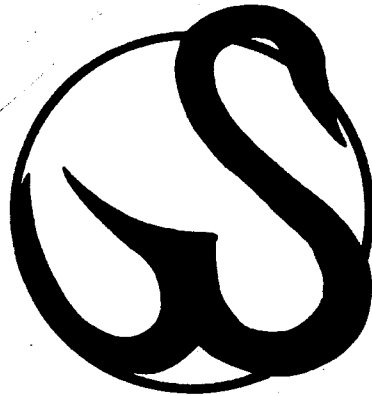


The Wagner Society

IN NEW SOUTH WALES INC.

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



Newsletter

No. 40 AUGUST, 1990.
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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

COMING EVENTS

Sunday, August 19th	Die Walküre (Video) Goethe Institute	1.00 p.m.
Sunday, September 16th	Siegfried (Video) Goethe Institute	1.00 p.m.
Sunday, October 14th	Concert by Japanese Wagner Society Opera House	3.30 p.m.
Sunday, November 18th	Götterdämmerung (Video) Goethe Institute	1.00 p.m.
Sunday, December 16th	Christmas Party Goethe Institute	2.30 p.m.

September 24th - 6th October.
Richard King Gallery. 141 Dowling Street, Woolloomooloo.
Murray Smith Lohengrin Collection.
Details on opposite page

COMMITTEE

President	Olive Coonan	387 6403
Vice President	Leonard Hansen	326 1793
Secretary	Clare Hennessy	747 5664
Membership Co-ordinators	Annette Marshall Margaret Budge	042 94 2992 521 6097
Functions Co-ordinators	Sue Kelly Richard Steele Paul Lehmann	365 4306
Treasurer	Leonard Hansen	
Immediate Past President and Public Officer	Richard King	358 1919
Newsletter Editors	Jessie Anderson Keith Anderson	
Catering	Margaret Budge Jessie Anderson Annette Marshall	

* * * * *
* If you have not renewed your subscription for 1990-91 this will *
* be the last copy of the Newsletter that you will receive. *
* * * * *

INVITATION

to the

Exhibition

AT THE RICHARD KING GALLERY
141 Dowling Street,
WOOLLOOMOOLOO.
of the

Murray Smith Lohengrin Collection

(SET AND COSTUME DESIGNS BY FRANK HINDER)

25th September, 1990 till 6th October, 1990.
Gallery Hours 11.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

OFFICIAL OPENING - 24th SEPTEMBER AT 6.00 p.m.

All Welcome

R.S.V.P. for Opening Night - please phone 3581919 or 3876403



VISIT BY JAPANESE WAGNER SOCIETY

On Sunday, 14th October at 3.30 p.m., a concert will be given in the Sydney Opera House to celebrate the 90th Anniversary of the Choirs and Orchestras of the KEIO GIJUKU UNIVERSITY and WAGNER SOCIETY.

The program will be a popular one, with short symphonic pieces and choruses from Italian and German operas. The large orchestra and massed choirs have travelled the world, appearing in Vienna, Salzburg, Berlin and the U.S.A. Although a strictly amateur group, they have regularly performed "Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg" and "Tannhäuser" with professional guest artists.

The year 1990-91 is the 90th anniversary season for the whole group. The large male choir will perform the Japanese premiere of Wagner's "Das Liebesmahl der Apostel" with the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra.

This magnificent project to bring the joy of music from Japan to Sydney deserves all our support and we must do everything possible to encourage a large attendance. Further information will be available closer to the date of the concert.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I would like to welcome and say thank you to all our members who are here to-day attending the Tenth Annual General meeting of the Wagner Society in N.S.W. Inc. In my first year as President, I would like to convey my thanks and appreciation for the help and unstinting support of all my committee members as well as Joseph Ferfoggia and Reg Maloney who have helped us stay on a secure financial footing.

During my first year we have had some wonderful and happy events, but also sad ones with losing some of our original and loyal members. As you know, Murray Smith was the instigator of our obtaining the Frank Hinder Lohengrin Collection, and before his death gave another large donation to the Society for the framing entailed to show this work. After some discussion the Committee unanimously decided to call the Collection, "The Murray Smith Lohengrin Collection". It will be available for showing at the Richard King Gallery during October next while Lohengrin is being performed at the Sydney Opera House.

