

Volume 25 Issue 11 Price 50¢ November 1986

# TOSA NEWS

The Official Publication of the Theatre Organ Society  
of Australia, N.S.W. Division  
Address - Box 474 Sutherland 2232  
Registered by Australia Post - Publication No. N.B.H. 1038

## ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY

MARRICKVILLE TOWN HALL

## DINE & DANCE

with

## "THE CLUB MEN"

FOR TOSA MEMBERS AND THEIR FRIENDS

23RD NOVEMBER 1986 AT 12.30PM.

BUFFET LUNCHEON - B.Y.O.

DURING THE AFTERNOON, GUEST ORGANISTS

WILL BE PLAYING THE WURLITZER

Plan your tables  
NOW!

Get in on the Fun

DIRECTORY

THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA. (NSW DIVISION)

PATRON Ian Davies

PRESIDENT Alan Misdale (525 5554)

VICE PRESIDENTS Frank Ellis (649 7011) Ian Somerville (476 4991)

SECRETARY Bob McMinn (542 3937)

ASSISTANT SECRETARY Pam McMinn 542 3937

TREASURER Edna Smith (529 7379)

ASSISTANT TREASURER Ron Smith (529 7379)

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY Ron Smith (529 7379)

RESEARCH AND ARCHIVES Ian Cameron

PRACTICE CONVENOR Bob Staunton (607 8925)

COMMITTEE Bill Schumacher, Neil Palmer, Jack Lawson, Margaret Hall,  
Ron Wilson, Phyllis Wilson

MINUTE SECRETARY Robert Gliddon

TOSA NEWS EDITOR Ron Wilson (759 6050)

TOSA NEWS PRINTING Ron Wilson

PHOTOGRAPHY Barry Tooker

CONCERT RECORDING Bill Schumacher and Ron Wilson

CONCERT TAPE HIRING Neil Palmer (798 6742)

HOME PARTIES Andrea Harrison (520 8632)

Address all correspondence to:-  
The Secretary, TOSA (NSW Division)  
Box 474 P.O. SUTHERLAND N.S.W. 2232

ON THE SICK LIST

NEW MEMBERS

(October meeting)

A cordial welcome is extended to the following new members.

David Lillington  
Victor and Elsie Evans (rejoined)  
Mr and Mrs E. de Sauty

It has been reported that Max Lang, husband of Sydney organist Valda Lang, has undergone major surgery.

The Theatre Organ Society and its members are thinking of you at this time Max and wish to convey their sincere thoughts for a speedy and complete recovery.

PLEASE NOTE

Articles submitted for publication in TOSA NEWS, MUST be accompanied by the author's name and address. If the author of the article wishes to withhold their identity from publication, this will be done. The printing of any item in TOSA NEWS, will be at the discretion of the Editor and/or TOSA executive and committee.

SPECIAL NOTICE

Would all interstate divisions and members please note change of postal address.

The NEW postal address is P.O. BOX 474 Sutherland 2232.

DATES FOR  
YOUR DIARY



## NOVEMBER

### SUNDAY 2nd at 2.00pm.

HOME ORGAN AND POOL PARTY  
at the home of Betty Bruderlin, 69  
Isaac Street Peakhurst.

Betty has a small above ground pool,  
so bring your swimmers and your music.  
Who knows, there maybe a few surprises!  
For bookings, please ring 534 1753.

Cost:- Gents \$3.00 Ladies \$2.00 plus  
a plate please.

### MONDAY 3rd at 7.30pm. COMMITTEE MEETING

### TUESDAY 4th at 7.30pm. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING MARRICKVILLE TOWN HALL

Please note: As the number of nominations  
for executive and committee positions  
did not exceed the number of positions  
to be filled, no ballot will be required,  
and it can be expected that the Annual  
Meeting will declare the nominees elected  
unopposed.

### SUNDAY 23rd at 12.30pm. ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY. MARRICKVILLE TOWN HALL

Dine and Dance to the music of "THE  
CLUB MEN".

During the afternoon, guest organists  
will be playing the Wurlitzer.

Full details and booking form in this  
issue.

This function is open to TOSA MEMBERS  
and their FRIENDS.

\*\*\*\*\*

## DECEMBER

### MONDAY 1st at 7.30pm. COMMITTEE MEETING

### SUNDAY 14th at 2.00pm. TONY FENELON IN CONCERT MARRICKVILLE TOWN HALL

Admission: Adults \$8.00 Members \$6.00  
Concession \$5.00

PLEASE BOOK EARLY

\*\*\*\*\*

### THEATRE ORGAN PROGRAMME

Don't forget to listen to "Theatre Organ  
Highlights" presented every Monday  
night at 9.00pm. on radio 2CBA FM  
with your host Frank Ellis.

## NOTES FROM THE SECRETARY

One of our very active younger members  
has put a suggestion to the committee  
that T.O.S.A. Australia wide conduct  
an eisteddfod type competition for young  
"Theatre Style" organists. At the last  
committee meeting, it was decided  
to have this item placed on the agenda  
for discussion at the National Executive  
Meeting in Adelaide at Easter next  
year. I would appreciate hearing from  
any members, young, or not so young,  
on this subject. From younger members,  
or the children of members, an expression  
of interest in such an idea would help  
your committee, and from other members,  
suggestions as to how such a competition  
might be organised and judged and indeed  
whether such an idea has your overall  
support, will no doubt help your committee  
in their deliberations.

In order to encourage young people  
to attend concerts, your committee  
have decided that all children under  
the age of 15 years, will be admitted  
FREE OF CHARGE to all concerts.  
So now you can bring your children,  
or your grandchildren, to a concert  
at no cost.

1987 ADELAIDE CONVENTION. Else-  
where in this issue, you will be able  
to see the full programme for what,  
I am sure will be a great convention.  
As members will already be aware,  
Ritchie Willis is organising a coach  
tour for the convention, and I understand  
from talking with Ritchie, that the  
coach is booked out. It therefore appears  
that N.S.W. Division will have a good  
representation at the 1987 convention.

For members wishing to fly to Adelaide  
for the convention, from anywhere in  
Australia or overseas, please contact  
me as a matter of urgency, for I have  
had some discussion with Australian  
Airlines (formerly TAA) and on a group  
travel basis we may be able to offer  
you a "deal".

DRAFT RULES. Accompanying your  
last TOSA NEWS was a copy of the  
draft rules for your perusal and discussion  
at the AGM. Whilst these rules are  
somewhat more copious than our present  
constitution, they do, we feel, provide  
an excellent basis for the incorporation  
of our society as well as providing for  
the many matters that the Corporate  
Affairs Commission require to be pro-  
vided for.

Please bring your copy of the Draft Rules to the AGM as ample opportunity will be provided for discussion, and if required, amendment to this draft.

I do, from time to time, receive correspondence from members about matters they would like raised at committee meetings, and your committee welcome such letters, for it is by this method that we learn what you require within your society. Please keep those letters rolling in and we will be a better informed, and therefore more attuned committee.

---

FOR THOSE TRAVELLING SOUTH  
TO VICTORIA

NOVEMBER

Thursday 6th. at 8.00pm.  
OAKS DAY. LADIES' DAY CONCERT  
Morrabbin Town Hall.

Sunday 16th at 2.00pm.  
TONY FENELON IN CONCERT  
Memorial Theatre Ballarat.  
Tony will be playing the Compton Theatre Organ and Steinway Grand Piano.

\*\*\*\*\*

DECEMBER

Thursday 4th at 8.00pm.  
Morrabbin Town Hall  
CLUB NIGHT Featured organist will be Bruce Ardley. Members free, visitors \$1.00 Feel free to take something to share for supper.

Friday 5th at 8.00pm.  
Moorabbin Town Hall.  
Waverley Multiple Sclerosis Auxiliary present CHRISTMAS FUNTASIA featuring TONY FENELON and JOHN ATWELL at the piano and Wurlitzer Theatre Pipe Organ, and DAVID ASHTON-SMITH, tenor.  
Adults \$7.00 Pensioners, children \$4.00

For all enquiries, please ring the Secretary, Betty McKillen on (056) 848 1243 or by writing to her at 13 Berkley Street Doncaster 3108.

\*\*\*\*\*

FOR SALE

For sale:

New console shell complete with two 61 note keyboards and 32 note pedal board.

OFFERS WANTED.

Colour photographs of the console are available for viewing.

For further details contact:-  
Peter Bidencepe - 44-2728  
Tom Halloran 523-5077

FOR SALE

Conn Organ - Theatrette model  
Horseshoe console - leslie  
This organ is in excellent condition  
URGENT SALE \$4950.00  
For all details, please phone 327-6189

---

SELWYN THEATRE CLUB

ADELAIDE TOSA CONVENTION TOUR

Departing Sydney Tuesday 14th April 1987

Day 1	Koala Motor Inn	Wagga Wagga
Day 2	Kar-rama Motel	Mildura
Day 3	Ensenada Motel	Adelaide
Day 4	" "	"
Day 5	" "	"
Day 6	" "	"
Day 7	" "	"
Day 8	Mount Gambier Motel	Mount Gambier
Day 9	Central Court Motel	Warrnambool
Day 10	Park View Motor Inn	Ballarat
Day 11	Hume Motor Inn	Albury
Day 12	Arrive back in Sydney	

Tour consists of 12 days and 11 nights, dinner, bed and breakfast, with the use of the coach in Adelaide.

