

T.O.S.A. NEWS

INCORPORATING *The Diaphone*

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA, N.S.W. DIVISION

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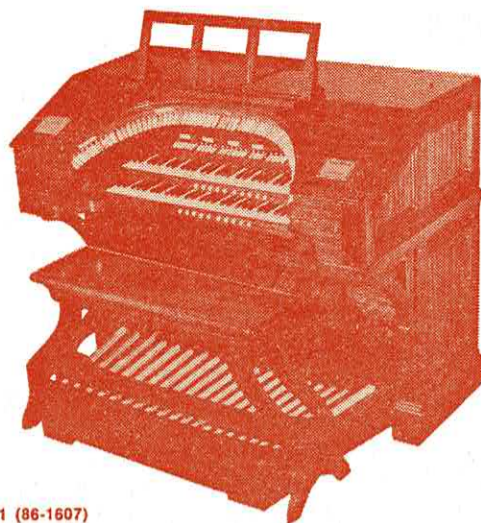
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FAREWELL TO THE CAPITOL

Those of us who are fortunate to have a copy of the late Ben M. Hall's Book, "The Best Remaining Seats", or who subscribe to overseas Theatre Organ magazines such as "Console", will know something of the special type of sorrow felt at reading of the end of a great movie house: the death of a Picture Palace. We read of handfuls of dedicated organ buffs huddled together in the early hours of the morning for a final recording on theatre organs that have seen better days, and occasionally there is the really big farewell performance before an organ is removed to safety, escaping the theatre wrecker's hammer by a few hours. We see the photos of the shells of big movie-houses after the stripping and feel perhaps a little glad that here in Sydney we still have a few of the big ones left.

How such feelings of detached sympathy are suddenly and angrily brought home by news that the Sydney Capitol is to be a cinema no longer. Surely not THE Capitol? Those of us with ours ears to the ground over the past few years have only asked ourselves, "How much longer will she last?" And now we know. This once magnificent cinema modelled by Henry White on the fabulous atmospheric designs of America's John Eberson created a sensation when it opened on 7th April 1928. It's lighting, statuary, stars twinkling in a blue sky with real moving clouds, and the general atmospheric feeling, not to mention the Roman Rotunda, Spanish Garden, Lion's Cage, and trees and birds liberally spread around the interior, were something that those first-nighters and the first-timers for ever after, never seemed to recover from. Even as late as the recent pop shows and transferred Opera and Orchestral series, the numbers of people remarking for the first time upon the effects showed clearly that Eberson's ideas were timeless.

And the organ. On the opening night, ".....Fred Scholl gave a series of pieces on the Wurlitzer Organ, he also shooting up unexpectedly from the depths in front of the stage. A transcription of the Rigoletto quartet showed the instrument to possess a full and finely impressive tone, which rang forth vibrantly in the huge building without seeming to blare. In his jazz number Mr. Scholl was obviously at tremendous pains to see how many curious and unusual stops he could use, and for those who love novelty for its own sake, the effect, though wild in the extreme, probably seemed very stimulating. The "Love Call" from "Rose Marie" showed the capacity of the organ in softly sentimental mood...."

P.T.O.

There we were, surprisingly several hundred of us, gathered in the Capitol Theatre on Saturday morning the 5th February 1972, perhaps a little bewildered, and perhaps a little incredulous, but nevertheless, having to face the fact that we were shortly to witness the last performance on this fine WurliTzer organ which we have grown to love over three decades. And did it sound great!!! I have said so before, and I'll say it again: "The finest Theatre Organ installation in Australia." I wonder if WurliTzers can think, for this one gave of its best that morning under the hands of ten of our well-known organists in a memorable tribute to the "3/15 Capitol."

We were sorry that not all those we asked could manage to come along, however, the feast of music and talent presented to us was superb. CLIFF BINGHAM set the ball rolling, followed by BILL SCHUMACHER, RAY THORNLEY, PETER HELD, LANCE WELLS, ALAN TRANTER, DAVID PARSONS, ERIC SMITH, DENIS PALMISTRA, and to "take her down", our beloved Patron, IAN DAVIES.

Vice-President Frank Ellis was Comperere for the morning and in his usual cheery manner introduced the organists to us, giving a brief biographical outline of each.

