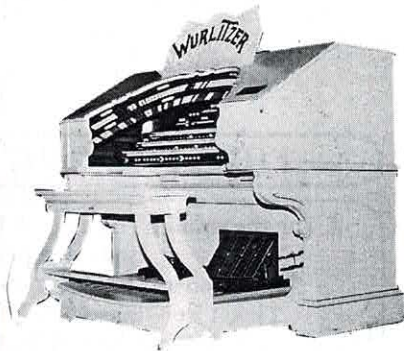




2/11 WurliTzer Theatre Pipe Organ
Marrickville Town Hall

SEPTEMBER, 1995

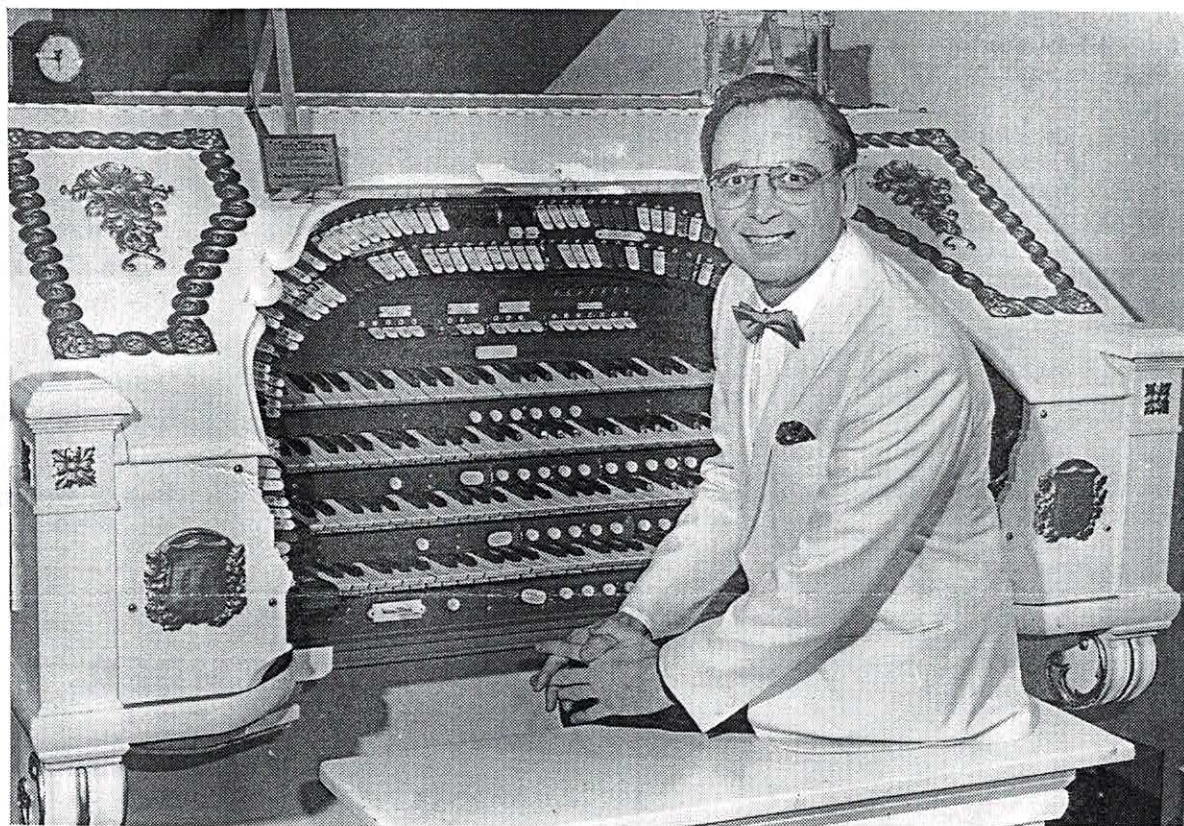
TOSA *NEWS*



3/17 WurliTzer Theatre Pipe Organ
Orion Centre Campsie

The UK's TOP THEATRE ORGANIST

LEN RAWLE



Sunday, 8th October, 1995, at 2.00pm

Orion Centre Campsie

Volume 34
Issue 8
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TOSA NEWS

SEPTEMBER, 1995

THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW DIVISION) Inc.

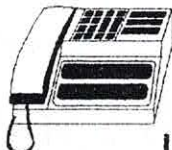
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SEPTEMBER

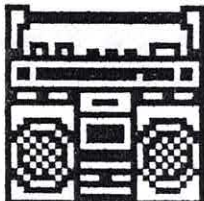
Sunday	3	at 2.00pm	John Ledwon Concert Orion Centre Campsie
Monday	4	at 7.30pm	Committee Meeting
Wednesday	6	at 7.30pm	Members' Playing Night Orion Centre Campsie

OCTOBER

Sunday	8	at 2.00pm	Len Rawle Concert Orion Centre Campsie
Monday	9	at 7.30pm	Committee Meeting
Wednesday	11	at 5.00pm	Close of Nominations for Committee
Saturday	28	at 2.00pm	Members' Afternoon with Ian Davies Bondi Junction RSL

NOVEMBER

Monday	6	at 7.30pm	Committee Meeting
Sunday	19	at 2.00pm	Walt Strony Concert Orion Centre Campsie
Wednesday	22	at 8.00pm	Annual General Meeting Orion Centre Campsie



REMEMBER TO TUNE IN TO
2CBA-FM 103.2

EVERY MONDAY AT 9.00 pm
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Presented by Chris Styles

Membership Notes...

This is your September copy of *TOSA News*. The fact that you have received it means you are a paid-up financial member.

As far as we know a 1995-1996 MEMBERSHIP CARD has been sent to everyone.

If by some chance you HAVE NOT received one, please phone me any evening after 7.00pm and I'll send one post haste.

Best wishes for the coming year.

