

REPORTS ON RECENT MEETINGS

SUNDAY 12 MARCH AT THE GOETHE INSTITUT

12.00PM DVD RICHARD STRAUSS – AT THE END OF THE RAINBOW – A FILM BY ERIC SCHULZ



This was a very interesting insight into the life, work and times of **Richard Strauss**. Members' feedback was very positive and several lively discussions followed during the interval. A pleasant surprise was the beautiful singing of Wollongong-born soprano, **Emma Moore**, whom the Society supported several years ago. She was shown being coached by the great Straussian soprano **Brigitte Fassbaender**. There was some fascinating archival footage of Strauss's minimalist conducting technique, which contrasted amusingly with a brief clip of Georg Solti at his most exuberant.

2.00PM TALK BY PETER BASSETT: 'A NEW LOOK AT THE RING'

A substantial and enthusiastic audience welcomed long-time friend of the Society, Wagner specialist **Peter Bassett**, who shared his recent thoughts about new ways of staging Wagner's works.

Peter provided some background to the upcoming Brisbane Ring, including short video clips from the Chinese director/production designer **Chen Shi-Zheng** and costume designer Anita Yavich. We can expect an imaginative, fantastical, production, with the music dictating the actions revealing the universal themes of the myths. Peter will be presenting a series of symposia, talks and interviews in Brisbane during the three cycles. Guests will include the conductor, Philippe Auguin; **Anna-Louise Cole** (Sieglinde, Brünnhilde), **Olivia Cranwell** (Sieglinde, Third Norn); **Liane Keegan**, Erda; and **Luke Gabbedy**, Gunther. Bookings are now open for these talks – highly recommended. Email pgbassett@outlook.com

Peter then talked about the precedents and possibilities for open air productions of opera. He was hopeful that with modern audio technology this will become more frequent. Wagner had proposed outdoor performances and of course his theatre cited the great Greek amphitheatres as precedents.

Peter was full of praise for one of Poland's most famous stages, and without question its most wonderfully located - **Sopot's Opera Leśna** (Forest Opera), a magical open-air theatre nestled in the middle of a serene hilly forest. With a history stretching back over 100 years, including legendary performances of the Ring in the 1920's, the theatre was modernised 10 years ago and boasts one of the best sound and vision systems in Europe.

Peter described an interesting very experimental production of *Das Rheingold* in LA and Detroit using live singers in front of a green screen with animated virtual settings. He then

turned his attention to some of the horrors of *Regietheater*. Members strongly agreed with his criticism of recent productions that entirely ignore the text and intentions of the works. He illustrated this with a comparison of the ways the Valkyrie have been depicted in several productions. Almost all ignored the fact that in the myths they are harpies - signifiers of death.

Peter finished his talk by reflecting on how his view of the Ring has changed. Twenty years ago, he was writing that love holds the story together – it's a tale of human frailty with love and compassion as humanities' last hope. Now he is of the view that the ring is just a band of gold with no actual power - the characters' views of it are deluded. The Ring is about self-delusion because of lack of compassion.

A very stimulating afternoon, enjoyed by all, followed by delicious afternoon tea – thanks to members who brought plates



Forest Opera, Sopot, Poland