

The Laukhuff Organ at St Ignatius Church, Toowong

The organ at St. Ignatius church was installed in 1959 by Whitehouse Bros of Brisbane as a memorial to Fr Leo Murphy S.J., who was appointed as an Assistant Priest to the Toowong parish in December 1942 and worked there until his death in March 1957. It was blessed by the Most Rev. P.M. O'Donnell, Coadjutor Archbishop of Brisbane, on 'Laetare Sunday,' 8 March 1959, and the sermon for the occasion was preached by the Very Rev. Fr Vincent Rowan P.P., Director of Sacred Music at Pius XII Seminary, Banyo.

This was one of two extension instruments installed in Brisbane in 1959 by Whitehouse Bros, which were built by Aug. Laukhuff of Weikersheim, W. Germany. The other Laukhuff extension organ was installed at St. James' Anglican Church in Kelvin Grove. The term "extension" instrument means that the organ has only two ranks of pipes from which all the stops are taken. This method of construction was a cheaper way of building organs than the traditional method and was made popular in theatre organs, such as the Wurlitzer organ at GOMA and the Christie organ at Kelvin Grove State College. It is a small instrument that was originally designed to support the chants and hymnody of the Tridentine Mass and the popular devotions of the time.

The Toowong organ has had regular tuning throughout its life, but no major maintenance, and has given very good service. However, by last year, the leather in the bellows which supply the air to the organ had perished and the trunk which takes the air to the pipes had split. The organ had simply run out of air and could no longer be tuned. The pipes were filthy and blocked with dirt. The organ runs on direct current, and the original rectifier was sending random signals and causing notes to not sound. In addition, the tops of the keys were curling and causing two notes to be sounded at a time. Despite these problems, the organ was being used regularly at the Sunday evening mass to augment the singing, especially during the psalms.

Accordingly, Fr. Wrex decided that out of respect for those who installed the instrument in our historic church, we should restore the organ to its original state so that it could again be used regularly, in addition to our other excellent instruments. Since news of the restoration has spread, people at other masses have expressed an interest in playing the organ and we hope that it will continue to support the vision of our community that Toowong be a beacon of liturgical singing in the Western suburbs, giving voice to "each person's dignity, worth and destiny in Christ".

For further information see Organ Historical Trust of Australia:

<https://www.ohta.org.au/organs/organs/ToowongRC.html>