

TOSA

APRIL 2004

volume 43 number 3

news

Price \$ 2.00

*TOSA is Proud to Present Two
Young Stars of Australian
Theatre Organ*

Mathew
Loeser



from *Adelaide*

David
Bailey



from *Brisbane*

Sunday, 18th April, at 2pm
MARRICKVILLE Town Hall

TOSA NEWS

APRIL, 2004

THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW DIVISION) Inc.

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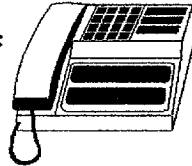
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TOSA News Items, Advertisements - EDITOR

All numbers use the prefix 02 from outside NSW

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COMING EVENTS

APRIL

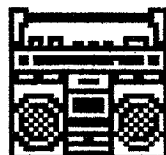
- Monday 5 at 7.30pm Committee Meeting
- Thursday 8 at 1.30pm Members' Playing Afternoon
Orion Centre Campsie
Phone 9716 0151 to confirm
- Sunday 18 at 2.00pm David Bailey
AND Mathew Loeser Concert
Marrickville Town Hall
- Thursday 22 at 7.30pm Members' Playing Evening
Marrickville Town Hall
Phone 9798 6742 to confirm

MAY

- Monday 3 at 7.30pm Committee Meeting
- Thursday 13 at 1.30pm Members' Playing Afternoon
Orion Centre Campsie
Phone 9716 0151 to confirm
- Sunday 23 at 2.00pm Chris McPhee Concert
Marrickville Town Hall
- Thursday 27 at 7.30pm Members' Playing Evening
Marrickville Town Hall
Phone 9798 6742 to confirm

JUNE

- Monday 7 at 7.30pm Committee Meeting
- Thursday 10 at 1.30pm Members' Playing Afternoon
Orion Centre Campsie
Phone 9716 0151 to confirm
- Thursday 24 at 7.30pm Members' Playing Evening
Marrickville Town Hall
Phone 9798 6742 to confirm



2MBS-FM102.5 on Tuesday 13th April at 12.30pm
for "Theatre Pipe Organ - Seriously"
And on Saturday 10th April at 6.00pm
for "Colours of the King",
Both presented by Andrew Grahame

From The President

Hello again !

The results of the *TOSA News* reader survey were both interesting and encouraging. First up I would like to thank those 40% of recipients who responded. That was better than I expected in a survey like this.

Between 90 and 99% of responding readers always read the "Editorial", "From the President", "Coming Events" and the write up of coming artists.

Between 80 and 90% always read "From the Mailbox" and "Concert Reviews". Of the other sections of the Magazine, none rated below 58%, and many people read sections "sometimes" as you would expect.

I trust our Editor will get the message that his work is appreciated - likewise the contributors to the magazine.

The final question had nothing to do with *TOSA News* and showed that only 3% always listen to our program on radio (IBC). This is to some extent because a lot of people are not within broadcast range. That is why the program has now been discontinued.

We were also encouraged by the good number of patrons who supported the Michelle Nicolle and Ryan Heggie concert in February. They were well entertained. But they also helped



with one of *TOSA's* prime objectives - to encourage young artists. With that in mind, I would like to urge you to come to the Mathew Loeser and David Bailey concert at Marrickville on Sunday 18th April. These interstate young guys are enthusiastic and very talented. Let's show them we are with them all the way!

Oh - one other thing. Someone asked why the Campsie *Wurlitzer* keeps bobbing up and down during some concerts. One answer is, of course, that Neil Palmer loves pressing the 'GO' button on the hoist, and does it with great flair and skill. The other answers are that when one artist is playing the organ and the other is at the grand piano it is necessary to lower the console so the artists can see each other and so the audience can see the piano (as well as half the console).

All for now - watch this space.

Walter Pearce

Editorial

Thank you to the kind members who expressed their satisfaction with the current contents and format of *TOSA News*, whether personally or by means of the recent survey. It's good to know that the time and effort put into producing the newsletter every month is repaid by members at least reading most of each issue.

Thank you, too, for the suggested improvements, some of which can be implemented over time but some of which are, for various reasons, simply impossible - *TOSA* is after all a non-profit organisation staffed by volunteers who are, at present, unable to perform miracles. More help would be appreciated with the supplying of interesting articles - these have to come mostly from members and if *TOSA News* is "boring" it's because members with interesting things to say have not put pen to paper for the benefit of *TOSA News* readers. People often forget that I am only "editor", not "journalist", "research officer" or "article writer", etc.

The predicted rush from members volunteering to edit *TOSA News* has (un)surprisingly not eventuated, and so you are stuck with me, at least for a little while longer. However, I will always be ready to step aside when the right person comes forward to take over and improve the quality of our "old-fashioned" newsletter.

Special thanks go to our valued contributors to this issue - to Wendy Hambly for the concert report (pp.7-8), to Merv Lock of Queensland for the description of the Kelvin Grove Christie (pp.5-6) and to William Spencer for the article about the history of the Kings Cross Theatre's *Wurlitzer* (pp.9-12) and to Ron McVeigh and Bob Cornish for their letters (p.4).

See you at Marrickville on 18th April.

Best Wishes,
Colin Groves

To contact the *Promotions Team* with your ideas and support :

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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 12th of the preceding month



From The MAILBOX

Ron McVeigh of Kirrawee writes:

In the current issue, March 2004, I found the articles of Bob Cornish's reminiscences on the Sydney State Theatre, and John Gardiner's "A Capitol Performance" about the Sydney Capitol Theatre, to be of particular interest.

As a boy in the 1940's I would always enjoy a visit to each of these theatres, admiring the theatres themselves - the sparkling chandelier in the State Theatre, and the glittering stars and rolling clouds in the ceiling of the Capitol Theatre, and always enjoying the sight and sounds as the organ rose up from below floor level in each of these theatres.

I often feel that these experiences are sadly missing from the cinema presentations of today, for the impressive sounds of the theatre organ, and the ornate decoration and coloured lighting presentation of these theatres of the past greatly added to the pleasure of "going to the pictures".

Keep up the good work, and thank you for doing the job of editor, which I'm sure is not an easy one.

Best wishes,
Ron McVeigh

Bob Cornish of Buff Point writes:

Thank you for inserting my article on the State Theatre Wurlitzer in the March '04 edition.

At the risk of appearing "greedy for fame", I'm forwarding you a little info. on the Capitol Theatre that, surprisingly to me, was not mentioned in John Gardiner's very enjoyable piece entitled "A Capitol Performance". Perhaps the Producer of the below-mentioned live show, Tibor Rudas, found the "Wurly" unsuitable for that particular show, or maybe the organ at the time might not have been "up to scratch", Rudas being the perfectionist he was, insisted on only the best.

