

The Wagner Society

IN NEW SOUTH WALES INC.

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



Newsletter

No. 37 NOVEMBER, 1989.
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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
Mr LEONARD HANSEN
Mr RICHARD KING

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

COMING EVENTS

Sunday, Nov 19th	Tannhäuser on C.D. Paris version complete.	1.00 p.m.
Saturday, Dec 2nd	Theatre Party. Tannhäuser Victorian Arts Centre Melbourne.	6.00 p.m.
Sunday, Dec 17th	Christmas Party Goethe Institute.	2.30 p.m.

COMMITTEE

President	Olive Coonan	271 3666(B)
Vice President	Leonard Hansen	326 1793
Secretary	Clare Hennessy	747 5664
Membership Co-ordinator	Annette Marshall	042 94 2992
Functions Co-ordinator	Margaret Budge	521 6097
Treasurer	Alma Straube	969 9383
Immediate Past President and Public Officer	Richard King	358 1919
Editors	Jessie Anderson Keith Anderson	449 8801
Committee	Susan Kelly	

NEW MEMBERS

The Society would like to welcome the following new members who have joined recently:-

Adam Owens : John Grant : Alison Moss : Ross Whitelaw : J. Learson :
Robert Bruck : Dr. Katy Bruck : Dr. Luciana O'Dwyer : Anita Florin :
C. Thomas : Toni Stephens : Ira Kowalski : Patricia Coulton.

Murray Stewart Smith

The Wagner Society mourns the loss of Foundation member Murray Smith on Friday, 6th October, 1989, after a long illness. One of the original group which first advocated

the formation of the Wagner Society, he became a committee member at the first meeting. He has held office ever since, even attending a meeting only days before entering hospital. Always willing to roll up his sleeves and work hard for our cause, he will be sadly missed by all who knew and loved him. Murray first realised the historical value of the Frank Hinder original designs for sets and costumes for the 1958 production of Lohengrin which we now own. Murray has ensured its preservation and members will be able to see this collection next year thanks to his generosity.



BIRD CALL

At his funeral, the music he loved especially- "The Forest Murmurs" and the Prelude to "Parsifal" was played as a tribute to one who dearly loved the music of the Master.

VALE MURRAY.



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*   Sadly our Society has lost two other
*   members recently. We refer to Dr Ian
*   Thompson and Mr Herb Halvorsen. Our
*   sincere condolences are extended to
*   their families and friends.
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Xmas Party

GOETHE INSTITUTE

2.30 pm. SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17TH, 1989.

Our main feature is a

RECITAL

by

Virginia Lamb and Peter Binning

singing

THE LIEBESTOD, ALBERICH'S CURSE,
DUET - ACT 11 FROM THE FLYING DUTCHMAN

LOOKING FOR XMAS PRESENTS?

Some copies of the Compact Disc of
Carl Tausig's Transcriptions of
Wagnerian Operas which was recorded

by

DENNIS HENNIG

will be on sale.

Dennis will autograph copies
purchased at the party.

All are welcome. There is no charge for members
but we do ask you to buy some raffle tickets.
We are asking visitors to pay \$6.

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* DON'T FORGET!
* TANNHÄUSER.
* NOVEMBER 19TH. 1.00 PM.
* LATEST RECORDING of the PARIS VERSION.
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REPORT FROM AMERICA

- by Wilf Menadue.

New York: This year the Metropolitan Opera staged its first complete cycle of Wagner's DER RING DES NIBELUNGEN since 1975 though this cycle has been built up over several seasons. The event attracted great attention from Wagnerites world-wide, so that the audience was not a regular Met gathering, but a specialist contingent from across the Continent, from Europe, Japan and Australia. On my left were an eager young couple from Florida attending their first complete Ring, and on my right an elderly Bayreuth veteran from Germany, while the entire row in front were Japanese. The general summing up seems to be that one will always make the pilgrimage to Bayreuth for its special ambience and if one seeks out-of-the-ordinary productions, but for anyone wishing to see the huge work as envisaged by the composer, this current New York production is the one to see. As the Met's artistic director, James Levine, explains, "I have no objection to a far-out Ring except that it shuts out more possibilities than it includes. Here, we need to give as much interpretation as possible to the viewer-listener."

