

# The Wagner Society

IN NEW SOUTH WALES INC.

All Correspondence to GPO Box 4574 Sydney, NSW 2001



## Newsletter

**#57 DECEMBER 1994**

**Print Post Approved PP242114/00002**

**PATRON: SIR CHARLES MACKERRAS**  
**HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS: Miss RITA HUNTER, CBE**  
**Miss LEONIE RYSANEK**  
**Prof MICHAEL EWANS**  
**Mr RICHARD KING**  
**Mr REG MALONEY**

## COMING EVENTS

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
December 4, 1994	Christmas Party to include video of Placido Domingo in rehearsal for <i>Die Walküre</i> in Vienna	Goethe Institute 2.00pm
January 29, 1995	1992 Bayreuth Harry Kupfer production of <i>Das Rheingold</i> - video	Metcalf Auditorium 1.00pm
February 12, 1995	Alison Gyger (Jones) talking on Wagnerian Opera in Australia followed by <i>Wagner Gala</i> - video from Berlin	Metcalf Auditorium 1.00pm
March 12, 1995	Arthur Carter & Ramon Josey talking on Wagnerian Singers in Australia	Metcalf Auditorium 1.00pm
April 2, 1995	Robert Gay presents a talk on Wagner's early operas - <i>Der Feen</i> , <i>Das Liebersverbot</i> and <i>Rienzi</i>	The Opera Centre 10.00am to 4.00pm
May 7, 1995	New York Metropolitan Opera's 1993 production of <i>Parsifal</i> - video	Metcalf Auditorium 12.00noon
May 21, 1995	Wagner Birthday Annual Lunch Guest of Honour - Leo Schofield	Ritz Carlton Hotel Time TBA
May 27, 1995	Concert performance of <i>Parsifal</i> in Brisbane - see application form	Qld Performing Arts Centre 4.30pm
June 18, 1995	1992 Bayreuth Harry Kupfer production of <i>Die Walküre</i> - video	Metcalf Auditorium 12.00noon

## CONTRIBUTIONS

*All contributions to the Editor are gratefully received, be they in the form of letters, articles or items that have caught your eye in other publications. If you do submit items it would be helpful if they could be typed rather than hand-written, especially if they are lengthy. However we welcome your interest in this newsletter in whatever form it comes. Please forward your items to: the Editor - The Wagner Society in NSW Inc, GPO Box 4574, SYDNEY NSW 2001.*

## COMMITTEE

President	Ramon Josey	326.2593
Immediate Past President and Membership Secretary	Olive Coonan	387.6403
Vice Presidents	Paul Lehmann	552.1424
	Sue Kelly	361 3260
	Janet Wayland	332.3926
Treasurer	Ira Kowalski	560 5859
Secretary	Annie Marshall	042.94.2992
Newsletter	Barbara McNulty	487.1344
Members	Jean-Louis Stuurop	587 0369
Public Officer	Reg Maloney	

**THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Dear Members,

This is the last newsletter for 1994 and it ushers in some significant changes for 1995 and beyond. Our most pressing problem, that of finding a new venue for our monthly meetings, has been resolved after much searching. From January, our new venue will be the Metcalfe Auditorium (ground floor) in the State Library of NSW in Macquarie Street. A very fine central city location. The library is unable to accommodate us for three dates in 1995. However, we expect that the Opera Centre or the Goethe Institute will become available. The change of venue is not without its problems, viz the extra expense for our Society. The cost is more than twice that of the previously generous rate at the Goethe. After much consideration, it was considered the best available for our requirements. Consequently (and unfortunately) we must increase the annual membership fee and the entrance charge to our meetings (see separate notice) if we are to fulfil the major objectives of our Society, viz to raise funds for the Bayreuth Scholarship, other sponsorships and to expand the influence of our Society by fostering a greater love of Wagner's music in the community. To this end we are embarking on a new membership drive from December. Our new brochure is at the printer and will be available by the time you read this Newsletter. Please try to recruit a new member from among your friends, and give the Society a great boost.

For those of you who were unable to attend the September 18th talk by Moffat Oxenbould, you missed a wonderfully candid talk on the problems of performing difficult (aka Wagner) operas in Australia. Not surprisingly, money was the major problem. Mr Oxenbould was quite correct in remarking that Australian audiences are very receptive to unfamiliar operas. The problem seems to be in sustaining that interest. He was disappointed with the public's response to the return season in Sydney of *Tristan und Isolde* and the 1994 *Mastersingers* in Melbourne. Although initial bookings for the *Mastersingers* were not encouraging, they picked up somewhat after a wonderful press and "word of mouth". This is where our Society and others around the country - in Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth - should become effective in doing **much** more to create a **sustaining** love of Wagner's music and humanity.

Mr Oxenbould also gave us a tantalising glimpse of the Australian Opera's 1996 season and beyond - a new *Flying Dutchman*, directed by Barry Kosky (Director of the 1996 Adelaide Festival). Considered something of an 'enfant terrible' of Australian theatre, I think we can expect some riveting and controversial theatre. Look out for his *Nabucco* in 1995!! There is the possibility of a *Tannhäuser* or *Lohengrin* in 1997. Possible return seasons of *Tristan* and *Mastersingers* should, in my opinion, be re-mounted in collaboration with Lyric Opera in Brisbane or State Opera in Adelaide. Adelaide has already seen the *Tristan*. Which brings me to the news of a most exciting **concert** performance of *Parsifal* at the 1995 Brisbane Biennial, with a great lineup of local and international artists. I urge anyone who can to take advantage of the special Wagner Society booking price (see separate notice). We are told by the booking office of the Queensland Performing Arts Centre that tickets are becoming scarce, so please return your application before 10th December. We only have an allocation of twenty-five seats at this time.

Is there anyone in Sydney who is not familiar with Robert Gay's stimulating talks on just about any musical subject? Well, if you missed his latest one for us on the Liszt/Wagner relationship make a note in your diary now for 2nd April next year when Robert will be discussing, with

musical extracts of course, Wagner's earliest operas *Der Feen*, *Das Liebersverbot* and *Rienzi*. It is depressing in a city the size of Sydney that the resources cannot be found to mount even a modest production of these early seminal works. Any entrepreneurs out there?

Another date you should all put in your diaries for next year. Leo Schofield has very kindly accepted our invitation to be the Guest of Honour at our annual lunch on 21st May 1995. I am sure you are all aware that Mr Schofield has become the darling of Melbourne after some initial hostile reaction to his appointment as Director of the Melbourne International Festival. His frequent public support over many years of Wagner's music has always delighted us and we hope by May next year that he will be in a much better position to tell us something of that *Ring* in 2000.

Finally I would like to thank all those who sent copies of the many world-wide reviews of the new *Ring* at Bayreuth and other operas. Unfortunately we do not have the space to publish them all. We are very grateful however to Mrs Hilda Perini who has given us her impressions with (translated) reference to Joachim Kaiser's *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* review. Our thanks also to Bill Watson for his very positive review and not forgetting Margaret Budge with her welcome review of the Châtelet *Ring*.

