



WAGNER  
SOCIETY  
NSW

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CELEBRATING THE MUSIC OF RICHARD WAGNER

# WAGNER QUARTERLY

**IN MEMORIAM** ROBERT ALLMAN OBE AM (1927-2013) – see article inside.

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Welcome to the first Quarterly for 2014.

I hope that our members had a very happy and fulfilling 2013, which included such a rich abundance of Wagner offerings from all over the world...the sort of offerings that are likely to come only once in a century.

This year will be somewhat quieter, but we still have some very special events planned, including another seminar by Antony Ernst in August, this time on Wagner's musical legacy. I don't think that anyone who was at Antony's seminar on the Ring last year will forget his amazing knowledge, erudition and delivery...with barely a glance at his notes!

We started this year on a high note in our February meeting, with three of the performers from the Melbourne Ring taking us backstage and giving us different perspectives on that amazing event.

Speaking of the Melbourne Ring, I am a member of the New York Wagner Society, and receive its regular magazine. The latest one, dated February 2014, contains a lengthy review of "the Ring Down Under." The reviewer described it as "one of the best Rings anywhere for a very long time..." high praise indeed!

I'm afraid that the Bayreuth ticket situation remains unchanged. Wagner Societies are no longer given an allocation of tickets from the box office. However, our membership of the Friends of Bayreuth gave us access to two tickets to the Ring and associated operas later this year, which were gratefully taken up by two of our members.

Your Society is continuing to support a number of scholarships and opportunities for aspiring young singers. Most recently, we have sponsored a major prize (the NSW Wagner Society prize) in the Elizabeth Connell scholarship, which was set up in recognition of that superb Wagnerian soprano, and is organised by the Joan Sutherland and Richard Bonyngue Foundation. Applicants will enter into heats firstly at the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden (judged by Dame Anne Evans

and Dennis O'Neill), then at the Metropolitan Opera in New York (judged by Jane Eaglen and James Morris). The finals will take place at the Sydney Conservatorium in September. We have also sponsored a young bass baritone, Christopher Richardson, who participated in the Lisa Gasteen National Opera School at the end of last year. Christopher gained greatly from the experience. His letter of thanks is set out later in this Quarterly. He will be singing for us at our AGM on 25 May.

Finally I must mention the very special Arthur Rackham books, which were donated to the Society, incredibly generously, by one of our members. They are described in detail later in this Quarterly, but I wanted to emphasise how unique they are. I have never seen illustrations quite as vivid as these, particularly given that the books are now over 100 years old. For those of you who enjoy antiquarian gems, I cannot recommend these too highly.

## Opera Australia's Ring Cycle Melbourne 2013



David Corcoran (understudy for Siegmund and Froh)



Dominica Matthews (Flosshilde & Schwertleite)



Warwick Fyfe (Alberich)

**Patron:**

**Honorary Life Members:**

**Simone Young AM**

**Mr Richard King**

**Prof Michael Ewans**

**Mr Horst Hoffman**

**Mr Roger Cruickshank**

**Dr Terence Watson**

## FOR YOUR DIARY

2014

No Wagner performances scheduled by Sydney Symphony Orchestra or Opera Australia

Sunday 4 May	<b>Recital: Wagner &amp; Beyond:</b> a roam through the Master's Musical Legacy – a concert featuring young Sydney singers, including Catherine Bouchier, Regina Daniel, Emilie Lemasson, Matthew Reardon and Sarah Ann Walker, accompanied by Michael Curtain. (This concert will feature the type of music to be explored by Dr Antony Ernst in his 23 August seminar: Beyond the Twilight of the Gods: Wagner's musical legacy – see below in Coming Events). <b>Members: \$40; Non-Members: \$45</b>	2PM Mosman Art Gallery
Saturday 24 May	Orchestra Wellington – Deborah Humble singing Wagner's <i>Wesendonck Lieder</i> , with Haydn Symphony No.84 and Bruckner Symphony No.7. Tickets: <a href="http://www.orchestrawellington.co.nz/">www.orchestrawellington.co.nz/</a>	7 PM Wellington NZ Cathedral of St Paul
Saturday 19 July	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i> – semi-staged performance by the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra – details below	4PM Auckland Town Hall
Sunday 10 August 7:00 PM	Jonas Kaufmann – concert of arias by Verdi, Puccini, Bizet and "others" with conductor Jochen Rieder	Sydney Opera House

## COMING EVENTS 2014 - STARTING TIMES MAY VARY

PLEASE CHECK THE SCHEDULE FOR DETAILS.

DATE	Some events may be subject to change and further detail in the next newsletter	TIME & LOCATION
6 April	<b>Dr David Larkin: R1 and R2 – The Two Richards: Strauss &amp; Wagner</b> DVD PRESENTATION 12:30 Act3; <i>Tristan and Isolde</i> . Glyndebourne 2007 Lehnoff production with Nina Stemme, Robert Gambill, Rene Pape and Bo Skovhus. LPO/Jiří Bělohávek	Goethe Institut 2PM
25 May	<b>Annual General Meeting</b> followed by Recital by Matthew Reardon & Chris Richardson (Lisa Gasteen National Opera School Scholar) accompanied by Bradley Gilchrist and Wagner's Birthday Celebration <b>NO DVD PRESENTATION</b>	Goethe Institut 2PM
15 June	<b>Simon O'Neill: Heldentenor from New Zealand</b> 12:30 DVD PRESENTATION – Act 1 <i>Parsifal</i> - Metropolitan Opera 2013. (Jonas Kaufmann, Rene Pape, Peter Pattei, Katarina Dalayman, Evgeny Nikitin, Daniel Gatti (cond) Francois Girard (director)	Goethe Institut 2PM
20 July	<b>Behind &amp; Below the Stage: Marnie Sebire, Wagner Tuba, Melbourne Ring Orchestra &amp; Roger Press, Assistant Director. Melbourne Ring Cycle</b> 12:30 DVD PRESENTATION – Act 2 <i>Parsifal</i> – Met Opera 2013. (Jonas Kaufmann, Rene Pape, Peter Pattei, Katarina Dalayman, Evgeny Nikitin, Daniel Gatti (conductor), Francois Girard (director)	Goethe Institut 2PM
Saturday 23 August Seminar	<b>Dr Antony Ernst: Beyond the Twilight of the Gods: Wagner's musical legacy.</b> (How Humperdinck, Strauss, Verdi, Respighi, Debussy, Chausson, Elgar, Mahler, Schreker, Pfitzner were influenced by Wagner) <b>NB: FUNCTION ON SATURDAY NOT SUNDAY</b> at Willoughby Uniting Church Conference Centre 10 Clanwilliam Street (Details of cost, program and application process etc to be advised shortly) <b>NO DVD PRESENTATION</b>	Willoughby 10:00 AM-5PM
21 September	<b>Dr James Wierzbicki: From the Sublime to the Ridiculous: The Long, Strange Ride of Wagner's Valkyries</b> 12:30 DVD PRESENTATION - Act 3 <i>Parsifal</i> - Metropolitan Opera 2013. (Jonas Kaufmann, Rene Pape, Peter Pattei, Katarina Dalayman, Evgeny Nikitin, Daniel Gatti (cond) Francois Girard (director)	Goethe Institut 2PM
12 October	<b>George Gilmour &amp; Sarah Louise Owens: In pursuit of choral perfection: insiders' views of the Bayreuther Festspiele Chor</b> 12:30 DVD PRESENTATION – Wagner Bicentenary Gala Concert from Semperoper Dresden, with Jonas Kaufmann, Staatskapelle Dresden conducted by Christian Thielemann	Goethe Institut 2PM
9 November	<b>Recital (details to be advised shortly) followed by Christmas Party</b> <b>NO DVD PRESENTATION</b>	Goethe Institut 2PM

Advice about changes to the Program will be emailed to people who have given their email addresses to the Society's Webmaster; the latest updates will also be available on the Society's webpage: [www.wagner.org.au](http://www.wagner.org.au). Admission to each event will be \$20 a Member, and \$25 per non-Member, unless otherwise indicated.

**Goethe-Institut address 90 Ocean Street Woollahra (corner of Jersey Road)**

## IN MEMORIAM – IRIS WAGNER 1942-2014

### Editor

Iris Wagner, daughter of Wieland Wagner (and hence a great grandchild of Richard Wagner), is survived by her three siblings Wolf Siegfried, Daphne and Nike Wagner, who is assuming leadership of the Beethovenfest Bonn beginning in the 2014 season. According to Deutsche Welle online, “Wagner, who worked as a photographer and translator, also belonged to the Richard Wagner Foundation’s steering committee. As the foundation’s most important decision-making body, its responsibilities include determining who leads the annual celebration of Richard Wagner’s work and legacy at Bayreuth.” She has been reported as questioning “whether the Wagner family needed to be involved with running the festival at all.” Provocatively, she expressed herself very decidedly about the quality of current Bayreuth productions: “In Bayreuth, social vanity, surface appearances and networking have now come to the fore. What’s left over is more or less emptiness, a hollow Richard Wagner cult,” she told the newspaper ‘Fränkischer Tag.’” EDITOR.

