

# TOSA NEWS

Jan/Feb 2009  
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## **International Artist!**



# ***Chris McPhee***

*Orion Centre, 155 Beamish Street Campsie Sunday 1st February 2009 at 2pm*

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# From the President



A Happy New Year to all.

Those who were at the December concert with Tony Fenelon certainly received a Christmas musical feast.

At that concert it was stated, as it also was at the AGM in November, that we would bring you dates for the 2009 concerts as soon as possible. These have only just been finalised following a few hiccoughs and also the need to arrange a substitute artist for February.

John Atwell recently had an accident which has put him out of circulation for a couple of weeks and he suggested that, rather than run risks with our concert, it may be better to make alternative arrangements. Best wishes for a speedy recovery have been forwarded to John on behalf of the NSW membership. Our thanks go to Chris McPhee for standing in at short notice. John will now feature in our May concert. Elsewhere you will find a list of concert dates for this year.

May I emphasise two particular dates for your consideration. Both are "club" occasions although friends and others are very welcome. The aim is to permit a more social atmosphere as distinct from a more "formal" concert setting.

The first is Saturday, February 28<sup>th</sup> at the Christian Science church in Campsie where there is a Hammond organ and good kitchen facilities. Time is 2.00pm to 5.00pm and directions are included elsewhere in this publication.

The second is Sunday, March 29<sup>th</sup> at Marrieville from 2.00pm to 4.30pm - more next issue.

Happy organizing

Geoff Brimley

# Editorial



I wish all TOSA members a Very Happy New Year and thank all those members and friends who came to the TOSA Concerts during 2008. What a great year it was for concert presentations. The various Teams of members who work behind the scenes to keep TOSA NSWs' instruments in top condition and to continue improving presentations are to be congratulated for their hard work. TOSA has recently purchased a color lazer printer to improve our promotional material which Santa delivered on Christmas eve.

It was so pleasing to see the many members and friends and the great number of public that came to the Christmas Concert to experience a new era in musical presentation combining the sounds of the Mighty Wurlitzer with the unlimited possibilities available from the New Roland Digital Grand Piano in the capable hands of Tony Fenelon. What a great show and many thanks Tony for giving the new digital big boys toy, kindly supplied by Ole Strom straight out of the box, a real work out.

As you will see from the TOSA News, John Atwell has unfortunately had to postpone his concert until May this year due to unfortunate circumstances. TOSA is most grateful to Chris McPhee for agreeing to perform for us in February at short notice.

Enjoy the music,  
Ernie Vale  
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# From the Mailbox...



Thanks for your responses and please continue to email or write in telling us what you think.

Where space permits we will do our best to publish your comments, but as space is limited, the editor reserves the right to edit or shorten any submitted comments and as always, the views expressed by any individual may not necessarily coincide with the views of the Theatre Organ Society of Australia (NSW Division).

Please submit all comments via email to:  
The Editor  
[editor@tosa.net.au](mailto:editor@tosa.net.au)  
or in writing to:  
The editor - TOSA News (NSW Div)  
PO Box A2322 Sydney South, NSW 1235

## New Members

TOSA (NSW) welcomes new members and wish them a long & happy stay.

Robin (Bob) Alleway of Caringbah  
Keith Lawson of Kiama  
Kaye Priday of Sunshine  
Gary Shackleton of Mt Riverview  
Arthur Skene of Waitara  
Howard Terrill of Heathcote (Vic)

## TOSA MEMBERS AT THE ORION, CAMPSIE: 8 JANUARY, 2009.

After a gap of three months TOSA members returned to The Orion Centre, Beamish Street, Campsie, for a monthly players' afternoon on a less than hot Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> January.

Those who were especially glad to re-acquaint themselves with this Wurlitzer were Ron Ivin, Deirdre McMullan, Craig Keller, Walter Pearce, Kevin Eadie, Frank Lewis, Peter Held, and John Batts. Needless to say, a great variety of music was heard.

As so often, David McMullan was listening and overseeing the refreshments kindly provided by his wife, Deirdre. It was a pleasant surprise to welcome Kevin Eadie, once upon time a TOSA Secretary, but a player who had never before sat on the Orion bench. Equally, we were pleased to greet two members from far away on the South Coast, Keith and Norma Lawson. Keith could not be persuaded to play on this occasion, but we live in hopes – next time, Keith!

