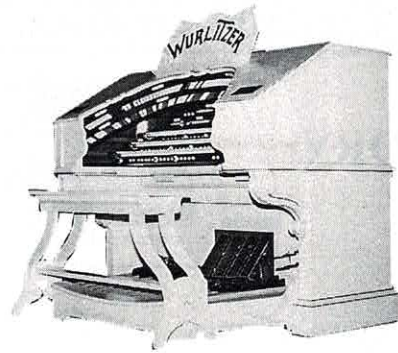
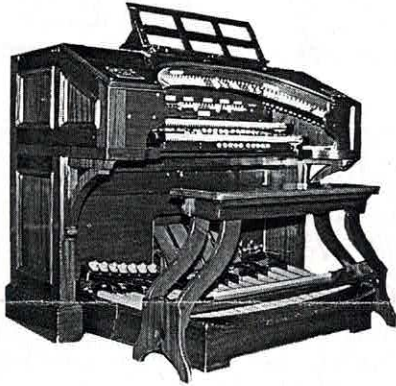


NOVEMBER, 1993

TOSA

Marrickville Town Hall



Orion Centre Campsie

NEWS

A Special Afternoon

with our patron, **LAN DAVIES**, and friends



Saturday, 13th November at Bondi Junction

See page 12 for details

Volume 32

Issue 10

PRINTED BY TOSA

The Official Publication of Theatre Organ Society of Australia (NSW Division) Inc.
G.P.O. Box 67, Sydney, NSW, 2001

Registered by Australia Post - Publication No. N.B.H. 1038

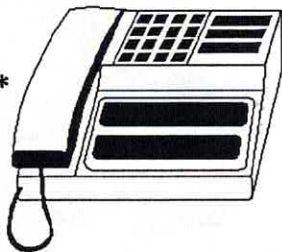
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TOSA NEWS

NOVEMBER, 1993

THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW DIVISION) Inc.

* DIRECTORY *



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COMING EVENTS

Jim Riggs' Workshop

Tuesday 26 from 7.30pm to 10.30 pm
Theatre Organ Workshop on Epping Baptist's
Christie Theatre Pipe Organ
(See page 12 for more information)

NOVEMBER

Monday 1 at 7.30 pm Committee Meeting
Saturday 13 at 2.00 pm Members' Club Afternoon
Bondi Junction-Waverley
RSL Club, Bondi Junction
(See page 12 for more details)
Thursday 18 at 8.00 pm Annual General Meeting
Orion Centre, Campsie
(See AGM agenda on page 13)

DECEMBER

Monday 6 at 7.30 pm Committee Meeting
Sunday 12 at 2.00 pm TONY FENELON
CHRISTMAS CONCERT
Orion Centre, Campsie

JANUARY

Monday 10 at 7.30 pm Committee Meeting



REMEMBER TO TUNE IN TO
2CBA-FM 103.2

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

From The Vice Presidents (Both of 'em)

Hi there!! Well, Spring has sprung with a vengeance, and as we move into the month of November it seems like Summer is already upon us. November, of course, also brings with it our **Annual General Meeting and Election**, to be held at the **Orion Centre, Campsie, on THURSDAY, 18TH NOVEMBER AT 8PM.**

When Jack and Pearl Lawson resigned from the Society on 13th June of this year, we were short one President and one Committee member. At the July committee meeting, the 2 Vice Presidents, **John Shaw** and myself, were asked to jointly share the position of President until the next election, to which we both agreed.

The committee felt that ALL members should be given the chance to vote for whom they wanted as President, rather than have the committee appoint a President for just the few months leading up to the AGM, although the committee had the authority to do so if it wished. This is the democratic way of dealing with the situation, and also of assuring the stability of the Society, which the present Executive and committee have long maintained.

The committee then promised **John** and myself full co-operation and help in any way they could - we only had to call on them whenever we needed their services. This was no "spur of the moment" offer, but a sincere and genuine one to help **John** and me to better carry out our additional duties.

To say that the committee has functioned smoothly and in complete harmony would be an understatement. They have all put their shoulders to the wheel and produced a team effort which I don't think has been bettered in my 30 or more years membership of the Society.

I know there are some in the Society who believe that any Executive or committee member who has served for



5 consecutive years should not be eligible to stand again, but this would be to throw out the baby with the bathwater. The Society could thus lose the services of its most experienced people - people whose expertise proved invaluable in our recent crisis when we lost the President and a committee member.

I believe that there is a lesson to be learnt from that crisis, and it is that there is no substitute for experience, and experience only comes with service to the membership over a long period of time.

This is not to say that new blood should not be introduced to the committee over time, but it should not be at the expense of dumping all long-serving members at one election. Long-serving members nominate because they wish to continue serving the Society and because they enjoy what they are doing for the general membership. To lose such loyal members could well be a disaster for TOSA.

You have a good team of capable and loyal members in your present Executive. They have restored stability to the Society and will continue to maintain it in the future. Support your present Executive and committee and let them get on with the job.

So, as the great J.D. so often said,

Thanks for listening,

Frank Ellis

Vice President

Editorial

The Annual General Meeting should be of interest to all our members, with reports from various areas of the Society's activities, with discussion of interesting innovations like establishing a building endowment fund, and with a "think-tank" discussion (postponed from the last Members' Night due to a small attendance) at the end of the meeting.

