

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 2ND, 3 P.M.
Atlanta Chapter, ATOS Annual Membership Meeting
followed by open console on the organ and piano
James Thrower residence

The December meeting is our annual membership meeting and you will be able to vote on the officers and directors for 2008 and learn what's going on with your Atlanta Chapter, ATOS. Following the meeting, there will be open console on both the piano and organ. This is a good opportunity for some excellent impromptu duets within our membership.

Of course, you don't have to be a member to attend. We

always welcome visitors and invite all to come get acquainted with our friends and find out what we are all about.

Directions to the
James Thrower Residence

On I-75 take Exit 263 to South Marietta Parkway (South Loop, GA-120) & turn West. Go under the railroad bridge and turn right. In about 1/4 mile turn left on Whitlock (GA-120) and go West for about 5-1/2 miles. Turn left

on West Sandtown Road. Then go about 2 miles through the flashing light at Old Villa Rica Road. Take the next left into Brookwest Drive, then the first right (Katy Lane) and turn right at the dead end onto Brookwest Lane. The Thrower residence is located at the first intersection on the right (3rd house).

Address: 2656 Brookwest Lane
Phone: 770-218-6279

Those Magnificent Renwicks

By John Clark McCall, Jr.



Those magnificent Renwicks — now here's a musical team that is at the top of its craft! I have been lucky enough to write many reviews of their work prior to the concert that Mark and Carrie gave on Sunday, November 18 at Bucky Reddish's home, but as you may have already guessed, they continue to bring new and exciting musical ideas which are always packaged as professionally as anyone "on the circuit". They are exacting musicians but they never lose sight of the *entertainment* value that a theatre organ, its console maestro, and a truly fine vocalist can give to

appreciative audiences.

The match between Mark Renwick and the Reddish Walker organ is perfection, just as Carrie's accomplished voice is to the room. Together, they left an Atlanta audience crying for more of the same and, of course, they gladly gave it.

Mark's concert introduction was a stirring *On Green Dolphin Street* which again evokes the old advertising slogan, "Is it real, or is it Memorex?" In this case, it was a Walker that has almost become indistinguishable from its real Wurlitzer counterpart. Mark, among his many talents, always adapts his playing style and his registrations to the instrument at hand, and in this case, the Walker offered "everything but the kitchen sink". He called upon those resources never in a contrived way, but in such a way that the *music* was always the consummate end product.

Renwick is a master in the art of registration, and this was quite evident in his suite of two selections from Lionel Bart's show, *Oliver*. *Who Will Buy?* began as a plaintive litany among English Street sellers crying about their wares, and progressed to a spirited, stirring climax that had the added "percussion" of some incredibly fast pedal work. Such pieces remind us that the art of the theatre organ is a visual thing and somehow, watching the artist at the bench lends a special excitement to the sounds that pour forth. Following this was one of the ultimate torch songs of live musical theatre, *As Long As He Needs Me*. This organist has a way with a ballad that can be matched by only a few in the field. His left hand accompaniment was something every musician should study; it was always precisely what the melody line needed. As I listened I thought,

(Continued on page 2)

**Atlanta Chapter,
American Theatre Organ Society**

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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. New members joining during the last quarter of 2007 are deemed members for 2008 and we are pleased to accept early renewals during December. 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*

(Continued from page 1)

"here is a precision watchmaker at the bench."

It doesn't take the listener a long time to discover who Mark's musical mentors are. Among them are, of course, Jesse Crawford and the legendary George Wright. Mark never mimics these men, but he draws heavily from their musical approach. In *Anastasia* Mark drew upon another great musician from Britain, Edmundo Ros, who purveyed the Latin beat to hundreds of tunes in his heyday. At this juncture it is important to remind listeners of another Renwick trait that all organists should employ—the judicious use of the instrument's battery of percussions. You won't hear the crash cymbal in every other piece Mark plays (thankfully!), and when you do hear it, it is always right—even needed—and utilized for an important *emotional* end. His playing is, as our friend John Nelson pointed out, truly that of a conductor at the "unit orchestra".

