



WAGNER  
SOCIETY  
nsw

CELEBRATING THE MUSIC OF RICHARD WAGNER

# WAGNER QUARTERLY

ISSUE NO 30

# 157

JUNE 2020



6848. P. Z. - VENEZIA PALAZZO VENDRAMIN - CALERGI.

Ca' Vendramin Calergi, Venice in 1870. **Photograph by Carlo Naya** inscribed to Marie-Caroline de Bourbon-Sicile, duchess de Berry (1798-1870), its former owner. Wagner died here on 13 February 1883

## SOCIETY'S OBJECTIVES

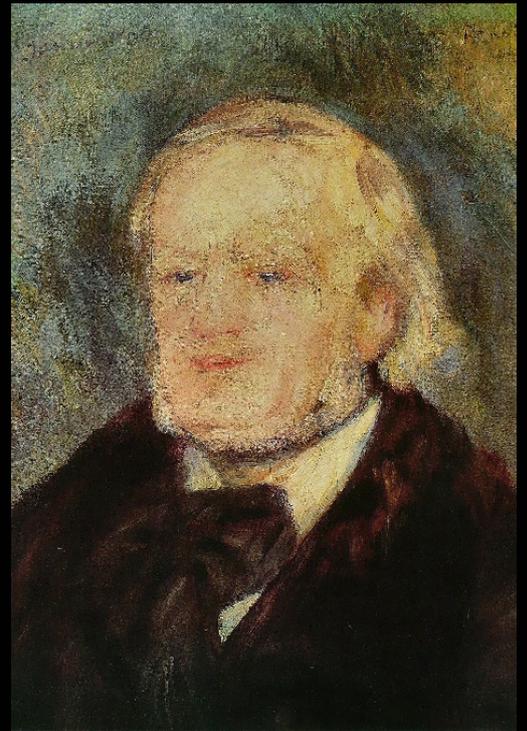
To promote the music of Richard Wagner and his contemporaries and to encourage a wider understanding of their work.  
To support the training of young Wagnerian or potential Wagnerian performers from NSW.

# WAGNER IN ITALY

REFER TO PETER BASSETT'S ARTICLE ON PAGES 5-10



Teatro di San Carlo, Naples



Wagner by Pierre Auguste Renoir



Palatine Chapel, Palermo

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

2020 has been a difficult year so far, with some unexpected and unfortunate interruptions to our program.

We had planned a number of events but were frustrated by Covid-19 regulations preventing the Society from holding meetings. We have missed out on a talk by Tabatha McFadyen and on presentations by Antony Ernst and Peter Bassett, two highly regarded experts on Wagner. We were unable to have our AGM on 10 May accompanied by our celebration of Wagner's birthday (though at 6 pm on that day a number of members joined together on Zoom to drink a toast to him).

We will now look forward to an important celebration of the achievements of the Society. In September we will commemorate 40 years since the first pioneers met in Bayreuth and decided to form a Wagner Society in Sydney. We will mark this significant event with a special meeting on September 27, at which cake and champagne will be served.

Thanks to the sterling efforts of Lis Bergmann, with input from Leona Geeves and Marie Leech, the Wagner Society in NSW now posts material on YouTube. It includes lists of artists supported by the Society, videos taken by individual members and information on recordings and performances of particular interest to anyone interested in Wagner's compositions. This site also features performances of Wagner operas, currently Tannhauser and The Flying Dutchman.

I would like to take this opportunity of signalling that at the next AGM (the date of which is still unknown) I will be stepping down as President. It has been a privilege to hold this position and I have greatly enjoyed working with Committee members to do as much as I could to promote the interests of the Society.

**President Colleen Chesterman**

### NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Dear members, I trust you are all safe and well in these uncertain times. Many thanks to Peter Bassett for his piece *Wagner in Italy*. Peter should have talked to us on 10 May but we had to cancel because of Covid 19 and he generously offered to write this piece for us. Thanks also to Minnie Biggs for her contributions and a special thanks to our sponsored singer Brad Cooper for his first instalment of a report on how he came to Wagner.

Many of you will have been watching the wonderful online transmissions from the Met, Covent Garden and other great opera houses, as recommended in our emails to you. I'd love you to send in a few lines about any of your favourite performances to share with other members in the next Quarterly.

**Mike Day**  
[michaeldayarchitect@gmail.com](mailto:michaeldayarchitect@gmail.com)

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Due to Covid 19 restrictions the AGM scheduled for 10 May has been postponed until sometime before 31 July. It will possibly need to be a Zoom meeting. The required Quorum is 23 financial members. Members will be notified and sent documentation at least 14 days before the date.

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**Patron:** Ms Simone Young AM  
**Honorary Life Members:** Mr Richard King  
Prof Michael Ewans  
Mr Horst Hoffman  
Mr Roger Cruickshank  
Dr Terence Watson  
Dr Dennis Mather

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### QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS:

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## FUTURE WAGNER SOCIETY EVENTS

Because of the Covid 19 assembly restrictions it is not possible to confirm which planned live events will proceed over the rest of 2020. Members will be kept up to date by email. Zoom talks are possible subject to prior interest from the membership.

### 26 JULY - PENDING

#### WARWICK FYFE TALKING ABOUT HIS FIRST WOTAN

Subject to the Goethe Institut's allowable number of attendees this talk may need to be given on Zoom. Warwick has indicated his willingness to do this. **TBC**

### 23 AUGUST - PENDING

#### TABATHA MCFAYDEN TALKING ABOUT SINGING AND DIRECTING

Postponed from 19 April. Possibly a Zoom Talk and Q&A from Tabatha, who is in Berlin. **TBC**

### 27 SEPTEMBER

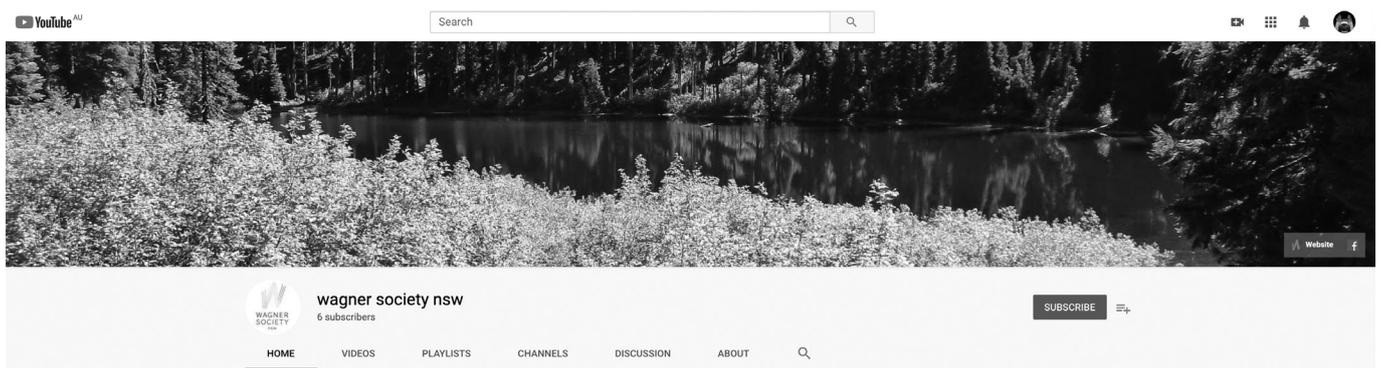
#### WAGNER SOCIETY IN NSW 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Details to be confirmed

## PRESS RELEASE FROM THE BAYREUTH FESTIVAL

In view of the effects of the Corona crisis on the operations of the Bayreuth Festival GmbH, the management and the shareholders of the Bayreuth Festival GmbH – the Federal Republic of Germany, the Free State of Bavaria, the City of Bayreuth and the Society of Friends of Bayreuth e.V. – regret that the Bayreuth Festival 2020 will have to be suspended next summer. This means that the following festival years will have to be rescheduled. In the 2021 season, in addition to the planned new production 'Der fliegende Holländer', the programme will include the revivals of 'Tannhäuser und der Sängerkrieg auf Wartburg', 'Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg', 'Lohengrin' and three concert performances of 'Die Walküre'. The new production 'Der Ring des Nibelungen' planned for this season will probably not be able to celebrate its premiere until 2022 due to rehearsal planning.

The Wagner Society in NSW has contacted members with tickets about their options.



## WAGNER SOCIETY IN NSW YOUTUBE CHANNEL

The YouTube channel 'Wagner Society NSW' can be accessed at:  
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpgwUznzAzNdUkP2JK1cDew>

**Videos** - will include all kinds of related videos including Society concerts (where available).

**Playlists** - includes YouTube videos from Guest performers/speakers; Society concerts; and Supported

artists. Playlists also include performances available on YouTube for Wagner operas.

