

# TOSA NEWS

September 2008  
Volume 47 No.8

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## 20th ANNIVERSARY! CONCERT...



***Bernard  
Walz***

***Neil  
Jensen***



**Music From Classic Movies!**

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# From the President



Welcome to the new-look TOSA News! Our new Editor Ernie Vale, along with Graham Weismantel on the graphics side, has spent many hours experimenting and coming up with the publication you now have in your hands. A great “thank you” gentlemen.

However, please remember that the Editor and Graphics person need material with which to work and are still looking to contributions from you, the members.

Don't forget the coming events – their success depends on your attendance. You will not be disappointed in any of the concerts planned and you can confidently invite your friends to a great afternoon's entertainment. Particularly try to get along to our new venture – a social time at the Campsie Christian Science Church. You will find details elsewhere in this issue.

Have you ever considered nominating for a position on the TOSA Committee? All positions become vacant at the Annual General Meeting and any and every member of this Society has the right to nominate for a position. Please consider what you might be able to do for your Society. Just note the closing date for nominations and don't miss out.

Happy organizing

Geoff Brimley

# Editorial



Welcome to the new format of TOSA News. The Editorial Team have spent considerable time and energy in developing this all-new look. We hope you will find it to be fresh, informative and keeping you in touch with Theatre Organ, concerts, happenings and related musical events and societies, members special activities and Theatre Organ History.

The Special Members' playing event at the Wesley Theatre's Christie Theatre Pipe Organ, arranged by Rod Blackmore who gave us a brief history of the organ and played the opening bracket, was enjoyed by 30 members with five members playing a variety of music. Thanks Rod for the opportunity to enjoy access to one of Sydney's Cinema Organs with an interesting history.

How fortunate we are to have been able to present two overseas artists in concert in August. The Ken Double Concert was very entertaining with a varied program that included several hit numbers from the 60's. Ken had also pre-recorded the accompaniment to two numbers so he could sing along to the WurliTzer.

Please note your diaries for Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> September to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Grand Opening of the former Capitol Theatre WurliTzer at the Orion Centre, Campsie, with two of Australia's International Artists, Neil Jensen at the console and Bernard Walz at the Grand Piano.

Many thanks to the contributors to this edition

Enjoy the music,  
Ernie Vale  
PO Box A2322  
SYDNEY SOUTH, NSW, 1235  
[editor@tosa.net.au](mailto:editor@tosa.net.au)

## From the Mailbox...



### Hey Readers...!

Do you like the new format of TOSA News?

Please drop us an email or write in telling us of your views on the newer, fresher format. Or just write in and tell us what you think of the concerts you have attended, or what you may be feeling about the direction of the Theatre Organ Society in general.

Where space permits we will do our best to publish your comments, giving you a voice in the organisation. 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

After what seemed to be an age, TOSA Players' Night regrouped on a chilly evening at Marrickville Town Hall on Thursday 24th. July, and found the Wurlitzer in good voice despite the vagaries of the weather.

Those who took a turn at the console were Graeme Costin, Deirdre McMullan, Walter Pearce, Kath Harding, Craig Keller, Frank Lewis, Ian Georgeson, and John Batts.

David McMullan was listening but also helped arrange the furniture and oversee the refreshments kindly provided by Deirdre and Kath.

John Batts

## Coming Events

A special celebration of the 80th Birthday of the Orion Wurlitzer and 20th Anniversary of its installation in the Orion Centre with:

Neil Jensen and Bernard Walz

Sunday 28th September, 2pm

At the Orion Function Centre, Beamish Street, Campsie.

For directions please refer to page 16.

The Orion Centre has disabled access directly from Beamish Street.

Social Club Afternoon

Christian Science Church, Campsie

Saturday 13th September, 2-5pm

Campsie.

Marrickville Festival

17th September to the 1st October.

**Reminder:** Closing date for entries in TOSA(NSW) Commemorative Music Composition Competition is 1st September 2008.

Works must be sent to Walter Pearce, PO Box 243, Burwood, NSW, 1805 by 1st September 2008. Requirements for entry are as set out in the August issue of TOSA NEWS.

Two prizes are offered for suitable submissions: First Prize: AUD\$1,000.00 and Runner-Up Prize AUD\$250.00.

Further queries about this competition may be addressed to either:

Dr Batts by email at [jsbatts@gmail.com](mailto:jsbatts@gmail.com) or by telephone at (02)-9389-8659

or to Barry Tooker at (02)-9744-1535

## Upcoming Events

David Parsons and Matthew Loeser

Sunday 26th October

Marrickville Town Hall, Marrickville.

Annual General Meeting

16th November

"Woodstock", Burwood.

Christmas Concert

Sunday 14th December

# Theatre Organ Society of Australia (NSW Division) Inc. Who Are We?

The NSW Division is now in its 48<sup>th</sup> year having been formed in 1960 to provide the opportunity for members to continue to hear the magical sounds of the Theatre Organ – Unit Orchestra.

