

Marrickville Town Hall

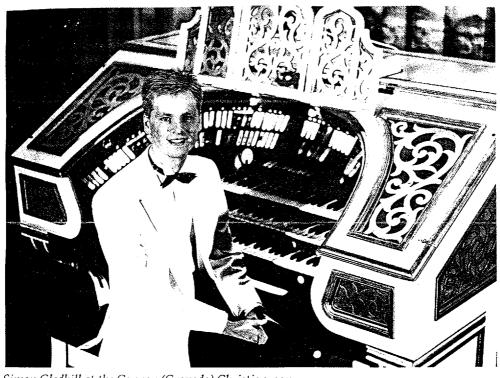
JULY, 1999





3/17 WurliTzer Theatre Pipe Organ Orion Centre Campsie

The Sensational SIMON GLEDHILL



Simon Gledhill at the Cannon (Granada) Christie organ

ORION CENTRE CAMPSIE SUNDAY, 11th JULY at 2.00pm

Volume 38
Issue 6
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TOSA NEWS

JULY, 1999

THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW DIVISION) Inc.

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COMING

JUNE

Thursday 24 at 7.30pm

Members' Playing Night Marrickville Town Hall

Phone to confirm 9798 6742

JULY

5 at 7.30pm Monday

Committee Meeting

11 at 2.00pm Sunday

Simon Gledhill Concert

Orion Centre Campsie

Thursday 22 at 7.30pm

Members' Playing Night Marrickville Town Hall

Phone to confirm 9798 6742

Saturday 31 at 2.30pm

Members' Club Afternoon

"Standaart Theatre Organ" Mosman Baptist Church

(See page 12)

AUGUST

at 7.30pm Monday 2

Committee Meeting

Thursday 26 at 7.30pm Members' Playing Night

Marrickville Town Hall

Phone to confirm 9798 6742

SEPTEMBER

at 7.30pm Monday

Committee Meeting

Sunday 19 2.00pm Richard Hills Concert Marrickville Town Hall

Thursday 23 at 7.30pm Members' Playing Night

Marrickville Town Hall

Phone to confirm 9798 6742

From The President

Hi there! I've not heard **Simon Gledhill** before - I think I was out of town last time he was on. But if the plug **Tony Fenelon** gave **Simon** is only half right then this is a concert not to be missed for anything. (This time **Jenny** and I depart **Sydney** the next day for a holiday down the coast.)

As I write in mid-June over two thirds of our members have paid their subscription into the year 2000, and their records have been updated.

For those who haven't yet paid, please jump in quick, so we can get the work done. The address label on this **TOSA News** tells you the date you are paid to.

Subscription forms were in the last two **TOSA News**.

NOW is a good time to cajole, trap, snare, trick, lure, frighten (yes, my word processor has a thesaurus!) your friends and relatives into joining **TOSA**. By the time you get to read this we will have done most of the planning for the year 2000 concerts. I already know there are going to be new ideas and some top entertainment.

Also the **Easter Convention** is in **Sydney!!** As **NRMA** almost says, IT PLAYS TO BELONG.

If you can't find a joining form, pick one up at the next concert, or phone me.

A word to those who have been enjoying the ORION Members' afternoons, please note that we have had to CANCEL THE JULY AFTERNOON. Not sure of August either. I will keep you posted.

Oh - one final thing. Our longsuffering Editor has been getting by with an ink-jet printer that is past its "use-by" date. Does anyone know of a pre-loved LASER printer, in good condition, that we can pick up at a bed-rock price? It must be IBM and MAC compatible.

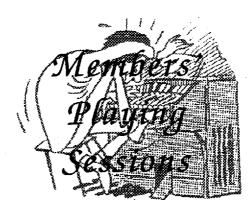
For now..... Walter Pearce



Welcome To New Members

TOSA (NSW) is pleased to welcome the following new members to our ranks, and we hope that their time with us will be a long and happy one:

Graeme Costin - Artarmon Anne Haines - Clovelly Mr F. Last - Kirrawee



Thursday, 13th May, saw the Orion Centre's WurliTzer hosting a Players' Afternoon. The players included David James, Peter Held, Wendy Hambly, John Batts, Jack MacDonald, Bruce Bisby, Walter Pearce, Jim Birkett and first time player Jack Knight.

The listeners included Betty Rose, John Atkins, Edna and Ray Hambly, Dick Benham, Joan Scott and Jenny Pearce.

Remember that, sadly, there can't be an Orion Playing Day in July and perhaps not in August either.

Editorial

In the absence of a full report on this year's **Melbourne Easter Convention** from any of our **NSW** members, I'm extremely grateful to **John Thiele** from **South Australia** for the use of his excellent photographs and his review of the **Regent Theatre**'s organ-opening concert, which was the closing event of the **Convention**, as well as being a well-publicised public concert (see page 6 - "Première Concert of the Melbourne Regent WurliTzer").

Also, thanks to **John Batts** of **Ottawa** (and **Sydney**) who has kindly allowed us to publish some of his thoughts inspired by his attendance at the **TOSA Convention** (see pages 7 and 8 - "Melbourne Musings") and intended also for his own **OVTOS** newsletter.

I hope you have all booked your seats to hear the sensational **Simon Gledhill** at the **Orion** on Sunday, 11th July. It will certainly be one of this year's highlights.

Equally sensational is the young **UK** player, **Richard Hills**, who will be playing for us at **Marrickville** on Sunday, 19th September. He is only 18 years of age, but already has a wealth of international experience and a host of awards and glowing reviews under his belt.

Next month's TOSA News will contain another one of our free offers (to first time attendees at our concerts), which is being made available for the Richard Hills concert in September. We would like to think, given Richard's youth, that some of our members may be able to offer the free seats to younger people who are interested in music but who have never heard a theatre organ played by such a young expert.

Thank you to all the contributors who make *TOSA News* possible each month, especially to **Barry Tooker** who supplies, or processes at **Network Graphics**, most of the photos in each issue (and who works tirelessly at concerts) with very little thanks or recognition.