**Channels** - provides links to relevant YouTube channels.

## WAGNER IN ITALY

by Peter Bassett

The words ‘Wagner’ and ‘Italy’ in the same sentence usually bring to mind his death in Venice in February 1883. But the most interesting connection began fifteen years earlier, in September 1868, a few months after the successful premiere of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* in Munich, conducted by Hans von Bülow. At that time, Richard Wagner and Cosima von Bülow, cohabiting at Tribschen on Lake Lucerne, embarked on a holiday together in northern Italy. They visited the Borromean Islands on Lake Maggiore, Genoa, Milan, and Bellagio on Lake Como. Cosima had been born at Bellagio on 24 December 1837 to the Hungarian virtuoso Franz Liszt and the French Countess Marie d’Agoult. By birth at least, Cosima was Italian, although Lombardy had been part of the Austrian Empire at the time. Liszt chose her name, Cosima, evocative of Como, to mark his and Marie d’Agoult’s blissful time there when they read Dante’s *Divina Commedia*. He composed a *Fragment after Dante*, anticipating his *Dante Symphony* published in 1859 and dedicated to Wagner.

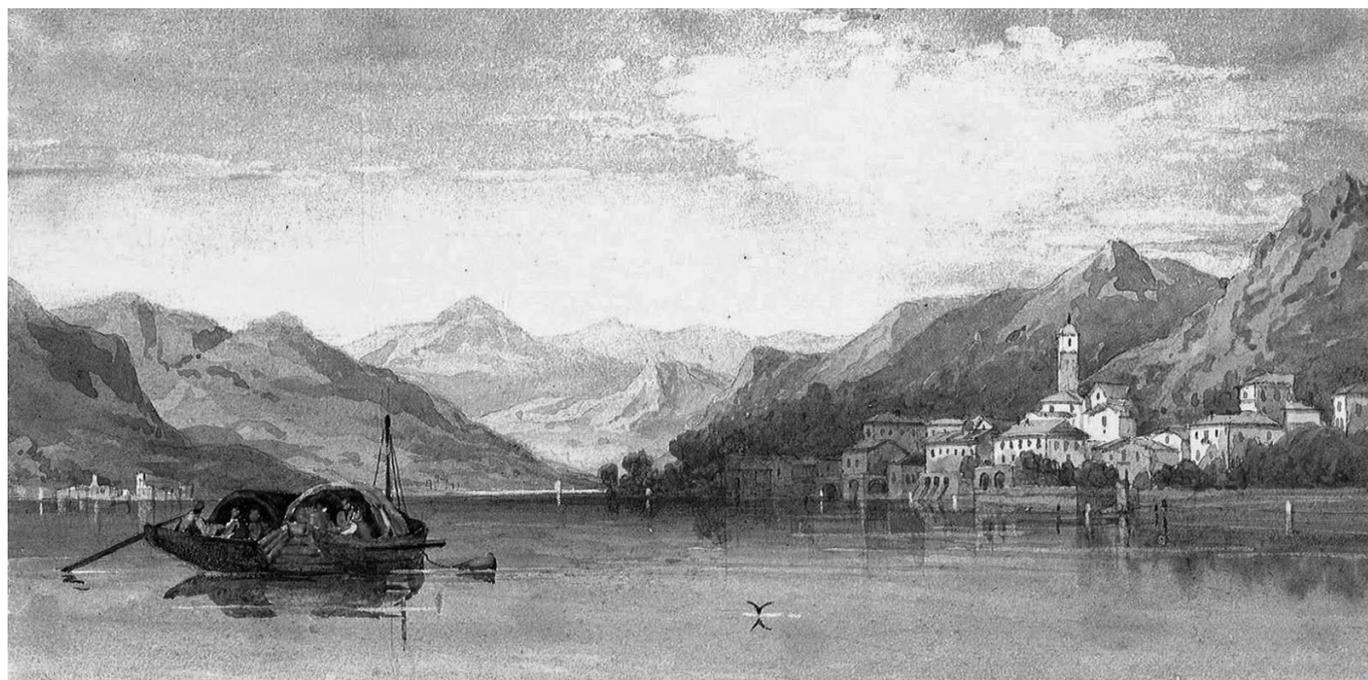
Back at Tribschen in November 1868, Cosima wrote to her husband Hans in Munich, confirming that their marriage was over and that, henceforth, she would be devoting her life to Richard Wagner. By then she had given birth to two children by Wagner - Isolde in 1865 and Eva in 1867 – although Hans had publicly claimed both girls as his own, as the law presumed. A third child, Siegfried, would be born to Cosima and Richard nine months after their Italian holiday, and there was no way that Wagner’s paternity could be hidden any longer.

Ludwig II of Bavaria felt betrayed. The two lovers, and even Hans himself, had categorically denied that the relationship was anything more than platonic, and the King had publicly

endorsed their denials. Munich had been buzzing with gossip for a year or so, but the King believed what he wanted to believe. Now his relationship with Wagner went into a dive from which it would not recover for six years. The Abbé Liszt (he had taken minor orders in the Catholic Church in 1865) also felt wounded, which was a bit rich given his own amorous history, including the fathering of three children with the already married Marie d’Agoult! He chastised his daughter in a long letter and cut off communications with Wagner. So, with both King Ludwig and Franz Liszt now alienated, Italy assumed a special place in the thoughts of Richard and Cosima, and they spoke of moving there permanently.

Much happened between the holiday of 1868 and the next Italian visit in late 1876, by which time Richard and Cosima had been married for six years. *Der Ring des Nibelungen* was finished, a theatre was built for its performance at Bayreuth, and the first Festival had come and gone. In August 1876, Cosima wrote to Judith Gautier: “Everything vanished as if by magic, only the silhouette of our theatre in the distance reminded us of what had been, and we seemed to have awoken from a dream. My husband was too exhausted to do any work, and he was even less capable of dealing with the rather complicated business matters arising from the festival; so I had to promise him to put the house in order within a week, and on 14 September we set off on our travels with bag and baggage, that is, four children and their governess and all their paraphernalia.”

Cosima noted that her husband’s prevailing mood during the Festival had been: “Never again, never again!” Then he had oscillated between despondency and a wish to “do it differently next year”, in 1877. The superhuman endeavour



A 19<sup>th</sup> Century view of Bellagio on Lake Como, by R H Manning

had taken its toll on his physical and emotional health, but the most pressing problem was the huge deficit which killed off any prospect of a re-staging the following year. In fact, the *Ring* would not be staged again at Bayreuth in Wagner's lifetime, although it was performed elsewhere. The Festival production deficit totalled 148,000 marks, and a loan from the Bavarian Treasury also had to be repaid. The total debt amounted to 364,000 marks - in today's money about one-and-a-half million dollars.

It is often said that the interior of the Bayreuth theatre was modelled on an ancient Greek amphitheatre, but its prototypes were in fact Roman. Examples can be found in the Odeon at Pompeii, in an ancient theatre at Catania in Sicily, and in the Odeon of Agrippa which had been a Roman gift to the people of Athens in 15 BC. All were roofed theatres with seating capacity for about one thousand. So, this was another connection between Wagner and Italy – this time, ancient Rome.

The 1876 Italian holiday, which lasted from 15 September to 17 December, began in Verona where Wagner admired the superbly preserved Roman amphitheatre, the site of theatrical performances in Renaissance times and operas in the 1850s. Then came visits to Venice, Bologna, Sorrento, Naples, Rome, and Florence. The cost of this extravagant holiday was met from a fee of \$5,000 from Philadelphia for the composition of a Grand Festival March to mark the centenary of American Independence.



Arena di Verona

In Venice they toured the Doge's Palace, which Cosima described as "a veritable feast of opulence and beauty", museums and churches, and attended a few theatrical performances. They admired Titian's *Assumption of the Virgin*, likened by Cosima to "first hearing a Beethoven symphony". It was this painting that had impressed Richard in 1858 when he had come alone to Venice from Zurich after the Minna/Mathilde confrontation, to work on Act Two of *Tristan und Isolde*. On that occasion, Titian's *Assumption* had reawakened thoughts of *Die Meistersinger* and, in particular, 'Eva im Paradies'. Richard was frequently unwell during this visit to Venice, his condition aggravated by letters from Bayreuth about the Festival deficit.

The journey continued with a visit to Naples and then a voyage by ship to Sorrento which appealed to the family as a peaceful refuge. They sailed out to Capri and back, but Richard still felt unwell, and he expressed serious doubts about the wisdom of restaging the *Ring* at all. He noted bitterly that not one of the princes who had attended the Festival had asked him what could be done for him or how he might be helped or supported. He began drafting a long letter to the King Ludwig proposing that the Bavarian Court Opera should take over full responsibility for the Festival Theatre and any future productions. These grim thoughts were relieved only by a visit to Pompeii with the children. Cosima tried to persuade him to forget his *Nibelungen* troubles and start on a new work. He considered composing a 'Symphony of Mourning' for those who had fallen in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71, incorporating a melancholy theme originally composed in 1868 for a work on 'Romeo and Juliet' that did not eventuate. The Mourning Symphony did not eventuate either, but the theme found its way into the third act of *Parsifal* when the knights, in utter despair, carry Titurel's coffin into the Hall of the Grail, proclaiming: 'Geleiten wir im bergenden Schrein'. This seemed to sum up Richard Wagner's state of mind immediately following the 1876 Festival.