I hope to see a big turnout for our annual Christmas "bash" on 4th December. To all members I wish you a very happy time over the Christmas break and a very prosperous 1995.

**Ray Josey**  
**President**

#### **NEW ADDRESS**

Please note our new and permanent address for all correspondence and the new telephone and fax number:

The Wagner Society in NSW Inc  
GPO Box 4574  
SYDNEY NSW 2001  
Tel/Fax - 326 2593

#### ***CORRECTION***

*My apologies to all our members for the last issue being late and also the typo that had the immediate past president as Ray Josey when we all know it's Olive Coonan and also for the interesting attempt to get members to go to Richard King's on two successive weekends!*

#### **1995 STARTS WITH A BANG**

The Committee has decided to include January in our calendar of events from 1995 and to celebrate the move to the Metcalfe we will be showing a video of the famous Harry Kupfer production of *Das Rheingold* from the 1992 Bayreuth Festival on Sunday 29th January. We shall be showing the rest of the cycle on various dates in 1995.

On February 12th Alison Gyger, probably better known to everyone as Alison Jones, author of several books on opera in this country, has kindly consented to talk to us on performances of Wagner in Australia. This should be a **must** in your diary. The afternoon will conclude with a belated showing of the video from Berlin - *Wagner Gala* - with Jerusalem, Meier, Studer and Terfel. Abbado conducts.

### INCREASE IN FEES

It is with great regret that we must increase our charges but an inescapable increase in costs with the relocation from the Goethe Institute to the Metcalfe Auditorium in the State Library makes this unavoidable.

From January 1st 1995 monthly meeting charges will now be \$10 each for members and \$15 for guests. From April 1st 1995 new annual fees will be \$40 for single membership, \$55 for joint membership and \$20 for Pensioner membership or student membership (under 25).

### *Lohengrin* Simulcast

Of great interest to members will be a performance of *Lohengrin* from the Vienna State Opera, simulcast on ABC-FM\TV on Sunday 15th January at 8.30pm. The cast includes Placido Domingo and Cheryl Studer.

### NEW MEMBERS

*The Society wishes to welcome the following new members:*

*Ruth van Luyt, H and C Derichs, Carol Bailey, Melinda Hayton, Anne Howard, Reg Sherlock and Kevin Kelleher.*

### LE CHÂTELET RING

*(Information from Margaret Budge)*

... on the whole a wonderful production, so much better than the last two at Bayreuth... The stage had very little furniture and was on an angle and asymmetrical for all four operas. The clothing was Third Empire - no bright colours - the women mostly in greeny-blue or grey or white, no outlandish costumes. The rhine maidens were in long white dresses with no shoes and... fairly static in their movements. The gold was a large balloon that rolled on stage. There was no

rainbow bridge when Walhalla was completed; it rose up from the floor on an angle across the back of the stage. There was a black and white scene as a backdrop that looked either like clouds or valleys.. for all the operas. There were not just two giants coming to be paid, there were 12, all dressed alike, but Fasholt and Fafner were taller than the rest, but not huge giants. The production was really quite sober and very concentrated to really enhance the music of the orchestra and help you concentrate on the singing. The lack of scenery helped... and it became almost hypnotic.

Alberich (Franz Josef Kapellmann) was very good. Donner (Wolfgang Koch) was very effective but Froh ( Louise Gentile) was not a strong enough singer. Alberich had wonderful outbursts of violence... a shock in his choreographed movement. Loge (Peter Straka) got the best applause. Tate (the conductor) was very well received. The Brünnhilde (Gabriele Schnaut) was outstanding - a wonderful voice, well controlled and powerful. Sigmund (Jyrki Niskanen) and Sieglinde ((Karen Huffstodt) worked well but Hunding (Kurt Rydl) stole the show as he did later as Hagen.

The most stage furniture was in the scene with Fricka and Wotan - two chairs, two tables, a bottle of wine and some glasses. Wotan (Robert Hale), was powerful and acted and sang well. Fricka (Nadine Denize) is quite small but very determined and a powerful singer. The dead heroes were all over the stage. The ring of fire was a triangular red sail that blew across the stage and covered Brünnhilde. The Walkeries were in long blue/green floor length dresses, no head dresses or shields, just long spears.

Siegfried (Heinz Kruse) was very blond and a little shorter than Brünnhilde; also rotund... wore the same costume all the time, a long-sleeved round-necked sloppy joe and dirty creased trousers. He did have a marvellous happy face and a good voice that complimented Brünnhilde's. I liked this *Siegfried* better than any I've seen... he was played as less of the oaf. There was no dragon, just Fafner (Zelotes Edmund Toliver), who was very tall. The set here consisted of a tree, some rocks, a stool and the gold balloon. Mime's cave had no forge and Notung came out of the floor after Siegfried ground up the broken pieces and sprinkled them on stage in the shape of a sword. Erda was as always very dully dressed in a long bluey-grey dress and sat on a garden seat.

Now I have to admit that *Götterdämmerung* is my favourite and this one was WOW! The norms were excellent - no ropes - but slow movements around the stage. Brünnhilde went from great to greater. She has, I am sure, a huge future. No stage scenery for *Götterdämmerung* except the side of the stage moved inwards to give the effects of a huge hall. Brünnhilde instead of riding into the fire sits down and sings her final words to the rising sun.

### THE SEATTLE RING 1995

In August 1995 Seattle, USA, is running another of its well-known and highly respected *Ring* cycles. Members may remember a report from Bill and Edna Watson a year ago on their experiences with an earlier production. Members of the Wagner Society and their friends who may be interested in attending are invited to contact **Ray Josey on 326 2593** and indicate whether they would like one of the cycles listed below. If sufficient interest is aroused we will attempt to organise a group to attend. The cycles run as follows in 1995:

Cycle One	6th August - 11th August
Cycle Two	14th August- 19th August
Cycle Three	22nd August - 27th August

It may further whet appetites to know that the role of Brunnhilde is being shared by Marilyn Zschau and Nadine Secunde.

**PARSIFAL IN BRISBANE**

Members will be delighted to know that we have secured tickets for the concert performance of *Parsifal* on Saturday 27th May 1995 at the Concert Hall, Queensland Performing Arts Centre. The performance commences at 4.30pm.

**BRISBANE PARSIFAL APPLICATION**

Name: .....

Address: .....  
.....  
.....

Home Telephone: .....

Work Telephone: .....

No of tickets @ \$70.00each ..... Total enclosed ..... \$

Please make cheque or postal order payable to the Wagner Society.

Applications should be returned no later than 10th December with a return stamped self-addressed envelope to  
The Wagner Society in NSW Inc  
GPO Box 4574  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

The seating is in the Stalls, "A" Reserve, Row "N", and the ticket price is \$70 per ticket.

