

PIPES

&

PERCUSSION

180
MAY - JUNE
2017

NEWSLETTER FOR
THE FRIENDS OF THE WURLITZER

& THE "KIWI CHAPTER" of the
AMERICAN THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY

EDITOR: *James Duncan*
E-MAIL: tremsoff@xtra.co.nz

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE WURLITZER ORGAN TRUST of AUCKLAND
VISIT US ON [Facebook](#) OR AT: www.theatreorgans.com/wota

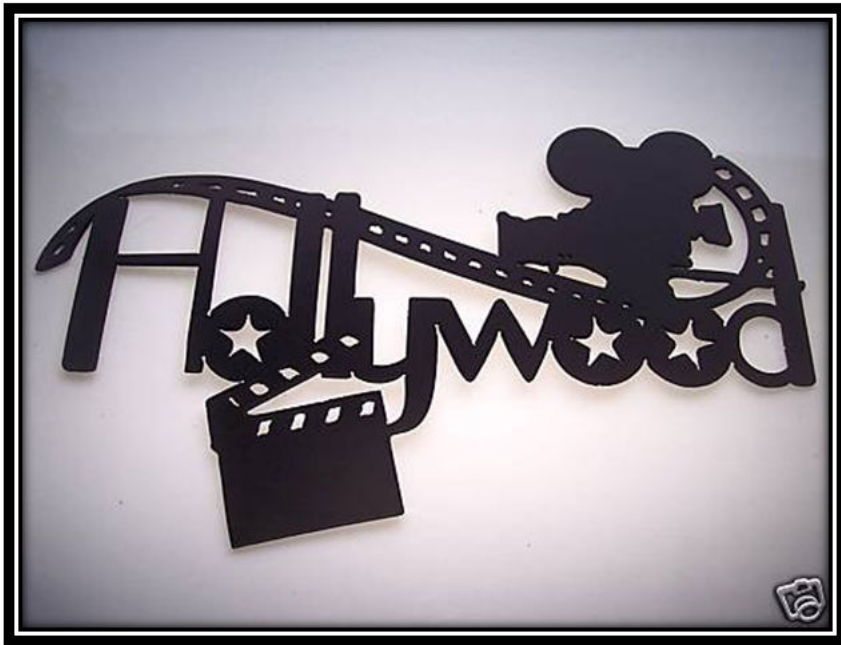
WINTER GREETINGS !

Yes – it's wet and windy outside – so winter is upon us. Back in March, we were thrilled with the large number of members who once again supported our annual *Friends of the Wurlitzer Club Afternoon*. Judging from feedback received, the tribute to the days of trams in Auckland with the story told through images and then a video was enjoyed by all. The video had the added bonus of being accompanied by our very own Wurlitzer organ, recorded during our days at the Hollywood Cinema.

With the building consent process for the Playhouse Theatre still going through its various phases, the Wurlitzer organ continues to sit in storage, unable to make music for us. The Trust has been anguishing over what we can do for you, our friends and supporters, to give you some kind of theatre organ entertainment. With our rapidly depleting funds racing out each month to cover storage costs for the organ, we are not in the position to bring artists over to play for us, with the costs of airfares, fees and theatre hire, plus the issue of finding a suitable instrument. Even then, without the uniqueness of the Wurlitzer pipe organ, we would not draw an audience big enough to recover the costs, so you can see our quandary.

However, we have an idea which will give us all, our Wurlitzer "fix" and bring the Trust some much needed pennies. Keep **Sunday June 25** free and turn the page!

+ + *The opinions expressed in this Newsletter* + +
are not necessarily those of The Wurlitzer Organ Trust of Auckland.



MAGIC MOMENTS On Video

With our very own

WURLITZER
THEATRE PIPE ORGAN

Sunday June 25 at 2pm

The Playhouse Theatre

15 Glendale Rd, Glen Eden

See Booking Form for Ticket Details

Tickets are not refundable – NO DOOR SALES

Raising funds for the Wurlitzer Organ Trust of Auckland

How many times have you been to a movie or show and thought; "I could go see that again!?" No doubt this could also apply to some of our Wurlitzer shows, so we're giving you the chance to relive some of those great moments.

