

The  
Friends

# NEWSLETTER

of the State Opera of South Australia Inc

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

July 2018

## Welcome from the President

It was wonderful to be back in the Festival Theatre for the season of *The Pearl Fishers*.

Notwithstanding the work still to be completed, the new view from the Festival Centre looking over Elder Park to Adelaide Oval and the Cathedral is magnificent. Linking the Convention Centre and the Festival Centre via the walkway now makes sense. Did you check out our State Opera Artists on the Walk of Fame?

State Opera proudly displayed its new banners in the foyer where Deb Pahl and Jeanette McLeod were there to greet patrons, and The Friends' booth was visited by many of you. Watch out for us in a new position nearer the Box Office when you come to *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg Act 111*.

*The Pearl Fishers* received wonderful reviews, including the sound of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Graham Abbott, the fine singing of the principals (and in particular the debut of our own Desiree Frahn), the reimagined staging and the State Opera Chorus. On your behalf, on the last night we presented Desiree with a wonderful bouquet of flowers to celebrate her debut in a leading role at the Festival Theatre.

The Friends will be celebrating State Opera SA's wonderful productions of some of Wagner's finest works, *Parsifal* and the two amazing *Ring Cycles*, at two events before State Opera's gala performance of *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg Act III* at the Festival Theatre on the 4<sup>th</sup> August. We will have our informative OVI for *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg Act III* at the Opera Studio on Wed 25<sup>th</sup> July and present a special video produced by Dr Peter Bassett "20<sup>th</sup> Year Adelaide Wagnerian Retrospective" on Wed 1<sup>st</sup> August also in the Opera Studio. This will be a marvellous opportunity for us to relive these wonderful productions. See information attached or Click here!

Plans are well underway for our *Merry Widow* Dinner at Ayers House on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> November. You will receive a SAVE THE DATE invitation soon. This coincides with State Opera's spectacular new production of *The Merry Widow* at The Festival Theatre in late November and early December.

You will have noticed we have now introduced Trybooking as an alternative booking option for most of our events. Using this option will save you downloading and filling in forms and postage.

We look forward to meeting you at our events in 2018

Robina Weir



### THE FRIENDS' NEWSLETTER HAS GONE ELECTRONIC

I hope that you are enjoying your new e-newsletter. We are still sending a print edition to those who have not nominated to receive an electronic version, but if you would be happy to move to an e-edition, send your email address to [friendssaopera@gmail.com](mailto:friendssaopera@gmail.com) or ring the Secretary on 0439 981 517



Robina Weir, Aileen Connon & Yarmila Alfonzetti  
at the Curtain Up! Cocktail Party

## Key Diary Dates 2018

- July** 25<sup>th</sup> @ 7pm - The Friends Opera Voices Introduction to *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg Act III* Opera Studio, Netley
- August** 1<sup>st</sup> @ 7pm - **Uniquely Adelaide: 20<sup>th</sup> Year Adelaide Wagnerian Retrospective** Opera Studio, Netley
- November** 9<sup>th</sup> @ 7pm - **The Merry Widow Dinner** Ayers House
- 14<sup>th</sup> @ 7pm - The Friends Opera Voices Introduction to *The Merry Widow* Opera Studio, Netley



## Uniquely Adelaide! Memories of the Wagner Decade

In 1997, the national and international box office launch for the 1998 Adelaide Ring, created originally for the Théâtre du Châtelet, took place at Sydney's Powerhouse Museum hosted by The State Opera Ring Corporation Chair, Mr Donald McDonald. Unbeknownst to those present it would mark the beginning of an extraordinary 'Adelaide Wagner Decade'. Three successful Wagner productions, the 1998 Ring, Parsifal in 2001 (both conducted by the late and revered Sir Jeffrey Tate) and the magnificent Adelaide Ring in 2004 would return economic benefits to the State totalling \$26.6 million! The 2004 Ring alone would help pour at least \$14 million into the State with 6140 people attending, including 3850 from interstate and overseas.

