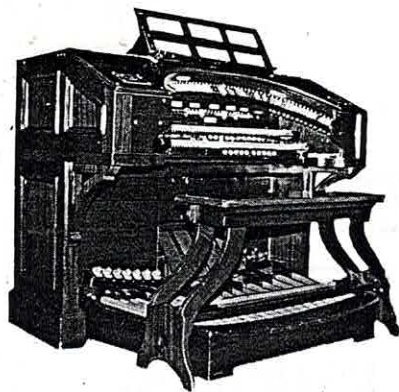
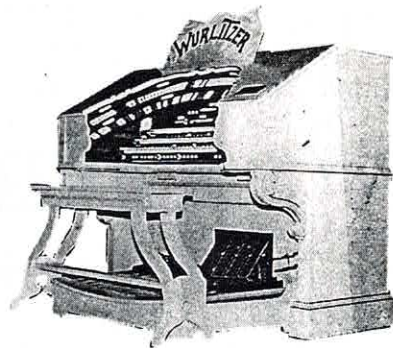


MARCH, 1994



2/11 WurliTzer Theatre Pipe Organ
Marrickville Town Hall

TOSA NEWS



3/17 WurliTzer Theatre Pipe Organ
Orion Centre Campsie

DAVID JOHNSTON



At the Mighty *WurliTzer* Pipe Organ
Sunday 27th March at 2.00pm
Orion Centre, Campsie

Volume 33

Issue 3

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TOSA NEWS

MARCH, 1994

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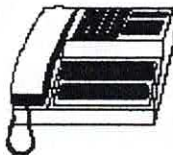
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COMING EVENTS

MARCH

Monday 7 at 7.30 pm **Committee Meeting**
Sunday 27 at 2.00 pm **DAVID JOHNSTON
CONCERT**
Orion Centre, Campsie

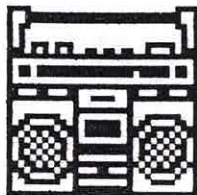
APRIL

PERTH ENCORE '94
Friday 1 - Monday 4 **NATIONAL CONVENTION**
PERTH, W.A.
Four days of Music, Mirth and Merriment with
fellow Conventioneers from Interstate and
Overseas, followed by a full day trip to New Norcia
on Tuesday 5th April.

Sunday 10 at 2.30pm **Members' Afternoon**
Epping Baptist Church
Monday 11 at 7.30 pm **Committee Meeting**
Sunday 24 at 2.00 pm **CLIFF BINGHAM
and
BILL SCHUMACHER
CONCERT**
Orion Centre, Campsie

MAY

Monday 2 at 7.30pm **Committee Meeting**



**REMEMBER TO TUNE IN TO
2CBA-FM 103.2**

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

From The President

Greetings, fellow members!

Since the last issue of **TOSA News**, we've had the bad news and the good news. The bad news is that our proposed **American** artist, who was to play for us at the **Orion** on 9th October, is not able to undertake this **Australian** tour. The good news is that his replacement is the one and only **Walter Strony**, an organist with the ability to produce exciting and dramatic programs. **Walt** has toured **Australia** at least twice before and has a large following among **Australian** audiences.

At the last committee meeting, we were delighted to meet our new Membership Secretary, **Walter Pearce**, who is taking over this rather exacting task from **Jeff Clark**. **Jeff** has done a fine job for the last few years and we are most grateful for his efforts.

Efforts to obtain regular practice times for members at the **Orion** are progressing slowly. The **Canterbury Council** has requested further written information from the committee and this has retarded progress somewhat. The main problem is that regular practice times cannot be guaranteed unless we are prepared to pay the full hall booking fee of around \$800. Obviously, this is out of the question, and so a more casual arrangement is being negotiated, whereby a regular time will be set aside, but which may be subject to possible late cancellation, due



to a paying hall booking. We are hoping to have full details next month.

Our hard-working editor is in rather dire need of more people to write concert reports for **TOSA News**. If you feel that you have latent journalistic abilities and would like to "have a go", please give **Colin** a ring and he would be delighted to show you the ropes.

