

EIGHTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGPRESIDENT'S REPORT

First of all I would like to give a summary of the year's events.

Our Annual Dinner at the Menzies Hotel last year proved to be one of the most enjoyable events of the year. Our guest of honour, Alberto Remedios, cancelled on the day due to influenza, and thanks to the efforts of our Honorary Life Member, Werner Baer, M.B.E., he produced a delightful surprise for us in the person of Sandra Hahn. I might add she agreed to be our guest about three hours before the dinner!!

The Chef held back with the food as we experienced four superb arias, three of Wagner, plus one Verdi, and I thought "Oh well we can't have great singing and great food - but we did!!" Everyone agreed we have a fine dramatic soprano in our midst and one who will enhance the reputation of Wagner's works in the country. Our thanks again to Werner's ingenuity.

Our Compact Disc Recording afternoons on Sundays at the Goethe Institute continued with a recording of Tristan and Isolde conducted by Bernstein with Hofmann, Behrens, and Sotin. A great way to experience the full majesty of these recordings without worrying about the neighbours!

Prior to Sunday 5th July, Dr. Leonard Hansen and I attended a talk at the Opera Centre to introduce Michael Hampe and Reinhard Heinrich who had just arrived to direct and design the Australian Opera production of "Cenerentola". Both spoke eloquently about their respective art and I think the seeds were sown as to who would be our guest of honour in 1988 at the Annual Dinner.

Later at our Reception for Michael Hampe at the Goethe Institute we were given some insight into the very special concept he has of Meistersinger - where the old forces give way to the new - not by destroying the old but building on their experience and foundations. His work is indeed of a deep intuitive nature.

The First Wagner Society Scholarship was awarded to John Wregg in 1986. He is a resident producer with the Australian Opera. On the afternoon of Sunday, 19th July he gave members a recount of his tour of Europe and the experience he gained. We feel from hearing his views we are assured of future dividends in Wagner productions from our investment. The Gurrelieder recording was also played later in the afternoon.

From all accounts the highlight of the year was our Seminar on the forthcoming production by the Australian Opera of Lohengrin. I, unfortunately, or fortunately if looked at from another point of view, was in Bayreuth and unable to attend. Recordings of all the major sessions were made and these are in the Society's Archives for those who may wish to hear them.

During my visit to Bayreuth, our member Lady Gallegan, and I were guests of Frau and Herr Wolfgang Wagner at supper in the Festspielhaus during the last intermission of Tristan and Isolde. We discussed the failed Ring Cycle in Australia and the inadequacies of the Opera House Orchestra pit. It has been found to be feasible to install a pit capable of holding over 100 musicians if it is modelled on the Bayreuth pit. The engineers have said it can be done - however I had not heard of any move to spend the one or two million dollars required to make it happen. Recently - I heard on the grapevine work will begin at the end of this year's session. How accurate that is I am not sure.

We also asked the Wagners to be our guests during the performance of Michael Hampe's production of Meistersinger. Herr Wagner felt they would be too worn out after the completion of the Festival especially as they were producing the new Kupfer Ring - a mammoth undertaking. But they said they would consider coming another time when things had settled down. We all know how productions are tailored and improved after their initial performance so this was entirely understandable. We later were shown the sets on the stage of the Festspielhaus just prior to the curtain rising on the Third Act.

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It was indeed a great honour to represent our Society in such an intimate way and to get to know a man who truly walks in his grandfather's footsteps - not in a slavish way but in accordance with the heightened consciousness of the latter part of the twentieth century.

The performances by the Australian Opera of Lohengrin were beyond doubt one of the great productions experienced in that House. I was able to go twice and can truly say it was even more moving than the new Herzog production I had recently seen in Bayreuth which was also amazing in its technical boldness. The Supper after the last performance was well attended and I think many felt as I did - we had all experienced something very special and would not be quite the same again - only better people for it.!

The Recital by Muriel Cohen and Rosamund Plummer at the home of Judge and Mrs. McGrath in Point Piper was very well attended and provided a pleasant Sunday informal musical soiree. A combination of good music and interesting members and friends.