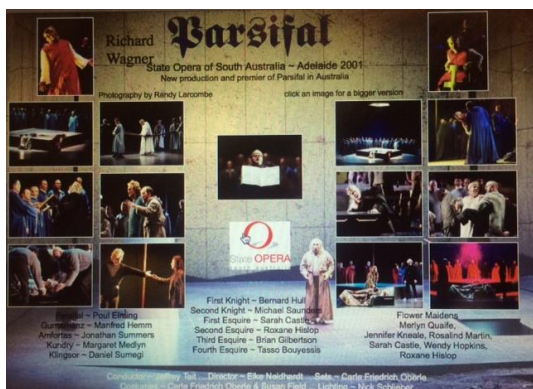
The Adelaide Ring Cycle in 2004, Australia's first, was described by one Sydney critic as 'One of the finest occasions in the history of Australian music, opera and theatre'. Britain's Sunday Times called the Adelaide Ring 'One of the most visually resplendent Rings of recent times' while the Financial Times spoke of 'the unflinching excellence of its execution and the magnificent playing of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra under its conductor, Maestro Asher Fisch'. The recipient of ten Helpmann Awards, the Adelaide Ring was an artistic and commercial triumph and was said to have put Australia firmly on the international Wagner map.



Our lasting and individual memories, while unique to each one of us, must surely be of the extraordinary productions themselves, particularly the 2004 Ring where the artists and production teams came from Australia, Canada, Germany, Israel, Korea, the Netherlands, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, with sets and stunning special effects of fire and water, seen as never before in the Festival Theatre.

In the case of the 2004 Ring, it was collaborative and innovative partnerships that underpinned and enabled this huge undertaking to succeed. From the Ring Circle of Donors from all round the globe, to both State and Federal Governments' sponsorship as well as that of the Richard Wagner Society of both Victoria and South Australia. From United Utilities Australia who developed the spectacular water curtain to the Adelaide University and FCT Combustion Pty Ltd who together solved the complicated combustion technologies required for the fire system. From the Adelaide Festival Centre which rebuilt and enlarged the main stage and infrastructure to accommodate the huge sets and special effects to Director Elke Neidhardt, Designers Michael Scott-Mitchell, Nick Schlieper and Stephen Curtis whose production realised the immensity of the drama. From conductor Asher Fisch, the extraordinary and enlarged Adelaide Symphony Orchestra to the

outstanding cast, headed by renowned Australian singers Lisa Gasteen as Brunnhilde, John Wegner as Alberich and Elizabeth Campbell as Fricka. It was this uniquely Adelaide style of collaborative partnerships that would give glorious life, in Barry Millington's words, to 'this the most comprehensive, most addictive and most stirring composition ever written'.



Through it all it was the leadership, courage, dedication and sheer hard work of the State Opera of South Australia, its Board, Staff, Friends and supporters that enabled it to achieve Wagnerian greatness. In the words of Dr Peter Bassett, Dramaturge and Artistic Administrator for the 2004 Ring: 'The fact remains that The Adelaide Wagner decade and the 2004 Ring in particular was a visionary and singular achievement in the annals of Australia's operatic history'. *Limelight November 2014 Adelaide's Ring 10 years on.*

The Friends look forward to sharing this momentous Wagnerian journey with you at the 20<sup>th</sup> Year Adelaide Wagnerian Retrospective with Dr Peter Bassett, on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> August, 7.00pm in the Opera Studio.

**Pauline Brooks OAM**



## Opera Voices Introduction to *The Pearl Fishers*

The first *Opera Voices Introduction* for 2018 on 24<sup>th</sup> April was, as usual, both informative and entertaining. Although many in the large audience knew Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers* quite well, they did not know this new Opera Conference production, the Adelaide staging of which was being sponsored by the Friends. Michael Gow (familiar to us as one of Australia's greatest playwrights) spoke at length about his directorial approach to the opera, particularly the elements relating to British colonialism. In addition, conductor Graham Abbott spoke about the score and the beauty of the orchestration by the young Bizet. Both speakers made it clear that even an opera with a somewhat silly plot can be made to speak



Grant Doyle & Desiree Frahn



Christopher Stone interviews Michael Gow & Graham Abbott

a truth to contemporary audiences. This message was made plain when we heard from the three principal singers for the production: Desiree Frahn as Leila, Grant Doyle as Zurga and Andrew Goodwin as Nadir. Each was in beautiful voice and received warm applause from the audience, who later were able to meet the artists on an informal basis over supper. Once again, the evening demonstrated that the Friends' OVIs are the best way to get to know an opera production.

