

SUNDAY, MAY 18TH, 3 P.M.

Hamm-O-Rama at the Fox in Joe Patten's Apartment

**A VERY SPECIAL FOX
THEATRE EVENT
"MUSIC IN THE JOE
PATTEN RESIDENCE"**

By Larry Davis



Atlanta Journal Constitution Photo

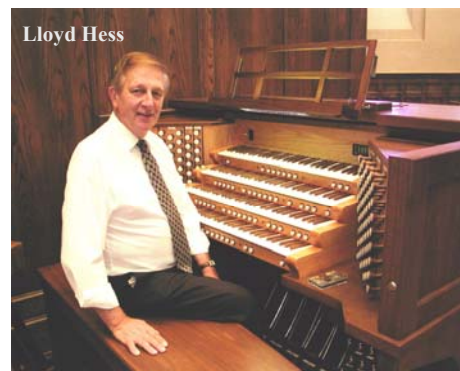
Last June, the Atlanta Chapter was privileged to return to the Fox Theatre for a program on the great Möller theatre organ. On May 18, we will be at the Fox again, this time for a very special, first-time musical event. Our Hamm-O-Rama for 2008 will be held in the apartment of Joe Patten in the Fox. A visit to Joe's magnificent residence is always a special treat, and at Joe's invitation, one that we will all have an opportunity to experience on May 18.

The Instruments – Joe's apartment is home to a fascinating collection of personal and Fox memorabilia. For the purposes of our meeting, it is also the home of a Hammond RT3 organ and a Chickering reproducing grand piano. The Hammond includes percussions, a Leslie speaker, a 32-note pedalboard, and a 32' pedal tone. A reproducing piano is more than a player piano; it is an instrument that accurately reproduces the playing of a great piano artist using rolls that include variations in touch and pedaling. Joe has a large collection of piano rolls for this very

special musical instrument, which is the same model as that in the concert hall of the International Piano Archive in Maryland.

The Program – We will begin promptly at 3 P.M. Because of accessibility issues, we respectfully ask that you arrive early enough to be in the apartment by our start time – and you are welcome to arrive early (see below for issues and instructions). We will begin by introducing **Mr. Joe Patten**, and ask him to tell us a little about the residence. Our musical program will feature music by **Mr. Lloyd Hess**, who has entertained us at our Hammond-centered programs in the past. He will take us back to a time when the smooth, cool, jazzy, cocktail, Lenny Dee, Jimmy Smith sound was heard everywhere. A native of Canada, Lloyd studied piano at the Toronto Conservatory of Music, and this musical study laid the foundation for his organ and accordion proficiency. While living in Texas, he was an accordion player for several German restaurants. He has been a church organist here in Atlanta for many years, but on our special Sunday afternoon, he will show us once again that he is a master of the smooth Hammond sound. After Lloyd's program, we trust that some of our other Hammond artists will take to the bench to entertain us on Joe's wonderful instrument. There may even be piano-organ duets... reproducing piano rolls... it is going to be an entertaining and varied afternoon. And we expect a special surprise guest to musically greet us upon our arrival.

Parking and Accessibility – The Fox Theatre is located at 660 Peachtree Street at the corner of



Lloyd Hess

Ponce de Leon Avenue (PDL). Since we scheduled the meeting, we have learned that *Riverdance* is presenting a matinee performance at 1 P.M. on that Sunday, therefore parking may be tighter than it might otherwise be. However, there are parking lots all around the Fox, including at the Georgian Terrace Hotel directly across from the theatre and a lot directly across PDL from the entrance to Joe's apartment. Please tell the attendants that you are attending an event at the Fox and you may get a special rate. We will enter Joe's apartment through a private door on the Ponce de Leon side of the theatre not far from the stage door. There will be someone there to welcome and direct you. Because of parking issues and accessibility, please give yourself plenty of time to park and get to the apartment before 3 P.M.

After the Program – we will have light refreshments at Joe's apartment. There are several restaurants in the immediate area for those who may wish to eat dinner nearby. At 6:30 P.M., *Riverdance*, currently on a farewell tour, will present their final Georgia performance at the Fox. For those who wish to see this exceptional show, tickets will be on sale at the box office.