Best Wishes, Colin Groves

Articles in this journal do not necessarily represent the views of the committee nor those of the editor

The deadline for each edition of *TOSA News* is the 12th of the preceding month



TOSA member Jim Booker has written an item he called The "Joseph Seal" WurliTzer - Postlude to an Article:

I read with interest the article in the April 99 edition of *TOSA News* on **Joseph Seal** and the organs that he played during his career, which had me scurrying through my record collection for the two LP records I had bought many years ago of this famed **English** organist.

Both are on the Astor Gold Star Series label, manufactured in Australia, and part of a series of three recordings made at the A.B.C. Cinema, Kingston-Upon-Thames. This is most likely the series Ian Baker refers to as excellent value - \$2.75.

The series was entitled *Family Favourites*, the second recording being published 6 months after the first, with the third being issued close behind - it is actually referred to in the notes on the second recording, due to the demand of "delighted music lovers" after hearing the first.

Not having the first of these recordings, the covers of the second and third are adorned with a beautiful white orchard and a large yellow rose respectively.

For the benefit of our readers and lovers of good music, the best way to summarise the two recordings I have, Volumes 2 and 3, would be to list the tracks.

More Family Favourites. (GGS 1148) Funiculi Funicula; Sleepy Lagoon; Fantasie Impromptu (Att. J Seal); Destiny; Drink To Me Only With Thine Eyes (Att. R Foort); March, Sons Of The Brave; Simple Aveu (Thome); Second Serenade (Heykens); Evensong (Martin); Waltz, Nights Of Gladness (Ancliffe).

Family Favourites Volume Three. (GGS 1190) Under The Double Eagle; Little Grey Home In The West; In A Persian Market Place; Wine, Women and Song; Dainty Doll; March from "A

WARRINGAH ORGAN SOCIETY

Presents an organ recital with Celerbrated International and Australia's Top Theatre Organist

TONY FENELON

At

The Long Reef Golf Club, Monday 5th July at 7.45pm.

TONY FENELON Needs no introduction, his profile reads like a page from "whose who". His many attributes places him in constant demand throughout the world. TONY will feature the ROLAND ATELIER CONSOLE theatre organ and will present a musical programme to suit all tastes ranging through music from the films, stage shows, popular tunes and evergreen standards.

Admission is \$8.00 per person, by TICKET ONLY which may be obtained by writting to

Ross Lanes, 30 Marinna Rd, Elanora Hts, 2101 (phone 99131826)

enclosing a stamped self addressed envelope.

Ticket is admission only, No reserved seats.

(This promotion is in association with MACRON Music Erina)

Little Suite"; Claire De Lune; The Petite Waltz; Un Peu d'Amour; Blaze Away.

From the notes on the second album, the first recording, *Family Favourites* (MALS 1131), featured music by **Elgar**, **Léhar**, **Rubinstein**, **Mascagni** and **Strauss**. (If anyone has this in their collection, I would certainly like to acquire a copy on tape or CD)

We are indeed very fortunate to have had organists like Joseph Seal, Reginald Foort and Reginald Dixon, in England, who have left us a legacy of finely recorded and excellently played music to thrill our ears. Not that I'm taking anything away from the current generation of organists, both in Australia and abroad, who enchant us regularly with their performances on our own mighty WurliTzer organs, and who have made their own excellent recordings for our continued enjoyment.

Jim Booker

Free Lunchtime Organ Recital

Colin Adamson will play a variety of pieces on the historic J.W.Walker & Son pipe organ at St John's Anglican Cathedral, Parramatta. All welcome.

Wednesday, 11th August 12.30 - 1.10pm

FOR SALE

Conn - Model 652

3 Manual Theatre Organ
Price Negotiable
Contact John Shaw
Phone: 4323 3757



of Jare Organ 200



21st - 24th April 2000

28th National Convention of the Theatre Organ Society of Australia in Sydney

Up-date from the Convenor - Margaret Hall-Nelson Dear members,

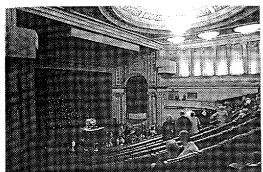
You'll be pleased to know that all our major concert presentations are now in place for next year's **Convention**. We don't plan to spill *all* the beans just yet... we want to keep you all intrigued. So each month just one or two facts will be revealed!

For this month, I'm sure you'll be pleased to know that **Tony Fenelon** will be weaving some of his keyboard magic on the *WurliTzer* Organ and Grand Piano at the Orion Centre on opening night!

More next month!

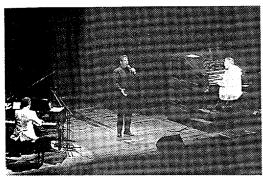
Margar et Hall-Nelson

Première Concert of the Melbourne Regent WurliTzer.



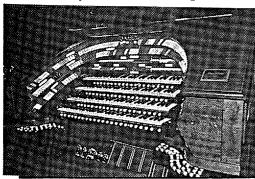
The highlight for me, and I think for most people attending this year's **Theatre Organ Convention** in **Melbourne**, was the Premiere Organ Concert for the "new" **4/36 WurliTzer** in the grand **Regent Theatre**.

This event must surely have set an alltime attendance record for a theatre organ concert in **Australia** - and on an Easter holiday weekend at that. The **Regent** was filled to capacity and extra chairs were even brought in to seat about another 200 people in standing room areas before some



people had to be turned away. Around 2,300 people enjoyed the magnificent sounds of the mighty Regent WurliTzer in its first public concert. And what a concert it was! Superlatives are often overused, but what other words can you use to describe a spectacular concert that was truly superb, in the proper setting for a theatre organ.

