

Rod Blackmore's
AUSTRALASIAN THEATRE ORGANS

Tasmania section



Best known location:
**St. Michael's Collegiate
School, Hobart**

Wurlitzer theatre organ
Opus No. 1716
(originally Style F)
3 manuals, 10 ranks

Originally installed in *Madame Tussaud's Theatre, London, England* as 2 manuals 8 ranks; later in *Palace Ballroom, Blackpool, England* as 3 manuals 8-10 ranks

St. Michael's Collegiate School is at 218 Macquarie Street, Hobart (capital of Tasmania). The school, a leading day and boarding college for girls, was established in 1892. The college's assembly hall (*Linmor Hall*) is off Davey Street.

Wurlitzer theatre pipe organ, opus 1716, was built as a Style F instrument of 2 manuals 8 ranks, despatched from the factory on 27th August 1927 for installation in *Madame Tussaud's* theatre, Marylebone Road, London, England. It was renowned for recordings and weekly broadcasts by organist *Edward O'Henry*. He was succeeded by *Leslie James*. The console was demolished during the first night of the Blitz in London, but the organ was otherwise undamaged and was placed in storage. In 1949 one of the ranks appears to have been exchanged for an English Horn, and by 27th June 1952 it was reinstalled in the *Palace Ballroom*, Blackpool (not to be confused with its famous neighbour, the *Blackpool Tower Ballroom* with its *Wurlitzer* opus 2037) as an organ with 3 manuals and 8 ranks – later increased to 10 ranks. It had been opened by organist *Watson Holmes*, and broadcasts were also made by *Reginald Dixon*. The ballroom was demolished in 1960 but the organ was saved by *Allan Hinkling*, a theatre organ enthusiast of Sedgley, England – at which time the English Horn was removed to his *Wurlitzer* opus 2081. In 1972 it came into possession of the *Yeovil Organ Club*. *Hubert Selby* broadcast from this location. It was acquired by the *Theatre Organ Society of Australia, Tasmania division* in 1975 when the Yeovil club acquired a *Conacher* organ. Under the direction of president *Owen McDougall* volunteer members installed the organ in the *Linmor Hall* over a period of ten years. The inaugural concert was performed by English organist *Len Rawle* to a capacity audience on Wednesday 20th November 1985. An Orchestral Oboe rank was added in 1997 and a Trumpet rank in 2006, bringing the organ again to 10 ranks. Installation of an upright *Wurlitzer* piano is planned. This organ is used for the club activities of *TOSA*, including the presentation of public concerts. It was extensively featured in a national theatre organ convention hosted by the Tasmanian division.

The organ is installed in two chambers, one on either side of the stage, speaking through apertures directly into the auditorium. The “toy counter” is installed midway between the two chambers, high up at the back of the stage (unenclosed). The console on its dais is normally “parked” to the right of the stage but can be moved to a central position for performances.

Dispersion of the ranks of this *Wurlitzer* is as follows:
Main chamber (left): Clarinet, Diapason, Flute, Violin, Violin Celeste – also the Chrysoglott.
Solo chamber (right): Tibia, Vox Humana, Tuba Horn, Trumpet, Orchestral Oboe – and Glockenspiel, Xylophone, Sleigh bells, Cathedral chimes.

Thanks are extended to Albert Hudson and Margaret Chant of TOSA Tasmania for assistance with this review, and to John Thiele of South Australia for permission to publish the photographs.

