



TOSA

MARCH 2004

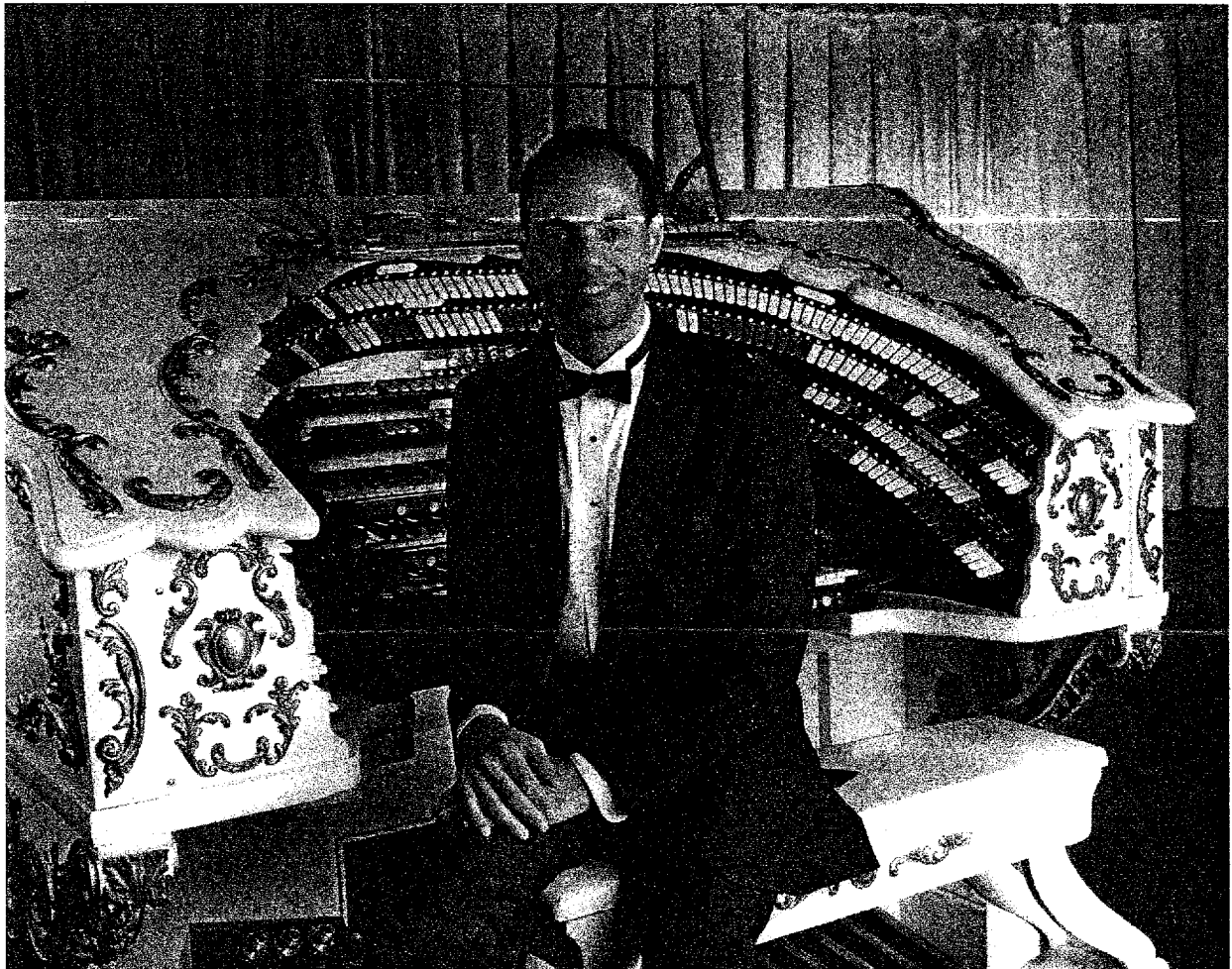
volume 43 number 2

news

Price \$ 2.00

The Return of Top USA Theatre Organist

Jelani Eddington



Sunday 21st March at 2pm

Marrickville Town Hall

Suggested Marrickville Council Parking - See page 3

TOSA NEWS

MARCH, 2004

THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW DIVISION) Inc.

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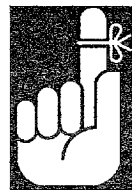
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<http://www.tosa.net.au>



COMING EVENTS

MARCH

- Monday 1 at 7.30pm Committee Meeting
- Thursday 11 at 1.30pm Members' Playing Afternoon
Orion Centre Campsie
Phone 9716 0151 to confirm
- Sunday 21 at 2.00pm Jelani Eddington Concert
Marrickville Town Hall
- Thursday 25 at 7.30pm Members' Playing Evening
Marrickville Town Hall
Phone 9798 6742 to confirm

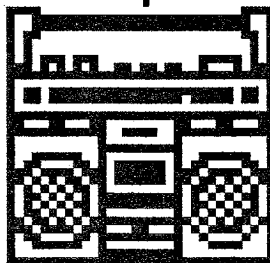
APRIL

- Monday 5 at 7.30pm Committee Meeting
- Thursday 8 at 1.30pm Members' Playing Afternoon
Orion Centre Campsie
Phone 9716 0151 to confirm
- Sunday 18 at 2.00pm David Bailey
AND Mathew Loeser Concert
Marrickville Town Hall
- Thursday 22 at 7.30pm Members' Playing Evening
Marrickville Town Hall
Phone 9798 6742 to confirm

MAY

- Monday 3 at 7.30pm Committee Meeting
- Thursday 13 at 1.30pm Members' Playing Afternoon
Orion Centre Campsie
Phone 9716 0151 to confirm
- Sunday 23 at 2.00pm Chris McPhee Concert
Marrickville Town Hall
- Thursday 27 at 7.30pm Members' Playing Evening
Marrickville Town Hall
Phone 9798 6742 to confirm

REMEMBER TO TUNE IN TO 2MBS-FM102.5
on Tuesday 9th March at 12.30pm
For "Theatre Pipe Organ - Seriously"
and on Saturday 13th March at 6.00pm
For "Colours of the King",
Both presented by Andrew Grahame
(See page 4 for more details)



From The President

Hello again !

Our first concert of the year went off really well. Michelle Nicolle and Ryan Heggie came down from Cobar to entertain us. They presented a well thought-out program with plenty of variety. They took turns on both the *Wurlitzer* and the *Grand Piano*, sometimes playing the two instruments between them, sometimes playing piano duet, even both together at the console.

Quite apart from their obvious musical ability they were very easy people to deal with and they worked together well. Their patience and temperament were certainly tested when rehearsing during the week of stifling heat. We were battling at the Orion without air-conditioning and the pitch of the organ was gradually rising alongside the piano. Even on the Sunday of the concert we were hard-pressed to have any degree of cooling! But we eventually succeeded!

