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CELEBRATING THE MUSIC OF RICHARD WAGNER

WAGNER QUARTERLY

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Welcome to the third Quarterly for 2014.

I am currently in Bayreuth, the Wagner shrine. As a result, I am afraid that I have missed some of our Society's more recent events. I am extremely grateful to other committee members for providing their descriptions and their very perceptive insights into these events, as shown later in this letter.

As with last year in Bayreuth, the Government's decision to cease ticket allocations to Wagner Societies has significantly affected the demography of the audience, particularly during the third Ring Cycle. In the old days, this was the cycle to which English speaking societies were invariably given tickets, with the result that a very significant proportion of the audience was English speaking. The New York Wagner Society used to organise fascinating lectures on the morning of each opera, which were attended by hundreds of people. Now the lectures have been discontinued, and the great majority of the audience appears to consist of Germans.

This is the second year of the Castorf Ring. It is a very strange production, but I have to say that many of us who were also here last year have considerably preferred it this year. This must at least partially be because it no longer holds its shock value for us. Also, although it is much the same cast, the singing is generally of a higher order than last year. In particular, Wolfgang Koch has been an outstanding Wotan/Wanderer, and Oleg Bryjak a terrific Alberich. Interestingly, during their confrontation in Act 11 of *Siegfried*, they looked like mirror images of each other, which makes sense, given that the Wanderer had earlier described himself as "Licht Alberich." Tomorrow evening we finish with *Götterdämmerung*. Catherine Foster has been in great voice as Brünnhilde, so we have high expectations, at least relating to the musical aspects of the work.

Wagner Society Meeting 15 June 2014 –Prof. Michael Ewans Nikolaus Lehnhoff's *Parsifal* (2004): A landmark in Wagner Production

Committee Member Nick Dorsch has kindly given me his brief assessment of this function as an introduction to Professor Ewan's précis of his talk that is reproduced below, along with his answers to some questions on the day.

Following by coincidence an earlier showing on this day of the DVD of Act 1 of the recent Met Opera *Parsifal*, featuring Kaufmann, Pape and Dalayman, we were treated to a very interesting talk by Prof Michael Ewans. He pointed out that with its obsession with racial purity and its rejection of sensuality and femininity, this work was extremely racist, anti-Semitic and sexist. Its very location in Spain, with the pure Grail knights to the North (the Christian area) and Klingsor's castle in the South or Islamic area, lends weight to this.

The production includes an outstanding cast and conductor, with John Tomlinson as a non-boring Gurnemanz! Michael showed several extracts from this fascinating production, with many instances of unusual settings and costuming. Most interesting was Act 3, with its ending where Kundry does not die, but she and Parsifal walk slowly off towards a blinding light, followed by several of the younger knights. This implies a rebirth for at least part of the grail fellowship rather than continuing on as the same old decadent, decaying group with

PRESIDENT'S REPORT *Continued page 3*

Patron: Ms Simone Young AM
Honorary Life Members: Mr Richard King
Prof Michael Ewans
Mr Horst Hoffman
Mr Roger Cruickshank
Dr Terence Watson



Opening Fanfare for the Sophia, Bulgaria, Ring Cycle-lake Terry and Julie Clarke's review on page 7.



James Roser as Harald in Wagner's *Die Feen*: Vienna State Opera – see Leona Geeves' report below.



James Roser as Der Feenkönig in Wagner's *Die Feen*: Vienna State Opera – see Leona Geeves' report below.



The Norns - prologue to *Twilight of the Gods* Sophia, Bulgaria, Ring Cycle-lake Terry and Julie Clarke's review on page 7.



Siegfried Act 3 Sophia, Bulgaria, Ring Cycle-lake Terry and Julie Clarke's review on page 7.

a new leader after the problems of Amfortas and Klingsor have been sorted out. (Could it be also an answer to the question of who was Lohengrin's mother?!) A really thought-provoking production and presentation.

Our newest Committee member Barbara de Rome has generously sent me her comments to pass on to you, with some additional comments from our Editor, Terence Watson.

It is already seven months since *The Ring Cycle* was staged in Melbourne and yet there is still much to say about it. We had two speakers to contribute their experience from behind and below the stage. Roger Press was assistant director to Neil Armfield for the production. In his opening remarks, Roger paid tribute to John Wegner, who was to sing Alberich, but had to withdraw because of illness, but only after forming the conception of the character for this production.

In his presentation, Roger focused on the practical challenges of the design elements of the production. Occupational health and safety issues factored strongly in a number of the major visual elements of the staging. The Valkyries all had to have specific training to manage the safety harnesses that attached them to their swings. The sharp eyed in the audience may have noticed the additional Valkyrie whose sole job was ensuring that all harnesses were properly fastened and unfastened as required. She had been a circus performer and had undertaken special training. The Valkyries had to be ready in their swings high above the stage and out of sight of the audience. Several found this found rather terrifying and this could be detected in their white knuckle grasp of the ropes. Roger also revealed that a plan to have Brünnhilde and Sieglinde together on one of the swings was only discounted on the day of the first performance of *Die Walküre*.

The cherry pickers which carried Fafner and Fasolt put undue weight on the stage floor. The floor had to be strengthened to support them. Union rules require that only trained operators can use this machinery and that is after a three day course. Fortunately, Roger was able to negotiate a deal which allowed Jud Arthur and Daniel Sumegi to undertake just a morning's training to enable them to operate the lever in the up and down mode only. They were not allowed to operate in any other direction.

