

Patron: His Excellency the Honourable Hieu Van Le AO  
Governor of South Australia

September 2016

## Welcome from the President

The winter months have proved a season of 'Firsts' in the State Opera Studio with our State Opera artists and artists from the James & Diana Ramsay Foundation Young and Emerging Artists Program working hard in a series of exciting workshops and performances. From the brilliant and moving WW1 commemoration of *Songs from Behind the Front*, to the workshop of the new opera *Innocence* and finally the new and exciting *In the Dome Room (at 2 o'clock)*, we have seen the vibrant and creative hub that is State Opera going full steam ahead. As always The Friends have been there to offer their support through Front of House and of course helping to keep the Studio ambience alive with the Opera Bar!



We look forward to another major first in the Opera Studio with the State Opera's co-production with the Elder Conservatorium of *Die Fledermaus*, in what will become an annual fixture at this time each year. This will be a fully-staged opera involving SOSA artists together with artists from the James & Diana Ramsay Foundation Young and Emerging Artists Program and all of the vocal students from the Elder Conservatorium. This is a landmark collaboration which brings together operatic artists at all stages of their development.

The Friends' Fortieth Celebrations have continued with the hugely successful concert at the Ngeringa Cultural Centre in the Adelaide Hills. The magnificent venue with its superb acoustics provided our Young Artists with a wonderful environment in which they shone and sang brilliantly. Panellists Nicholas Braithwaite and Timothy Sexton provided a fascinating insight into past successes and future pathways for State Opera and the world of opera.



40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations at Ngeringa with Nicholas Braithwaite, Timothy Sexton & President Pauline Brooks

In closing I am delighted to invite you to the Finale for our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, *'Lunch in the Courtyard' at Coriole Vineyard*. Coriole is a well-loved and valued sponsor of State Opera, and an outstanding supporter of the arts. We can think of no better place to bring our celebrations to an end than in the beautiful surrounds of Coriole, even as we raise our glasses to the future of State Opera. We look forward to seeing you there on 23 October!

Pauline Brooks OAM

## Key Diary Dates

- September** 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> @ 7.30pm and 4<sup>th</sup> @ 3pm - Puccini Spectacular, Adelaide Town Hall
- October** 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> – *Die Fledermaus*, Opera Studio  
7<sup>th</sup> @ 6pm - Pop-up Opera, Carrick Hill  
16<sup>th</sup> @ 3pm - Masterclass, Mario Bellanova & Gisele Blanchard, Opera Studio  
23<sup>rd</sup> @ 12.30pm - The Friends *Lunch in the Courtyard*, Coriole Winery  
26<sup>th</sup> @ 7pm - The Friends Opera Voices Introduction to *Tosca*, Opera Studio
- November** 12<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> - *Tosca*, Festival Theatre
- December** 9<sup>th</sup> @ 7.30pm – James & Diana Ramsay Foundation Young and Emerging Artists Summer Showcase, Opera Studio



Jan Harris & Rene Young welcoming at Ngeringa

All photographs from the Ngeringa Cultural Centre event by Mark Kennedy



State Opera Young Artists at Ngeringa

## Winter season in the Opera Studio – A season of firsts!

### ***Songs from Behind the Front***

Conceived in collaboration with Dr Christine Rothauser as part of the Flanders Fields Poppy Trail commemorations, ***Songs from Behind the Front*** was a moving and intimately staged concert featuring songs, poems, and letters from World War One, including rarely heard Australian melodies written during the Great War. Singers Desiree Frahn, Courtney Turner, Hew Wagner, Andrew Turner and the multi-talented Timothy Sexton gave sincere and heartfelt performances that took the audience on a totally engaging and emotional journey. A brilliantly designed set by stage director Velalien moved the action from the drawing rooms and kitchens of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Australia to the cafes of war-time France and the gritty reality of the field hospitals and trenches of the Front. Carol Young accompanied on piano and accordion.



The Great War killed 10 million soldiers; Australia lost 59,000 men, and yet this unique production was able to convey the camaraderie, triumph and great human spirit amidst the tragedy.

***Songs from Behind the Front*** not only paid tribute to all those who fought to liberate France and Belgium but also was a truly beautiful and moving commemoration of the War that helped define the Australian spirit. Congratulations to all involved.

