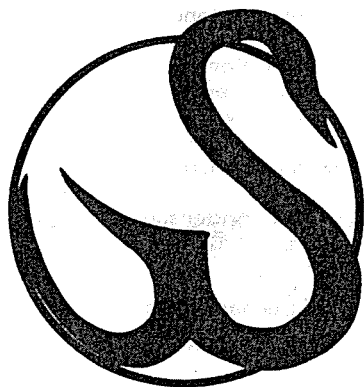


The Wagner Society

Registered Office: 141 Dowling Street, Woolloomooloo 2011
Telephone enquiries: 358 1919 (Bus. Hours)



Newsletter

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No. 24 DECEMBER, 1986.

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PATRON: SIR CHARLES MacKERRAS
HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS:
WERNER BAER
RITA HUNTER
LEONIE RYSANEK
MICHAEL EWANS

COMING EVENTS

Sunday	December 14th	Christmas Party 2.30 - 6.00 pm. Goethe Institute.
Sunday	March 15th	Compact Disc - Richard Strauss. Alpine Symphony - Salome (Complete).

COMMITTEE

President	:	Richard King	358 1919
& Co-Editor			
Vice-President	:	Janet Wayland	357 4806 (B)
Editor			332 3926 (H)
Secretary	:	Judith Ferfoggia	938 2030
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Committee	:	David McCulloch	270 9591 (B)
			665 4212 (H)
Programme	:	Dr Leonard Hansen	27 2926 (B)
Sub-committee	:	Michel Arnould	326 1793 (H)

DONATIONS

RECEIVED DURING LAST QUARTER.

Lady Gallaghan, Mr Geoffrey Magney, Neutral Bay Travel, Miss Tracey Wilson.
Mr Andrew Pell, Mrs B.F. Maloney.

Our gratitude is extended to the above members who we hope will accept this publication of their names as our acknowledgement for their support.

Donations to the Wagner Society are tax deductible if they are paid to the Elizabethan Theatre Trust and accompanied by the form opposite.

Donations to the Wagner Society are Tax-Deductible if they are paid to the Elizabethan Theatre Trust and accompanied by the form below.

To: The General Manager,
The Elizabethan Theatre Trust, P.O Box 137, Kings Cross, 2011

Dear Sir,
Please find enclosed a cheque for \$ representing my donation to The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust. This donation is given unconditionally. However, it would be appreciated if, when considering your appropriations to the performing companies, preference in the allocation of this donation could be given to The Wagner Society.

Signature
Name
Address

A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Including our annual Christmas get together, which I might add includes some Wagnerian documentary films, we will have had nine functions so far this financial year. Next year an even bigger programme is planned. Highlights include an expanded repertoire of opera by Wagner and others on compact disc at the Goethe Institute. A superb sit down dinner at Menzies Hotel Ballroom with a surprise guest of honour. Several receptions for visiting celebrities and singers including Michael Hampe, General Manager of Cologne Opera and Elizabeth Connell who is returning to Australia next year after many triumphs in Europe and America.

A full day seminar on Lohengrin, studying the mythology and music, illustrated by excerpts etc. This will be followed by the Victorian State Opera's production mounted in Sydney Opera House during September. Of course the Society will have group bookings and a reception to meet the singers and others in the production after the final performance.

Your committee has, (as usual) worked very hard throughout the year and we are always pleased to hear from the members who have suggestions and constructive thoughts on the running of the Society.

I would also like to welcome back from their European Tour, Dr Leonard Hansen, our Founding President and Michel Arnould. They were away for ten months, meeting many people in these older Wagner Societies and forging valuable links for future contacts and the sharing of knowledge of Richard Wagner and his works.

Lastly, a very Happy Christmas to all our members and friends of the Society. May 1987, our seventh year, be a landmark in the Society's history.

Richard King

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BAYREUTH FESTIVAL IMPORTANT NOTICE Re. TICKETS.

Application has been made by your Society for a group booking of 15 sets of tickets for the 1987 Bayreuth Festival. Although there is no guarantee that any tickets will be allocated to us next year - considering that a group from Sydney went to Bayreuth this year - it is still possible that the Society may get some priority in ticket distribution.

The opera being performed are: Lohengrin, Parsifal, Tristan and Isolde, Tannhauser and The Mastersingers of Nuremberg.

