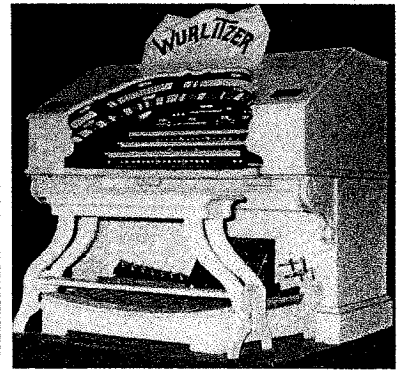


MAY, 2002

TOSA NEWS



2/11 WurliTzer Theatre Pipe Organ
Marrickville Town Hall

3/17 WurliTzer Theatre Pipe Organ
Orion Centre Campsie

Great Coming Events!! Sydney's Fabulous Top Theatre Organists



Margaret Hall
Sunday 16th June
Marrickville
Town Hall

Neil Jensen
Sunday 14th July
Orion Centre
Campsie

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Issue 4
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TOSA NEWS

MAY, 2002

THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW DIVISION) Inc.

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All numbers use the prefix 02

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COMING EVENTS

MAY

- Monday 6 at 7.30pm Committee Meeting
Thursday 9 at 1.30pm Members' Playing Day
Orion Centre Campsie
Phone 9716 0151 to confirm
Thursday 23 at 7.30pm Members' Playing Night
Marrickville Town Hall
Phone 9798 6742 to confirm

JUNE

- Monday 3 at 7.30pm Committee Meeting
Thursday 13 at 2.00pm Members' Playing Day
Orion Centre Campsie
Phone 9716 0151 to confirm
Sunday 16 at 2.00pm Margaret Hall Concert
Marrickville Town Hall
Thursday 27 at 7.30pm Members' Playing Night
Marrickville Town Hall
Phone 9798 6742 to confirm

JULY

- Monday 1 at 7.30pm Committee Meeting
Sunday 14 at 2.00pm Neil Jensen Concert
Orion Centre Campsie
Thursday 25 at 7.30pm Members' Playing Night
Marrickville Town Hall
Phone 9798 6742 to confirm

From The President

Hello again! I'm informed that around 30 people turned up to the *TOSA Event* at Mosman on 13th April, and a good time was had by all. There are some enthusiastic members out there! Thank you to Cliff for organizing the afternoon; to Cliff and Bill, and all for playing - at no charge to TOSA.

In this edition you should find a subscription reminder. Yes it's only days, but as we say each year, it helps amazingly if we can avoid the big rush at the end of June. So, if your mailing label says you are paid to 30th June 2002, then we welcome your subscription in the mail. This worked well last year - let's do it again.

And now would be an excellent time to find new members. Twist a friend or relative's arm, or even give them a gift subscription! We need new members to swell the ranks.

Now, further to last month, I can tell you that there will be no concert in May. And, sorry, no *Ty*.

But we are really looking forward to Margaret Hall at Marrickville on June 16th - details elsewhere in *TOSA News*. Then, surprise, Neil Jensen on 14th July at the Orion. Come on folks let's support the Oz talent - it's not just the overseas artists who know how to play!

And there are some top names coming up later in the year, including Chris Powell, Dan Bellomy, and Len Rawle.

A couple of local changes: Amy Caldwell has had to leave the TOSA Committee, although she still plans to be around TOSA and to help at concerts. Amy's feminine input into Committee



discussions will be missed. We wish Amy well, and thank her for her work - especially in co-ordinating the ushers at concerts, a job that has now been taken on, by our signwriter, Peter Harding.

The Committee has co-opted Barry Tooker to take the vacant position. Barry did not stand at the last election because of the strange hours he was being called upon to work at his new job. They didn't fit in with Monday evenings or concerts. But things have changed and he has agreed to return. Barry knows TOSA from the beginning, and we welcome him back!

Watch this space
Pearce Walter

.....
Thank You
.....

Sorry to report that Mary Hall has not been too well. We made sure she received some flowers from TOSA. Mary and Arthur Hall are much respected as TOSA people - and very reliable in getting the *TOSA News* folded, labelled and posted every month.

The April edition was due to go to post at the very time Mary was in hospital for a few days, but Arthur, trooper that he is, did the job alone!

Thank you, Sir!

W.P.

.....

Editorial

Apologies first - please note that Margaret Hall's concert on 26th June is at Marrickville Town Hall. Due to communications breakdown, it was wrongly listed as being at the Orion in last month's *TOSA News*. I hope no one has been inconvenienced by this error, and be sure to change your diary if you've already written it in there.

The debate about TOSA concerts including supporting artists continues with an impassioned plea from a long-time member, on page 4. What do you think? I know why the committee feels obliged to do it - smaller attendances at some concerts. Personally (and like a lot of others, I suspect) I'm inclined to be tolerant of these inclusions because a lot of people seem to enjoy the variety, although I'm just as happy without them. Usually of course it doesn't mean there is *less* of the *Wurlitzer*, rather there is an *addition* of vocal sounds to the organ, and it is good to hear the organ being used in a different way from the normal, straight-out concert mode. Overall, does it bring in a larger audience, or does it drive some regulars away? That is the question! If you have strong views, I'm sure the committee would be glad to hear from you.


Thank you sincerely once again to those faithful few who contribute to *TOSA News* by sending in, or writing, articles.

I would like to ask our contributors, if it is at all possible, to send items via the e-mail address give for the Editor, (francoise@physiol.usyd.edu.au) as this is the way that makes my job the easiest (no scanning, retyping, less errors of transcription, etc.), hopefully without making the sender's task any more difficult. Also, if you are sending photocopies, please be sure that they are as clear and unsmudged as possible. By the time the photocopies have been processed and appear in *TOSA News*, naturally their quality can only have deteriorated. Although TOSA's new photocopier seems to be giving good results now - much better than before - it can't, unfortunately, perform miracles.

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



From The MAILBOX

Allan Brooker of Belfield expresses his views about supporting artists at theatre organ concerts :

March 19, 2002

I read with considerable concern, Frank Lewis' comments re the inclusion of non-Wurlitzer items to our theatre organ concerts and I can tell you he and Stephen Bosanquet are not alone in their opinions. My thanks to them for speaking up!

