

Theatre Organ Society of Australia
Western Australian Division

Celebrating

Fifty Glorious Sounding Years



2018

A MESSAGE FROM THE TOSA(WA) PRESIDENT

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you all to the fiftieth anniversary of the Western Australian division of the Theatre Organ Society of Australia. Thank you to everybody who has had some part to play in helping this group to achieve this magnificent milestone.

In past years, Perth hosted "Theatre Organ Conventions" in 1989 and then again in 1994. Thus twenty four years have passed since this last event - an experience that is now just a distant memory for most people. South Australia last hosted a convention nearly ten years ago in 2009 and I was one of about ten people who went across from Perth on that occasion. Since then, Queensland and South Australia have held fifty-year celebrations, to which I have also been privileged to attend and experience the hospitality of our interstate societies. Now it is Perth's opportunity to extend friendship and hospitality to our interstate visitors, and I welcome one and all to this weekend of theatre organ music.



1989 was the year after our Compton organ was first installed in the John Leckie Pavilion and was played in that venue for the first time. Many interstate visitors joined our celebrations back then, which featured English organist Douglas Reeve. Amongst those visiting was a young boy from Adelaide and the music of Douglas Reeve at our first Perth convention became an inspiration to Chris McPhee. It is therefore fitting that Chris should return in 2018 to be part of our fiftieth celebrations and play in Saturday afternoon's concert together with Rosanne Hosking.

Prior to being located at the John Leckie Pavilion, the Compton organ was located in a warehouse in Myaree for several years. Although owned at that stage by Bob Purvis, TOSA(WA) helped undertake the maintenance of the instrument. A number of concerts were held on the organ in that location, including concerts by Len Rawle, Tony Fenelon and John Atwell. Even earlier, prior to us obtaining an organ, to raise funds for purchase of an instrument, concerts were held in the late 1960s and early 70s with Tony Fenelon and John Atwell. Hence our desire that Tony and John should return to Perth to play Sunday afternoon's concert for us. Unfortunately, due to recent illness and subsequent surgery, John has been unable to join us, but we are pleased to welcome Tony to play for us.

The second convention to be held in Perth occurred in 1994. I had been a member of TOSA(WA) for less than a year when this convention occurred, but this event marked the beginning of my involvement in TOSA(WA). There have been so many people involved with and contributing to this organisation over many years that I will not even attempt to mention them in this introduction. Each person's contribution has been appreciated, and without such contributions, we could not have survived to this point.

It is my hope that you will enjoy this weekend, that it will be an opportunity to forge friendships and in years to come, you will be able to look back with great enjoyment and remember when TOSA(WA) turned fifty.

RODNEY RAYMOND
PRESIDENT

ANNIVERSARY WEEKEND PROGRAM



Saturday 29 September 2018

- 10:00am Registration
Morning Tea
- 11:00am Concert with Western Australian Artists
Rodney Raymond, Simone Collins,
Len Harris, Ruth MacDonald,
John Fuhrmann, Ray Clements and John Pound
- 12:45pm Lunch
- 2:30pm Concert with Chris McPhee and Rosanne Hosking

Sunday 30 September 2018

- 10:00am Open Console
- 11:00am Morning Tea
- 11:30am Australia's Got (Theatre Organ) Talent
- 12:45pm Lunch
- 2:30pm Concert with Tony Fenelon
- 6:00pm Gala Dinner. Vina H Café and Restaurant, 151 Broadway, Nedlands.
3 course meal with welcome drink – additional drinks can be purchased from the bar.

Directions: From John Leckie Pavilion, proceed along Melvista Avenue in an easterly direction (in the direction back towards Perth). At the stop sign at the end of Melvista Avenue, turn left onto Hillway. At the end of that road, turn right onto Broadway. The restaurant is on the right hand side of the road – parking is also available behind the restaurant.

Monday 1 October 2018

09:30am Afterglow: Meet at Barrack Street Jetty, Perth at 9:30am.

We will cruise down the Swan River to Fremantle, where we will visit the Fremantle Gaol, have lunch, tour the town on the Fremantle tram and visit St Patrick's church (which houses the largest pipe organ in Western Australia). We will then return back to Perth around 4:30pm in the afternoon.

22 May 2018

A message from City of Nedlands Mayor Max Hipkins

It gives me great pleasure to congratulate the Theatre Organ Society of Australia (Western Australian Division) Inc on its 50th anniversary.

Established in 1968, this wonderful organisation is dedicated to the preservation and promotion of theatre pipe organs within our local community. This distinct type of pipe organ was originally developed to provide music and sound effects to accompany silent films during the first three decades of the 20th century.

The City of Nedlands has a strong connection to the Theatre Organ Society of Australia (WA Division) – in 1988, the organisation's Compton pipe organ was installed in John Leckie Pavilion and was carefully preserved as part of the recent \$2.5 million redevelopment.

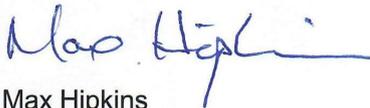
On the first Sunday of most months, the society delights audiences with relaxed musical afternoons at the pavilion, providing an opportunity for like-minded enthusiasts to get together and socialise.

The 50th anniversary celebrations will take place in September with a weekend showcasing the wonderful musical talents of several local and interstate artists. They will deliver admirable and fascinating performances and I wholeheartedly recommend you indulge in this magnificent auditory experience.

The Theatre Organ Society of Australia (WA Division) is one of the many different artistic and musical groups within the City of Nedlands adding to the rich fabric of our creative community. The past five decades are testament to the longevity of an organisation that is passionate about retaining a musical genre so it can be appreciated for years to come.

I wish the organisation every continued success with its future endeavours.

Yours faithfully



Max Hipkins
Mayor
City of Nedlands



City of Nedlands

ABN 92 614 728 214

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PATRON LEN RAWLE MBE

50 Glorious Sounding Years

I am delighted to have this opportunity of congratulating TOSA(WA) on their significant achievement of celebrating 50 years of helping to 'keep music alive' with the magnificent Compton theatre organ.

Our first vote of thanks must go in no small measure to committee members and volunteers past and present, for their dedication in presenting season after season of concerts and other events, for the benefit of the population of Perth.

The John Leckie Pavilion with its special setting, has become a quite unique social centre that visiting artists and guests feel fortunate to have included in their travels. For sure they have all departed with a special affection for the City, its welcoming residents and of course the historic Compton organ.

But the creation of such a fine musical instrument did not happen overnight.

Several decades ago I well recall being met at the airport by ebullient Jeff and Joy Knaggs, the latter though with a questioning look in her eye. There was also an unusual atmosphere during the car journey to my hosts' home... I sensed from several of Joy's questions that she was well and truly checking this young UK musician out as to whether he would fit in with the Perth life style. I became more and more disarmed with the way the questions were being asked and decided to take the bull by the horns and finally responded, "YOU DO REALISE YOU ARE TALKING TO A STAR". That was it, the temporary barriers were down, Joy roared with uncontrollable laughter and said "that's fantastic" (or words to that effect!). We were buddies from that moment on. On arriving at their home, Joy quickly rose to my humorous taunting, by slipping away to create a massive silver foil star which she hung on my bedroom door! A day later there were stars on my pillows! And so it went on, it was a running gag for the rest of the trip and I do not recall ever having so much fun despite all the hard work I later found out I was to be involved in.

Yes folks, that first trip was certainly memorable for the Compton had been set up in the Purvisonic warehouse at Myaree, normally used to store massive road-show loudspeakers in. No attempt had been made to restore the organ – only to roughly assemble



all the pipes and percussions. Thus, my first practice session turned into the creation of a lengthy list of faults, missing notes and tuning issues. Fortunately, I had scheduled a few free days ahead of the concert and so I volunteered to do what I could in the time available. Jeff and I worked on the organ right up to concert time but it was still far from concert ready.

I indicated that I felt it best only to put on a limited presentation with the organ thus we needed 'additional attractions'. Yes, it could sound like a train, do the Hoe-Down and the Bag Pipes but not too much more in pure musical terms. Joy decided to transform the factory by the introduction of miles and miles of coloured silver foil and to gather her female friends together not only to provide plenty of refreshments but also to put on "some dancing girls". I recall a slightly modified 'The Stripper' that brought the house down, as did the "Can-Can". With the help of as many corny jokes as I could recall we managed to fill the evening as 'A Night to Remember' – and it certainly turned out to be that.