Walter Pearce
Membership Secretary

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

TOSA is delighted to welcome the following new members and to wish them many happy hours of enjoyment in our Society :

Lois Adlard - Cronulla
Maxwell Gillard
- West Pennant Hills
Jennifer Griffiths
- Ettalong Beach
Gwendoline Kemp
- Warrawee
Robert Pearce - Melba
Leah Read - St Ives
Maureen Simons - Westmead
Thomas Stanton - Sylvania
Margaret Vernon
- Point Vernon
Barbara Woodward
- Sans Souci



Editorial

Time flies, as the old cliché has it, and it is already time to think about our Society's Annual General Meeting and, more particularly, about the nominations for Executive and Committee positions. Page 13 of this issue has the nomination form which must reach our Returning Officer before 5pm on Wednesday, 11th October, if you wish to offer your services.

Thank you to Mrs Mollie Pratten for donating back copies of *TOSA News* and *The Diaphone* to the Society's archives. TOSA appreciates such thoughtful donations which document the past, especially as valuable, historical material is often unfortunately thrown out. If you have old publications, photographs of organs or theatres, theatre organ-related documents of any sort, please don't throw them out. Pass them on to, or phone, a committee member for eventual archival preservation.

Thank you to all the contributors to this issue. It is wonderful to receive unexpected contributions from members who have attended theatre organ events which they are prepared to share with all the other members of the Society.

Once again, thank you especially to Barry Tooker for the photographic elements of this issue and to *Network Graphics* for the processing of the photos to improve their reprinting clarity and quality - always appreciated, even if not always credited in each issue by a forgetful editor.

Best Wishes,
Colin Groves

From The President

Since the last issue of *TOSA News*, there has been a number of interesting things happening, not the least being a most successful Australian tour by Jonas Nordwall. I was privileged to hear Jonas not only at the Orion but also in Canberra, and to be involved in a church organists' workshop with him.

Your committee also resolved some months ago to utilise Jonas' talents as an organ consultant to advise on the final "set-up" of the Orion organ. On the Thursday before his concert, Jonas and the organ's curator, John Parker, spent 4 hours inside the organ adjusting, regulating, tuning, opening and closing all sorts of gadgetry. The end result of the combined knowledge of these two very talented people is a *Wurlitzer* pipe organ that we believe to be second to none! If the various comments expressed by many of the audience at the Sunday concert were anything to go by, the feeling is unanimous.

The wealth of overseas talent continues unabated! John Ledwon (USA) in September, Len Rawle (UK) in October and Walt Strony (USA) in November, with Tony Fenelon (OZ) in December. What a line-up! And there's more (as the man says) in 1996. At least one Britisher and 2 Americans, PLUS our Convention artists - more on them soon.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the invaluable contribution to the success of our concerts made by our ticket secretary, George Newell, and his wife, Jean. Without these faithful and tireless workers we would not be able to efficiently handle the growing audiences at our concerts. Please remember that this position is a voluntary one, as are all TOSA positions. So be nice to George and Jean; say "Hi" to them in the box office or on the phone when booking your tickets for the next concert, as we would only operate with great difficulty without them.

Thank you, George and Jean.

Cliff Bingham
President

Articles in this journal do not necessarily represent the views of the committee nor the editor

The deadline for each edition of TOSA News is the 12th of the preceding month

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DAVID PARSONS

Well-known Sydney theatre organist, David Parsons, OAM, returns to the Church of the Good Shepherd, Bexhill, near Lismore, to give concerts at 1.00pm and 7.00pm. This is his 4th annual visit to play a program of popular music. Admission by program - \$10, student \$5, family \$25, includes afternoon tea or supper.

Enquiries : Grant Virtue (066) 25 1241

COLIN ADAMSON

Deputy director of music at St John's Anglican Cathedral, Parramatta, Colin Adamson, will be presenting a wide variety of music on the historic Walker pipe organ on Wednesday, 13th September from 12.30 to 1.10pm. Near Parramatta Railway Station.

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THANK YOU

To Roy and Iris Walkley for
donating a raffle prize.

TOSA appreciates every
donation and any assistance in
helping to keep costs down.

*Allan Tassaker's jokes
frequently have their UP's and
DOWN's but at least he doesn't
give UP. This one will certainly
go DOWN as being UP there with
the rest of the them.*

UP and DOWN

by Allan Tassaker

I was feeling DOWN so I decided to
go UP to the local music store to track
DOWN a new organ.

The salesman said, "Organs have
just gone UP. Sorry to let you DOWN."

I told him it was UP to me to look
somewhere else DOWN the road. He
said, "That's UP to you, but prices will
never come DOWN."

I felt fed UP! And DOWN and out.

However, I thought I would look
UP a friend of mine who would not let
me DOWN and who lived UP a nearby
hill.

He was lying DOWN when I got UP
to his place.

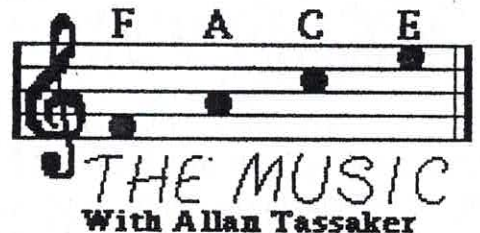
He said, "Glad you came UP to see
me, I have my organ UP for sale."

I asked if he would put the price
DOWN.

He said the price had just gone UP
because he felt DOWN about having to
sell UP.

I threw UP!

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Allan reminds us that
some time ago a chap
overseas ground up a car
into minute pieces and ate it
all, over a period of time.
Mixed it with his breakfast
every day!

True!

Well, continues Allan, a
chap in Australia has done
the same with an electronic
organ!

"So what?" you may well
ask.

Well, says Allan, the
Australian bloke joined
Parliament, ended up in the
cabinet and eventually
became Mr Speaker!



by Neil Palmer

With an increase in the number of items that I have to transport to concerts, I will no longer be able to bring the entire **Tape Library** to each concert.

You will still be able to hire tapes by writing or phoning me with your **Tape Library** requirements, and I will bring the tapes to the next concert. They can also be sent by post for \$2.00.

For those not familiar with the

workings of the **Tape Library**, the **TOSA** concerts that are released into the library are available for hire - the cost being \$10.00 deposit and \$4.00 hiring fee per set of tapes.