Willow Weep For Me was packaged in an upbeat, syncopated style somewhat reminiscent of the way Sarah Vaughan recorded it in the fifties in a live album recorded at Mr. Kelly's nightclub. I can't help but remind our readers that in

this particular recording there were some problems between the music and the band and she—without missing a beat—sung (as she pointed to the score) "*According to this I'm through but they're not, so I'll keep on singing Willow Weep For Me.*"

For those of us lucky enough to have experienced the High Fidelity craze of the 1950's (like this venerable reviewer), Mark's rendition of *Bahia* was a perfectly rendered journey back to George Wright's days when recording with the label, HI-FI Record. This era was earmarked by music that often was esoteric, exotic, and sensual—yes, *sensual*. The Walker emulated the sounds of the fabled Richard Vaughn Wurlitzer in every way, although the Walker may be just a wee bit better. *Bahia* is certainly not a sad piece, but I found a lump in my throat as Mark brought back these halcyon days to many in the audience.

As the afternoon proceeded, the lovely lady seated to the right of the Walker came to life in all good time. Her rendition of *Indian Love Call* is legend among those who have followed the Renwick's music, and this time it was almost as if Carrie were part of the "melody coupler" on the organ. There was an almost indistinguishable blending of the organ's solo line with hers. Her

impeccable diction, her precision, and her true love of what she sang left everyone spellbound. The Crawford arrangement of *My Love Song* (which originally featured vocalist Jack Plant) was played and sung to-the-note like the original recording made at the Empire Theatre, London. Mark is really *two* musicians; he is an outstanding soloist and he's one of the finest accompanying organists in the field. He manages to always give the precisely correct backdrop to his vocalist—never overshadowing, but always enriching the musical results. This is a skill few have and it is something that truly sets him apart.

Other selections included *Moanin' Low*, *Don't Blame Me*, *Darn That Dream*, *At Last*, and a novelty written by yours truly: *Market Day at Wally-World*. A medley of tunes from the motion picture *Gold Diggers of 1933* rounded out the program. Of course, the audience wouldn't let the Renwicks leave their musical stage and two encores followed: the delightful *Sing Before Breakfast—another* Mark and Carrie duo that belongs to *them—and* Mark's dark, pensive, and ever-lovely rendition of *Sylvia*.

These are very special artists, friends, and members of the Atlanta Chapter; long may they perform and entertain!

Impressions of Charles Walker

by John Tanner

The first time that I met Charles was at the Fox Theatre during one of the first public tours of the theatre, during the "Save the Fox" campaign. He was on the mezzanine level telling the tour groups about this particular section of the theatre. He was pointing out all the minute details in the plaster work that made the ceiling look like it had hand wrought wood beams.

Although this was the first time I met him, I actually knew of Charles many years before even though I didn't know it. I vaguely remember a time at my uncle's house on a hot summer night watching the Atlanta Crackers play at the old Ponce De Leon Ball Park, and out in the outfield near the large magnolia tree, the famous "Dancing Waters" were being showcased during the game. Charles was in charge of the display.

When I would go to the Southeastern Fair, it was a good chance that Charles was the one at the large brake lever that released the trains on the always condemned "Greyhound" rollercoaster.

Several Christmas seasons in the early sixties, Santa and his reindeer would be flying over the Walgreens drug store at the entrance of the mall at Lenox Square, courtesy of Herschel Harrington and Charles Walker. Perhaps the most impressive thing I ever saw of Charles Walker's creative talents, before or since I met him, was at the Southeastern Fair in 1969. Under the direction of William Hartsfield and the artist talents of



Charles, one of the exhibition halls at Lakewood was given over to a re-creation of man's first landing on the moon. Here Charles sculptured three dump truck loads of sand into a lunar landscape, with the center piece being a full size mock up of the Lunar Excursion Module (LEM) on loan from NASA .

