EDITORIAL

Every effort is being made to issue the Newsletter regularly, at the beginning of each month. It is being produced, duplicated and mailed by the Chairman. The Hon. Secretary has prepared a corrected List of Members; and an addressing system is being explored. If any member who has paid a subscription for 1964 fails to receive the Newsletter, or finds it wrongly addressed, please notify the Hon. Secretary.

Those who missed the announcement in the last Newsletter may wish to know that the Committee are proceeding with the publication this year of a new "Wagner Society Review", under the editorship of Mr. Nicolls.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS 1964

Subscriptions for 1964 are due, and may be paid by cheque or postal order through the post, or cash at ordinary meetings, to the Hon. Treasurer, The Wagner Society (England), 20, Bedford Street, W.C.2.

£ 1. 1. 0 Ordinary Membership.
£ 1.10. 0 Joint Membership - Husband and Wife.
£ 15. 0 Country Membership - for those who do not usually reside or work within 50 miles of Charing Cross.
£ 10. 0 Junior Membership - for persons under 21.

FUTURE EVENTS AT BEDFORD STREET 7.15 p.m.

May 5: "Die Meistersinger" - and Other Singers
An eagerly awaited lecture by Mr. Norman Peasey, repetiteur and coach at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. Members will recall his successful broadcasts, and his lecture to the Society last year. A large attendance is anticipated.

May 19: "Poetry, Music and Drama"
A lecture by Mr. Granville C. Fyne. Members will guess that this turns upon Wagner's profound conviction that poetry, music and drama belong together. The lecture will be fully illustrated with gramophone records.

Jun 2: "Die Meistersinger" - Acts I & II
Jun 16: "Die Meistersinger" - Act III

CONCERT DIRECTOR'S MEETING

Members are reminded of the annual Concert Director's Meeting, which will be combined with the traditional "Desert Island Discos", on June 30, 7.15 p.m. at Bedford Street. It is hoped that a large attendance will reward our Concert Director's live and enterprising approach. Please let him have your selections in good time; and do not hesitate if they happen to be unusual. One wonders whether, as in the celebrated radio programme, the selector ought to be allowed one book - other than the Bible, Shakespeare or Ernest Newman.
THE RECORDED VOCAL ART SOCIETY

There is to be a programme on "Wagnerian Singers" at 7.0 p.m. on May 13, at the Memorial Hall, Farrington Street.

EARLY MEMBERS OF THE WAGNER SOCIETY

Our Hon Secretary, from whose eagle-eyes nothing is long hidden, has unearthed the interesting and happy fact that out of thirty original members, no less than twelve are still active in the Wagner Society. After the passage of eleven years, this is indeed a tribute to the constant interest of those members, and to the fundamental stability of the Society.

THE DUTCHMAN AT SADLERS WELLS

Mr. Donald McIntyre has followed in Mr. Ward's footsteps as the Dutchman. He proved an able, straightforward singer; and at times gave more than a hint of power yet to come. Vocally, Miss Rita Hunter was equal to all the demands of the taxing role of Senta. She deserved her warm reception from a pleased audience. It is good to know that Britain continues to produce true Wagnerian singers, and that Sadlers Wells enables us to hear them.

"WAGNER - A PICTORIAL BIOGRAPHY"

"Wagner - A Pictorial Biography", published by Thames and Hudson at 28/-, is really a picture book, beautifully produced. Most of the illustrations will already be well-known by Wagnerians, but a few are more unusual. It is interesting to observe Wagner's own sketch for the decoration of the apartment at Penzing. He might well have given the professional interior-decorators a run for their money, had he so desired.

"The walls were festooned with silk... The whole of the floor was covered by heavy and uncommonly soft carpets into which one's feet literally sank. The working room was lilac, with lilac hangings and bands of dark red and gold in the corners. The dining-room pattern was rosebuds. The curtains were of brown wool with a Persian pattern, and the arm-chairs were dark red plush. The maid had to wear pink knee breeches and be exquisitely perfumed ..."

The biographer in this case, Mr. Walter Panofsky, blandly observes: "To pay for all this was obviously impossible, and in March 1864 Wagner vanished into the blue to evade his creditors. "Unless a miracle happens, this is the end". Curiously enough, a miracle did happen: King Ludwig II.

Altogether, a charming book, reasonably priced. The biography is in the nature of things short and elementary, but excellently translated by Mr. Richard Rickett. There are companion books on people as diverse as Shaw, Shakespeare, Churchill, Leonardo, Beethoven, Napoleon and Pope John XXIII.

G.C.P.

WAGNER IN THE THEATRE

We look forward to the resumption of a complete 'Ring' at Covent Garden in the autumn; but the question must be asked, are we getting enough Wagner in the theatre? After making allowance for the shoemaker who thinks there is nothing like leather, the answer is still no.
How did we fare, for example, in 1962-63? The Annual Report of the Royal Opera House shows 48 performances of Verdi, 15 of Wagner, and 4 of Mozart. There were 15 performances of 'Aida' alone.