### **'Lest We Forget'**

Director Andy Packer rehearsing *Innocence*

### **Innocence**

#### **Based on the book 'Time's Long Ruin' by Stephen Orr**

As proved by the recent triumphant premiere of State Opera's production of *Cloudstreet*, to reach their potential and hoped for success, new operas need time, funds and years of hard work, trial and creative development through 'workshopping'. As with the *Cloudstreet* model, the second workshop of Singular Productions' new production, *Innocence*, funded through Arts SA and auspiced by State Opera, was presented in the Opera Studio in July.



This operatic adaptation of Stephen Orr's novel *'Time's Long Ruin'*, with music by composer Anne Cawrse, and based loosely on real events in Adelaide in the 1960's, presented the challenging story of the Page and Riley families and the devastating events that overtook them. As noted in the program, it is from the viewpoint of nearly 50 years later that Henry (one of the children) now narrator, composes this '*melancholic retrospective of events that were the more ravaging for being unexplained*'. A challenging work but one beautifully and dramatically performed, it demonstrated the huge commitment, dedication and input from every member of a wonderful cast - adults and children, as well as director Andy Packer, librettist / producer Adam Goodburn, conductor Timothy Sexton, producer Deborah Caddy and the whole stage management/production team.

### ***In the Dome Room (at 2 o'clock)***



Joshua Rowe as Oscar Asche  
with Naomi Hede

Presented by State Opera and Prospect Productions ***In the Dome Room (at 2 o'clock)***, with book and lyrics by playwright Rob George and original music by Dale Ringland, together with excerpts from *Chu Chin Chow* by Oscar Asche and Frederick Norton, is the funny and engaging exploration of the lives of two of the giants of the Edwardian theatre, Oscar Asche and his wife, actress Lily Brayton. Gambling their Shakespearean reputations on a populist musical melodrama, *Chu Chin Chow*, they created a musical phenomenon that was said to have 'won the war' but by the end changed and destroyed their lives and relationship.

Joanna McWaters starring as Lily, and Joshua Rowe as the domineering Oscar, were joined by other State Opera singers, Nicholas Cannon, Adam Goodburn, Kristen Hardy, Naomi Hede, Andrew Turner, Timothy Sexton and Hew Wagner. Once more, congratulations to all and we look forward to hearing and seeing the completed project!

## A Day in the Hills at the Ngeringa Cultural Centre Celebrating 40 Years of Opera

What a truly magnificent way to celebrate 40 years of Opera! In the superb acoustics of the recently built Ngeringa Cultural Centre in the Adelaide Hills, members of The Friends were privileged to hear a magical concert given by six of our talented artists from the James & Diana Ramsay Foundation Young and Emerging Artists Program.

Accompanied by the remarkable Mark Sandon, the audience heard an outstanding program of arias and duets from soprano Karina Jay and mezzo soprano Courtney Turner, tenor Beau Sandford and mezzo soprano Fiona McArdle, soprano Naomi Hede and baritone Joshua Rowe, all accompanied by the brilliant Mark Sandon.

Friends' President, Pauline Brooks, was delighted to be able to lead the discussion with internationally renowned conductor Nicholas Braithwaite and CEO and Artistic Director of the State Opera, Timothy Sexton, as they shared their memories and experiences from past reflections to future thoughts on the evolution of opera. From past triumphs such as the Ring Cycles, to future challenges of opera in a technological world, the audience was left in no doubt as to the vital necessity and place of this extraordinary art form in our society.



Naomi Hede & Joshua Rowe in duet



Ngeringa reception committee: Kay Dowling, Yvonne McMurray & Helen Haines

The post-concert delicious al fresco lunch on the verandah, overlooking the beautiful hills of Mount Barker, gave Friends and artists the opportunity to share their passion and joy at the concert and the beautiful music making. Not only do we have our own Young Artist 'stars', but South Australia, in the generous gift from Ulrike Klein, has a new and wondrous star in the superb Ngeringa Cultural Centre. In thanking State Opera for its support through the Young Artists, The Friends look forward to celebrate with another 'Winter Warmer' at Ngeringa in 2017. We look forward to seeing you all there!

Fiona McArdle accompanied by Mark Sandon at Ngeringa

## In the Spotlight: Fiona McArdle, Mezzo Soprano

Last year The Friends were delighted to support Fiona McArdle as she began her studies at the New England Conservatory (NEC) Boston, in the Master of Music (Vocal Performance). Here Fiona updates us on her highly successful first year of study.



