

Volume 25 Issue 1 Price 50¢ Jan - Feb 1986

TOSA NEWS

*The Official Publication of the Theatre Organ Society
of Australia, N.S.W. Division
Address - Box A584 P.O. Sydney South, 2000
Registered by Australia Post - Publication No. N.B.H. 1038*

PRESENTS

John Atwell
in concert

Hear the

**SPECTACULAR
SOUNDS**

of a real live Theatre Pipe Organ
in a wide-ranging program of
POPULAR MUSIC

Sunday 2nd. March
at 2pm.

Marrickville Town Hall



Supported by

Patricia Wooldridge & Valda Lang

IT'S MEMBERSHIP TIME!

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The Secretary, TOSA (N.S.W. Division)

Box A584 P.O. SYDNEY SOUTH. 2000.

HOME ORGAN PARTY

at the home of Betty & Sam Bruderlin
 Saturday, 16th November 1985
 (By John Giacchi)

Approximately 60 people enjoyed a sunny and fun - packed afternoon at the home of Betty and Sam Bruderlin.

The pool was put to good use (resulting in some persons getting deliberately wet) and later in the afternoon the barbeques were lit and members enjoyed a steak and delicious side salads that were made by the ladies. Betty also thanks Roslyn Porter for the large quantity of garlic bread and also Joy Harrison for the coleslaw.

Later in the evening, members started to flock around the 'Elka' organ and received a good workout. Thank you to those who entertained us.

We were also presented with a surprise guest being none other than Dame Edna Everage. She along with her 'Bridesmaid', Madge, presented the members with gladiolas. Madge also had bandages wrapped around her head following a recent facelift! (I wonder where Ros and Barry Porter were? Too bad, maybe next time!).

Thanks also go to Betty and Sam for making the home organ party both a success socially and financially in raising \$174.60 towards our Capitol Organ Fund.

FOR SALE: Conn organ Trinidad 554 horse-shoe model.

This organ is in excellent condition.

PRICE: \$5,500 O.N.O.

For further information please ring 522 8025.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARYJANUARY

MONDAY 6th at 7.30pm.
COMMITTEE MEETING

SATURDAY 18th at 10.00am.
HOME ORGAN/POOL & B.B.Q.PARTY
Bert and Joan Chamberlain's home.
369 Reddal Parade, Mt. Warrigal (on
Lake Illawarra)
B.B.Q. Lunch. Members are asked to
bring their own steak etc and BYO.
Ladies are asked to bring a plate for
afternoon tea.
Admission: Gents \$4.00 Ladies \$3.00
Book now on 042 964122

WEDNESDAY 22nd at 7.30pm.
SPECIAL MEETING at Marrickville
Town Hall.

FEBRUARY

MONDAY 3rd at 7.30pm.
COMMITTEE MEETING

SATURDAY 15th at 3.30pm.
Pool Party - Northern Suburbs.
Please ring "Edna" on 487 2727 for
full details and bookings.
Admission: \$7.00 which includes light
buffet tea.
Nice Eminent organ and grande piano,
so bring your music along.

WEDNESDAY 26th at 7.30pm.
CLUB NIGHT
Marrickville Town Hall.

MARCH

SUNDAY 2nd. at 2.00pm.
PAID CONCERT
JOHN ATWELL in concert Marrickville
Town Hall
Admission:
Adults \$7.00 TOSA members \$6.00
Concession \$5.00
Booking form in this issue.

MONDAY 3rd at 7.30pm.
COMMITTEE MEETING.

THURSDAY 13th at 7.30pm.
MEMBERS MEETING at ORION CENTRE.

HOME ORGAN PARTY
(Date to be advised)
Joe and Mercedes Maennl home 31
Tenth Avenue, Oyster Bay. Please
phone 528 6383 for bookings.

NEW MEMBERS

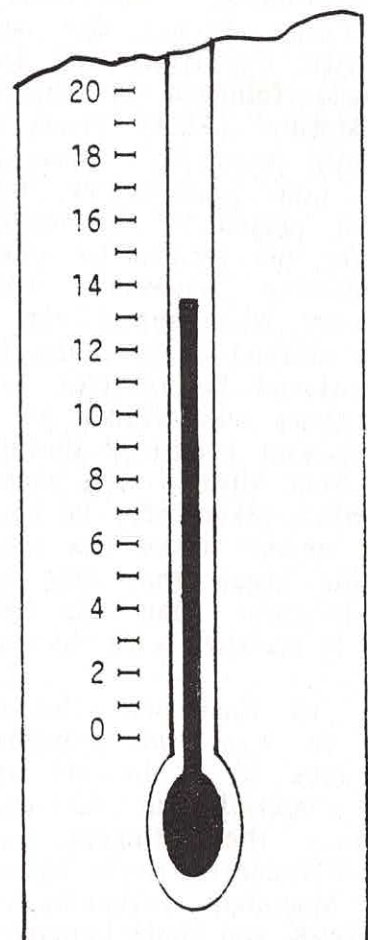
(December meeting)

Len and Judith Rawle
K.R. Beardsmore
Mr and Mrs Robert Quinn
Frances Waggott
F. Matters
Glenis Fist
Nancy Shaw
Bill McBean

NEW MEMBERS

(January meeting)

Mr. K. Digby
John and Jessie Lamb
Cheryl Baxter
Kathleen Richardson
Fred Freer
Mrs. R. Mewburn

CAPITOL ORGAN FUND

At the time of going to press the
thermometer has now risen to \$13,300.

SECOND LEN RAWLE CONCERT

24th November, '85 (by JOHN CLARK)

Though we didn't have a full hall to hear the English wiz of the organ, **Len Rawle** in his second Sydney concert certainly had a happy audience that obviously warmed to Len's personality and enjoyed his very individual and entertaining style.

This concert was similar to his first of 18 days previous, in that he talked only when needed and played long brackets at a stretch, though the content was (largely) as promised, completely different.

His opening bracket of six numbers served notice on those who had not heard him before, of the presence of an organist who would produce sounds they probably hadn't heard before in a style that could vary from Schmaltzy in the nicest way, to solidly rhythmic..brisk and breezy..full and rousing, and always entertaining.

By way of contrast, as the first bracket was all popular tunes, (Another Opening, Another Show, Begin The Beguine, Sentimental Journey, Starmaker, Pasadena, and Tzena Tzena) the second started out with the tremors off for Neapolitan Serenade followed by the operatic "On The Motley" (Aunty Freda always called it 'Pally Archie!') I guess I'm reporting what Len played...how he played it is best judged by the audience response and for his efforts he was loudly acclaimed..even cheered! His selections had very wide appeal for our audience as he started in on a Big Band medley.. I mentioned before that Len had produced some nice sounds we hadn't heard before...well I noticed during this medley that Alan Misdale was shaking his head, and when asked why, he said "I've never heard anyone make the range of sounds on this organ that this bloke makes", and I guess Alan has heard his fair share in his time with the Society.

