

No. 109, September 2007

A letter to Members

Dear Members

Welcome to our third Newsletter for 2007. Those lucky members who have journeyed to the European summer festivals are returning home, like the Pilgrims from Rome in *Tannhäuser*, with tales of the lowlights and highlights of the performances they saw, and Sydney is once again rousing itself from the depths of another winter.

Functions

On Sunday 21 July I gave a talk on *Tannhäuser*, touching on the role of Wolfram as the glue who binds the two legends which are Wagner's sources for his story. If space permits, some of my notes and great chunks from *Mein Leben* will appear elsewhere in this issue, and I hope they will give some interesting background for the *Tannhäuser* performances in Sydney later this year.

Next Sunday, 2 September, Professor Heath Lees will give a talk on Wagner and Mallarmé. Professor Lees has embarked on a tour of Australian Wagner Societies, giving talks in conjunction with the publication of his new book on this subject, and more details are included elsewhere in this Issue. Sydney is Professor Lees' last stop, and he will escape back to the relative calm of New Zealand just as the APEC curtain descends on our city. Our September meeting is earlier than usual to tie in with Professor Lees' travel plans.

On Sunday 21 October members who attended the 2007 Bayreuth Festival will report back on their experience.

On Sunday 11 November, again earlier than usual, Antony Ernst will give a talk on *Tristan*, the only opera on which he hasn't spoken to our Society. Antony is currently Artistic Administrator for the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra, and is coming to Sydney to give a talk the following day to the Northside Opera Study Group, and we are delighted that he has been able to take the time to talk to us.

On Sunday December 9, we will end 2007 with our traditional Christmas Party. Please remember to bring a plate. At this stage we're still hunting for a suitable DVD to show before the party. Last year's was a documentary on Waltraut Meier, which was more serious than some previous offerings, but was very well received, and this year we're open to suggestions of a serious or frivolous nature.

Engelbert Humperdinck met Wagner in Naples, and was invited to go to Bayreuth where during 1880-81 he assisted in the first production of *Parsifal*, and was repetiteur at every Bayreuth festival until 1894. To Wagner's amusement he won the Meyerbeer Prize in 1881. According to an on-line biography, in 1914 Humperdinck applied for the post of Director of the New South Wales Conservatorium of Music, but with the outbreak of the Great War such an appointment became unthinkable, and the position went instead to one of Hercule Poirot's countrymen.

This potted biography provides the background for a piano (four hands) arrangement by Engelbert Humperdinck of *Parsifal*, with narration in German and English, which was performed by Simone Young and Alexander Soddy (her assistant at the Hamburg State Opera) on 12 August at Villa Music in Bellawongarah, Kangaroo Valley. Although we hoped to organise transport so that a tour party of members could attend, this proved to be a far more complex undertaking than originally expected, and the tour did not eventuate.

On 20 August, Jessica Pratt, who was back in Sydney for her sister's wedding, gave a concert with friends at Trinity Grammar School. This included her father singing "*Nessun Dorma*", so that we could see where her talent came from. Jess is singing at the Vienna State Opera in January next year.

Newsletter Highlights

- P. ? Katharina Wagner - New Bayreuth Chief?
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FOR YOUR DIARY

2007		
<i>Tannhäuser</i>	Opera Australia, Sydney NSW. Revival of Elke Neidhardt's production - NOT TOO LATE TO BOOK	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	EVENT	TIME and LOCATION
September 2	Professor Heath Lees: Wagner and Mallarmé: Music as Poetry	2 PM Goethe Institut
October 21	Bayreuth attendees return like the pilgrims from Rom, to tell us of the second year of the Ring and the new production of <i>Meistersinger</i> by Katharina Wagner	2 PM Goethe Institut
November 11	Antony Ernst will talk on <i>Tristan und Isolde</i>	2 PM Goethe Institut
December 9	End of Year Function - please bring a plate.	2 PM Goethe Institut
Goethe-Institut address 90 Ocean Street Woollahra (corner of Jersey Road)		

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A Letter to Members (cont.)

Tannhäuser

In my last President's Report, I said that the Opera Australia website showed both Glenn Winslade and in the role of *Tannhäuser*, with Glenn Winslade's entry marked "Dates TBA". Despite the statement that "two exciting talents" were sharing the title role, "Australian Glenn Winslade and, making his Australian debut, Richard Berkeley-Steele", it now appears that "TBA" meant "To Be Axed", because Glenn Winslade's name no longer appears on the cast list for any of the performances. Instead, the *Tannhäuser* for all performances is currently listed as , who sang the role on 8 and 10 August at the St Endellion summer festival in Cornwall, under the baton of the festival's musical director, CBE.

The website now shows that the role of Wolfram von Eschinbach (*sic*) will be sung by Jonathan Summers to 27 October, and thereafter (on 30 October and 2 November?) by Warwick Fyfe. Previously, the website showed that the role would be sung by Warwick at all performances. Those who like me have looked forward to hearing Warwick in this role will need to change their performance bookings quickly. I also said in my last President's Report that this year I was hoping that all the drama would be on-stage. It would appear from the cast changes on the website that, as in 1998, this won't be the case.

