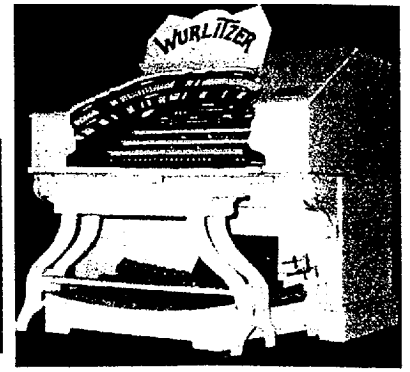


2/11 WurliTzer Theatre Pipe Organ
Marrickville Town Hall

JUNE, 2001

TOSA



3/17 WurliTzer Theatre Pipe Organ
Orion Centre Campsie

Yes! it's another MEMBERS' "EVENT"

This time at -
EPPING BAPTIST CHURCH
2pm Sunday 24th June

(Corner of Ray Rd & Carlingford Rd
- a short step from Epping Railway Station)

Featuring the "Christie" Theatre Organ and members of TOSA NSW.

Following the success of the Members' Special EVENT at Marrickville last year, this is another chance for an informal get-together with other members.

(Though non-members will not be turned away!)

There will be the Organ and Piano, and who knows what other items and novelties. Don't miss this.

*Admission is a \$10 donation at the door. (No bookings)
Afternoon tea will be available.*

TOSA NEWS

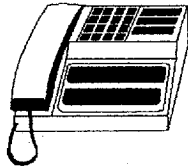
JUNE , 2001

THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW DIVISION) Inc.

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TOSA NEWS Items, Advertisements - EDITOR
All numbers use the prefix 02

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COMING EVENTS

JUNE

- Monday 4 at 7.30pm Committee Meeting
Thursday 14 at 2.00pm Members' Playing Day
Orion Centre Campsie
Important : Phone on the day to confirm 9716 0151
Sunday 24 at 2.00pm Epping Event
Epping Baptist Church
Thursday 28 at 7.30pm Members' Playing Night
Marrickville Town Hall
Important : Phone to confirm 9798 6742

JULY

- Monday 2 at 7.30pm Committee Meeting
Sunday 8 at 2.00pm Ken Double Concert
Marrickville Town Hall
Thursday 12 at 2.00pm Members' Playing Day
Orion Centre Campsie
Important : Phone on the day to confirm 9716 0151
Thursday 26 at 7.30pm Members' Playing Night
Marrickville Town Hall
Important : Phone to confirm 9798 6742

AUGUST

- Monday 6 at 7.30pm Committee Meeting
Thursday 9 at 2.00pm Members' Playing Day
Orion Centre Campsie
Important : Phone on the day to confirm 9716 0151
Sunday 19 at 2.00pm David Wickerham Concert
Orion Centre Campsie
Thursday 23 at 7.30pm Members' Playing Night
Marrickville Town Hall
Important : Phone to confirm 9798 6742

From The President

I'm sure we all enjoyed Tony Fenelon's concert at Marrickville. He was in top toe-tapping form. And the prevailing wind meant we weren't on the noisy flight path that sometimes drowns out the soft bits!

A good turn up of people made for a warm and enthusiastic audience.

We are looking forward to another TOSA Members' "EVENT" - this time at the Epping Baptist Church on June 24th. If it's as well received as the "Event" at Marrickville last year it should be a winner! See you there! There will be an assortment of members playing good organ (and piano) music, and other items/quizzes/odds and ends designed to keep you entertained. Afternoon tea available. Entrance is a \$10 donation at the door, no advance sales.

Thank you all those members who have paid their subscription renewals already. It helps spread the work-load at this end. Most subscriptions are due on 30th June - so send your payment any time.

A couple of our committee have been looking over two potential sites for our *Christie* organ (presently in storage), and they look quite encouraging. More details as they come to hand. We are also looking forward to having a new internet page for TOSA NSW. It should be operational within a few months.

As I mentioned last month, Jean Newell has retired from her position as Concert Ticket Secretary. She was given a round of applause and a box of flowers at the Marrickville concert. Now the job has fallen into the hands



of Kath Harding. We are asking for your help in bookings.....

To make for smooth and fast Box Office operation at future concerts, we are asking that all pre-booked tickets be paid for in advance. Tickets will then be posted out in time for the concert. In other words, tickets will not need to be held for collection at the concert, thus avoiding a bottle-neck at the counter. This is how the system used to work in past years, and we believe it is the way to go again. Ordinary tickets will, of course, be on sale at the door as usual, though we hope to also make this easier than it has been before, especially in the new cramped conditions of the Orion lobby.

We will appreciate your help in the change-over.

Until next time ...

Walter Pearce

Members Event
Epping Baptist Church
Sunday, 24th June at 2pm

Editorial

Our next TOSA function is the *Epping Event* centred around Epping Baptist Church's *Christie* organ on Sunday, 24th June at 2pm. Our talented TOSA members will be entertaining us all with great style and enthusiasm.

Our next concert is at Marrickville Town Hall on Sunday, 8th July at 2pm. Ken Double, who was so popular with our members last time he played for us, will definitely be playing the Marrickville *Wurlitzer*, NOT the Orion *Wurlitzer*, as I mistakenly listed in the May issue of *TOSA News*' Current Events column. Please change your diary entry if you have already copied it down from last month's *TOSA News*. We don't want anyone to turn up accidentally to the wrong venue!

A special thank you to John Batts who spent considerable time during the recent Brisbane Festival writing down his impressions and then writing them up for publication in *TOSA News*. His comments and asides are always entertaining to read, even for those who were not at the actual events and his efforts are greatly appreciated. Also thanks go to Roy Winston for his summary of our successful and enjoyable Southern Highlands Weekend.

Two members have sent in photos of the National Festival and/or the Southern Highlands Weekend - Neil Palmer and Michael Links - and we thank them for their valuable contributions.

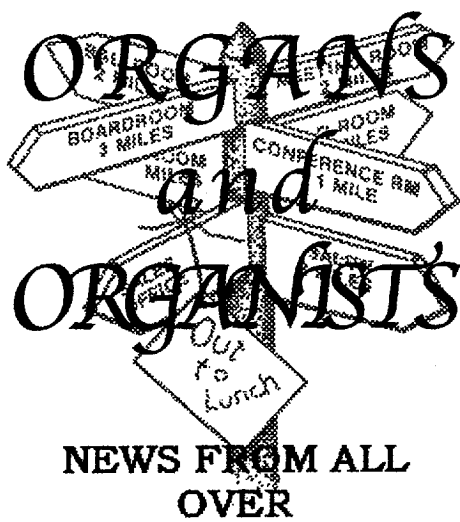
Don't forget that if you have any articles or photos, we are always looking for items to fill out our pages. Please send in any things you feel may be of interest to our members, rather than throwing them out.

