

**THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF
AUSTRALIA**

Report by Susan Lorette Dunn

2000 Churchill Fellow

PROJECT

**To investigate the production and presentation of
*The New York Festival of Song - USA***

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INTRODUCTION

While working overseas in 1997, a remarkable series of events determined I attend a concert by the **New York Festival of Song (Nyfos)** at Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. You see, I was hungry for inspiration to present art song with a ‘twist’ in Australia and a colleague of mine ensured I would not be disappointed at what **Nyfos** had to offer.

I have always been a creature of the theatre and was determined to find a way to present art song so it would communicate to more than just a select few. Unfortunately in Australia and largely the world over, art song has been thrown into the waste paper basket. I was horrified when an overseas teacher I respected, bemoaned, ‘*Art Song belongs in the drawing rooms of the past, audiences are not interested.*’ How can that be? I knew she was wrong, as in my early musical education I had been fortunate to be inspired by one of Australia’s most respected composers, whose songs are packed with drama and the ability to communicate. I had to find an innovative way to present song so it stimulated an audience into wanting more.

On the evening of January 15, 1997, **Nyfos** clarified my perception of how art song SHOULD be performed. Here was a company dedicated to the re-invention of the song recital. The experience of thematic programming coupled with an informative, witty and humorous narration delivered by the genius of Steven Blier, stimulated my creative spirit and stirred my soul into action. At last I had found my savior! This was what I wanted for Australia!

With passion stirring, I bravely applied for a Winston Churchill Memorial Fellowship and clung to Sir Winston’s words, ‘*Never give up!*’ The incredible rewards of my Fellowship proved to be tenfold. I was guided by my friends at **Nyfos** in every aspect of creating a successful company that specialises in revitalising ‘Song’ repertoire. I was also fortunate to investigate other companies that supported my vision, specifically, the **Eos Orchestra** and the **Opera Theatre of Pittsburgh** in the USA, and **Songmakers’ Almanac** in the UK.

Due to my interest in American Song, I spent many hours with some of America’s most famous up and coming composers both in interview and coaching sessions. I also attended more than two dozen Concerts, Recitals, Operas, Broadway shows, and Theatrical productions that sparked my creative instincts, stimulated ideas and assisted in the formation of my own mission statement. Amidst the bustle of daily interviews, I found the time to attend a short course on ‘*Visual Elements of the Theatre*’ at **New York University**. Coaching sessions with some of the best vocal and dramatic coaches in the USA made for an all round WOW kind of experience! This was definitely one of the most enriching and rewarding experiences of my life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge numerous people, both nationally and internationally, who helped support my vision and shape my journey into such a productive, rewarding and exciting experience.

The Winston Churchill Memorial Fellowship Trust, for extending funding and personal support, thus making my 'dream journey' possible.

My parents Joy and Colin Dunn, and my extended family and friends in Australia, for their constant emotional support, and encouragement.

My dear friends, Composer, Betty Beath, and her husband, Writer, David Cox, who have provided me with guidance, encouragement and inspiration throughout my life, thus helping me realise my dreams.

Jillian Bartsch, Head of Music, Opera Queensland and Producer Andrew Mckinnon, for their belief in my mission.

My friends and colleagues at **The New York Festival of Song**:

I would like to extend special thanks to Co-Artistic Directors, Steven Blier and Michael Barrett, who both gave so freely of their precious time to inspire me with their artistic genius. Gideon Schein, Executive Director, who welcomed me into the **Nyfos** office on a daily basis, eagerly sharing his experience and knowledge, and generously providing tickets for all **Nyfos** concerts and events. Administrative Staff, Caroline Cabass and Rebecca Feuerstein, for taking the time to share their knowledge with me. Jamie Bernstein Thomas, Board of Directors, and Jeffrey Craig Miller, Chairman-Board of Directors, for providing me with insights into the structure of how a Board of Directors guides and supports an organisation such as **Nyfos**. Jean Marie Miller, for her valuable knowledge regarding the **Nyfos** Education Program.

My friend, Composer Ricky Ian Gordon, who was a guiding light of pure inspiration on my journey.

Composers, John Musto, William Bolcolm and his wife Joan Morris, Lowell Liebermann, Richard Hundley and Chris Berg, for generously giving of their time to discuss their composition, and the future of contemporary art song.

Stephen Vann, Executive Director, **Eos Orchestra**, for his interest in my venture, and generosity in supplying tickets to all **Eos** concerts and events.

Mario Mercado, former Associate Director of Programs: **Kurt Weill Foundation for Music**, for the list of enticing musical contacts he provided me with in New York City.

David Farneth: Director, Weill Lenya Research Centre and Carolyn Weber, Assoc. Director for Program Administration, at the **Kurt Weill Foundation for Music**, for their insights into programming and licensing the works of Kurt Weill, and support for my future artistic ventures in Australia.

John and Ruth Rauch, for their generous support, and insights into the **Center for Jewish Culture and Creativity**.

Craig Urquhart, Vice President-Public Relations, Leonard Bernstein's company: **Amberson**, who offered me valuable assistance and information, and generously extended an invitation

for me to join he and the Bernstein family at the opening night of 'West Side Story', La Scala, Milan.

My Voice and Drama Coaches: William Woodruff, Neal Stulberg, Carol Castel, Nancy Houfek and Dan Gettinger for their valuable information, inspiration, encouragement and belief in my ability.

Jonathan Eaton, Artistic Director, **Opera Theatre of Pittsburgh**, for sharing his insights and passion for song with me.

Graham Johnson for his time to discuss the formation and success of **Songmakers' Almanac** in the UK.

My wonderful friends in the USA and UK: Liz Wright, David Robinson, Bonnie Hudgins, Leah Shamon, Neal Stulberg, Peter Rosen, Doug Webster, Ann Panagulias, Sean Heim, Rita Schaffer, Humphrey Burton, Heather Keens, and Frank Millward, for their support and hospitality.

My friends who generously provided me with accommodation in the USA and UK: John and Ruth Rauch, Carol Bunevich and John Merson, Nancy Houfek, Heather Keens and Frank Millward, and Don Ellis.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Position/Occupation: Part-Time Lecturer in Voice: QLD University of Technology.
Vocal Teacher: St Margaret's Anglican Girls School.
Professional free-lance Singer: Opera, Song, and Musical Theatre.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

To undertake an investigation into aspects of the prestigious **New York Festival of Song** in New York City (and other similar organisations), so I am armed with the knowledge to create a musical organisation in Australia, dedicated to the re-invention of the song recital.

HIGHLIGHTS

Every aspect of my Churchill Fellowship tour was a highlight as I was truly inspired on a daily basis. With this in mind, **major** highlights of my tour included:

- Forming contacts, alliances, and friendships with remarkable world class musicians and other professionals, including; composers, accompanists, vocal coaches, teachers, conductors, instrumentalists, choreographers, writers, and stage directors.
- Renewing and strengthening professional alliances and friendships in the USA and UK.
- Exposure and connection to the international music scene which included attending Concert and Recital programs, Opera productions, Broadway shows, and Theatre productions.
- Being involved with, and observing **Nyfos** on a daily basis.
- Working and coaching with Steven Blier and Michael Barrett, Co-artistic Directors of **Nyfos**.
- Working closely with, and being guided by, Gideon Schein, executive director of **Nyfos**.
- Coaching with some of the most outstanding musicians, directors, and composers and performing artists, in the world.
- Attending the opening night of 'West Side Story' at La Scala, Milan with Leonard Bernstein's immediate family and Craig Urquhart from **Amberson**.

- Being given the opportunity to create interaction between the artistic communities of Australia, the USA, and the UK.
- Performing a thematic recital program in the UK based upon the knowledge and skills I developed on my study tour.
- Creating the opportunity for future 'Song' projects and programs in Australia, with Michael Barrett and Jamie Bernstein Thomas.
- The realisation, that with the appropriate support, we have the capacity and opportunity to create artistic excellence in Australia.

MAJOR LESSONS

The following is a brief outline of the major lessons learned on my tour, which I will expand in the main body of my report, focussing on the **New York Festival of Song**.

My Fellowship gave me the opportunity to investigate creative innovative companies (both song and instrumental) in the USA and UK, providing me with the necessary knowledge, skills, and inspiration to initiate my own company in Australia, which will be dedicated to the re-invention of the song recital.