Till next month,
Cliff Bingham

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

We extend a warm welcome to following new members and hope they enjoy being part of our Society for many years to come :

Walter T. Abbott - Caringbah
Colin Robertson - Mount Colah
Lloyd Hamilton - Baulkham Hills
Edna McKay - Kirrawee
Richard Hall - Hornsby
Peg Simpson - Kirrawee
Stephen Dobell-Brown - West Hoxton

Editorial

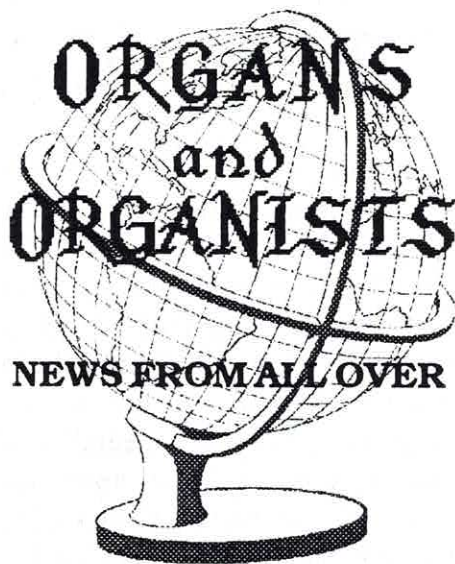
Thank you to all the faithful contributors who regularly supply interesting material for **TOSA News** and who are not sufficiently recognised for their efforts. Without them there would be very little in our magazine. Thanks especially to **Barry Tooker**, who not only takes all the local photographs, but also has them processed for clearer reproduction at **Network Graphics**, and we thank this business for their kind assistance.

Colin Tringham and **Amy Caldwell** wrote to support **Heather Finch's** letter in the January issue about publishing a resumé for each committee nominee at election time. Their comments have been noted and I have already tried to explain how it was a lack of time which prevented all the nominees from sending in resumé's and not their slackness or carelessness, as suggested in one of the letters. I have also indicated in these pages that I will try to do better this year, especially if the candidates will agree not to pull out at the last moment and waste all the editor's typing time by rendering the resumé's and voting unnecessary, as happened in 1992!

Best Wishes,
Colin Groves

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

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



CONVENTION UPDATE

Convention preparations are in full swing. Catering and transport deposits are paid, menus are being finalised and details checked and re-checked! Bookings are still being received and for any who are hesitating, you are advised to do something about it soon.

The W.A. Society is grateful for the assistance of the **Western Victorian Division** in being able to present 2 up-and-coming young musicians at the **Youth Concert**. They are 12-year old **Elizabeth Hanton** and 17-year old **Mark Mann** who will be making their **Convention** debut on Monday, 4th April.

Those **Conventioneers** arriving by air please note : the **Airport - City** shuttle bus service will take travellers to the **Metro Inn Hotel**, Canning Highway, **South Perth** (the **Convention** hotel) for \$6 per person. Return arrangements on request.

The **Convention Committee** and W.A. members are looking forward to welcoming as many as possible to the **National Convention** in Perth at Easter.

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BUSHFIRE BENEFIT

The **Hammond Organ Society**, **Number 1 Chapter**, were quick off the mark to organise a benefit concert in the wake of the disastrous bushfire at the beginning of the year.

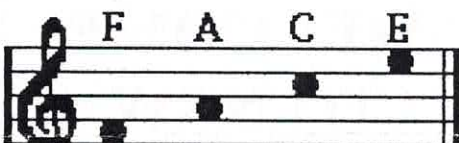
George and Vera Dusing, in collaboration with **Ritchie Willis**, organised a concert on 16th January at the **Selwyn Theatre** which raised \$1,100 for the **Heathcote Voluntary Bushfire Brigade**. Congratulations to all concerned.

WENDY HAMBLY

TOSA member and organist, **Wendy Hamblly**, will be playing a concert on the **Rodgers Classic** organ in **Concord Uniting Church**, on the corner of **Concord Rd** and **Wunda Rd**, **Concord West**, on Sunday, 17th April at 2.00pm. Admission is \$5.00 and this includes an afternoon tea. Proceeds from the concert will be given to the **Bill Crewes' Exodus Foundation** at **Ashfield**.

Music played at these concerts is similar to that played at **TOSA Concerts** and sounds well on this installation. This will be the third concert presented at this venue and \$1,200 has been raised for worthy causes to date.

Further information can be obtained from **Norm Weismantel** on (02) 809 1808.

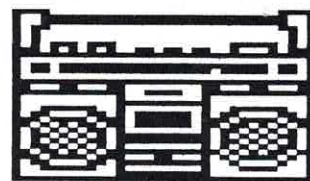


THE MUSIC
With Allan Tassaker

Allan Tassaker has just informed us that he has been invited to play before the Queen!

However upon making further inquiries about the offer, **Allan** discovered that he has been invited to play **BEFORE** the Queen ... arrives!

...So that she will not hear him!