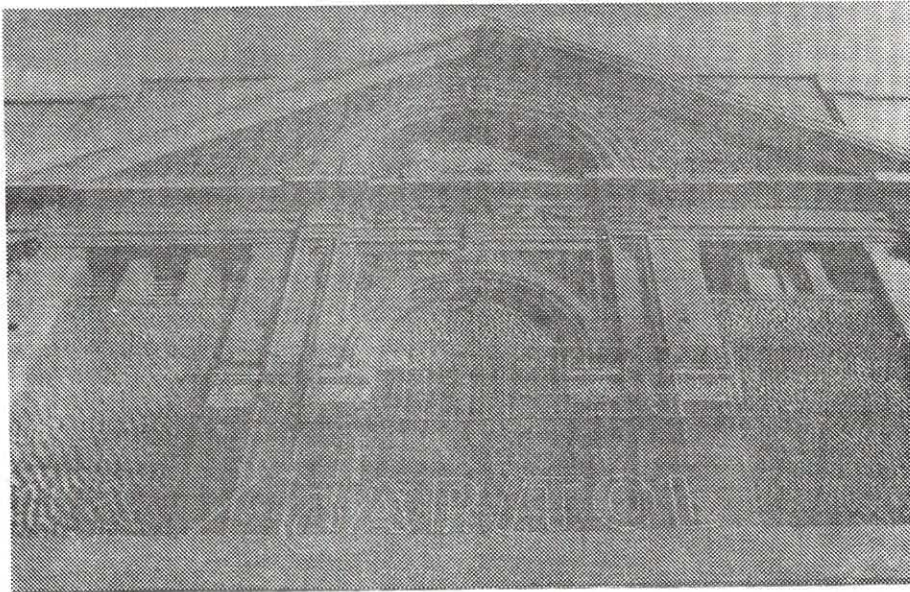
Fare - \$698.00

Deposit of \$70 to be paid by the 30th of November.

---

## REPORT WAXES LYRICAL ON PROSPECTS OF CAPITOL THEATRE

By Tracey Aubin, Civic Reporter.



A feasibility study into the Capitol Theatre, commissioned by its owner, Sydney City Council, recommends, without reservation, that the site be converted into a lyric theatre for major productions.

The study says the upgrading, adaptation and revision of the Capitol will "produce the greatest benefits for council, the southern CBD, for Sydney as a whole and for theatre in Australia".

It is a viable option which can be carried out at no cost to the council while giving the council an opportunity to participate in healthy profits, the report says.

The study recommends that the council share in the development by contributing its land as equity.

It says that the council can fore-go income from the site for 15 years in return for 50 per cent of the total income from the project from 15 to 60 years, after which the \$29.7 million, fully operational lyric theatre can revert to council ownership.

The study, by Travis Partners Pty Ltd, shows there is a strong level of confidence that operating costs can be readily covered by theatre revenue and can yield a "very conservative" annual profit of between \$800,000 and \$1,254,000.

It recommends that the council select a joint venture partner to underwrite the development risk. The theatre can be managed by a professional management group which can bear the responsibility and cost for the operation of the theatre at no cost or risk to the council.

The study says a 16 storey commercial tower above the Manning Building can make the 2,300 seat theatre, with an extended rear stage into Hay Street, financially viable.

The site, bounded by George, Hay, Pitt and Campbell Streets, has been owned by the council since 1846. It opened as the Capitol Theatre in 1928 and closed in 1983 with a performance by Victor Borge.

The Capitol was the first of four "atmospheric" picture palaces in Australia and is the only one remaining. Outside North America, there are just three such theatres left in the world.

It was classified by the National Trust of Australia (NSW) in 1976 and is a major element in the trust's Haymarket Urban Conservation Area.

In April last year, the State Government placed an Interim Conservation Order on the Capitol. According to the study, Sydneysiders suffer because of the lack of a lyric theatre. They miss out on numerous productions because of unsuitable venues.

Other productions designed for Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane theatres must be reduced in size or simplified at great cost for Sydney performances.

The study finds there are numerous disadvantages to building a new theatre against refurbishing the Capitol. These include:

- \* The difficulty in finding a central city site,
- \* The cost of construction,
- \* The years it will take to design and construct a new building while the demands exists today.

"The established atmosphere of the Capitol Theatre presents a great opportunity to create a memorable and exciting lyric theatre as opposed to a totally new theatre which lacks the richness, traditions and associations built up over the years," the study says.

A fully workable lyric theatre for musicals, opera, ballet and theatre can readily cover its operating expenses, it adds.

The study says parking will be no problem because of the proximity of the 900 space Goulburn Street Parking Station. There is also the opportunity to provide additional parking on the vacant site adjacent to Central Square which will make the development "more attractive and therefore more successful". Sydney City Council is yet to consider the study.

News source: The Sydney Morning Herald. September 1986

NEWS FROM THE A.C.T.

Copies of the 10" by 8" colour photo enlargement of the Compton console (in an attractive presentation folder) and the Souvenir Programme that were produced for the opening concert on 17th August are still available from TOSA ACT for a cost of \$12 and \$4 respectively including airmail postage anywhere in Australia (\$10 and \$3 if collected - phone Clinton White on (062) 88 7122).

Both items are worthwhile souvenirs of this important event in the history of Canberra's cultural heritage and would make an unusual gift. Orders are already coming in from interstate and overseas so, be quick.

NEIL JENSEN IN CONCERT

Saturday 29th November 1986 at 7.00pm.

A sneak preview concert at the new Atkinson family home of the 3/15 Wurlitzer pipe organ previously in the Regent Theatre.

Lovingly and uniquely restored and played by Sydney's international organist, Neil Jensen in a modern theatre organ programme.

To experience something new in sound and participate in this sneak preview concert, obtain your admission by telephone to John Atkinson on 587 3374 after 6.00pm.

Admission by prior booking only.

COST:- \$15 per person including champagne supper.

TIME:- 7pm. at 42 Lily Street Hurstville.

WARRINGAH ORGAN SOCIETY

Presents

MARGARET HALL



IN CONCERT

at

MACKELLAR WOMENS BOWLING CLUB

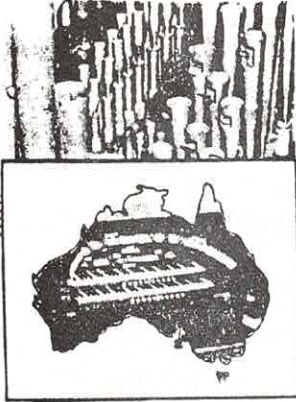
Campbell Parade West, Manly Vale

on

Monday 3rd November 1986

at

7.45pm.

**T.O.S.A.**

## Theatre Organ Society of Australia

(SOUTH AUSTRALIAN DIVISION) INCORPORATED  
P.O. BOX 595, ADELAIDE, S.A. 5001

13 Laura Street,  
VISTA. 5091  
SOUTH AUSTRALIA  
Phone: (08) 264-5245

13th September, 1986.

The Festival City Fifteenth National Convention of the Theatre Organ Society of Australia will be held in Adelaide during the Easter weekend of 1987 from Friday 17th April to Monday 20th April, plus the "Afterglow" tour on Tuesday 21st April.

The Theatre Organ Society of Australia (South Australian Division) Inc have devised, we believe, a varied and enjoyable Convention program presenting some of the best known Australian Theatre Organists as well as our own local Organists. We present as our main artist from the U.S.A., DONNA PARKER. Donna is a most talented and experienced Organist who gave her first professional concert at the age of thirteen; since this time she has had experience in many areas of Organ playing including appointments in large American restaurants and has been playing the 4/42 WurliTzer at the Indianapolis Music Palace for several years as Resident Staff Organist. Some extracts about Donna's 1983 A.T.O.S Convention performance in San Francisco included the reviewers comments "... beautifully played ... fine technique ... perfectly articulated ... a stunning performance ... done with great panache and rhythmic élan ... fine pedaling, great articulation and compelling rhythm ... lush theatre styling ... exceptionally varied program". Donna's concert on the Capri Organ promises to be both thrilling and exciting.

While Donna's concert will be the main attraction of the Convention we believe that we have an entertaining program from Registration night through to the "Afterglow" tour. Registration will start from 4.00 p.m. on Friday 17th April. Our professional catering service for the weekend, will provide the first meal which is included in the cost of your registration. Other meals to be included will be Saturday's lunch (a hot spit-roast), Sunday's lunch and Monday's lunch. The Convention Dinner will be held on Sunday night. The "Afterglow" tour on Tuesday also includes a hot lunch as part of the deal.

Friday Night's entertainment will be varied with local Organists providing Theatre Organ music and a jazz group will make the night swing. Saturday morning consists of two mini-concerts - one in the Adelaide Town Hall featuring John Atwell and the majestic sounds of the Town Hall Organ; the other will allow us the opportunity to see and hear the piano playing side of Ray Thornley who will be supported by some very talented local musicians and vocalists. This concert will be in the beautiful setting of the Barr Smith Theatre, a Nineteenth Century private residence Theatre now part of Scotch College.

After your roast lunch, we will have a leisurely afternoon at Adelaide's most popular beach - Glenelg. We will be transported there and back on South Australia's unique trams, especially hired for the afternoon. After an inspection of St. Peter's Church and a demonstration of its Organ you will be free to stroll around this popular tourist seaside resort.

Saturday night's concert at Wyatt Hall on our 2/12 WurliTzer will give all the opportunity to hear the sweet and lush sounds of this Organ in full concert. Ray Thornley will be featured on Organ while local residents Malcolm Ross, on Grand Piano and Heather his wife, soprano, will combine to make this an interesting and fascinating evening of musical entertainment.

On Sunday morning you will have the opportunity to hear Organists from the various Divisions of T.O.S.A. and possibly New Zealand in Cameo Concert spots. After your lunch, which is included in the cost of this function, you will be ready to enjoy the main Convention Concert at the Capri Theatre with DONNA PARKER. Those Conventioneers who have not seen or heard the Capri Organ before will be spellbound - when the curtains are retracted to expose the chambers. Pipes shining under colourful lighting, unrestricted sounds of the Organ filling the auditorium of the Theatre with the kaleidoscope of sounds only available on a Theatre Organ will be an unforgettable experience for all.

Sunday night will be a time for socializing; talking to friends, dancing and enjoying a delicious Smorgasboard meal at St. Leonards Inn, Glenelg. The night is but young for the young at heart and the enthusiastic Theatre Organ buffs - David Johnston will be accompanying one of the classic silent movies on the Capri Organ, as only David can do.