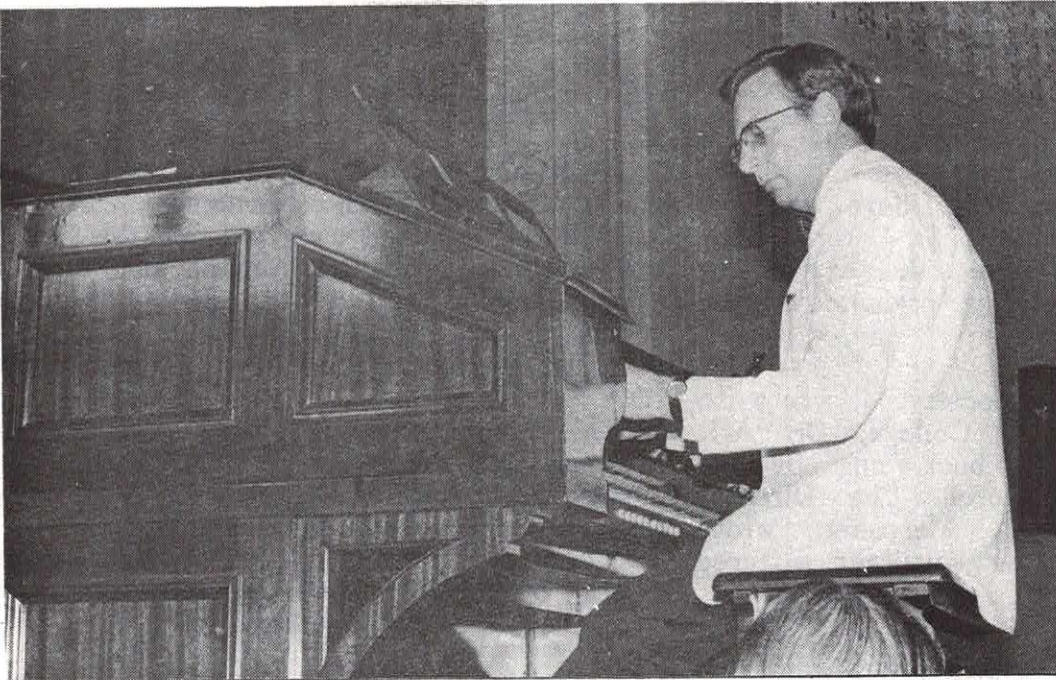
Nice and Easy was the name of the song as was the switching treatment Len gave it as he did also to Moonlight Cocktail, but for those who like to snap their fingers and tap their feet, S'Wonderful really hummed along. With Moonlight Serenade, if you closed your eyes, you could imagine the

Trombonists in Glen Miller's Band waving the mutes across the mouths of their instruments to give the "Do-Wah, Do-Wah" sounds so typical of that era.. open your eyes and you would instead see Len playing with right hand and feet but using his left hand on just the right tabs at just the right times to produce the same effect. Rapid reiterations are sometimes lost in the natural reverberation of Marrickville Town Hall but not so with Mr.Rawle..he used them in a crisp snappy fashion in a splendid rendition of that relatively simple oldie.."Dont Sit Under The Apple Tree" that really made it come alive. You Were Meant For Me was next and then to close the first half came Chatanooga Choo Choo with all the train effects and rushing rhythm that shows the entertainer in Len Rawle.

Tea, Coffee, Biscuits, Tapes, Records and much chatter constitute a typical intermission and that it all went smoothly is evidence of a well oiled behind the scenes organisation that is TOSA's Committee and Volunteer members.

Len returned to the console resplendant in his white jacket and bow tie and proceeded to hold the attention of the audience with some long time favourites (like Colonel Bogey, I Can't Give You Anything But Love, You'll Never Know, Something's Gotta Give, Amore, No Business Like Show Business) but of special delight to me was the Gold and Silver Waltz by Lehar. Len lilted through this with great expression as it and the previously mentioned tunes were part of a medley he had played for his Parents Golden Wedding Celebration just before he departed for his Australian tour.

To close the show we were again treated to an absolute kaleidoscope of sounds and tempos, from the lush presentation of You Forgot To Remember to the bouncy syncopation of the Sinatra hit, That's Life. Shivers up the spine with the 23rd Psalm which built to a tremendous Grand Organ climax and then Len slipped into Auld Land Syne....result?? long and loud applause demanding Len's re-appearance and after telling us that we dont have encores in England, he burst into a vibrant Hoedown that would have delighted even the Candi Carley fans.



Top photo:
Len Rawle seated at the Wurlitzer console.

Centre photo:
Newcastle member, Bill Waite, has Len Rawle autograph his cassette.

Bottom photo:
Len Rawle with members of the Sutherland branch of the Y.O.A.

NEAR DISASTER IN ADELAIDE

(By John Giacchi)

For those members that have not yet heard of the bad news, St Peter's College Hall, (which houses the ex Regent Adelaide 3/15 Wurlitzer organ), recently was set on fire.

In interest to our Society, I wrote to the Principal of the College, Dr. A.J. Shinkfield to relay back any damage that may have occurred. The Director of music, Mr. D.J. Merchant, wrote back to me that the Wurlitzer suffered little damage.

The organ, of course, was specially insured and repairs needed on the organ would only run into a few thousand dollars. The two chambers housing the pipework saved the pipes from destruction. The shutters to both chambers have only been charred, and a few of the pipes inside showed they did not like the heat!!

The console was the main damaged part of the Wurlitzer, not from fire, but water. The musical directors hope that this will dry out satisfactorily. Fortunately, the water moving to the basement under the stage passed by the blower room and there is no damage there - particularly as the College had recently spent some thousands of dollars rejuvenating the blower system.

The Wurlitzer piano, which is attached to the Wurlitzer, was placed in the gallery and as yet the college is unable to give the instrument a close inspection.

The hall could be some eighteen months in re-building. Therefore, the Director of music presumes that it will be some months before much can be done about the organ.

TAPE HIRING

Owing to some tapes not being returned, membership cards **MUST** be presented when hiring concert tapes.

For all information and hiring of tapes, please contact Neil Palmer on 798-6742.

NEWS FROM NEW ZEALAND

Sometime between Friday evening 8th and Saturday 9th November, "Persons Unknown" gained entry to the hoist box of the Wurlitzer organ, and through a deliberate act of vandalism dislodged one of the two driving chains that work to lift the console up into the auditorium.

The result of this 'sick' act caused disastrous problems when the hoist was used for the first time. One side of the lift went up leaving the other side in a stationary position until there was over 12 inches difference between the height of the two sides.

The emergency cut-out stopped the hoist, but not until all driving chains and numerous guide wheels and bearings had been ruined. Miraculously, the organ console suffered no damage and the organ is in perfect working order. At the time of writing, an insurance assessor is due to visit the theatre in the next day or so to inspect the damage, which is considerable!

At this stage we do not know whether the console will have to be removed from it's turntable platform so as to allow repairs to be carried out. If this is required it will be a mamouth job, taking many, many hours of disconnecting cables etc. etc: - we are keeping our fingers crossed!!!!

News source. . . Theatre Organ Society Of Auckland Newsletter.

IMPORTANT

Don't forget the all important meeting of members to be held at Marrickville Town Hall on Wednesday 22nd January 1986 at 7.30pm.

The purpose of this meeting is to discuss in detail the incorporation of YOUR Society.

Your attendance at this **MEETING** is essential.



HOME PARTY 23rd Nov, '85.

21 Lyne Road, Cheltenham.(by Doug Smith)

Saturday 23rd proved a very entertaining evening with many artists presenting the Conn 644 at its best and a good time was had by all.

Our Hosts, George and Joyce Walker have been members of the Society from its inception and have been the Hosts of many evenings of music for the Society. In the early years, a huge effort had to be made to survive and to help to gather funds for the expansion of the Society and in conjunction with a few other people their efforts proved very worthwhile when the chance came to purchase from the Prince Edward Theatre, our present WurliTzer organ.

The rest is history now and a part of every day life for us, but when we started, it was just a dream for the few members who hoped that somehow they could succeed and they did, thanks to people like George and Joyce Walker. Recently, they made a large donation of their private record collection to be sold at our recent fete - the collection being too large to be accommodated in their proposed new home-unit.

"The Entertainers"

From left to right:

George Walker, Daphne Hogarth, Doug Smith, Lance Wells, Jack McDonald
Andrea Harrison

These and many other generous efforts are just an example of their sincere dedication to the Society over the years, and many others today could learn from their actions.

The Home Party on this evening is (unfortunately) their last one, and then only because space does not permit one in the new residence. No doubt we will be seeing George and Joyce at our concerts etc and they will always be welcomed by all members anywhere.

Thanks again to George and Joyce Walker for this fine evening, and we cant forget all the effort you have both put into our Society over the years.

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DOWN MEMORY LANE
No.22 of a Monthly series
by FRANK ELLIS.

In July 1940, the Theatre Organ scene in Sydney was enhanced with the news of a new organ being announced. Believe it or not, in spite of the war, one enterprising theatre owner actually was installing a WurliTzer organ. Mr. Reg Payne, owner of the Regent Theatre, Wentworthville was to remove the old three manual concert organ and replace it with a 2/7 WurliTzer. Eustace Dodd was to be in charge of the installation, and the removal of the old locally built organ (a "bitza" similar to that in the Astra Theatre, Drummoyne) and the new installation was to be playing in six weeks.

