



PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2024

WELCOME

On behalf on the Committee, I would like to welcome you all to the 2024 Annual General Meeting of the Heidelberg Theatre Company.

PLAYBILL

Our 2024 productions were:

- *Rumors*, written by Neil Simon and Directed by Gayle Poor.
- *Berlin*, written by Joanna Murry-Smith and directed by Natasha Boyd.
- *Wait until Dark*, written by Frederick Knott and directed by Dean Banova.
- *And a Nightingale Sang*, written by C.P. Taylor and directed by Llaaneath Poor.
- *An Ideal Husband*, written by Oscar Wilde and directed by Tim Scott.

The HTC Youth production was *Peter Pan*, a new adaptation from the J.M. Barrie classic, directed by Robbie Nicholson.

Our occupancy rates were as follows:

- *Rumors* – 97.5%
- *Berlin* – 95.2%
- *Wait until Dark* – 92.6%
- *And a Nightingale Sang* – 87.8%
- *An Ideal Husband* – 100%
- HTC Youth: *Peter Pan* – 99.8%

For the 2024-year 5 play season, we achieved an overall occupancy of 94.6%.

It is worth highlighting that in 2024 HTC introduced a fourth matinee replacing the first Saturday night performance with a matinee performance. This delivered higher matinee performance ticket sales compared to the previous year's Saturday evening performances.

The occupancy rate for the HTC youth production of *Peter Pan* was 99.8%.

For the 5 plays plus the HTC Youth production we achieved an overall occupancy of 95.1%.

This is a fantastic result and we thank our 531 loyal subscribers and the many more theatre patrons who have enjoyed the productions and performances with us at HTC.

It is also worth noting that we are selling more tickets on-line with fewer phone bookings. While our subscriber number has fallen from 570 to 531, we have enjoyed a rise in our average occupancy rate from 82.8% to 94.6%.

As at the end of 2024 HTC has produced a total of 446 plays.

The 2025 season Playbill was launched at our Christmas Celebration last December.

- We kicked off the 2025 season in February with Play 1 – *Jeeves & Wooster in Perfect Nonsense*, written by David & Robert Goodale and directed by Morgan Thomas Connor.
- Play 2, which is currently in rehearsal, is *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*, adapted by Simon Stephens from the novel by Mark Haden, and directed by Karen Wakeham.
- Play 3 will be *Love, Love, Love*, written by Mike Bartlett and directed by George Werther.
- Play 4 will be *Other Desert Cities*, written by Jon Robin Baitz and directed by Gaetano Santo.
- Play 5 will be *The 25th Annual Putnam Spelling Bee*, music and lyrics by William Finn, book by Rachel Sheinkin, conceived by Rebecca Feldman and directed by Tim Scott.

The HTC Youth production for 2025 will be *Pinocchio* and is being adapted by Eric Fordham and Ryan Purdey.

VDL AWARDS

The Victorian Dram League Awards were held at Merrimu on Sunday 1st December 2024 and our entry, *And a Nightingale Sang*, did not receive any nominations.

HTC COMMITTEE

At the 2023 AGM held in April last year, there was one nomination for the Committee: Sean Tessari – nominated by Ryan Purdey and elected unopposed.

During the year the committee co-opted Jenny Gilbert.

Accordingly, the Committee was composed of 16 plus the President.

The HTC rules allow for up to 18 committee members plus the President.

The HTC Committee members for 2024 were:

- Wendy Drowley - Vice President and wardrobe
- Bruce Akers –Vice President and Treasurer
- Brett Hunt – Secretary
- Tim Scott – Play Selection Chair and Prompts
- Sally Scott – Tickets and Prompts
- Jim Thomson – Publicity
- Joan Moriarty – Key master and Maintenance
- Maureen McInerney – Maintenance
- Jenny Gilbert – Front of House
- Morgan Thomas-Connor -Youth Theatre and Social Media
- Ryan Purdey – Youth Theatre
- Melanie Belcher – OH&S
- Margaret Hassall – Technical liaison
- Louise Millar-Hoffman – FOH Art Space Coordinator and Props
- Karen Wakeham
- Sean Tessari

The committee requested that I continue as President and I accepted the invitation for the 2024 year. This has been my 23nd consecutive year as President and I would like to acknowledge the strong support of our two Vice Presidents, Wendy Drowley and Bruce Akers, Committee Secretary Brett Hunt, and Play Selection Chair, Tim Scott.

Tim Scott, as Chair of the Play Selection Committee, has been ably supported by the subcommittee members, Bruce Akers, James Antonas, Catherine Christensen, Maureen McInerney, Joan Moriarty and Karen Wakeham. This sub-committee sets the direction for the Company by choosing a variety of plays and directors which ultimately drives our box office success.

In addition, we should also acknowledge the work our Production Coordinators have contributed during the year, Maureen McInerney, Jim Thomson, Joan Moriarty, Louise Millar-Hoffman and Gayle Poor.

MEMBERSHIP

Our subscriber numbers in 2024 were 531.

Our 12 Life Members are:

- Wendy Drowley
- Bruce Akers
- Lois Connor
- June Cherrey
- John Knorr
- Fern Matthews
- Maureen McInerney
- Joan Moriarty
- Toni Tyers
- Chris McLean
- Brett Hunt
- Owen Evans

In addition to the Life Members, we have 76 ordinary members.

This brings our subscriber and membership numbers to 630, compared to 678 in 2023.

The Committee is recommending that membership fees remain unchanged at \$15 going forward.

Any volunteer who has completed at least 20 hours or more of work in one year for the Theatre is granted HTC annual membership.

VALE

We remember the following past members of the HTC family who have passed away since the last AGM.