Friedrich Nietzsche arrived in Sorrento in late October, and he, Wagner and Cosima met on several occasions. Nietzsche appeared drained and was preoccupied with his own health. He took little interest in Wagner's ideas for *Parsifal*. This would be their last meeting. German newspapers continued to arrive, carrying ever more ludicrous commentaries on the Bayreuth Festival, one of which even attributed Wagner's achievements to Mormonism! Cosima wisely advised him to respond with silence.

On 7 November they travelled to Naples and visited the hilltop Castel Sant'Elmo, built in the time of Charles of Anjou, the ruthless French nobleman who, in 1268, executed the sixteen-year-old Prince Konrad of Hohenstaufen, better known as Konradin, in the marketplace in Naples. That execution of an innocent young man ended the wars between the Hohenstaufen Emperors and the Popes. So sympathetic was Wagner to the plight of Konradin that initially, he called the young Franconian knight in *Die Meistersinger* Konrad von Stolzing, and only later changed his name to Walther.

The Wagners arrived in Rome on 9 November and threw themselves into more sightseeing, but their experiences were not always uplifting. Cosima described St Peter's Basilica as "expressive of everything that is not music." Richard called it "A Caesar's Palace gone wrong." They visited the Forum, the Villa Borghese, the Capitoline Hill, and lots of other palaces and museums. After surveying the Sistine Chapel, Wagner declared: "This is like my theatre; one feels it is no place for jokes", and all the while he continued to receive unwelcome news from Bayreuth about the Festival deficit. There would be no peace.

The German Embassy in Rome was housed in a Renaissance palace, the Palazzo Vidoni-Caffarelli designed by a pupil of Raphael. Wagner and Cosima went there on several occasions at the invitation of the Ambassador, Robert von Keudell, an East-Prussian, born in Königsberg. Keudell was an

accomplished pianist who, as a young man, had known Fanny Mendelssohn and had helped her to publish her compositions under her own name, something that her brother Felix had been reluctant to encourage. Keudell was a close friend of the Imperial Chancellor Otto von Bismarck who admired his pianistic skills. Wagner was aware of the connection between Keudell and Bismarck and hoped to benefit from it. He waited anxiously for a letter from the Foreign Ministry in Berlin in response to his request that the Imperial Government take over the Festival and its debt. After all, Kaiser Wilhelm I had attended the first *Ring* at Bayreuth, or to be precise, the first performances of *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*, which was an encouraging sign. The Kaiser had even described the Festival as being of national significance. Now, having lost the support of King Ludwig of Bavaria,

Wagner turned to the Imperial Government in Berlin. This must have stuck in his craw, for Prussian troops had helped crush the Dresden uprising of 1849, forcing Wagner into exile. When word reached Wagner on 21 November that a letter from Berlin had finally arrived, he was in such a rush to get to the Post Office that he collided with the door of his carriage and broke it! But the reply from the Imperial Government was bad news. They would not take over the running of the Festival, and nothing could be done to help with the debt. Gloom and more gloom.

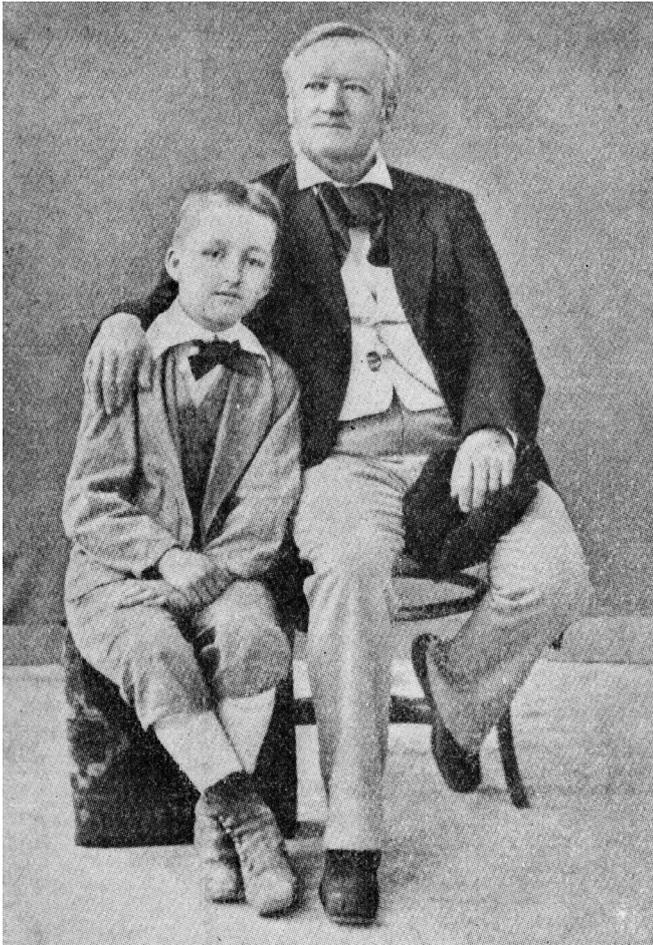


A cartoon of Robert von Keudell, German Ambassador at Rome with a 'hot line' to Bismarck. Wagner sought Keudell's help in 1876 in trying to persuade the Imperial German Government to take control of the Bayreuth Festival.

Wagner and Cosima then travelled to Florence, briefly, and on to Bologna. At the Teatro Comunale di Bologna, they attended a performance of Wagner's *Rienzi*, which Cosima declared to be much better than one they had seen in Vienna. The City of Bologna had made Wagner an Honorary Citizen in 1872, and now the Mayor hosted an official reception in his honour. It was in Bologna that the very first performance of a Wagnerian opera in Italy had taken place – *Lohengrin* in 1871. Giuseppe Verdi was in the audience on that occasion, and the conductor was Verdi's friend Angelo Mariani, with whom the Italian master would have a particularly tragic falling out soon afterwards. Wagner corresponded with Mariani from Tribschen, complimenting him on his effort and begging him to pay special attention to the chorus because it had such an important role to play, and especially to tempi. The performance (which ended at 3.00 am) was generally well received. Verdi admired some things but was critical of others. A year later, Mariani would conduct *Tannhäuser* also in Bologna. From Verdi's perspective, coloured by the insinuations of his publisher Ricordi, Mariani seemed to be drifting into the Wagnerian orbit, as many young Italians were doing. Arrigo Boito had translated some of Wagner's texts, including that used for *Lohengrin* in Bologna in 1871. Wagner wrote to him expressing the hope that "the glories of Italian and German genius could one day be brought into productive union". What Verdi interpreted as a threat Wagner saw as an opportunity for mutual inspiration. His genuine love of Italian music went back to his youth when, in his essay *Bellini* of 1837, he declared: "Song, song, and yet again song, you Germans!" The model for *Tristan und Isolde*, he told Cosima in 1878, had been Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, which he had conducted many times: "Nothing but duets", and it drew on Bellini's practice of melodic sequence. The family returned to Florence, and in her diary entry for Saturday 9 December, Cosima wrote: "We undertake nothing in the afternoon since R. is feeling unwell. In the evening, a sad conversation about our situation in Bayreuth. R. resolves to ask the King [Ludwig II] to take over the whole thing – he R., wishes to have nothing more to do with it." Soon afterwards, they left for Germany.

The longest Wagnerian sojourn in Italy, in 1880, lasted ten months between 3 January and 30 October, and included visits to Naples, Ravello, Rome, Florence, Lucca, Perugia, Pistoia, Sienna and Venice. It was during this time that he worked on the orchestration of *Parsifal*; he could complete about two pages of the score per day when uninterrupted.

In Naples, the family stayed at the Villa Doria d'Angri as guests of its English owners. Wagner attended a performance of *La Juive* by Halévy at the magnificent Teatro di San Carlo which he described as "a genuine opera house". He expressed "pleasure in the many beauties of the work, pleasure in the orchestra ... but dismay over the singing and acting." The artist Paul von Joukowsky and his 'adoptive son' Pepino, a Neapolitan folk singer, joined Wagner and Cosima in Naples in January 1880. They became part of the Wagner family circle, and Joukowsky was invited to design some of the sets for *Parsifal*. Pepino entertained the family with his singing, which included some of Wagner's early songs and snatches from operas.



