

*PIPES*

*&*

*PERCUSSION*

177  
NOVEMBER  
2016

**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  
C/- PO BOX 6707, WELLESLEY ST, AUCKLAND 1141, N.Z.  
VISIT US ON [Facebook](#) OR AT: [www.theatreorgans.com/wota](http://www.theatreorgans.com/wota)**

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### ***REMEMBER WHEN ?***

.....and we sure did on Sunday October 2<sup>nd</sup>, when as part of Auckland Council's "Heritage Festival", we presented an afternoon of entertainment, reminding us of just how much fun, music on the theatre organ can really be! Through this program of music we recalled 32 wonderful years of entertainment by our Wurlitzer organ at the Hollywood Cinema. We also remembered New Zealand's six other theatre organs installed around the country in the late 1920s, and of course our own Wurlitzer pipe organ's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on October 15, when she left Wurlitzer's New York Factory in 1926, bound for the Regent Theatre in Queen Street.

Scott Harrison on the Allen TH300 digital theatre organ was joined by Guest Artists B.B.C. an Auckland based Dixie jazz band. It truly was a great afternoon and judging by your comments after the show, you enjoyed it too!!

Our final event for 2016 will see us celebrating our Wurlitzer's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday by visiting her sister Wurlitzer in Tauranga, who also celebrates 90 years music-making!! See next page for details on the trip and for booking your seat on the coach for a fun day-out on **Sunday November 20.**

***Bookings close on November 13.***

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

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**JOIN US ON A DAY  
TRIP TO TAURANGA  
TO CELEBRATE  
90 YEARS  
MUSIC-MAKING  
BY THE TWO  
SISTER WURLITZER  
PIPE ORGANS**



**Sunday November 20, 2016**

**NEW LYNN RAILWAY STATION – Clark Street Bus Stop**

Abbots Coach will depart 8.30am sharp

WOTA Trustee John Kleingeld is the Bus Captain and will have a list of names of those who booked and paid for the New Lynn pick-up.

**ONEHUNGA RAILWAY STATION – Onehunga Mall Road Bus Stop**

Abbots Coach will depart 9.am

WOTA Trustee James Duncan is the Bus Captain and will check off passengers as they board before we hit the road for Tauranga.

- **The Tauranga Theatre Organ Society will have a light-lunch with tea and coffee ready on arrival at Baycourt**
- **Music on the Wurlitzer pipe organ by Auckland and Tauranga players**
  - **Depart Tauranga 3.pm approx. for return journey to Onehunga & New Lynn pick-up points – ETA Auckland 6pm.**

**SEE BOOKING FORM FOR TICKET DETAILS – Tickets Non Refundable**

# TWO SISTERS – WITH JUST ONE WEEK SEPARATING THEIR 90 YEARS !

**Our coming trip to Tauranga enables us to salute two extraordinary instruments that should have gone the way of the dinosaur when the movies found their voice, with the arrival of the “talkies”.**

However, these amazing pipe organs just continue to evolve and transform themselves to meet the ever changing needs of music presentation. Even in the millennium, audiences world-wide continue to be thrilled by the sounds of a theatre organ in “full-cry”, just as they had back in the silent movie days. Created by the Rudolph Wurlitzer Company in the USA as a suitable replacement for the live orchestras accompanying silent movies, the concept of a pipe organ in a theatre, with all the tonal resources of the orchestra, went absolutely “viral” way back then!

Few wonders of the movie palace brought more shivery pleasures to audiences (or caused more breast-beating among crusaders for *culture*) than the Mighty Wurlitzer. Part one-man band, part symphony orchestra, part sound-effects department; the Wurlitzer was one of the most versatile instruments ever devised by man.

Of course, there were a score or more manufacturers of theatre organs, but the Wurlitzer basked in the same sweet sunlight of generic familiarity as the Frigidaire, the Victrola, and the Kodak. In America it might be a *Barton, Kimball, Moller, Page*, or *Robert Morton*, to name a few — or in England there was the *Compton Company* or *Christie* from the famed organ builders Hill, Norman & Beard. However to the average moviegoer, if it rose up out of the pit with a roar that made the marrow dance in one’s bones — if rows of coloured stop-tabs lit by hidden lights, arched like a rainbow above the flawless dental work of the keyboards — if it could imitate anything from a brass band to a Ford motor horn to a choir of angels — then gee Dad, it *was* a Wurlitzer!

