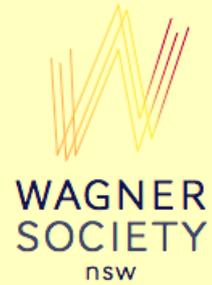




CELEBRATING
40 YEARS 1980 - 2020



Thursday 11 February 2021, 8 – 9.30pm:
Lise Lindstromin conversation from London,
via Zoom, with Dr Robert Mitchell



Photos of Lise Lindstrom with, top left: Dr Robert Mitchell,
and bottom right: host Esteban Insausti

Report by Minnie Biggs

There was yet another excellent turnout (nearly 40) of Society members and guests to meet Lise Lindstrom in London on Zoom. A great follow up to Susan Bullock's talk. And yet another Puccini to Wagner journey (but Turandot rather than Butterfly). Perhaps not so surprising given the similarity of their voices. Lise came from California and both of her parents were singers. In fact, she made her debut as Donna Anna - her father was the Commendatore - with the Berkeley Opera in California. Interestingly, her first real teacher was the beautifully named Met Opera star Blanche Thebom who came from Ohio, middle America.

Like Susan Bullock, it took a long time for Lise to find her voice, no one knew quite what to do with it, until Turandot was suggested and initially resisted and finally turned out to be the perfect match. She has sung all the different endings of Turandot. Lise paid tribute to director Graham Vick, who taught her how to analyse every phrase to give deep meaning to the words to make the characters believable.

After Turandot Lise continued with the great Strauss roles, Electra and Salome, and finally Brünnhilde in Melbourne in 2016. Lise spoke warmly of the collegiality and enthusiasm of the Melbourne company. We will be able to hear her Brünnhilde again in the OA Ring in Brisbane in November.

When asked her dream role not yet performed: Minnie in *La fanciulla del West*. Her two great grandmothers were named Minnie and they all came from the Golden West.

With pleasure from Minnie Biggs.

Review by Ross Whitelaw

Was it worth getting up at 5am to log into a zoom set up by the London Wagner Society with prominent BBC broadcaster, Christopher Cook interviewing Norwegian soprano, Lise Davidsen? Yes, it was!

I had the pleasure of seeing her sing Elizabeth in the new production of Tannhäuser in Bayreuth in 2019 and she truly made the hairs on the back of my neck stand up with her rendition of "Dich teure Halle". She didn't let up for the rest of the night either – a remarkable performance. She will reprise the role and also sing Sieglinde when things get back to normal on the Green Hill.

Lise grew up in a household which was not particularly musical, her father preferring Lionel Ritchie but she sang in her school choir and her local church while taking up the guitar as a hobby. She didn't see her first opera until she was 20 and then as part of an excursion with the Danish Academy where she learned to appreciate Bach in particular. She sang as a mezzo and felt more comfortable singing in a chorus. Her teacher (who had also taught Irene Theorin) encouraged her to learn soprano parts, calling her a "sopranomezzo". She later felt that her years singing mezzo parts was valuable experience.

Lise finished her studies in 2014 but was adamant that she did not study to compete although competitions enabled her to be heard and seen, sometimes before 6-12 directors who made up the judging panels. She went on to be the winner of Placido Domingo's Operalia competition and the Queen Sonja competition in 2015 and made the opera world sit up and take notice of her on stage, and in recital and concert performances. Bayreuth contacted her about a year after her competition wins. Lisa enjoyed her time at Bayreuth, even crying the first time she heard the orchestra at a rehearsal of Tristan and Isolde. It was a great team environment with even a "nerdy" feeling as everyone knew their Wagner, talked and debated about all things Wagnerian almost to the exclusion of all else. It was a chance to go deeply into all aspects of his work.

Lise enjoyed working with her director in Tannhauser, Tobias Kratzer who was super organized and gave the singers a lot of respect, a characteristic which she valued highly. Her other favourite conductors are Edward Gardner and Esa- Pekka Salonen.