To overcome recurring problems, a couple of changes have been made to the pre-booking system for concerts. So please read Walter's President's column on the left for details to avoid inconvenience.

Best Wishes,
Colin Groves

Articles in this journal need not represent the views of the committee or the editor

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



NEWS FROM ALL
OVER

Free Organ Recital

TOSA member Colin Adamson will present a varied programme on the Anglican Cathedral organ, St John's Cathedral, Parramatta, from 12.30 to 1.10 pm on Wednesday, 13th June.

St John's Cathedral is on Church Street Mall, Church and Hunter Streets, Parramatta.

Off-street parking available.

Close to train station.

All welcome.

The Lancastrian Theatre Organ Trust Loses Granada Venue

By David Alldred, Secretary of The Lancastrian Theatre Organ Trust

After eight successful years of association between the Lancastrian Theatre Organ Trust and Granada Studios Tour, Manchester, UK,

the decision has been made by Granada that the Tours Complex is to cease operating at the end of February 2001.

Following the peaking of visitors to the Tours Complex some two years ago, the decision was made by Granada to continue to use the attractions for corporate entertaining, etc. This to some extent has been beneficial to Granada's bottom line.

However, since the dramatic increase of digital broadcasting in the UK and more and more shopping channels coming on stream it was decided to pull out of corporate entertaining and revert the premises back to TV studios - the only concession being that the *Coronation Street* set be maintained and at some future date open this attraction to the public.

The Lancastrian Theatre Organ Trust installed the ex Gaumont, Manchester, 4/14 *Wurlitzer* into the Baronial Hall complex, which in itself was a scaled down replica of the foyer of the Granada Cinema, Tooting, in London and opened it in November 1992, the featured artists being Tony Fenelon and LTOT Vice Presidents, Len Rawle, Joyce Alldred, Nigel Ogden and Doreen Chadwick.

Since the opening, the *Wurlitzer* has been used as part of the Tours attractions, for LTOT shows and presentation, corporate bookings and LTOT weekends.

The last weekend, as some of you will remember, was the follow-on weekend from the 1999 ATOS Convention in London.

Over the years the Trust has had a very agreeable relationship with the management of the Tours and we thank them for their support.

Following meetings with executives of Granada, Don Hyde, chairman of the Trust and myself, formulated a mutual agreement to the benefit of the Trust, providing the *Wurlitzer* be removed within three months from the end of February 2001.

Following the very successful installation and opening of the ex-Paramount/Odeon, Free Trade Hall, Manchester, 4/20 *Wurlitzer*, in the ballroom of Stockport Town Hall in November 1999, the Trust has agreed, subject to the official agreement

being drawn up, to install the ex-Davenport, Stockport, 3/6 *Compton* in the Pavilion Gardens, in Buxton, some 15 miles from Stockport.

We now have the additional project of removing the Granada *Wurlitzer*, finding suitable storage and sourcing a new home.

At a recent meeting, the executives of the LTOT agreed in principal that the Trust should, if at all possible, find a suitable building to purchase outright, thereby giving the Trust complete control of events, provide central headquarters, have the facility to display our archives and hold our records.

This is our ultimate objective and in true Lancastrian endeavour we view this not as a setback, but as a challenge.

We shall in the coming months embark on a fund raising drive. ...

During the last two weeks in February we embarked on a recording marathon, putting as much material in the can as was possible. We invited nine artists to record a programme, which will eventually be released on CDs.

You can of course access up-to-date progress and information via our web site <www.voxlancastria.org.uk> or contact me direct, <david.joyce.allred@zetnet.co.uk>

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2001 ORGAN ODYSSEY

TOSA NATIONAL CONVENTION AT BRISBANE

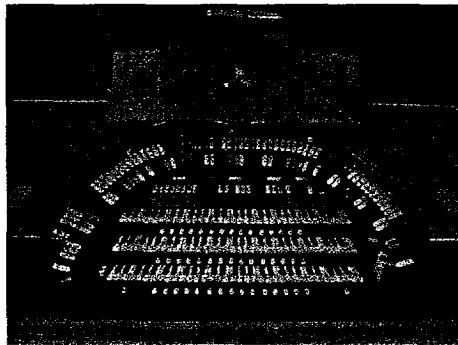
A Review by John S. Batts (TOSA-NSW)

What is a National Theatre Organ Convention or Festival for? Most readers of this journal would probably say that such events, as with TOSA meetings, serve a number of purposes. Among them must surely be considerations such as these half-dozen:

(a) it celebrates the art of the theatre organ, both the building/maintenance of and the playing of the musical behemoths of a now largely vanished world;

(b) it gives hosting groups an opportunity to showcase their work and catch up with what their counterparts in other parts of the country are doing;

(c) the occasion propels local chapters into high gear to complete



projects, fine-tune instruments, and inspire their membership into proactive help;

(d) it demonstrates a splendid commitment to the theatre organ cause, the preservation of that special music which unites us all;

(e) the event grants a public display of TOSA endeavours which may encourage the enlisted and both broaden and increase the membership; and

(f) it allows TOSA to promote publicly the overall cause of the theatre pipe organ. Against these bedrock considerations the success of a National Festival might be judged.

Of course, the particular challenge of this year's TOSA Festival was to follow up two super efforts in large cities with large societies, Melbourne

(1999) and Sydney (2000), with their multiple facilities and resources. Clearly, TOSA Queensland had its work cut out to approach such implied targets. Fortunately the instrument on which so much confidence was necessarily placed, the upgraded (one-time Granada, Maidstone) *Christie* let no one down, and attendees were rewarded by three major concerts which brought considerable acclaim, not only to the performers themselves but also to the local skills of the technical team led by a devoted whiz, Don Clark

The console is placed centre stage and rises in its own bay just beyond the lip of front stage. The two purpose-built chambers on either side of the stage were intended to replicate the organ's original home. Details of its provenance and the history of *Christie* theatre organs appeared in April's issue of the TOSA-NSW Newsletter.

Day 1

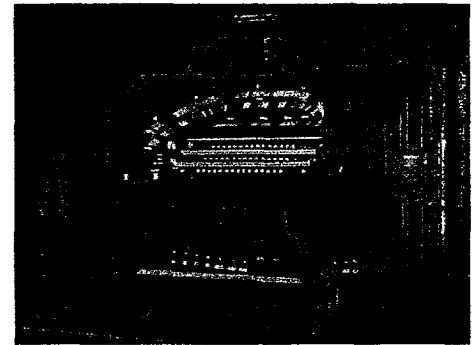
Your reviewer, delayed a little by the Ansett "off-loading" crisis of its passengers at Sydney Airport, arrived late for the Friday afternoon's opening performance (13th. April) at Kelvin Grove State High School, the base for the Festival. This segment had introduced the playing of some young Queenslanders to those attending before the current President of TOSA-Queensland Festival, Glenda Kubler, resplendent in a glittering top, put sparkle into a programme that ranged from *Onward, Christian Soldiers* — we were not to forget it was Good Friday! — to a medley of toe-tapping rags.

