

IN NEW SOUTH WALES INC.

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



# Newsletter

No. 29 December, 1987. §Âegistered by Australia Post Publication No. NBH5028

PATRON: SIR CHARLES MACKERRAS

HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS: Mr WERNER BAER M.B.E.

Miss RITA HUNTER C.B.E. Miss LEONIE RYSANEK Professor MICHAEL EWANS

# COMING EVENTS

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13th.

Goethe Institute Christmas Party 2.30 - 6.00pm

for 3.00pm

MONDAY, JANUARY 4th

"Mostly Mozart" - WAGNER Concert S.O.S. conducted by Stuart Challender

\* TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16th

Concert Hall. Opera House

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19th

"TURANDOT" - G. Puccini

\* FRIDAY FEBRUARY 26th OPERA THEATRE

7.30pm

"SALOME - R. Strauss

\* Booking information, see inside.

# COMMITTEE

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# A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

1987 has been a year packed with marvelous events and I can say with pride that I think all members can be proud of the committee's responsibilities and the professional way these have been carried out.

The highlight was undoubtedly the Seminar on "Lohengrin" at the Goethe Institue during August. Those who attended have all agreed it was a great success. The production of the opera by Australian Opera was superb and could be given pride of place in any of the world's great houses.

Our Annual Dinner at the Menzies Hotel - a feast of good food - great atmosphere and our remarkable good fortune in acquiring at the last minute, a replacement guest of honour for Alberto Remedios who was indisposed. All agreed that Sandra Hahn was magnificient and the evening turned out to be one of the most convivial of all our annual dinners.

Luckily we immediately re-booked the Menzies Ballroom for '88 as we have now found the entire year is almost booked out for such venues throughout Sydney!!

A "super" surprise guest has already accepted our invitation and 1988 promises even more goodies than '87.

Come to the Christmas Party at the Goethe Institute as we will have prepared a detailed list for your diaries. Interesting entertainment has been organised - great food - fine wine and pure juices and, of course, fellow Wagnerians.

A very good Christmas to you all and a healthy, happy and prosperous 1988.

## CHRISTMAS PARTY

You are all invited to what has rapidly become our traditional Christmas Party and if you wish to bring a friend please do. Just let us know by ringing either of these numbers.  $332\ 3926\ -\ 449\ 8801\ -\ 938\ 2030$ .

Admission is free, of course, but we're hoping you will take a chance in a raffle to win either a large Christmas cake, or some excellent Christmas wines and fruit.

The actual time is 2.30 for 3.00 pm (not before 2.30 please) but if you have other commitments and would like to drop in during the afternoon you will be made most welcome.

We are hoping to show some video films of particular interest too. So do come.

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### TURANDOT

The Festival of Sydney unites with Australian Opera and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra to give two concert performances of Puccini's "Turandot" on February 16th and 19th in the Concert Hall of the Opera House as part of the 1988 Bicentennial Festival.

In the title role for which she has earned much acclaim, Rita Hunter stars as the cruel Eastern Princess who slays those who love her. Kenneth Collins is cast as Calaf and Joan Carden as Liú.

We have been unable to gain block concessions but bookings can be made through either:

Festival Phone Bookings
- 266 4820
or
the usual ticket agents

Opera House Box Office - 20 525

SALOME. Within a week we have two compelling operatic events, and we are delighted to announce that we have been able to acquire 50 A Reserve and 10 B Reserve tickets to hear (and see) Marilyn Schau as a "Spellbinding" Salome. Robert Allman (Jokanaan), Robert Gard (Herod) and Lesley Stender (Herodias) combine in an intensely dramatic performance directed by Elke Neidhardt, whose "Lohengrin" lives on in our memory, and conducted appropriately by the dynamic Stuart Challender.

See back pages for tickets application form.

## PROPOSED CALENDAR of EVENTS for 1988

As we go to press firm dates for some events are unavailable but we can give you this catalogue to contemplate.

We intend to have an outline of calendar (with dates) to hand out at the Christmas Party.

The unabridged version of the Richard Burton film of Wagner's life.

