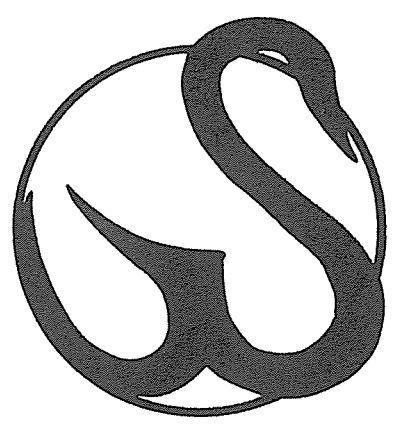


22 May 12:30-2:00
Ritz Carlton

The Wagner Society

IN NEW SOUTH WALES INC.

Registered Office: 4/22 Read Street, Waverley NSW 2024



Newsletter

#54 MARCH 1994

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PATRON: SIR CHARLES MACKERRAS
HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS: Miss RITA HUNTER, CBE
Miss LEONIE RYSANEK
Prof MICHAEL EWANS
Mr RICHARD KING
Mr REG MALONEY

COMING EVENTS

Sunday, March 20	<i>Parsifal</i> Video The Goethe Institute	1.00pm
Sunday, April 10	Cocktail Party for Sherwin Sloan President, Southern California Wagner Society	Time TBA Location TBA
Sunday, April 17	Andrew Riemer Lecture <i>Wagner's Ring: How German Is It?</i> The Goethe Institute	1.00pm
Sunday, May 1	Seminar on Berlioz' <i>The Trojans</i> The Opera Centre	11.00am
Sunday, May 22	Wagner Birthday Lunch Ritz Carlton Hotel, Macquarie Street	12.30pm

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COMMITTEE

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	Ramon Josey	326.2593
Newsletter	Richard King	
Public Officer		

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

On behalf of the Committee and myself, I would like to thank everyone for making last year's Christmas party one of our best. Everybody works so well together and having ideal weather makes for a wonderful day.

The following people were successful in obtaining the Bayreuth tickets (of which we only obtained ten (10) instead of our usual fifteen (15): *Dr & Mrs D King, Mr & Mrs A Hamlyn, Mr & Mrs Bill Watson, Leona Geeves, Hilda Perini, Margaret Budge and Gary Richards*. Better luck next year for the losers.

There are going to be a few changes this year. We are having a Luncheon at the Ritz Carlton on RICHARD WAGNER'S BIRTHDAY, 22ND MAY 1994, instead of a Dinner, so please try to come and make it successful. No worries about getting home.

The ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING will be held in JULY this year as May is not convenient and some of the present executive will be away in June. This is legal as we only need to have the meeting within six months of the end of our financial year.

In May we are going to have another seminar with the Friends of the Australian Opera at the Australian Opera Centre. It will be a full day on *The Trojans* by Berlioz. Application forms will be sent in March with your Membership renewals and you will also find one in this issue for those who want to get in early.

On behalf of the Society, I extend our sympathy to Jessie and Keith Anderson on their recent bereavement. Prior to moving to the country they were stalwart supporters of the Wagner Society at many levels.

Thank you for your good wishes on my recent trip to Hospital.

All the best for the year.

Olive Coonan
President

NEW MEMBERS

We are pleased to welcome these new members to the Wagner Society, and the return of Mr J L Stuurup and Ms C Walsh.

Mr F Flannagan, Mr & Mrs B H K Donovan, Mrs B Shields, Mr & Mrs A J Sutton, Dr D L McCarthy, Mr & Mrs M R Chesterman, Mr A J Pittorino, Mrs N Dorsch, Ms C Walsh, Mr J L Stuurup.

SEMINAR

On Sunday, May 1st a Seminar on Berlioz' *The Trojans* will be run for the whole day (that is, from 11.00am to 4.30pm) at the Opera Centre, Surry Hills.

Last year's seminar on Strauss' *Salome* was a huge success and all who attended felt enriched and enlightened.

This Seminar will once more be run at the premises of the Friends of the Australian Opera, and we are delighted at this further opportunity to share our musical appreciation.

The program of events for the day is as follows:

11.00am - 12.30pm	First Session	<i>Berlioz and Virgil: Cassandra and the Wooden Horse</i>
12.30pm - 1.00pm	Lunch	
1.30pm - 2.30pm	Second Session	<i>The Trojans Arrive at Carthage</i>
2.30pm - 3.00pm	Afternoon Tea	
3.00pm - 4.00pm	Third Session	<i>Tragedy of Dido. The Fate of the Trojans.</i>

Cost of the seminar will be \$30 for members and \$35 for guests and a booking form is attached. Please return to Seminar Organiser, 4/22 Read Street, WAVERLEY NSW 2024 with cheque or money order enclosed. (A further chance to apply will be given with the renewal notices). Please note we cannot accept applications at the door - YOU MUST BOOK.

