

# The Wagner Society

IN NEW SOUTH WALES INC.

Registered Office: 141 Dowling Street, Woolloomooloo 2011  
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## Newsletter

No. 33 November, 1988

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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, November 20th.	"Götterdämmerung". Goethe Institute	1.00pm
Sunday, December 11th.	Christmas Party. Goethe Institute John Wegner will be our guest and will talk of his experiences on the Bayreuth Scholarship.	2.30pm

COMMITTEE

President	Richard King	358 1919
Vice President	Olive Coonan	33 4092 (B)
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Committee	Margaret Budge	521 6097
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NEW MEMBERS

Mario Barrera, Brett Berthold, Naomi and Geoff Bower, David Clarence, Ariane Corboz, A.Ehl, Sheilah Gray, Barbara Kiessling, Paul Lehmann, Claire McCoy, Myra Radinovitch, Miss A. Smith, Miss A. Swebbs.

DONATIONS  
RECEIVED DURING LAST QUARTER

The Society would like to thank the following members and friends who have made donations during the previous quarter:-  
Dr Susan Kelly : Mr.Murray Smith : Lady Gallegan : Mrs Margaret Budge  
Mrs Barbara Bennett : Mr G. Magney : Mrs Margaret Reid : Dr.Leonard Hansen : Keith and Jessie Anderson.



THE PRESIDENT AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE  
WISH YOU ALL THE COMPLIMENTS OF THE SEASON

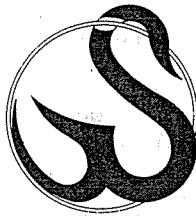


MICHEL MARIE-NOËL ARNOULD

Michel died on 31st July, 1988 after a long illness.

Our very special LOGO, the envy of  
Wagner Societies around the world,  
was designed by him at the Foundation Meeting.

It is now a permanent memorial to him.



This Society mourns his loss,  
but remembers with gratitude, not only the very many  
ways he helped in the organisation of functions,  
but simply because he loved us as we loved him.

VALE MICHEL.

Our lives are all the richer for having known you.



GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG

Sunday, 20th November, 1988

Goethe Institute at 1.00 p.m. SHARP.

Our C.D. afternoons for this year will conclude in November when we complete the Ring Cycle. Many members have expressed their enjoyment at hearing the whole cycle - some for the first time - and we really have a pleasant afternoon on these occasions. The actual C.D. to be played will be chosen nearer to the date according to availability at the time.

CHRISTMAS PARTY

You are all cordially 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 3581919 or 3582763 or 4498801 to let us know for catering purposes.

Admission is free, of course, but we're hoping you will take a chance in a raffle to win some Christmas goodies.

The actual time is 2.30 for 3.00 p.m. (not before 2.30 please) but if you have other commitments and would like to drop in for a shorter time you will be made most welcome.

John Wegner will be our guest and will be talking about his time in Europe as winner of last year's Bayreuth Scholarship.

BAYREUTH SCHOLARSHIP 1988

Bernadette Cullen has been announced as the winner of the 1988 Bayreuth Scholarship, and is currently in West Germany studying at the various Opera Houses and with well-known singing professors. The Society has paid her air-fare and she receives help from the West German Government with accommodation and travel within that country. We look forward to hearing from Bernadette when she returns. All the previous winners have stated that they have received great benefit from this experience and the Society is proud to be associated with this venture.

DIE WALKÜRE 1989

The Australian Opera has announced the 1989 season which will include a repeat performance of DIE WALKÜRE first produced a few years ago, but with some very interesting cast changes. Marilyn Richardson will sing Sieglinde but her Siegmund will be Horst Hoffmann whose thrilling performance as Lohengrin is still a very vivid memory. Our Brunnhilde will be Marilyn Zschau (her brilliant performance as Salomé earlier this year is another vivid memory); Heather Begg will be Fricka and Donald Shanks will be Hunding. Bruce Martin is listed as singing Wotan and it is the fervent hope of the Society that his return to health will enable him to take his place as planned.

We hope to show the same interest by way of financial support, video viewing and study seminars as we have done for the productions in 1987 and 1988.