Many music lovers who had heard Theatre Organ played in the Prince Edward, Lyceum, Capitol, State, & Roxy Cinemas - to name just some of the many installations around Sydney - wished to ensure that examples of Theatre Organ were preserved, restored and installed in venues suitable for concert performances.

Currently the NSW Division owns three Theatre Organs. A 2 manual 11 rank Wurlitzer (formerly Prince Edward Theatre) installed in Marrickville Town Hall, Marrickville Road, Marrickville and a 3 manual 17 rank Wurlitzer (formerly Capitol Theatre) installed in the Orion Entertainment Centre, Beamish Street, Campsie. Both of these Theatre Organs have undergone significant restoration and the electronics have been modernised with computerised relay systems to give artists significant flexibility and reliability in setting up and playing music from all ages including modern day popular music. The third organ is a 2 manual 8 rank Christie (formerly Kings Theatre Gordon) which is in storage awaiting a suitable venue for installation.

## Members and Our Activities

Members range from musicians to technicians to lovers of the Theatre Organ style of music and magical sounds capable of being played on these instruments. Members are entitled to discounted concert tickets for self or spouse, have the opportunity of playing both Wurlitzers on Members Playing days or evenings, attending home organ parties with the opportunity of playing a variety of electronic Theatre Organs as well as helping out with setting up concerts.

Membership provides an opportunity to participate in the running of the Society and receive the TOSA News 11 times a year to keep you informed of Theatre Organ

activities, concerts throughout Australia and overseas, and various web sites of interest to Theatre Organ music lovers. The purchase of a range of Theatre Organ recordings by Australian and overseas artists is available at concerts.

Disabled access is available at both the Orion Entertainment Centre and at Marrickville Town Hall (Marrickville Library on some web sites).

## How To Join

If you enjoy great music played on the Unit Orchestra that is the Theatre Organ - then we would love to welcome you as a member because the Theatre Organ is indeed a 21<sup>st</sup> Century musical instrument with a unique range of musical tones and colours that can thrill all ages.

Club membership costs a modest \$30.00 a year for full single membership. Pensioner, Country, Interstate or Overseas membership is AUD \$20.00. Six month membership is available from January to the end of June at half the full rate. After 1<sup>st</sup> April the full year rate takes members through to the end of June the following year. Full details are on the Membership Application Form at the back of TOSA News.

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Deadline for each edition is the 12<sup>th</sup> of the previous month. Please send copy before then where possible.

Your input is valued. Email where possible by typing into your email program or send separate files for text in "word .doc" and in ".jpg" for pictures.

Please do not format as that step is made by the Creative Director.

## SIDNEY TORCH CENTENARY



Radio 2's superb edition of "Friday Night is Music Night" on Friday, 6th June, marked the centenary of Sidney Torch, born in Tottenham Court Road, London, on 5th June 1908, to Russian parents named Torchinsky. His amazing handling of cinema organs brought fame in the 1930s, but the 40s saw his entry into the orchestral world, where he excelled as a conductor, composer and arranger, and in 1953 created "Friday Night." It is thought that he may have retired in 1972 because the BBC was considering the introduction of guest conductors.

His orchestral influence being so strong, we feared that his cinema years might be ignored in the tribute broadcast, but were pleasantly surprised by the amount of coverage and the inclusion of some cinema organ tracks. First came an extract from Handel's "Largo," in which he accompanied violinist Albert Sandler on the Christie at the Regal, Marble Arch, as they had worked together when young. Torch was then a pianist, but as Sandler (two years older) also had Russian parents they may have known each other as music pupils. The main examples of Torch's cinema organ work were side two of his "Hotter Than Ever" medley ("It Don't Mean a Thing," "St. Louis Blues" and "Sentimental Gentleman From Georgia") on the Marble Arch Christie, and the wartime record of "In the Mood" at the Gaumont State, Kilburn. Unfortunately, it was one of the rather poorly recorded Deccas, and something far better could have been found on Columbia.

As a conductor, Torch was a stern taskmaster, feared by some of the musicians, and even the star singers received his 'glare' if they failed to please. But all agreed that his often complicated arrangements were unsurpassed, and he composed hundreds of light music pieces to fit all occasions, even

the signature tune of the long-running "Much Binding in the Marsh" shows. The centenary tribute confirms that he is regarded as one of the 'greats' of British light music. The organ world will remember him as one of the finest cinema organists of all time. He died on 16 July 1990.

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## Helpers Needed!

TOSA really needs more helpers for the regular concerts, especially to help with the setting up of the hall before the concerts and the packing away of the equipment, etc., at the conclusion of the events.

If you feel you could assist your Society in this way, please contact our Vice President, John Shaw on (02) 9759 5825.

## 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 Organ in the Music Hall by Harold Ramsay

"Why do I play in Music Hall instead of the cinema. This question turns thought back to the early days of my career at the Rivoli, New York City, one of Broadway's 'Big Four.' Our programmes always included a selection of variety ranging from brilliantly executed ballet to world famous soloists. There was never a word spoken but the theatre was always packed to capacity.

