

**FEBRUARY PROGRAM - LARRY DAVIS AT THE
GRANDE PAGE OF STEPHENSON HIGH SCHOOL,
SUNDAY JANUARY 12, 2017, AT 3 PM**

Our February program takes us back to ATOS Atlanta's pride and joy in Stone Mountain – the 4/22 Grande Page organ – with a unique program by Larry Davis. While Larry is certainly no stranger to the Grande Page, either inside the chambers or seated at the console, this will be the first program he's presented on the instrument in over six years. In fact, Larry was the one brave soul willing to come forward and play the four-manual console at its debut at Stephenson back in January of 2011. That program also featured the first sounds from the solo chamber at the School. Needless to say, and thanks to the efforts of many, the organ has become a completely different instrument since then. We felt it only fitting to have Larry back for a fun afternoon with a "new" old friend.

About the Artist. Our artist for the month needs no long introduction because he's the president of our organization and has played for several times. He began teaching himself to play the organ at age 12 and was part of the American Theatre Organ Enthusiasts in the 1960's as a young teenager, where he encountered many of our founders. The first theatre organ he played was in the home of Doc and Norma



Larry Davis

Simmons. During his college days, his association with the organization faded but revived after his retirement when he met Ron Carter at a program to promote the restoration of the Strand. He rejoined the organization now called ATOS, and two years later was elected president and served in that position for three years. He has played at the the Strand, the Page, the Tivoli Theatre in Chattanooga, the Capitol Theatre in Macon, the Rylander Theatre in Americus, in Pinellas Park for CFTOS, in Sarasota for the Manasota Chapter, at the Temple Theatre in Mississippi, at the Alabama Theatre, and for the past several years duet organ/piano concerts with John McCall in Tallahassee. He says, "The world of theatre organ is a place where dreams come true, and they certainly have for me."

About the Instrument...
Constructed in 1927 for the WHT

radio studios of the Wrigley Building in Chicago, it was the first of the Page Company's crown jewel four-manual organs. Ultimately arriving in Atlanta in 1977, the instrument was eventually installed in a warehouse owned by Winn Sound and became the center of activity for the Atlanta Chapter. In 1991 the organ was purchased by Walt Winn and donated to the Chapter. After years of planning and with the cooperation of DeKalb County Schools, the current installation at Stephenson High School in Stone Mountain began in 1996.

Originally a 4/15 specification, the organ has been carefully expanded to 22 ranks. The chests, pipework, and percussions have received expert attention and restoration, and the instrument was professionally voiced to its new home last year. The stunning four-manual console has also been completely rebuilt, incorporating new keyboards, stop actions, and the latest relay technology. Ongoing volunteer and professional work continues almost weekly to further refine the organ to maintain its status as a world-class instrument.



Jack Sandow
Photo by Larry Davis

Our long-time chapter member, board member, and Page Project Director Jack Sandow celebrated his 95th birthday at the end of January. We are happy that he is still running around on Saturday mornings with us at the Page and we all congratulate him on arriving at this milestone.

**Atlanta Chapter,
American Theatre Organ Society**

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The Word is out—A comment from Ken Double

By now I am sure the word is out – I have announced my decision to leave the post of President/CE of ATOS. After ten years in the leadership position, it simply is time for a change, both for me personally, and certainly for ATOS. A new message and a new messenger is a good thing for the organization.

I will still be involved, assisting with conventions, chapter issues and special projects where my help might prove valuable.

And I will clearly be active with the Atlanta Chapter, continue playing at the Fox, and doing what I can to continue our chapter's efforts to make great music on the theatre organ, and present it to more and more in our area. I close with my thanks to all of those who have written to me with kind thoughts and wishes for the future.

Ken Double

The Chamber Mouse

crossed the line into Alabama and at first, like Hoke Colburn, didn't think it looked like much - until he arrived at the Alabama Theatre, where he immediately changed his mind. He freely admits that he has rarely been in a place nor seen nor heard an organ so fabulous. And he says he did not know an organ could be played like the artist of the day played the big Wurlitzer. Having seen no theatre cats, he files his report from the String Chamber.

The future of theatre organ as a musical genre is a frequent topic of discussion across the world of those who love the instruments and the music they make. Without doubt, those chapter members from Alabama, Atlanta, and friends from as far away as St. Louis heard – and saw – at least a part of what that future will be when they gathered at the Alabama Theatre in Birmingham to hear Nathan Avakian in concert on the Mighty Wurlitzer.