In 1977 when I attended my first chapter meeting of the Atlanta ATOS, at the East Point Theatre, Charles was one of the first persons that I met. My first mistake was to tell him I was interested in theatre organs, the second was to tell him I was interested in old theatres.

One thing I learned very early on about Charles was that if you showed the slightest bit of interest in anything that he was interested in he was going to latch on to you. I must have shown too much interest because before I knew it, I was helping him strip some old organ pipes from the organ at his church in Griffin, which was being moved to the new church building. On some pipes he had already stripped, he turned on a black light to reveal the outlines of the

old stencil designs that had graced the pipes in 1894.

As I got to know Charles one thing that became quickly obvious was that if something was old, Charles was going to be interested in it. If there was a society that dealt with some interest he had, he probably belonged to it, or if an interest did not have a society he would insist that one be started for it. To name just a few of the societies Charles belonged to — he was a charter member of the Atlanta Chapter when it was known as the Southeastern Chapter ATOE. Charles was also a member of the Organ Historical Society, The Theatre Historical Society, The National Carousel Association, which he helped to found, The Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation, The Society for the Preservation of Old Mills, The Reed Organ Society. I always joked with him that there should be an organ storage society, dedicated to storing old pipe organs, or the National Ceiling Fan society where you could take bus trips around to see ceiling fans in action.

Charles was very active in the early meetings that would lead to the formation of Atlanta Landmarks whose goal was to save and preserve the Fox Theatre. He helped establish the National Carousel Museum in Leavenworth, Kansas. He helped to preserve the Callenwolde Mansion with its Aeolian Pipe Organ. He helped in the preservation and restoration of Midway Church, Midway, Georgia, and also the Presbyterian Church in

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

Waltourville, Georgia, both of which had ancestral family ties.

As if all this were not enough, Charles' real business was theatrical lighting. Hundreds of schools and churches looked to Charles and Herschel Harrington Studio to plan the lighting for the school play or Christmas and Easter productions.

Charles also had a special gel for his spotlights that he dubbed "debutante pink" which made sure that all the new debutants at the Piedmont Driving Club would look their best when they made their social debut at the Debutante Ball.

If it was not a musical instrument or something to do with the theatre, Charles' other great love was trains.

Some of my most memorable moments with Charles were on trains. If it wasn't on one of the steam excursions to Toccoa or Chattanooga, it would be in the Blue Ridge or the Smokies. or trips in the Colorado Rockies from Durango to Silverton — or if we were not riding the train, we were driving all over middle Georgia photographing the remaining railroad depots.

If one were to open the dictionary and look up the term "pack rat", there would be a picture of Charles next to it. Charles could not throw anything away. I even saw him many times retrieve items that someone else had already thrown away. Now granted many of these items should have been thrown away, but every now and then, Charles would save things that would later be of use. Sometime Charles would be a little depressed about all the stuff he

had and wondered if anybody really cared about this old stuff. That is when I would point out that if he had not saved some of the information on Atlanta's theatres, I would not have been able to write the articles for this newsletter.

Charles was a caring individual. He would help some people who were down on their luck by giving them a job and a place to stay until they could get back on their feet. Even if these people didn't always appreciate Charles kindness, he would still try to help them.

One night a small fire broke out in the retirement home at the corner of Tenth and Juniper. Since the building had to be evacuated there were many elderly people standing out in the cold night air. Charles opened his little theatre on Tenth Street for the people to come inside out of the cold and entertained them on the organ while the firemen made sure it was safe for the residents of the retirement home to return.

When Charles sold the property on Tenth Street and moved lock, stock, and barrel to Griffin I even accused him of sweeping up the dust and packing it up. He worked with many of the local historical and theatre groups in the area. He worked with the Roosevelt Railroad, and was even tracing old stage coach routes across Middle Georgia.

