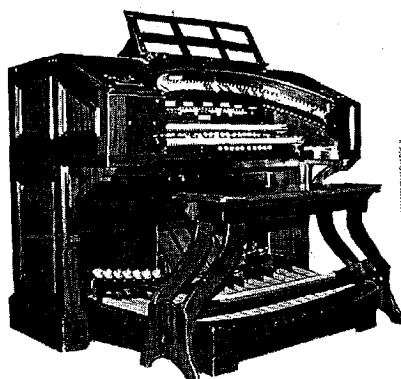
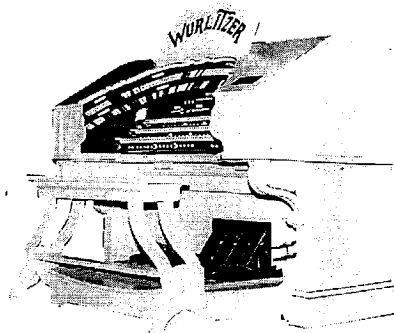


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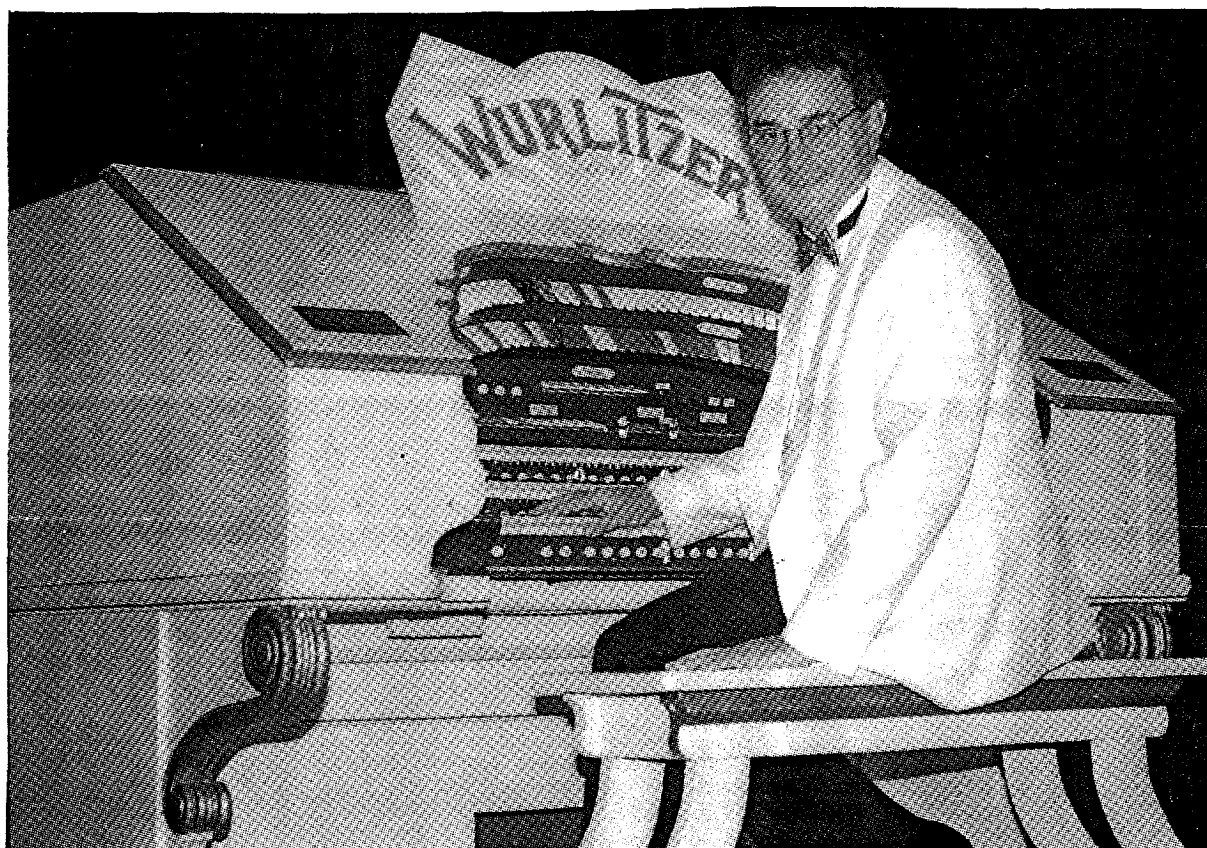
2/11 WurliTzer Theatre Pipe Organ  
Marrickville Town Hall

# TOSA NEWS



3/17 WurliTzer Theatre Pipe Organ  
Orion Centre Campsie

## TOSA's First Concert for 1999 welcomes back the highly talented **JOHN ATWELL**



**Sunday, 21st March at 2.00pm**  
**Orion Centre Campsie**

Volume 38  
Issue 2  
EDITED BY TOSA

The Official Publication of Theatre Organ Society of Australia (NSW Division) Inc.  
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\$1.50

# TOSA NEWS

MARCH, 1999

**THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW DIVISION) Inc.**

For the smooth running of TOSA, please contact the right person :

General Business - **SECRETARY**  
Ticket Bookings - **TICKET SECRETARY**  
Membership, Renewals, Change of Address -  
**MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY**  
TOSA NEWS Items, Advertisements - **EDITOR**



## COMING EVENTS

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#### WORLD WIDE WEB HOME PAGE - TOSA (NSW)

<http://www-personal.usyd.edu.au/~sgroves/tosa/home.html>

## FEBRUARY

Thursday 25 at 7.30pm **Members' Playing Night**  
Marrickville Town Hall

## MARCH

Monday 1 at 7.30pm **Committee Meeting**

Thursday 11 at 2.30pm **Members' Playing Afternoon**  
Orion Centre Campsie  
(See page 4)

Sunday 21 at 2.00pm **John Atwell Concert**  
Orion Centre Campsie

Thursday 25 at 7.30pm **Members' Playing Night**  
Marrickville Town Hall

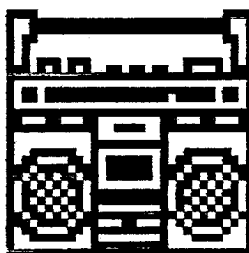
## APRIL

Friday 2nd - Monday 5th  
**27th National Convention**  
Melbourne

Monday 12 at 7.30pm **Committee Meeting**

Saturday 17 at 10.15am **Members' Playing Day**  
Willoughby Town Hall  
(See page 8)

Thursday 22 at 7.30pm **Members' Playing Night**  
Marrickville Town Hall



*Until 8th March !!*

REMEMBER TO TUNE IN TO  
2CBA FM - 103.2

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

# From The President

Hello again. The new year is well and truly up an running, but running a bit fast for me - lots of things to be done. Would you like to know how many shopping days to next Christmas?