Two of the world's outstanding theatre organists helped launch the organ in its new career with a highly appropriate, excellently balanced and varied programme. Tony Fenelon was the last resident organist at the Melbourne Regent before it closed in 1970, and Lyn Larsen was actively involved in the negotiations



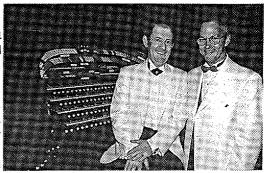
Text & Photos by John Thiele in America that secured the present WurliTzer organ for the restored Australian movie palace.

Tony appeared on stage first to open the show with the stirring theme from Raiders of the Lost Ark which led into a medley of film music. There was a goodly length of solo playing by both Tony and Lyn - in the second half, Lyn featured some of the music of Oliver Wallace who was one of the first organists resident at the Granada Theatre in San Francisco, the first home of this WurliTzer organ. He also paid tribute to the great George Wright, who was one of the last organists to play it in the (by then renamed) Paramount Theatre, with three numbers, including one of my favourites, Roller Coaster.

The concert presented many top class piano and organ duets for which Tony and Lyn are renowned - and these were sprinkled with a lively sense of humour that added a sparkle to this entertainment. The organ was shown in a variety of roles for which it was designed, including the accompaniment of silent films. Tony played for the Academy Award winning Tom and Jerry Hollywood Bowl cartoon, and his scoring of the original soundtrack was just brilliant! Lyn provided the accompaniment for some historic film showing the organ being packed and despatched from the WurliTzer factory in North Tonawanda to San Francisco. The scenes showing the largest and smallest pipes in the organ gave an opportunity to feature the 32' diaphones, which literally; shook the theatre. Wow!

Singer **Donald Cant** acted as host for the concert as well as featured vocalist. His song from *Phantom of the Opera* met with overwhelming response from the audience - and he had great fun amongst this audience during his **Al Jolson** medley. He kept the show bubbling along very enjoyably, and we saw how well the organ can be used with singers, and indeed other instrumentalists, for the trumpeter **Peter Gaudian** also made an appearance on stage to do some jazz improvisation with **Lyn** on organ and **Tony** on piano.

All in all, it was a magic concert, enhanced by some excellent lighting. I particularly appreciated some of the nice subtle touches, like when the house lights dimmed out at the end of interval, and out of the blackness, there grew a glow of light just on the horseshoe and keyboards of the organ console on stage - and that's all we saw for a few moments until stage lighting was added to reveal the artists entering. For

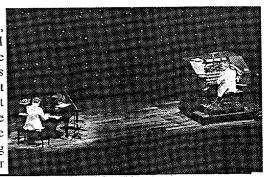


some of the numbers, including the grand finale, a backdrop of a night-time sky with hundreds of twinkling stars provided a spectacular setting for the organ and piano. At the beginning of the concert, the **Regent** auditorium itself provided a spectacle as the lighting in the impressive ceiling domes dimmed from gold to blue and then through to a red glow before fading out.

The concert was over all too soon. It was a programme of a quality and standard most befitting a **Regent Theatre** - the **Regents** always were considered the most



prestigious of Australian movie palaces. Afterwards, in the foyer, Tony and Lyn were kept busy for quite some time signing autographs and CDs. Congratulations go to all concerned with staging this concert to Jason Marriner of Marriner Theatres who oversaw the whole production, to Julien Arnold and his team who have worked so hard over a long period of time in the theatre to bring the organ up to concert standard, and to the Victorian Division of the Theatre Organ Society for their involvement in presenting the concert as the final event in this year's TOSA Easter Convention. It was a most memorable and very special occasion.



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TOSA member John Batts, who is editor for his local theatre organ society (the Ottawa Valley Theatre Organ Society) in Canada - although he currently resides in Sydney - has kindly allowed us to print the thoughts on the Melbourne Convention which he wrote to send off to Canada to be printed in his own OVTOS Newsletter.

Melbourne Musings

by John S. Batts

WITH A SONG IN MY HEART

Attending numerous concerts daily at the **TOSA** annual convention easily stimulated critical appraisals of the organists concerned. One feature of the more satisfying occasions was the way in which the performers had memorised their programmes.

Tony Fenelon and Lyn Larsen at the Regent, both performing frequently together (T.F. at grand piano) as well as solo, played for almost three hours without a sheet music on the key-desk.

The second best concert was given by American pizza-parlour organist David Wickerham. Again, he performed almost flawlessly for well over two hours without benefit of script before him, nor did he have prompt copies at either of the minutes of informal sessions he played during "open console".

Thirdly, John Giacchi, who lifted everybody's spirits at the culmination of the opening day at Malvern Town Hall with an attractive display of theatre-organ playing, played much of his programme from memory.

By contrast, several of the forgettable events were given by players who had sheet music on the desk for every note of every item played. In addition, in fairness, some of the least successful performers also essayed recollections of their supposed party pieces!

However, it reminds your editor of the dictum of that doyen of English theatre-organists, Reginald Foort, who wrote that if you have not memorised the piece you are playing, then you do not really know it! That is a challenge to all public performers and especially so for amateurs.

At a theatre organ console players have so much to do to organise registration changes and special effects that they do not need the additional

burden of keeping an eye on the bar (work that one out!) and turning pages of music.

As **Foort** opined, mastering the piece mentally is an excellent way to allowing yourself time to operate the myriad possibilities of the instrument.

TRANSPLANTED ORGANS

The recent TOSA Convention was remarkable in bringing home the truth of how many fine instruments at the close of the century owe their continued life to enthusiasts' vision and to small organisations. Of the six theatre organs heard, none had been made in Australia.

Three were U.S. WurliTzers (Dendy, Moorabin Town Hall, and Regent), two were British Comptons (Malvern Town Hall and Her Majesty's Theatre, Ballarat), and one a rare British Blackett and Howden (Coburg Town Hall).

Moreover, none of these organs was in their original theatre homes. The 3/15 Dendy WurliTzer which had been installed in the Capitol, Melbourne, in 1924, was moved to the Dendy Cinema in suburban Brighton in the 1960s, and had to be re-installed there after remodelling in 1983.