To The Wagner Society in NSW Inc
c/- Mrs Olive Coonan
4/22 Read Street
WAVERLEY NSW 2024

Please find my cheque/money order attached for \$.... being for the cost of () admissions to the Seminar on *The Trojans* at the Opera Centre, Surry Hills, on Sunday, May 1st.

Name:

Address:

.....

Membership No:

TICKETS: \$30 for members and \$35 for guests

VISIT TO THE AUSTRALIAN OPERA IN MELBOURNE
22ND AND 23RD APRIL 1994

We would like to thank all those who responded to our April offer of the Australian Opera's *Meistersinger* and *Dream* in Melbourne. At the time of preparation of this news letter we had received 34 applications. It is most encouraging to have such a response. Thank you.

ANDREW RIEMER LECTURE

On Sunday, April 17 Andrew Riemer, Associate Professor of English at Sydney University will lecture on *Wagner's Ring: How German Is It?* Illustrations will be from the Chéreau production. The lecture commences as usual at 1.00pm and is at the Goethe Institute.

Those of us who have heard Andrew before will be looking forward immensely to this afternoon. Members who haven't enjoyed Andrew's lectures before are in for an intellectually stimulating and highly enjoyable afternoon.

DONATIONS

The Society welcomes all donations and they can be sent as follows:

DONATION FORM

To The Wagner Society in NSW Inc
The Treasurer (Mrs Janet Wayland)
c/- 4/22 Read Street
WAVERLEY NSW 2024

Please find my cheque/money order attached for \$..... being a donation to the Wagner Society in NSW Inc.

Name:

Address:

.....

Membership Number:

NB: Receipts will be issued and all donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

STOP PRESS

A cocktail party is being arranged for SHERWIN SLOAN, President of the SOUTHERN CALIFORNIAN WAGNER SOCIETY on **Sunday 10th April**, 1994. The location and time of the event have yet to be finalised but if you are interested in attending please contact **Olive Coonan** on **387 6403**. Admittance will be **\$10.00**.

WILF MENADUE

A memorial service will be held for the late Wilf Menadue at St Stephen's Church, Macquarie Street, Sydney, at 11.00am on Saturday 12th March, 1994.

WERNER HERZOG'S *DER FLIEGENDE HOLLÄNDER*

After *Lohengrin* at Bayreuth, Werner Herzog has turned his attentions to *The Flying Dutchman* in Paris. The production, which commenced in October 1993, was greeted with mixed feelings by Tom Sutcliffe of **The Guardian**, as follows:

The Bastille, where most opera in Paris happens, is still presided over by Pierre Berge, Mitterrand's millionaire couturier friend. But ... the Châtelet Théâtre... with a new *Rosenkavalier*, easily trounced the Bastille opening of a new *Flying Dutchman*, staged disappointingly by the film director, Werner Herzog, and conducted with confident misapprehension by Myung-Whun Chung.... Herzog, or his designer Maurizio Balo, had the visually unusual but wearisome idea of presenting the Dutchman's ghostly ship as an iceberg. The real problem, however, was Herzog's inability to direct either the central characters or the chorus in any meaningful way.

Myung-Whun Chung, meanwhile, conducted the music not as early, romantic Wagner, under the influence of Bellini, but (quite inappropriately) as if it dated from the time of *Tristan*. Tempi were terribly mucked about, singers were dictatorially treated rather than accompanied and the more primitive song structures which Wagner adapted were not properly respected.

**The Guardian Weekly,
October 10, 1993:26**

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 1994 Annual General Meeting has been rescheduled to take place in July and further details will be available in the next newsletter.

HOUSE OF CARDS

The folks that live on the hill - Robert Hartford reveals the rumblings in the Bayreuth 'firm' as Wolfgang Wagner celebrates his 75th birthday.

It may read like an opera plot but I will resist labouring the point, even if it draws on bitter family feuding, naked ambition, intrigue and politicking, a ruthless lust for power and a burning desire to overthrow the established order. For the very first time in its 118-year history that unique family firm, the Wagners of Bayreuth, looks like losing its head with no successor in sight.

This is of more than local interest: the stage revolution at Bayreuth in the 1950s changed the perception of opera far beyond the bounds of Bavaria and its reforms are with us still. What happens there in the next year or so may bring equally apocalyptic and far-reaching changes. There is talk of not only putting on Wagner's earliest operas - *Rienzi* has been rumoured for decades - but those of his contemporaries too; the name of Meyerbeer being bandied about is most likely to shake the die-hards out of their complacency with images of horrors to come.

