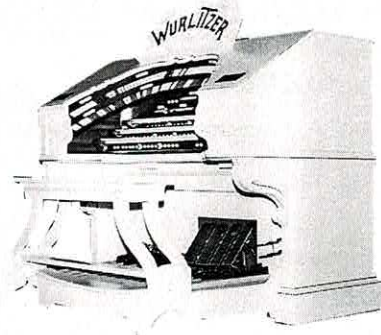
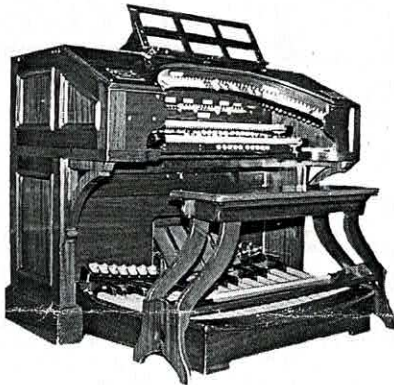


FEBRUARY / MARCH, 1993

# TOSA

Marrickville Town Hall



Orion Centre Campsie

# NEWS

# DAVID PARSONS



**ORION  
CENTRE**  
155 Beamish St.  
**CAMPSIE**

**SUNDAY  
28TH  
MARCH  
1993**

**BOOK  
EARLY**  
for the  
**BEST SEATS**

Volume 32  
Issue 2  
PRINTED BY TOSA

The Official Publication of Theatre Organ Society of Australia (NSW Division) Inc.  
GPO. Box 67, Sydney, NSW, 2001  
Registered by Australia Post - Publication No. N.B.H. 1038

Price  
\$1.00



# TOSA NEWS

FEBRUARY / MARCH, 1993

THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW DIVISION) Inc.

## \* DIRECTORY \*

### PATRONS:

Ian Davies  
Mayor of Canterbury, Ald. John Gorrie

### PRESIDENT:

Jack Lawson 569 3775

### VICE PRESIDENTS:

Frank Ellis 649 7011  
John Shaw 759 5825

### SECRETARY:

Mary Stewart 557 5045  
G.P.O. Box 67, Sydney, 2001

### ASSISTANT SECRETARY:

Robert Gliddon

### TREASURER:

Jim Booker 644 5929

### ASSISTANT TREASURER:

Bill Schumacher 985 7318

### MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY:

Jeffrey Clark 639 7208 (After 7pm)

### COMMITTEE:

Peter Harding 629 2257  
Pearl Lawson 569 3775  
Neil Palmer 798 6742  
Ross Adams 639 6343  
Barry Tooker 744 1535  
Colin Groves 745 2417

### PRACTICE CONVENOR:

Bob Staunton 607 8925

### RESEARCH & ARCHIVES:

Ian Cameron (048) 411 616

### TOSA NEWS EDITOR:

Colin Groves 745 2417  
P.O. Box 1257, Burwood, 2134

### TOSA PRINTER:

Robert Gliddon

### CONCERT TAPE HIRING:

Neil Palmer 798 6742

### TICKET SECRETARY (Concert Bookings):

10.00 am - 6.00 pm Mon - Sat only  
Ed Wharton 546 7231  
P. O. Box 23  
Penshurst, 2222

### ARTIST LIAISON OFFICER:

Bill Schumacher 985 7318  
8 Wharf Rd, Brooklyn, 2083

### PHOTOGRAPHY:

Kevin Rowland, noon - 8 pm  
Mobile Phone (018) 44 2308 (STD rates apply)  
Barry Tooker Home: 744 1535; Work: 550 5400

### CONCERT RECORDINGS:

Bill Schumacher 985 7318

### PROMOTIONS OFFICER:

John Shaw 759 5825

### LIBRARIAN:

Mary Stewart 557 5045



## COMING EVENTS

### MARCH

Monday 1 at 7.30 pm Committee Meeting  
Sunday 28 at 2.00 pm DAVID PARSONS  
Concert at Orion Centre  
Campsie

### APRIL

Monday 5 at 7.30 pm Committee Meeting

Friday 9 April to Monday 12 April  
NATIONAL CONVENTION OF  
THEATRE ORGAN MUSIC  
Adelaide

Sunday 18 at 2.30 pm TOSA Club Afternoon  
with Specially Invited Organists  
Epping Baptist Church

### MAY

Monday 3 at 7.30 pm Committee Meeting  
Sunday 23 at 2.00 pm CLIFF BINGHAM  
Concert at Marrickville  
Town Hall  
Wednesday 26 at 8.00 pm Half Yearly Annual  
General Meeting  
Marrickville Town Hall

### JUNE

Wednesday 2 at 7.30 pm Members' Night  
Orion Centre, Campsie  
Monday 7 at 7.30 pm Committee Meeting  
Sunday 20 at 2.00 pm TONY FENELON and  
JOHN ATWELL  
Duo Concert  
Orion Centre Campsie



**REMEMBER TO TUNE IN TO**  
**2 CBA-FM 103.2**

EVERY MONDAY AT 9.00 pm.  
For "Theatre Organ Highlights"  
Presented by Chris Styles



## 2 CBA-FM THEATRE ORGAN HIGHLIGHTS

### COMING EVENTS

Hi, from Chris Styles. Our new editor has asked me to give you an idea of what you can expect on TOSA's radio programme over the next couple of months.

First, before I go into the up-coming programmes let me thank everyone for their support and encouragement over these past 18 months. I think I have mentioned before that I have always had a longing to work in radio (since I was about 12 years old) and just 34 years later the opportunity arose when the committee approached me. It's been great fun and my sincere thanks to those members of the Society who have provided music from their vast collections for use on the programme.

I won't give dates of coming events as these haven't been finalised yet, but I will tell you that in the live-concert department we will have a concert by Walt Strony at Epping Baptist Church (quite different to Jonas Nordwell's programme).

Our president, Jack Lawson, has consented to come on the programme with his personal selection, and John Parker, our master organ-builder, will present his personal choices.

Ian Roche will be back to give us some further insights into organs in the United Kingdom with a programme on Compton organs. Ian, as those who listen to the programme regularly will know, recently presented a programme on the Reginald Foort Moller Travelling Organ. Unfortunately the radio station played this programme out of date-order and it went to air about 4 weeks ahead of when it was planned, so I couldn't advertise it to let listeners know that it was going to be on. I will endeavour to have it repeated at a later date and will let you know the exact



date in due course.

I would also like to repeat Margaret Hall's excellent tour through our former Capitol WurliTzer at Campsie, and that should be in the not too distant future.

I have been asked to prepare a programme on the Radio City Music Hall organ, and am at present researching this and will present it in the coming two or three months.

Just a final note regarding the programme. You will have noticed that occasionally the programme "drops out" and suddenly the listener hears a time call and other music plays for a couple of minutes. This is a "hic-cup" caused when the sound level of the music is low for more than a couple of minutes and the computer which controls the programme thinks (if computers can think) that the music has stopped and automatically replaces the programme. The operator at the station should correct the fault immediately and I have brought the matter to the station's attention on a number of occasions. Hopefully the fault can be rectified with new computer equipment soon!!

