

The Wagner Society



NEWSLETTER No.87, March 2002

IN NEW SOUTH WALES INC.

In Memoriam: Reg Maloney

Sadly we record the death of Reg Maloney, following on very soon after the death of his wife, Betty Maloney, as reported in the December 2001 Newsletter. Reg was a Foundation Member, and was appointed an Honorary Life Member in recognition of his work as our Honorary Auditor in 1983/84 and 1994-2000. He was well known to most members and many cherished his friendship.

President's Report

Dear Members

Welcome back to 2002 and a happy New Year to you all.

Our Christmas party was a great success with over 60 members enjoying a busy afternoon, despite a lost bottle opener! Terence Watson compiled a series of film extracts with Wagner connections ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous. Members were asked to identify the film, Director and the music - not as easy a task as you might think. We all tried hard but the winner was Mike day by a significant margin. We congratulate Mike and thank Terence for providing a real challenge and much entertainment. All members brought a plate and we enjoyed a most delicious and varied afternoon tea.

Our raffle winners were, Britt Hartnett (a complete CD Ring Cycle), Roger Cruickshank (Christmas cake Colin Jones (Lohengrin CDs) and Barbara McNulty (Wagner compilation 2 CD set). Our very grateful thanks go to Jochen Strossberg from Universal Music who generously donated the CDs and Barbara Brady who again made and donated a Swan decorated Christmas cake.

Our sympathy goes to Annie Marshall and her family who lost their home at Helensburg in the Christmas fires. Our sympathy also goes out to any others of our members who suffered loss or whose houses or property might have been damaged during these fires.

The first meeting this year will be on the 17 February when Antony Ernst will discuss two early Wagnerian works, Die Feen (The Fairies) and Das Liebesverbot (The Ban on Love) and I look forward to seeing you then.

Barbara McNulty January 2002

PATRON: Sir Charles Mackerras
HONOURARY LIFE MEMBERS: Prof. Michael Ewans,
Mr Richard King,
Mr Horst Hoffmann,
Mr Joseph Ferfaglia

NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTS:

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Registered Office: 3/46 Shirley Road, Wollstonecraft, NSW 2063

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Coming Events

DATE	EVENTS - 2002	LOCATION
February 17	Anthony Ernst on Die Feen and Das Liebesverbot	Goethe Institut 1.00 PM
March 17	Parsifal Easter	Goethe Institut 1.00 PM
April 21	Professor Nicholas Routley on "Hagen the Lawyer"	Goethe Institut 1.00 PM
May 26	Wagner's Birthday Function	Goethe Institut 1.00 PM
June	No function	Goethe Institut 1.00 PM
July 21	22nd Annual General Meeting	Goethe Institut 1.00 PM
August	No function	Goethe Institut 1.00 PM
September 15	Gotterdammerung final installment of the Kupfer/Barenboim production from Bayreuth	Goethe Institut 1.00 PM
October 20	To be advised	Goethe Institut 1.00 PM
November 17	To be advised	Goethe Institut 1.00 PM
December 8	Christmas Party	Goethe Institut 1.00 PM
Goethe Institut Address	90 Ocean Street Woollahra (corner of Jersey Road)	

Committee 2001-2002

President	Barbara McNulty	9487 1344
Vice President	Vacant	
Treasurer and Membership Secretary	Roger Cruickshank	9357 7631
Secretary	Dennis Mather	9560 1860
Members	Lindsay Knight	9550 3290
	Julian Block	9337 6978
Newsletter Editor	Terence Watson	9517 2786
	Sandy Dudgeon	9489 0570
Public Officer	Peter Nicholson	9436 1097

For Your Diary

The Ring Cycle	State Opera of South Australia announces the production team for Wagner's Ring Cycle - Adelaide 2004	Adelaide 17 Nov to 11 Dec
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The Wagner Wars

As reported on the BBC, Yahoo and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitschrift websites, Wolfgang Wagner has named Herr Klaus Schultz as the interim Director of the Bayreuth Festival. Herr Schultz is the Director of the Theater am Gärtnerplatz, Munich's second opera house.

