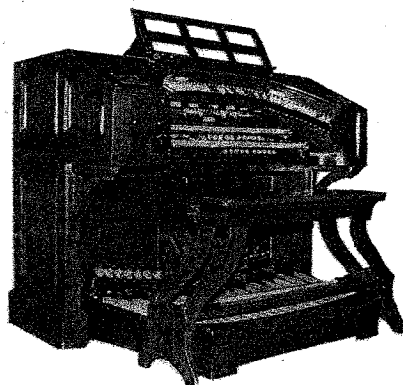


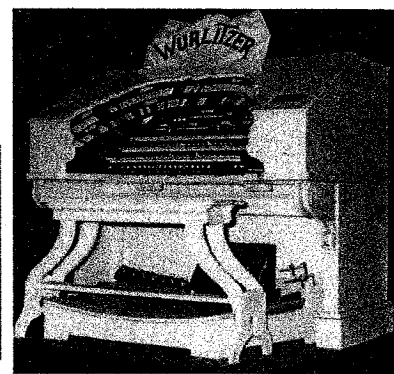
AUGUST, 2002



2/11 WurliTzer Theatre Pipe Organ
Marrickville Town Hall

TOSA

NEWS



3/17 WurliTzer Theatre Pipe Organ
Orion Centre Campsie

A Dazzling, Young Organist with
UK and NZ Connections Returns

Chris Powell



Marrickville Town Hall

Sunday 18th August at 2pm

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Issue 7
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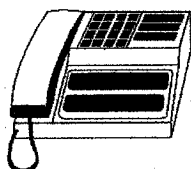
AUGUST, 2002

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COMING EVENTS

AUGUST

- Monday 5 at 7.30pm Committee Meeting
- Thursday 8 at 1.30pm Members' Playing Day
Orion Centre Campsie
Phone 9716 0151 to confirm
- Sunday 18 at 2.00pm Chris Powell Concert
Marrickville Town Hall
- Thursday 22 at 7.30pm Members' Playing Night
Marrickville Town Hall
Phone 9798 6742 to confirm

SEPTEMBER

- Monday 2 at 7.30pm Committee Meeting
- Thursday 12 at 1.30pm Members' Playing Day
Orion Centre Campsie
Phone 9716 0151 to confirm
- Thursday 26 at 7.30pm Members' Playing Night
Marrickville Town Hall
Phone 9798 6742 to confirm

OCTOBER

- Sunday 6 at 2.00pm Dan Bellomy Concert
Orion Centre Campsie
- Thursday 10 at 1.30pm Members' Playing Day
Orion Centre Campsie
Phone 9716 0151 to confirm
- Monday 14 at 7.30pm Committee Meeting
- Thursday 24 at 7.30pm Members' Playing Night
Marrickville Town Hall
Phone 9798 6742 to confirm

From The President

Neil Jensen was outstanding at the Orion concert in July, and entertained us with a wide variety of music.

Just how these artists memorize such a wide repertoire is beyond me! Then they play accurately and thoughtfully, despite the complication of controlling such a complex instrument at the same time! Neil did it all, and did it well.

What most people in the audience would not have noticed (is that the computer had latched the Diaphone stop ON and nothing Neil could do from the console would turn it OFF. So, the pedal in particular came through louder than would be comfortable for most music. Fortunately, three experienced TOSA people heard the problem and could see Neil flipping the tab to try and turn the Diaphone OFF. So, Rob Gliddon did the right thing. He whizzed back-stage to let us know, and as soon as Neil finished his first piece we typed "JENSEN" and pressed <ENTER> which re-loaded the JENSEN file into the computer memory. Within seconds Neil was (into his second item - with the organ functioning normally - and he didn't turn a hair. Bingo!

Why the computer does things like that I don't know - but I do know that Ken Martin had to do some industrial strength tuning before this concert. It had not been tuned since the middle of summer six months before, and I suspect the computer glitch was also caused by this lack of use.

Fortunately Neil Palmer, Bill Schumacher and I were able to get access to the Orion Wurlitzer for three Saturdays before the concert, and a good deal of maintenance was carried out. We even bought a narrow extension



ladder so Neil could climb up and service some of the percussions that had been almost inaccessible up till now. Some ranks are in strange and lofty positions in the Orion chambers because of the need to bring them into line with the shutters - this being an under-stage installation.

We also wired up the console so it could remain in its under-floor "garage" while notes and ranks were keyed for servicing. This meant we didn't have to put the console on the hoist and thereby run foul of the Orion people as they prepared for functions upstairs.

It was a set of three sadnesses over recent weeks. First we learned that Bill Schumacher's mother, Jean, died on 27th June, aged 96 years. On the 4th of July Rob Gliddon's mum, Flora, passed away, aged 87 years, and then to cap it off TOSA News Editor Colin Groves lost his mother, Thelma, on 10th July, aged 82 years. Our condolences to these three TOSA workers. None of these events were unexpected, but it still hurts.

Oh - by the way - I want to let you know that TOSA is not a sexist organization, even though, last week, one renewal letter arrived addressed in large bold print to the MEMBERSHIP secretary!

I'm pleased to be able to report that we have already received

renewals from 85% of our members. If the postal label on your TOSA News reads "SUBSCRIPTION EXPIRED", then please send your payment now so we don't have to take you off the mailing list. Stay with TOSA, support TOSA, and make use of the benefits of belonging! A renewal form should be enclosed.

I'm sorry Members' Playing Afternoons/Evenings are not having a good run at the moment. The Orion is always a bit doubtful, and even Marrickville has had its problems. It pays to phone ahead and check.

Opera Australia is making use of the Marrickville Town Hall again - every day 10.30am to 10pm for the three weeks up to the next concert. Just how we can get in for tuning and for Chris Powell to practise is a good question. But, as usual, Bill will find a way. And you won't want to miss hearing Chris. He is good!

We were unable to enclose membership cards in the July TOSA News - but we've made up for it this month.

If you sent your payment in the last 3 or 4 weeks, don't worry it will be processed before next month's TOSA News.

