

The Wagner Society

IN NEW SOUTH WALES INC.

Registered Office: 141 Dowling Street, Woolloomooloo 2011



Newsletter

No. 47, June, 1992.

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PATRON: SIR CHARLES MACKERRAS
HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS: Mr WERNER BAER, M.B.E. 1914 - 1992
Miss RITA HUNTER, C.B.E.
Miss LEONIE RYSANEK
Professor MICHAEL EWANS
Mr LEONARD HANSEN 1937 - 1990
Mr RICHARD KING

COMING EVENTS

Sunday, June 21st	Talk Brian Fitzgerald The Print Room Please note change of venue	2.00pm
Sunday July 19th	Reception Donald McIntyre The Print Room	2.30pm
Sunday August 16th	Musical Recital Carol Anne Petherick The Goethe Institute	2.00pm

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COMMITTEE

President	Olive Coonan	387.6403
Vice-Presidents	Paul Lehmann	552.1424
	Sue Kelly	
Membership	Clare Hennessy	747.5664
Treasurers	Janet Wayland	332.3926
	Bill Watson	
Secretary	Annie Marshall	042 94.2992
	Clare Hennessy	747.5664
Catering	Margaret Budge	521.6097
Newsletter	Janet Wayland	332.3926
Newsletter	Arthur Carter	047 58.83
Public Officer	Richard King	358.1919

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Ladies and Gentlemen or should I say good afternoon, fellow Wagnerians, I bid you welcome to the twelfth annual meeting of the Wagner Society in New South Wales Inc. Unfortunately, it has been a moveable feast the last twelve months due to the Goethe Institute refurbishing.

We are forever grateful to Richard King for allowing us to use the Print Room facilities whenever possible. As you all know this is where our Wagner Society was founded and where it all began. Richard, in his capacity of Public Officer, never stints of his time or help or advice whenever it is needed.

The two sad events of this previous year were the loss of our Werner Baer, whose contributions and efforts on behalf of the Society can never be matched. Not only does this Society feel his loss but the entire Sydney music scene will be the poorer for his passing. As to Stuart Challender's death, we all have lost a great Wagnerian conductor and his contribution will not be equalled in the music life of today.

Our year as usual started with our Annual Dinner with John Wegner as guest of honour. As you may all know, John has left Australia for greener pastures in a two-year contract with Karlsruhe Opera Company. We wish him every success in his future career.

In July I attended the opening of the Joan Sutherland Studio at the Australian Opera Centre and also attended the premiere of Joan Sutherland's new video LA STUPENDA, launched by Film Australia.

Unfortunately, our Sunday afternoon get togethers have been a little curtailed this year due to circumstances beyond our control. The good news is that we will be returning to the Goethe Institute in August of this year.

We have been approached by Mark Ellis of the Friends of the Australian Opera to run a seminar on PARSIFAL in October. We will be running this jointly with the Friends of the Australian Opera. Our Seminars are always a great success so please help us to make this one of our very best. We are hoping to make a substantial donation next year to the production of PARSIFAL and this would help to fulfil our promise of financial support so please come along and participate on this day.

As usual, I could not carry out my position as President without my wonderful, untiring committee. During this year, due to a new position in the work force by Annie, Clare and Annie changed positions. They are, as usual, still doing a wonderful job as Membership Secretary and Secretary. Our newsletter committee of Janet Wayland, Annie Marshall and Arthur Carter, have helped to keep this paper going. Without their tireless efforts and unstinting dedication we could not produce such a wonderful item of interest. Camron Dyer has also helped them to produce same. Paul Lehmann, as Vice President, and Sue Kelly, as Treasurer, have helped to keep the Society afloat. We have

had a good but not great year financially even without the help of the Goethe. Now last but not least Margaret Budge continues to make our catering on our function days as memorable as ever. I would say it has to be the best-catered for Society in Sydney. My grateful and heartfelt thanks to all of you. Arthur Carter still maintains our program on 2MBS-FM. If anyone could help him at all I'm sure he would appreciate it.

Our and my thanks must also go to Joe Ferfaglia and Reg Maloney for keeping and auditing the Books of the Society. Could we all please show them our appreciation in the usual manner.

