

*Sunday, September 20, 2009*  
*Open Console on the Grande Page at Stephenson High School*

*Our Yearly Visit and Open Console at the Grande Page*

By Larry Davis

On Sunday, September 20, we will have an opportunity to have a chapter meeting and open console at Stephenson High School, the home of our Grande Page organ. Most of you are already familiar with the history of this instrument, and its long journey from the studios of WHT Radio in the Wrigley Building in Chicago to the arts auditorium at Stephenson.



Our Page Organ was the first of the 4-manual Page organs to be built, and its younger sister is in the Embassy Theatre in Fort Wayne, IN, and the last of the three resides in the Avalon Theatre on Catalina Island.

Designed and specified by well-known Chicago organist Al Carney, the organ is fifteen ranks, of which seven are playable at the present time from a two-manual Wurlitzer console. The ranks are **Diapason/Diaphone-Sousaphone**, **Bourdon/Flute**, **Tibia**, **Vox Humana**, **Tuba**, **Quintadena**, **Viol D'Orchestra**, and **Clarinet** in the main chamber (highlighted ranks are playable), and **French Horn**, **Post Horn**, **Solo String**, **Tibia**, **Kinura**, **Oboe Horn**, **Brass Saxophone** in the Solo Chamber, along with the



**Chrysoglott**, **Vibraphone**, **re-it Xylophones**, **single-stroke Xylophone**, **Glockenspiel**, **Marimba**, **main toy counter** and a **second counter** with further toys in the solo.

The organ has recently been exquisitely tuned by Jim Wingate and sounds as good as it has ever sounded in the auditorium. As well, you will immediately see the progress that has been made in both the chambers and on the four-manual console.

Last year, you saw the manuals and the stoprails, basically just placed into the console. This year, you will see the massive (!) wiring job that is almost completed, and, as I wrote in the last newsletter, it will be one of your very few opportunities to see the inside of the instrument before it is all buttoned up later in the year.



People often wonder what kind of work it takes to re-do a console, and this is your opportunity to see

in person what is involved. Perhaps you have heard of the 35 miles of wire that Joe Patten used at the Fox. You'll be able to see why it can take that much, and see inside the console at the kind of work that is required to achieve a playing instrument.

And of course, you can take your seat at the console and make some music yourself. Last year we were entertained by various people, most memorably Bob Fountain and Paul Renard.

You will be hosted by Project Manager Jack Sandow, and project members Bob Haag, Rick McGee, Randy Hendry and me. Rick and I will open the musical endeavors and then turn the console over to all of you.

Whether you work on pipe organs, play pipe organs, enjoy listening to pipe organs, or all three, this will be a great day for you. I have often said that there are many ATOS chapters across the country that would consider themselves fortunate to have a 7-rank pipe organ – what we have now – and we already have that and are moving forward to something better.

Come, see, and enjoy! And, by the way, be sure see the historic sheet music that I have acquired that is associated with the Grand Page during it's Chicago sojourn.

**Directions to Stephenson  
H.S. on Page 5**

**Atlanta Chapter,  
American Theatre Organ Society**

P.O. Box 426  
Marietta, Georgia 30061-0426  
770-948-8424

[www.theatreorgans.com/georgia/atlanta/atos/](http://www.theatreorgans.com/georgia/atlanta/atos/)

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Contact Elbert Fields at 770-435-7340 or  
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**Great News for The Strand  
Organ Project**

By Ron Carter

I am pleased to announce that the organ console elevator has been purchased for the Strand. Steve Imler, a Strand advisory board member, has generously donated the \$15,000 needed to purchase and install the lift. This will be a great addition to the presentation of the Allen organ during pre-shows and concerts. I got to know Steve several years ago when SAVE THE STRAND signs started showing up all over Marietta. I knew that the Friends of the Strand Board had not done this and I soon found out that a local Marietta citizen, Mr. Steve Imler, had taken it upon himself to have the signs made and then placed in people's yards and business windows. I contacted Steve to thank him and he said that he just wanted to do something to help save the Strand and had taken it upon himself to do just that! He is a super guy, loves Marietta and the Strand. Then I played a theatre organ pre-show for a Valentine Benefit gala at the Strand for the Cobb Humane Society which Steve had sponsored. He said that he appreciated that so much and that the organ added so much to his program

**ALABAMA JUBILEE 2009**

**Alabama Chapter Regional Convention  
of the American Theatre Organ Society in  
Birmingham, Alabama - Nov 27 thru 29, 2009**

**Featuring (In order of appearance):**

Simon Gledhill at the Alabama Theatre  
Ken Double at the Alabama Theatre  
Steven Ball at the Cathedral Church of the Advent  
Jim Riggs at the Alabama Theatre  
Interview with Michael Barone at the hotel  
Donna Parker at the Alabama Theatre  
Mark Herman at the Alabama Theatre

**Afterglow - Nov 30 - Motorsports Monday**

Tour of the Talladega Speedway track, self-guided tour of the International Motorsports Hall of Fame, box lunch, and a self-guided tour of the Barber Vintage Motorsports Museum.

