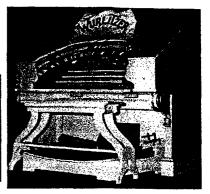


JANUARY/FEBRUARY, 2002

# TOSA



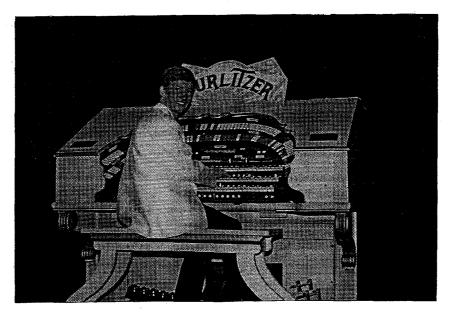
3/17 WurliTzer Theatre Pipe Organ
Orion Centre Campsie

2/11 WurliTzer Theatre Pipe Organ Marrickville Town Hall

# Happy New Year!!

Australia's Favourite Young Theatre Organist

## CHRIS McPHEE



Sunday, 3rd February, 2002, at 2pm Orion Centre Campsie

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Issue 1
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#### TOSA NEWS

JANUARY/FEBRUARY, 2002

#### SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW DIVISION) Inc. THEATRE ORGAN

For the smooth running of TOSA, please contact the right person:

General Business - SECRETARY

Ticket Bookings - TICKET SECRETARY Membership, Renewals, Change of Address -MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

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

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## JANUARY, 2002

Monday 7 at 7.30pm

Committee Meeting

Thursday 10 at 1.30pm

Members' Playing Day Orion Centre Campsie

Phone 9716 0151 to confirm

Thursday 24 at 7.30pm

Members' Playing Night Marrickville Town Hall Phone 9798 6742 to confirm

### **FEBRUARY**

Sunday

3 at 2.00pm

Chris McPhee Concert

Orion Centre Campsie

Monday 4 at 7.30pm

Committee Meeting

Thursday 14 at 1.30pm

Members' Playing Day

Orion Centre Campsie

Thursday 28 at 7.30pm

Members' Playing Night Marrickville Town Hall Phone 9798 6742 to confirm

### *MARCH*

Monday 4 at 7.30pm

Committee Meeting

Thursday 14 at 1.30pm

Members' Playing Day Orion Centre Campsie

Phone 9716 0151 to confirm

Sunday 17 at 2.00pm John Giacchi Concert Marrickville Town Hall

Thursday 28 at 7.30pm

Members' Playing Night

Marrickville Town Hall

Phone 9798 6742 to confirm

## · From The President

I'm writing this piece right after Tony and John's Orion concert. And I must say that I, and your whole Committee, were much encouraged by the full-house attendance. No-one could have gone away disappointed in a concert of that quality.

Thank you Tony and John - you've done it again.

And thank you to Jack Rose for using your special arctic phone-line to get Santa to our concert!

I should also say how friendly and warm the audience was - it was a pleasure to introduce our two Patrons, Ian Davies and John Gorrie.

Ian has been a supporter (and organist) of TOSA for many years now, and at the age of 85 he is still enthusiastic. He finds it hard to get along to concerts these days, though this is as much on account of other engagements than age! If you were there you will know why I called him "incorrigible"!

John Gorrie (age undeclared) has been TOSA's friend from way back when his efforts cleared the way for the WurliTzer to be installed at Campsie. More recently we remember him for his excellent Master of Ceremonies at the Sydney TOSA FESTIVAL 2000. Both John and Ian send their Christmas and New Year best wishes to us all.

Thanks also go to the audience for taking part so fully in the survey although, yes, there was a prize for doing



it. Julie Lewis was in the audience last Sunday and she won the draw which entitled her to two free concert tickets in 2002. Julie has generously donated those tickets back. She is not a member but is a regular TOSA concert-goer and is happy to pay her way. So we are doing a second draw! Thank you, Julie, we hope the tickets will encourage another person to become a constant attender.

By the way, now is the time for your friends to take a 6 month TOSA membership. Can you encourage them to do so? Oh, and make sure to invite them to Chris McPhee's concert in February.

Well, on behalf of the Committee, may I wish you all a Happy, Healthy, and Musical 2002.

**Walter Pearce** 

## Welcome To New Members

TOSA (NSW) welcomes one new member to our ranks this month. We all wish her a happy and long association with our Society:

Phyll O'Hanlon - Potts Point

## Editorial

Happy New Year to all TOSA members - may the year 2002 be filled with happiness and many musical delights at all the TOSA concerts!

Plenty of holiday reading for theatre organ enthusiasts in this issue of TOSA News - with a full, detailed report on the fabulous Christmas concert by John Atwell and Tony Fenelon, written by John Batts; articles on Reginald Dixon, and on David Johnston and silent movie accompaniment. Thank you to all the contributors for your much appreciated efforts and to interstate editors for implicit permission to reprint articles from their newsletters.

Thank you also to all our concertgoers for their vital attendance at the Orion and Marrickville. TOSA always presents only first rate theatre organists - even if it is someone unknown to you, our audiences can be sure that each player has been carefully selected to conform to our policy of only presenting the best theatre organists from home and abroad.

We have some great concerts coming up this year, from John Giacchi, Tony Fenelon, Chris Powell, Dan Bellomy, Len Rawle, and beginning soon with the very popular Chris McPhee at the Orion on Sunday, 3rd February - make sure the date is in your diary. What a great line-up! Please try to support TOSA by your regular attendance. See you there!

