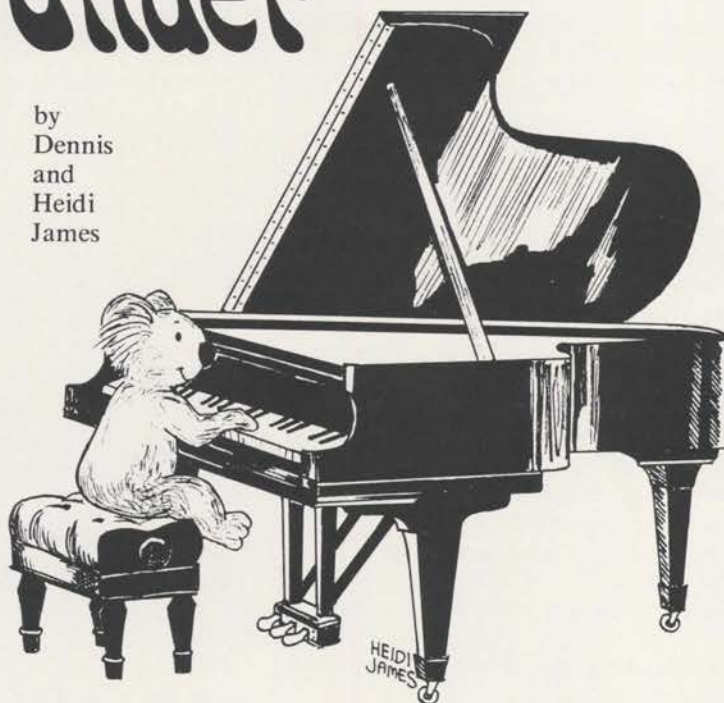
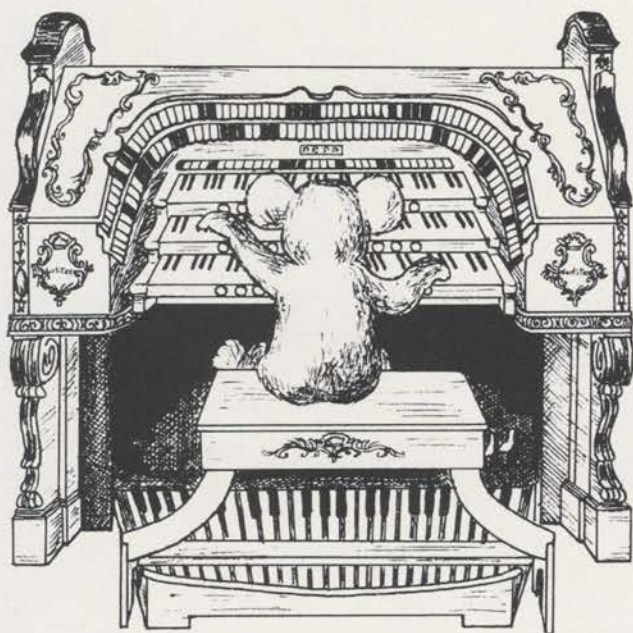


Dennis and Heidi Down Under

by
Dennis
and
Heidi
James



A few flakes of snow drifted past the window as our jet took off from Columbus on November 11. Hours later we stepped off the plane into 80 degree weather to be greeted by an equally warm reception from lei-laden ATOSers Claire and Al Watson and Dan Engelhard. Hawaii proved to be one of those few places that is as beautiful as the travel ads promise. The Watsons provided our lovely suite in the Ilikai Hotel with a balcony overlooking Waikiki Beach.

The next few days we were tourists by day turning into musicians at midnight practice sessions in the Hawaii Theatre. The 4/16 Robert Morton was installed in 1922 in the downtown Honolulu Theatre. It is basically a 2/11 with an added two coupler manuals and a 5-rank division on a ventel chest. The instrument features outstanding percussion and a beautifully restored console with ornate Hawaiian-motif carvings added by a local enthusiast. The crew works hard and the instrument was in tip-top shape for the concert. The piano, fresh from Dan

Englehard's store, was the top-of-the-line Bladwin SD-10 nine footer.