A list of people interested in attending the festival is being compiled, and any members wishing to place themselves on the list for any tickets received should notify the undersigned immediately on (02) 272969 (office hours) or (02) 3261793 (after hours).

The only conditions to the tickets are:

1. The applicants must be members of the Wagner Society.
2. Tickets will be offered in the order that applications are received, and should be paid for within seven days.
3. Tickets not paid for after seven days will be offered to the next applicant on the list.
4. A handling fee of 5% of the value of each ticket will be charged, to offset the Society's expenses incurred in their purchase. (The ticket price will be calculated as per the Aust\$/DEM exchange rate on the day the Society obtains its overseas bank draft.) Travel and accommodation arrangements will be the responsibility of the individual members, who are welcome to seek advice from the committee on these matters.

Leonard Hansen.

COMING EVENTS

Christmas Party. Plans for our Christmas party hold promise of many delights - both culinary and musical. Three short celebratory films are to be shown during the course of the afternoon with plenty of opportunity to mingle discuss and be merry.

Compact Disc. The first of the very popular compact disc afternoons at the Goethe Institute for 1987 will begin on 15th March at 1.00 p.m. It will be devoted to the music of Richard Strauss beginning with the strictly instrumental Alpine symphony and after a short spell SALOME - complete. The programmes for the last of 1987 are still in the planning stage but there is a feast in store - watch your Newsletter for all further details.

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DIE WALKURE at FRANKFURT OPERA.

Keith T. Johns.

Ruprecht - Karl Universitat Heidelberg.

Symbolism and Stage Direction with Accompaniments by Richard Wagner; some notes on the new production.

The new production of Die Walkure, as part of a new "Ring" at Frankfurt, was preceded by an introductory lecture on Sunday 27th April by Dr. Jurgen Maehder from the University of Bern. The theme of his introduction was "Sprachkomposition in Richard Wagner's Der Ring des Nibelungen" and as the title suggests, he concentrated on the relationship between text and music. The talk was most interesting with information about recurring tones, harmonies and intervals for certain words and ideas - a pleasant detour from the hackneyed (but necessary) lectures on Leitmotif. It was a pleasure to hear this talk punctuated with asides from Hanslick and also a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak in length with one of Europe's leading musicologists in the area of opera (particularly Puccini) and stage craft.

The Generalprobe contained no stops and only a few text inaccuracies. The biggest surprise was really no surprise at all: the staging and production was typically 'experimental' and lived up to the name which the Frankfurt Opera has acquired for 'modern' productions. Indeed, the staging is almost 'New-Wave' with its sharp use of black and white, symmetry and love of triangular shapes.

In sharp contrast to the black and white used to distinguish the gods, Siegmund and Sieglinde are dressed in vibrant colour. Siegmund's entrance, down the trunk of the tree and accompanied by a shower of falling leaves reveals the most amusing pair of vibrant, grass-green, velour pyjamas which stay with him throughout the opera ("Du bist der Lenz" takes on a whole new meaning!). Sieglinde's vibrant, blood-red outfit reminds one of a most unpractical cocktail-dress. Hunding's entry in a complete suit of gold armour adds one more colour to the display. The most successful idea in the staging is the use of an extremely confined space until "Du bist der Lenz" when the backdrop is raised and the whole stage is used to create a feeling of sudden expansiveness and breadth. Unfortunately the starkness of the design was not enhanced by two huge leaves (all one needs when working on a symbolic level) which mechanically arose out of the trunk of the tree and reminded one of the old-style of car indicators.

The path on the rocky heights in the second act reminds one of a triangular, new-wave representation of Saturn. Add to this the ceremonial appearance of a golden, kitchen chair which represents godly power and the restrictions of power, and one moves into the realm of the ridiculous. The kitchen chair became the most obvious sign of the use of symbolism on one blatant and stark level. Without layers of symbolism, the performers became the victims of one level of understanding; that is, the whole concept of the staging became one-dimensional and unsatisfying.

Continued.