If you missed, don't forget to pencil in the second Thursday in February – just in case!

*jsb/01/2009.*

## Fractional Stops

"Glory is fleeting, but obscurity is forever."  
- Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821)

"Victory goes to the player who makes the next-to-last mistake."  
- Chessmaster Savielly Grigorievitch Tartakower (1887-1956)

"Don't be so humble - you are not that great."  
- Golda Meir (1898-1978) to a visiting diplomat

"Give me chastity and continence, but not yet."  
- Saint Augustine (354-430)

"I do not feel obliged to believe that the same God who has endowed us with sense, reason, and intellect has intended us to forgo their use."  
- Galileo Galilei

"The power of accurate observation is frequently called cynicism by those who don't have it."  
- George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950)

# Organist Dudley Savage dies at 88

Veteran BBC radio broadcaster Dudley Savage MBE has died at the age of 88 in Cornwall after a long illness.

He broadcast hospital request show As Prescribed from Plymouth's ABC Royal cinema, playing music on the organ for the pro-



gramme for more than 30 years.

Mr Savage, who was born in March 1920 near Penzance, died at a nursing home near Liskeard.

Musician and author Jonathan Mann said he was "one of the greats" who "never regarded himself as a celebrity".

Cancellation petition

Dudley Savage was born in the village of Gulval, where his mother, a farmer's daughter, played the organ in the village church.

She taught him piano at home before he decided to move to the organ, studying under organists at Truro Cathedral and with musicians in Cornwall and Plymouth.

He eventually became the organist at ABC's Royal Cinema in Plymouth in 1938.

After being called up for military service in 1940 and serving with the army in India, he returned to Britain in 1946 and resumed his career at the Royal.

As Prescribed began broadcasting weekly in

June 1948, and carried on until it was axed by the BBC in 1968.

After a petition with 43,000 signatures was sent to the BBC, it was brought back as a monthly show in 1969, continuing for another 10 years and moving eventually to Radio 2.

He also undertook concert tours of the UK and Europe, bringing the music of his chosen instrument to thousands of people around the world.

Author and organist Jonathan Mann, from Guinnislake, said: "The thing that was remarkable was his musicianship. He had an incredibly distinctive style with a particular gift for harmony.

"He was a first-rate organist and arranger, as cinema organists have to arrange things in their head.

"He not only presented the [radio] show for an hour every week, but also played, which I don't anyone else ever did.

"He was also incredibly modest. He never made anything of his playing and never regarded himself as a celebrity."

The Cinema Organ Society added that his passing was a "great sadness", saying that he had "delighted organ fans up and down the country as well as in Europe".

It said: "Dudley was one of the last surviving organists from the great days when cinema organs were to be heard constantly on the wireless."

Dudley Savage also presented editions of Song of Praise when the programme was hosted in Plymouth.

His wife, Doreen, died in 2003.



# Invitation to the TOSA Easter Convention 2009 in Adelaide "PIPES TO THE FUTURE" A Festival of Theatre Organ

TOSA South Australia Division invite you and your members to Adelaide for the Theatre Organ Convention over Easter in 2009 with registration commencing at 4pm on Friday 10 April, followed by dinner and a film at the Capri Theatre.

Saturday 11 April begins with 'Sampling the Future' with Neil Jensen, Claire Baker, Robert Wetherall and Paul Fitzgerald on sampling and digital organs. After lunch, a concert at the Capri featuring Chris McPhee, Paul Fitzgerald, Gaynor Meyer (soprano) and David Fitzgerald (piano).

In the evening there will be a Convention Dinner at the Stables Ballroom Morphettville Function Centre with Live Music from 'Rumours'.

Sunday 12 April begins with open console for interstate/overseas visitors at the Capri Theatre Organ. Following lunch the afternoon concert at the Capri is 'Duelling Keyboards' with Tony Fenelon and John Atwell. A Spit Roast & Dessert Dinner will be available after the concert followed by a comedy nostalgia night with David Johnston.