THEATRE ORGAN HIGHLIGHTS

- Upcoming Entertainment

Theatre Organ Highlights must be in its ninth year or so by now, and we are still having fun presenting it for you, dear listener. Having followed our Vice-President, **Frank Ellis**, and our now illustrious President, **Cliff Bingham**, I'm just over two and a half years "down the track" and enjoying the "work" involved, if you can call auditioning and then presenting 30 minutes of weekly theatre organ music any sort of "work".

My continuing thanks to all my friends in **TOSA** who keep me well supplied with music for the programme, and especially to **Bill Schumacher** who puts a lot of work in with making available the "live" concerts for me. Thanks to the gang at **FM-103** - **Steve Wilkinson**, **Alan Burton**, **John** and **Mike** (and **Marty** providing the lollies) - for putting the programme together for me.

Coming up is the **Len Rawle's Epping Christie** concert of last year, and also **Jim Riggs'** last concert here - two entirely different styles of theatre organ playing, but both most enjoyable.

I am now able to put together a tribute to **Noreen Hennessy**, thanks to **Neil Palmer**, and you will hear this soon. **John Parker** has been a great help in providing material for the programme over the past months and his collection of very original recordings has enhanced the programme greatly - from comedy to **Phil Kelsall** leading rousing gospel singing.

I hope to continue presenting the programme into the foreseeable future and again ask you if you have any requests please let me know. I also hope to have some of our local artists on the programme in coming months, presenting *their* favourite theatre organs and performers, and I will advise more on this soon.

Thanks again for your support, and keep listening - **Monday** nights at 9.00 on **FM-103**.

Chris Styles

MOVIE, LUNCH & COFFEE \$8.50

Announcing our exciting 1994 schedule! This tremendously popular series has become the best value ticket in Sydney in Australia's most beautiful art deco cinema. Resident organist Neil Jensen plays the fabulous Wurlitzer at the beginning of each program and there will be lucky seat prizes and sing-a-longs as well. A wonderful outing for your organisation. Reservations are essential. Phone (02) 908 4395. 380 Military Road, Cremorne, 2090.

HAYDEN ORPHEUM PICTURE PALACE CREMORNE

2 Screenings - Wed. Feb 9th & May 25th at 11am

SLEEPLESS IN SEATTLE



Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan star in this delightfully romantic comedy about a widower's young son who goes to great lengths to get his Dad a "New Mum" **PG**

2 Screenings - Wed. Mar. 9th & Apr. 27th at 11am

The Age of Innocence



Based on Edith Wharton's Pulitzer Prize winning novel. A timeless romance set in fashionable New York society in the 1870s. Daniel Day-Lewis and Michelle Pfeiffer. **PG**

Wed. Apr. 13th at 11am

THE PIANO



One of the most honoured films of the year. Holly Hunter, Sam Neill in award winning performances. filmed in New Zealand by Jane Campion. **PG**

Wed. May 11th at 11am

REMAINS OF THE DAY



A beguiling comedy of manners regarding the perfect English butler, played by Anthony Hopkins, who devotes 30 years to his master.

2 screenings Wed Mar 30 & Wed. June 22nd at 11am

MRS DOUBTFIRE



Robin Williams and Sally Field. A Husband disguises himself as an elderly British woman and becomes a Nanny to his own children during a divorce settlement.

N.B. Neil Jensen plays the Cremorne Orpheum's Wurlitzer before each of the above lunch time sessions.

A.T.O.S.

In TOSA News we often refer to **The American Theatre Organ Society (ATOS)** and it is perhaps time to explain the role that this organisation plays and why we, here in **Australia**, have occasion to refer to its local Chapter.

ATOS has a branch in **Australia**, called the **Australia Felix Chapter**, which came into existence to provide a focus for members in **Australia**. It exists to provide an avenue for the speedy mailing of the ATOS magazine, *Theatre Organ*, and for administrative reasons within ATOS. It does not have a charter like other Chapters in the USA as it does not run its own concert programme. **Eric Wicks** and **Julien Arnold** acted as President and Secretary for the last 10 years.

The main attraction for

Australian members of ATOS is the receipt of the bi-monthly, glossy magazine, *THEATRE ORGAN*, which has interesting, theatre organ related feature articles, photos and news items from all over the world, and reports on the activities of the various Chapters. Each month a leaflet called *International News* is also published containing snippets of news from the USA and from such far-flung centres of theatre organ activity as Australia. Members can also register for the **Annual USA Convention**, held each July, and have the chance to submit young organists for scholarships and awards offered by ATOS, such as the award won last year by **Chris McPhee**.