There followed perhaps the only moment during the Festival that planning and execution were not wholly in synch' because a late descent of the console closing the afternoon's events meant that dinner in the adjacent school-hall was delayed. Not that it seemed to perturb the genial Brazilian chef, so that over one hundred people, including almost two dozen of TOSA-NSW, eventually sat down to his culinary

buffet.

Initially disadvantaged by all this, however, may have been Friday evening's artist, a former Brisbane organist returning after what must have been too long a professional absence. It was almost an hour after the printed starting time when Neil Jensen could finally reassure his nerves by bringing up the console to a packed gathering and convince his audience that a professional artist's musical (and sartorial!) standards were intact.

Neil Jensen's first major offering was *Flying Down to Rio*, which invoked mid-Thirties dance music after a fanfare start - the Solo Chamber Trumpet leaves the listener in no doubt from where it speaks - and some simulated plane



noises. Soon lively tunes such as the *Carioca* were enhanced by brief contributions from castanets, cymbals, and triangle.

More mood challenges were on offer when *Harlem Nocturne* (Earle Hagen) began its quiet, haunting and jazzy opening wail (strings and reeds?). This is music that soon leaves no doubt that it belongs to a New York venue; it seems to embody the vibrancy, tension, and drama of a night in the Big Apple. This rendering was notable for its pleasing registration and well-articulated phrasing. The dance component of this non-Chopinesque nocturne was also enhanced by judicious use of the cymbal tap. The contrasting tempos and harmonic riches of the piece make its inclusion a natural for the theatre organ repertoire.

Next on offer was a selection of Cole Porter tunes. Again variety was the hallmark of composer and interpreter, the brashness of *Anything Goes* markedly absent in a lyrical playing of *I've Got You Under my Skin*, a number notably played with the stereo effect available from split chambers housed on either side of the stage. Other tunes identified in this medley were *Another Opening, Another Show*, *Wunderbar*, and *So in Love* (all from *Kiss Me Kate*), *I Remember Daddy*, and *Night and Day*.

Following an unannounced selection, Neil turned to Eric Coates' *London Suite* (*Mayfair, Westminster, Knightsbridge*) to close the first half of his programme. One wonders why the musical challenges of these pieces of English light music are not more often taken up by theatre organists, for musical mood-setting is clearly in the text and invites resourceful registration. *Mayfair* is lively and sprightly; here much of the performance was via untremmed voices. *Westminster* suggests dignified grandeur and was played on a number of solo 8' ranks, with Chimes (perhaps a nod to Louis Vierne's *Carillon de Westminster*!) eventually being heard. This movement also grew in measured volume and closed with drawn-out cadence over a pedal-point. The best-known segment of this suite is the *Knightsbridge March*, here played at a tempo no guardsman could match! Plenty was heard from the Trumpet rank, not least in a flamboyant finale.

After refreshments, the second half opened with a sample of what Neil has been doing at The Orpheum (Cremorne), experimenting with younger audiences by using the pipe organ to accompany his own pre-recorded, synthesised layering of tracks of movie music and now replayed (via MIDI facility). The second offering in this manner was the love-theme from *Titanic*, with ersatz String sounds swelling as no Mantovani could achieve. From where I was sitting in the hall it was not easy to differentiate which pipe-organ ranks were being used to accompany the amplified sounds. Of this experiment, opinions heard later that evening were quite mixed, but one can certainly applaud the organist's ingenuity in trying it out.

The next and extended selection was the music of Russian-born Irving Berlin who would have been

celebrating his 113th birthday this month. The music opened with a rising chromatic run which flowered into *There's No Business Like Show Business*, not so silent testimony to the Wright-full influence of a certain George on current organists! I was particularly struck by Neil's playing of several choruses of the ballad *How Deep is the Ocean*, a memorable tune and here treated at times to some non-Berlin harmonies. There was a pleasing variety of tonalities, the second chorus involving a gentle interchange of flutes and strings, the third chorus, more forcible, introducing horns over a basically Strings/Vox ensemble, and the whole closed with Tibia-dominated sound over a sustained 32' pedal ("How deep..."). Then a quick change of mood to the dance music of *Change Partners* and *Cheek to Cheek* in various keys, with plenty of chord-playing by the right hand. The rhythmic *Stepping Out with My Baby* was also included.



Eventually a dramatic transition into a reprise of *There's No Business*, with the unmistakable Trumpet providing a final fanfare.

Suddenly it was time for the last piece of music - perhaps out of deference to the delayed start. Again a shift of style and mood as we were entertained by *The Overture to Rossini's Thieving Magpie*, with a useful reminder of the theatre organ, played perhaps to remind one of Robert Hope-Jones' original orchestral concept for his unit-organ. The overall effect was of cleanly-articulated notes and sensibly registered music giving life to nineteenth-century music through a twentieth-century medium. The older music allowed scope for dramatic shifts of volume, the occasional addition of percussion, and even antiphonal interplay of featured voices from the separated chambers.

It was already 10.40 p.m. but rousing applause brought out a daring choice of

encore. Neil offered Chopin's *Fantasy Impromptu*, popularised for theatre organ enthusiasts several decades ago by Ashley Miller's recording of this music at Radio City Music Hall. It mixes fast-moving arpeggio sections with the gently lilting section which includes an infamous steal, the *Chasing Rainbows* motif, and can be a tour de force. Despite the implied tempting of the Fates of misfortune (Friday, 13th) here was an occasion that had indeed been a good Friday, a rousing evening for this *Christie*, its audience, and the theatre organ cause.

Happily, if you were not there our ubiquitous TOSA - NSW Committeeman and photographer, Barry Tooker, was on hand to videotape this and other major events at the Festival. Perhaps we can all look forward to seeing an edited version of *Odyssey 2001* in due course.

There is always something very special about a console which slowly rises (and descends) perhaps this sight in part draws upon early memories far today's listeners a case perhaps of *Says My Heart* by Frank Loesser (Neil's first number) and it does reinforce that sense of magic - one man playing his own orchestra with which the theatre organ has been long associated. Incidentally, I should be delighted if any reader can tell me when and where the first console on a lift was installed in a theatre.