The Annual Dinner May 13th.

The Whole Ring on C.D. beginning in May.

Seminar on Die Meistersingers concluding with a reception for Sir Charles Mackerras.

Performances of Die Meistersingers are on: Saturday September 24th. Saturday October 1st. Friday October 14th.

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#### BAYREUTH for 1988

Applications are now closed for the Ballot for the 1988 Festival.

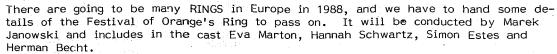
The Ballot will be held on Friday January 15th, 1988 at 3.00 pm. at 141 Dowling St. Wooloomooloo. All Successful members will be notified.

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## BAYREUTH SCHOLARSHIP WINNER

Our Congratulations to John Wegner, the winner of the 1987 Bayreuth Scholarship! We spoke to him on the day of his departure for a tightly packed mouth of vocal coaching, visiting as many opera houses as possible and seeing some operas. Significantly, Michael Hampe's production of "Maestersingers" in Frankfurt holds a prominent place in his plans. John will be singing in that opera here in 1988. Whilst in Frankfurt there will be coaching from Frau Hagenau of Frankfurt Opera and additional coaching at Cologne opera. After seeing "Tannhauser" at Cologne, he is hoping to make his first visit to Bayreuth to see the Opera House and get the feel of Bayreuth, and after his return on December 1st, we're hoping to hear some of his impressions.

## "L'ANNEAU du NIBELUNG" at ORANGE 1988



Dates - July 9, 16, 23, 30. 1988.

It is to be performed in Paris in March/April and then going on tour, including ORANGE in July. We have sent for application forms and will keep you informed or perhaps you could telephone us early in the New Year if you are anxious to include even a single opera in your travel plans.

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### LOHENGRIN BY THE AUSTRALIAN OPERA.

Keith Anderson

Everyone who attended any of the performances of Lohengrin during the 1987 season seem to be unanimous in their praise of the high standard achieved. In the past, while expressing gratitude that Wagner operas had even been included in the programme, there always seemed to be some aspect that was less than acceptable. This time, though, the A.O. "got it right". Of particular pleasures were:

- 1. <u>Visual impact</u>. The transfer of the production from Melbourne to Sydney was extremely successful and though backstage the smaller area may have created problems, it was not obvious to those of us out-front.
- 2. The singing. How wonderful it was to hear the Heldentenor voice of Horst Hoffman filling the theatre in his native language, the tender singing of Marilyn Richardson whose Elsa was very fragile looking, but had a much more "definite' personality than we have seen before, the strength of Robert Allman, Stella Axarlis, Donald Shanks and Geoffrey Chard.
- ())
- 3. The Chorus. They gave us a thrilling version of Wagner's score requiring the largest amount of chorus work.
- 4. The Orchestra. Last but not least it is satisfying to be able to applaud the orchestra and its conductor Stuart Challender whose untiring efforts made up for all those times when we were forced to be critical.

We look forward to Die Meistersingers in 1988 with eager anticipation.

Approximately 90 people gathered in the Northern Foyer after the last performance to thank the cast and management. As a Society we were very proud to be a supporter of this splendid production. The publicity we received through the page included in the programme has increased our membership and will enable us to continue giving support to the performance of Wagerian Opera.

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## V.S.O'S NEW "DUTCHMAN"

Olive Coonan

On Friday, 13th November, a party of 15 N.S.W. Wagner Society Members went to Melbourne to see "The Flying Dutchman". Many Thanks to Susan Linge of the V.S.O. for excellent seats and also to the Directors for issuing us with an invitiation for drinks at interval.

This performance of the "Dutchman" is a World premiere of the only autographed 1841 version, with Malcolm Donnelly as the Dutchman, Marilyn Richardson as Senta, Alberto Remedios as Georg (a.k.a. Eric ), Connell Byrne as the Steersman and Irene Waugh as Senta's nurse, Mary.

I personally, have not seen many performances of "The Flying Dutchman" but thought this production lacked a little in its impact on the audience, and did not use their large stage to its maximum capacity. The orchestra, under the conducting of Richard Divall, was excellent.

