

IN MEMORIAM

Astrid Varnay & Anna Russell – two memorable performers – see report on page 5.

A letter to Members

Dear Members

This is my final report for 2006. I hope this newsletter finds you all in good health, having survived the bunfight of 2006 year-end activities and ready for another scorching antipodean summer, and for 2007's Wagner treats.

Locally, so far as we can tell from the published programmes of Australian opera companies and orchestras, Wagner performances are limited to the Australian Opera's performances of *Tannhäuser* and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's performances of the *Siegfried Idyll*.

The closest item of interest is in Wellington, where the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra is following up the success of this year's semi-staged *Parsifal* performances with an all-Wagner concert on Friday, 7 September 2007, including Margaret Medlyn singing the Liebestod from *Tristan und Isolde* and the Immolation from *Götterdämmerung*.

Further afield, and much more colourful and exotic, the Bangkok Opera is staging *Die Walküre* in July 2007. Peter Bassett is leading a tour which includes a performance on Thursday 26 July. He writes "The Bangkok production emphasises the universal nature of Wagner's work by linking it to Thai experience and to the Hindu and Buddhist philosophies that Wagner regarded so highly during the last three decades of his life. The Artistic Director of Bangkok Opera, Somtow Sucharitkul, approaches the work from a distinctively Asian perspective, and the result is intriguing and surprising."

Functions

On 17 September, members who had been to Bayreuth in 2006 reported on the performances and in particular on the new Dorst/ Thielemann *Ring*, and on Bayreuth's new *Brünnhilde*, Linda Watson. Dennis Mather and John Studdert led the *Ring* discussion with an excellent presentation of photographs from the programmes and other sources. The general impression of Herr Dorst's production, with the theme that "the Gods are among us, but we can't see them" was very favourable, with most members rejecting the charge that this was one-dimensional production, finding it instead more multi-layered and textured than many of the overseas critics. There was general praise for Thielemann's shaping of the music and his general structure and tempi, and, despite some reservations, admiration for much of Watson's singing.

Elizabeth Gordon-Werner spoke about her very personal and favourable reaction to Christoph Schlingensief's much-maligned production of *Parsifal*, and read from notes she made at the time which she has since turned into an article, printed in this Newsletter. After the *Parsifal* performance, Elizabeth went back to her hotel room and wrote down her impressions, reactions and feelings while they were still raw, and the images and sounds were still very close to her, which makes the article very real and immediate without the distance which a more deliberate view might contain.

On 15 October, Alan Whelan gave an illustrated talk on *Rienzi*, Wagner's only work in the style of French grand opera, sometimes described as the best opera Meyerbeer never wrote. The story includes Wagner's only adventure with trouser roles, where, at the premiere in October 1842, his favourite soprano Wilhelmine Schroder-Devrient sang the role of Adriano, *Rienzi*'s son. Amazingly to our ears, while writing *Rienzi*, Wagner also worked on *The Flying Dutchman*, which failed in its first season and was replaced by further performances of *Rienzi*, to restore the composer's popularity.

Newsletter Highlights

- P. ? **My First *Parsifal* - Elizabeth Gordon-Werner**
- P. ? **The new Copenhagen Ring - Dr Jim Leigh**
- P. ? **The Toronto Ring Cycle - Colleen & Michael Chesterman**
- P. ? **LA Opera Gets \$6 Million to Stage 'Ring' -Editor**
- P. ? **The Mysterious Wagner Archive in Bayreuth- Editor**
- P. ? **Raven's Reporting**
- P. ? **2007 Annual Membership Renewal**

PATRON:

HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS:

Sir CHARLES MACKERRAS

Prof MICHAEL EWANS

Mr RICHARD KING

Mr HORST HOFFMAN

Mr JOSEPH FERFOGLIA

Mrs BARBARA McNULTY OBE

**Registered Office: 75 Birtley Towers, 8 Birtley Place, Elizabeth Bay NSW 2011
Print Post Approved PP242114/00002**

FOR YOUR DIARY

2007		
<i>Tannhäuser</i>	Opera Australia, Sydney NSW. Revival of Elke Neidhardt's production	8, 11, 16, 20, 23, 27, 30 October & 2 November 2007
<i>Siegfried Idyll</i>	Sydney Symphony Orchestra with Gelmetti and Frank Peter Zimmermann in Berg Violin Concerto and Schubert Great C major symphony	5, 6, 7, 8, December 2007

COMING EVENTS

2007		
DATE	TIME and EVENT	LOCATION
18 February	1pm Tony Palmer "Wagner" film, part 8 of 10 2pm Discussion led by Terence Watson and others on the Toronto and Costa Mesa Ring cycles and a short talk by Terence: The "Problem" of Siegfried.	Goethe Institut
18 March	1pm Tony Palmer "Wagner" film, part 9 of 10 2pm To be confirmed	Goethe Institut
15 April	1pm Tony Palmer "Wagner" film, part 10 of 10 2pm Nigel Butterley's second Faust talk, "Faust and the Feminine"	Goethe Institut
20 May	1pm Act 1 of a DVD of Tannhäuser (cast and other details to be confirmed) 2pm AGM 2.30pm recital by students from the Conservatorium of Music 3pm catered birthday celebration for Richard Wagner	Goethe Institut
June	TBC	
July	NO FUNCTION	Goethe Institut
August	NO FUNCTION	
September	TBC	Goethe Institut
October	TBC	Goethe Institut
November	TBC	Goethe Institut
December	End of Year Function - please bring a plate.	
Goethe-Institut address 90 Ocean Street Woollahra (corner of Jersey Road)		

COMMITTEE 2005-2006

President and Membership Secretary	Roger Cruickshank	9357 7631
Vice President	Julian Block	9337 6978
Treasurer	Michael Moore	9363 2281
Secretary	Mary Haswell	9810 5532
Members	Dennis Mather	9560 1860
	Gabrielle Bremner-Moore	9363 2281
	Alan Whelan	9318 1212
Newsletter Editor	Terence Watson	9517 2786
Public Officer	Alasdair Beck	9358 3922

A Letter to Members (cont.)

Although *Rienzi* was Wagner's first truly popular work, and perhaps the most popular of his works during his lifetime, Wagner experimented both with giving the opera over two evenings (as Opera Australia did unsuccessfully with Berlioz' *Les Troyens*) and with making cuts so that the work could be performed in a single evening. None of these experiments was sufficiently successful to induce his family to allow *Rienzi* to be given in Bayreuth after his death.

We all endure Emile Naumann's quote from Rossini, allegedly made to him in April 1867, that "*Monsieur Wagner a de beaux moments, mais de mauvais quart d'heures*", generally given as "*beautiful moments but bad quarter hours*". Alan notes that by April 1867, Rossini could only have heard music from the early and middle works, up to *Lohengrin*, and possibly from *Tristan und Isolde*. If the quote is accurate, it might most probably apply to *Rienzi* and not, as it is often applied by reviewers and critics, to the *Ring* or other late works.

On 26 November, Nigel Butterley gave a talk entitled "Faust, Mephistopheles – and composers", tracing both the sources of the legend and composers who have set it to music. Unfortunately, because of a technical problem with new audio-visual equipment installed at the venue, it was not possible to present all the musical extracts as Nigel had

intended, and we apologise again for the inconvenience this caused both to Nigel and our members. The most dramatic extract which Nigel played was by the Russian composer Alfred Schnittke (1934-1998), from his opera the *Historia von D. Johann Fausten*, which incorporated his earlier *Faust Cantata* (1983). The acclaim which greeted this late 20th century work was somewhat unexpected.

In April 2007, Nigel Butterley will deliver a further talk on the influence of the Faust legend on composers, particularly focussing on Faust and the Feminine.

Our Christmas Party was held on Sunday 10 December, and a documentary on Waltraud Meier "I follow a voice within me" was shown. Our party was a little less formal than in previous years, but still included many traditional touches, foremost among them another of Barbara Brady's legendary Christmas Cakes, which was first prize in our raffle and was won by Colin Baskerville. Our thanks to Barbara, and to Roger Hillman, head of Film Studies at the Australian National University for a copy of his book "Unsettling Scores: German Film, Music and Ideology," and to our Ravens for a CD set of the Solti "Walküre", which were also raffle prizes.

Next year's functions

We're in the process of negotiating with presenters for a number of next year's functions. At this stage we can confirm the February meeting, at which Terence Watson and others who attended the Toronto and Costa Mesa *Rings* will discuss the productions, singers, conductors, orchestras and venues for each of these performances. Expect some unflattering comparisons with their Australian equivalents, particularly the acoustics of our own beloved Opera House. It will be followed by a short talk by Terence: The "Problem" of Siegfried.

In April, we have Nigel Butterley's second Faust talk, "Faust and the Feminine", and in May our celebration party at the Goethe-Institut for Wagner's birthday, along with our AGM and what for many is the highlight of our year, the recital by students from the Conservatorium of Music, who have received German Language Scholarships from our Society.

Newsletter compliments

Once again, our thanks and congratulations go to Terence Watson, our Newsletter Editor, and to the high-quality bank of contributors he marshals to produce each Newsletter. I've recently received praise for the Newsletter from the Presidents of two local Wagner Societies, and from members of our Society both here and overseas.

Praise is also due to our unsung heroes, Ravens Richard Mason and Camron Dyer, who keep our calendar of future Wagner performances world-wide so up-to-date. I often find links from the websites of overseas Wagner Societies to this page of our website, allowing Wagnerites everywhere to take advantage of their research when making their travel plans.

Membership Renewals

It's time to renew your membership for 2007, and a form is provided on the inside back cover of this issue, or on our website at <http://www.wagner-nsw.org.au/membership.html>

This year, you can send your payment electronically to our bank account, if you wish. Please don't forget to post your renewal form as well. Unfortunately, because of the high fees involved, we don't currently offer the facility to pay membership fees by credit card, but will be looking at the PayPal online payment system to see if that's viable for us.

Other Wagner performances

This year, the Richard Wagner Society of Western Australia Inc celebrated its 20th anniversary, and we congratulate them on achieving this milestone. The Society had much more than its own anniversary to celebrate, with the West Australian Opera's production of *Tristan und Isolde* in November being the highlight of the Wagner calendar in Australia in 2006. Reviews and members reports of the performances, and of the seminar organised by the Perth Society, have been glowing. The March edition of the Newsletter will feature some comments by members and an overview of media critiques and some comparisons with other productions. As a foretaste, we are fortunate to have a short essay by Peter Bassett in this newsletter, **Image and Idea – *Tristan and the Upanishads***.

