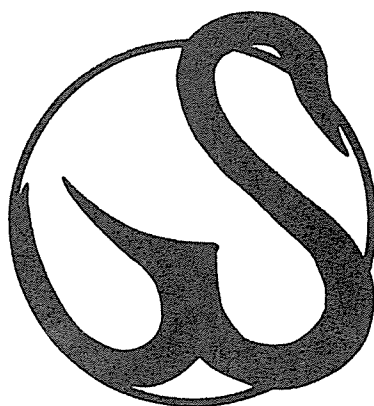


The Wagner Society

IN NEW SOUTH WALES INC.

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



Newsletter

No. 73, November/December 1998

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PATRON:	SIR CHARLES MACKERRAS
HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS:	Miss RITA HUNTER, CBE
	Prof MICHAEL EWANS
	Mr RICHARD KING
	Mr REG MALONEY
	Mr HORST HOFFMANN
	Mr JOSEPH FERFOGLIA

COMING EVENTS

<i>DATE</i>	<i>EVENT</i>	<i>LOCATION</i>
December 13	Christmas Party	Goethe Institut 2.00 pm
1999 February 21	Stephen Phillips: "After the Ring is Over" A retrospective discussion on the first Australian Ring	Goethe Institut 1.00 pm
March 13-14	Parsifal weekend (<i>see p. 2</i>)	Pokolbin
March 21	Video: <i>Siegfried</i> (Kupfer production)	Goethe Institut 1.00 pm
April 18	Peter Nicholson: Wagner as Artist	Goethe Institut 1.00 pm
May 23	Richard Wagner Birthday Luncheon. Guest speaker, Adrian Collette	Ritz Carlton 12.00 for 12.30
<p>Please also note the following dates for 1999: June 20, (also June 23 & 26 for SSO's <i>Siegfried</i>, booking details for theatre parties March issue) July 18 (AGM) 12 September October 17, November 21 and December 12</p>		

COMMITTEE 1998-99

President	Barbara McNulty	9487 1344
Vice President and Treasurer	Olive Coonan	9387 6403
Vice President and Membership Secretary	Clare Hennessy	9747 5664
Secretary	Barry Walters	9387 6642
Members	Barbara Brady (Editor, Newsletter)	9956 5132
	Roger Cruickshank	9357 7631
	Onofrio Ferrara	97994569
	Shirley Robertson	9707 2225
	Terence Watson	9517 2786
Public Officer	Reg Maloney	

THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I am pleased to be able to tell you that Clare Hennessy has agreed to accept the dual roles of Vice President and Membership Secretary which means the Committee is once again at full strength.

We were all sorry when Antony Ernst finished his series of Ring lectures. They were an interesting and helpful preparation for Adelaide and certainly provoked much discussion. We wish him a successful sojourn in Dresden - co-producing *Il Trittico* - and look forward to his return.

At the moment the texts of these lectures are being edited for publication next year as occasional papers. Our thanks go to Paul Lehmann for recording each lecture and to Barbara and Ian Brady for the very time-consuming task of transcription. A small subcommittee has undertaken responsibility for the editing and on-going liaison with Antony.

Jane and Barry Walters and I spent a delightful couple of hours at the home of the German Consul General, Mr Otto Roever and Mrs Roever, to celebrate the National Day of the German Federal Republic. It was very pleasant to be able to spend time with our friends from the Consulate and the Goethe Institut who take such an interest in the Wagner Society.

I look forward to seeing many of you in Adelaide, where I know we are in for a wonderful experience, and at our Christmas Party on 13th December. My best wishes to you all for a happy festive season, and please remember that our first meeting next year will be on 21st February when we will have the opportunity to hear about the Ring cycles from Stephen Phillips and ask the many questions we will have brought back from Adelaide.

BARBARA McNULTY

DONATIONS

The Society welcomes all donations and they can be addressed to the Treasurer, Wagner Society in NSW Inc at the address below. Donations are tax-deductible and receipts will be issued.

NEW MEMBERS

The Society is delighted to welcome the following new members: Mrs Penelope Seidler, Mrs Anne Smith, Mr Ian Hutchison, Mr Carl Erle, Mr Michael Sexton, Ms Gay Raby and Jack Sexton.

ADDRESS

Please note our permanent address for all correspondence

The Wagner Society in New South Wales Inc

GPO Box 4574 SYDNEY NSW 2001

Telephone: 9487 1344 (Barbara McNulty, President)

E-Mail: bradywav@acay.com.au (Barbara Brady for *Newsletter* items)

All contributions to the *Newsletter* are gratefully received and may be sent to the editor at the above address; copyright permission for extracts from publications will be sought by the editor where appropriate.