Report from Deutsche Welle: <http://www.dw.de/wagners-great-granddaughter-iris-dies-at-71/a-17353831>

### DONATIONS

Anonymous, Philip Bacon Galleries, Janette Bates, Barbara and Ian Brady, Rae and Russ Cottle, Rhonda Dalton, Camron Dyer, Igor Ferdman, Wendy and Andrew Hamlin, Susan Kelly, Anna-Lisa Klettenberg, Francois Kunc S.C., Monica and Aliro Olave, D R Orr, Kenneth Reed, Flora and John Weickhardt, Donna Woodhill, Terence Watson.

### NEW MEMBERS

Margrit Bachmann (1132), Frances and Michael Weekes (1133), Michael Rodriguez and Roslynne Moxhan (1134), Jane Schwager (1135), Nigel Stoke (1136), Allan Smith (1137), Maureen Eva (1138), Mailis Wakeham (1139), Janice Roberts Achim Leistner (1140), Amelia-Anne Merz (1141), Patricia Jones (1142).

Link to Fränkischer Tag article: <http://www.infranken.de/ueberregional/kultur/Wagner-Iris-Wagner-Wahnfried-Richard-Wagner-Stiftung-Museum-Bayreuther-Festspiele-Es-brennt-in-Bayreuth-an-allen-Ecken-und-Enden;art182,293945> (which also contains some pertinent criticism of the City of Bayreuth’s reconstruction of Wahnfried, including the possibility of a café in the “backyard” near the Grave).

## QUALITY HIGHLIGHTS:

### In Memoriam – Robert Allman - P. 5

#### LAST WORDS ON THE MELBOURNE RING - P. 6

#### A Parting Word from Erda - P. 6

Aka Deborah Humble

#### The Visual Language of the Melbourne Ring - P. 6

Peter Bassett

#### Susan Bullock’s “Little List” - P.9

#### The 2013 Melbourne Ring Cycle from the Inside: Dominica Matthews, David Corcoran and Warwick Fyfe - P.9

Terence Watson

### For Sale: Rare Arthur Rackham Wagner Volumes - P.14

## COMMITTEE 2013 - 2014

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## EVA WAGNER-PASQUIER - RETIREMENT FROM BAYREUTH ADMINISTRATION

Editor

It seems that Eva Wagner-Pasquier has decided that she does not want to continue as co-director of the Festival from the end of the 2015 season. The Bayreuth Festival has, as at early March 2014, no statement on this matter. However, the Chairman of the Bayreuth Festival's Board of Directors Toni Schmidt "said that Eva Wagner-Pasquier had informed the board of directors that she would not extend her contract as joint director with her half-sister, Katharina Wagner, when it runs out in 2015, the German news agency DPA reported."

Reports suggest that Frau Wagner-Pasquier is interested in staying on as some form of adviser, concentrating mainly on the Wagner Societies. James Geberer, for the San Francisco Classical Voice, reports: "Various websites and German publications have a field day speculating on what's going on behind the scenes. As Wagner-Pasquier would turn 70 at the time of contract renewal, it's possible that she just wants to retire—mostly, but not completely." This means, also, that her sister Katharina Wagner could stay on as sole director of the festival, if she were successful in having her contract extended.

*The Guardian* online sums up the current situation quite succinctly and slightly acerbically: "Whatever you think about some of the productions on the Green Hill over the last few years (which apparently reached a nadir in Frank Castorf's glibly and by all accounts pointlessly shocking Ring cycle last summer) the fact that the sisters have kept the festival in good financial and administrative shape over the last five years, and the fact that they're maintained musical standards in the

pit, with such conductors as Christian Thielemann, Andris Nelsons, and the star of last year's festival, Kirill Petrenko, bears witness to what can be achieved when the internecine feuding stops at Bayreuth, and the Wagner-clan gets on with the business of running an opera house. (Even if they still need to find some better singers on stage.)"

If the situation is as reported, then Katherina Wagner will be faced with both the administrative tasks undertaken by her sister, as well as, reportedly, producing Bayreuth's next *Tristan und Isolde*, although, as reported in a recent Quarterly, she will also have the assistance of the recently appointed Heinz Dieter Sense as Managing Director. However, many reports suggest that the improvement in performance standards were due largely to the efforts of Frau Wagner-Pasquier, so her departure could result in a future decline in those standards, unless someone else with her experience is appointed to the administration, who is not likely to be Nike Wagner, leading to the possibility of the appointment of a non-Wagner family member to a top position in the Festival. EDITOR

Artsblog: [http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/02/21/semper-opera-severs-ties-with-appointed-general-manager/?\\_php=true&\\_type=blogs&\\_r=0](http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/02/21/semper-opera-severs-ties-with-appointed-general-manager/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0)

Classical Voice: <https://www.sfcv.org/article/bayreuth-and-then-there-was-one>

*The Guardian*: <http://www.theguardian.com/music/musicblog/2014/feb/26/eva-wagner-leaves-bayreuth-festival>

## APPRECIATION FROM WAGNER SOCIETY SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT - CHRIS RICHARDSON

NB: Chris is our guest singer for the 2014 AGM on 25 May

The Hon Jane Mathews  
President  
The Wagner Society in NSW Inc  
GPO Box 4574  
SYDNEY NSW 2001  
8th February 2014

Dear Ms Matthews,

I would formally like to convey my heartfelt gratitude to yourself and the Wagner Society of New South Wales for generously granting the \$4000 scholarship that financed my attendance at the Lisa Gasteen National Opera School in December 2013.

This experience has been transformational for my vocal technique, and the language and performance coaching were absolutely invaluable. Furthermore, the intensive sessions with revered international professionals such as Siegfried Jerusalem and Metropolitan Opera conductor Giovanni Reggioli were career-changing.

The Opera School has already proved to be catalytic in the furthering of my career as a bass baritone - as following the LGNOS 'Industry Audition' (which took place on the penultimate day of the school) I was signed for exclusive representation as a performing artist in Australasia by

esteemed Classical Music agent Graham Pushee, the director of Arts Management. Exciting things are on the horizon as a direct result of your generosity.

I thank you profusely for your financial support which enabled me to experience the 2013 Lisa Gasteen National Opera School, and more generally I honour your commitment to the sustenance and longevity of the Classical Arts in this nation. This country is fortunate to have such an active and generous music patronage in the Wagner Society of New South Wales, of which I, in this instance have been the fortunate beneficiary.

With sincerest thanks,



Christopher Richardson Bass Baritone  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/richbassbaritone](http://www.facebook.com/richbassbaritone)  
Website: [www.christopher-richardson-bassbaritone.com](http://www.christopher-richardson-bassbaritone.com)



## IN MEMORIAM ROBERT ALLMAN

by Peter Bassett



Allman was born in Melbourne in 1927 and died on 4 December 2013, also, like Director Elke Neidhardt, during Opera Australia's Ring Cycle production.

Allman studied in Paris before being engaged by the Royal Opera Covent Garden for three seasons from 1955-57. He moved on to Germany in 1959. After travelling

the world singing major roles in major opera houses in Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, Stuttgart, Frankfurt, Cologne, Hanover, Mannheim, Dusseldorf, Kassel, Essen, Wiesbaden, Strasbourg, Zurich, New Orleans, Houston, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Singapore and Vienna, he returned to his native Australia to become principal baritone with the national company.

In 1965, Allman sang with the Sutherland-Williamson Opera Company on its tour of Australia, alongside Joan Sutherland, Luciano Pavarotti, Lauris Elms, Margreta Elkins and others. Indeed, he sang 11 roles with Joan Sutherland and then became the Patron of the Joan Sutherland Society of Sydney.

Jennifer Williams on [theoperablog.com](http://theoperablog.com), recalls that Allman "first joined the Australian Opera to sing the role of Jokanaan in *Salome* in 1960, and 28 years later, his reprisal led then Artistic Director Moffatt Oxenbould to remark 'he sounded so fresh-voiced and authoritative that it was hard, but wonderful, to believe that he had been with the Company since the first season in which we had performed *Salome* in 1960.'"