Bookings for *Tannhäuser* in Sydney in 2007

Tickets for Opera Australia's re-staging of the Neidhardt *Tannhäuser*, with seven performances in October 2007 and one in November, are apparently selling fast. Member Colin Baskerville called the box office to order an additional ticket, and was told that there were very few seats available, and that they were expected to be sold out by the end of December 2006. If this isn't part of your 2007 OA subscription, or you're planning to visit Sydney and catch a performance, you had better book now. The cast as advertised is Bernadette Cullen as *Venus*, Glenn Winslade *Tannhäuser*, Janice Watson *Elizabeth*, Daniel Sumegi *Hermann* and Warwick Fyfe *Wolftram*.

YouTube

I'd like to tell you about an internet-based video-clip phenomenon which has some interesting Wagner-related and musical items. Those of you who know your way around this world-wide waste of time will probably know about "YouTube" already, and those of you who regard the Internet with justified suspicion will be unwilling to venture there. But if you have a few spare moments over this holiday season and access to a computer, you may find this a journey worth undertaking.

First, YouTube is a free service. It's at www.youtube.com. As far as I can tell, young people, mostly American, with digital video cameras and too much time on their hands film each other doing pointless things and then "post" their video efforts on YouTube so that others can watch them. The clips range from the juvenile, such as the results of eating a few rolls of Mentos and then drinking Coke, or playing with matches close to one's person after a meal of beans, to the criminal, such as the activities of a group of school children in Victoria who filmed themselves setting fire to a young woman they had abused.

But in the midst of all this suspect material, there are some gems. This site is also used by lovers of Wagner and other music to post clips of opera performances. If you go to http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tAo_fTiZ2hY you will see Kirsten Flagstad, after an introduction by Bob Hope, singing a few HoJoToHos from *Die Walküre*, standing on a fake rock and poking her spear in a manner that may draw titters from a younger audience. I suspect that this is from the Ed Sullivan Show, or something similar, and dates from the early 1950s when I was still in nappies, but as I never saw her sing live, and don't recall seeing her on any film of an opera performance, this 3 minutes and 15 seconds holds me in thrall.

Then there is my current personal favourite - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0OQvW9-nz-0>. It's described as "Richard Wagner *Lohengrin* Act 3 Final. Magyar Állami Operaház Budapest Hungarian TV 2004", which by YouTube standards is a very full description, and contains 9 minutes and 11 seconds from the end of Act 3 of *Lohengrin*. As well as seeing a fragment from a very interesting staging, you can see and hear an Ortrud of exceptional vileness in so many ways.

And with these two examples you encounter the best and worst of YouTube. Articles about this site, which is often modestly described as a "phenomenon", say that over 100,000 new clips are added each month. At the same time, YouTube's Thought Police troll through this material deleting inappropriate and copyright items, so Kirsten and Ortrud will probably one day disappear. But until they do, they and a wealth of material you may never otherwise see are waiting for you to enjoy.

Although YouTube is free, you should probably give them your email address and register. It may make logging on and searching easier. It's anarchic, because the people who post the clips are allowed to use any tags (key words) they like to describe their material, and it is these "tags" which allow other people to find your clips – or not. A search on a "tag" such as "Callas" is as likely to produce a drag queen miming "Visi d' Arte" as it is the real thing. The Flagstad clip has four tags – Kirsten, Flagstad, Wagner and Walküre – and a search on "Flagstad" gets you four results, so it's the most direct. The *Lohengrin* clip has three tags – Wagner, *Lohengrin* and Opera – and a search on "*Lohengrin*" will give you 21 results. A search on "Wagner" gives over 2,000 results, but a search on "Richard Wagner" only 115, which is much more manageable. A search on "Bayreuth" gives around 300 results, and mixed in with the holiday videos from happy Burghers and clips from the 2006 German Tennis Open, there are extracts from productions by Wieland Wagner, and other delights. You just need to be a little Mime and mine for them.

On the downside, YouTube uses "Flash" technology which means that the picture size on your PC or laptop screen can't be changed, and that without some technical sophistication you can't copy the clips and keep them for later on. But if you have time to waste, this is a fertile place to waste it. So far, I have found seven different live clips of "Suicidio" from Ponchielli's *La Gioconda*, including Bumbry and Rysenak as well as Tebaldi and Callas, and within the confines of the little Flash screen and the best sound your PC or laptop can produce, you can compare and contrast the greatest singers of our age in performances you might otherwise never see. And that for me is a folly on which it's worth wasting a little time.

Bayreuth 2007

We've received an allocation of eight sets of tickets for Bayreuth 2007. Under our new ticketing rules, this means that the six applicants who have been members of the Society and have not had tickets to Bayreuth through the Society in the past five years have all been successful. They are Colin Jones and Paul Curran, June Donsworth, Jan Bowen, and Julie and Terry Clarke. At the Christmas Party there was a ballot for the remaining two tickets, and Monica and Aliro Olave were the lucky winners. As usual, Members attending Bayreuth 2007 will lead a discussion on the performances at our September 2007 function.

Let me wish you all a very safe and enjoyable summer holiday break, and I look forward to seeing many of you at one of our functions in 2007. Warmest regards, Roger Cruickshank

IN MEMORIAM - Astrid Varnay, 25 April 1918 - 4 September 2006 and Anna Russell, 27 December 1911 – 18 October 2006

Soprano Astrid Varnay died in Munich, Germany at the age of 88. According to the Los Angeles Times, Varnay was raised in New York and started her career at the New York Metropolitan Opera. According to Wikipedia, "Opera was the family business and Varnay grew up backstage at the world's opera houses. Her father founded, and both parents ran, the Opera Comique Theater in Kristiania (later Oslo), Norway. At one time Astrid was swaddled in the lower drawer of the dressing room table of the young Kirsten Flagstad" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astrid_Varnay).

"Flagstad arranged for her to start preparing roles with Metropolitan Opera staff conductor and coach Hermann Weigert...By the age of 22 she knew Hungarian, German, English, French and Italian and her repertoire consisted of fifteen leading dramatic soprano roles, eleven of which were Wagnerian parts. She made her sensational debut at the Metropolitan Opera on December 6, 1941 at a broadcast performance singing Sieglinde in Wagner's *Die Walküre*, substituting for the indisposed Lotte Lehmann with almost no rehearsal. This was her first appearance in a leading role, and it was a triumph. Six days later she replaced the ailing Helen Traubel as Brünnhilde in the same opera.

In 1969 she gave up her repertoire of heavy dramatic soprano roles after singing them continuously for a longer period than any other soprano, and began a new career singing mezzo roles. After being the world's leading Elektra for over twenty years, she now established herself as a great interpreter of Klytemnestra. The role of Herodias became her most often-performed role: 236 performances. She returned to the Metropolitan in 1974 and last appeared there in Weill's *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* in 1979. In the mid-1980s, character roles now became Varnay's metier. Her last appearance on stage was in Munich in 1995, fifty-five years after her Metropolitan debut.

Anna Russell died at age 94 in Batemans Bay!! According to her fan website, which has strangely not been updated with the news of her death, Anna Russell...moved Down Under, half way around the world from her former long-time home in Canada. She [was] living with her [adopted daughter, Deirdre Prussak], and [was] reportedly very happy in the new surroundings. <http://annarussellshrine.tripod.com/>. It would be of regret for many NSW Wagnerians that we did not know that she lived in Batemans Bay, otherwise we would have invited her to talk to the Society.

According to Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anna_Russell), Russell's early career included a few engagements in opera (including a disastrous appearance as a substitute Santuzza in a British touring production of *Cavalleria Rusticana*, where she clumsily tripped on a set piece and pulled it down - an event later used in her comedy) as well as appearances as a folk singer on BBC radio in 1931.

"I never intended to do comedy at all," she once said. "Every time I did something (while singing at the BBC), even though I was being very serious, everyone would laugh and scream. I used to get offended." "Finally, I thought that if people were going to laugh anyway, I might as well go along with the gang. So I did."

The Canadian Encyclopedia quotes her in 1977, from the *Toronto Star*, as describing herself as "the Rip Van Winkle of Toronto - a bit decrepit but not yet passed away. I still have one of the great voices of the decayed - a roar rather than screech, in a comfy basso nonprofundo." Wagnerians are most likely to remember her famous line on the complexities of the plot of Wagner's Ring in her glorious send up of the tetralogy: "I'm not making this up, you know!" [Editor]

NEW MEMBERS

The following people joined the Society: Professor Ivan Shearer (954), MaryAnne and Nick Gillott (955), Dr Warren and Susan Walsh (956), Pamela and Graham Thomas (957).

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 were gratefully received from the following members and supporters Nubent Pty Limited, Philip Bacon Galleries Pty Ltd, MaryAnne and Nick Gillott.

MY FIRST PARSIFAL - ELIZABETH GORDON-WERNER

The year 2006 held several firsts for me. I visited Bayreuth for the first time and I saw *Parsifal* for the first time. I saw Schlingensiefel's production of *Parsifal*.

I had studied the libretto before going to Bayreuth and I could imagine what a conventional *Parsifal* might look like. I also knew that Schlingensiefel's *Parsifal* was not a conventional production as I had heard talks by members of the NSW Wagner Society who had seen it the previous year. I had also read several reviews. The reviews had all been bad or

neutral, none of them were positive. They had told of clutter and chaos, so as I entered the hall I was prepared for a chaos that might detract from the music.

Instead I saw a *Parsifal* that I found profoundly moving, an experience for which I was quite unprepared given the reviews I had read. I was so overwhelmed by Act 1 that I wept and in the first interval I walked off by myself to recover. Before my walk, I bought an ice-cream to help the energy recovery process. I nearly left the ice-cream queue to escape the loud tirade of abuse the gentleman behind me was heaping on Schlingensiefel and his production. The man standing in front of me also overheard this loud commentary and commented to his wife "My feelings exactly!" Other overheard conversations around the Festspielhaus seemed to confirm that this was a production that everyone had agreed to hate.

Well, not quite everyone. As I wandered around the beautiful gardens eating ice-cream and waiting for my emotions to stabilise I spied a group of young people on a blanket having a picnic. I paused as I passed them and enquired, "Are you liking the production?" Two young female faces looked up at me with shining eyes and nodded slowly, smiling, unsure of my reaction. "Oh I am so pleased someone else liked it," I said, "as I have been so very moved by this production."

So what did I see and why did I react so strongly? It is true that, as I had read, there was a lot happening on stage all the time. It is also true that there were a great many stage props and that most of them look like temporary building materials propped up any old way. Videos projected onto the props and several screens showed amoeba, blood rushing through arteries, pulsing fish and insects laying eggs. There were rabbits both onstage and in the videos. There was so much happening all the time at so many levels that it would be as difficult to capture this production on film, as it is to describe it with words.

The knights were black, very black, and in some sort of African like costume, as was Klingsor. (Do they belong together somehow?). Members of the choir were dressed in every religious costume and a few political or military ones as well and there was a very fat dark skinned nearly naked lady who took centre stage. Everyone seemed to be worshipping this fat, dark-skinned, nearly naked lady or her image. Several times during orchestral parts a curtain came down and the video imagery continued on the curtain, often depicting some sort of sacrifice analogy or nature phenomenon.

