

# Maximise

*your enjoyment and understanding of*

# Wagner's music

Newsletter No. 124, March 2012

## In Memoriam

**ELIZABETH CONNELL 22 October 1946 - 18 February 2012**

The internationally acclaimed dramatic soprano Elizabeth Connell has died at the age of 65 of cancer - see article on page 5.

## President's Report

Welcome to the first newsletter for 2012.

We have a very exciting series of events lined up for this year. Details are set out later in this newsletter. The next meeting, on 25 March, promises to be a real highlight, featuring Maureen Wheeler, the major sponsor of the 2013 Melbourne Ring Cycle, and Richard Mills, who will be its conductor. Then, only a few days later, on Wednesday, 28 March, an evening fundraiser will take place at the Goethe Institute, featuring the erudite and entertaining Heath Lees, who will be talking about the women in Wagner's life and works.

However on the external front, the news is somewhat mixed. I will start with the Melbourne Ring and then report on the Bayreuth ticket situation. As you all no doubt know, Opera Australia (OA) will be mounting three cycles at the State Theatre in November and December next year. It is

a co-production with Houston Opera, and Neil Armfield is the director. There will be a stellar cast, including Juha Uusitalo as Wotan and Susan Bullock as Brünnhilde, and one of our members Deborah Humble as Erda and Waltraute. The venue is in many ways an excellent one, with a very large stage, but unfortunately not a very great seating capacity: it will accommodate approximately 1800 people. And here lies the problem.

It seems likely that tickets will be in short supply, particularly in the premium and A Reserve categories. Some time ago OA instituted a "Ring Leaders" programme, whereby donations of \$1,500, \$3,000, \$6,000 and \$12,000 gave donors the opportunity to purchase tickets in the category of their choice and (in relation to the larger donations) to the cycle of their choice. The number of tickets procurable in this manner increased, obviously, with the size of the donation. The tickets themselves are by no means cheap: premium reserve tickets for a full cycle are \$2,000 each, and A reserve are \$1,600. This is in addition to the donations. Nevertheless, OA has advised us that the response has been overwhelming and they are now only accepting donations of \$12,000 or more, as they are concerned that they will not be able to honour their obligation to provide seats, particularly in the premium and

**PATRON:**

**HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS:**

Simone Young AM  
Prof Michael Ewans  
Mr Richard King  
Mr Horst Hoffman  
Mr Joseph Ferfaglia

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT continued p.3** ►

**STOP PRESS 1: Das Rheingold Symposium – Brisbane.** The Symposium includes a range of interesting items to expand your knowledge of Wagner and the views of performers, such as Simone Young. Full details are included later in this Newsletter. The date is: Friday, 24 August 2012 (the day between the two *Rheingold* performances) at the Conservatorium Theatre, Brisbane. Costs: \$71.75 per person. Tickets sales will open on Monday 12th March, and may be purchased at Qtix.

**STOP PRESS 2:** *Das Rheingold* ticket sales have opened – so get in quickly, if you haven't booked already.

**STOP PRESS 3:** Friday, 29 and Saturday, 30 June: Deborah Voigt in a program of Wagner and Richard Strauss in the Concert Hall, with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, conductor Sir Andrew Davis. Bookings are open.

## For Your **Diary**

2012		
Monday, 4 June (6:30PM)	<i>Siegfried Idyll</i> – Richard Gill in the Sydney Symphony's <i>Discovery</i> program	Sydney Opera House
Friday, 29 and Saturday, 30 June	Deborah Voigt in a program of Wagner and Richard Strauss in the Concert Hall, accompanied by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Sir Andrew Davis	Sydney Opera House
Wellington: Sun, 22 July (3 PM), Christchurch: Wed, 25 July (5 PM) and Auckland: Sat, 28 July (4PM)	<i>Die Walküre</i> in New Zealand with Simon O'Neill Tickets on sale on Monday, 16 January 2012	New Zealand
Thursday, 9 (1:30PM), Friday 10 August (8PM) Saturday, August 11 (2PM)	Wagner under the Sails: The Opening Gala Revisited – Simone Young conducts the Sydney Symphony with Soprano Christine Brewer in excerpts from <i>Die Meistersinger</i> , <i>Tannhäuser</i> , <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> , and <i>Götterdämmerung</i>	Sydney Opera House
23 August and 25 August	<b>Wagner Society in NSW Patron Simone</b> Young and the Hamburg State Opera in two concert performances of <i>Das Rheingold</i> , with a seminar on the day of 24 August.	Queensland Performing Arts Centre
2013		
Nov - Dec 2013	The Ring Cycle - Melbourne: Cycle 1: November 18 to 25. Cycle 2: November 27 to December 4. Cycle 3: December 6 to 13.	Melbourne Opera Theatre

## Meetings **Dates & Coming Events**

DATE	EVENTS - 2012	TIME & LOCATION
25 March	<b>The Melbourne 'Ring'</b> . Maureen Wheeler, Principal Donor, and Richard Mills, Conductor, discuss their shared involvement in the 2013 'Ring' Cycle in Melbourne. DVD at 12.30: Part 2 of <i>Der Fliegende Holländer</i> starring Juha Uusitalo in the title role.	Goethe Institut 2pm
28 March	<b>SPECIAL EVENING FUND RAISING EVENT – Heath Lees: The Women in Wagner's Life and Art - See Information on back page</b>	Goethe Institut 2pm
22 April	<b>Emotional Noise: the relationship between sound, music, visual image and emotions. (Wagner's sound world.)</b> Catherine Gleeson and Andrew Belletti. (Australian Film, Television and Radio School) DVD at 12.30: <i>Max Lorenz: Wagner's Mastersinger - Hitler's Siegfried</i>	Goethe Institut 2pm
20 May	<b>Annual General Meeting Wagner's Birthday Celebration</b> Lisa Harper-Brown - Young Dramatic Soprano - with Stephen Mould – Piano. A Program of Richard Wagner's works: Elsa's Dream <i>Lohengrin</i> ; <i>Wesendonck Lieder</i> ; "Der Männer Sippe" <i>Die Walküre</i> . See back page for more details. DVD at 12.30pm: 'The Golden Ring: the making of Solti's 'Ring'	Goethe Institut 2pm
17 June	<b>Sins of the Father: a story about Liszt and Wagner, with musical illustrations.</b> (by Jessica Duchon) Presented by Damien Beaumont (ABC Classic FM) <b>In Conversation with Deborah Humble – Erda &amp; Waltraute in the Melbourne Ring</b> <b>**MEETING COMMENCES 1PM. NO DVD SCREENING.</b>	Goethe Institut 1pm
8 July	<b>Off the record and between the lines.</b> Peter Bassett talks about his new book <b>1813 Wagner and Verdi: A celebration.</b> Popular lecturer and Wagner expert, Peter Bassett, with the details of his newly-published book – see back page DVD at 12.30pm: Act1 of The Royal Danish Opera's production of <i>Tannhäuser</i> , with Stig Andersen in the title role.	Goethe Institut 2pm
12 August	<b>Our New Patron Visits:</b> Simone Young meets and greets the Wagner Society in NSW	Goethe Institut 2pm
16 September	In Conversation with John Pickering and Members' Feedback: Bayreuth 2012 DVD at 12.30pm: TBC	Goethe Institut 2pm
21 October	In Conversation with John Wegner DVD at 12.30pm: TBC	Goethe Institut 2pm
Date TBC	End of Year Christmas Party - please bring a plate.	Goethe Institut 2pm
<p><b>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: <a href="http://www.wagner.org.au">www.wagner.org.au</a>. Admission to each event will be \$20 a Member, and \$25 per non-Member, unless otherwise indicated.</b></p>		
<p><b>Goethe-Institut address 90 Ocean Street Woollahra (corner of Jersey Road)</b></p>		



## Committee 2010 - 2011

<b>President</b>	Jane Mathews	9360 9822
<b>Vice President</b>	Julian Block	9337 6978
<b>Vice President &amp; Newsletter Editor</b>	Terence Watson	8097 9797
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	Tony Jones	0412 57 2624
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	Katie French	9460 3346
<b>Public Officer</b>	Alasdair Beck	9358 3922

## President's Report continued

A reserve categories. This is wonderful news for OA, but less so for Wagner devotees, who might find themselves struggling to obtain tickets, particularly in premium and A reserve. Membership of a Wagner Society does not, I am afraid, give priority in the obtaining of tickets. Priority is afforded, in descending order, to artist sponsors, Ring leaders (according to the amount of their donation), OA patrons, OA subscribers, and finally to the general public.

However, there might be an opportunity for some of our members to obtain tickets, at least in A reserve, by the following means. I have been negotiating with OA about prospective benefits to our members if we, as a Society, were to sponsor an artist in the Ring. Our artist of choice would be Deborah Humble, who will be singing both Erda and Waltraute, and will therefore be performing in all four operas. To sponsor her would cost \$30,000. This would carry an entitlement to purchase 30 tickets to the Melbourne Ring, at least in A reserve seats, and with first option after Ring leaders to premium reserve seats. It is anticipated that 10 seats would be made available for each cycle. The problem is that we, the NSW Society, do not have the funds to do this. It would only be possible if our members were to make substantial donations for that purpose, so that we received virtually the whole of the \$30,000. I am therefore writing separately to all Society members, seeking to know whether enough of you would be interested in participating in this donation to make it into a feasible proposition. In exchange, you would have the certainty of being able to purchase at least A-reserve tickets for what promises to be an extraordinary event.

