

The Wagner Society

IN NEW SOUTH WALES INC.

Registered Office: 141 Dowling Street, Woolloomooloo 2011
Telephone enquiries: 358 1919 (Bus. Hours)



Newsletter

No.28 September, 1987.

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HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS: Mr WERNER BAER M.B.E.
Miss RITA HUNTER C.B.E.
Miss LEONIE RYSANEK
Professor MICHAEL EWANS

COMING EVENTS

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20th.	Goethe Institute "Der Freischutz on C.D. by Carl Maria Von Weber.	1.00-5.00p.m.
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26th.	Opera House "LOHENGRIN"- Performance SUPPER - Northern Foyer (optional)	7.00p.m.
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18th.	Goethe Institute Wagner - Shorter works incl. Siegfried Idyll & Wesendonck Lieder	1.00-5.00p.m.
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1st.	1/22 Wolseley Rd, Point Piper Muriel Cohen & Rosamund Plummer Recital on piano & flute. Tickets: Non-member \$7.00 Member \$5.00 Concession \$3.00	3.00-5.30p.m.
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15th.	Goethe Institute 'Die Fien' on C.D. by Richard Wagner.	1.00-5.00p.m.
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13th.	Goethe Institute CHRISTMAS PARTY	2.30-6.00p.m.

COMMITTEE.

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THE RECEPTION FOR PROFESSOR MICHAEL HAMPE

SUNDAY, JULY 15th.

Professor Hampe who has been the Director of Cologne Opera for the last twelve years, and whose production of "Tristan and Isolde" has been hailed as a triumph wherever seen, has been in Sydney to direct Rossini's "Cenerentola" and also to prepare for Australian Opera's 1988 production of "Die Meistersinger". So a little more than a year ahead of this new production it was most interesting to gain a glimpse into the mind of this fine director.

Rossini and Wagner would seem to inhabit separate worlds, though they did in fact meet in Paris in 1860 and the conversation which ranged widely was recorded by Edmond Michotte.*

If the link between Rossini and Wagner seems tenuous, we might well ask what Meistersingers has to do with the arrival of prisoners in Australia 200 years ago.

Michael Hampe's fondness for this work is undisguised and he acknowledges his good fortune in having worked with the two greatest Hans Sachs of our time - Theo Adam in Cologne and Berndt Weikel in Florence.

So how does he connect Meistersinger with Australia 1988? Professor Hampe draws the analogy of Nurnberg as the model of a society endeavouring to balance the various opposing forces within it. The old versus the new - the conservative versus the revolutionary ideas. He sees Meistersingers representing a great emanation of the human spirit, a comedy neatly avoiding tragedy which demonstrates how much labour and human greatness it takes to bring these opposites together. A comedy full of the wisdom of people living together, trying to achieve that balance which enhances a Society, he believes to be singularly appropriate to be performed for a young continent celebrating its 200th Anniversary.

Questions addressed to Professor Hampe at the end of his talk were answered with such generosity and with such thought provoking insight to the way he works that all present on that Sunday became aware that they are going to see a Meistersinger interpreted with great humanity and produced with what one critic called Professor Hampe's "informed sense of style".

A member of the audience captured the feelings of us all when he said he is looking forward to seeing Meistersinger "for the first time" though he had seen it many times before.

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* Copies of "Richard Wagner's Visit to Rossini" by E. Michotte. Published by the University of Chicago Press 1968 can be read at the Library of the Wagner Society.

SUBSCRIPTIONS! IF YOUR SUBSCRIPTION HAS NOT BEEN PAID THIS IS YOUR LAST NEWSLETTER.

LOHENGRIN SEMINAR.

Sunday, 9th August was voted by many members and visitors as our most successful function to date. It was the occasion of the Seminar on the Opera Lohengrin and its forthcoming production in Sydney.

One hundred and seven people finally made the audience at the Goethe Institute to hear our speakers - Dr. Leonard Hansen (Cuts and Omissions in Performances), Mr. Dennis Hennig (A Musical Analysis of Lohengrin) and Professor Andrew Riemer (Myths of the Holy Grail and the Swan Knight Legend). Then followed a panel discussion featuring Stuart Challender (Conductor for Australian Opera) and Elizabeth Connell (a well known Ortrud - back home to perform Medea) to join the speakers.