Perhaps I could also mention that we had intended to fly Ryan and Michelle from Cobar to Sydney and back, but when they discovered the exorbitant cost of flying from Cobar to Dubbo they insisted on driving that part of the journey. This saved TOSA quite a few hundred dollars. The flight from Dubbo to Sydney is quite cheap in comparison.

Please note that our *Theatre Organ* program on 2NBC will

To contact the *Promotions Team* with your ideas and support :

Tom Barber - 9629 3105 barber@idx.com.au

OR John Batts - 9389 8659 js_batts@hotmail.com

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



cease shortly. There has been almost no response to the session for several reasons. We have therefore decided to cut our losses for now. Thanks again to Chris Styles for preparing the taped programs.

By the way - someone brought a plate of marvellous Slice/Scone stuff for afternoon tea at the November Annual General Meeting. It seemed to have dates or nuts or things and tasted great in my expert opinion. I would have had a third serving, but other people got in first. Would the culprit who brought this along please contact me - with the recipe in hand. Please!

Thank you all those people who work together to make the TOSA concerts work, and may I (on this occasion) thank those who come early or stay late to help with the heavy moving of organ and pianos before and after each concert.

At each concert, please collect some of the new colourful advertising cards designed by Ron Mosman. They list the concerts for the first six months of 2004 and can be given to friends or shop-keepers to attract people to our concerts.

For now - Walter Pearce

Editorial

It seems that someone has complained about the old-fashioned appearance of *TOSA News*, so the Committee is trying to get this proverbial old dog to do new tricks - not easy as you know, and it would be simpler to find a new editor with new ideas - any volunteers?

In any case, until the stampede of offers from these prospective editors dies down and a new one is chosen, I'll plod along with my humble, despised issues. You will notice, however, a couple of changes in this issue and many thanks go to Ron Mosman for his renewing graphic design suggestions and help, especially the stylish new masthead for *TOSA News*.

Best wishes,
Colin Groves

Welcome To New Members

TOSA(NSW) is pleased to welcome the following new members:

Alfred Benson - Connells Point
Bonnie Grennard - Old Toongabbie
Barry Hetherington - Roseville
Keith Pharo - Frenchs Forest
Joan Robb - Caringbah
Mrs E Morrison - Miranda
Juliet Webb - Marulen

Marrickville Town Hall Parking

Marrickville Council advise that, due to the closure of the St Brigid's Church parking, the nearest carpark is located in Touhy Lane, off Petersham Road, at the rear of St Clement's Church

From The MAILBOX

Andrew Grahame outlines his radio programmes on 2MBS-FM102.5 :

"The Theatre Pipe Organ - Seriously"
Tuesday, March 9th at 12.30pm

Bull - Rondo in G (David Wickerham
at the 4/24 Wurlitzer in the Trinity
Presbyterian Church, San Diego)

All the following tracks recorded at the
4/29 Wurlitzer in the Capri
Theatre, Adelaide:

Sibelius - Valse Triste (Charlie
Balogh)

Gould - Pavane (Simon Gledhill)

Rubenstein - Kamnoi Ostrow
(Lew Williams)

Saint-Saens - "The Aquarium"
from Carnival of the Animals
(Chris McPhee)

Stanley - Trumpet Tune in D
(Clark Wilson)

"Colours of the King"

Saturday, March 13th at 6pm

Organ Music of Heinrich
Scheidemann (1565 - 1663)

Karin Nelson at the Brombaugh
Organ (1992) at the Haga Church,
Gothenburg, Sweden:

Praeambulum in D minor WV 33

Chorale Prelude "Lobet den Herren"

Fantasia in G major

Chorale Variations "Christ Lag in
Todesbanden"

Chorale Variations "Es spricht der
unweisen mund wohl"

Toccata in C WV 85

Magnificat

Bob Cornish of Buff Point reminisces:

The State Theatre in Sydney I'm
sure always invokes interest when an item
of musical content appears in the Media.
More certainly would the same interest be
instilled in the minds of TOSA members
because, as we all know, that cinema has
housed the beautiful four keyboard
Wurlitzer since 1929, and was neglected
for years until recently, to be rebuilt again
to its former glory!

TOSA was kind enough to reprint a
very interesting article I submitted way

Concert & Membership Prices

The following TOSA concert ticket prices now apply :

	Australian Artists	Overseas Artists
Non-members	\$22	\$25
Non-member Pension	\$20	\$22
TOSA Members	\$18	\$18
Students 15 - 21yrs	\$10	\$10
Child under 15 yrs with an adult :	FREE	

Membership Fees, as explained last month, are now:

\$30 for full membership, and

\$20 for Concession, Country, Interstate & Overseas.

back in Jan.1997, relating to both the
opening of the State and the installation of
the organ, and because of that, I thought the
enclosed extract from a chapter of a book I
wrote ("Life's A Circus!") might be of
interest to your readers, most of whom no
doubt can relate to that era (late Twenties to
the Thirties). So with that in mind, please
accept the following portion of a chapter
from the book, entitled "Time Out For
Music!"

"... It all began back in the late 1920's.
My parents were intensely appreciative of
Opera and Musical Comedy. In fact, most
of the musical shows of that era, and at this
particular time, the "Mikado" was showing
on stage at the magnificent and recently
opened State Theatre. Now being only
eight years old at the time, I make no claim
to being a juvenile enthusiast of classical
musicals, even though I must confess the
"Mikado" did leave a lasting impression
on my young brain! But more importantly,
two items stood out and had me completely
awestruck ... One was the interior decor of
the State, and to quote from the original
Souvenir of the opening of that cinema :
"The State's gigantic proscenium, a poem
in iridescent red and gold and ivory, a
fitting centrepiece for the splendour of the
Auditorium!" But the other, and most lasting
impression on me, was the thunderous
musical bass-notes emerging from the
sound-system, and emanating from the so-
called "Mighty Wurlitzer" Theatre
Organ, as it emerged stealthily but
dramatically from a pit in front of the stage!

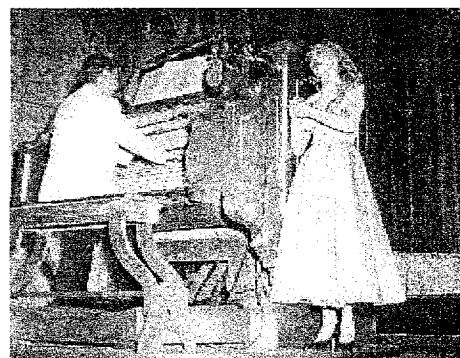
"The instrument was bathed in a
spotlight, and the organist, clothed in a light
blue dinner-jacket, black trousers and bow-
tie, was furiously working the vast array of
foot-pedals and pistons, with his two hands
similarly engrossed 'belting' out an
introductory theme song to the "Mikado"
The sound of that organ, and the eventual
melodies played, captured my imagination
to such an extent that, forever after, I was a
fanatical Theatre Organ enthusiast!

