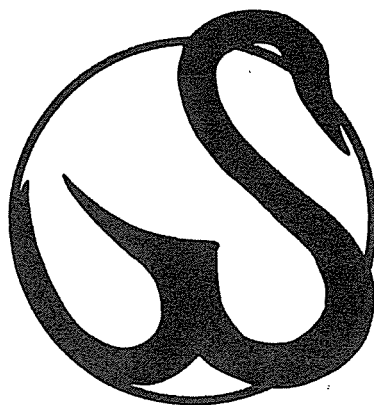


The Wagner Society

IN NEW SOUTH WALES INC.

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



Newsletter

No. 74, March 1999

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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>
March 13-14	Parsifal weekend	Pokolbin
March 21	Video: <i>Siegfried</i> (Kupfer production)	Goethe Institut 1.00 pm
April 18	“Orpheus Ascending”: Sydney poet Peter Nicholson presents a reassessment of Wagner and Wagnerism	Goethe Institut 1.00 pm
May 23	Richard Wagner Birthday Luncheon. Guest speaker, Adrian Collette	Ritz Carlton 12.00 for 12.30
June 20	to be advised	Goethe Institut
June 23 and 26	Sydney Symphony Orchestra’s concert version of <i>Siegfried</i> . See application form p.4	Opera House Concert Hall
July 18	Annual General Meeting	Goethe Institut 1.00 pm
August 22	Talk by Simone Young, Musical Director Elect of Opera Australia	Goethe Institut 1.00 pm
September 12, October 17, November 21 and December 12		

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
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THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

So much has happened since my last report to you and it is clear that the success of the Adelaide Ring has given Wagner Societies around Australia a new breath of life. It was wonderful to meet members from the other Australian Societies as well as those from England, Europe and the States.

Part of the excitement was meeting overseas visitors in Sydney and sharing our beautiful city with them. Amongst those visiting Sydney were Danila Mendoza and Verena Kossoto from New York. Those members who have attended the New York Wagner Society lectures in Bayreuth will remember Verena. Elizabeth Samson from Los Angeles was here for a few days as were Peter Haggblom, Tapio Eriksson and Teijo Saaari from Finland.

While attending a performance at the Sydney Opera House recently the complete stranger sitting beside me asked "Did you go to Adelaide?" and launched into his impressions with enthusiasm. It was his first Ring and the performances had made an indelible impression.

We were delighted to have Stephen Phillips, the Managing Director of the State Opera of South Australia, as our guest speaker at the February meeting this year and to hear first hand what had gone into the years of planning for such a massive undertaking. Following its triumphant success we are delighted to hear that the South Australian Government has set up a Consortium to develop a Management Model for a possible new Australian Ring at a future date.

While I was in Adelaide Oswald Bauer, whom some members met at dinner at the Bennelong in November, made a point of repeating his thanks and saying how much he had enjoyed the evening particularly the enthusiasm and knowledge of those present.

The Richard Wagner Society of South Australia and those others responsible for arranging the International Seminar, displays, films, lectures and social gatherings that kept us all involved are to be heartily congratulated. Our time in Adelaide was busy, interesting and stimulating.

As a result of Adelaide, Olive Coonan and I had a brief meeting just before Christmas with Heath and Liz Lees who are founding members of the New Zealand Wagner Society. Heath is anxious to try and establish Australasian Wagner links and as a result of our conversation some 30 members of the New Zealand Society are expected to come to Sydney for the Siegfried concert on Saturday, 26 June. Tentative plans are being made to run a short seminar on the Saturday morning, before the concert, at the Goethe Institut. Further information will be sent to you in April, together with the invitation to the Annual Lunch which will be held in May, once details are finalised.

On a sadder note we mourned the death of Alastair Mackerras, a member of the Society, who made such an outstanding contribution to the life of this city not only as headmaster of Sydney Grammar School but in many other areas.

Peter Haggblom from Finland has sent me details of a Ring to be performed in Helsinki in June 2000 and arrangements are being made to reserve a number of tickets. Details of the casts will

be included in the next newsletter but if any one is interested in going please contact me so I can keep you informed. It is expected that the Finnish Wagner Society will arrange a range of activities to coincide with the performances.

The year has started with a burst of enthusiasm and I hope we can build on this and make 1999 another outstanding year.

BARBARA McNULTY

DONATIONS

We acknowledge with sincere thanks the generous donations of Mr and Mrs W Spiller and of Dr Sue Kelly.

