

***MARTIN ELLIS AT THE ALABAMA THEATRE IN BIRMINGHAM  
FEBRUARY 15TH, 2015 — 3:00 PM CST  
JOINT MEETING WITH BIRMINGHAM CHAPTER AGO***

Our February 2015 program/meeting will be a joint venture with the Birmingham Chapter of the AGO featuring Martin Ellis at the Alabama Theatre, 1817 Third Avenue North, Birmingham AL (205-252-2262) at 3:00 pm CST Sunday, February 15th. Because this is a "chapter meeting" and not a "public" concert, there will be no concessions.

Martin is a native of Indiana; he began his musical training at an early age with a beginning interest in the piano. Music has been an integral part of Martin's environment as far back as he can remember, and since that time has taken many dimensions. As a teenager, he began classical organ study with the professor of organ and theory at Manchester College in North Manchester, Indiana. During this time, he gained experience playing for services in a variety of denominations and churches. In addition, he was active in school music programs, providing accompaniment for various choirs and playing in jazz, concert, and marching bands.

Moving up to the Indianapolis area, Mr. Ellis began classical organ study at DePauw University while still a highschool student. Theatre organ training soon followed, and while continuing to be involved in church music, Martin became active in the American Theatre Organ Society, winning first prize in local competitions and going on to become overall winner of the first prestigious ATOS Young Organist competition in 1985.

In addition to local concerts and programs, Martin has



performed at the Chicago Theatre, the Patio Theatre and the Bethesda Cinema for national ATOS events.

In 1986, Martin began attending DePauw University as a keyboard performance major. During college, Martin not only established himself as a consummate soloist, but was also head accompanist for the DePauw Choirs, touring to Carnegie Hall and Williamsburg, Virginia. He was active as a vocal coach to the voice department and assistant conductor for three opera/musical theatre productions produced by the DePauw School of Music.

Martin's performance awards include winning the local American Guild of Organists' Young Artist Competition and placing second in the Region V Competition, and placing first in the Arts Council of Indianapolis' Young Artist Competition.

In recent years, Martin has been active with the music program

of Second Presbyterian Church, and has performed numerous organ and choral/organ works in concert during his eight years there. His concert career has taken him to perform at Westminster Abbey, London as well as playing in numerous churches throughout the Midwest area and Indianapolis. Martin has performed and recorded with the Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra and nationally with the Trio con Brio organ trio with Donna Parker and Jonas Nordwall. He has been a regular theatre organ soloist in both the Chicago and Indianapolis areas for the last ten years, and most recently moved on to pursue classical and theatre organ venues in the Portland area. Martin recently accepted a position as Music Director at St. James Lutheran Church in Portland, and is now a resident of this area.

***About the organ...*** The Alabama Theatre Pipe Organ is Wurlitzer Opus 1783. The legendary theatre organist, Jesse Crawford, laid out its design for use in deluxe venues for Publix Theatres, thus the designation by Wurlitzer as Style Publix. Its basic design included 4 manuals (keyboards), 20 ranks (sets of pipes), 8 sets of tuned percussion units, and all the sound effects needed to accompany silent movies. Twelve additional ranks of pipes have been added to expand the tonal capabilities of the organ, making a total of 32 ranks (2336 pipes).

**Atlanta Chapter,  
American Theatre Organ Society**

P.O. Box 426  
Marietta, Georgia 30061-0426  
770-428-4091  
[www.atosatlanta.org](http://www.atosatlanta.org)  
[www.facebook.com/ATOSAtlanta](http://www.facebook.com/ATOSAtlanta)

*AC/ATOS is recognized as a tax-exempt organization under  
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Treasurer - Rick McGee  
Secretary - Randy Cobb  
Newsletter Editor - Elbert Fields  
Chapter Correspondent - Larry Davis

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

***Thanks for the  
Contributions***

Randy & Betty Anderson  
Paul & Janis Beavin  
Tom & Tannis Blackwell  
Bud Blubaugh & Ken Seiders  
Denson Buttrey  
Jack Corbin  
John Delk  
Ken Double  
Don Eckles  
Jay Mitchel  
John Moore  
Brad Sorano

***A NOTE FROM ONE OF OUR  
NEWEST MEMBERS:***

***December 29, 2014***

***Thank you for some good  
memories. You all are a grand  
group of talented people and I  
feel so honored to know you.***

***Thanks for sharing your  
beautiful musical gifts with the  
world.***

***With Love,  
Myra***



***President's  
Note...***

We are headed to Birmingham! Some people may ask, "Why should we travel afield for organ experiences?" Well, because there are some wonderful pipe organs within a relatively short drive that all of you should have the opportunity to experience. The Tivoli in Chattanooga and its original Wurlitzer that was the surprise of the 2013 convention; the Rylander in Americus and its unique Möller organ, the child of our own John Tanner and a gift of our own James Thrower. But the Mighty Wurlitzer at the Alabama is an instrument deservedly famous worldwide, cared for by our friends of the Alabama Chapter. The magnificent Alabama Theatre is called the Showplace of the South for good reason, and if you haven't visited there before – or even if you have – this will be a very special opportunity to see the theatre and to hear this organ in the hands of a master.

