

The Wagner Society

(Patron — Sir Charles Mackerras)

Registered Office: 141 Dowling Street, Woolloomooloo 20
Telephone enquiries: 358 1919 (Bus. Hours)

FEBRUARY 1982

LETTER NO. 6.

Registered Office: 141 Dowling Street, Woolloomooloo, 2011
Telephone Enquiries: 358-1919 (Business Hours only)

Patron: Sir Charles Mackerras

President: Leonard Hansen

Secretary: Sue Kelly

Treasurer: Clare Hennessy

Chairman: Richard King

Committee:

Cedric Falconer

Ian Hopkins - Co. Editor

Margaret Suthers - Co. Editor

Jean-Louis Stuurop

Janet Waylord

Honorary Life Member: Werner Baer M.B.E.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

A happy 1982 to you all! After much indecision and agonizing by the A.B.C. and Australian Opera Board, there is still a chance the concert performances of Tristan and Isolde will go on as planned in Sydney on August 12th and 14th, and Melbourne, August 5th and 7th. So that members may derive as much pleasure from this mature work as possible, the year's activities have mainly been planned with this opera in mind. Hence we have Mr. Wolfgang Baer M.B.E. talking to us on Monday 15th March, at 6.00 p.m. in the A.M.P. Theatre, Circular Quay. His talk will describe how Wagner's affair with Mathilde Wesendonk influenced the musical development of the opera. Most of you will know how enjoyable Mr. Baer's lectures can be, especially as he illustrates his points so effectively on piano and tape recording.

Shortly after on March 28th, the full recording will be heard at Jean-Louis Sturrop's Sunday afternoon Hi-Fi sessions. It is also hoped to hear "Tristan & Isolde" played on 2MBS-FM on Saturday, May 22nd, as part of a special Wagner birthday radio program. Incidentally, members who listen to the fine music on 2MBS-FM should be pleased to know that a regular "Wagner Society Programme" is soon to be established, on a monthly basis. Our member Arthur Carter is to be thanked for his work in getting this programme to air, and congratulated on compiling the music for the first broadcast. Any member who would like to put together two hours of music for a future programme should contact the undersigned on Tel. No. 326-1793 (evngs). The first programme will be broadcast on Sunday April 18th at 3.00 p.m.

On December 2nd last year, in the local newspapers it was announced by Mr. Patrick Vietch, General Manager of the Australian Opera, that a fully staged version of the "Ring of the NIBELUNGEN" would be part of the repertoire in future years, after being built up, one opera a year. Mr. Vietch certainly is overcoming established patterns in musical direction of the opera. On May 21st we will have the opportunity to show him our appreciation as he will be our guest of honour at the Annual Dinner. I, for one, will be looking forward to hearing more from him about the plans for the new Ring and it will be your opportunity to ask and learn more of the future of Wagner in the Australian opera.

Mr Veitch will be accompanied by his wife, Kathleen Norris. Also at the Annual Dinner, the Guessing Competition prizes will be drawn, so please support this raffle, returning the ticket butts and money as soon as possible. Proceeds will be towards the cost of presenting a recital later in the year.

Foundation members are especially urged to attend the dinner, to receive a small gift, in appreciation of the financial support they have given the Society in its infancy. (Some foundation members have already received theirs at last years' dinner).

The venue for this years' Dinner and celebration of Wagners' birthday is the Sebel Town House, Elizabeth Bay. (Use the Function Centre entrance). The cost of \$18.50 per person will cover a three course meal, but wine and pre-dinner drinks can be purchased separately. Pre-dinner drinks commence at 8.00 pm, with every-one being seated by 8.30 p.m. The Annual General Meeting, for which there is no charge to attend, and to which all members are welcome even if not stopping on for the dinner, will be held in the Library on the ground floor of the Function Centre, at 7.00 p.m., the same evening.

Our member Nicholai von Tonslamann who had an exhibition of his "Rim inspired" paintings in Sydney last November, has donated \$50.00 to the Society. This was a pledge he made on the proceed of the sale of his paintings and we appreciate his gift very much. It is hoped that those who missed seeing Nicholai's work due to the brief showing will have opportunity to view them in the future. In the meantime, Nicholai has written an article entitled "Painting Wagner's Music", which will appear in the next newsletter.

Please read the details of the coming activities carefully, and give our committee some idea of your support by returning the coupons at an early date, with a stamped self-addressed envelope.

TOP PRESS:

Leonard Hansen

The Wagner Society satisfies the requirements of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust to receive grants, and unconditional donations made to the Trust, with preference to the Wagner Society, will be allowed as taxable deductions from your assessable income.

Please contact the Secretary for the correct forms to use before sending your cheque.

WAGNER IN CONCERT

A large gathering of members heard our Patron, Sir Charles Mackerras, give a very interesting talk on "WAGNER IN CONCERT" at the Women's Hospital, Crown Street, last October. It followed the triumphant Syd performance of "GOTTERDAMMERUNG".