There, I learned the value of music plus showmanship on the stage. Coming to England for the Granada, Tooting, I soon heard of the success of G.T. Pattman, and wondered when an organ would be invented which would really be suitable for touring, always ready for use within an hour or so and always in tune.

What should one do on the variety stage? This question was almost answered for me by the 'Eight Piano Symphony.' This I devised and conducted for the 1933 anniversary of the Granada, Tooting: it toured the country but my employers preferred that I continue playing and broadcasting from the Granada.

The John Compton Organ Co. honoured me by an invitation to play and broadcast on their electronic organ at Radio-Olympia. It was the first all electric organ built here and was a grand instrument.

In the spring of 1936 I bade a regretful farewell to the Granada to accept Musical Directorship of Union Cinemas. After a few months my post was changed to Controller of Entertainment, and again my work was directed to the variety field.

The excellent team of organists I had the pleasure to work among proved conclusively that a theatre organ, under experienced hands, can accompany any act. There is no single name in the group I can select to mention. They were all first class.

A series of variety broadcasts from the Union-Regal, Kingston, 'Radio Rodeo' (a name I invented while conducting at the Palace, Dallas, Texas), proved what a team of organists can do in working with the world's finest variety acts. 'Stork Radio Parade' every Sun-

day had constant "House Full" notices before the performance started, proving what shows, in which organ was the backbone, could do. Organists I then engaged are now considered among our 'top flight'.

*From Theatre Organ World,  
by Jack Courtney*

## Countdown to TOSA (NSW) AGM

The date for the AGM is Sunday 16th November 2008.

Nominations are open for the annual election of Office-bearers and Committee-see Nomination Form Insert.

Nominations must reach the Returning Officer no later than 5th October 2008. If sent by post nominations must be received no later than the last mail on Friday 3rd October 2008.

Notice of any Motions or Special Resolutions for the AGM must reach the Secretary no later than 12th October 2008 to enable them to be advised to members in the November issue of TOSA News.

## Check Out!

TOSA (NSW)'s new website!  
Ron Mosman has been working hard to  
improve our website:

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

# RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL

Radio City Music Hall was described as “The showplace of the nation in the heart of Rockefeller Centre, New York, New York”. The following information is a comprehensive outline of the complex as originally completed.

The Radio City Music Hall was designed by the Rockefeller Centre, Inc architects. Donald Desky was chosen by the architects to assist in the decoration and furnishing of certain rooms under their supervision.

The theatre was opened on December 27, 1932 and since then has been visited by many millions of people.

Radio City Music Hall is the largest indoor motion picture theatre in the world and has a seating capacity of 6,000. Charles R.Hacker was Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer. Stage shows were produced under the direction of John Henry Jackson, who was Vice President and Director of Stage Operations, and Peter Gennaro, famed dancer and Choreographer.

## DIMENSIONS

### Auditorium

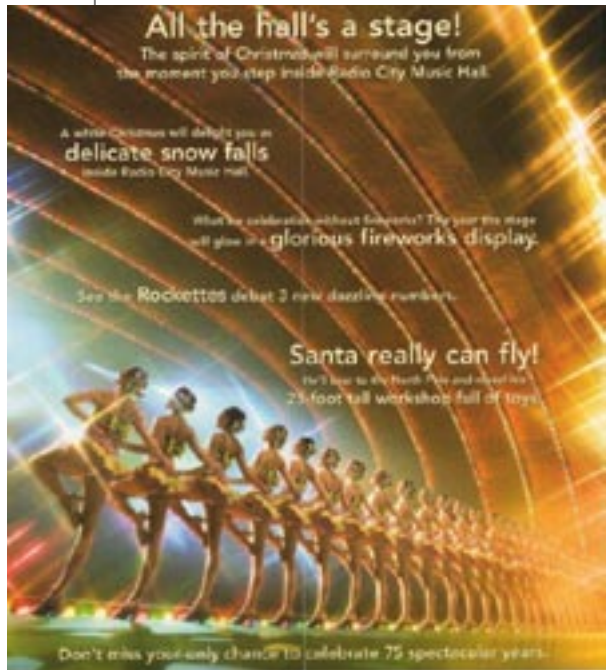
Back to stage .....160 ft  
Projector to stage.....190 ft  
Highest point..... 83 ft  
Orchestra Pit  
Depth.....17 ft  
Stage ..  
Depth .....66.5 ft  
Width ..... 144 ft  
Proscenium  
Height .....60 ft  
Width .....100 ft  
Foyer  
Height .....60 ft  
Length .....150 ft

## AUDITORIUM

The most striking feature of the theatre is an immense proscenium arch, sixty feet in height. The semi-circular design is carried out throughout the entire auditorium. The walls and ceiling are formed by a series of arches, each one larger than the previous as they move towards the rear of the theatre.

The whole effect is a stylized representation of a sunrise. The steel truss supporting the proscenium weighs 300 tons and is the heaviest ever used in a theatre construction.