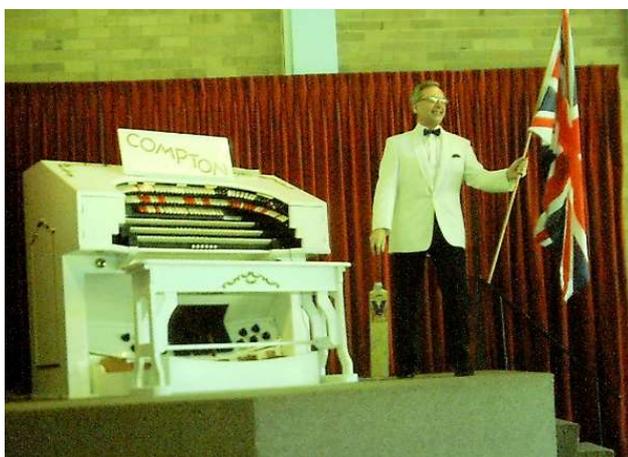
The organ clearly needed a lot more TLC (tender loving care) not to mention a more suitable home and it was Jeff who went about the business of finding the John Leckie Centre and set in motion a whole new phase of my involvement with TOSA.



Len at the console in Myaree

My next visit saw me working and sharing knowledge regarding the best way forward with two of the most dedicated enthusiasts in Stan Higgott and Dave Parker. They became the closest of friends and their subsequent passing is a great loss to us all. The technical and tuning aspects of theatre organs are viewed by many as a 'dark art' but they mostly boil down to not messing around with the work of the brilliant artisans of former years and following traditional organ building practice. Stan, Dave and other close aides were ever respectful of these attitudes and developed a real feel for Compton craftsmanship. They never moved to the next stage of the development of the instrument you now see before you without us having many exchanges and unanimous agreements one with the other.

My wife Judith, and I have been privileged to come amongst you on several occasions to play either the opening or closing concert of one of my several 'Down Under' tours and they have never failed to be some of the stand-out moments of our travels. Who can remember my entrance on to stage to perform with a Union Jack flag and cricket bat in hand? Australia, that day were giving our UK team a thrashing so they clearly needed an 'extra man' at the cricket ground.



2002: *Flying the flag for the UK cricket team*

Then there was the year when, starting in Brisbane, my love affair with mangos commenced – I found every TOSA venue I performed at had been circulated with a note - Mango Man is coming. Great fun! At Perth, I was greeted with a juicing machine on stage that we actually made good use of... during the show!! Delicious.

Another year, Lorraine and Ron Burnett were fun hosts before they decided to go off on the yearlong grand circumnavigation of the country but that was not before they gave up their brand-new water bed for the benefit of the artist's comfort. Talk about 'A life on the ocean wave'. It was a new experience for me.



2004: *Mango Man in action*

Their jovial manner and hi jinks brought me very close to their family. I of course retain such priceless memories as they continue to bring back fond recollections of why I have so enjoyed being a touring artist.

Great times were also made privately with Pat and Ray Gibbs at Salter Point where their home also became ours on several of our trips for weeks at a time. Their lounge became my music studio, members of the family enjoying informal master-classes whenever they popped by.

On another visit, there was an urgent request to promote one of my concerts on ABC National Radio. Minutes after I landed at the airport, saw me being rushed through pouring rain to the studio where there were assurances everything was ready for me to be interviewed and also to perform to the nation. I asked what the organ was "...It's a little brown one" said the receptionist. Undaunted, I was taken into a darkened studio where I enjoyed an extended promotional opportunity with a zany Irish presenter, who suddenly broke away and announced that given the inclement weather, I was now going to play "Here's that Rainy Day". I could barely see what turned out to be a spinet Hammond drawbar organ in the far corner of the studio and quickly trotted over, turned things on and set up a combination only to find there was no stool to sit on! A fisherman's canvas seat came to hand and off I went. Despite the discomfort and the inner feeling I was again being put to the test, the visit helped gain a good audience even if it was only 'A Little Brown Organ'.

I remain as active as ever here in the UK, also in Holland, Germany and Switzerland. Whilst another visit to wonderful OZ would be great, I rather feel it is possibly best left to the next generation of international travelling theatre organists.

I am sure you appreciate that for all the focus on the magnificent organ console and the spot lit activities of the organist, it is the audience that is by far the most important element in the future success of theatre organ. THANK YOU ALL for your part in keeping alive the theatre organ scene thus far. Please continue as individuals spreading the word about the wonderfully satisfying sounds of this remarkable instrument, to all you come in contact with.

And now let's celebrate 50 Glorious Sounding Years...

LEN RAWLE MBE (Making Beautiful Entertainment – with apologies to Her Majesty)



Theatres in Western Australia which had Theatre pipe Organs installed.

AMBASSADOR'S THEATRE – Hay Street, Perth. Owned by Union Theatres Ltd, this opulent 1 993 seat theatre opened in September 1928 and was demolished after its closure in February 1972. Hoyts Theatres Ltd took over the management in 1938. It housed WurliTzer Opus 1902, a style 260 organ of 3 manuals and 15 ranks. This organ was removed to the Melbourne Regent in 1945 after a fire destroyed the organ previously located there.

REGENT THEATRE – William Street, Perth. Owned by Hoyts Theatres Ltd, it opened in September 1927 and was demolished after its closure in 1973. It was renamed the METRO THEATRE after a change of management to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in 1938. WurliTzer Opus 1728 was installed in this theatre, a two manual 8 rank organ. It was enlarged to 12 ranks soon after. This organ was purchased by John Fuhrmann and Ray Clements in 1973 and has been extended and is now installed in the Karrinyup Community Centre.

Theatres in Western Australia which had Photoplayers installed.

(Photoplayers were roll operated combination piano and pipe organ for accompanying silent movies – some had manuals and could be played by an organist – they would have operated continuously during silent film screenings – there were probably around 10,000 made worldwide between 1910 and 1928 but their demise was immediate once sound films became established.)

MAJESTIC THEATRE – Murray Street, Perth. This theatre opened in December 1916 and closed in July 1938. It had a Cremona 1 manual 2 rank + piano Photoplayer installed.

PRINCESS THEATRE – Market Street, Fremantle. This theatre opened circa 1913 and closed in 1969. It had a WurliTzer 2 manual 4 rank + piano Photoplayer installed.

Buildings in Western Australia currently housing Theatre pipe Organs.

KARRINYUP COMMUNITY CENTRE – Built in 1977 and designed to accommodate the WurliTzer organ Opus 1728 removed from the METRO THEATRE. The two manual console from the METRO has been replaced with a three manual console. The original 12 ranks from the METRO installation have been increased with the addition of a further 9 ranks to total 21 ranks.

JOHN LECKIE PAVILION – Compton Opus 212, originally installed in the Plaza Theatre, Worthing, England; it was brought to Western Australia in 1971 and subsequently installed in this location in 1988. Originally a 3 manual 10 rank instrument, it has been extended to a 3 manual 12 rank organ.

CHRIS McPHEE



Chris began learning the electronic organ at the age of eight. His passion for theatre pipe organ was not fully realised until meeting and hearing legendary British organist Douglas Reeve in March 1989.

Chris studied music through the Australian Guild of Music and Speech, and gained his Associate Diploma with Honours in 1992. He has been awarded the position of Co-Patron of the Electronic Music Club of South Australia and was a recipient of the Royal School of Church Music organist scholarship.

Chris is in regular demand for concerts around Australia and overseas, including New Zealand, United Kingdom and the USA. In mid 1999 he was featured in the American Theatre Organ Society's National Convention, performing on the famous Buddy Cole WurliTzer.

In his home town of Adelaide, Chris is a popular artist at the prestigious Adelaide Town Hall and Festival Theatre pipe organs, performing for the Lord Mayor's Christmas Concerts and Morning Melodies series. Chris is also a featured organist at the Capri Theatre in Adelaide.

Chris has produced 7 commercial recordings, the most recent just released. His music has been featured on radio programs across the globe, including ABC's popular "Classic Drive" program and the long running BBC broadcast 'The Organist Entertains'.

ROSANNE HOSKING



Rosanne's performance career spans over twenty years and has taken her all around Australia and overseas. She has enjoyed exploring her natural versatility on the operatic, musical theatre, cabaret and contemporary stage.

Her professional theatrical debut was in the Australian cast of *The Phantom of the Opera* with which she toured Australia and New Zealand. She has played roles at the Adelaide Cabaret Festival, the Sydney Olympic Arts Festival and with the State Opera of South Australia. Rosanne has made appearances both nationally and internationally as a concert artist. Highlights have included *Off the Air* with ABC ClassicFM presenter Guy Noble and performing Mozart's *Exsultate Jubilate* with the Austral Sinfonietta in London.

Rosanne is also a well respected vocal coach who lectures in singing and music at the Adelaide College of Arts, conducts regular workshops for the SA Festival of Music and Pelican Productions and also runs her own private studio assisting professional and up-and-coming-artists.



TONY FENELON



It was inevitable from an early age that music would play a significantly major role in Tony Fenelon's life. As a child, he showed astounding talent as a pianist, and, in later years, studied with Roy Shepherd at the Conservatorium of Music in Melbourne.

Tony's insatiable interest in lighter music and a love of the majestic sound of the theatre pipe organ led to his appointment in 1965 as the resident organist at Melbourne's then prestigious Regent Theatre.

An internationally acclaimed artist, Tony provides a sophisticated balance between popular tunes, light classics along with music from the silver screen, stage, jazz and the great standards.

