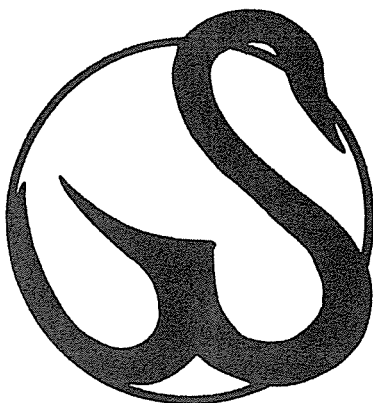


The Wagner Society

IN NEW SOUTH WALES INC.

All Correspondence to GPO Box 4574 Sydney, NSW 2001



Newsletter

#59 JUNE 1995

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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

Vic Buck
Wagner Soc **57** *St Vincent Place*
57 *Albert Park*
COMING EVENTS *the 3206*

| DATE | EVENT | LOCATION |
|--------------------|---|---|
| June 18, 1995 | 1992 Bayreuth Harry Kupfer production of <i>Die Walküre</i> - video | Metcalf Auditorium 12.00 noon |
| June 25, 1995 | Concert with Rita Hunter as guest soloist | Alambie Heights Community Centre 7.00pm |
| July 2, 1995 | Annual General Meeting Video - <i>Wagner Gala</i> - Concert from Berlin | Metcalf Auditorium 2.00pm |
| July 27, 1995 | Wagner Gala concert with Melbourne Symphony Orchestra - Simone Young conducting. Soloists - Elizabeth Connell and Bruce Martin | Melbourne Concert Hall 8.00pm |
| July 30, 1995 | Simone Young talk Video - <i>Wagner's Women</i> | Metcalf Auditorium 1.00pm |
| August 13, 1995 | 1992 Bayreuth Harry Kupfer production of <i>Siegfried</i> - video | Metcalf Auditorium 12.00 noon |
| September 10, 1995 | 1992 Bayreuth Harry Kupfer production of <i>Götterdämmerung</i> - video | Metcalf Auditorium 12.00 noon |
| October 22, 1995 | Arthur Carter talk on Kirsten Flagstad | Metcalf Auditorium 1.00pm |
| November 19, 1995 | Seminar on <i>Rheingold</i> Speakers to include Prof. Michael Ewans and Antony Ernst | Metcalf Auditorium 11.30am |
| November 30, 1995 | <i>Rheingold</i> concert performance by the SSO | Concert Hall, Sydney Opera House 7.30pm |
| December 2, 1995 | <i>Rheingold</i> concert performance by the SSO | Concert Hall, Sydney Opera House 1.00pm |
| December 10, 1995 | Christmas Party | TBA |

COMMITTEE

| | | |
|--|--------------------|-------------|
| President | Ramon Josey | 326.2593 |
| Immediate Past President and Membership Secretary | Olive Coonan | 387.6403 |
| Vice Presidents | Paul Lehmann | 552.1424 |
| | Sue Kelly | 361 3260 |
| | Janet Wayland | 332.3926 |
| Treasurer | Ira Kowalski | 560 5859 |
| Secretary | Annie Marshall | 042.94.2992 |
| Newsletter | Barbara McNulty | 487.1344 |
| Members | Jean-Louis Stuurop | |
| Public Officer | Reg Maloney | |

THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Dear Members,

At the time of going to print I can happily report on the hugely successful concert performance of *Parsifal* in Brisbane. Some critiques are reprinted in this issue. Much of the excitement generated by this performance came from the Kundry of Isolde Elchlepp, who had arrived from Germany at very short notice (only four days prior to the performance) due to the cancellation of not one, but two Kundrys previously announced. The two Wagnerian veterans, Franz Mazura and Donald McIntyre gave, as expected, impeccable performances.

We hear that the Victoria State Opera is still planning to begin its *Ring* cycle in 1996 but not necessarily the long awaited 'Australian' cycle. This is very exciting of course, but State Opera of South Australia has just upstaged Melbourne and Sydney with its announcement of a full cycle to be performed in Adelaide in late 1998. Again, it won't be Australian as we had all hoped (the Théâtre du Châtelet production from Paris) but we must congratulate Bill Gillespie, the General Manager of State Opera SA for this astounding coup.

Our April afternoon of Wagnerian singers in Australia was very well received. The audience was delighted to be reacquainted, even surprised, with these recent and rare Wagnerian tapes of singers many of whom are still performing on our stages. Another source of great pride for us.

This month sees our continuing presentation of the Kupfer *Ring* at the Metcalfe with *Die Walküre*. We hope as many members as possible are able to attend. These performances have now, even after several critically hostile years at Bayreuth, attained a certain 'classic' status. Another exciting event just announced for Thursday 27 July: a Wagner Gala concert in the Melbourne Concert Hall with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra conducted by Simone Young (who is to give a talk to our Society on 30th July) The soloists are two great Wagnerians: Elizabeth Connell and Bruce Martin.

