

Volume 25 Issue 8 Price 50¢ August 1986

TOSA NEWS

*The Official Publication of the Theatre Organ Society
of Australia, N.S.W. Division
Address - Box A594 P.O. Sydney South, 2000
Registered by Australia Post - Publication No. N.B.H. 1038*



David Smith



Andrea Harrison

**in
Concert
At the Console of
the Mighty
Wurlitzer**

AN AFTERNOON OF SPECTACULAR THEATRE ORGAN
AND PIANO ENTERTAINMENT

**Sunday 24th August at 2.00pm
Marrickville Town Hall**

DIRECTORY

THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW DIVISION)

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SPECIAL MEETING

Marrickville Town Hall
August 12th at 7.30pm

This special meeting has been called for **one purpose only.**

That purpose is to fill the vacancies due to the following resignations:-

Vice President
Secretary
Assistant Secretary
Minute Secretary
Committee (Three to be elected)

Nominations will be accepted from the floor on the night of the meeting. Be sure and bring your membership card with you for presentation at the door.

CORRECTION

Please take note that the concert admission prices as set out in the booking form in the July issue of TOSA NEWS are incorrect.

Correct prices are:-

ADULT TICKETS \$8.00

MEMBER OF TOSA \$6.00

CONCESSION \$5.00

CANCELLATION OF FETE

It was decided at the July committee meeting, that due to insufficient time for those still in office to organise, it was moved that the Fete, which was to be held in September, be cancelled.



AUGUST

TUESDAY 12th at 7.30pm.

MARRICKVILLE TOWN HALL
Special meeting to fill vacancies of the Executive and Committee.

SUNDAY 24th at 2.00pm.

DAVID SMITH AND ANDREA HARRISON
in concert: MARRICKVILLE TOWN HALL
Admission:- Adults \$8.00. Members of
TOSA \$6.00. Concession \$5.00.
Booking form in this issue.

SEPTEMBER

WEDNESDAY 10th at 7.30pm.

MEMBERS QUARTERLY MEETING
MARRICKVILLE TOWN HALL
Members quarterly meeting; in accordance
with the Constitution, which requires
the holding of three General Meetings
of members each year. Provided the
time taken by the meeting allows for
it, there will be some organ music to
follow, as well as tea and coffee.

TUESDAY 23rd at 5.00pm.
NOMINATIONS CLOSE

SUNDAY 28th at 2.00pm.
NEIL JENSEN IN CONCERT
MARRICKVILLE TOWN HALL
Admission:- Adults \$8.00 Member of
TOSA \$ 6.00 Concession \$ 5.00

PLEASE NOTE:

The Fete that was to be held on Saturday
20th 1986, HAS BEEN CANCELLED.

OCTOBER

FRIDAY 17th at 7.30pm.
CAPITOL ORGAN FUND RAISING NIGHT
Bondi-Waverly RSL Club, Gray Street
Bondi Junction.
Patron Ian Davies is once again inviting
members to attend a great night of organ
and piano music, with talented local
artists.
Admission is \$4.00; and the Bistro Bar
is open at 5.30pm.

SUNDAY 26th at 2.00pm.
FREE CONCERT
MARRICKVILLE TOWN HALL

NOVEMBER

WEDNESDAY 5th
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

SUNDAY 23rd at 2.00pm.

PAID CONCERT
MARRICKVILLE TOWN HALL

CANBERRA COACH TOUR

SUNDAY, AUGUST 17th, at 2.00pm.

TOSA member, Ritchie Willis has offered
to organise a one day coach tour to
Canberra for the official opening of
their Compton Theatre Organ by Tony
Fenelon.

The coach will leave Mortdale station
(Railway Pde. side), at 8.00am, and will
return at 9.00pm. Lunch will be avail-
able at the High Court Bistro.

Fare will be \$20 per head. Plenty of
parking close to the departure point.
If you are interested, ring Ritchie Willis
on 57 3581 for bookings. Cheques should
be made out to TOSA. Final date for
bookings will be Monday 5th August.
Join us on this historic occasion.

BOOK YOUR SEATS NOW

IF YOU ARE TRAVELING SOUTH
TO MELBOURNE

Two exciting concerts by the American
Theatre and Jazz Organist:-

FATHER JAMES MILLER
IN CONCERT

SUNDAY August 17th at 2.00pm.
Village Theatre, High St, Reservoir.

Thursday, August 21st at 8.00pm.

Moorabbin Town Hall
Admission to both concerts are:-
Adults \$ 8.00 TOSA Member \$7.00
Pensioners/Students \$5.00
TOSA Pensioner/Student \$4.00
Children under 15, free.


 INTERSTATE NEWS
ORGAN WILL BE CONCERT HALL'SFINAL TOUCH

"Music lovers will be pleased to know the Concert Hall at the Performing Arts Complex will be finished soon". . . a statement which comes direct from the Performing Arts Complex architect, Robin Gibson, a person who should know whether the hall is finished or not. Architecturally, the hall is quite sound. It simply lacks its crowning glory - the \$1 million, 7098 pipe organ.