However, for the benefit of our TOSA

members, who may not be aware, Rudas was the foremost Theatrical Entrepreneur in Australia at that time, when vaudeville reigned supreme, and the famous Tivoli vaudeville theatre was destined for the wrecker's hammer in due course. Which is why Rudas, who had previously enthralled patrons of the Tivoli with his beautiful Acrobatic Dance Adagio act (consisting of his attractive wife "Baba", his twin brother Andrew, and of course himself) eventually leased the Capitol Theatre, "dressed" it up a bit, and produced a spectacular Review in that venue. This was in the 60's, and Rudas then went to Las Vegas in USA, to establish a Theatrical Agency, where he was able to engage the "Three Tenors", (Pavarotti, Domingo and Carreras). Rudas was instrumental in urging these three world famous tenors to appear together in the one show, and as we all know, it was a world success.

"Tibby" Rudas has two lovely daughters, (Evelyn and Marilyn) who also were involved in show-business, and it was, because of this, and my own involvement in that business as a Professional Acrobat at the famous, aforementioned Tivoli ("Starry Way", 1947) the Rudas family and mine became staunch friends.

The remarkable sequel to that Tivoli show came about many years later, when I was invited to see the wonderful nostalgic show "Encore, Encore!" at the St. George Leagues Club. This was a complete revival of a Tivoli vaudeville show, starring all the glamorous dancers and showgirls of that era, most of whom were just as shapely (and glamorous) as of yesteryear! Their talent hadn't diminished either!

But not forgetting our TOSA organ members ... the Musical Director of that

marvellous show was none other than the very talented and certainly organ-oriented Mr. Chris Marshall, who I noticed, all through the programme, only left his piano-stool at interval (the show lasted two and a half hours!). Pity he didn't play the organ, many of which he displayed in his organ shop!

And for a juicy Finalé to this anecdote, and for the benefit of all the "mature" TOSA members ... that previously-mentioned Capitol Theatre show of Tibor Rudas', was the first show in Australia to feature a completely nude female showgirl (provided she did not move at all for the full seven minutes on stage!)

Bob Cornish

(Is this why living in BUFF Point appeals to you, Bob??? - Ed.)

Members' Playing Sessions

We had a pleasant afternoon at the Orion on Thursday 11th March. All the more so for the cool breeze coming through the open side doors - the day after a record heat wave!

Players were Jack Rose, Walter Pearce, Wendy Hambly, Ron Ivin, Rich Marschall and John Batts. Listeners Betty Rose, Cath Hardin, John Atkins, Jenny Pearce, Ed Hambly, Debra Marschall and Paul Luci.

Sorry the 25th evening at Marrickville had to be cancelled.

Concert & Membership Prices

The following TOSA concert ticket prices now apply :

	Australian Artists	Overseas Artists
Non-members	\$22	\$25
Non-member Pension	\$20	\$22
TOSA Members	\$18	\$18
Students 15 - 21yrs	\$10	\$10
Child under 15 yrs with an adult : FREE		

Membership Fees are now:

\$30 for full membership, and

\$20 for Concession, Country, Interstate & Overseas.

The following article was supplied by Merv Lock of the Queensland Division of TOSA and was printed in the March - April 2003 issue of the WA Tremulant. The WA editor, Joseph Hegney, commented, "It is interesting reading about these instruments with the thought that maybe there is a National need to see that the history involved is not lost forever."

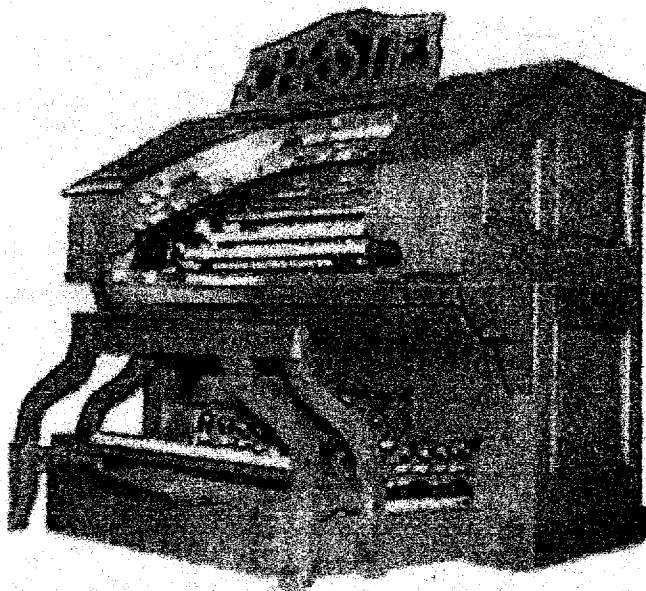
The Kelvin Grove Christie Unit Organ

The *Christie* Unit Organ now installed in the Auditorium of the Kelvin Grove State College is owned by the Queensland Division of the Theatre Organ Society of Australia. It was originally the property of the Granada Cinema Circuit of England and installed in their theatre in Maidstone, Kent.

The organ was built and installed by Hill, Norman and Beard in late 1933. It was listed as Opus 2911, a 3-manual, 8-rank instrument. The theatre opened on Wednesday, January 10th, 1934 - the organ being admirably demonstrated by Alex Taylor.

The organ is called a "*Christie*" after John Christie who became Chairman, and major shareholder, of H.N.&B. on 1st June, 1923. This followed financial difficulties in the company resulting in Dr Arthur Hill, joint managing director, being obliged to sell his shares. Incidentally, Dr. Hill died barely a fortnight later (June 16th).

The organ remained in continuous use until September, 1968, when nature struck a cruel blow to the Granada. The rivers Medway and Len overflowed their banks, flooding the theatre and other nearby properties, causing extensive damage. The stalls were completely under water, carpeting, seats, curtains, screen and organ console being severely damaged. The rest of the organ - pipes and blowing plant - were all at dress circle level and undamaged. The last to play the Granada



Christie was John Simmonds, a local organist.

During 1970, TOSA Qld became aware that the organ was for sale and made a successful bid for the organ (minus the console) and all other associated machinery. The services of organ builder, David Pawlyn, were arranged to remove and pack the organ for shipment to Australia. It arrived in January, 1971, in two shipping

containers and was in excellent condition, a credit to the packer.