We were hoping to publish some résumés of the candidates nominating for office, but the closing date for the nominations was too close to the deadline for the issue and only 3 nominees managed to send their résumés along in time. The committee felt it would be fairer to all if no résumés were published, rather than only those of the lucky few. We must try to be better organised next time.

One of the little jobs that I unwittingly took on when I became editor was finding someone to report on each of our concerts. I invariably forget that this is my responsibility and I usually send a very hassled half an hour before each concert trying to find someone of my acquaintance to write about the performance. If anyone would like to report on any of our concerts I would be most grateful, as the number of people that I know personally in TOSA is still rather small. I've asked virtually all of the people I know to write a report, which they have generally done quite willingly but they are starting to avoid me when they see me coming with a pleading look in my eye just before a concert!

It would be good to have a variety of reviewers and it would give more of our members the chance to participate in something enjoyable for the Society. Drop me a line or give me a ring, if you would like to help. In any case I always have pad and pen available at concerts (Hint! Hint!).

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



DAVID PARSONS

An organ concert will be held at the **Clempton Park Baptist Church**, Shackel Avenue, **Clempton Park**, on Saturday 6th November at 7.30pm. **David Parsons** will be playing their **Allen** organ, which comes up on a hoist. The church has a raked floor and theatre-type seating.

Admission is \$5.00 per person and will include supper.

COLIN ADAMSON

On Sunday, 7th November at 2.30pm **Colin Adamson** will be playing the historic, 130 year old **J.W. Walker & Sons** organ in **St John's Cathedral** in **Parramatta**. The programme will vary from show tunes to light classics and, although there is no admission charge, any donations will go towards the support of **Radio CBA-FM**, on which our own theatre organ programme, **Theatre Organ Highlights** is heard every Monday night.

Parking is available in the church grounds (Church Street) - access is via Hunter Street. The church is very close to **Parramatta Railway Station**. All welcome.

'94 CONVENTION NICHOLAS MARTIN

Two pieces of news about the Perth Convention at Easter next year :

(i) The original plan for a visit to the **Civic Theatre Restaurant** has been changed due to unforeseen difficulties, but the good news is that conventioners will be enjoying a meal at "**Sizzlers**" instead, with a larger variety of choice in the meal.

(ii) As an epilogue to the Convention, on 5th April, it has been decided to offer conventioners the opportunity to visit Australia's only monastery town, **New Norcia**, which is about 2 hours drive north of **Perth**.

New Norcia was established in 1846 by the **Benedictine** community and has an **Art Gallery** housing valuable paintings and a **Museum** where much of the district's history is represented. Nestled in the heart of the **West Australian** bush, it is a surprising piece of **Old Spain**.

The **Cathedral** contains the only **Moser (German) Concert Organ** in **Australia** and, after a short demonstration, conventioners will have the chance to play this beautiful instrument, if they so desire.

The journey passes through the vineyards of the **Swan Valley**, and the rolling foothills of the **Darling Range** before entering the farming country where **New Norcia** is situated.

The day will include a guided tour of the buildings and the townsite, morning and afternoon tea, lunch and transport from the **Convention Hotel** and return.

All this for only \$52 per person!

A professionally-produced Hi-Fi Stereo video featuring highlights of **Nicholas Martin's Sydney** performances is currently being prepared. It will include selections from his "**Blackpool Dance Night**" and his 1st August concert, as well as some interesting additional footage.

The video is to be called **Nicholas Martin - In the Mood** and is bound to be very popular with those who witnessed his fabulous playing and also with those who missed out when he was here in **Sydney**. Everybody who attended his performances was very impressed with his style and his personality. It will be really great to be able to have a permanent visual record of his visit. This is a rare opportunity to hear and see our beautiful **Orion WurliTzer** in the hands of a very talented professional.

Further details will be given as soon as they become available. Keep posted for its release!

CONCORD UNITING

David Parsons (What a busy man!) is giving an organ recital at a Pleasant Sunday Afternoon at 2.30pm on Sunday, 7th November at the **Concord Uniting Church**. The church is on the corner of **Wunda** and **Concord Roads, Concord West**.

The organ is a relatively new **Rodgers** electronic organ, which was supplied and installed by well-known **TOSA** member and organist, **Cliff Bingham**, who also played the first concert on it in June last year.

The cost is \$5 per person, and \$10 for a family, and includes a cup of afternoon tea.

The proceeds are going to the Reverent **Bill Crewes' Exodus Mission to the Homeless**.

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For more information, contact
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RAY THORNLEY CONCERT - A Review by Paul Luci

ORION CENTRE, Sunday, 12th September, 1993

A beautiful Spring day saw a good audience attend this concert. If memory serves me, Ray has not played for some seven years - the last concert he played here was at Marrickville.

After Frank Ellis' warm welcome, the console rose with the stirring "Knightsbridge March" which settled us into the mood for greater things to come. After Ray's greeting, he introduced the next piece, "I Know Him So Well", which Ray arranged with excellent use of percussion and brilliant counter-melody in the second part.

"Taming the Tenor" showed good use of percussion and piano, with very unusual pedal registrations. "On a Clear Day" had a superb rhythmic accompaniment and good use of the WurliTzer piano.

Then followed 3 pieces of dance music from Henry VIII. Here we heard some of the varied classical sounds of the WurliTzer and the softer tremed sounds.

"Gold and Silver Waltz" had Ray using some of the louder reeds in a fine waltz arrangement.