What makes companies like **Nyfos**, **Songmakers' Almanac** and the **Eos Orchestra** successful and unique? How do you produce a concert series that will stimulate and inform? How do you program song so that it excites and inspires? How can not-for-profit companies like **Nyfos** and the **Eos Orchestra** financially support themselves? How do you successfully build an audience? How do you nurture and promote your countries contemporary composers? How do you perpetuate performance opportunities? How do you promote the art of musical collaboration? Hungry for knowledge and in search of solutions, I powered feverishly between companies presenting endless lists of questions to artistic and administrative Gods! Exhausted yet elated, I formulated the following conclusions that have played a major role in the formation of the **mission statement** for my intended company, '**Songfest Australia**'.

- Art song presented in the 'traditional' solo recital format for the special select few in most cases and scenarios, can seem precious and fundamentally uncommunicative. The creative approach of thematic programming (doing concerts **about** something) with more than one artist, uniting song, poetry, history and humor is nurtured and implemented by **Nyfos** and **Songmakers' Almanac** with exceptional results. It is my ambition to apply these principles so that song can become an extraordinary rather than ordinary experience for the artist and audience in Australia.
- The following programming philosophy makes **Nyfos** unique, innovative and successful. Throughout their development they have been brave enough to serve a musical feast that is on no other menu in town! I will follow these principles as a guideline to create my company in Australia.
 1. The program is the star not the performer (the program is therefore the marketing tool).
 2. No two concerts are alike.
 3. No song is safe from us (from Bach to the Beatles)!
 4. Tell the audience what is interesting about a song. Don't preach or give them a musicology lesson, just let them in on the research and study by stimulating them with a flowing and informative narration.
- In Steven Bliers words '*Song is best when songful- straightforward, accessible, actable, and communicative. It loves subtlety but is resistant to intellectual complication*'. Often in the traditional song recital format divas and devos have been appearing with programs largely promoting French melodie and German lied and alas our own native tongue has been neglected. It is imperative that we communicate the text of a song to an audience, and what better way for us to do it than through 'our own' English language. It is time for Australian singers to be brave enough to develop full programs of song in English, where they have the opportunity to communicate a lifetime of experience through the text of their own native language. Rarely is it possible to bring this kind of life experience to a

foreign language, where so often singers digress into producing beautiful sound at the expense of expression and connection to the text.

- **Nyfos** has developed a rich repertoire of song, drawing on three centuries of international composers and from the vast repertoire of American song, which includes newly commissioned work by well known American composers and exciting unknowns. It is my intention in Australia to draw from this repertoire and also strongly support the life of Australian vocal music. It is essential to develop vital working relationships and exciting collaborations between Australian singers and composers, which has been largely neglected in the past. Commissioning, nurturing and promoting Australian song is necessary for our composers to be recognised and acknowledged both nationally and internationally.
- It is not unusual in the USA for singers to establish careers solely based on the concert and recital platform, and wherever possible, an American singer will be given employment preference over a foreign artist. Concert recital opportunities for Australian singers are severely limited. It is my wish to establish performance opportunities to promote Australian singers so they may achieve recognition both nationally and internationally and are not forced to re-locate overseas to establish a career. In the past we have been too fond of importing singers when there is a wealth of talent in Australia. It is time for us to overcome outdated feelings of inferiority, largely due to our sense of isolation from the rest of the world. International recognition and admiration will emerge when we begin to support and encourage 'our own' singers, thus promoting their ability and worth.
- The **Eos Orchestra** pride themselves on collaborating with other artistic disciplines to produce new and exciting performances. On occasion, it will be my intention to combine song with other artistic disciplines such as orchestra and chamber ensemble, dance, visual art, and poetry, to create a truly theatrical experience in a semi-staged environment. Engaging other artistic disciplines provides an opportunity for artistic collaboration and audience building.
- The importance of forming a Board of Directors who are willing to dedicate time and money to supporting and expanding a company such as **Nyfos** is essential for its artistic and financial survival. It is their responsibility to ensure the artistic and managerial function of the organisation is carried out with a firm commitment to fundraising and audience building. In the USA, within the companies I observed, each member of the Board of Directors possesses an overwhelming commitment and sense of responsibility on a personal level to caring for the cultural environment and community, performing their duties and tasks as a civil obligation. This is not a tradition we have established in Australia, but one that should be pursued and fostered. It is my intent and purpose to promote a sense of obligation within a social atmosphere of parties, picnics, and pure fun! As a body, this will give the Board a sense that they are acknowledged for their valuable input along with the prestige they desire and deserve.
- Symbiotic, consistent communication between artistic and administrative leadership, supported by the Board of Directors, is vital in establishing a successful company on every level. The structural and artistic visions must match to ensure productivity and artistic growth. In Australia, and also during my Fellowship overseas, I observed companies that were in conflict due to clashing visions and a general breakdown in communication. At the outset, it will be my intent when structuring **Songfest Australia** to carefully choose an artistic and administrative team that supports my vision and mission statement, and nurture an environment where honest communication between teams is encouraged and truly valued.

- In Gideon Schein's words, *'If you don't fundraise, you can forget it!'* It is absolutely necessary in Australia that we rely less on securing the sometimes-difficult worlds (especially for small companies) of corporate and government sponsorship and more on creating a community that will be financially supportive. Benefit concerts are fundamental, and individual sponsorship must be targeted. It is time to start feeling comfortable requesting money, and we must begin this process by gaining support from our inner circle of friends and family. This is how **Nyfos** began and how they built their loyal audience that helps sustain them artistically and financially today.
- The importance of an Education Program should not be underestimated, and has been established with **Nyfos** and the **Eos Orchestra** for a number of musical seasons. It is critical to develop future audiences and to find that 1-% that may be a future artist. It was stressed to me, that as an arts institution you have certain responsibilities to the society that is supporting you. The best way to do this is through an Education Program. With **Nyfos**, the program operates on the belief that exposure to song, as an art form is an integral part of a student's education, requiring specific thinking skills, an active imagination, a fresh look at history, and an appreciation of cultural differences. It is essentially part of my mission statement to ensure an education program is established within **Songfest Australia**.
- Creation of a concert series in small intimate venues is most appropriate for 'Song' repertoire. Larger venues would spell 'death', both artistically and financially. Overwhelming advice from all respective arts institutions is 'start small', build, grow and develop.
- Touring, recording, and radio broadcasts are essential for educating the public and audience building. It is extremely important not to neglect any potential audience, including opportunities such as seniors' and lunchtime concerts. Additionally, outreach programs to far and remote places should be developed. Eventually a concert series will be developed for **Songfest Australia** and promotion of the company through festival projects will be pursued.

Since the outset of my Fellowship, I have been seeking opportunities that will support my vision. While in the USA I was offered overwhelming support by artistic and administrative teams at **Nyfos** and the **Eos Orchestra**. Michael Barrett (**Nyfos**) has proposed that we work toward collaborating on a concert for the launch of **Songfest Australia**. I have also had a similar suggestion from Jamie Bernstein Thomas. Gideon Schein has kindly offered his services as a consultant to assist defining and establishing **Songfest Australia** in its initial stages. Jonathan Eaton has suggested his involvement by offering to direct *'Songplay'* with **Songfest Australia**. Stephen Vann (**Eos Orchestra**) has expressed interest in pursuing an exchange program between artists associated with **Eos** and **Songfest Australia**, therefore providing international collaboration between artists, and a launching pad for Australian artists into the international music arena.

During the later stage of my fellowship I performed my first thematic song recital, *'Journeys of the Heart'*, with friend and colleague, Heather Keens in the UK. It proved to be an enormous success artistically, providing me with the additional courage I require to pursue my venture. After arriving back in Australia, I collaborated with friend and colleague, Australian composer Betty Beath, to promote the music of Australian Women composers in recital at the Queensland Art Gallery. Many of the composers and writers/poets attended whose works we performed, thus establishing a real sense of artistic collaboration. The afternoon was an outstanding success and subsequent similar concerts have been requested.

In 1999 I had the pleasure to collaborate with friend and choreographer, Paul Boyd, for the Queensland Ballet International Gala. This was an example of combining the artistic disciplines of song, dance, and instrumental music, which proved to be an outstanding success. The knowledge I have gained during my Churchill Fellowship will assist me in creating other similar projects for **Songfest Australia**.

In October 2000, Brisbane hosted the fifth voice symposium of Australia, '*2000 A Voice Odyssey*', which I was fortunate to be part of the organising committee. Various research papers, lectures and masterclasses presented by national and international guest speakers, vocal teachers and other voice specialists comprised the body of the conference. In an attempt to make the public more aware of 'Song', I would be most interested in presenting a paper at the future voice symposium in 2002. I will also present names of international artists who would be suitable to feature as guest speaker's and/ or teachers, to the subsequent organizing committee.

