

President Memoir
Marilyn Terlich
1999

My main aim while President of MTAQ has been one of assessing where our membership wants us to be heading and how best to achieve this. Of course, it has been the Council as a team who have discussed and opted for various changes during '99, the Council included -

- Lorraine O'Brien – Treasurer;
- Moira Clohessy – Journal;
- Kim Woon – Support Group;
- Inna Kogan – Professional Development;
- Lauren Stephenson – Membership;
- Alan Lane – Membership;
- Brother Benildus – Constitution review.

In 1998 a survey of members was taken. The correlating and assessing the results was a necessary and enormous task largely undertaken by Moira Clohessy. The emphasis of seminars / workshops and masterclasses was of interest to most but in the metropolitan area attendances continued to be low.

We questioned whether this was because of -

- a) the topics were not meeting teachers' needs or
- b) whether weekends were not suitable and/or
- c) the busyness of everyday life made the effort of attending a chore rather than an occasion to draw ideas and motivation.

We decided to cut down on the number of functions during the year and promoted heavily those which we thought would be of most benefit.

Because of the awareness of the turn of the century, the Council knew that we needed to take the Association into the 21st century. There were three fronts we chose to concentrate on:

- bringing our country membership closer through the Internet by establishing an MTAQ website;
- reviewing the Constitution, so that it reflected the membership of today;
- revamping the office and auditorium.

Organising Northern Tours became a major aim, as our distance members were the ones with the greatest need. My 16 years of teaching in the bush gave me insight into the needs of our far-flung branches. Going on a tour of Rockhampton, Mackay, Townsville, Cairns and Sunshine Coast confirmed in my mind that my experience was the same in all isolated areas. The trip was invaluable, and I recommend it, if possible, to all in-coming Presidents. Meeting those dedicated teachers in country areas puts all subsequent decisions in a new light, taking into account the isolation of teaching in a country area. I was heartened to see the enthusiasm and mutual encouragement evident in the branches I visited, and it confirmed the need for a strengthening of ties between city and country that the planned website could provide.

The marketing of the MTAQ to the public has become an important part of presenting a perception that we are a profession that fosters talent, strives for excellence, and enriches the life of the community. In the past marketing was limited to articles and advertisements in various newspapers but with the use of computers becoming more widespread and the growing use of the internet by the general public we saw this as another avenue for promotion through the MTAQ website. Before its formation the office answered hundreds of calls each week providing advice on suitable teachers. The website has now alleviated this burden and the office can concentrate on other areas.

Launching the association into cyberspace meant assessing what would be useful to all members. The Internet overcomes the tyranny of distance and in setting up the site we attempted to keep it flexible so it can evolve to meet the needs of the association at any time in the future.

With the coming of the year 2000 (it must be the urge of a neatly rounded number!) there was a general feeling in society that it was a good opportunity to take stock and assess priorities whether by the individual or groups. During 1999 we refurbished the auditorium, kitchen and office, readying ourselves for the coming year in the physical environment and to discuss abstract ideas, a general meeting was held in December to discuss "Visions For The Future," again calling on members to give their wisdom on where they see the direction of the Association needs to be heading.

The redrafting of the Constitution became a reality, as the year 2000 seemed an appropriate time to take the MTAQ into the next phase of its existence. Those on the constitution committee were Kevin Power, Audrey Bowring, Laurel Muirhead and Brother Benildus and myself as chairperson. Each brought their individual, unique expertise to the task. Our aim was to give the Association a document flexible enough to serve for many years to come.

We now see the MTAQ having a two-fold approach ~ to attempt to offer advise and training to members wherever they are and to promote the Music Teaching profession in the best possible light to the public. All the initiatives begun during 1999 have been built on the firm foundations and the good management of previous Councils and Presidents - it has been achieved over a long period of time and I am happy to have been a part of that progress.