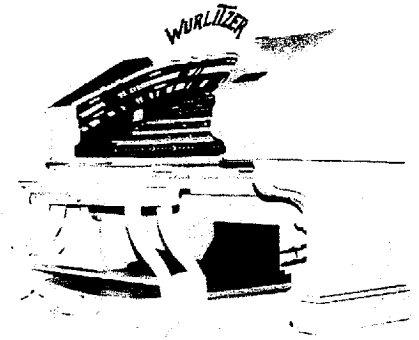


MARCH, 2000

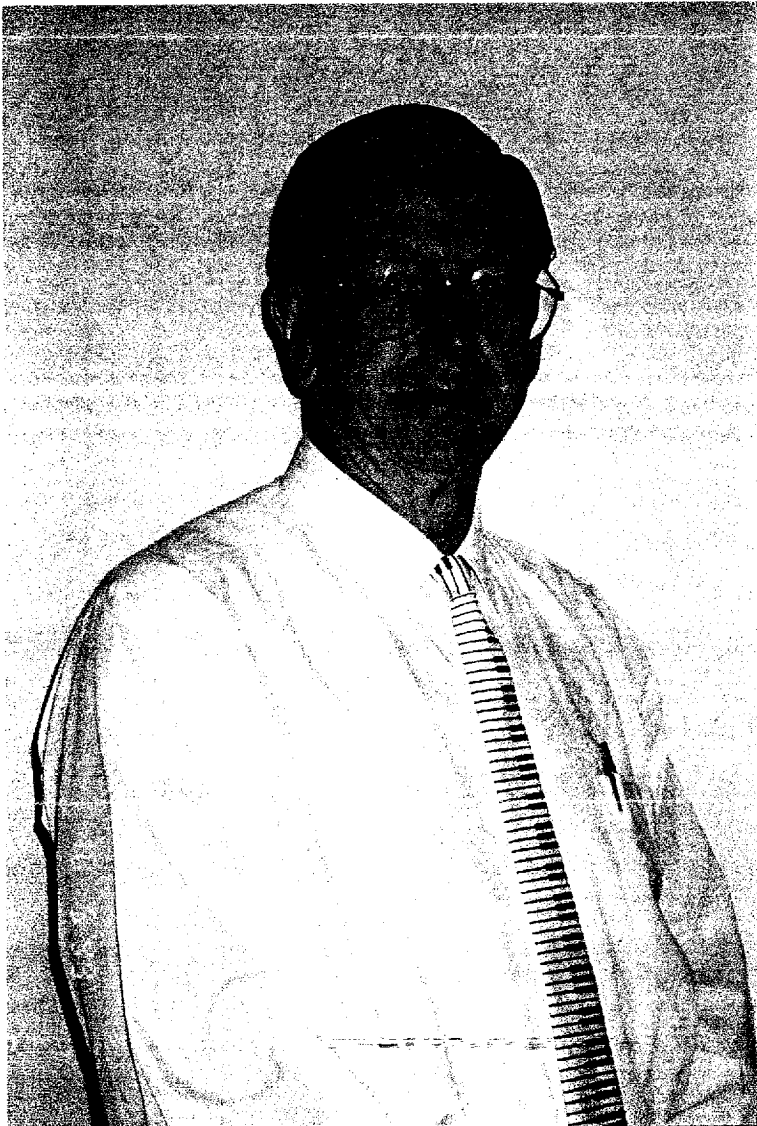
# TOSA NEWS



2/11 Wurlitzer Theatre Pipe Organ  
Marrickville Town Hall

3/17 Wurlitzer Theatre Pipe Organ  
Orion Centre Campsie

## One of Sydney's Favourite Organists



David  
Parsons  
on the  
Marrickville  
*Wurlitzer*  
Theatre Pipe Organ

Sunday, 26th March, 2000, at 2pm

# Marrickville Town Hall

*(Patrolled Parking)*

Volume 39  
Issue 2  
PRINTED BY TOSA

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# TOSA NEWS

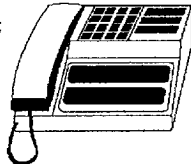
MARCH, 2000

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

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

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Membership, Renewals, Change of Address -  
**MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY**  
TOSA News Items, Advertisements - **EDITOR**

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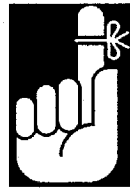
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## COMING EVENTS

### MARCH

- Monday 6 at 7.30pm **Committee Meeting**
- Thursday 23 at 7.30pm **Members' Playing Night**  
Marrickville Town Hall  
Phone to confirm 9798 6742
- Sunday 26 at 2.00pm **David Parson Concert**  
Marrickville Town Hall

### APRIL

- Monday 3 at 7.30pm **Committee Meeting**

**Friday 21 to Monday 24**

## FESTIVAL OF THEATRE ORGAN

**MUSIC 2000 !!!**

- Thursday 27 at 7.30pm **Members' Playing Night**  
Marrickville Town Hall  
Phone to confirm 9798 6742

### MAY

- Monday 1 at 7.30pm **Committee Meeting**
- Sunday 21 at 2.00pm **John Atwell Concert**  
Marrickville Town Hall
- Thursday 25 at 7.30pm **Members' Playing Night**  
Marrickville Town Hall  
Phone to confirm 9798 6742

# From The President

Hello again.

As usual of late, **Neil Palmer** and I saw two sides to the **Orion** concert. From back stage we dealt with pressing the buttons to make the organ rise and fall at the right times, raising and lowering the curtain several times, keeping an eye on the computer all the time, and turning on the piano pump in the nick of time.

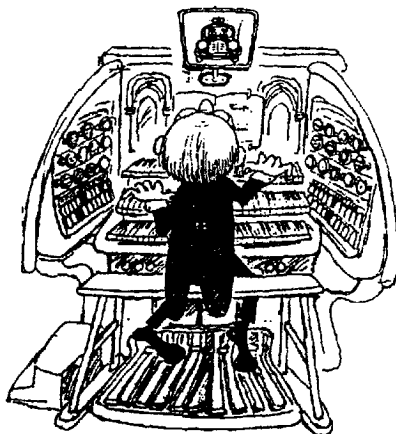
**Neil** let loose with an electric smoke-generator so that **Chris McPhee** materialised from the bowels of the theatre in a great cloud of "smoke". It suited the opening music too - loud spooky stuff.