John Gardiner, noted feature writer and cinema historian, gave us a short run-down on the Capitol Theatre and its organists (shortly to be enlarged by John and used as an article in TCSA News), and later the Manager of the theatre, Mr. Shaw, responded to President Tom Halloran's address.

Whoever decided on the final piece of complete and utter nostalgia must be congratulated. With our ears still ringing to the sound of Ian Davies' signature tune "Cruising Down The River", and our eyes unbelievably witnessing the final noble descent of the hoist and console, the motor was switched off. A few handclaps were quickly silenced and then we heard the great blower in the depths beat out its last breaths, and as Ian opened the shutters, the put-put of the tremulants ceased and the reservoirs gave a mighty groan and thump. Then all was still.

The feeling at that moment is hard to describe. It was indeed a sad occasion, but also one of happy anticipation, for we know that the New Life will soon be at hand for this wonderful historic instrument. We wait eagerly for news of the new home and a new lease of life for our WurliTzer:"the Capitol 3/15."

It seems that the interior of the theatre will be granted a reprieve; at least as long as Harry Miller is in possession, for the news reached me today that nearly all the picturesque "decorations of a Picture Palace" described above will be returned, and there is even talk of completely renovating the blue ceiling, stars and clouds. Good news for those aiming to keep this cinema for ever as a monument to the Great Years of the Movies.

Ian C. Griggs
Witness to History.

NEWS FROM CHATSWOOD TOWN HALL

Willoughby Council have announced preliminary plans for use of the 2/10 WurliTzer for 1972. A series of concerts featuring well known Sydney and famous interstate organists is planned and details are to be released soon.

"THE CHRYSOGLOTT"

The capital "Capitol" crew.

At the request of the Executive Committee TOSA News records the names of the members who gave outstanding service during the dismantling and removal of the "Capitol" organ:

Barry Tooker (leader)
Ian Somerville
Jack Lawson
Mrs Lawson (catering)
Mrs Tooker "
Ross Adams (Transport)
Norm King (pantechinicon driver)
Geoff Moore (Travelled from Newcastle)
Don Tyler " "
Wally Peacey (TOSA Vic.Division)
Harry Vivian
Peter Rowe

Jack Lawson estimates the weight of the organ as 25 tons. If anyone doubts his word just try lifting some of it!! The Society is truly grateful to all those who assisted in any way - particularly those who have provided storage space rent free.

The Organ and the Press

The April edition of "Music Maker" will contain an article on registration by Conn demonstrator Don Kingston of America.....

The March edition of "Electronics Australia" has a good write-up on WurliTzer Electronic organs..... "Weekender" magazine dated March 30th has a spread on electronic organs, a photo of Moorabbin Town Hall 4/21 console and also Gordon Hamilton at the Dendy.

This page of TOSA News is an experimental new format. Several readers have complained that they do not like the old foolscap-size layout of the news letter.

Pages 1 & 2 have been prepared in the familiar style. My personal view is that a more catchy title is needed. TOSA History is a more apt name than TOSA News!!

My proposed "STAR" Letter seems rather optimistic judging by my correspondence so far. Most of the material submitted has been far too long-winded and the rest is either dated or of interest to nobody except the author. If I'm wrong please write and tell me so, rather than muttering beneath your breath or making long-winded telephone calls to fellow members.

Apart from "The Chrysglott" the only other titles suggested have been "The Claricn" (too corny?) and "Profunda" (too profound?).

Comments, please!!

"The EDITOR"

WELCOME. The following new members have recently joined the Society:

John Shaw (Croydon), Jim & Joyce Sneddon (Caringbah), Alexander Gillies (Faulconbridge), Alice & Bessy Giddy (Merewether), Mr & Mrs Ted Chapman (Arnecliff), Mr & Mrs D.L.Dunnet (Epping), Ian Hanson (Longueville), Jack & Gladys Nelson (W. Lindfield).

