

THE PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT 1997-98

Dear Members,

It came as quite a shock to realise that twelve months have passed since our last Annual General Meeting and that it was time to prepare the Annual Report for the period April 1997 to March 1998. The year has been busy and I think successful.

Perhaps the most important thing to record is the growing interest in and understanding of the works of Richard Wagner. This is evident at concert and opera performances as well as seminars, and augers well for the future of our Society.

During the year we had large groups attending the two concert performances of *Walküre*, both of which were outstanding. Several members reported they got more out of these performances than from other staged versions they had seen.

The new *Tannhäuser* earlier this year provoked a range of reactions and considerable discussion. Many people loved it, some hated it, and others found it rather like the curate's egg: not so good in parts. Whatever one's response to the production, the consensus was that the music was excellent and a welcome addition to the repertoire. More importantly, many people who would not normally attend an evening of Wagner went to see what all the fuss was about and became converts.

We were delighted to be invited by the Art Gallery of NSW to co-host a seminar on *Tannhäuser* at the Gallery in November 1997. It was a most successful day, a delightful venue and delicious lunch and teas were served by the art gallery Volunteers. The seminar had been a suggestion of Jean Whitehouse, a long time member of the Wagner Society and of the Art Gallery, and we were pleased to dedicate the day to her memory as she had died some months earlier.

Another long time member we mourned was Lady Gallaghan, Persia to her many friends, who made enormous contributions to many aspects of life in this State, particularly music. Her gaiety, generosity and charm are all sadly missed.

During the year we strengthened our relationship with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Opera Australia. Our association with Opera Foundation Australia continues and we were pleased to provide an airfare for the 1997 scholar, Elizabeth Campbell, to allow her to study in Germany for her forthcoming role in the Adelaide *Ring*.

The future holds much Wagner in store. The Adelaide *Ring* is our next treat and we are proud to be listed as a major sponsor of this historic undertaking. Next year we shall have a concert version of *Siegfried*, and there are whispers (or should I say 'forest murmurs') of a *Götterdämmerung* and a *Parsifal* in 2000 and perhaps a *Tristan* in 2001. The music of Richard Wagner is indeed alive and well in New South Wales as we move into the new century.

Our Society is also prospering. Our membership is increasing steadily and attendances at meetings have been very encouraging. Despite an unavoidable increase in the costs of using the

Goethe Institut we have been able to maintain our charges for membership and meetings at current levels and make significant contributions towards the various performances we have seen and enjoyed. Our special thanks go to those members who make personal donations to the Society throughout the year.

We are also grateful to the Goethe Institut for making us so welcome as this is an ideal venue and we express our appreciation to Countess Ute Baudissin, the Director, and her staff.

We are also grateful to the Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany, Mr Otto Roever, and his staff for their ongoing support and interest in the Society.

The Committee has worked hard. Paul Lehmann has been an ideal Vice President. Olive Coonan is tireless as our Honorary Treasurer and can turn her hand willingly to any task that needs doing. Barry Walters is a marvellous Secretary and I would be lost without him. Terence Watson is bringing fresh ideas to the program, which is in sure hands. Our meetings would be far less interesting without the work of Shirley Robertson who provides our delicious afternoon teas. Barbara Brady is a most efficient Newsletter editor, always on the lookout for interesting material to include, with Clare Hennessy as an able assistant. Janet Wayland works diligently in the background keeping our membership files up to date - and this is no easy matter.

Reg Maloney continues as our Public Officer and Josef Ferfoglia as our Auditor, and we thank them both for their continuing interest and support.

Paul and Janet are retiring from the Committee this year and will be sadly missed as they have both made very significant contributions to our Society over many years.

Lastly I must express my appreciation to you all for your support.