

# The Wagner Society



IN NEW SOUTH WALES INC.

Newsletter No. 118, July 2010

## In Memoriam

Wolfgang Wagner (21 March 2010), and  
Patron of our Society Sir Charles Mackerras (14 July 2010) - see inside for obituaries

**NEWSFLASH:** Melbourne to stage a Ring Cycle – at last? – see report inside.

## President's Report

Dear Members

Welcome to our second Newsletter for 2010.

### Wolfgang Wagner

We all mourn the passing of an age with the death of Wolfgang Wagner on 21 March 2010. While he no longer officially played a direct role in the management of the Bayreuth Festival – his daughters Eva Wagner-Pasquier and Katharina Wagner are now the Leiterinnen of the Festival – he was one of the last direct links, through his grandmother Cosima Wagner and his father Siegfried Wagner, to Richard Wagner and his contemporaries. Wolfgang Wagner had known (for good or ill) many of the major figures of European musical, political and artistic history in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and had seen tremendous upheavals in his own children arising from that history.

In his memory, we showed a DVD of Act 2 of his 1981 Bayreuth production of *Parsifal* before our function on 28 March, and honoured his personal, artistic and administrative achievements which have contributed to the survival of the Bayreuth Festival.

### Sir Charles MacKerras

On 14 July 2010 the Patron of our Society, Sir Charles Mackerras, died in London aged 84. Sir Charles was an active supporter of the Society while he lived in Sydney, but after he made his home overseas his busy schedule meant

that there were fewer opportunities for him to be directly involved with our activities. Although I did not have the pleasure of meeting Sir Charles, like many others I was able to enjoy his concerts and recordings, a legacy which will endure.

While a number of the generous obituaries paid tribute to his conducting of Mozart and Gilbert and Sullivan, many of us will remember him for his Wagner here in Sydney, both at the official concert for the opening of the Sydney Opera House in 1973 (an all-Wagner affair with Birgit Nilsson) and for the Bi-Centenary *Meistersinger* in that Opera House in 1988. CDs or DVDs of both events are still available through Amazon. Some of his recorded legacy reflects the pinnacle of musical achievement. For me, nothing surpasses the recording of the Messiah (Basil Lam edition) for HMV, still available from EMI France through Amazon. The clarion sound of the uncluttered orchestration, the excellence of the

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### PATRON:

### HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS:

Prof Michael Ewans  
Mr Richard King  
Mr Horst Hoffman  
Mr Joseph Ferfoglia  
Mrs Barbara McNulty OBE

## For Your **Diary**

2010		
August 5, 6, 7	<i>Lohengrin</i> : Prelude to Act III – conducted by Simone Young (followed by Bruckner's 7th Symphony - Adagio dedicated to Wagner whose death occurred during its composition)	SSO - Sydney Opera House

## Meetings **Dates** & Coming **Events**

DATE	EVENTS - 2010	TIME & LOCATION
1 August	Stephen Whale recital: Brahms (1833-1897): Zwei Rhapsodien Op. 79 Two Rhapsodies - B Minor and G Minor; Haydn (1732-1809): Keyboard Sonata in E Flat Major, Hob. XVI 49 (No.59); Schubert (1797-1828): Piano Sonata No. 14 in A minor ("Grande Sonate"), D. 784 (Op. posth. 143) 12.30 DVD of Act 3 of Tristan und Isolde broadcast live from Bayreuth in 2009 (running time approx 75 minutes)	Goethe-Institut - 2pm
19 September	Report back on <i>Lohengrin</i> by members attending Bayreuth 2010	Goethe-Institut - 2pm
24 October	New York Metropolitan Opera's new production of Das Rheingold, being screened at the Chauvel Cinema, Paddington. (You'll need to buy your own ticket, and the Society will organise a function after the film.)	Chauvel Cinema, Paddington
21 November	Christmas Party – please bring a plate 2.00PM TBA Festivities start at 3:00PM	Goethe-Institut - 2pm
<b>Goethe-Institut address 90 Ocean Street Woollahra (corner of Jersey Road)</b>		

## Committee **2009 - 2010**

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## 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.

Donations from 7 February to 30 June 2010 were received from: Julie Carroll, Ann Weeden, Monica and Aliro Olave, Brett Johnson, Brian Freestone and Charles Brady, Hugh Hallard, Pam and Ian McGaw, Despina Kallinikos and Iphygenia Kallinikos. Naomi Kaldor, Neville Pollard, Glen Barnwell, Ross Whitelaw, Patricia and Roy Hodson, Bill Brooks and Alasdair Beck, Nance Grant M.B.E., Barbara and Ian Brady, Douglas Barry, Heinz Ebert, Mary Haswell, Richard King, Terence Watson, and Deanne Whittleston and Anthony Gregg.



## President's Report continued

soloists and the small clear chorus produce an authentic recording of unmatched beauty and power. In an age still in love with Messiahs with battalions of choristers, Mackerras gave us the unalloyed beauty of Handel's authentic voice.

Your committee will consider and approach suitable candidates for the position of the Society's second Patron, and ask the 2011 AGM to acclaim Sir Charles's successor.

### 2013 - Commemorating the Bicentennial of Wagner's Birth

Members of the Society have begun meeting informally and making contact with key music organisations in New South Wales and nationally to discuss their 'Wagner plans' for 2013 (if any). So that our Society is in a position to sponsor music organizations which commemorate the Wagner Bicentenary in 2013 in their programming a formal sub-committee is being set up, made up of these members and others, with a view to recommending ways of raising money to support concerts and also organising special Society events during 2013.

John Studdert reported to the Annual General Meeting in May on approaches that have been made so far, and gave an outline of proposed future actions, including keeping members informed through the website and our Newsletter. At this stage scheduling of performances by leading music organisations in 2013 is still subject to negotiation, so that it is not clear what events will be staged here in Sydney.

The position is further clouded by rumours of a Ring Cycle in Melbourne by Opera Australia, with Niel Armfield's comments on the ABC's "Talking Heads" programme about producing *Götterdämmerung* in 2017 doing nothing to clarify matters. (You can find a transcript of this interview with an internet search for 'neil armfield ring wagner', or going to <http://www.abc.net.au/tv/talkingheads/txt/s2945193.htm>) – see also article below.

### 2010 Functions

Our first function for 2010 was on **Sunday 21 February** when Peter Bassett gave an illustrated talk entitled '**The Operas Wagner Almost Wrote**'. Peter gave us glimpses of Wagner as the creator of unexpected characters, such as the theatre prompter who can't stop sneezing, the young man who makes his living dressed as a bear, and the poet who addresses his audience from a hot air balloon, as well as the better-known planned dramas on the lives of Jesus and the Buddha, and on the relations between the west and Islam.

Where many other composers were sent libretti written by professional dramatists to set to music, Wagner was both his own poet and composer. More ideas ended without being realized than the 10 works post-Rienzi which form the Wagner operatic canon today.

Peter made a very interesting comment about the quality of Wagner's dramatic poems - even those which he did not orchestrate were of such quality that they could have been successfully performed as plays. Some of us may smile politely when we encounter stories of Wagner reading his poems to his friends, thinking that

we would rather have been at home polishing our fridge magnets that night. So I was pleased to read a few days later about a spoken-word recording of *Meistersinger*, released on the label Col Legno in Germany in 2007, where an actor named Franz Winter read the poem (according to the reviewer) in a quiet metered recitation lasting 3 hours and 48 minutes.

Another reviewer mentioned a recent spoken-word recording of the *Ring*, also by a single reader, although "he read different characters with a different voice, and tried to infuse some semblance of drama into it." We look forward to reading more about these and other topics in Peter's forthcoming book on Verdi and Wagner which he is writing for the bicentennial of their births in 2013.

Our second function was on **Sunday 28 March** when Professor Heath Lees gave an illustrated presentation entitled "Lifting the Lid on Wagner's Piano". Many were surprised to learn that Wagner was not a good pianist, and that he claimed not to like the instrument, although in the Tony Palmer film "Wagner", excerpts from which illustrated Heath's talk, he was shown trudging across Europe, his trusty Erard grand following behind. Many portraits of composers with Wagner show him seated at the piano with the others circled around, but this more likely an arrangement for artistic emphasis rather than a natural sitting.

Professor Lees also pointed out that despite his disparaging of the piano, Wagner wrote a number of piano pieces and much of the music for his operas and music dramas was clearly written in 'sketch' form at the piano. Heath then discussed the way in which Wagner's music was championed by pianists such as Liszt in Wagner's own lifetime, thereby being spread to a wider audience, and also by pianists such as Stefan Mickisch in our time. Heath played an excerpt from a recording of Wagner's piano transcription of Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony, where the singers are retained and the piano only replaces the orchestra, unlike Liszt's transcription of that work where the piano replaces both orchestra and singers.

Our third function this year was on **Sunday 18 April** when Terence Watson asked the question, "What would we have had to do for Wagner to count us among his friends?" as part of a survey of some historical and philosophical influences on Wagner's world view and creative work. This talk was extracted from material on Wagner and philosophy which Terence is preparing for publication. Central to these ideas were "friendship" and "sympathy", and following Hobbes and David Hume, Wagner saw sympathy as a fundamental emotion, a genetically endowed mechanism which makes us moral. Would we have had enough "sympathy" to qualify in Wagner's eyes as a "purely human" being?

Terence introduced us to a friend of Nietzsche's, who also became a close friend of Wagner's and is mentioned in Cosima Wagner's Diaries, the Baroness Malwida von Meysenbug, a writer and idealist. The scion of a wealthy German family, she was a prolific writer and possessed through her sensitivity and feelings, the qualities of friendship and sympathy Wagner demanded of his friends. For Wagner, Art addressed the feelings, and could not be understood in a rational way. And so it was with his friends.



## President's Report continued

### Annual General Meeting on Sunday 23 May

Our annual general meeting was held at the Goethe-Institut on **Sunday 23 May**. A signed copy of the final accounts is available on our website, audited by our pro-bono auditors, WalterTurnbull. Once again, we are deeply indebted to the generosity of WalterTurnbull, its Executive Director Mr Mark Driessen, and Mr Christopher Ritchie, for their kindness and diligence in completing this audit on our behalf.

Following the Annual General Meeting, we enjoyed a recital organized by Emma Moore (soprano), with Anne Dowsley (mezzo-soprano), Simon Halligan (baritone), and Thomas Johnson (associate artist, piano). Normally, the AGM recital consists of students from the Conservatorium of Music who have already received German language scholarships from the Society for study at the Goethe-Institut, but this year two of the three recipients were unable to attend, and Emma kindly arranged a recital with fellow-students who will now all receive German language scholarships in recognition of their generosity and talent. These recitals are positive proof, if any were needed, of the value of encouraging talented young singers and artists in their chosen professions, and the value our small contributions make to these young people.

