

# The Wagner Society



IN NEW SOUTH WALES INC.

Newsletter No. 103, March 2006

## President's Report

### In Memoriam

#### **Birgit Nilsson, the Wagner Soprano Legend, Dies at 87 and Tenor James King at 80**

Birgit Nilsson, the Swedish soprano, died on 25 December 2005 at the age of 87 in Vastra Karup, the village where she was born. Max Grubb has specially written for the Newsletter an extensive appraisal and appreciation of the voice, career and character of Nilsson (page 10). Nilsson's regular co-singer, Tenor James King has also died at eighty: Florida, 20 November 2005 (see report page 14).

### A LETTER TO MEMBERS

Dear Members

Welcome to this, our first Newsletter for 2006, in which we mourn the passing of arguably the greatest Wagnerian soprano of the second half of the 20th century, Birgit Nilsson. Many of us only know her effortless soaring steely-sheened voice through recordings, whether as Sieglinde (and third Norn) in Knappertsbusch's spacious 1957 live *Ring* from Bayreuth, or as Brünnhilde in Solti's monumental studio recording of the *Ring* (1962-65) and in Böhm's meticulous live Bayreuth recording from 1967. Her great voice was stilled with her retirement from the operatic stage in 1982, except for one last extraordinary Brünnhilde at a gala performance at Covent Garden in 1992 when, at 72, "she could still tingle the spine with the voice that had dominated opera houses in the 1960s and 1970s" (UK Telegraph 12 Jan 2006).

We are delighted to have an extensive appreciation and review of Nilsson's career from member Max Grubb from Port Macquarie. He welcomes comment and debate about his assessment, so please take up the challenge.

### PRESIDENT'S REPORT continued p.3

<b>PATRON:</b>	Sir Charles Mackerras
<b>HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS:</b>	Prof Michael Ewans
	Mr Richard King
	Mr Horst Hoffman
	Mr Joseph Ferfaglia
	Mrs Barbara McNulty OBE

While on the subject of recordings, we are still waiting for the first opera of the promised set from the Neidhardt Ring in Adelaide in 2004, and regretting that last year's triumphal *Tristan* in Brisbane with Lisa Gasteen and John Treleven went unrecorded.

### Functions

On 19 February, we held our first function of 2006, at which Professor Kim Walker, Dean of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, spoke about the role of the Conservatorium, the work of the Opera Studies Unit in particular, and the need to find private funding to replace government grants which have been severely cut. Sharolyn Kimmorley then conducted a voice coaching class with Catherine Bouchier, a voice student at the Con. From feedback received at and since the function, members attending found this "master class" a fascinating and rewarding window onto the work of the Conservatorium, and I'd like on your behalf to once again thank Professor Kim Walker, Sharolyn Kimmorley and Catherine Bouchier for their fascinating insights.

Traditionally, our functions are held on the third Sunday of each month. However, as the Wellington *Parsifal* performances are on the weekend on the third Sunday in March, and because the Easter and Anzac Day public holidays fall around the third Sunday in April, we have combining the March and April functions into a single meeting on Sunday 2 April at the Goethe-Institut at 2pm, at which Alan Whelan will speak on the life and works of Siegfried Wagner.

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## For Your **Diary**

<i>The Ring: An Orchestral Adventure</i> (arr Henk de Vlieger)	Edo de Waart conductor, Andrea Lam piano – together with: Mozart Piano Concerto No 15 K 450	April 6, 7, 8
<i>Siegfried Idyll</i>	Australian Chamber Orchestra – the rest of the program is: Schumann Cello Concerto in A minor, Op.129, Demenga Les Adieux [Australian Premiere], and Beethoven Symphony No.5 in C minor	September 9, 10, 12, 13, Wollongong: September 14 and Canberra: 16 September
<i>Tristan und Isolde</i>	His Majesty's Theater, Perth WA. Featuring West Australian Opera Chorus and West Australian Symphony Orchestra This is Opera Australia production is presented by arrangement with that company	5.30pm 4, 8, 11 November 2006

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

DATE	EVENTS - 2006	LOCATION
April 2	Alan Whelan: the life and works of Siegfried Wagner.	Goethe Institut - 2.00pm
May 21	<b>Annual General Meeting</b> and recital by the students from the Conservatorium who received scholarships to study German language at the Goethe-Institut, accompanied by Sharolyn Kimmerley	Goethe Institut - 2.00pm
July 16	Nigel Butterley's second talk: on the music of Franz Liszt.	Goethe Institut - 2.00pm
September 17	Report back by members who attend the Bayreuth Festival in 2006 - on the new <i>Ring</i> production, the first Bayreuth Ring conducted by Christian Thielmann	Goethe Institut - 2.00pm
October 15	TBA	Goethe Institut - 2.00pm
November 26	Alan Whelan: an illustrated talk on <i>Rienzi</i>	Goethe Institut - 2.00pm
December 10	End of year function - <b>Please bring a plate</b>	Goethe Institut - 2.00pm
<b>Goethe-Institut address 90 Ocean Street Woollahra (corner of Jersey Road)</b>		

## Committee **2005 - 2006**

<b>President and Membership Secretary</b>	Roger Cruickshank	9357 7631
<b>Secretary</b>		
<b>Vice President</b>	Julian Block	9337 6978
<b>Treasurer</b>	Michael Moore	9363 2281
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<b>Members</b>	Dennis Mather	9560 1860
<b>Newsletter Editor</b>	Terence Watson	9517 2786
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## President's Report continued

It's generally acknowledged that, as a composer, Siegfried Wagner never emerged fully from the shadow of his father. When he died in 1930, in the same year that his mother died (Cosima cast an altogether different shadow over Siegfried's life), Bayreuth was left in the hands of his notorious widow, Winifred Williams. We tend to see the origins of present-day Bayreuth in the next 15 years of German history (1930 to 1945), and for some the stain left by Winifred and some of their children has still not been wholly wiped out. The tumultuous period following his death may have contributed to a certain neglect that Siegfried Wagner has suffered at the hands of Wagner scholars, and I'm looking forward to Alan's presentation.

### A letter to Members - continued

#### Going to the Movies

Without a lot of fanfare, we showed the first of ten episodes of "Wagner", Tony Palmer's 1983 marathon (9 hour) film on the life of Wagner before our function on February 19. Just like "serials" at the movies in the days before home theatre, we will be showing one episode before each of the next 9 functions, starting with episode two on 2 April. The "Wagner serial" will start at 1pm, and the function will start (as usual) at 2pm.

The film is not without its critics, especially for its non-chronological use of music and its occasional waywardness when historical accuracy gets in the way of the story, but in terms of the outstanding actors who deliver the roles, it is almost without peer. Foremost are the Wagner of Richard Burton and the Cosima of Vanessa Redgrave. Then there is the knightly Pfinz Pfong and Pfang of Sir John Gielgud, Sir Ralph Richardson and Sir Laurence Olivier (as Pfistermeister, Pfordten and Pfeufer respectively), the narration of Andrew Cruickshank (that great Scottish ham whose Doctor Cameron is burned in to the collective unconscious of too many generations), and an army of bit players – Gwyneth Jones, Peter Hofmann, Franco Nero, Sir William Walton, Arthur Lowe, Prunella Scales, Corin Redgrave, Yvonne Kenny, Manfred Yung, Jess Thomas, Dame Joan Plowright, Cyril Cusack, and many more.

This isn't something that is likely to be coming to a cinema near you any time soon, so why not come early to a few of the functions and sample its delights.

#### Bayreuth 2006

At our December 2005 function we drew the names of all the applicants for Bayreuth tickets in 2006 one by one from a hat (a Neidhardt *Ring* sunhat) that I took from my own Pandora's Box that is called "unfortunate Wagner merchandise bought on impulse which is too vile even for raffle prizes".

The lucky few, after some last-minute changes and shuffling of tickets, are: Dennis Mather and John Studdert, Elizabeth Gordon-Werner, Carole Bailey, Paul Gresham, Michael Moore and Gaby Bremner-Moore, Philip Bacon, Patricia and Roy Hodson.

#### Pandora

My Pandora's Box ("unfortunate Wagner merchandise" etc) had a few additions over the holiday period. While trying to sniff out Wagner rarities on DVD from Germany (via google.de) I came across three seeming gems which were unknown to me: Wagner meets Cuba – Parsifal goes La Habana; Wagner meets New York – Tristan meets Isolde in Harlem; and Wagner meets Spain - Siegfried's Ole in Espana. Tragically, only the first two have arrived, but when the third appears I know where it will be going. There is very little Wagner in these works, which are recordings and concerts given by a small orchestra augmented apparently by local musicians and singers from each location. "Tristan meets Isolde in Harlem", for example, has music which sounds a little like Big Band meets Procol Harum, with occasional recognisable moments from Wagner. You can tell that the theme is taken from Wagner because His Head appears rather prominently on the screen and if, when the word "enter" flashes on-screen you press "enter" on your DVD remote controller, you can hear the actual orchestral passage that is being butchered. I must have been very naughty in a past life to have to endure these DVDs.

Next to these latest arrivals in Pandora is the two-volume set of P Craig Russell's masterpiece "The Ring of the Nibelung". Had I noticed that the publisher was Dark Horse Comics before I bought them, I might not have been as surprised when I opened the parcel from Amazon dot com. The most interesting part of the "illustrated novel" is at the end. After Hagen has been dragged down into the Rhine, we see Wotan thrusting his shattered spear into Loge's breast, killing him. Later, we see Brünnhilde and Siegfried alive and united, like Adam and Eve, near the ashes of Walhalla. And in the arid burnt wasteland, a tree takes root and grows. The final cartoon image is the final image from the Neidhardt *Ring*, sans Erda.

