

## President's Speech, Launch of 2010 Programme

Fiona Luestner, President, Penola Coonawarra Arts Festival

Welcome to the launch of the 19<sup>th</sup> Penola Coonawarra Arts Festival and the festival programme.

The Committee thanks our Principal partners, Festivals Australia, South Australian Tourism Commission and Arts SA. Our major partner the Coonawarra Vignerons Association, key partners Hello Friday, Wattle Range Council and Wynns Coonawarra Estate, associate partners Limestone Coast Tourism and WIN TV, our many Guardian partners as highlighted at the front of the programme and our increasingly growing number of friends, many of whom are here tonight. Thank you for your support and belief in the festival.

I am excited and happy to be standing here in front of you tonight presenting what we believe to be our 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 designers Hello Friday, Simone Kain and Ben Hood for all their hard work and passion. Many a late night email has passed between them and our Committee. After the success of last year's changes we have kept the programme 'chapters'.

And now to the programme itself, with the new four day and night format being a huge success last year it returns again in 2010. It is oddly very easy to fill the extended timeframe and I am certain that we may even lengthen the festival even further in the future. Although I haven't yet mentioned that in a meeting and my soon to be exhausted Committee may disagree. The festival runs over four days and nights, with Co-Opera launching the festival on Thursday with an early evening performance, Renee Geyer will light up the Wynns Coonawarra Estate stage on Friday night after the announcement of the John Shaw Neilson Art Prize winner and the official opening at Penola High School. Yes, a change of venue, quite simply the prize has got too big for the confines of Local Images! I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank Lois Hodge for hosting the Art Prize, for frankly too many years to count. Lois is still the brains behind the

competition but it has found a new home thanks to Kirsty Amos and the school community.

In 2010 the festival committee has commissioned two special pieces. The first, 'Illumination of the South', has only happened with the assistance of direct funding. The Australian government is proud to be associated with this festival, and this project was only made possible by the Festivals Australia Australian government grant. The program supports cultural activity at regional and community festivals. So what is it?

Illumination is our own local piece of public artwork that will illuminate our heritage on the big screen. The big screen being local buildings. It will be on show in the evening Thursday through Sunday. I can't wait to see it. The second special event is the Deaf Can Dance Performance and workshop. With assistance from Arts SA the deaf dance troupe will present a Hip Hop performance like you have never seen before. It will be something special.

Bryan Dawe, our Patron returns, John Marsden is our special writers guest, we welcome again the family sub-programme, busking and Red Room. All of this coupled with the many cellar door exhibitions, the art prizes and our Long and Short Sunday Film Night make 2010 the festival for everyone.

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, sparkling has been making a big appearance this year, lots of laughs, far too much talking, a few tears and lots of hard work. This year we welcomed 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, Michelle Stehbens, Rick Paltridge, Anne Johnson, Ulrich Grey-Smith, Gail Adams, happy birthday Gail, Vicki Wells, Yvonne Carter, Kirsty Amos, Emma Graney and the Custodians of the festival, our holders of all festival knowledge, Lois Hodge and Peter Muller. My heart felt thanks for your hard work in the lead up to the festival 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 be something extra special.