Good news indeed. Les Denley, resident organist on the old concert organ was to open the new WurliTzer and remain as resident organist, with Tom Kelly as his deputy. Whilst at the Regent Wentworthville, Les had also been appearing at the Strathfield Cinema. This dual role necessitated him featuring at the Regent after the newsreel around 8.15pm. and then dashing down to Strathfield to play at interval and then do his feature spot after interval. The interval playing at Wentworthville being played by his deputy Tom Kelly.

Running a little late one night, Les was stopped by a Police car for exceeding the limit. Quickly explaining his role as organist in two theatres to a sympathetic cop, Les was allowed to go on his way without being booked. I guess the traffic cop must have been an organ lover.

Iris Mason took over the console at the Vogue Theatre at Double Bay when Ron Royce joined the Army. She made a good impression with her first presentation entitled "Milestones of Melody" and became quite a favourite with audiences at the Vogue.

Also in July 1940, Owen Holland had a couple of weeks in bed with a leg problem. Owen met with an accident around 1935 and broke his ankle - it appears that it had started to trouble him again in 1940.

Jim Williams took his place at the Regent Theatre's WurliTzer for a couple of weeks Owen was absent.

Reg Maddams of the De Luxe Theatre Wellington, New Zealand, had joined the Army as I mentioned in "Down Memory Lane number 19" - in October TOSA NEWS. In July 1940 Reg wrote to a Sydney journalist saying that he was on board a luxury liner "somewhere at sea" on his way to the War in Europe. Sounds to me as though there hadn't been time to strip all the luxury furnishings and transform the vessel into the usual austere troop ship, hence Reg's luxury cruise.

In August 1940, Bert Myers suffered an illness which robbed him of the use of his legs, fortunately only temporarily. Ray Chaffer, then at the Enfield Savoy, copped a dose of the measles and Paul Cullen deputised for him as well as carrying his own show at Burwood. At the Capitol Theatre, resident organist Billy Dick went on a couple of weeks holiday, his place being taken by Jim Williams. Sadly that month, the Kings Theatre at Gordon reduced their nightly organ interludes to one night each week and Valda Kersey was the unfortunate organist to receive such a drastic reduction of her income.

In September 1940, Jim Williams was appointed to the Majestic Theatre Melbourne. Also in Melbourne, Arnold Coleman began broadcasting again after an absence of several years. Heard on Sunday afternoons at 2.30pm the broadcast emanated from the Melbourne State Theatre 4/21 WurliTzer, where Arnold was resident organist. I don't recall which station in Melbourne but in Sydney the show was heard on 2BL.

Stanfield Holliday at the Ambassadors Theatre Perth went into camp for his 3 months Army Training and his place at the console was taken by Les Waldron for the period. Lionel Corrick arrived from Melbourne to take Les Waldron's place at the Sydney Plaza.

Owen Holland landed a ten week engagement with Radio 2CH to broadcast from the Regent Theatre four mornings a week at 9.30am. Stan Cummings was also broadcasting one night a week from the Arcadia Theatre Chatswood over Radio 2UE.

DOWN MEMORY LANE cnt'd

In Paris, the negro organist Fela Sowande at the La Fleur Theatre's Hammond organ and Arthur Young on the Novachord, recorded two sides of a 78 record. The tunes were "Yours For A Song" and "In An 18th Century Drawing Room". The first, unusual and quite haunting - the second, Ho Hum or maybe even Yuk!

Still in September 1940 and we heard the sad news that two Sydney theatres were to close down their organs completely. They were the Astra Theatre, Drummoyne and the Duke Of York at Eastwood. The Drummoyne job, a locally made "bitza", the Eastwood one an English Christie, now in 1985, happily restored and playing in the Baptist Church at Epping. This instrument has been visited by TOSA members on several occasions in the last year.

See you all next month with more bits and pieces from the past.

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TONY FENELON IN CONCERT

Marrickville Town Hall

Sunday 15th December 1985



The giant Christmas card opening to reveal Tony 'Santa' Fenelon.

See reviews on pages 10 and 11

TONY FENELON CONCERT REVIEWSunday 15th December 1985(by JOHN GIACCHI)

645 people attended the final TOSA concert performed by Melbourne artist Tony Fenelon at the Marrickville WurliTzer for 1985.

For those who remember Tony's Christmas concert two years ago, he appeared as Santa Claus carrying a bagfull of pipes. Last year Tony burst out of a huge gift wrapped box but this year, Tony appeared in a "magical" Christmas Card. What next Tony?

Taking into consideration the hot weather, the WurliTzer stood up to the test and remained in tune, even with the percussions. Also, with a hall full of people, it is surprising how different the WurliTzer sounds comparing to an empty hall, this being due to a cut in the reverberation.

Tony opened up the concert with "A Most Unusual Day" and then played a piece I hadn't heard before called "Cascade Of Stars". A beautiful arrangement of "People" had the audience clapping madly! A change of mood followed with "That's A-Plenty" and a Spanish piece of music called "Tango" followed. This piece reminded Tony of his first performance at the 4/19 Melbourne Regent WurliTzer.

Tony also played a Japanese jazz number called "Splanky" in which he used the sneaky Post Horn and Tuba exceptionally well. "Only Love", the theme song from the movie, Mistrals Daughter, received a loud applause from the audience and same applied with a Duke Ellington jazz number, "Sophisticated Lady" and the Jesse Crawford piece, "High Hat". Tony included several marches, the first one being "March From A Little Suite".

Tony concluded the first half with the popular "Skater's Waltz" which received "oohs" and "aahs" from the audience. Tony changed registrations in this piece extremely fast using the thumb pistons which created a three manual effect. Interval followed after an extremely loud applause from the audience.

Everyone needed a hot cuppa at interval because of the breathtaking artistry of Tony Fenelon, especially Tony himself, who took a sigh of relief that the first half was over. A huge thanks should go to the ladies who helped with the afternoon teas especially Phyl Wilson who was later presented with an arrangement of flowers by Tony Fenelon.

Tony came back refreshed from interval to start the ball rolling again with "Step To The Rear" from the Broadway play, "How Now Dow Jones". A collection of Beatle melodies from Paul McCartney and John Lennon followed which included "Yesterday", "Penny Lane", "Hey Jude", "All You Need Is Love", "Yellow Submarine", and "All My Loving".

The next selection came from the (yet to be released) play "Chess", the Academy Award Winner - "The Continental", "What'll I Do" by Lynda Ronstadt and the "Our Director March".

The Simon & Garfunkel song "Scarborough Fair" preceded the Barnum favourite, "Come Follow The Band" which received a large applause from the audience, and also "Please Dont Ask Me" recorded by John Farnham. Tony closed his concert with a medley of Christmas songs following which large applause brought Tony back for an encore and featured that lovely ballad "The Swan" and then his most popular request "Nola". Tony also included "I'll See You Again" and "When I Fall In Love".

It can be clearly seen why Tony Fenelon is called the "ambassador" of the Theatre Organ. Not only his presentation and playing is of very high standard but he also enraptures his audience with his pleasant personality.

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TONY FENELON IN CONCERT

Sunday 15th Dec.'85, (by JOHN CLARK)

I knew, as I sat listening to Tony that I had to write this report so I was searching for the appropriate words to describe that which has been described by far more literate people than me... but two words did stick in my mind.... "ADROIT & PREDICTABLE"..and completely it described this man..."dexterous, skilful, ingenious, adept."

It first came to me when I noticed the different ways he has of getting into playing position after he has taken a bow (he stands after every piece to acknowledge applause - that's one of the ways he's predictable.) Often he'll sit facing the audience and then by flicking his legs out and to the left, pivots on the seat of his pants until he is facing the console. Alternatively, he will turn left, slip his leg over the bench and so as to straddle it, and then swing his other leg around so he is in position to play...to me.. this is remarkable for a man of his height...I'm sure if I tried the same thing I'd do myself a mischief!

