



# The Wagner Society

(Patron — Sir Charles Mackerras)

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

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NEWSLETTER NO. 18

March 1985

COMING EVENTS:      Please note in your diary now.

VIDEO EVENING:      Austrian television interview/biography with  
Madame Leonie Rysanek - English translation  
(approx. 1-1/2 hrs).

Venue:      Print Room, Wednesday 27th March, 8.00 pm.  
Phone if you wish to attend  
- numbers limited (members only).

RECORD SALE:

"The Record Collector"  
Shop 97, Bondi Junction Plaza,  
Bondi Junction.

10% discount for members, Tuesday 23rd April, 1985 at 6.00 pm.  
Refreshments will be served. (No need to book.)  
A large range of hard-to-get Wagnerian records are available.

ANNUAL DINNER AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Friday 24th May, 1984, 6.30 pm/Dinner 7.30 pm.

Venue:      Madison Room, Southern Cross Hotel,  
Cnr Elizabeth and Goulburn Streets, Sydney.

Agenda:      Apologies - Minutes of Fourth Annual General Meeting.

Election of office bearers.

To be followed by buffet dinner, \$24.00 per person.  
(Complimentary cocktails at 7.30 pm.)  
See inside Newsletter for further details.  
Guest of Honour Miss Rita Hunter.  
Booking form enclosed.

5TH ANNUAL DINNER

Plans are well advanced to make this year's Dinner one to remember.

Firstly, as guest of honour, we have the ever popular Rita Hunter. Admiring her mostly for her great operatic roles - and she has really done us proud this year as Brünnhilde - we will learn to know her on this occasion as Raconteuse and Chanteuse.

Secondly we have a new location - the Southern Cross Hotel - which has a delightfully intimate banquet room to suit our needs. Parking should be no problem, whether in the streets or in the safety of the nearby car parks (Wilson's and City Council). Public transport is also very convenient to the hotel's location at the corner of Elizabeth and Goulburn Streets.

A splendid buffet dinner has been ordered, and will consist of cold meat entrees, followed by either Chicken a la King or Roast Sirloin of Beef, a variety of salads and finally a dessert selection with coffee.

Wines to complement the meal will be available as required, on a cash basis, payment being made to the Bar Steward attending your table.

As usual there will be a short cocktail hour prior to the dinner, when complimentary drinks will be served in the Ground Floor Lounge, especially set apart for our function.

So that you may keep a happy souvenir of the night a special souvenir menu will be printed, which no doubt you will want to have autographed by Rita Hunter.

As this function also commemorates the birthday of Richard Wagner, come along in a party mood, and bring your non-member friends; they are most welcome.

The cost of all this is only \$24.00 per person, so return your attendance form as soon as possible as numbers may have to be restricted.

ANNUAL RAFFLE

Enclosed with this Newsletter is a booklet of tickets for the Annual Guessing Competition, which will be drawn during the evening of the Annual Dinner on Friday 24th May, and the results published in the June Newsletter.

The prizes are: 1st: 2 'A' Reserve tickets for "Elektra"  
(R. Strauss) (Concert performance).  
2nd: Collectors Plate - Bayreuth Collection  
- Value \$40.00.  
3rd: Set of A.O. 'Ring' Posters - Value \$20.00.

Ticket prices are \$1.00 each.

Booksellers prize: Biography, Richard and Cosima Wagner  
by Geoffrey Skelton - Value \$30.00.

Your efforts in selling as many tickets as possible will be appreciated - you can ring 358.1919 for more books.

Remember, please return all unsold tickets, and the filled-in butts of all sold ones before the 24th May, or bring them with you to the Dinner.

### PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The format of the functions planned for 1985 have, as you will have noticed, changed somewhat, in order to maximise attendance, optimise member benefits and provide a convivial atmosphere for mixing and socialising whilst still adding to the "Wagnerian Experience".

In the past the small attendance at functions has been a big worry to your Committee who put in so much effort in arranging them. Now, with the elimination of admission fees for members whenever possible, there should be little reason for anyone to stay away.

Membership in the Wagner Society gives many benefits and demands few obligations - namely, supporting the functions, and recruiting as many new members as you can. The larger the membership the easier it is for the Society to achieve its aims and objectives. In this, our fifth year, we are unfortunately obliged to raise the membership subscription rate for the first time, to cover the expenses of the Newsletter, meetings and routine administrative matters. The cost of providing the various functions through the year will not be covered from subscriptions, so we must look to other traditional ways of raising money, namely donations and the raffle.

Tax deductible donations are perhaps the ideal way of showing your appreciation for the work of the Society. Since the final cost to you is between 30 to 50 percent of what you pay, you can afford to give generously, at least the equivalent, say, of what you would have paid in entry fees to functions, had they been made.

Even if every member donated \$10.00 per year the resulting amount would be close to our commitment to the Bayreuth Scholarship. Just setting aside 10 or 15 cents a day - that loose change in your pocket or in the bottom of your purse - makes a worthwhile annual gift. Acknowledgement of members' generosity will be made in the Newsletter, unless the donor wishes to remain anonymous.

