

# TOSA NEWS

Jan/Feb 2022  
Volume 61 No.1

Price: \$2.00

**Annual General Meeting  
of  
Theatre Organ Society of Australia  
NSW Divn Inc**

**Saturday 26th February 2022 2:00pm**

**West Ryde Anglican Church**

**March Concert at the Orion  
Centre Theatre  
Postponed**



**/tosansw**



**#tosansw**

# Directory

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**TOSA News** David & Margaret Badman

**Printer** Printers of Richmond

## President



Hello members,  
You will see in this TOSA News information about our AGM on 26 February and details for voting for general committee positions.

Yes, the AGM is proceeding. We've delayed multiple times due to (blasted) covid but we're approaching the point where we need to have an AGM to comply with NSW Fair Trading regulations. By 26 February we should all be over this current wave, vaccinated to the hilt and of course we'll be conducting the meeting under covid safe practices. It's also an opportunity for you to see and more importantly hear the ongoing development of the nearly finished Christie installation.

You'll note that the executive positions are filled as there are only single and very worthy nominations for each position. Elections for the general committee positions are required. You'll also notice that I am not standing for committee. More information about that at the AGM.

Looking forward to seeing you on 26 February.

Craig Keller  
President

## Editorial



Hello Members,

The article about the move of the Dendy Theatre, Melbourne, TOSA Wurlitzer, "Eliza", to the Capitol Theatre, Melbourne, now owned by Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), is a wonderful outcome for MTO. When the Theatre has its 100 year Anniversary celebration in 2024 the Wurlitzer will also be celebrating 100 years since it opened in the theatre in 1924.

I look forward to bringing you the next interesting episode of "Beginnings" for your enjoyment.

Please read the Notice for the AGM and in particular the details about voting for Committee Member positions. It is important that TOSA complete the business of the AGM in February. Note that if you don't wish to attend the AGM you can either post your ballot or email it to the Returning Officer. Please ensure to include your Membership Number with your Ballot Paper either on the envelope or in your email.

Regards.  
Ernie Vale,  
Editor TOSA News.  
[editor@tosa.net.au](mailto:editor@tosa.net.au)

## From the Mailbox...



### **Digital Lodgement National Library of Australia ISSN 2208-9098 (Online)**

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

Where space permits we will do our best to publish your comments, but as space is limited, the editor reserves the right to edit any submitted comments and, as always, the views expressed by any individual may not necessarily coincide with the views of TOSA NSW Div.

Please submit all comments via email to:

The Editor [editor@tosa.net.au](mailto:editor@tosa.net.au)

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### **Please Note**

The Society's only bank account now is with **St George**. Details are **BSB 112-879, account number 442 088 530**.

Please direct all payments to this account with St George Bank.

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### ***TOSA Annual General Meeting 2022***

The Department of Fair Trading require that all postponed AGMs due to Covid must now be held before March 2022. Accordingly, TOSA have scheduled our AGM for Saturday February 26th at West Ryde Anglican Church from

2:00pm. Covid safety protocols will be in place requiring members to sign in, show their Covid Vaccine Certificate, wear a mask and observe social distancing during the meeting. Hand Sanitiser will be available.

**TOSA will safely serve a delicious afternoon tea, including percolated coffee, tea and tasty treats in accordance with Covid safety requirements.**

**Transfer from West Ryde Station to the meeting will be provided by the Badman's.**

**If you would like to be picked up at West Ryde Station, please ring Margaret Badman on 0417971212 to make a booking and leave a contact mobile phone number.**

**Once you have boarded a train on February 26th, please ring Margaret Badman so we know when to pick you up at the Station.**

**The vehicle to pick you up will display TOSA signs on the side.**

**Please complete the Ballot Form included with this TOSA News to elect 6 Committee Members for 2022.**

## ***To Watch Out for***

Well, the Federal and NSW State Governments still encourage as many people as possible to be fully vaccinated including the booster vaccine.

TOSA has again had to postpone the concert at the Orion Wurlitzer in March 2022 because of the large number of people contracting the Omicron strain of Covid 19 this year.

