



ARTISTIC DIRECTOR / CHIEF CONDUCTOR REPORT 2016

The Darwin Symphony Orchestra's (DSO) 2016 concert season once again encapsulated the unique vision of the organisation and demonstrated the orchestra as the cherished and vital asset it has become to the Northern Territory community.

Integral to this is the orchestra's diversity, both in the locations we play and in the artistic programming, allowing us to resonate with the diverse landscape that is our home and to engage with a broad demographic of audience members.

Last year we again demonstrated that opera is an art form for all the people with another extremely successful outdoor Opera Gala at the Darwin Waterfront, introducing to our audience some of Australia's best vocal talent, including Amelia Farrugia, Victoria Lambourn, Henry Choo and Teddy Tahu Rhodes.

Since moving this event to the Darwin Waterfront precinct in 2014, this event has blossomed into an annual cultural highlight, heralding in the Darwin dry season. Audience numbers have continued to increase, with an estimated 3500 people in attendance in 2016 – the largest to date for a DSO outdoor Opera Gala. This event has been strategically aligned with the *MEET Darwin Famil*, a collaboration between the NT Convention Bureau and Darwin Convention Centre. This 'Meet Darwin' initiative encourages event planners to choose Darwin as the host of their next major conference and is the most successful sales activity undertaken for business events in the Top End each year. This further exemplifies the high regard placed on the DSO as a vital contributor to the cultural landscape of Darwin and how the orchestra plays a considerable role in the socioeconomics of the Territory.

Performance Details: Saturday 21 May 2016, Darwin Waterfront. Soloists: Amelia Farrugia, Victoria Lambourn, Henry Choo, Teddy Tahu Rhodes. Conductor: Matthew Wood

As the largest event in the DSO calendar, the *ConocoPhillips Symphony* at the Darwin Botanic Gardens has established itself as a must see event for thousands and forms a vital part of the orchestra's community engagement concerts, attracting our largest audience of the year in which we introduce many new audience members to the orchestra via our traditional rock/pop crossover. This year we celebrated the 12 year anniversary of this popular concert in a tribute to the iconic rock band Pink Floyd, with the orchestra enjoying playing to an audience of approximately 5000 people. Without doubt this is one of the most successful crossovers the orchestra has undertaken, working with a professional rock ensemble of 7 musicians and the full 60 piece orchestra, and also included a participating opportunity for 30 students from Darwin Middle School to perform in this unique event.

Performance details: Saturday 25 June, 2016, Darwin Botanic Gardens Amphitheatre. Conductor: Matthew Wood.

The continuation of the highly successful DSO MasterSeries at the Darwin Convention Centre proved to be another unmissable series of concerts. This season had a strong focus on storytelling, partly as we commemorated the 400 year anniversary of the death of William Shakespeare, and we opened the season with Mendelsohn's magical *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where the composer compellingly captures the mystical frivolity of Shakespeare's ethereal world. In this concert the DSO joined forces with the Darwin Chorale in a mighty collaboration that explored the medieval poem *Stabat Mater Dolorosa* set to music that incorporates both Western traditions alongside influences from the Middle East. The concert also included music by Darwin based composer Cathy Applegate.

Performance Details: MasterSeries 1 - Saturday 12 March, 2016, Darwin Convention Centre.
Conductors: Stephen Pevely and Michael Loughlin. Performance partner: Darwin Chorale. Repertoire: Beethoven, Applegate, Mendelssohn, Jenkins.

In *The Diva and the Bard* we welcomed back our dear friend and one of world's finest sopranos, Emma Matthews, as we performed a selection of works that showcased the overwhelming inspiration that Shakespeare has had on generations of artists.

Performance Details: MasterSeries 2 - Saturday 3 September, 2016, Darwin Convention Centre.
Conductor: Matthew Coorey. Repertoire: Verdi, Gounod, Tchaikovsky, Thomas, Purcell, Vaughan-Williams, Bernstein.

In *French Fantasy and Spanish Seduction*, Marshal McGuire, one of the world's most respected harpists, dazzled our audience in a programme of high virtuosity, fire and passion.

Performance Details: MasterSeries 3 - Saturday 29 October, 2016, Darwin Convention Centre.
Conductor: Matthew Wood. Repertoire: Gounod, Bizet, Rodrigo, Rimsky-Korsakov.

Unquestionably the highlight of our MasterSeries, and attracting one of the largest indoor audiences the DSO has experienced in its history (931 pax), was the DSO's presentation of *Babe*; the Aussie story of a pig that wants to be a sheepdog! 2016 marked the 21st anniversary of the film, and as such the DSO celebrated in a special wet season family matinee where the orchestra performed the film score by Australian composer Nigel Westlake live as the film was being shown.

Performance Details: MasterSeries 4 - Saturday 10 December, 2016, Darwin Convention Centre.
Conductor: Matthew Wood. Repertoire: Westlake - Babe

The DSO education series *Family Proms* continued its vital work in providing a series of engaging and educative programmes specifically crafted for our younger audience members. These interactive concerts offered an invigorating and exciting introduction to classical music held on campus at the Charles Darwin University – the home of the DSO.

Performance Details: Family Proms – Saturday 23 April, 17 September, 12 November, Charles Darwin University Theatre. Leader and programme coordinator: Anastasia Coroneo.

In 2016 the DSO had the great fortune to engage Monica Naselow as Concertmaster and in the newly formed position of Education and Outreach Officer. Monica Naselow is one of Australia's most talented musicians. Her professional background is extremely vast, and includes the impressive distinction of being the very first Australian appointed as a permanent member into what many

regard as one of the best orchestras in the world, The Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. Monica also brings to us a wealth of education and training expertise. A significant and vital appointment to the DSO staff, Monica brings with her the diverse skill set to ensure the ongoing nurture of DSO musicians alongside the development of community, education and outreach programmes.

Alongside this significant and diverse year of music making, the DSO quartet continued its valued work within the community in numerous corporate, educational and community events, reaching many thousands of people and demonstrating the fundamental role the DSO quartet plays in developing the outreach of the DSO.

Comprising approximately 70 volunteers, a small professional core of musicians and small staff and board the DSO strives to unite a community via the wonderful power of music. I am extremely thankful to our wonderful members of the DSO, both playing members and non-playing members. Your continued support, time and dedication is what has made this orchestra the cherished institution it is today and I look forward to sharing with you the future and the challenges that lie ahead as the orchestra continues to captivate its audience and maintains its journey of growth alongside the community it serves.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Wood'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Matthew Wood

Artistic Director / Chief Conductor

Thursday 4 May 2017