I noted on the pamphlets handed out at the event previous to David Smith's that it seemed clear there was going to be use of electronic instruments in his concert, which I abhor! So I decided for only the second time in thirteen years to pass up a concert. Added to this, I had never heard of David Smith (no offence intended, David) and the scant comments about his keyboard skills along with the very unflattering photo of him, revealed precious little about him and did nothing to entice me along. Quite the reverse, as it turned out.

Better promotion required here TOSA!

I can go to any number of events on any weekend to hear electronic instruments and all sorts of other instruments, singers and whatever, but I cannot go just anywhere that I please, to hear a genuine Wurlitzer Theatre Pipe Organ, so our regular TOSA concerts are very precious to me.

In such light, I had been eagerly awaiting the wonderful talents of John Giacchi, on March 17, but I was absolutely aghast, when five days before the concert, the March TOSA News arrives announcing that there would be "support" vocalists at the concert. What on earth for? They might be the greatest vocalists of all time for all I care, but damn-it I come to the concerts to hear the Wurlitzer organ! So, I decided for the third time to pass

up a concert. Sorry John, I'll just have to listen to your CD's for the time being!

People who want these sorts of so-called "support" acts at our theatre organ programs, I suggest, have joined the wrong society, or have come to the wrong concert!

I don't know whose idea it was to have these non-organ associates. I hope it wasn't John's, as if so, I am afraid he is seriously underestimating his skills. You don't need any help John, you are a magnificent artist and I just wanted to hear you again at the Marrickville organ, which is the best 2 manual Wurlitzer I have heard anywhere in the world! If it was the committee's idea of boosting attendances, well they have lost me and my regular seven guests, who like me, come to hear the organ.

Vocalists are an especial annoyance to me and other friends of mine who attend concerts since they only detract from an organ concert. The only human voice I want to hear, is the organ's Vox Humana as part of the magnificent ensemble we know as the Unit Orchestra. We have two magnificent units in the Marrickville and Orion Wurlitzers and we have dedicated voluntary TOSA members who work on these wonderful instruments of a previous era, for the love of it. What an insult to them to have their hard working efforts on these labour-intensive instruments of the '20s diluted by non-theatre organ events!

The Theatre Organ does not need supporting artists, unless it is another theatre organist. Another organist, another sound! Go for it!

The theatre organ is already an endangered species and if these unwanted add-ons persist (in my opinion) then there will be an even more endangered species.- the paying public!

If it is perceived that audiences want some variety in our theatre organ concerts, how about TOSA inviting other young and upcoming organists to our regular concerts, say in a cameo spot (with the incumbent artist's approval, of course) to give them much needed exposure to those of us who appreciate the instrument of the society we have joined - the Mighty Theatre Pipe Organ!

(Remember Chris McPhee's

cameo spot and consequent exposure to a large Tony Fenelon audience, a few years ago! Look at the following he has now.)

We don't need add-on, non-organ artists!

TOSA, the ball is in your court. Don't give me any reason to stop coming to the theatre organ programs, to hear the real artists that I love...Please!

Yours faithfully,
Allan Brooker

Hawaii Organs

In Hawaii, the Waikiki Theatre's 4/16 Robert Morton has been donated to the Palace Theatre in Hilo (<http://www.hilopalace.com>), the Big Island of Hawaii.

It is planned to combine the best of the Waikiki organ with that of the Palace's original organ to end up with at least a 4/20 organ that will be the largest in Hawaii. - Bob Aldel, Emerald City Organ Society, in *ATOS International News, Vol 4 No 3*.

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On Monday 7th January 2002, Al Sefl posted the following message on the Internet, under the heading:

"Bob Vaughn passes - an era dies..."

With some sadness I post to the list that Robert Vaughn, perhaps the finest film accompaniment organist of all time, has passed away.

Bob was the staff movie organist at the Avenue Theatre in San Francisco for nearly 20 years. In my humble opinion he could accompany a movie like no other artist. While Bob played you never were distracted from

the film and the mood of the music always fitted the scene on the screen perfectly.

Bob's secret was that he had perhaps the largest collection of original movie scores for the "silents" in the world. All of the films were presented with the original music composed for them, when the music was still in existence. On movies where the scores had been lost, Bob would create the themes for the characters and moods of the film. He accomplished the goal of providing the movie with proper music that supported the film, instead of putting his own ego up before the audience.

His career of playing started in the 1920s and stopped in the late 1990s with his failing health. With Bob accompanying the picture, there never

was a *silent* movie, only a movie with no words.

Bob was also a great train buff and loved steam era locomotives. He had a full HO layout when he lived in San Francisco and would haul his 16 mm projector to live steam meetings, where with the help of a piano or electronic organ he would accompany his copy of Keaton's "*The General*" for the enjoyment of all. Always quite the character, he often did this via his Harley Davidson motorcycle, on the back of which he would strap the projector and provide a carrying box for his little dog.

We who knew Bob shall all grieve his passing and shall miss the talents of this musical gentleman. Rest peacefully, dear old friend.

Also an e-mail from John Giacchi, who played for us so delightfully in March at Marrickville, which contained a newspaper obituary of this famous American theatre organist. John said:

Tuesday, 15th January

Some of you may, or may not, have learnt of Bob Vaughn's passing. He was the last of the silent film organists of San Francisco.

Attached is the obituary from the San Francisco Chronicle which I thought you might be interested in printing in the next available edition of the respective TOSA magazines.