Monday 13 April, the convention ends with a morning concert at the Capri featuring Neil Jensen, John Giacchi and Robert Wetherall and the Official Close is 12:00pm.

More information regarding bookings etc. see the Festival Brochure on the web at [www.capri.org.au](http://www.capri.org.au) or contact the *Festival Secretary* (08)8352 1564

*Festival email address* [tosa2009@netspace.net.au](mailto:tosa2009@netspace.net.au) or [www.capri.org.au](http://www.capri.org.au)

## Peter Wilkinson's Home Organ Party



## To watch out for..

Sunday 1st February, 2009 at 2:00pm  
Australian and international keyboard artist  
Chris McPhee with the Enzo Toppano duo.  
Orion Centre, Beamish Street Campsie.

The Orion Centre has disabled access  
directly from Beamish Street.

## But wait, there's more!!

### Considering a visit to the USA?

On the subject of A.T.O.S. Conventions,  
next year is planned for Cleveland, Ohio but  
2010 will be in Seattle, Washington. Now  
would be a good time for T.O.S.A. members  
to start saving and planning to attend.

Rob Gliddon recommends this should be a  
great event, having attended both previous  
Conventions held in Seattle in 1971 and 1981.

## Thanks to Helpers

Vice President John Shaw wishes to  
thank all the TOSA members who helped  
set up Marrickville Town Hall

for the Christmas Concert with Tony  
Fenelon as well as putting everything away  
afterwards. There was certainly a great  
atmosphere of Team Work in regard to all  
aspects of preparing for the Concert Pres-  
entation. What a great show it was with  
all the technical wizardry at Tony's finger  
tips and the considerable preparation that  
Tony must have done in order to combine  
the Rogers Grand Piano's many possibili-  
ties with the Wurlitzer. Thank you all for  
carrying out your various roles happily and  
competently.

## Advertising Rates in TOSA News

For Members:

Small, Organ related ads = FREE!

For all other cases:

Small bubble = \$11.00

Quarter Page = \$24.75

Half Page = \$49.50

Full Page = \$99.00

Full Page Insert = \$125.00

(All Advertising rates are payable in  
advance)

## Members' Playing Events

A reminder that the Committee has tried  
to establish permanent times but that  
these can be cancelled at short notice if  
either venue receives a paying booking for  
our Thursday.

Unless otherwise stated, the Campsie  
afternoons are held on the second  
Thursday of each month at 1.30pm, and  
the Marrickville evenings are on the fourth  
Monday at 7.30pm.

To be sure that there is no last minute  
cancellation at the Orion, please ring  
Walter on 9716 0151. To be sure there  
are no last minute cancellations at  
Marrickville, please ring Neil on 9798  
6742.

## The Musical Museum - Brentford Middlesex

*From the Musical Museum Guide Book*

This Musical Museum contains one of the world's foremost collections of automatic musical instruments. From the tiny clock-work Musical Box, to the self-playing Mighty Wurlitzer, the collection embraces a comprehensive array of sophisticated reproducing pianos.

The collection was originally assembled in the redundant St. George's Church, Brentford High Street, by the late Frank Holland, M.B.E. In 1963. Using his own private collection of instruments as a nucleus, and his life savings as the financial backing, he rapidly assembled an impressive grouping of instruments which forms the backbone of the museum today.

In 1966, under the aegis of the Department of Education and Science, the collection was formed into a Charitable Trust – The British

Piano Museum – and a number of Frank Holland's friends from the musical world became Trustees of this collection, which was rapidly growing in importance.

In those early days, much of the day-to-day running of the museum was carried out by Frank Holland, as was the restoration of the instruments, making it very much a 'One Man Band'. However, a small group of volunteers who all shared a common interest in automatic music gradually came together, and to this day the museum is run on an entirely voluntary basis. Looking around the marvelous selection of instruments, and taking into account the many activities in which the museum is involved, it is difficult to believe that it is all done in people's spare time.