Please enjoy what is left of this afternoon and if anyone still wishes to come to the Dinner please let Sue or Janet know. My thanks once again to each and every one of you for continuing in your support of us and this wonderful Society.

Olive Coonan
President

WERNER BAER, MBE
THANKS FOR THE MEMORY

Of your support in the first years of our Society and for the standards you set, not wanting us to become "just another Music Society".

of your Wagner lectures, as far back as 1977, which for many of us were the means by which our eyes were opened to the depths of Wagner's music. You were afraid that the lectures would be boring but they were never so. We remember your pained expression when, having announced that Alberich ALWAYS wears black, we had to say that Chereau had dressed him in an old army coat.

Of the times when you helped the Society when, through illness or other unavoidable reasons, the guest speakers had to cancel at the last minute. You found singers who stepped in and averted a disaster. Often at short notice, you accompanied singers. Also of your own part in the entertainment at so many of our eleven Annual Dinners. The cheeky manner in which you performed your unique act, which needed your perfect pitch, using phone numbers etc requested from the audience, will always remain a happy memory.

Of your recognition of the hard work involved in organising the Seminars. You were afraid that there would be a danger of "verbal diarrhoea" and then confided how much you had enjoyed and learned from the various speakers. A high spot was the glee with which you discussed Brian Taylor's talk on the Real Meistersingers with Sir Charles Mackerras.

Of your courage in the face of long and painful illnesses which only ever slowed you temporarily.

Of the afternoon when all records for heavy rain on one day were exceeded, you and Sybil asked us to join with you in celebrating Kenneth Neate's birthday during his last visit. Such a happy occasion!

Of the lectures for the WEA in Chatswood, especially when Keith persuaded you to do a course on British composers. You admitted your prejudices but, keeping an open mind, mapped out a program and, with your retentive memory and musical insight, delivered the talks as though you had been a life-long expert. All this culminated in the viewing of a wonderful performance of Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* (with the late Ronald Dowd adding a personal touch) which is a cherished memory for all those present.

Of the TLC which both you and Sybil gave us on the 1983 tour to Bayreuth. Over twenty kindred spirits spent eleven days together, some sad, some happy, and have remained firm friends ever since. The end of Act 2 of *TRISTAN UND ISOLDE*, when we all wanted to be alone, wrapped in the magic of what we had witnessed, comes vividly to mind as this is being written.

Of the many facets of your character - your wit, your pithy comments, your scorn when confronted with humbug, the appreciative glint in your eyes when a suitable riposte was directed your way, your enjoyment of a debate and your vast store of loyalty and friendship.

Of our last day together, just after Christmas. Elgar and Britten soothed the troubled breast and Domingo's interpretation of "In fermen Land" almost caused an explosion! When Jessye Norman sang Strauss' "Four Last Songs" somehow we all knew we were saying goodbye.

Keith and Jessie Anderson

AMFORTAS RECALLS REMINISCENCES BY JOHN SHAW, AO, MBE

The eminent Australian baritone Mr John Shaw enjoyed a singing career of some 35 years. His appearances with Australian Opera centred on the Italian baritone roles in the main (his celebrated Scarpia and Iago, for instance). Less well-known is John's rich experience in Wagner performances, at Covent Garden and in Europe during the 1960s. He shares with us now some insights and memories from his Wagner singing career.

John's first Wagner appearance took place in Melbourne, whither he had moved in 1951 for vocal training with the two Viennese teachers, the Portnoys. He thought his voice was by nature Italianate, but his friends both then and later advised him he would be capable of the German repertoire. In 1953 the Clarice Lorenz/Melbourne company presented *LOHENGRIN* in English with Ronald Dowd singing the lead and with Neil Easton as Telramund. John stepped into that role for two performances.

John Shaw remained here till 1957, singing the Italian roles he liked so much. Recommended by Joan Hammond and Elsie Morrison, John was attached to Covent Garden Company in 1958, where his splendid international career began with Rigoletto and then Amonasro (sung by him 300 times in London alone). John tells of arriving in England one Monday at 4.00pm, grateful that fellow Australian John Young came to welcome him. (There was a large contingent of Australian singers in London at that time). Next day, after his two hour interview by David Webster, the company manager invited the new company member to inspect "his" theatre. A rehearsal of the coronation scene from BORIS was underway. John was very impressed but was even more delighted when onto the set walked Marie Collier, Margreta Elkins, David Allen, John Lanigan, Heather Begg and Bob Allman, his colleagues from Australia. They had all adjusted to singing Wagner at the Garden, with almost no prior experience in that field.

