

## **Strathfield Symphony Orchestra Inc.**

### **Report by the President for 2005-2006**

It is my honour to present the President's Report on the activities of the Strathfield Symphony Orchestra Incorporated for the year 2005-2006.

During the year the Orchestra staged seven concerts with an average attendance at each of around 200 people. This included a special concert to support the activity of Strathfield Council in Senior Citizens week and a concert in Goulburn

Over the last year Paul Dhasmana, chief conductor led the work of the orchestra and, in conjunction with the orchestra's program committee, had put together a two year performance improvement program for the Orchestra. Unfortunately for the Orchestra, Paul obtained a playing position with the Queensland Orchestra and has been unable to carry through the program in 2006.

We were fortunate to have Solomon Bard return as guest conductor for the family concert in June. The highlights were the performance by concert master Paul Pokorny and his wife Julia of the Sinfonia Concertante and a spirited performance of Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf. We also played a piece arranged by Solomon Bard, Song of the Homebound Fisherman featuring Bruce Lane as soloist.

For the following concert in September, the orchestra embarked on an ambitious program entitled Mozart 1791. In collaboration with Taverners Concert of Music and other vocal forces rehearsed by Philip Chu the SSO staged 2 performances of the Mozart Requiem and the Mozart clarinet concerto performed by Debbie De Graaf. This for me was the highlight of the year with sixty voices raising the roof of the Town Hall.

Many of the orchestra toured to the Southern Highlands Music Festival in October joining with players from the local district to perform Beethoven's Symphony No 5 in the Goulburn Cathedral. Also performed was Paul Pavoir's overture "The First Hundred Years" under the baton of the composer. We have acquired a new touring name as a result of this gig. The large banner on the Cathedral railings welcomed The St Rathfields Symphony Orchestra. This was as a result of the poor handwriting of Paul Paviour or the poor eyesight of the signwriter.

The November concert featured Beethoven's 5 th Symphony and we welcomed back to again play with the orchestra, violinist Thomas Talmacs who played the first Paganini Violin Concerto.

Paul Pokorny resigned as concertmaster at the end of 2005 however he continues his association with the Orchestra as leader of the Strathfield String Quartet. We have been fortunate to secure the services of Paul Hoskinson as Concert Master in 2006. Paul has brought a new level of preparation and precision to the role and he is also contributing strongly to the management of the Orchestra.

Early 2006 saw some unexpected changes with the sudden departure of Paul Dhasmana. Through the terrific work of your Orchestra Manager, the indefatigable Bruce Lane we are able to organise some conductor auditions at very short notice and were incredibly fortunate to secure the services of Sarah Grace Williams as our Conductor after you were all smart enough to vote for her at the audition.

The first concert series in 2006 came from the New World comprising mainly Dvorak and a truncated Rhapsody in Blue. Following the success of these two concerts the Committee has confirmed Sarah Grace Williams as Chief Conductor for 2006 and has asked her to develop the program for 2007 in conjunction with the program committee.

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 current and former 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.

Ted Davies- Always the first to arrive to set up the orchestra and one of 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 and acts as auditor.

Roger Barker - the anchor of the Strathfield String Quartet.

I also wish to highlight the contribution of the hardworking members of your Committee over the last year some of whom are not standing for re election to the Committee. They include the amazing

Shirley Mahableshwarwalla – As assistant secretary and social secretary, Shirley has until recently managed the day to day relationship with the officers of Strathfield Council, managed front of house for our concerts and the interval refreshments. Shirley has recently moved to the South Coast and is not standing for re-election.

Shirley attended her first Strathfield Symphony Orchestra concert in 1973 and was the Secretary of the Orchestra from 1976 to 1999. She has been assistant secretary since that time. Shirley has been the only person on the Committee that is not a player in the Orchestra. This is an interesting turnaround as originally as I understand it, none of the committee were playing members of the Orchestra.

Laura Jamieson - who in addition to past roles of Publicity Officer and stage manager has traditionally involved her long suffering family, organized the successful Christmas raffle, relaunched the Orchestra's web presence on our own website and played in the Strathfield String Quartet. Laura is going overseas to work in the second half of the year and we look forward to her return in 2007.

Bruce Lane, previously Treasurer took over from Margaret Shirley as Orchestra Manager last year. Without Bruce we would not have a community orchestra, he has been the main driving force behind the orchestra over the last two years.

Rowena Cseh, who was coopted on to the Committee during the year and undertaken some great publicity and publishing work for the Orchestra.

Merryn Horrocks our efficient Secretary who has brought some order to the constant email traffic between Committee members and produced a new wind player in the last 12 months. Merryn in addition to producing a future addition to the wind section this year has reconfigured the website building on the initial work done by Laura Jamieson

Judith Baker and Vincent Leonard who acquire, issue and recover the music used in our performances.

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 fifth 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 6 June 2006

