



The Wagner Society

(Patron — Sir Charles Mackerras)

Registered Office: 141 Dowling Street, Woolloomooloo 201
Telephone enquiries: 358 1919 (Bus. Hours)

NEWSLETTER NO. 4

SEPTEMBER 1981

Wagner Society
Registered Office: 141 Dowling Street, Woolloomooloo, 2011
Telephone Enquiries: 358-1919 (Business Hours only)

Patron: Sir Charles Mackerras

President:	Leonard Hansen	<u>Committee:</u>
Vice President:	Sue Kelly	Cedric Falconer
Secretary:	Clare Hennessy	Ian Hopkins - Co. Editor
Treasurer:	Richard King	Margaret Suthers - Co. Editor
		Jean-Louis Stuurop
		Janet Waylord

Honorary Life Member: Werner Baer M.B.E.

SEPTEMBER

THE WAGNER SOCIETY

Page Two

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

There is no doubt that the return to Australia of our Patron, Sir Charles Mackerras, to conduct the Wagner concerts, has been one of the most exciting happenings on the local musical scene for many years. The music loving public reacted instantly and wholeheartedly, buying up all the Sydney tickets weeks in advance, and surprising the A.B.C. and Opera management with its enthusiasm. In Melbourne also the response was excellent, the Town Hall on both nights rippling with feverish excitement, which was echoed by the outstanding performances given by the orchestra and soloists. The spontaneity of the final ovation was a gauge of the intense pleasure and warm appreciation of the near capacity audiences.

Miss Rita Hunter was presented with a bouquet of flowers on the opening night of her tour, with the best wishes of the Wagner Society. At the luncheon in Melbourne given by the Wagner Society in her honour, she thanked us for our support and said that she in her turn, would do all she could to encourage a fully-staged Ring Cycle in Australia — hoping, of course, that she would be asked to take part in it. Also at the luncheon, a nucleus of a Melbourne Wagner Society was formed. In this way the interests of a much larger number of Wagnerites can be served, and the objects of the Society can become more of a reality due to the greater support of an increased membership. Already there are quite a few new members from Victoria, and for this we have largely to thank Mrs Jill Sinclair and the Friends of the Australian Opera in Victoria for their encouragement, support and warm hospitality.

It has been very pleasing to the Committee to see such a good response to the functions held this year. Since the A.G.M. we have had a music appreciation day, which Margaret Hennessy reviews elsewhere in this Newsletter. Committee-man Jean-Louis Stuurop has big plans to make these events even more exciting, and deserves your continuing support.

The talk by Mr Werner Baer M.B.E. on July 6th entertained a crowded W.E.A. auditorium with the witty and erudite performance that we have come to expect from this learned musician. Our thanks go to him and his assistant for the night, Tony Healy, for all the hard work that went into the presentation. Members can

enjoy more lectures on the Ring by Mr Baer by joining his W.E.A. Classes.

Your Committee hopes you will all enjoy the remaining functions for this year, and that you will make someone happy next year - and help your Society - by taking advantage of the special Christmas gift membership vouchers now available.

CHRISTMAS GIFT MEMBERSHIP

Application Form.

To the Wagner Society
141 Dowling Street,
Woolloomooloo - 2011

Please send me a gift membership certificate for -

Name: _____

Address: _____

Post Code: _____

in the following category:

- (please tick) Ordinary membership \$15.00
 Joint membership (husband & wife) \$25.00
 Pensioner/Young membership (under 25) \$ 7.50

Please add \$1.00 for printing and postage.

Note: Gift membership expires on 31st March 1983.

I enclose cheque/postal note/money order, payable to the Wagner Society, for \$

Signature _____ Date _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Post Code: _____

AN ALTERNATIVE BAYREUTH?

The Wagner Society's aim is to promote Wagner's music. In the words of our Treasurer, Richard King, it is a pity to see people come and go in life without having heard of Richard Wagner.

In view of that we have decided to give you an "alternative Bayreuth" by running a series of Sunday afternoon concerts, commencing at 2pm, on the afternoons of October 18, November 15 and December 13 in the Concordia Club, 231 Stanmore Rd, Stanmore.

