

## Strathfield Symphony Orchestra Incorporated

### Presidents Report 2019

Happy 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday Strathfield Symphony Orchestra, 2019 has been an extremely busy year for the Orchestra in this milestone year, and I could not be prouder of what the Orchestra has achieved this year.

We had an ambitious repertoire lined up for the year with Seasons 1 & 2 reflecting on past glories, Season 3 focussed on celebrating our Birthday, and finally Season 4 was a “Go Hard or Go Home” affair to launch the orchestra into a stellar future.

I must admit that with our opening piece for the year Zadok the Priest, as soon as the choirs started singing, the hairs on the back of my neck stood up and I knew this was going to be a very special musical year. This followed through all the way to the last note of Mahler’s 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony in Season 4. It should not be under-estimated that this Symphony is a massive undertaking for any Orchestra let alone a community Orchestra, but we did it and we did it in style.

#### Performances

##### **(1) Program 1 - Classical**

**Strathfield Town Hall: Saturday 6 April and Sunday 7 April**

The concert comprised the following works:

*Handel – Zadok the Priest – With Excelsia College Choir and Sydney Sakura Choir*

*Prokofiev – Symphony No.1 (Classical)*

*Haydn – Trumpet Concerto – Matthew Gately soloist*

*Haydn – Symphony No. 104 (the London)*

##### **(2) Program 2 – The Romantics**

**Strathfield Town Hall: Saturday 29 June and Sunday 30 June**

The concert comprised the following works:

*Tchaikovsky – 1812 Overture*

*Walton – Viola Concerto, Lisa Sung soloist*

*Saint-Saens – The Organ Symphony No.3*

As part of our ongoing relationship with Symphonia Jubilata, the orchestra was invited to attend their concert and perform on Saturday 22 June at Marie Basheer public school where we performed the 1812 Overture. The team at Symphonia Jubilata organised a wonderful Chocolate cake and everybody sang Happy Birthday to us. Founding members of this organisation are regulars at all of our concerts and it is another way that we are deepening our roots in the local community as many of the young players once leaving the school system will be looking to continue playing and we will be there for them. Symphonia Jubilata also generously lent us their Tubular bells for our concert series.

With this concert we also managed to bring something to Strathfield Town hall that it had never seen before a Digital Pipe Organ and it sounded magnificent.

### **(3) Program 3 – The Big 5-0!**

**Strathfield Town Hall: Saturday 21 September and Sunday 22 September**

This program comprised:

*Hyde – Happy Occasion Overture*

*Kats-Chernin – Redmyre Suite*

*Beethoven – Symphony No.7*

Our birthday celebrations had been planned to involve our founding Conductor Richard Gill, who unfortunately lost his battle to Cancer late in 2018. This concert season was dedicated to his memory and we were fortunate enough to have Richard's Wife, Daughter and Grand-Daughter in attendance for our Saturday Concert. AS a special encore and tribute to Richard, the Orchestra performed the theme from the movie The Dambusters, a song that was his favourite.

After our Saturday concert, a reception with Champagne and nibbles was held for the Orchestra Members, Players and special guests.

This programme was repeated for a fundraising benefit for Sydney Cancer Survivorship Centre on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2019 at Strathfield Town Hall.

### **(4) Program 4 – The Future**

**Strathfield Town Hall: Saturday 23 November and Sunday 24 November**

This program comprised:

*Copland – Fanfare for the Common Man*

*Mahler – Symphony No.5*

## **(5) Additional Performances**

In line with our agreement with Strathfield Council, the orchestra Participated in the Annual Spring Festival on 7 September playing a 30-minute set of popular music, as well as the Annual Carols Event on 7 December providing a 30-minute set of Christmas themed music.

This year also saw the state government bring forward Seniors Week in NSW from the usual April timeframe to February. Normally we would sacrifice our Season 1 Sunday concert so that Council could use this performance for Seniors Week.

The Orchestra managed to perform a reprise of our Season 4 Movies music from 2018 on Sunday 17 February. Moving forward, if Seniors week is to be this early in our annual season (We start rehearsals again in February each year) then we will look at moving to a more manageable Chamber Ensemble offering.

I would particularly like to thank everybody for taking on this additional concert to deliver something for Seniors Week, this has been a tradition of the Orchestra for over 30 years and I am so please we were able to maintain that tradition.

Our String quartet participated in providing music at the Councils Annual Australia Day Citizenship Ceremony, and also provided music at 5 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**

This year saw much hard work from a larger than usual number of players and I cannot thank everybody enough for all the blood, sweat and tears they put into this year's series of concerts. We again enjoyed a very healthy audience numbers and the number of people who came up to talk to me and thank me during the breaks and after concerts, telling me how great the Orchestra sounded is testament to your hard work. We can look forward to retaining and growing our audience in the future.

### **Music Director**

Once again, the orchestra had the benefit of being led by our Artistic Director Dr. Sadaharu Muramatsu (Sada). Since joining the Orchestra eight years ago, Sada has been instrumental in stretching the Orchestra's playing abilities and has been a tremendous asset to the orchestra. In all my years with various amateur orchestra's I have never come across somebody that can get you to do the hard work and be so nice about it.

Sada is like an iceberg, and often we only see what is above water, without realising the sheer amount of work behind the scenes that he puts in to help us sound great.

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

From All of us Thank-you Sada.

