

# The Wagner Society

IN NEW SOUTH WALES INC.

Registered Office: 141 Dowling Street, Woolloomooloo 2011



## Newsletter

No. 43, June, 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, June 16th	Rheingold Met. Production Goethe Institute	1.00 p.m.
Sunday, July 21st	Die Walküre Acts 1 & 2 Video and general discussion Goethe Institute	1.00 p.m.
Sunday, August 18th	Die Walküre Act 3. Video and general discussion Goethe Institute	1.00 p.m.
Sunday, September 15th	Flying Dutchman Video Goethe Institute	1.00 p.m.

At the recent Annual General Meeting it was agreed by those present that a charge of \$5 ( with concessions for pensioners and students ) be made at all regular functions at the Goethe Institute. The money will be used to cover cost of the afternoon tea, rent, and any special mailings.

COMMITTEE

President	Olive Coonan	387 6403
Vice-President	Paul Lehmann	552 1424
Secretary	Clare Hennessy	747 5664
Treasurer	Sue Kelly	
Membership Co-ordinators	Annette Marshall Margaret Budge	042 94 2992 521 6097
Public Officer	Richard King	

Also elected to the Committee were Arthur Carter and Janet Wayland, while Richard Steele remains as the Liaison Officer with the Australian Opera. Reg Maloney and Joseph Ferfoggia will act as the Honorary Accountant/Auditor. Further information about the duties they will undertake, will be given in the September issue.

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to the following new members:- Mr. J. Mant : Mr. A.C. Serch : Miss S. Brown : Mrs. G. Gosling : Mr. R.J. Carr : Mr.P.N. Aldred  
Mr. R.G.Brown : Mr. D. Gilfillan : Mr. P. Keller : Mrs. S. Eskell.

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the 11th Annual Meeting of the Wagner Society in N.S.W. Inc. This has been a significant year for us in many ways. The death of our Founder President, Dr. Len Hansen, occurred in October last after a long illness and this has left a void in our Society. You are all aware of his untiring work to establish and maintain this organisation. Its continuing expansion should become his most fitting memorial. Unfortunately we have also lost two more very special members in Jan Norris and Barbara Bennett.

Our year began with our usual successful Annual Dinner with Bernadette Cullen as our Guest-of-Honour. Her most recent activities overseas include singing Count Orry with the Welsh National Opera and in the Bohemian Girl in Dublin with Richard Bonyngue conducting. They were a little irate over her being chosen over Irish mezzos but after hearing her they realised why she had been chosen. The revival of Lohengrin at the Sydney Opera House was one of the year's musical highlights for us all. In Lisa Gasteen, the Company has a superb soprano who gave a wonderful performance as Elsa - we look forward to an outstanding career for her. We also, as a Society, sponsored Horst Hoffman in the role of Lohengrin. The theatre party was not well supported by our members and was a financial loss so the Committee has decided not to organise any more in the future.

Our monthly Sunday afternoons have again been very successful with a slight change in the format by showing Videos and hearing Talks until August. Booking of the third Sunday of each month has been confirmed with the Goethe Institute to whom we give thanks for allowing us to use this beautiful venue for our get-togethers. Please check your September newsletter for the last three events - where we hope to have a couple of surprises for you. We are especially grateful to Keith and Jessie Anderson for running these events - Keith for his technical work and Jessie for the arranging of the afternoon tea. She is ably assisted by Margaret Budge and Annie Marshall in the catering department. We stress that we are not sexist about this - any man who wants to wash up is welcome to help! I would also like to include Paul Lehmann and Sue Kelly here as they look after the door on these days - a necessary task that often keeps them away from the music. My thanks to them all.

Annie Marshall is our over-worked Membership Secretary who hopefully keeps track of all our members. Margaret Budge also must be thanked in this instance as she steps in and helps Annie when necessary. However, without the unstinting help of my Secretary, Clare Hennessy, there is no way that we could continue to run the Society efficiently. Richard Steele has been our Liaison Officer with the Australian Opera and this relationship has paid off because we are one of only three organisations mentioned in their Annual Report.

On the financial side we have had a reasonably good year. Our membership is almost three hundred and most of you seem to have renewed for the ensuing twelve months. The Newsletter continues in the capable hands of Keith and Jessie Anderson. Articles are always needed - so anyone who goes overseas to the opera is expected to write a review for all of us to read and enjoy!

In October we were well represented at the Japanese Wagner Society Concert at the Opera House - a most enjoyable afternoon. The Richard King Gallery was the venue for a showing of the complete Murray Smith Lohengrin Collection which was opened for us by Leo Schofield, who entertained us with some amusing anecdotes. This collection contains the original drawings of set designs and costumes by Frank Hinder for the 50's production of Lohengrin by the Elizabethan Theatre Opera Company.