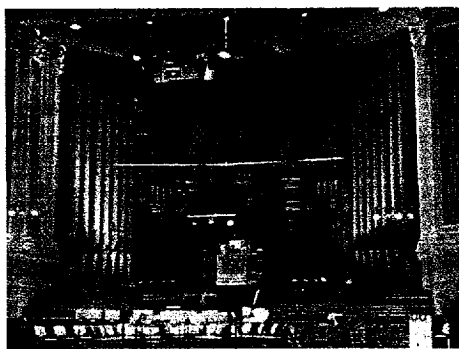
[While writing this review a quick sounding of expertise via "Second Touch" Internet discussion list brought some immediate answers. In England the first cinema organ installed on a lift was the *Plaza, Piccadilly* in Regent St in London's West End which opened in March, 1926 (my thanks here go to Ian McIver, Brisbane, and Gordon Crookes, U.K.). Ian suggested the first suburban cinema with organ lift in the UK as *THE RIALTO, Enfield*, in 1927. In the US it seems the *Granada* (later *Paramount*), San Francisco, may have the honour of the very first installation in 1921 (my thanks to Stephen Duffield, UK). On the Australian scene, the first console lift was at the *Capitol, Melbourne*, in 1924 (thanks again Ian McIver)]

Furthermore, Kelvin Grove presentations boast a splendid lighting set-up which vies with the most opulent theatre or pizza parlour installation.

Not only do the spotlights play in a variety of colours, but also good use is made of the rear curtain(s) of the stage, which through the evening shimmered to different tones and textures as directed by the lighting crew. The only iterated complaint against the Hall concerned its spartan, stackable wooden seats, perhaps a school's inevitable choice.

Day 2

Saturday was a full and varied day. Most of us had assembled outside Brisbane City Hall prior to entering its large, elegant, semi-circular hall beneath a rotunda. The facade of the five-manual *Willis* is very much a visual focal point, and about one hundred of us awaited music played first by Arthur Midgley. He opened promisingly with several theatre-organ favourites, the march *Under the Double Eagle* (Arnold Safoni) and then Ketelbey's tone-poem *Bells Across the Meadows*. Ellington's *Mood*



Indigo followed and began to show the limitations of a concert organ for the jazz idiom. A plaintive Oboe, gently tremulated, first took the lead in *Stranger on the Shore* and after some rich strings were heard closed with a single note in the Cathedral Chimes. There was thereafter a distinct leaning towards ballads (*Unforgettable*, *Smile*, *Somewhere My Love* among them), mixed in with some small churchy items from Handel, (what sounded to me like) S.S. Wesley, and *Trumpet Voluntary*, including a toe-tapping medley of *Five-Foot Two*, *Eyes of Blue* with *Sweet Georgia Brown* — this particularly seemed to underline the unsuitability of instrument to music once the novelty had worn off. One of the more effective closing items was Abe Holzman's march *Blaze Away* where an overall woolliness of sound was surpassed by upper-work voices and plenty of brass (probably the *Willis* Trumpet, Tuba, and Tromba all had an airing) and a floor-shaking close

complete with 32' pedal stops (one suspects the 32' Contra Ophicleide). Since none of the music was announced, a pity in itself, one has to rely on notes hurriedly jotted down at the time for most titles. This part of audience would have welcomed some words on what it was that we were about to hear. Moreover, a pause would have avoided the impression of sundry pieces being played almost seamlessly, a trait which was also to characterise the second organist's contribution. A little devil in my ear kept urging the question: "What would this performance do for a disinterested listener?" Conceivably, there was an enforced rush to ensure a prompt ending of the joint recital since City Hall was besieged by brass bands participating in a week-end long competition.

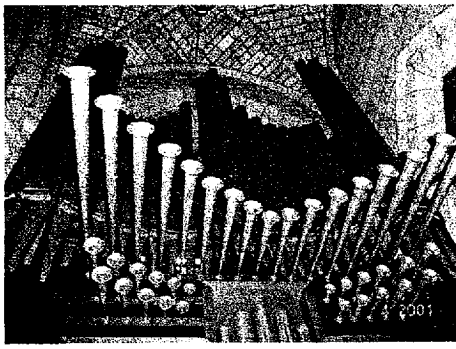
Barry Bailey continued the hectic cascade of music. Again one regretted the pressure on time which acted as a disservice to the music being played. After a light classical opening, a selection of Robert Stoltz's charming music for the operetta *White Horse Inn* followed. Here again, one wondered at the choice of registration on the *Willis* - on the following Monday the same organist played some selections from the shows and his selection of stops on the *Christie* worked more pleasingly. On the *Willis*, for example, one waltz was played with fractionals most evident and worked against the cantabile nature of the phrases; again, in two quicker movements the organ's tubbiness of sound seemed to stifle the articulation of the rhythm. By the closing number, *Goodbye*, which needs steady movement, being a kind of 'marche militaire', the Tromba or Tuba was used to good effect and with much brass and pedal depth too, here was satisfaction at last. Again the Cathedral Chimes were rung to open Stephen Adam's song *The Holy City*, though I thought the melody here was rushed and clipped. Next came Reginald King's *Song of Paradise* with its affinity with the theatre organ; it was originally dedicated to the violinist Alfredo Campoli who recorded it with Reginald Foort at the theatre organ. Plenty of Celestes and Strings were to hand to register the piece well. Then it was time for another early twentieth-century ballad with a TO pedigree - Oley Speaks' setting of Kipling's poem *On the Road to Mandalay*; quite

a spirited reading, though again one was troubled by Diapason thickness of sound. This was followed by more English light music. Eric Coates' *Dam Busters' March* from the film of that name was given splashy brass registration and concluded this early morning concert at City Hall. By my count we had twenty-one items of music in the hour of play. What a pity the session could not have had more leisure! And yet for all its variety the programmes of neither organist had offered us any French or Edwardian organ music of either the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. I should have loved to hear Elgar's *Imperial March* or one of his *Pomp & Circumstance* marches; likewise a movement from an organ symphony by Widor or Vierne would surely not have come amiss.