The opening of the third act was most amusing in a way that was not at all fair to the music. The action took place on and around a low, black and white inverted cone in the centre of the stage. The black, felted area was used as a giant slippery-dip to convey the fallen heroes from the hands of the Valkyries to the extremely receptive and appreciative Valkyries waiting at the bottom. The very skinny heroes, clad in bikini-briefs were then lovingly conveyed to the terraced, white section of the cone where they were cleaned and revived. Any erotic associations were adequately conveyed but once again the relationship between the performers and their assigned tasks was so laboured that the action became very stilted. Rather than making the most of the simple and powerful emotions arising from 'Wotan's farewell', the importance of the relationship between Wotan and Brunnhilde was continually interrupted by Wotan's symbolic movements representing his loss of perspective (also symbolized by the loss of an eye for Berghaus). The whole production was rather a prisoner of symbolism and an obvious cleverness which attempted to tie music, word, action and scenery into one tight knot.

Although the orchestra was supplemented with additional members it was not full-size. The members did however make quite a lot of noise and their enthusiasm resulted in either very loud and often harsh sound (particularly from the brass and woodwind) or soft playing of an uneven quality. The use of dynamic gradation, particularly in sequences built on diminished-seventh-chords to increase tension, was almost totally lacking. The musicians, like the directors, seemed to be trying too hard. One misses the 'covered sound' from Bayreuth and at times the orchestra was so loud that any balance between orchestra and singer was distinctly one-sided.

Unfortunately the voices did little to distract from the problems of the production. Walter Raffeiner (Siegfried) had wonderful intonation but a small voice (apparently he had a cold due to the fact that his pyjama-outfit did not include any covering for his feet) and Catarina Ligendza (Brunnhilde) gave an embryonic rendering of this demanding part. Wolfgang Probst (Wotan) provided the most consistent vocal performance and also managed the tremendous demands of his symbolic gestures with adequate sincerity.

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IMPRESSIONS OFF BAYREUTH 1986.

M. J. CONNERY.

DAS RHEINGOLD.

ACT I. The scrim curtain enshrouds the Rhine. Through a cross section of the river the Rhine maidens are seen to swim in a vertical plane clearly to the surface and then somersault to the bottom. This effect is achieved with a horizontal pool behind which is a mirror which reflects the movement of the three nude maidens.

Peter Hall's stage machinery consists of two discs on an elbow type of arm. These discs rotate and move in various directions. In the second scene an elevated mossy heavenly bank is achieved by using one of the discs in a convex position. The highlight of this scene was the emergence of Erda through the floor of the disc. By the use of the Tarnhelm, Alberich (Herman Becht) is tricked and turned into a frog - an electrical light shows the jumping of the frog.

Manfred Jung as Loge was dressed like a fireman in a blue serge frock coat and matching trousers, and a blond crew cut, in contrast with the flaming red wig of the first production. He gave a commanding performance and was the man of the moment.

Wotan (Nimsgern) gave a supreme performance and Donner provided one of the wonderful moments swinging the mallet to summon the thunderstorm and subsequently the Rainbow Bridge. All the male voices were quite unbelievable.

Continued.

DIE WALKURE.

ACT I. Opens with a gnarled tree centre stage at the base of which, through the root system is the entrance to Hunding's hut. Siegfried Jerusalem's Siegmund was particularly superb as he drew the sword from overhead, illuminated as he was from behind; and his Spring Song showed considerable musicality.

ACT II. The sensational Hildehard Behrens arrives on the sloping convex disc dressed in black leather with black helmet. She appears to use little make-up on her well-architectured face with the high cheek bones and slightly prominent teeth, and though of medium stature she uses her whole body when singing, using hands and arms magnificently. Fricka in grey enters in her ram-drawn chariot. The fight between Siegmund and Hunding with sword and club was no make-believe affair.

ACT III. As the silver platform arcs onto the stage from some 32 metres above, the four singing Warriors, spears on high, seem to be flying. As the disc flattens to the horizontal they unbuckle straps which hold them to the disc. Under the binoculars one of the Warriors appeared quite apprehensive. Whilst there was great empathy between Wotan (Nimsgern) and Brunnhild, the music of Wagner emerges supreme as it encompasses the voiceless action. On this textured silver disc there is a circle in the middle of which lies Brunnhild, and after ceremoniously placing the armour and helmet on the sleeping Brunnhild, Wotan ignites the outside of the ring with his spear. Slowly the flame flickers around the circle as the curtain falls.

SIEGFRIED.

ACT I. Opens with Mime working at the anvil. At the back a door opens leading to a wooded area. Tony Kramer, new to the role, plays the lead with a good lyric musical sound. He has a less declamatory voice than Manfred Jung.