I have approached the director of a prestigious musical institution in Queensland who has expressed interest in co-sponsoring a song recital series with me. This will provide opportunities for students of voice, other instruments, and composition, to partake in the series, developing their skills and knowledge of song repertoire along side professional musicians.

Recently, I developed a friendship and musical alliance with another 2000 Churchill Fellow, Tanya Simons. We are both passionate regarding the promotion of Australian music, and in March 2001 collaborated with the Queensland Youth Orchestra to present a performance of '*River Songs*' by Australian composer Betty Beath. We are presently investigating and planning the possibility of further similar concert performances.

It has always been my mission to create a love of song through my private studio teaching and university teaching and lecturing. The knowledge I absorbed during my Churchill Fellowship in interview and coaching will be joyfully imparted to my students in future classes, individual lessons, masterclasses and concert performances.

PROGRAM

The following two tables detail my overseas program. Initially, I chose to focus solely on **the New York Festival of Song** and coaching, however due to the attainment of other important contacts, I was able to broaden my study, thus acquiring additional knowledge and skills. While **Table 1** reflects my program of study, **Table 2** documents a list of all the musical and theatrical productions I attended, so vital in supporting the practical knowledge I acquired to develop my vision and mission statement for **Songfest Australia**.

Table 1

	Institution or Individual	Activity	Main Contacts	Dates
Los Angeles, CALIFORNIA, USA	Jewish Centre for Culture and Creativity	Interview	Ruth and John Rauch	27/02/00-7/3/00
New York City, NY, USA	The New York Festival of Song	Coaching/ Interview	Steven Blier Gideon Schein Michael Barrett	8/3/00-8/5/00
	Eos Orchestra	Interview	Stephen Vann	8/3/00-8/5/00
	Composers	Coaching/ Interview	Ricky Ian Gordon Richard Hundley John Musto Lowell Lieberman Chris Berg Craig Urquhart	8/3/00-8/5/00
	Vocal Teachers and Coaches	Voice lessons/ Coachings	Bill Woodruff Dodi Protero Neal Stulberg Carol Castel Dan Gettinger	8/3/00-8/5/00
New York City, NY, USA	Peter Rosen Productions	Interview	Peter Rosen	4/4/00
	The New York Festival of Song	Interview	Jamie Bernstein Thomas	5/4/00 11/5/00 16/5/00
	New York University	Course: Visual Elements in the Performing Arts	Mario Mercado	7/4/00-8/4/00
	Millennial Arts Productions	Interview	Paula Fischer Eric Fraad	11/4/00
	Former Associate Director of Programs: Kurt Weill Foundation	Interview	Mario Mercado	20/4/00
Pittsburgh, PA, USA	Opera Theatre of Pittsburgh	Interview/ Performance of 'Songplay'	Jonathon Eaton	2/5/00-4/5/00
New York City, NY, USA	Kurt Weill Foundation for Music	Interview	David Farneth Carolyn Weber	1/5/00 31/5/00
	Bolcom and Morris	Interview	William Bolcom Joan Morris	9/5/00
	Encompass New Opera Theatre	Interview	Nancy Rhodes	11/5/00
	The New York Festival of Song	Interview	Jean Miller Jeffrey Miller	18/5/00 1/6/00

Boston, MASS,USA	Harvard University Drama Department	Vocal and Dramatic Coaching	Nancy Houfek	26/5/00-29/5/00
Liphook, HANTS,UK	Bohunt College	Masterclass and Workshop	Susan Lorette Dunn Heather Keenes	11/6/00
	Bohunt College	Recital: Journey of the Heart	Susan Lorette Dunn Heather Keenes	18/6/00
Milan, ITALY	La Scala	Opening night of 'West Side Story'	Craig Urquhart (Amberson)	8/7/00
London UK	Songmakers Almanac	Interview	Graham Johnson	22/7/00
	Humphrey Burton	Interview	Humphrey Burton	24/7/00

Table 2

Place	Institution/ Artist	Musical or Dramatic Event	Date
New York City, NY,USA	New York Philharmonic	Kurt Weill's Centennial Celebration	10/3/00
	The Metropolitan Opera	The Merry Widow	16/3/00
	The New York Festival of Song:Rehearsal	Rags to Riches:A Hundred Years of American Song	20/3/00
	Eos Orchestra	Television Recording	21/3/00
	The Metropolitan Opera	La Boheme	22/3/00
	Eos Orchestra	Television Recording	22/3/00
	The New York Festival of Song: Concert	Rags to Riches: A Hundred Years of American Song	23/3/00
	City Centre Encores	Tenderloin	24/3/00
	Symphony Space	Wall to Wall Kurt Weill	25/3/00
	Eos Orchestra	Film Evening	27/3/00
	The New York Festival of Song	Education Outreach Program Concert	28/3/00
	Broadway	Moon for the Misbegotten	28/3/00
	Eos Orchestra	Celluloid Copland	30/3/00
	Helen Scheider	A Walk on the Weill Side	7/4/00
	Julliard Opera School	Der Kuhhandel: Kurt Weill	11/4/00
	The New York Festival of Song: Rehearsal	Birthday Bash for Francis Poulenc	12/4/00
	The Metropolitan Opera	Pelleas and Mellisande	13/4/00
	The New York Festival of Song: Concert	Birthday Bash for Francis Poulenc	14/4/00
	The Australian Chamber Orchestra	Great performers at Lincoln Centre	15/4/00
	Susan Graham Lincoln Centre	Art of the Song New York Recital	16/4/00
New York University Centre for Music Performance	Weill's Broadway Years:An Evening of Music and Memories	17/4/00	
Dawn Upshaw Lincoln Centre	Images of Dawn, Part 1 Hommage A Jane Bathori, The Composer's Oracle	30/4/00	
Jake Heggie Lincoln Centre	The Faces of Love An Evening of Songs by Jake Heggie	1/5/00	
Pittsburgh, PA, USA	Opera Theatre of Pittsburgh	Songplay A Dramatic Revue Music by Kurt Weill	2/5/00-3/5/00
New York City, NY,USA	New York Philharmonic	Sweeney Todd Stephen Sondheim	4/5/00
	Eos Orchestra	Six Ten-Minute Operas	5/5/00
	City Centre Encores	Wonderful Town Leonard Bernstein	6/5/00
	Renee Fleming Lincoln Centre	Art of the Song New York Recital	7/5/00
New York City, NY,USA	City Centre Encores	Wonderful Town Leonard Bernstein	7/5/00
	Broadway	The Wild Party Michael John LaChiusa	8/5/00

New York City, NY,USA	92 nd Street Y Tisch Centre for the Arts	Ned Rorem Hosts: American Songwriters	10/5/00
	William Bolcom and Joan Morris	A Very Dry Martini	12/5/00
	Dawn Upshaw and the Kronos Quartet Images of Dawn, Part 2	Tonight is the Night	13/5/00
	New York Festival of Song: rehearsal performance	Songs of the Irish Poets	17/5/00
	Dawn Upshaw Images of Dawn, Part 3	Round About	18/5/00
	The New York Festival of Song	Aaron Copland and His Circle	20/5/00
Boston, MASS,USA	Harvard University Theatre Department	Miss Julie	23/5/00
	American Repertory Theatre	A Winters Tale	27/5/00
New York City, NY,USA	Broadway	Kiss Me Kate	28/5/00
	The New York Festival of Song	Nyfos in Lotus Land: Benefit Concert	30/5/00
London, UK	English National Opera	Nixon in China	1/6/00
Milan, ITALY	La Scala, Milan	West Side Story Leonard Bernstein	21/6/00
			8/7/00

MAIN REPORT

Investigation of the production and presentation of the New York Festival of Song - USA

As I have detailed in my program, I was fortunate to investigate many fine companies during my Churchill Fellowship, but concentrated primarily on **The New York Festival of Song (Nyfos)** as a model for establishing **Songfest Australia**.

As a professional singer, I have never been content to just 'sing'. Entrepreneurial blood has been flowing through my veins since my first attempt to produce in the local school musical. As a singer, I have always been drawn to the art of 'Song', principally due to its power of communication, but it seemed to be continually presented as over refined high brow stuff that lacked lustre and life. Singers resurrected the traditional ho-hum repertoire that lulled an audience into dreamland instead of stimulating them into thinking and inquiry!

