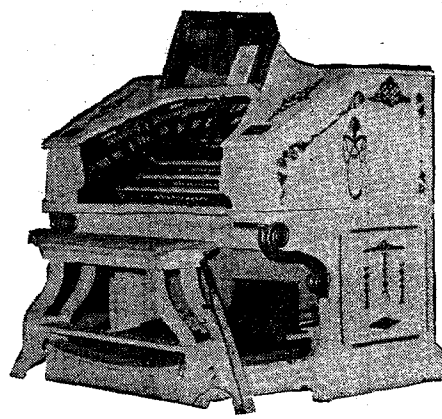


Marrickville Town Hall



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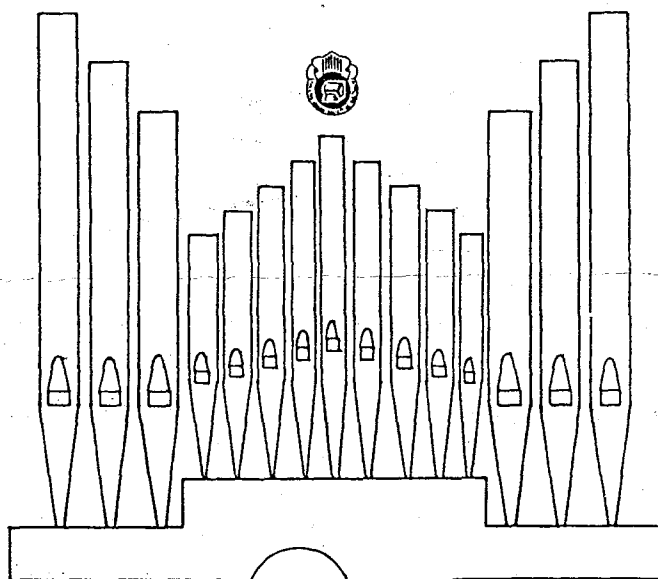
Orion Centre Campsie

SEPTEMBER 1988

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The Final Countdown Begins!



Pipedreams

ORION GRAND OPENING

October 1-2 1988

VOLUME 27

ISSUE 9

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ON THE SICK LIST

Frank Ellis, our jovial compere and life member was unable, for only the second time in his lengthy involvement with TOSA, to compere 'TWO PLUS ONE' at the Orion Centre due to illness. We hope that Frank will soon be up and around again shortly. Many members signed a get well card for Frank on the day of the concert to let him know that we were thinking of him. Get well soon Frank, the opening is not far away!

These are not hard and fast rules but more in particular a chance to get out the furs, dust off your suits and have a swinging good time!

Saturday night opening - semi formal, gentlemen please, a tie.
Sunday afternoon and Dinner Dance - informal.

These guidelines should make for a great night out and will mean the committee won't look out of place with suits, ties, gowns and jewellery.

WHAT SHOULD WE WEAR?

People have asked what sort of evening the opening night of the Orion Centre is to be. The committee has discussed at length the format for the whole weekend and set out below are our thoughts for your guidance.



THE GRAND OPENING

DATES AHEAD

SEPTEMBER

Monday 5 7.30pm. COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday 14 8.00pm. CLUB NIGHT - QUARTERLY MEETING
Marrickville Town Hall

Wednesday 28 5.00pm. NOMINATIONS CLOSE

OCTOBER

Saturday 1 8.00pm. TONY FENELON AND JOHN ATWELL IN CONCERT
ORION OPENING CONCERT - ORION CENTRE CAMPSIE

Sunday 2 1.30pm. NEIL JENSEN AND MARGARET HALL IN CONCERT
ORION CENTRE CAMPSIE

Sunday 2 7.30pm. DINNER DANCE WITH 5 PIECE BAND AND SPECIAL
GUEST ARTIST PAUL MAYBURY ORION CENTRE CAMPSIE
Booking form for above functions in this issue

Monday 10 7.30pm. COMMITTEE MEETING

Sunday 23 2.00pm. HOME ORGAN PARTY
Selwyn Theatre, 13 Rosemont Ave. Mortdale. Bookings 573 581

Sunday 30 2.00pm. FREE CONCERT - BICENTENNIAL SONG CONTEST
MARRICKVILLE TOWN HALL

NOVEMBER

Monday 7 7.30pm. COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday 9 8.00pm. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
ORION CENTRE, BEAMISH ST. CAMPSIE

DECEMBER

Sunday 5 2.00pm. DENNIS JAMES AND TOM GALL IN CONCERT
ORION CENTRE CAMPSIE - booking details later

Monday 6 7.30pm. COMMITTEE MEETING

PIPEDREAMS TICKETS SELLING FAST

This is your last chance to book for the grand opening of the organ in the Orion Centre. Tickets have sold well and we do not anticipate that many, if any, tickets will be left for sale at the door on opening night.