Simon, Cliff and Noah are all keen to entertain you with the wonderful sounds of theatre organ when it is safer for members and the public.

Legislation requires the AGM to be conducted by March this year so the AGM will definitely be held at West Ryde Anglican Church on Saturday 26th February, commencing at 2:00pm.

TOSA need at least 20 members present to form a quorum.

## **Advertising**

### **Rates in**

### **TOSA News**

For Members:

Small, Organ related ads = FREE!

For all other cases:

Quarter Page = \$25

Half Page = \$50

Full Page = \$100

Full Page Insert = \$125.00

### **Members' Dates**

**The Orion Theatre Campsie  
2nd Thursday of the Month**

**10th February**

**To be confirmed**

**Contact Craig or John to  
confirm dates for Orion.**

**Convener is**

**Craig Keller** on 0418484798

**or John Batts** on 0420424103

**Marrickville Town Hall**

**4th Monday of the Month**

**24th January**

**28th February**

**Convener is**

**John Batts** on 0420424103

will email you

**to confirm availability**

**Annual General Meeting  
of  
Theatre Organ Society of Australia  
NSW Divn Inc**

**Saturday 26th February 2022**

**2:00pm**

**West Ryde Anglican Church**

**Cnr Dickson Ave & Bellevue Ave., West Ryde**  
Afternoon Tea will be provided by TOSA

***Nominations have closed.***

***All positions on Executive have been filled  
by individual nominations***

**There has been seven (7) nominations for six (6)  
Committee Member Positions**

**A Ballot will be conducted to fill 6 positions**

**A ballot form is included with this TOSA News  
if posted or as an attachment if emailed  
and must reach the Returning Officer,  
PO Box 1053, Artarmon NSW 2064**

**no later than 25th February 2022  
ie by the last mail on Friday 25th February  
or scanned & emailed to  
gcostin@mac.com by the 25th February 2022  
please include your **Member Number** in the email**

**The Concert on Sunday 13th March 2022  
featuring TOSA Members  
Simon Ellis and Cliff Bingham**



***with a guest appearance by  
TOSA Member Noah Curran***



**Has unfortunately been postponed due to the  
situation with Omicron and Covid 19**

**This concert will be rescheduled at a date when  
the virus situation allows.**



**Lowrey organ pedalboard and bench —  
FREE to whoever wants to come to Artarmon and take  
them away.**

**Graeme Costin Mo: 0416 354 234**





## BEGINNINGS:

*Continued from December 2021 TOSA News  
An excerpt from The Encyclopedia of American Theatre Organ  
Volume 3 by Preston J. Kaufmann*

### Revised Hope-Jones Contract Cont.

Prior to entering into new arrangements, this letter was sent to the company attorney; Hope-Jones was seeking a special concession during their negotiations for his revised contract with the company—*RHJ at factory to George Pound, October 10, 1911*: "Memo, regarding sales. Five years ago I took [Egene] Licom from a music store. He makes good progress learning organ salesmanship but I cannot yet consider him strong enough to deal satisfactorily with the present situation, alone.

"If we are to hold our high prices, we must, I believe, seize the various fields at once and not allow our competitors rapidly to get ahead of us—otherwise we will lose nine-tenths of the trade.

". . . Three years ago the theatre and great auditorium fields were ours but now that we have done nothing and competitors have secured 50 or more orders and have delivered many instruments, we cannot regain it without a tremendous struggle

## Show & Membership Prices

	All Artists
Non-members	\$40
Non-member Pensioner/Seniors Card holder	\$35
TOSA Members	\$25

**All Students FREE on confirmation of Student status**

**All Children FREE accompanied by an Adult**

Group Booking for 10 or more Adults \$22 per person

First time Adult \$25 by completed Voucher at Box Office

### New Membership Fees for 2021-22

\$50.00 Full membership, \$40.00 Concession, Interstate or

Overseas \$50. \$5 discount if TOSA News emailed to you

Membership enquiries David & Margaret Badman

(02) 4776 2192 [membership@tosa.net.au](mailto:membership@tosa.net.au)

Associate Membership for a spouse/partner is an additional 50%

and a strong decisive stroke at once.