Finally, please do not forget our Annual General Meeting on 2nd July. Regrettably, business commitments all too often conflict with the responsibilities of the position of President and I shall not be seeking re-nomination. It has been a stimulating experience and the decision is taken reluctantly. All positions on the Committee become vacant each year and I strongly urge any member who would like to make a positive contribution to the Society to seek nomination. The relevant forms are located elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Ray Josey
President

NEW ADDRESS

Please note our new and permanent address for all correspondence and the new telephone and fax number:

The Wagner Society in NSW Inc
GPO Box 4574
SYDNEY NSW 2001
Tel/Fax - 326 2593

NEW MEMBERS

The Society is delighted to welcome the following new members:

Mr Gregory Chesher, Mr Robert Gibson, Mr Kevin Grant and Mrs Helen Grant, Mrs Zara Jackson, Kerrin McCormack and Dorothy McCormack, Mr Paul Milewski, Mr Gary Wilson, Mrs Mitzi Saunders and Mr Kevin Yi-Jing Xie.

DONATIONS

We gratefully acknowledge a donation from the following member: *Barbara Kiessling* of Melbourne.

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

| | |
|---|----------------|
| <i>DONATION FORM</i> | |
| To The Wagner Society in NSW Inc The Treasurer (Mrs Janet Wayland) GPO Box 4574 SYDNEY NSW 2001 | |
| 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. | |

Hojotojo Heiaha -- It's Adelaide!

Members will have read accounts in the press of Adelaide's coup in securing a complete *Ring* for 1998. We reproduce some extracts, starting with the jubilant article in the *Advertiser* (Adelaide) of Saturday, May 20.

"...Whoneeds the Ring? We do. Everybody does. Even if they don't want it. Why? Because it is simply the greatest work of art created in sound.... Australia has never had a complete *Ring*. In the late '70s, the Australian Opera's plans for a new production of the full cycle stalled after only two of the four operas actually reached the stage...In Melbourne, Melbourne Festival artistic director, Leo Schofield was hot to get the cycle for the festival this year, but again the expense and the logistics defeated him. Adelaide has pipped them both to the Ring post.

Adelaide is the best city in Australia for the Ring, the Festival Theatre is the best theatre - similar in size and shape to Wagner's own Festspielhaus, though alas not in acoustics - and the choice of the Paris production continues a well-established pattern of theatrical affinities between our city and French ways of staging things.

Getting the Paris Chatelet opera company's *Ring* is a coup de theatre for Bill Gillespie, State Opera, the ASO, the Premier, Mr Brown, and the ministers for arts and tourism, and also lets both the Victoria State Opera and the Australian Opera off the *Ring* hook..." ELIZABETH SILSBURY

Adelaide swaps Grand Prix for *Ring* cycle

And from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Saturday May 20, this article gives the background..

The epic story of the striving to bring Richard Wagner's operatic cycle, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, to the Australian stage reached a new denouement yesterday when the State Opera of South Australia announced it would mount a \$6.4 million production in 1998.

The production, backed by the South Australian Government, is a collaboration with the Théâtre du Châtelet of Paris, which is providing the director, Pierre Strosser, the scenery and the costumes. The four operas of the Ring cycle are *Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried and Götterdämmerung* - and each is several hours long. Jeffrey Tate will conduct the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra; soprano Carol Yahr will sing Brunnhilde, and tenor John Keyes will sing Siegmund.

Adelaide has beaten both Sydney and Melbourne to stage the cycle. Sydney and Melbourne have had Ring sagas of their own, rivalling the Wagnerian operas in complexity and drama. The Australian Opera mounted *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* in 1984, intending to complete the cycle in subsequent seasons. *Die Walküre* was successful, *Das Rheingold* less so, and enthusiasms for the project was dampened. The company's 1985 financial crisis overtook the project and the Ring was temporarily laid to rest.

Like the fatal lure of Alberich's gold itself, however, the lure of the cycle proved irresistible. A spokesman for the Australian Opera said it and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra were waiting for the results of a feasibility study on the possibility of jointly staging a Ring cycle, starting in

1998 and culminating in 2000.

The Victoria State Opera's plans were well down the track, but marred by continual difficulties. Sir Sidney Nolan planned to base the setting of the cycle on the Australian Dreaming and had already visited Australia for discussions with the VSO before he died. Last year's controversy was over a public disagreement between Melbourne Festival director Leo Schofield, who wanted the young Australian conductor Simone Young to work on the cycle, and the VSO music director Richard Divall, who vetoed the idea.

Although it is unlikely Australia could support more than one Ring cycle in the coming decade, spokesmen for both companies last night supported the Adelaide announcement...