If you have any enquiries about the programme or any suggestions, please feel free to telephone me on 798 7547 (not during business hours). I would like to hear from you.

Chris Styles

Thank you to the members who rang or wrote to express their approval of my first-ever effort as an editor. It is encouraging to feel that at least some people were happy with what they found in their last TOSA News.

In response to a nice, long letter from member Colin Tringham, I am sure he'll be pleased to hear the committee has been trying to organise a tea and coffee service for the audiences at the Orion Centre concerts. However, the efforts to achieve this goal have been thwarted, partly by the physical difficulties in the building, but, more importantly, by the lack of volunteers to actually run the service. If there are any members who would be willing to help run the tea and coffee stand, would you please make yourself known to a committee member. With the help of a few willing workers we can perhaps overcome, or at least try to ignore, the physical limitations of the venue, which was achieved at one of last year's concerts at the Orion.

A similar situation seems to occur with finding new members to serve on committee. Everyone agrees that a regular turn-over in committee membership would be desirable, but the people willing to serve do not, disappointingly, stand for election, or even write to the committee with their constructive suggestions and ideas for changes and improvements.

Allan Tassaker has also written a delightful letter explaining, in reply to my crack about him cleverly living in a PO box, that "there is nothing wrong with living in a PO box... provided that one is a 'mail'" Boom! Boom! You can't win against the relentless onslaught of his "wit". Although he feels the title "Porn Corner" may have attracted more interest, he has accepted "Corn Corner" because he knows that, as he says, "this is the corner where all members of intellectual thought shall meet!" Many witty returns !!

Best wishes,  
Colin Groves

*Articles in this journal need not represent the views of the committee or the editor.*

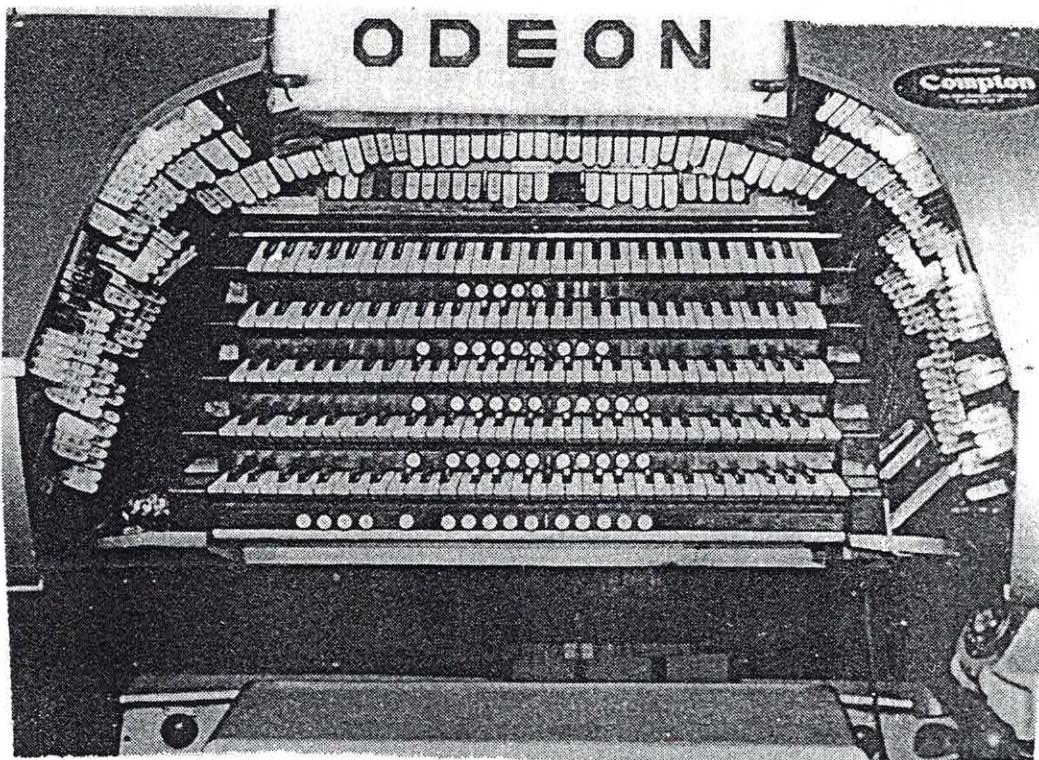
**The deadline for each edition of TOSA News is the 12 th of the month**



# COMPTON and "CHAPLIN" in London

"Chaplin", the new film from director Richard Attenborough, had its Royal Premiere in London before the Queen and Prince Philip in mid-December last year at the Odeon, Leicester Square. During its season at that theatre the evening programme, as in the "good, old days", featured the Compton organ.

The film stars Robert Downey Jr as Charles Chaplin, supported by Kevin Kline, Dan Ackroyd, James Wood, Diane Lane and Paul Rhys. Chaplin's actress daughter, Geraldine, plays her own grandmother in the film, and the part of a lady pianist accompanying an early silent film is played by famous, veteran English organist, Ena Baga.



Compton Console, Odeon Leicester Square

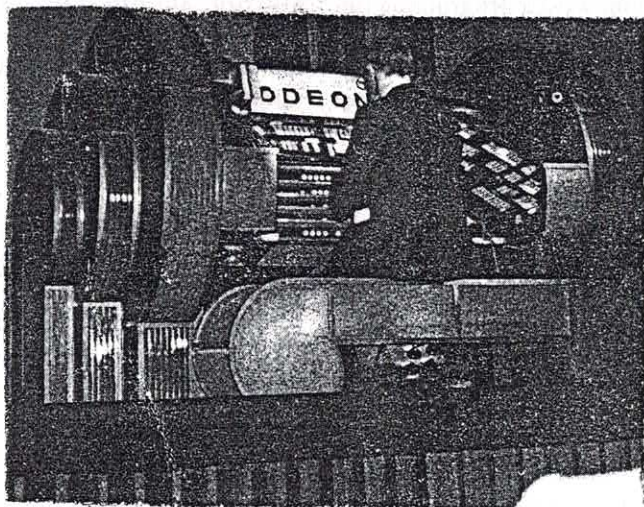
Ena Baga played the Compton for the first public performance of "Chaplin" at the Odeon, Leicester Square, and a team of organists, including Simon Gledhill, John Mann, Allan Skirrow, Iain Flitcroft and Donald MacKenzie, played during the run of the film. The organists played a prelude of 20 minutes before the beginning of the evening programme and a 5 minute spot before the feature film. In the foyer there was a display advertising the evening's featured organist and information about the COS (Cinema Organ Society).



Ena Baga

The theatre's General Manager, William Weir, is keen to promote "The Duchess", as the mighty 5 manual Compton is affectionately known. So English organ lovers may have the chance to hear this fantastic organ more frequently.

Incidentally, the film tells the life-story of Charlie Chaplin and, by all reports, is well worth seeing as it received higher ratings at its American sneak previews than Richard Attenborough's previous hit, "Ghandi" which was internationally successful.