“That is why I propose the temporary 15% discount. Licome will tell you that by devoting a little time, against his whole time, I make six sales to his one. I feel the situation demands any genius I may possess in this direction [be used].

“I know I can, even yet, secure the leading position for the Wurlitzer instrument and men for their factory—but a big and immediate order list is essential and we shall have to strain every nerve to get it.

“I advocate rigid adherence to our high prices arranged, but for 2 ½ months your allowing me to give a 15% discount to purchasers nationwide instead of your giving commission to your local branches. In those 2 ½ months I will gain you more orders of strategic value than the whole of our force could gain under normal conditions. By January 1, 1912, the Wurlitzer Hope-Jones Unit Orchestra will be so well known and so easy to sell, that the branches should be content with a small commission on sales. Prior to that date they cannot help you in selling, for they will not have the sample instruments.” Wurlitzer did concede to this request, but alas, no significant increase in sales resulted.

During the spate of contract discussions, the Wurlitzers’ considered terminating Hope-Jones’ employment. An unidentified attorney rendered an opinion on the existing contract for Wurlitzer, under the date of October 5, 1911: “. . . In the event of Mr. Hope-Jones leaving your employ, can you enjoin him from engaging in a competing business either as principal or employee? . . . On the very first page of the contract, he binds himself for ten years ‘unless this agreement shall be sooner terminated, by his failure or neglect therein’. . . Failure or neglect on his part clearly is something of which [Wurlitzer] only can take advantage.

“. . . if his going out and becoming a competitor would be of great harm to this branch of your business. . . I should not hesitate advising you to make the attempt to stop him. Here, however, are questions of business expediency, which should take into consideration not only the injury to your business if you cannot stop him, but the probable cost of a fight as measured against the possibility of failure in the contest. Of course, there can

be no possible doubt of your absolute ownership of all inventions made by Hope-Jones while actually in your employ. . . .”

Shortly thereafter, a new contract was in fact entered into by the parties; portions of the “Memoranda of Supplemental Agreement” agreed to October 14, 1911 read: “Whereas, a contract is in force between the parties hereto, and whereas, said Hope-Jones requests a modification thereof, and an extension of the privileges and emoluments coming to him thereunder.

“. . . All excess wage accounts referred to in said contract [of April 23, 1910] shall be withdrawn and abolished, both as to the past and future. The drawing account of said Hope-Jones shall be increased from forty dollars to sixty dollars per week.

“The one-half percent coming to Mrs. Hope-Jones in case of his disability, as therein provided, shall be increased to one percent.

“Under the direction and supervision of the said company, Mr. Hope-Jones shall have the powers of general superintendance of this particular department for a period of three years.

“The percentage on sales provided for in said contract accruing to Mr. Hope-Jones shall be increased during the term of this contract, to-wit: ten years, to three and one half percent, provided, however, that no percentage or special emolument from sales shall accrue to Mr. Hope-Jones, except where the money received from the sale of instruments is in excess of the prime cost plus thirtyfive percent [to cover] factory and executive charges, and provided further, that Mr. Hope-Jones, at his own cost and expence, shall pay all his personal expenses which he incurs outside of the factory.

“And said Hope-Jones does hereby and shall transfer and assign to the said company the entire and sole right to the use in connection with musical instruments, of the name Robert Hope-Jones, or any part or combination therewith, and grants to said company the exclusive right to register or copyright or otherwise protect said name.

“And, further, it is conceded to Mr. Hope-Jones the privilege up to January 1, 1912, of granting a special discount of 15% on contracts made and accepted for the sale of these instruments.

“And it is further agreed that Mr. Hope-Jones may have the privilege of giving all proper publicity to these Hope-Jones instruments. . . .”

Contractual changes between Wurlitzer and Hope-Jones were concluded during the 18th month of their partnership. This brought to an end a transitional period for both parties. Each hoped these modifications, as well as verbal discussions, would improve the department’s output, profitability and their working relationship.