## LOHENGRIN

The Committee has voted to purchase a collection of original Set and Costume designs by FRANK HINDER for the 1958 production by the Elizabethan Opera Trust Company of Lohengrin.

This staging in the Elizabethan Theatre, Newtown, was one of the first major indigenous productions of Wagnerian Opera in Australia by the Company that has now become the Australian Opera.

The cost of this collection is \$6000 and to date a substantial amount has been pledged. However we need more and any donation NO MATTER HOW SMALL would help to cover the cost. Should you wish to claim this donation on your tax, please use the form at the back of this newsletter and send your donation through the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust.

The Committee plans to make the collection available for viewing by members at a social gathering at an early date in 1989.

IT WAS SO IMPORTANT THAT THESE COLLECTIONS BE KEPT INTACT AND WE FEEL THAT THE SOCIETY IS THE RIGHT GROUP TO DO THIS NOW - BEFORE THE ITEMS WERE SOLD SEPARATELY AND DISPERSED FOREVER.

## COUNTRY MEMBERS

We note with great pleasure that some of our country members have been able to take part in some of our activities recently. Betty Berriman from Narrabri enjoyed her trip to Bayreuth; George Lithgow was able to travel from Newcastle to watch the video of Die Meistersinger; Allan Smith from Wentworth Falls has been able to be with us for some Sunday afternoons as well as the Seminar and Frank Keep who was a regular visitor until his knee operation put him on PAUSE for a while will be back with us as soon as possible. Barry Tarver from Woodburn has been in Sydney recently and while not able to see our video at the Goethe Institute was able to have a private showing to his great delight. Barry lives in an area with no electricity and depends on batteries for any listening and viewing, and the white ants have eaten through the spines of his books on Wagner (what good taste!). He has supplied us with the following cultural item.

These days, despite what cartoonists would have you believe, Wagnerian opera singers only rarely wear horned helmets. After what happened in West Germany at the Stuttgart Opera it's more than ever likely they never will. The soprano, spotting the Director laughing at her solo, charged across the stage, all 134kg of her, and gorged him with her horns. The audience, rather bored till then, loved every minute of it and broke into wild applause. Said the Director who landed in hospital, "She came at me like a mad bull." Quoth the soprano, "I got the little wimp (?). He bellowed like a pig. I was still laughing when they hauled me off to jail."

"The Australian".



MASTERLY SEMINAR.

- a review by Werner Baer.

"Verachtet mir DIE MEISTERSINGER nicht" (Don't disdain this greatest of Wagner's Operas), we heard in attentive silence at the Goethe Institute during most of Sunday, 11th September.

The Committee of the Wagner Society chose, and extremely well, two academics from the University of Sydney's Department of Germanic Studies and one senior lecturer from the Conservatorium of Music.

A nice combination of academia and practical music was achieved to give everybody something. The bonus, however, was the off-the-cuff half-hour talk by Sir Charles Mackerras, Conductor of the forth-coming Australian Opera production in Sydney. He spoke from a treasure of rich experience and knowledge of the way in which the great composers, including Wagner, went about their way when putting together their masterpieces. (No pun intended!).

The first morning speaker was musician-academic Dennis Hennig, who illustrated skilfully the many-stranded musical titbits, their basic togetherness and the moving of Motives around situations and characters. His taped and piano demonstrations were well chosen and carefully prepared.

The other mid-morning speaker, Dr. Ken Moulden, essentially relied on the text, its background, the actual beauty of the rhymes used in this opera which, it was agreed, could also be shown (and has been) on stage without reinforcement of the music. However we all know Wagner's fashioning of the "Gesamtkunstwerk", of which DIE MEISTERSINGER is a magnificent example.

