

TOSA NEWS

Sept. 2020
Volume 59 No.6

Price: \$2.00

Important Message

**“Due to Covid 19 virus restrictions
the October Concert at the
Orion Theatre
has been Cancelled”**

**TOSA NSW AGM postponed until
November 2021**

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President



the church to “carry on”. The Christie is now being utilised every week using online services where recordings are made on Saturday for streaming during the service.

One day we will return with concerts...

Craig Keller

President

Dear members, in the last TN I advised we were planning a concert in October. Well, alas, it is no more. A video conference committee meeting saw this as a major discussion point. While the proposed “Covid safe” capacity of the Orion may have just made it a viable concert, the inconvenience to audience and crew would have made it impossible to operate safely and comfortably. Can you imagine “checking in” being escorted to your assigned spaced-out seat and told to sit and stay there until the concert was complete with no opportunity for socialising? That was the sort of condition we would have had to apply.

We’ve also cancelled the AGM that would have been in November (see P22) again due to the pandemic.

This whole Covid thing is just a pain isn’t it? We ALL anticipate the day in the hopefully not too distant future when we can resume life with some normality. If there is any benefit to this whole shemozzle it’s that this year’s ‘flu infection rate is at rock-bottom. I hope you are all keeping safe and staying healthy.

You will note that both Campsie and Marrickville organs are being regularly exercised during member events (aka Player Days) and both are holding up well. Work continues on the Christie as the small crew are still able to access

Editorial



Hello Members, I hope you all enjoy the articles in this issue, Reginald Foort, brings you many items of interest about his experience in playing to audiences many of which are still relevant today. TOSA members are now able to attend Marrickville Town Hall in limited numbers whilst observing all Covid health precautions to play our wonderful Wurlitzer and keep it active thanks to Neil Palmer arranging with Council. I hope you enjoy the story about the Carma Laboratories Wurlitzer in the USA. It is wonderful that a company has seen the opportunity to save yet another musical instrument and through family history of exposure to the fabulous sounds of the theatre organ have been aware of an opportunity to install this instrument in an acoustically suitable building. The specification was therefore able to be significantly enlarged under the guidance of Jelanni Eddington.

Regards.

Editor TOSA News.

Enjoy the Music Live,

Ernie Vale

editor@tosa.net.au

From the Mailbox...



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Thanks for your responses and please continue to email or write in, telling us what you think.

Where space permits we will do our best to publish your comments, but as space is limited, the editor reserves the right to edit any submitted comments and, as always, the views expressed by any individual may not necessarily coincide with the views of TOSA NSW Div.

Please submit all comments via email to:

The Editor editor@tosa.net.au
or in writing to:

The Editor - TOSA News (NSW Div)
PO Box A2322
SYDNEY SOUTH, NSW, 1235

Please Note Change to TOSA Bank Account

The Society's only bank account now is with **St George**. Details are **BSB 112-879, account number 442 088 530**

Please direct all payments to this account with St George Bank.

Vale John Atkinson

Another long time member of TOSA and owner of the ex Regent Theatre, Sydney,

Wurlitzer passed away on August 6th at St George Hospital following a number of strokes. More details in the next TOSA News.

July/Aug Mystery Organist

I have not had any calls from members to identify the Mystery organist in the last issue of TOSA News. He is a British organist. Anyone know who it is?

A Members note of appreciation

Ernie,

An absolutely magnificent publication you and your team have outdone themselves!. The work that has gone into this is, I hope, appreciated by every member of TOSA NSW. I'd like to see you beat this effort, pal!.

With my best regards,
Dick Benham.

Smile

Finland has just closed its borders. No one will be crossing the Finish line.

So many coronavirus jokes out there, it's a pandemic

Due to the quarantine I'll only be telling inside jokes.

To Watch Out for

October concert at the Orion is cancelled!

Your Committee have given a thorough discussion of the situation around presenting a concert taking into account the restrictions imposed upon us all by this Covid 19 virus. In the interest of safety to all members and patrons who come to our concerts TOSA cannot guarantee the safety of our concert venues. Consequently the unfortunate circumstances mean that Committee have cancelled the October concert at the Orion Centre Theatre.

In the mean time we hope you have taken the opportunity to enjoy several of the many concerts on You-Tube, including a number of TOSA Concerts thanks to member Russell Smith posting them there for your enjoyment.