We have continued our Sunday afternoon functions which are developing into friendly get-to-know-you occasions for our members. We have had two Seminars, one on Die Walküre and a Mini-seminar on Tannhäuser and both have been very well attended. We have been very fortunate in having as our Speakers, Dennis Hennig, Professor Michael Ewans, Professor Andrew Riemer, John Clifton-Everest and Werner Baer. A special thank-you must also be given to singers Donald Shanks and John Wegner and also Arthur Carter who chaired the discussion following the Die Walküre Seminar. I am sure we enjoy our Operas and learn so much more from these Seminars. We have had five Compact Disc afternoons for Lohengrin, The Flying Dutchman, Tannhäuser, Electra and Parsifal which everyone seems to enjoy.

For the first time we had a joint Reception with the Australian Opera Guild for Donald McIntyre held in the Northern Foyer of the Opera House. He gave us a very interesting and informative talk on how he progressed to where he is now in his operatic career. We all, of course, consider him to be an outstanding artist. It was interesting for all members present to have had the opportunity to meet such a great artist and he made himself available for anyone who wished to make his acquaintance.

During the latter part of last year's Opera Season we had a successful Theatre Party to Die Walküre, which also featured Marilyn Zschau singing her first Brünnhilde. Then, following this success, I organised another Theatre Party to go to Melbourne to hear Tannhäuser. This featured Lisa Gasteen, a young promising star of the future, as Elsa. Peter Coleman-Wright was a wonderful Wolfram and Anthony Roden sang the role of Tannhäuser. We were entertained at interval by members of the Victoria State Opera and the Melbourne Wagner Society and after the performance all went back stage to meet Richard Divall, the conductor of the performance, for a Champagne Supper.

As usual we ended the year with the Christmas Party at the Goethe Institute. Virginia Lamb and Peter Binnings graciously agreed to perform some Wagner at the annual "get-together". It would be perhaps one of our most successful ventures as everyone knows each other and it is a happy and festive occasion for all concerned.

Now we arrive at the current year where we sponsored Marilyn Richardson in her brilliant performance as Isolde, with a donation of \$5000, matched by a similar donation by our esteemed member, Leonard Hansen. I am sure all members were thrilled at the spectacle of "Tristan and Isolde" by the Australian Opera.

cont.

We then again, joined forces with the Australian Opera Guild to hold a Recital given by Dennis Hennig to play and launch his Tausig Wagner Compact Disc. As you are no doubt aware the Wagner Society has sponsored Dennis' Compact Disc to the tune of \$8000. On the Compact Disc our Logo is prominently displayed and is a form of effective publicity. In the current issue of Gramophone, which is a very prestigious publication, this C.D., Dennis and the Sydney Wagner Society have all received wonderful reviews which will probably sell more C.D.'s than we had ever hoped for. Dennis is a wonderful pianist and is now coming to the fore of Australian audiences and listeners with his other performances which are frequently heard on ABC-FM. He is also greatly in demand as a Speaker at Seminars.

This year we also obtained 15 tickets for Wagner's home ground - Bayreuth. These were dealt with by ballot and everyone was most excited at being able to participate.

Turning to Wagner on the Radio, if it wasn't for Arthur Carter we would not have a musical hour every month on 2MBS-FM. He does this willingly and we are very grateful to him for this unselfish job. This is broadcast on the 3rd or 4th Sunday of each month between 1pm and 2pm.

To finish the year out, why don't all members try and entice one new person to join, which would swell our ranks? At the moment we have 205 single members plus 46 joint subscriptions, which gives us a healthy membership of 297.

It seems to have come to pass that suddenly Wagner is coming into his own where Australian audiences are concerned. Len Hansen, our Vice-President, and I went to Adelaide for the Festival and were received very graciously by the S.A. Musicological Society and the S.A. Wagner Society. Hopefully next year the Victoria State Opera are going to stage Rheingold as the first step to a complete Ring Cycle in 1996. Please keep your fingers crossed that these operas will take place.

In July, we are to be given a very interesting lecture by Fred Blanks on "Cosima and Gustav Mahler and what they expected from each other". A post Seminar on Tristan and Isolde with speakers, Dennis Hennig, Andrew Riemer and Helen Fulton will be held in June.

Finally we are having our Annual Dinner next Friday night at the Menzies Hotel at 7.30 p.m. and if you would like to come, please do so as I have to give the hotel the final numbers next Wednesday.

Thank you for coming and I hope you all continue to give us the support and co-operation to keep our wonderful Society afloat.

