

HEIDELBERG THEATRE COMPANY

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2009

Playbill

Welcome to the 2009 AGM of the Heidelberg Theatre company. This has been our 57th season and since our inception we have produced a total of 375 plays. This number also includes the HTC Youth productions and their current production of Alice in Wonderland is in season now and continues until December 19th.

Occupancy rates for our 5 plays this year were very strong and confirmed that this has been one of our best received seasons to date with: 85% for The Dinner Game; 97% for Cloud Street; 74% for A Skull in Connemara; 68% for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead; and 78% for The Philadelphia Story.

Once again this year we have maintained our ability to attract some of the best theatre talent available in Melbourne. We have continued to deliver highly regarded productions for theatre excellence both on and off stage.

The plays of the 2009 season will be covered by the adjudicators in the In-House Awards after the AGM.

In addition to our main Playbill the HTC Youth staged a production of the play Ruby Moon in May which was directed by Elise Dorian and currently in season is their production of Alice in Wonderland which is directed by Michelle Wittrup. Audiences to the Youth productions have been impressed with the performance standards achieved and we have been delighted to see continual improvement each year. HTC Youth has been recognised as a great opportunity for our younger members to gain valuable stage and production experience in preparation for mainstream theatre.

The rights for the 2010 season plays are now confirmed and all have been paid in advance to ensure that we can perform the 5 plays as advertised in our playbill. The playbill selection for 2010 season is: Disclosure; Glengarry Glen Ross; The Judas Kiss; Oh What a lovely War and The Pain Killer.

We will hear more about the 2010 season from the Directors later in the AGM.

VDL awards.

The 2009 Victorian Drama League Awards were held on Sunday 6th December and our entered production was Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead which received the following recognition.

In the category of the Adjudicators Awards:
The Ewan Crocker Award for a Performance in a Small Role – David Paul

We are proud to have received the following Nominations:

Best Set - Leanne Cole
Best Sound - George Bissett
Best Actor in a Supporting Role – Barry Lockett
Best Actor in a Leading Role – John Jenkins
Best Director of a Comedy – Chris McLean
Best Comedy Production

We were delighted to win Gold Awards for:
Best Costume Design – Wendy Drowley and Lois Connor
Best Actor in a Leading role – Tim Constantine

We congratulate our VDL Award winners and the Cast and Crew of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern for their success.

HTC Committee

Elected unopposed to the committee at the 2008 AGM were June Cherrey, Lena Minto and Patricia Tyler. Also elected were Michelle Wittrup and Anthony Cocking

Committee members for 2009 were:

Wendy Drowley - Vice President

Bruce Akers –Vice President, Treasurer & Play Selection Chair

Brett Hunt – Secretary & Membership

Lena Minto - Publicity

Dennis Pain – Maintenance, OH&S and Set Construction

Patricia Tyler- Front of House and Photography

June Cherrey- Tickets

Tim McLaughlin - Technical

Jessica Cole – HTC Youth

Vladimir Tsyganov –(part year)

Maureen McInerney

Michelle Wittrup

Anthony Cocking

The committee requested that I should continue as President and I accepted the invitation for 2009.

Our secretary, Brett Hunt, continues to do an outstanding job managing the membership and subscription returns, the data base as well as the distribution of “Prompts” via email.

Our thanks go to the members of the Play Selection Committee. Chair Bruce Akers, with a sub committee consisting of; Wendy Drowley, Joan Moriarty, Maureen McInerney and Margaret Hassall. This will be Bruce’s last year as chair of the Play Selection Committee and we thank him for his contribution.

Lena Minto continued to manage the Company’s publicity requirements and was assisted by Peter Tedford, Justin Stephens and Rhiannon Leach.

The Front of House roster for each production is co-ordinated by Patricia Tyler and in her spare time she has the responsibilities of being our theatre

photographer. We also appreciate the numerous volunteers who willingly undertake the Front of House duties during the year, including Deb Shaw and Maureen McInerney who take care of the Front of House supplies and catering.

