

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.