See <http://www.alabamatheatreorgan.com/convention.html> for more information.

that he wanted to help present the organ while it was being played in the proper manner! We are very grateful to Steve for this most generous donation. The lift will take the console from the orchestra pit floor 90 inches to the just above the stage apron. We hope to have it installed and operational the first of October. So you never know who might be out there to help our project.

Have you made a contribution? Do you know someone who might help us? We need to move this project forward but we need MONEY!! Contact me if you have any ideas that might help!

***Bucky says "Thanks" to those  
who helped make his Birthday  
Bash such a huge success!***

Betty & Randy Anderson  
Fred Boska  
Tom Cannon  
Mike Knight  
John McCall  
Shirley Rose (Caterer)  
Svetlana Satterlee  
James Thrower  
Steve Worthington

**Metrolina Chapter to  
Celebrate 20 Years**

MTOS, the chapter serving the Charlotte area and areas of North and South Carolina, will celebrate its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a concert by Ken Double, President and CEO of ATOS. This concert will be played on Gil Parsons' 3/56 Walker at his home in Davidson, North Carolina on Saturday September 12<sup>th</sup> at 2 pm.

Members of other chapters are invited to celebrate with us but since space is very limited a RSVP to Gil Parsons is required. Contact him by telephone at 704-786-5592 or email [gparsons4@carolina.rr.com](mailto:gparsons4@carolina.rr.com) no later than Tuesday, September 8<sup>th</sup>. Please park on the street. The entrance to Gil's Music Room is down the driveway following the walk to the double doors. Soft drinks will be served.

Our congratulations to the Metrolina Chapter on this achievement. Three MTOS officers are Atlanta Chapter members: Brent Wood, President; Gil Parsons, Secretary and Paul Gelsleichter, Treasurer.

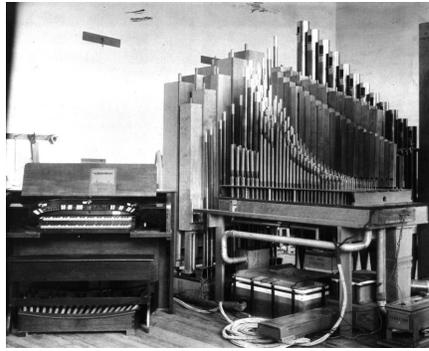
## *Theaters of Georgia and their organs Part 1: Introduction and the State Theater.*

By John Tanner

Partway through the series of articles on the Atlanta theaters, someone asked me if and when I was going to write about the theaters and organs in other cities around the state. I replied that most of my research to that point had been on the Atlanta theaters, because that is what I had the most information on and some of those theaters I actually remembered. However, in doing the research on the Atlanta theaters I have also from time to time come across information on other theaters around the state. Over the past year I have been visiting the libraries, historical societies, and even a probate court, in other cities to seek out the information on these theaters.

Back in the early 1970's, John McCall was editor of a publication called *The Relay* in which he included several paragraphs on some theaters around the state. With John's permission I am using that information as a spring board to greatly expand the information on a particular theater and organ. With the current research, I have accumulated enough material to start writing articles on these organs and theaters. Along the way I may retreat back to Atlanta and cover some material that I have not written about. One area in particular is some of the theaters in the black community. So stay tuned because I have some real surprises.

