

Musical Directors Report 2019

It is my pleasure to give my 21st report as musical director of what is not the Mosman Symphony Orchestras **and** Chorus. It has been, over this period of time a wonderful journey of development, learning and musical expression. Thank you to all who have participated in any way to this experience. I will attempt to give my report in discreet topics and, in my oral presentation, be as concise as I can!

Performing.

2018 year which saw the organisation consolidate to my mind. Orchestra continued with 4 subscription concerts of two performances each, plus additional performance at winery. Chorus took part in 2 of the orchestra concerts plus 2 more of their own and out 'n' about at Balmoral. Overall, all concerts were well received, with some very good audience numbers, however, on the whole it felt like audience numbers were down, especially on Friday nights, which is one reason we are experimenting with Saturday evenings this year. I hope we can determine later in the year if this is a positive move. I also believe it is a sign of the organisation's resilience and willingness to look at change as time passes. The only true issue I saw was the rather lacklustre organisation at Out 'n' About. While weather conditions were poor, a lack of communication from the organisers, lack of an MC to properly announce performers, too many different ensembles and slipshod PA system led to it not being a very enjoyable experience for the choir. I hope the out 'n' about in 2020 is better organised.

So overall, there is much to be extremely happy about, with keeping in mind there is always room to develop and improve. It is this sense of continual, positive and sustained effort that will see us all continue grow as an ensemble. A few of the things I would dearly love to see evolve are below...

Membership.

It is sad to see members leave. This is however, a part of an ensemble's existence as even the very best musicians in the world do eventually move on or retire from playing. I must note Brett Richards' semi-retirement to Coonabarabran. He is very much missed from the viola section – both as a player and for his never-ending assistance with all manner of tasks behind the scenes. always welcome back. There also new members, who are very welcome and good to see. Our challenge is to keep members, find the new members we need to cover parts and to ensure that MSO & C is a place where people WANT to come to make music. Please do your bit by encouraging others, spruiking up the orchestra, inviting people to concerts, etc. It is worth noting we currently need more horns, trumpet, tuba, percussion, violas and very importantly, basses.

Musical Standards.

I am really very happy with how the orchestra is evolving. Guests who play with us are always stating how much better the orchestra sounds. Please keep the effort up! The

orchestra is continuing to support itself and we are now in the process of buying a new set of timpani which will help the overall sound of the orchestra. Our current set were a good introductory measure for our needs, but they have limitations that we cannot ignore anymore. That means the orchestra has high quality timpani, bass drum, glockenspiel, and crash cymbals. This is so helpful for us in a practical sense. I think the committee and especially Lisa Beins need to be congratulated for all the effort which goes into these sorts of acquisitions.

There are, of course, things we can improve. For our strings, while bowings are working better, but there is still room for improvement. PLEASE copy bowings onto your part and do NOT just print the bowings off our website. While there are issues with the bowings we get from a professional orchestra at times – such as overly complex and not homogeneous, they are a starting point, not the destination. The solution lies with both preparation and ensuring our musical aim is clear. Sometimes, the easy bowing is totally unmusical! Please keep this in mind and the fact that the vast majority of the time, bowings are quite straightforward. So while there are challenges for us, I think things are looking rosy!

Another musical issue is attendance. It sometimes feels as if the orchestra is the last item on some people's list of priorities. I really do feel it needs to be somewhere up from dead last! Attendance can be dire at times and a player's absence has an effect on every other player. All members are important, and your musical contribution at rehearsals is critical to our success. There are always times one can't get to a rehearsal, or performance. It is totally understandable. But to miss rehearsals for trivial matters, or when it is just as easy to do that at another time can be irksome to the rest! Please attend all rehearsals that it is possible to come to!

The last point I would like to make is tuning. It is expected everyone pre-tune before a rehearsal, so we are all close to the right pitch. Then a thorough tune at the start of a rehearsal is quick, easy and precise. Please note, the pitch you get is A=442.

For the rest of 2019, we have some ambitious works, as well as some easier works. Both provide opportunity! Finally, 2020 is now in planning mode – EMAIL me our thoughts!

Procedural.

It is becoming a concern that responding to availability emails is so patchy and often ignored by members. At the risk of sounding school marmish, or even grumpy, I cannot understand at ALL how members cannot reply to a simple email. Apart from simple manners it makes the task of knowing who is and who is not playing very difficult, leads to errors in the program, and general confusion. PLEASE respond! If you are not sure if you have, just check your sent message box and see. This is important and everyone's co-operation is needed desperately! This would be my main gripe if I were to compile a list.

Another area to consider is our setup and packing away: which is left to only a few individuals. It isn't dire, nor do I feel that I am doing it all by myself. Far from it. However, can ALL members please look about on arrival and help with something if you see it? The more are involved, the easier it is for all. A very good example is the chairs at rehearsal.

While they are put out they are not in the right places and need to be moved. Please do this before you unpack / practice / have a cuppa! Not everyone is able to move the podium or timpani, but if you can... you get my hint! Organise the tea/coffee if it needs to be. We also need a lot more help at concerts, with setup, on the door, ushering, ticketing, in interval tea/coffee and post-concert drinks. Please help! Please volunteer a partner or child or parent!

For the future, I help to see us continue to grow as we have in the past year! Thank you all!

Andrew