At the **1993 TOSA Convention** in **Adelaide**, with roughly half the **Australian** members present, a

meeting was held to discuss any matters raised the members and to hold an election of officers. As a result of this meeting a new (all **South Australian**) committee was elected, and a unanimous vote of thanks was passed to the previous, faithful officer bearers

If you are interested in any further information about ATOS and its **Australian** branch, you could contact one of the office bearers:

Anthony Taylor (President) - 83 Queen St, Norwood, 5067, S.A. (08) 364 1436;

Gail Ward (Secretary) - 11 Lepena Crescent, Hallett Cove, 5158, S.A. (08) 387 1554; or

Gillian Laughton (Treasurer) - 10 Sandleheath Rd, Elizabeth Grove, 5112, S.A. (08) 255 1514.

MEMORIES OF NOREEN

Noreen Hennessy's death on 11th January this year has brought some happy memories flooding back to many, many people, as she was one of the most well-known of the Australian organists at the end of the cinema-organ era. Vice-President Frank Ellis has unearthed 2 photos of Noreen at about the time that TOSA's Marrickville installation of her Prince Edward Theatre's WurliTzer was taking place. On page 7, there are two pieces from the **Sydney Morning Herald**, one an obituary published on Monday, 17th January and the other a letter from well-known, Sydney identity Leo Schofield, who accidentally perpetuates the myth that the Prince Edward organ rose from beneath the stage, whereas in fact it stood behind the curtains on stage.



Noreen Hennessy at her own Lowrey organ, taken at Marrickville Town Hall in about 1967

Noreen Hennessy with Vice-President, Frank Ellis, and President, Tom Halloran, taken backstage at Marrickville Town Hall



The BARRIE BRETTONER Story

One of Australia's foremost theatre organists, **Barrie Brettoner** (F.T.C.L.), was born in **England** on 22nd February, 1913. He came to **Australia** at an early age and settled in **Sydney**. He had his first music lessons from his mother at the age of four and later continued his study of the piano with **Rex de Cairos Rego**. He was taught straight organ by **G. Faunce Allman**, and the clarinet by **Crosby Brown**. During his musical studies he won 2 Gold Medals and became one of the youngest Fellows of Trinity College, **London**. At this stage the theatre organ entered his young life and he began training in theatre organ techniques under the tutelage of the great **Horace Weber**, who was at that time appearing for a season at the **State Theatre, Sydney**. This was during the latter part of 1930 and into 1931.

Mr **Eustace Dodd**, **Wurlitzer's Sydney** representative, affectionately known as "**Brother Dodd**" to the fraternity, had given **Barrie** permission to go with the organ tuners as they moved around the various theatres, tuning the organs, and this was a splendid opportunity to try out many different organs, thereby adding to his experience. Needless to say, **Barrie** took full advantage of Mr **Dodd's** gesture.

His first appointment was to the **Palatial Theatre** in **Burwood**, where he was billed as "**Australia's Wonder Boy Organist**". Twelve months later he was chosen to be organist at the new **Civic Theatre, Auburn**, which was then ready to open. His place at the **Palatial Theatre** organ was filled by **Knight Barnett**. The **Civic Theatre's** opening night took place on Tuesday, 13th February, 1934, and **Barrie** was hailed as an outstanding performer at the lovely **2/13 Wurlitzer** which was installed in this house.

During his residency of about 12 months he celebrated his 21st birthday and was presented with a large key by the theatre staff. An amusing sidelight to his **Civic Theatre** days occurred one evening when the console's hydraulic lift developed a fault. The console normally turned around as it came up on the hoist and usually operated very smoothly indeed. On this occasion however as **Barrie** was bringing the organ up and playing his theme melody, the console came up very slowly, stopping every few inches as though trying to gain the energy necessary to lift itself a little higher. **Barrie** was equal to the occasion however and abandoning his theme music, he commenced to play, "**I'm Coming, I'm Coming, But My Head Is Bending Low**", timing his pauses in the song to the pauses in

the rise of the hoist.

Barrie's next residency was at the **Civic Theatre** in **Auckland, New Zealand**, at the console of the 3-manual **Wurlitzer** which **Barrie** considered one of the best-sounding **Wurlitzers** in the **Southern Hemisphere**. From **Auckland** he moved to the **De-Luxe Theatre** at **Wellington** for a season. Whilst there he gave a recital on the **Wellington Town Hall organ**, which was a 4-manual job by **Hill, Norman and Beard**. On his return to **Australia** he took a holiday from theatre organ playing for a few months and became organist at **St John's Church** at **Mudgee**, where he relieved well known **Arthur Massey** during an illness.

