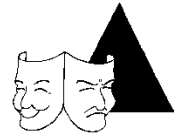


The Mount Players Inc.



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Minutes of the 2024 Annual General Meeting (AGM) Held on Friday the 16th of February 2024 at the Mountview Theatre

Chair: Craig Lenaine-Smith

Minutes: Jennifer Heriot

1. The Mount Players 2024 AGM was opened at 7:42 pm.

Craig Lenaine-Smith opened the meeting as the 2023 President.

The Mount Players proudly acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People as the traditional custodians of the land on which the Mountview Theatre is built. We celebrate the rich cultures through our language of theatre and their Dreamtime, the world's oldest form of storytelling. We pay our respects to elders past, present, and emerging.

Ensured a quorum (10% or greater of current Members) was in attendance or had nominated a proxy. Called for proxies and written nominations to be tabled.

A total of **twelve** nominations were received from David Runnalls, Karlana Santamaria, Leo Vandervalk, Frank Harvey, Melissa Forge, Karen Hunt, Craig Lenaine-Smith, Robyn Millard, John Taranto, Julie Baldwin and Jenny Heriot, Justine Press and Julie Baldwin.

All nominees are current Financial Members of The Mount Players, Inc.

2. Present

Those present at the meeting recorded as per the Attendance sheet.. Life Members present were acknowledged.

3. Apologies

Apologies were received from David Runnells, Ruth & Mike De Jong, Karen Hunt, LeoVandervalk, Kath & Kevin Addicoat.

4. Minutes of the Previous AGM held Monday 7th of February 2022

Moved to accept the presented minutes as a true and accurate representation of the 2022 AGM.

Moved by Karlana Santamaria.
Seconded by Bernadette Tonna.
Carried.

5. President's Annual Report for 2022

The Mount Players have had another very successful year. The company was left with a firm foundation under the guidance of Karen Hunt and Dave Runnells who steered us through the pandemic. 2023 saw the company solidify this and is back stronger than ever. This didn't happen by accident. I want to acknowledge the work and effort that the 2023 committee has put in and give them my greatest thanks. We had three new members join the committee last year. Jenny Heriot taking over the role of Secretary, who has done an amazing job digitising our documentation and making them accessible through Google Drive. Melissa Forge who continues to raise our company's social media profile and Justine Press who oversaw the reinstatement of the Play Selection Sub-Committee. Thank you to my Vice, John Taranto and Treasurer Bernadette Tonna for all your work. I would like to give a special mention to Karlana Santamaria, who has been an amazing support to me, in getting the Youth Theatre back up and running and offering guidance for my first time producing with Peter Pan. To all the committee, again I give you my heartfelt thanks. And of course, I need to thank everyone who volunteers their time to keep this theatre company running and continue to be the success it is. Karen Hunt and her Bog Busting team, Bar and Front of House Helpers plus the backstage, lighting and set crews. Without you, we are nothing.

I also want to thank our amazing sponsors for their ongoing support. As president I had the opportunity to attend a few "Companies Connect" sessions run by the VDL. They organise these as a way for community theatre companies across the state to link up via Zoom and learn from each other and share ideas. We are a very blessed company. Not only to have the support of local business, but also the Macedon Ranges Shire Council. I learnt that many of the other theatre companies in Victoria are not so lucky. As a few of you would know we've had a leaky roof issue for a while now. The MRSC are in the process of replacing all the flashing. They also clean our gutters on a regular basis. Thank you so much to Gisborne Office Barn, Bradleys Curtains and Blinds, Hanging Rock Winery and Jellis Craig Woodend. I need to give a special thanks to our major sponsor, the Gisborne Community Bank (Bendigo Bank). They have always been very generous with various projects that we have applied for funding, but this year saw them enter into a formal sponsorship deal with us, granting us \$5000 for this financial year and \$5000 again for each of the next two years. Thank you again. Your support is truly appreciated.