#### Information

A number of members have asked about the biography of Franz Liszt to which Nigel Butterley referred, which was the three-volume set written by Alan Walker and published by Cornell University Press:

- Franz Liszt: The Virtuoso Years, 1811-1847 (482 pages, ISBN: 0801494214)
- Franz Liszt: The Weimar Years, 1848-1861 (656 pages, ISBN: 0801497213)
- Franz Liszt: The Final Years, 1861-1886 (624 pages, ISBN: 0801484537)

I have included the number of pages in these paperback editions so that you will see the task that lies before you if you purchase all three. Also by Alan Walker and published by Cornell University Press is the smaller and much sadder volume "The Death of Franz Liszt: Based on the Unpublished Diary of His Pupil Lina Schmalhausen (Hardcover, 224 pages, published December 2002, ISBN: 0801440769) which gives a stark account of Liszt's lonely death in Bayreuth.



## President's Report continued

A number of members have also asked about the Newsgroup in which Alan Whelan participates, which is [humanities.music.composers.wagner](mailto:humanities.music.composers.wagner).

There are several ways in which you can access this Newsgroup. Your Internet Service Provider can give you a link so that, using standard email software such as "MS Outlook Express" you can access this and any other Newsgroup. For example, Telstra Bigpond broadband cable subscribers can use a link at [server-news.bigpond.net.au](mailto:server-news.bigpond.net.au) to access any Newsgroups they wish. Your Internet Service Provider should be able to help you set up a connection to this Newsgroup using their own server address.

You can also access the messages from this Newsgroup via the web. For example, if you search on [humanities.music.composers.wagner](mailto:humanities.music.composers.wagner) using [google.com](http://www.google.com) you will easily find a number of web-sites, such as

<http://groups.google.com/group/humanities.music.composers.wagner> where you can view the current day's postings, or sites such as <http://mailgate.supereva.com/humanities/humanities.music.composers.wagner/index.htm> where you can view the last 500 postings.

### Wagner performances

In Sydney in 2006 we have the SSO performing "The Ring – An Orchestral Adventure" under the baton of Edo de Waart on 6, 7, 8 and 10 April, and the Australian Chamber Orchestra performing the *Siegfried Idyll* in a series of concerts billed as "The Giants" on 9 and 12 September in Angel Place and on 10 September at the Opera House, and also in Canberra and Wollongong, Adelaide and Melbourne.

In Perth the West Australian Opera is staging three performances of Neil Armfield's production of *Tristan und Isolde*, conducted by Richard Mills, on November 4, 8 and 11. The cast is Isolde, Susan Bullock; Tristan, Alan Woodrow; Brangane, Bernadette Cullen; Kurwenal, David Wakeham; King Marke, Bruce Martin and Melot, Barry Ryan.

And by the time you read this, the two "semi-staged" performances of *Parsifal* in Wellington on 17 and 19 March will be over. With an all New Zealand cast, including Sir Donald McIntyre in the role of *Gurnemanz* and Margaret Medlyn as *Kundry*, these performances are part of the 2006 New Zealand International Arts Festival, in conjunction with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. Our Society has made a donation of A\$2,500 in support of these performances.

I hope that you can attend some of these 2006 Wagner performances, and some of our own functions, and please don't forget to take a look at one of the Tony Palmer "Wagner" serials at 1pm before each of our functions.

**Roger Cruickshank Sunday 5 March 2006**

## New Members

- 1,000th member coming up

**The following persons joined the Society between November 2005 and the end of January 2006:** Welcome to - Glen Barnwell [944], Vic and Katie French [945], Alfredo Zaniboni [946], Phillip Emanuel, a student member [947], and Glenn Horne [948]. If you have any Wagnerian inclined friends, please encourage them all to join so that we can reach the significant milestone of 1000 members as soon as we can in 2006. There may even be a "Wagner Shower" of appreciation for the 1000th member!

## Donations

The Society welcomes all donations and they can be addressed to the Treasurer, Wagner Society in NSW Inc at the GPO address above. Such donations help us to carry out our objectives of promoting the performance of Wagner's works. Donations are tax-deductible and receipts will be issued.

Donations were gratefully received from the following members between November 2005 and the end of February 2006: Naomi Kaldor, Elsie and James Moore, Kenneth Reed, Despina and Iphygenia Kallinikos, Anna-Lisa Klettenberg, Ross Whitelaw, Bill Brooks and Alasdair Beck, Monica and Aliro Olave, Helen and Kevin Grant, Elle Rasink, Annie Marshall, Sandra Beesley, Wendy and Andrew Hamlin, Hannah and Willi Spiller, Robert Lloyd, Neville Mercer, Neville Pollard, Mitzi Saunders, Heather and Peter Roland, Mary Haswell, Terence Watson, Diana and Peter George, Stephen Freiberg, Carl Andrew, Sybil Baer, Anna Ziegler, Deanne Whittleston and Anthony Gregg, Susette and Martin Dickson, Pam and Ian McGaw, Richard Mason and Camron Dyer, Phillip Bacon, Rae and Russ Cottle, Isolde Torny, Jane Mathews, Barbara and Nicholas Dorsch, Ann Weeden, Margaret and Clare Hennessy, Paul Gresham, Nance Grant, Rosemary and Julian Block, Jennifer Ferns, Diana-Rose Orr, Heinz Ebert, Margaret Whitlam, Margareta Baxter, Brett Johnson, Roger Cruickshank.



## Robert Lepage's *Ring Cycle* For the Metropolitan Opera

According to a news release on the Metropolitan Opera's website, director Robert Lepage's first production of Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* will be presented in full in the 2011-12 season. The Met's music director James Levine will be the conductor. "Robert Lepage is one of today's most inventive and gifted directors," said General Manager Elect Peter Gelb. "Harnessing new theatrical technology, Robert will create a Ring that will be a tour de force."

"According to Mr. Lepage, his new Ring will evoke the dramatic and mythic coast of Iceland, a place where the land shook and spoke back to the early Viking settlers.... He said, 'At a time when global warming and climatic change make us more conscious than ever of the fragility of this lonely planet, the Ring's Romantic power to evoke the conflicting forces between man and the divinities of nature makes more than a lot of sense. When you stage these works you are not only staging a new production, you must create a new world that explains the old one.'" You can read more about the 2006-07 program at <http://www.metoperafamily.org/metopera/news/detail.aspx?id=165>.

## **LOHENGRIN -** "Barrie Kosky's Wagner Is Not Wagner's Wagner"

In an Associated Press review, it has been reported that the audience shared this assessment of the Vienna State Opera's December 2005 production of the opera. "...Kosky, the director, was roundly booed, along with stage and lighting designer Klaus Grünberg and Alfred Mayerhofer, responsible for costumes."

"Most of their work was neither jarring nor controversial. It was worse — irrelevant, leaving the audience little choice but to concentrate on the mastery of the conductor Semyon Bychkov and the soloists Johan Botha, Soile Isokoski, Falk Struckmann, Janina Bächle, Kwangchul Youn and Adrian Eröd. They — and an alternately feisty, majestic or tremulous orchestra — wove a magical musical tapestry." So Mr Kosky continues his provocative career! [Ed. 2005]

## Michael Scott-Mitchell's Photographic Exhibition Of 'The Adelaide Ring'

The Editor is pleased to publish the following email from Rob Scott-Mitchell

Dear Terence,

It is my pleasure to draw your attention to a new website <http://www.blackstoneimages.com.au> which hosts Michael Scott-Mitchell's photographic exhibition of 'the Adelaide Ring'. As you are probably aware this unique record of the Adelaide Ring premiered in the Sydney Opera House exhibition hall last July. With the subsequent acquisition of the entire collection by the National Library of Australia (to become part of the National Archive), Michael and I are offering limited edition fine-art prints for sale (edition of 100 - including the N.L.A.).

We would be grateful if you could mention this in your next newsletter, and be more than happy to reciprocate a link to your website. Also, I would greatly appreciate any feedback you or your members may care to give regarding the design and functionality of my website.

[The website is well worth visiting for the comprehensive pictorial coverage of the Cycle – both for those who want to revive memories of this remarkable event and for those who missed out!! Our thanks to Michael and Rob for creating this photographic memorial to a great, possibly never to be repeated????, event in Australian cultural life. The website link will be added to our Society's website to make it easy to visit. Ed February 2006.]

## 'The Lost Ring'

Thanks to our Webmaster, John Studdert (member No 696) for drawing our attention to the following disc-covery! "After 50 years the legendary "lost" recording of Wagner's "Der Ring des Nibelungen", recorded live, in stereo, at the 1955 Bayreuth Festival is now being issued on record. Originally shelved, due to inter recording-company rivalry and doubts about live recordings in stereo, the recording captures one of the finest performances to come from Bayreuth.

The first in the cycle to be released is "Siegfried", with a cast that includes Gustav Neidlinger, Hans Hotter, Josef Greindl, Astrid Varnay and Wolfgang Windgassen. In 1955 these singers were at the height of their powers and the conductor, Joseph Keilberth, confirms his reputation as a first-class Wagnerian. Of the recording, Alan Blyth (writing in March 2006 Gramophone magazine) says 'Time and again, as I listened enraptured to this overwhelming performance, I felt as though I was sitting in the Bayreuth stalls.'