### Future Functions

#### July Function

Our July function will be held on **Sunday 1 August**, when Stephen Whale will give a piano recital including works by Haydn, Schubert and Brahms. Since he last performed at a Society function in July 2009, Stephen has commenced studies for his Masters Degree at the Yale School of Music, and is now in the final year of that course.

#### September Function

On **Sunday 19 September** members of the Society who visit the Bayreuth festival in August will report back on the new production of Lohengrin, and comment on the continuing works at the festival. We also hope to confirm a speaker who will talk about the connection between Liszt and Wagner, in preparation for 2011, which is the bicentenary of Liszt's birth.

#### October Function – new production of *Das Rheingold* from the New York Met

A number of members have pointed out that our functions often clash with the high definition delayed broadcasts from the New York Metropolitan Opera, and in 2011 we will ensure that this doesn't happen (unless it's by design).

However on **Sunday 24 October** our function will be held at the Chauvel Cinema, Paddington, which will be showing a delayed broadcast of *Rheingold* marking the start of the new Met *Ring* under James Levine, in an eagerly-awaited production by Robert LePage. You will need to buy your ticket to that performance early, through the theatre box-office, to avoid disappointment. The Society is negotiating with the management of the Chauvel, with a view to having an area set aside for an after-film function for Society members. If that is not possible, we will attempt to find another location nearby. If you have already bought a ticket for this performance at the Hayden Orpheum or

Dendy Opera Quays, or for another date, please think carefully before you cancel that ticket and purchase another for the showing at the Chauvel, as it may be booked out at that time.

Please also note that, because our October function is being held at the Chauvel Cinema on Sunday 24 October, **the previous advertised date of Sunday 17 October no longer applies.**

#### November Function

Our final function of the year will be held on **Sunday 21 November**, and will be our Christmas Party.

#### Functions in 2011 - visit by Tony Palmer

The Wagner Society of New Zealand is hosting a national tour by Tony Palmer, film-maker and Wagner specialist, in March 2011. Following that tour, it's proposed that Mr Palmer and a colleague will visit the Australian Wagner Societies between 1 and 14 April. Mr Palmer will take this opportunity to publicise a new remastered version of his 9-hour plus epic film "Wagner", and a new documentary on the Wagner family. At this stage we're uncertain which dates he will be in Sydney, but our hope is that we can arrange for Mr Palmer to give talks on these and other films, and can also arrange for showings of these works.

#### Our Website – [www.wagner.org.au](http://www.wagner.org.au)

If you go down to the Website today, you're sure of a big surprise!! It has been completely transformed, thanks to the hard work of our web-master John Studdert, and to a piece of software called **Joomla!** (Why do the creators of software give them names which sound like bad movies starring Robin Williams?)

The transformation is just spectacular. Gone are the flaming torches, replaced by clear uncluttered vistas with white space. And even though you may type in the old website address, you will be taken to our new address – [www.wagner.org.au](http://www.wagner.org.au). John has done a tremendous amount of work to change and update our website, although there is much work to do, including finalising a Member's Only area that will require members to log in with a password to see information, such as the full PDF of the Newsletter, and to comment on the Newsletter or other people's views on performances in a blog. However, we owe him a great debt of gratitude for the work he has done so far. Thank you, John, and well done!! [There is more information below – Ed.]

#### Bayreuth Scholarship is reborn

When Carolyn Watson, a young Australian conductor currently living in Europe, was awarded the 2009 Bayreuth Scholarship, we were all unaware that she would be the last recipient of that award in its current form. The Bayreuth Scholarship, administered by Opera Foundation Australia, has now been replaced in its 32<sup>nd</sup> year by a new award, the "Berlin New Music Opera Award." Opera Foundation Australia will continue to administer the "Berlin New Music Opera Award", which like the Bayreuth Scholarship is sponsored by the German Government (D.A.A.D), The Savage Club and the Wagner Society.

The Award enables an Australian artist who is professionally engaged in some facet of opera such as a singer, conductor, director, designer or repetiteur, to further develop skills by undertaking study in any part of Germany.



The focus of the newly named Award is on the new and revised productions of operas. We are delighted to be able to continue to support Australians involved in Opera by donating the cost of a return airfare to Europe (Icelandic ash clouds notwithstanding) to the winner of this award.

Subject only to confirmation from the German authorities, Opera Foundation Australia hopes to present the inaugural winner with his or her prize at its function on Sunday 1 August at the Sydney Conservatorium.

### Applying for tickets for Bayreuth 2011

The application form for sets of tickets for Bayreuth 2011 is at the back of this Newsletter. In the past, we've asked applicants to send us a cheque which we have held un-presented until after the ticket ballot, when we send payments from the successful applicants to the Bayreuth Festival Box Office.

This process will not apply this year. Instead, we are asking applicants to make sure that we have reliable contact details for them for November and December 2010, so that once we receive advice from Bayreuth we can contact them to confirm their application, and advise an approximate cost of tickets, based on the relative values of the Australian Dollar and Euro at that time. They can then deposit a cheque direct to the Society's bank account, or transfer the funds electronically.

We are also instituting a time limit for responses. If we contact you by email and telephone at the addresses you have provided and we do not receive a response within 48 hours, we will offer your tickets to the next members on the list of applicants and remove you from the process. This means that if you're going to be overseas, or walking across the Simpson Desert at that time, you need to give us the name of someone with whom we can deal in your absence.

This will ensure that successful applicants have certainty about their tickets, and that we are able to send the payment for our tickets to Bayreuth within their deadline.

### Bayreuth celebration dinner and Dr Sherwin Sloan

For many years, Dr Sherwin Sloan, the president of the Wagner Society of Southern California, has organised an annual dinner during the Bayreuth Festival in honour of Wolfgang Wagner. These dinners have been held in the Festspielhaus Restaurant starting immediately after the performance of *Rheingold* in the last cycle of Ring performances, and is generally well-attended by English-speaking visitors to the Festival, and by singers and other artists taking part in the productions. Dr Sloan is perhaps better known as the person who in retirement was a passionate follower of *Ring Cycles*, allegedly attending performances from some 90 different productions.

Sadly, Dr Sloan died in May this year, and the celebration dinner this August, in honour of Eva Pasquier-Wagner and Katharina Wagner, the joint directors of the festival, will undoubtedly take on the character of a tribute to both Wolfgang Wagner and Dr Sloan. Those Society members in Bayreuth this year who are able to attend the dinner will be taking part in a sad and historical occasion.

### Lectures on 'Wagner in Dresden'

The University of Sydney's Centre for Continuing Education is offering a course entitled "Wagner

in Dresden" starting on Thursday 4 November and finishing six lectures later on Thursday 9 December. Lecturer Robert Gay covers Wagner's time at the Saxon Court, from the triumph of *Rienzi* through the *Dutchman* and *Tannhäuser* to his disastrous involvement in the failed uprising of 1849 and his eventual escape to exile in Switzerland via Weimar and his musical compatriot and future father-in-law, Franz Liszt.

Robert Gay has a formidable musical and historical knowledge, and his lectures are delivered with great humour and authenticity. With the approach of the 2013 Bicentennial of both Wagner and Verdi, you can expect more than a trickle of lectures and courses on these composers, and Robert's "Wagner in Dresden" is likely to be an excellent way of getting your feet wet. You'll find more information and can enroll by contacting the Centre for Continuing Education on (Sydney) 9036 4789 or online at [www.cce.usyd.edu.au/course/WADR](http://www.cce.usyd.edu.au/course/WADR).

### Jessica Pratt

I was browsing through the (UK) Financial Times online (the consequence of boredom and an iPad) and found a review of a performance of Rossini's *Armida* at the Garsington Opera in Oxfordshire, UK. Headed "Fiendish demands: Jessica Pratt excels in the difficult title role", reviewer Andrew Clark says "What sets the performance alight is Jessica Pratt's *Armida*. This young English (sic) soprano has a ringing top, good looks, stage temperament and enough vocal agility to make sense of Rossini's love-struck heroine." However, don't expect to get tickets to Garsington any time soon. Clark says that "shameless exclusivity is the key" and that Garsington echoes "the world of (Richard Strauss's) *Capriccio*, in which rich people devise a performance for their own amusement."

If you search YouTube for "Jessica Pratt", you'll find live footage of Jessica in the title role of *Lucia di Lammermoor* in Genoa this year, and one excerpt from her performance of *Armida* at Garsington. Unfortunately, some of these clips appear to have been recorded on a mobile phone by someone standing at the back of the theatre. Despite these poor production values, the sound and vision give you some indication of how much better the performances must have been 'in the flesh'. The vision of Maestro Gelmetti and her supporters has been realised through Jessica's hard work and talent.

### A personal note

I have been somewhat self-absorbed over the last few months in one of the phases we all go through eventually - down-sizing, de-cluttering, and moving house. In the process, four tonnes of accumulated detritus found their way into recycling or rubbish. At the same time I encountered numerous difficulties with relocating technology, and all these events have meant that a number of Society matters have been unduly delayed, including acknowledging and welcoming new members, providing receipts for donations, and writing this report.

I apologise to Terence Watson, our Newsletter editor, and to any others of you who have been inconvenienced by this. I'd like to report that things are back to normal (well, almost, as is often the way with technology.)

Roger Cruickshank 22 July 2010



# In Memoriam: **Wolfgang** Wagner Dies **At Age 90**

(30 August 1919 -21 March 2010)

Wolfgang Wagner was the last of what we would consider the most direct descendants of grandfather Richard Wagner and great-grandfather was Franz Liszt. His older brother Wieland had preceded him in 1966. He is succeeded as the co-directors of the Bayreuther Festspiele by half-sisters Eva and Katharina (more than three decades apart in age). As the New York Times tartly reported (Margalit Fox 23 March 2010) "In keeping with longstanding family tradition, they had not spoken to each other in many years."