Warwick Fyfe is the 2007 Bayreuth Scholar. I spoke to him recently about his travel plans. He leaves for Europe after the last performance of *Tannhäuser*, where he will spend some time in Hamburg, with a side-trip to Berlin, see a performance of *Rienzi* in Leipzig, attend *Tristan* rehearsals in Munich, castle-watch in Fussen, and visit the Richard Strauss Institut in Garmish Partenkirchen. (Warwick is covering the role of Mandryka in *Arabella* in Opera Australia's 2008 season.) Warwick first went to Bayreuth in 1993, and again in 2000 when he was awarded a Bayreuth Bursary.

Contrary to the rumours, Opera Australia's 2008 season does not include another revival of a Wagner opera, although supporters of Nietzsche will be delighted at the prospect of a new production of *Carmen* plus a revival of the *Pearl Fishers* in the same year! Apparently you can never have too many handbags or too many Bizet operas.

Paul Curran

Paul Curran, who is currently in Bayreuth with nine other members of our Society enjoying the third cycle of the Dorst *Ring* and more, has a new website - www.paulcurran.info - which is well worth a look. The July 2007 issue of Opera magazine had an eight-page biography of Paul written by Andrew Clark, which gives some insight into his ideas as an opera producer, including his refreshing simple view that his role is to tell the story. From January 2009 Paul will also have a new job as Artistic Director of the Norwegian Opera (*Den Norske Opera*). Paul was described by the Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten* as "an enthusiastic and sought-after rising international star", and if you've followed his career over the past few years, you'll agree that they got that right.

Paul told *Aftenposten* that he's thrilled by the construction of Oslo's new Opera House, due to open in April 2008, and is reported as saying "Oslo is getting the most extraordinary new Opera House in the whole world," he said. "I really mean that." We'll organize a public stoning for disloyalty to the Orange Segments when next he visits Sydney.

Lisa Gasteen's part-Wagner CD

Bruce Martin's recording of an all-Wagner CD with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra under Simone Young was postponed after Mr Martin had a freak accident and cracked three ribs. Clare and Margaret Hennessy report that, since the orchestra, conductor and recording technicians were all scheduled and ready, Lisa Gasteen stepped in at the last moment and instead a CD has been recorded with her, including some Wagner and Richard Strauss's Four Last Songs. We understand that the recording with Bruce Martin has been rescheduled for 2008.

Bayreuth 2008

Our idea of inviting applications for Bayreuth in 2008 earlier than usual has been extremely successful, with applications already received from 16 members. Applications close on Sunday, 30 September 2007, and the application form is reprinted in this Issue.

What to do with your Wagner collection

For various reasons, a number of members have been in touch over the past few months, to discuss the fate of their Wagner collections. Most members have collected newspaper and magazine articles, programmes, records, tapes, CDs, books, videos and DVDs over many years, and are thinking about what to do with their collections when they no longer have the space to house them.

The Society doesn't have a library, so we can't handle gifts of material you may no longer want to keep. Clare and Margaret Hennessy chose to recycle a significant part of their record collection through radio 2MBSFM, which has a regular fund-raising sale which is open to the public. Before doing this, they kindly brought their collection of Wagner records to our July function, so that members could have "first choice". Some members who have significant collections of books have spoken to the Conservatorium of Music, to see whether they can be donated to their library. Others have found specialist dealers in rare and second-hand books through which to dispose of their collections. Because this is something which we all consider from time to time, I'd be interested in hearing from members who have already downsized their collections, so that we can give others some good ideas.

And thereby hangs a tale. Some time ago I lent my copy of George Marek's biography *Cosima Wagner*, and it never returned. (Lending is a great way to reduce any collection!) I wanted to re-read it, so I hunted around on the Internet, and found hardback copies in various conditions for between \$3 and \$125. I decided to buy a more expensive copy, allegedly in very good condition, but the Internet failed me and the transaction did not complete. Shortly afterwards, I happened to have breakfast with a friend in Glebe Point Road, and browsing in Da Capo Books (somehow it's always an expensive delight) I found two copies of Marek's book in excellent condition for A\$18 and A\$20. I splashed out and bought the \$20 copy. There's a message here about spending more time out and about and less time on the Internet, but I intend to ignore it. If you haven't read the book, Da Capo might still have its \$18 copy, waiting for you to add it to your collection. Warmest regards, Roger Cruickshank, 26 August 2007.

NEW MEMBERS

The following people joined the Society:.

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:

FAMILY PROMOTES KATHARINA WAGNER AS NEW BAYREUTH CHIEF

Katharina Wagner's debut as the director of Bayreuth's new premiere production for 2007, *Die Meistersingers von Nürnberg*, provides a unique opportunity to canvass a number of aspects of the Bayreutherfestspiele in one survey. As

one commentator put it: "In the absence of a real royal family, the Wagners are a God-given gift to those Germans who like to combine their interests in high culture with society gossip." However, not only is Ms Wagner the youngest-ever director she is also the first woman to have directed at the festival her great granddaddy instigated 131 years ago.