"But the most remarkable sequel to that

first introduction to the Theatre Organ
sound, came about when many years later
while visiting the famous "Palings Music
Store" in Pitt St. I met a young man named
David Devenport, who worked at
Palings, and noticed me practising on one
of their "demo" Hammond organs. He
invited me to accompany him early on
morning to the State Theatre, where
had permission to practise on the Wurlitzer
installed there. (The very same "Wurly"
that 30 years ago I had been enthralled by
when I accompanied my parents to see the
above-mentioned "Mikado"!)

"As you can imagine, that invitation
was readily accepted, and after David had
'switched on', brought the beautiful
Wurlitzer up to stage level and set up a
few registrations for me, it was one of the
most exciting musical moments of my life!
Of course, David had to stand by to change
the 'stops' for me, and when I had completed
my piece, he took over and showed me what
a true musician he is! (A small group of
cleaners loudly applauded when we had
finished!). David Devenport, (a TOSA
member,) is now a resident pianist at the
famous "Cremorne Orpheum Cinen
in Cremorne, Sydney."

Bob Cornish



Thanks to member Roger Dornan, the
"unknown" singer standing by the
Sydney State Theatre's Wurlitzer
in the October 2003 issue of TOSA
News has been identified as
Gwenda Holloway. Thanks, Roger.

More about Unification :

More Bang For The Buck

or the Principles of Unification/Extension applied to the Theatre Organ

Under this heading in the OVTOS Newsletter of May, 1997, Ross Robinson explained Unification

As the art of organ building developed towards the end of the 19th Century, it became apparent that new control systems would be necessary for the larger organs being contemplated. One possibility was electricity, especially the principles of telephone switching-systems applied to the organ.

The greatest contribution to the development of the modern organ was arguably made by Robert Hope-Jones, the father of the theatre organ; his early career was as a telephone-switching engineer. In a traditional church or concert organ, there is an actual physical pipe on the wind-chest for every note of every stop on the keyboard or pedalboard.

Thus, for example, an 8-foot (hereafter 8') flute stop on the Great manual will have 61 pipes (the keyboard after all spans 61 notes) on a wind-chest, and a 4-foot (4') flute on the same manual will have 61 different, if smaller, pipes on a chest; so the range of notes at the two different pitches (8' & 4') requires 122 pipes.

Notice that for the 8' rank, the note of middle C (or the 25th note counting up from the bottom or left end of the keyboard) will sound at a frequency of 3.3 vibrations per second, whereas the middle C on the keyboard for the 4' rank will sound at exactly twice this frequency, viz. 1046.6 vibrations per second. If both ranks are drawn at the same time when the middle-C key is depressed, then one hears both of these pipes speaking at the same time.

The ingenuity of Hope-Jones was to realize that by using rather simple relay wires as an organ builder he need have only one rank of pipes at 8' pitch, so that when middle C was depressed at the keyboard both the 8' middle C pipe and the 4' middle C pipe (i.e. speaking one octave above the 8' C) sound simultaneously, assuming the 8' and the 4' stop had been drawn.

For the builder this results in a saving of 49 pipes (and their space) by 'borrowing' them for the 4' rank from

the corresponding 8' rank.

However, in order to have a full 61 pipes for the 4' rank it is of course necessary to add 12 pipes to the top end of the 8' pipe chest; this is the principle of extension.

This process can be carried out far-reaching; so ranks within the theatre organ are normally extended to 73 or 85 pipes, sometimes to 97, and even 109 - or rarely 121 pipes; you notice that each 12 pipes grants another octave.

This process is also used, extending downwards an 8' pitch to 16', 32', and even to 64'. The lower-pitched pipes thus extended are more obvious in the physical sense because these large pipes are always placed on separate chests called 'off-sets'.

Notice that the whole extension process always starts with 8' ranks, and a theatre organ with few extensions has sometimes been disparagingly referred to as an '8 foot' instrument!

An allied feature of theatre organ design is called duplexing. In a classical organ each manual or keyboard is very much associated with families of pipes - the Diapason Chorus (especially 8', 4', 2' pitches) of pipes, for example, as the foundation of church-organ tone, is made up of a 16' Diapason, an 8' Open Diapason (sometimes two of them differing in scale or size of pipe rather than in their sound quality or timbre), a 4' Principal, and at least a further 2' stop (its appellations differ) and in the other direction even a 32' Diapason in the pedals.

Again, String-toned stops are particularly associated with the Swell (i.e. enclosed under expression) division of the church organ.

More characteristically, any one rank of pipes is generally available only in that division or keyboard, and if the same voice is desired on another manual, then the whole rank of pipes is duplicated; so if you have, say, an 8' Oboe on the Choir manual then you may also find an 8' Hautboy (often very

close in timbre) on the Swell manual.

It should thus be apparent that theoretically in a large classical organ of, say, 50 ranks available at different pitches (16', 8', 4', 2', etc.) and dispersed over three divisions (or manuals/keyboards), there could be as many as 50 x 61 x 3 pipes, that is some 9150 pipes, many of which would be silent most of the time. (Of course, in practical terms not all ranks would appear at all pitches on each keyboard, and this organ would more likely have about 4000 pipes).

But in a theatre organ using electrical relays, almost any rank of pipes could be available on all manuals/keyboards, and many are available on the pedal as well.

Since nearly all the available pipes would be in use most of the time, an organ of about 15 ranks producing similar sound levels, might have 15 x 97 pipes, a total of 1450 pipes if all ranks are fully extended. This duplexing and unification adds versatility while saving pipes and space (and sparing some tuning headaches!).

You may wonder why these principles have not been adopted by the builders of classical organs?

Well, they have been to some extent, though the makers of some church organs might not be keen to acknowledge the fact and the resulting inexpensively boosted array of stops at the console may bamboozle church music committees.

For purists the fact that there are missing pipes - and hence the resultant inter-modulations of the sounds from like pipes not precisely tuned to exact multiples of the fundamental frequencies - is detrimental; perhaps with their 'golden ears' they can hear the differences, though your author doubts it.

The opposition to unification and borrowing is more likely born of resistance to change - and the fact that the successful pioneer of the highly

unified and extended organ was the "Theatre Organ", designed and built for secular entertainment in the cathedrals of motion pictures.

Allow me to quote a famous designer of classical organs, William H Barnes, describing in 1942 some of the characteristics of a very large organ built by the Hilbourne L Roosevelt Organ Company in 1883 :

"...The stop action was tubular (pneumatic) from the console to an enormous combination machine in the basement and thence to the organ. ...

The magnets were enormous solenoids drawing perhaps ten times the current required by a modern magnet. There were only... 274 magnets in the entire organ of more than 6,000 pipes. In the heyday of the theatre unit organ these figures were almost exactly reversed. THEY HAD USUALLY 6,000 MAGNETS and 274 PIPES" (my emphasis).