Completing my music degrees, and achieving success in national singing competitions, I eagerly threw myself into establishing a career as a professional singer. Many wonderful opportunities both nationally and internationally in the fields of Opera and Musical Theatre came my way, but the urge to combine song and producing haunted me. I explored possibilities while maintaining my singing career and achieved success producing various musical production projects with friend and colleague, Director-Gary Young, involving Broadway 'Song' repertoire accompanied by linking narration. The audience had fun and listened with intent. Perhaps I could do this with all kinds of song, but how could I make it appealing yet informative, unusual yet accessible, serious and fun, as well as a viable option financially?

As I remarked in the introduction, an extraordinary series of events drew me in the direction of Steven Blier and **The New York Festival of Song** where my musical mentor, Leonard Bernstein, is credited as Founding Advisor. The evening of January 15, 1997 changed my life. Here was the successful recipe that made song palatable, a delectable delight to the senses in fact, where the audience was transported to heaven!

Eagerly after the concert I approached Steven Blier and absorbed every morsel of information I could find out about this extraordinary organisation. **Nyfos** was founded in 1988 by its Co-Artistic Directors Steven Blier and Michael Barrett and is dedicated to the re-invention of the recital format comprising both standard works and rediscoveries from the European, Slavic, and South American repertory. Over the years however and in accordance with its mission statement, it has stressed American song and artists by selecting an array of composers from the rich American song tradition and by developing new work. Each season **Nyfos** produces a three-concert subscription series presented at the Sylvia and Danny Kaye Playhouse, and also produces and presents three concerts at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall. In addition, **Nyfos** is presented at Festivals and other major recital halls in New York City. In past seasons **Nyfos** produced tours and residencies nationally and internationally. **Nyfos** launched its Educational Outreach Program in 1995 as a way to develop future audiences and musicians. The expanding recording library includes Leonard Bernstein's *Arias and Barcarolles*, *He Loves and She Loves*, the songs of George Gershwin; *Zipperfly and Other Songs*, by Marc Blitzstein; Schumann's *Kerner Lieder*, *Mignon Lieder and Duets*, and *Unquiet Place*, with songs by Pfitzner, Eisler, Zemlinsky, Weill, Busoni, and others.

This was the beginning of a journey that would indeed change my life. I was determined to relive my splendid experience with Nyfos, but needed to confer with the gurus over time. The Winston Churchill Trust provided me with the opportunity of a lifetime by awarding me a Fellowship for 2000. With the risk of not sounding too presumptuous, I felt was on my way

to resurrecting ‘Song’ as an imaginative and accessible art form for Australia as soon as I touched down in the USA.

I spent a total of five months overseas that was spent soaking up the artistic wonderland of creative ideas and knowledge that would indeed inspire me to create **Songfest Australia**.

Prior to beginning my Fellowship in New York City, I visited my friends John and Ruth Rausch at the **Centre for Jewish Culture and Creativity** in Los Angeles which has become a facilitating centre for Jewish Culture and Creativity all over the world. Perhaps the most inspiring aspect of the philosophy of the Centre is its interest in creating an introduction network between artists of all artistic disciplines across the globe who create from a Jewish perspective. What a spectacular idea! They don’t just hire artists for concerts but also encourage international interaction between art forms. The **Centre for Jewish Culture and Creativity** have established a performance group embracing artistic disciplines entitled ‘*Synergy*’ which showcases the work of its creative artists and gives audiences a broad experience of cultural works based on Jewish concepts, ideas and heritage. The ensemble of professional performers serves as a cultural kaleidoscope combining various art forms to express the broad range of Jewish ethos. In a sense they are educating as well as entertaining and not unlike **Nyfos**, create thematic programming. This was indeed a wonderful introduction to my trip inspiring my thoughts to take shape.

Following my time in Los Angeles I spent just over three months in New York City with side trips to Pittsburgh and Boston accompanied by a brief unexpected jaunt to Montreal! During this time, as I indicated in my introduction, I spent many long hours with those who of the American Music Scene both in interview and coaching sessions. Many dinners were had and more than a few enticing glasses of wine consumed with the director, composer or musical genius of the moment! My days were spent searching for knowledge, situations and ‘people’ that would spark my creative spirit and drive. Most evenings were happily exhausted in concert halls, opera houses, Broadway theatres, and Manhattan living rooms and restaurants.

I have included below a summary of my program in New York City, Pittsburgh and Boston. It represents a concise list of people with whom I worked very closely, accompanied by their position individually, or within the institution I was observing. Due to networking, especially with the good Mr. Blier, and plain good fortune, I was introduced to a multitude of important contacts that enabled me to broaden my study beyond **Nyfos** and therefore expand my vision for **Songfest Australia**. Reference to the tables in the Executive Summary may be accessed for a full list of artists and institutions not discussed in detail in this Main Report.

The New York Festival of Song, New York City, NY

- Steven Blier: Co-Founder and Co-Artistic Director
- Michael Barrett: Co-Founder and Co-Artistic Director
- Gideon Schein: Executive Director
- Rebecca Feuerstein: Artistic Administrator
- Caroline Cabass: Fundraising, Grant and Foundation Applications, Tracking and acknowledgment of all money
- Jeffrey Craig Miller: Chairman, Board of Directors
- Jamie Bernstein Thomas: Board of Directors
- Jean Marie Miller: Director: Education Program

The Eos Orchestra, New York City, NY

- Stephen Vann: Executive Director

Opera Theatre of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA

- Jonathon Eaton: Artistic Director

The Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, New York City, NY

- David Farneth: Director, Weill Lenya Research Centre

New York University, New York, NY

- Mario Mercado: Former Associate Director of Programs: Kurt Weill Foundation

Songmakers' Almanac, London, UK

- Graham Johnson: Artistic Director

Composers, New York City, NY

- Christopher Berg
- William Bolcom
- Ricky Ian Gordon
- Richard Hundley
- John Musto
- Lowell Liebermann

Coaches and Teachers, New York City, NY

- Steven Blier: Vocal Coach, Accompanist
- Michael Barrett: Vocal Coach, Conductor, Accompanist
- William Woodruff: Voice Teacher
- Neal Stulberg: Vocal coach, Conductor
- Carol Castel: Vocal and Dramatic Coach
- Dan Gettinger: Vocal Coach in Musical Theatre, Accompanist
- Gideon Schein: Language Coach

Teacher, Harvard University, Boston, MA

- Nancy Houfek: Dramatic Vocal Coach

Looking back now through my program, I wonder when I had time to draw breath! I worked constantly and consistently with the above mentioned people and organisations so that I may have the insight to formulate my own mission statement for a 'song' company dedicated to the presentation of song and the creation of performance opportunities for Australian artists. That is where I would like to begin, with my mission statement.

SONGFEST AUSTRALIA Mission Statement

- The re-invention of the vocal recital format through its thematic recital series in Brisbane, and national and international touring.
- To present the work of living composers and to commission new Australian works.
- To present innovative programming, including collaboration with other artistic disciplines to produce new and exciting theatrical performances.
- To present vocal works, contemporary chamber opera and music theatre works with chamber ensemble or orchestra.
- The presentation of the above repertory through repeat concerts, recordings and radio broadcasts.
- To offer an educational program for Australian schools centered on the creative process of song writing and performance.

I crave to bring the art of the song recital alive by stimulating and informing an audience, uniting song, poetry, history and humor. On occasion, I will also introduce other artistic disciplines such as dance to create a more theatrical experience. Solo recitals will be replaced with thematic programs using more than one artist. New Australian works will be commissioned and singers will form exciting collaborations and working relationships with composers. The company will be supported financially by a solid board of directors who are instrumental in audience building. Radio broadcasts and touring will contribute to the popularity of **Songfest Australia** and the educational outreach program will provide an enjoyable way to develop future audiences and musicians amongst young people. This is my dream!

Easy huh? Definitely not! I have set myself a challenge of a lifetime, but I've had the best teachers in the world to help guide my path. Now, let me take you back through my journey and introduce to the wonderful creative spirits and what they did to inspire my dream.

After my brief but informative time in Los Angeles, I travelled to New York City with the 1997 sounds of **Nyfos** still ringing in my ears. That experience on January 15, 1997 hit me like a thunderbolt. The program was entitled '*Modern Scenes from American Life*'. The first aspect that struck me as different to the traditional recital format was how the program divided into sections—*Childhood, Marriage, Rogues' Gallery, Significant Others, Saying Goodbye and Looking Toward the Future*. Next, the list of composers—*Leonard Bernstein, William Bolcom, John Musto, Ricky Ian Gordon, Harold Arlen, George Gershwin, Marc Blitzstein, Lowell Liebermann and Aaron Kernis*. An all American composers program with at least one world premier. Not to forget the singers—not one, but four! Last but not least was the double genius of Steven Blier and Michael Barrett as accompanists, who narrated their way through this junket of seductive song and urged their singers on with tender glances! It was a joy to behold.