Among the many bass-baritone roles he made his own, Allman's Wagner roles included: Wolfram in *Tannhäuser*, Donner in *Das Rheingold*, Telramund in *Lohengrin*, Kothner in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, and the title role in Peter Petersen's *Der fliegende Holländer* in 1977 for the Australian Opera with Neil Warren-Smith as Daland, Lone Koppel-Winter as Senta and Ronald Dowd as Erik.

Clive Paget in the *Limelight* magazine considered that "His greatest recorded legacy is probably a live *Lucrezia Borgia* with Sutherland and Elkins, conducted by Richard Bonyngé, as well as a staggeringly fine Pizarro in *Fidelio* from Glyndebourne directed by Sir Peter Hall." However, Wagnerians would be as pleased that his role as Fritz Kothner in Opera Australia's 1988 recording of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* has been preserved on DVD (still available at a number of online stores).

Allman was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire in the 1980 New Year's Honours, and a Member of

the Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday Honours of 1992 for his services to opera.

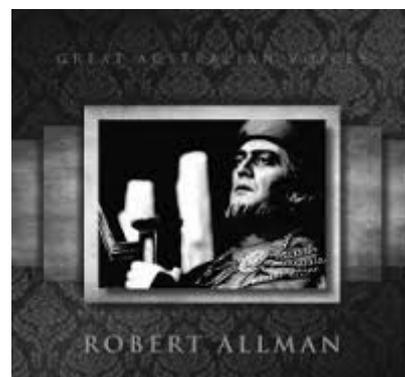
In *The Australian*, Brian Castles-Onion, summed up Allman's contribution and personal qualities: "To those who had the joy of working with him, Allman's personality, stage presence and unequalled vocal roar will forever remain with us. Audiences adored the clarity he brought to each of his many operatic roles and the ease and charm of his vocal delivery won him many admirers. He was an important and well-loved singer on the Australian operatic stage for 47 years."

Castles-Onion recalls Allman's final appearance on the Australian opera stage: "The final curtain on his career came in 1997 with the "Robert Allman Farewell Gala". It was the first and only time in Australia's operatic history that an artist has been honoured with such an event. His connection with the Sydney Opera House and its audience demanded Allman be granted a fitting career exit. The gala comprised Act Two of Verdi's *Otello* with Allman delivering his vitally strong Iago for the last time on stage. After interval, the performance continued with Act Two of *Die Fledermaus*, complete with a specially designed Party Scene where he took the audience on a journey through his career." However, as Oxenbould points out: "...the end of his performing career was not the end of his association with Opera Australia. He was a founding and long-term Trustee of the Company's Benevolent Fund and a mentor and adviser to generations of young singers."

Fortunately, Allman left a valuable, wide-ranging compendium that is still available of his singing that covers all of his roles over many years.

Report drawn from:

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/a-baritone-of-celebrated-force/story-e6frg8n6-1226780087818#>  
<http://www.limelightmagazine.com.au/Article/366822,robert-allman-has-died.aspx>  
<http://www.theoperablog.com/obituary-robert-allman-obe-am/>  
<http://www.smh.com.au/comment/obituaries/robert-allman-singing-with-the-stars-20131229-301h5.html>  
<http://www.abc.net.au/classic/content/2014/01/15/3914546.htm>  
<http://www.operaarts.com/robert-allman.php>



Great Australian Voices: Robert Allman  
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Online Price: \$39.99.

Available from our supporter, Fish Fine Music, at their website: <http://www.fishfinemusic.com.au/products/GAV002/Robert-Allman/Great-Australian-Voices-Robert-Allman/CD>

## LAST WORDS ON TH

## A PARTING WORD FROM ERDA – AKA DEBORAH HUMBLE

'It's over! We made it! What an amazing event for Melbourne and Australia. I expected an element of excitement but have been totally overwhelmed by the support from audiences, friends and fans. And to have such an incredible, friendly and talented lot of colleagues has made this time very special indeed. I send extra special thanks to the Wagner Society of NSW members who are so much more than my sponsors... they are friends, supporters, encouragers and great entertainers! And to all my friends who came to visit from Adelaide, Sydney and even London and Germany... wow. Made new friends too... what more can there be to take away from this amazing experience...bye bye Melbourne' (Facebook Post)

(Deborah Humble was critically acclaimed for her Erda and Waltraute roles in Opera Australia's Melbourne Ring 2013. Deborah is a member of Wagner Society NSW and the Society was delighted and proud to be in a position to sponsor her in Melbourne. Deborah is also singing the *Wesendonck Lieder* in Wellington on 24 May – see For Your Diary.)



## THE VISUAL LANGUAGE OF THE MELBOURNE RING – PETER BASSETT

Stage design plays a key role in establishing a sense of continuity throughout the vast span of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. Although the set designer for the Melbourne production, Robert Cousins, had little experience of designing for opera (his only work before the *Ring* was a modern chamber opera with Benedict Andrews), he was sensitive to Neil Armfield's priorities of modernity, a playful sense of theatre, the clearing away of clichés, and the pursuit of 'poor theatre', ie communicating the story with the simplest of means.

In an operatic work as massive as the *Ring*, an ever-present risk for directors and designers is fragmentation. Wagner's compositional technique of emotional reminiscence (use of leitmotifs) plays a vital role in maintaining the musical unity of the *Ring*, and its chief purpose is structural. Stage directors and designers need some equivalent means of maintaining conceptual unity over a long span, and this is often accomplished by using a single visual aesthetic throughout as, for example with Michael Scott-Mitchell's carefully calculated and integrated designs for the 2004 Adelaide *Ring*, and Robert Lepage's designs for the current Met production. Although the Met's interactive projections are mesmerising, its 'machine'- the many limbed see-saw that provides constantly changing surface areas for projections - greatly hampers performances and reduces the acting space to a narrow alley. I saw Neil Armfield in the audience for *Das Rheingold* in New York in 2012, and could tell from his body language that the Lepage concept was anathema to him. He did not return for the remainder of the cycle.

Armfield's comments to Clive Paget in an interview for *Limelight* magazine in November 2013 suggest that he recognised the dangers of fragmentation. He is quoted as saying: 'Each opera has a distinct personality and Wagner does keep a sense of unity across each one. But the tone across the four operas is very different, and I think you have

to respond to that change in tone. At the same time, just as characters continue while musical themes are constantly remembering the past, you have to find a visual connection all the way through.' I am not convinced that Armfield achieved his stated goal.

There were many fascinating vignettes but too often they were self-contained and conceptually unrelated to what went before or what came afterwards – or if they were related, I didn't recognise how. Separate scenes were accorded their own visual styles; indeed, I don't think I have seen such a miscellany of styles within a *Ring* production before. I'm not talking about the subject matter of the designs but the manner in which they were expressed. There were frequent aesthetic 'gear-changes', with styles ranging from abstract minimalism to ultra-realism; historical reconstruction to contemporary symbolism.

A few examples will illustrate what I mean. The opening scene of *Das Rheingold* employed a huge angled mirror in order to reflect, in turn, a crowd of 150 extras dressed for the beach, the three Rhinemaidens, Alberich and the 'gold'. The visual style was at first abstract and then contemporary minimalist. The use of a mirror in this way is not new; its pedigree can be traced via a recent *Rheingold* production at the Paris Opera (2010) directed by Günter Krämer and designed by Jürgen Bäckmann, to the 1983 Bayreuth production of Peter Hall and William Dudley and, beyond that, to the 19<sup>th</sup> century stage illusion 'Pepper's Ghost'. Bäckmann's Paris design showed the gold (a large, metallic sphere), the Rhinemaidens, and many extras all reflected in the mirror, whilst Alberich, clad like his Melbourne counterpart in singlet and grey pants, looked on. The Munich *Rheingold*, first staged in February 2012 and directed by Andreas Kriegenburg, followed a similar idea but used enlarged projected images instead of a mirror. Incidentally, the idea of using a stage illusionist for Alberich's 'vanishing

# E MELBOURNE RING

cabinet' transformations in Scene Three evoked not only 19<sup>th</sup> century European theatre but also the Australian illusionist The Great Levante (1892-1978) whose cabinets can be seen in the Performing Arts Collection at the Arts Centre Melbourne.