OLIVE COONAN.

PRESIDENT.

LOHENGRIN THEATRE PARTY

There will be a Theatre Party for the final performance of Lohengrin on 27th October, 1990. This is also the final night of the Opera Season, so it should be an exciting night. The Society is sponsoring Horst Hoffman's singing of the main role, so let's give him a big welcome back after all the disappointments of the past year.

AN APPLICATION FORM FOR TICKETS IS PRINTED LATER IN THIS NEWSLETTER.

THE WAGNER SOCIETY IN NEW SOUTH WALES INC.
REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31/3/1990

<u>1989</u>	<u>CURRENT ACTIVITIES</u>	<u>31/3/1990</u>
5650.00	<u>Revenue: Subscriptions</u>	5265.00
	<u>Less Administration Costs:</u>	
1625.42	Newsletter - Printing/Distribution	1728.91
890.60	Stationery/Postage/Telephone etc.	1339.85
286.20	Advertising/Promotion	500.00
62.90	Bank and Investment Charges	71.33
374.00	Depreciation of Fixed Assets	408.25
352.58	Subscriptions: Friends of Bayreuth/Opera	
	Magazine/Music Diary	286.46
340.15	Insurance	387.65
20.00	Statutory and Other Fees	20.00
<u>3951.85</u>		<u>4742.45</u>
1698.15	<u>Surplus/ (Deficiency)</u>	<u>522.55</u>
	 <u>Revenue: Other</u>	
935.50	Sale of Books/C.D./Journals, etc.	1621.00
3214.35	Lectures and Functions	5406.80
8345.68	Opera Tickets, etc.	21911.10
3309.50	Annual Dinner May 1989	3619.00
878.50	Annual Competition May 1989	698.00
12.11	Bank Interest	5.47
<u>16695.64</u>		<u>33261.37</u>
	<u>Less Expenses:</u>	
1441.61	Books/Programmes, C.D. etc.	650.04
1922.71	Lectures and Functions	3311.42
7736.08	Opera Tickets, etc.	20714.17
2872.34	Annual Dinner May 1989	2891.00
<u>170.00</u>	Annual Competition May 1989	0.00
<u>14142.74</u>		<u>27566.63</u>
2552.90	<u>Surplus/ (Deficiency)</u>	<u>5694.74</u>
<u>4251.05</u>	<u>CURRENT ACTIVITIES: Surplus/(Deficiency)</u>	<u>6217.29</u>
	 <u>EXTRAORDINARY ACTIVITIES</u>	
	<u>Revenue:</u>	
8547.55	Donations	13095.65
1836.73	Interest on Investments	2511.79
		15607.44
	<u>Less Payments:</u>	
4978.00	Scholarship and Sponsorship, etc.	15290.00
	Bookplates for W.Wagner, Bayreuth	800.00
<u>5406.28</u>		<u>16090.00</u>
	<u>EXTRAORDINARY ACTIVITIES: Surplus/ (Deficiency)</u>	<u>(482.56)</u>
<u>9657.33</u>	<u>TOTAL SURPLUS/(DEFICIENCY) TRANSFERRED TO ACCUMULATED FUNDS</u>	<u>5734.73</u>

R. M. alen

 Hon. Auditor

.....
 (A Straube) Hon. Treas.

THE WAGNER SOCIETY IN NEW SOUTH WALES INC.

