

The Wagner Society

IN NEW SOUTH WALES INC.

Registered Office: 141 Dowling Street, Woolloomooloo 2011
Telephone enquiries: 358 1919 (Bus. Hours)



Newsletter

No. 42, February, 1991.

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PATRON: SIR CHARLES MACKERRAS
HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS: Mr WERNER BAER M.B.E.
Miss RITA HUNTER C.B.E.
Miss LEONIE RYSANEK
Professor MICHAEL EWANS
Mr LEONARD HANSEN 1937 - 1990
Mr RICHARD KING

COMING EVENTS

Sunday, February 17th	An Afternoon with Arthur and Michael. Goethe Institute	1.00 p.m.
Sunday, March 17th	Parsifal Goethe Institute	1.00 p.m.
Sunday, April 21st	Rheingold Goethe Institute	1.00 p.m.
Sunday, May 19th	A.G.M. Video T.B.A. Goethe Institute	1.00 p.m.

We will announce the rest of the year's program
in the next newsletter, as we have yet to make firm
bookings with the Goethe Institute.
See article in this newsletter.

COMMITTEE

President	Olive Coonan	387 6403
Secretary	Clare Hennessy	747 5664
Membership Co-ordinators	Annette Marshall Margaret Budge	042 94 2992 521 6097
Functions Co-ordinators	Sue Kelly Richard Steele Paul Lehmann	365 4306 552 1424
Immediate Past President and Public Officer	Richard King	358 1919
Newsletter Editors	Jessie Anderson Keith Anderson	048 68 3651
Catering	Margaret Budge Jessie Anderson Annette Marshall	

ANNUAL DINNER

WHEN : 24TH MAY, 1991
 WHERE : MENZIES HOTEL
 TIME : 7.30 FOR 8.00 P.M.
 COST : \$40.00 EACH.

1991 PROGRAM

Arthur Carter, who for a long time now has presented the Wagner Program on 2MBS-FM, has offered to provide the Society with a series of video screenings, lectures, discussions (and debates!) for the months of April, June, July and August. We have yet to confirm the dates with the Goethe Institute and discussions are under way with their management. Until a final agreement is reached we will list this as a possible future plan but we thought members would like to know the details. The Committee plans to send out a special mailing in March to all members, so we hope to have these plans confirmed by then. Arthur's schedule is as follows:-

RINGS OF CONTRAST.

- DAY ONE RHEINGOLD (Munich Production)
Introductory Talk and Questionnaire Sheet.
- DAY TWO RHEINGOLD (Met/New York Production)
30 minute discussion (with pre-edited video clips) on the Producer's role in developing new approaches to Wagner.
- DAY THREE DIE WALKÜRE (Acts 1 and 2.)
Munich production
Texts of talks by Stewart Spencer and Niklaus Lehnhoff will be distributed.
- DAY FOUR DIE WALKÜRE (Act 3.)
Munich Production followed by the Metropolitan/New York staging.
Introductory talk by Germaine Greer who presents provocative ideas on the Wotan / Brünnhilde relationship.

The aim of this program is to promote understanding and increase knowledge of the operas following the viewing of these quite contrasting and in some cases controversial versions of the operas. There will be plenty of time for discussion after the talks and between screenings.

THE COMMITTEE WOULD APPRECIATE ANY EXPRESSION OF
OPINION ABOUT THIS PROJECTED PROGRAM.

OBITUARIES

MRS. JAN NORRIS.

Sadly we report the death in December of well-known member, Jan Norris, after a long courageous battle against cancer. Jan loved people. Her radiant smile will be remembered, especially by those of us, who met her first on the 1983 Bayreuth Tour. Our deep sympathy is extended to Walter, Chris, Vicki and Alex.

GUNTER KOSSODO of New York.

Many folk who attended Bayreuth performances in recent years will have attended lectures by this noted Wagnerite from New York. He passed away in late 1990 and will be sadly missed.

LEONARD BERNSTEIN.

This WAGNER SOCIETY would like to add our tribute to those from all parts of the world following the death of Composer/Conductor Leonard Bernstein whose recorded performances will be a reminder to us all forever of his great talent.