That omission, however, is soon to be rectified. The first shipment of the organ's parts have arrived, and all parts are expected to be in Brisbane by mid - July. And, if the Queensland Government Works Department projections are correct, Brisbane will hear the organ's musical thunder by March of next year.

Mr. Gibson and Brisbane organist Robert Boughen have combined their talents to consult with the West German designers, KLAIS, on the construction of the organ.

From a 32 foot pipe that "you could have a picnic in", according to Mr. Boughen, to pipes so small a jeweller's eyepiece is needed to fit them, the organ will be a centrepiece of awesome proportions. Of the 7098 pipes, 649 are wood, 56 are zinc/tin plated and 6393 are tin. The organ's veneers are made of North Queensland walnut which was sent to West Germany so it matches the Concert Hall walls.

As the organ's architect, Mr. Gibson designed the visual configuration of the pipes while Mr. Boughen consulted on the musical content. 'There has been an interesting interface in design between myself, Mr. Boughen and KLAIS,' Mr. Gibson said.

Mr. Gibson, who designed the organ for Queensland University's Mayne Hall (it is about half the size of the Concert Hall organ), said the design of the Concert Hall had been planned with the organ in mind.

"The organ is a vital part of the amalgam of the hall", he said. "I saw it as part of the hall itself. It is linked between the two side walls, with the ceiling and with the orchestral platform - an organ

is the ultimate of all musical objects for the hall. It will give great reflectivity to the hall - the curves of the pipes and their reflectivity will give it a great visual lightness".

Mr. Gibson said the groupings of the pipes were in a crystalline form which would add to the crystalline structure of the entire hall. Mirrors have been arranged at the pedals of the organ so that the "footwork" of the organist, will be visible to the audience.

One man keen to get his feet onto those pedals is Mr. Boughen. He said, that although it was impossible to design one instrument that would faithfully reproduce the music of every culture and age, the Concert Hall organ, would be flexible.

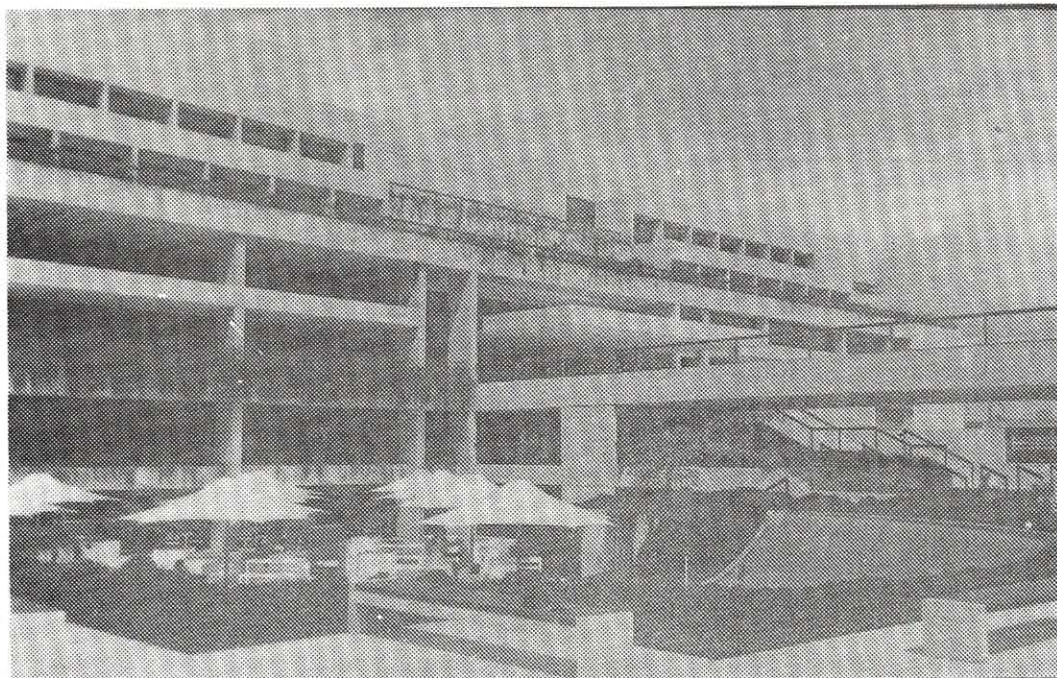
"It will play virtually all standard concert repertoire, not only classic baroque, but romantic, and contemporary. It should have a thrilling, warm, vibrating sound," Mr. Boughen said; "It should be able to reproduce not only the music of now, but that of the future".

Mr. Boughen has been honorary consultant for the organ since the mid-1970's and was involved in the search for an organ builder.

He said . . . "I believe this will be an outstanding instrument of real international significance".