Richard Wagner and his son Siegfried in Naples, June 1880

While he was in Naples, Wagner spoke about his wish to move to America, specifically to Minnesota where many Germans had settled. Cosima recorded that, to achieve this goal, he would need a subscription of one million dollars, which he would use to build a drama school and a house. He would dedicate *Parsifal* to the Americans and stage it there, “for he could no longer tolerate the situation in Germany”. His plan was to stay in Italy for a year, then return to Bayreuth for a year to see if there have been any developments, and, if not, to move to America in his seventieth year. He declared himself “sick of the *Nibelungen*”. In connection with these plans, the American Consul in Naples paid him a visit. In April, he told Cosima that he would stage *Parsifal*, after which the theatre should “go up in flames” and he would then emigrate to America and settle down there with his family.

At Ravello, Wagner visited the Villa Rufolo where he was impressed by the Moorish tower and the gardens, describing them as “lovely beyond description”, and he famously wrote in a guest book: “Klingsor’s magic garden has been found.” This comment is often interpreted as meaning that it was the Villa Rufolo that inspired the idea of a magic garden, but in fact, Klingsor’s garden had featured in the *Parsifal* scenario (first sketch 1857) and the complete text (1877) long before the visit to Ravello.

In Naples, Wagner met Engelbert Humperdinck, who would be invited to assist with *Parsifal* at Bayreuth and, in due course,

would become Siegfried Wagner’s composition teacher. In July, Richard Wagner’s health deteriorated further, and he began spitting up blood. There were visits to Rome, Florence, San Marcello, and Lucca. He visited Siena Cathedral with Joukowsky and was moved to tears, saying how much he wished he could hear the prelude to *Parsifal* beneath its dome. In September, he read a poem in a German publication celebrating the Battle of Sedan, a crucial battle in the Franco-Prussian War leading to the defeat of the French Army. It aroused “utter disgust”, as did a nationalistic drawing of an allegorical ‘Germania’ in a newspaper. “I have only to see a fellow in a winged helmet and I feel sick” said Wagner. “The dead horses alone are enough! And it all shows the barbaric times in which we live”. His efforts to attract the support of the Imperial German Government having failed, he now looked back with embarrassment at his *Kaisermarsch*, composed to celebrate the foundation of the Second Reich, and declared: “A very good thing that so little notice is taken of it”.

At the start of October, the family arrived in Venice and stayed at the Hotel Danieli on the Grand Canal, before moving into the Palazzo Contarini. The young pianist **Joseph** Rubinstein came to stay, and played his paraphrase on *Tristan*, the prelude to *Parsifal* and his paraphrase on the Good Friday Music, amongst other pieces. Rubinstein was a deeply troubled young man who had been born into an affluent Russian Jewish family. He had made great efforts to seek out Wagner, and became so emotionally attached to him that, within a year of the master’s death in 1883, Rubinstein shot himself in the grounds of Tribschen. This tragedy followed examples of other unstable romantics such as the playwright Heinrich von Kleist (1777-1811). A staging of Kleist’s *Die Hermannsschlacht* (Hermann’s Battle) in Berlin in 1875 had inspired some of the costume designs for the *Ring* the following year.

The next Italian holiday was between 1 November 1881 and 29 April 1882 and included Pesaro, Naples, Palermo, and Venice. Pesaro was a city closely identified with Rossini, with



Rossini statue

whom Wagner had had a long and fascinating meeting in France in 1860. Now Wagner was given a civic welcome in front of Rossini's statue. The growing interest in Wagner's music in Italy reflected a widely felt need, especially among younger musicians, for the revitalisation of opera. The familiar forms seemed tired and past their time. In his heart of hearts, Verdi seems to have recognized this too, if his last works are anything to go by.

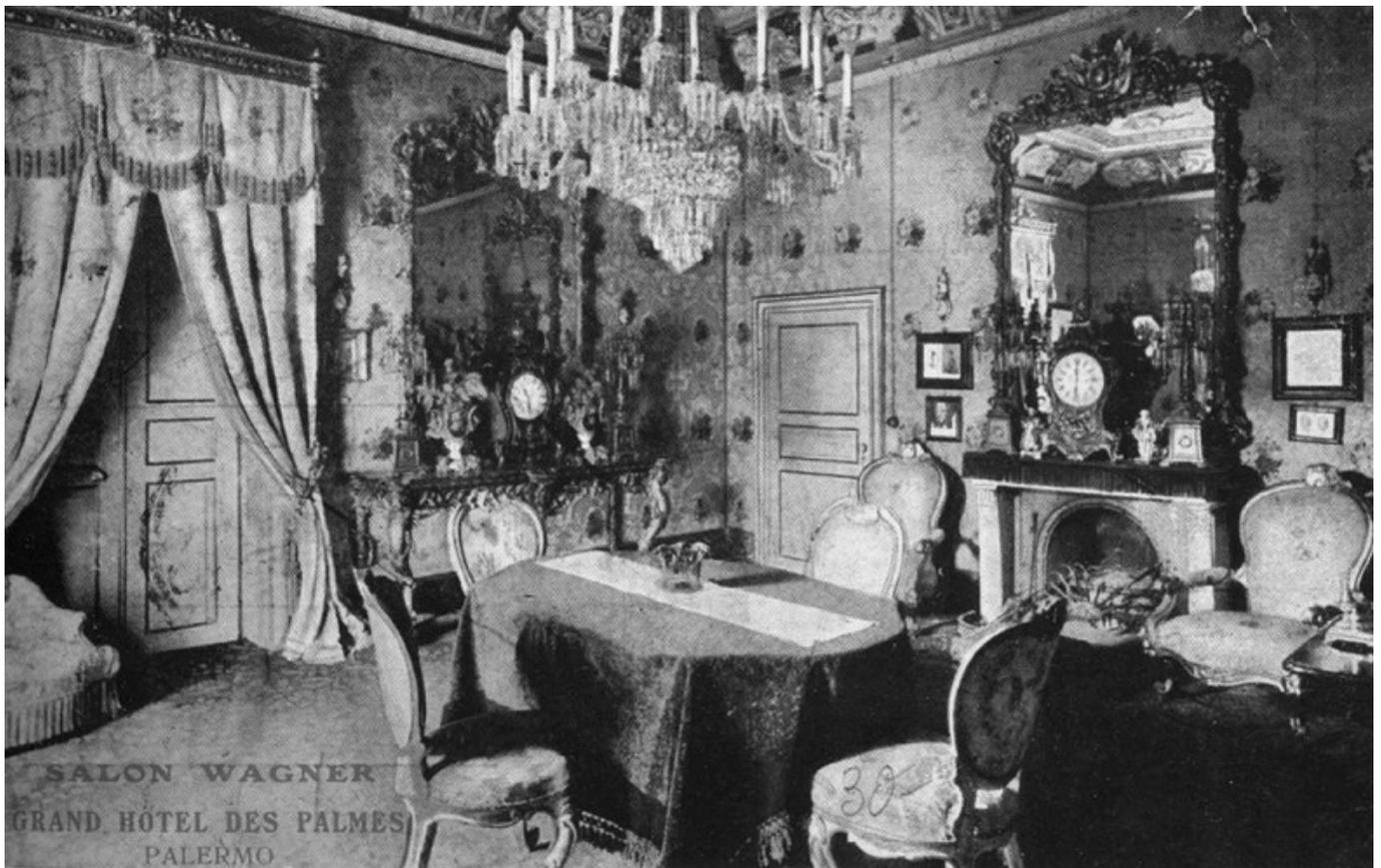
A stop in Naples was followed by a sea voyage to Sicily and a stay at the Grand Hotel des Palmes where the family took three rooms. Wagner had set *Das Liebesverbot* in Sicily, and also an unfinished work *Die Sarazenin* ('The Saracen Woman'). In conversations with Cosima he toyed with the idea of asking someone else to stage *Parsifal* for him at Bayreuth, and he thought seriously about having symphonies performed between opera performances. On 25 December he presented the final page of the *Parsifal* score to Cosima for her birthday, although he had jumped ahead to make this possible; the whole score, in fact, was not completed until 13 January 1882. After the last note had been written, he confessed that he had feared that *Parsifal's* completion would be interrupted by his death.

On 15 January, Pierre-Auguste Renoir came to the hotel to paint Wagner's portrait, a finished version of which now hangs in the Musée d'Orsay in Paris. Cosima noted: "The artist, belonging to the impressionists, who paint everything bright and in full sunlight, amuses R. with his excitement and his many grimaces as he works." The sketch was done in thirty-five minutes. Wagner commented that the portrait

made him look like "a protestant clergyman" (in Renoir's account) and "the embryo of an angel which an epicure has swallowed, mistaking it for an oyster" (in Cosima's).

On 2 February 1882, at the invitation of Sicilian Prince Gangi, the family visited the *Villa Gangi*—a beautiful house which, eighty years later, would feature in Visconti's film *The Leopard*. Later, Wagner commented that he felt that he had no home to go to anywhere, and that *Wahnfried*, his house in Bayreuth since 1874 and paid for by King Ludwig, "had been spoiled by so many things". He did not elaborate. The tour continued to Venice where he heard a theme from one of Verdi's operas being sung by a gondolier on the Grand Canal. He compared it unfavourably with the music of Rossini. The family left for Bayreuth on 29 April.