The present overlord, or artistic director as he chooses to be known, is Wolfgang Wagner, grandson of the composer Richard. Wolfgang is approaching his 75th year and is talking of stepping down. There is no immediately apparent successor. Wolfgang is at odds with his own children, Eva and Gottfried, and with those of his brother, Wieland, who died in 1966 and with whom Wolfgang shared the running of the festival since it re-opened in 1951.

There is open war raging between members of the Wagner family; they are good at it, having had endless practice, but are somewhat inhibited by the fact that no-one seems to be on speaking terms with anyone else. Because of this, they are conducting their rows in interviews with third parties and articles in the press. Wolfgang claims he is staying out of it but his actions show he is set on having his second wife, Gudrun, now just 50, take over from him. There is a particularly strong faction determined that she shall not.

History is repeating itself on the Green Hill. When Richard Wagner died in 1883 it was left to his widow, Cosima, to keep the Bayreuth Festival going. She did this with dogged application and, without her devotion to the task, there would have been no festival; she had her faults, too tied to tradition, but her achievement cannot be denied. In 1906, Cosima handed over the direction to the Wagner heir, her son Siegfried; he ran it until his death at the age of 60 in 1930.

Like his father before him (and, indeed, his second son after him) Siegfried married a woman much younger than himself. Winifred Williams, English by birth, was handed the Bayreuth succession in the terms of Siegfried's will; not of the Wagner blood, Winifred met with hostility from the Wagner family, by now with a dynastic tendency and an awareness of its own importance.

In addition to the burden Siegfried had imposed on her, Winifred had four young children to bring up; she had helped her husband behind the scenes and thus knew how the festival was managed but, feeling somewhat isolated, she turned to the outside for support and received it, willingly and avidly, from a keen Wagnerian and aspiring politician, Adolf Hitler. When Hitler came to power he saw to it that Bayreuth got its due; the connection still blights the place in many people's minds. There was never any sexual relationship between Winifred and Hitler, in spite of night-time assignations and long, late drives - but it was said Winifred was the only woman the Führer would allow to drive him in a motor car.

Winifred was eventually cleared by a de-Nazification tribunal on condition she make over the Bayreuth Festival to her two sons, Wieland and Wolfgang (in private she continued to believe in the USA or 'Unser Selig Adolf'). To her credit Winifred foresaw the present situation and did her best to prevent it coming about or, if it did, to resolve it without damage to the Wagner name.

Around 1973, a few years before she died, Winifred was instrumental in the establishment of a Wagner Foundation. This body, a complex fusion of the senior Wagners, the Friends of Bayreuth, the City of Bayreuth and others, was to deal with the complicated matter of ownership of the various properties, including the Festspielhaus, and to arrange for the smooth and untroubled transition of the festival directorship.

She had not reckoned with the Wagner great-grandchildren, and the six who might fancy their chances (there are five more, should they wish to join the fray, and Wolfgang's Katherina Frederike, rising 16).

If the Wagner genius, not forgetting that of Liszt, has descended thus far it appears rather diluted; few of the latest generation have shown any creative skill, save that of squabbling. Wieland's son, Wolf Siegfried ('Wummi'), made a modest name for himself as a director, producing Gluck's *Orpheo* at Wexford and the same composer's *Armide* at Spitalfields but, like his sisters, his drop-out lifestyle has done him no good with Bayreuth fastidiousness.

The only other to pursue the family business has been Wolfgang's daughter, Eva: she was closely involved with her father at Bayreuth in the early 1970s, then came to Covent Garden to cast operas (none too brilliantly, as I recall), married and went to Paris as Evan Wagner-Pasquier. I hear she has just parted company with the Bastille Opera on less than friendly grounds.

Wolfgang does not think much of the younger Wagners, younger being purely relative, as they are mostly around the age of 50. "Bayreuth should not be a training ground for Wagner great-grandchildren," he is on record as stating, forgetting where he himself came from; and he has seen to it none has had the opportunity to train there. Those who have been kept farthest away have the most to say: Wolf Siegfried found himself banned from Bayreuth after saying Wolfgang was not much good as either director or designer. After Wolfgang's latest *Parsifal* few are going to disagree with his nephew.