Once or twice we were able to nip around and see the concert from the audience's point of view and it sounded great. **John Weismantel's** lighting improves at every concert, and we noticed that his dear wife, **Sharon**, was operating the spotlight this time.

It was also interesting to meet the two sides of **Chris McPhee** in concert and at rehearsals. Fact is he's the same unaffected genuine sort of bloke both in public and back stage, a pleasure to chat with.

We sent **TOSA's** regards to his new wife, **Katrina**, with a thank you for lending **Chris** to **Sydney** for the weekend. **Chris** agreed to pass on the message, but reckoned she might appreciate him being out of the **Adelaide** house for a while! That's modesty for you!

We were sad to receive a letter from **Frank Rohanek** to say his health would no longer allow him to continue coming to concerts. **Frank** and **Edith** will be missed. They have been **TOSA** helpers in all kind of capacities for 20 odd



years. Of late **Frank** was a familiar face at the tea and coffee ticket table, and **Edith** was always there behind the candy bar. Thank you **John Atkins** for stepping in to help. (**John** also quietly gets on with a number of other jobs on concert days).

This brings me to an important subject.... We are running out of tea and coffee helpers for before the concerts and at interval. Will you, can you, male or female, boy or girl, young or not-so-young, volunteer to help? WE NEED YOU! Please phone me if you can assist - NOW! (Or speak to one of the committee at the next concert).

Oh - by the way - the **Marrickville Members' Evening IS ON** - 23rd March. But phone **Neil** on the day (or evening before) to be quite sure.

See you at **David Parson's** concert, and at the **Convention!**

Watch this space,

**Walter Pearce**

## Editorial

**Chris McPhee** played delightfully as always in our first concert for the year 2000. When all the smoke came up at the beginning of the concert, I had my fingers crossed, hoping that it was intentional and not something going horribly wrong down in the pit! Anyway it was a sensational way to start our new concert series for the year.

Our **National Convention** is nearly upon us, and after all the hard work that

**Margaret Hall-Nelson** (and helpers) have put into it, it is now our turn to do our bit by attending as many events as possible. There is a **Booking Form** provided loose in this issue, so you can make your bookings easily with **Bill Schumacher**, our Festival Registrar. The closing date, for catering purposes, has to be Friday, 7th April.

Please, don't miss out - this is an opportunity that only comes every few years, as **Conventions** are obviously a lot more expensive when you have to pay to travel interstate! Every event on the program is special, and well worth attending.

We have fabulous artists for you : 2 top organists from the USA - **Tom Hazleton** and **David Peckham**; 2 of the best from interstate - **Tony Fenelon** and **John Giacchi**; and 2 **Sydney** stars - **Neil Jensen** and **Cliff Bingham**; 2 fascinating audio-visual presentations from **John Thiele**; and other great events, like a **Harbour Cruise**, **Young Organists'** performances, a **Festival Banquet** in a beautiful venue, and a visit to the **Antique Musical Collection**. A fabulous program which has attracted a lot of attention from overseas and interstate theatre organ lovers!

Thank you to all the contributors to **TOSA News** - your efforts are always greatly appreciated.

Best Wishes,  
**Colin Groves**

## Welcome To New Members

**TOSA** is delighted to welcome the following new members and to wish them a long and entertaining stay amongst our ranks :

**Noelle Andreatta** - Cootamundra  
**Patricia and Ronald Bettinson** -

Nelson Bay

**Brian Cleaves** - Castle Hill

**Frederick Rudd** - Stewarts  
River

**Barbara and Donald Fullerton** -  
Medlow Bath

*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**



**Hollywood Philharmonic  
Organ on the Move**

*In the November '99 issue of Cinema Organ, the UK's Cinema Organ Society's newsletter, Simon Gledhill, the well-known English organist, passed along some information about the future of the organ which was formerly owned by the late, great George Wright.*

Simon Gledhill reports:

The late **George Wright's** "Hollywood Philharmonic" studio organ is on the move to a music school in Utah.

The **Wright** estate had passed to his adopted son, **Tony Shoot**, who put the organ up for sale for \$85,000. This was considered a high price, as the pipework and mechanical equipment were of mixed parentage and in variable condition. As a result, there were no takers, in spite of the prestigious connection.

Then **Tom**, who was apparently unable to come to terms with **George's** death, sadly took his own life, and the estate passed to **Tom's** sister, **Susie Schafale**. She has now donated the organ to the **Brigham Young University School of Music**.

The deal was arranged by **Terry Cutshall** of **Banda Records**, the company which produced **George's** recordings from the early 1980s until his death last year. **Brigham University** was represented by **Mike Ohman**, who knew **George** personally and has declared that the organ will be re-

installed exactly as it was in the **Hollywood** studio - after the necessary cleaning and restoration.

It is intended that the completed instrument will form a lasting tribute to **George**, providing the opportunity for his ideas of theatre organ design to be studied at first hand.

The delay in disposing of the instrument enabled a few lucky organists to visit the **Wright** residence in **Griffith Park, North Hollywood**, and try it out - something that would have been impossible during **George's** lifetime, as he was an intensely private man who became increasingly reclusive in later years. I was invited by **Tom Shoot** and **Tim Kopaceski**, **George's** close friend, to make the pilgrimage during the **1998 ATOS National Convention**, and it was an experience that I shall never forget.

At that time, the house was exactly as **George** had left it and one half-expected the great man himself to walk into the studio at any moment.