For those who like the excitement of a gamble - or do not need the tax deduction - the Annual Raffle gives the chance to win a nice gift. The draw will be made at the Annual Dinner and always provides an exciting moment. Try to interest your music-loving friends into buying some tickets.

Remember, the functions are organised for you and your friends to enjoy and to profit from. If the success of our first two activities this year is a guide, you will really be missing out on something if you don't attend the coming events.

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING and renewal of subscriptions

Any member who wishes to be considered for election should complete the enclosed Nomination Form.

Any member who cannot attend the meeting but wishes to exercise their voting right should fill in the Proxy Voting Form. Only financial members are eligible to vote.

Subscriptions are due on 1st April each year. Membership Renewal Form is enclosed and should be returned together with fees due, by May 10th.

#### THE WAGNER PROBLEM IN ISRAEL, 1984

A new book was just published in Israel, "Who's Afraid of Richard Wagner? - Aspects of a Controversial Personality", edited by Rina Litoyen and Hezy Shelah (Keter, Jerusalem, 1984). It is a very important book, not so much in its content, but more in its appearance. A book about Wagner, in Hebrew, in Israel, a country where there is almost an official ban on public performances (i.e. radio, television and concerts) of Wagner's music. The appearance of this book might be the beginning of an era in which the whole debate about Wagner, the man and his music, would be looked into once more.

October 1981 was the last time when the issue took to the headlines of Israeli mass media. Maestro Zubin Mehta, Israel Philharmonic Orchestra's musical director, tried to introduce, as an extra piece at the end of an ordinary subscription concert, Wagner's music. He addressed the public asking those who did not want to hear the music or those who did not approve, to leave the hall. This led to a long riot during the several days in which the attempt was made time and again until the maestro realised he had failed. The "Liebestod" was performed several times to the shouts from the rioting audience. This is certainly not the way one would like to hear Wagner's music performed in Israel.

Maestro Mehta's mistake, was a double one. The first was to address the public before playing Wagner's music. Maybe the music should have been played, and only later the address. Secondly Wagner's music, if and when it is performed in Israel, should not enter from the back door. A special concert should be announced for Wagner's music only, orchestral only at the first concerts, of course. Only those who wish to hear the music will come and it will not be forced on the usual subscription public.

However this latter idea of mine was tried in the 70's to no avail and the announced concert had to be cancelled. So until today when an Israeli wants to hear Wagner's music he must buy his own commercial recordings.

What is the reason for this ban? The sad thing is that there is no logical reason at stake. With illogical reasons one cannot argue. Wagner has become today the only symbol in Israel of the Nazi holocaust. In a nation that has learned to live with diplomatic relations with the German Government, and the everyday use of German products, Wagner remains the last and seemingly ineradicable symbol of the most horrible period of the Jewish history.

That Wagner was anti-semitic is a fact, but so have been many other famous composers - (Liszt) - and their music is performed without any problem. That in hearing music one should think above all about the art, not the artist, is agreed among many learned persons. However in Israel there exists a lot of people, many of whom are very learned, who feel that the

playing of Wagner's music hurts their feelings as Jewish survivors from Nazi Germany. The music of Wagner played in the Nazi concentration camps, (though it was not the only music played there), reminds these people of their tragedy.

As it is impossible to argue with emotional and illogical reasoning one cannot prove (or even try to do so) their being right or wrong. The only sad thing is that such feelings enforce an artistic ban on a very large crowd who does not share these feelings (and some of these are also survivors from Nazi Germany) and who are very eager to hear Wagner's music. If I might somehow agree, or rather understand these feelings, and thus also understand the ban in the mass media, I just cannot accept or understand the ban in the concert hall. Nobody forces anybody to attend a concert, and those who want to hear Wagner's music should not be prevented from doing so. Why should the Israeli Wagnerians suffer because of the feelings of other people? It really does not seem fair.

The saddest thing today, at the end of 1984, is that the public reaction has not changed as a whole. People still believe in the Wagner Ban - even young people from a totally new generation. I await very much the day when I will be able to hear a performance of Wagner's works here in my own country. However today this seems as far away as it ever was. There is not one hint which points to change. Thank heaven we are still permitted to hear the music in our own homes.

Michael Ajzenstadt, Jerusalem

#### BAYREUTH FESTIVAL TICKETS

Many members who are on the Festival mailing list have already received their reserved theatre tickets for the 1985 Festival taking place from July 25th to August 28th. It has occurred to the Committee of your Society that the many members wishing to avail themselves of this method of obtaining tickets are not aware of the procedure. Of course, application for tickets per se does not necessarily mean any will be received because the world-wide demand is so great, but by staying on the computer list year by year, it is not long before a pleasant surprise comes your way.