As the piano has always been his first love, Tony continues to revisit his extensive repertoire of classical piano, as there has been an increasing demand for his performances as a pianist. His favourite composer is Rachmaninoff, however his programs include works by Franz Liszt, Brahms, Debussy, Chopin, Tchaikovsky, Granados, Greig and Mendelssohn.

Tony was voted "Organist of the Year 2002" by the American Theatre Organ Society, and in 2003, was awarded the distinction of the Medal of the Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday Honours for his service to music.

In 2014, Tony was inducted into the prestigious American Theatre Organ Society's "Hall of Fame" recognising his contribution to this genre.

A man with an insatiable appetite for music, Tony's dedication and energy are the drive behind his constant quest for new ideas and musical horizons.

JOHN ATWELL



Dr John Atwell has had the pleasure of entertaining audiences on the theatre organ for around 48 years, both in Australia and around the world – in the United Kingdom, USA, Canada 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 the not so well known.

Over the years John has visited TOSA(WA) on many occasions to play the Compton and has been impressed with the improvements that have been made to the organ during that time. He was looking forward to teaming with Tony Fenelon during the TOSA fiftieth anniversary celebrations but unfortunately became seriously ill at the start of September. It was to be the first time that he and Tony would have played a duo concert with piano and organ at the Nedlands venue.

TOSA(WA) wishes John a speedy recovery from his illness and surgery. We will miss his musical contribution to the weekend.



October 1989 - Tony Fenelon at the Compton console

THE COMPTON ORGAN



SPECIFICATIONS

ACCOMPANIMENT CHAMBER	SOLO CHAMBER	TRAPS
Diapason: 73 pipes Flute: 91 pipes Violin: 73 pipes Violin celeste: 73 pipes Salicional: 73 pipes Salicional celeste: 61 pipes	Tuba: 85 pipes Trumpet: 61 pipes Tibia: 91 pipes Clarinet: 37 pipes Krumet: 36 pipes Vox Humana: 61 pipes	Bass drum Crash Cymbal Cymbal roll Snare drum Tom Tom Tambourine Castanets Sleigh Bells Chinese block Triangle Sand block
Xylophone: 37 notes Chrysoglott: 49 notes Cathedral Chimes: 20 notes Carillon	Glockenspiel: 37 notes	Fire bell Steam whistle Bird whistle Siren Klaxon horn

Second touch is provided on the Accompaniment manual

Unique Compton innovations:

Carillon stop: achieved by simultaneously sounding 5 Chrysoglott notes to produce a chime sound.

Acoustic Bass stop: achieved by simultaneously sounding 5 Tibia and Tuba notes to produce a discordant rumble.

Touch Cancel: Pressing hard down on any stop causes all stops in the division to turn off.

TOSA(WA) TIMELINE OF EVENTS

1933 – Compton organ manufactured



1968 – TOSA commences in Western Australia



1970's – Compton organ is installed at Myaree



1980's – Compton organ is installed at Nedlands

1988 – First Compton organ concert in Nedlands by Father James Miller



1989 – First interstate event hosted by TOSA(WA): "MUSIC IS THE KEY"



1994 – Second interstate event hosted by TOSA(WA): PERTH ENCORE '94



2000 – Major organ refurbishment and additional ranks installed

2008 – Fortieth Anniversary concert with Len Rawle



2013 – John Leckie Pavilion refurbished

2018 – Fiftieth Anniversary celebrations



AN EARLY TOSA(WA) HISTORY by Doug Miller

My dad was a dinki-di West Aussie, but his employer kept him in Melbourne for most of my childhood. I was a 1925 model, which means that I grew up in Melbourne in an era when most of the city picture theatres (only English people called them 'cinemas') and many suburban ones were fitted with either WurliTzer or (very few) Christie pipe organs (Compton organs had not yet emigrated). Sound came to the movies, but the organs generally remained in use, some right up into the 1960's.

Post World War II found us back in Dad's home state of Western Australia, and in the normal pre-television habit of weekly movie going. I at once missed something which I had always taken for granted – the exciting sounds of the WurliTzer. The Ambassadors Theatre had lost its lovely 3 manual 15 rank organ, gone to replace the burned out one at the Melbourne Regent. It had also lost its fabulous atmospheric décor, all covered with cream paint to 'modernise' it, but that's another story. In the Metro Theatre (ex Hoyts Regent Perth) on the floor, near the stage was a large lump shrouded in red velvet. Could it be? – yes it was, because I rang the manager to ask – a WurliTzer console. BUT, it is not the policy of M.G.M. to have organs in their theatres, and it only stayed there because the building belonged to the Methodist Church and a clause in the lease allowed for Church use of the auditorium for special occasions and on very hot Sundays on account of the excellent air conditioning. The organ was then used 'straight', receiving minimal maintenance by Mick Dodd, the organ tuner whose family business had made the original installation.

But there were stirrings in the undergrowth... A young man who had heard and loved organ recordings of theatre organ music and saved up to buy an electronic organ, became interested in the buried WurliTzer organ. The Metro theatre scheduled a season of its famous old Eddy and MacDonald musicals. Why not go for real nostalgia and play incidental music on the WurliTzer instead of the usual records? So John Fuhrmann found himself in a dream world playing a real theatre organ, having been engaged for the season.

The public loved it! Just like the old times! At first, the old girl was a bit croaky. There were some air leaks, the tremulants would not work, but with extra work by Mick Dodd, she gradually came good. For a two manual, she was a large organ, then having 12 ranks plus percussions. Grudgingly, the management decided to go on using the organ just to see if it helped

put a few extra bums on seats (it was the 1960's and TV was starting to seriously affect movie attendance).

By now a few people were becoming actively interested. Under the guidance of Ray Clements and John Fuhrmann, we got together with our common interest and in 1968 formed a Western Australian division of the Theatre Organ Society of Australia. TOSA had come into being in Victoria and N.S.W. a few years earlier. In fact, the August 1967 issue of *Vox*, the Victorian TOSA journal, has a cover which proclaimed "Perth Pipes Playing" with a large photograph of John Fuhrmann at the console and an article on page 3 by Tony Fenelon.

We began a routine of meeting at member's homes and recruiting new members. And, of course, trying to raise money.

One of the first functions with which we were associated was a hastily convened concert in the Metro Theatre to raise funds for victims of the Meckering Earthquake which occurred in October 1968. Electronic organs, as well as the WurliTzer were played by Perth professional organists. M.G.M. gave permission for a special evening concert to feature the organ, so John and I telephoned Tony Fenelon, then resident organist at the Hoyts Regent, Melbourne. Tony cheerfully assented and a date was arranged.

We then began the legwork, doing the rounds of airline offices, radio and television stations, and obtained reduced fares, free advertisements and a special TV appearance for Tony on electronic organ. The concert was a great success. Tony also gave a Sunday concert on a large model Thomas electronic organ in the Leederville Town Hall. Not long after these events, Tony Fenelon consented to be the first Patron of TOSA(WA).

We realised that we could not always rely on the generosity of M.G.M. for the use of their theatre and organ although the management was by now quite happy to acknowledge its value since it did actually help to bolster falling attendances. Our aim became to own a theatre pipe organ, and we began to work even harder to raise funds. We held progressive dinners, champagne breakfasts, a car rally, a picnic day at a member's dairy farm in the south. Few worked harder than Ray Clements to make sure that the funds built up. There weren't a great many members, but everybody worked so hard. Australian and overseas artists began to include Perth in their itineraries, with concerts being presented on both the WurliTzer and

various makes of electronic organs, always to our advantage.

Meanwhile, Perth organ builder John Lerner, whilst on a business visit to England in April 1970, reported on a three manual, 10 rank Compton theatre organ which was located in the Plaza Cinema in Worthing, Sussex. The cinema was now only used as a Bingo Hall, but the organ was still in playing order. It was in such good order that the BBC recorded a special 'Farewell to the Plaza Organ' concert for broadcasting. A special meeting of TOSA was called and following an enthusiastic vote, we put in a bid of purchase which was accepted, even though there were complaints from the English Theatre Organ Preservation Society about "irreplaceable British organs going overseas". The announcement helped membership – by July 1970 we had more than 60 members.

At the end of 1970, due to pressure of work, I gave up editorship of our first monthly journal *Cipher*, and passed it on to Max Bell, who renamed it *Tremulant*, the name which continues up to the present.

The crated Compton arrived at Fremantle in August 1971. A home had to be found for it. Somewhat prematurely, The West Australian of Thursday September 30 announced "Fremantle will get rare organ". It was to be installed in the Fremantle Town Hall, which would have made it the only town hall organ in Western Australia, but the Fremantle City Council could not agree on the extra expenditure and lost a wonderful opportunity.

