

ATOS Atlanta

Official Newsletter of The Atlanta Chapter of the American Theatre Organ Society



As Bob Dylan said,
 “The Times They Are A Changin’

In this era of social distancing, sheltering in place and shortages of some of our most basic needs, hoping a little lighthearted humor will brighten your day.

Me after I eat all of my quarantine snacks in one night



Like a Good Neighbor Stay Over There

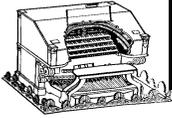


Above all, stay safe and stay well - Debbie Chambless

It's time to renew your ACATOS Membership! Please review the membership options and consider renewing at the Contributor or Patron level.



Level	Base	Cap
Student	\$17.50	
Basic	\$35.00	
Donor	\$36.00	\$99.00
Contributor	\$100.00	\$199.00
Sponsor	\$200.00	\$299.00
Patron	\$300.00	And up



A Letter from your President



MY, HOW LIFE HAS CHANGED, JUST A TAD

As the articles in the newsletter will indicate, the coronavirus not only nixed a lot of plans for programs, it has changed our lives dramatically and will impact us for the foreseeable future, including:

Clark Wilson and Carlton Smith postponing their work on the Page organ

Clark driving down only to have *Metropolis* postponed

The Brett Miller concert, set for April 25th, now postponed

Stephenson High School closed

Our alternate plans for meetings in April and May now put on hold as not only are we not to be gathering as a group, most in our group (including ME!) fall into that “elderly” category which is the high-risk group.

For now, we are simply on “hold” as an organization until such time there is some semblance of normal. Once we know specifics, we can announce our future meetings and events. In the meantime, what can we do? Quite a bit, actually:

Stay safe, follow the guidelines to stay healthy, and communicate with your chapter friends to make sure they are doing well. Just because you can’t get out doesn’t mean you can’t keep in touch Re-introduce yourself to your recordings! I know I can go a long, long time and not put a theatre organ CD in the Bose. What a great time to enjoy things I have enjoyed for so long, but just not in a while

Turn on your computer and dial up ATOS Theatre Organ Radio. You will discover a world of recordings and music you did not imagine existed, and might discover a new favorite player – or several for that matter!

Renew your membership if you have not already done so. Now more than ever, we need to stick together and be supportive and let our love of this great music help us get through this very unusual time.

To that end, I hope many of you are reacting positively to our letter regarding membership. It would be great to get our membership number over the magic 100 mark. We are very close to that!!

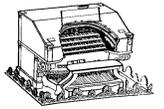
Meanwhile, while Clark Wilson was in town – four days and no public performance – a BIG Thank You to Ron and Donna Carter who provided so much hospitality; to Larry Davis who helped with transportation and other arrangements; to Andy Gaines, General Manager at the Strand Theatre who was under so much pressure what with governmental edicts changing hourly – Andy is a real gem; and to so many others who helped.

(Continued on next page)

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ACATOS is recognized as a tax-exempt organization under Section 501.c.3 of the Internal Revenue Code.

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Treasurer - Rick McGee
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Newsletter Editor - Debbie Chambless
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John Alford
John Tanner
Eddie Hulsey, Jr.
Larry Davis
Randy Hendry
Lee Lanier
Strand Project – Ron Carter
Page Project – Jack Sandow



Message from Your President (continued)

You should know that we paid Clark. It was not his fault he didn't get to play, and while here we found out there were at least six concert performances of his that were postponed. We will work out a future date, and get our tremendous value of his talents at some point in time down the road. We did the right thing for him (and thanks to a certain ACATOS supporter for his assist, too).

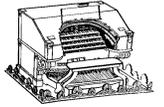
We know this much. And that is we don't know much of anything. Stay well; protect yourself and your loved ones; don't hoard toilet paper; and just stand by as we will have news and a meeting date soon.

Let's close with a chuckle, courtesy of member Bob McKoon who is the only person I know who ALWAYS has a new joke:

Did you hear about the atheist who died? He was buried in his very best suit. On his tombstone they wrote, "All Dressed Up and No Where To Go."

Do carry on just as best as you can!

Ken



WHAT A DIFFERENCE A MONTH MAKES

Paraphrasing the song helps explain things are a bit different!

A whirlwind of activity, pronouncements, news and reports – almost all of it focused on COVID-19 – have generated a lot of questions about our upcoming events for the Atlanta Chapter of ATOS. We will do as much as we can to inform you of what’s transpired, and what’s to come.

