

# THEATRE ORGAN NEWS FROM AUSTRALIA

by Bruce Ardley

During April each year many theatre organ enthusiasts in Australia make the yearly pilgrimage to the state which is hosting the Annual TOSA Convention, this year Perth, Western Australia. The convention was a complete success. I recall talking to some of the organising group in November 1988 and they were feeling very apprehensive as to whether it would succeed. Perth is 2000 miles distance from the major East Coast cities where the bulk of Australian population dwell. Australia's internal airfares are expensive and the road trip is long over some desert areas and places of sparse population. What they did have, of course, is the beautiful city of Perth positioned on the magnificent Swan River. The weather can be generally relied on to be very warm at that time of year and this year proved to be no exception. The other attractions are Western Australian TOSA's own 3/10 Compton installed in the John Leckie Centre at Nedlands and the privately owned 3/12 Wurlitzer in the Karrinyup Community Centre hall. Both halls are situated in suburbs a short distance from Perth City Centre.

Victorian TOSA President David Johnston, who is also the Patron of the Western Australian TOSA, opened the proceedings by playing his bagpipes. With this all-percussive sound he lured the conventioners into the John Leckie Centre where, with local organists, John Pound at the console gave the Compton a real workout.

The following day Conventioners visited Winthrop Hall at the University of WA for a concert on the British Walker 47-rank classic organ and then to Fremantle to hear the Clifton organ in St. Johns Church. Fremantle was the home of the Americas Cup and is a fascinating historical city. Later that day, it was back to the John Leckie Centre for Douglas Reeve — the Convention Concert Artist. In the words of one discerning critic, "Douglas was sensational. His music, technique, approach, personality and audience rapport were all first class." Douglas, as many readers will be aware, has resided at the Dome, Brighton, England 4/51 Hill, Norman and Beard classical and theatre organ for over 45 years. Douglas exploited the Compton to the maximum and was absolutely discreet in his use of stops and expression, perhaps two or three stops only in use on many occasions, and he saved the big registrations for climax purposes only — a sound lesson in the gentle art of registration. His audience loved him. He managed to provide the right musical recipe for them. An extremely balanced programme, with a good mixture of both modern and classical music. It was total entertainment. Douglas did not waste words, but when he spoke he did so incorporating much dry English humour that won the hearts of the conventioners



right from the start. With a minimum of prompting his audience readily sang along with him. That evening the Convention dinner took place, and it was Eat, Drink, and be Merry.

The following day Douglas Reeve gave his workshop session using the Compton. Later in the day the conventioners moved to Karrinyup. David Johnston compered this event which was a youth concert and provided a great opportunity to hear fresh talent as well as provide excellent experience for the youngsters. The final event of the Convention had Joanne Evans from Seattle together with co-owners of the Karrinyup Wurlitzer, John Furhmann and Ray Clements, in a joint concert.

Perth Division deserves the highest praise for the standard attained with their first Convention. I can certainly understand their initial nervousness wondering what they had let themselves in for. The success may also encourage the only State yet to hold a Convention — Tasmania. They possess a delightful 3/8 Wurlitzer in Hobart, the capital city.



The 3/10 Compton before 17th National Convention opening, John Leckie Center, Nedlands, Perth.



Convention artist Douglas Reeve. With him is talented young organist Chris McPhee from South Australia.



Robert Wolfe at the 3/17 Wurlitzer, Orion Centre, Sydney. Barry Tooker photo

On February 3, a young English organist sat at the console on the Orion Centre Wurlitzer organ in Sydney, New South Wales. For Robert Wolfe it was his first trip to Australia, but from the reception he received at the centres where he played, it certainly won't be his last.

This night was a "Blackpool Down-under" event, meaning an evening of ballroom dancing. Robert plays the Reginald Dixon style and brought the 3/17 Wurlitzer console up to stage level playing "I Do Like to Be Beside The Seaside." Robert, like Douglas Reeve, keeps his words to a minimum so there is lots of music in his presentations. On certain numbers the dancers just crowded around the console, such was the impact he made on the capacity crowd. This event was followed a couple of days later with a concert by Robert, also at the Orion Centre, to a full house. He also drew excellent response from audiences when he played in Perth and Adelaide.

Well known local and international organist Neil Jensen was recently seen on television in connection with the silent movies *The Kid* and *The Gold Rush*. The reason was the celebration of 100 years since the birth of Charlie Chaplin, and Neil accompanied both from the 3/12 Wurlitzer at Sydney Hayden Orpheum Picture Palace. Neil was first interviewed and then followed about four minutes showing him accompanying *The Kid*, good publicity which also enabled the viewing audience to see what these great organs had been originally intended for.

continued...