Virginia Lamb added greatly to our enjoyment by singing a Swan's Farewell composed by Wagner but (wisely) not used.

The Committee is gratified by the response from those who attended, many asking for more intellectual stimulation of this nature.

There is a considerable amount of work that goes into the planning, organisation, catering, preparation and cleaning up involved in a function of this kind, but no amount of work is sufficient if the lecturers' efforts had not excited our imaginations and increased our knowledge. Mr. Hennig, Professor Riemer and their partners will be guests of the Society on the opening night of Lohengrin with our grateful thanks.

We again remind members of the great co-operation we receive from the Management of The Goethe Institute in the use of the venue with its splendid Auditorium, catering and dining facilities, which greatly eases any problems.

This very rewarding day was concluded with a reception welcoming home Elizabeth Connell where we enjoyed the fine quality Moet and Chandon champagne made available to us as a donation. We are most grateful to the company for this gesture.

Next year, all willing and the interest sustained, we have plans to do something similar around the production of Die Meistersingers.

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Some Reactions.

"The seminar on Sunday was superb. The day went too fast. Thanks to the Committee for organising such a wonderful event. Professor Riemer was elating - could we possibly organise such a day again with him speaking on the Niebelungenlied?"
JAN NORRIS.

"A most enjoyable and informative day"
ROY PATEMAN - University of Sydney.

"I found every session entertaining, challenging and informative".
JIM McGLADE.

LOHENGRIN - SYDNEY CIRCA 1916.

A review of a previous Sydney production of 'Lohengrin', discovered by a member of the Wagner Society shows that some problems never go away. (We print excerpts only). There is no date on the cutting, but the Gonzalez Company toured here in 1916.

Last night the Fuller-Gonzalez Company at the St. James Theatre ventured into the domain of Wagnerian opera, in a production of "Lohengrin", but the experiment was of dubious value. To begin with, Wagner wrote not

only for his principals and chorus, but also for his orchestra; and to hear, as one heard last night, the orchestral themes treated feebly in many cases, and with inadequate colour, was to hear the opera only as a shadow of its real self. Signor Giovanni Gonsalez, the conductor, did amazingly well with the material at his command, but at his best, he was unable to overcome the deficiency of colour in the score. It is true that "Lohengrin" depends very largely for its success upon pure lyricism, since its melodic charm is much more decided than that of any of his other operas; but, at the same time, the orchestral themes are a factor in the production of this work. Therefore, in such a scene as that of the advent of Lohengrin, coming into the presence of King Henry on the plains of Scheldt, the orchestra should be seething with excitement. In this performance, it was really feeble.

This is only one case in point. The scene of the duel between Lohengrin and Teramund, the Bridal Procession, and Lohengrin's Farewell, might be quoted to similar effect, as proving the difficulty of undertaking this opera without full orchestral resources. The trumpet calls for the champion were somewhat shadowy, as the trumpeters were too obviously reliant upon the orchestra for their tone. In the same way, in the kemenate scene of the second act, which in the early stages was far too dark, the four trumpets heralding the Bridal Procession were so badly managed that the audience laughed.

In this production there was no balcony for Elsa's rapturous reflections in the early part of the scene, and Miss Flor was obliged to stand at a window, the sashes of which were so obviously of cardboard, or some such material, that they fluttered in the wind as the procession of attendant maidens passed by later before descending the stairway on the way to the church.

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WAGNER AND THE CRITIC—A CARICATURE.

METROPOLITAN AUDITION.

The New York Metropolitan Auditions held in the Opera House on August 23rd were won by 26 year old Mezzo-Soprano, Roxane Hislop of N.S.W. All six finalists were of a very high standard, although, in my opinion, the most exciting voice belonged to Tenor Barry Ryan whose chosen aria "Wintersturme" was sung with all the hallmarks of a heldem-tenor. His performance was the only one to draw bravos from a critical audience. Watch for the name of Barry Ryan.

(Ed).

Frank Johnson joins Marx in a night at the opera—Karl, that is, not Groucho

From Bayreuth to Beirut and back

Ronn

According to Wagner, Act Two of his *Flying Dutchman* takes place in the 18th century in the big room of a Norwegian sea captain's house, and opens with a chorus of women working at their spindles.

