

THE WAGNER SOCIETY IN NEW SOUTH WALES INC  
NEWSLETTER

**Registered Office: 4/22 Read Street, Waverley, 2024**

No. 80, September 2000

### COMING EVENTS

<i>DATE</i>	<i>EVENT</i>	<i>LOCATION</i>
September 17	<b>Have your Say!</b> Panel on <i>Götterdämmerung</i> - special guest, Mr Bill Gillespie, <i>see below</i>	Goethe Institut 1.00 PM
October 15	Wagner Society 20th Anniversary Function: Varied Program, <i>see below</i>	Goethe Institut 1.00 PM
November 19	Video <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> . Bayreuth	Goethe Institut 1.00 PM
December 10	Christmas Party - Barry Walters on visiting Wagner's residences; video of Wagner's favourite walk around Tribschen	Goethe Institut 2.00 PM
February 2000	Erich Fackert and Len Vorster - music for clarinet and saxophone with piano accompaniment <i>see below</i>	Goethe Institut 1.00 PM

### COMMITTEE 2000-20001

President	Barbara McNulty	9487 1344
Vice President and Newsletter Editor	Terence Watson	9517 2786
Treasurer	Roger Cruickshank	9357 7631
Secretary and Membership Secretary	Vacant	
Members	Shirley Robertson	9707 2225
	Lindsay Knight	9550 3290
	Dennis Mather	9560 1860
	Vacant	
Public Officer	Olive Coonan	9344 3470

**FUTURE SOCIETY EVENTS**  
**September 17: Have your say!** Discussion of SSO performance of *Götterdämmerung* with a panel including special Guest, Mr Bill Gillespie, Head of the Academy of Performing Arts, Edith Cowan University, WA. Excerpts from video documentaries on Wagner "Hitler's Religion" by Petrus Van der Let and "The Great Composers: Wagner", will also be shown as a prelude to a general discussion of Wagner and his work and future performances in Australia.

**October 15:** Wagner Society 20th Anniversary . Guest of Honour - Mr Horst Hoffmann, with recital by Ms Adele Johnston accompanied by Ms Fiona McCabe

**November 19:** Video *Tristan und Isolde* from Bayreuth Barenboim conducting, Ponelle staging and design, Kollo, Meier, Schwarz, Salminen and Becht.

**February 2001:** Erich Fackert and Lenn Vorster - program of clarinet, saxophone and piano music by Schumann, Paganni, Poulenc, Pedro Iturralde and Milhaud.

### THE PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT - 1999-2000

It gives me great pleasure to present to you the Annual Report for the past year particularly in this year that marks the 20th anniversary of the founding of our Society. It is of great interest that of the twenty or so Founding Members thirteen are still actively involved including, Reg and Betty Maloney, Michael Bookallil, Clare and Margaret Hennessy, Sue Kelly, Mr Dennis, Julie King, Bill and Margaret Suthers, Hugh and Janet Wayland and Richard King.

The Society was established to "further the knowledge and appreciation of the life and works of Richard Wagner in Australia". It is clear that, in the intervening time, there has been a noticeable increase in the knowledge and appreciation of all things Wagnerian and that the number of performances of his works has grown greatly. While we can't claim credit for this alone I do believe that as a Society and as individuals committed to our aims we have played a significant role.

In the past five years, for instance, we have seen two new Opera Australia productions, *Tannhäuser* and *Der fliegende Holländer*, The Ring Cycle in Adelaide and the ongoing Concert Ring performances by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. Our Society has been a Sponsor of all these productions.

There will be Wagner opera, *Lohengrin*, and a Wagner Concert in Sydney next year and two States, NSW and South Australia, are investigating the possibility of mounting Australian Ring Cycles in this decade and again we will offer our support.

In conjunction with the Concert *Siegfried* last year we arranged a very successful inaugural Australasian Wagner Seminar and lunch prior to the performance when we welcomed over twenty members of the New Zealand Wagner Association as well as members from other Australian Societies. We maintain contact with New Zealand and hope that we can repeat the success of that gathering in the near future.

A very important initiative that came to fruition during the year was our venture onto the Internet and we are greatly indebted to Marc Greyling, Dennis Mather, John Studdert and the members of the Website Sub-committee, chaired by Terence Watson, for the enormous amounts of time given so freely to establish and maintain our webpage. We have had numerous Questions and comments from around the world and our first membership application via the net: [www.wagner-nsw.org.au](http://www.wagner-nsw.org.au). Our regular meetings continue to provide a varied program, however it is a matter of some concern that the numbers of members attending appear to be dropping and if this continues it will have serious implications for our budget. The Committee has had some preliminary discussion about possible causes and remedies and we would welcome your comments and suggestions.

We continue to have a strong relationship with the Goethe Institute but were sad to farewell Countess Baudissin who has always been a good friend of the Wagner Society and we shall miss her. We do though welcome Dr Goll and thank him and his staff for their support and assistance. We also maintain our contact with the Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany and thank Dr Roever and his staff for their continuing interest.

It has been again been our pleasure this year to assist The Opera Foundation by providing a return airfare for the Bayreuth Scholar. This year's winner is Michael Black, Acting Chorus Master for Opera Australia, and we wish him every success.

The Committee has had a very productive year, clarifying several policy areas as well as maintaining the smooth functioning of the Society. We were sorry that Onofrio Ferrara

resigned during the year, but time constraints precluded his continued involvement. All members of the Committee have given unstintingly of their time and expertise and on your behalf I thank them. Olive Coonan as Honorary Treasurer, continued to be the backbone of the Committee. She is always the first to offer to undertake any task no matter how big or small it might be and her perseverance through the debacle of the *Götterdämmerung* tickets is to be commended. We hope we will receive the tickets today and you will have them as soon as possible. Clare Hennessy has been a great help as Vice President, and as Membership Secretary she has also been kept busy as our numbers continue to grow and a gratifying number of members renew.