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 Janette Bates, Mr Donald Campbell, Dr June Donsworth, Mr Ross Drummond,
Mrs Sandy Dudgeon, Mr Jack H Floehl, Mrs Jock Gosse, Mr Julian Lockyer,
Mr Robert A F Lloyd, Mr Alistair Martin, Ms Marta Mikes and Mr Roelof Vogel

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. The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of this Society. Copyright permission for extracts from publications will be sought by the editor where appropriate.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

The Society acknowledges with thanks receipt of the following publications from Wagner societies and related organisations: *Kulturchronik* (Goethe Institut) No.5, 1998; *News and Notes* (Wagner Soc. of Northern California), Vol. 3 No. 3-4, Sept-Dec. 1998; *Newsletter, Richard Wagner Society of South Australia*, No.122, Dec. 1998; No. 123, Feb. 1999; *Newsletter: The Wagner Society of New Zealand*, Vol. 2 No. 4, Jan. 1999; Opera Foundation Australia Newsletters and Scholarship listing; *Richard Wagner Nachrichten*: (Österreichische Richard-Wagner-Gesellschaft) Jahrg.10 Folge 5, Jan. 1999; *Wagner News* (Toronto Wagner Society) Vol. 10 No. 2, Dec. 1998; *Wagner Notes* (Wagner Society of New York) Vol. 21 No 6, Dec.1998; *Wagneriaani* (Wagner Society of Finland) no. 12, 1998.

WAGNER FESTIVAL IN JEOPARDY?

We reproduce extracts from Bayreuth Online, the online service of the Nordbayerischer Kurier: "The German Government plans to cut the subsidies for the Wagner Festival in Bayreuth. This means that the Festival budget could be 3.2 million German Marks lower each year. In the worst case this could endanger the whole festival. The Bayreuth newspaper 'Nordbayerischer Kurier' calls upon all Wagner friends to sign a proclamation which will be handed over to the German Government: "I do not want the German Government to cut the subsidies for the famous Bayreuth Wagner Festival" ".

This Society will give members and visitors the chance to sign a petition at forthcoming meetings. There is also a web site at <http://www.bayreuth-online.de/dh/nav/bonhead.htm> with the petition form on it (click for English). The form can be mailed or faxed to the Nordbayerischer Kurier, Maxstrasse 58-60, D-95444 Bayreuth, Germany.
Fax +49 921 500180, E-mail gdm@tmt.de

AUF WIEDERSEHEN (NOT GOODBYE) TO THE ADELAIDE RING

Stephen Phillips, Managing Director of the State Opera of South Australia, spoke on 21st February to a packed house of those who had attended the Adelaide Ring and to those who hadn't been able to get there and therefore wanted to hear about it from the horse's mouth. The first thing he told us was that a consortium has already been formed with the support of the SA Government to explore the feasibility for the production in Adelaide of a future Ring. Stephen's talk was an authoritative but fond account of the birth, life and triumphant success of the Adelaide Ring from the successful bid of SOSA to stage the Ring to the standing ovations after each performance. This provided the opportunity for a relatively small state opera company to show what it could do in front of a large Australian and international audience and also gave Australian and New Zealand singers an opportunity to work in the Wagner repertoire. The undertaking proved to be a commercial success, and due credit was given to Bill Gillespie for its artistic success.

What came out of Stephen Phillips's talk was the sense of community pride by South Australia as the public embraced the project wholeheartedly, and the sense of ensemble amongst the cast, technical staff, orchestra and everyone involved - they got on together wonderfully; this was due in part to the fact that they were all working together in one place for something like four months - a situation you would not get in Europe or the US. Tribute was given to Jeffrey Tate who rehearsed the orchestra and singers twice a day, six days a week and then gave individual coaching to singers. The cast not only adored Jeffrey Tate but all of the singers thought Pierre Strosser was wonderful. An interesting experiment was to relay the whole of the 3rd Cycle to the Playhouse so that members of the public could experience Wagner without cost and without constraint (it was accepted that they could come and go as they pleased). Some 2,200 attended and we hear from our colleagues in Adelaide that in fact the Playhouse audience sat on the edge of its seats. The tapes, of course, could be used in the future.

Stephen Phillips admitted to a personal sense of relief when the Ring was over as well as claiming it was a most stimulating and most unforgettable experience. The afternoon closed with the presentation to the Society of a signed and framed photo of John Wegner as Wotan.

SIEGFRIED

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra's concert version of Siegfried will take place on Wednesday 23 June at 6.00 pm and Saturday 26 June at 4.00 pm. Artists: Edo de Waart, conductor; Elizabeth Connell, Brünnhilde; Jirki Niskanen, Siegfried; Robert Hale, Wanderer; David Keubler, Mime; Ekkehard Wlaschiha, Alberich; Daniel Sumegi, Fafner; Mette Ejsing, Erda and Shu-Cheen Yu, Woodbird. The Society is pleased to announce that our donation to the Sydney Symphony Orchestra for these performances will be used to sponsor Daniel Sumegi.

