



# MUSIC THEATRE GUILD OF VICTORIA

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Music Theatre Guild of Victoria Inc  
held via Google Meet, teleconference & Beaumaris Theatre Company 82 Wells Road, Beaumaris, 3193  
on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2021 at 12.30pm**

**Company  
Representation:**

CLOC Musical Theatre – Ric Birkett  
MLOC - Leah Osburn  
OSMAD - Damien Calvert  
PLOS Musical Productions - Fran Boyd  
Williamstown Theatre Company - Marcus Cassidy-Anderson  
Cactus Musicals Inc - Tim Semmens  
Bendigo Theatre Company - Seamus Allen  
Ringwood Secondary College - Karl McNamara  
Windmill Theatre Company - Sean Van Geysel  
Waterdale Theatre - Fiona Boyle  
Ballarat Lyric Theatre - Matthew Heenan

**Individual &  
Life member  
Proxies**

Nathan Firmin by proxy to Elly Foster  
Brad Fischer by proxy to Elly Foster  
MLOC Productions by proxy to Leah Osburn

**Individual  
& Life Member  
Attendance**

Mitchell Brusamarello  
Ang Cuy  
Carole Cuthbertson  
Elly Foster  
Grant Alley OAM  
Dorothy Parker  
Mark Spencer  
Peter Tapai  
Mary Ellen Wallace-Smith  
Beverley Meldrum  
Laurie Gellon

**Members of  
a Member  
Company  
Attendance**

Derek Ingles  
Lachlan Alexander  
Tim Gay  
Gareth Grainger  
Trevor Osburn

**Apologies:** Brett Wingfield, Shaun Kingma, Alan Stone, Mikyla Battey, Sandra Davies, Nathan Firmin, Brad Fischer

**Welcome:**

I'd like to welcome everyone today and take a moment to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the Boon Wurrung people, and pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging. I acknowledge the value, significance, diversity and strength of indigenous cultures to the heritage of all Australians and recognise the relationship that indigenous people have with local land and waters, particularly the creeks and coasts of the bayside area. I acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded and that this always was, and always will be, aboriginal land.

This hybrid form of in-person and online gathering has certainly become more familiar of late, but I'm sure will have its own challenges. Particularly when chaired by someone who is technologically challenged. My thanks (and apologies) in advance to our amazing tech support today – Damien Calvert & Mark Spencer.

My thanks also to the committee here at Beaumaris Theatre Company – thank you for your generous offer to host the AGM, and thank you for not holding it against us when we took 12 months to take you up on the invitation.

#### **Confirmation of Minutes of 2020 Annual General Meeting:**

Members confirmed receipt of minutes - taken as read.

**Moved:** Dorothy Parker      **Seconded:** Elly Foster      **Carried**

#### **Business Arising from Minutes:**

Nil

#### **Correspondence:**

Nil

#### **Treasurer's Report:**

The Treasurer, Carole Cuthbertson, presented MTGV Statement of Receipts & Payments and Balance Sheet as at 31st January 2021.

Retained surplus as at 31 January 2020	\$54,422.76
Plus total income to 31 January 2021	\$7,418.79
Less total expenditure to 31 January 2021	\$18,693.21

**Retained surplus as at 31 January 2021      \$ 43,456.94**

Carole advised that an online account software (Xero) had been implemented during the year and that further work is underway to provide members and member companies with the ability to make payment directly via the website to enhance the offering.

There is a discrepancy of \$308.60 from 2020 to 2021 due to change over from manual accounting to the Xero program that will be investigated further.

**Moved:** Karl McNamara      **Seconded:** Fran Boyd      **Carried**

#### **President's Report:**

Just over one year ago, on the 19th of March, 2020 to be exact, I posted a picture of a ghost light on my social media channels, representing the hope and promise that we would soon return to our theatre. We had just announced, as had many companies, the official postponement of the show that I was in rehearsals for as a cast member. In a move I can now look on with wry amusement and (literal) 2020 hindsight, we thought we were being incredibly conservative by postponing to November 2020, certain that the world would have put itself to rights in a matter of a few months at most. November 2021 is now the date emblazoned on our third (and fingers crossed final!) round of advertising.

Just over one year ago, my work team and I left our offices, to work from home for what was expected to be a couple of weeks, maybe a month at the most. Online meetings were largely still a novelty, as we quickly transitioned all of our real-life programs into the digital world. We will be returning to our office for the first time after easter, as fully-fledged zoom masters, desperate for the novelty of face-to-face team meetings, and our daily ritual of doing the herald sun quiz in the lunch room together.