Shirley Robertson is another Committee member who undertakes a larger role providing our afternoon teas each month and there is no doubt that they contribute significantly to the pleasure of our Sundays. This is a major responsibility as everything we use has to be brought to each meeting and then stored at Shirley's home till next time.

Terence Watson, besides doing the Program, has, with Roger Cruickshank, been a tower of strength. They have involved themselves in many areas, the Newsletter, the webpage and policy development to name a few.

Barry Walters has been an industrious Secretary and has made the running of the Committee deceptively easy. He has handled the Bayreuth ticket application in an exemplary fashion and this is no easy task. Lastly but not least, Lindsay Knight has been an enthusiastic member of the group whenever time permitted and we have welcomed his input. Although not a member of the Committee, I must mention our tireless Newsletter Editor, Barbara Brady, who has done an excellent job and keeps the Newsletter full of information and news. I would also like to thank Cameron Dyer for his assistance in providing that invaluable section of the Newsletter 'The Raven's Reporting' which keeps us abreast of forthcoming Wagner performances around the world.

Sadly we say goodbye to several wonderful people today. Olive Coonan, Clare Hennessy, Barry Walters and Barbara Brady retire today and we shall miss them all. They have served the Society well in many capacities. They have given of themselves far beyond our expectations and each leaves an indelible impression on the Society that is to its great benefit. To each of them a heartfelt 'thank you'. We shall not forget what you have done. I know that you will continue to be involved in different ways for many more years.

Reg Maloney, after twenty years of service to the Society has resigned as Public Officer. We will not forget his contribution and his enthusiasm for Wagner and his works.

Joseph Ferfaglia has graciously agreed to continue as our Honorary Auditor.

You will be interested to know that Antony Ernst's Ring lectures are ready for publication. Ian and Barbara Brady have transcribed each lecture and an Editorial Sub-Committee of Barbara McNulty, Barbara Brady and Terence Watson has worked in consultation with Antony to prepare the papers for printing. We thank them all for undertaking what initially seemed an easy task but turned out to be a major undertaking.

We gratefully acknowledge the generosity of all those who make donations to the Society. These donations are critical to our ability to maintain our support and encouragement for the various Wagnerian concert and opera performances that we all enjoy so much.

Lastly I want to thank all the members of the Society for their interest and support especially

those members who regularly attend meetings and contribute actively to encouraging interest and understanding in the life and work of Richard Wagner. **B McNulty 23.7.2000**

#### **ADDRESS**

Please note our permanent address for all correspondence  
The Wagner Society in New South Wales Inc  
GPO Box 4574 SYDNEY NSW 2001  
Telephone: 9487 1344 (Barbara McNulty, President)  
Website: <http://www.wagner-nsw.org.au/>

#### **DONATIONS**

The Society welcomes all donations and they can be addressed to the Treasurer, Wagner Society in NSW Inc at the GPO address above. Such donations help us to carry out our objectives of promoting the performance of Wagner's works. Donations are tax-deductible and receipts will be issued. Donations have been received from Mrs Naomi Kaldor, Dr S Freiberg, and Mrs W Hinds.

#### **20TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The Annual General Meeting was held at the Goethe Institut, 90 Ocean Street, Woollahra, on Sunday 23 July 2000 at 1.00 PM.

#### **NEW MEMBERS**

Mr & Mrs MF Hurford, Miss AL Klettenberg, Mr R Kaminsky and Mr H Diamond, Mrs A Kayser, Mr DR Orr, Mr & Mrs R Cottle, and Dr J Altman.

#### **EDITORIAL COMMITTEE**

The Editorial Committee consists of the President (*ex officio*), the Vice President (Editor), and one or more Committee members as nominated by the Committee of Management.

#### **WAGNER SOCIETY IN QUEENSLAND**

A belated welcome to the newest Wagner Society and best wishes for a successful mission in promoting the works of Richard Wagner. Mr Hal Davis is the President and Ms Barbara Clifford, the secretary. The contact details are: PO Box 1052, Springwood Qld 4127, Telephone (07) 3209 3600, Fax (07) 3808 5178.

#### **ADMISSION TO THE GOETHE INSTITUT**

When functions begin at 1.00 PM the door will remain open until 1.20 PM. We are obliged to keep the door locked when no-one is in attendance but a committee member will return to the foyer briefly at 1.40 PM to check for latecomers. Please do not press the buzzer.

#### **FINANCIAL MEMBERS AS AT 31 JULY 2000**

Mr P Alger; Mr & Mrs D. W. Allen; Dr & Mrs G Amigo; Mrs J Anderson; Mr C Andrew; Mrs S Baer; Mrs C Bailey; Ms P Baillie; Mr K Baldenhofer; Mrs J Bates; Mrs M Baumgartner; Ms M Baxter; Mr A Beck; Ms S Beesley; Mr D Bihari; Dr B Boman; Dr M Bookallil; Ms J Bowen; Mr & Mrs I Brady; Miss L Brauer; Mrs M Bremmer-Moore;