This was as far away from the glam diva/devo solo stint that mixed so-called art song with popular arias and presented toe-curling 'folksongs from my homeland' as an encore, as you could get! This **Nyfos** program stimulated and informed the audience taking us on a journey where we became less passive and more participative. You could feel the heightened energy in the Weill Recital hall, Carnegie Hall. This was a quirky creative program full of vibrant song, served exquisitely for us to digest with glee.

Flash ahead three years to March 2000 and my challenge was yet to begin. How could I reproduce in Australia what **Nyfos** were so successful in formulating in America? I spent

many hours with Gideon Schein, Rebecca Feurstein and Caroline Cabass observing how the 'business' of Nyfos supported the final artistic product. I also spent considerable time interviewing Jeffrey Miller and Jamie Bernstein Thomas regarding the important nature of the Board, and Jean Marie Miller covering the Education Program. I was fortunate to be in NY during 'concert series time' and therefore attended '*Rags To Riches: A Hundred Years of American Song*', '*Birthday Bash for Francis Poulenc*', '*Songs of Irish Poets*', '*Aaron Copland and his Circle*', The Nyfos Benefit Concert: '*Nyfos in Lotus Land*' and the Education Outreach Program concert. Daily, I was presented with a gourmet feast of song!

Steven and Michael began their journey to recreate the song recital over a decade ago performing a small set of recitals with friends in Greenwich Village. Steven was inspired by **Songmakers' Almanac** on a trip to Israel the same way I was with Nyfos in 1997, as it planted the seed of thematic programming with more than one artist in Steve's mind. **Songmakers' Almanac** is the brainchild of English pianist and accompanist Graham Johnson. It was born in the early 70's in his London studio flat with an intimate and quite original program of Schubert songs sung by Soprano Felicity Lott and baritone Richard Jackson. Thus the thematic program was born with a debut devoted to '*The Ruling Passion*'. Before the interval the first two sections were headed: *To Bacchus and Tobacco and Sloth, Humbug, Greed, Snobbery, Dodgin' and Duplicity*. Composers *Arne, Wolf, Bach, Poulenc and Liszt* were partnered with *Mozart, Strauss, Copland and Noel Coward*. Not only were these audiences being sung to, but they were being read to as well. Three or four singers were in turn declaiming letters, diaries, biographies and press cuttings by and about the very people who wrote the poems and the songs featured in the recital. Thematic programs where you are doing concerts ABOUT something are one of the secrets to **Songmakers' Almanac** and **Nyfos** being so successful. Thank God they have escaped from the traditional solo song recital format of a singer; often anonymous accompanist, traditional repertoire and a set of relatively dull and minimal program notes. At last the song cycle was being revitalised!

The other company I was introduced to that focus heavily on thematic and innovative programming is the **Eos Orchestra**. Their commitment is to present engaging musical programs to a diverse audience. They centre on the rediscovery of important neglected composers and works, and collaborate with other artistic disciplines to produce new and exciting performances. Their philosophy is to position themselves as unique in the city. The Programming philosophy behind **Nyfos**, **Songmakers' Almanac** and **Eos** is to serve a musical feast that is on no other menu in town! And how do you do this?

'Firstly, the program is the star not the performer', Steven exclaimed, over a glass of wine one evening... *'I quoted this to an artists' manager once and he literally winced as if I had squeezed a grapefruit in his face'*. This tends to be a rather typical reaction from agents who encourage the 'Operatic Diva' tradition. We must educate audiences to go for the music not necessarily to see a star performer. For **Nyfos** and **Eos**, 'Music is the star'. The next important goal for **Nyfos** is making the concerts as different from each other as possible – 'No two alike'. This becomes easier when you start thinking about programming thematically. It is possible to jump from American music to French Operetta to European Art Song to a Shakespeare recital. Why not?

The **Nyfos**, **Eos** and **Songmakers' Almanac** public have remained loyal, flexible and engaged as they are being educated with exciting repertoire! It doesn't go astray that **Nyfos** employ the genius of Steven Blier to narrate and inform between songs with wit, style, charm, humor and true star quality. This is another bonus that makes **Nyfos** the musical hit of NYC! When speaking with Jamie Bernstein over lunch one day she said *'Steve is one of those people like my Dad who has one foot firmly planted in his homework and the other foot firmly planted in popular culture and totally comfortable in both worlds. He makes the bridge and there's nothing more fun than that-everybody always loves it. My Dad was really good at it-that's what made his 'Young Peoples Concerts' fun. He would talk about sonata form and use*

*a Beatles song as an illustration and everybody would fall about. Steve has that same knack. He is one of the valuable ones- a real consummate artist- the real thing, and I know **from** the real thing'!*

'A song is a song is a song- it doesn't matter to me where it comes from.' That's the singer Robert Whites credo, and it's borne out of his compilation CD, 'The Greatest Songs Ever Written', which mixes Schubert and Handel with Trenet, Gershwin and Kern. This is also Steven Blier and Michael Barrets credo. Steven suggests that I not go one day without listening to a new song! Why, because as the **Nyfos** motto states 'No song is safe from us'. When you have a wealth of repertoire to draw on, the idea of thematic programming is not so daunting. There is such a wide diversity of music out there to explore. You can make a Beatles song an art song if you know how to present it and mix it with other engaging repertoire. Nyfos frequently program the likes of Mahler, Schubert, and Brahms alongside Aaron Copland, Leonard Bernstein, Lee Hoiby and John Musto. It's not what you program it's how you program that's important!

As Steven suggests, *'Song is best when songful-straightforward, accessible, actable, and communicative.'* *It loves subtlety but is resistant to intellectual complication.'* He also exclaimed *'As a teacher at Julliard, I sense a strong and growing interest in American song. Both students and professionals want to be able to sing to an audience in their common language. One aspect I enjoy about American song is that artists gravitate to a piece for both its poetry and its music. When we sing in English, we're choosing to speak to the world through music about what we feel and who we are, and more and more composers and poets are giving us the words and music to do just that. And now that tonal music has become fashionable again, and the academic twelve-tone school has loosened its grip on contemporary composition, contemporary song stands a chance of flourishing.'* It is absolutely essential that we begin including repertoire in our own native tongue. **Nyfos** presented four concerts while I was in New York City and three were in English. Of course they do perform concerts of French and German lied, however these are presented thematically in a palatable and informative fashion accompanied by in-depth program notes and comprehensive translations.

As the singer and vocal teacher, Phyllis Curtin stressed in an edition of Opera News, *'If we don't champion American Song, no European will do it for us'*. How true! This also applies to us in Australia. If we don't champion Australian song, who will? In discussion with Gideon Schein I praised the talented composers we have in Australia and as I suspected, he had only heard of a select few. I appealed to Gideon to join my crusade, and for obvious reasons, promote Australian repertoire within the artistic ranks of **Nyfos**. He replied, *'If you don't want to make them famous, why should we!'* I don't want to get on my soapbox, but isn't it time we started to think a bit more 'American'? If we believe we are talented and pursue promoting Australian composers, the rest of the world may just sit up and listen. As my friend Mr. Blier exclaimed, *'If you tell an audience something is good, rather than, I don't know if your going to like this, you're half way there'*.

Since its inception in 1988, Nyfos have been famous for commissioning and programming new American work. They pride themselves on creating programs around living composers. They won a Grammy for their recording of Leonard Bernstein's last work, *'Arias and Barcarolles'*, had a hit on their hands with John Musto's *'Dove Sta Amore'* and received rave reviews across America for Ned Rorem's song cycle for four singers, *'Evidence Of Things Not Seen'*. *'Evidence'* is a work that requires an audience to concentrate. It takes up an entire program, lasts ninety minutes and is performed without a break. It comprises thirty-six songs with texts by twenty-four poets. The success of the cycle has buoyed Ned Rorem, who has so often railed against indifferent support for serious art in contemporary culture. He believes it is vital we be pro-active on behalf of our music and echoes the words of Phyllis Curtin by

stating 'If we don't make an American repertory, nobody is going to do it for us'! Well, listen up Australia!

I was fortunate to meet, interview and coach with many of the American composers that **Nyfos** program including Ricky Ian Gordon, John Musto, Richard Hundley, Christopher Berg, Craig Urquhart, William Bolcom and Lowell Liebermann. They gave of their time, knowledge and music so generously. This was the group of people I loved to 'hang out' with in NY. More than once I struggled back to my mid-Manhattan apartment with bundles of compelling repertoire under my arm, feeling like Alice in wonderland! Composers love singers, especially singers who love to sing their music. Fostering the singer composer relationship is vital for the continuation and ongoing performance of a composer's repertoire.

