November 2019

The Artful DODGER

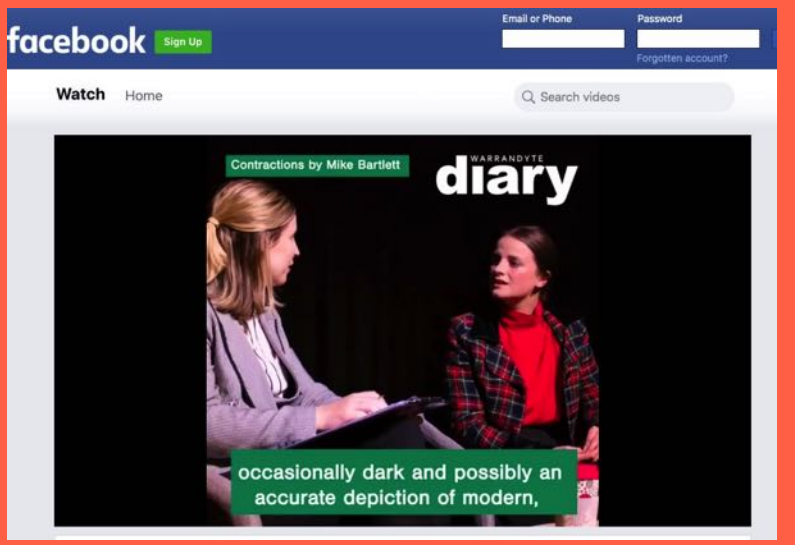
1.*n.* roystering young pickpocket from Charles Dicken's *Oliver Twist.* 2.*n.* Printed handbill full of tidings from the W.M.I&A.A. with a closing date for contributions of 25th of each month to David Tynan on 98445727 or davidtyn@gmail.com

WMIAA Members and Friends Forum

About 40 members and friends attended our forum night, held on November 8 to discuss the communities views and ideas about the future of the Hall, and of the WMIAA. Expertly facilitated by Bruce Turner, there were wide-ranging views from locals, politicians, and other community groups represented on the night. We managed to document as much of the ideas as we could, and it is now the job of the committee to make sense of, and recommend actions resulting from all of this feedback (its a lot of stuff!). Can I ask for patience, as we attempt to process what we learned from the forum. We will present a summary in a future Dodger. Many thanks to all who attended and helped make the night a success.

Warrandyte Diary Videos for the Facebooks

As part of the new way of promoting the activities of the hall, James Poyner (thanks James!) from the Warrandyte Diary has helped us to promote our latest production *Crimes of the Heart* by producing a short video for Facebook which in a single minute, describes the event, including some rehearsal photos. This can be viewed at:



https://www.facebook.com/warrandytediary/videos/798872377200216/

Dodger electronic only from 2020

For many years the Dodger has been available in bot electronic (PDF) format, as well as mailed out to those who have requested that option. The numbers requiring mailed out versions has dwindled from about 60 to around 20 now. For many years, Marjorie Beecham and Noelle Burgess would personally organise to envelope, address and stamp these, but now we think that this time has passed. Starting from the February 2020 edition, the Dodger will only be available in electronic from - either by email, or by accessing the Dodger via the WMIAA website.

Group reports

Pottery News

Spring and the countdown to Christmas have been the inspirations for the Tuesday potters' latest creations. New members to the Tuesday group, Annie and Clelia, have started straight into making beautiful sculptural water bowls for their garden visitors. Clelia's whale bird bath and ocean wave bowl in progress.

Annie is keen to attract and care for native bees in her
garden by creating very detailed bee shaped bowls that will provide a drink for her pollinating visitors.

Bird baths, echidnas, decorative masks and birds are all in production for our spring/summer gardens. Christmas trees, presents and snowmen are also underway, thanks to Melissa's daily Christmas countdown, reminding us all that making, drying, sanding and glazing our creations will require all our remaining pottery sessions for 2019.

Brenda Koochew

Group reports

Visual Arts News

Visual arts reports all continues to go smoothly.

If you have thought about joining us, we only stop for a few weeks over Christmas. Our last session being December the 13th & probably resume end of January. (maybe 7th Feb). Please, happy for your interest. Our model sessions are wonderful for improving your craft & provide the discipline of time. Offering 2 hour or 3 hour sittings.

Due to the great response & general positive experience of the art show in September, we've decided a repeat in December, 14th & 15th. With the same enthusiasm we shall deliver a great display with Christmas cheer! Hope to see you then or before.

P.S. Congrats to David for organising a successful forum on the Hall's future. Thank you.

Marion Cooper

Group reports

Theatre News

Hello. By the time you read this some of you will have booked tickets to see our final show of the year, many of the rest will be planning to book and hopefully all of you will actually come and see it.