Hey, that's enough for now -
Walter Pearce

Welcome To New Members

TOSA (NSW) is pleased to welcome the following new members and to wish them all a happy time amongst our ranks :

- Noelle Andreatta - Cootamundra
- Florence Best - Waverton
- Maureen Burke - Lane Cove
- Bryson Gale - Davistown
- Julian Laycock - Winston Hills
- Pamela Walters - Penrith

.....
Editorial Hey! How come there's no room for the Editor's piece? 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

Variety Concert

"On a Spring Note"



featuring

Margaret Hall & Tamara Rozek
at the Christie orchestral pipe organ

Owen Watkins
ragtime saxophonist

James Robertson
classical violinist

Join us for an entertaining afternoon of music
to put a little *spring* in your step!

Sunday 22nd September 2.30pm

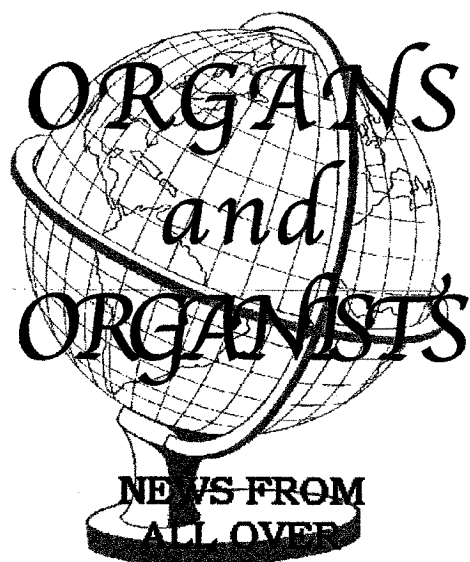
Epping Baptist Church
(Cnr Ray and Carlingford Roads)



Admission by Donation

Suggested donation: \$10 or \$5 (conc.)

Enquiries phone 9584 2353



A collection of interesting items from Victorian TOSA's May 2002 issue of *Vox* :

○ A 2/12 WURLITZER COMES SOUTH

The 2/10 Wurlitzer originally installed in the Kings Cross Theatre in Sydney in 1928, and subsequently removed to the Savoy Theatre, Hurstville, has come south to Victoria.

After being removed from the Savoy Theatre, the organ was installed in the Burwood Congregational Church, where the pressures were lowered, percussions removed, and it was used by the Church for a number of years, until they decided to sell it.

Steve McDonald, a member of the NSW Division of TOSA, decided to buy the organ from the Church, but before he moved it, he decided to raise the pressures to the correct levels for the various ranks, tune the organ again, and play and record it.

A number of the members of the Church who heard the organ played on the correct pressures were reported to have remarked "why are we selling this organ". Hmm ... too late!

Over the years, Steve has refurbished many of the components, but never actually got it installed. So with another house-move coming up, with no room for the organ, he decided to sell it.

Howard Terrill, long time member of TOSA Victoria Division, had recently been looking around in England for a theatre organ, but missed out on one, so when he heard about the Sydney Wurlitzer, he jumped in and, with a bit of advice, purchased the organ, shipping it down to Melbourne earlier this month.

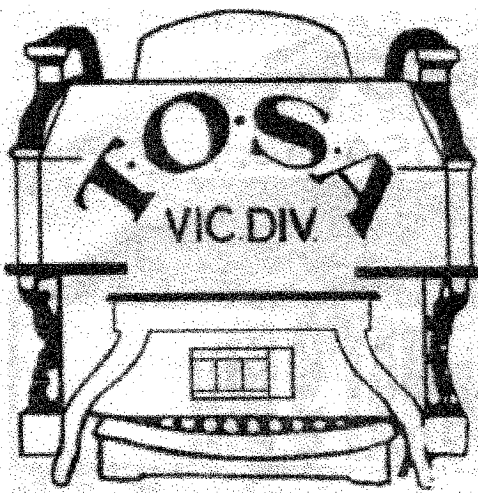
The organ is now in storage, and will be installed in his Heathcote home over the next six months, with a playing target before the end of the year. Organ Builder Ian Wakeley will be doing the refurbishment and installation, incorporating a solid state relay system by John Andrews of Sydney. The same system as installed at Malvern, and installed, but not yet wired in, at Moorabbin.

ORGANS ON THE MOVE (or Victoria gets more 'organised')

Following the sad death of Ray Thornley late last year, the organ components which Ray had collected over the years were placed on the market.

The organ was originally purchased by Ian McLean in 1989, who then lived in Canberra, as an inventory of ranks hand-picked by Russ Evans in Seattle, and it was intended to build the various components into a 3-manual organ of around 15 to 20 ranks.

Ian was forced to place the organ components on the market in 1993, and



some of the parts were sold off as single items. However, most of the components were purchased by Ray, and eventually shipped to his home in Wonthaggi.

The three-manual console, originally from a radio station in Cincinnati, was bought from Ian by the South Australia Division of TOSA, with the thought of replacing the two-manual console on the ex-Plaza Melbourne 2/12 at Wyatt Hall. This never happened, and Ray subsequently bought the console from the SA Division.

With the prospect that the 3-manual console, along with around 18 ranks of

pipework and associated regulators, chests, tremulants, etc., would be split up, three members of the Victorian Division got their heads together and stepped in to "save" the organ!

John McLennan, Stan Wilson and Julien Arnold are now the proud owners of a huge pile of "organ", which is now in storage at Julien's factory at Mentone (along with the 2/8 Wurlitzer from the Hearne residence in Geelong).

Yes, we have 2 Wurlitzers in stock at the moment ... never a dull world, is it?

There are no immediate plans for the 3-manual, 12 to 15 ranker at the moment, but a public auditorium would certainly be the preference.

THE GEELONG WURLITZER IS REMOVED

As you read in a recent issue of *TOSA News*, the Geelong Wurlitzer has been removed from the Geelong residence which has now been sold.

A team of TOSA members comprising of Julien Arnold, John McLennan, David Penney, Arnold Van Es, Neil Hunter and Mark Arnold, safely removed and packed the organ, shipping it down to the Mentone factory.

Just a couple of weeks prior to the organ being removed, Alan was practising on the organ in order to record the organ sounds for the last time at Montana, when the organ blower motor burnt out! Julien and Mark were swiftly on the scene, dismantling the blower, and removing the motor so that an electrician could pick it up and get it rewound, in order that Alan could continue with his aim to record the organ before it left Montana. The following weekend the Arnolds returned to re-assemble the blower, and Alan was able to resume his practice! The organ was recorded a couple of weeks later.