Write to :

TOSA (NSW Division) Inc.
304 Parramatta Rd
ASHFIELD NSW 2131

Phone : (02) 798 6742 after 7pm

TOSA TAPE LIBRARY

Jonas Nordwall	Easter	1976	Bill Schumacher,	26th Oct	1986
Maria Kumagai	12th Jun	1977	Marie Stronach &	"	"
Ron Rhode	2nd Sep	1979	Roy Ashton	"	"
Ian Davies	24th Feb	1980	Lance Luce	1st Feb	1987
Walt Strony	Easter	1980	Clinton White &	1st Mar	1987
Jonas Nordwall	21st Sep	1980	Andrea Harrison	"	"
Jonas Nordwall	19th Oct	1980	2CBA Spectacular	24th May	1987
Cliff Bingham at	13th Jun	1981	David Parsons &	28th Jun	1987
the St Columbs Church	Christie		Gus Merzi Trio	"	"
Len Rawle	22nd Nov	1981	Neil Jensen	26th Jul	1987
Patricia Guthrie,	21st Feb	1882	Cliff Bingham &	23rd Aug	1987
Beverley Kennedy &	"	"	Sydney Boys High School-	"	"
Neil Palmer	"	"	Bands & Orchestra	"	"
Ashley Miller	8th Sep	1982	Neil Palmer,	31st Jan	1988
Ashley Miller Workshop		1982	John Giacchi,	"	"
Beverley Kennedy &	20th Feb	1983	Cliff Bingham &	"	"
Neil Palmer	"	"	Bill Schumacher	"	"
Neil Jensen	20th Mar	1983	Ian Davies,	26th Jun	1988
Valda Lang &	24th Apr	1983	Trisha Watt,	"	"
David Parsons	"	"	Andrea Harrison,	"	"
Cliff Bingham &	10th Jul	1983	David Parsons &	"	"
Salvation Army Band	"	"	Barry Brinson	"	"
Tom Hazleton	3rd Aug	1983	Father Jim Miller	28th Aug	1988
Tom Hazleton	28th Aug	1983	Margaret Hall &	2nd Oct	1988
Ian Davies	25th Sep	1983	Neil Jensen	"	"
Warren Lubich	30th Oct	1983	John Van Kleef	30th Oct	1988
Clinton White &	26th Feb	1984	Robert Wolfe	5th Feb	1989
Neil Palmer	"	"	Maureen Dawes &	5th Mar	1989
Neil Jensen	25th Mar	1984	Clinton White	"	"
Richard James	24th Jun	1984	David Parsons	18th Jun	1989
Lance Luce at	22nd Apr	1984	John Van Kleef	20th Aug	1989
the Moorabbin Town	Hall Wurlitzer		Douglas Reeve at	March	1989
Ray Thornley	29th Jul	1984	Perth Convention	"	"
Walt Strony	24th Aug	1984	Douglas Reeve Workshop		1989
Margaret Hall,	30th Sep	1984	Perth Convention-	March	1989
Neil Palmer,	"	"	Cameo Artists	"	"
Bill Schumacher &	"	"	Jonas Nordwall	16th Jul	1989
Ian Davies	"	"	Trumpet Voluntary	24th Sep	1989
Cliff Bingham &	21st Oct	1984	Ian Davies	29th Oct	1989
Salvation Army Band	"	"			
David Parsons	24th Feb	1985	Blackpool Down-	9th Feb	1990
Cliff Bingham at	6th Apr	1985	Under with Robert Wolfe		
the Epping Baptist	Christie		Robert Wolfe	11th Feb	1990
Candi Carley	7th Apr	1985	New Faces Concert	1st Apr	1990
Candi Carley	14th Apr	1985	Ian Davies	27th May	1990
Neil Jensen	23rd Jun	1985	Walt Strony	22nd Jul	1990
David Smith	25th Aug	1985	Bill Schumacher &	23rd Sep	1990
Warren Lubich	22nd Sep	1985	Cliff Bingham	"	"
Len Rawle	6th Nov	1985	Clinton White &	28th Oct	1990
Len Rawle	24th Nov	1985	Bev Harrison	"	"
Margaret Hall &	27th Apr	1986	Simon Gledhill	8th Mar	1992
Cliff Bingham	"	"	Jim Riggs	27th Sep	1992
2CBA Spectacular	22nd Jun	1986	David Parsons	28th Mar	1993
Ian Davies	27th Jul	1986	7 minute video about TOSA c.	1968	
Andrea Harrison &	24th Aug	1986	Chris McPhee	27th Feb	1994
David Smith	"	"	Ray Thornley	28th Aug	1994
Neil Jensen	28th Sep	1986	Chris McPhee	5th Feb	1995
			Ray Thornley	25th Jun	1995

As a follow-up to his article last month, Chris Styles has also supplied this historical item - a 1936 article on **Quentin Maclean**. The author, **Leslie S. Barnard**, commented in 1993: "I wrote this piece for *Radio Times* 56 years ago. It strikes me as being over-written, the adjectives coming thick and fast and the over-all effect breathless and starry-eyed. But it is the style that pains me, not the content. The claims made are true enough: **Quentin Maclean** was pre-eminent and his greatest admirers were his fellow organists....At the **Trocadero**, **Maclean** was a happy man. As a boy, in holiday times, he used to stay with an aunt in **Leamington Spa** and from that base it was easy to go over to **Warwick** where, at **St Mary's Collegiate Church** there was a large **Hope-Jones** organ, as then untouched. He conceived a great regard for this instrument and came to understand what **Hope-Jones** was driving at, so that when the **Wurlitzer** organ, based on the ideas of **Hope-Jones**, came from **America to England**, he was at home with it. In passing, I would mention that among the original directors of the **Wurlitzer Hope-Jones Company** was **Samuel Clemens**, better known throughout the English speaking world under his pen-name of **Mark Twain**.... The **Trocadero Wurlitzer** was based on a model known in the States as **Publix No. 1**....As far as **Maclean** was concerned it was pretty near perfect and there was little in it that he would have changed....As for other organists and their attitude to **Maclean**, perhaps the last word may go to **Jesse Crawford** who was the abundantly famous **King of the Wurlitzer** in the USA. On hearing **Maclean** demonstrate the **Trocadero** organ he said, 'I am now going back to **America** to learn to play the **Wurlitzer!**'"

Unit-Organ Parade: By Leslie S. Barnard No. 8

QUENTIN MACLEAN

THE greatest artist in the cinema organ world; that phrase has been used so often in praise of the one and only 'Mac' that it has become as platitudinous as the Headmaster's speech on Prize Day. For nearly five years, week in and week out, he has been playing the most enterprising and catholic programmes of their kind ever broadcast, and has set a standard in cinema-organ playing that has never been approached.