Speeches will be kept to a minimum and the official opening will be performed by the Mayor of Canterbury Municipal Council Ald. John Gorrie.

Ian Davies has agreed to bring the console up with two of his numbers, Tony Fenelon and John Atwell will then take over for the rest of the concert.

The Sunday concert with Margaret Hall and Neil Jensen is selling slowly, but more bookings are now arriving. Good seats are still available for this function. And for a great way to end the opening celebrations come and hear Paul Maybury and the Clubmen Band at the dinner dance on the Sunday evening.

At the time of writing this, some 16 people from New Zealand have purchased package tickets! Interstate bookings continue to arrive almost daily. Members have worked for nigh on 16 years for this moment. Don't delay, see the booking form in this issue or ring the Treasurer to book your seats for the opening.

CAN YOU HELP THE COMMITTEE?

The opening of the Orion Centre Wurlitzer is now only 4 weeks away. The committee cannot hope to do all the duties required for such a major concert series and so we are asking for a small amount of the members time.

Required are programme sellers (2), ushers (quite a few), people to help in the cafe bar (3 or 4). Other people, however, can be found jobs with no problem whatsoever. All members can help to make the opening an exciting and unforgettable event.

If any members or friends can assist please contact the **PIPEDREAMS** producer and convenor John Rattray on 750 3779 (a.h.). He will only be too pleased to hear from you. An event such as **PIPEDREAMS**

can be a burden on a few or can be great fun for a larger team. People who have come forward to assist at other concerts have enjoyed the work, made new friends and got to see exactly what has to happen for a concert to 'work'.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

DONT FORGET

NOMINATIONS

Nominations close for the election of office bearers for 1989 on 30 September 1988 at 5.00pm.

MEMBERS' MEETING AND CLUB NIGHT

Wednesday 14th September 1988 at 8pm
Marrickville Town Hall

This meeting will be followed by the screening of the Audio-Visual presentation that has been sent by the committee to all interstate divisions as a promotion for the grand opening of the **Orion Centre Wurlitzer**. The presentation has now been transferred to video and we will be viewing the video this evening. A chance to hear the Marrickville Organ with a guest organist will also be available. Come along and support the meeting and club night.

PLANNING FOR 1989

The committee met recently and planned the programme for 1989. With demand for the Orion Centre very heavy, concert dates have had to be set for the next year. This will ensure that the incoming committee will be able to have regular concerts on both the instruments without being disappointed with venue bookings. In a later issue we will publish a programme for 1989 so you can mark your diary early.

NEW MEMBERS - August Meeting

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members, we hope that your association with us is long and enjoyable. H. Garvin, A.J. Slaney, H.W Tutch, E.K Clacher, N.H. Cooper.

A NEW FACE ON COMMITTEE

Following the departure of Ron Wilson from committee and the elevation of Jack Lawson to President, two vacancies existed on committee. Following a recent meeting of the committee, Nick Lang was elected to the position and will remain there for the rest of this committee's term.

Welcome Nick, we know you have many great ideas and a lot of energy and it is good to have you aboard.

One further committee vacancy still exists and this position will be considered at the next monthly meeting.

THE ORGAN SOCIETY OF SYDNEY

A warm invitation is extended to members of TOSA to join with the Organ Society for two recitals featuring noted English Recital Organist Mr. David Sanger.

David will be playing two Sydney recitals, the first, a lunch time recital, to be held at Saint Andrews Cathedral, George Street, Sydney on Thursday 15 September 1988 at 1.00pm. and the second, to be held on the same day, at Saint Phillips Anglican Church, York Street, Sydney at 8.00pm.

His performance will consist of music by Bach, Hartman, Gabrieli, Bohm, Reger and other famous composers.

Tickets are only \$8.00 each or \$5.00 for concessions and can be purchased at the door prior to each performance.

REVIEW - STEAM TRAIN TRIP

Who could have wished for better weather than that of Saturday 20 August. The second TOSA Steam Train Trip on board the official Bicentennial Steam Train '3801' was blessed once again with perfect weather. Blue skies and a dazzling sunrise over Central Station greeted some 300 people ready for this year's expedition. TOSA President and '3801' driver, Jack Lawson had arranged this year to take us South to Moss Vale, then to Unanderra,

Wollongong and back to Sydney via Hurstville. North in 1987, South in 1988, where to in 1989? Don't anyone suggest East, travelling to Bondi is not my idea of a fun day on the rails!

Travelling to Moss Vale after departing Central Station on time at 8.20, we passed through some lovely country and had some fun steadying ourselves on the now rocking train. Arriving in Moss Vale at 10.50 we confounded the SRA timetable folks who claimed that, when Jack Lawson put in his original request for our timetable, "you couldn't get to Moss Vale in that time." Well we did and without breaking the speed limit imposed by higher powers.