### **FLUCTUATIONS: October 1911 To August 1912**

Changed contractual arrangements during the Fall of 1911 brought about new hope for increased production and sales of Unit Orchestras. Already handling many responsibilities, Robert Hope-Jones attempted to undertake music roll projects. It was expected that several of the stock instruments he was to design would be equipped with automatic roll playing devices. Such a plan was thought to require rolls specially arranged so as to take advantage of the instrument’s full capabilities—*RHJ (Robert Hope-Jones) at factory to RWC (Rudolph Wurlitzer Company), December 15, 1911:* “As to arranging music for the Automatic Hope-Jones Unit Orchestra. Will you permit me to make the best arrangement I can. . . for three or four pieces of music for this instrument?

“Were my time not more valuable to you in other ways, I would myself undertake the work, because I believe I could do it better than any other man seeing that I am more thoroughly acquainted with the possibilities of the instrument. Next to me come the men I have spent so much time training in the use of it, namely, [organists] Houze, Reynolds and White.

“So far as I can see at the moment, it is probable that Mr. Krafft and Mr. Hopkins might be trained to make satisfactory arrangements of the music for this instrument . . . but they must be taught the unique peculiarities of the instrument and learn from personal practice upon it the value and peculiar effects of possible combinations.

“. . . This matter is deemed of so much importance by you that I am cancelling my arrangement to be in New York on Monday to

attend to certain sales prospects, in order that I may remain continuously in the factory."

Staff growth again meant the need for greater space in the Organ Department—*RHJ at factory to RWC, December 15, 1911*: "I am just taking up the organization of the factory department in a preliminary way and carrying it as far as I can before I have the new costing system installed. I can see at once that we ought to have two more voicing rooms started. At present we have the following full-fledged voicers: James Nuttall, David Arthur, Harry Carruthers and John Colton. In addition to these, young Frank is already capable of turning out some work under careful supervision and Pezare has actually voiced one of the stops for the Cort Theatre organ. I am arranging to train further help in this department at an early date and I am certain it will pay to have two new voicing rooms put into commission just as quickly as it can be done"

Like days of old, Hope-Jones sought nearly every possible chance to gain publicity for his inventions—*RHJ at factory to RWC, December 16, 1911*: ". . . We now have this new multiple hole tracker bar in position on the style 3 instrument in the factory, and it is being examined by all visitors. . . . While it is unknown and is therefore an item of news, I can get it boomed in the press.

"Have I your permission to write and prepare a number of illustrated articles upon the invention and sending them for publication simultaneously in the scientific papers, the Theatrical papers, musical papers and, where I can, the Sunday or daily general papers? I can probably get from 25 to 50 such articles and notices inserted free, and though I shall have to carefully disguise the advertising element, it will nevertheless be there and should prove worth a lot of money to the firm. . . .

"I am not forgetting my promise that the Wurlitzer name shall be as well known as the Steinway in the artistic field. This is one step towards accomplishing this result."

Music rolls still required Hope-Jones' attention, especially as the line of stock instruments increased—*RHJ at factory to RWC, December 17, 1911*: "Adhering to the instructions given to the effect that our set of music rolls shall be made to do for the entire

range of Unit Orchestras—I have devoted a great deal of thought, time and effort to arranging music to bring out the best effects for each style of instrument.

“I feel I have to give up and frankly tell you that I do not think it is possible. I recommend for your consideration the advisability of having two sets of music rolls, one for use with styles 1, 2 and 3, and the other for use with styles 4, 5, 6 and 7. In the case of some of the rolls, the arrangement of music itself would be different, but in most cases, it would be merely registration (manipulation of the stops) that would be different, so the extra cost of arranging the double set of rolls instead of a single set would in this latter case be nominal.”

Undoubtedly, tensions were increasing between company and inventor—*RHJ at factory to HW (Howard Wurlitzer/Mr. Howard), January 4, 1912*: “Though very sorry indeed it should have worried you, I am not sorry I wrote that letter of the 30th [contents unknown], for it has resulted in a more businesslike arrangement.

“Please try to see me through these kicks of mine only one thing—evidence of a determination to give employers a very large, honorable and profitable business.

“Under old conditions, all efforts were vain—but now success is possible. With your support, I feel certain of achieving it rapidly.”