During our latter days at the Hollywood Cinema, we introduced the concept of video projection of the organ console, relayed through the theatre projection plant on to the "big screen". During shows that featured additional artists we were able to add extra cameras and create even more magic on the big screen. After the show, the footage captured, together with sound, was merged together thanks to our videographers and these have given us some spectacular video memories.

It is from this video archive that we now present some *Magic Moments* with a couple of international artists at our Wurlitzer organ joined by guest entertainers.

The show will take the format of a normal concert presentation.

- **Doors open at 1.30pm (NOTE NEW TIME)**
- **We'll have a raffle, thanks to our new "Raffle Lady" Phyllis Robinson**
- **During interval there will be tea/coffee/orange juice available for \$2.00 in the Supper Room adjacent to the foyer**

This event is not open to the public, but you are more than welcome to bring friends along to enjoy the afternoon with you.

THIS & THAT FROM HERE & THERE.....



It must be noted, that since the start of this year, many of you have rallied to the cause and when renewing your subs for the year, have added a donation to your payment.

At this critical time in WOTA's history, these gifts are essential to aid the Trust in keeping solvent and continuing to ensure the Wurlitzer organ is in safe hands while in storage.

To all the following good people, please accept our heart-felt thanks;

D.	Barnard	J.	Davis	Juliet	Holdaway	D.	Rainbird
N.	Bayliss	R.	Davis	L.	Howe	D.	Rawlinson
D.	Billing	G.J.	Davy	W.	Hutchinson	R.	Reade
M.	Blayney	J.	Dekker	W.L.	Johns	P.	Retter
J.	Bouwman	R.D.	Dillon	D.	Johnson	V.J.	Richmond
G.	Bowden	H.A.	Dorbeck	J.	Jones	P.	Robinson
L. & J.	Boyd	V.	Duff	A.	Koke	A.	Ryan
P.	Brady	E.	Eyles	M.	Matheson	B.M.	Sherson
C.	Bright	A.	Freer	Ms	McBride	B.	Stevens
L.	Brooky	J.	Fryer	A.	McCarrison	B.	Teague
N.	Brownlee	B.	Galvin	V.E.	McMurtry	C.	Tyler
K.	Burling	P.	Garlick	I.	Mison	G.	Urquhart
J.	Burnett	M.	Grace	C.	Mountfort	P.	Vellekoop
C.	Carstairs	S.	Hamp	C.	Neill	R.	Wainwright
L.	Cassin	J.	Hardicker	W.	Oldfield	P.	Wallace
T.	Cheeseman	P.	Hassall	D.	Parker	G.	Watt
T.M.	Clements	I.	Helberg	H.	Perkins	M.	White
D.	Clouston	B.	Hemming	J.	Petersen	N.	Whitehead
M.	Cox	J.	Herle	S. & P.	Phillips	J.	Wills
S.	Crawley	K. & J.	Hill	H.	Plesner	G.	Wingate
L. & T.	Creighton	J.	Hipperson	F.	Pogson	A.	Wolstenholme
L.	Davey	Jan	Holdaway	J.	Prujean		

Substantial donations were received from;

A.L. Bartlett
J.P. & B.M. Briand

B. Lawson
B. & M. Massey

G. Upton

INTRODUCING SOMETHING NEW FOR OUR SHOWS

The Waitakere Playhouse Theatre Trust (WPTT) who own and administer the building, have been so welcoming to WOTA and are as keen as we are to get the organ singing once again! So with our move to the Playhouse Theatre and the certainty of more shows taking place when the Wurlitzer is up and playing, it's probably a good time to introduce some new initiatives for our shows.

- With 230 seats, the Playhouse is a much easier theatre in which to seat an audience, so doors will now open at 1.30pm – PLEASE NOTE NEW TIME
- During intermission breaks, we all like a little something to “wet the whistle” and with the coffee vans no longer able to attend our shows, the WPTT suggested we consider the fabulous facilities available in the theatre’s Supper Room. So from now on, during the interval, we will have tea, coffee and orange juice which will be available for \$2.00ea thanks to some wonderful people who have volunteered to staff the Supper Room for us during the interval break. However please do remember, that no food or drink can be taken into the auditorium.

CLOSING CHORDS

It was with much sadness that we learned of the passing of the former owner of our Wurlitzer pipe organ, Mr Les Stenersen, who slipped away Tuesday April 25. Organ Builder John Parker placed a detailed tribute on Facebook which we reprint here with John’s approval. Back in the late 1970s, when he met Les, John was an apprentice with the famed, Auckland based, organ building firm of George Croft & Sons Ltd.