Now you have a working definition of old-style perversity! But there you have it. The Herbert Park Memorial Organ at the O'Brien Theatre with

all its additions playable will have 21 ranks, a total of 1,550 pipes, including five 16' extensions; most ranks are extended to 73 pipes, several to 85 pipes.

The performer will be able to access nearly all of them on each of the three manuals/keyboards, and everything 8' and 16' will be accessible on the pedals, using the electronic equivalency of some 2,000 relays - we've come a long way since even Hope-Jones and become more sensible than Wm. Barnes!

Wurlitzer/Kimball/Compton/Christie?

Under this heading Stephen Ashley of the UK attempts to explain the British sound and the differences between various famous theatre organ brands

The sound of a *Christie* is rather sweeter than a *Wurlitzer*, more like a *Kimball*. Most were rather small instruments (under 10 ranks, with 2 manuals), the largest (by far) being a 4/37 in the Regal Cinema (later Odeon) Marble Arch (London), long since demolished. The organ was put into bad storage and has pretty well rotted away. Probably the most famous *Christie* was at the Regal Cinema, Edmonton, London, mainly because of the recordings of Sidney Torch. Some great re-issues onto CD have been produced of his recordings at Edmonton, which give a pretty good idea of the sound in-theatre, even though the original discs were cut in the early 1930s.

The most popular make of organ in Britain was the *Compton*, an instrument that in its finest form was very good. Probably closer in sound to a *Robert Morton* (i.e. powerful and brash), it had some interesting facets, not least of which was an electronic stop (on the better installations) called a *Melotone*, which could produce an eerie stringy sound. A real back-of-the-neck hair-raiser in the right hands! Basically, the *Compton* is a tremulated concert organ, not designed from the ground up to be a theatre instrument like the *Wurlitzer*. And unfortunately, most *Comptons* built fell into the category of cheap sound-makers, designed to provide intermission music at budget rates. A four or five rank *Compton* of this

calibre is a real turn-off, even for a hard-bitten organ enthusiast! Most of all, *Comptons* usually had metal tibias, which is hardly a match for the lush *Wurlitzer* pipe.

As for playing styles - we Brits evolved organically rather differently from the USA. The organ was late to the British theatre chains, arriving in the 1930's after the advent of sound movies. So rather than accompany the film as in the USA, it was used as intermission entertainment, which probably accounts for much of its "different" style development. And one must not forget the dancing influence...

The Brits loved to dance to the theatre organ, particularly in places like Blackpool (a holiday resort in the north west of England). The name of Reginald Dixon became synonymous with the *Wurlitzer* sound, although that *Wurlitzer* in the Tower Ballroom has mutations wired into the relays to produce a more "cutting" sound in that huge air-mass in the building. Basically, the *Wurlitzer* there is "too small for the hall", so the sound had to be brightened and boosted to be heard above the dancers' pounding feet. Those who love that sound do so with a passion. For the rest of us, though, a few minutes is about all we can stand.

And the British sound is also defined by a faster tremulant speed, although many organs over here have now been "slowed down" to sound a

little more like their American counterparts. Personally I do not like the faster trem speed, as it gives the sound a far more "hurdy gurdy" flavour, which along with the smaller number of ranks, is far less satisfying than the might and grandeur of the American sound. Some of the better (deceased) British players: Sidney Torch (of course!); H. Robinson Cleaver (an amazingly talented man who could play dance or orchestral styles with great feeling and whose Fan Club became the nucleus of the Theatre Organ Club of Great Britain); Vic Hammett, probably one of the best "rhythm" players; Jackie Brown, also a great master of rhythmic music; Quentin Maclean, whose orchestral stylings are still emulated and revered by many artists (Lew Williams for one!); I'm sure there are many more, but I'll leave that area for others.

So where is the "British Sound" now? Internationally, artists like Simon Gledhill, Russell Holmes and Richard Hills are playing a "hybrid" - that is, a mixture of English and American styles. These guys are the "shop window" for our organized talent and we need many more of them, of course. But it's a rare treat when a really good British *Compton* or *Christie* theatre organ is played by a really good musician on CD. It's mostly more of the same - Blackpool Bounce.

Steve Ashley
Piping Hot Recording Company

Organs To Remember (Part 1)

The *Wersi* 'Combo' Organs, the Orion W1T and the later Combo W1TC, produced from the late 1970's to the early 1980's, were among the most sophisticated analog combo organs ever made.

The first in a series of articles by Rich Marschall on analog (electronic, electro-mechanical, mechanical, and pipe) organs that defined the 'pre-digital' era

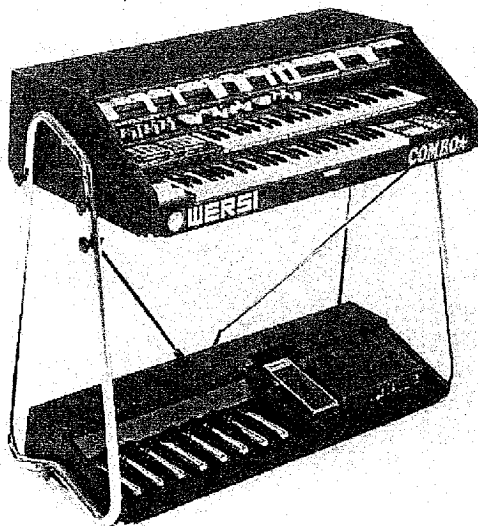
Weighing in at a little over 100 lbs. (not including the pedals, base, bench, and tone cabinets), they were also among the heaviest - although still substantially lighter than the 425 lbs. of a *Hammond* B3 console.

The Orion W1T and Combo W1TC were nearly identical electronically. Although the Orion W1T looked better, its case and stand configuration were awkward and replaced by the somewhat ugly but more robust Combo W1TC.

Competing with the first digital touring keyboards, the *Wersi* Combos held their own despite their wallet busting price of US\$13,300 (1980 dollars!) for a base unit. For comparison, this is when you could buy a nice Northern Virginia townhouse for US\$30,000 or a decent automobile for US\$6,000.



Wersi Combo Organs



In terms of technology, the *Wersi* Combo organ was really two organs and three synthesizers merged into a single housing. One organ was a fixed stop formant synthesis design similar to the voicings found in analog *Baldwin*, *Conn*, *Schober*, *Yamaha*, and of course *Wersi*, consoles of the era. The second organ was an additive synthesis drawbar system similar to that of the later *Hammond* organs, except the drawbars were in a slightly different order! The two organs were electronically keyed, affording considerable control of the envelope's (attack, decay, sustain, release) on each manual. Both organs were available simultaneously on the upper manual. (A common modification was to make both available on the lower manual as well by duplicating the upper manual's mixing circuit.)