**Atlanta Chapter,
American Theatre Organ Society**

P.O. Box 426
Marietta, Georgia 30061-0426
770-428-4091

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

*AC/ATOS is recognized as a tax-exempt organization under
Section 501.c.3 of the Internal Revenue Code.*

Chapter President - Bucky Reddish
Vice President - Larry Davis
Treasurer - Wanda Carey Fields
Secretary - Tom Robertson
Newsletter Editor - Elbert Fields
Associate Editor - Wanda Carey Fields
Chapter Correspondent - Rick McGee

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

**Sunday Afternoon at
Peachtree Christian Church**

Herbert Buffington was our guest artist on Sunday, April 20, 2008, featured at the dual organs of Peachtree Christian Church, Atlanta, Georgia.

The original organ is a Pilcher, installed in 1928, the second a Fratelli Ruffatti, installed in 1974. This setting was last featured with the Atlanta Chapter ATOS during the national convention held in Atlanta in 1978. Since that time, a rebuilt console and Walker digital additions bring the instrument to almost 200 ranks!

Herb presented a program of wide stylistic variance, featuring music from periods to satisfy almost any listener.

First up was "Prelude, Fugue and Chaconne in C Major" (Bux WV 137) by Dietrich Buxtehude. This displayed the more than adequate resources of this instrument to handle the Baroque repertoire. The Ruffatti was featured in this selection.



Herbert
Buffington

Next, the popular "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" (BWV 147, Chorale movement 10) of Johann Sebastian Bach. Elegant solo voices against great foundation and strings made the chorale come to life. This featured the Ruffatti and Pilcher organs together.

Then Herb treated us to his own Improvisations: Chorale Fantasy on "Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern" ("How Brightly Shines the Morningstar"). This well-done setting featured sections in the following styles: *Chorale / Jig (theme in pedal) / Plena / Fuga*. This presented many of the ensembles and solo stops from both organs and showed the imagination gifted to the organist.

Following this, the March upon Handel's "Lift Up Your Heads," Op. 15 of Alexandre Guilmant. Grand in the French style and full of the pomp and majesty called for by the composer – he would approve!

"Nimrod" from Sir Edward Elgar's "Enigma Variations" was next presented. A grand Solo English Horn and strings massed from the Pilcher, the Ruffatti and Walker gave the listener a way to journey into this moving selection and away from the everyday.

An "Improvisation on *Psalm 94*" summoned the thunder and might from both instruments and honored

the French improvisation school to the hilt. Mighty, terrifying, evoking the true tone of this Psalm for the listener and showcasing the power of the combined resources available to the artist.

A favorite of many, the Organ Symphony V in F minor, Op. 42, No. 1 of Charles-Marie Widor has five movements total. Herb presented three of them: Allegro (movement 1) is a grand and festive march to set the stage for the coming movements. Rich principals, diverse ensembles and a truly orchestral setting launched the symphony. The Adagio (movement 4) is only two pages in length, but offers the richest musical texture in the symphony. Solo voices in the pedal, constant suspensions of harmony, full use of orchestral texturing and the ever-satisfying final three C Major Chords (Charles Walker would have approved!). Lastly, the Toccata (movement 5) is the most well-known. For once, the toccata was NOT TOO FAST. Great tempo, phrasing and independent definition of voices made this selection come to life as if a new work.

An encore: Stars and Stripes Forever of John P. Sousa featured the four-hand, three-foot arrangement of the Chenaults (formerly at Northside Drive Baptist and now at All Saints in Atlanta) showed the theatrical and technical sides of the organs. MIDI tracks provided the missing player and allowed Herb to really show off the fun side of the organ.

For those of you absent, you missed a real treat!!

All comments and observations provided courtesy of **Biz E. Body**, a completely unbiased ear — remember, the walls, pews and chambers have ears!

**Playing the Stops — Flying by the
Seat or Your Pants.... What a seminar!**

Larry Douglas Embury did an indescribable job of showing us how to sit down at an organ you've never seen before and making great music. Thank you, Larry.

On Saturday, the 19th of April, we again took advantage of Bucky Reddish's ongoing



hospitality and had a great time learning about organs from Larry and enjoying great refreshments from Bucky.