We propose to push the series off to a flying start with "The Flying Dutchman" on October 18, followed, on November 15, with "Tannhauser" and to close the year (and this stage of Wagner's development), on December 13, with "Lohengrin". The recordings to be used will be Solti/Solti/Kempe.

In February 1982 we will start the next stage of Wagner's output with Tristan, Die Meistersingers, The Ring and Parsifal. I hope to use the new digital recording of The Ring which should be coming out next year.

Also, I will be introducing some music of Wagner's spiritual brother, Anton Bruckner as well as historical recordings of great Wagnerian singers.

Most of us have Wagner's recordings, but some do not have the equipment or the room to complement them. Then again, some of us live in home units and are unable to "let go" with our hi-fi set ups because of neighbours and sometimes other members of the family! The purpose of this series of concerts is to set you free from all those restrictions so that you can sit back, relax and enjoy the glorious music in near ideal conditions.

The Concordia Club, which is opposite Newington College and two minutes from Stanmore Station, has very kindly made available to the Wagner Society, at no cost, their Gesellschaft Room for this purpose.

For the technically-minded among you, the room is ideal, being about 50' x 28' x 10' with wood panelling all along the walls and

Wool carpet on the floor. The following equipment will be used: Thorens TD8 Mk II turntable; SME Series 3 tone arm; Shure V15 Mk IV cartridge; Quad 44 pre-amplifier; Quad 405 power amplifier; Equaliser; Series 4000 Philips loud speakers; KEF B139 super woofer and 100W amplifier for same; Telefunken back loud speakers.

All in all, 13 loudspeakers, of different frequencies, to bring GOOD music, not loud music.

Some of the equipment to be used has been loaned to the Society by Arrow Electronics, 342 Kent Street, Sydney, and we offer our grateful thanks.

We hope to create a sort of quadrophonic sound (to try to imitate Bayreuth).

We would also like to point out that the Concordia Club facilities are at our disposal, including an excellent dining room, where Australian and Continental meals are served. After the performance why not enjoy a good meal and discuss or argue about Wagner to your heart's content!

If you wish to follow the story of the opera, could you please bring your own synopsis.

On behalf of your Committee,

JEAN LOUIS STUURUP

P.S. A small donation would be appreciated to cover cost of insuring equipment.

ART EXHIBITION

Our member Nicholai von Tonslamann is exhibiting his paintings and sculptures based on the "Ring of the Nibelungen". Featured also will be a major sculpture piece by Barry Karp depicting Fafner guarding the Ring. Members are welcome to attend the opening of the exhibition which will be held at O.T.C. House, 32 Martin Place, Sydney, on Monday, November 2nd at 6.00 p.m.

PACIFIC NORTHWEST WAGNER FESTIVAL - JULY 18-AUGUST 2, 1981 *by Michael Bookallil*

Although not well known in the opera world there has been a regular Wagner Festival in Seattle, Washington State, U.S.A. each summer since 1975. A ring cycle was built up over four years culminating in the complete cycle in 1975. This has been repeated each year since then. There are two cycles each year - one in German and the other, the Andrew Porter English translation which is the same translation as used by the English Opera in the London Colosseum (E.M.I. record). This year they also performed a new production of Tristan which was first performed early this year in the regular season of the Seattle Opera.

Each ring cycle is performed over six days with one day gaps between the last three operas. The performers in each cycle were largely the same, but the Wotans, Siegfrieds and Brunnhildes were different.

The Seattle Opera House is in the area of the Seattle Centre which was constructed for a World Fair in the early 1960's. The Opera House is a modification of the pre-existing auditorium. It seats over 3000 and the view from all parts of the Hall is satisfactory. The stage is big and the pit contained the 90 member orchestra without any difficulty.

The ring productions were conventional. Most of the stage furniture was simulated rocks which were moved around. Projection was used extensively with fifteen projectors. This was very effective and enabled water and fire to be adequately depicted. There were some botches, e.g. Valhalla was often out of focus and once jerked into position rather than fading on. The ride of the Valkerie was left to the imagination. There were no horses but the Dragon in Siegfried was superb. They had five people inside him directed by ear-phones. In the English Siegfried he almost pushed the cave entrance over but was withdrawn just in time. Amplifiers were used for Alberich while invisible, Fafner - the dragon and the anvils.