THREE FOURS AND MORE

Three records currently available feature 4m. Wurlitzers. NSW TOSA member, BILLY NALLE, has a hit on his hands with "Big, Bold & Billy" which is breaking t.o. sales records in the States where it also has the distinction of being the first four track stereo organ recording. It presents in hi-fi the 4/26 in the former Brooklyn Paramount (now owned by Long Island Uni.) with Billy on top form. Australian release is on FESTIVAL SPJL 934279 in two channel stereo, or cassette PJ 24279. Also from the U.S. is Lyn Larson on the 4/34 in the Senate Theatre, Detroit. This disc entitled "Get Happy" is on CONCEPT CRS 3102, available from Concept Records, 6 Carrington St., North Balwyn, 3104 @ \$6.30. Nearer home leading English organist Vic Hammett shows off his admirable technique on the Moorabbin Town Hall 4/21. Highly recommended, very versatile, this FABLE release FBSA 015 is the first recording on this installation and will not be the last. The title is "The Mood I'm In" Price ? \$5.95

WILBUR KENTWELL has confirmed the date of his concert at Chatswood Town Hall as May 6th.

CAPITOL ORGAN PURCHASE FUND

Donations: \$447.00
Interest free loans: \$701.00
Loans from other TOSA funds: \$1,033.00
Bank Loan: \$1,000.
A number of members offered loans but have not yet remitted their money to the Treasurer. If we could all donate the equivalent to one year's subscription our debts would be covered. Incidentally, have you paid your current subscription? Our present credit on general funds is \$945.00.

RADIO AD PAYS OFF

Our member PETER HELD gave his best performance to date when he entertained over 300 at Marrickville Town Hall on Feb. 27th. Space precludes quoting all of his well chosen two-hour programme, but as a true Irishman he managed to include "Kelly the Boy from Killane" !!

Musically and financially the best value is possibly the BBC disc "More Hits from The Organist Entertains" with nine organists featuring eight different instruments - Compton, Christie, Wurlitzer, and Willis/Harrison. Orders PRIOR TO APRIL 30th will cost \$5.35 from Frank Ellis, 16 Delhi St. Lidcombe 2141 and also aid the Capitol organ Purchase Fund. Cash with Order, Please. Normal price is \$5.95 Our member Reubert Hayes has made a disc on a Conn Rhapsody. Priced at \$5.50 it is only available from Mr. Hayes, or Mr. P. Oakes, 9 Carmel Place, Winston Hills. This 12" LP includes a wide range of music, and is sure to interest many members.

"Historic Organs of Tasmania" VDR 040.
For those who appreciate organ tone and erudite playing John Nicholls and Lindsay O'Neill can be heard on 13 instruments located in Tasmania. Individual orders from Mr. M Dick, Studio Ninety P/L, 153 b William St., Devonport 7310 Tas.

"SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY"

Cecil Cranfield will play at Marrickville on Friday 14th April, supported by top trumpeter John Robertson, who is widely experienced in classical works as well as dance music. The compere will be TOSA member JAMES DIBBLE, well known ABC announcer, and proceeds will be shared 75% to the Childrens Medical Research Assn. and 25% to the Capitol Organ Purchase Fund. Tickets for non-members at \$1.50 will be on sale at Mitchell's and David Jones. Members may book through the Secretary or at the door.

PETER IRWIN reports that plans for the tour by REGINALD PORTER-BROWN the outstanding English organist are almost complete. Reg will make a recording in Sydney. He will appear at the TOWN HALL on July 16th and at Chatswood on July 19th. More news later.

It was the Society's first free concert this year, and a show of hands proved that most of the audience had heard the concert mentioned on Clark Kilns radio show.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

April

Tues. 4th. Committee meeting at Strathfield.

Fri. 14th. "Sentimental Journey" at Marrickville

Sat. 29th. David Parsons on the Compton Electrone PLUS tapes. At the home of Cdr. Irwin, 21 Campbell Drive, Wahroonga, 2076 at 8 PM. Phone 48 5030 for details, after 6 pm.

May

6th Wilbur Kentwell at Chatswood.

Fri. 19th. Organ Party: Neville Wright's home.

June

Fri. 9th. Chatswood. Council concert.

Wed. 21st. "Meet your Organ" - Marrickville

July

Sat. 8th Col. Tringham's evening

Sun. 16th Reg. Porter-Brown, Sydney Town Hall

Wed. 19th Reg. Porter-Brown, Chatswood

August

Sun. 20th. Bill Schumacher and Paul Edgar at Chatswood

October 7th. SOCIETY CONVENTION

ORGAN FOR SALE

Conn Rhapsody & 2 channel Leslie Cabinet. As new condition. \$2,600 o.n.o. Phone Mervyn Moore 48 5521.