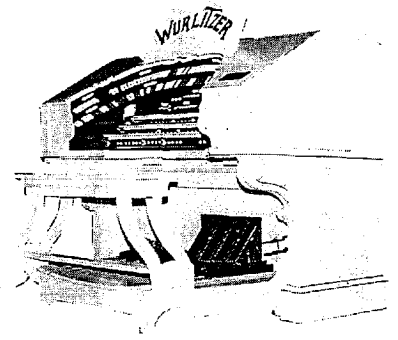


JANUARY / FEBRUARY, 1999

TOSA NEWS



2/11 Wurlitzer Theatre Pipe Organ
Marrickville Town Hall

3/17 Wurlitzer Theatre Pipe Organ
Orion Centre Campsie

IAN DAVIES *and friends at Bondi*



SATURDAY, 20th FEBRUARY at 1pm
Bondi Junction-Waverley RSL

Volume 38
Issue 1
PRINTED BY TOSA

The Official Publication of Theatre Organ Society of Australia (NSW Division) Inc.
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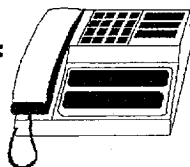
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RSL Club
(See page 11)
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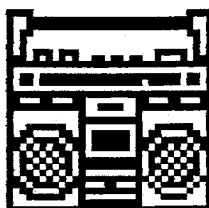
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APRIL

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27th National Convention
Melbourne

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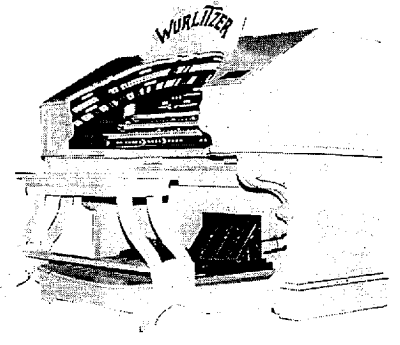


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2CBA FM - 103.2

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

JANUARY / FEBRUARY, 1999

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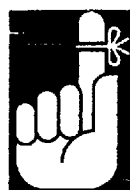
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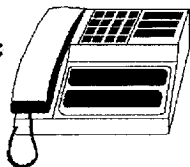
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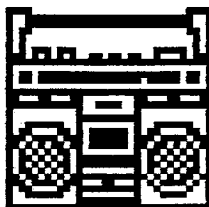
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EVERY MONDAY AT 9.00 pm

For "Theatre Organ Highlights"

Presented by Chris Styles

From The President

A packed house on 6th December for **Tony** and **John's** Christmas concert at **Campsie!!** **Tony Fenelon** always ends the year for us with a bang, and this time together with **John Atwell** we were treated to the best anyone could wish for. Apart from being top performers, they showed their consummate showmanship by even doing their own computer work during the show (hidden behind the console).

Your compere was so carried away with events, he forgot to put his coat on to appear after interval. It's hard to get good help these days!

John Atwell is our first **Orion** artist this year (21st March). He is an excellent arranger as well as organist, and is not to be missed. Elsewhere in this edition (page 13) you will find a voucher that lets you bring a couple of people to the concert **FOR FREE**, provided it's their first **TOSA** concert ever. This is a good opportunity to get people interested in Theatre Organ.

Speaking of the **NEW Orion** computer - as we do from time to time - it has travelled to **South Australia** and back in the last few weeks, and with the help of **TOSA Adelaide** we are progressing well, despite the gremlins. We are continually grateful to **Ron Sullivan** for the countless hours he is putting in to this project. He is - to put it mildly - not a man who gives up easily.

In November, I mentioned that in December (11th) **Bruce Bisby** was to represent us by playing at a "Multicultural" evening at **Marrickville**. And so he did - playing well despite a degree of noise from adults and from hot and cold running children. The evening was designed to bring different nationalities together - and it did. In fact, it was more of a get-together "event" than a concert, although there certainly was some beautiful on-stage music and dancing. It was all urged along through an incredibly powerful amplifying system. But thank you, **Bruce**, you're a trouper.



I came away thinking how grateful we should be to those volunteers who help keep our **TOSA** concerts well-oiled and working, and to those enthusiastic but disciplined people who make up our audiences!

Please note the "Positions Vacant" ad in this edition of **TOSA News** (page 8). Can we count on your support?

Also, there is a piece elsewhere regarding the **Marrickville Members' Players Evenings** (page 7) for those who like to come.

As soon as all is in order at the **Orion**, I hope to be able to report that some Thursday afternoons will be available for members to have a play.

On behalf of your Committee - have a **HAPPY NEW YEAR** ... Isn't it already flying by? We have some interesting items in the pipeline for this year, so.....

Watch this space,
Walter Pearce

Welcome To New Members

TOSA (NSW) is pleased to welcome the following new members to our ranks. We hope you enjoy your time with us :

Rodney Bendix - Hughesdale (Vic.)

Trevor Bunning - Rushcutters Bay

Douglas Kemp - Taren Point

Laurance Fadden - Bankstown

Editorial

Welcome to the first of the 1999 issues of **TOSA News** and a Happy New Year to all our readers!

Our first concert is still some time off yet but we have a **TOSA** afternoon for everybody on Saturday, 20th February at 1pm in the auditorium of the **Bondi Junction-Waverley RSL Club**. **Ian Davies** will be there, supported by a couple of our own talented, playing members. It's a very relaxed and enjoyable (and free!) afternoon's entertainment for those who can attend.

On Sunday, 21st March, the ever-popular **John Atwell** will be playing brilliantly for our pleasure at the **Orion Centre, Campsie**, at 2pm. Please be there if you can, as **John** always delivers an entertaining concert with a variety of music and styles.