“I am shocked and saddened to hear that Les Stenersen - my former colleague and partner in the Hollywood Wurlitzer organ, passed away on Anzac Day.

I was in my late teens when Les and I met at the Museum of Transport & Technology - I became a member of his "Recorded Sound" section, and through that, began my love of player-pianos.

Les purchased the 1926 Wurlitzer organ ex- Regent Theatre Auckland in 1978, asking me to head the restoration team to install it at the Hollywood Theatre, Avondale. After four years hard work by volunteers, Opus 1475 was re-opened in November 1982 by Tony Fenelon and Margaret Hall.

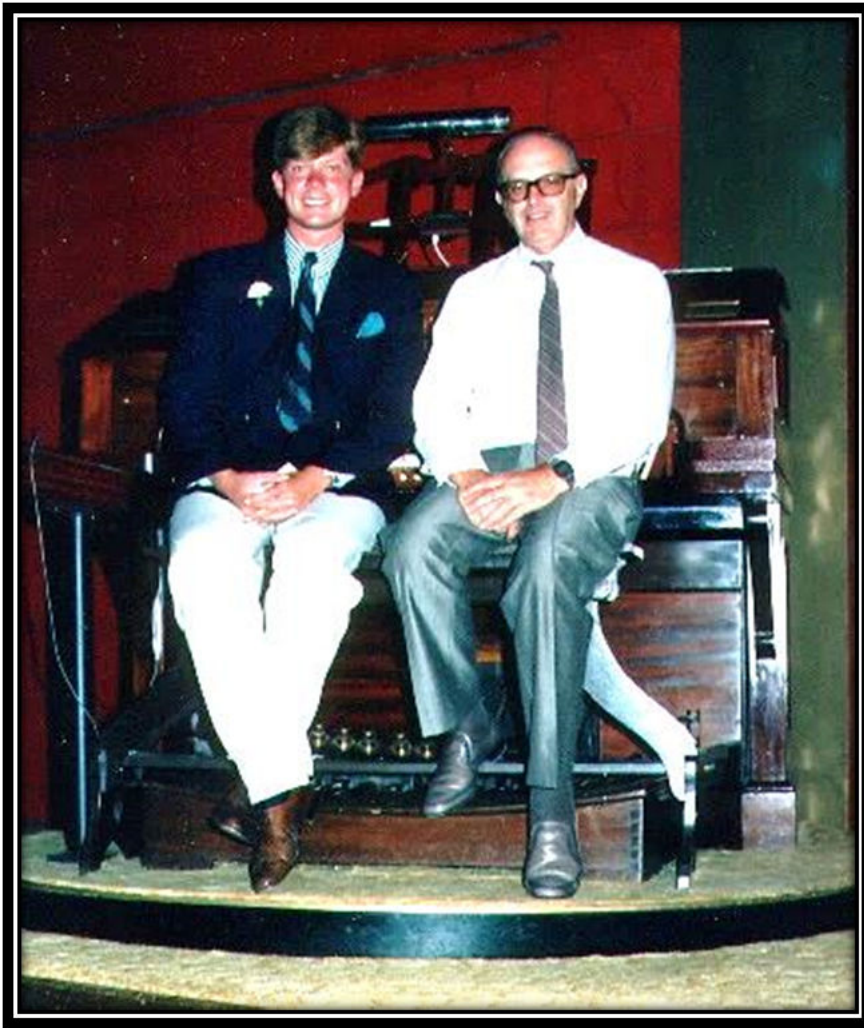
From that date the organ was presented by numerous organists, both New Zealanders and overseas, to mention but a few...

Tony Fenelon
Margaret Hall
Brett Morris
John Hardicker
Neil Jensen

Warren Lubich
Fr James Miller
Dr John Atwell
John Giacchi
Cliff Bingham

Allison Mattson
Phil Kelsall
Robert Wolfe
Chris Powell

From those early days things changed: I moved to Sydney, Australia in 1987 and Les eventually sold the organ to the newly formed "Wurlitzer Organ Trust of Auckland" in the mid 1990's.



Pictured above – UK organist Robert Wolfe seated at the Hollywood Wurlitzer console, February 1989.

