

REPORTS ON RECENT MEETINGS

SUNDAY 29 JANUARY AT THE GOETHE INSTITUT

12.00 DVD *SING FASTER - THE STAGEHANDS' RING CYCLE*

Members reported enjoying this very funny and informative Emmy Award winning documentary that follows the activities and thoughts of the backstage crew during the staging of the San Francisco Ring. For those who missed it it's available on Vimeo and excerpts can be seen on YouTube.

2.00 SPECIAL LIVE ZOOM *CONVERSATION WITH SUZANNE CHAUNDY AND ANDREW BAILEY*

President, **Esteban Insausti**, interviewed **Suzanne Chaundy**, director of the Melbourne Opera Ring Cycle, and **Andrew Bailey**, designer of the Ring via zoom.

To date most Sydney people have seen *Das Rheingold* in February 2021 in the early stages of digital concert hall, so very few closeups). This was followed by a staged *Die Walküre* in 2022, and a *Siegfried* concert performance later last year – The complete Ring will be staged in a venue, new to most of us, from March 2023. Suzanne talked about her major conceptual conceit – the two sides of the coin; the over world and the underworld – Schwarz and Licht. She also explained why the production has a clear narrative as opposed to the heavy conceptual production most seasoned Ring attendees see in Germany and Europe. Australian Rings are few and far between (except in 2023 when we will have two productions) which means that for the majority who cannot travel overseas to see one this is it. The experience needs to be a positive one, especially for those seeing a Ring for the first time. This was both candid and perceptive when put in the context of OA's recent Melbourne production.

With shades of Wieland Wagner ranging from grandeur to simplicity Andrew unveiled his designs. It's the first independent Ring, certainly in Eastern Australia since the Quinlan Cycle in 1913. Andrew's main design is a 3-D model of a drawbridge which pivots into the air. The actual drawbridge weighs 3 and a half tonnes and measures 7 and a half metres deep. This formed the roof of Hunding's hut and Nibelheim. It has a large circle on the pivoting roof through which grows the world ash. It becomes an exceedingly effective Ring of Fire. The large circle features again as

atmospheric moon and in Rheingold the same symbols become illuminated swings for the Rhein daughters. By the way I liked the swing poles in the first opera.

The design aim is simple and modern timelessness. And creating a good singing space, with no voids. It's a very flexible set, with weathered metallic landscapes, and deconstructed rich metallic finishes. The precedents and mood boards that Andrew shared showed eclectic but consistent imagery, including the "war room" from Stanley Kubrick's "Doctor Strangelove". Andrew and Esteban discussed the importance of sightlines for the audience to enjoy the action on stage as well as for the singers to follow the conductor in the pit.

As a way to explain the colour progression or strategy of the production, Andrew introduced us to the costume designs of Harriet Oxley (currently working in Japan but back for the Bendigo rehearsals), who also worked together with Chaundy and Bailey on *Flying Dutchman*. For the Ring the costumes are pastel, ethereal and real – simple and modern and timeless. The costume designs look amazing – we have already seen that Fricka has some totemic head wear – displaying power and glamour and that shiny fabrics abound for Freia, Brünnhilde, Donner, the Rheinmaidens, and the Walküren.

Towards the end of the chat Suzanne tried to add up the design team, the troops backstage and in the pit and on stage – it seemed like hundreds. A number we are eager to see in Bendigo next month.

Leona Geeves and Esteban Insausti

Julie Clarke added: We were entertained with Suzanne's concepts of this production and it was fascinating to see Andrew's models of the set staging and how they are used and enhanced within each of the four operas. Suzanne has a very traditional approach to this Ring Cycle, incorporating all the essential elements while adding some whimsical features which enhance the productions. Colour and costume design add a splendid richness and beauty to this all-Australian cast Ring.

DONATIONS TO HELP THE SOCIETY'S OBJECTIVES

We encourage members to donate to the Society to help with our regular support for artists. We also have a number of special projects for which we encourage your contribution.

GENEROUS DONATIONS WERE RECEIVED SINCE DECEMBER 2022 FROM THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS: Anna-Lisa Klettenberg, Brian Freestone, Ian McGraw, Diana Rose Orr, Sue Kelly and Carol Bailey

WE WARMLY WELCOME NEW MEMBERS WHO JOINED SINCE DECEMBER 2022:

Erica Booker 1271, Bettina Boss 1272