# Wagner Society 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Essay Competition Winner

- Nathan Parry, University of Melbourne

This is the first (major) part of the essay that won a special prize in the Society's Anniversary Essay competition in 2005. The conclusion will be printed in the June 2006 Newsletter.

## The Piano Music of Richard Wagner

Richard Wagner wrote a number of works for solo piano (see Table). Seven of these have been recorded by the Melbourne Pianist, Bruce Hungerford (1922 – 77), and this article endeavours to provide an extended historical background and brief analysis of each. Wagner's granddaughter, Friedelind Wagner, had met Hungerford in 1959 and subsequently created for him the position of pianist-in-residence at the Bayreuth Festival Master Classes. Hungerford performed the Bayreuth premieres of the piano works at Haus Wahnfried in front of a specially invited audience during the 1960 Festival, and later that year recorded them for the Master Classes' Scholarships Fund. The Two-LP set comprises two sonatas and a fantasia from the 1831 – 32 period, and four albumleaves dating from 1853 to 1875. Accompanying the records is an account, written by Friedelind, providing some history of each work.

It appears that the written press of the late nineteenth-century may not have, on the whole, promoted Wagner's piano works as being important or significant. Despite the emotional involvement the composer would have had at the time of writing the *Sonate für das Album von Frau M[athilde] W[esendonck]*, an 1878 article in *The Musical Times* claims that 'no person hearing this unambitious trifle would believe that Herr Wagner is its composer; but everybody must feel that it is the holiday-work of an artist.'<sup>1</sup> As with the acrimonious comments made on Wagner's earlier piano works, this publication also describes the so-called Wesendonck Sonata as showing 'plainly how little the greatest master of the orchestra was at home in writing for the most popular of all instruments.'<sup>2</sup>

Wagner was unashamed of the suggestion that he was not a pianist. Certainly, his music dramas of such wide scope rely on effects that are simply beyond the capabilities of a keyboard. The fact that Wagner 'was not a pianist' implies (according to Bellman) that the composer did not feel obliged to put a 'carefully considered public face on these pieces.'<sup>3</sup> Perhaps this, in turn, implies that revelations into the composer's thoughts at the time of composing the piano works, in addition to stylistic models, may largely be determined by a detailed study of them. The importance of thematicism in Wagner's music dramas as affected by his leitmotif technique is undeniable. However, in light of Wagner's piano works, an analytical investigation on the bases of harmony and theme is justified simply due to the fact that the pieces do not rely on leitmotifs and are generally quite simple in form. To date, only a small number of the works have been analysed in such a manner.

After matriculating from the Thomaskirche school in Leipzig (1831), Wagner commenced lessons with Theodor Weinlig (1780 – 1842), who was choirmaster and musical director at the church. The rapport between Weinlig and Wagner developed into a highly successful and productive one. During this period, the young Wagner worshipped Weber, Mozart and Beethoven, and his initial exercises indicated a conscious desire to follow their methods and styles. At one point, Weinlig had given him the task of writing a sonata, applying to it strict harmonic rules and thematic treatment. According to Wagner, one of the Pleyel sonatas was given to him as a model.<sup>4</sup> The result was the Sonata in B-flat major, and Weinlig requested that Breitkopf and Härtel publish the work, about which the young pupil was less than happy.

<sup>1</sup> *The Musical Times* 19 (1878) 84.

<sup>2</sup> "Royal College of Music". *The Musical Times* 32 (1891): 90.

<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Bellman, 'Wagner Pianiste?' *Piano and Keyboard* 175 (July/August 1995): 50.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Wagner, trans. Andrew Gray. *My Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983. 56.



It seems, however, that Wagner more likely took Beethoven as a model. The main theme of the *Larghetto* second movement contains a faint hint of Beethoven - the rhythmic statement of the subdominant chord with added sixth in bar 3 (Ex. 1a) is identical to the very commencement of Beethoven's Op. 31, no. 3 (Ex. 1b). Of course, this chord in the Beethoven has a far more important statement in that it serves as the initial figure of the first movement, whereas with Wagner it is no more than a transitory chord within the first subject. Wagner's slow movement also contains a second subject (Ex. 2a) that is very reminiscent of the second theme from the slow movement (also *larghetto*) of Beethoven's second symphony (Ex. 2b).



Example 1a. Richard Wagner (1813- 1883), *Piano Sonata in B-flat major, WWV 21*. Main theme of *Larghetto* (second movement), bars 1 - 4.



Example 1b. Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 - 1827), *Piano Sonata in E-flat major, Op. 31, no. 3*. *Allegro* (first movement), bars 1 - 4.



Example 2a. Richard Wagner (1813 - 1883), *Piano Sonata in B-flat major, WWV 21*. Second subject of *Larghetto* (second movement), bars 40 - 44.



Example 2b. Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 - 1827), *Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 36*. *Larghetto* (second movement), bars 32 - 36.

Wagner was rewarded for completing the sonata by being permitted to compose a fantasia for piano, with complete freedom regarding form. The main melody of this Fantasia in F-sharp Minor is very much treated as a recitative, and again the influence of Beethoven is evident. Even though Kropfingier maintains that Beethoven could be an 'unconscious influence' in the aforementioned instances of Wagner's B flat sonata,<sup>5</sup> in the Fantasia Beethoven's influence is more prominent. The demi-semiquaver triplets in the *Adagio molto e cantabile* section (Ex. 3a) are very suggestive of Beethoven, namely in the *adagio* of the D minor sonata, Op. 31, no. 2 (Ex. 3b). Furthermore, Bellinian *bel canto* is manifest, serving as early evidence of an influence and style that proved to be of significance in Wagner's compositional development in his large-scale music dramas. Bellman does admit that the work is testament to a more fruitful imagination and personal conception than the B flat sonata – the key relationships are outside standard practice of Classical composers, and the 'breadth of material and mood are light-years beyond his sonata exercises.'<sup>6</sup>



Example 3a. Richard Wagner (1813 - 1883), *Fantasia in F-sharp minor*, WWV 22. Bars 296 - 301.



Example 3b. Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 - 1827), *Piano Sonata in D minor*, Op. 31, no. 2. *Adagio* (second movement), bars 17 - 22.

Wagner's lessons with Weinlig seem to be apparent in the fugal introduction he intended for the finale of the Piano Sonata in A major. However, he regarded it as stylistically out of place and deleted the passage. Interestingly, this *Grosse Sonate* is not mentioned at all in either *My Life* or the *Autobiographical Sketch*, and was not printed until Hans Gerig (Köln) published it in 1960, under the direction of Otto Daube. This work is the last one that may be regarded as holding a position in Wagner's *juvenilia* for the piano, and is probably the most ambitious of all his piano works. His decision not to have the Sonata, as well as the Fantasia, published in his lifetime was reiterated twice by Cosima in diary entries: on November 26, 1877<sup>7</sup> and on January 18, 1878: 'R[ichard] plays through his Sonata in A major and decides not to publish it...he says the "*Fantasia*" is more him,'<sup>8</sup> and subsequently in a letter

<sup>5</sup> Klaus Kropfingier, trans. Peter Palmer. *Wagner and Beethoven. Richard Wagner's Reception of Beethoven*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 176.

<sup>6</sup> Bellman, *Wagner Pianiste?*, 1995, 51.

<sup>7</sup> Cosima Wagner, trans. Geoffrey Skelton, *Cosima Wagner's Diaries, Volume I, 1869 - 1877* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1980), 998: "I like it, but R[ichard] suddenly has doubts about publishing his...A Major Sonata."

<sup>8</sup> Cosima Wagner, trans. Geoffrey Skelton, *Cosima Wagner's Diaries, Volume II, 1878 - 1883* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1980), 20.



written by her to B. Schott's Söhne publishing house in 1878 (Bayreuth, December 17):

My husband does not consider the youth compositions good enough to have them published and even though he knows...that his friends and followers would purchase them out of reverence for him in spite of the lesser value which he attaches to them, he is reluctant to take...advantage of this loyalty.<sup>9</sup>

There not only seems to be imitation of Beethoven throughout all its movements, but a reliance on particular works of this composer is evident. For instance, the opening, and subsequent reappearance, of the three-note motif in the first movement is typical Beethoven, and the opening movement of his third symphony is reminiscent in the development of the first movement of the Wagner sonata. Furthermore, Wagner's slow movement, marked *Adagio molto, e assai espressivo* may be said to be derived from the slow movements of the Op. 106, and Op. 110 sonatas of Beethoven, namely in the long-drawn *bel canto* lines over the sombre bass chords. The *Maestoso* introduction to the last movement is strongly akin to the introduction to Beethoven's Op. 111.<sup>10</sup>

In February 1852, Wagner was introduced to Otto and Mathilde Wesendonck, who had recently moved to Zürich. During this period, the composer cultivated a love for Mathilde (1828 – 1902), and the Wesendonck Sonata of June 1853 was an inspirational result of this intimacy. This sonata was the first work composed since the completion of *Lohengrin* in 1848. Much has been written about the work, and it is possibly the most substantial of all the dedicatory works Wagner wrote for the piano.

The work is in one extended movement, commencing with a very quiet, tranquil and nobly expressive subject in A-flat major (Ex. 4a). This motive closely resembles Isolde's *Liebestod* as well as the opening of Beethoven's Op. 26 (Ex. 4b). Clearly then, thematic reminiscences of Beethoven have not disappeared altogether in Wagner's piano music.

A discussion of the developmental section of the sonata provides an opportunity to describe an aspect of Wagner's compositional technique that seemed to be emerging during this time. As argued by Kropfing, this new type of melodic development involved much use of expanding sequences rather than 'shrinking' ones.<sup>11</sup> The Wesendonck Sonata provides an excellent illustration of this developmental strategy since it is a one-movement work.

