

The  
Friends

# NEWSLETTER

of the State Opera of South Australia Inc

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

August 2017

## Welcome from the President

### ... with a little help from our friends

Since I joined the Friends of State Opera Committee over 10 years ago, and especially during my three year term as Vice President and since becoming President, I have been amazed with the support so many friends give to this wonderful State Opera Company.

The obvious start is with the **Committee of the Friends**, which tirelessly works behind the scenes to organise wonderful events, keep members informed through our newsletter and be a window into State Opera.

The next is the wonderful **Administrative & Professional Staff at State Opera**, who are always on hand with help in the form of organising singers for events, providing administrative support, and organising our informative OVIs and other sessions at the Opera Studio.

In addition, there is the wonderful support and camaraderie from a group of fellow music lovers like **The Friends of the ASO, Dante Alighieri Society of SA, Richard Wagner Society of SA, Co-Opera Inc. and Adelaide Eisteddfod Society**. We help each other by attending and advertising each other's events, bouncing ideas around when we're starting new innovations or offering advice on recent projects we've already been through and being friendly faces at events outside of our domains.

We also acknowledge the support of **The James & Diana Ramsay Foundation** which, through State Opera, offers opportunities to provide our singers through The Young and Emerging Artists Program with extra tuition and performance opportunities so needed to expand their horizons and practice their craft.

We also appreciate the support of groups such as **Adelaide Concert Collective, Recitals Australia and Chamber Music in Adelaide** which also provide wide opportunities for our singers from State Opera to perform outside the normal State Opera main events or Opera Studio events.

All these groups join together sometimes strategically or at times serendipitously to provide Adelaide with a marvellous music scene. I am amazed to see the number of small events advertised in churches, halls, and recital centres each week. I have to plan my weeks carefully to try to get to at least one of these events each week.

Planning ahead, I hope that you can come to our **Encore: Another day in the Hills** event at the beautiful Ukaria Cultural Centre at Mount Barker. This venue is a wonderful addition to the artistic life of Adelaide.

**Robina Weir**



Mark Sandon, Beau Sandford, Desiree Frahn,  
Fiona McArdle & Joshua Rowe at Ukaria

## Key Diary Dates 2017

- August** 23<sup>rd</sup> @ 7pm – The Friends Opera Voices Introduction to *La Vida Breve/Gianni Schicci*, Opera Studio  
30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> – *La Vida Breve/Gianni Schicci*, State Opera of SA, Adelaide Town Hall
- September** 10<sup>th</sup> @ 12noon to 4pm – The Friends present Encore: Another Day in the Hills Celebrating the Magic of Opera, Ukaria Cultural Centre, Mt Barker  
17<sup>th</sup> @ 3pm to 5pm – Masterclass with John Bolton-Wood AM, Opera Studio
- October** 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> @ 7pm – *Don Pasquale*, Elder Con/State Opera Co-production, Opera Studio  
14<sup>th</sup> @ 3pm to 5pm – The Friends host a High Tea at the Naval, Airforce and Military Club. Details to follow.

## In Conversation with Soprano Joanna McWaters

*'Joanna McWaters was particularly fine as the troubled Dolly Pickles, one of the most tragic characters in Australian literature. Shortly after arriving at No 1 Cloudstreet, she sings a hauntingly beautiful aria, asking for "one good reason to go on". This was the emotional pinnacle of the evening, with McWaters capturing the hearts of everyone in the crowd with a voice that seemed born for the role.'* Dylan Henderson, *Limelight*, May 2016



Joanna McWaters in Cloudstreet  
(Photography by Bernard Hull)

What better place to start a conversation with State Opera principal soprano, Joanna McWaters than in recalling her magnificent portrayal of Dolly Pickles in the unforgettable World Premiere of George Palmer's Opera *Cloudstreet*. As Joanna reflected on the production she noted "The music of *Cloudstreet* was very difficult but I had the benefit of two workshop periods over two years to learn about and develop my character. While the character of Dolly was fairly well set from the beginning, I found her difficult to get to know. While I struggled I knew I had to be able to understand and identify with her. The 'magic' happened only after that long gestation period when Dolly emerged through me both vocally and dramatically."