The Moorabin organ came to the 4000-seat State Theatre, Melbourne, in 1929 as a 4/21; it was sold privately in 1962, and subsequently resold to the local Council for a 1970 re-opening at Moorabin - its slave console went to the Capri Theatre in Adelaide.

The Regent 4/36 WurliTzer arrived in Australia in 1994 and was heard by the public for the first time in 1997; it began life as the Granada (later Paramount) San Francisco, in 1921, and more recently was in the Howard Vollum residence in Portland, Oregon.

The Compton at Malvern was bought as a five-rank organ from Britain in 1966 but suffered severe water damage en route; replacements were not completed until 1985 and its opening was delayed until 1992.

The Ballarat Compton instrument was formerly in the Ritz, Warrington; the Coburg Blackett & Howden, last of only eight organs made by that firm, was originally installed (1929) in the Prince's Theatre, North Shields, also in northern England; currently played via a Christie console, this last organ has yet to make its official public debut.

The Christie is a reminder of the arm of Norman & Beard (UK) which made numerous theatre organs in England (think of the much broadcast Regal, Marble Arch, and the Regal, Edmonton) and which eventually opened a factory in Australia to furnish instruments in New South Wales and Victoria, a brand which thereby constitutes an indigenous breed.

Next year's Sydney 2000 TOSA Convention will feature a lively Christie (ex-Duke of York's Theatre) now in Epping Baptist Church, which proves that some Mighties are ecumenical, too! Incidentally, three English theatre organs (all ex-theatre installations now singing in private residences) are currently on the market or likely to be so soon.

UPLIFTING THEATRE ORGANS

One aspect of attending the annual convention of the Theatre Organ Society of Australia (TOSA) was to see how amateur re-installers have raised their theatre organ in new locations around Melbourne, state capital of Victoria. I refer, of course, to the use of lifts for consoles. Musical behemoths rising slowly into view from the darkness of the orchestra pit and disappearing with equal drama at the

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end of the organist's solo spot were traditional feature of theatre organs in their hey-day.

Only one of the instruments featured at the Convention did not rise into view - the WurliTzer at the re-vamped Dendy Cinema in suburban Brighton, which I'm told disappears into a curtained alcove behind, when not in use.

Whereas one did not see the gorgeous boast of the Australian theatre organ scene - namely, the 4/36 WurliTzer in the downtown Regent Theatre - rise into view, this temporary interference was because of a current stage show. Therefore, the polished wood console had been rolled onto the stage from its home in the pit for the inaugural event.

The Compton organ at Her Majesty's Theatre, Ballarat, ascended magically at the centre of the orchestra pit.

Elsewhere in Melbourne, the suburban Town Hall installations were impressively faithful to the dramatic rise and descent of theatre-organ consoles - the 4/21 WurliTzer at Moorabin rose slightly right of centre, the 3/15 Compton at Malvern was stage right and could even swivel, and the 2/9 Blackett and Howden at Coburg on a lift stage-left could also descend beneath stage.

In all cases, this crowd-pleasing trait of the organ on a lift also gives a measure of security to the instrument — when not in use there is no sign of its whereabouts and no easy access to its workings.

One sadly notes that the concert organ in Melbourne Town Hall in the city centre, where the display of its pipes still fills one end of the auditorium, is now seldom used and, worse, rumour has it that this once revered four-manual instrument may be removed.

THEATRE ORGAN PROGRAMMING

Listening to numerous performances over a short space of time at a **Theatre Organ Convention** underlined the need for careful planning of a concert programme. Overall, it seems to need to emphasize variety - the same commodity that marks other aspects of

theatre-organ playing. Since my premise is that this very special instrument has immense capabilities in terms of sonorities and affects, a good choice of items to air will surely enhance the organ heard.

One of the more attractive events to my mind was played by Gail Dibben at Coburg Town Hall, not least because of the relative prominence of light music judiciously interleaved with songs. Further, she used contrast to good effect in different styles and tempos of music.

This must, in part, have been the benefit of picking an organist who knew the organ well and who could therefore choose music to display its strengths.

Opening with Irving Berlin's Say It With Music, she moved to a 1956 ballad, Mr. Wonderful, and followed it with the tango Ecstasy (José Belmonte) - once a favourite among English broadcasting organists but seldom heard by your scribe since then.

From dance, Gail moved to Eric Coates' Knightsbridge March, before closing with a German novelty item in the spirit of an oompah band, The Black Horse.

In her second contribution she opened with an arrangement of the waltz Fascination, and then a theatre organ classic, In A Monastery Garden (Ketelbey).

From the chanting of the monks, she moved to **Hoagy Carmichael**'s ballad, *Stardust*, with which the audience was lulled for a few moments of gentle sounds with a prominent chrysoglott and an attractive counter melody.

Next was a spirited and vigorous Latin-American number, El Relicario (Padilla).

Back to the gentler ranks for **Richard Rodgers'** My Romance and finally to opera for the haunting melody of Musetta's Waltz (Puccini).

Her encore was a roaring version of the Ethel Smith success, *Tico*, *Tico* (Abreu).

It might seem otiose to remark that her microphone words were impeccably brief and informative at a convention where never had so many said so little in so very many, many words.

Previously I had never heard of Gail

Dibben and so her afternoon programme of varied music, mixing the quiet and the loud, the inspiring and the spirited, the known with the less familiar, came as a happy surprise - notwithstanding that she needed a musical score for every note played! (See "WITH A SONG IN MY HEART" above).

PURE BREED? HYBRID?

The interest in the theatre organ world in maintaining original specifications after a transplant goes hand in hand with the doubts about creating a hybrid instrument. The issue is close to the OVTOS (Ottawa Valley Theatre Organ Society) heart since at meetings the issue is aired in relation to the blending of the original Capitol (Winnipeg) Warren and the Majestic (Santa Monica) Robert-Morton instruments.