Wolfgang's niece, Nike, admits he has been a successful manager (his job when Wieland was alive) but little else. In spite of his bringing in outside directors such as Chéreau and Kupfer, Wolfgang is stuck in the mud; she says the so-called "New Bayreuth", now 43 years old, is in need of a shake-up and she proposes a committee of experts to get Bayreuth off the "hamster wheel" of the ten regular works and to introduce other operas that would serve to put Wagner in the context of his time and to have associated discussions and lecture programs as well as concerts of music influenced by Wagner.

Wolfgang's own children are his fiercest critics. Relations with Eva, who took her mother's side when Wolfgang divorced her in 1976, have been frigid. I remember a performance of *Siegfried* by Welsh National Opera in Oxford some years back when both Wolfgang and Eva arrived; it took prodigious feats of shuffling by WNO staff to ensure father and daughter did not meet. Perhaps with her eye on the succession, Eva has fallen discreetly silent these last few years. She has support from some Foundation voters, not least because she is of the Wagner blood and blood counts for a lot in these circles.

Yet it is Bayreuth's heir apparent, Gottfried, who is making the most mischief. Gottfried has adopted a fashionable theme; his family's attitude towards Jews and, on the profitable principle of telling people what they want to hear, he has been lecturing his way around America - and Israel too, the first Wagner to set foot there - denouncing Bayreuth as still in the thrall of Nazi ideals and anti-Semitism. He has made especially vicious attacks on conductors Levine and Barenboim, both Jews, alleging 'Uncle Tom' compliance in working at Bayreuth. Wolfgang responded by fax: 'Henceforth, both in Bayreuth and elsewhere, an absolute distance between you and me must be maintained.' Gottfried flourishes this as proudly as his bundle of letters to his father, all of them returned unopened.

In the end, it seems certain Bayreuth will go for the 'Cosima option' and that Wolfgang will see his wife take control. Unlike her predecessors, Gudrun will have her husband to provide a guiding hand. This will leave Bayreuth rooted in its old tradition but, if the demand for tickets is an indication, that is what audiences want. As for the rest of the Wagner tribe, let them use their name to put their revolutionary concepts into practice and rent the Festspielhaus for an 'alternative' Bayreuth Festival in May. I would love to see how their words translate into actions.

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, c/- 4/22 Read Street, WAVERLEY NSW 2024

RUDOLSTADT AND BAYREUTH?

From the New York Times - more on the Siegfried Wagner connection.

...If not all the talk at Bayreuth was of Rudolstadt, a good deal of the talk in Rudolstadt was of Bayreuth. Rudolstadt lies in Thüringia, only 60 miles north of Bayreuth but formerly inaccessible as part of East Germany. It is now attached officially to Bayreuth as a sister city, but its artistic ties may be growing closer still.

The Thüringer Landestheater, a pocket-size opera house overseen by Peter P Pachl as administrative director and Konrad Bach as music director, is trying to turn itself into the world center for the operas of Siegfried Wagner, Richard's son. In this it is being supported by the International Siegfried Wagner Society, based in Bayreuth and led by Mr Bach.

What the future of this venture will be, no one can say. Wolfgang Wagner, following family tradition, is holding himself distant from Rudolstadt, and from the Siegfried Wagner Society, even though Siegfried was Wolfgang's father. Apparently the Wagner family figures one Wagner composer is enough.

In the meantime, Mr Pachl and Mr Bach are in danger of having their horse shot out from under them because, as part of eastern Germany's continuing cultural consolidation, the theatrical efforts of Rudolstadt and not-so-nearby Eisenach are being combined, with Eisenach getting most of the opera and Rudolstadt mostly spoken drama.

Undaunted, Mr Pachl and Mr Bach got their Siegfried Wagner project started last year with a production of the composer's first (1898) and most famous opera, *Der Bärenhäuter*, or *The Bear Skinner*, performed outdoors in the courtyard of the lovely Schloss Heidecksburg. This summer, with two performances cleverly timed to precede the opening of Bayreuth, thus attracting a clutch of visitors headed south, they revived *Der Bärenhäuter*, and added *Schwarzschwänenreich* (*The Kingdom of the Black Swan*), from 1911.

Interested members may like to know that the program of the Thüringer Landestheater, Rudolstadt, performed at the Schloss Heidecksburg, is as follows:

June 10 - 30, 1994

*Wahnopfer (The Illusion of Sacrifice) and
Schwarzschwänenreich (The Kingdom of the Black Swan)*

Remember our successful booksale at the 1993 Christmas Party?

If you'd like to clear some space on your shelves, please donate your no-longer needed books, records, cassettes or CDs by bringing them to our meetings. This will help to swell our funds and enable the Society to continue its strong support of Wagner.