A Richard Rodgers selection followed, including "On Your Toes", "A Small Hotel", "Boys From Syracuse", "This Can't Be Love", "Babes In Arms" and "Where or When", with excellent use of Tibias and Vox Chorus>

To end the first section of the concert Ray played a "West Side Story" selection, with "Tonight", "One Hand, One Heart", "America" and "Somewhere".

After a 20 minute break, Frank introduced Ray once more for the second half, and the console rose with a selection from "Wizard of Oz". Ray demonstrated his brilliant use of the piano, with a light buzzy reed modulation, ending the bracket with "Somewhere Over the Rainbow".

A Beatles' song, "Here, There and Everywhere" showed good use of the

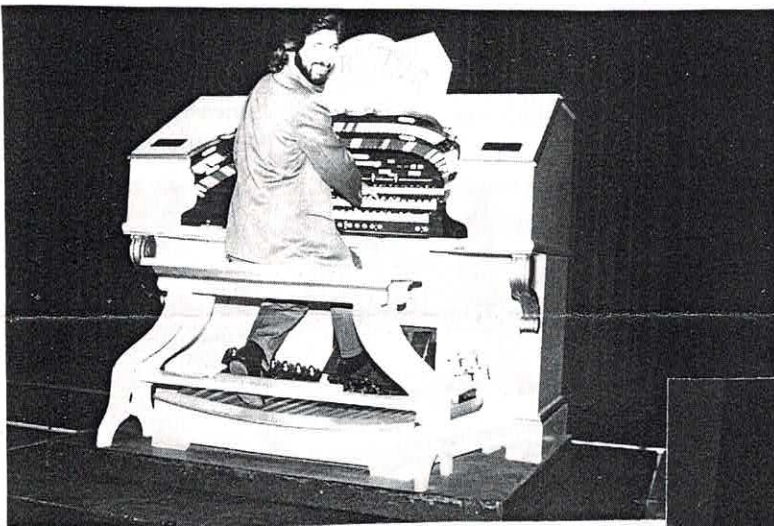
solo voices. "Fame" from the TV show of the 70's built from the softer sounds up to the full organ pedal sound.

Next came the "Last Rose of Summer" with excellent use of the Tibias. Music from "Les Misérables" came with outstanding use of untremed sounds and hand registrations.

Jimmy Edwards' comic number, "Little Red Monkey", brought wonderful novelty sounds and extremely fast pedal work. How does this man do it!

A refreshing arrangement of the popular "Carousel" was the final offering. Ray then played "Fantasie Impromptue" as an encore, bringing the concert to a close.

In summing up Ray Thornley's concert performance I would have to say that it was faultless, with superb registrations and melodic pedal playing. Let's hope we do not have to wait another 7 years to hear this truly professional Australian talent.



Ray and his wife at the Orion console



Photography by Barry Tooker

Rob Gliddon concludes his delightful and informative commentary on the UK's major organ event of 1993, which took place in London and Manchester from 28th May to 2nd June.

Cinema Organ Society's 40th Anniversary International Organ Festival

Session Ten - Trinity Arts Centre,
Pudsey - Open Console -
3/8 WurliTzer

A half-hour's drive from Ossett brought us to Pudsey. The Arts Centre in this small town is a converted, former Methodist Chapel, with the ground floor given over to shops and the floored-off, balcony area to a general-purpose hall. The organ installed here was originally from the Gaumont, Oldham, Manchester, a WurliTzer dating from 1938. For many years the organ was in the Dale Hall, Hampsthwaite and has only recently been relocated.

Again Quentin Maclean was responsible for specifying the stop-list, thus promising something out of the ordinary. The Tibia is the large solo scale, as is the Vox Humana, and also included are a rare French Trumpet and a Brass Saxophone - interesting choices for an instrument of this size. The organ is nicely regulated and is certainly the hall's best asset.

Open Console was led off by Simon Gledhill and concluded 2 hours later by Jim Riggs. As with all open console sessions the standard of playing varied. A buffet meal was provided during the late afternoon.

Session Eleven - Free Trade Hall,
Manchester - Simon Gledhill -
4/20 WurliTzer

The fame of this WurliTzer has spread world wide due to numerous recordings of it released by the Lancastrian Theatre Organ Trust. Simon Gledhill and this instrument made a truly great combination.

The organ is installed over the proscenium with several large decorative baffles in front of the swell shutters. Resulting from the chamber location, the sound is well-diffused throughout the auditorium, as in the theatre installations of the past. Small reed and flute sounds come out clearly and are superb - big ensemble sounds are only marginally less successful. Tibias (2 ranks of them!) are very lush-sounding and the String/Vox combinations are superb.