John Shaw's turn to do likewise came in 1962. A new production of LOHENGRIN was planned, with Otto Klemperer to conduct the work. John recalls: "Klemperer asked to hear me one night (I was singing Amonasro) with a view to my being his Telramund. I impressed him, apparently, and at a later interview he asked me 'How do you intend to sing the part?' I told him I would like to sing it as an Italian baritone would. 'My dear, that is the only way to do it. Please do not bark it!' Telramund contains beautiful passages, but legato and understanding the text are essential for correctly singing this music, with those difficult high F sharps being marked by Wagner 'piano'.

Although I had by that time sung a lot of German songs, I immediately went to night school to brush up my German as this would be my first role in that language. Ted Downes had taken me under his wing and always oversaw my work, right from my start at Covent Garden. So we worked for three or four weeks, every day; the text was very important to him and he was very strict about the meaning of Wagner's words. From Downes I passed to the hands of Reginald Goodall to work on the 'Stimmung', the right vocal atmosphere and feeling of the role. This lasted a further six weeks. Surprisingly Goodall couldn't play the piano and had a poor grasp of German. As well, I would rib him by taking along the score of PAGLIACCI and asking to run through the prologue as a warm-up. Such music was anathema to Goodall and he would react accordingly to my suggestion.

At last we had the first musical rehearsal, on a Saturday morning at Klemperer's suite in the Hyde Park Hotel. (The great conductor was loath to use the theatre). We all turned up - Goodall, Downes, Sandor Konya, Rita Goor, Regine Crespin, my staunch friend David Ward, and I. When my entrance came [Dank, Koenig, dir, dass du zu richten kamst!] I was a bit nervous. After a few bars Klemperer put up his right arm. David Ward spoke up, 'go easy on him, he's a pal of mine'. Klemperer replied, 'All I wanted to say, his German is very good. How did an Australian learn to sing German so well?' I was off to a promising start with this role! It was a great experience singing this difficult and extended part under Klemperer's fingers, which by this time was all he would use when conducting. Telramund is a thankless role, as the public usually are unsympathetic to him as a character in LOHENGRIN. The high tessitura of his vocal

line suited me very well and I got pleasing reviews but nonetheless little sympathy from the audience. After opening night came a celebratory supper party and I got to bed about 3.00am. Around 7.30 the 'phone rang. 'Mr Shaw?' in Klemperer's thickish Hamburg accent. I wondered if Downes or Joseph Rouleau were on the line, pulling my leg. 'I have to tell you you were very good last night', the voice continued, 'but you came in half a beat too soon in the Geheimnis' (the ensemble in the Minster scene). So it was Klemperer speaking to me! He had rung the company personnel office to get my number in Surrey at 7 o'clock, just to tell me about that half beat too soon!

Some years later I would sing Telramund in Geneva, with Sandor Konya again and the beautiful Lisa Della Casa, but I always look back to those 1963 performances under Klemperer as being some of the most memorable in my singing career."

... *To be concluded in the next Newsletter*

WAGNERIAN BOOKSHELF

We've discovered an extensive range of books on Wagner and his music in stock at THE PERFORMING ARTS BOOKSHOP, 7th Floor, 280 Pitt Street, Sydney 2000.

A brief listing is set out for the interest of members.

THE RING: ANATOMY OF AN OPERA	Stephen Fay & Roger Wood
TRISTAN AND ISOLDE: GERMAN/ENGLISH TEXT	trans. Steven Robb
THE COMPLETE OPERAS OF RICHARD WAGNER	essays by Charles Osborne
WAGNER NIGHTS	Ernest Newman
WAGNER REHEARSING THE RING	Heinrich Porges (trans by R L Jacobs)
THE FORGING OF THE RING	Carl von Westernhagen(trans by A & M Whittall)
THE REAL WAGNER	Rudolph Sabor
WAGNER	edited by John Deather & Carl Dahlhaus
WAGNER ON MUSIC AND DRAMA	A Goldman & E Sprinchorn
WAGNER IN THOUGHT AND PRACTICE	Geoffrey Skelton
WAGNER	Barry Millington
WAGNER, A BIOGRAPHY, VOL. 1	Carl von Westernhagen
MY LIFE	Richard Wagner (trans by Grey & Whittall)

Plus numerous Covent Garden, ENO etc handbooks on the Wagner Operas.

