

### 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 Roeber 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

September, 2000

---

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**