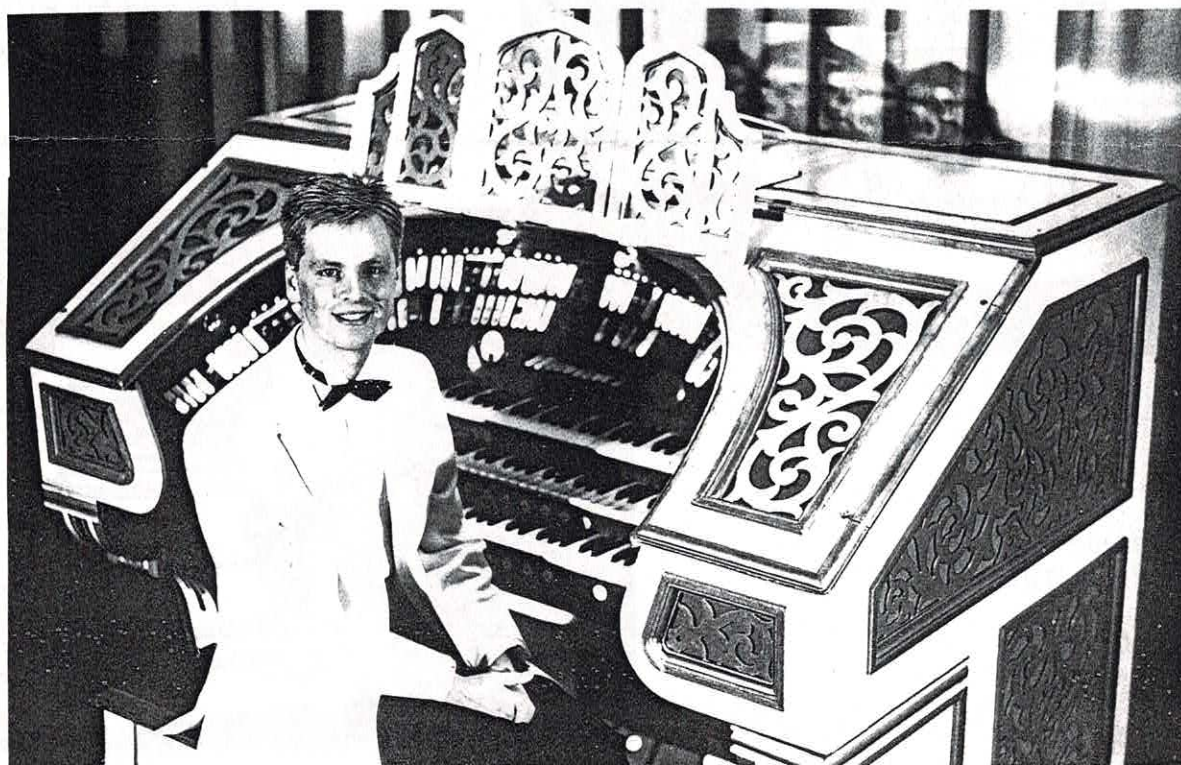
Most of us by now are familiar with the playing of Simon Gledhill and it was with great anticipation that all attended this session. We were not disappointed!! Special mention must be made of Simon's closing piece, Rossini's "The Thieving Magpie" - some all-time great playing; many other organists should apply for instruction time with him.

Session Twelve - Granada
Studios, Manchester - David Lowe -
4/14 WurliTzer

Many of you will have read in TOSA News of the re-opening of this instrument late last year by Tony Fenelon and Len Rawle. The organ was originally installed in the Gaumont Theatre, Manchester, in 1935 and saw frequent use right up until its removal from this location. During the 1960's the Lancastrian Theatre Organ Trust was formed and "adopted" both this and the WurliTzer now in the Free Trade Hall.

In its original home the organ was an under-stage installation and noted for its reed chorus. Harold Ramsay designed the stop-list, actually an expanded version of the legendary Granada, Tooting's 4/14 WurliTzer. The late Arthur Esgate was organist there in 1941-42. During the mid-1950's the Esgates moved to Australia where Arthur made some private recordings on Sydney's State Theatre WurliTzer and broadcast theatre organ in the early 1960's in the ABC's "At The Console" series.

After the removal of the organ from the Gaumont the Lancastrian Theatre Organ Trust stored the instrument. It was during



Simon Gledhill at the Cannon (Granada) Christie organ

this time that a disastrous fire occurred and the console and pipe chests were destroyed. As the console had been built by the English branch of the **Wurlitzer Company**, the original plans still existed and from these an exact replica console was constructed, with replacement chests being obtained in the USA.

The opportunity arose to install the organ in the **Granada Studios** as part of a public tours area. A replica of the **Tooting Granada Theatre's** foyer/Hall of Mirrors area, in reduced scale, was constructed and the organ speaks from the upstairs of this area and the console is set into the right-hand wall. Whilst this is a perfect setting in which to place a theatre organ, unfortunately the sound from the chambers is rather muffled, particularly for the organist!

David Lowe played an enjoyable programme, including several selections with "*Rain*" in the title - **Manchester** is legendary for its rainy climate. Also featured was a **Gracie Fields** medley, since **Gracie** was born in **Rochdale** in suburban **Manchester**.

One could not help feeling that **David** was not nearly so comfortable at this organ as he was several days previously at **Southbank**.

.....
**Session Thirteen - 2 famous
 Liverpool Classical Organs : St
 Georges Hall and Liverpool
 Anglican Cathedral**

The final day of the Festival included a bonus which had not previously been advertised - a visit to **St Georges Hall, Liverpool**. Some small delay was encountered while City officials were contacted to enable our admission to the building, but it was well worth the wait. The visit would have been worthwhile if only for its beautiful Victorian-

era decoration, the superb barrel ceiling and the magnificent decorated floor.

The **Liverpool** firm of **Henry Willis** built the organ during the 1850's and it said to be amongst their best work. We were treated to a brief recital which included *Variations on "God Save The Queen"* by **W.J. Best** (who played the opening of the **Sydney Town Hall** organ) - a most appropriate choice as that day was the 40th Anniversary of **Queen Elizabeth's** Coronation.