David Lowe at the 5/18 Compton

*from The Cinema Organ Society's  
Newsletter (UK)*



# TOSA BEGINNINGS

*Vice-President and concert compere, Frank Ellis has written a detailed account of the beginnings and early years of TOSA which we hope he will soon complete and publish as a small booklet for all our members to read. However, in the meantime, I have found an interesting letter to VOX, the newsletter of the Victorian Division of TOSA, by foundation member, John Clancy, in which he outlines the story of the formation of TOSA over 30 years ago and the story of the first organ involved. He writes :*

## Background

When television was introduced around 1955, it forced the sale of many theatres and also the sale of their organs, many of which met a sad fate, being broken up for parts, or sold for scrap metal.

Before this time, there were approximately 20 organs in NSW cinemas; all being used regularly. In fact, someone once said that if you decided to hear all the theatre organs it would take over a week - attending three sessions each day. So most people took them for granted; and as they were so readily available most people accepted them as theatre fixtures that would remain there forever. That is why no-one ever thought of forming a theatre organ society.

However by 1958 a few people became concerned that, at the rate at which theatres were closing down and organs being sold, there would soon be no organs left.

## Civic, Auburn

When in 1958 I learned that the Civic Theatre in Auburn (the largest and most palatial of the Sydney suburban theatres) was to close, I also found out that the WurliTzer organ was for sale.

This organ had some special attractions for me, especially when I found out its history from Mrs Crowle. Mr Crowle, the WurliTzer sales manager in Sydney, had exclusive

rights to import and sell WurliTzer organs in Australia. In 1924 he imported a 2 manual 7 rank WurliTzer which he installed in his home in Rose Bay as a demonstration model. When Mr Hearne from Melbourne heard the organ he was entranced, and being a wealthy man he was able to do a deal with Mr Crowle and buy the organ and ship it down to Melbourne where it was installed in his home, and it is still there today and is known as "The Hearne Residence WurliTzer".

Mr Crowle was not the least disturbed at the loss of his WurliTzer, and in 1928 he went to the WurliTzer factory in USA and personally hand-picked all the pipes and percussions for his new WurliTzer. The year was 1928, and was the peak year for the production of WurliTzer organs, with one complete organ coming off the production line each day, using mass-production methods. However Mr Crowle's own organ was given special privileges; and when it was completed it had 3 consoles (master, slave and player) and 15 ranks of pipes. This was installed in a large Ballroom in Mr Crowle's home (which still exists) and was used for demonstrations and private concerts.

In 1934 Mr Crowle died, and the organ was removed and installed in the newly-built Art Deco theatre, the Civic, at Auburn. Here it remained until 1958, being used right up to the time the theatre ceased showing films. Installed in two large chambers on each side of the proscenium arch, with elaborate plaster grill work covering the swell shutters, there was nothing to block the pipe sound coming out; which was just as well because, in contrast to the other WurliTzers in Sydney, this one was very delicately voiced, and had a very refined tone. It was also fortunate that it was regularly serviced by Mr Noad, one of Sydney's leading organ builders, whose factory was just down the road from the theatre. The main console was a one-off model, being beautifully hand-carved with roses and other decorative carving.

You can imagine my delight when I

was informed that my tender had been accepted and the organ was mine.

## Closure

The theatre management agreed to a final recital on a Saturday morning and, as I was a member of the classical organ society, its members were invited to attend. A close friend, Roy Williamson, agreed to play the recital, and to my surprise quite a large crowd turned up.

After Roy had finished, the organ was made available to anyone who wished to play; a very conservative Church organist, who never used to play any organ music except the classics, amazed us all by playing a "jazzy" arrangement of "The Dancing Tambourine".

Removal of the organ, overhauling the mechanism, and installing in its new home, took 10 years, and this is another story. However I was fortunate in being able to design and build a large concert room for the organ; being 65 feet long by 30 feet wide, and with a cathedral ceiling 45 feet high. At the rear of this room are the two organ chambers - the main is 15' x 15'; and the solo is 25' x 15'. They are lined with polished wood, with sloping ceilings to project the sound. In the rear garden is the blower, in its own building. There is an upstairs gallery capable of seating 100 people in theatre chairs.

## Special Features

You would expect a special WurliTzer to have some unusual features, and I will just mention a few of these (apart from the console). The pipework includes the only example in the world of a theatre model containing an Aeoline 73 pipe rank (as far as we know). This is a masterpiece of voicing, being on 10" wind pressure, yet so soft and refined that it is only just audible, and is the most beautiful rank on the organ. It is available at 16', 8', 4' and 2' pitches and combines excellently with the 16' Bourdon. The organ also has 2 Tibia ranks (wood and metal), and a rank called the Cymbale, consisting of



183 metal pipes. In the percussion section there is a set of 37 solid brass, tuned Chinese gongs, from match box size to 4 feet diameter; also a full range of 9 couplers; and four 16' pedal basses.

After the recital I appealed for volunteers to help me remove the organ, and scored 10 helpers.

### New Society

During the removal, we often talked about the need to form a theatre organ society and we finally decided to use the name "Theatre Organ Society of Australia", and to produce a newsletter called "TOSA News", and later a magazine called the "Diaphone".

Initially struggling with only a few members, the Society received a boost

when Palings Music Store in the City gave us the use of their concert hall and Hammond organs. Also we found out it was quite easy to visit the remaining theatres with organs, due to co-operative Managers and the "prestige" of the Society, and our first Theatre Recital took place with Reubert Hayes playing the 2/10 Wurlitzer in the Arcadia Theatre in Chatswood. We also had a clever idea : by making all the local theatre organists "honorary" members, we had a panel of expert musicians available for concerts.

The Society continued to prosper, and with the increase in membership we were able to have our first National Theatre Organ Convention.

Meanwhile I had a visit from Bob

Smith, a Superintendent of Prisons in Queensland, about forming a Queensland Division. So I gave him heaps of literature and, when formed, sent copies of the TOSA News and the Diaphone.

Also David Cross wrote from Victoria and I helped him form the Victorian Division; Wes and Ian Johnson wrote from South Australia and they formed the SA Division; and Ray Clements wrote from Western Australia and received permission to form the WA Division. So, that is how TOSA became an Australia-wide society, with each State being part of the whole, and yet being completely independent to run their own affairs, which was the original intention of the founders. *John Clancy*

## NEWS FROM OVERSEAS with an Australian connection

*In his Editorial for this year's January issue of the Newsletter of the Cinema Organ Society (U.K.), the editor, Tony Moss, reminisces about the foundation meeting of their society, 40 years ago. The organ played on that occasion found its way to Australia, originally to the Mecca/Victory Theatre in Kogarah. The photograph shows the famous British organist and founder of their organisation, Hubert Selby, at the console of this organ when it was still in the Ritz Cinema, Richmond in England.*

On 11 January 1953, 40 years ago, the COS was launched at a "National Rally and General Meeting" at the Ritz Cinema, Richmond. We met at 12 noon for a demonstration and recital at the 3/8 Wurlitzer by Founder HUBERT SELBY, adjourning at one o'clock for lunch "outside the cinema", which, as it was early January, sounds a bit cold! We reassembled at 2 p.m. for "inspection and trial of the organ", and it was during the afternoon that JOSEPH SEAL, then Musical Director for ABC, joined us and gave a short impromptu



recital. We then had tea and the business meeting at the Richmond Community Centre across the road. Membership was small in those days and the meetings at theatres were informal with an opportunity for all to play the 'mighty'. The COS has come a long way since then, with a membership of well over 2,000 and growing. Long may it continue! Sadly, the Ritz/ABC Richmond closed in December 1972 and later 'bit the dust'. The Wurlitzer was removed by Les Rawle and sold to a theatre owner in Australia. The last we heard (1990) was that it was in store in Australia, owned by Allan Tranter.



