



*PIPES*

*&*

*PERCUSSION*

199  
SEPTEMBER  
2022

**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](http://www.theatreorgans.com/wota)

## ***HAVE WE GOT NEWS FOR YOU !***

Friends, at long last, major work is going to begin on the installation of the Wurlitzer organ. In the last few months there has been much communication back and forth with Australia.

With the NZ borders now open to our Aussie friends, we learnt that our Melbourne Organ Building team had an exciting new project, the relocation of the Dendy Theatre Wurlitzer in the Melbourne suburb of Brighton, back to its original home, the Capitol Theatre in Melbourne city. With the Auckland job weighing heavy on their commitments, Julien and Mark Arnold were trying to work out how to juggle two very important organ projects on both sides of the Tasman. ***See inside for more...***

With events once again taking place all over the city, we are rescheduling our postponed April Club Afternoon to now take place on ***Sunday November 6 @ 2pm at the Playhouse Theatre, Glen Eden.***

**See over the page for the afternoon get together in November.....**

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

**THE WURLITZER ORGAN TRUST of AUCKLAND**

*Invite you to our*

**FRIENDS OF THE WURLITZER  
CLUB AFTERNOON**

**Sunday November 6 @ 2.pm**

**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*

**Under Covid "Orange" - Masks should be worn  
but can be removed during afternoon tea.**

**Vaccine Passes are no longer a requirement,  
but under the "Orange Traffic Light", masks should be worn.**

**OK to remove for afternoon tea.**

**We will aim to have good ventilation in the foyer during that period.**

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Although promoted back in our February newsletter, here are the details once again on this amazing video show that features an instrument regarded as the world's largest Wurlitzer pipe organ. The show features two of the USA's top entertainers – **Jelani Eddington** and **Zach Frame**.

This presentation comes from the magnificent residence of the late Jasper Sanfilippo. Jasper, born in 1931, made his fortune working in his father's nut business, John B. Sanfilippo & Son, Inc. In 1963 upon his father's death, when the company's annual sales were just \$383,000, he assumed day to day control. Over the subsequent decades, Sanfilippo built the business into first a regional, and then national major nut supplier, and in 1991, Sanfilippo led the company in becoming listed on the Nasdaq, with then annual revenues of \$151 million. In 1995 the Sanfilippo business acquired the Fisher nut brand from Procter & Gamble, which later became the best-selling recipe nut brand in the United States.

Jasper had a great love of mechanical musical instruments and created a music room to house a stunning collection of restored instruments. Housing the collection, the Sanfilippo "Place de La Musique", recreates the Victorian era of the first movie palaces, with architectural details. The Music Theatre can seat 350 and houses the largest theatre pipe organ ever built. The overall experience is an auditory and visual immersion in one of the most exciting eras.

The nucleus of the theatre organ, (Wurlitzer opus #1571, built in 1927 for the Riviera Theatre in Omaha) has been expanded to 80 ranks of pipes – that's around 5000 pipes!! The overall result is the most versatile orchestral theatre pipe organ ever built. Behind the scrim are five chambers containing pipes, percussions, wind regulators and controls in a four-story-tall area. The console is patterned after the original from Chicago's Paradise Theatre; it is mounted on the original organ console lift from the Granada Theatre. Mounted on the wall to the left are the 32' Diaphone pipes, and to the right are the 32' Bombarde pipes. A 32-note set of Deagan Tower Bells, the largest of which weighs 426 lb., hang on each side of the room. To the rear of the room, the 'Ethereal' pipe chamber in the attic echoes softly from the skylight area, while the brass 'Trumpet Imperial' and copper 'Bugle Battaglia' speak with great authority from the back wall.

Every year, Jasper Sanfilippo presented a concert series, with all the proceeds assisting charities serving children, families, arts and culture through the Sanfilippo Foundation. Since his passing in 2020, his family continue this legacy.

At the console for our video-visit to the Sanfilippo "Place de La Musique", will be **Jelani Eddington**, well known to you all from his regular visits to play for us back in our Hollywood Cinema days.



Sharing the program is a new face for you (pictured left) – **Zach Frame**. Zach is the artist in residence at the Wurlitzer organ of the Organ Piper Pizza Restaurant, in Wisconsin.

We look forward to sharing this video-concert with you **and....** sharing a cuppa afterwards.

**See over for ticket details.**

## **PRIVATE FUNCTION FOR FOTW MEMBERS & FRIENDS**

### **MASKS TO BE WORN**

**\$15.00 each**

***NO TICKETS ISSUED AND NO DOOR SALES!***

***Attendees will be checked in on arrival.***

**Please call/email Jan to organize your payment for the event**

**PH: 522-8944 / [jandenise@xtra.co.nz](mailto: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 November 2<sup>nd</sup>**

**NO DOOR SALES**

### **PAYING WITHOUT CHEQUES !**

If you are not skilled at internet banking, we suggest that you go into your bank with this newsletter and ask them to make the payment to our account, as listed above. Make sure you have photo I.D. or Drivers Licence as proof of who you are.