First, an update on the Page

In the capable hands of John Tanner, Bob Haag, Randy Hendry, John Alford and David Yackman, a great deal of work has been done recently on the Page at Stephenson High School to prepare for the swap of the Trumpet ranks (installing our chapter-owned rank – with thanks to John Alford for your fine “loaner”), the addition of the Krumet rank, and the return of the rebuilt Vibraharp. Though much remains to be done, a lot has been accomplished in a short time. Thanks to our dedicated and skilled crew!

Much of this work was in preparation for the return of Clark Wilson and Carlton Smith for updated tonal finishing. But alas, Coronavirus concerns led them to postpone: neither wished to board a plane with people with unknown medical histories. Understanding their concerns, we will welcome them at a future date. (Meanwhile, Clark DROVE down for *Metropolis*. More on that later.)

Currently, Stephenson High School is closed to everyone, including our crew, until further notice. We will stand by, and then continue with our work when we get the “green light” to re-enter the school.

Brett Miller postponed as well

With the same concerns in mind, the Brett Miller concert scheduled for April 25th has been postponed. We will announce a new date as soon as we can.

April and May Meetings

So, where does that leave us? Like everyone else, somewhat in limbo. We had thought about staging a general chapter meeting April 25th at Stephenson, thus making good use of a date already planned. But we have no way of knowing what the future holds, and as I write, gatherings of more than 50 are frowned upon; the school is closed; we are most certainly that “elderly” group they warn about; and so, we shall sit tight for a while, and as soon as we know more, we will be communicating to you. As of this writing, there is nothing scheduled, nor can there be.

Our options, once we get an OK to resume meetings and concerts, are plentiful. We could possibly have an event at the Fox; we can always schedule something at the Page once we know the school’s availability; and the Strand and the Plaza and our private homes all provide opportunities – just as soon as we know it’s OK to resume normal activity.

Note: ATOS has re-scheduled the convention. The 2020 convention is being shifted to 2021, in Indianapolis. Check the ATOS website for details, including what to do if you had registered to attend, as several of you have.



HOW ABOUT SOMETHING POSITIVE! LUCAS WURLITZER NEWS – FINALLY!

If one were inspired to research our history, one would find that perhaps 20 years ago - maybe longer than that – one could find hints in our chapter newsletter of efforts to reinstall the Lucas Theatre Mighty Wurlitzer back into the downtown Savannah theatre. Patience is indeed a virtue. The first major step toward bringing that Wurlitzer back home has taken place.

Working with the leadership at the Savannah College of Arts and Design, (SCAD, which operates the Lucas Theatre), ACATOS has signed a document turning ownership of the organ over to SCAD, with specific plans to have the instrument refurbished, enlarged, and reinstalled.

SCAD Vice-President Danny Filson was in Atlanta in mid-March, and he and Ken Double signed the contract, which now opens the door for SCAD to engage the A. E. Schlueter Pipe Organ Company to commence the renovation work and prepare for the installation.

The Lucas Theatre has been magnificently restored by SCAD; it hosts a wide range of events; and following a meeting there in December which included Lucas management, Mr. Filson, Ken Double, and representatives of the Schlueter company, including our own John Tanner, serious planning for the return of the organ got underway.



At the heart of our love of the theatre pipe organ is this desire to hear them play. When we have the opportunity such as this, to create the path for a Wurlitzer to return to its original home, it justifies the long wait, and satisfies all of us in that this is what ATOS is all about.

Thanks to Danny Filson and all in the leadership at SCAD; to Stratton Leopold, Hollywood producer and Savannah native and ice cream parlor mogul who reached out to us six years ago with a question about finding an organ for the Lucas; to Art and Arthur Schlueter, who stored this organ at no cost to the chapter for nearly 15 years in hopes this day might happen; to the late Dr. Ed Simmons, who saved the organ at a time it was feared the theatre would be torn down, and then donated it to us; and to the new management in place at the theatre, that is in LOVE with the idea of the Wurlitzer coming home.

Originally a 3/11, the plan is to expand the organ to a Style 260, i.e. a 3/15 with the additions of a fourth string rank; a Brass Trumpet; Brass Sax; and a Post Horn. In 2021, the Lucas Theatre celebrates its 100th anniversary. They would love to celebrate with the Wurlitzer. We know that timetable might be a tad difficult. Thus, since we've waited to these near-20 years, waiting just a wee bit longer will not be an issue. Good for us, good for SCAD and the Lucas Theatre, and won't a trip to Savannah now REALLY be worth it!





Things That Go Un-noticed:

Because of the current situation concerning the Coronavirus, and having to call a halt to many activities with the Atlanta Chapter ATOS, some of us have a little more time on our hands to catch up on some things we had been meaning to do.