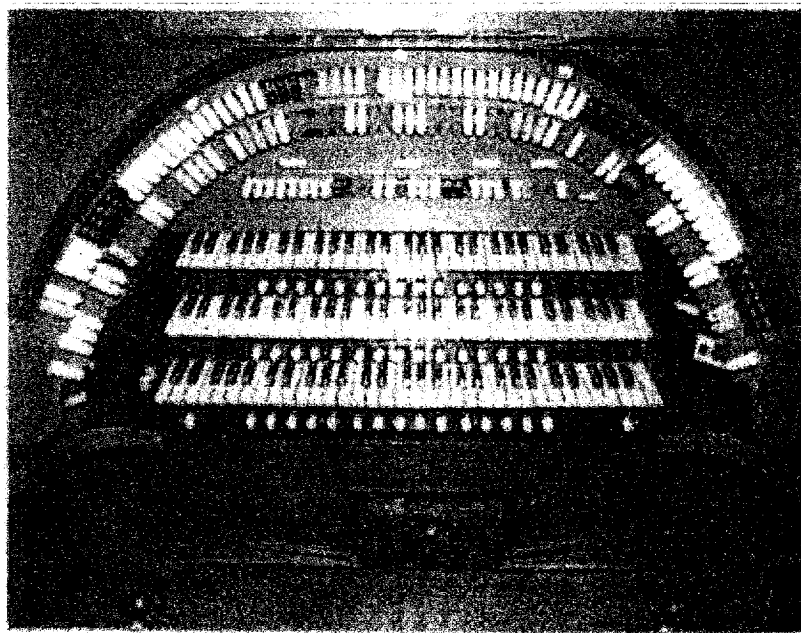
About the same time, a 2-manual *Christie* console became available locally. This console was from the organ of the Empire Theatre, Dunedin, New Zealand. The organ from there had been imported into Australia by Sydney organist, Penn Hughes, and installed in his home. The console from this organ became available when a 4-manual console replaced it.

Incidentally, the Penn Hughes organ became the core of the organ now owned by TOSA South Aust. and installed in their Capri Theatre.

The 2-manual console was converted to 3, the extra manual coming from local organ builders, Whitehouse Bros. After many hours of voluntary work by TOSA members, the organ was installed in two chambers at Kelvin Grove, virtually as it was in Maidstone. The only difference was that at Kelvin Grove the chambers are either side of the stage - in Maidstone they were side by side, on one side of the proscenium.

The inaugural concert was given by Melbourne organist Tony Fenelon on Monday, November 24th, 1975.

During 1995 it was becoming evident that the *Christie* was 'tired' and in need of major work. During October of that year, English organist Len Rawle was visiting to play a concert and a meeting was called while he was here to seek his advice on the 'way ahead' for the organ. His advice



closely paralleled the thoughts that some of our members had.

It was decided that a complete rebuild was necessary and the opportunity should be taken to address original design shortcomings and bring the organ up to modern standards.

The major shortcomings were in the winding and the disposition of the ranks. The disposition of the ranks in Maidstone, and as originally installed in Kelvin Grove, was Main Chamber (left, looking from auditorium) - Diapason, Viol, Viol Celeste and Flute; Solo Chamber - Tibia, Tuba, Vox Humana and Trumpet.

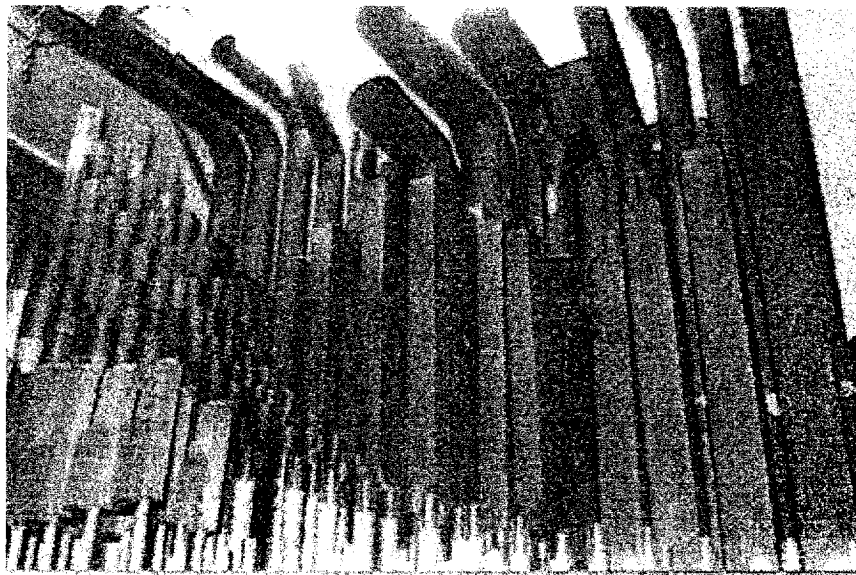
It is interesting that in the original plans for Maidstone, the Trumpet was shown at the front of the chamber and the Vox at the back. The original building frames show evidence that that is how it was originally installed, but it soon became apparent that the Vox couldn't be heard, buried at the back of the chamber, so the Trumpet and the Vox were swapped. It was decided in the rebuild to once again bring the Trumpet to the front where it could speak out with more authority.

Other changes in the Solo Chamber allowed the Vox to be positioned in the middle of the chamber, from where it is very successful.

The other major change with the original ranks was to move the Tuba from the Solo to the Main Chamber. This enabled the Tuba to blend correctly with the Diapason and for the two big reeds to be under separate control.

Those changes were relatively easy compared with the winding changes required! The big problem with the winding was the whole organ was on tremulants. Basses on trem sound terrible and rob the bass line of firmness and definition. Also the basses use large amounts of wind which makes the adjustment of the trem difficult, and always a compromise.

It is generally accepted today that the trem on this type of organ should start at 4ft C for the flues and 8ft C for



the reeds. The reeds were no trouble as the only reed to extend to 16ft was the Tuba, and it had a separate 16ft offset chest. The flues which extended to the top of 2ft, the Tibia, Viol and Flute, were the problem as their manual chests started at 2ft C. Because of the small scale of the Viol, its pipes could be moved up one octave after reboring the rackboard holes. This was not possible with the Tibia and Flute - the only solution was to build new chests.

This made the original chests surplus to requirements, so it was decided to add two more ranks, a Clarinet and Orchestral Oboe.

At the original meeting it was suggested that a Solo String would be 'nice', so a total of three new chests have been built to bring the organ up to 11 ranks.

So the mission was accomplished - all basses are now on separate regulated static wind. A total of five additional regulators were built.

The rank disposition of the 'new' organ is : Main Chamber - Diapason, Viol, Viol Celeste, Flute, Clarinet and Tuba; Solo Chamber - Tibia, Vox Humana, Trumpet, Orch. Oboe and Solo String, for a total pipe count of 839.

When the original 2-manual console was converted to 3, some compromises had to be made. There was insufficient space for the original Maidstone stop-list, resulting in some deletions.

Also, some of the dimensions were not correct - namely the distance the pedalboard was under the manuals.

With the re-specified stop-list

reinstating those deletions and incorporating the additional ranks, new stop-rails with more space would be required. Together with the dimension corrections, we were looking at some really major woodwork.