Meanwhile, the Commonwealth Government assessed the organ as a new instrument and exacted a huge tax on our import, which we were unable to meet. A terrible decision had to be made. We would be forced to sell the organ in order to pay the money outstanding. Forced to sell the thing we had all dreamed about and worked so hard to obtain! Delay in getting the Compton installed and playing did not delay the bills coming in, and the Committee were unable to obtain any Government assistance. In desperation, members accepted an offer from Bob Purvis, developer of the highly successful Purvisonic Sound business to purchase the organ and with the help of able TOSA members, install it in chambers built for it above one end of his large warehouse in Myaree. In return for continuing maintenance, TOSA would be able to use the instrument for concerts.

But the first challenge was to work out how it all had to be put together. Whilst the organ had been functional in England, it was then pulled apart, put into boxes and sent across to Western Australia. Then we had to work out what was what, how everything fitted



The Compton console circa 1980



Keith Hahn and Dave Robb at work in the Myaree pipe chambers



Max Bell, Keith Hahn, Kerry Burnett, Dave Robb and Mal McInnes

together and how to make it all work without any instructions or diagrams. Even after a great deal of work, the Compton never sounded right in the bare, unlined warehouse, even with an audience on hired chairs to dampen the too live acoustics. Every change in weather affected the instrument, and it was never completely in tune. Of course, no pipe organ is ever perfectly in tune, but in this environment, it did not even come close.

Some will remember in particular a 1983 concert by American organist Warren Lubich, which must have been the most severe trial the poor man ever suffered. The day had been very hot, and by evening scarcely one rank was in tune with any other.

Bravely, Warren felt his way around the stops, but it was a hopeless quest and probably lost TOSA several prospective members. Of course, this was no slur on Mr Lubich – his recordings reveal him as a first-class performer.



1983 concert - Warren Lubich at the console

Still, we must all be grateful to the late Bob Purvis, for without his intervention our Compton might have been whisked off to one of the eastern states.

I leave completion of this (much abbreviated) account of TOSA(WA) to others for I have not been an active member since the early days of the society, though I certainly appreciate the concerts it can bring me now.

Doug Miller

1970s – 1988

In 1968 the emergence of an organisation for Western Australian theatre organ enthusiasts came from an initiative of Ray Clements who contacted then secretary of TOSA (NSW) John Clancy after seeing an advertisement in a Radio TV and Hobbies magazine. As is the case with the birth of many fledgling groups, Ray carried the burden of all local administrative offices for several years. Local members were recognised as members of NSW and the adoption of a modified NSW constitution was undertaken. Alan Doodson, John Fuhmann, Max Bell and Doug Miller and later Tony Forte assisted Ray on the committee. Alan was initially President and Ray was Secretary, but by 1972 the roles had switched around.

The prime goal of the organisation was to find a theatre pipe organ. In March 1970 an offer of £950 Sterling was accepted for the purchase of the Compton organ from the Plaza Cinema in Worthing, England. Ray Clements and Alan Doodson were tasked with attempting to locate a venue for the organ which arrived in early 1971. The Fremantle City Council showed interest in having the Compton installed in the Fremantle Town Hall.

However, a British postal strike meant that bills of lading did not arrive in time and the organ was “stuck on the docks”. When the bill of lading did arrive, it was found that the value of the organ had been declared as being £3,250 rather than the £950 paid and customs wanted \$3,355 for the duty. This was eventually negotiated back to \$1,031 but by May 1972, \$7,700 had been spent on the organ project and installation had not even started. At the Annual General Meeting in 1972, due to member loan guarantor unrest, it was recommended that the organ be sold at a cost of \$6,000 to Bob Purvis, and this sadly occurred.

As a result, the organ was installed by Ray Clements, Harold Tobin, Peter Breeze and John Fuhrmann at Bob’s Myaree headquarters. Organ builder Mick Dodd undertook the final tuning and regulation. The organ installation was completed in July 1973 and Bob who played electric organ for dances and parties, became the first honorary member of TOSA(WA). The installation was never entirely successful because the new owner insisted on using two six-inch main wind-lines (one for each chamber) instead of the original 11-inch diameter wind-line. The opening concert was a joint effort performed by Hubert Selby, Bob Purvis, Ray Clements, and John Fuhrmann.

TOSA continued to hold regular meetings – mainly in people’s homes using electronic instruments. They also arranged concerts at other venues.

In 1973, the Metro Theatre was demolished and the WurliTzer organ removed and placed into storage. A new cultural centre was being built by the Stirling Shire Council at the Karrinyup shopping complex and the building was designed so the WurliTzer organ could be installed in that location. It was hoped that this would become TOSA’s home.

Three weekly home organ meetings were replaced by use of the Tree Society Hall in South Perth until 1977 when the Society was then able to move into the newly completed Karrinyup Cultural Centre. The format of meetings was generally an hour’s presentation by a competent electronic organist followed by supper, then entertainment by members playing organ. Other social events included car rallies, Christmas and progressive dinners. Meanwhile, installation of the WurliTzer organ was continuing, and occasional use was made of Bob Purvis’ Compton although the latter was not in good condition.

The University of WA started Perth’s first community radio station and a weekly, hour long radio program featuring theatre organ music commenced in 1982. This program was to continue until 2009.

Hubert Selby was an early presenter, but Mal McInnes became the mainstay – regularly presenting the program through to the mid 1990s when Ken Meeks started to assist him. Stan Higgott and John Fuhrmann took over from Mal in 2005.

Mal McInnes took over the TOSA Presidential reins from Ray Clements in 1980. Ray had served as either President or Secretary since society commencement in 1968. Alan Doodson also stood down as Secretary, and Barbara Clements replaced him. Both Ray and Alan were bestowed with life membership in appreciation of their services to TOSA. In 1980, the WurliTzer organ in the Karrinyup Cultural Centre became operational and the opening concert was played by Tony Fenelon on 3 October 1981.

In 1983 John Fuhrmann introduced Mal McInnes to Bob Purvis with a view to TOSA undertaking maintenance of the Compton organ. It was no longer possible for John and Ray to do this as they now had commitments to the Karrinyup Wurlitzer.

Lorraine Burnett became secretary in 1982 and a life membership was granted to John Fuhrmann in the same year. Then Stan Higgott took over as President in late 1984, a position he was to hold for the next twenty-five years. At this time, the committee consisted of Mal McInnes, Stan Higgott, Mike Edwards, Keith Hahn, Geoff Knaggs, Ken Meeks, Dave Robb, Stan James and Lorraine Burnett. Dave Robb received life membership in 1985 for being a long serving committee member.

TOSA again desired to have an organ of their own and started looking around for a suitable instrument. An offer was made to John Ham, to purchase his WurliTzer style 235NP organ (that organ has since been relocated to the Hayden Orpheum, Cremorne, NSW.) However other events intervened to change the course of history.

In 1986, Bob Purvis died, and his business was wound up. The last concert in the Myaree location was presented by David Johnston on 18th May 1986. The estate did not want the organ left in the Myaree warehouse and offered the organ back to TOSA. It was purchased by TOSA for \$20,000. The organ had to be quickly dismantled and was removed from the warehouse in Myaree and for a time was in storage.

The TOSA committee worked hard to find a new location in which to house the instrument. Many letters were written – most of the councils in the Perth area were approached, and most of the responses were negative. Finally, an arrangement was made with the City of Nedlands to use the John Leckie Music Centre.

For the next two years a dedicated band of volunteers worked tirelessly to reinstall the organ in the hall. Some of the members of that team included Stan Higgott, Geoff Knaggs, Keith Hahn, Phil Howie, Stan James, Ron Burnett and Ruth and Bernard Varney. The chambers were fully constructed in what had previously been a mezzanine floor at the rear of the hall. A stage was constructed and the console was stripped back and re-sprayed in white. Multicore telecommunications cables were installed through the ceiling of the building to connect between the console and chambers.

In hindsight, the ‘temporary’ installation in Myaree was probably a blessing in disguise. It meant that lessons were learnt from the issues which had plagued the Myaree installation. It also meant that some restoration work was able to be done during the installation as well as making it possible to achieve a good layout of ducting, chests and pipework.

By 1988 the organ was playable again and the first concert in the John Leckie Music Centre occurred on Friday 12 August 1988 performed by Father Jim Miller from USA.

The biggest initial challenge to owning a pipe organ appears to be finding a location where it can be installed. Dozens of letters were written to try and find a suitable location. Other methods were also employed. The following is the record from the minutes of the TOSA committee meeting of 3 September 1985:

Swan Brewery

Geoff Mal and Keith trespassed onto the property to ascertain whether this would make a suitable venue for a theatre organ. It was reported that the brewery itself was unsuitable and looked as though it would have to be pulled down but the building which was originally the stables had potential. Geoff and Mal to be approached with a view to writing regarding this venture.

The buildings on the Swan Brewery site on Mounts Bay Road were originally built in 1838 and were vacated by the Swan Brewery Company in 1979. The site was unoccupied, and the stables referred to above burnt down and were demolished in 1988. The redeveloped site was finally opened in 2001 after protests and pickets during the 1990s.

