

# TOSA NEWS

April 2014  
Volume 53 No.3

Price: \$2.00

**Sunday 18 May 2014 2:00pm**

**Dr John Atwell**

plays

**'Around the World in Music'**

on the

**Marrickville Town Hall Wurlitzer**

**2 manuals 11ranks of big Wurlitzer sound**

**Cnr Petersham & Marrickville Roads**

**Marrickville**



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# From the President



Sunday saw Mathew Loeser, recently returned from entertaining on a variety of cruise liners, present his cabaret show to a good-sized, appreciative audience. With an extremely varied show, Mathew included something for everyone. I wish to acknowledge the cooperation received from officers of Canterbury City Council in providing additional rehearsal time to permit Mathew to re-acquaint himself with the theatre organ after an extended break.

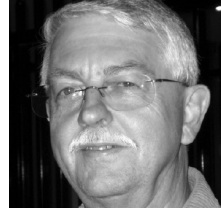
In May we will be entertained by co-Patron, Dr John Atwell at the Marrickville Town Hall in a show featuring the WurliTzer alone in all its magnificence.

The restoration of the Christie is nearing completion with installation to then commence. The small team of dedicated workers is to be congratulated on the high standard of workmanship which will ensure a quality instrument well into the future.

Finally a thank you to Graeme Costin who has made space available at his business offices for the Society's printer on which this publication is produced.

Happy organizing  
Geoff Brimley

# Editorial



With eight world class musicians to entertain you, each with their own style it promises to be a year of great Theatre Organ music at excellent value.

Where else can you find 2 hours of outstanding entertainment at TOSA Ticket Prices.

TOSA Queensland is celebrating their 50th Anniversary this year from Friday 29 to Sunday 31 August with an interesting program of instruments and venues. The Christie Theatre Organ at Kelvin Grove is one of the best in the world and American organist, Walt Strony, will be one of the featured artists along with our own Tony Fenelon and David Bailey.

Details of TOSA QLD Anniversary celebration can be found in this issue together with accommodation and booking details.

Deadline for TOSA News is the 12th of the previous month.

Enjoy the music,  
Ernie Vale  
PO Box A2322  
SYDNEY SOUTH, NSW, 1235  
*editor@tosa.net.au*

# From the Mailbox...



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

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

Please submit all comments via email to:

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

or in writing to:

The Editor - TOSA News (NSW Div)

PO Box A2322

SYDNEY SOUTH, NSW, 1235

## New Members

TOSA welcomes them and wish them a long and happy stay

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## Thank You TOSA Members.

The Executive and Committee of TOSA and the Technical Team, Front of House and Refreshments Teams thank everyone who came to the show on Sunday 23 March at the Orion Centre Theatre with Mathew Loeser.

What a great show with a

difference in cabaret style. A particular thanks to all members who spread the word and brought along people to experience a TOSA show for the first time.

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## Collectors Item

1961 Lowrey Festival FL-220 approx. 75 valve organ - 2x61 note manuals, 25 note pedal clavier. Now mostly dismantled for ease of moving. Used in same church since 1961. Last played by the undersigned on 31/12/13. Essential parts stored nearby.

**FREE** to collector with technical background.

Phone Peter Held at any reasonable hour on:  
(02) 97595174

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Mistakes are part of the dues one pays for a full life.

--Sophia Loren

If a man talks bad about all women, it usually means he was burned by one woman.

-- Coco Chanel

I take a very practical view of raising children. I put a sign in each of their rooms: "Checkout Time is Eighteen Years."

--Erma Bombeck

## ***To Watch Out For***

Another fabulous season of Theatre Organ entertainment in 2014 with 5 Australian Artists who are also all international musicians along with 3 Overseas artists - two from the USA and one from the UK. TOSA look forward to your company in 2014 and we ask that you help spread the word to friends and acquaintances.

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### **Donna Parker**

from Portland Oregon, USA

plays the

Orion Theatre Wurlitzer

on Sunday 20 July at 2:00pm

Donna is a member of the Summer Youth Adventure group of instructors, showing young musicians in the USA the art of playing Theatre Organ

## **Advertising Rates in TOSA News**

For Members:

Small, Organ related ads = FREE!