News From Australia *continued*

Australia's first CD recording featuring theatre organ has just been released. It features the multiple talents of Victorian TOSA President David Johnston and concert artist Gordon McKenzie. The organ used is the 4/22 Wurlitzer in the Moorabbin Town Hall and Grand Piano. Called "Fire Those Pipes," it features music from *Phantom of the Opera*, *Man From Snowy River*, "I Just Called to Say I Love You," and many others. Those interested can contact Gordon McKenzie, 52 High Street, Melton, Victoria 3337 Australia for details.

The 4/16 theatre organ in the Capri Theatre, Goodwood, Adelaide, South Australia is presently undergoing surgery and having a Devtronix System installed. This is the second theatre organ in Australia to be controlled with this system, the other being the 3/17 at the Orion Centre in Sydney. Another theatre organ to receive all solid-state circuitry is the delightful 3/8 Christie at Kelvin Hall, Brisbane, Queensland. This organ is also having a major overhaul — its first since it was installed fifteen years ago. So far over 2000 man-hours, from November 1988 to April 1989, have been spent in the rejuvenation.

Just prior to the Annual convention, Sydney organman John Parker travelled to Perth, WA, to regulate and voice the Compton which had never been done since the installation. For those who had heard or played the organ prior to this upgrading, the change in quality was very obvious and attractive.

Since the opening of the Orion Centre Wurlitzer 3/17 in Sydney, TOSA's other organ, the 2/10 Wurlitzer in the Marrickville Town Hall has not been so much in the news. Recently, however, a very successful concert was held there with Canberra organists Maureen Dawes and Clinton White.

On a sadder note, since my last contribution the well-known theatre organist Reubert Hayes passed away, aged 75 years. Reubert commenced his career in the 1930s playing in Sydney's suburban organ-equipped cinemas. At the beginning of the second world war he was asked to take a six-month engagement at the Brisbane Regent on a 3/15 Wurlitzer. This engagement was to last six years and included weekly half hour broadcasts from this cinema which were radio-beamed throughout the South Pacific. At the end of the war, he returned to Sydney to play the Wurlitzer 2/8 at Sydney's Plaza Theatre until 1958. He was then transferred to the Sydney Regent until 1960. A friendly, outgoing person with high standards of musicianship, he will be sadly missed.

Two other Sydney organists with great interest in the theatre organ, Eric Smith and Jon Congert both passed away. They contributed considerably in the renaissance of the theatre organ in Australia, and they, too, will be sadly missed.



# ORGAN-IZING

## POPULAR MUSIC

by  
**AL HERMANN'S**

### ENDING - I

The purpose of these articles is to enable the average home-organ owner, amateur, student, and anyone else who is interested, to make slow, easy, popular songs sound musically interesting. This requires a greater knowledge of music than it does to blast out a loud, fast piece which can sometimes create more noise than music.

Most amateur organists start on the first note of a song and stop on the last note. Professionals usually improvise a short introduction and add a fancy ending. There are numerous chord sequences which can be used for this purpose and new ones are being created or discovered every day. The only way they can be described or explained so that they can be applied to songs in any key is by the use of Roman Numerals to indicate which scale tones the chords are built on. If you are uncertain about how this works, study the article in the July/August, 1988 THEATRE ORGAN or Lesson 10 in "ORGAN-izing Popular Music."

All songs end on the I chord. After playing the final I chord, change to the IV chord — the chord built on the fourth note of the scale. Hold each chord and pedal for one measure in 3/4 time and two beats in 4/4 time.

The right hand plays an arpeggio upward on the notes of the IV chord, including the 6th and ends one octave higher on the I chord. The following examples illustrate the basic form of this ending. Other variations in the melody are possible. This Ending is the easiest to learn and can be used on many songs.



Do not merely attempt to memorize these examples. Study the chord sequence and listen to the melody. If you cannot figure them out in C, Bb, Eb and other keys, you have not learned the system and will not be able to figure out anything. Equally important with understanding the rules is perceiving and remembering the sound of what you are doing. After learning a few other Endings, your ear should tell you which Ending will sound most appropriate for the song you are playing. From now on, NEVER stop on the last note of a song; ALWAYS add an Ending.

*Music is now so foolish that I am amazed.  
Everything that is wrong is permitted and  
no attention is paid to what the old generation  
wrote as composition.*

SAMUAL SCHEIDT - 1587-1654)