Before we start this tour around the state, I would like to make everyone aware of the type of organ that was in those theaters. Except for 3 manual 11 rank style 235 that was in the Lucas Theater, Savannah, Georgia, most of the organs were 2 manuals and 8 or less ranks, with the more common size being 2 manuals and 4 ranks. Now that does not sound like a very big organ, but it is quite surprising how much music can be extracted from an organ that size, plus it



This photo shows a Style 75 Robert-Morton organ, similar to the ones that found their way into many of Georgia's smaller theaters, 2 manuals and 4 ranks. *Encyclopedia of the American Theatre Organ Vol. 2.*

tended to reflect the size of the theater. Many of these theaters were spaces previously occupied by some sort of retail establishment. It was only in the larger cities that you tended to find theaters built as an independent building

Regardless of the size of the theater, you will always find in the advertisement phrases like "THE LARGEST", "The Finest in any Theater in the South," and of course the highly inflated cost of the organ. One thing we must understand was that the theater owners were proud of their "Picture Palaces" and that the people in these communities were just as proud and rightly so, as the citizens of Atlanta were proud of their Howard, Georgia, Capitol, Fox, etc.

To begin our tour let us travel about 45 miles northeast of Atlanta to Gainesville, Georgia.

Several years ago while visiting with George and Barbara Whitmire (both now departed) and helping them with the installation of their small Marr and Colton theater organ, I asked George if Gainesville ever had a theater with an organ in it. George having grown up in Gainesville could not recall any organ or a theater that had one. Well, taking this as a no, I didn't pursue the question further. However, there was that listing of an organ being installed in the State theater that was in the back of my mind that needed to be verified.

As it turned out, the listing was correct and George's recollections were also somewhat correct.

Back in the early 1900's the Alamo Theater was Gainesville's main picture house and was basically designed very much in the style of the nickelodeon theaters, basically some chairs, a projection booth, and a screen. However, in the summer of 1924 that would change.

On August 27, 1924 the following appeared in the *Gainesville News*: "GAINESVILLE TO HAVE NEW MOVIE THEATER: Gainesville is to have, within the next sixty to ninety days one of the finest moving picture theaters in a town of this size in the whole country. It is to be equipped and operated by Mr. Frank Plagino of Charleston, West Virginia, who arrived in Gainesville Friday and who announces the purchase of the building on East Washington Street occupied by the Singer Sewing Machine Co., from the owner, Mr. J. W. Waters. The purchase price is \$15,000.

"The building fronts on East Washington Street 25 feet and runs back 120 feet, and is two stories in height. The second story will be torn out so as to permit a high ceiling, and one of the most modern and up-to-date fronts will be installed. In addition a concrete floor will be laid, so as to permit its washing daily, if necessary; the latest cooling and heating system will be put in, assuring perfect comfort summer and winter. Also, a large pipe organ will be built in the theater to cost approximately \$10,000 -- something Gainesville has never yet had in a motion picture house, which feature will be unusually attractive. The old mission style will prevail throughout the theater, and when completed it will be one of the handsomest in the South.

"Sixty or ninety days will be required to properly equip the building for the new theater. Local contractors will be engaged to do the work, and the inten-

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

tion of the new owners is to purchase all material locally so far as possible."

On Oct. 29, 1924, the Gainesville News carried three pages of ads announcing the opening of the State Theater the following Monday. In addition to the formal opening announcements, were ads by all the local suppliers for the theater, ranging from Goforth Bros. Hardware, W.J. & E.C. Palmour Co. department store, who provided all the draperies and curtains, Jackson-Thorpe Co. who provided the concrete, Economy Electric Co. that did all the electrical wiring, and many others.

Also included, was an ad from the Photo-Player Corporation of New York showing the console of the new \$10,000 Robert Morton Organ with organist Ben Potter at the console.



Ad from Photo-Player Corporation showing organist Ben Potter at the console of the Robert-Morton. Although hard to see in this photograph, the console seems to have a roll top, which was not usually found on theater organs.

Ben Potter had played at the Criterion, Tudor, and Metropolitan Theaters in Atlanta in the late teens and early 20's, and was also organist at Trinity Methodist, Atlanta. In 1924 he was also teaching at Brenau College in Gainesville, so it would be a natural for him to earn some extra income by playing the Robert Morton at the State.

While looking through the newspapers of this period, I often will look forward several months and years to see if there is a listing of someone else playing the organ or if the organist is going to do some special music, and I just happened to make a copy of an ad in August of 1925 that announced the opening of the

"New State Theater." At first this ad did not make sense, except that maybe a new management had taken over. Well, after writing the first draft of this article, I still was not satisfied with that word "New". So back to the library in Gainesville to see if I could sort out what was going on. Upon further investigation I now know why George did not know about the Robert Morton.