The angled mirror was used again in the very effective Nibelheim scene (Scene Three), but Scene Two seems to have had a rather different inspiration. Its historical-realist look owed more than a little to the Copenhagen *Rheingold* (2006) directed by Kasper Bech Holten and designed by Marie i Dali and Steffen Aarving. In both productions, the gods were shown surrounded by household items in preparation for their move into their new home. At Copenhagen, in a tented setting reminiscent of a 1920s archaeological expedition, the household objects were collections of large volumes (the family records) and sculptured classical busts, all stacked on trolleys. In Melbourne we had Wotan's natural history collection of stuffed animals in crates, making reference to the great natural history museums of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the background at Copenhagen was a painted representation of Valhalla, and at Melbourne there was also a painted backcloth showing Valhalla as depicted by Josef Hoffmann for the 1876 Bayreuth production. At both Copenhagen and Melbourne, the giants arrived from above the stage, and did so in almost identical cradles. At Melbourne they tore through the painted backcloth, thus rendering Erda's subsequent prediction of the end of Wotan's dreams and ambitions somewhat redundant.

In its final scene of *Rheingold*, the production underwent another change in design style with the sudden arrival of an all-dancing line-up of 1930s vaudeville 'Rainbow Girls'. Abstraction, contemporary realism and historical allusion now gave way to ironic symbolism in a reference to the frivolous world of appearances and the hollow grandeur of the gods. The dancers seemed to be related in some way to the Rhinemaidens who, in Scene One, had joined the beach crowd (the actual guardians of the gold?) while dressed incongruously in feathers, sequins and high-heeled shoes. As the final scene drew to a close, columns of dancers relentlessly formed and reformed, studiously ignoring the body of the dead Fasolt spread-eagled before them. Although the imagery of the feathered Rhinemaidens and well-drilled 'Rainbow Girls' can ultimately be traced to the 1930s



Barrie Kosky, Director, Klaus Grünberg. Designer – *Das Rheingold* 2009 Staatsoper Hannover Photo credit Stefan Adam

musicals of Busby Berkeley, it had been picked up and used to considerable effect in a 2009 production of *Rheingold* at Hannover, directed by Melbourne-born Barrie Kosky (now resident in Berlin) and designed by Klaus Grünberg. When the curtains opened for the prelude to that production, the stage was filled with feathered, leggy dancers on stairs, moving their ostrich-plumed fans in synchronised gestures. Behind them were the three Rhinemaidens, similarly attired and feathered. The 'gold' was a gold-painted, naked young woman, snatched away in due course by Alberich. In Melbourne, Alberich carried off a small girl in a swimsuit.

The three Acts of *Die Walküre* in Melbourne could be described, in turn, as realist, symbolist and minimalist. It is hard to imagine a greater contrast than that between Act One's realistically furnished alpine (not forest) hut, with snow flakes and leaves, snow shoes and stocked cupboards, and the bare stage of Act Three. The set for the long second Act, with its spiral ramp and hanging collection of stuffed animals, could be interpreted as the interior of Valhalla were it not for the fact that (minus the animals) it also served as the scene of the flight of the Volsung twins, the annunciation of Siegmund's death, and the battle between Siegmund and Hunding. So, this set needed to be read symbolically (events spiralling out of control?) unlike that for Act One. There is some evidence that the ramp and suspended animals were inspired by an installation by the Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York between November 2011 and January 2012. Stuffed animals and other objects were hung at various levels in the atrium of the museum, in the midst of Frank Lloyd Wright's big spiral ramp.

How should we describe the three acts of *Siegfried* in Melbourne? Act One, like its counterpart in *Die Walküre* was all contemporary realism and, to my mind, picked up a number of ideas from the 2006 Copenhagen *Ring*. In both productions, Mime's dwelling in the forest was a modern house with several living spaces. Siegfried occupied what was clearly a modern boy's bedroom. Mime prepared his concoctions in a modern kitchen and made swords in his workshop. Childish drawings of animals were stuck on the wall above Siegfried's bed at Melbourne, and in Copenhagen Siegfried used his drawings to try to work out his family relationships. The hole he cut in the wall at the end of the act, in lieu of splitting the anvil, became, when the scene revolved, the entrance to Fafner's lair. This was a nice touch.

If Act One could be characterized as 'contemporary realist', Act Two moved again into the realm of symbolism. Neidhöhle (the cave of envy) was the hole hacked in the wall by Siegfried, and Fafner was a naked man who applied theatrical makeup and projected his fierce reputation into the world via a cinema screen that enlarged his painted face. The idea of a comparatively harmless Fafner presenting a larger than life image to the world was a feature of the Copenhagen *Ring*. In that production the elderly and not at all frightening giant broadcast fierce roars into the forest via an underground sound studio and loudspeakers. The forest bird in Melbourne (as almost everywhere else these days) was a pretty girl, not just a 'voice of a forest bird' as Wagner specified in the body of the score - not even in the cast list. Directors seem incapable of resisting the temptation to add a pretty female to the stage picture at this point, even though this robs Brünnhilde of her key function of being the first female Siegfried has seen. But then, a boy brought up with all the gadgets of a modern household is hardly going to be ignorant of the world either, so I fear it is a lost cause to expect fidelity to Wagner's intentions.

Fafner emerges from his cave bloodied and naked. Naked figures appear regularly in *Rings* these days. In the current Paris *Siegfried*, first seen in March 2011, the dragon is represented as a platoon of naked men in body paint. In the Hannover *Ring*, Erda is shown as a naked old woman who walks slowly across the stage. In the Copenhagen *Ring*, the Rhinegold is depicted as a naked young man swimming in an aquarium.

The third Act of *Siegfried* reverts to theatrical imagery, and we find Brünnhilde lying asleep in a shrink-wrapped crate in front of a theatre proscenium and golden fire-like curtain. Like many audience members, I was taken aback by the idea that Brünnhilde could be put to sleep in the open in one place and awakened inside a crate in another. However, in view of the fact that the final scene of *Die Walküre* was given an entirely different (minimalist) treatment from the theatrical-symbolist treatment of the final scene of *Siegfried* we should not be surprised. The disjunction comes with the contrasting aesthetics of the two scenes in general, not just with the details of set dressings and props.

The set designs for *Götterdämmerung* took us back to the world of Scene Two of *Rheingold* and the torn Hoffmann-inspired backcloth. The Norns are seen trying to mend it, and the implication seems to be that they were trying to recapture the past and its lost dreams. But is that really what the Norns are about in the Prologue to *Götterdämmerung*? Their rope (in Wagner's version) represents the continuity of events - past, present and future - and it breaks because there can be no more continuity; the future is unknowable. They were never concerned with restoring Wotan's fortunes; neither was it their mother's mission to save Wotan from himself.

Another crunch of the scenic gears led to the second part of the Prologue and to a grubby mattress which constituted the love nest of Siegfried and Brünnhilde. The contemporary banality of this scene did not sit well with the splendour of the music, but worse was to come. The superb interlude of Siegfried's journey to the Rhine was sabotaged by the intrusion of a hoard of extras, waving goodbye and simulating rowing. The principles of 'poor theatre', as expounded by the Polish director Jerzy Grotowski, include a requirement that actors' voices and bodies be central to a performance and that music (live or recorded) should be eliminated unless it emanated from the actors themselves. Perhaps this was the motivation for introducing crowds of extras into orchestral interludes, in the hope of implying that, somehow, the music was emanating from them. This raises a fundamental question about the compatibility of poor theatre with the aurally rich (there is no richer), symphonic and proto-cinematic aspects of Wagner's works. All the things that are abhorrent to advocates of poor theatre are integral to the creations of Richard Wagner; they are the very warp and weft of the Wagnerian fabric and, not least amongst them is the independent and increasingly dominant role of the orchestra.

The Gibichung scenes featured both ultra-realism and social satire, juxtaposing the powerful, coarse and barbaric text and music with stage pictures of contemporary social sophistication and pretension. The 'vassals' might have been singing about taking up arms, drinking themselves into a stupor and slaughtering animals in honour of the pagan gods, but one would never have guessed this from the beautifully mannered and garbed wedding guests who appeared before us.

Siegfried's funeral music was accompanied by an extraordinary ritual of washing and anointing the dead hero's body, painting his face and standing him upright in totemic fashion. We had moved from realism and satire to cultish symbolism, and it was here that the work finally came to rest. Brünnhilde, who, according to the music and Wagner's expressed intentions, should dominate the ending of *Götterdämmerung*, became just one of many onlookers and mourners as she stood clutching lilies; a forlorn figure beside Siegfried whose eerie white face became the real focus of our attention. I couldn't escape the feeling that I was witnessing *Siegfried's Tod*, and that an idea abandoned by Wagner in the 1850s had been resurrected along with the mythic hero himself.

## FROM THE SINGER WITH THE LAST WORD IN THE RING! BRÜNNHILDE AKA SUSAN BULLOCK'S "LITTLE LIST"

(At the final reception for the Ring Cycle in Melbourne, Susan Bullock sang her specially written tribute to the performers and organisers to the tune of "I've a little list," sung by the Lord High Executioner in the *Mikado*.)