The Austrian producer, Otto Schenk, and German set-designer, Günther Schneider-Siemssen have used to the full the extraordinary technical facilities of the Met stage and have gone for a realistic, often very beautiful, setting and straightforward interpretation. Consequently the stage pictures look incredibly solid with jutting basalt rocks, rough-hewn timbers, seeming full-size conifer forests, long vistas and convincing illusion (the Rainbow Bridge seems to reach from the stage to the distant golden thrust of Valhalla.) There are scenes that will long live in the memory of opera-goers - the descent into Nibelheim taking place before our eyes, the excitement of the gathering strength of the Magic Fire, the ascent of Siegfried to the Valkyrie Rock and most memorably, the awe-inspiring closing moments of the whole cycle with the final scene of devastation as the Gibichung Hall collapses, the waters of the Rhine rise, Valhalla burns and is engulfed by the waters and then, emerging from this chaos the promise of a new world: it is quite breathtaking and as the last notes of music die away, the house explodes into cheering, stamping applause - and rightly so.

The cast is about as fine as is likely to be assembled presently, led by a passionate Hildegard Behrens as Brünnhilde and the sterling Wotan of James Morris - no praise is too high for their contribution to the success of this Cycle and my admiration for these amazingly committed performers knows no bounds. The Walsung twins in the Die Walküre of my Cycle (Number Two) were well sung by Ellen Shade and Robert Schunk, however they cannot erase my memories of the First Cycle's beautifully sung and involving performances of Jessye Norman and Garry Lakes. Toni Krämer's Siegfried was rather uneven, sometimes strongly heroic, but at other times less so, though his death scene was very moving. Siegfried Jerusalem was a brilliantly manipulative Loge, with Helga Dernes as a strong Fricka and Waltraute, while the huge (both physically and vocally) bass, Matti Salminen, was the only singer to participate in all four evenings - the two Fafners, Hunding and Hagen - villains all! Special comment should also be made of the incredible characterisation by Graham Clark - an appealing Mime? Other cast members deserving of individual mention include Franz Mazura, John Macurdy, Marita Napier, Birgitta Svendén, Dawn Upshaw, Kathryn Harries and Anthony Raffell. What a delight to see a row of six harps in the pit! The valiant and magnificent Metropolitan Opera Orchestra emerged victorious under the committed baton of Maestro James Levine.

Mixed emotions filled the audience as it filed out of the auditorium on Saturday night following the conclusion of Götterdämmerung - the abiding thrill of the event and a tinge of sorrow that it was over, but as farewells were said, all were secure in the knowledge of having been a fortunate participant in something very special.

BAYREUTH REPORT

Australians seemed to turn up in droves to the Festspielhaus this year for the Third Ring Cycle and accompanying single operas. Many devotees were from our Society, having managed to obtain tickets from a wide variety of sources.

The enthusiasm of this happy group was evident each interval by the vitality of the discussion of the events in the preceding Act. A highlight of the visit was a meeting with Wolfgang Wagner and the opportunity to present him with a special gift to commemorate his 70th birthday which he was to be celebrating on 30th August.

On 25th August at 5.30 p.m. - half an hour before "Rheingold" was due to start - an excited and rather expanded contingent from our Wagner Society was ushered into a small garden courtyard within the Festspielhaus building. Wolfgang Wagner appeared, beaming and perhaps a little surprised at the size of his reception, and made a very spirited welcoming speech.

At that point, Vice-President Leonard Hansen responded with birthday greetings, and on behalf of the Society handed him a unique and original present - a specially hand crafted lino-cut of his personal "ex libris" Book Plate. Past-President Richard King had organised to have the Book Plate made by well-known Sydney Artist Franck Marjason. This artistic decoration incorporates elements of our own Logo, as well as important symbols of Wagner's works. 50 copies of the Book Plate had been printed on special rice paper and the complete creation was enclosed in a specially made and decorated cedar case. Richard King proudly explained the finer points of the gift to Wolfgang, who was particularly happy with it, never having had a Book Plate of his own, and now receiving one from Australia, no less.