Late in 1936 he appeared at the **Arcadia Theatre, Chatswood**, which ended the following March, when he left for a honeymoon trip to **England**. On his arrival he was quickly engaged by **Harold Ramsay** who controlled organ presentations in a vast number of cinemas throughout **England**, and he became one of the 8 "Ace" organists whom **Ramsay** used for the opening of new organ installations or to be featured at special, prestige organ events throughout the country. **Barrie** was in the best of company, other members of this special team of "Aces" being **Sidney Torch, H. Robinson Cleaver, Joseph Seal and Neville Meale**. **Barrie's** first **English** appointment was to the **Ritz Theatre** at **Huddersfield**, at the console of a 3-manual **Wurlitzer**, which has been played only the night before by **Reginald Dixon** at a charity concert.

Later came an extended tour through the provinces including **Lancashire, Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and Warwickshire**, and it was during this tour that **Barrie** came into contact with the **Compton** theatre organs which were in many of the large cinemas. He had a high regard for the **Compton** and its **Melotone** unit which he exploited to the full. He always spoke glowingly of the qualities of the **Compton**, with particular mention of its terrifically fast action.

Finally after a season at the huge **Capitol Theatre, Didsbury, near Manchester**, which accommodated over 3,000 people and was equipped with a 4-manual **Hill, Norman and Beard** organ reputedly one of the largest of its type in **Britain**, **Barrie** was sent by **Major Wright**, **Wurlitzer's London** representative, to open the first **Wurlitzer** installation in **Denmark**. The theatre was the unusual and lovely **Palladium** in **Copenhagen**, which had all seats on the one sloping floor, plus a Royal box in the centre.

The organ, a **3/7 Wurlitzer** was, according to **Barrie**, an exquisitely-voiced instrument. It had big, fat-sounding Tibias and Voxes and possessed a Gamba of rare quality.

Returning to **England** he appeared at the **ABC Ritz, Hastings**, for a couple of years, playing a 3-manual **Wurlitzer**. Following this season, together with his wife and 2 young sons, he left for **Australia**, travelling on the ill-fated liner, the "**Rangitane**", as part of a war-time convoy. Shortly after the ship had set them down in **New Zealand**, she was sunk. The **Brettoners** crossed the **Tasman** to **Sydney** in the **Australian/N.Z.** liner, "**Wanganella**", and **Barrie** took over the console of the **Christie** organ in the **Savoy Theatre, Enfield**. This was followed by seasons at the **Savoy Theatre, Hurstville**, and the **Roxy Theatre, Parramatta**, after which he returned to the **Civic Theatre, Auburn** and the **Wurlitzer** had opened way back in 1934.

The Army was his next job for a considerable time until the end of the war and upon being discharged from the Army he gratified a desire he had entertained for some time to go on the land. He remained on his property for a few years, before returning to the **Arcadia Theatre** at **Chatswood** where he was the last organist in residence at the time the theatre closed down.

He was manager of the organ department at **Palings Music Store** for a few years and introduced the first **Compton** electronic organ into this country. The first really large **Compton** electronic organ here was sold to **Eugene Goosens** for use in the **Sydney Conservatorium** and **Barrie** was very proud of this important sale. At the time electronic organs were something of a novelty in this country, and **Barrie** felt that acceptance by such an eminent musician was a most important step forward.

I found Mr **Brettoner** to be a fascinating story teller of the Golden Days of the Theatre organ, with an unlimited stock of memories to draw on - memories one could listen to for hours on end.

Exceptionally friendly and easy to get along with, he was keenly interested in people, and especially in children. He was always bubbling with energy and spent much of his time in fostering a love of ballet and its music to many classes of enthusiastic youngsters, none of whom would possibly even have seen a theatre organ in a theatre. A brilliant and talented musician with a sparkling personality to match, with a life-long profound interest in the theatre organ.

MEMORIES OF NOREEN (Cont'd)

Queen of the wurlitzer reigned for two decades

OBITUARY

Noreen Hennessy
1913-1994

NOREEN Hennessy, who entertained an estimated 2.5 million people during her two decades as organist at the now-demolished Prince Edward Theatre, died at Eastwood on January 11, aged 80.

For 19 years she gave three performances a day, six days a week, on the Prince Edward's wurlitzer organ.

On her one day off – Sunday – she was musical director at the Western Suburbs Leagues Club.

She also did many broadcasts over the Macquarie network, the ABC and Radio Australia.

"People came to listen to me playing," she recalled in a 1977 interview. "They came from Melbourne, Queensland, all over Australia. I could even keep teenagers quiet with Debussy. I don't think anyone minded what I played, as long as I played ... I suppose I was



Noreen Hennessy

something like the rock stars of today." She played her last bracket of "high-brow, middle-brow and low-brow" numbers in February 1964 and then returned to her native Brisbane.