Your chance to play the Capri Organ will be on Monday morning during Open Console. This will be followed by what should be an informative and interesting workshop for all Organists, or Organ enthusiasts, by Donna Parker.

A leisurely lunch back at Wyatt Hall; farewells and open console on the 2/12 will conclude the formal part of the Convention, however there is more to follow for those with extra time available.

The Tuesday "Afterglow" tour to Victor Harbour, an optional extra, will give you the chance to do some sightseeing at Adelaide's most popular weekend seaside resort. A pleasant drive through undulating farmland brings one to the picturesque setting of Victor, nestling on the coast of Encounter Bay. A ride on the horse drawn tram, which connects Victor to nearby Granite Island, is included in the cost of your tour as is an inspection of some of our native wildlife in Urrimbirra Park. Ample time will be allowed for a bus tour of the town and strolling along the foreshore. This tour also incorporates a visit to Mr. Geoff Smith's residence and a demonstration of his 2/8 Christie Theatre Organ.



The programme in brief is as follows:-

Friday 17th April

4.00 p.m.	Registration	Wyatt Hall
6.30 p.m.	Evening Meal	
8.00 p.m.	Official Opening and varied entertainment	

Saturday 18th April

9.00 a.m.	Two repeat one hour concerts John Atwell (Organ) Ray Thornley (Grand Piano) plus vocalists	Adelaide Town Hall Barr Smith Theatre
12.30 p.m.	Roast Luncheon	Wyatt Hall
2.00 p.m.	Tram to St. Peters Church	Glenelg
8.00 p.m.	Concert Ray Thornley (Organ - 2/12) Malcolm Ross (Piano) Heather Ross (Vocalist)	Wyatt Hall

Sunday 19th April

9.30 a.m.	Australasian Cameo Concert	Wyatt Hall
12.15 p.m.	Luncheon	Wyatt Hall
2.00 p.m.	Main Convention Concert DONNA PARKER (U.S.A.) (4/16 Capri Organ)	Capri Theatre
7.30 p.m.	Convention Dinner Dance	St. Leonards Inn Glenelg
12.00 Midnight	Silent Film with Organ Accompaniment by David Johnston	Capri Theatre

Monday 20th April

9.00 a.m.	Open Console - 4/16	Capri Theatre
11.00 a.m.	Workshop with DONNA PARKER	Capri Theatre
12.30 p.m.	Luncheon followed by Farewells and Open Console - 2/12	Wyatt Hall

Tuesday 21st April

"Afterglow" Tour to Victor Harbour

The Package deal as outlined above will be \$84.00; individual prices will be found in the Convention Brochure. The "Afterglow" tour is an option and as such is available at a very reasonable extra fee. Convention Programmes with Registration booking forms will be available from each Australian Division of T.O.S.A. and New Zealand Theatre Organ Secretaries in November or December.

All enquiries to:- The Convention Secretary, Mrs. Bernice Larritt, G.P.O. Box 595, Adelaide S.A. 5001 - Telephone No (After Hours) (08) 277-7912. The package deal for full registration applies until the end of February, 1987.

Yours faithfully,

*B. Larritt*  
 Ross Lange  
 CONVENTION CONVENOR

## THE THURSFORD COLLECTION

(By Colin Tringham)

During my recent trip to England, I managed to visit the Thursford Collection - a museum which I never suspected even existed. Where is Thursford? Well, it is in Norfolk, near the tiny town of Fakenham and close to the coastal towns of Wells and Cromer. It takes about two hours to drive from the outskirts of London if you use as much of the Freeways as possible.

Thursford has a collection of Steam Traction engines, Fairground Organs and a Wurlitzer Pipe Organ plus a narrow gauge railway and one of the last remaining Gondola Rides (similar to the galloping horses). The organs are housed in a very large barn-like building so that even if the English weather is wet and windy (as it always seems to be whenever I visit), you can still see and hear the organs in comfort.

The Fairground Organs comprise a 98 Key Marengi Showman's Organ, a 112 Keyless Carl Frei Concert Organ, a Wellershaus 84 Keyless Organ, a De Leeuw street organ built in 1898 (the oldest organ in the collection), a Gebrs Decap 121 key Belgian organ, two Hoo-ghuys organs and perhaps the piece-de-resistance, 112 Key Mortier Dance organ.

The organs are played on a schedule, with each organ playing one piece before the operator moves on to the next one. When the final one has been played, the Gondola ride operates, and this has its own Gavioli organ. All the organs are in beautiful condition, but unfortunately are cordoned off so that you cannot see the 'works'. I was disappointed also to find that the organ operator was thoroughly bored by the whole process and definitely did not like questions.

Finally, the 19 rank, 3 manual Wurlitzer was put through its paces by the organist. During my visit it was Mr. Wolfe. This was the major disappointment of the visit. I know some people do not like the organ, classing it as crass, noisy mechanical contraption. These people would have a field day at Thursford. The organist started with a film snip, the Dam-busters, complete with airplane sound from the organ and numerous explosions and a great deal of noise.

Next we heard a train piece - the Chattanooga Choo-Choo, also played FFF and with lots of train noises. Then we heard Hold That Tiger, which at one time degenerated into a spectacular show where the organist grabbed hand-fuls of notes from each of the three keyboards in turn and in rapid fire. The music completely disappeared! It DID look spectacular on the two projection T.V. screens which were showing the keyboard from directly above the organ. At times during the performance, four animated figures descended from the roof to delight the children.

A bit against my better judgement, I did buy some records, featuring the same organist, and I am pleased to say that he could play with feeling and expression, features which were completely missing from his two half-hour performances. Organ recitals are held every Tuesday evening, commencing at 8.00pm and these would be the best performances to attend if you want to hear the Wurlitzer played 'normally'.

The 1'-10" gauge colliery train operated on during the opening hours, every Sunday throughout the year from 2.00pm to 5.00pm. and every day from 1st May to 31st October. There is a pleasant parking and picnic area outside the main gates where you can enjoy the food you take with you whilst waiting for the show to start.

If you are in England, and especially if you are interested in mechanical organs, I do recommend a visit to Thursford. The telephone number is Fakenham 3838 or Thursford 238, and the museum can be found off the A148 road between Holt and Fakenham.

---

### MORE SUCCESS FOR DAMIEN SCOTT

Damien has recently been awarded the 1986 Federated Music Clubs piano scholarship valued at \$1,000.

His teacher, well known TOSA member, Valda Lang, is naturally delighted and very proud of 16 year old Damien.

# The Byrd Theatre

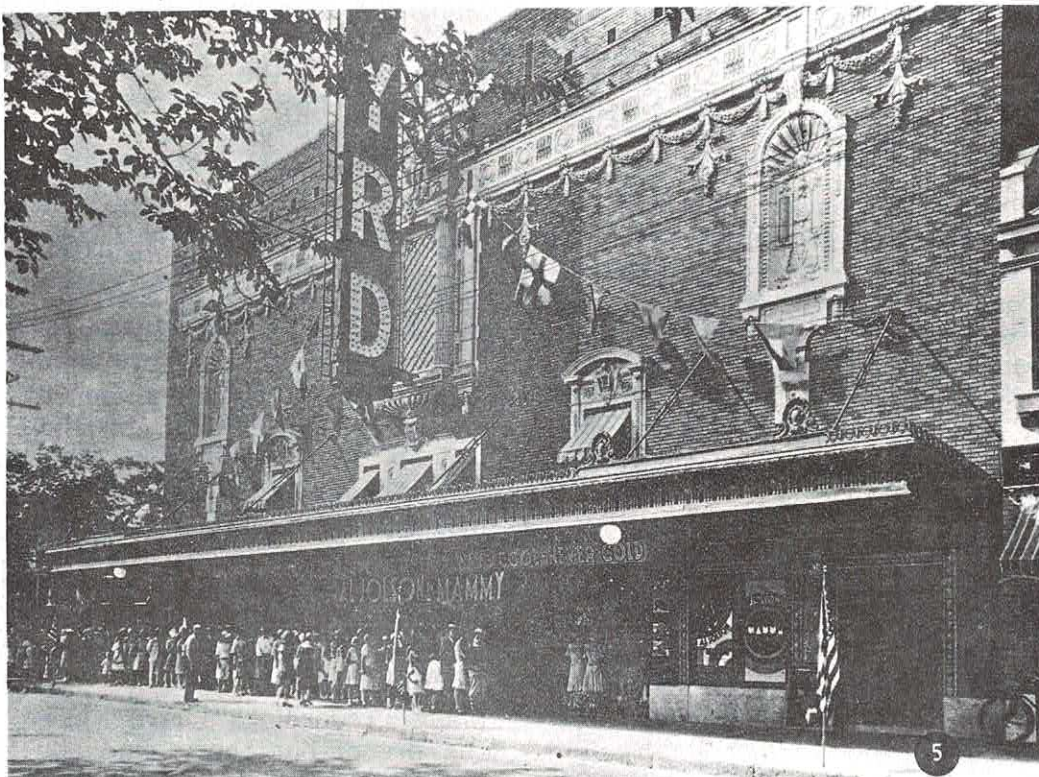
America's Most Beautiful Neighborhood Movie Palace

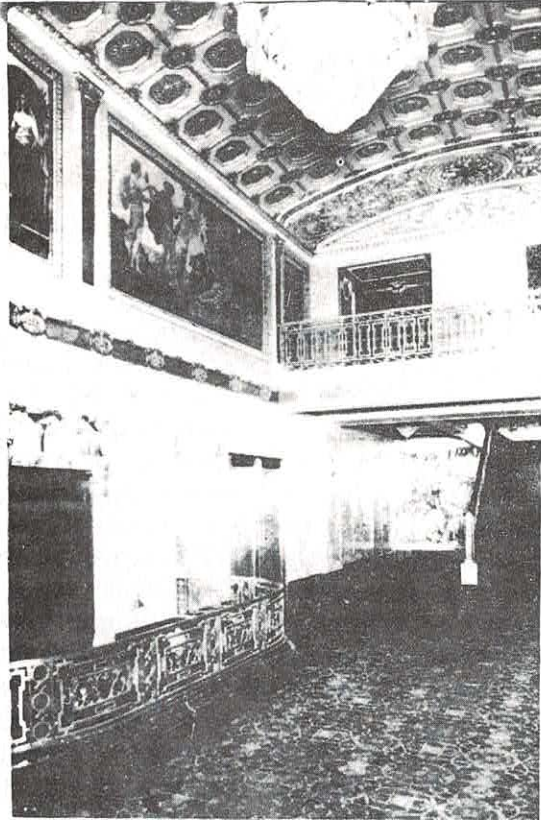
Even as Richmond's Byrd Theatre swung open its 28 magnificent brass doors to the public on Christmas Eve 1928, the silent films the organ was designed to accompany were fast taking a back seat to the "talkies". This beautiful theatre, however, remains today as a monument to the past and a hope for the future, as it is one of the last surviving movie palaces still in operation as a commercial enterprise. Ten years ago the Byrd was recognized by the Commonwealth of Virginia as being the last of its kind in the State, and it is now a Virginia Historic Landmark and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. It is recognized as probably America's best preserved example of a neighborhood movie palace. Designed in the manner of an opera house by architect and contractor Fred Bishop, a native Richmonder, the theatre was decorated by Brounet Studios of New York in a basic colour scheme of red and gold in the French Baroque style of the Napoleonic period.