It occurred to me that when I encouraged all of you to consider becoming a part of our national organization that you may just not know what all ATOS is accomplishing, so I've asked Ken Double to write us an

occasional column to keep you informed.

And with respect to the aforementioned **Ken Double**, I want to acknowledge all he has contributed to the chapter and our efforts over the years he has been here. When the prospect and interest in hosting a national convention has all but evaporated, he sparked a renewed interest, inspired potential participants, and we ended up hosting one of the most successful conventions in recent years – both an artistic success and financial success. We are an entirely different chapter because of that convention including the virtual completion of the Page Organ and its transformation into a fabulous instrument. He has worked tirelessly to promote use of the Tivoli organ in Chattanooga and citizens of that city are more aware than they have been in years of the presence and importance of the Wurlitzer. Those are only a sample of Ken's successes here in his home state. Ken's efforts are nationwide but he has become important beyond measure to our chapter and our endeavors.

Stay in touch,

***Larry Davis***



***THE EARL SMITH STRAND THEATRE  
LAUNCHES 2015 OFF A HIT-FILLED 2014***

The Earl Smith Strand Theatre is geared up for another year of diverse entertainment following an especially fun-filled 2014 that included a number of sell-out shows to end the year.

Located on the Marietta Square, the theater sold out seats for many performances of the extraordinarily well-performed and well-received, "A Christmas Tradition." On New Year's Eve, the theater was fully booked for the Stones Tribute Concert.

The theater also enjoyed a sell-out return visit of Departure, considered the most respected Journey tribute band in the nation, and the touring company of *Menopause the Musical* played to seven sold-out shows.

Over the seven-week holiday period, The Strand saw over 10,000 patrons for public shows as well as for private events and Christmas parties.

The Strand also had a very successful opening of the Lumière Lounge & Piano Bar, which is styled after those of the silent-films era. Open to the public Friday and Saturday nights with no cover charge, the Lumière features "hometown honey" in a hand-crafted cocktail drink menu by local bartender and singer/songwriter, Chad Yochum.

Upcoming calendar events include auditions for the Strand Academy, movie screenings, a number of options for Valentine's weekend, concerts, and much more. The calendar is found at <http://earlsmithstrand.org/calendar/>.

## THE PAGE WELCOMES AN OLD FRIEND BACK !!!!

Sunday, January 25th, 2015, at 3:00 pm, and we are gathered at Stephenson High School for an afternoon of music with one of our (heard all too seldom) members, Mr. Jim Wingate.

Our returning president, Larry Davis, opened the meeting with news of recent events, items of interest to the membership, and then a great introduction of our artist for the afternoon.

Imagine – a printed program and notes for the audience – a pro touch from a professional artist – Mr. Jim Wingate !

The console riser (we actually have a console on a lift) – Gershwin’s “Strike Up the Band” set things and the audience in motion....

Next, a selection not recently heard, the smooth ballad “Misty” from the pen of Erroll Garner.

Then, a bright seasonal nod with “I Saw Three Ships” as arranged by Richard Elliott (now the principal organist at the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City.)

A surprise selection to demonstrate the brass of the Page, the great selection



from Copeland, “Fanfare for the Common Man” had the full orchestral treatment offered.

A group of tunes for the next section:

First, “September Song” from the pen of Kurt Weill let us hear a variety of ensembles from the Page, and then “Till There Was You” from ‘The Music Man’ gave us solo voices to listen to and “Just a Spoon Full of Sugar” and “Feed the Birds” from Disney’s ‘Mary Poppins,’ had mental pictures from the film springing to mind.

Next, an excerpt from “The Return of the King” from the film score for ‘Lord of the Rings’ by Howard Shore let us share in the orchestral capabilities the Page can muster up!!

Two selections not usually featured at a theatre organ concert,

“National Hymn” by George Warren, and “Come Sunday” from Duke Ellington, gave us new perspectives on tunes that need more exposure. Good arrangements, solid playing.

Now, for the Sunday nod:

“How Great Thou Art” a traditional Swedish melody that was adapted in 1956 for a sacred song most would swear was at least a hundred years old, and still a favorite of many, led us to hear “Gabriel’s Oboe” that Jim swiped and hid in the Page chambers. “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” spirited us away in fine gospel fashion !

As a closer, a march is always a good thing, and the Page Band under the direction of Major Wingate, sent us on with “The Washington Post,” a favorite from the Sousa march camp!

Thanks, Jim! Don’t be so long in coming back again !!