No one will more readily endorse the view that he is the greatest of cinema organists than his colleagues and rivals; for it has been my experience that his fellow-organists are among his most ardent admirers. One of them, hardly less famous as a broadcaster, had the courage to say in print, 'Quentin Maclean has been my idol for years. . . . That was Reginald New (who is off the air and on tour at the moment of writing). Reginald Foort made the dedication 'To Mac, whom we all admire', a preamble to his book, 'The Cinema Organ'. That was no ostentatious stunt, but a sincere tribute to a virtuoso whom many people hold to be the greatest living organist. One of our leading musical journals, not given to wild panegyric except where well merited, published an article with the title 'Quentin Maclean: a Eulogy.'

In every bar that Maclean plays there is that which reaches the very heights of artistry and musicianship, be it fugue or fox-trot, Bach or ballad. He has the power of revealing the latent musical beauty of anything he plays and rendering it intelligible to any listener. He has broadcast items that in the hands of any other cinema organist would have been dull, except to the musician and the connoisseur.

IT is difficult to analyse the qualities that make a great artist great; with Quentin Maclean it is a synthesis of invincible technique, musical sincerity, sheer beauty of interpretation and a musicianly restraint, but most of all, it is a clear case of that 'indefinable something'. Many of his feats in the musical world have been spectacular, and his technique and versatility have made his name respected in the most conservative cathedral organ loft, as well as in other cinemas.

For those who have heard his broadcasts from Queen's Hall, All Saints', in Margaret Street, Broadcasting House, and the Royal Albert Hall, his powers as a virtuoso straight organist are well enough established. He has thrilled us with Bach organ works that could hardly have been better performed by anyone—I remember particularly a superb Toccata, Adagio, and Fugue in C that he played from the Concert Hall, Broadcasting House, a year or two ago. A Sunday afternoon relay from the Royal Albert Hall organ, soon after the completion of that great instrument, brought us a gloriously facile, joyous, and effervescent version of the Scherzo from Mendelssohn's 'Midsummer Night's Dream' that made an indelible impression on many musical ears.

However, his brilliance as a straight organist is by no means his only claim to recognition. As a cinema organist pure and simple he remains the most consummate of artists. He takes Bach and Widor in his stride along with the latest fox-trot, and when inclined can play a rhythm number with anyone, as some of his gramophone records show. Nothing that can be written on staves is beyond him. His arrangements of orchestral works are object lessons in what is

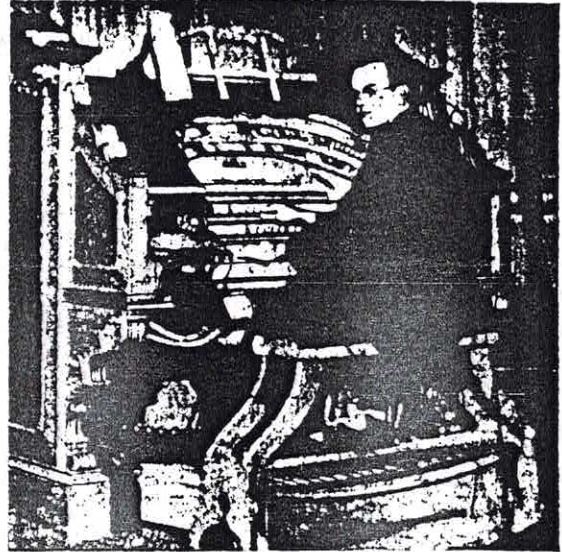
called 'orchestral organ playing', and his wonderfully crisp and felicitous 'registration' (or choice of stop combinations) in this connection is a by-word in the profession.

In his Wednesday programmes from the Trocadero, Elephant and Castle, he contrives to include a nicely-balanced variety of serious and popular music, from an artistic and imaginative version of an orchestral work to a snappily-played rhythm number or one of his own musicianly conceptions of a current song hit, around which he weaves all manner of musical ideas of his own. Looking back through old numbers of THE RADIO TIMES, the inquirer may be struck by the fact that his programmes have covered more ground and contained a greater variety of music of all kinds than any others of their kind on record. He has shown, too, that pure organ music is not beyond the scope of a properly-handled cinema organ, nor necessarily boring to the average audience, the great G minor Fugue, and the Toccata and Fugue in D minor of Bach, and movements from Widor's Organ Symphonies having appeared in his Trocadero programmes on the air.

Talking of Maclean and Bach, who can forget or deny the beauty of his occasional transcriptions from the Bach orchestral repertoire, such as the Suites and the Brandenburgs?

HIS gramophone records, too, embrace so wide a variety of music that it is difficult to believe that they are all the work of one man, except that that 'indefinable something' crops up again and stamps each one as indisputably his work. He began to record years ago at the Shepherd's Bush Pavilion, where he was organist for several years, when he was first building his reputation. In 1928 he designed the splendid 4 manual, 30-unit organ at the Regal Cinema, Marble Arch, which was built by a British firm to his specification, and opened by him in November of that year. While he remained organist at the console of this glorious instrument (probably one of the most refined cinema organs in existence) he made ten records, in themselves eloquent of his versatility. They include a selection of dance tunes, an exhilarating 'Ride of the Valkyries', the ever-popular second Hungarian Rhapsody of Liszt, Finale to Widor's Fifth Organ Symphony, a couple of wedding marches, a selection of ballads, and a spectacular arrangement of the 'Rhapsody in Blue'. In this record he displayed astonishing ingenuity by reproducing the famous clarinet *glissando* in the opening of this work with the aid of the syren that is numbered among the many 'effects' of the Regal organ.

