



PIPES

&

PERCUSSION

202
JUNE
2023

**NEWSLETTER FOR
THE FRIENDS OF THE WURLITZER**

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

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UNDER THE AUSPICES OF
THE WURLITZER ORGAN TRUST of AUCKLAND
www.theatreorgans.com/wota

CLUB AFTERNOON- SUNDAY 18 JUNE @ 2PM

I'm guessing the confusion over dates for the coming Club Afternoon has put many of you off! Although it was correctly mentioned in our last newsletter in two places, the main banner had it wrong as 18 May. My sincere apologies.

Please know that it ***IS*** on ***Sunday 18 June @ 2pm.***

So far, only ten members have booked, which is going to make the Trust over a \$1k loss – a figure that will cost us dearly. We understand that like us, you are missing the Wurlitzer and getting frustrated by the time it is taking to get it installed, but these Club Afternoons are the best that WOTA can do, to try and feed your hunger for the sights and sounds of the theatre pipe organ. Please do reconsider and come along and join us in June.

The organ installation continues apace and what a wonderful job our organ builders Richard Larritt and Peter Hosking are doing. They in turn are very complementary about the contribution from our Project Manager Neil Warrington and team member John Swales. Richard and Peter will be here at the end of the May for the next phase with the aim of getting some wind inflating the regulators. To this end, the two big organ blowers have been run-up and tested with both running sweetly. We've also purchased a new vacuum motor for the piano and are sourcing a replacement power supply rectifier for the organ's low voltage control system and electric action.

THE WURLITZER ORGAN TRUST of AUCKLAND

Invite you to our

FRIENDS OF THE WURLITZER CLUB AFTERNOON

Sunday June 18 @ 2pm

Playhouse Theatre, 15 Glendale Rd, Glen Eden

Doors open 1.30pm

*Enjoy a play-in to the show on piano from 1.30-2pm
by Margaret Massey & John Hardicker*

From 1.30pm, the organ chambers will be open for you to see the work in progress thus far, especially as Richard & Peter from Adelaide will have just completed another week of work on the organ installation. Access to the chambers is from the carpark beside the theatre.

Meantime, in the auditorium, **Margaret Massey** and **John Hardicker** will serenade you with music on the Playhouse Theatre's piano.

At 2pm, we begin our video "pot-pourri" program, which features an hour of amazing clips from the internet. These feature some of your favourite organists, playing theatre organs in the most unusual places from Gt Britain to the USA!! We round the program off with a 20-minute tribute from our days at the Hollywood Cinema. We screened this particular video at a previous Club Afternoon a few years back, but it will serve to remind us of the great entertainment we once enjoyed at the Hollywood, and now eagerly await to hear again here at the Playhouse Theatre.



After the video show, we adjourn to the Playhouse Theatre Supper Room for afternoon tea before heading home.

**Do hope you will join
us on
Sunday 18 June.**

Showtime is 2pm.

PRIVATE FUNCTION FOR FOTW MEMBERS & FRIENDS

\$15.00 each

NO TICKETS ISSUED AND NO DOOR SALES!

Attendees will be checked in on arrival.

Please call/email Jan to organise your payment for the event

PH: 522-8944 / jandenise@xtra.co.nz

INTERNET BANK PAYMENT

Account Name: The Wurlitzer Organ Trust of Auckland

Account Number: 12-3045-0449278-00

Quote the following:

PARTICULARS: **Your Name** / **REFERENCE:** **Club Doo**

Bookings Close Wednesday June 14

NO DOOR SALES

Once again, with still no organ for your enjoyment, instead of asking for subscription renewals, in return for the outstanding and loyal support you have given WOTA, the Trust is waiving annual subs this year in lieu of a donation to help us keep the organisation solvent. Remember please, all donations are Tax deductible, and we issue receipts for all donations over \$5.00.

**ARE YOU MAKING A PAYMENT
INTO THE WOTA BANK ACCOUNT?**

Call/email Jan

FIRST to advise that you are making a payment.

**If you don't tell us that you are paying money into our
account – we will not know to look out for it.**

**This means no admission to the show or
no receipt issued for a much-needed donation.**

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IN APPRECIATION

As you all know, we waived Annual Subscriptions last year, in lieu of a donation, and once again, members have been so generous in helping the Trust continue and see the organ installation to its completion. To the following good people, please accept our heart-felt thanks;

L. & J.	Boyd	J.	Holdaway	V.	McMurtry
I.	Clarke	I & A.	Johnston	T.	McNally
D.	Clouston	R.	Kilroy	C.	Tyler
L. & T.	Creighton	B.	King	E.	Vujnovich
J.	Dekker	M.	Massey	K.	Webster
M.	Grace	A.	McCarrison	G.	Wingate
S.	Hamp	G.	McGhie		

THE MISSING LINK TO THE NZ WURLITZER STORY

In late April, John Palmer, Bill Ridge and yours truly represented WOTA at an exciting handover ceremony. John Palmer now tells the story.....