The New York Times also commented: "Mr. Wagner was considered an able administrator if a rather stolid opera director. (In 2001, The New Criterion called him the "supremely less talented" of Siegfried Wagner's two sons.) Over the decades, he was described variously as a savior and a dictator." The will, no doubt, be much discussion over the next decade as to his relative merits. In his later years, he certainly took risks with some of his commissions for new productions, notably Christoph Schliengensief's 2004 *Parsifal*, the withdrawal of Lars von Trier from producing current Ring Cycle and the substitution of Wolfgang Wagner's equally aged friend Tancred Dorst to take over the Ring production. According to the New York Times, "In a condolence letter that was released to the news media, Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany called Mr. Wagner an "exceptional director." Judging by comments your Editor has heard over the years at Bayreuth and in Wagner Society report-backs on Bayreuth experiences, there would be considerable debate about his merits as a director.

The Guardian (Charlotte Higgins 22 March 2010), for example, suggests "...while he certainly wasn't an artistic visionary, his role in one of the most remarkable family businesses of all time will more than earn him his place in history. The history of the Bayreuth festival – with its tortured and serpentine family feuds and its serious brush with Nazism – is endlessly fascinating."

In 1939, after enlisting in the German Army, Wolfgang took part in the invasion of Poland and was wounded. (The invasion, as one of his sisters explained in "The Wagner Family," a documentary shown on British television last year, was planned at Bayreuth using Wolfgang's geography textbook.) (New York Times report)

The Guardian's obituary (Tom Sutcliffe, 22 March 2010) noted that "Discharged from the army, Wolfgang served his operatic apprenticeship in Bayreuth and at the Berlin Staatsoper – getting the chance also, as did Wieland, to mount operas by their father Siegfried in regional houses." This apprenticeship was significant in assisting the re-opening of the Festspielhaus and the countering of anti-Wagner groups who argued against the re-establishment of the Festival because of Wagner's anti-Semitic views.

Bloomberg online news astutely observes about the problematic Nazi connections of the Wagner family: "Wolfgang's mother was a committed Nazi and avowed admirer of Hitler until her death in 1980. Hitler, in his turn, adored "Winnie," worshipped the music of Richard Wagner, and was unstinting in his support of the Bayreuth

Festival.

The degree to which Wolfgang and Wieland were culpable supporters of Hitler's regime remains a source of debate. Wolfgang never joined the Nazi party, while Wieland joined in 1938 under Hitler's orders." (Shirley Apthorp and Catherine Hickley 22 March 2010)

As Sutcliffe observes: "The restoration of the festival was problematical, and not just financially. Wolfgang's instinct for local politics was fundamental to the success of the business. It conveniently turned out that, as a schoolboy, he had nurtured friendships with many who became leading lights of the town after the war." These connections came in handy in achieving the renovation of the Festspielhaus to bring it the most advanced theatrical technology available in the 1950s, enabling it to stage productions that, ironically, incorporated the ideas of theatre designer Adolphe Appia, who Cosima Wagner had branded as mad after he told her of his radical ideas for lighting Wagner's operas.

The New Bayreuth style of the 1950s and 1960s was essentially the brainwave of Wieland Wagner, but Wolfgang capitalised on the rehabilitation of the Festival's reputation effected by Wieland's approach by continuing the abstract and stylised approach to productions after Wieland's early death. "The so-called New Bayreuth style of production and design made the denazified festival after 1951 at least appear radically different: the visual emphasis now was to be on stylised costumes shorn of such traditional German elements as winged and horned helmets, while scenery suggested an abstract world created by stage lighting rather than the grand old trappings of German mythology." (The Guardian) Crucial to the success of the New Bayreuth were Wolfgang's admitted administrative skills – in fact Wieland's artistic abilities and Wolfgang's managerial skills may be about to be recapitulated in the alliance of Katharina and Eva (the latter having years of experience in managing the Weimar Festival – although many may question Katharina's artistic capacities, based on productions to date!).

Bloomberg also reports Wolfgang's undoubted successes in choices of directors and conductors who helped consolidate the Festival's reputation in the 1970s and 80s: "He hired stage directors Chéreau, Harry Kupfer, Goetz Friedrich and Jean-Pierre Ponnelle, alongside conductors Carlos Kleiber, Daniel Barenboim, Pierre Boulez and Georg Solti, creating legendary productions that set the interpretative benchmark for decades to come." However, more recent decades have been beset with problems in ensuring the best singers were willing to forego astronomical salaries from the great opera houses for the modest stipend at Bayreuth. Recent industrial action by technical staff before the 2009 Festival – and the increase in payment they won – is likely to generate pressure from performers for similar increases, with consequent increases on ticket prices to cover the additional costs.

On the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall (9 November 2009), Wolfgang was honoured



for his lifetime achievement with the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany with star and ribbon.

The Guardian's obituary sums up Wolfgang's achievement: "Wolfgang's major achievement was to have secured the future of the Bayreuth festival and at the same time ensured that the composer's descendants could enjoy a financial security that their famous forebear could never count on. The various arrangements negotiated by Wolfgang with federal Bavaria, the German state, and the city of Bayreuth were complicated to settle but invariably worked out to his personal advantage. His management of the future artistic and administrative direction of Bayreuth after his death is already questionable. Yet it will be out of character if Wolfgang's final gamble on his own daughters does not succeed too."

Bloomberg reports German Culture Minister Bernd Neumann writing that Wolfgang was "Committed to the tradition of his grandfather's legacy, he succeeded in stabilizing the festival in difficult times and leading it into a secure future,"

Mr. Wagner's survivors include his children, Gottfried, Eva and Katharina; a sister, Verena; and grandchildren.

You can read the full reports at the following web links.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/23/arts/music/23wagner.html>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/charlottehigginsblog/2010/mar/22/classicalmusicandopera-opera>

<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601088&sid=aTdQUJLCQwe8>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2010/mar/22/wolfgang-wagner-obituary>

## In Memoriam: **Sir Charles Mackerras,** **Patron Of Our Society, Dies At Age 84** (17 November 1925 - 14 July 2010)

Perhaps Moffat Oxenbould, former Artistic Director of Opera Australia, put it best in his comment in Opera Australia's obituary for Sir Charles: "operatic legend, a master musician and a good companion;" on the other hand, *The Guardian's* heading for Sir Charles' obituary sums up the quality of Sir Charles's career: "Energetic conductor engaged in a tireless quest for perfection."

Sir Charles was certainly energetic. As David Pickard, Glyndebourne's General Director, said: "Everyone at Glyndebourne is deeply saddened to hear of the death of Sir Charles Mackerras who conducted his final performances here last month, his final conducting appearance being the performance on June 12th." The 15 July 2010 performance of *Don Giovanni*, conducted by Glyndebourne's Music Director Vladimir Jurowski with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, was dedicated to Sir Charles's memory.

Sir Charles also had a full schedule ahead of him as he was to conduct two of the BBC Proms in this summer's season; now one of the Prom concerts will be dedicated to his achievements. If that were not enough, while battling his cancer, Sir Charles was scheduled to conduct the Scottish Chamber Orchestra for Mozart's opera *Idomeneo* as part of the Edinburgh International Festival.

Sir Charles was also a master musician dedicated to perfection, as all the major obituaries noted, whether it was in bringing "the insights of the authentic performance movement to his conducting, notably in his work on Mozart's music and music of the baroque. An early result of his "pioneering work on historic performance practices was his 1959 recording of Handel's "Water Music," which challenged the then-conventional lush performances by using the forces Handel had in mind, including 24 oboes." In 1966, he added ornamentation to the score of "The Marriage of Figaro" at Sadler's Wells, recreating his understanding of performance practice in Mozart's time," playing "a crucial role in

establishing Janacek's operas in the West."

In brief, in the words of The Washington Post, he "was known for performances that were revelatory not only because of their clarity and precision, their astutely judged balances and their consideration of period style, but also because they invariably sounded so deeply felt." Sir Charles made his last appearance at the Royal Opera House conducting Janacek's *The Cunning Little Vixen*, which the house staged at his request.

While Sir Charles was born in the USA in Schenectady, in New York state, to Australian parents, he was brought up in Sydney and attended Sydney Grammar School. At the NSW Conservatory, he studied the oboe, piano and composition. His earliest engagements as a casual oboist with the Sydney Symphony came during World War II; he was appointed in 1946 as the Orchestra's Principal Oboe. Sir Charles returned home in 2007 to conduct the Sydney Symphony as part of its 75th anniversary celebrations.

For many of us, Sir Charles first entered our consciousness as the person invited to conduct the Sydney Symphony Orchestra for the opening concert at the Sydney Opera House in 1973, but his association with opera in Australia began when he returned from London to conduct *La traviata* for the Elizabethan Theatre Trust Opera Company (now Opera Australia) in 1962. The Opera Australia obituary summed up Sir Charles's career with opera in Australia and with Opera Australia: "He was Musical Director of the then Elizabethan Trust Opera Company for its 1962 Season. In 1973, he conducted Mozart's *The Magic Flute* during The Australian Opera's Opening Season in the Sydney Opera House, returning at regular intervals until 1998. Between 1981 and 1985 he conducted concert performances of Wagner's *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried*, *Götterdämmerung* and *Tristan und Isolde* in co-presentations between Australian Opera, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra." Fortunately for Wagner-lovers, Sir Charles's conducting is well captured



in the DVD recording of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* from the 1988 Bicentennial season, the production itself a gift from the German nation to Australia.

In 1947, Sir Charles moved to London, where he joined the orchestra of the Sadler's Wells Opera where he met a Czech musician who persuaded him to apply for a scholarship to study conducting in Prague with Vaclav Talich, which led to his enduring interest in Janacek. As the Washington Post records "Mackerras became fluent in Czech and prepared new editions of Janacek's scores. Mr. Mackerras gave the British premiere of "Katya Kabanova" at Sadler's Wells in 1951 and helped bring the rest of the composer's operas to Western houses, where they are now firmly established. He also made a renowned set of Janacek recordings for Decca." He was also principal guest conductor of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra from 1997 to 2003.

Rupert Christiansen, in The Telegraph, gives us a "behind the scenes" picture of Sir Charles: "Singers found him particularly exacting; he had no time for hissy prima donnas or big-baby tenors, and he expected even the most timid newcomers to meet his generally brisk tempi and take criticism on the nose. To work with Sir Charles was a privilege, but it wasn't an easy ride.

"This native Australian bluntness and honesty got him into trouble on occasion, notoriously so when as a young man working at the Aldeburgh Festival, he dared to make a throwaway joke about Benjamin Britten's fondness for young boys. When Britten found out, he banished Mackerras from his kingdom a pity, as Mackerras would prove a superb advocate of his work after Britten's death."

