

## AGSA PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2010 – 2011

2010 was the International Year of the Collaborative Artist - a world recognition of the significance of musicians who play together - particularly pianists.

Since this is exactly what AGSA is all about, worth celebrating!

### EVENTS

The *AGM 2010* was held on Saturday March 6.

The committee has for some time been concerned about attracting fresh ideas and input from the younger age group. Several enterprising young people showed interest and at this AGM we welcomed Andrew Georg as a new member.

Andrew had already benefitted from the 2009 mentorship with SOSA and has since made a very strong contribution especially in the sponsorship search area, taking on the onerous job of applying for a grant from Carclew.

Following the meeting he also presented, with Thomas Saunders, an impressive and most enjoyable recital of piano duos in Pilgrim Church.

Another addition to our group was Josh Mollart, also an enthusiastic pianist/accompanist who has been very proactive early this year, introducing AGSA to Facebook.

With their help we're broadening the age range and generating greater contact with a younger generation for the Committee.

The *Young Accompanists' Showcase* - June 6, 20, 30 was again organized by Gina Macri.

Secondary School pianists Brenna Mackay, Olivia Ting, Ian Turnbull, Wendy Lee & Ji Zhou rehearsed and performed with professional soloists Janet Anderson (violin), Claire Oremland (cello), soprano Louisa Perfect and bass baritone Keith Hempton.

The Masterclass on June 6 was held again at Marryatville High School, a venue made available to us through the persuasion of committee member and

Marryatville High School teacher Leonie Hempton. Many thanks Leonie!

It was given by Prof. David Lockett whose advice and wise comments no doubt will have helped the 'budding' accompanists.

The average piano student has little idea of the potentials in being a pianist, other than teaching or doing solo work. We know that very few will be able to make a living as a soloist so this venture (YAS) is aimed at showing and highlighting the wide ranging activities available to a pianist who is interested in ensemble performance.

Those who have taken part in the Showcase have all enjoyed the experience and will hopefully continue similar activity, becoming our USEFUL accompanists of the future.

The Showcase culminated in two public performances on June 20 (also at Marryatville HS) and June 30 in Pilgrim Church as part of the AGSA Festival.

*Festival of Accompanists* – June 28 to July 3

The *Conference* of 2010 attracted a NZ delegate Julie Coulson, who plans to set up something similar in NZ. Julie thought it significant enough to attend and see how we do it!

Our Musician in Residence was Anthony Legge, from Opera Australia, a pianist renowned and respected as one of the most talented répétiteurs and vocal coaches in opera world.

The Festival began with Auditions for the Geoffrey Parsons Award on the Monday and Tuesday.

Wednesday June 30 saw two Pilgrim Church Concerts – the first given by six Primary School student duos.

AGSA understands the importance of early training – if we can introduce child

pianists to the 'fun' they can have making music with each other, rather than playing alone, they'll grow up accepting it as a natural activity, at the same time developing a much greater aural awareness, reading skills and flexibility.

I 'recruit' young musicians by canvassing teachers, through the Music Teachers Association, Austa (Australian Strings Association) and other such organizations. As we've done this now for several years, 'the word is out' and I've been approached by a number of teachers/parents offering performers.

For the Festival performance they're tutored by their own teachers, then come to me for a couple of sessions and a 'trial run'. Many of them have formed ongoing friendships and the general feedback has been very positive.

The second concert was another opportunity for the Secondary School students who had participated in the Young Accompanists' Showcase, to display their achievements.

On Friday July 2 in Pilgrim Church, we co-presented with THE FIRM a major recital of a rarely performed set of songs, the "Italian Songbook" of Hugo Wolf. Programming such a work attracted considerable media attention – there was a pre-concert article by Tim Lloyd and a concert review by Elizabeth Silsbury.

Performers were Anthony Legge, soprano Rosalind Martin and tenor Robert Macfarlane.

This collaboration with the Firm was of good value for AGSA, as a way of tapping in to their subscription audience and bringing the work of AGSA to a wider public.

