

# The Wagner Society



IN NEW SOUTH WALES INC.

Newsletter No. 120, December 2010 - January 2011

## President's Report

Dear Members

Happy New Year, and welcome to our first Newsletter in 2011.

### Functions in 2011

New Year is the one time when we can allow ourselves a few moments of romantic indulgence, as we gaze across the misty landscape of 2011 and beyond, like the unknown and over-dressed young man in Casper David Friedrich's famous painting "Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer" (Wanderer above the Sea of Fog). Cynics will tell you that the poor man was blind, and that with his next step he plummets cane and all onto jagged rocks below, but not every story has a happy ending.

For our Society, I hope that 2011 will be an important year on our way to the milestone of 2013, when we will celebrate both the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Richard Wagner's birth and the Armfield Ring in Melbourne.

Our first function for 2011 is on **Sunday 20 February**, when David Larkin will give a talk entitled "Cui bono? The Liszt-Wagner relationship reconsidered." (In case your Latin is a little scratchy, Wikipedia tells us that cui bono means "to whose benefit?", literally "as a benefit to whom?") In its own right, 2011 is the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Liszt's birth, an anniversary without which Wagner's life could have ended very differently in 1849.

David Larkin teaches courses in musicology and music analysis at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, with the music and aesthetics of Richard Strauss, Wagner and Liszt his main research interests.

On **Sunday 20 March**, Dr Terence Watson will speak on "Rousseau and Wagner: musician-philosophers", which forms a chapter of his forthcoming book on Wagner.

**Tony Palmer** was to have toured Wagner Societies in Australia and New Zealand from mid-March to mid-April this year, visiting Sydney from April 1 to 4. Unfortunately

his tour has been postponed, and we will let you know when it is rescheduled. Mr Palmer recently released a special commemorative 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of his epic film "Wagner" starring Richard Burton and Vanessa Redgrave, and in 2009 released a new documentary "The Wagner Family". He was hoping to show these to audiences in Australia and New Zealand during his tour.

On **Sunday 17 April** Brendan Carmody, the inaugural winner of the "Berlin New Music Opera Award" will talk about his three months in Europe, including working with Barry Kosky at the Komische Oper Berlin.

**Sunday 22 May** is the 198<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Richard Wagner, and will be our Annual General Meeting, a recital by Rachel Bate, and a birthday celebration for RW.

### Bayreuth 2011 – the 100<sup>th</sup> Bayreuth Festival

We have been fortunate to obtain 12 sets of tickets for the 2011 Bayreuth Festival. The performances and dates are:

Meistersinger - Wednesday 24 August 2011  
Tannhäuser - Thursday 25 August  
Lohengrin - Friday 26 August  
Parsifal - Saturday 27 August  
Tristan und Isolde - Sunday 28 August

As a number of the original applicants have withdrawn their applications, we have sets of 5 tickets available to members only. If you're interested, please contact Roger Cruickshank on 0414 553 282.

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### PATRON:

**HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS:** Prof Michael Ewans  
Mr Richard King  
Mr Horst Hoffman  
Mr Joseph Ferfoglia

## For Your **Diary**

2011		
7 March	Wagner arranged Liszt – Jean-Efflam Bavouzet pianist – Isolde's Liebestod	SSO - Angel Place 7pm
June: Saturday 25 at 11.30am, Sunday 26 at 1.00pm & Thursday 30 at 11.30am, & on Sunday 3 July at 12.30pm	The NY Met Die Walküre (Lepage/Levine). Running time 5 hours 55 minutes including intermission. The link is: <a href="http://www.palacecinemas.com.au/events/thenewyorkmetopera_20102011nsw/">www.palacecinemas.com.au/events/thenewyorkmetopera_20102011nsw/</a>	Chauvel Cinema, Hayden Orpheum and Dendy Opera Quays
2013		
Nov - Dec 2013	The Ring Cycle - Melbourne - three cycles	Melbourne Opera Theatre

## Meetings **Dates** & Coming **Events**

DATE	EVENTS - 2011	TIME & LOCATION
20 February	David Larkin, Lecturer at the Sydney Conservatorium, 'Cui bono? The Liszt-Wagner relationship reconsidered' – a talk about Liszt and Wagner, as an introduction to the bicentennial of Liszt's birth.  Preceded by Act 3 of the Munich Lohengrin with Jonas Kaufmann, starting at 12:30	Goethe-Institut - 2pm
20 March	Terence Watson: Rousseau and Wagner: musician-philosophers. DVD of The Life and Works of Richard Wagner, directed by Carl Fröhlich - first released on 20 November 1913	Goethe-Institut - 2pm
17 April	Brendan Carmody, winner of the inaugural "Berlin New Music Opera Award" (which replaced the "Bayreuth Scholarship") will talk about his 3 months in Europe, including working with Barry Kosky at the Komische Oper Berlin on a new production of Der Freischutz. Preceded by DVD of Das Rheingold – the only video recording of Karajan's 1978 Salzburg Ring Cycle – Part 1.	Goethe-Institut - 2pm
22 May	198th anniversary of Wagner's birth - our Annual General Meeting, followed by a recital by Rachel Bate, winner of the 2010 German Opera Scholarship. Preceded by DVD of Das Rheingold – the only video recording of Karajan's 1978 Salzburg Ring Cycle – Part2.	Goethe-Institut - 2pm
June	No Function	
17 July	TBA	Goethe-Institut - 2pm
August	No Function	
17 September	Report back by members attending Bayreuth	Goethe-Institut - 2pm
15 October	TBA	Goethe-Institut - 2pm
20 November	Christmas Party – please bring a plate. 2.00PM TBA Festivities start at 3:00PM	Goethe-Institut - 2pm
<b>Goethe-Institut address 90 Ocean Street Woollahra (corner of Jersey Road)</b>		



# President's Report continued

## News from abroad

In my letter to members in Newsletter 118, I reported that Jessica Pratt had received excellent reviews for her performances in the title role of Rossini's opera *Armida* at the Garsington Opera in Oxfordshire, UK. Jessica has now debuted at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden in the role of the Queen of the Night in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, under the baton of Sir Colin Davis. Although the season began on 1 February, I haven't yet found a review of Jessica's performance in a major paper, but I'll let you know when I do.

In 2010, **Miriam Gordon-Stuart** debuted in Bayreuth in the role of *Helmwige*. In October last year, one of our most peripatetic members Elizabeth Gordon-Werner, saw Miriam sing the role of *Ellen Orford* in Britten's opera *Peter Grimes* in Bremerhaven, one and a half hours by train from Elizabeth's home in Hamburg. Elizabeth reports that "Miriam was wonderful – a great actress as well as having a lovely voice." Miriam is also the current odds-on favourite for the role of *Sieglinde* in the *Armifield Ring* in Melbourne in 2013. If this rumour is now official, I've missed the confirmation.

**James Roser**, a young baritone whom the Society helped in 2009 with tuition in Europe, has been living in Berlin, working regularly with staff at opera houses and with a number of pianists and singers on some of the major song cycles in the *Lieder* repertoire. James will be in Germany for the remainder of the year, and will give the Society a talk and recital when he returns to Australia in 2012.

And one last report from Elizabeth Gordon-Werner, this time on reaction to **Simone Young's** recent season of *Götterdämmerung* in Hamburg, the last step in assembling her Ring Cycle, which so many members will be attending later this year. Elizabeth saw the premier of the season on 17 December 2010, and was stunned that the orchestra, conductor and producer were all booed. She reported that "The Hamburg *Abendblatt's* assessment of *Götterdämmerung* was cutting. The header read "Wagner's "Götterdämmerung": Apocalypse without Wow" and finished with the sentence "Jetzt beginnt, schneller als gedacht, die Göttinnendämmerung in der Staatsoper Hamburg." (Now begins, faster than we imagined, the Twilight of the Goddess at the Hamburg Opera.)" As Elizabeth commented, "How difficult it is to stay on a pedestal."

## Stephen Fry's documentary "Wagner and Me"

The Orpheum theatre in Cremorne (Sydney) will be showing a documentary film made by Stephen Fry entitled "Wagner and Me" in limited release from 3 March. Fans of Stephen Fry will need no encouragement to see this film, which builds on some of the themes first developed in Mr Fry's appearance on the English television show "Who do you think you are?"

The film was originally screened in August last year on BBC4, and since then has become something of a cult classic, like its maker. It has its own serious

website - [www.wagnerandme.com/](http://www.wagnerandme.com/) - and YouTube is awash with spoofs of the programme, some of which are remarkably inventive.