Some of our members may have heard that **Theatre Organ Highlights** is coming to a close on **2CBA-FM**, and this, sadly, is indeed the case. Our talented and hard-working presenter, **Chris Styles**, has been advised that the final programme is to go to air on 8th March. **Chris** says, "The reason for the programme ending is a change of music format by **2CBA-FM** - they are aiming for a younger audience." This is certainly sad news for those **TOSA** members and other listeners who, like me, so thoroughly enjoy the programme that **Chris** presents each week. I always either listen to the broadcast live or record it if I have to go out on a Monday night.

The station's decision to change their format is certainly a disappointing one for me and for many other theatre organ fans. I suppose it may be thought that the programme has had a good run, but it is still upsetting to lose this one small, half-hour per week of radio devoted to theatre organ music, all in the name of progress and in trying to cater for a younger generation which is obviously so amply catered for on virtually every other radio station in **Sydney**. Pity!

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

Bettine Vallance of Burwood has again sent us her appreciation of TOSA's last concert in poetic form:

The Magic of Music

Presented by Tony and John

They never fail to delight and please With their fantastic expertise.

Their programme was just perfectly planned,

And the magic sounds they presented were so grand.

To hear Tony and John play,

We know they always give to us a memorable, musical day.

One cannot help but feel uplifted as we go on our way.

The magic of their music always gives so much pleasure,

And for many, it makes wonderful moments to treasure.

FREE

To Be Picked Up in Drummoyne

Lowrey "Holiday" Organ
Model TL01

2 Manuals and 13-note Pedalboard
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Has Been Regularly Serviced
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2 Keyboards, Pedalboard
Flutes 16, 8, 51/3, 4, 22/3, 2 feet
Stool, Instruction Manual, Music

Price : 650.00 o.n.o.

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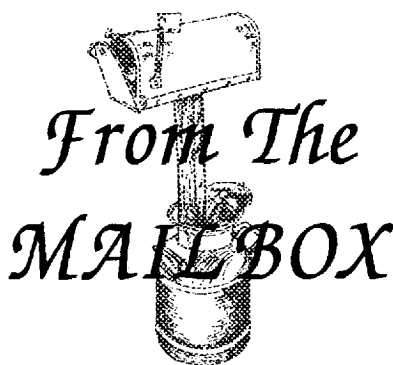
FOR SALE

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With stool, tapes and books

Price : \$750 o.n.o.

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Milton Speers of Gorokan recalls a youthful encounter with Horace Weber :

5th January 1999

The article in the September TOSA News about the Melbourne Capitol Theatre and its organist Horace Weber reminded me of an incident that took place 60-odd years ago. At the time I lived at Parramatta, in George Street, near the Roxy Spanish Theatre.

The Roxy was a beautiful theatre, as good as the best of Sydney's cinemas, although the State may have been more spectacular. The Sydney Capitol, on my first visit there, when Ted Henkel led the band and Fred Scholl played the Mighty Wurlitzer, was to me unbelievable,

During the intermission at an afternoon session at the Roxy, I was in the courtyard and noticed Horace Weber standing nearby. I spoke to him and told him how I had enjoyed his playing. He replied, "Thank you, sonny", and gave me a penny. I was about 11 years old at the time. His stay at the Roxy was short as he was relieving the resident organist who was on leave - either Eddie Horton or Desmond Tanner.

The Spanish Roxy is still with us and now has three screens, but sadly no 3/10 Christie organ.

Best wishes,
Milton Speers

FOR SALE

Conn Deluxe Theatre Organ Model 645

2 Rhythm units coupled to organ
2 sets of pipes up to 5'

1 Leslie tone cabinet model 147

Plus many spare valves, etc.

Price : \$2,850.00

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John Potter of the Lancastrian Theatre Organ Trust tells of his Society's recent youth encouragement programme, and also gives details of the ATOS Convention's "Afterglow" in Manchester :

5th January 1999

I am prompted to write having received the December TOSA Newsletter and the item on "Young Theatre Organists".

I thought you might be interested to know that this Trust in 1998 ran a series of concerts on the 4/14 Wurlitzer in Granada Studios Tour, Manchester called "The Year Of Youth".

Each concert featured two younger generation organists - one who had already had some concert experience supported by a newcomer to a public concert on the organ.

We had a high level of interest from audiences and the names featured were Joanne Godley, Craig Boswell, Lee Longden, Catherine Drummond, Richard Openshaw, Michael Holmes, Russell Holmes, Andrew James, David Spencer, Andrew Umpleby and Kevin Grunill.

It will be interesting to see how these artists go on in the coming years. The Committee of the Trust felt that a positive approach had to be given to promoting new young organists.

Whilst writing, I am enclosing details of our weekend which forms this year's "Afterglow" to the ATOS Convention in London in July, in support of the four line mention in the December TOSA News. It is hoped that the itinerary will include a visit to Stockport Town Hall where the installation of the 4/20 Wurlitzer from the Free Trade Hall in Manchester proceeds apace.

With every good wish for TOSA (NSW) in 1999.

Sincerely,
John Potter

Venues for the ATOS Afterglow are : Granada Studios Tour (4/14 Wurlitzer), Chorley Town Hall (3/9 Compton), Ossett Town Hall (3/13 Compton/Christie), Ritz Ballroom, Brighthouse (3c/8 Wurlitzer), a preview of the Stockport Town Hall's 4/20 Wurlitzer and a visit to the Blackpool Tower Ballroom.

Conversations with *GEORGE NEWELL*

by Russell Robertson

George Newell was well known to many people in our Society as the Concert Booking Officer for TOSA, an activity which his wife still continues.

He passed away on the 17/11/97. He is missed greatly by those of us who knew him.

I saw him often in other situations, and because he had been a Theatre Organist, I often took the opportunity to have many conversations with him about music and his experiences as a Theatre Organist in Sydney. He was the last organist to play at the Savoy Theatre in Hurstville.

