

Strathfield Symphony Orchestra Inc.

Report by the President for 2006-2007

It is my honour to present the President's Report on the activities of Strathfield Symphony Orchestra for the year 2007. The headline is: what a fantastic year of music making and development!

During the calendar year the Orchestra staged five concerts with an average attendance at each of around 200 people for the concerts at Strathfield Town Hall and over 500 for the Spinning the Planets Concert at Petersham Town Hall.

Let me just run through them briefly:

March 2007 "Classics and All that Jazz"

This was a two concert program including the traditional senior citizens matinee. The entertaining program comprised-

Marche Slave, Waltzing Matilda, Ave Maria, Peer Gynt, Nella Fantasia, Finlandia Fascinating Rhythm, Summertime, Academic Festival Overture and Nessun Dorma (Soloist - Daniel Bell).

June 2007 "Antarctica" With moving pictures from the IMAX film.

Antarctica - Nigel Westlake, (Soloist - Philip Moran). Sancta Maria, (Soloist - Daniel Bell) and Symphony No.1, Brahms.

This was a particularly hard one to pull off because of the multi media extravaganza, the need for desk lighting and the very late forced change of venue. Your Committee scrambled really hard to make this one a success.

September 2007 "Spinning the Planets"

The Planets, Gustav Holst, (with the PROCLAIM Choir) and The Holberg Suite, Greig.

The Orchestra finally left the safety and comfort of Strathfield Town Hall and staged a very successful concert in Petersham Town Hall in the Marrickville Council area.

December 2007 "Romantic Serenades"

Romeo & Juliet Overture and Serenade for Strings by Tchaikovsky, Serenade for Wind, Strauss and Danse Sacree et Danse Profane by Debussy (Soloist- Verna Lee)

Four great programs, each one a new milestone in the Orchestra's development. We have been very fortunate to have Sarah Grace Williams as Chief Conductor

and Artistic Director for 2007 and have seen the benefits of innovative programming in the concert programs and growing audiences for 2007 and 2008. She has worked extremely hard and very skillfully to bring about a transformation in performance standards, orchestral discipline and ensemble capability.

We welcomed back Paul Pokorny, our previous Concertmaster for the 2007-2008 season and the synergies of the partnership with Sarah-Grace and the Orchestra's Principals continues to develop. Paul also continues his association with the Orchestra as leader of the Strathfield String Quartet.

I am sad to report that some longstanding members of the orchestral tutti retired at the end of last year. These include life member Solomon Bard, our Conductor for over a decade and more recently a leader of the second violins. Belasario Hernandez, who played first violin with desk light obbligato and also Joe Singles who is a former concertmaster of the Orchestra who played with us more recently as a leader of the second violins.

I reported to the AGM last year-

“Under the baton and drive of Sarah Grace Williams and an energetic and committed committee, the Orchestra has expanded into challenging repertoire and reached new heights of performance. This has been an exhilarating ride but has caused tensions with some of the members as the repertoire has become more demanding.

In some ways the Orchestra is now a victim of its own success, with the orchestra's management committee, which is totally comprised of playing members of the Orchestra, wilting under the strain. More professional levels of organisation in forward planning, recruiting and communicating with players, publicising performances and building audiences, managing membership, ticketing and performances have been required. These demands will increase as the Orchestra continues to develop.”

These observations are equally valid for the year under review, 2007-2008. Whilst we have made progress on some of the back office issues (ticketing, membership, finances) we are still struggling to get sufficiently far ahead of ourselves.

With the exception of the box office, we have been unsuccessful in recruiting capable non playing volunteers to assist, so the reality is that we, the playing members, will continue to have to do the bulk of this organisational work. We still have vacancies on the Committee for this coming year – please consider.

There are a number of generally unsung heroes and heroines without whom the Orchestra would not function. They include the amazing Shirley Mahableshwarwalla. Shirley, who despite moving to the South Coast and whilst

not formally on the Committee, still oversaw front of house for our concerts and has provided refreshments at interval for all our concerts.

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 for this coming year.

During the year, Bruce Lane our Vice President took over from Simonil Bhagnavi as Treasurer. Without Bruce we would not have a community orchestra, he has been a main driving force behind the orchestra over the last four years. Thank you to Dr Simonil for keeping such a good set of books. It has made production of the accounts this year relatively painless. I would also like to recognize the work of Bruce Dunlop, a life member of the Orchestra who has provided accounting and auditing support to the Committee over many years.

Rowena Cseh, who has produced the excellent publicity material, quality programs and flyers for the Orchestra is stepping down from the marketing and publicity role. Thank you Rowena and I look forward to working with you in your role as Vice President.

Judith Baker, our Librarian. For several years she has acquired, issued and recovered the music used in our performances. Judith, even when she was not playing in a particular concert program, would make the trip to rehearsals to ensure music was available and accounted for. Thank you Judith for your work and commitment.

A particular thanks to Justin White our always busy Orchestra Manager who has probably the hardest job on the Committee. We are looking to appoint an assistant to share the workload of this critical role.

Thanks to Laura Jamieson who has provided event management, organisation and staging for some difficult logistic challenges in the last year and kept us up to the mark on governance as the Public Officer of the Association.

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

We again thank the Council for the regular use of this lovely Town hall as our rehearsal and primary 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 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 citizenship ceremonies hosted by Strathfield Council.

The Strathfield Symphony Orchestra has enjoyed another year of fine music making, its 39th in this Municipality. In this continuing period of development and regeneration, we look forward to ever greater musical heights and audiences in the year to come, our 40th anniversary.

Chris Elenor

President
Strathfield Symphony Orchestra Inc.
29 June 2008