Regards,
John Giacchi

Bob Vaughn died on 4th January 2002 of kidney failure. He was 90 years of age. On the right is the obituary from the San Francisco Chronicle of Friday, 11th January, 2002.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 10, 2002

VAUGHN, Robert "Bob" Franklin -- In Bakersfield, January 4, 2002. Dearly beloved husband of the late Frances Vaughn. Bob is survived by his only son William; his daughter-in-law Judith; his grandchildren Matthew, Douglas and Melissa, of Bakersfield; his cousin Jeanne Tomasello and family and numerous friends and acquaintances. Bob had many interests in life. His first being his wife who preceded him to heaven, and he has missed for nearly 20 years. He was a lifetime member of the San Francisco Motorcycle Club, and rode his motorcycle till age 85. He was a member of the Golden Gate Model Railroad Club where he loved to show his artistic skills. He was a member of the Knights of Columbus at St. Cecilia Church where he was active till moving to Bakersfield for health reasons two years ago. He was a member of the American Theater Organ Society. He was a U.S. Army veteran of WWII. His biggest enjoyment was his music, and nothing was better than playing the organ to a packed theater accompanying a silent movie classic. This is what he wanted and trained to do as a teenager in the 1920's until the talking films arrived putting his lifelong ambitions on hold until the late 1960's, when he started playing silent movies again at the Avenue Theater in San Francisco. He was fortunate to be able to play all over the United States as well as many local performances. He was proof that silent movies were never truly silent.



Members and visitors had a good time at the MEMBERS' PLAYING AFTERNOON at the Orion on 11th April. Every player who wished had two turns at the console, and made pleasant music.

Those who played were: Bill Schumacher, Ted Mackness, Jack Rose, Bruce Bisby, Roger Dornan, John Batts, Wendy Hambly and Jack MacDonald.

Listeners were John Atkins, Betty Rose, Jenny and Walter Pearce, Ray and Edna Hambly, Val Newton-John, and David James.

“Who’s Harry Warren?”

by Ron Ivin

This question has been asked many times. At a small concert held in the Central Coast town of Toukley, the organ recitalist announced he was going to play a selection of Harry Warren compositions. Someone in the audience called out, “Who is Harry Warren?” In reply the recitalist asked, “Do you know *Chattanooga Choo Choo* or *You’ll Never Know If You Don’t Know Now* or *I Know Why and So Do You* or *September in the Rain* or *I Had the Craziest Dream Last Night* or *Jeepers Creepers* or maybe any one of the songs from the hit musical of 1932 *Forty Second Street*?” The audience was stunned, as some of you may well be when you peruse the shortened list at the end of this article.

I find it strange that Harry Warren was a relatively unknown composer even though he was alive in the same era as Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, Richard Rodgers, George Gershwin, Ivor Novello and others. My hope is that you will find the following information of great interest.

Firstly, Harry Warren was not the real name of this gifted man but was given to him by his sister who realised that Salvatore Anthony Guahagna would be too hard to handle when he went to school. He was born on Christmas eve 1893. Even at an early age he showed a more than casual interest in music. He first became acquainted with the percussion section (drums) which I assume gave him his earliest appreciation of rhythm. Next he took up an old accordion before proceeding to the piano.

Finances did not allow Harry to receive musical tuition but he attained a great deal of experience by becoming a member of the local church choir. When he turned sixteen he decided to leave school when the opportunity came to join a travelling circus as the drummer in the circus orchestra.

After a short stint at this, he was able to acquire a position playing background music in films produced by the Vitagraph movie studio. He also worked as a prop-man and appeared in minor movie roles as a “walk on”.

He also assisted directors of the movies when required.

Around 1917, he joined the U.S. Navy as an entertainer. During this period Harry began to pen some of his first compositions. His first attempts were somewhat of a disappointment, mainly because of his inability to write good lyrics. At the end of 1918 after the war had ended Harry married Josephine Wensler and in due course their first child, Harry Jr was born.

Harry Warren’s real break came when he was discovered by Stark and Cowan, publishers. They were impressed by his piano playing and by the attractiveness of his melodies.

Harry was employed by the firm to promote and play other published tunes so that they would sell. This did not in any way appeal to Harry as he was bent on having success with his own work. His persistence brought a reward, in that at last one of his tunes was published and turned out to be a hit. *Rose of the Rio Grande* was its title, the lyrics being supplied by an Edgar Leslie. Warren was on his way! To find out what else he wrote and when, refer to the list at the end of this article.

Special mention should be made of the year 1932 in which Harry Warren and Al Dubin produced the entire score for the hit musical *Forty Second Street* which starred Dick Powell and Ruby Keeler. (This talkie is available on video.) If you want to see what Harry Warren or Al Dubin looked like, they both have speaking parts in this film.

In 1938 Harry was saddened by the loss of his son Harry Jr from a bout of pneumonia. He was only nineteen.

It was Harry who wrote the tune *Chattanooga Choo Choo* especially for Glen Miller’s orchestra. This turned out to be his first gold record, with Glen Miller’s recording of it reaching over a million sales. Another in that category was *You’ll Never Know*. Harry Warren was then in big demand, being ever pursued by record and film studios. Further he wrote music for such notable artists as Fred

Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Cyd Charisse, Howard Keel, Gene Kelly, Mickey Rooney, Judy Garland and Gloria De Haven, just to name a few.

It is almost a surprise to discover that Harry wrote music for the comedy team Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis and to boot the musical score for the TV series *The Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp*.

As time went by the popularity of Harry’s musical style began to wane in the late seventies, but his music still lives on today. Just listen to the background music in films and you will frequently hear a Harry Warren tune.

Harry had in excess of six hundred published tunes. How many unpublished ones there are remains unknown. It should be noted that *An Affair to Remember* was nominated for an Academy Award in 1970. It did not succeed. Although his popularity had faded, he was still penning music at the age of 86. His last publicly recognised tune was *Ungrateful Heart*.

Harry Warren passed away peacefully on 22 September, 1981. He was buried in a memorial park in Los Angeles, California. His epitaph is simply inscribed :

4 bars of “YOU’LL NEVER KNOW”
HARRY S. WARREN
1893 -1981
BELOVED HUSBAND,
FATHER, COMPOSER

The major song
successes of
Harry Warren:

“Rose Of The Rio Grande” (1922)

“Home In Pasadena” (1923)

“The Only Only One (For Me)” (1924)

“I Love My Baby (& My Baby Loves Me)” (1925)

“In My Gondola” (1926)

“Clementine (From New Orleans)” (1927)

“My Regular Gal” (1927)