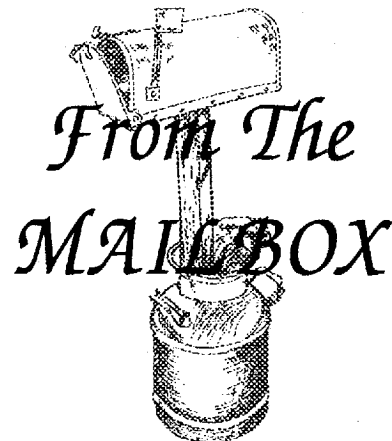
The organ itself was a delight to play, with absolutely the finest tibia/sax/vox sounds I have ever heard. **Terry Cutshall** was on hand and kindly offered to record some of my doodlings on the **Trousdale** player device attached to the instrument. These were later transferred to audio tape in the same session as the tracks that formed **Lyn Larsen's Tribute** CD, and so I now have a first-class recording of myself playing the **Hollywood Philharmonic Organ**, which I treasure.

I also heard, via the player, a couple of tracks of **George** himself playing the organ, which was a truly spooky experience!

One number was a wild *Tico Tico*, which has never been released on CD. I think that **Terry Cutshall** will be correcting this omission in due course.

I am personally delighted that the unique and historic instrument is now in the hands of someone who appreciates its significance and will not try to 'improve' it or, worse still, break it up.

Getting it to sound exactly as it did in **Hollywood** will be no easy task, however - especially without **George** on hand to explain how he worked his magic the first time round! I wish all concerned the best of luck.



**SYMPATHY**

All of us in TOSA would like to extend our sincere sympathy to **Carl Zipsin** on the recent passing of his mother. **Mrs Zipsin** had often crocheted rugs and doilies and donated them for popular raffle prizes.

**Thank You**

TOSA is grateful for a donation of \$200 from **Walter Garton**. This was the result of the donation of an electronic organ by **Jack MacDonald**, which was offered and reported in a **TOSA News** issue last year. It was **Walter** who received the organ and who has come through with this welcome contribution.

**Congratulations**

Long-time TOSA members **Norm and Betty Weismantel** will be celebrating their **Golden Wedding Anniversary** on March 4th, 2000. TOSA members, their family and friends congratulate them and wish them all the very best.



*Festival*  
OF  
**THEATRE  
ORGAN**

**Sydney 21-24 April**

In this issue of TOSA News, we have included the updated Festival Program with Booking Form on the reverse side.

Please note that all bookings for concerts/events over Easter should be made by filling out the booking form in this issue, (or the one you received late last year) and forwarding payment to the Festival Registrar, Bill Schumacher PO Box 36 Brooklyn NSW 2083

Please DO NOT ring TOSA Ticket Secretary, Jean Newell for "Festival" bookings.

Confirmation of your booking will be mailed to you. If you are not attending "Registration" on Good Friday at the Burwood RSL, your concert tickets will also be posted. A stamped, self-addressed envelope would be appreciated. Booked tickets will not be held at the door as we endeavour to alleviate congestion for door sales.

Remember, bookings close on 7th April. This allows time for bookings to be processed and confirmed, and tickets to be mailed out to those not attending Registration.

As Walter Pearce mentioned in his President's Report last month, seating will not be numbered at any of the Festival events. Convention time is a very social affair and an unallocated seating arrangement encourages a friendly atmosphere allowing visitors to sit with their friends, old and new. If you have a favourite spot in the hall, don't be late!

Please note that "The Organ, the Dance Band & Me" at the Cremorne Orpheum is a special hiring of the venue and not a public event. You will not be able to buy tickets at the door.

To our volunteers in the Festival Hosting Team, duties will be delegated and explained at a meeting on Wednesday 22nd March at 7.30 pm at Epping Baptist Church (corner of Carlingford and Ray Roads). We could still use a few more volunteers so please contact me if you would like to assist.

Margaret Hall-Nelson  
(Ph: 9584 2353)  
Convention Convenor

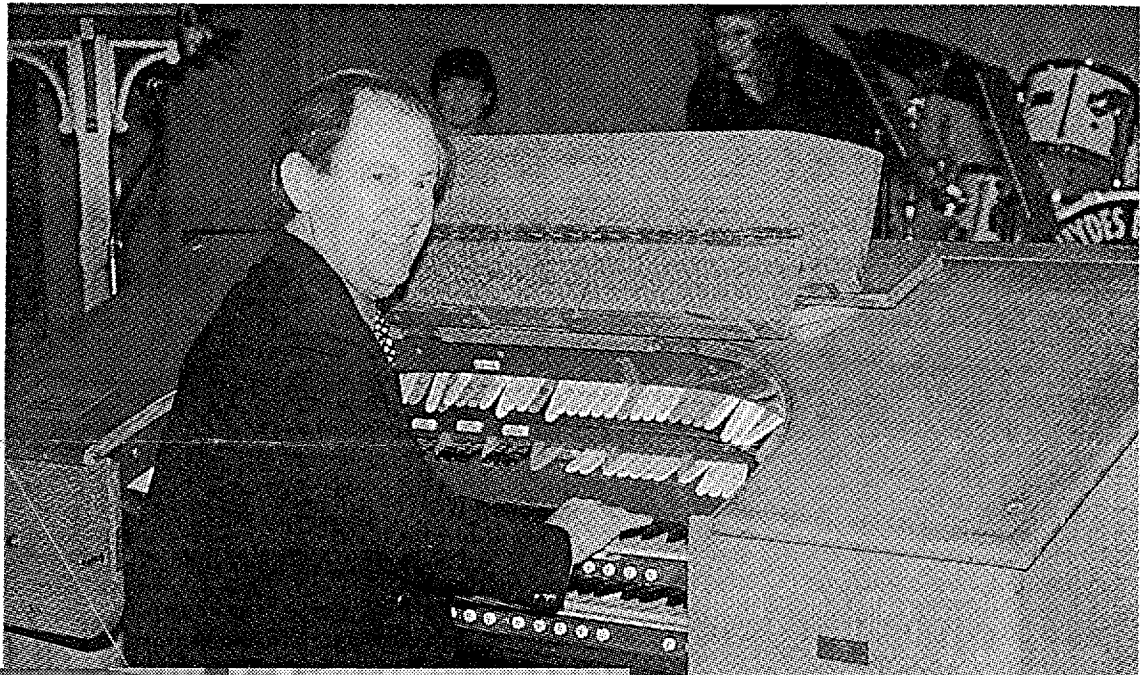
**National Convention of the Theatre Organ Society of Australia**