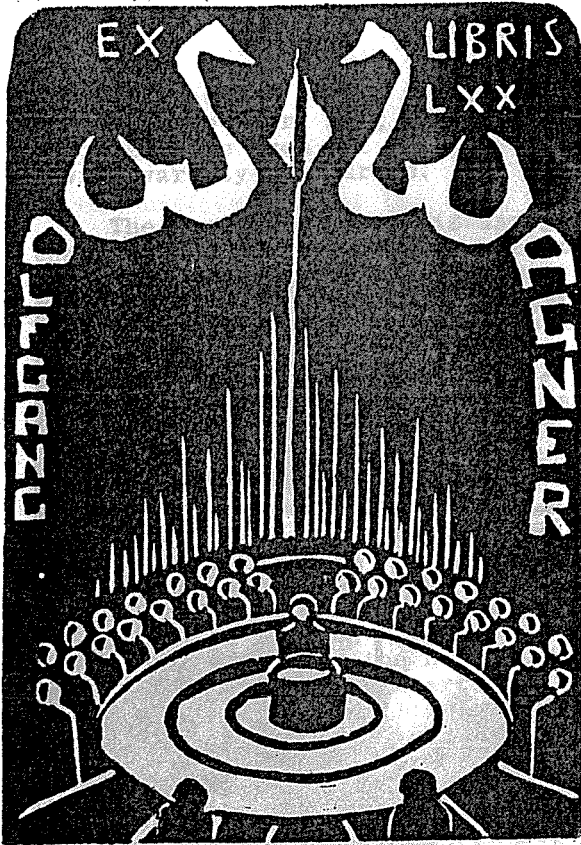
For Wolfgang Wagner, even at 70, life was not going to be easier. The day after the Festival finished, he would be flying, with all his staff, singers, chorus ("only 100 of them!"), orchestra and sets to Tokyo. The Japanese Government had sponsored this visit to inaugurate a new Lyric Theatre, and were to receive two staged performances of "Tannhäuser" and concert performances of "Lohengrin" and "Parsifal". The mind can only boggle at the magnitude and complexity of such an undertaking.

The question of tickets to the Festival was also addressed while several committee members were there on the spot to discuss the matter with the Box Office staff. No assurance would be given that Sydney would receive any allocation for next year's Festival, even though we pointed out that Perth and Melbourne have been regular recipients of tickets over the past few years. Nevertheless application will again be made by the Society on behalf of its members for a reasonable number of tickets. Any tickets received will be balloted among those members who notify on the appropriate form (see back pages) their desire to attend the Festival in 1990.

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* Rosemary Gunn is the winner of this year's Bayreuth *
* Scholarship, and is now studying in Europe. It is *
* our pleasure to assist this venture by paying for *
* the overseas flight. We were pleased to be able to *
* congratulate Rosemary when she attended our seminar *
* in July. *
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WOLFGANG WAGNER RECEIVING THE SOCIETY'S
PRESENT FOR HIS BIRTHDAY.

BOOK PLATES

This a copy of the Book Plate from an original lino-cut designed by Franck Marjason which the Society presented to Wolfgang Wagner on the occasion of his 70th Birthday on 30th August.

Also, from the same source comes this copy of the Society's Book Plate of which 50 copies will be placed in the books in our library.



1/50

F. Marjason '69

GLYNDEBOURNE AND BAYREUTH*by Sue Kelly.*

FIGARO and GLYNDEBOURNE are an unbeatable combination. The whole experience is so English - peacocks on the lawn, cows beyond the Ha-Ha, the entrance to the theatre through the drawing room of the house and the audience part of the event (the men much better dressed than the women).

The cast was good to very good. I would have preferred the Countess to be a little more mature as this is our usual expectation, but Swedish Gunnel Bohman certainly looked the part. All Glyndebourne Cherubinos are good and Marianne Borholm was no exception. But the evening was stolen by Felicity Palmer as Marcellina - wonderful singing and just over the top acting!

Some parts of the production seemed odd; the Countess's bedroom seemed to be a public place within the meaning of the act and Figaro never removed his hat at any time and of course, everyone had to sing while kneeling down, climbing up ladders or under a bed - a hallmark of 1989 productions. (See below). However I have never seen the difficult Act IV garden scenes done better.

And the music? Perfect, of course, as it was Mozart.

Simon Rattle conducted and the orchestra used original instruments. The woodwind sounds were exquisite, every note in the wonderful Act II finale perfectly placed. In my ignorance, I worried that the string sounds would not be as rich and full as usual but they were superb!

We ate supper on the grass - (salmon, raspberries and champagne, of course) surrounded by 800 other people with no sense of crowding and no noise - all very elegant and English. Somehow I can't see the Bayreuth sausage sizzle catching on here.

BAYREUTH.

Nothing has changed, one can still buy Band-aids at the Parsifal Pharmacy; the hotels serve lovely breakfasts; the Opern Cafe still serves the best torte in town; one queues up for autographs and to buy English newspapers with the cricket scores; churches are well attended as soloists from up the hill sing at Sunday services.