WAGNERIAN AUTHORS

Earlier this year we were pleased to welcome Professor Robert Donington as guest and lecturer. The Chairman has now received a letter from Robert L. Jacobs, author of "Wagner" in the Master Musicians series, expressing a keen interest in the Society. No doubt he has already been marked out as a potential lecturer by our Concert Director. The Society always welcomes professional scholars and authors, who can do much to increase our knowledge of Wagner.

CONCERT DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Foreword

In the process of enlarging the scope of the Society’s activities it is our intention to provide a regular catalogue and review of records and commercial tapes that are of interest to the Wagnerian. In the main only individual discs and part-sets will be mentioned in the newsletter together with news and rumours regarding larger scale ventures by the record companies. Detailed reviews of complete sets will be dealt with in 'The Wagner Society Review' the initial preparation of which is in the very capable hands of Mr. S. Nicolls.

Furthermore, we hope to devote at least one of our programmes to a 'Record Review'. The first of these is being planned for our autumn season, but the growing popularity of Wagner's music is prompting a greater number of Wagner issues, and we very much doubt if one 'Wagner Record Review' will eventually be enough.

Recent discs

By the very nature of things Wagnerians can hardly be sympathetic on a purely personal level to those multitudinous single-disc issues of overtures, preludes and the like, although we all recognise their proselytising value. This month, however, a disc stands out for special mention. As far as we can determine the nearest that Ansermet has got on disc with the Suisse Romande orchestra to Wagner has been Liszt's 'Bunenshiel'. This month Decca has issued this very famous combination playing the Preludes to Meistersinger, Lohengrin, and Parsifal, the Good-Friday music and Siegfried's Funeral March. It is, of course, very finely recorded and Ansermet's deeply idiosyncratic interpretations are of immense interest, especially where the interest is chiefly in the shifting harmonic patterns such as the Lohengrin and Parsifal preludes and the Funeral March. Some of the moments in these performances are very lovely. The Meistersinger prelude does not come off at all well. Conductors should realise that although this music seems extrovert, it is really of a highly complex nature; we remember that Tovey, in an analysis of Bach's F minor fugue from the 1st Book of the 48 compared this Meistersinger Prelude to the Fugue, and to the Beethoven last quartets. In spite of this single performance, those persons who are interested in the interpretation of one of the greatest living conductors should make a special point of listening to this disc.

Things to Come

Philips Records have most kindly given the Society advance information on their forthcoming 'Tannhäuser' and 'Parsifal'. Both are recordings of Bayreuth 1962 productions and promise to be most exciting issues. The 'Tannhäuser' will have Anja Silja, Grace Bumbry, Windgassen and Eberhard Wächter in the main singing roles.

'Parsifal' will be sung by Jess Thomas, the young American helden-tenor from South Dakota who now lives in Munich. The Gurnemanz will be Hans
Hotter; while Amfortas and Klingsor will be interpreted by George London and Gustav Neidlinger respectively. Irene Dalis, who was the first American Kundry at Bayreuth, creates that role here. Both productions are conducted by Knappertsbusch.

Decca are proceeding with their mighty task of making gramophone history by being the first company ever to issue the complete 'Ring' on records. Having already given us the incomparable 'Rheingold' and the magnificent 'Siegfried', they are now engaged on 'Götterdämmerung'. Further details are assured by Decca for later on during the summer.

The Society has written to Oriole Records regarding their recent issue of 'Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg' only very recently, and it is too soon to expect an answer. Details will be announced at meetings as they become available.

Future events

Since the Philips issues will be very important ones, we are hoping for an outside event such as we had with the recent splendid EMI 'Lohengrin', and the memorable 'Siegfried' and 'Tristan' by Decca, and this is to say nothing of the 'Tannhäuser' and 'Fidelio'. If we can possibly manage to arrange an outside pre-release event of both the Philips issues we will. This will be the first Parsifal on stereo and it is to be issued on five discs instead of the customary six.

The Champagne Party

We have now received permission from Sir David Webster to hold this event in the Crush Bar at Covent Garden after the second 'Rheingold' on Monday, 21st September. It is being held to celebrate the return of the complete 'Ring' cycle to the Royal Opera House. This is important, and we felt that it should be celebrated properly, and in no mean fashion. It is therefore intended that it shall be an affair of a certain social significance. We are planning to invite a number of very eminent persons connected with the world of music. Further details cannot be announced, we regret, until May 31. On this date tickets will be on sale to the public, price £2.2.0., although the number will obviously be limited by the capacity of the Crush Bar.

Members of the Committee who are aware of certain details that cannot yet be divulged are unanimous in thinking that this event may well be oversubscribed. In such an event the final fifty ticket-applications will be dealt with by ballot. I most strongly urge all members of the Society who are interested to make a provisional booking with either Mr. Slater or myself.

THE PHILIPS 'TANNHAUSER'

Since the Concert Director's Report was drafted, we have heard that an outside performance of the Philips 'Tannhäuser' may be arranged for June. Details of date, time and place will be notified to members during May.

THE LAST A.G.M.

The Hon. Secretary anticipates that the Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting will be duly verified and ready for duplication within two or three weeks. They will be sent to all members who paid a subscription for 1963 and for 1964.

We hope that it may be possible to enclose with the Minutes a notification of the 'Tannhäuser' event mentioned above.