Some "standard" organ music was soon available, for immediately afterwards we were bused to St. John's



Cathedral. On arrival we were greeted by the Master of Music, Dr Robert Boughen, OBE, who crisply introduced his programme from the front of the main aisle before scurrying aloft to play the 4-manual instrument. He opened with the jolly *Hörnpipe* from Handel's *Water Music* and quickly introduced listeners to the Spanish Trumpet dialoguing with the Diapason Chorus. By contrast, the Strings and Celestes were in evidence in a chorale on *In Dulce Jubilo* by Marcel Dupré, a meditative piece. Then it was back to the solemn and grand with Sir Arthur Bliss' *Wedding March* taken at a stately pace, the music seemingly enjoying the reverberation of the Cathedral. A quiet musical lollipop ensued, a piece often heard at weddings, the well-known *Air on a G String* (J.S. Bach). Here an 8' melody (?Oboe) was heard over a soft String accompaniment and a pizzicato 8' pedal stop. The phrasing was exemplary, the rhythm steady, and a sparing use of grace notes



enhanced the rendering. All of which may have lulled the audience into reverie, and certainly provided a dramatic contrast as the next selection announced itself—the late Fela Sowande's joyous *Jericho* with a sprightly motif and jazzy idiom declaring African roots and perhaps the composer's *Hammond*-playing days in 1950s London while studying for his FRCO! This short piece moved towards a splashy close and a Tierce de Picardie ending. Dr Boughen, Patron of TOSA-Queensland, had clearly given some thought to his specialised audience and concluded with the exciting *Toccata* from Leon Boellman's *Suite Gothique*, a haunting pedal motif rising in C minor and forming the basis of the movement beneath insistent semi-quavers through to the climactic descending run of double-peddalling against manual arpeggios on the final page. The sticky bun and drink afterwards in the Cathedral forecourt seemed oddly out of key with what had transpired, especially for the curious few who had climbed winding stone steps to examine the console in the north transept. But it probably gave us all energy for an additional organ crawl that morning.

We entered the buses once more to be taken to Brisbane's South Bank, a collection of cultural buildings that includes the Performing Arts Centre Complex, housing a 4-manual *Johannes Klais* organ in the Concert Hall, installed twelve years ago. Our



guide on this busy Easter Saturday was again Dr Boughen, who was disappointed to find on arrival that acoustic baffles/blinds and an overstage hanging encumbrance were in place and thereby precluded the optimum organ sound in the hall. Having outlined the history of this instrument, he therefore invited all to join him in the organ loft in small groups where he demonstrated some of the joys of this modern German instrument with its traditional French (*Cavaillé-Coll*) layout of draw-stops. This instrument, unlike the Cathedral organ, is totally without borrowing or duplexing of pipes. It offers mechanical action with electric coupling, and a state-of-the-art capture-system for the pistons. Our genial host, in effect, gave an informative and amusing tour of the ranks (e.g. the Trompeteria at 16', 8' and 4' and the three 32' pedal ranks) plus some illustrative bursts of music and even a brief improvisation or two which hinted at his self-declared admiration of Duke Ellington and Oscar Peterson. Afterwards from the stage he spoke of the current difficulties in promoting the organ to a diffident public. Too infrequently does one encounter a pleasant church/civic musician of such broad and enlightened views and tastes. How fortunate is TOSA-Queensland to have such a generous and gifted Patron!

Musically satisfied, we regrouped outside in the warmth of the Queensland sun for a picnic boxed lunch and refreshment; some even made time to explore a portion of this riverside park. All too soon the buses arrived once more on cue to whisk us on to the next event back at Kelvin Grove High School for the afternoon concert on the *Christie*.

John Giacchi soon had his audience under his musical sway with *The Continental* (?Con Conrad), played crisply with more than a hint of that classic recording of it by Don Baker made at the New York Paramount even though this instrument is no 4/36 mammoth. Variety and contrast are very much part of a superior TO programme, a factor of which John is clearly aware. He next played a quiet ballad written by one-time member of the (UK) Granada Theatres team of organists, Ronald Hanmer. This was the piece used by ABC's *Blue Hills* programme. Readers may not have known that

Hanmer eventually became a Queensland resident and occasionally led a small band of musicians, so this was doubly appropriate. Contrast again was evident with some Latin-American music from a long forgotten film, *Murder of the Vanities*. Plenty of tremors-off moments, at least four bars of Castanets, along with marked dynamic changes of registration were hallmarks of this rendition. The major feature of his first half was an extended selection of Cole Porter's music for the MGM film *Rosalie* (1939). This opened with the *In the Still of the Night* motif played slowly with a left-hand counter melody adding interest and eventually power as it blossomed into the French Trumpet. There was plenty of energetic dance music in the film, too, and one heard a rhythmic number complete with Trumpet riffs and Cymbal strokes other than the title number *Rosalie*. This music also demonstrated John's familiarity with the *Christie* via some lightning fast registration changes, many made by hand. Half an hour into this concert the organist gave way to fifteen minutes' of Stuart Free at the baby-grand *Yamaha* piano. Contrast here clearly and some familiar tunes courtesy of a Harry Warren selection, but I regretted not hearing more from John. When he did return we were switched to a snazzy *Waltz in Swing Time* before the first half closed with Richard Rodgers' dramatic music for *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* popularised by George Wright on those Hi-Fi EPs he produced in the 1950s. Its tunes do seem ideal for theatre organ and John demonstrated how orchestrally he conceives his registrations. So from the opening's fast pace (with notable stereo effects from the split chambers) to quiet bluesy moments of nervous (the music's, not the organist's!) melody leading into the lyrical passages there was much to be admired. Likewise it was good to notice the attention to detail with real left-hand arpeggios and octave playing of the *Three Blind Mice* motif. The whole was capped by the closing music with its insistent movement enhanced here by instrumentals and the rhythm section. No suggestion here that the music had been 'slaughtered'; it had been well executed!

After a half-hour interval John returned to view with Irving Berlin's *We Joined the Navy to See the Sea*,

introduced to remind us that he would be flying over the Pacific next day to an organ date at the *Rialtofest* in the Mid-West U.S. Then he moved to what he called "a rinky-tink" number from 1929 and new to me; it may have been called *Spring Fever*, and the coincidence that it might have been penned by someone called "Blum" is surely too neat! Finally, John presented a detailed selection from Harold Arlen's score for *The Wizard of Oz*. Many of the previously mentioned virtues of theatre-organ playing were to be seen and heard in songs like *Ding Dong the Witch is Dead* and a delightful arrangement of what can otherwise be a hackneyed piece, *Over the Rainbow*. Just when he seemed to be wonderfully in synch' he gave way to a cameo appearance by young Queenslander, Robert Wetherall, who played half a dozen pieces.

John Giacchi returned with a new version of *Never on a Sunday*, a light-hearted offering for Easter Sunday! Next was another moment to savour. TO concerts surely ought always to mix the new with the more familiar, and we were introduced to Billy Mayerl's *Moorish Idyll* from his *Aquarium Suite*. In common time, it was both delicate and attractive, suitably arranged with some oriental sounds; a welcome addition to the TO repertoire I suggest. Then it was time for a familiar ballad, courtesy of the Russian composer Borodin on whose music the score for the musical *Kismet* is based; this number was *And This is My Beloved*. John closed his programme with *The Overture* to the youthful Rossini's 1816 opera *The Barber of Seville*, intelligently registered and pleasingly played. Another concert to savour. Now the evening's banquet was in prospect as buses again dutifully decanted out-of-town conferenciers at or near their downtown hotels.