First to the succession – a possible battle (ersatz) royale between Eva Wagner-Pasquier, 62, Wolfgang Wagner's daughter from his first marriage; Katharina Wagner, 29, Wolfgang's daughter from his second marriage; and Nike Wagner, 62, Wolfgang's niece and Wieland's daughter.

In contrast to Katharina's relatively recent operatic debut, Ms. Wagner-Pasquier has long been artistic adviser to the Aix-en-Provence opera festival in southern France, and Nike Wagner, a musicologist by training, has for a number of years been the director of the Weimar Festival in Germany. Katharina Wagner has directed the Wagner operas *Der fliegende Holländer* in Würzburg in 2002 and *Lohengrin* in Budapest in 2003 and is, apparently, scheduled to direct *Rienzi* in Bremen in the future (possibly October 2008 – see the Raven's Report below). According to one interview, *La bohème* is her favourite opera.

But how will the succession be determined, regardless of Katharina Wagner's interest and availability? The outcome is in the hands of the Richard Wagner Foundation that owns the festival's theater, the Festspielhaus, and subsidises the event. But while Wolfgang has only one vote on a 24-member board dominated by German, Bavarian and Upper Franconian officials, he has so far had his way with the foundation

As far as the Editor can establish from various sources (see credits below), from Wagner's creation of the Festival and building of the Festspielhaus and Wahnfried in 1875-76, the Wagner "business" was privately owned by Wagner, then his heirs, until Winifred Wagner, in 1973, signed over to the Richard Wagner Foundation the ownership of the theatre, the family home and the family archives.

Under the terms of the agreement, Wolfgang Wagner retained directorship of the Festspiele. Apparently, the Foundation charter, perhaps not surprisingly, also requires that qualified family members receive preference. Under the terms of the Foundation, however, Wolfgang Wagner only has one out of 24 votes; the others are held by German, Bavarian and Upper Franconian officials and Friends of the Bayreuth Festival (2 votes).

The succession plotting became complicated in 2001 when Wolfgang Wagner apparently offered to step down. The Foundation chose Eva Wagner-Pasquier over Nike Wagner and Wolfgang's second wife, Gudrun. Herr Wagner responded by announcing that he was director "for life" at the same time stipulating that, when he died, he wanted his second wife, Gudrun, to become director-in-locus for Katharina Wagner.

There is, it seems much speculation in the German press that the Foundation board would meet to consider the succession after the 2007 festival ended on 28 August. According to a commentator, there may also be evidence of a change afoot in the fact that "for the first time Wolfgang Wagner did not attend the [Friends of Bayreuth] meeting, and for the first time the Friends openly criticized his management style".

According to other reports, "Gudrun Wagner already performs many of Wolfgang's duties (because he's so slow and frail). Interestingly, according to further reports, the Foundation "deed contains a special clause says that if he no longer performs his job - or no longer performs it alone - the foundation can cancel his contract. If he were to move aside, the foundation could choose anyone it likes as a successor. And since Gudrun has given him so much help, there may indeed be an opening for a coup, and Katharina's future may not be so assured." In fact, according to yet another recorder of the Wagner succession struggle, "Eva Wagner-Pasquier remains a favorite on the board, and she says she's still interested in the job. 'Yes, yes,' she said in a recent phone interview. 'Of course I would do it.' She laughed, then sighed. 'You know, I still haven't resigned.'"

Now for Katharina's bid to demonstrate her credentials as a director separate from her genetic claims. Bayreuth Festival spokesman Peter Emmerich said that, as a direct descendent of the composer, Katharina was "well aware that she must come up with something special," adding that she "has a strong will of interpretation that won't bow even to 'Meistersinger.'"

In an interview, Katharina Wagner apparently said new ideas were vital to keep the festival young at heart and that the festival had to claw back from the opera houses its avant-garde role in Wagner interpretation. "My concern is not to just preserve but to develop something new as well," she said. "Bayreuth can dare to experiment," she said, pointing to past engagements of two of the shock directors of German theater, the late Heiner Müller in 1993 for "Tristan and Isolde" and Christoph Schlingensiefel in 2004 for "Parsifal."

George Loomis, in the International Herald Tribune of 31 July 2007, felt that "the prospect that her new "Meistersinger," which opened the 96th festival last week, would advance her cause vanished in a chorus of boos. In her four previous opera stagings, mainly for second-tier theaters, she has emerged as a fervent proponent of Regietheater, or

director's theater, in which concept is king and little is sacrosanct. It is an approach that can yield brilliant results and enrage audiences, sometimes at the same time". Ms Wagner: "Being booed belongs to the job description of a director."

In an extended interview with Larry L Lash in *MusicalAmerica.com*, Ms Wagner noted that there were four new members of the Foundation and intimated that this might change the dynamics of the Board and its voting intentions and "they are expecting to select a new leader". She added, very pragmatically and apparently disinterestedly, that "[f]or me, the quality of the Bayreuth Festival must be maintained, and if none of the people who have the name Wagner have the qualifications, they should look for someone else. It's not only that you should have a picture of a Wagner standing there, they should have the qualifications. It should be decided because of quality".