In the end Senta commits suicide by electrocuting herself which requires a great stretch of the imagination – when one is used to or expects a traditional staging.

The libretto of this production is based upon a short story by Heinrich Heine about the legend of the Flying Dutchman and is staged in Scotland. All of the events take place in a period of 24 hours and move swiftly and inexorably towards the end. According to Richard Divall it would seem to be a greater masterpiece when performed in this version.

#### RECITAL BY MURIEL COHEN AND ROSAMUND PLUMMER.

The piano and flute recital given by Muriel Cohen and Rosamund Plummer was held at the home of Judge Frank and Dr Amy McGrath on Sunday, November 1st. The Society greatly appreciates the generosity of the McGraths for it enables us not only to keep our overhead costs down but also to provide a far more congenial atmosphere for listening to this particular type of music making.

The programme opened with two Bach Sonatas for flute and piano, followed by Debussy's "En Bateau", arranged for flute from the original scoring for violin and piano, and then a beguiling piece by Dulcie Holland was given its premiere performance – a composition based on an earlier study for piano.

Rosamund brought intellect and discipline to her playing. Her recent concert in the recording hall of the Opera House drew praise from Fred Blanks for her musicianship which he says needs no gimmickry. She is a young musician of whom we are sure to hear more.

To intellect and discipline Muriel added passion and lyricism in her interpretation of the Listz transcriptions of works of Wagner in the second half of the programme. Her playing of Lohengrin's reproach to Elsa, Das Liebersverbot and Elsa's Dream conveyed the emotions that inspired Wagner – his lyricism shone through Listz's often dazzling pianism. And finally the gradual approach of the Pilgrims was produced by a superb crescendo with Miss Cohen displaying her remarkable mastery of the keyboard.

The recital attracted a great deal of interest outside the Wagner Society and as a consequence new members have joined and more people are aware of the Society and its aims.

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## THE NEW SEATTLE 'RING'

Barrie Dexter

My wife and I have just attended the Australian Opera's performance of "LOHENGRIN" It was brilliant - quite as good as the two performances we saw in Bayreuth, and in some respects better. I was proud to see in the program acknowledgement of the Society sponsorship of Stella Azarlis, and the full-page advertisement.

A month ago we attended Der Ring in Seattle - We had heard it there previously in 1982, and then, as on this occasion, found the performance astonishingly, good, and quite comparable with Bayreuth.

The Seattle orchestra was excellent under the firm and sympathetic conducting of Herman Michael. The cast was strong, the outstanding singers, from our point of view, being the ever young Leonie Rysanek as Sieglinde, Toni Kramer as Siegfried, Gabor Andrasy as Hunding and Hagen, Roger Roloff as Wotan and the Wanderer,

Julian Patrick as Alberich and Hubert Delamboye as a brilliant Mime. The one weak link, we felt, was Linda Kelm as Brūnnhilde – and this was of course, serious weakness. We did not think her voice Wagnerian, and her stage presce was non-existent. But she is obviously a favourite with the West Coast Americans, and we did not find any American to agree with our disappointment in her. Perhaps we have been spoilt by hearing too many great Brūnnhildes!

The stage direction by Francois Rochaix was described as Post-modern. In many ways it went on from the point reached by Patrice Chereau - although to our astonishment Rochaix said he had never seen the Chereau version. Rochaix's main strength, perhaps, was that he paid equal attention to what the words and the music were saying - often not the same thing by any means - and sought to interpret these messages in the presentation - and Rochaix conceded that in this he had been very influenced by Brecht.

The discipline throughout was firm, and hence the acting and presentation persuasive with the one exception already mentioned. It was explained to us that this resulted, in part, from the long period of preparation, even the principals being present for a minimum of two weeks rehearsals. We felt that the whole company worked together co-operatively.

One advantage of the Seattle Ring is the accessability of everything. There were first rate lectures every opera-day, morning and evening. The General Director of the Opera, Speight Jenkins, was available for questioning. Rochaix was available in a nearby cafe every lunch-time for discussion. Leonie Rysanek gave a charming interview. Excellent Surtitles were a help.