The other piece of news relates to tickets to the Bayreuth Festival. As you will know, the NSW Wagner Society, in common with all Wagner Societies in the world, has for decades been receiving special allocations of Bayreuth tickets. We were therefore very surprised to learn earlier this year that this will now cease. There has long been criticism, particularly from within Germany, that too many seats are set aside for preferential groups, leaving an insufficient number for the general public, and leading to a waiting list of 8 or

more years. Following an audit by the German authorities last year, it was decided that this practice should cease. We were informed of this decision by a letter dated 14 December from Eva Wagner-Pasquier and Katherina Wagner, which we received at the beginning of this year. On 6 January 2012, I wrote to the Bayreuth and German authorities, on behalf of all Australian and New Zealand Wagner Societies. In the letter I referred to the contribution made by the Wagner Societies generally in focusing attention and maximising interest in the music of Richard Wagner, and the importance to our members of being able to attend the Bayreuth Festival. The letter is reproduced in full on our website. The response, dated 24 January 2012, from the Chairman of the Supervisory Board of the Bayreuth Festival confirmed the decision not to reserve a fixed share of tickets for Wagner Societies, but went on to say that "members of Wagner Societies shall be given limited priority on the existing waiting lists, which results in a shorter overall waiting period."

So it is not all bad news. The general waiting list will be significantly shorter than previously, particularly for members of Wagner Societies. As the President of the

### NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTS

Melbourne Ring Cycle Artist Sponsorship Program	P4
In Memoriam: Elizabeth Connell	P5
Details of Brisbane <i>Das Rheingold</i> Symposium	P6
The Year My Voice Broke – Lisa Gasteen	P7
<i>1813 - Wagner &amp; Verdi A Celebration</i> - Peter Bassett's New Book	P8
Solti's The Ring takes top spot as the greatest recording ever! - Katie French	P10
<i>The Humour of the Underman and Other Essays</i> By Francis Grierson - Terence Watson	P11
<i>Siegfried's Native Town</i> By Frederick Engels In <i>Works Of Frederick Engels, 1840</i> light on Wagner - Katie French	P13
Heath Lees: The Women in Wagner's Life and Art and Lisa Harper-Brown AGM special artist	Back Page



West Australian Richard Wagner Society said in a recent letter to me:

“The omens have been readily discernible for many years now and the present action can hardly be taken as shocking or unexpected. I have for several years now, personally urged our members to avail themselves of the opportunity to go to Bayreuth as the door was closing.”

In addition, the Friends of Bayreuth will continue to give us a limited allocation of tickets, consisting of two tickets to all operas, and two tickets to some of them.

Finally on this subject, we recently received a letter from the Richard Wagner Scholarship Foundation, which is

the sole beneficiary under the new scheme. Its previous allocation of 750 tickets each year has now been increased to 1,000, which will go to the scholars of that year, together with their supporters. So the emphasis from now on will be on supporting young and emerging talent: something that we can hardly criticise, given that it forms a significant part of our own charter.

All relevant correspondence on this issue can be accessed through our website, using the Members Only access process, which requires a password: [www.wagner.org.au](http://www.wagner.org.au). Please note that the Members Only section of the Society's website also contains PDF versions of the last few years of Newsletters; the collection will be progressively built into a complete set of Newsletters.

## Wagner 2013 Bicentenary Donation Appeal

2013 marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of Richard Wagner and will be a significant international musical occasion. The Wagner Society hopes to pledge major support for the 2013 Wagner Bicentenary Celebrations. To achieve this, we have set up a 'Wagner 2013 Fund' and we need your support to help make this possible.

Making a donation to the 'Wagner 2013 Fund' will ensure the Society's contributions to the celebrations will be world class. We are considering a number of possible exciting projects. One of them involves supporting a major international artist participating in Opera Australia's Ring performances in November and December 2013. We will also continue to promote the life and works of Richard Wagner through performances and events in Sydney.

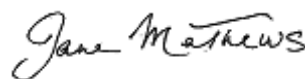
Donations are fully tax-deductible and can be made by cheque or money order by direct debit; details of the Society's bank account and postal address are given below.

### BANK DETAILS

Westpac Banking Corporation,  
Paddington NSW Branch  
Account Name: The Wagner Society  
BSB: 032040  
Account Number: 911323

Our postal address is:  
GPO Box 4574  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Thank you for considering this request for support - any donation to the Wagner Society's 'Wagner 2013 Fund' will make a difference.



The Hon Jane Mathews AO  
President  
Wagner Society in New South Wales

**THE DONATION FORM IS PRINTED ON THE INSIDE BACK COVER OF THE NEWSLETTER**

or can be downloaded at the Society's Website:

[www.wagner.org.au/site/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=84&Itemid=68](http://www.wagner.org.au/site/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=84&Itemid=68)

## Donations

The Society welcomes all donations and they can be addressed to the Treasurer, Wagner Society in NSW Inc, at the Society's GPO Box address shown on the back page of this Newsletter. Such donations help us to carry out our objective "to promote the music of Richard Wagner and to encourage a wider appreciation of the significance of his achievements." Donations are tax-deductible and receipts will be issued. The following donations have been received to the end of October 2011: Marlene and Paul Baumgartner; Jane and Philip Beeby; Sandra Beesley; Julian and Rosemary Block; John; Casey; Michael Chesterman; Rae and Russ Cottle; Alexander Cozzolino; Heinz Ebert; Jennifer Ferns; Francis Grill; Hugh Hallard; Margaret and Clare Hennessy; Patricia and Roy Hodson; Glenn Horne and Rujjiraporn Ekpunyaskul; Douglas Jamieson; Brett Johnson; Andrew Kaldor; Naomi Kaldor; Anna-Lisa Klettenberg; Hannelore Laundl; Gary Linnane; Jane Mathews; Pam and Ian McGaw; Patricia Moore; Diana-Rose Orr; Neville Pollard; Heather and Peter Roland; Mitzi Saunders; Ivan Shearer AM; Douglas Sturkey; Richard and Doreen Toltz; Terence Watson; Ann Weeden; Ross Whitelaw; Deanne Whittleston and Anthony Gregg.



# In Memorium: **Elizabeth Connell**

22 October 1946-18 February 2012

The internationally acclaimed dramatic soprano Elizabeth Connell has died at the age of 65 of cancer. Barry Millington has written a moving and comprehensive obituary for The Guardian newspaper from which the majority of the following extracts, focussing on Ms Connell's Wagner performances, have been taken. For Australians, Connell will be remembered among other things for her performances in Prokofiev's *War and Peace* in the 1973 opening of the Sydney Opera House

Born in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, she studied in Britain at the London Opera Centre and made her debut as a mezzo-soprano at Wexford as Varvara in *Kát'a Kabanová* (1972). After singing Ortrud in *Lohengrin* and Brangäne in *Tristan und Isolde* at Bayreuth (1980-82), she made the switch from mezzo to soprano in 1983, following which she took on a wide range of challenging roles including ...Elisabeth in *Tannhäuser*, Leonore in *Fidelio*, Norma, Senta in *The Flying Dutchman* and Ariadne. Then, just as she might have been expected to begin to wind down, she blossomed in her 60s in immensely taxing roles such as Turandot and Elektra, her voice sounding as youthful as ever.

The years 1975 to 1980, when she sang a number of mezzo roles with ENO, were a golden period for both her and her many London fans. Particularly outstanding in these years were her girlish, almost flirtatious Sieglinde (*Die Walküre*), an intensely moving Waltraute (*Götterdämmerung*) .... In the *Italian Girl in Algiers* she displayed impressive coloratura and an unexpected comic gift.

She also made her Covent Garden debut at this time as Violina in *I Lombardi* (1976). It was during her three-year stint at Bayreuth at the start of the 1980s that she began to realise that low-lying roles such as Kundry (a part she was covering) were not suitable for her. Reinventing herself as a dramatic soprano, she graced the major international stages – including La Scala, the Metropolitan, Munich, Hamburg, Glyndebourne, Vienna and San Francisco – with a succession of roles in which she demonstrated flawless diction, a dynamic stage personality that verged on the hyperactive and above all an engaging vocal quality.

Her recordings included...operatic scenes by Wagner and Strauss under Muhai Tang, and Owen Wingrave under Richard Hickox. Her 1997 recording of the role of Isolde under Eve Queler demonstrated both her burnished, jewel-like tone and a legato line made up of animated phrases alert to text. The character's anger and sarcasm in Act I were conveyed through biting consonants and tonal colouring rather than weight of voice; the *Liebestod* too was characteristically infused with humanity.

Retirement at that point was not in fact her intention: she was bidding farewell to Britain only to take up more engagements in Australia. Sadly, illness intervened the following year and she died

back at her home in Richmond-on-Thames, displaying to the end her sly wit and indomitable spirit.

In May and June 2010, she sang in a new production of *Tristan und Isolde* at the State Opera Prague, conducted by Jan Latham-König. Her 2010 performances also included *Elektra* in Auckland. Engagements in 2011/2012 would have include an opera gala at the Bad Urach Festival, where she was to sing arias and scenes from *Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor*, Verdi's *Otello* and *Macbeth* and Ortrud in a new production of *Lohengrin* at Opéra de Toulon.

The Joan Sutherland Society of Sydney Facebook page has the following comments. "The great South African dramatic soprano Elizabeth Connell passed away on 18th February at her home in London. The JSS will always be grateful to her for mentoring of these young singers at a masterclass in 2010. Our thoughts are with her family and friends at this time. RIP dear Liza." Wagner Society member, Vicki Watson, also on the Facebook page remembered Ms Connell's contribution: "That was a wonderful master class and I will always remember Liza's insightful and respectful ways of working with these young singers. It continues to inspire me in my own teaching, as does every note I was fortunate to hear her sing since I first heard her in Jenufa in Melbourne in the 1970's to her mighty Turandot in 2006. Farewell to a great singer and a beautiful soul."

