

Prattle

From the President

Here we are, nearly at the middle of the year, and it's hard to not think about what we would normally be doing. Normally we would be coming down from the high of another successful run of all-out singing and dancing extravaganza. Someone would still be vacuuming the sequins out of the orchestra pit. Someone would be pulling the set apart to store the 'good' bits. The costume ladies would be chasing accessories and the casts' tears would barely be dry from the goodbyes at the after party. But, perhaps, here is the 'break' that so many of our members say they will take every year. Until they hear what our next show is that is, and decide that they simply can't miss *this one*, and they'll take a season off next year!

But not everyone has had a complete break—the committee have still had things to do. Although, the work load is much less than usual and I must confess that it has been quite nice to work through tasks without the pressure of moving onto the next item! We have been working on our long term plan of securing a rehearsal venue for the company. This has involved meetings with the EG Shire and we are hoping to announce the final plans very soon.

We have also finally purchased a new half curtain for the Forge theatre which will replace the flimsy one that we currently have to install and uninstall for every show. This new curtain will be permanently fixed and as such will be easier to use and manipulate.

We are still looking ahead to our productions in the future and have continued with play readings over Zoom to try and work through some of our options and get organised for 2022.

We are still working for you and hope that all goes back to normal soon.

Take care and stay safe.

Until next month,
Viki Wright
President, BPLTC.



Executive Committee

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Secretary: Jodi Gray Treasurer: John Crawford

General Committee

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The next committee meeting will be held on
Monday 15th June.

If there is something you would like discussed, please contact
the company using the details above.



ACTORS **VIRTUAL** WORKSHOPS!

You could say Production Line's Actors' Workshops are 'zooming' along, unimpeded by the Coronavirus pandemic.

A core group of workshopppers has continued to meet, to swap goss and perform scenes, under the auspices of Tansy Bradshaw (who happens to have a Zoom account, so is able to host the workshops at no cost to us).

To join in the fun, all anyone else has to do is download the free Zoom

app, and let Tony Porter know they've done so, so he can advise them of the code to join each workshop.

Of course you'll need a mic and camera on your PC/laptop/device, as well.

The June workshops are scheduled for 2:00pm (Sunday) 7th & 21st – as always, the first and third Sunday of the month. You don't have to present a scene, but it would be great if you could – that is the point of workshopping, after all. The advantage of online workshops is you can get away with reading the script rather than learning it for a full performance. (Another advantage: you get to do it from the comfort of your home – and you don't have to pay!)

So jump to it while we're still in lockdown! Fire up your Zoom app and join the dedicated thespians who are finding ways to keep the craft alive.

(Look up 'Zoom client for meetings', and follow the prompts to download the free app. If you're asked for a payment, you've taken a wrong turn – start again!)

Those on facebook are also invited to join the 'BPLTC Actors'

Workshops' group. You don't have to be a regular workshopper to join in.



Bob Leggett has thrown out a challenge to anyone, to record and upload a scene – anything from a simple to-camera one-take one-person monologue to a full-blown edited scene with multiple actors and locations. Just keep it down to a few minutes' duration. What are you waiting for....?



In 2008 BPLTC put a variety show instead of a play and so *Old Time Music Hall*, directed by Bec Campbell and featuring several BPLTC regulars as well as guest performers, was performed over three nights at the Lucknow Hall. It was successful in its own right although the venue was less than satisfactory. Minutes for the time



show that it was thought to be cold and draughty.

The musical for 2008 was Oklahoma! which eventually had a successful run, although



due to renovations at the Forge, there were concerns about whether it would be able to go ahead. Minutes from a committee meeting in



April show that the Shire were unable to give BPLTC a date as to when the theatre would be ready. However, it was all completed in time and once the



usual issues over having enough men were addressed, the show went on and was the first performance in the renovated venue.

(Although there was still no orchestra pit.)

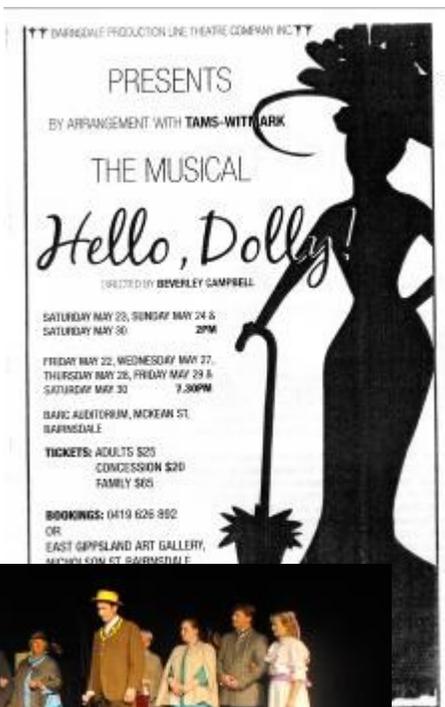


Later in the year Sue Lake-Harris proposed that BPLTC present a celebration of the music of Rogers & Hart, to be called *Sing for Your Supper*, in late November as a 'supper club' event. Unfortunately, the event was not a success and the poor state of the Lucknow Hall where it was held was blamed for low audience numbers.





