

# TOSA NEWS

December 2010  
Volume 49 No.10

Price: \$2.00

**50th Anniversary Year**

**SUNDAY 5 December 2:00PM**  
**MARRICKVILLE TOWN HALL**  
**Christmas Show**  
**John Atwell & Tony Fenelon**



**Play the  
2/11 Mighty Wurlitzer & Roland Piano**

# Directory

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# From the President



Hello all,

Well, another year has almost gone, but this time not just any old year. Our 50th Anniversary year has seen some great times and some difficult and frustrating events. The good news is that those frustrating times, the hoist breakdown and the need to rearrange venue schedules, are now in the past. With some hard work and cooperation of many people our shows have been highly successful.

Attendances have been good due to three specific things: 1. High quality Artists, 2. Quality presentations, and 3. Quality advertising by you our members. Thank you to each person who has contributed. You may consider you have not accomplished much by just inviting a friend or neighbor to come with you. We had 200 people at the last show – if each brought just one person to our final show for the year.... well you know the result. Wouldn't it be fantastic! How about giving it a try?

Thank you to all those who attended the AGM: also again to Ritchie Willis for his hospitality. The afternoon tea supplied by the ladies and the mini concert presented by some of our members gave an added benefit to the afternoon.

Regarding the future. Despite all our efforts our membership has reduced this year. To maintain our existing membership fee and ticket

prices we need to increase our numbers. Could you please make it your project to get at least one new member this year. If you would like a few forms to offer to your friends we can easily arrange this. Membership forms can be printed from TOSA web site [www.tosa.net.au](http://www.tosa.net.au)

Shows being planned for 2011 will continue the high standard of this past year. We are determined that our audio and visual presentation will be even further improved.

All aspects of the organization are run by volunteers. We need more now and will need even more as we look to restoration of the Christie organ.

More of that in the new year, but in the meantime start thinking of how you may be able to assist your Society. If you can help in any way, or would like further information, please give me a call.

Finally may I wish each of you a very Blessed and Joyous Christmas and a healthy, prosperous and musical New Year.

Happy organising,

Geoff Brimley

## From the Mailbox...



Thanks for your responses and please continue to email or write in, telling us what you think.

Where space permits we will do our best to publish your comments, but as space is limited, the editor reserves the right to edit any submitted comments and, as always, the views expressed by any individual may not necessarily coincide with the views of TOSA NSW Div.

Please submit all comments via email to:

The Editor [editor@tosa.net.au](mailto:editor@tosa.net.au)  
or in writing to:  
The Editor - TOSA News (NSW Div)  
PO Box A2322  
SYDNEY SOUTH, NSW, 1235

### New Members

No new members in October.

### Members Change of Address

If you are moving house, or change your email address please advise the Membership Secretary of your new address and/or email address by phoning (02) 9524 7203 or email [membership@tosa.net.au](mailto:membership@tosa.net.au)

## New Service for TOSA

### (NSW) Divn Members

*Theatre Organ Sheet Music Collection & Lending Library*

TOSA express our appreciation to all members who donated theatre organ sheet music to the new collection. The collection is finalised and has been catalogued. Thank you Graham Glendenning for undertaking this project.

*Further information regarding the collection will appear in TOSA News in the new year.*

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### *An Ideal Christmas Gift*

**Peter Held, (TOSA NSW)**  
**Plays light music on a 'factory-stamped' CD**  
**\$10 plus postage**

**Contact Peter Held,**  
**24/25 Phillip Street**  
**Roselands NSW 2196**  
**Phone (02) 9759 5174**

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### Free to be picked up

**2 x Baldwin Cinema Organs**

2 manuals with 32 note concave pedal board

Contact Jack Gibbs on  
(02) 9520 9132  
Engadine NSW

## Editorial



As our 50th Anniversary year draws to a close I want to thank everyone who has contributed information and articles to me for TOSA News.

I hope you have enjoyed the reviews of our shows this year where we have had an excellent group of Theatre Organists and Pianists to entertain you. I think the reviews of each show have been to a very high standard and I thank the reviewers for the significant amount of research they have done in preparing the reviews. The reviewers have created the atmosphere and mood that each musician presented in their performances.

I hope you enjoy the two articles in this issue prepared by member John Batts being an Interview with British Theatre Organist Simon Gledhill as well as the review of his show at Marrickville Town Hall this year.

We look forward to seeing many of you at the Christmas Show on 5 December at Marrickville Town Hall.

*Ernie Vale*  
*Editor TOSA News*

## Advertising Rates in TOSA News

For Members:

Small, Organ related ads = FREE!

For all other cases:

Small bubble = \$11.00

Quarter Page = \$24.75

Half Page = \$49.50

Full Page = \$99.00

Full Page Insert = \$125.00

### Members' Playing Dates 2010

#### The Orion Theatre Campsie 2nd Thursday 1:30pm - 4:30pm

December 9th

Please phone or SMS

**Craig Keller on 0418 484 798**

Players and listeners welcome.  
Please bring a plate of goodies for  
afternoon tea.

Tea/Coffee provided. Parking at  
rear off Shakespeare St.