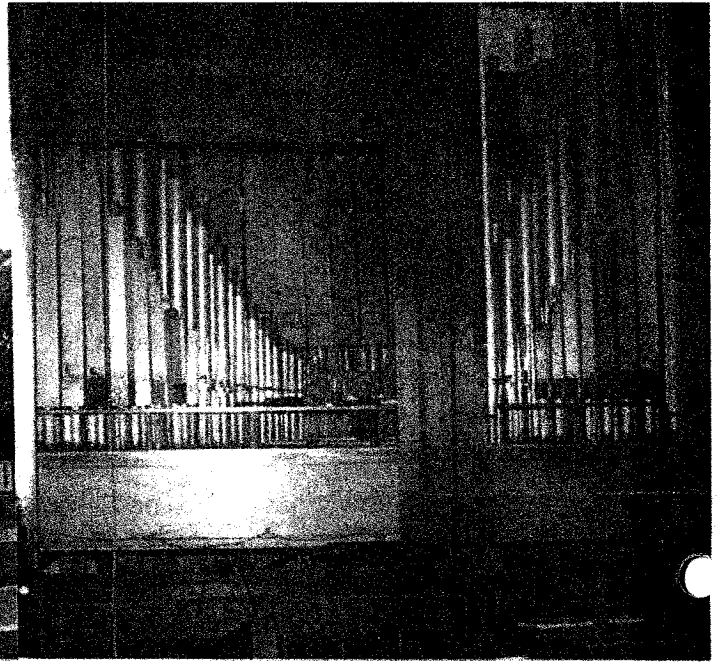
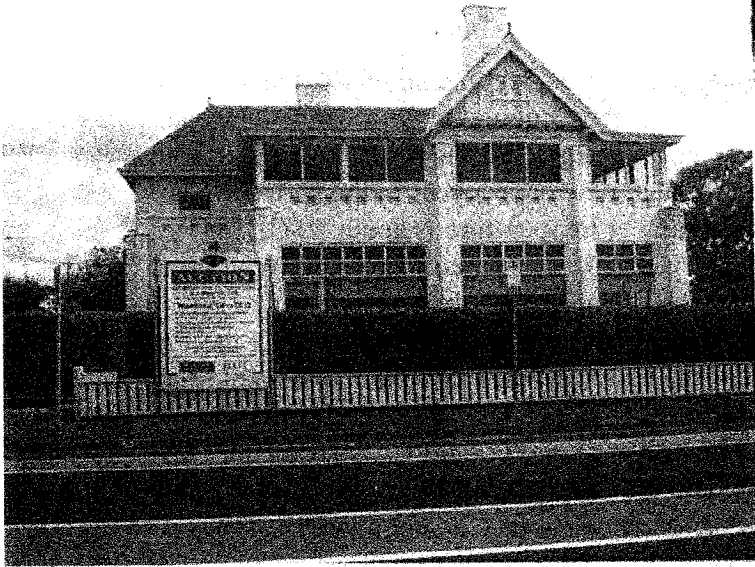
Since the organ has been at Mentone, John McLennan has re-leathered all the pipe chests, and most of the percussion units ready for the installation in the new music hall to be built at Geelong College in 2004.

Only the console and blower have yet to be restored, and a solid state system needs to be purchased for the organ to be ready for installation into the proposed hall at Geelong.

(See the photos on the next page)

The Geelong Organ on the Move

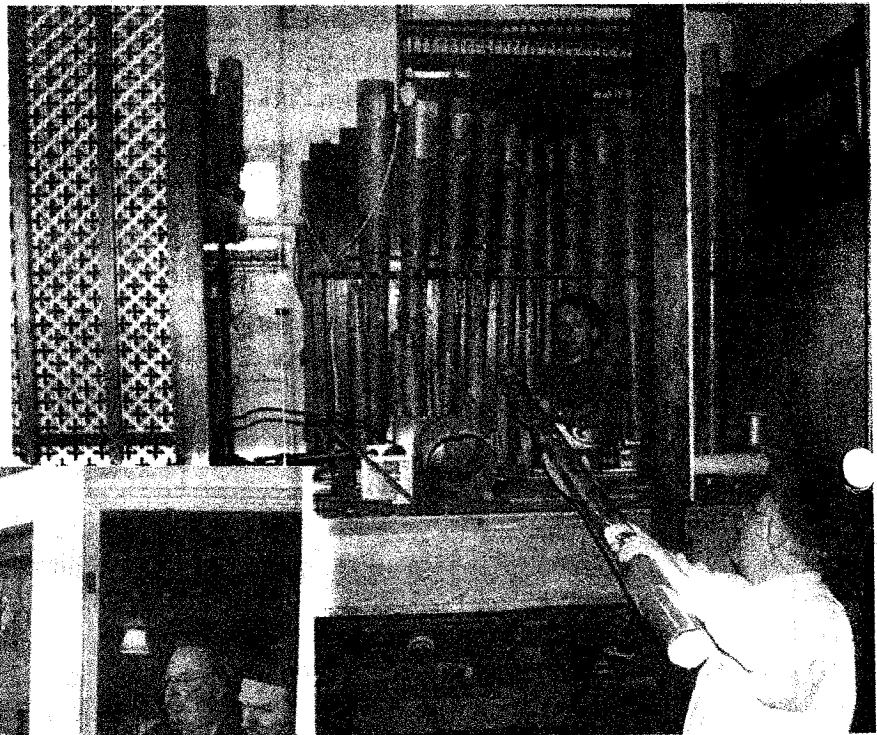
From Vox, May 2002



'Montana', Geelong.

Home of the famous 2/8 Wurlitzer since 1928. The organ chamber, added in 1928, can be seen at the first floor level on the left, with the small window.


RH Top. Organ chamber with the swell shutters removed shows the 7 rank chest with the Vox (front row) removed.



Above. Mark Arnold hands David Penney an 8' Salicional pipe over the cleared 7 rank main chest. The chimes action is seen on the side wall, with the chrysoglott at the rear.



LHS. Arnold Van Es, Sam McKenzie, Neil Hunter and Mark Arnold taking the Wurlitzer roll played through the front door.