Mrs M Bridges; Dr W Brooks; Mrs J M Brown; Mr & Mrs J Buchanan; Mr R Buckdale; Mrs M Budge; Mr D Byrnes; Mr D Campbell; Mr & Mrs Capps; Ms B Carfrae; Mr A Carter; Dr J H Casey; Miss A Casimir; Mr & Mrs A Cater; Dr & Mrs G Chesher; Dr & Mrs R T Clarke; Miss D Cleaver; Mr & Mrs A Cohen; Dr & Mrs R Cohen; Mr D Colquhoun; Miss J Condon; Mrs S Condon; Mrs N Conigrave; Mr & Mrs M Connery; Mrs O Coonan; Mr & Mrs R Cousens; Mrs M Craig; Mrs M Crane; Mrs M Craston; Mr R Cruickshank; Mr P Curran; Mrs EM Cymbalak; Mr M Day; Mrs G Dechert; Mr D Delany; Mr & Mrs H Derichs; Ms B de Rome; Mr BG Dexter; Rev Dr C Dominish; Mr H Donaldson; Mr & Mrs BHK Donovan; Dr J Donsworth; Dr and Mrs N Dorsch; Mr BC Ducker; Mrs S Dudgeon; Ms H N Dunlop; Mr C W Dyer; Mr H Ebert; Mr C A Evatt; Mrs J Ferfaglia; Mrs J Ferns; Mr and Mrs O Ferrara; Mr TW Field; Lady Finley; Mrs N Fleming; Mr J H Floehl; Dr S Freiberg ; Mr W Fyfe; Mrs I Garofali; Mr R Gastineau-Hills; Ms L Geeves; Mr R Gibson; Mr W Gillespie; Ms S Gillies; Miss M Glacken; Ms Doris Goss; Mrs J Gosse; Dr A Goy; Mrs AT Graham; Mr & Mrs K Grant; Miss N Grant; Dr J Gregory-Roberts; Mr M Greyling; Mrs JE Griffin ; Mr & Mrs I Gzell; Prof & Mrs P Hall; Mr H Hallard; Mr & Mrs A Hamlin; Mrs SP Handley; Mrs M Harris; Mrs S Hartnett & Miss B Hartnett; Dr F & Dr P Harvey; Mr S Hatcher; Ms DM Heath; Mr CJ Heathers; Miss S Hebbard; Miss C Hennessy; Miss M Hennessy; Mrs W Hinds; Miss M Hiscock; Mr T Hudson; Miss C Hughes; Drs I & L Hunter; Mr I Hutchison; Mr E Insausti; Mr J Iredale; Mrs C Jackaman; Ms J Jacks; Mr D Jamieson; Dr E Janssen; Mr B Johnson; Mr M Johnstone; Mr AN Jones; Dr & Mrs B Jones; Mr C Jones; Miss E Jones; Mrs E Jumikis; Ms N Kaldor; Misses D & I Kallinikos; Dr S M Kelly; Dr & Mrs D King; Mrs V King; Mr L Knight; Dr K Koller; Ms I Kowalski; Mrs E Kraefft; Mrs R Kruszelnicki; Mr P A Lehmann; Dr J Leigh; Ms E Lenthall; Mr & Mrs H Littman; Mr R A F Lloyd; Mr J Lockyer; Mrs E Long; Mr B R Love; Ms J MacKenzie; Mrs B Maloney; Mr E Manass; Ms J Manton; Mr A Martin; Dr R C Mason; Dr D Mather; Hon Justice J Mathews; Dr I Maxwell; Mrs D McBain; Dr D McCarthy; Mr A McDonald; Mrs P McGaw; Mr JM McGrath; Mr B McKenzie; Mrs B McNulty; Mr N Mercer; Mr & Mrs W Merretz; Dr LP Milewski; Dr & Mrs TA Mitchell; Mr J. Moessis; Ms P Moore; Mr & Mrs J Moore; Mrs EM Moser; Mrs J Mulveney; Mr AS Murray; Mr D Mutton; Mr & Mrs WF Naylor; Dr B & Mr C Newton; Mr & Mrs P Nicholson; Mr & Mrs GA Nicoll; Mr W Norris; Mr & Mrs A Olave; Mrs H Perini; Mr C Piper; Ms F Pisier; Mr A Pratt; Mr G Ramsay; Ms E Rasink; Mr K Reed; Mr G Richards; Mrs P Richards; Mrs S Robertson; Ms L Royos; Mrs M Saunders; Ms C Segura; Mrs P Seidler; Mr S Sheffer; Sir Nicholas & Lady Shehadie; Ms N Siano; Mr J A Simmonds; Mr R Smallwood; Mr A Smith; Mrs A T Smith; Mr & Mrs W Spiller; Mr R Steele; Mr R Stone; Ms A T Straube; Mr J Studdert; Mrs E Sullivan; Dr & Mrs W Suthers; Mr & Mrs A J Sutton; Rear Admiral R Swan; Ms A Swebbs; Mr C Terrason; Mr P Thompson; Mrs P E Thompson; Mr J Thomson; Mrs I Tornya; Mr D J Triggs; Mr & Mrs B Walters; Mr & Mrs D Watkins; Dr TG Watson; Mr W and Dr E Watson; Mr & Mrs H Wayland; Ms L Webster; Ms A Weeden; Mr R Whitelaw; Mrs M Whitlam; Mrs A Williamson; Mr A Wong; Mrs A Williamson; Mrs AT Woodham; Mr & Mrs R Woodward; Dr A Ziegler.

