

The Wagner Society

IN NEW SOUTH WALES INC.

Registered Office: 141 Dowling Street, Woolloomooloo 2011



Newsletter

No. 52, September, 1993

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PATRON: SIR CHARLES MACKENAS
HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS: Miss RITA HUNTER, C.B.E.
Miss LEONIE RYSANEK
Prof. MICHAEL EWANS
Mr RICHARD KING
Mr REG MALONEY

COMING EVENTS

Sunday, September 19	<i>Siegfried</i> video The Goethe Institute	1.00pm
Sunday, October 17	<i>Götterdämmerung</i> video The Goethe Institute	1.00pm
Sunday, November 21	<i>The Golden Ring</i> video The Goethe Institute	1.00pm

CONTENTS

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT	3
BOOK SALE	3
THE GOLDEN RING	4
AT LAST WE HAVE DONE IT!	4
LETTERS	6
MODUS OPERANDI	7
FINANCIAL MEMBERS AS AT 10TH AUGUST 1993	8
GEORGE BERNARD SHAW ON BAYREUTH	12
CONTRIBUTIONS	12
NEW MEMBERS	12
THE RAVENS REPORTING	12

COMMITTEE

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NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

I am writing this issue's notes while sitting on cloud nine looking forward to my second visit to Bayreuth. There are fourteen others going as well and we should be in good company as the Southern Californian and New York Wagner Societies will be there as well.

We are going to a Dinner organised by Sherwin Sloan, Chairman of the Wagner Society of Southern California, at Bayreuth after *The Flying Dutchman*. The Wagner family, Festival and Bayreuth dignitaries and the Singers in the Festival will be attending.

The Committee has made two donations this year, one of \$5,000 to the Australian Opera for *Tristan und Isolde* and one of \$2,000 to Opera Foundation. This will help our young singers along their way.

Some of the Committee attended a Recital by Luigi Alva and a reception afterwards. A good way to keep the Wagner Society alive to other people.

The Bayreuth Scholarship has not been awarded again this year, due to the worldwide recession hitting the German cultural organisations. Our condolences are with David Stanhope, this year's winner.

I was also lucky enough to have coffee with Michael Hampe on his recent visit to Sydney as Director of *Die Meistersinger*. What a charming and very intellectual man. He was very happy with the present production as well as the singers. Unfortunately, most performances were undersold and it is a great pity that the cost of tickets seems to have reached a point where people cannot afford them.

I want to thank all the members for renewing because at the moment there are only about ten unfinancial members. This is most encouraging to the Committee.

All the best while I am away.

**Olive Coonan
President**

BOOK SALE

Surplus stock from the Wagner Society's collection will be on sale at the Christmas Party. Do your Christmas Shopping there - December 12!

THE GOLDEN RING

On Sunday November 21st the Society will be showing a video about the making of Sir George Solti's *Ring Cycle* and in particular his version of *Götterdämmerung*. This of course follows after our presentation of the Metropolitan Opera's version of *Götterdämmerung* a month before and should throw very interesting light on how the conductor, artists and orchestra approach such a work untrammelled by staging needs.

AT LAST WE HAVE DONE IT!

We are now tax deductible! All donations are fully receipted for you to submit for your annual tax. Consequently we have also established a special donation account, which is separate from our everyday operating account. A sub-committee of four people has been established to oversee and administer this account in accordance with Canberra's requirements.

The text of the letter from the Federal Government is reproduced below:

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I am pleased to advise that the Minister for the Arts and Administrative Services and the Treasurer have approved the application for your organisation to be listed on the Register of Cultural Organisations maintained under Section 78 (1) (a) of the **Income Tax Assessment Act 1936**. Your public fund the **Wagner Society New South Wales Incorporated Public Donations Account** is therefore eligible from 8 June 1993 to receive tax deductible donations.

As you are aware from the eligibility criteria, there are a number of requirements for cultural organisations included on the Register to fulfil. In order to ensure tax deductibility for your donors, and to comply with Australian Taxation Office requirements, we require that your organisation will ensure that all receipts issued by the fund comply with the requirements at Attachment A.