Also from the UK comes news of Tony Fenelon, playing at the opening of the new Granada TV Studio Tours' organ.

## Granada Manchester

And so the Wurlitzer 4/14 and grand piano designed by Harold Ramsay for the Granada Manchester has come home at last! Or, most of it has. The grand piano installed at the Gaumont (the name under which the theatre opened in 1935) disappeared in the early sixties and the console was of course unfortunately destroyed by fire in 1988 while in storage.

Entering the roughly ¾-scale mock-up of the foyer of the Granada Tooting in MANCHESTER on the evening of Friday November 13th was uncanny, but certainly not unlucky! The reproduction of the Tooting foyer is remarkable and the thrill of seeing the beautiful reproduction 4-manual console rise before us with LEN RAWLE at the keyboards was a milestone in 40 years of theatre organ activity.

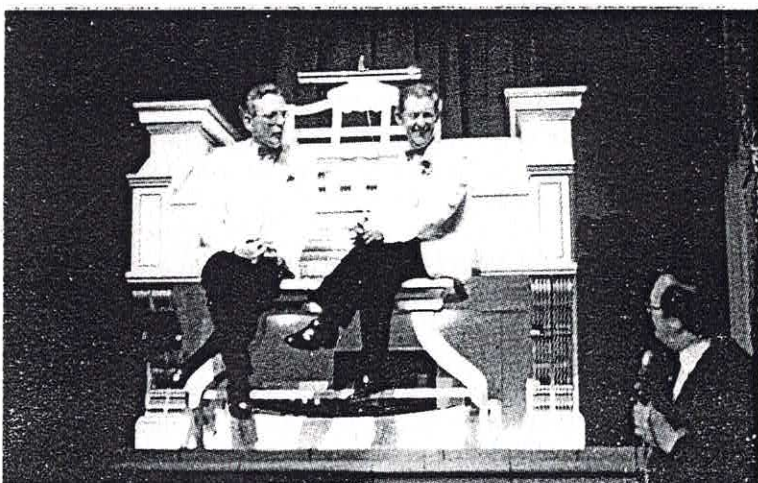
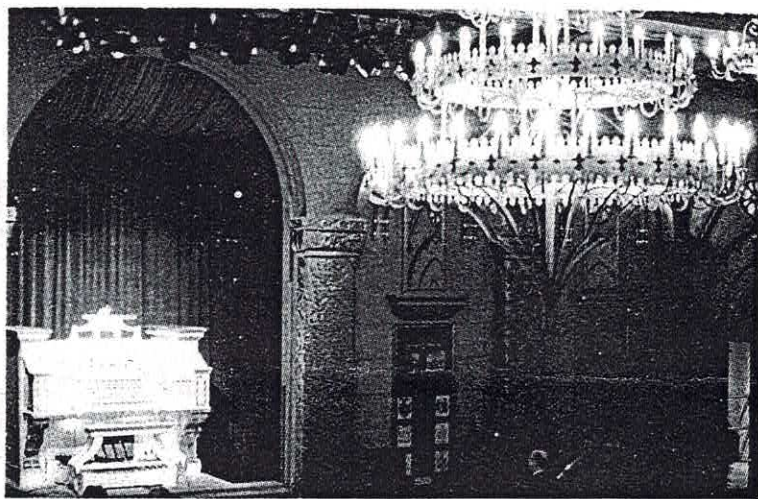
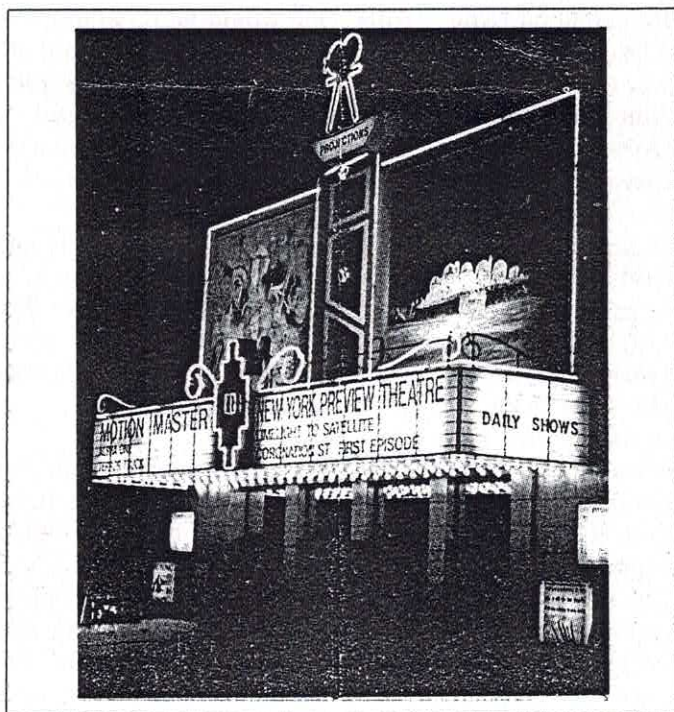
With a hush of excited expectation, the programme for the evening opened with a specially produced excerpt from John Fernee's Gaumont-British video featuring the Gaumont-British report of the opening of the Gaumont Manchester by Jessie Matthews and Sonnie Hale with Miss England in attendance. An extra item about the Mighty Wurlitzer had been added and the whole excerpt rescripted with commentary by — guess who?

Appropriately, this was followed by the appearance of the console, rising to the well-known signature tune of the resident organist for most of the organ's life in the theatre, Stanley Tudor. Len was followed by visiting Australian, TONY FENELON who not only performed solo at the console but duetted with himself at the grand piano. Very clever! And, by the way, the organ does have its own piano again, under the 'bridge' formed by the twin staircase to the 'circle foyer' where the organ chambers are clearly on view to visitors in the Granada Studios Tour. The piano, an upright from the Empress Ballroom Wurlitzer via the BBC and Worthing, has been beautifully restored and looks resplendent in white and gold. It can make itself heard, too.

The first part of the evening concluded with a duet on six keyboards (including both pianos) by both Tony Fenelon and Len Rawle, and we all went to supper somewhere near Coronation Street. It was so nice to meet one of the past resident organists at the Gaumont, Charles Smitton, again; I heard that Mrs. Tudor was there, too.