Roger Cruickshank, the Society's immediate past President also has very fond memories of Ms Connell. "I most loved the voice, but almost as much the acting and the impish humour, and nowhere better than in her Abigail in Barrie Kosky's unpopular *Nabucco* in Sydney. All her craft came together in that production so well that I saw it several times here, and timed a business visit to Melbourne so that I could see her there too. The performance is available on DVD through the ABC, but for bizarre copyright reasons you can only buy it overseas, because the ABC is not currently issuing it in Australia. Oddly, the production and her singing have made that one of my favourite Verdi works, a real young composer's opera. Her Bayreuth Ortrud, opposite Peter Hoffman's Lohengrin, is also available on DVD, although I didn't think that was 1980 as the obituary claims [it appears to be 1982, according to websites selling the DVD –Editor].

"I remember one production of *Norma* where Opera Australua had engaged an aged and very gay Perth producer of plays in his first staging of an opera, which he generally made look like something out of a knitting pattern from the 1950s. For *Casta Diva*, he had Connell stand on a chair in the middle of the stage, which was completely covered by a giant black sheet, with a hole for Connell's head. This one white singing orb in a sea of black was his Chaste Goddess, the cold shining singing moon in his empty universe. Connell was not a small



woman, and trying to maintain her balance on a raked stage while standing on a chair she couldn't see required all of her concentration. The singing, as a result, suffered. I harboured enmity towards that producer for many years, and hope that he has long since gone ignominiously and un-noticed to his grave!"

The German language OnlineFocus website also carried an obituary for Ms Connell, noting that at the Vienna State Opera she sang from 1985 to 2000 a total of 51 performances in eight different roles.

The ABC's Classic FM Facebook page has tributes to Ms Connell as well as a Youtube video of her final performance – a fitting swansong: ELIZABETH CONNELL 1947-2012 When I have sung my songs to you, I'll sing no more - [www.youtube.com/watch?v=pl2jG65Bjco](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pl2jG65Bjco) -

the encore of her final recital in Hastings, 27 November 2011. [Editor]

Full obituary by Barry Millington at [www.guardian.co.uk/music/2012/feb/19/elizabeth-connell](http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2012/feb/19/elizabeth-connell)

Opera Australia biography at [www.opera-australia.org.au/aboutus/our\\_artists/principal\\_artists/elizabeth\\_connell](http://www.opera-australia.org.au/aboutus/our_artists/principal_artists/elizabeth_connell)

Joan Sutherland Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/pages/The-Joan-Sutherland-Society-of-Sydney/107178185968827](http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Joan-Sutherland-Society-of-Sydney/107178185968827)

OnLine Focus: [http://www.focus.de/kultur/kunst/musik-sopranistin-elizabeth-connell-gestorben\\_aid\\_715533.html](http://www.focus.de/kultur/kunst/musik-sopranistin-elizabeth-connell-gestorben_aid_715533.html)

ABC ClassicFM: <http://www.facebook.com/abcclassicfm>

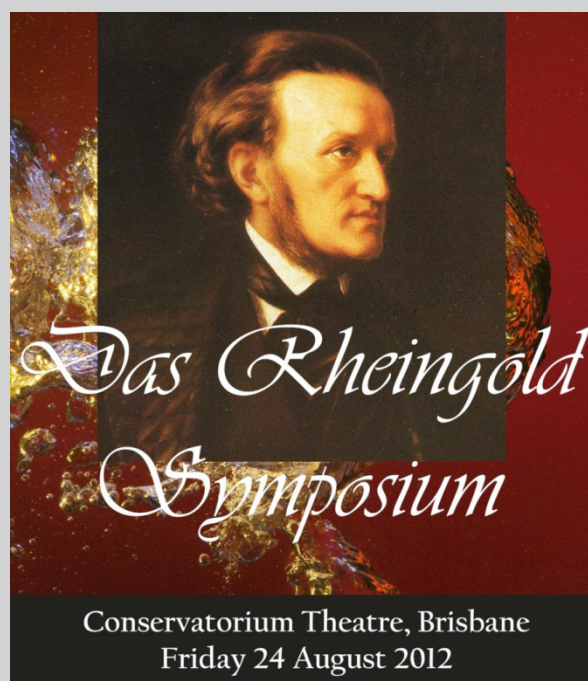
## Simone Young AM Wagner Society in NSW's New Patron - Hamburg in Brisbane

Tickets are now on sale from QTIX:  
[www.qtix.com.au/calendar\\_search/result/?q=rheingold](http://www.qtix.com.au/calendar_search/result/?q=rheingold) [Editor]

### Registration and documentation from 8:30 am

- |                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <b>9:15 – 9:30 am</b>   | <b>Welcome</b><br>Hal Davis, President of the Wagner Society in Queensland.<br>Professor Huib Schippers, Director of Queensland Conservatorium   |
| <b>9:30 – 10:10 am</b>  | <b>What Price Love? – Wagner's ideas at the heart of Das Rheingold.</b><br>Peter Bassett   |
| <b>10:10 – 10:40 am</b> | <b>Simone Young in Hamburg</b><br>Excerpts from a documentary film <i>Simone Young: Die Dirigentin</i> by German film-maker Ralf Pleger.<br>Also featuring the Hamburg Philharmonic, Lisa Gasteen, Petra Lang, Placido Domingo and Daniel Barenboim. |
| <b>10:40 – 11:10 am</b> | Refreshment Break  |
| <b>11:10 – 12:00</b>    | <b>Simone Young in Brisbane.</b>   |
| <b>12:00 – 12:50 pm</b> | <b>The Birth of Film out of the Spirit of Music - the cinematic in Das Rheingold</b><br>Dr Graham Bruce  |
| <b>12:50 – 2:00 pm</b>  | Lunch  |
| <b>2:00 – 2:30 pm</b>   | <b>Seven Pieces for Goethe's Faust</b> (1831) by Richard Wagner.<br>Students of the Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University   |
| <b>2:30 – 3:20 pm</b>   | <b>A Most Original Mind - Convergence of theory and practice in Das Rheingold.</b><br>Dr Stephen Emmerson  |
| <b>3:20 - 3:40 pm</b>   | Refreshment break  |
| <b>3:40 - 4:20 pm</b>   | <b>Preparing major Wagnerian roles.</b> Professor Lisa Gasteen   |
| <b>4:20 – 5:00 pm</b>   | <b>Das Rheingold: 'a morass of horrors and sublimities!'</b> (Wagner to Liszt, 15 January 1854)<br>Round Table discussion chaired by Leo Schofield.  |

Costs: \$71.75 per person. Tickets sales open on Monday, 12 March, and can then be purchased via Qtix: [www.qtix.com.au](http://www.qtix.com.au). Tickets for the *Das Rheingold* performances are now on sale from QTIX: [www.qtix.com.au/calendar\\_search/result/?q=rheingold](http://www.qtix.com.au/calendar_search/result/?q=rheingold)



# The Year My Voice Broke

- Lisa Gasteen

The following article was published on 1 December 2011 in *The Australian Financial Review* and is reproduced with permission. The article has been shortened in response to space requirements in the Newsletter.

Right now Lisa Gasteen should be up there where she belongs, prowling the stages of the world's great opera houses as that quintessential door bitch, Brünnhilde, in Richard Wagner's Ring Cycle. She would most likely be performing at the Hamburg State Opera, presided over by her buddy Simone Young, which secured her services three years back, when Gasteen's dance card was full to the end of next year. Instead, on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Cardiff Singer of the World win that launched her international career, Gasteen is treading the boards at the Queensland Conservatorium in Brisbane, her home town. There, Australia's most illustrious soprano since Sutherland, celebrated from the Met to Covent Garden, is instructing young singers in the finer points of an art she had all but given up: singing.

Gasteen has herself raised most of the \$130,000 it has taken to fund the three-week Lisa Gasteen Opera Summer School for 26 students from Australia and New Zealand, an event she hopes will become annual. Donations have ranged from \$200 to \$12,000, Queensland art dealer Philip Bacon is sponsoring three scholarships (he also funds the position at the Conservatorium "practice professor of opera" that is Gasteen's day job).

The Queensland Con has donated facilities and administrative help. And earlier this year Gasteen raised \$30,000 in one night by doing what she hadn't done in years, singing for her supper, accompanied by Young.

That money has secured her some illustrious assistants: John Fisher, former director of music at both the Met and La Scala, whom she describes as "the bees-knees of vocal coaches"; US conductor and vocal coach Giovanni Reggioli, who was prompter at her *Aida* Met debut in 1994; and the UK psychosomatic psychotherapist and Cambridge lecturer Phiroze Neemuchwala.

The latter looks the odd one out, but he is in fact central to what is essentially a lesson in survival, aimed at ensuring younger singers don't end up sailing off into the world as Gasteen did in the '80s, armed with little more than talent, naivety, a "smile and a suitcase". "Had I had worked with Phiroze at the beginning of my career I would have enjoyed it, and understood it, much more," Gasteen says. "But I didn't meet him until towards what turned out to be the end of my career "what would have been middle-career. And what I learnt from him after the accident helped me deal with what life had dished up."

That 2008 accident was to all appearances a freak. Gasteen noticed a laden cumquat tree in her garden, decided to make jam, climbed a ladder and "pinched a nerve." Then, once the pain subsided and I got

stronger, I decided to take up the contracts I had; that's when the spasming started. And it happened every time I sang." She was forced to cancel her appearances; a career just peaking went into limbo. With hindsight "a hindsight informed by Phiroze "she sees other dimensions to what might almost have been a symbolic act: climbing a ladder, reaching 'over-reaching'. "Self-esteem was a very big issue, and not putting unrealistic demands on yourself," she says of the lessons she learnt the hard way.



Lisa Gasteen at the Queensland Conservatorium.  
Photo: Glenn Hunt

"Singers always want to be perfect ... they're always beating themselves up. And when you're working at the absolute top of the profession, as I was, there are other people: conductors, directors. I had a friend who called it 'milking the light' picking little things; they just want to sharpen it up a bit, make it a bit better. It's very demanding. "We are like any kind of elite athlete. It's got to be right; not just right, it has to be perfect. That's a very, very heavy thing to carry around. It's very wearing, and you never give yourself any room to be proud of your achievements."

