



## HEIDELBERG THEATRE COMPANY PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2011

### Playbill

Welcome to the 2011 AGM of the Heidelberg Theatre company.

This has been our 59<sup>th</sup> season since our inception and to date we have produced a total of 386 plays.

Occupancy rates for our 5 plays this year were very strong and this result is a reflection on the quality of our productions and the Playbill selection for the season with:

- 90% for Enchanted April
- 69.7% for The Business of Murder
- 84.5% for The History Boys
- 94.6% for The 39 Steps
- 85.6% for Under Milk Wood.

We are fortunate that the Heidelberg Theatre Company has the ability to attract some of the best theatre people available in Melbourne and this has allowed us to build on our established talent base.

There were two changes of directors this year and we acknowledge Justin Stephens stepping in to take on the directorial responsibility for 'The 39 Steps', due to the unavailability of Geoff Hickey, together with the loan of props and costumes from Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre Company. Due to health reasons Sandy Green was unable to direct 'Under Milk Wood' and we acknowledge Chris Baldock together with the assistance of Helen Ellis for taking on the directorial responsibilities. We were also pleased that Sandy was able to assist as dialect coach for the production.

'The History Boys' was a coproduction with the Williamstown Little Theatre and cooperatively combined the skills and talents of both companies delivering two successful seasons.

The plays of the 2011 season will be covered by the adjudicators, Gayle Poor, Doug Bennett and Paul King in the In-House Awards after the AGM.

During the 2011 year the HTC Youth group has taken a break. Despite requests for Youth representatives for Committee and coordinators we have not received any volunteers. At this point it is uncertain when the HTC Youth Group will re-form.

The rights for the 2012 season plays are now confirmed and where applicable paid in advance to ensure that we can perform the 5 plays as advertised in our playbill.

The playbill selection for 2012 season is:

- The Lion in Winter
- An Inspector Calls
- The Importance of Being Earnest
- Summer of the Seventeenth Doll, and
- Arsenic and Old Lace’.

We will hear more about the 2012 season from the Directors later in the AGM.

### **VDL awards.**

The 2011 Victorian Drama League Awards were held on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> December and our entered production was ‘The History Boys’.

We are proud to have received the following Nominations:

Best Lighting – Deryk Hartwick

Best Costume design - Wendy Drowley, Lois O’Connor and  
Dianne Brennan

Best Actor in a Comedy Minor Role – Brian Farrell

Best Actor in a Comedy Supporting Role – Samuel Chapel and  
Tim Driver

Best Director- Bruce Akers

Best Production

We were delighted to win a Silver Award for:

Sound Design – Neil Williamson

We congratulate our VDL Award nominees and winners and the Cast and Crew of ‘The History Boys’ for their success.

## HTC Committee

Elected unopposed to the committee at the 2010 AGM were Owen Evans and Jim Thomson.

Committee members for 2011 were:

Wendy Drowley - Vice President  
Bruce Akers –Vice President, Treasurer  
Brett Hunt – Secretary & Membership  
Owen Evans – Set builders, Technical equipment and OH&S  
Jim Thomson - Publicity  
Patricia Tyler- Front of House and Photography  
June Cherrey- Tickets  
Maureen McInerney – Front of House

The committee requested that I should continue as President and I accepted the invitation for 2011.

Committee members who resigned during the year were:

Lena Minto  
Callum Robertson

Our secretary Brett Hunt continues to do an outstanding job managing the business of the committee and ensures the delivery of Prompts via email and post to our members and subscribers.

Our thanks go to the members of the Play Selection Committee. Chair Joan Moriarty, with a sub committee consisting of; Wendy Drowley, Bruce Akers, Jim Thomson, Maureen McInerney and Margaret Hassall.

In addition to her work with the implementation of the online ticketing system, Toni Tyers has also taken on the responsibility for managing the membership data base and subscriptions. She has also been responsible for coordinating much of the Company's publicity requirements and along with Wendy Drowley has spent many hours organising the Company's archives.

The HTC Facebook updates were kept current by Rhiannon Leach.

The Front of House roster for each production is co-ordinated by Patricia Tyler and she also has the responsibility of being our theatre photographer.

