed in the new Sanctuary in 1989. As a popular organ concert musician and organ consultant, Tom's warmth and fun spirit can be easily heard through his wonderful musicianship and incredible touch at the

console. Having played many varied types of programs over the years, we truly look forward to the opportunity to enjoy his Theatre Organ stylings for our upcoming April meeting, drawing from his love and appreciation of Mighty Mo. Tom has a genuine love for both people and music-making; he is quite a joy and a pleasure to both meet and know as a person. Don't miss hearing this very fine musician and enjoying the music he has planned just for us!



About the instrument... M.P. Möller Opus No. 11788 . . . When the Roswell United Methodist Church voted in 1986 to construct a new house of worship, it was determined that a new organ would be needed to lead the congregation in worship services. An Organ Task Force was appointed to study these needs and recommend an organ builder. After traveling from coast to coast hearing new instruments and visiting several organ facilities, the Task Force unanimously recommended that the new RUMC organ be constructed by the M.P. Möller Company of Hagerstown, Maryland. The main organ facade pipes were installed for Palm Sunday 1989, with the remainder of the installation being completed during the summer of 1989 by Möller's representative George Miller. The organ was first played for the dedication of the new Methodist Hymnal on August 27, 1989 and

dedicated November 5, 1989. The tonal specifications of the instruments were drawn up by Tom Alderman, in collaboration with Dr. Ronald Ellis, President of Möller, and Daniel Angerstein, Tonal Director of Möller (who also voiced the organ). The Roswell United Methodist Church Möller organ contains 94 ranks of pipes divided into six divisions totaling 5,300 pipes, plus a chime set of 25 bells and a Zimbelstern of 11 bells. The entire organ is controlled from a massive console of five manuals, which also controls a separate Allen MIDI Voice Expander unit. The console and organ casework are handcrafted from walnut; the 61 keys of each of the five manuals are made of bone, overlaid on walnut. The 122 drawknobs are hand-carved walnut inlaid with white maple and engraved in dark brown. Toe studs and all other metal items on the console are brushed brass. The antiphonal division in the rear balcony houses 10 ranks, including the horizontal trumpets (en chamade). These are made of polished bronze and are voiced to be heard above the full organ sound, to highlight festival occasions and grand processions. Interestingly, one can hear very strong similarities when comparing certain stops and sounds from this 1980's Möller to the 42-rank 1929 Möller residing down on Peachtree Street; they both have that distinctive "Möller voice."

About the program... Tom truly knows and understands what a Theatre Organ audience expects and enjoys – having put together quite a wide variety of selections built around the theme of *The Early Days of the Theatre Organ*. He has promised that he has a few surprises and a couple of "tricks" up his sleeves to keep all of us entertained and delighted. Come and experience one of the finest Organists in the Southeastern U.S. playing one of the very last large pipe organs that came out of the Möller shop in Hagerstown before they ceased to exist and went bankrupt in 1992.

**Directions to Roswell UMC
on page 4**

**Atlanta Chapter,
American Theatre Organ Society**

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www.theatreorgans.com/georgia/atlanta/atos/

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Vice President - Phillip Allen

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Associate Editor - Wanda Carey Fields

Chapter Correspondent - Rick McGee

***How often do we have a staff
organist from Radio City in
Georgia!? By John Hutchinson***

Cumming First United Methodist in Cumming, GA hosts its second Annual Arts Festival the week of April 19-26. Art exhibits are open daily from 1-8 pm. Concert artists include the David Brothers Jazz Combo on Monday, April 20 at Noon (free) and strings from Chamber Music Atlanta on Wednesday, April 22 at Noon (free.)

Special Concerts feature organist Robert MacDonald on April 22nd at 8 pm. in *A Night at Radio City* accompanying *Duck Soup* and *Wrong Again* starring Laurel and Hardy and in a concert of light classics on Friday April 24th at Noon. Both concerts are free.