The ceiling can be lighted in eight different colors by lights concealed in the recesses between the arches. In the ceiling too, are lights used for stage effects. In spite of its size, the auditorium achieves an effect of intimacy and compactness through its uniqueness of design. There are three self-supporting mezzanines of graduated widths cantilevered from



the rear of the auditorium – including the Music Hall's famous “First Mezzanine” reserved seat section.

## AIR CONDITIONING

The Music Hall, like other buildings in Rockefeller Centre, is air conditioned. Each patron of the theatre is allotted forty cubic feet of conditioned air a minute. The air enters through apertures in the ceiling and falls in a uniform blanket over the audience; it is withdrawn through outlets placed in triangular



pedestals located under the chairs. One of the advantages of this air conditioning system is that although smoking was permitted in the mezzanines, the smoke was never noticeable. 280,000 cubic feet of conditioned air is delivered to the theatre each minute. During the course of a year 79,716,000,000 cubic feet of air is used. The refrigeration requirements for this air flow is equal to that of 210,000 tons of ice. To heat the theatre, 27,000,000 pounds of steam is needed annually.

## CONTOUR CURTAIN

The proscenium opening is closed by a contour curtain on a shimmering gold fabric. This curtain is the largest in the world, requiring more than 2,000 yards of fireproof lining alone, and almost a mile of bronze cable. The finished weight is approximately three tons. It is so heavy that it was found impractical to transport it through the streets of the city in one piece from the studios of Henry Haug where it was made. It was carried to the Music Hall in five sections and stitched together on the stage by a corp of sewing women.



Grand Foyer, Radio City Music Hall, NYC, NY

Thirteen separate motors control cables sewn into the curtain fabric so that when they are shortened or lengthened the folds may be arranged in hundreds of different contours. These cables are used, too, to raise or lower the curtain which is operated from a panel board on which exact contour formation desired can be pre-set on movable limit switches.

## LIGHTING

The following is a partial breakdown of the more than 25,000 light bulbs in the theatre:

- 1,950 on stage
- 7,184 in auditorium
- 7,990 for marquee
- 1,496 for attraction signs
- 498 for display frames

500 for star effect on stage

If every bulb was burning at the same time over 3,000,000 watts would be in use. The spotlights used on stage represent a major breakthrough in energy conservation and incorporate a new optic system designed by Dana K. Mortenson. A stock of gelatins for 42 different colors is carried for the thousands of color frames used.

## LIGHT CONTROL CONSOLE

Immediately in front of the orchestra seats is the Light Control Console. This console controls the light effects on the stage and throughout the theatre. It is shaped like a long low upright piano and is studded with precisely 4,305 small vari-colored handles which control the amber, green, red and blue lights.

The 4,305 handles may be pre-set for 20 different combinations as to switching and intensity of the individual units and works simply by the operation of a master switch and dimmer. The board measures 15'6" long; 3'6" deep; 5'6" high and was manufactured by the General Electric Company. The console is of the Thermionic or Thyratron control type,

which resembles in operation the principle of the radio tube. Through inductors the current to the tubes is varied. Through intricate wiring this, in turn, controls the currents in the reactor circuits which are a part of each lighting unit.

One feature of this control console is the Selsyn automatic color change control. Ordinarily in spot-light color changes, an operator or attendant is needed on each spot to slide the desired color gelatin in front of the light. By the Selsyn method each spot-light is equipped with a metal housing containing four color-media running in tiny tracks and operated by small motors. The electrician, sitting at the control board in front of the auditorium may press a certain switch and immediately

eighty feet above the stage on a light border a blue gelatin will automatically slide over on its track into position in front of the lamp, and the audience will see blue light instead of white. By pre-setting the switches and using the master control the electrician can simultaneously change color media on all the spots wherever located. If the next color needed is green, another switch automatically moves over and so colors the light beam.

Another remote control feature of this extraordinary system is the so-called "blackout doublers" on all arc lamps. The principle of the arc lamp is the passage of electric current from the positive to the negative poles of two adjacent sticks of carbon, creating a spark or arc. When the electrical current is shut off, it takes about thirty seconds for the carbon to cool, during which time it gives out an after glow. For one lamp this would hardly be noticeable, but multiplied many times it can be enough to ruin the effect of a black-out sketch. To obviate this difficulty the arc lamps in Radio City Music Hall are all equipped with black shutters known as black-out doublers, also Selsyn operated. By moving the shutters in front of the arc and shutting off the afterglow the blackout may be made in two seconds.

A partial list of all the various apparatus which the console controls would include: six light bridges, each 104 feet long (they are, incidentally, the largest light bridges ever constructed or installed in a theatre) and equipped with fifty-six 2,000 watt Selsyn operated spots with remote control color changing devices, twenty four 2,000 watt independent spots, and four 70 ampere arcs. In addition, the light bridges on each side are equipped with fifteen 2,000 watt spots, five 2,000 watt floods, and four 150 ampere arcs. The console also controls six light towers, each equipped with one 150 ampere arc, three 2,000 watt spots, and one 2,000 watt floodlight.