After a lot of thought, it was concluded that it would be easier to start from scratch and build a new console.

Parts from the old console that were used included : music desk, bench, knee boards, toe piston woodwork, swell pedals, pedal board and keyboards.

The *Whitehouse* 'ring-in' keyboard has been replaced with a genuine *Christie* keyboard obtained from the Bendigo Organ Society who have built a 3-manual console from two 2-manual consoles!

New parts installed in the console included : stop-actions from *Syndyne, USA*, engraved stop-tabs from *Hesco, USA*, and piston buttons from *Kimber Allen, UK*.

A new, range-settable, 8-level memory stop-capture has been installed and controls a total of 171 stops from 55 pistons. This replaces the mechanical switches in the back of the old console which used to control only 16 piston

The first concert on the new organ was on Friday 13th April 2001 as part of the TOSA Easter Convention.

Advertising in TOSA News

For members:

Small, organ-related
advertisement = FREE

For all other cases :

Small bubble = \$11

Quarter page = \$24.75

Half page = \$49.50

Full page = \$99

Full page insert = \$125.00

(Payable in advance)

'Hooray for Hollywood' is a great opener and with Ryan at the console and Michelle perched on the side of the bench the console rose to loud applause from the audience. All stops out, with good use of second touch for a jazzy, bright opener.

While Michelle moved to the grand piano, Ryan introduced 'Java Jive' - piano to start, with organ using underlying tibia/flute ensemble. Lots of piano statements with organ response and good use of traps, with cymbal to pedal, and a 6/9 chord to end. Next came the theme from 'Forest Gump' - Michelle on piano to start - a delightful melody with Ryan joining on organ with flutes/strings and takes the melody - a solemn middle section, building in intensity with second touch for accents - returning to original melody and registrations - just lovely.

(Now for Michelle on organ with 'Arab Dance' from Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* - untremmed flute/diapason ensemble, gradually adding stops with left hand vamp - very rhythmic. Next came a medley from Bernstein's 'West Side Story' - first a short full theatre organ fanfare with 'Tonight', then cutting back to a lighter registration with oboe for 'I Feel Pretty', with a glissando down and adding glock for a slow bridge to 'Maria' - a quiet piece with tibia/flute ensemble, then on to a lively 'America' with castanets, then back to a softer registration for 'Tonight', then build up again using second touch for accents for a big finish. A little Gershwin now - 'The Man I Love'. Quiet flute/tias/tuba introduction, with underlying accompaniment and then a different solo voice for each phrase. Also, fractional tibias in middle section, with a baion base. Add strings to melody, then to full chords both hands for dramatic effect, cutting back to single note melody to end.

Ryan on organ now with Michelle on piano for Schumann's 'Dedication'. Piano to start with soft flute/tibia organ accompaniment underneath. Then organ takes melody and add strings to registration. A very restful piece. As Ryan moved to the piano for the next duet, he affectionately referred to the organ as a 'beautiful box of whistles'. I agree. With Michelle on organ we heard 'Liebestraum' (Liszt) - organ to start with melody and piano accompanying with arpeggios - build up organ

Michelle Nicolle and Ryan Heggie Concert Review

by

Wendy Hambly

ORION
CENTRE
CAMPSIE

Sunday,
15th February,
2004

registration, then instruments swap parts. Lots of 'feel'.

It's jazz time now with Ryan on organ - 'Up the Lazy River'. Untremmed string/reed melody with a left hand vamp. Next section, add tibias

for statement/response between manuals. Build registration to full theatre organ and add glock with a 6/9 chord and cymbal to finish. Great stuff. Still in jazz mode - 'Nancy' - diapason melody with flute accompaniment, then add tuba for melody - a very laid-back feel with a different solo voice for each phrase. Just lovely. Now for 'Tico Tico' with 'The Parrot' - untremmed strings/full theatre organ vamp left hand. Then add tuba and string right hand and castanets left hand. Busy right hand with great use of traps. A fun piece with great lighting as well. Big chord to end.

Something very different now - 'Phantom Regiment' - Leroy Anderson - vamp left hand - a distant trumpet with the right hand. Increase registration as regiment marches closer and a battle ensues, then back to original registration as regiment marches into the distance. I really liked this one. With Michelle returning to the piano we had 'Arabesque' - Debussy - this quiet, dreamy piece has been described as being 'fragile as a spider's web' - an apt description, I think. Piano to start with soft tibias underneath - almost like softly falling rain. Then organ takes a section with strings/vox/tibias, then piano rejoins. Waltz time now with 'Voices of Spring' - Strauss - this glorious piece always conjures up pictures of a grand ball room for me - statement/response between instruments with a big finish. Just great!

The second half of the programme opened with one of my favourite pieces - a piano duet - 'Root Beer Rag' - just great. Next came 'Benedictus' - Ryan organ/Michelle piano, with piano playing accompaniment and organ using tibias/string/vox to take the vocal part - a haunting piece. Now for 'Clair De Lune' - Debussy - Ryan on piano accompanies with Michelle on organ responding with underlying held chords with tibias, then add vox and diapason. Lots of feel in this piece - just soooooo beautiful.

'Puttin' on the Ritz' (Berlin) came next with Michelle on organ - jazzy, full-of-life number with lots of good fill-ins. Michelle moved to the piano next, for a fast piece from 'Children's Corner Suite' - Debussy - much like a child racing through their piano exercises and scales, just bursting to be out of doors, rather than practising the piano - except that this piece was tuneful and fun.

Ryan returns to the organ now with 'Dambusters March' – full theatre organ with crash cymbal for accents. Next section saxophone/tibias right hand with a vamp left hand – next section add glock and then back to original theme, with second touch for accents. Then cut to half pace and then change key and build up registration to a big finish.

Blues time now – 'Lover Man' – quiet, muted start with tuba melody and next section soft tibias, then back to tuba and krummet – very laid back. Build up registration with great counter melodies left hand for a quiet ending. Just lovely.

Something really modern – 'Rhondo' from *London Bridge* – with jazz improvisation and a big fat sound – vamp left hand while right hand does

a merry dance. I heard cymbals, castanets, reeds and lots more. Good light and shade and lots of runs and fill-ins.

Next came 'Finlandia' – untremmed with diapason – full chords both hands – very sombre and formal. Building up registration with post horn accents, then dying away – very expressive with good use of fractional tibias and vox for muted effect, then build up to a big finish with cymbal.

With Michelle on piano and Ryan on organ, it's 'Time to Say Goodbye' – what a delightful melody – the instruments talked to each other gently – organ vox and fractionals – just lovely. Of course, a well deserved encore - 'Crazy Organ Rag' – this commenced as a piano duet complete with dancing coloured lights and then

Michelle raced over to the organ to finish this bright jazzy piece. Then Ryan joined her on the organ bench to ride the organ to the pit.