**see insert for more details**

#### Marrickville Town Hall 4th Monday evening at 7:30pm

No players evening in December

To be sure there is no last  
minute cancellation at  
Marrickville please ring Neil on  
9798 6742 after 7:00pm

**TOSA NSW**  
**Christmas Shopping List of Music**  
**available as at 10 October 2010**

**ATWELL John**, Australia's Mighty Little Wurlitzer, Marrickville Town Hall. CD \$25

**ATWELL John**, Here's Malvern! Malvern Town Hall, Victoria, Compton Pipe Organ. CD \$25

**BAKER Barry**, For the Very First Time. Wehmeier Wurlitzer, Ohio. **Cassette** \$12

**BALOGH Charlie**, Pipes Plus. Good Time Charley's Wurlitzer, Grand Rapids. **Cassette** \$12

**EDDINGTON Jelani**, Peter and the Wolf & Other Selections. Plummer Auditorium Wurlitzer. CD \$26

**FENELON Tony**, Theatre Organ Magic. Melbourne Regent Wurlitzer in the 1960's. CD \$28

**KELSALL Phil**, Welcome to My World. Tower Ballroom, Blackpool. CD \$25

**PARKER Donna**, Lady Elsinore. Elsinore Theatre's Wurlitzer Pipe Organ CD \$25

**RICHARDS Rob**, Now Playing. El Capitan Theatre Wurlitzer Pipe Organ CD \$25

**VALLIANT Brett**, Lyric Wurlitzer. Little River Studio 3/19 Wurlitzer, Wichita. CD \$20

**WRIGHT George**, Let George Do It. Pasadena Studio Wurlitzer. CD \$28

**GLEDHILL/DOUBLE/RIGGS/PARKER/HERMAN, Alabama Jubilee.** Alabama Theatre Wurlitzer. 2 Disc set \$35

**These items are available for purchase at TOSA shows.**

**They may be ordered for postage by adding \$2.00 for postage and handling using the enclosed form.**

**TOSA NSW Division  
50th Anniversary  
Commemorative Coffee Mugs  
They would make a great Christmas gift**

The mug has a colour picture of the Orion Wurlitzer on one side and a colour picture of the Marrickville Wurlitzer on the other side. It has a double gold rim with gold lettering and gold music notes.

This memento of the Theatre Organ Society of Australia NSW Division's 50th Anniversary would make a very attractive Christmas gift.

There is a limited production of the mugs and they will be available to purchase only at our 50th Anniversary shows this year until sold out. They come in a special box.

**The price is \$25 per mug or  
a set of four (4) mugs for \$80 or a set of six (6) mugs for \$110**



# **Theatre Organ Society of Australia (NSW Division) Inc.**

## **President's Report**

Firstly, may I thank all members, and particularly those present at this AGM, for your continued support of the Society. Our shows throughout the year have been well attended, some more than others, and this is reflected in our financial situation of which you will hear more later.

The 50th Anniversary celebrations have been a great success despite a hiccup with the venue arrangements for the main celebrations in March. There are still some souvenirs remaining and so it's not too late to get yourself a memento.

Our artists for the year have excelled themselves. Each show has been presented in a professional manner thanks to them and a dedicated group of supporting volunteers. Our audio and video personnel seem to conjure up something amazing each time and their experience has certainly done much to improve the overall presentation over recent years. To each member who has contributed throughout the year, whether by direct involvement in the production or by stocking, setting-up, or selling at the candy bar, the afternoon teas or recordings bar, my sincere thanks.

In addition there are those who look after ticket sales, membership, production of TOSA News, purchase of supplies, maintenance of our in-

struments – and so the list goes on. Behind all that is a Committee who give unstintingly of their time and effort. To all involved we, the members, owe a great debt of gratitude.

Having listed some of the areas of member involvement I must say again that we are always looking for additional volunteers and would welcome your assistance. Just speak to one of the Committee.

I mentioned earlier the hiccup regarding the March Saturday show. The other problem which stretched over 6 months was of course the hoist problem at the Orion.

Although it is again operating, there is still further upgrading to be done. We do not expect this to interfere with our 2011 bookings although it is possible one members' playing time could be compromised. Fortunately we were able to transfer all show bookings to Marrickville with a slight adjustment in date for the December show.

Your Committee has discussed the question of Membership Fees and Show ticket prices. This is particularly pertinent as approximately 50 persons have not renewed their membership this year and ticket price concessions have been extended to cover Seniors Card holders. Despite the reduced income it has been decided to leave all prices unchanged. The continuation of this will largely depend on our ability to increase membership and show attendance. For this we rely on you, our members. Advertising, which we have increased substan-



tially, goes only so far. The best and proven method of advertising is word-of-mouth. Your personal invitation is invaluable – please use it.

Regarding a home for the Christie. Over the past 12 months we have investigated three locations. Each was identified to us by a member.

The first had looked promising and had been ongoing for some 18 months. The second was a Civic Centre but on closer investigation major building alterations would be required and made the proposal impractical. The third location is extremely promising.

Earlier this year we became aware of a church in suburban Sydney which had an electronic organ which was dying. The church just happened to already have the space for chambers although they had not been constructed. Three phase power had been installed in anticipation of some day having a pipe

organ. A short discussion was held with the Minister who was enthusiastic and suggested that a draft proposal be submitted to the church leadership for consideration.

We were then invited to meet with a delegation from their leadership and it quickly became apparent that they were seriously interested. Various matters were clarified and for our part it became apparent that if this project was to proceed TOSA would have to commit more financially than originally desired.

The matter was then put to the church leadership as a whole who, we understand, unanimously agreed to the proposal. They now are required to submit the proposal to the church's Sydney authorities for consideration and final decision.