TRAVEL IS BY INDIVIDUAL ARRANGEMENT.

Please contact the Queensland Tourist Commission for your accommodation requirements. We can recommend two reasonably priced hotels (\$75 to \$80) within walking distance of the Performing Arts Centre:

- 1 Bellevue Hotel, 103 George Street, Brisbane ..... Tel 07 221 6044
- 2 Gateway Hotel, 85-87 North Quay, Brisbane ..... Tel 07 236 3300

The conductor is Gunther Schuller, and the cast is as follows:

Amfortas . . . . . James Maddalena  
Tituel . . . . . Donald Shanks  
Gurnemanz . . . . . Donald McIntyre  
Parsifal . . . . . Arley Reece  
Klingsor . . . . . Franz Mazura  
Kundry . . . . . Mechthild Gessendorf  
Knights . . . . . Robert Harrington & Mark Penman  
Squires . . . . . Margaret Schindler, Adrian McEnery,  
Celia Mylne & Gregory Massingham  
Flower Maidens . . . . . Belinda Matonti, Maria Pollicina, Margaret  
Russell, Celia Mylne and Carol-Anne Petherick  
Lyric Opera of Queensland Chorus and the Queensland Symphony Orchestra

**CANDIDE AND SYMPHONY OF A THOUSAND (NO 8) BY MAHLER**

After *Parsifal*, the following night (Sunday 28th May) at 7.00pm in the Lyric Theatre, there is a concert performance of Leonard Bernstein's *Candide* with the Queensland Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Brian Stacey. The cast includes Michael Terry, Jennifer McGregor and Roger Lemke.

And for those who may want to stay longer in Brisbane, at 8.00pm the following Saturday night, 3rd June, the Queensland Symphony Orchestra and the Queensland Philharmonic Orchestra will be joining forces to present Mahler's massive Symphony no 8 in the Great Hall of the new Brisbane Convention Centre just a short walk from the Performing Arts Centre. Muhai Tang, the Principal Conductor of the Queensland Symphony Orchestra, conducts with an outstanding lineup of soloists.

Bookings may be made on the toll-free number 1-800-777-699.

33  
33  
25  
19

**THE ANNUAL GUESSING COMPETITION**

Tickets will be sold at all monthly meetings and with a mailout included in the March newsletter.

Drawing date . . . . . Annual Lunch Sunday 21st May 1995

1st Prize . . . . . David Jones voucher to the value of \$300.00  
2nd Prize . . . . . *Life of Richard Wagner* by Ernest Newman  
3rd Prize . . . . . *Oxford Companion to Music* by Percy A Scholes.

Tickets will be \$2 each or 5 for \$9.00. Books of tickets will be available at the monthly meetings to take away and sell to your friends.

If this new annual fund-raising drive is a success we will be looking at the possibility of more substantial prizes in following years.



### THREE *RING* PRODUCTIONS FOR AUSTRALIA?

We still can't get our act together. After a timid and disastrous *Walküre* and *Rheingold* we abandoned our first modern *Ring*. Now we have three (yes, three) productions mooted. First there is the long-promised Victoria State Opera's cycle, but after reading between the lines in an interview with Ken Mackenzie-Forbes as reported in the *Australian* on Friday 5th November, this one seems definitely off the rails. He was back-tracking madly on the VSO's wisdom in embarking on such a venture - "at this stage in our [VSO] development, staging the entire *Ring* could greatly damage us... I'd much rather see the State Government allocate \$500,000 a year to new operas... and rarely seen classics to our repertoire." And again: "The *Ring* is something for a minority group"!!!

Let's not forget that *Rings* proliferate in Europe and America and have done so for decades and continue to do so - Berlin, Paris, London, Munich, Oslo, Vienna, Frankfurt, New York, San Francisco, etc etc and, of course, Bayreuth (a seven year waiting list).

Then there is the Melbourne Festival production with Polaski and Elming in the running, but I think Leo Schofield will have an uphill battle with that one. I wish him well.

The last possibility we have is one that Moffat Oxenbould touched on - and he stressed that it is only at an exploratory stage - an Australian Opera/Sydney Symphony Orchestra collaboration with Edo de Waart conducting (and he's keen) in the newly restored Capitol Theatre. When? Possibly 2000.

I am sure there is at least one cycle in all this. Please make it **great** - someone.

### YOUNG AND DIVALL

As many of you are aware, two Australians are constantly mentioned as the most likely candidates for the huge task of musical director of Wagner's epic if and when it happens, Simone Young and Richard Dival. We have reprinted below profiles of both artists that appeared earlier this year in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and Melbourne's *Sunday Age*.

#### Young

In early August, amidst accusation and counter-accusation, the musical director of the PNO (Paris National Opera), the Korean-born conductor Myung Whun Chung, was sacked. His abrupt dismissal came only days before rehearsals were to begin for Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra*, the opera scheduled to open the PNO's notorious Bastille Opera's important 1994-1995 autumn season on September 19.

Into the breach... stepped 33-year-old Simone Young... In not dissimilar circumstances did she receive her first break as a conductor. In 1985, the young 24-year-old from Manly was called in at five hours' notice to conduct the Australian Opera's production of *The Mikardo*, due to the illness of its scheduled conductor... She was that show-biz perennial, an overnight sensation...

In 1987 Young was voted Young Australian of the Year... Armed with an Australia Council grant, she left for Cologne in Germany, where she had landed the post of assistant conductor with the Cologne Opera. Her career hasn't looked back... In 1991 Daniel Barenboim spotted her talent and took her under his wing. He immediately appointed her his assistant at Bayreuth, a position she will keep until 1996; and, in 1993, he made her his assistant at the Berlin Staatsoper.

Last year she became the first woman to have conducted the Berlin Philharmonic and in the past year and a half, she has conducted 20 different operas, including 16 for the first time, performing in all the major European houses... Next year she comes to Australia to conduct the Australian Opera's *Aida* in August.

**Angela Bennie**  
**Sydney Morning Herald (16/8/94)**

### Divall

The furore over who should conduct [the *Ring*], which is now being planned as a joint venture between the VSO and the Melbourne Festival has caused Divall deep pain... For reasons even he can't fully explain, Divall has developed what can only be described as an obsession with the *Ring*... "I'm attached to it because I've spent a lot of time preparing it," he argues.

It was Leo Schofield... who proposed the joint venture with the VSO, which has wanted to stage the operas for many years. Schofield suggested it should be conducted by Simone Young... He sees huge potential in the marketability, here and overseas, of having a conductor of international renown. And he is also titillated by the fact that it will be the first time since 1876 that a woman will have conducted the *Ring*... Divall adamantly refused to give ground... "I have a contract that expires at the end of 1998 but to continue on if the *Ring* has started before then," he says. The Melbourne Festival and VSO would like to begin the work in 1996, with all four operas being staged in 2000...