Others have written more fully on the musical aspects of the Ring so I will just make a few introductory comments about the staging. Kupfer's production seemed to me to be wilfully perverse. I accept that he has a vision for the whole cycle - it takes place in a post-Chernobyl world with BRECHT providing light relief and the only thing missing is posters with arrows pointing to the moral - for those of us who haven't done our homework.

OK. It's his view and a valid one, but why when you have a stage the size of Bayreuth do you crowd it with a (admittedly superb) set that leaves the singers a few feet to work in - or have a laser show that is lost unless you sit right in the middle of the row - or stage the last Act of SIEGFRIED on a totally empty stage? The lovers didn't even have a park bench to sit on. I liked the colour of the carpet, though.

And the poor singers - no one walked or stood still while singing - he or she is expected to run, sprint up ladders, jump up and down or lie prone to sing! You may despise the music but to show such contempt for the singers and their difficulties is unforgivable.

Highlights were GRAHAM CLARK who showed the way to recover from a heart attack was to sing Loge and Mime with athletic action and wonderful characterisation. He was thrown 12 large bouquets on his last night and fielded them all - should be in the slips for England!

Janis Martin stepped in at a few hours notice as the Valkyrie Brunnhilde and sang superbly. The tension on stage was electric and the performance was wonderful. Unfortunately Anne Evans was sick and probably returned too early. She sings well and we will hear more of her. The overture to TANNHAUSER was alone worth the trip. Meeting friends and discussing the performance is what Bayreuth is all about. Where would Wagner be without controversy? That the hand, writing this shook the hand of Richard Wagner's grandson made it even better!

WAGNER IN SAN FRANCISCO

During their visit to New York this year, Jann and Walter Norris met some members of the Wagner Society of San Francisco, and gave us the address of a contact person. We added this name to our mailing list - hoping that the two groups in "Sister Cities" would benefit from knowing each other. As this newsletter was being prepared for printing we heard the news of the horrific earthquake and the devastation of so much of the lovely city so many of us have visited. We hope that all members have come through this ordeal with minimal injury and property damage, and assure them that we have them in our thoughts. Some of our members were planning to attend the "Ring" in June in San Francisco, so we will be anxious to hear whether plans for the production will be altered.

TURANDOT

On Friday 24th November a concert performance of "Turandot" will be presented by the Warringah Symphony Orchestra, at The Hills Centre, Castle Hill.

Singers familiar to us by their outstanding performances in Wagnerian Operas should make the event well worth attending. Rita Hunter will sing the title role ; Christa Leahmann will sing Liu and Ronald Dowd , the Emperor. Calaf and Timur will be sung by Reginald Byers and Daniel Sumegi. Enquiries should be made by ringing 899 2422 or by watching advertisements in newspapers.

TRISTAN AND ISOLDE

Great interest is being shown in the full production of "Tristan and Isolde" in the Concert Hall of the Sydney Opera House early next year. With the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Stuart Challender, providing the music, it should be a milestone for Wagnerites. We have had 100 tickets allotted to us and, judging by the preliminary enquiries, there will be a rush to obtain them. The application form is on the back page so don't delay.

After Sydney, the production will go to Adelaide for the Festival. The Richard Wagner Society has planned an extremely comprehensive series of lectures, discussions and forums to support this great event. If you are going to Adelaide, ring (02)449 8801 for details.

DIE WALKÜRE

It is always exciting to attend the last performance of an opera especially one as successful as Die Walküre has been this year, so the hundred or so Society members were thrilled to be able to show their gratitude for the splendid singing by Donald McIntyre, Marilyn Szchau, Marilyn Richardson, Horst Hoffman, Donald Shanks, Rosemary Gunn and the eight Valkyries. Some of the stage settings, while showing their age and increasing infirmity, allowed for excellent juxtapositioning of the singers. The First Act was memorable for the radiant singing and acting of Marilyn Richardson and the committed interpretation and singing of Horst Hoffman, while the farewell scene between Wotan and Brünnhilde in the Third Act was very moving indeed. Thanks to the Australian Opera - we have had quite a feast by Australian standards, of Wagner Opera which will continue into 1990 and then we fear a drought will set in. Perhaps a timely reminder can be made about the size of the audiences at ALL the performances - support for Wagner Operas is very high and would remain so given any opportunity!

SEMINAR REPORTS

Sunday, July 16th saw every available chair at the Goethe Institute occupied by members and visitors eager to hear our speakers giving us a broader view, and more knowledge of, perhaps the favourite Wagner opera, "Die Walkure".