John Potter has produced a superb brochure, profusely illustrated in both colour and black and white, with a history of the Granada/Gaumont, the organists at the theatre, a comprehensive study of the Wurlitzer and its installation at the Granada Studios Tour, Manchester. The "Projections" experience not only includes the Tooting "Baronial Hall", but visitors are also taken past the glass-fronted organ chambers, through a Granada Hall of Mirrors, similar to Tooting, Manchester, Woolwich, Cheam, etc., into a 1930s 'fleapit' and the Motion Master Cinema — the future of the moving image.

Below: The "Projections" suite at Granada TV Studio Tours, which houses the restored ex-Gaumont Manchester Wurlitzer in a 2/3rds replica of the Granada Tooting's foyer (right). Bottom right: Tony Fenelon (r) and Len Rawle (l) being thanked by David Alldred for launching the re-installation. "Tony's impeccable technique and musicianship were acclaimed by the invited audience."





# THE WURLITZER ADDRESS

*Although this talk was given by Mr Fanny R. Wurlitzer (then chairman of the Wurlitzer Company) during the American Theatre Organ Society's Convention on 6th July 1964 at Wurlitzer Park, North Tonawanda, N.Y., it contains a wealth of history relating to the production of Wurlitzer Theatre Pipe Organs. Due to the length of the address, which was previously published in the Cinema Organ Society Journal and submitted by Rob Gliddon, we will spread it over a couple of issues.*

This is really a red letter day for me because it brings back many happy memories of the past. I go back to January, 1909, when we purchased the business from the Dekleist Musical Instrument Manufacturing Company, and I was chosen to come up here and take charge of the business. I was 26 at the time.

## Wurlitzer's German Foundations

I feel, however, that you will be interested in having a brief history of the events that brought us into the theatre organ business. The family traces its history back to the first Wurlitzer that we have a record of - in 1596: Heinrich Wurlitzer; and in 1659 the first Wurlitzer was born who made a musical instrument. It is unusual, perhaps that in every generation that succeeded him there was either a maker or dealer in musical instruments.

My grandfather dealt in musical instruments in the small village of Schoenbeck, in Saxony, where my father was born in 1831. The musical instrument business at that time was a home-industry to a large extent. Grandfather bought the instruments from the peasants who made them largely in the winter season when they weren't busy in their fields, and then he re-sold them to jobbers and exporters.

My father, of course, had experience in this business and he hoped to become a partner in his father's business; he was the eldest son. But his father decided that this was not the arrangement he had in mind. He wanted to keep the business for the youngest

son, who was a child at the time. So my father decided to come to America. He came to the United States in 1853.

It is a coincidence that in the same year my mother crossed the ocean; she was French and my father German.

## American Importers

My father imported the first musical instruments from his father in 1856, and it is from that date that our business started. I will skip to the time when we were musical instrument dealers in Cincinnati, Ohio, and Mr Dekleist had been brought over here by the merry-go-round manufacturers in North Tonawanda - at that time there were 3 of them.

Dekleist had been brought over to build merry-go-round organs for them because the duty had been increased and they decided it was necessary to manufacture the instruments here. He came over with one or two helpers from England. He belonged to a famous German family, and while in England had changed his name from Von Kleist to Dekleist.

In America he made merry-go-round organs for the manufacturers, but the business got a little slack. So he decided to see whether he couldn't get some additional business by making trumpets for the U.S. Army. He called on Lyon and Healy, one of the largest dealers in musical instruments in Chicago, who told him, "Oh, if you want to sell trumpets to the U.S. Army you'd better see Wurlitzer in Cincinnati, because they have that business."

## Coin Operated Pianos

So he came down to see my older brother, who was 12 years older than I; and we did buy trumpets from Dekleist. You see, merry-go-round organs had brass trumpets so it was just a short step to make the instruments used in the Army. Dekleist said, "Couldn't you sell some merry-go-round organs?" My brother said, "Well, we might sell one or two a year, but there's very little demand for them. If you would make a coin-operated piano for us, we could

sell a lot of them!"

At that time the merry-go-round organ that Dekleist made had a wooden cylinder that varied according to the size of the organ. It usually had ten tunes on it; and by turning a lever on the side you could play any one of the ten. He made the piano the same way: a long wooden cylinder with ten tunes on it. When the model was finished my brother came up to look at it and, after a number of changes, decided it was satisfactory and ordered two hundred. Dekleist did not have funds at that time, so he went to the bank and borrowed money on the strength of the order.

Well, that business developed and Mr Dekleist became prosperous. We had sole selling rights to all of the instruments. Paper music rolls followed very shortly after that, and wooden cylinders were discontinued. There were many types of coin-operated instruments; about that time skating rinks were very popular, and Band-organs, as we called them, were also useful and many were sold.

## Nickelodeons

There were nickelodeons; and for those we had developed an instrument - various models of them, with piano. The small ones had one box on the side, the larger had two; and held music rolls. One would be re-winding while the other was playing, and in that way they could accompany the picture. Motion pictures were very short - they were short reels; and you paid a nickel or a dime to go in and see the show.

That business was growing and we felt there was an opportunity to build instruments for a theatre. We weren't thinking of motion picture theatres, because they didn't exist. We thought of replacing orchestras.

At that time we heard of Robert Hope-Jones. He'd had some financial difficulty, and his company in Elmira failed, with some distinguished stockholders in it, including Mark Twain and the President of the American Telephone Association.

*continued next issue*



## TONY FENELON'S CONCERT on SUNDAY, 13th DECEMBER, 1992 REVIEWED by Chris Styles

Where does one start with the perennial favourite star of our Christmas concerts for TOSA NSW? Well, Tony surprised me at the beginning of the concert because he wasn't where he was supposed to be - that is, at the organ console. I had first-hand knowledge that he wasn't at the console when the concert was due to begin, because John Parker had put me in charge of the console lift. While I waited, and waited, for Tony to appear at the backstage entrance to the console, he didn't. I was suddenly suspicious that he was going to use a pre-programmed organ with the piano and, on quickly checking with John Parker, I found this to be the case. On to the stage bounced Tony, and the organ burst forth into **Sleigh Bells** rising, empty, into the auditorium, with Tony at the piano. Needless to say, a perfect interpretation of this well-known Christmas melody followed, with an ideal combination of organ and piano,

On next to an all-time favourite musician of mine, and I guess of Tony's - Freddy Gardner, the great saxophonist of the 50's. Tony played two of Freddy Gardner's favourites, **Valse Vanité** and **Body and Soul**. The latter in a jazz style which Mr Fenelon does so well. I sometimes crave for more of this style of playing from Tony.

Next, back to the piano and again with the wonders of the marvellous Devtronics system Tony accompanied himself with the **Waltz in E Flat** by Durand. On to a "Gershwin plus"

medley which again featured some jazz-style playing and use of the percussions, and included such tunes as **Love Walked In**, **The Man I Love** and a little, just a little, of **Rhapsody in Blue**.

After the opening of just plain **Sleigh Bells**, the next item was **Brazilian Sleigh Bells**, a Fenelon favourite and, as Tony reminded us, recorded by George Wright years ago.