To the left is a photo of Larry "Playing the Stops" on one of Bucky's two organs. The seminar was actually conducted on the outstanding Walker RTO -335.

Early Fox Organists 1929-1940:
Part two of a three-part article on the
Möller Organ in the Fox Theatre and
the organists who played it.

By John Tanner

The information in this article was obtained from an intensive search through the ads and write-ups in the Atlanta newspapers during this period. The 1930's was a very turbulent time in the history of the Fox.

Due to the Depression the ownership of the building fell to several different concerns, each trying to find a solution of running such a large theatre. During management changes there may have been some other individuals who played the organ briefly, but their names were never revealed in the newspapers.

Shortly before an Atlanta theatre opened that had an organ, there was usually some description of new organ and some word about who would be playing the organ for the opening.

However, almost a month before the Fox opened, you had read more about the new organ and organist Iris Wilkins than had been written about the subject for any other theatre in town.

Ads and an interview in the Atlanta Constitution, for which Mrs. Wilkins supplied some cartoons, only fueled the public's excitement over the new theatre's opening.



Cartoon Iris Wilkins provided newspapers.
 Atlanta Constitution Dec. 8, 1929

On December 25th, 1929 the house lights dimmed and the spotlight from under the proscenium bridge shown down into the depths of the orchestra pit. At that moment Atlantans heard the first public sounds of the huge Möller De-Lux Theatre Pipe Organ. The excitement of that moment can best be described by a review that appeared the following day.

"As the great console rose out of the depths of the orchestra pit with Iris working arms and legs and shoulders, she made that organ do tricks that amazed. At one moment it chirruped like a lazy canary and a couple of seconds later it boomed out diapasons that stunned the eardrums and rolled their reverberations down into your being until your entire system quivered. Then there came an announcement of the policies of the new theatre and a screened word of greeting from Harold B. Franklin, president of Fox West Coast Theatres, under whose general management the new playhouse comes. Next a sound news reel, and a sound cartoon comedy that was a scream.

Then we heard a burst of music and song. Slowly the orchestra pit rose into view. Our old friend Enrico Leide was wielding his baton with that touch of enthusiasm that only Enrico can impart, and 30 of Atlanta's finest musicians, with 20 selected singers--and the great organ adding its mighty contribution to the volume of the whole--poured forth

the dedication chant, "This Shrine of Beauty," arranged by conductor Leide himself to the music of Elgar's "Pomp and Circumstance" march.

Honestly, boys and girls, its was the greatest volume of musical sound to strike Atlanta's ear since John Philip Sousa led a band of 250 pieces in the "Stars and Stripes" down at the auditorium."

Ralph T. Jones The Atlanta Constitution Dec. 26, 1929. After the opening ceremonies of that Christmas Day in 1929, the Fox had now firmly established itself as the place to be for Atlanta's theatrical entertainment. Don Wilkins was the master of ceremonies, and was also Iris's husband. The Wilkins pair would at many times during the shows, go into routines that would interject some secrets of the Wilkins family, then they would get into "flinging matrimonial repartee" in the middle of the show, much to the delight of the audiences.

Not only was Iris busy keeping Don in line during the show, and finding out just what kinds of sounds you can get out of the Möller organ, but during the mornings she was broadcasting 4 times a week, around 11:30 am, the sounds of the Möller organ over WSB radio to cities such as Miami, Norfolk, and Memphis.



Ad for Iris Wilkins weeks before opening. Note strangely Wurlitzer-looking console. Atlanta Constitution Dec. 10, 1929

ENRICO LEIDE
 Conducting
THE FOX GRAND ORCHESTRA

Playing a special arrangement, "In Old Mexico," comprising "La Paloma" and "Estudiantina Waltz" with choral arrangement.

DON WILKINS
 Master of Ceremonies

FOX MOVIE-TONE NEWS
 "It Speaks for-Itself"

MATINEES
 Children 15c
 ADULTS, ADMISSION..... 25c
 Loges 50c

EVENINGS
 Children 20c
 ADULTS, ADMISSION..... 40c
 Loges 75c

Portion of ad for *Romance of Rio Grand*—Atlanta Constitution Jan 12, 1930



IRIS WILKINS Presenting "The Evolution of the Organ." A musical comedy you'll enjoy.