The whole problem of Concert vs. Staged Opera is a vexed one, but a degree of historical perspective was introduced by Sir Charles when he noted that "arrangements" of many works were common in the past, e.g. Reduced Orchestration of Operas, some even approved by Wagner for his own works - after all, before wireless or records, what did people do for music? (Piano duet arrangements of Mozart Symphonies were a favourite evening entertainment at Wahnfried, according to Cosima Wagner's Diary). This is not to suggest that the Australian Opera should "think small" however.

Sir Charles did feel that some operas were more suited to concert performance than others - perhaps those where the Plot Absurdities were more marked than usual (dare one say *Bel Canto*) or where the often very fine music would not otherwise be heard, such as some early Verdi. A concert performance has sometimes given a whole new lease of life to some music.

No one should think that a concert performance just involves a "run through"; problems of positioning singers requires a lot of thought, such as the Valkyries in the Melbourne concert who were elevated and to the side of the main singers. The chorus presented a special problem, with difficulties of entry not apparent when the work is done on stage and the action is being followed by the singers. Apparently there had been some criticism of the dress of the singers in the Melbourne and Sydney performance and reasons behind the choice were discussed. We were left in no doubt that words were as important as the music (homework should be done) for full enjoyment and appreciation of Wagner. For this reason, being able to follow a libretto in a concert is a big plus. Sir Charles then went on to talk of the crucial importance of the Leitmotif - central to any understanding of the concept of THE RING. He spoke of Wagner's constant inventiveness in this regard from simple to complex themes, all held together and developed in some cases over many years. He made the excellent suggestion that in future concert programmes the libretto could contain the words in German and English and the appropriate leitmotif could be indicated beside the words.

This would be a boon for all Wagner lovers and (I believe) confound the sceptics with the sheer skill and beauty of Wagner's achievement.

The role of the producer was mentioned in question time and in every case Sir Charles believes the music and the composer come first. Some immicks did not find favour with him. He spoke briefly of singers needing to specialise when singing Wagner - in a sense they would; other roles difficult - this applied especially to the character roles. The wonderful conversational aspect of the singing was stressed. Wagner's orchestration, he feels strongly, helps rather than hinders singers.

In summary, it was a fascinating talk from an informed and dedicated Wagnerian - we hope the first of many such talks. We are most grateful to the Administration of Crown Street Hospital for making the venue available and for providing supper afterwards.

Sue Kelly

OPERA ON RECORDS - THE ALTERNATIVE BAYREUTH

First of all I would like to thank the people who gave me moral support when I encountered some technical problems in the first session. The problems have now been straightened out and we are going ahead with a new programme for 1982.

On February 28, we are starting off with RIENZI which will be an interesting contrast to the other works following.

Next will be the beautiful recording of von Karajan's TRISTAN UND ISOLDE on March 28.

Following this, on May 2, will be DIE MEISTERSINGER VON NURNBERG with Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau under Eugen Jochum.

On May 30 we will have Deryck Cooke's introduction to THE RING with musical examples. This will be followed by about three hours of highlights from THE RING under von Karajan. So you will get all the 'goodies' in one go! For people not so familiar with THE RING I strongly recommend this day. Translations of the highlights will be available on the day.

Then we start on THE RING under Solti - June 27 DAS RHEINGOLD; July 19 DIE WALKURE; August 22 SIEGFRIED; and September 19 GOTTERDAMMERUNG. We will close the year on October 24 with the digital recording of PARSIFAL under von Karajan.

I hope you like the programme for this year and hope to see many of you at the Concordia Club, 231 Stanmore Road, Stanmore (opposite Newington College).

All performances commence at 2.00 p.m. except May 30th which will start at 1.30 p.m.

Jean Louis Stuurop

WAGNER EXHIBITION

The Wagner Society is anxious to mount an exhibition entitled 'Wagner in Australia', to coincide with the commencement of performances of The Ring Cycle in 1983.

Would members who have programmes, posters or other materials that could be lent for this exhibition, kindly write to,

The Secretary, The Wagner Society,
141 Dowling Street,
Woolloomooloo, 2011.

HELP WANTED

A small band of volunteers is required to help with the catering arrangements for future meetings. If you are a 'willing worker', kindly contact Janet Waylord, 357-4806 (bus.hrs)
331-5502 (aft.hrs)

CENTENARY GUESSING COMPETITION

Be sure to support our first fund raising effort which will go towards presenting a Wagner Recital later this year.

- 1st Prize - The new Digital Recording of the Centenary Performance of the "Ring" at Bayreuth, conducted by Pierre Boulez.
- 2nd Prize - The new Digital Recording of 'Parsifal' conducted by Herbert von Karajan.
- 3rd Prize - John Culshaw's book, 'Ring Resounding'!

Tickets are 20¢ each, and will be drawn at the Annual Dinner on Friday, May 21st, 1982.