As the BBC reports, "...when 82-year-old Wagner does eventually step down, Schultz will act as a sort of caretaker for the Bayreuth Festival until the succession issue is settled once and for all (Simon Morgan)". This quote says a great deal in the degree of uncertainty it conveys; in truth, no one knows what will happen, especially with this muddying of the waters!

The BBC report continues: "Technically, that leaves the door formally open to Wagner's estranged daughter by his first marriage, Eva Wagner-Pasquier, and his niece Nike Wagner. But the solution appears to pave the way for Wagner to hand over the reins of the festival to his second wife Gudrun and finally to their daughter Katharina."

The three reports note that Herr Schultz is a colleague and friend of Herr Wagner. Ironically, they also refer to the "relief" of the Bavarian Arts Minister, Hans Zehetmair, at this apparent resolution of the standoff that he played a part in creating. [Editor]

The articles can be read at these website addresses: <http://www.bbcmusicmagazine.com/news>,
<http://www.faz.com/> and <http://uk.music.yahoo.com/011213/158/cli7a.html>.



Wagner Tributes

The impact of Wagner's music and thought is manifested in many ways in many people's lives and creativity. Many poets and writers have penned tributes to Wagner or written works that reflect his impact on their worlds. I'm sure Wagner would have thought it unsurprising; rather, he would have thought it merely his due in recognition of the intensity and quality of his creative labours. The following two extracts were discovered during a fairly random evening of web surfing; a most rewarding evening.

In view of the wealth of material (some of it quite obscure) further gems will be included in future editions of the Newsletter. If Members have any other such tributes they would like to share, the Editor would more than eager to receive them!

The following extract is from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation that is dedicated to making available at their website electronic versions of books that are in the public domain in the USA. Their website address is <http://gutenberg.net/>.

The Death of Richard Wagner

a meditation by Algernon Charles Swinburne from his collection of poems called A CENTURY OF ROUNDELS.

THE DEATH OF RICHARD WAGNER

I.
Mourning on earth, as when dark hours descend,
Wide-winged with plagues, from heaven; when hope and mirth
Wane, and no lips rebuke or reprehend
Mourning on earth.

The soul wherein her songs of death and birth,
Darkness and light, were wont to sound and blend,
Now silent, leaves the whole world less in worth.

Winds that make moan and triumph, skies that bend,
Thunders, and sound of tides in gulf and firth,
Spake through his spirit of speech, whose death should send
Mourning on earth.

II.
The world's great heart, whence all things strange and rare
Take form and sound, that each inseparate part
May bear its burden in all tuned thoughts that share
The world's great heart -

The fountain forces, whence like steeds that start
Leap forth the powers of earth and fire and air,
Seas that revolve and rivers that depart -

Spake, and were turned to song: yea, all they were,
With all their works, found in his mastering art
Speech as of powers whose uttered word laid bare
The world's great heart.

III.
From the depths of the sea, from the wellsprings of earth, from the wastes of the midmost night,
From the fountains of darkness and tempest and thunder, from heights where the soul would be,
The spell of the mage of music evoked their sense, as an unknown light
From the depths of the sea.

As a vision of heaven from the hollows of ocean, that none but a god might see,
Rose out of the silence of things unknown of a presence, a form, a might,
And we heard as a prophet that hears God's message against him, and may not flee.

Eye might not endure it, but ear and heart with a rapture of dark delight,
With a terror and wonder whose core was joy, and a passion of thought set free,
Felt inly the rising of doom divine as a sundawn risen to sight
From the depths of the sea.

This etext was produced by David Price, email ccx074@coventry.ac.uk, from the 1883 Chatto & Windus edition. To find this etext version of the poems, go to the Project Gutenberg website at <http://gutenberg.net/> and enter `cnrnd10.txt` into the search panel, or just search for Swinburne or Wagner.

In a future newsletter will be included Swinburne's: Two preludes Lohengrin and Tristan und Isolde and an extract from a fascinating fantasy on the Ring Cycle called Prince Hagen By Upton Sinclair.



New Members

Maxwell Grubb

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 gratefully been received from the following members: Hartmut and Charlotte Derichs.