The Trust, 'not backward in coming forward', instituted a major upgrade of the instrument and a total re-vamp of the concert promotion, all with a view to raising funds for the rejuvenation of the instrument.

I could go on and on about the further wonderful work carried on by James Duncan and his Trust members, but it must be remembered that without Les Stenersen's original 'vision'.... Auckland possibly would have had NO Wurlitzer at all.

Go Rest in Peace Les Stenersen.... I know this organ turned you hair grey 😊 We certainly had our ups and downs over it, but I know for a fact (although you no longer owned it) you were very proud to see it rising as a three manual with Tony Fenelon again at the keys.

VALE Les Stenersen"

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

When people think of an organ in a theatre, the name "Wurlitzer" is the first to spring to mind. Although pioneered by Robert Hope Jones and the Wurlitzer Company in the USA, there were other theatre organ builders who produced similar instruments to the acclaimed Wurlitzer. In the USA there was *Robert Morton*, *Page* and *Kimball* just to name three, in the UK the *John Compton Company* really monopolised the British market, as the price of their instruments was very competitive with the much higher priced Wurlitzer, made worse by hefty import tax slapped on the USA product.

There was also another famous British organ building company called *Hill, Norman & Beard* who produced classical/church pipe organs and spectacular town hall organs, examples of which are found right here in New Zealand. However, with the popularity of theatre pipe organs in the 1920s, and the huge demand for product being enjoyed by the Wurlitzer Company at this time, *Hill, Norman & Beard* joined the party and built their own theatre organs, naming them "Christie".

Thanks to Mike Gillies, editor of "TIBIA", the newsletter for the Theatre Organ Society of Australia's Queensland Division (TOSAQ), we reproduce a recent article featured in their newsletter outlining the story behind the "Christie" name.

Pictured is TOSA Queensland's beautiful 3/11 Christie theatre pipe organ installed in the school hall of the Kelvin Grove High School in Brisbane.

Image courtesy Classikon



The Organ that gave Birth to the Christie - John Christie's Home Organ



By Mike Gillies, TOSAQ Tibia Editor

Wealthy Englishman John Christie inherited the stately family home 'Glyndebourne' in 1920 after the death of his grandfather William Langham Christie in 1913. An amateur organist, John Christie set about adding an organ room to the house as part of renovations around 1921-22.

The 24m long room almost doubled the façade length on the southern side of the building. He commissioned the organ builders Wm Hill & Son and Norman & Beard Ltd to build a pipe organ to go into this space at one end. This organ was one of the largest organs in Britain outside of a cathedral or concert hall.

The organ was enlarged in subsequent years and by now Christie owned considerable shares in the HN&B company. Both John Christie and friend and fellow Etonian Dr Lloyd gained considerable enjoyment playing the magnificent instrument.

The organ room was used for music evenings and to dabble in his other love, opera. Amateur opera nights and instrumental performances followed. During one such evening in 1931 Christie met his future wife, soprano Audrey Mildmay, and during their honeymoon they travelled across Europe attending the various music festivals such as at Bayreuth and Salzburg.