In addition to his seasons in Sydney, Sir Charles's list of overseas conducting appointments attests to his energy as well as to the evident quality of his conducting: Music Director of English National Opera (1970-77); music director of Welsh National Opera (1987-92) and had conducted "many great performances" from 1950; first conductor at the Hamburg State Opera from 1966 to 1969; chief conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra from 1982 to 1985; principal guest conductor of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra (1992-95); music director of the Orchestra of St. Luke's in New York (1998-2001); principal guest conductor of the Philharmonia (from 2004), and principal guest conductor of the Czech Philharmonic. In 1980, he became the first non-Briton to conduct the BBC Symphony Orchestra at the Last Night of the Proms. Sir Charles also conducted five Festival operas at Glyndebourne, beginning with *Falstaff* in 1990. This was followed by *Le nozze di Figaro* (1997), *Rodelinda* (1999), *Die Zauberflöte* (2005) and *Così fan tutte* (2010).

Sir Charles's talents and achievements were recognised during his career when he was knighted in 1979 and appointed a Companion of the British Empire in 1974, a Companion of Honour in 2003. Recent honours included the Royal Philharmonic Society's gold medal in 2005 and the Queen's Medal for Music, of which he was the first recipient. In 2008 he was made honorary president of the Edinburgh International Festival Society. He was also a Companion of the Order of Australia. In August 2008, Mackerras was made the new honorary president of the Edinburgh International Festival Society. He was only the

second person to hold the post; the previous holder had been Sir Yehudi Menuhin.

- To conclude with some further tributes to Sir Charles's enormous talent, engaging personality and significant cultural achievements:
- Rory Jeffes, the managing director of the Sydney Symphony: "...the nation had lost a living treasure."
- "Charlie Mackerras' impact on the development of musical performance practice over the last 60 years has been enormous," Royal Opera music director Antonio Pappano.
- The Washington Post "He was a force of nature, a true man of the theater, who grappled with how to honor a composer's intentions with the utmost rhythmic flair, drama and enthusiasm."

Your Editor is indebted to the following sources for this inadequate tribute to such a great man of music [Ed.]:

Alan Blyth, guardian.co.uk, Thursday, 15 July 2010: [www.guardian.co.uk/music/2010/jul/15/sir-charles-mackerras-obituary](http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2010/jul/15/sir-charles-mackerras-obituary)  
WNO tribute after death of Sir Charles Mackerras: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-10644769](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-10644769)

Ashleigh Wilson, *The Australian* July 15, 2010: Symphony mourns death of conductor Charles Mackerras: [www.theaustralian.com.au/news/arts/symphony-mourns-death-of-conductor-charles-mackerras/story-e6frg8n6-1225892114358](http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/arts/symphony-mourns-death-of-conductor-charles-mackerras/story-e6frg8n6-1225892114358)

Robert Barr, The Associated Press, Thursday, July 15, 2010: The Washington Post: [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/07/15/AR2010071501743.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/07/15/AR2010071501743.html)

Allan Kozinn, July 15, 2010: New York Times: Charles Mackerras, Elegant Conductor, Dies at 84: [www.nytimes.com/2010/07/16/arts/music/16mackerras.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/16/arts/music/16mackerras.html)

ABC (Australia) news: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/07/15/2954412.htm>

Alasdair Steven, The Scotsman: [news.scotsman.com/obituaries/Obituary-Sir-Charles-Mackerras.6423296.jp](http://news.scotsman.com/obituaries/Obituary-Sir-Charles-Mackerras.6423296.jp)

Clare Morgan: Sir Charles Mackerras dies: [www.smh.com.au/entertainment/music/sir-charles-mackerras-dies-20100715-10bx3.html](http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/music/sir-charles-mackerras-dies-20100715-10bx3.html)

Opera Australia: [www.opera-australia.org.au/opawwr/assets/main/lib90210/sir\\_charles\\_mackerras%20oa\\_message\\_of\\_condolence.pdf](http://www.opera-australia.org.au/opawwr/assets/main/lib90210/sir_charles_mackerras%20oa_message_of_condolence.pdf)

Glyndebourne Festival [www.glyndebourne.com/press/news\\_new/press\\_releases/sir\\_charles\\_mackerras](http://www.glyndebourne.com/press/news_new/press_releases/sir_charles_mackerras)

Rupert Christiansen: A tribute to Sir Charles Mackerras: [www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/opera/7891990/A-tribute-to-Sir-Charles-Mackerras.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/opera/7891990/A-tribute-to-Sir-Charles-Mackerras.html)

## New and Renewing Members

The following people joined the Society from 7 February to 30 June 2010:

Allan Freeman [986], Patricia Benjamin and Roger Smalley [987], Keith Elvy and Peter Dunphy [988], Paulo Montoya [989] and Hugh Taylor [990].





# Melbourne to be the Scene of Opera Australia's Ring Cycle? At Last?

The Financial Review of 22 July 2010 broke a story, that seems to be more than the rumours that many of us have read and heard over the last few years, about Opera Australia commissioning Neil Armfield to direct its second attempt at a Ring Cycle. We remember Opera Australia's Artistic Director Lyndon Terracini raising our hopes prior to his arrival in the post with his commitment to staging a Ring. Opera Australia's website has him dreaming: "Terracini has exciting aspirations for Opera Australia. Somewhere on the list is a *Ring Cycle*. 'Given Opera Australia's status as an international opera company, it's important for it to have one – every major company does,' he says, adding that the creation of a Ring is a phenomenal achievement for any company. 'That's not to say that in my first season there will be an entire cycle, but we need to put the building blocks in place.'

"The possibilities created by technological advances may have brought this notoriously costly undertaking within reach, Terracini believes. 'We might be able, for example, to do a digital Ring with a virtual set that, when you go on tour, goes along on disc. It's just a possibility and of course there are others, including hiring the State Opera of South Australia's production.'" We suspect that, given comments about the difficulties of restaging the Adelaide Ring, with its under-stage gas and water requirements, and the gradual deterioration of the sets and equipment in the six years since the production, that hiring the South Australian company's production was, sadly, never a realistic option.

Terracini was recorded by The Age's Raymond Gill on 10 November 2009 as saying: "If we raise enough money to do *The Ring*, we will premiere it in Melbourne, beginning with *Das Rheingold* of course and then doing one a year...". On the ABC's Sunday Profile with Monica Attard on 17 September 2009, Terracini had already signalled one reason that a Ring Cycle would probably be produced by Opera Australia anywhere but at the Sydney Opera House: "Certainly the pit in the opera theatre in the Opera House is a problem or certainly when you're playing larger repertoire. I don't think it's a problem when you're playing Mozart for example and I think the improvements that have been made to the pit, you can certainly hear - it's much better now than what it used to be. However having said that, if you were to stage a Ring Cycle then you couldn't do it in the opera theatre in the Sydney Opera House. It's not only because of the pit but because of the fact that there's no wing space and the size of the stage and all sorts of things. That doesn't mean that you have to stage everything in the Sydney Opera House, there are other theatres; the Capitol Theatre is a very good theatre for example in Sydney. And in Melbourne they have a very good theatre, in Brisbane they have a very good theatre, in Adelaide they have a good theatre." All of which reminds us that the NSW State Government is continuing to renege on its promises to do something about the technical, acoustic and interior design qualities of the Opera Theatre! And Mr Terracini's comments

perhaps put paid to one of the rumours that a Melbourne Ring might be staged in the Royal Exhibition Building – a far from suitable building.

Terracini also sees as one of the reasons for producing The Ring Cycle in Melbourne is to redress something of the imbalance in Opera Australia's presence and presentations in Melbourne. As Gill wrote in The Age: "Placating disgruntled Melbourne opera-goers is one of the many fence-mending tasks facing the new director...", especially after the acrimonious absorbing of the Victorian State Opera into Opera Australia.

There is also some justice in Melbourne being the location for Opera Australia's second attempt at The Ring Cycle since Opera Victoria's plans for its own production were gazumped by then Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett's decision to waste millions of dollars that could have subsidised their Ring Cycle on gazumping the Grand Prix from Adelaide. It is of some ironic satisfaction to Australian Wagnerians, that the South Australian Government, suddenly saved millions of dollars, bravely decided to back the South Australian Opera Company's strategically inspired bid to stage what became a world-class Ring Cycle under the brilliant direction of Elke Neidhardt and her exceptional creative team.

You may also remember that The Age's Robin Usher had reported on 9 December 2008 that the one-time owners of Lonely Planet were interested in subsidising a Ring Cycle: "[Maureen Wheeler] is reported to be investigating staging the cycle here in 2012 and is ready to put \$12 million towards the project. But she refused to comment yesterday, saying developments were only in an exploratory stage. 'We are chasing a dream,' she said." The Age also reported on one of the crucial elements of a successful production – the orchestra: "Melbourne Symphony's chief executive, Trevor Green, confirmed the orchestra was interested in the project. 'We are not committed to it at this stage but the prospect of it is really appealing,' he said." The Financial Review's recent article makes no mention of which orchestra might be used to play for the production. In your editor's view, the Opera and Ballet Orchestra would not be capable on its own of meeting Wagner's musical demands. The final "Ring orchestra" could of course be compiled in the manner successfully deployed in the first Adelaide Ring Cycle for which the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra was supplemented by players from other Australian orchestras.

You might have noticed that the donation from Ms Wheeler seems to have shrunk from \$12 to \$5 million, but I'm sure all Wagnerians will be grateful to Ms Wheeler if her donation clinches the deal for Opera Australia to produce a complete Ring Cycle of at least the standard of the Neidhardt Ring in Adelaide. According to the Financial Review, the Victorian Major Events Company is likely to contribute \$2 million, with more to come from donations (get your chequebooks out!), sponsorships and box office sales.



You might have also noticed some discrepancies in the timing of an Opera Australia Ring Cycle. In 2008, Ms Wheeler apparently was looking to 2012 (the year, coincidentally?, that Terracini's programming for Opera Australia begins). Armfield thinks the Cycle might stretch out to 2017, as he "confided" in response to host of ABC's Talking Heads Peter Thompson's loaded question: "I bet it's an opera that's 2017 in your diary?": "It's The Ring, actually. So, it's Gotterdammerung [sic]. It's the end of The Ring." This means that, if Opera Australia starts its Cycle in 2013, as the Financial Review tips, and the company does one opera a year, there is, as our President points out in his Letter in this Newsletter, a gap somewhere – unless Armfield was mixing up his dates and 2017 is actually the year the company produces the whole Cycle?