The SSO booking office has set aside a block of seats for our Society for each of the two performances. These are in A reserve at \$60 per person. Please complete the form below to reach us by 1st April, and note that numbers are limited so seats will be allocated in order of receipt. Send your application to: The Treasurer, Wagner Society in New South Wales, Inc., GPO Box 4574, Sydney NSW 2001. Tickets will be mailed to you.

We would like members to understand that these are two of the subscription performances in the ABN Amro Great Performers Series. Subscribers have long since been allocated their seats and those available to our Society are the best of the miscellaneous seats still available. Please do not be disappointed, therefore, if you do not secure the seats you would have chosen had you been placing your own subscription last year.

<i>Siegfried</i>	
I/We wish to apply for ticket/s to <i>Siegfried</i> on	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday 23 June at 6.00 pm
or	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Saturday 26 June at 4.00 pm
My cheque for \$..... (\$60 per person) is enclosed	
name:
address:
phone number/s:

STOP PRESS . . .

In association with the Wagner Society of New Zealand, we are planning a seminar on Saturday 26th June in the Goethe Institut to prepare for the performance of Siegfried that afternoon. Complete details and a booking form will be mailed to members.

A MINORITY VIEW

I have to concede immediately that in liking the production I am in a minority among the members of the Adelaide Ring Cycle audience to whom I talked and the critics who have reviewed the performances.

Along with many others at the momentous occasion of Australia's first complete locally produced Ring Cycle, I marvelled at the sound coming out of the Festival Centre pit, much of the singing and some of the stage effects. However, I will leave comments on the singing, playing and conducting to others since I suspect there is more of a positive consensus, including me, on these aspects of the production.

Many people took Pierre Strosser, the producer, and scenic designer, to task for imposing a "minimalist production" on the Cycle. In this context, people were really criticising the set for not being spectacular and/or naturalistic in the sense of following Wagner's stage directions closely - as does the current Metropolitan Opera production. A particularly sore point was the absence of a graphic representation of the end of the world in *Götterdämmerung*. But what about the lack of a Rhine, a dragon, a ring of fire (oh all right, some conceded, the flowing red fabric was a nice touch), or a real funeral cortege? It seemed Strosser's intention to strip the operas of all but the most essential action to which reference is made in the text (not the stage directions - and even this approach doesn't include, for example, Brünnhilde's and the other Valkyries' references to their horses).

Even more fundamental an objection was raised to the "perverse" refusal to allow the characters to look at each other or, worse still, to touch. Where were those climactic moments of ecstatic passion some of us believe to be the core of Wagner's operas? These seem to be unanswerable, fatal shortcomings in the production. But is there a way of seeing the production which makes sense of what we saw on stage? We are certainly not helped in solving this question by any revelations from Strosser, who kept his intentions very close to his chest in those few interviews he gave while in Adelaide or which I read at least.

I must admit I was floundering for a grasp on the production for about half of *Das Rheingold*. My first reaction was to try and place the period of the production using the gods' clothes as the starting point. They seemed to suggest the late 19C, but they had a regional, even parochial look to them - not the quality clothes one might associate with Paris or London or Berlin.

Then, when the impact of the "minimalist" staging reinforced the feeling of "something late 19C" about the production, I began to feel more sure that we were being shown an interpretation of the Ring Cycle as if it were a late 19C play, especially one by Ibsen. By the middle of Act 1 of *Die Walküre*, I had become confident that this approach would make the production very relevant to me - whatever Strosser may have intended!

I have to confess that my academic background is the study of American drama and its relationship to what were at one time highly radical and, to some, offensive modern plays such as Ibsen's *The Pillars of Society* (1877), *The Doll's House*. (1879), *An Enemy of the People* (1882), *The Wild Duck* (1884), *Hedda Gabler* (1890) and *The Master Builders* (1892). One

could also point to *Peer Gynt* (1867) with its young heroic figure, trolls and other exotic components as showing a generic relationship to the Ring Cycle.

It may be stretching credibility too far to suggest that there are deliberate structural parallels between these plays and aspects of Strosser's production. Although, Mr Antony Ernst in one of his lectures to the NSW Wagner Society before the Adelaide Ring Cycle remarked that Ibsen admired Wagner.

Regardless of any links between the two artists, I am sure that Strosser had in mind the very bourgeois, drawing room nature of many of the Ring Cycle's scenes, notwithstanding the stage directions' references to rocky mountaintops and riverbanks. In taking this approach, Strosser may well be extending the scenic and demythologising approach taken so successfully, in my view, by Patrice Chereau in the centennial Ring Cycle.