Since becoming organist at the Trocadero he has added immeasurably to his laurels as a recording organist, despite the fact that, while broadcasting perfectly, the organ is very difficult to record. (These paradoxes of theatre acoustics are interesting and annoying: at the Regal, Marble Arch, the reverse obtains; the organ records extremely well, but cannot be fully



Quentin Maclean at the Trocadero organ

exploited on the air.) The records of dance numbers made at the Trocadero are unparalleled for imaginativeness, originality, and musicianship. They include every kind of treatment, from ultra-snappy rhythm to arrangements that amount almost to miniature concert studies. Perhaps his most extraordinary feat is to be found in his record of a movement from the lovely A minor Piano Concerto of Grieg, in which, by a modern miracle, he plays the whole lot himself—and not by means of a mechanical pianoforte attachment, either! Arranging the orchestral score for the Trocadero organ as he alone can do it, he made a record of this part of the work in the theatre. Later, using a piano in the recording company's studios, and listening to his own organ accompaniment through headphones, he played and recorded the piano part—to measure, one might say. The latter was super-imposed upon the former, and so we have the extraordinary experience of listening to a concerto played entirely by one man. His performance of the piano part would be a credit to any concert pianist.

IT is good to know that the 4-manual, 21-unit American organ at the Trocadero is in every way worthy of its player—a magnificent organ all through, and as versatile as its master. From the grandeur of its full organ to the exquisite refinement of its softest units it is the dual-purposed modern cinema organ of the largest type, *par excellence*. The two chambers (Main and Solo) are divided and on opposite sides of the hall, two microphones being used in broadcasting. The gilt console, with its 217 stop-tabs, is placed on a turntable lift in a corner of the orchestra pit.

Despite his academic training and powers as a straight organist, there is nothing of the intellectual snob about Quentin Maclean, and when he likes he can do as good a comic interlude of the 'story told at the organ' type as anybody else. Ask the Trocadero patrons!

A kindly personality, with none of the pseudo-eccentricities that lesser men affect in the hope that they will be acclaimed as geniuses, has made him easily the most popular man in the cinema-organ world—he is admired and respected by everyone.

OUR NEXT ARTIST : LEN RAWLE

Born in **Tonypany, South Wales**, in 1938, **Len's** classical training, which started at age 4, came from the **London College of Music** in **Cardiff**. Later, when his parents moved to **London**, he studied piano under concert artist, **Martin David** at the **Guildhall School of Music**, and organ under **George Metzler** at **St Stephens, Walbrook**.

Len developed his own style of playing entertainment music, first during National Service at the small **Wurlitzer** in the **Ritz Theatre Aldershot**, then at the larger **Wurlitzers** in the **Ritz Richmond** and **Regal Kingston-Upon-Thames**.

This was aided by close contact with several notable theatre organists, in particular **George Blackmore, Joseph Seal, Gerald Shaw** and **Vic Hammett**. He was also fortunate in having the **UK's** first residence **Wurlitzer** in the family home at **Northolt**.

Eventually he purchased the famous 4-manual **Wurlitzer** of the **Empire Theatre, Leicester Square**, which became the centre-piece of his self-built home at **Chorleywood**. Described by many as the finest residence **Wurlitzer** in the world, he has savoured its rich golden tones for over 30 years, and still considers it a privilege to play it. He has recorded, broadcast and televised this, the largest **Wurlitzer** in **Europe**, many times.

Two particular highlights were appearing on the very first edition of the famous radio program, *The Organist Entertains*, plus many subsequent ones, and also appearing in the much celebrated and often repeated **Sir John Betjeman TV**

documentary, *Metroland*.

With the family name that is synonymous with the very heart of the organ scene, both in the **UK** and overseas, **Len Rawle** has the benefit of a family steeped in the tradition of theatre organ enjoyment and preservation. He is a past chairman of the **London Chapter** of **ATOS**. His parents were made honoree members of the **International ATOS** movement, in recognition of their services and enthusiasm for maintaining the theatre organ scene. More than 40 theatre organs have passed through the "saving" hands of the **Rawle** family!

In the commercial world **Len** was Musical Director for **Yamaha UK** for 17 years. As "**Mr Yamaha**" he helped establish the **UK** electronic organ market. He also structured a network of over 100 music schools, 400 teachers and 11,000 students. His skills at teaching, lecturing and writing, in addition to concerts on both pipe and electronic instruments, keep him at the forefront of the organ scene, where he has earned himself the enviable reputation as "**The Rembrandt of the Organ**", always managing to get the best sounds out of the instrument at hand.

Len's musicality is called upon from time to time when theatre organs are transplanted or upgraded. He has a passion for sounds and has acted as consultant for pipe and electronic installations in **Great Britain**, on the **Continent**, in **Australia** and in the **USA**. He is proud of having been invited to help inaugurate several re-installations of theatre organs, in particular the **Wurlitzer** in **Hobart, Tasmania**, the **Granada Studio Tours Wurlitzer, Manchester**, the famous "**Torch**" **Christie** in **Barry Memorial Hall**, the **Sheffield Compton**, the **St Alban's Organ Museum Wurlitzer** and more recently the **Wurlitzer** in **Woking**.

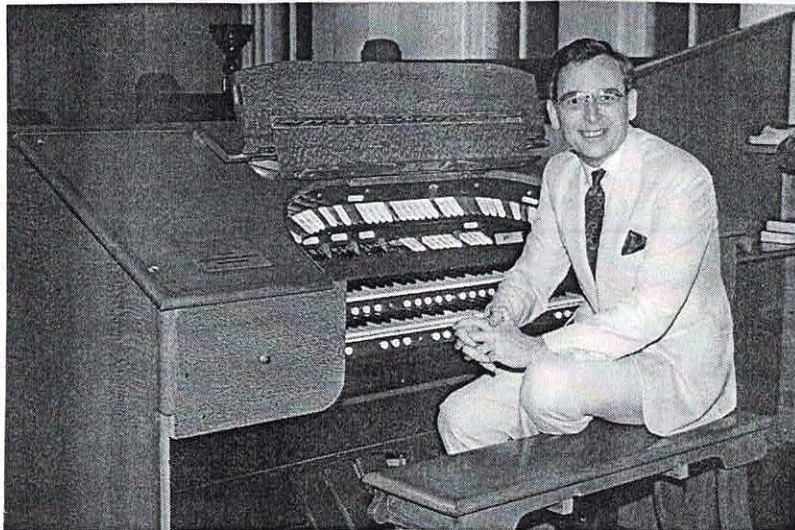
He is President/Patron of many organ clubs and societies in the **UK** and abroad, and musical adviser to **ATOS (UK)**.