[Divall] started his working life as a messenger boy with the ABC but through the kindness of a number of people, including the musician Verna [sic] Baer, ... began to build a future in music... He sang as a soloist in more than 30 operas but gradually his interest in conducting became the more compelling force. Before joining the VSO in 1972 he had been the music director of the Queensland Opera.

**Muriel Reddy**  
**Sunday Age**

**NB:** Richard Divall has been Musical Director of the Victoria State Opera for the past 22 years and has been responsible in no small part for the enormous prestige that the VSO enjoys today. At the end of 1994 he relinquishes this position but will retain links with the Company as Principal Guest Conductor.

**BAYREUTH RING 1994**  
**BATTLE OF THE BOOS AND THE BRAVOS**

Alfred Kirchner and Rosalie, the Director and Designer of the new *Ring*, would not have been surprised at the disapproval that greeted Kirchner's appearance at the end of *Götterdämmerung*. They knew they would provoke the traditionalists.

For me, their overall message was clear: there are no easy solutions to the world's woes. In particular, a return to a rigid, hierarchical regime as exemplified by the Japan/Germany team in WW2 (and perhaps, by implication, a return to fascism, rigid socialism or capitalism) will not work. The world must start anew and rethink, without sentimentality or romantic clap-trap. The stark, empty hemisphere of the final scene conveyed that message. Throughout, the costumes recall those of the Japanese Samurai, thus emphasising the hierarchical and power-based structure of Wotan's world.

Levine's music was, however, far from bleak. It was reported to be the slowest ever, lasting 15 hours 37 minutes - but it revealed phrases of great beauty not heard in more robust performances. At the same time, when the big noise was necessary, it was there in all its magnificence.

An outstanding performance was given by John Tomlinson as Wotan and the Wanderer. Siegfried Jerusalem dominated *Das Rheingold* as Loge. Poul Elming as Siegfried and Tina Kiberg as Sieglinde were a convincing combination. Wolfgang Schmidt strove manfully to match the excellence of his predecessor Jerusalem as Siegfried, but without complete success. However I cannot recall any male performer who did not act and sing very well indeed. They all deserve a special mention. Deborah Polaski's Brünnhilde was, in comparison with the Video greats, Behrens and Jones, rather strident, but perhaps the intention of the Director was to emphasise that, as demanded by Wagner's libretto, she was driven by passion, not wisdom or reason. That same libretto requires Siegfried to possess the minimum of wisdom, and throughout this production Siegfried is presented as a bobby-soxed oaf. He may be fearless, but he is conspicuously stupid. Just what did Brünnhilde teach Siegfried? In fact this *Ring* is at pains to emphasise the flaws in most characters. Wotan is pathetic as he dithers and postures (as do all the Gods), as he leans on Loge to solve his problem, and as he consults his guru Erda, who in turn can only refer him to Brünnhilde. Just what did Erda teach Wotan?

The Director and Designer were certainly provocative:

- The Samurai theme was omnipresent
- Wotan had no hat
- the Walküre swung about in scroll-shaped boxes
- the same ladies were dressed in huge cow-girl breeches
- the Norns were beautiful silk-worms
- there was no dragon, only a green mound which opened into a large, red mouth
- there were no green trees or flowers in the "Winterstürme"
- the Rhinemaidens didn't pretend to swim
- Fricka had a large basket-shape on her shoulder, perhaps representing the burdensome nature of the marriage code
- and so on.

But for me the sets, which were clear and bright, were exciting and were not inconsistent or distracting. The production was even humorous, as the Gods shilly-shallied and the giants, each with an individual character) strode around with heads dwarfed in front of enormous black and yellow carnival faces carried on their shoulders.

If the real stuff of Bayreuth is the achievement of musical excellence while at the same time advancing the Wagnerian Art Form, this Levine/Kirchner/Rosalie *Ring* is a worthy successor to the Barenboim/Kupfer *Ring*.

The bravos have my vote.

**Bill Watson**

### DONATIONS

*The Society welcomes all donations and they can be sent as follows:*

#### DONATION FORM

To The Wagner Society in NSW Inc  
The Treasurer (Mrs Janet Wayland)  
GPO Box 4574  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Please find my cheque/money order attached for \$..... being a donation to the Wagner Society in NSW Inc.

Name: .....

Address: .....

Membership Number: .....

NB: Receipts will be issued and all donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

**TICKETS TO BAYREUTH  
THROUGH THE WAGNER SOCIETY IN NSW**

The Society reminds members of the rules relating to the acquisition of tickets for Bayreuth through membership of the Wagner Society in NSW.

- I. Only Financial Members of at least 2 years standing are eligible to apply for tickets
- II. Only signed orders placed on the form below will be accepted.
  - A. A deposit of \$100 (one hundred dollars) for each application is also required.
  - B. If tickets are not allocated to you the Deposit will be promptly refunded.
- III. Applications must be made prior to 31st December 1994.
- IV. We will apply for performances in the third cycle, ie, middle to late August 1994.
- V. You are responsible for the price of the tickets once they are received. (Unfortunately, because of the nature of the dealings with the Festival Box Office, we require payment even if you are unable to use the tickets. We will not return tickets to the Bayreuth Box Office because there is a risk that such a move may prejudice future orders from our Society. However, if you are unable to go, after paying for the tickets, it is **extremely probable** that we would be able to find someone else to take them over).
- VI. **All payments** must be made through the Society.
- VII. You will be responsible for your own travel arrangements and accommodation.
- VIII. Tickets will be sold as a package (subject to availability).
- IX. We will add a service charge of 10% to the tickets to cover the Society's expenses and overhead in ordering and distributing the tickets.
- X. In the event of a ballot being necessary one ticket only will be allocated to Financial Members of 2 years standing or more, except in the case of a married couple, or close relatives, when 2 tickets will be allocated **provided both are financial members**.
- XI. If a ballot is necessary, it will be conducted in early January in the presence of Committee Members, or any other members of the Society wishing to attend.

Signature	
Name	
Address	
Phone (work and home)	

SEND TO THE WAGNER SOCIETY, GPO Box 4574, SYDNEY NSW 2001

TELEPHONE ENQUIRIES ..... 387 6403

Number of seats .....  
 If there is a choice would you prefer expensive seats ..... Y/N  
 Less expensive seats ..... Y/N

## BAYREUTH 1994 - REVIEWS

### *Das Rheingold*

After the breathtakingly beautiful opening in E-Flat, the curtain rose on Kirchner's own version of (and in memory of) Wieland Wagner's Neu-Bayreuth world disc. It looked like an upturned soup plate. The three Rhine maidens were sitting, lying or cavorting on a three-armed slightly bent ladderlike contraption that turned slowly around like a carousel. In the middle was a large cocktail glass that contained the gold. In the background was a band that glittered like water. The Rhine maidens were Joyce Guyer, Sarah Fryer and Jane Turner. Alberich was sung brilliantly by Ekkehard Wlaschiha. Rosalie had put the Rhine maidens in fantasy costumes like aerobic bodices, tights, baseball caps etc. Alberich looked like the beetle out of Kafka's story *Metamorphosis*. He wore short leather pants, knee protectors and a huge hunchback made of green ribbed plastic. The stage settings are many faceted and leave room for associations and interpretations.