In 1910 the Wurlitzer Company took on the eccentric English organ builder Robert Hope-Jones, and I’m sure that they could never have guessed that the result of this union would capture the world market the way it did. By bringing together his crazy ideas about organ building and their financial clout, the “Wurlitzer Hope-Jones Unit Orchestra” as they were first marketed, was born.

By 1926, the company was almost swamped with orders for Unit Orchestra’s from right around the globe. In this year the company made its first million dollars from theatre organ production and were shipping a complete organ a day from the factory in North Tonawanda, New York state, in a bid to meet demands.

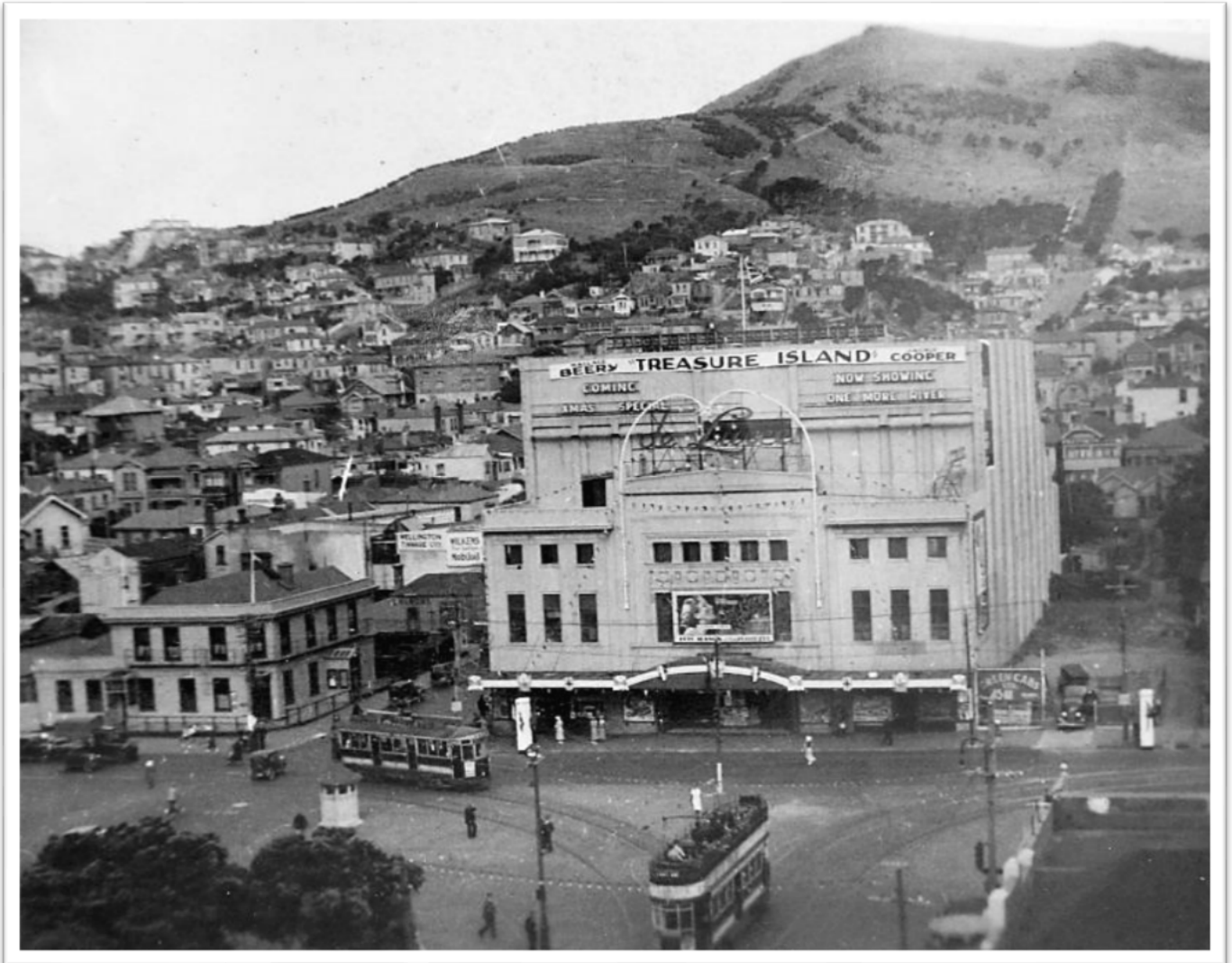
On Friday, October 15, 1926, the Wurlitzer Company’s 1,475<sup>th</sup> “Unit Orchestra” left their New York factory for the long journey down to the bottom end of the world and a magnificent picture palace in Queen St Auckland, called the Regent Theatre, which opened in December 1926.