BALANCE SHEET AS AT MARCH 31, 1990

<u>1989</u>	<u>ASSETS</u>		<u>1990</u>
162.80	Pre-Payments - Friends of Bayreuth 1990	0.00	
250.00	Annual Dinner May 1990	<u>250.00</u>	250.00
2241.74	Cash at Bank		4000.27
35.00	Cash in Hand		0.00
17407.78	Investment		15413.73
599.00	Stock - Balance Stationery written off	0.00	
375.00	15 books "Cosima Wagner" @ \$25 ea	375.00	
506.65	2 Libretti and scores	506.65	
30.00	1 "Elektra" videotape	30.00	
42.00	2 Mackerras Books @ \$21. ea	42.00	
1110.00	44 copies "Wagner in Aust." @ \$15 ea	660.00	
0.00	8 Compact Discs "Hennig Recital" @ \$24 ea	192.00	
6000.00	46 items Lohengrin Set Designs	<u>6000.00</u>	7805.65
	Fixed Assets - Filing Cabinet	185.00	
	less depreciation	<u>185.00</u>	0.00
	- Set of Speakers	990.00	
	less depreciation	<u>743.00</u>	247.00
	- Typewriter	695.00	
	less depreciation	<u>463.00</u>	232.00
	- Furniture	832.00	
	less depreciation	<u>42.00</u>	790.00
	- Urn	100.00	
	less depreciation	<u>20.00</u>	80.00
825.25			1349.00
0.00	Debtors - Bayreuth Tickets unpaid as at 31/3/90		<u>1798.30</u>
<u>585.22</u>		<u>TOTAL ASSETS</u>	<u>30616.95</u>
 <u>LIABILITIES</u>			
2195.00	Subscriptions 1990/91 received in advance		1535.00
1309.00	Annual Dinner May 1990 " " "		1120.00
295.00	Annual Competition May 1990 " " "		165.00
2817.00	Sale of Opera Tickets " " "		0.00
807.00	Lectures and Functions " " "		0.00
200.00	Accrued Expenses: Hire of Hall at G.I.		<u>100.00</u>
<u>7623.00</u>		<u>TOTAL LIABILITIES</u>	<u>2920.00</u>
<u>21962.22</u>	<u>ACCUMULATED FUNDS AT 31/3/1990</u>		<u>27696.95</u>

ACCUMULATED FUNDS ANALYSIS

Balance of Funds as at 31/3/89	21962.22
Plus Surplus for year ended 31/3/90	5734.73
<u>Balance of Funds as at 31/3/90</u>	<u>27696.95</u>

.....
A Straube, Hon. Treasurer

Auditor's Report: I have examined the books and vouchers relating to the Wagner Society in New South Wales Inc. and hereby certify that the above Balance Sheet and the attached Statement of Revenue and Expenditure represent an accurate account of the financial affairs of the Society.

.....
R. Maloney
.....
(R Maloney) Hon. Auditor.

SEMINAR REPORT

Our annual seminar was held on June 17th at the Goethe Institute - this year on the subject of Tristan and Isolde. In other years we were able to hold the seminar just before seeing a performance of the opera, which added to the excitement. However this year, because Tristan and Isolde was performed in the summer season, we had to hold the seminar some months later. This may explain the smaller attendance, but the quality of the speakers, and the enthusiasm of those present was as high as ever.

First speaker was Dennis Hennig, whose very successful C.D. of Tausig's Transcriptions is being acclaimed, demonstrated and discussed in detail, the various changes in style found especially in the transcriptions involving Tristan and Isolde.

Dr. Helen Fulton, speaking to us for the first time, gave us a detailed outline of the various myths and legends which are available from which Wagner could choose his libretto. An authority on the literature of the Celtic world, Dr Fulton described how myths often were changed from the days when they were told as sagas, before the first written versions were made. Even the name Tristan is not used in all versions. The applause at the end of this lecture, was proof of the interesting way the subject had been presented.

Professor Riemer, the third speaker, chose as his subject "Swooning over Tristan". In the latter part of the 19th Century, it was fashionable to publicly show quite extravagant reactions to the music of Tristan and Isolde - fainting in public, collapsing from emotion etc. Many writers of the day used the most flamboyant language to describe their feelings - to an extent that we, to-day, would regard as incredible. He mentioned many famous writers and quoted extensively from their works, and drew the conclusion that the pendulum has swung back to where an objective view is now usual. The ability of the opera to stand on its own merit is now paramount - and it is regarded as one of the greatest works of art.

Andrew Sharpe, from the Australian Opera, spoke to us about the 1990 production. Having to find a new Tristan at the last moment caused many traumas, and he spoke glowingly about the efforts of William Johns in coming to Sydney at such short notice. The set which was unique, needed special stage directions, especially using the ropes at the side of the stage. He praised the co-operation of Marilyn Richardson, Bernadette Cullen, Malcolm Donnelly and Donald Shanks when carrying out the producer's concepts.

To finish the day, all present enjoyed a delicious afternoon tea. Judging by the buzz of conversation these seminars have become an important part of our Society's program.



ANNUAL DINNER REPORT

Our Annual Dinner was held at the Menzies Holiday Inn Hotel on Friday, 25th May. Although the numbers were smaller than on previous occasions, it was nevertheless a successful occasion where all present enjoyed each other's company. At Life Member, Werner Baer's suggestion, Lucy McPherson sang two arias from Tannhauser, which were very much appreciated by all present. Guest-of-Honour, Bernadette Cullen, in a brief speech, thanked the Society for its part in assisting her as the Bayreuth Scholarship winner.