Roger told us that the stuffed animals were in part intended to reflect the understanding emerging in the mid-19th century that the natural world was starting to break down and so many cities set up natural history museums to preserve specimens before they disappeared. He explained that, just as Wotan had collected and displayed his precious collection of endangered animals in Valhalla (the animals

were lowered into and retracted from scenes to match Wotan's entrances and exits). He also chose to protect his favourite daughter, Brünnhilde by enclosing her in a similar protective case. The challenge for the team was managing the level of heat from the gas operated flames on Susan Bullock as she lay in the case. She had to contend with a significant level of heat as she lay there, while we enjoyed a very powerful and satisfying ring of fire image.

Another challenge for Roger and the team was timing. The scene where the gold (gold covered iPhone boxes) is piled up to hide Freia had to be precisely timed so that it ended in time with the music. While it appeared to be random, in fact the placement of the boxes was rehearsed many times. Timing was also crucial with the rotating circular walkway. The singers needed to be positioned at the front of the stage when they needed to sing. He also praised the role conductor Pietari Inkinen played in galvanising the orchestra, the production team and the performers – as well as Inkinen's skill in matching the timing of the music to the precise demands of the production, especially the turning of the great spiral in *Die Walküre*. Roger also elucidated the meaning of the "Sea of Humanity" featured in the production, pointing out that its first appearance was intended to suggest a petri dish with the beginning of life that quickly evolved to human life.

Roger acknowledged that working on *The Ring* was an extremely challenging, but exciting period of his career which he hopes to be able to do again. [As a kind of Wagnerian coincidence, Roger was also the director responsible for restaging for Opera Australia the famous Wagner director Harry Kupfer's production of *Otello*; perhaps Roger could agitate for his Wagner productions to be transferred to our stages – I'm sure our Members would be happy to help?? Ed.]

Marnie Sebire, a member of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, brought three gleaming instruments to show and play for us: A normal French horn and bass (in F) and tenor (in B flat) *Wagnertuben* (Wagner "tubes"—ie tubes of metal— not tubas, as they are often called in English; a better term is "horn." A donation from the Wagner Society in NSW supported Opera Australia's purchase of one of the horns. Marnie demonstrated

PRESIDENT'S REPORT *Continued page 5*

QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS:

Nikolaus Lehnhoff's *Parsifal* - P. 6

Prof. Michael Ewans

Sophia Ring 2014 - P. 7

Terry & Julie Clarke

Wotan, Erwache Exhibition - P. 9

Terence Watson

Australian James Roser in Erl Ring - P. 10

Leona Geeves

DONATIONS

Donations: Received since June 2014:

Heinz Ebert; Warwick Fyfe; Ian Harper.

NEW MEMBERS

David May (1146).

FOR YOUR DIARY

2015

February 14, 17, 19	GREAT NEWS - <i>The Flying Dutchman</i>: Victorian Opera with Vitalij Kowaljow and Petra Lang and the Australian Youth Orchestra conducted by Richard Mills, and designer Roger Hodgman – more details below.	Palais Theatre, St Kilda @ 7:30pm
Sunday April 12	Wagner Society Concert featuring a singer whom the Society has supported.	Venue to be notified @ 2pm
May 13, 15 & 16	Sydney Symphony with Matthias Pintscher: <i>Siegfried Idyll</i> .	Sydney Opera House @ 8pm
June 20 & 22	WONDERFUL NEWS - Sydney Symphony is banking on the success of its previous operas in concert to perform <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> . David Robertson will conduct Christine Brewer as Isolde, Stuart Skelton as Tristan, Katarina Karnéus as Brangäne, Derek Welton as Kurwenal, and Stephen Milling as King Marke, with Sydney Philharmonia Choirs and S Katy Tucker's visual enhancement. Echos of Bayreuth with two intervals including an hour-long dinner break!	Sydney Opera House @ 8pm
November 25, 27 & 29	Sydney Symphony with Edo de Waart: Prelude to Act 1 <i>Lohengrin</i> .	Sydney Opera House @ 8pm

COMING EVENTS 2014-2015 - STARTING TIMES MAY VARY

PLEASE CHECK THE SCHEDULE FOR DETAILS.

DATE	Some events may be subject to change and further detail in the next newsletter	TIME & LOCATION
21 September	Dr James Wierzbicki: From the Sublime to the Ridiculous: The Long, Strange Ride of Wagner's Valkyries 12:30 DVD PRESENTATION - Act 3 <i>Parsifal</i> - Metropolitan Opera 2013. (Jonas Kaufmann, Rene Pape, Peter Patte, Katarina Dalayman, Evgeny Nikitin, Daniel Gatti (cond) Francois Girard (director)	Goethe Institut 2PM
12 October	George Gilmour & Sarah Louise Owens: In pursuit of choral perfection: insiders' views of the Bayreuther Festspiele Chor 12:30 DVD PRESENTATION – Wagner Bicentenary Gala Concert from Semperoper Dresden, with Jonas Kaufmann, Staatskapelle Dresden conducted by Christian Thielemann	Goethe Institut 2PM
9 November	Recital by Anke Höppner, accompanied by David Miller. followed by Christmas Party. NO DVD PRESENTATION. NB: Starting time 2PM	Goethe Institut 2PM
2015		
15 February	Oxford academic and writer and translator, Dr Rosamund Bartlett , author of <i>Wagner and Russia</i> , a study of Wagner's influence on Russian thought, will talk about Russia and Wagner and opera, all of which have featured in her writings.	Goethe Institut 2PM
Tuesday March 10 NB WEEKDAY	The engaging Dr Heath Lees will endeavour to place his film " Wagner's Ring; A Tale Told in Music " against the whole 100-year existing gallery of Wagner film, and draw out the various ups and downs, highs and lows, successes and failures of a selection of these.	Goethe Institut NB Time: 6PM
Sunday May 24	AGM, followed by Recital with young artists, who have been the recipients of various Wagner Society Awards – German, Eisteddfod and Lisa Gasteen National Opera School.	Goethe Institut 2PM
June: date TBC	In June, we hope to bring you a seminar discussing aspects of <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> .	Venue & time to be notified

Advice about changes to the Program will be emailed to people who have given their email addresses to the Society's Webmaster; the latest updates will also be available on the Society's webpage: www.wagner.org.au. Admission to each event will be \$20 a Member, and \$25 per non-Member, unless otherwise indicated.