But then that is what art is about - making unlikely links and showing us how to see/hear a work or life in a new way. *The Master Builder* is in part about deceit and broken agreements. *An Enemy of the People* is in part about a character who refuses to let people get away with their illusions and upsets people's greedy plans. Fricka fits this part quite well. Nora, in *The Doll's House*, could be seen as a Brünnhildean character in the way she develops her own values and rebels against the constricting mores of her society. Unfortunately, Nora is not able to reach a state of transcendence as Brünnhilde appears to achieve at the end of *Götterdämmerung*.

This point about transcendence is of course another area in which Strosser, to my mind, has redirected the Ring Cycle towards the late 19C - this time focussing on the world view being developed in the anti-Romantic, anti-transcendent literature that was being written from the middle of the 19C onwards (and which Strosser admits to reading voraciously).

In this literature, and the philosophy of people like Nietzsche, there is no place for the miraculous, the metaphysically transcendent. Strosser drives this point home, it seems to me, at the end of *Götterdämmerung*. This world is now utterly human. In this production, Siegfried's dying lyrical recounting of his adventures comes across as something truly from another world. His death is the assertion of the human - the evilly human - over the other-worldly, which Siegfried's innocence (whether captured by the performer or not) is intended to represent.

This also accounts for the stripping from *Götterdämmerung* of evidence of the magical, such as the Tarnhelm. Siegfried's use of it to appear as Gunther to trick Brünnhilde is just that - a clumsy trick which fails to convince us as it later worries Brünnhilde. Similarly, there are no gods or Valhallas really left after Brünnhilde's transformation into a mere mortal: so the destruction of the gods and Valhalla can only occur in her imagination. All the audience is left with then is Brünnhilde staring into a vista (or void), waiting for death. This can appear to be a relatively bleak view and it is, of course, the basis of much Western literature since Nietzsche announced "the death of God". On the other hand, it can be seen as retrospective - Brünnhilde looking back into the world of happiness she hopes to rejoin after death. Wagner's music, however, reminds us that it is what is happening in a character's heart or soul or mind which is

important - the attitude one takes to existence or the end of it.

Even more disturbingly, this world is the world of Victorian values - it is improper and uncivilised to give way to public demonstrations of emotion, let alone touch, or for men and women to look directly at each other outside the bedroom. Ibsen's plays are full of passion and a desire for commitment which is constantly frustrated by the social conventions of propriety and decency - probably even more so in the provincial capital in which Ibsen was writing.

A friend commented in response to my views that the characters in Ibsen's plays are usually physically close, even if only because of the confines of the drawing room, even if emotionally distanced from each other. Maybe in Strosser's staging, the physical distance between characters serves a number of purposes. It can be seen as the Ibsen approach writ large to match the cosmic scope of the drama. In the case of the gods the physical distance may represent the hierarchy which exists between them, as well as their different spheres of responsibility. In the case of the demigods and humans, maybe Strosser is deliberately denying the audience the sight of Sieglinde and Siegmund embracing, or Brünnhilde and Siegfried, to underline the point that in this world, our everyday world, such joy is hard won and we shouldn't expect to experience it vicariously.

To give both Ibsen and Strosser their due, this holding back of emotion, this refusal to break with convention, this constant avoidance of touching or demonstrating passion, can, with the right actors and producer, lead to amazingly powerful reactions in the audience. This is still the appeal of Ibsen's dramas. We have to deal with both the obvious levels of frustration on stage and the powerful emotions being raised in us by the observation of these highly charged situations.

In the case of the Ring Cycle, we have the added advantage of Wagner's music to leave us in no doubt as to what is happening in the characters' minds and hearts. In the ABC documentary on the Adelaide Ring Cycle, Strosser says that "the music is the flesh on the characters". What he does with the characters, the settings and the action, is to let the music be the primary means to communicate - simply, directly - and powerfully (under Mr Tate) . The "minimalist" stage setting assists this by not distracting the viewer with **either** superbly **or** inadequately wrought stage effects - they are all mostly secondary to the drama. After all, Wagner used much ink in asserting the primacy of the drama and the supporting role of the music in his works.

TERENCE WATSON

OUR APRIL FUNCTION:

On 18th April our speaker will be Peter Nicholson whose talk is entitled 'Orpheus Ascending: a reassessment of Wagner and Wagnerism'. Peter has published three books of poetry: *A Temporary Grace* (1991), *Such Sweet Thunder* (1994) and *A Dwelling Place* (1997). He is a member of this Society and has a serious and sympathetic interest in Wagner's life and music. If you would like to learn more about him you will find on his web site at:

<http://peternicholson.byteserve.com.au> extracts from the reviews of his books, an essay by the poet placing his work in the context of contemporary and traditional poetic practice, some shorter poems, as well as extracts from *Notebook* together with other sources of information relating to the author.

