

The Wagner Society

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Newsletter

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PATRON: SIR CHARLES MacKERRAS
HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS:
WERNER BAER
RITA HUNTER
LEONIE RYSANEK
MICHAEL EWANS

COMING EVENTS

Wednesday	April 2nd	Talk by David Wansbrough Goethe Institute - 7.30 pm *
Sunday	May 4th	First of Chereau RING on A.B.C. Television *
Wednesday	May 14th	Annual General Meeting Print Room, 141 Dowling St Woolloomooloo - 6.30 to 7.45 pm
Friday	May 23rd	Annual Dinner. Madison Room, Southern Cross Hotel, 7.30 pm. pre-dinner drinks - 8.00 pm dinner.
Sunday	June 29th	Guest of Honour: Mr Ronald Dowd. Recital by David Parker. * Associate Artist Marie Van Hove 9 Lady Davidson Circuit, Forestville 2.30 for 3.00 pm.

* See details in Newsletter.

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If a red dot appears on the front page, your 1985-86 subscription, due on April 1, is overdue, and if not paid in 30 days your membership will lapse.

The President's report is to be read at the Annual General Meeting and will appear in the June Newsletter.

'REDISCOVERING MYTHOLOGY.'

This is the subject of the lecture David Wansbrough is to deliver at the Goethe Institute on 2nd April.

Mr Wansbrough, who is a fellow of the International Academy of Poets, promises an evening's instructive entertainment - not the least bit dull.

At the same time Wagner was exploring the verities of the Germanic past, English speaking poets were being influenced by Celtic, Saxon and Norse verse - forms and rhythms. An evening not to be missed.

Supper will be served at the completion of the talk. There will be no charge to members or their friends and once more we are most grateful to the Goethe Institute for making their home available to us again.

Kindly phone 358 1919 "during office hours" if you are able to attend.

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THE ANNUAL DINNER

Those who attended the Annual Dinner at the Southern Cross Hotel last year will remember with pleasure what a happy occasion it was, and for all the reasons that made it so we have chosen again to hold our "Birthday Celebrations" at the Southern Cross.

We are delighted to have as our Guest of Honour Mr Ronald Dowd. After a most successful career that has spanned many years both here and abroad Mr Dowd has now retired. He will be remembered for his interpretation of Tristan, Lohengrin and Taunhäuser, so we especially look forward to meeting this renowned singer who is one of the corner - stones in the building of Australian opera.

During the evening the Guessing Competition will be drawn and the winner announced.

1st Prize	2 tickets to first Australian Opera Production of Benjamin Britten's Opera "Peter Grimes"
2nd Prize	\$50 Gift Voucher for "Record Collector" Shop.
3rd Prize	Limited Edition "Parsifal" Plate. Value \$25.00

Raffle Tickets: \$1.00 per ticket.
\$5.00 book of five.

The cost of the dinner at \$30.00 per head includes pre-dinner drinks but not the dinner wines. These can be ordered from the menu.

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WAGNER ON A.B.C.

A.B.C. T.V. begins on Sunday May 4th, 9.15 pm in simulcast with A.B.C. FM, the Patrice Chereau controversial version of the "RING", conducted by Pierre Boulez and recorded in the Festspielhaus, Bayreuth.

The complete cycle will be screened over ten successive weeks - not completely satisfying for true Wagner lovers, but a least a start! I have viewed the tapes and although the interpretation leaves a lot to be desired they certainly create a fantastic theatrical event. Well worth viewing.

Richard King.

Wagner on A.B.C. continued.

The B.B.C. first screened the Chereau RING in this way, Act by Act and the following year repeated it in the more satisfactory way, one uninterrupted opera each week. I suggest that members who have enjoyed this first television RING in Australia, write to the A.B.C. and say so. Make it known that Wagner has a widening audience in Australia and express your hope that we will be able to experience this magnificent production as it was intended.

Ed.

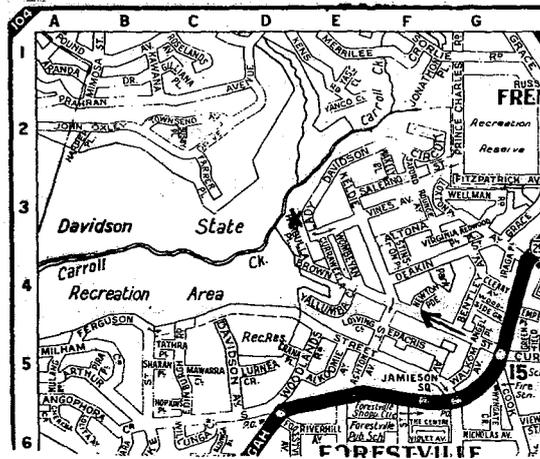
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RECITAL

The tenor, David Parker, and associate artist Marie Van Hove, both from the Canberra School of Music, are to present a programme of Wagner, Liszt and Strauss in the studio of their home in Forestville.