From The MAILBOX

Peter Gamble of Chadstone, Victoria, writes :

19th June

'Guest Artists' (Saxophonists, Singers, whatever) at Theatre Organ concerts are like wheels on a tomato - Totally unnecessary.

I don't attend TOSA concerts in Melbourne when there are 'Guest Artists' and I won't QANTAS to Sydney for the same reason. Pity, because TOSA needs my bum on its seat.

I regret the need to protest in this way but protest I do.

Peter Gamble

Keith Robinson of Rydalmere writes :

27th June

Congratulations to TOSA, Margaret Hall and Owen Watkins for such an enjoyable concert at Marrickville Town Hall on the 16th June.

My first TOSA concert was at the Orion in 1998 with Margaret being Artist. I left the concert in a daze, amazed at what I heard. Fortunately I was bought back to earth by my wife reminding me to say goodbye to the other people in the group, then I was allowed to drive home.

So it was great to see Margaret's smiling, energetic presence and to hear her style of music once again. Then there was the added pleasure of Owen's virtuoso playing of the saxophone. Here we had the pleasure of hearing another of Margaret's skills, that of an accompanist. Her arrangements, registrations and playing were fully supporting of the soloist. What a contrast between two instruments from the 1920's era. On the one hand a large, powerful, multi-voiced instrument, and on the other, a small, single voice. Yet the result was a marvellous blend of the two instruments, achieved by two highly skilled players ever mindful of

the other player.

Imagine how the organ makers of that day would have loved to include a rank to match the sound that Owen produced from the saxophone.

I sincerely hope that TOSA does not keep us waiting another 4 years before we hear again Margaret Hall, and Owen Watkins in concert.

Yours truly,
Keith Robinson

A note from John Batts (currently) of Coogee :

28th June

Just a public word of praise for Margaret Hall's thoughtful programme at Marrickville and also for her choice of accompanying artist.

As one who has followed recent discussion in your columns about the wisdom or insensitivity of theatre organists appearing with a supporting act, I cannot resist chipping in to say that I did enjoy this saxophone/pipe organ combination, and this from one who normally reserves his appreciation for saxophones of the 16' variety!

Among the factors contributing to the pleasure on this occasion were:

(1) that the duettists explored music (Andy Sonella et al.) which was, I suggest, novel to most listeners, yet possessed period resonance. The creamy timbre of this *Selmer* sax sounded very much part of the inter-war period, reminiscent, for example, of music for a TV series featuring that "art deco" Agatha Christie detective, Hercule Poirot;

(2) that the pieces had relevance to the theatre organ hey-day and readily lent themselves to organ accompaniment;

(3) that the music was sensitively played; and

(4) that the guest artist's contributions were of the right duration. I'm still awaiting word on whether attendance that day was boosted by a short mention in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (weekend edition).

Either way, it was good to see the concert placed in the public eye.

Yours sincerely,
John S. Batts

Don Hyde, Chairman of the Lancastrian Theatre Organ Trust writes :

5th July

Many thanks for the write up on the

Lancastrian Theatre Organ Trust in the latest copy of *TOSA News*. ...

LTOT has a lot on its plate at the moment, as well as Stockport concerts, etc., and the Peel Green Project we have had to remove the Granada *Wurlitzer* because of the formation of a new TV company - *Three Sixty Media* - which has taken over the whole of the Granada TV site, so we are in the progress of negotiating to put that organ in a Civic Building in Bury (that's north of Manchester City), also we are in negotiations to put the ex-Davenport *Compton* organ in the Pavilion Gardens, Buxton - these gardens were put together in about 1840 and are just being restored as per original. There is a large octagonal shaped glass house, where we hope to install the organ.

Hope to see all our friends in OZ in Adelaide next year.

Regards,
Don Hyde

Rod Blackmore of Thornleigh writes :

2nd July

I have just been doing some theatre organ research at the State Library, and accessed Reginald Whitworth's book (published in 1932) *The Cinema Theatre Organ*.

I was distressed to find some Neanderthal had carefully razored out all the pages containing photographs (including two quite historic photos of the Roxy Theatre, New York, Kimball organ).

One can only hope that such a person is not a TOSA member.

Sincerely,
Rod Blackmore

Brian Fardon of Rockdale also writes about supporting artists:

6th July

I have been following with much interest the correspondence in "*From the Mailbox*" re so-called "support acts" at recent TOSA concerts and I can only say, thank goodness that people like Allan Brooker have spoken up criticizing these unfortunate occurrences. His comments on these intrusions to a good theatre organ concert seem to mirror my thoughts exactly.

In the May issue of *TOSA News* he also wrote a review of the "*Organ Spectacular 2002*" concert at the

Regent Theatre, Melbourne. I too went to the considerable expense of fares down to Melbourne, plus two night's accommodation, to hear an organ concert that promised more than most, with two of the world's great theatre organists, Tony Fenelon and Jonas Nordwall. The advertisement I first saw for this event did say "and Guests" which I took (naively as it turns out) to mean "other organists". To my dismay, when I arrived at the theatre the "guests" turned out to be a vocalist, a guitarist and a male choir.

Mr Brooker pointed out that their spots in the program were reasonably brief but I could not help thinking how unnecessary they were, and how I would have much preferred to hear other organists with different styles on that fabulous *Wurlitzer* they have there. It was supposed to be an "Organ Spectacular" after all. Apparently, I got off lightly as Mr Brooker mentions another concert a few years earlier when these non-organ acts must have dominated.

Now I find TOSA here in Sydney is going down the same track of including annoying "support" acts. As a consequence I have passed on all concerts this year with the exception of that excellent program put on by Chris McPhee in February. I wish we could hear more young, talented people like him. His generation is the future of Theatre Organ!

The theatre organ is already an instrument of minority musical interest and will be pushed further into obscurity if it is not allowed to be presented in its pure format. For those people who have never attended a theatre organ Convention, I strongly urge you to give it a try sometime. It is absolutely astonishing, the multitude of different sounds that can be heard from the same instrument, but with different styles and different players at the helm. Now that's variety for you!

Yours faithfully,
Brian Fardon

Richard Marschall of Penrith writes :

4 July 2002

Such lively discussions in the *Letters* section of *TOSA News* with respect to associate artists prompts me to add my two cents about the future of Theatre Organ and TOSA. Please note that this is my personal opinion and does not necessarily represent the views

of other committee members.