"Hello Montreal" (1928)
 "Nagasaki" (1928)
 "Old Man Sunshine (Little Boy Bluebird)" (1928)
 "Absence Makes The Heart Grow Fonder" (1929)
 "Cheerful Little Earful" (1930)
 "Cryin' For The Carolines" (1930)
 "Have A Little Faith In Me" (1930)
 "Would You Like To Take A Walk" (1930)
 "By The River Sainte Marie" (1931)
 "I Found A Million Dollar Baby (In A Five And Ten Cent Store)" (1931)
 "You're My Everything" (1931)
 "Forty-Second Street" (1932)
 "Ruffle Off To Buffalo" (1932)
 "Three's A Crowd" (1932)
 "Young And Healthy" (1932)
 "You're Getting To Be A Habit With Me" (1932)
 "The Boulevard Of Broken Dreams" (1933)
 "Honeymoon Hotel" (1933)
 "I've Got To Sing A Torch Song" (1933)
 "Keep Young And Beautiful" (1933)
 "Shadow Waltz" (1933)
 "We're In The Money" (1933)
 "I Only Have Eyes For You" (1934)
 "I'll String Along With You" (1934)
 "About A Quarter To Nine" (1935)
 "Don't Give Up The Ship" (1935)
 "Go Into Your Dance" (1935)
 "Lullaby Of Broadway" (1935)
 "Lulu's Back In Town" (1935)
 "Page Miss Glory" (1935)
 "The Rose In Her Hair" (1935)
 "She's A Latin From Manhattan" (1935)
 "Where Am I (Am I In Heaven?)" (1935)
 "The Words Are In My Heart" (1935)
 "You Let Me Down" (1935)
 "I'll Sing You A Thousand Love Songs" (1936)
 "My Kingdom For A Kiss" (1936)
 "Summer Night" (1936)
 "With Plenty Of Money And You" (1936)
 "Cause My Baby Says It's So" (1937)

"How Could You?" (1937)
 "I Know Now" (1937)
 "Remember Me?" (1937)
 "September In The Rain" (1937)
 "The Song Of The Marines (We're Shovin' Right Off Again)" (1937)
 "Daydreaming (All Night Long)" (1938)
 "The Girl Friend Of The Whirling Dervish" (1938)
 "Jeepers Creepers" (1938)
 "Love Is Where You Find It" (1938)
 "You Must Have Been A Beautiful Baby" (1938)
 "Devil May Care" (1940)
 "Down Argentina Way" (1940)
 "Fifth Avenue" (1940)
 "Two Dreams Met" (1940)
 "You Say The Sweetest Things (Baby)" (1940)
 "Chica Chica Boom Chic" (1941)
 "Chattanooga Choo Choo" (1941)
 "I Know Why (And So Do You)" (1941)
 "I, Yi, Yi, Yi, Yi (I Like You Very Much)" (1941)
 "Tropical Magic" (1941)
 "Where You Are" (1941)
 "At Last" (1942)
 "I Had The Craziest Dream" (1942)
 "I've Got A Gal In Kalamazoo" (1942)
 "Let's Bring New Glory To Old Glory" (1942)
 "Serenade In Blue" (1942)
 "There Will Never Be Another You" (1942)
 "A Journey To A Star" (1943)
 "The Lady In The Tutti Frutti Hat" (1943)
 "My Heart Tells Me" (1943)
 "No Love, No Nothin'" (1943)
 "You'll Never Know" (1943)
 "This Heart Of Mine" (1944)
 "You've Got Me Where You Want Me" (1944)
 "Coffee Time" (1945)
 "I Wish I Knew" (1945)
 "The More I See You" (1945)
 "On The Atchison, Topeka And The Santa Fe" (1945)
 "Wait And See" (1945)

"This Is Always" (1946)
 "My Dream Is Yours" (1949)
 "My One And Only Highland Fling" (1949)
 "Someone Like You" (1949)
 "Friendly Star" (1950)
 "If You Feel Like Singing, Sing" (1950)
 "You Wonderful You" (1950)
 "I Wanna Be A Dancin' Man" (1952)
 "Just For You" (1952)
 "Seeing's Believing" (1952)
 "What Good Is A Gal (Without A Guy?)" (1952)
 "Zing A Little Zong" (1952)
 "That's Amoré" (1953)
 "Innamorata" (1955)
 "The Legend Of Wyatt Earp" (1955)
 "(The Same Thing Happens With The Birds And The Bees)" (1956)
 "An Affair To Remember" (1957)
 "Separate Tables" (1958)

Some statistics on Harry Warren's music:

Number of songs written by Harry Warren (1918 -1981) - about 845 titled works

Number of songs published (1922-1981) - varies between 450 and 550 depending on the definition of "published"

Number of songs considered "standards" - varies between 50 and 125

Number of songs on the Hit Parade in the top ten - 42

Number of songs no.1 on the Hit Parade list - 21

Most songs in the top ten on Hit Parade at in any one week - 4 (1942)

Number of hit records of his songs - about 220

Academy Award nominations - 11

Academy Award wins - 3

Number of movies, TV shows, stage shows, and shorts that have used at least one Warren song - at least 615

As part of a series on lady organists, cleverly called "Lofty Ladies", *The Sydney Organ Journal* featured the biography of Sydney's own **Margaret Hall** in their Summer 2001-2002 issue. Since Margaret will be playing for us on Sunday, 16th June, at Marrickville, I have obtained permission to copy the article. The *Organ Music Society of Sydney Inc.*, which usually features classical and church organs (and organists), can be contacted on 9412 4548.



Margaret Hall at the Orion Centre Wurlitzer

As a child of four or five, my pride and joy was a toy grand piano. It was different to those I'd had previously. It had all of four octaves and real black notes—WOW! With a natural ability to play by ear, inspiration came from the family collection of 78 rpm recordings—mostly popular music, especially musicals, but also a moderate sampling of the classics. I was the youngest of four and my teenage siblings brought into the house pop music of the 1960s.

In the early 1970s, playing the electronic organ was a common alternative to the piano. Several people we knew had one in their home and I was fascinated by the variety of sounds and the fact that you played with your feet as well as your hands. In 1972 at the age of nine, I got my first (spinet) organ. Within several weeks and prior to finding a teacher, I was building a sizeable repertoire of elementary pieces from 'The Pointer System' instruction course. Mr Britton from whose shop in Hurstville we had purchased the organ was impressed by my progress and invited me to play at a concert he was promoting. Local organist and teacher Val Brisby also played that evening, and following on from that night she became my tutor in popular organ for the next three years.