In the Recapitulation, the order of the themes is reversed, and this assists in a delay of returning to the home key of A flat until close to the end. Adjacent phrases in the second subject of the Exposition also change order in the Recapitulation. The calm concluding portion with the triplet accompaniment is in strong contrast to the energetic preceding passages. As with the A major Sonata of 1832, Beethoven's influence seems to emerge. For example, Dowd notes the choice of tenor register at both the beginning and the end being suggestive of the first movements of Beethoven's Op. 27, no. 2 and Op. 57 sonatas, plus a number of slow movements in

<sup>9</sup> Friedelind Wagner, 'Theodor Weinlig's Apprentice (1831),' *Sleeve Notes: Richard Wagner The Complete Piano Works*. Bruce Hungerford, Pianist, 1961.

<sup>10</sup> Barry Millington (editor), *The Wagner Compendium. A Guide to Wagner's Life and Music* (Thames and Hudson, 1992), 319.

<sup>11</sup> Kropfing, *Wagner and Beethoven*, 1991, 193-195.





Example 4a. Richard Wagner (1813 – 1883), *Eine Sonate für das Album von Frau M.W.*, WWV 85. Bars 1 - 4.



Example 4b. Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 - 1827), *Piano Sonata in A-flat major, Op. 26. Andante con Variazioni* (first movement), bars 1 - 4.

other works.<sup>12</sup> However, there also seem to be suggestions of Wagner himself in both the melody and harmonies, as one would expect at this stage of his compositional development. Indeed, Dowd observes thematic connections and procedural similarities between the *Album Sonate* and Wagner's music dramas.<sup>13</sup>

Unlike Dowd, Newman regards the thematic ideas as the weakest feature of the sonata (for example, the 'sentimental chromaticism' in the second theme), but does praise the leitmotif-like development, with its 'sure control of modulations and tonal directions, effortless transitions and mastery of form as a whole.'<sup>14</sup> The sonata is one of the rare instances in nineteenth-century music where the work is in a single sonata-form movement. Wagner regarded the piano as a useful tool for composing in that it assisted him in devising the full scope of his large works, and in the present instance, there is no virtuosity present, as one would expect in most nineteenth-century piano compositions.

Bye aptly states that the Wesendonck Sonata 'demonstrates very neatly why musical, not simply dramatic, considerations governed Wagner's need for a gigantic canvas... The small scale of this sonata isn't really able to accommodate the placid, A[-]flat major... opening material with the restless chromatic eruptions.'<sup>15</sup> However, a significance for this piece is provided by Bellman, who declares that, despite it being more developed than the earlier piano works, it has the feeling of a 'private communication,' and serves as a 'private thought from one of the most public of composers.'<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> John Andrew Dowd, "The Album-Sonate for Matilde Wesendonck; A Neglected Masterpiece of Richard Wagner," *Journal of the American Liszt Society* 10 (Dec 1981): 44.

<sup>13</sup> Dowd, *Wesendonck Sonata*, 1981, 43.

<sup>14</sup> Dowd, *Wesendonck Sonata*, 1981, 44.

<sup>15</sup> Antony Bye, "Wagner: Piano Music," *Musical Times* 134 (1993):, 223.

<sup>16</sup> Bellman, *Wagner Pianiste?*, 1995, 54.

# Birgit Nilsson 18 May 1918 – 25 December 2005: A Tribute (Part 1)

Max Grubb has specially written for the Newsletter an extensive appraisal and appreciation of the voice, career and character of one of the greatest singers ever to have walked the opera stage. The second part, dealing with Birgit Nilsson's Recorded Legacy, regaling us with many of the Nilsson Anecdotes – Nilsson was famous for her sense of humour as well as her voice – and a select bibliography will be published in the next issue of the Newsletter.

**Obituaries** appearing in newspapers following her death have concentrated on the chronological aspects of her career. The following articles will examine her role as the foremost 'hochdramatische' soprano of the twentieth century; the tour of Australia in September and October 1973; significance and contribution to the development of the recording of classical music; her recorded legacy both aural and visual; and will conclude with some anecdotes about her. Many of the claims made might seem to be overstated, particularly in the first section, and as such, I would hope stimulate discussion about the career of this remarkable singer.

## The foremost exponent of the art of the 'hochdramatische' soprano of the twentieth century.

In terms of longevity of career, diversity of repertoire and sheer power of the voice, Nilsson was a unique creature.

### Longevity of Career.

Birgit Nilsson's official performing career lasted from 1947 when she made her debut as Agathe in *Der Freischütz* at the Royal Opera Stockholm until September 1982 when she sang Isolde's 'Narration and Curse' at the Centennial Gala of New York's Metropolitan Opera House. No other dramatic soprano had such a long and continuous international career on the stages of opera houses and concert halls throughout the world and in this she was unique. She sang at the Metropolitan Opera House 222 times in 16 roles from 1959-1982, 232 times at the Vienna State Opera from 1954-1982, and gave 208 performance of Isolde throughout her career.

During the 1970's, she began to restrict her operatic appearances, singing the occasional Isolde and Brünnhilde although she continued to sing Elektra and the Dyer's Wife in *Die Frau ohne Schatten* until 1981. However her concerts included excerpts from most of the roles she had sung on the stage.

In the introductory section of her autobiography, the German mezzo soprano, Christ Ludwig, who frequently sang with Nilsson, commented: "After a certain age, you no longer have the ease,

and your voice is no longer as radiant. Indeed, you must stop singing just at the time when you know what singing is all about. ...All other professionals, except for athletes and dancers, mature and do their best work later.... But singers stop singing in the middle. Naturally, I'm speaking in particular of female singers. The men have it better. They can retain their vocal abilities well past the age of sixty. A big exception is Birgit Nilsson, the great Isolde and Brünnhilde of our time, indeed of our century, who, in her mid fifties and later, continued to sing demanding roles" (Ludwig, 1999, p.4).

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Earlier singers of this repertoire had much shorter careers.

Florence Austral and Marjorie Lawrence had their international careers truncated by ill health: Austral by the onset of multiple sclerosis and Lawrence by polio. Austral's international career commenced in 1922, but by 1932 was on the wane and she returned to Australia to be principal soprano in Sir Benjamin Fuller's Grand Opera Company 1934-35 Season and to undertake broadcasts for the ABC. Lawrence's international career commenced in 1932, interrupted by the onset of polio in 1941, and re-commenced in 1943, albeit in the form of concerts and recitals which she was able to perform initially from a wheelchair and later standing using a frame. The international career of Frida Leider began in 1923 following engagements at the Berlin State Opera and continued until 1938. The international career of Kirsten Flagstad commenced in 1935, was interrupted in 1941 following her return to Norway for the duration of World War 11, re-commencing it in 1947 and she continued to perform until 1955. Astrid Varnay commenced her international career in 1951 singing the dramatic soprano repertoire until 1965 when she began a second career in character roles as a mezzo soprano. Rita Hunter's career did not have the same international focus as those of her predecessors. She gained prominence at the English National Opera in the English 'Ring' between 1970 and 1977. In 1972 she performed Brünnhilde at the Metropolitan Opera, in 1975 performed Norma at San Francisco and the Metropolitan Opera and again Brünnhilde at the Metropolitan Opera. She performed with the Australian Opera between 1978 and 1985, with concert tours of Great Britain, Australia and the United States in 1986.

### Diversity of Repertoire.

Nilsson's repertoire included all the roles assigned to the 'hochdramatische' soprano. The Wagner roles of Isolde and Brünnhilde, Strauss roles of Salome, Elektra and the Dyer's Wife, and Puccini's Turandot. These roles she sang during her international career. Lirico spinto roles included the Marshallin, Senta, Venus, Elizabeth,



Sieglinde, Elsa, Donna Anna, Aida, Amelia, Tosca, Lady Macbeth, Agathe, Leonore (Fidelio) and Lisa (*Queen of Spades*). Most of the spinto roles were undertaken in Stockholm and more sparingly in the leading opera houses of the world during the 1960's. She claimed that her appearances in the spinto roles were fewer than she would have liked because opera house managements wished to mainly engage her to sing the 'hochdramatische' roles.

Other 'hochdramatische' sopranos, such as Leider, Lawrence and Varnay, sang many roles which overlapped those of Nilsson whilst Flagstad's were more limited. Frida Leider's repertoire included the major Wagner roles, Mozart roles of Donna Anna and the Countess, Norma, Leonore (*Il Trovatore and Fidelio*), the Marshallin, Gluck's Armide, Norma, and Dido in Berlioz's Trojans.

The repertoire of Marjorie Lawrence included, Brünnhilde, Isolde, Senta, Elizabeth, Salome; lirico spinto roles, Tosca, Sieglinde, and Aida; and mezzo roles, Ortrud, Venus, Amneris and Carmen and French roles; Salome in Massenet's Herodiade, Racel in *La Juive*, Brünnhilde in Reyer's Sigurd, Valentin in *Les Huguenots* and Alceste. Had she not contracted polio in 1941 at the age of 31 her essay of these roles would have been more far reaching.

Following her international success in 1935, Flagstad's major roles included, Brünnhilde, Isolde, Senta, Elsa, Elizabeth, Kundry and Leonore (Fidelio), but excluded the Strauss roles of Salome, Elektra and the Dyer's Wife as well as Turandot and the Italian spinto roles. By contrast, Astrid Varnay, during the 1950's had a similar performance repertoire overlapping that of Nilsson although she never sang Turandot. Rita Hunter's repertoire in staged opera was limited to Brünnhilde, Abigale, Lady Macbeth, Abigale and Donna Anna, although she sang in concert presentations of Tristan and Isolde, Elektra and Turandot.