A short bus journey away stands the **Liverpool Cathedral**, the largest church with the largest church organ in **England**. Building this large church commenced in 1912 and has only been completed recently. The organ again is by **Willis** and has two 5-manual consoles, 145 speaking stops and a total of 9,741 pipes. One console is located adjacent to the pipework in the traditional position, while the other, built in 1989 is on the main floor and as such was ideal for the brief demonstration and recital we were given. With a reverberation time of 9 seconds, the organ sounds magnificent in this mighty building.

.....
**Session Fourteen - Opera
 House, Blackpool -
 3/13 Wurlitzer**

The **Opera House** is in fact a 1930's cinema/theatre and contains the last **Wurlitzer** installed new in **England** in 1939. This organ is an under-stage one and typically has a prominent reed chorus. The Solo Chamber pipework was removed several years ago and it was thought that this would be the end of the organ in that location. With the closing of the stage show "*Cats*" (for which the space below the stage was required for

machinery connected with the show) it was decided to re-install the Solo chamber. This work had only just been completed several days prior to our visit, Good news indeed!

David Shepherd and **Jim Riggs** were amongst those who gave a short demonstration of the organ.

.....
**Session Fifteen - The Tower
 Ballroom, Blackpool - Phil
 Kelsall and Nigel Ogden -
 3/14 Wurlitzer**

The **Tower Complex** is a strange amalgam of amusement rides, arcades and of course the famous **Ballroom** on the third floor. Undoubtedly the world's best known, most played **Wurlitzer** has a most elaborate rococo setting which has to be seen to be appreciated. When played for dancing the organ is, of necessity, amplified throughout the room.

Phil Kelsall played his usual session for dancing and, although the floor was far from full, it was fascinating to watch **Mr Blackpool** make all those sounds live. At the conclusion of the dancing, the lights dimmed and the lights closed., all the general public departed and only the **Conventioners** were left.

With the amplification turned off, we were treated to an hour of **Nigel Ogden** concertizing on the legendary instrument and, yes, I can testify that it can be made to give out the sounds we are all familiar with from other **Wurlitzers**. With this final concert the **Festival** concluded. The **Cinema Organ Society** must be commended for presenting an excellent programme - all instruments were in excellent voice and the wide cross-section of artists made for interesting performances throughout. **Bravo C.O.S.!!**



Phil Kelsall at the Tower Ballroom Wurlitzer

The **JEAN PENHALL** Story

Jean Penhall had the good fortune to be born into a musical home, her mother being an accomplished pianist and violinist, whilst her father's musical abilities were directed toward brass instruments. She first saw the light of day at **Harden** in **New South Wales** and, at the age of 8, commenced her study of the piano, at which she made remarkable progress during the next 2 years.

At the age of 10 years she was playing the harmonium at her Sunday School, and continued in this capacity for some time.

Jean heard her first pipe organ at the **Presbyterian Church** in **Harden** and was deeply impressed by the majestic tone and volume of the pipe organ when compared to her little harmonium.

It was not long before she persuaded her parents to allow her to come to **Sydney** for some lessons and soon after her arrival in the city she had 3 lessons from one of **Sydney's** best-known organists, **Miss Lillian Frost**, of the **Congregational Church, Pitt Street**.

Taking advantage of her stay in the metropolis, she visited the **Arcadia Theatre** at **Chatswood** one evening and heard her first **WurliTzer** organ. The organist at the theatre at that time being **Nicholas Robins**.

So enchanted was **Jean** with this new experience that she enlisted the aid of a friend to intercede on her behalf with the great **Manny Aarons** for some lessons and when he agreed to her request she promptly fainted from sheer nervousness! **Manny** gave her 3 lessons, using the **King's Cross Cinema** organ which was later installed in the **Savoy Theatre, Hurstville**.

Later she returned to her home in **Harden** and was appointed organist at the **Presbyterian Church**, a post which kept her occupied for the next 4 years. This church had a **Dodd** pipe organ installed and **Jean** found this instrument to be a very fine one indeed.

In 1936 she decided to move to **Sydney** and stayed with the **Dodd** family for about 3 months. **Mr Dodd**,

as **WurliTzer** representative for **Australia**, had a 2-manual, 7 rank **WurliTzer** installed in his own home as a demonstration unit and **Jean** was able to have unlimited use of the organ for practice.

A theatre pipe organ in the home is golden opportunity that comes to very few students of this highly specialised branch of music making and **Jean** found herself with such an opportunity. She needed no further incentive and lost no time in making the most of this piece of good fortune. The **Dodd** residence **WurliTzer** was later installed in **Reg Payne's Regent Theatre, Wentworthville**.

An appointment as organist at the **Presbyterian Church** at **Hurstville** followed and soon after this **Jean** became first pianist for the famed **St George Choral Society**.

During this period she did many broadcasts, *Messiahs*, concerts, etc., from **Sydney Town Hall**, as well as broadcasting from **Paling's Concert Hall** on an **Everett** organ.

In 1939 **Colonel De Basil's Russian Ballet Company** visited **Sydney** and **Jean** played for the world premiere of a **Bach** ballet. For this occasion she played a specially installed concert organ and appeared with the orchestra under the baton of **Anatol Dorati**.

Her first engagement as a resident organist was at the **Strathfield Cinema** at the console of the **Christie** organ. The theatre was then under the management of the **Western Suburbs Cinema Circuit**. Later when the theatres of this company came under the control of **Hoyts' Theatres** she was then featured at many of the key houses of their circuit.

She remained with **Hoyts** for 9 years. At one period **Jean** doubled at the organs of both the **Strathfield Cinema** and the **Civic Theatre, Auburn**, about 3 miles away, and this meant performing at one theatre before the intermission and then dashing madly over to the other to appear after the intermission.