Best Wishes for the New Year, Colin Groves

## Advertising in TOSA News

For members:

Small, organ-related advertisement = FREE For non-members:

Full page = \$99

Half page = \$49.50

Quarter page = \$24.75

Small bubble = \$11

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



As if to prove that the hard-working TOSA committee can't please all the people all the time, TOSA member, Stephen Bosanquet of Pennant Hills writes, about his disappointment with the use of electronic equipment at David Smith's October concert:

15/11/2001

At the Marrickville Town Hall concert held Sunday 20th October I was disappointed at Dave Smith's concert because he used that imitation machine. Although he was talented, I felt uncomfortable, and this weak machine has no place with the glorious WurliTzer I came to hear.

I had a friend with me and we both walked out during intermission. We both paid our good money and the ad. of TOSA did not mention the use of the electronic machine. Only a singer was mentioned in the ad. with Dave Smith. The same will happen again unless I know from the ads what is in the concert.

When I ask friends to come, I am embarrassed when the program includes non-WurliTzer additions. I felt embarrassed with the Dave Smith concert with this weak machine.

I can appreciate making advertised variations in the concerts at the Orion or at Marrickville. If we have WurliTzer organ with other forms of music, like Tony Fenelon and John Atwell with grand piano, this is to my great enjoyment. We have also had a silent movie with the WurliTzer. We could have choir, orchestra, dancing with the organ, etc.,- anything, but not weak imitation machines.

I would like to give a happy, bright note to end with - that I have appreciated how great all the people in office are -

tea-servers, ticket sellers, etc. They worked hard during the concerts.

Yours Truly, Stephen Bosanquet

(Often, unfortunately, Stephen, the TOSA committee and the Editor who prepares the publicity material for the concerts do not know in advance of the intention of the artists to use unusual equipment, and therefore it can not be advertised. In any case, in my humble opinion, it is good to have, occasionally, some variety in the kinds of concerts presented, and the committee must keep trying different things in an attempt to bring in more paying customers - Ed.)



The following items are all taken from recent issues of the Ottawa Valley Theatre Organ Society Inc.'s Newsletter, edited by TOSA member John Batts.

#### AN OPERA HOUSE GOES DIGITAL

The 200-rank Grand Organ in Sydney Opera House's Concert Hall is not currently in top playing condition because the original 1970s' control system is being replaced by a new microprocessor-based system from the English firm, Solid State Logic Organ Systems.

The work, due to be completed by year's end (2001), enhances the piston recording facility and will allow for Record-Playback too, whereby the organist can subsequently listen at the

back of the hall to his/her own playing.

John Batts comments: "Wrapped in a Maple Leaf, I should tell you that the Kingston Kimball already possesses this kind of system! And more immediately OVTOS soon hopes to be able to boast of something of the same kind of facility."

(Another of the strange occasions when news about Sydney organs reaches me (belatedly) through an overseas source! - Ed.)

## COSTING A TRANSPLANT

The Cinema Organ Society Newsletter reports that the cost of moving the ex-Paramount/Odeon Manchester 4/20 WurliTzer from that city's Free Trade Hall to Stockport Town Hall was £200,000.00 sterling.

#### COMPTONS ACCOUNTED

Did you know that the total number of cinema organs installed, mostly though not exclusively in the United Kingdom, by the John Compton Organ Company was 261? Among exotic locations for Compton theatre organs was the organ installed in the Rivoli, Cairo.

### Thank You

to Frank Lewis of Pymble for your kind and encouraging words!

## FOR SALE

Yamaha Console Organ
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Organ Recently Serviced and

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TOSA member, Russell Robertson, of Cheltenham found the following interesting article about Reginald Dixon - who was a Patron of our Society until he retired from Blackpool, and written by Nigel Ogden - a featured artist at our 1996 Sydney National Convention. The item comes from the

Autumn 2000 issue of This England magazine



Oh, I do like to be beside the seaside: I do like to be beside the sea...

or an incredible 40 years, that famous old music-hall song, written back in 1909, meant only one thing to millions of radio listeners throughout the British Isles — Reginald Dixon was, once again, seated at the organ of the Tower Ballroom, Blackpool.

Whether it was Lancashire's premier seaside resort which made Reginald Dixon famous, or the other way round, has been a debatable point for many years. Suffice it to say that for most of his impressively long residency at the Tower he was the town's greatest asset. Even on the hottest and sunniest of summer days, his personal magnetism and happy, vibrant style of music-making on the large world-famous Wurlitzer organ was sufficient to draw the crowds off the beach and into the ballroom either for one of his immensely popular live broadcasts, or just for an hour of dancing.

Born in Sheffield on the 16th October, 1904, Reginald Dixon had a childhood interest in all things musical and it quickly became apparent he did not intend to follow his father into the steel industry! From the age of 13, organ lessons - plus several official appointments playing for services at local churches - kept the young musician extremely busy and although he initially aspired to become a professional concert pianist. the slump following the Great War meant that he had to become the family bread-winner. He therefore began to consider more practical alternatives and turned to the world of the cinema where his natural keyboard skills were ideal for improvising the piano accompaniment to silent films. Inventing suitable music to fit the action on the screen stood him in good stead for later years.

His first appointment was at the Stocksbridge Palace cinema on the edge of the Peak District, earning him the princely sum of £3 per week, but this soon rose to a heady £5 at the Picture House, Chesterfield. He first acquainted himself with a new-fangled Wurlitzer

organ at the Regent, Sheffield and then began to move onwards and upwards, enjoying associations with the West End Cinema, Birmingham, the Regent in Dudley and, in 1929, the New Victoria at Preston, significantly close to a certain Lancashire seaside town.

His girlfriend, Vera, whom he'd known since his early church organ days in Sheffield, travelled over to see him as often as time and money would allow. One day, during a visit to Blackpool, Reg proposed to her as they sat listening to Max Bruce playing the Tower Ballroom's first Wurlitzer. She accepted and remained his constant companion and support for the next 45 years.



