



The Wagner Society

(Patron — Sir Charles Mackerras)

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NEWSLETTER NO. 16

September 1984

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| Patron: | Sir Charles Mackerras | <u>Committee:</u> |
| President: | Leonard Hansen | Michel Arnould Judy Ferfoggia |
| Vice President/Editor: | Richard King | Sue Kelly Heike Knoke |
| Secretary: | Jean Byrne | Murray Smith Janet Wayland |
| Treasurer: | Joseph Ferfoggia | |
| Honorary Life Members: | Werner Baer M.B.E. Leonie Rysanek | |

COMING EVENTS: [See tear-off booking slips at end of Newsletter]

Talk by Prof. Michael Ewans - Wagner and His Successors

Goethe Institute, 90 Ocean Street, Woollahra.
Monday, 24th September at 6.30 p.m.

The Flying Dutchman (Concert Performance)

Canberra, Friday, 19th October 1984.
(See details in Newsletter).

Concordia Club, Stanmore

Sunday, 30th September, 1.10 p.m.
Tristan and Isolde (new compact disc).
Last recording afternoon for the year.

Wagner Transcribed for Piano

9th November, 7.30 p.m.
Ampico Towers, 47 Station Street, Newtown.
(See details in Newsletter.)

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

About Membership

Why are you a member of the Wagner Society? How do you expect to benefit from your membership? What contribution are you making to the activities of the Society?

This is some of the information your Committee needs to know in order to keep the Society interesting and viable, and the basis for the questionnaire circulated in the last Newsletter. Replies have been received from barely one quarter of the members - hardly an overwhelming response, but perhaps a predictable one. There always has been a small solid core of active members, ready to participate in each function, to receive the benefit of the presentations, and most importantly, to meet and mix with other members.

The information in the replies has been collated, and the results appear elsewhere in this issue. Your Committee will make the most of the suggestions, applying them to benefit the majority of members. Hopefully, in a year's programme, there will be something to please everyone, but it would be most unusual if we were able to please everyone in everything we did. That there have been disappointments in our efforts over the past few years, we would be the first to acknowledge, but we did appreciate the frankness of those replies which gave explicit details.

The strength of the Society lies in its members, but the Society does not exist for its members alone. It has a responsibility to the community at large. Hence, each member should not have joined just for what he or she can get out of the Wagner Society for the \$15.00. Rather, it must be asked what he or she can do to help the Society in its aims and objectives. Attending functions and joining in the activities of the Society is the easiest and most obvious way of showing that you joined for a purpose and that you support the Society's aims of promoting interest and understanding of Richard Wagner to a greater public than just the membership. We cannot expect recognition from the public if we appear divided or - even worse - apathetic within our ranks.

As the fate of the Australian Opera's Ring Cycle is yet to be decided, let us be united in spirit and, for the sake of Richard Wagner, show our strength at all future functions.

Leonard Hansen

THE FLYING DUTCHMAN

Canberra, Friday, 19th October.
HURRY! HURRY! HURRY!

Due to the recent mail delays, the closing date for this tour has been extended to 15th September.

Please telephone the office for your application form if you have not received one. Show your support for more live presentations of Wagner's works - join the tour!

RESPONSE TO QUESTIONNAIRE - JUNE 1984

33 members responded. Breakdown is as follows:

Question 1: Yes/No. I enjoy the talks and events arranged by the Society Committee.

Yes - 27 6 unable to attend, reasons being lack of time, child care, and transport difficulties. 7 attended all or most; 20 attended from one to six.

Question 2: Do you think we should hold more or fewer functions each year?

More - 5 Less: Nil; Currently OK: 26; Not answered: 2.

Question 3: Do you think we should continue with the Annual Dinner after our Annual General Meeting?

Yes 27, No 3. I suggested separate nights; Several said NOT at Concordia Club or Wentworth Hotel. One said Sebel Town House OK.

Question 4: Do you think the Society should aim for more social events or more informative events.

More Social events: 3; More informative events 23;
Mixture of social and inf.: 5; Not answered: 2.

Question 5: Suggestions for guest speakers or events:

Patrick Veitch (1); Anyone connected with Bayreuth (1);
Anyone involved in opera production (1); 19th century historians (1);
Roger Covell (5); Rita Hunter (3); Michael Ewans (1);
Denis Condon (1); Werner Baer (2); Jon Weaving (1);
Moffatt Oxenbould (1); David Cramm (1); Lauris Elms (1);
Fred Blanks (1); Maria Prerauer (1); David Vance (1);
John Cargher (1); Video films (4);
David Reeden, Librarian at University of NSW currently writing Ph.D. on 'Opera in Australia in the 19th century' (1);
"Introduction to the Ring" (1).
- Suggest Wagner Society contribute articles to 'Good Weekend' (Saturday Herald), National Times, Bulletin, etc.
- Suggest agitate ABC to show Chereau Ring films.
- Newsletter to contain reviews and information on availability of recordings; reviews of available publications;
- Make publications and records on loan to Wagner Society Members.

Question 6: Membership of other musical or cultural societies in Sydney:

Australian Opera 10; Sydney Philharmonia 2;
Art Gallery Society 2; ABC Orchestra Committee and ABC 2;
2MBS/FM 2; National Trust 2;
Musica Viva 1; Goethe Institute 2;
Rockdale Municipal Opera Co. 1.

Reciprocal membership benefits with other musical societies -
Yes 17; No. 10; No opinion 6.

Question 7: Should the Newsletter contain more articles rather than just information re coming events, etc:

Yes 25; No 4; Not answered 4.

