



The Friends of the State Opera of South Australia Incorporated
President's Report
Forty Fourth Annual General Meeting Saturday 9th August 2020

Once again I am proud, to report on the achievements of 2019, the 44th year of the The Friends. I am presenting the report late due to the COVID 19 restrictions not allowing us to hold our AGM as planned on 4th April 2020.

The Friends continued our mission of supporting State Opera SA and celebrating opera.

During the year State Opera SA presented another exciting and varied program. Their mainstage productions consisted of *The Mikado* and *Madama Butterfly* at The Festival Theatre and in two brave new venues -*Carmen in the Square*- in Victoria Square and -*Cunning Little Vixen*- at the Ridley Centre at the Wayville Showground. Their Lost Operas of Oz season of *Christina's World*, *Madeleine Lee* and *Boojum* were very well received. There was also a series of recitals *Girls' Night Out*, *Le Salon*, *Morgan Pearce* and *Wallis Gunta*. As well as these they introduced The Winter School, Pop up Chorus and Opera Discovery series to promote opera to young people and new opera lovers.

I would like to review the Friends work and activities over the last year.

1. The Friends were excited to be production sponsors of *Boojum* by Martin Wesley Smith, presented as one of The Lost Operas of OZ, in the Dunstan Playhouse. Production sponsorship is our main monetary contribution to State Opera each year, with money gained through a bequest and raising money at our fundraising events.
2. We supported the Winter School by providing two scholarships for young singers.
3. The Friends continued their popular Opera Voices Introductions (OVI) before main stage productions. This year members learnt insights of the productions and music from *The Cunning Little Vixen and The Mikado*. Thanks, must go to Christopher Stone for his wonderful interviews, the production staff and singers for their willingness to take part in these evenings and SOSA staff for organizing the singers and setting up of the Opera Studio.
4. The Friends ran a number of very successful fundraising events. We held a *Winter Soiree & High Tea* at the Naval and Military Club with a wonderful recital by Johanna and Andy Turner and Mark Sandon. Members enjoyed our film night, featuring *Downtown Abbey*. We ended the year with Masters of Opera Luncheon at Woodstock Winery where we were entertained by artists from State Opera. They were all well supported by members.
5. We continued our support of State Opera events at the Opera Studio by operating the popular Friends bar for *Christina's World* by Ross Edwards and *Madeline Lee* by John Haddock. Special thanks to Marlene and Trevor Gregory for their work over many years coordinating the Bar. Committee members always enjoy these events as it gives us the opportunity to meet our members and others who support State Opera.

6. We supported emerging artists through our Grants Program. Bethany Hill and Charlotte Kelso both received financial support from the Friends to further their studies and career in Europe.
7. This year we established the Public Fund to enable tax deductibility donations from members. Thank you to all members who donated to this fund.
8. We kept our members informed by producing four editions of The Friends Newsletter and updating our website. A very big thank you to Karen Peterson for continuing to work her magic with the layout, our roving reporters and photographers and Pauline Brooks who continued to help and advise on the process to produce the newsletter.

I represented The Friends on State Opera's Board of Management, chaired by John Irving until October when Dr Beata Byok was appointed to this position.

I would like to thank our Patron, His Excellency the Honourable Hieu Van Le AC Governor of South Australia for his continuing patronage. Members of the Committee had the opportunity and privilege to talk to him during the Annual Government House Garden Party when he spoke spiritedly of his love for Opera.

I would also like to thank the Staff of State Opera who have assisted, supported and enabled The Friends in all their efforts. In 2019 we signed an extensive Production Agreement to formalize the collaboration between us.

Major changes with the State Opera Company occurred with the appointment of the new leadership team of Ms Yarmila Alfonzetti, Executive Director and Mr Stuart Maunder AM, Artistic Director in 2018. There are also many new faces in the office, and we are building strong alliances with them. I believe State Opera is in strong and innovative hands to lead us forward in this new era.

The Friends committee, have once again worked tirelessly behind the scenes organizing fundraising events. They continue to give very generously of their time and resources. During my third year as President I have had wonderful support from all members of the committee who have such amazing knowledge and breadth of expertise. I cannot thank them enough for their continued dedication. This year four of our dedicated committee members, Marlene Gregory, Jan Harris, Rene Young and Kay Dowling are not seeking re-nomination to the committee. I would like to thank them for their outstanding service to The Friends over many years.

Notwithstanding all the support we have received The Friends are at a turning point in its life as outlined in a letter to members in April. Thank you to all who answered the survey which will guide the new committee to map out the future of The Friends.

I would like to thank our loyal members who have continued to support The Friends by their donations, attendance at our fundraising events, words of praise, counselling and friendship.

Finally, as we look ahead I am confident that The Friends with the support of its members will continue to assist State Opera SA to reach their goals and vision for opera in South Australia.

Robina Weir
President 2019, The Friends of the State Opera of South Australia Inc.