The orchestra was the Seattle Symphony Orchestra augmented for the occasion and the conductor was Henry Holt who is mainly

responsible for the existence of this Ring. The orchestra's performance was adequate - not up to the Bayreuth standard, but that is probably an unfair comparison, e.g. the horn solos were bad in the German Siegfried but improved by the English one.

Practically none of the singers were known to me. Only Noel Mangin (Fafner & Hunding) would be known to Australian audiences.

The German Wotan, Franz Ferdinand Nentwig was not as good as the English Raimund Herinx. The German Siegfried did not look the part and was not very good (Pentti Perksalo). The English Siegfried Elliot Palay, a young American was excellent in Siegfried but was disappointing in the Twilight of the Gods.

The German Brunnhilde (Ute Vinzing) was strong but somewhat harsh at times. She also played Isolde. The English Brunnhilde (Janis Yoes) was good. She did not have as much volume as Ute Vinzing, but her performance was more enjoyable.

The other parts were taken by the same singers in each version. Alberich (Oskar Hillebrandt), Mime (Wilfried Plate) Donner & Gunther (Anthony Raffell) Loge (Emile Belcourt) Hagen (William Wildermann), Fricka (Diane Curry) were outstanding. The chorus and the Valkyries were excellent.

The English version was as well done as the German. On occasion it was noticeable that some of the singers had German accents and Siegfried's American accent was very obvious, but this in no way interfered with the enjoyment of the performance. There were some German speakers in the audience. Those whom I asked could not see any objection to Wagner in English.

Tristan was performed between the two Rings. Isolde was Ute Vinzing and Tristan was Edward Sooter (who played Siegmund in the Ring cycles). This was a very good performance. There was a great use of lighting effects which some found distracting but I thought quite effective.

Each opera was preceded by a one-hour lecture starting 1½ hours before curtain. Most of these were very enjoyable with well prepared musical illustrations.

This Festival will be held in 1982, July 24-August 6, probably without Tristan. At this time of the year Seattle is very pleasant and there is some spectacular sightseeing.

* * * *

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Our Patron, Sir Charles Mackerras, has taken time from his busy conducting schedule to be guest speaker at a special meeting of the Wagner Society on Monday 12th October, at 6.00 pm. The venue will be the auditorium of Crown Street Womens Hospital, at the corner of Crown and Albion Streets, Darlinghurst, just a short distance from Oxford Street and Central Railway. Enter the theatre by the doors marked "Teaching Unit", not through the main hospital entrance.

The hospital board has very generously made both the theatre and the light refreshments available to us at no cost, so there will be no charge to our members and their friends for attendance. However, for catering purposes, it would be appreciated if you could telephone the Society office to notify your intention to attend.

Sir Charles will talk on "Wagner in Concert", a very appropriate topic indeed these days, and one which is sure to provoke a lively discussion at question time.

A highly recommended function.

WAGNER at the Print Room
21st June, 1981

For the 25 - 30 people who attended this day - an average of 10 - 15 at any given time - it was a very rewarding and enriching experience. The day had been arranged excellently by Richard King and Murray Smith of the Print Room. I arrived before the day began and found myself a comfortable seat - very comfortable lounges, etc, had been provided so there was no need for the cushion.

One entered the Print Room "without a sound" once the Records commenced - a notice to this effect was on the front door. The atmosphere was very reminiscent of "Wahnfried" at Bayreuth which I visited last year. A room there is set aside to listen to various excerpts at given times which is quite magnificent. It is very rare indeed for anyone to be able to listen to music "without any interruption or noise whatsoever". The isolation in this case was perfect. Everyone came and went as they pleased without any disturbance at all to others.

The music, of course, was wonderful. It was a great thrill for me to hear the very old Records and singers. You all, of course, know what was played but I especially enjoyed tremendously -

The Liebestod - Eileen Farrell (which was recorded in 1951);
Brunnhilde's Immolation Scene (Gotterdammerung) - Kirsten Flagstad;
Excerpts from Siegfried (which was recorded live at Bayreuth c. 1973).

