

President's Report 2017

It gives me great pleasure to present the President's report to the membership of Williamstown Little Theatre Inc, for 2017.

On any measure, 2017 was another very successful year for WLT. We continued to play to full houses to most nights, we saw growth in our subscriber base, our volunteer numbers have remained impressively high, and each of our regular events – January working bees, social events, Open Rehearsals, the AGM and Cordell day were all extremely well attended.

We also enjoyed five fine and diverse productions over the course of the year. We enjoyed the frenetic energy of a New York Jewish comedy, a very personal psychodrama, an historical drama, a bleak Irish comedy, and a madcap romp at the end of the year. As I said at Cordell Day, every one of these plays will have been someone's favourite. It was that kind of year.

Congratulations to Barb Hughes on her production of *The 39 Steps* for taking out the Craven Award for best production, and to Mark Briggs and Liam O'Kane for taking out the Cordell and Win Stewart Awards respectively. Congratulations also to Shirley and the team from *Vincent In Brixton* who did the company proud at the Victorian Drama League Awards, taking home a number of nominations and several gongs. It was a memorable season of theatre – thank you to all involved.

At the Cordell Day, we celebrated the achievements of some wonderful WLT friends. David Dare was awarded the Grahame Murphy award for excellence for his 35 odd years as ticket secretary. We celebrate this remarkable contribution to WLT, and look forward to David's continuing involvement, particularly in set design and construction. We thank Bob Harsley for agreeing to take on this pivotal role, and wish him every success. At Cordell Day we also acknowledged the significant contributions of Maria Haughey, Marise De Quadros, Moira Smith and Dion Sexton. In February, three WLT stalwarts were inducted as Life Members – Bob Harsley, Neil Williamson and Alex Begg. Worthy recognition of significant and unswerving commitment to the company.

Over the course of 2017, we were saddened by the loss of three of our treasured Life Members. In March we learned of the death of Doug Lindsay. Doug was a mainstay of the company from the early fifties through to the mid seventies – and he did everything! From Stage Management and ASM to set construction, starring roles and directing. He and his wife Joan were the heart and soul of WLT. Later in the year, we learned of the passing of Ella Bambery OAM – our longest serving Life Member. A fine actor and long serving committee member. Then in December we lost our beautiful friend, Ray Hare. Ray was an ever reliable set builder, underrated actor, guttering cleaner, front-of-houser, adjudicator, movie tout and Past President. But above all, he was just a really great guy to be around. I hope these walls retain even a small amount of the warmth Ray brought to the place.

Vale Ray, Doug and Ella. We celebrate their lives and achievements.

I would also like to pay tribute to the work of the Committee of WLT over 2017. Your Committee has worked diligently in ensuring the company is running within the parameters of its constitution, policies and regulatory requirements. I believe it is appropriate to name the Committee as part of this report, and take this opportunity to highlight their contributions to the membership:

- Barb Hughes - Vice President; and coordinator of Wardrobe and Social events,
- Brian Christopher – Treasurer; and overseer of contracts, licences and any compliance related activities, not to mention coordinator of most set builds
- Bob Harsley – Newly appointed Ticket Secretary and procurer of front of house supplies
- Emma Hunt – FOH coordinator and manager of the roster, and assistant to Alex Begg in training up new backstage folk.
- Roger Forsey – Technical advisor and coordinator of all things electrical and IT related
- Ellis Ebell - Grounds keeper and guardian of our archives and historical artefacts
- Tony Tartaro – Office administrator, costume assistant, policy developer and OHS supervisor
- Shirley Sydenham – Company Secretary; minute secretary, keeper of the Membership database, Website manager, interface with rights agencies and coordinator of our communications.

These people put in extraordinary hours to make sure WLT remains the place to be in community theatre in Melbourne.

I would also like to pay tribute to the many volunteers who have contributed hundreds of hours to ensure that WLT remains one of the leading community theatres in Melbourne, and something of a home away from home. To our set builders, our front of house teams, our costumers, our communications team, our backstage crews, our performers, our designers – and of course, our members, thank you for being with us over 2017, and we rely on your continued support and dedication over 2018.

2018 marks fifty years since our first production in our Albert Street home. Over the course of the year, our members can look forward to hearing a lot about our plans for ensuring that the theatre will be a great place to be for the next 50 years. It is a special place, and we intend to keep it that way!

Peter Newling

Secretary's Report for 2017

2017 was another wonderful year of great successes. We are fortunate and grateful that so many people want to work with us, people whose amazing talent, dedication and incredibly hard work ensure such high production values that all our productions are classified as 'not to be missed'.

Your hardworking Committee continued, collectively and individually, to make a great contribution to the running and maintenance of this theatre company and underpin its success. This time last year we welcomed Emma Hunt into the fold. She has done a super job coordinating the Front of House volunteers and filling the rosters smoothly and well ahead of time. She has also ably assisted Alex Begg in his role of backstage coordinator.

There were 11 Committee meetings in 2017. Attendances were :

	Attended	Apology	Absence
Brian Christopher	11		
Ellis Ebell	6	5	
Roger Forsey	5	6	
Robert Harsley	8	3	
Barbara Hughes	10	1	
Emma Hunt	9	2	
Peter Newling	9	2	
Shirley Sydenham	11		
Tony Tartaro	8	3	

Barbara Hughes and Tony Tartaro, assisted by a small band of willing helpers, have continued miraculous work in wardrobe, and I can report that, contrary to rumours, there is indeed a floor upstairs. Judi Clark and Peter Newling have also discovered floor in the props area as they continued their organisation and maintenance of a large props collection crammed into a minute space. They are now photographing the props and building a catalogue. Both wardrobe and props are endlessly ongoing tasks because of the flow items in and out for each production or hire, plus the additions to the collections each time. Due to the hard work and diligence of all concerned, upstairs is more organised and looking more gorgeous than ever. Thank you.

Thank you also to Erin Austin, who once again produced five sensational programs for us in 2017. Our programs are noticed and praised. Indeed, since Erin started doing them, we end a production with far fewer left over than we used to. In fact, the *Vincent in Brixton* programs only just made it to the end... we had 2 left.

It is our aim to build up teams of people in areas of design and backstage operation so that the same few aren't called upon so much that they burn out. Alex Begg and Emma Hunt successfully set in place a different Stage Manager and ASM for each 2018 production. Thanks to Tony Tartaro's efforts and training we have for the first time a different costume designer for each production of 2018 . In addition, Tony has built up a growing band of gifted and enthusiastic sewers who are called upon when a production requires costume construction, and who were very busy in 2017. To this end a partnership was formed with The Loom Room so that we can use the spacious and sunlit Williamstown Senior Citizens Centre.

Our monthly newsletter, Cues & News, continues to be amazing. This large, attractive, newsy and photo-heavy epic appears in our electronic mailboxes on the 15th of each month. Cues & News is sent to over 1000 readers. Thank you Frank Page, for keeping us all informed in a newsletter that is the envy of other community theatres.

We thank our genial Front of House people who welcome our patrons and we thank the many unsung heroes who perform so many tasks that keep the place clean and in working order. And of course, we thank all our hundreds of loyal patrons who keep on coming back for more.

In our 50th year of residence at 2 Albert Street it is timely also to thank those farsighted members who purchased and converted the premises. I believe the success of our productions honours their legacy. The amazing people who make up Williamstown Little Theatre keep us at the forefront of community theatre, as well as ensuring it's a wonderful, friendly place to be. Certainly for the next 50 years...!

Shirley Sydenham