The theatre operated continuously for nearly 55 years, but was closed after its last performance of "Giant" on May 15, 1983. The Neighborhood Theatre chain had operated this jewel of a movie palace for 45 years; however, the changing customs of booking arrangement and movie-going habits, accounting for mounting losses by the chain, caused the final decision. But the magnificent house refused to die, even though its future remained uncertain for a period of months until the owners Mr. & Mrs. Samuel Warren of Arlington, Virginia, decided to re-open the theatre under independent management.

Duane Nelson, who had managed the theatre for the Neighborhood chain, was appointed General Manager, and it was under his guidance that needed restoration was undertaken. Because most of the original fixtures remained and were in working condition, much of the restoration involved painting and cleaning.

Front view of the Byrd Theatre, taken shortly after its opening.





The Byrd lobby, showing the original fountain, which contained fish. It was removed to make room for the "new" concession counter.

The lobby was painted, sponged to be exact, and was done over three times before the desired effect was achieved. Rag painting was too coarse in texture, so paint was applied by hand, using a sponge dipped in the paint. Three colours were blended by sponge to give the look that was so popular in the '20's. All the brass doors were removed, cleaned, re-installed and polished. The brass light fixtures were removed and cleaned; missing fixtures were copied and replaced. Chrome was removed from restroom fixtures, revealing solid brass pipes and fittings.

The foyer remains intact except for the "new" concession counter. It was originally installed in an old bakery in New York, and when it was placed in the Byrd, even the competing movie houses found reason to send their executives by to "check it out". The display case with the back mirror and counter is a valuable antique and enhances the elaborate foyer.

All that the auditorium needed was a good cleaning and relamping. A section of the balcony ceiling had to be restored because of previous water damage. Plaster casts were made from existing decorations to replace the damaged plaster. The final touch was replacing the old carpet, which was installed in 1971,

with a wine red carpet to match the seats and stage curtains.

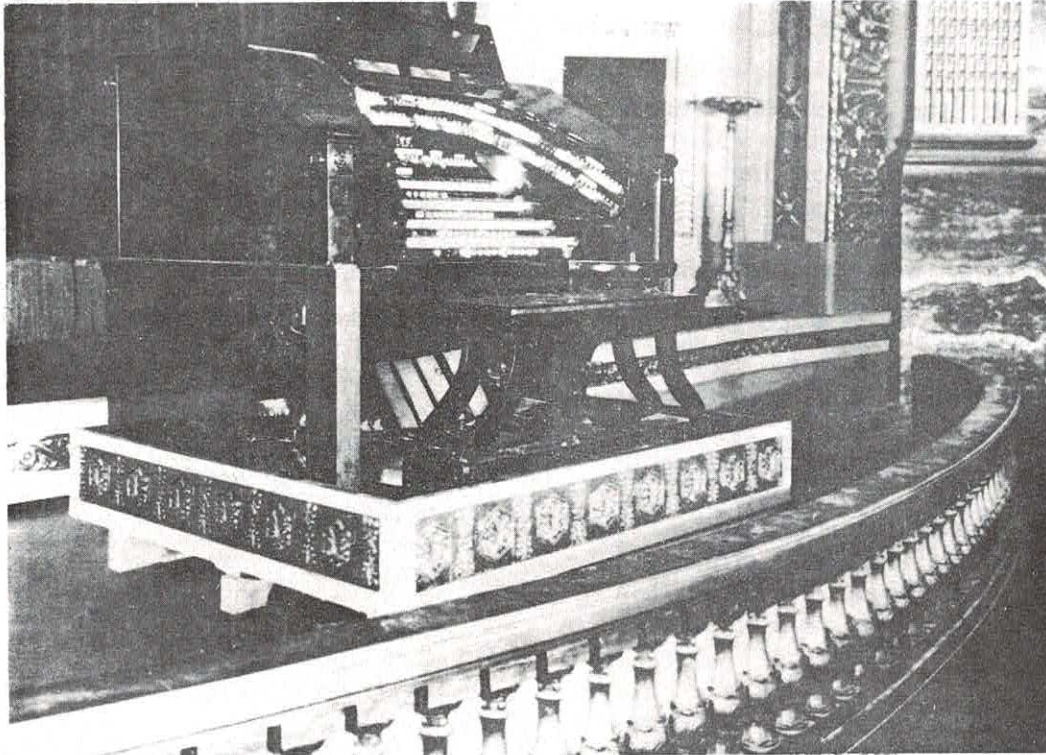
The magnificent two-ton Czechoslovakian chandelier hanging in the main dome is equally as famous as the organ. It contains over 5,000 crystals and there are 400 light bulbs in four colours in this massive fixture. It can be lowered for cleaning and lamping. There are a dozen smaller chandeliers throughout the building and 30 crystal wall sconces. Today the Byrd is more colourful than ever and better lit than when it opened. With its seating capacity of 1390, it is by no means one of the largest theatres in the Country, but it is certainly one of the most beautiful. William Byrd, founder of Richmond, would be pleased with his namesake.

The Byrd's 4/17 Wurlitzer Hope-Jones Unit Orchestra is one of the finest examples of an original in-theatre instrument that can be found. The instrument has been played regularly since opening night, except for a few years during World War II. Opus 1948 shipped from the Wurlitzer factory in 1928, the instrument is totally original except for a Post Horn rank added in the summer of 1985.

The huge mahogany console rises majestically from the centre of the stage on its original Peter Clark lift. The Main and Solo pipe chambers are directly above the centre of the stage behind a golden grille. A Grand Piano and Marimba Harp in boxes to the left and right of the stage are played from the organ console.

The organ is known throughout the World for its richness of sound; the organ's many voices literally cascade from above the heads of the audience. By present-day standards, the organ is probably heard by a paying audience more than any other in-theatre instrument remaining. It is played every Friday, Saturday and Sunday for two shows each night by current staff organist Lin Lunde. The organ is in excellent condition because of a dedicated crew and its being played almost every day, either for practice or performance.

Many recordings have been made on the organ, but those made by Westminster featuring Dick Liebert are the best



A 1928 photo showing the organ console before it had ever been played. When the stage was extended over the orchestra pit it covered the elaborate fender around the top of the lift on which the console sits. It is still in place but hidden from view.

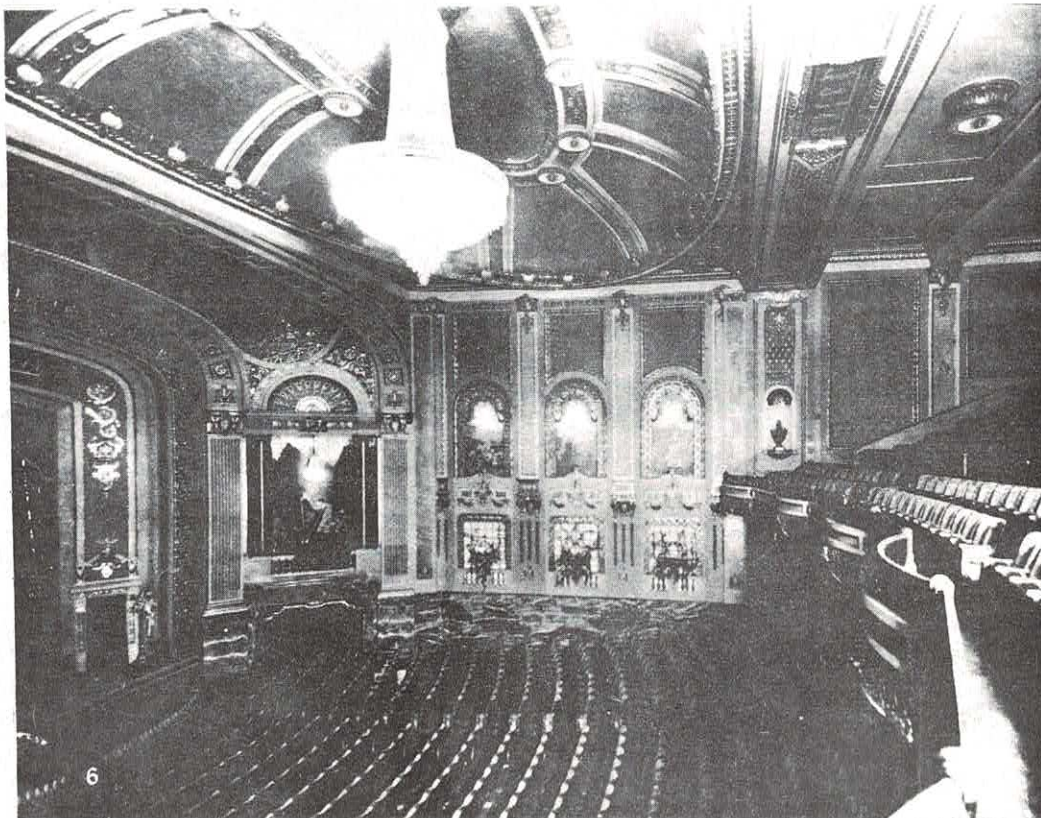
known. Leibert was organist at Radio City Music Hall at the time and was brought to Richmond for two weeks to make a series of recordings.