# Out and About in 1999

with **Barry Tooker**, TOSA's Official Photographer

*Tony Fenelon at Epping Baptist Church's Christie*



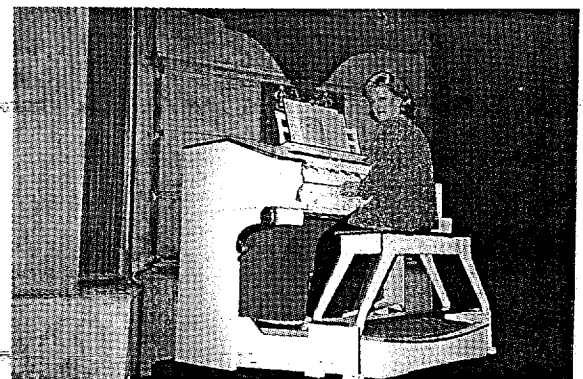
*Margaret Hall introduces the featured players at the Mosman Baptist afternoon*



*The Mosman Standaard console*



*The happy group of members at the CD playing afternoon at the Hella showroom*



*Margaret Hall at Allen console during the Gone With The Wind presentation at Capitol Theatre*

# 40 years or so ago

## Some reminiscences of Rod Blackmore OAM

TOSA had its 40<sup>th</sup> birthday on 9 January 2000. The original group formed its interests around **John Clancy** who, in 1958, had bought the 2/13 WurliTzer organ from the Civic Theatre, Auburn, and was busy building his house at Wentworthville around it. The group was also disenchanted with the failure of the Organ Society of Sydney to adequately cater for their interests. I had been present at the Saturday morning occasion in 1958 when the organ was played in the theatre for the last time, with **Penn Hughes** being the principal performer.

1958 was the year in which most of the suburban theatre organs were disposed of by theatre managements. In 1959 I had also visited and played on the 2/10 WurliTzer in Burwood Congregational Church transplanted from the Savoy Theatre, Hurstville.

**Penn Hughes** was instrumental in securing this installation, but within the theatre organ fraternity his personality and penchant for buying up redundant organs to acquire the best ranks for his own home organ at Bexley (based largely on the Plaza Theatre WurliTzer and the Dunedin [NZ] Empire theatre Christie), did not endear him.

Also in 1959 while living at Lane Cove and working at North Sydney I had been fortunate to gain permission to practice on the WurliTzer of the Chatswood Arcadia theatre. I often went there in the early mornings, not always to the delight of the adjacent milk bar proprietor who may have had a late night, as the mighty sounds strayed out the side doors which were opened to give the theatre an airing. An understanding boss also allowed me extended lunch hours if things were quiet to sneak up to Chatswood. The organ by then was

being played only on Saturday nights (gratis) by **Barrie Brettoner**. The Arcadia organ was the first pipe organ of any sort I had heard as a child in the early 1940s.

In March 1960 TOSA held its first meeting with the object of attracting public membership. It was preceded by a feature article in the *Herald* which attracted my attention and attendance. This and other meetings over a couple of years was held in **Palings'** concert hall premises, without any rental, and TOSA was usually fortunate to have a Hammond or other organ provided. Organists who gave freely of their time there included **Manny Aarons** (longtime organist at the State 4/21 WurliTzer), **Cecil Cranfield**, **Ray Myers** (then organist on the CBA temporary studios Christie acquired from the Melba Theatre, Strathfield) and **Jean Penhall** (well known performer at the Capitol WurliTzer 3/15.)

The earliest concert in a theatre for members was in August 1960 by **Reubert Hayes** (organist of the Regent Theatre WurliTzer) on a Saturday morning at the Chatswood Arcadia WurliTzer.

An early task of the society was to document the specifications of Sydney's various theatre organs. With member **Geoff Aspinall** who would come up from Wollongong on Saturday mornings I set about this task, and found theatre managers to be generally very helpful. On entering the State Theatre we were surprised to hear the strains of "Every Little Breeze seems to whisper Louise" emanating from the organ and on peering into the pit discovered member **David Devenport** who had use of the organ. David had already drawn up the stop list and specifications, saving us considerable time when realising the 4/21 WurliTzer has 214

stop tabs plus other controls.

Around the corner in the Lyceum theatre we discovered another member **Mrs. L. Ward** was permitted to practice on the 2/9 Christie.

The Capitol WurliTzer when first encountered made some dreadful sounds, all out of tune and apparently virtually unplayable. On another occasion it was playing marvellously and we thought that it had simply had a tune-up. Then there were occasions when after an hour or so the wind pressure would appear to drop dramatically and the whole thing went out of tune. Not yet having had access to its innards we concluded that some patch on a regulator must be lifting and allowing an escape of pressure. The solution was, in fact, much simpler – the belts from the motor driving the blower would begin to slip as it heated up; tightening them rectified the problem.

We met the inimitable **Peter Rowe** who was curator of both the State and Capitol organs and had a wide knowledge of their operation; he was also no mean organist himself when he could be persuaded to play. The Capitol management was co-operative in allowing TOSA to work on renovating the organ, and groups of members were there every Saturday fixing failed notes but also finding time for aspiring organists to have a play. *Young fellows!* like **Bill Schumacher**, **Cliff Bingham** and **Ray Thornley** were among those who came and entertained us.

We also found our way into the Prince Edward "Theatre Beautiful" and met the radiant **Noreen Hennessy**, the last of Sydney city's theatre organists. This led to a Saturday morning concert prior to a theatre session, and an intense

interest by TOSA in the future of the organ. We had attempted to secure an option to purchase the *Arcadia* WurliTzer when the theatre closed in April 1961, but the **Crispe** family (*Arcadia* owners) ultimately donated it to Willoughby Council. When it became known that the *Prince Edward* would be closing we kept in constant touch, until one day in 1964 when I was speaking to the management I was told "Bring us a cheque for 1200 pounds and the organ is yours." The money was quickly subscribed by members either as a gift or loan, and with **Tom Halloran** and **John Clancy**, I was appointed as a trustee of the organ to secure its transition to TOSA ownership (as the Society was not an incorporated body.) The organ remained in the theatre until 1965.