There are four spotlight booths, two on either side of the auditorium, two with two 150 ampere spots and one effect machine each. One of the auditorium coves is equipped with six 150 ampere arc spotlights. There are two Linnebach Lanterns for projecting scenery

on a specially constructed screen and two 180 ampere arc projectors.

There are sixteen 2,000 watt Selsyn controlled incandescent spread lens spots; four 2,000 watt independent spots, all on the inner frame of the proscenium arch.

The mechanical control board on the stage controls the disappearing footlights which, when not in use, can be covered by an automatic hood that becomes part of the stage floor. The footlights contain seventy-two 100 watt lamps each of red, amber, green & white, together with seventy-two 150 watt blue lamps. The cyclorama footlights contain two hundred and eighty-eight 200 watt lamps in four colors, also of disappearing type, the double cyclorama border, for which are used thirty-eight 1,000 watt deep blue lamps, thirty-eight 750 watt daylight lamps and thirty-six 500 watt amber, green and red lamps.

Not only does the switchboard control this impressive array of equipment, it also controls the auditorium lighting.

In Radio City Music Hall the audience, too, is bathed in color. In the curved ceiling, which is constructed of semi-circular fluted bands of acoustical plaster, known as coves, are 3,000 reflectors in eight strips. Through the use of this equipment, the light in the entire theatre can be changed from one color to another almost imperceptibly.

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*More details next month on this magnificent venue in which a Wurlitzer Theatre Organ with dual ebony consoles is installed and still entertaining patrons in the 21st Century.*

## **Notices of Motion or Special Resolution for AGM**

Please forward any notice of motion or special resolution to:  
The Secretary  
Lot 1 Spring Hill Road, Mittagong, NSW  
2575 to be received no later than 12  
October 2008.

"The diameter of the revolving turntable is 43 feet"

## Reginald Foort & His Travelling Moller Organ

I have never been able to discover who was the very first person to tour a pipe organ. I believe David Clegg did, but am not sure. There is no doubt that Max Erard was one of the first; and I still recall the terrific impression of hearing (when I must have been a schoolboy), a music-hall act called the Elliot-Savonas, who apparently played a pipe organ with three separate consoles.

It was my old friend, G.T. Pattman, who first toured a really big pipe organ, and I am sure it was his example which inspired me to take out my huge touring theatre organ.

All my life I've been a bit of an adventurer. I believe in diving into a job head-first, giving it all I've got for a year or two, and then pulling out into something fresh. I joined the BBC staff as theatre organist in October, 1936, and, apart from my four weeks summer leave, I had four days off in my first year and six in my second. Rather than stay a third year and go stale, I had the big Moller Concert Organ built and set out on tour.

I went to Moller for it because:

(1) they are the world's biggest organbuilders; (2) I had loved their organs which I had played in the USA in 1935; (3) if I'd had a Wurlitzer or a Compton, it would have sounded pretty much the same as all the other Wurlitzers and Comptons in the local cinemas in the towns I visited; and I wanted something "different". I certainly got it! There never has been another organ like it, ever!

The organ has five manuals, 27 ranks fully unified, 259 stop-keys, over 100 pistons and controls. All the tonal percussions are genuine Deagan and all the non-tonal genuine Leedy, the best and most expensive in the world. The organ complete weighs over 25 tons. We had it specially designed to travel in five enormous lorries and we had a staff of thirteen to handle it; three organ builders,

five lorry drivers (who rapidly all became expert organ builders!), two electricians, stage rigger, general manager, and advance publicity agent.

The organ arrived in 65 packing cases, and we hired Drury Lane theatre, which happened to be closed, to unpack the organ and set it up. The boys worked day and night and had the organ playing in five days! I actually made gramophone records and a Pathé Pictorial on it on the fifth day—Friday.



The Moller console after it was permanently installed in the BBC Studio following World War II.

The Sunday saw us at the Palace Theatre, Manchester, where we opened on the Monday. I had not had time to set more than a very few of the 100 pistons, and I had to open without having had anything like a real go on the organ at all.

That didn't worry me as much as you might think, because, having designed the whole organ myself and having done all the working drawings for the console, I knew just where everything was and felt thoroughly at home on the job of playing.

The organ throughout is of "Rolls-Royce" quality. Altogether it has been played in 118 different theatres—some of them three and four times, and has been pulled down, travelled and re-erected 167 times—always



One section of the organ being moved into one of the many theatres. The motor in the foreground was one of several, due to the varying electrical currents.

the organ a try-out after they had finished building it.

Stage "get-outs" vary incredibly but, with a reasonably good "get-out", like the New Theatre, Cardiff, where you could almost drive the lorries onto the stage, the boys could have the organ down and on the road in about 4 1/2 hours. They used to like to have about 24 hours to get the organ into the new theatre, build it, connect up, test everything and tune through.