The art of Theatre Organ, as of organ in general, must remain a living entity or it will slip into total obscurity, to be known only as an arcane historical instrument and art form. To remain alive requires that the instrument must continue to develop and be used in new ways that render it meaningful to both present and future audiences and artists.

Although the term "Theatre Organ" in the narrow sense has come to mean instruments and musical styles representative of the Golden Age of Theatre Organ from the early decades of the last century, in the broader sense it can be taken to mean any organ and music employed for "popular" or "theatrical" entertainment, in contrast to instruments and works used in a sacred setting or to accompany church services.

It can sensibly be argued that the great town hall organs and organ programmes comprise the original art of Theatre Organ. Certainly the programme formats that worked well then, still work today in terms of audience appeal: roughly 1/3 classical, 1/3 "oldies", and 1/3 contemporary.

In terms of technology, Theatre Organ has always pushed the edge — sometime for better, sometimes for worse. The Robert Hope-Jones "unit orchestra" layout had several advantages, many of which were carried over into the great electronic concert keyboards of the 1960s - 1980s.

Many rue the modern trend toward electronic "pipe organ simulators", but one should not broadly condemn all electronic augmentation out of hand. There are sounds that pipes do really well, and there are categories that are inaccessible via blown pipes, such as most percussive sounds. The cinema organs of the 1920s and 1930s were notable in their electro-mechanical augmentation in this area by means of an expanded "toy chest", piano, and other hammer-struck instruments.

After the cinema organ reached its golden age, further electro-mechanical tone colours which became popular with many organists and audiences included the tone wheel generation, valve head amplification, and rotary speaker sounds often associated with the name "Hammond". While inappropriate for most forms of earlier music, the "Hammond sound" is essential to some forms of Jazz and Rock & Roll.

Again, this is a range of percussive sounds not easily synthesized pneumatically.

While many of the electronic organs of the 1950s to the present were (and still are) appalling, some made meaningful contributions to the art. The analog organs by *Rodgers*, *Wersi*, and *Moog* in the 70s - 80s achieved a rich, full, interesting sound that few would confuse with a pipe organ, and were used by top organists such as Virgil Fox (*Rodgers*), Jimmy Smith (*Wersi*), and Evangelos Papathanassiou (all) drew live audiences numbering in the tens of thousands per performance. No one would argue that Rick Wakeman, another artist who often used analogue and digital electronic organs in conjunction with piano and pipe organ, drew smaller crowds because he used electronics or because he played with other musicians - his audiences often exceeded 100,000 per concert during the 1970s.

The present era of digital sample playback organs is a bit dull with many of the big name instrument makers content to "sit on their laurels" and build simulators of the past. Some of the smaller developers working in "physical modelling-based forms of sound synthesis are doing interesting things, however. Many new organ installations, both for concert halls and churches, are augmenting genuine pipes with electronic ranks. Very often, this is just adding supplementary traditional pipe sounds (particularly for the higher pitched ranks as this is very economic to do for 4' and higher pitches), but it is not unknown for orchestral and certain electronic organ sounds to be added as well. Should TOSA do this also? On existing installations, or just new installations?

Some would argue adding modern electronics to TOSA organs spoils the instrument's historical authenticity. However, TOSA organs already use PVC plumbing, modern wire looms, CMOS IC switching, and LSI control boards - in other words, technology that would look like *Star Trek* to the *Wurlitzer*'s original builders. No doubt a century from now TOSA members will be debating the merits of replacing some electronic componentry with photonics!

Advantages of electronic augmentation include:

* Eliminates unsightly extra

keyboards on stage;

* Expands the scope of the instrument to include a much broader variety of musical styles;

* Provides a convenience to visiting artists who can "load" their favourite sounds (if we don't already have them in our "sound library"); and

* Allows the instrument to be employed more in non-concert applications (i.e., live theatrical performances), if required.

Cautions to electronic augmentation include:

* Any augmentations should be done well, or not at all;

* Duplicating organ stops electronically takes much more powerful loudspeakers and amplifiers than is commonly imagined (especially for any venue of a decent size);

* Should be visually unobtrusive, if not nearly invisible; and

* Purists might object.

There are further advantages of an organ capable of a great scope of styles and eras:

* Provides a resource for music teachers that may expose both teachers and students to a wider variety of tone colours and styles;

* Provides an inspiring tool for musicians and composers (new juxtapositions of sounds and ease of playability tend to enhance creativity); and

* Allows the organ to be used more easily in ensemble with other instruments, to present more diverse styles of music. This exposes the organ to a broader range of musicians and audiences, some fraction of which will seek to learn and hear more.

It is my experience that some proportion of people (after hearing a number of inspiring organ performances) will seek to learn how to play the instrument themselves. As they study the instrument and its literature, their tastes tend to broaden. For example, some may start in jazz/rock and later expand to ballets and show tunes. Others start with church music and move into modern jazz. Virtually all serious students have some interest in classical styles as well. It is safe to say that every organist TOSA has performing at its concerts is quite capable of top drawer performances in virtually every major style.

However, it really doesn't matter what style an organist started in, what matters is that they develop into well-

rounded, capable musicians. It is up to organizations such as TOSA to facilitate the availability of suitable instruments and venues, so musical wunderkinds can be encouraged to keep Theatre Organ ALIVE as an art form.

Best regards,

Richard A. Marschall, Ph.D.

Ron Ivin of Wyoming writes :

8th July

I would like to congratulate member Bettine Vallance for her forthright reprimand of Mr Allan Brooker in voicing justifiable indignation regarding his somewhat antiquated notions concerning the usage of the *Wurlitzer* and similar type organs for other than solo purposes. Back in the decade surrounding 1930 this type of organ was conveniently used to supply the "soundtrack" to silent movies and did it well. With the advent of sound movies the organ took a less prominent role before disappearing altogether. Fortunately there were those who were interested enough to see a future for the theatre-type organ.

If only Mr Brooker had attended the recital given by Margaret Hall on 16th June at Marrickville, he may have changed his attitude. Bear in mind that it was still the organ that we were hearing, only in a different capacity - the accompaniment to the saxophone. This was really something to experience. The audience was enthralled and showed it by their generous applause.