According to the recent new production at Covent Garden, Act Two takes place at some unclear period in the Norwegian sea captain's factory or sweatshop, and opens with a chorus of women working on an assembly line under strip lighting. On reading that the British critics and audience were outraged about it, we in West Germany thought to ourselves: if that Covent Garden audience lived where we lived, they would be lucky if the entire opera had not taken place on an assembly line under strip lighting.

That, it might be objected, would have been a trifle too far-fetched. The second of the three acts can just about be made to take place in a factory, since it is supposed to be somewhere indoors where women are working. But the first act takes place in a rocky cove. And the third is in a Norwegian harbour.

But West Germany opera directors do not recognize such geographical restraints. In the Munich Opera's feminist *Dutchman*, which dates from 1981, the entire opera takes place in that big room of the Norwegian sea captain's house. Moreover, these are not the rude surroundings of simple, 18th century Scandinavian fisherfolk. It is a well-upholstered, draped and curtained mid-19th century drawing room, with upright piano and brass table lamps.

The opera, it may be remembered, is about a Dutch sea captain doomed to wander the seas for eternity unless he can find a woman faithful to him unto death.

Every seven years, he is allowed to come on land to look for her. Berthing for one such shore leave, he meets the Norwegian captain's ship sheltering from a storm. Hearing that the Norwegian has a daughter, he gets himself invited home.

The girl, Senta, by useful coincidence, has long been obsessed with the legend of the Flying Dutchman. She soon abandons her dull betrothed, the huntsman Erik, and promises eternal fidelity to the Dutchman. But seeing her and the pleading Erik together, the Dutchman mistakenly thinks she has been unfaithful already. He returns to his ship. But she proves her devotion, and so redeems him from his wanderings on the seas, by drowning herself.

"The room of the total plot: an archetypical living room, at first irritating, undefined, then partly recognized by the forcefully-entering (*hineindrängenden*) Dutchman as a wish-room," explains the Munich production's director, Herr Herbert Wernicke, in a helpful programme note. "The Dutchman is driven by this one wish, to be able to go back to the society that he has left behind. Firmly integrated into this structure are Senta's father and his sailors, who represent the world of men... She wants to flee these bourgeois constraints. She longs for a person who does not regiment her, who is not stupid, someone who does not want to bind her in egotistical love, like Erik does."

"Her freedom-dream is sacrificing herself for a man she will love unto death. The Senta-figure is a typical example of a woman who before the mid-19th century carried within herself the growing emancipation process. But this emancipation could not take place because only the principles of the

world of men were accepted as the standard...."

Herr Wernicke does not explain how the "Senta-figure" could much help the growing emancipation process from the principles of the world of men by promising to be faithful to one unto death and, on being accused on slender evidence of infidelity, drowning herself on a man's behalf. Mrs Pankhurst's advice to her would have been that, if she wanted to aid the growing emancipation process, she should do something constructive such as chaining herself to the Norwegian parliament's railings. Miss Greer's advice would have been that, while she saw nothing wrong in principle with making off with one of them for a night or two, experience suggested that Dutch seamen never stayed mysterious for long, and that Senta would be wise to ditch him before she ended up serving him his lunch in their retirement windmill.

It might seem that, for the Munich director, an even bigger problem than making the *Dutchman* be about feminism is how to get at least one sailing ship into a mid-19th century drawing room. Not at all. The ropes, and gang-plank, arrive through the double doors, closely followed by a boisterous crew. It is surprising that more damage is not done to the furniture.

Senta's father wears a fur-collared overcoat and top hat and smokes a cigar, even when he is supposed to be captaining his ship. But, then, in this production, he does represent capitalism. During Senta's wild ballad about the Dutchman legend, one of the spinning ladies thoughtfully hands round coffee on a tray.

This kind of thing is associated by British opera goers with East German directors or "Marxist

opera" because, when such productions were first put on by British companies a few years ago, the directors did seem to come from East Germany. The moment from which many of us date the genre was when the curtain rose on a production by Harry Kupfer in the late 1970s—I think of a work by Richard Strauss—to reveal a set dominated by a huge phallus, occasioning, from one male in the stalls to his gentleman friend, the loud whisper: "Anyone we know, duckie?"