But things didn't always work like that. The worst jump I remember was from the Palace Theatre, Hammersmith, the worst "get-out" in the country, which involved getting police permission to close a side-street and build a wooden stage right across it, last lorry not away until 9am Sunday morning, to the Palace Theatre, Hull, 285 miles on account of diversions caused by floods and low bridges.

in a rush over the week-end, no cotton-wool methods, slap! bang! wallop! out into the street and up into the lorry.

Apart from a few pipes bent or broken through travelling over hump-back bridges at high speed during the night, the organ is as good as the day it came out of the factory, nearly eight years ago. During that time, I don't think we've had a dozen ciphers.

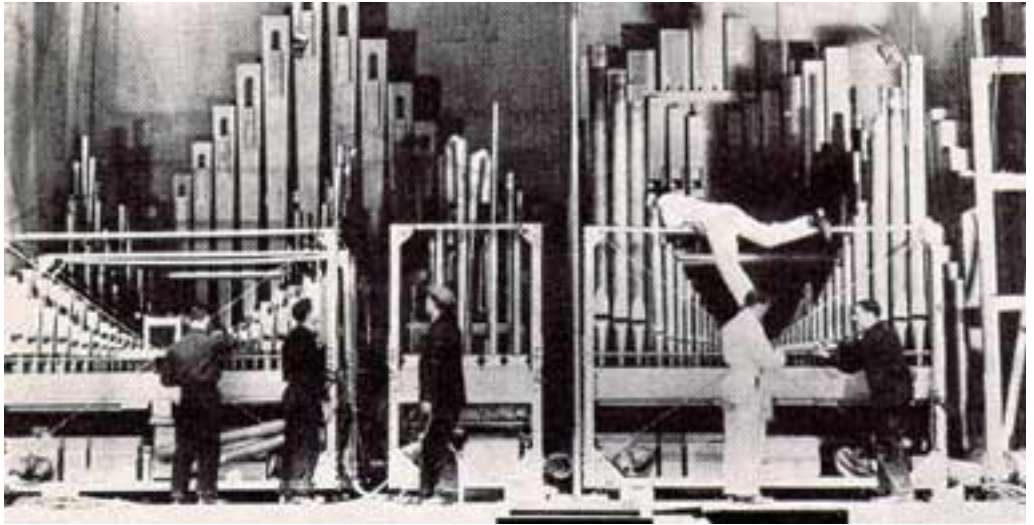
The only trouble we experienced was when we had a week in (say) Birmingham, followed by a week in (say) Portsmouth. The combination of oily dirt from one atmosphere and salt, damp air from the other, tended to cause an odd note off here and there through sticky armatures.

I had a marvellous staff: Johnny Quarmby, my head organ builder, is quite a good organist himself. So he always used to give

That Monday they didn't get the wind on until 5:45pm, the doors opened at 6:00pm and I had to play the whole evening without a single pipe having been tuned! Believe it or not, it didn't sound too bad.

All went well until the war came along. At first we thought we were finished and almost lent the organ to the BBC right away. But we found that by switching some of the ranks around a bit and leaving the big string section in store, we could take the organ by train, so we carried on with two lorries, and took the rest of the organ by train for another 18 months, all through the terrible blitz winter.

I suppose our greatest adventure was in the big snow-up in March, 1940, when half the organ (in the two lorries), was buried in a 16ft snow drift in the middle of the Yorkshire moors, and the other half went by mistake to Bolton Goods Yard instead of Preston. That



Workmen are shown installing the organ on a theatre stage.

week we weren't able to open until the Thursday matinee.

Early 1941, I heard that the BBC's own theatre organ in London had been destroyed by enemy action, so I offered them mine, and in May, 1941, we took the organ to Llandudno. Now it has been purchased outright by the BBC, thoroughly cleaned, overhauled,

regulated throughout, and re-erected in Jubilee Hall, East Road, London, EC, where I hope it will continue, for many years to come, to give unlimited pleasure to the organists who broadcast on it and to listeners all over the world.

*From Theatre Organ World 1946*

## Concert & Membership Prices

The following TOSA concert ticket prices now apply:

	Australian Artists	Overseas Artists
Non-members	\$25.00	\$27.50
Non-member Pension	\$22.00	\$25.00
TOSA Members	\$20.00	\$20.00
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# Ken Double (U.S.A) plays the Orion Wurlitzer

Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2008

Report by John Shaw



Thankfully the day was mild and sunny which no doubt provided the necessary incentive to our senior members to venture out and from what I have heard, they were more than amply, perhaps "Doubly" rewarded.

Ken kicked off the entertainment with a lively version of "Everything's Coming Up Roses." Ken's opening had the usual panache one has come to expect from this performer. The song was played in tempo with the rhythm occasionally punctuated by the tap cymbal. This opener was followed by a pleasant song titled "I Love Being Here With You." Perhaps this was a message to the audience.

It was good to hear a bracket of songs from Stephen Sondheim (a change from the tired old show tunes) which were written for the musical "Follies" in 1970. Although the show won two awards, it did not survive on Broadway very long at that time. Ken played the Prologue, "Broadway Baby" and "Losing My Mind." "Broadway Baby" featured the opening melody line on Piano with a superb counter melody.