Next came a piano novelette, **Nanette**, in which Tony used the organ and its WurliTzer piano (pre-recorded) and himself at the grand piano on stage. This was brilliantly played on both pianos with the organ. I was recently discussing with Alan Burton, an accomplished musician and the producer of my radio programme, this concept of recording oneself and then playing a duet with the pre-recorded music. We both agreed that it is very difficult to come up with a different arrangement of the same music so that one is not duplicating the same notes when duetting with oneself. I guess because Tony does it with such apparent ease, it shows that he is a true professional.

Lastly before interval came a comprehensive selection from the "King and I", superbly played and, whilst we all agree on the musical appeal of a couple of numbers from our latest musicals, e.g. "Phantom of the Opera" and "Cats", the shows of Rodgers and Hammerstein certainly had hits with every number in their

musicals.

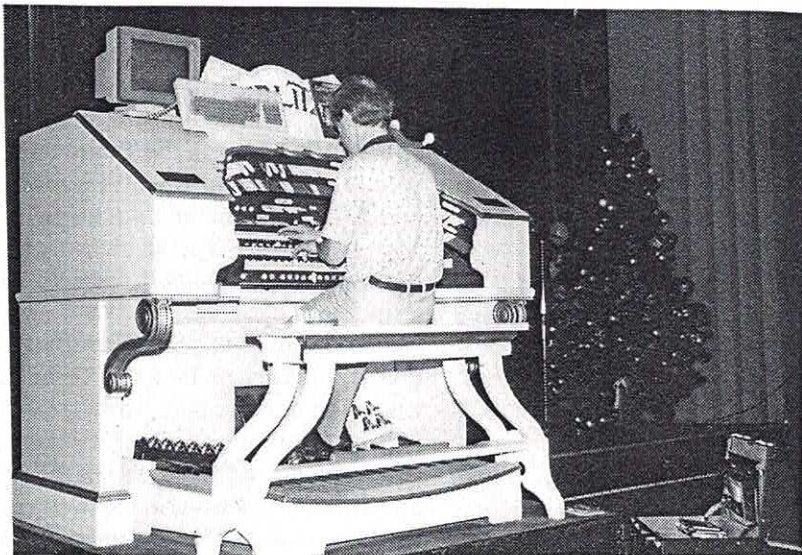
After interval Tony again put us in the Christmas spirit with well-known melodies - **Deck the Halls**, **O Come all ye Faithful**, **Joy to the World**, **A Great and Mighty Wonder**, to name but a few.

Following the Christmas medley, Tony played what he entitled a "Broadway Concerto". This featured **I Get a Kick out of You**, **Younger Than Springtime**, **Wunderbar**, **And This is my Beloved** and **People will Say We're in Love** (from that other great Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, "Oklahoma").

Lastly it was that favourite time for we Fenelon fans when Tony requested items from the audience. There is never a lack of numbers suggested, so after some back and forth discussion Tony launched into **If you were the Only Girl in the World** and followed it with such numbers as **Bolero**, **Granada**, **Root Beer Rag**, **As Time Goes by**, **Memory**, **New York, New York**, **Dambusters March** and finished with a fine rendition of **O Come all ye Faithful**.

To great applause after this, so well deserved, Tony bid us farewell with **I'll See you Again** and **Wish me Luck as you Wave me Goodbye**.

Thank you again Mr Fenelon for a great afternoon, and you are always welcome to visit us. Come back soon!





# THEATRE PIPE ORGANS IN NEW ZEALAND

*In this interesting article, James Duncan gives details of the seven theatre pipe organs that were installed in New Zealand theatres over a period of time, all of which have now been silenced in their original homes.*

## Early 1920's, 2/4 WurliTzer Orchestrion

This was the first theatre organ to be installed in New Zealand, but the exact date is unknown. It was in the **Strand Theatre**, in Auckland's main shopping street, Queen St, and it seems that it was a "Pit Organ", where the pipes surrounded a console, rather than being contained in separately enclosed chambers. It also had a duplex roll - player built into the piano-type console.

The organ was removed in the late 30's and, after being stored for some years, was sold to a private individual whose whereabouts is unknown.

## 1926, Opus 1475 - Model F 2/8 WurliTzer

This organ was shipped from the **North Tonawanda** factory in October, 1926, and arrived in New Zealand in December. It was installed in the 1,700-seat **Regent Theatre**, Auckland, just across the street from the **Strand**. It was not completed when the **Regent** opened. American organist, **Eddie Horton**, gave the first concert in February, 1927, and remained as resident organist for a year, to be followed by Australian, **Knight Barnett**. Other local and overseas players appeared, but by the 30's the organ was seldom heard, mainly due to the "talkies". Also, a few doors away, a much bigger organ was being featured at the **Civic Theatre**.

After 1939 the **Regent** WurliTzer was not heard publicly, although it is believed to have been available to individual players outside normal screening times. In 1944 it was offered for sale, and was bought by the parents and pupils of the **Hutt Valley High**

**School**, located in a dormitory suburb in **Wellington**.

It was installed in their **Assembly Hall**, where it became a feature of the music department and school dances.

In 1968, disaster struck in the form of a tropical cyclone which, at its height, blew part of the school hall's roof off, and subjected the organ to torrential rain. The school considered it uneconomic to repair the organ, and so once again it was up for sale - unplayable.

A **Wellington** businessman was the new owner, until he, in turn, sold it to Auckland enthusiast, **Les Stenerson**. He, with the assistance of **Jan Grefstad**, proprietor of an Auckland suburban cinema, **The Hollywood**; the skills of organ-builder, **John Parker**; the Kiwi Chapter of **A.T.O.S.**; and a host of volunteers, saw the organ brought back to **Auckland**. It was slowly restored and completely re-wired, and one pipe chest replaced, due to unrepairable water damage. Following the restoration it "opened" with a grand concert in 1982.

The pipes and associated hardware are installed in two chambers behind the motion picture screen. The console is situated to the left of the proscenium, and mounted on an electric hoist which ascends to a height of 12 feet, while doing a slow rotation to bring it to the "concert position". (While in the **Regent** the console was not on a lift, but sat on one side of the stage area.)

On the opposite side of the **Hollywood** proscenium is the WurliTzer upright piano, mounted on a platform to match the height of the console hoist enclosure. This piano was once part of Masterton's **Cozy Theatre's** WurliTzer Photoplayer. The pipework for that instrument is now scattered around the country, but part of it is in the **Hollywood** organ.

The organ has now been enhanced

with the addition of 5 more ranks, making it a 2/13 instrument plus piano.

Soon after its re-opening a group of enthusiasts got together and formed "The Theatre Society of Auckland Inc." Regular concerts are given, and the management runs silent movies with WurliTzer accompaniment, both of which are well attended. The future looks relatively bright for the ex-**Regent** WurliTzer, but the **Regent** itself was demolished in the early 70's.