Goethe-Institut address 90 Ocean Street Woollahra (corner of Jersey Road)

the three instruments, showing both her skill and the difference in their pitch and timbre. She explained that Wagner wanted an instrument that would fill in what he heard as a gap in the timbres between the trombone and French horn. He was seeking "A sound that could demonstrate the nobility of the Gods." From the player's perspective, Marnie lamented that, as a hybrid instrument, it is never fully in tune, but she hopes that the new ones on order for the Sydney Symphony will be improved! Marnie then shared with us her sense of trepidation that, as well as being the eighth French horn in Melbourne, which gave her the responsibility of starting the whole Cycle, she also had to play the *Wagnertuben!*

Marnie informed us that Wagner never finalised his notation for the *Wagnertuben* in The Ring Cycle. The website dedicated to the *Wagnertuben* [your Editor kids you not!] describes this confusion as follows:

In the score of *Die Walküre*...the tenor tubas are written in E-flat and the bass tubas in B-flat in an attempt to cater to the band instruments [French horns, etc] that first played the parts and also to the limitations of the players: the parts were thus considered more comfortable for reading. However, the keys of B-flat and F were to be retained in copying the orchestral parts and the music had to be transposed into these keys.

This was the start of the tangled issue of transpositions in writing for the Wagner tuba. Wagner, however, had a change of heart and the parts were not transposed but notated exactly as they had been written in the autograph manuscript. Was this simply indecision on his part or an uncertainty as to the employment and transposition of the new instruments? Wagner evidently preferred E-flat/B-flat notation....

While there is now a fully corrected score used in Bayreuth, the Melbourne performers and conductor had to work out the correct notation. You can read more at www.wagner-tuba.com/wagnertuba_melton/trials_transpositions.htm.

BEYOND THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS: WAGNER'S MUSICAL LEGACY

ANTONY ERNST SEMINAR
SATURDAY 23 AUGUST 2014

- Colleen Chesterman

Regrettably, I wasn't able to attend Antony Ernst's seminar, but, as Colleen Chesterman's précis shows, it was clearly another great success for Antony and the Society.



Dr Antony Ernst presenting to the Wagner Society Seminar

Antony presented his talk to over 80 members and friends. For well over 5 hours, speaking as usual without notes and with many musical examples, he considered how composers came to terms with Wagner's musical innovations. We heard of Bruckner's adoption of heavier musical forces, of Verdi's retreat into silence after *Aida* until after Wagner's death, of Humperdinck's brilliant adaptation of Wagner's chromaticism to interpret a Brothers Grimm folktale *Hansel und Gretel*.

So much influence: from Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder*, based on Norse myths, to Chausson's *Pelleas et Mélisande*. He showed how Wagner transformed stage design, influencing theatre designers Alfred Roller and Adolphe Appia. Emphasising the impact of wars and economic depression on opera, he suggested that, in the 20th century, Wagner's major influence has been on film scores, from Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* to Howard Shore's *Lord of the Rings*. He asked what would have happened had Wagner been shot on those Dresden barricades in 1848? And answered it with a summary of how much poorer our musical culture would have been.

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NIKOLAUS LEHNHOFF'S PARSIFAL (2004): A LANDMARK IN WAGNER PRODUCTION - 15 JUNE 2014 by Prof. Michael Ewans

Professor Ewans has kindly provided this abstract of his very well received talk to the Society. He has also given your editor his responses to some questions raised by Members at the talk - at the end of this abstract. Ed.

Lehnhoff's production of *Parsifal* was staged in London, San Francisco and Chicago in 2004 before being presented at the Baden-Baden Festival, and there recorded for broadcast and subsequent release on DVD by Opus Arte. There are two aspects of Wagner's last 'stage festival play' which are hard for twenty-first century spectators to come to terms with; its racism - only those of pure blood may be Knights of the Grail - and its hostile view of women. *Parsifal* treats female sexuality, unremittingly, as an evil temptation, and Kundry's seductive oriental costume in Act II is nineteenth-century German and French code for the exotic and erotic danger of miscegenation, which threatened upright northern European Christian males, tempted by women from inferior eastern or southern races.

Lehnhoff's production mounts a critique of the work *from within, during an actual performance*. He started from the premise that the world of the Knights, has sunk into decay. The Knights had initial good intentions to help people, but no longer uphold their original goals; they are now celebrating a ritual which has become meaningless. The decay of the Grail community is evident in a number of touches in Act I, including acts of violence against Kundry, and against Amfortas when he refuses to uncover the Grail.