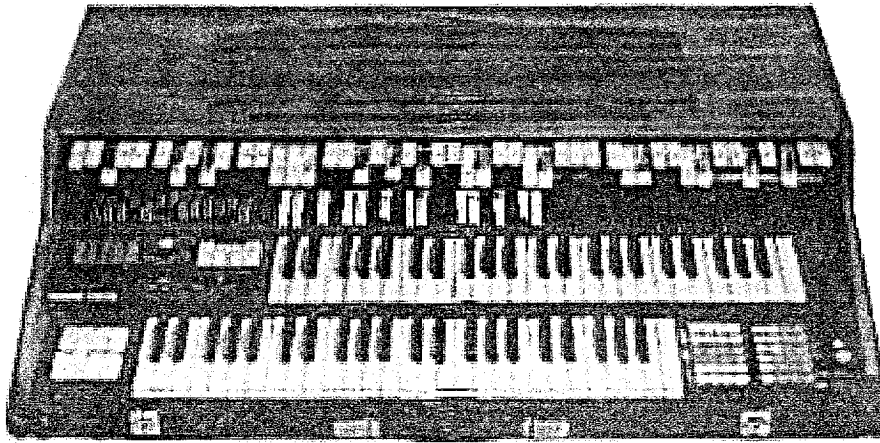
The synthesizer subsystems included a 'piano' synthesizer (independently keyed on the upper manual), a bass synthesizer on the pedals, and a percussion (drum unit) synthesizer. The piano and percussion synthesizers were nothing special - although *Wersi* marketing at the time thought they were! The bass synthesizer was pretty good, producing a reasonable bass guitar and tuba, as well

as a cutting 'techno' bass.

The organ voices and some of the synth voices could be routed through a variety of built-in effects. These included analog synthesizer swept filters, analog shift registers, and a variety of modulations.

An outboard valve (vacuum tube) guitar head and quad box was necessary to achieve a 'Hammond-like' sound from the drawbars. A genuine valve *Leslie* tone cabinet (amplified loudspeaker system) didn't hurt either.

The electronic keying of the fixed stop organ, drawbar organ, and bass synthesizer made the *Wersi* Combo units VERY amenable to later MIDI conversion, both OUT and IN. Already very quiet and suitable for studio use, MIDI



conversion greatly expanded the usefulness (and commercial life) of these organs. With MIDI IN, the organs could produce reliable, polyphonic, genuine analog organ and synthesizer parts in perfect synchronization with other digital (usually sampled) instruments. This made them very

handy for layering in textures and 'retro' sound parts in advertising and movie sound tracks.

By the mid 1980's most functioning *Wersi* Combos had been removed from touring duties, MIDI converted, and parked in recording studios. Many are still in regular use, churning out (by now, quite recognizable) commercial sounds.

This article was originally written on request for a group interested in the preservation of Combo Organs. Next I'll probably write about the analog Conn Organs. After that, whatever people prefer.

I've have a reasonable collection of material on Hammond, Schober, Wersi, and Yamaha. I wish I had more on the old analog Rogers, particularly sales literature and photos - perhaps if our members could ask around, some of the old sales reps might dig up stuff from their collections.

I am also seeking more info on Thomas and Lowrey. Likewise info on organs from the valve (vacuum tube) era would be appreciated.

Rich Marschall

JELANI EDDINGTON's Busy Year 2003

(Proof positive of his Great Popularity and Outstanding Talent)

JELANI EDDINGTON GIVES A RECORD 63 CONCERTS DURING 2003 CONCERT SERIES

In his busiest concert season ever, Jelani Eddington completed a total of 63 concerts during the 2003 concert series.

Among the highlights from the 2003 season included a week tour of Holland and a two-week tour in New Zealand in February 2003, as well as a six-week concert tour in the United Kingdom and Germany in August. The 2003 concert series also saw Jelani accompany a number of silent films, including *The Black Pirate*, starring Douglas Fairbanks, *The Eagle*, starring Rudy Valentino, as well as a number of short silent film comedies with Laurel & Hardy, Buster Keaton, and Charlie Chaplin.

Additionally, RJE Productions released two extremely successful recordings. The first, "*Let's Face The Music!*", was released in February 2003 featuring Jelani Eddington at the 4/35 *Wurlitzer* at the Berkeley Community Theatre in Berkeley, California. The second, "*Christmas Wonderland*", was a holiday album released together with pianist David Harris at the Wheaton-Fox Studio in Wheaton, Illinois.

In addition to his busy concert and recording schedule, Jelani also presented a number of seminars and workshops this year, including a seminar on phrasing and registration in Portland, Oregon, a silent film accompaniment workshop in Salt Lake City, Utah, and a seminar/masterclass for young theatre organists in the United Kingdom.

The coming 2004 concert series is also shaping up to be very busy, with a return to Australia and New Zealand in February 2004. Two new recordings are expected to be released in early February 2004 as well.

See www.rjeproductions.com for more details!

At the John Atwell concert in December last year a TOSA member handed Cliff Bingham a number of old TOSA News issues from 1972-74. The Diaphone section of TOSA News of May 1972, when the editor was our current Returning Officer, Rod Blackmore, included the following historic article written by John Gardiner just after TOSA's removal of the Wurlitzer from the Capitol Theatre, and long before its installation in the Orion Centre, Campsie.

A Capitol Performance

While memories remain of the final recital by the Capitol's "Mighty Wurlitzer" on the morning of Saturday 5th February 1972, I submit this survey of the Capitol Theatre as a sincere tribute to Cliff Bingham, Lance Wells, Denis Palmistra, David Parsons, Alan Tranter, Ray Thornley, Bill Schumacher, Peter Held, Eric Smith and Ian Davies; to former Capitol organists who played their way through good and bad times since 1928; to Capitol Theatre manager, Alf Shaw; and particularly to the Executive and Members of the N.S.W. Division of the Theatre Organ Society of Australia who have had the doubtful pleasure of knowing me since November 1969.

Personally, my main concern has been centred around the Capitol Theatre's position as a place of entertainment and with the many colourful personalities that have made up its chequered life. I also held the belief that the organ's removal would bring about the destruction of the theatre's very soul, but I accept the fact that the life of the Capitol, as a cinema, appears to have drawn to a close, although in many ways it died a natural death forty years ago.

However, before its final death knell sounded, there unexpectedly arose the absolute necessity of saving the theatre's soul and, in their own inimitable way, the Theatre Organ Society did simply just that, and a vital part of the Capitol Theatre lives on.

Gentlemen, I raise my hat to you for not only enabling the Capitol Wurlitzer to one day speak its mind again, but for the quiet efficient way you went about its removal. I feel proud to have been associated with your activities.

Now - on with the show!