However, Miss Hennessy returned briefly to the spotlight in 1977 when she performed at the Music Hall in Neutral Bay.

A requiem mass will be held at St Anthony's Catholic Church, Marsfield, at 11 am today, followed by a private cremation.

Tribute to Noreen

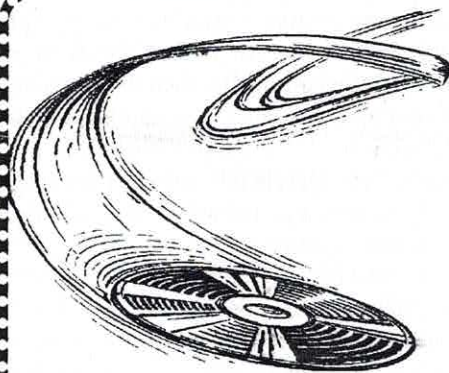
As I no longer have a regular column in the *Herald*, perhaps I may be permitted space on the Letters page to pay tribute to the late Noreen Hennessy, for years the organist at Sydney's beautiful Prince Edward Theatre.

Noreen was a real Sydney identity in the 1950s. No visit to the pictures, as they were then called, matched the experience of the Prince Edward where Noreen, blonde and beaming in crushed velvet and diamente, entertained patrons from the console of the mighty Wurlitzer.

Often she chose music she considered appropriate to the picture we were about to see or had just seen. Before and after *War and Peace* she favoured us with selections from Tchaikovsky, and to pipe us out of the theatre after *Psycho* she played Saint-Saens' *Danse Macabre*. Occasionally though, her choices went horribly awry. I saw *Billy Budd* at a matinee and was deeply moved when the youthful Terence Stamp as Billy was hung from the yardarm. The last shot was of his feet in black-buckled 18th-century sailor's shoes swinging slowly across the screen. The great blue velvet curtains closed and Noreen, probably thinking patrons needed a little cheering up, rose on cue from below the stage ... playing a jaunty version of *Anchors Aweigh*.

Leo Schofield,
Melbourne (Vic).

January 20



Record Bar News

by Neil Palmer

Phil Kelsall's 1993 recording :
I Do Like To Be Beside The Seaside.

Tracks include: *Oh I Do Like To Be Beside The Seaside, The Darling Buds of May, Nights of Gladness, Amazing Grace, Friends For Life, The Holy City*, plus more.

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The Wurlitzer of the Regent Theatre, Wentworthville

In September last year the ex-Regent Theatre building in Wentworthville was damaged by fire. The building was to have been demolished, except for the facade, to make way for a shopping development. In this article Vice-President, Frank Ellis, looks back over the history of the organs in the Wentworthville Regent.

On Thursday, 15th March, 1934, the **Regent Theatre** in the Sydney suburb of **Wentworthville** opened its doors to a full house of local residents eager for their first look at the interior of this new addition to their local amenities. The theatre was opened by the **Hon. F.H. Stewart**, MHR, and he was assisted in the ceremonies by the Mayor of **Holroyd**, **Ald. G.E. Maunder**.

It appears that the theatre did not have an organ when it opened for the re is no mention of one in the souvenir programme which marked the opening. However a locally built organ with a 3-manual console controlling a nondescript collection of pipework was installed in late 1938. **Les Denley** then became the resident organist playing the feature spots, whilst deputy organist, **Tom Kelly**, did the intervals and the layouts if required.

It was rumoured at the time that **Penn Hughes** was involved in the sale and installation of this organ, as he was reportedly involved in the sale and installation of a similar organ in the **Astra Theatre, Drummoyne**.

When one remembers that the **Regent, Wentworthville** was owned by **Mr Reg Payne**, that the **Astra, Drummoyne**, was owned by the two **Richards** brothers, and that these three men later went into partnership to build and operate the **Astra Theatre, Parramatta**, which also had an organ installed, and that later **Penn Hughes** signed a contract with the three partners to appear in any one of the three theatres as directed, then it does seem to support the rumours. If he had indeed arranged the sale of the two locally built organs, he would certainly been in a favoured position to have secured the job of organist in any one of the three theatres.

The organ installed in the **Astra, Parramatta**, was not a locally built

job, but was a **2/5 Christie**. I have a photostat copy of the contract between the partners and **Penn Hughes** which clearly sets out that he was to play in any one of the partnership's three theatres. It also gave him permission to use their organs to teach pupils and he was allowed to have no more than 12 pupils at any one time.