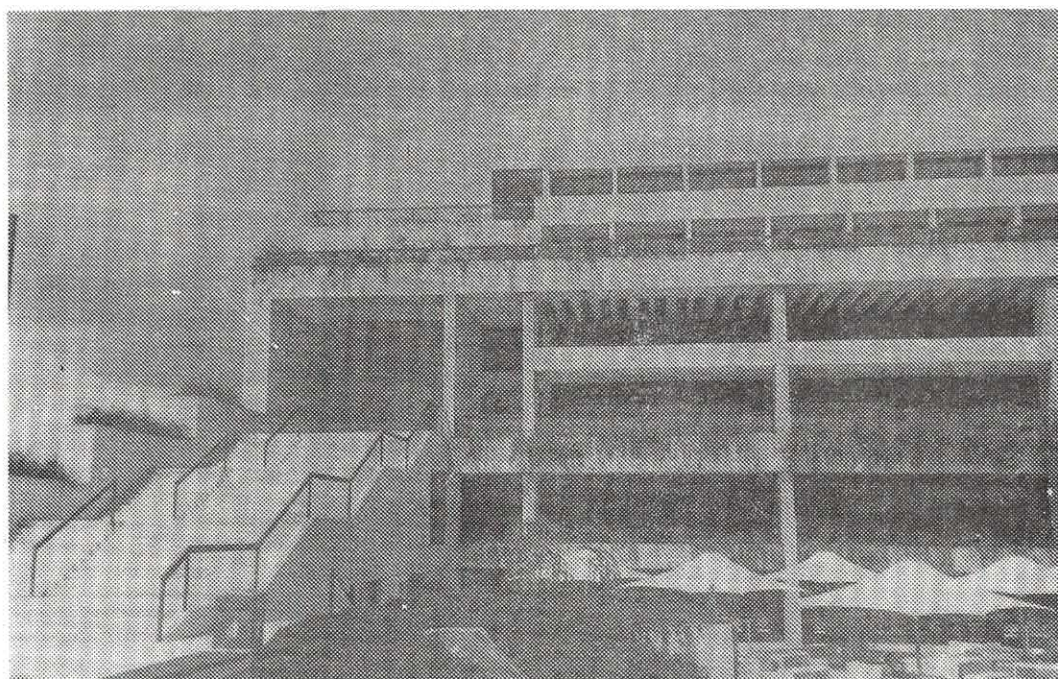
The organ has 88 stops, compared with the Sydney Opera House's 126 stop organ. It was large but not ridiculously so, Mr. Boughen said.

Making the organ fit the space provided by the architect is only half the job of getting the organ ready for a performance. Once it is made to look magnificent, it must be made to sound so. This requires the pipes to be voiced, a time consuming and sophisticated technique. "Each pipe must be individually adjusted and tried, adjusted and tried, adjusted and tried," Mr. Boughen said.



Photos Above and below:-

Two views of the Performing Arts Complex
in Brisbane.



PROPOSAL FOR ADELAIDE TOSA CONVENTION 1987

COACH TOUR 11 DAYS AND 10 NIGHTS.

Tour includes Dinner, Bed and Breakfast and use of the coach in Adelaide. Suggested fare \$650. A \$50 deposit to be paid by November 1986. Leave Sydney on Tuesday 14th April and return Friday, 24th April, 1987. Please refer to page

five of TOSA NEWS, May issue, for details. So far, 24 people have booked, but we must have 45 passengers to make the tour a goer. Please ring Ritchie Willis on 57 3581 for bookings NOW.

THE THEATRE ORGAN. . .

WHEREIN LIES ITS FUTURE?

(by John Ledwon)

The theatre organ movement of today is suffering from, at best, a static interest level and, at worst, a gradual decline of interest. What can be done to increase interest, particularly with the younger segment of our population? I offer the following suggestions, based on my experience in working with persons 16 to 22 years of age in a musical environment for the past ten years, both as a professional musician and as an educator.

We of the theatre organ world need to involve the young in order that the movement stay alive. We must involve large numbers of people with diverse talents and interests if we expect to see large scale growth. ATOS and similar groups must examine their goals closely to see if they are on a musical track that appeals to a large portion of the general population. The theatre organ must be made to appeal to a much larger potential audience if it is to survive.

The theatre organ has proved that it can excite and enamor audiences of the 70's and 80's; just look at the crowds and their reactions and enthusiasm at pizza parlors. Unfortunately, this ray of hope is diminishing. Why? Possibly because the pizza parlor organist either couldn't or wouldn't present music from today's current repertoire, or perhaps the theatre organ couldn't perform current pop music credibly. It's okay to delight the six-to 12-year-olds with tinkling bells and snappy drums and help the senior population relive happier moments with music they grew up with, but what about the 16-to 35-year old group? They are the future audience, and their music has been largely ignored.

Here we have what I consider to be the focus of the problem of generating greater interest in theatre organ - the inability or unwillingness of the majority of today's theatre organ artists to play current pop music and the fact that the theatre organ, in its current configuration, cannot compete musically with to-days "sound" without the assistance of other instruments.