Oh, he really did like to be beside the seaside ...

The all-important turning point in Reg's career came one wild and blustery February day in 1930 when, responding to an advertisement for a new Tower Ballroom organist, he took the plunge and went along for an audition. When asked if he'd ever played for dancing, he replied "Oh, yes." In fact, he'd only ever played once, at the Cutler's Hall in Sheffield when he was sent home halfway through the evening as useless! However, he obviously did everything

right that day, because he got the job—and so began a residency which, in terms of its duration alone, has remained unsurpassed in the organ world.

The new dashing young musician made such an impact on the regular Tower dancers that it wasn't long before the BBC took an interest. His first broadcast took place on 4th June, 1930 when his snappy, rhythmic style became an instant hit and resulted in thousands more broadcasts, many to far-flung parts of the Empire — which often meant the maestro could be found seated at the console at some unearthly hour in a dark and deserted ballroom, long after everybody else had gone home.

Soon after his appointment, Reginald (not to be confused with his namesake, Reg Dixon, the contemporary northern comedian). realised that the existing Tower Wurlitzer was just not powerful enough to support the hundreds (sometimes thousands) of dancers gliding round the floor of the huge ballroom. He therefore designed a new, larger organ which was heard for the first time at the start of the 1935 season. It is this instrument, one of the finest Wurlitzers ever constructed, which still entertains the Tower Ballroom's patrons to this day, in the capable hands of the current resident organist, Phil Kelsall.

After the war, Reginald Dixon's live half-hour radio programmes invariably took place before a packed crowd of happy holidaymakers. As they listened in awe and watched his fingers and feet dancing nimbly over the keys and pedals, the atmosphere was always one of spell-bound amazement, with each item

ending in sustained and rapturous applause — no wonder in the 1960s that Reg's average weekly radio audience was around six million! Victor Smythe, former producer for BBC North Region, once said: "Why don't you try to get them singing?", to which Reg replied: "Get them singing? I can't stop them — they'll sing anything!" And sure enough, nearly all subsequent broadcasts ended with the audience raising the roof in a selection of old music-hall favourites.

Even during the hottest of weather, people would leave the sands in their droves just to be present when Reginald Dixon broadcast live on the radio from the Tower Ballroom. In the evening the dance floor was invariably packed by several hundred people but on special occasions, such as New Year's Eve, there could be thousands thronging the building.

PAUL THOMPSON

During the Blackpool summer season—the longest of any British seaside resort because of the famous illuminations which are not switched off until the beginning of November—Reg met and worked with many of the stars appearing at the town's various theatres.

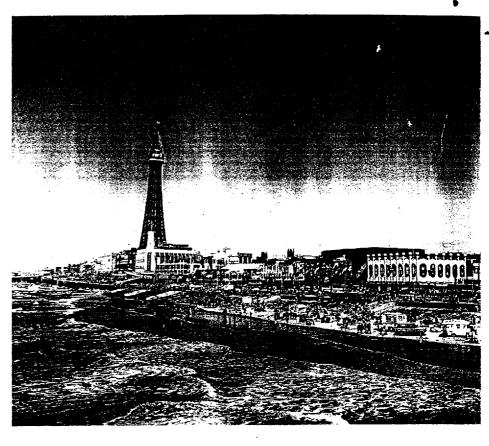
addition to his own solo broadcasts he is also host for, or contributor to, many other radio shows from Blackpool including "Holiday Night", "Time To Celebrate" and "Meet Me At The Tower".

As well as being a regular performer over the air-waves, Reginald Dixon's recording output was prolific. With a tal of more than three hundred 78s, paus numerous EPs and LPs, he was easily the country's most recorded organist and became almost synonymous with the sound of the Wurlitzer, certainly as far as seaside music was concerned.

Reg was also no stranger to royalty. In April 1955 he appeared in a Royal mmand Performance in the presence the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh, playing the Opera House Wurlitzer at the adjacent Winter Gardens. In 1966 he made the trip from Blackpool to London to receive the M.B.E. for services to entertainment — a very rewarding moment in a long and stinguished career.

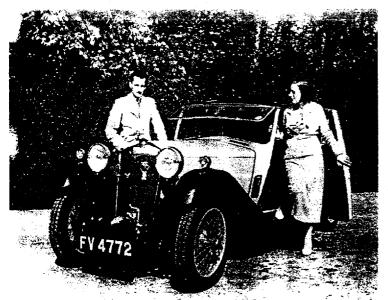
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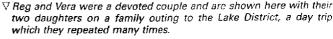
Two of Reginald Dixon's passions were cars and cine-photography, which he regularly combined on family holidays both at home and abroad. This picture shows him with his wife, Vera, and their prestige Riley sports car.





At 6.50am on 14th December, 1956, the caretaker at Blackpool Tower was confronted by a terrible sight the main complex was ablaze. Despite the best efforts of a large number of firemen, the damage was immense. Fortunately, all the zoo animals survived but several valuable birds perished in the aviary. Also destroyed were the uniforms of the resident band but their long-serving leader, Charles Barlow, rushed inside and personally threw irreplaceable sheet music out of a window to his musicians waiting below. Meanwhile, the ballroom was extensively damaged but, miraculously, the splendid Wurlitzer organ survived virtually intact, albeit in a somewhat damp condition. The wooden block-floor had to be totally replaced, however, and after a busy 18-month rebuilding and decorating programme costing more than half a million pounds, the building was reopened on 23rd May, 1958 - quite a feat.