Just over one year ago, our committee made the decision to attempt to run our annual general meeting online for the first time in Guild history. This decision was met with trepidation – surely it would be better to wait until we could do it in person? Little did we know that it would be a full 12 months before that would have been truly possible again.

So it seems strangely fitting, and absolutely delightful, to be sitting in a theatre for the first time in just over a year, and even getting to see some real life humans in person into the bargain! And how fantastic, one of the

great silver linings from last year, that we now just assume people will want to join us online and we have the means to accommodate both!

The President's report traditionally is an opportunity to reflect on the last 12 months, celebrating our community and the theatre that we make. And while we didn't get to make as much theatre as we'd all like, there was still a lot to celebrate.

There are not many other industries that were called on to show as much resilience as the arts and entertainment sector, and I believe collectively we should take a moment to celebrate just surviving. To still be here, to still be planning and making theatre, connecting with our communities, and looking forward with optimism, is a credit to every company and every member here. The creativity and innovation we saw throughout the year as companies found ways to stay connected, to entertain and to support, was just magical.

Early in 2020, as company after company postponed or cancelled seasons, it became clear to us that we would have a difficult decision to make regarding the 2020 judging season, as only a handful of shows had managed to get over the line before restrictions came into play. Combining the 2020 and 2021 seasons was not an easy decision, but we have been so appreciative of the support and understanding from our members around this decision.

Compared to 100 productions in 2019, the combined 2020-2021 season has still only seen 10 shows judged in the open category so far and 4 in the junior. However with another 10 open productions and 6 junior productions already on the slate for our judges, and many companies continuing to reschedule and plan in light of the current restrictions, we are looking forward to a fantastic celebration of the return to theatre at our Awards night to be held at the end of this year!

I'm pleased to confirm that the production team we had in place for the 2020 awards night has graciously agreed to stick with us, and I look forward to Tamara Finch and Daniel Heskett as our Director and Musical Director respectively, putting together a night not to be missed!

Whilst the curveballs of 2020 saw us having to put some parts of our strategic plan on hiatus, there were other areas that I'm happy to report benefitted from the chance to take a step back and re-focus.

After the success of our first ever Judges Induction and Training Day in 2020, we rolled out a 2021 training session. Whilst originally planned as an "in-person" session, the on-again off-again lockdown hokey pokey that we are all too familiar with meant that it had to be delivered online. Running this kind of session online, involving viewing and reviewing performance videos, jumping in and out of breakout rooms and managing online judging scorecards is no mean feat, and a huge gratitude of thanks goes to Karl McNamara for bringing his expertise to the table. Once again Karl delivered fantastic and practical training on adjudication, ensuring calibration amongst our judging panels that will see consistent assessment and scoring throughout the two year judging period. Thank you Karl and thank you also to Mark Spencer for his technical support and unending patience!

We're really lucky that the majority of our judges have been able to stay on board across the full 20-21 season, and our thanks to all of them for their patience and persistence as the goalposts kept shifting. I'm not sure who is more excited for them to be back in theatres watching your amazing productions, us or them! But I know the day I got a message from one of our judges telling me they were bursting with excitement being back in an auditorium waiting for the orchestra tune-up will stand out in my memory for a long time.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank our Judges Administrator Mitchell Brusamarello. Mitch is stepping into his 3rd year in the role, and suffice to say I'm not entirely sure how we did it without him! It's been great to see both the administrative and judging processes evolving, and we will continue to look for ways to improve upon them year on year.

Although it was a piece of the strategy that fell victim to covid restrictions last year, I can't wait for us to roll out our planned Members' Forums in the coming months, and we welcome any suggestions of topics or offers to partner with us delivering or hosting sessions that would add value to our community.

One key piece of work that was highlighted in our strategy has been a review of our Guild constitution. Over the last few years, various parts and pieces of the constitution have been brought to AGMs for review and last year an action was to review the document overall. We were fortunate to be able to bring together a subcommittee of very skilled and experienced members to undertake this work, which was ongoing throughout

the course of 2020. I'm happy to now hand over to Rick, who'll be representing the subcommittee to provide us with a bit of an update on where things have landed so far.

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Ric Birkett provided an update on the review of the Constitution. Despite Covid and the associated pressures, the working group has done some work, which will continue over the next couple of months to determine what needs to be amended after which suggestions will be forwarded to the MTGV committee for comment.