Membership

Our subscriber numbers were 529 this year, compared to 518 last year. In addition to this we have 77 general members, 17 Life Members, plus 40+ people on our mailing list.

Financial

Our Treasurer, Bruce Akers, will provide a full financial overview later in the meeting.

Heidelberg Theatre Company turns over more than \$120,000 per annum and continues to enjoy a secure financial position. This year has seen an increase in our revenue and a modest improvement in our cash at hand and we hold bank balance of approximately \$44,000 compared to \$40,000 for the same time last year.

Expenditure

During the year our expenditure increased at a comparable rate to our income and was primarily attributed to production costs and the necessary R&M obligations to maintain the Theatre.

Bookings and ticket box

The responsibility of managing our bookings and ticket sales continues to be performed with great skill and reliability by a dedicated team. The work of June Cherrey, Julie Hall, Leanne Cole, and Tonia Biggs has ensured that the box office runs smoothly right through the season. In addition Leanne Cole has also been researching possible providers for an online booking service.

Prompts and Programmes

Behind the scenes and working with great style, Toni Tyers ensures that “Prompts” is put together and ready for printing 6 times a year and this year with assistance and back up provided by Margaret Hassall. In addition Toni continues to be involved with programmes as well as Chris Mclean and Chris Baldock.

During the year we suffered major delivery problems from Australia Post for the mail out of the hard copies of Prompts. As a result we are currently in the process of evaluating alternative mail out providers. For those members and subscribers who were disadvantaged by the late mail arrival of Prompts we apologise.

Important people

Our talented team of Set builders includes Owen Evans, Dennis Pain, Paddy Moriarty, Des Harris, Neville Wilkie, Doug McNaughton, Chris McLean and Jim Thompson.

Our technical and back stage crews included the talents of George Bissett, Tim McLaughlan, Margaret Hassall, Campbell Black, Callum Robertson, Struan McGregor, Steve Hillman, Sam Booth, Jason Bovaird, Declan Wood, Siobhan Earley, Kristen Mander, Basileia Paras, Terri Scott and many more - all of whom the audience will never see. We are also fortunate to have benefited from the original music and talent of Paul Karafillis in our productions.

Our extensive wardrobe and costume requirements are ably managed and protected by Wendy Drowley and Lois Connor and assisted by Cathy Ryan Chistensen and Maureen McInerney.

Our properties this year have been tidied and organised into an orderly discipline by Yvonne Charter.

Leanne Cole, Maureen McInerney, Wendy Drowley and Bronwyn Parker have been responsible for set decor during the year and have produced some great results.

Our thanks to Leanne Cole for coordinating the various exhibitions of art in the theatre foyer during each of the production seasons the year. We are grateful to Leanne and the other exhibiting artists for generously displaying their work.

Our Playbill and Posters were skilfully crafted again this year by the talented James Hutson and we have been fortunate to secure his services again for the 2010 season.

In August this year Anne Smith bravely coordinated a successful Comedy Capers Evening of Jazz and Cabaret bringing together talented performances from a broad cross section of members and entertainingly M.C.'d by Laurie Jezard.

We also wish to thank our in-house adjudicators: Rose Capuano, Geoff Hickey, Barbara Hughes and Jim Murphy.

Additional rehearsal space

As we have done now for several years we continued to lease the 1st Rosanna Scout hall to provide us with additional rehearsal space in order to ease the congestion at the theatre when the demands of the Youth Group, current production and auditions would have all needed the venue at the same time.

Lease

We met with the Banyule Council on 17th August this year to discuss our lease status. Currently our occupation is in accordance with our further option term which we exercised on 14th January 2003. As a result the current term commenced on 9th March 2003 and is due to expire on 8th March 2013. This further term was a right from our initial lease. At the time of exercising our option the Council failed to act in accordance with the lease obligations which required a Deed to be prepared for execution to confirm our further lease term. The Council acknowledged at our meeting that they did not act in accordance with their obligations and our occupation is confirmed for the full term of the option. It was also agreed that we would look at a new lease to replace the existing document in order to extend our term for a further 10 years with a 10 year option. We are now waiting for a draft lease from the Banyule Council.