We're looking forward to the first concert for 1999 - **John Atwell's** on 21st March - using the new computer system. Not to be missed. Again in this edition there is a **Free Ticket Offer** (page 13) so you can bring your first-time friends to a great concert.

Did you notice the new way the "doors" across the chambers have been arranged at the **Orion**? It is now possible to sit in the front row and not have your hat blown off. Now the organist can hear better, and to the audience the sound appears to come from high in the front of the auditorium.

By the way, have you bought any good organ CDs lately? **Neil** and his dad, **Merv**, do keep a good selection. Look for "**Record Bar News**" in most editions of **TOSA News**, or you can buy at the concert. They run on a shoe-string margin to keep the prices down and the quality up.

**Well, hooray, we're going to have a crack at a Members' Afternoon at the Orion. See the notice elsewhere in this edition (page ). If you come and play, you'll be part of the "running in" of the new system which is necessary to make sure all will be well for the concert. Here's your big chance to help and enjoy it!**

Further to **Colin's** Editorial item last month on the demise of our program on **2CBA-FM**, I have two pieces of news. First, we have had an offer to put our session on a good-coverage **Sydney** FM station. Trouble is it will cost \$500 per week, which means finding a sponsor. Any takers? We suspect

not, but who knows, perhaps *things would go better with Coca Cola?*

On the other hand, **Chris Styles** may have found an opening with a country community FM station that will give us free time and who have a link-up with an association of such stations who may be interested in down-loading our program via satellite. More news when it comes.

Next month - a detective story. Watch this space.

**Walter Pearce**



## Editorial

A combination of circumstances, including venue problems has meant that we have had to wait a long time between concerts. However, our first 1999 concert is finally due this month, on the 21st, with the incomparable **John Atwell** at the console of the **Orion WurliTzer**. **John's** concerts always contain a great mixture of well-known favourites with special unusual pieces added in to keep his repertoire fresh and entertaining, and all so beautifully played. Let's hope that all our members will make a special effort to attend this first-class event, after such a long drought for Sydney's theatre organ lovers. Remember there is the usual Booking Form on the back page of this issue of **TOSA News**.

The **TOSA** committee has been busy organising other, different types of events, in addition to the ever-more-

costly full concerts, and these functions deserve to be well supported. There are **Playing Times** for members at both **WurliTzers** this month! The **Orion** has an afternoon **Members' Playing Time** on 11th March at 2.30pm, and **Marrickville** has the now regular Thursday evening **Playing Time** on 25th March at 7.30pm. These occasions are like mini-concerts for those who come to listen, rather than to play. So if you can, it would be well worth your while to attend, especially as the normal concerts are now less frequent and these **Playing Times** are free for members. If you would like to bring a small item of afternoon tea or supper to add to the tea or coffee usually available, the occasion becomes even more social and enjoyable.

This issue of **TOSA News** contains a couple of items related in one way or another to the **Easter National TOSA Convention** in Melbourne : **Ian Williams** reminisces about the **Melbourne Regent Theatre** which will see the Grand Opening Concert for the giant **WurliTzer** being performed by **Tony Fenelon** and **Lyn Larsen** - an important and exciting event for **Australian Theatre Organ** enthusiasts (See pages 5 and 6); and the **Warragul TOSA Division** has sent more details of their **Convention Afterglow** which should be an entertaining day and a suitable conclusion to the **Convention** weekend for all the happy participants (See page 4).

If you are thinking of going to the **Convention** you will need to hurry now or your application will be too late - mind you, at least some of the events can be attended on casual, door-sales basis, so in that sense, it is never too late!

Thank you sincerely to all the contributors to these pages, who send in items they have discovered for the enjoyment of the **TOSA News** readers. **Barry Tooker**, for example, always has some input into each issue, either through photos he has taken, or has had processed for publication, or reports he has written about theatre organ events. Without the help of quietly-contributing people like **Barry** and a few others like him, there would be very little to put in the magazine.

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 12th of the preceding month**



## NEWS FROM ALL OVER

### HOPE-JONES OPUS #1

Opus #1 in America by Robert Hope-Jones continues playing and growing. At last count, it remains a 4 manual, but has grown from 14 ranks to its current size of 156 ranks.

The instrument, installed in The Great Auditorium, Ocean Grove, New Jersey, is set for another season of concerts, with organists Gordon Turk, David Messineo, David Peckham, Thomas Murray, and Don Kinnier. The building is closed during the winter, so the organ gets a thorough going-over every spring - generally with the addition of a few more ranks!

The original Hope-Jones specification remains intact along with his concepts of chamber design and expression. (from *ATOS International News*, June 1998)

## FOR SALE

### Organ Grinder

Seated, hand-held

Rare, Italian (?) Ceramic

8" x 4"

Offers

**ALSO**

### Large Organ Grinder

with cart on wheels

Ceramic model made in Italy(?)

Hand-made replica (very rare)

T-CAPO-DI-MONTE

New - Never used

14" x 9"

Price : \$4,995 o.n.o.

Contact Peter Andersen

P.O. Box 35

Deepwater, 2371

## COLIN ADAMSON

St John's Anglican Cathedral, Parramatta, presents another free, lunchtime organ recital.

TOSA member, Colin Adamson, will present another light organ music recital at the historic St John's Cathedral, Hunter Street, Parramatta.

Colin will play a wide variety of music on the J. W. Walker Pipe Organ, along with his newly-formed "orchestra".

Wednesday, 10th March, 1999, from 12.30 to 1.10pm.

Everyone is welcome!

## CONVENTION '99

*Warragul Afterglow* - more detailed information from Kent and Norma Wilson

The Gippsland Division of TOSA (The Warragul Organ Club Inc.) will be hosting an "Afterglow" program on Tuesday, 6th April, 1999, as part of the Melbourne Convention. The President, Committee and members would be very pleased to have your presence on this special day for our Division.

An interesting day is assured with the following activities arranged for your enjoyment :

For those travelling from Melbourne, a coach will leave the Victoria Hotel, Little Collins Street, at 9am and then pick up at the Malvern Town Hall at approximately 9.20am

Travelling via the Princes Freeway, Morning Tea is planned at Pakenham. There, members of the Pakenham Organ Club have kindly offered to be your hosts for a brief stop for a cuppa, etc.