If they try to chase you out to the ATM machine outside, please remind them that *THEY* removed cheques as a payment option, and therefore, *they* need to take care of payments such as these, on your behalf.

If you wish to make a donation, please include this with your payment.

### **MAKING A DONATION ?**

Please follow the steps outlined above.

1. Call or Email Jan to advise that a payment is being made
2. Make the payment by internet banking or visit your bank to organize payment

**Call/email Jan to advise that you are making a payment into the WOTA Bank Account – failure to notify, will see no admission to the show or receipt issued for a donation.**

**PH: 522-8944 / [jandenise@xtra.co.nz](mailto:jandenise@xtra.co.nz)**



## **NEWS FROM THE ORGAN CHAMBERS !**

Neil Warrington and his team have been attending to a number of small "behind-the-scenes" tasks, in preparation for a visit from our Australian organ building team.

As noted in the editorial, the Arnolds were in a real quandary, having two projects each requiring action sooner, not later. So, the Wurlitzer Organ Trust of Auckland reached a very amicable separation from our agreement with Julien and Mark to enable them to commit needed time to the Dendy job. But....as one door closes another one opens and thanks to "matchmaker" John Fuhrmann in Perth, he brought us together with **Richard Larritt** and **Peter Hosking** from Adelaide, who have offered help to see our beleaguered organ install project finally fulfilled.

Both men have a long association with the Capri Theatre in Adelaide, where they continue to keep this massive Wurlitzer organ living up to the word "MIGHTY".



For a bit of background, Richard Larritt has been a professional organ builder and craftsman for nearly 50 years. It's been his life's job (and passion) and if not satisfied with that, he has a very fine 3/16 theatre pipe organ that he installed in his home. *(Console pictured left)*

Peter Hosking was a Telstra tech officer most of his career. He got hooked on the theatre organ sound at the age of 13 but left it until he was in his forties before taking up studies.

On organ projects, Peter has been Richard's tuning assistant, wireman, electronics sounding board and almost anything else you could think of for 14 years.

Today, Richard and Peter still work together for special

projects and as well as work in the chambers of the Capri Theatre Wurlitzer, both men are players and part of the team performing for the film sessions.

The two men will be in Auckland in September to help our team get the big work started in the organ chambers, and will leave us some homework to undertake, until their return, for a couple of weeks in January and another big push.

## **IN APPRECIATION**

**As you all know, we waived Annual Subscriptions this year, in lieu of a donation, so many of you have, once again, been so generous in helping the Trust with your donations.**

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

D.	Barnard	D.	Handley	R.	Read
A.L.	Bartlett	J.	Hipperson	P.	Retter
D.	Billing	R.J.	Hunter	V. & D.	Richmond
L. & J.	Boyd	D.	Johnson	O.	Saran
J. & B.	Briand	J.	Jones	J.	Stallard
N.	Brownlee	R.	Kilroy	B.J.	Stevens
C.	Carstairs	A.	Koke	B.	Teague
T.	Cheeseman	C.	Lamdin	C.	Tyler
T.	Clements	B.	Lawson	G.	Urquhart
D.	Clouston	J.	London	E.	Vujnovich
L.	Clunie	D. & M.	Matheson	R.	Wainwright
S.	Crawley	L.	Mathews	P.	Wallace
L. & T.	Creighton	A.	McCarrison	G.	Watt
S.	David	G.	McGhie	K.	Webster
R.J.	Davis	I.	McHardy	M.	White
J.	Dekker	V.	McMurtry	G.	Wills
S.	Downer	W.	Oldfield	G.	Wingate
J.	Foster	P. & S.	Phillips	A.	Wolstenholme
M.	Grace	F.	Pogson		
S.	Hamp	D.	Rawlinson		

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### **Substantial donations were received from;**

- |  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| ▪ American Theatre Organ Society         | ▪ John Hardicker |
| ▪ Western Districts Community Foundation | ▪ Barry King     |
|  | ▪ Raewyn Reade   |

Further to the above, WOTA Treasurer John Palmer notes;

*As frustrating as the Organ Installation is at times, we are blessed with so many who are making it all possible with generous donations. It recently just got even better!*

*In March 2019, we applied to ATOS (American Theatre Organ Society) for USD4500 towards the project, and then, heard no more about it. In February 2022, James got a request for an update on the installation as part of the reporting requirements for giving us the Grant. What Grant we replied, we've not received any money nor even had our application acknowledged.*

*In short, with Ken Double's help (former ATOS CEO) and Dave Calendine (ATOS Treasurer), this has now been rectified and we have received a grant of USD4500, approx. NZD6500 in the Bank!*

## **CLOSING CHORDS**

It is with much sadness, that I need to share news of the passing of two of our longest-serving and founding Trustees of WOTA, and very much familiar faces to all of you.