Quite what Mr Fry's legions of admirers will make of all this Wagnerism, I'm not sure. Nor can I begin to guess how Herr Wagner's own legions will react to Mr Fry's unique perspective as he attempts (as the movie trailer says) to "save the music he loves from its dark and troubled history".

## Lubeck

Last September, I had the pleasure of attending a Ring Cycle in Lubeck, around 60km north-east of Hamburg. The old city of Lubeck is on an island in the Trave River, and is a UNESCO World Heritage site. It has a population of some 215,000, and is the largest German port on the Baltic Sea. So much for the tourist brochures.

In the clichéd tradition of small places which do things well despite being overshadowed by a more famous neighbour, Lubeck is said to "punch above its weight" in many areas, including opera performances. It may not have the financial and artistic resources of Hamburg's eagerly awaited Ring Cycle under the baton of Simone Young, but Lubeck's Cycle was no less an extraordinary artistic and musical achievement.

I'd like to share with you some random and personal recollections, views and details of the Cycle and other things, many more of which may find their way into a coherent review on our website in due course.

Tickets to the whole cycle ranged from 72 to 172 Euro (at that time, A\$120 to \$290). Naturally, my friends and I splashed out on the premium tickets, but worried until the tickets arrived that they were so cheap that we might only be going to Rheingold. The argument you hear about this kind of pricing is that it's only possibly because opera is heavily subsidised by the German government. Since poor American mortgage lending practices triggered a global financial crisis, this is no longer true, if it ever was, as the number of opera companies closing down across Germany shows. And a country which spends A\$46 million to buy one vote for a game of soccer is hardly on high moral ground when denouncing subsidies.

The opera house itself is small, until the curtain goes up. In the stalls, where we sat, there are only 15 rows of seats. All up, counting the balconies and 3 tiers of circle, the capacity of the *Grosses Haus* Lubeck is 780. Not all seats were filled – I had never seen empty seats at a Ring Cycle before – and some seats were taken by musical instruments, with the harps occupying the balconies, and with video cameras, which recorded every performance.

Nothing of this small-scale, cosy atmosphere prepared me for the shock of seeing the stage area when the curtain went up. Size, as Lady Bracknell might have opined, really is everything when it comes to stage area. It was huge, vast, immense and cavernous, but I cannot say how many Olympic-size swimming pools (our national unit of volume measurement) it would have contained. As an indication, during Rheingold there were a number of containers on the stage, and many more floating in the vast space



above it. (In the early stages above the Rhine, it really was a construction site.) These are adapted to work as offices and sheds on the site, and chillingly, the Giants take Freia into one overnight while Wotan and Loge go down to rob Alberich of his gold. There is no doubt in this production that the Giants rape Freia, although the inference is subtly drawn.

Not so subtle is the scene at the end of *Götterdämmerung*, when Hagan's thugs (alas, we Vassals aren't a nice lot in this production) rape Gutrune offstage, and to ensure that none of us has missed the point, she returns with blood smeared generously over her thighs. She needs to have a little motivation, it seems, to kill Hagan at the end of the show, saving the Rheinmaidens the bother of dragging him down into their watery depths. As Hagan had speared her own beloved husband in the back, so Gutrune thrusts a spear (which Brünnhilde has conveniently dragged around all night) into Hagan's side, proving perhaps that what goes around, comes around. Or that opera producers who laboriously stage a Ring Cycle one work a year over 4 years have by the end run out of ideas and out of interest. Perhaps they have a Lulu to stage?

The outstanding singer of the cycle was the glorious Brünnhilde of the young American soprano Rebecca Teem. She too has her own website ([www.rebeccateem.com/](http://www.rebeccateem.com/)) where you can hear her immolate with a few screeches to a rather lacklustre piano accompaniment. This is a pale imitation of the wonder we saw and heard in the flesh in Lubeck, but it gives a glimpse of what I hope the full DVD version will show abundantly – a wonderful actress, and a glorious voice. Nothing about her physical appearance prepared me for the vocal power and intelligence she mustered in that role. Remember the name – Rebecca Teem!!

At the start of Act 1 of *Götterdämmerung*, Rebecca and Siegfried and their family of 10 or 12 kinder of a certain cutesy age are enjoying domestic bliss as Siegfried prepares for his journey. Perhaps daddy is going to catch the morning train? Another child arrives, 8 or 10 years old, and with his slicked-down black hair, toothbrush moustache and lederhosen, we know we're not in Kansas any more. So do the other children, who quickly line up in terrified serried ranks until Rebecca shoos the Child Adolf away. (During the interval, I asked someone who had driven up from Munich for the performance whether German opera viewers were tired of having the Nazi era rammed down their throats when opera producers ran out of ideas, and he replied politely that it was meant to be "ironic".) Child Adolf makes one more head-banging appearance, when Rebecca was at her weakest moment after Waltraute's home visit, wearing a Wolf's Head over his own and tormenting her. Such subtlety.

When Siegfried in the guise of Gunther comes to take Rebecca by force to the Gibich, Hagan's thugs murder the whole screaming bunch of kinder surprises, and not a moment too soon. I'm making a list of other operas where Hagan's Boys could rid us of cutesy children's choruses, and *Carmen* and *La bohème* are up there at the top.

The production was suitably modern regietheatre. Rheingold was brimming full of interesting images and ideas, and after that it went downhill. (Will M. LePage's Great Big Machine for the NY Met go the same way, I wonder?) The character of Loge was particularly well drawn, and as with the other actors the actions matched each word and each musical cue. Unhappily, the actor who sang Loge was short, fat and ugly, with curly hair and particularly distinctive glasses, which still doesn't explain why I was regularly approached during intervals by people who assumed that I had sung Loge. It's not flattering at my age to be mistaken for a tenor!!

After Rheingold, the ideas began to fail. By Siegfried, the whole conceit was in the stage machinery. A giant revolve, like one of those circular Vache cheeses with segments in foil, was our stage, and when it was spinning happily along our hero could jog through each of the separate revolving sets when the ideas dried up. One was a rather well equipped bar, where Mime mixed drinks. Another of the dried up ideas was the decayed body of Sieglinde, seated in an arm-chair and wrapped in a blanket, past which her son jogged happily as she revolved across our stage. The Woodbird was a rather voluptuous nurse and spectacularly gifted soprano, under Wotan's control, who carried a giant hypodermic needle and injected people with gallons of a substance which turned them into the Living Dead of many a B-grade movie, *Nosferatu* among them. Did it mean anything? Did I care? Alberich suffered this fate and hadn't found the antidote when he came to pester Hagan during his Watch in *Götterdämmerung*.

In Rheingold, while Erda was warning Wotan to give up the Ring (and Wotan was wondering how many children she could bear him), three wonderfully clad slender women in the style of Hindu goddesses draped in spectacular costumes glided majestically across the stage. These were the Norns in happy times. By *Götterdämmerung*, they have become the most degenerate bar girls, entertaining Hagan's thugs in one of his local establishments. Or were those the Rheindaughters? Actually, it didn't matter.

### Melbourne Ring Cycle – 2013

I would like to thank **Ms Maureen Wheeler**, a major donor to the Melbourne Ring Cycle in 2013, for agreeing to give our Members an insight into her introduction to Wagner's music and how that led to her to joining the ranks of tragic "cyclists" scouring the globe for another "fix" of the potent brew that Wagner concocted in The Ring Cycle. We are privileged that Ms Wheeler has taken the time to write the article for our Newsletter (see below). Many of our Members have shared Ms Wheeler's "road-to-Damascus conversion," and will find as well as finding much to think about in her assessments of the various Cycles she has attended over the last few years.

And there, gentle reader, my reminiscences must end. Ring Cycles are a magic elixir for Wagnerians, and this one for all its faults was pure ambrosia. It was an overwhelming undertaking brilliantly executed, and a deeply satisfying and difficult experience. I hope that Neil Armfield's 2013 Ring will be that for all of us, and more.

Roger Cruickshank, 7 February 2011



# 'So, You Like Wagner - A Bit Heavy Isn't He?'

## - Maureen Wheeler on Her Discovery of Wagner's Ring Cycle

This is the most common response to anyone professing a love of the German composer, and to be honest, until just 10 years ago, it would have been mine.

I grew up listening to opera on the radio, my mother would tell me the stories and I learned to love *La Bohème*. That is why my first trip overseas as an independent 18 year old was to Paris, where I saw *Tosca* my first 'live' opera, from a box at the Paris Garnier. I had imagined that a seat in a box would be very glamorous, but I soon realised it was not about 'seeing' opera. I had a wonderful view of the audience, but absolutely none of the stage, which was almost behind me. However, the box was cheap, shared with eight people squashed in like sardines, and the singing was wonderful.

