



President's Report – AGM 2015

2015 delivered a feast of high quality productions ranging from the extremely intense and powerful *Carrie The Musical* to the fluffy and highly comical *Legally Blonde*, the latter giving the judges multiple blonde moments and award winning performances from *Chihuahua* and *Bulldogs*! It has been quoted 'The Year of the Pooch' by our judges!

We are very privileged to enjoy and appreciate such a high standard of talent in Victoria. However, it is not always the case that big productions dominate the amateur theatrical scene. Many small companies have given us the element of surprise with very clever, creative direction, sometimes in limited spaces with limited budgets and limited resources, proving that sometimes less is best. We are living in a technical age where technology can replicate and enhance a production to the extent where minimal sets are used and special effects take over. This can sometimes distract from the actual show content if there is excessive overuse of lighting and projections. I am sure we are all aware that the heart of any production is the quality of its cast and their ability to tell the story with skillful acting characterization, body language, vocals and charisma, drawing the audience in to believe. Peripheral enhancements are the dressing but the core is the cast and production team. So, to the many smaller companies out there who cannot afford the luxuries that modern technology have on offer, build and develop your core and the results will speak for themselves. Excellence comes from passion and commitment and that costs nothing.

Feedback from the 2015 Awards Night has been very positive. It showcased excellence in performances carefully chosen throughout the year by our judging panels. Every number was beautifully balanced and a credit to Director Brad Beales. The orchestra was stunning and almost stole the show with their choreographed introduction to the night, courtesy of the very talented Musical Director Daniel Heskett. I would like to indulge in a quote from the Stage Whispers review "It was a masterclass in how to run an awards ceremony and still be hugely entertaining. It was also a reminder to all there, of the absolute joy Musical Theatre brings to our lives. In short, it was fabulous." One has to be happy with that.

Returning to the "core" of the Awards Night, the Guild would like to express sincere thanks to Director Brad Beales, Musical Director Daniel Heskett and Production Manager Brett Wingfield for a stunning evening. Of course pulling off such a wonderful production doesn't happen overnight but over months of careful and precise planning and for this we acknowledge and offer our heartfelt thanks to Brett Wingfield, whose attention to detail and reputation of being a perfectionist shone through.

Congratulations to Edith Harray Award recipient Fran Boyd, acknowledging her outstanding contribution to musical theatre; to Bryn Bowen, recipient of the Musician's Award; to Bev Woodford, who was awarded Guild Life Membership and to everyone who received commendations, nominations and those recipients of a Bruce Award.

To the Geelong theatre community who generously hosted the night, we thank you for your support in the preparation and Front of House management, and CentreStage Geelong for providing their venue for the Guild rehearsal.

I would also like to acknowledge those companies, individuals, corporate bodies and foundations that sponsor our Bruce Awards each year in support of the Awards Night.

My thanks go to the many dedicated personnel who have contributed freely their time and experience on the Judging Panels and similarly on the Committee over the past 29 years, consistently upholding the vision created by our founder Bruce McBrien.

Both the Junior and Open Judging Panels are acknowledged and thanked for their dedication and time in judging 107 productions throughout Victoria in 2015. There has been a significant increase in visits to country companies that demanded travelling vast distances and their time on the road, their efforts and their work are greatly appreciated.

We should not forget the partners of Judges and Committee whose unseen support is also acknowledged and greatly appreciated.

The Guild Committee sincerely thanks retiring Judge and Judging Panel Chairman Graeme Cope, Judge David Dare and Junior Judge Gemma Hedger who, for many years, have made considerable contributions to the Guild. As we move forward, and due to the every-growing Junior Section, the Chair has now been divided and we welcome our new Open Panel Chairman Brad Fischer and Junior Panel Chairman David Crawshaw, together with new Judges Nicole Lylak, Peter Maver and Keith Stublely. We also offer our thanks to relief judges Dot Parker, Carla Gianinotti, Darrell Boyd, Bev Woodford, Val Pagram and Brendan Kevans.

In 2015 we sadly lost Life Member and Past President David Richards, who assisted Bruce McBrien in setting up the Music Theatre Guild. Also Edith Harry Award recipient, Judge and well-known Musical Director Geoff Tomkins. Their individual contributions to the Guild were invaluable and they will be fondly remembered.

The last thank you goes to my committee who have been my supportive rock throughout the year. Thank you for your continued work and fellowship, and to Carole Cuthbertson who is standing down as Secretary after many years, thank you for your contribution in a very demanding role.

To all companies, I wish you success with your productions in the coming year and look forward to seeing you at the 30th Bruce Awards for Excellence in 2016, to be held at the Frankston Arts Centre on Saturday 10th December, with Director Danny Ginsberg and Musical Director Amy Wert.

Beverley Meldrum
President – Music Theatre Guild of Victoria