Should these relate to overseas Wagner developments or should these articles relate to an Australian vision/interpretation of Wagner: Yes 2; No 1; Both 27; Not Answered 3.

A WAGNER NIGHT OF A DIFFERENT KIND

DENIS CONDON, with characteristic kindness and his indefatigable enthusiasm has again offered the Wagner Society an evening of music on his reproducing pianos.

Those who came to Ampico Towers on the previous occasion, remember the fascination and the pleasure of the experience of listening to the works of Wagner (and others), transcribed for piano and played by well known pianists.

Numbers are limited, so to be sure of a place

call 358 1919 as soon as possible

ADDRESS: 47 Station Street, NEWTOWN.
DATE: 9th November
Time: 7.30 p.m.

Supper (coffee and cake) will be served.
There will be no charge, but a small donation
towards expenses would be appreciated.

LOVE OR POWER - THE FATAL CHOICE

Precis of Talk prepared by Miss Susan Mackerras
and given to members by Sir Charles Mackerras.

Wagner's use of the motive known as the Renunciation of Love (by Baron von Walzogen) at the moment when Siegmund pulls the sword out of the tree, has puzzled opera-goers and critics for the past century.

However, a careful study of the usage of this motive throughout the Ring will show that the phrase does not describe the renunciation of love at all, and that Wagner was being quite consistent.

The motive in question is first heard when Waglinde reminds her sisters that only he who forswears Love's Power can master the magic to make a ring out of the gold. Wellgunde has already told Alberich that this ring will confer Mastery of the World on its forger.

Thus, World Mastery, or Absolute Power, can only be won by renouncing love; but the converse is also true. He who would love and be loved, must renounce the desire for absolute power and domination over others. The two are incompatible.

Most of the major protagonists in the "Ring" are offered the "Choice between Love and Power" and this is what the motive in question represents. This Choice is the central theme of the music-drama. Wagner shows us that the hunger for power brings destruction, but that love brings life and

LOVE OR POWER - THE FATAL CHOICE (continued)

renewal. Indeed Wagner expressed this intention in one of his letters and although many motives representing either love or power in their various aspects have been named, the motive which presents these two forces as the opposite of each other has not yet been identified.

In future, I shall refer to the motive previously called the "Renunciation of Hope" as the "Choice Motive".

The Choice Motive occurs more than 40 times during the "Ring" and consists of two parts. The first part is the well-known passage sung by Wagnlinde quoted above and is used when the characters are actively choosing either love or power. The second part is less well-known, although it occurs more often than the first. It is a sad, defeated-sounding phrase of six descending notes and first heard during Loge's Narrative to the words "fur Weibes Wonne und Werth" and tends to be used either in a retrospective sense or when the Choice of Power, not Love, has been forced by circumstance. The entire motive with both parts is rarely heard - the moment when Wotan kisses away Brunnhilde's god head is such an occasion.

There is only one motive derived from the Choice Motive, the Surrender Motive (called Hingebung in German). It occurs for the first time in the second section of Loge's Narrative to the words "als Weibes Wonne und Werth." It is virtually identical to the second part of the Choice Motive except that there is a trill on the third note which transforms the dejected sense of the parent motive to a more positive and idealistic character. It is used to portray the devotion between men and women and occurs quite frequently in Act 3 of "Siegfried."

There are a number of occasions when the Choice Motive is used and Love, not Power, is being chosen. For example, when Fasalt says he was prepared to build Valhalla, Wotan's Seat of Power, in exchange for Freia, when Wotan gives up the Ring to ransom Freia, when Brunnhilde asks Siegmund to entrust Sieglinde to her, and when Wotan allows Siegfried to pass after the spear has been broken (here Wotan is acknowledging that the old age of rule by might is over). The motive is heard in full when Brunnhilde tells Waltraude that she will not return the Ring to the Rhine maidens because it represents Siegfried's love.

To fully understand the use of the Choice Motive when Siegmund pulls the sword out of the tree, it is necessary to consider another motive first - one called the "Purpose of the Sword" Motive by Derryk Cooke.

At the end of "Das Rheingold", Wotan is faced with a dilemma - if ever Alberich regains the Ring, the gods and the world are doomed to a loveless existence, but Wotan himself cannot retrieve the ring from Fafner because he is bound by his bargain. So he plans to beget a race of heroes who, driven by their need yet free from his guidance, will win the Ring back for him. This is the meaning of the Purpose of the Sword motives which occurs for the first time with the Sword Motive as Wotan greets Valhalla "So-gruss ich die Burg, sicher vor Bang und Graun". It reappears later, when Siegmund, sitting by the fire, recalls the sword his father promised him in his hour of need.

LOVE OR POWER - THE FATAL CHOICE (continued)

This motive appears for the third time followed by the Choice Motive as Siegmund pulls the sword out of the tree. As Siegmund says "Walse verhiess mir in Lochster Noth", the music reminds us that Wotan intended Siegmund to use the sword to win back the Ring, but Siegmund then announces that "Heiligster Minne Hochste Noth" will be his inspiration. He is renouncing Wotan and the quest for World Mastery in favour of upholding the value of Love in the World.

The use of the Choice Motive at this point is therefore not only logical, but also returns the attention of the audience to the central theme of the drama and of Life itself.

S. Mackerras
17/5/84.

BOOKING SLIP : TALK BY PROFESSOR MICHAEL EWANS
"Wagner and His Successors"

Goethe Institute, 90 Ocean Street, Woollahra
Monday, 24th September at 6.30pm

Please reserve me _____ seats @ \$3 member or \$1 students/pensioners

NAME: _____ MEMBER NO. _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE NO: _____