Two more recording afternoons and then the Christmas Party completed the calendar year of 1987.

Many of these events are more fully described in our Newsletter and new members are welcome to peruse back issues at the Society's registered office.

Our first Theatre Party for 1988 was a group booking for the A.O. production of "Salome" with Marilyn Zschau, throwing everything, including modesty, to the wind - it was an evening of spectacle and marvellous singing.

The Video of the Bayreuth "Parsifal" was shown at the Goethe Institute on Sunday 20th March and those had seen it before, both live and at the previous screening, all agreed a truly magnificent Wolfgang Wagner production.

The following month we were disappointed not to hear Dorothy McCormack's talk on the Wagner Lieder due to her illness and hospitalisation but the consolation prize of a 16 mm film of "The Flying Dutchman" from the German Ambassador in Canberra was certainly appreciated.

As we are having our Annual General Meeting after our Annual Dinner and not before as has been the case in the past, I am also able to report on this years as well. From all reports, again one of the best !! Again at the Menzies Holiday Inn Hotel in Sydney. Attentive staff, good food and a fine atmosphere. The bonus of the evening was our guest of honour, Reinhard Heinrich, who delighted us with inside gossip backstage at Bayreuth and the biographical details of a long and fruitful career - deeply aligned to Wagner. His generous gift of two original designs from Meistersinger (the Bayreuth 1981 production) were much appreciated. We raised an extra \$400 on the evening and came out well in the black.

Fund raising is a very important part of our activities if we are to maintain one of the basic aims of our society, that is the promotion of the work and music of Richard Wagner in Australia.

We are not an adult fan club, a group which gathers and congratulates ourselves and each other on our fortunate elevated position in the world. We have to direct our energies to the unconverted, not with missionary zeal but with encouragement towards performance and the fostering of true Wagnerian talent.

Someone said they were not going to buy a raffle ticket because they were not interested in the prize. I must admit one does think if one won - do you need it or want it - but that is not the point. The raffle is a fund raiser and when we make sufficient money that enables us to sponsor singers through scholarships or productions we are fulfilling our aims and furthering the cause of Wagner's legacy for not only ourselves but the vast majority of people who are coming into this world - living and dying and not encountering this great gift of the Gods.

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Even our theatre bookings make a few dollars for the Society and as you can see by the Balance Sheet we are still growing surely and steadily each year.

Over the last few years we have given over \$20,000 in sponsorship plus generous donations by our founding President, Dr. Leonard Hansen. We are in no doubt the most active and supportive musical society in Australia and combined with the efforts of our sister organisations in other States probably a force to be taken into account when the name of Richard Wagner comes in mind.

In the words of the late President Kennedy of the United States - think not what the Society can do for you - think what you can do for the Society.

Finally I would like to thank, on the members behalf, our Committee who have guided the Society in its development and worked so hard throughout the year 1987/88.

Our Vice-President and Editor of the Newsletter, Janet Wayland, for an informative, well prepared and interesting Newsletter and all the other activities as a committee member one is required to do. Unfortunately Janet is retiring from the Committee this year after six - seven years service. A well earned rest and we thank her for everything.

Jessie and Keith Anderson for technical expertise, culinary delights at social functions and assistance with printing menus, library cataloguing and other duties.

Our former Treasurer and former Secretary, Joseph and Judy Ferfoglia - who have gone to Europe for several months holiday and who gave unstintingly of their time and expertise. Clare Hennessy has taken on the job of Minutes and general correspondence Secretary and Jessie Anderson will handle the membership registration, cards, etc.

Murray Smith for his hours of telephoning members to remind them of upcoming events and his work as Treasurer, following the departure of Joseph Ferfoglia.

Olive Coonan for her many duties on the Committee and finally Dr. Leonard Hansen who has, despite many obstacles over the last few years, supported the Society to the hilt - both in enthusiasm and financially. I thank him most deeply on your behalf.

Reg Maloney who has been our Honorary Auditor since the Society's foundation in 1980 and Arthur Carter for our 2MBS monthly programme. Any person I have overlooked - I ask your forgiveness - and I say "thank you" to all the members for their support.

Richard King  
President  
22nd May, 1988.