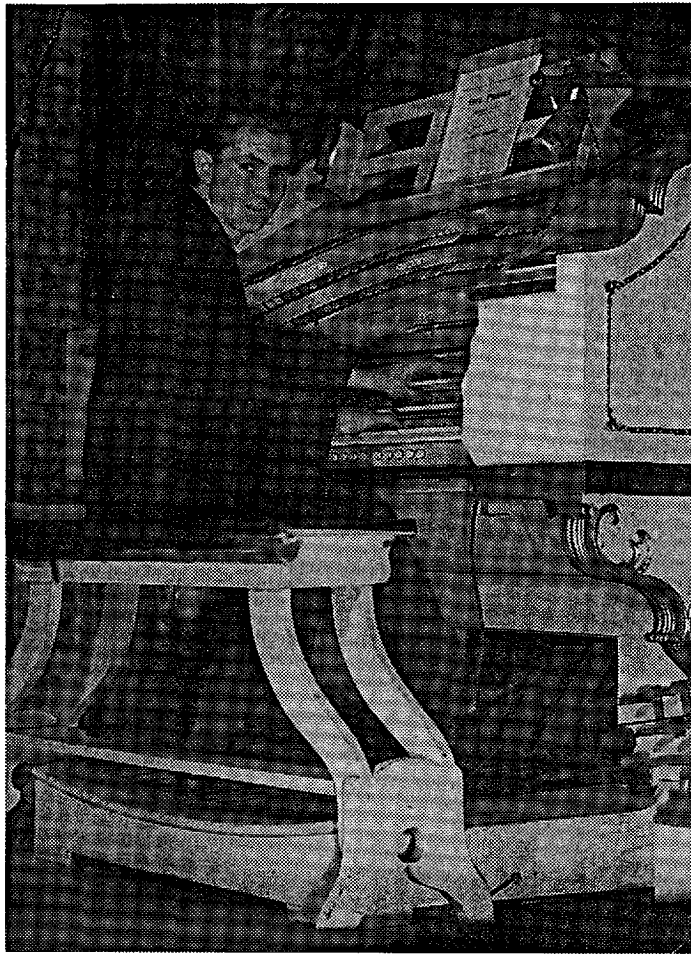
During one discussion I asked him who was his teacher for the Theatre Organ. He said he had two teachers, Charles Tuckwell, who at that time was organist at the Plaza Theatre in Sydney, and Manny Aarons, who was the organist at the State Theatre in Sydney.

Why had he chosen them? He said they were two very experienced and accomplished organists and they both possessed a great musical knowledge and background.

A lesson was thirty minutes and it cost one guinea, a quite significant sum in those days, but they were great teachers and the lessons were an enjoyable experience and well worth the cost.

The organ at the Plaza was a two manual Wurlitzer. It had a splendid tone and was a good instrument to play. The State Theatre organ was a four manual Wurlitzer with an extremely beautiful sound. The State is a magnificent theatre - a real success for the architects who had to fit a large complex building onto a limited and difficult site. But the design problems had an effect on the installation of the organ.

In most theatres the organ pipes are housed in two chambers located at mid-height at each side of the stage. At the State this arrangement had to be considerably modified because of the



A young George Newell at the console of the State Theatre's Wurlitzer

amount of stage machinery and other problems, so the chambers were much further away from the stage and quite high up. The organ sound is carried via wooden tunnels or trunks which meet in a "mixing chamber" and from there it is directed into the theatre. The point of entry was above the arch over the stage. This is about sixty feet above the organist.

The result is a very beautiful blending of the sound from the different ranks of pipes from each chamber, but the sound has to travel a long distance to get to the theatre. From the moment an organ pipe speaks, it takes over a tenth of a second before the sound reaches the organist. Not very long, but an organist is immediately aware of the delay, but George said you quickly become adjusted to it.

Manny Aarons' position as the organist at the State was quite demanding. As with other theatres, the organist was required to play with the orchestra. Orchestras had to rehearse

the future programme and the usual arrangements were for the musicians to come into the theatre before 8 am, and rehearse till about 10 am, a time at which they had to leave before the theatre opened its doors to admit people for the 11 o'clock session.

At the State it was different. Below the theatre is the State Ballroom, usually vacant during the day. It had a stage, two pianos, a percussion set and the necessary music desks. It was well set up and most convenient.

Rehearsals were usually arranged at times between the afternoon intervals or during the 5 o'clock session. The orchestra would go down to the Ballroom. They had their instruments, but there was no organ.

Manny Aarons would be present at all the rehearsals, during which he would listen to the conductor's instructions, listen to the other players and study the entire score.

On the day the orchestra presented the new programme Manny Aarons had to come in exactly at the right moment and combine properly with the other instruments and without actually rehearsing the organ. He never failed.

When he had the opportunity, George would sit near the front and watch the orchestra play. He remembered that Manny seldom looked at his music - he had already memorised it. His attention was fixed on the conductor's baton, making sure that the organ sound arrived exactly when required. George said that he always came away with a tremendous admiration for Manny.

George's own playing was at three of the major suburban theatres, the Palatial at Burwood, the Roxy at Parramatta, and the Savoy at Hurstville.

The Palatial was originally the Burwood Theatre, but in 1933 it was acquired by new owners and was extensively rebuilt, and a three manual

Christie organ was installed. It reopened as the **Palatial**.

This theatre was quite unusual. When you came in through the entrance you could see that the floor sloped down towards the front of the theatre. This was normal in most picture theatres and done so that those seated at the back would be able to see over the people in the front and so have an uninterrupted view of the screen.

However when you had moved well toward the front of the auditorium you could see that the floor levelled and then sloped upwards towards the stage, rising about one metre over the distance of the first eight rows of the front stalls.

Surprisingly this did not obscure the view of those at the back because the stage and screen were higher than usual and those at the back were looking up and over the heads at the front. In fact it was easier to see the screen at the **Palatial** than in most theatres.

The reason for the unusual levels in the floor was to be able to accommodate the organ console. To avoid some problems and costs in sinking the organ well lower than the floor it was decided to raise the adjacent floor level one metre, then to build the circular wall of the organ well one and a half metres higher than the raised floor level. The result meant that when the console was at the bottom of the well it was not visible to the audience.