"INSIDE OUTSIDE: LIFE BETWEEN WORLDS" by Andrew Riemer

The Author, well known to members of the Society as a speaker at many of our seminars, has written a moving autobiography tracing his arrival in Australia from Budapest in 1947 with his parents. They had, almost miraculously, survived the trauma of war (and escaped other, more sinister, European experiences) to come to Australia which they imagined a sophisticated tropical paradise. His parents never quite regained their equilibrium when faced with suburban Sydney, his mother being especially

handicapped because she did not become fluent in English.

They were further disadvantaged by arriving alone before we had made plans for receiving the large numbers of post-war migrants. He recounts school experiences with baffled teachers, his family's inability to grasp the casual nature of suburban life and a lonely adolescence. However, he made the transition from skill at French Knitting to scholarship and a new, liberating life at Sydney University began. (*I have news for you, Andrew, life in the suburbs was deadly for all of us in the '50s and Sydney University was the great escape!*)

There are many events and personalities that are touched on lightly and are all the more telling for that. When Andrew writes of his parents I suspect the reticence conceals much anguish.

He makes a plea for assimilation via language skills as the proper approach to so-called multiculturalism and his last few pessimistic pages make sombre reading in the light of the current fate of the boat people. This wise and funny book as much to tell us about ourselves in the past and how our present was shaped. Read it!

Sue Kelly

ANDREW PORTER ON TRANSLATING 'THE RING' (EXCERPTS FROM THE INTRODUCTION)

Alongside their new, much publicised recording of the Ring, conducted by Bernard Haitink, EMI have just quietly completed the reissue of the 1975 Ring from English National Opera. Here the conductor is Reginald Goodall and two Australian singers (Gregory Dempsey and Clifford Grant) appear in leading roles. The most notable hallmark of this ENO Ring is its being sung in English.

On the subject of Wagner in the vernacular, we are guided not only by Wagner's own views but the reasoning of the translator of this 1975 Ring, Andrew Porter. Introduction to his translation of The Ring (Faber & Faber, 1976). Excerpts provided by Patricia Baillie of Da Capo Music.

The difficulties of German-into-English are compounded by Wagner's Stabreim or alliteration, his hard syntax, and his archaic vocabulary. For many of the recurrent key words there are syllabic equivalents. Blut is blood, Schwert is sword and Tod is death. Liebe and Auge give more trouble; on a few occasions the singers of my Ring-in-English are asked to slur two notes to love and eye, and Fafner the Wurm was not easily transformed into a dragon. But syllabic equivalents are not sonic equivalents: the long dark vowels of a sustained Blut or Tod are ill-represented by blood and death. A German Siegmund can cry Schwert with a bright, forward ring that mere sword is powerless to provide.

But there were compensations. When I heard Rita Hunter fill even so stilted a phrase as 'You who this love in my heart inspired' with tender swelling emotion, ... to audiences that followed what was said, I could believe there had been some gains as well as the inevitable and enormous losses. *To be continued in next issue....*

**THE TREASURER'S REPORT
REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE
STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31/3/92**