AGM 2020

postponed until November 2021 authorised by Department of Fair Trading

See letter from TOSA Secretary Simon Ellis next to the Members Diary

Advertising

Rates in

TOSA News

For Members:

Small, Organ related ads = FREE!

For all other cases:

Quarter Page = \$25

Half Page = \$50

Full Page = \$100

Full Page Insert = \$125.00

Members' Playing Dates

**The Orion Theatre Campsie
Second Thursday of the
Month**

**Player Days under Covid 19
restrictions. Contact Craig
or John to confirm dates for
Orion. Convener is
Craig Keller on 0418484798
or John Batts on 0420424103**

**Marrickville Town Hall
4th Monday afternoon/evening**

**No players days for the
moment until the Corona
Virus is well under control**

**Convener is
John Batts on 0420424103
will email you to confirm the day is
available or
Neil Palmer on 9798 6742 after
7:00pm
to confirm availability**

Vale Jack Rose

Jack was born on August 14th, 1928 in the city of Colchester, England.

As a young boy he attended North Station Road Public School, but he hated school : as he said, "I must have been a bit inattentive, because I always got into trouble". Jack's life-long love of fishing dates back to the time that he spent absenting himself from school.

With World War II looming, it was considered appropriately safe policy to send children away from military areas, and so Jack and his sisters Dawn and Gheita were sent to different areas. Jack was sent to the all-boy's Dr. Barnardo's Home at Kingston-on-Thames, just outside London. When air-raids began on London, Jack and his fellow residents were moved to Russell Coats Nautical School in Pool, Dorset.

When he was about 14years old, Jack moved back to Colchester and got a job as a railway Engine Cleaner...a job usually performed by adult men, but undertaken by boys, with the adults away fighting. He progressed from Engine Cleaner to Acting Fireman, and later to Fireman, stoking coal to power the locomotives. Jack was part of a team hauling bombs from one part of England to another.

After the War, Jack was conscripted in to the Army as part of the Essex Regiment, and served in France, Germany, Austria and Italy. After finishing his time in the Army, he tried to return to work with the Railways, but there were no longer jobs for bomb transport staff.

On the advice of an Australian soldier married to Jack's cousin, Jack joined the Australian Army in England in 1950. Following the six-week trip, he arrived at Fremantle Barracks around Christmas time, finally being assigned to 101 General Transport Company based in Randwick, Sydney. Jack had reached the rank of Sergeant in the English Army, and following training at Ingleburn, he found himself sent to Singleton in charge of transport. He spent five years of National Service at the old Holsworthy Army Camp, until being demobbed.

Jack got a job with the Metropolitan Water Board, beginning a 36-year career, which saw him rise to the role of Water Service Supervisor.

In 1951, Jack met a pretty young girl named Betty on a blind

date. In 1953, Jack and Betty married, so beginning a 66 year romance with the love of his life. They raised four fine children: two boys and two girls.

Jack loved painting and other crafts, handy-work, and fishing. He loved the organ, and was a keen player, although never learning to read music: everything was done by ear. For many years, Jack and Betty were faithfully involved in TOSA.

Jack passed away on June 23rd, 2020 just over a year after the death of his beloved Betty. He was 91.

Four Portable Hauptwerk Organs For Sale

Organ 1 - \$1,650.00 complete



1 Behringer UMX-610 61-note keyboard; 1 Novation Launch-key; 61-note keyboard; Keyboard stand with provision to add a 3rd manual; Hammond XPK-200L 20-note MIDI pedalboard; Behringer FCB-1010 Foot controller (2 swell pedals, 10 toe pistons) Roland MIDI interface, powered USB hub; MIDI and audio cabling, laptop stand; Adjustable stool, music rest; 1 Novation Launchpad Mk II

Organ 2 - \$1,150.00 complete

1 Behringer UMX-610 61-note keyboard; 1 Novation Launch-key; 61-note keyboard; Keyboard stand; Studio Logic 17-note MIDI pedalboard; 1 Yamaha FC-7 swell pedal + MIDI Solutions pedal controller; Roland MIDI interface, powered USB hub; MIDI and audio cabling, laptop stand; Adjustable stool, music rest; 1 Novation Launchpad Mk II



Organ 2 above

Organs 3 & 4 - \$1,150.00 (each) complete

2 Behringer UMX-610 61-note keyboards; Keyboard stand; Hammond XPK-100 13-note MIDI pedalboard; 1 Yamaha FC-7 swell pedal + MIDI Solutions pedal controller; Roland MIDI interface, powered USB hub; MIDI and audio cabling, laptop stand; Adjustable stool, music rest; 1 Novation Launchpad Mk II



No parting out of individual components – each organ to be sold only as a complete unit.

