



# The Wagner Society

(Patron — Sir Charles Mackerras)

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

Registered by Australia Post  
Publication No. NBH 5028

NEWSLETTER NO. 12

1st September 1983

---

Patron:	Sir Charles Mackerras	<u>Committee:</u>
President:	Leonard Hansen	Michel Arnould Jean Byrne
Vice President:	Sue Kelly	Jean-Louis Stuurop Janet Wayland
Secretary:	Clare Hennessy	
Treasurer:	Murray Smith	
Editor:	Richard King	
Honorary Life Members:	Werner Baer M.B.E. Leonie Rysanek	

---

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As this Newsletter reaches you thirty lucky Society Members will have just completed their exciting group tour to Bayreuth for the 1983 Festival, where they witnessed the magnificent staging of "Tristan and Isolde", "The Mastersingers of Nuremburg" and "Parsifal", along with the outstanding new production of "The Ring". No doubt you have been reading the reports and critiques as they have slowly filtered back to this country, but your colleagues have a fund of first hand information which they are most willing to share with you. At the next meeting, over a glass of wine or cup of coffee, find out what the Festival was really like. Perhaps you will get the opportunity to go next year - our organiser, Neutral Bay Travel, is certainly trying for tickets to be able to repeat the tour in '84.

The coming months in Sydney will seem for us Wagner enthusiasts like a mini-festival, with not only a part of "The Ring" being performed, but the chance for us all to meet the conductor, producer and designers, as well as the singers. It will be a busy but rewarding time, after which we can all let our hair down at the picnic. Let's all get together for this unique event.

LEONARD HANSEN

---

This is my first occasion as editor and as I will be overseas, it will be left in the very capable hands of Mrs. Janet Wayland to add final notes etc. Please read the newsletter when you receive it as many diary dates are imminent. There are three contributions plus news of our first scholarship finalists. My thanks to Miss Leona Gaeves and Mr. Werner Baer for their contributions.

---

### DIARY

Talk by Mr. Andrew Sinclair,  
Mr. Alan Lees and Mr. Desmond  
Digby on Australian Opera's first  
production of Die Walkure

Tuesday, 13th September 6.15 p.m.  
Print Room, 141 Dowling Street  
Woolloomooloo  
\$3.00 members - \$4.00 non-members

Talk by Signor Carlo Felice  
Cillario

Monday, 17th October 6.15 p.m.  
Print Room, 141 Dowling Street  
Woolloomooloo  
\$3.00 members - \$4.00 non-members

Drinks and savouries will be served.

---

Monday, 10th October ) "Die Walkure" all our allocation sold  
Friday, 28th October ) " " " " " "

Please make your own arrangements if you have not already booked.

---

### Jean-Louis Recording dates - Concordia Club, Stanmore

Sunday, 18th September 1.30 p.m.

Lohengrin (new von Karajan)

Sunday, 16th October 1.30 p.m.

Die Meistersinger (von Karajan  
Dresden Recording)

Sunday, November 27th 1.00 p.m.

Parsifal

---

### First Annual Picnic

Sunday 20th November 11 am  
Balls Head Picnic Reserve  
Gregories Map Ref. Map 13 J11

No charge but bring your own food and wine. Cooking facilities available.

---

### LATE NEWS

ABC FM Radio will broadcast the Bayreuth Ring Circle over four nights commencing Monday 26th September to 29th September. The radio guide 24 Hours will have two Wagner articles including one by Professor Michael Ewans.

---

BOOKING FORMS AT END OF NEWSLETTER

---

On Tuesday evening 26th July a cocktail party was given by the Directors of Neutral Bay Travel to those lucky members travelling to Bayreuth. A lavish spread of delicious savouries and hot dishes was provided giving the travellers an opportunity to meet each other etc. To top off the evening, a most unexpected pleasant surprise was the presentation to the Society of a cheque for \$200 from the Directors in appreciation of our efforts in publicising the tour etc. Our heartfelt thanks for such a gesture and in particular Mrs. Dawn Moss whose perseverance made the tour possible.