In a 2005 interview with *Opera-Opera*, Gasteen talked about the strain of the decision she had then taken to return to the UK with her husband Barry, leaving her teenage children with family. That decision followed Simone Young's dramatic departure as music director of Opera Australia. With Gasteen's astonishing performance at the 2004 Adelaide *Ring* behind her, and her old friend no longer programming her sort of repertoire, there simply wasn't enough work to keep her here. "Of course it's not easy to be leaving," she said at the time. "No one is happy, really. It's not a great thing for our family, but I'm the principal bread winner and that's the way it is."

Six years later, the abrupt end of that career remains "an absolute catastrophe" materially. "I would still be in the middle of contracts that I had signed right up until the end of 2013," she says. "There was a lot of income to lose. Financially it was unbearable."

In another sense it has proved a relief, however. "It meant I could reconnect with my family. That was a real burden for me. It's just not practical to have your family in Australia and your career in the northern hemisphere." Is there any sense then of an almost necessary break? "Certainly it was very decisive," Gasteen says. "I had no choice but to stop. For three months I couldn't even hold a pencil in my hand. Phiroze would say it was my body making me do what my ego wouldn't allow me to do."



It is that tough mental game Gasteen wants singers to be prepared for before they sally forth. "When I was national adjudicator [of the Australian Singing Competition] last year, I thought, 'nothing has changed since I was a young singer; it's the same for these kids as it was for me.' That is terrible; nobody has done anything to progress it. I have the energy and the passion so I thought, 'I'm going to do something.'"

"Someone might win a \$45,000 prize, then they'll travel overseas. They'll have to house and keep themselves, find people who can be bothered with them. Within a very, very short space of time, they will have used up all of that money and they come home, and what do they do then? "It didn't make sense to me. It's far more cost-effective [to do it here]. These kids will eventually go overseas, but they'll be far more able to compete."

## 1813 - Wagner & Verdi A Celebration

- Peter Bassett

"This beautiful book has been published to mark the bicentenary of the births of Richard Wagner and Giuseppe Verdi whose operas continue to enrich the lives of opera lovers everywhere. They were born at a time when Europe was convulsed by the Napoleonic wars, and when the nation states of Germany and Italy did not yet exist. Each became a master of musical-dramatic forms and transformed the way music was composed for the theatre. Their influence extended well beyond the stage.

"Peter Bassett's new study of these two great figures of the nineteenth century is richly illustrated in full colour with art works drawn from opera houses, museums and private collections. It features insightful commentaries and magnificent photographs of locations associated with the composers and their works. It is printed on high quality art paper and runs to 232 pages in large format." You can purchase a copy for \$88 (with free postage in Australia) from Peter Bassett's website at: [www.peterbassett.com.au](http://www.peterbassett.com.au).

Members may also be interested in another recent book on this subject – Peter Conrad's *Verdi And/Or Wagner* (Thames & Hudson ). According to most of the reviews your Editor has read, the reviewers cannot resist airing their personal stereotypes of and prejudices against Wagner (the "nasty" one) and for Verdi (the "nice" one). This is perhaps in response to Conrad's own preferences for Verdi as a better man than Wagner. The UK The Telegraph's reviewer, Igor Toronyi-Lalic, on 22 November 2011, puts this contrived opposition nicely: "'We are accustomed to choosing between Wagner and Verdi,'" states Peter Conrad. Are we? I'm accustomed to choosing between ketchup and mustard, jam and marmite, potato and rice. But Verdi and Wagner? Really? Conrad, a much admired cultural historian, former Oxford tutor and opera nerd, thinks so and tries (sometimes a little too hard) to find opposition in everything that these two 19th-century titans did, thought and wrote." In The Observer of 13 November 2011, Paul Levy, sees virtues in Conrad's assessment, but also limitations:

Writing at Wagnerian length, Conrad tries hard to give Verdi as much space on the page, and his drama and music as much exposition and analysis, as he gives to Wagner. But of course there's something that makes this impossible: unlike Verdi, Wagner was his own librettist, so comparing the dramatic elements of their operas has an intrinsic apples and oranges incompatibility. The German's

pretensions to creating a *Gesamtkunstwerk* were simply not shared by the Italian, and Conrad's learned riffs upon the plots of Verdi's operas do not seem to go to the heart of the same matter as when he does this for Wagner's work. He stands on much firmer ground when elaborating the music, which he does so elegantly that you find yourself able to call to mind the melodies he refers to.



Levy sums up his interesting review by quoting Conrad: "We need both composers...because they 'represent two sides of our nature that are usually not on speaking terms – the virtue of charity or *caritas* as opposed to the rage of the egotistical will, a need for human connection as opposed to the mind's proud solitude'."

Your Editor would be pleased to publish reviews of Peter Bassett's book as well.

You can read both reviews at the relevant newspaper's website:

[www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/non-fictionreviews/8899364/Verdi-AndOr-Wagner-by-Peter-Conrad-review.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/non-fictionreviews/8899364/Verdi-AndOr-Wagner-by-Peter-Conrad-review.html)

[www.guardian.co.uk/music/2011/nov/13/verdi-wagner-peter-conrad-review](http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2011/nov/13/verdi-wagner-peter-conrad-review) [EDITOR]

## New Members

The following people joined the Society:

Glynis Burnett & Rosemary Fallon [1052]; Craig Brush [1053]; Ruth Silver [1054]; Tom Accola [1055]; Rosamund Dallow-Smith & G J Smith [1056]; Dr James Fortune [1057]; Dr Rod Gillespie [1058]; Mr Neil & Dr Marcia Cameron [1059]; Francis Grill [1060]; Ursula Armstrong [1061]; Robin Amm [1062]; Gwendoline King [1063]





# Richard Wagner's Women - Eva Rieger

- Translated By Chris Walton (The Boydell Press)

À propos of Professor Heath Lee's talk to the Society on 28 March, a book on apparently the same subject by Eva Rieger, Professor Emeritus in Historical Musicology at the University of Bremen and lives in the principality of Liechtenstein. The following is the publisher's website summary of the book

"Richard Wagner's music contains some of the most powerful portrayals of emotions in all opera, particularly love. Eva Rieger presents a new picture of the composer, showing how the women at his side inspired him and how closely his life and art intertwined.

"We follow Wagner's restless hunt for the 'ideal woman', her appointed task being to give him shelter, warmth, inspiration, adventure and redemption, all in one. He could hardly have desired anything more contradictory, and this is reflected in the female characters of his operas. They are all in some way torn, faltering between their own desire for self-realization and the societal constraints that impel them to sacrifice themselves for their men.

"Rieger bids farewell to essentialist, naturalized notions of femininity and masculinity. Her investigations are both comprehensive and convincing, for she avoids the pitfalls of imposing extraneous interpretation, instead focussing keenly on the music itself."

The anonymous reviewer for the December 2011 Opera Now notes that Professor Rieger has an "interest in what nowadays would be called feminist studies; however, this book is no polemic, but a meticulously researched and expounded examination of Wagner's relationship and attitude to women and how this influenced the construction of both libretti and musical composition of his operas, with close analysis of his instrumentation... which is quite startlingly revelatory concerning his concepts of woman's role and nature." Unfortunately, the reviewer does not even hint at the revelatory analysis of Wagner's instrumentation, so one will need to read the book to discover more. The reviewer concludes: "Rieger's impressive musical and psychological analysis in no way detracts from Wagner's genius and reading it led me back to listening to the operas with added, and enriched appreciation."

We can glean a hint of what Rieger might have been saying on this subject in her book from an article she wrote in 2002 ("Love Is the Essence of the Eternal Feminine": Richard Wagner's Concept of Femininity with Reference to Brünnhilde. Contributors: Eva Rieger - author. Journal Title: Women & Music. Publication Year: 2002. Page Number: 1+. Copyright 2002 University of Nebraska Press; COPYRIGHT 2002 Gale Group), in which she refers to Wagner's instrumentation:

Wagner was absolutely aware of the effect that vocal sound and melodic design could have. With his use of leitmotifs and certain types of

instrumentation he was able to portray Brünnhilde on two levels: by continuing the myth of a "natural" femininity that is by nature more sensitive and emotional than the male counterpart, and by also giving her a hint of greatness and human strength that is allowed--albeit subservient to the needs of the male sex--to develop to full maturity. Michel Poizat's opinion that the voice can awaken in us feelings of "jouissance" is confirmed when we realize that Brünnhilde's part is truly a great one. (18) Large intervals, sheer volume, and exaltation that compete with a rich orchestral sound--all of this makes Brünnhilde seem way ahead of what was expected of a woman in the nineteenth century. Her cries of jubilation as a Valkyrie are just as convincing as her cries of joy in love. Brünnhilde's voice is her strength and power--not, however, because she goes her own way, independently of the composer... but because she actually reflects Wagner's idea of what a woman should be: a partner subservient to her male lover but also aware of the sexual dimension of love.

At the end of the trilogy the Siegfried motive is combined with the leitmotiv of release ([more commonly known as "Brünnhilde's Glorification" -- Ed]. Trombones in their deep register usher in a male world of public domain and representation, while Brünnhilde represents the world of love. In this way Wagner makes a connection between Siegfried and Brünnhilde--not, however, on the same level. Sharing the same fate as Elisabeth, Elsa, and Senta, Brünnhilde devotes her whole being to a single man. In a revealing diary entry Cosima Wagner quotes her husband: "I am glad that I kept back Sieglinde's theme of praise for Brünnhilde, to become as it were a hymn to heroes." (24) Just as revealing is Cosima's answer, dictated to her by Richard, to a question about the last motive in the Ring: "Das Motiv welches Sieglinde der Brünnhilde zusingt (ist) die Verherrlichung Brünnhildens, welche am Schluss des Werkes, gleichsam von der Gesamtheit aufgenommen wird." (25) („The motive that is sung by Sieglinde to Brünnhilde expresses the glorification of Brünnhilde, which is then taken up by the whole orchestra at the end of the work.") In Cosima's diaries we can find even more evidence: „Am Morgen singt R. mir das Thema von Sieglinde an Brünnhilde und sagt mir: 'Das bist Du--'" (26) („In the morning Richard sings me Sieglinde's song to Brünnhilde and then says: 'That's you--'").

