

The Friends of the State Opera of South Australia Inc
46th Annual General Meeting, April 2nd, 2022
Held at the Naval, Military and Air Force Club, 111 Hutt Street Adelaide SA 5000

President's report for the year ended November 30th, 2021

Despite disruptions, cancellations and postponements including restrictions on audience numbers The Friends have had a fruitful, engaging and artistically satisfying year with our Members and State Opera.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Patrons

It was with some sadness that in 2021 The Friends bid farewell to the former Governor of SA, Hieu van Le AC, as our patron of 7 years. I was honoured to represent The Friends at the State Dinner held in his honour in September 2021 and was able to personally thank him on your behalf for his hard work, kindness, and humanity towards the community and for his support of opera in SA.

It was with pride and great pleasure that we received the news that Her Excellency the Honourable Frances Adamson, AC and her husband Mr Rod Bunten, accepted our invitation to become Patrons of The Friends of the State Opera of SA. We warmly thank them for their patronage.

Partnership Agreement 2021 between The Friends and State Opera, included:

Production Partner for the highly acclaimed, colourful and energetic production of The Barber of Seville held in November 2021.

The Friends donated three double passes to The Barber to frontline health workers at the Women's and Children's Hospital Paediatric Emergency Department. There was such a lot of interest shown in attending that a ballot had to be held.

A scholarship for the 2021 Opera Academy which was awarded to South Australian tenor *Kim Worley*.

Initially the scholarship was for the Summer Opera Academy which was postponed (due to Covid related disruption) and became the Winter Opera Academy, only to be postponed again until eventually in September 2021 the inaugural Opera Academy was launched. A program to create, develop and enhance the career pathways for Australia's most talented emerging opera singers. Due to interstate travel restrictions the Academy moved from an intensive residential course to a series of online coaching sessions and seminars. Tutors included Anthony Hunt, Head of Music and Chorus Master at State Opera, Penelope Cashman SA, and over zoom Sydney based Sharolyn Kimmorley, Donna Balson, and Head of Music at Opera Australia Tahu Matheson.

Behind the Scenes

Behind the Scenes (BTS) was introduced to build on the successful Opera Voices Introduction (OVI's) platform introduced by The Friends, but with the addition of having the opportunity to view part of a production rehearsal in the Netley studios, as well as hearing from leading creatives and conductors in conversation with Christopher Stone. Friends' members and non-members were encouraged to attend with advertising of the event being supported on the State Opera website. The Friends thank State Opera for providing access to the Netley studio as well as providing the singers and creatives. This educational experience contributes to the understanding of what not only goes into the

interpretation and staging of a production but the historical background thereby enhancing and enriching our appreciation of a production. The proceeds from the BTS were used to support State Opera, singers and creatives

The two BTS's held this year were for;
Sweeney Todd; The Demon Barber of Fleet Street on 22 April 2021
The Barber of Seville on 27 October 2021

A survey of members was carried out for The Barber of Seville BTS . The impetus for conducting the survey was a concern expressed by State Opera that attendance at a BTS did not necessarily translate into tickets being bought to see a production.

The survey sample of attendees was limited by covid restrictions, nevertheless, of those that attended the event there was an 80% response rate. The results indicated that almost 90% had bought tickets to see The Barber of Seville before attending the BTS. 84% had heard about the event via email notification from The Friends, and 82% considered the most important part of the evening was the combination of listening to and being able to ask questions of the creatives and viewing rehearsal highlights.

A Trio of Afternoon High Teas at the Naval Military and Air Force Club

My thanks go to Pauline Brooks OAM Chair of the Events sub-committee who provided the impetus for the series and was ably supported by The Friends Committee.

The first of these on April 10th entitled '*A Star on Her Door*', showcased the life and career of June Bronhill, coinciding with the launch of Richard Davis's biography. Dennis Olsen AM and Dale Ringland shared their memories of June's life and career.

The theme for the other two afternoon high teas were '*Words and Music, the Artist's Life*'. On 22nd May the much loved duo of Anthony Hunt, Head of Music and Chorus Master State Opera and soprano Jessica Dean, shared their combined creative journey with us.