Winners of the raffle prizes were:-

First Prize (Tickets for Lohengrin).....	Cynthia Hughes
Second Prize (Baton and Book)	John Simmonds
Third Prize (Framed Booking Plan)	Janet Wayland
Last Prize (Wagner Mug)	Tony Wheeler

"GUSTAV AND COSIMA"

On Sunday, 15th July at the Goethe Institute, the Society welcomed Mr. Fred Blanks, the well-known Sydney musicologist and critic, as its guest speaker. His chosen topic was "GUSTAV AND COSIMA". Using the latest information from recent publications, Mr Blanks explained that Mahler met Wagner in 1875. Early information about Mahler mainly came from the biography written by his wife, Alma, but it is now known that this book contains many factual errors which are corrected in a newer biography written by Egon Wellesz and in the letters published in the early 1980's by Paul Zsolnay.

Mahler's first fame stemmed from his ability as a conductor of operas in such places as Ljuljana, Leipzig, Prague, Hamburg, Vienna and New York. However, he was also becoming known as a composer. Needing an "admission ticket to European culture" because of anti-Semitic feelings then current, he arranged his conversion from Judaism to Catholicism.

Mr. Blanks discussed the history of the various publications of Mahler's letters. Cosima's efforts to have the operas of her son, Siegfried, performed in Vienna, and Mahler's successful request for Anna von Mildenburg to sing at Bayreuth were outlined, as was Cosima's request to have her daughter, Isolde's fiancée used as a conductor in Vienna. Further correspondence dealt with questions of extension of copyright with the result that Cosima failed in her attempt to have rights in perpetuity for Parsifal in Bayreuth.

Mahler died in 1911, regretting that, despite his lifelong work for Wagner's operas, he was never invited to conduct in Bayreuth. Cosima and Siegfried died in 1930; Anna von Mildenburg died in 1947 with Alma outliving them all till 1964.

This splendid talk was illustrated with the following music:-
 Extract from Gounod's Faust : Lieder Eines Fahrenden Gesellen (Songs of a Wayfarer) No.3 : Lied Von Der Erde (Song of the Earth)"Von Der Jugend"
 Alma by Tom Lehrer : "Winterstürme Wichen" from Die Walküre : Good Friday Music from Parsifal : La Descente de la Courtille by Wagner : "Der Tambourg'sell" from Des Knaben Wunderhorn (Youth's Magic Horn) by Mahler. Performers included bass Alexander Kipnis; baritone Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau; Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Daniel Barenboim; Jon Vickers with London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Colin Davis; Lauritz Melchior, Fritz Wolf and Alexander Kipnis with Berlin State Opera Orchestra, conducted by Siegfried Wagner; Orchestra de Paris conducted by Daniel Barenboim.

REPORT FROM AMERICA

- by Wilf Menadue.

Once again we thank Wilf for his contribution of this article following his attendance at the Metropolitan Opera this year.

NEW YORK.

With their newly completed Ring Cycle up and running, the Metropolitan Opera this season unveiled its new Wagner production - Der Fliegende Hollander. Premiered during one of the coldest spells in New York's recent history, it is also a staging that is cold, grey and gritty. Even before the curtain has gone up, the audience mentally shudders as the storm begins to rage in the pit. Ice and cold are in evidence throughout the work. The opening scene has Daland's small ship, with snow on the deck and frost hanging from the railings, sheltering in the lee of a huge iceberg, the only hint of warmth being a glow of light through the portholes. Admittedly the second act is set in the warmth of the work room, a sort of sail loft in this production, where the women repair the sails for the ships, but the row of windows at the rear of the set are steamed and misted indicating the biting cold outdoors. This point is highlighted by the villagers wiping the panes attempting to catch a glimpse of Senta and the Dutchman inside. The final scene is again bleak and grey, with the sailors rugged up and it is only after Senta's sacrifice and the subsequent settling of a violent snow squall, revealing that the ghost ship has vanished, that blue skies begin to appear.

The Dutchman's ship itself, is depicted as a huge steel prow, with a large gangplank reaching from the proscenium arch to the stage from which the wandering sea-captain sings his Act 1. monologue. The producer, August Everding, explains his inspirations for this setting, "I was lying on a little boat in the harbour and fell asleep. Suddenly I awoke - there was a big ocean liner looming right over me. I thought I would be crushed. That's the effect I want when the Dutchman's ship appears. You have to communicate the primeval fear awakened by the appearance of the phantom ship." The mysterious black shape is very effective in this regard.