The next stop will be Warragul, the home of the Warragul Organ Club - the West Gippsland Masonic Centre, Korumburra Road, Warragul, with music on the Conn *Martinique* and a delicious smorgasbord lunch.

Following lunch, board your transport for a visit to the Darnum Musical Village. The "3 D's" - David Johnston, David Cross and Dorothy Deneys, will provide outstanding

musical entertainment for your enjoyment. These long-standing members of TOSA (Vic.) are well known to Conventioneers and concert goers.

The Darnum Musical Village is unique to Australia and has a large collection of antique musical instruments on display. A guided tour of this museum is most interesting.

Before leaving for the return trip to Melbourne, at approximately 5 pm, afternoon tea will be provided.

Travelling by coach, the all-inclusive cost is \$34. If you provide your own transport the cost is \$24. (A map with directions to the venues can be forwarded if you are travelling separately.)

Provision is made on the Convention Registration Form for your booking. If you decide you would like to come after registrations are closed you may contact us direct by contacting Kent Wilson, President of the Gippsland Division at PO Box 147, Warragul, 3820, or phoning for information on (03) 5623 2586.

All visitors to this region, which is just over an hour's drive from Melbourne, will be given a very warm welcome, and we are sure you will enjoy the scenic beauty of this part of West Gippsland.

Kent and Norma Wilson  
Warragul Organ Club Inc.

## Members' Orion Playing Afternoon

On Thursday afternoon, 11th March, from 2.30 to 5.30pm, we expect to hold the first of a series of afternoons (usually the 2nd Thursday of the month) at the Campsie Orion. Members are invited to come and take a turn at the keyboard, while other members are invited to come and listen.

This is a welcome test of the new computer control system - but no hitches are expected!

If you wish to confirm that all is well (especially if you travel some distance), phone Walter on (02) 9716 0151 before 11am on the day of the event.

# Memories of Melbourne's *REGENT* Theatre

The re-opening of the refurbished *Regent Theatre* in 1995 brought back memories of this theatre and other theatrical happenings in Melbourne to **Ian Williams**, whose item was published in *ATOS' International Newsletters*, Vols 1 and 2, 1998. On Monday 5th April of this year, **Tony Fenelon** and **Lyn Larsen** will introduce, in concert for the first time, the *Regent's* newly installed **4/36 WurliTzer** during this year's *Easter Convention*.

## "MY FIFTY YEARS WITH 191 COLLINS ST"

Recently I celebrated a special "anniversary". It was fifty years almost to the month that I made that first visit to the **Regent Theatre, Melbourne**. A visit that was to influence my life, both in my love for the "movie palace", and to influence my choice of career when leaving school a few years later. My mother had taken me to see the **Fox** family classic, *My Friend Flicka*, and I remember saying that I wanted to be a film star like **Roddy McDowell**! Big thinker me - most kids would probably have just wanted the horse that he loved in the movie!

At the time, it was another great visit to the movies and naturally I didn't have any idea of the tragedy that was to follow within the month - the disastrous fire that was to destroy the **Regent's** magnificent auditorium on the evening of April 29th, 1945. The news on the radio on the Sunday morning of the fire left me in a state of disbelief. I knew that there was something about that theatre that was "special", more than any other that I had been to; but we had to wait till Monday morning's *Sun* to see those photos of the utter devastation that the fire had caused. I remembered every detail of those articles; the probable cause of the fire, how it was discovered, etc., but could only pine for the loss of something that I knew had meant something "special" in my life.

Within twelve months I had started going to the various theatres in the city during school holidays on my own, and could never miss out on peering through the cyclone gates at the front of the theatre. The **Plaza** had re-opened a few months after the fire. The ticket lobby was intact, and the glass doors to the grand foyer had been frosted over. To my eyes, the theatre was just lying there, dormant and forgotten.

In September '47, I went past and saw the marble steps at the front being taken up. I went home and burst into tears as I said to my mother, "They're pulling the **Regent** down". Fortunately, my tears were not to last too long as it

was announced in early December that the theatre was re-opening on December 19th.

I was working at **Ball and Welch** between exams and the Christmas break-up. On the day that bookings opened, I got out of bed about 4.45am, caught the 5.12 train from **Box Hill** and arrived outside the theatre about 5.45am - third in the queue! Just before 9am, I asked the person next to me to mind my place whilst I "signed on" at the store, via the **Flinders St** entrance, then promptly walked out the **Flinders Lane** exit! "They'll probably think I'm in the stockroom," I said to myself. Soon after I had my two tickets- **U33/34** in the stalls.

Opening night came and my brother and I waited patiently at the glass doors. When they opened, I was off like a rocket - **FIRST INTO THE THEATRE!** The movie, *The Home Stretch*, was an average Christmas attraction - a horse racing story in Technicolor with **Cornel Wilde** and **Maureen O'Hara**. I wandered upstairs at the interval to marvel again at the magnificently restored auditorium with the huge chandelier and light changes. I didn't know at the time, but **British** comedian **George Formby**, who had come out to appear at the **Tivoli**, was guest of honour. It wouldn't have mattered even if I had known, the **Regent** had been restored - nothing and nobody could be more important than that. From then on I saw every show at the **Regent**, either on school holidays or Saturday mornings. The circle was the same price as the back stalls. The organ was always featured, and there I would linger on the way out to hear the orchestra as it rose in from the pit. Sadly the orchestra was dropped mid-1948 due to post war inflation.

Most kids would have been off to "the footy" on Saturday afternoons, but no, not me. I would set off on my bike from **South Box Hill** through **Surrey Park** and call at **Hoyts Maling, Canterbury**, then to the **Rivoli** and **Hoyts Broadway, Camberwell**, then

to the **Hoyts Time** and **Balwyn Theatres**, and finally the **Surrey, Surrey Hills**. It was at the latter that I discovered the *Film Weekly*, a trade magazine that I was to subscribe to for twelve months before I joined the industry!

But I clearly remember what happened one day whilst riding through the park. I saw these 'strange' people lining their dogs up, then leaving them whilst they, the handlers, hid behind a tent. One dog moved, then another cringed forward; little did I realise that forty years later, I would be doing the same thing myself - and loving it! It's called "obedience training."

At this time, I had an interest in commercial art. I would spend hours designing posters, approx. 15" by 9" for the local **Rialto** and **Regent Theatres** which went up on the back verandah wall. One for **MGM's National Velvet** won me a certificate from the **Argonauts Club** on **3AR**. In one of my first "decisions", I decided I had to be in the theatre life, better to be on the "inside looking out than on the outside looking in".