Rieger then observes, tellingly, "Wagner saw in Brünnhilde a reflection of his partner Mathilde Wesendonck, who was so overwhelmingly obsessed by love that she was ready to die for it." So, as with all philandering males, you tell your women what they want to hear, and, sometimes, they will believe you??? [Editor -- your Editor would be pleased to publish any review of the book by Society Members.]



# Solti's The Ring Takes Top Spot as the Greatest Recording Ever! - Katie French

Enthusiastic readers of the December Newsletter would have been intrigued by the inclusion of a small 'Question and Answer' section which asked 'How many copies of Georg Solti's Ring have been sold?' The stunning answer was '18 million'!

This Q & A shows just how in tune our Editor is with the *zeitgeist*, especially now that it has been announced that Sir Georg Solti's recording of Wagner's Ring Cycle has just been voted **the greatest recording of all time** in a poll of the Britain's leading classical music critics, carried out by BBC Music Magazine.

Solti, whose centenary will be celebrated next year, conducted the first complete studio recording of Wagner's masterpiece with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra over a nine-year period from 1956 – 65. The recording included such Wagnerian 'greats' as Kirsten Flagstad, Hans Hotter, Birgit Nilsson, Christa Ludwig, Wolfgang Windgassen and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, just to mention a few. The Gramophone Classical Music Guide (2008) described Solti's distinctive style as 'blazingly dynamic' and not to everyone's taste, but the recordings themselves as 'a classic of the recording era.'

Some say that critical to the recordings' success was the participation of the 'legendary' producer John Culshaw at Decca. Culshaw determined that a studio recording should create what he called 'a theatre of the mind', so that it would contain effects which would have occurred in a live performance: thunder would crack and crash, swords would clash, highly original ideas at the time of recording, and perhaps unacceptable today, in this era of sanitised recorded sound. He was determined to incorporate all sounds which were dramatically relevant to the moment, and which derived from actions described in the score. (In fact, Culshaw's 'Introduction by the producer' included in the booklets accompanying the 1997 'remastering' of the original analogue recordings, are quite remarkable for the

insight they give the listener concerning the importance he placed on 'orchestral texture', and tone colour to create character or mood, especially in a sound recording of an opera.)

Michael Scott Rohan, a writer on opera and Wagner, a regular contributor to the BBC Music Magazine, and contributor to the poll, commented: 'Other versions have their virtues ... but there is little doubt that Solti ... hasn't been surpassed; it may never be.' In his list of the five best Richard Wagner CDs or DVDs for Wagneropera.net, Scott Rohan recommends the Solti recording as number three. Whilst he says it is not the most 'fashionable' choice, it is 'the most accessible', and recommends it to newcomers for its superb cast and sheer sense of drama, and 'a sound that's still gripping half a century later.'

For those who are interested in reading yet another 'dubious list of the latest and greatest', or even those who prefer to think of these recordings as those that are essential to every collection, the complete list of the 50 greatest recordings of all time appeared in the January, 2012 issue of BBC Music Magazine.

**In preparation for the celebration of Wagner's Bicentenary, and to celebrate Sir Georg Solti's Centenary year, as well as the selection of this monumental recording of the 'Ring' as 'the greatest recording ever', the Wagner Society will screen 'The Golden Ring', the BBC's documentary on the recording of the Solti 'Ring' in May 2012, prior to the Annual General Meeting.**

[Members might be interested in reading through the nominations for greatest Wagner recording – CD/DVD – from a number of eminent singers, critics, directors etc on the Wagneropera.net website at – [www.wagneropera.net/Recommendations/Recommendations-2008.htm](http://www.wagneropera.net/Recommendations/Recommendations-2008.htm) . Editor]

## Australian Singers Successful Overseas

- Colleen Chesterman

Recent issues of *Opera Now* reported on the success of two Australian singers who are moving into the Wagnerian Repertoire.

In November there was a review of an August concert by the 9 singers (chosen from 200 who auditioned) who had participated in the Salzburg Young Singers Residency. One of these was Melbourne bass-baritone Derek Welton, who appeared as Creonte in Pinchgut's *L'Anima del Filosofo (Orpheus and Euridice)* in 2010. The reviewer praised Welton for a "thrilling account of the Flying Dutchman's 'Die Frist ist um'." Welton has also appeared as Donner in Opera North's *Das Rheingold*. Welton's home page also reveals that on January 28 2012 he won the prestigious Emmerich Smola Förderpreis in Germany.

In January, the London Wagner Society reported that it had awarded the 2012 Bayreuth Bursary to 32-year-old Australian soprano Helena Dix. The annual bursary covers the cost of attending Bayreuth, including opportunities to sing for influential singers in the opera world. Previous winners include Bryn Terfel.



# *The Humour of the Underman and Other Essays* By Francis Grierson

- Terence Watson

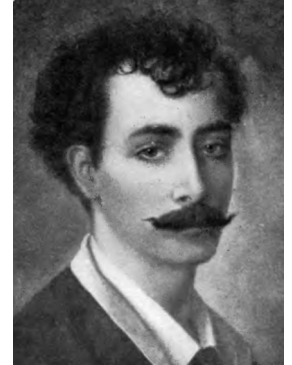
(London: Stephen Swift & Co., Ltd, 1911 – available in an e-book version at [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org): [www.archive.org/search.php?query=humour%20underman%20AND%20mediatype%3Atexts](http://www.archive.org/search.php?query=humour%20underman%20AND%20mediatype%3Atexts) ). The following essay, *The Wagnerian Riddle*, is a provocative and interesting response from someone who is clearly impressed and moved by Wagner's works, but who is also worried about the power of his music in particular – a concern shared by many in the years before and after Wagner's death. Grierson was also a very talented musician (pianist) who clearly appreciated the subtleties of Wagner's music. He also became a renowned spiritualist, which gives his views on the mystical elements in Wagner's opera a thought-provoking twist. There is a short biographical note on Grierson at the end of this essay.

IN the beginning there was an unrest in all Wagner's music, huge and heaving as the ocean itself, depicted with appalling realism in the overture to the Flying Dutchman, merciless, overpowering, yet intended only for the born musician. This unrest was accentuated more and more in each succeeding work. In Lohengrin it is the melancholy of mythical romance; in Tannhauser it is the melancholy of religious romance; in Tristan the fatal influence of passion and romance; in Parsifal a strange mixture of mysticism, passion, and romance; in the Ring it is passion rising to unheard-of climaxes, a series of battles in which nothing is absolutely plain and nobody absolutely secure. It comes nearer to being Schopenhauer set to music than anything else one can imagine, and the impeccable scoring of the musician might be set side by side with the impeccable style and logic of the great pessimist. Wagner pushed passion and romance to the last limit of artistic perfection, making despair triumphant in Tristan and Lohengrin, elsewhere depicting a restlessness the like of which no one had even imagined before his day. With a wand of enchantment he created a vast realm of romantic and mediaeval mysteries which unrolled before the astonished world in all the magic of mingled sight and sound, causing the puppets of myth to live and move in a phantasmagoria of mystery at a time when Germany was just entering upon a far-reaching epoch of materialism backed by a bulwark of militarism. And just as this giant of polyphonic harmony was about to conquer the musical world, Ibsen was looming above the Scandinavian horizon with a rude and trenchant realism such as had not been known since the time when Euripides purged the Athenians of all their optimistic illusions in a long and final triumph of tears. And thus we have seen, in our own day, the most marvellous manifestation of divergent genius ever manifest in the short space of three decades: Wagner in musical mysticism, Ibsen in dramatic realism, and Bismarck in the iron yoke of militarism.

Wagner wielded the supremest wand of all the modern magicians, yet he exercised but a negative influence in the world of opinions and ideas. How, it may be asked, was his influence so subtle and yet so shallow? How did it come about that all Germany was steeped in the music of Tannhauser, Lohengrin, and Parsifal at a time when the Germans had but one united purpose, to become impregnable as a military nation? The answer is, Wagner's genius dealt in past myth and past tradition; he produced positive sensations but futile ideas. In his music the nerves are always touched or thrilled, the mind made restless, and the soul left hungry. Imagination coupled to marvellous nervous energy, were the dominant factors in the musician's life and work. And, like cause, like effect. In general, Wagner's scoring may be likened to the perpetual casting and re-casting of sea-waves under a steady breeze, and his nuances the shadows cast by a setting sun or by moonlight, the constant agitation and emotion offering no rest even to the stormy petrel of his own genius. Perhaps the most curious thing about his dramas is the incontrovertible fact that while his audiences may be profoundly moved by the music they always remain indifferent to the moral. And yet no musician ever tried so hard to imprint the seal of a moral lesson on his hearers; his failure here proves once and for all how vain it is to look to romance and imagination for a moral basis of action.

Wagner's music is a music without hope. It is not the music that could call a nation to arms, or pacify a mob, or revive a languishing people to religious life, or console the sick in their last hour. We have to sum up the work of a man of genius by considering the dominant tone and influence of the major part of his work, and it is clearly idle to bring forward bits of Parsifal and other works as perfect specimens of religious and optimistic inspiration. It is not these short pages that have secured Wagner his great audiences. On the contrary, it is the power, vehemence, and passion of all his work taken from first to last.