As we will periodically review your participation in the scheme it is important that our information is up to date. Please make sure that you send us details of any changes to your organisation's governing documents as well as the composition of your board and/or those administering your public fund.

If your organisation is involved in awarding grants, prizes or other payments to groups or individuals, please provide details of your grant/prize policy or guidelines.

You must also note the following:

- testamentary gifts are not tax deductible

- a Public Fund must be open to and regularly receive donations from the public
- donors must not receive any advantage of a material character by way of return, eg, discounted tickets to performances etc. It may also be considered a material benefit if donors were to receive a tax deduction for supporting the cultural activities of their relatives - eg, the parents of choir members donating to a fund to be used for travel costs of the choir.

**Attachment A**

**Issuing Receipts**

- To ensure tax deductibility of donations, receipts issued in the name of the fund must contain the following elements
  - the date the donation was received
  - name of the organisation
  - name of the fund
  - signature of a person authorised to act on behalf of the fund
  - name of the donor
  - an indication that the fund is listed on the Register of Cultural Organisations maintained under Section 78 (1) (a) of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1936

The example below contains all the elements required.

**THE WAGNER SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES INC**

Received from: .....

Amount: .....

Date: .....

**Representing a donation to the Wagner Society New South Wales Incorporated Public Donations Account**

Received by:.....

The Wagner Society New South Wales Incorporated Public Donations Account is a tax deductible fund listed on the register of Cultural Organisations under Section 78 (1) (a) of the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1936*.

**DONATIONS OF \$2.00 OR MORE ARE TAX DEDUCTABLE**

## LETTERS

The run of nine revival performances of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* in Michael Hampe's production was very significant. All principal roles were filled by Australian artists (granting Mr Hoffmann has made his home in Australia). Moreover, the conductor, Graeme Jenkins, quoted Mr Hampe's view that Bruce Martin was equal to the world's best in the role of Hans Sachs. Lastly the audiences (on the five nights I attended), while not capacity ones, maintained attendance and interest to the final curtain. Sydney opera goers are becoming enured, it seems, to protracted Wagner Nights and enjoying themselves in the process.

It was, however, disquieting to find no mention of the Wagner Society of NSW in the program or on the nightly cast sheets. A great chance was missed of putting the Society's name and existence in front of audiences patently interested in Wagner's music. Assuming that the Society was not invited to join Clemengers in sponsoring this well-received revival, it mystifies me why no half-page promotion of the Society and its objects etc was not included in the *Meistersinger* program. This was done in the case of *Lohengrin* in 1987.

The "objects" of the Society include "... fostering and promoting ... Wagnerian music" (Constitution, Section 2 B[ii]). Yet an ideal "captive" audience has been allowed to slip away, unalerted that the Society provides year-round enjoyment of Wagner, right here in Sydney. The annual members' due yield the Society in excess of \$5,000 and some of this should surely be directed to promoting the Society and, by extension, public interest in Wagner's music here on our home turf.

After the reportedly poor houses for *Tristan* in this year's Melbourne season, and the diminished audiences (except for the one Saturday evening) that *Meistersinger* drew in Sydney, Australian Opera may, with some justice, conclude that there is no large public here for Wagner. One can easily envisage how such an evaluation of audience tastes will affect future seasons. Whatever the Society can do to resist such thinking in opera circles would be in line with the "aims and objects" I referred to. Both a modicum of self-promotion amongst the opera public and some recruiting of enthusiasts from the audiences at Wagner stagings and concerts seem first, and basic, steps to be taken in warranting the existence of a Wagner Society here in Sydney.

I would be interested in the views of other members on this matter.

Arthur Carter

## MODUS OPERANDI

*A press release has been forwarded to us by Peter Binnings and we reproduce it for the interest of all members.*

MODUS OPERANDI is a new company established in Sydney to provide further opportunities for the performance of opera and to make opera more accessible to the general public. In order to achieve these aims modus operandi employs the following strategies:

- \* performing in alternative venues
- \* performing with minimal use of sets, lighting and costume to keep production costs, and thereby ticket prices, as low as possible
- \* engaging singers and musicians on a cooperative basis.