So what was the reception of the *Meistersinger* production? First the cast and team: Hans Sachs - Franz Hawlata, Veit Pagner - Artur Korn, Sixtus Beckmesser - Michael Volle, Walther von Stolzing - Klaus Florian Vogt, Eva - Amanda Mace, Night Watchman - Friedemann Rohligh, Conductor Sebastian Weigle, Dramaturg Robert Sollich, Chorusmaster Eberhard Friedrich, Stage designer Tilo Steffens and Costumes Michaela Barth.

From the myriad reviews – perhaps the "scandal" of the succession enticed more media commentators to attend or scrutinise activities at Bayreuth than usual – one could conclude that Ms Wagner had constructed a variety of *Meistersinger* productions; so diverse are the reactions that one could believe no one had been to the same production.

Matthew Westphal in *PlayBill Arts* on 26 July 2007 perhaps summed the divergence of views best: "Reaction to the musical performance was similarly divided [as to the staging, singing and acting –Editor]. AFP described conductor Sebastian Weigle and the Bayreuth Festival Orchestra as being in "a state of grace," and the AP said that its playing "was a dream — sonorous, rhapsodic, finely nuanced and at one with the singers on stage." On the other hand, AFP 's English-language report quoted Berlin-based critic Lorenz Tomerius as saying that Weigle "has absolutely no grasp of the score. It's extremely messy. The singing's not up to scratch, either."

Hugh Canning, in a review titled "It's all gone to her head" for the *Sunday Times* on 5 August 2007, wrote: "More shocking than anything in the production, however, is the mediocrity of the musical performance, dully conducted by Sebastian Weigle and poorly cast: Franz Hawlata's Sachs and Amanda Mace's Eva, both vocally sub-standard, were mercilessly booed, while Klaus Florian Vogt's overgrown-choirboyish, unheroic, pop-singer-like Walther was cheered to the rafters. Only Michael Volle's trenchantly sung Beckmesser achieved anything close to festival standards. In her bid to succeed her father, Katharina apparently chose those singers, though Vogt was a late replacement [for Robert Dean Smith who the Editor had the pleasure of hearing and seeing at a previous Bayreuth production]."

Most reviewers seem to share Canning's reservations about the standard of singing, although some were more tolerant of the Konzept of Ms Wagner and, in Canning's words, the "intellectual input of her favoured dramaturg (an ideas man or woman, a role virtually unknown in the British theatre, where directors are expected to have some of their own), Robert Sollich. Katharina's new Mastersingers carries heavy ideological baggage and debatable glosses on the performance and "reception" history of Wagner's only mature comic opera, while virtually ignoring Wagner's narrative, characterisations and music, in favour of an alternative scenario of her (or Sollich's) own."

As another reviewer put it: "Ms. Wagner tackled the opera's dark association with German nationalism by satirizing luminaries of German culture like Bach, Beethoven, Goethe, Schiller and even Wagner himself. But European critics said much of the audience turned against her in the last act, when she resorted to topless dancers, full male nudity, plastic phalluses and a bizarre auto-da-fé." However, in her interview with Larry Lash, Ms Wagner put the phallic record straight by insisting that: "They weren't penises! They are bulls' horns. At the beginning of the scene, the masters are wearing them on their heads like horns. They came from the prop department."

Lash seems to give the most neutral summary of the basic Konzept: "Undisciplined but talented artist Walther attempts to transform his song into a crowd-pleaser and loses his artistic integrity. Wearing sneakers, sunglasses perched on his long blond locks, he winds up in a conservative suit and tie. The moment when he first puts on sensible black shoes is simultaneously funny and heartbreaking. Sachs, too, is an outsider. The cobbler makes identical shoes for the townsfolk, but he remains barefoot until conformity overtakes him. An uptight, prune-faced snob, Beckmesser becomes enlightened through the gibberish Sachs has penned to trick him. Essentially, Walther and Beckmesser trade places: iconoclast becomes buttoned-down conformist; prude becomes free spirit. Sachs, too, undergoes an epiphany, his ideology moving to the far right, bringing a chilling, xenophobic tone to his final paean in praise of all things German."

In expanding his repudiation of Ms Wagner's "heavy ideological baggage and debatable glosses," Canning says: "...the German press barely questions the debatable premises on which the director and her dramaturg base their contentious interpretations. Sollich writes, in a note distributed to the press, of Sachs's "aggressive conservatism" in Act III and, in the official programme book, of the "sinister content" of his final peroration on German art. But what is aggressive and sinister about a defence of German art from foreign influence? His speech is essentially aimed at Italian opera and is a warning against princes who don't speak the same language as their people. To

suggest anything else is as much of a distortion of Wagner's text as the Third Reich's misappropriation of Wagner's works for propaganda purposes."

