

## April 2018 NEWSLETTER from the President *Monika Laczofy*

Welcome AGSA members ...

We began 2017 with a search for fresh ideas and welcomed two first-time ventures involving AGSA:

1. The AMEB (SA) introduced a Student Accompanying Prize, to be judged by members of AGSA Council – the first entrant was Cecilia Tran accompanying both of her brothers in a viola & a cello exam – a lot of hard work & great cooperation there; she was awarded the prize of \$700.
2. President of AUSTA, Agnes Weinstein, introduced the second initiative - a collaborative WORKSHOP with AGSA, on accompanying strings, held on April 30 at Berenice Harrison's Studio.

### **AGSA'S CONTINUING PROJECTS**

**Gina Macri's YAS 2017** involved professionals soloists violinist Alison Heike, oboist Charles Klein, soprano Naomi Hede and bass Keith Hempton, to coach the student pianists for a July 2 Masterclass, given by Jamie Cock at Marryatville High School.

This prepared them for a performance, also at Marryatville High, on July 30 and another on August 5 as part of the Conference at our annual Festival.

### **JEMS (our Junior Ensemble Musicians)**

We were in the throes of planning a Festival theme highlighting the role of an accompanist in Choral Music, so our **JEMs 2017** program which it was my pleasure to convene, involved young pianists accompanying vocal ensembles. The performers included many willing singers from Young Adelaide Voices, boys from St. Peter's College and girls from St. Andrew's Primary school, plus a number of Norma Knights' private singing students. They joined forces with pianists and other instrumentalists from across Adelaide – we had 32 participants in all!

They were tutored in a Masterclass on June 11 by Keith Crellin who needs no introduction in Adelaide.

Their concert performance in Pilgrim Church on August 2 at 12.10pm was followed at 1.10pm by a program 'FOR the JEMs', given with great energy and enthusiasm by the Marryatville High School Pops Vocal Group. It was directed and accompanied by Jason Hammond, their teacher and jazz pianist *extraordinaire!*

To provide an incentive for pianists and music lovers to apply for the Festival, the Adelaide Singers donated an Early Bird Prize - a double pass to ACO's "Messiah" in St Peter's Cathedral in November

The THEME of the **2017 FESTIVAL** was another first – the brainchild of Leonie Hempton, Council Member and Head of Music at St Peter's Cathedral. Her idea was to feature Keyboard Accompaniment in Choral Music, something we've never had before, which is surprising, considering so many accompanists are asked to work with choirs.

We had choral groups ranging from juniors in Young Adelaide Voices, to teenagers in the Marryatville HS Pops Vocal Group and Chamber Choir, disabled singers in the TUTTI Choir, church music-making with the St Peter's Cathedral Choir, to tertiary music students in the Elder Con Chorale and finally adult choristers with the Graduate Singers----- all led by some of Adelaide's most significant conductors and accompanists (both pianists and organists).

The Conference covered/discussed the many expectations of the choral pianist in a range of different groups and situations. At least two of the accompanists involved are here at the AGM today – NERISSA PEARCE & ANDREW GEORG – many thanks for their contribution particularly to the Conference.

A comprehensive review on the festival was sent to us by visiting singer and choral conductor from Victoria - JEANNIE MARSH. It was published in the MTASA Music Stand's ACCOMPANISTS' CORNER which I established in 2013. Jeannie's review is so full of superlatives about the whole concept, organisation and standard of performances that it's difficult to choose just one ... *What a brilliant way to see "behind the scenes" principles and processes and then see them applied in the concert setting....The weekend was full of invaluable insights....the event demonstrated Adelaide's position as a "centre of excellence" for Australian choral training and the art of the accompanist."*

**The Recital** on Sunday August 6 at 2.30 in Elder Hall, was performed by the Elder Conservatorium Chorale, Young Adelaide Voices and the St. Peter's Cathedral Choir. Jeannie's comment summed up the audience reaction....*We were lucky to be there, to be given one of those glimpses into the sublime that musicians and music-lovers are always hoping for, but only rarely encounter.*