*La Traviata*, *Carmen* and *Aida*, were all known to me, but beyond the Italian canon I was fairly illiterate.

When I moved to London, I dragged my boyfriend (later my husband Tony) to see *La Bohème*. It was his first experience of opera. I am sad to say that his appreciation has not grown over the many years of being married to an opera lover. Although he has obligingly accompanied me to hundreds of operas, he still doesn't 'get it'.

After we had settled in Melbourne and had children, I became friends with a small group of women in our neighbourhood and in the early eighties we began to subscribe each year to Opera Victoria, later Opera Australia, seeing four operas a year, a practice we continue to this day.

Gradually, my tastes broadened as I heard more and I learned to appreciate the huge legacy from a variety of great composers - Saint-Saëns, Mozart, Handel, Delibes, Rossini, but not Wagner.

Fast forward several years; my children are now teenagers – life resembles the worst episodes of a soap opera. I am talking to a friend, a lawyer, we are commiserating with each other on how life with adolescent children has become a nightmare and he says 'I wish I could put her (his daughter) on a rock surrounded by fire, like Wotan did.' Well, I had never seen the Ring, but I was immediately struck by the beauty of this solution, as any reasonable parent of a teenage girl would be, and I asked him to tell me more. He promised to send me a compilation disc that arrived just as I was leaving for London. With a 23 hour flight ahead of me, I tucked the disc into my bag with my Discman (yes, this was before iPods) and took off.

I landed in Singapore shattered. I had played the two discs over and over again, at full volume and was blown away, I had no idea music could be like this and yet I could barely articulate what 'like this' was.

To myself I called it 'heart music' because it went straight to the heart. It was as though I had always known this music, it had always been there,

somewhere in my heart/soul/whatever/wherever, just waiting for me to rediscover it. It seemed so perfectly and simply formed, every note followed the other as though there could be no other possible combination. I listened to it again and again all the way from Singapore to London. By the time I arrived I had decided I must see the Ring. The following year I went to New York to see the Met production. I went with Renaissance Tours because I had done a few trips with them in Europe and knew I could rely on them to get me great seats, a nice hotel and a hassle-free trip. I also had a sneaking suspicion that I would possibly not last the distance of 20 hours of opera over four nights. At least in New York, I could always go to the theatre and see a play instead.

From the first bars of *Rheingold* I was hooked. The Met's was the perfect production for a first time 'cyclist'. Traditional, romantic, it surely captured what Wagner meant to convey. The details of who sang which role, who directed, etc, have never interested me. I can never remember from one opera to a next who was involved, however this was May 2004 and James Morris sang Wotan, James Levine conducted and it was wonderful. I couldn't wait for the next night, or the next or the next. It was like reading a great book which you never want to end, or being on a journey where the destination is no longer important.

I don't have the ability to go into detail as to what makes the Ring such an immense work. There are many Ring experts who do, but the seamless intermeshing of singing, orchestra, visual and narrative gradually builds until you seem to absorb the story through every sense. I was not aware of time passing and each evening I was reluctant to be released from the spell when the curtain came down. At the very end, as *Götterdämmerung* died away in what must be one of the most beautiful musical phrases ever written, I felt so sad that it was over, I wanted to go back and start again, from the beginning.

Since then, I have seen the Ring cycle seven times. Manaus, in Brazil was a favourite, Beijing, which had the Nuremburg production, was great. Seeing it with a predominantly Chinese audience was also fun and interesting. Many of them were obviously very familiar with the work, but there were others who assumed the word 'opera' meant exactly the same in Mandarin and English, and they behaved as they would at the Chinese Opera, commenting loudly, changing seats, laughing at odd moments. They loved the dragon in *Siegfried*, but were rather upset at its demise; dragons are lucky for the Chinese.

Copenhagen was not a favourite, but I mostly enjoyed it, ditto for the Covent Garden Ring, however, Los Angeles 2010 was, in my opinion, for what it's worth, dreadful.

In all these Rings the directors tinkered with the story to the extent that they distorted significant elements of



the text that rendered redundant the care with which Wagner built his opera. In the Copenhagen version, both Siegmund and Sieglinde pull the sword from the tree, somewhat detracting from Siegmund's heroism. The Norns are reduced to three noisy Edna Everage types who jump from the stalls waving placards of outrage against the production on stage. Brünnhilde appears on stage with a baby, rather than plunging into the flames of Götterdämmerung with Grane.

The Covent Garden Ring similarly added unnecessary elements, such as an aeroplane that appeared and disappeared, but its symbolism was never explained. There was also the rather horrible scene where Alberich has the ring forcibly taken from him in a setting reminiscent of the torture photos of Abu Ghraib.

Los Angeles was in a class of its own when it came to sheer silliness. Although visually stunning, the production simply made no sense. The singer's faces were painted as old-fashioned clowns. For some reason, the women had long extended arms that were held out to the side throughout their scenes. The singers took their places standing behind cut-outs of their characters, similar to those with which people get their photos taken with their faces showing through a hole on top of a ridiculous costume. Placido Domingo as Siegmund was painted half blue and white, as was Sieglinde, an overly obvious reference to how they were completed each other. The stage was so severely raked that it was impossible not to be distracted from the action by fears for the singers' safety every time they moved.

While these effects may have been seen as modernising or enhancing the story, in each case they destroyed the mythological aspects of the Ring and diminished the audience's ability to be swept up by the drama. Contra-textual direction is an irritant; if the singer is singing "Let us rest under that tree" we should actually see a tree, and the singers should sit under it! Any director who decides that he/she can improve the Ring by ignoring the narrative and substituting 'clever' ideas of their own, must also realise that in doing so the coherence of the work will be compromised. This can be exciting and challenging, if it is successful; if it isn't, it is at best a distraction, at worst vandalism.

What I have learned is that directors can mess with the text and do unspeakable things to the story, but the music will always triumph. I don't really mind if the setting is changed and updated, set in a laboratory in the jungles of Brazil, or a torture chamber reminiscent of Abu Ghraib, as long as there is sympathy for the story. If the lyrics illuminate what you are seeing on stage, the narrative is intact and all the connections to the story remain, but seeking to out-think Wagner by creating a parallel story just doesn't work, at least for me.

I have met many people who, like me, will follow the Ring from country to country, theatre to theatre. I have to admit we are a bizarre tribe. At my very first Ring at the Met, I sat next to a very charming English man. I was very taken by the fact that he wore a different coloured dinner jacket every night. When we got talking, he told me it was his 46<sup>th</sup> Ring, and he would see it again next week when his wife joined him.

In 2009, I went back to the Met for the last performance of the Otto Schenk production (my 7<sup>th</sup> Ring). As I was standing in the foyer with friends, I recounted the story of the man with the different coloured dinner jackets who had seen 47 Rings. At that moment, he walked through the door in his green (Rheingold) jacket. I actually pointed to him and said 'That's him!' He came over and I was so embarrassed. I had to explain when I had last met him and how I remembered him. I also asked him how many Rings he had now seen (5 years later): 'Sixty four' was the reply, but the Met was his favourite.

It is an obsession, no different from any other passion, whether it is football or Star Wars or collecting pottery ducks. The different interpretations add interest to the event. We sad old 'cyclists' will earnestly discuss the merits of each and every production endlessly, but always it comes back to the music and the story, the all too familiar cycle of frail humanity, striving for greatness, ending in chaos, but always allowing for the possibility of hope and a new beginning.

My next Ring is San Francisco this year. I will also be at the Met in 2013 to see the full production of their new cycle and of course, Melbourne, where a dream which seemed to be mythically impossible, will hopefully come true. I might even persuade Tony to come with me and this time he might even 'get it'.

## Committee 2010 - 2011

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# ***Das Rheingold*** Metropolitan Opera - **Live and** Sydney **Screening**

## **1. Richard Mason - New York, Thursday, 30 September 2010**

Lisette Oropesa [Woglinde], Jennifer Johnson [Wellgunde], Tamara Mumford [Flosshilde], Eric Owens [Alberich], Stephanie Blythe [Fricka], Bryn Terfel [Wotan], Wendy Bryn Harmer [Freia], Franz-Josef Selig [Fasolt], Hans-Peter König [Fafner], Adam Diegel [Froh], Dwayne Croft [Donner], Richard Croft [Loge], Gerhard Siegel [Mime], Patricia Bardon [Erda], Conductor James Levine, Producer Robert Lepage, sets Carl Fillion, costumes François St-Aubin, lighting Etienne Boucher

This performance marks the start of the first new production of the Ring at the Met in more than 20 years. For 6 separate seasons the beautiful, intensely controversial (hated by newspaper critics, loved by artists and wildly applauded by audiences) Otto Schenk production has attracted Wagnerites from around the world. The new production represents a huge gamble by Peter Gelb and the Met, with new stage machinery costing up to \$40m by some estimates, necessitating a reinforcement of the Met's stage.