We understand there has been preliminary phone contact and there was nothing to discourage the local church in those discussions. It is not clear how long this procedure

## Show & Membership Prices

The following TOSA show ticket prices now apply:

	Australian Artists	Overseas Artists
Non-members	\$25.00	\$27.50
Non-member Pensioner/Senior	\$22.00	\$25.00
TOSA Members	\$20.00	\$20.00
Students 15-21yrs	\$10.00	\$10.00
Group Booking for 10 or more Adults	\$20 per person	

Child under 15yrs accompanying an adult: FREE!

Annual Membership Fees are now: \$30.00 for Full membership, and \$20.00 for Concession, Country, Interstate & Overseas.

Membership enquiries Bob Alleway 9524 7203 [membership@tosa.net.au](mailto:membership@tosa.net.au)

Associate Membership for a spouse/partner is only an additional 50%

will take but you can be assured you will be advised of developments as they occur. Whilst we are not in a position to name the church or suburb we are confident that it will meet with the approval of most, if not all, members.

The Committee believes that this project will proceed. We will need a team of willing members to work on the Christie and in the next issue of TOSA News you will be asked to lodge an expression of interest if you are able to assist. And no, you don't need any special qualifications – just a willingness to work within a team under the guidance of an experienced person.

Finally, a note of thanks to our host, Ritchie Willis who has willingly opened his home and theatre to us for this meeting.

Again, thank you for your support of your organization, your Committee and me.

Thank you.  
Geoff Brimley, 7th November 2010

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## **SECRETARY'S REPORT 2010**

Good afternoon and a warm welcome to the 2010 AGM situated in the Selwyn Theatre and we thank Ritchie Willis for making this venue possible.

Another year has passed, and the 2010 Committee has once again worked together and important de-

isions have been determined.

This year has been very important because of our NSW 50th Anniversary Celebrations of the Theatre Organ Society of Australia.

President Forums are part of a six monthly Agenda where each state exchanges data and Minutes are recorded.

Wesley Theatre once again was visited in July -- John Batts being the main artist followed by a few of us tackling the Christie organ as open console.

OH & S Issues have caused us amongst other things to re-arrange our afternoon tea procedures and that now minimises any danger to the public and volunteers.

A yearly planning meeting was held at Epping Baptist Church followed by a social Club Day and open console on the Christie.

We organised two Home Organ Parties this year -- firstly at John Batts' Bronte home. They are another important social event, which in turn helps the members, who are attending, time to have a talkfest. The second party for 2010 will be late November at Oyster Bay followed by an April organ party at Mittagong next year.

Most important and exciting news for 2011 could be our Christie organ finding a home after many years in storage and finally being installed in a church.

I would like to pass on my sincere condolences to the spouses, families and friends of TOSA members who have passed away this year also a thank you to the volunteers for their help in making Sunday shows run smoothly and may I suggest there is always room in many ways, especially with the future installation of the Christie, for a few extra hands to lighten the load, quicken the pace and might I say move forward.

Thank you  
Deirdre McMullan

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## For a Hammond Organ Enthusiast

Hammond 122J  
in working order

We are not seeking payment for the organ, just hoping to find someone who can find a use for it. Contact David Bonnitcha, in Russell Lea (near Fivedock) phone 0416 970 578. Enthusiast to arrange removal of the organ.



## AN INTERVIEW WITH THEATRE-ORGANIST SIMON GLEDHILL.

*On account of a busy schedule, Simon was not able to grant TOSA(NEWS) a question-and-answer session while fleetingly in Sydney in late September. However, he was kind enough to agree to answering a list of written queries by way of an "interview." These questions I thought might be of general interest to our readers and I am grateful for both the additional time it took him to pen his replies and the particular insights he was willing to offer as a renowned theatre organist. I'm sure I could have asked many more questions, but restricted myself to a dozen [John S. Batts, Sydney, NSW].*

*JSB: Popular talk is that you were a proficient piano-accordionist as a young fellow. What on earth possessed you to embrace the much rarer and more cumbersome instrument that is the cinema organ?*

SG: My musical education began on the piano accordion. When I was six, a friend brought a toy accordion to a "show and tell" session at school, and apparently I went home and told my parents I wanted to learn to play the accordion. They bought me one for my next Christmas present and found a local teacher, who turned out to be excellent. I continued to play the accordion until I was around 17, winning a number of competitions along the way. I still own an accordion, although I haven't played it for a long time.

I got into organ music because my father liked it. He purchased a small home electronic organ with the idea that he would learn to play it, but I soon hijacked it! (*continued beyond the middle pages*)

**TOSA NSW Division Presents**  
**The Christmas Show**

with

**John Atwell and Tony Fenelon**



**Playing the 2 Manual 11 Rank Mighty Wurlitzer  
and Roland Piano**

**\*\*MARRICKVILLE TOWN HALL\*\***

**Marrickville Road, Marrickville**

**Sunday 5 December 2010 at 2:00pm**

(Disabled access available at the entrance next to the Fire Station)

Free off road parking at Banana Joe's off Petersham Road and Touhy Lane  
as well as at the corner of Marrickville Road  
with access from Livingstone Road near the traffic lights

**Bookings: (02) 9629 2257**

Visa & Mastercard accepted

**for more information see [www.tosa.net.au](http://www.tosa.net.au)**

## **Tony Fenelon**

**Tony's** concerts provide a tasteful balance between popular tunes and light classics and include music from the films, stage shows, jazz, and great standards. As the piano has always been his first love, **Tony** will present some solo numbers as well as duets with John on the Roland piano.