Throughout his life, Leonard Bernstein frequently spoke of what his teacher Koussevitzky called 'the central line', the line to be followed by the artist at any cost, the line leading to perpetual discovery, a mystical line to truth. Who better to know about the truth of a composition and find 'the central line' in a song, than the composer themselves, and how foolish if we don't take advantage of working closely with our living composers? One evening after a very relaxing dinner with Ricky Ian Gordon, he grabbed my arm and said, 'come and listen to my new cycle 'Late Afternoon' which I'm premiering tomorrow night at the 92nd St Y' (in a program called '**Ned Rorem Hosts American Songwriters**'). As he sang and played in his living room I thought, wow, this is what it must have been like with Lenny Bernstein - music and singing and being creative with friends in New York City. But then I felt at home. From the time I was fourteen years old I was inspired to adore song by my dear friend and teacher, Australian composer Betty Beath. She instilled in me a love for song and especially Australian song. Composers like Ricky Gordon and John Musto are up and coming stars in New York City, isn't it time we in Australia looked less at the frequently programmed Beethoven and Handel and a little more at the wealth of repertoire produced by the talented living composers that surround us!

So, we have the songs, how about the presentation? **Nyfos** do it very simply, with no stage set, minimal lighting, a grand piano or two (depending on the program), a table, and chairs. I wasn't too crazy about the water jug and glasses positioned on the table for thirsty singers, or the occasional music stand for prompting purposes. **Nyfos** narrowly escape reproach in this environment. If the concert was staged in a more theatrical sense, drinking water and stands would be a definite no-no. Steven is a believer that the repertoire speaks for itself, and in his opinion, the staging of song and song cycles as such is not necessary. Being a rather theatrical creature at heart, I actually differ in my opinion and this is where I turned to the **Eos Orchestra** and the **Opera Theatre of Pittsburgh** for inspiration.

The **Eos Orchestra** is quite a stagey bunch, but then Jonathon Scheffer, an outgoing enterprising young conductor, who studied with Leonard Bernstein, is their Artistic Director and Conductor. The rather youthful not-so-little band specialises in paying tribute to neglected masterpieces and demi-masterpieces! My first encounter with **Eos** was at Lifetime Studios in Queens where they were recording an Aaron Copland program for television. Here visual elements were central to the performance. The program was staged with lighting, orchestra, and film, complete with soloists - singer Thomas Hampson and clarinetist, Richard Stoltzman There was no doubt that this stunning combination of artistic disciplines had both musical and visual impact. As a newly recruited fan, I plead with Executive director Stephen Vann for a supply of tickets to their concert series in New York City. I wasn't disappointed.

The first **Eos** performance in the series I attended was entitled '**Celluloid Copland**', which celebrated Copland's contribution to the war effort at home. Here they presented a thematic concert which included first performances of Copland's newly dusted-off film scores and the rarely heard complete ballet that is Copland's masterpiece, '**Appalachian Spring**'. The second concert offered an evening of short works by six composers: '**6 Ten-Minute Operas**'. It

presented a virtual history of Opera, from Monteverdi to short musical theatre works from the 20th and 21st century. Very interesting and thematically programmed repertoire accompanied by simple but effective staging and mixing of artistic disciplines made for an all round theatrical event. This was the kind of programming that make **Eos** indispensable to the cultural life of New York City. Looking around, this was one of the youngest, savviest, most eager audience I've ever seen at a classical music performance. I felt very encouraged! What did concern me however was the funding that would be required to produce a more 'theatrical' type of concert. Jonathan Scheffer clearly had his hands on some solid financial resources and generous patrons. Would it be possible to stage song with other artistic disciplines in a theatrical environment without it costing a fortune?

On the recommendation of Steven Blier, I attended a course at the **New York University** entitled '*Visual Elements in the Performing Arts*'. It focussed on visual components of the theatre with several guest speakers from leading New York Arts Organisations. It was quite coincidental that one of these speakers specialised in directing the theatrical work of one of my favorite 'song' composers: Kurt Weill. Jonathan Eaton is a Kurt Weill specialist and also the current Artistic Director of the **Opera Theatre of Pittsburgh**. Fortunately for me, he was in the process of presenting an entire season of Kurt Weill repertoire in Pittsburgh while I was residing in New York City. One piece on the program that had me intrigued was '*Songplay*', which Jonathan described as a Dramatic Revue, featuring some of Weill's less familiar work, along with his favorites.

Out of curiosity and interest, I visited the **Kurt Weill Foundation**, a not-for-profit, private foundation that preserves and perpetuates the legacies of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya. David Farneth, Director of the Research Centre, kindly assisted me with information about the successful '*Songplay*'. Numerous reviews praised '*Songplay*' as '*one of the best productions we have seen or are likely to see, for a long, long while*', and '*it is almost pure song...it is also play*' and '*Eaton has given the songs a dramatic framework*'. '*Rather than stringing together a bunch of Weill songs, Eaton has woven them into a story.*' Fascinated, I was convinced a trip to Pittsburgh was in order. This show/concert was exactly the kind of concept I was looking for. It was a kind of **Nyfos/Eos** combination - Unusual, but accessible repertoire, six singers in costume, a simple but effective stage setting, appropriate lighting, a four piece chamber ensemble and songs and themes woven into a dramatic context with the help of short sections of dialogue. The dialogue is deliberately sparse: much of the action, both of plot and character development takes place within the songs, in the way they are interpreted and staged. It is the songs that make the play. I was convinced this would be something Australian audiences would love! Back in New York City, I revisited the **Kurt Weill Foundation** and conferred with David Farneth, and Caroline Weber, Associate director for Program Administration, who were more than accommodating, providing me with approval to program Kurt Weill in Australia.

The versatile Opera singer Dawn Upshaw in '*Images of Dawn*', presented another performance, which engaged a similar concept to '*Songplay*', - '*Round About*' for **Lincoln Centre**. The program consisted of musical theatre repertoire woven into a dramatic context, reflecting images of Dawn Upshaw's life in a theatrical setting. It was presented with Broadway baritone - Gregg Edelman, slides, stage setting, film, distinctive lighting and a small stage band conducted by the talented Musical Director, Eric Stern. The effect was slick, sassy, and very entertaining. Here again we see song being presented as accessible, and versatile, but also very interesting due to the presentation and programming. My mission statement was becoming clearer.

How would I be able to produce similar quality programs without blowing a budget? Unlike **Eos**, I would most often be working with a small chamber ensemble of musicians or indeed a single pianist. This would clearly be much more cost effective. Venue would be another extremely important consideration. **Eos, Pittsburgh Opera Theatre** and **Nyfos** organise it

quite simply with small auditoriums and small stages. Steven and Michael repeatedly emphasised the importance of starting small. Their first concerts were in Greenwich house with a mere 100 seats. This is also where the idea originated to schedule a season of performances- two groups of three concerts. Today **Nyfos** are continuing that philosophy, with a subscription series of six concerts at two contrasting venues: the Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, (268 seats) and The Kaye Playhouse (620 seats). Song, unlike Opera, is such an intimate form of communication. You lose audience contact and connection when you start booking big auditoriums. Song will always have a small audience, it is important not to try and make it into an arena spectacular.

Audience building is of prime importance when establishing a company such as **Nyfos**. Where do you start? Primarily, as Steven, Michael and Gideon suggest – ‘*start small*’. In the initial stages you ask friends to sing and call everyone you know to be your audience. The marketing strategy for **Nyfos** and **Eos** is the programming, not just the singer. It has taken **Nyfos** 12 years to develop their audience and identify them with a particular performance style. It is essential to educate an audience with all types of song - and then listen to what they want. Begin your own lists, trade mailing lists with relevant artistic organisations, and use word of mouth as a driving force. One of the most important forces that help build an audience and fundraise for a not- for- profit organisation such as **Nyfos** and **Eos** are the Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors is the backbone of not-for-profit arts organisations. It is their responsibility to ensure the artistic and managerial function of the organisation is carried out with a firm commitment to fundraising and audience building. The importance of forming a board with members who are willing to dedicate time and money to supporting and expanding a company such as **Nyfos** is essential for its artistic and financial survival. Board members must meet the following criteria: It is essential they enjoy attending concerts and they must be willing to contribute time and money to the organisation. Most often board members will buy a four-ticket subscription to each concert, which ensures that often their friends will become new subscribers. If the company doesn't meet budget the board are responsible. Special qualifications are not necessarily sort; however it is useful to recruit people with specific expertise in certain fields such as law to assist with relative business legalities. It is also quite significant to involve individuals with social influence on the Board.