WOTAN'S VIEW OF THE ADELAIDE RING

Time: Jeffrey Tate had just begun to conduct Act 3 of *Siegfried* at the 3rd Ring Cycle in Adelaide and I was stretching my calf muscles in preparation for entry onto the steeply raked stage.

Place: The prompt side rear steps of the *Siegfried* set.

Realisation: I had been performing well and was feeling coordinated but this was my last scene as Wotan/Wanderer in the historic performances so it was the last chance to test my limits.

Action: I stepped onto that stage and let go with the best stream of power singing of my life. It felt as if I could ride over the orchestral wall-of-sound no matter how loud it became. I sang without an ounce of vocal reserve or safety net and my body's singing 'engine' clicked into a sort of coordinated 'primal-scream' mode that allowed me to touch the limits without vocal strain or fatigue.

At the end of that performance I stood in the wings stunned by my personal achievement and proud of everyone who had been involved in the Ring project.

You, the members of the Sydney Wagner Society, were part of the team of 'Angels' and I would like to congratulate you on the many ways in which you have influenced the outcome of the Ring.

As soon as the Ring project was announced you offered sponsorship and your sponsorship target was 'Wotan'. I could practically feel the good vibes and wishes especially when many of you arrived for the second cycle.

But as many of you know, your influence on me began 12 years earlier. You helped turn my career towards Wagner when the Sydney Wagner Society and the Opera Foundation saw my potential as a Wagner singer during performances of Boris Godounov in 1986. I was awarded the Bayreuth Scholarship in 1987 and my development in the Wagner repertoire has been rewarded with the Green Room Award for my 1997 performances as the Dutchman in Melbourne and appearances in Bayreuth as Donner in the 1997 *Rheingold*. I have felt the support and interest of member of the society over the years and it has helped me during the interesting years from 1992 when I went to Germany to change from Bass to Helden Baritone. Your love for the Wagner repertoire and your wish for a Ring in Australia were realised when Adelaide was taken over by Ring Fever in November/December 1998. Those of you who have talked to Wagner Ring 'first-timers' will all have heard the stories of how much people enjoyed the experience.

We all hoped for a good Australian Ring and were pleased to hear that it qualified as a world class Ring.

Delerious with ring fever -

Michael Kennedy - *Sunday Telegraph*, London. 6th December, 1998.

"I have attended the second cycle and was impressed by the consistently high level of achievement - the equal of almost any European cycle of today except a one-off very best".

And how did we come to end up with such a great success? It started with the vision and drive of Bill Gillespie and the people he worked closely with. The South Australian Minister for the Arts got behind the project. It was also cleverly managed by Stephen Phillips at SOSA and the

small but multi-talented team that he assembled. Also involved were the many people who were involved in drumming up support and media coverage around the world as well as the people who thought up and organised the exhibitions, Symposium and other events... the list goes on and on. Finally the set arrived from Europe and the singers met Jeffrey Tate and Pierre Strosser.

Inspiring and courageous is what I would call these two men. Not only were they going to attempt to spend only 2 weeks on the initial blocking (staging) of each of the 4 operas before the rehearsals in the theatre, but they had many people in the casts performing their roles for the first time and so had the challenge of educating people about the psychology of the characters and the nuances of Wagnerian singing. To this end Lionel Friend, the assistant conductor and the excellent music staff that had been assembled were also magnificent.

It took a while to catch on to the acting style that Pierre Strosser wanted but his vision was strong and his reasoning compelling. He dared you to be different and go with the text and emotion rather than the expected gesture. He challenged you to trust the large space between characters and to cut out all gesturing until you understood the psychology of the moment and then to let the body find only the necessary amount of action. He spoke little English so his direction was given in German or French depending on which language he thought you understood best and there was simultaneous English translation by his assistant Stephen for those who understood neither. In moments of passion and subtle detail, French prevailed. I wrote this to a friend during the rehearsals:

“The producer Pierre Strosser has a vision of the text which is at one with Jeffrey Tate’s and it is fascinating to see them passionately discussing key points in the plot. They are always checking to see if they are musically and dramatically telling the same story. What a rare occurrence in theatre these days. Fantastic! Pierre is searching for truth in text and movement and so he is prepared to break some of the conventions that we are used to seeing in Wagner. His vision takes a while to get used to and you have to clean up your dramatic tendencies. For example there are often dramatic changes in thought for Wotan which the brass might blast out and the tendency is to try to find an aggressive gesture or walk to match the drama of the music. Pierre asks you to feel the drama inside you with less show and let the audience fully appreciate what is happening to you by listening to the power of the music - the principle of ‘less is more’.