ACT II. A rain forest, in the middle is a black abyss from which the dragon emerges blowing smoke. This enormous creature rears 20 feet up in the gloomy atmosphere with eyes flickering, teeth bared and blowing smoke before Siegfried plunges the spear into his heart.

ACT III. The Wanderer appears on the disc elevated to about a third of the height of the stage and below there is a misty blue line within which aura appears Erda. At the change of scene we see Brunnhild asleep at the middle of the silver disc. Siegfried arrives and initially fearful of her, stands at the edge of the disc. One by one he removes the helmet and chest armour and realises then that the Warrior is a woman. Brunnhild slowly awakens, her hands moving almost imperceptibly. Her long dark hair with the black leather trousers contrast with the white shirt and silver textured disc. Very slowly she lifts to a sitting position; slowly both arms move from her side in line with her shoulders, with the winged sleeves draping from the outstretched arms. The perfectly straight back, squared and high sternum, illustrates the beautiful human female form. As she stretches arms above her head and looks heavenward with a joyous smile she sings "Heil Sonne" ("Hail to the Sun"). She sings in this seated position for some minutes before rising to sing with Siegfried. In her seated position Behrens used tremendous breathing technique with pelvic and diaphragm support. She strides and paces across the slanted disc with confidence, raises her arms and with arched back and feet planted, produces a perfectly balanced fortissimo.

Siegfried, the person born without fear, finds himself fearful of Brunnhild but gradually overcomes the situation. Brunnhild in turn, concerned about giving up her godly status, is reluctant to yield to Siegfried. Finally they overcome their respective problems. Who said Wagner was dry and heavy? This was as Wagner wrote, the most beautiful love - man and woman, depicted in a most credible and convincing way. Kramer is a stiff Siegfried. At the end there was a tumultuous ovation, with Behrens and Wagner taking the prizes. The most poignant moment was when Behrens, standing, sings the Siegfried Idyll. He remains kneeling but you could see he was affected by her beauty and sound. A superb singing and acting performance by Behrens. She is fat, athletic with a winning smile and a great favourite in Bayreuth in '86. She obviously loved performing the part. After 15 minutes of curtain calls we went to a small restaurant where seven of the French horn players played folk songs and medleys from Wagner.

Saturday 30th May. - 10,00 Gala Assembly.
 13,30 Gala Luncheon.
 18,00 Performance of "Tristan & Isolde".
 23,00 Champagne supper.
 Sunday, 31st May - 11,00 Lecture by Prof. Goetz Friedrich.
 17,00 Performance by Stuttgart Ballet, to include a new work
 set to the "Siegfried Idyll".
 20,00 Closing ceremony.

An itinerary for a three week tour to Germany from 16th May to 6th June is being prepared. This would include the very exciting "Ring Cycle" in Frankfurt (see the article on Die Walkuere in this Newsletter) followed by the Congress in Stuttgart and opera performances in nearby cities. It promises to be a memorable experience, and any member interested in joining the tour, or individually visiting the congress or Frankfurt operas should contact the undersigned as soon as possible.

- oOo -

ERRATUM. In the September newsletter, in the report of the performance of "The Mastersingers of Nuremberg" in Budapest, it was stated that Sandor Solyom-Nagy had to step down from the role of Walter due to illness. It was in fact the tenor Andreas Molnar who was sick and whose place was taken by Joseoh Hopfersieser. Mr Solyom-Nagy sang Hans Sachs that evening in fine voice.

- oOo -

The GOETHE INSTITUTE

The Wagner Society wishes to express its real appreciation to the Goethe Institute for the generosity shown to it in the past year. Members and guests have enjoyed the opportunity to meet in such conducive surroundings for the many and varied occasions held during the year and the Society values greatly the freedom to use the splendid auditorium and adjacent rooms.

The Goethe Institute would want all Wagner Society members to be aware of the many other facilities available to them which include the Library, language classes and, on request to be placed on the mailing list, The Goethe Institute magazine can be sent to you.

Further information can be had by telephoning the Institute on 328 7411.

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RECENT ACQUISITIONS IN THE LIBRARY.

Sheet music, for pianists of all grades and for two and four hands, has recently been acquired by your Society and is available for loan for playing in a domestic situation. Some titles are:-

Unser Wagner" Albums Nos. 1 & 2.
 Richard Wagner Piano Album, arr. George Bell.
 Parsifal for 4 hands.
 Goetterdaemmerung for 4 hands.
 Tannhaeuser arr. by Robert Keller.
 Siegfried - Idyll arr. by Otto Singer.