At the TOSA convention, one of the surprisingly satisfying instruments by general agreement - heard in two concerts, at the banquet-dance, and in open console - was the Compton in Malvern Town Hall which now weighs in at 16 ranks.

The original 5-rank Compton had suffered serious damage en route to Australia; the original console was damaged beyond repair after an accident while trucking it to a Homes Exhibition!

Three more ranks, then two more, plus a percussion unit and a Compton blower were added. The current console is a Chinese copy fabricated Down Under. But the extraneous ranks include a Moller 8' Quintadena, a Stephens 8' Oboe Horn, a 8'-2' Tibia by Hill, Norman & Beard (once in St Paul's Cathedral in Melbourne!), an unknown 8' Trumpet, two ranks of Robert-Morton 8'- 4' Strings, and a Trivo brassless 8' Saxophone.

Despite this — and it should be called a Compton Plus! — this instrument is quite cohesive and satisfying to hear and play. It now has the tonal variation needed for concerts and the lack in mid-range pipework has been compensated. At the recent convention of experts and organ lovers, no one was heard complaining!

The CLUB NIGHT and the COMPTON ELECTRONE

The CLUB NIGHT is a new venture by the Society. The first such night was on Friday, 14th May, and the programme was "Discover The Compton Electrone" - an electric organ which was developed from the Melotone Units, many of which were incorporated in Compton Theatre Organs.

The Melotone, which was developed and built by the Compton Organ Company, produced its sound electronically. The Units had 16, 8 and 4 foot pitches and could be played independently, that is with the purely electronic sound, or played with and in combination with the various stops of the organ.

John Compton who established the company bearing his name was a remarkable person. As a young man he had become well known as a brilliant and talented organist, and it was expected that this would become his career, but he had an intense interest in sounds and how they are produced, and he chose to become an organ builder. He became successful and highly regarded in his occupation and he designed and built a number of outstanding organs for churches and public halls.

He made a number of significant developments on the mechanical side of the organ, the most important being the Compton Electrical Action, Improved Electrical Key Contacts, and innovations to the Swell Shutter System.

He had a great respect for the work and ideas of Robert Hope Jones (their lives overlapped) and he became one of the early builders of theatre organs in Britain. The Compton 4 manual, 22 rank organ (with a 32 ft. Tibia) in the Shepherds Bush Pavilion was the second theatre organ built in Britain.

One part of Hope Jones' work that became a special interest to Compton was the Diaphone, a unique type of organ pipe invented by Hope Jones. Compton used the basic principal to develop a number of different Diaphone stops (and sounds)—and he also devised important modifications to the Diaphone windchests.

His interest in sounds, especially

by Russell Robertson



Presenter Peter Held

new sounds, later led him to investigate sound produced by electrical means. He then followed this by setting up a Research Division within his company to develop suitable units.

The Melotone was the result, and its incorporation into Compton theatre organs created considerable interest, and did much to promote the sales of Compton Theatre Organs.

The Melotone was the basis for the later and more sophisticated unit, the Electrone, which was available in several models, and sold as a solo instrument.

The Melotone first became known in Australia around about 1937 or 1938, through a series of recordings by Reginald Foort. People were intrigued by the new and special sound. The answer was on the record label "Recorded at the Paramount Theatre,



Peter Held at the Compton Electrone console

Tottenham Court Road, London".

The **Paramount** was a large new and very lavish theatre which had a **Compton** organ which was equipped with a **Melotone** unit.

The Reginald Foort records are now quite rare, but you may occasionally hear them on radio programmes like "Thanks For The Memory" (2MBS) You may have heard the Melotone sound on some of the recorded broadcasts by Dudley Savage at the Compton organ in the ABC Theatre at Plymouth.

So, at the first CLUB NIGHT there were those with some idea of the Melotone, and some to whom it was quite unknown, but all had arrived with a level of interest and a wish to learn about, and more particularly to hear, the Compton Electrone.

Margaret Hall, chairperson for the night, welcomed the members and guests, and introduced the topic presenter, TOSA Committee Member, Peter Held who has been a theatre organist and who has played a Compton Organ.

Peter gave a brief general background to Compton organs and then a special introduction to the instrument on the stage.

It was, he told us, a Compton 357 CS Electrone, a model which was designed for church use. He then told us how he had acquired it. It was not working, neglected and in disrepair. The owners had no further use for it, and were about to have it thrown out as junk. Peter happened to have arrived at the opportune time, and seeing the name John Compton Organ Company, immediately offered to take

it off their hands. It was given to him at once.

Repairing and restoring anything as complicated as an organ is difficult. In this case it was more so as the Owners' Manual and the Service Books had long since been lost. It was only by patience and determination that the work was finally completed. It took a long time, but the organ is now again working

Peter then took his seat at the console and began his programme. The items were as follows:

Consider Yourself, A Wonderful Day Like To-Day, a Quickstep Medley -A Lovely Day To Day, Me and My Shadow, Sweet Gypsy Rose; Samba

El Cumbanchero; Strauss Polkas; Selection from My Fair Lady; Temptation Rag; Autumn Crocus (Billy Mayerl); Butterflies in The Rain; Selection from The King and I; Destiny Waltz (Sidney Bains); Cascade of Stars; Please; My Heart and I; Laugh, Clown, Laugh; Poet and Peasant Overture; Let The Rest of The World Go By; I'll See You Again; Ecstasy Waltz.

It was a well chosen programme and each item received a good response from the audience. My Fair Lady, The King and I and Poet And Peasant receiving that extra level of applause.

A comment however on two of the items - Autumn Crocus by Billy Mayerl and Butterflies in The Rain. Billy Mayerl was an English pianist and composer who was very popular in the late 1930's and 1940's. He is now being rediscovered and gaining a new popularity and public following. Autumn Crocus was written as a piano piece, but it adapts very well to the organ. The other, Butterflies In The Rain, is a long-time favourite with theatre organists - it was once recorded by Quentin McLean.