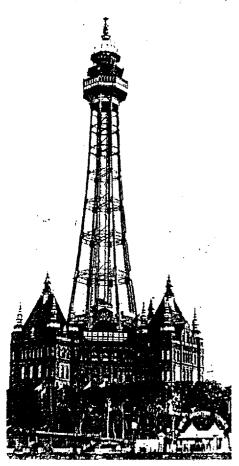






## Stars of Yesterday

(Continued)





Away from the limelight, Reg was a quiet, charming and self-effacing family man who was genuinely amazed by his own success. Spending so much time each year helping other folk to enjoy their holidays left him precious little time of his own, but there was nothing he and Vera loved more than caravaning in the Lake District, or further afield in the south of France with his cine-camera always close to hand!

The announcement of his forthcoming retirement at the end of the 1969 summer season made headlines in all the daily newspapers, simply because nobody could envisage the unique combination of Reginald Dixon and the Tower Ballroom Wurlitzer ever coming

The face behind the voice of the popular weekly BBC Radio 2 programme, The Organist Entertains. Nigel Ogden, who contributed this article, is shown here seated at the famous Tower Ballroom Wurlitzer, the organ on which Reginald Dixon ("Mr. Blackpool"), starred and recorded for so many years. The instrument is now in the capable hands of resident organist, Phil Kelsall.

to an end. His farewell concert, on Easter Sunday, 1970, was a magical affair which the 4,000 admirers in the audience will never forget. Although it was the end of an era the concert, compèred by Vince Hill and supported by a considerably augmented BBC Northern Dance Orchestra, was a wonderful celebration of one man and a lifetime's dedication to his work.

Retirement from the Tower, however, did not mean the end of organ playing for "Mr. Blackpool". He still found himself in huge demand for concert tours around the British Isles, and throughout the 1970s continued to broadcast on the BBC theatre organ, the very same instrument he first played at the Tower. Following the arrival of the new Tower organ in 1935, it had been transferred to Blackpool's Empress Ballroom and from there, in 1970, to the BBC's Playhouse Studios in Manchester.

Reginald Dixon died on 9th May, 1985, aged 80, when the whole world of popular music mourned the country's most endearing and entertaining theatre organist. He had an innate ability to produce and play music the public wanted to hear, and in the way they enjoyed it most. His reputation was second to none, and for thousands of people I Do Like To Be Beside the Seaside still means only one thing — happy holiday memories of Reginald Dixon at the organ of the Tower Ballroom, Blackpool.

NIGEL OGDEN

### Over 40 tunes by 'Mr. Blackpool'



Available as CD or Tape

For 40 years Reginald Dixon thrilled audiences on the fabulous Wurlitzer organ at the Tower Ballroom in Blackpool and now you can hear him again on this exclusive new CD and Cassette. It includes over 40 memorable melodies to remind you of the golden age of seaside entertainment when crowds left the hot sands in their droves just to be present when "Mr. Blackpool" weaved his magic over the multiple organ keyboard and foot pedals.

Tracks include: ★ I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside ★ Teddy Bears' Picnic ★ Red Sails in the Sunset ★ Diane ★ The Anniversary Waltz ★ Down at the Old Bull and Bush ★ The Cuckoo Waltz ★ You Were Meant For Me ★ Beyond the Blue Horizon ★ Eton Boating Song ★ When Day is Done ★ Sweet Sue ★ Mexicali Rose ★ Home ★ Avalon ★ Whispering ★ Shine on Harvest Moon ★ Blaze Away ★ Who's Sorry Now — and more than 20 other tunes.



TAPE PRICES: (REF: SY9) £5.95 (inc. UK post). Overseas surface mail (airmail in brackets) £7 (£8); or US \$13 (14); Can \$19 (22); Aus \$20 (22); NZ \$23 (26).

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or US \$16 (18); Can \$25 (27); Aus \$25 (28); NZ \$29 (33).



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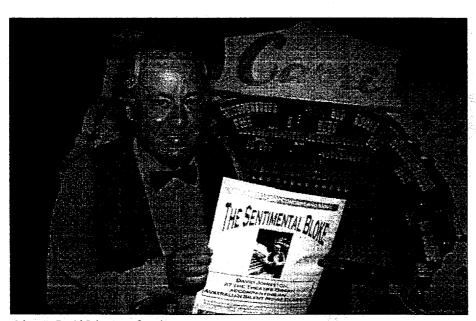
All major cards accepted

#### Silent Films and David Johnston

#### A brief history of silent film music and David Johnston at the Capri - February 25th

The theatre pipe organ came into being because exhibitors early perceived the need to provide sound effects and theme music to enliven the shadows on the screen if they were to retain their audiences.

The largest city theatres employed sizeable and expensive orchestras to do this, and the cans in which many prestige films came to the theatres were accompanied by a full score written by studio employed composers of the highest calibre. Not only was each scene provided with suitable music, but the appropriate sound effects were noted on the score in exactly the right places to complete the illusion of reality. Then, late at night or early morning, the film was projected to an otherwise empty theatre while the conductor and his musicians made themselves familiar with the action on the screen above their heads. The whole process was often repeated several times.



A happy David Johnston after the concert

Even so, a team of thirty or more musicians made an unwieldy group to change rapidly from one mood or theme to another, and it was found that the lone pianist with a pull cord sound effects machine in the smaller theatres could often be much more flexible in the accompaniments. There was only one drawback. No pianist could provide the richness of the full cinema orchestra. My mother told me that her family was friendly with the proprietor of the Wondergraph (later Civic and then State) in Hindley Street, and that they used to often go there as guests of the management, but her most memorable impressions of both the Wondergraph and the rival Wests Olympia further up the street, were of the very fine music provided by their orchestras - usually drawn from the classics and always appropriate.

