



Behind the Curtain – DDC Newsletter

AGM Summary

On the 4th May Dorrigo Dramatic Club held their 69th Annual General Meeting. There was a large turnout with close to half the membership in attendance. Dina gave her president's report, celebrating that the club had held three productions through the year; *The Travelers*, written by a member of the community and bringing new members to the stage, *Santa the Panto* - a Kids on Stage Production which also brought new blood to the theatre on and off the stage and much pleasure to those involved; and *Blithe Spirit* which was a very well received production.

After reports from the President, Treasurer and Film Society representative, Marian Grant acted as the Returning Officer, declaring all committee positions vacant. Two written nominations were then put forward for President - Dina Luciani and Jonathan Billing. The majority of votes went to Jonathan Billing.

Other roles nominated and filled on the day were:

Secretary: Jacky Williams

Vice President: Siobhan Dongés

Ordinary Committee Members:

Cathy Marsden

Bridget Kramer

Ken Gardiner

Julie Ward

Michael Murray

Jenny Pratten

Message from the President

Dear Members,

It's a great honour to write to you as the newly elected President of the Dorrigo Dramatic Club. Whether you're a long-time supporter or a newer member, thank you for being part of the DDC community. I want to take this opportunity to share an update following our recent AGM, introduce the new committee, and talk about the exciting plans we have for the year ahead.



The new committee is a mix of experienced members of the club such as Julie, Cathy, Jacky and Ken with enthusiastic newer members; Bridget, Siobhan, Andrew, Jenny and Michael. We as a committee are grateful to have the opportunity to contribute to a club that has meant so much to the community. A club that has touched each of our lives in a different way. You can meet the new committee members below - each one brings something special to the table, united by a shared dedication to the club and its continued success.

I would also like to say thank you to the previous committee. Their continued dedication to the club on and off the stage through the years has been key to the continued life of the club. We have very big shoes to fill.

We as a committee and a club also need to say a big thank you to Dina Luciani, who has become synonymous with the Dorrigo Dramatic Club through her many years of involvement, first on the stage and then as President. She has 'Kept the Stage Alive'. I still recall with great fondness her debut on stage in "The Banished Cavaliers" where she played one of the titular cavaliers. And her role as Pearl in "Summer of the Seventeenth Doll" has long stuck with me. Heroes, villains, stage manager, director and wrangler. Dina will forever be valued as a life member and key contributor to the club. Thank you Dina, brava.

Looking forward, the new committee is in full support of the upcoming Shakespeare production, and will do all we can to support Director Michael Vlasto to bring this exciting production to life for the community. Behind the scenes we are also working on the curriculum for a Young Drama program that will run weekly, beginning in Term 3. This program will be for Primary School kids to develop a variety of theatre and performance-based skills, including mime, maskwork, creating characters, improvisation and speech - performing poetry, monologues etc. The next Old Gazette Film Society screening is "The Conclave" on Friday 16th May, with a special free DDC members-only film screening of "Maria" a biographic drama film about Maria Callas to be held on 14th June as a component of our 70th anniversary celebration activities.

As we look ahead, the new committee is committed to upholding the legacy of the Dorrigo Dramatic Club while embracing new ideas and energy. We acknowledge that change can bring strong feelings, but we assure all members that the recent AGM followed the transparent and democratic processes outlined in our constitution. Our goal is to move forward with respect, unity, and a shared love of theatre. We invite every member, longstanding and new, to join us in continuing to make the club a vibrant, welcoming space for creativity, connection, and community.

Sincerely,
Jonathan Billing
President of the Dorrigo Dramatic Club



Meet the Committee

President:

Jono Billing

I have long admired the work of the Dorrigo Drama Club and some of my happiest memories are at the Old Gazette Theatre. I think my first experience at this theatre was watching the Sheriff's Kitchen in the early 90's and not long after that joining Young Drama on a Saturday morning. From then, over the years, performing in young drama productions to adult productions a break from Dorrigo and then returning only to rejoin the club in 2022 to perform in the Beast and then joining the committee as public officer. I was a part of the committee for 3 years and so am familiar with the work that is done by the committee to try and keep behind the scenes running smoothly so that Kids on Stage productions can happen, OGFS can screen films and we can do what we love - telling great stories on the stage.

It is with a spirit of gratitude to the previous committee members and those that served before them - keeping the club running- that I put my hand up to be the President this year.

