

TOSA NEWS

September/October 2024

Volume 63 No.5

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CHRISTMAS AT THE ORION



Dr. John Atwell at the Wurlitzer Theatre Organ

Sunday, 1 December 2024

Orion Centre, Campsie



Directory

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Dr. John Atwell

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David Badman 0408 230 337

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Simon Ellis secretary@tosa.net.au 0403 548 354

PO Box 63 BUXTON NSW 2571

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Membership Inquiries

Margaret Badman membership@tosa.net.au 0417 971 212

PO Box 589 RICHMOND NSW 2753

Committee

Barry Tooker 02 9744 1535

Pam Lawson 0457 866 010

Robert Gliddon christieorg@bigpond.com

Ernie Vale 0415 626 064

Roger Dunk roger@at.com.au

Eric Burwood ericburwood@optusnet.com.au

TOSA News Editor

Oliver Dunk editor@tosa.net.au

PO Box 2751 CARLINGFORD COURT NSW 2118

Marrickville Players Convenor

John Batts 0420 424 103

Neil Palmer 02 9798 6742

Orion Players Convenor

Craig Keller 0418 484 798

West Ryde Christie Convenor

John Weismantel 0435 258 287

Ticket Secretary (Concert Bookings)

David Badman 0408 230 337

Photographer

Barry Tooker 02 9744 1535

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Editor



Dear Members,

David Bailey did a sterling job in accompanying the silent films on the Christie theatre organ at West Ryde Anglican Church (St. Columbs). David made full use of the Christie's effects department which has been expanded from what was originally supplied with the organ - even the newly installed slide-whistle got an airing. I found that the church makes an excellent silent film venue, the block-out blinds over the windows being really effective in doing what they are supposed to do plus the bright and sharp image from the data projector.

Our next event is the all-important Annual General Meeting on Saturday, 9th November. Please DO come along and see how YOUR society is doing. Note that this year there will be a ballot for both Vice President and Committee positions. Ballot forms will be sent with your TOSA News.

There are three options for getting your ballot papers to the Returning Officer:

1. Scan and email.
2. Place in an envelope and pop it in the post.
3. Place in an envelope and bring it along with you to the AGM.

Please write your membership number on the back of the envelope.

Hello Members,

I hope you all enjoyed the silent film event with David Bailey this September. David really pulled out all of the organ's stops, showcasing what it would've been like going to see a silent film back in the roaring 20's!

Looking forward, the AGM will take place in November (information on pages 5 and 6), and the re-opening concert of the Orion Wurlitzer will be in December! I look forward to seeing you all there.

TOSA NSW is now active again on YouTube and Instagram! Please don't forget to like and subscribe!

Concert clips/recordings can be viewed at:
<https://www.youtube.com/@tosansw>

Photos can be viewed at:
<https://www.instagram.com/tosansw>

Enjoy the read!

Oliver, Editor

I'm typing this amongst the turmoil of unpacking after just moving house. But I obviously found the box containing the laptop!

That's all for now.

Neil, President

From the Mailbox...



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Please submit all comments
via email to:
editor@tosa.net.au

Please send all submissions
via post to:
PO Box 2751
CARLINGFORD COURT NSW 2118

IMPORTANT NOTE

The Society's only bank account is
with **St George**

Details are :
BSB 112-879
Account Number 442 088 530

New Members

As of the publication date of this issue, there
have been no new members.

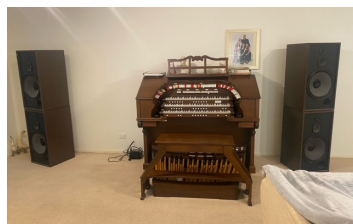
ANOTHER Thank You!

TOSA NSW would like to once again say
"thank you" to all members who have kindly
made donations.

FOR SALE

Allen Theatre Organ in excellent condition.
Moving to a new home and there is no room.
\$20 000

Contact Phillip Vorbach on 0450 093 187



Membership Renewals for 2024-2025

Membership and Renewal of Membership

\$40 Full | \$30 Concession | \$30 Interstate | \$40 Overseas | \$10 Student

(Only one TOSA News per household)

Membership Enquiries

0417 971 212 membership@tosa.net.au

Associate membership for spouse/partner - an additional 50%

UPCOMING TOSA EVENTS

Saturday, 9 November 2024 **West Ryde Anglican Church** **2024 TOSA AGM**

The 2024 TOSA Annual General Meeting will be held at West Ryde Anglican Church, commencing at 2pm on Saturday, the 9th of November.