The afternoon's illustrated talk (with suitably selected slides showing the forerunners of the Mastersingers and some of Hans Sachs' colleagues) was particularly fascinating, as Mr. Brian Taylor had delved into the rich tapestry of the "Tabulatur", so well explained by Fritz Kothner on stage, and the few examples that have been allowed to come down to us. "Walther von der Vogelweide", the often quoted Minnesaenger, of the frequently heard motif in the opera, and Wolfram von Eschenbach, were the two main selected personages of this pre-Mastersingers period. Mention was of course made of the importance these and other Minnesaenger of those times had on many of Wagner's creations, although it was naturally mentioned that, as we are now aware, he bent a number of historically quoted situations to his own purpose. It is hardly imaginable that the original Sachs, a cobbler credited with a number of quite juicy ditties, was as philosophically endowed as the wondrous personality we see in our Hans Sachs of the opera, a role most difficult to sing and determine on stage. That old beloved city, Nuernberg, was also referred to, as was, in passing, Hitler's predilection for this medieval city and its values; "in passing" very wisely, as the day's informative entertainment was not created to cause ripples even of the slightest discontent.

The final Abgesang was given by the ever witty and highly knowledgeable Sir Charles Mackerras, who joined us accompanied by several members of his immediate family, all of whom occupy positions of responsibility in Australia. What an outstanding family! I well remember Catherine, mother of these remarkably gifted people, who proudly acknowledge their descent from Isaac Nathan, rightly called the "Father of Australian Music".

To conclude, Chairman Dr. Leonard Hansen introduced the members of the cast who had joined us for the reception for Sir Charles. These included Helena Doese (Eva), Paul Frey (Walther), John Wegner (The Nightwatchman) Reinhard Heinrich (designer of costumes) and Heather Begg who will sing Fricka next year.

Keith and Jessie Anderson, whose addiction to Wagner's music is no less than anyone else's, handled the bookings of participants and the catering expertly and the organisation was first class, with great capacity from committee members who showed remarkable attention to planning and detail.

From modest beginnings only a few years back, our Society has become the leading ground for learning and enjoying Wagner's works, and at the same time it is able to monetarily assist deserving causes, mainly centred around "den Meister", but also singers and musicians of promise.

All of us privileged to be present on this occasion will remember it with pleasure when recalling the day, its preparation on academic and musical bases for the great adventure that awaits us now, with a typically German production of this most German of all German operas. Der Saenger Sitzt ..... and no Hanslick in sight anywhere.

### JOURNAL OF THE SOCIETY.

Our first issue of what we plan to be an Annual Journal will be on sale at functions or by mail from November 20th at \$6.00 (plus postage \$1.50) per copy. This first issue, with the title "FANGET AN", will cover the proceedings of our Seminar on Die Meistersinger, and other associated articles. For enquiries, contact any Committee Member. An application form is on the back page for those requiring it.

### DIE MEISTERSINGER VON NÜRNBERG

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE, SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1988.

(A Review from a "critic" who makes no apologies for obvious bias)

Michael Hampe, during a talk to our Society last year, promised us a Die Meistersinger that would be based on the concept of the Old versus the New. The whole idea of an Opera Production being a 200th birthday present from one country to another is novel enough, but one which was greeted with great enthusiasm by Wagnerites. When the "present" was finally "opened", the recipients were thrilled beyond measure. This production is very fresh and colourful and moves at a brisk pace under the guiding hand of Sir Charles Mackerras, our Patron. Hailed as Wagner's only comic opera, it seemed to me that I heard more chuckles than I had heard in any previous performance.

The most vivid memory I have is of the sets, designed by John Gunter, and costumes, designed by Reinhard Heinrich, which together with the lighting brought 16th Century Nuremberg to life. The problems of the small stage in Sydney must be enormous but they seemed to be overcome completely. The lighting of the Act 3, Scene 1 was excellent. This scene so often used as a "build-up" to the brilliant Festival Meadow scene, was the highlight of this production aided by the acting of Donald McIntyre and the singing of the wonderful quintet. In the final scene the colourful costumes, singing of the chorus, the maypole dancing and the promised procession of the Meisters (in black) all prepared us for the song contest so ably presented first by John Pringle then by Paul Frey. They seemed to have plenty of room though space is limited.