Let me address each of these. First, the artist's ability or willingness to play current pop music. Let's look at willingness first. Presently, much emphasis is placed on keeping the senior population happy, mainly because they are the principle support group providing funds for the artists and related business interests. If audiences demand music from the '20's, '30's or '40's, they get it, mainly because if you deprive them of it they will not attend concerts. So here we have a "Catch 22" situation: older audiences pay the bills and demand music from a bygone era; younger audiences stumble onto a theatre organ concert out of curiosity or whatever, are turned off by the music presented and never return. Now, is it only the musical selections presented that turns off this younger audience, or are other factors involved?

Current pop music is quite complicated rhythmically and is largely vocal in nature. Admittedly much current pop music will not transfer credibly. By credibly I mean in a manner which captures the original mood and drive of a selection of music. Music that will not transfer must not be performed, as it will probably turn out stilted and strange, or worse, comedic. And that is a great way to turn off a younger audience. Current pop music that will transfer well will probably require assistance from other musical sources. The addition of a rhythm section (percussion and electric bass) and an accent section (brass or a synthesizer) will do wonders to the overall sound. Many theatre organ purists will fight tooth and nail this practice of adding other instruments to their beloved theatre organ. However, for the theatre organ to survive in the '80's and beyond it must be done. How many solo musical instrumentalists can you name today other than vocalists?) Not many, I think. Today's successful musical presentations are cooperative efforts; a single solo instrument just won't make it in today's musical world.

When I speak of augmenting the theatre organ with other instruments I don't mean the "Big Band" sound. That era has also passed.

I speak of augmentation with electric bass (artists, get off the 16' extensions, they're murder in today's modern sound), percussion (not the toy counter but a real live percussionist), brass (not the Post Horn but good brass musicians or a good professional studio synthesizer) This "re-creating" the modern sound is why so many good theatre organ artists shy away from current pop music. Most of it cannot be re-created credibly on a solo theatre organ, and many artists are reluctant to engage other musician's assistance at concerts because of the added expense and cries of outrage from the purists who feel adding anything to the theatre organ is a desecration of the art.

Which brings us to you, the audience. What can you do to help the situation? Simply accept change, for without change there can be no future....for anything. We live in the '80's; accept that. Sure, things were great in the '20's, '30's and '40's, but would you trade in all the technological advances of today for those of past decades? Probably not. The same goes for today's musical world. Music is an art form in a constant state of flux; stifle this and it dies. The theatre organ movement is static and living in the past; either it moves forward toward the present or it is doomed to gradual extinction. Today's audiences must compromise some of their views and tastes and allow a good portion of a concert to be music of today registered for today. And if that means adding other instruments, so be it. Enjoy the added variety, the new musical experiences. There is a whole new world out there musically, and I'm not talking of Acid Rock, Hard Rock, Punk or New Wave, just good contemporary music that sounds great on a theatre organ (with a little assistance from other instruments).

Today's audiences hold the key to the future of the theatre organ. Change your tastes and attitudes and the movement will expand because the artists will introduce new ideas and styles; remain static and you've killed the instrument you profess to love. Expand your musical horizons! Listen to some of the milder contemporary composers.

Not everything they write is good, but then, neither were the composers of the past perfect. The milder composers may not be the principle music of the young, but they listen to it and most of them enjoy it. Composers like Andrew Lloyd Webber (who constantly uses nostalgia in his compositions), John Williams, Neil Diamond, Barbra Streisand, Bruce Springsteen and a host of others all have something important to say musically and we need to listen. Also, go see a contemporary motion picture; examine the tastes of the young. Accept and embrace what you can and try to tolerate the rest. Remember, you were young once and someone most likely had to tolerate your tastes. (I wonder what people born in the 1880's or 1890's had to say about music of the 1920's and '30's). Go see "Back To The Future", its loaded with '50s nostalgia, or see Ron Howard's "Cocoon". They are both great flicks and if they make you smile and see today's entertainment in a slightly different light they've served their purpose. Also, demand that today's concert artists play music from today. When you find an artist who embraces modern music and styles, don't run away....**SPREAD THE WORD!** Take your grandson or granddaughter to the concert. Expose today's youth to their music performed on a theatre organ. Don't take them to a concert of dated music. I can practically guarantee they won't like it and won't go again. To involve today's young people you must meet them on their terms and give them what they want to hear or they will go elsewhere. There is too much going on musically that appeals to them for them to take the time to understand that which they think they don't like. We must educate them from where they are to where we want them, not the other way around.

One final important point and I'll get off my soapbox. Those of you who are artists or producers of theatre organ concerts must consider yourselves part of the entertainment industry. In order to compete in today's competitive entertainment business, artists and producers must learn to entertain through more than just the auditory

portion of the brain. Spectacular lighting, backdrops, staging variety and perhaps positioning the console in such a manner that the artist's back is not always toward the audience (the weakest of all staging positions) must be considered.

