
THE PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT

Delivered at the Annual General Meeting on 18 July 1999

Dear Members,

As I started to prepare the Annual Report I realised that it did indeed give me great pleasure to report to you on the past year which has been one of growth and achievement.

Our year started with the splendid Sydney Symphony Orchestra concert performances of *Die Walküre*. The excitement engendered by these concerts was translated into large attendances at the lecture given by Antony Ernst in preparation for the Adelaide *Ring Cycle*. As we have come to expect with Antony, these lectures were stimulating, thought provoking and at times provocative and very popular. In response to many requests the tapes have been transcribed and edited in consultation with Antony and it is hoped that they will be available in printed form for Members soon.

Paul Lehmann did an excellent job of recording each lecture and Barbara and Ian Brady undertook the massive task of putting the tapes onto computer disks for editing, and we do thank them all. It has been a very complicated process made more difficult by Antony's absence overseas and the demands on his time that made it difficult for him to respond quickly to the various drafts with which he has been inundated. Our annual lunch in honour of the birthday of Richard Wagner was well attended and everyone enjoyed Bill Gillespie's comments on the work leading up to the Adelaide *Ring*.

It is indisputable the *Ring* was the major event of the year with some 150 Members making the trip to Adelaide. We were very proud to be associated with this venture in our sponsorship of John Wegner as Wotan. The success of the *Ring* is a matter of record and it continues to resound wherever Wagner lovers meet. While we may differ about the production it is clear that for many, especially those seeing a *Ring Cycle* for the first time, the simplicity of the presentation together with the surtitles allowed the music and drama to have a very meaningful and satisfying impact.

We congratulate the State Opera of South Australia and all associated with this historic event. They proved that a largely Australasian cast and orchestra can mount a significant *Ring Cycle* and complete on the world stage.

Our co-operation with Opera Foundation Australia continues and the Bayreuth Scholarship this year was awarded to Stephen Mould, a conductor and repetiteur. We congratulate Stephen and wish him every success in his future career.

The last function of the year was a weekend seminar at Catersfield in the Hunter Valley where we were the guests of Rosemary Cater-Smith and Alec Cater. Robert Gibson gave two very interesting lectures on *Parsifal* which were greatly appreciated by those present.

It is most gratifying that Members have supported all functions, performances and meetings so fully. Our membership continues to grow steadily and there is no doubt that appreciation and knowledge of the works of Richard Wagner is growing in the community at large.

The Committee has worked steadily throughout the year to ensure the success of our meetings and to promote our Society as broadly as possible.

Clare Hennessy has been a great backup as Vice President combining these duties with those of Membership Secretary. Olive Coonan, as always, is a remarkable Treasurer and continues to give so much to the Society in so many ways. In particular we thank her for undertaking responsibility for the Adelaide arrangements which for many reasons was a thankless task. Barry Walters is an exemplary Secretary whose attention to detail allows the Committee to function effortlessly and effectively. The Newsletter is in the very capable hands of Barbara Brady and I know you will all agree that there is always interesting material to be found in each issue. Barbara retires from the Committee this year but will continue as Editor with the assistance of an Editorial Sub-committee.

Shirley Robertson is another hard working Committee Member providing delicious refreshments at all meetings. It looks effortless but it does entail a great deal of planning and preparation and Shirley does it all with a smile.

Terence Watson has responsibility for our program and does an excellent job looking for new and interesting activities. Few will forget the Christmas Quiz or the Market Day in November. Roger Cruickshank is a tower of strength, willing to turn his hand to any task that needs to be done. Similarly Onofrio Ferrara despite many calls on his time is always willing to help when he is able to be with us. On your behalf I would like to thank each of them.

We acknowledge gratefully the continuing support of the Consul-General for the Federal Republic of Germany, Mr Otto Roever and his staff, and of Countess Baudissin, Director of the Goethe Institut. Access to the facilities of the Goethe greatly increases the success and enjoyment of our meetings and we do thank Countess Baudissin and her staff for making us so welcome.

I should not forget to thank all those who make donations to the Society because it is these donations that allow us to make substantial contributions to major Wagner concerts and opera productions and to encourage additional works to be included in future programs.

Our year was saddened by the death of Alastair Mackerras. We have lost a valued Member whose contribution to education and the arts, to choose only two areas of his vast interests, will be long remembered. In closing I would like to thank Reg Maloney who continues as our Public Officer and Joseph Ferfaglia our Auditor.

During the year we invited Joseph to accept Honorary Life Membership in recognition of his long and close relationship with the Society. A similar invitation was extended to Horst Hoffmann who, by his presence in Australia, has made so many Wagner performances possible. We were delighted when they accepted our invitation and we look forward to a long association with them both.

I would also like to thank each and every one of you who supports the Wagner Society in NSW and makes it vibrant, interesting and a significant part of the music world of this State.

BARBARA McNULTY