A graduate of Boston University and the New England Conservatory of Music,

Bob MacDonald holds Bachelor and Master of Music degrees in Organ Performance as well as the Associate degree of the American Guild of Organists. Bob served as Associate Organist - Choir Director at the Riverside Church in New York City, from 1969-1977. Concurrently he was Director of Music and Organist at The Interchurch Center in New York City. From 1977 — 1989, Bob served as Director of Music and Organist at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Newark, New Jersey while also being a staff organist at Radio City Music Hall. Bob served as Organist - Choir Director of the First Presbyterian Church in Fort Worth, Texas from 1989 until his retirement in 2007.

For details contact John Hutchinson at jhutchinson@cfumcga.com or call 678-516-9329.

*Ads or announcements for this newsletter:
Contact Elbert Fields at 770-435-7340 or
elfields@yahoo.com*

***STRAND FILM SERIES AND
USE OF ALLEN DIGITAL
ORGAN BIG SUCCESS!***

By Ron Carter

The use of the digital Allen organ for the Strand film series and other shows has been well received by Strand patrons and management. The use of the organ was a topic of discussion at the March Friends of the Strand Board meeting. Several board members told Ron Carter (Secretary for the Board and Strand Organ Project Chair) that they had heard many favorable comments from friends and patrons of the theatre

about the pre-show concerts and sing-alongs. One Board member, a Marietta City Official, emphasized the organ brings a uniqueness to the theatre that no other venue in Cobb has to offer. She was also present at the February chapter program, where we had 400 in attendance, and stated she thoroughly enjoyed it — particularly the silent film! If you have not attended one of the movies put it on your schedule. Come early and eat at one of the many restaurants around the square.

Here is the schedule for April with the organ pre-show starting at 7:30 pm: Thursday April 2nd 8 pm, *Man On Wire*;

Friday April 3rd 8 pm *Jaws*; Saturday April 4th 3 pm *Sound of Music* (with a tour of the organ slide show and lobby demo for the kids); Saturday April 4th 8 pm *Back to the Future*; April 5th 3 pm *Casablanca*; April 10th 3 pm *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* (a tour of the organ slide show and lobby demo for the kids); April 10th 8 pm *To Kill a Mockingbird*; April 11th 3 pm ET (a tour of the organ slide show and lobby demo); April 11th 8 pm *King Kong* (the 1933 version).

Doug McKinney, award winning film historian, will introduce many of the films in this series.

***STRAND ORGAN
PROJECT UPDATE***

***by Ron Carter,
Strand Project Chairman***

Several of us continue working each week on various components of the Wurlitzer and Robert Morton Organs. Slug has finished going through all of the Wurlitzer pipes and has cleaned all of them. Several will need some minor soldering repairs. He also has put a coat of shellac on the Tibia and Flute manual ranks. They look like new. He is now going through all of the Robert Morton pipes cleaning them. Slug has also made several repairs to some of the offset wood pedal pipes that were split. The RM Post Horn and Oboe Horn are in excellent condition and look almost new. Larry Davis has finished re-leathering the RM post horn chest and is

now working on the third swell shade motor actions. I just completed a complete re-leathering of the 2nd swell shade motors replacing all the leather on the primaries and secondaries, and adding new leather to the valves. It was tested and worked like a charm. We are now beginning work on some of the 16' pedal wood pipes and actions. Elbert has helped in cleaning some of the larger pedal pipes.

We have a little over \$7,000.00 left in our account and need another \$35,000 or so to finish this project. If you have not contributed please do so now and if you know of any prospects-businesses, individuals that we could send our new updated brochure (completely designed and developed by Phillip and Mandy Allen) please let me know. Our biggest expenditure in the

next few months will be for the electronic relay (\$15,000). A BIG HEARTFELT THANKS to John (Grumpy) Tanner who has purchased several Wurlitzer chests, tremulants, reservoirs and tremulants which he is donating to the Chapter for use in the Strand Organ Project. These were restored several years ago and we are in hopes that they can be cleaned up, minor repairs made and put into service. This will save us hundreds of hours of time and thousands of dollars! Thanks so much John!