A final interesting point from the Financial Review's report is that Opera Australia will link with the Houston Grand Opera to co-produce The Ring Cycle. This is perhaps less surprising than one might initially think, since Armfield will direct opera for HCO in October 2010 – none other than his own production for Opera Australia of Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes*! The HGO website contains an interesting hint as to its commitment to a future Ring Cycle, although the website seems not to have any specific information on it about a Ring production: "HGO's acclaimed production of Wagner's *Lohengrin* last fall was the **first in a multiyear series of German opera** that continues next year with performances of Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* featuring a powerhouse all-star cast [Editor's emphasis]."

The conductor of both Armfield's *Peter Grimes* and the *Lohengrin* is Houston Grand Opera music director Patrick Summers. Your Editor is willing to take bets that Maestro Summers makes a Ring appearance in both Houston and Melbourne! In The Houston Chronicle's website article about preparations for the October 2008 premiere of *Lohengrin*, Summers is reported as being "excited and not the least bit trepidatious" heading into Friday's opening of *Lohengrin* — his first time to conduct a Wagner opera and HGO's first Wagner production since its 2001 *Tannhäuser*. Summers has conducted more than 30 operas here since his 1999 HGO debut with *La Traviata*. But Richard Wagner is a world unto himself and not only because of the devilish demands of his music."

Summers' interest in Wagner stems from an experience that, to your Editor, seems little short of miraculous:

"Wagner is the entire reason I became a conductor. I grew up in southern Indiana, near Indiana University, whose School of Music was built around an annual production of *Parsifal* (Wagner's final opera). The whole culture of Wagner was very much a part (of the school) and I was exposed to it early. I believe his operas are the ultimate works of profundity and depth in our field. To me, Wagner is the ultimate of what our art can do. He's the composer I've been most obsessed with. And the one I've waited the longest to conduct." If indeed Mr Summers is the conductor for Opera Australia's Ring Cycle, we may well be in for another great experience, but he will have to meet the high standards set in Adelaide by Jeffrey Tate and Asher Fisch! While I'm sure all Wagnerians will be wishing Opera Australia well in its venture with The Ring Cycle, we should not forget that, on apparent plans, the company will only

be producing *Das Rheingold* in 2013. Your Editor thinks that, given that Opera Australia wants to be considered a major international opera company, and many smaller opera companies around the world, not the least being the Hamburg Opera under Simone Young, have announced/introduced full cycles already, with some companies planning to do cycles of Wagner's operas in the bicentenary year, then Opera Australia needs to bite the Wagnerian bullet. Over decades, Opera Australia has neglected the development of a credible Wagner tradition, leaving it to both the defunct Victorian State Opera and the State Opera of South Australia to build up local traditions. It is about time for Opera Australia to commit to developing a consistent, regular schedule of Wagner productions.

Your Editor has based this report on information derived from the following websites:

The Age: Bringing Melbourne in from the operatic cold: [www.theage.com.au/news/entertainment/arts/bringing-melbourne-in-from-the-operatic-cold/2009/11/09/1257614998370.html](http://www.theage.com.au/news/entertainment/arts/bringing-melbourne-in-from-the-operatic-cold/2009/11/09/1257614998370.html)

ABC: Sunday Profile: [www.abc.net.au/sundayprofile/stories/2688968.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/sundayprofile/stories/2688968.htm)

<http://marcellous.wordpress.com/2010/04/15/opera-australia-agm-2010-a-retrospective/>

ABC: Talking Heads: <http://www.abc.net.au/tv/talkingheads/txt/s2945193.htm>

Everett Evans; Houston Chronicle: Maestro is ready for his Wagner debut: <http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/ent/6691369.html>

## Email Addresses

Email is for many members the communication method of choice, and it's vital for us to have your current email address if you want to receive reminders about Society functions, or in the future to receive the Newsletter electronically. The Society's email address is [info@wagner-nsw.org.au](mailto:info@wagner-nsw.org.au) (info at wagner hyphen nsw dot org dot au).

If you'd like to receive reminders about forthcoming Society events and occasional matters of interest to members, just send us an email from your current email address, with "Email reminder service" in the "subject" line. If you'd like to take part in the pilot for electronic delivery of the Newsletter, make sure that we have your current address by enrolling (or re-enrolling) in the Email Reminder Service.

Some people have particularly avaricious anti-spam programs which devour emails from nice people like us, and each different email program (such as Outlook) has its own way of avoiding this. Some programs let you nominate the Society as a "favourite" or "trusted address", to ensure that our emails do not suffer that fate, and if you take the time to make us "trusted" you'll ensure that you receive our emails for as long as you want to.



# Redemption In Ten Dimensions. Stefan Herheims's Bayreuth *Parsifal*

- Dr Jim Leigh

## Part 2 of a three part exposition and introduction for audience members of the current Bayreuth production.

(For ease of reference Dr Leigh's shorthand lists of aspects of the production, dimensions and symbols are repeated at the end of this section – Part 3 will be in the next issue of the Newsletter. The full review is on the Society's website.)

### Act 2

The scene is again the Wahnfried living room. Gurnemanz is in the bed and the war films are still showing. Gurnemanz is the linking narrator of the events involving all the active characters so he can be in the same bed that they have all been in, if only to dream. Gurnemanz disappears and is replaced by Klingsor in the bed, dressed as in Act 1, but wearing a blonde female wig and big dark wings. Klingsor and Kundry come to the bed. Wounded and gassed World War 1 soldiers come in and the room is transformed into a military hospital, with beds and nurses...

The identification of Klingsor's magic garden with a military hospital provides an intertext between the decadence of the Hapsburg empire, the association between sickness, sex, death and creativity apparent in the literature of the time (Freud, Mann), Wagner's own death in Venice and his use of Italian models for *Parsifal* (Siena, Ravello) *Tristan* and the *Ring*. In the place of the altar there now appears a huge old fashioned film projector. The war films continue but the picture of Germania is now multiply mirrored throughout the room. The mirror is a symbol of self-knowledge. Multiple mirrors confuse and drive one to introspection, disease and retreat into an artistic paradise away from reality.

This happened to Wagner, Ludwig and Germany itself after Versailles where the crushing reparation demands were made. The multiple mirrors allude to the hall of mirrors at Versailles and its slightly larger imitation at Ludwig's Herrenchiemsee in Bavaria.

Leaves are now seen hanging from the roof of the stage. This is an allusion to the fact that military hospitals were often set up in damaged buildings, that nature will move in to protect that which "culture" has destroyed, and that Wahnfried itself had roof damage in World War 2. As Klingsor calls for Kundry, she is now seen in the bed, dressed in red and surrounded by smoke and red light, which changes to blue and violet and fills the whole room. This is to show that Klingsor and Wagner's phantasmagoric effects are really shabby transparent stage smoke- and-mirrors (see Adorno's critique in "In Search of Wagner"). Kundry's multiple representations mirror in womanhood the multiple sides of manhood depicted in the two (or three) Parsifals, Amfortas, Klingsor and Titurel...

Kundry gets out of the bed.

As Klingsor and Kundry narrate the story of her curse and the original seduction of Amfortas, they act this out together by embracing passionately by the bed. Wounded soldiers come up to the bed seeking comfort but nursing sisters pull them back. The projector disappears.

This alludes to the 19<sup>th</sup> century theatre practice of overacting and clear declamation so that the words could be clearly heard. The removal of the projector symbolizes that we should not need surtitles if the acting is good enough (!). (Unfortunately, there were many non-German singers in this production and words could not be clearly heard.)

Next, the child Parsifal is again in the bed. Klingsor and Kundry come to the bed and as Kundry asks "are you chaste" Klingsor's hand shakes. At Klingsor's "furchbare Not" he covers his groin with his wings, recalling his self-castration.

The child Parsifal gets up in the bed and pulls the Ludwig cloak with him. As Klingsor sings of his shameful dismissal from the Grail community, and his dream of getting the Grail for himself (his delusion of grandeur), he pulls off his wig.

After a recapitulation of past events, Klingsor shows his true face. He wants both Spear and Grail. The removal of the wig symbolizes this. Stage actions comment on persons' characters in much the same way that Wagner's leitmotifs do in the music. Klingsor's dreams of world domination as a delusion of grandeur parallel those of Hitler.

Kundry kisses the child Parsifal as Klingsor recalls her kiss of Amfortas, presaging the later seduction of the youth Parsifal. The child Parsifal goes to the grave. Kundry sinks back into the bed. As Klingsor sings of the approaching knights, showgirls of the 1930s (the Flowermaidens) come out of and from under the beds. Thick smoke comes through the door.

Klingsor is creating an atmosphere of general seduction, not just of Parsifal, but of all men, embodied in the wounded soldiers. The smoke signifies World War 1 poison gas. As Klingsor sings "er ist Schön, der Knabe" he kisses the child Parsifal, suggesting homosexual affiliations not present in Wagner's *Parsifal*, but related to Ludwig or characters in Mann's novels.

Dead soldier dolls are thrown on the beds, while the child Parsifal acts out a fight with his sword. This doubling of action shows both the present struggle of Parsifal against Klingsor's knights, but also recalls the previous futile efforts of the Grail knights against Klingsor's realm. The back wall of the room opens, revealing the Wahnfried garden. On the balcony stands the youth Parsifal. Klingsor takes the child Parsifal on to the bed, covering him with his wings. The showgirls go out of the room and form up in cabaret style rows. The wounded men make love to the nurses.



Parsifal jumps off the balcony onto a mattress, as a gymnast. The gymnastic reference is to the Nazi health and fitness movements leading up to the 1936 Berlin Olympics. The altar in the fountain is piled with cannon balls. The nursing sisters and the showgirls tease Parsifal. We now see costumes of the 1940s as well as earlier ones.

With Kundry's "Parsifal, stay" we see her as Marlene Dietrich in male evening dress as in the films *The Blue Angel* and *Morocco*. Both films were used in the 1930s as propaganda against the German people's seduction by Nazism.

The garden transforms back to an inner room. Parsifal is on the bed. The girls throw red flowers at him... Kundry enters through the winged doors, still dressed as Marlene Dietrich, but wearing wings which have on one side a white rose. The white rose is the obverse of the red rose of Herzeleide and signifies innocence, which Kundry's future failed seduction of Parsifal will achieve. It is also a link to the White Rose movement (cf Sophie Scholl) who opposed Hitler.