Kundry appeared in several costumes, each of them very different, but we always knew it was Kundry. Sometimes there were two of her. There was one Parsifal but also a look-alike who looked and acted exactly as you would expect a storybook Jesus Christ to act. He helped people all the time and was generally very 'good'.

So why was I so moved by this chaotic multilayered production with its unusual staging? In order to explain my reaction I think I must write a little about myself. I believe that people's reactions to music, especially Wagner's operas, can only be explained by their personal histories. Our reactions are informed by what went before just as Parsifal's understanding is informed by his own personal history.

Schlingensiefel's *Parsifal* seemed to take a lot of what I have been thinking about religion and life over these past 30 years and present it on stage. As the story and the controlled chaos unfolded I had the feeling that someone else had thought the thoughts that I had thought, someone had felt my feelings and, if I were to meet him, would understand without explanation. A rare gift.

I was brought up in a Christian family, though not a particularly observant one, and attended a high school run by the Anglican Church. I took the religious lessons seriously and at 18 I decided that if what I was being taught in religion classes was true, I should become a missionary or priest. We were taught we were all included, we were all important. At the same time I was a girl and therefore automatically excluded from the church hierarchy. In response to this duplicitous message I decided it was all a lot of tosh and left the church behind me with school. I became a card-carrying atheist, turned off by the discrepancy between what the church taught and how it acted. The closest thing I came to a religious experience over the next 30 years was doing courses to learn the Vipassana meditation technique. The course is not religious in itself, but it does include some explanation of Buddhist precepts. I discovered that Christian and Buddhist precepts are very similar and that despite having become an atheist I had lived by such precepts. They seemed like common sense rules for a good life to me.

I had not re-read the *Parsifal* libretto again before the performance as I had intended, but I speak German so I expected to understand everything immediately. However, when the curtain rose and Gurnemanz sang to some very black people in weird costumes, it took me a while to work out that these black African caricatures were actually the knights, keepers of the grail. Discovering that these people were knights, even if they did not fit the role model, gave me an immediate sense of identification. In the same moment I also realised that many of the audience would feel the direct opposite. They would feel that they had nothing in common with these pitch-black people with their odd costumes and weird symbols, would feel that their religion had been taken from them. Their Knights should be white, male, strong and with

good teeth. These people were black, of both genders, and weird. I knew how most other people would feel as although the church talks a lot about inclusiveness, they would not imagine knights of the grail as black people in plastic skirts. If we came back to earth in 3000 years," I thought to myself, "this is what we might see."

Parsifal is bemused by the grail, the weird symbols, the fat female figure everyone worships and the priests in many costumes and when Gurnemanz asks him if he understands what he has seen, he shrinks back and shakes his head. We can understand his reaction because we don't understand what is going on either. All these odd men with their symbols, singing aggressively to Amfortas that he should do his duty. Instead of feeling cross with Parsifal for not understanding what he has seen, we find we identify with his confusion.

Amfortas, dressed as a hospital patient is despairing. We are too. We are overwhelmed by the strangeness of it all. I was reminded of how I felt when I went back to the church for a wedding 10 years after I left the church. I felt the same sense of strangeness and dismay that civilised people could worship icons and accept supernatural stories. In *Parsifal*, the audience was obviously feeling as I had felt. I could feel the cringe from every corner.

Then there is Kundry. We are comfortable with Kundry as a fallen woman. We understand the role model and we can sympathise with her when we are feeling nice. However, we are not comfortable with the male 'type' that makes Kundry into a fallen woman. In this production, every male apart from Gurnemanz either wants or abuses Kundry. The Knights think that she hates them and they would have killed her if Gurnemanz had not protected her. Parsifal and Amfortas both want her; Klingsor rapes her on stage. Kundry or her double in their black and white costumes are always on the defensive. She is abused; she is despairing; she would like to die but cannot. When Klingsor wipes blood on her slip at the place where her legs part we understand her plight and her despair. I doubt there is a man or woman in the audience who didn't recognise our society in her story. There is a collective shudder when Kundry is shown with her bloody petticoat. We don't want to think about how a fallen woman actually feels, but here we have no choice. Abused, misused, despairing. She is a girl, unacceptable as a priest, abused by those who are priests. Remembering newspaper headlines of recent years, who wouldn't shudder?

All though Act 1, videos show pictures of nature. I am a biologist and these images made me feel as if I was back in the laboratory looking through a microscope with one eye while observing something else with the other, a familiar feeling for a biologist. A video maker from Bern told me later that he felt equally at home with the video imagery. It was second nature to him to have lots of movement and chaos and quick changes. The video rabbits and amoeba had the effect of continually reminding one that nature is a cycle, that there is no life without death. Exactly the Christian message actually, but not in a form that most would recognise. ("What were those rabbits anyway?" one woman in the ice-cream queue asked.)

Schlingensiefel anticipates this lack of understanding and presents the rabbit again and again and finally in an inescapable way. We see a video of a dead rabbit, in quick time, as the blowflies visit, then the carcass is eaten by maggots. I grew up on a farm so these pictures were a life/death reality for me, but I still found it hard to watch. I closed my eyes. I had got the message.

When the man in the ice-cream queue spluttered angrily that 'this production could have been put on 5 or 10 years ago, but not now', I realised that many people would be confronted by the production in ways they could not verbalise and would have to find a way to discount what they had seen. 'I am above this old fashioned production,' this man was saying.

The second act depicted detention centres with Kundry as boat-person cum terrorist. We could still see her good but wounded heart though. Although this act fitted well with the previous one, I was not so affected. I am ashamed of our detention policy but that is not new.

In the third act, Parsifal, Amfortas and Klingsor wrangle over Kundry, underscoring the wound that both men and women carry. The final seconds were, for me, a masterstroke. After the rabbit gives life to maggots we see, through the curtain, a lighted doorway open on back stage. Light floods through and Klingsor, Amfortas and Parsifal walk towards it hand in hand. That moment said to me 'Klingsor or priest – it is all one. Good and evil. Opposite sides of the same coin.' Kundry becomes the heroine. She is shown, finally, in a confirmation veil carrying the sword, which in this production is an enormous Sheppard's crook. Oh the symbolism!

Addendum

The other day I told our Editor, Terence Watson, how I discovered Wagner's music and he said others might be interested, so here is my story.

In 1988 Germany gave Australia a production of *Die Meistersinger* as a bicentenary present. At the time, although I loved opera, I did not like Wagner's music at all. I found it very dreary and when it was played on the radio I turned it off. When our German neighbours took their children to see *Meistersinger*, I felt sorry for them, wondering how one

could inflict such music on 12 year olds. I heard later to my surprise that they all enjoyed it. I thereupon decided that I should go as well, but I was too late and I missed it.

The same production came back two years later and this time I registered early enough. It was just wonderful. This opera was the start of my Wagner addiction. I saw both the Adelaide Ring Cycles and over the last year I have started painting series of works informed by *Lohengrin*. This music feels like a home to me and nowadays, in common with all Wagnerians I suspect, as soon as I hear a bar of a Wagner opera my body dissolves into a different space. **Elizabeth Gordon-Werner**

THE NEW COPENHAGEN RING OR EGOS AT HOLMEN - DR JIM LEIGH

The new Copenhagen Opera House was given to Copenhagen by one man. Yes, shipping magnate Maersk McKinney Møller gave over a billion and a half Danish Krøner (about \$A 400 million) to the nation for a new opera house, just over the water right opposite our Crown Princess Mary's Royal Palace. He also specified what it would look like. It is a big rectangular box with a jutting ship like prow. The interior however is modelled on a violin case and its curved wall is made of maple. What is it like?

Well, it looks great and functions brilliantly, but it is a little hard to get to. Although on the island of Holmen opposite the Royal Palace, there is actually no good water access. Ferries stop at 7pm. By road you have to drive for about 25 minutes through a rather derelict industrial area and the hippy state of Christiania. There is one bus (no.66, opera house is end of line). They did put on plenty of buses for the Ring nights. The new house was officially opened with a performance of an amazing new production of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* in April 25,26, 28,30 2006. The Royal Theatre production had actually been built up over the preceding three years, partly in the older opera house in the city centre. Siegfried and *Götterdämmerung* had actually been given as separate operas in the new building in late 2005 early 2006, but the April cycle was the first complete Ring in Copenhagen since 1912. Queen Margarethe attended *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* and the audience had to stand for her and the performers had to always bow to her first. Although the Danes are famously casual, they take their Royals very seriously and disapprove of anyone not showing them the proper respect.

In addition to the ego of Møller and of course Wagner, we had on display a very egotistical (but very interesting) production by director Kasper Bech Holten and dramaturg Henrik Engelbrecht. In choosing to call the cycle Brünnhilde's Ring, changing the actual dramatic events, inventing whole new scenes and characters, setting *Götterdämmerung* in Bosnia in 1999, indulging in some way out audience-pleasing but self-referential by-play and writing a big glossy book about it (on sale in the foyer for about \$100), Holten and Engelbrecht have brought Wagner into the 21st Century.

Actually, much of what we saw was not that original and one could trace a lot back to Chéreau at Bayreuth 1976, through Friedrich's various efforts at Covent Garden, Deutsche Oper Berlin and Helsinki, the Stuttgart productions and of course Kupfer and the Flimm more recently at Bayreuth. It was certainly not anything like what Lars von Trier might have done at Bayreuth had he not pulled out.

The idea, according to a pre-performance talk given by Engelbrecht, was to see the story as Brünnhilde trying to trace the roots of her dysfunctional family and a recurrent visual leitmotif was the bookshelves in Valhalla containing the family almanacs and life stories. So the story was a sort of series of flashbacks. Time relativities were observed. *Rheingold* was set in the 1930s, *Walküre* in the 1950s, *Siegfried* in the 1970s and *Götterdämmerung* in the 1990s. Engelbrecht was also trying to make the point that women will be the source of power in the 21st century. All female characters were very powerful, even Freia and Gutrune. Sieglinde, for example, pulled the sword out of the tree entirely on her own (I've seen her assist before). Brünnhilde was heavily pregnant throughout *Götterdämmerung* and delivered her baby during the immolation scene. A real baby cried to the "redemption through love" motif at the end as Brünnhilde stood in a bloodstained nightie nursing it. Engelbrecht also claimed that the historical events during the period 1848-1974 actually set up the 20th century so the time shift was justified.

Seeing the Ring through Brünnhilde is not that unreasonable. It has often been asked – why does Wotan need to create a free hero when he already has Brünnhilde? However to focus solely on the women and to treat Siegfried as a bit of an idiot sperm donor misses the whole point of what Wagner meant the Ring to be about. In his famous letter to August Röckel of 25 January 1854, Wagner explained the meaning of the Ring drama. Paraphrasing, Wagner said that reality is that which must change, the unreal, or Kantian noumenal sphere, remained constant. Then he said a human being is both man and woman, and it is only when man and woman are united in love that men and women attain full humanity. Only that which is real can be eternal and it is through love that the most perfect manifestation of reality is attained, therefore love only is eternal (but changing). The Ring thus sets forth the necessity of recognizing and yielding to change, the manysidedness, the multiplicity, the eternal renewing of reality and of life.