Big turn outs for our shows are important for lots of reasons. The more the merrier of course, especially at the end-of-year-around-the-table format where you see the show with friends and enjoy a drink and some nibbles. But also the revenue you generate for us.

Much of your ticket price goes towards the actual production – roughly 30% is taken up with paying for royalties, purchase or hire of props etc. The rest of the ticket price goes towards maintaining the Hall of which the Mechanics' Institute and Arts Association is the custodian.

So, hopefully, right after reading this, you'll be jumping online, popping in your credit card details and downloading your ticket to an electronic device, all of which helps us and the planet too.

So … "Crimes of the Heart" aka " Contractions" by Mike Bartlett and "Elegy for a Lady" by Arthur Miller, opened on 22nd November. We hope to see you and a table of friends in the audience.

Christmas Party

We are planning to have our annual Christmas BBQ and Finska competition at Stiggants Reserve on Sunday December 15 from 4 pm onwards. All WMIAA members and friends are welcome! BYO meat, vegan treat, salad, grog, and playful attitude.

Looking forward to 2020

Congratulations to Susan Rundle who has cast our season 1 play for 2020 and will shortly begin rehearsals.

The cast is:

Lisa Upson	*Cora*	Ana Isabel	*Chris*
Jeanne Snider	*Annie*	Lou Phelan	*Jessie*
Jane Menze	*Celia*	Simone Kiefer	*Ruth*
Sandi Miller	*Marie*	Jeremy Skuze	*John*
Gary Wall	*Rod*	James Poyner	*Lawrence*
Sally Close	*Brenda*	Noelene Cooper	*Lady Cravenshire*
Luisa Romeo	*Elaine*		

So, we are getting ready for next year already which is wonderful. Calendar Girls opens on March 20th.

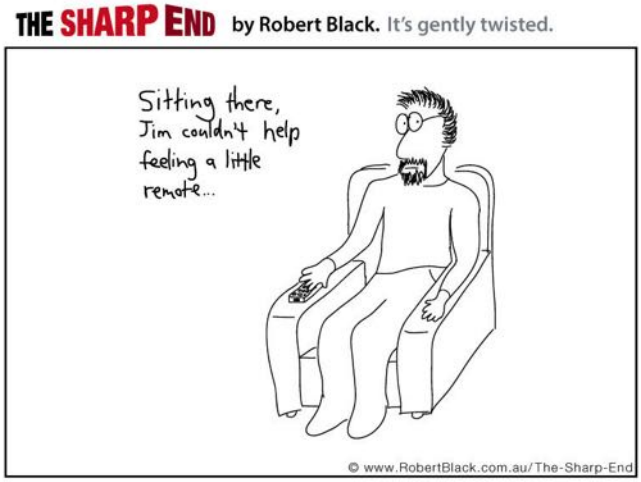
Adrian Rice

The Sharp End

One of our multi-talented members and WMIAA Web (and all things digital) guru Robert Black moonlights as a terrific cartoonist - you may have seen his work in other publications, including in the Warrandyte Diary. Robert generously permits us to publish one of his 'gently twist' cartoons each month - thanks Robert!

For more about the Sharp End, go to

http://www.robertblack.com.au/the-sharp-end



For the Forum – a brief history

This is an edited version of the history of the WMIAA, WAA and the Warrandyte Mechanics Hall. It appears in various places, but was a useful background document at the recent WMIAA Members and Friends Forum.

A Brief History of the Warrandyte Mechanics Hall and the WMIAA (1882–2019)

The Warrandyte Mechanics Institute Hall on the corner of Mitchell Avenue and Yarra Street turns 91 years old in 2019, although the Institute goes back to 1881. It has had three separate venues and several stages of development in that time and now, in year 138, it is a thriving organisation, proud of its venue and its role in the community.

Venue 1: Site of Warrandyte Primary School (1882–1890)
It began when the Andersons Creek Community School, No. 12 (now called Warrandyte Primary School) moved to its new building in 1875, as a result of a petition to the Minister for Instruction, requesting the use of the old school building to enable local young people over 15 to continue their studies. After delays, trusteeship was given to three nominees to maintain the building as a Mechanics' Institute. This may have been as early as 1878 for an Evelyn Observer advertisement in 1882 indicated that "The Warrandyte Mechanics Institute Free Library is open".

Venue 2: Northwest corner of Yarra Street and Webb Street (1890–1925)
The building (at Venue 1), in poor state of repair, soon became unsuitable for an institute, especially as Mechanics Institutes were starting to move their focus to providing venues for meetings and community entertainment as well. Consequently, a new hall was built on Crown Land on the northwest corner of Yarra and Webb Streets (where Rush & Hampshire Solicitors office is now), with a successful opening in 1890 where locals provided music, recitations and a performance of the farce, "Spinks the Baker". This hall served the community for 35 years for regular dances, weddings, meetings and silent movies.

