

PRESIDENT'S REPORT JULY 2020 to JUNE 2021

This report should cover the year from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021, however I have continued it through to recently as we have been very much constrained by the COVID-19 pandemic and I felt the need to report on any activities after the usual end date.

We continued 2020 in "pandemic" mode keeping a close watch on what STAG could present to our audiences, unfortunately restrictions continued irregularly making it impossible to present live shows, we turned to Zoom to keep in touch, most regularly for monthly Committee meetings.

As reported last year our Zoom film, Corona Star 19 written by John Head was streamed on 4 July. This was a very successful initiative both financially and emotionally.

With the on-going and ever-changing situation regarding the arts amid the pandemic, Laura Varapodio was appointed our COVID Officer creating a COVID safe plan for our premises and keeping Committee advised of any changes/adaptations throughout the year.

In August under Gemma's direction, we presented a play reading of "Friday the 13th" by Jean Pierre Martinez. Using Zoom we had breakout rooms so several groups could read the play simultaneously and audience members could watch, all in all it was a success and it was good to see old and new faces and giving us a chance to catch up.

In August 2020 we were advised of our success in applying for a \$6580 grant from the Greater Shepparton Connected Communities organisation. This money has gone towards the ongoing renovations in the Blackbox, in particular upgrading the greenroom area with toilet, sink and dedicated makeup/hair area. Troy McKindley has been overseeing this project with assistance from Phil Croke, Mitchell Street and Steve Condon. New props shelving has been built in the greenroom and Noella Kay and Carol Davidson spent many hours culling and sorting props which are now boxed, labelled and securely stored.

In September John Head presented a Playwriting Workshop via Zoom, the writing process was broken down into all its components with participants then creating a monologue. Through necessity the Georgy Awards Committee created a new filmed category for Monologues.

Workshop participants crafted their works to fit the guidelines, chose an actor to perform or presented the monologue themselves, this was filmed in the empty BlackBox theatre and entered into the competition.

In September 2020 I was interviewed by Sue Nalder from Latrobe University regarding a project/survey they were carrying out, titled "Delivery of Art and Culture Services in Greater Shepparton - Public service supply chains: A case study into Art Services at Local Government Level". I explained that STAG was not employed by the Council to provide art services but we hired WestSide PAC, at the community rate, to present our musicals and plays, we entered into a partnership with Riverlinks to present a show in their Afternoon Delights Season for which we received a flat fee. We have also applied for and been successful in obtaining Arts Grants and Matching Grants for specific projects or minor improvements to our premises.

In October 2020 Nicky Pummeroy and I took part in a "Power of Art" day for the Fairley Leadership cohort, this took place via Zoom and involved us talking about the significance of theatre in the community and the connections made, STAG's history and the challenges and successes along the way. We then led them in a few fun theatre games.

The year's Christmas party was held at The Cheeky Grog Company on 13 December, it was a very relaxed affair with much discussion about the year just gone and what was in store for the coming year. Thanks to Wendy Platt for organising this event.

Encores, a concert featuring songs from a variety of lesser known musicals, was presented over 2 performances with different casts, on 27 March 2021 at Chapel on Maude. This joyous show was the brainchild of Justin Dohrman, the cast were assisted by mentors Justin Dohrman, Kat Bristol and Nicky Pummeroy. Fortunately we were actually able to present this show complying with COVIDSafe protocols, little did we realise this would be the only live performance we would be able to present during this reporting year.

10 in Ten was our contribution to the 25th Shepparton Festival in March, unfortunately the performances on 18-20 March 2021 were postponed and re-scheduled for June, but continued uncertainty and rolling snap lockdowns forced us to make the difficult but inevitable decision to cancel the live performance and consider filming the plays to be presented online, again due to the uncertainty of when filming could actually take place we cancelled this idea and instead held a rehearsed reading via Zoom on 10 August for all involved.

In late June at a Festival celebration STAG Life Member and past President, Rob Robson was made a Festival Life Member, Rob and Maxine travelled up from Warragul for the occasion and it was wonderful to see them both looking fit and healthy, I took the opportunity of giving them a tour of the Shed and the BlackBox, they were very impressed with the changes that have taken place since their departure.

We welcomed John Head and Noella Kay to STAG's Life Members Group in July and December respectively, both have contributed to the company in many ways and their dedication is greatly appreciated. Sadly, we farewelled Life Members Helen Ferguson and Lance Woodhouse during the year, their involvement in theatre in Shepparton went back many years with them both being instrumental in the creation of STAG. Only last Friday, 1st October, our beloved Life Member Dick Hutchinson passed away, he was a one in a million whose commitment to STAG both backstage and onstage will always be fondly remembered, as will his sense of humour and cheeky smile. Mel Matthews and Sharon Geraghty stepped down from Committee during the year and I thank them for their time and dedication while on Committee.

We received approval to stage The Drowsy Chaperone in April 2022, we have a Production Team led by Casey Fogarty, Director and Gemma Marchant, Production Manager who are working through the processes necessary to hold auditions and start rehearsals. I'm sure we are all looking forward to the opening night of our first big musical in a long time.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Committee for their support, dedication and courage during this difficult time, working our way through these unprecedented times has not been easy, as we all know the performing arts has been hit very hard by rolling lockdowns, density limits, social distancing and many other terms new to our vocabulary. We are all aware of the invaluable contribution the performing arts makes to the well-being of the community at large and STAG will bounce back to thrill our audiences. Ian Smith has been overseeing the introduction of Microsoft Teams which will streamline STAGs communication, filing and record keeping. Bron Prater is leading a team gathering information and anecdotes for the creation of a 50th anniversary book. Our Treasurer, Brendan Armstrong is stepping down from the position he has held since 2017, we thank him for his steady and reliable work keeping our books. I especially thank my "right-hand woman", Nicky Pummeroy for her tireless work, positive attitude and boundless energy. Finally, I have been President of STAG since 2010 and I feel it is time that I stepped down from the role. It has been an exhilarating journey which I have thoroughly enjoyed. STAG truly is a wonderful family and a great asset to the community and we will continue to thrive in the new world that is dawning.

Thank you for being a wonderful addition to my life, I assure you I am not going anywhere and look forward to contributing to STAGs future endeavours.

Sincerely yours
FIONA KENNAN
PRESIDENT
OCTOBER 2021