On Easter Monday, 1999, **Tony** featured in the inaugural concert of the Melbourne Regent Theatre's new Wurlitzer pipe organ. Since the civic opening of the Regent, **Tony** has been featured on the Wurlitzer organ during the seasons of the re-release of the films My Fair Lady and Gone with the Wind.

A man of great versatility, **Tony's** dedication, energy, musical integrity and personality make him an artist of constant demand throughout the world.

### **Co Patron JOHN ATWELL**

It is just over thirty years since **John Atwell** gave his first performance on a theatre pipe organ at the Dendy Theatre, Melbourne, during the 1968 TOSA convention. Since those early days, John has presented many concerts around Australia and overseas.

He continues to play concerts at theatre organ venues around Australia both as a solo performer and in duo collaboration with his long-time colleague and friend, **Tony Fenelon**. Some of these concerts have been premier recitals on new organ installations, including the Capri Theatre, Goodwood. John has acted as consultant on many of these installations.

**Tony and John** played the opening show for the ATOS Convention this year at the Seattle Paramount Theatre, USA. What a great performance on the 4 manual 20 rank Publix 1 (Opus 1819) Wurlitzer and Grand Piano.

### **Tickets to the show :**

**Members \$20;**

**Non Member Pensioner/Senior Card \$22**

**Non-Members \$25;**

**Student (15 – 21 Years) \$10**

**Children accompanied by a paying adult free**

**Group bookings for 10 or more adults \$20 per person**

Note: If your friends or relations and/or their children have never been to one of these Shows then the first time they come to a show it is free. See [www.tosa.net.au](http://www.tosa.net.au)

**for the free booking form & booking form.** Please encourage your friends, relations and/or children to come to this show featuring Wurlitzer magic.

I taught myself to play for a while, but my parents wisely realised that I needed formal tuition, so I started lessons with another excellent local teacher, Michael Woodhead, who also taught me piano and classical organ (his own background was in classical organ music).

It was Mike who discovered that there was a Compton theatre organ installed in a former Methodist chapel not far from where my parents and I lived. It could be hired out for private practice for £3 per hour, and Mike encouraged me to go along and give it a try. I did, and quickly became hooked. That was in 1982.

The sound of the theatre organ is more complete, more thrilling and more versatile than that of the accordion — there's so much more that you can do with it. And you don't have to generate your own wind power by opening and closing the bellows!

*JSB: You are now very highly regarded as an organist in the theatre-organ world and are in demand at many venues in several continents; at the same time it's said that you have another career remote from music-making. How on earth do you find time to keep up a rehearsal schedule and to keep different programmes in your memory bank?*

SG: I've worked for Lloyds Banking Group since 1987 in a variety of roles. I'm now a Credit Director responsible for the Bank's specialised lending businesses — acquisition finance, project finance, ship finance, commercial aviation finance, rail finance, and so on.

I never seriously considered taking up music as a full-time profession. Except for the favoured few, it's a tough way to make a living and I'm happy to keep it as a hobby. I play between 20 and 25 concerts each year. The UK concerts take place at weekends and I can usually get there and back without having to take time off from my day job; the

overseas concerts are accommodated within my annual holiday from the Bank. Rehearsal is tricky. The amount I do depends on whether or not I'm learning new material and/or preparing for a big concert or series of concerts. I rehearse at home, on my three-manual Allen digital theatre organ — on week-day evenings after work and, of course, at weekends. Fitting it in between my other commitments is a challenge, but it must be done!

I'm lucky in having a retentive memory. I rarely use sheet music at concerts, and this has led some people to wonder if I play by ear. I can play by ear, but I always start with the sheet music when learning new repertoire. I find that, in the course of learning and arranging a new piece, after a few days I can remember it without making any special effort to memorise it.

*JSB: As with your CDs, your public programmes show a tendency to play pieces of music which are usually categorised as British light music, mostly written in the first half of the last century, and as in the case, say, of Reginald King, this is music that has fallen out of favour. Yet presumably your inclination is a conscious choice. As our legal friends say, "please explain."*

SG: While this style of music may have fallen out of favour at one stage, I think it has come back into fashion, in a modest way. Lots of CDs are now available featuring light music: both re-releases of old recordings and brand new recordings. I've always found this type of music attractive — tuneful, colourful and a pleasing contrast to the show tunes and standards that we all enjoy hearing at theatre organ concerts. And, of course, a lot of good light music was written by theatre organists such as Sidney Torch and Frederic Curzon, so there is a theatre organ connection.

*JSB: TOSA(NSW) still promotes a small*

*series of theatre-organ afternoons played by professionals each season, yet acknowledges both that attendances are in decline and that the average age of attendees is on the increase — an unhappy state, yet one found elsewhere in the theatre-organ world too. From an artist's perspective what are we doing wrong?*

SG: If I had the answer to this question, we would have reversed the problem already! These days, the theatre organ is a niche musical instrument and one difficulty is that the cost of promoting it to a wide audience is prohibitively expensive.

My own view is that there is little point trying to interest very young people in the theatre organ — today's pop music is, conceptually, 180 degrees away from the type of music produced by the theatre organ — but I think there is scope to promote the instrument more assertively to people aged over 50 whose musical tastes have broadened and who are less bothered about the peer pressure of "being cool."