When the theatre opened the house organist was Carl Rohnd, assisted by Velma Beck and Winston Neville, who was brought from the Colonial Theatre in Richmond. Eddie Weaver played at the Byrd for many years before its

temporary closing. He became a very popular Richmond institution with his concerts featuring sing-alongs and "trips through the organ" to illustrate its many voices. Eddie was enthusiastically received by a virtually full house when he returned to the Byrd in October 1985 for his first Richmond concert in several years.

Current staff organist, Richmond's own Lin Lunde is again making the Byrd

Taken just prior to opening night, this photo shows the massive dome and chandelier, as well as the original inner proscenium which was covered in the 1950s with a Cinemascope screen.



NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

organ known in the Richmond area. Lin has accompanied four silent pictures in the last 18 months, including "Wax-works" with four showings; "Wings", which had six showings; "The General", which ran a week with two matinees; and "The Eagle", which had one showing. Walt Strony accompanied "The Son of the Sheik" for one showing. Concerts have been presented by Walt Strony, Ron Rhode, Lowell Ayars and Ty Woodward, as well as by Eddie Weaver. Lin Lunde continues the Byrd tradition of educating new theatre organists - he now has a student who is learning to play the mighty Wurlitzer, just as Lin learned to play it as a pupil of Eddie Weaver.

Today the Byrd is a successful repertory theatre presenting the best the studios have to offer. Duane Nelson is the young man responsible for every aspect of managing this huge undertaking, from the selection of the films to the selection of the French pastries and gourmet popcorn. He runs a tight ship, and is eagerly waiting to greet folk at the Byrd.

Going to the Byrd is more than going to the movies - it is a "happening"! A handsome doorman in black tie and tails greets each guest. Pretty young women dressed as flappers right out of the "roarin' '20's dish up the popcorn, French pastries, sodas and coffee. The show starts promptly with a colour cartoon or old newsreel after Lin has entertained the audience on the Mighty Wurlitzer complete with a spectacular light show.

The present owners are to be commended for keeping such a valuable bit of Americana open to the public so that people today, who have been reared on the idea that movies are either shown on the television screen or in a cinder-block building, can actually be a part of the great experience of going to the movies "'20's style"!

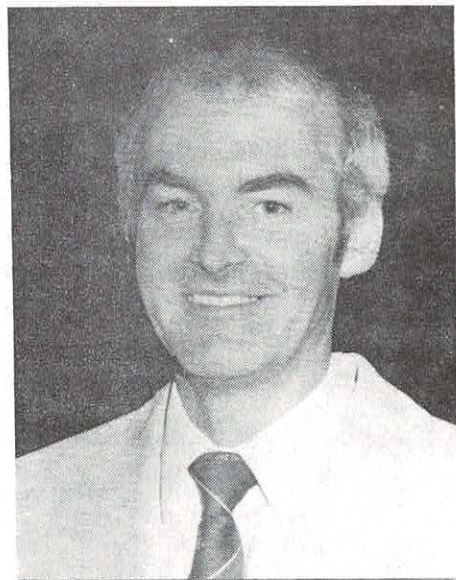
--- Reprinted from "Theatre Organ,  
January/February 1986.

The Winter Garden story (Part 2), written by Gordon H. Berry that appears on page 23 of this edition of TOSA NEWS, was received by me anonymously through the mail bearing the post mark of Kingsgrove Post Office.

One can only assume that the article was presented to the previous committee or editor for publication in TOSA NEWS. Obviously this did not happen. What concerns me is, WHAT HAPPENED TO PART 1 of The Wintergarden Story?

LATE NEWS FROM CANBERRACLIFF BINGHAM IN CONCERT

SUNDAY 30th NOVEMBER 1986 at 2pm.



Popular Sydney organist, Cliff Bingham, and pianist, John Crawford, will be featured in concert at Albert Hall, Canberra.

For all enquiries, please ring Clinton White on (062)88 7122 at home, or (062)47 5155 during working hours.

TOSA CHRISTMAS PARTY

PLEASE BOOK EARLY FOR YOUR  
CHRISTMAS PARTY.

REMEMBER THE CLOSING DATE IS  
FRIDAY 14th NOVEMBER.

## HOME ORGAN PARTY

Ian and Barbara Somerville's residence

Sunday 12th October

Being one of the 18 dedicated TOSA members who supported Ian and Barbara on their social afternoon to help raise funds for the restoration of the Society's organs, I take this opportunity to thank Ian and Barbara for such a relaxed and sociable afternoon, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all. Two members drove up from Mt. Warrigal especially to be at the party. Thanks also to the ladies who supplied all the delicious salads and cakes. Many thanks are also extended to those who entertained us during the day playing the pipe organ, or the Thomas Celebrity organ.

A most enjoyable day was had by all, which resulted in \$102 being raised.

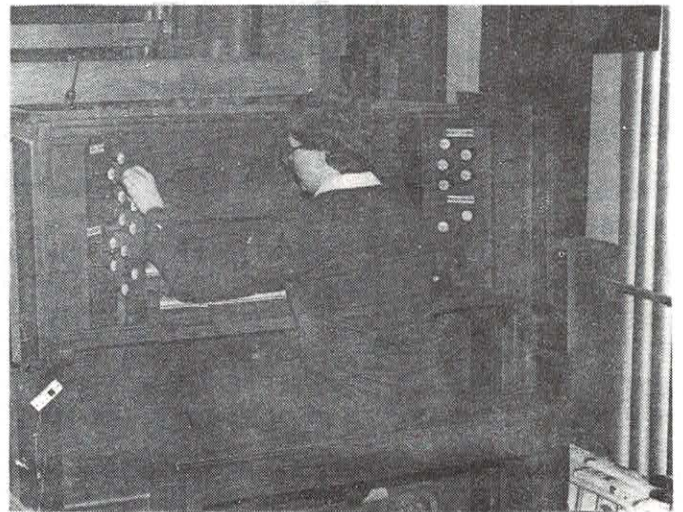
(Ron Wilson Ed.)



L - R Jean Schumacher, Eunice Palmer, Phyl Wilson, Olive Russel and Bert Chamberlain enjoying a cool drink in the garden.



Barbara Somerville playing the Thomas organ.



Neil Palmer at the console of the 2/13 Norman and Beard pipe organ.



Bill Schumacher entertains at the console of the Thomas Celebrity organ.



Bob McMinn (centre) debating with Bill Schumacher and Ian Somerville whether the steaks or sausages are cooked.

(Continued from last month)

### SOME MUSICAL CENTENARIES.

(By Russell Robertson)

It is still controlled by the Wagner family and it was widely expected that it would organise a centenary festival that would be one of the great musical events of this century.

The head of the family is Wagner's grandson and at a news conference he said that in 1983 the Theatre would stage a magnificent production of "Der Ring Des Nibelungen" (The Ring Cycle). This massive music epic is his greatest composition and also the longest opera written. It is divided into four parts which are presented in sequence on four consecutive evenings. The first is "The Rhyne Gold" the next is "The Valkyrie", then comes "Siegfried" and finally "The Twilight Of The Gods". The selection of The Ring Cycle was not unexpected and was generally approved by Wagner enthusiasts.

Everything seemed fine till grandson Wagner made his next public announcement which named the conductor and the producer for The Ring Cycle. His choice had the public quite mystified. The two men came from France, a country where Wagner is seldom staged, and they seemed to have a very limited experience with Wagner's operas. Where did they get their expertise? Many wondered whether the grandson had chosen shrewdly or had made a very serious error of judgment.

Rehearsals began and very soon there was friction between the conductor and the players. They complained that conductor Pierre Boulez was taking excessive and unjustifiable liberties with Wagner's score. The rows became worse and a number of musicians resigned and left the orchestra. This episode could not be easily explained away and it created considerable embarrassment. The musicians all belonged to leading German orchestras and they had been specially invited to play at Bayreuth. Many had done so for years. All were highly qualified and very experienced in Wagner's music.

Another shock soon followed. The producer had decided that the opera would not be played in the traditional costumes of Norse Mythology. The cast were to appear in modern dress "so as to give a new and modern dimension to the opera". This sounded very impressive, but no one seemed quite sure what it meant.

At the opening performance the audience were looking for modern dress, but saw instead, Wotan the chief of the Gods dressed in what would have been "Sunday best" for a successful Hamburg merchant in the 1840's.

The youth Siegfried was also wearing something from the last century, but much less fashionable. Badly torn and in need of repair it looked like something the local poacher had thrown out. However things picked up for his wedding to Gudrun because he had now got hold of a black dinner suit which was in a quite reasonable condition.

Hagen, one of the Gods was wearing present day clothes, but they did not do much for him. Unshaven and untidy, with his collar undone and his tie hanging loosely round his neck, his unkempt appearance gave the impression that drink had long ago got the better of him.

He had other problems too. His suit was ill fitting and it seemed in danger of falling down and so he had to keep dragging his pants up. However, his movements were clumsy and ambiguous and on occasions it looked as if he was attempting to pull his pants down, not up. Not much charisma about Hagen.

At the conclusion of the first performance one critic wrote "...the audience reaction was controversial" which is a nice way of saying that a section of the audience applauded, and the rest booted.

Another critic said that the production was proof that the French had neither forgotten nor forgiven the German war-time occupation of their country.



One critic simply advised opera lovers to avoid Bayreuth and instead to go to Seattle (U.S.A.) where each year The Ring Cycle is produced to consistently high standards.

Not a good year for Wagner. It is hoped that in the lead up time to his next centenary his family will find out where they went wrong this time.