Prima la musica. James Levine, having suffered ill health and cancelled engagements for some months, created an intensely beautiful, sensitive and dramatic account of the score. Levine managed to accommodate the singers' vocal lines and a lyrical approach with a motivic energy, moving forward like a gigantic flywheel. His hand movements showed a careful concern with balance, as well as sensitively cueing the singers. Many details in the score were revealed: one stand-out was the blood-curdling horn trills following Alberich's curse.

The singers were of a generally high standard, with 2 exceptional performances. Eric Owens [Alberich] created a strong character with much greater range and development than usual. In the opening scene he was playful, then tempted by the gold after his rejection by the Rhinemaidens; in Nibelheim he became a megalomaniac; in his curse he achieved a tragic dignity. Stephanie Blythe [Fricka] has an exceptionally rich, strong instrument with which she created a rounded characterisation of a wronged wife trying to repair a broken marriage. Bryn Terfel [Wotan] generated great hopes when he first sang Wotan in London 6 years ago. The voice is still distinctive and reasonably expressive, and is now much darker, but unfortunately bad habits [a Scarpia-surfeit?] have removed all traces of legato. His Wotan conveyed limited emotion with a generic anger. Richard Croft [Loge] gave a fine, lyrical and at times beautiful performance, but was somewhat underpowered. Freia was a touch shrill and occasionally sharp, Erda had a piercing vibrato, appropriately doom-laden, the giants were strong and individually characterised. Gerhard Siegel [Mime] was well-chosen for a small role, and, both musically and with character, pointed towards Siegfried.

Poi la scena. The production was dominated by 24 planks (technically, rhomboids) which filled the entire rear  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the stage. This device, termed "the machine" by stagehands, could be lifted up and down, and each plank could be individually rotated. In addition, video projections were used to make the machine resemble the bottom of the Rhine (flowing pebbles through which Alberich scrambled), giant hands on which the giants stood to make their demands, the cleft leading to Nibelheim (Wotan and Loge doubles walked on a vertical wall), the roof of Nibelheim (glittering gold-bearing rock) and finally Valhalla (god doubles ascended a vertical rainbow bridge, which then closed to form a drawbridge and finally a wall – the gods' refuge from the world and their prison from reality). The obvious danger with technology is to play with it too much, distracting from stage action and narration. [Anyone who saw La Damnation de Faust from the Met by the same director, with a bank of video screens illustrating the action, will recognise the extreme dangers of this approach]. However, worst fears were not realised, as during scenes the machine was relatively static, movement being largely confined to the transformations – this had the distinct benefit of suppressing the Met audience coughing fit which invariably accompanies these – the Master would have approved. Perhaps erring towards the generous, it is possible that the machine will provide a unifying factor drawing the entire cycle together. The main drawback with the machine was to confine most of the action to the front  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the stage, simulating a concert performance at times. In addition, it was quite noisy. Interestingly, the costumes would have fitted without alteration into the Schenk production, and the Tarnhelm appeared identical. There were unfortunate technical glitches: on opening night the gods could not ascend the rainbow bridge, and at this performance the top of Wotan's spear fell off when he confronted Donner. This might have been taken as an emasculation symbol, pointing towards the spear's eventual destruction. However, it was an error: when Wotan's double appeared, his spear was intact, but when Bryn Terfel returned, the spear lacked its point. As described above, there were some interesting and novel characterisations, and the production avoided both Eurotrash psychosymbolism as well as Schenk naturalism. It passed the ultimate test - the Master would have been entertained, apart from enjoying the extravagance in these austere times.

Final verdict – conducting excellent, singers very good, production good.

## **2. John Collis - New York, Tuesday, 5 October 2010**

[John is a resident of Brooklyn, although originally Australian. While he has seen many productions of Wagner's operas over the years, his primary musical interests lie in a much earlier period – Renaissance and



Baroque. However, John is also a singer and so his comments about Wagner's vocal writing come with some authority, if from a different perspective. Ed.]

James Levine conducted, but had to be assisted to the podium and did not climb up on the raised stage for a bow, remaining on the side and waving the singers forward. He looked very thin, so it was rather remarkable that he was able to conduct for 2.5hrs without a break!

It's always a pleasure hearing the Met orchestra, especially when there is so much symphonic writing throughout the piece. They played very well, with some quite marvellously stirring moments. The opening passages were so beautiful, not a fluff or a beep from the horns. The singing was also generally very good: the Young People playing the smaller roles were determined to be noticed and to show some flair, so there were some great moments from them (i.e Donner and the lightning at the end). Stephanie Blythe has such a horn of a voice that the clarity was stunning, even above the orchestra. Such a pity there were not any extended arioso passages for her so that we could have enjoyed her more.

The two Germans who played the giants were equally as impressive and managed two rather different vocal sounds well, as they played off one another (as much as they could given the constraints of the set). One expects this from the Met, especially in such an important inaugural production. Bryn Terfel also sang well, but I got kinda bored by his tonal style, which never seemed to vary much in colour or volume. I reckon such a big part, with so much storytelling and carrying the action forward, should be given with a lot of different flavours. Maybe not all his fault, however, as the movements and acting directions seemed pretty minimal and stand-and-sing, especially for his part. The Mime was good, but hampered by a rather weird outfit (more later). The Loge, Richard Croft, a local boy, took about 5 mins to warm up then sounded great! Again, though, the voice had only one or two colours and I really wanted more for this centerpiece of the drama, who has so much influence over the action (and who represents fire for goodness sake!). A few more snarls, a few more fluted high notes would have made the world of difference. His acting was fine - he had a lot to do on a very awkward stage, but the singing, while not dull, was also not varied enough for me. This was most certainly not the case with Eric Owens as Alberich. He stole the show, I thought, just by being the part without affectation. He never tried to make a "character" voice, but gave us so many colours and was not afraid to inflect his pitch for a thespian effect. Hands down the best singing of the night! (The New Yorker agrees with me!)

You will remember that the "philosophy" behind this Met production is to blend the new theatrical devices with 19<sup>th</sup> Century production values. Costumes were kinda Star Trek (next generation Klingon), but I could see the attempt to use the old ideas of pre-historic Nordic outfits. The ladies and the gents were, on the whole, in skirts. Gnomes were in one-piece jump-suits with attachments (Mime had this full

frontal apron flapping about) and Alberich wore one in (of course!) gold. Maybe this was in the original production, too? Loge was in an off-white outfit of wrapped-cloth-with-leggings, which played well in his special fiery follow spot (which only worked in one horizontal position on the stage - very silly as he moved in and out of it). He did have special-effects hands with lights that were used to clever effect, though sometimes I wanted them off, as they were distracting. Wotan, of course, had a Funny Wig with hair over the blinded eye. Gave him an opportunity for head tossing (curls and all).

The set was a Great Machine. It creaked, it groaned, but did produce marvellous effects. Very 18<sup>th</sup> Century! Many of these effects were generated by the use of safety lines, so that we could get a "top-down" view of the action (shades of Esther Williams). These kinds of effects were foreshadowed in the circus or in the opening of China's Olympic Games. That's not a bad thing per se, but just everybody but the gnomes got to do a bit of wall-walking. The interactive video scenic effects were mostly B&W, but interesting nonetheless. Lots of cloud or riverbed movement, of course, as the actors moved about on the stage(s). Orange creatures for Alberich's cave reflecting the hoard, which lay about in neat rows behind the forges. Pity no one on stage attempted a bit of [anvil] banging. It was hard to see where the clanks were coming from (I suspect the violas). The Giants were placed on evenly divided groups of planks with the gods on the apron stage below. This made both movement and interaction tricky, especially for Loge, who had to work the extreme rake between them. There was much sliding in the opening scene, too. Sliding was a [stage] motif, too, but did not appear to carry special meaning. The descent to Alberich's cave was suitably spectacular as the Great Machine turned this way and that to make a Great Staircase. The trouble was that the safety lines kept getting in the way of the video (same with the Rhinemaidens). At the end, all the gods took a walk on the chintzy rainbow bridge, tied together with ropes that were entirely visible because they were so thick. As they were walking up a vertical wall, it was understandable but....tied together??