Len has given many concerts in the **USA** and **Europe** and is now on his fourth tour of **Australia**. He has several recordings to his credit, his latest being on the **Woking Wurlitzer** - a special souvenir recording which features the spacious tones obtainable in the spectacular, natural echo of an empty auditorium. This is the first ever recording of this new organ and has been made in digital stereo with no editing or over-dubbing.

Married with 3 children and one grandchild, he has an interest in aviation and has obtained his private pilot's licence.

His style of playing features a tremendous variety of tone, for he finds the range of sounds within an organ its most satisfying element. He is always prepared to share his enthusiasm and you are sure to notice this in his superb playing.

Welcome back, **Len**.



Len Rawle at Epping Baptist's Christie in October, 1993

Earlier this year, two of our members, **John Robinson** and **Ross Wells**, found this interesting article about our next artist, **Len Rawle**, in an issue of the **International Express**, and kindly passed it along for inclusion in **TOSA News**.

Glory of the Empire

Living with the mighty Wurlitzer

Many of the earth's great mysteries are to be found not in ancient tombs or deep in far-flung forests but behind the front doors of houses you walk past without a glance.

Britain, more than anywhere else, is a land of strange secrets and hidden riches, locked away behind plain facades in ordinary streets.

Like edible snails tucked away in their shells, such secrets can be difficult to prise out, but the effort is always worthwhile. A three-bedroom house in an ordinary Home Counties road is not the sort of place where you would expect to find anything wildly unconventional. But behind the unostentatious frontage of 132 Berry Lane, Chorleywood, Herts, there hides a dazzling surprise.

By **HENRY MACRORY**

Pictures: Ian Bradshaw

Inside, enjoying a comfortable and well-earned retirement, is an aristocratic refugee from a vanished age: the mighty Wurlitzer organ from the Empire, Leicester Square.

This great beast, the second largest cinema organ in Europe, shares the house with its devoted owners, concert organist and music lecturer Leonard Rawle, 57, and his wife Judith.

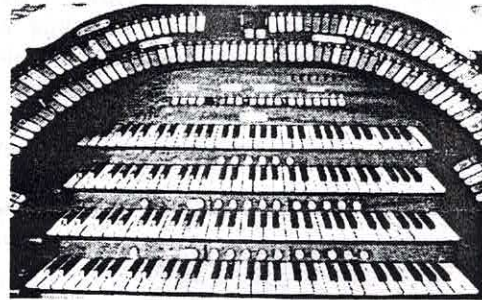
Like an iceberg, most of the Wurlitzer is hidden, and what is hidden is vast. It could not be accommodated by any ordinary house. So the house had to be constructed around it.

Built in 1927 at a cost of £16,000, the Wurlitzer rose in majesty from the Empire pit four or five times a day for more than 30 years and drenched the vast auditorium in a torrent of sound.

In the early 1960s it fell victim to changing tastes, and all those years of glamour and fame nearly led to the humiliation of a scrap-merchant's yard.

But reprieve came at the last moment in the shape of Mr Rawle, whose aim in life is to save the cinema organ, the brontosaurus of musical instruments, from extinction.

He paid the Empire a nominal sum, dismantled the Wur-



KEY FUNCTION: The one-ton console in the living room

litzer and put its tens of thousands of parts in storage. Then he and his wife set to work designing and building a soundproof house to fit

round it, laying 65,000 bricks over the next two years. "I put all my life savings into it but it was worth every penny," said Mr Rawle.



BIG SOUND: Leonard Rawle among the 1,436 pipes in the specially heated room. Some are 17ft 6in tall and wide enough to climb in



PURPOSE-BUILT: The Rawles' home

"Today it would cost at least £250,000 to replace."

By 1965 the organ had been reassembled and, ever since, the one-ton cream and gold

console has taken pride of place in the sitting-room.

Out of sight is another 24 tons of equipment. The relays and switches are in the loft and the 15 horsepower motor is in an outhouse. In the electrically heated pipe room there are 1,436 pipes, some of them 17ft 6ins high and wide enough to climb inside.

THE Wurlitzers were built to very high standards," says Mr Rawle. "They have a long lifespan provided they are looked after properly.

"I tune mine every six weeks and carry out routine preventative maintenance at the same time. It has a thorough clean every 10 or 15 years. I play it regularly for pure relaxation. Anyone who

has one will tell you how therapeutic they are."

Sit down with Mr Rawle and you can enjoy the sounds of the xylophone, the glockenspiel, the tuned sleigh bells and marimba harp, the chimes, the vibraphone and the cymbals.

At the drop of a switch you plunge deeper into this fantasy world as all the old silent film effects come into play — the thunder, the wind and the waves, the gongs and horns and whistles, and two separate birds, Bird 1 and Bird 2.

The sitting-room of 132 Berry Lane is truly a place where you can empty your pockets of all your doubts, cynicisms and wordly cares.

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New Horizons for Worship Service Playing - Workshop conducted by Jonas Nordwall

Tuesday 18th July, 1995 at the Winton Music Centre.

Report by Madeleine Rowles

A capacity crowd is heartening in this day and age where workshops and masterclasses are often so poorly attended. Even with the assistance of Patti's Hire, attendees had to resort to the benches belonging to the merchandise in Winton Music's top floor showroom, where the workshop was held.

The emphasis of the workshop was the use of MIDI in church services, and Mr Nordwall began with a brief history of incorporation of MIDI into church organs. (Musical Instrument Digital Interface is an industry-standard specification that allows compliant instruments, computers, sound "libraries" etc to communicate.) MIDI allows the use of hundreds of new sounds as extra stops, and allows recording and playback of performances from floppy disc. In equipment such as the Rodgers 940 used for the workshop, the interface even allows a choice of swell pedal expression or velocity sensitive ("piano") expression.

Mr Nordwall emphasised that church organists play for Muggins in the street (or John Q. Public, as they call him in the States!) and that MIDI can make a wider range of music more accessible to the average congregation.