The organ is used throughout the entire world in this way. This instrument is unique in its ability to also provide accompaniments because of the orchestral range of sounds at hand. In our own city we frequently hear it used in this way.

During the period of World War II, the Capitol Theatre put its *Wurlitzer* (now installed in the Orion Centre in Campsie) to good use. Free entertainment was provided for more than two thousand servicemen and women in the form of concerts prior to the screening of a film. When an orchestra was not available, the organ provided music for the singers and dancers. It also led community singing by the troops when the words of the hits of the day were shown on the screen with the aid of the "ping pong ball". These functions were popular and much appreciated in those times of crisis.

We look forward to the recital by Neil Jensen on 14th July on the Orion in Campsie. Mr Jensen is the resident organist at the Orpheum Theatre in Cremorne. Many patrons enjoy the times when Neil ably employs the organ there to accompany singers and other artists including The New Trocadero Dance Orchestra.

I do not know Mr Brooker personally but I do have respect for his right to express his opinions, as I hope he does for those who have a different opinion. The Theatre Organ Society does its best to foster and maintain an interest in the Society's future, and most of the members applaud their efforts to include variety in their concerts. The *Wurlitzer* organ is different today to what it was in the days when a patron arrived at the theatre maybe in an A model Ford to listen to tracker-action organ. It is now a modern machine with electronic response and computer-generated operation. Just as the organ has moved with the times, so should we.

Finally, I would like to say that while I respect everyone's right to his opinion, I feel it is not good for anyone to force his opinions on others. Plainly, if you, Mr Brooker, do not wish to attend a recital for what some may see as misguided reasons, then please, for the Society's sake, do not persuade others to stay away.

Ron Ivin

Organist and long-time member of TOSA, Peter Held of Roselands, writes :

8th July

The reply of Allan Brooker, in the July issue, has provoked me into "putting fingers to typewriter", in order to mitigate misleading, and misinformed circumlocution; also, to minimise the dissemination of misconceptions of the theatre organ "industry".

Neil Palmer did NOT write that he was unconcerned that the M.T.H. organ "takes a back seat, instead of being featured on its own" (*Videp. 5 of JUNE issue, for what he ACTUALLY wrote!*). Thou shalt not misquote!

Yes, the acquisition of a really good organist for the occasion is essential, but the availability of "all these voices and sounds" on the day is far from a certainty! That, or these elements, are per se, not enough to produce the full house hoped for by A.B. & company.

It's just not that easy!

In spite of the consistent attendance at TOSA events over 13 years, A.B. & co. SEEM, to me at least, to have no idea of the practical difficulties inherent in actually playing pipe organs. This means, *inter alia*, having the technique to be able to bounce the fast parts of the music along, AND hold it all TOGETHER whilst doing so! It requires a certain "magic touch". Assuming possession of that, one prepares - this involves spending hours, trying out various items, WITHOUT the benefit of doing so on the organ to be used. After you've got the timings fairly right, you've got to REHEARSE all this, including the changes of "voices and sounds" *ad exhaustum*, so that it will all come together, in a hopefully professional-looking manner on THE DAY... Need I go on? ...

So there is a "wealth of young talent" in South Australia, and promising aspirants in Victoria - glad to hear it! If only such a desirable situation could fructify here, in this sport-mad city. Trying to put on recitals/concerts here is like trying to play roulette, with TWO WHEELS - one controlling the availability, musical suitability and personal willingness of the would-be performers, and the other wheel controlling the availability of the VENUE!

After a long gap, because of disenchantment - yes - I attended the concert of Margaret Hall and Owen Watkins on 16th June. I was pleasantly surprised!. We heard the organ THROUGHOUT THE SHOW! - in accompanimental and solo roles! The format of presentation was refreshingly novel and, in my opinion, within the "accepted milieu" of the "industry".

The mention of the original purpose of the cinema organ, i.e. accompanying silent films, evokes memories in me, having done much of that between 1978 and 1980. If we confined the cinema organ to this role, would any of them be left playable?

A.B. and I are both members of the British CINEMA ORGAN SOCIETY. From this, he will note, via its literature, how the cinema organ in that part of the world evolved from the silent film role into a SOLO instrument, whereby those organists with good stage personalities AND virtuosity of performance became celebrities of the era.

Peter Held

A few final points from TOSA Vice President, John Shaw :

12/7/02

A pseudo-Shakespearean drama? (Ironically the Orion carpark is in Shakespeare St!)

To be or not to be, that is the question in recent debate over associate artists. I do regret that Allan Brooker has found it necessary to stay away after such a splendid record, and I hope that this may be only temporary, as we do miss him and his generous support.

Some points need setting straight however, for everyone's understanding:

1. An associate artist is not a new idea - TOSA has done this many times over the years, even with Tony Fenelon.

2. It is strange when someone likes piano and organ, and says it adds variety, but refuses to attend if there is any other instrument with the organ.

3. TOSA committee would like to present young interstate organists more frequently - however, in the past audiences have stayed away in droves. The only success we had was when we used Tony Fenelon to introduce Chris McPhee to Sydney, and it is not always possible to do this.

4. Unfortunately, from past experiences, overseas artists do not always draw the crowds, and of course we only have a limited say in the selection.

5. It would be very foolish and irresponsible if we continued with monthly concerts and lost money hand over fist - we have already lost on a few,

6. The feedback we have had over the years from people 'dropping out' is that the lack of variety with organ only becomes boring to some non-enthusiasts.

7. The Theatre Organ only played for silent films in the 1920s and no doubt produced boring music if listened to without the film showing.

8. From 1929 onwards the organ was frequently played with the orchestra - my own uncle, pianist Alfred Shaw, played at the Capitol and State, and told me this many times. Also the organ accompanied many variety acts, as it was not uncommon to present a live show as well as a movie. Those who frequented the

Prince Edward heard Noreen Henessy singing along to about half of her programme. My teacher, composer/conductor Roy Maling played at the Regent Theatre and arranged the music for organ and orchestra. So for three decades (30s, 40s and part 50s) the theatre organ was not just played solo at Sydney's major city theatres, where our instruments originated. History is all very well but we now have to address today's and future issues.