It is just as colourful on 'the open space on the mountain tops'. The white irregular netting on the black stage background may be interpreted as the communication system of our global village,. just like the glass disc that has been splintered by a red wooden stake and hangs threateningly above the scenery, may be a reference to Siegfried's death. Kirchner and Rosalie show great virtuosity with such playful elements. Fasolt and Fafner carry over their heads huge masks, symbols of their giant growth or they could also be tribal African references.

The subterranean cleft of the third scene opens up from the disc like the threat of a huge magical animal. It shows a Nibelheim where the helots of Alberich swarm in their metal tubes like slaters when one lifts up a stone and exposes them to daylight. When Alberich is tricked and collapses, Wlaschiha plays it so convincingly that there is silence in the house.

Kirchner convincingly shows that Wotan loves his wife Fricka and that she loves him even more so. James Levine conducts in such a fashion that a tender aura envelopes the couple. Hanna Schwarz sang Fricka seductively and melodiously. John Tomlinson was a powerfully sung Wotan. Rene Pape (Fasolt) and Eric Halvarson (Fafner) were singers of a high calibre. Siegfried Jerusalem's Loge was no croaking pseudo, intriguing half god but a powerfully sung, elegant, brilliant contrast between giants, dwarfs and gods. This time no gold bars hiding Freia, Kirchner had her lying on the ground covered with gold leaf, while Levine accompanied with impressionistic oboe-sweetness.

Walhalla looked like a scaffold of giant knitting needles and the rainbow bridge is a garland of stalactites dripping from above.

### *Die Walküre*

After the storm music the curtain opens onto a violet-golden stylised room; in the middle a stylised tree. Sieglinde (Tina Kiberg), dressed in a strange Japanese-look costume, sits in front of a square that has been placed onto the disc. When Siegfried (Poul Elming) stumbles in asking for water she fetches a dish that looks like a dog's saucer. She knees and pushes it towards him but later relents and brings a horn filled with a drink.

Kiberg and Elming are both Danish and resembled the twins extremely well. Hung was sung with authority and forcefulness by Hans Sotin.

As *Die Walküre* describes the despair and hopelessness of these two human beings, the characters need all the support they can get from the Director and sense-making sets and costumes that create the right atmosphere. This was not achieved, despite Levine's beautiful orchestral detail. There was no frenzied build-up of emotion.

It became evident in the second act that Levine's conducting slowed the musical dramatic buildup.

After Fricka, triumphantly, changes her husband's mind and tells Brünnhilde "your father waits for you, let him tell you what fate is chosen", then this passage should be sung and articulated in a haughty manner, not just nicely sung.

The third act opened with the Walkeries standing separately in a lengthwise cut open giant tin which moved with them up and down and sideways. They were in Japanese-looking costumes also with leather bodices, emphasising busts, and trousers that were huge at the hips and narrowed downwards. Most unbecoming, I thought. Deborah Polaski was a tall, most attractive Brünnhilde and sang the role with great mastery. After Wotan's farewell, Brünnhilde is put to sleep in front of a small sial on a bare mountain top. The fire that is supposed to envelop the mountain top is again a wide band in the background that glows red and shimmers. The whole of *Die Walküre* lacked drama and dynamics, I thought, especially Wotan's farewell.

I thought mournfully back to the production of 1988 in Sydney, where Donald McIntyre and Marilyn Zschau sang and played with such emotion that I had to swallow hard and had tears in my eyes. This was truly missing in this 1994 production in Bayreuth.

### *Siegfried*

Richard Wagner wrote "The fate of the world depends on the godlike simplicity and uniqueness of this one without fear". Well, neither Kirchner nor Rosalie resolved this statement. This child of nature at first sight made a ridiculous impression, his white suit with chic blue vest, as he swung (frequently) on a swing through the cave. It could not be overlooked that Rosalie, with her sets and costumes, followed a subtle system. Kirchner was not able to develop this strangely uninteresting but strong-voiced Siegfried (Wolfgang Schmidt) beyond harmless presentations. He does not achieve tension between Mime and Siegfried; nothing symbolises the world-redeeming power of Siegfried or Mime's dangerous ambition. As Mime Manfred Jung did not sing in top form. The first act did not achieve the usual Bayreuth standard.

The cave contains, on the right side, a heap of trolleys, in the middle there stands a tiny plastic anvil which could be demolished by any grandmother, a large toy bear cutely jumps through the air. There was really very little for Kirchner to work on. The only redeeming moments - the sublime Wotan with his sonoric voice and the comforting, consoling gestures of Mime when Siegfried hears how his mother died.

What is a German forest? For Wagner and his *Ring* and in the history of the German soul, it is more than a collection of a few trees. The slow fog-like music of the beginning of the second act fulfils the demand for "deep forest" and "blackest night". The spectator cannot see anything. The

lighting producer shows in this production that he has no artistic imagination. Rosalie created an enchantingly beautiful sky of tree leaves (green and shimmering plastic umbrellas). In the background, a huge mass which was recognisable as the dragon. Not critically or ironically, she offered the treeless forest. It was beautiful but not in accordance with the gloomy, threatening music of the dragon. Levine conducted quietly and intimately. Wolfgang Schmidt sang Siegfried competently.

The fight with the dragon was disappointing. The huge mass opened a big red mouth, Siegfried ran in, thrust his sword then ran out with Fafner and his mask following him.

In the third act Wotan's hopeless meeting with Erda (Birgitta Svenden - her voice is too slender) and his defeat at Siegfried's impatience, take place in too harmless a manner. When the woodbird (Joyce Guyer) has delivered Siegfried to Brünnhilde the narrative attitude of the *Ring* is altered. Until now what happened in reality and perceptible dramatic sense were one. From now on, action and intended meaning are not cohesive.

The meeting of the couple on the mountain top of the world, the meaning of it emphasised and increased by the music, is not only meant to be what it is in its first dimension, an intoxicating love scene, but the triumph of liberty for two young people and the vision of a new world. One has to believe this. While Polaski reached wonderful lyrical moments and Schmidt was just able to hold his own without reaching a shiny high C, one could feel the meaning and importance of this moment.

One has heard, in Bayreuth, more tumultuous applause after the third act of *Siegfried*, but also many more loud boos.

### ***Götterdämmerung***

The truly good news first. All lamentations about a crisis of good Wagnerian singers can be ended for the time being. In the new *Ring* we heard a Brünnhilde who grew better from evening to evening and who started her final song in the third act of *Götterdämmerung* in a deeply moving manner.