The works included in our first season are *The Telephone* and *The Medium* by Gian Carlo Menotti. *The Telephone* is a delightful one-act comedy telling the story of a most unusual marriage proposal.

*The Medium* is a dramatic two-act opera. Madame Flora (Baba), her daughter Monica, and Toby a mute, prepare for a seance. The clients arrive and the seance begins. The seance is faked but suddenly Baba cries out: someone, or something, has touched her and she is terrified. The clients are dismissed and they leave asking "why be afraid of our dead" while Baba tries to find out who played the trick on her. She has tried to make Toby admit that he touched her, but without success, despite a whipping. Some days later the clients return and Baba tells them that she is a fraud. The clients will not believe they have been cheated but they are sent away: so is Toby. Baba gets drunk and falls asleep, while Toby returns and hides behind the curtain fo the puppet theatre. Baba wakes in a panic, seizes a revolver and fires. A spot of blood appears on the curtain. "I've killed the ghost", cries Baba. Toby falls forward, dead, dragging the curtain with him. The opera closes with Baba's doubts left unresolved, "was it you?"

MODUS OPERANDI will present these works in the **Village Church, Oxford Street, Paddington** (site of the Paddington Markets).

Musical Director

Edie Rens

Director

Peter E Binning

Designer

Barrie Cowling

Cast includes

Nora Babikian/Sian James/Don Lister

Hillary Oliver/Yolanda Podolski/Matt Ray/Helena Sindala

Performances will be on **Friday 8th, Saturday 9th, Thursday 14th, Friday 15th and Saturday 16th October**, commencing at 8.00pm. Admission is \$15.00 full price and \$10.00 concession. Tickets will be available from the door 30 minutes prior to the performance. For further information on MODUS OPERANDI please contact 560 3456 or 327 58868

## FINANCIAL MEMBERS AS AT 10TH AUGUST 1993

*Patron: Sir Charles Mackerras, Life Members: Professor Michael Ewans, Miss Rita Hunter, Mr Richard King, Mr Reg Maloney, Mde Leonie Rysanek*

