

SUNDAY, JANUARY 20TH, 3 P.M.
Larry Davis at the McKoon's

About the artist... When *Larry Davis* was eleven years old, a previously-undiscovered musical ability surfaced during the Christmas season when he sat down at his aunt's piano and began playing carols, despite having never previously touched a piano. A few months later, his parents bought him a Conn spinet organ (an instrument he still owns). He took a few lessons from the organ salesman and then began to study on his own, learning style and musical ideas from recordings by Jesse Crawford, Les Barnett, and particularly Don Baker. Within a year, at the age of thirteen, he began to perform publicly.

He became a member of the Atlanta Chapter of the then-ATOE, and played his first theatre pipe organ in the mid-1960's at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Simmons. During the late 1960's he alternated between theatre organ, folk guitar, and playing organ in a rock-and-roll band.

In 1969, he entered Emory University and his relationship with ATOE faded. He continued playing organ and piano, however, first as an assistant organist at Roswell Street Baptist Church in Marietta during his early college years.

Then, beginning in 1971, he served for more than thirty years as the organist for the Corvillia Bible Conferences in Florida.



In 1974, he attended his first service at the Mount Paran Church of God, where he encountered the person he says was his next great influence in organ playing – our own Wanda Carey (now Fields). Larry says, "I unashamedly stole everything I could from her, because she was and is quite simply the best gospel organist I have ever heard." In 1976, he became organist for Faith Memorial Assembly of God in Atlanta, where he served until 1982.

After 1982, he began to focus on piano with his musical mentor, the late, legendary concert pianist and composer Merle Maupin.

Music, however, was not all that Larry was doing. From 1973 onward, he was employed by DeKalb County, first as a juvenile officer and later as a member of the Sheriff's Office. He also became a paramedic, working on ambulances serving the metropolitan Atlanta community. In 2003, he retired from DeKalb County, and a few weeks later, attended the Maple Avenue Methodist Church presentation of

*Happy New
Year!*

Ben-Hur with Ron Carter playing the score. Through Ron's encouragement, he re-associated with the world of theatre organ and the Atlanta Chapter, now ATOS, and says, "I have come back to my first and greatest musical love. I am having more fun than I could ever have hoped for."

Larry has served as president of our Atlanta Chapter from 2005 through 2007.

The Organ is an Allen Custom 317. All the speakers are installed in chambers that speak into the living room. These chambers are located above the console. The console is ebony. The organ was expanded to 6 channels from the normal 4 channels on the Allen 317.

Directions to the McKoon's
395 Fairway Court, Newnan, GA
Phone: 770-251-4284

Take I-85 south to Exit 51. Turn left (East) onto Highway 154. Go 2.7 miles to traffic light. Turn right (West on Highway 34) and go 1.4 miles to the next traffic light, Shell station on left. Turn left (south on Sullivan Rd.) and go 1.2 miles to "The Fairways" subdivision on the right. Turn into the subdivision and proceed to house number 395 on the right. This street is a cul-de-sac.

**Atlanta Chapter,
American Theatre Organ Society**

P.O. Box 657
Marietta, Georgia 30061-0657
770-428-4091
www.theatreorgans.com/georgia/atlanta/atos/

*AC/ATOS is recognized as a tax-exempt organization under
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Chapter President - Bucky Reddish
Vice President - Larry Davis
Treasurer - Wanda Carey Fields
Secretary - Tom Robertson
Newsletter Editor - Elbert Fields
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Chapter Correspondent - Rick McGee

2008 Dues Reminder

According to our By-Laws, Article VIII, dues are payable on January 1st and shall be paid within the first two months of the year.

Please, pay your 2008 dues of \$35 (student \$17.50) and don't miss out on any of the wonderful things our chapter has to offer. Members who joined during the last quarter of 2007 are deemed members for 2008. Those who have not renewed by the end of February may be dropped from the newsletter distribution list.

Please make check payable to:

Atlanta Chapter, ATOS and mail to

Wanda Carey Fields, 413 Concord Rd SW, Smyrna, GA 30082-4509

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

Welcome New Members

Melinda & Phillip Allen
770-926-9214
3487 Sabrina Court NE
Marietta, GA 30066-4770

***Atlanta Chapter
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***CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF
THAT THEATRE ORGAN
SOUND*** by John Tanner

Back in the early 1930's if you were sitting wondering if the country would ever get out of the Depression, you could find some relief on the radio. For theatre organ admirers this was a good time.