The general director of the State Opera of South Australia, Mr William Gillespie, who will also be artistic director of the Ring cycle, said his was one of 150 submissions for funding from State Government money freed up by the transfer of the motor racing Grand Prix from Adelaide to Melbourne. He said the 1998 Ring cycle was the first of four successful submissions to be announced.

The Chairman of the State Opera of South Australia, Mr Tim O'Louchlin, said the production was expected to earn the State more than \$15 million. **MIRIAM COSIC**

This is Opera's view of the Châtelet Theatre Ring which is destined for Adelaide. We reprint selections from reviews in Opera (London) Sept. 1994 and Jan. 1995.

...The THEATRE DU CHATELET's enterprising director, Stéphane Lissner (recently appointed general director of the Orchestre de Paris as well), paired Jeffrey Tate and producer Pierre Strosser, who are presenting their *Ring* in two instalments. Strosser is also his own set designer and in both functions has stripped everything down to essentials. The curtain opens on a steeply raked stage of which the back wall frames monochrome images. Only Woglinde is present, to be joined as instructed in the score by her sisters... The first Tarnhelm episode succeeded brilliantly, but Mime's reaction to his beating was less than minimal. The later transformations were left entirely to the imagination of the audience. Visual starkness was partially relieved when a wall halfway towards the back rose through the floor in scene four with a narrow door leading to Valhalla which Wotan shut in Loge's face.... As a producer, Strosser adheres to a recent trend which does not allow characters who are conversing to look at each other... A preliminary balance evokes mixed feelings. Nonetheless, it remains an undertaking well worth the effort as there is space for growth. And the lack of hyper-specific trappings can only be considered an advantage...

The final instalments of the CHATELET's *Ring* (October 27 and 29) were remarkable for a galvanized Jeffrey Tate, abandoning his Goodall mode for a fleet approach so that there were no bloated moments. Strosser's stark staging was a welcome relief after the excesses recently reported in these pages, which is not to overlook that he was roundly booed by a segment of the audience at both the first night and final performances...

It would be unfortunate if this *Ring* was allowed to vanish after a single outing. With a certain amount of tinkering it could provide an excellent antidote to some recent attempts which have trivialized a work which is susceptible to a multiplicity of interpretations. Both Strosser and Tate deserve full credit for their seriousness of intent and achievement. **JOEL KASOW.**

LETTERS RECEIVED

From MARY VALLENTINE, General Manager, Sydney Symphony Orchestra:

I am delighted that The Wagner Society has so very generously agreed to sponsor the performance of Bernadette Cullen in Das Rheingold.

To establish such a formidable cast of singers does not come without significant expense, and the generous contribution by the Wagner Society will be of great assistance.

We are presently considering hosting a forum type luncheon at the Inter-Continental Hotel featuring members of the cast and the SSO's Chief Conductor, Edo de Waart, and we will keep you and your members informed should there be any further developments.

Please extend our thanks to all your members for your decision to sponsor Miss Cullen's performance in Das Rheingold.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM will be held at The Metcalfe Auditorium, State Library of NSW, Macquarie Street, on Sunday July 2nd 1995 at 2.00pm.

VOTING RULES

At the Annual General Meeting the office bearers (President, up to two Vice Presidents, Treasurer and Secretary have to be elected) and four Committee Members of the above Society if sufficient nominations are received.

If the number of nominations does not exceed NINE MEMBERS those members are automatically declared elected to the COMMITTEE. Similarly the Office Bearers go into their positions specified if no one else is nominated to the same position. In the case of TWO OR MORE NOMINATIONS to positions of office bearers a ballot will be held on the day of the Annual General Meeting.

Financial members may vote by proxy given to a financial member if unable to attend the Annual General Meeting.

If more than FOUR MEMBERS are nominated for the Committee a ballot will also have to be held to elect same.

PLEASE NOTE THAT ALL PAPERWORK (NOMINATIONS AND PROXY VOTES) HAS TO BE RECEIVED BY FRIDAY 23RD JUNE 1995.

NOMINATIONS

The Secretary
The Wagner Society in NSW Inc
GPO Box 4574
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Madam,

Please take notice that we, the undersigned members, hereby respectively propose and

second

for election as

or a member of the committee of the Wagner Society.

Date

Signed
(proposer)

Signed
(seconder)

Signed
(nominated member)

NOTICE OF MOTION

I/we will be attending the Annual General Meeting on 2nd July 1995 and would like the following motion to be placed on the Agenda for discussion under General Business.

.....
.....

Name:

Member no:

PROXY

The Secretary
The Wagner Society in NSW Inc
GPO BOX 4574
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Madam,

I cannot attend the 15th Annual Meeting to be held on 2nd July 1995 but give my proxy vote
to

who is a current financial member of the Society, Membership number:

Date

Signed

Address

.....
(nominated member)

NOTICE OF MOTION

I/We will be attending the annual general meeting on 2 July 1995 and would like the
following motion to be placed on the agenda for discussion under general business.