A ballot for the positions of Vice President and Committee Person are required this year as there are more nominations than positions.

Please carefully read and submit the ballot paper sent with your TOSA News to the returning officer before the AGM. This can be done via email or post, or it can be handed in by 2:15pm on the 9th of November.

Afternoon tea will be provided free of charge, and the Christie Theatre Organ will be open console after the conclusion of the meeting.

Find out more on the next page!

Sunday, 1 December 2024 **Orion Centre, Campsie** **TOSA's Annual Christmas Concert** **with Patron Dr. John Atwell**

Dr. John Atwell will present the annual TOSA Christmas concert at the Orion Centre, Campsie.

This will be the 'grand re-opening' concert of the Orion Wurlitzer since major flood repairs took place.

Find out more on page 7!

Advertising

Rates in

TOSA News

For Members:

Small, Organ related ads = FREE!

For all other cases:

Quarter Page = \$25

Half Page = \$50

Full Page = \$100

Full Page Insert = \$125.00

Members' Dates

West Ryde Anglican Church

Wednesday, 16 October

Wednesday, 20 November

Convenor is John Weismantel

0435 258 287 or

whitecoats@bigpond.com

Please contact him to confirm availability

Marrickville Town Hall

Monday, 28 October

Monday, 25 November

Convenor is John Batts

0420 424 103

Please call him to confirm availability

Orion Centre

Thursday, 10 October

Thursday, 14 November

Convenor is Craig Keller

0418 484 798 or

craigkeller1966@gmail.com

Please contact him to confirm availability

2024 TOSA AGM
Saturday, 9 November 2024
Commencing at 2pm
West Ryde Anglican Church

AGENDA

1. Welcome & President's Opening Remarks
2. Apologies
3. Confirmation of 2023 AGM Minutes
4. President's Report
5. Secretary's Report
6. Treasurer's Report
8. Marrickville Organ Report
9. Orion Organ Report
10. Christie Organ Report
11. Nominations of Patron for 2025
12. Appointment of Auditors for 2025
13. Declaration of Office Bearers and Committee for 2025 by the Returning Officer.
14. General Business
15. Closing Remarks by Chairman and Close of Meeting

LIST OF NOMINATIONS

President (1 Position - Unopposed)
Neil Palmer*

Vice President (2 Positions)

David Badman*
Margaret Hall

- Professional organist, technical knowledge
- Joined TOSA 1977, former committee person, Convenor of Festival of Theatre Organ 2000
- Collaboratively and respectfully will serve TOSA with an enthusiastic vision



John Weismantel*

Secretary (1 Position - Unopposed)
Simon Ellis*

Treasurer (1 Position - Unopposed)
Geoff Brimley*

Committee Person (6 Positions)

David Badman

Current Vice President

Eric Burwood*

Graeme Costin

Been a TOSA member since about 1998 and want to see it keep going strongly.

Roger Dunk*

Third generation TOSA member. Father of current TOSA News editor. Enthusiastic to see continued preservation and promotion of theatre organs to current and future generations.

Robert Gliddon*

Margaret Hall

See Vice President

Pam Lawson*

Barry Tooker*

Ernest Vale*

John Weismantel

Current Vice President

* Currently holds this position

Location

West Ryde Anglican Church

14 Bellevue Ave, West Ryde NSW 2114

Onsite parking entry via Dickson Ave. Lots of on-street parking in surrounding neighbourhood streets if carpark is full.

Church is 900m from West Ryde Station.

A courtesy car can be arranged for pick up and drop off at West Ryde Station. Please contact David Badman at 0408 230 337 prior to the AGM if you'd like to utilise this service.

CHRISTMAS AT THE ORION

Sunday, 1 December 2024

2pm

Orion Centre, Campsie

Introducing Dr. John Atwell...

Dr John Atwell has had the pleasure of entertaining audiences on the theatre organ for over 50 years, both in Australia and around the world – in the United Kingdom, the USA, Canada, the Netherlands, and New Zealand. In that time has developed a reputation for providing programs, whether in concert or on recordings, which are carefully put together to provide a variety of enjoyable music, with a balance between the familiar and sometimes the not so well known. His playing style is not easily pigeonholed, but reflects the diversity of his musical experience.