Jeffrey Miller as the Chairman of the Board has been an important asset to **Nyfos**. He acts as the eternal diplomat and has often facilitates communication when difficult issues have to be resolved. Hosting regular board meetings in his home and inducing board members to find ways to fundraise is essential as Chairman. He suggested I organise intimate concerts in large homes as a springboard for fundraising when initiating and establishing my own company. This will assist in building an audience and creating social events that bring board members social credit. It is extremely important that we feel comfortable requesting help and money. Individual sponsorship and Benefit Concerts are as essential as securing corporate funds, and government and foundation grants as a source of financial support.

Jamie Bernstein Thomas has been an instrumental force as a board member of **Nyfos** during recent years. Benefit concerts were often held in the Bernstein residence after Leonard Bernstein passed away in 1990. Jamie expressed how she regularly hosted ‘*Songfests*’, accompanied by a champagne supper. Of course it wasn't difficult to lure eighty or ninety guests to the prestigious Bernstein ‘Dakota’ residence at \$100 ahead. How many people in this world can boast of experiencing a musical feast of song in Leonard Bernstein's living room? I attended a **Nyfos** Benefit: ‘*Nyfos in Lotus Land*’, held in New York's prestigious Lotus room, at \$250 a head. The evening was a complete hit financially, (Board members had to entice as many of their friends as possible) musically, and socially. I observed each member of the **Nyfos** Board possessed an overwhelming commitment and responsibility to caring on a personal level for the cultural environment and community, performing their

duties and tasks as a civil obligation. This is something we must begin to foster and pursue in Australia. It is vital to promote a sense of obligation within a social atmosphere and what better way to celebrate than with wine, food and song!

The Advisory Board, also essential in a not-for-profit Arts organisation, has a completely different function to the Board of Directors. As Jamie Bernstein exclaimed, *'These are the names that you want on your stationary- people established in the field of your endeavor who will give the organisation credibility'*. The **Nyfos** Advisory Board reads like whose's who of music: William Bolcom, Graham Johnson, Christa Ludwig, and Frederica Von Stade just to mention a few! Their function is to assure the organisation reeks of prestige, and to be consulted from time to time on relevant issues.

Symbiotic consistent communication between artistic and administrative leadership supported by the Board of Directors is vital in establishing a successful company on every level. It is necessary that the structural and artistic visions match to ensure productivity and growth. At *'Visual Elements in the Performing Arts'* at **NewYork University**, John Conklin: Stage Designer suggested, *'the only representation the audience sees of a company is the final product on stage.'* It is therefore very important that the administrative team support the artistic vision. The transfer of energy between the audience and performers is what the organisation stands for, not the administration. I observed conflict within certain companies due to a breakdown in communication between artistic directors and the administrative team. Misunderstandings can be avoided if an honest line of communication is kept open. Personally, I think artists are in a way like children - they need a nurturing environment that will allow them to explore new paths. It's up to the management team to support that in the best way they deem possible.

From the Board of Directors to Broadcasting - Jamie Bernstein Thomas has not only been instrumental as a Board member, she has initiated a radio program which she and Steven Blier host in New York City, that ensures **Nyfos** be heard by the masses. A one-hour program 'scaled down' from the program of the moment is recorded in the studio of WQXR with Steven and Michael accompanying and Jamie narrating from a concise script she prepares with Steven. This has been an extremely successful approach to securing an interested public who often become new audience members and subscribers.

Touring and recording has also been an effective marketing tool for **Nyfos** further afield, creating additional opportunities for a potential audience. Most of the big presenters in the USA target Universities and Colleges in Cities and also regional areas. Touring eventuated as the company and personal contacts between the company, artists and venues grew. Recording eventuated when Nyfos secured the rights to perform Leonard Bernstein's *'Arias and Barcarolles'*. As a result the record label Koch released five CD's for the company promoting innovative repertoire and thematic programming.

Developing an audience and musicians for the future is a major priority for **Nyfos** and the **Eos Orchestra**. Gideon Schein suggested to me that, *'as an Arts organisation you have certain responsibilities to the society that is supporting you, and the most effective way to do that is through education'*. In 1995, **Nyfos** developed an 'Educational Outreach Program' with a desire to introduce students to the concept of song. The program is based on the premise that if our city's children are not exposed to music, we will have no future artists and if our children do not learn to appreciate, understand, and listen to musical concerts; we will have no future audiences. It operates on the belief that exposure to song, as an art form is an integral part of a student's education. Song is used as an entry- point for learning. The emphasis is to find the meeting ground between what the students know and enjoy in music and what they expect to hear and see at a **Nyfos** concert. What about song makes the students come alive? How can that feeling be generated by other genres of music?

Gideon chose a Director for the Program- Jean Marie Miller, and under her guidance, sent out teaching artists from **Nyfos** to teach an 8 week Program in chosen secondary schools, assisted by the resident school music teacher. The program is designed to work with a wide range of secondary students – those who may have extensive previous musical experience and those who have none. All of the students participate in the program, which creates a context for the work of **Nyfos**, through participatory activities using poetry and song.

The **Nyfos** program structure consists of the following components, which comprise a unit of study.

- Creation of curriculum materials designed to support classroom work.
- A teacher training/planning session
- 8 in-school workshops taught by Nyfos teaching artists.
- Attendance at a Nyfos concert designed specifically for high school students.
- Written evaluations by teachers, students, and teaching artists.

Until recently, **Nyfos** taught the program through classical song repertoire, but realised it would be more effective to explore the world of song through ‘the kids music’. In this way the teaching artists were able to demystify elements of song and convince students that what they would hear in a concert with **Nyfos** is not that different from what they hear on the streets today. It was a success! After spending 8 weeks composing in a creative class environment, students performed their own repertoire alongside teaching artists performing Schubert, Jean Ritchie and Aaron Copland in a public concert. Cheering, screaming and positive energy pervaded the Sylvia and Danny Kaye Playhouse on the afternoon of March 28, 2000. The concert was truly inspiring and demonstrated to me that you just have to meet young people on their level to entice them to learn!

To observe **Nyfos** on a daily basis was truly rewarding. It has given me tools to extend my knowledge of programming and detailed insight into overall structuring, publicity, marketing and administrative requirements for a not-for-profit arts organisation. To dwell on business and administrative detail would prove inappropriate, however a summary of business advice that Gideon Schein offered is as follows:

- Start small and build slowly.
- Clearly define the Mission Statement.
- Establish leadership and make sure the artistic and managerial function of the organisation is carried out effectively.
- Develop individual and corporate relationships and fundraise.
- Develop and expand the Board of Directors.
- Develop committees within the Board of Directors to focus on specific issues such as marketing and public relations, intellectual property, personnel, nominating and ad-hock.
- Gradually build a subscription series.
- Create mailing lists (assisted by the Board of Directors) and initial marketing postcards.
- Market with good singers and the program.
- Secure reviews.
- As an Artistic Director spend time dealing with concepts, people and the program.
- See the impact of an entire series and plan ahead.
- Be brave!

Apart from dashing between interviews, performances and companies, I spent time coaching with remarkable musicians. I know I exhausted every Leonard Bernstein song suitable for the soprano voice in the repertoire with Steven Blier and Michael Barrett. Who better to learn from? Both of these extraordinary musicians worked so closely with the Maestro. Michael was Bernstein’s assistant conductor from 1985-1990 and currently serves as musical advisor to the Leonard Bernstein Estate. Frequently, Michael would say to me, *‘This is what Lenny*

would love you to do in this section! So now I feel I can perform Bernstein with first hand knowledge. 'How lucky to be me'!

My voice teacher in New York City was the adorable William Woodruff who kept me on my toes technically. I consistently quote Bill to my students, '*Don't go after the audience, bring them to you.*' I guess if you really think about it, this applies to most situations in life- if you push too hard at anything, usually you will get the opposite of what you are trying to achieve. Thank you Bill for your wisdom and technical twists!

My dear friend Neal Stulberg offered me much musical insight into Leonard Bernsteins '*Arias and Barcarolles*', and the delightful Dan Gettinger, whom I worked with in Israel in 1996, supplied me with the most appealing and unusual of Broadway repertoire. I can always rely on Dan to come up with a hit that hasn't been done to death!

The glorious Carl Castel, whom I also worked with in Israel in 1996, challenged me to deliver every line of text within my song repertoire with honesty and true intent. She encouraged me to analyse character and text in detail. You know it really is so much easier to be truthful about a character when you map out the entire emotional journey.