## FINANCIAL REPORT

THE WAGNER SOCIETY IN NEW SOUTH WALES INC  
REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2000

1999

2000

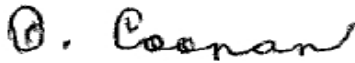
CURRENT ACTIVITIES

8520.00	REVENUE MEMBERSHIP	8745.00
	Less administration costs	
1885.25	Newsletters: printing and distribution	2041.91
1091.65	Printing, stationery, postage and telephone	1102.25
72.12	Bank charges 75,98	
358.70	Subscriptions	400.00
550,00	Insurance	550.00
<u>35.00</u>	Statutory and other fees	<u>35.00 (4205.14)</u>
452728	Surplus / (Deficiency)	4539.86
	<b>REVENUE OTHER</b>	
10924.00	Lectures and functions	6017.35
4219~00	Theatre parties	5595.00
4180.00	Annual luncheon May 1999	4620.00
1677.00	Annual competition 1999	1485.00
<u>1269,37</u>	Bank / Investment interest	<u>1104.56</u>
22269.37	18821.91	
	<b>LESS EXPENSES</b>	
8305.25	Lectures and functions	5091.24
3679.00	Theatre parties	5595.00
4150.00	Annual luncheon May 1999	5543.00
0.00	Annual competition 1999	120.00
0,00	Miscellaneous advertising and publicity	769~00
<u>0.00</u>	Other miscellaneous	<u>110.00 (17228.24)</u>
6135.12	Surplus / (Deficiency)	<u>1593.67</u>
10662.40	TOTAL CURRENT ACTIVITIES	6133.53
(416.62)	EXTRAORDINARY EXPENSES	0.00 0.00
10245.78	SURPLUS / (DEFICIENCY)	<u>6133.53</u>
	<b>PUBLIC DONATIONS AND INVESTMENT ACCOUNT</b>	
	<b>REVENUE</b>	
1450.00	Donations	1579,00
<u>0.74</u>	Interest <u>0.86</u>	
1450.74	1579.86	
	<b>LESS EXPENDITURE</b>	
14900.00	Sponsorships and donations	7102.00
<u>19.97</u>	Bank charges <u>11.95</u>	
14919.97	(7113.95)	
	<b>TOTAL EXTRAORDINARY ACTIVITIES</b>	
<u>(13469.23)</u>	Surplus / (Deficiency)	<u>(5534.09)</u>
	<b>TOTAL SURPLUS / (DEFICIENCY FOR THE</b>	
<u>(3223.45)</u>	<b>YEAR ENDED 31/3/2000</b>	599.44
	<b>DETAILS OF DONATIONS AND SPONSORSHIP</b>	
	Sydney Symphony Orchestra	5000.00
	Bayreuth Scholarship Winner Lisa Gasteen	<u>2102.00</u>
	7102,00	

THE WAGNER SOCIETY IN NEW SOUTH WALES INC  
BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 MARCH 2000

1999	2000
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>	
0,00 Prepayments.. functions seminar	7348.64
500.00 Prepayments: luncheon May	0.00
4392.76 Cash at bank	529.96
27759.63 Investment	28853.42
248,02 Public Donation Account	810.93
80.00 Stocks: P/S brochures, raffle tickets, envelopes, etc.	80.00
6956.00 46 items Lohengrin set design/frames	6956.00
75.00 Wagner Tshirts	75.00
40.00 Debtors	0.00
<u>0.00</u> Petty Cash	100.00
<u>40051.41</u>	44753.95
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>	
185.00 Filing Cabinet	185.00
(185.00) less depreciation	(185.00)
990.00 Set of Speakers	990,00
(990.00) less depreciation	(990.00)
695.00 Typewriter	695,00
(695.00) less depreciation	(695.00)
100.00 Urn 100.00	
(100.00) less depreciation	(100.00)
<u>0.00</u> <u>0.00</u>	
<u>40051.41</u> <b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	44753.95
less <b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	
6.90 Creditors 35.00	
550.00 Prepaid membership	95.00
<u>2760.00</u> Prepaid theatre party	<u>7290.00</u>
<u>(3316.90)</u> <b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<u>(7420.00)</u>
<b>TOTAL ACCUMULATED FUNDS AS AT</b>	
<u>36734.51</u> <b>31/312000</b>	<u>37333.95</u>
<b>ACCUMULATED FUNDS ANALYSIS</b>	
Surplus as at 31 March 1999	36734.51
Plus surplus / (deficiency) for Year 1999/2000	. 59944
Surplus as at 31 March 2000	<u>37333.95</u>

**AUDITOR'S REPORT** After having examined the books and records of the WAGNER SOCIETY IN NEW SOUTH WALES ING, in my opinion the above balance sheet and attached statement of revenue and expenditure represent an accurate statement of the financial affairs of the Society.



O. Coonan  
Treasurer

  
J. Ferfoglia  
Hon. Auditor



### OPERA REVIEWS

**THE HELSINKI RING CYCLE** - Helsinki in spring is beautiful. To arrive on a crisp sunny day with all the trees in new leaf, lilacs in full bloom and spring flowers and bulbs everywhere augured well for our visit to see the Ring Cycle. The Opera house is relatively new, all white with a glass wall that overlooks a broad green meadow down to a narrow arm of the harbour which makes an idyllic setting.

The production by Gotz Freidrich was very modern with minimal scenery and many interesting features. Perhaps the overriding impression of the production was of sexuality including deviance in most of the close relationships. Incest was apparent between Wotan and Brünnhilde and Gunther and Gutrune while the Valkyries seemed to be lesbians given to necrophilia with the dead heroes. Wotan's amputation of Alberich's hand to gain the ring was a rather extreme touch.

In *Das Rheingold* the raised stage was used to great effect in the Rhine and Nibelungen scenes. The Rhine Maidens sang well and were extremely seductive, enticing Alberich with occasionally exposed breasts quickly concealed on his approach. The dressing was eclectic. The Giants looked like space men and Alberich a rather seedy businessman. Fricka and Wotan were formally dressed in long cream coats, while Donner was a boxer ready for the ring and Froh, wearing a long organza coat over a white business suit, looked ready for a gay mardi gras. Mette Ejsing's Erda was wonderfully sung.