Canning continues: "...Katharina Wagner and Sollich's *Mastersingers* is all attention-seeking exaggeration and parodic distortion. They throw everything into the pot: a staged debate about modern art that has the would-be mastersinger Walther von Stolzing throwing paint around the masters' academy and drawing pudenda and breasts on Eva's frock; caricatures of the German masters, who sit disconsolately during the Act III prelude; the chorus emptying replicas of Warhol's Campbell's soup tin over the brawlers of the *Midsummer Nightmare* at the end of Act II. There are two stark-naked women and a man, and Walther's Prize Song climaxes in a game-show presentation of a huge cardboard cheque by television studio hostesses. The result is an unpalatable witch's brew: a mishmash of the styles of fashionable avant-garde German directors such as Peter Konwitschny and Christoph Schlingensiefel. If Katharina has inherited anything from her father, it is a knack for aping other directors' work."

If these comments suggest that there is as much if not more happening on stage than in the equally booed Schlingensiefel Bayreuth *Parsifal* (in its final year – thank goodness no doubt many will say to themselves), then Shirley Apthorp would agree as she contends: "This incoherent production tries to do far too many things at once. There are abundant clever references to German art, culture and architecture. Statues of Goethe, Schiller, Bach, Wagner, Kleist and others come to life.... A little nudity and some simulated sex are thrown in for good measure. Ms. Wagner's calculated subversion of the plot could have been brilliant if it had been more sparingly realized. In her frenetic struggle to prove herself clever enough, presumably aided by intellectual dramaturge Robert Sollich, a few good ideas and strong images are lost in the cross."

Yet another reviewer opined that "Katharina put "*Meistersinger's*" text under a microscope and made some creditable adjustments to Wagner's most tradition-bound and only comic opera." Another again thought the opposite: "Even more importantly, however, while treating the opera as a kind of discourse on tradition and progress in art, she showed no particular respect for the actual plot." Loomis suggested: "Katharina Wagner's sympathetic treatment of Beckmesser, Walther's rival in love and art, is no less radical. Yet it struck a chord with me, because Beckmesser's humiliation in the opera is way out of proportion to what he deserves. Picking up on an idea advanced by scholars that the gibberish of Beckmesser's contest song anticipates Dadaism and hence is actually forward-looking, she has him undergo an epiphany after the street riot. A strong minority of the populace applauds Beckmesser's song, and he departs, disgusted, only when Sachs starts talking about German art."

According to Canning, "before Hans Sachs delivers his encomium to German art, a theatre director and a conductor are bound and gagged and thrown into a skip, which Sachs then sets alight while flunkies hold out their arms at something just short of the angle required for a Hitler salute." Another reviewer claimed that the masks these characters wear are of the faces of the production team. Perhaps this move by Katharina was intended to convey a sense of self-parody or ironic detachment?

Lash generously sums up: "This "*Meistersinger*" will challenge, delight and outrage audiences for a number of years to come. Perhaps, as Beckmesser discovers, breaking with tradition isn't such a bad thing."

Canning begs to differ: "One of her more ludicrous notions is that Beckmesser is the hero of *Die Meistersinger* and that Wagner's parody of composition represented by his song is an example of avant-garde music. This has to be one of the most unmusical stagings of *Die Meistersinger* in the entire performance history of the work. Dramatically, it has all the sophistication of a drunken and druggy fancy-dress party for rich kids."

As an interesting footnote for those of us planning a Bayreuth pilgrimage in the next few years (the box office gods willing), Larry Lash, in his interview, asked Katharina Wagner "Why is the "*Parsifal*" being dumped after this season?" Ms Wagner replied: "My father decided not to run productions so long any more. People always want to see new things. The "*Fliegende Holländer*" [from 2003] is gone, too. We are going to make the run shorter for every piece. We want something new about every four years, but it depends on costs, too. "*Lohengrin*" is very expensive to put on, so it depends on what we need in the orchestra, the chorus".

The Editor is indebted to a variety of reviews and commentaries in compiling this overview, including those that may still be read on the Internet at <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,2707619,00.html>, http://www.guidelive.com/sharedcontent/dws/ent/performingarts/stories/DN-opera_0729gl.ART.State.Edition1.4258996.html, <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,2347779,00.html>, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/31/arts/music/31wagn.html?ex=1343534400&en=1ec3910bad294bd2&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss>, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,494992,00.html>, <http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117934348.html?categoryid=33&cs=1>

http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/stage/opera/article2181912.ece
<http://www.iht.com/articles/2007/07/31/arts/loomis.php>
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<http://www.musicalamerica.com:80/news/newsstory.cfm?archived=0&storyid=16505&categoryid=2&cookies=1> [Editor]

***Götterdämmerung* – a concert BBC Proms Performance; Prom 39 Sunday 12 August 2007 - John Studdert and Dennis Mather**

Christine Brewer Brünnhilde (*soprano*), **Stig Andersen** Siegfried (*tenor*), **Sir John Tomlinson** Hagen (*bass*), **Alan Held** Gunther (*baritone*), **Gweneth-Ann Jeffers** Gutrune (*soprano*), **Gordon Hawkins** Alberich (*baritone*), **Karen Cargill** Waltraute (*mezzo-soprano*), **Andrea Baker** First Norn (*mezzo-soprano*), **Natascha Petrinsky** Second Norn (*mezzo-soprano*), **Miranda Keys** Third Norn (*soprano*), **Katherine Broderick** Woglinde (*soprano*), **Anna Stéphany** Wellgunde (*mezzo-soprano*), **Liore Grodnikaite** Flosshilde (*mezzo-soprano*), Concert Staging by **Paul Curran**, **BBC Singers, BBC Symphony Chorus, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Donald Runnicles** *Conductor*.