*JSB: How far may it be an advantage to the theatre organ to offer shows in which the organist collaborates with players of other musical instruments? If so, which instruments best serve the cause?*

SG: I enjoy such shows, and I think that many instruments combine effectively with the theatre organ. An obvious example is the piano, and the excellent piano-organ concerts performed by Tony Fenelon and John Atwell are a case in point. I think that any solo instrument — violin, flute, oboe, clarinet, saxophone or trumpet, for example — can sound great with organ accompaniment. I'm not sure, however, that such shows will necessarily lead to larger audiences.

*JSB: Increasingly, it's difficult to find*

*places for re-housing theatre organs in similar venues (think of the former Trocadero, Elephant & Castle Wurlitzer in London, for example). TOSA(NSW) spent 18 years before installing the Capitol Wurlitzer in the Orion at Campsie. Do you have any particular advice about placing these instruments in different kinds of venues such as churches [Epping Baptist Church, Clayhall (UK), Kingston (Ontario), St. Pete's Florida, etc.], schools [Dickinson HS, etc.], pizza parlours, dance halls, barns, private houses, etc.?*

SG: I agree that this is tricky. The ideal is to own the venue in which the organ is installed, so that you have complete control over it. Some theatre organ groups have done this, a good example being the Capri Theatre in Adelaide. However, it's a big financial risk and responsibility and I fully understand why many groups shy away from it.

Ideally a theatre organ needs to be installed in a room which is big enough to give it "room to breathe". It has been said many times that the most important stop on any organ is the room into which it speaks; this is so true. Theatre organs can sound OK in small, acoustically dry rooms, if they are very carefully installed and regulated, but they really blossom in a larger room with warm, reverberant acoustics.

*JSB: Much is made of the view that theatre-organ programmes tend to present older music, and little enough from the previous 30 years — the presumption is that young listeners (when discerned) are therefore marginalised and unlikely to develop into future audiences. Is there something inherently crippling in such a view? What does this mean for theatre-organists?*

SG: The music played on the theatre organ needs to sound comfortable, and some more recent music is suitable. However, in my opinion, little

music written in the last 30 years is of comparable quality to that written in the preceding period. Ultimately, I want to play high quality music which sounds good on the instrument. These simple requirements drive me back to Cole Porter, George Gershwin and the like. Jazz musicians don't feel the need to apologise for playing such music, and nor do I.

I have included music by, for example, Andrew Lloyd Webber and Stephen Sondheim in my concerts, and I'm happy to continue doing so. Music played on the theatre organ must have strong melody and harmony. Much modern pop music has little melody or harmony, being far more focused on rhythm — for this reason it doesn't work well on the theatre organ.

*JSB: Your theatre-organ style is often described as "jazzy". This is probably too restrictive a term yet it does cover the treatments you accord to some ballads (e.g. "On the Sunny Side of the Street" and "Come Fly With Me" at Marrickville). How would you like your theatre-organ style to be described?*

SG: Eclectic. I play pieces in a jazzy style when I think that the music suits such treatment. Anyone who has heard Frank Sinatra sing "Come Fly with Me", accompanied by the Billy May orchestra, will understand why I chose a jazzy style for my arrangement of this piece — it fits the tune like a glove. But when I'm playing a ballad, or a transcription of a light orchestral piece, I "play it straight". To me, the wonderful thing about the theatre organ is its ability to embrace a wide range of musical styles. I try to reflect this in my concerts.

*JSB: I'm certain that most of our members will have been impressed by your deft handling of the Marrickville Wurlitzer after a comparatively short time playing it. What advice would you like to pass along to our players about*

*setting pistons? And did you use more than one channel?*

SG: No, I use a single channel, because I can't be bothered with changing memory levels mid-performance! If the organ has a decent number of pistons, as at Marrickville, I can easily manage with one level, plus some hand registration to add variety.

Theatre organ registration is such a complex subject that you could write a book about it. Indeed, Walt Strony has done just that, and I recommend it to anyone who is interested in the subject. Two general comments on my own approach:

(i) I tend to try to set certain sounds on the same piston on any instrument I play, to help me remember where to find that sound in the heat of a live performance.

(ii) Changing registration should never be allowed to interfere with the natural flow of the music. I've heard players who slow down, or even stop playing, in order to change sounds, and that drives me nuts! The music should always come first.

*JSB: I found your choices of music displayed an interesting selection of styles and periods. Are these decisions governed by the instrument, by the audience, by your own taste (even idiosyncrasies) — or by most if not all of the foregoing? And if the answer is personal taste, then do you worry about how well that serves the overall cause of theatre-organ audiences?*

SG: Of course the instrument is a factor — I select music which works on the organ I'm playing, and that can involve last minute changes to my concert programmes. Mostly, however, I play what I enjoy playing, although I try to include a wide variety, with contrasts between succeeding selections. Luckily my audiences seem to like what I like.

*JSB: From time to time one reads about*



*"the art of theatre-organ playing." If you agree with this concept, then what in your view constitutes the "art"?*

SG: It is an art, in my view. There's so much to it — the technique, not only of playing the notes (with both hands and feet) but also registering the stops; the wide and varied repertoire; and the need for the player to arrange as well as perform the music. Managing all these challenges simultaneously, without making it obvious that you're working your socks off, is the "art that conceals art". That's what makes the theatre organ such a satisfying instrument to play.

*JSB: Most theatre-organ societies are a little apprehensive about the future, but what views of the role of the instrument have you as a younger player? Where do you see yourself and, say, TOSA in ten years' time?*

SG: I think the theatre organ has a future, but it has become, and will remain, a niche instrument. The best way to ensure its future is to focus on quality — quality of instruments, venues, presentation standards and, of course, players. Quality always survives, because people recognise its intrinsic worth.