While the Capitol's exterior conjures up memories to a much older generation of Wirth's Hippodrome and the days when the circus came to town, the interior was transformed into a smaller replica of

the Capitol Theatre Chicago during the early months of 1928 by Sydney architect Henry White in collaboration with American theatre architect John Eberson.

The Capitol became Australia's first complete atmospheric theatre, but only remained a prestige theatre for less than five years, the curtain being lowered on elaborate stage presentations and pit orchestras by the end of 1932.

The birth of the Capitol theatre took place on "Sydney's Great Bright Way" on the morning of Easter Saturday 7th April 1928 when the \$42,000 Wurlitzer organ was played for the first time by Australian organist Leslie Waldron as he accompanied the silent film "His Lady"

At 8 p.m. that night, the event was officially proclaimed by a roll of drums from the orchestra pit heralding the first appearance of American conductor Ted Henkel as he rose into view on the elevated orchestral stage, directing a thirty-piece orchestra in a performance of Ponchielli's "Dance of the Hours", while at the organ console was seen the tall, massive frame of American organist Fred Scholl, his thick rimmed spectacles glistening in the spotlight.

Although not classified as a brilliant organist, Fred Scholl, like Ted Henkel, was an astute showman with a shrewd sense of what the public wanted, and a capacity for contorting his rotund face into peculiar shapes during the presentation of some novelty item when the Wurlitzer would produce the weirdest sounds from his masterly touch.

For the next eighteen months both Ted and Fred made a remarkable impression on Sydney audiences and were largely responsible for establishing the Capitol as the city's foremost movie palace.

Among the patrons who frequented the Capitol during its vintage years was a fourteen year old boy from Summer Hill who would sit in the first row of the front stalls nearest the organ pit and gaze in awe at the sight of

Fred Scholl, who no doubt gave this interested viewer - destined to become a popular versatile organist in his own right - a quizzical wink of encouragement from behind his spectacles. Tragically enough, this particular youth's name happened to be Ray Chaffer.

During November 1928, Leslie Waldron left the Capitol for the Ambassadors Theatre Perth, and was succeeded by popular Arnold Coleman from the Capitol Theatre Melbourne, who presented the Wurlitzer at the morning and intermediate sessions until January 1929, when he returned to Melbourne to join American organist Frank Lanterman at the State Theatre.

By the middle of 1929, Ted Henkel and Fred Scholl had accepted an offer to open in New Zealand at the Civic Theatre Auckland. Following an official exchange of batons with British conductor Horace Sheldon, Ted Henkel concluded his Sydney season on 19th October while Fred Scholl stayed on until 15th November.

On 16th November, the Capitol presented "Australia's First Featured Organist" - J. Knight Barnett - whose first appearance as star organist coincided with the theatre's new policy of extended seasons that now replaced the regular weekly changes.

Until then Knight Barnett had only been observed during the morning and intermediate sessions, and he now emerged from the pit to say "How do you do, everybody" in the friendly, sophisticated manner that was to make him a firm favourite with cinema audiences for the next forty years.

After a three months season, Knight Barnett left the Capitol on 14th February 1930 for the Victory Theatre Kogarah, and was succeeded the following day by Mannie Aarons, former musical director at the old Lyceum Theatre in Pitt Street. After leaving the Capitol on 26th March 1930, Mannie returned to conducting cinema

orchestras until he ultimately moved into the State Theatre in July 1932.

The position of featured organist was now given to assistant organist Billy Dick who had joined the Capitol staff on 11th January 1930 and became identified with the *Wurlitzer* until 14th August 1930.

During this particular year, Price Dunlavy from the State Theatre appeared at the Capitol Theatre between 10th-16th May, 30th May - 6th June, and 27th September - 31st October.

But despite this galaxy of organists, box office receipts fell off to such a degree that arrangements were made to bring Ted Henkel and Fred Scholl back from New Zealand.

Backed up by the biggest publicity campaign ever accorded two musicians at the time and built around the phrase "TED AND FRED ARE COMING BACK", Union Theatres rolled out the red carpet on 5th August 1930 and a large, table-top truck festooned with streamers, balloons, ballet girls and the Capitol Stage Band playing "*Happy Days Are Here Again*" met the ocean liner *Maunganui* at Darling Harbour and escorted the car bearing Ted Henkel and Fred Scholl back to the theatre, where outgoing Musical Director Horace Sheldon stood waiting at the stage door.

As the motorcade pulled into Hay Street before an enthusiastic crowd of admirers and theatre staff, Horace Sheldon stepped forward and systematically burst every balloon within reach. This rather senseless act immediately evoked the wrath of Presentations Director O.G. Perry (whose position at the Capitol Theatre was soon to be allocated to American Stage Director Clyde Hood) and his normally placid nature gave way to sharp expressions of contempt and disapproval beneath the Capitol's brightly painted awning.

Amid all this confusion Ted and Fred were whisked away to the *Cinesound* film studios at Bondi Junction where against the backdrop of a ship, made realistic by appropriate sound effects, they were among the first personalities to be filmed and recorded by the new sound system that was about to make itself heard on Australian newsreels.

Back at the Capitol, their opening performance on 15th August being

celebrated by a special midnight matinee, Ted Henkel and Fred Scholl somehow failed to recapture their former popularity and, with the eventual expiration of their respective contracts, Fred left Sydney on 14th February 1931 and returned to the United States, following a brief stayover in Honolulu, while Ted was signed up for a season at the Capitol Theatre Melbourne where he opened on 14th March, eventually leaving Australia early in 1932.

With the departures of these two vivid personalities, the most colourful epoch in the life of Sydney's Capitol Theatre came to an end and there was ushered in a series of misfortunes that were to lower the pre-eminent position of this atmospheric movie palace, now feeling the effects of the depression and a pronounced loss of patronage to the State Theatre.

Early in January 1931, a Christmas pantomime "*Jack and the Beanstalk*", which began hopefully and was expected to run for at least a month, was taken off after a season of barely two weeks.

On 27th February, Bert Howell from the Ambassadors Theatre Perth came to the Capitol and was forced to contend with an orchestra suffering from the effects of a reduction in strength due to the dismissal of ten musicians.

On 21st March, Clyde Hood who had guided the destinies of stage presentations at both the State and Capitol Theatres became one of the ill-fated passengers aboard the trimotored aircraft "*Southern Cloud*" which crashed in foul weather near Cabramurra in the Snowy Mountains district.

By 15th July, Bert Howell and the orchestra had given their last Capitol performance and were transferred to the State Theatre to supplement the organ interludes of Horace Weber. In the absence of a regular pit orchestra, a series of stage presentations, featuring Ivan Varanoff and his Russian Balalaika Orchestra, Dave Grouse's Band, and the Capitol Revellers, came and went from the Capitol Theatre between 22nd July and 30th November,

All through this period of transition, Billy Dick remained at the organ until 13th November, when his place was taken by Leslie Waldron who moved from the console into the orchestra pit

on 4th December to conduct the Capitol Augmented Orchestra which had evolved from the earlier combination led by Dave Grouse.