***Standing opposite Smith & Caughey's department store in Queen Street, this image from 1927 from the Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries***

The Regent Auckland Wurlitzer was the first of the larger organs to come to N.Z. and it had a busy life at the Regent until the theatre had enough sound movies coming through that the organ was no longer needed. In 1944 it was sold to the Hutt Valley High School to be installed in the school hall and in 1979 came back to Auckland for a whole new life entertaining thousands at the Hollywood Cinema in Avondale, Auckland, until August last year.

**This rare image courtesy of the Barry Brinson Collection, sees a very tired looking console of the former Regent Theatre Wurlitzer, here in the Hutt Valley High School Hall, 1960s.**





***Standing in the shadow of Mount Victoria Wellington, is the De Luxe Theatre in Kent Terrace, at the east end of Courtenay Place. A 1935 view courtesy of the archive of organist Barrie Brettoner***

Back to 1926, and seven days and seven organs after the departure of the Regent Auckland instrument, Wurlitzer's 1,482<sup>nd</sup> Unit Orchestra departed, also for New Zealand but this was for the De Luxe, later renamed Embassy theatre in Wellington.

The Embassy Theatre Wurlitzer fared slightly better than its sister at the Regent, in that, like the Civic Theatre in Auckland, the organ continued to be part of the entertainment on offer when going to the movies. The Embassy Wurlitzer organ was also helped along by regular radio broadcasts right through to the 1950s.

In 1959, the Wurlitzer at the Embassy Theatre played its last notes and was sold to Mr. Eddie Aikin, a theatre organ enthusiast who installed the instrument first in a former honey-packing shed south of Tokoroa, and later in the school hall of Tokoroa High School. Ultimately, ill health forced Mr. Aikin to sell the organ to the Tauranga 20,000 Club. This organization, formed specifically to purchase the organ, donated the instrument to the City of Tauranga. With the support of the Tauranga City Council, the society installed the instrument in the Tauranga Town Hall in 1972. The Wurlitzer was once again featured as a concert instrument for many local and overseas artists until it was announced in 1986 that the Town Hall would be demolished.



***The De Luxe (Embassy Theatre) Wellington with the Wurlitzer organ console just visible on the left side of the orchestra pit. The organ chambers were either side of the proscenium arch.***

The Tauranga City Council suggested that the organ could be relocated in the newly-constructed Baycourt Entertainment Centre—a beautiful performing arts facility located behind the Town Hall. The Tauranga Theatre Organ Society (formerly the Tauranga 20,000 Club) accepted the Council's offer. By the middle of 1987, the arduous task of dismantling and re-installing the instrument began, and by late 1988, Opus 1482 was playing once again. Dennis James traveled from the United States to present the premier concert of the instrument in December 1988.

In 2001 the Tauranga Theatre Organ Society embarked on an ambitious program under the direction of John Parker and Melbourne organist Scott Harrison to improve the playing condition of the instrument. Wind pressures were reset, and rewinding done to improve tremulant performance. Over a period of three years, the five reed ranks were shipped to John Parker's Sydney shop for cleaning, repairs and re-voicing. With the organ now sounding possibly its best ever, the instrument is proving a worthy asset, both to the Baycourt Entertainment Centre and to the city of Tauranga.

At 90 years of age this year, these two very historic Wurlitzer pipe organs are veritable testament that there is a place in the music scene for this unique and still much-loved musical art form.