Pierre makes the point that by rushing in and dramatically raising your spear to break up a squabble between Donner and Fasolt makes the spear big but not Wotan. A leader who has authority does not need to threaten with spears or make huge gestures to show his power. I feel excited by the chance to bring Pierre and Jeffrey’s vision to fruition but also feel the weight of responsibility. Luckily we are in the stress-free rehearsal setting of Adelaide with its good air, great food and laid-back lifestyle.”

Everyone, especially the singers and the members of the orchestra, seemed to have fallen in love with Jeffrey Tate and what he brought to the Ring Cycle. From day one you knew that you were being led, educated and conducted by an extremely gifted person. But what was so special? When he was in the orchestra pit did he turn on a magic persona to elicit such beauty from orchestra and singers? I believe it is the accumulation of every minute Jeffrey spent with the people in front of him which made him so special. He also did not impose his will or ego on the music, he

searched for the truth that was on the page. Throughout the rehearsals you heard him re-examining the score to check that he understood what Wagner wanted to say through the text and music.

Jeffrey Tate was at the production calls from the first day of rehearsal and during the potentially boring periods of musical silence, when the singers were learning where to move their feet, Jeffrey would be switched on to every word Pierre uttered and would be quick to back up Pierre by explaining how the music illuminated what the director said. He would always have musical and vocal tips about how you could illustrate the moment. He personally coached you through difficult scenes and passages and was quick to schedule himself for extra rehearsals with singers when they came up against technical problems. He was completely focussed on bringing out the best in everyone.

Jeffrey Tate has a gift for communicating with singers and musicians. He celebrates what each person is able to do, wins their trust and then encourages and shows you how to rise to a higher standard. He dares you to risk and is there with a smile if you fall but encourages you to keep risking until you achieve the new level of performance. Jeffrey was there after nearly every act to analyse and congratulate you on the special things you achieved and to point out where and how you could improve. Before a performance and before certain acts he would come around and review your performance goals. Wow!

With the preparation done it became time to begin the performances but they are another story.

Let's hope that future Australian Rings will be planned and that the Sydney Wagner Society will again play their part so generously. 'Wotan' thanks you.

JOHN WEGNER

PS: On 3/9/98 I also wrote this to a friend:

"Jeffrey Tate is an inspiration; he has boundless concentration and patience. He has also thought out every phrase to the nth degree and if I can come up with a high percentage of his nuances then I will have surpassed what many Wotans have attempted. It is a big ask with lots of vocal risk taking and going against the 'usual way' that many passages are handled. I am lucky that having sung in Germany so long, my pronunciation hurdles are not too high. But remembering all the dynamic, rhythm and histrionic variations is a difficult task." **JW**

ALASTAIR MACKERRAS, AO 1928-1999

It is with sadness that we record the death at the beginning of January of Alastair Mackerras, former headmaster of Sydney Grammar School. He was a long-standing member of this Society, and a Wagner enthusiast of even longer standing. He wrote in 1997 that when he was about 13 he spent a lot of time playing gramophone records and was very struck by the parts of Wagner operas in the family collection and by the singing of Lauritz Melchior. Wagner was quite definitely his number one composer at the time and he never grew out of his passion for Wagner. He said: "I continue to find his music deeply stirring as I did as a teenager".

REVIEWS

I have a confession to make. I find that Wagner's Lohengrin possesses more than its fair share of longeurs. Such an impression was repeated when listening to Daniel Barenboim's newly released interpretation where the work is performed uncut. This issue has much to commend it. Barenboim's conducting is excellent, he shapes and dramatises the music expertly and is able to maintain the momentum of the piece. That last ounce of inspiration is however missing. The singing is also of a generally high standard. Peter Seiffert is a superior Lohengrin, his pure and ringing tone being ideal for this heroic role. Deborah Polaski sings Ortrud, Falk Struckman is Friedrich, and Rene Pape takes the role of Heinrich der Vogler. they are all first-rate. the only minor disappointment is the hard edged and poorly pronounced singing of Emily Magee, the young American soprano who sings Elsa. Fine contributions from the orchestra (Staatskapelle Berlin) and chorus. The recorded sound is satisfyingly warm and clear. This release must now stand as the most recommendable version of this opera, followed closely by the classic but aging EMI /Kempe set. Teldec 3984-21484-2 (3 Cds).