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## Simon Gledhill wows Marrickville

*by John S. Batts.*

On a sunny Sunday afternoon (26 September) in Marrickville what better opener than a sprightly eighty-year old tune to open proceedings than **On the Sunny Side of the Street** (1930: Jimmy McHugh & Dorothy Fields). Simon Gledhill obliged with a bright and bouncy account of the song, the pedal cymbal accenting the beat at first. Then the music grew into a snappy, har-

monically-adventurous version of what has become a jazz standard. Having earned audience attention, Simon went on to deliver a delightfully varied programme of music; contrasting choices averted any hint of boredom that might otherwise arise from listening to an eleven-rank instrument for a couple of hours. Careful registration this day was another of Simon's hallmarks, as should be clear from some of the later comments. And a minor, third contributor to his attractive style of playing is his regular employ of non-tremulated pipes to offset the normally throbbing wind-chests.

The second piece of music on any theatre-organ programme is always revealing. After the playful re-harmonising and big sounds, he chose some British light music from the pen of Reginald King (1904-1991) — a quiet, reflective **Serenade for My Lady**, interesting music with dreamy melodies and sweet harmonies, and played with deftness; there was even provision for a delicate patch of untremmed soloed Flute. King had been a notable pianist as well as composer. Simon feels some affinity with this kind of music; he had recorded King's "June Night on Marlow Reach" at the Tower, Blackpool, on his *Shall We Dance?* CD in 1994. In sum, this "Serenade" was a pleasing musical choice, not least since the composition features rarely in TPO shows.

So, in order to maintain maximum audience attention, where did Simon turn next? This reviewer is never quite certain of whether or not his account is to be read mostly by those who were unable to be present. However, those in attendance will know that the organist opted for a medley of songs. Again, there was gentle surprise because the single composer featured was not the familiar Gershwin, Kern, or Cole Porter. Instead we were treated to some reminders of an American composer of

popular songs, **Richard A. Whiting** (1891-1938). He was posthumously inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame, and a Broadway musical of 1980, *A Day in Hollywood, a Night in the Ukraine*, partly celebrated Whiting's best-known songs and his collaborations with the likes of Johnny Mercer, Leo Robin, Gus Kahn and Buddy DeSylva. In Simon's medley that began grandly I identified: "Breezin' Along With the Breeze" (1926); "Louise" (1929), and "Hooray for Hollywood" (1938); then there were wisps of "Beyond the Blue Horizon" and perhaps "Sleepy Time Gal" (1924). In weaving these songs together the organist demonstrated how much at one he was with the instrument; moreover, the characteristic contrasting of ballad and jolly up-tempo playing was matched by the varying use of right-hand chords on the Solo manual alternating with single-note melody statements. Again one was aware in this medley of his subtleties of swell-shutter control at the service of the music.

Next Simon turned to **Moonlight in Vermont** (1943: John Blackburn & Karl Suedsdorf), a ballad celebrating the delights of the American New England state. It might be noted that this song was a recording success for Richard Whiting's daughter, Margaret, long before Frank Sinatra committed it to disk. Simon suggested his approach to it owed something to English theatre-organist Bryan Rodwell's treatment. Again, the element of surprise was to the fore. Initially we heard a chorale-like treatment of the melody, an untremmed Clarinet over an accompaniment that briefly reminded one both of Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata" on account of the quaver notes/motif and of a Bach chorale on account of the registration. Despite aircraft rumble overhead, this led seamlessly into the Vermont song's melody, and Simon was launched into exploring the established

harmonies. Here as throughout the afternoon, one had opportunity to appreciate of the careful phrasing of the music. Similarly, there was much to admire about the improvised bridging between choruses, before a gentle cadence brought the delicious music-making to its String + Vox close.

From the American back to the British, from the relatively known song to the less known light music, this time of Haydn Wood (1881-1959). Simon has recorded **Sketch of a Dandy** (1952) on his *Kalvalkade* CD (1996) recorded at the Dickinson Kimball, so he clearly feels that much British light music can be successfully transcribed on theatre organs. This orchestral piece worked well on the Marrickville Wurlitzer in his hands. I particularly enjoyed the second-touch counter melody in the middle section of this work. "Sketch" was described by Simon as "light and crisp." It certainly has a jolly motif, but there are quieter, more soulful moments too, a challenge to the performer; yet the thoughtful executant knows that a Wurlitzer is well equipped to deal with swings of mood.

After the preceding two shorter numbers it was time to be expansive via another medley of tunes, this time from the Lerner and Loewe musical of 1947, *Brigadoon* [MGM film of the same, 1954]. The music always trumps that fantastical plot about a Scottish village that appeared out of the mist for one day every century; if memory serves, this happy arrangement for the enchanted if imprisoned villagers guaranteed Brigadoon would live for ever and not be sullied by the material world, unless someone should leave and the covenant be broken. Of course, the arrival of two young New Yorkers and love in the air threaten Brigadoon's existence. Yet as so often in the world of classical opera too, the music transcends niceties of narrative and commonsense.

Simon opened his selection in stirring style and was especially persuasive in treating probably the two best-known songs, "The Heather on the Hill" and "Almost Like Being in Love." This medley also demonstrated that the organist was capable of swift hand-registration changes to effect different tone-colours. Here too I observed both that whatever the music Simon is playing his sound volumes generally remain much the same and that nothing is soloed for too long.