After the 'gap year' of 2016, **the Geoffrey Parsons Award** was offered again in 2017. We adopted a new approach - on line applications suggested by Penny Cashman (vocal coach and accompanist at the Elder Con) – to avoid applicants having to be here a week before the final , and emailing them a specially

difficult rapid learning work three weeks before application deadline. We've always attracted interstate applicants but this was designed to attract more and it did just that. We also put more emphasis on it being an Australian award to honour Australia's greatest accompanist, Geoffrey Parsons. Guy Noble (conductor, ABC presenter and former student of Parsons) wrote an article for us in the MTA Music Stand as well as giving a short talk about him in the AGSA Conference.

This time it was a separate event, coming after our Festival, the Final held on Sunday September 10 at 2.30 at Carclew in North Adelaide. The judging panel, Dr. Diana Weekes, Diana Harris OAM and soprano Elizabeth Campbell who rehearsed the Set Work – 2 Brahms songs *Meine Liebe ist grün* and *Der Tod daß ist die kühle Nacht* - with each pianist on the day before, then performed them in the Final.

Elizabeth selected the finalists from the on line applications and video/audio auditions. The process worked well and was appreciated by all applicants. The Final was chaired by one of Australia's foremost accompanists, Head of Keyboard at the Australian Academy of Music, Timothy Young.

We had five indications of interest in applying for the Parsons Award: three from NSW, one from Qld, only one from Adelaide –it was disappointing that not more locals were interested to enter.

The three selected for the final, by the two Dianas and Elizabeth Campbell, were Michael Jenkin, Jonathan Wilson, (both had studied overseas & are working professionally), and Thomas Saunders. There was only one prize - \$6000 - still the most valuable Award for Accompanists in Australia. Winner was Dr. Jonathan Wilson from NSW.

Jonathan sent a letter of thanks - he was so determined to be involved that when his initial soloist became ill he was able (with the judges' permission) to involve an excellent associate singer Michael Butchard from Sydney, as well as his SA associate violinist Lachlan Bramble.

This was my first experience of convening the GPA ; I found it to be certainly time-consuming but as all progressed smoothly, most interesting and enjoyable.

We closed the year with a **Dinner** on November 18, again by courtesy of Berenice Harrison. Many of you joined us, making it a most enjoyable 'feast' and raising substantial funds for future events particularly the Geoffrey Parsons Award.

MAJOR CONSIDERATION FOR THE FUTURE OF THE GUILD – Maintaining and expanding a strong Council -

SUCCESSION PLANNING— the need to provide for the continuing life of the Guild, as recent council members have retired/resigned – always for legitimate reasons ranging from having babies (Penny), changed responsibilities particularly associated with family responsibilities (Sachiko Hidaka ) – work and family related-- Margie Ferrie and Frances Wood caring commitments, illness –(Berenice Harrison’s recent serious illness has meant she has decided to resign as Vice President but will continue on the council and support AGSA as much as she can — continuing to offer the use of her studio for AGSA needs despite her current illness) and the incursions of age (Joan Atkinson), also Diana Harris who has indicated this is her last year as Secretary and Festival Curator & Convenor).

We sincerely thank all of them for their generous contributions over many years.

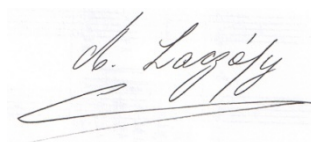
ACTION—there has been a concerted effort to recruit new councilors, particularly younger ones – 3 are here today:

Lois Fong – recently returned to Adelaide after many years as a busy violin & piano teacher and performer in Darwin;

Sebastian Phlox – currently a Phd candidate in composition but with an outreach to the wider music scene as organist, pianist, conductor & sometime president of the Elder Con Students’ Association;

Daniel Brunoli – business entrepreneur and director, passionate musician and pianist.

I am also now able to inform you that when my term of office as President ends at the 2019 AGM, we have been assured that Leonie Hempton will take on the Presidency.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "M. Laczofy", with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Monika Laczofy  
President, Accompanists’ Guild of Sa Inc