Venue 3: The Current Site (1928–Present day)
In about 1925, the old hall (at Venue 2) was becoming too small for the growing community and fundraising began for a replacement. A splendid site, made available when the Warrandyte Hotel on the corner of Mitchell Avenue and Yarra Street was destroyed by fire in April 1925, was purchased and the new hall was opened in April 1928.

In its next phase, the hall was still used regularly for dances, deb balls, Lilac Time Balls, New Year's Eve dances, meetings, weddings and also as a cinema up to 3 times per week until the advent of the drive-in in the 1950s. During the war, it was used for fund raising events for patriotic purposes and it also served as a Bush Fire Relief Centre during the Black Friday fires of 1939. In 1944, the Warrandyte Fire Brigade moved in to a newly constructed stone building at the rear of the hall. In 1966, a timber building was added to this stone building, which acted as a Group Headquarters and radio room for the Warrandyte Fire Brigade. This same building became the Pottery Studio when the new fire station was built at Harris Gully Road in 1981.

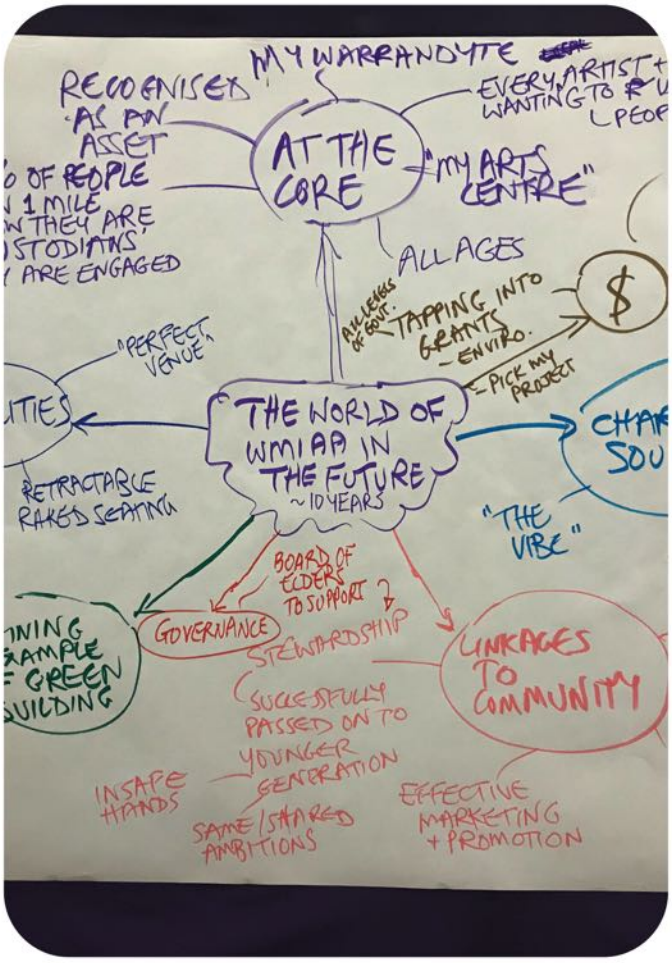
The Birth of the WAA
The committee added the porch, toilet block and meeting room in 1956, but with lack of revenue from film screenings, it was struggling to maintain the hall and its sale to Council was even considered. The saving of the Hall was brought about by the formation of the Warrandyte Arts Association (WAA) in 1956 – an umbrella association of drama, music, craft, painting and pottery groups. The association was born as a result of a public meeting in Nov 1955 and the various groups emerged over the following months. Warrandyte was relatively distant from the city in those days and so the association grew rapidly and played a key role in the artistic opportunities for the community. Not only could local people participate in the various groups, but professional musicians, for example, were brought out to perform in the MI Hall. WAA members maintained the building through fundraising, sale of debentures, loans from committee members, hours of voluntary labour and, above all, the drive to maintain the Hall.

The Birth of the WMIAA
At a public meeting in 1986, WAA was given the go-ahead to take over the full responsibility of the Hall and a new, incorporated association – the Warrandyte Mechanics Institute and Arts Association (WMIAA) – was born.

Grandiose plans for extension as a fully-fledged theatre with foyer, exhibition space, storage etc were not fulfilled. However, the association has devoted hours of work and thousands of dollars raised from theatrical productions, especially the annual Festival Follies, exhibitions and sales to undertake major refurbishment and purchase of equipment. Renovations began in 1991 and include, re-stumping, re-plastering and lining, insulation, internal and external painting and electrical work, installation of ducted heating, purchase of a new piano and lighting equipment. This involved a huge investment of money and countless working bees and fundraising concerts by members. The renovations have continued into the 21st century with the purchase of a new sound board, new tables, new chairs, new stage curtain, refurbishment of the committee room with cupboards, benches and flooring, installation of air conditioning, re-roofing and external painting and the creation of a garden with ramp access depicting the activities of the association through mosaics and dedicated to the memory of an outstanding volunteer.