The later, darker Schopenhauerian interpretation gave a more significant importance to Wotan. Wotan rises to the tragic height of willing his own destruction. To will what necessity imposes is the lesson from the history of mankind. To

deny the will to power leaves a fearless human being who never ceases to love – Siegfried. In *Parsifal*, Wagner went further and advocated the denial of the will to sexual love as well, and that is why some have seen *Parsifal* as the fifth part of the Ring (eg Flimm at Bayreuth). Wagner saw world history as the development from the state of nature, through humankind, the state, government, law, corruption and return to innocence. He actually planned to write a book called “The Unbeauty of Civilisation” on these themes. The Ring is world history expressed in myth (see the essay *Die Wibelungen*)

The Ring is thus about a lot more than Brünnhilde and she is not really the right central character from a philosophic point of view even though overtly she does seem to develop more than Siegfried. The trouble with Siegfried is that he is drugged for much of *Götterdämmerung* and even in *Siegfried* by dragon blood, and Wagner can't really show his main character developing. Nevertheless the Ring is such a great work it can be interpreted in many different ways and the Copenhagen way is one of them. To the production itself...

Das Rheingold

The first striking feature was that it had six scenes instead of the usual four, although continuous of course.

Scene 1 (not the bottom of the Rhine); Brünnhilde's room in the attic of Valhalla, surrounded by musty old tomes of family albums. Brünnhilde looking through them.

Scene 2 A lounge room in a 1930s middle class basement flat. Rhinemaidens are flappers. Alberich is seducing them. Much byplay eg ice cubes down front of Alberich's pants to cool his ardour. Alberich has drinks cabinet and is getting drunker and drunker. As will become apparent later in act 3 of *Götterdämmerung*, the set actually is an empty swimming pool.

The gold is a real naked man swimming in real water tank. When the gold is stolen, the man is killed by Alberich and the water becomes bloodstained. This is justified. In the text as the Rhinemaidens are swimming around the newly revealed gold, they sing at one point ‘Schant, er lächelt in lichtem Schein’ (See how he smiles in the gleaming light) referring to the gold as he, and at another “Wache, Freund, wache froh, wonnige Spiele spenden wir dir” (awaken friend, awake to joy, gladdening games we'll play with you now). The gold is not an inanimate object but a living mythological being. Incidentally, there is another gold like object in center stage that has no part. This is a feature of the production: the director tricking the audience as to which stage prop is the significant one. The curtain falls during transition.

Scene: Gods camped in tents, ready to move into Valhalla. Wotan has one eye closed (no patch). Donner has a rifle. Loge is a smoking mobster shyster. Giants descend from top of stage in lifts. Fafner is seated in a wheel chair as tophatted fat capitalist.

Scene 4 Nibelheim is truly scary. Gruesome headless, limbless, otherwise incomplete bodies in plastic bags. Mime's Frankenstein-like laboratory with failed tarnhelm experiments around. A bit like the Robin Cook film, *Coma*. At one point, Mime attempts to reanimate one of these objects with an electric shock. Transformations are conventional like Flimm at Bayreuth. Dragon is a headless human form. Toad seemed real.

Scene 5 Wotan and Loge's torture chamber. This was an even more scary scene, invented by the director. Alberich is strapped up with arms extended. Wotan and Loge are torturing him. Injections are given. Wotan gives an injection and then slowly cuts off Alberich's whole forearm, with the ring on, with a knife (almost surgically). (Chéreau and Friedrich). The ring is actually a sort of large forearm amulet.

Scene 6 When giants come back, descending again from on high, Fafner gets out of wheelchair when he kills Fasolt (see Little Britain). Erda has no blue light but a long plait. She is sung by a fairly large lady. Donner scene is very good. Rhinemaidens' lament is sung on a wind-up gramophone record set up by Loge. Wotan spears it in disgust. The gods ascend to a large skyscraper receding from the audience, on a window cleaners' platform. Wotan kills Loge (invented by director).

Musically generally excellent, balanced, clean, dynamic if not particularly cultured interpretation (about 2 hr 25 min). (conductor Michael Schönwandt) All singers except Froh, Erda and Mime very good, others adequate and Erda improved in Siegfried. Theatre has very good acoustics (stalls row 11 central).

Cast: Alberich - Sten Byriel - excellent, Wotan - James Johnson good, Donner - Johan Reuter (excellent), Froh - Johnny van Hal (weak), Loge - Michael Kristensen, Fasolt - Stephen Milling (excellent), Fafner - Christian Christiansen (excellent), Mime - Gert Henning Jensen (weak), Fricka - Randi Stene (very good), Freia - Anne Margrethe Dahl Erda - Susanne Renmark (weak), Woglinde - Djina Mai Mai, Wellgunde - Yiva Kihlberg, Flosshilde - Hanne Fischer Brünnhilde - Iréne Theorin (mute role in *Rheingold*, invented by director).

Die Walküre

Act 1 We are now in the 1950s, a bourgeois domestic interior, initially a restricted set. Hunding was very powerfully sung by Stephen Milling. Sieglinde was also excellent (Eva Johansson). There was a late replacement for Siegmund, and initially I was disappointed not to be hearing Poul Elming who has sung the role in Bayreuth, Geneva and many other places, but Stig Andersen, who was the designated alternate in any case, was excellent, both in singing and acting. He put in a monumental effort in the cycle, going on to sing both Siegfried's two and four days later. Plácido Domingo had also put in a Siegmund here in an earlier one-off production.

The spring night scene was done by a beautiful expansion and rotation effect, with a flowery bank, flanked by the ubiquitous bookcases, to remind us that it was Brünnhilde's family history we were watching. Sieglinde pulled the sword out all on her own. The lovers tumbled down the bank in each other's arms (and legs). The horns were wobbly at times in this exposed music but otherwise whole Act carried off with great verve.

Act 2 As is now seemingly standard, inside Valhalla Inc. Wotan's office with the window cleaners' gantry prominent. Brünnhilde (and all Walküren) have wings, although in 1950s dress (cf Stuttgart). There are tombstones marked F, S, S, H (Fasolt, or Fafner or Fricka or Freia? Siegmund, Sieglinde, Siegfried? Hunding lined up for admission to Valhalla). Wotan observes a radar screen (Stuttgart) and has a tattoo or burn mark of the ring on his forearm. He keeps Alberich's severed forearm in a bottle on his desk. In the long narration, Brünnhilde is reading her storybooks. The bookcases are there. At "Das Ende" Wotan smashes one of the S tombstones (Siegmund's no doubt).

In the fight, Nothung just breaks on its own without the spear being involved. Hunding does not die, just walks away laughing at Wotan. Wotan himself tries to help Siegmund and falls on his body at the end. Wotan improved in this Act. Fricka (Randi Stene again) excellent, as were Siegmund, Sieglinde and Hunding.

Irène Theorin looked a bit old for the young Brünnhilde, but sang really well. Apparently she sang in the Nuremberg production when exported *in toto* to Beijing recently, to great acclaim and is thought to be the next big thing, although she is not young. I believe that if this Act, the central Act in the Ring, goes well, the whole cycle will. It certainly did not flag and set up great hopes for the rest of the cycle.

Act 3 The Walküre rock was a hut on top of an alpine meteorological station (? Jungfrau). The girls were dropping in for a drink, a bit like Adelaide, slumped on kitchen chairs. The set then rotated to show gruesome mutilated bodies of soldiers in World War 2 dress. This imagery was somewhat spoiled or softened when the girls stacked them up like rag dolls and their weight seemed very light. All Walküren had wings. Some were a bit lightweight in voice, but the ensemble scenes went well. Eva Johansson brought tears to the eyes at "O hehrstes Wunder" to the redemption through love" motif and, it has to be said, just outsung Théorin in this Act. Wotan's farewell sung in the small hut. Wotan pulls Brünnhilde's wings off and covers her in them as the symbol of taking away her godliness. A real white pigeon is released by Brünnhilde. For the magic fire scene the whole set expands again and rotates and real fire, a bit like Adelaide emerges. The scene is again framed by the bookcases. Wotan (Johnson) good, but not great; Théorin very good. Orchestra excellent in Act 3. Passionate and accurate. Really let rip in the old fashioned way (eg Leinsdorf 1961 recording with Nilsson).

Walküren: Helmwig- Emma Vetter, Gerhilde- Yiva Kihlberg, Ortlinde- Charlotte Meldgaard, Waltraute- Hanne Fischer, Siegrune- Anna Rydberg (late replacement), Rossweisse- Elisabeth Jansson, Grimgerde- Elisabeth Halling, Schwertleite- Ulla Jensen.

Siegfried

Act 1 This was the most elaborate set in the whole production. Successively a 3 level scene was built up. First, Mime's 1970s kitchen (middle), second, Siegfried's student bedroom (upper), Cohn-Bendit poster bestrewn walls, stereo etc, the third, Mime's basement workshop and library (lower). Mime (now sung by Bengt-Ola Morgny, a great improvement from the earlier incumbent) gives Siegfried (Andersen) his lesson in the facts of life using the blackboard. Siegfried comes in wearing a bearskin. The Mime-Wanderer question and answer took place in the kitchen and basement and was marred by one embarrassing wrong entry of a very loud giants' motif. Mime rushed to his library to look up answers. The flickering fear of the dragon was from a TV set. The forging scene took place on all three levels with much perfectly timed rushing up and down a spiral staircase. Nice touches were Mime typing in the tapping rhythm. Andersen's great acting and tapping as well as singing. When the sword forged Siegfried smashes the TV with it and not the anvil that was also present. All singing and acting excellent, as was orchestra, apart from error noted above. This Act drew loudest applause so far.

Act 2 As is now becoming a cliché, we saw the young Hagen on stage, being instructed by Alberich. He is in the first scene and sees Siegfried kill the dragon as well. In this production he is a young man, as opposed to the boy seen in Bayreuth. This is more consistent with real time, as we know from *Die Walküre* that Alberich had made Grimhilde pregnant before Siegfried was conceived so Hagen must be at least as old as Siegfried if one takes these things literally.