It is Joanna's strong belief that acting and singing are inseparable and integral to a successful performance for today's opera singers. That belief and drive have led her to be universally recognised for her outstanding interpretation of her roles and characters.



*'McWaters gives a superb, emotionally varied performance, as Lily is buffeted by the twists of fate at the hands, and whims of Oscar, drawing on her inner strength to keep going, finally walking out on him. This is the sort of complex characterisation that we have come to expect from her.'* Barry Lenny, *BWW* review In the Dome Room at Two O'clock July 2017

Joanna McWaters as Lily  
(Photography by Bernard Hull)

The demands on today's singers are huge. As Joanna says "The preparation for a role is long. For the role of Butterfly (in the title role of *Madama Butterfly* for State Opera) it was 18 months of learning and working (this time with conductor Nicholas Braithwaite) to build up endurance and vocal stamina while understanding all the other characters in the opera, as well as the context of the drama and the style of the composer." In the face of what might seem like overwhelming challenges, her quiet and balanced philosophy is simply to take it 'one note at a time'.

Another vital aspect for the singer is of course working with the rest of the cast, crew and the director. For Joanna her role as Nedda in *Pagliacci*, provided her with the thrill of working with the gifted tenor Rosario La Spina and the superb director Andrew Sinclair. As Joanna says "Working with Rosario was very much about the need to trust and feed off each other's performance while as director, Andrew allowed us to try things in different ways, to develop the subtext and prehistory which in the end captured the darkness of the piece through Nedda."

From speaking with Joanna it is obvious that today's singers must, while building on their own foundations of talent and technique, be both flexible and resilient, as ultimately sets, costumes and staging continue to present new and unique challenges.

The coming together with the orchestra, which Joanna describes, with face alight, as "riding on the back of the big wave" is where we, as audience, share with the artists in the joy and wonder of the final outcome and magic that is the magnificence of opera.

To you Joanna, our thanks and deep gratitude for continuing to share your insights, your talent and life's work with us.

**Pauline Brooks OAM**

## Soiree at the Barr



It was with great pride that I welcomed Friends & Guests to the first **Soiree at the Barr**, an evening of music, food and conversation in the historic Reading Room of the Barr Smith Library at the University of Adelaide. Musicians from the Elder Conservatorium and singers from State Opera presented a varied program of music in an amazing acoustic space. We also heard about the history of this great building. There was plenty of food and drink to make the evening enjoyable. Yes, it was a little cold, but with the music and singing so glorious it was temporarily forgotten.

Robina Weir with players from the  
Elder Brass Ensemble

**Robina Weir  
President**

## Friends on the Move – Opera based travels with Friends' Member John Tuckey *Don Carlo*, Royal Convent Garden Opera House, London



*Don Carlo* is a five act Grand Opera composed by Giuseppe Verdi.

I attended on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2017, having purchased my ticket back in February by telephone; the first day tickets were opened for the general public. Row E – very central. With the opera starting at 6pm, I arrived at 5pm for a light meal and a champagne, before entering this red, plush and lush theatre.

There was a lavish scene for each act, superb voices, wonderful costumes and a wonderful orchestra.

A highlight was the aria in the third Act between Don Carlo and Rodrigo, Marquis of Posa, so beautifully singing of their everlasting friendship. The music from this was repeated throughout the opera.

This performance would have to be my best night at the Opera. I must purchase a DVD of this 2008 production soon.

You can watch *Don Carlo's* Excerpts (Verdi) on YouTube.

## News from State Opera by John Irving, Chair and Interim CEO

It has been a very busy time at State Opera. We have presented *Love, Sex and Death* during the Cabaret Festival, *In the Dome Room at Two O'clock* and held a "thank you" concert for our donors, all in the Opera Studio.