# N.Z. THEATRE ORGANS OVER 90+ YEARS

We had a total of seven theatre organs in theatres dotted around the country back in the heyday of the theatre organ era. Here they are;

- ❖ **1916: Wurlitzer "Photoplayer" – Strand Theatre, Queen St Auckland.**
- ❖ **1926: Wurlitzer Model F – Regent Theatre, Queen St Auckland**
- ❖ **1926: Wurlitzer Model H – De Luxe (Embassy Theatre) Wellington**
- ❖ **1927: Wurlitzer Piano/Console organ – Cozy Theatre, Masterton**
- ❖ **1928: Wurlitzer Piano/Console organ – Paramount Theatre, Nelson – then transferred to the Paramount Theatre, Courtenay PI Wellington**
- ❖ **1928: Christie – Empire Theatre, Moray PI Dunedin**
- ❖ **1929: Wurlitzer 260 Special – Civic Theatre, Queen St Auckland.**

*In Preservation today;*

**Regent Auckland (Hollywood Cinema):** enlarged from original 8 ranks of pipes to 15 ranks with a new 3 manual console fitted 1998.  
Soon to be installed in the Playhouse Theatre, Glen Eden.



**Embassy Wellington:** The Addison Theatre, Baycourt Performing Arts Centre, Tauranga



**David Maciulaitis - 2012**



**Cozy Masterton:** With the upper organ keyboard removed, now the piano attachment on the former Regent Auckland Wurlitzer. The Cozy Pipe work also incorporated into the Regent organ. Pictured at the Hollywood Cinema.  
*Jelani Eddington-2003*



**Paramount Wellington:**

From All-Saints Church Haitaitai, to the Michael Woolf musical collection.

The organ now fully restored at the Drury Residence in Christchurch with the ex-Regent Auckland 2 manual console fitted. The piano console now forming the piano attachment for the organ.

*Barry Brinson - 2016.*



**Civic Auckland:** now on display at the Southward Museum, Paraparaumu.

**Chris Powell - 2005**



## TH300 BY ALLEN

12 RANK and 17 CLASSICAL RANKS / THREE-MANUAL THEATRE ORGAN  
Plus 8 dynamic GeniSys™ Voices!

### FEATURING:

- ~ Multiple Theatre Specifications w/Classic Voices ~
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*Allen theatre organs are widely acclaimed for their authentic sound of theatre pipe organs. These organs start with the finest theatre pipe organ samples, including the attack, steady state and decay. When combined with authentic digitally sampled theatre organ tremulants, the result is a magnificent ensemble!*



This instrument is on sale with  
a discounted price tag !  
Phone Roger on  
0800 Allen Organ (toll free)

# THIS & THAT FROM HERE & THERE.....

## DAY TRIP TO TAURANGA – SUNDAY NOVEMBER 20

There will not be any tickets issued for this event. Please ensure that you confirm that Jan Nancekivell, our Ticket Secretary, has received your payment and that you've been added to the passenger list.

**Please DO NOT make an internet bank payments until you have advised Jan.**

Although anybody interested in the trip is welcome to join us, there will not be any spare seats for members to just turn up on the day, we almost have more interested in the trip than seats on the coach, so it will be a matter of first in – first served. We also need confirmed numbers for catering by the good people of the Tauranga Theatre Organ Society, so again, no sales on the day.

**Bookings will close off on Sunday November 13.**



## REMEMBER WHEN ?

Memories of a great show at the Playhouse Theatre, Sunday October 2 with Scott Harrison at the Allen TH300 and BBC Dixie Band.



## **PLAYHOUSE THEATRE UPDATE**

With the Unitary Plan in place and a new Council elected, the concept plans and drawings are soon to be presented to Council for their consent to build.

The cost for this application is in the vicinity of \$10k – and as we are sharing this initial cost with the Waitakere Playhouse Theatre Trust, our contribution is \$5000.

In response to our “call to arms”, another wonderful clutch of members have dug deep and contributed to the cause, with \$2975 now raised!! A BIG Thank you to;

N. Bayliss  
L & J. Boyd  
N. Brownlee  
L. Cassin  
V. Duff  
B. Galvin  
W.L. Johns  
A. Koke  
W. Oldfield  
H & J. Perkins  
J. Prujean  
R. Reade  
G. Upton

**Our young organist  
Campbell Crawford is  
holding a pipe from  
our Wurlitzer organ,  
and we will use this  
as a thermometer  
to measure  
our progress.  
Please, can you  
help too?**

