

**GARY JONES AT STEPHENSON HIGH SCHOOL  
SUNDAY, JUNE 28TH AT 3:00 PM**

Our June program will be at 3:00 pm on Sunday, June 28th featuring Alabama Theatre House Organist Gary W. Jones on our Grande Page organ at Stephenson High School in Stone Mountain.

**About the Artist...** Gary Jones is one of the southeast's most prominent theatre organists. His love and knowledge of theatre organ is brought to life through the Alabama Theatre's Mighty Wurlitzer.

Beginning piano at age 4 and advancing to organ at age 11, Gary continues to study and strives to perfect his artistry. Noting that Wurlitzer marketed their organs as a "Unit Orchestra", Gary carefully crafts his arrangements orchestrally and thinks of himself as more of a "conductor", rather than an organist.

Having served on the National Board of Directors of the American Theatre Organ Society, Gary was also a founding member of the Board of Directors of Birmingham Landmarks – the non-profit organization that owns and operates the Alabama Theatre and the Lyric Theatre.

After retiring from BellSouth in 1994, Gary owned and operated Southeastern Music Gallery in Tuscaloosa for over 20 years. He is now full-time Facilities Manager for the



Alabama Theatre and is currently President of the Alabama Chapter of the American Theatre Organ Society.

Serving as Staff Organist for a number of years, Gary was appointed House Organist in 2009 and continues to thrill audiences with the magic of "The Mighty Wurlitzer".

**About the instrument...** The following is taken from an article written

by Larry Davis and used with his permission. The Grande Page theatre organ at Stephenson High School was the first of the Page Company's crown jewel, four-manual organs. It was originally installed in 1927 in the WHT radio station in the Wrigley Building in downtown Chicago. It was said to be the largest such organ ever built for a radio studio. In 1929, the WHT Page was moved to the Michigan Theatre in the town of Flint, Michigan, where it entertained theatre audiences until 1950. Later it was removed and installed by several owners. Ultimately in 1977, the late Richard Weber (a member of the Atlanta Chapter of ATOS) acquired the Page to be used in a proposed pizza restaurant in Atlanta, Georgia. However, a different organ was ultimately installed

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**That's Entertainment**

*The Chamber Mouse, having survived being very nearly homogenized by the vibrations of SR-5 speakers, sends this report from the McGee residence:*

When Ken Double opens a show with *That's Entertainment*, it is more than a console riser, it is a promise of an afternoon of first-class music. And so it was at the keyboards of the Allen TO-5 at Rick McGee's residence at our May meeting. The Saturday afternoon audience crowded into the house from one end to the other: the music room, kitchen and even the porch for the special opportunity to hear a world class artist in an intimate setting.

After the opening, Ken launched into *Softly, As In A Morning Sunrise*, except that it wasn't soft, nor slow, but a snappy arrangement so unusual that it took a few moments to realize what we were hearing. Following that came a quiet, measured and beautiful rendition of the arrangement by the great vocalist Beverly Sills of Victor Herbert's im-



Photo by Larry Davis

mortal *Kiss Me Again*, from the operetta *Mlle. Modiste*.

Then out came the quick feet and fingers as we heard *You Gotta See Your Mama Every Night (Or You Can't See Mama At All)*. Following that, an opportunity to rest during a dreamy little medley that included, *All I Do Is Dream of You; I Can Dream, Can't I; Dream a Little Dream of Me; Dream Along With Me*. No one went to sleep, though, it was just the kind of great music that we dream of hearing. Once done with the dreaming, we could start to *Sway* as Ken brought us back to fun of listening

to his unique rhythmic style.

Then came a truly memorable performance full of nostalgic memories, a medley of three: *Beware My Foolish Heart, Once Upon A Time, and Probably*. This one had even the experienced connoisseurs of music and musical performance shaking their heads in amazement at the profound artistry that emerged during this section.