As now it is the moment when the Ring Cycles must end,  
I've got a little list, I've got a little list  
Of Wagnerian offenders who just drive me round the bend  
And who never would be missed  
They never would be missed.

There's Hunding, Hagen, Fasolt, Fafner, Mime and his clones  
And then that cursing Alberich with all his golden phones  
And Wotan, he's no angel, he's a terror to his girls  
His twins are into incest, they're those redheads with the curls  
They really freak out Fricka in her fox fur and her pearls  
I've got her on my list, my Step Ma's on my list

And now we come to Loge, the smooth talker in "that" suit  
I've got him on my list, he's right here on my list  
He uses wit to tell the gods to hand back all the loot  
But they could not resist  
His fire will be missed.

There're swings as horses, guns as spears, no armour or breastplate  
Soprano birds and Erda's Norns, and that damned thread of fate  
And then the leading lady who's delivered in a crate  
She wakes to find her nephew kissing her...that's so "R"rate  
They make out in the plastic, what a place for your first date  
They're all here on my list, I've got 'em on my list

And what about poor Siegfried whose Mum died when he was born?  
He really will be missed, I know he will be missed  
Gutrune got him tiddly then he really got the "horn"  
He's right here on my list, I've got him on my list  
Old Gunther, what a loser, and he never gets the girl.

His wedding to Brünnhilde had the vassals in a whirl.  
Those showgirls and their shiny ring have caused us all this strife  
Where everyone's related and your brother is your wife  
But now that it's all over and you've heard my little list,  
Come on, let's all get...."drunk"..., come on, let's all get "drunk"!!!

But just before I leave you there's one thing I'd like to say  
You'll all be very missed, you'll all be very missed  
So thanks to all you Aussie folk for wishing us "g'day"  
You're all still on my list, you're all still on my list!  
To Craig and Lyndon, Neil and Bob, Kate, Damo, Rog and Rob,  
Maureen, Tony, Alice, Simon and the Backstage Mob  
The Orchestra and ...Pietari...!!!!  
You've whipped up Donner's storm  
And Tony Legge and all your team  
You've all been on great form  
So farewell from this Pommie  
As we take the Ashes home...\*\*\*\*  
Consider yourselves kissed  
You're on my Christmas list!!!

\*\*\*\* (that was VERY wishful thinking in early  
December when this was written!!!)

This is the text of the song that Susan Bullock sang at the final  
reception in Melbourne and has been kindly made available for  
reproduction in our Quarterly.

© Susan Bullock December 2013

## THE 2013 MELBOURNE RING CYCLE FROM THE INSIDE: DOMINICA MATTHEWS, DAVID CORCORAN AND WARWICK FYFE – TERENCE WATSON

On 2 February 2014, Society Members were honoured to have three of the performers involved in the highly successful Opera Australia production of Wagner's Ring Cycle give their insights on production and their parts in it. The three were very open and forthcoming about many aspects of the rehearsals, the challenges they faced and their feelings about having the chance to participate in the production.

Among other things, Warwick regaled us with the challenge of stripping to one's undies on stage as Alberich, not to mention singing to a blood-covered, buck-naked Fafner (Jud Arthur). He was, however, sanguine about his prospects of "breaking into" the big time in the northern hemisphere, despite the rapturous ovations he received for his spine-chilling portrayal of the Ring's premier villain. In addition, he already has a very full schedule until 2018, so it could be hard to fit in an overseas audition. However, after that, the first person offering him a contract "can have me." In the meantime, he was also enjoying his work with the very welcoming New Zealand opera company.

Dominica (Flosshilde & Schwertleite) began by also recalling some of the challenges of the Melbourne production, including having to tread carefully on a stage made slippery by the accumulated sweat of the "Sea of Humanity" that appeared in many of the scenes. The solution was non-slip soles – and continued care. In addition, she recalled the multiple levels of occupational health and safety precautions

to protect the Valkyries descending from the flies on trapezes, and for the dead heroes being hauled aloft and left hanging for some time. However, she found it hard to resist the urge to swing! On a personal level, she said that the experience had strengthened her voice and loved being the bottom line where she could let her voice "rip." Reflecting the feelings of many audience members, Dominica would have liked more to be happening on the stage, but she appreciated that Director Neil Armfield wanted to focus on the singing and storytelling. Dominica was happy to reprise the chance to work with the Siegfried Stefan Vinke, after singing with him during his appearances in Opera Australia's production of Erik Korngold's *Die tote Stadt*. She had also worked with Susan Bullock previously in Opera Australia's production of Dimitri Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. She also found it memorable to be able to help Terje Stensvold (Wotan, The Wanderer) celebrate his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, as well as to work with him during his last performances of the roles.

David Corcoran relished the chance, he told us, to understudy the roles of Siegmund and Froh for the production, as a young heldentenor "wondering where my voice could go." He felt that the piano dress rehearsals for the Ring gave him an opportunity to show Opera Australia the quality of his voice. His experience has led him to consider that he could one day follow in Stuart Skelton's footsteps, since the rehearsals gave him a sense of a very good fit between the demands of the role and his voice. David was thankful for the opportunity to study

the role with someone like Stuart, who knows exactly what he wants and how to do it. David recalled that his first Wagner performance had been stepping in for Andrew Brunson as Walther von der Vogelweide in *Tannhäuser* when Andrew took a week to perform in another show. Before taking up the cover for the Melbourne Ring Cycle he had sung Siegmund in Harbour City Opera's August 2013 production of Act 1 of *Die Walküre* (you can read Charlotte Moore's review at [www.limelightmagazine.com.au/Article/355349,Live-review-mozart-and-wagner-make-a-scene-harbour-city-opera.aspx](http://www.limelightmagazine.com.au/Article/355349,Live-review-mozart-and-wagner-make-a-scene-harbour-city-opera.aspx)). On the strength of these opportunities, David is planning to devote six to eight weeks to studying German in Germany and making as many contacts as he can and to audition as often as he can.

In response to a question, Warwick said that the dividend of experience of working on the Ring Cycle was unique; at the end of the first full dress rehearsal, he had never felt such a sense of corporate pride and never seen singers crying and applauding each other. Dominica seconded this sentiment, adding that most of the cast were Australians and they had all finished with a great sense of "look what we can do; this counts!" David added that he had a sense of a well-oiled machine that led to pride in the organisation that created such a successful production.

Robert Mitchell, senior chorus member, who was in our audience, considered that it was fantastic that the Ring Cycle had been completed in one season, because that was crucial in building the esprit de corps, giving the company an incredible focus, and making all the participants feel very, very special. Robert also noted that it was one of the chorus's greatest pleasures to be able to sing the special Melbourne Ring festival concert of choruses from Wagner. He hoped that the success of the *Parsifal* choruses in particular would lead to Opera Australia finally staging its own production of the opera. (If and when it occurs, it will be many, many years after, again, the State Opera of South Australia's 2001 production by Elke Neidhardt. Indeed, one could point to the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's wildly successful semi-staged performance of Richard Strauss's *Elektra* in February 2014 as a useful model – Editor).

In response to a question about what the three performer would like to see changed for the 2016 revival (to be hoped for), Warwick, echoing a comment from Susan Bullock, said "More walls" on the stage, since the auditorium and the stage have acoustic dead spots and walls on the stage would help project the voices more effectively and consistently. In addition, Dominica added that the speakers that people could see around the stage were not there to amplify the singers, but to help the singers better hear the orchestra – and walls would help give the singers better feedback of the orchestral sound on the stage. David suggested that greater use of video technology, such as that for Fafner's make up scene at the beginning of Act 2 of *Siegfried*, could be used to add even greater definition to the storytelling. Both Warwick and Dominica felt that, overall, the momentum and impact of the Cycle tended to peter out by *Götterdämmerung*, given that it had received the least amount of rehearsal time. David would also have liked a bit more clarity with the staging of Act 1 of *Die Walküre*, since it was puzzling at times to work out whether the characters were meant to be inside the hut or outside in the snow.

Echoing the most disappointing aspect of the 2004 Adelaide Ring Cycle (apart from the lack of a revival), the question of why the Melbourne Ring was not filmed was raised. Similarly, the responses suggested that, as far as the performers knew, it was a matter of not being able to negotiate contract releases for overseas singers to be filmed. (It is to be hoped that, if the 2016 revival happens, that the contractual "difficulties" will have been sorted out, particularly if (almost all) the cast are Opera Australia singers. Editor).