MEMORIAL SERVICE

The auditorium at the Goethe Institute was filled to overflowing on the occasion of the memorial service for our Founding president, Leonard Hansen in November last year. Mourners from our Society were joined by members of the Dental Profession, former Patients, Officials of the Opera Company, and friends from many walks of life to remember Leonard's great contribution to his Profession and to the Arts. The Wagner Society was pleased to provide this opportunity. In her introduction, our President, Mrs Olive Coonan, spoke of Leonard's efforts and introduced two fellow Foundation Members, Richard King and Reg Maloney who paid tribute and gave thanks for the time he shared with us. Finally, Mrs Coonan thanked all for their attendance and asked all present to listen to some favourite music of Leonard's - "Softly And Gently" - the final moments of great Wagnerian Edward Elgar's "Dream of Gerontius" - beautifully sung by Dame Janet Baker. After the service many members enjoyed light refreshments before viewing a performance of Götterdämmerung.

Many expressions of sympathy have been received by the Committee from many parts of the world. We thank these people very much.

BIRMINGHAM'S RING OF CONFIDENCE

-from a review by Tom Sutcliffe
in the December Guardian Weekly

It had to happen, of course. Just about everything we can think of has been squeezed, condensed, abridged or abbreviated to suit those in the last decade of the 20th Century who are short of time. Touring the U.K. at the moment is a version of Wagner's marathon tetralogy which has been cut, rewritten and reorchestrated from the usual week-long festival performance to a "two-night length" by Graham Vick and Jonathan Dove for the City of Birmingham Touring Opera. What Wagner took 25 years to complete, Dove has taken 25 weeks to reconstruct for 18 instrumentalists and a cast of twelve. The result is a spell-binding critical experiment, based on the proposition that the essence of the Ring - its story and the music through which that story is fleshed out and evaluated - can survive compromises far more profound than the normal imperfect circumstances of performances. The Ring, in the great opera-houses is routinely subjected to inadequate singing, feeble acting, and a visually prosaic theatrical dimension. Wagner's epic is mysterious, secret. You just can't "drop in" on the Ring as entertainment. You have to go into training and work hard to penetrate its length, complexities and obscurities - like Siegfried going through Loge's flames to attain Brünnhilde!

This version provides a short-cut for those with less time, less money, less leisure and less access to the few venues grand enough for the full works, to sample a saga of a mythical world torn and broken by human vanity. This Ring Saga as it is called is not The Ring but it is a fine version and best of all, invites one to get stuck into Wagner's great original.

It works primarily through the singing and acting. Vick and the responsive conductor, Simon Halsey have gathered a lot of bold voices. The scale is more intimate, but the style of singing has Wagnerian abandon, much beauty and attack, often profound consistency of line and in most quarters admirable devotion to getting the words across. Vick's intention is to outline the saga simply, clearly and traditionally - with appropriate voice-types and characters given a look and feel that anybody familiar with children's versions of the Norse sagas would recognise. Chris Dyer's triple-decker set lit with care and perception by Nick Chelton worked very well indeed, either for close focus or for a broad space for the Gibichung's Hall.

Jonathan Dove's virtuoso re-orchestration revives one's taste buds for Wagner's original score. Of course the task of converting great floods of intricate orchestral colour grows infinitely more severe from the third act of Siegfried on, when Wagner returned to his great work after twelve years. Once one encounters his late method, with its fluidity of leitmotifs and its montage of references, the adapter must do damage when he chooses what is to be most important and what is to be sacrificed. In the late Wagner the orchestra is no longer just big battalions, it is high technology. But even if Vick's Ring Saga is all in the more primitive spirit of the younger Wagner, it reflects the musical atmosphere of the finished work with remarkable accuracy.

(This article was brought to our notice by Annie Marshall. While purists might protest vehemently, we should all find the references to the fact that this performance makes the audience want more and "sends them back to the original", should give much food for thought especially for Opera Companies like ours in Sydney where funds are in short supply and where younger devotees need to be found and kept. -ED.)

RECORD REVIEW

-contributed by RICHARD KING.