It is proposed to publish letters from members (and non members). If you have suggestions for the running of our Society - comments on Wagnian productions both local and overseas - points raised by our speakers at our regular talks (lecture?) - we would be glad to hear from you.

We are gradually building up a valuable reference library of books, recordings, Opera magazines, newspaper cuttings, films (video) etc. which have been catalogued by our member, Mrs. Betty Ingamells (weeks of work) and further cataloguing will be required in the future (volunteers please). A comfortable room is available for viewing the video, reading, researching etc. (Headphones required as the gallery is just above it.) If you wish to make use of our archives please phone during business hours to make an appointment (Tuesday-Saturday 11am - 6pm).

---

#### KEN NEATE DISCUSSES THE WAGNER VOICE

Ken Neate, currently in Australia to adjudicate at the Metropolitan Opera Auditions, spoke to members of the Sydney Wagner society at their headquarters, the Print Room. He spoke about the Wagner Voice, a subject about which, he said, it is hard to be dispassionate.

Ken Neate, the boy from Cessnock, started his career as a lyric tenor in Miss Drummond's Sydney concerts which often contained compressed operas. Shortly after singing the Prize Song, the A.B.C.'s Dr. Keith Barry asked him to audition for the forthcoming broadcast Lohengrin. The A.B.C. in fine form had scheduled the performance without knowing whether suitable vocalists were available.

At the audition Ken sang the Narration and both parts of the duet. Barry was delighted and Ken postponed his overseas study plans. The production featured the conductor Joseph Post with Thea Phillips and Fred Collier singing the major roles. Mr. Neate now considers this a baptism of fire for his Bayreuth performance of Loge, some thirty years later.

In 1940 Ken Neate went to New York where Lotte Lehmann introduced him to Bruno Walter. This led to his acceptance as an understudy at the Metropolitan Opera Company where he appeared the next year in the gala performance of The Magic Flute.

At the end of the war the tenor made his debut in German at the new Covent Garden Opera and sang Gounod and Mozart operas, then continued his career in Spain and Italy.

He returned to Australia in 1955 for the J.C. Williamson Season of Grand Opera and again in 1960 to sing principal tenor roles in *The Magic Flute*, *Rigoletto* and *Madame Butterfly*. Since returning to Germany in 1961 he has specialised in Wagnerian roles such as *Tannhauser*, *Lohengrin* and *Tristan* with special appearances at Bayreuth.

When Dame Joan Sutherland first sang *Lucia* at Covent Garden in 1959, Ken Neate sang *Edgardo* without rehearsal and on very short notice.

The Wagner Voice is not a natural instrument. It demands a special mind, first rate musicality and good health. It also requires an ear sensitive to nuances and excellent diction and coordination. This last is very important because Wagner is a perfect integration of words and musical drama, where the words must be heard. It is a special form of theatre.

The problem with Wagner is to find the fully matured voice, one which has taken years of development like that of the Australian tenor Connell Byrne who has, as has Ken Neate, sung *Tristan* in Germany. Preparing to sing Wagner virtually requires a twenty-five year plan with first rate directors. He cited the greatest conductors - Richter, Mahler, Walter, Beecham, Furtwangler and Mackerras as people who could prepare singers without ruining the voice.

We were again warned of the dangers of very young voices tackling difficult and potentially detrimental roles. Mr. Neate suggested that Australia, the United States and Germany get together in a spirit of national reconciliation and find suitable Wagnerian voices to train over a period of say five years.

This could be a project for the Wagner Societies of the world. The singers could study in Bayreuth and take part in performances in the Festspielhaus. This would be suitable for lyric sopranos, tenors and that peculiarly Wagnerian invention, the Heldenbaritone.