Lehnhoff's dissent from Wagner is however most marked by the central role which Waltraud Meier as Kundry plays in Act III. At the end of scene 1 Kundry falls onto Parsifal's chest and they embrace tightly, each with both arms clasped around the other. In this way a deep affinity and empathy between them is established, which then becomes crucial to Lehnhoff's final scene. There, it is not Kundry who dies, but much more appropriately Amfortas, who feels that since the

new king has come, he can now receive the death for which he had begged repeatedly, before the coming of Parsifal. He places his crown on Parsifal's head, and then dies in his arms. And then Parsifal, led by Kundry, rejects Montsalvat. He gently takes off the crown which Amfortas has placed on his head, and lays it on the skeletal corpse of Titurel; then he looks up at Kundry. She beckons to Parsifal, and he follows her slowly out of the temple towards a light which shines from outside, leading them to a new and different life. Seven individual Knights detach themselves one by one during the final bars from the adoring group surrounding the spear, and follow them. Lehnhoff suggests that these Knights see that 'there might be another way, without the religious ideology which has led to many of the greatest crimes committed in the name of God'.

Lehnhoff returns to *Parsifal* the power which in a straight production it no longer holds, because of its racism and its narrow, frightened male view of women as evil seducers. In my view, Lehnhoff has given the 'sacred stage festival play' back to us today, as a work which we can accept and live by.

Follow-up by Professor Ewans to questions after the *Parsifal* lecture on 15 June 2014.

Recommended Nikolaus Lehnhoff DVDs: Janáček *Kát'a Kabanová* Davis Glyndebourne Arthaus; Schreker *Die Gezeichneten* Nagano Salzburg Festival EuroArts; Wagner *Parsifal* Nagano Baden-Baden Opus Arte.

Not recommended; Strauss *Elektra*. Get the Friedrich/Böhm DGG film instead!

The book I quoted from about Kundry's tears is Dieter Borchmeyer. (1991) *Richard Wagner: Theory and Theatre*. Oxford. Clarendon Press. My own book *Words, Music and Stage Action in Opera* (working title) is currently under negotiation with a publisher.

VICTORIAN OPERA PRODUCTION OF *DER FLIEGENDE HOLLÄNDER* - FEBRUARY 2015

From the Victorian Opera's website: "In St Kilda's iconic Palais Theatre witness the famous tale of the legendary ghost ship come to life with the use of ground-breaking 3D technology. Richard Wagner's first masterpiece is transformed by Victorian Opera and two of the greatest living Wagner singers. Powerhouse bass Vitalij Kowaljow, a regular at La Scala and Covent Garden, takes on the role of The Dutchman, forever cursed to sail the seas. Soprano Petra Lang, 'a fireball of ferocity and passion' and a veteran of European opera houses, breathes life into Senta, the village girl who dreams of saving the doomed captain."

CREATIVE TEAM: Conductor Richard Mills; with the Victorian Opera Chorus with the Australian Youth Orchestra; Director Roger Hodgman; Set and Visual Design Matt Scott

and Christina Smith; Lighting Design Matt Scott; Costume Design Teresa Negroponte; Digital scenography is by Deakin Motion.Lab.

CAST: The Dutchman Vitalij Kowaljow; Senta Petra Lang; Erik Bradley Daley; Daland Warwick Fyfe; Mary Liane Keegan; Steersman Carlos E Barcenas.

VENUE: Palais Theatre, St Kilda

DATES: Saturday 14 February 2015, 7.30pm; Tuesday 17 February 2015, 7.30pm; Thursday 19 February 2015, 7.30pm

TICKETS: available via Victorian Opera's 2015 Season Packages, or call 1300 822 849; Single tickets will be on sale Monday, 13 October 2014. www.victorianopera.com.au/what-s-on/the-flying-dutchman/#TabOverview.

THE SOPHIA RING: JULY 2014

by Terry and Julie Clarke

We left our yacht in a harbour close to Rome and travelled to Sofia, capital of Bulgaria, for the Ring at the end of July. Bulgaria is the poorest country in the European Community but rich in history and culture. Apart from a few potholes in the pavements the towns are clean although designer shops at street level belie the crumbling buildings above. The people, however, are extremely pleasant and helpful. English is almost universally spoken, there were even English surtitles at the opera.

There was only one cycle of what they claim to be the first ever fully staged performance of Wagner's tetralogy in the Balkans and these have been lovingly prepared over the last five years. The enthusiasm of all the participants was palpable and their determination that their visitors should enjoy their stay and appreciate the Bulgarian artistry was overwhelming. Coming from Australia we seemed to be the object of special attention by the organisers and were interviewed four times for Bulgarian television.

The performances themselves were notable for the complexity of the stage management and the lighting. The basic stage motif was a circular elevated ring which could be cut in two and moved in a variety of shapes, as the River Rhine, the magic fire, Dragon's cave and much of the stage setting. There were also a number of large cones which were used to represent Valhalla and power. They also double as horses for the Valkyries. The almond-like mandorla, a swing for birth and death, also turned into a boat for the journey along the Rhine. Much of the lighting was by projection. This was used throughout to make for extremely bright and colourful scenes. There was a remarkably effective flowery spring for *Winterstürme* and fire for Brünnhilde's rock and the final scene was breathtaking.

This is the first opera Nikolai Panayotov, a notable Bulgarian abstract artist, has designed. The sets and costumes were colourful, timeless and futuristic, if sometimes a little strange. Hunding, dressed as a kind of Korean warrior had one and a half metre horns projecting sideways from his shoulders and Fricka, in Act Two of *Die Walküre* appeared with huge white plastic cloak which ballooned out behind her. Since she arrived on a moving walkway above the stage, which juddered, rather than moving smoothly, this appendage bounced in a way alarming for the audience as well as the poor singer. There seemed to be no expense spared in the costume department, no boring single get-up for Siegfried and even Gutrune had four changes of dress.