Mime leads Siegfried on by consulting the Michelin Green Guide to London (? reference to the London manufacturers of the original Fafner head for 1876 Bayreuth that got lost in transit...sent to Beirut instead). Before the woodbird is heard, the real pigeon is seen again. Siegfried (Andersen) really plays the wooden instrument himself (a recorder, not cor anglais in orchestra). However, he does not play horn solo (very well played in orchestra). The dragon speaks through loud speakers initially with a Dalek-like light. Later, we see a lower level set emerge, showing Fafner at a control panel controlling a many tentacled dragon plant. As a homage to Kupfer, a rusty boiler is on stage, playing no part in the action. Siegfried kills Fafner in his chair by thrusting Nothung through the back of he chair into Fafner. Actual woodbird not seen (? or is the pigeon the woodbird, controlled by Brünnhilde rather than Wotan, as in Adelaide and elsewhere.) In this Act, Stig Andersen appeared to flag, or more probably was saving something for Act 3.

Act 3 Wanderer (Wotan) visits his old flame, Erda, in her 1930s style bedroom. She is asleep, but gets up with a dressing gown on, which later comes off to reveal a rather large lady in a nightie. There is a servant present. Susanne Resmark is better than in *Rheingold*. Siegfried confronts Wotan before a barbed wire fence with a hole in it. Wotan breaks the spear himself. Siegfried climbs through the hole. The ascent to the rock is effective and curtain does not fall Brünnhilde has her trousseau packed with her in an old suitcase. The rock with the hut rotates a lot while the pigeon (which must be the woodbird) tells Brünnhilde that Siegfried is on the way. The love duet is accompanied by rotations of the hut and running in and out of doors, but Andersen and Théorin bring it off superbly, proving that Andersen was saving himself in Act 2. The bookcases frame the front of the stage.

Götterdämmerung

Prologue The Norns scene was very clever and brought interpolated applause, rather like the Ride of the Valkyries in Adelaide. The Norns were actually seated throughout the auditorium, dressed in daggy clothes as studious Wagnerites clutching the *Walküre* program and one wearing opera glasses round her neck. First and Second were in the stalls and Third in a box. They discussed events and gradually got disgusted with the performance and walked out, showing the audience photos of the Director Holten with disapproval, bearing placards with one saying Cosima would be disgusted. Self referential in the extreme "isn't my production clever and controversial?" They finished up on stage during e transition to the dawn scene. (First Norn - Susanne Resmark good, 2nd Norn Hanne Fischer very good, 3rd Norn Anne Margrethe Dahl good).

After their night(s) of love and presumably some further few months, a heavily pregnant Brünnhilde has made her little hut much more homely, stuffing it with pot plants and other bric-a-brac. After a husbandly-wifely breakfast, she sends Siegfried on his way down the Rhine. He initially forgets to leave her the ring. She does not immediately put it on. It is a symbol of love, not power, to her.

Act 1 The Gibichungs are fairly conventional. An effete Gunther, dizzy blonde Gutrune and really nasty Hagen doing push ups. We are in Bosnia 1999 with lots of military types around. Siegfried has a mobile phone, and before he gets the drug, telephones Brünnhilde. Waltraute brings Brünnhilde a packet of photos from Valhalla. When Brünnhilde sees Siegfried/Gunther she tries to get Siegfried on her mobile. The changeover scene is done behind the hut. Hagen (Peter Klaveness), according to the dramaturg Henrik Engelbrecht, is based on the Serbian rogue, General Arcan, and was truly a vicious character. He sang well. Gunther (Guido Paevatalu) and Gutrune (Yiva Kihlberg) were adequate and good actors. Waltraute (Anette Bod) lacked true mezzo weight).

Act 2 Alberich tutors Hagen is a basement lecture room under a fluorescent tube light, using blackboard and chalk plus duster to explain background to him and audience. The scene finishes with Hagen killing his father by stabbing him with a knife (another directorial invention). Siegfried drives onto the stage in a new sports car, pulling up beside another already parked there (Hagen's). Hagen summons the Vassals after first executing some prisoners by shooting them in the back of the head, then sexually assaulting a female prisoner. The Vassals are commandos in balaclavas. The spear oath is sworn on a bayonet. The trio is sung in one corner of the stage, which is surprising, considering the possibilities offered by the state of the art stage machinery.

Act 3 The Rhinemaidens have aged 40 years. The set is the same as *Rheingold* scene 2, but it now looks like an empty swimming pool. The tank where the young man representing the gold swam is boarded up. In the hunt scene, the commandos come in with guns and beer (rather like Adelaide). Brünnhilde is on stage, and witnesses Hagen killing Siegfried by stabbing with a bayonet. She is his vision as he dies. His body stays on stage; the curtain does not drop during the funeral march. Bookcases and piles of books are seen as Brünnhilde reads Siegfried's life story as the parade of leitmotifs rolls solemnly by. Hagen kills Gunther by shooting. The dead hand of Siegfried does not rise up. Wotan's ravens are represented by two of the Walküren.

Brünnhilde sings "Ruhe du Gott" not to Siegfried, but to Wotan seated in an arm chair, after which he dies. The ring is clearly seen as Siegfried's body is picked up. The book piles are set on fire and glow slowly as the stage revolves to show the other gods on fire on the gantry in front of Valhalla. Brünnhilde does not die but has a baby, with which she emerges on stage. She has a blood stained nightie. The baby cries as the curtain falls. Théorin is excellent in the final scene, with total control and full voice. The orchestra excels itself in the final opera.

Overall, one of the best Rings I've seen. Hard to fault in any way and Wagner has always shown to be proof against almost any directorial indulgences, which in this case were not too bad and indeed interesting. Orchestra extremely willing and while not absolutely top rate, better than most and right for the acoustic. Although the pit was invisible from row 11, I spoke at interval to someone in row 4 who said he was disconcerted by the movement in and out of the pit of players. For these big operas they rotate brass and other players. It's funny, but when you listen to records and CDs the music and singing is very important, but when watching a production you make allowances. The bars and restaurants all work smoothly, if you don't mind paying about double what you do in Australia for anything. The programs, although in Danish, have lots of pictures of the production itself.

Dr Jim Leigh

THE TORONTO RING CYCLE SEPTEMBER 2006 - COLLEEN AND MICHAEL CHESTERMAN

From 12th to 17th September 2006, we attended the first cycle of *The Ring of the Nibelung*, presented in Toronto by the Canadian Opera Company in their new Opera House. The production, the first by the company and in Canada, was welcomed enthusiastically as a bold, but highly successful choice by the general director and conductor Richard Bradshaw. The acoustics of the house are excellent and the 104-person orchestra in a magnificent pit overall performed with great skill and passion, though there was a tendency both to overplay and rein back too much at some times, presumably in a search for the right balance with the singers. The production faced a major obstacle with the last minute withdrawal of British bass-baritone Pavlo Hunka from the role of Wotan. The splendid Judith Nemeth as Fricka also had to withdraw from *Valkyrie* after dental surgery. That the company performed so well was a major tribute to the commitment of all concerned.

England's Susan Bullock (who [performed] as Isolde in Perth in November) was a magnificent Brünnhilde, acting with great passion and conviction. If there is any criticism to be made, it is that in some of her top notes her voice was a bit thin and strained. The Sieglinde of Canadian soprano Adrienne Pieczonka was exceptional, with a rich voice and dramatic power; she was well matched by American tenor Clifton Fortis as Siegmund. As Siegfried, German tenor, Christian Franz, was capable, but without the thrilling power of true heldentenor. Sadly, Latvian Peteris Eglitis, as Wotan in *Valkyrie* and Siegfried, a role he had sung in the COC 2004 and 2005 productions of these, did not have sufficient vocal power to carry the roles through to the last acts. Canadians John Fanning and Joni Henson were excellent as Gunther and Gutrune, with Fanning also singing well as Rhinegold's replacement Wotan. Mats Algren's dark-voiced Hagen was very powerful. Also singing extremely well were Richard Paul Fink as Alberich, Richard Berkeley Steel as Loge, Julie Makerov as Fricka and Mary Phillips as Waltraute, Phillips Ens as Fafner and Hunding and Robert Kunzli as Mime, while the Rhinemaidens, Valkyries, Norns were all excellent and Mette Ejsing as Erda and a Norn had great power.

Each of the operas in the Ring had a different director. *Rhinegold* was the only premiere in the cycle and was directed by the designer of the whole cycle, Michael Levine. He represented the Rhine with sweeping white curtains, in front of which the Rhinemaidens cavorted in white Victorian nighties. More controversially, Alberich skulked centre stage behind a prone suit-clad man, eventually revealed as Wotan; this showed the shared motives of these two, but caused puzzlement rather than revelation. The second act revealed the gods as a Victorian industrial family, with all women in bustled black frocks. Valhalla was represented by a large architectural model of a city, going around three sides of the stage, with splendid domed buildings reminiscent of Speer's plans for Hitler. The most thrilling effect was achieved by representing the giants as shabbily dressed labourers supported on the shoulders of other builders; when their demands for payment were not met, they shattered the model into fragments. The gods were represented as already weakened. Alberich's seduction by the gold was represented by showing Fink in a full gold suit, rather like a tacky rock star. Sadly Erda's great entry was marred when she appeared from back stage resembling every other female in her high-necked black Victorian frock.

Valkyrie was having its second showing (the first in 2004) under the direction of film's Atom Egoyan. It was therefore inexcusable that Hunding's hut was in such darkness that both Wotan and Sieglinde fell on the uneven earth surface, but Egoyan had apparently been insistent on this. Nonetheless, he established an intense drama between the three singers, exposing their emotional relations in filmic close-up. Sadly, the wonderful coming of spring was scarcely bright enough to be noticeable. The Valkyries, also in black Victorian gowns, were introduced wrapping the heroes in white winding sheets. The set with mounds of these bodies in front of tumbled-down scaffolding and occasional lumps of Valhalla masonry, called to mind World War I battlefields. The interactions between the Valkyries and their distress at Brünnhilde's punishment were very powerful.

Siegfried had premiered in 2005, under the direction of film-maker Francois Girouard. As a stage director he has forged links with a mime company, whose leader appeared in Act 1 as an ever-present bear. Siegfried, wearing white pyjamas, appeared as the curtain rose seated on the stump used in Hunding's hut. Above him an abstract tangle of branches filled the whole proscenium, with lumps of Valhalla, other detritus and white pyjama-clad bodies in the branches. It was extraordinarily beautiful, apparently meant to represent Siegfried's mental universe, with the figures occasionally moving and tumbling in response to the arias. As a result, Mime's hut was a bare stage and scenes such as the forging of Nothung took place over a red spot lit hole with arms reaching upwards to represent flames – not very satisfactory. The

most powerful use of the supernumerary mimers was to depict Fafner as a stage high human pyramid and his death by the collapse of their bodies. The least satisfactory used the mimers as the fire surrounding the rock, with red spotlights on their white pyjamas, but their slow departure one by one drained attention from the thrilling last duet.