An opportunity presented itself which seemed golden for sales of Unit Orchestras to legitimate theatres. These playhouses used live orchestras to accompany musicals and other live entertainment. However, theatrical managers had become upset in about 1912 with the Musical Protective Union, who sought a 25% increase in the pay for their members. An alternative was considered whereby music could be provided by installing an organ in each theatre. This would require only one musician to play it, instead of hiring an entire orchestra and thereby greatly reducing overhead.

Hope-Jones undoubtedly was the mastermind behind a plan to get a syndicate of theatre managers to work together in purchasing organs for a number of theatres they operated. Already, John Cort had purchased a style 6 instrument (Opus 7) for his Cort Theatre in Chicago, which was installed in the latter half of

1911. It is possible this was done prior to any musician problems. In any event, it obviously showed the potential for relying on just an organ for music. Besides Cort, others that became interested in the plan included Liebler & Company, Martin Beck and others.

Over a period of months, the proposal was developed. Thinking they could thwart the union by replacing orchestras with organs, The *Diapason* reported on the matter in its August 1912 issue. At that juncture, the group was looking at purchasing 24 Hope-Jones instruments. The next one was to be installed in the Cort Theatre, Manhattan (also a style 6, Opus 20), with seven others in local houses; the remainder were planned for out-of-town theatres.

Problems between the union and showmen were eventually resolved, with only the Cort Theatre project completed. Prior to the parties settling their differences, Hope-Jones remained a strong promoter of the plan. The recipient of the following letter was a salesman at the New York City store—*RHJ at factory to F.W. Grimes, January 6, 1912*: Many thanks for yours of the 5th. I have also seen yours of the 3rd addressed to Mr. Howard. I am not surprised at your expressing distrust in [showmen Martin] Beck, [Harry] Frazee and Bloom. They have certainly shifted their ground.

“My confidence however remains. I can see the thing from their point of view, and though I may not consider them justified in delaying their order for a new organ to be built specially for demonstration purposes, I consider their action a wise one and one that will prove to have been taken in our interest as well as their own.

“. . . [Unless the organ in the Cort Theatre, Chicago] should prove disappointing or be a failure, I believe these people will carry out their contract with us and do it in a liberal spirit. It is in their interest to carry it out. I think if you had seen as much of Beck and Frazee as I have, you would be inclined to share my opinion.

“It is against my principles to bet, but I do not mind staking a glass of your favorite buttermilk that my opinion will prove the correct one.

*To be continued - Editor*



# **STOP PRESS NEWS from TOSA (VIC) VOX Magazines, June – October 2021!**

*Article written by Kingsley Herbert with thanks to  
Vox Editor, Donald Binks.*

Ongoing developments over the last six months and recent joint discussions between RMIT University and Melbourne Theatre Organ (TOSA VIC) have culminated in the welcome news in that the Capitol Theatre's original 3/15 Wurlitzer theatre pipe organ (more widely known as the Dendy Organ and owned by TOSA (VIC), will be returning to its original home in the historic Capitol Theatre hopefully in time for the building and organ's Centenary Anniversary in 2024.

Many TOSA members, generally, have cinema organ recollections, especially with Melbourne's picture palaces and later with the international fame of the ***Dendy Organ***, Brighton, largely through its widely acclaimed 'up-front' acoustics and recordings by Australian organist Tony Fenelon. The following summary provides an update of recent developments for readers' interest. The compilation of events and archive organ photos are largely drawn from Melbourne Theatre Organ's Vox, Magazines, June – October, 2021 with the kind review and permission by Vox Editor, Donald Binks.

## **The Melbourne *Capitol Theatre's* Wurlitzer pipe organ returning home!**

An Important Message from TOSA (VIC) President, Scott Harrison, included in the June 2021 Vox Magazine advised members that TOSA (VIC) had received a letter from Palace Cinemas advising that in order to grow their business, their plans are to divide the Dendy Cinema 4 where the Society's organ has been installed for almost 60 years – into four small cinemas, including the organ chamber area which will become one of the planned new cinemas. The Society had six months till 30 September 2021 to remove the organ. A final 'Thanks for the Memories' Dendy concert planned for 25 July 2021 sadly, was cancelled due to the VIC Covid-19 lockdown, though a video recording is proceeding for the virtual '*Thanks for the Memories*' concert and posterity's sake!