With Kundry's Herzeleide narration, Parsifal goes to the rocking horse. As Kundry tells of his naming and Herzeleide's death, he goes to the bed and Kundry embraces him. As Kundry's seduction proceeds, the whole room contracts. Parsifal has become alone with his insights. It then expands again as Parsifal's private sphere re-enters into the public domain as he increasingly gains wisdom. Parsifal seeks the wound on his own body. The cupola of the Grail temple descends again. With his recollection of Amfortas: the "redeemer, saviour" Parsifal goes to the grave. Lights shine in the tree. This is an allusion to the use of tacky Christmas decorations in celebrating Christ's birth and also to the tacky souvenirs that were (and still are) sold at Bayreuth to celebrate Wagner's "religion of art" at Bayreuth.

Kundry appears out of the altar as Herzeleide. Parsifal sits on the bed and Kundry passionately kisses Parsifal. Jewish refugees appear carrying suitcases. One carries a menorah. Kundry stands in front of them, with arms outstretched, showing bloodstains on her gown. This signifies Kundry as Ahasuerus the Wandering Jew, Wagner and Cosima's anti-Semitism and the Nazi treatment of Jews in World War 2. When Parsifal sings that he is going to redeem Kundry (as well as the Grail) from her curse for having laughed at Christ on the Cross, the Jewish refugees stop, as if seizing on a new hope.

With her second seduction attempt ("only one hour"), Kundry pulls her skirt above her knees and embraces Parsifal. He runs again to the grave. This recalls the Herzeleide incest scene in Act 1 and indicates that Wagner is not going to let the second attempt succeed. At Kundry's curse, Nazi swastika flags and armed SS soldiers appear from right and left. On the newly visible altar a boy in Hitler youth SA uniform stands, holding a spear. Klingsor is seen in the bed with outstretched wings. The boy throws the spear at Parsifal. (This was the only magic effect that did not convince from row 1!) He catches the spear and plunges it in Wagner's grave. The insertion of the spear in the grave is a symbol that it is to be desired that Wagner's

anti-Semitism and its consequences should be expunged from history.

The Hitler youth identifies with the young Parsifal, and through him, the seduction of German youth by Nazism. The SA uniform also alludes to Himmler's costly searches for the real Holy Grail and Otto Rahn's researches in this area. The SS men and Nazi emblems identify with the Wagner family's personal hospitality to Hitler in Bayreuth. The magical properties of the spear, equate to the "wonder weapons" of the last years of the Hitler period which would hopefully win the war against the odds, eg Messerschmidt 262 jet fighter, A4 (V2) rocket, atomic weapons.

The Reich eagle falls onto the bed. The SS men shoot. Parsifal is not hurt. He pulls the spear out of the grave again and lifts it high. He exits with the spear. Kundry stays in front of the grave. The wound of German history must stay open and never be forgotten.

Act 2 is very confrontational and addresses issues not previously put on the Bayreuth stage, although such dramatization has appeared in many other places, in Germany and elsewhere...

I believe Wolfgang Wagner, knowing he is old (90) and retiring as director, thought such a representation was now possible and hence he engaged Herheim. Wolfgang had "come clean" about all the Hitler and Nazi connections in his 1994 autobiography "Acts". In 1998, he approved and opened an academic conference on "Richard Wagner and the Jews" in Bayreuth. This was organized by the Universities of Bayreuth, Heidelberg and Bayreuth and sponsored by the Richard Wagner Foundation Bayreuth and the Howard Gilman Israel Culture Foundation. I went to some sessions. Professors Rose, Vaaget, Large, Katz, Friedlander and others of the new predominantly Jewish school of Wagner interpretation were there. The concluding consensus seemed to be that, while all Wagner's works have some anti-Semitic elements, they are acceptable as great art, but in listening to them we must feel guilty. Rose, the most extreme anti-Wagnerian, even referred to the "hatred" we must see in Wagner's music, and claimed that a production that did not emphasise anti-Semitism was "false." Vaaget, and other moderates, did take issue with Rose on a number of points. I am not sure if Herheim or his dramaturg were there at the conference, but Susanne Vill gave a paper and co-edited the proceedings. I did, however, notice many of the delegates apparently enjoying themselves at the Festival performances.

It is also probably significant that, in handing over the Festival direction to his daughters Katharina and Eva in 2008, Wolfgang was conceding that new directions would be taken and the current production resonates also with this concept of reconciliation.

In this Act the action for me did not distract so much from the music as it did in Act 1. Perhaps I was getting used to this production. This was really classical Bayreuth music drama. Christopher Ventris as Parsifal was outstanding and I thought the timing and weighting of Daniele Gatti's conducting was very appropriate to the production. The Herheim production would not have



worked with the faster tempos that Boulez used in the Schlingensiefel production (and which only enhanced its incoherence).

The main features of the production are

1. Wagner's *Parsifal* told with much more stage concretisation of events past and present. This is normally only narrated or implied in the music.
2. The history of Germany 1870-1951, depicted in stage action and film.
3. The history of Wagner's creative and personal life, the establishment of the Bayreuth Festival and the building of Wahnfried are depicted in stage action and film.
4. The reception history of the opera *Parsifal*.
5. The unconscious, psychological development of Parsifal and Wagner is depicted on stage by symbolism, both with actors and physical symbols.
6. Direct confrontation with the audience by making them part of the production.
7. Use of parallel actions and multiple characterisations to depict the individual and collective unconscious.
8. Use of dream sequences and magical set transformations.
9. Use of simultaneous hybrid sets and stage symbolism to interrelate the *Parsifal*, German history, psychological and Wagner history lines.
10. Use of theatre within a theatre.

### 10 Dimensions

1. Wagner's *Parsifal*, both the music drama itself and its reception history
2. Personality development of the human
3. Psychoanalysis, both Freudian and Jungian
4. Male/Female gender relations both individual and societal
5. Religion, in relation to society, war, race.
6. The Grail and Spear as symbols. (There are at least ten different Grail symbols)
7. Contrast between dreams and reality
8. Wahnfried
9. Bayreuth Festival
10. German History

### The Top 10 Grail symbols

1. Actual grail vessel in red, rose, and white
2. Bed
3. Wagner's grave
4. Bathtub
5. Fountain
6. Altar
7. Heart of Federal German eagle
8. Speaker's desk in parliament
9. The search for immortality
10. Womanhood

## Wagner's **Unfinished French** Revolution Operas: *Männerlist größer als Frauenlist oder: Die glückliche Bärenfamilie,* *and Die hohe Braut oder Bianca und Giuseppe* - Peter Bassett

*For members who unfortunately missed Peter's talk that opened this year's Society's activities, this article is part of his longer talk about the opera's that Wagner never wrote. Ed.*

When Wagner was twenty-five and in his first year of marriage to Minna, he occupied himself with two works linked to the aftermath of the French Revolution: *Männerlist größer als Frauenlist oder: Die glückliche Bärenfamilie* (Men's cunning greater than women's cunning, or The happy family of bears) and *Die hohe Braut oder Bianca und Giuseppe* (The noble bride, or Bianca and Giuseppe).

The French Revolutionary Wars<sup>1</sup> and their Napoleonic aftermath were still fresh in European minds in the 1830s. After 1789 many aristocratic French émigrés had taken refuge in German cities such as Coblenz<sup>2</sup> in the Rhineland, where the Archbishop-Elector was the uncle of Louis XVI. These émigrés (who included the French king's brothers the Comte d'Artois and the Comte de Provence and his cousin the Prince de Condé) incited armed conflict in an effort to restore the old regime. Pillnitz Castle on the Elbe, well known to Wagner, witnessed key events in this process<sup>3</sup>. The ill-considered initiatives of the émigrés prompted general mobilization by the revolutionary government, hastened the execution of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette and, ultimately,

prepared the way for Napoleon Bonaparte. No wonder Wagner felt inclined to poke fun at them. Nevertheless, he had been horrified by the cruelty and excesses of the Revolution when he read about them as a seventeen year-old: 'I recall being truly appalled by the heroes of the French Revolution...; without knowledge of the prior history of France my human sympathies alone were outraged by the atrocities of the revolutionaries, and I was dominated by these purely human sentiments for so long that even in later years it cost me a real struggle to give due weight to the true political significance of those acts of violence.'<sup>4</sup>

In *Die glückliche Bärenfamilie* Wagner's targets are the Baron von Abendthau ('Evening Dew') whom he describes in *Mein Leben* as a 'snobbish old man', and his friends 'the élite of the aristocratic French émigrés during the revolutionary period'.<sup>5</sup> The two principal female characters have revolutionary names and each, in her own way, undermines the Baron's pride in his 'enormously old lineage' (*enorm altes Geschlecht*<sup>6</sup>). The Baron's ugly daughter is Aurora ('the Dawn': always a threat to the evening dew). Dawn or sunrise was a widely used image



during the French Revolution and other revolutions too<sup>7</sup>. Her beguiling cousin is Leontine ('Lion-like'). A lion was a revolutionary symbol of power. In Wagner's prose draft, the French-named Leontine is indeed described as a Frenchwoman, which suggests that the whole family is at least partly French.

Wagner worked on *Die glückliche Bärenfamilie* in 1837 at Königsberg and in 1838 at Riga where he had been appointed music director. The music for three numbers was sketched in Riga before the project was abandoned<sup>8</sup>. He found that the style of the music was beginning to remind him of Auber's or Adam's and so he lost interest in it. Others have suggested that the style was influenced more by Rossini<sup>9</sup>. *Die glückliche Bärenfamilie* was the composer's only attempt at a 'number' opera with spoken dialogue, in the manner of the French *opéra comique* and German *Spieloper* - the comic opera form derived from *Singspiel*. Today we would say 'operetta'.

The plot was based on *Women's Wiles*, one of the *Tales from a Thousand and one Nights*. The original oriental tale begins on the one hundred and ninety-sixth night of Scheherazade's resourceful attempts to keep her head, and may be summarized as follows. In the city of Baghdad, a young girl passed by a shop owned by a handsome young man called Alá al-dín, and noticed a sign above the door that read: 'There is no cunning other than men's, for it is greater than women's'. The girl resolved to outwit the young man and prove him wrong so, on the following day she made herself as attractive as possible and went to the shop on the pretext of buying something. There she began to expose parts of her beautiful body, and asked if it was fair that she should be slandered as being ugly and misshapen. The young man wondered what he had done to deserve such a display of captivating beauty, and began to improvise poetry praising her loveliness. The girl said she had been badly treated by her father, who had described her as ugly and no better than a slave girl, and had refused to allow her to be married. The young man asked who her father was, and was told that he was the Chief Judge of the highest court in Baghdad.