John Q. Public, Mr Nordwall points out, hears "an organ as an organ, as an organ", meaning that aspects of music clear to the organist and "educated listener" aren't always clear

"organ" and "more organ"! Strings from a MIDI sound library were added to the orchestral part, and the increased distinction between "organ" and "orchestra" would clearly make more sense of the transcription for many listeners.

MIDI can extend an organ's range and versatility. The Rodgers 940 allows MIDI voices to be moved in octaves, allowing, for example, a trumpet voice to be lowered and assigned to the pedals as a 32' reed. MIDI's potential for a l l o w i n g performance of "un-idiomatic" music was illustrated with

Gounod's *Sanctus* from the *St Cecilia Mass*. This begins with an oboe melody supported by quaver bass notes on the first beat, and chords in quavers from the higher strings.

The organ's oboe stop was suitable, but the accompaniment and pedal stops were not, producing a rather wearing thud-choof-choof-choof which, as a wit in the peanut gallery put it, sounded "like a train coming"! (Mr Nordwall was quick to point out that these same sounds are beautiful when used appropriately.)

Enormous improvement was made by mixing MIDI sounds with

the organ stops, the piece becoming smooth and gentle even in a carpet-and-ceiling-tile acoustic.



Cliff Bingham introduces Jonas Nordwall

to the layman. A transcription of G.F. Handel's *Organ Concerto No. 4*, for organ and orchestra, was used to



TOSA member, Amy Caldwell with Jonas Nordwall

illustrate that even with careful registration, JQP doesn't hear "organ" and "orchestra" - he simply hears

An interesting juxtaposition of historically-informed performance (a topic close to the author's heart!) and MIDI technology occurred in a demonstration of intelligent registration versus "face value" registration for the *Hallelujah Chorus* from G.F. Handel's *Messiah*. Mr

Nordwall points out that we are getting away from the 19th century idea that **Handel** should be "big and thuddy"; baroque orchestras are smaller than most modern orchestras, and the sounds they produce have a more transparent quality. It is a mistake,

therefore, for the organist to see "fff" in the score and reach for the "kitchen sink stop" (Full Organ with The Lot). After demonstrating the introduction in this manner, he asked "What do you think the choir's first note will sound like?" Most agreed that fairly unpleasant bellowing was probable! MIDI strings were added, the articulation, particularly in the pedal, lightened up, and the piece took on new vitality that would draw a totally different response from the choir.

We were reminded that music has power to influence people and affect moods, and for this reason, organists can make or break services. Giving one's best to the job means not just technical practice, but analysing the music to ensure that style, registration, and choice of hymn send appropriate messages to the congregation.

As an exercise, we were handed music for a hymn to be played as a meditation, given four "flavours" of organ sound, and asked to choose a flavour for each stanza. This exercise has been known to start world wars, but in this instance the only controversy came from a group of anarchists who decided that registration was irrelevant because they wouldn't choose that hymn as a meditation anyway!

Mr Nordwall then led us in a "meditative American-style" rendition, and finished with a performance of an

orchestra. can provide a portable practice orchestra.

Mr Nordwall did not try to present MIDI as the greatest thing to hit church music since the C major scale, but as something we should not be afraid to use if it can improve the quality of worship service music. It should be neither adopted nor rejected purely on the basis that it is new or different. I hope this is the message that participants went away with.



The fabulous Rodgers 940 at Winton Music

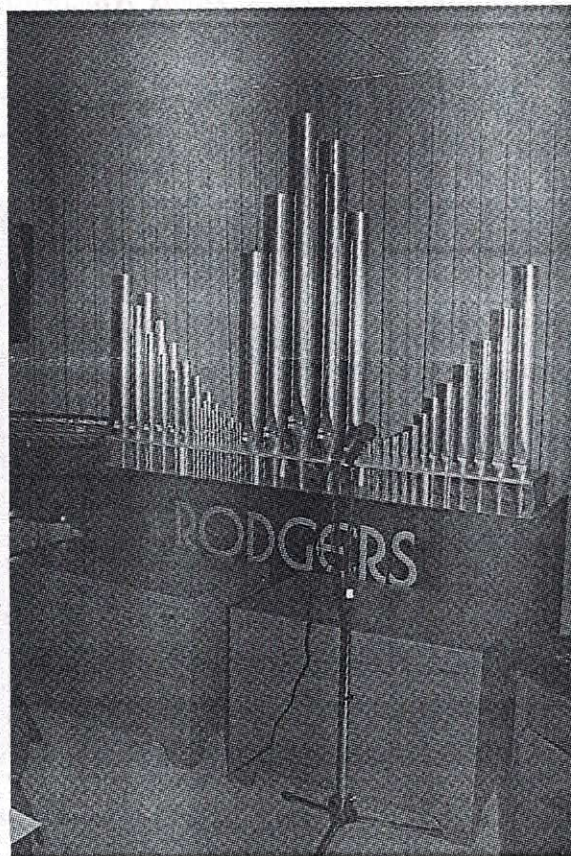
organ solo from **Guilmant's Symphony in D minor**, accompanied by MIDI orchestra on floppy disc and sequencer. This is yet another benefit of MIDI - organists performing with orchestras usually get only one rehearsal; MIDI

Conversations at similar workshops indicate that a small but significant number of church musicians share some common difficulties. Some lack the self-confidence to try out an idea with potential, for fear of "getting it wrong", whilst others, looking for the secrets of success, charge off enthusiastically to implement everything they were "told"

at the workshop down to the last hemi-demi-semi quaver. There are, of course, no such "secrets" that can relieve us forever of the burden of thinking! A few, dazzled by the presenter's technical ability, go away thinking "that's all very well if you can play like he/she does", completely missing the fact that the presenter's "performances" illustrate basic principles that can be applied to anyone's repertoire, no matter how humble.

Many thanks to **Mr Nordwall** and **Winton Music** for an evening of information, helpful advice, a few good laughs, and ample supper. Having attended two free workshops and one token admission recital presented by **Winton Music**, I congratulate them on extending their services in this way. More, please!

The peanut gallery had the last word - after the **Guilmant** symphony played from a score with many pages, someone just had to ask "Can you get MIDI to turn the pages for you?" We await further technological development with bated breath...