The next year, 1984 was less spectacular. No really big names and no much talked about flops. There was only one centenary and that was Smetana, the composer of "The Bartered Bride", and nine other operas which are seldom heard now.

His own country, Czecho-Slovakia had a number of festivals in his honour. His neglected operas were again staged and his other compositions were all featured at special concerts.

The most pleasing result from the festivals are the very fine recordings from some of the performances. The outstanding one is the complete recording of "The Bartered Bride" which is perhaps the best that has ever been made. There are also a number of splendid recordings of his piano compositions which now seem to be gaining a new and deserved popularity.

Those of you who attended any classical organ concerts in 1985 will certainly know whose centenary year it was. First it would be mentioned in the programme notes, and then again when the concert had reached a piece by J.S.Bach the organist would tell us that it was the three hundredth anniversary of the birth of the great master.

This third centenary had been celebrated by a number of special concerts and festivals. A very original idea has come from the great French organist Marie-Claire Alain. It is her ambition to record all of Bach's organ compositions. Last year, she had completed 17 Vols. and more will soon be available.

You might expect that she has been making these recordings on some famous and historic French organs. It is not so. They are made in Sweden and Denmark, all on Marcussen organs, considered by Marie-Claire to be the best there are.

We find it difficult to understand why Bach was soon forgotten after his death and almost unknown for a century. He was rediscovered around 1850 and his reputation has grown to the level where he is now regarded as perhaps the greatest. A reputation of such magnitude can however very easily dominate the public attention. While celebrating Bach's greatness, many were unaware that another very great composer, George Frederick Handel was born in the same year. So too was Domenico Scarlatti.

1986 is also a year of three centenaries. The first which was mentioned at the beginning is Weber who was born in 1786. He wrote Der Freishutz and many other operas. He was a very important influence on the development of opera in Germany.

The next is Franz Liszt who died in 1886. Regarded as one of the greatest pianists in history, he is also the composer of a large body of piano works.

His music had been moving back into public favour and the recording companies always alert to any trend have been quick to exploit this by promoting the centenary theme and issuing a number of special, and often very fine recordings of his music. One company out thought its rivals. It has issued a recording of a number of Liszt's compositions "played on Liszt's own piano". Astute marketing.

The third person to have a musical centenary in 1986 is Marcel Dupre, the French organist and composer. He was born in 1886 and is generally considered to be the greatest organist of the twentieth century.

His many international concert tours were extremely popular and through them he revived the public interest in organ playing and organ music. His remarkable playing became the inspiration for many young musicians to take up the study of the organ. It was also the influence that changed the policy of many music academies to give more attention to the teaching of the organ. The Australian Broadcasting Commission had been organising concert tours for singers, conductors, and instrumentalists. In 1939 it announced a tour by Marcel Dupre.

He was an immediate and sensational success and the Commission responded to popular demand and increased the number of concerts. The city council was very appreciative of the prestige he was bringing to the famous Town Hall organ and it decided to sponsor a free afternoon concert for the people of Sydney.

On the afternoon of the concert, Dupre had been delayed and as he made his way to the Town Hall, he became worried that he might be late, something that he was anxious to avoid, as he considered it to be impolite to the audience.

He arrived just in time and hurried up the steps and into the foyer where he found the doors to the auditorium all shut. He quickly knocked at one and waited. The door opened and an attendant smiled apologetically, said that he was sorry, but the hall was full, there was no more room and no one else can be admitted. Dupre said "you must let me in - I'm the organist Marcel Dupre". The attendant smiled again and said, "in the last half hour I've had a dozen like you, all with the same silly fake foreign accents and all claiming to be Marcel Dupre - and I'll give you the same advice I gave them - hop it". The door was abruptly closed.

Dupre now really worried, went to the corridor at the side of the auditorium and knocked on another door, but there was no response. He tried the next door, but again no answer. Now feeling quite desperate, he came to a third door and knocked and this time the door opened. Fortunately, this attendant had been on duty at the previous concerts and he recognised Dupre immediately and invited him in, and then led him to the steps of the organ platform. Dupre was in time, and went to the music desk and gave a superb concert. This experience was to become one of his favourite stories to his friends for many years.

Dupre's centenary became a special occasion in Sydney this year. On the third of May, the day of his birth one hundred years ago, The Sydney Organ Society arranged a Lecture/Recital, "The Art of Marcel Dupre" which was presented in the Town Hall.

Norman Johnston from the Conservatorium gave the lecture which was complemented by music at various points. Participating artists were Norman Johnston, Sharon Maennl, a Brass Ensemble and a small choir.

Sharon played Bach's Prelude and Fugue in E minor. Piece Heroique for organ and brass was played by Norman Johnston and the Ensemble. Then came two pieces from Dupre's Book of 79 chorales; "From Heaven He Came" and "Der Tag Ist So Freudenreich". Both were played splendidly by Sharon Maennl. These chorales are very beautiful and deserve to be heard more often. Next there were two items from the choir and Norman Johnston concluded with some Dupre Preludes.

Circumstances in the Town Hall that morning meant that everyone had to sit on the choir benches fronting the organ console. Artists and audience became a single group and it gave the impression that here was a number of his friends around the organ which he once played, joining together to honour him on his birthday. If Dupre was watching, I'm sure that he enjoyed it. It was a small informal concert, but I think it is one of the most enjoyable that I have attended.

Let us now look ahead to the year 1987, which has two centenaries, Gluck and Borodin. Christoph, Ritter Von Gluck, as the name indicates, was an aristocrat, but the family had no land or estates. When he was young, several nobles combined to sponsor his musical education, first in Vienna and then in Italy, where he was a student of Samartini, a famous organist and composer.

After completing his studies, he began writing operas. Though very successful, he was dissatisfied with the form of opera which he described as "concert in costume". His aim was to write musical drama, and he later achieved this with "Orfeo and Eurydice", and this was soon followed by the even more popular "Alceste".

Gluck was the creator of modern opera, and he became the inspiration for Mozart who greatly admired him.

The other musical identity whose centenary will be celebrated in 1987 is Alexander Borodin the great Russian composer who was born in St. Petersburg (now Leningrad) and died there in 1887.

Prince Gideanov was his father and that should have put him on the "top shelf" socially, but his mother was the wife of an army doctor which was not at all good. Gideanov however had a simple solution to the problem, and it was to register the child's birth in the name of one of his serfs.

It was no setback really, because his mother, the beautiful Avdotia Kleinecke was a remarkable person. Intelligent and educated, she supervised and directed her son's education which was given at home by a number of specialist tutors.

At the age of eight he was fluent in German and French and was already showing unusual musical ability. When he was ten he began the study of chemistry, and this and music from then on became the greatest interests of his life.

When he was seventeen, he entered the medical faculty at the University, but still continued to study music. After graduating he worked as an army doctor, then returned to the University to do some research and to take higher degrees in chemistry. At the age of thirty, he was appointed Professor of Chemistry.

His friend Moussorgsky encouraged him to start composing and then assisted him by presenting his music at numerous public recitals.

Borodin in one of Russia's greatest composers, but his music was subordinated to his academic career and so his output was not very large - four operas (including Prince Igor), three symphonies, one concerto, some chamber music and piano pieces.

1988 is a musical blank. No important composer or instrumentalists has a centenary this year, which is probably a good thing because in Australia, all interest and energy will be directed to the celebration of the second centenary of European Settlement in Australia.

1989 is another blank year, and in Australia, we will probably be still recovering from the National Celebrations of the previous year, and we'd be too tired to notice any composer.

1990, the end of the decade (almost) is different and it can bring the era to an end on a really grand scale.

Sydney's Town Hall is a well known feature of the city, When you enter the auditorium, you immediately see

at the far end the tremendous organ which is as wide and as high as the hall itself. When it was completed it was for a long time the largest organ in the world. It is an outstanding Romantic Organ, and after its recent major overhaul is in beautiful condition. On the left of the console is a small plaque with the builder's name:-

W. HILL and SON.  
LONDON  
1886 - 1889

The organ was completed at the end of 1889, and the inaugural concert was in 1890. It was given by W.T.Best, then regarded as the world's leading organist and brought from London for the occasion. My hope is that the Civic Authorities, or The Sydney Organ Society (it is the classical organ society) or both in conjunction will on the centenary of the actual date, present W.T.Best's complete programme of the inaugural concert. This could be followed by other concerts recreating the rest of Best's Sydney tour.

The next step is to follow on with a festival to celebrate the centenary of the death (1890) of Cesar Franck, one of the really great composers of organ music.

1990 can be a memorable year for good organ music. If you are not exhausted, then keep going a little longer, because 1991 cannot be ignored as it will be the second centenary of the death of Mozart, in December, 1791.

A centenary celebration tries to give you something special and memorable, and in Mozart's case, this has been made difficult because the memorable things have already been done. We have had the play Amadeus, two television serials on his life, and the film version of Amadeus.

What else is left that is different and dramatic?

Salzburg and Vienna are saying nothing. Does this mean that we are in for something sensational such as "...Mozart's grave finally located" or "old manuscript found - is it a genuine Mozart Symphony?". Anything will do, so long as it is not a hyped up version of "The Magic Flute" done in modern dress. The cycle ends in 1992-93 with the centenaries of Rossini and then Gounod and Tchaikovsky. After that it will be about thirty years before the musical centenary cycle begins.

THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA N.S.W. DIVISION  
STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30th. SEPTEMBER, 1986

<u>1985</u>	<u>RECEIPTS</u>	<u>1986</u>
\$ 2298	Bank Balance 1/10/85	\$ 12477.20
2844	T.O.S.A. News	3123.00
3269	General Fund - Subs	2773.00
21550	Concerts	18419.10
145	Home Parties	102.00
1847	Refreshments	1253.87
278	Organ Practice	355.00
7362	Sale of Records, Cassettes, etc.	2125.50
860	Tape Library	484.90
66	Sale of Badges	116.00
218	Bank Interest	243.45
1914	I.B.D. Interest	1571.25
70	Advertising	160.00
-	Spring Fete	3974.03
-	Christmas Party	2958.00
27	Donations	8.00
-	Sale of Cakes - Club Night	9.00
-	Insurance Refund	25.00
-	Sale of Paper	5.00
-	Refreshments Change- Banked	100.00
20696	Convention 1985	- -
685	Jenolan Caves Tour	- -
325	Tape Library Deposits	- -

---

\$ 64454

---



---

\$ 50283.30

---

T.O.S.A. CAPITOL ORGAN FUND

Balance 1st. October, 1985	\$ 7850.75
Donations	597.37
Concerts	444.05
Home Parties	1576.10
Raffles	634.15
Spring Fete Proceeds Including \$3376.40 from General Fd.	3823.00
Bank and I.B.D. Interest	1138.02
Profit Canberra Tour	180.00
	16243.44
Less Federal Tax on Debits	3.23
	16240.21
Balance 30th. September, 1986	16240.21
Held as Follows Westpac Savings Inv,A/c \$2240.21	
" I.B.D. Investmt \$14000.00	\$ 16240.21

THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA N.S.W. DIVISION  
STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30th. SEPTEMBER, 1986

PAYMENTS

<u>1985</u>		<u>1986</u>
\$		\$
1833	T.O.S.A. Press	2295.15
1672	Postage	1772.03
10926	Concerts	13893.38
111	Stationery	180.09
876	Refreshments	493.79
4869	Marrickville Organ Maintenance	420.08
6817	Records and Cassettes - Purchases	715.09
122	Tape Library	498.94
40	" " Deposit Fund	20.00
40	Bank Card and Master Card fees	21.30
47	Bank Charges and Tax	44.75
1089	Capitol Organ Restoration	1720.56
1139	Promotion and Advertising	930.95
73	Spring Fete	524.68
-	" " Proceeds transferred to Cap. Org Fd.	3376.40
185	Club Nights- Hall	274.00
-	" " Entertaining A.T.O.S.	133.11
100 Dp.)	Christmas Party	2986.00
-	Tribunal Fee	10.00
36	Telephone Directory Entry	45.65
-	" Calls	288.00
40	Hire of Hall for A.G.M.	45.00
-	Recording Equipment	3500.00
-	Copying Machine	1730.00
540 Mbrs)	Badges for Office Bearers	18.00
-	Hire Church Hall - meetings	230.00
44	Private Post Box	48.00
-	Incorporation Expenses	136.00
-	Timer for Marrickville Organ	29.99
544	Insurances	703.10
36	Registration of T.O.S.A. News	36.00
-	Service Copying Machine	50.00
-	A.P.R.A.	29.87
-	Pipes etc. ( Russ Evans )	630.56
-	Legal Expenses	287.00
-	Transfer Funds to I.B.D.	5000.00
886	Jenolan Caves Tour	-
19499	Convention 1985	-
120	Vacuum Cleaner	-
293	Intercom, Recording Leads	-
51977		43117.47
12477	Bank Balance 30/9/86	7165.83
<u>\$ 64454</u>		<u>\$ 50283.30</u>

Total General Funds 30th. September 1986

Current A/c. Westpac Bank Ramsgate as above	7165.83
Interest Bearing Deposits Westpac Bank	22000.00
Advance Bank (After addition of Int. \$102.52)	1207.57
	<u>\$ 30373.40</u>

AUDITOR'S REPORT

I have examined the books of account and other records of the Theatre Organ Society of Australia (N.S.W. Division) and in my opinion the above Statement of Receipts and Payments and details of other funds of the Society, show a true and fair view of the results of the Society's transactions for the year ended 30th September

17/10/86 *O.O. Moen* Public Accountant Regd under Public Accountants Registration Act 1945 as

CONCERT REVIEW - NEIL JENSEN

MARRICKVILLE TOWN HALL  
 Sunday, 28th September 1986.  
 (By John Shaw)

A less than capacity crowd turned out to hear this artist's only T.O.S.A. concert for 1986. Despite the day also being the Rugby League Grand Final, it is hard to imagine why so many members missed an artist of this calibre. Why is it so??

Opening with the often played "There's No Business Like Show Business" a snappy arrangement, with smoothly modulated key changes gave this number a freshness with irresistible appeal. "Stair Way To The Stars" followed, accompanied by a well controlled drum beat and this brought back to me memories of San Sylmar.

The selection from "La Cage aux Folles" reflected most expressive playing and harmonically interesting arrangements. A superbly sensitive rendition of "This Nearly Was Mine", followed, with subtle counter melodies, and was an excellent example of the musicianship of this artist.

A Strauss bracket, although well received, to me only filled up the programme as did "That's Entertainment", in which the arrangement lacked entertainment. The piece de resistance was probably "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue", the Rodgers and Hart composition from "On Your Toes", which premiered in 1936.

Next came Offenbach's "Orpheus in the Underworld", which is most suited to the theatre organ, although the xylophone was drowned out by heavy registrations during the "Can Can". (Possibly badly placed in the chambers)?

"Bess You Is My Woman" (Gershwin's Porgy and Bess) was typical of Neil's super registrations so colourful harmonic progressions which exemplified this artist's mastery of the theatre organ.

The "Serenade" from the "Student Prince", also was in the latter category with a sound almost like shimmering strings which could be a top secret registration.

"Memory", from Cats, must be one of the most overplayed pieces of the decade, and is probably difficult to make a winner. Playing it straight could sound boring, however, Neil

played an arrangement, which no doubt, took some preparation, however, although technically interesting, I don't believe it captured the right mood, nor won particular acclaim from the audience.

"New York, New York" certainly come to life with style, and after a pleasant Lyn Larsen composition called "I Just Don't Understand", Tchaikovsky's "Swan Lake" followed.

Finishing with "Chattanooga Choo Choo", (recently heard at the Len Rawle concert), the Wurlitzer reached full steam in record time. So realistically portrayed, one could be forgiven for thinking our friend Jack Lawson (who had left earlier to go to work) had taken a wrong turn at Marrickville station. (Apologies Jack).



The encore "Only a Rose", although perhaps not so suitable for an encore, showed off the organist once again at his best.

The only slight detraction was perhaps dialogue (particularly in view of radio broadcasts) between numbers which was occasionally directed to personal friends in the audience and was out of place with an otherwise "Mr Showman" performance.

If you have never heard Neil Jensen in concert, DON'T miss his performances in the future.

## THE WINTERGARDEN STORY

(By Gordon H. Berry)

Special credit must be given to HARRY GREAVES, HOWARD O'DEA, KERN CORPORATION, GEOFF DITTMAN, PHILLIPS PUBLIC RELATIONS, NORM PELLING, BRUCE HAWKINS (General Manager of Queensland for Greater Union Theatres Ltd), who went out of their way to give me every assistance in the preparation of this article.

It was the Wintergarden Theatre's final performance. There was an aura of gloom and sadness in the large auditorium.

The theatre was looking old and neglected by its early standards, it had not had a coat of paint since the 1939 renovation. It looked as if it had lost its identity of being not just a theatre but a REVELATION.

Staggering and reeling after television had sunk its deep teeth into its vitals. It still managed to keep operating at a profit. This was directly due to Harry Greeves. Credit must be given to his expertise in direction and theatre management.

Harry started as a lad, with Australasian Films Ltd. an offshoot of Union Theatres Ltd. Columbia Pictures and Harrington's Ltd. who supplied the Theatre trade with photographic, cinema equipment, Raycophone Radio and Theatre sound systems. He had a good background of the cinematograph now known as projectors.

He eventually became assistant manager of the Tivoli Theatre, built in 1915 opposite the City Hall. It was an unusual theatre, being two theatres in the one building. The Tivoli Main consisted of stalls, lounge and circle. The Roofgarden Theatre higher up, overlooked the city, with a panoramic view.

It was delightfully cool on a summer evening. At a later date, Harry was transferred to the Embassy theatre located in Duncan Street in Fortitude Valley. He was once again promoted to the Tivoli and Roofgarden theatres where he remained for eleven years.

He was then appointed to the flagship of the Wintergarden chain, as general manager for "Wintergarden Theatres

Ltd", Queen Street Brisbane, even to the theatres demise.

Harry could still run the theatre at a profit. He was a showman. Eventually at the closure of the Wintergarden, he was transferred to the George Theatre, George Street. He later retired from the George theatre, after a period of time. Harry is a very much respected member of the movie fraternity and is liked by all.

Despite the somberness of the occasion, the Directors of the Wintergarden came near and far, as well as other theatre managers and businessmen in the industry. Regular patrons were forwarded special passes also. Some who came for years, attended this special, sad and final occasion. As I looked at the old theatre, which once was regarded as 'not just a theatre, but a REVELATION'. It became one of the first picture palaces. In my mind, I could see the beautiful cool white painted theatre, with 10,000 coloured lights. Its immense decorated spider webbed ceiling and proscenium arch, with its ever changing coloured hues.

In its heyday, there were stage presentations and a twice weekly movie programme change, including new stage prologues, assisted by the organ and orchestra. The organ console being placed high up in the right hand side of the proscenium arch. after the talkies arrived, the use of the Wurlitzer Photoplayer came to a swift end. The vitaphone system (sound on a 16" disc recording) came to take its place. A new style of presentation called Cinesound Stage and Screen presentation incorporating Bob McQuestion's orchestra and a ballet of twenty-two with Rita Henderson at the console of the 7 rank 2 manual horseshoe Robert Hope Jones Orchestra Wurlitzer Unit.

Strange as it may seem, many patrons preferred the Wintergarden organ to the big 15 rank 3 manual Wurlitzer up the street at the Regent. Both organs could be heard in Elizabeth Street, and each had its own characteristics. The Wintergarden had sweet and round tone decidedly more pleasant to listen to - the voicing was different. What improved the tonal quality was the acoustics of the Wintergarden and the placement of the installation.