In September that year, after the magnificent Festival performances of *Parsifal*, Wagner and Cosima and the children returned to Venice and moved into the Palazzo Vendramin Calergi on the Grand Canal. Buoyed by *Parsifal's* success, Richard announced that he intended to live for another twenty-four years! In December, he decided to celebrate Cosima's birthday at the *Teatro la Fenice* by conducting a performance there of his *Symphony in C major*, which he had composed when he was just nineteen years old. This would be the last occasion on which he would conduct any of his works. The orchestra and *La Fenice* Opera House gave their services gratis as a mark of their esteem for Wagner, and rehearsals were held in strict privacy on 15, 16, 18, 19, 20 and 21 December. By 24 December, Liszt had joined the rest of the family (Cosima, Siegfried, Isolde, Eva



Pesaro The Grand Hotel des Palmes, Palermo, where Wagner completed the score of *Parsifal*

and Cosima's two daughters by Hans von Bülow, Daniela and Blandine) and they all set off at 7.30 pm in gondolas for *La Fenice*. After the performance they returned home again by gondolas, happy and contented.

On 5 January, they walked in St Mark's Square but had to return home when Richard began suffering chest spasms. At supper, according to Cosima's diary, he had told her "I love you!", which contradicts subsequent gossip that their marriage had become strained over a fanciful involvement by the sixty-nine year old Wagner with the 'Flower Maiden' Carrie Pringle – debunked by Stewart Spencer (among others) in the 2004 issue of the *Journal of the Wagner Society of London*. On 12 January, the spasms lasted for more than two hours. He died in Cosima's arms in the Palazzo Vendramin in the afternoon of 13 February. A plaque

was later erected on the Grand Canal wall of the Palazzo with a text by the Italian poet D'Annunzio. It reads: "In this palace, the spirits heard the last breath of Richard Wagner become eternal, like the tide which laps the marble stones".

Just two months after Wagner's death, the *Ring* was given its first Italian performances, in Venice, at *La Fenice* on 14, 15, 17 and 18 April 1883. It opened in Bologna on 20 April and in Rome on the 27th. Richard and Cosima Wagner's love affair with Italy was complete.



Memorial plaque



Wagner and Cosima at Palazzo Vendramin



## 22 MAY 1813 - HAPPY BIRTHDAY DEAR RICHARD

Sad that we couldn't celebrate live this year as

planned on 10 March due to Covid 19 lockdown but happy some of us were able to meet up on Zoom on 22 May 2020 to share virtual bubbles and cake.

**Richard Wagner celebrated by Zoomers;** Barbara Brady, Mike Day, Marie Leech, Minnie Biggs, Jill and Jacqui Sykes, Colleen and Michael Chesterman, Jenny Edwards, Garry Richards and Pauline Holgerson



## THE WAGNER MUSEUM IN VENICE

On 13 February 1995 the room on the mezzanine floor of the Palazzo Vendramin Calergi where Wagner lived and composed was entrusted by the Municipality to the Richard Wagner Association of Venice. Set up as a museum space, it is open to the public in perpetual memory of the musician and his love for the lagoon city.

Since 2003, the adjacent rooms have also been used as a museum, to house the Josef Lienhart collection, received as a donation: rare documents, posters, scores, autograph letters, paintings, disks, lithographs and various memorabilia. The largest private collection dedicated to the maestro, after that of Bayreuth. The museum is open to the public on Saturday mornings by appointment.

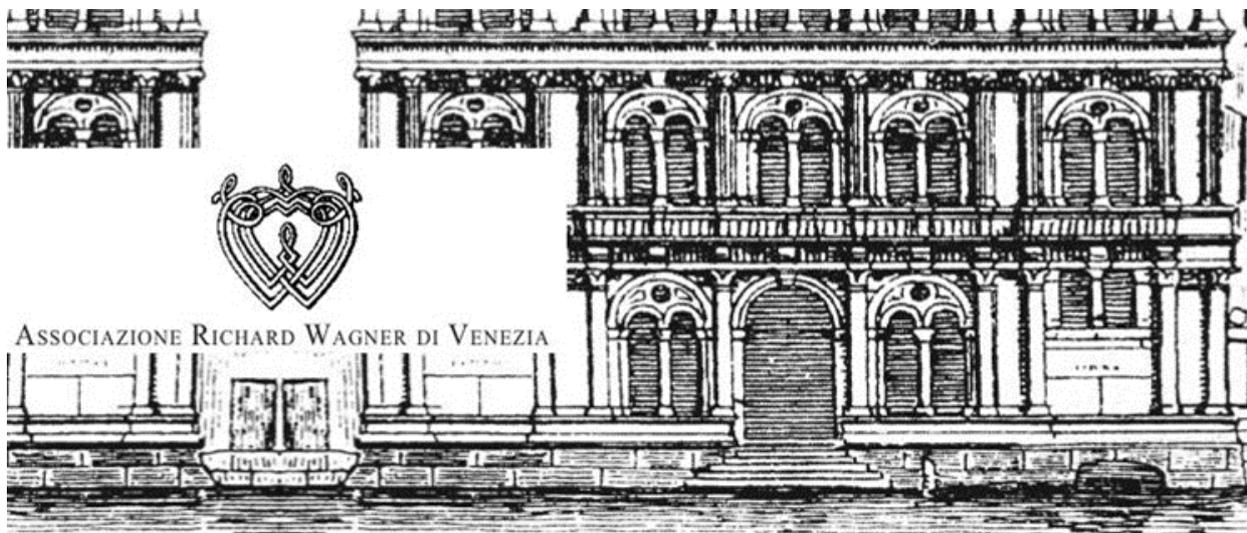
*“A secluded place, away from world interference. On the run from daily worries and sentimental storms, in search of a space out of time in which to bring to light an unnamed inspiration. Driven by an impulse to quiet, Richard Wagner identifies his oasis in Venice: “It has become totally unbearable to live in the city big species due to the noise of the carriages that makes me furious. Now it is known that Venice is the most peaceful city, it is worth to say the least noisy in the world and this makes me decide absolutely for it “, Wagner wrote in a letter to his father-in-law Franz Liszt before arriving for the first of the six Venetian stays, in August 1858. <https://www.casinovenetia.it/en/wagner-museum>*

The Associazione Richard Wagner di Venezia operates the museum and the Richard Wagner European Study and Research Center



The Wagner Museum in Palazzo Vendramin Calergi (at the rear of the Venice Casino)

(Centro Europeo di Studi e Ricerche Richard Wagner - C.E.S.R.R.W.). It also holds exhibitions, conferences, and concerts, and publishes scholarly papers that promote the life and works of Wagner.



Since 1995 the “Giornate Wagneriane “(Wagner Days) are held annually in Venice in November, and each year the event is headlined by a Symposium on topics around Richard Wagner. <https://www.richard-wagner.org/rwwi/en/events/wagner-days-venice/>

## TOSCANINI AND WAGNER

by Minnie Biggs

For those who have not read the recently updated biography of Arturo Toscanini by Harvey Sachs, there is much fascinating ephemera about Richard Wagner.

Arturo Toscanini was born in Parma, Italy (yes, the cheese and the ham!) on March 25, 1867. He died at home in Riverdale, New York on January 16, 1957, just short of his 90th birthday. Musical from his earliest days, able to sight read and remember scores after a single reading, he took up the cello before first conducting at 17 and became the greatest conductor of the 20th century if not in all of history. Beloved of audiences and musicians alike, irascible, perfectionist, energetic, brilliant.

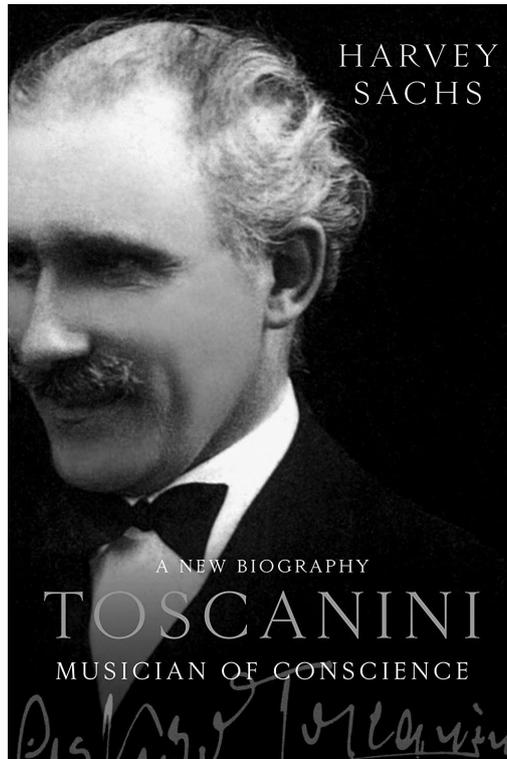
Starting early, aged about 11, 1878, Toscanini had his first taste of Wagner. He heard the overture of *Tannhäuser* at a concert of Parma's Quartet Society. Considered radical, controversial, avant-garde, he was 'astonished'.