On arriving at Moss Vale passengers wondered why the Treasurer was last seen rushing to a book shop. The reason for this was the highly popular raffle featuring as the prize a large framed photographic print of '3801' steaming along the very route we were travelling. 500 tickets were sold on the train and after new raffle books were purchased another 200 were quickly snapped up. The winners, Jan and Athol Stuart were delighted and happily clutched the print for the rest of the day.

Lunch was a tasty mixture of steak and sausage sandwiches served by the members of the Moss Vale Rugby League Club. Service was a little slow but with 300 hungry 'steamers' it all went remarkably well.

Travelling through some lovely country on the return trip driver Jack stopped the train for a few minutes to allow us to admire the view over the Wollongong area and South Coast. Many cameras were seen poking out the windows! People remarked that a lot of unfamiliar faces were aboard, more so than the previous trip. Some of the regulars were unable to attend but the new people filled in all the spare spaces leaving, as we pulled out of Central, only about 25 spare seats.

Once again this year's trip was only made possible by the efforts of President Jack Lawson and wife Pearl. The McMinn and Tooker youngsters proved that once again they can be relied upon to help us out. In all a great day was had by all concerned.



THE ELECTRONIC HOME ORGAN PAGE

by Alan Deveaux

This is the last article on frequency divider organs, and we will look at one of the most difficult areas of an Organ to arrange electronically, the Pedal Section (Note that I did not say the pedal manual since manual implies 'hands').

Why do the pedals seem more difficult than the rest of the organ? Well, it is partly by reason of economy and partly due to convenience. Most organists who buy electronic organs are more enthusiast than expert, many learn the piano first and the feet just do not behave themselves as well as the hands. Therefore to avoid a jerky bass line, the electronic organ almost always includes some form of sustain. There is no problem here, except that pedal notes take the most power from the amplifier. By restricting the pedals to a single note at a time, the manufacturers can economise a little on the amplifiers and loudspeakers (since you don't have the intermodulation distortion caused by two low notes sounding at high power together). Also for those who do not hit the pedals quite as accurately as they would like, a single wrong note is not quite as obvious as TWO notes pressed together with both sounding at once.

The sustain will of course allow a note to fade slowly when the foot is removed from that pedal; however if a second note is pressed while the first note is still sounding, the electronics must immediately silence the first note, and then sound the second one at full volume. There are many approaches to this, and rather than re-print many diagrams, if you want a good description of the circuits used, refer to the book 'Electronic Musical Instruments' by Richard H. Dorf.

The actual frequencies for the pedal tones are usually obtained from TWO stages of frequency division - one for the 8 foot

pedal tones, and the other for the 16 foot pedals (32 foot pedals are very rare on electronic organs). These tones are taken not from the lowest octave on the manuals, but from the next higher octave. This gives the voicing circuits the opportunity to borrow harmonics from the higher divisions of the frequency generator as explained in a previous article.

With only one note at a time available from the pedals, some interesting ways can be used to obtain different tones. A diode and capacitor combination can be used to distort the waveform. A single tone going through such a combination changes its tone, TWO notes distorted in this way form intolerable intermodulation distortion.

To wrap up this, our brief excursion into frequency divider organs, we will look at some of the unusual effects which were produced over the past thirty years. Foremost among the innovators (although I personally did not think all their efforts were 100 per cent musical) was the Thomas electronic organs. Their Vibra-Magic circuit in particular produced some quite good effects if not 'done to death'. The trick was that the vibrato circuit (which had to be running to get the effect) was momentarily shut off EVERY time a key on the Solo manual was played. After a delay of around a second, the vibrato was allowed to gradually return. The effect was that of a violin player who gradually produces a vibrato on playing a long note.

Another effect much used by many manufacturers was a 'percussion modulator'. This circuit allowed some, or all tones from a manual to go through an extra stage of amplification which again could be controlled by pressing the keys. Usually the stage was allowed to cut the signal off after a second or so, giving a brief 'plink' sound. Some WurliTzer organs featured a manual of tuned bongo drums using this feature (which I found somewhat less than desirable) while Thomas and Conn used the feature to give a percussive edge to some sounds. It was quite effective when used to simulate a piano sound which has a rather sharp attack. Once again this effect was good if not overdone.

Preset stop combinations were rather unusual, although Gulbransen featured a reversible Sforzando button which brought on full Organ when pressed - this was quite useful. Thomas had an interesting system of push-buttons, located on the stop rail which could be changed to produce various combinations. The push-buttons had rather a long throw as they mechanically moved the stop tabs and I found them too cumbersome to use often. Baldwin combined sets of sounds into groups - strings, reeds and flutes and combined these using four or five interlocked pushbutton switches located between the two manuals, to produce useful combinations with very little circuitry.

