

## President's Speech, Launch of 2009 Programme

Fiona Luestner, President, Penola Coonawarra Arts Festival

Welcome to the launch of the 18<sup>th</sup> Penola Coonawarra Arts Festival and the festival programme.

The Committee thanks our major sponsors, South Australian Tourism Commission, Arts SA, Coonawarra Vignerons Association, Wattle Range Council and Limestone Coast Tourism, our many sponsors as highlighted at the front of the programme and our increasingly growing number of friends, of whom there are many here tonight. We were fortunate to also receive funds from the 'Chefs of Coonawarra' which will assist the festival in building its national media profile by hosting a journalist during the event. Thank you for your belief in the festival.

I am excited to be standing here in front of you tonight presenting what we believe to be the best festival programme yet. I think that you would agree from the quick look you have been able to have that it looks fantastic in both design and substance. I thank our designer Anna Mitchell, who unfortunately could not be here tonight, and our committee members, Simone Kain, Lisa Gulyas and TJ Smith for all their hard work. We mixed things up a little this year and have separated the programme into 'chapters'. Frankly our first draft confused me so much that we decided to start again, I hope that you find the new format user friendly. The new television advertisement showing here tonight has again been done by one of our sponsors, Capture Creative, thank you Ben for being so passionate about the festival, it shows.

And now to the programme itself which I think we have also mixed up a little as well, but all for the better. The festival now runs over four days and nights, with Co-Opera launching the festival on Thursday with an early evening performance, Rhonda Burchmore will hit the stage on Friday night after the announcement of the John Shaw Neilson Art Prize winner and the official opening at Local Images, Lyndey Milan headlines the 'intimate' food component, Peter Goldsworthy is our special writers guest, with internationally known photographer Andrew Dunbar holding special workshops and Bryan Dawe, our Patron returns to add his wit. We introduce the *Little Kids, Big*

*Kids* family portion of the festival and also premiere 'Iris' a work by Guy Detot and Jessica Foster. All of this coupled with the many cellar door exhibitions, the art prizes and our Long and Short Sunday Film Night make 2009 the festival for everyone.

We have already received some great feedback on the event that I would like to share, double the amount of entries for the design prize have been received, some 80 entrants, we rank third on a Google search for arts festival in Australia – higher up than the Adelaide Arts Festival and our main act, Rhonda Burchmore has been quietly creating buzz even before a public announcement was made.

We should be very proud of the festival as an event and of the people who dedicate themselves to putting the festival together. The festival comes together over a couple of glasses of Coonawarra wine & some outstanding snacks, lots of laughs, far too much talking, a few tears and lots of hard work. This year we welcomed some new members and I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge each of the Volunteer Committee members, in no particular order; Simone Kain, TJ Smith, Gail Stephenson, Nicole Reschke, Cathy Hughes, Michelle Stehbens, Lisa Gulyas, Rick Paltridge, Kerrie McCarthy, Robert Miles, Anne Johnson, Ulrich Grey-Smith, Claire Gleeson, our international member Suzie Cottle and last but by no means least, the two members who we like to call the Custodians of the festival, Lois Hodge and Peter Muller. Many thanks for your hard work in the lead up to this moment and thank you in advance for the hard work that is still to come.

So please raise your glasses and toast a wonderful festival that promises to *over deliver* in 2009.