.....
.....

Name

Membership no

THE WAGNER BIRTHDAY LUNCH
The Ritz Carlton Hotel

An appreciative group of members again celebrated Wagner's birthday by lunching at the Ritz Carlton and learning about the activities of the Australian Opera from its general manager, Mr Donald McDonald. Not surprisingly, he was generous in his congratulations to Adelaide on scoring the Ring. Since Clare Hennessy's letter of appreciation to the Committee sums up the event so well, we print it here in full:

Dear Committee,

Just a short note to express my thanks for a wonderful lunch on Sunday.

I know from being on the Committee on many previous occasions just how much work goes on behind the scenes to make the function the success it was. The menu was an excellent choice and the Ritz Carlton did a magnificent job with their 'silent' service during lunch.

I though our guest of honour, Mr Donald McDonald, General Manager of the Australian Opera, gave us a very interesting talk, thanking the Society for its support for Wagner performances over the years and then especially making mention of the Society's donation for the AO's visit to Edinburgh last year. This support was particularly appreciated by the Opera Company.

All in all a very pleasant function.

CLARE HENNESSY.

THE FIRST WAGNER SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND

The first Newsletter of the Wagner Society of New Zealand Inc. (dated 1994) contained this very interesting article on the first Wagner Society in New Zealand and we reprint it by kind permission of the Editor.

When the first meeting of Auckland Wagnerites took place this year [ie, in 1994] on 22nd May (Wagner's Birthday), everyone believed that by forming a recognised, incorporated society, they would now be providing the first major national focus for the keen fascination that Wagner's life and music always excites. After all, New Zealand like most other countries in the developed world - has been experiencing an exciting renaissance of interest in everything operatic, and Wagnerian music-drama has been part of the trend, and has drawn special interest.

But it might come as a surprise to many to know that the New Zealand Wagner Society is not in fact the first Wagner Society in New Zealand - not by a long chalk, since one was formed almost exactly a century ago, in the house of a Mr A. Crump, in the little suburb of Stoke, near Nelson.

Wagner in New Zealand ... contd.

However, it lasted for only three weeks.

The Society was informally set up on the twelfth anniversary of Wagner's death (13 February, 1883) and consisted of ten people, who had been brought together by the authentic background and spellbinding personality of Michael Balling, one-time friend of Richard and Cosima Wagner, conductor of Wagner music-dramas, editor of Wagner's music, and uncompromising Wagner-worshipper.

Balling (born 1866) came to New Zealand in 1893, after a bout of ill-health. He was charged with conducting the local choral society in Nelson, and generally extending a wide musical influence in the city. Thanks to Balling's background, that influence was unashamedly Wagnerian, and his first concern in Nelson, only three days after his arrival here, included a piano solo Fantasia on themes from *Die Walküre*. The Nelson School of Music was founded by Balling, and the concerts he conducted there and in the town were received with enormous enthusiasm. He taught everything - harmony, score-reading, piano, every orchestral instrument available in the town - and Wagner, whose works he preached and propounded incessantly.

At the first (perhaps the only) meeting of this Wagner Society, as we are told from the diary of Frederick Gibbs, headmaster of the local Central School, Balling spoke with all the reverence of a prayer meeting of Wagner's influence and death. Later, musical extracts from all the main music-dramas were performed, and further readings were given from Wagner's autobiography *My Life*, and from a letter from Wagner which one of the company had been sent some years before.

Apparently the Society broke up when Balling discovered that one of the members of that original group had discussed its activities with an 'unbeliever', who made the mistake of sending up the seriousness of the venture in Balling's company. No-one made fun of Wagner or Wagnerism when Balling was around. The Society was summarily cancelled, Gibbs tells us, by the 24 March - a mere 39 days after its inception.

So perhaps Balling's First Wagner Society of 1895 doesn't rate highly enough to be considered a proper rival to the new Wagner Society of New Zealand, which has now had a highly successful first year, has attracted nearly 120 people as members, and enjoys having an average of 60 people to its functions so far.

But it does show a unique Wagner Connection with New Zealand which is of much interest, and links our Society up with a background of knowledge and appreciation which, contrary to many people's belief, can go back for a hundred years.

Uwe Grodd, who is a member of our committee in the Wagner Society of New Zealand, was one-time director of the Nelson School of Music. Recently he and his wife, Virginia, have been researching the context of the Wagner connection with New Zealand through Michael Balling. They have willingly agreed to give a presentation to the Society next year [1995] (the centenary of the 'first' Wagner society). This will be of enormous interest to all our members, and we will let you know through the columns of this Newsletter when the even is to take place. Watch this space!

Wagner Society of New Zealand Inc, PO Box 202, Auckland, N.Z. Tel/Fax +64 09 521 1245.