As with many of the organists who were playing at this time it was only a few short months before Iris and Don returned to the West Coast to work some of their magic out there.

(Continued on page 4)



Portion of ad for *Born Reckless* Atlanta Constitution June 22, 1930

In the middle of June 1930, Don and Iris left the Fox and audiences welcomed Mel Riuck, as the master of ceremonies, and Dwight Brown "The Organ Ace" at the console of the organ.

Dwight Brown had just recently come from the Toledo Paramount, and before that, the Palace in Dallas, Texas.

Dwight continued broadcasting the Möller over WSB radio, and many of his programs could be described as "beautiful arrangements of popular organ melodies." During the week of June 27, 1930 he did a special organ solo entitled "A Night in Spain." One of his other musical presentations was an arrangement called "Evening" in which he features "In the Gloaming," "Evensong," by Schumann, and "At Peace With the World" by Irving Berlin.

In August of 1930 the Fox came under the control of the Loews Corporation and by the end of September it was announced, that due to the magnitude of the fall picture season, it would justify the elimination of the Stage Shows. It was during this period Dwight Brown left the Fox. However, the Fox was not without organ music for very long.



The Console Collection

Adolph Goebel, who was playing at Atlanta's Paramount theatre, came over and evidently played for several weeks.

Mr. Goebel had been playing at the Paramount since June 20th, 1930. At the end of September he goes over to the Fox, but is back playing at the Paramount by October 12th and is gone by the middle of November.

Interesting most of the publicity shots of Adolph Goebel show him appearing at the Fox console.

In November of 1930. one of Atlanta's favorite organ personalities, Al Evans, who had played at the Atlanta Paramount and then at the Palace in Washington D.C., was now engaged to play the Möller.

Mr. Evans seemed to have been very popular with Atlanta audiences, and soon had his choir of 5000 singing to his melodies.



Atl. Constitution Apr. 19, 1931

By 1931 the effects of the stock market crash of 1929 were beginning to be felt by most Americans and Al Evans was doing his part to help the unemployed by teaming up with Mrs. T.K. Glenn, and her Penny Club. Al improvised the song "Penny-a-Meal" which he played during the week of September 27th. A large basket was placed in the lobby of the Fox so that movie-goers could drop their coppers to aid the Penny Club. That week, over 16,000 pennies were donated, and were used to help provide meals for Atlanta's unemployed.

During the late 1920's and early 1930's many of the theatres in Atlanta, at one time or another, hosted a session

of the Atlanta Constitution's Cooking School. During one of these sessions a photographer would set his camera up on stage, facing the audience. He would snap the picture and it would be published in the paper the next morning, so attendees could see themselves in the paper. (An extra side benefit is that in some cases these are the only photographs I have come across of the theatre, looking into the house from the stage.)

Al Evans' Penny Song Aids Fund Headed by Mrs. Glenn



Atlanta Constitution Sep. 30, 1931

In March of 1931, attendees of the Cooking School were having to deal with a nation wide controversy, in which the following article from the Atlanta Constitution, dated March 5, 1931 tries to shed some light on.

"Fox Organist Features Song About Potlikker: Patrons of the Fox theatre this week, who are accustomed to the inventiveness of Smilin Al Evans, the organist, in creating parodies which he renders on the mighty reeds of the Fox instrument, with screen illustrations, found their meter in a brand-new song---the potlikker-corn-pone theme. As a result of the nation-wide controversy growing out of the question: to dunk or not to dunk, an admirer of "Smilin Al's" weekly organ contrivances, suggested that, to the popular tune of "Springtime in the Rockies," these words be sung:

**When it's dunk time in potlikker,
I'll come crumbling home to you,
And without an eyebrow's flicker,
Crush my cornpone in the brew,
Once again I'll sit beside you,
While the dunkers have their say,
And break cornpone in potlikker--
In potlikker, come what may.**

The words were contained in a letter originally received by the Potlikker editor of the Constitution from William G. Formby, and led by "Smilin Al", the audiences at the Fox join in the chorus with much gusto and hilarity.