What a delightful concert from two very capable young people – their duets were very 'together' and the instruments complemented each other beautifully. A great deal of time and thought has obviously been put into registrations and arrangements. I enjoyed the variety of organ and piano and the choice of music presented. There was something for everyone – from classic to jazz, and everything in between. I particularly enjoyed the inclusion of some pieces rarely heard, as it really makes me sit up and listen, and increases my listening repertoire. Do hope Michelle and Ryan will be visiting us again in the not too distant future.

Oldest Playable Organ

From the Internet's discussion lists comes the following item of historical trivia :

Chris Hanger wrote : "Many years ago, I had an E. Power Biggs recording that made reference to an organ in Sion, Switzerland, dating from sometime in the 14th century. I have a question that hopefully one of you can answer: where is the oldest playable organ in the world?"

Peter Rodwell of the International Organ Foundation, Madrid, Spain, answered : The Sion organ (spec. follows) is indeed said to be the oldest playable organ (the oldest unplayable one being the Roman organ in the museum in Aquincum, north of Budapest). There are occasional rumors of older, playable instruments.

I once wandered into a small church in a remote village in central Spain and discovered what the caretaker described as a "14th century" organ that had recently been restored. Unfortunately he didn't have the key to open the door leading to the loft, and the light in the church was too dim to see much, but it looked more like 17th century to me from what I could see. I'll have to go back some day and check it out...

Here's the Sion organ's details:

Location: Sion, Switzerland, St Valere Cathedral

Builder: Unknown

Year: c.1390

Action

Key: Mechanical

Stop: Mechanical

Wind pressure: 46 mm

Discography: "L'Orgue de Valère",
Guy Bovet, Gallo CD-088, AAD

Specification:

Manual (C-c2, short octave, 45)

Principal	8'	C-F of wood; rest metal in facade
Octave	4'	C-F plus Coppel 4' metal pipes from G
Coppel	4'	Stopped, wood

Quint Major 2-2/3' Metal

Superoctave 2' Original Gothic stop, metal

Quint Major 1 1/3' Original Gothic stop, metal

Mixtur II 1' Original Gothic stop, metal

Pedal

Subbas 16' With coupled Bourdon 8'

George Candler also responded with a couple of extra details :

The organ at the chapel of St. Valère in Sion, Switzerland, has been played since it was built in 1390-95 and was still playing when we visited there two years ago!

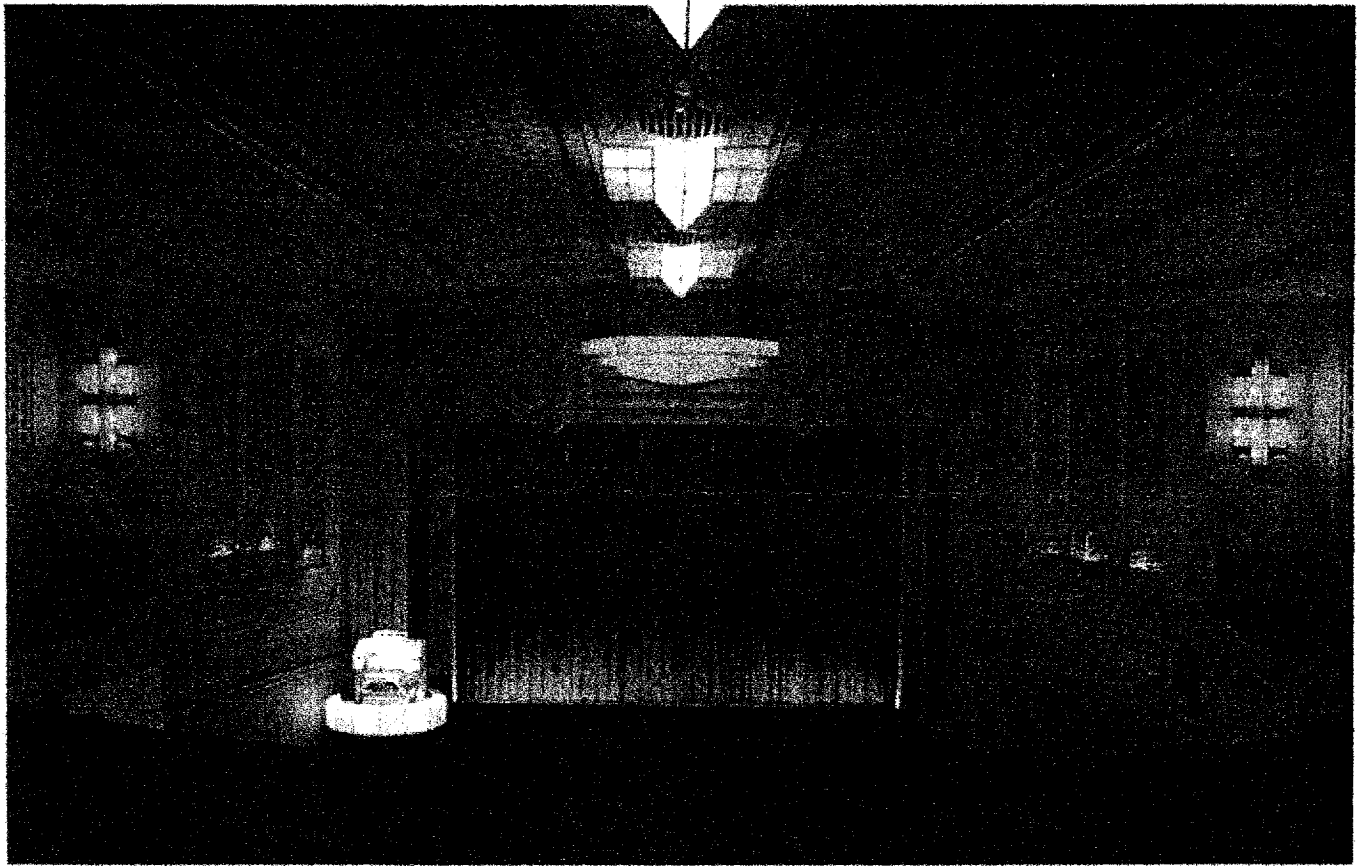
It still has three original ranks of pipes plus five ranks that have been added over the years.

The E. Power Biggs recording was made after the organ's 1954 restoration and there have been many others made since like the Guy Bovet recording that won the 1988 Gold award of the *Académie du Disque Français*.

The organ was originally based on a 4 foot plenum but was modified toward the end of the 17th Century to an 8 foot disposition by the addition of a Pricipal 8', Quint major 2-2/3, Copel 4', Subbas 16'+8+.