It was particularly pleasing to showcase our new piano during the donor event with Dale Ringland, Andrew Georg and Mark Sandon all playing on the night.

The review of our structure has been completed and we expect a report soon. It is likely to recommend that we split the CEO and Artistic Director roles and I concur with that strategy. Doing so, and recruiting the best people for the roles, will allow the company to thrive. I have been very heartened by the number of calls and emails received from potential Artistic Directors. It is clear that SOSA is an attractive option for many practitioners.

We are also finalising our main stage program for 2018 although are being held up by the lack of available dates in the Festival Theatre. At the time of writing we have two dates confirmed, one in May and one in August, but cannot confirm a third at the end of the year. As you are aware we cannot access the Festival Theatre for the rest of 2017 due to building works and will not have access to Her Majesty's for all of 2018 and 2019 as it is refurbished.

We were hopeful of launching the 2018 season in the Town Hall at the end of August but that might not be possible...stay tuned for details.

I take this opportunity to again thank you, the Friends of the State Opera, for your support and dedication. I look forward to catching up at productions in the second half of this year...at the Studio, the Adelaide Town Hall or Her Majesty's.



## The Madrigal Room

State Opera transformed the Opera Studios into the Madrigal Room, a cabaret setting, for two special events *Love Sex and Death* and *In the Dome Room at Two O'clock*. This gave the opportunity for our singers to express themselves in a new format. The evenings were well attended and sparked some interesting discussions about these innovations. The Friends participated by providing a plentiful bar and an opportunity for members to meet.



## Out and About with Singers

### Naomi Hede

"I competed in an Eisteddfod in NSW recently and received a 2<sup>nd</sup> place and three 3<sup>rd</sup> places. The competition was very high, with sections with more than 25 competitors from all over Australia. My state was mentioned in each prize and I was happy to represent SA and our State Opera Company as best I could. I was also very excited to participate in *In the Dome Room* at the Opera Studio.

I am next involved with the Intermezzo program with Co-Opera's *La Boheme*. I am playing Mimi. I am also involved in the Accompanist Guild Young Accompanist mentoring program. I look forward to being able to sing for the company again since performing Pamina in *The Magic Flute*."

**Naomi Hede**



### Robert Macfarlane and Hew Wagner

Congratulations to Robert Macfarlane and Hew Wagner on their performance with the Lyric Opera of Melbourne in its recent production of *The Coronation of Poppea*.



### Fiona McArdle

Fiona has reached the finals of the prestigious **Joan Sutherland & Richard Bonygne Bel Canto Award** which will be judged by Sir Richard Bonygne in Sydney in September. We are very proud of you Fiona.

## 2017 Helpmann Awards Announced

*Saul*, the wildly acclaimed co-production with State Opera of South Australia, the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra and the UK's Glyndbourne Festival Opera received six awards including Best Opera and Best Director of an Opera and Best Music Direction. Congratulations to all concerned on scooping the pool. Perhaps there should also have been a category for Best Chorus as by all accounts The State Opera Chorus would have won it hands down.

## Encore: Another Day in the Hills Celebrating the Magic of Opera

The Friends of State Opera are presenting an encore to their concert at the beautiful Ukaria Cultural Centre last year. It will be held on **Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> September from 12 for 12.30pm until 4.00pm**. There will be a panel discussing the Magic of Opera and the opportunity to hear more of our emerging artists. The event will include a light lunch during which you can meet the artists.

## Vale Sir Jeffrey Tate CBE

It was with great sadness we heard recently of the sudden death of Sir Jeffrey Tate, conductor of our ground breaking Wagner's *Ring Cycle* in 1998. Sir Jeffrey had a distinguished international conducting career conducting many world famous orchestras. Recently Sir Jeffrey was principal guest conductor and artistic advisor of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra.



## Welcome New Members

Rosemary de Meyrick  
Carmen Galessi  
Craig McCallum



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**