

THEATRE ORGAN NEWS FROM AUSTRALIA

Without doubt the most exciting recent event on our theatre organ scene was the opening of the expertly renovated Orpheum Picture Palace at Cremorne, a Harborside suburb of Sydney's North Shore.

Built in 1935, The Orpheum has remained Sydney's finest example of Theatre Arte Deco design. A very successful cinema until the late 1950s when television had a disastrous effect on the neighbourhood houses, it survived the lean years until 1972 when it went dark. Over those later years the interior deteriorated. The author can recall seeing a movie there in 1969. Most of the lighting did not work and the auditorium had an odour suggesting that it was inhabited by many four-legged creatures.

Very successful television personality Mike Walsh has over the past few years, through his company, Hayden Theatres, purchased a number of old cinemas and given them a new lease of life. He takes a very personal interest in their performance. When the derelict Orpheum became available he purchased the building in December of 1986. The task was then to commence the restoration. Some years earlier the owners had pushed an arcade of shops through the stalls area in an endeavor to make some money from the building, situated on a prime piece of Real Estate. The remainder of the auditorium stayed in darkness, filled with years of accumulated rubbish. Undaunted, plans were drawn up including a new proscenium arch to be faithful to the old Arte Deco surrounds. The theatre was to reopen to the admiring public nearly twelve months later.

The grand opening was attended by the "Who's Who" of the Australian entertainment scene. Nostalgia was the "Name of the Game" with attendees attired in 1930's garb. A band dispensed Jazz while the guests enjoyed wine and eats. Entry to the auditorium is now through the upstairs lobby. This lobby has been given the full treatment including a magnificent stained glass window which highlights the Wurlitzer (what else) grand piano placed in front of it. Carpets throughout were specially woven and similar to those in the Oakland Paramount.

One then enters the auditorium, and it is difficult not to be impressed. The new proscenium has been fitted out with rich looking heavy velvet curtains, providing that "Sense of Occasion." Lighting has been faithfully restored, including hidden neon tubing in the wall and ceiling coves. Seating is cozy and spacious.

About twenty minutes before the movie started a small section of the centre stage floor quietly slid back. The console rose into view in all its white and gold glory with well-known Neil Jensen at the helm. The 3/12 Wurlitzer organ is about 1925 vintage and was originally installed in the Fox-Wilson Theatre, Fresno, Cali-



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fornia. It has had a Trivo Post Horn added. The organ was installed by well-known Adelaide organ builder George Stevens and his crew. Final work on the instrument was done by John Parker — the former New Zealand organ builder who lives in Sydney.

It is now some months since this new showplace opened and Hayden Theatres, the controlling group, are delighted with the response to the organ presentation. The result is also heartening for the theatre organ scene when a purely commercial enterprise is prepared to spend a substantial amount of capital in the purchase and subsequent installation of a pipe organ. To the Hayden Theatres



Orpheum Picture Palace and the newly installed 3/12 Wurlitzer up at stage level. An excellent view from every seat.
Courtesy - Hayden Theatres

Group we must say "A job well done." This year the 16th Theatre Organ Society of Australia National Convention will take place in Canberra, the capital city of Australia, from April 22-25.

Each year we host a number of visitors from the United States at our conventions. The exchange rate being favourable to you, the Canberra Division of TOSA are hoping for a large influx of overseas visitors.

Tony O'Brien, from Detroit, will be the featured artist at the Compton 3/9. There will be many other interesting events. Enquiries should be directed to:

**Convention Secretary, TOSA
(ACT Division) Inc.
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AUSTRALIA**

Why not extend your visit and check out Australia at the same time, it's a great place.

Just prior to Christmas I had the opportunity to visit both Sydney and Canberra. In Sydney, the former Capitol Theatre 3/15 Wurlitzer is scheduled to be reopened in the Orion Centre, Campsie. The opening will take place from October 1-3, 1988.