*Die Walküre* was most enjoyable and the singing was generally excellent. Raimo Sirkia as Siegmund, and Taina Piira as Sieglinde were excellent and Jukka Ryhanen as Hunding was outstanding. Hunding's fellow hunters were rather disconcerting with their electric torches which were used in a very menacing manner but which really added nothing to the scene. Brünnhilde, Susan Maire Pierson, was very good and I doubt if I shall ever see *Die Walküre* again without remembering the pelvic thrusts which accompanied her 'hojotohos'. Wotan, Jukka Rasilainen, good in *Das Rheingold*, was even better and the scene with Fricka, Eeva-Liisa Saarinen, most convincing. The Valkyries, dressed in overalls with exposed leather bodices, were rather butch but sang well. Wotan's farewell to Brünnhilde was beautifully sung and most moving and concluded with the entire stage surrounded by most impressive real fire.

*Siegfried* again was very good but with some strange quirks. There was no bear just a skin, Mime had a red umbrella for reasons which escape me and five scantily clad Woodbirds appeared from behind trees to sing their forest murmurs. The dragon was a huge blowup which almost filled the stage and deflated as it died. Again, the singing was very good.

*Götterdämmerung* opened well with excellent Norns, though Brünnhilde's appearance before the conclusion of the scene to break the rope was somewhat disconcerting. Hagen, Matti Salminen, was very good and the chorus of Gibichings was excellent. The difficult scene changes and the destruction of the Gibiching hall and Valhalla were very well managed. The recovery of the ring and Hagen's drowning were most realistic. Brünnhilde's reappearance at the end in contemplative pose suggested hope for the future and a new order.

The one disappointment was the orchestra under Lief Segerstam which was large but included many young players whose enthusiasm did not equate with experience with the result that at times the music was unable to match the excellent singing. This notwithstanding, it was a most enjoyable Ring. **Barbara McNulty August 2000.**

**THE NEW YORK METROPOLITAN RING CYCLE** - A week and a day in New York

As Jan Bates said so eloquently in the June Newsletter, the New York Metropolitan and its production was superb. We had had a mix-up in ordering the Metropolitan tickets (apparently not unusual), but thanks to many international phone calls by Terence Watson, we finally received our tickets. As you can imagine, we feared the trip may be a disaster.

In Los Angeles, my least favourite city, and after an almost five hour wait for my New York connection, I was tired and bored until I spoke to my travelling companion who informed me that he was one of forty New Zealand Wagnerians who were travelling to New York. I couldn't believe my luck. Liz Lee, the wife of Professor Heath Lee, the President of the New Zealand Wagner Society, was introduced to me soon after. Thus started a wonderful week. Later, the Lees helped Ruth Bridges and me to attend the pre-opera lectures which we thought were booked out. These talks and discussions so illuminated these wonderful operas.

The New Zealand mob also arranged for us to be invited to the pre-performance drinks hosted by the New York Wagner Society. We were welcomed by Jan Wagner, their President, and by the members - how friendly and welcoming they were. It's a lovely feeling to walk into the Metropolitan and have people say hello and chat like old friends.

Apart from the performances, especially by Placido Domingo and Deborah Voigt, who were superb, the highlight of the week was a "Rhine Journey on the Hudson" organised by the New York Wagner Society on the night between *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*. On board the "Mystique", we were served a superb meal, accompanied by good entertainment, shared the great company of many Wagnerians from all over the USA and overseas, and enjoyed one of the most amazing sights: Manhattan and the Hudson at night.

After the Ring Cycle, After I returned to New York from a week's tour to the Niagara Falls, Lancaster County, Cornish and Washington, I dumped my bags at the 63rd Street YMCA, and hurried to the Box Office, hoping to buy a seat for the final performance of *Götterdämmerung*. To my amazement, after waiting in line for 3½ hours, tickets became available 10 minutes before the 6:30pm start. No time to change, but straight into my seat - Family Circle, dead centre! I admit to *Götterdämmerung* being my all time favourite opera. In this performance, Stig Anderson, the Danish tenor, a far better singer, in my opinion, replaced Wolfgang Neumann as Siegfried. I hope to hear much more of him. It was worth all the queuing. As Jan Bates said, Neumann showed signs of strain, but not Anderson whose voice rose to the occasion every time without any sign of strain, greatly overshadowing Jane Eaglin.

After my last trip to the Metropolitan, I thought that if I never saw another performance, at least I've seen the best; now I've seen it twice, together with a bonus *Götterdämmerung*. I now wonder if this can be bettered! **Margaret Budge July 2000**

**FLIMMFLAM: THE NEW BAYREUTH RING** - first performance 26, 27, 29, 31 July.

*Das Rheingold*

The Rhinemaidens (Dorothee Jansen [Woglinde], Natascha Petrinsky [Wellgunde], Laura Nykänen [Flosshilde]), were well cast, with strong voices. Kim Begley, as Loge, had a nice tone, but grossly overacted, as did Gunther von Kannen (Alberich). Johann Tilli [Fasolt], Philip Kang [Fafner/Hunding] and lesser gods were all satisfactory voices, if rather unexciting; however, Hans-Joachim Ketelsen (Donner/Gunther) had a coarse tone. Alan Titus (Wotan) had a pleasantly bland but warm baritone voice, with minimal stage authority. Giuseppe Sinopoli's conducting was rather slow and very quiet, rather like chamber music, which offered an interesting, if 1-dimensional view of the work. The production (Jürgen Flimm [Director], Erich Wonder [Sets], Florence von Gerkan [Costumes]) had some interesting ideas, essentially a parallel with corporate life, with Wotan as the chief executive/architect planning Valhalla as a new corporate headquarters. A number of ideas were borrowed from Dickens: the gold was specks scattered amongst debris (*Our Mutual*

*Friend*), Scene 3 was taken from *Hard Times*. The audience was extremely enthusiastic, although we had doubts: there were too many ideas thrown together at random, none well thought out and none particularly successful theatrically. Overall assessment: satisfactory.