How then to achieve the flexibility of the pianist and the richness of the orchestra, and save a great deal in musicians' salaries into the bargain? Robert Hope-Jones didn't set out to invent theatre organs. He had the view that both the mechanisms and tonal variety of the traditional classical organ were deficient, and he set out to provide what he considered to be vast improvements to both. If the many ecstatic comments made at the time are to be believed, most contemporary organists agreed with him when they heard his revolutionary instruments, though there was always a hard core who, on aesthetic grounds, held out for tradition. Their views have prevailed in the classical organ world, but Hope-Jones's ideas were incorporated in many orchestral and church instruments. They also found a ready reception by the WurliTzer firm and their many imitators for use in an entirely new instrument especially developed for the accompaniment of silent pictures - one capable of providing a most satisfying substitute for orchestral music and a very wide range of sound effects into the bargain.

So now we had a one person orchestra and sound effects division to provide musical accompaniment for films, and

themes were written by many skilled organists, most of them very experienced church organists, for use by their fellows. Some have survived to this day, such as CHARMAINE and RAMONA by Ernest Rapee of the Roxy Theatre in New York. Nevertheless, the organist too had to preview the film several times and then refine his synchronisation as he played for performance after performance. Even then, obvious errors in timing or omission frequently occurred.

I have five video copies of THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA. Some have the original two colour Technicolor sequence on the very fine studio re-construction of the Paris Opera House staircase, some have not. Only two have theatre organ sound tracks, each by long experienced silent era organists, yet

both missed the obvious use of the chrysoglott when clappers were several times seen descending upon gongs to warn of intruders. It is eerie to see them making no sound at all in otherwise excellent accompaniments.

Think then, of the difficulties facing DAVID JOHNSTON in his music making for THE SENTIMENTAL BLOKE. He was born long after the sound film had forever replaced its silent predecessor, and he had very limited opportunities for previewing the film, so his achievement in providing a very satisfying score was very fine indeed. If sometimes I would have expected a sudden change in the mood of the music - say from action to love theme - I can hardly blame him from the security of my seat in the darkened theatre and my invincible ignorance of the art of theatre organ playing (oh how I wish that I had persevered with my

#### Film Soundtracks Recorded

piano lessons long ago) and I must also record that most times he got it all just right.

The audience obviously enjoyed itself immensely, as much from the subtitles which were direct quotations from the original poem, and the manifold vintage Australian slang terms as anything in the action on the screen. Even so, the sight of a long vanished Sydney and traditional Aussie way of life couldn't help but arouse nostalgia for what was and is no more.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if this talented musician were able to earn his living while refining the art of which he is probably Australia's finest exponent in a repertory circuit of theatres showing the many excellent silent films which have survived. Where better than the Capri? David knows that he'd be among friends whenever he came to our city.

Brian Pearson

## David Johnston records organ accompaniments for Australian silent Movies



David watching a video monitor while recording

The day after everyone enjoyed David's concert and superb soundtrack for **The Sentimental Bloke**, a few people returned to the Capri to watch David back in action.

ScreenSound Australia (The National Film and Sound Archives in Canberra), contracted David to play original soundtracks for the films **Silks & Saddles** and the original **Robbery Under Arms**.



Graham Ward, Wayne Bertram, David Johnston, John Thiele

After Sunday's performance one would expect David to be quite drained but you would not think so listening to these 2 soundtracks. They are both different and unique and in my opinion excellent.

Many people don't realise that most of the themes and melodies that David plays while accompanying a film are simply made up by David and then developed as the film progresses. I am forever amazed at how David can sit watching a film, play music to fit the action (with no written music to play!) and yet not make any mistakes. I take my hat off to silent film players.

The films will be released on VHS by ScreenSound - I'll keep you posted so you may have at home an Australian silent film with David playing the soundtrack.



TOSA recording Engineers Wayne Bertram (left) and Graham Ward

To keep the recorded soundtrack in time with the film so the organ sound could be married to the master vision in Canberra, Wayne Bertram brought along a digital video recorder from work. Backup soundtracks were also recorded to DAT with timing signals sent from the video to the DAT recorder - again to keep sync if needed.

Our historian John Thiele was on hand to photograph happenings - The photos on these 2 pages are his (except the one with him in it! That's Gail Ward's shot.

# A Review of TOSA's Last Concert: . Tony Fenelon and John Atwell

## Orion Centre Campsie by John S. Batts Sunday 9th December

Sunday afternoon, 9<sup>th</sup> December, brought a full house to Campsie's Orion Function Centre (can one think of a more cumbersome title?) to listen to Australia's best-known name in theatre organ circles, Tony Fenelon, in concert with another seasoned performer on the bench, John Atwell.

In prospect it was an afternoon to savour and one which brought out numerous local luminaries of the theatre-organ world, including our cherubic Patron [I had written "Parton" but perhaps I an will enjoy that confession of a typo!] I an Davies, our previous concert artist David Smith, and former President, Cliff Bingham; Bill Schumacher was observed working on official recording of the event in the gallery and Margaret Hall was in the audience.

To a recorded version of Jingle Bells the console rose [sorry, pun-haters!] to reveal our own jolly Jack in full crimson plume of a Santa costume dispensing lollies to the fortunate within his throwing range.