Times change and at the start of 1989 it was decided, in line with more common practice, to reform the original Charitable Trust into a Company Limited by Guarantee, with Charitable Status, and for trading activities the museum to be separated-off into a second, independent, organisation. Unhap-





pily, Frank Holland died in the autumn of that year, just a few months before these changes took place, but his collection lives on, delighting visitors from all over the world – (*including the Editor who spent a most enjoyable afternoon at the museum on the day of the opening concert on the Mighty Wurlitzer*).

### **The Origins of Automatic Music**

These days, at the touch of a button, we are so used to hearing any type of music, reproduced with amazing fidelity, that it is hard to imagine what it must have been like before the days of radio, television, and Hi-Fi. A hundred or so years ago most people *never* heard an orchestra, concert pianist, or opera singer during their whole lifetime. The local village band, the church choir, or perhaps a trip to a Music Hall would form the total of

the average person's contact with the world of music.

For a period of about 50 years, until the advent of radio, electronic recording techniques and 'talking pictures' in the late 1920s, automatic musical instruments were produced in huge numbers and they reached fantastic levels of superhuman sophistication.

Although various types of automatic Pipe Organ were first described around 100 B.C. and were mentioned throughout history, the first type of automatic musical instrument to be produced in any quantity was the Musical Box. They are still made today!

*To be continued in the next issue of TOSA News*



## **A Wurlitzer's 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday! More than candles.**

This past year marked both the 80th anniversary of the Wurlitzer (Opus #1813) installed originally in the Capitol Theatre, Sydney, and the 20th anniversary of its later re-opening at the Orion Centre, in suburban Campsie. Beginning as a Style-260 instrument (3m-15r) when presented to the public at its Hay Street venue by American organist Fred Scholl on Easter Saturday, 1928, this Wurlitzer saw almost daily use until 1957. Thereafter, it was gradually "adopted" by TOSA enthusiasts and used for concerts until the Capitol closed in 1972. Eventually the organ was bought and stored for many years. With the help of Canterbury Council and of many volunteer hours a suitable venue was found; next a professional organ-builder was brought in to head the project. Boasting two additional ranks, the organ was given another opening concert at the Orion in Campsie in October, 1988. Since that time the Wurlitzer has been presented in concert by TOSA(NSW) and kept in voice notwithstanding its venerable four-score years.

Accordingly, the TOSA Committee endorsed the idea of celebrating this instrument's survival in two ways: in the short-term by having a very special show at the Orion on 28th September featuring Neil Jensen and Bernard Walz (grand piano); and by launching a competition to produce a suitable musical composition that might eventually add to theatre-organ literature.

Despite what seemed to be a reasonable decision by the 80th. Anniversary Competition Committee (Barry Tooker and this writer) to restrict the advertising of this competition to venues and people within Australia, and despite what was thought to be a substantial sum offered as prize-money, the number of works submitted at the closing date was probably fewer than we had hoped. Nonetheless, a range of music was submitted by the closing date, and it was especially gratifying that a number of school-children were encouraged to submit their compositions on CDs and even on DVDs as well as musical scores.

An adjudicating committee (Cliff Bingham, John Shaw, and this writer) was struck to sift the entries and find a suitable winning com-

position. And by the beginning of December they picked the composer of "The Wurlitzer Waltz" in Eb-major to be the worthy winner, a decision ratified by the TOSA Committee. Written by Peter Hale of Adelaide, SA, this music was further honoured by being played at December's theatre-organ by organist Tony Fenelon at his Marrickville Town Hall. Any potential publisher of this music should approach TOSA(NSW) in the first instance.

Though Peter was unable to be present that afternoon, a number of composition entrants were able to join us. TOSA(NSW) would like to thank all who participated. Among those present, the surprisingly young entrant, Elektra Lammers, proved to be a lively 8-year-old and she was more than happy to be photographed on the bench of the Marrickville Wurlitzer. The enterprise of Gloria Stuart, who interested at least one of her school classes in this composition project, was admirable. The TOSA Committee liked many of the submissions it examined. We concluded that though one prize had been awarded this was a competition in which there were no losers, only winners, and that the Australian theatre-organ world is the richer for their involvement.