The original task of reviewing the proposed amendment to include a postal vote procedure was completed and determined to not be needed.

The working group has continued to review the current Constitution and believe there are opportunities to review, refresh, realign to updated model rules and this task will be continued in the coming year.

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Thanks so much Ric, and again, such a great example of work that's been done by bring together expertise and passion from across our community. Our thanks to Ric Birkett, Jack Neil, Mary-Ellen Wallace, Elly Foster and Mark Spencer for their ongoing efforts on this piece of work.

In addition to focusing on communication and collaboration with our members throughout the year, we intentionally moved further into the advocacy space, building on our commitment to support and elevate the needs of the theatre community. Early in the year we acted on recommendations from the Presidents' group, and advocated on behalf of the theatre community to have the major rights holding companies allow live streaming of productions in response to the COVID-19 restrictions. I was absolutely thrilled when I was notified of the success of this lobbying, and we've continued to advocate for our sector wherever possible, most recently joining with the VDL and a number of non-musical theatre companies around Victoria to advocate for funding allocations for non-professional theatre in the next state budget cycle.

When the world forced us to collectively stop and take a breath, we were also gifted with the time and space to have some incredibly important conversations. I felt so privileged over the course of the last year to be invited to speak, listen and learn in a number of forums aimed at exploring and improving our collective approach to inclusion and diversity in theatre.

Moving forward – intersectional advocacy, and understanding the importance of allyship in our spaces is going to be crucial. What are our best practices for genuinely inclusive theatre? How do we stand with and for People of Colour, First Nations peoples, people with disabilities, the LGBTQIA+ and CALD communities and any other cohort who doesn't currently see themselves represented and invited into our spaces. Where does our responsibility lie in advocating for gender equity, for body positive practices and celebrating neurodiversity? I look forward to us answering these questions collectively, and more importantly, putting ideas into action.

I also want to take a moment to recognise a particular contributor to our theatre community. I believe that Ballarat Theatre Company (BTC) is in the process of being wound up currently. BTC is one of the smaller companies in Ballarat and the driving force behind the company is Peter Nethercote.

Peter and the company have had several nominations and a few wins at the guilds over the last 40 or so years the company has existed.

The company began in the 80's producing smaller Music hall style shows at the (relatively new) Victoria Theatre at Sovereign Hill, and from the funds raised at these productions, Peter managed to get together a 'crew' to assist in producing plays and later musicals.

Many of the works both musical and 'straight' plays were Peter's own writings: Reversals, Beth and Mack and the Three weird sisters to list but a few.

Some insights that have been shared with us around Peter's amazing contribution include the sheer amount of opportunities he provided to so many through the company.

He should be incredibly proud of his own works and those of others that he produced and his work and detail on sets and costumes was second to none.

BTC produced a varied range of shows, many of which were too obscure (The goodbye girl, Baby, Into the woods) for the larger companies in town and the mainstream audiences.

BTC also provided many opportunities for budding artists to get a leg up.

Peter was also very involved in the other companies in town; onstage, directing and designing and making sets and costumes. He has worked with BLOC, Lyric and Begonia festival in leading roles and so much more. Roles have included: Henry Higgins – My Fair Lady & Pygmalion, anything in G&S with Patter (Major gen Stanley etc.), Bobby in company, the baker – into the woods, Danilo in the Merry Widow, Mary Sunshine in Chicago, the lead in

Goodbye Girl, and many, many more. Many of the shows he starred in, directed, and designed set and costumes. Our thanks and appreciation to the amazing contribution Peter has made across so many years.

I was also really privileged to speak at an extra special book launch this year, and want to take a moment to acknowledge the contribution that has been made to our community by Cheryl Threadgold. If you've not seen it yet, this is "In the Name of Theatre" and it's the most comprehensive and beautiful history of non-professional theatre in Victoria. We do have a number of copies here for purchase today if you don't have your copy yet, or you can order online – [www.inthenameoftheatre.com.au](http://www.inthenameoftheatre.com.au)

As many of you will be aware, Cheryl has donated the profits of this book to the Guild and the VDL, and this generous donation has allowed us to provide a subsidy against membership fees for all companies and individuals this year. I should also mention that in light of the financial challenges so many companies are going through right now, we have decided not to raise fees for next year as was scheduled, but to freeze it as is for another year.

Well for a year where we hardly got to make any theatre, I've managed to still find more than enough to bang on about, so I should probably wrap it up yes?