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TRANSPORT PROBLEMS?

To miss out on any of the Society's events simply for the want of transport concerns us greatly. Please, if you find yourself in need of transport ring any member of the committee and we can arrange a lift.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

May I be allowed to congratulate the organisers of "Wagner on Compact Disc" heard monthly at the Goethe Institute? My first visit last month was truly a most moving experience. I was entranced as I listened to my favourite opera reproduced so realistically in concert hall conditions. The high standard of the electronic equipment coupled with the expertise of the operator ensures uninterrupted playing to each act, no matter how long. The sound level is judiciously selected for maximum enjoyment, the effect being far superior than most of us could hope - or dare - to achieve in our living rooms.

Equally pleasurable is the interval period and the opportunity to have a relaxed chat over a delicious afternoon tea, so generously provided by the ladies committee, all in such a lovely setting where not even a small donation is asked for. I am certainly looking forward to more of these happy occasions in next year's programme.

Sincere thanks once again to all those involved, who donate their time and effort for our enjoyment.....Leonard Hansen.

Dear Judy, (Ferfoggia),

Three matters: (a) Firstly, a big thank you to those members responsible for getting Chereau's Ring on to ACB-TV. You just can't imagine the thrill it has been for someone who lives out in the scrub, a long way from the Opera House, to see the Ring on TV. Fabulous viewing! And in doing so, I've converted a couple of friends to the world of Wagner.

(b) Secondly, I don't know if you watch BACKCHAT on ABC-TV, Tuesday evenings (which is a 5 to 10 minute program allowing viewers to write in airing their brickbats and bouquets for various ABC programs), but my letter, waving the Wagnerian flag, was read out in the program, on the 3rd June. It was in response to a letter from a viewer, the week before, saying that "ten weeks of Wagner was just like the football season". Rising to the bait, I bore in with "I nearly choked over my coffee to hear that a viewer has dared to equate football with the Mt. Olympus of classical music, Wagner's Ring Cycle. For us Wagnerians that cannot afford Bayreuth (the Opera House is too small to perform the Ring), it is a long-awaited special treat and a marvellous vehicle to introduce other viewers to the magic of Wagner. Bravo, Aunty!"

(c) And finally, born out of strong curiosity, I would like to propose a (fun) survey of members to find out (i) the most popular of Wagner's operas, and (ii) the most popular individual Act in the Ring Cycle.

See back page for details.

Barry Tarver.
WOODBURN

- oOo -

NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome is extended to these new members.

Mr and Mrs J. L. Sharpe
Mrs Maureen Gray
Mr Alfred Cornwall
Mr John Drayton
Miss Tracey Wilson

Mr and Mrs Denis W. King
Dr Judith Nicholas.
Mr Heinz Ebert
Mr Ian and Mrs Barbara Brady
Mr Andrew Pell.

- oOo -

A (FUN) SURVEY FOR THE SUMMER HOLIDAYS.

There are no prizes in this survey but it should be of great interest to know the results. Separate voting should be allowed for each husband and wife membership, as Mr Traver says "I would be the last person to trigger a divorce", and membership number should be shown on the voting form to deter (heaven forbid) multiple voting from the more fanatical amongst us!

SURVEY - THE MOST POPULAR WAGNER OPERA & MOST POPULAR ACT FROM THE RING.

Post your votes to:

Survey,
C/-B. TARVER,
P.O. BOX 117,
WOODBURN NSW 2472.

- THE FLYING DUTCHMAN
- TANNHAUSER
- LOHENGRIN
- TRISTAN UND ISOLDE
- DIE MEISTERSINGER
- DAS RHEINGOLD
- DIE WALKURE
- SIEGFRIED
- GOTTERDAMMERUNG
- PARIFAL

Spouse's choice:

List your 5 most favourite acts from the Ring Cycle (Die Rheingold to be treated as one act), in preferential sequence, 1- 5, equal preference allowed:

- Das Rheingold
- Die Walkure - Act I
- " " - " II
- " " - " III
- Siegfried - Act I
- " - " II
- " - " III
- G'runge - Act I
- " - " II
- " - " III

Spouse's choice:

(Mark 1 to 5 only)

M'ship no.

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