John is currently in the UK playing a series of five concerts from Worthing and Rye in the south to Howden-le-Wear (near Durham) in the north, with a couple in the Yorkshire area.

John is proud to be a patron of the Australian Theatre Organ Society Divisions in both New South Wales and South Australia.

He is looking forward to presenting this year's Christmas concert at the Orion Centre, the first there for a quite a considerable time.



Location

Orion Centre, Campsie

155 Beamish St, Campsie NSW 2194

Lots of parking onsite.

Orion parking entry via Shakespeare St.

The Orion Centre is easily accessed via public transport. Bus routes 410, 420, 490 and 492 run from Burwood to Campsie.

Time & Date

2:00pm

Sunday, 1 December 2024

Ticket Prices

(Afternoon Tea Included)

Member	\$35
Adult	\$50
Concession	\$40
Student	\$15
Child	FREE

A special price of \$25 per ticket is available for group bookings of 10+ people.

Booking

Tickets may be booked and reserved online using the link provided.

<https://www.trybooking.com/CVNCS>

Please contact our ticket secretary at 0408 230 337 to book tickets over the phone.



LIVE MUSIC AND SILENT FILMS WITH DAVID BAILEY

7th September 2024
Review By Roger Dunk

On an unusually warm early Spring day, West Ryde Anglican Church set the stage for a captivating silent movie presentation. This venue, with its large screen, video projector, and ability to fully darken the room even in daylight, proved ideal for such an occasion. However, the star of the setup was undoubtedly the beautifully restored Christie cinema organ, boasting a vast array of fascinating sound effects and musical traps.



David Bailey, renowned for his expertise in silent film accompaniment, delivered a masterclass performance, accompanying the 1926 Harold Lloyd film, *For Heaven's Sake*. His score was musically engaging yet unobtrusive, enhancing the movie without overpowering it. What made his performance stand out was his skillful use of the organ's extensive range of effects. From the "sand block" mimicking the slow burn of a fuse, culminating in a "thunder" crash as a bomb exploded, to the whimsical use of the "doorbell" as a telephone and the "train whistle" for locomotive scenes, Bailey's creativity knew no bounds. And when the organ lacked the necessary effect — like a dog barking — he improvised brilliantly, adding to the charm.

The audience's lengthy applause at the end of the film was a clear testament to the joy it brought to everyone.



Following a break for afternoon tea (thanks to Margaret, Pam, and the helpers), David returned to showcase the organ's range with some solo pieces, including *Hey There* from *The Pajama Game* and a medley from Romberg's *The Desert Song*. The afternoon concluded with an upbeat accompaniment to the Buster Keaton classic, *Cops*, leaving the audience thoroughly entertained.



Only one question remains. When can we do it again?!



MY ENTHUSIASM FOR ORGAN MUSIC

A Reflection By John S. Batts

Part 1: The Early Years (Continued)

Within two years of the start of formal organ lessons I had been appointed a young Chapel organist with a busy routine: daily services, two on Sundays, plus three choir practices during the week too. Apart from the preludes and a postlude, I was daily required to accompany the Responses, sundry Canticles (a Venite, a Psalm) and at least one hymn. That demand led to a rapid expansion of my classical repertoire too. The Sunday services of Matins and Evensong were musically demanding, with settings of the Venite (“O come let us sing unto the Lord”), Te Deum Laudamus (“We praise thee”), Benedictus (“Blessed be the Lord”), or sometimes the Benedicite (“O all ye works”), along with the Magnificat (“My soul doth magnify”) and the Nunc Dimittis (“Lord now lettest thou, thy Servant”). Several churches even used the organ to accompany the Creed with a wandering harmony beneath a held note. Looking back at all this, I am sure it taught me a deal about different keys and their character.

Throughout many of the years of my youth the BBC broadcast many theatre organists each week, particularly on the Light Programme. “Sandy Mac” [Roderick H. MacPherson] played a number of them, such as “From My Postbag,” “The Twilight Hour,” and “Chapel in the Valley”. This last show used Charles Smart as organist while Sandy exploited his own Canadian burr as compère.