For all other cases:

Small bubble = \$11.00

Quarter Page = \$24.75

Half Page = \$49.50

Full Page = \$99.00

Full Page Insert = \$125.00

### **Members' Playing Dates The Orion Theatre Campsie**

There will be some players days in 2014 - but not every month. Craig Keller will notify members by text when the dates have been confirmed .

Craig Keller on 0418484798  
Players and listeners welcome.

**Marrickville Town Hall  
4th Monday afternoon/evening  
at 2:30pm to 7:00pm**

**Not available in April or June  
because of Opera Australia  
Please contact Neil or John  
Batts to confirm availability**

To be sure there is no last minute cancellation at Marrickville please ring Neil on 9798 6742 after 7:00pm the Friday before.

## TOSA MEMBERS' EVENING AT MARRICKVILLE

Monday afternoon, 24th February, brought another Members' Day event at Marrickville Town Hall after a break of several months – our date had conflicted with both Christmas and Australia Day respectively. We do need a run of habit-forming uninterrupted occasions to build up numbers, so it is to be hoped that the list of attendees will grow. And it has to be said that of late the Wurlitzer has not been at its top-notch best while lacking both the Chrysoglott and the English Horn. The former was back for this occasion as was the latter's chest. And for the March Members' Day at the Town Hall the English Horn will be operable.

This time we had no listeners, despite (maybe because of!) the hours of opening covering mid-afternoon to early evening. Those who enjoyed the additional time at the Wurlitzer were: **Tom Barber, Graeme Costin, Kevin Eadie, Ian Georgeson, and John Batts.** And thanks to the thoughtfulness of those attending, we munched on biscuits, cakes while sipping tea or coffee. Little wonder we reluctantly (if mistakenly) left the hall just before 8.30 pm.-- it ought to have been an hour earlier.

Don't forget that all members of TOSA(NSW) are most welcome on Players' occasions. As usual, and should there be a doubt in your mind, a phone-call (or email) to Neil or me will confirm that the event is about to take place. You don't have to play, though some of you might simply wish to try out a few sounds of selected ranks by depressing a key — and find out what magic ensues. It's often held that the hall into which this Wurlitzer speaks is a great contributor to its unique voice; and it's in well-defined stereo. Members' events are the ideal time for a personal exploration of one of TOSA's treasures. So please remember that for the next two months we shall be beginning at 2.30 and ending about 7.30 pm. – after this May we expect the Monday Night Dance Class from Petersham will have resumed their regular habitat at Petersham Town Hall.

*John S. Batts TOSA Co-ordinator*

## **"Rachmaninoff Live" Ampico Concerts in Melbourne**

*This article is reproduced with the kind permission of Robbie Rhodes and was originally published in the Mechanical Music Digest*

<http://www.mmdigest.com/Archives>

Possible World Record Attendance at Rachmaninoff Ampico Concerts.

Some time back I was asked to consider providing two instruments from my collection for 2014 Melbourne White Night Festival. It was proposed that a reproducing grand piano capable of playing the music of Rachmaninoff be used in a major concert recital venue and a large European outdoor organ also be placed in the city.

For the benefit of those not familiar with concept of The White Night Festival, the movement grew up from a cultural event held annually in St. Petersburg in Russia (to celebrate their summer solstice where sunsets are late, sunrises are early and darkness is never complete) to all-night cultural events held in a number of cities around the world.

It was originally proposed to use one of my Mason & Hamlin AA Ampico grand pianos but short notice and unforeseen circumstances prevented this and Harold

and Beverley Ball very kindly and generously agreed to provide their fine 1921 Knabe 5' 8" Ampico for the occasion.

The Festival was held last night and I am pleased to advise it as a roaring success at all levels. The crowd was very well behaved and preliminary estimates of attendance indicate that it was well over double that of last year and may well have been over 700,000 people.

