

2020 HTG PRESIDENTS REPORT

The year 2020 will undoubtedly go down in history as one of the strangest and most unusual in modern history. Who could have known what was in store for us all 12 months ago living through and adjusting to life amidst a global pandemic? For all the challenges we have endured, perhaps an unexpected consequence is that we as Australians have started to re-identify as "The Lucky Country." With 2nd and 3rd waves of Covid19 running almost unchecked through so many parts of the world, the speed in which our lives in Australia are returning to some level of normality, albeit a new normal, is due to both effective management and our relative isolation. But maybe it has revealed that we aren't such a defiant and rebellious lot after all, but a nation generally blessed with a level of common sense and humility that has seen us accept the dangers before us and the extreme methods required to work through this crisis together.

For us assembled here, a small group of everyday folks who treasure the arts and the depth to life they bring, I truly believe we share an understanding that society and in particular the economy are really just notions that comprise real people with real lives – and that it's people that matter most. Maybe it is in understanding what is most important in life that has seen us navigate this crisis with relative success. And maybe the biggest lesson that we have had forced upon us is to occasionally just sit still and reflect on what is most important in our lives.

So, for all the big plans we had for HTG in 2020 to build on our wonderful 2019, what we have ended up doing for a very large part of it is sitting still and reflecting. Four shows planned but only one delivered. Appropriately though a show in 'Love Letters' where the actors also sat still and reflected, leading audiences down that same path in identifying themselves in the character's lives. A small show, but a big achievement. Leilani, Barbara and a small dedicated cast and crew revealed another string to the HTG bow – boutique theatre presented outside a traditional setting, amidst a social crisis. Well done to you all and thank you for shining a little light in the darkness.

2020 for HTG may have been quiet, but in no way was it unproductive. Like our personal journeys, the life of our Theatre Group has been nourished and strengthened by an entire year of reflection and planning. Many of the objectives laid out 12 months ago have still been progressed. To name a few

- Mark Davidson's wonderful work collecting and archiving HTGs post 1986 activity, collecting 76 of the 78 show programmes, and then tracing our lineage back through several name changes all the way to 1885.
- Haydn's work on our website, policies and procedures and digital assets.
- Brian's meticulous overhaul of our constitution which is now ready for final review and implementation in 2021.
- The continued expansion of our dedicated Full Member Group to 41, consolidating the Groups future.
- The growth of our Committee to the maximum 15 with specific roles to fulfil.
- The establishment of sub-committees for Set, Publicity and Wardrobe to further share the company workload.
- Engaging with Council with regard to the restoration and refurbishment of Mittagong Playhouse, which now appears destined to re-open as a beautiful, single purpose Boutique Theatre in 2022.
- Consolidation of HTGs financial position.
- The awarding tonight of our first Life Memberships, recognising outstanding commitment to HTG over many years.

Covid19 relapses notwithstanding, 2021 will see us produce the three shows intended for 2020.

- NUNSENSE in March at Bowral High School, with the engagement of the Schools HSC Entertainment class
- 12 ANGRY JURORS here at 'The Venue' in June
- JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR at the Chevalier Performing Arts in September

Items and Events still under discussion include

- The offering of Scholarships to the NIDA Open Training Programme to extend and develop theatrical skills.
- A reprise of 'Love Letters.'
- Hosting of a professional National Touring Production.
- A Reunion Event that would recognise the historical commitment of nearly 100 current and former members.
- Acting workshops
- An original work by one of members targeted at Anzac or Armistice Day.
- A Musical Theatre Showcase
- A holiday production aimed at child and family entertainment.
- Fundraising and social events

Other ongoing goals to be further progressed include

- Building on HTGs on and off-stage talent base.
- Building a reputation as a welcoming and safe place for people to give expression to their creativity.
- Establishing a centralised storage space to care for our growing resources.
- Furthering relationships with local businesses through mutually beneficial Sponsorship Partnerships.
- Reviewing and Publishing key HTG Policies and Procedures in one concise document.

It has been an absolute privilege to serve as President of HTG over the last two years, working with a dedicated Committee and Membership to together revitalise what has been an important part of our Southern Highlands Community for over a century. All of us gathered here tonight have played a part large or small in rejuvenating 'our' HTG. I sincerely hope that the very small number of loyal members that gathered at the 2018 AGM in hope of the group's survival feel extremely proud and vindicated by the almost 50 of us that gather here tonight in warm fellowship, common values, and a commitment to the future of Highlands Theatre Group.

Steve Cheers. 1/12/20