The Dexterous and Skilful parts of the definition are no news as Tony is expected to be...and was. That definition encompasses "Ingenious" gives me great satisfaction as this is so evident in the way he weaves several "tunes" together so that one is a counter melody to the other, or how he pops in part of Chopsticks and other waltzes during the Skaters Waltz... other artists do this I know but he seems specially "adept" at it....adept is described in the dictionary as "one skilled in an art...an expert."

The next time Frank Ellis needs to introduce him he need simply say "ladies and gentlemen, I give you the adroit Tony Fenelon."

And "Predictable?????" Where Tony is concerned you can predict the following....a large crowd,(we had more than 600) a well rounded programme (classics, evergreens, jazz, novelty numbers) his appearance will be smart (White jacket, black trousers, white butterfly collared shirt, pink cummerbund and matching bow tie and buttonhole flower) audience response will be enthusiastic...(it was!)

What made me dwell on the predictable things about Tony is that a lady came

to me at interval (because I was wearing my brand new TOSA badge) and said could we give Tony leave not to wear his jacket in the second half on such a warm day and I told her that Tony had that option but he typically wore his jacket no matter how it was, such was his professional manner..he played the whole concert..predictably...with his jacket on.

I haven't mentioned what he played 'cause most of you were there...and if you couldn't make it well..I guess you missed the concert.

Highlights of the day?? We arranged a special entry for Tony....last year he sprang out of a gift wrapped box.. the year before he came in dressed as Santa and threw lollies into the crowd..so this year, as "things have been a bit tough" said Compere Frank Ellis, "we only have a Christmas card for you"...and the curtains opened to reveal a 6'x4' card, which, when opened by an "invisible hand" revealed a skilfully painted Santa Claus (courtesy of Barry Porter) with Tony's face and hands showing through appropriate cut-out holes.

Late in the concert Tony slipped behind the console to return with a lovely floral arrangement as a tribute to wonderful service given to TOSA by Phyl Wilson. She made the trip down to the console amidst loud applause to receive the flowers from Tony and in response, Phyl thanked the team of ladies who arrive early before every concert to help set up for the day, and the ladies from the audience who help serve the teas etc.

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IT'S MEMBERSHIP TIME
 **RENEW NOW** 

NEWS FROM THE A.C.T.

INSTALLATION REPORT

(by David Dunnet)

TOSA ACT Division now has a **WORKING** 2/8 Comton Pipe Organ thanks to the herculian efforts of Richard Larritt and Garth Liebelt from George Stephens Organ Builders of Adelaide, S.A.

The Organ's eight ranks, Tibia, Flute, Viol, Celeste, Diapason, Krummet, Vox Humama and Tuba are all standing on their respective windchests in the chambers in the Albert Hall. All ranks are winded, tremmed, tuned and playing, with almost all notes playing in the correct chromatic order. The white and gold console is in place on the mobile podium and all of the keys and pedals have been adjusted together with the stop tab mechanisms.

Although it works and sounds tremendous after so many years of work, it is not complete as time and money ran out after three and a half weeks of feverish activity by our Adelaide friends and the local support team.

Although all of the percussion units are installed and winded they still have to be connected to the switch stack, tested and adjusted and the swell shutters and motors have to be connected to each other and the latter connected to the terminal boards. The ELV (extra low voltage) DC power wiring has to be permanently installed and connected to the generator.

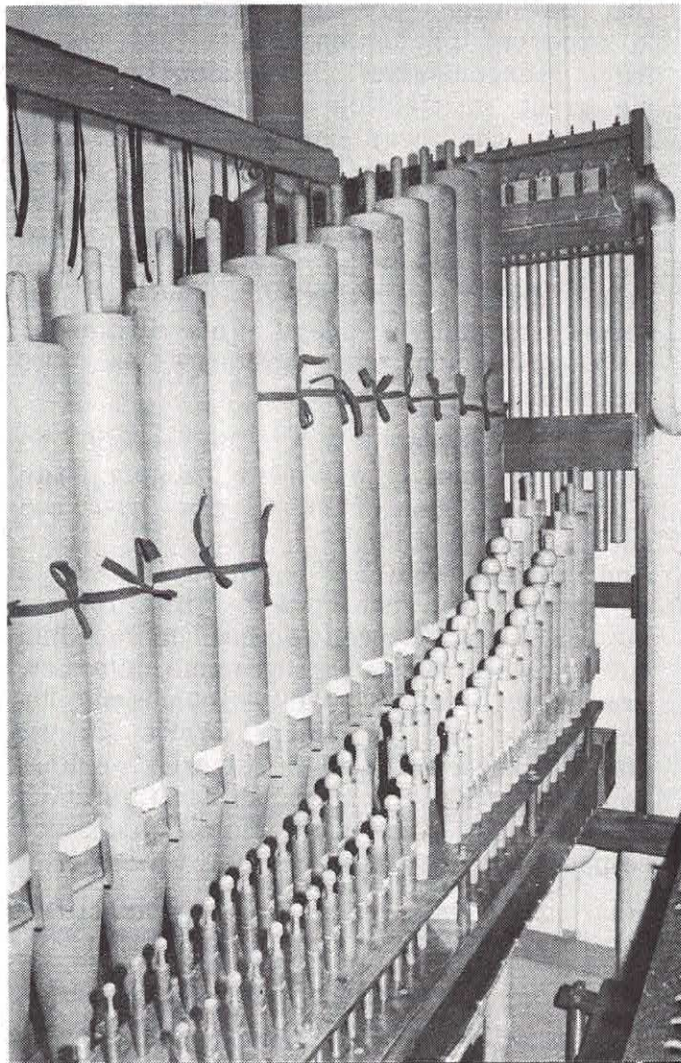
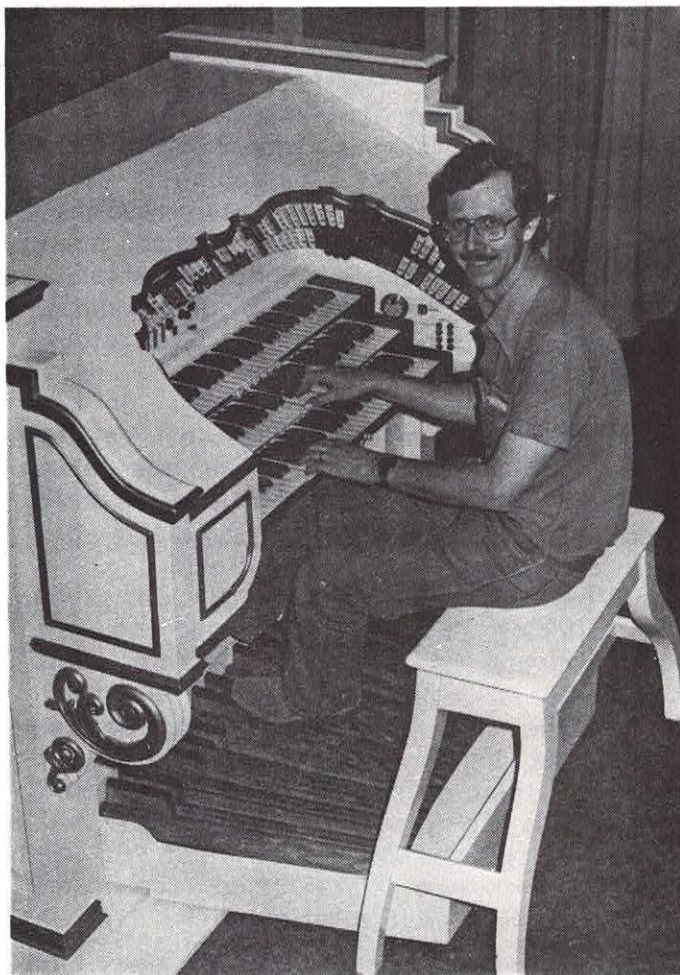
In short there is still a lot to do before the instrument can be made available for members to play regularly and finally presented in an opening concert.

I would like to thank the Restoration Team for their deication and hard work over the years and in particular Graham Williams, Cliff Edgecombe and Max Skeates for all the time they put in during the three hectic weeks of installing the organ in the Albert Hall.

News source. . . 'TOSA ACTION'
(A.C.T. Division Newsletter)

Top photo: Organ builder Richard Larritt seated at the console.

