

Wednesday 2 March 2022, 7.00pm

Talk by Christopher Cook on *Amfortas! Die Wunde ... Two Wounded Disciples: The post-Christian world of Parsifal and the curious symbiosis between Amfortas and Klingsor*

A Wagner Society in NSW event via zoom from Deal, England



Thirty-three people registered for the talk by Christopher Cook on ‘Amfortas! Die Wunde ... Two Wounded Disciples’.

Responses emailed by viewers after the talk:

- Thank you so much for arranging this very interesting lecture! Food for thought and further research and thinking.

- Thanks so much to you and the committee for arranging the talk last night. It was packed with ideas and new thoughts about Parsifal, which is my favourite of Wagner’s operas and gave me so much to think about and follow up. Again thanks for an enjoyable hour.

Report by Ross Whitelaw

I'm not sure what the 25 members and guests expected to hear when we sat by our computers and logged in to **Christopher Cook's** talk, but for those of us already entranced by the beauty and majesty of this opera and I imagine those who would like to discover more about it, they were treated to an exceptional and fascinating hour. Christopher's knowledge of his subject, the depth to which he plumbed the material and his easily understood and clear style of delivery made this one of the highlights of our educational calendar. Neither a musicologist nor a Wagner scholar in the true sense, Christopher prefers to be known as a cultural historian although one who, in his own words has been "completely absorbed by both the man and his music for over half a century". His interest in the relationship of *Parsifal* to Christianity and, in particular, to Christian beliefs in the nineteenth century is expressed in his reactions to Amfortas and Klingsor, a pair of "wounded protagonists".

The late nineteenth century was an age of faith but also an age of doubt, where the gathering of facts and their interpretation began to overtake religious certainties. Wagner stated that Art proceeded from God and that through Art, all men could be saved. Certainly, both ideas were in play at the end of the century and Christopher explores the ambiguity with erudition and insight. He shows us that it is all too easy to close our eyes and just listen to Wagner's music while missing a complete work of intentionally ambiguous meaning. The opera even ends with a new beginning. Death and resurrection? Reincarnation? Take your pick. Christopher sees the role of the of Kundry as pivotal – her Eve to Parsifal's Adam, He leads us through the prism of Freud, the window of Schopenhauer and contemporary productions he has seen in Barcelona and Zurich. He provokes and challenges and entertains at the same time. It will send you away to contemplate. It will send you away to dust off those books and articles you will want to read again. It will, above all else send you back to your favourite recording of *Parsifal* with new understanding.

I look forward to hearing from Christopher again. If you missed him this time, he has generously allowed us to record his talk and to publish a written copy, all available from our website at [.https://wagner.org.au/events/wagner-society-events-online](https://wagner.org.au/events/wagner-society-events-online). If you would like to hear more of him, particularly his interview with noted Wagnerians, look on the website of the London Wagner Society for past and upcoming events (although they are generally live at 5am).

About Christopher Cook

Christopher Cook is a British broadcaster and journalist. His work can be found in places such as the Guardian and the New Statesman. His current

academic work includes positions at Syracuse University, London Centre and American University (London Programme). Christopher is a regular contributor to BBC Music Magazine and International Record Review and has written for The Gramophone. He chairs pre-concert events for the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, the Hallé Orchestra, the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Study Evenings at the Royal Opera House where he also interviews for their 'Meet the...' programmes and Glyndebourne Opera. For the past four years he has curated pre-performance talks at English National Opera. Christopher also does interviews for the London Wagner Society, which can be accessed through their website.