The opera is set in a period around the turn-of-the-century, I would think, judging from the costumes, the metal ship and the primitive electric lighting in the workshop. The austere, Ibsenesque costumes, dark against the white of the snow, are the work of Lore Haas and emphasise the sober character of this northern country. The set designer is Hans Schavernoch.

Vocally the Met did Wagner proud, from the powerful, haunted Dutchman of James Morris and the experienced, if smaller scale, Daland of Paul Plishka, down to the hard-drinking Steersman of Thomas Booth. Judith Christin is an authoritarian, wheel-chair ridden Mary and Garry Lakes a strong, clear Erik, while the Senta was a singer new to me, Mechthild Gessendorf - it is a big voice and steady as a rock, with enough shine and gleam to cut through the big orchestra. She is not young, and has, I understand, been a regular in the German Houses. Now, the departure of an angry Eva Marton has exposed her to the New York opera-going public who, on the showing of my audience, have accepted her whole-heartedly. The chorus sang vigorously and with strength, while the orchestra was quite magnificent - they always play well for Maestro James Levine, and to hear that volume and quality of playing issuing from the open pit is truly thrilling, and as the turbulent music of the overture filled the big, darkened theatre, it set the tone for the evening. The opera is played as one act without a break - are the New York musicians a hardier lot than their Victorian counterparts? The production is a fine achievement by all concerned.

cont.

Opera-goers in town for the Dutchman also had the opportunity to hear a number of singers often associated with Wagnerian roles, in other works - Janis Martin. Johanna Meier, Helga Dernesch and Robert Schunk in the opulent Die Frau Ohne Schatten; Hildegard Behrens, Graham Clark, James King and Donald McIntyre in a superb Wozzeck; Paul Frey in the Beethoven Ninth; Brigitte Fassbaender hamming it up in Die Fledermaus and Dame Gwyneth Jones as a riveting Turandot in the overwhelming Franco Zeffirelli production.

This season's production of the Ring introduced another new Wagnerian singer to New York audiences, the Czech soprano Gudrun Volkert, who took over the role of Brünnhilde in the Third Cycle, following the injuries sustained by Hildegard Behrens at the conclusion of the second Götterdämmerung. Miss Volkert has sung at least seven complete Cycles in the second-line European Houses, such as Antwerp, Strasburg and Warsaw, and was well prepared for this opportunity. It was her big moment and she made the most of it. Early signs of nervousness soon disappeared and she didn't put a foot wrong in this involved production, with sufficient cut at the top, to get through the huge orchestral sound. She saved the Cycle and received a tremendous ovation at its conclusion; acclaim she could only have dreamed about. She now joins a comparatively short and impressive list of singers to have sung the three Brünnhildes in this House.

The overall concept and production confirmed the positive impact made last year and many of the performances are now virtually definitive - James Morris' multi-faceted Wotan; Matti Salminen's black-voiced villains; Christa Ludwig's persistent Frickas and her pleading Waltraute; Garry Lakes' Siegmund; Siegfried Jerusalem's wily Loge and Horst Hiestermann's mangy Mime. Hanna Lisowska was a very effective Sieglinde and Gutrüne, but she could not erase the memory of the greater radiance and easy power of Jessye Norman in the earlier role.

William Johns was a delightful surprise as the young Siegfried. I had expected it to be well-sung, but not acted with such conviction. Well-costumed and wearing a boyish wig, he was convincingly youthful, handling the rough and tumble of the role with alacrity, and had the house laughing happily as he attempted to imitate the bird-calls. He was tireless and in the Forging Scene sang strongly while working the bellows or hammering away with the precision of a percussionist. Siegfried Jerusalem as the Siegfried in Götterdämmerung was less successful. Admittedly he has only recently taken up the role and lacks his colleagues' experience, but he appeared to have real problems in maintaining the role, relying on forceful singing so that by the time of his death, he was making some very unheroic sounds. The true heroes of this opera and the entire Cycle were the 100-plus members of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and their conductor, James Levine. There will be no Ring Cycle next year.