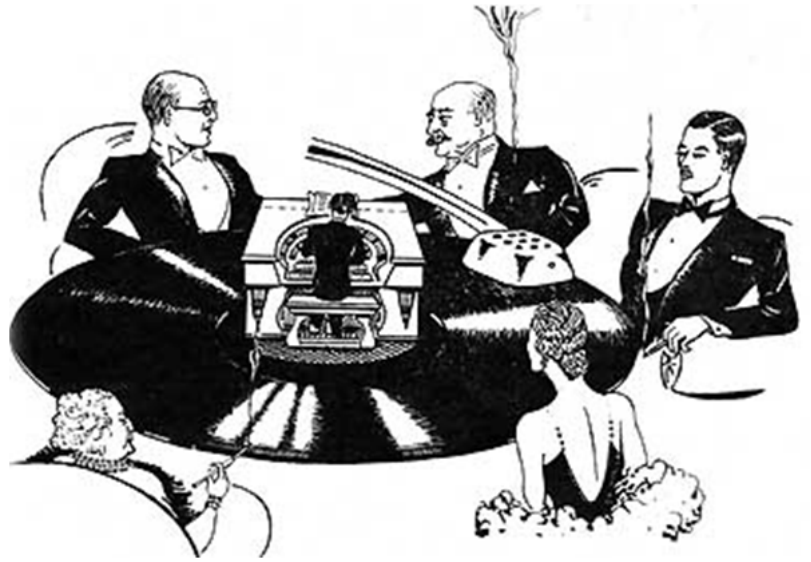


## **ARE YOU AN ENGINEER?**

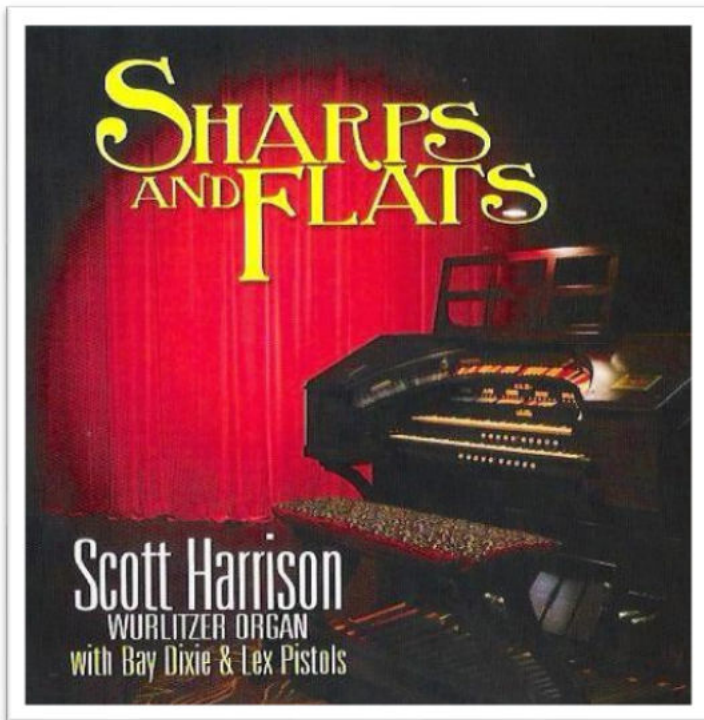
Do we have any engineers in our midst who could offer their services in the next phase of the Playhouse Theatre organ chamber construction? You would need to have current practising certificates and Council registration.

Please contact James Duncan - [jrduncan@xtra.co.nz](mailto:jrduncan@xtra.co.nz)

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(Include \$6.00 for local post & packaging)



**Sharps and Flats**

Released in 2014, showcasing  
New Zealand's three Wurlitzer organs  
along with Dixieland Jazz Bands  
'Bay Dixie' and 'Lex Pistols'.  
This CD is a lot of fun!  
\$20.00



**Piping Hot Dixie**

Recorded live in October 2014,  
features the dynamic combination of  
the Kingston City Hall 4/21 Wurlitzer  
Organ and the sensational Melbourne  
based Trad Dixie Jazz Band 'Shirazz'  
\$20.00

**We will have these and our other theatre organ CDs available  
on the Tauranga trip.**

## FROM OUR SOUTH ISLAND FRIENDS:

For our Dunedin readers or those who might be in Dunedin –

Friday 28<sup>th</sup> October @ 12.10pm

Former Hollywood Cinema organist Denis McCombe will be presenting a half hour lunchtime programme of light music at the Johannus organ of First Church, Moray Place, Dunedin

## THEATRE ORGAN IN AUSTRALIA

### TOSA NEW SOUTH WALES (Wurlitzer)

All concerts at the Orion, 155 Beamish Street, Campsie, commencing at 2 pm.