9. After careful consideration, our committee re-introduced associate artists to some concerts as one of the ways to regenerate our dwindling audiences. I personally sought the views of two professional entrepreneurs who both advised "in order to attract a larger audience you need to broaden your audience base by way of adding associate artists to add variety." I think the argument must stop with the professional opinion.

10. Of course people disenchanted with TOSA could go to the Orpheum, but there they may hear vocalists David Campbell or Tim Draxel; OR they could go to Willoughby, but then they would hear the Dean Sinclair singers; OR they could go to the Melbourne Regent at great expense, and hear their associate artists; OR they could stay at home and contemplate their navel. I wonder if any of the above organisations received a letter of complaint too?

11. My final remark would be to point to the most successful concert presented by Margaret Hall a saxophonist Owen Watkins which not only drew ecstatic praise but also pulled in the best audience seen at Marrickville for some time.

I sincerely hope that my remarks have not offended ANY of our valued members.

John Shaw
TOSA Vice President

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A Report on Margaret Hall's Concert

Marrickville Town Hall by Ron Ivin

Sunday 16th June

There was an air of expectancy throughout the well-filled hall as Margaret began her recital. Pleasure was expressed by many members that we were to hear one of our own well-qualified artists, and we look forward to other local performers in the future.

I would like to say at the outset that Margaret is to be congratulated and applauded for her programme selection. Her arrangements and performance of them were so expert that I for one was faced with two alternatives - give up my own playing altogether; or to battle on and try to improve. The better part of valour persuaded me to persevere. Obviously Margaret's excellence was only achieved by timeless practice and devotion.

Margaret was not making her debut on 16th June. Her first recital on this well-loved "Wurly" was back in 1977. Before that she did a three-year stint with Mecca Theatres entertaining patrons before the movies. More recently Margaret has toured the world doing recitals. She holds a Bachelor of Music degree. She majored in classical pipe organ. Now here's a sales plug. Margaret has a CD called *Kitten on the Keys* and, if you don't already have it, I recommend that you purchase it.

Now for the concert. Unfortunately, while we could hear the organ well it was hard to hear Margaret's comments clearly, especially since we had the incessant additions of diaphonic 747's which did not help.

Margaret began with *Music for the Movies March* by Louis Levy. This brought back memories of many years ago when this music introduced the Gaumont British Newsreels. I found it most captivating. The same can be said for Margaret's splendid rendition of this piece. The robust sounds selected and the brilliant pedal solos made it an uplifting and an excellent start which had the audience eagerly anticipating what was to come.

It is easy to listen to any of Richard Rodgers' music. Regarded as one of his most popular works is *The Sound*

of Music. This was first, using a lovely church-style setting at the outset. One could visualise Julie Andrews in the picturesque Austrian hills. Then came *June is Bustin' Out All Over* which, if I'm not to be corrected, was sung by Shirley Jones in *Carousel*. Margaret coupled this with *There is Nothin' Like a Dame* from *South Pacific* - a very bright and breezy selection.

Margaret introduced her next offering going back a little in time to 1950 to a film called *Royal Wedding* which starred the memorable couple, Fred Astaire and Jane Powell. The song from that, *Too Late Now* by Burton Lane used rather haunting sounds with extraordinary counter melodies. The organ was made to shine as Margaret brought out its tonal possibilities.

The characteristic style of Leroy Anderson is a favourite amongst music lovers, as all his compositions emit a bright atmosphere. Margaret chose two of his popular pieces, *Belle of the Ball* and *The Syncopated Clock*. It was a delight to hear these performed with true form accuracy. I can't help but make the comment that it seems that Margaret has spent considerable time not only in practice but also in working out what a TOSA audience would like to hear. This became evident when they were presented with a selection of Irving Berlin favourites. The titles were *Let's Face the Music and Dance*; *Heat Wave*; *Always*; *Top Hat*, *White Tie and Tails* and *Cheek to Cheek*. I particularly enjoyed the part in *Always* where the melody was played by the left hand and a complex accompaniment by the right.

An interesting diversion in the programme came next. Margaret had chosen to invite an associate artist, a very talented musician who gave us some specialised numbers on the alto saxophone. Owen Watkins has performed worldwide as you can read in the flyer handed out at the concert. We were totally captivated by the virtuosity of this player. *Saxanella* was first, a novelty in the style of *Nola*

composed by Rudy Wiedoeft back in the 1920's. A beautiful waltz entitled *Millicent* was next by the same composer. Scott Joplin is well-known to us as a ragtime pianist. I dare say everyone knows *The Entertainer*. However we heard another rag transcribed for the saxophone which I admit I did not know - *Elite Syncopations*.

Before interval Margaret delighted us once again with *The Carousel Waltz* by Richard Rodgers. This was the prologue (full version) as heard in the musical play. It contains musical intricacies which are hard to execute. Well done, Margaret!

One did not have to intentionally eavesdrop during interval to hear many appreciative comments from the audience. It seemed that everyone was looking forward to the next half from both of these excellent performers. But first the raffle was drawn by Owen and Tamara's beautiful, tiny, blonde daughter, Rhianwen, flavoured with Walter Pearce's well-chosen comments.

The opener was a breezy offering, *The Best Things in Life are Free*. What a true sentiment! It took three composers to write this song - De Sylva, Brown and Henderson.

I heard somewhere that Jerome Kern's tune *Pick Yourself Up* was voted one year to be one of the most popular tunes of all time. Margaret's rendition of the arrangement by Lyn Larsen was a pleasure to hear. *All the Things You Are*, also by Jerome Kern, was ingeniously arranged by Billy Nalle in the style of a Bach trio and was a joy to listen to. If Margaret was nervous at the beginning it didn't show as her playing was flawless - a clever arrangement, cleverly played.

Once again Margaret chose a Lyn Larsen arrangement - this time of *Louise* by Leo Robin. I am almost running out of superlatives. Let me just say everybody enjoys Margaret's playing so much that we would like to hear a lot more of it.

Hold on! We are not finished yet.

Next is *A Broken Rosary* by Klein, again arranged by Lyn Larsen in the style of Jesse Crawford. Internal glissandos, the envy of many amateurs, were prevalent. Maybe we should consider taking lessons from her. *Ecstasy Tango* by Jose Belmonte was Margaret's next choice. I marvel at two things; the adaptability of the *Wurlitzer* and the brilliance at which it is put to use by a capable performer like Margaret.