***Audrey and John Christie
pictured at Glyndebourne in 1948***

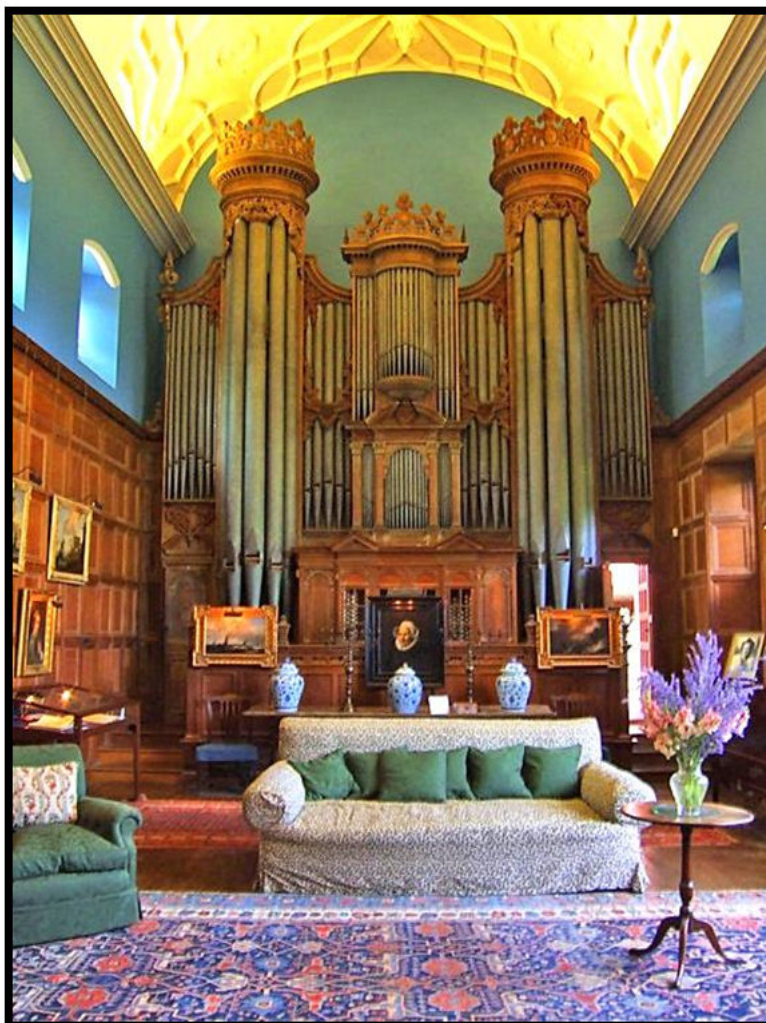
This trip gave John Christie the idea to present such similar music events at home. He was particularly smitten by Mozart's operas and wanted to perform them to invited guests at Glyndebourne. He wished it to be an intimate embracing of classical opera for all to enjoy. But he needed a theatre to house the operas. He planned to enlarge the organ room but his wife talked him into 'doing it properly' and a small 300-seat theatre was built complete with orchestra pit and stage lighting.



Their first festival opened in 1934. Its first season was a triumph and made Glyndebourne a name in opera festival circles internationally. Further expansion in both the building and opera repertoire followed. The substantial gardens were used for relaxing and dining during the long intervals. During World War Two the house was used for evacuated children to live in.

When John Christie died in 1962, it was his son George who took over running the festival. By 1977 the theatre seated 800 and the opera festival continued to be popular. In 1994 a new theatre was built seating 1200 people.

***Glyndebourne
Organ Room today***



Today only the decorative pipe facade and organ console remain at Glyndebourne. After the war, all the pipes and winding components were donated to the Horse Guards Chapel at Wellington Barracks, London. The chapel was destroyed by a flying bomb during the 1944 Blitz and rebuilt in the 1960s.

But back in 1923, it was the thrill of playing his wonderful pipe organ in Glyndebourne that encouraged John Christie to buy out Hill Norman and Beard organ builders. He saw the opening for cinema organs in Britain using the new technologies developed by Robert Hope-Jones, and thus enabled the birth of cinema pipe organs that bore his surname. John Christie was a man of the performing arts—and silent film was, after all, just opera without singing.

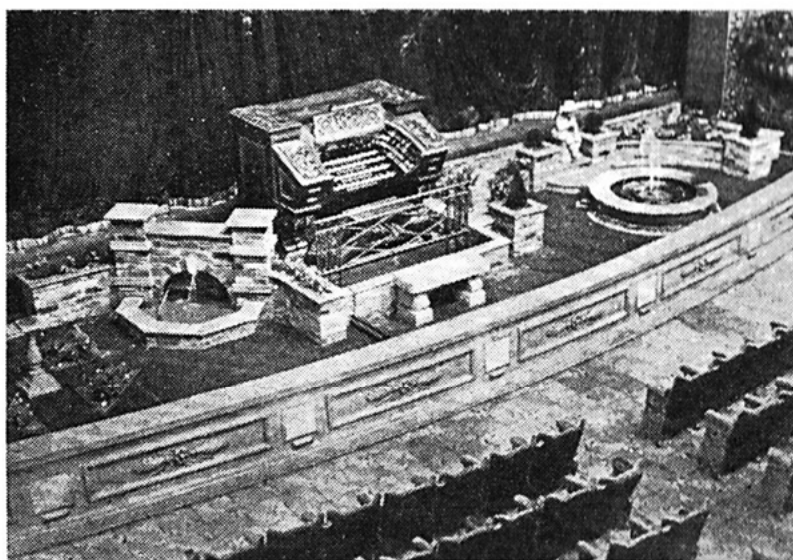
MAY 1933

THE CINEMA ORGAN HERALD

67

CHRISTIE ORGANS

The largest and finest Unit Organ installed in Europe is the "Christie" at the Regal, Marble Arch