In *Götterdämmerung* we entered a modern sterile company headquarters, with electric cords lashing across the ceiling, dropping down to be wound by the Norns. Its director, Tim Albery, is a Ring veteran and his interpretation was crisp and cool – with all the major scenes powerfully presented, strong directing of the singers and effective use of a burning red in a largely monochrome office setting. Given this, the use of a metal bed as the rock, Siegfried's bier and the funeral pyre seemed somewhat skimpy and the great climax was a rather subdued collapse of a couple of lighting rigs. But by that time the audience was so swept away by the playing, the wonderful singing of Bullock in the finale and their emotion at the huge achievement of the company, celebrating possession of its own purpose-built house after a 20 year wait, and a Ring that had been first planned 40 years before, that the applause and celebration carried on for over an hour in the glittering foyers. Truly an impressive achievement.

The COC's new home, the Four Seasons Performing Arts Centre, takes up a block in Toronto's centre, bordering the banking district and with major hotel chains as its neighbours. Its square construction and the fact that it was not used to revitalize Toronto's declining harbour foreshore received architectural and press criticism. But its position, facing a major cross city road, with a five storey glass wall showing the foyers with flooding lights, linked by transparent stairs with the audience circulating, presents an exciting glow to passers-by. The house holds 2000, half on the ground floor, where there is not enough rake for perfect sightlines from the back. Almost 500 are on the top (5th) level, where views are reportedly a little vertiginous and some subscribers criticised the side seats on the other levels, as they curve round close to the stage with views of the stage and surtitles hampered.

The three cycles were marked by some stimulating conferences. The North American music critics' conference took place during Cycle 1; the company organised presentations by visiting experts - we heard the great critic and translator Andrew Porter and Dorothea Glatt, Wolfgang Wagner's long-time associate and the Toronto Wagner Society organised lunches with celebrity speakers and after show drinks and discussion at the Hilton. Most impressively, the Society also organised three seminars on the Saturdays in conjunction with Music and Arts faculties of the University of Toronto. We attended the first of these Opera Exchanges, along with over 200 others, for an impressive set of papers on Putting the Ring on Stage. A stand-out speaker was London's Barry Millington. He is the co-editor with Stewart Spencer of a forthcoming Wagner Journal, which he is keen to promote to international Wagner societies (www.thewagnerjournal.co.uk). The Canadian Broadcasting Commission played the first cycle live on its classic station adding to the sense of the national significance of the production.

Toronto itself is a great city in which to spend a week. The Toronto International Film Festival was on during the first cycle and glimpses of stars were possible. There are some marvellous galleries and museums, though the major two resemble Valhalla in destruction with Frank Gehry and Daniel Libeskind adding huge extensions to their 19th century splendour. Nearby Niagara Falls and the Stratford Theatre Festival are attractions and there are great restaurants for before and after show meals. The production will be played in another 4 or 5 years and is a great addition to the international spectacles.

Colleen and Michael Chesterman

LA OPERA GETS \$6 MILLION TO STAGE 'RING'

In an article from The Associated Press, Solvej Schou (6 September 2006) reports that "thanks to a \$6 million donation from philanthropists Eli and Edythe Broad" the LA Opera will be able to mount a production of the Ring. Schou also reports: "Domingo confirmed that he hopes to take one of the roles in the four-opera masterpiece that has been hailed as one of the greatest theatrical works ever created. 'I hope to sing the role of Siegmund, if I am still singing then,' the 65-year-old tenor said with a smile." In a 3 October 2006 article, *Los Angeles Opera Announces Details for Upcoming Ring Cycle*, Vivien Schweitzer provides more details of the production, including the estimate of the cost: approximately \$32 million. In the article, the Music Director, James Conlon, commented: "Though Wagner has long been a staple of orchestral repertory and there have been occasional performances of Wagner operas in LA, there has never been a Wagner tradition similar to that in Europe in general and Germany specifically. I want to see LA Opera become a hub of Wagnerian activity in the coming years... Los Angeles, as one of the cultural capitals of the world, needs to have a giant Wagnerian magnet just as do New York, London, Paris and Vienna." [It's a sentiment that I'm sure many Australian Wagnerians share that one of our capitals and one or more of our governments and corporate sponsors would take up this challenge for Australia! Editor]

Schweitzer notes that, "Between 2001 and 2010, LA Opera will have presented all of the major Wagner operas, including (in addition to the *Ring*) *Lohengrin* in 2001, a revival of *Der fliegende Holländer* in 2003, *Parsifal* in 2005, and upcoming productions (all conducted by Conlon) of *Tannhäuser*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and *Tristan und Isolde*." This is a record that many Wagnerians expect that Opera Australia should emulate.

According to Schweitzer, the "casting for the Los Angeles *Ring* includes soprano Linda Watson as Brünnhilde, tenor John Treleaven as Siegfried, bass Vitalij Kowaljow as Wotan, soprano Anja Kampe as Sieglinde, mezzo-soprano

Michelle DeYoung as Fricka, bass Eric Halfvarson as Fafner/Hunding/Hagen, baritone Gordon Hawkins as Alberich, tenor Graham Clark as Mime, mezzo-soprano Jill Grove as Erda, tenor Arnold Bezuyen as Loge, soprano Ellie Dehn as Freia, bass Morris D. Robinson as Fasolt and bass-baritone Alan Held as Gunther.” The full article can be read at <http://www.playbillarts.com/news/article/5342.html>. [Editor]

THE MYSTERIOUS WAGNER ARCHIVE IN HITLER'S BAYREUTH RESIDENCE

In a fascinating interview by Manuela Hoelterhoff with the director of The Richard Wagner National Archive in Bayreuth, Sven Friedrich provides an interesting insight into a collection of material that is of great interest to Wagnerians. If you have visited Bayreuth, you will have seen the building to the left of Wahnfried that is more in/famous as the sometime residence of Adolf Hitler when he was in town.

In response to Hoelterhoff's query as to what the Archive contains, Friedrich replied: We have thousands of hand-written documents by Wagner and his family. The most important are Wagner's letters. He wrote, during his lifetime, around 10,000 letters, and 3,000 originals are here. Then we have his aesthetic and theoretical writings, his essays, his prose works, his libretti. And, at the very top, the original hand-written scores of his works are kept here.

Hoelterhoff: Do you have a favorite thing in the archives? Friedrich: The scores. To turn the original handwritten pages is a special feeling. Hoelterhoff: Do they require special care? Friedrich: All these valuable documents are kept in a safe in the basement in Wahnfried, in a bank safe with a big armored door. Imagine, for example, the score of “Tristan” alone is valued at about 8 million euros (\$10.2 million).”

Hoelterhoff: Do stage directors tend to come and use the archives when they are preparing a production? Friedrich: Normally not. They should, probably. I have the impression that many of the stage directors really don't want to come into the stuff deeply. They have their impression, they read the work, they have an idea. [A very perceptive assessment of the products of many Directors' Konzept approaches to Wagner – Editor.]

Friedrich also provides an interesting response to a conundrum that many Wagnerians have wondered about – what happened to the original scores of Wagner's operas that were in Hitler's possession? Hoelterhoff: In 1939, German industrialists gave Hitler on his 50th birthday several valuable Wagner scores which have never been seen again. Did they burn with him? Friedrich: No. I don't even think these scores were ever in Berlin. They were not in the Führerbunker. This is a legend. In my opinion, these scores were in the Berghof in Berchtesgaden. Hoelterhoff: But his villa there was also destroyed. Friedrich: It was bombed. But some things were evacuated before, to Meran. And probably the scores are in the U.S. or Italy. Not Russia. We know how the bunker looked and that the rooms were very small. Hitler had, in his private room, a small safe. The “Rienzi” score is in four big folio volumes that wouldn't have ever fitted into this safe.

(Manuela Hoelterhoff is executive editor of Muse, the arts division of Bloomberg News. The opinions expressed are her own.) www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601088&sid=apM5OhFrX7Zo&refer=home. [Editor]

IMAGE AND IDEA – TRISTAN AND THE UPANISHADS

‘Say, what wondrous dreams hold my soul captive...’ Mathilde Wesendonck, *Träume*, 1857.

‘In the evening...finished the Upanishads. Found Schopenhauer's dream theory in it.’ Cosima Wagner, 16 January 1874

Some of the most beautiful and poetic imagery in *Tristan und Isolde* is drawn from the *Upanishads* of the Hindus. Schopenhauer was extravagant in his praise of these mystical treatises written in Sanskrit between 800 and 400 BC, sometimes called the ‘Himalayas of the Soul’. For most of his life, he read a few pages of the *Upanishads* in translation each night before going to sleep, and of them he wrote: ‘It is the most profitable and sublime reading that is possible in the world; it has been the consolation of my life and will be that of my death.’ It is hardly surprising that Wagner too came under the spell of these ancient writings.

Schopenhauer praised them especially for their recognition (expressed poetically) that our senses are only able to grasp a representation of the world, and that this representation stands like a veil between the subject and the hidden world of timeless reality – Tristan's wondrous realm of night. This ‘veil’ the Hindus called *Maya*. Schopenhauer noted: ‘The ancient wisdom of the Indian philosophers declares. “It is *Maya*, the veil of deception, which covers the eyes of mortals, and makes them see a world of which one cannot say either that it is, or that it is not: for it is like a dream; it is like the sunshine on the sand which from afar the traveller mistakes for water, or the piece of rope cast to the ground, which he mistakes for a snake.” But what all these thinkers mean, and what they are talking about, is nothing more than what we, too, at this moment are considering – the world as representation subordinated to the principle of sufficient reason.’

The love-potion opens the eyes of the lovers to a truer insight, something that the mythologist Joseph Campbell described in these terms: ‘...as [Tristan and Isolde] have already renounced psychologically both love as lust and the fear of death, when they drink, and live, and again look upon each other, the veil of *Maya* has fallen.’

In a revealing personal observation to Jakob Sulzer in 1855, Wagner too, spoke of the veil of Maya as it fell over his own life and work, casting him, he said, into the world of deception 'where I then allow myself to become entangled, often to the point of utter distraction.'

When Tristan and Isolde sing: 'then I myself am the world', they are drawing on one of Schopenhauer's favourite passages in the *Upanishads*: 'I am all these creatures, and besides me there is no other being', illustrating how someone contemplating nature necessarily draws nature into himself, transcending individuality and joining with the sublime. This image also finds an echo in the Good Friday scene in *Parsifal*, when Gurnemanz draws even the humblest things in nature - the grasses and flowers of the meadow - into a greater reality.

When the lovers sing: 'heart to heart, mouth to mouth, bound together in one breath', the *Upanishads* are there again. The Sanskrit word *âtman* - 'breath' or 'soul' - is often used in conjunction with truth, infinity and the supreme deity - something beyond comprehension. *Âtman* is related etymologically to the German word for breath, *Atem*, and we find the most vivid expression of this connection in Isolde's final vision, in which the once-living Tristan enters into the 'immensity of the world's breath'. Indeed, a passage in the *Katha Upanishad* that reads: 'The *Âtman* is beyond sound and form, without touch and taste and perfume' clearly inspired other lines of the *Liebestod*:

*'How they swell and
clamour around me,
shall I breathe them,
shall I hear them?
Shall I taste them,
dive beneath them?
Breathe my last
in sweet perfume?'*

When they seek to merge their personalities ('Tristan you, I Isolde, no longer Tristan!' and so on) they are echoing yet another verse of the *Upanishads*: 'As the flowing rivers disappear in the sea, discarding their name and their form, thus the illuminated one, freed from name and form, enters the divine spirit, who is greater than the great.'