All the singers were Bulgarian, apart from the first of three Brünnhilde's, who was Mongolian, although she studied at the Conservatoire in Sofia from 1986. She had to sing the whole of the second act of *Die Walküre* standing high on a narrow cone, which was wheeled around by a stage hand. This precarious position made her singing somewhat strained.

The Bulgarian National Opera provided two excellent Siegfrieds: Martin Ilev also played Siegmund and Konstantin Andreev whose ringing voice stayed with him right to the end of his eponymous role. Not so his Brünnhilde who transposed all her high notes down an octave so that the final note of the love duet was completely lost. The Brünnhilde in *Götterdämmerung* was strong throughout.

The orchestra numbered 93, filled the pit to overflowing and produced a rich and exciting sound. They were conducted by Erich Wächter, one of only two Germans to be involved in the project. The other was the 81 year old Richard Trimborn who has been involved in 11 Rings and has donated the last five years to this project.

There was so much to enjoy in this Ring that criticism is invidious. The credit for the success of the project must go to the Director, Plamen Kartaloff, whose dream this has been for many years. His desire to express what he feels about the Ring meant that every stage picture was packed with meaning and nuance, much more than one could comprehend on a single viewing. He meticulously follows the text and music.

Thus a splendid and fascinating production! It is to be repeated from 4-9 July 2015. I would urge anyone who may be near Sofia next year to attend. It is inexpensive and you will be treated royally.

FOR SALE: Rare Arthur Rackham Wagner Volumes available for purchase by Wagner Society in NSW Member

A member of the Society has very generously donated two volumes of Arthur Rackham's illustrated libretti of the four Ring operas: *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* in Volume 1, and *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung* in Volume 2. These are limited editions. They are dated 1910, numbered 96 and signed by Rackham himself. The illustrations are extraordinarily vivid. Patricia Bailie, a highly experienced antiquarian book expert and a member of the Society, has examined the books and written the following comments:

"Two handsome vellum bound volumes, Arthur Rackham: Illustrations of The Ring Libretti. *Der Ring des Nibelungen – Ein Bühnenfestspiel für drei Tage und einen Vorabend, von Richard Wagner*. Two volumes. Contains libretti of: *Das Rheingold* & *Die Valkyrie* (vol. I) and *Siegfried* & *Götterdämmerung* (vol. II). Ruetten und Loenig, Frankfurt A/M. 1910-1911. Limited edition, signed by Arthur Rackham. This is no.96. 25 x 19cm, bound in original publisher's full vellum, gilt titles, t.e.g., others untrimmed. Gilt medallion with 'RW' to front cover.

"The renowned illustrator, Rackham, has given us here splendid illustrations of Wagner's heroic Ring Cycle. There are 64 tipped-in, tissue guarded, colour plates. The set presents very well indeed. There are a few marks and some very light soiling to the vellum bindings and occasional light browning or foxing to some pages. Overall, a handsome copy, in excellent condition, of this rare set.

"Note on the set numbering: For the American and British editions, both also dated 1910 & 1911, some claim that the edition was 1100 or, some, 1150 copies, all signed by the artist. This set is numbered in Rackham's hand as no. 96, making it an early printing of the edition."

Patricia also made enquiries about any other similar volumes of the Rackham libretti. There are currently two sets on the internet market, although it is unlikely that they are as early as no.96. Both are selling for a little over \$A5,000. In the circumstances, we thought that we should make these two volumes available for purchase by our members for the starting price of \$4,000. Anyone who is interested in purchasing these unique volumes should contact Society President, Jane Mathews, by email at mathewsj@ozemail.com.au.

BAYREUTH FESTSPIELE EXTENDS KATHARINA WAGNER CONTRACT; FUTURE PROGRAM

There have been many press reports that the contract of the 36-year-old great-granddaughter of Richard Wagner has been extended by five years, as announced by the financial director of the Festival, Heinz-Dieter Sense in July 2014. Ms Wagner's current contract expires at the end of the 2015 festival season. "The new contract by Katharina Wagner provides only minor changes to the previous tasks." Read more at www.welt.de/kultur/buehne-konzert/article130151010/Bayreuth-verlaengert-Vertrag-mit-Katharina-Wagner.html.

Rick Fulker for Deutsche Well online (23 July 2014) reports how the federal and state governments have increased their control of the Festspiele:

...the festival venue known as the Festspielhaus, designed by Richard Wagner expressly for the performance of his own works, is now partly obscured behind a textile façade replica: the World Cultural Heritage site has a leaky roof and crumbling exterior. The complete restoration at a cost of 30 million euros (\$40.4 million) will be financed mostly by public funds. In return, the national government and the state of Bavaria are now majority shareholders in the enterprise and will have greater influence over decisions, including on the future directorship of the festival. Up to now in its entire history, the event has always featured Wagner family members at the helm. Read more at www.dw.de/calm-after-the-storm-as-bayreuth-festival-opens/a-17804285.

Norman Lebrecht reported on Slippedisc.com (28 July 2014) a tentative schedule for the next five years at Bayreuth, including the apparent cancellation (for "budgetary reasons") of the 2015 *Tristan und Isolde*: "2016 The director Jonathan Meese, who has faced criminal charges for incitement, has

pledged not to introduce Nazi symbols in *Parsifal*. 2017 Barrie Kosky, director of Berlin's Komische Opera, will stage *Meistersinger*. He's ambivalent about Bayreuth but says 'there's no escaping Wagner'. Kosky is thought to be the first Aussie to direct on the Green Hill (a breakthrough oddly unreported by Aussie media). 2018 New *Lohengrin* with Anna Netrebko as Elsa [imagine the wild fights for tickets to this production – Ed]. 2019 New *Tannhäuser*, conducted by 'young international maestro.' 2020 New Ring, probably conducted by Thielemann [another all-out battle for tickets?? Ed]."

