

Caroline Underwood's speech at the MMD AGM held on 15th February 2011

I'm going to recap a little on the activities of the last 18 months and then Neil is going to tell you more about what's in the pipeline for this year and beyond.

Last year we bid farewell to our previous Programme Coordinator, Tim Saward, and welcomed James Humphreys into the role. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Tim for all his hard work during his time at MMD and to warmly welcome James to the organisation.

I always say that it's been a busy 18 months for MMD and I think that this last 18 months has been the busiest and most successful time yet for the organisation. Membership of MMD has grown about 25% year on year to 275 writers which is hugely encouraging. What is particularly good is that the writers now cover a wider range of writing disciplines and experience than ever before so that playwriting, film, tv and pop now sit alongside book, music, lyrics. That has to be a good thing. Funding has also increased, largely thanks to Neil Marcus's hard work.

To mention a few highlights of the last 18 months – last year was the fourth Stephen Sondheim Student Performer of the Year Prize which incorporates the Stiles and Drewe Best Song Award. The event goes from strength to strength and we're looking forward to another great competition this year. I would encourage all our writers to seriously consider entering a song for it. Our thanks to George and Anthony for their on-going sponsorship, joined last year by Hilary Williams, to whom many thanks also. The Best Song Award went jointly in 2010 to Conor Mitchell and Gwyneth Herbert.

The Works programme continues. The March 2010 event included a presentation of THERESE RAQUIN by Craig Adams which is going to be further developed at The York Theatre in New York in the Spring as part of our transatlantic collaboration with The York, John Sparks and the Academy of New Musical Theatre in Los Angeles. The next edition of The Works will take place in a few months' time. Our thanks to the Noël Coward Foundation for their continued sponsorship of this programme.

Thanks to a substantial funding award from Arts Council England last year, we were able to produce last summer's Sounds of England event, in partnership with three theatres – Jermyn Street Theatre, the Lowry and the Watermill – to develop six new one hour pieces. As a result of this programme, MMD writers Luke Bateman and Katy Derby developed a relationship with Jermyn Street and wrote the theatre's Christmas panto. We've had a new collaboration with The Bush Theatre through their Resident Composer Scheme with MMD writer Michael Bruce. This is something we hope to repeat at other theatres in the UK in due course. And, most recently, another new collaboration, this time with The Gate Theatre, resulted in the revue "Beyond The Gate" which was a very impressive showcase of MMD writers' work. The show has just been recorded and a percentage of profits from the sale of the CD will be donated to MMD. A big thank you to Simon Grieff at SimG Records and Rex Bunnett for all their help and support with this.

MMD's regular events continue – Nuts and Bolts sessions, Writing Lab Xtreme – generously sponsored by the Peter Fineman Foundation – Royal Academy of Music

workshops and the Lionel Bart Memorial Masterclass. Our thanks for the Masterclass series to the Lionel Bart Foundation. If there's anything in particular you would like us to cover in the Nuts and Bolts sessions or the Masterclass series, please let us know and we will certainly do our best to do so.

Please don't forget to use our website. Apart from posting all the current opportunities, it contains a lot of useful information and also news on productions by MMD writers. You can add your bio to the website so it's a great way to circulate information about your work.

To conclude, I'd like to say a huge thank you on behalf of the Board and the writers to Neil Marcus and James Humphreys who work tirelessly for MMD seeking out new opportunities and funding possibilities and organising all the events. I'd also like to thank my fellow Board members who give their time, experience and expertise to MMD. We're delighted that Sean Gray, Managing Director of Josef Weinberger, joined the Board last year.

I'm now going to hand over to Neil who's going to tell you about some of the things lined up for the next few months or so.