If you were looking around the radio listings in the Atlanta papers (remember television was still years away), on August 8, 1933, you could have your theatre organ senses stimulated four times a day. If you were to tune in WGST, broadcasting from the Ansley Hotel, at 12 noon you could hear Ann Leaf on the CBS radio network and on that same station right before you went to bed you could hear Bob Hess at the Wurlitzer in the Atlanta Paramount.

If in the morning you preferred listening to WSB, broadcasting

from the top of the Biltmore Hotel, you could hear Jimmy Beers at the Möller Organ in the Fox at 10:45 a.m. If you liked to have your theatre organ music right before bedtime you could tune in at 11:30 p.m. and someone would be at the Wurlitzer in the Georgia (Roxy) theatre.

Most of these programs only lasted about 15 minutes although sometimes they could run 30 minutes, but even so, each day you could get an hours' dose of theatre organ music.

Upcoming article. The Fabulous Fox Möller--the early years.

Also, this year I plan to showcase theatres around the state that had organs. I will also have an article on the early movie theatres (before 1920) in Atlanta and how the music was presented with the film.

From time to time as more information becomes available I will spotlight one of the organists from the early years, so stay tuned.

Closing Chords

Ellen McElvany... Atlanta Chapter member Ellen McElvany, of Conyers passed away on December 16th at Crawford Long Hospital. She is survived by her sister, Elsie McKoon and nephew Bob McKoon both of Newnan and her Scottie terrier.

Tom Phillips... Atlanta Chapter member Tom Phillips passed away on December 2nd. Although Tom was unable to attend meetings, he was a constant supporter and true admirer of the theatre organ.

A Month of Triumph for the Theatre Organ

by Larry Davis

Between the holidays of Thanksgiving and Christmas, theatre organs took center stage (even if located on the left or in orchestra pits) for three important programs by Atlanta Chapter members at theatres in Georgia and Tennessee.

On November 27th, the Mighty Wurlitzer of the Tivoli Theatre in Chattanooga was presented in a public program for the first time in several years. Under the direction of Larry Donaldson and Bert Allee, a dedicated team of volunteers has been caring for the instrument in hopes that public use of the organ would one day re-emerge. Sandy Coulter and Ken Dolberry, who are involved in the management and operation of the theatre for the City of Chattanooga which owns it, have begun to suggest to those using the theatre that the organ be used prior to their shows. Just after Thanksgiving weekend, Ron Carter was notified that the music directors of Grace Academy, a private Christian school in Chattanooga, had expressed interest in having the organ play before their Christmas pageant. Ron and I drove up on the day of the program, arriving just at the end of the program rehearsal, and found the stage full of grammar school program participants of all ages.

The organ had been moved to the orchestra floor under the main chamber. Sitting high upon its platform, the white console dominated the room. Taking his place on the bench, Ron began to play *Jingle Bells* and the kids began to clap and sing and cheer, particularly enjoying the percussions. So impressive was the response that the program directors asked Ron to play during the entire hour the theatre was open before the 7 P.M. start of the program. Ron promptly recruited me to play the first part of the hour. Prior to the program, Bert and Ron did some quick tuning, and soon the organ was sounding like the wonderful Wurlitzer that it is.

The organ was the focus of a lot of attention during the time it was being played, with some standing up to better see the instrument and some coming down to the front to watch and photograph it as it was played. No one presents grand music better than Ron Carter and his closing performance of *O Holy Night* was followed by enthusiastic applause from the audience that filled most of the available seats in the theatre. It was a historic evening for the Tivoli and the Wurlitzer. Our thanks go out to Melissa Ferrel and Kaylan Wells of Grace Academy for giving us this opportunity.

Incidentally, Ron's performance of *O Holy Night* can be viewed on the internet at www.youtube.com under the keywords Ron Carter, Tivoli, theatre, and organ.

Two hours south of Chattanooga is a theatre in which the organ is used before almost every event. That theatre, of course, is the Atlanta Fox, where on Decem-

ber 18, Organist-in-Residence Larry Douglas Embury took to the bench for his second annual "Christmas at the Fox – Larry, Carols, and Mo." After the critical and artistic success of the sold-out event last year, the Fox Theatre once again decided to present the Christmas organ concert – expanded, reorganized, and reserved-seat – as a gift to the people of Atlanta and as a benefit for Toys for Tots and the Atlanta Food Bank. Participating in this year's event were the Atlanta Boy Choir in a repeat appearance, the choirs of Ebenezer Baptist Church and Zion Hill Baptist Church, and the Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus.

