

T.O.S.A. NEWS

incorporating **THE DIAPHONE**

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

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IF YOU ARE AN UNFINANCIAL MEMBER OF N.S.W. DIVISION OF T.O.S.A.
THIS IS YOUR LAST COPY OF T.O.S.A. NEWS.

For information regarding renewal of your membership for 1974
consult March edition of T.O.S.A. News or contact the Club
Treasurer, Alan Misdale.

WHAT'S ON IN APRIL.

6th April, Saturday 8 p.m. An organ party at the home of Mark Gabriel. Mark has a Wurlitzer Electronic organ and the address can be found by looking up the Gregory map which also shows Como Bridge the address being 27 Yarran Road, Oatley. Please phone Mark early on 579 2169 as approximately 40 people can be accommodated. Supper will be served. The organists will be Jim Patrick and Herbert Wyatt.

11th-14th April - National Convention in Adelaide

STAR ATTRACTION

GERALD SHAW PLAYS WYATT HALL WURLITZER

Read the history of this organ in this issue of T.O.S.A. News.
MEMBERS WISHING TO FLY TO ADELAIDE will be interested to know that T.A.A. are the appointed official carriers and through their group travel service will be offering a discount to visitors to the National Convention. For further information contact T.A.A. Travel Service. Mr. Robert Numans, 20326.

23rd April, Tuesday, 7.45p.m. Quarterly General Meeting and get-together at Joh Congert's shop in 5 Burwood Road, Burwood. The shop is called the Organ Stop and is about 100 yards along Burwood Road from Parramatta Road. There will be precisely 1 hour's meeting discussing Society business and then those present will be entertained by Joh Congert playing the National SX7000 twin channel stereo amplifier organ and Joh tells me that this organ has 6 pitches on the upper manual and 5 pitches on the lower!

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY.

10th May, Friday 8 p.m. Jonas Nordwell at the Society's 2/10 Wurlitzer at Marrickville Town Hall.

18th May, Saturday. 8 p.m. David Parsons at Ritchie Willis May Organ Party.

26th May, Sunday. Free Afternoon Concert at Marrickville.

31st. May, Friday. 8 p.m. Jonas Nordwell at Chatswood.

22nd June, Saturday. Jim Patrick's Home Organ Party

28th June, Friday 8 p.m. Eric Smith at Ritchie Willis' June Home Organ Party.

CONCERT REVIEWS FOR MARCH.

The concert by Eric Smith with guests Julie Madden and Robert Broughall last month at Chatswood on the 2/10 Wurlitzer began as an exercise in disaster. Eric took over the job with 11 days notice, all the advertising was held up firstly by unforeseen circumstances then the postal strike and the organ after performing perfectly gave up right at the end with a massive cypher in G (which has since been traced and overcome). However, in spite of all that (as George Wright once said) those people who were unable to be at this concert may have missed the concert of the year.

The organ performed for the larger part of the time in the manner predicted last month and is responding to the professional work which is being done very nicely. Eric had the use of a large part of the registration change mechanism and had under his control an organ sound which could be superior to Marrickville. Eric's playing and programme were superb and he excels himself when playing accompaniment and this appeared during the evening as he accompanied singer Julie Madden. Julie is a singer with a very fine voice and I think everyone at the concert enjoyed her performance and her choice of songs. Eric's other guest Robert Broughall is a young man studying organ with Eric and shows promise and I think we will hear more of him in the future.

MELCHER MAGIC AT MARRICKVILLE - Clif Bingham.

The 1974 Marrickville season got away to a swinging start on Sunday 24th February, when visiting American organist, Byron Melcher showed us all how it's done. An enthusiastic audience of about 250 people heard a programme of old and modern numbers played in a style that the American organists have made their own, a style that sets the standards for all others. This was

a unique occasion too in that it was the first all pipe organ concert presented for TOSA by an American in NSW Byron opened with a rich orchestral arrangement of "Cabaret" which led to bigger and better things. Two blues numbers "Wabash Blues" and "Basin Street Blues" featuring plenty of modern (but not "way-out") harmonies, were enthusiastically received by the audience. However, the three most outstanding numbers (for this reviewer anyway) were "Spanish Eyes" and two "hard Rock" numbers "Put your hand in the Hand" and "Spinning Wheel" Byron's harmonies, rich registrations and tremendous use of syncopated rhythm between left hand and pedal percussion was mind bending.

Byron's final number was a spectacular Spanish number. As Byron's policy is not to play encores, the applause was absolutely thunderous (This reviewer, until this concert, had never heard prolonged stamping at Marrickville before). Nobody could complain however, as Byron quickly established a close rapport with the audience and kept his announcements to an absolute minimum. Result - more music.