So one's first visit to an opera in East Germany itself was preceded by some excitement. Amazingly, the curtain of Beethoven's *Fidelio* at Leipzig rose to reveal that the work had been set in an 18th, or early 19th, century Spanish prison. It was amazing because that was where Beethoven set it. Nowadays, it is reasonable to expect it to be set in Auschwitz or, to show that we are all prisoners of consumerism, Marks and Spencer.

Performances of other works in East German opera houses confirmed this swing to the right. Then came the realization: Stalin, the father of the country, was a conservative on arts policy. Opera in the infant East German state was inspired by "socialist realism" whose most famous exponent was the late Walter Felsenstein at the East Berlin Komische Oper. In practice, socialist realism was not much different from capitalist realism. The basic idea was that such things as Norwegian coves and harbours were to look it. This did not rule out phalluses, but their deployment would be dictated by considerations of scale.

True, the East German directors who departed from these principles were Felsenstein's young followers. Where, then, did they get their ideas? There were non-

realist opera productions in West Germany, notably at the great Kroll Oper in Berlin. From what it is possible to read about them, none seems to have resembled the present Munich *Dutchman*. The East German and East German-inspired directors, whom Britain and West Germany have come to know so well, would doubtless depict themselves as heirs of the Weimar *avant garde*. But really they have picked up their tricks from the late-1960s western spoken theatre, with its weakness for any old progressivism. And progressivism is only tolerated up to a point in East Germany.

Meanwhile, in the West, the cause flourishes. In Frankfurt, Aida, which Verdi set in ancient Egypt, opens in a present-day museum of ancient Egypt. The tenor hero, whom Verdi thought was an Egyptian general, is the museum administrator. He first appears, working late and seated at his desk, trying to get through the eternal paper work that is the destiny of all who must lead an arts bureaucracy. The high priest, Ramphis, is a sort of Lord Goodman figure, perhaps from the Arts Council.

Elsewhere, it is now hard to find a *Salome* that is not set in West Beirut or does not contain Yassir Arafat. Carmen tends to be a Sandinista girl-soldier, Lohengrin an astronaut. In the new *Fidelio* at Kiel, the villain, Pizzaro, wears evening dress, but so do the soldiers under his command. That means they represent a decadent social order. In progressive opera production, evening dress always means decadence.

Over in the East, much of this has been abandoned, possibly because audiences might get the wrong idea about which kind of system was being unflatteringly depicted.

BAYREUTH 1988.

The Society will be making application to Bayreuth again for 1988 as indicated at the Annual General Meeting and any tickets received will be allocated by ballot, with a maximum of two to each successful applicant. A single member has the option of taking one or two.

Advice from Bayreuth is not expected until January 1988 with the ballot taking place soon after that. You will be notified immediately if successful and results will be published in the subsequent Newsletter.

Members should complete the form at the end of the Newsletter and return to: 141 Dowling St., Woolloomooloo N.S.W. 2011.

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VIRGINIA LAMB A PROFILE

A burgeoning Wagnerian voice in our midst is sure to raise hope in Australian musical circles and all encouragement and support must go to Virginia Lamb.

The Wagner Society congratulates Virginia on her recent success in The Australian National Eisteddfod in which she won the Qantas prize - a trip to New Zealand. Most interesting was the comment of Richard Morphew, a judge for the Eisteddfod, that Virginia Lamb would "end up being a splendid Wagnerian".

For the past three years Virginia has been studying in Germany with Professor Kaiser Bremer, the renowned Wagner specialist, who has shaped the voices of Elizabeth Connell, and Gwyneth Jones, and she wants to return to Germany especially to study the role of Elsa with him.

In the meantime, The Metropolitan Opera Auditions and auditions for the ESSO Young Artists of Australia and Western Australian opera are foremost in her mind as she currently works with Australian Opera and Lyric Opera of Queensland.

We wish this young artist every success in her career and will take a keen interest in the development of her Wagnerian voice.

We would like to see more young
Musicians like Virginia come forward,
and make their talents known for our
mutual benefit.

COMING EVENTS.