**Members:** Mrs M Agsten, Mr P Alger, Mrs B Allen, Dr & Mrs G Amigo, Mrs J Anderson, Ms S Asmus, Mrs S Baer, Ms P Baillie, Mr K Baldenhofer, Mrs M Baumgartner, Mrs A Bentley, Dr B Boman, Dr M Bookallil, Mr & Mrs I Brady, Miss L Brauer, Mrs G Bremner, Mrs R Bridges, Ms B Brown, Mr & Mrs J Buchanan, Mrs M Budge, Mrs M Bullock, Mrs J Buxton, Ms A Byrne, Mr B Campbell, Mr R J Carr, Mr A Carter, Dr J Casey, Ms A Casimir, Dr R & Mrs Clarke, Mr & Mrs M Claxton, Miss D Cleaver, Mr A Cohen, Ms B A Conti, Mr & Mrs M Connery, Mrs O Coonan, Mr & Mrs R Cooper, Ms L Cotton, Mr & Mrs R Cousens, Mrs M J Crane, Mrs J Darlington, Mr & Mrs M Day, Miss B de Rome, Mrs P de Saulty, Mr B Dexter, Mr L Dobbs, Mr & Mrs H Donaldson, Dr N Dorsch, Mr J Drew, Mr B Ducker, Ms H Dunlop, Mrs D Dupain, Mr H Ebert, Mr & Mrs M Edgeloe, Dr R C Edwards, Mr & Mrs D Eskill, Mr G Evans, Mr & Mrs C Evatt, Mr & Mrs J Ferfoggia, Dr & Mrs M Field, Mr T W Field, Dr & Mrs D Fifer, Mr I Firth, Mrs M Fisher, Dr & Mrs G Fletcher, Mr G Fleischer, Dr S Freiberg, Lady Persia Galleghan, Mr R Gastineau-Hills, Ms L Geeves, Ms S Gillies, Ms M Glacken, Mr P R Glasson, Ms G Gosling, Miss N Grant, Mrs J Griffin, Mr D Halse-Rogers, Mr & Mrs A Hamlin, Mrs S Handley, Mrs M Harris, Mr & Mrs F Harvey, Mr S Hatcher, Mr J Heathers, Miss C Hennessy, Miss M Hennessy, Miss M Hiscock, Mr & Mrs E Holliday, Mr T Hudson, Miss C Hughes, Mrs A Hunter-Papp, Mr E Insausti, Mr J Iredale, Mrs C Jackaman, Mr & Mrs D Jamieson, Mr H Jamieson, Mr A Jones, Miss E Jones, Mr R Josey, Mr V Kaliman, Misses D & I Kallinikos, Mr F Keep, Dr S Kelly, Ms B Kiessling, Dr & Mrs D King, Mrs V King, Miss J Klein, Dr K Koller, Ms I Kowalski, Mrs E Kraefft, Mrs R Kruszelnicki, Mr P Lehmann, Ms M Lichtenbergers, Mr & Mrs H Littman, Miss J Littman, Ms V Long, Mr B Love, Mrs D McBain, Mr T McBride, Mr C McCann, Mr A McDonald, Mrs P McGaw, Bro J A McGlade, Mr J McGrath, Mr B McKenzie, Mrs B McNulty, Mr A Mackerras, Mr G Magney, Mrs S Major, Ms Z Makowska, Mrs B Maloney, Mr E Manass, Mr J Mant, Mrs A Marshall, Mr R Mason & Mr C Dyer, Justice J H Mathews, Dr I Maxwell, Mr D Melley, Mr W Menadue, Mr & Mrs W Merretz, Mrs J Mitchell, Ms P Moore, Mrs J Mulveney, Mr D Mutton, Dr J Nicholas, Mr W Norris, Mr A Owens, Mr B Parsons, Mrs H Perini, Mr C Piper, Mr R Potter, Ms J Read, Mr K Reed, Miss M Reid, Miss S Remington, Mr G Richards, Mr M B Richter, Prof & Mrs A Riemer, Mrs S Rimmer, Mr & Mrs G Roberts, Mrs S Robertson, Mrs E Robinson, Mr & Mrs R Salzer, Mr S Sheffer, Ms N Siano, Mr J Simmonds, Miss J Sloman, Mr A Smith, Mrs I Spinadel, Prof & Mrs R Spillane, Mr & Mrs R Staniland, Mr R Steele, Mr R Stone, Ms A Straube, Dr & Mrs W Suthers, Ms A Swebbs, Mr G Symons, Mr D Tabrett, Mr K Takahashi, Mr B Tarver, Mr R Taylor, Mrs S Teece, Mr K Terrasson, Mrs P Thompson, Miss J Tomkinson, Mr D Triggs, Mr R M Trupp, Mrs J Watson, Mr & Mrs W Watson, Mr H Wayland, Mrs J Wayland, Ms L Webster, Ms A Weeden, Mr C Westrip, Mr & Mrs A Wheeler, Miss J Whitehouse, Mr R Whitelaw, Mrs M Whitlam, Mrs N Williamson, Ms S Wilson, Ms E Woodford, Ms J Yarad, Dr I Zetler, Dr A Ziegler.



## GEORGE BERNARD SHAW ON BAYREUTH

*Patricia Baillie has sent us the following item, for which we thank her, a long and prescient extract from Wagner in Bayreuth by George Bernard Shaw.*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Bernard Shaw had been to Bayreuth in July 1889, where he saw *Parsifal*, *Die Meistersinger* and *Tristan und Isolde*. He wrote a lengthy article for *The English Illustrated News*, published in September of the same year. It has been abridged below.