The day did not auger well for your reviewers. A blocked drain in one of the Australia's national airline's Boeing 747 meant a long delay in leaving Sydney, meant missed connections in Singapore, a re-routing through Frankfurt and an arrival time in London just a couple of hours before the 4 pm start of the BBC Proms concert production of *Götterdämmerung* at the Royal Albert Hall. To add insult to injury the London skies threatened to ruin the planned picnic in the first interval.

As we reached for a second glass of wine during the first interval our thoughts returned to the 1998 Royal Opera semi-staged production under Maestro Haitink. The *Das Rheingold* of that series was as tentative as the First Act of *Götterdämmerung*. Perhaps it is the vastness of the RAH that intimidates performers or the proximity of the orchestra on stage immediately behind the singers which can so easily swamp their singing. Whatever the issue at hand it appears that the performers need a little time to become comfortable with the hall before the excitement comes to the fore.

Thankfully the dying chords of this *Götterdämmerung* found an exciting environment complete with the 'Mike Day' Shivers up the Spine Register. This is perhaps best illustrated by Stig Andersen who wiped two tears from his eyes as he sat down following his final words

*To die is sweet,
To shudder is enchanting:
Brünnhilde offers me her welcome!*

The moment was reinforced by Christine Brewer's poignant greeting to the departed Siegfried. Brewer's moment was a triumph in sound and emotion. We left after a well-deserved standing ovation for a breathtaking night – directed and staged for the concert platform by Society member Paul Curran.

Dennis's further thoughts on the production follow.

As we entered the hall Paul Curran's work was subtly and immediately evident with projections suggesting Valhalla like architecture on the walls behind the stage. The stage lights came up on time and we were under away on time with the three Norns retelling the story so far. The first Norn, Andrea Baker, is a mezzo with a fabulous bottom register, a silky and even voice all the way to the top of her range.

It was immediately evident that maestro Donald Runnicles was going to use the on-stage orchestra to best effect. He was able to pull back the volume most of the time so as not to drown out the singers, and thereby provide a beautiful sound which points up the subtlety of orchestral colours that the master wrote into score. The on-stage orchestra also had the advantage of providing an unmixed sound (in contrast to that at Bayreuth) which helped the listener see exactly how the Master mixed the colours. Of course, when there were no singers to take care of, Runnicles was often able to just let it rip and the audience was swamped with wave after wave of the most exquisite orchestral playing.

Siegfried, Stig Andersen and Brünnhilde, Christine Brewer, proved to be a well matched pair of lovers, and their scene moved inexorably to one of the musical highlights of *The Ring* with a near perfect musical climax to end the Prologue.

Alan Held as Gunther started as a surprisingly strong character as well as singer. His reading being in strong contrast to other and much more popular weak and wimpy Gunthers we have seen in the past. He sustained his vocal strength and dramatic intensity to the end.

John Tomlinson's Hagen was mesmerising. Although his vocal powers are not quite those that one remembers from his Wotan Bayreuth days, his dramatic intensity was, if anything increased. Menacingly evil, he was able to increase his volume to match anything Runnicles threw at him. At times he almost slipped into a Sprechgesang - but it didn't matter – he was Hagen, son of Albrecht and aspirant ruler of all.

Karen Cargill's Waltraute gave a beautifully polished reading, which Runnicles took quite slowly, with many more silences than one would usually hear. Indeed the Maestro was able to bring out the beautifully rich and subtle orchestral accompaniment here with the singer often being accompanied by a single instrument or couple of instruments. Despite the leisurely pace of this section the Prelude and Act I came down 10 minutes shy of 2 hours – one of the quickest I have ever seen – but a no time did it seem rushed. The Maestro was able to use more strongly contrasting tempi to develop dramatic intensity. The Conductor nailed a 10 on the 'Mike Day' Shivers up the Spine Register in the conclusion to Act I and the audience was propelled into the London twilight gibbering about this and that aspect of the previous one hour and 50 minutes.

The Vassals were as rowdy a bunch that you have ever seen. Stephen Jackson the chorus master, had trained them to sing accurately and with as much dynamic contrast as is possible. The Tarnhelm was depicted by Siegfried's wearing a necktie – this is as far as the staging went – and a most effective tool. Once again Hagen, Brünnhilde and Siegfried, with none of the dramatic tools available in a fully staged version, were able to paint a palpable picture at the end of Act II with maestro Runnicles' selection of tempi producing another near perfect climax to end the Act.

As Act III progressed, the extremes of volume and tempi continued to provide a highly colourful tone picture. Then, as the immolation scene got underway, the lighting was extended to the ceiling where flickering red and orange lights provided a veritable inferno inside the hall. The non-promenading audience rose to its collective feet to acknowledge a fine production.

A postscript. As we made our way back to the tube, the building behind the Albert Hall - which is behind scaffolding - had also been illuminated from inside with red lights and thereby extended the feeling of the Twilight of the Gods.