The year 1932 brought O.G. Perry back to the Capitol with what came to be known as "The New Idea" in stage presentations, which were nothing more than modest tableaux constructed to blend in with the orchestral overture and entr'acte.

The curtain rose on the first of these "New Ideas" on 1st January 1932 and introduced "Master Personality Conductor" Charles Smith, the New Capitol Symphony Orchestra, and organist Leslie Waldron.

By early February, Billy Dick was back at the organ console until 24th November 1932 when the Capitol was forced to close its doors as the result of a film shortage which had developed from a series of disagreements between exhibitors and the film companies.

The "New Idea" was abandoned, the orchestra pit was vacated permanently (some of the musicians joining Hamilton Webber at the State Theatre), Billy Dick was stood down until further notice, O.G. Perry was appointed General Manager of the State Theatre, and the stars at the Capitol never regained their former lustre.

After standing idle for almost five months, the Capitol Theatre solemnised its fifth anniversary on 7th April 1933 by re-opening as "*The Home of Your Happy Hours*" for the residents of Sydney's inner suburbs. Along with double features, serials, weekly amateur trials and an occasional vaudeville act, the voice of the "*Mighty Wurlitzer*" in the hands of Billy Dick endeavoured to make itself heard above the clamour of a rowdy element who, attracted by a much reduced admission charge, cared little or nothing for the once-respected, atmospheric surroundings and what it offered.

Over the next seven years, whenever Billy Dick was absent on annual leave or relieving at the State Theatre, the Capitol organ was prevented from gathering dust by Denis Palmistra (May-June 1934), the late Stanfield Holliday (June 1935 & January-March 1936), New Zealand's Reg Maddams (July 1939), and Jim Williams (July 1940), all of whom were destined to leave a distinct impression on the theatre organ world for many years to come.

Sometime in June 1942, Billy Dick stepped down from the console to join the Civil Construction Corps, and in his place came Renee Lees, the wife of former Presentations Director O.G. Perry, who was to die in 1950 completely forgotten by the industry he helped to create.

Throughout four dark gloomy years, Renee Lees attempted to maintain some colour amidst drab surroundings. In 1928 she had appeared on the Capitol stage as solo pianist with Ted Henkel's orchestra in a performance of "*Rhapsody in Blue*", but the predominant colour was now khaki and the once-popular vogue of stage presentations seemed rather remote as vast numbers of American servicemen queued up in a continuous line around the block on Anzac Day 1944 when the occasion was marked by the screening of a patriotic film.

At the time there stood on duty in the foyer a young trainee manager who twenty three years later became the Capitol's permanent manager and a good helpful friend to the Theatre Organ Society and to others who have had the pleasure of knowing genial Alf Shaw.

After closing to allow for a general clean up, the Capitol opened on 31 March 1945 as a first-release theatre. Quantities of white paint were applied to the exterior of the building and it is possible to assume that the original dark polished wood of the *Wurlitzer* console received its first face-lift at the same time, with poor results,

Walter Aliffe from the Prince Edward Theatre was engaged as organist and given prominent publicity on one of the large display hoardings facing Parker Street.

With the war over, Billy Dick came in through the stage door on 3rd November 1945 to face a succession of cynical audiences who now regarded the *Wurlitzer* as an intrusion on their thoughts and conversation, while irresponsible, impertinent children balanced precariously on the edge of the orchestra rail in their efforts to gain a ride as the console made its appearance from the pit.

In this atmosphere where the stars no longer shone, Billy Dick gave his final recital on 30th January 1947 and a link with the Capitol's halcyon days was broken.

Renee Lees returned to feature the

organ until October 1947, when electricity restrictions imposed a ban upon its use.

After lapsing into silence the "*Mighty Wurlitzer*" made a brief comeback in January 1948 before sinking to the bottom of the well until December 1952 when it was used in conjunction with a six-piece orchestra for the pantomime "*Mother Goose*", the organist again being Renee Lees.

On 3rd February 1954, Mannie Aarons returned to the Capitol after an absence of twenty-four years, and tried to coax some life back into a sadly-neglected instrument that sounded in particularly bad shape to the most untrained ear. Added to this, the hydraulic lift gave constant trouble and Mannie soon hastened back to his more reliable niche at the State Theatre.

Jean Penhall became the last official Capitol organist in April 1954 and, despite a general lack of maintenance, the organ put up a brave show until 29th June 1957 when it disappeared from public view altogether, at least until it was resurrected by the N.S.W. Division of the Theatre Organ Society of Australia.

Upon being restored, the Capitol *Wurlitzer* appeared before receptive audiences attending T.O.S.A. Conventions and at occasional morning and evening film sessions, when it was played by various T.O.S.A. members.

On 26th August 1967, Arnold Coleman renewed his association with Sydney's Capitol Theatre when he gave a recital for T.O.S.A., this being the only occasion when the organ was again heard in the hands of one of its original masters.

The following month, Joh Congert gave a memorable performance when a large teenage audience showed their enthusiasm and appreciation by a warm round of applause, proving that the *Wurlitzer* could quite ably compete with the film image of Elvis Presley.

Broadcasting played its part in the history of the Capitol Theatre from as far back as 1929 when the studios of the newly formed Australian Broadcasting Company were located in the since-demolished Her Majesty's Theatre building in Market Street.

On a certain night of the week, Fred Scholl would be heard taking part in the overture with Ted Henkel's orchestra, while later in the evening the stage presentation would be relayed out into the ether to find its way into numerous drawing rooms where a radio receiver, complete with its ornate loudspeaker horn, would become the focal point of attention in an atmosphere of dark blue floral wallpaper offset by silk fringed light-shades, Persian patterned carpets, velvet cushions, and a forsaken gramophone or pianola.

After all, this was a genuine Capitol performance which could not always be found on scratchy-sounding phonograph records or perforated paper player rolls.

Throughout the 1930s, the air-waves were full of organ recitals from various suburban cinemas that now featured former Capitol organists, but by the late 1940s the Capitol *Wurlitzer* was restored to broadcasting status by Renee Lees and Penn Hughes.

To write an appropriate epitaph for a dead movie palace is not a simple undertaking, but from the printed programme of a recent symphony concert I quote an extract from a description of the final movement to Respighi's symphonic poem, "*The Pines of Rome*".

"To the poet's phantasy appears a vision of past glories; trumpets blare, and the army of the consul advances brilliantly in the grandeur of a newly-risen sun toward the sacred way, mounting in triumph the Capitoline Hill."

And as the past glories of the Capitol Theatre fade into oblivion, I am reminded of two rather profound statements that were uttered by my nine year old son who stood by my side on the stage of the Capitol Theatre on the afternoon of Sunday 13th February.