Organs 1, 2 and 3 located at Strathfield South.

Organ 4 located at Harris Park.

Easy vehicle access to both locations.

All instruments can be dismantled/collapsed then readily transported in a sedan car.

Offers will be considered, especially if 2 or more organs are bought by the same person.

To become playable with Hauptwerk, buyers would need to add a computer/laptop, download/install driver for the Roland UM-One MIDI interface, download/install Hauptwerk then purchase a Hauptwerk licence or subscription. All units currently operational with Mac laptops (not included) playing through headphones.

For theatre organ playing, the Paramount 310 sample set (providing the digital equivalent of a 3 manual 15-rank Wurlitzer) is free. Each organ can control a 3-manual sample set from 2 keyboards using Hauptwerk's "floating keyboards" function. Velocity sensitivity on all keyboards allows for Hauptwerk's "second touch" to be employed.

Enquiries ... contact Andrew Grahame - email ajg2011a@me.com
- ph 0412 903 721

Show & Membership Prices

	All Artists
Non-members	\$40
Non-member Pensioner/Seniors Card holder	\$35
TOSA Members	\$25

All Students FREE on confirmation of Student status

All Children FREE accompanied by an Adult

Group Booking for 10 or more Adults \$22 per person

First time Adult \$25 by completed Voucher at Box Office

New Membership Fees for 2020-21

\$50.00 Full membership, \$40.00 Concession, Interstate or

Overseas \$50. \$5 discount if TOSA News emailed to you

Membership enquiries David & Margaret Badman

(02) 4776 2192 membership@tosa.net.au

Associate Membership for a spouse/partner is an additional 50%

TOSA Members Day @ The Orion, 13 August, 2020.

John S. Batts writes:

While the Covid-19 pandemic continues to hamper TOSA(NSW) efforts, we have managed to complete a third-in-a-row meeting at The Orion Centre in Campsie on 13th August. A small but determined group met for the second Thursday of the month meeting.

After a quick skirmish with a non-responding hoist, the console was eventually up and running, or at least the blower was and some tremors could be heard thumping away in the chambers. We even had console lights, yet for a while the instrument would not produce pipe sounds. Some time was lost while your scribe tried out sundry ruses on the operating-system computer – in vain. However, a phone-call to our President eventually solved the problem and allowed three organists and three listeners to enjoy the sounds of the 3-17 Wurlitzer: **Kevin Eadie, Graeme Costin** and your scribe, **John Batts**. Despite recent rains the well of the hoist was found to be dry. This Thursday brought sunshine and relative warmth, but the tuning of the pipes remained tolerably stable.

Proceedings were enhanced by the presence of TOSA's doyen photographer, **Barry Tooker, Kevin Clancy, and Rhonda Furner**. It is hoped that one of these photos will accompany this report in TOSA(NSW) News.

Thanks to the kindness of management's John Khoury we were able to extend our stay slightly to compensate for a late start.

TOSA did its best to adhere to state-mandated procedures for combatting Covid, so that the bench, keys, tabs, and pistons were wiped with a disinfectant-laden cloth between changes of organists. Furthermore, a register of attendees and their contact phone-numbers was kept. Most organists wore masks, too.

It is hoped that the Inner-West Council will soon approve TOSA's submission on its Covid-protection procedures so that the Marrickville Town Hall Wurlitzer can be used once more.



Graeme Costin



John Batts



Kevin Eady



L-R Graeme, John, Kevin



L-R Graeme, John, Kevin, and Kevin Clancy



New Carpet at Orion Theatre

Those members who regularly attend the members player days at **Marrickville Town Hall** were able to return on Monday 24th August under strict Covid 19 distancing and sanitising rules together with providing contact details. Reports are that the organ was in quite good tune and the players thank Neil Palmer for arranging the return to the delightful sounds of our Wurlitzer.



**Articles from
THE CINEMA ORGAN
by**

Reginald Foort, F.R.C.O., A.R.C.M.