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## **Check Out!**

TOSA (NSW)'s new website!  
We have been working hard to improve  
our website:

[www.tosa.net.au](http://www.tosa.net.au)



# **Chris McPhee** **at the Mighty Wurlitzer**



with  
Well Known Piano Accordionist



**Enzo Toppano**  
**Sunday 1st February at 2:00pm**  
**Orion Centre, 155 Beamish St Campsie**

*Due to copyright regulations, the making of audio and/or video*

## Chris McPhee

Chris is in regular demand for concerts around Australia and overseas, including New Zealand, United Kingdom and the USA. In mid 1999 he was featured in the American Theatre Organ Society's National Convention held in London, performing on the legendary Buddy Cole Wurlitzer. In September 2002, he returned to the USA for his sixth concert tour with performances in Rochester and Portland.

Back home in Adelaide Chris is a popular artist at the prestigious Adelaide Town Hall and Festival Theatre pipe organs, performing regularly at the Lord Mayors Christmas Concert, and to over 1500 patrons at the popular Morning Melodies concerts.

At a Chris McPhee concert, audiences are treated to a mix of musical genres, from Opera to Broadway, always with a focus on the toe tapping tunes of yesteryear.

Whilst a solo artist of renown, Chris has had the privilege to perform with some of Australia's top entertainers, including Tony Fenelon, Rosemary Boyle, Tasso Bouyessis, Ryan Heggie, JC Jazz, Brett's New Internationals (Auckland), The Bay Big Band and Adelaide Harmony Choir, to name just a few...

Chris' music has been featured on radio programs across the globe, including ABC's popular 'Classic Drive' program and the long running BBC broadcast, 'The Organist Entertains'. Recorded on the Capri Theatre organ Adelaide, Chris' latest CD release celebrates 20 years of theatre organ performance.

## Enzo Toppano

Enzo Toppano, the son of Italian migrants settled in Broken Hill. Enzo and his brother were urged to take up the piano accordion by their father, who was a professional accordion player.

Two years after Peggy Mortimor arrived in London, she met up with her childhood friend, Enzo, who had travelled to England in 1949. They fell in love and married in 1950 in a church at Golders Green, London. Their daughter, Peta, was born a year later. While Enzo toured England on the Stoll Moss theatre circuit, Peggy appeared in concert performances and continued her work with the BBC.

After returning to Australia for family reasons, Peggy & Enzo decided to stay, appearing throughout Australia and New Zealand in tours of *Ice Parade*, *Ice Capades*, and shows produced by Harry Wren.

After Lorenzo (Ren) was born in 1956, Peggy and Enzo were among the first entertainers to appear on Australian television, with their own segment on Sydney's first TV breakfast show.

The ATN 7 program was hosted by Ray Taylor. Near the end of the show's run, in early 1961, the two Toppanos were working at a breakneck pace. Enzo starred in Harry Wren's travelling show *Celebrity Circus*, wrote music for pantomimes, conducted the music and featured in guest spots. As well, he composed music for the ABC TV show, *Cafe Continental*. Peggy was also pressed for time. After daily appearances in pantos, she would race to another theatre to appear in *Thanks for the Memory*, starring Gladys Moncrief and George Wallace.

*Hope you all enjoyed the excellent review of Richard Hills Concert by Dr John Batts in the November issue of TOSA News. Many thanks again John. (Editor)*

## **Organist Richard Hills in Conversation.**

Part 2 (conclusion).

Following his wonderful public performance on the Wurlitzer of Marrickville Town Hall for TOSA(NSW) in late August, 2008, Richard was kind enough to allow an interview with John S. Batts on behalf of TOSA and RNB's radio presentation "Theatre Organ Magic." Notes: Pauses not omissions are marked by three dots. Additions in square brackets are to help place the references.

Continued from: "RH: If I want something in between [piston] numbers 4 and 5 well then I'll hit No.5 and take the Post-Horn off my hand."

**JSB:** Right. And you more or less do this wherever you go, so that you did this on the Christie yesterday in Brisbane [at the Kelvin Grove Christie]?

**RH:** Oh yes, and obviously the sounds get tapered to a certain degree, depending on what the organ does well.

**JSB:** I think our members are a bit shy about moving anything by hand, being very reliant on pistons. So I thought it was quite exemplary the way you were hand-registering. And with that magnified picture we have of all that's going on at the console, it's instructive — which I think is very good. Some of our visiting artists are very finicky; they use all the channels, and if it's a very special piece may have a whole channel devoted to it, a modern thing that is available.