Judy Muir

Judy was very prominent in the early days of the Heidelberg Rep initially when the theatre was located in the Uniting Church, East Ivanhoe and then later at the Rechabite Hall in Ivanhoe. She was first mentioned in 1956 as a stage assistant in the production of *Better for worse*. She acted in 7 production s and directed at least 3 productions through to 1961. Following his she was located overseas and on her return was a regular audience member.

Hector Davis

Hector was on Council when HTC requested help with buying the Turnham Avenue Bus Depot in 1974. When HTC gifted the property to the Heidelberg Council in 1980 as a community asset, he supported the initiative in 1981 for the Council to pay for the conversion of the bus depot into the theatre. He was Mayor during his time on Council and was always interested and supportive of HTC. He is recorded as Mayor on the two plaques in the foyer above the box office, the first from April 1982 for the opening of the Turnham Avenue theatre, and the other for the extension to the foyer in July 1993. Hector also paid for the silver Logo on the front wall of the building which was installed when we expanded the foyer in 1993.

Geoff Hickey

Geoff was very well known in the Melbourne Community Theatre circle. In 2004 he won Best Actor at Victorian Drama League Awards for his role as Larry in the HTC production of *The Iceman Cometh*. Between 1992 to 2008, Geoff directed four productions at HTC including, *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*; *Come Back to the Five & Dime Jimmy Dean*, *Jimmy Dean*; *Cat on a Hot Tim Roof* and *Over the River and through the Woods*.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Our Treasurer, Bruce Akers, has prepared a full financial overview of the 2024 year which he will present later in the meeting.

We are pleased to report that the Heidelberg Theatre Company has been able to maintain a satisfactory financial position over the past year.

Our cash reserve of \$221K compared to \$211K last year.

Our revenue for the 2024 year was \$192K, compared to \$178K in 2023. Our expenditure for the 2023 year was \$170K, compared to \$147K in 2023.

Our 2024 operating surplus was \$22.0K which was a good result compared to the \$30.8K surplus in 2023.

BOOKINGS AND TICKET BOX

Sally Scott, with assistance from Carol Farr and the very capable box office team, manage the SABO on-line ticket booking system and the theatre ticket box roster for each production.

PROMPTS, PROGRAMMES, POSTERS AND PLAYBILL

The editorial task of producing and publishing our Theatre newsletter “Prompts” has been in the very capable hands of Tim and Sally Scott ensuring that our members and patrons up to date with regular information during the year. From 2025 Tim and Sally will be handing over the editorial reins of Prompts to Aislinn Ryan.

Our 2025 Playbill flyer, production programmes and the posters were once again skilfully crafted by Chris McLean. In addition, Chris also manages the HTC website and the HTC Facebook page. \

ARCHIVES

Our Archive team of Toni Tyers and Fiona Campbell have advised the Committee that they are stepping back from their roles this year, and we thank them for the great work they have contributed over many years to keep our theatre history organised accessible.

If any members have a desire to become involved with the HTC archives, now would be a good time to step forward so that Toni and Fiona can provide an easy handover.

COMMUNITY

During the year the Heidelberg Theatre Company has assisted the following community groups:

Oxfam Canterbury, Ivanhoe Rotary Club, Friends of Salt Creek & Associated Parklands, Montmorency Asylum Seekers Support Group, Manningham Uniting Church, Whittlesea View Club and Greensborough View Club, with all of these groups benefiting from the allocation of discounted tickets for fund raising nights.

In addition, we have also supported a number of schools and community groups with complementary tickets for fund raising events.

TURNHAM AVENUE DEVELOPMENT

The Woolworths redevelopment, of the ex-Council office land next door in Turnham Avenue commenced construction in July 2024. The construction progress has been efficient and fortunately the impact on the Theatre has been minimal. When completed, the project will include a new Rosanna Library and basement car parking which will be available to the supermarket customers, the library users and at night for theatre patrons.

COUNCIL

We have met with Banyule Council on numerous occasions during the past 12 months as we work through the proposed plans to extend the theatre foyer. The scope includes the upgrading of the toilet facilities to meet disability access requirements, a ramp from the foyer to the auditorium, bringing the front wall of the foyer towards the street to overcome the blocking effect of the new supermarket box and additional signage.

The foyer upgrade project has been made possible following an announcement by Banyule Council of a \$1M grant following the Woolworths Building Approval.

Initially the grant was considered for an extension to the rear of the theatre in order to develop an off stage set construction space, however the restrictions imposed by Melbourne Water made that proposal unworkable.

The upgrade to the theatre foyer will be a more valuable upgrade, especially to those theatre users with mobility challenges, rather than building a separate construction area.

Costings are yet to be quantity surveyed and there will be fitout items that HTC are likely to fund such as a new kitchen, floor coverings and furniture.

The timing of these works has not been agreed and planning will also need to consider be the challenge of construction impacts and if a shutdown period will be required.

WORK, HEALTH & SAFETY

I am pleased to report once again that we have been free from any major incidents in 2024. We have continued to include O.H. &S. reporting as part of the committee meeting agenda and we have managed to maintain a safe working environment and safe work practices for all our volunteer workers.

CLOSE

On behalf of the Committee, I am happy to report that the Heidelberg Theatre Company has a strong balance sheet and an even stronger team of talented theatre people, both on and off stage.

The Heidelberg Theatre Company remains committed to deliver cultural diversity and great entertainment, while providing affordable live theatre that is accessible to a broad audience base. We are delighted that our 2025 season offers a 5-production playbill, plus the HTC Youth Group production.

On behalf of the Committee, we thank everyone who has generously contributed at all levels to our success during the 2024 year as we continue into our 73rd year.

John Gilbert
President Heidelberg Theatre Company
8 April 2025