How many of you have noticed that I have consistently used the word "artist", rather than "organist"? Why? First, like it or not, the term "organist" or "organ concert" turns off the majority of people today. So, why use it? Find some other way of saying the same thing. Who knows, you might pick up several unsuspecting audience members who might otherwise not have attended the concert, for an artist to appeal to the area of potential audience that is going to be needed in order that the theatre organ movement may survive and expand, he or she will need to be more than an organist. Superior musicianship, knowledge of orchestration, versatility in staging techniques and the ability to communicate with the audience in a unique and entertaining style will all have to be shown by the artist if we are to move forward.

Certainly, all of this is going to take time, effort, money and, above all, creativity. But if we don't aim for the top we certainly can't ever come anywhere near it. New blood must be infused into the movement in order for it to survive. Emphasizing contemporary music performed in a contemporary style and staged with contemporary theatrical techniques is a possible solution. The challenge is there; are we capable, both creatively and innovatively, to meet it? To surmount it?

News source... 'Theatre Organ'
January/February 1986

THEATRE ORGAN BROADCAST

Don't forget to listen to Frank Ellis, who hosts the Theatre Organ programme on 2CBA FM every Monday night at 9.00pm. Frank features records and concerts recorded live at Marrickville Town Hall.

SILVER ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

(1961 - 1986)

August 1986 marks the Silver Anniversary of Barclay Wright's administration of the Mastertouch Piano Roll Company.

To help celebrate this significant occasion Music Roll Australia and Mastertouch are presenting a very special afternoon of entertainment and refreshments.

We are honoured to have the Palm Court Orchestra present a short programme of salon music and other light entertainment which will be in keeping with the "tea room" atmosphere of the occasion.

Even though the occasion is essentially an afternoon performance, as hosts, we would be pleased to see guests in formal attire, (black tie/evening dress) which although optional, would help to enhance the nostalgic atmosphere and help make this a memorable celebration. Civil decorations and academic dress is also encouraged.

Drinks and light refreshments will be served during the afternoon, leading to High Tea in the early evening.

Owing to the nature of the seating arrangements, the number of people will have to be limited, so book early to ensure that you will be part of the celebrations.

For all enquiries and bookings, please contact Mastertouch Piano Roll Co. P.O. Box 206 Petersham N.S.W. or phone them on (02) 569 5128.

WHERE: PETERSHAM TOWN HALL

WHEN: SUNDAY, 17th AUGUST, 1986

TIME: 3PM. to 7PM.

COST: \$25 DOUBLE (SINGLE \$15)

PLEASE NOTE:

Make all cheques/money orders payable to "MASTERTOUCHE".

CONCERT REVIEWMECCA THEATRE HURSTVILLE

(Sunday 6th July 1986)
(By Andrea Harrision)

Nearly 800 people turned up to this, the first, (but hopefully not the last!), MECCA/TOSA concert production.

Our first artist was David Parsons, who brought up the white and gold Conn organ, (soon to be replaced with an \$85,000 Allen 6500), with a medley which included "Jean", "Bright Eyes", and, "Thoroughly Modern Millie".

Frank Ellis, introduced that lovely lady of song, Erica Witt, who charmed the audience with her sweet soprano voice. Included in her bracket, was "Make Believe", "Memory", and "My Hero".

Back to David Parsons for his "odds n' sods" segment consisting of the "Waltz" and "Soldiers Chorus" from Faust, a sensitive "People", and, to end the first half, a novelty number, "Stumbling".

Theatre proprietor, Mr. Phil Doyle introduced himself in his own inimitable style, and, together with accompaniment from David Davenport, presented a before/after film on the history of the Mecca.

Phil then proceeded to brush his hair forward and "acted out" an impersonation of M.C. Frank Ellis, which was appreciated by all; particularly Frank himself!!

Next came the obligatory 'Singalong' segment with all the usual old time numbers.

David reappeared at the console with a 'dance' bracket including "Shall We Dance", "Dancing In The Dark" and a lovely "Floral Dance".

Erica Witt presented her final bracket in a gorgeous white sequinned gown. This time her selections were all love songs, such as, "Perhaps Love" and "Who Can I Turn To". I'm not a great fan of soprano singers, but, Erica is one exception: She exudes a radiance in every performance, that I've not seen anyone match.

After all of the usual "thank-yous", David took down the console with a 'clapalong' 'Liberty Bell March'.

A big thank you to Mr. Phil Doyle, that dynamic Australian theatre organ personality, for allowing this event to happen. There can be no doubt of its success - let's hope it's the first of many.

Thanks must also go to Ritchie Willis and Norm Read who conceived the idea for this concert, and in conjunction with TOSA, helped in the promotion and organising of the concert.....Editor.



Photo above: Soprano Erica Witt
Below: David Parsons



THEATRE ORGAN TUITION



On Monday 7th July 1986 Neil Jensen of Keymedia Productions, will be commencing tuition operations, and offering a wide variety of services, in the Sydney metropolitan, and selected country areas.