Another unusual feature of the **Palatial** was the location of its projection booth. In most theatres it was placed at the rear of the Dress Circle, but at the **Palatial** it was on the ground floor at the back of the Stalls. **George** did not know why this was done, but a few years later it became an advantage. The owners of the theatre chain built two new theatres at **Enfield (Savoy)** and at **Strathfield (Melba)**. Their proximity to **Burwood's Palatial** made it possible to have shared programmes.

Each theatre would programme the same feature films, but the theatre chain would rent only one copy of each. Careful planning and the placing of film shorts in each theatre programme

made it possible to commence screening a main feature in one theatre, then after the first reel had run through, to send it by motor cycle courier to the next theatre. The courier would then collect another reel and take it on to the next theatre.

The arrangement required very precise planning and timing every week, but it worked perfectly. The ground floor projection booth at the **Palatial** made the film exchange quicker and easier.



Manny Aarons at the State Theatre's WurliTzer

The **Roxy** and the **Palatial** were theatres which were notable for the professional level of their programme presentation.

The evening session of three and a half hours commenced at 7.30. At about 7.25 the stage curtain would rise and a slide would project onto the screen wording such as "Prelude ..." or "Overture ..." or "Entre-Act ...".

The organist, remaining down in the pit, would then begin to play the classical or light classical piece named on the screen. The house lights would begin to dim and at 7.30 the house was in darkness. The first short film would

come onto the screen and the organist would have to make sure that he finished just before the film sound came on. This required good timing and cooperation with the projectionists. **George** said that **Charles Tuckwell** was a real master at film introduction. His timing was exact. He could always finish the last bar about one second before the film sound commenced.

At about eight o'clock, after the first film shorts had ended, a slide would project onto the screen "The **Roxy** Proudly Presents at The Theatre Organ." A white spot light would then shine onto the organ-well and the organist would come up playing - usually a short piece, so within one or two minutes the organist introduced himself, welcomed the audience and announced his first selection.

George said that the advice from the management was that they should be warm, friendly and brief. You are there to give a recital, not a monologue. The recital time was usually about twenty-five minutes.

The organ segment was always popular and at the end of each item there would be really good applause, which of course, you had to acknowledge. Getting out from the organ seat and the console could be awkward and look clumsy, so most organists remained seated and bowed to the audience while seated.

Not so **Charles Tuckwell**. He was able in one well-controlled, quick movement to swing around and be standing beside the console and bowing deeply from the waist. Getting back onto the seat could also be awkward, but **Charles** had also mastered this. With the same grace and style, and with one quick action, he was again seated and announcing his next item.

George said that the organ platform at the **Palatial** was not wide and there was only a small space at the sides. He said that if ever **Charles** had misjudged and missed his footing he would have fallen and broken his neck. He never missed.

At interval the organist played for between twenty and twenty-five minutes. After interval the organist

home. They would play for about fifty minutes each session.

While having lunch one day **George** and I were talking about some of the organists of the past. I mentioned **Knight Barnett**. **George** said, "We always called him **Jack Barnett**" Actually that was his name. Early in his career he was programmed as **J. Knight Barnett**. In later years the **J.** was dropped and from then on he was known as **Knight Barnett**.

He was a very popular organist and he could establish an immediate rapport with the audience.

One of his selections, a novelty which he would present occasionally was to play *Annie Laurie* with his right hand and *Down upon the Swanee River* with his left hand. The right hand would be played on the right chamber and the left hand on the left chamber, keeping both clear and distinct. His real cleverness was in the way he could make each chamber louder or softer, and combine them so as to produce the most surprising and attractive results. Others tried the same novelty, but none could do it in the same way as **Knight Barnett**.

He lived at **Lindfield**, quite convenient to the railway station. As the theatres he played in were all close to rail stations he chose to travel to and from the theatres by train. The often lengthy travelling time he would spend reading. He belonged to a library and would finish a book every week.

Turning the conversation to another organist, I asked **George** if he had known **Nicholas Robbins** who played at the **Arcadia Theatre** in **Chatswood**. "Please," said **George**, "**Professor Robbins** if you don't mind" He said that **Nicholas Robbins** was a Senior Teaching Member on the staff of the **Conservatorium** and had been one of **George's** teachers there.

George said that he was a very good organist, and one whom he greatly admired.

But as he only played at the one theatre he was known only to a limited number of people. Those who played on circuits were heard by a lot more and so were much better known.

I once asked **George** if he had ever had any unusual or amusing experiences in the theatres. He said that he hadn't any, but some of the other organists had. The story he liked best concerned **Manny Aarons** at the **State Theatre**.

The occasion was a Public Holiday. The weather had commenced fine and the city was crowded quite early, but by midday rain had commenced and the people, looking for shelter, began to crowd into the theatres.

Manny Aarons was playing in the interval preceding the 2 o'clock session. The theatre was full. After finishing a selection he responded to the applause, then asked the audience if anyone had a request they would like him to play for them. A large, middle-aged lady sitting near the front stood up and in a loud voice said, "Will you play '*Ome Sweet Ome*'?"

"Yes, certainly," said **Manny**.

He played a straight version first, then went into some variations on the main theme, and finally doing a dramatic key change played it as a march.

He said that he thought he had played it really well and quite expected the enthusiastic applause that followed. When the clapping died down, **Manny** turned towards the middle-aged lady and asked, "Well, madame, did you like that?" The lady stood up and in quite a loud voice said, "No" and then sat down. The audience burst into laughter, so too did **Manny** who had a great sense of humour.

He then said, "Well I will now play something else for you" and immediately went into a medley of *Viennese Waltzes*

which took him up to the start of the film.

When he came up for the next interval he looked around to where the lady had been seated. She had gone. He never saw her again.

One day I asked **George** what were his thoughts on the various organs he had played.