DER FREISCHUTZ. After hearing from Mr. Dennis Hennig (Lohengrin Seminar 9/8/87) how much Wagner admired this Weber opera it is very appropriate that we should be listening to it so soon. The cast in this performance includes Rene Kollo (Max), Hildegard Behrens (Agathe) with Helen Donath and Kurt Moll to mention but a few of the great voices. Rafael Kubelik is directing the chorus and orchestra of Bavarian Radio.

RECITAL. A Sunday afternoon recital is to be given at the house of His Honour Judge Frank McGrath and Dr. Amy McGrath by one of Australia's greatest interpreters of Romantic Keyboard music, Miss Muriel Cohen, assisted by flautist, Miss Rosamund Plummer of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. In the programme will be works by - Liszt, Debussy, Bach and a composition by Dulcie Holland for flute and piano being given its first public performance.

Admission will include light refreshments at the end of the programme.

Tickets	Members	\$15.00	
	Non-members	\$7.00	Bookings: 3323926
	Concession	\$3.00	(Evening)

DIE FEEN. Only occasionally do we hear Wanger's first attempt at opera. Its acceptance by the Leipzig theatre was continually postponed and its production in fact, was delayed for more than 50 years.

'Die Feen' unashamedly adhered to the German Romantic tradition of Weber in subject matter and musical language and perhaps not until 'Das Liebesverbot' did a certain individuality and technical fluency develop. In this performance, recorded in 1983 at Bayerische, Staatsoper, Munich, we hear again Kurt Moll (Fairy King) and Linda Esther Gray (Ada) supported by a truly international cast with the chorus and orchestra of Bayerischen Rundfunks conducted by Wolfgang Sawallisch.

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RITA HUNTER & ALBERTO REMEDIOS AT THE SEYMOUR

On October 7th Opera Mode presents Rita Hunter and Alberto Remedios in a recital of Verdi & Wagner.

Time: 8.00p.m. Tickets: \$30.00 - \$24.00 (concession).

In the belief that Sydney needs an alternative to the traditional fare of the major production houses, Opera Mode was formed with the express purpose of promoting contemporary opera in all forms and Australian in particular.

Opera Mode is supported by some funding from The Ministry of the Arts, Corporate Sponsors and a growing number of followers.

In November, The Rape of Lucreta (Benjamin Britten) is opening at the Thomas Mann Theatre, 132 Chalmers St., Sydney.

All enquiries to Mr. Peter Binning. 356 4452
or 14 Crown St., Woolloomooloo.

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WAGNER AND THE NUMBER 13

Numerology, the study of the mystical significance of numbers and the use of numbers to divine the future has a long and complicated history. The theory behind the subject is based on the Pythagorean idea that all things can be expressed in numerical terms because they are ultimately reducible to numbers. Consider the case of Richard Wagner and the number 13. There are 13 letters in his name. He was born in 1813, and the sum of digits of this year is 13. He composed 13 operas. The full score of Tannhauser was completed on 13 April 1845, and the first performance of the Paris version took place on 13 March 1861. Also in 1861 Wagner saw Lohengrin for the first time, 13 years after its completion. Die Walkure was first performed on 26 June 1870, and 26 is twice 13, while excerpts had been heard in a Vienna concert on 26 December 1862. The first Ring cycle started on 13 August 1876. Parisfal was premiered on 26 July 1882, and finally Wagner died on 13 February 1883, a year whose first and last digits form 13. Can these 13s really be dismissed as mere coincidences?

THE GOETHE INSTITUTE

We have all, at one time or another enjoyed the benefits of the Goethe Institute, either on C.D. Sundays, receptions, film showings, talks and by the time you read this, our second seminar, and we all know how fortunate we are in being able to use the upper level for Wagner Society events. But downstairs is another world of cultural facilities available to Wagner Society members that you may have only glimpsed through the glass doors on the way upstairs. There are German language classes, the latest magazines including OPERNWELT, cassettes and a well-stocked Library. Give them a ring on 3287411 and they will be happy to give you more information.

While on the subject of the Goethe Institute may we reinforce the need for punctuality for all functions at the Institute. As explained before, we are responsible for security whilst we use the building and cannot leave the doors unlocked. Remember if you are late, you take someone away from the auditorium and disturb the concentration for all. Please try to be on time.