After the beauty, more toe-tapping fun: a medley from *Follies: Those Beautiful Girls; Broadway Baby; and Losing My Mind*.

And despite a prior reference to the regional origins of the artist, he declared himself one of us with a rousing closing of *Is It True What They Say About Dixie?*

One thing for sure, those of us in Dixie that afternoon were grateful for the fulfillment of the promise of entertainment made at the beginning by our own great artist and look forward with anticipation to the next opportunity.

*The Chamber Mouse*

**Atlanta Chapter,  
American Theatre Organ Society**

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Vice President - *Ken Double*  
Treasurer - *Rick McGee*  
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***Thanks for the  
Contributions  
General Fund***

Bruce Brownlow  
Bob McKoon

***Directions to  
Stephenson High School  
on Page 4***



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

***Where in the World is Carmen  
Sandiego? ----***

That was an old game that helped children to learn geography. These days it applies to members of the Atlanta Chapter who, during the past several months, have exported the musical excitement that the chapter is so fortunate to have all across the nation. This is in addition to the regular appearances at the Strand Theatre, the Fox Theatre and the Tivoli Theatre.

**Ron Carter**, in addition to the silent film series at the Strand, has been using his special musical insights across the South as he brought the joy of silent film to audiences at the John Knox Presbyterian Church in Greenville, SC, and St. Stephen's Lutheran Church in Lexington, SC.

**Rick McGee** somehow adjusted his incredibly full schedule to present a program at the Alabama Theatre in Birmingham.

**John McCall** appeared at the Forker Memorial Wurlitzer in Sarasota and the Central Florida Wurlitzer in the Pinellas Park City Auditorium. I followed him in Pinellas Park and then John and I presented their third joint program at the MaGuire Performing Arts Center in Tallahassee, FL, featuring both piano and organ.

***Thoughts on Open Console***

*By Larry Davis*

No, not that kind of open console! But that one does figure into our thoughts as we review our practices and procedures for our meetings.

We are privileged to have the opportunity of meeting in many different venues, from Stephenson to the Strand and in many private residences that are home to some really fabulous instruments. It is common that at the end of a chapter social, the opportunity is given for chapter members and guests to try out the instrument (we do not have open console after formal concerts).

Now we haven't had any complaints but we want to consider how we can best respect our hosts, our guests and each other. And to that end, we have made an informal decision to follow the lead of other chapters and convention hosts and gently request that during open console times, those participating limit their performance to three songs and perhaps 10-15 minutes maximum. This means that one of your song selections cannot be a 20 minute medley of country music songs (who would be likely to be guilty of that, I wonder?). This will provide a chance for everyone who wants to play to have the opportunity and will keep us from burdening our hosts for too long a period of time. Of course, if our hosts insist, perhaps a second round will be forthcoming once everyone has had a chance at a first round.

The good news is that we have so many wonderful instruments and so many people who are willing to host us for programs. It is more good news that we have so many members who can play and are willing to do so.

Also remember that if we have non-member guests who want to play, be courteous and yield to them, encourage them, and see if we can get them hooked!

The Grande Page deserves special mention, and we need to add the Strand and the Marietta Performing Arts Center to this as well: in these venues, there are responsible people who are required to secure the instruments, lock up the venues, set the alarms, and such like. We have to respect those people as well. In the future, for the public venues, you can expect us to create a sign-up list that will help us to respect our time limits. And at the Page, before we open the console, we are going to allow the crew to put the "hat" back on – that cover that I have been reliably informed is appropriately called a "pergola" – so that the several people that it takes to do this will still be there and available. Once it's on, the organ will be available until the crew that locks up needs to head out.

We could just turn off the blower...

And **Ken Double!** Ken Double is the new Carmen Sandiego, for if there is a geographic location that to which he hasn't traveled to play, to encourage, to plan, and where he has been our international representative, I don't know where it is.

So your chapter is well-represented across the nation by the local artists that entertain wherever they are summoned.