As background history, TOSA (VIC) had purchased the ex-Capitol

Wurlitzer organ from the *Capitol* owners in November 1963. During the organ's early life in the *Capitol*, as part of a proscenium revamp in 1929, the organ's pipe-work, excepting the 32' pedal horizontal Diaphones, were removed from their original chambers above the proscenium to newly constructed chambers lower down. In keeping with the moderne vogue of the time, the console was given a 'wedding-cake' makeover in white with gold moldings and trimmings. It remained that way till removed from the theatre in 1963.



**Horace Weber at *Capitol* organ, 1924.**

**Horace Weber at *Capitol* organ, 1963**

TOSA (VIC) successfully negotiated with Bert Ward, proprietor of the Dendy Theatre, Brighton, as an ideal location for the ex-*Capitol* Wurlitzer. Organist Horace Weber, who had opened and shut the *Capitol Theatre* installation, was invited to perform the actual opening items on the very same instrument in its new *Dendy* venue on 27 April 1967. The Wurlitzer console once again appeared as in 1924 in its rich mahogany polished livery.

When the single screen Dendy cinema closed in 1983 for conversion as a twin cinema complex with a new shopping arcade on the ground level, formerly the stalls, the organ again needed to be removed into storage and a chance for a complete facelift and makeover including a re-French polish of the console. The new Dendy Centre opened with *Village* as operators in 1988 with the Dendy Wurlitzer organ in Cinema 1. *Village* added another cinema over the years. Then *Palace Cinemas* took over operations in the early 1990s and added yet another cinema – the Wurlitzer organ was now in Cinema 4.

Continual maintenance and improvements have been made to the Dendy Wurlitzer (now 3/16) over the years, including improved electronic relays, culminating in the recent successful installation of a new state-of-the-art *Uniflex* computer-controlled relay system. The 3/16 Wurlitzer, as modified over the years, is listed by the National Trust of Victoria as of significance at State level.

*"Over the past 54 years we are happy to say that a very healthy and happy relationship has existed between TOSA (VIC) and all the owners and operator of the cinemas at the Dendy Brighton. Palace Cinemas have shown themselves to be enthusiastic supporters of the organ and we thank them for that support over so many years."* – TOSA VOX Editor, July 2021.



### **Farewell to the Dendy**

Whilst there were a number of potential venues investigated by the TOSA (VIC) Committee team for relocation of the organ, everything pointed towards the possible return of the organ to its original home in the *Capitol Theatre*, Swanston Street, Melbourne. The *Capitol Theatre* itself had undergone significant renovations in 1964 for the removal of the stalls area as a shopping arcade thereby lessening the height of the auditorium by 6 metres. By fortuitous luck, the organ chambers from whence the organ

pipes were removed in 1963 are still available and subject to a fuller assessment, will probably need some upgrade work. There are photos available showing the original pipe layouts in the chambers; however, because of necessary acoustic constraints, the 32' Diaphones will need to stand vertically in a new location at stage level. RMIT had offered storage with significant space and a truck loading bay in Swanston Street, nearby. The plan would be for the console to be placed on display in the theatre to help and raise funds. It should be pointed out that the organ will continue to be owned by TOSA (VIC) as its custodian and monies raised by joint fundraising between RMIT and TOSA (VIC) would be available for the organ's installation and its promotion.



**The interior of the Capitol Theatre, late 1924, showing the Wurlitzer organ bottom left.**

During the reopening of the *Capitol* auditorium in 2019 following a major 5-year refurbishment program by RMIT University, RMIT staff enthusiastically mentioned the wishful possibility of 'getting the organ back'. RMIT has proven its commitment with the heritage building through its sympathetic refurbishment and TOSA (VIC) believes a huge advantage is that this will prove a long-term location for the Wurlitzer.