Bottom photo: Part of the solo chamber



CABARET NIGHT A HUGE SUCCESS

ORION CENTRE - CAMPSIE.

Friday 13th Dec, '85 (by Doug Smith)

This would have to be one of the most enjoyable functions ever held by the Theatre Organ Society anywhere. I feel sorry for those unfortunate people who could not attend.

As we lapped up the niceties of the plush air-conditioned Orion Centre, more than 60 people had started to dance well before Dinner was even announced! This can only be put down to the great music provided by a very experienced five piece band (by courtesy of Merv Palmer - good one Merv!) which had us toe tapping in a very short time.

A superlative Dinner followed, being provided by Anderson's Caterers and the food and service was excellent to say the least. Committeeman **Jack Lawson** did a top job as M.C. for the evening and there's no doubt everything ran smoothly with a minimum of fuss thanks to Jack.

During the evening we had a couple of interludes with **Bill Schumacher** playing the Hammond organ, Guest Soprano **Erica Witt** entertained us and later **Neil Palmer** was also at the organ.

Thanks indeed to these fine artists who were very well received by all.

Photo below:

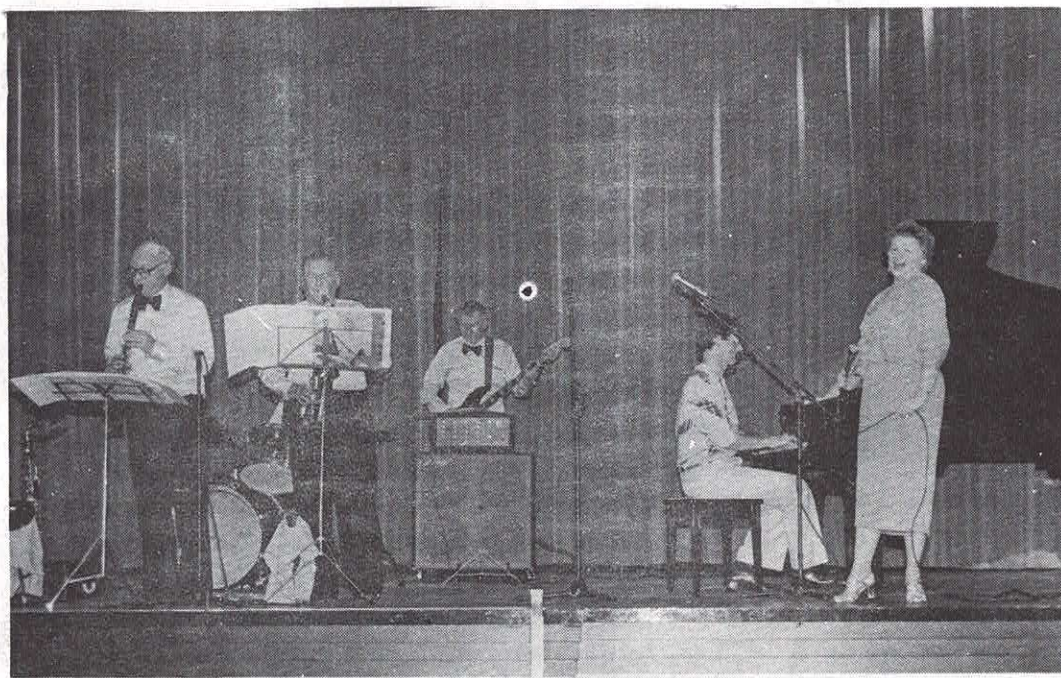
Erica Witt accompanied by the band with Bill Schumacher on piano.



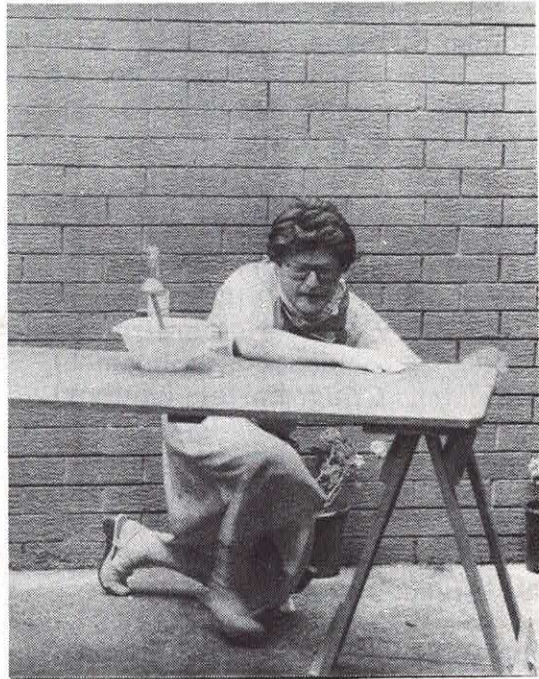
Photo above:
Guest soprano Erica Witt.

The Barn Dance occupied the whole of the dance floor area and very few people didn't take part. The end of the night finished up with a Running Bear snaking in and out of the tables and ending up with a somewhat exhausted line of people all gasping for more! Perhaps it was the new venue or the aura of Christmas but a very happy feeling was noticeable throughout the evening and at five to twelve we looked around and everyone was still there! wondering where the night had gone!

Our sincere thanks to the organisers, plus our very good band who gave more than their money's worth, our guest artists, who all helped to make this evening such a huge success. Full marks to **Phyl Wilson** for her tireless efforts and organisation and doing the bookings etc for the night. An excellent night to finish the year with!!







HOME ORGAN PARTY REVIEW

Held at the Porter residence
Sunday 1st December 1985
(By John Giacchi)

"What a great party!" were the words that I heard from happy members who attended the home organ party at Roslyn and Barry Porter's residence.

Although the weather wasn't promising outdoors, indoors, the atmosphere was warm and bright, as music was being played and danced to.

Several people had also decided to turn up in fancy dress and, "gee", what outrageous outfits some had worn. I feel sorry for the person who turned up as Dolly 'John' Parton, complete with breasts and all!. Thanks must go to those who went to the trouble to add some colour to the afternoon.

Throughout the afternoon, our hosts, Roslyn and Barry constantly kept us entertained with a variety of 'acts'. The first one was of the Village People, consisting of Barry Porter (construction worker), Bill Schumacher (policeman), Ron Smith (bikie), Craig Porter (cowboy), Ernie Vale (Indian) and John Clark (marine), had us all laughing in stitches and asking for more - and more they gave - a strip tease right down to the swimmers and you should have seen John Clark's 'trendy' pink 'tights'!!

Another act followed which featured Barry Porter as an ABC TV commentator. He introduced to us 'Mrs Beetson' (alias Jeff Scholer) to show us how to make a Christmas pudding with brandy resulting in 'herself' getting drunk.

The barbeques were lit and members enjoyed a steak with all those delicious salads our ladies had prepared and a warm thanks is extended to them.

Robert and David Cook had set up a wireless microphone system which enabled members to hear the music outside. Robert Cook had also videotaped the day enabling members to have a laugh over the days events. Such was the popularity of the video that two sessions had to be held.

Photo at right:
Home organ party reviewer John Giacchi (alias Dolly Parton) doing 'her' soft shoe routine.

Since it was also a pool party, a few members braved the water and went for a swim.

Many thanks is also extended to those who entertained us during the day, either on organ or piano, especially Marie Stronach who, accompanied by Bill Schumacher, sung some lovely ballads for us. Next on the list, we then had a third act. This time consisting of two 'Bears' (Roslyn Porter and Andrea Harrison), who sang 'The Teddy Bears Picnic' and at the same time threw sweets into the audience. A raffle was also held along with a table tennis competition to aid the Capitol Organ Fund.

Here again, I have the opportunity of thanking the ladies who provided a delicious supper for us all to enjoy. Later onward into the night, the younger ones had set up a disco in the Porter's garage complete with flashing lights.

Many thanks must go to the Porter family for a very well organised afternoon and making it a success, both socially and financially for the Capitol Organ Fund in raising \$409.00.





REGINALD DIXON

INTERVIEWER: I believe you first visited Blackpool Tower in 1912, when you were seven years old.