At the *Regent* theatre in George Street, we found the 3/15 WurliTzer console entombed beneath the CinemaScope screen. The organist had (after the introduction of that medium) only been able to hear the organ sounds through a small loudspeaker above his head! Shortly after we commenced going there the bearings of the blower (up above the proscenium) packed up and made more noise than the organ itself. **Reubert Hayes**, who had been last organist at the *Regent* provided us with full specifications of both *Regent* and *Plaza* WurliTzer. It was interesting that Reubert had rewired the *Regent* piano stops as a most full and beautiful Tibia chorus. The upright piano itself had been on loan to the *Arcadia*, Chatswood, but was "repossessed" by Penn Hughes when that theatre closed. Another upright WurliTzer piano was found backstage at the *Arcadia* and was purchased by **John Clancy**. (It was unfortunate that this piano tumbled off John's utility while being transported home and required much renovation.)

The *Victory* theatre Kogarah was also visited and its 2/8 Christie specification noted. There had been a fire in the console and the stop tabs had all been replaced with chunky white tabs by organbuilders **S.T. Noad & Son**. The organ was

still being played by **George Buckingham**.

In those early years TOSA made visits to a number of transplanted organs – the 2/7 Christie at Epping Baptist Church (ex-*Odeon*, Eastwood), the 2/8 Christie at St. Columbs church, Ryde (ex-*Kings*, Gordon), the CBA studio 2/8 Christie (ex-*Melba*, Strathfield), the 2/10 WurliTzer at Burwood Congregational church (ex-*Savoy*, Hurstville). I also visited and noted details of the 3/10 Christie at Wahroonga Adventist church (ex-*Palatial*, Burwood), and the 3/10 Christie then at **Stan Baldwin's** residence, Castle Hill (ex-*Roxy*, Parramatta.). Also to be seen to be believed was **Arthur Lord's** mammoth 51 rank organ in his garden studio at Killara, controlled by the 4 manual WurliTzer slave console originally intended for Sydney's *State* theatre.

The first public theatre organ concert (again as part of a membership drive and accompanied by press publicity) was held at the *Lyceum* theatre on 9 October 1961 (while film sessions were in recess for the Methodist annual conference.) **Cecil Cranfield** was the artist, partly on the Christie organ (which was not in good condition) and mostly on a Hammond organ.

The early 1960s saw the importation of many electronic organs following relaxation of dollar restrictions – Hammond, Baldwin, Conn, Thomas, Yamaha, Lowrey, Gulbransen and the kit-organs of Schober. Automatic Totalisators Ltd were also producing the Julius organ. Numbers of professional former theatre organists found employment with the sales firms – Palings, Suttons, Nicholsons, McFarlands, Rees Wills, Winton Music – these included, **Reubert Hayes, Owen Holland, Ian Davies, Cecil Cranfield, Jean Penhall, Charles Tuckwell** and others.

A TOSA initiative to bring theatre organ music to the public was a series of concerts, usually in suburban town halls, using

instruments provided by the organ firms and played by these well known performers. Other theatre organists who played these concerts for us included **Eric Smith, Lance Wells, Harry Weldon, Les Denley, Clarence Black, Wilbur Kentwell, and Denis Palmistra**. (Apologies for some I have undoubtedly overlooked.) A number of these were personal friends of member **Frank Ellis**.

This type of TOSA production pinnacled in 1970 & 1971 with "Organ Spectaculars" at Sydney Town Hall (as part of the *Waratah Festival*) featuring 5 or 6 different electronic instruments at the hands of well-known organists and compered by **James Dibble**. I reserved for myself the pleasure of playing the (royal) National Anthem on the Grand Pipe Organ to open those occasions!

The production of a monthly newsletter (originally a single roneoed page which was developed to become **TOSA News**) was also an early innovation. This was originally one of my tasks and was taken over in 1964 by **Frank Ellis** who remained as editor for a number of years. I also edited for some of those early years a quarterly magazine, **The Diaphone**. I think I still have every copy of a newsletter or **TOSA News** ever produced, as well as copies of **TOSAVic's Vox** going back many years. With memberships of other organ and theatre associations I am rapidly running out of space to store these publications!

Numbers of TOSA members were also members of the Hammond Organ Chapter and this connection brought to the society valued members such as **David Parsons OAM**.

TOSA has developed in accordance with its aims, much to the pleasure of those who were involved in its earliest days. A little nostalgia for the excitement of discovery of the mighty theatre pipe organs and their potential as a special group interest you may hopefully not think to be misplaced.



In the September/October 1999 issue of *Theatre Organ* a brief report was given on the Young Organists' concert at the 1999 ATOS Convention in London, followed by the biography of each of the winners and entrants. This article has been edited to feature the participants of interest to local readers.

# The 15th Annual National Young Theatre Organist Competition - The 1999 Contestants

The cameo performances of our Junior, Intermediate and Senior winners of the 1999 competition, together with the concert of **Ron Reseigh**, the over-all winner of 1998, were great and the audience loved them. All four performances were outstanding.

**Len Rawle**, as MC, introduced **Ron Reseigh**, the performing artist at the **Woking Leisure Centre** on their 3/16 **Wurlitzer**. Following **Ron's** terrific concert, **Len Rawle** introduced the three winners of the 1999 competition: Junior - **Heather Novak** (US); Intermediate - **Elizabeth Hanton** (Australia); and Senior, **Sean Henderson** (New Zealand/US). The audience was thrilled with their performances. The organ was in excellent condition thanks to **Len Rawle**, **Bernard Baldwin**, **Ian Ridley**, and the rest of the crew. The young adults were treated royally during practice time. Since the **Woking Leisure Centre** was quite a long way from downtown **London**, **Budgie Groom**, who is Chairman of the **Young Organist Competition** in **London**, spent the whole day transporting and feeding our young contestants. We really appreciated it. We also want to thank **Len Rawle** for assisting our young adults as they sat down to a larger and different instrument than what they normally play.