The next music was indeed a change of mood and genre. From faux-Scottish, Simon turned to a genuine Latin-American bossa nova that has enjoyed much success, **The Girl from Ipanema** (1962: Antonio Carlos Jobim with Portuguese lyrics by Vinicius de Moraes, & later English lyrics by Norman Gimbel). During this dance, the shifting coloured lights on the surfaces behind the console were seen to good effect, adding a pleasing theatricality as they intermittently did for other songs too. That is not to suggest that Simon's music was upstaged because this was a most musical version of every electronic organist's stand-by. Within eight bars the swaying rhythm had been established, followed by its punchy theme, then a contrastingly warm string-dominated section. One heard briefly also beneath the melody a short pedal-cymbal segment, but for the most part Simon is not as easily moved to employ tuned percussions and traps as are pizza-parlour organists. Yet each restatement offered something fresh for the careful listener.

Simon's next choice of music shifted decades and nations with **Be My Life's Companion** (1951: Bob Hilliard & Milton De Lugg). This ballad was registered at much the same sound-level throughout. It was penned originally for the Mills Brothers, though Simon asso-

ciated it with Mario Lanza, but this day, thanks to the organist, it sounded as though made for the Wurlitzer voices.

A march by Eric Coates (1886-1957) titled **London Calling** (1943), closed the first half. Like so much of Coates' music this was bright and cheerful, and doubtless fun to play — Simon at the console has the happy knack of communicating his enjoyment — though I'm not convinced this march is one of Coates' memorable tunes. That said, theatre-organ audiences must surely expect to hear some less familiar music at a show. This march begins in bustling style and gives opportunity for the Wurlitzer brass (English Horn and Tuba) to be featured. The playing was as busy as the sounds were boisterous. A drawn-out cadence reminded me that this piece is by no means to be disparaged; indeed this is a march that could find its feet in any theatre-organ programme.

The second half began with what would have been a good console-raiser, a song written for Frank Sinatra called **Come Fly with Me** (1957: Jimmy Van Heusen & Sammy Cahn). The familiar melody line came this time packaged with brassy splashes, single-note small reeds (Kinura), warm washes of Strings and Vox for a chorus, and much harmonic ingenuity.

Another treat was to follow, again a slightly different idea for a medley. Simon explained it as being Indiana-inspired, in fact, a small tribute to the melodies of Bloomington-born Hoagland Howard Carmichael (1899 – 1981) usually referred to as "Hoagy," best known for writing four of the most-recorded American songs of all time: "Stardust" (1929), "Georgia On My Mind" (1930), "The Nearness of You" (1937), and "Heart and Soul". Alec Wilder in his study of the American popular song concluded that Hoagy Carmichael was

the "most talented, inventive, sophisticated and jazz-oriented" of the hundreds composing pop songs in the first half of the 20th century. Simon, of course, had surprises in his choice, so we were principally treated to "My Resistance is Low" (lyrics by Harold Adamson, 1951), "Two Sleepy People" (lyrics by Frank Loesser, 1938), "One Morning in May" (lyrics by Mitchell Parish, 1933), and "Up the Lazy River" (lyrics by Sidney Arodin). Thanks to the TOSA-crew's close-up projection, now boasting large screens on either side of the console to enhance audience enjoyment, one can notice that Simon likes chorded playing in the soloed right hand, not simply triads in various positions but even four-note chords lending harmonic interest. The first of his medley was accorded up-tempo treatment and the rhythm, enhanced by careful phrasing, was catchy. He gave a bluesy reading of "Two Sleepy People," before an elegant bridge was heard into "One Morning" with its several modulations and this song even presented a Chime riff — delicate playing indeed! Perhaps Simon kept the best till last, for he gave a thorough airing to "Lazy River" complete with jazzy harmonising and anything but lazy playing. Here too one was reminded of the clever use of English Horn riffs, of the value of the occasional upward transpositions of key, and the value of a splashy close.

From the loud though never strident, Simon moved to a wistful ballad, **Anyone Can Whistle** (1964: Stephen Sondheim (b. 1930), the title song from what was initially a Broadway flop. For this one Simon remarked that his approach had been influenced by a recording of British singer [now Dame] Cleo Laine. Once more good phrasing, pointed by subtle use of the swell-shutters, injected musical life into this delicate song. During this number, one was again reminded of ways to make use of

a relatively small number of ranks to make the tonal resources sound extensive.

If I remark that the organist then turned once more to English Light Music, you might conclude that such offerings provide the spine of the afternoon's performance. Such choices certainly lend some support to the overall variety and musical richness. After all, apart from the world of CDs, MP3s, etc., where else than in a rounded theatre-organ programme will one encounter works by Reginald King, Eric Coates, and the composer of the next piece heard, Frederic Curzon (1899-1973)? I'm old enough to have heard BBC broadcasts by "Freddy" Curzon from the BBC Theatre Organ, and he was not averse to playing works by his fellow organists as well as his own, like the "Dance of the Ostracised Imp." Perhaps it is fair to say that **The Boulevardier: A Characteristic Intermezzo** (1939) may be Curzon's least faded composition, despite its conservative melody and harmony. Simon clearly likes this piece and has recorded it on a Barton organ for *Up, Up and Away!* I like to regard it as mood music, and here it's presumably a musical portrait of a man-about-town, probably a bon-vivant Parisian or a fashionable Londoner with his cane, spats and monocle, one who dresses to be seen and admired. There is a jauntiness to the tune that hints as much, the movement indicating perhaps the confident gait of the walker of the boulevard — the original "Mr Cool" perhaps. Melodic and attractive, this kind of well-written music surely deserves its place in the theatre-organ repertoire too.