The Christie Console at Regal, Marble Arch, London



Sydney Torch, the famous Organist at Regal, Marble Arch

This wonderful organ comprises 32 tonal units, the most complete range of percussions and effects including a genuine 32-note carillon. It weighs 15 tons and contains approximately 3,000 pipes ranging from half an inch to 32 feet in length. The console is fitted with 450 stop keys, pistons, and controls. The Organ also controls a full size Grand Piano.

Ask your Music Dealer to demonstrate Columbia Records made by Sydney Torch at the Regal Organ

WEST-END SHOWROOMS & OFFICES:

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Telephone:
GERRARD 2357

Telegrams:
GERRARD 2357

(Courtesy of Hill, Norman & Beard, Ltd.).

With our Wurlitzer pipe organ coming out of storage later this year, we hope this doesn't occur!!



Courtesy T.J.Gaffney

MAGIC MOMENTS ON VIDEO

SELECTIONS FROM OUR VIDEO ARCHIVE
FEATURING THE FORMER
HOLLYWOOD WURLITZER

**SUNDAY
JUNE 25
AT 2PM**

(DOORS OPEN 1.30PM)



ALL SEATS \$15.00

ADMISSION BY TICKET ONLY

NO DOOR SALES – BOOKINGS CLOSE JUNE 23
SEE BOOKING FORM WITH THIS NEWSLETTER

**A FUND RAISING EVENT FOR THE
WURLITZER ORGAN TRUST OF AUCKLAND**

Tea/Coffee/Orange Juice during interval- \$2.00

NEWS FLASH! –

As we go to print, Graham Upton, Architect looking after the organ chamber project for the *Waitakere Playhouse Theatre Trust* advised that Auckland Council had granted Resource Consent. This is a great milestone and means we can move with confidence to the next stage – preparing detailed design and working drawings.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY....

CONCERT TICKET ENQUIRIES & RESERVATIONS

**JAN NANCEKIVELL – PH: 522-8944
OR E-MAIL: JANDENISE@XTRA.CO.NZ**

**THE PLAYHOUSE THEATRE
15 GLENDALE ROAD, GLEN EDEN**



SUNDAY JUNE 25 – *Magic Moments on Video*

Selections from previous shows at the Hollywood Cinema featuring international theatre organists at the console of the ex-Regent Theatre Auckland Wurlitzer pipe organ and guest entertainers. **No Door Sales - Bookings Close June 23.**



THE WURLITZER ORGAN TRUST OF AUCKLAND

*(A REGISTERED
CHARITABLE TRUST - CC 10966)*

**PRESERVING THE HISTORIC
FORMER REGENT THEATRE AUCKLAND,
1926 WURLITZER PIPE ORGAN.**

www.theatreorgans.com/wota

Organ Piano and Keyboard Society of Auckland 98 Captain Springs Rd, Onehunga

Mini Concerts every 4th Wednesday in the month with a featured theme are;

- Wednesday May 24th 10.30am – *The Seasons*
- Wednesday June 21st 10.30am – *Animals*

Contact Rob or Barbara on PH: 838-7346



**THE
WURLITZER ORGAN TRUST
of AUCKLAND**

(REG. CHARITABLE TRUST No.10966)

Visit us at:

www.theatreorgans.com/wota

CHAIRMAN:	Mr James Duncan <i>Concert Manager/Newsletter Editor</i>	PH: 525-7067
SECRETARY:	Mrs Carol Neill	PH: 575-8645
TREASURER:	Mr John Palmer	PH: (07) 855-3267
PROJECT LEADER ORGAN REINSTALLATION:	Mr Neil Warrington	PH: 828-4934
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##

**FRIENDS of the WURLITZER MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY
and CONCERT TICKETS:**

Mrs Jan Nancekivell

PH: 522-8944



**SUPPORTING
THE WURLITZER ORGAN TRUST
OF AUCKLAND**