The song virtually tells the story of a Broadway Musical being written and produced. Thirty-eight years on the score is still refreshingly different and Ken's arrangements continue to feature the most suitable counter melodies.

"It All Depends On You," followed with a

jazzy feel, which then became rather raunchy with a bump and grind ending.

The mood then changed completely to a sedate light classical waltz favorite, "Voices Of Spring" (Strauss). Ken reminded us that the Wurlitzer was first called a "Unit Orchestra," (not a Theatre Organ), and that he intended using the Organ's full orchestral voice, which he then proceeded to do. Several solo voices were heard which included Clarinet and other woodwinds, returning to strings and making use of percussions as orchestral bells. Use of second touch highlighted some phrases.

Right now, on Broadway, one of the most popular shows is "Jersey Boys" which is based on the life and music of Frankie Vallee and includes the song "Dawn," which was played by Ken in a gentle rock rhythm with the melody and accompaniment supported by a tambourine backing. Next came the popular and still requested song "Can't Take My Eyes Off You." Commencing quiet voices with the usual beat understated, Ken played the number overall as a soft ballad.

The final song, "Sherry Sherry Baby" was a bouncy melody which was played in a laid back style.

Again another complete contrast when Ken announced that he would play "Love Is A Many Splendored Thing" in a traditional George Wright style - complete with glissandos on the chrysoglott. The number was well received although it is often heard by other performers.

Then came the switch to the Spanish flavored "Granada," played with tremulants switched off to give a dramatic effect and in addition tambourines punctuating the fast melodic passages. Tibias and soft string phrases were featured with a reiterating tambourine again at the end of each phrase. A few key changes added a nice touch to this somewhat lengthy piece.

The first half of the program then concluded with "Let There Be Peace On Earth".

After intermission (as the Americans say) we heard the organ commence playing without an organist at the console, at which point Ken strolled out on stage with a microphone in his hand singing "When You're Smiling,"

and by the end of the song I am sure that everyone was doing just that! His easy to listen to voice plus the chosen song suited the occasion and came as a pleasant surprise.

The number "Coquette" followed with a bouncy tempo and jazzy chorus which kept the mood bright.

A Frank Sinatra medley included "All The Way" with some unexpected alternate harmonies, then "My Kind Of Town," "I've Got You Under My Skin" in swingtime, and "My Way," once again with a few different chord progressions.

A very interesting song followed, written by Oscar Levant, a favored pianist and friend of George Gershwin, who also had a distinguished career.

Somehow, that "Vamp of Savannah, Hard-Hearted Hannah" got into the act, quite possibly as a request.

It was a change to slip into the 1960's mode for the songs "It's My Party," "Meditation" (a legendary bossa nova by Jobim) which sounded great on the organ (why don't we hear more?) and contained some nice original counter melodies. "So What's New" (Alpert)

preceded Neil Sedaka's "Breakin' Up Is Hard To Do," which is a nice quiet ballad. The selection concluded with Dusty Springfield's "Only Want To Be With You."

Back to Spain with the castinets working overtime to the song "Valencia" at a romping tempo.

A choice of Harry James big band numbers, always so perfect for playing on our orchestral organ, contained "Long, Long Time," "Beginning To See The Light," "I Had The Craziest Dream" and "I've Heard That Song Before."

For the finale, Ken, with microphone in hand, crooned to his own organ accompaniment, "It Had To Be You."

What a perfect ending to a well planned, well rehearsed concert. Once again Ken did not fail to surprise with his complete professionalism and as a fine entertainer, including his jokes which I thought best not to divulge.

Looking forward to another return trip!



# Indianapolis American Theatre Organ Society Convention 4th – 9th July

Greg and I decided to attend the AGO and ATOS convention and we had an absolutely fantastic time. Ken Double, president of ATOS, certainly added spark to the well organised convention, and he got us right into the mood, making us feel part of something special. Before going to ATOS we were invited by Barry Holben to visit the Allen Organ Company in McCungie to see how they build their organs. This was a very interesting tour, and we could not believe that the “whole” organ is manufactured on site. We saw raw steel turned into little screws, blocks of wood being cut and shaped, computer boards being assembled, notes being made, right up to a completed organ. Then we visited their museum which housed models from the early days. Thank goodness for microchip technology. After that we laid hands on the Lynn Larsen Theatre Organ in Octave Hall. Music is fun!

We then went on to Philadelphia to hear Rudy Lucente play the Macy’s Wanamaker organ. After enjoying the recital Rudy walked us through some of the organ chambers. We decided to come back again in the afternoon and a girl has to do what a girl has to do and that is shop whilst the organ is playing. Result = one pair of shoes.

The concerts we most enjoyed during the ATOS convention

- The opening concert with Simon Gledhill on the 3/26 Wurlitzer at Manual High School (Schools have theatre organs!:) What technique and a lovely concert making it exciting for the rest of the week and what was in store for us all.

