



Sunday, 9 August 2020

FRIENDS OF STATE OPERA - 2020 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING REPORT FROM THE CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The 12 months preceding this meeting have been some of the most successful, joyous, difficult and uncertain times in the history of State Opera. We have gone from record successes at the box office and national critical acclaim, to a silenced performing arts company like all others at this time. The recent months in particular have, like so many other businesses, truly stopped us in our tracks and forced us to re-think and re-evaluate everything we do and how we do it (if even we can).

However, it remains important what while we acknowledge the havoc wreaked by COVID-19 on our entire industry, we recognise and remember the impressive work State Opera delivered in the second half of 2019 (the first two quarters of our fiscal year):

1. *Boojum* by Martin Wesley-Smith in the Playhouse
2. *Christina's World* by Ross Edwards in the Netley Studio
3. *Madeline Lee* by John Haddock in the Netley Studio
4. Girls' Night Out, Strauss Gala at Adelaide Town Hall
5. *Madama Butterfly* in the Festival Theatre
6. *Mikado* in the Festival Theatre

The volume, quality and diversity of this work alone set this Company apart from every other state-based opera company in Australia. In addition, valuable community engagement activity including Pop-Up Chorus, Opera Discovery Days, Pre-Concert Talks and Creative Development Workshops filled our calendar and our year so that we reached more people than ever before through this wonderful artform. Inspired and led by our Artistic Director, we hosted masterclasses, coaching sessions, auditions and lessons so that every aspiring opera singer in South Australia had a place they could consider as home base. This sentiment is one which we will carry forward into every year so that all the artists we support can eventually find their way onto our stages.

The support we have received from the Friends of State Opera in FY2019-20 has been unwavering. Their financial contribution to the *Boojum* production has demonstrated that FOSO will stand shoulder to shoulder with the Company in our passion for Australian content and Australian creativity. FOSO's presence and support at the performances of *Christina's World* and *Madeline Lee* made it possible for the State Opera team to manage the myriad of tasks required in a home-venue production. In addition, on many small but certainly not unnoticed occasions, the Committee of FOSO have shown themselves to be true champions of our artistic program and of our business improvements, and true friends to our small but dedicated team.

In the last 18 months there have been many changes at State Opera, and many changes to the way we collaborate with FOSO. It is to their credit that FOSO have taken these changes in their stride and adapted over time to State Opera's new approach to marketing, communications, design and technology. Our professionalisation of the arrangements between SOSA and FOSO, captured now in an annual agreement, have meant clarity and a shared understanding to ensure that we meet, and hopefully exceed, each other's expectations. The administrative team, management and the Board want to extend our thanks to those members of the Committee who have listened and compromised so that we can continue to share this partnership and what we all love the most.

We would like to thank Robina Weir for her time and energy on the Board of State Opera. Robina is a stoic and honourable supporter of this Company, and we would do very well if all our patrons and donors matched her passion for consistency and care. We are delighted to welcome Beata Byok to the Board as the new representative of FOSO and we know her charm, intellect and exuberant love of the opera will mean we have an excellent advocate for many years to come.

We are honoured to be leading one of the flagship arts companies in Australia and hope that we can make huge strides in performing arts and business excellence in this State. We look forward to working more closely with FOSO in the coming years as we announce new and exciting projects, and as always, we welcome any ideas, advice and information you can share with us.

We look forward to connecting with you more closely in 2021 which should be a fresh full new year for all of us.

Yours sincerely



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