

FRIENDS OF SCOTTISH OPERA

Chairman's Report on the year ending 31st March 2010

Scottish Opera

Scottish Opera's 2009/2010 season of operas: *The Elixir of Love*, *The Italian Girl in Algiers*, *The Adventures of Mr Brouček* and *La bohème* were all enjoyed by audiences in Glasgow and Edinburgh; while *The Elixir of Love* and *La bohème*, along with the orchestra-accompanied touring version of *Katya Kabanova*, visited Aberdeen and Inverness. Opera Unwrapped events were also staged in each city. The new staging of *Carmen* - which opened at the Citizen's Theatre in Glasgow - is being very successful as I write.

The Friends' financial support for 2009/2010 went once again to the now newly-renamed Opera Highlights tour which visited 21 venues throughout Scotland.

The third Open Day at Scottish Opera's production studios at Edington Street in Glasgow featured some new activities and was very well attended.

The Friends

Scottish Opera's strength and vitality have been mirrored by those of The Friends. Through our Council, our Branches and the efforts of Anne Higgins, the Friends' Manager, we connect directly with those who enthusiastically support Scottish Opera and opera more generally at local levels throughout the country. Each Branch – and each new Group – supports Scottish Opera in its own way to suit its circumstances. But each is supported by the Council and Anne; and by sharing the experience of others through a strong network of formal and informal contacts. The variety of these efforts is a tribute to the health of the organisation.

Our relations with the Company in 2009/2010 have been as cordial as ever. In particular, Alex Reedijk, the General Director, has continued to support and value the Friends as we value his outstanding leadership and the example he sets, in this as in so many other respects, to all his hard-working staff. Meetings were held with Alex Reedijk and staff from Fundraising and Marketing regarding Friends' relationship with these departments and the arrangements for the new format 'Brio'. My attendance at the Board of Scottish Opera has continued to be a crucial component of the relationship.

The formation of a Holidays Sub – Committee earlier this year will enhance and expand this very successful component of Friends' extra mural activities.

I must note and record here, with more regret than I can express, the untimely death of Brian Jamieson, Honorary Secretary, guide and friend, in February of this year.

Governance

We are confident that the functioning of the Council, the Executive Committee and all our procedures stand up to comparison with the best in the field. In particular we

regularly review our strategic objectives and how we are achieving them; and take corrective action whenever necessary or desirable.

Branch activities

Dumfries & Galloway's coach trips to matinee performances in Glasgow continue to be much appreciated and branch members enjoyed a concert by Scottish Opera Emerging Artist Nadine Livingston along with regular Scottish Opera performer Francis Church, accompanied by Head of Music Derek Clark, as well as film shows and meetings; Forth Valley continued their very successful monthly meetings and coach trips and are happy to report excellent attendances; Grampian's meetings included two "Lunch and Listen"s at His Majesty's with members of the opera casts and a party at retiring Chairman Douglas Risk's house to raise funds to support Dr Bartolo in *The Marriage of Figaro* Play Your Part appeal; under Jim Lorrain-Smith's leadership Highland branch continued to offer opportunities to meet members of the Company when it was in town; Lothians and Borders' meetings were well attended but we are very sorry to report that their hard-working Secretary has had to step down from the committee; Strathclyde's five Study Days and a highly entertaining cabaret featuring Wyn Davies, conductor of *The Italian Girl in Algiers*, were all well attended and raised considerable funds while Tayside continues to meet at regular intervals in Dundee and reports an increase in attendance. The Perthshire Branch's opening concert at Methven Castle was hugely enjoyed by a capacity audience, and was repeated earlier this month. A further 4 meetings were much enjoyed during the year and a similar size of programme has been launched for this season.

New Groups

I am delighted to report that new Friends Groups in Angus, Clyde and the Isles and East Fife continue to run their own events in order to build and maintain local enthusiasm for Scottish Opera. We are giving them as much support as we can and they need. I am enormously grateful to all those who have so valiantly taken on the tasks of building support in these new areas.

Angus Group expanded their committee and activities to feature 8 meetings, mainly attracting large audiences except when the weather was particularly bad. The Clyde & the Isles Group mounted another event featuring Scottish Opera understudies from *La bohème* in the intimate setting of the Seaview Café, Wemyss Bay as well as arranging talks on *The Elixir of Love* and *The Adventures of Mr Brouček* and a festive afternoon tea with a concert by Emerging Artist Miranda Sinani at Stroove. East Fife's concert at Kellie Castle in August attracted a capacity audience of 90 to raise funds for *The Marriage of Figaro* appeal.

Membership

Membership of the Friends fell slightly during the year from 1635 to 1554.

Brio

Following discussions with the Company, as noted above, editorship of the magazine was taken over again by Scottish Opera in the spring and the first 16 page issue of Brio was greatly enjoyed by Friends. Two further issues will appear each year in future.

Fundraising

Our financial contribution to Scottish Opera this year was also affected by our investment in the telephone membership campaign in 2008 - which we are confident will pay dividends in future. A donation of £33,000 was made at the end of the financial year and a further £7,000 or so will be handed over once the financial outcome of the Grand Prize Draw is confirmed.

Thanks

I would like to thank a number of people for their help and support during my year as Chairman and will do so at the October AGM. I will however take this opportunity to single out Anne Higgins for special mention for her dedication and hard work – well beyond the call of duty.

Simon Paterson
Chairman, Friends of Scottish Opera
16 September 2010