And then there is Seattle itself, a delightful town with cheerful, helpful citizens and many charms. There is good accommodation within walking distance of the Opera House or along the mono-rail.

We cannot recommend the Seattle Ring enough!





Freia stands behind the pile of gold in Das Rheingold.

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#### DO YOU SING IN THE BATH?

Or do you take singing more seriously? In either case the <u>BATHURST NATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL FOR SINGERS</u>, a new venture directed by Ronald Dowd, is designed to fill an existing void by providing the opportunity for Soloists and Choristers - singers of all styles - to meet, and perform under the tutelage of such names as Bernd Benthaak, Werner Baer, John Carmody, William Reed, to mention only a few.

It will be a week of total involvement in the Singer's world from Jan 9-16, 1988, at the Mitchell College of Advanced Education.



By the time you read this the registration date will have closed but all the signs are that this is going to be well attended and we wish this SUMMER SCHOOL FOR SINGERS every success.

If you are looking ahead to the next SUMMER SCHOOL in 1989 more information can be had by writing to the <u>Secretary</u>, <u>P.O. Box 468 Paddington 2021</u>.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

A smallish audience heard Rita Hunter and Alberto Remedios give a splendid and full program of Verdi and Wagner last night at the Seymour Centre. Rita combined with Alberto to give a very touching account of the "Otello" Act 1 duet (a rarity for Rita to be heard in this ethereal music), the final scene from "Aida" and the Dawn duet from "Goetterdaemmerung" which closed the program. The second half was devoted to Wagner - a feast of fine singing, ranging from Erik's aria, Lohengrin's narration and the Wintersturme, to Elisabeth's entry aria, Elsa's Dream & Du bist der Lenz, - all Wagner excerpts that Sydney had not previously heard Rita sing in public concert.

Thus it was all the more disturbing to note the absence of Wagner Society members from this well-publicized recital. Surely one of the purposes of there being a Wagner Society in Sydney is both to promote and to support the performance of Wagner's music, in this city primarily, and elsewhere in Australia on ocaassion. Opera Mode, the concert promoters, had offered the Society a generous concession for a block booking, and one could share the embarrassment and disappointment felt by the artists and the Opera Mode management at the Society's failure to support this initiative in Wagner presentation, by attending. It seems hardly a fitting acknowledgement of the renowned status of Rita and Alberto as stars of the English Ring and nowadays our two leading, resident exponents of Wagnerian music drama. Suffice it to say, with shame, that Rita Hunter was both hurt and annoyed at this lapse on the part of the Wagner Society.

May we ask that amends be made, by arranging the long discussed and many times postponed Society-sponsored concert for Rita Hunter, on her return from North America in February next. This move might help redress the (hopefully wrong) impression that the Sydney Society cares more to talk about Wagner "in fernen Landen" rather than actively enjoy Wagner's music when performed right here in Sydney. There is still time to include such a concert for Rita and Alberto, perhaps, in next year's schedule of Society activities.

Hoping you will print this letter to promote discussion of the Society's role and arouse interest in supporting these two fine artists still resident in our midst.

Yours faithfully Arthur Carter.

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Dear Mr Carter,

I thank you for your letter relating to the Opera Mode concert, and like you, regret the smallish audience and the lack of Wagner Society members.

I would, however, like a correct a misconception. You state that Opera Mode had offered a generous concession for a block booking, but the committee of the Society is in ignorance of any such offer. I personally arranged with the promoters to advertise the concert in our news bulletin, and was surprised at the cost of the tickets, and went so far as to mention that to Mr Peter Binnings.

Coming so soon on top of the AO "Lohengrin" performances, for two of which the Society was given concession for block bookings, it may be that some members felt the price of \$30 was excessive for a concert without orchestra.

For our society functions we attempt to keep our costs to a practical minimum, and a great deal of time and effort is spent in encouraging members to attend. For a commercial venture, it would seem that the onus would be on the organisers to do the canyassing.