**RH:** That's right. We all have our own way of doing things. I tend to use just the one level. Whether that's because most of the organs in the UK only have one level available, it's possible [an explanation]. Maybe it's because I like to do a lot of the hand registrations because I have a starting point from a piston and then modify it.

**JSB:** Here in Marrickville it is very convenient.

**RH:** Well that's right.

**JSB:** You can actually change things while you still have a finger on a note.

**RH:** But you just have to be so careful if you are going to set more than one channel, you really have to remember what's on it.

**JSB:** Yes, otherwise chaos ensues!

**RH:** Otherwise chaos ensues, and I have been present when chaos has ensued. I would just much rather work with one channel. For heaven's sake, it's a 11-rank Wurlitzer with ten generals [pistons] and five divisionals [pistons] per manual. There are only a certain number of combinations you need. The bigger the organ, obviously, the more you have to work with. But there again, if it's got 4 manuals, you've got four manual's worth of pistons as well, so it's relative. Very occasionally, for conventions or occasions when I've done a very big piece or a piece that requires very distinctive registrations, then I will set a couple of general pistons on a different channel. But I would mark very carefully on my little piece of paper what was there so that I won't forget.

**JSB:** Did you do that when you first went to the Oakland Paramount, for example?

**RH:** No, because the Oakland Paramount organ only has one level of combination actions.

**JSB:** Oh! Does it! How intriguing!

**RH:** The console is still on original blow boxes and centre-board.

**JSB:** That I hadn't realised. In a sense that cuts down a bit of the headache.

**RH:** It means what you have is what you are stuck with. And you don't find yourself on the wrong [combination-action] level.

**JSB:** Have you got any CDs in the making? Are you thinking of recording at the Apollo in Hammersmith?

Continued on page 16...

Continued from page 14...

**RH:** It won't be the next one since that has already been promised to somewhere else. But all in all there are ideas for another three CDs in the pipeline. So at some point I'm going to have to find the time to sit down and work out the material for them. But it's certainly about time that I got my recorded output up to date.

**JSB:** Last year a kind soul brought me a copy of George Blackmore's Dendy March which he had penned in 1967 for the opening of the Dendy in Melbourne. Have you ever come across this piece? For you, from Rochester, it would be the ideal sort of thing to have. Today it was nice to hear "Down the Mall" by a "John Belton." Was that [organist & composer] Gerald Shaw or John Howlett – someone like those people?

**RH:** I think that was a pseudonym. I don't know otherwise. I'm sure it was not Gerald Shaw.



**JSB:** Though he did write "The Red Cross March."

**RH:** That other piece dates from the Thirties; he was playing in theatres then, but had not hit the big time.

**JSB:** So that's really too early for him, but it probably was a theatre organist. Some years ago I wrote an article for C.O.S. Journal about [English] theatre-organ composers, and it seemed the matter of composing seemed to

be quite widespread. And I have come across instances since then, items I did not know about at that time. So I am wondering when you are going to spread your wings.

**RH:** There's a slight difference in that back in those days, of course, if they wrote something that was good it was going to be on the radio within a matter of weeks.

**JSB:** That's true; you wouldn't need much of a song-plugger.

**RH:** But no, it still does happen. I know, for example, that [young American organist] Mark Herman is very fond of composition and has played a couple of his own compositions at the [ATOS] convention this year.

**JSB:** Your old teacher, John Norris, also publishes material.

**RH:** Yes, he does. He tends to go in for arranging, arrangements rather than composition. But certainly back in the old days, organists did this as another source of income, particularly from the royalties. They were also good as well; they knew how to write music. They had a good solid training.

**JSB:** Yes, GB [George Blackmore] had an FRCO [Fellow of the Royal College of Organists: Note that Richard is also a FRCO diploma holder]. So many of them did: Freddy Bayco, [Reginald] Foort ....