History by Rodney Raymond

My first involvement with TOSA occurred in August 1988 when I attended the opening concert in the John Leckie Pavilion by Father Jim Miller from USA. At the time I was working for the same company as Stan Higgott and he kept inviting me to come down and have a go playing the organ. A few years passed before I actually did come down and try out the organ but have been thoroughly converted ever since. It was the start of a great many friendships. I think everyone who tries to play the Compton remembers the first piece they try to play, and in my case, it was *Parade of the Toy Soldiers*. It started at an enthusiastic tempo, and by the end of the second line, was at the speed of a dirge and still slowing down. Such is the way it is for everybody not accustomed to the delay of a pipe organ! But I loved the sound – the ability to change from whisper quiet to a powerfully loud sound with the push of a button – bass that you can feel as well as hear – and those sound effects that appeal to someone with a warped sense of humour like mine!

I was soon introduced to Dave Parker because he lived in the same suburb as I did. Dave and I became lifelong friends. Dave was doing practice on the Compton organ every Tuesday evening and I was invited to go down with him. We started sharing the transport from Swan View to Nedlands – an arrangement that started in 1994 and continued until mid-2013.



Dave Parker

By the time I became involved, the organ had been long installed in John Leckie Pavilion, and TOSA was regularly holding two types of events – a “member’s day” which occurred on the first Sunday of each month, and concerts which occurred on four or five other Sunday afternoons during the year. Because (at that time) the hall was not air conditioned, it was almost impossible to keep the organ in tune from December to February, so events were always avoided during summer.

Member’s Days consist of two hours of organ and piano music (plus a break for afternoon tea halfway through) presented by whichever musicians are present on the day. The afternoons have always been relaxed and friendly, enabling many friendships to be formed. There have been numerous musicians over the years, but the regular trio of organists at member’s days consisted of Dave Parker, Ruth MacDonald and myself. In the nineties, there were other players, including Stan James, Les James, Malcolm Fenton, Iris Stamp and Len Richards. Len had studied to get his AMusA after retirement, and appropriately earned himself the title of “Mr Fingers”. In more recent years, Pamela McLean, Len Harris, Dorathea Slawomirski and Ray Harasymiuk have also helped entertain. Since Dave’s death in 2014, Simone Collins has joined the group and the trio of organists is now Ruth, Simone and myself.

Afternoon tea has been an integral part of a member’s day – and all members have helped to contribute to the afternoon teas. Elva Moore, Kit Ottoway and Yvonne Craig for many years undertook the organising of the afternoon teas, they were followed by Ray Gibbs and then Malcolm Hood. Letty Wood regularly organised the raffles, a job that Anne Holland now ably carries out.

There are many wonderful people who became part of my life because they have been involved with TOSA over the years. As mentioned above, I knew Stan Higgott through work connections, but came to know him a lot better because of TOSA. Stan first became President in the early 1980s and was still filling that role when I first became involved. Together with his wife Pearl, he was a driving force behind TOSA in Western Australia. Stan lived for TOSA, he loved organ music, and though I believe he could play, I never did actually hear him play the organ. Pearl assisted in the role of membership secretary for many years.



Stan Higgott, President from 1985 to 2008

Other hard-working committee members included Richard and Elva Moore – Richard doing a stint as secretary followed by a good many years as treasurer. Ray and Pat Gibbs were also very involved as were Bernard and June Varney and Malcolm Hood. Malcolm Fenton, Stan James and Bill Maher also assisted at committee level in earlier years, Brian Court, Ian and Pamela McLean, Margaret Gethin, Evelyn Frost, Ruth MacDonald and Simone Collins becoming involved in more recent years.



The 1994 convention organisers with guest artists

The organ maintenance team consisted of Stan Higgott, Dave Parker, Alan Harris and Malcolm Hood. This group would come down every Wednesday and spend the day keeping the organ in top shape. Stan knew the workings of the organ backwards – the installation in the John Leckie Pavilion had been his design, guided with expert assistance from Richard Larritt and Len Rawle. Alan Harris was a Telecom technician and Dave Parker was an electronics technician, so they looked after the electrical side of the organ. Malcolm had excellent woodworking skills and helped out in that area. In 2009, Ian McLean also joined this group, contributing his engineering skills to the team. All of the original team have now left us, but their efforts in keeping the organ in fine condition are deeply appreciated.



Dave Parker maintaining a pipe chest

The organ underwent a major upgrade in 2000 when the original Compton tibia (which was a metal pipe tibia) was replaced by a wooden pipe tibia. Prior to

the upgrade I remember avoiding use of the 2' Tibia stop because to my ears, it screeched. The new Tibia was a great improvement. Two additional string ranks – a salicional rank and a salicional celeste rank – were also added. The stop layout was altered. The original stop layout was unique in that all the reed stop tabs were grouped together, to the left of all the flue stop tabs. This was altered to the more conventional arrangement where stop tabs are ordered loudest stop to softest stop from left to right. Intermanual couplers were added to the great, and great to solo couplers were also added. At the same time, much of the cotton insulated wire in the console was replaced with PVC insulated wire. Many of the chests and regulators had leather components replaced with new leather.

Newsletter Editor is another thankless task that involves a lot of ongoing work. Dave Parker was editor throughout the 90s, handing the baton to Joe Hegney in 2001. Malcolm Hood then took over the role in 2004. Malcolm had a number of amusing pseudonyms for his concert reviews including “Citric” (not quite a critic) and “Minim” (not crotchety). In 2013 Pamela McLean became editor, then Ruth MacDonald took over in 2014, followed by Simone Collins who has been editor in 2018. TOSA entered the digital age in 2001 when I put the TOSA(WA) website on the internet. In 2016 we entered the digital media age when Simone Collins commenced our Facebook page.

Concerts have been the other main event that TOSA has held – hiring of a professional musician to play the instrument at a standard which will attract people to come and listen, and hopefully become involved. Stan Higgott and Dave Parker were the main concert organising committee. During the 1990s and 2000s, there were generally four or sometimes five concerts each year, which meant a lot of organising. For most of this period, setting up of the organ for each artist meant that Dave Parker would be crouched behind the organ for a couple of hours setting little switches on a board, so that when the artist pushes the thumb pistons under each keyboard, the stops would change according the way the little switches had been set. Each organist has different preferences and this job had to be done before the organist could start practicing.

Dave Parker, along with the Higgotts, Malcolm Hood and Ray and Pat Gibbs would generally host visiting artists. In recent years, this is a task that I have taken over and have enjoyed doing. In 2013, the organ was upgraded with a computerised system for memorising piston settings which means no more crouching behind the console to set switches!

It would almost be impossible to record all the people who have come and played a concert at John Leckie Pavilion as would it be impossible to remember concerts that were better (or worse) than others. Sure, we have had some great names come and play some great concerts – Walter Strony, Len Rawle, Dave Wickerham and Nathan Avakian are some international names that immediately spring to mind, but the concerts by Australian organists have been just as noteworthy. One of the things that TOSA(WA) has always tried to do has been to give an opportunity for younger Australian artists to perform. In 1989, a young Chris McPhee performed for us together with Sean Dunwoodie and Elizabeth Edwards.



1989 - Sean Dunwoodie, Elizabeth Edwards and Chris McPhee

In the 1990s David Waller and Lisa Cox (pictured below) as well as Elizabeth Hanton, Mark Mann, Sean Henderson, Kylie Mallett, Heath Wooster, Mathew Loeser and Ryan Heggie were other young performers.



1995 – David Waller and Lisa Cox

And more recently, we were pleased that Michael Larritt could perform his first concert outside of his home state, here in Perth.



2016 - Michael Larritt

My wife Glenys and I have thoroughly enjoyed hosting guests who have come to Perth to perform on the Compton organ. We shifted house in 2013, and John Atwell was the first guest we had in our new home. The night he arrived, we received a call from our son who was having a reaction to a bee sting, so we dashed off to take him to hospital, leaving John home alone to entertain himself. John politely asked us at the end of his visit if we were aware that the door on the bathroom did not shut properly! The next guest in our home was Scott Harrison. I had fixed the bathroom door by then, but we had decided the blinds on the bathroom windows were so terrible, they needed to be replaced. The old blinds were pulled down, but the new blinds had not arrived in time. Scott had to make do with aluminium foil taped over the bathroom windows to provide some privacy. The bathroom has since been completely renovated, so later guests have fared much better than John and Scott.

My involvement with the Theatre Organ Society has been the genesis of many fine friendships. This organisation has only survived because of the many people who have been willing to give of themselves and their gifts to help make a good organisation into a great organisation. Meanwhile the Compton organ continues to operate in fine condition even though it is now eighty-five years old.

Thanks to a group of volunteers – many people over many years – who have helped in one way or another to install or work on the organ, to assist setting up or packing up at concerts or meetings, to provide refreshments, or just to come along and be part of a group – we have shared a friendship which has been held together by the glue of musical enjoyment.

