

The  
Friends

# NEWSLETTER

of the State Opera of South Australia Inc

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

February 2017

## Welcome from the President

In welcoming you to the first edition of The Friends News for 2017 may I say how excited we are about the State Opera's dynamic and varied 2017 season. With the challenges of the closure of Adelaide Festival Theatre in the second half of the year CEO & Artistic Director Timothy Sexton has seized the inherent opportunities in the situation and put together a creative and wide ranging program. The Friends are delighted to be sponsoring the double bill of *La Vida Breve/Gianni Schicchi* in August, together with the Verdi Spectacular in November, both in the beautiful acoustic of the Adelaide Town Hall.

In this edition we have opened the year by including presentations given by the new Chair of the Board of State Opera, John Irving, together with those of Timothy Sexton, as they reflect on ensuring the Vision for State Opera now and into the future. (Due to space limitations my presentation can be read on the Friends' website [saopera.sa.gov.au/friends](http://saopera.sa.gov.au/friends)). I think I can safely say however that the Friends, through hard work and commitment, has achieved its goals of supporting State Opera in all its activities, programs and productions, plus helping to raise funds for the benefit of the company as well as supporting and sponsoring the professional development of our young artists. Like any true friend we will remain a constant ally and continue to stand by and work for all we value in State Opera and the art form in the times ahead.

As this is my last 'Welcome' in my role as President, I would like to express my thanks to the many people who have made these last three years such a joy. To the members of the Friends' Committee my heartfelt thanks for their unstinting support, hard work and commitment. They are an amazing team of talented, caring and passionate Friends and State Opera supporters – we simply would not exist without them. To Timothy Sexton, Deb Pahl and the wonderful State Opera team and artists, thank you all for your

support and hard work for us and for this outstanding company. You have created Operatic triumphs and visions that have taken us to the stars and back! To all the professional and committed Board colleagues with whom I have worked - my thanks for all the wisdom shared. Finally to you, our very special 'Friends' my thanks to you for coming on this journey with us and for sharing yourselves and your passion for this remarkable art form.

I look forward to the journey ahead in your company.

**Pauline Brooks OAM**



President Pauline Brooks with The Friends' Committee

## Key Diary Dates 2017

- March** 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> – *Saul*, Festival Theatre  
29<sup>th</sup>, 7pm – The Friends Opera Voices Introduction to *Cavalleria Rusticana & I Pagliacci*, Opera Studio
- April** 9<sup>th</sup>, 2pm – The Friends of State Opera AGM, Opera Studio  
18<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> – *Cavalleria Rusticana & I Pagliacci*, Festival Theatre
- May** 21<sup>st</sup>, 2.30pm – State Opera of SA Recital, Ukaria, Mt Barker
- June** 2<sup>nd</sup>, 6pm to 9pm, Soiree at the Barr, historic Reading Room of the Barr Smith Library

See the 2017 State Opera of South Australia Season Brochure.

**Looking ahead: Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> September "A Day in the Hills" at Ukaria, Mt Barker - concert and lunch, 12noon to 4pm.**

## Continuing The Friends' Support of Young Artists – Repetiteur, Mark Sandon

### *The Lisa Gasteen National Opera School, Queensland*

The Lisa Gasteen National Opera School is conducted over four weeks, and last year focused on the training of four repetiteurs and sixteen singers. There were two public performances given, the first a water-themed lieder and art song, and the second a gala of scenes from five operas.

The first week concentrated on repertoire for the art song evening. I found this to be enormously enjoyable, both for the opportunity to work with dedicated young professional singers and for the chance to learn from the remarkable pianist Phillip Mayers. The repertoire assigned to me was *Verzagen* by Brahms, *Gefrome Tränen* (Schubert), *L'île Inconnue* (Berlioz), *Wasserfahrt* (Mendelssohn) and *Die Lorelei* (Clara Schumann). Needless to say, I was thrilled with the music.



Mark Sandon speaking at The Friends Lunch in the Courtyard, Coriole, October 2016 Photo by Mark Kennedy

Some of the advice I received on this repertoire has really stayed with me. A lot of it revolved around greater efficiency in my technique, but I also learned to refine my focus and make sure not a single note went by without my attention being on it. As Richard Hetherington said to me, about one hundred times, “take nothing for granted, Mark!”

The culmination of this first week was, of course, the concert and this went exceedingly well. It was a great privilege to hear some of the finest young voices in Australia and New Zealand paired with some excellent pianists.

The next two weeks were filled with preparation for the Gala Night of Opera. Scenes were selected from *Orfeo* by Monteverdi, *Orfeo ed Euridice* by Gluck, *Orpheus in the Underworld* by Offenbach, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* by Nicolai, and *Falstaff* by Verdi.

These operas were divided up amongst the singers and repetiteurs, and I was assigned to two of the three operas conducted by the wonderful Richard Hetherington. Namely *Orfeo ed Euridice* and *Orpheus in the Underworld*.