**RH:** [Frederic] Curzon, of course, was one of the best. Another was Felton Rapley.

**JSB:** Yes, from Winchester; he arranged things. That arrangement that you had of the [Noel] Coward tunes, did you string them together? Because there is an edition of them in the series with the beautiful blue covers, Chappell.

**RH:** I try to do my own arrangements on the whole.

**JSB:** This one of the ways we can all learn. I was quite in awe of the way in which you were segueing between this and that and keeping the motif going.

**RH:** It is a huge and necessary skill in the theatre organist's armoury, being able to do appropriate modulations and key-changes

and counter melodies, almost without thinking about it. It's one of the stock ways of arranging for the theatre organ.

**JSB:** Next month I'm including Viva Mexico on the strength of today in my radio programme. What can you say of Ronald Hanmer?

**RH:** Ronald Hanmer, of course, was one of the great staff arrangers for Chappell in the UK back in the 1950s. He was also a theatre organist; he played on the Granada circuit. And he emigrated out here to Australia in the 1970s, I believe, and set up his home in Queensland, where he conducted the St. Lucia Orchestra for about twenty years. I think he had a particular talent for stringing together tunes with a common theme into little fantasies, and he did a whole host of them. There's a Stephen Foster Fantasy, and there's one called Boots and Saddle which is based on cowboy and western themes; and there's another called Heritage of England which is, as the name suggests, English folk-songs. And he did this one called Viva Mexico! which is a great hoot of an arrangement. It is great fun to play, particularly the way he strings the various pieces together. I think it is quite masterly.



**JSB:** There's also one called The (something) and the Rose which I picked up in a junk shop.

**RH:** The Oak and the Rose.

**JSB:** Yes ... I have a copy of that I bought in Hay-on-Wye, the book-town [in Wales, UK].

**RH:** Bouquet de Paris is yet another. There are loads of them ... very, very beautifully put together.

**JSB:** Isn't there a nautical one as well?

**RH:** Oh, I'm sure there is. That rings a bell.

**JSB:** What is your view of novelty numbers generally? Sometimes one finds people in TOSA who get a bit worried about novelty numbers as though these are "corny" or something and not likely to appeal to the younger generation. Any views from a younger generation man yourself?

**RH:** I don't see why it should appeal less to the younger generation than to other people. They might even object less to them, because they are generally up-beat and quite fun. Novelty items are a staple part of any concert repertoire. If you go to a light orchestral concert you'll hear pieces of mood music written in that vein. Think of all those wonderful novelties that Sidney Torch wrote that were broadcast for years on the radio and played by the BBC Concert Orchestra: "On a Spring Note," "Shooting Star," "Fandango," I don't see any problem at all. They're fun to play on the organ. It's like everything else on the programme; it has to be well thought-out, well prepared, and put in the right place in the programme.

**JSB:** Is it essential to have the piano? I heard you have a go at "Dizzy Fingers" earlier on today. Then there are piano novelty things like "Nola," "Polly," "Dainty Miss" etc. Do you have to have a piano attached [to the organ] in order to play them?

**RH:** No, I don't think so.

**JSB:** I did want to sound you out about that one.

**RH:** There are various ways you can play that kind of novelty music on the theatre organ – all sorts of ways. The Strings, 8' 4' 2' without tremulant as long as it has a crisp sound; or the Diapason 8' and 4' without tremulant. You have to lose the tremulant to get the articulation. Or you can play it with the Xylophone and a subtle coupler. There are all sorts of ways to get the same kind of percussive effect. The piano can be useful, but it can only be useful if it is a good piano, in good tune, where there isn't a huge amount of vacuum noise when you have the stop-key down, and where it is responsive. So

often these things are wheezy and clapped-out, and where you put more than one note down they don't want to work. With organs, pianos have to be really good. But if they are good, you can use them to play that kind of music, but I don't think it in any way usurps the other ways of doing it. Another sound in the [organist's] armoury.

**JSB:** You seem to have a penchant for the Latin feel, I noticed.

**RH:** You think?

**JSB:** Yes. And it does seem to go well on the theatre organ.

**RH:** Very much so. And it has done traditionally for years.

**JSB:** Though the theatre organ predates the vogue for Latin-American music. It didn't really come in until the early 1940s, at least in North America.