- Young Theatre Organist Competition with Donnie Rankin, the 2007 winner, followed by three finalists. It was interesting to see that a cassette tape was used to set the piston memories. One contestant had to treat us to a comedy act while we all waited. The winner was Jonathan Ortloff, and I hope that we will hear him here in Australia. His program and playing was far beyond his years.

- Richard Hills on the 3/18 Barton at the Warren Performing Arts Centre. Richard was

truly remarkable and amidst stiff competition from the rest of the concerts we attended, was adjudged by us as the best organist.

- Clark Wilson with the silent film The Winning of Barbara Worth at the Embassy Theatre on the 3/12 Page. It was interesting how one was completely aware of the organ at the start, but as the movie progressed, it became part of the overall experience. The raging river scene was incredible. It went on for quite a while and the thrill of the rushing river never faded, it just got more and more tense. Without a doubt, this is an art and Clark Wilson a wonderful exponent of it.

- North United Methodist Church Trio on bro 4/76 Kimball, Allen 321 and a Steinway piano with Jonas Nordwall, Donna Parker and Martin Ellis. Who ever thought different instruments of this ilk would blend so well. Must be all in the “orchestration”.

- Off to Cincinnati and into a home, the Wehmeier Residence with Jelani Eddington at the 4/36 Wurlitzer. The room not only housed a real pipe organ, but also about 6 grand pianos, mainly Steinways. You all know Jelani quite well, and this was sadly to be our last concert of the convention.

The Paramount and Embassy theatres were beautiful and it’s good to see that there are significant efforts afoot to keep them afloat. Going afloat was the last event of the week. Some 300 of us boarded a river steamer (with a steam calliope – which was played outrageously) and spent a very pleasant couple of hours on the Ohio River.

All good things must come to an end, and happily our flights home, with loads of World Day Youth, went very smoothly indeed. I think the buzz with these conventions is being with people who enjoy what you enjoy, and having had a line-up of top players and organs, and excellent organization, what better way to spend a few days. If you haven’t attended an ATOS convention, you should truly think about doing so!

Godielieve Ghavalas



# **The Mighty WurliTzer Orion Centre Campsie, Sydney, NSW Australia**

The Grand Opening of this 3 manual 17 rank WurliTzer, Opus No.1813 Style 260, Theatre Pipe Organ (Unit Orchestra) in the Orion Centre Campsie took place on 1st October 1988. The organ had been formerly installed in the Capitol Theatre Sydney where it delighted theatre patrons for many years following the opening on 7th April 1928 played by US organist Fred Scholl. The organ was purchased by the Theatre Organ Society of Australia (NSW Division) Inc. and removed in 1972 to storage by many members of TOSA.

After nearly 11 years of searching for a new home for the WurliTzer it was learnt that the Canterbury Municipal Council were planning to refurbish the Orion Cinema in Beamish Street, Campsie, as their Community Centre. After much negotiation with Canterbury Council, T.O.S.A. was successful in gaining approval to install the organ under the stage as well as gaining space for storage facilities at no cost to the Society.

Restoration work had progressed slowly, having been carried out by some of the members over the years. In order to have the instrument ready for opening in the Bi-Centennial year 1988, the Organ Builder John Parker was employed on a full-time basis to complete the restoration and installation. It was impractical to re-use the original pneumatic relay and switch stacks so a Devtronix Solid State Computer system was purchased from the USA to control the functions of the organ and to offer new possibilities to the organist. An English Horn and Solo String Celeste were added as well as extending the top octave of the Diapason, Tibia and Solo String. A WurliTzer Piano was aquired, restored and is played from the organ console. Several prominent Australian and US organists have had input towards the final specification.

The WurliTzer Theatre Pipe Organ in the Orion Centre is one of the most up-to-date installations of its kind. It is regularly featured by TOSA in concert, and has been played by many renowned local, interstate and overseas organists. Members have the opportunity to play it on members playing days.

The WurliTzer is a one-person orchestra and you can play anything from classical music to modern, swing and jazz. It is also the perfect instrument to provide dance music as is the case at the Blackpool Tower Ballroom, Blackpool, UK. In addition to the sounds of the many orchestral ranks of pipes the organ also has a Chrysoglott, Xylophone, Glockenspiel, Marimba Harp, Chimes, Castanets, Bird Whistles and tuned Sleigh Bells.

The installation of the organ under the stage provides for a superb blending of the magical sounds of this instrument into the Theatre Auditorium to the delight of all organists and audiences. The Orion Centre being a former cinema is the perfect setting for Concert presentations enabling appropriate lighting and facilities for artists. Audiences are well catered for with excellent facilities for refreshments as well as disabled access.

The 20th Annivesary Concert of the Grand Opening of the WurliTzer in the Orion Centre, Beamish Street, Campsie is on Sunday 28th September 2008 at 2:00pm with Neil Jensen at the organ console and Bernard Walz at the grand piano.

The program will include music from some of the classic movies. (It is also the 80th Birthday of this WurliTzer Organ's opening in Sydney's Capitol Theatre)

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