

# **Strathfield Symphony Orchestra Inc.**

## **Report by the President for 2003-2004**

Councillor Alfred Tsang, Distinguished Members, welcome to the AGM of the SSO.

It is my honour to present the President's Report on the activities of the Strathfield Symphony Orchestra Incorporated for the year 2003-4.

During the year the Orchestra staged five concerts with an average attendance at each of around 300 people. The Orchestra has continued to flourish musically under the clear baton and musical directorship of Maestro Bard. His has been a decade long partnership with the Orchestra. We have been very fortunate to have a conductor with the skill, experience and creative musicality of this great conductor. He has nurtured, coached and led the Orchestra to ever greater musical heights. For me, Maestro Bard and the Strathfield Symphony Orchestra have been inextricably linked.

Yesterday's SSO concert was billed as Solomon's farewell concert with the Orchestra however this is somewhat misleading in that the Committee has resolved to retain Solomon as our Principal Guest Conductor which enables us to continue our musical partnership with him. I will speak more of Solomon's immense contribution to the Orchestra in commending the motion to vote him life membership of the Association which is foreshadowed on your notice paper.

We have been very fortunate this year to have the leadership of Paul Pokorny as our Concertmaster and soloist. Paul has been "on leave" as he puts it, from the Ku-ring-gai Philharmonic Orchestra. This is now pulling him back. We of course have been urging him to go AWOL from Kurringai permanently as he has played a huge part in pulling together the rhythmic and tonal precision of the Orchestra and in developing the confidence and depth of the strings over the last year. He has also made a big contribution to the management of the Orchestra.

At the start of this year the Orchestra advertised for a new resident conductor to carry on from Maestro Bard. We received 9 inquiries for the position and the Orchestra auditioned four conductors for the role of resident conductor over two rehearsal nights. From a strong field, the orchestra voted overwhelmingly to choose Paul Dhasmana to lead the work of the orchestra in the coming period. Paul comes to us very well qualified, as a master of conducting with significant playing and conducting experience. A flautist with the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra, he is also conductor of the Sydney Youth Orchestra and has recently undertaken a repeat engagement as the guest musical director of the Taverner Consort of Voices. We are extremely fortunate to have secured Paul's services. Paul will be our resident conductor while the Orchestra continues the practice of asking a guest conductor to take on one concert cycle each year.

Paul will start to work with the Orchestra immediately. He will be working with the guest conductor for our next concert Mathew Wood and undertaking some rehearsals.

Over the last year the Orchestra has continued the tradition of programming an Australian work for each concert. This year we undertook the recently composed piece, Energy II composed by Caroline Szetto and those of you were at the concert yesterday heard a fine performance of the oboe concerto composed by Carl Bowman only last year. This was only the second ever performance of the piece. Another Australian composer chosen by Solomon for his farewell concert was Miriam Hyde, a long time supporter of, and soloist with, the orchestra. I think one of the highlights of my time with the orchestra was the collaboration over several concerts between Miriam Hyde, playing her Second Piano Concerto under the baton of Maestro Bard.

We thank the Council for the regular use of this lovely Town hall as our rehearsal and performance venue. Without the stable foundation of this base, there would be no orchestra. The Orchestra recognizes the two way nature of this obligation and as always was pleased to again stage a special performance for senior citizens week as our first performance of the year. Also over the last year the Strathfield Quartet, comprised of members from the Strathfield Symphony Orchestra has delivered a musical program for a number of citizenship ceremonies hosted by Strathfield Council.

There are a number of generally unsung heroes and heroines without whom the Orchestra would not function. The contribution of some of whom, who are not formally on the Committee, I would like to mention:

- Ted Davies- Always the first to arrive to set up the orchestra and the last to leave after organizing the refreshments at the break and packing the Orchestra up.
- Bruce Dunlop – Who keeps our financial accounting up to scratch.

I also wish to highlight the contribution of members of your Committee over the last year:

- Roger Barker – Who in addition to his secretarial role organized the recruitment and selection process for our new conductor.

Roger has decided not to stand again as Secretary . I wish to thank him on behalf of the Orchestra for his contribution as a leading cellist with the Orchestra and the anchor of the Strathfield String Quartet. His work as our secretary and as the stage manager have ensured the Orchestra is always logistically organized and our performances well presented.

Other hardworking members of your committee are:

- Shirley Mahableshwarwalla – As assistant secretary she manages the day to day relationship with the officers of Strathfield Council.
- Laura Jamieson - who in addition to the role of Publicity Officer and has been working on the Orchestra's website and organized our successful Christmas raffle.
- Bruce Lane, our treasurer who in addition to prising subscriptions from reluctant pockets, acquired some additional funds for us through advertising and has been playing a an important role for us in conductor liaison and concert program planning.
- Margaret Shirley – Our Orchestra Manager who ensures we have the requisite musical forces for each performance.
- Beatrice Yip and Vincent Leonard who acquire, issue and recover the music used in our performances. Beatrice has spent much time put together an excellent spreadsheet catalogue of the Orchestra's library. This has already proved its value in assisting concert program planning.

Last but certainly not least, I wish to recognize those Orchestra members who turn up early to assemble the stage and the risers, the chairs and the stands; and then stay behind after the performance to strip it all down again.

The Strathfield Symphony Orchestra has enjoyed another year of fine music making, its thirty fourth in this Municipality. In this period of change and transition, we look forward to ever greater musical heights and audiences in the year to come.

Chris Elenor  
President  
24 May 2004