That just about concludes our superficial discussion of the frequency divider style of Electronic organ. The next article in the series will look at some of the styles of individual oscillator organs before concluding with a brief look at the computerised tone generators used in the current generation of 'Hi-Tech' organs.

1989 CONVENTION UPDATE (From TOSA W.A.)

The Western Australian Division has been a hive of activity in recent months, not only with the planning of the 1989 Convention, but also completing the installation of their 3/10 Compton. The work on the Compton is progressing well and the resprayed console looks just right on its newly constructed, specially designed stage.

To start you planning for your visit to W.A. we have negotiated with a 5 star hotel to give a substantial discount on the cost of their rooms for Conventioneers. The hotel is situated on the south side of the Swan River and most rooms have panoramic views of Perth City and Kings Park. All rooms are delightfully appointed and have a queen size bed and a single bed. Some family rooms are available with a queen size and two single beds. Other facilities include a fridge, toaster and kettle; all have ensuite with shower, bath and toilet.

The location of your hotel is straight down the road from the Perth Airport (and the Casino!) and is situated on the main bus routes from Perth and Freemantle. There are local shops for everyday needs and a wide range of eating houses from Gold Plate Award Winners, a carvery in the hotel and many types of take away.

All of the cost savings we have negotiated are passed on to you. Normal charges in 1989 will be \$72 for a double, \$82 for a triple and \$85 for a family room. The cost negotiated for you is \$57 for a twin, \$62 for a triple and \$65 for a family room. Persons wishing to come early or stay after the convention will be eligible for the above discounts providing the stay is an extension (at either end) of the convention. Obviously the rooms are limited (especially the family rooms) and early booking is recommended. Hotel brochures have been sent to all divisions. Reservations can be made on the form provided in this issue of TOSA NEWS by sending it to the Convention Secretary, P.O. Box 343, MORLEY, 6062.

Our choice of Hotel was made with quality and convenience in mind. As the Perth public transport system is almost non-existent during the Easter period we have simplified the transport problem for you. For your convenience we are arranging 5 star transport to all activities from the Convention hotel only. It is expected that the cost of all transport will be under \$30 for the 4 days. As you can see, there will be no hassle of finding your way around a strange city and no expensive car hire or taxis.

We are sure that you will find the arrangements are convenient and economic, it is anticipated that the cost of convention activities should be around the \$100 mark - more details of this in a future update which will make a great foundation for a memorable visit to the Perth 1989 Convention.

REVIEW

TWO PLUS ONE

Orion Centre

by R J (Ron) Roberts

The July 31 concert in the Orion Centre with Vice-President Cliff Bingham playing a Rodgers Trio Organ partnered with John Crawford at the piano and singer Bronwyn Hall was a grand show in all respects save in one respect. The basis for any concert consists of a good audience that fills an auditorium. It was a great pity that so few ventured out to hear such an excellent musical afternoon. Maybe the fact that it was not a WurliTzer Pipe Organ that was being played, but one of its electronic counterparts.

The instrument in question was a Rodgers, at least fifteen years old about the equivalent of a 3/7 unit organ. It proved more than an adequate substitute, a forerunner of some modern ones which are coming fairly close to the real thing. Cliff Bingham taxed its capabilities and the results were very happy, it did not match the real thing of course, yet it pointed to possibilities. Played within the tonal limitations of the instrument it was interesting to hear another alternative organ voice.

Cliff Bingham, the organist is happily free from those irritating theatrical trappings one occasionally sees at the organ console. He sits with a straight back, not moving an inch as careful and concentrated as a Michael Dudman at the Concert Hall organ. He is also conservative in his registrations and it may or may not have pleased some people to be free of the wail of the tibias, even for one afternoon. Overuse of them is a feature encountered too frequently. There are other stops on the organ. After all a good concert organist playing classical or romantic organ music doesn't use a full diapason chorus throughout his performance.

The concert began with a rousing performance of 'Oxford Street' from the 'London Again Suite' by Eric Coates, which Cliff Bingham played with a snap and a sprightly pace, full of the atmosphere of the piece, the organ used to good effect.

From there he moved to a lively jazzy 'Sunny' that had a good glow in springy rhythm. Both of these were played in a good style, appropriate to the pieces and registered according to their need without using any tonal pattern unfitted for the music in question.

Then John Crawford and Cliff Bingham joined forces in organ/piano duets of singular delight in the way in which they anticipated and understood each other fusing together making it sound not like two separate instruments but something of a separate entity. Perhaps it is not a thing at which to wonder for they have been working together for at least thirteen years.