JOSEPH FERFOGLIA

The Committee has great pleasure in advising that our Honorary Auditor, Joseph Ferfoglia, has accepted Honorary Life Membership. Joseph and his wife Judy were very early members of the Wagner Society in NSW and are among our strongest supporters. Joseph served for many years on the Committee and now advises on financial matters. Though they live in the Mountains Joseph and Judy regularly attend meetings and bring great enthusiasm to all matters Wagnerian. I am sure that all members will welcome Joseph as an Honorary Life Member.

OSWALD GEORG BAUER

A number of members of this society were privileged to meet Dr Bauer on 12 November at a dinner at The Bennelong Restaurant. Dr Bauer is one of the four keynote speakers at 'Wagner at the Millennium' where he will be addressing the symposium on: *United in Love and Spring; Nature as Performer in the Ring*. Dr Bauer holds the position of Secretary-General of the Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts. His latest book, translated into English, is *Richard Wagner Goes to the Theatre* (1998) but some members of our group own copies of his earlier classic on stage designs and productions. Despite having just jetted in to Sydney that day he showed no sign of fatigue and was generous in sharing with us his reminiscences of Bayreuth, Wolfgang Wagner (which whom he keeps in close contact), specific productions of Wagner operas and recent German history. We were interested to learn that he had been here before, in 1977, to present a Wagner exhibition at the Sydney Opera House.

PARSIFAL WEEKEND AT CATERSFIELD, 13 -14 MARCH 1999

If you wish to join us on this weekend, please complete the coupon below and return it, with your cheque, to the Wagner Society in NSW, GPO Box 4574, Sydney, NSW, 2001. The closing date for applications is 31.1.99.

PARSIFAL WEEKEND	
I/we wish to reserve	places for the Parsifal seminar at Catersfield House, Mistletoe Lane, Pokolbin over the weekend 13-14 March, 1999.
My cheque for \$	is enclosed,
at the rate of \$230* per person for two nights' shared accommodation, seminar fees, two breakfasts, one lunch and a wine tasting and gala dinner (BYO) on Saturday night.	
(* \$150 surcharge for single accommodation)	
Name/s:	
Phone Number/s	
Address	

THE ROYAL OPERA RING

Notes from London. The Royal Opera Ring - a semi-staged production in the Royal Albert Hall. 28 September to 3 October 1998. Conductor: Bernard Haitink. Director: No one given credit.

Let me make a confession at the very start. I think the just concluded production at Bayreuth is pretty extraordinary. I even came to like Rosalie's costumes - after they had been modified somewhat. The Royal Opera's 'semi-staged' or, in reality, 'no frills' effort in the vastness of the Royal Albert Hall, turned out to be just as remarkable. Semi-staged for this production constituted two strategically placed verdigris cubes on a specially constructed thrust stage which resembled a stealth bomber. The Royal Opera Orchestra and its conductor, Bernard Haitink, were located behind this stage. The singers were dependent on an array of televisions for their cues.

The cycle as a whole was characterised by marvellous performances by the orchestra and chorus which eclipsed any unevenness by some of the Principals.

Das Rheingold

The very ragged start by the three Rheinmaidens (Rosemary Joshua, Gillian Webster and Leath-Marian Jones), whose voices were a bit uncertain in the great arena, was matched by an equally unsteady orchestra. 'Oh dear,' some of us thought. Maestro Haitink ploughed on with a steady pace but the whole thing was proving to be a bit ordinary. John Tomlinson as Wotan, was pacing himself rather nicely and an intelligent and sympathetic Fricka (Michelle DeYoung) started to move things out of the commonplace. The entry of Loge (Philip Langridge), whose 'spivy' costume caused a murmur of mirth from the hitherto respectful audience, started to get things moving. Both his voice and acting started at a high level and just got better. The interchanges between Wotan, Loge, Alberich (Ekkehard Wlaschiha) and Mime (Robin Leggate) introduced a measure of humour. This, probably together with the singers' and orchestra's growing sense of comfort with the peculiar acoustics of the RAH, produced a spark of something special. The growing sense of certainty of accomplishment had been helped along by splendid acting and vocal performances of Fasolt (Kristin Sigmundsson) and Fafner (Matthias Holle). The night's accolades went to Bernard Haitink, whose experience and grit finally pulled the orchestra together, and to Philip Langridge who attacked his role with flair.