I made two attempts to get a job with **Hoyts**, the second time I became the office boy in City Publicity, located on the first floor of the **Regent** building, (across the hall to Head Office). That was the 16th May, 1949. I had to go to all the newspapers with the ads, film exchanges for publicity material and was constantly on the go all around the various city theatres.

Once a week, **Geoff Robertson** would be featured on the organ live on **3AR**, via a phone line, and I wouldn't miss that for anything.

My first "theatre posting" was to the **Capitol** in June, 1951, as a cadet. This theatre also played an important part in my life. I was assistant manager when it closed in 1964, a heart-breaking experience as it was the first of the "movie palace" theatres to shut. I couldn't believe it - how could a magnificent theatre like this just close

down? Who would dare to pull it down? Over two years later however, I was to return as House Manager to the modified upstairs theatre we know today. Putting in a booking system, getting good staff, countless eighteen hour days, yet the six weeks up to, and including, the opening weeks were the happiest of my life.

Oh, almost forgot - who of us working at the theatre before it closed will forget those "pests" buzzing around backstage, frightening the usherettes? - something to do with removing the organ! (That was the start of the **Victorian Theatre Organ Society**, removing the **3/15 WurliTzer** to be subsequently reinstalled in the **Dendy Theatre** at suburban **Brighton**.)

The next few years would be spent at the various theatres - a happy life, never poor houses, always full on Saturday nights. In one sense I dreaded school holidays, especially during wet weather - queues, ankle-biters by the thousand from morning to late afternoon.

In 1951, the **Regent** scored the biggest day in its history, 14,500 admissions! Of course, most of the audience was in the first four and a half sessions of the six shows we ran per day.

Naturally, I had my devilish side too. I was particularly irked when the usherette on the sound monitor didn't compensate for the thick red house curtain cutting the sound volume as it came gracefully down at the end of the movie. Me? "Excuse me dear" - and promptly turned the dial up so the movie, musical or whatever, came to a fittingly noisy end!

My wickedest prank came during

**Call Me Madam**, the **Irving Berlin** musical starring **Ethel Merman**. In one scene, **Merman** as Ambassador **Sally Adams** is presented at court and in stepping back to curtsy, steps on and tears her dress. Just imagine 3,253 patrons almost jumping out of their seats as a minor tear comes over as a major explosion! Just as well the manager wasn't around.

The longest run the theatre ever had was **The Robe**, the first CinemaScope feature. It ran sixteen weeks, but was "held over" longer than necessary as a selling point, so that all the independent exhibitors would install this new entertainment wonder and stave off the forthcoming evil of television. Otherwise, **The Best Years Of Our Lives** clocked up eleven weeks, (and eleven Academy awards!), with **The Third Man** running an amazing nine weeks in the middle of a lengthy tram strike, before people became slaves to the car.

However, once television arrived, the rot set in. The "action" houses, the **Esquire** and **Lyceum** in Bourke St, were the first affected as people who once paid money to watch rubbish in the theatre, now found they could watch rubbish at home for nothing! Then the big theatres like the **Regent**, **Capitol**, **State**, etc., felt the pinch.

**Fox**, whilst controlling **Hoyts**, would not let movies like **South Pacific** go to the **Regent**. Why? Well, a blockbuster like **South Pacific** would probably have run at least six months at the 3,253 capacity **Regent**. But, at the 1,500 seat **Esquire**, it ran just on **THREE YEARS!** Half the seating capacity, lower overheads, a smaller theatre can override "bumps" like a hot spell which kept people away from the

non-air conditioned theatres.

**Sound Of Music** even went to a tarted-up **Lyceum**, about 1,200 seats, and the standard of product at the **Regent** started to deteriorate. Those of us working could feel the theatre dying, sometimes 300 patrons at an evening session early in the week. The organ had gone silent, the theatre was becoming a morgue, we felt it would be better to close it than go on in this fashion.

Whilst the **Regent** faded out on a mediocre western, the **Plaza** had scored a hit with **Butch Cassidy And The Sundance Kid**. Was it something like 90 weeks? And in November, 1969, the final insult - auction catalogues being sold from the island ticket box with the auction itself conducted from the stage. My main purchase, a four-lamp bracket from the circle which has been waiting for twenty five years to be re-lit in my lounge room! I decided some time ago not to jinx myself - it will only be re-lit when the theatre re-opens - we're almost there!

Oh, the **BIGGEST** day in the theatre for a **MOVIE** was certainly **Cinderella**, but for sheer numbers it would have to be 8th October, 1995, when at least 30,000 people trooped through on the State Government's Open Day. With special re-opening celebrations being planned, and the hit musical **Sunset Boulevard** slated for a long run (shorter than expected! - Ed.), the **Regent** will be well and truly back where it belongs, at the heart not only of Collins St, but with more big shows planned for the **Princess and Her Majesty's**, at the heart of the arts and entertainment capital of **Australia - MARVELLOUS MELBOURNE!!!**

Ian Williams

## An ATOS Newsletter item

From **ATOS International News**,  
June 1998 :

### A German Dictionary for Organists

From the **Miller Pipe Organ Company** newsletter, "**The Principal Chorus**" a set of descriptive definitions:

**Blower** : das Wheezenpuffer

**Bombarde**: das Loudenboomer

**Borrowed Stops**: das  
Cheatenschtoppers

**Combination Pistons**: das  
timensaver Shortishcutters

**Draw Stop Knobs**: das puller und  
shoven Werks

**General Cancel**: das Buttonpopper  
mit Sound ein gross Kaput

**Pedal Keyboard**: das  
Schtompinwerks

**Sforzando**: das Suddenisher  
Schreamenpusher

**State Trumpet**: das earschplitten  
Loudenboomer

**Swell Box Shutters**: das Volumaker  
upperdowner Gepfloppenwerks

**Tremolo**: das Sound Schaker

**Unison Couplers**: das  
Hitchschtoppers

**1' Stop**: ein Peepenskwieker

**4' couplers**: das  
Hitchuppenschtoppers

**16' Couplers**: das  
Hitchdownenschtoppers

**32' Stop**: das longisher grossen  
Growlenboomer

Towards the end of last year, Amy Johansen, was appointed official organist at the University of Sydney. This item about her appeared in the university's publication, *The University of Sydney News*.