Music and Arts 1035 (2CDs) contains excerpts of the 1937 and 1938 Covent Garden Ring conducted by Wilhelm Furtwängler. Walküre Act 3 and generous portions of Götterdämmerung are on offer. Singers featured include Flagstad, Leider, Melchior, Weber and Janssen. The American Record Guide writes that the sound is clear and undistorted but there is a variable amount of surface noise. As one can imagine from the list of participants (many of them in their prime), the performances are fabulous.

The ARG also raves about a new Tristan and Isolde from the Seattle Opera featuring Ben Heppner and Jane Eaglen in the title roles with Armin Jordan on the podium. "The entire production was dazzling, a spine-tingling evening of discovery, the two singers doing the roles full justice". The Metropolitan Opera, who of late have considered this work uncastable, will feature the same singers in a production to be premiered in the northern spring.

Richard Osborne's superb biography of Herbert von Karajan has recently been published (Chatto and Windus, 850pp \$60). This book had me spellbound and should be obligatory reading for everyone interested in this artist and in the history of the recording and music world from the thirties to the late eighties. Osborne has been meticulous with his research and his writing is eminently readable. A reminder that the Karajan/DG Ring has been reissued at a reduced price. This is an under-appreciated set and belongs in any self-respecting Wagner CD collection.

IVOR ZETLER

Nietzsche and Wagner: A Lesson in Subjugation. By Joachim Kohler. 186p. Yale University Press. This book was reviewed by Alan Ryan in the *Australian Financial Review*, Jan. 29, 1999. We extract just a line or two from this comprehensive and informative review ('How Nietzsche lost his mind in the house of Wagner') which reviews Nietzsche's life and the relationship between the two towering 19th century figures: "How does Nietzsche's passion for, and passionate rejection of, Wagner and all his works connect with his madness, and how do these connect with the attraction his work held for generations of violent anti-Semitic reactionaries? It is not clear that Joachim Kohler's engaging and vivid book can quite answer that question, but it sheds some light..."

SOME USEFUL INTERNET WEB SITES

Richard Wagner Archive

<http://www.utu.fi/~hansalmi/wagner.spml>

The compiler of this site is Hannu Salmi of the University of Turku, Finland. He presents material collected during his years as a Wagner scholar since 1987. The site includes biography; Wagner's writings, contemporary literature on Wagner, Wagner and popular culture, operas and other compositions, Wagner's family tree, links to other Wagner sites and his own studies on Wagner.

Richard Wagner Web Site

<http://home.sol.no/~krevens/logc/rwws.htm>

This is written, edited and designed by Kristian Evensen, a Norwegian scholar. It includes an essay on 'Loge - person and element, commentator and agent' (and in fact this was originally called Loge's Web Site). In addition there is a comparative chronology, an interactive map of the Europe of Wagner, translations of 19th Century German texts on Wagner with introductions by Kristian Evensen, essays, and a substantial section on Wagner resources on the Internet. Especially helpful is the annotated list of sources in three parts: Bibliography, Discography and Videography. His list of other Wagner sites is also critically annotated.

Wagner on the Web

<http://www.zazz.com/wagner>

Comprehensive site from the USA which features up to date news, reviews of recent Wagner performances (contributed by members of the audience rather than professional critics), selected CDs and CD reviews, selected books for sale, information on forthcoming performances, links to other sites and numerous contributions on Wagner's life and music. The survey on favourite Wagner performers and conductors which the compiler, Joe Erbacher, carried out was reproduced (with his permission) in a previous issue of this newsletter. The sole review of the Adelaide Ring noted so far is written by a member of this Society, Dr Jim Leigh.

<http://www.geocities.com/Vienna/9957/wagner.html>

Jane's Wagner Page

Dr Jane Ennis is an English Wagner scholar, with a Ph.D on Wagner from the University of Leeds. The site is something of a minefield of moving and still graphics and proliferates in links to areas not only related to Wagner but also to the author's other musical interests. Worth a visit.

San Francisco Opera. A web site of especial interest to those going to the San Francisco Ring in June.

<http://www.sfopera.com>

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I refer to your brief review in no. 73 [*Newsletter*] of the monograph *Richard Wagner's Artwork of the Future: Inspirational or Conspiratorial?* by Michèle Renouf, about which I would like to make three points.

In general: It is important for the sake of intellectual freedom of inquiry that Wagner Societies begin to discern the difference between Wagner's absurd antisemitic bitching versus his viable criticism of the racist supremacy basis of Judaism: the Hebrew Scriptures make this clear as its manifesto (just as Zionism realizes these claims by terrorist, illegal occupation of Palestinian peoples' lands). These are hard facts, not conspiracy theories.