Hello Dolly! was the headline show for 2009, starring Kirshy McAinch as Dolly Levi and it was a success. The minutes show that again the council was trying to renovate the theatre facility and BPLTC had to work around time frames that were not ideal. It was also at this time that the committee were working towards building a rehearsal and storage space for



the company. The company had to vacate their home in Ross St due to the building being sold and it becoming too small as the company grew. During the last months of 2009 and into 2010, John Crawford was instrumental in securing the lease of land for the company at the Bairnsdale Aerodrome and getting permission to build a shed. This was momentous in many ways, but not least because this was the first time the company had a secure home. Previous to this, the committee had considered taking over Lucknow Hall, but it needed too much work to be made fit for purpose and this idea was abandoned in favour of the Aerodrome.



2009 ended with *A Night of Nostalgia* at the TAFE student canteen, featuring music hall numbers from 1900 to the end of WW2. It was directed by



Sue Lake-Harris with assistance from John Lewis and featured musical items, monologues, melodrama and skits.



Many, many, MANY thanks to Tony Porter who has spent countless hours adding up to days compiling the history of BPLTC. He has given me full access to his records and any inaccuracies are mine. J Gray - Ed.



YES, IT'S POLITICAL!

I don't want to make a political statement to a readership that is, self-evidently, a disparate mob with varying political viewpoints. Unfortunately, the crisis that has overtaken the world community has impacted heavily on the arts sector, and in Australia this has been exacerbated by deliberate government action &/or inaction. Shadow Arts Minister Tony Burke has published an article in the MEAA magazine ('Equity') which, putting the politics aside, sums up the situation succinctly. I've gone through it and carefully removed comments that might be seen as blatantly political, and tried to just leave the facts for you to consider – so it's heavily edited. If you care at all about the arts, then you owe it to yourself to park your political leanings, and read on.

The work of artists, performers, and everyone else who makes the industry possible goes deeper than just jobs and dollars. The arts tell our stories, change how we feel, and reach and teach our hearts and minds about ourselves and each other.

When Australia goes through a crisis like the recent bushfires, typically we turn to the (performing) arts for comfort, and ask them to donate their time and talent.

Yet beyond ignoring the fact that arts and entertainment workers have a special role in our community, the government isn't treating people in the sector like workers at all. After years of funding cuts, the sector went into the current crisis already vulnerable. Earlier this year, just before COVID-19 took hold, the government abolished the department responsible for arts funding and policy, rolling it into the department responsible for roads and railways. Even so, I've been stunned by their apparent willingness to sit by and do nothing while an entire industry crumbles.

This industry is worth an estimated \$111 billion a year. It employs hundreds of thousands of Australian workers. It helps drive other industries, too, like tourism and hospitality. It's an important part of our economy. Yet next to nothing has been done to help.

When JobKeeper was announced at the end of March it was designed to exclude most arts and entertainment workers. This is a sector dominated by sole traders, independents, freelancers and self-employed people – and actors, given the gig-to-gig nature of their work, are among the most obviously excluded. If you wanted to design a wage subsidy to cut out as many people as possible in the arts and entertainment sector, your answer would be JobKeeper in its present form.

On top of this, the government decided in the middle of the crisis to suspend local-content quotas for new Australian drama, documentary and children's programs, delivering another blow to the screen sector. Perhaps the most disturbing part of that announcement was the Arts Minister's description of content obligations as "red tape".

Quotas have been a central driver of the production of Australian stories for years. Dismissing them as mere red tape highlights an appalling lack of understanding from the minister, who is meant to be advocating in Cabinet for the arts and creative industries.

Ultimately, it's hard to escape the conclusion that this is a deliberate attack on an industry.

We know that many working artists, including actors, are not well-paid. They eke out an existence, moving from one insecure job to another, from show to show, because they love what they do and they love to entertain. We know that they need our support, just like every other worker. It's a craft, a trade, a profession. It shouldn't be treated like a hobby.

Australia is starting, tentatively, to emerge from the health emergency that caused this economic crisis. But let's be honest: the arts and entertainment sector will be the last to return to normal. It will be a long time before Australians are going back to live shows. It will be a long time, too, before TV and film production is back to where it was.

I have faith in the resilience and creativity of our artists. But the idea that those driven to create will always find a way is false – they need to earn a living. And right now, they need our support.

We have to ask ourselves: once the crisis is over, what will Australia look like if our arts sector is gone?