At a time when Prussia had become the chief seat of scientific scepticism, the musician-poet was at work creating a whole world of mystery and illusion. When Bismarck founded the German Empire, the nation had no offset to materialism and militarism. It required a



*Benjamin Henry Jesse  
Francis Shepard  
(1848-1927)*



veritable Titan to hold the balance to the side of poetry, music, and art, for poetry and art alone would not suffice; an opiate of enchantment had to be administered by a master-physician skilled in the art of drugging the senses. Sound, colour, movement, gesture, were all united in one mighty ensemble, and the result was a mingling of Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, and mediaeval Germany. Victor Hugo never achieved anything equal to certain antithetical scenes of the music-dramas. Tannhauser opens with a saturnalia and ends with a long procession of saints. All this had to be accomplished by one man, for one country, for a particular epoch. Yet, although the dramas were intended for the German people and the German temperament, curiously enough the day was to come when the French would appropriate them to their own benefit. In the music there was a universal distraction. It kept the French mind from brooding over the lost limb which Bismarck tore from the crushed body of France at the taking of Sedan. For, be it noted, France, previous to the battle of Sedan, was a nation rich in optimistic security. When the French awoke from their long dream it was to live in a twilight of pessimistic insecurity, and what could be more congenial to the state of the patients' minds than the music and poetry of the Twilight of the Gods, the sad melody in the bridal procession of Lohengrin, the fierce agonies of Parsifal, the vehement Ride of the Walkyries? Here again poetry was impotent. The Parisian nerves required a new stimulant something like the mingling of champagne with the nepenthe of absinthe, and the music-dramas proved veritable music-drams.

Violent fevers never last long, and the day of reaction came. The Germans began to regard Bayreuth as a pleasant place for a holiday, while the French began to neglect Wagner's music as soon as they felt the reviving effects of a new scientific and philosophical optimism. And London? How was it possible to engraft the Wagnerian cult on the London public? How was it possible for a people nourished on the languid and listless airs of Handel to relish the volcanic fury and suave symbolical meanings of Wagner? It is no joke to say that the music-dramas have been popularised in England by the most popular joker in London to-day. We have the key to the mystery in Mr Bernard Shaw's *The Perfect Wagnerite*. The crowd, who know no more about the real beauties of romantic and mystical music than they know about Virgil's Latin, took Mr Shaw seriously because they concluded that, although he could joke about Socialism, it would be out of all reason to expect him to carry persiflage and paradox into the realms of music. They snatched at the bait; they found the entertainment well worth the money from a sensational and spectacular point of view, while not a few imagined they had attained the highest philosophical summit when they were able to say they had witnessed the whole of the Ring; they would then discuss and explain the symbols without so much as a hint at the music, good or bad. Thus, while the French enjoyed the subtle beauties of Wagner's music, the London audiences flatter themselves that they understand what the

dramas are all about; the thing is all plain enough when you possess the key.

Wagner's dramas attracted in many ways: for the lover of Nature there was the rippling of water, the rising and setting of sun and moon, the shimmering glow of soft and supernatural twilights; for the lover of melodrama, manoeuvres, quarrels, battles, terrible encounters between god-like warriors; for the religious mystic, perpetual conflict between vice and virtue, angelic inspiration and demonic artifice; for the musician, a nameless ocean of heaving tone-waves over whose shifting surface flitted the Phantom Ship of lost illusions, the Flying Dutchman of destiny and despair. The Phantom Ship stood in the very beginning as the key to the Wagnerian melancholy. Wagner was the result of the Napoleonic upheavals; the contemporary of Schopenhauer, Heine, and Alfred de Musset, children of disillusionment and intellectual pessimism. With Wagner and his great contemporaries action took a negative form it belonged to the realm of imagination, and even Ibsen was not so much a builder as an intellectual dissolvent.

Great men often become popular at last not because of their powers but because of their eccentricities and weaknesses. There is scarcely a popular man of genius whose popularity has not been gained through his lightest and most superficial work. Goethe's one popular book was his *Werther*, the book which the public itself let slip into oblivion.

The popularity of Wagner can only be accounted for on the score of his weakness. The crowd seized on what was vulgar, blatant, and ridiculous the long and impossible death of Amfortas, the idiotic attitude of Parsifal, anticlimax and inartistic repetitions. Side by side with pure inspiration and impeccable ensembles we have a coarseness and crudeness which shock the taste and offend the ear, and yet the "True Wagnerian" pretends to accept all in a lump.

The lack of humour was Wagner's greatest defect. No man with a sense of humour could have written Parsifal. He could be vehement and sarcastic, pathetic and sentimental, but he was a stranger to wit and humour. Compare the brightest and the gayest parts of the music-dramas with even the dullest parts of Mozart, and the difference is like that between ordinary Rhine-wine and champagne. The humour in the *Meistersinger* resembles bombast compared with that in *Don Giovanni* and *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and nowhere in Wagner is there anything comparable with the sparkling and suave humour of Verdi's *Falstaff*. And it is just this lack of humour in Wagner that the public cannot realise.

As for the popularity of Wagner in the concert-room, the case is different. Here the composer is heard at his best because there is neither time nor place for the unspeakable boredom of Wagner at his worst. This phase of his popularity is no doubt sincere, although in London the Wagnerian concerts are patronised largely by foreigners.



To pass from Wagner as artist and musician to Wagner as thinker and philosopher is to pass from a realm of imagination and sensuous enjoyment to a world in which practical action is totally wanting. Wagner's mission was to fill the immense void left in the world of ideal sensation by the onslaught of Napoleon. When Napoleon swept away the last vestiges of romantic feudalism he left a chasm between the old and the new that could only be bridged by a combination of poetry and music, in the structure of which philosophy and commonsense appeared as mere props and not as arches; but the time came when the props fell to pieces, and the bridge appeared in the air as a rainbow symbolising anything the beholder pleased to infer or imagine.

The material side of Germany has not been acted upon by Wagner's genius. All who have lived in Berlin know how the great composer's ideals and teachings have been ignored by the ruling classes. The truth is, Wagner's music-dramas came as a nervous and negative reaction after the long and mighty strain that began with the French Revolution and ended with the defeat of Napoleon. After the titanic struggle of real men on the solid earth, the combat of spiritual hosts in the clouds; after the triumphs of real heroes, the illusions and dreams of ideal powers and phantom warriors. It was to be expected that Nature would somehow strike a balance between violence in real life and violence in the sphere of imagination.

To sum up, the chief reason for the decadence of Wagnerian art in Anglo-Saxon countries may be found in the fact that we are at the beginning of a long period of optimism. A people who are being schooled in the philosophy of optimistic suggestion will refuse to be influenced by the negative and lowering moods of the greater part of Wagner's music. The suggestive power

of Lohengrin and Tannhauser is little short of deadly, to say nothing of the demoralisation set up in the sensitive listener by a full dramatic representation of Tristan. The time is at hand when music will be used to heal the mind and comfort the heart instead of to fill the mind with melancholy and distract the imagination.

In a future issue of the Newsletter – Grierson's essay: *Nietzsche and Wagner* – which may explain the book's title – an ironic response to Nietzsche's *Übermensch!*

Francis Grierson was the pseudonym of Benjamin Henry Jesse Francis Shepard (1848–1927), who was brought from England as an infant and raised in a log cabin in Illinois and elsewhere in the Midwest. Self-educated as a musician, he made his way to Paris (1869) to become a sensational success as a singer and pianist, later touring Europe and the U.S. Given a house in San Diego by admirers, he lived there (1886–88) but returned to Europe to begin a literary career under a pseudonym. His books include *La Révolte idéaliste* (1889), oracular and sententious essays, in part translated as *Modern Mysticism* (1899); *The Celtic Temperament* (1901), displaying apocalyptic theories; *The Valley of Shadows: Recollections of the Lincoln Country, 1858–63* (1909), a clear and sensitive view of Midwest pioneers, possessing also a mystic sense of impending great events; *Parisian Portraits* (1910); *La Vie et les hommes* (1911), aphorisms; *The Humour of the Underman* (1911) and *Abraham Lincoln, The Practical Mystic* (1918), both complementing his major book on Lincoln's land; *Illusions and Realities of the War* (1918); and *Psycho-Phone Messages* (1921), spirit utterances of great Americans written during Grierson's last, poverty-stricken days in Los Angeles. If you are interested you can read more about this unusual man at: [www.answers.com/topic/francis-grierson#ixzz1lhFvhYyL](http://www.answers.com/topic/francis-grierson#ixzz1lhFvhYyL).

## Siegfried's Native Town By Frederick Engels In *Works Of Frederick Engels*, 1840

Written: in November 1840, First published: in Telegraph für Deutschland No. 197, December 1840. Signed: Friedrich Oswald (a pseudonym for Engels at a time when he needed to be careful about the political and punitive implications of publishing radical material). This fascinating account of Engels' visit to the Rhineland home of the Siegfried of the Nibelungenlied gives us a colourful picture of the lands and towns of the area. But, the essay also reminds us that the Siegfried legend was alive and well at the time that Wagner was working up his sketches – note the date of the essay. Wagner was still in Paris at this time and working on *Rienzi* and *Der fliegende Holländer*, but also talking about Germanic myths and legends with fellow Germans Heinrich Heine and Ferdinand Lehrs, both of whom he met in Paris.

the legends in ways more in accord with contemporary revolutionary aims, based on a left-wing interpretation of Hegel's political philosophy. One could almost hear Wagner's revolutionary fervour in Engels' protest: "... when we are released from that discipline we fall into the hands of the goddess of the century, the police. Police for thinking, police for speaking, police for walking, riding and driving, passports, residence permits, and customs documents — the devil strike these giants and dragons dead!" Wagner certainly shared Engels' critique of established Christianity and the repressive political state.