A very pleasant way to spend a Sunday in Winter.

Margaret Hennessy

BAYREUTH REPORT

Leonard Hansen

Grey skies and a handful of celebrities accompanied the opening of this year's Bayreuth Festival on 25th July. The rain, however, did not dampen the enthusiasm of the audience who gave a warm reception to the long awaited new production of "Tristan and Isolde", even though it was not the best version of this opera to grace the Festspielhaus stage. Three reasons, I feel contribute to this fall in standard. Firstly, Daniel Barenboim's subdued musical direction then Ponnelle's production which played too heavily on the "darkness" theme, and finally Joanna Meier, Isolde herself, called to Bayreuth at late notice, whose voice generally was not big and accurate enough to be totally satisfying. The star of the night was Rene Kolls, (Tristan), with Matti Salminen giving a beautifully sung, and emotionally acted King Mark.

The other premiere performance was Wolfgang Wagner's "Mastersingers". No visual surprises here - crisp, functional sets, and safe groupings - the weaker voiced Bernd Weikl (Sachs) and Siegfried Jerusalem (Walther) being placed mostly to the front. Not so Hermann Prey, whose Beckmesser was a flawless and most intelligent portrayal, with singing to match.

The orchestra under Mark Elder, and the magnificent choir gave that rich and exciting sound that makes Bayreuth the great attraction it is. The Flying Dutchman was tightened up under its new conductor, Peter Schneider, and still remains one of the technical wonders of the theatre. Gotz Friedrich's "Lohengrin" is slowly losing some of its erratic fantasy, with Gottfried no longer appearing as a miniature Tin-man, although the nails and feather decor remains. Elizabeth Connell, as Ortrud, again receives frenzied ovation, more for her acting ability, I imagine, as she still appears to be sorting out her vocal register.

Finally, Parsifal closed the cycle, unforgettably in this case with the stunning performance of Eva Rondova as Kundry and Manfred Jung as Parsifal. The grandeur of the music soared out with overwhelming passion under the baton of Horst Stein. Symbolically that day the sun streamed forth from the clouds, and I left Bayreuth uplifted, fulfilled and content.

NOTICE

Members and friends attending the concert performances of *GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG* please note the following information.

At the start of the first interval, members who have paid for cocktail-style refreshments are asked to move quickly to the Reception Hall, at the Eastern end of the cloak-room lobby, and present their vouchers at the door. As catering facilities are limited, no one who has not applied for an entré card can be admitted.

If you have been unlucky enough to miss these concerts, it is possible that there will be a direct broadcast on ABC-FM on Saturday, 3rd October. Check with the usual news publications for details.

Bennelong Restaurant

Due to the early start of this opera, a special *Gotterdammerung* dinner will be served in the Bennelong Restaurant. A limited choice of specially prepared main courses followed by coffee will be on the menu for \$7.50 per person. Bookings essential.

Wednesday, September 30th

The Bennelong will open early at 4.30 pm for patrons to be out by 5.45 pm. The special dinner will also be served during the first interval, which extends from approximately 8.05pm to 8.55 pm.

Saturday, October 3rd

A la carte lunch will be served from noon to 2.30pm. The special dinner will be served during the first interval, from 6.30pm to 8.00pm.

Harbour Restaurant

Meals and snacks will be available before both performances and during the first interval at the self-service Harbour Restaurant. Concert Hall patrons can gain quick access to the restaurant during interval via the balcony doors in the Northern Foyer. Note: The Harbour Restaurant will remain open until 9.00pm on Wednesday, September 30th.

Foyer Bars and Coffee Lounge

The Coffee Lounge and Concert Hall Foyer bars serving a variety of food items (including for example boxed sandwiches) will be open prior to performances and during all intervals.

Parking

For the Wednesday performance of *Gotterdammerung*, the first PARK AND RIDE bus will leave the Domain Parking Station for the Opera House at 4.30 pm. The last bus to return to the parking station on that date will leave the Opera House at 12.45 am.

For the Saturday performance, the first bus will leave the Domain Parking Station at 3.00pm and the last bus will leave the Opera House at 11.45 pm.