Of more interest to me, especially during school holidays, were the daily ‘Ten O’ Clock Tempo’ 30-minute broadcasts each weekday morning, often but not always using the Jubilee Studio’s Moller instrument (5-28) in east London. This organ had the reputation of sounding rather dull

in its broadcasts. I was not alone in preferring the Outside Broadcasts; many of these were London venues, such as the Granada Cinemas at Tooting and Clapham Junction or the Gaumont State, Kilburn, even The Regal Cinema, Kingston-upon-Thames—all Wurlitzers. Then there was the large Christie at the Regal (Odeon) Marble Arch, and the 5-17 Compton in the Rank flagship cinema, the Odeon, Leicester Square. Beyond the capital city, there were occasional broadcasts by Reginald Dixon from The Tower Ballroom, Blackpool (Wurlitzer 3-14), by Douglas Reeve from The Dome, Brighton (Hill, Norman & Beard 4-plenty), and by George Blackmore from both The Astoria and the Capital Cinemas in Aberdeen (both 3-8 Comptons I think). Then there was another fairly regular Saturday slot for theatre organ at 6.00 am called “Bright and Breezy”, usually featuring the BBC Studio’s Moller in Hoxton – and in all likelihood pre-recorded.

The BBC Regional Services also used cinema organs, most notably BBC West with Dudley Savage’s “As Prescribed” series broadcast from The Royal (later ABC) Cinema, Plymouth on a 3-8 Compton (plus Melotone). BBC North used Blackpool, of course, and the Odeon, Leeds, among other instruments. Home reception of both these stations was less than optimal, whereas BBC Home Service (Midlands) was received well.

From the BBC’s Birmingham Studios, James Pestridge produced for several years in the 1950s a weekly series titled “Midland Console” which featured an extensive range of venues within the region. I suspect that as many as twenty different places were visited for this 15-minute early evening time-slot. All were introduced by the chosen organist playing “By the Fireside” and each closed with his/her own signature tune. YouTube has recently reminded me of a Stanley Tudor broadcast from the Gaumont/Regent Cinema, Hanley (2-9 Wurlitzer) in 1960. A second YouTube recording dating from June, 1955, features Charles Smitton playing the 3-8

Compton in The Gaumont in Birmingham's City Centre. That series also broadcast from the first cinema organ that I heard live, the 2-4 (+Melotone) Compton installed below stage at The Ritz Cinema, Hereford. Peter Kilby was (I think) the organist on both occasions. Thanks to YouTube I have now heard a third Midland Console broadcast by Robinson Cleaver playing the 2-5 Wurlitzer in The Savoy, Coventry – and there may be others to be explored in this same series. My schoolboy diary records broadcasts by Laurence James from the Gaumont, Smethwick [Birmingham], Bryan Rodwell from the Granada, Rugby, both Peter Kilby and Trevor Willetts from the Tower, West Bromwich, and Arnold Loxam from the Gaumont, Walsall. Without evidence I am pretty certain that organs at the Ritz Cinema, Nuneaton (Compton) and the Granada, Rugby (Christie) also featured.

In that earlier mentioned schoolboy diary I also made a note of other organists (39) who according to the BBC's Radio Times went to air, often unheard by me that year; these names have here been arranged alphabetically: Ena Baga, George Blackmore, Terrance Casey, Robinson Cleaver, Harold Coombs, Henry Croudson, Frederic Curzon, William Davies, Reginald Dixon, Eric Easton, Nelson Elms, Phil Finch, Frank Gordon, Sydney Gustard, John Howlett, Laurence James, Arthur Lord, Arnold Loxam, Sandy Macpherson, John Madin, Neville Meale, Louis Mordish (Trocadero E & C), Edward O'Henry, Tommy Pears, Reginald Porter-Brown, Felton Rapley, Austin Raynor (Harrogate), Douglas Reeve, Robin Richmond, Dudley Savage, Joseph Seal (Kingston), Gerald Shaw (RMA), Charles Smart, (his son) Harold Smart, Eric Spruce, Howard Thomas, Donald Thorne, Stanley Tudor, and Stanley Wyllie (Ritz, Belfast). Two names I may have missed were those of Reginald Foxwell and Bobby Pagan. As a young choirboy, that is before the organ-loft called me, I recall writing down in my large hymnal (now lost) some three columns of the names of cinema organists; that total was over eighty!

Among my father's papers I have found my teenage diary which suggests that by my mid-teens the theatre organ was part of my life. On December 31st. I wrote: "Went to Hereford by bus to the Ritz Cinema (A.B.C.) and met the manager [Mrs Watts] and [organist] Joseph Storer, who after playing a selection of Doris Day hits and a popular medley during the interval [Al Jolson Story was the featured film], showed me around the organ's under-stage chambers ... a Compton 2-4."