Theatre organ is still very much 'alive' and in good hands. These young adults are practising long hours and performing in their chapters, letting the world become familiar with one of the greatest and oldest art forms, Theatre Organ. The technicians (God bless them) all over the world are working hard to keep these instruments in wonderful condition, and our ATOS members work very hard, supporting and raising funds so that we may enjoy our love of theatre organ. We are certain that ATOS will continue to grow.

The following judges determined the over-all winner of the competition at the **Woking Leisure Centre** concert -

by *Dorothy Van Steenkiste*

**Cheryl Seppala**, San Diego, California; **Marian Bickel**, San Marcos, California; **David Johnston**, Melbourne, Australia; and **William Davies**, London, England.

The over-all winner for 1999 is **Sean Henderson** in the Senior Division. **Sean** was sponsored by the **Australia Felix Chapter**. **Sean** will be playing a full concert in the year 2000 in **Milwaukee**, Wisconsin.

Rules and regulations for the 2000 competition will be sent out in August. Be sure and encourage your young organists to enter the competition, contact your teachers, schools and music studios.

## SEAN HENDERSON

*Over-All Winner and Winner of the Senior Division Sponsored by Australia Felix Chapter of ATOS*



**Sean** is 20-years-old and was born in **New Zealand** and later moved to **Melbourne, Australia**. His recording was done on the 4/29 hybrid theatre organ in the **Capri Theatre, Adelaide**.

His formal training began at age six on electronic organ and in the same year he was given the opportunity to

hear and play the **Wurlitzer** in the **Hollywood Cinema, Auckland**. He gave his first public electronic organ concert at the age of nine.

After moving to **Australia** he had many opportunities to perform for the **Australian Organ Societies**. At the age of 12 he was privileged to perform a cameo spot in a concert given by **Walt Strony** who encouraged his interest in theatre organ and later became his mentor.

**Sean** is a past winner of the **ATOS Young Theatre Organist Competition** at both the Junior level, sponsored by the **Australia Felix Chapter**, and the Intermediate level, sponsored by the **Valley of the Sun Chapter** in **Arizona**.

After several trips to the **United States**, **Sean** moved to **Phoenix** when he was 16. We has become an **American** resident and his energies have been focused on his music studies at **Arizona State University** where he is majoring in organ performance.

**Sean** is the second student to complete all three categories of the competition and become over-all winner. The first one was **Russell Holmes** from **England**.

## ELIZABETH HANTON

*Winner of the Intermediate Division Sponsored by Australia Felix Chapter*



**Elizabeth** is 18-years-old. She began learning the piano and electronic organ at the age of four. The **Hanton** family moved to **Ballarat** in 1993, allowing **Elizabeth** to attend the renowned music school, **Clarendon College**, which opened up many musical opportunities.

She was introduced to the **Ballarat Compton** theatre organ at the age of eleven by her teacher, **Myrtle Cox**, and since then has appeared in several of **Australia's National Theatre Organ Conventions**, performing at **Perth** in 1994, and **Adelaide** in 1998.

**Elizabeth** was named School Captain of Music in 1998, her final year at secondary school, participating in the Stage Band on bass guitar, the Concert Band on keyboards, and leading the String Orchestras as 1st chair violinist. She was also the school chapel organist and an accompanist for other musicians at college. **Elizabeth** received the top mark in the State of **Victoria** for her efforts in the school subject of Music Performance, gaining a perfect score, 50/50. She also gained her Associate of Music in electronic organ under the guidance of **Myrtle Cox**.

**Elizabeth** has deferred her Arts/Music course at the **University of Melbourne** until the year 2000. She is currently working as an accompanist in **Ballarat** and plans to complete her Associate of Music in piano this year. Her goal after university is to become a professional accompanist, performer and possibly a music-journalist.

## JEFFREY ANDREWS

*Entry in the Senior Division*  
Sponsored by **Australia Felix Chapter**



**Jeffrey** is 20-years old. Originally from **Ballarat**, **Jeffrey** now lives in **Melbourne**. He is studying for his third year Arts / Engineering double degree at **Monash University**. He is majoring in Civil Engineering and minoring in Music and Geography in his Arts. He is still studying electronic and theatre organ with **Mrs. Myrtle Cox** in **Ballarat**.

The recipient of two **American Theatre Organ Society Scholarships**, he was runner-up in 1998 and the winner in 1999 of the senior division of the theatre organ section in the **ROTOSA** competition jointly conducted by the **Somerton Park Rotary Club** and the **South Australian Division of the Theatre Organ Society of Australia** at the **Capri Theatre** in **Adelaide**. He also played during the **TOSA National Theatre Organ Convention** in **Adelaide** in 1998.

**Jeffrey** also plays piano and saxophone, and is involved in a number of bands and ensembles in **Melbourne** and **Ballarat**. He travelled to **Singapore** with the **Monash Wind Symphony** in 1998 and is planning a trip to **Austria** in 2000. His recording was made at the **Capri Theatre** in **Adelaide**, a 4/29 hybrid.

## TROY ANDREWS

*Entry in the Junior Division*  
Sponsored by **Australia Felix Chapter**



**Troy Andrews** is 15-years-old, has been learning the organ for six years from **Myrtle Cox**, and plays the **Compton** theatre pipe organ in **Ballarat, Australia**.

He competes yearly in the **Royal**

**South Street Society Competitions, Ballarat**. Last year he gained prizes in all sections entered, including three first prizes for the electronic organ and theatre pipe organ in the 13 years and under sections, and the theatre pipe organ 16 years and under. He was then invited to play in the **Royal South Street Society's Junior Prize Winners** concert, playing the **Compton** organ.