On Sunday afternoon April 19th, 1925, less than 6 months after the State Theater had opened, "The entire city was thrown into a state of consternation last Sunday afternoon at 6:30, when the high walls and the giant steel girders of the old Hunt Opera House fell to the ground with a resounding crash that was heard for miles around, and the immemorial war was on again between Nature's most destructive element, Fire, and the courage and skill of man." *The Gainesville News*.

The firemen arrived to find the interior of the opera house already in flames and due to low water pressure the Hunt building soon became an inferno. After water pressure was increased from some of the supplies from the surrounding mills, the effort became to keep the fire from spreading but it was already too late, the fire soon spread up Bradford Street to East Washington and then down Washington, destroying all the buildings along its path. By the time the fire was brought under control, almost a dozen establishments, including the State Theater, were destroyed.

A couple of weeks after the fire Mr. Plagino stated that he would rebuild the State Theater as a duplicate to what was there before, in all its appointments. From an article dated July 29, 1925 *Gainesville News*, Mr. Plagino states that all the furnishings are ready to be put into the reconstructed theater, including a new organ. The article does not say what kind of organ. Judging from the insurance information listed in the paper after the fire, the State building was valued at \$35,000 with an insurance

policy valued at \$19,000. The insurance would have gotten the theater going again but would not have covered the cost of a \$10,000 organ.

There is no listing of an organ going to the State in 1925 and there are no ads with an organ mentioned after the State reopens. If indeed a new organ of like or some other kind was installed there seems to be no knowledge of its history or current status.

With only a few months of use, the Robert Morton didn't have time to become remembered by most of the people in Gainesville. The fire would have created a more lasting memory.

The Plagino family would open two other theaters in Gainesville in the 30's -- the Royal in 1931, and the Ritz in 1933, and would continue to operate the State until 1953 when it finally closed.

The State almost suffered disaster again in 1936 when a tornado leveled much of the downtown portion of Gainesville and killed over 100 persons. The Royal was extensively damaged, but was rebuilt. It was finally demolished in the 80's and is still a vacant lot. The State survived and the building still exists on East Washington Street.

Next time we will travel to Griffin, Georgia and visit the Imperial Theater.



How the State Theater building looks as of July 2009.

## *Allen Organ Used Throughout the Summer — Plans for Increased Use This Fall*

By Ron Carter

The Chapter Allen MDS 317EX was used for two weddings, 10 preshow concerts and a benefit gala in July and August at the Earl Smith Strand Theatre. It is also being used on a regular basis for tours via the smart recorder playback system.

Please check the Strand website at [www.earlsmithstrand.org](http://www.earlsmithstrand.org) for show dates and times when the organ will be used this fall. There are big plans for Halloween and other film screenings during October and November. It will be used for the screening of *Gone With the Wind* on November 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>. This is for the 70-year re-premiere hosted by Robert Osborne of Turner Classic movies.

As was stated in last month's newsletter, the Chapter has purchased the Allen from John McCall with payments to be made over a five-year period at no interest. At this time the organ payments are being made from existing chapter funds and we are stepping out on faith that members will give a little extra over the next five years to pay for this instrument so that we can have a digital theatre organ owned by the chapter that can be easily transported to venues that would like to have a theatre organ program but have no theatre organ. In fact we have already received a \$250.00 check from Bob McKoon with another \$250.00 to come next month from him for the Allen. Please send your contributions for the Allen to Wanda Carey Fields, 413 Concord Road SW, Smyrna, GA 30082-4509 and enter "For the Allen Organ" on the memo line of the check.

## *Bucky and the Milestone!*



Left to Right—Larry-Douglas Embury, Chris Elliott, Bucky Reddish, Jelani Eddington, Ken Double

original Wurlitzer now). To celebrate this marker, a celebration party was held at his residence and featured three national / international artists and one of our own who is making himself known nationally as well.

Ken Double, one of our chapter members, and President / C.E.O. of the American Theatre Organ Society, Chris Elliott – international artist and silent film accompanist deluxe, and Jelani Eddington – surprise guest international artist, were joined by Larry-Douglas Embury – artist-in-residence and official house organist for the Atlanta FOX Theatre, and our own John McCall, Jr.

Each artist performed on the Walker RTO 3/35 (now 36) theatre organ installed in Bucky's residence. Mini-concerts of about thirty to forty-five minutes allowed the artists to delight the celebrant and his guests.

This was a party where one could arrive, listen, visit and, most importantly – EAT, then leave as desired. It was reported that at least 125 people were in attendance – almost at the same time !!