The last time I saw Charles he was deeply upset about a house somewhere down in South Georgia. It was the oldest house in that county and the owners of the property had decided it was time for it to go. I reminded Charles that you can't save everything,

and I reminded him of all the things that he had helped to save.

I don't think Charles ever really knew how much he had done and how much he meant to his friends, and anyone for that matter, whoever met him. His passion for the past, and his unique sense of being able to find humor in almost every aspect of life, were only a couple of his endearing qualities.

Many people have asked me how I got the nickname "Grumpy", because it did not always seem to fit. After all, we all have our grumpy times. Well, I have to thank Charles for that title, and it occurred this way.

I don't remember if it was a chapter meeting or what but what I remember was that I was talking to someone about some topic and Charles was standing behind me talking to someone else about organs or theatres — when all of a sudden I hear Charles exclaim, "I don't know, let's ask Grumpy!" To which he turned to me and asked me if I knew about whatever topic he was discussing. Well, being blindsided by Charles' question I was immediately dubbed "Grumpy" by all those around me, and it has been my nickname ever since.

I have tried to mention just a few of the highlights of Charles' life. There are many more to be sure and could be the subject of volumes of material. To all who knew Charles, we will always have our special memories, thankfully they are joyful. We have all been blessed with his time with us.

Charles Norman Walker
Nov. 17, 1940 - Oct. 8, 2007

President's Message...

I have been gratified beyond words by the many kind comments that I have received since my announcement that I will step down from the presidency at the end of this month. In particular, the complimentary and supportive words from people for whom I hold the greatest respect has been most humbling. It has been an extraordinary privilege to have been able to be the president for the past three years of a chapter that has a national reputation as one of the best in ATOS.

I have heard the period of the late 1970's and early 1980's referred to as the "Golden Age of the Atlanta Chapter" by some who lived through that era. But as I write these words, the groundwork has been laid for theatre organs to be installed at the Strand Theatre in Marietta and at the Imperial Theatre in Augusta; the Rylander Möller already plays an important part in the life of that theatre; and the Chattanooga Tivoli is re-exploring



Larry Davis at the Conn Spinnet that was his first organ -- along with his mother's bear collection.

Photo by Karen Davis

public use of the Wurlitzer there. I believe that we are living in the opening days of a new Golden Age for our chapter and that many unforeseen opportunities are going to reveal themselves in the near future.

There are those who have expressed concern at my decision and for you I will share a personal memory. Back when I was twelve years old, my Dad and I were having a conversation one afternoon about some changes in the Boy Scout troop. In the process he told me something memorable. He said, "I've learned that anytime you get to feeling indispensable, put your hand

in a bucket of water, take it out, and see how big a hole it leaves." Wise words. The successes of the past three years are the result of the participation of many people even though the leader sometimes receives the credit. In my messages each month, I've tried to illustrate this fact by acknowledging the contributions of the many people who make our chapter successful.

The passing of Charles Walker should remind us that the torch must eventually be passed to a younger generation. Therefore, as the years pass, we must always be diligent to educate new people and younger people in this wonderful world of theatre organ and in how to lead our organization. I urge all of you, but particularly you who are younger, to stand forth and share with us your knowledge, your energy, your enthusiasm, and your wisdom. If you don't think you have enough knowledge or experience to contribute meaningfully, consider that your current president had been

(Continued on page 6)

Christmas Pops Concert at the Rylander Theatre

ATOS member, John Clark McCall, Jr., will be featured in a Christmas Pops Concert at the Frank Sheffield Memorial Möller theatre organ at the Rylander Theatre, 310 West Lamar Street, Americus, Georgia, at 7:30 p.m., Friday, December 21. Tickets are \$10.00 each and all proceeds go to charity.