Regarding the Ampico Rachmaninoff concerts, I was very surprised to see a queue of people approximately 100 yards long awaiting entry to Hamer Hall for our first session at 7:00 p.m. Over the course of the night the Box Office tells me that approximately 15,000 people of all ages attended the event and patrons were attentive, respectful and interested. Whist I was the notional compare of the event, Harold Ball also very kindly shared this role and together we introduced rolls and provided commentary, gave historical background information and later answered questions put by the audience.

Harold Ball on the stage was at his sartorial best and, together with his shock of white hair, was initially mistaken for Rachmaninoff by the younger and less well informed members of our audience. (Given Harold's long involvement and passion with our

interest, I could not help but think that perhaps Rachmaninoff's love child may have been a more apt description).

My Verbeeck organ, "Australia Fair Grand Concert Organ," was also used and its operation required the kind assistance of Damen O'Donahue, Steve Rattle, Micky Tee, Nick Lange and Scott Harrison. It attracted crowds of between 200-300 all night and most were taken in with its operation and loved the very fine arrangements provided by both Johnny Verbeeck and Tommy Meijer.

All in all, it was a very satisfying event and on a serious note (regarding our Ampico concerts), I am amazed to think that crowds of this magnitude and age group, could today be attracted to largely forgotten technology and to a concert virtuoso who has been dead for over 70 years. It just shows that good publicity for events at prime concert venues can draw an audience. To the best of my knowledge, I am not aware of a crowd of this size ever attending reproducing piano concerts (and possibly even to live Rachmaninoff concerts) and would be interested to hear if anyone knows of a larger audience attendance.

Kind regards always, Rick Alabaster, Sunny Melbourne, Australia



**Australia Fair Grand Concert Organ**





**Rick Alabaster presenting  
at the  
"Rachmaninoff Live"  
Ampico Concerts  
in  
Melbourne**



**Harold Ball on the stage  
was at his sartorial best  
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informed members of  
our audience.**

## **Show & Membership Prices**

The following TOSA show ticket prices now apply:

	<b>All Artists</b>
Non-members	\$32.50
Non-member Pensioner/Seniors Card holder	\$27.50
TOSA Members	\$23.00

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

**All Children FREE**

Group Booking for 10 or more Adults           \$20 per person

Annual Membership Fees are now: \$35.00 for Full membership,  
and

\$25.00 for Concession, Country, Interstate & Overseas.

Membership enquiries Geoff Brimley (02) 6351 3122

*membership@tosa.net.au*

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

## "Has the age of the signature tune disappeared?"

### *From TOSA Member and organist John Batts*

Ernie, I found your item on "Has the age of the signature tune disappeared?" interesting, not least because in the examples cited the title and organist did not always correspond with my own recollection of the songs used by English organists. Time can distort and even corrupt memory, of course. And yet, providing substance to your implicit challenge has sent me on an extended visit down Memory Lane! In what follows I've not attempted to be comprehensive, so not every cinema organist who ever sat on a bench in the UK is featured.

It was not unknown for signature tunes to be changed over the years, of course. Two well-known cases, for example, are provided by **Sandy Macpherson** and **Stanley Tudor**. In the former case, Sandy dropped "Happy Days Are Here Again" which he had certainly used in the 1930s at the Empire, Leicester Square, and quite possibly prior to that at other North American venues such as The Palace in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. Possibly with his appointment as BBC Theatre Organist and certainly at the outset of hostilities in 1939, he changed to "I'll Play For You" which I think is his own composition. Secondly, **Stanley Tudor**, long resident at the Gaumont, Manchester, and a broadcasting organist, had formerly used "Singing in the Rain" as his signature tune. Reportedly he changed at the behest of the city fathers, who were concerned about Stan's reinforcing that city's reputation for rain. So post-WW2 and doubtless with a sense of humour he used "Powder Your Face with Sunshine," Carmen Lombardo's 1946 composition. And sometimes the choice of signature tune was courtesy of the cinema/theatre itself. **Reginald Liversedge**, associated for a long period with The Pyramid Theatre, Sale near Manchester (Christie), after spells at a cinema in Dewsbury and at The Lido, Bolton, chose "The Desert Song Waltz" because the interior of the Pyramid was adorned with quasi-Egyptian motifs -- the only theatre organ anywhere in the world that had carved Egyptian Heads on the Console.