TOSA Reflections by Ruth MacDonald

My earliest memory of the Compton Theatre Organ was seeing it in a giant warehouse. The warehouse was full of sound equipment and belonged to a company called Purvisonic Sound. Bob Purvis was the owner, and he had a great love of theatre organs. I was a wide eyed teenager very involved in playing the organ, a regular of the Yamaha music scene and competitions when my parents found out about this organ in the warehouse.



A trip down the freeway to the south of the river suburb of Myaree brought us to the organ. I remember being amazed at the size of the instrument, I had seen pipe organs in churches and played the big electronic Yamaha instruments, but never before had I seen or played an organ with coloured tabs and instruments such as 'sand block', castanets or tambourine. The fire bell was a particular treat.

I sat at the console and began playing. I put down some basic stops after being given some assistance from a member of TOSA (WA Branch). I attempted a march – Under the Double Eagle – by R. Strauss. Off I went like a bat out of hell, and 10 seconds later had almost ground to a complete stop. I had made the greatest faux pas in theatre organ playing – I was listening to the sound coming out of the pipes. I had no idea what delay was, but I learnt very quickly that night. I quickly shifted gears, and after trying to imagine my ears didn't work, I played a nice slow ballad. More successful, but still very slow.

But it didn't matter – I was hooked! We signed on the dotted line and became members that night. What a treat, being able to play such a majestic beast (as I call her) every Friday night, and get to listen to the professionals almost make her sing in concerts.

Sadly, in 1986, Bob Purvis passed away. His family did not share his enthusiasm and love for the instrument, and TOSA was offered the chance to

purchase the organ and find a new home for it. Needless to say, the society jumped at the chance, and a new home was found in Nedlands, a western suburb of Perth. Then began the arduous task of moving the instrument. Not an easy feat. I can remember standing in the chambers labelling each pipe and then labelling the hole it sat in. Remember we were all amateurs at this, and you can't buy transport instructions at the local newsagent. This is not quite an IKEA flat pack.

Not only did all the pipes have to be labelled and wrapped, but all the kitchen wear (percussion) and the bellows and tremulants also had to be prepared for the big move.

Months later, and after many splinters, swearing and sweat, the organ was in bits, but at its new home in Nedlands. Then the next problem was how to get the wiring into the ceiling (almost 3 storeys high) and then work out which wire went where, and not to mention all those pipes, tambourines and drums! More swearing and sweating later, and the organ was complete! Not only was the mighty Compton organ ready to be played, but she was now a grand and regal white in colour, gone was the gawdy gold glitter paint from her warehousing days. Father Jim Miller gave the opening concert, almost 2 years after removals began, and I was so excited to be a part of it all.

Moving the organ also opened up other opportunities, it became more available for members to utilise for practise, and we were able to give the monthly Sunday meetings a whole new perspective. The Compton Theatre Organ, originally from the Plaza Theatre in Worthing, England, had found a stable and permanent home.



Ruth MacDonald at the organ console in 2008 (above) and in 1986 (top left)

In 1989, TOSA turned 21 and came of age. That year for the first time, Western Australia hosted a TOSA National Convention. 230 people attended this event featuring English organist Douglas Reeve. Treasurer and Convention organiser, Ken Meeks had to handle the greatest money turnover in the Society's history, with convention receipts of \$70,493 and convention expenditure of \$70,343 (and the event recording a total profit of \$150).

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(W.A. DIVISION)**

**17th National
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In 1994, TOSA(WA) held a second conference, PERTH ENCORE '94. Malcolm Fenton led the organisational committee and was also the conference treasurer.

This time, just under \$29,000 was received. Around 140 people attended all events, with feature concerts attracting more attendees. Profit from this event was \$87.51.

CONCERT REVIEW – Len Rawle, Sunday 17 October 1993 (by “Boppy”)

The John Leckie Music Centre was the venue where we would hear,
Len Rawle, the U.K. organist, named their “Organist of the Year”.
We selected our seats really early, for a crowd were expected you see,
And yes, people turned up in droves – to hear this celebrity.

After being introduced he acknowledged us, and then he started to play,
“The Anniversary Waltz” for the twenty fifth year of T.O.S.A. in W.A.
And then a selection called ‘Showtime’, and all the tunes in it, we knew,
“Some Enchanted Evening”, “Wonderful Guy”, “S’Wonderful” – and the percussion really shone through.

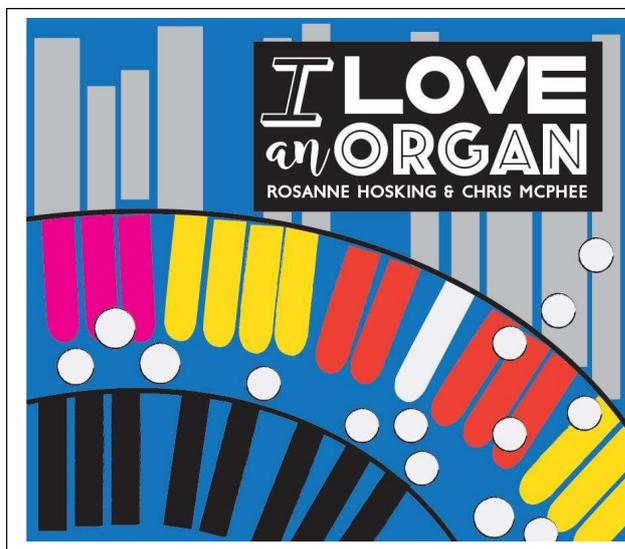
“Serenade” from ‘Student Prince’ and ‘South Pacific’ – made terrific with accents and lots of ‘tizz,
And lastly a flourishing finish, as he played “There’s no Business like Show ‘Bizz””.
Good old “Blaze Away” – in a humpty hump beat, we could hear the brass band, with their marching feet.
The George Wright fan had “Love for Sale”, and Jesse Crawford’s “Broken Rosary” brought from Elsie a wail.

There was a Sydney Torch arrangement, nicely done too,
And “Bugle Call Rag” with lots of Gee Gaws all brought in on cue.
We visited England for a ride on a train, and first we build up steam,
In “Chattanooga Choo Choo” we travelled along through tunnels, over bridges, and through fields of green.
The bluesy middle eight was a nice surprise to me...And after the journey, a nice cup of tea!

We heard the impatient rap of the conductor’s baton, as the instruments tuned up with much aplomb,
“Curtain Up”, an original composition with swing, “Zena, Zena, Zena” went off with a zing.
Storms and thunder: “Here’s That Rainy Day” and “I’ll Close My Eyes” played in a dreamy way.
“Quando, Quando, Quando” (He really went to town), “Charmaine”, “Five Foot Two”, and then “Sweet Georgia Brown”.

“Ecstasy Tango”, “Hawaiian Wedding Song” and you could hear the crowd humming,
“Temptation Rag”, “Amazing Grace” with a pipe band a-drumming.
“I’ve Got You Under My Skin” so the song goes, “September in the Rain” and “Anything Goes”.
In Jesse Crawford style “Falling in Love Again” was played,
“Eye Level” followed, and then our day was made...

“Bless This House” sent us all swooning,
“Pigalle” was next, then the orchestra tuning.
A reel or a Hoedown, ...real Yahoo,
and to finish: “No Business Like Show Business” – well done too.
Your likeable manner and the way you entertain...
What more can we say: “Do come back again!”



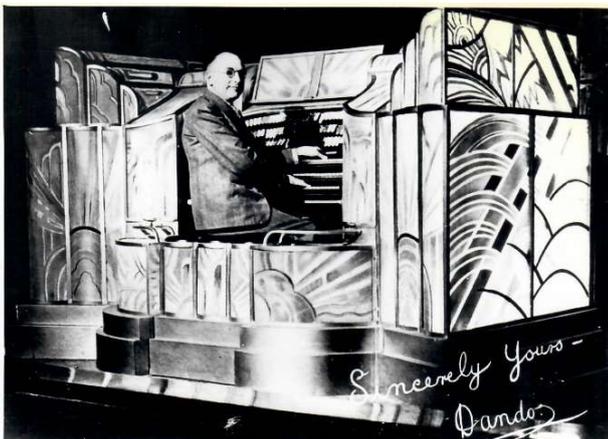
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THE STORY OF A THEATRE ORGAN by A212

Early days in Worthing

1933, what a year! There may have been turmoil in the world, but I WAS BORN! I was conceived in the John Compton Organ Co. works in London and delivered, fully grown, numbered A212 to the Plaza Theatre Worthing. What a magnificent sight I was when I made my appearance on the stage surrounded by beautiful changing coloured lights and filling the 2000 seat theatre with thrilling music. How the audiences loved me and appreciated the skilled musicians, especially Tommy Dando who was the first resident organist, who coaxed wonderful effects from my pipes and special effects. Tommy who played on many UK organs said I was the best Compton, a sentiment echoed many years later by visiting artists at my new home in Perth. Beside the organ and films the theatre complex included a spacious cafe and a superb ballroom. Life couldn't have been better.