His first comment, as a group of us gazed into the depths of a now empty organ-well, was that it reminded him of a funeral.

The second occasion was when the wagon containing the dismantled console and piano attachment pulled away from the curb, and Bill was heard quietly remarking - "There goes a piece of history".

I had to admit that even this was indeed a Capitol performance.

Organ events all over



WHAT'S ON

IN THE ORGAN WORLD AROUND AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

BALLARAT

Her Majesty's Theatre, Ballarat, 3/9 Compton Theatre Organ
Sunday 11 July, *Silent Movies program, 2.00 pm*
Sunday 7 November, *Len Rawle (UK) 2.00 pm*

BENDIGO

Howard Terrill Residence Heathcote, 2/12 Wurlitzer Theatre Organ
Wednesday 17 March *Jelani Eddington (USA). 8.00 pm*

WARRAGUL

West Gippsland Masonic Centre, Warragul, Conn Martinique Electronic

MELBOURNE

Dendy Cinema, Brighton, 3/15 Wurlitzer Theatre Organ
Sunday 16 May *David Johnston & Peter Hurley*
Sunday 18 July *Jim Riggs (USA)*
Sunday 19 September *Paul Fitzgerald & Heath Wooster*

Malvern Town Hall, 3/16 Compton Theatre Organ
Sunday 14 March *Jelani Eddington (USA)*
Sunday 25 April *Thos. Heywood*
Sunday 15 August *Tony Fenelon*
Sunday 28 November *John Atwell*

Coburg Town Hall, 2/9 Christie/Blackett & Howden Theatre Organ
Sunday 20 June *John & Terezia Kalkbrenner*
Sunday 17 October *Leith Ewert & Carole Wyatt*

Kingston Town Hall, Moorabbin, 4/21 Wurlitzer Theatre Organ

SYDNEY

Orion Centre, Campsie, 3/17 Wurlitzer Theatre Organ
Sunday 15 February *Michelle Nicolle and Ryan Heggie Concert 2.00 pm*

Marrickville Town Hall, 2/11 Wurlitzer Theatre Organ
Sunday 21 March *Jelani Eddington (USA) Concert 2.00 pm*
Sunday 18 April *David Bailey (Qld.) and Matthew Loeser (S.A.)*

Orpheum Picture Balace, Cremorne, 3/14 Wurlitzer Theatre Organ*
Most Friday and Saturday nights, *Neil Jensen "plays in" evening film shows*

GOLD COAST

Maher Hall, Burleigh Heads, Rodgers Olympic Theatre Organ

BRISBANE

Kelvin Grove High School, 3/11 Christie Theatre Organ
Saturday 6 March *Jelani Eddington (USA) Concert 2.00 pm*
Followed by concerts by *Chris McPhee (SA), Jim Riggs (USA) and Len Rawle (UK)*

ADELAIDE

Capri Theatre, Goodwood, 4/29 Wurlitzer Theatre Organ
Sunday 7 March *Jelani Eddington (USA)*

Wyatt Hall, Pulteney Grammar School, 2/12 Wurlitzer
Saturday 27 March *Scott Harrison (Vic)*

PERTH

John Leckie Music Centre, 3/10 Compton Theatre Organ
Sunday 16 May *Gordon McKenzie (Melbourne)*
Sunday 20 June *Thos. Heywood (Melbourne)*
Sunday 19 September *Gail Dibben (Melbourne)*
Sunday October 24 or 31 *Len Rawle (UK)*

AUCKLAND

Hollywood Cinema, 3/14 Wurlitzer Theatre Organ
Sunday 29 February *Jelani Eddington (USA) Concert 2.00 pm*
Sunday 18 April *Chris Powell (UK) Concert 2.00 pm*
Sunday 27 June *Jim Riggs (USA) Concert 2.00 pm*
Sunday 28 November *Denis James (USA) Concert 2.00 pm*

OUR NEXT ARTIST : *Jelani Eddington*

During the years that Jelani Eddington has given concerts, he has easily established himself as one of the most prominent and sought-after artists on the concert circuit. Jelani has performed in most of the major concert venues throughout the United States, has toured extensively abroad, and has received numerous awards and recognitions, including his selection as the "2001 Theatre Organist Of The Year".

Jelani Eddington was born in 1974 in Muncie, Indiana, to Louise Eddington and the late Robert Eddington and grew up in a very musical family. Between the interests of his mother, a professional music teacher of many years, and those of his grandmother, Florence Arnold, a well-respected piano instructor, it was no surprise when Jelani demonstrated an inclination toward music at a very early age.

Shortly after beginning piano instruction at the age of four, Jelani began studying classical piano under the direction of his grandmother. At the age of eight, a trip to hear the 4-manual 42-rank Wurlitzer Theatre Pipe Organ installed in the Paramount Music Palace, a restaurant in Indianapolis, introduced Jelani to the sounds of the theatre pipe organ. Soon thereafter, he began to pursue classical organ lessons and ultimately began studying theatre organ under the direction of John Ferguson, whose skills as a theatre organ instructor have been highly acclaimed internationally.

In the spring of 1988 at the age of 13, Jelani won the American Theatre Organ Society's Young Theatre Organist Competition, prevailing over competitors aged 13 to 21 from the United States, England, Australia, and New Zealand. Jelani remains the youngest competitor ever to win this title. Jelani went on to graduate Magna Cum Laude from Indiana University in 1996, and later received a Juris Doctor degree from the Yale Law School in 1999, after which time he was admitted to practice law in New York State.

During the course of his concert career, Jelani has been featured at numerous National and Regional Conventions of the American Theatre Organ Society, and has toured extensively throughout the world, including numerous concert appearances in the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, England, Wales, Holland, France, and Germany. Jelani has also distinguished himself as a recording artist and has produced numerous theatre organ albums on some of the best-known and most dynamic instruments in the USA.

In August 2001, the American Theatre Organ Society honoured Jelani's extensive career as a concert and recording organist by naming him the "2001 Theatre Organist Of The Year". Having received the award at the age of 27, Jelani retains the distinction of being the youngest-ever recipient of this prestigious honour.

FREE TICKET OFFER !!!

*Do you have friends who have never been to TOSA Concert?
This invitation is for them :*

Invitation

If you have never been to a TOSA Theatre Organ Concert before, here is your chance to hear one of America's finest Theatre Organists, Jelani Eddington.

The time: 2pm on Sunday 21st March. The place: Marrickville Town Hall

Cut out and post this form, enclosing a self-addressed, stamped envelope, to :-

The TOSA Ticket Secretary,
18 Acres Road,
Kellyville, 2155

*An official numbered ticket must be obtained from our Ticket Secretary by mail in advance.
This invitation will not be accepted to gain entry at the door of the concert.*

I/we (one or two people only) have not been to a TOSA concert before:

Name : _____ Phone : _____

Name : _____ Phone : _____