Mr Parker was brought to Australia from Wales 17 years ago to be principal tenor for Australian Opera, a post he held for three years. He is currently the head of the Department of Vocal Studies at Canberra and as such is about to embark on an "Opera Study Tour" at the invitation of the West German Government which will take him to the Opera Houses and Colleges of Music in Cologne, Bonn, Berlin, Munich and Stuttgart. He will be accompanied by Moffat Oxenbold, Stuart Challenger, Richard Divall, Peter Birch (Musica Viva - Melbourne) and Ken McKenzie-Forbes on a hard working tour that does allow for seeing a few performances of 'Dutchman', Lohengrin, and Parsifal.

Miss Marie Van Hove, for many years official accompanist for the A.B.C., is now vocal coach/repetiteur in Canberra and will take over her husband's duties in his absence. Her prodigious programme for the year includes conducting Stabat Mater at St Christopher's Cathedral for Easter, conducting La Boheme in August, with David Parker as director/producer and together performing the complete song cycles of Schubert.



We are assured of an afternoon of fine music in congenial surroundings and as numbers are limited we ask you to phone 35 8199 (bus. hours) as soon as possible.

Admission \$6.00 includes afternoon tea and coffee. Gregory map reference -72D3. 9 Lady Davidson Circuit, Forestville. 2.30 pm for 3.00 pm.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

Nance Grant M.D.E.
Malvern, Vic.

I wish to thank the Wagner Society for the beautiful flowers I received from you on "Opening Night" of "Lohengrin". I do appreciate your thoughts. The role of Ortrud has been a real challenge for me as I usually sing the virtuous roles.

It is a marvellous production and a very high standard of singing. I'm sure you will enjoy it.

1.12.85.

Christa Lehmann
Abbotsford. N.S.W.

Just a note to say how thrilled I was to receive the lovely Victorian posy of flowers from the (N.S.W.) Society in Melbourne.

I can't tell you what an "ELEKTRA-fying" evening that first concert was. The audience was overwhelmed and wonderfully receptive.

I look forward to seeing you all on 23rd and feel a great deal of sadness at the reasons behind the cancellation of the 26th - lack of interest! I find the Australian public inconceivable at times, and can only say it will be their loss. The second performance in Melbourne was not so good - musically - however the response was the same. I do hope the A.B.C. record the Sydney one as well, and perhaps edit all three, but of course that would mean extra work, wouldn't it?

Once again, my sincere thanks.

18.11.85.

Jean Whitehouse
Kirribilli. N.S.W.

As a recent participant of the tour to "Lohengrin" in Melbourne, I wish to say thank-you to Committee of the Wagner Society. I have heard that some of the committee gave up days (and nights) of their free time to organise transport, accommodation, food and water. It was all a tremendous success. The seats at the Opera were wonderful. It was good to be entertained by the Melbourne Wagner Society with drinks during the first interval. The production was truly worthwhile, the good points outweighing the bad by a long chalk, but as Joseph (Ferfaglia) said, it was Wagner himself who won in the end - the music was superb.

It was exciting to be in a new theatre with very modern stage equipment (and a wonderful curtain). The depth of the stage was almost "mind boggling".

The bus was extremely comfortable and what other bus trip would have included a video of the Chereau Ring?

Many thanks! When and where are we going next time?

9.12.85.

Penny Scantlebury
Ealing. London.

I would be most grateful if you would give me the opportunity to make some personal comments about Michael Edgeloe's article, 'Wagnerian Frustrations in London', which appeared in your December issue - to correct one or two inaccuracies, and also to respond to his description of Pauline Tinsley's recital for this Society.

Letters to the Editor Continued.

Firstly, the audio-visual presentation of 'The Rhinegold' at the South Bank was cancelled for technical reasons, not industrial action as he suggests; and Linda Esther Gray is not visiting Australia in 1986, although she may do so at a later date.

Secondly, it is rather optimistic to expect major Wagnerian performances to coincide with a five-week visit to London (but a nice idea that we should enjoy such frequency!), so I think Mr Edgeloe should feel quite pleased to have seen Welsh National Opera's fine 'Gotterdammerung' (the only British Ring production new this decade) in Southampton, which is but a two-hour drive from London.