Whether for pleasure or for serious study, students who desire tuition that is concise, without complication, uniquely and refreshingly different, from the beginner, to advanced and professional levels, are welcome. A wide array of subjects, such as music fundamentals, techniques, registrations, arranging, and performance; are available for tuition, in a large cross-section of keyboard styles. In addition to the aforementioned services, specialist preparation for music examinations, eisteddfods, and performances, is available, if so desired.

State-of-the-art video, and audio-tuition aids, will be incorporated and a three manual Rodgers Custom Century installation, will be soon introduced for Theatre Organ Tuition.

The opportunity to partake, in the consolidation of eighteen years international experience; is now available. Bookings and enrolments are welcomed, and may be directed to 12/9 Napier Street, Drummoyne, Telephone (02) 814 778.

NEW MEMBERS

(July Meeting)

A cordial welcome is extended to the following new members.

- Steve McDonald
 - Neil Jensen
 - Mr and Mrs Groll
 - Joy Cole
 - Ken Weston
 - Mr and Mrs R. Walker
 - Brian Binskin
-



SUNDAY 7th SEPTEMBER 1986 at 2.30pm.
EPPING BAPTIST CHURCH
Cnr. of Ray & Carlingford Roads, Epping.

John Atwell plays the Christie Unit Organ in a program which comprises a wide range of music from classical through theatre organ favorites to pops.

Come and join us for an entertaining afternoon of your kind of music. All donations will assist in the continuing maintenance and up-grading of the organ.

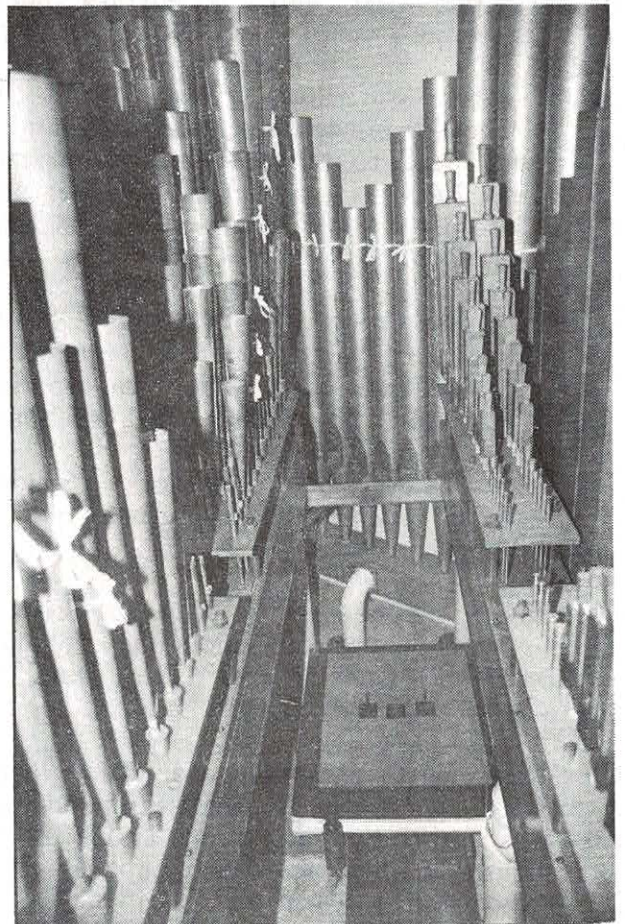


Photo at right:
A view of the solo chamber at Epping Baptist Church.

THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA
(A.C.T. DIVISION) INC.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

You are probably aware that TOSA ACT will be staging the official opening concert on our Compton Theatre Pipe Organ installed in the Albert Hall, Canberra on Sunday 17th August 1986 at 2.00pm. Tony Fenelon will be the artist and we are fortunate to have as our official guest, the Hon Ros Kelly, MP, Federal Member for Canberra, who will be making the official opening speech.

Enclosed is some information about the concert and the organ which you may care to include in your August newsletter. I have reserved a number of seats for interstate TOSA members and the ticket prices for those seats are as per the "Advance Booking" prices - not the more expensive Canberra Theatre box office prices.

We will also be producing a quantity of special souvenir programmes for the event and these will be available to buy to any TOSA members (whether attending the concert or not) for \$3 plus postage. The programme will contain photographs and historical notes on the organ, its original home, the Albert Hall in Canberra, TOSA ACT and, of course, Tony Fenelon.

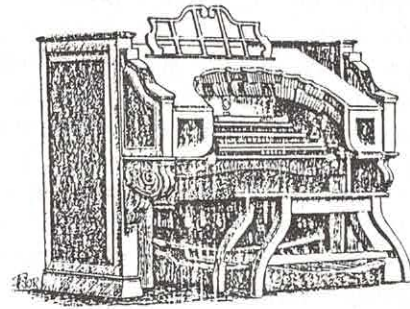
Please feel free to contact me on (062) 887122 (home) or (062) 475155 (work) if you have any questions of if you would like to arrange ticket and/or accommodation bookings for any of your members who may wish to attend the concert.