LAURITZ MELCHIOR, Tenor and ALBERT COATES, Conductor.
Excerpts from TANNHÄUSER - SIEGFRIED - GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG
CLAREMONT GSE - CD 78 - 50 - 33

ALBERT COATES, Conductor. TRISTAN AND ISOLDE EXCERPTS.
CLAREMONT GSE - 78 - 50 - 26

Several years ago I heard of an experiment to put a two thousand year old terracotta pot on a turntable and, placing a stylus against the surface, hope to hear the ancient sounds of the potter's workshop. The theory was the turning of the pot was not dissimilar to the creation of a wax cylinder. I did not hear if there were any results!!!

At least recordings made back in the early years of this century were created using a technique which was more sophisticated. Now with a process called Digital Remastering, we can hear the legendary singers of the past as near as they would have been heard if they had been recorded to-day - perhaps not in stereo but better than 78 Shellac to Vinyl LP.

Two recent CD's featuring Lauritz Melchior and the conductor Albert Coates have been re-issued by the Claremont label. These CD's verify everything one has heard of this glorious tenor who started life as a baritone and did not begin to sing as a tenor until he was 34.

Furtwangler is quoted as saying, "There never was a Wagnerian tenor like him". Listening to these CD's one tends to agree with him. As they were recorded between 1926 and 1929 on Shellac 78 RPM discs one is conscious of the slight surface noise but the quality of the voice and orchestra is far superior to the originals. Albert Coates and Lauritz Melchior had long and fruitful careers - the latter was known as the "Great Dane" by those who knew him well.

On the other disc "Tristan and Isolde" excerpts, Coates is the predominant conductor - again from records made between 1926 and 1929. These were done in London and Berlin on the HMV Label. Other conductors and artists are featured. There are two Tristans - Lauritz Melchior and Walter Widdup and two Isoldes - the legendary Frida Leider and Gota Ljungberg. Howard Fry is a magnificent Kurvenal. Although the Love Duet between Frida Leider and Melchior has been shortened, it is regarded as one of the finest ever recorded. Leider says that during the recording session Coates generated such passion from the orchestra that her head reeled and she had to hold on to Melchior.

During his lifetime, Albert Coates recorded over 600 78 RPM record sides. The huge task of engineering these new compact disc recordings is obviously a labour of love by the people at Claremont.

The search for the originals took them to South Africa - USA - and Europe. To continue the venture it has to be viable financially, and to that end I recommend members to keep them in mind when next they visit their favourite music shop. If you have any trouble obtaining these Compact Discs, you may like to contact :-

AVAN-GUARD MUSIC P/L
70 WILSON STREET,
NEWTOWN.2042 N.S.W.
TEL - 02 550 3688.

ANNUAL DINNER ATTENDANCE FORM.

I would like to make reservations at \$40.00 each for the Annual Dinner on 24th May, 1991 at 7.30 p.m. at Menzies Hotel.

I have enclosed my cheque for \$

Name.....

Address.....

Note: Entree cards will not be issued. A guest list will be kept at the door. If a receipt is required, please enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope.

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS IS FRIDAY, 3RD MAY, 1991.

DONATIONS TO THE WAGNER SOCIETY

Date

The Secretary,
The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust,
137 Regent Street,
CHIPPENDALE. 2008.

Dear Sir,

Please find enclosed cheque or

CHARGE MY

- BANKCARD No.
- MASTERCARD No.
- DINERS CLUB No.
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- EXPIRY DATE

for \$ representing my donation to The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust.

This donation is given unconditionally. However, it would be appreciated if when considering your appropriations to the performing companies preference in the allocation of this donation could be given to

THE WAGNER SOCIETY IN N.S.W. INC.

.....

(Please print following details):-

MR/MRS/MS/DR/MISS

Address..... Post Code.....

OR

I have made this donation on behalf of my company.

Signature Title

PLEASE PRINT NAME AND ADDRESS OF COMPANY

..... Post Code

We would ask you if making your donation by cheque to make it payable to the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, but post it to the Wagner Society's official address for processing before we pass it on to the A.E.T.T. We can only accept payment by cheque or credit card and this donation must be separated from any other payment included at the same time. These are Taxation rules and are beyond our control. If you have any doubts about the procedures please contact a committee member. Thank You.