The age of the signature tune certainly in the UK must have been linked initially at least to specific residencies and to regular broadcasting slots. As far as I can gather from before my time, at least during the late Twenties and Thirties, new organs were usually but not always launched by a celebrity organist who would come to "open" the instrument publicly for perhaps a week and thereafter another organist would be appointed for a much longer term. The upshot was

that an organist might well choose his own signature tune early in his career and retain it thereafter. This explains why **Joseph Seal**, latterly MD of Associated British Cinemas, used "John Peel" throughout his time on the bench. This traditional English song, "Do you Ken John Peel?" – it's about a famous north-country huntsman – was Joe Seal's option when playing at The Lonsdale Theatre, Carlisle, a Christie organ located in "John Peel" country and quite possibly his first-ever residency. This tune was kept even though he was subsequently resident at The Ritz, Belfast, and later during his association with The Regal Cinema, Kingston-on-Thames, where he made many broadcasts and recordings – though as far as I know Seal never played a public organ-interlude at that venue. Little wonder that the general public may have associated his signature tune as no more than a rhyming link between "John Peel" and "Joe Seal"! And one should never forget that for self-explanatory reasons **Reginald Dixon** used the song "I Do Like to Be Beside the Seaside" for his long association with the Tower Ballroom Blackpool.

Another use of signature tune was via an association with a particular broadcast programme. I think here of the BBC's Midland Console series of broadcasts featuring instruments in the geographical region around Birmingham. This broadcast featured a presenter, **James Pestridge**, and that week's featured organist playing "By the Fireside" by way of signature at the opening and then closing with the organist's usual signature tune. One of the delights of this show was featuring cinema organs not otherwise heard, among them the Gaumont cinemas at Hanley (Wurlitzer) and in Cheltenham (Compton), the Ritz cinemas in Nuneaton (Compton) and Hereford (Compton), or The Lyric, Wellingborough. The late-night BBC organ broadcast Moonlight Lullaby also used its own signature tune.

Without theatre organists either playing regularly or broadcasting regularly, the occasion for a signature tune does not really exist. So that really is the answer to the question you (or your source) pose. **Rob Calcaterra**, whom I heard when he was Resident at Radio City Music Hall in NYC, probably did use "On a Wonderful Day Like Today"; this would have been in the 1980s by which time the British Cinema chains (ABC, Granada, Rank) had not only let go their stables of organists but with very few exceptions sold off the instruments too.

Now to the oddities in your listing. For me **George Blackmore** is associated with his BBC broadcasts from the Capitol Cinema and the Astoria Cinema, both 3-manual Comptons in Aberdeen, Scotland. For these he used "Cock of the North" and not "Chinatown, My China

**The Next Performance**  
**Australian and International Musician**  
*organist, pianist, accompanist*  
**Dr John Atwell**



**Plays**

## **'Around the World in Music'**

(Norway) Grieg's 'Valse Triste' ; (Holland) Heykens 'Serenade' ;  
(Austria – Vienna) from the Viennese school (Lehar, Strauss);  
(Russia) – music from Tchaikowsky ; (Mexico) – Granada;  
(Latin America) – (Cuba) Lecuona's 'Andalucia' (The Breeze and I);  
(Brazil) Music of Antonio Carlos Jobim ('Girl from Ipanema', 'Wave');  
Plus some well known pieces from the USA, UK and Australia

### **At the Marrickville Town Hall Wurlitzer**

Cnr Petersham & Marrickville Roads

Marrickville

Sunday 18 May 2014 2:00 – 4:30pm

Tickets : Members \$23; Non-Members \$ 32.50; Pensioner/Senior \$ 27.50  
Group bookings for 10 or more adults \$20 per person  
Students FREE on confirmation of Student Status

**Bookings:** Theo Langenberg 0410 626 131  
14 Warrah Place, Greystanes 2145 - Visa & Mastercard accepted

**Dr John Atwell**  
**Co-Patron TOSA NSW**

**John** retired from scientific research back in 2009. He has kept up his concert activities both around Australia and internationally. **John's** last overseas concert trip was in October 2013 when he played in the United Kingdom and The Netherlands (Tuschinski Theatre, Amsterdam and Kunkels Street Organ Museum, Haarlem).