The Xmas Party was a wonderful success and the catering lived up to its usual high standards. Elizabeth Allen, recently retired from the Australian Opera Company was a very amusing raconteur.

At this stage I would like to convey all our thanks to Richard King, our Public Officer, who allows us to use his business address and telephone as our registered office and takes the number of messages that this entails. On my recent visit to Melbourne I attended the Covent Garden Scholarship Finals run by the Opera Foundation. I was able to meet several administrators as well as artists and back stage personnel on an informal basis and to renew contacts with others. Spreading the word about the Society, what it does and what it hopes to achieve in the future is the unrelenting work of all my Committee and myself.

I could not let this day pass by, without thanking Arthur Carter, and hoping that he will keep up his unstinting work at 2MBS-FM in running the Wagner Hour every month. Sincere thanks also to Joseph Ferfaglia and Reg Maloney for helping to keep us on a secure financial footing. This year's Bayreuth Scholarship winner was Roland Peelman who is conductor of the Hunter River Orchestra. He has also worked with the Australian Opera and the South Australian Opera and is looking forward to his trip to Germany to further his studies. We wish him well.

Please enjoy yourselves and if you still wish to come to the Annual Dinner on Friday night next, you can still book. John Wegner will be our Guest-of-Honour. My thanks to all of you, Wagner lovers, for your continuing support, help and love over the last twelve months which in some ways have been very sad for me. Without this support we could not continue to maintain our Society in the way all our original members wanted.

Thank You.  
OLIVE COONAN.  
PRESIDENT.

## OBITUARIES

The Society wishes to express its sympathy to the family of Mrs. Barbara Bennett who died recently. During her very long life, she was deeply involved with the Arts, especially Opera. Her memories of Mrs. C.T.Lorenz' Opera Company in the early 1950's would have made a wonderful book, and the events she was part of would make to-day's opera production seem very tame! Barbara loved people and we will miss her very much.

Also from overseas comes the news of the death of Australian Pianist, Eileen Joyce, at the age of 78. Born in Tasmania, she was brought up in Western Australia where she was taught by her mother. She was prominent among European artists before and after World War 2, till she retired in 1962.

## NEWS FOR COLLECTORS

Patricia Baillie of Da Capo Music P/L tells that she has acquired an interesting bust of Wagner which she has for sale. It was cast by Sydney sculptor Clara Hali. The original bust appears to be based on an oil painting by Franz von Lenbach. Standing 26 cm high, and made of waterproof plaster ( can be damp-wiped clean ) it sells for \$85.

## DOES WAGNER'S MUSIC QUALIFY?

"What is a "classic"? When we refer to a painting, a musical composition, a novel, an architectural structure, or a philosophical work as a classic, what do we mean by the term? When we designate a symphony, a drama or film or a sermon as a classic, what qualities do we have in mind? A classic is an expression of the human spirit that seems to gather into a fitting unity something that is fundamental, recurring, and universal in our experience. It brings into irresistible focus some perennial nexus or knot that, in every century, bedevils our species. Or it captures, in form and media that prove efficacious, year in and year out, some moment of sublime transcendence that again and again washes clear the gates of our perception. A classic stands the test of time. A classic brings to expression something that is fundamentally true about the human condition but does so in a way that respects the essential complexity, the stubborn persistence, and the honest opacity of its subject matter.

Honest opacity? Classics exhibit what some writers have called a "surplus of meaning". They exhaust our capacities for interpretation before we have exhausted their meanings. There is a penumbra of mystery around the heart of any true classic. It gives rise to conflicts of interpretation and discloses surprising depths as we inquire into its multiple layers of meaning.

The idea of a classic can be made clearer if we contrast it with the concept of a "period piece". The latter, also an expression of the human spirit, captures something essential to a particular moment in our shared experience and brings it to clarifying expression with compelling effect. Period pieces can be extremely valuable, and, sometimes, they become classics. But usually the best-selling novel of this season is the cliché of the next, and the film that regaled everyone this summer is passé by autumn. The designation "popular", in addition to suggesting "lowbrow" (of the folk), often connotes something of the cut-flower character of the period piece.

-from American Author James W. Fowler.