### The unique qualities of the Voice

Many comments have been made about the size, power and projection of Nilsson's voice. It could cut through an orchestra of over 120 players in the pit and a chorus of 100 on stage. This was due to the placement of the voice high in the mask which gave it a cutting edge and at times a tendency to sing sharp. Following her debut as Isolde at the Metropolitan Opera in 1959, Irving Kolodin, critic of the New York Times wrote: "Miss Nilsson proved herself ...to be the greatest of rarities, a performer - like Flagstad before her and Caruso before her - to whom the size of the Metropolitan was not a hazard, but an advantage" (Bing, 1972 p.200).

That doyenne of writers about the voice, John Steane, in making comparisons between the vocal attributes of Nilsson and her predecessor, Kirsten Flagstad, offered the following observations when she was recording the role of Fricka in *Das Rheingold* in Vienna in 1958: "But well before this she had trouble with the highest notes, the B's and C's, and going back to the records

she made in America in the late 1930's, just after her triumphs there, one hears a voice that is so gloriously comfortable in the middle and low registers that one almost begrudges the necessary excursions upwards".

With Nilsson, however, "there was never any question that here was a soprano through and through: the tone was not characterised by breadth or warmth but by purity and penetration, and the high notes were its glory" (Steane, 1992, pp.30).

Steane's comments are validated by listening to the following recordings. The Metropolitan Opera Broadcast of 30 January 1937 of *Siegfried* (Naxos 8.110211-13 CD2 track 11) shows the warmth and steadiness of tone in the middle registers and she does not attempt the high C at the climax of the final scene. Contrast this to Nilsson's recordings of *Siegfried* (Decca 455 562-2 CD4 track 11) and (Phillips 412 479-2 CD4 track 11). She hits the high C, holds it, and indeed the whole scene appears to have been sung a tone higher. Did Flagstad transpose downwards or Nilsson transpose upwards? Any comments?

Peter G Davis of *High Fidelity/Musical America* in his review of Nilsson's debut as Elektra at the Metropolitan Opera in October 1966 was reserved in his praise of her performance: "the role has rarely been accorded such a glorious vocal performance; when it comes to staying power and ability to ride out the mightiest Straussian orchestral tides, Nilsson clears the floor of all vocal competition. Still, it was a curiously uninvolved hour and three quarters - partly due, I think to the restrained detachment of Miss Nilsson's acting as to the unrelieved sunny brilliance of her voice.... From watching this artist grow in a part over the past years, one can predict that something more positive will eventually develop, but right now it's very chilly" (Metropolitan Opera Annals, 1978, p.17).

Winthrop Sargeant, in the *New Yorker*, reviewing a new production of *Tosca* in October 1968 wrote: "The presence in the cast of Birgit Nilsson and Franco Corelli will make it a best seller, partly, I think, because these are the two loudest singers to be heard today" (Metropolitan Opera Annals, 1978, p.59).

Reviewing a new production of *Tristan and Isolde* at the Metropolitan Opera, Hubert Saal in *Newsweek* (November 29 1971) commented: "Nilsson was a tigress as Isolde, with bellows for lungs, unleashing unlimited power, speed and emotion.... the sounds Nilsson made were superhuman, astounding, like a natural force".

Singing at the Verona Arena in 1969 opposite Nilsson in Turandot, Placido Domingo commented: "The vibrancy and magnitude of Birgit's voice in those performances made her sound seem a sort of thunderbolt. Through an odd effect - acoustical, psychological or both - the farther I was positioned from her, the more monumental her voice sounded to me. There were moments when I was so overwhelmed for her vocal abilities and power that I almost



forgot to continue singing. Performing *Turandot* with Nilsson was one of the high points of my life, not only as an artist but also as a worshiper of great singing" (*Domingo*, 1983, p.77).

The most detailed and incisive comments about Nilsson's stage performances and the impact she had are made by Jackson (1997) in his reviews of Metropolitan Opera Broadcasts in which she featured. These include *Tristan and Isolde* (9 January, 1960, pp.282), *Fidelio* (13 February, 1960, pp.301), *Die Walküre* (20 February, 1960, pp.284), *Turandot* (4 March, 1961, pp.393), *Siegfried* (13 January, 1962, pp.293), *Götterdämmerung* (27 January, 1962, pp.295), *Turandot* (24 February, 1962, pp.486), *Tristan and Isolde* (23 February 1963, pp.297), *Die Walküre* (6 March, 1965, pp. 413), *Salome* (13 March, 1965, pp.320), and *Aida* (20 March, 1965, pp.447).

I can remember hearing two notable examples of this power during her two concerts at the Melbourne Town Hall in September 1973. At the lieder recital (22/9/1973), she sang as an encore 'Vienna City of My Dreams' ending on a top D which raised the roof of the hall and at the orchestral concert, when she sang 'In questa reggia' and, in particular, with the impact of the phrase "quel grido", the audience appeared to be pinned to the back of their seats. Never before or since have I heard such precision or power in a human voice.

### **Birgit Nilsson's Tour of Australia in September and October 1973.**

In May 1973, the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) announced that Birgit Nilsson would tour Australia in September and October and would give the Opening Concert in the Concert Hall at the Sydney Opera House on 29 September. This was the most significant of tours undertaken by international singers in Australia since the Sutherland Williamson Grand Opera Season of 1965. Tours for the ABC included those of Victoria de los Angeles (1965), Elizabeth Schwarzkopf (1967 and 1971), Lucia Popp (1969) and Gerard Souzay (1968). Guiseppi di Stefano toured in 1967 under the auspices of a private promoter. However, these tours did not have the visceral impact vocally as did that of Nilsson.

#### The Concert Schedule.

The tour began in Perth (15 September 1973), then Adelaide (19 September) with the Western Australian and South Australian Symphony Orchestras respectively. In Melbourne on 22 September, she gave a Lieder Recital accompanied by Geoffrey Parsons, then an Orchestral Concert on 26 September with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. The opening concert at the Sydney Opera House on 29 September was an all Wagner program with Sir Charles Mackerras conducting the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. A further Orchestral Concert on 3 October featured a Beethoven and Richard Strauss program with the Cleveland Orchestra conducted by Lorin Maazel. Her tour concluded with a Lieder Recital on 6 October, again accompanied by Geoffrey Parsons.

#### The Opening Concert at the Sydney Opera House, 29 September 1973.

This concert was the most important engagement during the tour, indeed the reason for the ABC being able to persuade her to come to Australia. The concert was an international event and the first half was televised nationally by the ABC.

Nilsson made the following comments about the Sydney Opera House: "The theatre and concert hall, however, is charmingly situated on the open tip of a narrow promontory and is in perfect harmony with its surroundings. On the outside it resembles an enormous sailing ship, and looking out of a dressing room window you might think you were on a great Atlantic liner.... But the interior does not quite measure up to the lavish exterior, and it is very clear that a different architect with less imagination and more limited financial resources completed the décor" (Nilsson, 1981, p.69).

Having attended both concerts in Melbourne and the two orchestral concerts in Sydney. I was overwhelmed by the power of her voice, particularly in Melbourne. In Sydney, however, the voice did not appear to have the impact it did in Melbourne. My seats in the front row of Circle Box V to the right of the stage for both concerts was not the optimum location, and, on subsequent attendance at concerts in this venue (*Götterdämmerung* on 8 September 2000), sitting in the rear of the stalls provided a better balance between orchestra and soloists

All her concerts were broadcast by the ABC. One would hope that recordings of these concerts are still in the ABC or National Archives. *The Gramophone*, in its December 2005 issue, p.13, announced that "a mouth watering compilation from Australia's ABC Classics including the opening concert at the Sydney Opera House" would be released to celebrate the 80th birthday of Sir Charles Mackerras. I was lucky to have friends at the ABC who, fearing that the ABC might destroy the tapes, were able to provide me with reel to reel copies of her Melbourne concerts. Following her death and the fact that these concerts occurred over 30 years ago, and presumably would no longer be subject to copyright, it would be timely for the ABC to release her broadcast performances, if copies are in existence.

#### The Concert Program.

The concert programs demonstrated the diversity of her operatic repertoire.

Despite being the leading 'hochdramatische' soprano, the programs contained only the 'tit bits' of her Wagner and Strauss repertoire. The Opening Concert at the Opera House comprised 'Dich, teure Halle' from *Tannhäuser* to begin, followed by the 'Liebestod' from *Tristan and Isolde*, and concluded with Brünnhilde's 'Immolation' from *Götterdämmerung*. This was the only all Wagner concert she gave whilst in Australia. The Beethoven and Strauss Concert on 3 October comprised 'Abscheulicher' from *Fidelio* and concluded with the final scene from



*Salome*, with [Richard Strauss's song] *Devotion* as an encore. In Melbourne, the orchestral concert included 'Divinités du Styx' from [Gluck's] *Alceste*, 'Pace pace' from [Verdi's] *The Force of Destiny*, 'Ocean, thou Mighty Monster' [from Weber's] *Oberon*, Isolde's 'Liebestod', 'Moro, ma prima in grazia' from [Verdi's] *A Masked Ball*, concluding with 'In Questa Reggia' from *Turandot*, with 'Vissi d'arte' [Tosca] as an encore. I understand that the Perth and Adelaide concerts included Brünnhilde's 'Immolation' Scene, Isolde's 'Liebestod' and excerpts from her Italian repertoire.