**John** was organ consultant to the recent production of "King Kong" at the Regent Theatre, Melbourne where the Wurlitzer organ was used for each performance.

A few years back, **John** rejoined the Maroondah Singers as accompanist, after a break of 13 years. It is an activity which **John** really enjoys as it provides an outlet for a wide variety of musical accompaniment.

**John** receives repeat invitations to play concerts at theatre organ venues around Australia both as a solo performer, as well as in piano/organ duo combination with his long-time colleague and friend, Tony Fenelon.

**John** has also taken his talents overseas on several occasions, playing performances in the USA, Canada, the United Kingdom and New Zealand. **John's** musical activities have not been limited to theatre organs. He is an experienced classical organist and pianist, having played many classical organ recitals, participated in concerts for the 'All Stops Out' series on the Melbourne Town Hall organ, 'Music for the People' at the Myer Music Bowl and Melbourne Town Hall, and 'Carols by Candlelight'.

The Sydney City organist, *Robert Ampt*, invited **John** to play the Sydney Town Hall Grand Organ for one of their Monday lunch time series and **John** was well received by the large audience.

**For the best reserved seats you can book securely on [trybooking.com](http://trybooking.com) by going to [www.tosa.net.au](http://www.tosa.net.au) then Events, click on the Artists name/show title then scroll down to the text to buy your ticket, click on it, select your preferred seat/s and complete the purchase.**

*(the age of the signature tune article continued)*

town." Secondly, **Reg Foort** used "Keep Smiling" for his broadcasts as the first BBC Theatre Organist. I am not aware of his use of the WW1 song "Pack Up Your Troubles" as signature tune. Indeed, that assignation is peculiar because that very song was used as a signature tune for very many years by **Douglas Reeve**, Borough Organist at The Dome, Brighton, a frequent national broadcaster as well local personality.

Some current English organists are clearly peripatetic and international. Performers such as **Simon Gledhill** and **Richard Hills** have no base theatre or cinema and little need of identification through a signature tune; indeed, one might say that both impart their own stamp on the way in which they play and therefore have no need of a signature tune. Maybe the presenter of BBC radio's The Organist Entertains, **Nigel Ogden**, uses a signature tune (and possibly one of his own devising) for public performances; Equally, I have no information that **Donald Mackenzie** who seems to play at the Odeon Leicester Square for major events these days employs a signature tune. I suppose it possible that English organists **Robert Wolfe** and **Nicholas Martin** employed signature tunes while performing almost daily at their respective musical museums.

Whilst I have no knowledge of the U.S. and its early theatre organists, I can confirm from your listing that **Robinson Cleaver** did use "An Earful of Music" (1934) both for his broadcasts and while touring with Granada Cinemas. Similarly, **Andrew Fenner** certainly used "Sussex by the Sea" as a signature tune for his BBC broadcasts.

Other associations of organists and tunes from way back when which come to mind are these -- doubtless aural relics of a mis-spent youth because once upon a time these items had been pencilled in on the back pages of a schoolboy organist's hymnal(!) and yet names if not sig' tunes can be mostly recalled from the deep recesses! Only one song, "Let the Great Big World Keep Turning," failed in its link with a particular organist. My revised list may be of interest to TOSA readers, being of about thirty-three UK organists with signature tunes assigned:

Ena Baga: "Lets All Go Down the Strand";

Al Bollington: "Bolero";

Doreen Chadwick: "Doreen";

Robinson Cleaver; "An Earful of Music";

Tommy Dando: "Keep Your Sunny Side Up";

Reginald Dixon: "I Do Like To Be Beside the Seaside";

Nelson Elms: "Trees";

Harry Farmer: "A Farmer's Boy";

Andrew Fenner: "Sussex by the Sea";

Frank Gordon: "A Gordon For Me";

Vic Hammett: "Beyond the Blue Horizon";