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

### **Membership**

Our subscriber numbers were 461 this year, compared to 477 last year. In addition to this we have 87 general members and 14 Life members.

### **Financial**

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

Heidelberg Theatre Company turns over more than \$140K per annum and continues to enjoy a secure financial position. This year has seen a substantial increase in our revenue and an operating surplus of \$31K, a very positive result when compared to our \$20K operating deficit last year. We are also pleased to report a strong improvement in our cash at hand and we hold bank balance of approximately \$43K compared to \$22K for the same time last year.

### **Expenditure**

Our major capital expenditure this year was the purchase of new auditorium seats. We acknowledge the substantial financial assistance provided by the Banyule City Council for the 50% contribution to the project and in particular the support for this project from Cr Tom Melican. We also acknowledge the original donation provided earlier by Fern Matthews for \$1,000. Minor capital items purchased included a new lighting rack, the new auditorium house lights and an upgrade to the rear external lighting.

We also acknowledge the contribution from the Banyule City Council for the replacement of the concrete path from the rear door of the theatre to the wardrobe.

Due to the major capital outlay this year, we maintained a conservative control on general expenditure with \$108K of expenses, an amount similar to the previous year. This was essential to ensure that we maintained an adequate cash balance.

Moving forward we have identified that there are a number of lighting and technical items which now require replacement. As a result of our sound financial position we will be able to purchase these items in the coming year.

## **Bookings and ticket box**

The introduction this year of our online booking system has been a great success with around 30 - 40% of single show tickets sales now being sold on line. Our thanks to Toni and Bob Tyers, assisted by Chris McLean and Bruce Akers, who all contributed an enormous amount of work to enable us to go on-line with ticket sales.

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, Toni Tyers and Linda Coutts, was boosted during the year with the addition of Jenni Purdy to the box office team and we thank them for their continuing work to ensure that everything runs smoothly right through the season

## **Prompts, Programmes, Posters and Playbill**

Behind the scenes and working with great style, Toni Tyers ensures that our bi-monthly newsletter “Prompts” is put together and ready for printing 6 times a year.

Our 2011 Playbill and majority of the posters for this year’s plays were skilfully crafted by James Hutson. During this year Chris McLean took over the responsibility for the ongoing poster design and the 2012 Playbill. The Company extends its thanks and appreciation to James Hutson for his many years of creative services to HTC.

Chris McLean has continued to deliver great programme design work during the year and in addition to his new responsibilities for poster designs and the 2012 Playbill design, he still manages to find the time necessary to do a fantastic job keeping the HTC website current.

## **Important people**

Set designs this year have been created by Owen Evans, David Dare, Merinda Backway and George Tranter. Our talented team of Set builders includes, Owen Evans, Dennis Pain, Paddy Moriarty, Des Harris, Neville Wilkie, Doug McNaughton, Malcolm Cother, Chris McLean and Jim Thompson.

Our technical and back stage crews included the talents of George Bissett, Jess Wilcox, Raymond Martini, Neil Williamson, Craig Pearcey, Josh Kerr, John Rowe, Margaret Hassall, Lena Minto, Emma Hunt, Melanie Belcher, Terri Scott, Siobhan Earley, Bobby Parish, Sheelagh Belson, Bill McKenzie, Dianne Collins and many more - all of whom the audience will never see. We are also fortunate to have benefited again from the original music and talent of Paul Karafillis in Under Milk Wood.

Our extensive wardrobe and costume requirements are ably managed and protected by Wendy Drowley and Lois Connor and assisted by Dianne Brennan and Maureen McInerney.

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 and Anne Smith for coordinating the various exhibitions in the theatre foyer during each production seasons the year and for the assistance given by Sandy Green and contributing artist Janine Evans.

In August this year Anne Smith again bravely coordinated a successful HTC Capers Night, an evening of Jazz and Cabaret bringing together the aspiring and the talented performances from a broad cross section of our members.

### **Additional rehearsal space**

With The HTC Youth Group taking a break this year we able to accommodate all of our rehearsal and audition obligations at the theatre, so we have discontinued our hiring of the 1<sup>st</sup> Rosanna Scout Hall and have also vacated the props storage. This initiative has assisted us to save a reasonable amount of expenditure for the year.