He said he had learnt on *Wurlitzers*, and the last organ he played (**Hurstville Savoy**) had been a *Wurlitzer*. They were all very good organs, but the **State Theatre** had a really rich and majestic sound. In between those organs he had played the *Christie* organs at the **Palatial** and the **Roxy**, and his final opinion was that he preferred the *Christie* organ. It has a splendid tone and is free from any harshness. **George** declared that the *Christie* Tuba and Trumpet Ranks are superior to those of any other builder.

He said that some people are dismissive of the *Christie* because of what they describe as its "slow action".

What is an "organ's action"? When an organist depresses an organ key, it sends an electric current to activate the mechanism that admits air into the organ pipe. The time that the mechanism takes to act is very brief - a fraction of a second. In the *Wurlitzer* organ it is faster than in the *Christie* and people speak of "the slower action". **George** said that initially he was aware of this difference, but he said an organist can adjust to this quite quickly.

Whenever anyone said that you cannot play really fast on a *Christie*, **George** would remind them that **Sidney Torch**, one of the great organists, made recordings on *Compton*, *Christie* and *Wurlitzer* organs. Many of his great recordings were made on *Christie* organs - the **Regal** at **Marble Arch** and the **Regal** at **Edmonton**, both in **London**.

November's Members' Playing Night

Players on Thursday, 26th November were **Frank Lewis**, **Wendy Hambly**, **Walter Pearce**, **Ron Ivin**, **Bruce Bisby**, **Dave Knight** and **Jim Birkett**.

Listeners were **David James**, **Ray Hambly**, **Edna Hambly**, **George Walter**, **Paul Luci**, **Hazel Knight** and **Shirley Pallot**.

The next planned **Marrickville Players' Night** is Thursday, 25th February, at 7.30pm (entrance by small door to the rear of right-hand side of the hall - behind the Library)

MEMBERS' PLAYERS NIGHTS

All things being equal, we expect to have a Players' Evening at Marrickville from 7.30pm on the **FOURTH THURSDAY** of each month throughout 1999. As there are sometimes cancellations at short notice, you can phone the previous evening to confirm. Phone Neil at 9798 6742 or Walter at 9716 0151. (*Players' afternoons at Campsie are coming - we hope!!*)

Review of David Lowe's CD, *Take the A Train* by Ian Eadie

Dear Editor,

I am about to take a little liberty in that I am including this letter with the copies of the TOSA(Tas) magazine.

As you may recall David Lowe was our feature artist at the Convention we staged in Hobart last year. David stayed with me while he was here and since then we have stayed in touch. Recently he sent me a copy of his first CD, which he thought I might like, and I do. He did ask that if I could, would I review it. This I have done but it then remains what to do with the review.

I thought that probably the best to get the word out about his CD was to send the review to the TOSA Editors for their use as seen fit. Not all magazines print reviews I know, but if you do, and the review I have done is useable, then I'm sure David would appreciate the publicity.

Regards
Ian Eadie

TAKE THE 'A' TRAIN - David Lowe at the WurliTzer Theatre Organ, Neuadd Pendre, Tywyn, Gwynedd, Wales.

David, you may remember, was in Hobart for the Theatre Organ Convention in 1997, and his playing was well received by those who attended. I

have stayed in regular, if occasional, contact with him. Recently his latest letter arrived with a CD. What does one do in such circumstances but to race to the CD player, load the CD, and start things off. In the few seconds it takes for the system to sort itself out and start playing, you pick up the letter and start reading ... "I thought you might like the enclosed CD..." but the opening notes of the CD grab you immediately, so it's straight back to the CD cover to read the list of tunes - our mutual interest in trains should have told me that it was indeed the whistle of the 'Coronation Scot' starting its long journey from London to Scotland, or, in the case of the CD, the title of the opening number. A rousing start.

From there to the lovely Alan J. Lerner / Burton Lane composition *Too Late Now*, followed by a nicely played selection from *Me and My Girl*, a show which was playing in Hobart while David was here for the Convention, and which was attended and enjoyed by many conventioners.

Next is the first of the tunes featuring electronic percussion - what else but the *Choo Choo Samba*, a very danceable number that will be added to my list of samba practice tunes. These tracks are followed by sensitive renditions of the *Beauty and the Beast Theme*, and *We'll Gather Lilacs*.

The rest of the CD includes a Welsh medley evocative of the great choirs of this part of the world, a selection from *White Horse Inn*, Coates's *London Bridge*, and of course, the title track, *Take the 'A' Train*. The CD, which includes a total of 20 tracks covers a wide variety of music which I will allow you to discover for yourself when you listen to it.

This CD has obviously had the impeccable preparation and the thought given to the selection of numbers that I know David gives to his concerts. His skills in obtaining the widest variety of sounds and effects from an organ belie the fact that the instrument used for this recording has only 8 ranks, albeit an installation of high standard and preparation.

I am certainly glad to have this compact disc, David's first foray into the recording field, in my collection - I'm sure you will too. May the whistle of the Coronation Scot sound the beginning of a continuing recording career.

Copies of the CD are available from David Lowe for £9:00 plus £1.50 p. and p. (both amounts in sterling), payment by Visa or Mastercard accepted, at 72 Primrose Lane, Gilstead, BINGLEY, West Yorkshire, BD16 4QP, United Kingdom.

POSITIONS VACANT

We are looking for the following helpers in 1999.
Can you support TOSA

- Assist with "Candy Bar" sales
(sweets & drinks at the front of the Orion theatre)
- Assist with tea/coffee and kitchen during and after interval.
We already have dedicated helpers, but would like to organise a roster so no-one misses too much concert.
- Help with Orion concert lighting. We need a person with some technical knowledge to join with another volunteer.
You will have the best seat in the house!

Please apply during February to: Bill Schumacher 9985 7318
Walter Pearce 9716 0151

SELWYN THEATRE'S TOSA HOME PARTY

Report and photographs by Barry Toker



On October 25 at 2.15 **Ritchie Willis** welcomed everybody to the Selwyn TOSA Home Party. Five artists were present to entertain us, with **Wilf Leeder** being a last minute replacement for **Joy Erickson**.

