



Annual General Meeting, Sunday March 7, 2010

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2009

In January 2009, still buoyed by the glowing success of the 2008 Festival and bolstered by a \$5000 ex gratia payment from Arts SA in recognition of our splendid Silver Anniversary efforts, we produced our first professionally designed brochure which has put us "into step" with the best of the publicity world.

A NEW EDUCATIONAL PROJECT:

To quote Diana, "*our efforts to highlight the accompanist do not end with our public events*"

With this in mind, an educational opportunity arose directly from our 2008 Festival. David Barnard, who was our guest in Young Accompanists on Show and who now has a substantial career as an accompanist & repetiteur in the UK, was engaged by State Opera of SA as chief repetiteur for the November production of *The Flying Dutchman*. AGSA agreed to support the appointment which included David mentoring a local pianist in the repetiteur role – a great opportunity for an AGSA member to expand career options.

Continuing the theme and inspired by AGSA, **State Opera** together with **AGSA, the Wagner Society and Friends of State Opera** sponsored **3 Repetiteur Mentorships**: Puccini mentoree (Andrew Georg), Wagner mentoree (Mark Sandon), and Offenbach mentoree, Dennis Agafonov. Dale Ringland mentored Andrew & Dennis. Andrew also gained valuable experience by attending Wagner rehearsals & observing David Barnard. Language coaches Margaret King (German) and Mira Marchi (Italian) both donated their services to this project.

In a significant outcome Andrew Georg has since been appointed associate - repetiteur with experienced AGSA member, Nerissa Van Nek, for the Festival production of Ligeti's *Le Grand Macabre* and will be principal repetiteur for SOSA's July/August production of Verdi's *Aida*, highlighting the value of such an experience for talented young pianists interested in the accompanying field. The venture has set a precedent which AGSA

hopes will find support in the future. Donations to this Project will be gratefully received.

EVENTS

After the ambitious ventures of '08, we decided to scale down somewhat for '09. Despite this and because of the willing cooperation of long-standing supporters, we still managed an exciting series of events with high-ranking artists.

There were 3 major activities:

Art Song to Opera - on March 22 at Cynthia Poulton Hall, held in conjunction with ANATS, was presented by guests **Simon Kenway** and **Teresa La Rocca**. Simon filled in at the very last minute for Nicole Panizza who was unable to leave Ireland due to health reasons. Thank goodness for AGSA interstate contacts in finding Simon who had a fund of information to offer both pianists and singers. Both his lecture/demonstration (with the help of Teresa La Rocca) and the master class were conducted with infectious enthusiasm. The piano/voice duos – Melanie Redden & Tahlia Ries (sop), Mark Sandon with Blake Parham (lyric baritone), Jamie Cock with Greta Bradman (sop) and Malcolm Day with Eva Butcher (sop) clearly enjoyed and benefitted from working with Simon. Simon's recital with Teresa La Rocca included the Aaron Copland Cycle, 12 Poems of Emily Dickinson plus art songs by Granados, Strauss and Rodrigo as well as arias by Puccini and Mozart.

We are grateful to ANATS for their cooperation in making this event such a success.

Secondly came AGSA's all important educational project, aimed at introducing secondary level pianists to the joys of accompanying by providing them with experienced professional partners to work with, during the month of June.

This was our **Young Accompanists' Showcase**, managed by Gina Macri, held on June 7 & 21 at Marryatville HS with the final concert on July 8 in Pilgrim Church during the

Festival and preceding the Leslie Howard/Niki Vasilakis recital.

The masterclass was taken by **Leigh Harrold** one of the Guild's former Geoffrey Parsons prize winners, now a highly respected professional accompanist. Our professional soloists, who worked with the young accompanists with great understanding, were: Peter Handsworth (clarinet) with Jacqueline Raymond and Matthew Nguyen, Naomi Hede (soprano) with Brenna Mackay, Samantha Hennessy (flute) with Helen Zhou and Imants Larsens (violin and viola) with Matthew Chu and Natalie Leung

Event three must be considered the major event of the year: ***The Festival of Accompanists*** – ten days of events highlighting the accompanist as chamber musician, covering all levels of experience from primary and secondary school duos, through to tertiary ensembles and finally reaching the pinnacle with our Musician in Residence **Leslie Howard**.

We began on July 6 with auditions for the Geoffrey Parsons Award and a masterclass taken by Leslie. On Wednesday July 8 at 1.10, following the midday concert by our Young Accompanists' Showcase performers, Leslie performed Liszt and César Franck in a recital with violinist **Niki Vasilakis**. Leslie was guest of honour at a dinner in the Ayers House Library that evening as guest of Allans Music. Leslie was also available for a number of individual lessons during the week.

Thursday July 9 saw the Final of the **Geoffrey Parsons Award**, held in association with the Elder Conservatorium of Music, with Leslie chairing the Jury supported by AGSA Committee member Frances Wood, and Conservatorium Senior Lecturer, Rodney Smith. Mark Sandon won the Parsons Award. Each finalist was privileged to rehearse and perform the first movement of the Debussy Violin Sonata with the Guild's distinguished guest soloist, ASO concertmaster **Natsuko Yoshimoto**.

In 2008 the London Geoffrey Parsons Trust's one off \$5000 donation allowed us to offer a \$6000 prize pool, but we reduced the prize money to \$4000 in 2009, much as we would like to have kept it at \$6000. Even so, though the Parsons Award may not be the most valuable, it is one of the most recognized prizes for the accompanist in Australia.

The Festival concluded on Wednesday July 15 with 2 lunch hour recitals presented by **junior** and **tertiary** level accompanists - continuing our expressed aims to encourage collaborative

performance at all student levels. The junior concert has now become an annual project. I'd like to express my thanks to the willing teachers and parents who have cooperated with me in the tutoring of the enthusiastic and talented juniors.

OTHER MATTERS

The Guild Dinner was held on Friday August 28 - As this is the main fundraiser for our Geoffrey Parsons Award, we would very much appreciate greater support for it. No government source will fund a prize so, until something more profitable emerges, we must raise the money ourselves. Please support the dinner.

The Silver Anniversary Register - was printed and distributed. It is also now available on the website.

COMMITTEE MATTERS

One major **change** is that our publicist, Chris Wainwright, has a new and very busy job as Manager of the Adelaide Youth Orchestra. He is still finding time to for the occasional advice, preparing some of our programs and media releases. In association with our secretary, Diana Harris, Sheila Bryce took on some of Chris's load. We wish him every success in his new position.

My thanks go to all members of the AGSA Committee and most particularly to the executive, Vice President, Berenice Harrison, and Secretary/Treasurer husband & wife team Diana & Peter Harris for their untiring efforts for the benefit of the accompanist and the Guild during 2009.

SPONSORSHIP

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the important support of our major sponsor for 2009, Allans Music. Without them we could not have presented the events outlined in this report.

FOOTNOTE

The 2009 AGM – held on March 22 between the Kenway masterclass and his recital with Teresa La Rocca, was one of the best attended AGMs we've ever had – a clear indication to us that we should continue to "frame" it with musical activity!

Monika Laczofy

AGSA President 2007 - 2010

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