One of the commenters on Lebrecht's page posted this response: "According to Die Welt, in 2015 there will be a new *Tristan* with Eva-Maria Westbroek and Steven Gould, conducted by Christian Thielemann and directed by Katharina Wagner." So, we will need to wait to find out the truth. Two other commenters reflected the range of opinions about Barrie Kosky's status as an opera director: "I'm not really enthusiastic about Kosky, but at least he's someone who knows what is an opera."

"Barrie Kosky is one of the most talented and experienced directors working in Germany today. Although Australian by birth, he's German by culture, and he's steeped in Germany's language and culture. He's confirmed the Komische's role as the powerhouse of modern opera production in Germany – adept both at directing, and at producing too. Die Meistersinger's central theme is what the true culture of Germany should be – Sachs and the Masters talk continuously about this theme. I am sure Barrie Kosky will deliver in spades on this theme – a fine decision from the Bayreuth management." See more at: <http://slippedisc.com/2014/07/bayreuth-leaks-an-australian-debut/#sthash.R7znK40r.dpuf>.

ELIZABETH CONNELL PRIZE FINALS IN SYDNEY

by Colleen Chesterman & Leona Geeves

The Elizabeth Connell prize, in memory of the great dramatic soprano, will be awarded for the first time this year. The Wagner Society has donated the 2nd prize of \$5000, to be called the **Wagner Society in NSW Prize**.

After auditions and semi-finals held in Sydney, London and New York, finalists have been chosen: Tracy Cox (USA); Lucinda-Mirikata Deacon (Australia); Diane Kalinowski (USA) Anna Patrys (Poland) Justine Viani (Britain/Australia). The finals will be held in the Verbruggen Hall, Sydney Conservatorium of Music, on September 13 at 4pm. The finals for the Bel Canto Award will also take place in the same concert. So there will be 11 fine young singers.

Lucinda-Mirikata Deacon sang Kundry in the Sydney Chamber Opera production *Climbing Toward Midnight* staged in April 2013. The Wagner Society was principal sponsor. Lucinda-Mirikata is also a finalist in the Opera and Arts Support Group Vocal Scholarship, and a finalist in the 2014 McDonalds Operatic Aria. She has also very recently reached the finals of the Melbourne Herald Sun Aria.

Of the Bel Canto Awards finalists, soprano, **Rachel Bate** won the **Society's Wagner Aria Prize** in the 2013 Sydney Eisteddfod. Tenor, **Matthew Reardon**, a Melba Trust Scholar, received a **Society German Language Award** and sang in the Society's *Wagner and Beyond* concert earlier this year as well as the post AGM recital, and recently in the finals of the Melbourne German Opera Award won the Audience Prize. Matthew is also a finalist in the Opera and Arts Support Group Vocal Scholarship.

Thomas Strong, who also received a **Society German Language Award**, has also reached the finals of the Melbourne Herald Sun Aria.

Dramatic soprano, Justine Viani, is also a semifinalist in the Elizabeth Connell Prize for Dramatic Sopranos. She studied at the Royal Northern College of Music and the Welsh International Academy of Voice. Originally from Carnarvon, Western Australia, Justine's family emigrated when she was a child to the UK. Justine still has family in New South Wales.

We will highlight the winners in our next issue.

WOTAN, ERWACHE! EXHIBITION BY SAMUEL GALILEO QUINTEROS AT GALERIE POMPOM, 25 JUNE-20 JULY

by Terence Watson

Quinteros's exhibition was advertised on the back of the last Quarterly. Australian born Quinteros lives and works in Sydney and earned a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Hons) at Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney. Your Editor took a look towards the end of the exhibition. I was quite surprised at what I saw. Imagine 7 paintings in Japanese anime style, with female figures representing **all** the roles in the particular scenes Quinteros chose to illustrate (and by extension the whole Ring Cycle). You can see images of the paintings at Quinteros's Tumblr website pages at: [http://sgquinteros.tumblr.com/tagged/catalog%3A2014:Das Rheingold](http://sgquinteros.tumblr.com/tagged/catalog%3A2014:DasRheingold) sii Wotan, Gemahl, erwache! (Wotan, husband, awake!); *Rheingold* siv Weh! Noch blitzt ihr Blick zu mir her... (Ah, her gaze still gleams on me here...); *Die Walküre* A1si Erfrischt ist der Mut (My spirits are refreshed); *Die Walküre* A2siv Doch Eines sag' mir, du Ew'ge! (But tell me one thing, you Immortal!); *Siegfried* A2siii Nur Sehrende kennen den Sinn (Only lovers know its meaning); *Götterdämmerung* A1sii Hier sitz' ich zur Wacht (Here I sit on watch); *Götterdämmerung* A2siv: Schwurwissender Eideshort / Nachthüter (Oath-witness and lord of vows/Guardian of night).

It was part of Quinteros's intention it seems to challenge our usual understanding of The Ring Cycle not only as a battle between power and love, as is often claimed, but also masculinity and femininity. Rather like seeing a Globe Theatre production of a Shakespeare play with an all-female cast, this series of paintings forced me to think about the kinds of relations that might exist between women playing the roles usually accorded men. There was also an undoubted sexual undercurrent in the works that is reflected in Wagner's own theorising: that is, there is an element of female homoeroticism, especially from a male perspective. Wagner's essay *The Art-work of the Future* features imagery of women representing three arts (Dance, Poetry and Music) dancing erotically together and kissing each other, so there is some justification for Quinteros's exploration of this inversion of roles.