On 14th July soprano Fiona McArdle accompanied by Josh van Konkelenberg shared the story of her career, highpoints, challenges, and travels. Fiona is a former James and Diana Ramsay Young and Emerging Artist with State Opera who was supported by The Friends in her professional studies, which included obtaining a Master of Vocal Performance at the New England Conservatory, Boston USA.

Sponsorship and Grants

The Friends provided sponsorship funds towards the production of *Voss* and baritone *Joshua Rowe*, in his role as Palfreyman in 2021. When *Voss* was postponed, the funds were held over to May 2022.

Dawn Wallace award 2021 was presented to soprano Victoria Coxhill

The final of the Vocal Division of the Adelaide Eisteddfod which now alternates each year with the Arnold Matters award, was held on 25 September 2021. It was originally named after Kathleen Steele-Scott, an original committee member who made a generous donation but was then named after the late Dawn Wallace, a long-time Friends committee member, who left a bequest to The Friends to enable it to support young singers.

FOSO Grant recipient in 2021 was mezzo-soprano *Alexandra Grave*. The grant will supplement her part scholarship to study at the Royal Northern College of Music for a Master of Music (Vocal and

Performance). Alexandra's other skill is that she is a speech pathologist and hopes to use the knowledge in this field to help maximise the vocal health of singers on her return to Adelaide. She moved to the UK in January of this year.

The Friends Sponsor

Cate (nee Barr) and Nick Foskett of Top Note Wines sponsored The Friends providing donations of their award winning wine for fund raising events. The Friends thank them for their generosity not only in wine but also song.

Other Activities

Quarterly editions of the Newsletter were sent out in 2021. Articles were provided by John Irving, Chair of the Board of State Opera, Stuart Maunder AM, Artistic Director, members, singers, grant recipients, sponsor and committee members.

We have continued to utilise social media through our Facebook page thanks to the efforts of Helen Haines.

As The Friends representative on the *Board of State Opera SA* I have endeavoured to convey our support for State Opera while at the same time being a voice for the community of opera lovers and champions who have supported, financially and in audience participation, State Opera for the last 46 years.

I want to thank State Opera Board, the executive management team of Yarmila Alfonzetti ED and Stuart Maunder AM, AD, and staff of State Opera for their support of and engagement with The Friends.

Our financial status, which will be presented by Yvonne, remains in a healthy state. I would like to take this opportunity to thank members who were able to provide a donation to the Public Fund in 2021, which was used to support opera in SA. As a collective we can achieve much more than what may be possible for individuals and in doing so know that we have contributed in a very material way to opera in South Australia.

CHALLENGES

The Friends has an aging membership that nonetheless remains an enthusiastic and committed supporter of State Opera. However, looking to the future we must find a way of encouraging not only new members to join, but review and renew how we maintain our relevance to opera in South Australia. Times change and it is important that as an organisation we examine how we can adapt to these changing times. I know that this can be disruptive, to challenge the status quo, but I also believe that if we do not it will be to our detriment. To this end the committee will continue to review our strategic direction and explore ways of optimising and building on opportunities. As always members feedback and suggestions are sought and valued.

Finally, I wish to thank your hard working and dedicated committee; Christopher Stone (VP), Susan Bethune (Secretary), Yvonne McMurray (Treasurer), Robina Weir (Minute Secretary), Pauline Brooks OAM (Chair Events sub-committee), Helen Haines, John Tuckey, Johan Bruwer, Robert Dodderidge. They are a wonderful team of people to work with, who are passionate champions for opera, and its dissemination into the community.

A special thank you to Johan Bruwer who is stepping down from his position on committee. Johan stepped into the role of Secretary 'de novo', in his first term on committee, in 2019 to 2020. He was instrumental in streamlining some of our processes. I am happy to say that Johan will remain a member of The Friends and I look forward to seeing him at future events.



Dr Beata M Byok
President, The Friends of the State Opera of SA Inc.
2 April 2022