After other organ/piano items the two musicians played an arrangement of a hymn tune 'How Great Thou Art' not so much in a burst of ecclesiastical flavour, but to extract the note of fervour in its theme, though without being at all churchy. It was a good prelude to the singing of Bronwyn Hall, who bought a light untrained voice to her songs, singing expressively and quite appealingly. She began with a song called 'The Rose' which she followed with a song that Debbie Boone made so popular some years ago. 'You Light Up My Life' which is actually a religious song. Her bracket after intermission began without an accompnist. Dispensing with John Crawford who accompanied her so beautifully to this point she sang with guitar an attractive piece called 'The Wind Beneath My Wings' after which John Crawford resumed his pianoforte accompaniment for her. She finished with yet another hymn 'My Jesus I Love Thee'. There is no doubting the sincerity of her feelings in her songs and the purity of her sweet voice. She did not give the impression of attempting to sell herself, but sang simply, directly with a charming manner.

Cliff Bingham and John Crawford came back on the scene after interval with some ritzy playing in 'The Apartment', 'He Aint Heavy' and 'Joyful' all the music expressed in the name of the last number. The interplay between Crawford and Bingham once again displayed the remarkable rapport existing between these two musicians, the ebb and flow of ideas, the degree of support they give one another (something not always apparent in similar

combinations of two instruments played together in duet). After this there was an excursion into more serious matter with a performance of the Schumann 'Devotion'. This was possibly an invasion of tricky territory. Schumann must sound like Schumann or at least show some signs of the original spirit and intention that inspired it. This both Cliff and John did successfully so much that even Schumann would not have objected to a cinema organ (even an electronic one) being used for this delicate piece.

Cliff Bingham then did a couple of solos, the Strauss 'Radetzky March', and the Gordon Young 'Prelude'. Both were outstanding examples of what can be done when music is approached intelligently, for the Strauss work with its constant repetition of the one theme, without any sort of development can be extremely boring, but Cliff Bingham brought to it light and shade though retaining its strict tempo. Without some attempt to make it interesting as Cliff Bingham did it remains a dull March.

Gordon Young's 'Prelude' was also played by Cliff (which had been especially requested) in a manner which suggested great sensitivity on his part, registered quietly on flue stops, a thing of infinite delight. It was not exactly what one would expect to be played on a theatre type organ, but it marked a change in mood of the program, a respite from the lighter side of music for a moment and it was quite justified in being there for it demonstrated not only the versatility of the organ, but it was a good measure of Cliff Bingham's musicianship and versatility.

After the reflective moments of Cliff Bingham, John Crawford rang the change with a stunning piano solo of a piece called 'Lulu', nothing to do with the licentious opera 'Lulu' by Alban Berg, but a rousing jazz piece in an idiom that defied classification. It is enough to say that this joyous fingerfull of notes was an arrangement by Oscar Peterson. Organ and piano duets were resumed with 'St. Elmos Fire' followed by an arrangement of 'My Favourite Things' out of the musical 'Sound of Music'. Cliff and John turned this into a marvellously exciting cascade of music, a double barrelled affair in which organ and piano seemed to vie with

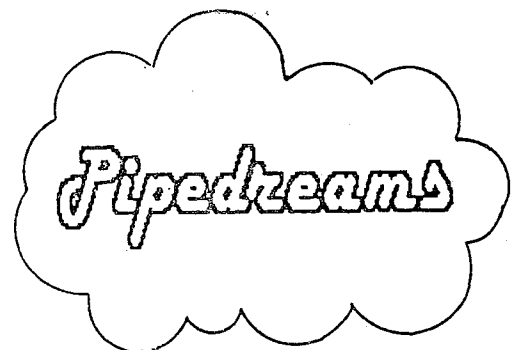
one another to attain ascendancy. John sparkled some brilliant pianism with flashy Lizzian configurations that were dazzling and spectacular.

A final warning, if any other piano/organ teams search the heavens for 'Ghost Riders in the Sky' a requisition will be made for some ground-to-air missiles for appropriate action.

The Rogers Organ was an effective substitute for the real thing although it has certain positive limitations. The reed stops appear to lack the true definition of reeds having a sound somewhat related to the flutes. None the less, in the hands of one such as Cliff Bingham it is capable of providing much pleasure.

FRANK ELLIS ON RADIO AGAIN

TOSA life member and resident compere Frank Ellis has been approached by radio station 2CBA FM to come out of retirement to host and compere a one hour documentary on the mighty theatre organ in Australia. The project, which will be heard on 2CBA, will also be heard throughout Australia as 2CBA were originally approached by the Sound Archives in Canberra. Frank is now very busy getting the script together along with some recordings from the days when the sound of the Theatre Organ in Australia really was mighty.



THE GRAND OPENING

OF THE

EX-CAPITOL THEATRE

WURLITZER THEATRE PIPE ORGAN

ORGAN MUSIC AND PIZZA FOR JAPAN?

