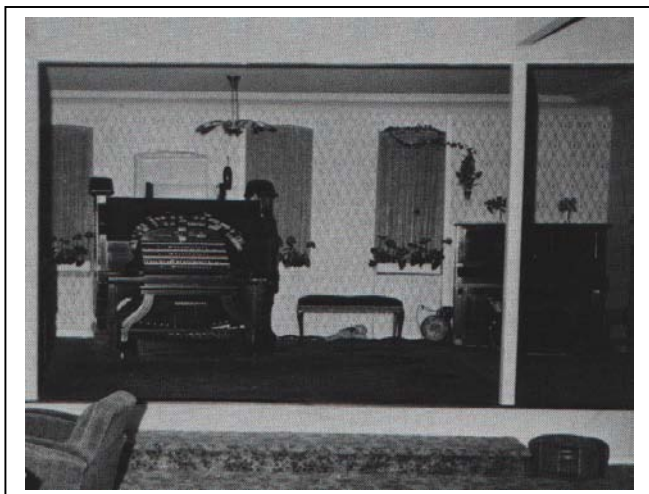


Rod Blackmore's
AUSTRALASIAN THEATRE ORGANS

New South Wales section



Best known location:
Penn Hughes residence
Bexley

Composite *Christie/Wurlitzer*
theatre organ
2 manuals (later 4 manuals) 16 ranks

now substantially incorporated into the
Capri theatre 4/29 theatre organ,
Goodwood, Adelaide, South Australia

Jack Penn Hughes originated from South Australia and was a professional theatre organist throughout the 1930s-1940s until the late 1950s featuring at many organs reviewed in this series, particularly in Sydney but also in New Zealand. He was also known as the “singing organist”. His last theatre residence was at the *Plaza* theatre, Sydney. Despite his musical talents, many found him to be personally irascible, and in his dealings with redundant theatre organs he bordered on the unconscionable. In all some 12 organs were acquired by him and sold on to others, it being claimed that the purchasers did not always receive the organs they expected, Hughes having retained the best features for himself. He has also been identified in the late 1930s with involvement in the installation of instruments in theatres, eg the *Astra* theatre, Parramatta, and the *Astra* theatre, Drummoyne.

In about 1957 Hughes bought the 2/10 *Christie* organ from the *Empire* (later *St. James*) theatre, Dunedin, New Zealand, and in 1959 he acquired the 2/8 *Wurlitzer* organ (opus #748) previously in the *Plaza* theatre, Sydney. These two organs formed the basis of his residence organ, initially utilising the *Empire Christie* console. Later, Hughes acquired the 4 manual secondary console previously installed with the *Wurlitzer* organ (opus #1987) of the *State* theatre, Melbourne, Victoria, and connected it to his residence organ. The sixteen ranks were as follow:

<u>No.</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Source</u>
1,2,3	Tibia (metal), Melodia flute, Clarinet	<i>Christie, Palatial</i> theatre, Burwood NSW
4,5,6	Viol, Orchestral Oboe, Vox Humana	<i>Christie, Empire</i> theatre, Dunedin NZ
7	Kinura	<i>Wurlitzer, Kings Cross/Savoy</i> Hurstville NSW theatres - (<i>Congregational Church</i> , Burwood NSW)
8	Oboe Horn	<i>Wurlitzer, Regent</i> theatre, Wentworthville NSW
9	English Horn	<i>Conagher</i> , Southampton, England
10-16	Open Diapason, Tuba Horn, Clarinet, Viole d’Orchestre, Celeste, Flute, Vox Humana	<i>Wurlitzer, Plaza</i> theatre, Sydney NSW

The 2 manual *Christie* console was acquired by the Theatre Organ Society of Australia (Queensland Division) and rebuilt as a 3 manual console for its *Christie* organ (originally of 8 ranks from the *Granada* theatre, Maidstone, UK) and installed in the Kelvin Grove high school, Brisbane, Queensland.

The Hughes music room was 44ft deep and could hold 160 people. Concerts were given there by some notable theatre organists including Lyn Larsen, Tony Fenelon, and John Atwell.

In 1967 the organ was sold to Mike Pfizner for his residence in Darwin, Northern Territory. Although it was worked on by Mike and his friends for seven years, there were several severe floodings that prevented fulfilment of his dream. Mike offered the organ to the South Australian division of The Theatre Organ Society of Australia, and it was removed in November 1974 – only 4 weeks before the devastating Cyclone Tracey that demolished the Pfizner home.

The organ has since been installed in TOSA’s *Capri* theatre, Goodwood (suburb of Adelaide) South Australia, and enlarged to 29 ranks. It is unique in having glass-fronted chambers to enhance the audience’s experience of organ presentations.

4/16 console at Darwin →