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ANNUAL DINNER PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs taken at the Annual Dinner are now available at the Richard King Gallery, 141 Dowling St., Woolloomooloo. If you are interested Richard would appreciate a phone call to arrange a suitable time for you to see them and buy a memento of that happy evening.

Ph: 358 1919 (B.H.).

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TALK BY JOHN WREGG.

Those who came to the recording afternoon of July 19th at the Goethe Institute to hear Schoenberg's Gurrelieder were also given a talk by Mr. John Wregg, producer with The Australian Opera Co. and winner of the 1986 Bayreuth Scholarship.

John related his experiences and thoughts while attending many performances throughout Europe and the United Kingdom. He was very fortunate in having the opportunity for side by side work with eminent people such as Götz Friedrich (Berlin Opera), Hanz Neugebauer (Cologne) and Harry Kupfer (Bayreuth).

All of his discussion was delivered to us in an entertaining, casual style which pleased the audience and initiated many questions.

We thank John for coming along and feel assured that his additional experiences will pay dividends for all opera lovers in future Australian productions.

POSITIONS VACANT

Our Treasurer and Secretary will be on extended leave for most of 1988 and we are asking from the membership for anyone with secretarial and accounting abilities to contact us for discussion about joining the committee and to liaise with the present bearers of these two vital offices.

LETTER TO THE EDITORSolti's Ring of The Nibelung.

I would like to express my thoughts of the re-issue of the complete Ring recording conducted by Georg Solti with The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra et al.

These performances were originally recorded and released on L.P. records during the mid to late 1960 years. They were amongst the best selling operatic sets in the classical repertoire and the achievement of the total Ring cycle was hailed as "The Recording Event of the Century".

I do not wish to comment on the artistic merits compared to subsequent sets such as those conducted by Karl Bohm, Marik Janowski, Herbert von Karajan and Pierre Boulez as personal preferences for singers and conductors are always strong and rival versions all have their merits and shortcomings.

Now that the resources of the Decca Record Co. have transferred the original tapes to digital form for release on compact disc I claim that this must surely be the re-mastering event of the century.

Throughout all of these compact discs the immediacy of the voices and excitement generated by the orchestral presentation is extremely satisfying and is not surpassed by the competing versions. The greatest improvements have been made to Das Rheingold and Siegfried where the original recordings suffered from some distortions and background noise.

I hope to be able to share my enthusiasm for these re-issues by playing this set next year at the Sunday recording afternoons.

Keith Anderson.

NEW MEMBERS

May we welcome the following new members to the Society, thank them for their support and wish them a long and happy association with The Wagner Society.

Mrs Annette Marshall; Mr Thomas Cawte; Dayan Goodsir-Cullen;
Miss Maire Glacken; Miss Adriana Kumarich; Miss Margaret E Gray;
Mrs Eugenia Orth; Mr Peter E Binning; Mrs E Robinson; Mr Roy Pateman;
Mrs Sybil Baer; Miss Jennie Greenwell; Mrs Shirley Robertson;
Mr Abe Segal; Miss Therese Leuver; Miss Lesley A Cotton;
Miss Elise Herrman; Br James McGlade; Mr Tony McDonald;
Mrs S & Mr J Buchanan.

LIST OF DONORS SINCE JUNE 1987.

Mr G Magney; Mrs Betty Maloney; Adrianna Kumarich; Mr S N Matthews;
Dr Leonard A Hansen; Miss CLare Stevenson.

Our gratitude is extended to the above members who we hope will accept this publication of their names as our acknowledgement for their support.

Donations to the Wagner Society are tax deductible if they are paid to the Elizabethan Theatre Trust and accompanied by the form opposite.

DATE.....

The Secretary,
The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust,
Post Office Box 137,
KINGS CROSS. N.S.W. 2011.

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AND ADDRESS
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OR

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BAYREUTH 1988 APPLICATION FORM

I wish my name to be entered in the ballot for tickets for Bayreuth 1988.

NAME..... MEMBERSHIP No.....
NUMBER OF TICKETS..... 1 or 2 PHONE No.....

MEMBERSHIP - SEPTEMBER 1987

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