#### *Die Walküre*

Placido Domingo was very good; however, for those who had heard him before in this role (as we had, in '97 and 4/00 at the Met), vocal deterioration was apparent, with the "Wälse" fermata rather unexciting. Kang was vocally mediocre, with minimal stage presence. Titus now showed serious weaknesses: the voice sounded unnatural, as if he was trying to force a heavier sound on a light baritone. Moreover, this vocal weakness was compounded by his minimal stage presence and absence of involvement with the character. This created a gaping hole in the opera, as, during several great scenes in Act III, Titus simply stood still and sang with no emotion; in contrast, in the great Act II monologue, the overacting was embarrassing. Birgit Remmert (Fricka) had a thin tone and was otherwise unmemorable. Gabriele Schnaut as Brünnhilde had ringing tones, a heavy vibrato, but struggled to act against the inept Titus.

The standout performance was Waltraud Meier, as Sieglinde, in wonderful voice with excellent acting which provided a consistent, deep, if unconventional portrayal. When she appeared to Siegmund in Act I (before the "Winterstürme"), she was wearing a bridal-style nightgown, as if trying to extinguish her first marriage with a second, a hint at incipient madness; by Act II she was deranged, rushing to embrace Siegmund after he was killed; in Act III she wrapped the broken Nothung in the bridal veil and cradled it like a baby on her exit, providing a nice piece of irony as we know she will die in childbirth. The conducting was on similar lines to *Das Rheingold*. The production had a few interesting ideas: the "Winterstürme" was sung to the Northern lights, an original touch; Act II, Scene 1 was set in a corporate office. However, frequent scene changes in Act II were accomplished by a noisy revolve, which destroyed several fine musical passages. There was also a strange landscape backdrop, which vaguely resembled the pyramids but had no obvious connection with the Ring, or even this staging of it. The close of Act III was a gross anti-climax: a glass tower moved to enclose Brünnhilde, an enchanting view was given of snow-capped mountains (or perhaps clouds) and then, nothing: no magic fire (a few red lines on the stage a bathetic substitute), and no applause either, for an embarrassingly long period. Overall assessment: very uneven, with a few successes but some fundamental defects.

#### *Siegfried*

Incredibly boring performance by Sinopoli, whose speeds reached absurd levels. The opera lasted 4 hours and 40 minutes (compared with an average 4 hours). The riddle scene in Act I almost came to a complete halt: I spotted many heads nodding off to sleep. The times were much longer than indicated in the program, which were presumably calculated from the dress rehearsal (other operas were accurate), implying willfulness or even malice. Sinopoli was foolish enough to take a solo curtain call, at which he was overwhelmed by booing (he was so upset by this he didn't attend the obligatory press conference the next day). Wolfgang Schmidt (Siegfried) was on quite good form in Act I, with a nice tone, but the appalling conducting severely strained his voice in the sword song, from which it did not fully recover. Schnaut had some problems with an over-wide vibrato (many thought she was out of tune) in the awakening scene, but finished strongly with golden tones. Titus seemed to improve in Act I, and the slow speeds produced some fine legato singing, but his voice deteriorated severely in Acts II and III, with a vanishing lower register. Michael Howard (Mime) was a nonentity. Mette Ejsing (Erda) was very good.

The production ran out of ideas: Act I was set in the ruins of Hunding's hut. The vague backdrop reappeared, now looking like Los Angeles, a bombed Dresden, or Auschwitz, depending on which audience member you questioned. The dragon looked impressive, but did nothing. One production quirk, which had been in evidence before, was that of introducing stray characters, particularly at the ends of Acts. For example, Alberich and Mime had appeared at the end of *Das Rheingold*. These strays appeared to be a substitution for character interaction or development. In *Siegfried* this quirk became tiresome, with the Wanderer appearing at the ends of Acts I and II, and a schoolboy Hagen at the start of Act II. However, the best set so far was at the end, where Brünnhilde's cave opened up to form a sun disc, a simple idea, linked to the text, theatrically effective without additional clutter. Overall assessment: the inept conducting destroyed the performance.

### *Götterdämmerung*

Schmidt was good overall, although his voice alternated between a fine heldentenor with clean tone, and a coarse, slightly flat sound. Schnaut had major problems in Acts I and III, with a severe wobble, although Act II was better. Embarrassingly, Wolfgang Wagner came in front of the curtain before Act II, to announce that she was ill, but would sing anyway. Apart from the German equivalent taking several minutes (most thought he was announcing a substitute), he was treated with extreme disrespect by the Bayreuth audience, with "Speak up, you fool" (in German) audible. John Tomlinson (Hagen) was rather bland, but produced a nice pleasant tone, and indeed, was in better voice than we have heard him before. Ketelsen was woeful, with a weak voice, and once forgot his lines, unfortunately out of hearing of the prompter, so simply fell silent for several crucial bars in Act II. Violeta Urmana (Waltraute) was excellent. The conducting returned to normal speed, so that *Götterdämmerung* was 5 minutes shorter than *Siegfried*! Sinopoli was obviously determined to escape boeing and avoided taking a solo curtain call. The production returned to the concept of corporate life, with Gibichung Inc. in a modern office tower. However, there were very few ideas, none of them new, and even fewer were successful. The ending fell completely flat, with a few projections on a scrim to show Valhalla and the Rhine (in each case to the other's music), and a final tableau showing a young boy (Parsifal, we were instructed), standing on a white stage. After the last note there was a long, embarrassing pause, followed by desultory applause. Boos for the production team outnumbered cheers by about 3 to 1. Worse, the applause was very short, lasting only 5 minutes, with most walking away subdued, quite unlike any other Ring we have encountered. Overall assessment: too many weak performances, and a production that died.