**Troy** has been fortunate to have the experience of playing a concert on the **Capri** organ in **Adelaide**, and also a **Ballarat Theatre Organ Society** concert on the **Compton** theatre organ. **Troy** is also a versatile musician, playing the alto and baritone saxophone in many different **Ballarat** bands.

**Troy** is in year 10 at the **Ballarat Secondary College**. He studies English, Science, Music and year 11 Maths. His recording was made on a 3/19 **Compton** theatre organ in **Ballarat**.

## VERONICA ANNE DILLON

*Entry in the Senior Division*  
Sponsored by **Kiwi Chapter**



**Veronica** is a 20-year-old theatre organ student from **Auckland, New Zealand**. Four years ago she attended her first theatre organ concert and fell in love with the instrument immediately.

In 1996 (exactly one year after attending her first concert) **Veronica** began taking lessons with **British** theatre organist **Mr. Chris Powell**. She had never played any instrument other than the ukulele, nor had she had any previous musical instruction. More recently **Veronica** has studied with **American** organist **Mr. Jelani**

**Eddington, British organist Mr. Paul Roberts**, and the leading lady of the Australian theatre organ scene, **Margaret Hall. Veronica** is presently still studying with **Mr. Jelani Eddington** via cassette tapes, e-mail, faxes, and the telephone, as well as classical piano with local piano teacher, **Mrs. Marie Laycock.**

During this past year the 1926 two manual **Wurlitzer** on which **Veronica** practises was converted into a beautiful three manual console with solid-state relays. She had the privilege of helping with this work, and gained much valuable experience.

Apart from her musical studies, **Veronica** is a waitress and works with her father in sales and marketing. Her recording was made on the lovely **3/13 Wurlitzer** at the **Hollywood Cinema** in **Auckland, New Zealand.**

## Final Results of the Hobbyist Division

We had five entries this year. Tapes were submitted with two of their favourite selections. The tapes were numbered and sent to the adjudicators.

The adjudicators were **Scott Foppiano** and **Steve Schlesing**. We would like to sincerely thank them for taking the time to review the tapes and offer their written comments to the

contestants. Written comments of the two adjudicators are sent to all the contestants. Also, a final copy of the numerical valuation of each contestant is sent to each adjudicator.

### PAUL FORTE

1st Place

Sponsored by **Australia Felix**



**Paul Forte** is 23-years-old and is a devoted theatre organist who enjoys performing on the **Compton** theatre organ at **Her Majesty's Theatre, Ballarat.**

**Paul** is a floor-covering contractor by trade, so he must fit in practice time on the organ outside of working hours. This often means heading off to the theatre around 7.00 a.m.

**Paul** has been receiving lessons from his teacher, **Mrs. Myrtle Cox,**

since he was about nine-years-old.

Over this time he has received many awards for his performances, including **Eisteddfods**, scholarships, musical examinations in theory, practical and performance, and he has been guest artist at a wide range of concerts.

At the age of thirteen, **Paul** was invited to accompany his church's musical ministry team as keyboard player and cornet player.

He has since also performed on the organ as part of a mission team to a number of churches throughout **Haiti, West Indies.**

**Paul** has a strong commitment to his local community and readily makes himself available to entertain audiences in many charity concerts.

His family, chapter and friends were so happy that he won first place in the **Hobbyist Division** that they raised funds to send him to **London, England,** to receive his plaque.

**Paul** is Vice-President of the **Ballarat Theatre Organ Society** and is enthusiastically involved in its activities.

He is undergoing maintenance training to service the local **Compton** theatre pipe organ.

His recording was done on a **3/9 Compton** theatre organ in **Her Majesty's Theatre, Ballarat, Victoria.**



**President Walter Pearce** reports :

We had an excellent turn-up at the **Members' Afternoon** at the **Orion** on Thursday, 10th February, 2000. It is obvious that everyone was delighted with the opportunity to play or listen. **Jim Birkett** was the last to have a turn and he "played the organ down into the pit" like a kid with a new Christmas toy!

The players included **Ron Ivin, David James, Walter Pearce, Jack**

**Rose, Frank Lewis, Bruce Bisby, Wendy Hambly, Jack MacDonald, and Jim Birkett.**

The listeners were **Bill Harris, John Atkins, Betty Rose, Edna and Ray Hambly, Jenny Pearce, Robert Gliddon, and Elaine Birkett.**

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A lot of our members are, or have been, church organists, and most have a disastrous tale to relate. Recently the *Organ Music Society of Sydney* has published a couple of these horror stories. This one is told by the editor of their Journal, **Geoff Beck** and appeared in Spring 1999 issue of *The Sydney Organ Journal*.

# One Organist's "Wedding from Hell"

The following occurred many years ago when I was organist-choirmaster of **St David's Anglican Church, Arncliffe**, a church popular at that time for weddings.

The tracker with attached console organ at **St David's** resided on a gallery under the church tower, some 20ft above the chancel. It was originally built by **Joseph Massey** in typical turn-of-the-century style and splendidly rebuilt and enlarged in 1969 by **Pitchford & Garside**, their last job while with **Hill, Norman & Beard**. Nine pipes of the bottom octave of the 8ft Open Diapason were conveyed off the chest and formed three towers on a display screen.

The wedding party was large and of the type where the bridesmaids all seemed to be called **Gaylene** or **Leanne** and were arrayed in acres of pink chiffon with the blokes mostly hung-over and uncomfortable in electric blue tuxedos with pink cummerbunds and bow ties. There were flower girls, page boys and guests dressed to kill for the reception afterwards at the RSL.

There was a bagpiper (for no apparent reason) and a lady who was to sing *Let the Bright Seraphim* because this was what **Prince Charles** and **Diana** had had and because we had refused her first choice of a pop song by **Kylie** somebody-or-other. In all, the sort of wedding where nobody would notice if you played *The Dead March* from **Saul** or *Three Blind Mice*.

All went well until the 'just cause or impediment' prior to the exchange of vows and I was aware of a disturbance and something moving above my head. Too late, I failed to catch the bottom C Open as it fell from the middle of the screen, bounced on the loft railing and landed with an almighty thwack right at the feet of the tightly-corseted bride's mother and her party at the left hand side of the chancel.