Referring to the Society-sponsored concert in February, 1988. The Society has been in constant touch with Mr Brian Barnes, organiser of the Sydney Festival since April following our offer to pay Rita Hunter's fee as soloist in a concert during the '88 Festival.

Mr Barnes has explored every possibility and only in mid October were we informed that he was unable to arrange a function which fitted in with our requests but did not clash with "Turandot" performances and the A.B.C. Wagner Concert in the "Mostly Mozart" Series.

In publishing our correspondence it is to be hoped that we may engender responses from members of The Society which could give us an insight into their reasons for not attending the recital.

Ed.

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## NEW SECRETARY & TREASURER

Two new committee members have been co-opted to fill the positions of Secretary & Treasurer soon to be vacated by Judith & Joseph Fergolia who are taking a well-earned long holiday next year. Judith and Joseph together have worked tirelessly for the Society for many years and their thorough professionalism reflects so favourably on the Society.

We are very happy to welcome Miss Claire Hennessy back as Minutes Secretary, to be assisted by Olive Coonan & Murray Smith with Membership, (a constant task), and Mr Harry Darlington, who will take care of our finincial affairs.

Our thanks to Claire, & Harry and Bon Voyage to Judith & Joseph.

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### ANNUAL DINNER 1988

Our plans for next year's Dinner have been doubly blessed it would seem. In what is going to be a year of heavy demand on the best venues, we have been able to confirm our booking at the Menzies Hotel at the pre-Bicentennial prices!

But even more pleasing is confirmation from Germany that Reinhard Heinrich has been happy to accept our invitation to be Guest of Honour for that evening. Mr Heinrich is a highly regarded costume designer with many credits to his name and is to design the costumes for our Bicentennial production of 'Maestersinger' as well as the Harry Kupfer 'Ring' in Bayreuth. He will surely have much to tell us.



## **NEW MEMBERS SINCE SEPTEMBER 1987**

May we welcome the following new members to the Society, thank them for their support and wish them a long and happy association with the Wagner Society.

At our functions committee members wear identifying name tags, please come up and make yourself known.

Annemarie Limacher, Mr H J Zelus, Mrs P and Mr F Harvey, Mr Ramon Josey, Miss Susan Remington, Miss Deborah Wilson, Mr Dennis Hennig, Mrs N L and Mr A P Riemer, Mr Kurt Looser, Mr E Insausti, Mrs D Hall Greatorex, Mr K and Mrs A Winsor, Miss Natalie Forbes, Mr David Mutton, Mrs W Strugarek, Dr Dean Smith, Dr Anna Ziegler, Mr Tim Clark and Dr R Wagner, Mrs C Jackaman, Mr W R and Dr E Watson, Mr Kevin Terrasson, Mrs M and Mr H H Smith, Mr D G O Jones, Miss Helen M Strahan, Mr A J Cummins, Mr John Edwards, Mr Frank T Gipps, Mrs S & Mr R Miller, Mr Tony McDonald, Mrs S & Mr J Buchanan,

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### WAGNER IN 1871

1. Excerpt form "Music Study in Germany", by Amy Fay. She wrote from Berlin on May 18th, 1871 as follows:

Wagner has just been in Berlin, and his arrival here has been the occasion of a grand musical excitement. He was received with the greatest enthusiasm, and there was no end of ovations in his honour. First, there was a great supper given to him, which was got up by Tausig and a few other distinguished musicians. Then on Sunday, two weeks ago, was given a concert in the Sing-Akademie, where the seats were free. As the hall only holds about fifteen hundred people, you may imagine it was pretty difficult to get tickets......

The orchestra was immense. It was carefully selected from all the orchestras in Berlin, and Stern, who directed it, had given himself infinite trouble in training it. Wagner is the most difficult person in the world to please, and is a wonderful conductor himself. He was highly discontented with the Gewandhaus Orchestra in Leipsic, which thinks itself the best in existence, so the Berlinese felt rather shaky. The hall was filled to overflowing, and finally, in marched Wagner and his wife, preceded and followed by various distinguished musicians. As he appeared the audience rose, the orchestra struck up three clanging chords, and everybody shouted Hoch! It gave one a strange thrill.