Review

Die Walküre,

3 November 2001 - Vienna

This was an "A" Opera night at the Vienna Staatsoper starring Placido Domingo (Siegmond), Waltraud Meier (Sieglinde), Jan-Hendrik Rootering (Wotan), Hildegard Behrens (Brünnhilde), Marjana Lipovsek (Fricka), Conductor, Peter Schneider, and Director, Adolf Dresen.

This was a conservative production with no eccentric surprises. Act I was set in a white tent with a large circular open space in centre roof with snow falling as Siegmund arrived. This tent was suddenly lifted by the latest machinery [installed during the Staatsoper's recent renovations - Ed] as the lovers sang of the arrival of spring to show a clear night with stars shining. The contrast was of snow falling again on the ill-starred lovers during their travails in Act II. This Act began in a black tent indoor scene, which changed to a bleak, open space with snow falling, for the entrance of Siegmund and Sieglinde fleeing from Hunding.

Fortunately rocks were not part of the scenery. Domingo was a dynamic Siegmund with his baritonal-tenor voice in unwaveringly solid form. Meier looked young and ravishing, in a simple long frock. Both sang effortlessly in balance with the orchestra, so that the marked difference in age between them (the twins) was scarcely noticeable. Meier's singing was extraordinarily expressive and beautiful. Lipovsek was an extremely well sung, angry Fricka with Rootering a laid back Wotan, until Fricka's arguments convinced him, leading to the motive of Wotan's distress. Rootering sang extremely well, slightly under-sung at first, but increasing in quality and intensity as his work load increased. However, he is a large man. His movements on stage were lumbering style movements where the other principals were most dynamic in their movements. One wished for the energy of a James Morris or John Wegner, who was such an adornment to the Adelaide Ring. Perhaps Rootering may have had an injury.

Brünnhilde had a marvellous interpreter in Behrens. In 1979 she was Salome at Covent Garden dancing so well the Dance of the Seven Veils. Yet, after the intervening 22 years, she hardly looks different - slim, young-looking with a young-sounding voice. Like all the other principals, she had no trouble singing above the orchestra. Her acting was superb. In fact

Domingo, Meier and Behrens never gave the impression they were acting. The role of Hunding was sung by Walter Fink, a regular bass-baritone with the Staatsoper. He is a huge man with a huge dark and menacing voice that suited the part admirably. The orchestra under the direction of Peter Schneider was simply marvellous with the various instrumental solos a joy to hear. This was indeed a most memorable Wagner night at the Opera. Tony McDonald January 2002

[Thanks -Editor]

Two Reviews

by the globetrotting Wagner Reviewer: Jim Leigh

Die Walküre at Zurich

I saw the new production of Die Walküre on Friday 22 June 2001. This is the latest part of a new Ring and was premiered on 27 May 2001.

Zurich is a small traditional house with many boxes, but is of very high quality and has a large orchestral area. I had a first row box front right with near unencumbered view of the stage and excellent view of the all-important Die Walküre woodwind band. The variety of woodwind use in this work is truly extraordinary and one could see the validity of the Karajan like approach that was taken in this performance.

The new production, by the American Robert Wilson, with costumes by Frida Parmeggiani and lighting assistance by Andreas Fuchs, has attracted mixed responses. It is abstract, but not that abstract. The distinguishing feature is the use of precise, choreographed movements, timed to the music. ie ballet in slow motion. There is also extensive use of timed lighting effects and much highlighting of hands and faces. Hand movements have been particularly calculated. Yet there is an ash tree, swords, spears, shields, fire, helmets but no horses. The entry of the Walküren is very calculated, as is the putting of Brünnhilde to sleep.

There were some telling effects. Wotan (Alfred Muff) and Brünnhilde (a perfectly acceptable Gabrielle Schnaut) moved in strict parallelism as joint will in Act II. Brünnhilde tries to stop Hunding (Matti Salminen) killing Siegmund (Gosta Winbergh) but Siegmund is nowhere near Hunding.

Only Cornelia Kallisch (Fricka) refused to follow the movement discipline, in the hope of attracting attention to herself, which she did successfully.