Of the concerts I attended, the orchestral concert at the Melbourne Town Hall was the most interesting because of the breadth of repertoire and because the acoustics of the Hall showed off her voice to better advantage than the Concert Hall at the Sydney Opera House.

Her lieder recitals in Melbourne and Sydney included songs by Schubert, Grieg, Sibelius and Rangström, and concluded with encores of 'Vissi d'arte' and 'Vienna City of My Dreams'. Part 2 next issue **Copyright: W M Grubb, February 2006**

#### MORE NILSSON

You may be interested in visiting the Metropolitan Opera's website that now has a wonderful collection of *Photos of Nilsson at the Met* covering her many appearances there in the roles that Max Grubb has described above. The Met's website address for the photos is <http://66.187.153.86/Images/Nilsson.htm>. If you happen to be in New York on Tuesday, May 23, 2006 7:30 PM, the Guild Event Calendar lists what will probably be a wonderful talk on *Birgit Nilsson: A Force of Nature* at the Alice Tully Hall with the Host: Dame Gwyneth Jones: "Join us for this loving tribute to a legend, with selections of Nilsson on film and reminiscences by her colleagues and friends." If any of our members is lucky enough to attend, please share your experiences with your fellow members by writing something for the Newsletter. More details at Met's website: <http://www.metoperafamily.org/guild/calendar/detail.aspx?id=1148>.

#### ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION WITH THREE LEGENDS:

**Sometime after 1983 (I have not been able to find a more precise date for it)**, Martha Mödl, Birgit Nilsson and Astrid Varnay talked about their careers for Bavarian TV with the host/moderator of the program, Klaus Schultz. **KS-** Astrid Varnay, Birgit Nilsson and Martha Mödl only ever stood on a stage together once, 1954 in Bayreuth in the third act of "Die Walküre." Afterwards they were the Isoldes and Brünnhildes in all the great opera houses of the world. I experienced them often, and worked with them professionally. In Munich they came together again to tape this program for Bavarian Television. The full account is informative and fully of funny reminiscences by all three grande dames of opera and can be read at: <http://www.geocities.com/Vienna/Strasse/7321/mnvdisc.html>.

One of Nilsson's is worth repeating: Everyone was so reverent about him [Herbert von Karajan]. I didn't see

why you had to be more reverent about Karajan than about anyone else. I said what I thought. Once he said, "Frau Nilsson, do that again, but this time with heart. You know your heart, it is there where your wallet is." "Then we have at least one thing in common, Herr von Karajan" I replied. But I think he thought it was funny. There were a lot of things like that. He'd call us for a musical rehearsal of the "Ring" at 10 or 10.30, and we'd wait half an hour, three quarters of an hour, and even more, and then his secretary would come and say "Herr von Karajan doesn't have any time, come this evening at 7" and he'd still be three quarters of an hour late. I felt he was just trying to show his power.

#### Birgit Nilsson and Joan Sutherland The Stupendous

And not to forget another review by another of our members, Peter Nicholson, who now writes a regular monthly article for *3 Quarks Daily's* Poetry and Culture column. For an introduction to his own poetic work go to the website <http://peternicholson.byteserve.com.au>.

I can only quote the opening and closing sentences to give you a taste of Peter's article: "The passing of such an artist gives every reason to ask myself again where such vocal excellence comes from.

"What a privilege it is to have heard these artists. One gives profound thanks for their splendour, the gift of their singing, the pleasures of their amazing artistry." The full article can be read at [http://3quarksdaily.blogspot.com/3quarksdaily/2006/02/birgit\\_nilsson.html](http://3quarksdaily.blogspot.com/3quarksdaily/2006/02/birgit_nilsson.html)

## James King Dodge City, Kansas, May 22, 1925 - Naples, Florida, November 20, 2005

Opera News carried an obituary for James King who died about a month before Nilsson in Florida (20 November 2005): "James King was born on Richard Wagner's birthday. He liked that. Although the lyrical heldentenor referred to himself as "just a plain country boy from Kansas," he owed many of his triumphs to the bard of Bayreuth. Still, he recognized certain limits. An artist of rare intelligence, King avoided the heavyweight dangers of Tristan, Siegfried and Tannhäuser, some flirtations notwithstanding. That may help explain why he was still singing, and singing beautifully, well into his seventies.

"King never jeopardized the essential purity, sweetness, steadiness and strength that marked his Walther von Stolzing in *Die Meistersinger*, Siegmund in *Die Walküre*, Lohengrin and Parsifal. The same qualities, combined with rare stamina and an easy top, made him a classic interpreter of Richard Strauss's forbidding heroes ...not to mention Florestan in



Beethoven's *Fidelio*. Everyone who heard these lofty achievements found it hard to believe that he had originally trained as a baritone.

' "James King was a great tenor during an era of great tenors," reflects Giorgio Tozzi, an associate at the Met and later on the faculty of Indiana University. "He was also a great colleague, as easy to know at the High C level onstage as he was at ground level offstage. Singing was a joy for him, and you knew it just by listening to how he sang". More at the website: <http://www.metoperafamily.org/operanews/issue/article.aspx?id=1526&issueID=57>.

In a second obituary in OperaNews, the following comment was made: "King's last public performance came in 1996 at the televised gala in celebrating James Levine's 25th anniversary at the Met. He went on to teach at Indiana University's School of Music, and his biography, titled **"Nun sollt ihr mich befragen,"** was published in 2000." The full report is at <http://www.metoperafamily.org/operanews/news/pressrelease.aspx?id=1051>.

## Wagner in the Jungle

The following report on the 2005 Manaus Ring Cycle has been submitted by Jan Bowen.

The proverbial pinch test failed miserably. No matter how much self-inflicted pain I administered to my bare arm, I couldn't believe that here I was, on the balcony of an Italianate opera house in the middle of the Amazon jungle, spending the interval break surrounded by flickering candelabra and gleaming silver, and consuming a potentially dangerously concentration-impairing banquet.

The city of Manaus in the remote northwest of Brazil, accessible only by air or a 16,000 km river journey, last year staged the first performance of the Ring ever produced in Brazil. As a committed Wagner groupie, I just had to go.

Manaus is situated at the 'meeting of the waters' where the Rio Negro in Venezuela and the Rio Solimões in Peru join together to form the mighty Amazon. Founded in 1669 by Portuguese settlers as a defence against any Spaniards foolhardy enough to venture up the enormous rapid-infested waterway and named after the indigenous inhabitants, the Manaós, Manaus was nothing more than a tiny isolated fort for more than 200 years until the 1890s rubber boom put it on the map.

For a status-seeking rubber baron what greater symbol of luxury and culture could there be than an opera house and one more than usually enterprising entrepreneur used his incalculable wealth to build the Teatro Amazonas. Wrought iron staircases were imported from England, crystal chandeliers from France, gilded mirrors from Italy and stone from Portugal. All had

to be transported on barges up the river. The Italian Domenico de Angelis painted the exquisite ceiling panels, while the outside cupola was covered with 36 000 golden tiles, gleaming from the elevated site for miles around.

The opera house opened with a gala performance on New Years Eve, 1896, and for a few years, it attracted Europe's leading singers. Even Caruso, it is said, was booked to perform, although he never actually made it. Then the Brits smuggled the rubber seeds to Malaysia, scientists developed synthetics and the Brazilian rubber economy went bust. The building stood rotting in the tropical heat for nearly 90 years.

A decade or so ago the civic fathers recognised its tourist potential, restored it and since its reopening in 1996, have held an annual opera festival unique in the world, including over four years, one Ring opera a year, culminating in the full cycle last year.

Most of us in this Opera Australia/Renaissance Tours group wondered how a remote Brazilian town, not small - population 1.8 million - but scungy industrial, where more than half the inhabitants are illiterate, could possibly come up with something even faintly comparable with Bayreuth, Berlin or for that matter, Adelaide.

Well, it certainly gave them a run for their money and enjoyment was by no means dependent on the exotic appeal of the location. British director Aiden Lang, veteran of Glyndebourne and Covent Garden, with imaginative effect, adopted an environmental theme appropriate to the threatened jungle surrounds. In *Das Rheingold*, the Rhine daughters cavorted in large see-through boxes holding DNA molecules. *Siegfried* had stylised molecular 'trees'. In one memorable scene, Erda had to drag herself up a huge spiral ladder causing the audience to hold its breath in sympathy at the difficulty she must have had in actually singing at the same time. It all seemed a bit unnecessarily taxing until someone pointed out to the less scientifically literate members of the group that the double helix is the basic building block of DNA. The interference with nature theme was a little less successfully dealt with in *Gotterdammerung* which opened with Gunther bending over an unconscious Guttrune on an operating table. There were some suggestions in the press that he was performing a lobotomy but since he was consistently focused on the other end of her body some kind of reproductive procedure seemed more likely. The hospital setting fitted rather better with the memory drugs given to Siegfried but it must be said that the full meaning of the metaphor eluded most of us.

By and large though it was a thought provoking production that worked well. Few could disagree with the basic premise that unless our leaders, represented by Wotan and his gods, act more decisively to save the world's natural resources such as rainforests, the crumbling of Valhalla will be as nothing compared with the environmental apocalypse that will occur.



And I must say that the super trad Ring I saw in Seattle a few months later cured me forever of wanting to see another literal production. Sylvan glades and fire-breathing dragons are fine, probably essential, to establish a benchmark and I was lucky in that my 'first Ring' was the now discarded Met production. But the reason the Ring not only survives but is also growing in popularity is its never-ending relevance to us and our life as it unfolds through the ages. Interpretative approaches may not always come off but for me at least there is an intellectual dimension that keeps me coming back for more.