His teacher brought the cello part of the score for him to study; he found it very difficult. Only a few years later, 1884, he was playing cello in the Parma orchestra for *Lohengrin*, after its success in Bologna and failure in Milano. He later remembered; "...From the first bars.. a magical unearthly impression with his divine celestial harmonies that revealed a new world to me, a world of whose existence no one had dreamed until Wagner's supernatural mind discovered it."

He conducted his first complete Wagner production- of *The Flying Dutchman*- in March 1893 in Palermo, it was a local premiere. Every evening called for an encore of the overture.

In 1895 in Turin he and the manager selected *Götterdämmerung* to inaugurate their first season and for the first production of *Götterdämmerung* by any Italian opera company. They used only about 3/4 of the score, feeling that audiences could not take an opera twice as long as a standard Italian opera. It was a huge success- 21 performances in 6 weeks, average one every 2 days!

He came to La Scala as conductor in 1896-97 and thought of opening his first season there with *Die Meistersinger*. Board members asked if he had heard it, not believing he alone could interpret such work. He lied, saying he had heard it in South America! However he went to Bayreuth in 1899 and heard the famous Hans Richter, a disciple of Wagner, conducting. He noticed a ritardando on a quarter beat which



he had made a gradual one and looking at the score found he was wrong and Richter right. He made the correction for himself. However, he deplored the ensemble and the singing. (Wagner commented after Richter's first Ring that 'not one of his tempi was correct'.)

A little later he was conducting *Siegfried* and *Otello* on alternative evenings and preparing a new production of *Lohengrin* which was the only Wagner opera performed frequently in Italy, although with massive cuts. Toscanini restored the work to the original.

During a rehearsal of *Lohengrin* on 16 January 1900 someone rushed in to say that his wife had given birth. He tried to resume rehearsals but not able to concentrate, rushed home. And found a baby girl.

The 1900 opening of La Scala season was to be the premiere of *Tristan und Isolde*, with a revival of *La Bohème* the next night. But due to the sickness of the Tristan tenor, at short notice *La Bohème* had to open the season with 27 year old Enrico Caruso. He had over rehearsed that day and singing that night, his voice was a disaster: "He did not show what he could do." Equals a disaster! The audience was doubly upset to have missed the opening of *Tristan*.

However, that production was praised not only for the musical value but also the technical and visual innovations. They were designed by Mariano Fortuny, later famous as a fashion and fabric designer. He lit the tree, under which Tristan dies, transparently, to obtain a more intense sunset effect. Richard's son Siegfried saw the performance and wrote enthusiastically to his mother (not without some racist slurs- 'those wops') and urged her to write to Toscanini which she did. Immediately, and with fond appreciation.

What is surprising is the popularity of Wagner in Italy at that time, the end of the 19th century, when Italian opera reigned supreme. Those Italian audiences raved about the music and the productions. Puccini was writing new works and Verdi, most beloved and revered, was being continuously performed. I did not think that Italians would have been so open to music that was so diverse and radical.

But times were changing and Toscanini felt that Wagner was the most influential figure in late 19th century music and that new developments would stem from him or from those who reacted against him, not from the repetition of traditional Italian operas.

On to the Metropolitan Opera in New York. First approached by them in 1903, then 1906, he asked Caruso for advice and Caruso said, “No, is teatro for singers, cantanti, not conductors”. He first went as joint musical director with Gustav Mahler in 1908. Toscanini had to be defended: “German opera would not suffer setbacks under an Italian, he was quite as famous for his Wagnerian interpretations as for his conducting of Italian operas.”

At his first rehearsal of *Götterdämmerung* with the Met orchestra, he was very nervous because of his bad English. Conducting in South America and of course Italy, nearly all the musicians spoke Italian but in New York there were mostly German, Jewish, and Yiddish speaking men. He read out an introduction, making apologies for his English, saying, finally, “Music is a universal language, we shall understand each other.” They did. Indeed the musicians were astounded at his memory, conducting without the score and correcting errors in their printed parts, errors which German conductors had never detected. And he conducted rehearsals on his feet, no chair, for 4 hours. His first performance of *Götterdämmerung* was in Dec 1908; both the Italian and German language presses were ecstatic. Not to mention the American papers.

November 1909, a new *Tristan*. Olive Fremsted performed with more power and passion than under the previous conductors, ‘a beautiful Isolde’, Toscanini said. Her dream wish years later was to do another Isolde under the baton of Toscanini, she wrote, in a letter when she was 80 years old.

In 1930 he went to Bayreuth to conduct. At the first rehearsal the players were terrible, he decided to leave. But Siegfried Wagner assured him better players would be found, and were, and he stayed.

Once again the musicians were shocked at his memory and knowledge of the scores. He loved the chorus. The whole Wagner family sat in on rehearsals and were captivated by his prowess and devotion. Siegfried had heart attack early on, was in hospital and died soon after. Toscanini spoke of Wagner as “Mon grand maitre’ but when describing the man, used the Italian word farabutto (scoundrel, crook!)

Zooming ahead... to television with the NBC Symphony Orchestra for the 1952 season. Toscanini suffered from the extremely hot lights and took quicker tempi than usual. “Parts of the Wagner concert of 29 December are remarkable- one marvels at the breadth of the *Tristan* prelude, at the increasing intensity of the ‘Liebestod’ in which he restrains the orchestra from making a series of climaxes and instead builds the tension to one real climax”.



Mariano Fortuny. Act1 Tristan und Isolde

September 19, 1951 Toscanini conducted an all Wagner concert at La Scala. He donated his fee to Casa Verdi. It was his first concert in his homeland in 2 years and the last he would give there. Rehearsing the ‘Liebestod’ from *Tristan*, he shouted “Crescendo, voce, voce, for god’s sake, what do you have where your hearts should be?”

**Reference: TOSCANINI Musician of Conscience** By Harvey Sachs Illustrated. 923 pp. Liveright Publishing. \$39.95.



Arturo Toscanini and Siegfried Wagner, Bayreuth 1930

# NEWS FROM YOUNG SINGERS SUPPORTED BY THE SOCIETY

## BRAD COOPER - SCHOLARSHIP REPORT - PART 1 OF 2

### WAGNER & THE ART OF MASTER-SINGING

It was lunchtime in 1993 and I was a 15 year old Conservatorium of Music High School student in Sydney when these fateful words were uttered to me and a group of fellow students by one of our music teachers, Brett Johnson:

*"Michael's Music Room has the Karl Böhm Bayreuth DG recording of Tristan und Isolde on sale. One of you needs to go and purchase it".*

I was the one to dash down after school finished and happily find it still sitting outside the store on the SALE shelves. That afternoon as I listened to the entire opera from start to finish in my bedroom my love affair with the world of Richard Wagner began.

That same year all we 'Con High' students had found ourselves in the Sydney Opera House Concert Hall performing the Berlioz Requiem to farewell Sydney Conservatorium Dean, John Hopkins. As a Boy Soprano in year 7 I had sung solos, primarily in Mozart's Coronation Mass, but when my voice broke I assumed that would be it for my singing. That evening though Brett sang next to me and hearing me as we all soared through the huge Dies Irae and Lacrymosa movements he insisted afterwards "you really should consider switching to singing in year 11 & 12".

I was somewhat sceptical about a life in opera. We'd studied *La Traviata* & *Coronation of Poppea* earlier that year and I'd found it all a little odd - why do they keep singing the same thing over and over? I wondered.

And then in July 2013 I caught it: The Opera Bug. I sat in the second row of The Australian Opera's act two finale of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. Arend Baumann as Hans Schwartz, fully decked out in nightgown and cap, at the climax of the street-fights scene, ran to the front of the stage, knocked the heads of two extras together and as he turned and took his happy dance celebration upstage to where the entire company hung out of windows and sang Wagner's glorious fugal music I knew that I wanted to be up there and part of all that fun, and at the interval between Acts 2 and 3 I breathlessly tracked down Brett in the foyer to tell him as much.

Next day at school I cornered fellow student Alex Negrin, *Meistersinger* score in hand from the library and we started bashing out Sachs' final aria 'Verachtet mir die Meister nicht!' in our class home room. Brett heard us and came



running "stop singing that right now, you'll ruin your voice!". Perhaps this was in reference to my imitation of Karl Ridderbusch's vocal stylings I'd just heard on his Bayreuth recording in the Library. Whatever the reason, I knew I had to get some lessons and 6 months later I was having weekly lessons with Maree Ryan, who would be my teacher for the next 9 years.