The October 2021 *Vox Magazine* headlined that **"RMIT, the custodians of The Capitol and MTO are pleased to announce an agreement has been reached, targeting 7th November 2024 as the date when the Capitol Wurlitzer organ will sound again - the centenary of the Theatre and the**

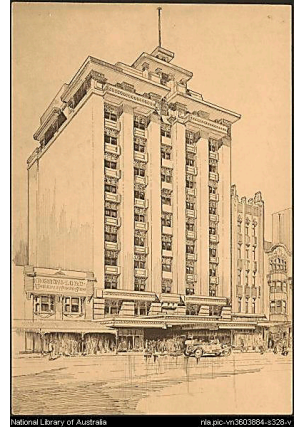


## ***Wurlitzer!***

I am sure all TOSA members would join in congratulating TOSA (VIC) in their success and endeavors, not only with achieving this unique outcome in returning a theatre pipe organ to its original home, but also for their dutiful care and improvement upgrades to the organ and in its promotion and goodly use over many years in the public limelight. As can be said, A New Beginning, begins!



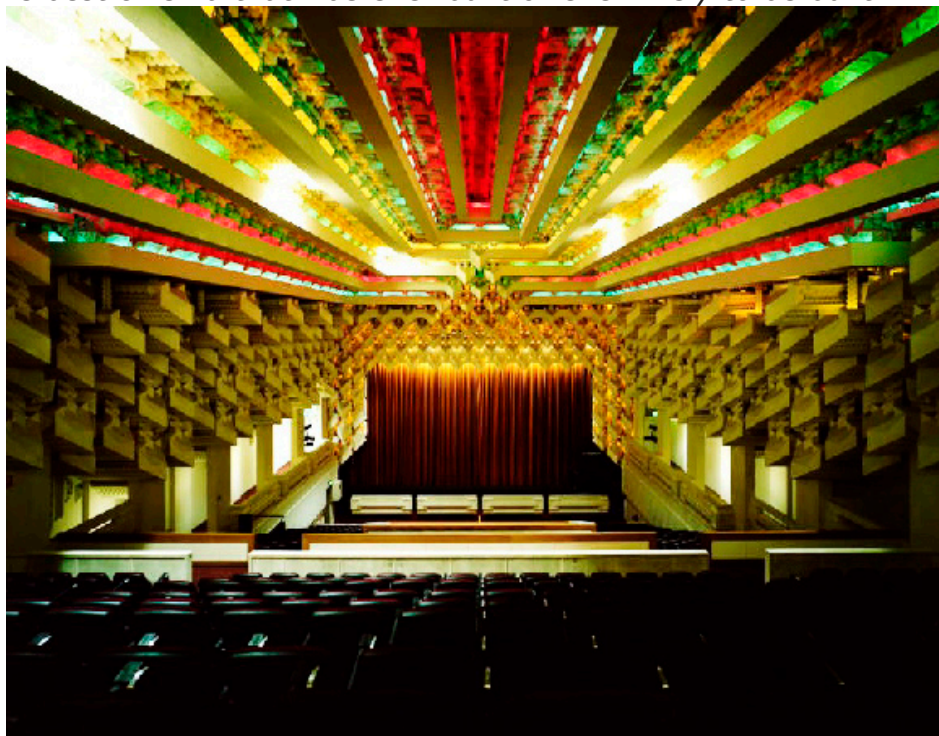
**The Capitol theatre tiered seating as it is today - descending forward from the original dress circle.**



**Architectural drawing of the *Capitol* building, Swanston Street, Melbourne**

Citing *Wikipedia*, American architect Walter Burley Griffin's design submission (with impressive plan renderings by his wife Marion Mahoney Griffin) for the then unnamed federal capital city was selected on May 23, 1912 as the winning entry. Following continued disputations between Griffin and Government bureaucrats (and a Royal Commission in 1917, that determined that they had undermined Griffin's authority by supplying him with false data which he had used to carry out his work) Griffin ultimately resigned from the project in 1921 and withdrew from further activity in Canberra. The Griffins' first major commission after leaving Canberra was the *Capitol* Theatre in Melbourne. According to a film documentary "*City of Dreams*" (Mason 2000) "*It was probably the Griffins themselves who persuaded their Melbourne clients to call the proposed theatre and office development the 'Capitol'*". They had used that name for the monumental centrepiece of Canberra (which was never built) – a zigurat construction that was intended to crown Capitol Hill.