After the girl left the shop, the young man went to see the Chief Judge and asked for the hand of his daughter in marriage. The judge replied that his daughter was not worthy of such a fine young merchant, but the suitor, taken aback, insisted that he wished to marry her. A marriage contract was concluded and a dowry given. That night the bride was taken in procession to her husband, but when he lifted her veil he discovered underneath a face so repulsive that he decided to annul the marriage then and there. But this wasn't possible and he realized he had been tricked. On the following morning the young man rose and went about his business with a heavy heart. His friends all greeted him with mocking congratulations on his marriage. After they had left him, the first girl returned, even more attractively attired than before.

When he asked her why she was tormenting him in this way she replied that she had been provoked by the sign over the door, and then she instructed one of his

servants to have a new sign prepared reading: 'There is no cunning other than women's, for it is a mighty cunning and overcomes the falsehoods of men'. The sign was duly made and set over the door. Then she told the young man to go to the public square where he would find mountebanks, ape-dancers, bear-leaders, drummers and pipers, and invite them to come to him the next day while he was drinking coffee with his father-in-law the Chief Judge. This motley band should offer congratulations, she said, and express the hope that he wouldn't abandon them, since they were so proud of him. If the judge asked what this meant, the young man should reply that his father had been an ape-dancer but the family had come into good fortune and so now he was in business. The judge would express horror at the thought that his daughter, whose lineage could be traced back to the prophet, had married the leader of a tribe of mountebanks. Then the girl advised the young man to say that he wouldn't forsake his wife even if he were offered the kingship of the world, after which, eventually, he should allow himself 'reluctantly' to be persuaded to speak the words of divorce. The young man did as he was advised, his father-in-law was duly outraged and the young man duly divorced. He then married the beautiful girl who had outwitted him.

So, what did Wagner do with this old tale from *The Thousand and one Nights*? Firstly, he moved the setting from Baghdad to an unidentified 'large German town'. The shop became specifically a jeweller's establishment and the young man was given the name of Julius Wander. In Wagner's version, the veiled young woman became Leontine and the equivalent of the Chief Judge of Baghdad is Baron von Abendthau, a veritable Pooh-Bah of family conceit, who is in despair of ever marrying off his ugly daughter Aurora to anyone of comparable social rank. But Julius persuades the Baron that he is suitably well-born (though in fact he is not) and obtains consent for the marriage (he thinks, to Leontine) which takes place soon afterwards. During the ceremony, Julius discovers he has been landed with the hideous Aurora, and then Leontine appears from amongst the guests to mock the hapless groom. Aurora is revealed as Leontine's cousin. Julius is in despair.

Wagner described what happens next in the following terms:

'The beautiful lady now returns to the despairing bridegroom to exult in his misery and promises to help him out of the terrible marriage if he will remove the motto from his signboard. At this point I departed from the original, and continued as follows: the furious jeweller is on the point of tearing down the offending sign when a curious apparition leads him to pause in the act. A trainer of bears appears in the street, making his clumsy beast dance, in whom he at once recognizes his own father [called Gregor] from whom he has been parted by the curious vicissitudes of fate. He suppresses any sign of emotion, for in a flash a scheme occurs to him by which he can utilise this discovery to free himself from the



hated marriage with the daughter of the snobbish old man. He engages the bear-tamer to come that evening to the garden where the ceremonies of betrothal will be celebrated before a select group of guests. To his young lady adversary, however, he announces his intention to let the sign hang over his shop for a while longer, for he hopes that the motto can still be substantiated.

After the marriage contract, containing a lot of fictional titles he has awarded himself, has been read to the assembled company, composed, as I conceived it, of the elite of the aristocratic French émigrés during the revolutionary period, the bear-tamer's whistle is suddenly heard and in he comes, together with his dancing beast. Angered by this tasteless spectacle, the astonished company becomes actually indignant when the groom, now giving vent freely to his emotion, falls into the arms of the bear-tamer and loudly proclaims him as his long-lost father. The consternation of the company becomes even greater, however, when the bear itself embraces the man they supposed to be of aristocratic pedigree; for the bear is really his brother [called Richard] who, upon the death of the actual bear used in the act, has enabled the poverty-stricken pair to continue to earn a living in the only way they know how by donning the skin of the deceased. The sudden discovery of his lowly origins dissolves the marriage at once.'

Leontine falls into Julius' arms, salutes his cunning and suggests that the inscription over the shop be left just as it is. She is, one might say, even more cunning than her eastern counterpart because she lets Julius think he has won their little game of wits, as any astute Victorian wife would.

It seems likely that some of the names are autobiographical: Julius Wander for instance, is presumably the composer's elder brother Julius Wagner, who trained as a goldsmith and had recently returned from 'wandering' in France.<sup>10</sup> Richard, who inhabits the bearskin, is undoubtedly the composer himself. This precariously employed theatre director in his early twenties, pursued by creditors and always on the hop, probably took ironic pleasure in comparing himself with a dancing bear! The bear would return in act one of *Siegfried*. How that idea must have amused Wagner!

But is Gregor a coded reference to Ludwig Geyer, the composer's step-father (and perhaps, as Nietzsche mischievously suggested, biological father)? Some commentators<sup>11</sup> consider that Wagner was hinting at doubts about his paternity, but this seems unlikely. Not only is there scant reason to doubt that Richard's father was Friedrich Wagner as asserted in *Mein Leben*, but also Ludwig Geyer had died when Richard was only eight. Karl Geyer, Ludwig's brother, on the other hand was a goldsmith with whom both Richard and Julius Wagner had lived in Eisleben and from whom Julius had learnt his craft.<sup>12</sup> If (and this is by no means certain) 'Gregor' is code for 'Geyer' the particular Geyer in question must surely be Karl, not Ludwig.

*Die hohe Braut*, based on a novel of the same name by Heinrich König, was planned between 1836 and 1842 as a grand opera in five acts; a history subject modelled unashamedly on French grand opera in which, typically, romantic passions are played out against a background of historical troubles. Wagner sent his prose scenario twice to Eugène Scribe, librettist to Meyerbeer in Paris, in the misguided hope that it would be shaped into a libretto for which he, the young and unknown Richard Wagner, would be asked to write the music. In this way, he hoped, he would get his foot in the Paris door. He even translated the text into French to improve its chances, but to no avail. Undaunted, he tried the same tactic with a French prose draft of *Der fliegende Holländer*, again without success. In the end, Wagner himself wrote the *Hohe Braut* libretto, which he offered to at least two other composers before a Bohemian friend Jan Kittl agreed to set it to music under a new title: *Bianca und Giuseppe, oder Die Franzosen vor Nizza* (Bianca and Giuseppe, or the French at the gates of Nice). So there is no Wagnerian music at all for this opera by Wagner the librettist, but there is Czech music for it, and this made it one of the most successful Czech operas before Smetana's. Its premiere was in 1848. A modern recording is available of a performance at the National Theatre Prague in 2003 conducted by Jan Chalupecký.

Wagner records in *Mein Leben* that, after the first performances of *Die hohe Braut*, a Czech critic advised him that his true calling was as a librettist, and that he was wasting his time in attempting also to compose. The novelty of Wagner the composer writing his own texts is often remarked upon but, more correctly, we should speak of Wagner the dramatist who felt compelled to write his own music. Significantly, all his advances in composition, which had a profound influence on western music, grew out of this dramatic need. He completed both text and music for thirteen operatic works, but there were another fifteen dramas for which he produced prose sketches, scenarios or librettos, and of these, four were offered to other composers.

*Die hohe Braut* is set in and around Nice in 1793, when French revolutionary armies captured the city from the Italian house of Savoy. Anticipating *Tannhäuser*, there is a scene for a chorus of pilgrims bearing the body of Brigitta who had ended her life after being persecuted for falling in love with the commoner Sormano. Kittl, with one eye on the censor, diluted much of the revolutionary content including a quotation of *La Marseillaise*. Wagner was upset by the changed ending, and asked for his name to be removed. It must have been increasingly clear to him that he needed to take control of both text and music, but his even greater need at the time was to establish a foothold in Paris, centre of the operatic firmament, and this made him compromise yet again, with *Holländer*. Little wonder that, disillusioned at last, he felt he had compromised his art while trying, unsuccessfully, to win the support of the men who ran the Paris Opéra and the Académie Royale de Musique. The strength of his reaction when it came, directed at the French musical establishment in general and Meyerbeer and his associates in particular was, in large measure self reproach and over-correction. In 1861



when he staged *Tannhäuser* in Paris, there was not a shadow of compromise. The ructions were spectacular but Wagner left with his head held high. It was a great lesson in self-reliance.

(Endnotes)

1 The Revolutionary Wars between 1792 and 1802 led to France's acquisition of territories in the Low Countries, Italy and the Rhineland. The turmoil created by these events and the Napoleonic Wars that followed between 1803 and 1815 impacted directly on Wagner and his family.

2 Spelt 'Koblentz' after 1926.

3 In the Pillnitz Declaration of 1791, Emperor Leopold II (Marie Antoinette's brother) and King Frederick William II of Prussia announced their readiness to restore Louis XVI to his throne, by force if necessary.

4 *Mein Leben*, Trans. Andrew Gray, Ed. Mary Whittall, Da Capo Pres, New York, p. 39.

5 *Ibid*, p. 135.

6 Barry Millington in his article *Happy Families: A Wagner Singspiel Rediscovered*, *The Wagner Journal*, Vol.1 No.3, Nov. 2007, translates this phrase as 'distinguished ancient race' to

support his interpretation that Baron von Abendthau and his friends are caricatures of Jews. At no time does Wagner describe the Baron as Jewish, and French aristocratic émigrés of the period would hardly have been Jewish since the emancipation of French Jewry had been a notable achievement of the Revolution. Wagner seems to have regarded Abendthau as a snob of a conventional kind, preoccupied with preserving his family's social status at all cost. The Baron's equivalent character in the oriental tale from which the plot was drawn is similarly obsessed with his family's position.

7 The Cruiser *Aurora* fired the shot that signaled the storming of the Winter Palace in St Petersburg in 1917, a fact exploited in Soviet revolutionary propaganda and remarked upon by Sergei Eisenstein.

8 See *Richard Wagner, Männerlist größer als Frauenlist oder Die glückliche Bärenfamilie* in a performing version by James Francis Brown. Music Haven, London, 2010.

9 Dieter Borchmeyer, *Drama and the World of Richard Wagner*. Trans. Daphne Ellis. Princeton University Press, 2003, p. 46.

10 *Mein Leben*, op.cit. p, 78.

11 For example Millington op. cit.

12 *Mein Leben*, op.cit. p. 7.