A problem I had with the whole opera is that there was no extended vocal singing that was not part of the dialogue. I know that it's the perfect expression of Wagner's theories, but I longed for Ms Blythe or the cute young man playing Froh to burst into song for just a bit. We get some of that in the beginning with the Lovely Ladies (who were not hiding much - not so 19<sup>th</sup> Century as mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century nightclub breasty Chanteuses). I'm sure Mr Terfel or Mr Croft would have dazzled us with their lyric brilliance. That's really what the Young People tried to do with their moments in the limelight. And maybe Mr Owens did just that with his own part, which is why I enjoyed his singing so much more. Such a fine collection of voices. Such a splendid setting and so much anticipation of fabulousness. Just left me feeling a bit underwhelmed. But I'm looking forward to Die Walküre next year, when the aluminium planks may be called to do even greater feats of circus magic.



### 3. Ian Cowan - Dendy Cinema Screening - Canberra

George Bernard Shaw wrote of Wagner's own production of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, "One of his devices was to envelop the stage in mists produced by what was called a steam curtain, which looked like it really was, and made the theatre smell like a laundry." Technology has advanced. Nowadays we have what has been dubbed the "Valhalla Machine". It looks like a gigantic fence, but one that tilts and skews and changes colour; sometimes becoming a sky-like or watery backdrop, and sometimes a complex platform on which characters walk at alarming angles, and makes the theatre smell, metaphorically, of carpentry.

We're talking here of the latest New York Metropolitan production of *Das Rheingold*, what Wagner called a Preliminary Evening to the Ring, more particularly the film of it shown at Dendy Cinema. I'll hasten to say that, whatever criticism I may level at the production, the singing and the acting has my unreserved admiration. Predictably, the Metropolitan has provided an introduction in which Bryn Terfel as Wotan is interviewed by Deborah Voigt. But *Das Rheingold* is Alberich's drama, not Wotan's. Wotan merely has sufficient time to identify himself as a greedy, dishonest, hen-pecked old lecher. Let us forget him for the time being. He will have his day in *Die Walküre* and his come-uppance in *Siegfried*. As for Deborah Voigt, she does not yet appear; we can look forward to her immolation as Brünnhilde in *Götterdämmerung*. This evening, as I write, it is the time of Alberich. There never was a better Alberich than Eric Owens. This really great dwarf deserves ten curtain calls at the very least. The rest of the cast, most particularly Richard Croft as Loge, should have five. What sensitive, decent male would not sacrifice gold for sympathy from one of those entrancing Rheinmädchen?

Back to laundries and carpentry. The problem for a producer today, Robert Lepage in this case, with all the facilities of modern technology at his disposal, is knowing where to start and where to stop, or in which order to start and stop. Some of the scenes might have been painted by Rubens. But then there is this extraordinarily mobile fence, which causes the audience, if not the cast, anxiety as to how to retain its balance. And there are the strange breast plates worn by Wotan, Froh and Donner. They demonstrate, as if to a class in human physiology, the pectoralis major, rectus abdominis and other muscles, all burnished, sometimes in bronze and sometimes in silver, to ensure that students and body-builders are unlikely to forget the images. Finally, after some three hours, towards the end, the lighting manager is unleashed. There is a riot of colour as the cast wends its way over the Rainbow Bridge toward Valhalla that could not have been bettered by Walt Disney. So we have here, in this production, a strange mixture of the traditional with the post-modern, the mechanical with the physiological, the sophisticated with the banal, which thankfully never overwhelms the glorious singing and orchestral playing. Nor does it displace the unseen, but overarching presence of the now frail, but always formidable maestro, James Levine

Shaw also wrote, "I must admit that my favorite way of enjoying a performance of *The Ring* is to sit at the back of a box, comfortable on two chairs,

feet up, and listen without looking." There are many moments in this performance of *Das Rheingold* when one would also be happy just to listen. Nevertheless, despite some misgivings, looking is well worthwhile.

[Your Editor would be happy to print your views on the Met's production of *Die Walküre*, when it is broadcast in June.]

## New Members

The following people joined the Society:

Heinz Kestermann [0995], John Kaldor [0996], Peter Mason and Henry Burmester [0997], Tim Singleton [0998].

## Donations

The Society welcomes all donations and they can be addressed to the Treasurer, Wagner Society in NSW Inc, at the Society's GPO Box address shown on the back page of this Newsletter. Such donations help us to carry out our objective "to promote the music of Richard Wagner and to encourage a wider appreciation of the significance of his achievements." Donations are tax-deductible and receipts will be issued.

## Email Addresses

Email is for many members the communication method of choice, and it's vital for us to have your current email address if you want to receive reminders about Society functions, or in the future to receive the Newsletter electronically. The Society's email address is [info@wagner-nsw.org.au](mailto:info@wagner-nsw.org.au) (info at wagner hyphen nsw dot org dot au).

If you'd like to receive reminders about forthcoming Society events and occasional matters of interest to members, just send us an email from your current email address, with "Email reminder service" in the "subject" line. If you'd like to take part in the pilot for electronic delivery of the Newsletter, make sure that we have your current address by enrolling (or re-enrolling) in the Email Reminder Service.

Some people have particularly avaricious anti-spam programs which devour emails from nice people like us, and each different email program (such as Outlook) has its own way of avoiding this. Some programs let you nominate the Society as a "favourite" or "trusted address", to ensure that our emails do not suffer that fate, and if you take the time to make us "trusted" you'll ensure that you receive our emails for as long as you want to.



## 'The Decision To Play Wagner in Bayreuth Was Unanimous'

Der Spiegel Online reported last December that Katharina Wagner and Eva Wagner-Pasquier, co-directors of the Bayreuth opera festival, have "welcomed the Israel Chamber Orchestra's decision to play a piece by Richard Wagner during the 2011 festival." The report also says that "...the Jewish Austrian conductor Roberto Paternostro, the musical director of the Israel Chamber Orchestra, is breaking new ground with a plan to perform Wagner's Siegfried Idyll along with works by the Jewish composers Gustav Mahler and Felix Mendelssohn and a contemporary Israeli composer next year in a public hall [Stadthalle] in Bayreuth on July 26, 2011, one day after the annual Wagner opera festival opens there." If you're lucky enough to be present for the Premiere night, you might like to try and book yourself into the concert. The organisers have, apparently, been at pains to point out that the performance is not part of the official Bayreuther Festspiele.

According to Paternostro's website: "Dr. Michael Hohl, Major City of Bayreuth, Katharina Wagner and Roberto Paternostro are pleased about the upcoming guest performance."

In the report, the conductor stated a challenging and controversial ambition: "I realize that parts of Richard Wagner's weltanschauung [sic] and Bayreuth's relationship to the Nazi regime can neither be justified nor whitewashed. Yet I am convinced that it is possible to convey the musical significance of Wagner in a new and sophisticated way to the generation which is now coming of age without having to ignore the burdens or historic responsibility."

While Paternostro's reported assertion that the "...few attempts previously made to play Wagner's music in Israel have failed," he said. "But the mission must be to forge new paths - carefully - and perhaps in the near future it will be possible to break the ice," has some truth because of the quasi-official attitude to playing Wagner's music in Israel, one should not forget conductor Daniel Barenboim's occasional performances over the past few years.

Paternostro, the descendant of Holocaust survivors, commented that, although any orchestral player with

objections to playing Wagner's music was free not to play, the decision to play was unanimous. However, in a sign of generational change, Paternostro said: "In our orchestra we have many young musicians and I had many individual conversations with them. They said they want to play it, that Wagner is a big part of music history and that they want to deal with this issue."

Mayor Hohl is also quoted on Paternostro's website on the Nazi heritage of Bayreuth: "'For Bayreuth, the performance of the Israel Chamber Orchestra at the opening of the 2011 Festival season is a very special - in fact groundbreaking - event. The particular role played by Bayreuth and Wagner in the ideology of the National Socialist dictatorship remains unforgotten today and, in light of such a cultural event, should not go unmentioned.... The city of Bayreuth has confronted this dark era of aberration, intolerance and violence. And it continues to do so, more than 65 years after the end of the war, and supports all efforts to come to terms with the events of that era in a serious and credible manner. There will be no culture of forgetting and suppression in Bayreuth.'"

Paternostro commented further: "For me it is important that this program includes not only Wagner's music, but also that of two important Jewish composers, Gustav Mahler and Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, and that these are connected to the German premiere of a work by the most important contemporary Israeli composer.... I hope that this performance of Jewish musicians in Wagner's Festival city will send a positive signal of rapprochement, of tolerance, and an open, historically-informed cultural exchange between our countries, which are joined most of all by music."