The evening was devoted to the



Festival Banquet held at the Holiday Inn, Roma Street, prefaced by cocktails and enjoyed by many as an opportunity to meet new friends or catch up with old acquaintances. My only complaint here was the often overloud (because amplified) singer who managed to inhibit conversation at the tables. There were no speeches or votes of thanks, but all attending owe a great deal to the hosting Queensland group and its officers for its volunteered hours of labour, particularly the heroic efforts of the Kubler family, Ian and Glenda (and not forgetting their two helpful daughters).

Day 3

Sunday was another busy day, though its beginning was not as brutally early as the previous or succeeding days. This time we joined the coaches for a sunny excursion southwards for



an afternoon of musical entertainment put on by the TOSA-Gold Coast in Maher Hall, Burleigh Heads. This was prefaced by a lunch at the local RSL overlooking the sea. Yet again the organization was faultless with Bus Captain Hilary Lewis ensuring the three buses found their destinations.

Perhaps many of us had eaten too well to respond adequately to the afternoon's fare, but a number of those present opined that they had most enjoyed the contributions of the two invited soloists. The young teenager, Laura Knight, played her violin superbly and was sympathetically accompanied at the piano by Marie Nicolson; she had thoughtfully chosen almost a theatre organist's programme that included Monti's *Czardas*.

In the second half Muriel Watson (vocalist) with fine period dresses and stage presence captivated her audience with two separate selections of well-known songs, accompanied by Bev Black at the *Rodgers* electronic organ. The backbone of the keyboard entertainment featured the piano/organ

duo of Bev Black and Beryl Eigeland. Both performed creditably but seemed to battle a little with the amplification system and at moments I was certain that the two instruments were not quite in tune with each other.

However, in a Festival that was basically confined to one theatre organ, this afternoon's venture was overall rewarding. Further, the outing probably placed us in a better perspective to realise the pinnacles to which Richard Hills' organ playing has ascended, for his was the evening concert back at Kelvin Grove. But first it was time (yet again) to eat supper back at the school.

Easter Sunday's evening concert at Kelvin Grove High School was arguably the high-light of the 2001 Festival. The 20 year-old recitalist must have felt increasing pressure as the days passed after the professional concerts by Jensen and Giacchi. In any case, here was a young man whose reputation is well advanced both by wide acclaim for his North American debut at the Oakland Paramount in the summer of 1988 and by audiences and reviewers in theatre organ journals ever since. Here was a case of much anticipation, or all to play for! Would the mid-size *Christie* meet his needs? Would there be a let-down after all? We did not have long to wait for Richard Hills' answer.

The console rose to a rousing plea, Revel and Gordon's 1937 tune *Wake Up and Live*, with tension-raising rising chromatic modulations before settling into the first chorus. The registration was changing but restrained, plenty of English-style rhythmic playing with brassy riffs; there followed an extemporised section in jazz fashion with xylophone riffs before a final restatement. This was followed by a lesser-known piece by Eric Coates, *Dance in the Twilight* from his *Springtime Suite*. Here the tune was well articulated and the phrasing good; the movement certainly opened in waltztime with a swirling melody. The Crescendo pedal was used for emphatic bursts of sound. Even the sway of the young figure on the bench seemed to suggest via body language an executant totally at one with the music. Richard next turned to the music of the Big Bands, a Harry Warren tune written for the film *Orchestra Wives* and starring Glenn Miller. Again, this playing of *I Know Why* was careful and

thoughtful, letting plenty of light into the music by a natural phrasing of the song. After listening to this calibre of playing one can be easily annoyed by those who equate theatre-organ music with so called "elevator music" (or is it muzak?)!

The first extended selection of music was from Rodgers and Hammerstein's musical *The King and I*, which opened here with a brief cocktail of major songs in the show before settling on *I Have Dreamed* with a basic sound of singing strings conveyed via legato playing. *I Whistle a Happy Tune* was suitably spirited encompassing a key-change and a Trumpet lead. With a gentle segue improvised, it was a restrained opening verse of *Hello Young Lovers* with some interested rubrato play on the key phrase and the registering suitably lyrical. *Getting to Know You* opened politely in tempo and sound level, building to a restatement of the chorus with neat Glock' note as riff. *Something Wonderful* began as a slow and wistful ballad and handled the melody line as though discovering a wonderful melodic line from which the organist could not be parted; some delicate ranks were soloed in this segment before the *Shall we Dance* motif was introduced, restated loudly via an alternation of Brass and Flutes. More modulation and some reworking of the original harmony brought about the reprise and a crescendo close. Here was an organist making music, and the applause was deserved.

Some remark should be made about Richard Hills' appearance and microphone manner. Both could hardly be faulted. While establishing rapport with his listeners, he can play self-deprecatingly on his Britishness (for example, an aside about his "failing brain" and Foot 'n Mouth troubles in the UK) and was very properly attired as if just from a function at his College's Junior Common Room. Despite the warmth of the evening he declined the invitation to doff his jacket. At the mike he seemed both quite unselfconscious and already to have intuited that there is a happy balance between saying almost nothing to the audience and tiring its patience with too much.

Richard next presented Cole Porter's *Experiment*, first heard, as he explained, on a recording by the Piccadilly Dance Orchestra with a

verse rather risqué for its time. Deprived of its lyrics the music is clearly dance, and though probably "new" music for the majority in the hall, Richard's playing of it makes one realise that one does not exclusively need contemporary music to please a Theatre Organ crowd, for here was Twenties' music flourishing under young hands.

The music seemed to be getting better with each selection. Playing the variety card, Richard next presented a Latin number, Albert Marland's arrangement of a traditional *Mexican Fire Dance* conjuring up the musical scene with a fiery Spanish opening, followed by contrasting lyrical section featuring String sounds; then it was back to fury with semi-quaver dashes up and down the manuals plus much



chromaticism dashing towards a Trumpet-dominated finale and a cymbal-crash climax.

The last music of the first half was something of a stunning 'tour de Torch'. Admitting himself to be a fan of the English theatre-organist/conductor/composer Sidney Torch (and assuring us that we were all too young to remember 78s!), Richard recreated a 1935 medley in tribute to the old master from *Torch Song-Parade* recordings. This choice was also born of the fact that Torch made many of his famous recordings on the *Christie* organs at London venues, The Regal, Marble Arch, and The Regal, Edmonton. Both were larger than this Queensland 3/11 instrument but the musical results this evening left little to be desired. Many of those songs are now forgotten, but the titles included: *Don't Let It Bother You*, *The Continental*, *I Only Have Eyes for You*, *Over My Shoulder*, *Love is Just Around the Corner*, *June in January*, *As Sweet as We Are*, *Sing as We Go*, and *I've Got to Sing a Torch Song*. Richard did enough to convince many in the

audience that his listening to Torch has been meticulous; many of the registrations and Torchisms were remarkably familiar. Yet this was no mere pastiche. Somehow Richard managed to communicate the pleasant charm of the old music and its first populariser along with his own vibrancy - a remarkable achievement!