It is a very interesting instrument and is very much worth seeing and hearing!

From Soiled Beginnings to Salvation



The sumptuous art deco splendour of the Savoy Theatre Hurstville. At the time this photograph was taken, not long prior to demolition of the theatre, the theatre had been renamed The Mecca. To the left is the Allen Electronic Organ.

Jaded, are you, by the performance of your investments given these uncertain times of stock market crashes and major corporations going belly up as a result of bad management? Well, take this wise tip...investment in Australia's deregulated electricity industry is sure to make your hard-earned fortunes prosper as yet another large theatre organ installation gets connected to the national power grid.

It's not often that we welcome to these pages yet another quality theatre organ installation and this time, it is not one of today's electronic digitone toasters, but a real wind-blown machine as yet another fully paid-up, card carrying Wurlitzer organ finds solace in the former church-converted-music-room of Mr Howard Terrill in Heathcote, Victoria.

His-Story

Opus 1868, a Style H of 2 manuals and 10 ranks, was built by the Rudolph Wurlitzer Company in North Tonawanda, USA at the request of its Australian agents, W.A. Crowle, and separated from its parent fully crated on 4 April 1928. It was destined for Hoyts' *Kings Cross Theatre* in Darlinghurst (an inner city suburb of Sydney, New South Wales) where it opened under the capable hands of Stan Cummins. Darlinghurst was (and still is) that sort of town where individuals have paid homage over the decades to sordid burlesque-type entertainment venues and shopping malls where swiping fresh meat over the check out scanner and buying a slice of pie takes on an entirely new meaning! Opus 1868 contained the usual choice ranks and percussions

Open Diapason, Tuba Horn, Clarinet, Violin, Violin Celeste, Concert Flute, Orchestral Oboe, Kinura, Vox Humana and Tibia Clausa) and it was the third of only three Style H Wurlitzers to come to Australia (the others being the *Prince Edward Theatre* and the *Arcadia Theatre* – both theatres in Sydney). Unique to those instruments was the fact that Opus 1868 was to be the first in this country to have the "New Style" or plain sided console with decorative scroll key-bed support, in the Art Deco range (all of Australia's Style F consoles – the *Wintergarden Theatre, Brisbane, Regent Sydney/Plaza Melbourne Theatre and Metro Theatre, Perth* were given the same treatment). It was also one of the very few instruments in the country with a pressure (as opposed to vacuum) piano.

There are few people, if any, alive today to tell the tale of this innocent and conservative little Wurlitzer amongst the morally corrupted laneways and side streets of Darlinghurst, and, for whatever reason, the mellifluous sounds from this Opus made a somewhat valiant attempt to cleanse the "swirling tassels of sin" of Darlinghurst Road for only a few years. In the mid 1930's, Hoyts Theatres considered that Opus 1868 would be better located under the direction of Mr Jack Hawkins (from Hill Norman & Beard in Clifton Hill, Victoria) to the then new 1200-seat art deco *Savoy Theatre* in Hurstville, which opened on 4 September 1937. Here, Opus 1868 would entertain in a totally different sense than that in its previous incarnation in its new white colouration. After all, it was a family show! The *Savoy* and Opus 1868 were a brilliant team together given the art-deco surroundings, the shallow chambers, generous tone

openings and wonderful acoustics.

Organists who performed at the *Savoy* Wurlitzer included Knight Barnett, who opened the organ in 1937, Barrie Brettoner, Ray Chaffer, Paul Cullen, Dennis Palmistra, Harry Weldon and, finally, Owen Holland who graced the bench of Opus 1868 for 8 years until 1958.

The console rose on a hoist to the left of the stage which was lit by various shades of neon around its perimeter. The hoist mechanism was guided by rails which would enable the console to automatically spin and turn on the way up and down. The late Reg Maddams from New Zealand who played the *Savoy* Wurlitzer whilst on circuit told the following humorous story of the time when things went terribly wrong: "...the console (on the way up) was lurching and crashing and all the glass around the surround was being smashed in sections! I don't know who was more stunned - the audience or me! It took me all my time to keep playing and afterwards I wondered if the audience thought this was my usual way of bringing up, and coming onto the programme. Oh my God, it was an awful experience! Every time I looked around to try and work out what was happening, another bloody crash!! The console went down quite alright because there was no more glass that could be smashed."

Word quickly spread, following the opening of the *Savoy* and its Style H, that this instrument was a real kick-in-the-backside gem! Minor modifications were made during the transplant the most notable being the replacement of the bottom 4 notes of the Wurlitzer 16' Bourdon with a set of much larger scale. Throughout its life in the *Savoy*, the instrument was recorded on at least 2 occasions by Owen Holland, resident organist at Hoyts' flagship *Regent Theatre*, Sydney, on its 3/15 Style 260.

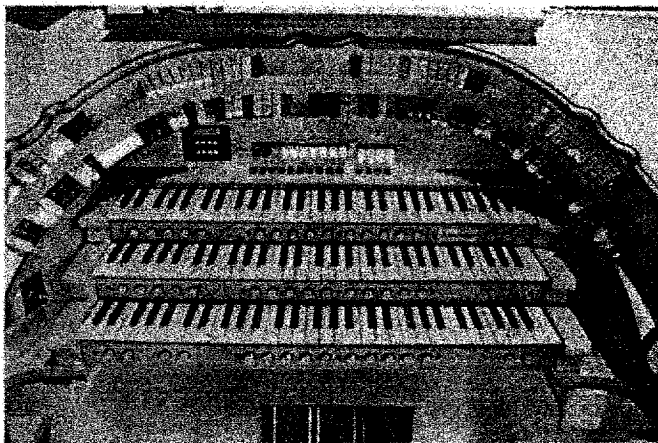
A sad life

It was shortly thereafter that Hoyts Theatre were given a reality shot in the arm regarding the limited use of their theatre instruments and, in 1958, a deal for its sale was brokered with Sydney organist and personality, Penn Hughes. Penn already had installed 16 ranks of various Wurlitzer and non-Wurlitzer pipework in his home, which he had connected to the 4-manual slave console from the Wurlitzer Style 270 installed in Melbourne's *State Theatre*. At that time, he was also resident organist for Burwood Congregational Church who negotiated the purchase of the organ on behalf of the church to install it for their use. Under the direction of Allan Kell (owner of Kell & Rigby who were the builders of the new Parliament House in Canberra!), various members of the church carefully dismantled the Wurlitzer and installed it in its new location.