Since we are not having any programs at this point, the newsletter naturally would be a little shorter. Ken Double asked me if I had any historical item to share, and if so to send it to our editor. Well at the moment I have about ten different things but none are complete. So when I was looking through some of my photographs I have taken of theatres I noticed a few things I had not noticed before. So I thought I would share those with you.

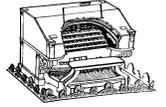
HOWEVER, its up to you to see if you know what theatre these items are from. This is kind of like the mystery photo we have done in the past.

Here are three photographs of un-noticed items of a theatre that many of our members have attended over the years. If you know what theatre and where in the building they are, send me an email at frump1@mindspring.com with your guess.

I will reveal the answer in the next newsletter

John Tanner





Check out this excerpt from John McCall's newest book
Available at Amazon.com

Epic of the Center:
A Theatre's Words, Music and Wurlitzer

By John Clark McCall, Jr.

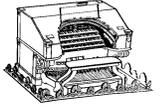
Epic of the Center: A Theatre's Words, Music and Wurlitzer

-Introduction-

I have romanced about a theatre in New York's Rockefeller Center which is all but forgotten now. Completed and opened December, 23, 1932 in the shadow of her sister Radio City Music Hall, the R-K-O Roxy (renamed the Center Theatre in December, 1933), had to die to allow the great "showplace of the nation" to continue its existence. It was a sacrifice that has haunted theatre and theatre organ historians, lovers of music and the spoken word. It is possible that a few New Yorkers, once young adults, may remember the only major part of Rockefeller Center ever to be offered upon the pyre of "progress."

Although numerous books have appeared about the larger famed Radio City Music Hall, none have ever materialized which focus primarily on the Center Theatre (as we will refer to this theatre hereinafter except in cases where R-K-O Roxy is more appropriate within historical context). The internet, however, has borne fruit which is most decidedly a volume on this lost theatre: *Vanished New York City Art Deco: R-K-O Roxy / Center Theatre*. Researched and written by Chris Arena and Anthony L'Abbate, this "duograph" is superbly penned and illustrated. For me, after this internet discovery it became obvious that my desire to write a general architectural history of the theatre was futile and totally unnecessary. I encourage you to call upon their scholarly work at your first opportunity: www.drivingfordeco.com. I must confess that in early drafts of this book I wandered into great detail concerning the architecture and design of the playhouse. I have since tried to focus more on what occurred inside, especially on the stage, screen, and orchestra pit.

As an enthusiast of the theatre organ art form for over sixty years, I realized that I might use the written word as an opportunity to present the story of one of Wurlitzer's most successful and last theatre organ installations, which was—like its architectural envelope—almost forgotten. And that particular focus reminded me that there is also much to tell about the Center's general film, musical and thespian offerings.



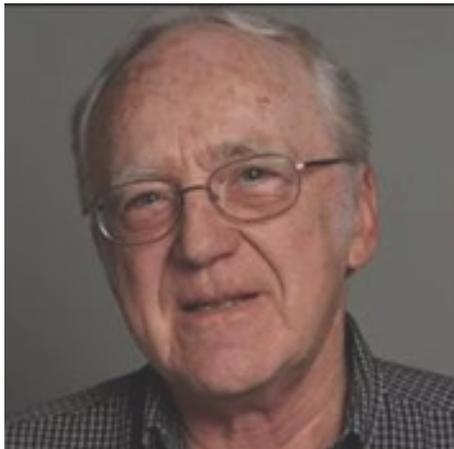
Epic of the Center is strictly a personal and selfish enterprise which most probably will be perused by a select few. I thank you for joining me. I boldly offer the fact that now, the theatre organ and its history may be threatened, allowing it to become much like the Center and its instrument—rarely remembered or given to scholarly documentation outside a few books and a singularly important organization: The American Theatre Organ Society. The organization's website (www.atos.org) is also recommended as a general introduction to the saga about to unfold within these pages regarding the Center's organ. Additionally, the Bibliography offers additional documentation regarding those who trod the stage and pit of this magnificent and modern temple of the performing arts. I was not fortunate enough to ever stride through the handsome interiors of this building, but I have attempted to visit it through words; I hope they help illuminate the reader.

Orchestras, organists and other soloists, vaudevillians and production casts came and went but the Center's Wurlitzer organ was at the epicenter of that marvelous building, amidst the cavalcade of entertainment offered in the theatre's scant existence of only twenty-two years. The epic follows. Our heroine theatre disappeared in clouds of dust in 1954...although important parts of her are still very much alive.