The concert was at twelve, and was preceded by a "greeting" which was recited by Frau Jachmann Wagner, a niece of Wagner's, and an actress. .... As she concluded she burst into tears, and stepping down from the stage she presented Wagner with a laurel crown, and kissed him. Then the orchestra played Wagner's Faust Overture most superbly, and afterwards his Fest March from the Tannhauser. The applause was unbounded. Wagner ascended the stage and made a little speech,.... He spoke very rapidly and in that child-like way that all great musicians seem to have, and as a proof of his satisfaction with the orchestra he requested them to play the Faust Overtune under HIS direction. We were all on tiptoe to know how he would direct, and indeed it was wonderful to see him. He controlled the orchestra as if it were a single instrument and he were playing on it. He didn't beat the time simply, as most conductors do, but he had all sorts of little ways to indicate what he wished. It was very difficult for them to follow him and they had to "keep their ......It went on like a succession of piclittle eye open," as B., used to say. tures. The effect was tremendous.

I had one of the best seats in the house and could see Wagner and his wife the whole time. He has an enormous forehead, and is the most nervous looking man you can imagine, but has that grim setting of the mouth that betokens an iron will. When he

conducts he is almost beside himself with excitement. That is one reason why he is so great a conductor, for the orchestra catches his frenzy, and each man plays under a sudden inspiration. He really seems to be improvising on his orchestra.

Wagner's object in coming here was to try and get his Nibelungen opera performed. It is an opera which requires four evenings to get through with. Did you ever hear of such a thing? He lays out everything on such a colossal scale.

(Of another concert) Beethoven's Fifth Symphony ...he declared nobody understood but himself. That rather took down Berlin, but all had to acknowledge after the concert that they had never heard it so magnificently played. He has his own peculiar conception of it... There must have been two hundred players in the orchestra, and they acquitted themselves splendidly. The applause grew more and more enthusiastic, until it finally found vent in a shower of wreaths and bouquets. Wagnen bowed and bowed, and it seemed as if the people would never settle down again. ... His Kaiser March was encored. Such an effect! After the tempest of sound of the introduction the drums came in with a sharp tat-tat-tat-tat-tat! Then the brass began with the air and came to a crescendo, at last BLARING out in such a way as shivered you to the very marrow of your bones. It was like an earthquake yawning before you.

The noise was so tremendous that it was like the roaring of the surf. I never conceived of anything in music to approach it, and Wagner made me think of a giant Triton disporting himself amid the billows and tossing these giant waves of sound from one hand to the other. You don't see his face, of course – nothing but his back, and yet you know every one of his emotions. Every sinew in his body speaks. He makes the instruments prolong the tones as no one else does, and the effect is indescribably beautiful, yet he complains that he never CAN get an orchestra to HOLD the tones as they ought. His whole appearance is of arrongance and despotism personified.

By the end of the concert the bonquets were so heaped on the stage in front of the director's desk, that Wagner had no place left big enough to stand on without crushing them. Altogether it was a brilliant affair, and a great triumph for his friends. He has great many bitter enemies here, however. Joachim is one of them, though it seems unaccountable that a man of his musical gifts should be. Ehlert is also a strong anti-Wagnerite, and the Jews hate him intensely. - perhaps his character has something to do with it, for he has set all laws of honour, gratitude and morality at defiance all his life long. It is a dreadful example for younger artists, and I think Wagner is depraving them. In this country everything is forgiven to audacity and genius, and I must say that if Germany can teach US music, we can teach HER morals!

For Amy Fay's charming impression of a truly memorable event we wish to thank Da Capo Music of 112 Glebe Pt Rd. Glebe.

(Ed.)

# DONATIONS - RECEIVED SINCE SEPTEMBER 1987

Anonymous; David Walsh; A. I. Segal; J N Nicholas Pty Ltd; Ms Deborah L Wilson; Mrs Annette Marshall; Mr & Mrs I Brady; Mrs D Dupain; Miss Margaret E Gray.

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 Elizabetha Theatre Trust and accompanied by the form below.

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