To my committee colleagues; thank you once again for your support and work throughout the last year. It has been a challenging year for all of us for so many reasons. There have been times throughout the year when each of us have been stretched to breaking point as our worlds got smaller and more intense, and yet you all persisted and I genuinely couldn't have done it without you. I am definitely looking forward to seeing more of you all in person, and I am sure you are all looking forward to a batch of Elly's cheese biscuits which are just not the same on google hangouts!

Thank you all so much for continuing to support and connect your communities this year. It has been my privilege to serve as your Guild president for another year, and I can only hope that in 2021 I get to spend a lot more time enjoying your amazing productions!

I'm excited for our theatre community to be full of people and music and magic once more. And after just over one year, I'm so happy to finally turn off the ghost light.

Thank you.

**Moved:** Carole Cuthbertson                      **Seconded:** Damien Culvert                      **Carried**

## Election of Office Bearers and General Committee

Mark advised all attendees the nominations received.

<b>Position</b>	<b>Nominated</b>	<b>Nominated by</b>	<b>Seconded by</b>
<b>President</b>	Ang Cuy	Marcus Cassidy-Anderson	Mark Spencer
<b>Vice President</b>	Brett Wingfield	Ang Cuy	Mark Spencer
<b>Secretary</b>	Mark Spencer	Marcus Cassidy-Anderson	Ang Cuy
<b>Treasurer</b>	Carole Cuthbertson	Ang Cuy	Mark Spencer
<b>General Committee</b>	Dot Parker	Ang Cuy	Mark Spencer
<b>General Committee</b>	Elly Foster	Karl McNamara	Ang Cuy
<b>General Committee</b>	Karl McNamara	Elly Foster	Ang Cuy
<b>General Committee</b>	Damien Calvert	Tristan Lawrence	Katherine McDonald
<b>General Committee</b>	Leah Osburn	Garry Bertranp	Lisa Webster

Ang advised that the number of nominations for both executive roles and general committee members did not exceed the number of positions available and as such, all nominations, as detailed above, are elected.

## **General Business**

### **Item 1**

As a relative 'newbie' Fiona Boyle asked about the value of being a member and the support provided to member companies by the Guild.

Ang suggested that the 2020 Strategy document, which includes an overview of MTGV objectives and mission statement be attached to these minutes.

### **Item 2**

Marcus Cassidy Anderson suggested obtaining further detail on who is represented by the Guild. It would be an opportunity for companies to report on key statistics (2019 preCovid, 2020 impact, 2021 recovery) to the Guild - eg how many volunteers, actors, musicians are involved in non professional theatre in Victoria, which could help the Guild in advocating for its members, such as lobbying for government funding.

### **Item 3**

Mary-Ellen Wallace Smith suggested that the Music Theatre Guild look to hold a member forum, perhaps quarterly, to support regular and facilitated conversation between members who may be interested in understanding how other members are working through the recovery from Covid-19. She suggested that this forum would enable others to demonstrate, share and discuss options for the wider membership group to consider ahead.

Ang agreed that this would be something the Committee of Management would look into further and that our previous efforts to commence member forums would be renewed now that the lockdowns, and Covid Safe Plans will permit.

It was noted that the Presidents forum already operates which gives the opportunity for collegiate discussion amongst companies. Details will be included in these minutes.

### **Item 4**

Tim, from Cactus Musicals, advised that his company was not listed on the Music Theatre Guild Website. Mark Spencer agreed to follow up and action reminding all members to notify the Guild of any discrepancy at any time, via the Contact Us form on the website ([musictheatreguildvic.org](http://musictheatreguildvic.org)) or directly via email ([secretary@musictheatreguildvic.org](mailto:secretary@musictheatreguildvic.org))

### **Item 5**

Damien Calvert advised that he administered a community project - Melbourne Theatre Calendar. MTGV is partnering with the calendar, which will be linked to the Guild website. Member companies are invited to put details of their shows up for inclusion.

<https://melbournetheatrecalendar.com.au/>

### **Item 6**

Fiona Boyle asked if the Guild could provide communication on Covid restrictions - it was noted that theatres would have their own Covid safety plans, which would be specific to each theatre.

Furthermore Fiona asked if the Guild could provide details on any grants that may be available for theatre companies - details to be distributed.

**Ang Cuy** thanked everyone for their input, interest, attendance and ongoing support.

**There being no further business, the meeting closed at 1.22pm**