NEW MEMBERS

The Society would like to welcome the following new members who have joined during the last quarter:-

Ms J. Parkes : Mr. H. Webb : Dr. J.R. Hazel : Mr. and Mrs. I.W.T. McGaw:
 Ms. M. Ternel : Ms. S.H. Asmus : Mrs and Mr P. Matthews : Mr. Tim Rogers:
 Mr. Haddon Witten : Dr. R.L. Thomson : Mrs. Margot Doust : Mrs. Ann
 Byrne : Ms. Adana Tinworth : Mr. Paul Jason Bramble : Ann Weedon : Mrs
 Melanie Agsten : Professor Robert Spillane : Lynda Bannerman : Mrs.
 Kharime Feez.



THE GOOD WAGNER.....

The fact is that Tristan and Isolde gives us not only one aspect of love in the greatest exaltation of love in all art outside Shakespeare. Wagner shows us not only the loved and the beloved. He shows us most of the aspects of love: the selfless devotion of woman to woman, of the faithful waiting-girl to her queen. Brangäne's love for Isolde is not less poignantly treated by Wagner than the love of the romantic protagonists. More moving still is the expression of devotion of man to man, the devotion of Kurwenal to his master. Where in the range of the arts is there anything finer, sweeter, nobler and more embracing in its humanity than Wagner's picture (told in music, remember, as much as in words) of Kurwenal in Act 3 of this music-drama: Kurwenal patiently attending his dying knight, endeavouring in his own doglike way to understand a tragic ecstasy and woe which is far beyond the homely world of HIS experience; Tristan lifts himself up on his fever-ridden pallet and cries out of his heart: "O Treue! hehre, holde Treue! Mein Kurwenal, du trauter Freund!" The cry is as melting in its pathos as the great cry of Isolde as she leans over the deathbed of her lover: "Nur einmal, ach, nur einmal noch!" We have to turn to Anthony and Cleopatra for the like of this wounding beauty. No performance of Tristan can be truthful to Wagner if Kurwenal and Brangäne are not as consummately played as Tristan and Isolde themselves. Tristan tells us in music, once and for all, of romantic love, passionate love, selfish love, love that considers the world well lost. Also it tells us of the love that serves and sacrifices, that suffers and waits, that dies in service and dies happy in service. This "erotic" opera, indeed, like all great works of art, possesses a fundamental ethic and a fundamental metaphysic. The main and shattering beauty of it all comes from the fact that Wagner set passion and ecstasy and pathos against a background of doom: the joys of the lovers are snatched briefly from a world in which even the inimical forces are not so much cruel as laden with sadness and fate. When Brangäne's voice calls from the Watchtower, "Habet ach!" the menace goes beyond the immediate plot-interest and action: this music is not only expressing an incident in the drama, is not only expressing the voice and emotions of Brangäne as she warns the lovers that the night is passing and King Marke will soon return. Wagner constantly transcends the immediate needs of his theme. The Watch-tower music is dyed in rich, bodeful colours: there is ardour in the rising string sequences: the harp ravishes the score: but the deep solemn fundamental harmonies sound the note of mortality. The music evokes the sense of beauty perishable in a world where the sane active day has little use for the obsessions of night.....

King Marke is musically and dramatically as beneficially endowed with genius and dignity of point of view as the lovers. Most other opera composers or dramatists would have left him merely a part of the eternal triangle. He is made to represent the noblest aspect of love: wise understanding love that covers like a cloak. It is often argued that the appearance of Marke in Act 2 is anti-climax. In a drama without music, his long speech after the betrayal by Melot would certainly have tried the patience. But here is another proof of the essentially musical design behind Wagner's libretto sequence: after the climax of the duet between Tristan and Isolde a point of rest was needed in the musical shape as well as in the psychological tempo. Moreover, Marke's music is here a supremely beautiful statement of his point of view. Wagner, who was so incapable in real life of seeing anybody's

point of view except his own, was without prejudice or intolerance in his dealings with the people of his imagination. Marke's music is bowed with grief at Tristan's duplicity: not a note of jealousy is heard, no anger: the bass clarinet is the voice of sorrow - it asks the question before Marke opens his mouth:

Where now are truth and honour fled
If Tristan all hath lost?
This to me, Tristan?