And what an unusual installation it was - the Main chamber was situated at the front of the church behind the pulpit and the Solo Chamber was installed at the rear of the church in what looked like a huge Hammond PR-40 speaker on steroids. Its electro-pneumatic relays and switchstacks located beneath the Solo Chamber at floor level (you had to walk through the relay room to access a ladder going up to the Solo Chamber). In retrospect, life for Opus 1868 in this church remained unhappy for many years particularly after Penn's death when the instrument succumbed to highbrow anti-electro-pneumatic church organists at its keyboards who dreamed throughout many a service that it would one day be replaced with a more puritanical "stick" organ. To add insult to injury, throughout the course of the organ's life during this period, the choice Orchestral Oboe and Kimura (the latter which found its way eventually to the *Capri*

Theatre 4/29 instrument) and the top 18 pipes of the Tibia Clausa were pilfered and replaced by a low-pressure brand-X principal and fifteenth. Yuk! To accommodate these sacrilegious additions, the entire pressure of the Solo was lowered making the organ sound, to my best recollection, like a breeze blowing over a field of bathtubs!

The potential for a law suit prevents me from disclosing the name of an individual who pestered the church to sell off the rare organ piano, or so the story goes. Similarly, the Chrysoglott was stolen - it simply vanished into thin air! The church decided to donate the Xylophone and Glockenspiel to Radio 2-CBA (the Christian Broadcasting Association) who later sold these components to Arthur Esgate for his classical job (operated from the 4-manual slave console originally from Sydney's opulent *State Theatre*). These eventually found their way to the 3-manual Compton/Christie in Dallas Brookes Hall in Melbourne. The only tonal percussion that remained was, not surprisingly, the Cathedral Chimes (and even the Midnight Organ Supply would not leave these alone, taking three of the 25 note set that probably now adorn some residential hallway, forever destined to a life as a clanging doorbell).



Shot of the 3-manual electronic which replaced the Conn which replaced the Wurlitzer!

The fallboard, where one would find all of the tabs for these components as well as the stops for second touch, was replaced with a plain piece of wood, the tremulant tabs being moved in the process to the extreme right of the Solo stop-rail where some of the tonal percussion were once indicated. Even the regulator springs disappeared - imagine the horror of seeing Wurlitzer regulators restrained in doing their thing by bits of rope! Mercy

The word according to the Book of McDonald

In 1990, the church succumbed to the multifarious cries of its unsympathetic organists, and put the organ up for tender. In December of that year, the organ's saviour, in the form of one Steve McDonald purchased the instrument to fulfil his dream to own his own theatre pipe organ for his specially built music room in his beautiful Californian bungalow in Banksmeadow, NSW. Steve, at that time, had owned the 2-manual Style F console from Sydney's Plaza Theatre (originally *Wintergarden Theatre*, Brisbane) with an assortment of pipes from various manufacturers. The prospect of owning a pedigree instrument was not only too enticing, but the restoration and installation would prove to be an easier task than the assembly of odd bits and pieces.

Over the coming months, the organ was carefully removed and lovingly stored and restoration of the instrument began in earnest. First, the console:- this involved the complete gutting of the console and keyboards and the removal of the

pneumatic action. The Console shell was then sent to a professional for French polishing - the poor man little realising the magnitude of the work required - and completed the work to the highest professional standard at a very reasonable price. It is probably the most exquisitely finished 2-manual console around and, for a long time, took pride of place in the music room. Its beautiful high gloss rose-mahogany finish is said, by many overseas visitors well qualified to comment, to be far superior to any that came out of the factory and looks far from something that ought to have handles and be carried out by pallbearers! And so it should be! It was intended to be a treasured part of Steve's home furnishings. All metalwork was chrome plated

Theatre Adelaide which had been built by George Stephens for the Capri Wurlitzer and became superfluous to their needs after the massive enlargement effort in 1995 was purchased to provide a fine chorus reed stop, and a second large scaled Vox Humana from St. Stephens Uniting Church, Sydney was given a more enhanced Vox Humana Chorus. A Wurlitzer toy counter from an earlier instrument was acquired to replace the instrument's original one.

Work then started on the restoration of the wind chests, starting with the off-note strings (2 of which had been badly water damaged). As with all other chest restoration, all screws, gaskets and pneumatics were removed and all surfaces cleaned to original bare surfaces. New gaskets were made and all pneumatics were releathered. Valves were either cleaned or replaced and the screws and washers cleaned or replaced and resurfaced.

All woodwork was sanded, sized and new shellac applied (approximately 4 coats). The Main chamber swell engines, of which there are 2, were also fully restored. The Solo 5 rank chest which accommodates the Vox Humana, Orchestral Oboe, Tibia Clausa, Tuba and Kinura was stripped, repaired, cleaned, re-gasketed, sanded, sized and shellacked with 6 coats no less and all secondary motors releathered.

The 3-phase blower, a 2 stage (fan) Spencer Orgoblo with 5 horsepower and 22 inches of static wind pressure behind it, was professionally dismantled, sand blasted, primed and re-enamelled. The company reported that the motor was not in need of overhaul and that the bearings and brushes were in excellent condition.

At Steve's request, a revised stop layout was drawn by John Giacchi within the parameters of the existing electro-pneumatic stop-rail. At the owner's request, appropriate couplers were added to enable the instrument to take on a Blackpool characteristic. Devoid of fundamental and deemed unnecessary by many of today's specifiers, the 16' tenor C Vox Humana stop remained on the Accompaniment manual as per Wurlitzer's original intent.

Requiem

As Julie Andrews voiced in *The Sound of Music*, where God closes a door, somewhere he opens a window. The value of Steve's Banksmeadow property became too good to refuse given the out-of-control rise in property prices in recent years, and so the house was placed on the market and sold. The nightmare of having to move 12 ranks of pipes and percussions and various hardware, had, once again, begun. Regrettably, he resigned himself to the conclusion that the project would never come to fruition, and so, the instrument, in its semi-restored state, was once again, open for tender.

Eternal Salvation

Halleluia! Howard Terrill, long-time member of TOSA(VIC) purchased many years ago an old church in Heathcote, Victoria, and transformed it into a music room full of other instruments (both pipe and electronic) and much musical love. A purchase price was negotiated for Opus 1868 and it was shortly loaded and on the road again



The upstairs lounge of the Savoy Theatre, shortly prior to demolition. Note wilting potplant reluctantly anticipating the arrival of the wrecker's ball.

and enamelled as required, including the 3 swell pedals, 2 sforzando (piano type) pedals and the toe studs. All console pneumatics were re-built from scratch and/or replaced where missing. The keyboards were rebushed and professionally recovered with ivory grained celluloid specially imported from the United Kingdom for the task. All stop tabs were repolished, re-aligned, adjusted, and replaced where necessary with Wurlitzer originals. The pedal board naturals were all replaced - the sharps were in good condition. At the threat of police prosecution, the original fallboard and other bits and pieces that had gone missing over the years mysteriously reappeared and were restored!