Second Edition

SILENT PICTURES AND INTERLUDES

THE most characteristic use of the cinema organ and that for which it was primarily intended - the accompaniment of silent pictures - has unfortunately practically disappeared, but the organ has always been one of the most popular of musical instruments and provided organists will only take the trouble to play the right kind of music and present it in an attractive manner; I see no reason at all why the organ should not become even more popular than ever.

Personally, I am sorry silent pictures have disappeared, because accompanying them on the organ could be made a very fine subtle art, the organ being in some ways immensely superior to an orchestra for the purpose. Through having to play from printed music, the orchestra was not sufficiently flexible and in the ordinary theatre, where rehearsals were not possible, the changing from one piece to the next was abrupt and clumsy, and the keys were rarely related; frequently there was no printed music available which really suited the scenes to be accompanied.

The organist, on the other hand, could either play suitable music from memory, sliding smoothly from one piece into the next without a break, or he could improvise. Above all, playing entirely by himself, he could time his playing where necessary to fit the actual movement taking place on the screen.

One of the most frequent devices in pictures is to work up to

a climax and then have a sudden stillness in the action, and this the organist could illustrate musically with ease by starting softly, improvising a tremendous crescendo up to full organ and then stopping dead for a silent pause at the psychological moment.

Comedy pictures of course, provided the organist with his great opportunity: here he could really let himself go with confidence. Curiously enough, few people realized how closely the organist had to watch the screen. Some of the effects for reproducing the missing sounds, such as the surf, motor horn, fire bell, were specially provided for in the organ, but the majority of noises which the organist put in to fit the picture were manufactured, so to speak, on the keyboard. The cinema organ can provide the most realistic reproduction of such noises as bagpipes, a brass band, the smashing of glass, a baby crying, a thunderstorm, or a cock-crow.

One of the best effects I remember getting in a silent picture was in the sentimental situation at the end, when the repentant wife returned to the home and the husband quietly greeted her with: "Hello, Mary," and she replied: "Hello, Joe." I succeeded in reproducing these two phrases in their respective registers in such a way that the audience really got an impression of the characters speaking.

On another occasion, at a trade show, when the theatre was filled with cinema owners and managers, whom one would hardly expect to take any notice at all of one's musical accompaniment, an express train started up in the picture, got up full speed and disappeared in the distance, and I managed to reproduce this effect on the organ so realistically that the audience burst into applause.

In reproducing the missing sounds of silent pictures, everything depended on accurate timing; it was absolutely essential to keep one's eyes glued to the screen in order to attain perfect synchronization of sound and picture.

When silent pictures disappeared and the accompaniment came to be provided by mechanical means, the organ was found to be most useful for picking up the threads at the end of one picture and making a neat join into the next, thus obviating an unpleasant blank between the pictures. This joining of pictures can be done artistically or otherwise, but, if done with care and judgment, it certainly makes for the smoothness and continuity of the show. The organist must start in the key of the picture which is finished and make a neat modulation into the key of the new

picture, taking care not to play too loudly. This is something that only the organ can do; it would be impossible for an orchestra or a gramophone to do it nearly so well, if at all.

The main function of the cinema organ now is to provide a musical entertainment of ten or twelve minutes in each show, and, if only the organist is willing to take the trouble to prepare a suitable selection and to present it in such a way that it really entertains and holds the attention of the audience, this can easily be made the most popular item in the programme.

Unfortunately, few managements have sufficient imagination to realize that the organist cannot make bricks without straw; that, if he is to get his show over, he must be given publicity and assistance in the way of clever presentation and good lighting effects. Although the organist has to play constantly in the same theatre, and, to a certain extent, to the same audience, the variety it is possible to get into his organ interludes week by week is enormous.

People love to hear the music they know, but this must be played with some touch of novelty. Any public performer will tell you that it is not necessary to wait for the applause (or lack of it) at the end to tell whether the audience have enjoyed his show. If an audience is restless, or can be heard whispering or coughing, the organist is either playing the wrong kind of selection, or is not presenting it in the right way. He must be a terribly severe critic of himself as to whether he is succeeding or failing in holding his audience's attention.

Even when the organ console is on a lift, the modern practice of placing it in the centre of the orchestra pit, so that the organist has to play with his back to the audience is, to say the least, not conducive to good showmanship. The console lift has now become so common that it is no longer a novelty, and if the organist begins his interlude while the lift is at the bottom, even if he has been announced on the screen or by means of a card, it will certainly be some time before he has succeeded in capturing the attention of his audience.