Evans says he attributes his state of physical well-being today to the fact that his family cook fed him cornpone and potlikker "on the sly" when he was an ailing puny boy."

Al Evans continued to play at the Fox until the week of June 19, 1932 when Loew's ceased its operation of the Fox.

" Enrico Leide and the Fox concert orchestra in a special farewell overture, Al Evans reviewing some of the biggest, favorites of his career at the console of the big organ and a special group of short screen features complete the bill, the last which Loew's Inc. will offer at the Fox and their final in Atlanta until next September when they open the new Grand with a policy of gorgeous promise which, however, they refuse as yet to divulge in detail." Atlanta Constitution June 19, 1932.

After Loew's departure, the Fox remained closed for almost two months before it would reopen on August 12, 1932 with Enrico Leide appointed general manager and

(Continued on page 5)

Jimmy Beers as the new organist.

Jimmy Beers got his start as a singing usher at the Atlanta Paramount, then when the Paramount closed in March of 1931, he moved over to the Capitol Theatre to play the Robert Morton.

Jimmy Beers' tenure at the Fox began in August of 1932. Some of the offerings during Jimmy's tenure included selections such as "Versatility," "Naughty Marietta," "The Chocolate Soldier," "The Old Refrain," "When Day is Done," and "Evensong" from Tannhauser.

School Girls for Roosevelt



Girls for Roosevelt students from Washington Seminary standing in Fox lobby next to a poster of Presidential candidate Franklin Roosevelt. L to R Organist Jimmy Beers, Miss Rosebud Leide, Miss Virginia Merry and Manager Enrico Leide—Atlanta Constitution Oct. 23, 1932

When Presidential Candidate then Governor Franklin Roosevelt came to Atlanta, Jimmy presented a special arrangement of music honoring Mr. Roosevelt.

Along with duties as house organist and as daily feature on WSB radio, Jimmy had time to compose and on April 16, 1933 saw the debut of his new composition, "Cargo of Love" with Ellis Williams, "Dixie's Golden Voiced Tenor" singing the lyrics. After that musical offering the audience would settle down and listen to the screams of Faye Ray in David O. Selznick's "King Kong."

Late in August of 1933 after almost a 50-week run at the Fox, Jimmy took a vacation, part of which was to go to New York and study under Jessie Crawford and Dick Leibert.

Probably one of Jimmy's more memorable console risers was for an Armistice Day program when the Möller console came up all draped in American Flags.

In April of 1934, shortly after Lucas and Jenkins took control of the

Fox, Jimmy Beers left to take a position with the Coca Cola Company.

The period of 1934 to 1935 was a very difficult time for the Fox. By 1935, the Fox was now owned by the city for non-payment of taxes. Even though the theatre remained open, the city was also on the fringe of bankruptcy. At this time, Mosque Inc. which was a partnership between Paramount and local businessmen, Lucas and Jenkins. Lucas and Jenkins had acquired control of the Fox, the Capitol, the

Georgia, and the Paramount, as well as many of the local suburban houses around the city. Although they held very tight reins on what each of these theatres offered, and much of the De-lux presentations were greatly curtailed, if not in some cases done away with. Their management policies slowly allowed for all these theatres to go from operating in the red to operating in the black.



Jimmy Beers with flag-draped console, Armistice Day Atl. Constitution Nov. 12, 1933 William Dunn photograph



Dale Stone, at the Fox Theatre organ, is heard over WSB every day except Saturday and Sunday in a program of popular melodies at 11:45 o'clock. The program is made up entirely from request.

Radio ad from
Atlanta Constitution
May 26, 1935

At the Fox, organ music still was heard, although it's hard to tell from the newspaper ads as to how much was heard, before the movies. In May of 1935 organist Dale Stone was broadcasting over WSB at 11:45 everyday except Saturday and Sunday. The program was made up entirely from request. Although Mr. Stone was playing for radio there is no indication in the papers that he was a regular feature of the daily program of the theatre, although this could have been a result from the cost cutting measures Lucas and Jenkins were using in the ad copy for the papers.

The last program list Mr. Stone played for the radio was June 18th, 1935.

In July of 1936 a small ad appears in the Atlanta Constitution announcing a new organist.