To bring the organ back to its original specification, Steve contacted Russ Evans in Seattle, USA whose super-keen sense of investigation managed to scout around and locate a set of Kinura pipes (manufactured by Kimball) and an Orchestral Oboe (manufactured by Dennison) to replace the ones originally removed. Although these ranks will certainly fit the bill, obtaining authentic Wurlitzer ranks was cost prohibitive taking into account our third-world exchange rate and the costs of transportation. Adelaide organ builder George Stephens, rebuilt the missing pipes of the Tibia Clausa and extended it to become a full Twelfth. George also made repairs to some of the pipework which had sustained minor damage.

A further 2 ranks of pipes were acquired to enhance the specification to 12 ranks. A Trumpet from the *Capri*

to its final resting place. The organ had been basically fully restored single handed by Steve and all that Howard was required to complete were the restoration of the regulators, percussions and tremulants. This, along side the installation of the Wurlitzer was ably completed by Ian Wakeley. In addition, John Andrews from Sydney was commissioned to replace the reliable original electro-pneumatic switch-stack with a solid state computer relay.

So, on a cold Melbourne winter's night when the much needed rain is cascading down the windows of the conservatory, and you are securely snug before the television enjoying your hot cocoa beneath your throw-over with the cat nestled close to your feet, and the lights suddenly dim causing you to reach for the nearest candle, don't despair! Light it as a vigil, in total assurance that, not only has your hard-earned nest egg grown, but, in a far away place, a Spencer Turbine has drawn 3-phase power and begun its spin for life, making glorious music once again after some 32 years and making at least one lucky individual proud to be owner of one of the few remaining pedigree instruments in this country.

Postlude

The *Savoy* enjoyed several more decades as a first run film house as the *Mecca Theatre* under the management of Mecca Theatres (who also owned the former *Victory Theatre* up the road in Kogarah which originally housed a 2 manual 7 rank barn-burner of a Christie, then the former

Ritz Theatre Richmond, UK 3/8 Wurlitzer Special). Upon Mecca Theatre's acquisition of the *Savoy*, an Allen ADC-4600 electronic substitute sat on the rostrum for several years. Regrettably, the *Savoy Theatre* is no longer – its imposing façade and everything behind it being damaged first by fire originating from the stage house, thence totally by the wrecker's ball to make way for a medium density apartment complex. It was a wonderful legacy to the art-deco architecture typical of only few theatres in New South Wales such as the *Cremorne Orpheum Theatre*. Only memories remain.

Disclaimer: The advice contained in this article is written for the purposes of editorial style only and not intended to be actual financial advice. Besides, theatre pipe organ blowers do not, in reality, chew up that much power!

Credits: John W Parker: "An evening with Reg Maddams" – tape recorded memoirs of the good old days of a theatre organist; *Photography*: John Theile; *Historical information*: Ian R. McIver; Steve McDonald.

William Spencer

OUR NEXT ARTISTS:

David Bailey and Mathew Loeser

Sunday 18th April *Marrickville Town Hall*

DAVID BAILEY

Being only 22, David Bailey is one of the few younger organists making an appearance around Brisbane. His interest in theatre organs has taken David into an exclusive niche in the local music scene.

David began formal study of the piano in 1993 and continued studying piano and theory until 1997. In this time he attained numerous certificates from the Australian Music Examinations Board. After discovering the theatre organ in 1997 David also studied electronic organ for one year.

Following this, David studied classical organ for one year with the organist of the Holy Trinity Church in Brisbane. He has continued his study of the classical organ under Christopher Wrench, lecturer for organ at the Queensland Conservatorium.

David performs regularly for TOSA Qld on their 3/11 *Christie* theatre organ and for TOSA Gold Coast on their *Rodgers* theatre organ, both for meetings and in concert. David also makes appearances at many other organ clubs around Brisbane. He has also performed at several TOSA National Conventions in recent years.

Besides his activities for TOSA, in the past two years David has entertained audiences at Brisbane's Regent Theatre before features at the International Film Festival. Large audiences attended these sessions, resulting in thousands of people experiencing a glimpse of the Regent's former glory. David has also played *Hammond* organ stylings to huge crowds of his own generation as a support act for the well known DJ group 'The Avalanches'.

David takes an enormous personal interest in theatre organs and their history. It is his enthusiasm for the instrument which has resulted in what is currently the only permanent theatre organ installation in a Brisbane picture theatre. David now resides at the organ of the 400 seat main house of the Balmoral Cineplex. Here,

large appreciative audiences are treated to live theatre organ music every week and David is proving that organ music is still a crowd-pleaser.

David hopes to continue his music studies into the future and his plans also include silent movie accompaniment and using the organ for dancing.

MATHEW LOESER

Mathew Loeser is an 18 year old musician gaining increasing recognition with each passing year. He has been studying both electronic and theatre organ for approximately 9 years and in this time has achieved great success. In 1999 Mathew won the Junior Theatre Organist Category of the ROTOSA Youth Music Scholarships after being runner-up in 1997 and 1998. He has appeared in concerts at the Theatre Organ Society of Australia's National Easter Conventions held in Adelaide in 1998, 2003 and in Sydney in 2000, as well as playing regularly for Theatre Organ Society club-nights and concerts at the Capri Theatre and the Electronic Organ Club of South Australia.

In August 2001, Mathew won the Junior Theatre Organ Section of the American Theatre Organ Society's Young Organist Competition and as a result travelled to Indianapolis in the USA to perform at their annual convention.

In the past year, Mathew has made concert appearances showing great diversity in the realm of piano and vocal solos. His enthusiasm for this is such that he hopes to further his knowledge of singing, and make it a far greater part of his performing career.

In the past few months, Mathew has started travelling within Australia demonstrating digital pianos and organs for the *Roland Corporation*, thus adding a further dimension to his musical abilities. Currently residing in Adelaide, Mathew plans to travel to gain exposure and experience in the entertainment industry and, sometime in 2004, he is hoping to release his first CD.

FREE TICKET OFFER !!!

Do you have friends who have never been to TOSA Concert?

This invitation is for them :

Invitation

If you have never been to a TOSA Theatre Organ Concert before, here is your chance to hear two of Australia's finest young Theatre Organists, *David Bailey and Mathew Loeser*.

The time: 2pm on Sunday 18th April. The place: Marrickville Town Hall

Cut out and post this form, enclosing a self-addressed, stamped envelope, to :-

The TOSA Ticket Secretary,
18 Acres Road,
Kellyville, 2155

*An official numbered ticket must be obtained from our Ticket Secretary by mail in advance.
This invitation will not be accepted to gain entry at the door of the concert.*

I/we (one or two people only) have not been to a TOSA concert before:

Name : _____ Phone : _____

Name : _____ Phone : _____