NB: Hans RICHTER was conductor of the first *Ring* in 1876, Hermann LEVI was conductor of *Parsifal* in 1882. Amalie MATERNA (soprano) sang Brünnhilde and Kundry in their first performances at Bayreuth till 1891. Therese MALTEN sang Kundry in 1882 and also Isolde and Eva in the year of Shaw's visit to Bayreuth.

The dates of the first performances in London read as follows: *Tristan and Meistersinger* both 1882, Hans RICHTER conducting (4 years and 6 years respectively BEFORE Bayreuth); *The Ring*, also in 1882, conducted by SEIDL, *Parsifal* in 1914 at Covent Garden.

With the Victoria State Opera now seriously preparing a complete *Ring* for Melbourne, 1995-1998, might we not feel that Shaw's arguments of 104 years ago apply to Australia of today?

Patricia Baillie

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There are many reasons for going to Bayreuth to see the Wagner Festival Plays. Curiosity, for instance, or love of music, or hero-worship of Wagner, or adept Wagnerism - a much more complicated business - or a desire to see and be seen in a vortex of culture. But a few of us go to Bayreuth because it is a capital stick to beat a dog with. He who has once been there can crush all admirers of *Die Meistersinger* at Covent Garden with: "Ah, you should see it at Bayreuth," or, if the occasion be the *Parsifal* prelude at a Richter concert: "Have you heard Levi conduct it at Bayreuth?"

Those who have never been in Germany, and cannot afford to go thither, will not be sorry when the inevitable revolt of English Wagnerism against Bayreuth breaks out; and the sooner they are gratified the better.

Wagner is now dead, absent, and indifferent. The powerful, magnetic personality, with all the tension it maintained, is gone; and no manipulation of the dead hand on the keys can ever replace the living touch. Even if such reproduction were

possible, who, outside Bayreuth, would be imposed on by the shallow assumption that the Bayreuth performances fulfilled Wagner's whole desire?

At Bayreuth, there is already a perceptible numbness - the symptom of paralysis.

The London branch of the Wagner Society, unobservant of this danger signal, seems to have come to the conclusion that the best thing it can do for its cause is to support Bayreuth.

Consideration [of these facts] suggests the question whether we are to be made laugh and yawn at Bayreuth by a line of mock Maternas and sham Maltens? If not, what can Bayreuth do that cannot be done as well elsewhere, that cannot be done and much more conveniently for Englishmen in England? If Bayreuth repudiates tradition, there is no mortal reason why we should go so far to hear Wagner's lyric dramas. If it clings to it, then that is the strongest possible reason for avoiding it. Every fresh representation of *Parsifal*, for example, should be an original artistic creation, and not an imitation of the last one.

The true Wagner Theatre is that in which this [original artistic creation] shall be done, though it stand on Primrose Hill or in California. And wherever the traditional method is substituted, there Wagner is not. The conclusion that the Bayreuth theatre cannot remain the true Wagner Theatre is obvious.

It would be too much to declare that the true Wagner Theatre will arise in England; but it is certain that the true English Wagner Theatre will arise there. The sooner we devote our money and energy to making Wagner's music live in England instead of expensively embalming its corpse in Bavaria, the better for English art in all its branches. Bayreuth is supported at present partly because there is about the journey thither a certain romance of pilgrimage; ... partly by a conviction that we could never do the lyric dramas at home as well as they are done at Bayreuth. This, if it were well-founded, would be a conclusive reason for continuing to support Bayreuth. But *Parsifal* can be done not merely as well in London as in Bayreuth, but better. A picked London orchestra could, after half-a-dozen rehearsals under a competent conductor, put Herr Levi and the Bayreuth band in the second place. Our superiority in the art of stage presentation is not disputed. There remain the questions of the theatre and the singers.

The dramas performed [in a London Wagner theatre] need not always be lyric; for it must not be overlooked that the actual Wagner Theatre is also the ideal Shakespeare Theatre. In considering whether such an enterprise would pay, the practical man should bear in mind that opera at present does not pay in the commercial sense, except at Bayreuth, there the charge for admittance to each performance - £1 - is prohibitive as far as the average amateur is concerned.