Some years ago I evolved a little showmanship scheme which I was fortunate enough to be able to put into practice at the Regent, Bournemouth (and which brother organists all over the country have flattered me by imitating!), by which I have the organ console sent up in a spot-light (and the modern cinema organ really makes rather a striking picture when presented in this

way without the organist), and I make my own entrance by walking across the stage as the main tabs are raised. The personal touch of a little speech, in which I announce what I am going to play, helps to concentrate the attention of my audience, and when I sit down to begin my solo, I am assured of absolute silence. When I have finished, I leave the organ and return to the stage, the tabs being closed in the usual way; thus my interlude takes on something of the nature of a stage show, and the audience is enabled to let me know, by the volume of its applause, whether it *really* wants me to play again.

There are so many types of interludes which can be played on the organ, and which will be found acceptable to any normal cinema audience, that it is impossible to give anything like an exhaustive list. Selections from grand or light opera, or Gilbert and Sullivan, medleys of works by well-known composers, the quasi-oriental type of suite like the *Four Indian Love Lyrics*, brilliant overtures, tone-poems of the *Finlandia* or *Invitation to the Waltz* type, or the usual medley of popular classics or dance numbers always prove successful.

Apart from these, there are one or two types of interlude which are worth mentioning. When playing for comedy pictures one of the most successful devices used to be to play a well-known tune, the name of which, when spotted by the audience, would be found to be particularly fitted to the situation on the screen. I expanded on this idea by playing a whole series of fifteen or twenty pieces, the names of which would tell a complete story to the audience. An even more successful adaptation of the idea can be worked out by showing a series of specially drawn, humorous sketches on the screen by means of lantern slides illustrating the various ideas.

Other instruments can be combined with the organ with immense success. There is no doubt that one of the secrets of the art of entertainment consists in appealing simultaneously to both eye and ear; no matter how good an organist you are, unless you give your audience something to look at during your interlude, their attention will certainly be liable to wander. If, therefore, you can get a pianist, or a violinist, on the stage with good lighting effects you will not only have provided something different from an ordinary organ solo, but you will be giving your audience something to hold their visual attention as well.

Many theatres are fitted with what is known in the profession as a "non-sync." This consists of a gramophone, connected to the loud-speakers intended for the reproduction of talking pictures,

on which ordinary gramophone records can be played, and which enables the records to be amplified to such an extent as to fill the whole theatre. Its curious slang name is an abbreviation of "non-synchronous," and signifies that music can be played which is not synchronized with a picture.

The use of suitable records, by this means, particularly vocal records, accompanied by the organ, opens up a whole new world of possibilities for organ interludes. The organist can play a selection from a well known opera and conclude by having the big tune of the opera sung by Caruso or some other artist of equal celebrity, and the reproduction of these records is now so extraordinarily good that it is almost indistinguishable from the singing of the real artist appearing in person.

On a recent occasion I was accompanying a superb record of Drigo's *Serenade*, sung by Gigli, and a member of the audience was overheard by one of the attendants to remark on leaving the theatre that "She was most surprised to discover that Reginald Foort had such a beautiful voice ! "

The main difficulty about using gramophone records in conjunction with the organ is that of getting the record and the organ exactly in tune together. This is done by altering the speed at which the record is run; increasing the number of revolutions per minute make the record sharper and *vice versa*.

Playing to a record, however, is not altogether as easy as it sounds, because, if the record is not dead in tune, it is impossible to tell while you are playing whether it is the record which is sharp or the organ. All you know is that something sounds horribly out of tune! The fellows who work the moving picture machines are invariably only too keen to help, but unfortunately they are not trained musicians, so, at one time, when I had to rely on one of the operators to work the "non-sync." for me, I arranged a system of signalling by which, if the record was flat, I held up my left hand, and if it was sharp I held up my right hand. I shall never forget one dreadful Sunday evening when I was playing my usual half-hour's organ recital before the show, and included five or six gramophone records in an ambitious attempt to make it interesting, both the operator and myself got our System of signalling so thoroughly muddled up that he lost his head and began to alter the pitch all over the place! After twenty-five hectic minutes, during which I had to transpose whole items, in an endeavour to coincide with the gramophone, in desperation I cut the last record and finished up

with a solo played on the organ alone!