Jack Helyer: "I'm Happy When I'm Hiking";

Peter Kilby: "Our Waltz";

Reginald Liversidge: "Desert Song Waltz";

Arthur Lord: "I've Heard That Song Before";

Arnold Loxam: "Come Back to Sorrento";

John Madin: "A Wandering Minstrel"

Neville Meale: "Happy Days Are Here Again";

Louis Mordish: "St. Louis Blues";

Bobby Pagan: "Pagan Love-Song";

Reginald Porter-Brown: "Oh! Mr Porter, What Can I Do?";

Harold Ramsey: "Theme from Rhapsody in Blue" (Gershwin);

Felton Rapley: "Poeme" (a movement from a Suite by Eric Coates);

Robin Richmond: "When the Red, Red, Robin goes Bob-Bob-Bobbing Along";

Bryan Rodwell: "You Made Me Love You";

Dudley Savage: "Smiling Through";

Gerald Shaw; "Song of Home" [a Scots song from the Western Isles];

Harold Smart: "Pick Yourself Up";-(*"Let Yourself Go" Editor*)

Charles Smitton: "Estrellita";

Eric Spruce: "Country Garden";

Donald Thorne: "My Song Goes Round the World";

Sidney Torch: "I'll Sing You A Torch Song";

Trevor Willetts: "We'll All Go Riding on a Rainbow".

*Thank you so much John for such an interesting response to my question in the March TOSA News. I had hoped that question would trigger some lasting memories from one of our members.*

*One can deduce that you have been a keen listener to Theatre Organ for many many years with the advantage of living in the UK in your youth. You obviously enjoyed many visits to the theatre circuits that housed Theatre Organs -(Unit Orchestras) as well as having the opportunity of listening to the BBC Theatre Organ broadcasts.*

*Owing to space limitations I have listed the thirty three organists and their signature tunes and compliment you on such a great memory of those happy days. Having compared the tunes to my source you were spot on in every case. I have added tune titles or expanded them where necessary. As you are aware some organists used more than one signature tune - presumably when they moved to a new residency or for BBC broadcasts.*

*I will share the tunes of the other organists that you listed in future TOSA News.*



## **Pages From The Past**

*An article from the PUGET SOUND PIPELINE - March 2014  
with the kind permission of the Editor, JoAnn Evans*

BILL BUNCH collected every bit of organ related information he found throughout his life -- newspaper articles, letters, catalogs, photographs, copies of documents, and more. This invaluable collection is the source of most "Pages From The Past" articles.

The following article is from a packet of photocopied pages stapled together. It is undated and neither source nor author is identified. Several more installments will follow.

### **APOTHEOSIS OF THE MIGHTY WURLITZER - Part 2**

The first organs in theatres were ponderous affairs, about as well suited to their purpose as a string quartet in a six-ring circus. All they had in common with the later Mighty Wurlitzer was the fact that they all depended on wind, keyboards, foot pedals, and pipes to make their music. And yet these early organs – nothing more than transplanted church instruments – brought a certain grandeur to the premises that set a movie theatre apart from the nickelodeon with its beleaguered upright piano.

As movies grew longer and more ambitious, something more versatile than the piano was needed to cope with the flickering changes of mood and the demands for special sound effects that filled every scene in a photoplay. A full orchestra at every performance was out of the question for even the grandest of the early deluxe cinemas, and the organ was the ideal substitute. But a tubby church-type organ that made even "Waltz Me Around Again, Willie" sound like an offertory was woefully out of place, as audiences grew more discerning. Then, a few years before World War 1, the answer to the problem came in the form of the Hope-Jones Unit Orchestra, built by the Rudolf Wurlitzer Company of North Tonawanda, New York --- famous until then as importers of fine violins, makers of pianos and mechanical organs for merry-go-rounds.