### ***Bill Mitchelhill – 08/06/2022***

After almost 95 years on this earth, Bill's final days saw him laid low with Covid, then a fall which led to time in hospital, that saw other viruses take hold and finally pneumonia set in.

Bill had been part of the Hollywood Cinema Wurlitzer organ story from day one! As a member of the Kiwi Chapter of the American Theatre Organ Society, Bill and the team travelled to Wellington in 1978 to help load the organ from its storage location into two 20ft containers. They then followed the organ by road back to Auckland, arriving just on midnight, to unload the containers and transfer the thousands of "bits" into the under-stage area at the Hollywood. He was actively involved in helping with the installation of the organ and was immensely thrilled when, in 1982, Australian organist Tony Fenelon brought the console up at the dedication concert, bringing theatre organ entertainment back to Auckland.

Then in 1992, the late Les Stenersen, owner of the organ, announced his desire to sell the Wurlitzer, so a group of key supporters who helped at the concerts, formed the *Wurlitzer Organ Trust of Auckland*, with Bill Mitchelhill being appointed Founding Chairman.

Under Bill's careful leadership, the Trust had the organ improved and enlarged to make it a world-class instrument. The finished product saw theatre organists from all over the world come and have fun playing this amazing organ, entertaining audiences between 300 and 400 at the Hollywood.

But Bill had been a wonderful friend and confidant to me, your scribe, together with his partner Bill Ridge. They were both there for me, getting me through the highs and lows of life.

In 2005, Bill wanted to attend an American Theatre Organ Society Convention and asked if I would accompany him. It happened to be the 50th Annual Convention of the ATOS, held in L.A. and what a musical treat it was. On the way up to the USA, "Young Bill" accompanied "Old Bill" and I to Hawaii for a few days holiday, before Old Bill and I went on to L.A.

While in Hawaii, we visited Pearl Harbour and made that sobering trip out to the *USS Arizona* where thousands of men perished when the ship was sunk during that "day of infamy" in 1941.

Bill's service was held on Monday 13 June 2022, and I was devastated to not be able to attend, as I was fighting a nasty bout of Covid. A small number were on hand to farewell "Old Bill", and former Hollywood Cinema organist, Ron Clark, provided the music for the celebration of Bill's life.





***Bill Mitchehill on the left, with some of the WOTA Organ Team,  
at UK Organist Simon Gledhill's post-show dinner.  
October 2003. Photo John Parker***



***LEFT: A proud achievement for  
WOTA Chairman Bill Mitchehill. –  
A FULL HOUSE for  
a Wurlitzer show - March 2006.***



**Farewell old friend!**



## **Ron Clark – 26/08/2022**

Here I am again, the bearer of more sad news - we lost another of our founding Trustees of the Wurlitzer Organ Trust of Auckland - Ron Clark crossed the Rainbow Bridge following a short spell in hospital, he was aged 82.

Ron became involved with the Hollywood Wurlitzer organ back in the mid-1980s, when we needed a Resident Organist to perform not only concerts, but silent movie shows. This, Ron really excelled in and helped present the Wurlitzer organ to a whole new audience.

He was one of our nine founding Trustees of WOTA in 1993, and with his good business sense, was able to source funding through the ASB Trust, enabling WOTA to pay the final balance owed on the Wurlitzer organ, in 1995.

It was not only his regular appearances at the console, entertaining audiences at the Hollywood Cinema, but Ron's "back-office" skills that were still in hot demand, as we then began to look at a program to help make the organ shine. With his business acumen, Ron helped financially manage the massive ten-year project of turning the Hollywood Wurlitzer from a tired box of whistles, into what was later to be regarded as New Zealand's "showcase" Wurlitzer pipe organ – a cost just short of \$100k! This project earned Ron the affectionate nickname of "The Clark of Works".

With a new-look 3 manual console, and 16 ranks of pipes, giving our organists a much bigger musical pallet of sounds to work with, Ron took the organ to new heights with the silent movie shows becoming increasingly popular.







***A little wooden Tibia organ pipe mounted into a trophy to express our appreciation to Ron Clark on his retirement from WOTA – October 2014.***



Like all of us, Ron was devastated in 2015, when the news broke that the Hollywood Cinema was up for sale and all that hard work had to be undone, as we loaded the organ into containers once again, and began the search for a new home.

***BELOW: Ron on the left, stands with the late Mat Mathew the Wurlitzer organ's curator for so many years, on stage at the Hollywood Cinema, here at the final show – August 2015. Photo Bill Ridge.***



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**As with our Founding Chairman, the Late Bill Mitchelhill, I am just sorry that Ron never got to hear our Wurlitzer organ sing once again, in its new home at the Playhouse Theatre in Glen Eden.**

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**THE  
WURLITZER ORGAN TRUST  
of AUCKLAND**

**(REG. CHARITABLE TRUST No.10966)**

Visit us at:

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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***