A similar situation arose during her

season in the city of **Parramatta**, where she appeared at both the **Roxy** and **Astra Theatres**. However, as these theatres were only 5 minutes walk apart, it was a much easier task here than it had been at **Strathfield** and **Auburn**.

Later she worked for **Greater Union Theatres** and was featured at the **Sydney Capitol Theatre**. Periodically, she alternated with **Manny Aarons** at the **State Theatre** for a few weeks at a time.

Asked which theatre was her favourite, **Jean** said that she had liked them all but the lush atmosphere of the **State** would be hard to surpass. To look up at the **State Theatre's** ceiling and see those 12 great, glittering chandeliers would inspire any artist. Additionally, the 4-manual console of the **State** had been an organist's dream. However the **Savoy Theatre** in **Hurstville** had been her real favourite because the audiences in this theatre had really appreciated the kind of music that she preferred to play.

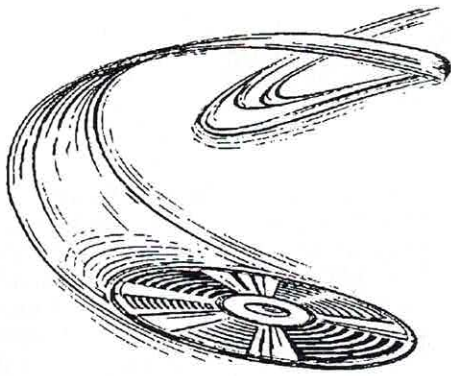
She remained at the **Capitol Theatre** until the organ was shut down, thereupon joining the firm of **Palings Pty Ltd**, demonstrating and selling **Hammond** organs. She became a brilliant exponent of the electronic instruments.

During her **Western Suburbs Cinemas** days **Jean** used to sing a song or two for the patrons, whilst accompanying herself on the organ. This form of feature spot was always a favourite with **Australian** audiences.

Jean also appeared at the **Astra Theatre** at **Drummoyne** for a season, singing and playing the organ to theatre audiences.

One of that very select group of women to succeed in a profession that was for many years the exclusive domain of the male, she was a talented and polished performer with a wide experience of all types of organs.

Until one got to know her **Jean Penhall** was shy and somewhat reserved, but the sincerity and warmth of her personality made her a charming and friendly person indeed.



Record Bar News

by Neil Palmer

PUTTIN' ON THE PIPES : Dan Bellomy at the WurliTzer of Uncle Milt's Pipe Organ Pizza Co. Tracks include : *Surrey With the Fringe on Top, Puttin' on the Ritz, Sentimental Journey, Stormy Weather*, plus others. Some tracks feature a Live Drummer! This is one for the jazz enthusiasts!! Available on Compact Disc for \$28.00. Postage : \$2.80.

At his recent Sydney concert, Ray Thornley officially launched his latest recording, **CAPRI CAROUSEL**, recorded on the WurliTzer of the Capri Theatre in Adelaide. Tracks include : *Knightsbridge March, Here, There and Everywhere, West Side Story Selections, Carousel Waltz*, plus more. TOSA has a very limited supply of this cassette for \$12.00, plus \$2.45 postage.

Available at TOSA Concerts, or by Mail Order from :

TOSA (NSW Division) Inc.
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When ordering recordings, it is advisable to include a contact telephone number, in case the item is unavailable.

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From Françoise Janod-Groves of Burwood :

1/10/93

"Since March we have been able to serve tea and coffee before and at interval at the Campsie venue. This has proved to be very successful.

Tea or coffee and biscuits are available before the concerts and at interval at the price of \$1.00. We now have artificial sweetener to replace the sugar that some are not allowed to have.

I wish to thank **Betty, Joan, Pam and Jean**, who have been helping on the tables, and also **Barry, Peter and Colin** who help with the hot water and anything that we might need. Also, a special thanks to **Frank Rohanek** who so efficiently sells the tickets before the concerts and at interval so that the servers can work more quickly by not having to handle any money.

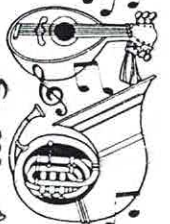
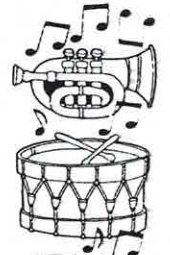
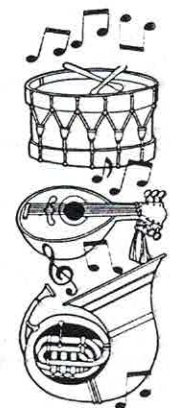
Thanks also to my two children, **Sacha and Natasha**, who make themselves useful whenever the need arises.

I think patrons are happy to be able to have a cup of tea or coffee and a couple of biscuits.

We hope that we will be able to serve you all for many concerts to come.

Thank you again to everyone.

Françoise"



CASTLES IN SPAIN

Rob Gliddon found this interesting, historical article in the April, 1970 edition of the "Music Maker". The article was written by John Gardiner and features the Roxy at Parramatta and the Plaza in George Street, Sydney. Both of these theatres housed theatre pipe organs and still stand today but in modified form.

The first part of this article, which even includes a TOSA advertisement of the period, is concerned mostly with the Plaza Theatre and next month's instalment will tell the story of the Roxy.

The year 1930 introduced to Sydney movie audiences two interesting examples of Spanish renaissance architecture embodied in the Roxy Theatre, Parramatta, and the Plaza Theatre, Sydney.

