

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

December 2016

Welcome from the President

In coming to the end of this, our 40th Anniversary, we look back with great pride on the achievements of our wonderful State Opera Company as well as The Friends, throughout this memorable year! State Opera has excelled with a season of outstanding productions; from the innovative *Magic Flute*, sponsored by The Friends, to the triumphant and magical world premiere of *'Cloudstreet!'* From its winter series of new works in the Opera Studio and the romantic and gorgeous Puccini Spectacular in the Adelaide Town Hall, to the five star triumph of the glorious *Tosca*, with our stellar Kate Ladner succeeding brilliantly in her first *Tosca*, we have seen yet again the strength, talent and commitment of our State Opera Company. For his creative and outstanding leadership we thank State Opera SA CEO and Artistic Director, Timothy Sexton, as well as his team who continue to amaze us with their dedication and hard work! We are all the beneficiaries.



In this 40th Anniversary Year, The Friends' Committee members have also continued to work hard in organizing events such as the 'Toast to 40 years of the Friends', the wonderful Lunch in the Hills at the Ngeringa (now Ukaria) Cultural Centre, the Opera Voices Introductions and the recent Coriole Lunch in the Courtyard. In addition they give generously of their time and resources in staffing the Friends Opera Studio Bar and other events in the Opera Studio, all with the intention of supporting both the State Opera and our Young Artists. For their continued dedication, loyal commitment and generosity I give my heartfelt thanks. It also gives me great pleasure to announce that, in coming to the end of my term on the Board of the State Opera, Vice President Robina Weir has been appointed by Minister Snelling as my replacement as the Friends' Board representative. I wish Robina and the Board of State Opera all best wishes for the times ahead.



Robina Weir, Pauline Brooks, Helen Haines, Kay Dowling,
Rene Young and Marlene Gregory at Coriole

Despite the challenges of the Adelaide Festival Centre's redevelopment works, State Opera's 2017 Season promises to be bold, exciting and innovative. In thanking you all for your support throughout this year may I ask you to show your commitment to, and belief in, our State Opera by renewing your Membership of The Friends and encouraging your friends to become our Friends! I look forward to seeing you all in 2017.

Pauline Brooks OAM

Diary Dates

December 9th @ 7.30pm – James & Diana Ramsay Foundation Young and Emerging Artists Summer Showcase, Opera Studio

2017

March 3rd, 5th, 7th, 9th – *Saul*, Festival Theatre

29th @ 7pm – The Friends Opera Voices Introduction to *Cavalleria Rusticana & I Pagliacci*, Opera Studio

April 9th @ 2pm – The Friends of State Opera AGM, Opera Studio

18th, 20th, 22nd – *Cavalleria Rusticana & I Pagliacci*, Festival Theatre

Full program of further Main events and activities for the State Opera and The Friends will be announced in the February 2017 issue of the Friends' Newsletter.

All photographs from the Coriole Vineyards event
by Mark Kennedy



Friends enjoying Lunch in the Courtyard, Coriole

Continuing The Friends' Support of Young Artists – Penelope Cashman

Bel Canto in Tuscany, August 1st to 20th, 2016

The Friends of State Opera were delighted to support another wonderful Young Artist, Penelope Cashman, enabling her to attend 'Bel Canto in Tuscany'. Included in this edition are excerpts from her fascinating report and account of her experience.

For the full report please visit The Friends website: saopera.sa.gov.au/friends

In August of this year, thanks to The Friends of State Opera, I had the wonderful opportunity to be one of the pianists at the inaugural 'Bel Canto in Tuscany'. This course for opera singers was held in Greve in Chianti, Italy, home town of its Washington-based director, Maestro Giovanni Reggioli. I first met Giovanni at the Lisa Gasteen National Opera School (LGNOS) in 2014 and then worked with him again at LGNOS 2015. It was during the 2015 school that he invited me to be a pianist at Bel Canto in Tuscany.

Giovanni Reggioli is a conductor and vocal coach steeped in the Bel Canto tradition. I often feel he must have a direct phone line to Rossini! In creating this opera course, he brought together his finest colleagues from the US, UK and Italy. These included Will Crutchfield, Richard Hetherington, Dona D. Vaughn, Elisabeth Bishop, Laura Pasqualetti and Francesca Giovannelli.