And a final request: if you have purchased this book for curiosity's sake and are not familiar with what a theatre organ is, or more importantly, what it sounds like, get thee to Amazon.com and audition a few of the listed examples in the Bibliography and/or visit www.atos.org to enjoy Theatre Organ Radio.

John Clark McCall, Jr.

February 17, 2020, Palmetto, GA



An Atlanta Chapter Closing Chord

G. Roger Dayton passed from this life, with his family at his side, at Brookdale in Greenville, South Carolina, on Saturday, March 14, 2020. He called many Illinois communities home over the years: Chicago, Hinsdale, Clarendon Hills, Batavia, and Coal City; and moved to Greenville, South Carolina in 2003.

Roger was born July 26, 1938 in Chicago, IL, the only child of Gilbert Reuben Dayton and Mary Lee (nee Pugh) Dayton. His family moved to Hinsdale, IL, and he attended Hinsdale Central High School. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Business Administration in 1960. Roger served in the U.S. Army as

a Military Intelligence Specialist 1961 – 1964.

He was a life-long restorer and collector of automatic musical instruments. In 1971, when his employer relocated, Roger turned his hobby of restoring player pianos and nickelodeons into a full-time business specializing in many forms of antique and automatic musical instruments. Pedals, Pumpers & Rolls, Ltd. encompassed his entire family for over 25 years (wife Carol, daughters Janet and Laura, son-in-law Steve Hale, and his parents Gil and Mary Lee), had multiple retail and rebuilding locations (Villa Park, Elmhurst, Hillside, Rockford, and Batavia), included a museum, and was often featured in Chicago-area articles and television interviews.

Roger continued his passion of rebuilding player pianos after the Batavia retail location was closed, after 1997. Moving his work to Coal City, Illinois and then to Greenville, South Carolina where he involved his step-grandson, Jonathan Marquez, over the past few years.

He was also a life-long collector of toy trains and a member of the Train Collectors Association. Other affiliations included: AMICA (Automatic Musical Instrument Collectors Association) International; MBSI (Musical Box Society International); several PTG chapters (Piano Technicians Guild), SAR (Sons of the American Revolution), Franklin Club, Kane County Car Club. Roger most recently attended services at Faith Baptist Church in the Greenville area.

G. Roger Dayton is survived by his wife of 22 years, Sara Evelyn (nee Scott) Dayton, and his daughter Janet Louise Dayton Hale, her husband Steve Hale, and two grandsons Austin and Colin. He is also survived by Sara Evelyn's daughter Ramona Kay Marquez (her husband Joseph Marquez; grandchildren: Jonathan (Cari), Melody (Chuqui), Julia, and Daniel (Faith); and 17 great-grandchildren) and her son Roger Kendzora (his wife Lisa Kendzora; grandsons: Brock, Brant (Yolanda), and Brion (Annette); and 7 great-grandchildren).

He was preceded in death by his parents Mary Lee and Gilbert R. Dayton, his wife (from 1961 – 1995) Carol Lee Dayton, daughter Laura Ann Dayton Rietz, and husband Frederick Rietz. Services will be private.



An Atlanta Chapter Closing Chord

William "Billy" Lacefield (1967-2020)

Billy Lacefield was a familiar face at Atlanta Chapter events, and particularly at the events of his husband and partner Dr. Michael Petway. Billy passed away suddenly on March 23rd at the age of 52.

While many in our chapter knew Billy via our theatre organ events, in his profession – a renowned and accomplished teacher of mathematics – his nickname was "the gentle genius." Gentle and genteel he most certainly was.

William Otis Lacefield III was born September 11, 1967 in Louisville, KY and spent his childhood in Louisville and later Macon, GA. Following graduation from Southwest High School in Macon in 1985, he excelled in college graduating magna cum laude from Mercer University in 1989. Billy earned his masters in curriculum and instruction from the University of Southern Mississippi in 1993, and his doctorate in curriculum studies from Georgia Southern University in 1999.

His teaching skills earned him honors and acclamation as his career carried him to Mercer University, where he earned tenure and a full professorship in 2009. One colleague wrote of Billy, "His students loved him for his ability to teach challenging courses with such gentle kindness."

Billy and his partner Dr. Michael Petway have been proud members of our chapter for many years, with Billy supporting chapter events both at their home and statewide over the past many years. Due to the current pandemic, a celebration of life will be held at a date to be announced. In lieu of flowers, the family will establish a memorial scholarship fund at Mercer University; details to be provided once the fund is established and active.