Then Val encouraged me to deepen my musical studies and this led me to tackle some legitimate organ repertoire with a new teacher, Ken Martin. On a large Conn organ in Mr Martin's studio, I was first introduced to the music of J S Bach *et al.* My home practice instrument was upgraded to a Lowrey console organ and we also made room for a piano as I was encouraged to work on my technique.

Throughout these years, I participated in the Yamaha Electone Festivals and the City of Sydney Eisteddfod, winning several prizes. I also attended many electronic organ concerts learning about the various brands and became aware of Australia's top players like Tony Fenelon, Cliff Bingham and the late Ray Thornley.

With hopes for a career that would involve music, gradually piano lessons took precedence over organ lessons as it seemed a more conventional musical road to be on. From 1977 I 'hopscoched' through the AMEB piano syllabus, first leaping into 5th Grade and then 7th Grade two years later, completing the necessary theory grades along the way. This brought me to a level compatible with performance requirements for 3 unit music in the 1980 Higher School Certificate.

In the same year there was one organ performance opportunity I could not pass up. My school music teacher, Mr Reid suggested I audition for the Schools Instrumental Festival. I did so and was selected to perform on the organ in the Sydney Opera House. At seventeen, I was reportedly the youngest person yet to play the Opera House organ. I played Bach's G major *Prelude BWV 541*—I hadn't yet learned the fugue!

In the meantime however, from late 1976, my popular style organ playing had been earning me a small weekly income. A friend who worked part-time at the Mecca Theatre, Kogarah suggested I audition for the position of resident organist. I was almost fourteen when I got the job and continued with it until I left school four years later. This appointment had an incredible impact on my future life.

Although most theatres had dispensed with live musical entertainment many years before, the presentation at the cinema retained some of the old world trimmings. At weekends I played at two, sometimes three evening sessions. It was the era of the 'double feature' and my first set commenced twenty minutes before the first film. I returned to play at intermission and occasionally also played the crowd out. An inevitable perk of this job was that with the exception of those with an 'R' rating, I got to see lots of movies. As school work became more demanding however, the time between my appearances was more wisely spent doing my homework.

The Mecca, formerly the Victory Theatre, used to have a Christie pipe organ. It was removed more than a decade before I was on the scene and in its place was a Conn electronic. However, soon after I began my stint at the theatre, the manager Phillip W. Doyle, himself a theatre organ devotee, imported a 1937 three manual, eight rank Wurlitzer from England which was to be installed in the theatre. I had no experience with such instruments so it was arranged for me to spend some time on the ex-Prince Edward Theatre Wurlitzer. In 1968, this organ had been relocated to Marrickville Town Hall by members of the Theatre Organ Society of Australia (TOSA).

Subsequently my first of many appearances for TOSA was in 1977. In 1980 it was a special honour to present a concert at the Mecca Theatre during the TOSA National Convention. This exposure brought me recognition within the theatre organ scene Australia wide and since those early days I

have given many concerts interstate.

I saturated myself in the world of the theatre organ reading overseas journals, listening to recordings and regularly attending TOSA concerts. Enthralled by particular performances, I endeavoured to re-create them through careful listening and imitation. This inevitably taught me the theatre organ idiom. Under my own steam I studied modern harmony and chord substitution as a means of enhancing my own arrangements. As a theatre organist all sorts of music provides inspiration and I have quite a broad taste—jazz, classical, pop; Bach to the Beatles and beyond!

In particular, the visiting American organists made a huge impression on me. They used the organ's resources orchestrally and their arrangements were carefully planned and harmonically sophisticated. Often their programs would include an item of 'real' organ music — something appealing to a theatre organ crowd like Bach's *Gigue Fugue*. Between 1977 and 1980 Tom Hazleton, Jonas Nordwall, Lyn Larsen, Ron Rhode, Hector Olivera and Walt Strony were major influences on me. The fact that they were also trained classical organists inspired me to pursue that aspect of organ playing although not as a full time student for some time yet.

In 1980 I began corresponding with New Zealand organ builder John Parker, who in his spare time was directing the restoration of Auckland's ex-Regent Wurlitzer organ. It was to be installed in the Hollywood Theatre, a suburban picture house. With an 18 year old's sense of adventure, I deferred my intended tertiary studies and moved to New Zealand to become part of the restoration team. Under supervision I completed various tasks including a significant part of the new wiring. I also assisted with voicing and regulation. Gradually as more of the organ became playable we were able to stage fund-raising concerts in which I took part. Outside time spent on the Wurlitzer's restoration, I assisted John on his tuning rounds for George Croft and Son, taught electronic organ and worked in music retail.

In June 1982 the Hollywood Wurlitzer had its opening. The incredible thing about this was that I appeared on the same bill as one of my idols —Tony Fenelon. We performed some piano and organ duets in which I played the orchestral part on the organ with Tony on piano. This experience was repeated the following year along with other concerts at the Hollywood and appearances at two other NZ theatre organ venues.

Whilst in New Zealand for almost three years, I undertook classical pipe organ studies with Leonard Cave. This prepared me to enter the Bachelor of Music course at the Conservatorium when I returned to Sydney in 1984. There, my



Early days at the Mecca Theatre. Kogarah.

organ teachers were Robert Ampt and David Rumsey. Having played flute in high school, I took this as my second study.

As a student of Robert Ampt I competed in the Wollongong Pipe Organ Festival Competition (1984) and the Bach Organ Playing Competition at the Melbourne International Festival of Organ and Harpsichord (1985). Each competition produced three finalists and I proudly achieved equal second place in both.

During my last two years at the Con, I had the experience of performing with the Sydney Youth Orchestra under John Hopkins at the Opera House and again at the Sydney Town Hall. I was also selected to perform Handel's *Organ Concerto in Bb* (Opus 7, no. 1) with the Conservatorium Orchestra in the Verbrugghen Hall.