REGINALD DIXON: Oh yes, I remember that! I remember going on the sands with my sister. My younger sister wasn't born yet (that was the year afterwards). We used to watch the Punch and Judy show on the sands every day there. Yes, that was where I used to hear the roundabouts in those days as we went, when the sea receded. That was when I heard "I Do Like To Be Beside the Seaside," all those years ago. We went into the Tower, like a lot of people, on a very wet day and it was very, very crowded. I remember some of the machines where you put a penny in the slot. Some of them were still there when I went all those years later. They were so intriguing. (These automatic instruments - orchestrions, phonolist violinas and the like - were STILL there a couple of generations later. DT)

I always wanted to be a concert pianist. I used to struggle very, very hard rehearsing. I used to do six hours a day of "practice", as we called it, on the piano when I was in Sheffield. I must have driven people mad, playing scales for two hours. I'd be about nine years old then. Then I had a period when I wasn't too well and I gave up for a while, then started again - I think I would be about 11. I had another teacher and then I took it quite seriously, and I was teaching music when I was about 13. I took some letters (a diploma) at a college which I shall not name, which now don't mean very much, and I started to teach. I always think it was money under false pretenses! I was keen on the piano, I still love it, my listening is the piano, piano concertos, I enjoy it somehow. There's something about it - there are so many ways you can attack a piano. I used to think that, anyhow, but I was never intended to be a concert pianist, as we all realize now. I sometimes think your life is governed for you. But I did enjoy those early days and I worked very hard. Then, of course, I went to Sheffield University for a while, studying harmony

and counterpoint. I should have taken the Master of Music exam, but unfortunately we landed right in the middle of a slump, a "recession" as it's known now, and I had to go to work in a cinema.

I: Your father, of course, in Sheffield, would have expected you to go and work in a steelworks I suppose, to be a steelworker.

RD: He was a steel file cutter. When I say that to people ("What did your father do?") they look rather blank at me. I've seen him take an ordinary file without any teeth in it, and with a hammer and chisel make a perfect file. Of course, eventually the machines took over and that type of work became redundant. But he had little shops around Sheffield where he employed women to cut files.

I: What made you want to be a concert pianist; what sparked you off?

RD: I can always remember, when I was five years old, crying to my mother because I wanted to play my piece on the piano, and she used to lock the piano because she said I would damage it. But eventually she gave way. What it must have sounded like I don't know! It must have been terrible! I've always loved music. But in those days, you know, you had nothing else; we'd no radio, no television.

Stocksbridge Palace was where I started. I remember my audition. I played two of Debussy's Arabesques on the piano, and the manager (a grand fellow, a little cockney) came down, went through a trap door in the orchestra pit and as he came out he said "You'll do, mate!" and that was how I got the job. I used to go by motor bike out to Stocksbridge.

I: I understand you were inventive in those days and you added sound effects

RD: Oh yes, I took the bottom on the piano out and when there were bangs coming on the screen I used to put the loud pedal down and kick the strings and do all sorts of things like that. The piano didn't like it very much and eventually suffered. They bought a new piano on the night I left!

REGINALD DIXON INTERVIEW ...

I: And then you went on to a second cinema in Chesterfield, I think?

RD: Yes, I went to Chesterfield and I used to deputise for the musical director, who was rather an invalid. That gave me good experience. I used to go down to the Wicker cinema for two hours. There was a big pile of music on the piano. I had to read that, follow a violinist, and every time there was a tap with the bow - "next number" - that had to be read and played to silent films. That was an education absolutely and an experience. It was an entire job on its own and it was essential that you read and could at the same time look up at the picture and not lose your place in the music. In later years I got quite a big library together, there was special music written for it. I got rid of it eventually because it wasn't very good. Later, when I went to Healey Palace in Sheffield, we had a good orchestra and we used to play some very, very good music. As they used to say, we used to "fit the picture". But in those days they had big trade shows with full orchestras. I remember playing for the film "The Four Men of the Apocalypse". And "Intolerance", that was another very big film, you probably remember mention of that. I played for the trade shows. The trade show, as you know, was for the exhibitors and they used to go there to see for the booking of the film.

I: You were playing the organ then, weren't you, at Birley Carr United Methodist Church? That was the first organ you played, wasn't it?

RD: I learned to play in Cemetery Road Congregational Church, which has gone now. I had another music teacher who taught me to play. I had only nine months' lessons on the organ, but I worked very hard.

I: You were only 13 when you were playing the organ there?

RD: Yes, just 13.

I: But I think you saw the talking coming in and were starting to think about other things.

RD: Oh yes, yes. Often I didn't get home till one o'clock in the morning. You see, in those days we had an operator who, as we used to say in Sheffield, loved his "bevvie", he liked his drop of "biddy", and in those days there was no control over the speed of a machine. These days it has got to be

so many frames per second in order to keep in with the speed of the sound. By the end of the night I think he must have been leaning on the machine. It went slower and slower and we'd be coming out of the cinema at one o'clock in the morning! Fortunately, where I lived there was a tram depot and I used to catch the last tram. Next morning I was down at the Regent Cinema rehearsing on the Wurlitzer at eight o'clock, in order to get onto the organ.

I: That was the first Wurlitzer you played wasn't it?

RD: That was the first Wurlitzer I played, yes, yes.

I: But I think you moved down to Birmingham for your first job on a Wurlitzer?

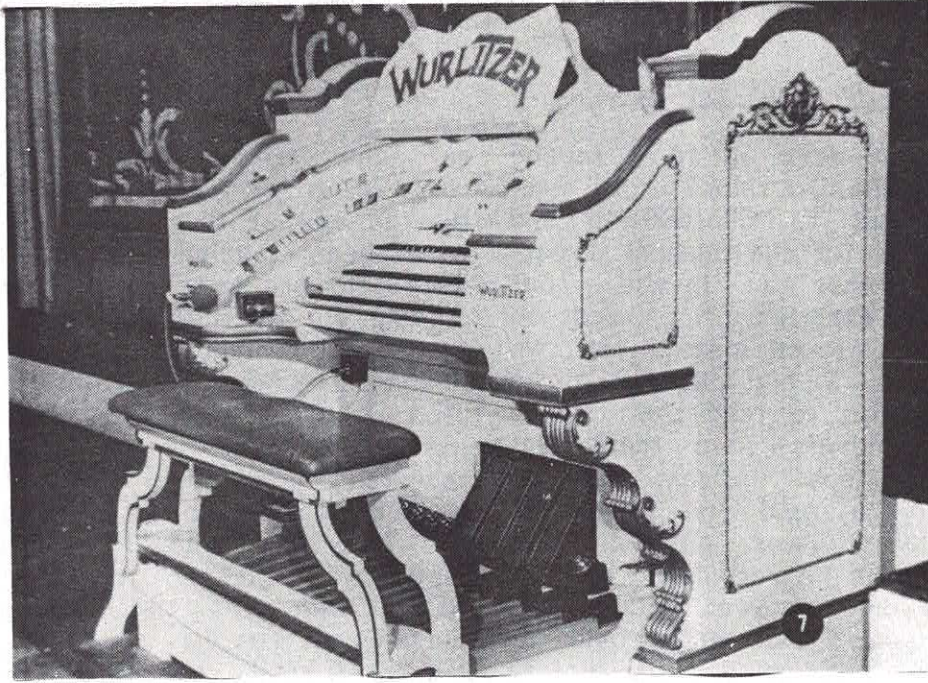
RD: My first job was at the West End Cinema in Birmingham. That would be about 19...was it 27? 28?...28, yes, because I went up to Preston in 1929 and got married.

I: And that again was to take your first job at Blackpool?

RD: I had an audition in 1930, yes. It was a very wild February day, we came on the Promenade, and I was frightened to death because I was out of a job then. I was told afterwards there were quite a number of entrants



Reginald Dixon



Console of the "Dancing Queen," the 3/14 Wurlitzer Opus 2187 in the famous Tower Ballroom Blackpool, England. Designed by Reginal Dixon, it was opened by him in April 10, 1935, and played by him until he retired in 1970.

for it, but I didn't know, I thought I was the only one. I'd had a chance to go before, but my mother thought Blackpool was too wicked for me! They were Methodists, you know, very narrow people.