In particular: I agree with the criticisms arising from the haste with which the monograph was prepared. More precious time had been allotted to research than to editing. The haste of course was to catch the English-speaking Arizona Ring Cycle audience with whom to open a genuine debate in the interests of understanding Wagner's inspirations/conspirations.

In part-apology: I am afraid the same emphasis on research (and leaving too little time for proof-reading) has occurred again with the much enlarged special Adelaide hard-back edition of this monograph into a book in celebration of Australia's first fully-achieved Ring production. I can but plea for readers' indulgence and ask that the much-considered content take precedence for evaluation and stimulus. I need not warn Wagnerians that the Meister's depth of scholarship can hook and require one's life: I for example, found myself having to undertake a degree in Theology and Philosophy at the University of London in order to meet his investigative demands. My findings thus far welcome objective debate at the e-mail address of: micheleladyrenouf@msn.com

The 200 page hardback book with five additional colour photographs may be ordered from Stageset, PO Box 18812 London SW7 4WD, including p&p from Sydney at \$49.95.

MICHÈLE RENOUF

BAYREUTH SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

(from Opera Foundation Australia Scholarships listing)

1973	Ronald Dowd, tenor NSW	1988	Rosemary Gunn, mezzo-soprano NSW
1974	Donald Shanks, bass QLD	1989	Richard Divall, conductor VIC
1976	Robert Gard, tenor NSW	1990	Roland Peelman, conductor NSW
1978	John Main, tenor NSW	1991	Stephen Bennett, bass NSW (withdrew)
1980	Reginald Byers, tenor NSW	1994	David Stanhope, conductor NSW
1981	Nance Grant, soprano VIC	1995	Stephen Walters, repetiteur NSW
1982	Andrew Sinclair, producer VIC	1996	Geoffery Harris, tenor VIC
1983	Margreta Elkins, mezzo-soprano NSW	1997	Elizabeth Campbell, mezzo-soprano SA
1985	John Wregg, producer NSW	1998	Stephen Mould, repetiteur NSW
1986	John Wegner, bass NSW		
1987	Bernadette Cullen, mezzo-soprano NSW		

THE RAVENS REPORTING, compiled by Camron Dyer

This listing does not cumulate. Please see also issues no. 71 and 72 for additional performances.

Amsterdam	<i>The Ring</i> - June 1, 2, 4, 7; 9, 10, 12, 15; 17, 18, 20, 23; 25, 26, 28, 30, 1999.
Athens	<i>Lohengrin</i> - March 21, 23, 26, 28, 1999.
Berlin	Staatsoper <i>Tannhäuser</i> - March 28, April 2, 11, May 8, 1999.
Bonn	<i>Das Rheingold</i> - March 13, May 23, June 5, 1999. <i>Die Walküre</i> - March 14, May 30, June 20, 1999.
Cologne	<i>Parsifal</i> - April 4, 8, 11, 15, 25, 1999.
Helsinki	<i>Das Rheingold</i> - June 3, 6, 1999. <i>Siegfried</i> - June 10, 13, 1999. <i>Götterdämmerung</i> - May 21, 24, 27, 30, 1999.
Leipzig	<i>Holländer</i> - April 4, 25, June 17, July 8, 1999.
Marseille	<i>Siegfried</i> - May 4, 7, 9, 12, 1999. <i>Götterdämmerung</i> - June 10, 13, 16, 19, 1999.
New York	The Met <i>The Ring</i> - March 25, April 1, 15, 22; 24, 25, 27, 29; May 1, 2, 4, 6, 2000.
Oslo	<i>Holländer</i> - April 10, 13, 17, 1999.
Stuttgart	<i>The Ring</i> - new cycle in progress <i>Das Rheingold</i> - March 12, April 22, May 8, 21, 1999. <i>Die Walküre</i> - July 4, 8, 11, 28, 1999. <i>Siegfried</i> - November 14, 1999. <i>Götterdämmerung</i> - March 12, 2000.
Toulouse	<i>Die Walküre</i> - April 30, May 2, 4, 7, 9, 1999.
Turin	<i>Holländer</i> - September 17 to 29, 1999.
Zurich	<i>Parsifal</i> - April 1, 11, 1999. <i>Tannhäuser</i> - May 30, June 3, 6, 1999.

STOP PRESS II ...

Saturday 17 April, a film at the Chauvel (National Cinematheque) by Hans Jurgen Cyberberg - *Confessions of Winifred Wagner - her first interview*. It is showing after the film, *Picture of Germany*, a documentary about films made in Germany during the Nazi period. The session starts at 1:00pm.

One has to be a member, but one can join on the day.