Dennis Hennig took us through the musical complexities of the score, illustrating on either the piano or from recordings the many themes we would be hearing when we attended the opera.

Professor Michael Ewans' subject was the Interaction of the Music and the Drama. He described to us the way in which Wagner, having planned Siegfried's Death as his opera, came to realise that he had a much greater story to tell than he first imagined. "Die Walküre" then became the tragedy of the love between Sieglinde and Siegmund, the love between Wotan and Siegmund, and the love between Wotan and Brunnhilde. The music reflects the tragic mood of all these interacting stories - the result being one of the greatest artistic creations of all time.

Professor Andrew Riemer told us about the myths on which the "Ring" is based. Wagner made use of these Germanic myths but changed them so much that he virtually wrote a new set - but one which is matched by such superlative music that the four operas are a brilliant achievement. Written over one hundred years ago, they are more popular than ever.

To conclude the day, our Speakers were joined by Donald Shanks and John Wegner to form a discussion panel, chaired by Arthur Carter. This witty session, was enjoyed by all.



Again, on 15th October the Goethe Institute was full of folk wishing to broaden their knowledge of a Wagner Opera, this time "Tannhäuser" as 30 of our members are going to Melbourne to attend the Victorian State Opera's production on 2nd December. John Clifton-Everest from the Department of Germanic Studies at Sydney University, who has published a book called "The Tragedy of Knighthood", which is the result of research into the ballads about heroes of the Middle Ages, gave us a most interesting and scholarly talk called the "Lure of the Venusberg". We were given copies of translations of some of these ballads and it was easy to see how Wagner combined these with his favoured theme of redemption through the love of a virtuous woman. In the old morality plays, which were a reflection of the religious beliefs of the day, good and evil were represented in stark black and white terms and the Venusberg was a symbol of evil and sinful behaviour. The Wartburg, where the song contests took place is still in existence though the room is much smaller than is suggested in the opera.

Werner Baer, in his inimitable witty style, spoke about the opera and illustrated his talk by playing themes on the piano, and was supported by Keith Anderson using the latest C.D. recording. To our great delight, Sandra Hahn, who has a special place in the hearts and minds of this Society's members, sang "Elizabeth's Greeting" and "Elizabeth's Prayer".

All this has made us look forward to November, 19th when we will be hearing the full Paris version on a newly released recording.

OPERA LUNEDI

A new group will be formed in 1990 to study Music and Opera. It will meet at St. Martins Anglican Church Hall from 10 am till 12.30 pm on Mondays commencing on 22nd January. Among the lecturers will be Denis Condon ; David Garrett ; Fred Blanks ; John Grundy and John Carmody. Anyone interested in joining should contact -

MRS JOAN GRIFFEN on 4072134.

THEATRE PARTY TICKETS FOR TRISTAN AND ISOLDE
CONCERT HALL. SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE.

The Wagner Society,
141 Dowling Street,
Woolloomooloo.2011.

I/We would like to bookseats for the performance of Tristan and Isolde on 17th February, 1990. I have enclosed a S.A.E. for return of tickets.

Only applications made by members will be considered (in order of receipt) till 31/12/1989. Payment must accompany booking.

Number of tickets in "A" Reserve at \$74

Number of tickets in "B" Reserve at \$51

NAMEMEMBER NUMBER.....

APPLICATION FOR TICKETS TO BAYREUTH,1990.

The Wagner Society,
141 Dowling Street,
WOOLLOOMOOLOO. 2074.

I/We wish to be included in the ballot for tickets to Bayreuth in 1990, should the Society receive an allocation. I/We will abide by the decisions of the committee regarding the ballot.

Member/s.....Member No.....

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 cheque or CHARGE MY
BANKCARD No.
MASTERCARD No.
DINERS CLUB No.
AMERICAN EXPRESS No.....
VISA CARD No.
EXPIRY DATE

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 IN N.S.W. INC.

Signature Please print Name

and Address Post Code.....

OR

I have made this donation on behalf of my company.

Signature Title
PLEASE PRINT NAME AND ADDRESS OF COMPANY
..... Post Code

We would ask you if making your donation by cheque to make it payable to the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, but post it to the Wagner Society's official address for processing before we pass it on to the A.E.T.T. We can only accept payment by cheque or credit card and this donation must be separated from any other payment included at the same time. These are Taxation rules and are beyond our control. If you have any doubts about the procedures please contact a committee member. Thank You.