A great musician – as Mr. Avakian plainly is – can make fine music on any instrument set before him, or in the case of the theatre organ, that he sits before. But there are instruments and there are instruments, and a Stradivarius will enable an exceptional violinist to delight audiences more than an ordinary violin. So it is with the Alabama's legendary Wurlitzer organ. Mr. Avakian remarked that he often feels that he has the sense of operating a mechanical device when playing an instrument but that with Bertha he felt a sense of collaboration,

and he credited the organ crew – deservedly – for making that possible.

So, you may have heard Nathan before, but you have likely not heard him on an instrument with virtually unlimited resources, perfectly suited to his style and creativity. Sunday afternoon was just such an organ and therefore just such an experience. Those who braved the storms – not just rain, but a deluge – in order to make it to the program were without exception glad that they did.

So, before we get to the music, what of this collaboration? What made it so special? Well, the Wurlitzer has some wonderful reeds, solo reeds, color reeds, and Nathan made effective use of them both on-trem and, wonderfully, off-trem, something that is not heard as much as he allowed us to hear them. Then there were the percussions, notably the Vibraharp and the Xylophones. Now the Alabama has two Xylophones, one unenclosed, one enclosed, and Nahan alternated between them in successive sections of work, creating a depth of expression not usually heard. Those were the sorts of things we had those who were there experienced.

And then there was the music. Solo theatre organ, theatre organ with film (we'll get to that) and finally, theatre organ with his signature smartphone accompaniment. Mr. Avakian creates music by technical means (on a computer) by layering digital voices, stores it in his smartphone, and projects it from his smartphone through the theatre sound speakers. He accompanies these tracks or

they accompany him or both. It's genius, it's different, and it's delightful.

And we didn't have to wait for it, for the program opened with "King of New York," from *Newsies*, featuring some of that accompanying accompaniment. Zez Confrey is a favored composer among theatre organ enthusiasts and his "Jack in the Box" followed, with just the organ. Then came an exciting "Slumdog Millionaire," followed by John Barry's beautiful "Somewhere in Time" from the movie of the same name, and in that we heard the beautiful voices and combinations in the Wurlitzer so suited to lyrical music.

"Joy to the World" was the next work but not the one you're thinking of; it was the one by Three Dog Night. Nothing but fun. And can you play the music of Queen on the theatre organ? Well, Nathan can, and it was the tour de force performance of the afternoon. The music of Freddie Mercury and Brian May has never sounded like it sounded in the Alabama that afternoon, along with his accompaniment tracks. And not a small sample, it included "Fat Bottomed Girls," "Crazy Little Thing Called Love," "Don't Stop Me Now," "Killer Queen," "Somebody to Love," "Bohemian Rhapsody," and then a song prophetic for Atlanta Chapter members that afternoon, "We Are the Champions." And the end of this set of songs, the theatre erupted in applause and cheers, indicative that a new age of theatre organ performance is

(Continued on page 3)



President's Message...

This month, I want to talk about the Grande Page Theatre Organ in Stephenson High School. Starting back in 2003, I would come to the high school and meet Jack Sandow – sometimes it was just him and me – and after finishing some work, would spend a couple of hours playing the organ as it was then, two manuals, no combination action, seven incomplete ranks, the old slow relay. And I loved it, sitting there making music, exploring the different sounds that I could extract from those few ranks (or listening to others, especially Jim Wingate, do so). One day after reading some online comments from other people across the country, I became aware how fortunate we were to have that organ and realized that many chapters would have loved to have an instrument like it – just

as it was – and the ready access to it that we have always had at Stephenson High School. And now - and now! – well, a year has passed since Clark and Carlton came to do tonal finishing . We have four manuals and twenty-two ranks; an organ phenomenal enough that we could proudly invite Richard Hills to come play for us. There are many chapters with organs under their care but few are as remarkable or as unique as this one, few chapters have as cooperative a venue as the DeKalb County Schools and Stephenson High School have been with us. We have almost unlimited access to our instrument as long as it doesn't conflict with school activities. I know Stephenson High sometimes seems a long way, but the high school is only about eight minutes off the interstate portion of US 78 and therefore easily accessible. Even from where I live in west Marietta, it only takes me about 45 minutes on Saturday mornings and we have a “back way” that

regulars go that we'll be happy to show you (quicker than GPS). Come and join us to work, come and join us to play, and come and enjoy our programs. It occurs to me that you may say, “But how do I go about this?” Well, usually on Thursday or Friday we get clearance from the school that the auditorium is free and then we notify everyone and those who can come. Sometimes we only work, sometimes we only play, sometimes both. You can always contact me by email as a weekend approaches and find out where things stand – and I'll keep you updated. If you play and you've never played this one, well, you should. It's ours – it's yours. The Grande Page is a treasure, and a long-time dream for our chapter – a dream that has come true due to the efforts and gifts of many. Let's live our dream to the fullest.