### **Management and Administration**

As a result of the 2018 Annual general meeting, the 2019 management committee members were:

President – Craig Giles

Vice Presidents – Alicea Gedz

Treasurer – Sarah Gulyamova

Secretary – Laura Jamieson

Members – Aimee Palfreeman

– Dorothy Sercombe

– Dennis Dorwick

*Ex Officio* Members:

Music Director – Sadaharu Muramatsu

Concertmaster – Paul Pokorny

Librarian – Alicea Gedz

Orchestra Manager – Vacant

All of the committee work tirelessly in a variety of roles to keep the wheels of the Orchestra turning, especially in this very busy year.

Continuing on from the success of our planning for 2019, the repertoire sub-committee has again worked hard to plan a balanced concert series for 2020. To the subcommittee, thank you for your hard work and dedication in delivering a wonderfully balanced series of concerts on time.

This has resulted in a significant increase again in our pre-concert day ticket sales.

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 three 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.

Zoe Barber – This has been our second year collaborating with Zoe for all of our stunning artwork for posters and programmes, we have never looked so good and it was a real pleasure to have Zoe and family in attendance of our 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday programme and to finally introduce her to the orchestra.

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.

Last but not least I have to give a particular callout to Laura Jamieson and all of her extraordinarily hard work through 2019.

Laura found herself professionally between gigs, and the orchestra benefited tremendously from all the extra time Laura was able to invest in various activities, I am sure 2019 would not have been the success it was without Laura. Laura is already a life Member, but I call for Double Life with no parole!

### **Finances**

Our objective for the Orchestra has been one of being sustainable: Further details of finances will be outlined in our Treasurers report.

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.

From the onset, we knew that this year's concert series would involve additional spend to do the seasons justice and to adequately celebrate 50 years of music making. This involved additional spend on programme printing in full colour to provide a souvenir style programme. We have a wonderful 30-year history document and we do need to spend time adding to that to bring us up to date.

We also had additional hire of instruments such as the wonderful Organ.

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

A new initiative was undertaken by the Orchestra committee this year to start the process of refurbishing some of our staple equipment like chairs and stands. We have in the past bought cheap music stands, and even with careful handling they have proven to be a false economy and are only lasting a few years. Cheap stands use soft metals and simply become unusable very quickly.

On the point of music stands, we applied for and were successful in attaining DGR status meaning we could solicit donations that were tax deductible. We launched this as part of

our Birthday celebration in a request to “Buy us a Birthday present”, our audience was very generous and that got the ball rolling.

We also were successful in attaining a state government grant through our federal member Fiona Reid. Part of the condition of this grant was that we would be funded dollar for dollar in a matching programme. This would mean the orchestra would provide \$12,000 and State Government would provide the other \$12,000.

Having secured the funds, we have undertaken to secure the following items with many having already been delivered.

Music stands – We have procured some 60 stands at a cost of approx. \$165 each, these were delivered, and we were able to use for Season 4 concert. Our sincere thanks have to go to our advertising partner Sydney String Centre who were able to arrange a bulk buy for us at a reduced price (these are normally \$200 each) These stands are expensive but have a 5 year warranty and will last well beyond that as they are very robust in construction.

Of course, we could not leave our Artistic Director out, and have also procured an appropriate Conductors Music Stand.

Chairs – We are in the process of finalising and ordering replacement chairs to replace ageing faulty ones and to give players more options. We have also included procurement of 3 specialty Bass stools.

Percussion Instruments – A few years back we procured a Chau Gong or Tam Tam, this was a \$2500 instrument that sits in a cardboard box so we have added to it with a suitable stand and will arrange manufacture of a cover so it can live on-stage with Timpani. We have also bought an orchestral Glockenspiel and Xylophone to add to the percussion section with suitable stands/trolleys. This will reduce our need to hire these items in future and give us greater flexibility with percussion players having to only bring smaller items to rehearsals and concerts.

Keyboard – We have managed to at a reasonable price procure an 88 Key Digital piano with weighted key action and a 700-voice library of instruments. This will enable us to fill gaps if say a harp is unavailable and to be a chamber organ where needed.

Sconce Lights – Rechargeable battery LED lights will also be acquired to replace our aging “bug eyes” lights and will reduce our need to be constantly buying batteries.

Infrastructure – We have also used some grant money to refurbish trolleys for stands and risers to put new wheels that will protect the town hall floor and also handles to make them easier to get in and out from under the stage when stored. We will also look at works for chair stands once the new chairs arrive.

Whilst on the surface it may look expensive committing such large funds from the Orchestras savings, in the long run it will save us money as items we are buying are of quality and saving in some instrument hire will assist. The amount allotted is I believe reasonable to provide for a stable future of the orchestra and helps in our mission to be sustainable.

### **Strathfield Council Relationship**

One of our Key relationships is with Strathfield Municipal Council, and we have continued to foster and develop our relationship with council.

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.

Councillors are no strangers to our concerts and always make time to talk to us at council events that we participate in.

Our relationship with both Councillors and Council staff has evolved this year and it is now a real pleasure being able to call council staff and work with them. Council has been very supportive with our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations and it is evident that at all levels they appreciate the value we add to the community.

### **The Future**

At the conclusion of celebrating 50 years of music making in the Strathfield community, I am confident that artistically and financially we have set ourselves a firm platform to launch into the next 50 years.

We have a good operating model that is working and a wonderful committee who are making informed, wise and un-selfish decisions.

This has been my third year acting as President and I can truly say it has been an honour and privilege I hope to continue into the future. I would also like to thank everybody for their ongoing and invaluable support.

Craig Giles  
President

8 June 2020