Christopher Stone

## Curtain Up!

On 25<sup>th</sup> May a number of members attended a cocktail party, *Curtain Up*, at Adelaide's Naval Military and Airforce Club. The function provided an opportunity to meet State Opera's new Executive Director, Yarmila Alfonzetti, and to hear her vision on a new era for State Opera. Ms Alfonzetti addressed the members present and was also able to meet and talk to them on an individual basis, getting a very good appreciation of their passion for opera. There was very tasty warm and cold finger food and drinks served efficiently by the club staff. In addition, there was entertainment provided by State Opera artists, soprano Karina Bligh and baritone Joshua Rowe, accompanied by State Opera Music Coordinator Andrew Georg. The choice of opera and song was perfect for a relatively intimate gathering and demonstrated the range and sensitivity of both singers. All in all, it was an evening of fine music, conversation and refreshments.

Andrew Georg, Katrina Bligh, Joshua Rowe & Yarmila Alfonzetti



Christopher Stone



Pauline Brooks, Yarmila Alfonzetti, Ruth Rentchler & Anthea Reeves

## Uniquely Adelaide!



In the lead up to State Opera of South Australia's Wagner Gala Concert *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg Act III* you are invited to join Dr Peter Bassett and The Friends for a *20<sup>th</sup> Year Adelaide Wagnerian Retrospective* on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> August, at 7.00pm in the Opera Studio.

Peter will present a retrospective video featuring Adelaide's 1998 *Ring Cycle*, 2001 *Parsifal* and the 2004 *Ring Cycle*. Footage includes exciting excerpts from rehearsals and performances as well as clips from the 1997 'Weekend with the Ring' Conference and the 2003 'Glimmer of Gold Weekend'!

Information and Booking form enclosed! Or [book via the Friends' website](#).



## Out and About with State Opera Staff and Artists

### Stuart Maunder AM

We look forward to meeting the new Artistic Director, Mr Stuart Maunder AM when he takes up his position officially on the 3<sup>rd</sup> July. As a member of the Board it was a pleasure to have him at the June Board Meeting when he shared his vision for the artistic programme for 2019.



Stuart Maunder AM



Sky Ingram singing in the Coliseum Theatre London

### Sky Ingram

I am happy to announce that I am to sing Queen Dido in *Dido & Aeneas* in my return to English Touring Opera in October/November in a fabulous Baroque Triple Bill. There are also two exciting contacts with Garsington Opera in 2019 & 2020 which I look forward to.

**Sky Ingram**

## Friends on the Move

### Eugène Onéguine at Opera Bastille Paris

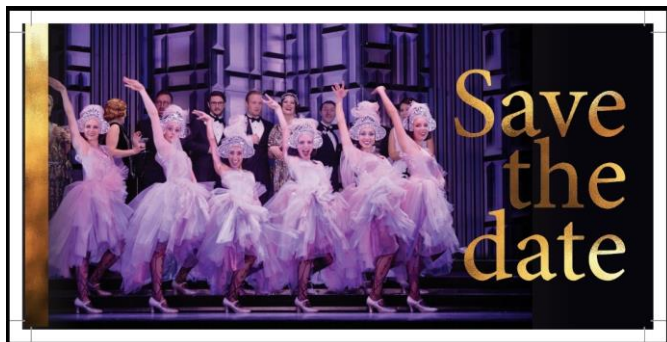
This Theatre has no excitement from the exterior - all stainless steel panels and glass. The interior foyer is spacious but has no ambience.

I booked this performance months ago when I discovered Anna Netrebko was performing the role of Tatiana. In this program she shared this role with three other Sopranos. One was Australian Nicole Car, last seen in *Carmen* (on Sydney Harbour). This was to be Anna Netrebko's final performance of this season. When it was announced she would not be performing the audience were very irate and very vocal in letting all know they were not happy at all.

Elena Stikhina was Tatiana for this performance. The set was simple but striking, and Elena so dramatic and her voice superb. Eugène Onéguine himself was also striking, the very tall baritone, Peter Mattei who had a marvellous strong voice with enormous depth. The other leading male roles were so good which overall gave a privilege of a most wonderful night at the Opera.

The Curtain calls went on for some time which showed some forgiveness for not seeing Anna Netrebko.

**John Tuckey**



Watch for this flyer in the post.



## Welcome New Members

Peter Bastian    Clare Lorimer  
Tim Ryan        Carolyn Palmer



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

Layout of The Friends' Newsletter by Karen Peterson

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