Speaking of entertaining, one can say with confidence that it is likely that our own **Bob Fountain** is the Atlanta musician who has been entertaining audiences for the longest period of time. Starting in the 1960's, he has been playing at venues all over Atlanta for the ensuing decades. Whether at McKinnon's on Wednesday evenings, or opening for the Sock Hops at the Strand, or playing to cheers and enthusiasm during open console at chapter meetings, Bob is the consummate entertainer, a great enthusiast of the theatre organ with great ideas, a great storyteller and treasure of history and memories, and a good friend to our chapter and our art. He is also one of the few remaining charter members of our chapter! He's one of those people without whom we would not be here, and without whom we would not be as successful as we are.

Stay in touch,

*Larry Davis*

# ORGANIST BIOGRAPHY

## Part One:

By John Tanner



Several times over the years, this photograph has shown up as a listing on Ebay. The photograph is of an organist posing at the Atlanta Fox Möller Console. The identity of the organist is usually listed as unknown. One listing had it as being Don Mathis, and one listing even had it as a young Bob Van Camp. The organist is actually a gentleman by the name of Joe Stoves.

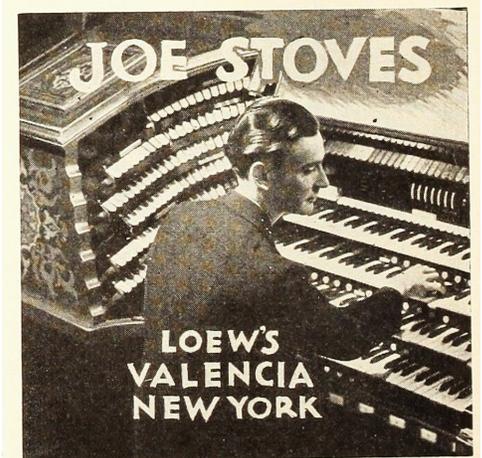
Mr. Stoves grew up in Nashville, Tennessee and graduated from Vanderbilt University with a Bachelor of Arts Degree. He then went to Germany and studied with Fritz Heitman of Berlin, and then with Carl Straube of Leipzig. Upon his return to the United States he became an organist for the Loew's theatres. He was the chief organist at the Loew's Temple in Birmingham, Alabama. There he presided over the large four-manual concert Möller organ.

By mid 1928 several of the theatres in Birmingham including the Loew's Temple closed due to, too many seats, too little product, and not enough run. Most of the theatres were switching over to sound films and were letting the musicians go, which further created chaos on the local scene.

Joe Stoves went to Providence Rhode Island and opened Loew's State on October 6, 1928, where he presided at the console of the \$90,000 Robert Morton

but what better console to have a publicity photo taken? Even though the top A key on the Great manual was stuck down!

By late 1931, Mr. Stoves was playing the Wonder Morton at the Loew's Valencia in New York. According to the information I have found, the movie going public like his presentations, and he seemed equally capable of playing the classics as well as the popular tunes of the day. Even when he played at the Loew's Valencia, he still used the publicity photograph of him at the Fox console.



His career was cut short in November of 1934 when he died from the result of a fall. His real name may have been Joseph Stobles since that was the name listed at the hospital that he was in when he died.

This article is the beginning of a series that will give some of the biographical information on the organist that were associated with the theatre organs in Atlanta and Georgia. We know a great deal of information about the organs and the theatres but we don't always know very much about the people that played them. If any of our members have information about some of these organist please contact me and I will be glad to add that information to the biographies.