Ken Neate sees no reason why Wagner cannot be presented with cuts. Wagner would have agreed to this if it enabled his works to be presented. Scores exist with the cuts defined for presentation in smaller theatres.

Nor must it always be sung in the original. Cosima Wagner approved an English text and the London Coliseum and Seattle always perform Wagner in splendid English versions. This not only widens the field of comprehension but also lessens the amount of time needed to prepare a role.

Mr. Neate feels that nowadays Richard Wagner would have utilised every possible special effect visually and electronically to produce spectacular theatre. Imagine *Lohengrin* with holograms. His Bayreuth Festspielhaus, the realisation of his wildest dreams, was novel at the time because of its hidden orchestra and conductor.

He is excited by the Australian Opera's production of The Ring starting this year with "Die Walkure". He praised Alberto Remedios and Rita Hunter whom he has heard in Seattle.

Finally Mr. Heate congratulated the Wagner Society on its Scholarship Fund but suggested the amount should be more and should continue for five years. The Society should also, he suggested, harangue Bayreuth to establish a school to ensure the continuation of the Wagner Tradition, in fact the Unending Melody.

LEONA GEEVES

---

DIE WALKURE - A NEW INTERPRETATION (NOT REALLY)

Michael Evans, Professor of Drama at Newcastle University and author of the newly published Wagner and Aeschylus addressed the Wagner Society for the second time on 15 July at the Concordia Club.

He stressed that his book and therefore his talk was not a new interpretation but a look at the themes of Wagner from Greek tragedy through Norse mythology. The Ring, he felt, was about human emotions and dilemmas. Richard Wagner had not only combined the tension in the impulse of Greek tragedy with the Shakespearean impulse, but had emerged victorious. The Ring focussed on the sensual and daemonic forces of life.

Professor Evans said that some people split the Ring into dull and interesting sections. He asked the group to consider in detail two extracts from Die Walkure which might be thought dull, probably because of their lack of action. Wotan's monologue from Act 2, Scene 2 and the so-called Wotan dialogue with Brunnhilde Act 3, Scene 3.

The Professor stressed that the Ring was a drama, described by Richard Wagner as a stage festival play in three evenings. He used to read his Ring poems to gatherings of friends not only as a P.R. exercise but because they were as dramatic as anything written by Goethe and Schiller. The music therefore had the same function as it did in Greek drama; it was subservient to the drama.

He maintained that Die Walkure is a Tragedy of Renunciation. The three major acts of renunciation are Siegmund's drawing out of the sword, Nothung, Wotan's realisation that he must kill Siegmund and finally Wotan's parting from his favorite daughter, Brunnhilde. In fact the renunciation of love is the starting point of Die Walkure.

During the monologue Wotan has three violent outbursts of emotion, whereas 'Leb wohl' has two stages in the continuum of Wotan's progress. It is in fact the realisation that all he has built up must perish and the consequent joyful acceptance of this fact.

Professor Evans traversed so many fascinating concepts during his talk that one must urge Wagnerites to pursue the subject at greater length and depth in his book Wagner and Aeschylus and eagerly await what we hope might become the annual Michael Evans Lecture.

LEONA GEEVES

---

WAGNER PRESENTATIONS AT CONCORDIA CLUB

For some two years Jean Louis Stuurop, one of the Wagner Society's earliest supporters, has been presenting Sunday afternoon recorded programs at the Concordia Club in the Sydney suburb of Stanmore.

The Labour of Love was originally heralded and well attended. Regrettably, however, and perhaps naturally, after some time the novelty has worn off, and the flock of regular patrons has somewhat dwindled.

Jean Louis, a stalwart of the Society and great admirer of its aims, has put much work into these pleasant get-togethers, which are held in agreeable surroundings, and perfect, quiet and reverent tranquility as Wagner a la Bayreuth should be heard.

What is particularly pleasing is the fact that the great recordings of the Wagnerian repertoire are heard without commentary and discussion. Those attending know what they are going to hear, and an easy camaraderie has developed over the long period of time these programs have been presented - free of charge.