ANATS (Australian National Association of Teachers of Singing) also actively promoted Anthony's visit, informing their membership of his offer of private lessons for singers and their pianists. The offer was enthusiastically taken up by as many as could be accommodated in Anthony's very crowded time here.

Saturday (July 3) began with Professional Development Sessions

in Cynthia Poulton Hall, featuring Anthony Legge in Lectures and Masterclasses.

Participants were pianists Daniel Thorpe, Marianna Grynchuk, Joshua Mollart, Tanika Richards (in the non-professional class) and Nerissa Pearce, Jamie Cock and Julie Sargeant (in professional category). Their Associates were Sharon Turley, Blake Parham, Daniella Jedrzejczak, Mandy Hutchinson, Deborah Caddy, Louisa Perfect, Joanna McWaters and Nicholas Cannon.

Margaret King, Head of German Studies at Adelaide University, gave a very informative and interesting talk on German for Musicians.

The day closed with the *Geoffrey Parsons Award* Final in the Hartley Concert Room. Winner this year was Karl Geiger accompanying soprano Desiree Frahn and his wife Ashleigh (cello).

Competing with Karl were Andrew Georg and Christopher Lian-Lloyd.

They accompanied soloists Patrick Power, Thomas Brennan, Deborah Caddy, Minas Berbery, Julia Stevens and Anna Coleman.

Patrick deserves a special vote of thanks for performing the set song with all the applicants and then further rehearsing with the 3 finalists, with much goodwill and very professional stamina!

The Jury, Stephen Whittington and Berenice Harrison, was chaired by Anthony Legge and the evening was 'hosted' in a most entertaining way by Keith Hempton.

We'd like to express our appreciation for the continuing formal ties with the Elder Conservatorium, in providing us with the venue for the Parsons Award.

*Duo Recital* - Later in the year on August 24, we heard another duo recital by two former winners of the GPA, Michael Ierace and Amir Farid.

They played Brahms, Mozart and Rachmaninov to the great enjoyment of a good sized audience in Elder Hall - a surprisingly large audience given the last minute relocation of the recital. The two pianos at the intended venue (Pilgrim Church) had been double booked (ie at another location!!) and AGSA was extremely lucky that Elder Hall was unexpectedly available (due to cancellation of an orchestra rehearsal).

We're genuinely grateful to the Conservatorium for acting so swiftly in AGSA's favour and allowing us to use it, free of charge (!) at such short notice.

Both Michael and Amir are former winners of the GP Award. They have since gone on to further successes, perhaps winning bigger prizes but they both acknowledge the value of this Award in helping to advance their careers. AGSA is pleased to have recognized their talents and given them due encouragement.

The final activity for the year was our *Fundraising Dinner* on Sat Sept 11, again by courtesy of Berenice Harrison who this time not only hosted the event but also provided most of the food, giving the committee members a 'duty-free' evening.

Quoting Diana, "while the dinner raised well over \$1500 for the Parsons Award, much more will be needed to turn it into a prize of genuine significance for accompanists seeking to forward their careers.

In comparison with prizes for soloists at \$3000 for the winner, this is still relatively insignificant.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

Recently the Committee discussed and recognized the admirable service to the musical community given by pianist/accompanist/coach Dale Ringland.

By unanimous vote, we offered him an Honorary Life Membership. Dale replied to our offer with sincere pleasure, has accepted and will give a presentation in our next Conference.

Hon Life Member, Mary Le Page, has retired - we offer her many thanks for her long service and support, with best wishes for a happy retirement.

## **FINANCES**

AGSA is a voluntary organization and ever in need of financial support - particularly for GPA (as there are no grants available for prizes). We can only continue the quest for more support.

Finally a word of gratitude for the contribution made by all Committee members - their generosity in giving time, effort, ideas, has been immensely valuable and is much appreciated.

This has been my final year as president of AGSA. The 'term of office' has been very interesting for me and, thanks to Diana's patient guidance, I've also learned much!

The ever-friendly atmosphere and support of everyone on committee has made the journey very pleasant. Thank you!

Monika Laczofy

(retiring President, March 2011).