In any case we would not waste our Wagner Theatre as the Bayreuth house is wasted, by keeping it closed against all composers save Wagner. Our desire to see a worthy and solemn performance of *Parsifal* has been gratified; but what of the great

prototype of *Parsifal*, *Die Zauberflöte*, hitherto known in our opera houses as a vapid, tawdry tomfoolery for showing off a soprano with a high F and a bass with a low E? Mozart is Wagner's only peer in lyric drama: he also made the orchestra envelope the poem in a magic atmosphere of sound: he also adapted a few favourite rhythms, modulations and harmonies, to an apparently infinite variety and subtlety of accent and purport.

Then there is *Fidelio*, always grimly irreconcilable with the glitter of the fashionable opera-house and needing, more than any other lyric drama, that concentration of attention which is the cardinal peculiarity of the Wagner Theatre.

[There exists] doubt as to the possibility of finding singers for an English Wagner Theatre..... Fortunately, Bayreuth has shown us how to do without singers of internationally valuable genius. The singers there have not "created" the lyric drama: it is the lyric drama that has created them. Powerful as they are, they do not sing Wagner because they are robust: they are robust because they sing Wagner. His music is like Handel's in bringing into play the full compass of the singer and in offering the alternative of either using the voice properly or else speedily losing it. Such proper use of the voice is a magnificent physical exercise. The outcry against Wagner of the singers who were trained to scream and shout within the highest five notes of their compass until nothing else was left of their voices - and not much of that - has died away. Even that arch quack, the old-fashioned Italian singing master, finds some better excuse for his ignorance of Wagner's music and his inability to play its accompaniments, than the bold assurance that German music is bad for the voice. Plenty of English singers would set to work at the Niblung Ring tomorrow if they could see their way to sufficient opportunities of singing it to repay them for the very arduous task of committing one of the parts to memory. Singers of genius, great Tristans and Parsifals, Kundrys and Isolde, will not be easily obtained here any more than in Germany; and when they are found, all Europe and America will compete for them. But Bayreuth does without singers of genius. Frau Materna and Fraulein Malten... have large voices, and have some skill in stage business and deportment; but then do nothing that any intelligent woman with their physical qualifications cannot be educated to do.

Before Wagner, the qualities which distinguish the Bayreuth performances were rarer in Germany than they are now in England. His work inspired them there: what is to prevent it doing so here? No more Bayreuth then: Wagnerism, like charity, begins at home.

**George Bernard Shaw**

## CONTRIBUTIONS

*All contributions to the Editor are gratefully received, be they in the form of letters, articles or items that have caught your eye in other publications. If you do submit items it would be helpful if they could be typed rather than hand-written, especially if they are lengthy. However we welcome your interest in this newsletter in whatever form it comes.*

*Please forward your items to:*

*the Editor  
The Wagner Society in NSW Inc  
141 Dowling Street  
WOOLLOOMOOLOO NSW 2011*

## NEW MEMBERS

*The Society welcomes the following new members (and members who have rejoined after a considerable period)*

Mr P R Glassen, Mrs Irina Spinadel, Mr V Kaliman

## THE RAVENS REPORTING

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

- Bonn:** Graham Clarke has been singing the part of Herod to great acclaim in Ken Russell's production of *Salome* in Bonn. He will be long remembered by those who saw the Kupfer *Ring* for his Loge in *Rheingold* and astonishingly athletic Mime in *Siegfried*.
- London:** Intending visitors to London who are fans of Elizabeth Connell's may be pleased to know that if they miss her performances in *Masked Ball* and her recitals here in Sydney in August they can catch up with her at the Royal Festival Hall, between 13th and 16th October, where she is giving two concert performances of *Tristan und Isolde* with the London Philharmonic under conductor Frans Welsler-Möst.
- Sydney:** Sunday September 19th, 2.00pm - St John's Church, Glebe Point Road, Glebe - Da Capo Concert. Program includes Wagner's Wesendonck Lieder, and works for viola, violoncello, voice, piano, all performed by the staff of Da Capo. Admission \$8 (\$5).