

SIGHT AND SOUND UPDATE

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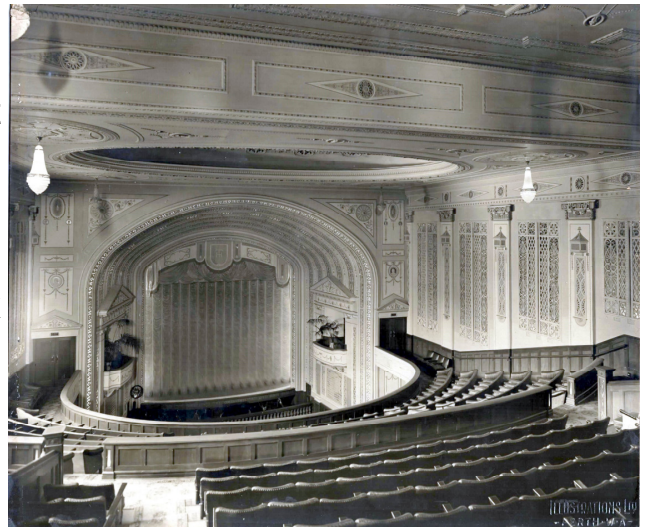
WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S MOST TRAVELLED THEATRE ORGAN

Swept up by the popular entertainment trends of the day, in 1927 the Hoyts theatre chain leased the Queens Hall in William Street Perth from the Wesley Trust. A redesign of the Hall by architects Bohringer, Taylor and Johnson saw the emergence of the Regent Theatre which itself was later renamed the Metro Theatre by MGM. The very austere and plain indoor multi-purpose hall was replaced by an opulent auditorium with ornate proscenium containing an organ right (solo chamber) and left (main chamber) with shutter openings flush up against the plasterwork



*Auditorium Queens Hall, Perth

for maximum effect. Hoyts engaged Hill Norman and Beard (London) to construct a two manual and 8 rank instrument for the Perth Regent Theatre. The unit instrument was a cheaper version of a Wurlitzer Style F, the ranks being Tuba, Tibia Clausa, Open Diapason, Clarinet, Flute, Viol de Orchestre, Vioxa Celeste and Vox Humana. The percussions and traps were identical to Wurlitzer and even included the ubiquitous tuned sleigh bells. The instrument was not installed but reportedly placed in storage in the Rosemount Theatre (now the Rosemount Bowling Alley) in North Perth. The inability of an 8-rank organ to fill a 2000 seat theatre instead led to a Style F Wurlitzer with additional Brass Trumpet, Orchestral Oboe, Krumet and Kinura ranks being installed.



*Interior, Regent Theatre, Perth

By 1929 Hoyts had sent the Christie to their "Deluxe Theatre" in Melbourne. However, by 1930 the organ had moved to the Plaza Theatre Sydney. The same organ popped up again in the 1938 refurbished Savoy Enfield Theatre in the western suburbs of Sydney.

In 1959 the Hoyts Theatre chain sold the instrument to Franklyn Baldwin for installation in his Castle Hill home. Subsequently, in 1974 Geoff Smith, President of the Theatre Organ Society Australia (SA) purchased the instrument for a residence installation.

CONTINUED - WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S MOST TRAVELLED THEATRE ORGAN

With the passage of time the instrument was acquired by the Bendigo Theatre Organ Society for installation in the Castlemaine Town Hall. Unfortunately, agreement from the local Council was not forthcoming resulting in the Christie being donated to the Theatre Organ Society Australia (VIC.). This orphan organ was in turn donated to AMMPT Western Region (Inc.) (AMMPT) who saw potential in installing the instrument in an auditorium adjacent to their museum at the former Sunset Hospital in Nedlands. Uncertainty on project development timeframes and future State Government intentions has led AMMPT to decide not to proceed with the initiative.

Much of the Christie organ with additional acquired church pipework is stored in a container located in Swan View. A new relay is required, and the disassembled console is in Melbourne. This theatre organ was the first one shipped to Australia by Hill Norman and Beard. It precedes the establishment of their factory in Melbourne where they constructed several theatre installations in Australia. It used low-pressure pipe work (5" – 8") compared to later Christie organs and Wurlitzer organs (10"-15"0.

**Photos courtesy of WA State Library and Wesley Uniting Church.*

Published in the May 2nd, 2022, Organ Society publication "In the Pipeline" authored by AMMPT committee member John Fuhrmann.

NEXT IN-FOCUS—15th JUNE

The next InFocus will be held at the Fred Bell RSL Hall in St. James on Wednesday 15th June commencing at 7.30pm. The topic will be "Part I of the story of Perth's Telethon", right from its earliest beginnings. It traces the origins back to Sir James Cruthers' involvement with the first big Red Cross Appeal in 1949, then onto the very first Telethon in the USA in 1949, flowing onto the epic involvement in Telethons by Jerry Lewis, which attracted great interest from the then TVW hierarchy. The presentation covers TVW's first Telethon in 1961, that appealed for funds to support victims of the Dwellingup fire, which destroyed the town and many surrounding settlements. There were also the appeals for funds to send Christmas parcels to troops overseas, which started during the Vietnam war, and extended into the early Channel Seven Telethon years. It also covers the many key personalities who donated their time to Telethon over the years.

GRANT SUCCESS

Following committee decisions on the need for various pieces of equipment for museum development, film library and promotion purposes, successful grant applications by the secretary totalling almost \$17,000 were received in 2021. This has enabled funds to be spent on obtaining much needed film cans, shelving for display purposes, website development and software to facilitate more comprehensive cataloguing of donated items and memorabilia.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This is to acknowledge that two photographs that appeared in SSU #87 under the heading "CINEMAS OF YESTERYEAR" are purported to be the copyrighted work of Daryl Binning