Sunday October 9 - **Martin Ellis**

Sunday December 4 - **Tony Fenelon and  
John Atwell**

### TOSA QUEENSLAND (Christie)

All concerts at Kelvin Grove State College Theatre  
Sunday October 2—**Martin Ellis**

Sunday December 4—**Chris McPhee &  
Rosanne Hosking**

### TOSA VICTORIA (Wurlitzer)

Saturday, October 22, 2 pm, Kingston City Hall—  
**Martin Ellis**

### TOSA GOLD COAST (Queensland)

All concerts at Mahar Hall, Matilda Street, Burleigh Heads, 2pm

Musical Afternoon—third Sunday of each month

### TOSA WESTERN AUSTRALIA (Compton)

All concerts at the John Leckie Music Centre  
at 2 pm

Sunday, September 18—**Richard &  
Michael Larritt**

### STOP WESTERN AUSTRALIA (Wurlitzer)

All concerts at Karrinyup Community Centre

Sunday, October 16—**Martin Ellis**

Sunday, November 13—**Ray Clements &  
John Fuhrmann**

## Organ Piano and Keyboard Society of Auckland 98 Captain Springs Rd, Onehunga

*Mini Concerts every 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday in the month with a featured theme are;*

- Wednesday October 26<sup>th</sup> 10.30am – *Feelings/Emotions*
- Wednesday November 23<sup>rd</sup> 10.30am – *Christmas songs*

**Next OPKSA Concert: Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> November at 2.pm “Variety Concert”.**

**Contact Rob or Barbara on PH: 838-7346**

**A recent newspaper headline to bring a chuckle....**

**“Typhoon Rips Through Cemetery; Hundreds Dead”**

*Did I read that right?*

## **DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES....**

### **CONCERT TICKET ENQUIRIES & RESERVATIONS**

**JAN NANCEKIVELL – PH: 522-8944**

**OR E-MAIL: JANDENISE@XTRA.CO.NZ**

**THE PLAYHOUSE THEATRE  
15 GLENDALE ROAD, GLEN EDEN**



### **SUNDAY NOVEMBER 20 – Day-Trip to Visit the Tauranga Wurlitzer**

With our Wurlitzer organ and Tauranga's, both celebrating 90 years since being shipped from the Wurlitzer factory in New York State, it seemed a good time to make a trip down to visit our sister theatre organ venue.

Booking form inside this newsletter

### **2017.....**

March – Friends of the Wurlitzer Club Afternoon.

May – Negotiations underway for a visit by Melbourne entertainer Tony Fenelon

Later on..... Our Wurlitzer will hopefully be warming up her vocal chords!!



### **THE WURLITZER ORGAN TRUST OF AUCKLAND**

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CHARITABLE TRUST - CC 10966)*

**PRESERVING THE HISTORIC  
FORMER REGENT THEATRE AUCKLAND,  
1926 WURLITZER PIPE ORGAN.**

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<b>CHAIRMAN:</b>	Mr James Duncan <i>Concert Manager/Newsletter Editor</i>	PH: 525-7067
<b>SECRETARY:</b>	Mrs Carol Neill	PH: 575-8645
<b>TREASURER:</b>	Mr John Palmer	PH: (07) 855-3267
<b>PROJECT LEADER ORGAN REINSTALLATION:</b>	Mr Neil Warrington	PH: 828-4934
<b>TRUSTEES:</b>	Mrs Margaret Cox Mrs Jackie Crawford Mr John Kleingeld	PH: 636-5277 PH: (09) 236-3998 PH: 838-8419

##

**FRIENDS of the WURLITZER MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY  
and CONCERT TICKETS:**

Mrs Jan Nancekivell

PH: 522-8944



**SUPPORTING  
THE WURLITZER ORGAN TRUST  
OF AUCKLAND**