Apparently, on 4 November 2010, the Israel Chamber Orchestra performed at the Liederhalle Stuttgart in its first rehearsal of Richard Wagner's Siegfried Idyll.

[If you are interested in reading more about this important cultural and historical moment, you can go to the following links: [www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,722527,00.html](http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,722527,00.html) and [www.robertopaternostro.com/en/menu33/news7](http://www.robertopaternostro.com/en/menu33/news7) Editor.]

## Wagner As A Revolutionary: Dora B. Montefiore 1902

Websurfing can be a great waste of time, but every now and then one stumbles on gems of information that shine light in many directions on seemingly unrelated topics. In the following case, it is Wagner's relationship to British and Australian feminist socialism and the life of an unknown (to me - and I presume to assume most of our readers), but historically significant figure. I was delighted to read about Mrs Montefiore's exciting and politically and socially committed life in Australia and many other countries in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. But there was an additional interest in her evident knowledge of and love for Wagner's ideas, if

not for Wagner's artistic compositions. It may be that there were not very many occasions in Britain, and certainly not in Australia of that period, to hear and see performances of Wagner's operas.

The following is the first part of a two part report on Ms Montefiore composed first of some of her biography to give some context to the following 1902 article by Montefiore on the link between Wagner's radical socialistic ideas of the 1840-50s and her contemporary world. I hope that it is of interest to you - send me your comments - Editor.



# ***Dora B Montefiore* Biography by Sean Matgamna:** **Dora B Montefiore: A Half-Forgotten Socialist Feminist**

In its early phase, her life-story was rather like a Barbara Cartland-style romance. In the late 1870s, the conventional young Englishwoman, Dorothy Fuller, bred in a Victorian manor house in Surrey and educated there by governesses and private tutors, went out to Australia to visit relations and there met and fell in love with a fine, rich, young Australian, George Barrow Montefiore. After a short trip home, she went back to Australia to stay.

They married and lived happily, not for “ever after” – there is no such thing as ever after, no more than there are happy endings! – but for about a decade. Then the man died and she was left, in her late 30s, a widow with two children under ten. Still, she was very well provided for. She inherited everything.

Yet the formal reading of her husband’s will by her husband’s lawyer sparked the beginning of a radical change in this Victorian widow’s emotional and intellectual life.

Having told her how rich she was, the unthinkingly brutal lawyer added:

“Since your husband has not chosen to make any other provision, you will be the children’s sole guardian.”

“What?” said the startled woman, who had never given any thought to such things, stung to outrage at the idea. “You are talking about my children, the children I have borne! Make other provisions, indeed!”

The lawyer insisted on his point: “He might very well have made other provision. For example, you are of different religions, are you not? (George had been Jewish.) He might have wanted to put his children in the custody of someone of his own religion.”

At that moment the widow began to turn herself into a warrior for women’s rights. She would be one of the founders of the Women’s Suffrage Movement in New South Wales.

Once she started to look around at the world she lived in, at the place of women in it, and at the way it was run in general, she quickly turned into a radical socialist too. The warrior for women’s rights became a warrior against capitalism and all its iniquities. She would spend the rest of her long life campaigning for equality for women and for the socialist emancipation of the working class from capitalist wage slavery.

This was Dora B. Montefiore, who, at the age of 69, with three decades of militant feminist and socialist activity then behind her, was elected to the provisional executive of the Communist Party of Great Britain at its founding conference in 1920. Marxism, inspired by the Russian Revolution, was making a new start in this country.

Now almost forgotten, Montefiore, after Sylvia Pankhurst, was then the most prominent British woman Communist, and had been for a decade

and a half, at least, before that. Dora Montefiore does not deserve to be forgotten. She was active at various times in Australia – where, in 1911, for a while she edited the Sydney paper, the International Socialist Review of Australasia – South Africa, Britain and Ireland. She wrote and spoke and organised for the pre-Russian Revolution Marxist movement in Britain (the Social Democratic Federation; then the S.D. Party; and, after 1911, the British Socialist Party). She wrote an important pamphlet in 1909, “The Position of Women In the Socialist Movement,” published by the SDP press.

Active in the Womens’ Suffrage Movement for many years, she was a member in its first period of the Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU). Founded in 1905 by Emmeline Pankhurst, and her daughters, Christabel, Sylvia and Adele, the WSPU pursued militant tactics. But its objective was to gain, not universal suffrage, the vote for all women and men over a certain age (many working class men too had no vote), but votes for women, “on the same basis as men.” In practice, this meant winning the vote not for all women but for only the small stratum of women who could meet the property qualification. Thereby, its advocates argued, would be established the principle of woman’s equality with man. It was, its opponents argued, not votes for women, but “votes for ladies.” [Part 2 in the next issue.] This is the website - [www.marxists.org/archive/montefiore/biography.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/montefiore/biography.htm) - in case you want to read ahead.

## **Wagner Bazaar**

- 21 November Christmas Function

After a long absence from our program, we held a very successful “bring and buy” for Wagner recordings, books, memorabilia etc, primarily as a fund-raiser for the Society’s commemoration of the bicentenary of Wagner’s birth in 1813 – something for Sydney, while Melbourne has The Ring Cycle. The Bazaar took advantage of an especially generous donation of Wagner books, CDs, DVDs and memorabilia by Society Member Robert Lloyd. We owe Robert a debt of gratitude as the Society raised a little over \$700 from his donations, plus some from other Members’ donations. Sadly, Robert died before the bazaar occurred, but Members may have seen his participation in a documentary on SBS on 25 January 2011 entitled Living the End. If you missed the program, you can see a short video of Robert with his characteristic optimism, humour and courage at: [www.sbs.com.au/documentary/program/livingtheend](http://www.sbs.com.au/documentary/program/livingtheend). Editor.



## Wagner as a Revolutionary

The suggestive words spoken by our veteran guest Edouard Vaillant at the recent banquet offered to Comrade Quelch, on the relations of Art to the Social Organism, and as to its possibilities under new and better social conditions, struck a chord which is perhaps too seldom sounded by those who are working in the foremost ranks for that new and, better social order.

That this is so may be regretted, but it can scarcely be, wondered at. There is so much spurious, emotional, and superficial socialism, which like the seed by the wayside is bound to dry up and wither, because it is not rooted in

economics, that those who can give a reason for the faith that is in them spend laborious days and nights in economic propaganda [sic], knowing but too well that at the present moment it is the one thing needful. Thereby they often deny themselves pleasant excursions into the more flowery by-ways or collectivist thought, amidst the blossoms of that new Art, new Literature, and new Science which shall eventually spring from the carefully nurtured and watered new economic root.

On the Continent, where Collectivism numbers amongst its disciples more men of genius in Art, Literature, and Science than it does in England, such excursions into a socialistic future, made under the guidance of the artist or the homme-de-lettres, afford acceptable breaks in the literature devoted to economic propaganda; and at a time like this in England, when the aesthetic side of one's nature is more than, usually discouraged by the gaudy squalor of a projected Barnum Coronation show, it may prove refreshing to "hitch for a time our wagon to a star," and listen to what the master, Richard Wagner, has to prophesy concerning Art under the coming social revolution.

As is well known, Richard Wagner, in his salad days, not only spoke and wrote, but struck a blow for progress. When, in 1848, the people of Saxony demanded of their king a constitution, trial by jury, a free Press, and representative government, Wagner and his friend, August Rockel [sic], joined a revolutionary society known as the "Fatherland-Union," and the young artist read a paper before the members of that society which showed

already the direction of his budding thought, inasmuch as it urged that the theatre should be brought into closer relations with the higher artistic life of the people. Later on, in his famous article, "Art and Revolution," we can observe the expansion of that earlier thought, when he points out the close connection between political and artistic reform, and shows the impossibility of attaining the, latter ruder existing capitalist conditions. The decaying rags of feudalism still cling to every existing institution, and Wagner foresaw that nothing but a revolution could sweep them finally away, and give a fair field to real freedom, and real art expression. Though at the time of the rising in Saxony he was dependant on Court favour, he obeyed the dictates of his conscience and of his aspirations, and sided with the revolutionary leaders. On May 1st, 1849, the King dissolved the Saxon Diet, and the people, though at first successful in their rising, were afterward dispersed by Prussian troops.

