

PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE 6TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - MAY 14TH, 1986.

It is with pleasure I present the sixth annual report to the Society, representing the financial year 1st April 1985 to 31st March 1986. As usual, it has been a full and fruitful year of activities.

We began with our 5th annual meeting and dinner, held for the first time at the Southern Cross Hotel. As a result of the confusion created by early arriving guests for the dinner and the disruption of the meeting, it was decided to separate the annual general meeting this year.

The dinner was an outstanding success. About 130 people were present and, apart from the slow serving of the food, I think everyone had a pleasant evening. Our guest of honour, Miss Rita Hunter, gave us some amusing insights into that world the other side of the footlights, and enthralled us with her superb songs, accompanied by Werner Baer, who also gave us a marvellous "Happy Birthday Richard Wagner." It was indeed a memorable evening.

During July and August the video recordings of the Boulez/Chereau 'Ring' were screened at the Goethe Institute in Woollahra and were, from all reports, well attended and thoroughly enjoyed. This 'Bayreuth in Sydney Festival' was helped along by the culinary delights supplied by our foundation member Mrs Jessie Anderson.

In October, as an added bonus, 'Tristan and Isolde' was also screened. November will long be remembered by those members who attended the seminar on 'Electra', again at the Goethe Institute. The speakers included Mr Richard Toop of the N.S.W. Conservatorium of Music, Professor Michael Ewans of Newcastle University, and Richard Armstrong, the conductor of Welsh National Opera who was visiting Australia as guest conductor for the proposed four concert performances of 'Electra' in Melbourne and Sydney. The organisation of the seminar was prepared by Dr Leonard Hansen and Michal Arnold. It was an event of which any professional organisation of paid employees would have been proud. When one remembers all the members of our Committee are acting in a voluntary manner and have many other commitments, I think we can be justly proud of the high standards achieved so far in all our endeavours. A report of the proceedings was published in the December Newsletter.

Those who were fortunate enough to go to Melbourne on the 7th of December all spoke of a fine performance by Victorian State Opera's first-ever production of 'Lohengrin'. I think we have to set up a separate organisation called 'Wagner Society Travel Inc.', or give items of this nature to a travel agent to handle. It is amazing how many 'variations' are required by members to suit their individual needs. Some days the phone would run hot! The Saturday night performance of 'Electra' was well attended by members. Both the ABC and Australian Opera are always happy to do business with us. We are the largest 'block bookings' they have. The cancellation of the Tuesday night performance was to be regretted, as Melbourne was able to fill both nights' performances - a lack of publicity by the ABC I think.

The calendar year ended with a Christmas get together at the Goethe Institute, again ably assisted, where it counts most, by Jessie Anderson our master chef.

In February our foundation President Dr Leonard Hansen took off for about ten months long service leave, and handed over the office to myself. I would like to take this opportunity to place on record the Society's very deep appreciation of his untiring efforts on our behalf. Leonard's love of the music of Richard Wagner opened many doors to friendship and contact with musicians, singers and administrators in the world of theatre and opera. It is through these associations he was able to enveigle many an artist to our doors. For little or no fee these people have given their talents to us because they saw in Leonard an enthusiasm which they later discovered was shared by all the members of the Society. In an organization such as ours it is the personal contact of like-minded individuals which makes the wheels turn.

Although David Wansbrough's talk was given in our new financial year, i.e. 1986-87, I should like to mention it now. Entitled 'Myths and Legends of the Germanic Peoples at the Time of Richard Wagner and their Influence upon the English Poets,' it was a

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thought-provoking evening. David's talent as a poet and speaker is something approaching genius, and his enthusiasm for us to share his world was felt by all who attended. He demonstrated to us through poetry that inner world of inspiration where a universal well exists for any who are prepared to tread that path of inner searching. No committee or computer can create a 'Ring Cycle' or a Ninth Symphony - only individualists such as Richard Wagner and Beethoven could have given us these treasures. Often out of great adversity from their contemporaries and their environment have the great gifts to mankind been born. David showed us how many in the artistic world of that time were in tune with the spirit of man and his universe.

In September last year it was decided by our Committee to find an alternate printer for our Newsletter. I think you will all agree it is a marked improvement; less expensive and tentimes better than the predecessor. Michel Arnold and Janet Wayland, created the cover, adding to the attractiveness of the Newsletter which I am sure is eagerly awaited and read.

Finally I would like to thank all the members of the Committee who gave so freely of their time and energy. We all have a livelihood to maintain, family commitments and so on, but I can truly say our Committee has worked hard for us all throughout this past year.

The Society will continue to thrive and grow if we maintain the enthusiasm already shown by you all here tonight.

Richard King
Acting President