To sum up - a performance that was smooth and polished with more than a dash of brilliance.

NEW MEMBERS

A welcome on behalf of the Society is extended to the new members listed below and we hope that at the first opportunity the seasoned veterans of the Club will make them feel welcome to our concerts and organ parties.

Mr. & Mrs. Gilbert of Gordon, Mr. & Mrs. Zboran of Blacktown, Mr. & Mrs. Sabbia of Sylvania Waters, Mrs. Stegga of Eastwood, Mr. & Mrs. Cook of Killarney Heights, Mrs. Tombs of Randwick, Mr. & Mrs. Mills of Orange, Mr. & Mrs. Robinson of Beecroft, Mr. John Evertt of Oberon, Mr. & Mrs. Rogers of Baulkham Hills, Mr. Howard White of Ashbury, Mr. & Mrs. Widdoson of Canley Vale, Mr. Norton Williams of Redcliffs Victoria, Mr. & Mrs. Stewart of Revesby, Mr. & Mrs. Cheves of Liverpool and Mr. & Mrs. Stead of Eastwood.

Mr. Norton Williams has responded to our welcome already with an invitation to members to visit his home at 43 Guava Street, Red Cliffs Victoria if they happen to be going that way (10 miles south of Mildura) where he is finishing off a Theatre type electronic organ as he would like to share his hospitality and fellowship with you.

COMMITTEE MEETING.

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on 1st. April, 1974, at St. Anne's Church Hall, Strathfield.

FOR SALE ADVERTISEMENTS:

Hammond H-100 Organ, Genuine Walnut console in original condition \$4,500. Apply 6 Kiah Place, Merewether, 2219 via Newcastle. Phone 63 2915. Mrs. B. Maynard.

Hill, Norman and Beard 2 manual and pedal Organ, features include:-
Approx. 20 stops - the usual inter manual and intra manual couplers
(some interesting cancelling switches) - approx. 40 years old
-detached console - Electro-pneumatic action which needs some
attention - Organ case approx. 16' high and 12' wide and 8' deep -
Organ in good condition.

Contact: D. Alexander - Telephone 498 7577 (office hours)

Organ: - Jennings Mod.C

Valve model with full console and pedale - Contact Rex Harris
607-6173.

COLOUR SLIDE EVENING AT PADDINGTON.

Saturday 16th March saw another successful evening at the home of Ritchie Willis, Paddington. The evening commenced with Reg Black at the console of the Thomas Lawrence Welk Organ. Reg delighted the patrons with his playing of popular melodies and received great applause for his contribution to the programme. Next item was the recent tour of Tasmania, on colour slides taken by Ritchie, which was appreciated by the audience. After an enjoyable supper the sum of \$15 was donated by the gathering for the Capitol Wurlitzer Organ Fund. A special thanks to all who came along and made the night a wonderful success.

RECORD REVIEW.

"THE MAGIC OF THE WURLITZER" Astor GH552 Stereo.

Joseph Seal at the Wurlitzer, A.B.C.Theatre, Kingston-on-Thames, London.

Available Ground Floor Record Dept, Palings, George St,
Price \$2.75.

Selections featured are:- March, Oxford Street; Ciribiribin;
Lullaby of Broadway; Moon River; When I take my Sugar to Tea;
Fantasy Impromptu; One Love; Ding Dong Polka; I'll Walk
Beside You; Jealousy; Dream Lover; Tonight; Black Eyes;
March, Old Comrades; Smoke Gets in your Eyes; Don't Blame Me;
Love is the Sweetest Thing; As Time Goes by; Waltz, I'll Follow
my Secret Heart; Louise; Stella by Starlight; Nancy (With
the Laughing Face); You'll Never Know; Strange Music; Eleanora.

This, Joseph Seal's latest recording is one of the Astor "Golden Hour" series and presents one full hour's playing time - good value for the small purchase price. As with all Mr. Seal's releases, playing is technically of a high standard, very listenable and registration is interesting.

We shall look only at some of the pieces as there are so many from which to choose. March, Oxford Street is interesting in that it is the opening number from Eric Coates' lesser known "London Again" Suite which is the sequel to the "London Suite". What a pity that several notes of the introduction on

the English Horn reveal this rank had some pipes not completely in tune at the time! When I take My Sugar to Tea is probably my favourite number on the whole record - brilliantly played it's Torch/Waller/Seal all in together. I'll Walk Beside You is the usual dreary rendering, I can't understand why it is included as it is followed by an excellent version of Jealousy, using the superb reeds (for which this particular instrument is famous) generously.