Mr. McCall will be assisted by pianist Dayle Harding at the Rosalynn Carter Steinway grand piano in an evening of light Christmas classics and a medley from the film, Meet Me In St. Louis. McCall will also provide an original score on the organ for the silent comedy, The Wrong Santa, as well



as premiering his new composition, Windsor Wonderland—a song inspired by Americus' famous landmark hotel, The Windsor. Dayle Harding, in addition to his duos with McCall, will present a cameo from Tchaikovsky's ballet, The Nutcracker.

An after-concert complimentary reception will be held on stage again featuring pianist Dayle Harding.

On Saturday, December 22 at 10:00 a.m. Mr. McCall and the

Rylander's organ curator, John Tanner, will host an "open console" event at the theatre. Admission is free and is open to anyone wishing to play the Rylander organ or for those who just wish to listen. The Rylander organ, a smaller version of the famous Atlanta Fox Moller, is one of only two organs in a Georgia theatre. McCall was instrumental in the Rylander's acquisition and installation of this organ, originally built for the Riviera Theatre, Scranton, PA, in 1926.

Special weekend packages including the concert, open console, and lodging at the Windsor Hotel are available. Concert tickets and further information are available in advance at the Rylander box office or by phone at 229-931-0001.

(Continued from page 5)

a member for about twenty months when he stepped into the presidency. The support will be there for you, as it was for me.

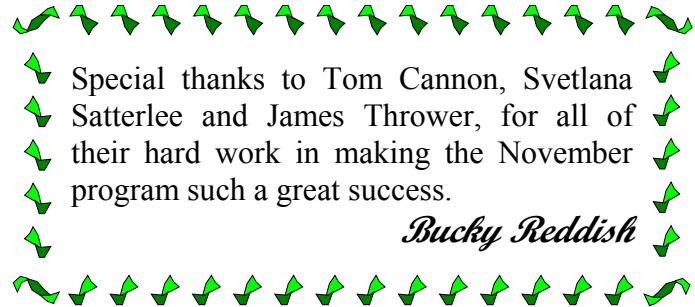
In conclusion, I want to thank all of you – and particularly the members of the Board of Directors for the past three years – for your contributions that are truly the reason for our recent success and our emergence into a new Golden Age.

Stay in touch.

Larry Davis

Thanks for the Donation

John Nelson



Special thanks to Tom Cannon, Svetlana Satterlee and James Thrower, for all of their hard work in making the November program such a great success.

Bucky Reddish

Upcoming Meetings & Events *(Mark your Calendars)*

- **December 2nd, 3 P.M., Atlanta Chapter, ATOS Annual Membership Meeting followed by open console on the organ and piano at the James Thrower residence**
- December 16th, 3 P.M., - Hector Olivera in Concert at Grace United Methodist Church, 458 Ponce de Leon Avenue, Atlanta, GA, Schantz/Widener organ, \$10 per person*
- December 16th, 6:00 P.M., - 14th Annual Nicholas Bowden & Friends Holiday Concert at Peachtree Presbyterian Church, Music for organ, chorus and soloists. Free admission. A free-will offering will be taken.
- December 18th, "Christmas at the Fox" at the Atlanta Fox Theatre with Larry Douglas Embury
- December 21st, 7:30 P.M., "Christmas Pops" with John McCall at the Frank Sheffield Memorial Möller, Rylander Theatre, Americus
- December 23rd, 2 P.M. CST, Larry Davis on the Wurlitzer at the Alabama Theatre in Birmingham
- **January meeting to be announced**
- 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, 2008, 3 P.M., - Meeting, Brett Valiant at the Bucky Reddish residence**
- March 6-9, 2008 - 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

* Note: You can order tickets to the Hector Olivera concert in advance by sending a check for \$10 per ticket to Grace United Methodist Church, Attention Ellen Hicks, 458 Ponce de Leon Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30308. Put "Hector Olivera tickets" on check. Be sure to include your name and address so Ellen will know who they are for.

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.