Tibia Slides. One of the most fascinating effects on the cinema organ is that beautiful "glissando" which Jesse Crawford uses so superbly in his records. This is produced entirely with the fingers, but is only really effective if done on the tibia clausa stop or on a combination of stops in which the tibia clausa is predominant. This stop takes a tremulant better than any of the other stops, and the secret of the effect is that, when a chromatic scale is played very rapidly, the tremulant makes each pipe sound as if it were run into the next, and the effect to the listener is almost exactly the same as that of a *portamento* on the violin, the sound of each separate pipe not being distinguishable.

This tibia *glissando* is such a delightful effect to produce that organists tend to use it too frequently, with the result that it loses its novelty.

Using the Solo Stops. Although it adds considerably to the variety of effect obtainable from an organ if the beautiful solo stops are used one at a time, many organists appear to feel that they are not really making use of the organ unless they have several dozen of these fascinating stop-keys down.

I am reminded in this connection of a story which my old teacher, Sir Walter Parratt, used to tell. He was a great believer in using solo stops of an organ singly and used to impress the importance of this on his pupils by begging them to emulate the famous Italian cardinal who had the extraordinary faculty of being able to keep silence in thirteen different languages!

Tremulants. The most vexed question with regard to cinema organs is that of the use of tremulants. The tremulant is the mechanism which gives the tone that is well-known "wavy" effect in imitation of the *vibrato* of the singer or violinist. It is in the form of a wooden box, which is inserted in the wind trunk leading to the wind reservoir under the pipes, and contains a valve, which, put into action by means of a stop-key at the console, interrupts the steadiness of the wind supply.

The orthodox organist, accustomed to large masses of diapason and full-swell cathedral organ tone, hates the use of tremulants at all and does not hesitate to rush into print to express his abhorrence thereof.

It should be remembered, however, that in the cinema we are not in church, and the cinema organ is primarily intended to be, as far as possible, a one man orchestra. Now, in the orchestration to-day, no instrument, with the possible exception of the clarinet,

plays without a distinct *vibrato*; Leon Goosens, for example, probably the greatest oboe player who ever lived, plays with a *vibrato* exactly like a solo violinist; tremulants are used in the cinema organ in an endeavour to imitate that beautiful "live" shimmer which is so characteristic of the orchestra.

Even small organs contain at least two tremulants, and the valve in each of these is capable of a number of different adjustments -- wind pressure, speed of beat, length of stroke-- and I cannot help feeling that cinema organists are inclined to be too easily satisfied with the organ builders' ideas as to how the tremulants should be adjusted.

I aim at getting considerable variation into the effect of the different tremulants and to obtain a live quality of tone without allowing it to deteriorate into that horrible "wobble" which is so objectionable.

The acoustics of the theatre are an entirely different proposition from those of a cathedral, and the organ played entirely without tremulants gives, in my opinion, a dull, unpleasant, dead effect. On the Regal organ I have ten tremulants and my general practice, when playing any of the various full organ effects of which the organ is capable, is to have three or four of these tremulants on and the remainder off. This, I find, gives quite a fair imitation of the full orchestra and gets away, in the only way I have been able to devise, from the dead, "churchy" effect of the organ when played without tremulants at all.

— **The Personal Touch.** There is no doubt that audiences find an attractive organ interlude a pleasant relief from the mechanically produced music and other sounds of the talking pictures. In spite of the amazing standard of efficiency which has been attained in the reproduction of music by mechanical means, the personal touch can never be replaced. As far as the musical entertainment of an audience is concerned, there can never be any really satisfying substitute for the personal appearance of the artist.

In the early days of the modern cinema organ, I was fortunate enough to play a not altogether inconsiderable part in helping to establish its popularity; I sincerely hope that, for many years to come, It may continue to entertain audiences and bring a little colour into the rather grey lives which most of us live in these difficult times.

So relevant to the difficult time we are all currently experiencing .

Carmex president pulls out all the stops with theatre organ

Paul Woelbing used to live in a cottage-style house that wouldn't look much out of place in Hobbiton.

He works in an office he shares with 16 vintage motorcycles, a Boston terrier (Violet) and an easy-going French bulldog (Sophie) that he likens to a fur-covered meatloaf.

And he's overseeing installation of what will be one of the country's largest pipe organs — in a Franklin warehouse.