Following a welcome by Fox General Manager Allen Vella, the program began with the appearance of Larry Douglas in a long fur coat riding across the stage in a sleigh. The coat came off to reveal a sparkling jacket and the applause and the fun began with a sing-a-long of *Jingle Bells*. Larry was joined by the church choirs, strikingly dressed all in red tops and singing *O Come All Ye Faithful* with a dynamically altered rhythm pattern. More sing-a-longs followed, and then the Atlanta Boy Choir sang *Frosty the Snowman*. As the church choirs joined them for *Let It Snow*, snow began to fall onto both the stage and the audience. The organ descended and the film *Miracle on 34th Street* was received with the typical enthusiasm of a Fox Theatre audience, many of whom evidently had not previously seen the movie.

After the film, Larry Douglas brought the Möller up to concert level playing *The Most Wonderful Time of the Year* and continued with a musical program that included a beautiful *Christmas Song* played directly on the Phantom Piano, a moving rendition of the two versions of *Away in a Manger* on the organ, and several other compositions. The evening concluded with the Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus joining the organ for a rousing *Joy to the World* and *We Wish you the Merriest*.

Once again, the Fox presented to a sold-out house a wonderful evening of entertainment featuring Larry Douglas Embury and the Mighty Möller organ, both favorites of Atlanta audiences.

NEXT MONTH – "A Month of Triumph" continues with John McCall at the Rylander.

Thanks for the Donations

John Nelson
Edd & Norma Simmons

In Memory of Charles Walker

Jack and Claire Sandow
Bert Allee, Jr.



From the WSB Radio History website (<http://wsbhistory.com/index.html>) — Atlanta Chapter member JOHN MOORE, who was at WSB 1964 to 1982. (Thanks to Rick McGee)

John worked his way from a part timer on WSB-FM to become the morning voice of Atlanta radio in the decade of the 1970's after taking over from the popular Bob Van Camp. Known for his "regular guy" approach in his interviews, John talked to every famous person in news and entertainment of the day. PR people knew if they brought anyone to town, the trip was not a success unless their star got in front of a microphone next to John. While John alone was a dominant figure in Atlanta radio, many consider his teaming with the talented Jim Howell to be a stroke of genius. The combo of the two men led to some of the liveliest morning shows ever to air on radio starting in 1977. John would later team with another popular radio figure Garry Kinsey until 1982, when John would leave White Columns along with many other giants of radio like Elmo Ellis.

After leaving WSB, John did a short stint at WRNG. After that, John writes "I went to the first Arizona-waiver station in the market, combining an AM signal from Marietta with an FM from Lagrange. When that sold, I went to Gwinnett and played oldies until I could make the switch to software development. Of all the stations I worked for after WSB, Cox Radio either bought or ran all but the last!

Upcoming Meetings & Events *(Mark your Calendars)*

- **January 20th, 3 P.M.—Meeting, Larry Davis at the McKoon Residence** (see front page)
- February 3rd, 2008 at 2 P.M., Charles Whittaker — Free organ concert at First Presbyterian Church, 1328 Peachtree Street in Atlanta (adjacent to the High Museum). Most of the concert is classical, but he has played a little of his Star Wars/Amazing Grace arrangement that was awesome. Concert preceded by luncheon (optional) for \$8 and lecture in the Berean Room. Reception follows. Call 404 228-7732 for more info or lunch reservations.
- **February 24th, 3 P.M., - Meeting, Brett Valiant at the Bucky Reddish residence**
- March 6-9 - Tom Hoehn at the Rylander Möller provides the complete score for The Sumter Players' production of *The King and I*, directed by Brooks Nettum. For tickets, hotel information, and times, call the Rylander Box Office at 229-931-0001 or visit www.rylander.org
- February 12, Georgia Southwestern University *Faculty and Friends Concert*, Rylander Theatre, Americus, with guest appearance by John McCall at the Frank Sheffield Memorial Möller theatre organ (details will follow in the February newsletter).

Atlanta Chapter , ATOS - Membership Application

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

Annual membership dues \$35 (Student \$17.50). Please make check payable to *Atlanta Chapter, ATOS*. Meetings are held monthly, usually on the 3rd Sunday afternoon. Mail this application and your check to:

Wanda Carey Fields
 413 Concord Road SW
 Smyrna, GA 30082-4509