Each artist offered great contrast and stylistic differences, providing a great variety of music. There were even some organ-piano duets between Chris Elliott (organ) and Jelani Eddington (piano).

At the end of the evening, we were treated by a special duo – Mark Renwick on the organ, accompanying his talented wife Carrie in several vocal selections.

A great party! Bucky – where and when do we sign up for the 120<sup>th</sup> ??

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

Saturday, August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2009 at 4:00 pm the Reddish residence was invaded for a birthday celebration!!

Bucky Reddish, President of the Atlanta Chapter, American Theatre Organ Society reached a milestone – his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday (he's almost as old as an

### *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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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*

***Thanks for the Strand Theatre  
Organ-Project Donations***

**LISTENER (\$100 TO \$249)**

Ralph W. Daniel

**BRONZE CIRCLE (\$1000 to \$2499)**

Randy & Priscilla Hendry

*Additional Sponsorship Levels Available*

**FRIENDS (up to \$99)**

**PATRON (\$250 to \$499)**

**VIP (\$500 to \$999)**

**SILVER CIRCLE (\$2500 to \$4499)**

**GOLD CIRCLE (\$5000 to \$9999)**

**DIAMOND CIRCLE (\$10,000 +)**

**ORGAN-NAMING RIGHTS AND WORLD-  
CLASS CONTRIBUTOR (\$100,000 +)**

- ***Speakers for sale*** — pair of Rodgers RW-3



speakers in walnut-finish cabinets. No internal amp but wired to connect to external amp. Also a Rodgers Leslie with

internal S-100 amp. Ted Barnett is going to donate the proceeds of this sale to our Strand-Organ Project. Asking \$495 for all three. Make an offer. Contact Ted at 404-876-0563 or [tlbarnet@bellsouth.net](mailto:tlbarnet@bellsouth.net).

- ***Organ for free*** — Circa 1969 Thomas Celebrity, 2-manual, 25-note pedalboard. Contact Herb Buffington at 404-364-9344 (Home) or 678-364-9344 (Cell) for details.

***“Thank You” to those who helped remove the Allen console  
and organ platform from the Strand Orchestra pit on Saturday, August 29<sup>th</sup>.***

These individuals also helped move organ parts, chests and pipes at the warehouse so that the auto parts inventory that has been sold can be removed.

The three-horsepower, three-phase Spencer blower that we obtained from Ohio was serviced and connected to electric power by James Thrower. It started up and ran like a charm!!

Thanks to Phillip Allen, Ted Barnett, James Buttram, John Carter, Ron Carter, Don Eckles, Elbert Fields, Randy Hendry, James Thrower and Priscilla Wilcox.

***Upcoming Meetings & Events (Mark your Calendars)***

- September 13, 2:00 pm CST—Dolton McAlpin in concert at the Alabama Theatre in Birmingham.
- September 18, 7 pm — Ron Carter will accompany the silent film THE GENERAL at the Sacred Heart Cultural center in Augusta, Georgia.
- **September 20, 3:00 pm, Meeting** — Open console & tour of progress on the Page at Stephenson High School. (see Page 1) Hosts: Larry Davis & Jack Sandow
- **October 18, 3:00 pm, Meeting** — “Music by Ron Carter and Friends” a musical variety show at the Carter residence.
- October 23, 7 pm — Ron Carter will present a theatre organ program, sing-a-long and accompany a short silent comedy at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church on Sandy Plains Rd in Cobb County.
- October 27 (Tues) at 7:00 pm – “Concert on the Sanctuary Organ” at Peachtree Road United Methodist Church by Nicholas Bowden on the 4/135 Mander • Tickets: \$10.00
- October 31, 7:00 pm— Phantom of The Opera at the Alabama Theatre in Birmingham, Tom Helms, Organist
- **November 22, 3:00 pm, Meeting** – “Music from Down Under” with special Guest Artist, Mr. David Johnston (direct from Australia ) at the Burud Residence on their Allen GW-IV
- November 27-29, 2009 — Alabama Jubilee 2009, Birmingham, AL, Regional Convention
- December 5 (Sat), 3:00 pm – Concert at Spivey Hall (Pre-Concert Talk: 2:00 pm) Dr. Joyce Jones (Professor of Organ, Baylor University ) on the 3/79 Ruffatti • Tickets: \$30
- December 21, — “Larry, Carols and Mo” at the Atlanta Fox Theatre, Larry-Douglas Embury on the 4/40 Möller and Joe Gransden with his 15-piece orchestra. Free but tickets are required.