# New fingers at the key boards

BY ANNE SARZIN

It never occurred to Amy Johansen to be anything else but an organist. Undisputed, too, has been her progression to the rank of those musicians with an international reputation.

Recently-appointed as the new University Organist, Ms Johansen (right) is contemplating no fewer than 50 graduation ceremonies every year and several series of concert recitals.

Ms Johansen has a strategy to convert those who are either indifferent or antagonistic to those heady sounds that swell through the Great Hall at Great Moments. Graduation audiences will be entertained beforehand with a "light and festive" musical repertoire – transcriptions of symphonic music, as well as works by Mozart, Handel and JS Bach.

Concert recitals, however, call for different tactics. "You can give more challenging music to concert audiences, in fact some organists believe you should play something they want to hear and something they should hear," Ms Johansen said.

Born into a music-loving family in the United States, and with a grandmother who was an accomplished organist, Ms Johansen's interest in the instrument started early. Educated in her home country, she furthered her organ studies in England and in France, with one of the best known contemporary composers of organ music, Naji Hakim, whose work she plays on her CD entitled *The Embrace of Fire*.

Ms Johansen's other CDs reflect her Australian experience: *Once in Royal David's City* comprises music



*Amy Johansen at the console of the Beckerath organ in Sydney University's Great Hall*

from the Chapel of Newington College in Sydney; and *Organ at the Opera* features organ duets performed with her husband, Sydney City Organist Robert Ampt, at the Sydney Opera House.

Since her arrival in Australia in 1991, she has performed at the Melbourne International Festival of Organ and Harpsichord, the Newcastle Cathedral Festival, and the International Barossa Festival of Music, as well as giving recitals in countless town halls throughout the country.

In planning these concert programs, Ms Johansen tries not to take sides despite her love of Vierne, Widor and Franck's French romantic music and especially JS Bach's organ music. "His music is so great it can never be duplicated," she said. "The organ has such a rich history, so we are lucky to have a remarkable repertoire, one can never get bored."

Ms Johansen is also drawn to the rhythmic complexities of modern organ music, especially the compositions of her former teacher Hakim. "It's important to play modern composers," she said. "Maybe they'll never be Bach but their music deserves to be played – and it stretches the audience's ears a little. An added advantage is being able to ask living composers about their intentions."

Ms Johansen has a high opinion of the University's organ, which was made in 1972 in Germany. There is the added bonus that – despite the sandstone soaking up the sound – the acoustics in the Great Hall are what she terms "sympathetic".

Ms Johansen plans to reinstate the free one-hour Great Hall organ recital series on Sunday afternoons, which will follow the carillon recitals, as well as "sporadic" Monday lunch-hour recitals.

# The University of Sydney's Great Hall Organ

*The appointment of a new university organist prompted me to find out a bit more about the Great Hall's organ. This information comes from the cover of a 1993 CD produced by the Chancellor's committee in 1993, called **Organ and Carillon Music from The University of Sydney***

The current organ is the second organ to have been installed in the **Great Hall of The University of Sydney** and succeeds an instrument commissioned in 1882. The newer organ was designed by **Rudolph von Beckerath of Hamburg** and built in conjunction with **Ronald Sharp of Sydney** with the assistance of **T. E. O'Mahoney**, architect, and staff in the Deputy Principal's Office of the University.

The inaugural recital, by Swiss organist **Lionel Rogg**, was on 4th December 1972.

**Herr von Beckerath**, who designed and built many organs in **Europe** and the **United States of America**, expressed his concept of organ building as follows: "The classical organ, or the baroque organ, is no longer possible

except through an imitative return to the past. Our time is neither classic nor baroque. The vitality of a modern instrument demands instead the translation of the spirit of past greatness into contemporary form."

Except for the couplers, the organ has "mechanical" or "tracker" action with its advantages of reliability, promptness of attack and subtleties in touch control. Classic voicing, unlicked pipes, slider chests and low wind-pressure combine with modern technical advances, such as the "capture system" which permits any preselection of stops, to make the organ at once classical yet also suited to our own times.

The organ has three manuals and pedals, 53 speaking stops, 78 ranks and 3947 pipes.

The four departments are: Great, Positiv, Swell and Pedal.

The cost of the building and maintenance of the organ was largely been met from the **Eleanor Sophia Wood Bequest**. Mrs Wood, who died in 1962, bequeathed her residuary estate, valued at over \$800 000, to the University and in so doing gave the University's Senate wide discretion as to the purpose for which the funds could be used. In 1962 the Senate decided to appropriate the funds for a new organ in the **Great Hall** as well as for the establishment of the **Sydney University Press** and for the award of Travelling Fellowships.

During the construction of the organ the greater part of the gallery was rebuilt and in 1973 the Senate named it the **Eleanor Sophia Wood Organ Gallery**.

## "Members' Day"

*"Up Close and Personal" with the Willoughby WurliTzer*

On **Saturday 17th April from 10.30am until approximately 1.30pm**, TOSA members are invited to enjoy an informal get together to experience the Willoughby Town Hall's 2/11 WurliTzer organ, "up close and personal" (to quote the film).

Many of you may have attended some of the concerts at Willoughby over the past few years, and of course most recently Tony Fenelon was featured on this instrument. Concert co-ordinator, **Mr Ron Sinclair** has very kindly liaised with the Willoughby Council to allow TOSA Members access for this rare opportunity.

Ron will be giving a brief history of the instrument and then members will have the opportunity to try it for themselves. Naturally, enthusiastic listeners are also very welcome to come along and share the experience.

Perhaps you may like to bring a sandwich to keep the tummy rumbles at bay. Tea and coffee will be provided.

**It is important that we have a group of manageable size so please register your attendance by phoning Margaret Nelson-Hall on 9584 2353.**

Should an unforeseen problem arise regarding our access we would also need to be able to let you know of any change.

Willoughby Town Hall is in Victoria Ave, Chatswood, opposite the entrance to Westfield.

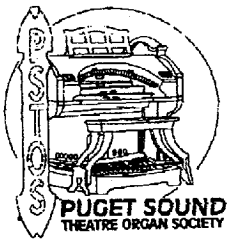
It is only a few minutes walk from Chatswood Station.

If you prefer to drive, 3 hours free parking is available at Chatswood Chase.