## SOCIETY LIBRARY

The Committee would like to draw to members' attention that the Society has a Library which is currently stored at the Richard King Gallery. It is a varied collection of books about Wagner's life, many libretti, vocal and piano scores of the operas and others some of which are out-of-print editions and therefore quite valuable. Most of the books have been donated with the hope that they can be used for research etc in any way connected with Wagner. The problem of deciding the best way to keep this library intact, and to place it where its use and value can be realised will arise in the near future. Thanks to Judy Perfoglia Janet Wayland and Klaus Baldenhofer we will have time to decide this so ideas from members about its placement are urgently needed. If you have any suggestions please write to any Committee Member soon. Rather than wait till another Annual Meeting, the subject will be raised at a Sunday Gathering when a larger number of members than usual will be present to discuss the ideas.

OVER TO YOU MEMBERS. IDEAS, PLEASE!

## RECENT DONATIONS

The Society wishes to thank the following members for their recent donations:- Mrs. Pauline Thompson : Mrs Margaret Watson : Ms Miriam Harris : Dr. Rae Boyd : Reg and Betty Maloney.



## PARSIFAL AT THE MET.

-contributed by Brother James McGlade  
and Mr. Ray Josey.

(from the New York Times - reviewed by Donal Henahan.)

When the Metropolitan Opera made up its corporate mind that it needed a new Parsifal - a questionable decision, considering the memorable strengths of the old one - the assignment naturally fell to the team of Otto Schenk and Gunther Schneider-Siemssen. Their tradition-conscious stagings of Tannhäuser and the Ring had brought the company surprising successes in the Wagnerian repertory during a time when theatrical egotists were gaining headlines by visiting one idiocy after another on helpless operas.

The premiere of the new Parsifal certainly did not signal a change in the Met's Wagnerian course. As a sensitive representation of the music, it was beyond cavil. James Levine's conducting, a model of concentrated rapture over the five-hour span, rightly placed emphasis on the orchestral score. His tempos at their most languorous seldom caused a sag in the Wagnerian line.

Among the beneficiaries of Mr Levine's experience with this music was Placido Domingo, essaying the title role for the first time. The part of Parsifal proved right for him: it does not venture very high but it requires just the kind of rich, powerful middle and lower tones that Mr Domingo commanded all evening. Dramatically too, one could nearly believe in his progress from innocent youth in the first act (no Wagnerian tenor is really credible there, physically or vocally) to weary middle-aged warrior in the end.

Kundry, one of the more baffling characters in Wagner, came to plausible life only intermittently. Jessye Norman, portraying the crazed seductress and mother figure did believably suggest the tortured psyche behind Kundry's traditional heartrending screams. She had the stamina for the duet in Klingsor's garden, too, though her tendency to break up the vocal line into a series of gasps and moans became tiresome.

Gurnemanz in many ways the work's most interesting character, seemed exactly that in Robert Lloyd's richly quirky performance. The British bass found odd resemblances to Polonius in Parsifal's spiritual mentor, but that was better than the unrelentingly solemn and colourless mien of the standard Gurnemanz. Franz Mazura, a veteran Klingsor, presided over a particularly cluttered and unattractive garden. His voice dripping evil, he plotted with understandable bitterness as the self-castrated villain. Ekkehard Wlaschiha as a robust voiced, rather melodramatic Amfortas, too loudly sorry for himself to allow space for anyone else's pity.

The staging was clear and understandable to a fault, so intent on following Wagner's instructions that too little was left to the imagination. The most effective scene drew one into the vaulted hall of Monsalvat, the worst by a long shot virtually botched the Good Friday Spell : the meadow was dotted with wire-stemmed artificial posies that sprang back and forth whenever touched by human foot or robe's hem. This effectively diverted attention from the work's famously entrancing moments.

A literalist depiction of the Grail ceremony, tied the ritual tightly to the Roman Catholic Mass with its vestments, altar boys, its venerated chalice etc. The work's fascinating tangle of pre-Christian myths and symbols, which Wagner set great store by, lost much of the necessary mystery. The celibate knights of Monsalvat wear monkish robes not armour as before. Gone also was the perfect matching of choral movement to choral music. The scenic transformations go smoothly thanks to the Met's versatile stage machinery, but the producer's solutions tend to be unremarkable, relying almost entirely on revolving scrims to create the magic bridges.