Along with the two other pianists (both NY-based) it was my role to provide accompaniment for the coachings, master classes, rehearsals and three concerts that took place throughout the course.

It's hard to pick highlights from such an intensive three weeks, but a number of aspects made a profound impression on me. I played for many hours of Elisabeth Bishop's voice lessons and these taught me a huge amount. An American mezzo soprano who performs regularly at the Met, Elisabeth is a humorous, warm and unfailingly positive teacher who has an extraordinary knowledge of vocal technique and anatomy, but manages to convey it in a strikingly accessible and efficient manner. It was a privilege to see her effect significant vocal improvements with many students of different voice types, ages and experience.

Dona D. Vaughn, who runs two opera companies, directs all over the US and teaches at the Manhattan School of Music, directed the scenes for the concerts. Throughout the course she also worked with groups of singers on their acting, presentation, and specific arias. The classes were powerful and sometimes confronting. Dona acknowledged the deeply personal challenges of being an opera singer and never glossed over the difficulty of the career and the vulnerability it often entails.



The three concerts were very special events, if slightly pressured due to the compressed rehearsal time! The first was held in the Castello di Verrazzano, a castle overlooking Greve. We performed numerous operatic excerpts while the sun set over the Tuscan hills behind us. The second concert comprised sacred repertoire by Rossini, Puccini, Pergolesi, and Mozart. This was held in the Pieve di San Leolino, a Romanesque church dating from the 12th century. The final concert was held on the steps of the church in the main square of Greve and attracted a particularly large audience of locals and tourists. It was a highly successful conclusion to a wonderful three weeks. I know we all left the course both inspired and exhausted.

Bel Canto in Tuscany taught me an enormous amount and gave me some very valuable contacts and experience. I gained a deeper understanding of the Bel Canto vocal technique and feel I've already been able to convey this to the singers I work with here in Adelaide.

I would sincerely like to thank all the members of the Friends of State Opera for your generosity. There are few opportunities and sources of support for Australian vocal coaches and repetiteurs wanting to develop their professional skills and I feel very privileged to have had this invaluable experience.

Penelope Cashman

The 40th Anniversary – A fitting finale with Lunch in the Courtyard at Coriole

Recognised internationally for its magnificent wines, Coriole has been a major and greatly valued sponsor of the State Opera of South Australia for many years. In addition it is also renowned for its outstanding contribution to the arts and culture of South Australia through many of its events including the Coriole Music Festival, Shakespeare in the Vines and the People's Messiah. What better place to bring our 40th Anniversary Celebrations to an end than in the beautiful surroundings of the newly renovated Coriole Courtyard.

Despite the challenge of a cooler than expected spring day, the large gathering of Friends enjoyed the ambiance of the Coriole gardens while sampling the fruits of the Coriole vineyards. Spirits and voices were warmed and enlivened after a sparkling wine on arrival and a variety of Coriole signature wines from the Dancing Fig to the Mary Kathleen Cabernet Merlot and 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon. These continued to be savoured and enjoyed throughout a sumptuous meal prepared by Executive Chef Tom Reid.



Timothy Sexton draws the raffle

The raffle table was laden with prizes generously donated by the members of the Friends' Committee, together with the Adelaide Arcade and Adelaide Hatters. Donations from the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, State Opera and the Adelaide Festival also ensured that the Silent Auction provided excitement and fun for guests as well as funds for The Friends and State Opera.

Adding significantly to the pleasure of the occasion were Young Artists Desiree Frahn, Karina Jay and Beau Sandford who, accompanied by Mark Sandon, sang a wide variety of songs from opera to musicals. As always their talent, enthusiasm and willing contribution to a Friends' event, reminded us of the great worth in supporting these wonderful young people as they work tirelessly to create and develop their careers. In thanking them we look forward to following and supporting their pathways in the years ahead.

