

# CEO'S MESSAGE



When I joined Sydney Opera House in January 2008, I was struck by the commitment and enthusiasm of all staff for the future of this great NSW creative asset. This is a special place for everyone, and I look forward to continuing to develop the range of experiences in the coming years.



## **Performing Arts** (refer page 12)

Attendance at performing arts programs increased this year by 5% to 1,269,999. Performances also increased by 4% to 1,661.

Our resident companies brought to the stage great music, opera, theatre and dance in a diverse range of programs and in exciting new ways such as the free telecasts of Opera Australia's *Carmen* and The Australian Ballet's *The Nutcracker* which went live to the Forecourt, Federation Square, Melbourne, as well as to regional Australia. Sydney Symphony web-streamed 10 performances and Sydney Theatre Company presented four very successful productions.

The Sydney Opera House's own programming continues to grow, enabling the people of NSW to attend a broad range of national and international productions. Highlights included *Sacred Monsters*, a collaboration between Sylvie Guillem and Akram Khan, and our inaugural *Hemispheres* program of world music.

The new Public Programs stream commenced this year with a series of Public Program Talks and as part of our commitment to providing free family entertainment, there were 18 free performances of *Strange Fruit*. This program will grow next year with more free/low cost events and access to artists from other parts of our programme talking about their work.

Our Young Audience program remained popular with 56,655 people attending 307 performances on and off site. Highlights included House:Ed programs *Lifeboat* and *The Girl Who Cried Wolf* and Kids at the House programs of *Rabbit*, and *Goodbye Mr Muffin*.

The Balnaves Foundation Open House Program offered subsidised \$5 tickets to seven programs including 1,000 tickets to *Edward Scissorhands*. Sydney Opera House and the ABC presented the *Choir of Hard Knocks* in two sell-out performances, with all profits going directly to the Choir. The program won a Helpmann Award for Best Special Event.

## **Tourism and Visitor Experience** (refer page 24)

The visitor experience was improved this year through a number of initiatives. A new Host Team was created to welcome customers at the Information Desk and at Stage Door. *The Essential Tour* was launched to provide a new audio-visual tour experience and we opened up the Opera Theatre and Concert Hall Southern Foyers to the public during performance times.

Asian Language Tours attendance grew by 15% to 90,278 and Backstage Tours grew by 13% to 1,944; however, standard tours were affected by the UK and USA inbound tourism downturn and declined by 11% to 206,570. Strategies are in place to manage the effect of the decline.

I am pleased to report that work to improve access has gained momentum since the appointment of a dedicated Access Program Manager in 2006. Our new website launched this year is accessible to people with disabilities, funding has been allocated to improve access to and within the Playhouse theatre and a permanent caption system will be installed in the Drama Theatre in September 2008. Ensuring that our site and services are accessible for all people is a priority and our new three-year Access Strategic Plan, which is under development, will identify further improvement strategies.

## **Building and Environment** (refer page 26)

Work continued this year on the Accessibility and Western Foyers project that will significantly improve access and amenities. It is the largest building project undertaken since Jørn Utzon's re-engagement as Sydney Opera House architect in 1999.

A sustainability group was created with a focus on reducing our ecological footprint, and water and energy plans have been developed. A new Manager, Sustainability and Energy will be appointed next year.

In the third year of our Information Systems Strategic Plan, 22 projects have been completed to increase systems stability and capacity. Our new website was launched and has increased accessibility and sales capacity.

## **People and Culture** (refer page 34)

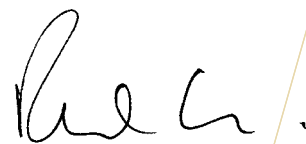
In April 2008, changes were made to the structure of the organisation to increase collaboration and improve business performance. The activities of strategic building development and maintenance were amalgamated as were fire and security. The commercial operations of tourism, food and beverage, retail and licensing all now report to a single director and a new central procurement unit has been created.

A leadership program was conducted this year and our safety record continued to improve. We successfully re-registered as a Registered Training Organisation which will allow us to continue to deliver a number of entertainment industry qualifications to staff and to offer traineeships.

Project Marker, which will commence in September 2008, will provide an opportunity to engage with staff about the continued improvement of the organisation using the *Business Excellence Framework*. This project will be in collaboration with other key performing arts centres world-wide and will allow us to compare results, generate and collaborate on improvement ideas.

## **Thank You**

Sydney Opera House's results are due to the support and commitment of many people and organisations. I would like to thank the resident companies for their essential part of our operation. Thanks also to our major sponsors HP, NAB and all our donors who help us deliver more events through their support. Finally, I wish to thank management and staff for the welcome that they have given me, and for all their hard work in making this yet another extraordinary year of activity at Bennelong Point.



**Richard Evans**  
Chief Executive