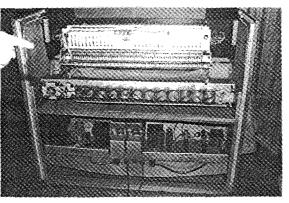
I should also add that the Sidney Bain's pieces are always popular, and they were on this occasion too.

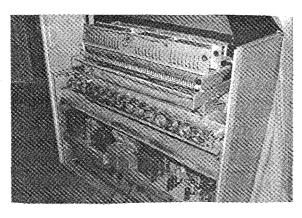
The individual pieces all built up to an overall programme which made good entertainment, but it was also a programme which showed so much of the organ's capabilities, which was, after all, the purpose of the evening.

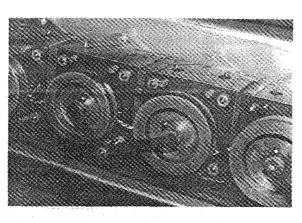
During the interval supper break, **Peter Held** opened up the back of the console so that we could have a close look at the mechanism.

The organ operates (as does the **Melotone**) on the revolving disc system, with a separate disc for each note of the scale. The sound is magnified through two loud speakers.

It has two manuals (five octaves and a 32 note pedal board. There are two swell pedals, one for each manual. It has a tremulant, and the depth can be varied, but not the









TOSA (NSW) President, Walter Pearce, at the console

speed.

The layout and arrangement of the mechanism is very logical and orderly, and most parts are easily accessible for maintenance - most, but not all.

Before resuming his programme, Peter invited any in the audience who would like to come and try the organ. There were four who accepted; a gentleman whose name I do not know (from the photos, probably Walter Pearce -Ed.), Jack MacDonald, Margaret Hall, and Wendy Hambly.

Peter then resumed his programme, and after his final encore, *Ecstasy Waltz*, there was a vote of thanks to him for his work as presenter and player.

The topic for the night was "Discover The Compton Electrone". For most of us, it was a programme of discovering much about an instrument which we had heard about but had never heard being played - it was an occasion of discovery.

The organ was built in 1957, a time when many electric organs had some limitations. They could sound well in the mid-range of the musical scales, but the sound was not consistent over the whole of the range, losing quality and character in the upper and lower pitches. Also the stops did not sound authentic.

Most could give an acceptable *Tibia* sound, but did poorly with the *Diapason*. The *String* stops and the *Woodwinds* were not well defined, and sounded similar to each other.

The Electrone does not have these problems. The sound is consistent right along the range, and sounds clear and definite in the treble and bass. The stops have a clear and well defined sound. The Clarinet, Tromba, and Flute stops are quite outstanding. The organ would have been very advanced in its day and compares very well with present day organs.

It was a very satisfying and informative evening, and I hope that we might have another occasion in the future for a further discovery of the Compton Electrone.

Report on Tony Fenelon's Concert

Marrickville Town Hall by Wendy Hambly Sunday, 23rd May, 1999

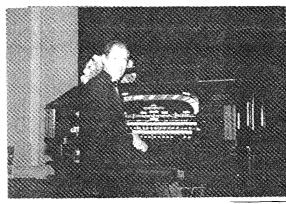
Smile, Darn Ya, Smile was the title of Tony's opening number this afternoon. Untremmed fanfare with chrysoglott/glock, followed by tremmed full theatre organ - very catchy tune with lots of embellishments right hand. Tony used all the 'kitchenware' as he calls it - cymbals, drums, etc. I heard some second touch there also. A big finish with cymbals. What an excellent opener, and yes, this number did put a smile on everyone's face and set the tone for a wonderful afternoon of music.

Non Dimentica from Limelight by Charles Chaplin came next. Harp left hand with light reed right hand for melody, then add lots of tibias and flutes - a simple melody which allowed Tony to enhance the arrangement considerably by adding fractional tibias for effect with good use of second touch for underlying melody line. Then full chords with tibias and lots of smooth runs. Then build up registration with a two hand run to softer registration and gradually fading to a fractional shimmer with chrysoglott/glock to finish. How creative. Hope I can remember this by the time I get home! A gentle piece which seemed to float around the auditorium.

Now for Moonlight on the River. Tony presented a Jesse ('Poet of the Organ') Crawford arrangement. Only 2 or 3 stops at a time were used. This allows the full colour of those particular stops to be heard. Commence with light reed and diapason and then to fuller organ section with alternately tibias/strings/reeds, then return to 8' tibia and diapason with some beautiful chromatic runs with held chord and underlying chimes to finish. How lovely. The audience appreciated this one a great deal.

Then to Tara's Theme (Gone With the Wind) - full organ with strings, strong reed melody line to full theatre organ, with use of second touch. Middle section tibias and strings, then tibia only bridge to Love Look Away - I heard many pieces in this medley including a western-style march (complete with galloping horses - well, that's what it sounded like anyway!) -

bright and bouncy with left hand vamp and right hand reed melody line, then full organ for a change of key and bridge to *Shenandoah* - right hand melody line tibia and diapason - left hand tibia and harp then add more tibias and back come the galloping horses - then a clever bridge with reed right hand and glock and xylophone with use of second touch building up and then cutting back to left hand shimmer for *Beautiful Dreamer* and right hand tibia



Tony Fenelon at the Marrickville console

and vox - 8va up and then 8va down. Did you notice the fragment chords with the tension/release mechanism. Also in this medley were Jeannie With The Light Brown Hair; Glory, Glory, Hallelujah - chords both hands - lots of pedal and second touch - pull back on expression pedal and then increase volume for full finish. Each song in this medley is lovely in its own right, however it is Tony's arrangement of them which brings out the emotion in each piece and makes the music come alive.

