

Rod Blackmore's

AUSTRALASIAN THEATRE ORGANS

Western Australia section



Best known location:
**Community Centre,
Karrinyup (Perth)**

WurliTzer theatre organ
Opus No. 1728
(with additions)
3 manuals, 21 ranks

This organ is the former 2 manuals 12 ranks WurliTzer from the Regent/Metro theatre, Perth with a new 3 manual console and additional ranks.

The *Karrinyup Community Recreation Centre* was built in 1977 and is extremely well utilised by the *City of Stirling* residents and local groups. It is adjacent to the popular *Karrinyup* shopping centre. The main hall has a timber floor and measures approximately 252m². A large elevated stage is situated at one end and includes curtains, backdrops and stage lighting. The hall accommodates up to 350 people. There are also meeting rooms. *Karrinyup* is a suburb of the State's capital, *Perth*, about 7km north of the city.

In 1973 the *Wesley Trust*, owners of the 2/12 *WurliTzer* organ in the *Metro* theatre – see *Regent/Metro Perth story* - invited tenders for its purchase. *John Fuhrmann* (who had been the resident organist from 1966) and *Ray Clements* were the successful tenderers, narrowly beating an offer from the Town Council of the provincial city of *Kalgoorlie*. The organ was removed over a 5-week period by organ builder *Mick Dodd* and volunteers, and remained in storage at *Ray Clements'* nearby warehouse for 3 years.

The requirements for the organ's installation were in an architect's brief for the construction of the *Karrinyup Community Recreation Centre*, and included chambers with concrete floor and brick walls, lead-lined chamber, blower and console room doors, no right angle corners in the auditorium, triangular shaped chambers, a high auditorium ceiling, a motorised console platform, and blower/relay and console rooms. The console is on a motorised platform, emerging from its own room which has a roller shutter door. The parabolic ceiling of the auditorium is about 10m high and, with an audience, reverberation time is just under a second. A new *Discus* blower was purchased and the organ has 9 tremulants.

Elevated chambers either side of the stage allowed installation of four standard *WurliTzer* shutter assemblies. A main and solo chamber assembly angled at 45 degrees allow pipes to speak directly into the auditorium, while the second sets face each other across the stage, permitting useful volume control – important in a small building.

The 2 manual console from the *Metro* has been replaced with a 3 manual *WurliTzer* console that originally controlled opus number 977 in *Scheuters* theatre, *Long Beach, California USA* from 1924 (a style D organ of 6 ranks.) That organ was rebuilt by *WurliTzer* in 1934, becoming 3 manuals 8 ranks and installed in the studios of radio *KFPY* in *Spokane, Washington State*. In 1949 when *KFPY* moved location the organ was acquired by organbuilders *Balcom and Vaughn* (*Seattle*) and further extension occurred creating 3 manuals 10 ranks for the *Rolladium* skating rink. In the 1960s noted organ technician *Bill Carson* bought the organ and installed it in his home – adding the top portion of a *WurliTzer* style 260 double bolster stop rail; it is in this form at *Karrinyup*.

Added to the original 12 ranks from *Perth Metro* are a second *Tibia*, an *Oboe Horn*, second *Vox Humana*, *Salicional* with celeste, *Flute* and *Solo String* – these came from a *Los Angeles* pizza parlour, the *Paramount Pizza House* in *Indianapolis* and a residence in *Idaho*. A *Gottfried* English Post Horn was also acquired as this was the rank chosen by US artist *George Wright* for his original organ installation.

The inaugural concert at *Karrinyup* on 3rd October 1981 was played by theatre organist *Tony Fenelon*. *Neil Jensen* opened the 3 manual console on 19th October 1986.

The disposition of the pipe ranks at *Karrinyup* is:

Main chamber: Clarinet, Violin, Violin Celeste(1), Violin Celeste (2), Diapason, Flute, Flute Celeste, *Tibia Clausa* (solo scale), *Vox Humana*;

Solo chamber: *Vox Humana*, *Tibia Clausa* (standard scale)

Tuba Horn, Kinura, Krumet, *Orchestral Oboe*, Brass Trumpet, *Solo String*, *Salicional*, *Salicional Celeste*, *Oboe Horn*, *Post Horn*.

*Karrinyup
Community
Recreation
Centre* →



Thanks to *John Fuhrmann* for information in this review