<u>1991</u>	<u>CURRENT ACTIVITIES</u>	<u>1992</u>
<u>4735.00</u>	<u>Revenue: membership</u> <u>Less Administration cost</u>	<u>4771.00</u>
1523.97	Newsletters - printing & distribution	1348.49
2122.15	Stationery, post, telephone etc	454.82
330.00	Advertising, promotion etc	00.00
51.10	Bank & investment account charges	26.41
440.00	Depreciation of fixed assets	275.00
219.85	Subscriptions: Friends of Bayreuth etc	250.00
359.50	Insurance	359.50
<u>20.00</u>	<u>Statutory & other fees</u>	<u>20.00</u>
		<u>2734.22</u>
<u>(331.57)</u>	<u>Surplus/(Deficiency)</u>	<u>2036.78</u>
	<u>Revenue: other</u>	
329.00	Sale of Books, CDs, Journals etc	48.00
2986.00	Lectures & functions	2691.60
5214.70	Theatre tickets	2744.60
3160.00	Annual Dinner May 1991	3000.00
608.00	Annual Competition May 1991	825.00
38.15	Bank Interest	7.05
<u>12335.85</u>		<u>9316.25</u>
	<u>Less Expenses</u>	
218.41	Books, CDs, Journals etc	48.00
3367.37	Lectures & Functions	2061.44
6002.00	Theatre tickets	2084.60
3104.70	Annual Dinner May 1991	3340.25
100.92	Annual Competition May 1991	96.00
110.00	Miscellaneous	118.80
<u>12903.40</u>		<u>7749.09</u>
<u>(567.55)</u>	<u>Surplus/(Deficiency)</u>	<u>1567.16</u>
<u>(899.12)</u>	<u>Current activities = surplus/(deficiency)</u>	<u>3603.94</u>
	<u>Extraordinary Activities</u>	
	<u>Revenue</u>	
744.75	Donations	105.00
<u>1832.79</u>	<u>Interest on investment account</u>	<u>1279.71</u>
2577.54		1384.71

Less Payments

<u>7332.00</u>	Scholarship, sponsorship etc	<u>3487.00</u>
<u>(4754.46)</u>	<u>Extraordinary activities = surplus/(deficiency)</u>	<u>2102.29</u>
<u>(5653.58)</u>	<u>Total Surplus/(Deficiency) for year ended 31.3.92</u>	<u>1501.65</u>

Balance Sheet as at 31st March 1992

<u>1991</u>	<u>Assets</u>		<u>1992</u>
250.00	Prepayments - Annual Dinner May 1992		300.00
19.75	Cash at Bank		00.00
15243.97	Investment		17040.85
225.00	Stock - 7 books "Cosima & Wagner" @ \$25 each	175.00	
506.65	2 Libretti & Music Scores	506.65	
30.00	1 ELEKTRA videotape	30.00	
42.00	0 Mackerras books	00.00	
570.00	36 copies "Wagner in Australia" @ \$15 each	540.00	
336.00	1 CD "Hennig Recital"	24.00	
6956.00	46 items LOHENGRIN set designs/framed	<u>6956.00</u>	8231.65
	Fixed Assets - filing Cabinet	185.00	
	Less depreciation	<u>185.00</u>	00.00
	Set of Speakers	990.00	
	Less depreciation	<u>990.00</u>	00.00
	Typewriter	695.00	
	Less depreciation	<u>695.00</u>	00.00
	Furniture	832.00	
	Less depreciation	<u>208.00</u>	624.00
	Urn	100.00	
	Less depreciation	<u>60.00</u>	40.00
	Answerphone	230.00	
	Less depreciation	<u>30.00</u>	200.00
<u>909.00</u>			<u>864.00</u>
<u>25088.37</u>		<u>TOTAL ASSETS</u>	<u>26436.50</u>
<u>1991</u>	<u>Liabilities</u>		<u>1992</u>
00.00	Bank overdraft		252.68
200.00	Creditors Accruals		68.80
1510.00	Membership 1992/1993 received in advance		1900.00
1160.00	Annual Dinner May 1992 received in advance		670.00
<u>175.00</u>	<u>Annual Competition May 1992 received in advance</u>		<u>00.00</u>
<u>3045.00</u>		<u>TOTAL LIABILITIES</u>	<u>2891.48</u>
<u>22043.37</u>	<u>Accumulated funds as at 31st March 1992</u>		<u>23545.02</u>
	<u>Accumulated Fund Analysis</u>		
	Acc Fund at 31/3/91	22043.37	
	Plus surplus for year 91/92	1501.65	
	<u>Accumulated funds as at 31/3/92</u>	<u>23545.02</u>	

The Honorary Treasurer Sue Kelly per O Coonan

Auditor's Report: I have examined the books and vouchers of the Wagner Society in NSW Inc and hereby certify that the above balance sheet and related attached statement of revenue and expenditure represent an accurate account of the financial state of affairs of the Society as at 31st March 1992.

