

Strathfield Symphony Orchestra Incorporated

Presidents Report 2017

This year as certainly been full of activity for the Orchestra and, gone by in the blink of an eye. As a committee, we have collaboratively worked hard to not only deliver a series of concerts throughout 2017, but also plan for both the 2018 year and the 50th Anniversary year 2019.

In doing this planning, we have tried to bring a lot of our timelines forward in the year so that we have as much planned out as possible, previously it felt like we were investing a lot of time and energy with repetitive tasks each concert season.

Performances

(1) Program 1 - Magic & Mystery

Strathfield Town Hall: Saturday 1 April and Sunday 2 April

The concert comprised the following works:

Berlioz – Carmen – Les Toreadors

Johann Strauss Jnr – Emperor Waltz

Massenet – Le Cid

Dukas – The Sorcerer’s Apprentice

Johann Strauss Snr. – Tritsch Tratsch Polka

Tchaikovsky – Sleeping Beauty

Johann Straus Snr. – Radetzky March

This program was also performed on Sunday 26th March for Strathfield Council as part of Seniors Week celebrations.

(2) Program 2 – One & All

Strathfield Town Hall: Saturday 24 June and Sunday 25 June

The concert comprised the following works:

Mozart – Overture Cosi fan Tutte

Beethoven - Violin Concerto in D Maj Op.61 – Soloist Alastair Duff Forbes

Schumann – Symphony No. 2

(3) Program 3 – Tears & Laughter

Strathfield Town Hall: Saturday 16 September and Sunday 17 September

This program comprised:

Wagner – Overture from Die Meistersinger von Nurnberg

Verdi – Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves from Nabucco

Rossini – Overture from The Thieving Magpie

Verdi – Anvil Chorus from Il Trovatore

Mascagni – Intermezzo from Cavalleria Rusticana

Wagner – Prelude to Act III – Lohengrin

Verdi – Matador's Chorus from La Traviata

Bizet – Carmen Suite No. 1

Puccini – Hummingbird Chorus from Madame Butterfly

Weber – Huntsmans Chorus from Der Freischutz

Bizet – Overture from The Pearlfishers

Verdi – Triumphal March & Chorus from Aida

The choirs of Excelsior College Choir, and the Sydney Sakura Choir were once again collaborated with to deliver this concert.

This programme was repeated for a fundraising benefit for Sydney Cancer Survivorship Centre

(4) Program 4 – War & Triumph

Strathfield Town Hall: Saturday 25 November and Sunday 26 November

This program comprised:

Brahms – Academic Festival Overture

Mozart - Concerto for Flute and Harp ,

Soloists Verna Lee-Brown Harp, Lyndon Swasbrook Flute

Tchaikovsky – Swan Lake Suite

Sibelius - Finlandia

(5) Additional Performances

In line with our agreement with Strathfield Council, the orchestra Participated in the Annual Spring Festival on 3 September playing a 30 minute set of popular music, as well as the Annual Carols Event on 9 December providing a 30 minute set of Christmas themed music.

A group of our Brass Section participated in providing music at the Councils Annual Australia Day Citizenship Ceremony, and the String Quartet also provided music at 4

similar ceremonies held at Strathfield Town Hall throughout the year. Our thanks go to all of the players who participated in each of these events.

Summary

Overall, each of our principal Concert Series enjoyed good audiences numbers , and season after season the playing standard enjoyed constant growth. This playing standard and hard work by all players in the Orchestra, has I believe a direct correlation to audience growth as we had feedback through the year from people who attended for the first time coming back for more concerts through the year.

Music Director

Once again the orchestra had the benefit of being led by our Music Director Dr. Sadaharu Muramatsu (Sada). Sada is a very nurturing person who actively works to bring out the best in each player. Our increased playing standard from concert to concert is largely due to the hard work and dedication Sada demonstrates to the orchestra. It would be fair to say Sada is the most prepared and rehearsed person in the orchestra, working tirelessly to prepare the orchestra by providing rehearsal schedules and notes after most rehearsals.

Sada has been extremely flexible in his approach to rehearsal time, where we re-scheduled our break to give players an increased break from 10 minutes to 15, but also brought forward so that our second half has a full hour of rehearsal time to get through large works. This was done on a trial basis and seems to be working for all parties and so has remained.

Sada also participated in all committee meetings and was part of the Repertoire Selection Sub Committee. Our sincere thanks go to Sada for his hard work and dedication to the Orchestra through the year. This was Sada's sixth year with the Orchestra.

Management and Administration

As a result of the 2016 Annual general meeting, the 2017 management committee members were:

President – Craig Giles

Vice Presidents – Harriet O'Donnell

Treasurer – Andrew Heike

Secretary –Emma Barnett followed by Laura Jamieson.

Members – Neil O'Donnell

Ex Officio Members:

Music Director – Sadaharu Muramatsu

Concertmaster – Paul Pokorny

Librarian – Alicea Gedz

Orchestra Manager – John Trezise followed by Neil O'Donnell

All of the committee work tirelessly in a variety of roles to keep the wheels of the orchestra turning.

At the beginning of the year, I asked the repertoire subcommittee if we could have the 2018 concert series repertoire finalised by July 2017 so that we could lock down dates etc and aim to have a season brochure ready for our final concert in 2017. I am delighted that we have been able to achieve this, and for only the second time in the Orchestra's history, we were able to end the year advising our players and audience of what is on and when it will be on in 2018. To the subcommittee, thank you for your hard work and dedication in delivering a wonderfully balanced series of concerts on time.