I would like to share my love of theatre with the community and to encourage others to tread the boards, work to get a production going or just come and join us in the theatre to enjoy the show. I aim to encourage the committee I lead to work together to refine procedures to protect the club and members – engaging the community and trying to draw in active members for the operations of the theatre – encouraging people to utilise their skills or craft for the club or learning new skills to assist the club.

Secretary:

Jacky Williams

I love that Dorrigo has its own community theatre providing productions and film screenings and have been involved with screening films at the Old Gazette Theatre since 2009 also being one of the founding members of the Old Gazette Film Society since its inception in 2016. I am looking forward to my new role as Secretary of the Dorrigo Dramatic Club in supporting the committee and our members in growing productions and film screenings at the Old Gazette Theatre to continue the awesome entertainment the Dorrigo Dramatic Club provides for the Dorrigo community.

Vice President:

Siobhan Dongés

Since moving to Dorrigo in 2020, I've come to deeply appreciate the role the Dorrigo Dramatic Club plays in our town. From enjoying fabulous productions like Minefields and Miniskirts and watching my daughter flourish in Kids on Stage over the past two years, to dipping my toes into acting with



Blithe Spirit - a wonderful experience with a fabulous cast and crew - I've gained a deep appreciation for the local talent and the effort and dedication that goes into each production.

I'm grateful for the legacy and hard work of the committees before us and am excited to contribute to the Club's continued success. Drawing on my experience in the not-for-profit sector, I hope to support strong governance and help deliver engaging programming, events, and opportunities that contribute to our vibrant community.

Treasurer:

Andrew Blackie

I am grateful for the opportunity to join the Dorrigo Dramatic Club Committee. My family have only recently settled in Dorrigo but have found in the club a very meaningful opportunity for connection and expression. I believe that active, inclusive arts organisations are a cornerstone of thriving communities. I will bring to the committee a background in governance and an enthusiasm to contribute to its exciting future.

Committee members:

Cathy Marsden

My first foray onto the DDC stage was waaaaaaay back when I was 15 years old, in a production directed by Ralda Nash called "East of the Sun and West of the Moon". Michael Vlasto was also in that production! I remember back then people were permitted to smoke in the theatre and the smell of cigarettes still takes me back to those days. I can't believe the theatre never burned down! Since then I've been in many DDC productions and I've really loved every one. I've made some wonderful friends over the years - the terror of performing in front of a live audience seems to be a very bonding experience.

I have been a Committee Member of the Drama Club for around 15 years - 11 years as Treasurer and four as a committee member. I'm looking forward to another productive year in our fantastic little club.

Julie Ward

I've been a member of DDC since I arrived in Dorrigo in 2005. Since then I've been a committee member, Public Officer, secretary for around 18 years, occasional performer, stage manager, lighting operator and worked front of house. It's hard work but great fun and a wonderful way to meet different people in our community. I hope that we can continue these great traditions into the future and provide the younger generations with opportunities and support to explore their talents and develop skills.



Bridget Kramer

I love theatre's ability to both explore the human condition and provide escapism from our daily lives. As a relative newbie to acting on stage, I can vouch for how much fun it is to play around with characters and dialogue and challenge yourself to perform for an audience. I hope to see more of our wonderful Dorrigo community participate both on and off stage! I'm excited to be on the DDC committee to work with a team of enthusiastic and dedicated people in continuing the legacy of bringing theatre to Dorrigo.

Ken Gardiner

Ken has been a part of the theatre for 14 years and a committee member for approximately 10 years. He has regularly made appearances on and off the stage, helping the theatre as a handyman/maintenance guru. Assisting with light and sound and performed in many plays through the years. He has been an integral part of keeping forward momentum and motivating newer members to try something new.

Michael Murray

Michael moved to Dorrigo 3 years ago. He is a furniture designer and maker by trade. He so loved the production Blithe Spirit and enjoys the OGFS monthly movies, and has been inspired to join the committee. Michael looks forward to contributing his handyman skills and background in live music to support and enhance stage productions.

Jenny Pratten

Jenny moved to Dorrigo 4 years ago and has been involved with a range of community activities. She has always had a keen interest and enjoys drama productions and has loved joining her 7 year old granddaughter at rehearsals and productions of Kids On Stage. Jenny's background in health policy will bring valuable organisational insight and good governance to support the continued growth and success of the committee's activities.