Dora Montefiore Archive: The Social Democrat; Source: The Social Democrat, Vol. VI No. 7 July 1902, pp. 202-205;

Transcription: Ted Crawford. HTML Markup: Brian Reid. Public Domain: Marxists Internet Archive (2007). This is the website - [www.marxists.org/archive/montefiore/index.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/montefiore/index.htm) - if you want to read ahead. [Part 2 in the next issue.]

### Stop Press - Met Ring loses Siegfried!

The Los Angeles reported on 8 February 2011 that Heldentenor Ben Heppner has withdrawn from the production because the singer "has retired the role from his repertory." Tenors Gary Lehman and Stephen Gould will sing the role of Siegfried in the operas, which will debut in the Met's 2011-12 season. The company also will present the full "Ring" cycle, directed by Robert LePage, during that season. Editor.

## Fashion Stakes at the Bayreuth Festival

I'm not sure what Wagner would have made of the lengths that some people go to in making themselves stand out at the Festival – maybe some of the silks and satins would have taken his fancy, given his known liking for the fabrics to soothe his recurrent erysipelas [(Greek *ερυσίπελας* - red skin) (also known as "Ignis sacer", "Holy fire", and "St Anthony's fire") is an acute streptococcus bacterial infection of the dermis, resulting in inflammation. (Wikipedia)].

However that may be, at the 2009 Festival, our Member Patricia Baillie took a photographic survey of the apparel and put them into a website devoted to the results: [picasaweb.google.com.au/baillie.patricia/Frocks#](http://picasaweb.google.com.au/baillie.patricia/Frocks#).

I would recommend a visit to Patricia's photographs, not to plan the wardrobe you will need for your next/first visit to the hallowed hall, but to enjoy the acts of creativity that sometimes match and sometimes outdo the sartorial splendours the costume designers create for Wagner's characters – and Patricia's photographic skills. One of my favourites is the Scottish trio – perhaps dressed in protest at Wagner's changing of the original setting for *Der fliegende Holländer*? As Patricia says: "Bayreuth is, though of course primarily the music... but it's music within the context of a Festival. And the dressing adds to the festival atmosphere." [Ed.]



# The Raven's Reporting - Compiled by Camron Dyer

There is a regularly updated comprehensive list on the Society's Website <http://www.wagner-nsw.org.au> that takes the list to 2014.

## March 2011

Augsburg  
Barcelona  
Berlin

Chicago  
Cottbus  
Dessau  
Essen

Hamburg  
Hanover  
Leipzig  
Linz  
Lübeck  
Mulhouse  
Paris Bastille  
Prague

Schweinfurt  
Strasbourg  
Stuttgart  
Ulm  
Weimar  
Zagreb

## April 2011

Augsburg  
Basel  
Berlin

Berlin

Budapest

Cologne  
Cottbus  
Dresden  
Duisburg  
Essen  
Frankfurt  
Gelsenkirchen  
Gera  
Hamburg

Hanover  
Helsinki  
Karlsruhe  
Karlstad

Leipzig

Linz  
Mainz  
Mannheim  
Munich  
New York

Prague

Sofia  
Stuttgart  
Ulm  
Vienna

*Tristan und Isolde* – March 12, 20, 27.  
*Parsifal* – March 2, 4, 8, 10, 12.  
Deutsche Oper  
*Tristan und Isolde* – Mar 13, 17, 22, 26, 30.  
*Lohengrin* – March 1, 5, 8.  
*Siegfried* – March 26.  
*Lohengrin* – March 19.  
*Siegfried* – March 26.  
*Götterdämmerung* – March 13, 20.  
*The Ring* – March 13, 18, 24, 27.  
*Das Rheingold* – March 16, 20.  
*Die Meistersinger* – March 26.  
*Die Meistersinger* – March 20.  
*Götterdämmerung* – March 20.  
*Götterdämmerung* – March 25, 27.  
*Siegfried* – Mar 1, 6, 11, 15, 18, 22, 27, 30.  
The National Theatre  
*Parsifal* – March 19, 27.  
*Das Rheingold* – March 19.  
*Götterdämmerung* – March 3, 6, 12.  
*Parsifal* – March 6, 10, 20, 26.  
*Das Rheingold* – March 18, 25, 30.  
*Tristan und Isolde* – March 6, 12.  
*Parsifal* – March 26.

*Tristan und Isolde* – April 16, 22, 30.  
*Parsifal* – April 3, 8, 15, 25, 30.  
Deutsche Oper  
*Tristan und Isolde* – April 3.  
Staatsoper  
*Die Walküre* – April 17, 22, 25.  
Radio Symphony Orchestra in the Philharmonie  
*Parsifal* – April 8.  
Hungarian State Opera  
*Parsifal* – April 17, 22.  
*Parsifal* – April 17, 22, 25.  
*Siegfried* – April 2, 17.  
*Tannhäuser* – April 22, 25.  
*Holländer* – April 16, 23.  
*Das Rheingold* – April 15.  
*Tristan und Isolde* – April 3, 8, 17, 22, 25.  
*Das Rheingold* – April 23.  
*Tristan und Isolde* – April 8, 10.  
*The Ring* – April 1, 3, 6, 10.  
*Parsifal* – April 25.  
*Siegfried* – April 17, 20, 30.  
*Parsifal* – April 9, 12, 16, 19, 22.  
*The Ring* – April 20, 21, 23, 25.  
Värmland Opera  
*The Ring* – April 18, 20, 22, 24.  
*Die Meistersinger* – April 9.  
*Parsifal* – April 22, 30.  
*Die Meistersinger* – April 30.  
*Tannhäuser* – April 17.  
*Lohengrin* – April 3, 6.  
*Parsifal* – April 14, 17, 24.  
The Met  
*Die Walküre* – April 22, 25, 28.  
The National Theatre  
*Parsifal* – April 22.  
*Walküre* – April 14 [no other dates].  
*Parsifal* – April 3.  
*Das Rheingold* – April 14, 17, 19, 24.  
Staatsoper  
*The Ring* – April 6, 7, 10, 13.  
*Parsifal* – April 21, 24, 27.

## May 2011

Altenburg  
Augsburg  
Basel  
Dresden  
Duisburg  
Düsseldorf  
Essen  
Frankfurt  
Gelsenkirchen  
Hamburg  
Hanover

Karlstad

Kassel  
Lübeck  
Mannheim  
New York

Prague

Ulm  
Würzburg

## June 2011

Basel  
Berlin

Budapest

Darmstadt

Dresden  
Düsseldorf  
Essen  
Gelsenkirchen  
Hanover

Karlstad

Kassel  
Leipzig  
Lübeck  
Lyon

Mannheim  
Meiningen  
Paris

San Francisco

Weimar

Wels  
Würzburg  
Zurich

## July 2011

Bayreuth

*Tannhäuser* – May 1, 6.  
*Tristan und Isolde* – May 14, 27.  
*Parsifal* – May 6, 14, 17, 28.  
*Tannhäuser* – May 29.  
*Holländer* – May 7.  
*Parsifal* – May 22.  
*Die Walküre* – May 15.  
*Die Feen* – May 3.  
*Das Rheingold* – May 8.  
*Parsifal* – May 1.  
*Das Rheingold* – May 11, 28.  
*Siegfried* – May 15, 21.  
Värmland Opera  
*The Ring* – May 6, 8, 13, 15.  
*Lohengrin* – May 7, 22, 28.  
*The Ring* – May 20, 22, 27, 29.  
*Lohengrin* – May 14, 22.  
The Met  
*Die Walküre* – May 2, 5, 9, 14.  
The National Theatre  
*Parsifal* – May 15.  
*Das Rheingold* – May 7, 15.  
*Parsifal* – May 21, 29.  
*Parsifal* – June 2, 19.  
Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra in the Philharmonie  
*Die Meistersinger* – June 3.  
Hungarian State Opera  
*Lohengrin* – June 9, 12, 18.  
*Tristan und Isolde* – June 10, 13.  
*Parsifal* – June 17, 19.  
*Rheingold* – June 4 [no other dates].  
*Die Walküre* – June 26 [no other dates].  
*Tannhäuser* – June 2, 5.  
*Parsifal* – June 5, 11.  
*The Ring* – June 22, 23, 25, 26.  
*Das Rheingold* – June 4, 9.  
*Das Rheingold* – June 24.  
*Die Walküre* – June 22, 26.  
*Siegfried* – June 30.  
*Götterdämmerung* – June 12, 18.  
Värmland Opera  
*The Ring* – June 13, 15, 17, 19; 27, 29 July 1, 3.  
*Lohengrin* – June 2, 12, 19, 23.  
*Die Walküre* [concert] – June 19, 25.  
*The Ring* – June 2011 [no actual dates].  
*Tristan und Isolde* – June 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 22.  
*Parsifal* – June 23.  
*Rienzi* – June 3, 5, 12, 18, 25.  
Bastille  
*Götterdämmerung* – June 3, 8, 12, 18, 22, 26, 30.  
*The Ring* – June 14, 15, 17, 19; 21, 22, 24, 26; 28, 29, July 1, 3.  
*Tristan und Isolde* – June 5.  
*The Ring* – June 8, 9, 11, 13.  
*Tristan und Isolde* – June 2, 5.  
*Parsifal* – June 5, 19, 23.  
*Parsifal* – June 26, 29.  
*Tannhäuser* – July 25.  
*Die Meistersinger* – July 26, 30.  
*Lohengrin* – July 27.  
*Parsifal* – July 28.  
*Tristan und Isolde* – July 29.