More additions and improvements include the sealing of the rear car park, a professional building check for asbestos and some resulting modifications, purchase of additional theatre lighting, digital equipment and a motorised screen as well replacement of the rear stage doors and improved access in general. The cost of this work has been raised and reduced by the efforts of association members, but WMIAA Inc also wishes to acknowledge financial assistance from Manningham Council, Nillumbik Council, the State Community Fund and the Warrandyte Branch of the Bendigo Bank. In 2009, the association was the recipient of a major grant of $50,000 from the Bendigo Bank (Community Enterprise Foundation) towards a major project to upgrade the foyer and toilets and install rainwater collection, with a further $12,500 in 2010 towards the completion of the project. This work was completed, and now additional improvements are made each year, such as the installation of a toilet in the pottery studio, improved theatre lighting and digital sound and light equipment, a rear deck and termite prevention work. The Hall has never looked better, either inside or outside, or from the front or back.

From the Forum – selected memories



From the Forum – The WTC in 2019

The following is the text of Adrian's short address about the current state of the WTC, and provides an example of the preliminary presentations from the various group leaders, which sparked mush discussion on the night of the recent WMIAA Members and Friends Forum.

The first thing is to acknowledge is the early successes of this theatre company that reaches back to the fifties and all the people who were involved in the company.

But … in mid 1996 I walked out onto this stage in the first show I acted in here. There were 10 people in the audience.

I was traumatised! I know I'm an unknown. I know it wasn't the greatest or best known play. But … even so …

I am happy to say that has never happened again. We've had a few small opening nights and quiet Thursdays but our audience numbers have grown steadily and we now average roughly 400 per production or 50 per show … Our new benchmark is 50 not 10. Except when we bring Follies back and we'll be looking to fill this hall on every night.

We have become better at raising our profile and attracting actors and directors from outside our immediate group. This is important because, while maintaining links to our community it is essential we have wider appeal. To maintain the revenue which helps keep this place standing as a community amenity, we need to attract consistently larger audiences which means attracting more people from further afield. In this respect we are succeeding in getting better.

While we now have a bigger profile a common statement in town is "oh, I didn't know we had a theatre in Warrandyte."

We understand. We don't have a great big glitzy building, we have our treasured and historic hall. We don't have a great big neon sign, we have our noticeboard and a sign and two lovely pottery statues. Otherwise how would you know that anything of interest happens in here?

Perhaps it's more about what people expect from theatre and what a theatre should stand for or provide?

We might think too about the role of theatre in a community. They can be many:

1. An opportunity for people to be involved
2. for young people especially
3. A forum for highlighting community issues perhaps
4. Simply entertainment – designed to take minds off the real world for a couple of hours
5. Something that takes people away from their immediate world and into a place of make believe that besides entertaining also provides food for thought and might even challenge your status quo.

Over the years we've shown varying degrees of organisational skills. We are after all volunteers with other things happening in our lives. Luckily we have been able to count on significant contributions from a dedicated core of volunteers in our theatre company.

Besides our committee we have a number of individuals with specific skills and passion for theatre to be able to call on: from set designers to builders and painters as well as backstage, front of house and technical crew.

The current committee has been together for many years and we should all be grateful for their contribution and commitment.

We are now possibly as well organised as we have ever been, at the heart of which are four decisions:

1. to always have 8 performances of each major show
2. to stage Follies biannually
3. to decide which plays and shows we will stage up to 3 years in advance
4. to profile our activity more effectively

Maintaining our output at 4 shows per year requires commitment and dedication. This is something we intend to maintain and even exceed. Although there are no plans for more than 4 full shows annually. However we might consider other options for short runs of plays that are easy to stage.

So we have evidence that we are getting better but to continue the trend we need to:

1. encourage involvement from those who wish to learn the ropes
2. continue to bring varied genres of theatre to town
3. continue to appeal to a wide range of theatre goers
4. engage effectively with our community
5. involve larger numbers of people
6. improve the overall theatre going experience for audiences
7. develop sustainably into a well-known theatre we can all be proud of.

Crimes of Heart Dress photos

WMIAA/WTC
CHRISTMAS BARBECUE
AND FINSKA TOURNAMENT

STIGGANTS RESERVE

DECEMBER 15th

From 4pm.

Please bring a salad or dessert to share

All meat and vegetarian options provided.

RSVP TO Lisa U on 0402035427

Be Ready Warrandyte

BUSHFIRE SCENARIO

ARE YOU READY?

What about pets ?

Wednesday 27th November 7-9pm

North Warrandyte Family Centre

Contact : info@warrandyte.org.au