In *Tristan und Isolde* we have the story of a love whose driving force is a yearning for union beyond the constraints of time, the fluctuations of physical passion and even separate existences; an opportunity to be 'one forever' rather than 'you' and 'I', 'Tristan' and 'Isolde'. The little word 'and' which Isolde values because it seems to *join* the lovers, is in fact keeping them apart. In the realm of night there is no separate existence - no need for 'and' - only the ultimate unity of being. Tristan gives her a little lesson in Schopenhaurian philosophy when he says: 'So let us die undivided, forever one, without end, never waking, never fearing, embraced namelessly in love, given entirely to each other, living only in our love!' This is perfect love: the extinction of selfishness, the disappearance of self - total identification with each other.

'Plurality' said Schopenhauer, 'is merely illusory, and in all the individuals of this world there is made manifest only one, single, truly existent Being, present and ever the same in all...' I have no doubt that, ultimately, this was Wagner's credo, and that *Parsifal* was his manifesto. *Tristan* was the first great flowering of this belief, a belief so compelling that it provided the intellectual justification for interrupting the Nibelung project.

It is fascinating to see how Wagner was thinking his way towards a Schopenhauerian position long before he encountered the philosopher's writings, and how he was already immersed in Tristonian concepts years before jotting down his first sketch for the work in 1854. His philosophical position seems to have been entirely at one with the way in which he understood and composed music - indeed, it might be said to have grown out of his musical sensibilities. In his essay *The Artwork of the Future* written soon after fleeing Dresden, he wrote: 'In the kingdom of Harmony there is therefore no beginning and no end; just as the objectless and self-devouring fervour of the soul, all ignorant of its source, is nothing but longing, yearning, tossing, pining and therefore everlasting falling back upon itself.' Here he is describing a process of musical composition as much as a philosophical idea, and he identified this musical process long before he encountered the philosophy.

In *A Communication to my Friends* he wrote: 'What, in the end, could this love-yearning - the noblest thing my heart could feel - what could it be than a longing for release from the present, for absorption into an element of endless love, a love denied to earth and reachable through the gates of death alone?' Again, the language is poetic and philosophical but it is also a way of describing the harmonic processes characteristic of Wagner's music; and this was written in 1851 when *Tristan* was still years into the future.

Peter Bassett

THE RAVEN'S REPORTING, COMPILED BY CAMRON DYER

There is a regularly updated comprehensive list on the Society's Website <http://www.wagner-nsw.org.au> that takes the list to 2013 – the bicentenary of Wagner's birth!

December 2006

Berlin Deutsche Oper
Tannhäuser - December 13, 17.
Staatsoper
Tristan und Isolde - December 3.

Cardiff Mariinsky Theatre at the Wales
Millennium Centre
The Ring - Nov 30, December 1, 2, 3.
Tristan und Isolde - December 29.

Dresden *Tristan und Isolde* - December 17, 23, 30.

Essen *Das Rheingold* – December 9, 29.

Freiburg *Meistersinger* 10, 14, 17, 20, 23, 28, 31

Geneva *Das Rheingold* – December 21.

Halle *Parsifal* [Ballet] - 10, 12, 15, 20, 2006

Hamburg *Holländer* – December 1, 22.

Hanover *The Ring* - December 1, 3, 9, 16.

Karlsruhe *Lohengrin* - December 2, 22.

Leipzig *Lohengrin* – December 26.

Lübeck *Tannhäuser* – December 21.

Magdeburg *The Ring* - Dec 27, 30, 2006, Jan 3, 7.
Siegfried – December 3.
Wagner Gala Ben Heppner – Dec 10.

Mannheim *Holländer* - December 18, 21, 23.

Munich *Tannhäuser* – December 1.

Pforzheim *Das Rheingold* - December 10.

Saarbrücken *Das Rheingold* - December 16.

Weimar

January 2007

Copenhagen *Lohengrin* - January 14, 18, 21, 24.

Budapest *The Ring* - January 5, 7, 11, 14.

Detmold *Die Walküre* – January 13.

Dortmund *Siegfried* – January 28.

Dresden *Tristan und Isolde* - January 2, 5.

Essen *Tristan und Isolde* - January 6.

Frankfurt *Tannhäuser* - January 28.

Freiburg *Das Rheingold* – January 13, 28.

Halle *Das Rheingold* – January 20.

Hamburg *Tannhäuser* - January 21, 28.
Parsifal [Ballet] - January 4, 6, 10.

Hanover *Tannhäuser* - January 17, 20, 27.

Karlsruhe *Das Rheingold* – January 10.
Götterdämmerung – January 14.

Lübeck *Lohengrin* – January 28.

Magdeburg *Tannhäuser* – January 19.

Mannheim *The Ring* – December 27, 30, Jan 3, 7.

Milan *Lohengrin* – 17, 20, 23, 25, 28, 30, 31.

Pforzheim *Tannhäuser* – January 5, 21.

Vienna Staatsoper
Tristan und Isolde - Jan 10, 14, 19.
Holländer – January 25.

Vilnius *Das Rheingold* - January 20, 2006.

Weimar

February 2007

Aachen *Lohengrin* – February 14, 25.

Amsterdam *Tannhäuser* 2, 5, 8, 11, 16, 19, 22, 25.

Antwerp *Die Walküre* - Feb 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 18.

Berlin Deutsche Oper
Ring - Feb 9, 10, 16, 18; 20, 21, 23, 25.
Staatsoper
Parsifal - February 8, 11.

Copenhagen *Lohengrin* - February 1, 4, 7, 23.

Dallas *Lohengrin* - February 15, 18, 21, 24.

Duisburg *Holländer* – February 11, 21, 24.

Essen *Holländer* - February 15, 18, 25.

Frankfurt *Tannhäuser* - Feb 1, 4, 8, 17, 22, 25.

Freiburg *Das Rheingold* – February 23.

Ghent *Die Walküre* - February 25, 28.

Hamburg *Parsifal* - February 1, 4.

Karlsruhe *Die Walküre* – February 11.
Siegfried – February 18.
Tristan und Isolde – 3 [no other dates].
Tristan und Isolde – 11 [no other dates].

Kassel

Koblenz

Lisbon *Die Walküre* – February 24, 26, 28.

Los Angeles *Tannhäuser* - February 24, 28.

Magdeburg *Tannhäuser* – February 3.

Meiningen *Holländer* – February 9, 11, 17, 24.

Milan *Lohengrin* – February 4.

Münster *Tannhäuser* - Feb 2. [no other dates].

Nuremberg *Holländer* – February 3, 10, 18.

Rouen *Holländer* – February 4, 6.

Strasbourg *Das Rheingold* - Feb 14, 18, 24, 27.
New National Theatre
Holländer – February 25.

Tokyo

March 2007

Aachen *Lohengrin* – March 2, 11, 25, 30.

Berlin Staatsoper
Parsifal - March 18, 25, 29.
The Ring - March 10, 10, 11, 11 [in 2 days]; 14, 15, 16, 18.

Cologne

Copenhagen *Lohengrin* - March 13, 16.

Darmstadt *Holländer* – March 31.

Dijon *Holländer* – March 15, 17, 20.

Dortmund *Siegfried* – March 18.

Duisburg *Holländer* – March 18.

Erfurt *Tannhäuser* – March 10, 14, 25, 30.

Essen *Holländer* - March 3, 14.

Frankfurt *Tannhäuser* - March 3.

Freiburg *Das Rheingold* – March 9, 15.

Ghent *Die Walküre* - March 4, 7, 10.

Graz *Holländer* - March 18, 21, 24, 28, 30.

Kiel *Tannhäuser* – March 11, 24.

Lisbon *Die Walküre* – March 3, 5, 8, 10.

Los Angeles *Tannhäuser* - March 3, 8, 11, 15, 18.

Magdeburg *Tannhäuser* – March 24.

Meiningen *Holländer* – March 8, 17, 25.

Mulhouse *Das Rheingold* - March 9, 11.

New York The Met
Die Meistersinger - March 1, 5, 10, 13.
Holländer – March 4, 11, 22.

Nuremberg *Holländer* - March 24, 27, 29, 31.

Portland *Die Walküre* - Mar 2 [no other dates].

Riga

Salzburg Easter Festival
Das Rheingold - March 31.

Stockholm *Das Rheingold* – March 24, 27, 30.

Strasbourg *Das Rheingold* - March 1.

Tokyo New National Theatre
Holländer – March 1, 4, 7, 10.

Tokyo Opera Nomori - Bunka Kaikan Hall

Toulouse *Tannhäuser* - March 15, 18, 21.
 Vilnius *Tristan und Isolde* - 8, 11, 14, 18, 21.
 Washington, DC *Die Walküre* - 10, 14, 16, 22, 24.
 Zurich *Die Walküre* - March 24, 28.
 Zurich *Parsifal* - March 29, 31.

April 2007
 Aachen *Lohengrin* - 5, 9, 15, 22, 29.
 Barcelona *Holländer* - April 4, 10, 13, 16, 17, 19, 21, 22, 24, 25.
 Berlin Deutsche Oper
Tristan und Isolde - April 7, 11, 15.
Parsifal - April 6, 9.
 Chemnitz *Lohengrin* - April 14.
 Copenhagen *Die Meistersinger* - April 1, 2, 3.
 Darmstadt *Holländer* - April 7.
 Detmold *Die Walküre* - April 6.
 Dortmund *The Ring* - April 6, 8, 13, 15.
 Eisenach *Tannhäuser* - April 8, 22, 27.
 Erfurt *Tannhäuser* - April 22, 28.
 Essen *Tristan und Isolde* - April 6.
 Gothenburg *Parsifal* - April 6, 15, 22, 29.
 Graz *Holländer* - April 1, 4, 12, 14, 18, 21.
 Hamburg *Tannhäuser* - April 28.
 Kiel *Tannhäuser* - April 7.
 Leipzig Gewandhaus
Wagner Gala - April 28, 29.
Tannhäuser - April 8.
 Mannheim *Parsifal* - April 6.
 Meiningen *Holländer* - April 5, 26.
 Munich *Parsifal* - April 1, 5, 8.
 Nuremberg *Holländer* - April 6, 16.
 Pforzheim *Tannhäuser* - April 3.
 Rostock *Holländer* - April 28 [no other dates].
 Salzburg Easter Festival
Das Rheingold - April 9.
Tristan und Isolde - 11, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 22, 24.
 Valencia *Das Rheingold* - April 28.
Die Walküre - April 30.
 Vienna Staatsoper
Parsifal - April 5, 8, 11.
Holländer - April 29, 2007
 Washington, DC *Die Walküre* - April 1, 5, 9, 14, 17.
 Weimar *Die Walküre* - April 15 [no other dates].
 Zurich *Parsifal* - April 5, 12, 15.