Thomas Dando at the console, circa 1935

But sadly things change. Television came and the cinema became less popular. The writing was on the wall when the cinema was converted to a bingo hall. The beautiful music was replaced by shouts of “Bingo”, although some concerts were still played. But eventually I suffered the indignity of being offered for sale. Would anyone buy me? Yes, some people in far off Perth, Australia were interested, and a sale was arranged.

I learnt later that the Theatre Organ Society of Australia had branches in a number of states and the West Australian division was formed in 1968. So besides this being the 50th anniversary of TOSA(WA), it is also my 85th birthday. The keen members organised all sorts of fundraising activities including concerts, picnics, motor rallies etc., even straight-out

donations and eventually they had raised enough money to make an offer to buy me.

Just before I was packed up in 1971, one of England's then popular organists, Bobby Pagan included in his programme a tune with a strange title, “Waltzing Matilda”. Apparently, this was a popular tune in Australia and presumably was intended to make me feel welcome in my prospective new home.

Early days in Perth

After I was shipped to Fremantle, I was dumped on the wharf at Fremantle. And now the troubles started. Although I was 37 years old, by some mistake (I don't know whose) the Australian customs assessed me as new, which attracted a much larger import duty. This was a disaster for my new owners, as they had not budgeted for this impost. So, I remained forlorn at the dockside for some time. What was to happen to me now?

A shining knight rode to my rescue. Mr. Bob Purvis, a prominent music industry and sound system businessman, offered to buy me from TOSA(WA) and to meet all the extra costs. I was to be installed in his factory at Myaree and TOSA(WA) people were to set me up and look after me, and to hold concerts. This very generous man had ideas on how he could use me in his business.



The console when located at Myaree

So began the work of unpacking and assembling me. Disaster! All the beautiful illuminated surrounds of coloured lights and glass on the console were smashed. At first, I was aghast, but on reflection I felt that they were very 1930s and while much admired then, I felt they were a bit vulgar now I was in more mature years.

For some years I was not used very much and it was recognised that a full renovation was necessary, this being undertaken by members of TOSA(WA). In November 1983 Mr. Warren Lubich played at the re-opening concert in Myaree. One would have to say that the poor gentleman performed under great difficulty as the warm day caused the tuning of my pipes to drift during the afternoon. However, this was a start and regular concerts were given over the next three years. While a factory is not a suitable concert venue, it was better than nothing.

Later days in Perth

Then came another setback. Mr. Bob Purvis died. David Johnston presented a memorial concert in his memory on 18th May 1986. Negotiations with Mr. Purvis' estate resulted in TOSA(WA) repurchasing me. But of course, a new venue was needed and thanks to the good work of a TOSA(WA) member, an arrangement was made with the City of Nedlands to use the John Leckie Music Centre. (This had previously been known as the John Leckie Sports Pavilion and evidence of this may be seen on the wall of the change rooms under the hall, and of the playing fields which surround the hall in College Park. TOSA(WA) is not the only group which uses the hall for music, so the name change is appropriate. Mr. Leckie was a Nedlands Councillor in early times who had been a leader in the development of College Park.)

During November and December 1986, I was once more dismantled and removed. For the next two years a dedicated band of volunteers worked tirelessly to assemble me in the hall. The chambers were fully constructed by the team in what had previously been a mezzanine floor. The layout of the chests was decided following consultation with other people with previous experience.



Working on wiring chests in the new pipe chambers

The stage was constructed and my console stripped and re-sprayed to its bright, but not garish, form you see now. The connection between the console and the chambers was by means of some massive Telecom cables, very generously donated, which are above the ceiling. And we must not forget the enormous task of matching connections between the distribution board at the back of the console and its counterpart in the relay blower room.



Running cables in the ceiling between chambers and console

By 1988 I was ready to be played. The first concert in the John Leckie Music Centre was given by that charismatic priest from America, Father Jim Miller, at 8 pm on Friday August 12th.



Father Miller at the console at the opening concert in 1988

How marvellous I felt, after all the work done by the TOSA(WA) members, to have me in playing order, and to have such a distinguished organist to show off his (and my!) ability to create beautiful music. Since that first concert in 1988 I have enjoyed giving many concerts each year played by many artists, local, interstate and overseas. Some of their pictures appear in this booklet. In 1989 and 1994 TOSA(WA) hosted the National Theatre Organ Society of Australia Easter Conventions.

Over the years, much work has gone on to improve me. Originally, I was a 3/10 organ, but two new chests have been added so I am now a 3/12 organ and I sound much better for this addition. Quite a lot of my original wiring has needed replacing. When I was built, Mr. Compton's wiring was all cotton covered, originally white, but over the years with the grime from coal dust in Worthing, the colour turned to a beige-grey. Since then plastics have been invented and now much of my wiring is insulated with colour-coded plastic. This makes for the easy identification of which wire goes where. The dedicated maintenance crew have worked hard to make improvements so that now I am rated as the best Compton organ in Australia.

The present day

My memory for names is not the best but I do remember, after Tommy Dando, Warren Lubich and Jim Miller, many great artists from Britain, America, Eastern States and locals, names like Douglas Reeve, Walt Strony, Jonas Nordwall, Hubert Selby, Ronald Curtis, Peter Lish, Tony Fenelon, David Johnston, Chris McPhee, Ryan Heggie, Elizabeth Hanton, Margaret Hall, Scott Harrison and Thomas Heywood not forgetting local John Pound and of course our beloved patron Len Rawle who helped me to entertain you.

Over the years so many people have worked very hard to get me to my present good shape. I remember Ray Clements, John Fuhrmann, Harold Tobin, Peter Breeze, Geoff Knaggs, Fred Starcken, Ron Burnett, Stan James, Les James, Doug Buswell, Stan Higgott, Dave Parker, Alan Harris and Ian McLean. I hope others, whose names I cannot remember, will forgive me: they know whom they are and can take pride in their achievements. I thank them all most sincerely. Although I never got to know their names, I should acknowledge the ladies who make the afternoon teas, an essential part of a good concert.

I am proud to be part of this special triple anniversary. I am 85 years old, TOSA(WA) is 50 years old, and together we are celebrating the 30th anniversary of coming to the John Leckie Pavilion. I am sure you will greatly enjoy my various tones as presented by the weekend's artists.

By now you must have realised that I am not just an inanimate object, but I have feelings. My greatest joy is to entertain you, and it is disappointing when the hall is only half full. Please help my dreams come true and BE HERE so I can be happy. (I suppose you know organists refer to me as "she"; of course, I am female).

NOTE: This history was written by Malcolm Hood for the 75th anniversary of the organ in 2008.

*Allen Organs congratulates the
Theatre Organ Society of Australia (Western Australian Division) on its fiftieth anniversary.*

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Organist Dave Parker...the Theatre Organ Society of Australia's WA branch is back after a two-year hiatus. Picture: Marcus Whisson www.communitypk.com.au d398407

Society tunes up for comeback

AFTER a two-year hiatus, the Theatre Organ Society of Australia's (TOSA) WA branch wants to make some noise at their upcoming gala.

"wow" the community. "To use this old machinery, which still sounds as amazing as it did back then, is incredible," Mr McLean said.

TOSA was on a recess while The group use a theatre pipe

orchestrate the music played by member Dave Parker. Each month the group hosts a members' day open to the public. "We're always looking for more members," Mr McLean said.

THE WEST AUSTRALIAN THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 30 1971

\$7,000 for thirty-year-old Compton

FREMANTLE WILL GET RARE ORGAN

By KIM SEABROOK

A rare 30-year-old theatre organ would be installed at the Fremantle Town Hall next year, the Fremantle City Council director of cultural affairs, Mr John Birch, said last week.

The Theatre Organ Society in W.A. has imported the old Compton organ from Worthing, a seaside town near Brighton, England, at a total cost of \$7,000.

The organ would be a big asset to Fremantle and to W.A. There were not many Compton organs left and this one was in fine condition.

It would be only the second theatre organ in the State. The secretary of the society, Mr Ray Clements, said the group had chosen the Fremantle Town Hall because of its good acoustics for organ music and because of the go-ahead attitude of the council towards cultural activities in Fremantle.

"The acoustics we need create a blending of sound rather than the clear crisp sounds many theatres are designed to produce," he said. "In this respect the Fremantle Town Hall is just right for theatre organ music."

The organ was brought to Australia by container ship and weighs about five tons. It has 90 pipes, the biggest 16 feet long and 10 inches in diameter. Mr Clements said the installation, which it was hoped would be started by the middle of next year, would be handled completely by members of the society. The society was started in W.A. three years ago.

A member, Mr Vernon Kidd, said that the group's popularity was because of a growing interest by young people. "The younger generation seems to be tired of record and radio music," he said. "They want to get back to producing music themselves and taking part in the production of music at first hand."

THE WEST AUSTRALIAN THURSDAY AUGUST 11 1988



Organ enthusiast Geoff Knaggs tunes the 1930 Compton's flute pipe section in readiness for tomorrow's inaugural concert. Picture: RON D'RAINE.