The concert opened with **Wilf Leeder** on piano and **David Devenport** (pictured left) on the *Thomas Celebrity Organ*. What a surprise to hear **Wilf**. I had no idea we had such a talented pianist hiding in our ranks.

He and **David** opened with *Cruising Down The River*, then continued with *Lara's Theme* and *Whispering*. In a dry aside, **David** asked if a **Manly** ferry went on the rocks with all of our politicians aboard, who did we think would be saved? AUSTRALIA!

They continued with *The Desert Song* and an **Inkspots** favourite, *To Each His Own*. **Gladys Moncrief** used to sing *Little White Dove*, and **David** thought that they could often be found *On The Sunny Side Of The Street*. *Always* is often played at weddings. *Lily Of Laguna* led into *Sleepy Lagoon* followed by *The Anniversary Song*, *I Belong To Glasgow* and finishing with *I'll Be Seeing You Again*. At this point **David** announced that they would have to leave as they had an urgent engagement next February.

Peter Seward (left) was the next artist. **Peter** cannot read music but he can play so well that he has filled engagements at **Melbourne's Dendy** and **Sydney's Orpheum Theatres**. He is equally at home on theatre pipe and electronic organs and is in strong demand at home organ parties. **Peter** opened with *Man Of La Mancha* and followed this up with the *Godfather Theme*. A **Jesse Crawford**-style *Hold Me* led into *Cabaret*, *Zing Went The Strings Of My Heart* and *It's A Great Night For Slinging*.

In a romantic mood, he played *Hello Young Lovers*, *Why Am I Romantic* and *Isn't It Romantic*. *Tropical Meringue* holds a subject dear to **Peter's** heart - food. He finished with the *Destiny Waltz* and *Vivare*. Afternoon tea was served.

For the rest of the afternoon we were entertained by **Wendy Hambly** on organ with **John Shaw** on piano. *The Best Things In Life Are Free* was a good start before *Serenade* from *The Student Prince* and a march. A solo from **Wendy** (left) was *A Little Bit Independent* with selections from *Wizard Of Oz*. Back with **John** again and they played *Some Day My Heart Will Awake* followed by selections from *Showboat*.

Now it was **John's** turn to play solo piano with *Please Don't Ask Me*, and *The Homecoming* for **Betty Bruderlin**. **Wendy** rejoined **John** in *I Don't Want To Set The World On Fire* and *A Fine Romance*. Another solo from **Wendy** with *Cheek To Cheek* from *Top Hat* and *It's Great To Be In Love Again*. Back with **John** again for *Quando Quando* with *El Cumbanchero* for the big finale.

Alan Misdale thanked the artists for their services and on behalf of TOSA, **John Shaw** (below left) thanked **Ritchie** and **Norm** for organising and hosting the home party. The concert raised in the vicinity of \$480 for the TOSA Building Fund. **Ritchie** has been a great supporter for the society for many years and this has been one of countless home parties that he has run in aid of various projects. Thank you, **Ritchie**.

Drawing the lucky door prize (below)



A Report on *SCOTT HARRISON in Concert* Willoughby Civic Centre by Barry Tooker Friday 23rd October 1998

Although I had not heard of **Scott Harrison** before, I have since learned that he is a **Victorian TOSA** Committee member and he has often played for shows at the **Dendy Theatre**. For this concert on Friday October 23rd, he had just returned to **Australia** from playing engagements in **NZ** and the **USA**. I guess this may have influenced his choice of *San Francisco* for an opening tune.

What A Wonderful World, made famous by **Louis Armstrong**, was played with great sensitivity, and this was followed by *Sentimental Journey*, in a style reminiscent of the big band era during the 30's and 40's.

Moving forward to the 70's came *Send In The Clowns.*, *Mame* and *Hello Dolly* came from the stage shows that everyone knows. For a complete change **Scott** seated himself at the grand piano to play *The Wind Beneath My Wings* from the movie *Beaches*.

It was time now to hear those talented singers **Dean Sinclair** and **Rachael Cunningham** accompanied by **Ron Sinclair** at the **Wurlitzer** organ. Singing arias from *Count Of Luxembourg* by **Léhar**, they sang *Tell Me Can This Be Love* as a duet. **Rachael** sang a solo, *Fancy Free*,



followed by another duet *Two Millionaires On The Rue d'Amour*.

Back to **Scott** again on the organ playing *Amazing Grace* in Hot Gospel style. He finished the first half of the program in lighter style with *Music Music Music* and *Alexander's Ragtime Band*.

Interval was a time for welcome refreshments and a chance to check out several tapes **Scott** had for sale in the foyer.

To show off his classical dexterity **Scott** opened the second half of the concert with the *Trumpet Voluntary*. *You Light Up My Life* was followed by *Mood Indigo*, then *Somewhere*. A novelty number is always welcome and this came in the form of *Play A Simple Melody*. **True Love** completed his

first bracket of tunes for this half and now it was time to savour our popular singing duo again with **Ron** accompanying.

Dean sang *Man Of La Mancha*, before joining **Rachael** to perform *Indian Love Call*, followed by a touching *Almost Like Being In Love*.

Scott returned to play *Music Of The Night* from *Phantom Of The Opera*. I am not sure if **Scott** had his fan club in the audience but, if not, he had a host of appreciative listeners who were very vocal in their

applause. He finished up with *Waltzing Matilda* and *I Still Call Australia Home*.

The finale was **Dean** and **Rachael** singing the song from the **Barcelona** Olympics - *Amigos Para Siempre* accompanied by **Ron**. This was an excellent concert which deserved a full house.

I am sure the house full sign will go up on Friday February 19th 1999, when that international star **Tony Fenelon**, also from **Melbourne**, will be featured along with tenors **Dean Sinclair** and **Roy Weissensteiner** and soprano **Leslie Martin**. An early booking is suggested if you want to hear what magic **Tony** can perform on this instrument.