In 1964 architectural writer Robin Boyd described the Capitol as "*the best cinema that was ever built or ever likely to be built*".



***The Capitol Theatre displaying some of its original 4,000 concealed incandescent coloured globes!***

---

**Vale Jack Moelmann**  
**Organist, Board Member of American Theatre Organ Society**  
**(ATOS) and**  
**great supporter of ATOS and organists generally**  
*Courtesy of USA organist Walt Strony*

Today, I received a letter from Jack's return address. Inside, was a notice of Jack's passing, of which I knew, but also the details of his death -- his unsent Christmas letter -- and his obituary. His brother had thoughtfully sent this out.

Jack had been very ill from Parkinson's disease. His neighbor found him on the floor on December 23, and he was taken to the

hospital. He quickly lost consciousness, and his body shut down. He passed on December 30, which was also my Birthday.

I met Jack in the late 70s. I became an ATOS Board member around 1985. I was in the meeting when he took over the gavel from Rex Koury. It was a time of turmoil and I remember lots of negativity. In fact, Rex Koury asked to be excused from the then-board position of being Past President - a position that was regarded as important in keeping continuity. I think he'd had enough, but was too polite to say so. Whenever you hear the "Gunsmoke" TV theme -- remember that Rex composed it. Regardless, Jack held things together throughout his terms.

Anyway, there were three situations that he helped me in regard to ATOS politics which I will share with you. At the time, ATOS artists were being underpaid to perform at conventions. I signed a letter (with many others) "respectfully asking" that the amount be increased. Some of the board members didn't take to it well. In fact, they were so angry that they bypassed me for several years in the "Organist of the Year" award. Once the board changed make-up, he fought for me to get it. In fact, it had been such an oversight that they awarded it to me twice - in both 1991 and 1993. I will always be grateful for that support.

Another issue involved one of my friends, Simon Gledhill. I was in the UK performing, and met Simon (he was in the UK equivalent of high school!) and heard him play. When I came home from that trip, I began promoting him in this country. I knew he would become a major theatre organ star. The only problem was that he'd been discovered by the Cinema Organ Society, who were in "competition" with our London ATOS chapter. Several members of the London group sent a letter to Jack demanding that I be CENSURED "for promoting a non-ATOS organist." They were demanding board action. Jack showed me the letters, and assured me that this would never be on the agenda. But, he just wanted me to know that it happened. Of course, history has shown what fools they were. But, I still was very offended at the time.

Over the years, Jack brought me to perform in his home (his basement organ room is/was legendary!) and even at his church! And then there were those parties at his home, afterwards. Oh my!



In 2008, he asked me to share a program with him and several others at Radio City Music Hall. I think part of the reason was that I had just performed there the previous year and could help guide everyone on the ins and outs of that instrument. And there were many! We all had lots of fun in NYC. One funny detail I remember was that in renting the hall, which cost him upwards of \$100k, he had to pay for many union members, including a carpenter. He asked why he needed to pay a carpenter, since we were just going to play the organ. They responded that the carpenter needs to be there for "load-in." LOL So, on the day of our rehearsal, Jack entered the stage door and called for the carpenter. When he arrived, he asked him to carry his briefcase to his dressing room. That was Jack! Then in 2015, we did the same type of show at the St. Louis Fox theatre. What fun it was.

I think in some ways, Jack was misunderstood. During the Covid era, he sent out a few "gifts" to artists he was concerned about. He had a long history of that going back to Dan Bellamy, at least - when Dan was struggling with cancer. The point is that people like Jack are all too rare in our world. And even fewer have been involved in the theatre organ world. RIP, Jack. We will always miss you!



In the photo, L to R, you will find Nelson Page, Jack Moelmann, me, Father Gus Franklin, Lew Williams, and Russell Holmes. This photo was taken at Radio City right after our concert.

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