Wagner started to infiltrate my life with the intensity only a teenager can muster. Along with some friends at school (Alex, Bryan & Nick) we formed a Wagner Club and got together during the holidays to watch the entire Bayreuth VHS Collection on Phillips. I listened to every recording I

could lay my hands on through libraries and began building my own library of CDs. Wagner, Richard Strauss and Gustav Mahler dominated. I lay awake at night listening to Isolde's Liebestod or the *Götterdämmerung* 'Vengeance Trio', Mahler's Symphonies or Salome whisper 'sweet somethings' into John the Baptist's severed head. I'm sure my parents thought I was uniquely odd as this strange, intense music blared and I contemplated the meaning of the Universe!

Ultimately though this music inspired me and continues to inspire me today. This music has become the soundtrack to my life - my same school friend Bryan pointed this out to me when, as flatmates, he noted: "I never need to ask you how you are, I just listen to what music you listen to and I know already". Let's hope it's the finale of Mahler 5 and not the Immolation Scene!

### WAGNER BABY

Before too long the heavily anticipated year 2000 was upon us and every able-bodied tenor in Sydney was hunted down to join the Hunding's Vassal Chorus for the Sydney Symphony's concert performances of *Götterdämmerung*. Happily I was among them and it was the first time I was paid to sing anything professionally.

In 2001 Opera Australia was similarly seeking out tenors for *Lohengrin* and then in 2003 a dream was realised to be a Lehrbub in the same Michael Hampe production of *Meistersinger* I'd seen in 1993, this time under Simone Young at Sydney's Capitol Theatre. When it came time to rehearse the Act Two finale which had inspired me a decade earlier I keenly cornered our fight director and asked to be given

something exciting to do. Unfortunately my stage combat skills were vastly inferior to his estimation of my perceived enthusiasm, especially when we had such difficult music to sing at the same time, and at breakneck speed under Simone. After a few rehearsals of me attempting to count, sing, watch Simone and swing punches, all unconvincingly, he mercifully assigned my 'plot' to another actor. A decision I was incredibly grateful for.

### LIFE BETWEEN WAGNER

August 2003, right after my OA role debut, another dream scenario: stepping in as Fourth Jew in Strauss' *Salome*, I headed firstly to Berlin to study with Reiner Goldberg (he helped me to connect my voice onto my chest and loosen my jaw: "Locker, locker! Du musst immer locker sein!") and then to London on a UK Ancestry Visa to see where life might take me. I studied with Marilyn Horne on Scholarship at the Music Academy of the West in California and at the National Opera Studio in London.

I performed repertoire a young tenor is supposed to: Tamino in *Magic Flute*, Belmonte in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, Almaviva in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Britten's *Albert Herring*, Davey in Jonathan Dove's 'Siren Song', etc...

I had a couple of happy detours into Wagner: the small role of Gunther in *Die Feen* at Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris and Aubry in Marschner's *Der Vampyr* (for which Wagner composed an interpolation aria and which we actually performed in place of Marschner's original!) for Grachtenfestival in Amsterdam. Strictly speaking though, Wagner was not on anyone's radar for me. The very few times the idea of Wagner popped up it was swiftly knocked back down.

That was until February 2019.

### WAGNER RESURGENT

It was a glorious Sydney day. I had just come up to The Opera Centre from a refreshing kilometre swim at Prince Alfred Park Pool and popped in to chat with Joanne

Goodman (OA Senior Manager, Performing Artists) whom I hadn't seen in a while. Towards the end of our catch up she said: "oh, you're down for something next year. Let me have a look... yes, here it is: *Lohengrin Understudy*". Well, I just about burst with anticipatory excitement! Double checking with levels of management, especially Lyndon Terracini himself, it was confirmed.

Grabbing a *Lohengrin* score from the Library I booked a practice studio and started singing through Act 3, which boasts all the 'meaty' sections of the role. Even though it was the first time I'd sung through any of the role it felt like I'd been singing it for years. Having listened to the work innumerable times over the years it felt like I was welcoming back an old role rather than sight-reading through a new one.

My favourite recording of *Lohengrin* had for years been the DG Abbado from Vienna, so I knew exactly what I wanted to do next.

### WAGNER'S SIEGFRIED

My good friend Rupert Dussmann is a wonderful vocal coach & répétiteur in Berlin. He often finds himself on the coaching staff at the Staatsoper there. I sent him a message asking if he knew whether or not Siegfried Jerusalem ever gave private singing lessons as I'd seen on social media that he often gave Masterclasses. "Don't know about that, but I can make some enquiries. I don't really know him personally. Hmm, let's see."

Later that day another message from Rupert: Siegfried Jerusalem's email address address pops up on my phone.

"Wow!!! Thank you!!" I replied. "Guess who I just bumped into in the Canteen?" wrote Rupert. "He is singing one of the Meisters in the *Meistersinger* revival here right now. So I thought I would grab the bull by the horns and ask him. He seemed to be up for it, so YAY!!! [...] He was sitting with Graham Clark, Franz Mazura and Reiner Goldberg, just imagine! Was tempted to take a photo..."

I was absolutely thrilled!



With Robert Dussmann



With Siegfried Jerusalem

## TEENAGE DREAMS CONFIRMED

I had come to singing through a love of Wagner, but as a young singer I had to put all hopes of singing him to one side and focus on other repertoire.

Chatting with a few key professional supporters the consensus seemed to be: yes it was the right thing to do, and yes: it was perfect that you'd been asked to do it rather than announcing yourself that you were going to start singing this repertoire. One thing I had observed over the years was how many singers I'd seen try to make a move into Wagner, often when their vocal technique was suffering. It can seem like a natural progression when one is struggling with their voice, but all too often they crash and burn in a spectacular way, or even more often, are never heard of professionally again.

I didn't want this to be my fate!

Before I made any final decision I had to check with someone who knew my voice, knew what they were talking about Wagner-wise and whom I could trust to give me honest feedback. This was someone who had been a lead coach for the Barenboim Ring at Bayreuth.

This man was Tony Legge.

Tony had been Opera Australia's Head of Music and over the years I had worked through roles like Nemorino in *L'elisir*, Tamino in *Magic Flute*, Ernesto in *Don Pasquale*, Albert in *Albert Herring*... Perhaps more importantly I had mentioned Wagner to him a few years earlier when Joshua Hecht (Opera Australia's prime Vocal Teacher) had said to give it a go. He



With Tony Legge

however firmly dissuaded me - I was there to sing Donizetti with Tony that day, after all.

So there was only one thing for it, I packed a suitcase and headed to London for the Easter Break and worked through Lohengrin with Tony. About 20 minutes into our first session he stopped and in that very 'Tony' way exclaimed: "Yes, it's perfect for you, perfect for you. Now..." We worked hard that week and managed to get through the entire role in a series of 90min sessions. His final verdict being "I can tell it's right for you because you're fresher at the end of the 90 minutes than you are at the start of it!"

Exactly what I wanted to hear!

This was the preparation I needed, both vocally and emotionally, for what was to come next and what I will write about in my second instalment. Working through this mammoth role with Siegfried Jerusalem himself in Nürnberg. A rollercoaster of an experience as he pulled me apart vocally, texturally and histrionically in a way I had never anticipated possible. Honestly the most rewarding series of lessons I have ever experienced and which have resulted in my casting, on his personal recommendation, as Florestan in *Fidelio* in Germany, July/August 2021.

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

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

### BRANGAYNE OF ORANGE VINEYARD

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

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

### JANET WAYLAND

*Following the In Memorium we published in the March issue I received the following email from Janet Wayland's daughter Lucy*

Dear Michael,

Thank you for your kind words. And we would be pleased to have the In Memorium printed in the Quarterly. I knew she was an early member, but had no idea how early, and certainly was unaware of the various positions she held over the years. I have to say, her timing couldn't have been better. That would suit her no end. Oddly, she was wearing her Wagner Society t-shirt when she passed. We thought it apt.

As we go about cleaning the house, I will keep my eyes open for any useful memorabilia. I know she got to Bayreuth at least twice, and there are photos galore in the cupboards, so I am sure we will find something to contribute.

Again, on behalf of my brothers, Hugh and Sam, we thank you for the acknowledgment of Janet's role in the Wagner Society.

Sincerely,  
Lucy Wayland

## MAIA ANDREWS 24 MAY 2020

Since the Wagner Society supported my study trip to NYC to work with Jack Livigni April 2019, I have been singing and auditioning in Germany a considerable amount but have recently faced the same issue as all performing artists worldwide in having lost work due to Covid-19. As devastating as the situation is, this time has certainly shone a blazing light on what is truly important to me; I'm simply grateful for the health and safety of my loved ones.

Pre-Covid was a pretty successful time for me, really just the beginning of my professional career. As I mentioned in my last report to the Wagner Society, after my training with Jack Livigni, I was hired last European summer to sing Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte* at the Musikfestival Oper Oder-Spree in both Neuzelle and Beeskow. I then sang a Strauss Lieder concert series in Weimar, a French mélodie concert series and also performed the role of Gretel with the Jenaerphilharmonie in November. I took part in a masterclass with Éva Marton, who strongly encouraged me to strengthen my lyric to full lyric repertoire. She believes that although romantic and particularly verismo opera suits well now, that in the future I would be well suited to much more German repertoire including Strauss and Wagner. This sort of feedback only confirmed exactly what both Jack and Siegfried Gohritz, my German singing teacher here at the Hochschule in Weimar where I'm based, had been advising me.