The toy counter was very effective. These were bad depression times, at home the best we had were crystal sets with headphones and needing a high aerial. Our entertainment consisted of competing in school choirs and orchestras, almost every self respecting school had a Rexonola gramophone, the larger ones called panatropes. There were various Schools of Arts and Mechanics Halls, where we practiced. It was nothing for an eisteddfod to run for a week. The principal towns also hired a train starting at Townsville, picking up at Rockhampton, Bundaburg, Maryborough and other centres for Brisbane where they competed for the Easter Eisteddfod. Male choirs and ladies choirs would travel to Lismore and Murwillumbah. The children loved verse speaking and elocution. In the schools, the State School inspectors kept an eye on the cultural arts and many a school either rose or fell by the school inspectors annual report.

This led to our generation demanding the ultimate in entertainment. Theatre attendances would drop if the standard of quality fell, the legitimate theatre especially.

We had lasting memories of Gregory Ivanoff with his salon orchestra of twenty. The writer remembers the console being shifted from the proscenium arch down to the centre of the orchestra pit.

Frank Daly was always trying out new ideas. Once when Ellie Jones was seated at the console of the Wurlitzer, up came a huge bunch of ostrich feathers, draped fan like behind the back of the organ console, with lights and the Breograph changing colours. It sure looked effective.

Probably due to the cost, the organ had no Tibia section. I once heard a demonstration on a residence organ, using the same stops as the Wintergarden's organ. There appeared to be very little difference in the tonal quality.

In 1935, alterations were made to the theatre, the organ was discontinued and the console was removed across the street, to be stored in the Irish Club building in Elizabeth Street.

Sydney organist Owen Holland, remembered the hard words said when the rebuilders, found the condition of the Hope Jones Wurlitzer organ on its arrival in Sydney.

Apparently caused by the dismantlers, when they put the side-cutters through the console and switchboard wiring.

The organ had been sold to Hoyts Theatres for installation in their Plaza theatre. Dodds, the organ builders, were commissioned to make a new set of Tibia pipes. After the Tibia pipes were installed, the quality of the tone and the instrument never sounded the same. It became a screecher and a complete disaster. It never had the mellow sweet tone of the orchestra unit we once knew.

After a long term at the Plaza, the organ was sold privately by Hoyts. Later parts of the organ were sold to an organ speculator. I am reliably informed that the reed and string pipe sections are now located in the Capri Theatre in an Adelaide suburb. The theatre and the organ being owned and operated by the Theatre Organ Society Of Australia, South Australia Division. Both the theatre and the organ have been completely restored by the Society and the critics regard the organ as being a very competent installation. The Society is regarded as a get up and go organisation, and tackles the impossible.

Ellie Jones was a remarkable person. After the organ was discarded, she went into the aircraft industry. It was one of the few that paid its way at Archerfield Aerodrome. She quite often adjudicated at eisteddfods, was a born sight reader, a pitfall for any accompanist, she was also a qualified concert pianist, taught the piano and organ, and had the rare ability to put the artists at their ease.

As this, the final performance in the theatre that was once referred to as a REVELATION, we were shown a short film named "The Cobblers of Umbridge". After intermission, projected on the large screen was the feature film, Frankie Howerd in "Up The Front", an hilarious British comedy film.

Norm Felling, who started as a young man in 1935 at the Wintergarden as a projectionist, recently retired. He became the senior projectionist of all Greater Union Theatres Ltd. in Brisbane. In 1974 he is well remembered for his efficiency in theatre projection work, also the training of the younger members of the staff. On his retirement, he was a loss to Greater Union Theatres as his work was always thorough.



He well remembered Ellie Jones and often set the special effects and slides on the Brenograph for her organ presentation. On Norm's retirement, the Directors and Greater Union gave a special presentation dinner. He was well liked and respected by the management and the younger members of the staff. Some of the Directors came from Sydney and the far north to wish him well.

At the end of the theatre's final performance, we were assembled in the circle foyer for a chicken and champagne supper which would be better described as a banquet.

A young projectionist gave us a rare treat. The coloured lighting system was thrown up for us for the first and last time for many years, the spider webb ceiling was lit up, only for a short duration due to the dust hazard and so as to avoid the risk of fire. The large Mirrorphonic sound system provided suitable music for the occasion.

Finally it was time to go. The hour was very late. Nobody wanted to go. We all had a last look at the auditorium, still there was plenty of food and champagne.

The lights gradually dimmed, it was time to put the old theatre to rest for the last time. Whilst we were departing through the long foyer, we wondered what the architects, Ballantyne and Hare would have thought of the turn of events, the end of a REVELATION.

On the day of the final performance, Thursday 6th Decemeber 1973, a large notice appeared in the newspapers, "City theatre plant and equipment and fittings for auction at 10.00am. on Friday 7th December 1973. Complete with talkie equipment, Western Electric, Mirrorphonic amplifier and speakers, stage dimmers, switchboard and stage lighting, to be auctioned off by Alex Overett Industial Auctioneers." Finally the Wintergarden property building was purchased on 6th November 1973 by CBC Properties

Disaster struck Brisbane on Australia Day 1974 - the City was flooded. Most of the City theatres and their auditoriums were damaged. For a short duration, the Wintergarden foyer, which was not flooded, was leased as a flea market. The theatre section was unused and lay dark and empty.

The C.B.C. eventually built a bank in the foyer. It remained there for some years.

When Hoyts Theatres Ltd. gutted their magnificent Regent Theatre to make way for a four theatre cinema complex, all their equipment was stored in the unused section of the Wintergarden theatre.

Queen street Brisbane, the City's shopping heart, was becoming bedraggled and dowdy. As new suburban shopping centres were being built, the main street was slowly dying into a dilapidated deadheart.

The retail businesses have been affected as well as as the Queen Street Theatres, the entertainment industry and transport systems. Something had to be done. The Greater Brisbane City Council took the initiative. It decided to build a shopping mall to bring the breath of life back into the City again.

Objections were made, the City Council remaining adamant. The Commonwealth games were coming to Brisbane and that was that. The Mall would be completed before the opening of the games. Criticism was common place but was ignored. On 21st March 1981, that far sighted developer, Kern Property Trust, purchased from the Commercial Banking Co. the whole of the Wintergarden site including the banking agency.

The whole area of the Wintergarden was to be a seven storied shopping site with access to parking facilities. The wreckers moved in immediately. A serious accident could have occurred on the site. During demolition, one of the workmen became tangled up in the numerous wires of the old wiring installed in 1924. There had been several modifications to the coloured lighting systems, which became decidedly dangerous. Its switchboard was almost the width of the theatre. The original plan was to have the three primary colours, this was not altogether effective, adjustments were finally corrected.

Projectionists said the system caused a lot of trouble. After many anxious moments, the employee was rescued by his team mates.

To be concluded in next months TOSA NEWS.

## MICHIGAN THEATRE

(Ann Arbor)



*A vintage photograph of the Michigan Theatre in Ann Arbor*

Ann Arbor is the home of the University of Michigan, founded in 1841. In January, 1928, the stately Michigan Theatre opened its doors. Romanesque architecture was chosen to reflect the dignified aura of the university. The theatre opened with a movie, stage acts and an orchestra in the pit. This format continued for the next dozen years.

The Michigan has survived the years quite gracefully. The house suffered the usual modernization efforts; the Barton organ slept quietly in the orchestra pit. In the 1960's, volunteers from the Motor City Theatre Organ Society woke up the Barton and began refurbishing efforts. Organ concerts and programmes soon became part of the activities at the Michigan. The group of Motor City Chapter members that cared for the organ began a tradition of Second Sunday programmes, featuring a mini-concert by a local artist, open console, refreshments and socializing. (So successful was this format that it has been copied for M.C.T.O.S. programmes at the Punch and Judy and Royal Oak theatres.)

In 1978, dark clouds formed. Butterfield Theatres had decided not to renew their 50-year lease on the theatre. Butterfield owned the nearby State Theatre, a 1940's C. Howard Crane house, which they

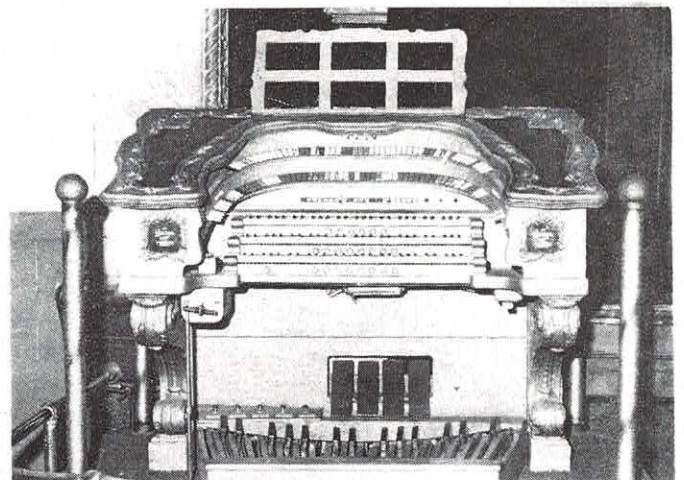
"quadded", giving them all the capacity they needed.

A group of Michigan Theatre enthusiasts many of them organ buffs - began searching for a way to save the building from doom and destruction - an almost certain fate, as it was situated on prime Ann Arbor real estate.

Studies found that in spite of the many university-owned halls, auditoriums and theatres, there was still a great need in the area for a non university-controlled facility. Repeated attempts to acquire the property were thwarted by rocky economic conditions. Finally, the city council voted to provide funds for the purchase of the Michigan Theatre through a bond issue, and subsequently the City of Ann Arbor agreed to buy it.

The Michigan Theatre is now operated by the Michigan Community Theatre Foundation, a non-profit organization whose goal is to preserve and utilize the building. Efforts are now underway to attempt to restore the interior to its original appearance. The theatre is now used for a variety of programmes including films, dance and musical presentations.

The Barton organ is still maintained by M.C.T.O.S. which works in close co-operation with the Michigan Community Theatre Foundation. In fact, several individual are currently active in the administrative bodies of both groups.



Michigan Theatre  
3/13 Barton