TOSA President, Walter Pearce, introduced the artists, and with Fenelon seated at the Yamaha babygrand piano and Atwell at the WurliTzer console at half-height we were soon tapping our feet to the rhythms of Vincent Youmans' Carioca, (1933: from Flying Down to Rio) where the leading melodic motifs alternated between piano and organ. On this year's Christmas tree was the next item, a catchy old piano piece of yesteryear in three-four time. Poldini's Poupée Valsante (The Waltzing Doll). In this arrangement, the sweeping waltz was well served. The piano first stated the motif with crisp articulation over the accompaniment. piped Thereafter, the two instruments shared and echoed the key phrases. For a piece beloved by Salon orchestras too, this sharing among keyboards allowed the music to come across well.

At this juncture the console was raised to full concert position for John Atwell to play several numbers solo. He began with a stirring march, Haydn Wood's Montmartre from The Paris Suite (1935). This account reminded one not only of the theatre organ's felicitous affinity for such British light orchestral music but also that Eric Coates had a rival in this genre during the first part of the twentieth century.

From this the organist moved to some American light music, with Richard Rodgers and Stephen Sondheim's collaboration, Do I Hear a Waltz?, title song of the 1965 stage show. Here he drew on a range of registrations to carry the tune: initially Tibia-dominated and then mostly string choruses with Post-Horn riffs. There were moments, too, of the lesser reeds in evidence. Overall, this was percussion-free, allowing the pipes to convey the feeling, until the cymbal chimed in at the close.

The fifth item on the programme brought the Christmas season to the fore with Silver Bells (1951: Ray Evans and Jay Livingston) a song which, as Atwell remarked, has clearly outlasted its original movie vehicle, The Lemon Drop Kid. Here, too, one particularly noticed the contribution of the technical lighting crew, as large snow-flake patterns were projected onto the stage backdrop, the console itself regaled in silver/white and blue spot-lights.

This WurliTzer may lack a Compton illuminated jelly-mold surround, but the Orion audience does not lack visual enhancements as the music sings. Silver Bells began gently enough, enriched with occasional second-touch highlights on an accompaniment led by the Harp; there were Glockenspiel riffs over melodies mostly conveyed by the flues (Tibia, Diapason, Flute). After a segue into the next chorus the registration turned distinctly jazzy, horns and reeds over a Tap Cymbal. The final restatement was

much fuller in volume, leading to a dramatic close with the Glock over Flutes at its cadence.

By contrast, and theatre organ programmes are seldom without such shifts, Atwell turned to a little-played work by a one-time theatre organist, Oliphant "Wilson" Chuckerbutty's Pæan (1948). This work was rendered rather as on a concert organ with untremmed pipes dominating-an opening dialogue of fanfares between Post-Horn and Trumpet interspersed with sections on a largely Diapason chorus. The more lyrical central section was stated by 8' voices on the accompaniment before building up once more, after a right-hand trill and a stolid Trumpet chorus to a finale of loud reeds and a 32' pedal, a little raucous for front-row listeners, the sounds needing more auditorium bloom than a packed Orion could provide.

Atwell was rejoined by Fenelon for David Raskin's ballad, Love is For the Very Young. It opened gently with a jazzy air, splendidly reinforced - another tip of the hat to TOSA's gifted amateurs - by the lighting crew's choice of red and blue background behind the blue spot on the organist. A lush Tibia melody then took over, until the piano took over the lead and the organ resumed a soft orchestral accompaniment. The slow-moving nature of this song or its arrangement allowed some deft duetting of piano and organ.

Half an hour into the concert Tony Fenelon moved to the WurliTzer to play another item previously unheard on a theatre organ by this reviewer, namely, some gypsy airs by the nineteenth-century Spanish violinist and composer Pablo Sarasate (1844-1908). After a strident opening of Zigeunerweisen (Opus 20: Gypsy Airs), we were into violin runs and arpeggios with minor keys dominating. In a slower and gentle section the organist introduced the WurliTzer upright piano, before a longer scintillating

segment of dancing semi-quavers (perhaps demi-semiquavers!) brought about some top-tapping music and a virtuoso's hectic flourish for a finish. The articulation of the notes was crisp and clean.

The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians reports that Sarasate's "technique was assured, his intonation was precise ... and his whole manner of playing was so effortless as to appear casual" (22, 282). Intonation apart - yes, the organ crew had done their part - is not this the hallmark of Tony Fenelon's playing too?

Next came a Sixties standard associated with Barbra Streisand, People from Bob Merrill and Jule Styne's Funny Girl (1964, film 1968). Its words include a phrase that Fenelon embraced to thank the audience for some thirty years of support for the theatre organ, "People who need people are the happiest people in the world," and went on to express his own view of what he had largely regarded as "a lovely hobby," making music. The ballad began with a delicate opening, the gentle Chrysoglott preceding the Glockenspiel, then a Flute/Harp accompaniment to a familiar melody carried by 16' Strings and other ranks in combination. A second chorus featured the Voxes singing along; the third chorus made much of the Tibias and lesser Horns, second touch also being evident here. A fourth round blossomed into a brassier registration before falling back to a restrained close via some interesting harmonic modulations in the final bars capped by a final Chrysoglott arpeggio.

Whereas the styling of this whole piece emphasised the lyrical, the next pair of tunes were in contrast.

Here Makin' Whoopee (from Luckee Girl, 1928: Gus Kahn & Walter Donaldson), a tune forever linked with Eddie Cantor, was coupled with Lazy River (1931: Sidney Arodin & Hoagy Carmichael). A definitely jazzy feel was imparted by the piano and a low, "dirty" rendering of the melody in the opening bars, to say nothing of the Big Band riffs imparted by the Post-Horn. Thereafter Voxes and Strings combined to give that quintessential WurliTzer sound as the first tune gave way to the second song, now embracing the Cymbal Tap

on the pedal. Here too were some improvisations on the lead melody in between the well known subject of Hoagy Carmichael's tune. And if I have previously claimed contrast was to the fore in these performances, here was another as the tempo almost doubled for another statement of Lazy River this time reminiscent of a Dixieland treatment, suddenly arrested with a loud close.