In late January of this year, I did a last minute audition at Theater Altenburg Gera and they immediately took me on to jump in for a sick soprano for three roles and a bunch of concerts. I started rehearsing at the beginning of February, performed in a concert singing Weber within a week, and we then opened the theatre's Revue the following week. It was a show within a show, performed as if it were the general rehearsal with an irate 'director' sitting downstage, commenting throughout and hassling his assistant, played by yours truly. It was an intense experience to be thrown into an acting role, predominately improvised (in German!), but all the music numbers I sang were much more in my comfort zone. One night I also had to jump in for sick soprano, which worked well dramatically as the overworked assistant director having to do everyone's job! I sang excerpts from works ranging from Offenbach's *Orpheus in der Unterwelt*, to Lloyd Webber's *Phantom of the Opera*, to Verdi's *Otello*!.. What the Fach?

Up until mid-March I was rehearsing Gretchen in *Der Wildschütz* and Hannchen in *Der Vetter aus Dingsda*, both to open in April 2020. Of course, we were unable to continue, and the theatre has been closed since. At first, we all thought it would just be postponed for a month or so, not realising the scale of the pandemic and the very real consequences it would have on the performing arts, let alone the world at large.

At home, I focused my time on role learning, feeling I suddenly had a luxurious amount of time to learn the stack of music and dialogue which I had originally only been given with a few days' notice. I also spent time on Mozart's Bastienne, a role I'd in the meantime been hired to do with Theater Nordhausen as part of



Éva Marton Masterclass

their Sommerfestspiel, but of course this eventually fell through too. I'm simply hopeful these productions will return next season and I can pick up where I left off.

Not to undermine the mental instability that comes with having lost roles I've worked towards since moving to Germany four years ago, I also recognise that being self-isolated in idyllic Weimar in the springtime is a relatively deluxe quarantine. With more time on my hands than I knew what to do with, I very quickly was hungry for distraction and inspiration. Anne Schwanewilms, who works as a professor at my Hochschule, urged me about a year ago to engage in other creative fields to broaden and shape my sense of artistry. I'm grateful to now have the time to explore and indulge in that sort of creativity, and the nature that surrounds Weimar is a somewhat fitting setting. I've read more than I have in the last few years put together, begun writing stories, taught myself how to play ukulele, and picked up drawing for the first time in my life.

Although we as performing artists were the first ones to lose their work, and probably will be the last ones to work again in our chosen fields, I do believe we have an advantage of having most likely already built a resilience to life's uncertainties owing to the very nature of our work being unpredictable. I can only hope that my colleagues continue such resilience until we all see the back of Covid-19 and begin to see whatever the exciting future of the performing arts will be.

## LETTER OF APPRECIATION FROM NATHAN BYRON

27 May 2020  
Nathan Bryon

Dear Members of the Wagner Society in NSW,

I am writing to you to earnestly and sincerely thank you for all you did to support my development in the U.S earlier this year. The journey was extraordinary and very much informed my next steps as a young artist as well as my professional networks. The United States is an extraordinary option for development and I feel much more capable in pursuing post-graduate study in that environment thanks to your generosity.

I was lucky enough to work with some of the top pedagogues in the U.S and have maintained regular contact with many of them. Deborah Birnbaum has been particularly supportive and encouraging, she is an NYC-based breath specialist and pedagogue, who worked intensively with Montserrat Caballé and has taught singers of the likes of Joyce DiDonato as well as many dramatic voices. She was kind enough to recommend me for the Houston Grand Opera Young Artist Vocal Academy and I was lucky enough to get to the final bunch of applicants but alas, Covid-19 has restricted travel and at this stage it's not possible.

I attended opera rehearsals at the Juilliard School, Manhattan School of Music and many others which was wonderful for researching good Masters programs and possible financial support for this in the future. In an extraordinary series of events I also crossed paths with well-known baritone David Greco as I attended a performance he gave in NYC, and we attended a Thomas Hampson masterclass together.



I am now planning a post-graduate audition tour of Europe and America (provided it's possible during the Covid-19 pandemic) so that I can take advantage of any and all opportunities that could come my way in any of those countries. I feel much more equipped in my knowledge and networks to make the correct steps in the United States, and that is largely thanks to you.

This was an extraordinary developmental opportunity that wouldn't have been possible without your generous support, so thank you for all you do in enabling young singers like me achieve their goals.

Sincerely yours, Nathan Bryon

### REVISED COMMITTEE PROPOSAL

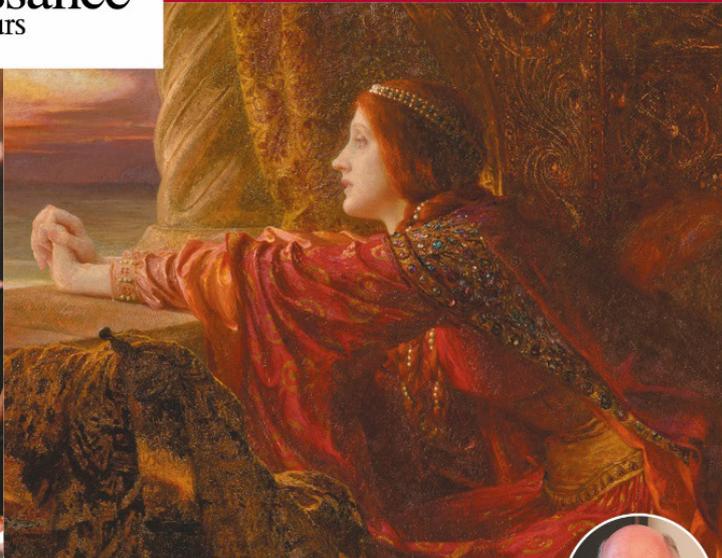
At a committee meeting held on Zoom on Wednesday 13 May the following changes were agreed upon about the makeup of the committee following Colleen stepping down as President at the AGM; Esteban to take over as President, awaiting AGM agreement; Rhonda and Mailis have retired; Ross Whitelaw has agreed to join the committee. There is a requirement for a second Vice President and we would like an additional general committee member

Members who would like to help out and join the committee should email Mike asap and a nomination form will be sent out in time for voting at the AGM. [michaeldayarchitect@gmail.com](mailto:michaeldayarchitect@gmail.com).

The committee meets about every 10 weeks for about 90 minutes on a Monday night and most of us continue on afterwards to share a meal at a nearby restaurant.

#### PROPOSED COMMITTEE 2020 - 2021

President	Esteban Insausti	0412 282 070
Vice President 1 and Quarterly Editor	Mike Day	0413 807 533
Vice President 2	To be filled	
Treasurer	Margaret Whealy	0414 787 199
Secretary (Interim)	Mike Day	<a href="mailto:michaeldayarchitect@gmail.com">michaeldayarchitect@gmail.com</a>
Membership Secretary	Lis Bergmann	
Members	Nick Dorsch	0419 751 694
	Marie Leech	
	Ross Whitelaw	
	Colleen Chesterman	9360 4962
	To be filled	
Artists' Liaison	Leona Geeves	
Technical Consultant	Florian Hammerbacher	<a href="mailto:wagner_nsw@optusnet.com.au">wagner_nsw@optusnet.com.au</a>
Public Officer	Alasdair Beck	9358 3922



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### Tristan und Isolde

**Opera Queensland, Brisbane**  
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Experience Opera Queensland's production of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* with an impressive semi-staged performance conducted by Pietari Inkinen and starring Heldentenor Simon O'Neill and American soprano Meagan Miller.



### La Rondine in Canberra

**National Opera**  
with Phillip Sametz  
11–13 December 2020 (3 days)

Attend a fully-staged production of Puccini's rarely performed opera *La Rondine* by Canberra's newly-launched National Opera, featuring tenor Henry Choo and soprano Lorina Gore in the lead roles.



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**Dresden**  
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## ADDRESS

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### **Garden of Villa Rufolo, Ravello, Italy**

At Ravello, Wagner visited the Villa Rufolo where he was impressed by the Moorish tower and the gardens, describing them as "lovely beyond description", and he famously wrote in a guest book: "Klingsor's magic garden has been found." This comment is often interpreted as meaning that it was the Villa Rufolo that inspired the idea of a magic garden, but in fact, Klingsor's garden had featured in the *Parsifal* scenario (first sketch 1857) and the complete text (1877) long before the visit to Ravello.

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## ADDRESS FOR SUNDAY FUNCTIONS

(unless otherwise advised in Coming Events)  
Goethe Institut, 90 Ocean Street Woollahra (corner of Jersey Road)

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