We are still waiting to hear back from the Spencer blower company on when their factory tech will be in our area so that we can get the blower dismantled and moved to the theatre.

Salon Music in the Elliott Style

by John Clark McCall, Jr.

I couldn't help but recall my friend Mimi Platter's reminiscence of old Atlanta days when I heard the first strains of Chris Elliott's *King Kong March* at the Reddish RTO Walker on Sunday, March 22. Mimi's grandfather, Oscar Pappenheimer, was a noted Atlanta physician and music devotee who lived in a stately columned home at Ponce de Leon and Piedmont Avenues which later became the Ponce de Leon Infirmary. A music *salon* with a pipe organ and two Steinway concert grand pianos provided a place for music of the highest order featuring Atlanta's finest turn-of-the-century artists. Many of these artists later became principals with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra.

As Christian moved on to Jerome Kern's immortal *All The Things You Are*, I was struck by this contemporary parallel to those early Atlanta days. Right here, in this house, was some of the finest music you will ever hear, masterfully played by possibly one of the most *musical* maestros to ever grace a horseshoe console, and being delivered by an instrument with not one real pipe in site. It was a landmark afternoon for our chapter, and for many reasons.

Our host, Bucky Reddish, generously co-funding many of the venues that have brought top-flight artists to this superb instrument, has assembled a veritable "who's who" in the theatre organ world since the installation of his Walker organ. And among them, Chris Elliott easily represents one of the most visceral, yet exacting organists. His approach never turns its back on the importance of the music itself. Though technically right there with the best of his contemporaries, the fact that he can do a fingered glissando at lightning speed or a pedal line that becomes a blur is very secondary to his respect for the composer's original intent. From rich ensembles to the haunting meandering of a solo line on the Walker's Skinner-sampled orchestral flute, listeners were never confused about where Chris Elliott was going musically. And the results were pure joy.

It is important to also note that the



architecture of his program material was just as extraordinary. I don't recall any concert I have heard personally that did a better job of displaying the astounding versatility of this instrument we so admire. When an artist can move easily from the show music of Rodgers and Hammerstein—as in his medleys from *The King and I* and *My Fair Lady*—to a composition by Robert Schumann originally conceived for the pedal pianoforte (*Sketch In F-Minor*), the listener is left with the proposition that the theatre organ is truly perhaps the most versatile instrument extant.

Mr. Elliott will quickly tell you that his success has been honed and polished by some of the greats in the field, including Richard Purvis (whose composition, *Night In Monterey* he included), Lyn Larsen, Walt Strony, and Gaylord Carter. But when you hear an Elliott concert, you are immediately struck by the innate soul of this organist. His elegance and sophistication would have Cole Porter eating out of his hand! And, this concert served up a generous sample of the witty and melodic tunes that only Cole Porter could have penned: *From This Moment On*, *Night and Day*, *Easy to Love*, and *Just One of Those Things*.

He didn't forget the theatre organ as a novelty either. *Turkish Towel*, a musical diversion inherited from Lyn Larsen, was delightfully delivered using — you guessed it — the very appropriate kinura rank as its main spokesperson. And while on the subject of Larsen, his own composition, *Stanley* received a sensitive and engaging rendition.

There was a place in the program for a sacred moment as well. Chris counted the great arranger, composer, and yes—theatre organist—Fred Bock as a good friend. His untimely passing led many important musicians to assemble a book of musical arrangements and compositions in his honor. Mr. Elliott's contribution was an unforgettable study on

the great hymn-tune, *I Would Be True*. It very quietly and poignantly pointed to Chris' long-time association with sacred music and his talents in arranging. The Walker calmed accordingly and, at the hymn's end, left the audience wanting to acknowledge what had just unfolded, but applause seemed so out of place. And there were equally sparkling other offerings including a stirring British march by Charles Shadwell: *Down With the Curtain*.