We rented Honda motor bikes and tore around the southern tip of Oahu taking in the local attractions. One evening Claire and Al Watson took us to the Polynesian Cultural Center for a performance of authentic Pacific Island dancing. Thirty foot waves had smashed a few houses in the area the day before but the surfers were out in force anyway, being tossed about like pebbles.

November 14 was our Sunday morning concert date at the Hawaii Theatre. We met the celebrated theatre organist Johnny DeMello at the buffet-style get-together afterwards. He regaled us with many stories from the Hawaiian organ scene.

Monday morning we flew to the "Garden Island" Kauai where we saw the Pacific Grand Canyon and took a river cruise to the hanging fern grotto. In the very center of the island is Mt. Waialeale (why-a-lal-lay), the wettest spot on earth with over 400 inches of rain annually, though it was bone dry the day we

visited. The Sea Flite hydrofoil made a pleasant return trip through the rainbows back to Honolulu.

John and Grace Jenkins saw us off at the airport (more leis!), and we were off to Australia.

Two days later our plane landed in Sydney, having lost 24 hours somewhere along the way. We had just enough time to grab a quick flight up to Brisbane where we were greatly surprised to find ourselves back in tropical splendor.

We'll give the TOSA Queensland group five stars for great hospitality. Various members went to great lengths to arrange well-planned excursions. Dot Herd took us to Bunya Park where we petted and fed the wallabies, kangaroos and various other native animals. A particularly aggressive emu grabbed Dennis and ate his bag of corn, paper and all. At one point we were alarmed by a terrible rumbling noise which turned out to be the resident koalas snoring in their sleep!

Ted Badger took us to the beautiful Gold Coast beaches and over

the border to New South Wales to try our luck on the slot machines (we lost!).

Ken Wherrett found Heidi enamored with Queensland pineapple so it was off to the Glass House Mountains to a tropical fruit plantation. We particularly enjoyed a stop at the excellent movie museum in nearby Buderim where we learned about the early days of Australian film.

The instruments for our concert at the Kelvin Grove High School were in excellent condition. Dennis enjoyed the 3/8 Christie which has been assembled from many sources. The pipework came via England and the console was originally a 2-manual Christie from New Zealand. The crew skillfully converted it to 3 manuals with an all-new electric combination system that was a joy to work with. The piano brought in for Heidi was a Yamaha G3 grand which handled like a trim sports car.

Out stay ended with a get-together with the members of the new ATOS Chapter at the Wherreys' where everyone seemed more like old friends than newly made acquaintances.

Coming from the tropical north, Melbourne's Summer seemed a little cool but we had to remember that even in the middle of Winter (July) it snows there only in the Mountains.

We were intrigued by the trolleys, (trams to the Aussies) that still run up and down the center of the Melbourne streets.

Bill and Margaret Glasson's home became our refuge for R and R. There are so many people who made our down-under tour a success, but most of all we are indebted to Bill Glasson whose tireless managing of the myriad details made it all possible. Heidi took advantage of the time on Bill's home instruments to write a duet version of "Waltzing Matilda." Bill's pipe organ is a rare 2-manual French scroll Wurlitzer console from England to which he is assembling various pipes and chests acquired during his many travels.

We had three concerts in Melbourne. The first was on Thanksgiving Day at Moorabbin Town Hall where we performed in an elaborate stage setting featuring mountain back drop, picket fence and real trees. The organ was a 4/21 Wurlitzer with added Post Horn and 32' Diaphones intact. The chambers are installed over the back of the stage area and speak via carved openings into the auditorium proper. The room features gymnasium-like acoustics and the organ becomes a bit muffled at times. It is, however, a very thrilling sound.

We visited Cinema North where club members are installing a 2/8



Buderim Movie Museum.

Christie. Already the organ features a bright and bouncy English sound with effective exposed percussions. Sidney Torch would have approved, we're sure!