To stay on the list you must apply each year, even if you do not intend going to Bayreuth for that season. You can refuse to accept tickets that may have been allocated to you, or better still, you can allow someone else to purchase them from you. There are always members wanting tickets. If sufficient tickets become available there is always the chance of organising a group tour, with the obvious social and financial benefits.

Application for tickets has to be made on the special form provided by the Festival Booking Office, and returned to them no later than 14th November the year before the Festival. Notification of ticket allocation usually comes at Christmas time - otherwise a polite note advising of the unavailability of seats will come later in February. Thus you have a good seven months to prepare for the tour, which incidentally may not occur on the exact dates you selected, due once again to the great demand on the box office. You have to be prepared to take an alternative cycle of operas.

The Wagner Society can be helpful in co-ordinating the ticket applications, arranging exchanges and setting up a group tour.

In order to put yourself on the mailing list you have to write a short letter in English - requesting a ticket application form for the next Festival. The address is:- BAYREUTHER FESTSPIELE,  
KARTENBÜRO,  
POSTFACH 2320,  
8580 BAYREUTH 2,  
WEST GERMANY.

Do this now. Further information, and help with the actual ticket request form will appear in the next Newsletter.

#### WERNER BAER LECTURES

Mr Werner Baer, MBE, has just commenced a series of nine lectures for the W.E.A., every Wednesday morning at 10.30 am in the Exhibition Hall, Opera House, Sydney. The lectures cover the Wagner Operas with particular emphasis on the "Ring Cycle".

Contact the W.E.A. on 264-2781 for further information, quoting course No. 077.

NOMINATION TO COMMITTEE

The Secretary,  
The Wagner Society,  
141 Dowling Street,  
WOOLLOOMOOLOO, NSW, 2011.

Dear Sir,

Please take notice that we, the undersigned members, hereby respectively  
propose and second \_\_\_\_\_  
for election as a member of the Committee of The Wagner Society.

DATED this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 1985.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
Proposer Second

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
Member Proposed

PROXY

The Secretary,  
The Wagner Society,  
141 Dowling Street,  
WOOLLOOMOOLOO, NSW, 2011.

Dear Sir,

I cannot attend the Fifth Annual General Meeting, but give my proxy vote  
to \_\_\_\_\_  
who is a current financial member of the Society.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL ... FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NOT RENEWED

The Wagner Society,  
141 Dowling Street,  
WOOLLOOMOOLOO, NSW, 2011.

I wish to renew membership of the Wagner Society in the following category:

- \$18.00 Ordinary Membership (Annual Subscription)  
 \$30.00 Joint Membership (Husband & Wife) Annual Subscription  
 \$ 9.00 Pension/Young Membership (Under 25) Annual Subscription

Membership renewal is due annually on April 1st.

Mr/Mrs/Miss

\_\_\_\_\_ (Full first name and surname in BLOCK LETTERS thanks)

Membership No. \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

(BLOCK LETTERS)

\_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Day; \_\_\_\_\_ Evening

If under 25 - please include birth date \_\_\_\_\_

If a Pensioner, please quote No. \_\_\_\_\_

I/we enclose cheque/postal note/money order, payable to The Wagner Society.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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TO: THE GENERAL MANAGER  
THE ELIZABETHAN THEATRE TRUST  
P.O. Box 137,  
Kings Cross, NSW, 2011.

Dear Sir,

Please find enclosed a cheque for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ representing my donation to The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust. This donation is given unconditionally. However, it would be appreciated if, when considering your appropriations to the performing companies, preference in the allocation of this donation could be given to The Wagner Society.

SIGNATURE .....

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

..... POSTCODE.....



C O M M I T T E E

President	:	Leonard Hansen	2/3 Rosemont Avenue Woollahra 2025	326.1793 27.2969 (bus)
Vice President & Co-Editor	:	Richard King	141 Dowling Street Woolloomooloo 2011	358.1919
Secretary	:	Jean Byrne	8 Lincoln Street Eastwood 2122	86.3815 630.6444 (bus)
Assistant Secretary	:	Michel Arnould	2/3 Rosemont Avenue Woollahra 2025	326.1793 211.1029 (bus)
Treasurer	:	Joseph Ferfoggia	71 Binalong Avenue Allambie Heights 2100	938.2030 646.1555 (bus)
Assistant Treasurer	:	Judy Ferfoggia	71 Binalong Avenue Allambie Heights 2100	938.2030 451.5555 (bus) Ext. 1
Co-Editor	:	Janet Wayland	278 Oxford Street Paddington 2021	332.3926 357.4806 (bus)
Publicity Officer	:	Sue Kelly	7/30 Cook Road Centennial Park 2021	331.1973 588.1111 (bus) Ext. 2382
Librarian/ Archivist	:	Murray Smith	141 Dowling Street Woolloomooloo 2011	358.1919
Patron:	:	Sir Charles Mackerras		
Honorary Life Members		:	Werner Baer M.B.E.,	Leonie Rysanek