

Wagner Society in NSW

President's report June 1982

The 2nd Annual General Meeting of the Society was held on 21st May, with 75 members in attendance. My first thought was to thank all the members for their participation in the great new venture that the Wagner Society has been, especially those Foundation Members who supported the Society so generously, placing it on a sound financial footing from the start. It was explained however that not a lot of money was being generated from the various functions that are arranged, as these are provided at near cost. This is done so that no member or interested person would be prevented from attending for financial reasons. The only way left open to the Society to raise money to carry out its aims and objectives is to actively seek donations. Making donations to the Wagner Society through the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust on the proper form supplied — should be an attractive proposition to most people as it is a tax deductible procedure. In fact, an annual donation of \$100.00 works out much less than buying a daily newspaper through the year! So please give to the best of your ability, to enable your Society to grow and take its place beside the bigger and more established musical bodies.

An election was held for Committee members, but as no new nominations were received, the existing Committee was re-elected, except for Dr. Cedric Falconer, who has retired due to ill health. Many thanks Cedric for your help in the past, and best wishes for a speedy return to good health.

Cedric's place on the Committee has been taken by Mr. Michel Arnould. Welcome Michel! To the other members of the Committee I would like to express my sincere thanks for the work they have done in the last year, especially to Richard King and Murray Smith for the use of their premises, telephone and valuable time.

Leonard Hansen

President's report September 1982

What an exciting month August has been! Firstly, those wonderful performances of "Tristan & Isolde" which could not have failed to satisfy even the most critical Wagnerite. Sydney and Melbourne audiences turned out in capacity numbers to their respective concert halls to enjoy superb performances by orchestra and soloists alike. The acclaim was universal as evidenced by the unanimously enthusiastic reviews by the newspaper critics. Our Patron, Sir Charles Mackerras, again showed his mastery of Wagner's music, and command over his orchestras. Unfortunately, as you read this, he is already on the other side of the world carrying out his other many commitments. Sir Charles was very sorry not to be able to give a talk to the Wagner Society this year, as anticipated, and presents his apologies.

It was rather discouraging for your committee to see such a poor attendance at the Robert Gard recital. Robert's presentation was, as usual, impeccable and the programme content unusual to say the least. It had been the intention of your committee to stage further recitals and concerts, but without the full support of you, the members, this will not be possible. We would like to hear of any comments, favourable and unfavourable, regarding the recital, and about future policy on concert

promotion. Our thanks and congratulations to Mr. Michael Edgetoe of the Liszt Society for the splendid preparation and printing of the programmes.

For our next function we have invited Professor Michael Ewans to talk to us on "Wagner and the Greeks". Dr. Ewans, a graduate of Oxford and Cambridge universities, is the author of numerous articles and programme notes on Greek tragedy and opera since Wagner. Most recently he has written a book — yet to appear in Australia — titled "Wagner & Aeschylus: The Ring and the Orestia", in which Dr. Ewans explores the effect of the classical Greek tragedy on Wagner, and its relationship, in points of poem and music, to the "Ring". At present Dr. Ewans is head of the Department of Drama at the University of Newcastle (N.S.W.).

The small Sydney contingent of Wagner Society members who went to the Melbourne performances of "Tristan & Isolde" were made very welcome by the committee of the Wagner Society in that city. Since its formation at the Rita Hunter luncheon a year ago the group has increased to a membership around 70 keen Wagnerites, and several functions have been held. Talks were held with the President, David Gale, and Secretary, Aubrey Schrader, on the Sunday, on the many ways our two groups can pool their resources to the benefit of Wagner Society members in both cities. Certainly Dr. Gale is to be congratulated for the well organised and very satisfying dinner and supper during the intervals of the concerts. Hopefully we will be able to reciprocate when our Melbourne friends visit us next year for 'Die Walküre'.

Finally, please do not omit to check through the coming events list, and make a special effort to attend on the 27th September for what should be a very stimulating talk by a very learned Wagner scholar.

Leonard Hansen

President's report December 1982

As 1982 draws to a close, your Committee has been working hard on an interesting and diverse programme for 1983. Whilst some of the dates and topics later in the year may still have to be confirmed, the basic plan is there, giving you some idea of what lies ahead. We do urge any member with ideas for functions to communicate them to us, for only by having popular and successful activities can the Society flourish.

The major change being made is the holding of several General Meetings through the year, at which members are invited to join in the running of the Society.

Whilst it is recognised that most people prefer to miss out on the business of meetings, we do feel that it is necessary to have participation, in order that the Committee, in its decision making, does not lose touch with the needs of the members. The meetings will be held at the Print Room, 141 Dowling St., Woolloomooloo, at 7.30 pm, and an entertainment will be organised to follow the meeting, if time permits. The dates have been set out elsewhere in the Newsletter.

It is very pleasing indeed to announce that we are to be host to such a great international operatic star as Leonie Rysanek. In the short and busy time that Miss Rysanek is in Australia, she will attend our formal dinner on Saturday, 5th February, at the Wentworth Hotel, Sydney. We can be justly proud of the Society's reputation and standing when such a notable personality accepts our invitation to be guest of honour at a function, and we can all look forward to an exciting evening meeting with Miss Rysanek, and listening to her experiences of a long theatrical career.

Members of the Opera Guild and other music lovers have been invited to the dinner also, so make your application early, as numbers will have to be limited. The evening should be a fitting finale to the Sydney Festival Season.

Whilst mentioning the Festival, I must remind you of the wonderful concert the A.B.C. has organised at the Sydney Town Hall on January 28th. You will find in the Newsletter full details, and an application form for tickets which you should return without delay.

Keep the date of 20th May free to attend our Annual "Wagner's Birthday" Dinner. Our special guest this year will be Rita Hunter, who you'll find is a delightful person to meet socially, as well as being our very own stunning Brunnhilde later in the year. There will also be a raffle drawn that evening — following last year's successful one — this time the prizes will be two tickets to Die Walkure, a recording of Lohengrin, and the book-of Richard and Cosima Wagner which is reviewed in this Newsletter. Sale of tickets will commence in the new year.

During July and August quite a few of our members travelled to the Wagner Festivals of Seattle and Bayreuth. Not only were they able to enjoy the fine music and theatre, but also, being a Wagner Society member, they could relate better to their counterparts in other countries. May I say thank you to these roving ambassadors, for passing onto us their interesting stories, and for making the Australian Wagner Society wider known around the world.

Whilst I was in Paris in October I met Dr. Catherine Devraigne, President of the formidable Cercle Nationale Richard Wagner, the oldest and largest Wagner Society outside Germany. Their list of activities and guest artists is most impressive, and they would welcome visits by our members to their meetings. Also, their collection of artworks and Wagner memorabilia is breathtaking and, naturally, quite priceless.

In New York I had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Ingo Von Boenigk, President of the Wagner International Institution. Generous with his hospitality and very interested in our activities, he talked enthusiastically about the ways our groups can co-operate to mutual benefit. He introduced me to Carl Childs, Chairman of the North Californian Chapter in — a little closer to home — San Francisco. Members who would like to visit these groups on their travels should contact me for the appropriate addresses and details.

Finally, I would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, and look forward to seeing you at the concert on the 28th January and at our gala dinner on the 5th of February.

Leonard Hansen