## The Wagner Society's Pro Bono Auditors



In today's current environment there is lot of uncertainty and volatility.

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# Your **New Website** - [www.wagner.org.au](http://www.wagner.org.au)

The Society's Webmaster, John Studdert, pressed the magic button to activate your new website two weeks ago. John has provided this overview of the magic he is mastering to bring you the new look website.

The website is now driven by an up-to-date content management system called Joomla. Fingers crossed it is operating with a minimum of problems, but please be patient as we tame this new savage beast. The Committee hopes that Members will embrace its new functionality. We are awaiting a new banner!

The new website will be updated much more regularly than in the past so please bookmark its URL and use the website to ascertain the latest news about the Society, Society functions (including last minute changes in schedule or programs), peruse the new image galleries and to ascertain news about Wagner and music in general.

## **Salient points about the Website are below:**

[www.wagner.org.au](http://www.wagner.org.au) or [www.wagner-nsw.org.au](http://www.wagner-nsw.org.au)? Well the answer is both, at least for the moment.

For some time the Society has owned both [www.wagner.org.au](http://www.wagner.org.au) and [www.wagner-nsw.org.au](http://www.wagner-nsw.org.au) domain names. In the intricate process of launching the new website the new website was linked to [www.wagner.org.au](http://www.wagner.org.au) and this is where it will stay for the moment though both 'wwws' will work for a little while.

## **Features of the New Website**

Joomla allows for a range of new functionalities. These include:

- A calendar for Society functions and events of interest to members
- A 'Latest Events' section which lists forthcoming functions and events over a two month period
- A facility for Members to register. (Why register?)
  1. Joomla allows us to designate 'Members Only' areas and in the near future we will be placing members only material on the site; such as the full Newsletter that contains material that should not be placed in the public domain.
  2. Registered members can comment on Articles on the site
- Image galleries can be more easily created
- Latest news can be placed on the site with a minimum of fuss
- Joomla can be operated from any computer, anywhere and it is planned that other members of the Committee, such as your Newsletter Editor, will be able to update the site when required.

## **The new website is a bit austere isn't it?**

Well, the site at the moment the site is a bit ascetic. This will change when the new banner is created. As time goes on more images will be placed on the site. The major effort in developing the site has been related to its actual operation.

## **How do I Register?**

In the first instance we ask you to send a request via the contact form on the site. You will then receive a site generated email with simple instructions. While the Society Webmaster can monitor who is registered your login and password details are known only to you. At this stage only members invited to register. Once you have registered feel free to comment on articles on the site.

## **What has happened to the email, [info@wagner.org.au](mailto:info@wagner.org.au) ?**

This email has been replaced by [wagner\\_nsw@optusnet.com.au](mailto:wagner_nsw@optusnet.com.au). We also ask you to use the contact form on the site for communication with the Society.

## **Will I be able to pay/renew online?**

For the moment no but your Committee will be considering online payment options. One such option would be PayPal. The advantages of PayPal are that you can renew membership, make donations etc using a Credit Card and the money is directed into the Society's Bank Account. PayPal also has a good reputation. The only disadvantage is that PayPal takes a percentage, albeit small.

## **What was the cost of developing this new website?**

The good news is that Joomla is an open source program and it is mostly free! All work on the development of the new website has been done on a voluntary basis. I would like to place on record my appreciation for the invaluable assistance given by fellow Wagner enthusiast, and friend, David Feighn – a resident of Melbourne.

## **Who is responsible for the operation of the Website?**

Your Webmaster will continue to be responsible for the operation of the Website though other Committee Members will eventually be given access to its operations. Major articles placed on the website flow through the editorial control of Committee Member and Newsletter Editor, Terence Watson.

Please send any queries to the Webmaster using the Contact Form on the site. Feedback at all times is welcomed.



# Wagner Society Newsletter Electronic Distribution Survey

The Society has been looking at ways to reduce costs and increase our efficiency in sending you the Newsletter. Some of you already receive notifications of meetings, including last minute changes, and other Society related information by email. Sending Newsletters and information by email, or using related electronic means of accessing Society material will save the Society significant amounts of money that can then be directed to achieving the aims of the society 'promote the music of Richard Wagner and his contemporaries and to encourage a wider understanding of their work'.

The last two Newsletters have been converted to Portable Document Format (PDF), an electronic document format that requires the use of Adobe Acrobat Reader (or similar computer program that is capable of opening the PDF, such as NovaPDF – there are free versions of both available on-line). Adobe often comes pre-installed on recent computers.

Another advantage of the PDF format is that you would be able to click on any links that are included in the text of an article that would take you to other interesting Wagner-related material.

If you are not sure if you have Adobe or a similar program or how it works and would like to discuss this, Committee Members Roger Cruickshank, John Studdert (the Society's Webmaster) and Terence Watson would be happy to help.

As part of the process of converting the normal printed version of the Newsletter to PDF, certain personal or confidential information in the Newsletter (eg Member's names, the Society's financial reports, Member's donations) has been deleted, although the names of elected office holders, committee members, and honorary life members, have been retained.

Two of these PDF versions have now been uploaded to the Society's website as part of the Committee's process of ascertaining Members' views on using electronic means to distribute or access the Newsletter.

We would like to receive your views on the following options:

- 1) Would you like to receive the Newsletter as a PDF document by email? This option is the most simple, but downloading the PDF would add slightly to your overall download total, if that is a consideration for you. As a test, we can email you a PDF version of the Newsletter. You should be able to open it by clicking on it and opening it with Adobe Reader.
- 2) Would you prefer to receive a link to the PDF version of the Newsletter that is available on the Society's website? This option would require you to click on a link in the email that would then take you direct to the current Newsletter, which you would then open with a PDF program. For example, this link will take you to the Newsletter's in PDF section of the Society's website [http://www.wagner.org.au/site/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=151&Itemid=94](http://www.wagner.org.au/site/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=151&Itemid=94).

- 3) To maintain the privacy and confidentiality of aspects of the Society's activities, we could also send a link to the Newsletter, as in Option 2, together with a password that you would need to type into a box on the Society's website to access the Newsletter. This option would remove the need to edit the Newsletter to remove any private and confidential information.
- 4) If you would prefer to continue receiving the Newsletter by post, then also let the Committee know.

If you have already provided the Society with your email address, we would like to invite you to join us in a trial. The exact nature of the trial would depend on which of the options garners the most support. If you haven't given us your email address – see the information on page 10 of this Newsletter.

As part of the trial, we would like your feedback on matters such as speed, usefulness, ease of operation, for example:

- ♪ How soon after you clicked on the link in the email did the Newsletter open in Adobe?
- ♪ Was this about the same time as it would normally take you to open a PDF on a website, faster than normal, or slower than normal?
- ♪ Were you able to adjust the size of the on-line Newsletter so that it was easy for you to read?
- ♪ Were you able to navigate from page to page through the document?
- ♪ Did you click on any of the links to other websites that are embedded in the text, and if so did the new site/s open easily for you?
- ♪ If you had the option in future, would you prefer to read an online copy of the Newsletter instead of the paper copy which you're currently receiving, or as well as the paper copy?

Please send your feedback on the options 1-4 above by

- post, to the Society's address - GPO Box 4574 SYDNEY NSW 2001 or by
- email to: [wagner\\_nsw@optusnet.com.au](mailto:wagner_nsw@optusnet.com.au)

If you wish to, you could instead or as well, complete the simple questionnaire the Webmaster John Studdert has compiled at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/3BLF22L> and, by clicking a few buttons, generate an automatic electronic result for the survey.

All feedback will be very gratefully received and will contribute to the Society keeping up with the electronic age.

*Terence Watson (Newsletter Editor) and  
John Studdert (Webmaster)*



**The Wagner Society in NSW Incorporated  
Application Form for Tickets to the Bayreuth Festival 2011**

	Applicant 1	Applicant 2
<b>Name</b>		
<b>Email Address</b>	.....	
<b>Mailing Address</b> (If you are successful, your tickets will be posted to this address)	..... .....	
<b>Mobile Phone</b>		<b>Other Phone</b>
<b>Membership No</b>		
<b>Signature/s</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Tick this box</b> if you wish to be allocated the less expensive tickets.	

**Applications**

- Any current financial member of the Society may apply for one set of tickets in her or his own name, and any two current financial members with a shared membership may apply for one set of tickets in each of their names (i.e. two sets of tickets for the two members);
- Applications on this form must reach the Society before 1 October 2010, posted to GPO Box 4574, Sydney NSW 2001 or emailed to [wagner\\_nsw@optusnet.com.au](mailto:wagner_nsw@optusnet.com.au) (wagner underscore nsw at optusnet dot com dot au).

**Allocation of tickets**

- Normally in November or December each year, we find out the number of sets of tickets that we have been allocated for the next year's festival. We will email these details to applicants, with an approximate A\$ cost for each set of tickets, plus an A\$100 processing fee per set which the Society retains.
- Where there are more applicants than sets of tickets, a ballot is conducted on the following basis:
  - applicants who have been financial members of the Society for two or more years and who have not within the past five years (for the Bayreuth Festivals in 2005 to 2009) received tickets through the Society will be balloted first;
  - other applicants of two or more years standing will be balloted second; and
  - all remaining applicants (including late applications received on or after 1 October) will be balloted last.
- Allocation of seating is at the discretion of the Society, and we will attempt to give each member attending the festival a range of seating locations according to our allocation. Shared members will be seated together wherever possible.

**Payment for tickets**

- When we receive our allocation or, if a ballot is required, immediately after that ballot is held, we will contact the successful applicants and arrange for payment to be transferred to our bank account so that we can send the full payment to the Festival by the due date. It's vital that we are able to contact you quickly, so you need to make sure that if you're away at this time we have reliable contact details or the name of someone who can make the payment on your behalf.
- If we have not received a response within 48 hours of our attempt to contact you, your application will be deemed to have been withdrawn and we will approach the next applicant on the list.
- If you are unable to transfer your payment within 5 business days of our request, your application will also be deemed to have been withdrawn and we will approach the next applicant on the list.



## **ADDRESS**

Please note our permanent address for all correspondence

The Wagner Society in New South Wales Inc

GPO Box 4574 SYDNEY NSW 2001

Telephone: 9357 7631 (Roger Cruickshank, President)

Website: <http://www.wagner-nsw.org.au>

Website enquiries: [webmaster@wagner-nsw.org.au](mailto:webmaster@wagner-nsw.org.au)

(most website addresses used in this Newsletter will be on the Wagner Society's website in the relevant article)

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