It was not long, however, before **Reg Payne** decided that a better organ was required for his **Regent**, as the locally built organ was clearly inadequate. I well remember **Les Denley**, a close friend of mine for over 40 years, telling me that **Reg Payne** had taken him to the home of the **Wurlitzer** agent, **Mr Dodd**, to try out a **2/7 Wurlitzer** installed in his home as a demonstration unit. **Mr Payne** decided to buy the organ and it was installed in the **Regent** by **Mr Dodd** and his technician, **Gunnar Paulson**, after removing the old, 3-manual locally built organ.

Les Denley told me that the **2/7 Wurlitzer** had been installed in the old **Romano's Restaurant** in York Street, until **Romano's** moved to their newer, luxurious premises in **Castlereagh Street**, almost next door to the **Prince Edward Theatre**. The organ was not included in that move and it was installed in the **Dodd** home as a demonstrator until bought for **Reg Payne's Regent**.

The **Regent's** new organ was opened by **Les Denley** on the 24th August, 1940. It is of interest to note that **Les Denley** played the feature spot, **Tom Kelly** played the interval music, and the organ technician, **Gunnar Paulson**, played the audience out at the end of the show. Later when **Les** went into the Army and **Tom Kelly** joined the Air Force, **Gunnar Paulson** became the resident organist for the duration of the war. On his return from war service, **Les Denley** resumed his position as

resident organist, but without **Tom Kelly** as his deputy. In fact, a deputy was never employed again after the war.

Some years later **Richard Hood** became the resident organist and continued until the organ was shut down, except for a period when **Penn Hughes** played a short season of a few weeks only. Sometime during 1951 at an evening performance, clouds of smoke swirled into the auditorium each time the swell shutters were opened, due to a fire in the blower. The organ was shut down to await repairs, and when finally repairs were commenced a second fire was started by the repairer's blow torch. The organ remained silent then until it was sold to **Mr Maurice Baldwin** of **Castle Hill**.

Maurice, one of the three **Baldwin** brothers, placed the organ in storage, and it is interesting to note that the other two **Baldwin** brothers each had a theatre pipe organ in storage or in the process of installation. The other 2 organs involved were the **3/10 Christie** from the **Roxy Theatre**, Parramatta, and the **2/7 Christie** from the **Savoy Theatre, Enfield**. The latter is now in an **Adelaide** home.

The next owner for the ex-**Regent 2/7 Wurlitzer** was **Mr Phil Doyle** of the **Mecca Theatre, Kogarah** (formerly the **Victory**) and although the organ was to have been installed in his theatre, it did not eventuate. Most of the pipe work is now owned by **TOSA** member and Ticket Secretary, **George Newell** who is installing it in his home, using the console which came from the **2/8 Christie** organ in the **Strathfield Cinema**. The **Regent's** original **Wurlitzer** console is now installed in the home of **Mr Terry Lloyd** of **Canberra**, where I am sure it brings countless hours of pleasure to its owner.

Frank Ellis

The JOHN ATWELL CONCERT

Sunday, 30th January, 1994

A Report by Chris Styles

What an enjoyable Sunday afternoon and what a pity there weren't more TOSA members and friends to enjoy John's music making. John was in great form and, as Colin Tringham and I sat listening, couldn't help but feel that John's playing was just how we like our theatre organ music - rich in sound, "gutsy" at times (using that word in the nicest possible way) and overall great self-indulgence on our part in the best sounds of the Campsie Wurlitzer.

I always feel I have to say when I am asked to write a "piece" on our concerts (and I am always glad at any time to help our editor of TOSA News) that my limited musical training means I cannot be an adequate commentator on any professional musician's playing but, after saying that, there's nothing stopping me from saying that I enjoyed John's concert very much, and I suppose that is the main result one looks for at any musical gathering.

John brought the console up with Jerry Herman's "Hello Dolly" tune *Put On Your Sunday Clothes*, and I like different openers at times other than those we hear regularly. This was followed by a bright and brassy *Veradero* and it's tunes like these I sometimes avoid on my radio programme if I am not sure of pronunciation - no other reasons. This one was pronounced as written, though.

From the movie "Sleepless in Seattle" came the Victor Young tune *When I Fall In Love* with catchy piano

use and pleasant-to-the-ear chording, and then a number I really like *A Wink and a Smile*, now sung by Harry Connick Junior, a man whose singing I really think is great. John played both of these delightfully.

