

# OBITUARY RICHARD JAMES KING

## 1943 – 2025



Richard King at WSNSW 40th Anniversary Celebrations

**Richard King** passed away peacefully at home on 22 January 2025, surrounded by his loving family and friends, after a painful year-long battle with bone cancer. Richard lived a rich and vibrant life and was a much loved, and fun loving, founding member (No 15) and Honorary Life Member of the Wagner Society in New South Wales. Born in 1943 and raised in Lane Cove, Sydney, upon completion of high school Richard joined the Bank of NSW. After seven years there he worked as an accountant for the British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) in Sydney. This job provided a great opportunity to travel worldwide, seeing wonderful art and theatre and listening to inspiring music, especially at Bayreuth.

Richard's love of the arts led to the opening, with partner **Murray Smith**, of his own picture framing business in Surry Hills. They moved to The Print Room, in Woolloomooloo, which specialised initially in original works on paper, including prints, and then dealt in fine art photographs.

**Max Dupain** was among several eminent photographers represented by Richard. He also authored and published several books on various Australian artists, including **Sydney Long** and **Hall Thorpe**. The Print Room was used from 1981 as the venue for early meetings and events held by the newly formed Wagner Society. Richard, **Dr Leonard Hansen**, and a group of Sydney Wagner lovers formed the society in 1980 during the Bayreuth Festival. **Sir Charles Mackerras** became the first Patron and was very active helping Richard (the first vice president) organising speakers and events.

In 1991 Richard started King Pick Farm at Sussex Inlet, with his friend **John Pick**. They produced cut native flowers for export and local sale. They flourished for nine years but the bush fires of 2001/2 made

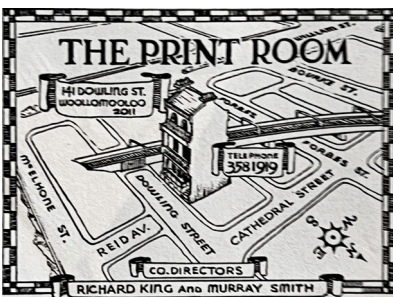
Richard re-evaluate his life, prompting his move to Hobart, where he lived the remainder of his life, writing and keeping busy as an archivist and looking after his beloved dogs, first Miss Nikki, followed by Mister Bailey. His last book was *Synchronicity and Dreaming – Guidance for our Lives*. Gumquest, Exile Bay, 2017. In this work Richard shows “how observing our inner selves and synchronistic events can guide our biography and provide a philosophical foundation for our lives.”

Richard was a deeply spiritual man and he had a particular love for Wagner's *Parsifal*, which he considered the most profound of all Wagner's music-dramas. He was also a huge admirer of Beethoven's *Fidelio*.

In his will, Richard has very generously named WSNSW as a beneficiary. The society is to receive the proceeds of the sale of his house and art collection. His wish is for this money to be used to mount concert performances of *Parsifal* and *Fidelio*.

He desired that, as far as possible, performers are to be Australian, preferably from NSW. Before his passing Richard had already gifted the society a substantial sum to kick off the project, which is being used for professional advisers and scholarships for emerging singers and musicians, in preparation for performances. Negotiations are advanced for the appointment of the conductor, principals and understudies. Depending on the availability of the main players and venues, we hope that the performances can take place in 2026. Following is Richard's communication with the Society setting out his wishes.

**Mike Day**  
Vice President WSNSW  
1 February 2025



The Print Room flyer



A copy of the Book Plate from an original lino-cut designed by Frank Marjason & presented to Wolfgang Wagner (photo, Newsletter No. 37)



25 August 1989: L-R President **Richard King** with Vice-President **Dr Leonard Hansen** who presented **Wolfgang Wagner** on behalf of the Wagner Society in NSW with a special gift on the occasion of his 70th birthday which he would be celebrating on 30 August. The gift was a hand crafted lino-cut of Wolfgang's personal ex libris book plate. This was witnessed by a small contingent of Society members (photo, Richard King)



# CONCERT PERFORMANCES OF RICHARD WAGNER'S MUSIC DRAMA *PARSIFAL*

When Dr. Leonard Hansen and I discussed the creation of possibly the first ever Wagner Society in Australia's history in June of 1980 at my Gallery, The Print Room in Sydney, we envisaged a group of people who would come together and encourage the performance of the Master's works. The performances created by the Elizabethan Theatre Trust and later the Australian Opera were very rare indeed. I had joined the English Wagner Society when visiting UK in 1966. I applied every year for a ticket to Bayreuth without success and was only able to go there in 1977 with the help of Lufthansa in Sydney. They also obtained the tickets for Leonard, his first pilgrimage there being July/August 1980. Olga at Lufthansa had directed Leonard to meet me as she knew how enthusiastic about Wagner I was...! Synchronicity at work in our lives...!