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## AUSTRALIAN & NEW ZEALAND RING CYCLISTS

Colleen Chesterman

### Missing the Bayreuth Experience?

During the Melbourne Ring Cycles 1 and 2 in 2103, the Richard Wagner Society of Victoria organised two working lunches for members of the committees of Wagner Societies in Australia and New Zealand. In the second meeting, which I attended with representatives from Victoria, South Australia and New Zealand, we discussed the importance of Bayreuth in building links between members of Wagner Societies throughout Australia and New Zealand, as well as from Europe and the Americas. This also led to shared dinners, seminars and sightseeing, all wonderful additions to the experience of Bayreuth.

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## WAGNER'S EARLY OPERAS – AN INTRODUCTION

Barbara Brady

As one of a series of talks entitled "Enjoy, Learn, Discuss" at radio station Fine Music 102.5, Barbara Brady is going to present an introduction to Wagner's first three operas: *Die Feen* (*The fairies*), *Das Liebesverbot* (*The Ban on Love*) and *Rienzi*. This will include brief audio and video selections from the operas and will be followed by wine and cheese. Date: Sunday 18 May at 2:30 pm. Venue Fine Music at 72-76 Chandos Street, St Leonards. Cost: \$10. As space is limited, it is advisable to book by phone on 9439 4777.

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## NEW MEMBERSHIP FEES

Please note the decision of the Management Committee on membership fees for 2014.

Single	\$65
Shared	\$95
Shared pensioner	\$56
Single pensioner	\$36
Student	\$25

There is a new facility on the Society's Home page ([www.wagner.org.au](http://www.wagner.org.au)) for credit card payments using PayPal.

## WAGNER AND US: A SYMPOSIUM

Report by Liz Jacka and Colleen Chesterman

Presented by the University of Melbourne and the Richard Wagner Society of Victoria,  
5–8 December 2013 at Melba hall, The University of Melbourne

This seminar, which began two days after the second cycle of Opera Australia's 2013 Ring Cycle, was a lively and well-attended event, with a number of local and overseas Wagner experts. It was prefaced by a public lecture on the Thursday evening given by Dagny Beidler (great grand-daughter of Richard and Cosima Wagner) and Eva Rieger in which they discussed the Swiss branch of the Wagner Dynasty through Wagner's daughter, Isolde.

Then followed three days of presentations on various aspects of Wagner's legacy up to the present. The papers were notable for their diversity and raised a number of surprising angles on the Wagner phenomenon. Each day a keynote address was given by well-known international authorities: John Deathridge, Patrick Carnegy and Eva Rieger.

Deathridge, a British musicologist who has written extensively on Wagner, gave a theoretically ambitious talk entitled "Power and Violence in The Ring". Invoking philosophers, including Michel Foucault, Theodore Adorno, Walter Benjamin and Giorgio Agamben, he argued that in the Ring there are two kinds of violence operating – mythic (comprising the operation of the law and of punishment) and divine where the relationship between the law and violence is broken and violence is no longer justified. He made a further distinction between strategic power (*pouvoir*) – Wotan – and pure power (*puissance*) – Siegmund and Siegfried. He used these distinctions to discuss the killing of Hunding by Wotan at the end of Act II of the Patrice Chéreau Bayreuth centenary *Die Walküre* – an act not of law but of "pure terrorism".

Patrick Carnegy, the author of the excellent *Wagner and the Art of the Theatre* (2006), and formerly a Covent Garden dramaturg, gave a highly engaging illustrated talk on the history of Ring productions from Wagner's own time until the present. As in his book he discussed landmark productions, such as those of Sergei Eisenstein, Wieland Wagner, Joachim Herz, the Kroll Theatre, Ruth Berghaus, Patrice Chéreau, and the Stuttgart Ring of 1999-2003.

Eva Rieger, best-known for her recent book *Richard Wagner's Women* on the role of women in Wagner's operas, reviewed in the Quarterly 128, gave her keynote address on the subject of the treatment of masculine characters in Wagner's operas from the heroic (Siegfried) to the 'weak' (Erik), whom, she argues, are given the characteristics of women.

There were a number of excellent presentations by Australian scholars on the history of Wagner performance and reception in Australia, including Peter Tregear's intriguing account of the founders of music studies at Melbourne University and their Wagnerian-inspired compositions, Sue Cole's analysis of the career of the first Ormond Professor of Music at Melbourne University, G W L.

Marshall-Hall in the context of both British and Australian Wagnerism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and Kerry Murphy's description of the first Australian Ring, an extraordinary touring production mounted by Thomas Quinlan in 1913.

Michael Ewans gave a very stimulating and in-depth analysis, with ample illustration, of two landmark Wagner productions, namely the Chéreau Ring and the Nikolaus Lehnhoff *Parsifal* of 2004. There were two papers on Wagner and film; one was a highly entertaining paper by James Deaville on the depiction of Wagner in Ken Russell's extravaganza, *Lisztomania*, and the other a close analysis by the brilliant David Larkin on the use of the Prelude from *Tristan and Isolde* by Lars Von Trier in his film *Melancholia*. David Larkin will address the Society on Wagner and Richard Strauss on Sunday April 6.

A few papers very interestingly looked at the reception and branding of Wagner, both historically and today. Robert Gibson examined the ways in which the Bayreuth Wagner establishment set out to build an international Wagner 'brand'; Rachel Orzech looked at the way in which Paris reacted to the beginnings of the appropriation of Bayreuth by the Nazis; Dr James Wierbicki traced the long history of the use of the "Ride of the Valkyries" in everything from Bugs Bunny to *Apocalypse Now* to Japanese anime; and Luke Berryman gave us a rigorous analysis of the extent to which it is fair to say that the Nazis borrowed anything from Wagner's anti-Semitism, arguing that there is very little evidence that any of the Nazi leadership had read Wagner's prose works. On Sunday 21 September, Dr Wierbicki will present for the Society his very entertaining and well-illustrated paper.

Perhaps the most surprising Wagner connection came in a presentation by Michael Christoforidis entitled "Wagner, *fin-de-siècle* Spanish music and the Moor's Last Sigh". He argued, using musical examples, that Wagner's influence on Spanish music was widespread and was central to the development of the new Spanish school, apparent in the *fin-de-siècle* constructions of 'Alhambriism', a movement that encompassed the nostalgia for Spain's Moorish past. He traced the influence in passages from operas by Albeniz and De Falla.

One question about the seminar was that its concentration over three days, some quite lengthy, resulted in a predominance of academics. Many other Wagnerians would have been interested, stimulated and entertained by the papers and discussions. In Seattle, for example, similar papers were presented in a lecture theatre in the Opera House over three days, one in each cycle, with a paper by conductor Asher Fisch on each of the days. These were attended by a wide cross-section of audiences for The Ring.

## AUGUST IN THE USA - GLIMMERGLASS'S DER FLIEGENDE *HOLLÄNDER*

Colleen Chesterman

Last August 2013, we decided to see the last cycle of the popular Seattle Ring. A long way to go for a week, so we headed first to the East Coast, spending three days seeing wonderful galleries in Philadelphia and Baltimore. We then spent four days in upstate New York at the Glimmerglass Opera Festival. Friends had recommended it after a visit a couple of years ago. In 2013 it featured a Francesca Zambello production of *The Flying Dutchman*.

The festival is based near Cooperstown, a charming town on a very beautiful lake named Glimmerglass by author James Fenimore Cooper. The Festival performs in a 900 seat theatre situated on the other end of the Lake from Cooperstown. Zambello has been director of the Festival for three years and has had great success financially and artistically. Each year the Festival presents two classical operas, one modern opera and one musical comedy. As well, visiting artists perform recitals and conduct master-classes; an ambitious young artists' program provides training and experience for about 30 emerging artists each year.

The *Dutchman* showed the resident orchestra to great effect, with excellent playing in the crisp acoustic of the hall. The young artists provided the chorus and their dance training at Glimmerglass showed to great effect as the seamen pulled on ropes and performed hornpipes and the women mimed to the Spinning Chorus; some young artists performed in the smaller roles, such as the Steersman and Mary. The staging was very effective. Long ropes hung from the ceiling, used by the sailors to mime the pulling of sails and by the women as spinning ropes. Steel rigging at the back of the stage was silhouetted at times against harsh blood red light with figures climbing up, including Senta and the Dutchman for their final destructive embrace. Zambello excels in moving cast members and scenes were most dramatic.

The powerful production emphasised the erotic charge of the work, with Senta's bed centre-stage at the opening as she dreamed of the Dutchman and re-appearing later for passionate scenes with the Dutchman and Erik. The youthful Dutchman, bass-baritone Ryan McKinny, was lean and tortured, with a leather jacket over his shoulders and a full tattoo on his bare chest. As Erik, Jay Hunter Morris showed frustrated passion, a much more powerful character than often seen. The Senta, soprano Melody Moore, sang with tremendous power and great emotional intensity as she played out her passion for the Dutchman and her highly charged rejection of Erik.