The second half opened with Eric Coates' *London Bridge*, a lively piece in common time and an opportunity to play with counter melodies and occasional cymbal crashes. Thereafter he turned to Billy Mayerl's use of a theme by Croome Johnson, *Bats in the Belfry*, a lively piano piece rendered without tremors and quite loud. The middle section offers some tricky rhythm and finger work, but in this playing one would never have guessed for all was secure. This saw the only minor and unheard hiccup in the whole evening's performance, poor Richard moving onto the Solo manual suddenly to find no stops drawn; not that more than a second passed before the silence was ended!

Next a ballad which Richard has recorded, the Kern and Hammerstein collaboration *The Folks Who Live on the Hill* - an appropriate enough choice for Brisbane which has many a hill. This was followed by another pleasant anthology of tunes which he called *A Jolson Jamboree*, songs associated with and even composed by Al Jolson. Reginald Dixon was fond of a parcel of Jolson songs, but this was no Blackpool imitation! *I'm Sitting On Top of the World* - a number once beloved by theatre organists playing their solo spot atop the console lift - was delivered with crisp rhythm and closed with a clever segue into *When the Red, Red Robin* (Harry Woods) also accompanied by an interesting counter-melody. Irving Berlin's *Always* was wistful and delicate, a good build-up for the pace of *Toot, Toot, Tootsie* (Erdman, Kahn, Russo), here quite shorn of any maudlin suggestion of departure; the second chorus was jazzy in conception. *My Mammy* (Walter Donaldson) was given a Jolionesque melodramatic treatment, as was the closing choice Jolson's own *Sonny Boy* (written in collaboration with Henderson, De Sylva and Brown) - one expected at least Larry Parks to peep out on stage!

After the emotional tumult of

Jolson it was back to British light music and reminders of two admired English cinema organists; first of Sidney Torch as composer via his own *On a Spring Note*, and second of Gerald Shaw, whose annotated copy of *Rio Chambira* (Müller) Richard had been working with. If the former was sprightly, then the latter was full-voiced Latin music, brassy and joyful with the Castanets and Tambourine joining in. It was good to be able to recall that the theatre organ can do justice to such disparate music.

Richard's final selection encompassed music from the French ballet. Here were ten minutes' worth of the various tunes and moods of Delibes' 1870 work, *Coppélia*, and another chance to mine the orchestral possibilities of the theatre organ. The sheer variety of sounds and levels was striking, if only to mention the Flute notes played on the accompaniment manual. The musicianly performance was never strident for more than a few bars and then released to a lesser intensity. This was an organist not afraid to use a solo melody where necessary or to fashion full chordal complexities with both hands and feet where needed. In short, he was allowing the music to speak, to ebb and flow, fingers and feet a mere conduit.

After prolonged acclaim, Richard returned to the bench to dazzle once more with his arrangement of the popular Latin-American samba *Brazil*, an inventive and electric performance which left us hoping for more, though he wisely left us on yet another musical high. What an instrument! What a performer! Do not moments like this give one the best inner satisfaction that belonging to a theatre organ group and preserving a threatened musical species is not only simply worthwhile but a life-enhancing activity?

Day 4

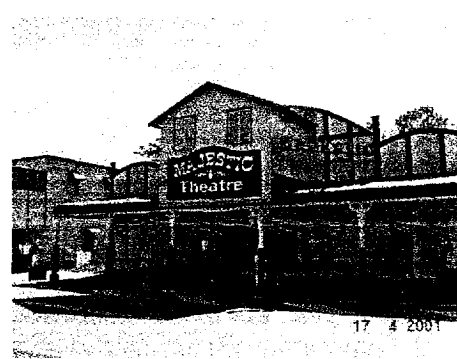
Monday was another early start, buses leaving downtown hotels for Kelvin Grove before 8.00 a.m. The morning first presented what was billed as a "Cameo Concert" on the *Christie* by Arthur Midgley and Barry Bailey who both seemed more at ease at the theatre organ than at City Hall, even though this was another early morning engagement. Here their selections relied extensively on show tunes (*My Fair Lady*, *Showboat*), as do theatre organ concerts generally. Following a morning pause for

refreshments - Queenslanders really do make one feel welcome! - it was time for the bold and fearless to try out the *Christie* in an Open Console session.

Some announced their offerings others did not, but for most it was very much a case of persistently playing *Underneath the Sweaty Palms!* Almost a dozen tried out their hands (and feet) during this pre-lunch session: players included Paul (from Ballarat), Greg (from South Australia), Scott (from Victoria), Ralph Hurrell (South Australia), Barry (Tasmania), Margaret Cox (Tasmania), John La Lecheur, Errol Storey (N.Z.), Noelle Whitefield and even your reviewer. At the conclusion of this, prompted by the effervescent Glenda Kubler's *Show Me the Way to Go Home*, we sat down yet again to a pleasant meal, sad perhaps that the official "Odyssey" was closing but grateful to our hosts for their first-rate and devoted organisation. Homer's Odysseus wandered for ten years, but though there is nothing national pencilled in for next year, another Festival is planned for only two years hence.

Day 5

Tuesday's *Afterglow* was the customary early start on an even longer journey by coach to the Sunshine Coast where a major engagement was



at Ron West's Majestic Theatre at Pomona to experience some organ-accompanied silent films. This small building was opened in 1921 and now is wholly devoted to silent film presentations, using a small two-manual *Wurlitzer*. We were welcomed by Ron West after mid-morning refreshments and then enjoyed an attractive selection of old-time silent-film stars: Harold Lloyd in *The New Car*, Charlie Chaplin in *One A.M.*, Buster Keaton in *The Balloon Mania*, and finally Blackhawk Films' *The Great Pie Fight*, starring Laurel and Hardy. All were deftly



accompanied by Ron's assistant, Richard Zieren, at the *Wurlitzer*, reminding us of why theatre organs developed.

After all this, who needed lunch? But we did, and the coaches took us to another seaside venue, Coolum Beach RSL, to eat and unwind. The remainder of the afternoon journeying back 132k. to Brisbane was social and instructive



with leisurely stops at The Ginger Factory and The Big Pineapple, a



gentle afternoon's diversion to buffer our return to the mundane world after several days of being on a theatre-organ enthusiast's musical high. Many of those abiding concerns of the theatre organ fraternity/sorority had been met. Thank you, TOSA-Queensland Inc.