TONY FENELON

at CHATSWOOD (Willoughby Civic Centre)

with

THE TWO TENORS

(DEAN SINCLAIR and ROY WEISSENSTEINER)

and SOPRANO (LESLIE MARTIN)

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A SPECIAL EVENT

Members' Afternoon - Saturday, 20th February, 1999

Ian Davies at Bondi

Our Patron, **Ian Davies** has invited all **TOSA** members to a special **FREE** afternoon at the club where he regularly plays. The date is **Saturday, 20th February**, at 1.00pm, and the club is the **Bondi Junction-Waverley RSL Club**. Several of our leading player-members will be playing the **Rodgers "Trio" Theatre Organ** including, of course, **Ian** himself.

The club is at 1 Gray Street, **Bondi Junction** and is very close to **Bondi Junction Railway Station**. Parking will be available in the **Grace Bros** car-park until the end of the afternoon's great entertainment. Come along and enjoy a relaxing afternoon in the Club, being entertained by these first-class performers. No bookings necessary, just be there by 1.00pm!

A Profile of Ian Davies

Our long-serving and highly-respected theatre organist patron, **Ian Davies**, started to study music at a very early age. He began piano lessons under the tutelage of his mother. Two years later, he became a pupil of **Miss K. Cox** and continued with her for 3 years.

It was at this point that the pipe organ made its entry into **Ian's** life. His mother frequently played the organ at **St Joan's Presbyterian Church at Essendon, Victoria**. **Ian** persuaded her to give him lessons and after 6 months he became a pupil of the organist of the church.

Ian began his professional theatre organ career in **Melbourne**, playing the **Plaza, Regent** and **Capitol Wurlitzers**, and the **Hammond** organs at **Brunswick** and **Albert Park**.

During the war, while serving in the R.A.N. overseas, **Ian** was guest organist at the **Regal Theatre, Grays Forum Theatre, Liverpool**, and the **Bristol Theatre, Avonmouth, Wales**.

Upon arriving back in **Melbourne**, he returned to the **Hoyts** circuits, his last theatre organ season being at the 3-manual, 15 rank **Wurlitzer** at the **Capitol Theatre**, where he held a 5 year residency. He then moved to **Sydney** and spent some years in the showrooms of **Rees Wills Pty Ltd**, demonstrating **Lowrey** and **Rodgers** organs.

His magnificent opening recital at the 1965 Convention of the **Theatre Organ Society of Australia** was long remembered by those who attended. He was also the featured opening organist at the 1966 Convention on the **Capitol Wurlitzer**. These are but two of the many memorable programmes he has played and which made **Ian Davies** so popular with **TOSA** members. He played over 90 concerts for the **NSW Division** during his long association with **TOSA**, always drawing a large crowd of devoted fans.

For many years **Ian** has been resident organist at the **Bondi-Waverley RSL Club**, playing each Friday for an hour in the club's auditorium for the pleasure of the club's members and guests.

In 1972 following the retirement of **Reginald Dixon** from the **Blackpool Tower** and from the position of patron of **TOSA NSW**, **Ian** was elected to the position and to this day he remains faithfully still as our patron.

He has always been ready to give of his many talents for the members of our **Society** and we are sure that many members will appreciate the opportunity to hear **Ian** play again at the **Bondi-Waverley RSL Club**, in the company of some of our other player members. Come along and bring a friend to this special event. **TOSA's** visit to **Ian's** club last August was enjoyed greatly by all those who attended.

Review of **TONY FENELON** and **JOHN ATWELL's** Duo Christmas Concert

Orion Centre Campsie

by **Wendy Hambly**

Sunday 6th December 1998

Deck the halls with boughs of holly, tra la la la la, la la la la, 'tis the season to be jolly, tra la la la la, la la la la; jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way, oh what fun it is to ride in a one horse open sleigh, hey! And jolly we certainly are - over 600 of us and we know we'll have a lot of fun this afternoon with **Tony** and **John** to entertain us as only they know how.

Yes, the opening medley was a Christmas one, with lots of our favourite carols and songs using statement (organ) and response (piano) and full theatre organ and a little improvisation in the middle section for good measure.

Next came a medley with universal appeal - **Gershwin's** *Overture from Crazy for You (Girl Crazy)* - numbers like *I Got Rhythm*; *Biding My Time*. Organ commences with strings and tibia ensemble, then piano takes melody with organ playing an underlying improvisation - good use of traps too - chrysoglott, etc, then cutting back to tibia/flute ensemble. Then organ takes melody with piano giving us arpeggio runs and improvisation. A pick up of pace for *I Got Rhythm* to a big finish.

Tony on organ now *With a Song in My Heart (Rodgers and Hart)* - crash cymbal with fanfare for main theme then shimmering left-hand and melody with strings and fractional tibias right-hand. Then to full theatre organ sound; cutting back to soft ensemble - right-hand melody and left-hand improvisation. Picking up the pace now with a 'laid back' feel with cymbal on pedal.

Then came *Blue Moon* with soft, fractional tibias and good use of glock for emphasis, then strings and vox with piano and untremmed section. Then *The Lady is a Tramp* - back to light theatre organ ensemble with lots of 'feel'. Note that these types of combinations capture the mood of these songs perfectly. Also good use of second touch for emphasis. Trill right hand and underlying melody left hand to finish.

John returns to the organ now and **Tony** moves to the piano to play **Gershwin's** *Rialto Ripples* - a novelty

piece. Bright and jazzy sounds with piano giving statement and organ responding with strings and vox ensemble. A busy, fun piece.

Time for **Tony** to have a rest while **John** plays *It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas* (sung by **Bing Crosby**). I heard a chrysoglott here with tibia and string ensemble and wonderful fill-ins with the left hand. The chrysoglott was also used on its own for a phrase which added interest. Then to full organ with contrary motion runs and then add brass with full chords both hands to finish. A well thought out arrangement.