"We're kind of an eccentric bunch around here," said Woelbing, president of Carma Laboratories Inc., makers of Carmex lip balm. "...And I'm probably the most eccentric."

Woelbing helps run the family owned business started in 1937 by his grandfather, who concocted its signature product and used to cook it up on a hot plate. He offers the most basic of reasons for building an enormous theatre organ in a warehouse whose main purpose is to hold the stocks of aloe butter, lanolin and other ingredients that end up in those little pots and tubes.

"It's a cool thing," he said. "I like it, my dad liked it, and the idea (is) that we want to share it with the community. ... But also because the space is big enough. An organ really needs the space for the sound to develop.

"My intent is to have a great instrument and hope that organists come and use it."

The project dates back several years. It germinated when Woelbing and his late father, Donald, were inspecting a vacant warehouse for expansion of Carma Labs. As they considered the building's condition, the age of the roof and how the place was laid out, Woelbing noticed something else: Great acoustics.

"I thought, 'Gee, there's a really nice echo in here. We could do something with this,'" he recalled.

Woelbing, 58, doesn't play. But he's a former art teacher with a fine aesthetic sense and the wherewithal to pursue such interests as collecting the work of Wisconsin painters, old Harleys and self-playing musical instruments.

With the organ project, he went all in. He won't say what it's costing, other than "lots."

Theatre pipe organs are the quirky cousins of the instruments found in churches. Built by the thousands in the 1920s for the silent-movie houses then sprouting across the country, they were

all but killed off by talking pictures and the Depression. Most were demolished. A few hundred remain, either in theatres or with collectors.

A Racine insurance agent named Fred Hermes, for example, rescued a large Wurlitzer from a Detroit theatre in 1956 and built a home that could house it and a 150-seat auditorium fitted with seats and décor from old movie houses. Now 88, Hermes still hosts tour groups.

Parts From Many Organs

The Carmex organ is being constructed with parts of many instruments. One set of pipes originally played for roller skaters at the long-gone Riverview Rink on Milwaukee's east side.

"We found it in a pizza restaurant, sitting in a crate in storage in Mesa, Arizona.," said Terry Kleven, co-owner of Century Pipe Organs, a Minneapolis firm that is assembling Woelbing's instrument.

The console originally was built for a Los Angeles organist and was gilded with trim that would suit Liberace. It has since been redone in more-restrained walnut. "A little calmer look," Woelbing said.

More Musical Muscle

The foundation of his organ, though, consists of several sets of Wurlitzer pipes built for a Chicago movie house that opened in 1931, just as theatre organs were becoming obsolete. Apparently never used in the theater, it was purchased by a now-dead physician in Denver, who, like Hermes, built a house around his instrument. Woelbing bought it out of storage.

The Carmex organ originally was conceived as a much smaller instrument, said Bob Swaney, co-owner of Century. But the sonic opportunities offered by a cathedral-sized room with a 35-foot ceiling argued for more muscle. So did the ideas, Swaney said, of the other main participant in the undertaking, a Racine man named Robert Jelani Eddington.

Eddington, 40, is a Yale-educated lawyer who practices in Milwaukee. He's also an organist of some note, and has been working as tonal consultant on Woelbing's project, playing a critical role in the instrument's design. "He has a very fertile mind," Swaney said.

When finished, Woelbing's organ will include about 6,000 pipes.

Some are 32 feet tall and will pump out sound so low in pitch that you won't so much hear the rumbling as feel it. On others, the music-making part is as short as five-sixteenths of an inch. About half the pipes have been installed in a second-floor chamber that's roughly as big as a bedroom and is built like a giant speaker cabinet that opens into the warehouse. A similar chamber has yet to be finished.

Ready To Party

The console, already in place, has four keyboards, 32 foot pedals and 455 stop tabs that can be manipulated to produce the sounds of an immense string section, French horns, English horns, oboes, four kinds of trumpets, etc. That's not to mention such silent-movie-house trickery as doorbells, cracking whips, bird whistles, crying babies and rain falling on a tin roof. "We talked about an accordion, but Paul didn't seem to want one," Swaney said.

Powering all this musical exotica is a 40-horsepower electric motor that's housed in a bunkerlike room and, very noisily, pushes more than 160 cubic feet of air per second up ductwork the size of an oak trunk, through the organ pipes and, ultimately, into the warehouse.