May 2007
 Aachen *Lohengrin* - May 19.
 Bergen *Die Walküre* - May 24.
 Bremen *Tristan und Isolde* - May 27,.
 Budapest *Tannhäuser* - May 10, 13, 15, 17.
 Chemnitz *Lohengrin* - May 6, 15.
The Ring - May 12, 13, 17, 20.
 Darmstadt *Holländer* - May 4.
 Detmold *Die Walküre* - May 12, 16.
 Dortmund *Siegfried* - May 18.
Götterdämmerung - May 20.
 Dresden *Tannhäuser* - May 20, 28.
 Eisenach *Tannhäuser* - May 18, 26.
 Erfurt *Tannhäuser* - May 13, 19.
 Gothenburg *Parsifal* - May 6, 12, 20, 27.
 Hamburg *Tannhäuser* - May 1, 6.
Holländer - May 15, 20, 24.
 Kiel *Tannhäuser* - May 4, 17.

Mannheim *The Ring* - May 13, 17, 20, 27.
 Marseille *Die Walküre* - May 16, 20, 23, 25.
 Meiningen *Holländer* - May 13, 28.
 Munich *Holländer* - May 7, 11
 Neustrelitz *Holländer* - May 19 [no other dates].
 Paris Opera Bastille
Lohengrin - May 15, 19, 23, 26.
Das Rheingold - May 3, 7, 12.
Die Walküre - May 5, 10, 14.
 Valencia Staatsoper
Holländer - May 2, 6, 10, 14.
 Vienna *Holländer* - May 17, 20, 22.

June 2007
 Aachen *Lohengrin* - June 2.
 Aix-en-Provence *Die Walküre* - June 29.
 Berlin Staatsoper
Parsifal - June 24, 29.
Tristan und Isolde - June 3, 10, 15,
 24. Darmstadt *Holländer* - June 6, 16.
 Dresden *Holländer* - June 5, 10, 20, 23.
 Eisenach *Tannhäuser* - June 23.
 Essen *Tristan und Isolde* - June 3, 10, 17.
 Florence *Das Rheingold* - June 14, 19, 23, 27.
Die Walküre - June 16, 21, 25, 29.
Tannhäuser - June 15, 20, 24, 28.
 Frankfurt *Tannhäuser* - June 10, 13, 21.
 Hagen *Tristan und Isolde* - June 3, 17, 24.
 Hamburg *Holländer* - June 7.
 Innsbruck *Holländer* - June 23, 27, 30.
 Kiel *Tannhäuser* - June 23, 30.
 Mannheim *Parsifal* - June 3.
 Meiningen *Holländer* - June 7, 27.
 Nuremberg *The Ring* - June 23, July 1, 8, 15, 2007
 Paris Opera Bastille
Lohengrin - June 2, 5, 8, 11.
Siegfried - June 14, 17, 20, 23, 26.
 Vienna Staatsoper
Lohengrin - June 20, 23, 27.

July 2007
 Aix-en-Provence *Die Walküre* - July 2, 5, 8.
 Bangkok *Die Walküre* July 24, 27
 Bayreuth *Die Meistersinger* - July 25.
Tannhäuser - July 26.
The Ring - July 27, 28, 30, August 1.
 Bremen *Tristan und Isolde* - July 1, 8.
 Erl *The Ring* - July 6, 7, 8/10, 11; 14, 15, 16/18, 19; 22, 23, 24/26, 27.
Tristan und Isolde - July 9, 17, 25.
Parsifal - July 12, 20, 28.
 Frankfurt *Tannhäuser* - July 1.
 Hamburg *Parsifal* [Ballet] - July 12.
 Meiningen *Holländer* - July 8.
 Munich *Parsifal* - July 8.
Holländer - July 26, 29.
Die Meistersinger - July 31.
 New York The Mariinsky Theatre at The Met
The Ring 13, 14, 20, 21; 16, 17, 18, 19.
 Nuremberg *The Ring* - June 23, July 1, 8, 15; 17, 21, 25, 29.
 Santiago *Tristan und Isolde* - July 21, 24, 27, 30.

August 2007

Bayreuth *Meistersinger* – 4, 8, 16, 19, 28.
Tannhäuser – August 3, 7, 15, 18, 27.
Die Walküre – August 5.
The Ring –9, 10, 12, 14; 20, 21, 23, 25.
Parsifal – August 2, 6, 13, 22, 26.

September 2007

Dresden *Lohengrin* – September 23, 30.
Linz *Götterdämmerung* – Sept 23 [concert].
Munich *Holländer* – September 30.
Stockholm *Götterdämmerung* 15 [no other dates].

October 2007

Dresden *Die Meistersinger* – 14, 17, 20, 24, 27.
London The Royal Opera
The Ring - 3 cycles - October 2, 4, 7,
9; 17, 19, 21, 24;

October 26, 28, 31, November 2.

Munich *Holländer* – October 5, 9.
Tokyo *Tristan und Isolde* – Oct 11, 14, 17.
Yokohama *Tristan und Isolde* – October 8.

November 2007

London The Royal Opera
The Ring - 3 cycles – Oct 26, 28, 31,
November 2, 2007.
Munich *Tristan und Isolde* - November 11, 18.

December 2007

London The Royal Opera
Parsifal – December [no actual dates].
Milan *Tristan und Isolde* - December 7, 11,
16, 20, 23, 28.
Paris Bastille
Tannhäuser – 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 24,
27, 30.
Vienna Staatsoper - New Ring Cycle begins
Die Walküre - 2, 2007 [no other dates].

January 2008

Los Angeles *Tristan und Isolde* – 12, 20, 26, 30.
San Diego *Tannhäuser* – January 26, 29.
Bangkok *Siegfried* [no actual dates].

February 2008

Los Angeles *Tristan und Isolde* – February 3, 8.
San Diego *Tannhäuser* – February 1, 3.

March 2008

Cologne *Tannhäuser* – March 15, 18, 28.
SalzburgEaster Festival
Die Walküre - March 15, 24.

April 2008

Cologne *Tannhäuser* – April 4, 6, 18.
Riga *Siegfried* - April 25 [no other dates].
Vienna Staatsoper
Siegfried - April 27 [no other dates].

May 2008

Bergen *Siegfried* - May 22.
Cologne *Tannhäuser* – May 4, 11, 16.

June 2008

Aix-en-Provence *Siegfried* - June 28.

July 2008

Aix-en-Provence

Siegfried - July 1, 4, 7.
Tannhäuser – July 28, 31.
Die Meistersinger - July 31.

August 2008

Baden-Baden *Tannhäuser* – August 3, 6.

December 2008

Vienna Staatsoper
Götterdämmerung - 8 [no other dates].

March 2009

New York The Met
The Ring - [no actual dates].
Bangkok *The Ring* - [no actual dates].

April 2009

New York The Met
The Ring - [no actual dates].
Riga *Götterdämmerung* 24 [no other dates].
SalzburgEaster Festival
Siegfried - April 4, 13.

May 2009

Bergen *Götterdämmerung* - May 21.
Vienna Staatsoper
Das Rheingold - May 2.
The Ring - May 5, 6, 8, 10 [2 other
cycles but no dates].

June 2009

Vienna Staatsoper
The Ring - 3 cycles [no June dates].

July 2009

Aix-en-Provence
Götterdämmerung - July 3, 6, 9, 12.

August 2009

Seattle *The Ring* - 3 cycles [no actual dates].

March 2010

SalzburgEaster Festival
Götterdämmerung - March 27.

April 2010

Berlin Staatsoper Fesstage
Siegfried [no actual dates].
Götterdämmerung [no actual dates].
SalzburgEaster Festival
Götterdämmerung - April 5.

Bangkok *The Ring* [no actual dates].

Season 2010/11

Berlin Staatsoper
The Ring [no actual dates].
Milan *The Ring* [no actual dates].
New York The Met
The Ring - New production begins

Season 2011/12

New York The Met
The Ring - 3 cycles [no actual dates].

August 2013

Seattle *The Ring* - 3 cycles [no actual dates].

Peter Nicholson website with Wagner related articles and comment

Members may remember our Member, Peter Nicholson, delivering an inspiring talk to the Society a number of years ago on the subject of Wagner's genius, *Orpheus Ascending*. Peter has now become a regular contributor to a stimulating and wide-ranging blog called 3 Quarks Daily at <http://3quarksdaily.blogs.com/3quarksdaily>. His latest contribution is on the Ern Malley hoax. Peter tells me that he has received considerable positive feedback to his articles. You can find a list at Peter's own website <http://peternicholson.byteserve.com.au/links.html>.

Annual Membership Renewal for 2007			
1. Please provide your name, address and membership number if your Newsletter address label does not appear on the back of this page			
Name		
Address		
	City.....	State.....	Post Code.....
Membership Number.		
2. Please renew my/our membership from 1 January to 31 December 2007 on the following basis (please tick one)			
	Single member \$50 (single pensioner member \$30)	\$ _____	
	Shared members \$75 (shared pensioner members \$50)		
	Students \$20 (include a copy of your current ID Card)		
3. I/We wish to donate the following amount to the Society. (Donations of \$2 or more are tax-deductible, and receipts will be issued. All donations are acknowledged in our Newsletter.)			
			\$ _____
4. Total - Please post your form to the address below, along with a cheque or money order made payable to The Wagner Society:			
The Treasurer The Wagner Society in NSW Inc GPO Box 4574 Sydney NSW 2001			
<i>Or post your form and make an electronic payment to:</i> Westpac Banking Corporation, Paddington NSW Branch Account Name: The Wagner Society BSB: 032040 Account Number: 911323			
\$ _____			
Please tick one:	<input type="checkbox"/> Cheque enclosed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Electronic payment made
5. Signatures			
.....		
Signature		Signature	
...../...../200....		
Date renewed		Name in BLOCK LETTERS	
		Name in BLOCK LETTERS	

Bangkok Walküre in July 2007

As a follow up to the article in the June 2006 (No. 104) newsletter about the performance of *Das Rheingold* in Bangkok, Peter Bassett, who provided a review of the production, has advised us that he is putting together a group for the Bangkok Walküre in July 2007 and thought that this might be of interest to Society members. You can find more information on Peter's website: www.peterbassett.com.au or If the idea of a four-day/three-night tour to Bangkok (25 – 28 July) for *Die Walküre* appeals, contact Vicki Mitchell at Renaissance Tours on 1300 727 095 or email her at vickimitchell@renaissancetours.com.au. The Editor would be pleased to receive reviews of the production from anyone who attends!

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

(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)