

15th Annual General Meeting 2nd July 1995
THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Dear Members,

I welcome everyone here today to our 15th Annual General Meeting. The past year as President has been a very stimulating personal experience and I hope that our choice of programmes over that period has been stimulating for members also. Our move from the Goethe Institute to here in the Metcalfe Auditorium of the State Library has, I believe, been very successful, and apart from some minor teething problems it has been warmly welcomed by most members.

Speakers during the past twelve months have included: Moffat Oxenbould, Artistic Director of the Australian Opera, who regaled the sceptics with the Australian Opera's not inconsiderable achievements in the Wagnerian repertoire; and Robert Gay, who once again received an enthusiastic response to his talk on the Liszt/Wagner relationship and his later talk on Wagner's earliest operas. Writer/journalist Alison Jones gave us a rare glimpse into the earliest known Australian performances of Wagner's operas, which surprised many with the text if not the quality of these productions. My modest contribution to the Society has been the collaboration with the enthusiastic and knowledgeable Arthur Carter, to whom the Society owes a great debt. The afternoon included many rare Wagnerian tapes of Australian singers.

The Society is mid-way through presenting the video release of Harry Kupfer's 1992 Bayreuth *Ring* cycle. Other videos shown have included Placido Domingo in rehearsal for *Die Valküre* in Vienna and the New York Metropolitan's *Parsifal*.

Carol Ann Petherick gave us a wonderful recital in August last year prior to some overseas engagements including an Italian tour with Carlo Felice Cillario as accompanist. Twenty of our members attended the inaugural John Darnley-Thomas Memorial Scholarship concert at the Allambie Heights Community Centre in which Rita Hunter sang in memory of her late husband. At the Sydney Football Stadium late last year, the arena performances of *Turandot* with Eva Marton, were attended by twenty-five members of the Society.

Last year at very short notice, the Committee entertained several members of the Richard Wagner Society from Melbourne during an interval of a performance of *The Trojans*. We received a letter of appreciation from them which encouraged us to seek further ways of bringing the Wagner Societies of Australia and now New Zealand closer together. To this end we invited members of those Societies in Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth and Auckland, to join us at the November 1995 performances of *Das Rheingold*, with several members from those cities accepting our invitations. These valuable ties were also in evidence with our recent group booking to *Parsifal* in Brisbane in May last, where New South Wales members were able too exchange views with members of other State Societies.

Our major sponsorship for this year has been an amount of \$3000.00 to support the Sydney Symphony Orchestra with Bernadette Cullen's performance as Fricka in *Das Rheingold*. Support of \$250.00 has also been made to the John Darnley-Thomas Memorial Scholarship. The recipient of this year's Bayreuth scholarship, repetiteur Stephen Walter, has just been announced and the Society, as in past years, will be providing the return air fare to Germany. Further sponsorship is to include the sum of \$5000.00 to The Australian Opera for their 1996 *Flying Dutchman*.

The Society was represented by the invitation of the Consul-General of Germany, Dr Irene Grunder, to a reception at her home to welcome the German delegates to the Australian-German Consulate. Invitations to the Society were also extended by Opera Foundation to attend the German Operatic Awards at the New South Wales Conservatorium and a reception at 'Fairwater' by Lady Fairfax for the finalists of this award. Our Annual Luncheon was well attended and the Guest of Honour, Donald McDonald, General Manager of the Australian Opera, delivered a fine speech which delighted everyone and was much appreciated by members.

As I mentioned in the June Newsletter, I will not be seeking re-nomination as President and I shall also be standing down from the Committee. Other Committee members not seeking re-nomination this year include Sue Kelly, Annie Marshall and Jean-Louis Stuurop. They have been invaluable to the Committee for some years and I thank them, not least for their support over the past twelve months. I also extend my thanks to the other members of the Committee for their help in the past year. It is with regret that I must stand down and I wish the new Committee every success in the future.

There are still many good things to come for the rest of 1995 - Simone Young in late July, the rest of the Kupfer *Ring* and Arthur Carter on Kirsten Flagstad's Centenary. Speakers for the November seminar have now confirmed their availability - they are our Honorary Life Member Professor Michael Ewans, who is currently preparing a new book on Wagner, Professor Andrew Riemer, now Literary Editor of *The Independent* and an impressive young Dramaturg from the Australian Opera - Antony Ernst.

The year ends with a bang, (indeed as it started with *Das Rheingold*) - and the Christmas party. Thank you all for being here.

**Ramon Josey,
President**