SIEGFRIED AT THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE

Margaret Budge has sent us these reviews of Siegfried from London, and in a letter to Annie Marshall, describes her own impressions.. Thanks, Margaret.

“I went to see Siegfried at £110 - the only ticket left, and wholeheartedly agree with David Gillard’s article. The singing was superb but as for the sets and costumes, it were as if they ran out of money and went to a charity shop for the clothes. The Wanderer’s blind man’s cane was ridiculous. I thought. Bernard Haitink was great as was the orchestra. I admit to closing my eyes and just listening to some of my favourite pieces so that I wouldn’t be distracted by the staging....”

Great Wagner? Oh no, it isn’t

(Extract reprinted from *The Daily Mail*, Friday March 31, 1995)

SIEGFRIED: Royal Opera, Royal Opera House:

First the good news. This new Ring may be hollow but it conjures up a burnished cast of home grown talent. The Welsh soprano Anne Evans - Bayreuth’s preferred Brünnhilde from 1989 to 1992 - finally takes her rightful Wagnerian place with the Royal Opere to give us a seamlessly sung, gloriously secure assessment of the warrior-maiden. Two more Bayreuth Brits step up too - the tenor Graham Clark is a wonderfully wicked Mime and the bass John Tomlinson brings baleful glitter to The Wanderer. Alas, the chauvinism falls apart when we come to the production team responsible for the third segment of this preposterous new Ring - director Richard Jones and designer Nigel Lowery.

Once more we are transported to Wagner in Wonderland for an abstract, simplistic staging that owes more to music hall, revue, pantomime and vaudeville than it does to timeless myth.... (Tomlinson’s Wanderer resembles Sir Harry Lauder on a bad night - false beard, tartan top, frock-like kilt and a blind man’s walking stick-...Clark’s Mime is a long-haired clown in Max Wall boots...Siegfried...a shambling sorcerer’s apprentice from Jack And The Beanstalk, a giant-killer who grows out of short trousers only when he slays the dragon. The forging of his sword is certainly straight from a panto kitchen...)

Lowery’s vivid colours and some sharp pieces of stagecraft - particularly the shadow-play dragon who turns out to be a Halloween monster with pumpkin head - add touches of genuine innovation, but there are far too many silly things along the way.

The Ring is not an anti-romantic Monty Python farce but an epic power struggle between gods, giants and dwarfs and a mighty Wagnerian love story in which the redeeming power of love will ultimately save the world. Turning it into a remorselessly knockabout comic strip is to trivialise a master work beyond recognition and belief.

Conductor Bernard Haitink once more draws playing of brisk but shimmering authority. It is a disgrace that such fine musical standards should be squandered on the chap trickery of this risible production. **DAVID GILLARD**

Siegfried Survives

(Extract reprinted from *The Financial Times* Wednesday March 29, 1995)

We all have our gripes about “concept” opera-productions, but Richard Jones’s Siegfried - the latest instalment in his version of Wagner’s *Ring* for the Royal Opera - confirms what *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* had suggested: that a guiding concept was needed to justify all the little jokes, twists and reversals-of-expectation that trick out this *Ring*, and that there is none. In Nigel Lowery’s designs, the Jones production is a random assemblage of small, bright-ish, quite disparate ideas.

Yet Siegfried survives the treatment rather well...The Royal Opera has fielded a distinguished cast, and under the anxious, thoughtful direction of Bernard Haitink - rumour has it that he loathes the production - they convey much more of the depth and power of the music than Jones has bothered to match....

In this *Ring*, Jones seems to have just three modes of interpretation. First, to reduce Wagner’s characters to one-dimensional cartoons (Brünnhilde is really a mother-figure for Siegfried: well yes, but we *knew* that, and so did Wagner, and it is not the whole truth by a long way). Secondly, to contradict basic assumptions - Wagner’s for a start - about settings and moods: the primeval forest, the rarefied peaks. Thirdly, to introduce freehand any arbitrary joke that springs to mind: the empty series of boxes-within-boxes that Mime gives Siegfried here, the proliferating wardrobes, the campy Woodbirds.

Nothing really holds it together, except Wagner’s transcendent score. It is a spit in the eye, sometimes amusing, without any central focus. Is this really worth doing at such expense? Is it the best kind of attempt at the *Ring* that we can muster these days? It would be sad to think that was true. **DAVID MURRAY**

We have also been sent two articles about Bayreuth written by **Frank Johnson**, Deputy Editor of the *Sunday Telegraph* (London). In the first article, he explores the conceit of confusing Bayreuth with Beirut and tries a war-correspondent’s account of Bayreuth -

‘Many of these people who have just gone into Siegfried have no hope of getting out for five hours. Two nights later, they face almost six hours of *Gotterdammerung*. Despite the searing heat, the one thing agreed on by the feuding clan which controls the festival is: no cuts’...

The second article is a more of a treatise on Hitler, Wagner, and Bayreuth today.