According to the Gallery handout about the paintings:

The exhibition's title refers to the character who is arguably the protagonist of the cycle, Wotan, the head of the old gods. Following a line of thought that reads the narrative as an allegory of broader social evolution, Wotan represents the personified force of humanity's collective, historical transcendental impulse, and specifically acting as an agent of authority stemming from transcendental ideals (the law). It is in their relation to this principle that all the other figures in the narrative are defined. The story of the Ring cycle follows a trajectory of increasing dissolution brought about by a primordial fracture of innocence that has caused truth to become incommensurable with virtue and love, ending with a total collapse of the world and the beginning of a new order [<http://sgquinteros.tumblr.com/wotanerwachetext>].

This is a fine summary of the music-drama's overall meaning, especially as it reflects Wagner's early Romantic influences, from such philosophers as Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, and such artists as Goethe, Schiller, Hölderlin and Friedrich Schlegel (whether or not Quinteros was aware of this influence). An apparently anonymous review from *Sneaky.com* summarises the many elements out of which Quinteros constructs his images:

Quinteros' paintings contain many curious references to both contemporary and pre-modern cultures. The scenes resemble Japanese dance and opera forms such as Nogaku and Kyōgen, but the performers are often displaced, reconfigured as Cosplay-Zoku characters in blocky, geometric video-game worlds resembling Tetris and Super-Mario. The virtual world is a digital successor to the dream world that comes in and out of mythology including the Norse mythology that inspired Wagner's Ring Cycle narrative. Quinteros' latest exhibition, *Wotan, Erwache!*, references the Ring Cycle, and continues the artist's investigation of the theatrical and the mythical. The selection of the opera is itself a fascinating and appropriate choice for Quinteros, as Wagner incorporated influences as diverse as epic Greek poetry and the Icelandic mythology of *Völsunga* saga and the Poetic Edda into his four sprawling acts, which total around fifteen hours in length. This opens Quinteros' work up to a multitude of possible readings, especially coupled with the vastness of cyberculture. Like *Skyenet*, Wagner's Ring Cycle ends in a kind of apocalypse, an armageddon that destroys and restarts the world. www.sneakymag.com/art/sexy-sexy-painting.

SNEAKY describes itself as "...a Sydney and Melbourne based magazine about art, music, culture, creativity, design, fashion, girls and boys, religion, mental illness, technology, insanity, race, the streets, movies, whiskey, tequila, weird people, oddball lifestyles, history, failure, deviants, friends, life, cocktails, and fun." A Wagnerian could have much fun in identifying symbols from the opera: helmets, swords, goblets, spears, and the gold, but might have more difficulty working out who the figures are and whether their positioning in the paintings is meant to add to the symbolic significance of the works (because of the "conversion" of all the males characters into females).

The comments quoted above from the review, in fact, are quite illuminating about Quinteros's purpose(s) in painting these seven works. The same cannot be said for the following extract from the Gallery handout, which your Editor finds almost impenetrable:

In relation to the paintings, Wagner's Ring acts as a substructure, a linear series of episodic configurations of motifs that have been recontextualised into new visual compositions within a matrix of contemporary themes, whilst retaining a reflection of the original work's mythological kernel through the archetypal images of the narrative's key symbols.The works of this exhibition extend the premise of that moment of transcendent authority's 'sleep of reason' into a neo-capitalist cybernetic dream-world: a fictitious future, an endless metropolis of steel and glass envelopes; and within, a harem of packages, seams and signs. Role-playing upon this resplendent commercial stage are virtual idols heralding the "the first sound from the future," paradigms of femininity and youthitude. The actors' homogeneity stems from a thematic binary: in diametric opposition to the ideal of the law is the passive ideal of the young-girl figure. [<http://sgquinteros.tumblr.com/wotanerwachetext>]

I think it means that Quinteros was having fun translating his perception of Wagner's work into contemporary imagery to show that Wagner's critique of capitalism is still relevant and that a feminist critique of power, and contemporary fetishising of youth culture, can be imported into The Ring Cycle. Indeed, there have been many productions of The Ring Cycle based on much less "theory" than Quinteros's interpretation.

On 11 May 2014, Julian Day interviewed Quinteros about his exhibition and you can listen to it on the ABCs Classical site www.abc.net.au/classic/content/2014/07/11/4044655.htm. Day introduced the program thus: "It's not often that we talk about silent paintings in a program about experimental music. However tonight you'll meet a young Sydney painter for whom Wagner is a central influence." As part of his program, Day played two works based on motifs from Wagner's operas.

The first was by Dieter Schnebel (1930) using the *Freitagzaubermusik* from *Parsifal: Wagner-Idyll für Kammerensemble und Singstimme ad lib* (1975). (*Singstimme* is a mixture of *Sprechstimme* or speaking in pitch and singing.). "Schnebel was originally a strict serial composer... before an increasing anti-dogmatism spurred him on to develop experimental concept and process composition methods... in which he exploits the use of the human voice in previously unknown dimensions ranging from whispering and wheezing to screaming."

www.schott-international.com/shop/php/Proxy.php?purl=/essh/persons/featured/17066/index.html. You can listen to the work with Katarina Rasinski, soprano, and the RSO Saarbrücken, with conductor Hans Zender, at www.youtube.com/watch?v=HSQumCTemUk.