I can feel no lowering at all of the musical pulse in Marke's music: the artist who sings it is as well endowed as the others. Yet this music has been called tedious - even by many who otherwise admire the opera. I invite the reader to look at the score and contemplate only two sections of Marke's address - at the words, "die so herrlich hold erhaben mir die Seele musste laben" and the closing phrases "Den unerforschlich tief geheimnisvollen Grund, wer macht der Welt ihn kund?" Not even Isolde, in the "Liebestod" has more moving things to utter. And the player of the bass clarinet, if he has a soul at all, will not forget that here is a part for his instrument without an equal in elegance: if orchestral music knows writing more expressive for bass clarinet than this, more appropriate to it, I should like to know where it may be studied.

Melot remains the only figure in the opera who receives no special musical treatment. He remains a lay-figure in a score which breathes life and tragic significance and the quality of loveableness even into the Shepherd in his few bars of recitative, not to mention the great cor-anglais melody which is supposed to be the Shepherd's own composition as he waits for Isolde's ship.

(This summary represents part of a biography of Wagner written by the great British musicologist, Neville Cardus who puts into magnificent words, what we feel about Wagner's music, especially now when Tristan and Isolde is so much on our minds.)



AND THE NOT SO GOOD WAGNER!

The following is a quotation from THE LIVES OF THE GREAT COMPOSERS by Harold C. Schonberg. The chapter about Wagner is appropriately titled COLOSSUS OF GERMANY. It deals at some length about the basic flaws in Wagner's character, but then says :- "His egomania was supported by genius, and, after him, music was never the same."

No composer ever demanded so much from society, and Wagner was altogether unblinking about his needs. "I am not made like other people. I must have brilliance and beauty and light. The world owes me what I need. I can't live on a miserable organist's pittance like your master, Bach." His egoism approached madness. He thought nothing of writing the above to a young man he hardly knew, asking for money. "It would be rather hard for you to provide me with this sum, but it will be possible if you WISH it, and do not shrink from such a sacrifice. This, however, I desire.... Now let me see whether you are the right sort of man!" Then follows an inducement: "The assistance you give me will bring you into very close touch with me, and next summer you must be pleased to let me come to you for three months at one of your estates, preferably in the Rhine district."

The young man, Robert von Hornstein, refused to give the money to Wagner, who actually was surprised. How could such a pipsqueak refuse to subsidise a man like him? He sent a note to Hornstein, writing him off for good: "It probably will not happen again that a man like me will apply to you!"

OBITUARY

The death has occurred at 88, of the noted British conductor, Sir Reginald Goodall. He was born in Lincoln, began his studies there and at the Royal College of Music, and later studied in Vienna, Salzburg and Munich earning his living as an accompanist. He was one of the first to recognise the talent of Benjamin Britten, giving first performances of his works. He was known primarily as a Wagner conductor, though he never conducted at Bayreuth. After some performances of individual operas, he finally became the centre-point of the complete Sadler's Wells Ring built up over three years, and then given complete at the Coliseum in 1973, with Rita Hunter. He recorded Tristan and Parsifal. He insisted on long and meticulous preparation. He coached a new generation of singers in Wagner including Dame Gwyneth Jones and Donald McIntyre.

HAMMING UP ELEKTRA

In the current trend of "hamming up" operas, the new Götz Friedrich production of Elektra at Covent Garden seems to have gained special notoriety. It takes place in a corrugated iron hangar with automatic doors and steps. Louvre shutters above open to introduce Marjana Lipovsek's piercingly focused Klytemnestra and later reveal Robert Tear's Aegith in a tiger-skin coat getting topped by Orest. On the right a phallic and damaged ventilation tube pierces the roof and floor.

Eva Marton, plumply waif-like and sporting a dirty mac over her ragged dress, streaks past the slaving maids and fascist lesbian overseers in the hangar before jumping on to the forestage and squatting impassively on the right staring at the audience. Here we are again in the typical German operatic world of brutal concentration camp attendants, maids get their hands stamped on and whips itch to be used. Klytemnestra's household is divided between dykes and gays.

The trouble with this recipe is that it has degenerated into self-parody, not shocking, not atmospheric, not even surprising. She trots out the old design solutions thoughtlessly, without realising that what may once have been daring and fresh is now just another kind of culinary opera. Has Friedrich reduced what Strauss and Hofmannsthal intended as a neo-classical revival into sheer theatrical hocus?

Sir George Solti who will be the big draw for many in the audience makes his musical interpretation seem second-hand and fatigued, but when you have achieved something as extraordinary and cutting as his Elektra used to be, how do you make it new?

-Part of a review by Tom Sutcliffe
in the Guardian Weekly.

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