“Germans have become less German. So has Bayreuth, 50 miles from Nuremberg. Its Richard Wagner Strasse now contains a C&A, a Woolworths, and a pub called “Big Ben”...On stage the preoccupations are also international. In this year’s *Ring*, when Siegfried was murdered, green trees dipped in sorrow and homage. The producer was making an “environmental statement” about our planet being defiled...”

[Extracts reprinted from the *World of Opera* newsletter, 2nd ed, Summer 1995, compiled by Investour Travel (who conduct tours to Bayreuth from London).]

This extract is from *The Australian Opera Patrons & Friends* newsletter of May 1995:

1996 OPERA TOUR OF NORTH AMERICA
Featuring the Lyric Opera of Chicago's Ring Cycle, March 1996

Join supporters of The Australian Opera...[on this tour to]...the Lyric Opera of Chicago's March 1996 series of three complete cycles, each over one week. The cycle will be conducted by Zubin Mehta, directed by August Everding and designed by John Conklin, and will feature great singers such as James Morris, Eva Marton, Jan Eaglen and Siegfried Jerusalem. This 18 day tour will be led by Stephen Hall AM, former artistic director of The Australian Opera and founder of the Festival of Sydney. Highlights will include a week in Chicago for the Ring Cycle, culminating in a reception with performers and staff of the Lyric Opera; plus opera performances in three other cities, including *La Forza del Destino* at the Metropolitan Opera; [and more]...

For further information about this tour, call Ruth Taylor or Liz Mead on 699 1099.

BAYREUTH LECTURES 1995

For visitors to Bayreuth in August, here is an opportunity to attend a lecture series presented by the Wagner Society of New York: **Professor Bryan Gilliam, Lecturer**. This series is now in its eleventh year.

| | | | |
|-----------|--------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| August 18 | Parsifal | August 23 | Die Walküre |
| August 19 | Tannhäuser | August 25 | Siegfried |
| August 20 | Tristan und Isolde | August 27 | Götterdämmerung |
| August 22 | Das Rheingold | | |

Place: Festspielrestaurant, Festspielhügel, Bayreuth
Time: 10.30 to noon Cost: DM10 per lecture

Bryan Gilliam received his PhD in musicology at Harvard University in 1984 and currently serves as Associate Professor of Music at Duke University, where he taught a graduate seminar on Wagner's music dramas last fall. He addressed the Society at its Wagner/Strauss Seminar and its Karl Böhm Centennial Celebration in 1994.

Wagner Society of New York, PO Box 949, Ansonia Station, New York, NY 10023-0949, USA.
Phone: 212/749-4561; Fax: 212/749-1542.

SYDNEY CONSERVATORIUM ASSOCIATION

BAYREUTH (Germany) REVISITED

AN INVITATION

To return to the home of

THE RING

SEE AND HEAR ABOUT THE NEW PRODUCTION

Presented by Elizabeth Long

At the home of Mrs Joyce Tonge

Come with Elizabeth to Bayreuth, Germany, to see Wagner's Festival Theatre -- built especially for his music drama *Der Ring des Nibelungen*.

We will visit "Wahnfried", Wagner's home/museum -- and the beautiful Bayreuth Opera House.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU

Date: Sunday, June 25, 1995

Time: 3 pm

Venue: 4 Chesterfield Road, Epping
Phone 876 1707

Cost: \$10 Concession \$6 includes refreshments
Proceeds to the Sydney Conservatorium Association Scholarship Fund.

SEATTLE RING

Nancy Fleming, a member of the Wagner Society, would like to contact any other members who are travelling to Seattle for the second cycle, August 14 - August 19.

Please telephone Nancy on [02] 958 3110.

NOEL MANGIN, GREAT NEW ZEALAND BASS, DIES

Noel was born in Wellington, New Zealand, December 31, 1931 and died March 4, 1995.

Noel had a commanding presence and was well known for his great dramatic and buffo roles.

He made his operatic debut in 1957 as Germont Père in *La Traviata* - a baritone - and following a line of great Kiwi singers such as Oscar Natzke and Inia Te Wiata, became a bass.

His professional career started at the Australian Opera, then the Elizabethan Trust Opera, as Sparafucile; and his debut as Sarastro, one of his favourite roles, took place with that company at the Palais Theatre in Melbourne. Throughout his life Noel retained a real degree of affection for the AO, always remembering its initiative in starting and consolidating his career. He made friendships there that lasted 35 years.

After a long period of study in Paris with Domonique Modesti, who was also Lauris Elms' teacher, Noel went to London and joined the Sadler's Wells Opera, now the English National Opera. Leaving London he became principal bass with the Hamburg State Opera for ten years and from there sang in nearly every major opera house in Europe.

...