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

REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31/3/91

<u>1990</u>	<u>CURRENT ACTIVITIES</u>	<u>1991</u>
5265.00	<u>REVENUE</u>	4735.00
	<u>MEMBERSHIP</u>	
	Less Administration Costs:	
1728.91	Newsletter - Printing and Distribution	1523.97
1339.85	Stationery, Post, Telephone etc	2122.15
500.00	Advertising and Promotion	330.00
71.33	Bank and Investment Charges	51.10
408.25	Depreciation of Fixed Assets	440.00
286.46	Subscriptions (Friends/Bayreuth etc)	219.85
387.65	Insurance	359.50
<u>20.00</u>	Statutory and other Fees	<u>20.00</u>
<u>4742.45</u>		<u>5066.57</u>
<u>522.55</u>	SURPLUS/ (DEFICIENCY)	<u>(331.57)</u>
	<u>REVENUE - OTHER</u>	
1621.00	Sale of Books, C.D. Journals etc	329.00
5406.80	Lectures and Functions	2986.00
21911.10	Opera Tickets etc	5214.70
3619.00	Annual Dinner May 1990	3160.00
698.00	Annual Competition May 1990	608.00
<u>5.47</u>	Bank Interest	<u>38.15</u>
33261.37		12335.85
	<u>LESS EXPENSES</u>	
650.04	Books, C.D. Journals etc	218.41
3311.42	Lectures and Functions	3367.37
20714.17	Opera Tickets etc	6002.00
2891.00	Annual Dinner May 1990	3104.70
0.00	Annual Competition May 1990	100.92
<u>0.00</u>	Miscellaneous	<u>110.00</u>
<u>27566.63</u>		<u>12903.40</u>
<u>5694.74</u>	SURPLUS / (DEFICIENCY)	<u>(567.55)</u>
<u>6217.29</u>	<u>CURRENT ACTIVITIES SURPLUS / (DEFICIENCY)</u>	<u>(899.12)</u>
	<u>EXTRAORDINARY ACTIVITIES</u>	
	<u>REVENUE</u>	
13095.65	Donations	744.75
<u>2511.79</u>	Interest on Investment	<u>1832.79</u>
15607.44		2577.54
	<u>LESS PAYMENTS</u>	
<u>16090.00</u>	Scholarship and Sponsorship	<u>7332.00</u>
<u>(482.56)</u>	<u>EXTRAORDINARY ACTIVITIES SURPLUS/ (DEFICIENCY)</u>	<u>(4754.46)</u>
<u>5734.73</u>	<u>TOTAL SURPLUS / (DEFICIENCY) Trans.to Accum.Funds.</u>	<u>(5653.58)</u>

R. Maloney  
Hon. Auditor.

O. Coonan  
Hon. Treas.



THE WAGNER SOCIETY IN NEW SOUTH WALES INC.

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST MARCH. 1991.

<u>1990</u>	<u>ASSETS</u>	<u>1991</u>
250.00	Pre-Payments - Annual Dinner, May 1991	250.00
4000.27	Cash at Bank	19.75
15413.73	Investment	15243.97
375.00	Stock - 9 books "Cosima and Wagner" @ \$25	225.00
506.65	- 2 libretti and scores	506.65
30.00	- 1 "Elektra" Videotape	30.00
42.00	- 2 Mackerras Books @ \$21.00	42.00
660.00	- 38 copies "Wagner in Aust" @ \$15	570.00
192.00	- 14 C.D. "Hennig Recital" @ \$24	336.00
6000.00	- 46 items Lohengrin Set Designs	<u>6956.00</u>
		<u>8665.65</u>
	Fixed Assets - Filing Cabinet	185.00
	less depreciation	185.00      0.00
	- Set of Speakers	990.00
	less depreciation	941.00      49.00
	- Typewriter	695.00
	less depreciation	602.00      93.00
	- Furniture	832.00
	less depreciation	125.00      707.00
	- Urn	100.00
	less depreciaton	40.00 <u>60.00</u>
1349.00		909.00
<u>1798.00</u>	<u>DEBTORS</u>	<u>0.00</u>
<u>30616.95</u>	<u>TOTAL ASSETS</u>	<u>25088.37</u>

LIABILITIES

1535.00	Membership 1991/1992	received in advance	1510.00
1120.00	Annual Dinner May 1991	"	1160.00
165.00	Annual Competition May 1991	"	175.00
100.00	Accrual: Hire of Goethe Institute		200.00
<u>2920.00</u>	<u>TOTAL LIABILITIES</u>		<u>3045.00</u>
<u>27696.95</u>	<u>ACCUMULATED FUNDS AT 31/3/91</u>		<u>22043.37</u>

ACCUMULATED FUNDS ANALYSIS

Acc. Fund Balance as at 31/3/90	27696.95
Less Deficiency for year ended 31/3/90	<u>5653.58</u>
<u>ACCUMULATED FUNDS AS AT 31/3/91 (Bal Sheet)</u>	<u>22043.37</u>

Mrs Olive Coonan  
Acting Hon Treas.

Auditor's Report: I have examined the books and vouchers relating to the Wagner Society in New South Wales Inc. and hereby certify that the above Balance Sheet and the Attached Statement of Revenue and Expenditure represent an accurate account of the financial affairs of the Society.

R. Maloney  
Hon Auditor.