The company continues to try and give back to the community too, through Charity nights and gold coin donations for our show programs. I am proud to say we were able to donate over \$1,100 to the Macedon CFA, had an amazing response to The 39 steps food drive for the Gisborne Food Bank with over \$1000 worth of cash and goods given them. \$650 was donated to the Heskett CFA to help them purchase a new tanker and The Starlight Foundation received \$750 raised from the Peter Pan program donations.

This year we sadly said goodbye to Ken Old who passed away, but whose many years of dedicated service to the Mount Players will be remembered. Today also marks the 41st Anniversary of the Ash Wednesday Bush Fire, when our original theatre was razed to the ground. We remember all the people that came before us to rebuild this magnificent facility we have today.

2023. We started our season with an acted out, radio play version of the classic, The 39 Steps, directed by John Rowlands. This is the third production in this style that

John has brought to us, and they always go down a treat. I had the opportunity to chat with various audience members when working the bar and many had not been to our theatre before. Their love of the book or the movie and this type of show intrigued them. It was very well received. Thank you, John, and everyone involved.

Next up was Sam Shepard's darkly disturbing *Buried Child* directed by Robert Wallace. This was our VDL entry for 2023, and boy what a success it was:

Robert Wallace - Gold Award for Best Set Design in a Comedy or Drama
This award is very much shared with Johnny T. You can have the best design in the world, but unless you have someone who can build it for you, you have nothing. Two story set, rain, wind... what John can create is incredible.

Robert Wallace - Silver Award for Best Properties Design in a Comedy or Drama
Roger Farley and William Shaddock - Silver Award for Best Lighting Design in a Comedy or Drama

Ron Kofler - Gold Award for Best Male Actor in a Drama

Duncan McGauchie - Gold Award for Best Actor in a Minor Role in a Drama

Vicki Smith - nominated for Best Actress in a Drama

Russell Servis - nominated for Best Actor in a Supporting Role in a Drama

Robert Wallace - nominated for Best Director of a Drama *Buried Child* - nominated for Best Production, Drama

This was a difficult show to digest for some, but I think the company needs to be commended for making bold choices and the proof is definitely in this pudding. We are not a little back water theatre company. We seriously hold our own against some of the big players in Melbourne and this is something we should all be incredibly proud of. Congratulations to all!

July saw us bring back the One Act Play Festival. This is the 11th time we have held one and I believe we are one of only two companies that were able to put on an official VDL festival this year. Many had to cancel. Bernadette Tonna, as always organised a great week. Thank you and you should be very proud. There was such a great vibe and energy around the theatre that weekend, with about 80 people attending on the Saturday and almost that again on the Sunday. We saw plenty of excellent plays including one written by our very own, Dean Michaels. Adjudicator, Peter Newling certainly had his work cut out for him and we thank him for his time that weekend.

Of all the plays we have put on in the 52-year history of this theatre company it is hard to believe that we have never put on one of Shakespeare's. So, what do we do... We do them all at once. In one night! *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)*. This show was so much fun. I should know, I was in it. BE TO NOT OR BE

TO. Under Travis Handcock's clever direction some much needed laughter was brought back to this theatre. He worked Peter Bevin and I hard, with only a four-week rehearsal period. I'm sure you will agree the work paid off. Travis is an experienced director and has worked with many companies in Melbourne. He honestly says that The Mount Players and this theatre is his favourite place to work, and I am sure we will see him back up here again soon.