### Some General Thoughts

The underlying idea behind the production, an analogy of corporate life, was not itself too bad. One can quite easily imagine Valhalla as a corporate headquarters, and this approach would link Wagner to the idea of capitalism as creative destruction. The Ring is definitely concerned with endless renewal, and the limits to freedom and property are also quite reasonable as related themes. The ring itself could be portrayed as man's endless search for economic goods. Properly followed through, this could create some fruitful connections, and make the Ring appear quite contemporary. However, not all the operas fit in with this idea, indeed whole stretches of the tetralogy could be lost in this approach. Modernity is also currently rather old-fashioned, as Chéreau and many derivative productions have explored this approach over the last 25 years. The more fundamental objection is that the Ring is simply too large to fit into any particular theory, whether Socialist, Capitalist, Sophoclean, Freudian, ecological or whatever, and that an attempt to do so diminishes the work and, paradoxically, makes it appear less, rather than more, relevant. I suspect Wagner understood this point very well, and it is precisely why he set the cycle in mythological times (unlike the

*Nibelungenleid* itself, and his other operas, which are set in historical, if distant, periods). If Wagner had wanted to show a parable of modern life, he could have prescribed a contemporary drama (as Verdi did with *La Traviata*). Traditional productions allow, indeed encourage, the singers to explore deeper interpretations.

However, whilst I might prefer traditional productions, I am prepared to enjoy alternative stagings. The problem in Bayreuth was the fatal combination of technical ineptitude and insufficient original ideas. This contrasted sharply with the amount of pre-performance production propaganda: TV programs, newspaper articles and so on. This puffery would be risible anywhere except Germany, and it went unnoticed by the critics that the actual staging bore little resemblance. Flimm, in an interview, stated that the interrelationships between characters were critical, but the production was characterised by their lack of interaction (I thought this deliberate, until I read the articles, after which it appeared merely incompetent).

The acoustics at Bayreuth justify their fame. The singers are crystal clear throughout the house; the orchestra seemed very quiet, but perhaps this was Sinopoli's fault. However, there are no free lunches, even in music, and the favourable environment for voices carries a risk, namely that it allows mediocre singers with small voices to sound quite acceptable. For an opera house that purports to be of the first rank, there were far too many B-grade singers with uninteresting small voices. **Richard Mason August 2000**

*Wagner and the Volsungs* - by Árni Björnsson

A detailed study of the sources of the Ring Cycle which demonstrates how significant the Icelandic mediaeval literature which Wagner read was on its form and content. An English translation is being prepared. You can contact Selina Gudmundsdottir, President of the Richard Wagner Society in Iceland at Vesturgata 76B, 101 Reykjavik ICELAND; email: [arni@tv.is](mailto:arni@tv.is).

**GOTTFRIED H. WAGNER - Lecture at the Goethe-Institut, Sydney 20 June 2000**  
**"How to handle German family history and German history after the Shoah? The Wagner family as a German case"** Herr Wagner, great grandson of Richard Wagner, spoke about the issues covered in his autobiography, recently translated into English as *The twilight of the Wagners* (Picador 1999), and in his group, The Post-Holocaust Dialogue Group, co-founded with Dr Abraham Peck. His main areas of study are German culture and politics of the 19C and 20C in connection with Jewish culture and history. The lecture was introduced by Dr Konrad Kwiet, Adjunct Professor for Jewish Studies and Roth Lecturer for Holocaust Studies, University of Sydney. A number of Members attended the lecture.

**PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED:**

The Society acknowledges with thanks receipt of the following publications from Wagner Societies and related organisations: *News and Notes* (The Wagner Society of Northern California) Vol.V, No.2, June 2000; *Richard Wagner Nachrichten* (Richard Wagner Gesellschaft, Austria) Vol.12, No.3, July-Sept 2000, *Newsletter* (The Wagner Society of New Zealand) Vol.3, No.3, June 2000; *Wagner Notes* (The Wagner Society of New York) Vol.XXIII, No.3, June 2000; *Kulturchronik* (Goethe Institut) No.2, 2000; *Newsletter* (Wagner Society in Queensland) No 3, February 2000.

**THE RAVEN'S REPORTING, COMPILED BY CAMRON DYER**

*This list is not cumulative and should be read in conjunction with Newsletters Nos.78 and 79. There is also a comprehensive list in chronological order on the Society's Website.*

Adelaide *Parsifal* - September 22, 26, 29, October 2, 2001.