She was in her fourth period of lockdown, having performed at the Deutsche Oper in Berlin, the Met in New York and in Amsterdam in 2020. She said it was difficult to practise on one's own, especially not knowing if her next performance would be cancelled or not. Above all, she missed the audience interaction.

Lise starts preparing a new role about a year before the performance, working on the text first and then adding the music. She said that she didn't want to copy any other singer and that she wants to do it her way as after all "That's why you come." Her aim was to be honest and clear in her performances, making a conscious decision to perform concerts and recitals as well as singing on stage.

All in all, an (early) hour well spent.

From the Wagner Quarterly 160, March 2021

About Lise Lindstrom:

American dramatic soprano Lise Lindstrom has dazzled the world with compelling performances that are “truly world-class”. Her unique vocal power combined with her expansive range, extensive palette of vocal colours, and unrivalled stagecraft, makes her one of the most sought-after talents of her generation. In roles that range from Turandot to Senta, Elektra and Brünnhilde, Lindstrom’s distinguished career has taken her to the world’s leading opera houses, including the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Wiener Staatsoper, Royal Opera House Covent Garden, and Teatro alla Scala.

In 2016 Lindstrom performed Brünnhilde in her first-ever full Ring Cycle for Opera Australia in Melbourne for which she was awarded the Green Room Award and Helpmann Award. The critics went wild as “Lindstrom, a tremendous Brünnhilde throughout...ended the Ring in a blaze of glory literally and metaphorically”. A leading interpreter of Wagner’s heroines, Lindstrom has also portrayed Senta in *Der fliegende Holländer* with San Francisco Opera, Polish National Opera and New Orleans Opera, both Elisabeth and Venus in *Tannhäuser* with Greek National Opera.

About Dr Robert Mitchell:

A veteran of over 5,200 performances in more than 120 operas, baritone Robert Mitchell first sang with Opera Australia at the opening of the Sydney Opera House in 1973 and made his last appearance with the OA chorus in the 2017 concert performances of *Parsifal*. Having principally undertaken chorus responsibilities during those 44 years, his final principal role with OA was as The Captain in the world premiere seasons of Kate Miller-Heidke’s *The Rabbits*. Robert’s other roles included Spalanzani: *Les contes d’Hoffmann*, Lillas Pastia/Guide: *Carmen*, Antonio/Annibale: *The Gondoliers*, Liberto: *L’incoronazione di Poppea*, Maître d’Hôtel: *The Merry Widow*, Diener: *Lulu*, Government Whip: *The Eighth Wonder*, Officer: *Der Freischütz*, Messenger: *La Traviata*, Penizek: *Countess Maritza*, Frère Jean: *Roméo et Juliette*, Polish Gentleman/Soldier: *Death in Venice*, and others in *La Bohème*, *The Mikado*, *Adriana Lecouvreur*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Manon Lescaut*, *Lucrezia Borgia*, *Boris Godunov*, *Yeomen of the Guard*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Capriccio*.

Robert has also been a soloist for the Sydney and Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Festivals, Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, Chamber Soloists of Sydney and the Warringah and Wollongong Symphonies and has broadcast for ABC Classic FM. In 2015 he gave the first performance of Australian composer Gordon Kerry's song cycle 'Jean à Jean' which Robert commissioned in memory of his late partner Denis Condon.

After completing the Diploma of Music Education, for his Master of Creative Arts (University of Wollongong) Robert undertook a survey of the work of French singer/teacher Pierre Bernac. For his PhD (University of Sydney) he prepared a critical edition of Offenbach's five-act operetta *La Vie Parisienne*. A past State and National President of the Australian National Association of Teachers of Singing (ANATS), Robert has taught at Macquarie and Western Sydney Universities. He has lectured to music interest groups and written articles on a wide variety of musical subjects, teaches singing privately and is currently chairman of the Opera Australia Benevolent Fund.