Whilst studying full time, I did manage some 'moonlighting' as a theatre organist. To what extent David Rumsey was aware of my extra-curricular activities, I cannot be sure but the day he and my fellow students visited the Orion Centre to inspect the Wurlitzer, I just had to don my gold organ shoes for a bit of *show*. Nevertheless I was upstaged by Mr Rumsey who wowed us with his rendition of the *12th Street Rag!*

In the Christmas period of 1987-88, David Rumsey organised a European study tour for his students. This was an incredible experience visiting instruments in Germany, Austria, Holland, Switzerland, Italy and France. As a side trip I spent a week in London visiting the famous cathedrals and making contact with the London Chapter of the American Theatre Organ Society who organised visits to several theatre organs for me.

Throughout my student days I gave a number of classical recitals around Sydney at the Great Hall of Sydney University, Pitt Street Uniting Church and St Andrew's Cathedral. I also enjoyed several church positions: Rockdale Uniting Church, Strathfield Uniting Church (Carrington Ave) and St Mark's Anglican Church South Hurstville where I met my husband, Robert Nelson, an electronics engineer.

Robert and I married in 1991 and honeymooned in the USA. We attended the American Theatre Organ Society (ATOS) Convention in San Francisco and afterwards I gave a concert in Seattle. 1992 saw the release of my recording 'Kitten on the Keys' which has sold approximately 2500 copies. It was recorded on the ex-Capitol 3/17 Wurlitzer now in the Orion Centre, Campsie.

Career highlights over the next couple of years included two performances at the Opera House. In 1993 I played a program in the Grand Organ Celebration Series to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Sydney Opera House. In 1994, I appeared with the SSO in 'Silver Screen Orchestrations'. This was a family concert and every musician was required to dress up as the character from a film. Suspended high above the audience in the organ gallery, I chose to be *Mary Poppins* and made a theatrical entrance with umbrella and carpet bag.



'Mary Poppins' en route to the Sydney Opera House organ gallery.

A creative business opportunity arose for Robert and I in 1995 when we were approached to undertake the promotion and operation of a unique private collection of mechanical musical instruments. Apart from sharing with audiences the history and music of these beautiful and ingenious mechanical instruments, I also played a short theatre organ program on a large Rodgers electronic. After several years experience of working with tour operators and the general public, it was Robert who actually came up with the idea that we should set up our own show.

'Margaret's Music Room' has now been operating for just over twelve months. Our ninety minute presentation is called 'Theatre Organs and Picture Palaces'. Through the music I play and the images we show on a large screen, the audience is taken on a nostalgic trip to an entertainment style of a bygone era. Although I play an Allen digital theatre organ in the show, I go to some lengths to explain the authentic theatre pipe organ and illustrate it by showing and sounding a selection of organ pipes.

Almost thirty years since an organist had entertained movie audiences in the "atmospheric" splendour of Sydney's Capitol Theatre, I had the privilege to do just that during a four week season in October/November 1999. A restored print of the classic movie "Gone With the Wind" was the featured film and an Allen digital theatre organ was temporarily installed specially for me to play. In May 2001, I was delighted to appear with three other "lofty ladies" (Amy Johansen, Heather Moen-Boyd and Tamara Rozek) in one of the Sydney Town Hall Grand Organ Federation Recitals.

Over the years I have taken an active role in TOSA and have served several periods as a member of the committee. The most ambitious project I undertook was as convenor for Sydney's four day 'Festival of Theatre Organ 2000'. I am also a member of the Sydney Organ Music Society, the Antique Sound Society and the Australian Cinema and Theatre Society. Outside my organ interests I have been musical director for several locally produced pantomimes, studied singing and have strutted the boards in amateur musical productions. I adore old theatres and love all things 'art deco'.

More than anyone, it has surprised me that I have been able to forge a living entertaining from the organ bench. I've had a lot of support from my parents, my husband and several friends along the way. That is what has really made my life's passion of the theatre organ possible. I hope to help perpetuate people's interest in this exciting musical medium for many years to come.

For the organ world in general, I would like to see an increased exchange, and to some degree a meshing of the classical and theatre organ worlds. Even collectively, they are a mere ripple in the deeper musical pond. On a local level there has already been increased dialogue in recent years between the Sydney Organ Music Society and the Theatre Organ Society and joint events have been organised and enjoyed by all. It would be great if this can develop further, each helping the other to sustain and build an audience for the organ—a wonderfully diverse instrument—and encourage the organists of tomorrow.

ADDENDUM

A brief explanation and history of the theatre organ

Developed specifically to accompany silent movies and capable of filling large theatres, the theatre or cinema organ, is built on the 'unit' as opposed to the 'straight' principle, with individual ranks being 'extended' to their most usable pitches. Differing from the classical organ, the theatre organ's foundation rank is the Tibia which has the greatest number of pitches and can range from 16ft to 1ft including fractionals of 5 1/3ft, 2 2/3ft,

1 3/5ft, 1 1/3ft. On large instruments pedal stops can extend down to 32ft. With relatively few ranks all on high wind pressures (from 6ins up to 25ins on the largest instruments) all pipes are under expression, enclosed in usually two chambers. Tonal and non-tonal percussions (e.g., glockenspiel, xylophone and sometimes a piano; tambourine, snare drum, bass drum, triangle and cymbals) add to the organ's orchestral nature. The 'toy counter' as it is affectionately known, often includes a selection of effects, playable from push buttons or toe studs, which were useful for silent film accompaniment. e.g., horses hooves, bird whistle, car horn, fire bell, boat and train whistles. Theatre organ tremulants are used more frequently, are physically larger and shake more vigorously than their classical counterparts. Certain registrations however, are most effective when they are turned off. Rather than drawstops, tabs are arranged around a 'horse-shoe' console with many settable pistons and an electro-pneumatic action. The Rudolph Wurlitzer Company, a multi-faceted musical instrument manufacturer in North Tonawanda, New York, mass produced over 2200 Unit Orchestras (their trade name for theatre organs) between 1910 and 1943. Other US builders included Robert Morton (Wurlitzer's nearest competitor who produced about 1000 such instruments), Moller, Barton, Page, and Kilgen. The most notable British builders were Christie (from the factory of Hill, Norman and Beard) and Compton.