Amsterdam	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - February 1, 5, 9, 13, 17, 21, 25, 28, 2001.
Antwerp	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - April 13, 16, 19, 22, 2001.
Austin	<i>Die Walküre</i> - March 9, 10, 11, 12, 2001.
Barcelona	<i>Rienzi</i> - February 13, 16, 2001.
Berlin	Deutsche Oper <i>Holländer</i> - October 3, 6, 2000, March 22, 27, May 1, 6, 2001. <i>Die Meistersinger</i> - December 25, 31, 2000. <i>Parsifal</i> - April 8, 12, 16, 2001. <i>Tannhäuser</i> - May 16, June 3, 27, 2001. <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - May 20, 27, 2001. Staatsoper <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - Oct 26, 29, Nov 5, 12, 2000, Jan 5, 14, 21, 2001. <i>The Ring</i> - February 17, 18, 22, 25, 2001. <i>Holländer</i> - April 8, 15, 20, 26, 29, May 13, 17, 2001. <i>Die Meistersinger</i> - June 2, 10, 2001.
Bologna	<i>Holländer</i> - November 29, December 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 14, 16, 2000.
Bonn	<i>Das Rheingold</i> - February 2, 2001. <i>Die Walküre</i> - November 5, 2000. <i>Siegfried</i> - January 17, 2001.
Budapest	Opera House <i>Holländer</i> - December 15, 28, 2000. <i>The Ring</i> - January 7, 9, 11, 13; 12, 14, 17, 19, 2001. <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - March 18, 2001. Erkel Theatre <i>Parsifal</i> - April 13, 2001.
Chemnitz	<i>Tannhäuser</i> - October 7, 2000. <i>The Ring</i> - October 20, 22, 28, 31, 2000.
Cologne	<i>Das Rheingold</i> - Dec 9, 12, 15, 17, 21, 2000, Jan 2, 5, 7, May 10, 13, 16, 19, 2001.
Copenhagen	<i>Parsifal</i> - March 7, 10, 26, April 1, 9, 2001.
Dessau	<i>Holländer</i> - October 14, November 19, 2000.
Dortmund	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - March 25, 2001.
Dresden	<i>Das Rheingold</i> - September 30, 2001. [no other dates] <i>Die Walküre</i> - November 11, 2001. [no other dates]
Duisburg	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - January 21, 27, 2001. <i>Tannhäuser</i> - February 11, 17, March 4, 2001.
Dusseldorf	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - October 30, November 3, 2000. <i>Parsifal</i> - October 22, November 1, 2000. <i>Holländer</i> - February 6, 9, March 6, 10, 13, 2001.
Essen	<i>Lohengrin</i> - October 21, 25, November 1, 4, 9, 19, 25, December 15, 2000.
Frankfurt	<i>Holländer</i> - October 3, 6, 8, Dec 14, 18, 21, 28, 30, 2000, Apr 29, May 1, 5, 7, 20, 25, 27, 2001.
Geneva	<i>Siegfried</i> - April 20, 23, 26, 29, May 2, 5, 8, 2001.
Ghent	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - March 29, April 1, 4, 7, 25, 2001.
Göteborg	<i>Lohengrin</i> - Nov 26, 29, Dec 2, 7, 10, 15, 29, 2000, Jan 7, 12, 14, 17, 2001.
Graz	<i>Götterdämmerung</i> - Oct 7, 13, 18, Nov 2, 8, 2000, Jan 28, April 14, 2001.
Halle	<i>Tannhäuser</i> - October 22, November 26, 2000.
Hamburg	<i>Holländer</i> - December 22, 28, 2000, January 3, 10, 2001. <i>Lohengrin</i> - April 28, May 1, 20, 24, 2001.
Hanover	<i>Lohengrin</i> - October 21, 25, November 5, 11, 15, 18, 26, Dec 2, 2000.

	<i>The Ring</i> - April 13, 15, 21, May 5, 2001.
Helsinki	<i>The Ring</i> - August 7, 11, 19, 26; 29, 31, Sep 3, 6, 2001.
Karlsruhe	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - October 1, 22, 2000. <i>Die Walküre</i> - November 5, 2000 [no other dates]
Leeds	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - January 27, 30, February 10, 2001.
Leipzig	<i>Tannhäuser</i> - May 18, 24, 31, June 4, 2001.
Liege	<i>Holländer</i> - May 11, 13, 17, 19, 22, 2001.
London	English National Opera <i>Das Rheingold</i> - January 26, February 2, 6, 2001 [concert, new cycle begins]
Madrid	<i>Parsifal</i> - March 3, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 15, 2001.
Manchester	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - February 24, 2001.
Mannheim	<i>The Ring</i> - Oct 26, 29 Nov 1, 5, 2000; Dec 29, 2000, Jan 2, 7, 14; May 17, 20, 24, 27; July 5, 8, 15, 22, 2001.
Newcastle, UK	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - February 17, 2001.
Nottingham	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - March 3, 2001.
Prague	National Theatre <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - Jan 4, Feb 17, Mar 6, Apr 14, 22, May 6, 2001.
Santiago	<i>Die Meistersinger</i> - May 16, 19, 22, 25, 2001.
Schwerin	<i>Tannhäuser</i> - January 19, 2001.
Seattle	<i>The Ring</i> - August 5, 6, 8, 10; 13, 14, 16, 18; 21, 22, 24, 26, 2001
St Petersburg	<i>Siegfried</i> - New production. No dates.
Strasbourg	<i>Holländer</i> - January 14, 16, 18, 21, 27, 30, February 4, 2001.
Tokyo	New National Theatre <i>Das Rheingold</i> - March 30, April 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 2001.
Toulouse	<i>Tannhäuser</i> - October 5, 8, 11, 15, 17, 18, 20, 2000. <i>Das Rheingold</i> - February 16, 18, 20, 23, 25, 2001.
Tulsa	<i>Tannhäuser</i> - February 10, 16, 18, 2001.
Verona	Teatro Filarmonico <i>Holländer</i> - October 14, 16, 18, 20, 2000.
Wiesbaden	<i>Tannhäuser</i> - April 28, 2001.
Zurich	<i>Das Rheingold</i> - Oct 8, 13, 19, 22, 28, 29, Nov 17, 2000, Jun 14, 2001. <i>Tannhäuser</i> - May 1, 2001. <i>Die Walküre</i> - May 27, 30, June 2, 4, 10, 16, 22, 2001.

#### Members' Market

Members of the Wagner Society in NSW are invited to use this space to advertise for sale or purchase secondhand Wagnerian recordings and publications. There is no charge, but please limit advertisements to fifty words.

*A Dictionary of Musical Themes* Harold Barlow & Sam Morgenstern (Ernst Benn Ltd London 1967 ed.) \$40ono. Contact Terence Watson on 9517 2786 (h).