## 1926, Opus 1482 - Model H, 2/10 WurliTzer

Just one week after the **Regent** Theatre WurliTzer had been shipped from the factory, this slightly bigger organ left **America**, also bound for New Zealand, but this time for a theatre in the capital city, **Wellington**, the **De Luxe** Theatre in **Courtney Place**.

The organ opened in 1927, and became a much-loved feature of the theatre. Organists, both local and overseas, were featured at the console - in fact they seemed to work a circuit of theatres in **Australia** and **New Zealand**. Very early in radio days a small number of 78 rpm records were made and broadcast. The **De Luxe** Theatre, later re-named the **Embassy**, was also home in the early 1950's to several radio variety shows, involving the organ, soloists, etc.

The WurliTzer played its last notes at the **Embassy** in 1959, and was sold to an enthusiast who installed it first in a "barn" and later in the **Tokoroa** High School Hall, until ill-health forced him to sell the organ to the **Tauranga** Home Organ Society. With the blessing of the **Tauranga** City Council, they installed it in the **Town Hall** in 1972. Many concerts were given there, until in 1986 it was announced that the **Town Hall** was to be demolished. So in mid-1987 began the arduous task of dismantling and re-installing the organ in the fairly new **Baycourt Entertainment Centre**, where it is used for regular concerts.



### 1927, 2/4 and 2/5 WurliTzer Photoplayers

Very little is documented about these two small piano-console organs, which were shipped to **New Zealand**, the 2/4 for the **Cozy Theatre, Masterton**; and the 2/5 for the **Paramount Theatre, Wellington**. Both had duplex roll-playing mechanisms which operated both pipes and piano. Both instruments saw little use and were sold and re-sold.

The 2/5 is now in a private home after being a "church organ" for some time. The **Cozy** instrument is now part of the ex-**Regent WurliTzer** in **Auckland's Hollywood Theatre**, where only the piano action remains, the pipework being used in the **Hollywood organ** and elsewhere.

### 1928, 2/10 Christie - Model 2714

This was the only Christie in **New Zealand**, having been shipped from **London**, and installed in the **Empire, Dunedin** on the South Island. The console was mounted on a lift which rose about 8 feet, and that is about all that has been documented. In 1952 the organ was sold to Australian organist, **Penn Hughes**. With a third manual added, it is now installed in the **Kelvin Grove High School in Brisbane**, and owned by the Queensland Division of TOSA.

### 1929, Opus 2075 - 3/16 WurliTzer (260 Special)

The last and largest theatre organ to arrive in **New Zealand** was the impressive instrument for **Auckland's**

fabulous **Civic Theatre**, in **Queen Street**. The **Civic** was built in 1929 and opened in December of that year. It was rated as the "Showcase of the Pacific", with its lavish decorations - the foyer in "Ancient Indian" style, and the auditorium in "Ancient Persian" style, with seating for 3,500. The ceiling gave the impression of gazing at the stars of the Southern Hemisphere on a clear night, except for the occasional wisps of cloud from the "cloud machine". Truly an "Atmospheric Theatre"! The **Civic** was divided into three levels - **Circle, Stalls and Winter Garden**, the latter being a cabaret after the final evening session. Theatre-goers could, for a nominal charge, make their way down a grand staircase to the **Winter Garden** for supper and dancing, before heading off to catch the tram home.

For musical entertainment the **Civic** boasted a full orchestra which performed in a large **Gondola** that could rise up from the ballroom floor, approximately 12 - 15 feet on an hydraulic lift. Well-remembered is the way the orchestra would rise, in the **Gondola**, just as the curtain closed on the evening show and the house lights came up. This was to encourage patrons to go down to the **Winter Garden** for supper, and a late-night "twirl" on the dance floor.

But the main feature, of which the Management was justly proud, was the mighty **WurliTzer** which rose out of the depths "with a roar that made the marrow dance in one's bones". The chambers were under the stage, with the sound only slightly hindered when the orchestra's **Gondola** was at its highest position. The piano, chimes, xylophone, and marimba were installed

in small opera-style boxes on either side of the auditorium, clearly visible to the audience. The console was mounted on what was believed to be the world's highest organ lift - 20 feet into view and another 17 feet before the **Circle** patrons could see the organist.

The company that ran the **Civic** were very proud of the organ and a strict code of rules was laid down to protect its uniqueness. As a result, only one professional recording was made on the organ - a 78 rpm recording in 1951. During the late 1950's, and for the rest of the **WurliTzer's** days there, the organ was played by **Ron Boyce**, and during a practice session he "secretly" recorded the organ, with the results being much later compiled on tape.

By the mid-60's the company decided that the **Winter Garden Ballroom** should be converted to a smaller cinema, without the organ. In March, 1968, **Ron Boyce** took the console down for the last time, to the Maori love-song, "Pokarekareana". The organ was put up for sale, and eventually bought by Mr (now Sir) **Len Southward of Wellington**. It was taken out and stored at **Lower Hutt**, and later installed in a theatre adjacent to the main showroom of the **Southward Museum Trust** - the **WurliTzer** became part of the magnificent display of vintage cars, traction engines and organs. The organ was opened in 1983, with the console mounted on a much smaller lift, and the chambers on either side of the auditorium. These days it is featured regularly in concert, and occasionally during days when the museum is open.

*from News South, newsletter of  
the Theatre Organ Club (UK)*

## ORGANS and ORGANISTS

\* Since I typed the above article on NZ organs, we've heard that **Cliff Bingham** has been engaged to play the FINAL concert on the **Hollywood organ**

in **Auckland**, before removal from the cinema.

\* The **WurliTzer** in **New York's Radio City Music Hall** is currently in the first stages of a complete renovation. The main console has been removed from the theatre, but in the meantime the second console will be used to play the massive instrument. The total restoration job is likely to take up to 4 years to complete.

\* **Melbourne's ex-Cinema North** pipe organ is definitely to be installed

in the **Coburg Town Hall**. This organ is a **Blackett and Howden** instrument, controlled by a **Christie** console, relays and switches. It also has an additional rank of **WurliTzer** tibias.

\* As part of the **Canberra Week** celebrations, TOSA ACT will host an Old Time Dance on Monday, 8th March in the **Albert Hall**, home of their **Compton**.

\* The once-largest, pipe-organ company, **Moller**, is to be liquidated and the famous name will cease to exist.



## Margaret Hall's "Kitten on the Keys" - well received in England!

### For Your Listening

"KITTEN ON THE KEYS" — MARGARET HALL at the Orion Centre Wurlitzer

Margaret Hall will be a new name to most British members. She started on popular organ at the age of nine, then benefited from formal studies of piano and organ, gaining the Bachelor of Music Degree. She became a resident theatre organist at 14 years of age and has been featured at three Australian National Conventions. This (first) recording was made on the excellent Orion Centre; Campsie, organ, originally a Style 260 (3-15) Wurlitzer, rebuilt and enlarged by the TOSA (New South Wales Division) under John Parker's direction. The organ is bright, but very well regulated; the English horn is very 'spiky', the strings (on & off trem) excellent, the tibia satisfying (though not exceptional) and the ensemble blends as a theatre organ should.