During the early nineteen thirties, Loew's operated the Atlanta Fox and Mr. Stoves may have played very briefly at the Fox. Which means the photograph was taken sometime in 1931. I have found no advertisement that Mr. Stoves was engaged to play the Fox, but that does not always mean that he did or did not,



### *UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS (Mark your Calendars)*

- **June 28th (Sunday), 3:00 pm Stephenson High School featuring Gary Jones from Alabama. (See Page 1)**
- **July - No Chapter program**
- **July 26th (Sunday), 2:30 pm at Rick McGee's residence, ACATOS Board of Directors meeting.**
- August 8th (Saturday), 7:30 pm, Justin LaVoie at the Rylander in a public concert.
- **August 9th (Sunday), 2:00 pm, Bucky's Birthday Bash in Butler, GA with Justin LaVoie plus Ron Carter, Larry Davis, Ken Double, John McCall, Rick McGee and a cast of thousands!**
- August 16th (Sunday) Atlanta Fox Theatre presents "Celebrating the Legends." The legend of Mighty Mo and the Kings of Silent Film Comedy. This event is part of the 40th anniversary of the Saving of the Fox and the CocaCola Summer Film Series (more in July newsletter).

### *STRAND ORGAN RELATED EVENTS:*

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 [earlsmithstrand.org](http://earlsmithstrand.org).

- Saturday, June 6th, 8 pm, *The SOCK HOPS* with Bob Fountain playing organ pre-show at 7:30 and intermission. Tickets \$15 in advance or \$18 the day of the concert.
- Sunday afternoon August 2nd 3:00 pm with organ pre-show at 2:30 pm *SILENT COMEDY SHORTS* - organists TBA.
- Sunday afternoon, August 30th, 3:00 pm with organ pre-show at 2:30 pm the silent academy award winner *WINGS*, organist Ron Carter.

### *June Program (Continued from page 1)*

in the restaurant, and the Page organ was stored in a warehouse owned by Winn Sound in Atlanta.

After a couple of moves to other warehouse locations for Winn Sound, the organ was purchased by Mr. Winn in 1991 and donated to the Atlanta Chapter. At that point, it was removed from the warehouse and stored in trucks at a local business. Through the late 1980's and early 1990's efforts were made to find a home for the Grande Page. It was at that time that chapter member Jack Sandow emerged as the champion of the Grande Page. He approached his friend, Dr. James Hallford, Superintendent of Schools of DeKalb County, who expressed interest in having a theatre organ placed in one of the county high schools. Chapter members toured existing schools, but were unable to locate a suitable facility for a pipe organ. At

the time, Stephenson High School in Stone Mountain, GA was in the design stage. In 1992, a meeting was held between officials of DeKalb County School System and members of the Board of Directors of the Atlanta Chapter. The school system agreed to make building modifications to a planned 500-seat theatre in the new Stephenson High School to include chamber space, an organ pit, organ console storage area, blower accommodations, and electrical and wind conduits. Jack Sandow became the project leader after the initial meeting and worked closely with Beers Construction Company and the school system's engineer as design and construction progressed.

Work has continued on the Grande Page over the years. Most of the organ has been rebuilt and plans call for adding six ranks to what you heard at the Convention. The Atlanta Chapter's Page Crew has been working untiringly to make sure the Grande Page will be ready to perform better than it ever has.

### *Directions to Stephenson High School*

- **From I-85 N** - Turn South on Jimmy Carter Blvd. which changes to Mountain Industrial Blvd. and then Hairston at Memorial Dr. Go to the 3rd traffic light and turn left on Rockbridge Rd. When you cross the railroad tracks, continue two miles and turn right on Stephenson Rd. Go 1 mile. School is on the right.
- **From I-285** - Exit on Memorial and turn East toward Stone Mountain. Turn right on Rockbridge Rd. and continue. When you cross the railroad tracks, continue two miles and turn right on Stephenson Rd. Go 1 mile. School is on the right.
- **From I-20 West Side** - Take Exit 74 and go north on Lithonia Industrial Blvd. Turn left on Stone Mt. Lithonia Rd. Go about a mile and turn right at the light onto S. Dishon Rd. Proceed approximately 1.25 miles (past a church on the right) and turn left on Alford which dead-ends into Stephenson Rd. Turn left. The school will be about 1/2 mile on your left.

*School address is: 701 Stephenson Road, Stone Mountain, GA 30087*