He sang Hunding, Fafner and Hagen in the Seattle *Ring*. He studied under Wieland Wagner but Wieland's death deprived him of the opportunity to sing at Bayreuth, and he was unable to accept Wolfgang's later offer to sing Hagen. His illness also prevented him from singing in the Arizona *Ring* cycle.

His many roles with the Victoria State Opera included Bluebeard, Basilio, Don Pasquale, Mestopheles, and Timur.

(We acknowledge these excerpts from articles by Richard Divall and Alison Jones in recent issues of *Opera Australasia*.)

DEATH

The Society records with regret the death of Frank Keep of Wollongong

PARSIFAL AT THE BRISBANE BIENNIAL

For those not fortunate enough to visit Brisbane on May 27, we reprint extracts from the music critics' reviews.

Mesmerising, except for the musicians

Parsifal by Richard Wagner, Queensland Symphony Orchestra; Gunther Schuller, conductor. Concert Hall, Brisbane, for the Brisbane Biennial. (*The Australian*, May 29, 1995).

Saturday's performance of *Parsifal* kept an attentive near-capacity audience mesmerised. Versatile American conductor Gunther Schuller ... set an ideal pace, and sought constantly for the consistency and balance of texture that keep Wagner's work from rushing or dragging.

The star of the evening was undoubtedly soprano Isolde Elchlepp. Although engaged at the eleventh hour, she provided a superb account of Kundry, by turn sullen, sultry, wild and desperate. Even in this concert mode, Elchlepp was superbly dramatic, maintaining excellent intonation through the most histrionic of Wagner's parts.

The soprano was excellently matched in here dramatics by Franz Mazura as Klingsor, and truly deserved the wild enthusiasm displayed by the audience at the end of Act II.

Act I is dominated by the bass role of the knight Gurnemanz, here rendered with maturity and rock-solid reliability by Donald McIntyre. Gurnemanz is the anchorman who relates the tragic or enlightening events of other characters around him, and McIntyre's rich and even tone was ideal for this role.

Parsifal is harder to bring off. His character has to change more over the course of the opera than any other, yet do so with subtlety. As the title character, Arley Reece made a fine "fool" of himself in Act I and allowed his emotions to boil over at the crucial point in Act II, where *Parsifal* abruptly rejects the seduction of Kundry. However, Reece's voice is on the small side for this part. He underplayed the empowered, redeeming *Parsifal* of Act III and left the finale of the opera accordingly undervalued in relation to the sizzling second act.

The baritone James Maddalena as the morbid Amfortas began insecurely...but never fully assayed the range of emotions that his part can entertain. Donald Shanks provided strong, well-judged entries for Amfortas's father, Titirel...

Parsifal was a bold and successful initiative for the first full day of the festival. It was only the second Australian concert performance of the work and, hopefully, will inspire one of our opera companies to mount the Australian stage premiere before the millennium is out.

MALCOLM GILLIES

Riding out the currents of anxiety

Music. Brisbane Biennial, May 27. *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 May, 1995.

Roger Covell relates the problems with two Kundrys who had to cancel, then continues:

...All was resolved on Saturday night. A third Kundry, Isolde Elchlepp, arrived from Germany in time for final rehearsals in the Performing Arts Complex's concert hall and sounded fresh and strong enough to have sung the part twice. Although described as a mezzo-soprano, she had no difficulty in letting loose an occasional ringing high B, transposing a phrase up an octave in order to do so.

Although Kundry, with her incorrigible desire to serve patriarchal and incipiently patriarchal males, may not be a favoured role model for feminists, she is at the heart of the action when the Christian-Buddhist ethical ritual of the opera suddenly blazes into drama, hero against demon, in act two. Here and elsewhere the admirable Elchlepp was in the company of some soloist colleagues of the highest calibre.

Donald McIntyre, the great and greatly experienced New Zealand bass-baritone, has so much natural presence and vocal-visual authority that he transcends the anonymity of concert dress in projecting the character and even the milieu of the lovably wordy Gurnemanz, keeper of the Grail knights' conscience. As his phrases registered optimism, hope and vision in the later passages of act three, there seemed no reason why Sir Donald should not be still singing as warmly and effectively as ever in 20 years.

The same might hold good for another splendid veteran, the 71-year-old Franz Mazura, as the evil self-castrated (but bass-voiced) magician, Klingsor. I feared his powerful and much-used voice might show a trace of wobble in the Brisbane Concert Hall. But his tone was as firm and exciting as his vivid sense of engagement in the drama of act two.

The only intrusive vibrato of the evening came from a much younger singer, the American baritone James Maddalena, as the wounded, anguished Amfortas; but Maddalena carried conviction with the passion of his phrasing.

If Arley Reece was a touch matter-of-fact as Parsifal, his tenor voice was at all times sure and comfortably within its range and powers in singing the music of the "guileless fool" who makes his first entrance as the equivalent of a crazed duck-hunter and slowly attains visionary dedication.