It seemed to me one of the greatest obstacles to a performance was the desire to "update" and reinterpret the works by a minority of directors and make them relevant to the "modern" mind...!! This was very short sighted as the current tradition of Wagnerian stagings in Australia was rare and it seemed to me the egos of these people were directed only towards their peers, internationally. Having experienced these bizarre performances all over the world I can safely say I attended many a "concert version" keeping my eyes closed and enjoying the glorious journey in my mind. I confronted a couple of these openly "Wagner Hating" directors over the years, telling one to even write his own operas if he hated the Master so much.

My proposal is for our Wagner Society to create an annual concert performance of *Parsifal* and later even perhaps the bi-annual concert performance of *Fidelio* by Beethoven, one of Wagner's most admired composers. *Fidelio* is a beacon for the freedom of mankind.

Esteban and Michael's thoughts as to the venues are excellent ideas to encourage patronage from Sydney's population living in the western areas. Also the use of the talented singers and musicians/orchestras domiciled nearby. Also giving the people residing there exposure to the finest possible music and enhance their lives accordingly. I know hearing classical music for the first time when I was about ten years old was a revelation, even though I was met with much antagonism by my parents - I was told to turn off that dreadful noise on the radio!

My vision is to lay the foundation for the financial backing for an annual performance, augmented by tax deductible donations by members and friends. Hopefully also legacies and government subsidies to encourage the fine arts to be performed in the areas of the greatest populations. I intend to direct financial assets from my estate towards the cause. I am heartened by our President's, Vice President's and Committee's enthusiastic response to the proposal. I understand that several singers, scholarship winners and regional orchestras have already offered their services. Hopefully the Conservatorium of Music will come on board. So many budding musicians would get exposure earlier in their careers as well.

The *Ring Cycle* and *Parsifal* are vital to help mankind get through the age of materialism and lack of spirituality. No doubt Wagner's contribution to our journey through these realms was preordained, rising above organized religion and dogma. Mankind's goal is freedom of will where no harm is allowed to others.

Thank you,

**Richard King**  
Hobart, June 2024

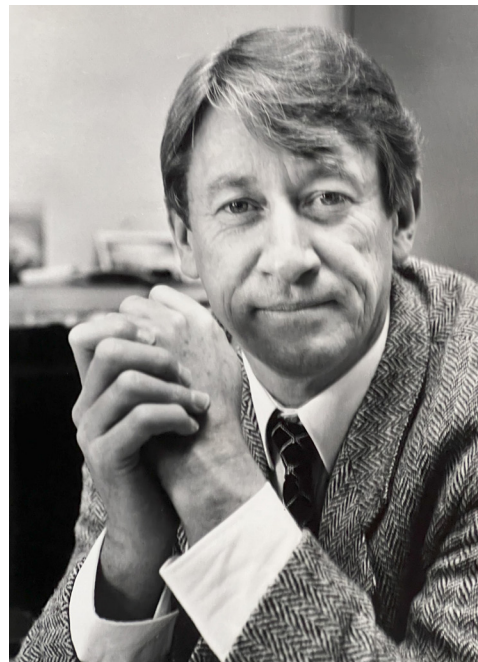


Photo by Max Dupain 1991



Vice President **Mike Day**, **HLM Richard King**, President **Esteban Insausti**, Hobart, 8 June 2024

## MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR THE LATE RICHARD KING

**Wednesday 30 April, 11.00am at Cellos Grand Room, Castlereagh Boutique Hotel, 169 Castlereagh St, Sydney**

The family of the late Richard King is inviting members and friends who were unable to attend the funeral in Hobart on 31 January to come along and share memories of a remarkable man. The hotel is a beautifully restored heritage listed building built, and still managed, by the Masonic Club of NSW. WSNSW supported singer, **Ellen McNeil**, accompanied by **Bradley Gilchrist**, will be performing.