### **Lease**

Currently our occupation of the Theatre is in accordance with our further option term which we exercised on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2003. As a result the current term commenced on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2003 and is due to expire on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2013

Whilst there have been several attempts to resolve our next lease term, we are still 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 which is now available for all performances and is greatly appreciated by those audience members who are hearing impaired.

The Banyule City Council currently has strategy to rezone the land adjacent to the Theatre in Turnham Avenue and the land at the rear of the library in Douglas Street. The specifics are detailed in the Banyule Planning Scheme Amendment C76, which was passed at the Council meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2011 under resolution

(CO2011/340). The Heidelberg Theatre Company lodged objections to the Planning Scheme Amendment on the grounds that the change of zoning to the adjacent land to a business use and the Council's objective to eventually sell the land will potentially destroy the community zone that currently exists and will ultimately have an adverse effect on the Theatre.

In simple terms this proposal is about realising the capital value of the land in Rosanna to pay for the cost of the Council Office development in Greensborough.

There appears to be no regard by the current Council for the value of the community land bank that currently exists in Turnham Avenue and the future potential community uses that could be accommodated there.

There are obligations in the current Planning Resolution that include public car parking access for the Library and the Theatre and we will continue to lobby the Council for an outcome that has the least adverse effect on the Theatre.

### **Heidelberg Film Society**

The Heidelberg Film Society has experienced a difficult year financially and we are currently in discussions with them regarding how their use of the theatre will be handled in the future.

### **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.

We also note our thanks to Ted Drowley for looking after the theatre maintenance during the year.

### **Community involvement and Charity**

During the year the Theatre has been regularly used by the Heidelberg Film Society, Rosanna Library, Circolo Elderly Pensioners and Banyule City Council.

Preview nights were provided to the following charities at a discount rate of \$10 per seat for groups of 50 or more:

Catherine Wotton Ovarian Cancer Nursing Scholarship Fund at Austin Hospital.

Oxfam – Canterbury

Templestowe College Chaplaincy.

Costumes and props were lent to Our Lady of Mercy College for their production of 'My Fair Lady'.

HTC has also continued to support Inner FM.

## **Vale**

We received the sad news this week that George Bugge passed away peacefully in his sleep on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> December.

George first became involved with the Heidelberg Repertory Group in 1961 operating the sound for Orpheus Descending. Alice was in the cast and from then on he was apparently hooked because he returned in 1962 to do the sound for Unexpected Guest and from then on looked after sound for 99% of all our plays until 1981.

A theatre partnership both on and off stage, George and Alice married and they had Barbara who became well known to many HTC members during rehearsals and working bees.

George designed the set for Absurd Person Singular in 1978, an award winning play directed by Alice. He continued to assist Alice with her pantomimes, worked on the sound for Nicolas Nickelby and travelled to New Zealand with the cast in 1989. He was responsible for both lighting and sound for the Company's 1981 production of Under Milk Wood. Of the 205 plays that the Company staged from 1961 to 1993 George worked on 158 of those.

George was also on the Committee for many years representing lighting and sound.

After Alice's passing in 2007 George retired to Tasmania to be with his daughter and grandchildren.

He returned to the Theatre in 2010 with his grandson Cameron to attend the dedication ceremony of Alice's Garden and this would have been the last occasion that most of the HTC Family would have seen George.

George Bugge will be fondly remembered by many of us and we extend our condolences to Barbara and his grandchildren.

## Close

The 2011 year has been a successful and rewarding one for Heidelberg Theatre Company. As we prepare to enter our 60<sup>th</sup> year in 2012 we can safely report that the Theatre Company is in a sound financial position and is artistically ready to accept the challenges ahead.

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 your level of experience will be able to make use of your offer. If you have ever considered becoming more involved, make your interest known to the Company so that we can organise a suitable introduction for you.

To celebrate our 60<sup>th</sup> year we will be initiating reunions, reflections and celebrations with a final party to be held at next year's AGM. We welcome all past and current actors and crews who have been part of the Heidelberg Theatre Company over the last 60 years to join us at opening night reunions, events and to continue contributing their theatrical talents for many more years to come.

On behalf of the Committee we thank all of those who have contributed both on and off stage to make 2011 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

11<sup>th</sup> December 2011