"As far as theatre organs are concerned," Eddington said before launching into a lively "Sleigh Ride" while workers scooted through the warehouse on forklifts, "this will be one of the largest in the world."

Woelbing's goal is that the organ be finished by February 2016, when he will turn 60. "I didn't do a party when I was 30, didn't do it when I was 40, didn't when I was 50," he said. "When I'm 60 I'd like to have a little bit of a party, so that's a good date to shoot for."

Swaney and Kleven believe they can make the birthday deadline. No guarantees though. They've already spent four years physically building the organ; they're a small shop, and it's a big job. But the two men — who, coincidentally, are longtime Carmex users — relish the opportunity to be putting together such an elaborate instrument.

"We never thought we'd build anything like this in our lives," Swaney said.

Go to Dave Wickerham Organist on the web then Dave Videos then Dave Wickerham at Carma Labs Medley Part 1 to hear this organ.

TOSA (NSW) Annual General Meeting 2020

To All Our Patient and Long-suffering Members

This year, 2020 has presented all of us with a series of challenges with which to cope, and continues to supply a broad raft of challenges to try to overcome.

It has been with great sadness that your Committee has found it necessary to cancel all the planned Concerts and musical events that we were all anticipating and looking forward to enjoying. I am sure that for many of us, the sense of isolation that accompanies the inability to engage in our regular activities is also difficult to endure.

The overwhelming need that we have had to confront this year is the health and safety of all of us. The many procedures required to stage any form of social gathering have been carefully examined, and determined to involve unacceptably high levels of risk to the well-being of each of us who may wish to attend various TOSA functions.

The latest COVID-19 casualty about which your Committee has had to wrestle is the conduct of the 2020 Annual General Meeting, scheduled for November, as you will know.

Following advice from Fair Trading NSW, which is the appropriate Regulatory Body to which we are legally accountable, we have to inform you that the 2020 AGM must be postponed to November 2021. This option, offered to all organisations by Fair Trading NSW, is the only practical means by which we can ensure the safety of possible attendees at our usual General Meeting.

This deferral for 12 months will mean, of course, that the current Office Bearers and Committee will retain their positions until the 2021 AGM, by which time we hope along with everyone else that the world returns to something more normal. We will continue to do our utmost to re-open our venues and return to usual programming as soon as it is safe to do so.

I would like personally to take this opportunity, along with all Committee members, to wish you each continuing health and safety, as we head into the end of this awkward year. I look forward to the time when we can meet together again, and thank you for your understanding and support.

Warmest Regards,
Simon Ellis, Secretary

Members Diary

Membership Renewals: Thank you to all members who have renewed their TOSA Membership at the reduced rate for 2020/21. TOSA encourage those members who have not yet renewed to please renew membership. All existing members will be able to renew their membership for 2020-2021 with a 50% discount applied. There are links to various theatre organ performances on the TOSA Web Site. If you can't find your renewal form please phone David or Margaret on (02) 4776 2192 with your membership number and they will complete the renewal form for you.

Even if you don't receive TOSA News by email it is very important TOSA can contact you, in case of cancellation or change of date of a Concert and any other important event.

Theatre organ performances on the web and You-Tube

I hope many members enjoyed the virtual Sanfilippo Wurlitzer performance by Jellani Eddington and Zac Frame by clicking on the link provided to members thanks to John Shaw. It is a great instrument in a lovely setting.

Another performance I can thoroughly recommend is Dave Wickerham playing the 4/80 Wurlitzer in the Carma Laboratory Warehouse in the USA. This Wurlitzer speaks so well into the acoustic environment of a warehouse with 35 ft ceiling. See the article in this issue about the history of the Carma Wurlitzer. Dave plays a well planned program that uses a lot of the voices on the organ.

Go to Dave Wickerham Organist on the web, then Dave Videos, then Dave Wickerham at Carma Labs Medley Part 1 to hear this wonderful sounding recently completed installation. Well not quite complete as I believe it is intended to add another 10 ranks to make it a 4/90 theatre organ, larger than Sanfilippo's Wurlitzer. In this case big is beautiful as the organ speaks so well into the large space of the warehouse. Paul Woelbing has just purchased a Moller roll player for the organ.

I have listened to Dave Wickerham playing this instrument several times as it sounds that good.

Do yourself a favour and check it out.

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