R Maloney - Hon Auditor

NIXON IN CHINA

The Adelaide Festival has always had a reputation for staging unusual opera and this year's choice was no exception. The Australian premier of NIXON IN CHINA by John Adams took place on 29th February and was a triumph.

The very effective sets and costumes were on loan from Houston Grand Opera, the Los Angeles Music Centre Opera, the Nederlandse Opera and the JFK Centre for the Performing Arts. The pale misty winter landscapes of Peking looked wonderful and the entry of Nixon's plane was very impressive. The second and third acts were interiors, also well conceived, with the bland Chinese executive style that is an unfortunate feature of modern China.

James Maddalena is Nixon - he created the role and has made it his own, both in terms of his looks and his singing. Pat Nixon was sung by Eileen Hannan who deserved an Oscar for her acting alone, all those simpering mannerisms wonderfully captured. In fact, the director Gale Edwards deserves great credit for the splendid acting all round and the way minor roles such as Mao's secretaries were so well characterised. Our own John Wegner was Kissinger, not a large singing part as Kissinger is pushed to the background by Nixon (who grabs any glory that's going) but John showed unexpected athletic skills in the ballet. Some critics found the ballet too brutal and in fact it was somewhat overpowering.

The figure of Chou En-Lai was shown as the power behind a puppet-like Mao, Chou sinister at first but very sad in his evocation of past struggles. The libretto by Alice Goodman was witty, pointed and ironic in view of recent events in China. I found it very moving.

The Orchestra, under David Porcelijn, played superbly and contributed in no small measure to the success of the evening. I found the music approachable and the format of the opera traditional, reconciling those who might be wary of "modern" opera.

The Society was well represented in the audience and I for one gave the performance a standing ovation.

Sue Kelly

MEETING VENUS (AGAIN)

It's a must even for those who rarely go to the movies. Kiri Te Kanewa sings Elizabeth brilliantly. It's funny, ridiculous and has sex, drugs, strikes, almost violence - everything but "rock and roll". It's worth seeing just for the excerpts from TANNHAUSER; the good belly laugh is a bonus.

My mother, aged 84, enjoyed it as much as I did and hopefully it will be available someday on video; it is one I would like to own.

Margaret Budge

SEMINAR NEWS

1992 SEMINAR - PARSIFAL

THIS YEAR AT THE OPERA
CENTRE IN CONJUNCTION WITH
THE FRIENDS OF THE
AUSTRALIAN OPERA!

DATE: Sunday 18th October

9.30 - 5.00pm (APPROX):

MORNING AND AFTERNOON TEA
PROVIDED

BRING YOUR OWN LUNCH

COST: \$25

THE RAVENS REPORTING

Here we offer advance short items/performance news of interest to Wagner lovers.

Bayreuth: Good news for this year's visitors. The Auditorium is now air-conditioned!

Very recently Polygram has released some new videos from Bayreuth. The Chereau Ring conducted by Pierre Boulez, PARSIFAL, LOHENGRIN, TANNHAUSER and DIE MEISTERSINGER VON NURNBERG. A TRISTAN UND ISOLDE - Kollo, Meier, Schwarz, Becht, Salminen and conducted by Barenboim, directed by J P Ponnelle - will be out in April. All videos are available from the Opera Shop at the Opera House.

Spoletto: DIE MEISTERSINGER VON NURNBERG is to be staged by Menotti during this year's Festival (June 24-July 12) and conducted by Spiros Argiris.

Munich: The Festival includes
DER FLIEGENDE HOLLANDER July 15, 17
DIE MEISTERSINGER VON NURNBERG July 31

Venice: TRISTAN UND ISOLDE July 16-30 with Janis Martin, William Johns and conductor Christian Thielemann.

Denmark: The Danish National Opera in Aarhus will present a Wagner Festival including TRISTAN UND ISOLDE August 23, 27 and September 1 and PARSIFAL August 25, 29 and September 3.

Berlin: PARSIFAL opens October 25 at the Staatsoper with Poul Elming in the title role, conductor Barenboim and producer Harry Kupfer.

Chicago: The Lyric Opera are to begin a new RING cycle with DAS RHEINGOLD (opens Jan 23, 1993) and DIE WALKURE (opens Nov 23, 1993), producer August Everding, director John Conklin, conductor Zubin Mehta.