Robert Hope-Jones, its inventor, a remarkable little Englishman with a shock of white hair that made him resemble Franz Liszt in a fright wig, had been tinkering with ideas for "liberating" the pipe organ ever since the turn of the century. A former telephone engineer, he

pioneered the developments that were later to result in the theatre organ while modifying church instruments in England. The first of these innovations was electro-pneumatic action. This replaced the noisy and cumbersome "tracker" action (that literally tied the organ console to its pipes by hundreds of rods or stretched wires) with a system of opening and closing the valves in the pipes with electro-magnets which were, in turn, controlled by sterling silver electrical contacts under each key on the console.

Operating on low voltage, this system made it possible for the console to be located almost any distance from the pipes (and in later days of splendour, on lifts that would raise and lower it in orchestra pits and, in many instances, revolve).

Hope-Jones also introduced stop tablets --- tongue-shaped pieces of ivory in various colors which could be easily flicked by the organist's fingers to activate the organ's stops or voices. These tabs appeared in place of the awkward draw-knobs of the traditional organ. At the same time, he conceived the idea of arranging them in curved rows above the keyboards or manuals-- thus the familiar "horseshoe" console was born.

But Robert Hope-Jones's most important contribution to the organ was his system of pipe unification. Up until that time all organs were built so that each manual could play only a limited number of the organ's basic sets of pipes or "ranks." The unit principle, by means of an intricate system of switches and relays, made it possible for every rank to be played from every manual, at many different octave pitches. Thus a unit organ of six ranks (six separate sets of pipes each with a distinctive voicing) could be made to outshine in performance and tonal variety a "straight" organ requiring more than thirty ranks.

Hope-Jones often made the comparison between the Unit Orchestra organist and the painter who had six fundamental colors to work with: "By mixing these six colors, he can get a limitless number of various shades, because he can mix them at will. With a 'straight' organ of six ranks, one is very limited in musical results, whereas with a Unit Orchestra of six ranks, one has a really remarkable number of possible combinations."

By devising ways to combine ranks into new voices or stops, and by developing many completely new solo voices, (his Diaphone was invented first as a fog horn, and is still used by the Coast Guard as such) Hope-Jones enriched the organ, made it an instrument of

incredible flexibility, and opened up a dazzling new career for the stuffy church mouse in the outside world.

After coming to the United States, the brilliant if more than slightly eccentric inventor built a number of instruments for churches, hotels and small theatres before going bankrupt. When Andrew Carnegie was introduced to Hope-Jones in 1908, he remarked: "I want to have an organ overwhelm me with the feeling of how miserable a sinner I am," and the inventor obliged by giving him a demonstration on the giant organ his company had just built in the Tabernacle at Ocean Grove on the nearby New Jersey shore. Unfortunately, Carnegie was not made to feel sufficiently miserable to invest in the organ works in Elmira, New York, and in 1910 the Hope-Jones Organ Company (motto: "Scientia Artem Adjuvant") was absorbed, along with its owner and all his patents, by the Wurlitzer Company.

Quick to realise the exciting possibilities of the instrument as a theatre organ, Wurlitzer launched into full-scale production of the Wurlitzer Hope-Jones Unit Orchestra. By the time the first real movie palaces were being built, it was ready to roar to fame and glory. Its success, however, came too late to have meaning for its inventor. With less and less to say about the destiny of his brain child, he became increasingly bitter. "The Wurlitzers say they are going to build better organs without me," he wrote to a friend on April 1, 1914. "I am no longer at the factory, neither have I anything to do with jobs outside. I am a 'gentleman at large' on \$60 per week. They refuse to stop the \$60 because it would give me my freedom."

On September 13th of that year he perfected his last invention-- a new bizarre way of committing suicide. He attached a rubber tube to a gas jet and fitted it with a T outlet. One end was firmly taped with adhesive to his mouth which was sealed closed, as was his nose. Gas escaping from the other end of the T outlet was ignited so that there would be no danger to others from escaping gas after his death.

"Unit Orchestra" was the perfect name for the new instrument. Basically a pipe organ, its voices were designed to imitate all the instruments of the orchestra, plus many that no orchestra (or organ) had ever heard before. These musical marvels were equipped --- in addition to their thousands of pipes --- with a battery of bass drums, snare drums, xylophones, glockenspiels, marimbas, grand pianos (that could also imitate banjos and mandolins), sets of tuned sleigh bells, chimes, triangles, cymbals, castanets, Chinese blocks, tambourines, tom toms, gongs and saucer bells.