John then reminded us of the very sad passing recently of that most famous lady of Australian Theatre Organ, Noreen Hennessy, and paid tribute to her by playing very wistfully *Thanks For the Memory* with a gentle finish. Next came the Sigmund Romberg "Student Prince" and a medley of numbers from that operetta, played in fine style. John followed this with a very authentic Sidney Torch version of *Dance of the Blue Marionettes* and I know it was authentic as I have a copy of the original, and a sparkling tune it is. Following this was *Lullaby in Rhythm* with percussion plus, and rich lush sounds.

John then moved to his own composition, *From Portsmouth to Botany Bay* as we have just celebrated Australia Day a few days earlier. I really admire the hard work any composer puts into such a work. A most enjoyable "tone poem", if I could describe it that way.

After interval John returned in a bright outfit "to be noticed" - he'd earned his "salt" in the first half, so I can only say he'd already been "noticed". He opened with *The Best Things In Life Are Free*. Here again I use my term "gutsy" - love that tune and its interpretation by John. On with

the music and John Philip Sousa's *King Cotton March* was next. Marches are great fun, and this one was no exception.

John then presented a Lyn Larsen interpretation of *Poinciana* which built up to a solid sound, though staying very musical, and had a quieter finish. Scott Joplin's *Pineapple Rag* was next and this used much piano and percussion. More piano next with a "jazz" style *Say It's Only a Paper Moon* with the piano sounding just great, a little more exposed than its usual self.

That wonderful movie "Strictly Ballroom" inspired John to a medley next consisting of *That's Dancin'*, *I Won't Dance*, *Dancing in the Dark*, *Face the Music and Dance* and lastly *Cheek to Cheek*. All reminding me of my ballroom days - a hundred years ago!

Two more numbers before the big finish, and these were *Serenade* and then straight into *I'm Beginning to See the Light* with its own big finish. Lastly John went all "classical" with the *Polonaise* from Tchaikovsky's "Eugene Onegin", a familiar sound with much feeling. We wouldn't let John go without a well deserved encore, and this was a pacey and bright number, *Who*, which was a great way to end a delightful afternoon's entertainment.

Thanks John, and I know we all enjoyed your playing once more. We look forward to seeing you in the not too distant future.



OUR NEXT ARTIST :

DAVID JOHNSTON

Sunday, 27th March at 2.00pm

Orion Centre, Campsie

David Johnston is well-known to our regular concert-goers for his entertaining concerts, his engaging personality and his skill in providing theatre organ accompaniment for silent films. His exceptional talent as a musician, combined with a flair for showmanship, have justly earned him a reputation as being Australia's most entertaining organist.

David was born into a musical family, his father also being an accomplished organist. As a young boy it was his ambition to follow in his father's footsteps and become an organist (if he could not get a job as a train driver!)

His first appointment as an organist was at Melbourne's Dendy Theatre, later to become the home of the Theatre Organ Society's famous Capitol WurliTzer organ. He also turned his attention to Electrical Engineering studies, while continuing to work part-time as a musician. He was able to combine his musical and engineering skills by working with musical instrument companies - demonstrating, selling, managing, servicing and

repairing instruments. He worked with numerous theatrical companies and developed a skill for which he is regarded as Australia's foremost exponent - accompanying silent movies.

For 10 years David was Musical Director of Melbourne's famous "Naughty Nineties Music Hall", whilst upgrading his qualifications in Electronic Engineering and Computer Electronics - studies which are now of great value to him with the growing application of computers in musical composition, in performance and in the instruments themselves.

The demands on his talent have made David something he never intended to be - a full-time professional musician. He is the Musical Director of the "Bull 'n Bush Music Hall", "John Hancock's Music Hall", plays regularly for organ clubs and societies throughout Australia, and is organist and Musical Adviser to the Melbourne "Carols by Candlelight". David particularly enjoys working with young people and was a National Adviser to the "Youth of Australia" movement, contributing to their monthly magazine, "Keyboard World",

and is a Consultant to the Board of the Australian Guild of Music and Speech.

David was chosen to play the first-ever theatre organ concert as a part of the world renowned "Melbourne International Festival of Organ and Harpsichord", and has been invited to serve on the Melbourne Town Hall Organ Restoration Committee under the direction of the American virtuoso Carlo Curley. He is a past President of the Victorian Division of TOSA and is Patron of the Western Australian Division of TOSA.

In his spare time he pursues another interest, that of fully instrument rated private pilot. His love of flying has taken him to many parts of Australia and serves as a convenient means of getting from one concert location to the next.

Last year David played for us in Sydney in February last year, also accompanying the Australian silent film, *The Kid Stakes*. His concert was greatly appreciated by all of the audience members and we have invited him back to entertain us again, knowing in advance what a treat he has in store for us all.

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