

HEIDELBERG THEATRE COMPANY

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2025

Welcome

On behalf of the Committee I would like to welcome you all to the 2025 Annual General Meeting of the Heidelberg Theatre Company.

Playbill

Our 2025 productions were:

Jeeves & Wooster in Perfect Nonsense, written by David & Robert Goodale, and directed by Morgan Thomas Connor.

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.

Love, Love, Love, written by Mike Bartlett and directed by George Werther

Other Desert Cities, written by Jon Robin Baitz, and directed by Gaetano Santo.

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 was Pinocchio, written by Ryan Purdy and Erich Fordham, and directed by Ryan Purdy and Sean Tessari.

Our occupancy rates were as follows:

Jeeves & Wooster - 95.9%

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time - 100%

Love, Love, Love – 98.1%

Other Desert Cities - 85.3%

The 25th Annual Putnam Spelling Bee - 99.7%

HTC Youth – Pinocchio - 77%

For the 2025 year 5 play season, we achieved an overall occupancy of 95.9%.

For the 5 plays plus the HTC Youth production, we achieved an overall occupancy of 93.8%.

This is a fantastic result and we thank our 622 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. Our subscriber number has grown from 570 to 622, and we have enjoyed a rise in our average occupancy rate from 94.6% to 95.9%.

As at the end of 2025, HTC has produced a total of 464 plays.

The 2026 season Playbill was launched at our Christmas Celebration last December.

We kicked off the 2026 season in February with Play 1 – Love Loss and What I Wore, written by Nora Ephron and Delia Ephron, from the book by Ilene Beckerman and directed by Catherine Christensen.

Play 2, which is currently in rehearsal, is The Girl on the Train, adapted by Rachel Wagstaff & Duncan Abel from the novel by Paula Hawkins, and directed by Deborah Fabbro.

Play 3 will be Birdsong, adapted by Rachel Wagstaff from the novel by Sebastian Faulks and directed by Michelle Swann.

Play 4 will be Crimes of the Heart, written by Beth Henley and directed by James Antonas.

Play 5 will be Clue: On Stage, written by Jonathan Lynn, with additional material by Hunter Foster, Eric Price and Sandy Rustin and directed by Chris McLean.

The HTC Youth production for 2026 will be The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, adapted from the novel by L. Frank Baum.

VDL Awards

The Victorian Dram League Awards were held at Merrimu on Sunday 7th December 2025 and our entry, Other Desert Cities, received nominations for the following awards:

Best Drama Production

Best Director of a Drama – Gaetano Santo

Best Actress in a Drama – Lindy Yates

Best Supporting Actress in a Drama – Paula McDonald

Best Properties Design – Jim Thompson and Wendy Drowley

Best Actor in a Drama in a supporting role was won by:

Liam Gillespie - Gold Award

HTC Committee

At the 2024 AGM held in April last year, the following members were nominated to continue on the Committee: Tim Scott, Sally Scott, Bruce Akers and Wendy Drowley, and new nominees, James Antonas and Catherine Christensen were all were elected unopposed.

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

The HTC Committee members for 2025 were:

Wendy Drowley - Vice President and wardrobe

Bruce Akers –Vice President and Treasurer

Brett Hunt – Secretary

Tim Scott – Play Selection Chair

Sally Scott – Tickets

Jim Thomson – Publicity

Maureen McInerney – suppers

Jenny Gilbert – Front of House, archives and maintenance

Morgan Thomas-Connor -Youth Theatre and Social Media

Ryan Purdey – Youth Theatre

Joan Moriarty – Archives and key master and archives

Melanie Belcher – OH&S

Margaret Hassall – Technical liaison

Louise Millar-Hoffman – foyer Art Space Coordinator and Props
Sean Tessari – Youth , set builders and youth
James Atonas -
Catherine Christensen - wardrobe

The committee requested that I continue as President and I accepted the invitation for the 2025 year. This has been my 24th 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, Joan Moriarty and Maureen McInerney. 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 also acknowledge the work our Production Coordinators have contributed during the year. They were: Margaret Hassall, Gayle Poor, Jim Thomson, Joan Moriarty, Tim Scott and Gayle Poor.

Membership

Our subscriber numbers in 2025 were 622.

Our 11 Life Members are:

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

In addition to the Life Members, we have 95 ordinary members.

