

## Musical Directors Report 2018

This is the 20<sup>th</sup> Musical Director's report I have had the pleasure of presenting to the Mosman Symphony Orchestra AND Choir. As is usual there are many, many people to thank: they appear to be grouped into ever smaller circles and start with every single member of both the choir and orchestra. It is also the committee, the office bearers and certainly very much to Susan Breidis for her direction of the choir, which is now 1 year old! Thank you SO much to one and all. Without your assistance, there would be no orchestra or choir and we would not be reading this report.

Hopefully, it didn't escape members' notice that in 2017 we finally got our chorus up and running as an operating venture, rather than an occasional adventure. 2017 was a year of many activities which saw consolidation, growth, many positive directions and, on the part of the musical director, some rethinking towards consolidation and reasonable expectations for the ensembles.

Our consolidation saw a continuation of our evolutionary musical development. Apart from presenting some 10 concerts of both orchestral and choral music, both ensembles grew in numbers and ensemble cohesion. While small, the chorus is singing together with a wonderful sense of community and purpose as we saw at both of the concert programs they gave. Having the choir join us in orchestral programs gave them the opportunity to work in detail on works and perform without having to prepare a full (or nearly full) concert of singing! This has been and will continue to be invaluable in its growth. Susan's direction and expertise has seen this move into a choir that sounds quite wonderful, as we all heard last weekend. I must also thank Rufina for her hard, thankless work behind the scenes, organizing the choir, as well as being the treasurer. Without her, I doubt we would have been able to get things off the ground or entice Susan along!

In the orchestra, it was cohesion of the ensemble that 2017 should be best remembered for. Not only some wonderful concerts early in the year, but the superb sense of ensemble in the Brahms Symphony no.2 in November. It was, without doubt, one of the most enjoyable concerts I have conducted! It was also quite stunning to see and hear the orchestra take on and meet the challenges of French repertoire. Those performances were really something else, with our audiences experiencing new sound palettes we have not worked in before. Bravo to all for that as well!

We have also seen our membership change, as some sadly leave, but also, we are able to welcome new players. Those who have had to absent themselves for work, study or family are still a part of this musical community and we really hope they will be able to return when it's possible.

This report is not only a recount, to a degree, the past year, but also to mention future directions, possibilities and opportunities. For the orchestra, we have the rest of 2018 music to present, rehearse and practice. Some of it will be challenging to get through. Some of it will be

challenging to play as well as it deserves, or individuals are able to, even if it looks easy! These challenges will see the orchestra continue to grow musically and I hope, be thoroughly enjoyable to experience in both rehearsal and concert. The other challenge is to fill holes: we need three trombones all the time and a full complement of strings, which seems to be possible if all attend.

The choir has made great inroads to this year and is creating a sound which is quite mature and well blended. It is thrilling to hear, even more thrilling to conduct last weekend and yet a new experience for the audience! One of the choir's current challenges is to continue to grow. What is the right size for a choir? It really is a case of balance, having roughly equal numbers of all voices. Right now, there is a need for some more tenors and basses, but it is looking towards around the 4/5 per part. 6 or 8 singers on each part would be lovely, an even dozen is even better and starts to make 2019 programming possible! Can I ask everyone, both orchestra and choir to keep this in mind and spruik the choir where possible? Talk it up and encourage people to join (especially tenors and basses)!

For the rest of this year, there are joint and separate concerts. Please take the time to look on the website and make a note of concert and rehearsal dates!

I do feel that there is so much which is positive. All need to feel rather pleased with themselves! But this does lead, invariably, to the areas, topics and activities I feel need to be developed. These are:

**Attendance.** The issue is not when a member misses a rehearsal due to illness or pressing need, but when convenience takes over. It is clear when one stands back that at times, players may not come to rehearsals without there being a compelling reason. Can I ask, on behalf of the committee who is well aware of this, to make the orchestra / choir a priority please? Certainly, it can't be the top priority in one's life (although, who could complain about such dedication?) but maybe not the very last one? Somewhere above Netflix, groceries and that third glass of red with dinner would be of great help to everyone...

**Repertoire.** I have had some wonderful suggestions regarding repertoire, as well as my own plans. Please email suggestions to me, get a bunch to email, etc. as I am now getting the bones of 2019 ready. One thing for next year if at ALL possible, is Beethoven Symphony #9. For that, we need a few things: a much larger choir (help with recruiting), a much larger venue, and funding to make that happen all happen. Please cross fingers.

**Concert opportunities.** Opportunities to do additional concerts do arise, such as our recent tour down to the Shoalhaven, so please keep an open ear and mind for these, as they can be very good fun, plus some also add to the orchestra's funds rather substantially!

**Input from members.** Repertoire is not the only input that is needed from members. I firmly believe that the membership is the heart and soul of the orchestra and choir, so your thoughts are not only desirable, they are critical to our ongoing development. If have a thought, please

get it to the committee – talk, email, ask to attend a committee meeting (they are not closed affairs) and bring it on! Please! We need members to be involved. Some things are easy, some more awkward, yet critical. There are however, many, many things to help. This is what we need to have continue.

With those things in mind, it is clear to me we are on the right path to maintaining and continuing to develop a wonderful community resource for players, singers and concert goers. Thank you SO much for the past year and I look forward to another great year ahead!