THE RUSSIAN CONNECTION

The Richard Wagner Verband of St Petersburg had a successful music festival in 1993, but as yet cannot perform a complete Richard Wagner opera. However, they would like to have contacts with other Wagner Societies.

If anybody plans to go to St Petersburg, please contact the president of the Verband,

Dr Ella Machrowa
ul O Tokarewa 18/a-9
St Petersburg, Lomonosow-3
189510 RUSSIA
TEL: 812 423 1694
FAX: 812 315 5321

For travel arrangements from Germany, a recommended company is:

East-Reisen GmbH
Bahrenfelder Chaussee 53
D-22761 Hamburg
GERMANY
TEL: +49 (0) 40 896046
FAX: +49 (0) 40 894940

LUCIA POPP

Lucia Popp, who died in a Munich hospital of cancer on 16 November, four days after her 54th birthday, was a lyric soprano of endearing stage personality, feminine allure and vocal virtuosity. She was at her best in Mozart and Richard Strauss, moving successfully as her voice matured from a sprightly Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro* and a beguiling Sophie in *Der Rosenkavalier* to the weightier rôles of Contess Almaviva and the Marschalin, while maintaining throughout her love of Lieder.

She was born in the village of Uhorska Ves, not far from Bratislava in the former Czechoslovakia and, as a child, went "barefoot with the geese", as she put it. Turning late from drama to music study at Bratislava, she made her début there in 1963 as the Queen of the Night in *Die Zauberflöte*, her scintillating coloratura as a "Popp of the tops" in this rôle brought her next year a contract at the Vienna Staatsoper under Karajan and a recording of it under Klemperer that has not been individually out-classed.

Her name was quickly made in other centres, in the USA as well as in Europe. "After Vienna, nothing was quite so frightening", she said, and she described Covent Garden as "like a sanatorium by comparison". [In Great Britain] ... she became a welcome frequent visitor from her first Oscar (*Un ballo in maschera*) in 1966 to a last single appearance as the Marschallin (replacing an indisposed Felicity Lott) in 1989. Besides Sophie and Susanna, her rôles in Covent Garden included Arabella, Despina and Gilda, and a memorably radiant Eva in *Die Meistersinger* in 1982-3; she even stepped in once at English National Opera as Ilia in *Idomeneo*.

Her silver-pointed soprano was often reminiscent of Elisabeth Schumann, in Lieder as well as opera, and she gave many recitals with her first husband, the conductor Georg Fischer. She was later married to the tenor Peter Seiffert, who once measured his wife's awesome recorded repertory as filling "three and a half metres". Among them are varied discs of songs and major operatic rôles (some on video), with one yet to come, as Vitellia in *La clemenza di Tito* recorded in Zurich last March to add to a testament of artistry which will long keep her memory fresh in our hearts and minds.

Noël Goodwin

THE RAVENS REPORTING

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

- The Met *Holländer* - with Julia Varady, James Morris and Jan-Hendrik Rootering. Conducted by Hermann Michael. March 30, April 2, 5, 9.
- Oslo *The Ring - Die Walküre* opens on 25th March. Further performances April 6, 9, 13, May 14, 19. The cast includes Carol Yahr, Anne Gjevang, James O'Neal, Oddbjorn Tennfjord, with conductor Heinz Fricke. The producer is Mike Ashman and director Katherine Hysing. *Das Rheingold* - May 5, 7. *Siegfried* - premieres Feb 2, 1995. *Götterdämmerung* - premieres March 15, 1995.
- Berlin *Tannhäuser* - Deutsche Oper, March 27.
- Munich *Die Meistersinger* - March 25, 28, April 3.
Holländer - March 5, 8, 12, 18.
- Bordeaux *Holländer* - April 21, 24, 27. In the Palais des Sports. Production comes via Montpellier and Naples. Conductor Alain Lombard, Producer Tobias Richter.
- Venice *Tristan und Isolde* - April 23, 26, 29, May 3, 5. With Gabriele Schnaut, Hanna Schwarz, Siegfried Jerusalem, Hans Sotin and Hartmut Welker. Conductor Marek Janowski.
- Buenos Aires *Tannhäuser* - May 10, 12, 15, 17. With Mechthild Gessendorf, Klaus König, Jorma Hynninen. Conductor Janos Kulka.
- Wexford
Festival: *Das Liebersverbot* - 20th October to 6th November.
- Melbourne *The Ring* - 1995 ("In 1995 the VSO launches Wagner's *Ring* Cycle, the operatic event of the decade..." VSO's 1994 Brochure).
- The Met *Parsifal* - Robert Lloyd is to sing Gurnemanz in a March 1995 revival.