Which brings us to our final production of the year, Peter Pan – A Musical Adventure. I still have Karen’s words ringing in my ears when I told her I was going to be producer for it. You’re crazy. You’ll burn yourself out. She was right. I came pretty damn close. But we’d teamed up with Boilerhouse from Sunbury and we needed some skin in the game. The idea of doing a co-production with Boilerhouse had been floating around for a while and I am glad I got to see it come to fruition. The Boilerhouse team of Jess Ryan and Ryan Storm took charge of the

creative direction and we all folded in behind them. By the time the show hit the stage we all had skin in the game. I think we exhausted every possible resource that each company had. Jess was adamant from the start that she needed a complete double cast. It was double the work, took double the amount of time, but she was right. Which I’ll elude to soon. We had an incredible turnout for the auditions, and we ended up casting almost 50 people. One of my favourite memories is Jess and Ryan on the floor of the foyer. We had just finished our second weekend of auditions. Been in the theatre all Saturday and all Sunday and they now had little pieces of paper with names of people trying to place them into the perfect combination, getting the chemistry just right. They spent hours on it. Once the show opened though, all that meticulous planning went out the window. Covid went through the cast, people needed to swap or fill in for others. Out of the 16 performances we did only once did a complete, original cast get to perform together. We didn’t have to cancel a single show though and this was a mighty effort. What this show did though was to leave an indelible mark. Especially for some of the kids involved, and some of the adults, it was life changing and something that they will remember forever. Even at the Christmas party, you couldn’t get them off the stage. They were still there, on stage, singing all the songs and doing all the dances. The joy they got out of it. The skills they don’t even know they learnt will hold them in good stead.

For all the hours that were put into that show, they paid off, and will pay off more in the future.

As you know we are so blessed to have this wonderful facility and when opportunity presents itself, the committee is in favour of sharing it with others. Along with our own shows we had a dinosaur puppet show come up to visit during one of the school holidays, the Good Girls Song Project brought us the folk musical Voyager, Queers on the Catwalk had their night again and the Sunbury and Macedon Ranges Specialist School performed their musical captured by a documentary film crew who had been following the whole process. The documentary “This is Going To Be Big” screened at the MIFF last year and hopefully will be screened on SBS and/or Netflix later this year. Once again, great exposure for our theatre.

(Play Trailer)

OK. What does 2024 look like? I won’t go too deep into our productions as I think most of you would have attended our season launch, other than to say it is an exciting mix of contemporary plays, with the oldest

one being written in 2008. Three comedies are on offer including a darker one plus an Australian drama, Jasper Jones, which will be our

2024 VDL entry. We already have external companies that want to drop in. We have a burlesque troupe, The Sugar Showgirls coming up in June and the Macedon Ranges Naturally Cool Big Band are going to perform a night of swing and jazz classics. Vicki Smith and Karen Hunt are organising social activities for us to attend. Our own Mel Forge is organising a one act play writing workshop and last night we hosted a fundraiser with Shane Jacobson for the second Mount Writer's Festival which will be held here and at Jubilee Hall at the end of November.

When I took on the presidency last year, I had four main objectives that I wanted us to achieve. We got three of them, and that ain't bad! We restored the Play Selection Sub-Committee and formalised how that operates, and I have to thank Vicki Smith and Justine Press for that. We now have a liquor licence that covers us for the entire year eliminating the need to apply for each production and covers us if we have drop in show or play readings. I have to thank Dean Michaels and Dave Runnells for that. So much effort dealing with the council and the liquor licence board went into that. The one we missed out on was building a new props storage area in the workshop and converting our current props room into a wet room with shower and laundry facilities, but plans are underway, and I think we will see that completed soon. My biggest priority was to get our Youth Theatre back up and running. It was

interesting reading back over the minutes from last year's AGM and Roger Farley asked the question "what were we doing to get it up and running again" and the response was that we were still trying to find volunteers. Well, we didn't find any. So, as a committee we decided we needed to change the model YT had previously been running under and charge comparable fees to others offering drama lessons in the area. We would pay professional people to run it professionally. This is the only sustainable way. As a company we are not in it to make money. We just want it to cover teaching costs and running costs. Karlana and I spent a lot of time planning this. We had a great response from our advertisement and interviewed about seven people. All high-class candidates. Many of you would know Kerry Turpie. She ran the youth theatre for a few years when it first started. Bringing her back on board was a no brainer. And then a man by the name of Mark Constable discovered us, and we discovered him. Professionally trained actor from WPAA, he had previously been head of acting at The National Theatre, St. Kilda and the Australian Academy of Dramatic Arts. We introduced him to Kerry and they seemed a perfect fit. I could go on and list what they achieved in the past six months, as Youth Theatre only started again in the middle of last year, but I thought I'd do something a little different, give you an opportunity to meet him and let him tell you what he and Kerry have been up to. Mark can be an appendix, if you like, to

my report. If you have any questions please hold them over the general business.