After two short items it was time once more for extended play as well as yet another surprise. First performed in 1858 and said to be the first classical full-length operetta, the **Overture to Orpheus in the Underworld** (1858)

## **TOSA NSW**

\* 2010 - OUR 50TH YEAR \*

All shows at Marrickville Town Hall this year at 2:00pm

Christmas Show Sunday 5 December

\*\*\*\*John Atwell and Tony Fenelon\*\*\*\*

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## **TOSA South Australia**

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October 17th John Atwell

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## **TOSA Victoria - mto**

Christmas Celebration and Launch of 2011 Concert Subscription

Malvern Town Hall Wednesday 8 December at 6:30pm

Contact Margaret Sutcliffe on (03) 9891 7227 by 3 December

## **Warragul Theatre Organ Society**

Events Contact: Bee Mellor (03) 5122 2131

by Jacques Offenbach was the artist's penultimate choice. Simon described it as "a pot-boiler" with many moods. The opening was stirring, followed by expansive melodies. The registration was not unexpectedly orchestral and theatrical, including small moments of solo String or Clarinet heard alone. Within there was plenty of contrasting sonority; splashy build-ups and then a single untremmed reed ... low, loud trills heralding a stately tune ... a fast waltz movement ... boisterous motion ... and, of course, the much recognised "Gallop" — an untremulated CanCan (more correctly unhyphenated) in full staccato rig, a musical romp encapsulating that chorus-line of female dancers lifting their skirts in provocative ways.

Noteworthy was that fact that the organist did not end his programme with the classical music; to do so might risk, however unintentionally, elevating its status in such a way as to cast popular music pejoratively. Instead, the crowning feature of the afternoon was **Kiss Me, Kate**, the 1948 musical written by Cole Porter. I understand Simon has a floating array of tunes from this show. On this day we were lucky to hear an imaginative arrangements of: "So in Love" — that allowed for a haunting, restrained opening (a surprise in itself); "Another Op'nin' Another Show" — complete with some sizzling riffs; "Always True to You in My Fashion" — taken at a fast clip; "Brush Up Your Shakespeare" — with a cheeky registration to match the sentiments; "Wunderbar" a fast waltz, its tensions heightened via transpositions; "Too Darn Hot" — with the right hint of sleaze; "Why Can't You Behave?" — again with saucy riffs and mostly underpinned by the pedal cymbal. A brief recapitulation of several tunes led into "We Open In Venice," a lush "So In Love" reprised with a hint of a bolero rhythm, and a suitable grand finale.

And in all this I may even have missed a title or two!

It had been a wonderful afternoon of music-making at the Wurlitzer, a thoughtful choice of works intelligently and un-flamboyantly performed — and all these sounds produced without a shred of sheet music or of a registration guide on the desk. We were even accorded an encore. This show had been a most remarkable performance by a fine ambassador for the art of theatre organ.

©John S Batts

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## TOSA NSW Divn Financial Statement

Members who were unable to attend the AGM may request a copy of The Financial statement to be available for them to pick up from the Treasurer at the December 5 show at Marrickville Town Hall or by post by contacting the Treasurer by email or phone.

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## Emailing of TOSA News to Members

If you would like to receive your TOSA News each month by email it will be in living color as a pdf file which makes it so easy to file.

Please advise the Membership Secretary on [membership@tosa.net.au](mailto:membership@tosa.net.au) with your name and membership number with a copy to the Editor on [editor@tosa.net.au](mailto:editor@tosa.net.au) that you wish to receive TOSA News by email.

# **Members Diary**

**November**

**Sunday 28th 2:00pm**

## **Home Organ Party**

at 50 Caravan Head Road, Oyster Bay

3 manual Rogers Trio Organ

**Phone John Wall on (02) 9528 9158 to reserve a seat**

**Please bring a plate for afternoon tea**

**December**

**Sunday 5th 2:00pm**

**\*\*\*The Christmas Show\*\*\***

**Tony Fenelon & John Atwell**

**play the Mighty Wurlitzer & Roland Piano**

**Marrickville Town Hall**

**Monday 6th 7:30pm**

**Committee Meeting Burwood RSL Club**

**January 2011**

**Saturday 29th 10:00am to 12 noon**

**Members visit to the Wesley Centre Theatre**

**Open Console at the Christie Organ**

**Radio.**

Radio 2MBS-FM 102.5 "Colours of the King" (program of the Organ Music Society of Sydney)

2nd Saturday of each month, 5pm till 6 pm

**Web Sites of Interest:**

[www.tosa.net.au](http://www.tosa.net.au)

[www.theatreorgansaust.info](http://www.theatreorgansaust.info) (history of cinema organ installations in Australasia)

[www.sydneyorgan.com](http://www.sydneyorgan.com) (our sister society, the Organ Music Society of Sydney OMSS)

# TOSCA NEWS

December 2010  
Volume 49 No.10

**PRINT  
POST**

PP255003/01823

**POSTAGE  
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AUSTRALIA**

Official Publication of the Theatre Organ Society of Australia (NSW Division) Inc.

230, Spring Hill Rd, Mittagong, NSW 2575

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**Merry Christmas to all members & friends  
Tony Fenelon & John Atwell  
at Marrickville Town Hall 5 December 2010**