It was time for the last bracket of tunes before the interval. John Atwell returned to the console, Tony Fenelon to the piano for The Russian Rag (1918: Cobb, based on George L. Rachmaninoff's Prelude in C# Minor). Here is music often associated with organ and orchestra; Lyn Larsen' likes to play it with the Jack Bethards' Orchestra. The piano led initially with the organ providing rhythmic accompaniment, until the organ made its melodic statement and thereafter parity was maintained. This piece is very much a toe-tapper and came off well.

More Russian music followed as the pair launched into Tchaikovsky's Serenade for Strings with a cautious start and gentle tempo. String ranks and piano strings were very much to the fore in this embellished arrangement which embraced at least four statements of the motif. The Orion's Tibia was a good foil to the piano and generally the playing here reminded one not only of Hope-Jones' original conception of the theatre organ as a "unit orchestra" but also the way in which many an organ was installed in the pit to supplement the movie palace's house band.

Time for an anything but Quiet Village, a piece indelibly associated for many of us I suspect with George Wright's Hi-Fi recording, but Atwell said his own transcription was based on a version by the American piano duo, Ferrante and Teischer. As previously, when playing as a duo both artists had the score firmly before them. The music itself is full of atmosphere, an unusual rhythm coupled with a haunting chord progression. The piano makes the initial impact and the organ is untremmed; cascading downward glissandos suggest the rain-forest, but this is no Daintree for the music is redolent of the Americas. I may even have heard as Messien-esque birdcall or two before the close. What a successful tone poem this is, and what a wonderful score to show off the tonal resources of a theatre organ! And a good moment to leave the audience yearning for more, the interval had begun.

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For the second half the console oddly rose in silence at 3.48 p.m., but the duo opened their account with a two-piano arrangement of Arthur Benjamin's Jamaican Rumba (1948), with Fenelon once more at the Yamaha and Atwell playing the secundo part via the console's WurliTzer piano. In an afternoon which otherwise breathed assurance and ease between the two musicians, the opening here was a little unsteady, perhaps because timing the action of the piano via the console keys made for uncertainties. Thereafter, the insistent rhythm of the music and its catchy melodies convinced me that we do not hear enough of such engaging, lively music in theatre organ concerts. I wondered if this duo included any movements from Darius Milhaud's Scaramouche (1939 version for two pianos) - would not Braziliera be a blast? - or Gabriel Fauré's gentler suite Dolly (1897) in their programmes.

Next came an item new to me, a brief Waltz in A Major composed by Mischa Levitski (1898-1941), an American pianist who reputedly wrote a number of attractive piano pieces. His numerous tours abroad included some to the Far East, and presumably Australia, for reportedly he had been inspired to compose this waltz while on the Adelaide Express, incorporating rhythms of rail travel with patterns of four. This work gave scope for two pianos and latterly some interesting organ support via Diapasons and Tibias.

The console rose to full concert height once more as John Atwell introduced what he termed "a little bit of nonsense," the lively All God's Chillun Got Rhythm from the Marx Brothers' film A Day at the Races (1937: Gus Kahn, Bronislaw Kaper & Walter Jurmann). Plenty of quick movement about the keyboards here, especially the Post-Horn riffs on the Solo and some chromatic runs on the Accompaniment. The second statement

was rendered in jazzy fashion.

Solo organ next as Atwell reminded us of several of the successes in a revived show recently in Sydney, Singin' in the Rain, but also a 1952 film dealing with the transition from silent films to talkies. Here we were treated to several well-known songs, including All I Do is Dream of You (1929: Arthur Freed & Nacio Herb Brown, and a feature of the 1934 movie, Sadie McKee)with Chrysoglott delicacies in the accompaniment for a first statement followed by a louder and faster chorus plus cymbal before segueing into I'll See You in My Dreams (1924: Gus Kahn & Isham Jones) with some open harmony renderings with a suitably gentle opening and close, after a spirited middle section.

The illuminated backdrop depicted stars for this number. At this point, too, while the organist was not encumbered by a score on the music desk in front of him, some deft hand registration was observed.

Then the title song, Singin' in the Rain (1929: Arthur Freed & Nacio Herb Brown) registered energetically if not quite in the mode of the late British organist Stanley Tudor who initially used it as a signature tune while based in proverbially wet Manchester. You Are My Lucky Star (1935: Arthur Freed & Nacio Herb Brown, and a feature of Broadway Melody of 1936) was full-throated and rhythmic before a reprise of the title number and a triumphal close in the best theatre organ tradition.

Next it was time for a band number from the movie Sing, Baby, Sing, You Turned the Tables on Me (1936: Sidney Mitchell & Louis Alter). This music also features in The Benny Goodman Story. Notable again were some hand-registrations though the score was open. Plenty of riffs, a feature of the popular dance bands two generations ago, a pedal Cymbal, even a Xylophone briefly in the melody. Once more spirited music and spirited playing.

By way of contrast and initially unannounced was the carol by Adolphus Adam, O Holy Night played with different levels of registration as verse gave way to chorus, and variety of treatment moving from

the agitato to the cantabile; Atwell even managed to lead it to a fanfare close.

Tony Fenelon then offered a piano solo, in memory of Vera Dustin, for many years associated with the Hammond Organ Society. He chose a song rich in associations for it had been sung by Marlene Dietrich in the early German sound film, The Blue Angel (1930) and by Mai Britt in a 1959 remake. It was Falling In Love Again (1930: Reg Connolly & Fred Hollander; reached the U.S. in 1931). This time Fenelon played without a score and imparted a haunting quality to the music.