Thirdly, to condemn Pauline Tinsley's recital as 'a disaster' is unfair. The reasons he gives are not artistic (apart from finding the singing 'unpleasantly loud' - but does he expect an underpowered Wagnerian soprano?! Could he not have relocated himself a more favourable position? The balance between soloist and piano was ideal where I sat and, as he says, the hall was not full), and seem to be based on his expectations of programme content and attendance figures. It was clear from our publicity that Miss Tinsley stepped in at very short notice, and there was no time to provide a full programme (although free programme sheets were provided which contained some information). In view of her imminent departure to New Orleans to sing Ortrud it would have been churlish to expect Miss Tinsley to make explanatory announcements for every item (some of which are standard operatic repertoire anyway) as well as singing such a full programme of demanding works. A misunderstanding with the Hall authorities resulted in all the ticket money being returned to applicants on Miss Gray's withdrawal. We did not expect to fill the Hall (which I have never seen sold out, even for the likes of Jessye Norman or Margaret Price) and, in the circumstances, we feel a sense of pride in drawing the numbers we did to what I've understood from other people they found to be an enjoyable evening. Our events are not necessarily intended to make a profit; although this was organised as a fund-raising event, it was decided that the prime consideration should be to carry through the event to reward the hard work of the organiser, especially as we had already advertised the original artist quite widely and there would inevitably be one or two people turning up on the night expecting to attend a recital. Rather than a disaster, it is some achievement to secure a major artist at short notice and to have her perform such an interesting and enjoyable series of works, including her own first performance of The Wesendonck Lieder!

11.2.86.

Ken MacKenzie-Forbes
General Manager, The Victoria State Opera

Thank you for your letter concerning the very generous donation of \$7,000 from The Wagner Society towards The Victoria State Opera's production of 'Lohengrin' in November/December last year. As I indicated to Dr Hansen when we met at the first night, the company is deeply grateful for this support. We were pleased to be able to show this in a more tangible way by entertaining the members of the Society, who had travelled down from Sydney to attend the final performance of 'Lohengrin' on December 7.

We have arranged to credit the Society's donation in our programmes and brochures during this season and will of course ensure that this also appears in any future revivals of the production. Given the magnificent public and critical response to 'Lohengrin' we are confident it won't be too many seasons before it is seen again in Melbourne.

As you are no doubt also aware, The Australian Opera are currently planning to include to production in their 1987 Sydney season, and I have asked The Australian Opera to credit your support in their programmes for 'Lohengrin'.

Enclosed is the receipt you require for accounting purposes.

With best wishes.

27.2.86.

THE RING IN PARIS

From Dr Leonard Hanson in Paris January/February 1986.

After 30 years absence from the theatre, and fifty years from the concert platform, Der Ring des Nibelungen has just been presented by the Nouvel Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France as part of its 10th anniversary celebration. The venue for the first cycle was the Theatre des Champs Elysees, a classic Art Deco style theatre with delicate Pre-Raphaelite frescos in the foyer and around the high dome of the auditorium. The large orchestra was distributed down in steps from the back of the deep stage which had been blocked off with flats decorated with "trompe l'oeil" columns to match those of the proscenium. The stage was extended over the existing orchestra pit so that all the instruments on this gently sloping ramp were visible to the audience even from the stalls*. There was little space left for the soloist, but they managed to make their perfectly timed entries and exits without mishap, and no space for floral decoration but this was compensated for by the presentation of enormous bouquets at the conclusion of each night.

The conductor Marek Janowski already has quite a reputation with Wagner, one which has recently been consolidated with his recording of the full "Ring Cycle" with the Dresden State Orchestra. Small in stature but ample in energy he held his orchestra's and audience's attention throughout the entire four evenings. It was obvious much preparation had gone into these performances. Indeed, in 37 days there were 96 rehearsals, representing 26,000 hours work for the 140 musicians, 26 soloists and choir of 120. Some rotation of musicians was possible thus relieving the strain on, and allowing extra preparation for, certain overworked instruments.

DAS RHEINGOLD Friday the 31st of January 1986. From the very outset it was evident that this was going to be a performance to be reckoned with. Twice Janowski lifted his baton only to lower it again because of some slight disturbing noise from the audience. At the third attempt - in complete silence - the famous "E" flat major cord materialised, and soon developed into the rather rapidly flowing Rhein music. The Rhein Maidens in their turn sang their joyful phrases at a brisk pace and in no time at all Alberich, sung by Hermann Becht, had made off with the gold. The orchestral passage leading to the second scene, at once magical and majestic, was abruptly cut by the firm voice of Waltraud Meier, a very sharp-tongued Fricka. In contrast Roger Roloff gave a beautifully mellow and controlled version of the young Wotan. The reliable Matti Salminen and Matthias Holle gave solid accounts of the giants, with Cheryl Studer a vibrant Freia. It was Peter Schreier however, as Loge, who provided the greatest pleasure of the evening, with not only a beautifully sung but also well acted portrayal of that slippery trickster. Yes, even in a concert performance, a good singer can express the character of the role with body language.