March, Old Comrades proves Mr. Seal is quite a master of the second touch counter melody, again the beautiful reeds are in abundance. A quiet, sensitive rendering of Smoke Gets in your Eyes displays the smooth Tuba Horn to best advantage. The Tibias receive a good workout during Love is the Sweetest Thing - Tremulants are rather fast as with most English instruments. A fast moving Eleanora - played without tremors and greatly contrasting registration leaves a good impression on the final number. A recording worthwhile adding to your collection, it makes excellent background or dinner music. Only several numbers which have little appeal but these are well compensated for by the remainder.

EDITORIAL.

Well we got the first issue out in spite of printing difficulties (and an extra large debt of gratitude from us all to the Wells family who do all the collating, stapling and posting, not an insignificant job) and the response has been fantastic. I have had letters of all kinds from all over the country, telephone calls from well wishers and met new people within the Society I didn't know existed. Thanks very much for your offers and keep the good work coming in, as we need it all. Those that have made offers of material, and everybody else, please remember that anything which you may have or any article which you can compose which may be of interest to us all (or a photograph with a story) please send it along to me on the guarantee that good care will be taken of it and if it is suitable we will certainly use it and return to the contributor.

Next month we have with us the American organist, Jonas Nordwell, at our pipe organs in Marrickville and Chatswood Town Halls and according to the reports in the American magazines and news letters we are really in for a treat, so don't miss it.

Included in this issue is a news snippet from the Console Magazine about the prices theatre organs are fetching overseas and it makes one think about the potential worth of the organs which the society now own or may be offered in the future.

These organs however, only become valuable musical instruments when we have a place to use them and they are screwed back together and I think it is to this end we must all pull together and when the work parties begin in earnest on the Capitol restoration prior to reinstallation please see if we can all give assistance as I think it will certainly be needed and gratefully accepted.

PULTENEY GRAMMAR SCHOOL ORGAN.

During this month the convention will be held over the Easter Weekend in Adelaide those amongst us fortunate to attend will be entertained by the visiting English Organist Gerald Shaw. Gerald Shaw is in Australia for a once only performance and an organ which will be featured during the Convention is the Adelaide T.O.S.A. 2/12 Wurlitzer Theatre Pipe Organ.

The Wurlitzer Organ owned by the S.A. Division of T.O.S.A. was originally installed in the Regent Theatre, Sydney, where it was opened in March, 1928 by the American organist Roy Devaney. An identical instrument was also shipped out for the Adelaide Regent. They were originally a model F instrument of two manuals with eight ranks of pipes in two chambers. Wurlitzer made about ninety-two of this model. The first was No. 562 shipped from the factory on 29.7.22 for the Lafayette Theatre in Lexington, Kentucky. The last was a rebuild of No. 1165 from the Star Theatre in Cleveland, Ohio which went to England on 10.7.34. Australia had two model F instruments, No. 1728 is now in Perth. The model proved to be too small for the Sydney Regent so it was removed to make way for a larger 3 manual 15 rank Wurlitzer and sent 'Downstairs' to Melbourne's Plaza Theatre. During installation four ranks were added (Trumpet, Oboe Horn, Gamba and Orchestral Oboe sent out by Wurlitzer in August 1928) thus making it as it stands today, a 2/12. It proved to be a very satisfactory instrument at the Plaza so it's twin was sent from Adelaide to Perth Metro. This then resulted in the Adelaide Regent opening without an organ, and remaining so until the 3/15 which now resides in St. Peters College Adelaide. During it's years at the Plaza the 2/12 was heard by a vast radio audience as well as the Melbourne theatre goers. In the last years of use, Ian Davies would be the name most associated with the Plaza organ, particularly from the broadcast viewpoint. On September 28th, 1958 he gave a broadcast, which could well have been the last one from the Plaza - the instrument had very little use in the theatre from that time. Fortunately it remained in the theatre and on September 13th, 1968 Hoyts Theatres Limited advised the Secretary of the S.A. Division that they were shortly to sell two Theatre Organs, namely the ones in the Regent and Plaza Theatres Melbourne. T.O.S.A. Adelaide were invited to tender and on December 4th, 1968 Mr. Alan Barr, Director of Theatres for Hoyts wrote to say that this division had been the successful tenderer for the Plaza Theatre. Wurlitzer Opus 1730.

Purchasing the organ was one thing, organising and carrying out the transplant was another. Tuesday night January 7th, 1968 saw the assembled team in Melbourne. The operation began that night with the team working most evenings and through the nights until the Saturday when the instrument was dismantled; much of it wrapped, packed and carried up fifty seven steps to Collins Street, and then onto a truck and thence into a railway van which was sent on it's way to Adelaide's Mile End goods yards.

