

'Recalling The Adelaide Rings And Parsifal'

By Peter Bassett, 21 February 2016

12.30pm: DVD: Visconti's 'Ludvig', Part 1

2.00pm: Presentation by Peter Bassett

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Peter had had close and varied involvement with the Adelaide Rings of 1998 and 2004, and Parsifal of 2001 and drew on this experience in providing insights into the productions themselves and, most importantly, the political and administrative environments in which they were created. He noted that, prior to the 1998 Ring performances, eighty-five years had passed since the last staging of the complete cycle by the touring Quinlan company in Sydney in 1913. The political incentive for embarking on Adelaide's 'Wagner Decade', together with the unique status of the State Opera of South Australia as a statutory body, explained the State Government's close involvement in the project and, ultimately, the significant level of government intervention in the latter years of preparations for the 2004 Ring. Ultimately, management and budgetary issues would influence Commonwealth and State funding bodies in their attitudes towards a remount of that production. Nevertheless, the first Australian-produced and designed Ring of 2004, like the earlier Ring and Parsifal had been a considerable success in artistic terms and as a cultural tourism venture.

Peter gave the audience interesting financial reports for all three Adelaide Wagner performances. The 1988 Ring cost nearly \$8M to stage, but brought an economic benefit of some \$10M to South Australia and attracted 56% of the audience from interstate and overseas. The 2001 Parsifal cost a "mere" \$2.3M, produced an economic benefit of about \$2.4M and attracted 30% of its audience from interstate and overseas. The fabulous 2004 Niedhardt Ring Cycle, however, cost over \$15M, and brought an economic benefit of a little over \$14M, and attracted about 65% of its audience from interstate and internationally. The difference in costs for the two Ring Cycles is largely because the 1988 production was brought in from France; "our" production—Australia's first home-grown full production, was developed and built in Australia, using far more spectacular scenery, among other things.

Peter showed documentary clips of all three productions, including back-stage technical preparations, rehearsals and the performances themselves. These brought back powerful memories of three historic

Wagnerian events. Touching segments with the late Elke Neidhardt, and with Jeffrey Tate, Asher Fisch, John Wegner (as both Wotan and Alberich), Lisa Gasteen at the height of her career, Daniel Sumegi in his debut as Hagen, Liane Keegan as Erda, Warwick Fyfe as Fasolt and numerous other artists, made this an afternoon to remember.