On behalf of the members of The Friends' Committee, may I offer our sincere thanks to all those who helped make this such a wonderful and fitting finale to our 40th Anniversary. In particular may I thank Libby Raupach and Mark Lloyd of Coriole for their generous support of The Friends on this special occasion, and for their ongoing and long term support of the State Opera.



Mark Sandon, Desiree Frahn, Karina Jay & Beau Sandford

Opera Voices Introduction to Tosca

The last OVI for 2016 took place at the Opera Studio on 26th October and previewed the return of Puccini's *Tosca* to Adelaide after an absence of 16 years. A large audience attended, including a number who had never seen the opera before. A prime purpose of the OVIs held by The Friends is to help our audience discover operas for the first time and to explore facets of the particular production.



The evening was built around a conversation between The Friends' Christopher Stone, the director of the production, Cath Dadd and the conductor Nicholas Braithwaite, both making a welcome return to work with State Opera. Both guests were clearly completely immersed in *Tosca*, a result of working on many productions of the opera over many years. For instance, both Cath and Nicholas reflected on the political and historical background to *Tosca*, first performed in 1900 but with the action taking place in the Rome of 1800. Cath confirmed that we would be seeing a historically accurate production, not a modern update, which she thought inappropriate for this opera. Her enthusiasm for this opera and her desire to present a

dramatically realistic performance was quite obvious to all. Nicholas Braithwaite showed similar passion for Puccini's score, clearly indicating that there is a lot more to it than some may think.

To finish off the OVI, we were fortunate to hear two of the cast singing highlights of the opera. Soprano Kate Ladner, making her role debut as Tosca, sang the Act II aria *Vissi d'arte*, bringing a tear to the eye of not a few audience members. Bernard Hull, singing Spoletta in the production but also covering the leading tenor role of Mario Cavaradossi, sang the Act I aria *Recondita armonia*. Both were ably accompanied by Andrew Georg.

All that was left was to enjoy refreshments supplied by members of The Friends' committee, mingle with our guests and to discuss the forthcoming production. Of course, for those that went to one or more of the performances, the comments by Cath Dadd and Nicholas Braithwaite provided added insight into a superb production.



Nicholas Braithwaite, Cath Dadd, Timothy Sexton, Kate Ladner & Bernard Hull

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 the September edition we featured 'Opera in Italy - Experiencing the Spectacular' and in this edition we have Part 2:

Opera in Italy – Experiencing the Intimate

In Venice we saw *La Traviata* in the intimate and unusual setting of the Baroque Palazzo Barbarigo Minotto on the Grand Canal. To get there we walked alongside a narrow canal, up an old stone staircase and joined about 70 other people in a beautiful salon with seating all around. This was the setting for the Act 1 of *La Traviata*. When it was time to start an attendant in costume went around lighting candelabras to light the room and add atmosphere. A small 4 piece orchestra appeared and the audience became quite excited. Violetta and Alfredo entered and sang and we were all guests at the party. The singers were excellent and we felt part of the performance. After the 1st Act we all went into another lovely nearby room looking onto the Grand Canal to have a Prosecco and mingle with the audience. For Act 2 we moved to another grand room representing a room in the house in the country. Once again we sat around the singers and felt the atmosphere of the situation. Unfortunately Giorgio wasn't as good as the other singers. For Act 3 we moved to a huge bedroom with an alcove for the final scene. Violetta died in Alfredo's arms right in front of us and there wasn't a dry eye in sight.

While it is a scaled down performance, the singers and musicians were excellent, the setting magical and a wonderful atmosphere was created. We went out into the beautiful evening very happy to have been part of this opera experience and wondered if we would be able to replicate this in Adelaide.



Welcome New Members

Mrs Jean Medley
Dr & Mrs Owen and Delia Mace



Photography by Ali Feo

'AND WHAT A TRIUMPH IT WAS: TOSCA - SPLENDIDLY POWERFUL REVIVAL OF AN OLD-TIMER ... KATE LADNER...BRILLIANTLY SUCCESSFUL ... ROSARIO LA SPINA ...DELIVERS THE BEST OF HIS CAREER ... MARIO BELLANOVA...ABSOLUTELY RIVETING...' *Graham Strahle in The Australian.*

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**