



## ACCOMPANISTS' GUILD OF QUEENSLAND

April 2020

Dear fellow accompanists and Accompanists' Guild members.

This is a rather different newsletter than usual, written at a time of great change and insecurity, in 'Unprecedented and extraordinary times', to quote our political leaders.

Income and employment for accompanists suddenly plummeted. We became financially vulnerable, with most accompaniment work across all genres either greatly reduced, limited, cancelled or postponed until further notice. The majority of us are sole traders, work freelance, on short term or part-time contracts, and classed as casuals. The future is uncertain; tough economic times are forecast.

We will survive this crisis and it's important to have hope in such times. There are and will be work opportunities for accompanists and associate artists. Those of us with career mixes of teaching and accompaniment are likely to have online work opportunities. Our sympathies are with accompanists in precarious positions who rely totally on accompaniment for their income. Some safety-conscious socially – distant one to one coaching and accompaniment may still be possible, as well as live-stream work and recording of accompaniments.

'Necessity is the mother of invention', so let's be creative and proactive! We can dare to think outside the box, to brain-storm ideas to improve and create future work opportunities. We can firm up and enlarge data bases, improve our accompaniment skills and learn new repertoire, update our marketing skills, and even develop self-control and patience during Government form-filling and Centrelink queues .....!

Some colleagues have been expressing doubts about their abilities to survive this current crisis, which prompted me to reflect upon the many qualities that we have assimilated during our accompaniment careers.

Accompanists are used to experiencing and surmounting many types of challenges & difficult, unpredictable situations. Individually & collectively, we all have inner strengths & qualities, with a wide range of communication skills, gifts, talents & experiences.

Guild accompanists have a lot of strengths. We are used to problem-solving [such as simplifying complicated orchestral reductions]; to quickly responding to emergencies [Help, I need an accompanist!]; to overcoming fears [unexpected recordings] and obstacles ['difficult' personalities]; to managing stress [juggling multiple engagements during examination & audition week]; to resourcing and pooling talents and materials to achieve results [the soloist needs an accompanist tonight, has forgotten to bring the music, where can I find a copy of the score? Who's available for this gig?]; to receiving, accepting, following and fulfilling

instructions [from conductors, music teachers, directors, educational establishments, co-artists and examination regulations]; to initiating, creating and exploring opportunities [at the start of our careers and when work is thin on the ground].

We are reliable, adaptable, resourceful, and creative. We are an integral part of so much music making at many stages of developing musicians. We enrich communities.

The saying, 'Problems shared are problems solved', tends to be true when we offer support and assistance to each other and are willing to both ask for and accept help. Ours is a profession of service to others. We're all in it together. Can we therefore find ways to share and support our fellow Guild members through these challenging, social distancing times? Can we reach out to each other, share experiences & information about on-line modalities that may be helpful to you?

Katie Zukov, who has been the Guild's President since 2016, is relocating to Sydney. Our committee thanked her for her significant service to the Guild, for very actively raising the status of accompanists at UQ and for creating and establishing AGQ accompaniment prizes there. As a gift of appreciation, Katie was presented with the book 'Piano Lessons' by Anna Goldsworthy, and we all wished her well in the next stages of her career. The committee unanimously elected Valerie Dickson to be her replacement, Acting President until the next AGM.

A very warm welcome is extended to our new members, Sophie Min and previous member, Jasmine Atkinson. We now have 71 members, who will be pleased to know that Guild membership fees remain at \$60 for the 2019-2020 financial year. Student membership is still only \$30 per year.

The Guild continues to support the Accompanists' Guild of Queensland Piano Accompaniment Prizes at U.Q., the Con and in some eisteddfods during 2020. Unfortunately, due to Covid-19, some upcoming Eisteddfods and competitions have had to be cancelled and Guild members are asked to regularly visit the AMEB website for examination updates.

Let's encourage ourselves to maintain buoyancy, musical skills, cheerfulness and a sense of humour throughout these difficult times.

Finally, as Acting President, I thank our committee members for their support and wish all Guild members well during this time, to have faith in your profession and maintain hope for the future of music making.

Valerie Dickson.

Acting President, Accompanists' Guild of Queensland