While it was in storage a small group checked for dead magnets and another group revarnished all the woodwork, including the wooden pipes. When the final unwrapping was completed, the only damage consisted of a few missing Flute 'lips' one Tibia 'ear' and some of the 'pencil' string pipes had tended to concertina. This says a great deal for the care of the transplant team, the packing cases and the railways.

A committee specially appointed for the purpose was scouting for a suitable home wherein they hoped to recapture the Plaza sound. Two specially designed organ chambers were constructed by the school behind Wyatt Hall and when they were ready, the various parts were all placed within inches of their present positions by the installation crew. At this point the very able professionals Gunstar Organ Works were called in to assist with the placing and connection of major parts, and to tune the pipes. Then followed a process of eliminating problems which was again undertaken by the indispensable installation crew.

The two chambers housing the pipes are each 17'6" wide, 12' deep, and 12' high. Beneath them is another chamber 35' x 12' x 4' high, into which is installed the wind trunking, electrical cables, tremulants, and pressure regulators, along with the switches and relays which connect the console with the pipework. In a separate room is situated the Blower driven by a 7½ h.p. electric motor which delivers 700 cubic feet of air per minute at 15 inches of water pressure to the organ chambers.

The Organ's installation in Whatt Hall by the S.A.Division of T.O.S.A. can be judged by all those attending this year's convention and it will be found to be of the highest standard.

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR FROM PETER HELD.

In the latest issue of VOX there is an account by Vic Divisions Concert Director, Bryan Leech. I noted the ominous statement that audiences dropped off at concerts, during the period under review which is, I presume approx. a year. I dare to assert that the high admission prices to concerts are a major cause of this drop in patronage, and why are the prices so high? - because the organists, have been jacking up their fees to "Whatever the market will stand" - the over used cliché of big business.. I also dare to assert that theatre organ recitals will soon be a thing of the past, unless the organists are made to see the error of their ways, and, quickly.

I recently have had the chance, to see or hear at first hand just what Theatre Organists, get for a recital in Britain depending on their drawing power. These same characters come out here to show us how a Theatre Organ should be played, and, demand return airfare, plus up to \$300 a recital, regardless of the "gate"- ludicrous - I say! This society of ours would be able to make ends meet, and even overlap, so to speak, if our "leaders" didn't bow to these people. The last Theatre organist we had out here from Britain gave an excellent account of himself, particularly with his doubling on piano at Chatswood, I agree,

but was it worth that to us when he failed to fill the hall(?) at both Chatswood and Marrickville? I say NO, and also I assert that any of these visiting organists should be offered a flat fee of \$50 plus a percentage of the gate depending on how well known they are, and other obvious factors. Alright so they refuse; so what? we can do without recitals on the Marrickville and Chatswood organs temporarily.

ITS TIME - that the organists will have to be TOLD . "Keep your fees realistic, or you'll have more time for practice than you bargained for !" This should apply to everybody. If they ignore the warning stage a lock-out, and conduct record recitals, and organ get-togethers like the Victorians do, at reception centres or if impracticable due to staffing problems, at some parish halls, one of which, I know, in the Western suburbs, which, has a nice theatre model electronic organ. The C.O.S. in London District stage a very good record recital cum quiz once a month at a studio size theatre. I may add that the social side of our society is lamentably in need of expansion. Why not a bar-b-que on some nice location some summer Sunday? (Ed. note: This is already in the pipeline!) The recent addition of tea, coffee, and soft drink supplies per the Lawson-Tooker families is a step in a good direction.

REGARDS,

PETER HELD.

STANDARD 235 WURLITZER SOLD FOR \$15,000: BIDS OVER \$20,000 INVITED ON ST. LOUIS THEATRE ORGAN ('Console' Magazine U.S.)

Inflation, the spectre of continued climbing prices, which has been upping the selling price of theatre organs at long last hit with a vengeance this month and has virtually placed the theatre organ hobby up in the millionaire classification. Early in March, a deal was closed for the purchase of the standard 235 3m/11r Wurlitzer organ installed in the Wilson Theatre, Fresno, Calif. The name of the buyer was not learned at press time. Richard Villamin, Porterville Organman, removed the instrument for the new buyer.