Stay in touch,

Larry D

Chamber Mouse.....(Continued from page 2)

Just as exciting as anything we've heard before. And off into the intermission we went, so excited about the music that none ever looked at their phones to see that Atlanta was already well on the way to becoming champions.

After the interval, Nathan introduced an unusual tribute work entitled “We Are Done,” that made one curious for the lyrics. Then, following an amazing story of an actual conversation with the composer himself, he played Dave Brubeck's “Blue Rondo A La Turk.” From the organ to the grand piano – we've seen that done before at the Alabama – and a work that Nathan composed for the wedding of his friends the Schwinn, appropriately, “The Schwinn Song.”

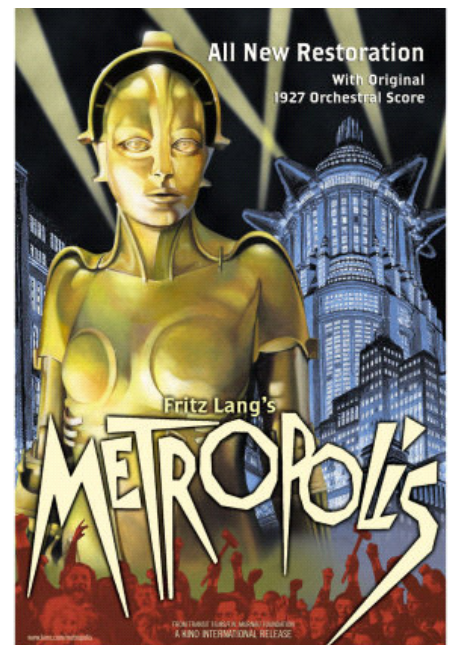
Nathan returned to the grand red and gold console for a most extraordinary part of the afternoon. Some years ago, Nathan was invited to compose some short works that could be used by young film students as a basis for making their own silent films. He undertook to write short scores to fit various topics, and the ones we got to hear were Romance, Sci Fi, Horror, Discovery and Noir, but we weren't just listening. Nathan screened actual films by some of the young filmmakers, and they were just delightful. Nathan now travels worldwide to support the International Youth Film Festival as these events have

come to be known. And as it turns out, the filmmakers construct their works to the music without knowing its origin. Then, at the festival, he brings up the organ and accompanies their festival-honored films live. Thus a new generation of filmmakers is discovering the theatre organ!

At the conclusion of the films, Nathan brought the concert to a close with an appropriately show-stopping, “The Devil Went Down to Georgia.” Who would have believed that a theatre organ could play a foot-stomping, three-chords-and-a-cloud-of-dust bluegrass fiddle tune? Nathan believed it! And did it! And left the audience, and quite possibly himself, breathless.

We hardly dared call for him to play something else but we were not able to resist and he responded with more technical wizardry in “Bumble Boogie.”

Finally we could breathe again, and relax, and revel in the true delight of an afternoon of diverse and very different music. This is part of the future of theatre organ, and we like what we see and hear. “We Are the Champions” closed the first half, but it might well be said, “Nathan, you are a champion,” taking us where no one has been before (maybe we could make a Sci Fi film out of that to some of Nathan's music)..



The Silent Masterpiece Metropolis at the Strand Theatre Marietta GA March 25th 7:30 pm World renown silent film theatre organist Clark Wilson will this epic digitally restored science film accompany using the original 1927 score on the Strand's Mighty Allen Theatre Organ. Tickets are \$15 and \$18. Call the box office at 770-293-0080, or in persons M-F from 11am to 6pm, Sat from 9am to noon or on the web at www.earlsmithstrand.org

Upcoming Meetings & Events (Mark your Calendars)

- Saturday, February 11, 2017, Larry Davis will be playing the organ pre-show at the Strand for the screening of Casablanca
Sunday, February 12, 3 p.m. - Monthly Meeting at Stephenson High School featuring Larry Davis at the 4/22 Grande Page
Sunday, February 19, 2017 at 2:00 pm CST. Free admission John McCall in Concert at the Fred Dove Residence, Warrior Alabama. This concert on Dove's Walker Theatre Organ is sponsored by the Alabama Chapter, ATOS. Contact the artist at jcmcdc@windstream.net for further information.
Saturday, March 25, 7:30 p.m. - Clark Wilson accompanies the 1927 classic Metropolis at the Strand Theatre; ticket details on Page 3

I's Out! John McCall has recorded a new tribute to the big band era on the Forker Memorial Wurlitzer, Grace Church, Sarasota. The CD, entitled Calling Mr. Miller is available through E-Bay or from the artist at jcmcdc@windstream.net (229) 560-7540.

It's Time To Pay Your Dues — Do It Now, Don't Put It Off

Calendar-year 2017 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 2016, you are considered a member for 2017. 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

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