

# 21 July 2019 - Stuart Skelton Talks About Singing On The World Stage

12 noon: DVD Act 3 of Barrie Kosky's Bayreuth  
*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*

2pm: Stuart Skelton talks about singing on the world stage

Goethe Institut, 90 Ocean Street, Woollahra



Grammy nominee and 2014 International Opera Awards Male Singer of the Year, [Stuart Skelton](#) is one of the finest heldentenenors on the stage today, critically acclaimed for his outstanding musicianship, tonal beauty and intensely dramatic portrayals.

Stuart was born in Sydney. He won the McDonalds Aria Competition, which led him to study singing at the University of Cincinnati and on the Merola Opera Program at San Francisco Opera. He now appears for the major opera companies worldwide, including the Metropolitan Opera, New York, Seattle Opera, La Scala, Milan, Paris Opéra, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Bavarian State Opera and at the Baden-Baden Festspielhaus. He is especially renowned for his interpretation of dramatic and Heldentenor roles, including Florestan (*Fidelio*), Lohengrin, Siegmund, Tristan (*Tristan und Isolde*), Parsifal, Gherman (*The Queen of Spades*), Laca Klemen (*Jenufa*), Boris (*Kát'a Kabanová*) and Peter Grimes.

Stuart was supported in his early career by the Wagner Society in NSW. He is visiting Sydney for SSO concert performances of *Peter Grimes*, with Nicole Car and conductor David Robertson on 25 and 27 July.

## Report from the September 2019 Quarterly

We were privileged to host Stuart Skelton, who was accompanied by his wife the violinist Asa Gudjonsdottir, on Sunday the 21st of July. Stuart was in Sydney for a couple of performances of Benjamin Britten's "Peter Grimes" with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra the following week.

The format of the event was informal and relaxed, much like the man himself. Our President Colleen Chesterman briefly introduced our guest who made some general remarks about the state of opera at the moment (it's healthy and will continue to live for a while longer) after which the floor was opened for questions from the large number of attendees. The questions and topics were wide ranging. From conductors and directors to modern productions to where he resides and how he relaxes in preparation for the next gig.

Stuart's responses were generous, humorous and sometimes insightful. He explained the difference between a good conductor and a great one with an anecdote about Daniel Barenboim. Barenboim invited Stuart to participate in a rehearsal of "Tristan und Isolde" at the Staatsoper in Berlin. He had not sung the role on stage yet and there was a particularly difficult phrase that he broke up into several breadths but somehow Barenboim had picked up that he could do it in one. Just before that phrase Barenboim faced Stuart, the only time he made eye contact, and made an arc with his right hand meaning "do it in one breadth". Stuart's response was "well if Barenboim wants it one I better do it", which he did. Point being that the conductor knew what was possible before the singer knew. Stuart repeated several times during the conversation that he was "blessed" by having both the opportunity and good fortune to work with some great conductors, including some conductors familiar to Australian audiences such as David Robertson, Simone Young and Asher Fisch.



Stuart, Colleen Chesterman (President) and Leona Geeves

His views on directors and productions were more circumspect. Not so much in that he prefers a certain type of production but rather that he has very firm views on the roles he takes on. I believe Mr Skelton would be a formidable personality to deal with as a director but also a lot of fun. He admits that he always aims to sing beautifully and doesn't hold back. For those of us that saw and heard his Grimes the following week this was a true statement. I remember his Grimes in the Armfield production for Opera Australia which was astonishing but with the SSO under David Robertson we were privileged to see and hear someone at the top of their game. Even though there was no set the performances were so rich physically and vocally that there was no need for scenery. With Stuart Skelton what you see is what you get - big, honest, intense, intelligent, beautiful singing and interpretations that comes from a position of understanding of both the technical and psychological/dramaturgical aspects. Based in Florida where he is hours away from major US and European opera houses, he is enjoying his work and life (being recently married) and tax status. Personally, on top of his gifts as an artist, a man that relaxes with a good cigar and even better rum is one that commands my respect.

Stuart came across as a great raconteur, generous, intelligent, personable with no airs and graces, very disciplined and very much across the current issues of contemporary opera making. The conversation lasted for well over an hour and was insightful, delightful and very entertaining. We hope he will back in Australia soon. A great afternoon.