Berlin	Deutsche Oper <b>Tannhäuser</b> – July 9. Komische Oper <b>Die Meistersinger</b> – July 2, 17. <b>Tannhäuser</b> – July 8, 16, 29. <b>Die Meistersinger</b> – July 15, 23. <b>Parsifal</b> – July 22, 31. <b>The Ring</b> – July 20, 21, 23, 24. <b>Das Rheingold</b> – July 1. <b>Götterdämmerung</b> – July 3. Värmland Opera <b>The Ring</b> – June 27, 29, July 1, 3; 8, 10, 15, 17. <b>Lohengrin</b> – July 17. <b>Lohengrin</b> – July 2, 6. <b>Tristan und Isolde</b> – July 27, 31. <b>The Ring</b> – June 28, 29, July 1, 3. <b>Holländer</b> – July 7, 10, 25. <b>Tristan und Isolde</b> – July 2. <b>The Ring</b> – July 6, 7, 9, 10. <b>Parsifal</b> – July 10, 17, 24. <b>Parsifal</b> – July 3, 5, 10.	Munich <b>Siegfried</b> – June 3. <b>July 2012</b> Munich <b>Das Rheingold</b> – July 10. <b>Siegfried</b> – July 6, 13. <b>Summer 2012</b> Toulouse <b>Tannhäuser</b> – [no actual dates]. <b>August 2012</b> Santiago <b>Tannhäuser</b> – [no actual dates]. <b>September 2012</b> Enschede <b>Götterdämmerung</b> – [no actual dates]. <b>October 2012</b> Enschede <b>Götterdämmerung</b> – [no actual dates]. <b>November 2012</b> Berlin Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra in the Philharmonie <b>Das Rheingold</b> – November 22. <b>Die Walküre</b> – November 24. <b>December 2012</b> Milan <b>Siegfried</b> – December 7 [no other dates].
Mannheim Munich	<b>Tannhäuser</b> – August 1, 7, 13, 19, 25. <b>Meistersinger</b> – August 6, 12, 18, 24. <b>Lohengrin</b> – August 2, 8, 14, 20, 26. <b>Parsifal</b> – August 3, 9, 15, 21, 27. <b>Tristan und Isolde</b> – August 4, 10, 16, 22, 28. Noblessner Foundry [Estonian National Opera] <b>Parsifal</b> – August 25, 26, 27, 28.	<b>2013</b> Amsterdam Baden-Baden Cottbus Halle Ludwigshafen Melbourne Milan <b>The Ring</b> - [no actual dates]. <b>The Ring</b> - [no actual dates]. <b>Götterdämmerung</b> – Spring 2013 [no actual dates].
San Francisco Stuttgart Weimar	<b>Season 2011/12</b> Bayreuth	<b>March 2013</b> Berlin Staatsoper <b>Götterdämmerung</b> – [no actual dates]. <b>The Ring</b> – March 22 [no other dates]. Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra in the Philharmonie <b>Siegfried</b> – March 1. <b>Götterdämmerung</b> – March 15.
Würzburg Zurich	<b>August 2011</b> Bayreuth	<b>April 2013</b> Munich <b>Holländer</b> – April 14, 17, 20.
<b>August 2011</b> Bayreuth	<b>September 2011</b> Enschede Stuttgart <b>October 2011</b> Enschede Frankfurt Stuttgart <b>November 2011</b> Berlin Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra in the Philharmonie <b>Lohengrin</b> – November 12. <b>Holländer</b> – November 12, 16.	<b>May 2013</b> Milan <b>Götterdämmerung</b> – May 18 [no other dates]. <b>Götterdämmerung</b> – [no actual dates].
<b>September 2011</b> Enschede Stuttgart <b>October 2011</b> Enschede Frankfurt Stuttgart <b>November 2011</b> Berlin Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra in the Philharmonie <b>Lohengrin</b> – November 12. <b>Holländer</b> – November 12, 16.	<b>2012</b> London Royal Opera <b>The Ring</b> - [no actual dates].	<b>June 2013</b> Milan Munich <b>The Ring</b> - [no actual dates]. <b>Holländer</b> – June 28. <b>Tannhäuser</b> – June 29.
<b>2012</b> London Royal Opera <b>The Ring</b> - [no actual dates].	<b>January 2012</b> Frankfurt <b>Götterdämmerung</b> – January 29 [no other dates].	<b>July 2013</b> Munich <b>Das Rheingold</b> – July 13.
<b>January 2012</b> Frankfurt <b>Götterdämmerung</b> – January 29 [no other dates].	<b>February 2012</b> Munich <b>Das Rheingold</b> – February 5, 9, 12.	<b>August 2013</b> Seattle <b>The Ring</b> - 3 cycles [no actual dates].
<b>February 2012</b> Munich <b>Das Rheingold</b> – February 5, 9, 12.	<b>March 2012</b> Berlin Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra in the Philharmonie <b>Tristan und Isolde</b> – March 27.	<b>September 2013</b> Berlin Deutsche Oper <b>Die Walküre</b> – September 22. <b>The Ring</b> - [no actual dates].
<b>March 2012</b> Berlin Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra in the Philharmonie <b>Tristan und Isolde</b> – March 27.	<b>May 2012</b> Berlin Berlin Philharmonic <b>Walküre</b> [concert] – May 20, 23, 27. Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra in the Philharmonie <b>Tannhäuser</b> – May 5. <b>Rienzi</b> [concert] – May 21, 24, 27. <b>Siegfried</b> – May 27, 31. <b>Siegfried</b> – [no actual dates].	<b>October 2013</b> Enschede <b>The Ring</b> - [no actual dates].
<b>May 2012</b> Berlin Berlin Philharmonic <b>Walküre</b> [concert] – May 20, 23, 27. Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra in the Philharmonie <b>Tannhäuser</b> – May 5. <b>Rienzi</b> [concert] – May 21, 24, 27. <b>Siegfried</b> – May 27, 31. <b>Siegfried</b> – [no actual dates].	<b>June 2012</b> Frankfurt <b>The Ring</b> – 2 cycles [Die Walküre June 7, 24] [no other dates].	<b>November 2013</b> Dresden <b>Tristan und Isolde</b> – November 16 [no other dates].
<b>June 2012</b> Frankfurt <b>The Ring</b> – 2 cycles [Die Walküre June 7, 24] [no other dates].	<b>November-December 2013</b> Melbourne The Ring – 3 cycles [no actual dates].	<b>November-December 2013</b> Melbourne The Ring – 3 cycles [no actual dates].
<b>June 2012</b> Frankfurt <b>The Ring</b> – 2 cycles [Die Walküre June 7, 24] [no other dates].	<b>June 2014</b> Barcelona <b>Die Walküre</b> – [no actual dates].	<b>June 2014</b> Barcelona <b>Die Walküre</b> – [no actual dates].



# Annual **Membership Renewal** 2011

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 2011 on the following basis (please tick one)

Single member \$60 (single pensioner member \$35)

Shared members \$90 (shared pensioner members \$55)

Students \$25 (include a copy of your current ID Card)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

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\*.)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Total**

Please complete this form and post it to:

**The Treasurer  
The Wagner Society in NSW Inc  
GPO Box 4574  
Sydney NSW 2001**

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

**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:

**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)

**6. Signatures**

.....  
Signature

.....  
Signature

...../...../2011  
Date renewed

.....  
Name in BLOCK LETTERS

.....  
Name in BLOCK LETTERS



## **ADDRESS**

Please note our permanent address for all correspondence

The Wagner Society in New South Wales Inc

GPO Box 4574 SYDNEY NSW 2001

Telephone: 8021 0974 (Roger Cruickshank, President)

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)

**Address for Sunday Functions  
Goethe Institut  
90 Ocean Street Woollahra (corner of Jersey Road)**