The cast, led by Donald McIntyre, Paul Frey, Helena Doese, John Pringle, Christopher Doig, Elizabeth Campbell, Donald Shanks, Robert Allman and John Wegner sang and acted with great conviction. John Pringle's interpretation of Beckmesser was the best we have seen from him. He kept control of the characterisation at all times. Christopher Doig, like so many other Davids, is very mature but sang well and Elizabeth Campbell's Magdalena need not be so self-effacing. Paul Frey's ringing Prize Song was thrilling. Donald McIntyre rushed to Sydney at short notice to sing Hans Sachs and then rehearsed constantly so it was no wonder that his voice seemed slightly tired in Act 3, but his vast experience and commanding stage presence was so obvious that the ovation he received was no surprise. It seemed to me that the orchestra, small in number and playing in cramped conditions responded to the sure guidance of Sir Charles Mackerras as never before. Sir Charles' vast experience and deep insight always ensure a high standard and the "bravo's" did not just mean "welcome home" but deep gratitude that we had seen a world-class Wagner opera performance.

One disappointment was the translation used in the Surtitles. When one sentence has to cover the meaning of a long passage, it should not be flippant, or even "smart-alec". It happened often that laughter came before the words were actually sung, and it must have been disconcerting for the singers as well as altering the mood for the audience.

OUR THANKS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF WEST GERMANY FOR OUR WONDERFUL BIRTHDAY PRESENT - SO MUSICALLY SATISFYING- AND TO MICHAEL HAMPE AND REINHARD HEINRICH WHO CAME FROM GERMANY TO BE WITH US. TO SIR CHARLES MACKERRAS AND THE VISITING CAST MEMBERS, WE SAY THANKS ONCE AGAIN AND WE HOPE YOUR STAY WITH US WAS A HAPPY ONE.

### THOUGHTS ON DIE MEISTERSINGER VON NÜRNBERG.

-researched and supplied by Patricia Baillie of Da Capo Music.

From the beginning we succumb to its irresistible charm, its bright, vibrant rhythm, its easy uninhibited joyousness. We find ourselves haunted afterward by the memory of Hans Sachs, of a few exquisite isolated sounds, and by a feeling of musical bounty as boundless as the sea - Peltz. 1948.

When we pass to the melodic wealth of the orchestral score, its inspiration, the richness of its colouring, and the wonderful delicacy of its workmanship, the mind is almost staggered at the phenomenon of one human brain possessing such an amazing combination of faculties.

-p.56 Cleather & Crump. 1912.

He (Sargent) was required to conduct the Mastersingers.....From the moment the train pulled out of King's Cross he had his nose buried in the score. At Carlyle he closed the score with a triumphant slap and said, "There, now, I know the Meistersinger." p.124. Reid. 1968.

It is not difficult to find the message which Wagner intended in [Die Meistersinger]. Wagner was annihilating those who insisted upon producing art according to rules and formulas, and tries to show that with independent thinking and freedom an artist can create greatness.

-p.616. Ewen.1944.

Wagner was a terrible moralizer; but his moral is so broad, so genial, of such universal application, that it irradiates the mind and warms the heart with a new faith in life. - Rayner. 1940.



And the Mastersingers has one commanding excellence: it smells of the good brown earth and real life, untainted by any tedious metaphysic... We want no pseudo-philosophical commentaries on Tristan and Isolde and the Mastersingers: they can be pressed into the service of no economic or sociological theory. - p.167. Newman 1904.

Though the work begins with the most radiant generosity of feeling its heart is to be found nearly three hours later when Sachs sings, "Wahn! Wahn!" (Illusion! Illusion!) -the great monologue to which no-one pays any attention. p.192. Burbridge.1979.

As a comedy, the Poem ranks as the German masterpiece of the century. One may even venture the statement that while rising to the level of Shakespearean comedy, it is entirely free from coarseness: moreover, Wagner never descended to the portrayal of drunkenness, even as an element of comedy. Only those intimately acquainted with the German language in all its finer shades of meaning could possibly appreciate the extraordinary workmanship and "gigantic humour" as Hans von Bulow called it, displayed by Wagner in this delightful poem.

-p.56. Cleather and Crump.1912.

Die Meistersinger is far too serious and too pointedly ideological to be a comedy: it is a dramatic plea pro domo, self-gratification and satire rolled into one, a unique fusion of proclamation, drama and opera.

-Gal. 1976.