And so we begin our 2007 Wagner season with a picture of the end (or the end of the beginning)

Professor Heath Lees: Wagner and Mallarmé: Music as Poetry

Many of us will be familiar with Professor Lees from his talks to the Wagner Society of NSW and his participation in the intellectual milieu of the two Adelaide Ring Cycles. However, given his appearance at the September meeting, members might be interested in knowing a little more of Professor Lees' career. We know him primarily as President of the Wagner Society of New Zealand, which he and his wife founded in 1994.

However, Professor Heath Lees' academic position is Professor: Music Studies, Music and Literature; Associate Head: Postgraduate Studies, School of Music at the University of Auckland. His qualifications and professional associations include: Master of Arts, University of Glasgow, 1962; Bachelor of Music, University of Glasgow, 1965; Doctor of Philosophy, University of Auckland, 2006; Fellow of Trinity College of Music, London, 1966. According to the University of Auckland website: Professor Lees is presently researching the impact of Wagner in France and the effect that Wagner's music had on 19th century writers, particularly on the Symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé, and his circle.

"His recent book "Mallarmé and Wagner: Music and Poet Language" (2007) overturns the traditional view that Mallarmé was 'converted' to both music and Wagner at a concert in 1885. Instead, the book claims that Mallarmé's awareness of music and of Wagner's music in particular, had begun early in his life....Indeed, it seems highly probable that Mallarmé's "poétique" was built on a sustained attempt to 'musicalise' his poetry along the lines of the Wagnerian music-drama, and that this came to successful fruition in the poet's 'Wagnerian' period from 1885 to the end of his life."

One of the reviews of Professor Lees' book captures what many in his Australian audiences already know: "To hear Heath Lees talk about Mallarmé is a revelation: where many commentaries appear to lead into mists of complication, he clarifies in simple language how a brilliant mind like Mallarmé's could consciously turn language into music while letting it tell its own story. Professor Lees's great strength lies in combining the skills of practical musician (including composer), musical scholar and expert literary commentator." This comment is also true of his explorations of *Meistersingers* and *The Ring Cycle*.

As if his existing qualifications and achievements were not enough, according to the Auckland University News, Professor Lees went further, stimulated by his love of the Symbolist poets: "Heath, who was first appointed Professor of Music in 1983, graduated...with a PhD in French Literature, which he completed in an unusually brief amount of time, having enrolled for it in 2003. Heath registered for the PhD as he had concluded that commercial publishers wouldn't be interested in his research on the influence of the German composer, Richard Wagner, on the work of Stephané [sic] Mallarmé.... Through a study of Mallarmé's life, correspondence, musical education and work, Heath has argued that what Mallarmé called his "re-possession of music" started from when he first started writing, rather than consequent to a particularly moving Wagnerian concert in 1885, as is often believed." [Editor]

Symbolism and Music and Mallarmé

If you, like me, know little about Stéphane Mallarmé, you may be interested in a little background. He lived from 1842 to 1898 in Paris, his real name was Étienne Mallarmé and he was a French poet and critic who earned a living from

teaching English. His earlier work owes a great deal to the style established by Charles Baudelaire. His *fin-de-siècle* style, on the other hand, anticipates many of the fusions between poetry and the other arts that were to blossom in the Dadaist, Surrealist, and Futurist schools, where the tension between the words themselves and the way they were displayed on the page was explored.

According to Wikipedia.com, a “good example of this play of sound appears in Roger Pearson's book 'Unfolding Mallarmé', in his analysis of the *Sonnet en '-yx'*. The poem opens with the phrase 'ses purs ongles' ('her pure nails'), whose first syllables when spoken aloud sound very similar to the words 'c'est pur son' ('it's pure sound'). This use of homophony, along with the relationships and layers of meanings it results in, is simply impossible to capture accurately through translation.”

His works include: *L'après-midi d'un faune* 1876, *Les Mots anglais* 1878, *Les Dieux antiques* 1879, *Divagations* 1897, *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* 1897, *Poésies* 1899 (posthumous), but most importantly for us Wagnerians, his essay *Richard Wagner, rêveries d'un poète français* published in *La revue wagnérienne* August 1885 of which it has been suggested that it was “more the *idea* of Wagner that inspired his reverie rather than any specific work”.

From 1885 to 1888 one of Mallarmé's disciples, Édouard Dujardin, published a symbolist journal, *La revue wagnérienne*, devoted to Wagnerism. Its aim was to promote Wagner not only as a composer but also as a poet and the creator of a new form of art. The journal included translations of his essays and libretti, studies of him, book reviews, poems, press clippings, occasional lithographs by painters Henri Fantin-Latour and Odilon Redon and also a bulletin of performances of Wagner's works throughout Europe.