It would also be interesting to know if Engels ever saw a production of The Ring Cycle and if he found it told him anything like what he hoped the Rhine River might be saying: "But I want to go down to the Rhine and listen to what the waves gleaming in the sunset tell Siegfried's

It is not known if Wagner had read this essay, but he shared Engels' desire to reinterpret



mother earth about his grave in Worms and about the sunken hoard."

There lived in the Low Lands a rich king's heir by right,  
His father Siegmunt, his mother Siglint hight,  
In a castle brave that everywhere was famed  
Down by the Rhine, and Santen it was named.

*Der Nibelungen Not*, [I] 20

The Rhine should not be visited only above Cologne, and young Germans particularly should not imitate the travelling John Bull who sits bored in the saloon of the steamer from Rotterdam to Cologne and only comes up on deck here because it is the beginning of his panorama of the Rhine from Cologne to Mainz, or his Guide for Travellers on the Rhine a Young Germans should choose a seldom visited place for their pilgrimage — I am speaking of Xanten, the native town of the Horny Siegfried. \*

A Roman city, like Cologne, it remained small and outwardly insignificant during the Middle Ages, while Cologne grew big and gave its name to an electoral archbishopric. But Xanten Cathedral looking out in splendid perfection far across the prose of the Dutch sand flats, and Cologne's more colossal cathedral remained a torso, but Xanten has Siegfried and Cologne only St. Anno, and what is the Song of Anno [95] compared to the Nibelungs!

I came there from the Rhine. I entered the town through a narrow, dilapidated gate; dirty, narrow alleys led me to the friendly market-place, and from there I approached a gate built into the wall which encircled the former monastery court with the church. Above the gate, right and left, below a pair of small turrets, were two bas-reliefs, unmistakably two Siegfrieds, easily distinguished from St. Victor, the patron-saint of the town, who is to be seen above every house door.

The hero stands in a closely-fitting coat of mail, spear in hand, driving the spear into the dragon's jaws in the image on the right, and trampling down the "strong dwarf" Alberich on the left. It struck me that these bas-reliefs are not mentioned in Wilhelm Grimm's *Deutsche Heldensage*, where everything else relating to the subject is collected. Nor do I recall having read of them anywhere else, although they are among the most important pieces of evidence for the local connections of the legend in the Middle Ages.

I passed through the echoing Gothic vaulted gateway and stood before the church. Greek architecture is clear, gay consciousness; Moorish is mourning; Gothic is holy ecstasy; Greek architecture is bright, sunny day; Moorish is star-spangled dusk; Gothic is dawn. Here in front of this church I sensed as never before the power of the Gothic style. Not when it is seen among modern buildings, like Cologne Cathedral, still less when it is built round with houses clinging to it like swallows' nests, as

with the churches in the North-German towns, does a Gothic cathedral make its most powerful impression; only between wooded hills, like the Altenberg church in the Berg country, or at least separated from everything alien, modern, between monastery walls and old buildings, like Xanten Cathedral. Only there does one feel deeply what a century can accomplish when it throws itself with all its might into a single, great aim. And if Cologne Cathedral, in all its gigantic dimensions, stood free and open to the gaze from all sides, like the church of Xanten, truly the nineteenth century would have to die of shame that for all its super-cleverness it cannot complete this building. For we no longer know the religious deed and so we marvel at a Mrs. Fry, who would have been a most commonplace phenomenon in the Middle Ages.

I entered the church; high mass was just being celebrated. The notes of the organ thundered down from the choir, a jubilant throng of heart-storming warriors, and raced through the echoing nave until they died away in the farthest aisles of the church. You, too, son of the nineteenth century, let your heart be conquered by them — these sounds have enthralled stronger and wilder men than you! They drove the old German gods from their groves, they led the heroes of a great age across the stormy sea, through the desert, and their unconquered children to Jerusalem, they are the shadows of hot-blooded centuries which thirsted for action! But when the trumpets announce the miracle of the transubstantiation, when the priest raises the glittering monstrance and the whole consciousness of the congregation is intoxicated with the wine of devotion, rush out, save yourself, save your, reason from this ocean of feeling that surges through the church and pray outside to the God whose house is not made by human hands, who is the breath of the world and who wants to be worshipped in spirit and in truth.

I went away shaken and asked to be shown the way to an inn, the only one in the little town. When I entered the inn parlour I could feel that I must be close to Holland. A quaintly mixed exhibition of paintings and engravings on the wall, landscapes cut into the window-panes, goldfish, peacock feathers and the ribbed leaves of tropical plants in front of the mirror clearly showed the host's pride in possessing things which others do not have. This passion for rarities which in decidedly bad taste surrounds itself with products of art and nature, be they beautiful or ugly, and which feels most at home in a room full to bursting with such absurdities, is the Dutchman's besetting sin. But what a shudder seized me when the good man took me into his so-called picture-gallery! A small room, all the walls densely covered with paintings of little value, although he claimed that Schadow had declared one of the portraits, which was actually much prettier than the rest, to be a Hans Holbein. A few altar pieces by Jan van Calcar (from a neighbouring small town) had lively colouring and would be of



interest to an expert. But as for the rest of the room's decorations! Palm leaves, coral branches and the like protruded from every corner; there were stuffed lizards everywhere, a couple of figures made of coloured sea-shells, such as one finds frequently in Holland, stood on the stove; in a corner was a bust of the Cologne Wallraf, and beneath it hung, desiccated like a mummy, the dead body of a cat, with one forepaw treading right on the face of a painted Christ on the cross. If my reader should ever stray into this one hotel in Xanten, let him ask the obliging host about his beautiful ancient gem; he possesses an exquisite Diana cut in an opal, which is worth more than his entire collection of paintings.

In Xanten one should not miss seeing the collection of antiquities in the possession of Mr. Houben a solicitor. It includes almost everything that has been dug up or found at *Castra vetera*. The collection is interesting, but it does not contain anything of particular artistic value, as is to be expected of a military station, which *Castra vetera* was. The few beautiful gems which were found here are dispersed all over the town; the one piece of sculpture of any considerable size is a sphinx, about three feet long, in the possession of the innkeeper already mentioned; it is made of ordinary sandstone, badly preserved, and was never particularly beautiful.

I went out of the town and up a sandy rise, the only natural elevation for miles around. This is the mountain on which, according to the legend, Siegfried's castle stood. At the entrance to a pine grove I sat down and looked at the town below. Surrounded on all sides by earthworks, it lay as it were in a cauldron, only the church rising majestically over the brim. On the right the Rhine embracing a green island with broad, gleaming arms, on the left the hills of Cleves in the blue distance.

What is it about the legend of Siegfried that affects us so powerfully? Not the plot of the story itself, not the foul treason which brings about the death of the youthful hero; it is the deep significance which is expressed through his person. Siegfried is the representative of German youth. All of us, who still carry in our breast a heart unfettered by the restraints of life, know what that means. We all feel in ourselves the same zest for action, the same defiance of convention which drove Siegfried from his father's castle; we loathe with all our soul continual reflection and the philistine fear of vigorous action; we want to get out into the free world; we want to overrun the barriers of prudence and fight for the crown of life, action. The philistines have supplied giants and dragons too, particularly in the sphere of church and state. But that age is no more; we are put in prisons called schools, where instead of striking out around us we are made with cruel irony to conjugate the verb "to strike" in Greek in all moods and tenses, and when we are released from that discipline we fall into the hands of the goddess of the century, the police.

Police for thinking, police for speaking, police for walking, riding and driving, passports,

residence permits, and customs documents — the devil strike these giants and dragons dead! They have left us only the semblance of action, the rapier instead of the sword; but what use is all the art of fencing with the rapier if we may not apply it with the sword? And when the barriers are finally broken down, when philistinism and indifference are trodden underfoot, when the urge to action is no longer checked — do you see the tower of Wesel there across the Rhine? The citadel of that town, which is called a stronghold of German freedom, has become the grave of German youth, and has to lie right opposite the cradle of the greatest German youth! Who sat there in prisons Students who did not want to have learnt to fence to no purpose, vulgar duellists and demagogues. Now, after the amnesty of Frederick William IV, we may be permitted to say that this amnesty was an act not only of mercy but of justice. Granted all the premises, and in particular the need for the state to take measures against the student fraternities, nevertheless, everyone who sees that the good of the state does not lie in blind obedience and strict subordination will surely agree with me that the treatment of the participants demanded that they should be rehabilitated in honour and dignity. Under the Restoration and after the July days [1830, France] the demagogic fraternities were as understandable as they are now impossible. Who then suppressed every free movement, who placed the beating of the youthful heart under "provisional" guardianship? And how were the unfortunates treated? Can it be denied that this legal case is perfectly calculated to show in the clearest light all the disadvantages and errors of both public and secret judicature, to make manifest the contradiction that paid servants of the state, instead of independent jurors, try charges of offending against the state; can it be denied that all the sentencing was done summarily, "in bulk", as merchants say?

But I want to go down to the Rhine and listen to what the waves gleaming in the sunset tell Siegfried's mother earth about his grave in Worms and about the sunken hoard. Perhaps a friendly Morgan le Fay will make Siegfried's castle rise again for me or show my mind's eye what heroic deeds are reserved for his sons of the nineteenth century.