A pipe dream comes true

By HELEN WINTERTON

A VINTAGE Compton theatre pipe organ will be given its first WA concert tomorrow.

The 1930 organ, which was in the Plaza Theatre, Worthing, on England's south coast, until 1966, was bought for \$20,000 by the WA Theatre Organ Society.

The society renovated the organ at a cost of \$6000 and it is now installed at the John Leckie Music Centre in Nedlands.

Society vice-president Geoff Knaggs said the renovation took nearly 4000 hours of voluntary work.

Theatre pipe organs took over from the piano in providing background music to silent movies.

When talkies came into prominence they were often followed with a stage show and the organ was developed further to replace an orchestra.

"In Perth, there was a theatre organ in the Metro and Ambassador," Mr Knaggs said. "The Metro organ probably played for the last time in 1970."

"There are only a few left in Australia and this would probably be the oldest."

"It's priceless today but we wouldn't sell it for anything."



Theatre Organ Society stalwart Malcolm Hood tests out the video screen at the John Leckie Music Centre.

Watch the flying fingers

Thanks to a big video screen, silent audiences can see the hands of the organist playing the three manual consoles of the rare Compton theatre organ.

Malcolm Hood, a pianist for the Theatre Organ Society, will give his first public concert at 8pm on Sunday September 12 in the John Leckie Music Centre in the middle of Clifton Park, Melville Avenue (Cliftonmont end).

Admission, payable at the door, is \$10 with concessions at \$12.

For more information, call Malcolm on 9390 0945.

His concert is at 8pm on Sunday, September 12 in the John Leckie Music Centre in the middle of Clifton Park, Melville Avenue (Cliftonmont end).

Admission, payable at the door, is \$10 with concessions at \$12.

For more information, call Malcolm on 9390 0945.



Organ music to mark a milestone

The Theatre Organ Society is celebrating its 50th birthday with an extravaganza of music. Australia's top theatre organists, Tony Fenelon, John Atwell, John Pound and Chris McPhee, will join soprano Rosanne Hosking to present a series of concerts in Nedlands over the weekend of September 29 and 30.

In picture theatres at the start of the 20th century, theatre organs allowed one skilled musician to conjure up a symphony of sound and provide every necessary musical impression for breathing life into silent films and the popular music of the day.

Leckie Pavilion on the first Sunday of each month. The society's Compton is a three-manual organ of 915 pipes in 12 ranks, originally from the Plaza Theatre in Worthing, England. The anniversary concerts this month will be held at the John Leckie Pavilion, at the intersection of Melville Avenue and Loton Road in Nedlands. Tickets for the weekend of concerts are available via www.tosawa.org.au or by phoning Rodney on 9310 2638.

Acknowledgements:

- Above: The West Australian, 11 August 1988
- Top left: Western Suburbs Weekly, 2 April 2013
- Top right: The West Australian, 30 September 1971
- Middle right: Post Newspapers, 4 September 2010
- Bottom right: Post Newspapers, 8 September 2018
- Over page: The West Australian, 12 August 1988

Priest of pipes

IT WAS difficult to envisage what sort of person could combine priesthood and entertaining until Father James Miller stepped down from the old Compton theatre organ.

Father Jim, wide braces stretched over his rotund figure from which frequently emanates an infectious belly laugh, is both jolly and gentle.

It was easy to imagine the 53-year-old with the softly-spoken American accent embracing the congregation of Holy Trinity Orthodox Church, Saginaw, Michigan. It was no less easy to imagine him charming theatre organ enthusiasts with jazz and blues and Broadway — which is the purpose of his visit to Perth.

He says he is honoured to be the overseas touring artist of the Australian Theatre Organ Society so soon after his last invitation tour in 1986, but he is the sort of entertainer audiences love to see again and again.

His two professions fit together well. When he became a priest 18 years ago, he asked to be one of two at a small parish so he could continue to teach his 30 pipe organ and piano students and give concerts.

The Ukrainian Orthodox church does not have an organ, so his two professions don't clash. However, the occasional hymn finds its way into the concert programme, earning him the reputation of being "a very sneaky salesman for the Lord".

Father Jim's introduction to the organ was classical, but he soon realised the theatre organ suited him more than the church organ — and any observer would agree that his personality is at one with the lively instrument.

He said the only thing the two instruments have in common are keys and pedals. Their greatest dif-



Father Miller on the Compton theatre organ. Picture: RON D'RAINE

ference is the purpose for which they were designed.

"The theatre organ came about as a direct result of the silent film," said Father Jim. "If you put an organ in the theatre it could accompany the film and you wouldn't have to pay 14 men to play the orchestra.

"Thus, it has everything you need to present a silent film — drums, explosions, door-bells, horns . . .

"The music of the church belongs on the proper instrument, and theatre music belongs on the theatre organ. You wouldn't go to St Paul's Cathedral to see *A Chorus Line*." He chortles hugely at such a prospect.

Tonight's concert by Father James Miller will be the first on the newly-restored Compton theatre pipe organ at the John Leckie Pavilion in Nedlands.

The 1930 organ was housed originally in a theatre in Worthing, England, and was bought by the WA Theatre Organ Society for \$20,000 two years ago.

Since then, \$5000 worth of materials and 4000 hours of voluntary labour has returned it to its former glory.

The John Leckie Pavilion, originally a theatre and then a gymnasium, was chosen as the new home for the massive unit because it is not used full-time, allowing the 70 society members ample opportunity to use the organ. It is also the home of Nedlands Music Society.

The instrument is one of only two theatre organs in Perth, the other is a privately-owned Wurlitzer housed at Karrinyup.

The society aims to use the instrument for teaching and entertainment and hopes to raise funds through concerts. — Sarah Palmer



TOSA(WA) members 2016

Theatre Organ Society of Australia (Western Australian Division) Inc

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PRESIDENTS

1968 – 1970: Alan Doodson
1971: Bert Nicholls
1972 – 1979: Ray Clements
1980 – 1984: Mal McInnes
1985 – 2008: Stan Higgott
2009 – 2010: David Parker
2011 – 2012: Malcolm Hood
2013 – 2018: Rodney Raymond

Tony Forte, Mr and Mrs Foster, Florence Frame, Helen Fraser, Doug Frazer, Ivy Friend, Evelyn Frost, William Frost, Ann Fuhrmann, John Fuhrmann, Mr and Mrs Gayton, Mollie Gaynor, Margaret Gethin, Denis Gibbs, Kitty Gibbs, Patricia Gibbs, Ray Gibbs, Jean Gibson, Laura Gillam, Bernice Gill, Max Gill, Joan Gilling, John Gilling, David Grant, Mr and Mrs Grantham, Denis Green, J Green, Mr and Mrs Greenwood, Helene Groves, Dorothy Hackshaw, Robert Hackshaw, Mr Haihes, Keith Hahn, Peter Hahn, Chris Hamlett, Dorothy Hamlett, R Hancock, James Hardisty, Pat Hardisty, Pat Hardstaff, Geoff Harler, Norma Harler, Rodney Hatch, Amanda Hawkins, Mr and Mrs Haydon, Joseph Hegney, Stanley Higgott, V Hill, Joan Hiller, Joyce Hoare, Anne Holland, Malcolm Hood,

PATRONS

1972 – 1984:
Tony Fenelon

1986 – 1991:
David Johnston

1994 – 2018:
Len Rawle

Nelson Epps, Susan Epps, Neville Farnell, Billie Farnell, Malcolm Fenton, John Ferguson, Mr and Mrs Finch, Patrick Flanagan, Phyllis Fleming, Peter Flewell-Smith, Helen Formentin, Tony Formentin, R Forrest,

VICE PRESIDENTS

1973 – 1977: Vern Kidd
1978: Theo Harrison
1979: Mal McInnes
1980: John Cork
1981 – 1983: Max Bell
1984: Stan Higgott
1985 – 1989: Geoff Knaggs
1991: Lorraine Burnett
1994 – 2008: David Parker
2009 – 2010: Malcolm Hood
2011 – 2013: David Parker
2014 – 2018: Brian Court

Ray Harasymiu, Ruth Harrington, Alan Harris, Len Harris, Semone Harris, Mrs Hegney, C Henry, Nanette Herbert, Arthur Herriott, Pearl Higgott, Mirlywn Hood,



TREASURERS

1968 – 1970: Marian Kidd
1971: John Fuhrmann
1972 – 1974: Jack Skinner
1975 – 1977: Geoff Harler
1978 – 1979: Tony Spall
1980: Max Bell
1981 – 1982: Gwen Wilkin
1983 – 1984: Mike Edwards
1985 – 1987: Ken Meeks
1988: Stan James
1989: Ken Meeks
1990 – 1996: Bernard Varney
1997 – 2009: Richard Moore
2010 – 2012: Rodney Raymond
2013 – 2014: Ian McLean
2015 – 2018: Bernard Varney

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