In vocal terms, the Manaus Ring may not have had a Placido Domingo or a Waltraud Meier – but how many places do and American Maria Russo's experienced and passionately realised Brünnhilde was eminently suited to the 700-seat auditorium. Canadian, Alan Woodrow [who will sing Tristan in Perth later this year], drew on his ringing tenor and experience as the reigning Siegfried in many major opera houses, including Seattle, to convey the ambiguities of that character to great effect. Brazilian Licio Bruno's Wotan was a bit short on gravitas for a head god, but was vocally superb with a warm and powerful bass baritone. Stephen Bronk was a sensation as Fasolt, Hunding and Hagen. Then there was Thomas Rolf Truhitte as Siegmund - tall, handsome, ardent with a magnificent tenor voice - we Aussies invited him to our shores on the spot; Opera Australia are you listening, he's very keen to come here.

The Amazon Philharmonic Orchestra consisted of mostly young eastern European players, lured there by better pay and conditions than they could get at home, and nurtured over the last four years by artistic director Luiz Fernando Malheiro. What the 70-strong band lacked in number they made up for by playing their collective heart out. Although the 40 degree-plus heat and 98 per cent humidity must have led to severe culture shock – for the cellist from St Petersburg in particular.

The tickets, by the way, cost \$25 a performance!

Of course being the Ring our artistic pilgrimage was interspersed with sightseeing on the days off. We went gliding up Amazon tributaries in a canoe, mesmerised by monkeys swinging from tree to tree, indigenous kids who invited us to 'pat' a boa constrictor, and a caiman sunning itself precariously on a giant lily pad. We took a trip into the jungle to see exotic flora and fauna, including to our delight, a sloth, high in a tree and living up to its name with its exaggeratedly slow gyrations. Hiring a small plane we looked down on fingers of jungle protruding resolutely into the huge expanse of water, and marvelled at the meeting of the two rivers which flow side by side, the Negro black and the Solimões yellow, neither conceding blending rights to the other for miles.

It took Wagner 26 years to write the Ring. Perhaps even more than usual we were grateful that he lived long enough to finish it.

Jan Bowen No 743 January 2006

## ***Tristan & Yseult*** – Sydney Festival 2006

I hope that you all made it to this introductory warm up to Wagner's version in Perth in November 2006, by the Kneehigh Theatre Company B at the Seymour Centre, 11 January. According to the Sydney Festival program, "Charged with naughtiness, wit and tender observation, this energetic and anarchic production brings Cornwall's oldest love story crashing into the 21st century.

The production had already received a very positive response in London at the Cottesloe in the National Theatre. In his review of 18 April 2005, Paul Taylor wrote: "Imagine that an emotionally wrenching Greek tragedy had somehow got rudely entangled with one of those irreverent satyr plays that used to round off and put in a wider perspective those tragic trilogies in Athens... This will give you some idea of the strange, mind-bending and heart-twisting atmosphere generated by Tristan & Yseult - a wonderful retelling of the famous, not to say infamous, love story.... The result is one of the best evenings in theatre you could hope to find."

"...the show wrests the myth back from the near-monopolistic might of Wagner and shows it to us from other competing perspectives. History, they say, is written by the victors. But here it's the defeated who get to tell the story - in which, of course, there is agony and ecstasy for our title pair, and just agony for everyone else who enjoyed the dubious privilege of being in the line of fire.

"Because of the surrounding irreverence (the absurd flying round on pulleyed ropes, the ship sail as theatre curtain, etc), the pain of their love communicates itself keenly to us. Terrific, for those who long for theatre which takes the mind and heart into an altered state." I can only agree enthusiastically.

I found that a number of things about Wagner's opera making more sense as this version, that seems to stick more closely to the original sources than Wagner's, unfurled across the stage. The terror of the invasion of Cornwall by Morholt that leads to his death at Tristan's hand was brought chillingly to life, while also serving as a satire on the USA's invasions of Arabic countries. During the invasion, flyers rained down on the audience saying: "People of Kernow Don't be Alarmed We come as friends and LIBERATORS Stay off the streets. REMEMBER ANY resistance is FATAL".

However, in addition to the joys of the production, Kneehigh's approach to developing and presenting the work rang bells – Wagnerian bells. Here's how the company described its developmental process in the program: "Kneehigh started as a company making works for children and their families, but we soon found ourselves creating challenging, accessible and anarchic theatre for a diverse local and national audience. We are based in a collection of barns on the south Cornish coast.



"...Kneehigh builds a team for each project. The isolation of the barns, and the need to cook and keep warm provides a real and natural focus for our flights of imagination. This is not a conceit; it is a radical choice that informs all aspects of our work.

"Kneehigh is an ever-changing ensemble, a kind of strange family, many of whom come from, or have chosen to live in, Cornwall.

"The company changes for each project – there are those who have worked together for a long time and those who have just arrived. We look to surprise each other, to take leaps in the dark but there is no given formula for making the work. If we were to have a manifesto it might include words like generosity, passion, bravery, humility, ambition, instinct and irreverence."

It was a small shock of recognition to recollect that Wagner had posited such a communal approach to making art in *Oper und Drama* in 1850-51. He rhetorically sets the scene: "Who, then, will be the Artist of the Future? Without a doubt, the Poet. (38) [196] But who will be the Poet? Indisputably the Performer (39) (Darsteller). Yet who, again, will be the Performer? Necessarily the Fellowship of all the Artists.-" and then describes a process very similar to Kneehigh's.

"The first and truest fount of Art reveals itself in the impulse that urges from Life into the work of art; for it is the impulse to bring the unconscious, instinctive principle of Life to understanding (verständniss) and acknowledgment as Necessity. (40) But the impulse toward agreement (verständigung) presupposes commonality...

**Therefore, only from a life in common, can proceed the impulse toward intelligible objectification of this life by Art-work; the Community of artists alone can give it vent; and only in communion, can they content it [give it content - tw].**

The free Artistic Fellowship is therefore the foundation, and the first condition, of the Art-work itself. From it proceeds the Performer, who, in his enthusiasm for this one particular hero whose nature harmonises with his own, now raises himself to the rank of Poet, of artistic Lawgiver to the fellowship; from this height, again, to descend to complete absorption in the fellowship.

The function of this lawgiver is therefore never more than periodic, and is confined to the one particular occasion which has been prompted by his individuality and thereby raised to a common 'objective' for the art of all; wherefore his rule can by no means be extended to all occasions.... **Each separate member may lift himself to the exercise of this dictatorship, when he bears a definite message which so far answers to his individuality that in its proclamation he has power to raise it to a common purpose....**

However, Wagner, in keeping with his views about the significance of the Volk in maintaining true social values, had already identified the Volk as the source of real art as well.

"Thus, and thus only, must the future Artist-guild be constituted, so soon as ever it is banded by no other aim than that of the Art-work. Who, then, will be the Artist of [205] the Future? The poet? The performer? The musician? The plastician? [sculptor -tw] —Let us say it in one word: the Folk. That selfsame Folk to whom we owe the only genuine Art-work, still living even in our modern memory, however much distorted by our restorations; to whom alone we owe all Art itself " (pp.196-202 *The Art-Work of the Future*, 1849, translated by William Ashton Ellis, The Wagner Library, Edition 1.0). So it is, perhaps, no surprise that Kneehigh has such close roots to its Cornish community and drew its inspiration from a range of written and folkloric sources for their version of the Tristan and Isolde story.

It may only be my imagination, but it seems that Wagner's influence is still strong in artistic circles. This idealistic concept of a group of like-minded artists combining to create a work that combines all the artistic genres – the famous Gesamtkunstwerk – is still evident in the concept of the workshop that so many writers participate in these days. Wagner also influenced how actors engage each other's characters in a performance, how they relate to the audience and how they move, group and gesture to create their characters. He also had strong ideas about scenic design, mostly fairly conservative and representational, but, through Adolphe Appia's response to Wagner's ideas and music dramas, Wagner's dramatic theories led to the New Bayreuth staging style using minimal settings and subtle lighting that is still evident in many contemporary performances. Anyone who saw the 2005 production of *Othello* at the Sydney Theatre or the Russian all-male production of *Twelfth Night* at this year's Sydney Festival will have seen evidence of the continuing influence of this Wagnerian theatrical tradition.

It is, indeed, something of a delicious irony that his theory of communal artistic endeavour has, over a century, generated a performance tradition by which a group of like-minded artists come together in Cornwall to work on the story of Tristan and Isolde/Yseult, with major indebtedness to the version Wagner completed in 1859. Wagner's version has almost single-handedly constructed the concept of love by which we are today still conditioned through innumerable love stories, "romantic" films, pop songs about "lurve", jingles that rely on lover, attractiveness an sex etc every day of our lives. Kneehigh has de/re-constructed the whole lot with delirious joy in their communal creation.

If you would like to learn more about the company, you can visit their website: <http://www.kneehigh.co.uk/index.htm>. Or, if you missed them on this visit, you could catch them at the [Spoleto Festival, South Carolina, USA](#), from 25 May - 11 June 2006. Their other productions are: *The Bacchae*, *The Wooden Frock*, *The Red Shoes*, *Pandora's Box*, *Cry Wolf*, *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*, *Wagstaffe the Wind-up Boy*, *Nights at the Circus*, *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, and *Cymbeline*.

[Terence Watson March 2006 emphasis added to the Wagner quotes.]