Siegfried offered imposing strength of voice and vitality.

With Alberich and Hagen (Eric Halverson) future visitors to Bayreuth may look forward to excellent singing.

In spite of that I must say that I cannot remember any *Ring* that left me as cold as this one. Maybe it was Levine who conducted in a softly pretty manner and the differences between Kirchner's production of serious characters in a funny and harmless way and Rosalie's capricious fancies. She produced places in an artificial way, uncertain of taste and funnily wrong, like the abstract trees that bow clumsily at Siegfried's death. And the Norns not communicating with each other. Levine conducted too slowly; he left no reserves for the very sensitive, pale motionlessness, which is part of the grand pessimistic music picture of *Götterdämmerung*, too little of austere musical structure.



For example, the funeral march in the third act started too matter-of-factly. Of course it grew, but as scenically no funeral march took place (no carrying away of the corpse), the fortissimo transfiguration was not evident. The funeral march seemed to end in melancholy and it was not made clear when the march ends triumphantly and the next scene starts in twilight.

Kirchner had his best ideas when presenting Siegfried as a country bumpkin but not as the tragic hero. Schmidt presented his role in *Götterdämmerung* successfully but was unable to show his feelings, his love to Brünnhilde in the farewell scene of the first act. Later when he has become the passive object of Hagen's intrigue, Kirchner made him more convincing.

The ghostly wake-dream scene was meticulously produced. Halvarson's Hagen was in impressive voice. Gunther (Falk Struckmann) could do with more extreme and subjective presentation. Guttrune (Anna Linden) looked beautiful but her voice was reserved.

The stage design of the second and third act was very effective. A dark stage, as in the second act, creates a dark atmosphere. But in the first act, it was strange to have containers hanging from above. Also the main characters sitting on giant bar stools. It all seemed stupid and unnecessary, fitting neither the text or the music.

This *Ring* started in a Japanese-archaic look but it was not sustained and became something of no significance. Wagner tried to develop and create tension between his characters. Rosalie created effects.

Kirchner and Rosalie should get together and maybe next year it will be more cohesive.

**Hilda Perini**

**With reference to Joachim Kaiser's *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* review.**

#### **OBITUARY - GOTTLÖB FRICK**

German bass, at Pforzeim, on August 18, aged 88. Frick possessed one of those black saturnine voices that seem peculiar to the German-speaking countries, perfectly suited to the dour bass characters in Wagner's operas. Sarastro, Rocco and the Hermit, which were his best known roles, made him in great demand in the major opera houses from 1950 - 1970. He was born on 28 July 1906 at Ölbrunn in Württemberg. Studied at the Stuttgart conservatorium and was a member of that city's opera house from 1929-31. He made his debut at Coburg as Daland. He moved to Dresden in 1938 and remained there until 1952. Whilst in Dresden he sang his first Wagner roles.

He moved to Berlin, then Munich. He first sang at Covent Garden in 1951 as Hagen and Hunding, and appeared regularly there from 1957-67 in Wagner roles and others. He made his Bayreuth debut as Pogner in 1957 and sang Hunding and Hagen at the Festival regularly between 1960 and 1964. Also a frequent guest at Vienna. Although he officially retired in 1970, he reappeared as Gurnemanz at Covent Garden in 1971 and then recorded the role under Solti, who also used Frick for several roles in his recording of the *Ring* in the 1960s. Like many singers of his generation he always sang in his native tongue - all to the good, since his German diction was incisive and full of character.

## THE YOUNG WAGNER

*The following article was submitted to us some time ago by David Rowlands and up to now we haven't had the space to print it. However, this issue we will print in full his piece and we are most grateful for his submission.*

In *Mein Leben* Wagner portrays himself as the consummate artist, intuitive, passionate and unremittingly egocentric. I find the first fifty or so pages of the tome to be a fascinating character study, and worthy of examination by any interested in Romanticism and its leading lights, of whom our Richard (with a sun-like intensity) was one.

Despite being full of lies, misrepresentations (eg, the portrayal of Minna, his first wife) and slips of memory, the work provides valuable insights into the mind and heart of Wagner, whose character is still capable today of fascinating - and repelling - millions. It is easy to see why Wagner was so magnetic, if only because of his unshakeable faith in himself, which in the end was shown to be justified. The *Ring* and Bayreuth stand as monument to this.

We should always bear in mind that Wagner was an actor who sought to portray himself in the most dramatic light possible. Much of Wagner's adolescence may be a construction, it is true. However, this only enhances the value of Wagner's book as an examination of Wagner the artist. *Mein Leben* is how Wagner would have us see him, and so is a direct link to the workings of that titanic mind.

We are told that Wagner's father died soon after Richard's birth. This is important, for we may see much of the young Wagner's activity, both artistic and social, as bearing the stamp of a fatherless childhood. He was inclined to worship great composers and poets of the past, and Wagner made Beethoven a kind of musical and spiritual "father". His youthful overture in B flat major, Wagner says, "... grew out of my study of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony....." [*Mein Leben*, p51. Also p35: This Ninth Symphony became the mystical lodestar of all my fantastic musical thoughts and aspirations.] Shakespeare too was an important influence on Wagner, whose first play, *Leubald und Adelaide*, was a synthesis of *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *King Lear* [Ibid, p25]. Also in Wagner's "pantheon of spirits" [Ibid, p 31], were Mozart (Wagner adored *Don Giovanni*) and Weber, whose *Der Freischutz* was a favourite of the young Wagner's [Ibid, p 13]. It strikes us that Wagner instinctively seized on the great dramatists as artistic role models. Beethoven, Shakespeare - these are the very embodiment of dramatic expression, and they became Wagner's guiding influence.

The tendency of Wagner to seek out father figures is highlighted in his account of callow youth, a period when Wagner set aside his dramatic and musical aspirations to lose himself in the student lifestyle, with its drunkenness, aggression and gambling. Wagner describes how he felt a passionate longing to be a member of rowdy student organisations. Soon Wagner began to associate with the student fringe:

These hooligans had greatly struck my fancy and I had already made their personal acquaintance... I was particularly dazzled by a certain fellow named Gebhardt, a person of incomparable good looks and strength; his slim, heroic figure towered head and shoulders above his companions. His redoubtable strength, combined with a rather gentle temperament, lent him a majestic dignity, placing him beyond comparison with other mortals [Ibid, pp 44-45].

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understood this singular composition or not' [Ibid, p57]. Thus the mature Wagner who contends that destiny removed his prospective duelling opponents [Ibid, p 47: The way destiny preserved me from the consequences of my rashness strikes me as truly miraculous to this day and is worthy of closer description] may be slightly different to the developing Wagner. I raised the point that Wagner may have been "searching" for a "father" through all this time, and it is a useful background point, I feel, when studying the young Wagner. To say it in another way, Wagner at this time was (not surprisingly) trying to find the appropriate channel for his weighty talent.