Die Walküre

The reviews for Rheingold were mixed, to say the least, so we in the audience awaited the opening bars of Walküre with some apprehension. We should not have worried because Maestro Haitink was now fully in control and the orchestra was much more accomplished. It would remain so for the rest of the cycle. The first act was, however, a bit flat. Neither Siegmund (Kim Begley) nor Sieglinde (Rita Cullis) produced anything sparkling. Hunding (Matthias Holle - the splendid Fafner of the night before) however, produced a firm and powerful performance. The second act saw a change in quality. Fricka (Michelle DeYoung) gave a sensitive and exciting performance. This was matched by a powerful and moving interplay between Brünnhilde (Hildegard Behrens), in consummate voice, and Siegmund. A powerful bunch of Walküren moved the opera further above the average. Their mastery heralded the final and moving scene between Wotan, an emotional and accomplished voiced John Tomlinson, and his wayward daughter. A British audience moved to tears? Yes. This weeping turned into a tumultuous reception for the Maestro and the cast.

Siegfried

The quality of the opening bars of the short orchestral prelude assured us that the orchestra was now under full control. This meant that we could better cope with the uncertainties surrounding some of the principals. Mime's (Graham Clark) entry heralded an exuberant act characterised by superb exchanges between Mime and Siegfried (Stig Andersen) and between Mime and The Wanderer (John Tomlinson). Clark's performance, in all respects, was profound. Stig Andersen's voice, while lacking a clarity in tone, was nonetheless impressive for its strength. His enthusiastic acting was appropriate for this bullish production. Act 2 continued the power of Act 1. Of note was the enchanting forest murmurs. The sheer intensity of the acting made us forget the limitations of the performance space. Act 3 was a bit of a let down. Brünnhilde (Anne Evans) was slightly stiff both in terms of acting and voice. By the time of the final Siegfried/Brünnhilde rapture, Stig Andersen was feeling the strain of his earlier ebullient performance. This is a minor criticism however. A special mention must be made of the gentle and moving interaction between Wotan and Erda (Catherine Wyn-Rogers). The cheers at the end of the performance were fitting.

Götterdämmerung

What a night! The first bars of the Prologue caused us to realise that we were being confronted, for this night at least, by the best orchestra in the world. Its brilliance, together with the surety of the Norms (Catherine Wyn-Rogers, Jane Irwin and Rita Cullis), caused this scene to flash by in an instant. The Act I interaction between a malignant Hagen (Kurt Rydl), a petulant Gunther (Alan Held), as well as a dynamic Waltraute (Petra Lang) added to the mounting excitement of this production. Act 2 opens with a powerful and sinister confrontation between Hagen and a menacing Alberich (Ekkehard Wlaschiha). Evil is soon dissipated by the disciplined and soaring sounds of the vassals (RO Chorus). Somewhat shaky, we stumbled into the corridors of the Royal Albert Hall to mutter our enthusiasms. In Act 3 the vastly improved and spirited Rheinmaidens (Rosemary Joshua, Gillian Webster and Leath-Marian Jones) toyed with the ever ebullient Siegfried (Stig Andersen). Something in his voice was now different - a new clarity or lustre heralded his own pending demise. In the final scene of this now astounding production Gunther is literally thrown off the stage by a frenzied Hagen. Brünnhilde (Ann Evans) approaches her immolation with a restrained dignity and a clear, perfectly pitched, albeit limited in volume, voice.

But the time for criticism is now over, for Bernard Haitink, the RO Orchestra and Chorus and the hard working Principals have clearly created something phenomenal. At the end Maestro Haitink bowed his head in a quiet contemplation of his creation. Moved, the audience thundered its appreciation. The Maestro pacified the audience. 'Write to the Ministry of Culture. Very serious. Help us,' he pleaded in his subdued voice.

The elated and angry audience poured out of the hall, all intent on writing to their MPs and to the Royal Opera. I hope they do and I hope that the Royal Opera is able to survive its own *Götterdämmerung* - it must.

JOHN D. STUDDERT

This is John's fourth *Ring Cycle* - three at Bayreuth. He will be going to Adelaide.

BOOK REVIEWS

Who's Who and What's What in Wagner, by Jonathan Lewsey. London, Ashgate, 1997, 330p. This is a dictionary arrangement of characters in Wagner's operas, of the works themselves and of selected topics and objects related to the works. The entries vary in length from two lines to several pages and are based on Wagner's texts, so under each opera we get a summary of the plot and for each character, a chronology of what he or she does throughout the opera. This leads, naturally, to some overlap. The range of characters is comprehensive, including those who do not appear on stage such as King Gibich and Grimhilde, and there is also a minute coverage of terms and objects such as the Tabulator and the Slate and Polter Evening in *Die Meistersinger*.

Some examples from the entries under **W** will give you an indication of the variety of topics treated: **Wasser**, der (Water); **Weckrufer**, der (The Awakener); **Wehwalt** (Woeful); **Wellgunde** (Rheinmaiden); **Weltesche**, der (The World Ash Tree). Does anything else occur to you? In a book written by an Englishman for an English audience, the head-words, or leading words, are in the German language. To find the woodbird (Waldvogel) wasn't too hard but try looking for the giants (Riesen)!