# 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 2013 – the bicentenary of Wagner's birth!

## February 2006

Budapest	<i>Tannhäuser</i> - February 9, 15, 19, 23.
Cardiff	<i>Holländer</i> - February 17, 22, 25.
Copenhagen	<i>Siegfried</i> - February 1, 6, 26. <i>Götterdämmerung</i> - February 19, 22.
Dortmund	<i>Die Walküre</i> - February 4.
Dresden	<i>Parsifal</i> - February 16, 19.
Innsbruck	<i>Die Meistersinger</i> - February 11.
Hanover	<i>Holländer</i> - February 26 [no other dates].
Munich	<i>Holländer</i> - February 26
Paris	Chatelet <i>Siegfried</i> - February 5, 8. <i>Götterdämmerung</i> - February 2, 12, 15.
Riga	<i>Holländer</i> - February 18.
Stockholm	<i>Die Walküre</i> - February 25, 28.
Toronto	<i>Götterdämmerung</i> - February 2, 4, 7, 10, 12.
Vienna	Staatsoper <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - February 11, 15, 18.

## March 2006

Berlin	Deutsche Oper <i>Tannhäuser</i> - March 30.
Birmingham	WNO <i>Holländer</i> - March 14, 17.
Bristol	WNO <i>Holländer</i> - March 24.
Cardiff	<i>Holländer</i> - March 1, 3.
Chemnitz	<i>Holländer</i> - March 17. <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - March 26.
Copenhagen	<i>Götterdämmerung</i> - March 4, 28.
London	WNO at the Coliseum <i>Holländer</i> - March 7, 9.
Mexico City Centre	Festival of Mexico in the Historical <i>Götterdämmerung</i> - March 16, 19, 21, 23.
Milton Keynes	WNO <i>Holländer</i> - March 30.
Munich	<i>The Ring</i> - March 1, 7, 14, 22; 4, 10, 18, 26. <i>Holländer</i> - March 2, 5, 8, 12, 16.
Paris	Chatelet <i>The Ring</i> - March 30, April 1, 3, 6.
Phoenix	Arizona Opera - Symphony Hall <i>Holländer</i> - March 23, 24, 25, 26.

Stockholm	<i>Die Walküre</i> - March 4, 11, 17. <i>Das Rheingold</i> - March 9, 14.
Tucson	Arizona Opera - TCC Music Hall <i>Holländer</i> - March 31.
Vienna	Staatsoper <i>Lohengrin</i> - March 5, 9, 13, 17.
Washington DC	<i>Das Rheingold</i> - March 25, 30.
Wellington	<i>Parsifal</i> - New Zealand International Arts Festival in partnership with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra –Friday, 17 and Sunday, 19 March

## April 2006

Berlin	Staatsoper <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - April 8, 12, 16. <i>Parsifal</i> - April 9, 14. Deutsche Oper <i>Tannhäuser</i> - April 2. <i>Parsifal</i> - April 14, 17.
Budapest	<i>Parsifal</i> - April 14, 17.
Chemnitz	<i>The Ring</i> - April 13, 14, 16, 17.
Copenhagen	<i>Die Walküre</i> - April 7. <i>Götterdämmerung</i> - April 5, 11. <i>The Ring</i> - April 25, 26, 28, 30.
Dresden	<i>Lohengrin</i> - April 24, 27, 30. <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - April 14, 17.
Erfurt	<i>Parsifal</i> - April 29.
Essen	<i>Holländer</i> - April 9, [no other dates].
Frankfurt	<i>Parsifal</i> - April 23, 27, 30.
Gothenburg	<i>Die Walküre</i> - April 29.
Liverpool	WNO <i>Holländer</i> - April 4.
London	The Royal Opera <i>Götterdämmerung</i> - April 17, 22, 27, 30.
Milton Keynes	WNO <i>Holländer</i> - April 1.
Munich	<i>Parsifal</i> - April 9, 13, 16.
New York	The Met <i>Lohengrin</i> - April 17, 20, 24, 29.
Paris	Chatelet <i>The Ring</i> - March 30, April 1, 3, 6, ; April 8, 10, 12, 15. <i>Holländer</i> - April 2.
Riga	
Swansea	WNO <i>Holländer</i> - April 15.
Tucson	Arizona Opera - TCC Music Hall <i>Holländer</i> - April 1, 2.
Vienna	Staatsoper <i>Holländer</i> - April 3, 7, 11. <i>Parsifal</i> - April 13, 15, 19. <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - April 17, 21, 25.
Washington DC	<i>Das Rheingold</i> - April 2, 5, 8, 10, 14.
Zurich	<i>Parsifal</i> - April 13, 15, 17, 23.

## May 2006

Budapest	<i>Die Meistersinger</i> - May 20, 24, 27, 31.
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Copenhagen **The Ring** - May 2, 3, 5, 7; 16, 17, 19, 21; 23, 24, 26, 28.  
 Dresden **Tannhäuser** - May 21, 25.  
 Erfurt **Parsifal** - May 5, 19.  
 Frankfurt **Parsifal** - May 14, 20, 25, 28, 31.  
 Gothenburg **Die Walküre** - May 6.  
 Helsinki **Parsifal** - May 20, 23, 27, 30.  
 London The Royal Opera **Götterdämmerung** - May 3, 6.  
 New York The Met **Lohengrin** - May 3, 6.  
**Parsifal** - May 12, 15, 18.

### June 2006

Barcelona **Lohengrin** - June 30.  
 Budapest **Die Meistersinger** - June 3, 11.  
 Chemnitz **Tristan und Isolde** - June 4.  
**Lohengrin** - June 24.  
 Dresden **The Ring** - June 5, 11, 17, 21.  
 Erfurt **Parsifal** - June 4, 10, 18.  
 Frankfurt **Parsifal** - June 15.  
 Ghent **Das Rheingold** - June 13, 16, 18, 21, 24, 27, 30.  
 Tokyo The Met at NHK Hall **Die Walküre** - June 15, 18, 21.  
 Vienna Volksoper **Die Meistersinger** - June 23, 27, 30.

### July 2006

Aix-en-Provence **Das Rheingold** - July 2, 4, 6, 8.  
 New Sir Simon Rattle Ring  
 Barcelona **Lohengrin** - July 21, 24, 27, 30.  
 Bayreuth **Holländer** - July 25, August 4, 7, 18, 20, 24.  
**The Ring** - July 26, 27, 29, 31, August 11, 12, 14, 16; 22, 23, 25, 27.  
**Tristan und Isolde** - August 1, 5, 9, 17, 21, 28.  
**Parsifal** - August 2, 6, 10, 19.  
 Chemnitz **Lohengrin** - July 1, 8.  
 Ghent **Das Rheingold** - July 4, 7, 9.  
 Munich **Tristan und Isolde** - July 8.  
**Holländer** - July 16.  
**Tannhäuser** - July 27.  
**Parsifal** - July 29.  
**Die Meistersinger** - July 31.

### Season 2006-7

Strasbourg **Das Rheingold** - New Ring Cycle begins [no actual dates].

### September 2006

Saarbrücken **Das Rheingold** - September 23, 26.  
 Toronto **The Ring** - September 12, 13, 15, 17; 29, 20, 22, 24; 26, 27, 29, Oct 1,

### October 2006

Costa Mesa Orange County Performing Arts Center **The Ring** - October 6, 7, 9, 11, (Mariinsky Opera Company) Saarbrücken **Das Rheingold** - October 1, 3, 6, 15, 19, 21, 25.  
 San Francisco **Tristan und Isolde** - October [no actual dates].  
 Toronto **The Ring** - September 26, 27, 29, October 1.

### November 2006

Perth **Tristan und Isolde** - November 4, 8, 11.  
 Saarbrücken **Das Rheingold** - November 1, 9, 17, 24.

### December 2006

Karlsruhe **Götterdämmerung** - December [no actual dates].  
 Saarbrücken **Das Rheingold** - December 10.

### January 2007

Hamburg **Tannhäuser** - January 21, 28.

### February 2007

Amsterdam **Tannhäuser** - February 2, 5, 8, 11, 16, 19, 22, 25.  
 Hamburg **Tannhäuser** - February 4.

### March 2007

Washington **Die Walküre** - Mar 24, 28

### April 2007

Hamburg **Tannhäuser** - April 28.  
 Salzburg Easter Festival **The Ring** - first of the Ring operas with a full cycle in 2010.]  
 Turin **Tristan und Isolde** - April 11, 15, 18, 22, 26.  
 Washington **Die Walküre** - Apr 1m, 5, 9, 14

### May 2007

Hamburg **Tannhäuser** - May 1, 6.

### June 2007

Aix-en-Provence **Die Walküre** - June 29.  
 Hamburg **Tannhäuser** - June 3, 17, 24.

### July 2007

Aix-en-Provence **Die Walküre** - July 2, 5, 8.  
 Munich **Die Meistersinger** - July 31.  
 New York The Mariinsky Theatre at The Met **The Ring** - July 13, 14, 20, 21; 16, 17, 18, 19.  
 Santiago **Tristan und Isolde** - July 21, 24, 27, 30.



## **ADDRESS**

Please note our permanent address for all correspondence

The Wagner Society in New South Wales Inc

GPO Box 4574 SYDNEY NSW 2001

Telephone: 9357 7631 (Roger Cruickshank, President)

Website: <http://www.wagner-nsw.org.au>

Website enquiries: [webmaster@wagner-nsw.org.au](mailto:webmaster@wagner-nsw.org.au)

(most website addresses used in this Newsletter will be on the Wagner Society's website in the relevant article)

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