Obviously we are very excited about finally getting our pipe organ "off the ground" and before the public. Already our membership is growing and interest is being shown by many important cultural and community groups in Canberra. We think it will be a success.

Thanks for your support.

Yours sincerely,

Clinton White
Senior Vice President



THEATRE PIPE ORGAN CONCERT

TOSA (ACT) PROUDLY PRESENTS THE INAUGURAL CONCERT

ON

CANBERRA'S COMPTON THEATRE PIPE ORGAN

Although the Compton Theatre Pipe Organ owned by the ACT Division of the Theatre Organ Society of Australia was a relative late-comer to the theatre organ scene it has, like most other theatre pipe organs, had a long and interesting history.

Originally installed in March 1933 for the opening of the Gaumont Palace (later re-named the Odeon Theatre) in the Gloucestershire Spa town of Cheltenham, UK, the organ featured a console of attractive wooden casework with flat-topped end pillars and curved front jambs. It boasted 688 pipes in eight ranks, namely Diapason, Tibia Clausa, Stopped Flute, Violin, Violin Celeste, Krummet, Vox Humana and Tuba. This specification may be found on other instruments of similar size by various builders although a Clarinet would often be included as an alternative on the Great and Accompaniment manuals but the sound was synthetically derived from other ranks.

The tonal percussions comprised Vibraphone (surprisingly, not available as a chrysoglott) Glockenspiel (available also in reiterating form as Orchestral Bells), reiterating Xylophone and Chimes, and there was also the usual unit of traps and effects.

The console was situated in the centre of the orchestra enclosure at the Odeon on a Jensen lift and, although having three manuals, the top one was a coupler only.

The opening performance on the organ was played by Fredric Bayco from the Dominion Theatre in Tottenham Court Road, London, which theatre housed a 3 manual 12 rank Compton.

After the opening week in 1933, Alfred Furnish commenced a three years' appointment as resident organist before changing places with Kenneth Walters, of the Regent, Bristol. A year later the organists changed back and Furnish remained at Cheltenham until the outbreak of war in 1939. During the war years the organ was used only by guest organists, notably George Clissold, who often played for Friday evening community singing shows. In 1946, George Senior became the theatre's last resident organist, and from 1947 Jack Hartland frequently appeared for quest weeks, including annual "birthday shows" in which he was assisted by Johnson Lewis, and local enthusiasts still recall the special visits during the fifties by Bobby Pagan and Gerald Shaw.

Apart from people who attended meetings arranged by the organ societies - the Theatre Organ Club held a number - the organ was latterly heard only by the children of Cheltenham, Mrs Joan Hogg having been organist for the Saturday morning Cinema Club shows for a number of years. But used or not, the instrument remained in good order, mainly through the vigilance of Jack Hartland, who remained at the cinema as assistant manager after the cessation of his organist appointments.

Although it never gained fame as a nationally broadcast organ, its excellence was heard through the BBC's "Midland Console" broadcasts by Phil Finch, Louis Mordish and Henry Croudson. Things might have been different, however, if Sandy Macpherson had had his way early in the war, for at that time, due to the bombing of London and the subsequent loss of the original BBC Theatre Organ, Sandy was evacuated to Evesham - about 15 miles from Cheltenham - where he had the frustrating job of maintaining his broadcasts on a Hammond. Sandy introduced himself to the then manager of the theatre, Mr E.A. Gillingham, in the semi-blacked conditions of the foyer, to enquire about the possibility of using the Compton for his broadcasts. But his attempts came to nothing, mainly due to the shortage of telephone lines which would have been needed to carry the broadcasts, and, sadly, he had to remain with the Hammond until finally a Moller was acquired and set up at Llandudno in 1941.

Oddly enough, the Odeon organ was the first Compton theatre pipe organ to be "exported" from the UK. The John Compton Organ Company supplied more than two-thirds of the organs installed during the British theatre organ boom but never entered the export market unlike its Wurlitzer and Christie counterparts. What is even more strange is that Compton's advanced technology and their factory's output capabilities could have made the proposition of export a very feasible one.

The main reason, of course, is that Compton were "too late" because in the late twenties, when overseas commissions might have been forthcoming, the firm was still comparatively small and not even making its own pipework. In the early thirties, when the talkies became the latest "fad", many theatre pipe organs fell silent or at the most were heard during interval and the occasional stage production.

Now, largely thanks to the enthusiasts, interest in the theatre organ has turned. Long silent instruments have been restored, improved and expanded and others have been transferred to places where they are likely to enjoy a long and useful life.

Surprisingly enough, the Odeon Compton was not bought by a group of enthusiasts, but by the commercial concern which owned the Dendy Theatre in the Melbourne suburb of Brighton. It is in the Dendy that the Victorian Division of TOSA has installed the three manual, fifteen rank Wurlitzer from the Capitol Theatre, Melbourne, the huge success of which led to the management's decision to install a theatre organ in one of the buildings of their planned redevelopment of the Dendy site. The plans provided included an additional cinema, swimming pool, restaurant, shopping arcade and car park. The original idea was to place the organ in the new cinema but it was later decided that the second cinema would not be built and that the organ would be installed in the restaurant.