Zambello was a welcoming host, delighted to have visitors from so far away. She invited us to receptions and an excellent day-long seminar by a Yale academic on Verdi's struggles with censorship, in which some young artists sang to illustrate different versions of censored arias. His birthday year was marked by performances of an updated and very witty translation of his much-censored *King for a Day*.

There is much to enjoy in the beautiful surroundings of the town and lake. At the other end of the lake, the 133-room Otesaga Hotel, built on the lakefront in Federal style with a front portico supported by massive 30-foot columns, hosts some Festival events. It was built by a wealthy local family, the

Clarks, who also owned the Dakota apartments on Central Park West. Other Clark properties in Cooperstown are The Farmers' Museum in characteristic old stone buildings and the Fenimore Art Museum, with an excellent collection of American Indian art and craft. And, who could resist the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

In 2014, Richard Strauss's birthday year, Glimmerglass will feature a production of *Ariadne auf Naxos*, starring the Festival's 2014 artist in residence, dramatic soprano Christine Goerke (who sang such a powerful Elektra for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in February). Goerke began her career as a Glimmerglass Young Artist and will spend summer in the area, passing on her wealth of expertise.

The Seattle Ring has been reviewed in these pages in previous years. It certainly has some moments of great beauty, particularly the River Rhine scenes, but I found other sets rather crowded with tree roots and rocks - Rackham on steroids. The real strength is the quality of the singers: Stephanie Blyth, as an impressive Fricka, Richard Paul Fink as Alberich, Margaret Jane Wray as Sieglinde, Alwyn Mellor, an emerging Brünnhilde and marvellous Stefan Vinke as Siegfried. Stuart Skelton was a great Siegmund and Daniel Sumegi a powerful Fafner and Hagen. In a presentation, Blyth praised the direction of the actors by Stephen Wadsworth and emphasised that she had taken what she had learnt in Seattle into her performance as Fricka in the Metropolitan Ring. The second cycle also had an excellent one-day seminar. The conductor Ascher Fisch gave an excellent presentation on Wagner's musical modernism. We hope that some time in his journeys to and from Perth, Western Australia, he may be able to present this in Sydney.

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## GOING TO A RING CYCLE THIS YEAR?

Andrew Fergusson from the Wagner Society of South Australia proposed a solution to the problem of putting attendees to Ring Cycles in touch with each other, if they wished. He has created a self-subscription email list using Mailchimp (please don't ask...). Current members of Wagner Societies in Australia and New Zealand can subscribe to the list via an online form that requires a first name, surname, email address and the name of the Wagner Society to which they belong.

The website contains a list of Ring Cycles, currently 10 in 2014, and participants can indicate which one(s) they are attending. This information will then be compiled and emails sent to provide contact information about others who are attending the same cycle (s). Subscribers will only receive information relating to the cycles that they indicate.

**To subscribe to the mailing list, just follow the link on our web-site or subscribe to the list on [www.wagnersa.org.au/contact/contact-groups/](http://www.wagnersa.org.au/contact/contact-groups/).**

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# ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL 2014

1. Please provide your name, address and membership number

Name	.....		
Address	.....		
	City.....	State.....	Postcode.....
Membership Number	.....		

2. Please renew my/our membership from 1 January to 31 December 2014 on the following basis (*please tick one*). NB New membership levels

<input type="checkbox"/> Single member \$65 (single pensioner member \$36)	\$ .....
<input type="checkbox"/> Shared members \$95 (shared pensioner members \$56)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Students \$25 ( <i>include a copy of your current ID Card</i> )	

3. I/We wish to donate the following amount to the Society.  
(Donations of \$2 or more are tax-deductible, and receipts will be issued.  
All donations are acknowledged in our Newsletter\*.)

<b>4. Total</b> Please complete this form and post it to: The Treasurer The Wagner Society in NSW Inc GPO Box 4574 Sydney NSW 2001	\$ .....
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**4(a). Renewing by cheque or money order** - Please include your cheque or money order, made payable to **The Wagner Society**, when you post this form.

**4(b). Renewing by bank account transfer** - Please use your bank's internet banking facilities to send your payment electronically to:

Please use your bank's internet banking facilities to send your payment electronically to

**Westpac Banking Corporation, Paddington NSW Branch**

Account Name: The Wagner Society  
BSB: 032040  
Account Number: 911323  
Payee Reference: Your surname, initials and membership number  
(These will be printed on the Wagner Society's bank statement)

**4(c). There is a new facility on the Society's Home page ([www.wagner.org.au](http://www.wagner.org.au)) for credit card payments using PayPal.**

## 6. Signatures

...../...../2014	Signature	Signature
Date renewed	Name in BLOCK LETTERS	Name in BLOCK LETTERS

## TRISTAN UND ISOLDE IN AUCKLAND ON 19 JULY 2014 - Peter Bassett

Peter has kindly drawn your attention to a semi-staged performance by the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra of Wagner's most passionate music-drama. Conductor Eckehard Stier will lead an impressive cast through this challenging work: Lars Cleveman Tristan (Cleveman has just made his Metropolitan Opera debut in the equally demanding role of Siegfried); Annalena Persson Isolde; Daveda Karanas Brangäne; Bo Skovhus Kurwenal; Marco Stella Melot. Ticket prices are Adults/Senior: \$64-\$139 (Public Ticket price). You can also add a dinner package at one of two nearby art institutions' cafés. Further details and bookings from Auckland Philharmonia's website: <http://apo.co.nz/concert-events/wagner-tristan-und-isolde> (through Ticketmaster NZ) or call Auckland – 0011 649 970 9700.

Peter is also leading a five day tour from 17–21 July 2014 for Renaissance Tours, with the performance as at least one of the highlights. Further details, including Peter's exclusive symposium on the music-drama on the morning of the performance) are available from Renaissance Tours' website: <http://renaissancetours.com.au/opera/tristan-und-isolde-in-auckland/> or call Toll Free: (AU) 1300 727 095.

## FOR SALE: RARE ARTHUR RACKHAM WAGNER VOLUMES AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE BY WAGNER SOCIETY IN NSW MEMBER

A member of the Society has very generously donated two volumes of Arthur Rackham's illustrated libretti of the four Ring operas: *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* in Volume 1, and *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung* in Volume 2. These are limited editions. They are dated 1910, numbered 96 and signed by Rackham himself. The illustrations are extraordinarily vivid. Patricia Baillie, a highly experienced antiquarian book expert and a member of the Society, has examined the books and written the following comments:

"Two handsome vellum bound volumes, Arthur Rackham: Illustrations of The Ring Libretti. *Der Ring des Nibelungen – Ein Bühnenfestspiel für drei Tage und einen Vorabend, von Richard Wagner*. Two volumes. Contains libretti of : *Das Rheingold* & *Die Valkyrie* (vol. I) and *Siegfried* & *Götterdämmerung* (vol. II). Ruetten und Loenig, Frankfurt A/M. 1910-1911. Limited edition, signed by Arthur Rackham. This is no.96. 25 x 19cm, bound in original publisher's full vellum, gilt titles, t.e.g., others untrimmed. Gilt medallion with 'RW' to front cover.

"The renowned illustrator, Rackham, has given us here splendid illustrations of Wagner's heroic Ring Cycle. There

are 64 tipped-in, tissue guarded, colour plates. The set presents very well indeed. There are a few marks and some very light soiling to the vellum bindings and occasional light browning or foxing to some pages. Overall, a handsome copy, in excellent condition, of this rare set.

"Note on the set numbering: For the American and British editions, both also dated 1910 & 1911, some claim that the edition was 1100 or, some, 1150 copies, all signed by the artist. This set is numbered in Rackham's hand as no. 96, making it an early printing of the edition."

Patricia also made enquiries about any other similar volumes of the Rackham libretti. There are currently two sets on the internet market, although it is unlikely that they are as early as no.96. Both are selling for a little over \$A5,000. In the circumstances, we thought that we should make these two volumes available for purchase by our members for the starting price of \$4,000. Anyone who is interested in purchasing these unique volumes should contact Society President, Jane Mathews, by email at [mathewsj@ozemail.com.au](mailto:mathewsj@ozemail.com.au).

### WAGNER SOCIETY MEMBERS – SPECIAL OFFERS AND 10% DISCOUNTS – ASK BEFORE YOU PURCHASE AT:

The Wagner Society Management Committee has negotiated a 10% discount for Wagner Society members: just mention that you are a member!