Goodies in the Commons area of the school, open console, time to visit and spread rumors – what else could you ask for on a Sunday afternoon in January !!!

Offered by **Biz E. Body**, a completely unbiased (and still full) ear! Remember, the walls / chambers, and spies have ears!!

## THE WELL-VERSED WURLITZER

She’s undergone many changes over the past few years, but “Big Bertha” just keeps getting better with time. The 87-year-old Wurlitzer organ has grown to 32 ranks from its original Publix 1 (20 rank) specification, based on valuable guidance from the late Tom Hazelton. With the recent help of Lyn Larsen and Tom Helms, the organ’s current specification has been painstakingly voiced and regulated to produce a thrilling ensemble.

The Atlanta Chapter’s very own Rick McGee was no stranger to the bright red and gold console of the Alabama Theatre’s Mighty Wurlitzer, having played many prior engagements there in the past, but this was his first turn at the newly-expanded and voiced instrument. The result was a journey



Photo by Michael Anderson

across the decades and through the many voices of the beloved “Big Bertha” on the afternoon of Sunday, January 11. Both the instrument and the musical selections were explored in their entirety – meaning the inclusion of those all-too-often-omitted verses.

Rick proved that you can take the organist out of Atlanta, but you can’t the Atlanta out of the organist. He expertly coached the Wurlitzer into believing it was a Möller for a handful of selections – paying tribute to “Mighty Mo” at

the Atlanta Fox and organists Iris Vining, Bob Van Camp, and Hector Olivera. The performance was enthusiastically received by the Birmingham audience, while the “roadies” who made the short trip from Atlanta to be part of the occasion felt right at home. Despite the Alabama Chapter referring to the event as their “December Meeting”, Rick resisted the urge to reprise a few Christmas tunes, having played more than his share of them for the past two months.

The reunion of organ and organist was long overdue and concluded with the musical promise of “I’ll Be Seeing You”. It was a splendid afternoon in the surreal surroundings of the historical Alabama Theatre, and, likewise, we truly look forward to Rick McGee’s return once more to the console of Birmingham’s “Big Bertha”.

*The Foxy Vox*

**STRAND MOVIES WITH ORGAN POPS PRE-SLOWS**

Come support the Earl Smith Strand Theatre as it features the Atlanta Chapter's Mighty Allen GW-IV Theatre Organ and Chapter organists. Tickets may be purchased by calling the box office at 770-293-0080 or on the web at [www.earlsmithstrand.org](http://www.earlsmithstrand.org).

- Friday, February 12th, organ pre-show 7:30 pm, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, organist TBA
- Saturday, February 14th organ pre-show 7:30 pm, *Casablanca*, organist John McCall
- Sunday, February 22nd 3:00 pm organ pre-show & sing-a-long 2:30 pm, *King Vidor's The Big Parade*, organist Misha Stefanuk

**COMING SOON**

By John Tanner

The next issue of the newsletter will contain part one of the last of the articles on Theatres in Georgia that had Pipe Organs.

Needless to say I have accumulated quite a collection of material on Georgia's early 20th century movie theatres. I still will write an article relating to the theatre organ, of which I have several planned, focusing more on the organist that played them. However, for now I will share each



month a photo out of the collection. Anyway, the first photograph is of the Colonial Theatre in Milledgeville Georgia. Although the theatre never had an organ, it does have some interesting trivia. The building is now a pool hall, but the name Colonial is still spelled out

in the tile floor.

Also famed comedy film star Oliver Hardy worked at this theatre as an usher, projectionist, and singer, before going to Jacksonville Florida to start his film career.

**IT'S TIME TO PAY YOUR DUES — DO IT NOW**

Calendar-year 2015 dues of \$35 per household (Students \$17.50) are now due and payable. Article VIII, Section 2 of our By-Laws state "Dues shall become payable on January 1st of each year and shall be paid within the first two months of the year."

Although not stated in the By-Laws, we have made it a practice to consider payments made during the last quarter of the preceding year to apply toward the following calendar year; therefore, if you paid during the last quarter of 2014, you are considered a member for 2015. Please use the Membership Application below noting the instructions and address therein.

**Atlanta Chapter, ATOS - Membership Application**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Do you own an organ? \_\_\_\_\_ If so, description \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Category (check one): \_\_\_\_\_ Patron (\$300 and up) \_\_\_\_\_ Sponsor (\$200 - \$299)

\_\_\_\_\_ Contributor (\$100 - \$199) \_\_\_\_\_ Donor (\$36 - \$99) \_\_\_\_\_ Basic (\$35) \_\_\_\_\_ Student (\$17.50)

Send Newsletter via email: \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

Please make check payable to **Atlanta Chapter, ATOS**

Mail to: Atlanta Chapter, ATOS, Attn: Treasurer, P.O. Box 426, Marietta, GA 30061-0426