Our second and third concerts were literally back-to-back on Sunday, December 5 at the Dendy Theatre. The theatre is decorated in an Art Deco motif with giant geometric flowers lit by colored lights on the ceiling. The famous Dendy Wurlitzer deserves its fine reputation. It has been heard often on records with Lyn Larsen, Vic Hammett, Tony Fenelon and many others at the console. It has a crisp, clean and bold sound which emanates from chambers installed directly behind the screen. Bill Glasson generously brought in a new Danemann grand from his music store for Heidi.

With barely enough time to sign autographs we plunged into the second performance: a screening of the Fritz Lang 1926 science fiction classic *Metropolis*. We premiered our duet score for the film last May in London, England, and added a synthesizer during the Dendy show. The joint-improvisation included various effects for the city and robots by Heidi on the piano and synthesizer while Dennis provided the continuous score.

We were invited to take part in a two segment history of film music documentary for Australian television which led to our own half hour special on the ABC Network.

The Hawaii Theatre marquee. The first "R" rated concert?



Dennis was fitted for various costume changes by the wardrobe department, including a 1920's outfit and formal Phantom of the Opera garb. The program included a tour through the chambers, music to illustrate the history of theatre organ and a closing segment with piano and organ in duet.

We spent some time visiting Aussie organist Tony Fenelon as well as meeting John Atwell, upcoming young concert artist. John Pearson showed us through the enormous Melbourne Regent Theatre which closed in 1969 and was completely stripped by auction in early 1970. With a recent \$2½ million grant the theatre is scheduled to be completely refurbished with restoration work in progress while we visited. It is hoped the original Wurlitzer can again be installed for the re-opening. The Regent had a small theatre underneath, the Plaza, whose 2/10 Wurlitzer ended up in Adelaide where we headed next.

The South Australia group is one of the most enthusiastic clubs we've ever run across. The average age is younger than most and their spirit highly infectious. Our receptions at Ted Lloyd's and Gary Vanderwerp's were among the most hilarious evenings we've had in a long time. Many local musicians were present and we all joined in various parodies of American tunes and other festivities.

A magnificent 9-foot Steinway destined for Festival Hall somehow found its way to the Pultenay Grammar School for our concert and Heidi thoroughly enjoyed its responsiveness and well-voiced tone. The Wurlitzer was equally fine in an excellent installation behind the stage wall speaking directly into the seating area. The chests and tremis were sub-floored and the blower detached in a separate room. Careful alterations of the existing unification and added couplers made the console a joy to play and the full-house audience couldn't have been nicer.

Much remains of the Adelaide Victorian architecture with the wide streets and long porches with hitching posts remindful of a Western set. The city was well laid out in the 1800's in a grid pattern with four squares and a surrounding park belt. Hosts Helen and Ted Lloyd took us touring throughout the area including a drive up to the Barossa vine-

yard country for a picnic at the Sepeltsfield winery.

The city-of-the-black-swan, Perth, was next on the tour. The atmosphere had a newly minted air about it that is refreshing. We saw the Indian Ocean for the first time and drove into the bush country with host Ray Clements. Perth was a lot like the best of Southern California without the rampant commercialism spoiling the landscapes.

The area has no working theatre organs as yet, so Ray arranged for a Conn 651 for the concert at Subiaco Town Hall and Heidi found an elderly Bechstein grand.

Getting to our own show turned out to be somewhat of a problem. The taxi driver got lost and when we finally recognized a street near the hall, it had no outlet. We ended up walking over a small stream through a wooded area in full concert dress, arriving just in time to play.

Ray took us to a community hall under construction where he will soon install a 2-manual Wurlitzer. The hall will be a multi-purpose facility with the console on tracks, a la Radio City. The high chambers and overall design foretell an exciting sound in years to come.

We were anxious to see three things in Sydney: the Opera House, the Town Hall organ and the State Theatre. All three were tremendous.

Bill Schumacher, Mark Gabriel and host Rob Glidden took us to a



Dennis and native.

stirring performance of *The Messiah* in the Opera House concert hall. The auditorium acoustics were very natural and pleasing. The organ case is in place but the instrument not finished and may never be if news accounts are to be believed. Over \$1½ million has been invested to date with no completion date set.

Dennis was allowed an hour on the famous Town Hall organ with its 64' open reed. The 5/128 Willis dates back to the nineteenth century and is undergoing a complete restoration.