But that wasn't all. The organist at the console of the Unit Orchestra could conjure up nightingales, canaries, galloping horses, steamboat and train whistles, auto horns (both "honk-honk" and "ah-oo-gah"), fire-engine sirens, airplanes, hurricanes, swishing surf, rain on the roof, telephone bells, door bells, trolley bells, and the sound of smashing crockery---all with hair-raising verisimilitude. There was virtually no mood or situation on the silent screen that a quick-thinking and agile organist couldn't heighten with some musical theme and mechanical effect from the Wurlitzer Hope-Jones Unit Orchestra's bag of tricks.

*Part 3 in the next issue.*

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**The Original State Theatre Sydney  
Wurlitzer Theatre Organ Console  
has been restored in the USA  
and is back on the organ hoist in the Theatre**



# TOSA QLD 1964-2014



**Join us as we celebrate 50 years of TOSA in Queensland!**

**Friday evening 29 August to Sunday afternoon 31 August 2014**

The Queensland Division of the Theatre Organ Society of Australia invites you to two-and-a-half days of outstanding music and social events to be held in Brisbane, Australia. The celebrations will be centered at Kelvin Grove State College, the home of our Christie cinema pipe organ. To book use contact details below.

#### **The Organs**

The Christie 3/11 cinema pipe organ at Kelvin Grove State College. It is acclaimed as one of the best Christies in the world.

The ex-Regent Wurlitzer 3/15 theatre pipe organ in the Cinematheque at the Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA). The Wurlitzer is beautifully restored and installed in a state of the art cinema.

#### **The Artists**

Tony Fenelon needs no introduction other than to say he is Australia's most highly regarded theatre organist.

Walt Strony has been a star of the American circuit for many years and is also well versed on classical pipe organs.. He is recognised as a very adept organ tuner and finisher.

David Bailey has made a name nationally for his silent film accompaniment. A Brisbane local, David is resident organist at the GoMA Cinematheque, playing the Style 260 Wurlitzer.

The Kate Street Mob Big Band is one of the most vibrant swing-era bands in Brisbane and their singer Shoshanna will enchant you with her golden voice. They will be joined by a cavalcade of top local organists on the Christie cinema pipe organ.

**For more details: N - 0412-377 676 (Brett) E - [tosaqld@gmail.com](mailto:tosaqld@gmail.com) W - [www.tosa-qlld.org](http://www.tosa-qlld.org)**

# TOSA Q1A 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary - Accommodation

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## **Members Diary**

**Monday 7th April Committee 7:00pm**

**Sunday 18 May 2:00pm - 4:30pm**

**Australian and International Musician**  
*organist, pianist, accompanist*

**Dr John Atwell**

**plays**

**'Around the World in Music'**

**At the Marrickville Town Hall Wurlitzer**

**Cnr Petersham & Marrickville Roads**

**Marrickville**

**Book at [www.tosa.net.au](http://www.tosa.net.au)**

**or**

**Contact Theo Langenberg 0410 626 131**

**Tickets also available at the box office from 1:30pm**

Radio 2MBS-FM 102.5 "Colours of the King" (program of the Organ Music Society of Sydney) 2nd Saturday of each month, 5pm till 6 pm

### **Web Sites of Interest:**

<https://www.facebook.com/tosansw>

[www.theatreorgansaustralia.info](http://www.theatreorgansaustralia.info) (history of cinema organ installations in Australasia)

[www.sydneyorgan.com](http://www.sydneyorgan.com) (our sister society, the Organ Music Society of Sydney OMSS)

[www.ATOS.org](http://www.ATOS.org)

# TOSA NEWS

April 2014  
Volume 53 No.3

**PRINT  
POST  
100004836**

**POSTAGE  
PAID  
AUSTRALIA**

Official Publication of the Theatre Organ Society of Australia (NSW Division) Inc.

101 Crinan St., Hurlstone Park NSW 2193

If undeliverable please return to :

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