**Assemble on the Town Hall steps by 10.15am to meet Ron Sinclair and gain access.**

**Hope to see you there and don't forget to register!**





The Puget Sound Theatre Organ Society in the USA publishes a monthly newsletter edited by TOSA members Russ and JoAnn Evans, and often includes items of general interest to theatre organ fans world-wide. This historical item about a George Wright concert comes from the Dec 98/Jan 99 issue of the Puget Sound Pipeline

## Pages From the Past...

GEORGE WRIGHT was the "father of the theatre organ revival" that began in the 1950s, when it was generally acknowledged that the theatre organ had died along with silent movies. Born August 28, 1920, George passed away May 10th of this year, leaving behind a legacy of creative musicianship that will continue to influence organists, young and old, for years to come.

Over forty-two years ago on May 10, 1956, George was presented in concert on the Moller at the Los Angeles Shrine Auditorium. Attended by more than 4600 enthusiastic "orgophiles", this was indeed a news-making event. Imagine if you can an auditorium half again as large as Seattle's Paramount Theatre, filled to the brim with theatre organ aficionados!

Following is a review of this concert which appeared in the January 1957 issue of *The Kinura*, a non-profit publication devoted to the interest of the theatre pipe organ. The review was written by Stu Green, a name familiar to many ATOS members.



George Wright in the '50s

## GEORGE WRIGHT THEATRE ORGAN CONCERT ATTRACTS 4600 IN LOS ANGELES

Los Angeles, May 10 [1957] — The lights dimmed and a spotlight picked out the large console. The young man with the brush cut went into a rousing version of *Anything Goes* and an historical evening had begun. In fact, it may be the first performance of its kind in theatre organ history. In the old days the 3 to 5 minute organ solo was a standard item of theatre fare but in those days we don't recall a previous incidence of a theatre organist packing more than 4600 people into a huge auditorium on the strength of two hours of pop organ stylings. That this could happen 27 years after the "death" of the theatre organ is significant, to say the least, and a personal tribute to George Wright as well as to the instrument he has done so much toward resuscitating.

There was something electric in the atmosphere as we approached the lobby of the mammoth Los Angeles Shrine Auditorium, an aura of expectancy worthy of a theatre "first night". Little knots of organ enthusiasts generated excited comments on the drawing power of the allegedly dead instrument as orgophiles, young and old, filed into the 6000 seat hall. The choice seats for this affair were not those "down front" but rather the lower priced ones back on the steeply banked balcony — the place where the organ sounds best.

The auditorium is huge and practically square. The decoration is in the typical Ma-

sonic tradition, mixing the gaudy with the conservative with the result that it looks quite old fashioned — a place sympathetic to theatre organ sound since it closely resembles the old time movie palace. Seated near the center of the balcony we were afforded a good view of the straight organ console, its large side jambs crowded with stop tablets (not draw-knobs, thank Heaven!). The balcony extends far forward, bringing those in front surprisingly near the stage. But even so, the obviously large console was dwarfed by its surroundings. The house is roughly comparable in seating capacity with the New York Radio City Music Hall. It was surprising to see it slowly fill with organ fans — but satisfying. There was a brief intro by disc jockey Ben Hunter, then Mr. Wright took his place at the console.

Those familiar with George Wright's recordings know of his capacity as an entertainer and he was at his best on this particular evening. He put so much into his playing that he largely overcame the limitations of an instrument — though huge — hardly classed as a true theatre instrument. The big Moller's theatre stops were effectively buttressed by two ranks of tibias from the Vaughn residence organ, substitutes for the more churchly tones — just for this evening.

The program consisted of 23 selections, many of them tunes George has recorded — *Roller Conster*, *Ebb Tide*, *Edelmu*, *Love For*

*Salé* (complete with snarling reeds), *The Boy Next Door*, and *Jealousie*. He was successful in duplicating the registration used on his recordings so far as the Moller facilities permitted. Quite naturally, he steered clear of tunes which rely heavily on double track recording — with one notable exception, *Quiet Village*. The omnipresent mocking bird was dominant in all his pre-recorded boisterousness. This novelty was much appreciated and while acknowledging the applause, George indicated that credit should be given the bird operator, too.

### Tuning the Moller a sizeable task

When the Shrine management showed no enthusiasm for putting the 114 rank monster into shape for the concert, Richard Vaughn, the driving force behind HI-FI label records, undertook the job at his own expense. Vaughn, whose home is built around the Wurlitzer from the Chicago Paradise Theatre, hired Hollywood's busiest organ maintenance man, Henry Pope, to bring the long neglected instrument up to meet the stringent performance requirements of Wright. He touched up voicing where necessary and tuned considerably, a formidable chore in itself. For example, Lee Haggart once tuned the entire 114 ranks (including several ranks of mixtures) and the time con-

## George Wright concert, continued

sumed ran to 96 hours. Tuning is further complicated by the great distances between sides of the organ. It is actually a city block from the Swell Chamber ladder to the one which leads to the Great Chamber. therefore, it is practically impossible to "tune across" from one side to the other. Haggart pioneered one solution in 1926 by setting up a microphone in one chamber and listening by headset in the chamber where he was tuning. The instrument suffers tonally from this great separation of chambers, too, a phenomena which shows up during rhythmic tunes when syncopated accompaniment from one chamber may get out of phase with the solo from a chamber across the theatre. This is most obvious from seats on the side.

### This Moller neither "fish nor fowl"

The four expressive divisions are installed in pairs on both sides of the 6000 seat auditorium at just above balcony level, about 60 feet above the four manual console which is located in the left side of the orchestra pit. The stop complement is partly orchestral (theatre) and partly "legit", or as Vaughn says, "neither fish or fowl". Among the unique stops there is an unmitred 32' Bombard in the Great Chamber and a seven rank mixture in the Choir which is near the stage. This last is a challenge to any tuner. It's classed as a "concert organ" yet the builders had some pixi-ish ideas concerning such theatrical items as traps. These percussions are available only on the pedals!

Vaughn wasn't very enthusiastic about the way the big Moller had been installed. He feels that it had been literally thrown into the chambers when it was installed back in 1926. However, it's more likely that the ravages of time and neglect have taken their toll since the original installation was made by James H. Nuttall, Lee Haggart, and Frank Rogers, three of the most skilled and careful organ men on the West Coast. Therefore, it's reasonable to assume the job was done properly at the time even though the chambers are now nearly knee deep in the accumulated dirt of decades. Bur back to the program.