It is not really a dictionary if you cannot find entries in alphabetical order by their English words, but it is certainly a collection of interesting essays. However, it is difficult to gauge the level of knowledge the author assumes from his readers. Each major article is characterised by a concise introduction and a thoughtful and sometimes insightful conclusion. For example, the essay on Alberich (some 5 ½ pages) not only narrates Alberich's actions throughout the Cycle but summarises his crucial role in the drama, his relation to Wotan and his own character. On the one hand the preponderance of plot summaries and character descriptions suggests a simple, basic book aimed at newcomers to Wagner, but on the other hand there are some passages that are on a difficult intellectual level, such as the essay on sex - which is evidently spelt the same in both languages.

What else do you expect of a reference book? The absolute essential is an index but regrettably, that is lacking; however cross references are plentiful once you know where you are in the text. There is also something called a glossary which is a table of selected quotations from the operas. These are not arranged alphabetically (you couldn't very well do this because they don't have key words as in a true glossary) but are grouped under each of the ten major operas in chronological order. These quotations are translated by the author (both literally and idiomatically) and are usually referred from the section on one of the characters. The first entry in the glossary (under *Der fliegende Holländer*) gives Wagner's original text and then Lewsey's translation for: "No doubt of it; the storm has driven us seven miles from safe haven". Why? Most readers would accept that Lewsey is using accurate quotations appropriately in the body of his text without feeling the need to check the source of those he opts to list in this table.

There is indeed a bibliography but at first glance it looks a bit strange. For example, there is a small selection of the standard works on and by Wagner but also you will find a couple of novels by Dostoevsky and poems by Yeats, Homer's *Iliad* and James Joyce's *Ulysses* together with *Zen and the art of Motorcycle Maintenance* by R.M. Pirsig. The author explains his basis for including these other works as their reflection of "themes which occur and re-occur throughout Wagner's works".

Finally there is a selected discography which includes live recordings, studio recordings and videos. I admit to being unqualified to assess this but it is pleasing to see recordings of *Die Feen*, *Das Liebesverbot* and *Rienzi*, and it does run to eleven pages (as against the bibliography's two pages).

So we have a dictionary which is not a dictionary and a glossary which is not a glossary and a somewhat subjective bibliography. As a collection of essays and definitions this work often makes interesting reading to dip into, and as a source of reference to known characters it is workable (though I am not comfortable with putting Walther under Stolzing), but to non-German readers its value is fatally diminished.

BARBARA BRADY

Richard Wagner's Artwork of the Future and Judaism: Inspirational or Conspiratorial? by Michelle Renouf. London, Stage-Set, 1998. 65pp. plus 3 inserts: 'An account of how and why this book was banned at its launch at the Arizona Opera in USA' in three languages.

A copy of this small volume was sent to the Society by the author, a member of the London Wagner Society. Privately published, it shows much evidence of the haste with which it was prepared. The editing is sloppy, some key quotations are not sourced and Wolfgang Wagner's wife Gudrun is referred to as Guttrune. The prose style is convoluted and the organization of each section makes it very difficult to follow the argument.

Lady Renouf seems to absolve Wagner of anti-semitism and indeed appears to make a case for Wagner borrowing his concept of "the chosen people" from Judaism and then transferring this to the German folk.

It is doubtful if this monograph advances the debate in any way though perhaps it could form the basis of a future discussion.

BARBARA McNULTY

THE RAVENS HAVE FLOWN

Ravens reporter, Camron Dyer, having only just returned from the USA where he experienced a feast of opera including *Tristan* at San Francisco and *Holländer* at Houston, has barely had time to turn around before heading for Adelaide. Accordingly this issue misses out on his very valuable report of Wagner opera overseas - but watch for an update in the following issue of the Newsletter.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

The Society acknowledges with thanks receipt of the following publications from Wagner societies and related organisations: *Kulturchronik* (Goethe Institut) Nos. 2-4, 1998; *Leitmotive*: the journal of the Wagner Society of Northern California, Vol. 11 No.4, Winter 1997 and Vol. 12 No. 1, Spring 1998; *Newsletter, Richard Wagner Society of South Australia*, Nos 116-121, June-Nov. 1998; *Newsletter: The Wagner Society of New Zealand*, Vol. 2 Nos. 1-3, May-Oct. 1998; *Richard Wagner Nachrichten*: (Österreichische Richard-Wagner-Gesellschaft) Jahrg.10/Folge 3-4, Juli-Nov. 1998; *Wagner News* (The Wagner Society, UK) No.xxx, *Wagner Notes* (Wagner Society of New York) Vol. xxi No.3-5, June-Oct. 1998.