

CEO's Message

I am delighted in my first year as CEO to report a successful year for the performing arts at Sydney Opera House, recording the highest ever ticket sales and box office income at 521,168 and \$29m respectively. This reflected an increased number of performances and greater diversity of programming. This was achieved despite a testing backdrop of international events which affected the tourism industry worldwide and presented new security challenges.

Sydney Opera House now plays a key role in promoting and sustaining the Arts through significant support of our principal presenting companies, through our own productions, employment and training and in the commissioning of new works, such as Meryl Tankard's *Wild Swans*, a joint commission with The Australian Ballet.

Our success in attracting and engaging an increasingly diverse range of audiences was demonstrated in our newest and most versatile performance venue, The Studio. This year over 300 performances were presented, offering an eclectic mix of performance genres and showcasing a number of new artists. The total audience of 59,000 was an increase of 10% on the previous year. While the trial season on the Forecourt also succeeded in attracting new audiences, we have taken on board the feedback on the impact of the physical set-up. Future outdoor events will be contained to low infrastructure and be limited to shorter durations.

It has been a year of putting critical foundation blocks in place. This has included a substantially new executive team, highly skilled and highly committed; creating a powerful five year strategic plan with explicit priorities and projects, communicated to and understood by all staff; getting a meaningful performance management system in place for all our people; establishing a Conservation Management Plan where the heritage aspects of this great building are balanced with its role as a dynamic centre for the Arts.

The new executive team have embraced six key principles which determine our approach and priorities: a commitment to partnerships as the primary way to develop our activities; to significantly enhance the building and precinct both aesthetically and functionally; to drive a culture of flexibility in work practices which match the needs of our business; to enact a level of security awareness and alertness commensurate with a new era of risk and community expectation; a disciplined approach to business operations; and to promote youth education and youth audience development opportunities. This is the first time that this organisation has such a documented library of its key projects and their detail over the life of a strategic plan.

It has been a year of commencing an exciting program of building improvements, starting with box office facilities (due for completion in October 2003), a new Utzon designed Reception Hall interior (due August 2004),

a new stage door entrance and reception (due December 2003). I am also delighted to reopen to the public the Exhibition Hall which had been buried for years behind the Playhouse and used as temporary office accommodation.

A highlight of my year was undoubtedly the honour of meeting Jørn Utzon in Majorca and delivering to him the Pritzker Medal for Architecture which had been presented the evening before to his son Jan in Madrid. This prestigious award, architecture's 'Nobel prize', proudly recognised the extraordinary achievements of Utzon, particularly Sydney Opera House. Since then, Jørn Utzon has been actively engaged in developing designs for the improvement programme.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the marvellous support by the NSW Government to our ambitions and ongoing operations. I would also like to thank my executive team for their support and leadership and the Trust for their encouragement and counsel. But most of all my thanks go to the staff for their openness and willingness to embrace significant change. None of our achievements would have been possible without their day-to-day dedication.



Norman Gillespie
Chief Executive