The entry for 14th January records: "Went to the Ritz Cinema, Hereford by rail at 7.30 am to meet Peter Kilby the BBC [broadcasting] organist. He demonstrated the instrument then let me have a go; he also brought me a cup of coffee. Spent over 2½ hours talking. Came back very thrilled by the 4 o'clock train." Peter Kilby returned to the Ritz for a week in February and again in November, while Harold Nash played in June, but I was in school during these visits. I should add that this Compton on its lift in the middle of what might have been the orchestra pit was also a vintage-1937, illuminated, jelly-mould console – as visually attractive as could be.

As I think about my days as Chapel organist, I should further remark that I had two clashes with ecclesiastical officials. One concerned my extempore playing, trying to fill in a minute or so when the clergy were behind the clock. Someone, a veteran of two World Wars, had complained that he had heard from the organ what sounded like a song about "cigarettes with those lipstick traces"! At the time I did not know Jack Strachey's song "These Foolish Things" (1936), but I may have heard it on the radio. So my extempore solo line may have stirred that old feeling for that old listener! Yet I do recall feeling miffed about that complaint – after all there are only a limited number of notes in any octave! The second objection I suspect was more genuine, and the time 6/8 signature for "Little Red Monkey" is more distinctive. I cannot recall whether this was or was not a moment of filling

in time; it may have stemmed from boredom or an instance of 'jeux d'esprit'. Whatever the cause, enough people reported on hearing it that day played on the organ. A stiff reprimand ensued for disturbing the peace of mind of the congregation. Some of the younger set present that day assured me that they had enjoyed it!

One Summer when the School Certificate (Ordinary Level) results had been announced, my future options began to be seriously explored. One was to study Pharmacy, but another involved entering the Birmingham School of Music in Paradise Street. I went for an interview at the latter with the then Principal (Christopher Edmunds), who pointed out that my results merited exploring more academic options. Possibly he saw me as an unusual candidate who might not give one-hundred percent attention to his domain. And in truth my parents were relieved. Instead, I went on to VIth-Form studies and potentially university entrance.

By mid-teens I had logged up a substantial amount of church service playing. My father, for whom parish concerns were always secondary to his civil-service employment, had frequently used my skills to deputise for him at weekday funerals in his parish church. When I attended Sunday services with him, part of the appeal for me was to play preludes and recessionals, and initially we shared a hymn or two. Eventually that expanded to accompanying the choir contributions too. As a result, I sometimes found myself on the bench of other churches and chapels in the vicinity too. Indeed, I now reflect that memorizing an ever-changing roster of Anglican chants in sundry keys and mastering the pointing of psalms is itself very much a musical education. And clearly there was a dualism to my enthusiasm for the organ.

My next challenge came from the school's appointment of a young musician to the Staff. David De Vile BA, FRCO had been, I think, Organ Scholar

at Pembroke College, Cambridge -- yes, more recently Anna Lapwood's home base! He took me on at once and soon had me accompanying a demanding quasi-cathedral musical routine with a new anthem week. He also coached me through two organ examinations in two years. I recall being very apprehensive of one of the visiting examiners, Dr Herbert Sumsion from Gloucester Cathedral; on a later occasion the examiner was Dr Herbert Wiseman. Both exams were passed.

In mid-teens I had become a young member of [UK] The Cinema Organ Society (Midlands). Later this had led to notice of a members' Sunday morning meeting in Birmingham while I was staying with an uncle at Stourbridge. A half-hour drive found me filled with anticipation in Steelhouse Lane outside The Gaumont. Boldly I put my name down to play and understood that organists were going to play in alphabetical order. I was to appear following Foley Bates, then a professional resident organist at The Odeon, Birmingham. The format was for each player to begin by riding the console up, and end by descending out of sight on the lift. When Mr Bates at the bottom of the pit reappeared out from beyond the metal door, he was rightly solicitous for me to ensure that the door was properly closed in order that pressing the Up button would have success.

I rose slowly playing a Doris Day song titled (I think) "Lucky for Me" and briefly played something else - not impossibly it was "Little Red Monkey"! Then, having found the Down button, it was time to sink from the spotlight's glare. There was generous applause as my descent began, but the personal thrill was to last a lifetime. I could hardly stop talking about it later that day - and possibly you may conclude that I never have! However, there was to be a similar experience many years later. Meantime I was off to university.

[Possibly to be continued]

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