



TREASURER'S REPORT to the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

MARCH 2024

The Music Festival has completed another successful year, meeting their mission goals and excelling at them. Many South Australian children and their families have learnt about the joy that comes from highly skilled learning, positive mind-set and a magical performance in an iconic South Australian theatre. All students are welcomed, encouraged and given everything they need to succeed. This is what we exist for. This is what the Music Society was set up 132 years ago to achieve, little knowing then, quite what would be achieved and that this longevity was possible.

Unfortunately our financial position has not been as successful and with ever rising costs for both us and schools, our bottom line has struggled somewhat. Our goal of the highest standard of performance opportunity for students that we can possibly manage, cannot and must not be compromised. During 2024 we successfully became a Company with Limited Guarantee and are now called the South Australian Public Primary Schools Music Society Ltd. We are now finally in the last stages of being approved for Tax Deductibility for donations and can now go out and seek philanthropic donations, sponsorships and grants, but in order to achieve success we will need a dedicated person in the role and a strong board to support them.

We have also struggled for the last 18 months or so to renew our Memorandum of Agreement with the Department for Education. The Music Society and The DfE are partners in the success of the Music Festival which offers public school students a plethora of Arts opportunities in a wide variety of areas. This has been a very one sided affair for some time now and we seem no closer to a new Agreement that is acceptable to both sides. In fact their most recent offer was less than that negotiated over 4 years ago. This is not reasonable or respectful and the new Board will need to tackle this head on.

My thanks go to our chair, Terena Pope, Festival Manager, Irene Solowij and Life Member Stephen Measday for tenaciously seeking success in this area and I hope they are rewarded soon.

The Budget for 2024 is a significantly deficit budget. This is not sustainable and some tough decisions may have to be made. We already run a very tight ship and have no areas of operations that can be cut much further. Everything is more expensive; insurance has gone up substantially and we need to be responsible employers to those who work for us, provide safe vehicles, opportunity for growth and all that we need, to do what we do. The Board and the members of the Society need to decide on Affiliation fees and concert ticket prices ongoing, for these are our major sources of revenue. We need to be thoughtful of our schools and families for their costs are likewise always going up – we don't want to lose any of them. The Board may need to seek financial assistance from the DfE in order to meet rising costs citing the mutual benefits to both sides, but this is again a Board decision. The Covid years impacted our savings, squirreled away for years and years and the current climate is not conducive to replenishing them.

To close I owe a huge vote of thanks to Kendall Carter, ably supported by Kristin Howard, who manage the day to day financial running of the Society. They both work tirelessly for our common goal. Thanks too must go to Natalie Drazil, our book keeper and pay roll officer who keeps a steady eye on things and prepares BASS Statements and other regulatory documents for us. She is a treasure. Thanks too to Ian McDonald and Nancy from Creative Accounting who provide auditing and wisdom.

This is my last report to you as Treasurer. I stepped in at a time when there were some significant issues, we needed a thorough overhaul of accounting practices and before COVID was even a thing. It has been a privilege to support the team through the last few years, but my skill set is not really Finances and I believe we are on the cusp of new possibilities that require someone with a finance headset. So I leave this role, satisfied I have done my best, with Board experience that has been both a joy and frustrating in not quite equal measure, and my belief in what this Society stands for and can do, stronger than ever. Thank you everyone for your support, but especially thank you to Irene Solowij who has always believed in me and provided a gee up whenever it was needed. To Terena Pope, current Chair and Stephen Measday the previous Chair of the Board, thank you for your support and encouragement to take on this task and have a red hot go at it. To my fellow Board members, thank you for not asking too many difficult questions and for your support. It has been a pleasure and privilege to be part of this amazing Society and I look forward to many, many years of service in the future.

Kirsty Henning

PS: DRG status is now approved and the process is complete. Now the real work begins and we need to boost the Board with some experts and find a company to help us take advantage of this new status. Tax Deductibility is an opportunity to seek large donations that come through philanthropy, passion for the Arts and the potential we offer to so many students and teachers. An exciting era awaits us.