My friend Nancy Houfek, who is a Voice Coach in the Drama Department at **Harvard University** in Boston, took that one step further. We spent four full days analysing Ricky Ian Gordon's Song Cycle '*Genius Child*'. She prompted me to understand the song firstly as heightened speech, as the presentation of a dramatic situation from a character point of view. Once we probed the text in detail, I was able to add the musical dimension, to work toward a synthesis. I was able to 'be' in the moment and know exactly what I was feeling **all** the time. As a performer it is your duty to take the audience on a journey - you can take them 'behind' the words where they should be building pictures in their mind. Generally poems are too vague to give an audience an in-depth understanding of the character, so it comes back to the performer to create an experience of melody, musical atmosphere, vocal quality and truthfulness in dramatic content. If we desire people to attend recital programs, they will only come for what we can give them, so we had better make it good!

I have already mentioned my dear friend, composer Ricky Ian Gordon whom I coached with on several occasions, but I would also like to reveal another magnificent spirit who gave me much insight into the human soul. Dear Richard Hundley, thank you for your inspiration, encouragement. In his songs he states his objective is '*to crystalize emotion*'. He succeeds with warmth and wisdom. The songs I coached with him are heart-stoppingly beautiful, especially '*Come Ready and See Me*'. Richard, you bring beauty to the world.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The journey my Churchill Fellowship has taken me on has been truly enriching and inspirational both on a musical and personal level. The opportunity to travel and meet so many extraordinary, talented individuals has provided me with the experience of a lifetime and the encouragement to establish my dream company, **Songfest Australia**.

‘Song’ is not dead, it is alive and well in New York City and continues to thrive under the banner of **Nyfos**. Additionally, the **Eos Orchestra**, the **Opera Theatre of Pittsburgh** in America and **Songmakers’ Almanac** in London, is presenting other stimulating and innovative programs. It is time to make this happen in Australia. We in music and theatre tend to be terribly enthusiastic about what we are doing and I am extremely passionate about finding new engaging ways to move an audience. The future of live music depends upon a new view of what concerts can be at their best and most imaginative. It is up to us as creative artists to make that happen.

I believe that great singers performing exciting and innovative repertoire as part of a thematically and theatrically based program in a beautiful sounding hall with enthusiastic accompaniment, informative narration, and program notes is something **everyone** can appreciate. In this scenario there is tremendous power and communication coming off the stage that can be felt as pure energy translated into beauty. These musical experiences do not have to be rare. No longer should we be content with the recital where the diva or devo trails out a Schubert song cycle for the 95th time with little connection to the text, an accompanist who is seen as secondary and no program notes or translations worth their salt. The latter has to ‘be put to bed’ or our musical audiences will be doomed. Song cannot remain on the shelf any longer; it is time to make it a joyful, powerful, entertaining and an uplifting experience, accessible to all. This can only be done with imagination, insight and perseverance.

Leonard Bernstein led a graduating speech at Johns Hopkins University with the following inspirational advice: *‘we have guardians out there-artists, the prophets among us, scanning horizons we cannot see... Every artist copes with reality by means of his fantasy. Fantasy, better known as imagination, is his greatest treasure, his basic equipment for life. And since his work is, his fantasy is in constant play. He dreams life... You are the generation of hope. We are counting on you you-on your imagination-to find new truths: true answers, not merely stopgaps to the abounding stalemates that surround us. Will you accept, as artists do, that the life of the creative spirit precedes and controls the life of exterior action; that the richer and more creative the life of the spirit, the healthier and more productive our society must necessarily be... Go forth and take the world! Well Maestro Bernstein, I will certainly endeavor to heed your advice!*

My conclusion is my Mission Statement discussed in the above report and the way I can disseminate the information is through the establishment of my company: **Songfest Australia**.

As I stated earlier in my report, since the outset of my Fellowship, I have been seeking opportunities that will support my vision. While in the USA I was offered overwhelming support by artistic and administrative teams at **Nyfos** and the **Eos Orchestra**. Michael Barrett (**Nyfos**) has suggested that we work toward collaborating on a concert for the launch of **Songfest Australia**. I have also had a similar offer from Jamie Bernstein Thomas. Gideon Schein has kindly offered his services by travelling to Australia as a consultant to assist defining and establishing **Songfest Australia** in its initial stages. Jonathan Eaton has suggested his involvement by offering to ship *‘Songplay’* to **Songfest Australia**. Eric Stern who has acted as musical director for Dawn Upshaw on her recordings, and the musical production of *‘Round About’*, has offered his assistance and support. Stephen Vann (**Eos**) has

expressed interest in pursuing an exchange program between artists associated with **Eos** and **Songfest Australia** therefore providing international collaboration between artists and a launching pad for Australian artists into the international music arena.

During the latter stage of my Fellowship I performed my first thematic song recital, *Journeys of the Heart*, with friend and colleague, Heather Keens. It proved to be an enormous success artistically, providing me courage to pursue my venture. Since arriving back in Australia I have promoted Australian song in concert. The first occasion was with friend and colleague Betty Beath, to promote the music of Australian Women composers in recital at the Queensland Art Gallery. The second was the performance of Betty Beath's 'River Songs' with Tanya Simons (conductor) and the Queensland Youth Orchestra. A third performance of Australian Music including dance is being negotiated for later this year 2001. I have also created working relationships with other Australian Composers.

I have approached the Director of a prestigious musical institution in Queensland who has expressed interest in co-sponsoring a song recital series with me. This will provide opportunities for students of voice, other instruments, and composition, to partake in the series, developing their skills and knowledge of song repertoire along side professional musicians.

It is vital that Australia has pride in her musical landscape. It is my intention to strongly support the life of Australian vocal music by seeking out repertoire and commissioning new works. It is essential strong relationships be developed between composer and singer. This can only happen when singers take the initiative to seek out new and interesting works for performance. For Australian singers to feature our own music is essential -for our own growth as artists and for the future of the 'Song' form. Any art form that looks only backward may back itself into its own grave. To keep our art alive, I urge singers to find their favorite new composers and support them.

I believe is also imperative to invite composers to performances of their works. This promotes composer and singer alike and deepens the audiences understanding of chosen repertoire. Interaction between artistic disciplines is essential to provide a working atmosphere of creativity, and growth nationally and internationally. No artist will ever reach his or her full potential in complete isolation.

Where funding is concerned in small organisations, it is imperative Australians think beyond the corporate world. We must be brave enough to fundraise, beginning with our close circle of friends and family. As Gideon Schein suggests, start small and build with Benefit Concerts. We are worthwhile as artists in Australia and it is time to stop apologising for our talent. Australians shouldn't have to disappear overseas to be validated and recognised. I know many Australian singers who are performing overseas, and Australian composers who are having their work performed overseas, yet they are not being rewarded for their excellence **first** in Australia. This 'tall poppy syndrome' has to cease! We must create our own opportunities and this means relying less on larger performing arts groups for employment and more on the creation of smaller musical organisations in smaller venues. It is up to our imagination and us.

Innovation in the arts comes about because someone or some group feels they cannot find the kind of experience they crave, so they must make it in their own image. Commercial success should not be an issue. This is the principle guiding all the musical organisations I have discussed, and my intended **Songfest Australia**. It is our responsibility to hold our heads high and forge ahead with creativity and imagination. As Jonathan Scheffer, Artistic Director of **Eos** has stated on occasion, *'Perceptions in the arts can change easily when a genuine needs to reach an audience guides all concerned. And if the more 'serious' arts have been dwarfed by mass entertainment, there will continue to be that smaller, intensely devoted audience*

having the experience of a lifetime which no amount of profit-driven enterprise can hope to offer.'

Additionally, I was moved by an article singer Thomas Hampson wrote for Opera News where he exclaimed: *'The world of song – born of poetry and thought, regardless of epoch or language or musical form – brings to the reader/listener an invitation of shared existence. If, as C.S. Lewis has it, " We are read to know we are not alone,' then it seems to me we sing to establish a kind of radar contact with that imminent community – a community of thoughts, words, emotions, music and experience, all of which are personally inhabitable through the kaleidoscope of song. What you see is a reflection of life. How you see depends on the agreement and melding of poet, composer and recreative artist. The ultimate meaning it has is an individual experience of one's own imagination, tooled with one's own iconography, in search of one's own clarification. This seems to me to be worth a great deal of fuss!'*

I am looking forward to making a difference by passing on my experience and love of song through educating the community, teaching, lecturing, performing and the eventual establishment of **Songfest Australia**. With pride, I will apply the advice and wisdom of Winston Churchill and *'Never Give Up'*!