### The famous Wright showmanship never failed

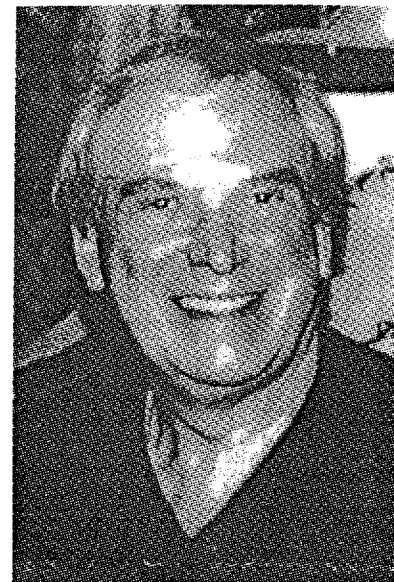
Wright's showmanship was nowhere more in evidence than during a memorable episode entitled *Silent Movies Are Back*. George supplied the musical accompaniment while

the projectionist screen a couple of antique short movies, one a gesturing, overdone "meller" complete with vamp and the woman mildly wronged but determined to make a federal case out of it. This hammy relic was choice bait for the organ antics of Mr. Wright as he brought forth heaving Tibia sobs in mock pathos, much to the merriment of the house. But George was at his best while cueing a Mack Sennett comedy, a race track burlesque starring old timers Billy Bevan and Andy Clyde. The jerky action covered a maximum of slapstick, considerable accelerated horse racing and the inevitable "chase". This one moved fast but George never missed a chance to cue an audible bump into a screen pratfall or chase a galloping horse along with his furious rendition of that paleolithic paroxysm, *Crazy Over Horses*.

This novelty filled the big house with rolling laughter which sometimes tended to swamp the music. At the end, George took his bows to recurrent waves of applause as the public recovered from "rolling in the aisles". Only one other selection got a bigger hand — *Jealousie*, and that is the tune this reviewer enjoyed most, too.

### Final "Mystery Tune" astounded audience

The 23rd selection was listed as "*To Be Selected*". For this final "mystery" tune, George sat down at the console and threw the tremulants off. Then he played the introductory measures of Bach's Toccata and Fugue on a battery of Diapasons. There were murmurs in the house as some listeners figured George was using that intro as some sort of gag, but he wasn't fooling. With a dignity which could come only from a sincere love of great music, the man introduced as "the greatest theatre organist" proved to 4622 people that the permanent literature of the *King of Instruments* is no stranger to him. Jaws dropped as he ran through the difficult passages of Bach's dramatic show piece (Stokowski conducted it in *Fantasia*) with no more apparent effort than he needed for *Birth of the Blues* a few minutes earlier. Critics rarely agree when they dissect a performer of serious music, but to this reviewer, who has been on fairly intimate terms with Mr. Bach's music since he first attempted a two part invention over 30 years ago, Mr. Wright's handling of the master's most theatrical composition left little to be desired. This is one classic without a dull moment and George took full advantage of each opportu-



George in 1980

nity without attempting to improve on or otherwise alter Bach. He played the music straight and with concert organ registration. To this reviewer the musical result was magnificent and judging from the applause there were 4621 others who shared that viewpoint. Thus was revealed a hitherto unpublicized facet of the Wright abilities.

George was tired by this time and the audience let him off with one encore. But the glow was still warm as the auditioners filed out, some stopping to buy Wright's records from hawkers in the lobby. It was on the way out that we heard the only sour notes of the evening, gripes from a few who sat downstairs. They complained that they couldn't see George as he played "...shoulda raised the console!"... or that the best vantage point wasn't from the highest priced seats which sold for \$3.50 (orchestra). True, the one buck seats up on the shelf were ideal. There was also a widespread complaint that the organ was never quite loud enough. But it should be remembered that George was restricted to using just the theatre organ section of the instrument, most of which is on relatively low pressure.

Next day, Richard Vaughn, who sponsored the concert against the advice of numerous crepe hangers, was jubilant. As he helped Henry Pope pull his two prime tibias out of the Moller and replace the stately diapasons, he said, "I'm more than satisfied with the results — and although we haven't made plans beyond the May 29 Sacramento High School concert, there will be more concerts — depending on organs available".

We couldn't reach George Wright for comment. He was still up in the clouds.

—Stu Green, Hollywood.

Don't forget Members' Playing Evenings at Marrickville Town Hall every 4th Thursday of the month - 7.30pm, at the rear, right-hand entrance. As there are sometimes cancellations at short notice, please confirm the night before by phoning Neil on 9798 6742, or Walter on 9716 0151

*Ritchie Willis noticed in the Sydney Morning Herald of Saturday, 31st October, 1998, this item about Peter Jewkes, the well known Sydney organ-builder, and the new organ for St Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta (Sorry about the quality of the printing with its wavy lines, etc., but the combination of my scanner and TOSA's printer does not seem to be able to produce anything better, in spite of many tries)*



Pipe of piece . . . Peter Jewkes tests one of the smaller pipes of the dismantled organ.

Photograph by ROBERT PEARCE

## Organ transplant to play sweet thunder

By RICHARD MACEY

For almost a century the organ accompanied English congregations as they sang to the glory of God in London's St Saviour's Church, a stone's throw from Harrods department store.

But earlier this year St Saviour's sold the instrument for £5,000 (about \$14,000) to Parramatta's St Patrick's Catholic Cathedral as a replacement for one lost when the cathedral was destroyed by arson on February 19, 1996.

The old organ was dismantled, boxed and shipped to Parramatta where it awaits the completion of St Patrick's campaign to raise \$9 million for the cathedral's rebuilding.

Now a jumble of 2,500 lead pipes and ornate timber carvings, it lies scattered amid thick dust on the top floor of a disused Parramatta building.

"It's a monumental jigsaw puzzle," concedes Mr Peter Jewkes, one of only a handful of professional organ builders in Australia.

Mr Jewkes, who also plays the organ at Christ Church St Laurence, Railway Square, estimates restoring and re-assembling the organ, built in 1898 by the British firm Norman and Beard, will cost \$250,000 compared to \$900,000 for building a new one.

"It's an incredible coup," he says, predicting it may become one of the finest musical instruments in Australia and attract audiences from across the nation to recitals.

"It was built as the Rolls-Royce of organs, a real battleship. A new organ would not have the same lavish quality."

St Saviour's advertised the organ for sale on the Internet after its committee, facing dwindling congregations, decided to convert most of the 19th century church into apartments.

Mr Jewkes, who spotted the Internet ad and alerted St Patrick's, says that if a buyer had not stepped forward, the

organ almost certainly would have been scrapped or broken up for spare parts.

Its reassembly is expected to take 18 months of intensive work, including two months of tuning the pipes, which range in size from 10 centimetres to almost four metres.

But Mr Jewkes said the effort and cost would be worthwhile.