I spent a great deal of time with Richard, and learned a huge amount. He is a genuinely warm and kind man, possessed of an encyclopaedic knowledge of opera and a passionately musical soul. He described to me the ways a repetiteur has to be *imaginative*; that even in rehearsals, playing an orchestral reduction, you have to find enough musicality to be able to inspire others. He also encouraged me to learn to imagine and hear fully fleshed out harmonies in the music that I play, so as to feel that I can really *live* inside the world of the music.

During this period I was also asked to play for a number of singers' lessons with Lisa Gasteen. This was a wonderful opportunity to learn from one of the great Wagnerian sopranos of our time, and to hear her opinions on the “why” and “how” of great singing.

Arriving at the Lisa Gasteen National School on the first day, I was both mentally and physically exhausted, having just finished the undergraduate, honours' and masters' recitals for the students at the Elder Conservatorium. The greatest compliment I can give the School is that the period of intensive work that followed actually re-energised me. It was one of the most valuable musical experiences I have ever undertaken, and I particularly wish to thank you, the Friends of the State Opera of South Australia, for making it possible for me.

**Mark Sandon**

## Vale Edward ‘Ted’ Nichols MBE,VRD,RAN

It is with great sadness that The Friends acknowledge the passing of one of our longest standing and most loyal of friends, Ted Nichols. A modest, highly decorated naval man, Ted was well known for his great love of opera as well as his strong connections with the Australian Ballet. We were privileged to have had Ted's company at the recent Coriole lunch where he was greeted with great affection by many of those present.

A Celebration of Ted's life is to be held in April at the Festival Centre.

**For further information please contact Pauline Brooks at The Friends: phone 0439 981 517**



## State Opera of South Australia - Ensuring the Vision

**Vision: “To be the most exciting and innovative opera company in Australia, enhancing South Australia’s artistic reputation nationally and internationally.”**

At a recent gathering in the State Opera Board Room, the Friends’ Committee was delighted to meet with the State Opera Board and Staff to discuss their roles as well as their vision for the future of State Opera. The following presentations were given by John Irving, recently appointed Chair of the State Opera Board, and Timothy Sexton, CEO & Artistic Director. For the full versions, as well as President of the Friends Pauline Brooks’ presentation, please visit the Friends’ website on [saopera.sa.gov.au/friends](http://saopera.sa.gov.au/friends).

### John Irving, Chair, State Opera of South Australia Board



I am personally thrilled to be here today as Chair of the State Opera of South Australia, a performing arts company with a wonderful past, difficult present (I will come back to that) and an exciting future.

The difficult present relates not to the company or its programs, which will remain at the highest level, it is all about venues. As you will know the Festival Theatre is the key venue for SOSA; it is the only venue capable of providing the performers and the audience with the best possible experience.

As a result of the redevelopment of the plaza and car park the venue is compromised in two ways - it will be closed completely for at least six months and even when open will have significant access issues, especially for car parking, for some time to come.

However I can assure you all that the company, its board and management will be working very hard to ensure that our audiences, wherever we might be playing, will be thrilled with what they see and hear on stage.

I am also very pleased to announce that our CEO/AD Tim Sexton has been reappointed by the company for another term from 1 July 2017. In conjunction with Tim, his staff and the rest of the Board, I look forward to sharing wonderful Opera with you for many years to come.

### Timothy Sexton, CEO & Artistic Director - State Opera of South Australia



As the smallest of the ‘major’ opera companies, we have an extraordinary record of achievement, from Ring Cycles to *Moby Dick* to Philip Glass operas to *Nixon in China*, *El Nino*, *Elektra*, *Salome* and new works such as *Cloudstreet*, *Ode to Nonsense*, *Different Fields*, *Ingkata*, *Innocence*, and *On the Beach*.

The evolution from humble beginnings, through a relatively brief transformation as New Opera in 1973, through to the Act of Parliament that established us as State Opera SA in 1976 can be summed up in a single word, tenacity.

We are a company that stubbornly refuses to let the turkeys get us down and we’ve had quite a few turkeys foisted upon us over the years, often in the guise of adverse conditions that test us. For nearly 30 years, you’ve had the same team forging ahead to create great theatre. And this is primarily what we do and why we do what we do. We love the art form and the thrill of creating something special. You have special people who create special things.

This is my 30<sup>th</sup> year with the company in a journey that has covered a huge range of tasks. But I have been blessed to work with some of the most extraordinary colleagues you could ever imagine, Deb, Judith, Nigel, Jeanette and the host of contract people such as Dave McLean who helps to steer the production ship.

What that 30 years of exposure has shown me is how truly unusual this company is. We literally baffle our interstate counterparts. They don’t get us and can’t work out how we do what we do. But if you are seriously committed to your craft and are surrounded by like-minded people, then anything is possible.