Now for **Jerome Kern's** *Just the Way You Look Tonight* - soft tibias and vox for melody right-hand and tibia with harp left-hand. Chrysoglott for interest. Now to soft reed; spot-on phrasing - did you hear those fragment chords, and also beautiful runs? A simply delightful rendition - full of emotion. Very quiet untremmed finish with chrysoglott.

Now for *Sleeping Beauty Waltz* - full tibia ensemble building intensity - busy footwork. A well orchestrated piece, full of life. Second touch for accent and build up to a thrilling finish.

Tony returns to the piano now to celebrate 100 years since the birth of **Gershwin** by playing *By Strauss* - a lesser known work, but just as good as all the others. Piano gives statement with organ responding with horn and glock. Organ takes melody with cascading arpeggios from piano - an excellent arrangement - jaunty and firm with a 32' pedal to finish!

Now for something totally different - *Theme from The Deerhunter - Cavatina* - this arrangement is based on the **John Williams** guitar arrangement. Organ commences with soft tibia ensemble to set melody; piano responds with organ playing underlying chords with soft tibia and diapason ensemble. A hauntingly beautiful piece. The sound just floated around the auditorium and settled like a mist over all of us. A held chord from the organ and arpeggio from the piano to finish. Just soooooo beautiful.

Now for a fitting ending to a magnificent first half- *Warsaw Concerto*. Organ with 32' pedal and full theatre organ registration and full chords - piano with main theme. A very alive rendition with plenty of light and shade. Piano responds with arpeggios while organ plays melody; build up to a big finish. A very 'together' rendition which commanded my full attention from start to finish and was very much appreciated by the audience.

After a refreshing interval, a toe-tapping opener from **John** and **Tony** - *I Know That You Know* full theatre organ to start with a piano fanfare. Organ melody and vamp with piano ascending and descending arpeggios. Chromatic run on piano to finish.

From **John** on organ, a **Latin American** piece - *Vera Dero* - full organ with brass and use of second touch for response. A fast piece with a much slower and softer middle section with use of post horn second touch. Perfect runs, returning to faster tempo with full organ and lots of brass. Thumb glissando and huge chord and cymbal to finish. Great fun.

Let's go *All the Way*, with a tribute to **Frank Sinatra**. Shimmering chords (fractional tibias and vox) to start; soft ensemble for melody line and 16' stop for emphasis; now to soft tibia/flute ensemble, then brass-only melody-line and return to soft ensemble and fractionals right-hand, Vamp left-hand (with harp) - lots of smooth runs to a build up in registration, dying away to tibia chorus and chrysoglott to finish.

Now for **Gershwin's** *Bess You Is My Woman* from *Porgy and Bess*. Soft tibias with fragment chords to start, then untremmed phrase, then melody clear line and tremmed now with tibia and diapason all this with a counter melody left-hand. Lots of light and shade - a very emotional piece, expertly presented.

Tony returns to the piano now for *We're All Alone* - piano to commence with arpeggio and organ with melody line - tibia and reed, building up in registration when piano takes melody. An excellent duet arrangement. Quieter

now to finish with a soft chord on organ and arpeggio on piano.

Let's do something different now with **Tony** on organ - an operatic "3 Tenors" bracket. All those well known songs - cymbal and full chords, dying away to reed melody line (including lots of musical ornaments); excellent bridging (as always) with diapason open harmony and chrysoglott thrown in for good measure. Then to waltz time with melody right-hand and counter melody left-hand (second touch is very handy!) Chrysoglott phrasing for interest and then back to tibia and piano. Lots of good operatic characters and flavours here. **Tony** creates just the right mood every time - big finish including a 32' pedal.

A very short Christmas bracket now. Have you ever heard *Jingle Bells* untremmed with a church organ sound with loads of improvisation? Wow! *Jingle Bells* never sounded so good. We also heard *Deck the Halls*; *All Through the Night*; *We Wish You a Merry Christmas* and *Joy to the World*. Whew!

An unusual start now to *Ritual Fire Dance* - strings and vox trill right-hand with shimmer and xylophone left-hand. Vamp throughout with left-hand using plenty of traps - a busy piece, but oh, such fun.

John returns to the organ now for *O Holy Night* - piano to start with arpeggio and organ single note melody line - using all those lovely soft sounds on the organ, then building up to full theatre organ and then fading away again to finish. Hmmmmm. I really liked this one.

Now for the highlight of the concert. **Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue** as you've never heard it before. Untremmed reed and tibia from organ and piano joins after first phrase. Soft tibia chorus with underlying reed echo and vamp by piano - chrysoglott response from organ. Instruments played solo for certain phrases. This piece was sheer delight to my ears and I let the music wash over me and allowed myself to become lost in the mood of the music. So did everyone else - the applause was thunderous. I

was thoroughly delighted to see a large proportion of the audience giving **Tony** and **John** a well deserved standing ovation.

For their well deserved encore **John** and **Tony** played *Swanee* - all out on piano and full organ with second touch.

Tony and **John** are, without doubt, **Australia's** finest duo performers. Each concert seems more enjoyable than the last. I know that a huge amount of time and effort goes into each and every number and the result is certainly worth the effort.

Tony and **John** always seem to know which songs we will enjoy - I guess they know us well by now. Their technical ability is superb, not to mention their ability to accurately portray the emotion of the music and get the audience involved as well.

John and **Tony**, thank you for such a memorable concert. By the way, I really would like to hear *Rhapsody in Blue* again. Would a CD with this piece and some of your other favourites on it be too much to ask?

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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 :-

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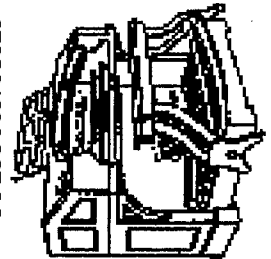
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