Die Meistersinger was Wagner's first and last attempt at Comedy....The result is something quite unlike any other comic opera ever written or conceived....Like all true comedy, it is designed to chastise with a smile the weaknesses of human nature. The rich drollery of the Beckmesser scene in Act 3 is comparable with the best things in Aristophanes. It evokes the mirth that "lifts the brows as gunpowder lifts a fortress"; but for the most part the laughter that Die Meistersinger gives us, springs from that illuminating inward delight that is a finer feast for the soul than any amount of cackling merriment.

-Rayner 1940.

"It is interesting you should say that," Elgar rejoined. "Richter once put the "Nimrod" crescendo side by side with Wagner's crescendo in the Meistersinger Overture, and comparing them, showed that mine was the better of the two."

p.107. Reid. 1968.

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How do you spell it? - Society member Renate Wagner was asked when giving her name as she tried to buy a ticket for Die Meistersinger at Sydney Opera House Box Office.

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### BAYREUTH 1989

The Society has once again applied for a grant of tickets for 1989. Should we be successful, full information will be included in the next Newsletter. We would like to include a reminder that continuous membership is a condition for being included in the ballot should more members apply than the number of tickets allotted. Operas to be staged are the current Ring Cycle, Lohengrin, Parsifal and Tannhauser. An application form to be included in the ballot is on the last page.

THE NEW RING - BAYREUTH 1988.

I NEVER REALISED THAT OPERA WAS A BLOOD SPORT.

- Annette Marshall.

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS.

As Wieland and Chereau proved, a radical RING will be accepted in the end if it is presented with dramatic force and intellectual coherence. Each new Ring director has the obligation to seek the spirit, not necessarily the letter, of Wagner's four-opera cycle, and Kupfer, director of East Berlin's Komische Oper is no exception. He presents a cinematic re-thinking of the myth that projects the action far into a grim, post-nuclear-war future, in which gods, dwarfs, giants and humans stumble through the detritus of a lost civilization in a futile search for salvation. As stern as a Lutheran sermon, yet as exciting as an action-adventure film, Kupfer's Ring is thrilling.

- Michael Walsh in "Time".

WAGNER IN BOILER SUITS.

The technical realisation of the effects of Rheingold and Die Walkure is dull compared with the first cycle of the Hall-Dudley version of the Ring.....Kupfer's scene designer, Hans Schavernoch uses green laser beams to mark out the bed of the Rhine, but here and later the laser technique employed seems primitive and flat. It reaches a very low level with the cube outlined in red, like a figure in a solid geometry textbook, that does duty for the ring of fire surrounding the sleeping figure of Brunnhilde....The giants are very tall, moving on draped, wheeled platforms but seeming pin-headed in comparison with their height and their huge shoulders and arms.....some clue to the theme underlying the production appears.....in the condition of the world ash tree .....already no more than an old, dry, twisted stump.

-Roger Covell. Sydney Morning Herald.

The pin-heads of the giants certainly reminded us that like the huge Brontosaurus, size is no guarantee of survival.

- Anonymous.

Wotan was singing about placing Brunnhilde on a mountain surrounded by a ring of fire for protection against all but heroes...but she still finished up in a perspex cube!

-Another Anonymous.

BAYREUTH BRUTALISM

Occasionally a bit of set is plonked down on the autobahn- a rusty old boiler for Mime's forge, a bombed-out factory for Siegfried Act 2 (the "depth of the forest" is Wagner's quaint old-fashioned recommendation) -but not often enough. For long stretches - the only colour on stage is the red wigs worn by those descended from Wotan as they, or others, sit in the middle of the autobahn for a chat, or at one grisly moment, a bonk.....projecting skyscrapers above the autobahn to show the horrors of Gibichung society might have been frightfully dashing in the theatre of the Weimar Republic but looks a little old hat to-day. There is nothing so conservative as an East German director..... The Kupfer Ring is thus ultimately a waste of time, effort and a huge amount of money.

Were it not for the theatre's unique acoustics, it would be tempting to put a match to it to purge the place of its past.....other operas should be performed here but that won't happen in my lifetime, which doesn't much matter as I will never set foot in the place again as long as I live.

-Rodney Milnes - The Spectator.