Next came When I Fall in Love chrysoglott/glock and soft tibias for introduction, then clarinet for melody line right hand (this is one of my favourite organ stops). Tibias and diapason and harp left hand - add tibias right hand. A very laid back rendition with plenty of opportunity for musical ornaments and then light reed right hand and underlying vamp left hand and pedal for improvisation section with return to melody line (light tibia combination) - a sweet, unhurried rendition with a lovely 6/9 chord and chrysoglott/glock to finish. Hmmmmm.

We all really liked this one.

Now for Hollywood Bowl - synopsis: theme from Tom and Jerry cartoon wherein Tom is trying to conduct an orchestra playing Die Fledermaus and Jerry is trying to muck it up - however, Tony promised to play it properly. Full theatre organ for fanfare and then cut back to tibias and reeds. A very busy and exacting piece with plenty of drama and an untremmed section. Then to full tibias gradually adding stops, until we

get back to full theatre organ, adding fractional and 2' tibia. A slower and lighter middle section then back to full theatre organ for next section with cymbals for emphasis - a slowing of pace and continual adding of stops to a huge finish with drum roll and cymbals. What fun. I just loved this one.

Rollercoaster - "Everyone else plays this one, so why can't I?" says **Tony**. Fairground organ sound to start, (the only quiet part?!) then trill left hand and build to a furious pace. Precise fingering is required for this piece and yes, it was just like a roller coaster with lots of arpeggios and runs up and down the organ - I nearly got dizzy towards the end! This piece was great fun and took us out to interval.

After interval came Cherokee Medley - full theatre organ to commence, cutting back to fractional tibias and flutes and then adding tuba. Plenty of scope here for tasteful fillins using tuba with chrysoglott/glock to improvise around the melody line, then building up to a big finish.

A march medley now with lots of familiar tunes, including Washington Post. Plenty of opportunity to use cymbals, brass. Excellent bridging (the ones you don't really seem to notice) with plenty of variations on themes and brilliant contrary motion runs and trill to finish. What a novel idea!

We move from one end of the musical spectrum to the other now with an Opera segment. This included None Shall Sleep (Turandot - Puccini); Overture Act 1 La Traviata (Verdi) and Rossini's Barber of Seville. Tibias with both hands on upper to start -

untremmed - no pedal. Then 8' tibia only right hand with harp left hand and add pedal. Lots of counter melody too. An excellent, emotional arrangement. From marches to opera - what a versatile instrument, not to mention **Tony**'s ability to present all of these differing styles.

Next came a novelty piece with an oriental flavour - Tambourin Chinois (where does he get them from?) Did I hear bells? Yes, I also heard xylophone and lots of other sounds with all the right oriental flavours - try untremmed 5ths with a fractional tibia for good measure. Chording is important too. Untremmed 4' piccolo sounded good too - full tibia chorus with chrysoglott/glock with plenty of statement/response. And I even heard some sleigh bells. I just loved this one - full of Tony's usual surprises. He certainly knows how to keep us on the edge of our seats.

An offering from Gershwin now. Nice Work If You Can Get It/Love Walked Infull tibia chorus with chrysoglott arpeggio, then to softer tibias with plenty of perfect runs. Did you hear those fragment chords? What a difference they make to an arrangement. Then let's get jazzy with a jazz organ sound and a great 'feel' to this piece - lots of improvisation with thumb glissando with a big chord to finish. Just superb!

A beautiful, lyrical piece now - My One and Only Love - chrysoglott/glock right hand a tibias left hand to start - a lovely lilting melody line. Then full tibia chorus and diapason, then building up registration by adding reeds and then fractionals and

strings with chrysoglott/tibia phrase and then back to flutes and tibias, add some fractions with a downward chrysoglott arpeggio to finish.

Ever tried playing a piece structured on 2 chords only? Try *Perpetual Motion* by **Strauss** - a very orchestral piece. Piccolo single note melody to start, then bring in chords. I heard an untremmed tuba in there somewhere and even some re-iterating bells - a very busy piece which was great fun. Just goes to show you that 2 chords are not boring after all!

Then came Long Ago and Far Away held pedal and tibias with chrysoglott to start (another "Tony invention") then tibia chorus with plenty of tuba counter melody. Single note melody at times, building to full organ and then cutting back with fractionals - held tibia note and chrysoglott/glock arpeggios to finish. Some different ideas here, which worked extremely well.

Now for **André Previn**'s *Control Yourself* (for all those people in the audience who are misbehaving says Tony) - out come all the brass and reeds and xylophone with statement/response between left and right hand - a very jazzy feel with interesting chord progressions and many unexpected registrations which worked exceptionally well and really made everyone sit up and listen.

Medley from shows at the Regent Theatre Melbourne (Tony's favourite theatre organ). Left hand full chord and right hand trill to start, then to fanfare - Everything's Coming Up Roses - cut back

to tibias - Just One Look (Sunset Boulevard) - with clarinet melody line right hand and arpeggios left hand with clever bridging to If I Were a Rich Man using the same voices in different octaves and plenty of fill-ins. Then we come to Make Believe with those beautiful tibias and a tuba counter melody, then to left hand vamp with cymbal for Can't Help Lovin' dat Man; then Old Man River - a very dramatic rendition with trill right hand and melody left hand to a BIG finish.

Prolonged applause brought **Tony** back to us for his encore (we weren't going to let him go without one anyway!). Let's boogie! *Pine Top Boogie* - great fun with plenty of brass; cymbals, xylophone and everything else that you can think of - walking base line, contrary motion chords and lots of other ideas besides! A fitting end to a concert filled with drama, imagination and superb musicianship.

It is always a pleasure to be in the company of Tony Fenelon. I always feel relaxed and refreshed (and inspired) after listening to his arrangements and hearing all of those imaginative extras which bring so much life to Tony's concerts. The good thing about Tony's music is that you don't have to be an musical expert to hear the beauty of the arrangements - you only have to listen and enjoy every moment. I know the audience enjoyed themselves immensely - their applause said so, and I know we'll all return to hear the next Fenelon concert. Thank you for the pleasure of your company, Tony - see you at Christmas time.