Rodgers' Pipes and bass speakers

JONAS NORDWALL Concert Review

by Ron Ivin

On Sunday, 23rd July, 1995, people in Campsie were treated to a sunny day although there was a chill in the breeze. However the atmosphere was more pleasant in the Orion Centre, with great anticipation in the air before the concert began.

Everyone should have read the brochure on Jonas Nordwall by now but I should make the point that, as well as being an experienced recitalist, Jonas is a renowned technician and clinician in both church and theatre organ circles.

One always wonders what number will be used as a curtain raiser. Will it be *There's No Business Like Showbusiness* or *That's Entertainment*, *I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside*, *Cruising Down the River* or simply *Who?* There are so many suitable openers. Jonas' choice of Wagner's *Prelude to Act 3 from Lohengrin* turned out to be a crowd pleaser, with its build in fanfares and melodic themes.

In vast contrast the next offering was *You Made Me Love You*. The sonorous treatment of this standard, usually played in a robust manner, caused me, at least, to feel that Jonas had someone particular in mind as he played. In any case Jonas' wife, Nancy, was in the audience - a real lady possessing beauty and charm, and a pleasure to meet.

The film *Muriel's Wedding* caused a nostalgic revival of Abba. *Dancing*

Queen was beautifully arranged and performed with good use of chimes. Next was the light and ever popular

Jonas' racy piano accordion solo *Czardas* by Monti (a calculated guest) as much as we did. Why did he play it so fast (168mm)? The answer: Because he can!



Jonas at the Orion Wurlitzer console

Frosini piece, *Bubbles*. We were then treated to a selection of tunes from the musical *Les Misérables*. To his shame the writer must confess that, except for *Let Me Hear The People Sing*, they are not well-known to him, although he

to his son, Chris. He was actually meaning his black box (sequencer). I find it impossible to remember all that Jonas said about the procedure of his production and playing of *Guilmant's Symphonie No.1*, except that it was

painstaking and had to be done in stages. However the end result was breathtaking to say the least. The coordination in playing with the disc was a tribute to the artist's genius. After that, Jonas was due for a well-earned break provided by the interval.



Jonas in rehearsal - mastering a different kind of keyboard

immensely enjoyed their playing.

The King of Sweden, Gustav Adolph, I think might have enjoyed

organ. We all should appreciate that John gives his time and employs his energies without great reward to maintain the tuning and operation of

the instrument to a superb standard.

After interval the organ rose to **Gus Kahn's** *Making Whoopee* which was not quite expected and was almost drowned out with applause at the beginning.

Now we come to the real associate artist, **Jonas'** and **Nancy's** son, **Chris**. At age 20, **Chris**, although having great experience in the field of music, has only turned his attention to playing the theatre organ in the last 10 months. **Chris'** first piece was *Tanhauser's Grand March* and he did himself proud with this not too easy item, using florid pedal work.

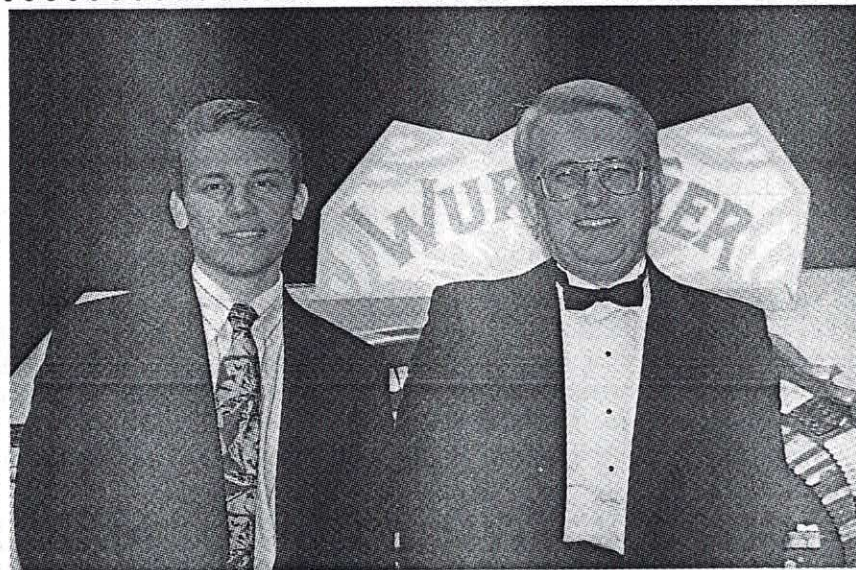
One could wonder if the next offering was a little tongue in cheek, or even cheeky, with the title *I Just Can't Wait to be King*. Maybe he wants his father's place as king of the console, or was the inference unintended? However, congratulations, **Chris**, on the beautifully played piece from *The Lion King*.

Then it was back to the monarch for **Bach's Toccata in D** (Dorian). It was like a fresh breeze to hear this less played toccata. If you closed your eyes you could easily imagine being in a cathedral.

I almost forgot to mention the medley of **Duke Ellington** tunes. **Jonas** used the **Wurly** piano to good effect during



Associate artist **Chris Nordwall**



Father and son pose at the **Orion** console



Visiting members of **Willoughby Council's Organ Committee**, with our artists, **TOSA** executives and patron, **John Gorrie**

this rendition, which included *Satin Doll*, *Solitude* and *Take the A Train*.

Not to be outdone by his son, **Jonas** chose another title from *The Lion King*, *The Circle of Life* by **Elton John**. Throughout the whole recital we had a smorgasbord of voices, but the registrations in *The Circle of Life* were exceptional.

Jonas Nordwall's final selection was the ever-popular *Orpheus in the Underworld Overture*, and there were some well-known tunes in this.

Well, I can only say that I am glad that **Mr Wurlitzer** did not confine himself to making violins. What a loss to the theatre organ world that would have been!

The encore, an excellent arrangement of *Waltzing Matilda*, was in order to end a magnificent feast of varied theatre organ music. In summing up, it can only be said that **Jonas** and **Chris Nordwall** entertained us with a brilliant, organ-testing performance.

FOOTNOTE

We should all appreciate the brilliant lighting effects created by **Miles Perry**. The colour combinations add further enjoyment to the performance. Congratulations **Miles!**