**RH:** And there are still (Latin) things written in the 1970s that work nicely on the theatre organ. The key thing is that it's got to have a good melody line, good harmony, and has to be a good piece of music.

**JSB:** So you really enjoy the idea of the integrity of the music.

**RH:** Well, that's what it's all about. I try not to play any second-rate music, but always quality.

**JSB:** A final word ... about the future. Habitat [London store] is closing, or at least is not using their theatre organ [2-6 Wurlitzer] any more. That's a bit sad. Will the ex-New Gallery Wurlitzer be still there or entombed?

**RH:** Who knows what the future holds? But hopefully it will. It's got to stay there, because of the heritage of the building [installed in ?1926]. It was given a full restoration just before the store opened.

**JSB:** With lottery money?

**RH:** No, Crown Estates paid for it as part of the upkeep. And lots of people will keep their eyes on it.

**JSB:** Let's hope so. So you think the organ

has a future anyway. That's the grand thing.

**RH:** The organ generally?

**JSB:** Yes .. pipe organs, as here in Australia, are a little bit under threat from the electronics

**RH:** well they are in churches. Who knows ... I think that pipe organs are quite often given the rum deal because unfortunately they do cost money.

**JSB:** So do you think we're going to be here in ten years, fifteen years, entertaining you on your tenth visit to Australia ?

**RH:** Something has to change.

**JSB:** Any thoughts for our membership as you contemplate this?

**RH:** I'm beginning to wonder, should we say, if the format of the two-hour concert is beginning to come to the end of its existence. Theatre organ is becoming further and further from popular culture. And the people that appreciate it and remember it for its own sake are getting very thin on the ground nowadays. I think we could talk for half an hour on this. Whatever happens, I think that we have a duty to ensure that the instruments are in the best possible condition musically as well as mechanically. I think we have an obligation to present only the very best in concert, and it's only if we can do that that we can then encourage people to come and hear them. Some of the shows that get put on these days are only for the need for having a show: "Oh, we have twelve concerts to fill this year, who on earth are we going to book?" mean poor shows, and that's certainly not doing anyone any good. It's certainly not doing the instrument any good. There may be people from the public who have never heard the instrument before and who will not exactly be encouraged to come again, unless they hear the instrument in the peak of condition: good tuning, everything working, played by someone who really knows what they are doing. And if that means going down to six concerts a year, then I think it would be much better to have six really good concerts a year rather than twelve, a mixed bag. But I also think that the days when people came to hear the organ for its own sake are limited. Perhaps we should explore getting theatre



organs in some kind of use where people will stumble across them by accident again. They are rather like Neil Jensen is doing at The Orpheum [Cremorne]: people come to see a show and they are confronted by the Wurlitzer, and that's how I fell in love with the Wurlitzer. I'm sure that's how you found them as well; you happened to come across one and were blown away. But if someone had said "Oh, come and hear this organ concert," you would have said "Oh no, I'm mowing the lawn or something." We need to think up new and inventive ways, and if that means just giving twenty minutes' worth of organ music before a film presentation or something, well let's do it. I'm not saying that the two-hour organ concerts should be dropped, but I think we need to start exploring other avenues, other ways of using the organ. Perhaps people explore it with orchestra, with soloists; I think if you have a really good performer then you don't need someone else to accompany the show. But it might be an extra way in. It's a very grey subject, but I think that if we are going to be here in ten years as you say, then something

is going to have to change. We've got quite a short amount of time to think of what.

**JSB:** That's right, the old behemoth is close to extinction otherwise.

**RH:** Of course, as you know, the thing is if you are confronted by one of these things in the flesh, it's very hard, if it's played well, not to like it.

**JSB:** As today!

**RH:** That's the key. You can put on all the CDs in the world, but it doesn't beat actually sitting there in front of the thing and feeling it move the air.

**JSB:** And watching! I met one of our older members immediately after the concert who hadn't got the courage, but he did want to shake you by the hand in order to be assured that you only had two hands. Thank you, Richard for being so generous with your time.

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Tony Fenelon  
wowing the crowd  
at the Marrickville  
Christmas concert.

