

Rod Blackmore's  
**AUSTRALASIAN THEATRE ORGANS**

*New South Wales* section



Compton console at Dallas Brooks Hall, 1975

*Best known location:*  
**Arthur Esgate residence,**  
**Wahroonga**

**Hybrid theatre organ**  
with **Compton console**  
3 manuals, 26 ranks

**Was in the Dallas Brooks Hall,**  
**[Grand United Lodge of Freemasons]**  
**East Melbourne, Victoria, from 1973. Hall**  
**demolished in 2016 and the organ is no**  
**longer an intact instrument.**

*Arthur Esgate* was an English theatre organist during the 1930s, moving to Johannesburg, South Africa in 1953. In 1956 he and his wife moved to Australia and he gave radio broadcasts from a number of Sydney theatre organs. He was the inaugural president of the *Theatre Organ Society of Australia (NSW division)* in January 1960 but only remained with the society for two months. His home was in Wahroonga, an upper north shore suburb of Sydney. He assembled no fewer than two theatre organs in his home at different times. The second of these, subject of this review, had a *Compton* theatre organ console that had been in the *Astoria* theatre, Brixton, England – an organ he had played during his professional career. (In the *Astoria* the *Compton* organ had two consoles, one in the orchestra pit and the other for use on the stage – it is the stage console that Arthur acquired.) Arthur also was a naval design engineer by profession.

The pipework for the Esgate residence was of considerably mixed origins, nearly half being *Aeolian-Skinner*. Other ranks were *Wurlitzer*, *Christie*, *Hill Norman & Beard*, *Gottfried*, *Gray & Davison*, and *Compton*.

In 1973 the organ was bought by the *Grand United Lodge of Freemasons* for installation in its *Dallas Brooks Hall*, East Melbourne. Arthur himself was originally involved in installing it there, but the project faltered due to his failing health; he died on 25<sup>th</sup> March 1976. Melbourne organ builder *George Stephens* was brought in to finalise the installation which was pruned to about 19 ranks, and as a first stage culminated in actual installation of 13 ranks. The organ remains incomplete, although it is said to have a big theatre sound, and has principally been used for Lodge ceremonial purposes. It has a piano, xylophone, glockenspiel and chimes.

Remaining ranks at *Dallas Brooks* (not all connected, especially the reeds), and their make, follow:

<i>Make</i>	<i>Ranks</i>
Aeolian-Skinner	Orchestral Trumpet, Open Diapason, Clarinet (free reed), Orchestral Oboe, Strings (2 ranks), Salicional, Open Flute, Stopped Flute, Vox Humana
Christie	Clarinet, Viol d'Orchestre, Viol Celeste, Vox Humana
Aeolian-Skinner/Christie	Tibia
Compton	Tibia
Wurlitzer	Tuba
Hill Norman & Beard	Open Diapason
(Display pipes)	Open Diapason
"New"	Kinura
?	Trompette en chamade

*With acknowledgment to Ian McIver's "Theatre Organs under the Southern Cross" for the photograph and numbers of details herein.*

**UPDATE (2016)** The Dallas Brooks Hall has been demolished. The Theatre Organ Society of Australia (Vic. Divn.) is said to have acquired the organ console and some pipe ranks.