On the back of knowing what we are going to perform in 2018, a recommendation from Laura about a graphic artist that she had used previously at work, saw the orchestra in contact with Zoe Barber. Finding Zoe has for the orchestra been like striking oil, and we are very fortunate that Zoe has offered to provide her services pro bono. After a few meetings over the phone, we were produced with a graphic outlay that everybody instantly loved. Zoe has worked not only on a season flyer, but individual posters and social media banners so that we have a cohesive look and feel for the year. This has also extended into a much needed overhaul to our programme layout and all of this now looks very professional.

Zoe has also been working with us on a revised Logo for use in our 2019 year and committed to supporting us through 2019.

Development of a strong brand identity starting with 2018, has been key to our planning for 2019 and gives a great Launchpad to develop our identity and audience numbers through 2018. We have worked hard on sounding great, so why don't we look great as well?

Our thanks go to Zoe for all of her hard work, we conservatively estimate that what she has delivered would be at market rates unachievable for this orchestra financially.

Laura has worked hard taking over ticketing responsibilities and another first for the orchestra has been that all of our concert series were up on line for sales by the end of 2017 for 2018 year. This means we can then focus on publicity for further grow our audience base. With 2019 having an anticipated increase in tickets sales, we are also looking at moving members complimentary tickets onto this system. We have been trialling other complimentary tickets this way in preparation. This will however mean players will need to specify Saturday/Sunday on a per concert basis. Thanks Laura for yor hard work here and for finding Zoe.

Another flow on effect from having our planning done earlier in the year is we can also plan what players are required for each season. At the beginning of the year John graciously stayed on as Orchestra Manager and provided a transition period for Neil to eventually take over this responsibility.

Neil has worked hard in the background to implement our new system for sourcing players and before the end of 2017, we were able to go to all players and members with dates and parts required so that they could indicate availability for the entire year. For the players and

members our aim is to give as much notice as possible as we acknowledge that we are not the only group that some people are involved with.

From an orchestra management perspective, this has meant we have a far greater lead time in identifying vacancies and can work on filling them so that all parts and seats are filled for all rehearsals. So far feedback is this new system is working well.

My sincere thanks to all of the committee for your hard work throughout the year, the committee has worked as a cohesive unit in delivering an exceptional year.

Outside our committee, I have to pay special thanks to the following two people.

Danielle Norton – Thanks for doing such a fabulous job on the rehearsal and concert catering.

Richard Sercombe – I am so grateful for Richard and the work he does on concert days organising the audience catering.

Club Burwood RSL, have been very generous in providing a meeting room at no cost to the Orchestra. Our sincere thanks go to Club Burwood for their continued support. Jill Durand and her team are a delight to work with.

Finances

Our objective for the orchestra has been one of being sustainable: Further details of finances will be outlined in our Treasurers report; however it is a highlight that we have achieved a net profit of \$7006.00 for the year.

Much of the decision making process by the committee has been made with a sustainable mindset, not necessarily profit driven. We have made some wise decision and exercised restraint where needed. With much planning for future years and especially with 2019 the 50th Anniversary coming up, we acknowledge that 2019 in particular is going to require additional expenses to secure guest artist etc, and much of the planning for 2018 to date has also factored in requirements and costing for 2019.

Constant audience growth has assisted with a steady income stream and resulted in again we not having to alter Audience Ticket prices or membership fees.

Strathfield Council Relationship

One of our Key relationships is with Strathfield Municipal Council. Over the past 2-3 years, understandably the council has been operating under the cloud of Forced Amalgamations by the state government. We are delighted for the council and their successful bid to reject these amalgamations and the state government has now taken them off the table.

This has meant the council has been able to change it's focus from one of survival to one of progress forwards.

Capital works have continued at Strathfield Town Hall with the bathrooms and kitchen area having been refurbished and the hall has been re-painted and stage curtains replaced.

We have been working hard with the Council, our relationship extends all the way back to the orchestra's formation in 1969 and we have to acknowledge that we would not have made it this far without the Council's support. We have met with both the Mayor Gulian Vaccari and also the General Manager and his staff to progress our relationship into the future.

For the past few years we have been working under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) where we have been required to demonstrate that we add value to the Local Government Area as the council is the custodian of ratepayers funds and has a fiduciary responsibility to spend wisely. I am pleased to advise that this MOU has been extended from being a year by year offering to a perpetual one.

Strathfield Council support us by providing rehearsal and storage space along with a venue to perform at Strathfield Town hall with additional space for sectional rehearsals at Bates Street Community Centre.

In turn we provide a concert for Seniors Week, Citizenship Ceremony Music, and participate in Spring Festival and Christmas Carols Concerts.

We are also pleased that Strathfield Council have added additional dates to our MOU so that we can hold our Annual Cancer Survivorship Centre concert at Strathfield Town Hall. This allows the centre to raise money without the overhead of venue hire and we are certainly extremely grateful to the Council for this provision.

Whilst Concord Hospital is outside the Strathfield Local Government Area, the council acknowledged that Strathfield is in the Hospitals catchment area for cancer treatment and post treatment care and this concert would provide tangible benefit to Strathfield residents.

We have also as a result enjoyed the presence of the Mayor, Deputy mayor and one Councillor at our most recent concert.

The Future

With much of the planning already underway for 2018 and 2019 plans looking very healthy, we can look forward to slipping into execution mode for the 2018 season.

2019 is going to be a big year for the orchestra, but we have to get there first, over the next year we need to focus on further deepening of our relationship with Strathfield Council, we already have more meetings and ideas to discuss and look forward to collaborating with council well into the future.

With a re-vamped visual and brand identity, we need to focus on 2018 with growth in our audience number to get an awareness of 2019 and years beyond.

Craig Giles
President

22 May 2017