Donald Shanks, the sole Australian among the major principals, made up for the smallness of his part as the aged Titirel by the grandly-rumbling size of his voice; and the flower maidens, knights and other soloists and choristers were true, well-prepared and perhaps inevitably diminished in tone by being behind the orchestra.

The Queensland Symphony Orchestra, on stage and off, lived up to its responsibilities even where its numbers were well under Wagnerian strength. The violins were persistently unsatisfactory in their agreement in high-flying passages; the horns began as if intent on nudging every other entry slightly off pitch, but then cured themselves completely of this habit. Gunther Schuller's conducting, short on inspiration, was at all times clear, calm and mindful of the immensely long strategies of the work..... **ROGER COVELL**

Ravens reporting...contd.

Marseille *The Ring* - Three Ring cycles are to be given in Oct/Nov 1996. The cast includes Jeannine Altmeyer, Heikki Siukola, Nadine Secunde, Robert Schunk, Hermann Becht, Kurt Rydle. Conducted by Serge Baudo and designer Charles Roubard.

Buenos Aires *Das Rheingold* - Teatro Colon is to assemble a Ring beginning with *Das Rheingold* this December. Conducted by Franz-Paul Decker, producer and sets Roberto Oswald and costumes by Anibal Lapiz. The cast includes Eva Maria Bundschuh, Robert Hale, Paul Frey, Helmut Pampuch and Sergey Koptchak. The Ring is to be completed in 1998. *Das Rheingold* December 5, 7, 10, 12.

Dortmund *Götterdämmerung* (new production) - Conducted by Moshe Atzmon, producer Heinz Lukas-Kindermann and designer Dieter Schoras. Opens September 18.

**ANNOUNCEMENT OF WINNERS OF THE GUESSING COMPETITION
DRAWN 21 MAY 1995**

THANKS to all those who supported our new annual guessing competition which raised approximately \$900 for the Society.

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| FIRST PRIZE | Margaret Whitlam \$300 David Jones gift voucher |
| SECOND PRIZE | James Buchanan Life of Richard Wagner, by Ernest Newman |
| THIRD PRIZE | Nancy Fleming History of Western Music, by Percy Scholes |

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, GPO Box 4574, SYDNEY NSW 2001.

THE RAVENS REPORTING:

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

- Venice **Holländer** - Gabriela Benackova, Gosta Winbergh, Bernd Weigl. Conductor Marek Janowski, producer and designer Wolfgang Wagner. June 18, 21, 27, 29 and July 2.
- Munich **Parsifal** (new production) - Marjana Lipovšek, John Keys, John Brocheler, Tom Fox, Kurt Moll. Conductor Peter Schneider, Producer Peter Konwitschny and designer Johannes Leiacker. July 1,4,8,11.
Die Meistersinger - July 28, 31.
- Savonlinna **Holländer** - Savonlinna Opera Festival, Finland - Elisabeth Meyer-Topsoe, Raimo Sirkiä, Esa Ruuttunen/Jukka Rasilainen, Matti Salminen. Conductor Gintaras Rinkevicius, director Ilkka Bäckman and designer Juhani Pirskanen. July 15, 18, 22, 27 and August 1-4.
- Aahus **Götterdämmerung** - Danish National Opera - Wagner Festival 95-96. Conductor Francesco Cristofoli, Producer Klaus Hoffmeyer and designer Lars Juhl. August 25, 27, 31.
- Los Angeles **Holländer** (new production) - Ealynn Voss, Frederick Kalt, Greg Fedderly, Franz Grundheber, Louis Lebherz. Conductor Asher Fisch, producer Julie Taymor and designers George Tsy-pin and Constance Hoffmann. A co-production with Houston and ENO. September 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 24m, 27.
- San Francisco **Die Walküre** - Gabriele Schnaut, Anne Evans, Marjana Lipovšek, Poul Elming, James Morris/Willard White, Victor von Halem. Conductor Donald Runnicles, producer Nikolaus Lehnhoff, revived by Laurie Feldman, designer John Conklin. November 4, 7, 12m, 15, 21, 25, 29.
- Buenos Aires **Das Rheingold** (new production) - Teatro Colon. Anne Gjevang, Eva Maria Bundschuh, Cornelia Wulkopf, Robert Hale, Paul Frey, Helmut Pampuch, Sergey Koptchak, Oskar Hillebrandt. Conductor Franz-Paul Decker and producer Roberto Oswald. December 5, 7, 10, 12.
- Amsterdam **The Ring** - De Nederlandse Opera is to assemble a Ring cycle in 1997 and 1998 with a complete Ring in April/May/June 1999. Das Rheingold is scheduled for September 1997, Die Walküre in January/February 1998, Siegfried in June 1998 and Götterdämmerung in September 1998. It is to be conducted by Hartmut Haenchen and directed by Pierra Audi.