July Club Date

Australia's 'little-known' Theatre Organ

In 1991, after a complete restoration, the Dutchbuilt Standaart Theatre Organ in Mosman's Baptist Church was reopened by Cliff Bingham, during the Sydney TOSA Convention.

Apart from church service music, not much has been heard of this instrument since. A Members' Club Afternoon has been arranged at Mosman Baptist Church (Melrose St, Mosman) for Saturday, 31st July, commencing at 2.30pm.

Organ technical wizz, John Andrews, will give an account of the instrument and its history, and members Wendy Hambly, Bruce Bisby, and Cliff Bingham will entertain us at the console.

A contribution to afternoon tea would be appreciated. Look forward to seeing you all there!

Mosman Baptist Church Melrose Street, Mosman Saturday, 31st July at 2.30pm

ABOUT OUR NEXT ARTIST: Simon Gledhill

In a series of articles called "The Entertainers" in the Theatre Organ Club's News South of February/March 1997, Frank Cornish gives the following profile of Simon Gledhill.

The audience settled down in their seats. The WurliTzer concert in the Stanford Theatre was nearly over. Simon Gledhill had played his climactic last piece and taken the console down, but the tumultuous applause ensured that he would play an encore. The audience heard the lush tones of the WurliTzer and quietened. The huge console rose up - but there were two people sitting on the bench. Simon finished his intro and swung round.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, I should like to introduce the writer of some of the music I have played tonight - David Raskin. I'll now accompany David with his song - LAURA!" The huge auditorium was hushed as the 80-year old David Raskin sang his legendary ballad, gently accompanied by a very proud Simon Gledhill.

Simon was born in Halifax, West Yorkshire. At the age of five, there was an end-of-term concert at school. One of the boys brought a toy piano accordion. Young Simon was fascinated and told his parents he would like to learn the accordion. Fortunately, there was a good teacher in the next town, Huddersfield. So for the next few years, Simon learnt the mechanics of accordion playing and (very important for the Simon of today) musical theory and sight reading. He carried on his studies on the accordion until he was sixteen.

Back in time, when Simon was ten, his father decided to buy himself a home electronic organ. Simon started to teach himself how to play it. However, his father decided that, if he was going to learn, he would do it properly - and enrolled him with a really good teacher, Michael Woodhead, a classical organist and pianist in Huddersfield who, fortunately, was broadminded enough to encourage Simon in light music as well as classical.

Michael Woodhead told Simon of a club in Yorkshire where he could hire a Compton Theatre Organ by the hour for practice - the ex-Gaumont, Doncaster, organ (once played by Hebron Morland and Con Docherty) at the 3 J's Club, Gomersall.

One day, when **Simon** was practising, **David Lowe** walked in. **Simon** remembers with gratitude that day **David** took him through all the ground rules on registration.

John Whiteley, the owner of the 3 J's, arranged for Simon to enter the Northern Organist of the Year Competition (not the ATOS one) and in May, 1983, he won it. A very influential member of the audience, Nigel Ogden, asked Simon to make some recordings for "The Organist Entertains", which he did on the BBC Theatre Organ No.3 in the Playhouse, Manchester.

Simon's musical tuition carried on until he was 18 and studying for his A levels. He was playing the theatre organ exclusively now, but still the exams had to come first, and theatre organs went on the back burner for some time. Then he met David Shepherd, who invited Simon to his Lincolnshire home, where he played David's 6-rank Compton and listened to recordings of Joseph Seal, Gerald Shaw, Quentin Maclean, Sidney Torch, Lyn Larsen, George Wright, Walt Strony, Ashley Miller and many others. These legendary organists became strong influences on Simon's style.

Nigel Ogden, who first featured Simon on "The Organist Entertains", also encouraged him, and introduced him to many organists. Simon Gledhill's main career is in a Bank in Grays and, as most organ concerts are at weekends, the two careers are not a problem. It does mean, however, that he does not accept bookings for midweek concerts, except where he can easily get to the venue from London, such as his occasional concerts at Great Munden Plough. His work in the Bank gradually becoming demanding, so that to give himself reasonable time for relaxation, he will be accepting fewer concert bookings in the future.

Simon is one of the very few organists whose work is enjoyed by the general public, and also accepted by the 'purists' of the organ world. You will very often see well-known faces of other organists at his concerts. He is an organist's organist.

He told me that he doesn't have the time for any absorbing hobbies. With his work at the Bank, and his demanding concert schedule, any precious spare time is spent in relaxing away from it all. Simon has two home organs: an early 2-manual Allen theatre organ lives at his parent's home in Yorkshire, and in his flat at Grays is a venerable Hammond tonewheel. In fact all the music heard at his concerts for the past 4 years has been worked up on this Hammond.

Simon has given many concerts in America and Australia, in particular in prestige venues in the States. In every location audiences have warmed to his musicianship, general quality of playing and repertoire.

The concert at the Stanford Theatre deserves another mention. Simon was staying with David Packhard, Jnr. (of Hewlett-Packhard) who has spent millions of dollars renovating that theatre, and runs classic films with naturally a fine WurliTzer playing for intermissions and concerts. David Raskin was staying at the same time, and he and Simon got together on the house concert grand to go through the Raskin numbers which Simon intended to play at the major concert - so Simon could play these songs in the knowledge that the writer had given his hints on how best to interpret them. The finale with both Simon and David Raskin on the lift was a very emotional moment. David was given his first job by George Gershwin. He knew and worked alongside such giants as Cole Porter and Jerome Kern.

Simon told me it was fascinating to talk to this man who had lived through the time when the melodies we all love were actually being written. Simon has one or two ambitions - to play the huge Möller at the Atlanta Fox; the 36-rank WurliTzer in the St.Louis Fox. At 30, his musical ambition is to become the player he would like to be. I know he will continue to evolve.

BOOKING FORM

Post to: The Ticket Secretary 18 Dudley Street, **PUNCHBOWL NSW 2196**

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

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