Now it was Owen Watkins' time to come on the scene again, with another novelty number transcribed by Rudy Wiedoft, composed by Louis Alter called *Dolly Dimples* - absolute saxophonic exhibitionism. A *Southern Sketch* by Rudy Wiedoft and J. Russel Robinson was an atmospheric piece depicting the American South.

Margaret's excellent accompaniment was complementary and precise.

Owen's last piece was a novelty called *Delma* in true ragtime style composed back in the 1920's by Leon Rosebrook.

Margaret then returned with a bracket of Bing Crosby favourites. There were shades of *White Christmas* in the introductory bars and the ending. The tunes in between were *Swingin' on a Star*; *Some Sunny Day*; *Have You Ever Seen a Dream Walking?*; *Please*; *Dream a Little Dream of Me* and *When the Blue of the Night Meets the Gold of the Day*. These were rendered in a way we expect a "Wurlly" to sound.

Strauss's *Radetsky March* was the final piece that Margaret was to

delight us with. The audience joined in at last with some clapping followed by generous applause for a much appreciated performance.

It looked as though no one was going to let these virtuosos off without an encore so we were granted this with a lively *Twelfth Street Rag* by Euday L. Bowman, transcribed by Rudy Wiedoft. This rag was played to death during the wartime years but it still remains at the top.

Congratulations to Margaret especially, but also to Owen for a most enjoyable afternoon's entertainment.

I can only concur with Walter Pearce and Colin Groves' remarks recommending the concert in their respective columns of last month's *TOSA News*.

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OUR NEXT ARTIST : CHRIS POWELL

THE ENTERTAINERS: CHRIS POWELL by Frank Cornish,
from the UK's *News South*, April - May 2001

The solid-state action was switched on. Chris swung on to the *Wurlitzer* bench, pressed his pistons (already set with the quint and tierce couplers), and pushed the lift up-button. As he rose up into the, strong stage lights he had a feeling of déjà-vu. Because this WASN'T Blackpool. He was, in fact, on the other side of the world - playing the 2/12 *Wurlitzer* in the Hollywood Cinema, Auckland, New Zealand!

Chris Powell was born in Manchester and now lives near Leicester. When he was two years old, the Powell family moved to New Zealand, where Chris heard his first pipe organ in the chapel of Christ Church Cathedral Grammar Boys' School.

On return to England in 1977, the family settled in Burnley, Lancashire, and Chris started taking piano and organ lessons with Steve Dudek (last heard of playing at Butlins, Minehead). At the age of 13, Chris saw a Phil Kelsall L.P. in W.H. Smith, bought it, and was hooked on theatre organs for life. One Saturday afternoon the Powell family visited Blackpool and happened to go into the Tower complex. Chris was bowled over by the Ballroom and, of course, the *Wurlitzer*. He said to his father, "One day I'm going to play in here."

In December 1990, sure enough, Chris Powell pressed the button and came up on the lift, on the white and gold *Wurlitzer* console, to start playing in Blackpool Tower Ballroom. Before he achieved this prestigious position, of course, Chris worked his way up. He managed to get

practice sessions on the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, *Wurlitzer*; Ron Curtis gave him cameo spots on the Paramount Studios *Compton* and he played for dances and gave concerts. Then, in 1990, a friend had a gig playing piano for the Labour Party Conference in the Blackpool Winter Garden complex - but he'd double booked and asked Chris to deputise for him. Two weeks later, an organist in a bar in the Winter Garden had family problems and also asked Chris to deputise. People had started to notice.

That winter the *Wurlitzer* in the Tower Ballroom was due for a major overhaul and so some of the staff team were laid off. Then the overhaul was delayed which gave a staff shortage. Chris was contacted and was successfully auditioned by Phil Kelsall. So, at last, his dream was fulfilled and he started playing for the dancers in the Tower Ballroom.

The Tower connection opened many doors. In 1991, Chris played in front of the Princess Royal in the Winter Garden and was filmed for a television programme about Blackpool. As well as performing at many organ festivals around the country, Chris now became demonstrator for *Lowrey*, *Orla*, *Farfisa* and *Kurtzweil* at home and abroad. Also he has produced demonstration discs for *Yamaha* for their EL range of organs.

Chris Powell is a well travelled performer. In Europe he has played in Holland, Switzerland, Germany, Tenerife and the Isle of Man.

In 1994, Chris was invited to New

Zealand for a four week tour. This was such a success that he was asked to become Resident Organist at the Baycourt Theatre in Tauranga, a post which he accepted for 1996. Several new recordings were made during this period. He returned to the UK in 1997, gave many recitals at home and abroad, including Spain and Switzerland - and then back to New Zealand again.

1998 saw marriage to Marie - and more concerts in Australia and New Zealand. 1999 - more globe-trotting, another residency in New Zealand, then home to Leicestershire for another busy run of concerts. In 2002 Chris' globe-trotting starts again when he sets out on a round-the-world tour with confirmed bookings in Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, Bendigo, Auckland, Wellington, and Seattle.

Chris Powell's touring organ is a *Roland Atelier*, which he finds can give good theatre sounds. His musical influences in the early days were Phil Kelsall, then Nicholas Martin and Robert Wolfe. More recently: Ron Rhode, Walt Strony, Lyn Larsen. On electronic - Brian Sharpe and Glynn Madden come to mind. For his own home-listening, Chris' tastes are wide - from classical organ to the current charts. His hobbies outside music are shipping and aviation. Unfulfilled ambitions are to learn to fly; to play more in America (perhaps that concert in Seattle next year will open many doors).

Chris Powell has recently made a recording on the 3/20 *Wurlitzer* in Perth, Australia.

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Sunday 18th August at 2pm

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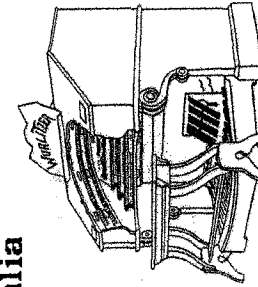
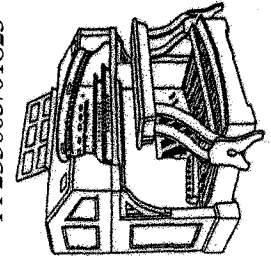
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