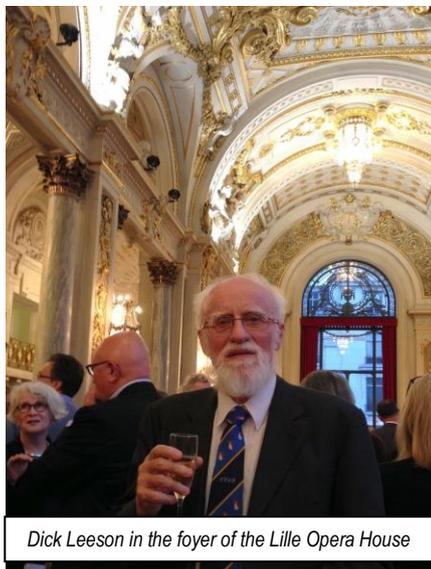
But we are just one leg of the three that make up the company tripod. The Friends, who have existed as an organization as long as State Opera SA has existed as an entity, are like a Siamese twin - we’re joined at the hip and that long term commitment and dedication I mentioned is equally present in them. We are forever grateful for their existence and their contribution.

The other leg of the tripod is the Board, with a totally different focus but no less critical to the success of the company. We are equally grateful for the contribution of all our Boards to the strategic success of the company. Each leg of our SOSA tripod needs to be the same length and the same strength to ensure the greatest stability for the company. A unified vision is therefore critical to our success.

I would add one other thing - to continue to leverage those things and the people that make this company unique so that our interstate counterparts continue to scratch their heads in disbelief for many years to come. Thank you.

## Friends on the Move - Opera based travels with members Robyn and Dick Leeson

### Part One



Dick Leeson in the foyer of the Lille Opera House

Since our retirement, Dick and I have been fortunate enough to be able to travel overseas each year. We take turns choosing the destinations of our trip, and Dick always chooses a visit to Europe based around available operas. In Western Europe even relatively small towns tend to have opera companies and the standard is usually very good, so there is plenty of choice. Previous trips have taken us to a lot of smaller places in Germany in particular as well as the larger cities such as Paris, Vienna, Berlin and Milan. This year Dick worked out an itinerary including towns in south and west France, then Munich on the way to Poland. We travel by train, so the logistics of working out a suitable itinerary and then booking operas, trains and accommodation, all on-line, is a great way to keep aging brains active in the six months or so before we leave.

Here is a brief account of the joys, trials and tribulations of our 2016 trip. As well as the operas and concerts we do the usual tourist activities of visiting museums, castles, churches and exploring the old parts of towns.

From Adelaide we flew into Nice via Dubai, and immediately ran into the first of many problems due to strikes in France. The airport bus drivers were on strike and we were directed to a crowded and confusing public bus. We spent a couple of nights in Nice, coping with our jet lag by taking a ride on the “Chemin de Fer de Provence” to the delightful medieval village of Entreaux, and checking out the whereabouts of the Opera House to which we were returning later. Then it was off to our first opera stop, the pretty town of Montpellier. The Opera House was very grand in the usual vertical style, but rather faded from its former glory. We saw an operetta by Offenbach put on by a group of teenagers and young adults. The standard of the singing was rather variable but the production was good and the whole thing very amusing, even for us with our limited French.

After five days in Montpellier, we set off for a series of two night stays, criss-crossing France in between. Though we didn't stay in Paris on this trip (we have spent a lot of time there previously), we changed trains there several times, necessitating metro trips in between main line stations. This caused some anxiety when there was limited time to make the transfer! First stop was Caen, in Normandy, where we went to a concert by the brilliant vocal group Les Arts Florissants. Here we ran into train strikes for the first time. We had planned a day trip to Bayeux to see the famous tapestry, but found all trains cancelled, and no suitable bus connection. So that goes back on the bucket list!

In Lille we saw Monteverdi's *Orfeo* in the beautiful vertical-style Opera House. This was a great show with excellent singing and dancing - the singers were required to dance as well, which they did with great skill. The start was spectacular; an African-type bass drum began proceedings answered by a choir of sackbuts appearing in one of the theatre boxes. Europe seems to have no shortage of counter-tenors, sackbut and theorbo players so Monteverdi's operas are done very well. **To be continued ...**



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**


  
**STRAVINSKY'S**  
**THE SOLDIER'S TALE**

Sunday 26 February, 2.30pm  
 St John's Anglican Church, Halifax Street, Adelaide



Experience an ever-relevant lesson on the terrible consequences that can arise when something precious is sacrificed for instant gratification. A stunning and intricate chamber work mixing theatre and music; Stravinsky's Soldier's Tale is as pertinent today as the day it was written.

**Gerri Masi** Narrator | **David Bailhnt** Actor | Chamber Ensemble

Tickets \$35/\$30 [www.trybooking.com/OOVR](http://www.trybooking.com/OOVR)  
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