New England Conservatory (NEC) is a world-renowned institution with a rigorous curriculum, and a uniquely collaborative culture where students are encouraged to explore. The Master of Music (Vocal Performance) is a program that pushes you to your limits and truly prepares you for life in the industry. With classes in movement, stage combat, acting, performance and interpretation, I have learnt much about what is required of me in this industry and learning much about myself. Through my studies at NEC I am able to work with a world-class faculty in the Opera, Vocal and Collaborative Piano Departments. Jane Eaglen, an internationally renowned, award-winning soprano, has been a wonderful teacher for me. I am learning so much from her and noticing a considerable change in my voice. Studying at NEC has been a huge learning curve for me but I am relishing the challenge. My first year of study has been incredibly successful; I was awarded a Dean's Award this semester for my high grades, and was one of four graduate students in the Vocal Department to receive an increased Merit Award for their performance. While studying I have had many wonderful performance opportunities, beginning with singing the chorus for Gluck's *'Iphigénie en Tauride'* in the incredible Jordan Hall. Most recently I had the opportunity to perform the role of Flosshilde in Symphony New Hampshire and Lexington Symphony's *'The Essential Ring Part I'*.

Costs of postgraduate study in the USA are high, and while I have been offered postgraduate scholarships from the New England Conservatory, there still remains a high amount of money required to continue studying in the USA. Donations made through the Australian Cultural Fund will go toward paying my tuition fee of nearly US\$17,000 per semester. Thank you all for your support. With your help, I will be able to continue studying at the New England Conservatory and continue on the path to an operatic career.

If you wish to donate to help Fiona continue her studies please visit: [australianculturalfund.org.au/artists/fiona-mcardle/](http://australianculturalfund.org.au/artists/fiona-mcardle/)  
Please note that all donations to the Australian Cultural Fund are tax deductible. [www.fionamcardle.com](http://www.fionamcardle.com)

## Friends on the Move - Opera travels with Vice President Robina Weir

Vice President of The Friends, Robina Weir offers some insights from her recent contrasting opera and performance experiences in Italy. In this edition we feature 'Opera in Italy - Experiencing the Spectacular' and in our next edition 'Opera in Italy - Experiencing the Intimate'.

### Opera in Italy – Experiencing the Spectacular

In Verona we saw a performance of *Aida* in the 100AD Arena di Verona, which holds about 15,000 people.

Our hotel offered an early dinner which we had in its very modern restaurant. It was a good start to the evening. We then walked to the arena and like everybody else did a tour of the piazza where all the sets for other operas in the cycle were stored. At about 8.30pm we entered the arena at Gate 1 of 70 entrances, all with huge red banners and curtains across them. It was very grand. You cannot see into the arena until you are past the curtains and then it was very exciting. We went inside for a 9pm start and were surprised at how full it was. We were lucky to have excellent padded seats in Row 5.



After a glass of Prosecco we were ready for the performance. The audience, mostly dressed in formal clothes where we were sitting, took their seats and there was tremendous anticipation. The orchestra members strolled in slowly and set themselves up. While they were in a pit there was no barrier between them and the audience, and we could see them very clearly. There were two huge screens for the surtitles which were in English and Italian. The set was amazing but simple and adaptable as it was moved four times. There were huge columns, obelisks, sphinx, palm trees and a large curtained central archway at the back of the stage. All the stage hands were visible and wearing head lamps so that they could change scenes in the dark.

When the 1<sup>st</sup> Act started there was a roar from the crowd as the contrast from dark to light and the dazzling costumes was amazing. The singing, especially *Aida*, was wonderful. It took a little getting used to the sound which sounded weak at first, but soon became adjusted to the huge arena. The props were spectacular. At least four times during the performance there were about 250 people on stage; main, chorus, ballet, and on the arena steps behind the stage where performers were waving banners, flags and flares at various times. During the spectacular triumphal procession four beautiful white horses came on stage and bowed right on the edge just above the huge orchestra. It was all staged to impress and it did.

There was some added drama before Act 4 when the stage hands were trying to raise a huge canopy across the stage. A guy rope snapped and a huge obelisk tilted and looked like it was going to crash onto the stage. Everybody gasped but it held. After about a thirty minute delay, the show went on. Consequently the opera didn't finish until 1.15am. It was a very late but memorable night.



### Welcome New Members

Mr Tom and Mrs Pam Mayer  
Dr Pamela Tonkin and Dr Stuart Inglis



Good friends enjoying Ngeringa!

For any enquiries or further information on **The Friends** please contact **0439 981 517**

The Friends Committee gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the **staff of State Opera SA**