The orchestra punctuated the story line forcefully and with utmost precision, and was yet capable of exquisite tenderness without losing impetus or becoming cloying. The performance was rounded off with a magnificently pompous entry into Valhalla. It had taken only two hours thirteen minutes, but because of its intensity and concentration of action never seemed rushed. These generally faster times were to continue throughout the Cycle.

* where we sat as part of the Paris Wagner Society's theatre party.

DIE WALKURE, Sunday, 2nd February, 1986. In contrast to the rather boisterous and full-throated playing of Das Rheingold, Die Walkure was approached with great delicacy, so that the large orchestra sounded at times like a small ensemble. The duet between Siegmund (James King) and Sieglinde (Teresa Zylis-Gara) was memorable for the contrast between his great heldentenor and her light Italianate lyric soprano. In fact, of all singers in this Cycle, she alone seemed incapable of matching the others in volume, but as she kept the character of Sieglinde fragile and vulnerable throughout, this was not a drawback to her performance.

Matthias Holle as Hunding is now far stronger and more commanding in the role than when last seen at Bayreuth in 1983, and must have one of the best deep bass voices

DIE WALKURE Continued.

in the opera world today. Donald McIntyre gave his excellent portrayal of Wotan the one recalls from the Boulez-Chereau Ring, and Waltraud Meier was once more a formidable Fricka. Although her mask and body remained expressionless her voice conveyed great emotion, with a beautifully modulated middle range but with some strain and vibrato in the higher tessitura.

It was the entry of Ute Vinzing (Brunnhilde) that provided the greatest surprise of the evening. Dressed in a gown of shimmering metallic fabric, and shunning the music stand provided for her, she gave out a voice of enormous strength and power, never to be covered by the huge orchestra behind her. The emotion in the voice was accompanied by suitable body gestures, and with her general air of great confidence in the role she showed herself to be one of the great Brunnhildes of our time. So intense was the interplay of voices and orchestra at the climactic "Leb' wohl" near the end of the opera that there was hardly a dry eye in the theatre.

No review of this opera would be complete without a word about the Valkyries in Act III, for rarely does one find 8 sopranos of such uniformly high standard and strength. Individually each voice was a delight to the ear, but collectively the volume and intensity of sound was such that it would have put fear into the heart of the bravest warrior.

SIEGFRIED Wednesday, 5th February '86. If nothing else, a concert performance of an opera is an insight to the genius of the composer, whose music is too often these days only heard on recordings or from an orchestra pit. To see the written notes executed on the instruments is a revolution, and the preludes to the three acts of Siegfried are no exception. The magical interplay of leitmotifs flit from one section of the orchestra to another, sometimes feather-light, othertimes with enormous vigor.

Graham Clark was an excellent Mime, living every word of his script, and singing with great subtlety and wit. He had to be good, because he was pitted against two great singers, Donald McIntyre continuing his role of the Wanderer, and William Johns a heldentenor destined to carry on the tradition of the great Siegfrieds of the past. With a beauty, control and facility of such a big voice he has also the ability to sustain his performance without signs of strain. There was no fatigue even as he was following the wood-bird (sung delightfully, but rather distractingly high up in a rear balcony, by Susan Roberts) and bringing the long Act II to its energetic close. Siegfried's awakening of Brunnhilde (Ute Vinzing again) and the love duet, with these two strong singers and the extraordinarily brilliant orchestral accompaniment was a spine-tingling moment.

GOTTERDAMMERUNG Saturday, 8th February '86. The trio of Norns, Cornelia Wulkopf, Waltraud Meier and Sophia Larson recounted their tale with great clarity and in strong clear voices. Nor was there any disappointment in the Dawn scene with Siegfried and Brunnhilde, their voices blending beautifully as in the previous concert, and the orchestra bringing great excitement to the climax of Siegfried's departure.

Act I brought yet another new singer on stage - Heinz Jurgen Demitz in the role of Gunther. His tall and youthfull features physically suited the part, and his voice was no disappointment, being equally strong and expressive and a good match for Hermann Becht's experienced Albericht. It also blended very well with William Johns' full and open tenor voice in the Blood-Brotherhood scene. The Guttrune as sung by Sophia Larson was a sheer delight - where are all these new singers coming from?

Waltraud Meier continued her strong performances, this time in the role of Waltraute, and Matti Salminnen made his reappearance, in Act II, as Alberich, with great impact. It needed only Ute Vinzing's grand voice to join this strong cast on the stage to bring this act to a tempestuous conclusion. Some people may comment on her facial mannerisms or on her excessive emphasis of final consonants, but technically her voice, though a little heavy for this role at times, invites little criticism. Her achievement in singing through the three nights without a score or any prompting was as heroic as the role she portrayed. Similarly one could pick minor faults with the orchestra - missed notes in the brass, poorly timed entries etc., but they were rare and lost in the overall impact of a first class orchestra playing under a conductor of genius.