Bill Schumacher, Heidi and Mark Gabriel at Sydney Harbor.





Dennis and Heidi with Tony Fenelon at Moorabbin Town Hall.

It is a very exciting instrument with powerful reeds and an incredible Tuba which brought to mind the Tuba in the Blenheim Palace Willis in England. With cathedral-like sound, the organ proved to be as good as its reputation.

Our third treat was provided by Jack Lawson and his wife who escorted us on a tour of the magnificent Sydney State Theatre. The 4-manual Wurlitzer is rarely available for playing but happened to be up on the lift during our visit. It is one of the very last remaining Australian organs in its original location. Unfortunately the tone is somewhat muffled with the chambers high in the proscenium arch.

The State is one of the last remaining movie palaces with all of its original statuary, paintings and furniture intact. A large clock sunken into the foyer floor catches one's eye when entering the lobby. We were quite unprepared for the vision of Versailles when we enter the theatre proper. The immense main crystal chan-

delier with its twelve flanking chandeliers were turned on for us. The galleries are filled with paintings by leading artists of the day especially commissioned for the opening of the theatre. The State has survived partly due to several unique construction details: it's unusual 45 degree angle into the surrounding block makes high rise plans difficult and the double balconies preclude division into smaller theatres.

Our concert in Sydney was at the Marrickville Town Hall where a fine Yamaha C3 grand was brought in for Heidi. Dennis unfortunately did not fare as well. A unique feature (now being corrected) of the 2/11 Wurlitzer was the windline from the blower ducted up an outside wall, over the roof and into the chambers. The concert day was a very sunny and dry 97 degrees and super-heated air entered the organ. A drastic drop in wind pressure and various ciphers marked the concert.

Mark and Bill treated us to a day-on-the-town with ferry and hydrofoil rides on the sail boat studded Sydney Harbor. Rob Glidden took us to a beautiful State Park where we toiled about in a rented launch. After an interview by Les Flannegan for the Australian editions of *Organist Magazine*, we were off to New Zealand for the conclusion of the tour.

The New Zealand scenery is first class and the "natives" are friendly. Resident ATOSer Norman Dawe showed us around Auckland where we met Mollie and Jack Granwal who have worked with Norm to form

the Kiwi Chapter. They proudly showed us the chapter charter and gave us official organ pins to add to those received from the Australians.

Norman drove us down through pastureland and steep, rolling hills to Tauranga where we were the guests of June and Rex White. Their house has a commanding view of the harbor at Otumoetai. Rex is the retiring Chief Engineer at the Tauranga Electric Company and the guiding force behind the restoration of the 2/10 Wurlitzer in the Tauranga Town Hall. The rest of the crew are engineers at the telephone company so you can imagine the quality of the workmanship in the circuitry.

Despite Christmas and summer vacations so near, a large crowd came to our December 19 concert. A bus load of enthusiasts made the 3½ hour trip from Auckland with other devotees flying in from Wellington and Chrichchurch. The organ behaved beautifully and its sound ideally matches the hall size. Heidi thoroughly enjoyed the 9' Yamaha grand.

The Mayor of Tauranga welcomed us and Heidi received a huge floral bouquet from the Mayoress. We closed with the singing of the beautiful Maori farewell song "Now Is The Hour" with the audience all joining in.

The next morning, before leaving for Auckland, we were pleased to see glowing reviews in the national New Zealand papers... theatre organ concerts are a rare thing with only one theatre organ playing in the entire country.

Norman was once again our tour captain and outdid himself on our return trip to Auckland. We drove along the Firth of Thames, coastline to the right and pastures to the left. Occasionally we were forced to stop for herds of sheep and cattle crossing the roads.

The lushly carpeted green hills contrasted constantly with exotic jungle-like foothills covered with tree ferns. Through it all our little two-laned road wound about like a corkscrew. As we neared Auckland, a rainbow shimmered through the drops that were beginning to fall. Like the rainbow, a symbol of promise, we were leaving this part of the world with hopes of returning again soon. □

Kiwi Chapter members after their program in Auckland.