I: The organ you were playing there, it was for dancing, wasn't it? It wasn't for the cinema anymore. What did that mean to you?

RD: They asked me if I'd played for dancing (Mr. Jepson, our musical advisor). I said, "Oh yes." I'd played for one dance, at the Cutler's Hall in Sheffield. I'd been sent home halfway through! There again, I'd had no experience of playing for dancing, but I was desperate! So I got the metronome going. The very first night, the pianist said to me, "What was that?" I said, "It was a quickstep."

He said, "You're telling me!"

The musical advisor, Jepson, said to me, "HAVE you played for dancing?"

I said, "Oh yes."

He said to me, "If you don't make a success of it, you'll go, and the **** organ as well!"

And of course, there was no amplification, and when you'd get a crowded ballroom you couldn't hear the organ at the end of the ballroom, so in '33 or '34 we started to make a suggestion for another organ.

I: You, of course, then got a new one, with three manuals, and grand piano, xylophone, and . . .

RD: Yes, and I'm responsible for that specification. I say that, whether they shoot me for it or not, but I wanted to have those biting reeds for dance work. Now, of course, they've got marvellous amplification and they can make it fill the place, can't they, without distortion? Things are so much easier than they were in the days gone by. I keep quoting what there wasn't in those days, but it's perfectly true. It was pretty hard work. You'd no microphones to speak to the people! And I never had a heavy voice, a big voice.

Before the war, I never got home when the season started! I'd be there in the morning and the afternoon, and then they decided to introduce me playing in the ballet, the Children's Ballet, which a lot of the older people will remember. So there were two shows in the summer, with the ballet, 2.30 and (or was it 3.30? It doesn't really matter.) and 7 o'clock at one time, the times varied. Then we had two sessions and late dances, too. We had all the bands like Joe Loss, Ken Mackintosh, Jack Hylton, Ambrose. They used to do a week at the Palace in the Varieties, then come across and play for a late dance, and I was in for the interval again! They used to bring me a nice steak and chips at teatime!

REGINALD DIXON INTERVIEW ...

I: How much were you getting a week for this then?

RD: Well, I started off in the winter time at six pounds a week, and in the summer, nine pounds a week!

I: Well, of course, even before the war, in the mid-1930s you were already broadcasting, weren't you?

RD: Yes, one August before the war I did eight broadcasts in one week, and they were all live! In those days, you see, you hadn't the recordings, they were live, and they were sent out to places like Canada. I often wonder if anybody ever heard them! We did get occasional letters. Sometimes these were 3 o'clock and 4 o'clock in the morning. Then later I started with Radio Luxemburg. I did three nights a month starting at midnight. They wouldn't close the ballroom till 4 o'clock in the morning. I remember struggling with the melody from "Rhapsody in Blue", the middle part you know. I had to announce at the end of it and I kept stumbling over the announcement. And of course, there again, you know, they were wax records, you hadn't tape. I had just done a successful one, and leaning back, I heard a slow handclap up on the balcony! It was one of my keen fans, the fireman! He thought he was giving me a bit of applause. I said, "I could kill you! You just ruined my record." I had to go through the whole lot again after that.

I: As well as the broadcasting, there were records you started to make in the 30's too, weren't there?

RD: Yes, yes.

I: And you were selling millions. These were 78's, of course. What was your favorite?

RD: Well, I don't . . . do you know, I can't really remember.

I: "Tiger Rag" was one I think that had a big sale.

RD: That was the highest selling record (in about 1934 I think it was) in the country, wasn't it, that "Tiger Rag?" I used to listen to the dance bands and I must have copied what they did. Of course, "Tiger Rag" was a favorite amongst all the bands.

I consider my technique was because I had rehearsed so much on the piano and done all types of scale practice.

Minor scales, major scales, double thirds, all that, which gave me a good technique. You see, now take the modern electronic organ. Your hands don't get strong playing one of those because there's no resistance in them is there? On a Wurlitzer you've got the lag to fight, too. One fellow once said to me, "Do you realise that your feet are in front of your hands?" I said, "No, I don't realise it, but I know why, 'cause it takes longer for the sound to go through that big pipe than it does through the shorter ones." Which is true, isn't it? You see, you've got to wait until the wind travels round. It can probably be only a fraction of a second, but it's there. So therefore, your feet have got to be in front and the lower the longer it takes. That comes automatically.

Yes, I consider that playing the piano, practicing on the piano, was responsible for my technique on the organ. I'm afraid I couldn't do it now.

I: The war years. You went into the R.A.F., I think. Went in as an Aircraftsman and came out as a Squadron Leader?

RD: Acting Squadron Leader, yes. What happened, I tried to join up quietly, going to Gloucester, as a radio operator, but someone found out and sent me to Uxbridge as a musician. I had a five-piece band eventually, arriving at Northolt, with 90% Polish personnel. Very brave men, too. I've always had very great admiration for the Polish people. It was, as you know, just after the Battle of Britain when I joined up, and we used to try to play Chopin; they loved Chopin. There was a Polish Sergeant at that time, in the Sergeant's Mess, and he always used to ask me to play "Poeme" by Fibisch.

I felt it wasn't a war, it wasn't what I joined up for. So I went in for a commission and eventually got one. They put me into movement control, which was connected with RTOs and finally finished up at Air Ministry when they were preparing for the invasion of Japan. Then they dropped the atom bomb there and eventually I was demobbed. I don't want to go into a lot of details over the war, but I felt I was a small cog in a very important job, that's all, and I look back and felt that I did something worthwhile. I used to occasionally go up to Bangor (where the BBC theatre organ was housed) on my leave and do a broadcast. I remember on one exercise I was

at Old Sarum where they were all congregating for the invasion, and I heard an organ as I went past the Nissen huts. It was Charlie Smart doing a broadcast that I should have done! I was "somewhere in England" and nobody knew where I was. That was prior to D-Day. Looking back, I wouldn't have missed that now, but there were times I used to worry, wondering if I ever would get back to playing.

I: In spite of all that, you became a national broadcasting figure in the really big days of radio just after the war.

RD: Yes, it was hard work. I felt it was hard work to come back again somehow, because, in five years another generation had sprung up, see? I mean now, after 14 years away from Blackpool a number of people say "Who's Reginald Dixon?" Which is true. People say, "Oh, people will remember YOU forever. No, it doesn't happen does it?"

The morning broadcasts.... it astounded me that, you know. Ten o'clock in the morning. They were coming in at 9 o'clock and the ballroom would be packed with people! It was really remarkable. I couldn't understand it... just for half an hour's broadcast! One of the things which they loved was to sing. I remember the producer saying, "Try to get them singing." I said "Try! I can't stop them!" They'd sing anything. So that was the idea of the last five minutes being a sing-along. And if it wasn't in I'd get letters complaining about it.

I: You were awarded the MBE, but one of the big honors was to be allowed to switch on Blackpool Illuminations in 1956.

RD: Yes, it was a wonderful year.

I: You were such a tremendously glamorous figure then. I think, to cope with the fans, you had photographs made that tore off like postage stamps, perforated like postage stamps.

RD: Oh, yes, mmm. A firm in Dundee did them for me. They had glue on the back and they used to stick them on the corner of the autograph book page, inside. Yes, I'd almost forgotten about those! I had some of them at one time, but they've disappeared like other things.

I: You were judging the beauty contests, of course.

RD: Yes, yes. You make a few friends

there and I always think a lot of enemies, too! I remember walking past, and there was a girl from Sheffield. It was a terrific walk around that stadium - like walking to the scaffold I thought sometimes. As I was walking past the Sheffield girl (she didn't get a prize), a voice said "Th'art not a very good picker, Reggie!"

I: 1969 was your Ruby Wedding, and retirement too, after 40 years at the Tower.

RD: Actually, it was '70, I thought.

I: 1970 you actually finished?