The management considered it desirable to have an instrument smaller than and with different characteristics to the nearby Wurlitzer, and asked TOSA member Bill Glasson to keep an eye open for anything which might be suitable whilst he was visiting England in the Summer of 1967. After some unsuccessful searching

Bill found the Odeon Compton to be of the size, tonal quality and condition required, and upon his recommendation the Dendy management made an offer which was accepted by the Rank organisation. The fact that Hill, Norman and Beard are active in England and Australia made them the obvious firm to be entrusted with the work of removing and rebuilding the organ, and the dismantling commenced on the first day of 1968. It was packed in crates made by a Cheltenham firm, and after its long sea voyage was taken to the Clifton Hill factory at Melbourne so that a thorough checking and any necessary restoration work could be carried out whilst its new home was being built.

The planned redevelopment finally proceeded in 1985 but the planned installation of the Compton was shelved some years prior to that. It was in 1978 that the organ was put up for sale and, after negotiations were concluded with the Dendy management, the organ was bought by a private group of enthusiasts in Canberra. Almost 10 years of sub-standard storage afforded no good to the organ's condition and water and vandal damage meant that the job of restoring the instrument would almost be an impossibility.

It was then that the TOSA ACT entered into the organ's history and this was assisted by the all important aspect of timing. TOSA had just completed negotiations with the Department of Territories to install its Wurlitzer hybrid organ into the Albert Hall but had decided that the instrument would be unsuited to the size of the hall and the agreed installation location at the rear of of the stage. A Queensland group showed interest in the TOSA organ and bought it giving TOSA more than sufficient funds to enable it to conclude a deal for the purchase of the Compton, an instrument that was considered to be ideally suited to the Albert Hall installation. So, in October 1978, the Compton finally fell into the hands of the enthusiastic TOSA ACT restoration team.

The long and difficult task of restoration then began including extensive modification to and expansion of the organ's specification. The stop list was completely redesigned, the old coupler manual was converted to a full solo manual, an English

Horn rank was added to the other eight and an automatic live rhythm unit was included in the new layout. The condition of the organ was very poor indeed and a small band of diligent and faithful workers spent months and years re-leathering, soldering, mending, manufacturing, and modifying the many thousands of parts of the instrument. Not the least of the tasks was that of straightening a number of pipes that had been damaged by vandals and poor storage conditions over the years. These were packed in solid wooden crates and shipped to Adelaide for professional care by TOSA's organ consultant, George Stephens Organ Builder Pty. Limited.

Exactly seven years, thousands of man hours and some \$40,000 later the organ was heard for the first time in its new home on Thursday 7th November 1985 at 11.15pm.

So the Odeon Compton once again stands proud with its gleaming white and gold console at the fore in the elegant surrounds of the Albert Hall. It is assured of a long and useful life in its new home and will bring many hours of enjoyment to those who listen to its wonderful sounds and experience its magic. Its life as a traveller had ended but its history continues.

Incidentally, the film being shown at the Odeon over the removal period was "Follow That Camel" . . . pity it couldn't have been 'Follow That Kangaroo!!'

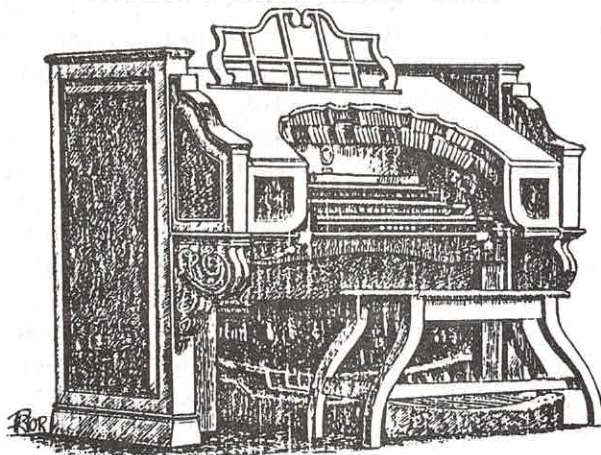
Adapted by Clinton White from
"A Compton for Export"
by Bryan Taylor.

HOME PARTIES

Members would have noticed in the past issues of TOSA NEWS, that we are often asking members if they would consider holding parties in their homes.

If you would like to host a home party in your home, please contact Andrea Harrison for all details by ringing her on 520 8632.

THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA
(A.C.T. DIVISION) INC.



THEATRE PIPE ORGAN CONCERT

TOSA (ACT) PROUDLY PRESENTS THE INAUGURAL CONCERT

ON

CANBERRA'S COMPTON THEATRE PIPE ORGAN

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FEATURING INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED

AUSTRALIAN THEATRE ORGANIST

*** TONY FENELON ***

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