Reprinted from ATOS International News,
June 1988

Making an initial visit to famous Pizza Joynt in San Lorenzo, California, a group of Japanese businessmen became so enthusiastic about duplicating the operation in Japan, they immediately offered to buy a 4/20 Wurlitzer. To emphasize their intense desire to acquire an instrument, they placed a two day purchase deadline on the organ which is the property of Carsten and Joyce Henningsen, owners of the Pizza Joynt.

The organ was acquired 26 years ago and is still crated in a local warehouse. It had been purchased for installation in a second pizza parlour, planned but never built.

Sale of the Wurlitzer was being considered by the Henningsens prior to the offer made by the visitors because a redevelopment plan threatens to take the warehouse property and would force relocation of the instrument. They were thinking about possible return of the organ to its original home, Loew's State Theatre in Syracuse, New York, which is now believed to be a performing arts centre.

The sudden offer to sell prompted Joyce Henningsen to try and find someone in Syracuse who could supply information about the theatre. She called the NEWS and the only information at this source brought out the fact that Rex Koury had been resident organist there and might be able to supply names to contact.

He was reached at his home in Foresthill, California, and gave the name of one man he had known there. However, he could not be contacted.

With that dead-end situation, and little prospect of locating anyone else in Syracuse on such short notice, it was expected the Wurlitzer would soon be on the high seas bound for a new life in Japan.

AN INTERESTING LETTER

Reprinted from ATOS International News
June 1988

Organist's Husband Assesses U.S. Publicity And Audience Action

Candi Carley Roth has returned from Sydney, Australia where she performed two almost entirely different (her hoedown medley was included in both shows) concerts at the Hayden Orpheum Picture Palace in suburban Cremorne. It was her first appearance in Sydney since 1985.

I would like to make several observations about these concerts showing how they differ from programs in the United States. They illustrate that 'going bigtime' will not happen unless ATOS makes it happen.

Candi was seen on TV and heard in four interviews on radio - one was aired three times. This was no happy accident. It happened because Hayden Theatres has a full time publicity and promotions manager in the person of Linda Murdough.

If ATOS or its chapters want publicity they will have to pay for it with advertising or a full time publicity/promotions manager - or find qualified members who can do it. A word of warning, this is not a job for the easily disappointed.

Also, audiences were different in Australia. When I see an audience for Los Angeles Theatre Organ Society I guess the average age to be about 70. At Candi's Sydney concerts a much wider range was represented. It leaned toward seniors, but all ages were there - even pre-teens.

Perhaps U.S. audiences are not wide age range at concerts because of seniors' outspoken intolerance to 'new music' I have heard them walking out on programs because too much 'new music' was being played.

Mark Eric Roth

THE CATALINA CASINO (California)

Reprinted from a programme kindly loaned by Ritchie Willis.

Perhaps nothing better symbolises the 'Island of Romance' to residents and visitors alike than our landmark Catalina Casino. The Italian word "casino" means nothing more than a "place for entertainment and social gathering," which is exactly what William Wrigley Jr. intended the building to be. There never was any gambling in the building.

The point of land on which the building was constructed, formerly referred to as Sugar Loaf Point, dictated the Casino's round shape with a diameter of 178 feet. Los Angeles County ordinances restricted its height to 140 feet, then the limit for 'skyscrapers.' William Wrigley's general manager, D.M. Renton, coordinated about 60 sub-contractors and a crew of as many as 500 men, working in three 8-hour shifts around the clock, seven days a week. They finished the building in 14 months at a cost of about US\$2 million in pre-inflation dollars!

The Casino's grand opening was on Memorial Day, May 29, 1929. Although admission was charged in the Theatre, initially there was no charge for dancing in the ballroom.

The outside theatre lobby is dominated by nine 10' by 25' art deco murals which depict the submarine garden of Catalina. They and the rest of the building's artwork were conceived by John Gabriel Beckman, an up-and-coming artist who the previous year had completed the interior design for Graumann's (now Mann's) Chinese Theatre in Hollywood. Beckman was hired based on sketches submitted just two days after a dinner with the Wrigleys in Pasadena. Beckman assembled a team of five prime artists who did the actual painting based on his sketches and colour schemes.

John Beckman's theme reflected the underwater life surrounding the Casino and local historic motifs. The exterior murals were originally to be done in the popular Catalina tile from the Catalina Clay Products Company, but this would have required two years to complete and the

Casino's tight construction schedule required the murals to be painted directly on the concrete surface. Nearly 60 years later Beckman himself is supervising the completion of this project as originally envisioned in tile, and the first completed, the central mermaid panel, was unveiled July 19, 1986.

Inside the theatre foyer, one is immediately struck by the 4,599 square feet of solid black walnut on the walls which was milled right here at the old Catalina Furniture Factory. The original foyer furniture was also made there but was replaced in 1941 by the present art deco furniture.