The tape starts with a bright and clean rendition of Levy's MUSIC OF THE MOVIES with close attention to detail. Gershwin's SOMEONE TO WATCH OVER ME follows, including the verse, beautifully phrased. SERENATA (Leroy Anderson) is again nice and clean, featuring percussions which speak with clarity and to good effect. There is a hint of John Seng in the conclusion! An interesting, if rather lengthy, arrangement of THE CONTINENTAL is taken just at the right speed, with diversity of registration and a good, understated ending. An Irving Berlin medley is well put together, but suffers (unaccountably in view of Miss Hall's general musical excellence) from blatant melody errors in ALWAYS and TOP HAT. Other tracks include SOMEWHERE OUT THERE, KITTEN ON THE KEYS (clean, perfect tempo — rhythm organ at its best!), and an interesting, well thought out, orchestral arrangement of Noel Gay's music from ME & MY GIRL. AM I BLUE is beautifully 'bluesy' and contrasts with the happy ROW, ROW, ROW which includes the verse (most entertaining!). CALLING ALL WORKERS is controlled and accurate, but VOICES OF SPRING somehow lacks the Viennese 'lilt' and is not completely accurate. Louis Armstrong's WONDERFUL WORLD features an interesting pedal line, 2nd touch accents — a sensitive interpretation of an all too rarely heard song. The finale really swings — BANDSTAND BOOGIE is played in true 'big band style' with all the right harmonies, syncopation, clean tremos off registrations, and a proper bass line, and brings the recording to a joyful conclusion.

Despite the few reservations expressed, this is an excellent debut with a bold, imaginative, sensitive, entertaining and musical performance. The recording is very good, with very little background noise, exploiting the 'stereo' arrangement of the organ. The imaginative cover features a colour photo of Margaret at the console in the company of kittens and keys. Inside there is copious information on artist, instrument, and the music. **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED!**

JOHN MARSHALL

(Available, price £5.50 plus 50 pence postage, from Geoff Day, COS Sales Officer, 105 Highview, Vigo Village, MEOPHAM, Kent, DA13 0TQ).

The above article appeared in the January, 1993, issue of the UK's **Cinema Organ Society's** Newsletter. Support our local artists of international standards and achievements. You don't have to go to England, or convert your dollars into pounds, to get a copy of Margaret's terrific cassette - it is available right here at all our TOSA concerts or, by Mail Order, from:

TOSA (NSW Division) Inc., 304 Parramatta Rd, Ashfield, NSW, 2131, for **ONLY \$15.00.**

### FOR SALE

**Gulbransen** electric pianola with automatic expression. Has been fully overhauled - new hammers, felts, etc., and the pneumatics have all been recovered and retubed. The white keys are all new and the instrument has a very good, rich tone. The piano will play ordinary 88 note pianola rolls and Recordo or automatic-expression rolls with full expression. This piano would be ideal to connect to a Theatre Organ, as the loudness can be controlled easily. Solenoid kits are available from overseas to interface pianolas and organ consoles. Asking only \$3,900 with 200 rolls.

Contact Colin Tringham on 419 3739.

### CORN CORNER



Allan Tassaker, that fairly new member, tells us he is in need of an organ repair man. He says he has just stuck a knife and an axe into his keyboard. He reckons his music book instructed him to:

"Attack the keyboard with great vigour"!



# REMEMBER TO BOOK TO HEAR DAVID PARSONS ON THE ORION WURLITZER

Booking form on back page

\*\*\*\*\*

## Profile of DAVID PARSONS O.A.M.

\*\*\*\*\*

David Parsons began piano lessons at the age of 8 and started to receive pipe organ tuition when he was 12 years old from his father, who had a Licentiate Degree from London College of Music. With his father also a Minister of the Church of England, David had virtually unlimited access to a large pipe organ where he became Church Organist at the age of 14. He was Chapel Organist at Callan Park Psychiatric Hospital for 17 years, organist and choirmaster at St Phillip's Church, Eastwood from 1965 to 1977, and is now organist and choirmaster at St Matthew's Church, West Pennant Hills.

David has been a member of the Theatre Organ Society since 1967 and he has given many concerts on the few remaining, famous theatre organs - he played the **Capitol Theatre's 3/15 WurliTzer** for the 1967 Convention and during the final concert before its removal from the theatre; the **State Theatre's 4/21 WurliTzer** for 2 Society concerts, including the 1977 Convention; the **Lyceum Theatre's Christie** for many Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Services; and the **Prince Edward Theatre's 2/10 WurliTzer**, now installed in **Marrickville Town Hall**, where he has played some

5 concerts, including the Fifth Birthday Concert in its new home. His first recording, called "**Long Live the WurliTzer**" was made on the **Marrickville organ** in 1974. He has also recorded on the organ in the **Great Hall of Newcastle Univesity**, which has a very large Conn 3-manual, custom-built, electronic pipe organ.

Undoubtedly a highlight of his musical career was in 1969 when he became the Australian Champion Yamaha Organist, and represented Australia in the world finals in **Tokyo, Japan**, which included a 2 week tour of the country as a guest of **Yamaha**. He was placed seventh in a field of 19 world finalists, from a total of over 3,000 contestants.

At 2 separate all-Gershwin concerts at the **NSW Conservatorium of Music**, David was invited to play organ for the Concerto in F for 2 pianos and organ, as well as 2 solo spots during the performances.

A more recent highlight in his career was the invitation by the **Sydney Opera House Trust** to give an inaugural concert on the new **Grand Organ** on 28th June, 1979. So successful was this

concert that the **Sydney Morning Herald** wrote on its front page next morning, "An audience claimed to be the largest-ever for an **Opera House** concert assembled in the **Concert Hall** to hear the **Grand Organ**. Yesterday, 3,000 people crammed into the Hall which seats 2,700 to hear a concert by David Parsons, whilst another 1,000 watched it on video screens in the foyer." As a direct result of this success, he was invited, by public demand, to give another concert on 7th August, as part of the inaugural series, which an estimated 2,000 people attended.

Finally, David holds regular organ concerts in his own home to raise funds for community and charitable organisations. He plays a large **Conn 651 Theatre Organ**, with 3 sets of pipe speakers, for an average of 70 people each week, and these evenings are so popular that they are booked up approximately 15 months in advance. As a culmination of all his efforts in bringing pleasure to so many people, he was awarded the Order of Australia Medal (O.A.M.) in the 1985 Queen's Birthday Honours List.

A very popular person and a superb organist!

### FROM HIS REVIEWS

"Those who were unable to attend the David Parsons Concert ...missed one of our best presentations for many years."

"The audience gave David's well-chosen programme an enthusiastic reception."

"Many organists would do well to follow David's style when introducing his items - not one

word too many, and his carefully-worded, well-modulated and enthusiastically delivered introductions made you expect something good even before his fingers touched the manuals."

"Something for everyone."

"What a delightful afternoon's entertainment!!"

"As the afternoon progressed I was absolutely delighted with David's selection of music, the wide variety of numbers chosen and his very professional presentation."

"His selections were varied and exceptionally interesting and his introductions to each piece of music precise and never intrusive."