

President's Report

Dear Members

I am pleased to present the 22nd Annual Report of the Wagner Society in NSW.

Last year at this time I reported to you on the apparent misappropriation of Society funds.

Unfortunately the situation is unchanged though we know that the bulk of the money from the Investment Savings Account was removed from the account in the early 1990's before any member of the present Committee was a member of the Society.

The matter is now in the hands of the Police and we know it has been investigated but so far we do not know what action, if any, the Police intend to take.

Though we are as yet unable to bring this matter to a conclusion the Committee has set in place procedures and practices that ensure constant vigilance of our financial dealings so that such an occurrence cannot happen again.

While the loss of funds has been a severe blow it is quite clear that together we have managed to re-establish the stability of the Society and guarantee its future. To all those members who offered support and encouragement and gave donations we would like to say a special 'Thank you'.

The Honorary Treasurer's Report will show that our financial position is sound and that not only have we met all our obligations but have been able to maintain our principle of supporting performances of Wagnerian works and the Bayreuth Scholar as well as significantly building up our Donation Account.

The troubles we have faced have had the effect of drawing on the enormous goodwill within the Society and I know I am not alone in feeling that we face the future as a stronger and more cohesive association.

Looking now at the activities of the year under review, the highlights were the recital given by Warwick Fyfe accompanied by Stephen Mould and the lectures given by Simon Williams and Antony Ernst.

Warwick Fyfe is not only a member of Opera Australia but he is one of our members. He has a wonderful bass voice which is going from strength to strength. Stephen Mould is a member of the music staff of Opera Australia and an accomplished pianist. We wish them both every success in their future careers.

Simon Williams is a Professor of dramatic Art at the University of California, Santa Barbara campus, and gave a lecture at last year's AGM as well as the Parsifal seminar at Catersfield which was a great success. We were extremely lucky to be able to take advantage of Simon's visit to Australia. We also thank Rosemary Cater-Smith and Alec Cater for their hospitality.

It was a great pleasure to welcome Antony Ernst back from overseas and everyone enjoyed his lecture on Die Feen and Das Liebesverbot, those rarely performed early Wagner operas. [continued p. 3]

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Sadly we record the death of several members two of whom were Honorary Life Members, Rita Hunter and Reg Malone. Rita's wonderful voice was well known to us all and everyone who knew her rejoiced in her warm personality and sense of fun.

Reg and Betty Maloney were Foundation Members of the Society and it was doubly sad that they should die within a few months of each other though for both of them it was release from long illnesses. Both Reg and Betty had been active and involved members and Reg had been the Honorary Auditor of the Society for many years. They took great delight in funding the establishment of our website seeing it as a significant step forward for the organisation.

We shall miss them all.

We maintain good relationships with the German Consulate General and the Goethe Institut and we thank their officers and staff for the continued support. We are also pleased to support the Opera Foundation by assisting the Bayreuth Scholar.

As usual there are many people to thank. Foremost are the members of the Committee who work so hard to ensure the wellbeing and success of the Society. Firstly I must thank Roger Cruickshank, our Honorary Treasurer, who is a tower of strength and whose sense of humour has helped us through some rough patches. Terence Watson does an amazing amount of work to edit the Newsletter and is responsible with David Watkins, a member, for its new format which has been so successful. Dennis Mather, our Honorary Secretary is always busy and Julian Block and Sandy Dudgeon are always willing to provide support and willing hands. To all of them my heartfelt thanks. We were sorry that Lindsay Knight was unable to remain on the Committee and we wish him well.

There are others we must thank too. Foremost is Shirley Robertson who provides the afternoon teas which make our meetings more enjoyable. It is an enormous task as everything we use has to be brought to each meeting. Then there is Marc Greyling, who initiated our website and was our first webmaster. The website has proved to be a very valuable contact point for the Society and we thank Marc and wish him well. We also welcome John Studdert, our new webmaster.

One of our major fundraising activities are our two raffles and we thank those generous friends who have donated prizes, including Donald Campbell, who donated one of his beautiful Bayreuth scarves, Barbara Brady, who has for many years made and donated a delicious Christmas Cake, and Jochen Strossberg of Universal Music who donated a large number of CDs.

Nor should we forget Camron Dyer and Richard Mason who are our Ravens who report on forthcoming Wagnerian performances around the world.

Lastly I must thank all of you who come to meetings. Your interest and encouragement is greatly appreciated. This year I step down as President. It has been a very interesting experience, a bit like the curate's egg - good in part - but overall I have found it very rewarding. I have learned a lot and made many wonderful friends, thank you all.

Barbara McNulty 21 July 2002