#### FISH FINE MUSIC

Fish Fine Music was born in 1982 as two small stores known as The Record Collector. After almost a decade as Sydney's largest classical music retailer, the company expanded to include popular music stores and in 1991 we re-branded ourselves as Fish Fine Music.

Fish Fine Music exists purely because our team has a passion for music. Our policy is to carry the largest classical range of CDs and DVDs in Australia and we remain committed in the long term to the unsurpassed audio quality of the CD format.

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+61 2 9660 1825

Or email Da Capo at: [music@dacapo.com.au](mailto:music@dacapo.com.au)  
or **Meredith Baillie** - on [shop@sapphobooks.com.au](mailto:shop@sapphobooks.com.au)

The cafe attached to Sappho serves great coffee and wine and snacks.

#### BRANGAYNE OF ORANGE VINEYARD

Brangayne of Orange has kindly agreed to offer Members a 10% discount if they purchase any of their wines. Please call and order by phone (02 6365 3229) and mention your membership of the Wagner Society.

## THE RAVEN'S REPORTING, COMPILED BY CAMRON DYER

There is a regularly updated list on the Society's Website [www.wagner-nsw.org.au](http://www.wagner-nsw.org.au) that takes the list to 2017.

**April 2014**

Berlin Deutsche Oper  
*Parsifal* – April 5, 18, 21.  
Staatsoper  
*Tannhäuser* – April 12, 16, 20, 27.  
Bordeaux *Siegfried* – April 11, 13.  
Braunschweig *Parsifal* – April 18.  
Brno *Holländer* – April 12.  
Budapest State Opera  
*Holländer* – April 1, 3, 5.  
*Parsifal* – April 16, 18, 21.  
*Tannhäuser* – April 18.  
*Tristan und Isolde* – April 19.  
Darmstadt *Parsifal* – April 13, 18.  
Dortmund *Tannhäuser* – April 5.  
Duisburg *Die Walküre* – April 19, 26.  
Eisenach Wartburg Castle concert  
*Tannhäuser* – April 18.  
*Tristan und Isolde* – April 18, 21.  
Frankfurt *Götterdämmerung* – April 23, 26, 29.  
Geneva *Das Rheingold* – Ap 11, 13, 17, 23, 26.  
Houston *Parsifal* – April 6, 13, 20.  
Innsbruck *Tannhäuser* – April 20.  
*Die Meistersinger* – April 27.  
Karlsruhe *Tristan und Isolde* – April 18.  
Kiel *Parsifal* – April 18.  
Leipzig *Die Feen* – April 20, 25.  
*Die Walküre* – April 6, 21, 26.  
Linz *Tristan und Isolde* – April 13, 27.  
Lübeck *Lohengrin* – April 3, 6, 7, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 20, 22, 24, 27.  
Madrid *Lohengrin* – April 3, 6, 7, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 20, 22, 24, 27.  
Moscow Novaya Opera  
*Tristan und Isolde* – April 16.  
Munich *Parsifal* – April 16, 20.  
Nuremberg *Die Walküre* – April 5, 12, 20.  
Paris Opera National de Paris  
*Tristan und Isolde* – April 8, 12, 17, 21, 25, 29.  
*Tannhäuser* – April 25.  
Prague *Die Feen* – April 9, 17.  
Regensburg *Tannhäuser* – April 14, 18, 21, 25, 28.  
Stockholm *Siegfried* – April 13, 18, 21, 27.  
Stuttgart Staatsoper  
*Lohengrin* – April 12, 16, 20, 25, 28.  
*Parsifal* – April 17, 21, 24.  
Vienna *Lohengrin* – April 11, 13, 15, 17.  
Weimar *Lohengrin* – April 18.

**May 2014**

Augsburg *Lohengrin* – May 3, 8, 18, 21, 25, 29.  
Barcelona *Die Walküre* – May 19, 22, 23, 25, 27, 28, 30, 31.  
Berlin Deutsche Oper  
*Tristan und Isolde* – May 14, 18, 25.  
Braunschweig *Parsifal* – May 25.  
Brno *Holländer* – May 2.  
Darmstadt *Tristan und Isolde* – May 11.  
Dortmund *Tannhäuser* – May 11.  
Dresden *Holländer* – May 17, 24.  
Duisburg *Die Walküre* – May 4.  
*Lohengrin* – May 24, 29.  
Eisenach Wartburg Castle concert  
*Tannhäuser* – May 1.  
*Tristan und Isolde* – May 1, 10.  
Frankfurt *Götterdämmerung* – May 2.  
Geneva *The Ring* – May 13, 14, 16, 18; 20, 21, 23, 25.  
Graz *Lohengrin* – May 24, 30.  
Innsbruck *Parsifal* – May 3.  
Karlsruhe *Die Meistersinger* – May 7, 11.  
Kiel *Tristan und Isolde* – May 24.

Leipzig *Die Feen* – May 25.  
*Das Liebesverbot* – May 28.  
Linz *Die Walküre* – May 17.  
Lübeck *Tristan und Isolde* – May 11.  
Nuremberg *Die Walküre* – May 4, 25, 29.  
Oslo *Holländer* – May 16, 19, 23, 27, 30.  
Paris Opera National de Paris  
*Tristan und Isolde* – May 4.  
*Tannhäuser* – May 25.  
*Die Feen* – May 25.  
*Tannhäuser* – May 2.  
*Tannhäuser* – May 31.  
Staatsoper  
*The Ring* – May 30, 31, June 5, 8.  
*Lohengrin* – May 21.

**June 2014**

Barcelona *Die Walküre* – June 3.  
Basel *Lohengrin* – June 15.  
Birmingham Symphony Hall – Opera North  
*Götterdämmerung* – June 21.  
Budapest Bartók Béla National Concert Hall  
*The Ring* – June 12, 13, 14, 15.  
*Tannhäuser* – June 20, 22, 2014.  
*Tristan und Isolde* – June 8.  
Darmstadt *Holländer* – June 20.  
Dresden *Lohengrin* – June 1, 9, 15.  
Duisburg Wartburg Castle concert  
Eisenach *Tannhäuser* – June 1, 8.  
Gateshead Sage – Opera North  
*Götterdämmerung* – June 28.  
Geneva *The Ring* – June 13-18; 20-25 [no other dates].  
Karlsruhe *Die Meistersinger* – June 1, 8, 19.  
Kiel *Tristan und Isolde* – June 9, 13.  
Leeds Opera North  
*Götterdämmerung* – June 14, 18.  
*Die Feen* – June 6, 27.  
Leipzig *Die Walküre* – June 9, 14.  
Linz *Die Walküre* – June 19, 29.  
Nuremberg *Holländer* – June 2, 6, 12, 16, 22.  
Oslo *Die Feen* – June 19.  
Regensburg *Rienzi* – June 3, 15.  
Riga *Götterdämmerung* – June 14, 17, 20.  
Seville *Tannhäuser* – June 5.  
Tallinn Staatsoper  
Vienna *The Ring* – May 30, 31, June 5, 8; 19, 22, 25, 29.  
Wels *Lohengrin* – June 3, 8.  
*Holländer* – June 5, 6.

**July 2014**

Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra  
*Tristan und Isolde* – July 19.  
Bayreuth *Tannhäuser* – July 25.  
*Holländer* – July 26.  
*The Ring* – July 27, 28, 30, August 1.  
*Lohengrin* – July 31, .  
Dresden *Holländer* – July 2.  
Erl *The Ring* – July 18, 19, 25, 26  
*Die Walküre* – July 30.  
Hanover *Die Meistersinger* – July 12, 16, 19.  
Karlsruhe *Die Meistersinger* – July 12.  
Leeds Opera North  
*Götterdämmerung* – July 12.  
Munich *Holländer* – July 8, 11.  
Nuremberg *Die Walküre* – July 6.  
Salford Quays The Lowry - Opera North  
*Götterdämmerung* – July 5.  
Sofia *The Ring* – July 23, 24, 26, 29.  
Stuttgart *Tristan und Isolde* – July 20, 23, 27.

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## ADDRESS

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Website: [www.wagner.org.au](http://www.wagner.org.au) | Website enquiries: [wagner\\_nsw@optusnet.com.au](mailto:wagner_nsw@optusnet.com.au)

[All website addresses used in this Newsletter are reproduced in the PDF version of the newsletter on the Wagner Society's website in the relevant article - Members Area]

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### CAPACITY AUDIENCE FOR “MELBOURNE RING FROM THE INSIDE” - See Report Inside



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### ADDRESS FOR SUNDAY FUNCTIONS

Goethe Institut, 90 Ocean Street Woollahra (corner of Jersey Road)

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