"It will produce everything from the softest, gentlest sounds to thunder. You will know it's playing."



## An Important Announcement

Credit Card facilities have, unfortunately, had to be cancelled due to a substantial increase in Bank fees for this type of facility.

The only alternative available to your Committee was to increase the cost of recordings, which was considered totally unacceptable.

We regret any inconvenience

caused to members. Cheques continue to be acceptable.

CDs & Cassettes are available at TOSA Concerts,

or by Mail Order from :

TOSA (NSW Division) Inc.

304 Parramatta Rd

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# WARRINGAH ORGAN SOCIETY

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Please send cheque and self stamped  
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*Richard* has recorded a disc / tape  
of **Popular Ballads** that he will have on  
sale at the evening concert called

### **A Walk in the Black Forest**

**\$30.00 for the CD**  
**\$18.00 for the cassette**

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| 5. A Walk in the Black Forest | Barrel Polka                  |
| 6. Moonlight Serenade         | 11. The Lady is a Tramp       |
| 7. All I Ask of You           | 12. I Only Have Eyes for You  |
|                               | 13. Climb Every Mountain      |
|                               | 14. Brazil / Amor / Amor      |

Richard Boyle has been making organ music for many years. After a few initial piano lessons he switched to church organ. Shortly after he became acquainted with the Hammond organ and has been playing electronic organ ever since. He has given concerts around Australia and some of his albums have gone overseas. He has always strived to be an 'individualist' by creating a sound and style that is different from traditional organ music. This, he says, enables him to appeal to a wider audience. He enjoys playing styles from light classics and musicals to country, middle of the road pop to latin American hits; and from swing to polkas, marches and waltzes. He sees the modern electronic organ (which is making a renewed comeback in popularity) as a musical challenge and believes it to be the most expressive and versatile of all musical instruments. Richard says that being a musician is a tough and demanding life, but believes strongly that success comes from understanding people's musical tastes and most importantly by having a deep respect for his audiences and friends- for without their encouragement and support it would be fruitless. "It moves me when people go out of their way to say they enjoyed a piece I played, an album of mine or a concert I'd given," he says.

During his current concert tour Richard will be releasing his latest album titled 'A Walk in the Black Forest'. This is his seventh album and he is very happy to announce that this album is available on CD as well as cassette.

The album has been twelve months in the making. The pieces were very meticulously selected; offering something for everyone. Richard has also turned his hand to engineering. The entire album has been produced, arranged and engineered by himself in his own studio.

Plans are already underway for two albums in 1999, one of which will be spiritual music featuring the beautiful voice of his wife.

# OUR NEXT ARTIST : *John Atwell*

John started learning the piano at the age of 7 in Adelaide, and had always expressed an interest in playing the pipe organ. At that stage, his experience had been a limited exposure to the organ in the local church plus a Jesse Crawford and two Reginald Foort recordings from his father's collection of 78s. But on Good Friday 1965, he visited the Regent Theatre in Adelaide with his family as a lad of 15 years, and experienced for the very first time the total impact of a live theatre organ. This experience was to be the catalyst which kindled his interest and resolution to play the theatre organ. After that, any excuse to go back to the Regent was worthwhile!

Once John commenced classical organ studies at age 17, the Regent became his unofficial venue for theatre organ tuition. When he could, on a Saturday morning John would get some extra practice at Scots Church in North Terrace where he went for lessons, then slip round to the Regent for the matinee. The "lesson-matinee" cost 5/- (later 60c) and consisted of listening to and watching every action and movement of the resident organist, Knight Barnett, from the front row of the stalls. It didn't matter what film was playing. Later he would work on what he had seen

and heard back at his practice instrument - a very early Allen organ. This was the only way to get tuition in those days, apart from listening to recordings.

After the Regent closed, John became aware of the existence of the Theatre Organ Society of South Australia, and through this association and the recognition of his developing talents, he was invited in 1968 to join Knight Barnett, Brian Richardson and Ian Johnson for the first TOSA theatre organ concert at the Regent's WurliTzer in its new location at St. Peter's College Memorial Hall. Quite an experience for an 18 year old!

In 1971 John married and moved to Melbourne to study immunology for his PhD. His musical career also continued to develop with invitations for concert appearances in different states of Australia. But an appearance with Tony Fenelon at the same WurliTzer in St. Peter's College during the TOSA Convention in 1974 marked the national debut of a popular piano/organ duo association which has continued to the present day. In that time Tony and John have performed many times to appreciative concert audiences all around Australia. In 1995, they took their particular magic to the USA for a successful

four week tour.

Over the years, John's musical contributions have been quite varied. John's theatre organ performances have taken him around Australia, New Zealand, the USA and Canada. Several of these performances have been opening concerts; he has presented programs of both classical and light orchestral fare on significant non-theatre instruments in Australia; for 16 years he was accompanist to the Maroondah Singers; he has worked as a freelance accompanist for many other choirs and soloists; and he has acted as a consultant on the re-specification of many of the new theatre organ installations around Australia.

Through his music, John has had the opportunity to meet many people over the years both in Australia and overseas. He is grateful that many have become close family friends. John has spent his post-university life working as a research scientist for CSIRO. He is again working in the field of immunology and molecular biology as it relates to the diagnosis of human disease. Work commitments place an ever increasing demand on his time. However, he is determined to ensure there is always time for both music and his family.

## FREE TICKET OFFER !!!

*Do you have friends who have never been to a 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 one of Australia's outstanding Theatre Organists, John Atwell.

The time: **2pm on Sunday 21st March** The place: **Orion Centre Campsie**

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

The TOSA Ticket Secretary,  
18 Dudley Street  
PUNCHBOWL NSW 2196

*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:

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**NSW 2196**

Always include a stamped self-addressed envelope with your booking. If this is not done, tickets will be held at the Box Office.

**JOHN ATWELL CONCERT**  
**ORION CENTRE CAMPSIE.**  
**SUNDAY, 21st MARCH, 1999 at 2.00pm**

Phone Enquiries & Bookings:

**Mrs Jean Newell : (02) 9750 0362**  
Between 10.00 am & 6.00 pm. Mon. - Fri. only

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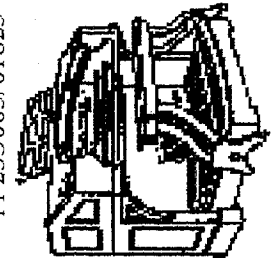
# TOSA NEWS

# MARCH, 1999

Theatre Organ Society of Australia  
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