\*A note is perhaps needed to remind us that the "horny" epithet refers to Siegfried's skin, made impenetrable by Brünnhilde's magic spells, not to his sexual impulses, although, nowadays, we might want to use that adjective of Siegfried as well [Editor]

Reproduced from the Marx/Engels Archive: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1840/12/siegfried.htm#art>



## ***And So The World Ended*** - Finale of the Metropolitan Opera's Ring Cycle

There have been a number of reviews of the Met's new Ring Cycle, most of them very mixed and primarily disappointed with the performance and use of the The Machine – Robert Lepage's gigantic set of planks that forms the backdrop to the whole Cycle and sometimes interacts with the production in exciting and sometimes silly ways. Heidi Waleson, writing for The Wall Street Journal on 31 January 2012: "'Götterdämmerung,' the final installment (sic) of Richard Wagner's 'Ring' cycle, is a long evening; the Metropolitan Opera's new production, featuring Robert Lepage's notorious 'machine,' felt even longer. There were flashes of magic, but even Fabio Luisi's incisive conducting could not redeem an evening of singing that—with a few exceptions—was merely adequate, and a theatrical concept that had no sustaining vision."

Specifically on the successes of the set, Waleson writes: "By now, Carl Fillion's set of giant revolving planks is a familiar sight, and the handsome video images of Lionel Arnould, making his Met debut, eloquently transformed them into the rushing waters of the Rhine and the final inferno. The set, despite intrusive clanking when it moves, makes smooth work of the many location changes, and evokes the mythic world (the Norns are in a creepily empty space; the ropes of destiny that they weave hang from the ends of the planks), the natural world and, for the first time in the cycle, extended time in the world of humans. The monumental hall of the Gibichungs, the smarmy and traitorous pair who bring down the epic hero and heroine, is decorated with a projection of what looks like a huge orange cross-section of a tree; it has furniture and white statues of the gods (the Wotan one, comically, has the prominent nose and the straggly hair of Bryn Terfel as the young king of the gods from Mr. Lepage's "Rheingold" at the Met last season). And as Gunther washed his bloody hands in the Rhine after the murder of Siegfried, the water slowly and horribly turned red."

More disturbingly, Waleson observes that "The singers often seemed like interlopers on the set; under directed, and in the case of the two leads, vocally uninspiring, they had trouble animating the evening. This sounds a little like the response many

of us had to the Tancred Dorst Ring at Bayreuth.

Antony Tommasini, in his review of 28 January 2012 for The New York Times, *Wagner's Horsewoman of Apocalypse*, takes a somewhat more sanguine view: "Götterdämmerung," the final installment in the Metropolitan Opera's new production of Wagner's "Ring" cycle, which opened on Friday, is the most theatrically effective staging of the four works in this epic series, and the clearest representation of the director Robert Lepage's vision. That's because with each installment Mr. Lepage has simplified the staging and used fewer of the capacities of Carl Fillion's 45-ton set: the machine...."

Tommasini considered the conducting under Luisi to be worthy successor to Jame Levine: "At his best in years past Mr. Levine revealed more mystery and awe in the score. But Mr. Luisi's lucid, textured and urgent conducting was distinguished. He received a huge ovation." This promises for a memorable performance when he comes to conduct the music-dramas as complete units. However, after lukewarm assessments of most of the singers, Waleson comes down in qualified support for Luisi: "It was left to Mr. Luisi to make the case for "Götterdämmerung," and he did. Some muddled horn playing aside, the orchestra was clear and sculpted, the storytelling vivid, the motifs carved out yet integrated into the orchestral fabric and the surging momentum of the opera. Some of the highlights were the scene transitions, when the set moved with the music, a new theme signaling a new place, and other purely orchestral moments. As Siegfried's raft cruised toward the audience, Mr. Boucher's sun gleaming behind it and the music of the Rhine journey welling out of the pit, you could see the magic of Mr. Lepage's idea. But a handful of moments, over the course of 19 hours, do not a "Ring" cycle" make."

Again, one has to hope that in the period from the premiere of *Das Rheingold* two years or so ago to the premiere of the complete cycle in mid-April 2012, both Lepage and Luisi can tweak, nip and tuck and even re-imagine some moments – and build the video projections into a more comprehensive and thought-through element of the projection – into a theatrical experience worthy of the work [Editor].





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## The **Raven's** Reporting - Compiled by Camron Dyer

There is a regularly updated comprehensive list on  
the Society's Website <http://www.wagner-nsw.org.au>  
that takes the list to 2014.

## Associated Wagner Lectures

**Opera Lunedi** - Meets 10am St Martins Anglican  
Church, 9b Arnold St, Killara  
19th March: Introduction to the Ring - Brian  
Fitzgerald

**Northside Opera Study Group** - Meets 10am  
Mondays Undercroft St Davids Uniting Church,  
Pacific Highway, Lindfield  
Monday 26 March: *Das Rheingold* - Wagner -  
Peter Bassett  
Monday 2 April: An Introduction to The Ring  
(Wagner) - Victoria Watson

**Sydney Opera Society** - Meets 2pm Presbyterian  
Church Hall, cnr High and Willoughby Sts,  
Willoughby  
Saturday, 1 September: The Ring Cycle (Part 2) -  
Dr Robert Gibson

## It's Past **Membership Renewal** Time

Yes, it's surprising how quickly the year slips by,  
and membership renewal was due by 31 January!

*Why renew your membership for 2012?*

The best reason to renew is the expanded range  
of activities and events that will stimulate, educate  
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Our calendar will expand the number of Wagner  
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1. Please provide your name, address and membership number.

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City.....State.....Postcode.....

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2. Please renew my/our membership from 1 January to 31 December 2012 on the following basis (*please tick one*)

Single member \$60 (single pensioner member \$35)

Shared members \$90 (shared pensioner members \$55)

Students \$25 (*include a copy of your current ID Card*)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

3. I/We wish to donate the following amount to the Society. (*Donations of \$2 or more are tax-deductible, and receipts will be issued. All donations are acknowledged in our Newsletter\*.*)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Total**

*Please complete this form and post it to:*

**The Treasurer  
The Wagner Society in NSW Inc  
GPO Box 4574  
Sydney NSW 2001**

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**4(a) Renewing by cheque or money order** - *Please include your cheque or money order, made payable to The Wagner Society, when you post this form.*

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**Westpac Banking Corporation, Paddington NSW Branch**

**Account Name: The Wagner Society**

**BSB: 032040**

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(these will be printed on the Wagner Society's bank statement)

**6. Signatures**

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Signature

.....  
Signature

...../...../2012

Date renewed

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**A person ceases to be a member if they fail to renew their annual membership by 31 January each year.**





Wagner 2013

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*Donations are tax-deductible, and receipts will be issued.*

*All donations are acknowledged in our Newsletter*

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**The Wagner Society in NSW Inc**

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Telephone: 9360 9822 (Jane Matthews, President)  
Website: [www.wagner.org.au](http://www.wagner.org.au)  
Website enquiries: [wagner\\_nsw@optusnet.com.au](mailto:wagner_nsw@optusnet.com.au)

(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)

## A Very Special Wagner Society Event

The extraordinary amusing and informative **Heath Lees** will present: *The Women in Wagner's Life and Art*.

Many of Wagner's most intriguing characters are women - often part-angel, part-demon, and many women in his own life were just as fascinating as those in his operas. This lecture describes the women who entered the composer's circle, provided him with models for his female characters, and sometimes changed his life and art.

**When: Wednesday 28 March**

**Where: Goethe-Institut  
90 Ocean St, Woollahra**

6.15pm: Welcome drinks

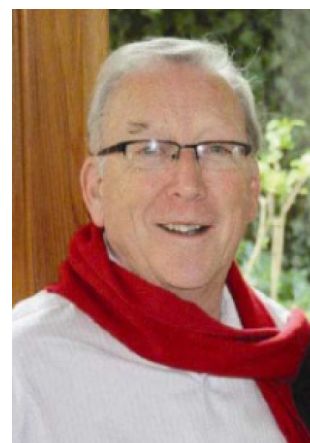
6.45pm: Lecture

8.15pm: Wine, cheese & canapès

Members: \$45

Guests: \$50

Proceeds to support our 2013 Wagner Bicentenary Appeal



## Lisa Harper Brown is The Wagner Society's Special Guest for the 2012 AGM on 20 May

Critically acclaimed as 'radiant both vocally and visually', British-born Lisa Harper-Brown is a unique and commanding performer. Equally at home on the recital platform or the operatic stage, Lisa has delighted audiences from Sydney to London in a range of repertoire from Bach to Berg and beyond.

Lisa made her debut on the main stage for Opera Australia singing Pamina in *The Magic Flute*. Since then her operatic roles have included Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Diana in *Orpheus in the Underworld*, Echo in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Fiordiligi in *Così fan Tutte*, Elsa in *Lohengrin*, Eva in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, the title role in *Salome*, Rosalinde in *Die Fledermaus*, and Countess Almaviva in Niel Armfield's exciting new interpretation of *The Marriage of Figaro*, for which she received a prestigious Sir Robert Helpmann Award.

A relocation to Germany saw Lisa embraced by the artistic community in Berlin. Not long after her arrival she debuted as First Lady in *Die Zauberflöte* for Hamburg State Opera, and thereafter was seen regularly in Concert, Recital and Festivals throughout Germany until her return to Australia in 2009.

She has appeared with Sydney Symphony Orchestra for performances of *Die Walküre* in both 1998 and 2003. She has worked with conductors including Edo de Waart, Ascher Fisch, Ola Rudner, Simone Young, Sebastian Weigle, Alfred Eschwè, Peter Robinson, Emanuel Plasson, Roderick Brydon, and Nicholas Braithwaite and had the privilege of working with composers including Sir Michael Tippett, Roger Smalley, John Rutter, Carl Vine, Richard Mills, Graeme Koehne and Peter Sculthorpe.

A larger scale mini-operetta version, titled 'The Ringtone Cycle', debuted in this year's Adelaide International Arts Festival, an exciting event in Lisa's 2012 calendar. Upcoming engagements in 2012 include Lisa's debut with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, as they perform a National tour of Wagner's *Die Walküre*.



Lisa Harper-Brown - AGM Star

**Address for Sunday Functions  
Goethe Institut  
90 Ocean Street Woollahra (corner of Jersey Road)**