

Wagner Society in NSW

President's report, December 1981

The most exciting musical event this year was undoubtedly concert performances of "Gotterdammerung" on the 30th September and 1st October.

Sir Charles Mackerras directed the Sydney Symphony Orchestra with great feeling and precision, and the soloists and choir superbly, bringing a vitality and realism to the roles one would not have expected in the concert hall.

It was gratifying to read so many favourable comments in the press, and I'm sure all Wagner Society members felt proud to have supported this production. Well-wishing telegrams were sent on our behalf to the singers and musicians, but I would extend here special congratulations to our member, Miss Nance Grant for her beautiful singing, not only as Gutrune, but also as Sieglinde in the Melbourne 'Valkyrie'. Most of us cannot imagine how much training is needed for these roles; Miss Grant even took special tuition under Professor Breme in Bayreuth.

During the first interval on the Saturday evening, members were able to mingle and chat in the Reception Hall, whilst enjoying light refreshments. Our only regret was that the caterer's interpretation of 'light' referred mainly to quantity rather than type of savoury, so the service ended up being a little light-on. We apologise to those who went away hungry and dissatisfied; a complaint was made to the caterer for letting us down like that.

Appetites were certainly well satisfied at the Sir Charles Mackerras lecture on the 12th October in the Crown Street Hospital auditorium. Sir Charles covered his subject of "Wagner in concert" very thoroughly, and with his usual wit. The evening was well attended, and, judging by the questions asked later, thoroughly enjoyed. Our thanks go to member Peter Bone for masterminding the event so faultlessly, and to the hospital board and staff for the location and the ample supper. A real delight. We look forward to a repeat performance from Sir Charles when he returns to Sydney next year from his overseas commitments.

There is a small group of very satisfied Wagnerites who are enjoying immensely the Sunday afternoon playing of complete operas at the Concordia Club. It is an ideal way to hear your favourite music, free of interruption and disturbance. The sound is excellent, thanks to Mr Stuurop's unflagging efforts and many hours in setting up the equipment. The Club facilities ensure all personal comforts, including having refreshments available at "intermission" and meals before and after if required, all at reasonable cost.

Remember, "Lohengrin" is playing on December 13th at 2.00 pm, so treat yourself to an exciting experience by being with us.

As mentioned at the Mackerras evening, Wagner Society members have been invited to an evening with the South Pacific Liszt Society, on Friday, 4th December. Mr Werner Baer, M.B.E. will be talking about the Liszt-Wagner relationship. If you are interested in the activities of the Liszt Society, ring their Secretary, Leah Cunningham, at home on 960 1258.

That extraordinary soprano, Jesse Norman, has had another successful tour of Australia and I hope as many members as possible were able to enjoy her wonderful performances. It seems that Miss Norman could be turning to Wagner opera soon, certainly on records, if not on stage. Your Committee felt it would be a nice gesture to welcome Jesse Norman to Sydney with a bouquet of flowers from the Society. The continuous growth in membership is gratifying to see, especially the many new Foundation members, who have given so generously to help the Society off to a good start. To all our recent members, the Committee bids a warm welcome and hopes you will find what you are looking for in the Wagner Society. If not, please let us know; or if you would like to contribute to the Newsletter or help in any way, please get in touch with us.

The Annual General Meeting of the Wagner Society has been set down for Friday, 21st of May — the Friday nearest to Wagner's birthday, the 22nd. Keep this date free as the entertainment after the meeting promises to be something special. News of other events will be found in the next newsletter, in the New Year. Until then, from myself and the committee, every best wish for a Merry Xmas, and Happy New Year.

Leonard Hansen