The Plaza Theatre became the last major showplace to be constructed under the direction of Hoyts Theatres Limited and was originally meant to surpass in size and appearance all other large scale movie palaces in Sydney at the time.

This idea could have well been achieved had it not co-incided with the Wall Street crash of October, 1929 and its subsequent aftermath.

Following drastic alterations to the original design submitted by architect Guy Crick, there finally emerged on the site of the old Hoyts De Luxe cinema, a theatre of modest proportions with an ornate but restrained style of decor.

The principal features of the auditorium were two balconies flanking the stage; decorative windows beyond which an atmospheric effect was obtained by the illusion of an evening sky; from the walls hung large multi-coloured banners, while orange shaded lamps gave an added glow of light to that already provided by the several

large candelabra suspended from the artistically painted beamed ceiling.

Provision was made for only one level of seats, the backs of which were not padded but made up of thin leather material on which was embossed an illustration of a Spanish galleon at sea.

The stage and proscenium arch were fairly simplified in design and there was originally no orchestra pit until several months later when an elevated orchestral stage operating on the worm-drive principle was installed to accommodate the orchestra from the Regent Theatre across the way, which appeared alternatively at both theatres under the direction of Stan Porter and William Cade between the years 1932-1934.

Despite the many modifications that took place, arrangements were made for the installation of an organ, with chambers for the various sets of pipes located behind the decorative plaster work on either side of the proscenium.

In place of the American Wurlitzer that was usually found in most large city theatres, a British built Christie from the Lyceum Theatre, Melbourne, was installed, the console being placed in a central position in front of the stage.

With the introduction of the orchestra pit, the console was moved to the right hand side of the stage and with the eventual withdrawal of the orchestra was then positioned in the centre of the elevated stage until its removal in 1938 and its replacement by a rather ancient Robert Hope-Jones Unit Orchestra from the Wintergarden Theatre, Brisbane.

The official opening of the Plaza on Friday, 11th April, 1930, was scheduled to take place at 7.45 p.m., but for some unexplained reason did not commence until 8.20 p.m. when a message of welcome was extended to all those present.

This was followed by the Hearst-Metrotone newsreel, Laurel and Hardy in "Night Owls", a colortone revue "Mexicana"; "Hot Dogs", described as an "all-barkie" with a cast made up entirely of dogs; and the feature film Cecil B. De Mille's Metro-Goldwyn-Mayere production "Dynamite", starring Conrad Nagel.

American organist Eddie Fitch from the Sheridan Theatre, Chicago, appeared at the organ, while the Plaza Quartette consisting of Blodwen Hill (first violin), George White (second

violin), Dagmar Roberts (piano), and Cedric Ashton (cello) presented a programme of Spanish music from the lounge during intermission supplemented by girls in Spanish costume singing from the side of the entrance hall and the balconies near the stage.

A journalist who attended the occasion passed a few acid comments the following day when he described the foyer as being jammed tight with people to the point of acute discomfort, the somewhat subdued atmosphere, and the voices from the sound track of "Dynamite" as metallic and unpleasant to the ear.

It would appear that the Plaza's gala opening was in keeping with the times.

Before coming to Australia, Eddie Fitch had been one of the organists for the Ascher Brothers chain of theatres in Chicago and was seen by Australian audiences for the first time at the Regent Theatre, Brisbane, in January, 1930. His brief season at the Plaza ended on 16th May, 1930, when he exchanged organ consoles with Wallace Kotter at the Sydney Regent.

In October, 1930 Eddie Fitch was transferred to Melbourne where he was featured simultaneously at the Regent and Plaza Theatres.

Wallace Kotter, also originally from Chicago, remained Plaza organist until 9th December, 1930, when he was succeeded by Eddie Ford from the New York Roxy, who appeared alternatively at the Regent until 18th December, 1930.

Australian organists were first represented at the Plaza organ by Idwal Jay early in 1931, then in 1934 by Stanley Cummins who was to feature the Christie organ for the last time before its removal to the Savoy Theatre, Enfield, and introduce on 9th July, 1938, the newly installed Wurlitzer from the Wintergarden Theatre, Brisbane.

From March until May, 1939, Penn Hughes graced the console before moving on to Adelaide, and was followed by former Prince Edward Theatre organist Les Waldron, who during his season at the Plaza featured two of his own compositions — "Spanish Caprice" and "Valse Caprice" with the accomplished Sydney violinist Dan Scully, playing an Australian made violin. Les Waldron left the Plaza in September, 1940.

HEAR

WILBUR KENTWELL

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Popular Organist

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THE BIG WURLITZER
THEATRE PIPE ORGAN

★

MARRICKVILLE
TOWN HALL

Thursday, 23rd April
8 p.m.

★

TICKETS:

\$1.50 at door, or available from
Rees Wills (Lowrey Organs),
412a George Street, Sydney.

★

Presented by the Theatre Organ
Society of Australia and Mar-
rickville Council as part of the
Captain Cook Bi-Centenary Cele-
brations in the Municipality of
Marrickville.

For the next two months, Lionel Corrick from the Melbourne Regent appeared at the Plaza before making way in November, 1940 for Charles Tuckwell, former featured organist at the Regent Theatres in Adelaide and Melbourne and the Civic Theatre, Auckland (N.Z.).

Stan Cummins returned to the Plaza in 1941, remaining in residence until early 1945 when he moved across to the Regent exchanging places with Owen Holland, whose stay at the Plaza became unexpectedly brief due to prolonged ill health.