On that, I will conclude and please welcome Mark Constable to the stage.

6. Youth Theatre Annual Report for 2023 (Mark Constable)

There were two terms of the youth theatre last year. Mark shared his history in theatre, which included 30 years of acting, training at WAPA and work with multiple major theatre companies. His wife is a theatre producer and they have two children. One was part of the *Peter Pan* production and it changed his life. But for him, seeing *Peter Pan* was a profound moment. He raised that working with Kerry is a joy and balance in their dynamic. The Youth Theatre is now up to ~50 kids this term. They have created a clear vision for moving forward.

In 2023 the Youth Theatre did a showcase which highlighted the work done in classes for the families. It was based around ensemble and physical work. This year, there are additional projects planned.

7. Treasurer's Annual Report & Statement

REVIEW DOCUMENTS Bernadette Tonna presented the 2023 Annual Report as the 2023 Treasurer. The Mount Players' 2023 financial year began January 1st 2023 and ended December 31st 2023. Our total income was \$ 1046712, and our total expenditure was \$140562; this resulted in a net profit of \$. Depreciation was valued at \$. Retained earnings stand at \$139540. The term deposit remained healthy at \$27,000 at the closing of our 2023 financial year. Trading account balance: \$35,400 Try Booking \$965. \$100 cash as our bar float. Total bank account asset: \$63,000.

We have 65 financial members in 2023 so far.

Bernie will not be renominating for Treasurer as she has moved to Perth.

The financials were moved as accepted by Julie Baldwin.
Seconded by Frank Harvey.
Carried.

8. Resolution for the number of Committee Members to hold office

It was resolved that the number of Committee Members to hold office would not be restricted prior to declaration of the nominations.

9. Declared that all Committee positions were vacant.

10. Declared that nominations were received for the incoming Committee.

Nominations received from David Runnalls, Karlana Santamaria, Leo Vandervalk, Frank Harvey, Melissa Forge, Karen Hunt, Craig Lenaine-Smith, Robyn Millard, John Taranto, Julie Baldwin Jenny Heriot and Justine Press.

Nomination forms were read out and all nominees were elected unopposed.

Acceptance of this election moved by Allie Clare.
Seconded by Marie Damos.
Carried.

11. General Business

Allie Clare mentioned that she is so pleased Mark and Kerrie are doing The Mount Players Youth Theatre again. *Peter Pan* was a production where the kids are stuck for life.

Chris Finch noticed that there's no musical scheduled for 2024. Craig explained that we could not have done *Peter Pan* without Boilerhouse. People like the Camerons and the Foxes drove the musical theatre in the past. He would like to acknowledge the grandness of having a musical so that musos can cut their teeth. The company started on the premise of musicals - we were doing 3 a year initially. Justine Press commented that the Play Selection Committee will be looking at.

Marie Damos would like to see an Australian show. Craig reminded Marie that we have *Jasper Jones* coming later this year.

Bernie - Would like to see a prerequisite for anyone who nominates to be on the Mount Players should be a member for a minimum of one year.

John Taranto acknowledged this year's new Lifetime Members: David Runnells, Karen Hunt and Bernadette Tonna. As David and Karen were unable to attend tonight, Bernie was acknowledged for her 30 years work at the theatre. She was presented with a lifetime Member Plaque.

12. The Mount Players 2023 AGM was closed at 8:40 pm.