RD: Yes, '69 was the starting of it. In many ways I didn't want to leave, but I just felt that the strain was beginning to prove too much. You see, I started in May, I used to supposedly have a day off, but the last two years I did a BBC program with Vince Hill on my day off, and then I did two series with Moira Anderson, and that was supposedly my day off. I used to get home at half past five! My wife would have a lovely meal for me, but that was my day off. Then there was the weekend, and course, as you know, I did three shows on Sundays. I didn't play as much as I did before the war because I couldn't. So then I realized that possibly I could move around a bit. I was able to go over to Holland with my Dutch friends. I played the very first electronic organ in 1934, in the cellar in the Plaza, Stockport. It was a sack of potatoes, supposedly! It had been brought over against an embargo. The man that told me has gone now so it won't really matter. That was the first Hammond. They called it a Lafleur, in those days, to differentiate between the church and the cinema. The Hammond was the church model, and the same model was the Lafleur because some people would say, "We don't want a cinema organ in our church." Now, of course, you more or less have to play a computer, haven't you? I could get on any Wurlitzer or a Compton and within a short while produce some sounds - a few settings here and there but I could hesitate with an electronic organ because they are not the same, they are not alike, are they? They're all different, they all have different positions for this, that and the other.

I think they've been a good thing because they do produce some brilliant young organists, don't they? You might say, "Well YOU haven't got an electronic organ." I haven't for the simple reason that they keep improving them! I think there's a bit of Yorkshire still left in me; I won't get one till they get the ultimate. But it's probably going to be too late then. I was looking the other day and I could see the Tower. Whenever we used to drive back home when we'd been away during our holidays, I used to say to my wife, "There's the office! Back again tomorrow!" I still regard it as "the office," although it's now 14 years since I left there. Actually, there's a certain amount of luck in life. Well, call it luck, if you like, maybe I'm wrong there. As I said before, I sometimes think your life is planned out for you. I have regrets, but I've got a lot of very happy memories, VERY happy memories.

News source. . . 'Theatre Organ'
July/August 1985



The Hobart Wurlitzer

Wednesday 20th November was not only an important date in the calendar of T.O.S.A. (Tasmanian Division) but also in the whole of the Theatre Organ Society of Australia. This date saw the opening of the Tasmanian Division's own theatre pipe organ. This now means each Division owns and operates at least one instrument in a public auditorium. The Australia wide capital city theatre organ concert circuit is complete - not forgetting in addition of course that superb Compton at Ballarat plus the soon to be opened (June 1986, we believe) A.C.T. Division Compton in the Albert Hall, Canberra.

Len Rawle proved to be the perfect choice for an opening artist. Consistent with all his programmes the evening was packed with variety and his contribution in the technical field prior to the opening was invaluable. Two students from the college further added to the variety of the programme with some excellent classical playing on the loaned Yamaha Grand Piano. It is not proposed to give here a list of items at the opening recital but rather to give a brief run-down on the very interesting history of this instrument.

In the mid 1920's Madam Tussaud's Waxworks in London suffered a disastrous fire and when the premises were rebuilt it was decided to include a cinema in the complex. Naturally at this time a cinema organ was included in the new building. The instrument was a modest size Wurlitzer of 2-manuals and 8-ranks. Noted English cinema organist Edward O'Henry played the opening seasons and also recorded numerous 78's on this popular and well known instrument.

During the Second World War the cinema was badly damaged during the air-raids on London. The console also suffered quite a deal of damage, however, the chambers survived intact. The organ was removed and stored until the end of the War at which time it was decided that the cinema would not be rebuilt and the site is now occupied by the London Planetarium.

The organ console was rebuilt after the War by S.J. Wright & Son, the Wurlitzer Agents, in its present form of three manuals with single stop-rail and a beautiful french console. It was intended that the organ would be a demonstration unit, but as we all know no brand new pipe organs were installed in British cinemas after the War.

In 1951 the Blackpool Tower Company purchased the organ for installation in the Palace Ballroom, Blackpool, and to cope with the larger building in which it was to be accommodated, the instrument was increased in size by two ranks one of which was an English Horn.

THE HOBART WURLITZER ... cont.

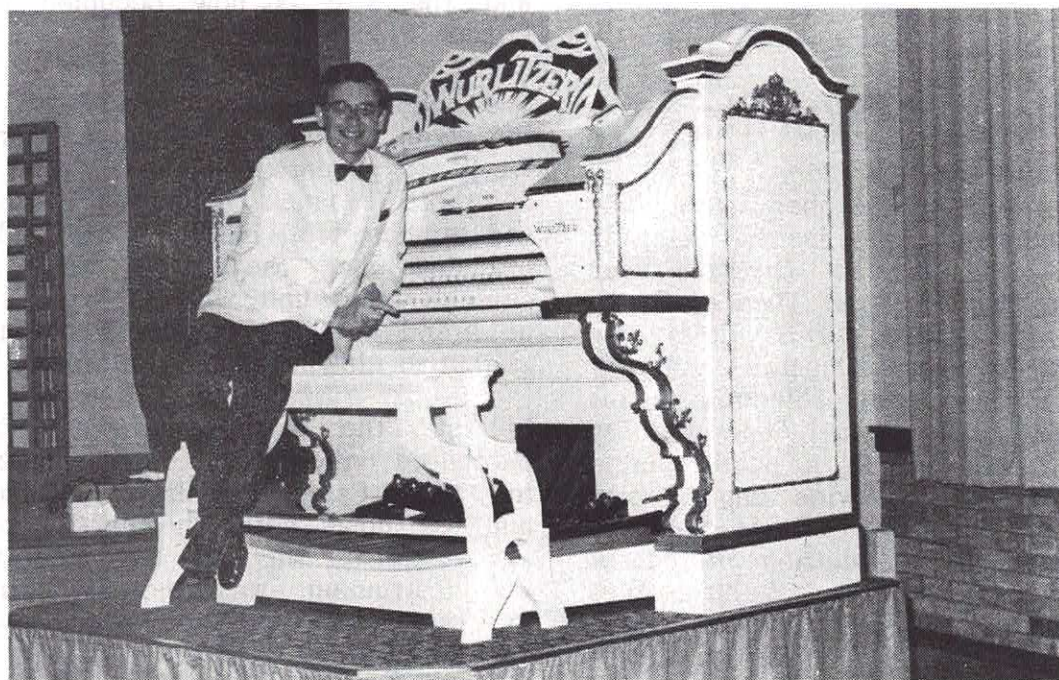
The organ was duly opened by Watson Holmes in mid 1952 and was later broadcast by Reginald Dixon as part of a series which included all the organs in the Tower complex. The Palace Ballroom was demolished in 1960 and the organ was saved at the last moment by an enthusiast.

Still later the organ came into the possession of the Yeovil Theatre Organ Club minus the two ranks which were added in the 1950's. During 1975 it was found by T.O.S.A. (Tasmanian Division) that the organ was available for purchase, as the Yeovil Club were about to purchase a larger Connacher organ in England.

After the usual surveying of various sites in which to place the instrument in Hobart, agreement was reached with St. Michael's Anglican School for Girls to install the organ in their Assembly Hall. The Hall is rather old but this is much to the advantage of the sound of the Wurlitzer - the ceiling being high and lined with boards - the floor is parquetry - and the Hall is just the perfect size for an eight-rank Wurlitzer. The chambers are located at the back of the stage but this does not seem to affect the sound of the instrument which can be clearly heard anywhere in the Hall. The console is mounted on a raised platform at the front of stage left.

A great deal of time and effort has been expended by members of the Society in installing the organ and getting it into working order - the Organ is now playable - with very little help or guidance from those who have been involved with installations on the mainland. The one exception to this is Julien Arnold - of Moorabbin Town Hall Wurlitzer fame - Julien spent two weekends helping out the installation team. Len Rawle, Julien Arnold and Neil Palmer spent part of two days before the opening adjusting regulators and tremulants etc.

Now with the opening over the work will need to recommence to further improve the installation. Much work is still required to bring the chambers up to standard and the console is still in need of quite a deal of work, but all the ingredients are there for a superb sound. All ranks show promise of sounding really good, the Tuba, Tibia and in particular the Vox Humana should be outstanding. Congratulations are due to all the members of the installation team and to the remainder of this the smallest Division of T.O.S.A. for their progress to date.



Len Rawle seated at the Hobart Wurlitzer console