The 138-foot diameter theatre auditorium originally seated 1,250 but now minus the first two rows of seats has reduced seating to 1184. The proscenium arch surrounding the screen is 44 feet wide, 24 feet high and is trimmed in gold leaf. Above it is a rendition of Botticelli's Venus rising from the waves on a scallop shell. The stage is suitable for live productions and during World War II, military personnel training on the island were entertained by performers including Bob Hope, Danny Kaye and Kate Smith.

The first "talkie" was released just two years before the Casino opened and the technology was new. Although William Wrigley Jr. wrote that "I am not enthusiastic about having talkies in the new theatre...." he did insist that it be designed with the best possible acoustics and equipment. Two years later, when the Radio City Music Hall was built in New York, engineers visited Catalina and designed their new building acoustically on the lines of the theatre.

Silent films were still the dominant medium and no movie theatre in that era was complete without a theatrical organ. In addition to accompanying silent films with its numerous special effect sounds, the organ was used as a prelude to 'talkies,' and for evening concerts outside the building broadcast over a loudspeaker system. (See a separate article on the organ in this issue)

The interior murals, also conceived by John Beckman, were painted on battleship mesh, a burlap-like cloth chosen as part of the acoustical design due to its use in

the Mormon Tabernacle. This material proved difficult to paint on because of its porous nature and a very finely-ground pigment was needed. The ten cone-shaped interior mural panels, which have never been retouched, symbolically depict stage in the history of Catalina and Southern California although they are not meant to depict actual events. A close look at the auditorium's ceiling reveals 60,000 4" squares of sterling silver foil used to cover the 43 foot high dome.

Although the height of a 12-storey building, the Casino consists essentially of only two floors with an intervening mezzanine level. On the mezzanine level were the coat checkrooms, restrooms and lounge area where dancers could rest and socialise without tying up the ballroom floor.

The ballroom, located 56 feet above the ground floor, was built for dance crowds of 5,000 or more, and required an easy means of moving large numbers of dancers to and from it. Six ramps similar to those used in Wrigley Field, Chicago were built. The ramps are housed in accessory structures at each side of the building.

The 158-foot diameter ballroom is the largest circular one in the world with a total floor area of 20,000 square feet. The dance floor is inlaid with seven different types of hardwood including maple, white oak and rosewood over an underfloor of polished pine. Layers of felt and acoustical paper were used and the entire floor was floated on two inches of cork which served both to cushion it and to acoustically isolate it from the theatre below.

In the 1930's, Phillip Wrigley arranged to have CBS broadcast the orchestras playing in the ballroom and the "Big Band" era arrived. Dancers floated across the floor to music from the likes of Bob Crosby, Stan Kenton, Buddy Rogers, Jimmy Dorsey, Woody Herman and others. Kay Kysler opened the ballroom on May 18, 1940, to a record crowd of 6,200 enthusiastic dancers. The dance floor was reduced to about two-thirds its original size during a renovation of the ballroom in 1948. At this time a kitchen capable of serving 1,800 was added, as was a 13-foot wide elevated terrace with tables and chairs along the edge of the dance floor. This

renovation reduced the capacity of the dance floor to about 2,000 people.

The romantic appeal of the Catalina Casino is capped by the "Romance Promenade" which nearly encircles the structure outside the ballroom level. This 14-foot wide balcony was inspired by the columned loggias of the Alhambra, the ancient seat of the Moorish culture in Granada, Spain. Here dancers can stroll and catch their breath between sets while gazing on the town and bay. This was said to have led to more than one proposal of marriage, further enhancing our island's reputation as the "Island of Romance."

THE PAGE ORGAN IN THE CATALINA CASINO

The organ was built by the Page Pipe Organ Company, of Lima, Ohio, and installed in the Avalon Theatre in 1929. This and one other in Fort Wayne, Indiana are the only two Page Organs in the United States today.

News of the arrival of the Casino organ was reported in the local newspaper in April of 1929. Installation involved placing 16 ranks of pipes (with 76-85 pipes per rank) in ceiling lofts on either side of the proscenium arch and covering them with grillwork. The pipes are made of lead, tin, zinc and wood and were manufactured in Germany. When all was completed (at a reported cost of US\$40,000) the organist had at his disposal a highly unified, four-manual console with a bank of three curved stop rails and a complete range of sound effects.

The Casino organ was used for movie accompaniment until sound was firmly established, but it is best remembered for the concerts given before films or during the afternoons. Leonard H. Clark was the first organist for the theatre. Mrs Mary Oswald was organist in 1933 and 1934. Sherwood Metz, featured as "The Singing Organist," played during the 1935-1937 seasons. Miss Sybil Thomas was the Casino organist during 1938 and 1939. After World War II, free afternoon concerts were resumed from 1947 to 1959, with organist Gil Evans at the console.