After 1927 when the talkies came in, theatre organs remained popular with audiences, particularly during the war years, and then their use gradually declined. As well as in theatres, they were also installed in ice skating rinks, baseball stadiums, hotels and ballrooms. Something of a renaissance took place during the 1960s in the USA when disused organs from soon to be demolished theatres were installed in restaurants, producing the 'Pizza and Pipes' phenomenon. Several very successful establishments are still in operation. These days however, it is largely up to the theatre organ preservation societies (like TOSA) to keep these instruments, and the art form of playing them, alive.

The Local Scene

In Sydney, the Hayden Orpheum Picture Palace at Cremorne presents Neil Jensen playing the theatre organ at several sessions throughout the week. Theatre organ concerts are presented more or less monthly by TOSA at Marrickville Town Hall and the Orion Centre at Campsie, and several times throughout the year by independent promoters at the Willoughby Town Hall in Chatswood and at the Epping Baptist Church. With the restoration of the historic State Theatre's Wurlitzer organ now in progress, hopefully in a few year's time there will be another large public venue with scope for several organists to play regularly on a roster. This is now happening at Melbourne's Regent Theatre where a large Wurlitzer organ was re-installed just a few years ago.

Readers of the SOJ may not be aware of Australia's several success stories in the American Theatre Organ Society's International Young Organist Competition. In recent years, Australian entrants have won the major awards in numbers disproportionate to entrants from America and the UK. Among others, John Giacchi, originally from Sydney, and Chris McPhee, a South Australian are both former winners and now regularly undertake concert tours internationally as well as perform Australia wide. Each have several recordings to their credit and provide inspiration to those who follow.

Margaret will delight us all with her magical playing on Sunday, 16th June, at Marrickville Town Hall

Jonas Nordwall and Tony Fenelon at the Mighty Regent Wurlitzer Organ

At The Regent Theatre, Melbourne, 9th February, 2002

by Allan Brooker

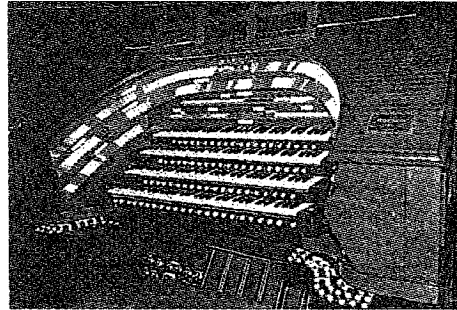
Well, when I first saw the advertisement, I did not need much pushing to quickly contact a theatre organ friend in Melbourne, to organize some tickets for myself and a couple of Sydney friends, to venture down to our southern city, to hear two of the world's best theatre organists play what is now the largest theatre organ in Australia, the ex-Paramount Theatre, San Francisco, 36 rank Wurlitzer.

After a disappointing inaugural concert in April 1999, where we lucky to hear the talents of Tony Fenelon and Lyn Larsen for only about twenty minutes in each half of the program, I was alarmed to see after Tony and Jonas' names for this 2002 concert, the words "and Guests". It was the "and Guests" which spoiled the 1999 show from a theatre organ lover's perspective. With a garrulous singing compere, a woeful female vocalist and an even worse trumpet player, most of the program was taken up with non-organ events and we heard precious little Wurlitzer.

To be fair to the Regent owners, they are in the business of running theatres and the addition of a Wurlitzer organ obviously had them perplexed as to how it should be presented. The 2002 show was a vast improvement with goodly chunks of the theatre organ as the beloved solo instrument we had come to hear.

Tony Fenelon, opened the show with a rousing "I Won't Dance" and then his old theme song from his days as resident organist at the Regent, "Everything's Coming Up Roses". It was after this number that Tony mentioned the theatre had actually been closed and dark for longer than it had been in operation before. An emotional rendition of "With One Look" from *Sunset Boulevard* and a medley of songs from *My Fair Lady*, all too soon, ended his first bracket.

Jonas Nordwall opened his first portion with "Prelude to Act 3 from *Lohengrin*", a touch heavy perhaps for theatre organ, but significant in that



it was the first track featured on his CD, "West Hills Renaissance" recorded when the organ was in the Howard Vollum residence. It did demonstrate perfectly, however, the absolute versatility and power and depth of this particular theatre organ. His next number, seemingly to rectify the heavy introduction, was a "sleazy, down and dirty", and in total contrast, an outrageously delightful version of "The Stripper".

When Tony Fenelon is present, we can always count on a spirited piano/organ duo and that's exactly what happened next with a fiery "Gypsy Dance", Tony on grand piano and Jonas doing the honours at the Wurlitzer.

It was about here that the "guests" came on - a female vocalist and a guitarist and all four joined together for "Music to Watch Girls Go By" and "Can't Take My Eyes Off You".

Following was a Jonas solo number where he played an exciting version, mainly on the organ pedals. In fact we even had "foot cam" showing on the cinema screen his pedal dexterity! Just fabulous!

There was a surprise to follow this astounding performance, when a thin



veil curtain lifted and the lights came on to reveal a fifty-odd contingent of the Victorian Male Welsh Choir. How they all crept in without making a sound was amazing. They sang, accompanied by Jonas on organ, "What do you do With a Drunken Sailor?", complete with comic staggers. Well done and well received!

All too soon, interval was upon us and it was time to stretch the legs. So far, it had been really good with not too much interference from the "guests".

Part two, commenced with the guitarist playing a pleasant light classical piece and then it was down to business with a beautifully "dreamy" version of "Misty" by Tony and Jonas in piano/organ duet. Jonas followed with an accompaniment to a short Australian silent movie set in Melbourne.

Closing one's eyes during Jonas' next solo piece on the organ, one could be forgiven for guessing as to who was playing, for it was exquisitely, in essence, "shades of the San Francisco Fox Theatre", with George Wright, playing "Little Girl Blue". We then, had our vocalist return with "Girl from Ipanema" and "Moon River" backed by Jonas on organ.

I think it was about here that Jonas mentioned that he was envious of a city that could boast four organs that possessed 32 foot pipes and then immediately placed his foot on the appropriate pedal to create an "earthquake" Super stuff!

I may now have segments out of sequence, having being quite intoxicated by the excellence of our two organists, but somewhere along the line, Tony played the most gorgeous version of "Body and Soul". It was an arrangement to die for! Good on you, Tony!

I know for sure, that in the second half, he played an extended selection from *Phantom of the Opera* with more than the usual pieces involved.