"NEW FOX ORGANIST---Homer Knowles to preside at console:

This week the Fox theatre presents Homer Knowles at the console of the world's largest theatre organ. Organ presentations are to become a weekly policy at the Fox. Knowles, a native Georgian, has just returned from Chicago after studying in both popular and classical organ techniques at the Sherwood Music Conservatory.

These organ presentations are to be built around the suggestions made by Fox theatre patrons so that the fullest enjoyment may be derived from the new feature."

Although it is hard to tell from the newspaper write-ups

(Continued on page 6)

Cargo Of Love



Sheet music cover from John McCall collection



Ad for Homer Knowles—Atlanta Constitution July 10, 1936

and ads what kind of special music Homer may have presented, it seems that he was popular with the Fox audiences and that most of his presentations seemed to be around one request number and then the sing-a-longs. There is an ad that

has Homer presenting a "Knock-Knock" program. Aug. 30, 1936.

On Dec. 5, 1937 there appears an interesting heading in the feature ad for the film "Heidi" starring Shirley Temple. In the ad there appears the text: Extra! Popeye Cartoon---Homer Knowles playing the new Electric organ. Could this be a demonstration of the recently invented Hammond Organ?

Along with Homer's duties at the Möller he was also broadcasting a radio program, but not on WSB. Homer's programs were broadcast over WAGA at 10:30 am daily.

Homer would continue to play at the Fox until he was inducted into the armed forces after the outbreak of World War II and would have the longest run of playing the Möller at the Fox during that time.

Later organists would include Cliff Cameron, Don Mathis, Eddie Ford, Stanleigh Mallotte and Graham Jackson. These will be covered in a later article about Atlanta's theatre organists.

Next issue Part 3: The Fabulous Fox Möller.

Georgia's Organ Secret Revealed

Made in the same year (1928) as the Rylander Möller, the Georgia organ world's best kept secret may be that a third Möller theatre console is also now up and playing in the SE city of Sylvania at the residence of **Randy and Kim Magnuson**, near the Savannah River halfway between Augusta and Savannah, about 3.5 hours SE of Atlanta.

Möller Opus 5211 was originally installed in the College Theatre in Bethlehem, PA <http://theatreorgans.com/wi/Waukesha/atoe.html>, subsequently owned by George Wright, and was used in the mid



1980's to mid 1990's for the Dickinson chapter's large Kimball <http://www.dtoskimball.org> at Dickinson HS <http://dickinson.redclay.k12.de.us>. More console history available at <http://www.theatreorgans.com/wi/Waukesha/history.html>.

The original 14 ranks of organ pipe-work departed at an unknown

time in the past. Seven ranks of mostly Morton (opus 463, 1923 Cohoes NY Elks Club) and Kimball (opus 6842, 1923 <http://www.pstos.org/instruments/wa/seattle/ridgemont.htm>), along with 14 mostly Wurlitzer digital ranks, now make up the console's 3/21 specification. More pipe ranks are on hand and will replace some of the digital ranks in the future.

Figaro (Found In Garage & Attic Rusting Organ) is normally available and maintained in playing condition. It features full MIDI record and playback, and anybody is welcome to hear, play, and even cut an audio CD to take home. Call 912-564-5956.

Upcoming Meetings & Events (Mark your Calendars)

- May 3rd, 6:00 P.M., Organist Ken Cowan of Westminster Choir College will be performing at Trinity United Methodist Church in Atlanta, General admission \$15 each, only 460 seats available. Call 404-659-6236 for tickets and additional information. Free Parking with Validated Ticket
- May 16th, 7:30 P.M., Inaugural Concert on the new Allen organ at St. Margaret's Episcopal Church by Nicholas Bowden, 1499 South Main Street, Moultrie, GA. Free and open to the public. 229-616-1116; www.stmargaretsmoultrie.org
- **May 18th 3 P.M., Meeting, Hamm-O-Rama at Joe Patten's apartment in the Fox Theatre**
- May 18th, 2:00 P.M. (CST), John McCall in Concert at the Mighty Wurlitzer at the Alabama Theatre, 1817 3rd Avenue, North, Birmingham, AL, free and open to the public.
- **June 29th, 3 P.M., Meeting, Ron Rhode at the Reddish residence**