

President Memoir

Brenda Hunting

2009 –2012

I joined the MTAQ Council (as it was then known) in February of 2008, after having already been involved as a volunteer, most notably in the formation of the Student Performers' Society in early 2007 (along with fellow member Deanne Scott). I confess to having been rather ignorant of just how large a workload the presidency entailed (as some of my predecessors have also confessed), and stepped into the role of president in 2009 and had to learn how to fit everything in amongst my busy teaching load. I could not have managed it all without the expert advice and assistance I received from secretary Kerry Thomson and treasurer Judy Neal, and valued support from my predecessor John Colwill, as well as the other members of Council.

My three years in the chair were extremely busy, occasionally stressful, and incredibly rewarding. I'll highlight here some of the important events. In 2009 MTAQ collaborated with the AMEB for the Series 16 Piano Grade Books launch. Later that year we were involved with the Piano Tuners' Association in their International Conference held in Brisbane, including an opportunity for our piano students to learn about and experience a variety of early fortepianos from the QCGU collection.

In 2010 Brisbane hosted the Alan Lane Memorial Workshops, which, as always, was well received. We also embarked upon a major constitutional review, necessitated by a reinterpretation of the Office of Fair Trading rules relating to the incorporation of the branches. I had never been involved in the nitty-gritty of working on a constitution, so this was another steep learning curve. The changes to the constitution resulted in some branches choosing to become Teacher Groups, with their finances looked after by the central office, while others chose to remain branches.

Work also commenced on the mammoth task of upgrading the MTAQ website. I have always been a technophile, but knew only a little about managing the backend of a website. However, that soon changed! Much time and energy was spent researching what we needed as an organisation and how we could achieve it at a price that fitted into our limited budget.

2011 was a very memorable year. The year began with the devastating floods in Brisbane in January, followed soon after by Cyclone Yasi in Far North Queensland in February. Many of our members were among those affected by these two disasters, with some teachers losing everything. It was gratifying to help Council organise some relief and see the generous donations of music books and offers of teaching spaces to the affected teachers.

Council began to explore the possibility of making the AGM and professional development workshops available to regional members via video-conferencing. This was another learning curve for us all, but one that I felt strongly about, as many regional and rural teachers had expressed their concerns about the lack of professional development available to them.

This year also saw a review of membership categories, brought about by the Music Council of Australia's move to introduce some form of national accreditation for studio music teachers. This, of course, also required modifications to the constitution. (As it happened, the national accreditation didn't eventuate.)

Another important event in 2011 was the Association's 90th anniversary. We held a cocktail function on 15th October at the MTAQ auditorium, with the Mythos Quartet playing for us during the informal

part of the evening. Two of our three patrons (Max Olding and Lisa Gasteen) and four past presidents (John Colwill, Paul Neal, Di Burt and Joyce Skelton) were in attendance. We were all delighted to hear a performance by Pamela Page.

I have always been passionate about providing students with performance opportunities, especially more informal ones that could help students to prepare for more important occasions such as exams, recitals and eisteddfods. Thus I continued my involvement with the Student Performers Society throughout my presidency and long after I stepped down from Council, a total of eleven years in all. I was encouraged to see it expand in 2010 to include northside and westside branches.

The annual meeting of presidents of Music Teachers' Associations around Australia gave me wonderful opportunities to see how other MTAs operated and how we could all help and support one another. There were many issues in common across all of the MTAs – how to maintain and increase membership numbers, budgetary constraints imposed by low member numbers and how to encourage members to be involved. The concept of some form of national accreditation and or regulation for private studio teachers was always on the table (and still is). Meetings were held in Sydney, Melbourne and Wagga during my term.

By the end of my presidency, the website redevelopment was almost complete, and planning was in place to begin offering the AGM and workshops online for regional members. Unfortunately we were not quite prepared in time for the 2012 AGM.

I look upon my term in the hot seat as one of much personal growth. It definitely stretched my grasp of all things tech as I helped to oversee the development of the new website and the setting up of online viewing of workshops and AGM, an area I have continued to be very involved in for the Association. Both of these were seen as extremely important in helping the Association to attract new and younger members and to encourage all of our members to be involved in the pursuit of lifelong learning.

I would like to thank Kerry Thomson, Judy Neal and all the Councillors (Sharon Bourne, Samantha Docherty, Mark Griffiths, Angel Hsieh, Annie Laver, Fiona McMillan, Helen Smith, Tertia Hogan, Juliet Goulter, Anna Lu, Paul Sabey and Sue Thompson) who supported and assisted me so ably.