As he finished the console rose once more and this time he took his seat on the bench to remind us of the melodies from that rare British musical - it was successful in America! - Oliver (1960: Lionel Bart). The music included As Long as He Needs Me and Consider Yourself One of the Family. Here again variety was the keynote of the registrations, one moment the balladlike, the next a sprightly rhythmic rendition: in turn one heard the piano, the riff of a Glock, Harp and Flute, a section featuring Voxes and Strings, then reeds and brass followed by a Post-Horn's snarl; we were launched into a jolly bouncing version of Consider Yourself, soft in the verse louder in the chorus, the Glockenspiel in dialogue with the pipes. The selection drew to an end with a flourish of bold registrations.

After the tumult of Victorian London (via echoes of Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist), little wonder one responded favourably to the relative calm of Simon and Garfunkel's hit, Bridge Over Troubled Waters (1970: Paul Simon). The tune has become a pop classic within the last generation, and now it is aired by the duo on organ and piano once more, the former taking on a mostly chordal role while the piano swirled to arpeggios between melodic moments. The backdrop beyond turned golden, with reds and yellows suffusing the curtains.

The penultimate offering was appropriate and it was left to Atwell to announce, after several jokes during the afternoon about aging; it was a song from the film You Were Never

Lovelier, I'm Old Fashioned (1943: Johnny Mercer & Jerome Kern). It opened with an organ statement on the Solo and restrained registration before the piano took the lead. Not for the first time during this afternoon was one recollecting the early role of so many organs in the pit in filling out an otherwise small theatre orchestra. Here the pedal Cymbal was a good substitute for a drummer. Little wonder that at this moment Tony Fenelon thanked John Atwell for his orchestral contribution to the duo's music.

A closing number for a theatre-organ concert is traditionally a blockbuster and this was no exception. Richard Addinsell (1904-1977), an English composer for theatre and film, is probably best known for his music written for the 1942 film Dangerous Moonlight (released in US as Suicide Squadron); it contains a movement for piano and orchestra which became immensely popular under the title Warsaw Concerto. Those who did not know the film may well have been first introduced to its music by a popular record made by the piano duo, Rawicz & Landauer. For the purists the work is a bit of a crib from Rachmaninoff's 2nd Piano Concerto, but from the reception of this performance it is obvious that after almost sixty years this piece still has that power which stamps it a classic of popular music. With suitably dramatic registration and an abundance of piano arpeggios the familiar strains were soon sending shivers down the spine. I doubt that it is necessary to have seen the film for the notes seem to encapsulate that sense of menace confronted via jagged phrases, tumbling arpeggios, agitated chords and their progressions. Film music at a high standard.

The playing deserved an encore call, but after such a tour de force what might serve? They offered That's All! possibly the 1980s song by Phil Collins, but this is a merely a guess. The music was brief though gently moving and dance-like, providing more occasions for reed riffs on the Wurlitzer against the piano's insistent rhythm, before a quiet cadence and an inserted last-gasp tinkle of Merry Christmas from the piano. It was perforce a little anticlimactic, but now time to hit the rail and road with fresh memories of a thoroughly musical afternoon.

## OUR NEXT ARTIST : Chris McPhee

Chris comes from Adelaide and is employed full time as a customer relations officer with the Adelaide Bank.

He began his musical career at the age of nine learning electronic organ. He has studied music through the Australian Guild of Music and Speech and gained his Associate Diploma with Honours in 1992, following his achievement of full marks for Matriculation Music Performance and Theory in 1990. He has been honoured with the position of Co-patron of the Electronic Organ Club of South Australia.

Chris has also studied classical pipe organ, is assistant organist at his church and has worked as an organist for a funeral home. In 1992 he was awarded the Royal School of Church Music Scholarship. He is in regular demand for concerts around Australia, has made five tours of the USA and is a rostered house organist and concert artist at the Capri Theatre, Goodwood, South Australia.

In January 1993 Chris returned from a study and concert trip to the USA where he spent a month under the tutelage of

theatre organist Jonas Nordwall. In June he was invited to perform a short season at the Adelaide Regent Theatre for its 60th birthday celebrations, the first time live music had been heard there since the removal of the 3/15 WurliTzer organ in 1967.

His increasing popularity resulted in the unusual experience of performing theatre organ music and sound effects for a live ABC radio quiz show broadcast from the Capri Theatre.

His most outstanding achievement came in June 1993, when he was acclaimed as winner of both the Senior Section and Overall Winner of the American Theatre Organ Society's Young Theatre Organist Competition. In July that year he flew to the USA to accept his ATOS awards and perform at their convention in Chicago.

In July 1994 he returned to play the anchor role in the winners' concert at the Fresno Convention. Chris was the first Australian to be named Overall Winner of this prestigious competition.

He returned to the USA in March

1996 to present concerts in Seattle, Wenatchee, Portland and Chicago.

Shortly after his return he was a featured artist at the 1996 TOSA Convention in Sydney.

Chris has been privileged to perform duo concerts with the talented Melbourne pianist / organist Tony Fenelon, giving concerts in Adelaide, Ballarat, Sydney and the Gold Coast and on five occasions he has combined the Capri organ with Adelaide's very popular Bay Big Band, playing successful concerts to enthusiastic full houses.

In mid 1999, Chris was featured in the American Theatre Organ Society's National Convention held in London. In October 2001, Chris returned to the USA for his fifth concert tour.

Back home in Adelaide, Chris has been featured in concerts on both the Festival Theatre and the Adelaide Town Hall organs.

Chris has made five commercial recordings, including his latest release, entitled A Gift of Music.

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