In St. Louis an announcement was mailed organ buffs inviting bids on the famed 4m/20r Wurlitzer now installed in the Ambassador Theatre. The invitation specified that bids must be submitted starting at \$20,000 and the list of rules pertaining to its removal were severe enough to discourage many a hobbyist. According to Stann Kann, who was in Hollywood Thursday, March 15th for his appearance on the Joey Bishop Show at NEC BURBANK Studios, the reason for the stated bid price, he was told by theatre owners, was they already have an offer of \$20,000 for the organ. The organist said, during a talk with him in his dressing room at the studio, that he was amazed at the offer and had called officials to confirm it.

FRED PILLSBURY HIGH BIDDER FOR ST. LOUIS AMBASSADOR THEATRE

WURLITZER 4m/23r.

(Console' Magazine U.S.)

Official final purchase price of the Ambassador Theatre 4m/23r Wurlitzer organ has been stated and reveals that St. Louis Organ Buff Fred Pillsbury was the successful bidder to take the organ home for \$31,000. Prior to the recent sale, the organ has been reported to have 20 ranks and four manuals, but according to New York Organist Billy Nalle, and Dr. Orrin W. Hostetter, Pasadena, Calif., buff, who attended the opening of the bids in St. Louis the organ definitely has 23 ranks total.

The Pasadena enthusiast reported that an inspection of the instrument disclosed the main cable has been cut at one time about seven feet from the console and it was spliced. The piano was also missing.

WEDDING BELLS.

Barry Tooker reports that Ian Sommerville a member of T.O.S.A. was married on Saturday, 9th March, to Miss Barbara Stone at Roseville Methodist Church and the reception was held at their home at Mt. Colah. Congratulations to them both and a welcome to Mrs. Barbara Sommerville to the Society.

BEN HALL MEMORIAL.

We have news from America that on the Harold Lloyd estate there is to be constructed a 150 seat theatre to show films to museum visitors and will include Ben Hall's (Little Mother) Five rank Wurlitzer Organ. You will recall that back in December 1970 the Theatre Organ and Theatre Historian Ben Hall was found murdered in his New York apartment and his assailants are still at large. Ben Hall's work, "The Best Remaining Seats" remains the definitive work about movie palaces of the 1920's and he was a tireless worker for the theatre Organ scene in the U.S.A. During the interview with Woody Wise the permanent manager of the Harold Lloyd Estates the following information, which will be of interest to us all, is reported. "It will cost close to \$200,000 to transform the handball court into a miniature of a '20s movie palace - even with volunteer work for the organ installation" says Woody.

Acquisition of the "Little Mother" Wurlitzer through the efforts of the New York Chapter was a notable step in the right direction too. It's the perfect instrument for the job. The limited space available for chamber use and the miniature scale of the auditorium make a 5-ranker just the right size. The instrument is now in storage on the estate grounds. Woody is still getting the "feel" of the huge project. He enjoys conducting visitors about the grounds, putting a roll on the 32 rank residence organ or showing off one of Lloyd's two remaining Rolls Royce vehicles.

"Harold Lloyd sure went in for quality", says Woody. "Nothing but the best would do". As an example he points to the rain gutters on the estate buildings. On close examination one notes they are made of copper, both gutters and pipes.

He has especially kind words for the Neil Kissels. The family has been living on the estate grounds for several months with Neil acting as resident caretaker, and maintenance man. In that time Neil has repaired many of the fountains and done much to improve the ancient plumbing.

"He's good with wiring problems, too" says Woody of the man who supervised installation of the LA Chapter's 3/16 Wurlitzer in the San Gabriel (Calif) Civic Auditorium.

During the coming months Woody Wise will be campaigning hard for funds to finance operation of the museum and to get started on the Ben Hall Theatre. "Donors can designate their contributions for either the general fund or for the Ben Hall theatre", explains Woody. "I think I know already how gifts from ATOSers will be designated. With a little good fortune (aided and abetted by Woody Wise's and the Trustees' skills as fund raisers) ATOS will have a permanent installation where the visiting public can be exposed to pipe organ music, and where a man who did so much to perpetuate the theatre organ will himself be remembered by generations to come through his theatre organ sounding forth in an atmosphere he would approve, the appropriately named Ben Hall Theatre - a tribute in perpetuity.

Any one having the good fortune to be visiting America and California in particular can gain entrance to the Harold Lloyd estate through Grayline Tours, 1207 West 3rd Street, Los Angeles, California Phone (213) 481-2121. And having seen Bill Schumacker's slides we can assure you it is one visit you wont forget.

DEADLINE

To all those that contributed articles to this issue a big thank you and for all of you racing to the post office to send us some for May the deadline is the 17th April. We have to keep it mid month to allow for editing and printing and we know how you like to get your issue on or about the 1st. of the month - don't you - so please try to get your articles to us on time.