All singers were good. Muff tended to shout a bit at times and it was good to hear Schnaut in good form after Bayreuth in 2000. Sieglinde (Stephane Friede) carried out movement



instructions to the letter and this possibly handicapped her a little.

The orchestra, under Franz Welser-Moest, played with extreme clarity and refinement, in the Karajan fashion, and the quality throughout was excellent, far better than in the Geneva production with the Suisse Romande under Armin Jordan (reviewed on Wagner on the Web).

It was fascinating to see Die Walküre in the town in which it was written, and I made a point of seeing the actual houses of its creation (Pension Rinderknecht; today Hochstrasse 56-58 the prose and verse versions 1852 and Zeltweg 13 1854-56 the musical score) and the Hotel Baur au Lac where Wagner read the whole Ring to friends on 16,17,18,19 February 1853.

Die fliegende Holländer

in Zurich

I saw the 1995 Ruth Berghaus Zurich production on 1 July 2001; stage design Hartmut Meyer, costumes Margit Koppendorfer, lighting Jürgen Hoffman). Zurich has an opera house with the highest standards of production, singing and orchestral playing. Top prices are 220 Swiss francs (about 250 \$A) and well worth it

The production was essentially a two level set with a further central opening shell for especially significant entrances. Set reconfigurations allowed a smooth transition to Daland's house.

A key element was the pseudo-balletic choreography of the Dutch and Norwegian crews. Bringing in treasure boxes, ship work and the Norwegian girls in "Act III" legs over the rail. The spinning chorus involved large ship ropes much in the style of Norns. The Dutchman portrait was represented by the actual Dutchman in 16th century dress standing in a lit rectangular doorway on the upper level. Senta did not jump and the ghostly crew was not seen.

Of the singers, Senta (Anne Schwäwilms) stood out. Peter Seiffert (Bayreuth Lohengrin 2001 and Walther 1997) overdid Erik, Alfred Muff (Holländer) was better than he was as Wotan in Walküre, Steurmann (Kenneth Roberson) sang and acted well. The chorus (Director Jürg Haemmerli) were excellent and the orchestra played superbly under Weikert. Nadine Asher (Mary) got a few boos.

It was fascinating to see this Holländer a day after visiting the house in Meudon, on the outskirts of Paris, where he wrote the whole thing (text, music) in the period May-October 1841, and the house 14 Rue Jacob where he wrote the overture in October-November 1841.

To get to Meudon by train and bus, take RERC to Meudon Val de Fleury and bus 169 to Gare de Bellevue and walk up Ave du Chateau towards the observatory. The house is No 27 Rue Jacob and is in the Latin Quarter.

To see excellent Wagner performed in the town that was so significant in his creative life was an intensely moving experience. To see all the places where he lived and read and performed his work when he was developing his mature style added immeasurably to the experience at the opera itself.

Raven's Reporting,

Compiled by Camron Dyer

This list is not cumulative and should be read in conjunction with Newsletter No.86. There is also a comprehensive list in chronological order on the Society's Website.

Atlanta 27,	<i>Holländer</i> - October 24, 26, 2002.
Budapest	<i>Tannhäuser</i> - May 17, 19, 22, 24, 2002. <i>The Ring</i> - June 12, 13, 15, 18; 16, 19, 21, 23, 2002.
Essen	<i>Lohengrin</i> - June 6, 23, 2002.
Kaiserslautern	<i>Lohengrin</i> - April 7, 13, 21, 27, 2002.
Manaus	<i>Die Walküre</i> - April 18, 20, 23, 2002.
Mannheim	<i>Parsifal</i> - May 30, 2002. <i>The Ring</i> - July 5, 7, 14, 21, 2002.
Savonlinna	<i>Tristan and Isolde</i> - July 17, 20, 23, 26, 2002. <i>Die Meistersinger</i> - July 30, August 1, 3, 2002.
Venice	<i>Tristan and Isolde</i> - June 22, 25, 27, 30, July 3, 2002.

Publications

Received:

The Society acknowledges with thanks receipt of the following publications from Wagner Societies and related organisations:

Wagner Society of New York
Wagner Notes Vol. XXIV No.5 October 2001



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