I myself have had the satisfaction of hearing these recorded programs, under the best possible acoustic conditions, and enjoying the music, which is indeed very familiar to me. Uninterrupted, and in company of others with similar tastes, musical experiences are further enriched. The recordings are being played on excellent equipment, giving listeners the opportunity of hearing them at fairly high decibel level and without distortion. What more can one ask?

I wish only to remind interested Wagnerians that these programs are continuing; and that Jean Louis is entitled to some tangible recognition for his mighty and totally voluntary effort on behalf of music lovers and of Wagner in particular. He is a man of little compromise and does exactly what he believes in. His tastes are catholic, if that word is applicable to Wagner, and he knows what he wants and how his music should be heard and presented.

It is generally known that Wagner, in the Bayreuth fashion, must be heard as an overall musical experience. Consequently, those of us who want to hear Wagner in the dark, or at least semi-dark (to allow for following the score) as in Bayreuth, will continue to reap satisfaction from the manner in which Stuurup presents his Sunday afternoon programs - without fuss and bother.

And what is more: you can get a good cup of coffee and a meal (excellent German cuisine) on the premises - but naturally Wagner comes first. Meals are served only after the music, and are reasonably priced at that.

The Wagner Society is indebted to the Concordia Club for making available to us, free of charge, such a suitable venue on the first floor of its fine club; and, of course, Jean Louis, undaunted in his admiration of the great Man of Bayreuth, has our deep gratitude. We all wish him continued successes with his fine effort (and record, no pun intended!).

Nun Sei Bedankt, mein lieber Jean Louis!

WERNER BAER

---

#### FOOTNOTE TO THE WERNER BAER ARTICLE

A date to look forward to is October 16, the Sunday afternoon we are to hear the Meistersingers at the Concordia Club, when Mr. Baer has promised us a short talk on the new production of The Ring at this year's Bayreuth Festival.

THE WAGNER SOCIETY SCHOLARSHIP in conjunction with  
THE METROPOLITAN OPERA AUDITIONS

The finals of the Metropolitan Opera Auditions were held in the Opera Hall on Sunday 29th August. This year two "firsts" were associated with the auditions, one being that Australia is now designated the 17th Region in the Contest for that coveted scholarship and we can now choose one winner to go direct to New York, instead of three finalists, as in previous years, going to Hawaii for final selections.

The second "first" is our Wagner Society Scholarship to be awarded to the singer with this special Wagnerian quality who is seeking further training in this unique vocal and dramatic style.

We were delighted and fortunate indeed to have as adjudicator Sir Charles Mackerras, who was assisted by Elizabeth Fretwell and Bruce Martin - singers experienced in works of Wagner - and we wish to thank them for their thoroughly professional deliberations and very fair, and I hope, helpful comments.

Five of the six finalists made applications for the Wagner Scholarship and of the five only one voice showed glimpses of Wagnerian potential. This is no criticism of the voices of all the contestants. The standard was very high, particularly when one considers the youthfulness of the singers.

Sir Charles regretfully stressed that this youthfulness was the chief reason for not awarding the Scholarship this year. None of the singers, in his and his colleagues' opinions, has the stamina or maturity necessary to venture into the demanding field of Wagner's music drama.

The Society, too, is disappointed not to have found that rara avis. Unlike the Metropolitan Opera prize, the Wagner Society Scholarship is not the "launching pad", as one speaker described the New York scholarship, but something more specialised for the mature singer. The funds for this year's Scholarship will be added to during the coming year, in the sincere hope that next year we can award an even more valuable prize.

---

One of our members Reg Maloney, having his 'alternate Bayreuth', has set something of a record. While his wife was off on one of her intrepid journeys to the Simpson Desert, Reg experienced the Ring in its uninterrupted grandeur starting at 0600 hours and finishing the same night at 2345 hours with 1 3/4 hours for meal breaks!!!

---