[Many, many thanks to John Batts for his informative and entertaining comments on the Brisbane Festival. Also thanks to Neil Palmer for the use of his photographs which may not have copied too well, but that is the fault of my computer equipment and not of Neil's photos!- Ed.]

Southern Highlands Hospitality Weekend

By Roy Winston

Congratulations to our hosts, Dick and Kerry Benham and to Chris Styles and Dominic Wong for opening their homes to around 40 TOSA members and their friends for a weekend of warm fellowship and wonderful music.

Over a dozen of our talented members entertained us on the various organs and/or treated us to light romantic and melodious song.



On Saturday, Dick and Kerry, ably assisted by their good friends Jill and Graeme Kemp, welcomed each of us as we arrived from 2pm onwards at their lovely Moss Vale home.

We were directed to the organ room where Dick introduced his *Conn 650* and Bert Chamberlain played the *Thomas Paramount*. Margaret Hall-Nelson then played a lively bracket of numbers on the big *Conn* to demonstrate some of the organ's many sound effects and get the party moving.

Wendy Hambly then favoured us with a delightfully balanced bracket as Wendy always does.

By now afternoon tea was being served (Oh what a spread!!), and our volunteer organists continued playing in good form. Some of our players were ably assisted by Margaret with

registrations and percussion side-effects to everyone's delight.

About 6.30pm, dinner was announced. We were treated to mountains of tasty entrees, followed by BBQ mains and still the strains of organ music drifted up into the dinning



room and lounge areas.

Believe it or not, we were then served a range of sumptuous sweet dishes, plus tea or coffee, and there was a variety of refreshments to enjoy.

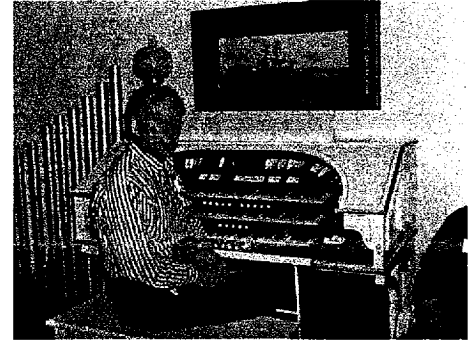
After dinner Margaret showed us a very informative and interesting video on the construction and installation in the USA of a *Mighty WurliTzer* organ, and some of the many wonderful, highly-ornamental theatres that were built to show the earlier movies and how the theatre organs augmented those silent films.

We were so pleased to find that Ray and Edna Hambly and Eunice



Palmer had made the trip from Sydney to be with us and share the fellowship.

After dinner we had the pleasure of listening to more of our volunteer organists, but we leaned heavily on



John Batts (our on-paper Canadian) and Margaret Hall.



Both Jan Pringle and Roger Dorman who had sung so beautifully before dinner, again favoured us with more of their melodious talent, accompanied on organ by Margaret.

Later Margaret and John decided that it was time for us to sing. They then took turns at the organ to lead us in community singing. They both delighted us with many old favourites until the party broke up about 10pm.



KEN DOUBLE

returns on

Sunday, 8th July, at 2pm

Marrickville

Town Hall

Booking Form overleaf

N.B. Change of Ticket Secretary

Southern Highlands Hospitality Weekend (Day 2)

By Roy Winston

On Sunday at 9.30 am we were all back for more at Chris Styles and Dominic Wong's fairytale home at Mittagong. By 9.30 the organ, a *Wurlitzer*, was being played and it was played almost continuously until well after 1 o'clock.

We were allowed to explore the entire gracefully ornamented and decorated, spotless house, set in its large and developing gardens. I tend to think that the house and furnishings fascinated the ladies more than the lovely music.

The extensive, thoughtfully laid out gardens, garden-pools and ornaments, flowers veggies and herbaceous borders left the men wondering when and how Chris and Dominic find the energy and the time to create so delightful a garden and lawn. Some of our members made time to drive around and enjoy the many lovely homes and gardens in the wide leafy streets with their autumn colours.

Over the weekend our organ players were: Margaret Hall-Nelson, John Batts, Wendy Hambly, Roger

Dorman, Amy Caldwell, Elizabeth Cerda, Don Baker, Bruce Bisby, Bert Chamberlain, Chris Styles and Dick Benham. Jan Pringle and Roger Dorman both sang for us.

The others who came to listen and enjoy the fellowship of the weekend were Robert Nelson, Edna and Ray Hambly, Bill Watts, John and Shirley Lucke and Pilot, Jan and Ian Pringle, Françoise, Natasha and Colin Groves, Richard and Debra Marschall, Ted and Margaret Dunk, Roy and Maree Winston, Neil and Eunice Palmer, Doreen and Tony Tuck, Deidre and David McMullen, and of course Dick and Kerry Benham and to their friends Jill and Graeme Kemp who did so much to assist in the preparation and serving of the wonderful spread to feed the wolves on Saturday.

I did not learn who, if anyone, assisted Chris and Dominic to set up such a magnificent spread for morning tea/lunch on Saturday but I do know that it was appreciated and enjoyed by all, served outside on such a lovely

sunny day. (It is Ivy Turnell who is to be thanked and congratulated for the marvellous morning tea - Ed.)

The weather was perfect and we all had a marvellous and memorable weekend. We returned home, each knowing one another much better and some new friendships were forged in TOSA.

P.S. I have learnt that I missed at least one organist who played for us and 2 or maybe 3 listeners whose names did not reach me. To all, and especially those that I failed to mention, thank you for bring with us and we hope to see you again soon at our Sydney concerts at Marrickville Town Hall and Campsie Orion.

(Sincere apologies to anyone who has been omitted or whose name has been misspelt. We worked from the sign-in lists and some mistakes are possible - Ed.)

Photos on page 12 were kindly supplied by Neil Palmer.

Day 2 photos by Michael Links will appear in next month's TOSA News.

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Please include a stamped self-addressed envelope with your bookin, and your tickets will be posted to you. Seats cannot be reserved unless payment is received in advance.

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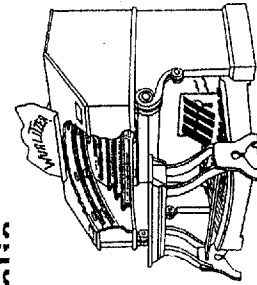
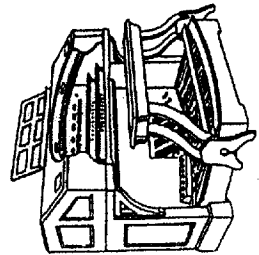
TOSA NEWS

JUNE, 2001

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