I think it was about here, that the Welsh choir gave us a traditional

Welsh number in their own language.

To rouse everyone again (as if we needed it!) Tony and Jonas finally, swept into "March Militaire" in what we thought was our last dynamic piano/organ duo for the day.

But no, a duo encore followed, called "The Regent Boogie" but alas the audience craved for more and Tony and Jonas obliged with what I think was called "Finale, Carnival of the Animals".

All too soon, the concert was over, but it was a job well done. Even though I thought the "guests" were completely unnecessary (and no disrespect intended to these people) for an "Organ

Spectacular" as advertised, it was a huge improvement on 1999. To give credit to the Regent management, the guests' spots were only three, mercifully brief from a theatre organ lover's view, and blended seamlessly with the main feature - the Mighty Regent Wurlitzer Organ, which after all, was what we had come to hear! The key point this time around was that the mighty Wurlitzer was used in every number throughout the concert.

It is a fabulous treasure and I eagerly await the first recording on this fabulous "unit orchestra"!

In case I am regarded as a "crank" about unwanted associate artists at

theatre organ concerts, I note that Wayne Bertram, TOSA SA's newsletter editor, mentions in his report of the Regent 2002 event "it was a well played program by both organists and, although I would rather have lived without the added artists singing and playing guitar, they were fortunately reasonably short." (SA TOSA News March, 2002)

The Mighty Wurlitzer has infinite colours and all the voices you can imagine. For variety, add another organist! 'Nuff said!

Allan Brooker

More about Melbourne Regent on : <http://www.marrinertheatres.com.au>

A Brief History of the Regent's Wurlitzer

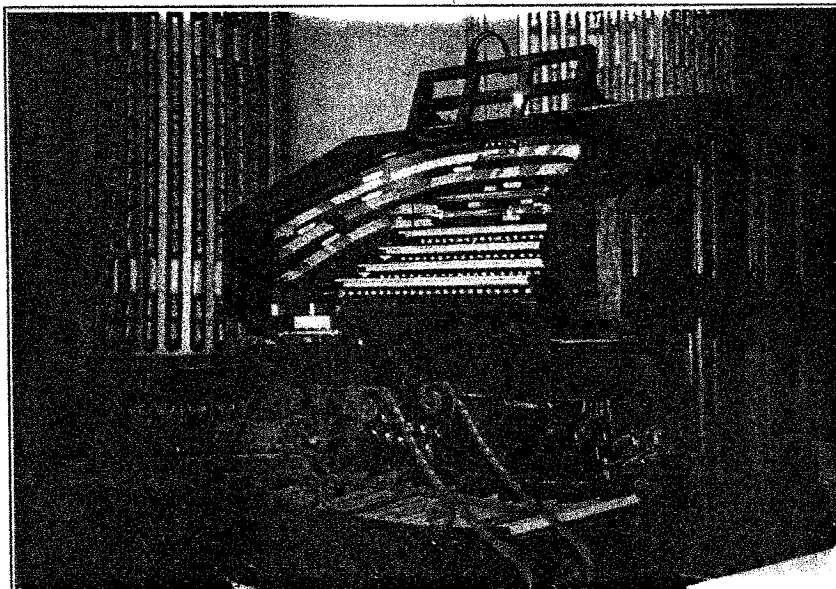
The Wurlitzer organ in the Melbourne Regent Theatre was first installed in the Granada Theatre (later renamed the Paramount) in Market Street, San Francisco, in 1921. The 285 style, 4/34 instrument was at the time the largest organ yet built by the Wurlitzer Company. It was showcased by organist Oliver Wallace, later musical director for the Disney Studios.

The organ had a rebirth in the early sixties, with concerts presented by Anne Leaf, George Wright and a young Tom Hazleton, who became the last house organist at the Paramount.

In 1965 the theatre closed and the organ moved to the Howard Vollum Estate in Portland, Oregon, where it again had a new lease of life. Following Howard Vollum's death, the organ was sold and placed in storage.

When Julien Arnold was commissioned by Staged Developments Australia to locate a 'new' instrument for the Regent Theatre, then undergoing restoration, he began negotiations and, with the assistance of organist Lyn Larsen, managed to seal the deal.

The organ arrived in Australia in late 1994 and under went extensive



refurbishment and re-assembly in the hands of Julien Arnold, his son Mark, and other volunteers from the Theatre Organ Society. Virtually all the organ parts had been installed in the four chambers by re-opening night in August 1996, but because power had not even been connected to the two gigantic blowers high on the stage fly tower, the organ remained silent. The unconnected console sat on the organ lift for one night only, and was then relegated to a corner backstage for the season of *Sunset Boulevard*.

With only limited access being available, work proceeded slowly until the console was eventually restored to the organ lift at the end of the *Sunset* season.

In November 1997 the organ was heard for the first time in public at a

special season of the film *My Fair Lady*. Tony Felon naturally presided at the console and shared the live musical honours with the Dennis Farrington Show Band. As Tony brought the console up for the first time, the applause was overwhelming - an emotional moment for many who had worked for so long for this moment.

The organ was again played to the public in May 1998, when the Regent ran a movie tribute weekend following the death of Frank Sinatra. This time John Atwell presided at the console. Since then, the long slow process of fine tuning and regulating the multitudinous parts in such a large instrument has continued.

The opening concert, part of the 1999 Melbourne National Convention, was played by Tony Felon and Lyn Larsen. It was fitting that Lyn Larsen shared the opening program with Tony Felon. His involvement with securing the Regent instrument, his long association with Tony Felon and the Melbourne theatre organ scene from the early Dendy days and his considerable influence and inspiration to many Australian organists were reason enough.

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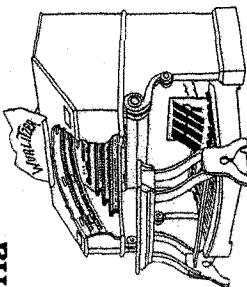
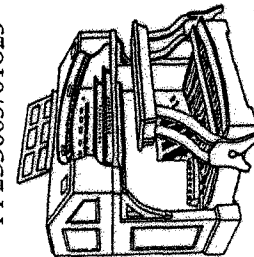
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