Das Rheingold opens with gods roaming freely centre back stage, then the scene darkens and the famous E FLAT is heard from the pit. Blue laser beams shoot out from centre back stage, gradually forming into a

cavern of water - the depths of the Rhine. It was quite magical. The final scene is a multi-storey building with strobe lighting in the colours of the rainbow representing Valhalla. When the gods enter Valhalla they ascend in a lift in the building, complete with perspex suit cases and Donner with his perspex hammer.

-Murray Smith.

AWFUL, BUT INESCAPABLY THE RING OF TRUTH.

Kupfer though a wretchedly limited man, is an ingenious one, and some things come off splendidly: the use of lasers was exciting, the use of gantries and catwalks of Nibelheim worked well even in British Telecom yellow; the giants fully 4.3 metres high moved so freely on wheels that Froh had to skip nimbly out of harm's way (Cause of death: run over by mechanised giant!).....but in the end, it won't do if only because Kupfer, whenever faced with a real difficulty, runs away from it. Take those giants; because the men inside them can do nothing but sing, they cannot pick up the gold, let alone quarrel over it, so there is no visible reason for Fafner to murder his brother. There is no attempt to deal with the problem - the people out there are only the audience, and what do they matter?

I stayed on for Die Meistersinger where the glorious goodness of that tremendous score soothed my soul to quiet but it also told me that my ravings about the Ring will dissolve every time when that E flat steals out into the darkness. Believe me when I say that I shall never come back to Bayreuth, I lie.

- Bernard Levin of The Times  
published in The Australian

An unforgettable sight was the crumbling of the skyscrapers in the finale of Gotterdammerung. I would not have missed any of it for anything.

-Jean Whitehouse.

A parody of the Ring performed by BARNUM CIRCUS with some good or very good singers.... Others part-time singers.....Sound - orchestra in session comparable with Canberra Parliament in session (half of the politicians in the Chamber and half at the Bar)....."Forest Murmurs"? Actually I have named it "Sewerage Murmurs" as the stage showed the section of some kind of multi-storey building in ruins showing a lot of pipes and a big drainage or sewerage pipe at the bottom of the building.

- Joseph Ferfaglia

Hagen's spurs were Das Ende. It was an ugly, "angular" Ring.

- Judy Ferfaglia

Unqualified successes among the singers are Graham Clark's manically active Mime, and his superior Loge; Gunther von Kannen's dark and bleak Alberich; Linda Finnie's Fricka and Nadine Secunde's Sieglinde which was outstandingly warm and focused. Deborah Polaski as Brunnhilde did not have the top range to make the climaxes ring true, however she has a commanding stage presence. Siegfried Jerusalem gave a thrillingly fresh performance as Siegfried - physically active and vocally exciting. Reiner Goldberg was vulgar and unsubtle of voice. John Tomlinson was a magnificently sonorous Wotan.

- Nicholas Kenyon from the Observer.

Daniel Barenboim was conducting the Ring for the first time..... something he would have been well-advised to do.....anywhere other than in Bayreuth, where his shortcomings were humiliatingly exposed between extremes.

-Rodney Milnes in the Spectator

There remains the conducting of Barenboim. No doubt it will improve.

-Edward Greenfield of the Guardian

JOURNAL OF THE SOCIETY.

I wish to purchase.....copy(ies) of the above Journal and enclose my (cheque/ money order) for ..... to cover cost. Cheques to be made payable to The Wagner Society in NSW Inc and posted to the Treasurer, 141 Dowling Street, Woolloomooloo. 2011.  
NAME.....  
ADDRESS.....POSTCODE.....

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BAYREUTH 1989 APPLICATION FORM

I wish my name to be entered in the ballot for tickets for Bayreuth.  
Name.....Membership Number.....  
Number of Tickets... 1 or 2. Phone Number.....

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DONATIONS TO THE WAGNER SOCIETY

Date .....

The Secretary,  
The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust,  
P.O.Box 137,  
King's Cross N.S.W. 2011

Dear Sir,

Please find enclosed cash/cheque OR CHARGE MY  
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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 IN N.S.W. INC.  
.....

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PLEASE PRINT NAME AND ADDRESS OF COMPANY .....  
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We would ask you when making your donation in this manner to please send your cheque, made payable to the Wagner Society's Official address for processing before it is passed on to the A.E.T.T. Thank You.