Resident organist Neil Jensen makes final adjustments before the big night.
Courtesy - Hayden Theatres



In stage position the top of the hoist is square, with the turntable perimeter easily visible Console tastefully decorated by John Parker. Looks magnificent in front of the red velvet drapes.
Courtesy - Hayden Theatres

The Orion Centre is actually the former Orion Cinema which was saved from destruction and turned into a function centre. Chambers have been built below stage and appear quite generous in size with large openings to allow the sound to escape into the auditorium. The former stalls area will now seat about 800 people. The balcony area has had the floor flattened and houses the lighting control and other equipment. Electronic control of the organ will be from the unit supplied by Devtronix of California. John Parker is at present engaged full time on the rebuild. The quality of the restoration is a credit to both him and his assistants. I am greatly looking forward to attending the opening of this Wurlitzer which has been increased to 17 ranks from the original 15. New South Wales' other organ, the Marrickville Town Hall 2/10 Wurlitzer, sounded in fine form after listening to the tapes of excellent recent concert by Hector Olivera.

Both Tony Fenelon and David Johnston gave concerts here recently, both to approving audiences.

I was also able to see and play the former Duke of York Theatre Eastwood Christie now installed in the Epping Baptist Church, in suburban Sydney. This organ began as a 2/6 but has gradually grown under the guidance of Rob Glidden and John Andrews. The organ console at one stage had been partly "churched" but is being restored to its original theatre organ styling. The instrument has a delightful theatrical sound though not akin to any particular brand. It is used regularly for theatre and classical concerts and is a first class dual purpose unit.

Another interesting theatre organ installation is that of the 3/15 former Regent Sydney Wurlitzer now installed in a specially constructed small theatre in the home of John Atkinson at the Sydney suburb of Hurstville. The pipework is all housed in one chamber and provides a very full sound. This organ and the Duke of York Christie, as previously mentioned, will both feature in later articles.

In Victoria, the Wurlitzer at the Brighton Twin Cinema Complex (formerly Dendy) is ready to open on Sunday, April 17, and one week before the National Convention. The final work to be done will be the engineering necessary to guide the console on its platform from behind the curtains at the right side of the screen out into the public area.

It is now several months since Hector Olivera's very successful concert tour. Over a period of three weeks he played eight concerts in various parts of Australia. So impressed was Hector with the Moorabbin 4/21 Wurlitzer sound that he said he would like to return and record it. This he did.

Goodbye until next time.

ORGAN-IZING

POPULAR MUSIC

by
AL HERMANN



The reason for using substitute chords when arranging popular music for organ is to improve or enrich the sound of the original harmony by providing more motion or chord changes. One of the easiest improvements to any song is to add a diminished chord just before changing from a I chord to a V7 chord if the composer has not already done so. This will always provide an opportunity to play three pedals in a row moving upward or downward to the 5th of the V7 chord.

When the diminished chord contains the 5th of the I chord (which is also the root of the V7 chord): the pedals will move UPWARD chromatically from the root of the I chord to the nearest note in the diminished chord, and continue upward to the 5th of the V7 chord.

In 4/4 time, this requires two measures. In 3/4 time it takes four measures. When the diminished chord contains the root of the I chord: the pedals will move DOWNWARD from the 3rd of the I chord to the nearest note of the diminished chord and continue downward to the 5th of the V7 chord.

All of the best composers of popular music use these diminished chord sequences frequently. You will find both of them in the first eight measures of "My Buddy."

Examine many songs, and wherever a V7 chord follows a I chord, add a diminished chord just before the change and listen to the difference. These diminished chord sequences can also be used for introductions, long fills, and repeat-endings (turn arounds).

If all this sounds complicated, read it again, think about it, and experiment at the organ. For additional explanation and examples, see Lessons 27 and 28 in *ORGAN-izing Popular Music*.

Your Ballot is in this Issue.
REMEMBER TO VOTE!