Uncertainties aside, Wagner the artistic genius dominates even the early stages of *Mein Leben*. Before the turbulence of adolescence set in, young Richard had written *Leubald und Adelaide* (the original manuscript of which is preserved in the Wagner archives) and composed some keyboard music. Importantly, Wagner knew that his talent lay not in performing music but rather in the more conceptual and creative field of composition [Ibid, p35. But as I passionately declared that "music" meant "composition" to me and not "playing an instrument", they gave in and decided that I should take regular lessons in harmony...] (Wagner was, on his own admission, a very poor pianist and violinist, instruments he understood, but not with his hands, as it were). This is a key to understanding his mind, which was extremely undisciplined (no doubt due to its innate creativity). Rigorous study was beyond Wagner, who only pursued that which came without real effort. The hours and hours of practice it requires to play the piano did not appeal to Wagner, and the intellectual effort needed to study musical harmony was similarly unappealing: "... the aridities of harmonic theory disgusted me more and more..." [Ibid, p35]. Wagner's was an intuitive mind which was able to bypass the usual means needed to gain an understanding of music. It really was in his blood.

Wagner was by nature an "arrogant" man, and we see his arrogance (I call it brilliance) beginning to develop quite early. He was utterly scornful of anything his teachers did, dismissing it as academic pedantry. The following passage is typical of Wagner's attitude toward formal education:

My disgust at having to lay aside Homer, of whom I had already produced a written translation of twelve books, in order to take up again the easier Greek prose writers, was indescribable and wounded me deeply. I henceforth comported myself in such a manner as never to win the friendship of a teacher at this school [Ibid, p22].

Wagner tells us that he spent all his time at school writing creatively and reading works not prescribed for study. Like most intelligent adolescents, Wagner went through a stage of thinking he was always in the right. "Study is for little pedants" was to be his attitude. Looking at it from Wagner's perspective, he was right. Wagner was unsuited to academia, and everything he did sprang naturally from his genius. Only those subjects which interested him from a dramatic point of view were pondered. (For instance, he loved classical Greek because it reminded him of the heroic world of Greek myth). The greatness of his mind lay in its extraordinary imaginative power, which is self-consciously highlighted by Wagner in his book. For instance, the child Richard was constantly seeing ghostly apparitions:

The excitement of horror and fear of ghosts constitute a singular factor in the development of my emotional life. From earliest childhood certain mysterious and uncanny phenomena produced undue effects on me... [Ibid, p13].

From the earliest age, Wagner had been fascinated with the theatre, and I think this to be the most significant trait in the development of Wagner the operatic composer. He devoted all his talents to dramatic expression, and this is not surprising when we note the following:

What attracted me so strongly to the theatre, in which I include the stage itself, the compartments behind the scenes, and the dressing-rooms, was not so much the desire for entertainment and diversion, such as motivates today's theatregoers, but rather a tingling delight in finding myself in an atmosphere that represented such a contrast to normal life by its purely fantastic and almost appallingly attractive quality. Thus a set, or even a flat - perhaps representing a bush - or a costume or even only a characteristic piece of one, appeared to me to emanate from another world... [Ibid, p13].

Laid bare in the above is the quality of Wagner's imagination. Everyday life bored him, and the theatre allowed Wagner to escape into "... that fascinating demoniacal realm" [[Ibid, p13]. It was not Wagner's intellect that spurred him to create the *Ring*, but rather the vast reserves of emotion and imagination he was able to tap. The boy who could be transported merely by touching a theatre costume is easily identifiable as the man responsible for the searing climate of *Tristan und Isolde*.

Women were always very important to Wagner, who once ruminated that a man was worth nothing if he could not be loved by the opposite sex (*Familienbriefe*, pp189-190: I cannot endure men, and would like to have nothing to do with them. No one is worth a toss unless he can really be loved by a woman.). The power of his imagination lent itself to an idealistic appraisal of the women in his life who, like the theatre, became representatives of something higher. Wagner tells us that as a child his sisters' friends would often come and visit:

I remember pretending to be in a state of stupefied sleepiness in order to induce the girls to carry me to bed, as I had noticed to my excited surprise that their attention in similar circumstances brought me into delightfully intimate contact with the female being [*Mein Leben*, p16].

The influence of femininity on the young Wagner is very pronounced in *Mein Leben*. To him, the theatre was peopled by women, and so I believe that Wagner's interest in the theatre was bound up with his developing sexuality. If, in Wagner's mind the theatre was "feminine", it is not surprising that he loved it so much. It represented to him a world of sensual experience. He says as much: the

... attributes of femininity, particularly insofar as they were connected with the imaginary world of the theatre, filled with an almost passionate delight [Ibid, p14].

I propose that sex was symbolised in the theatre, for Wagner, and that dramatic achievement was tantamount to sexual experience. We should remember that it was mostly with women that Wagner shared his new works, and it was very much his artistic genius that attracted women to him. In this way, Wagner's art and sexuality were linked, and if we accept the basic Freudian premise that our primary goal is sexual gratification, then we come closer to understanding the voracious creative drive of the mature Wagner. The early passages of *Mein Leben*, I think, clearly

express this developing aspect of Wagner's personality. That Wagner expressed his sexuality in art does not diminish his strong search for paternity which I have mentioned previously. Music was sexual, but Wagner chose figures like Mozart, Weber and Beethoven to act as musical "fathers". The act of creating music was an expression of sexual instinct, but the influences moulding the form of this creation were "masculine". Thus music brought together Wagner's desire for sexual gratification and his search for a father. This is similar to the everyday situation of an infant boy following in his father's footsteps. For Wagner, the instinct was always there, but the study of Beethoven et al allowed him to express this instinct eloquently. This is what I mean when saying that great composers of the past acted as father figures to the young Wagner.

The nature of Wagner's mind made him an intensely egocentric being. There is no getting away from the fact that Wagner treated people badly, seeing them only from his perspective and not taking into account their needs. Granted. This aspect of Wagner's character is brought out in the book, in which Wagner describes his relationship with other males:

I can only [*sic*] indifference in the choice of companions to the fact that I had never experienced a meaningful relationship and only wanted to have someone who would accompany me on my excursions and to whom I could pour out my innermost feelings to my heart's content, without worrying what effect it might have on him [Ibid, p38].

