



# The Wagner Society

(Patron — Sir Charles Mackerras)

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Honorary Life Members: Werner Baer M.B.E.  
Leonie Rysanek

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The month of January 1983 was dominated by the personality of Leonie Rysanek, that dynamic Prima Donna of the Vienna State Opera, who came to Sydney to sing the title role in "Tosca". Madame Rysanek's long career in Wagnerian roles gave us special reason to pay tribute to her, and honour her with honorary life membership of the Society. In fact, it was Leonie and her husband Ernst-Ludwig Gaussmann who honoured us with their gracious presence, and interest in our work, and it was such a pity that so few members turned up at the dinner to witness it. Their gift to us, the book of the making of the film 'Elektra', will illustrate the stature of our guests (it is kept at the Wagner Society Office for all members to see) so perhaps next time they return to Sydney, they will receive from us the whole-hearted response they deserve.

February has been an equally exciting month, the inauguration of the Wagner Society Scholarship being the high-light. This prize is being given in conjunction with the Metropolitan Opera Auditions conducted by Opera Foundation Australia, so that it ensures that the most capable young singers are eligible. Apart from aiding promising singers in their careers, the scholarship should provide for the future a healthy band of well trained artists to perform in the growing number of Wagnerian Operas being staged by its various Australian opera companies. One such singer,

Lisa Gasteen, regional winner in last year's auditions, gave a farewell recital on the 11th February, before flying to Los Angeles for the finals. Her rendition of Elsa's dream showed what a fine voice she has, one we are sure to hear more of in the future.

The first ordinary general meeting takes place on March 15th. Please come along, not only with your ideas and suggestions for a more active society, but also with offers to help your hardworking committee in its management.

Leonard Hansen

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#### DINNER IN HONOUR OF LEONIE RYSANEK

Members of the Society and the Opera Guild enjoyed a very pleasant Dinner at the Wentworth Hotel on February 5th - our Guest of Honour was Leonie Rysanek who was accompanied by her husband, Dr. Gausmann.

Prior to the Dinner, guests had the opportunity of speaking to Madame Rysanek at some length. During dinner, our President, Dr. Hansen, gave a witty survey of Leonie Rysanek's career, with some musical examples worked into the speech, with the aid of tape recordings.

Madame Rysanek then spoke briefly and answered questions from the floor. She was particularly interesting on the discipline needed to be a singer, especially with regard to life style - moderation in all things except work! In this context it is interesting to note that this Dinner was the only social function she attended during her Sydney visit. She also feels that young singers run the risk of too rapid promotion, with consequently a short career and no voice even before they reached her age.

Both she and her husband enjoyed Australia greatly - our sun is always popular - and good news, she has been invited to sing SIEGLINDE in two years time! Watch this space for further news!

Richard King then presented a hand coloured drawing by Robert Emerson Curtis of the Opera House, as a gift from the Society. After dinner we were able to have programmes and records autographed and mix informally with friends over coffee. It was a wonderful evening with a great artist, who impressed with her integrity and dedication and her very Viennese charm.

Photographs of the evening are available and may be viewed at The Print Room where orders can be taken.

Sue Kelly

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#### OPERA ON RECORD

This year's "alternative BAYREUTH" got off to a fine start with a wonderful performance of "The Flying Dutchman", with DIETRICH FISCHER-DIESKAU in the title role. The disappointing aspect of an otherwise thoroughly

enjoyable afternoon was that only sixteen people attended. This was particularly distressing for committee man Jean-Louis Stuurop, who puts much time and effort into supplying and setting up of the first-rate Hi-Fi equipment, and arranges with the Concordia Club for the free use of the music room. In fact, if numbers do not improve at next month's session, he will have to abandon the project altogether, which would be a great loss to the Society, and in particular to those members who would otherwise not be able to hear Wagner's great works played as if in an Opera house.

The program planned for the next five months is tailored especially for the benefit of those lucky members going to Bayreuth in August. If one is spending so much money in going to see those operas in the ideal conditions of the Festspielhaus, it only makes sense to improve one's knowledge of them as much as possible beforehand, in order to gain maximum enjoyment of the actual live performances.

At the Concordia Club, apart from familiarisation of music and text, there is the added benefit of discussion over coffee, and lack of interruptions from telephone, family and neighbours, as happens when one tries to play a whole opera at home. You can also use the dining room for lunch at 12.30 p.m.

Let's see a few more appreciative faces enjoying Wagner's music with their fellow enthusiasts from now on! The program is as follows:

Sunday, 20th March at 2.00 p.m. - Das Rheingold

Friday, 1st April at 1.30 p.m. - A special performance of Bach's St. Mathew Passion, with Fischer-Dieskau and Peter Pears, conductor Klemperer

Sunday, 17th April at 1.30 p.m. - Die Walkure  
N.B. The Solti version of the Ring will be used.

Sunday, 29th May at 1.30 p.m. - Siegfried

Sunday, 19th June at 1.30 p.m. - Gotterdammerung

Sunday, 17th July at 1.30 p.m. - Tristan und Isolde  
A new recording, conductor Kleiber

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#### ART EXHIBITION

Nicholai von Tonlamann has completed several new paintings on Wagnerian themes, including Tannhauser, Parsifal, and Tristan Und Isolde. These will be exhibited, along with some other works, at the Lanrick Gallery, 52 Macpherson Street, Waverley, from Tuesday, 22nd March 1983.

Members are welcome to attend the official opening, but should notify the gallery of their intention, by ringing 389-4338.

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GERMAN LANGUAGE COURSE

For those lucky members who are planning to visit Bayreuth this year, now is the time to brush up on your German - not just so you will know how to order off a menu fillet of beef instead of calf brains, but so that you can follow the words of the operas more easily.

Our member Mathew Byrne, recently arrived in Australia from Germany, will give coaching classes for beginners and advanced learners on Tuesday evenings, at the Print Room, 141 Dowling Street, Woolloomooloo, from 7.30 p.m. to 9.30 p.m.

The fees are yet to be arranged and will depend on the number of participants. If you are interested at all, even if the above mentioned times are not suitable, please ring the office and let us know. Spending a few hours over the next months on German pronunciation and vocabulary will make a big difference to your enjoyment of the tour in August.

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BOOK NEWS

Professor Michael Ewans, who talked to us last year and returns to address the Society in July, has had his book "Wagner and Aeschylus" released in Australia. It is published by Faber & Faber, and distributed by Penguin, and sounds like the ideal book to take for that long plane trip to Europe!

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ANNUAL RAFFLE

Enclosed with this newsletter you will find a book of raffle tickets, to be sold and returned in time for drawing on Friday, 20th May. Please try your hardest to sell all the tickets (more are available on request) and so aid the Scholarship Fund, to which all profits of the raffle will go.

The prizes, you will see, are quite exciting, and the chance of a win certainly makes giving away a few dollars to charity more interesting.

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ALTERATION TO FUNCTION DATE

It is disappointing to have to announce that Sir Charles Mackerras will not now be giving his talk to the Society as planned this year, due to his commitments with the A.B.C. and the Symphony Orchestra.

An alternative function has been arranged for Monday, 2nd May, the guest speaker being Mr. Connell Byrne, an Australian tenor who has made his singing career in Europe, and is returning for a season with the Tasmanian Opera Company.

Mr. Byrne's talk will deal with the challenges facing a tenor in Wagnerian roles, a field with which Mr. Byrne has had great experience, in as much as he has sung roles as diverse as Rienzi and Walther von Stolzing. His repertoire of over 50 roles covers composers from the baroque to the contemporary.

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