

President’s Newsletter July 2021

Dear fellow accompanists and Accompanists’ Guild members,

Fortunately, with fingers crossed, most areas of accompaniment have returned to pre-Covid normal.  Normal now includes a combination of ‘live’ and online, influenced by unpredictable, spasmodic Covid-19 outbreaks, lockdowns & restrictions.

Guild membership currently stands at 73.

Our AGM was held in December last year and was faithfully attended by 11 members with 14 official apologies received. I especially thank all those who turned up, braving the weather to support our Guild that morning. Heavy overnight rain and local flooding caused our “picnic in the park” A.G.M. to be relocated indoors.  We thank our Secretary, Kathleen for finding and organising for us an excellent alternative indoor venue in West End at short notice.

We give a warm welcome to Andrea Sparks and Julian Wade, our two new committee members who were elected at the last AGM and thank outgoing committee members, Catherine Stirling and Kathy Sander for their generous years of service to the committee. Kathy has kindly agreed to continue on as our Webmaster.

Several Eisteddfods, that normally receive donations to prize winning accompanists from AGQ, are running again this year. Border District Eisteddfod recently announced the winner of this year’s Award. “A very talented young accompanist, Aryanna Davies, won your award”, gaining 91 marks in the 10 – 12 Years Prepared Accompaniment Section. “Aryana was very happy and thankful to receive this prize of $50”.  Heartening news, auguring well for the future of accompaniment.

Unfortunately Brisbane Eisteddfod Inc. has formally closed down as a functioning performing arts competition platform. Many Guild members competed there when young, before progressing on to become professional accompanists.

The Guild has received the disturbing news that at least two Eisteddfods are charging entry fees for competitors’ accompanists. Member Dr. Robert Manley kindly alerted AGQ: “I attended the Ipswich Eisteddfod and noted that they are charging entry fees for piano accompanists as an official policy of the Eisteddfod. I was quite taken aback that the committee regarded this as an appropriate policy. Whilst this fee can simply be passed along to the entrants, I intend to raise a complaint directly with the Eisteddfod.” AGQ is looking into the matter and following Robert’s recommendation, considering a formal submission from the Guild, emphasising the integral professional role of accompanists.

The John and Sue Thompson Vocal Accompaniment Scholarship was awarded on Thursday 22 April.  By all reports, the standard was very high amongst the six competitors. The Guild sponsored a year’s free student membership to this year’s winner, Ruby Luck who performed Vaughan Williams’ The Vagabond, and Strauss’ Morgen, along with her piano solo - Chopin Sonata No 3, 4th Movement. This was the first year the Guild has been involved as a sponsor and we are taking steps to donate an annual monetary prize in future years.  The Guild was represented on the night by our Secretary, who presented Ruby with the Guild’s award and gave a short speech - good marketing for the Guild!

We congratulate the QMTA upon their 100th Anniversary, for their outstanding achievements and service to Queensland throughout those years. We wish them well now and in the future. Committee member Julian Wade represented the Guild at their Centenary Honour Board Unveiling in July. Our Patron, Piers Lane, was also there, a guest of honour at the party.

We also congratulate two of our members who obtained their music doctorates: Guild Treasurer Dr. Sarah Stranger and Dr. Robert Manly. A timely call-out for any members who obtain a Masters Degree or Doctorate, to inform our Secretary of this, so that their listing can be appropriately altered.

Guild members continue to shine! Several past and present AGQ committee members were in the audience at the BBGS Cathedral Concert in June and heard Guild members, Cara Tran and Kathy Sander give outstanding performances of the choral accompaniments - playing of the highest standard, demonstrating the depth of talent within our Guild

Congratulations to former committee member, Juanita Simmonds, for her insightful article published in CutCommon, where she interviewed ex-Brisbane pianist Elli Welsh: My Arts Career During COVID-19: Elli Welsh, pianist. <https://www.cutcommonmag.com/my-arts-career-during-covid-19-elli-welsh-pianist/>

Our referral system continues to receive praise from the public, soloists and Guild members. “I’ve been impressed with the responses from your members and it’s good to know about the Guild for future exams in Brisbane”, wrote Lauren of the Sunshine Coast on 29th July, who had requested an accompanist for her daughter’s Grade 4 flute exam. She told me that she was delighted to so easily and quickly obtain an accompanist via the AGQ. Several members had contacted Lauren to offer their services immediately after receiving the request emailed to Guild members, Bravo!

I hope to see as many of you as possible at our AGM, unfortunately postponed to a date post lockdown, t.b.a. So I wish you all good health. May we continue to have faith in our profession and maintain hope for the future of music-making.

Valerie Dickson