After retiring temporarily from theatre organ playing, Owen Holland rejoined the Hoyts organisation in September, 1946, at the Palatial Theatre, Burwood.

In June, 1946, Reubert Hayes from the Brisbane Regent opened at the Plaza where he was billed as "Australia's Ace Organist" until March, 1958, when he succeeded Stan Cummins at the Regent.

With the introduction of Cinerama later the same year, the organ was finally removed to allow for the necessary alterations to the proscenium arch. The orchestra pit and elevated stage still remain to serve as a reminder of the early days of cinema presentation.

Down the years the Plaza has had the distinction of presenting such notable screen attractions as: Greta Garbo in "Anna Christie" (her first sound film) and "The Big Trail", Norma Shearer in "The Divorcee" and "A Free Soul", and Bette Davis in "Dangerous" and "Jezebel".

The magnificent voices of Metropolitan Opera stars John McCormack and Lawrence Tibbett were heard during 1930 in "Song O' My Heart" and "The Rogue Song", and in 1934 came the Academy Award winning comedy, "It Happened One Night", starring Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert.

The years 1936-37 brought to the Plaza screen the great Charlie Chaplin in his satirical masterpiece "Modern Times", Shirley Temple in "Captain January", the famous German actor Conrad Veidt in "King of the Damned", and Charles Boyer, Jean Arthur and Colin Clive in "History Is Made At Night", while the film musical was adequately represented by popular singers Bing Crosby in

"Pennies From Heaven" and Dick Powell in "On The Avenue".

The great Walt Disney made his mark upon the Plaza early in 1938 with his first full length cartoon "Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs" and in 1951 with "Cinderella". Although the last named film was moderately successful, it never achieved the box office appeal established by its predecessor of thirteen years before.

Following the declaration of war in September, 1939, Brian Aherne and Victor McLaglen were seen in "Captain Fury" which was followed by David Niven and Ginger Rogers in "Bachelor Mother", while audiences of the post war years queued up to see "The Mask of Dimitrios" starring two of the screen's most famous villains, Sydney Greenstreet and Peter Lorre: June Haver in "I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now", and the highly suspenseful western drama "High Noon" with Gary Cooper in his best known role.

A milestone in cinematic history was reached in 1952 at the Plaza with the introduction of Cinemascope in "How To Marry A Millionaire", but was eclipsed on 8th September, 1958 when the screen "exploded to six times its normal size" following the voice of Lowell Thomas dramatically announcing: "THIS IS CINERAMA!" which dominated the Plaza for the next decade with the following productions—"This Is Cinerama", "Cinerama Holiday", "Cinerama South Seas Adventure", "The Seven Wonders of the World", "Search For Paradise", "The Windjammer", "The Best of Cinerama", "How The West Was Won", "The Wonderful World of the Brothers Grimm", "It's A Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World", "The Greatest Story Ever Told", "The Hallelulah Trail", "Battle of the Bulge", "Khartoum", "Grand Prix", "2001: A Space Odyssey", "Custer of the West", and "I Station Zebra".

With the departure of Cinerama, the screen returned to normal size for the distinguished epic production "Battle of Britain" which continues its successful season as the Plaza enters into its 40th year as a leading Sydney theatre.

* * * *

(to be continued next month)

SPECIAL EVENTS

The Jim Riggs' Workshop - Urgent!

Remember that during his stay in Sydney, Jim Riggs has agreed to pass on his extensive knowledge of theatre pipe organ playing to interested members by running a workshop event for interested players and listeners - no need to be an organist; come and learn about what to listen for during a performance. Supper provided!

The workshop will take place NEXT Tuesday, 26th October on Epping Baptist's Christie organ. Cost will be \$30, with a possible concession for under-18's. Please don't delay - Register with Rob Gliddon today at the concert if you intend to take advantage of this special event arranged for you by your club. This is an uncommon opportunity for all lovers of organ music to learn more about the appreciation of these mighty instruments from one of the world's best players!

Ask any committee member for directions or more information if you would like to attend.

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, 13th November at 2.00pm 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 Ian himself, Valda Lang, Wendy Hambly and Bill Schumacher.

The club is at 1 Gray Street, Bondi Junction and is very close to Bondi Junction Railway Station and 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.



Ian Davies and family at the Orion console, after his successful farewell concert in September 1991

CORN CORNER



As a beginner, Allan Tassaker had real trouble playing his music for the first six months.... then he realised he had the music upside down all the time! Yes, you guessed it - he was trying to play the pedals with his hands!

THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (N.S.W. DIVISION) INC
G.P.O. BOX 67, SYDNEY NSW 2001

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is given for the A.G.M. to be held at the Orion Centre, Beamish Street, Campsie at 8.00PM on Thursday 18th November, 1993.

BALLOT CLOSES 8.00PM

AGENDA

1. Welcome and opening of the meeting
2. Apologies
3. Call for 2 Scrutineers
4. Reading of previous AGM & Quarterly minutes and confirmation of said minutes
5. President's Report
6. Secretary's Report
7. Treasurer's Report
8. Marrickville Organ Report
9. Orion Organ Report
10. General Business
11. Declaration of the ballot by Returning Officer
12. Closing remarks by chairman & closing of meeting

At the conclusion of the meeting supper will be served.

Would all members please bring something to share for supper.

F. Ellis / J. Shaw
VICE PRESIDENTS