This brings our subscriber and membership numbers to 738, compared to 630 in 2024.

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 HTC family members who have passed away since the last AGM.

Fern Mathews

Fern was a cast member in the first Heidelberg Repertory Group production of Liliom in 1952. The play was produced by the Council of Adult Education and performed at the Heidelberg Eisteddfod Hall. Fern was awarded HTC life membership for her loyal patronage and until recently she was a regular attendee at the AGM. Fern was always delighted with the achievements of the season past and keenly looked forward to the season ahead.

Fern's generosity and support was demonstrated in her Will, as she has left HTC the amount of \$20,000 to be used in the production of a play.

Paul King

Paul was talented director, an awarded set designer and builder, and a very capable lighting and sound designer.

Professionally he was the Head of the Art Department at Mc Robertson Girls High for many years. His community theatrical involvement started at Pumpkin Theatre in the early 70s before branching out other community theatre companies in Melbourne, including HTC.

Paul directed 10 plays at HTC between 1994 and 2014, and he may be remembered by some of us as an eccentric man. Rarely did he have the

same cast on the opening night of his play as he originally cast. He didn't have any concern of what the audience thought and he directed productions that were exhausting, fun and memorable.

Financial Matters

Our Treasurer, Bruce Akers, has prepared a full financial overview of the 2025 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 \$227K compares to \$221K last year.

Our revenue for the 2025 year was \$224K, compared to \$192K in 2024. Our expenditure for the 2025 year was \$193K, compared to \$170K in 2024.

Our 2025 operating surplus was \$31.6K which was a good result compared to the \$22.0K surplus in 2024.

During the year our major capital expenditure included \$50K to replace the main air-conditioning unit that services theatre auditorium in October, and to date the unit has operated without fault. Disappointingly the Banyule Council was not willing to assist with this project. In addition there was approximately \$6K spend on lighting and tech equipment.

Bookings and ticket box

Sally Scott, with assistance from Carol Farr manage the SABO on-line ticket booking system and the theatre ticket box office 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 Aislinn (Ash) Ryan, with guidance from Tim and Sally Scott, ensuring that our members and subscribers are kept up to date with regular information during the year.

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

Archives

Our Archive team is under the care of Joan Moriarty and Jenny Gilbert and we appreciate the work they undertake behind the scenes to record the history of the Theatre.

Community

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

Ivanhoe Rotary Club, Friends of Salt Creek & Associated Parklands, Montmorency Asylum Seekers Support Group, Manningham Uniting Church, Whittlesea View Club, Second Embrace Refugee Support Group, Nillumbik Lions 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 including Rosanna Primary School, Thornbury Kindergarten and Northside Football Club.

Turnham Avenue Development

The Woolworths redevelopment of the ex-Council office land next door in Turnham Avenue was completed in November 2025. The Council Library was completed soon after the supermarket. As predicted, the parking underneath and behind the supermarket is insufficient and this has resulted in many customers parking in the railway carpark. The increase in traffic, abandoned shopping trolleys and rubbish in Turnham Avenue has been addressed with the Council.

Council

We have worked through the foyer upgrade works with Council and the appointed architects during the year. The proposed scope is to extend the theatre foyer to the footpath boundary. The work will include the upgrading of the toilet facilities to meet disability access requirements, a ramp from the foyer to the auditorium, provide additional space for our theatre patrons before curtain and during interval, noting that the ramp and the DDA compliant toilets will take up existing foyer area. The proposed façade and new signage will also assist to overcome the effect of the new supermarket blocking the sightlines to the theatre.

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

A QS costings has estimated the project at over \$1.5m +GST. However, a quality management survey has identified how this may be reduced with some scope changes.

There is still likely to be a funding shortfall of \$250,000+ which HTC will need to provide.

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 2025. 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 maintained a strong balance sheet, which is complimented by

an even stronger team of talented and dedicated theatre people, both on and off stage.

The Heidelberg Theatre Company remains committed to deliver a combination of cultural diversity and great entertainment, while providing the best affordable live theatre that is accessible to a broad audience base.

We are delighted that our 2026 season offers a 5 production playbill, plus the HTC Youth Group production and we look forward to welcoming our audiences to each show.

On behalf of the Committee we thank everyone who has generously contributed at all levels to our success during the 2025 year as we continue into our 74th year.

John Gilbert
President Heidelberg Theatre Company
7 April 2026