I always take pride in witnessing the way we embrace these "top tier" organists. I've never heard a warmer reception and then, all too soon, it was time to end the concert with a guaranteed barn-burner: Paul's *The Burning of Rome*. Many of you will remember George Wright's inclusion of this on one of the Dot-Hamilton LP's made on the Pasadena studio Wurlitzer. Personally, I have enjoyed this only in recorded form (for over forty years!). It was a singular treat to hear this performed live, and on an instrument that I dare say comes very close to what many consider the finest recording organ George ever played.

Chris' encore was the beloved *That's Entertainment* from the M-G-M musical, *The Band Wagon*. It certainly represented what this musical journey was all about. Perhaps that is one of the reasons for the longevity of this ingenious music machine and its most recent reincarnations; it really does entertain! It is majestic, it is visual, it can bring humor and pathos, and even spirituality. And it can interpret—in the hands of a master like Chris Elliott—all *good* music that is put before it.

So here we find ourselves, in 2009, enjoying the best of the theatre organ in the *salon* of a private residence where the organ and the artist could rival any major theatre. We are, indeed, a spoiled lot. Thank you, Bucky Reddish and Chris Elliott for indulging us!



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**Directions to Roswell UMC,
814 Mimosa Blvd., Roswell, GA 30075**

From Interstate 285

Go north on Georgia 400 to Northridge, Exit 6. Turn right at the top of the ramp, and make an immediate sharp right turn onto Dunwoody Pl. Go about two miles and turn right onto Roswell Rd. Cross the river and continue about a mile. (Roswell Rd. changes names to S. Atlanta St. after crossing the river.) At the light, turn left onto Marietta Rd. and take an immediate right onto Mimosa Boulevard. Roswell UMC is the second church on the left.

From Marietta

Go east on Highway 120 (Roswell Road) to Historic Roswell Square. Just approaching the square, turn left onto Mimosa Blvd. Roswell UMC is the second church on the left.

Enter at the driveway next to the Chapel (which faces Mimosa) and proceed down the hill, park behind the Main Sanctuary and enter at the large sets of double-doors which face the rear parking lot.

Thanks for the Donations

Mara & Jim Loftin
Bob McKoon
James Thrower

Bucky says "Thank You"

to the following for all their invaluable help at the March Meeting: Tom Cannon, Svetlana Satterlee, Betty Anderson, Mike Knight, Ted Barnett, Fercho Reneifo, David Nolte and James Thrower.

Upcoming Meetings & Events (Mark your Calendars)

- April 19, 3:00 pm, Meeting, *The Early Days of the Theatre Organ* featuring Tom Alderman playing a concert of theatre organ music and light orchestral transcriptions on the 1989 5/94 Möller sanctuary pipe organ at Roswell United Methodist Church
- April 22, 8 pm — Cumming First UMC, *A Night at Radio City*, Robert McDonald accompanying *Duck Soup* and *Wrong Again* starring Laurel and Hardy. Free
- April 24, Noon Friday — Cumming First UMC, Robert McDonald in a concert of light classics. Free
- May 17, 3:00 pm, Meeting, "Third Sunday of May the 17th on the McKoon Allen 3/17" featuring regional theatre organist Gene Stroble from Jacksonville, Florida at the new residence of Bob McKoon.
- May 17, Larry Davis playing the 4/32 Forker Memorial Organ for the Manasota Theatre Organ Society
- May 24, 5:00 pm, Patriotic Concert at Mt. Bethel United Methodist Church, Larry-Douglas Embury, organ. Admission-free, but an offering will be taken.
- No June meeting — Attend the ATOS convention in Cleveland, OH, June 30—July 6

Atlanta Chapter, ATOS - Membership Application

Name _____ Phone _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State/ZIP _____ Email _____
 Do you own an organ? _____ If so, description _____

Meetings are held monthly, usually on the 3rd Sunday afternoon. Annual membership dues \$35 (Student \$17.50). **Please make check payable to Atlanta Chapter, ATOS.** Mail this application and your check to: Wanda Carey Fields, 413 Concord Road SW, Smyrna, GA 30082-4509