The bride's mother, thinking perhaps that this must be a Visitation

from On High (or possibly from the effects of tight corsets), fainted rather gracefully into a convenient choir stall and had to be fetched a glass of water.

The bride and groom looked anxiously around, perhaps waiting in fear of some other visible manifestation of their obvious unfittedness to be joined together in holy matrimony.

The rector gazed benignly into space as if this was just a customary part of the rite at **St David's** and the congregation waited, hushed, as if to see what else was going to happen.

Clearly, the pipe could not be left where it was and, as nobody else seemed inclined to do anything about it, I descended from my loft, like a ministering angel in red, white and blue to rescue one of the fallen and in order to fit it through the spiral staircase which led to the organ loft, bore it upright, like a processional cross (we were as High as we dared to be at **Arncliffe**) and put it behind the organ.

The service continued with the congregation clearly now eager for some other event to occur and some seemed disappointed that the organ continued to play despite missing one of its obviously vital components: the newlyweds departed to sign their lives away in the vestry.

The singing lady arrived and looked nervously at the remaining pipes on the screen and I smiled in what I hoped was a comforting manner so as to reassure her that any further attack by the organ was unlikely.

We had not had a rehearsal or even spoken before, so I launched into the *Bright Seraphim* at a fairly brisk pace as experience had shown that too leisurely a tempo could often run an unpractised singer embarrassingly out of breath.

Instead of coming in on the C with 'Let' she came in with 'Our Father' and when she continued 'which art in Heav'n', I realised that either I had got

it wrong, she had got it wrong, or the people who prepared the program had got it wrong.

Fortunately, like all organists of my generation, I could play *The Lord's Prayer* in my sleep and I quickly switched into that dismal composition with what I considered to be great flair and aplomb but with the awful realisation that we were now in F major and Lord knows how she was going to cope with the coming top A on 'Thy', much less what would be a top C at the end on 'ever'.

Drastic measures seemed necessary so when we came to the bit where the organ introduces 'give us this day' alone, I switched to E flat and played that lead-in on full swell to give her a decent cue.

Not a chance; she started again on the original Bb and I had to follow, but now Madam was fast running out of breath and getting very red in the face.

We continued and with upperwork and mixture to help with her final shattering top C, a sound that to quote **Anna Russell**, could have easily killed a bowl of goldfish, the lady collapsed onto the loft chair like a balloon that has been exhausted, leaving the second 'ever' and 'amen' unsung. I hoped she had not had a stroke.

When she had recovered her breath and wits she said that the organ was out of tune. Rather testily, I asked what had happened to the *Bright Seraphim* - she tossed her head and said, "Oh, I changed my mind at the last minute. It was too heavy and highbrow."

As for the Open Diapason, after it was put on a broomhandle to straighten and its languid bashed back into place, it sounded as good as ever, but the following weekend we wired all the display pipes to the screen. (The organ, sadly, was destroyed some years back).

No, I did not make this up!

**Geoff Beck**  
Editor

# OUR NEXT ARTIST

## David Parsons, O.A.M.

**David Parsons**, by his own admission, has led a charmed life. Being the only son in a family of seven children, there was great excitement when he was born fifth in line on the 31st May 1935 in the Rectory of **All Souls Anglican Church, Leichhardt**, where his father was the minister. It was a lovely old two-storey house built in 1887, where the balustrade could be slid down; marbles could be played on the lino on the stairs; the basement under the house made an ideal cubby house to play "Mothers and Fathers", (being the only son, he always had to play the father). However, the role of father was one without any decision-making or authority !!

His father was kind but rather strict. For every Sunday service, he remembers having to sit with his six sisters in the front pew and behave himself, or else! The church had a very large choir (some fifty people where his dad was also the choirmaster) and a very large pipe organ. He grew up taking a more than passing interest in the church music. With a Licentiate degree in music, his dad decided to have David taught the piano when he was eight, continuing through the grades for the next seven years.

It was the church organ that attracted him the most, so at the

age of twelve, his dad taught him the fundamentals of the church organ. If he was not at home, his mother would usually find him belting out all kinds of music on the church organ. He is convinced that it was God's plan for him to become a church musician, and at the age of 14, he was appointed organist in his church.

From then on, with his father as choirmaster and he as the organist, the training and experience gained over the following sixteen years, until his father's retirement, were the foundation of a very successful career in church music.

He was organist and choirmaster for 13 years at **St Philip's Church, Eastwood**, and since 1978, is currently organist and choirmaster at **St Matthew's, West Pennant Hills**.

Loving all kinds of music, he soon developed a love of the theatre organ, and remembers his first play on a **Wurlitzer** organ in the **Plaza Theatre** where **Rupert Hayes** was the organist. After the evening session one Saturday in 1952, **Rupert** allowed him to bring the organ up on the hoist and play a few tunes. What an exciting time that was, and from then on, he has developed a style of his own playing popular music on all of

the remaining theatre organs in **Sydney** and beyond.

This has led him to some notable appointments such as Assistant City Organist (theatre) in **Sydney** playing the **Sydney Town Hall Grand Organ** for many concerts; an inaugural recitalist at the **Sydney Opera House Grand Organ**, playing to record crowds; playing the opening concert on the restored **Wurlitzer** organ in **Willoughby Town Hall**.

Since 1970, **David** has been entertaining tens of thousands of people in fundraising efforts in his own home, and as a result, has been awarded the **Order Of Australia Medal (O.A.M.)** in 1985, and the **Paul Harris Fellow Medal (Rotary International's** highest award) in 1992 for services to the community.

He is also the concert performing artist of the **Pipeless Pipe Organ Company**, demonstrating the **Ahlborn Galanti** church and concert hall organs.

Now that he has retired from full time work, he is even busier giving lunchtime organ concerts to retirement villages and such groups.

This then is rather a brief resumé of one of **Sydney's** well-known and talented musicians.

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