Council

We are grateful to the Banyule Council for the loan of their Phonic Ear Kit during the year, particularly for the Sunday matinees, which has been greatly appreciated by those audience members who are hearing impaired.

Our submission to the Banyule Council for a community grant towards new theatre auditorium seating was unfortunately declined during the year.

We also thank the Council for undertaking the repair work to the asphalt path to the theatre door and the concrete edges that had failed due to the effects from the adjacent tree roots.

Garden Project

With the financial and practical assistance provided by Banyule Council the front garden project has been realised. Local Eltham artist Leigh Conkie was commissioned to produce the timber sculptured seats and we now have mini outdoor performance area. The Heidelberg Theatre Company still intends to dedicate the garden in honour of the late Alice Bugge as a memorial to her 50 years of service to HTC. This dedication event is yet to be coordinated subject to the availability of George Bugge.

O.H.&S.

We have continued to include O.H.&S. as part of the monthly committee reporting and through better awareness and safe work practices we are pleased to report that there have not been any critical or major risk issues to affect the Theatre.

Community involvement and Charity

During the year the Theatre has been regularly used by the Heidelberg Film Society, and Banyule City Council.

The Heidelberg Theatre Company also made donations to the following organisations:

Salvation Army Bushfire Appeal.

Victorian Aids Council

Peter McCallum Cancer Centre in memory of Bill Roberts

Victorian Cancer Council

Sacred Heart Primary School

During the year we supported and contributed to the following charities and organisations with preview night performance fund raisers and ticket donations:

Preview nights were provided to the following charities:

Assisi Ordinance; Oxfarm; Olympic Adult Education; Amnesty International; and The Uniting Church Ivanhoe.

Already 4 out of the 5 preview nights for 2010 have been booked.

In addition various Fund Raiser nights were held by:

Several Probus Groups; Literacy Groups; Scouts; Schools and Church Groups.

HTC has also continued to support Inner FM, 3CR and 3MBS.

Vale

The theatre community said goodbye to Charles 'Bud' Tingwell on 20th May 2009 at memorial Service conducted at St Pauls Cathedral in Melbourne.

Bud was President of the Victorian Drama League for many years and then became Patron of the VDL.

We also note the passing of following HTC family:

Ron Conroy, who directed Bermuda Triangle in 2000 and

Ben Shaw, who played the part of Amadeus in Mozart 1990, performed in Translations in 1991, Our County's Good in 1992 and as Valmont in Les Liaisons Dangeureuse in 1995.

Close

The 2009 year has been a successful and rewarding one for Heidelberg Theatre Company. As we prepare to enter 2010 we can safely report that the Theatre Company is in a sound financial position and is artistically ready to accept the challenges ahead.

For nearly 60 years the Heidelberg Theatre Company has been an active and thriving community resource, for not only the people of Banyule, but also for the greater theatre community of Melbourne. In addition to making theatre more easily accessible and affordable to the community, HTC continues to provide opportunities for involvement at all levels.

We are always looking for talent and skills both on stage and behind the scenes. To keep a group such as our going we will always require new members and active participants. There will always be a need for people with administration skills, hospitality skills, accounting skills, marketing skills and handy man skills. Regardless of what level of experience you hold we will be able to make use of your offer. If you have ever considered or are thinking of becoming more involved, make your interest known to the Company so that we can organise a suitable introduction for you.

On behalf of the Committee we thank all of those who have contributed both on and off stage to make 2009 another successful year. To our members and our appreciative audiences, we wish everyone a safe and happy Christmas and a successful New Year.

John Gilbert
President

13th December 2009