The second, much longer and more complex piece is by Hans Werner Henze (1926-2012): *Tristan* (1973), Preludes for piano, tape and orchestra (Préludes für Klavier, Tonbänder

und Orchester). You listen to a performance with Homero Francesch, piano; Kölner Rundfunk-Sinfonie-Orchester, conducted by Hans Werner Henze at www.youtube.com/watch?v=bgjm9H5u0Q0 (a recording of Westdeutscher Rundfunk Köln, 1975).

Stephen Downes describes it as "A large-scale work..[that].. explicitly explores Henze's creative and wider psychological stance with regard to Wagner" [2011 *Hans Werner Henze: Tristan* (1973). London: Ashgate Publishing.]. Wikipedia says:

Scored for piano, tape and full orchestra, it takes the form of a homage to Richard Wagner's opera *Tristan und Isolde*, with the piano providing preludes to a series of widely divergent material, both live and on tape, including direct quotations from Brahms's First Symphony and Chopin's Funeral March, a birdsong-like treatment on tape of a recording of a soloist singing Isolde's part and a child reading extracts from Joseph Bédier's account of the death of Isolde (in the English translation by Hilaire Belloc) as well as a recording of a human heartbeat." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tristan_%28Henze%29

I liked the overall pastel grey, blue and pink colouring of the paintings, with each having a particular highlight colour, orange in one, acid yellow in another etc. The technical skill in executing the paintings is very impressive, explaining why Quinteros has been well received in the art world. I found the music more interesting than the paintings, but that reflects my sensory preference for hearing over seeing. For another perspective, you can read a plain English and informative review by Chloé Wolifson on the *Raven* website: www.ravencontemporary.com.au/review-samuel-quinteros-wotan-erwache.

AUSTRALIAN BARITONE, JAMES ROSER, AT ERL IN AUSTRIA WORKING ON THE RING CYCLE by Leona Geeves

James Roser, a young baritone, whom the Society has helped financially in the past, is making a name for himself covering Wotan in *Das Rheingold* and Gunther in *Götterdämmerung* in "The 24 Hour Ring" at the Tiroler Festspiele in Erl, Austria. He has previously sung in *Rigoletto* there as well. He is not the only Australian appearing in the Summer Festival there. Well-known Sydney vocal coach, **Sharolyn Kimmorley**, has long been working there in the season and this year, young Melbourne mezzo, **Alexandra Sherman**, has been singing the roles of Erda, Schwertleite and Gringerde. In addition, **Brett Berthold**, the Principal Double Bass of the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra, has just played two cycles of *The Ring* there. Gustav Kuhn is the instigator of the Festival and the conductor.

James came later to singing after studying as an environmental scientist. He received such major awards as Mietta Song Recital Award, Vienna State Opera Award, and the Britten-Pears Young Artist Award. He has sung recitals in Australia, Germany and Austria, Canada and the UK, where he appeared as Curly in *Oklahoma* at the Rainhill Music Festival. He has sung with Opera Australia and appeared in operas such as *Rigoletto*, *Carmen*, *Don Giovanni*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Così fan tutte*, *Owen Wingrave*, *Hänsel und Gretel*, *Werther*, *The Medium*, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, and two roles, Der Feenkönig and Harald in Wagner's early opera *Die Feen* (April-May 2012 in the Opera Tent with the Vienna State Opera).

Apart from Lieder recitals and oratorio, James has also performed the role of Curly in *Oklahoma* at the Rainhill Music Festival. He has appeared in Australia and abroad in concerts and recitals for Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, ArtSong NSW, Chamber Music Australia, Britten-Pears Young Artist Programme, Oxford Lieder Festival and the Franz Schubert Institut. James has been broadcast in Australia on 2MBSFM (now Fine Music 102.5) and 3MBSFM and ABC Classic FM, as well as ORF and Servus TV in Austria. Recently he has appeared in recitals, accompanied by Manon Fischer-Dieskau, at the Gesellschaft Für Musiktheater in Vienna.

This European summer, the Erl Music Festival twice presented Wagner's *Ring Cycle* during two July weekends, and again during one weekend. The "weekend" Ring starts with *Das Rheingold* on Friday evening and the three operas of the Tetralogy starting at 5pm on Saturday and ending at 5pm on Sunday.

The performances are semi-staged in the new Festival venue, with the orchestra on rostra at the back of stage, divided by a scrim with the costumed singers at the front. The singers are excellent and young, with the two giants the only singers familiar to most Wagner fans. They were Andrea Silvestrelli, singing Fafner, and the iconic Franz Hawlata, as Fasolt. They were accompanied by the Orchestra of the Tyrolean Festival Erl and a chorus of singers from Gustav Kuhn's Accademia di Montegal.

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(All website addresses used in this Newsletter are reproduced in the PDF version of the newsletter on the Wagner Society's website in the relevant article - Members Area)

FOR SALE RARE IBACH GRAND "RICHARD WAGNER" MODEL

This piano is an Ibach grand, model FL-14, catalogued as "small concert grand Richard Wagner". It was completed in May 1900 at Ibach's Barmen factory and then shipped to the London dealer from whom the present owner's family bought it and shipped it to Mudgee (NSW) where it has remained in the same house ever since.

In its May 2011 certification of the piano to the owner, Ibach noted that Ibach frequently lent pianos to Wagner (at home and on holidays), that parts of Parsifal were composed on an Ibach, that on the night before his death Wagner played on an Ibach to his wife, and that to commemorate their association, and with the consent of the Wagner family, Ibach styled its FL-14 model "Richard Wagner," which is prominently and ornately stamped into the iron frame.

The case is rosewood and in excellent condition. Overall length is 235cm. It has been regularly maintained and has been used for practice by performers at the Huntington Music Festival.

Asking price is \$25,000.

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