What is this? Well, it's an extraordinary instrument that precedes the conventional theatre organs that we know, such as our Mighty Wurlitzer. Built by the Rudolph Wurlitzer Company, this **Model K Photoplayer** was designed to accompany silent movies. It was installed in the Strand Theatre in Queen Street, Auckland in 1915. These instruments were where it all began... The console contains a piano and two organ roll players. On the left a percussion box, on the right an organ box. The instrument can be played by a musician seated at the console or, like a player piano, the paper rolls are punched with holes which are instructions to the organ which produces the music. There are two rolls, when one concludes, the other starts.

Cleverer than that, you can alternate between rolls. One might have romantic sentimental music on it, the other perhaps a car chase. The operator can switch between rolls, and I'm told that in some theatres, this action can be controlled from the projection box.

The organ is played from the top manual (keyboard), the piano from the bottom manual. Hard to see in these images, but there is a row of buttons, below the piano manual, which set off the sound effects like a car horn, siren etc.

There are thirteen foot pedals which also have sound effects and percussions on them, not sure how you remember which is which. The image below, shows the inner workings of the organ with the display covers removed from the chamber boxes and the console.



In 2010, ***The Photoplayer Restoration Trust*** was formed to restore this classic instrument, the remains of which had been found in a garden shed in Auckland. In 2014, shortly after I'd moved to Hamilton, I had the privilege of seeing the instrument at the start of its restoration. Back then, it was not much more than a console and a few other bits and pieces. The Trust displayed it at the Homes Show at the Claudelands Event Centre. There, I met Don Paynter, the Trust Secretary and Kevin Hanna. Kevin, a piano tuner and restorer for some seventeen years, played a major part in the restoration with his partner, Nathan Smith.

The Sanfilippo Foundation in Illinois USA, which has its own amazing collection of orchestrions and a photoplayer, gave Kevin and Nathan a significant amount of help during the restoration. The Sanfilippo Foundation also has a Wurlitzer Pipe Organ. The spectacular Opus #1571 was built in 1927 for the Riviera Theatre in Omaha. It now boasts five manuals and eighty ranks. The organ has been played by Ken Double and Jelani Eddington; both well-known artists to us here in Auckland.

On Saturday 22nd April, WOTA Chairman James Duncan, fellow Trustee Bill Ridge and I, travelled to Puketotara (near Pirongia), about 45 minutes from Hamilton, to attend the transfer of guardianship of the Photoplayer, to Kevin Hanna and Nathan Smith, where it will be displayed in their private museum. We were blown away by what we saw at their amazing collection.

Not only the wonderful Wurlitzer Photoplayer, but nine other orchestrions. All in beautifully restored condition, all in working order.



At left, is the Banjo Orchestra built by the D.C. Ramey Piano Co in Chicago.

Yes, that is a real banjo inside!

You'll notice the music rolls on top.

A forerunner of the jukebox, it has a slot on the right-hand side for dropping in a nickel to play a tune.



***Another beautiful orchestrion,
also playing for a nickel.***



***...still more. These were usually
located in restaurants and hotels.***

Over the years, the Wurlitzer Organ Trust of Auckland had provided *Letters of Support* to the Photoplayer Restoration Trust. These letters helped to validate the reputation of the Photoplayer Trust with their applications for funding.

The now completed Wurlitzer Photoplayer can be dismantled for easy moving, and it is the intention that the instrument can be set up and displayed at other locations.

For our Trust, what a find. Kevin and Nathan are keen to give our piano a good spruce up and get involved with our installation. When you add this to the great work being done by Richard Larritt and Peter Hosking and our Neil Warrington and his team, we can look forward to one VERY MIGHTY Wurlitzer in the Playhouse. Our piano was originally a Wurlitzer "Piano-Console" organ, installed in the Cosy Théâtre in Masterton.



The Photoplayer Trust with Kevin Hanna and Nathan Smith on the right



**THE
WURLITZER ORGAN TRUST
of AUCKLAND**

(REG. CHARITABLE TRUST No.10966)

Visit us at:

www.theatreorgans.com/wota

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

Mrs Jan Denise

PH: 522-8944



THE MOTAT SOCIETY



SUPPORTING THE WURLITZER ORGAN TRUST of AUCKLAND