

## THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Dear Members,

We have all been looking forward to 1998 as it promises us a feast of Wagner music, and our first experience has lived up to expectations. Though some of us may argue about details of the production there is consensus that the music of *Tannhäuser* is splendid and that this is a very welcome addition to the repertoire of Opera Australia. We are proud to have been able to provide some support towards the costs of mounting this work and do congratulate artists, orchestra and production staff on their overwhelming success.

It is very gratifying that members are supporting so strongly the various opportunities this year to enjoy the music of the Master. While many of us have *Tannhäuser* in our opera subscriptions, 37 members will join a theatre party in late February. In April 56 of us will attend the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's concert of Strauss and Wagner. Twelve members are off to Bayreuth for the second *Ring* cycle in August and in November/December an amazing 99 members and friends are headed to Adelaide for our own *Ring* cycle.

While this level of support more than justifies our existence it does place considerable strain on those on the committee responsible for the arrangements and I would like to ask for your co-operation. Once applications have been received and tickets bought it is not possible to change or cancel the arrangements as the Wagner Society cannot accept any financial responsibility. This particularly applies to Bayreuth though in an emergency we will help you try and find someone wanting tickets.

Our first lecture this year was a resounding success and the many who came to hear John Wegner's talk were impressed with his professionalism and charm. I think we were a little surprised to hear what an exhausting schedule can sometimes be involved and can only marvel that John takes this in his stride and continues to sound better each time we hear him. He is currently singing Scarpia in *Tosca* at the Opera House to great acclaim and he takes our very best wishes with him to Adelaide for Wotan later this year.

The Goethe Institut, who make us very welcome, advised me in December of a substantial increase in their charge for our meetings. Before agreeing to accept the proposed charge the committee is looking at several alternatives as this increase will have a significant impact on our budget. We are loath to increase membership or meeting fees or reduce our sponsorship for performances of Wagnerian works and will therefore have to monitor costs continually. The attendance at the February meeting was very heartening and if members can continue to support meetings at this level we hope to be able to meet all our commitments without any immediate increases.

Our annual lunch is again at the Ritz Carlton Hotel on 24th May, 1998 when we celebrate the birthday of Richard Wagner, so please mark this date in your diaries. We hope our guest speaker will be Bill Gillespie, the Artistic Director of the State Opera of South Australia. This year we have some wonderful prizes for the raffle - a weekend for two at Catersfield in the Hunter Valley, courtesy of Rosemary Cater-Smith and Alec Cater, two opera tickets to an opera of your choice during the winter season of Opera Australia and an autographed copy of the official 1997 Bayreuth Program, a gift to the Society by John Wegner. We do thank John, Rosemary and Alec for their generosity.

In March we will screen a video of *Parsifal*, the New York production with Waltraud Meier, Siegfried Jerusalem and James Levine, and in April Antony Ernst will commence his series of four *Ring* lectures. I do encourage you to come along and please bring your friends as they are always welcome.

BARBARA McNULTY