The purpose of others' existence was to facilitate Wagner's development and to provide comfort. In this he is like a child, this "fault" is easily forgivable in hindsight. We are all a little egocentric, and as Wagner's talent was far greater than the average, so too was his egocentrism. The power of his imagination forced him to live in a largely self-constructed universe, in which he was the deity. For a mind like Wagner's, whose thought processes were so overpowering, it would have been impossible for him to break away from the dream-world. In any case, Wagner was not immune to the sufferings of other people. Indeed, how could we seriously suggest that so great a dramatist as Wagner was not empathetic? It is quite possible to see Wagner's egocentrism as a defence mechanism. Such an extraordinarily sensitive man as Wagner could not afford to take on the burdens of other people: it would have broken him. Therefore, it was easier to accept the world on his own terms. I am here conjecturing, of course, but it [*sic*] important that we think of human explanations for Wagner's difficult character. He was not a monster, as some think. In his failings he was very human, and we should embrace that humanity. The alternative would be something like those dreadful nineteenth century biographies of Mozart depicting "the Master" as a serene genius devoid of human characteristics. Having said this, though, it is true that Wagner would have been a trying companion, to say the least. The incident best highlighting this is his illicit use of Frau Wagner's pension at a seedy gambling den [Ibid, p50]. This youthful escapade also hints at the Wagner of later years who would gain a notorious reputation for poor financial management.

One of the most curious things about Wagner's account of his early years is a complete absence of religious soul-searching. It is not uncommon for intelligent youths to devote long hours to the "big" questions, yet Wagner appears to have been completely untroubled. This is not to say that Wagner knew all the answers, far from it. Rather, he was asking himself different questions. Some people wonder if Christ was the saviour. Wagner wondered the same thing about Beethoven. The nature of Wagner's mind precluded any serious thought about traditional religion, because Wagner at this stage was the centre of his own universe, which was composed of elements

like Woman, Theatre and Music.

More than anything else, *Mein Leben* shows the young Wagner to be a Romantic with his head in the clouds. So absorbing did he find "higher pursuits" that everything else appeared dull. His relationship with the daughters of Count Pachta shows that his nature was unamenable to most people. The following passage paints a vivid portrait of Wagner as an awkward, serious youth who eschewed "normalcy" in the belief that he compensated for this with artistic expression.

I soon noticed to my disgust their shallow knowledge in the whole area of aesthetics, while they pronounced receptiveness to every kind of superficiality. None of my enthusiastic communications about the higher pursuits I had come to care about so much interested them in the slightest. I protested... against the horse-loving vacuous gallants who showed up from time to time and paid what was to me insulting court to both Jenny and Auguste [Ibid, p.64].

I can easily believe that the Wagner who felt so strongly about women would have liked to be seen in the same light as "horse-loving vacuous gallants". He was jealous of these youths and felt resentful that his intellectual disposition did not romantically attract young and pretty girls. No doubt he would not care for my saying that. Wagner, in an attempt to make himself attractive, poured out his feelings in art, and we see a continuing link between art and sexuality for Wagner. My understanding of Romanticism is that feelings are more important than rational thought. Clearly, Wagner was a true Romantic, whose great passion was expressed in so magnificent a way. If Romanticism was the beginning of the Self in art, Wagner was the chief exponent of one's own experience counting for everything. This led to intellectual snobbishness and egocentrism, as we see in the account of Wagner and the Pachta girls. Yet if Wagner's relationship with people was impractical, his art was supremely practical. For me, this practicality is best expressed in the opening lines of *Mein Leben*:

Born May 22nd 1813 in Leipzig, two flights up in a house on the Bruhl known as "The Red and White Lion", I was christened two days later in St Thomas' Church with the name Wilhelm Richard [Ibid, p3].

There is a delightful feeling here of "right, let's get down to business!" This is in keeping with the Wagner who designed, sought finance for and finally oversaw the construction of Bayreuth. We see that Wagner could at times be grossly impractical and at other times act with great verve. This demonstrates the extent to which Wagner's life differed from his art. However, a study of the young Wagner shows that it is not possible to separate the two. Wagner was so brilliant an artist because this is how he first learnt to express himself. We have to thank for Wagnerian opera the difficulty Wagner had in relating to other people. It was the price he paid for genius, and I think it ludicrous when people say they like the music yet loath the man. The music, as I have shown, grew out of the man's personality, and so the poignant, beautiful moment of Siegfried's death in *Götterdämmerung* is as much Wagner the man as his petty day-to-day failings, which are so unjustly emphasised by non-Wagnerians.

David T Rowlands

## JOHN WEGNER

News passed on from Olive Coonan of John's current Karlsruhe triumphs. And he asks his Australian friends: Has he made history? He has made three Wotan debuts in one calendar year - *Rheingold* on 20th November 1993, *Walküre* on 29th January 1994 and *Siegfried* on 1st October 1994. Is he now the first Australian to have sung all the Wotans in Europe? In one year?

### THE RAVENS REPORTING

*Here we offer advance short items/performance news of interest to Wagner lovers.*

- Chicago      *Siegfried* (new production), with Eva Marton/Jane Eaglen, Nancy Maultsby, Siegfried Jerusalem/Wolfgang Schmidt, Graham Clark, James Morris, Ekkehard Wlaschiha, Eric Halfvarson, conductor Zubin Mehta, producer August Everding, director John Conklin - January 24, 28 (m), 30, February 1, 3, 6, 10, 14 and 18.
- Opera du Rhin      *Lohengrin* (new production) with Valerie Millot, Yvonne Minton, David Rendall, Urs Markus, Gregory Reinhardt, conductor Thomas Fulton, producer Antoine Bourseiller. Strasbourg - December 3, 5, 10, 13, 15 & 18 (m); Mulhouse - January 13, 15.
- Arizona      *Götterdämmerung* - Karen Bureau (Brünnhilde), Malcolm Rivers (Alberich), George Gray (Siegfried), conductor Henry Hold. Tucson - January 19, 21; Phoenix - January 25, 27, 29 (m). The full cycle is scheduled for Spring 1996.
- Copenhagen      *Tannhäuser* (new production) with Tina Kiberg/Elisabeth Meyer-Topsoe, Stig Fogh Andersen, Gert Henning Jensen/John Laursen, Guido Paevatalu, Christian Christiansen/Jorgen Klint, conductor Dietfried Bernet. Opens February 23.
- Oslo      *Siegfried* (new production) with Carol Yahr, Arild Helleland, Knut Skram/Erling Chr Onsager, conductor Heinz Fricke, producer Mike Ashman and designer Kathrine Hysing. February 11, 15, 18. *Rheingold* - February 21, 23 and *Die Walküre* May 20, 23.
- Berlin      Staatsoper - *Tristan und Isolde* - March 5, 11, 19, May 14, 21.
- Covent Garden      *Siegfried* opens March 27.
- Cologne      *Das Rheingold* - March 5, 11, 16, 19 (m), 25.
- Liege      Opera Royal de Wallonie - *Holländer* (new production), with Gabriele Maria Ronge, Mady Urbain, Andras Molnar, Thierry Migliorini, Benyt Norup, Philip Kang, conductor Friedrich Pleyer. March 3, 5, 7, 9, 11.
- Vienna      *Lohengrin* - March 20, 24, 27.
- Bayreuth      The Tannhäuser next year will be Heikki Siukola.