Refurbishment of the organ was done by the Building Superintendent Dale Eisenhut in 1958 and without his love for this instrument, the organ would not exist today.

In the spring of 1979 The Los Angeles Chapter of the American Theatre Organ Society, and six dedicated men spent many days and nights replacing leather and felt parts, repairing electrical connections, and otherwise refurbishing the instrument for the 50th anniversary of the Casino.

The Avalon Theatre is fortunate to have Mr Robert Salisbury a local resident, available to play the organ on an ongoing basis. He started playing the organ in 1958 and with few breaks, has continued to this day. Bob entertains enthusiastic crowds at concerts and before the movies on weekends.

DON'T FORGET TO MARK THE DIARY!

HOME ORGAN PARTY

Sunday 23, October 1988 at 2pm

This afternoon of music is being held at the Selwyn Theatre 13 Rosemont Avenue, Mortdale. Bookings essential Ph. 573 581

Artists to be featured are:

David Davenport
John Shaw
Jan Ingall and
Joyce Lawton

All proceeds are going to the Orion Centre Wurlitzer installation project appeal - do ensure you are there to support the Mighty Orion Wurlitzer!

LOST WURLITZER FOUND IN SHED

Reprinted from ATOS International News
June 1988

During July 1924, Wurlitzer Opus 861, a style D organ, was installed in the ballroom at Chicago's Granada Hotel. Years later the small ballroom became a restaurant and eventually closed. The or-

gan was removed, forgotten and subsequently thought to be lost or destroyed. Not so!

The Wurlitzer was recently found stored in a machine shed in Illinois by Jim Petersen of Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin "It is in very good condition and will be installed in my home this year," he said.

According to ATOS Advertising Director Len Clarke, the organ enjoyed a lively career for several years.

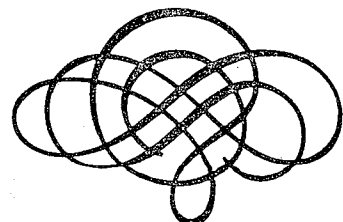
"It had been silent for some years when the late Bob Rhodes learned of its existence and promptly moved into the hotel with the understanding he could use the organ if he maintained it.

As usual on Sunday mornings, though he had worked late the previous night Rhodes was at the console. Hal Pearl and myself one Sunday morning when a particularly maternal-looking lady, who lived above on the second floor, was at home for the first time at this hour.

Rudely awakened by what she had no idea, she dressed and came to the ballroom to express her displeasure and to learn the pipe chamber was directly under her room. A few unkind words were exchanged, but the music continued. I don't know if she moved or not.

Too bad we did not have the recording equipment of today. Many homemade recordings were made on the organ by Rhodes and Pearl. Rhodes finally moved in a Hammond and duets were also recorded. We had fun making recordings but nothing was ever kept."

(Another good story of a organ lost and then found. How many other mighty organs lie disused in garages throughout the world? Ed.)



STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS

ORION OPENING ARTIST UPDATE

Just when you thought that we had finalised the artists for the opening celebrations in October we are now able to tell you of the final two who will be joining in.

Paul Maybury who many members will remember from his past appearances with the society will be joining us as special cabaret guest at the **DINNER DANCE** on the Sunday night. Paul has a large following and is still seen regularly on television. Join us at the Dinner Dance for a night of entertainment to remember.

Joining Margaret Hall in the concert to take place on the Sunday afternoon is Sydney vocalist Gregory Shaw. Gregory has many awards to his credit for performance and has toured New South Wales centres with great success. Last year he completed a Bachelor of Music degree at the NSW Conservatorium and next year he will be continuing with his post-graduate studies. His repertoire includes light operatic compositions and other equally well loved pieces. For sheer entertainment and a glorious singing voice there can be none other than Gregory Shaw, it will be your unfortunate loss if you do not see this artist just once in concert with the mighty Wurlitzer Theatre Organ! An event not to be missed - Book early to reserve your seat.



AFTER THE TWO OPENING CONCERTS EVERYONE WILL DESERVE A CHANCE TO 'LET THEIR HAIR DOWN'

JOIN THE COMMITTEE AND CIVIC DIGNITARIES AND

ENJOY THE FUN AT

THE ORION CENTRE DINNER DANCE AND CABARET

DRINKS WILL BE SERVED FROM 7.00pm TOGETHER WITH FINGER FOOD

A THREE COURSE DINNER COMMENCES AT 7.45pm

DRESS: INFORMAL BRING YOUR OWN DRINKS

COST ONLY \$26.00 PER TICKET OR \$20.00 UNDER 15 YEARS.

FOR BOOKINGS RING JOHN RATTRAY OR MURRAY RIES ON 750-3779 (AH)

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