Many poets associated with symbolism were extremely interested in the German composer Richard Wagner (1813–1883). The French interest in Wagner went back to the 1860s, when Baudelaire had admired and written about him.... Wagner imagined his music-dramas as *Gesamtkunstwerke* (total works of art) in which all the arts would be combined in a single work to transcend the possibilities of individual media. While some critics emphasized the naturalist tendencies of Wagner's music, French interpreters of Wagner imagined the orchestrator of the total work of art as a secular priest and the work itself as a means to provide a transcendent experience. Baudelaire described his experience of Wagner's music-drama *Lohengrin* (1848) as ecstatic, instigating an involuntary dreamlike state.... In the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, the performance of Wagner's operas had been banned in France. Many French literary figures, however, visited the festivals at Bayreuth, and by the mid-1880s there was a veritable cult of Wagner in France.

Many symbolists share the notion that all art should aspire to the condition of music [a notion that Wagner also lifted from Schopenhauer - Editor], which was thought to be the most emotionally direct aesthetic medium. In "Art poétique" (1884), Paul Verlaine (1844–1896) famously instructed poets on the importance of "music before all else." This musicality was achieved in much symbolist poetry through rhyming, alliteration, assonance, and other rhetorical flourishes. Indeed, Mallarmé's conception of his poems as a kind of music is brought out in an anecdote. When Debussy asked permission to set Mallarmé's "Afternoon of a Faun" (1876) to music, Mallarmé responded: "But I thought I had already done that!" (Sieburth, in Hollier, p. 796).

I am indebted for this potted overview of Wagner, Mallarmé and the French Symbolist poets to a range of online sources including *A French Connection*, Bet Briggs (at Bikwil <http://www.bikwil.com/Vintage10/Revue-Wagnerienne.html>), Symbolism and Music (at <http://science.jrank.org/pages/11377/Symbolism-Symbolism-Music.html>) and Wikipedia (at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St%C3%A9phane_Mallarm%C3%A9). [Editor]

Tannhäuser Background Material - Roger Cruickshank 26 August 2007

*Here are some background notes which became a talk on Tannhäuser given to the Society on July 15 2007. The extracts from **Mein Leben** are taken from the Project Gutenberg EBook of My Life, Volume I, by Richard Wagner.*

The historical Tannhäuser lived from around 1200 to 1270 and composed songs, sixteen of whose lyrics have survived. Once wealthy, he squandered his fortune on “fair women, good wine, dainty meat, and baths twice a week” (in the words of a poem attributed to him) and supposedly ended his life writing penitent poetry regretting his former wasteful, sinful lifestyle. The historical Wolfram von Eschenbach lived from around 1170 to 1220, and is ranked among the great German medieval poets chiefly for his epic poem *Parzival*. Among von Eschenbach's surviving works are seven lyric poems, for which the music has been lost, and an unfinished epic, *Titirel*.

In *Mein Leben*, Wagner says that he read “a pamphlet on the Venusberg, which accidentally fell into my hands” and “brought *Tannhäuser*, if only by a passing hint, into touch with *The Minstrel's War on the Wartburg*.” These are the two legends from which Wagner forged the single story of his opera. Wagner found the original text of the Wartburg song contest tale in an annual report of the proceedings of the Königsberg German Society, which included “in the same copy a critical study, *Lohengrin*, which gave in full detail the main contents of that widespread epic.”

In the legend of *Tannhäuser* used in Act 1 and the final scene of Act 3, Tannhäuser tires of the continual delights of the Venusberg and decides to return to the world. Venus tries to prevent him, and Tannhäuser cries out that he desires no woman other than the one he is now thinking of, upon which he calls to the Virgin Mary. At the mention of this holy name, he suddenly finds himself back in the world. Determined to begin a new life, Tannhäuser makes a pilgrimage to Rome to ask forgiveness for his sins but the shocked Pope (usually identified as Urban IV, who served as Pope between 1261 and 1264) says that his wooden staff will burst into bloom before Christ will forgive a sinner like Tannhäuser. Disillusioned, Tannhäuser returns to the Venusberg where in the arms of Venus he awaits the Last Judgement. The Pope's staff bursts into bloom and he sends messengers to find Tannhäuser, but the poet has disappeared and the old song tells us that it is the Pope who is damned. This is clearly not the happy and redemptive ending with two corpses which Wagner gives us.

In the tale of the song contest at the Wartburg used in Act 2, Landgrave Hermann of Thuringia, famous for his patronage of the arts, hosted a great tournament of song. Many Minnesingers were present, and a contest developed between six of them. Five Minnesingers sang the praises of Landgrave Hermann, but Heinrich von Ofterdingen praised his master Duke Leopold instead. Tempers rose, and it was agreed that the loser of the contest would be put to death. Heinrich von Ofterdingen, who was outnumbered and clearly not very bright, was judged the loser, whereupon he asked Sophie, the Landgrave's wife, for protection. She threw her mantle over him, preventing anyone from harming him. Sophie called for the contest to be repeated in a year's time, and summoned the Hungarian sorcerer Klingsor to judge between the singers, and anyone who argued against his decision would be killed. During this year, Heinrich von Ofterdingen gained Klingsor's support, and the magician used his powers to help the Minnesinger. But despite Klingsor's sorcery, Wolfram von Eschenbach won the contest by singing pious songs about God's grace, leading to the perplexing conclusion that even with a crooked judge on your side, you may not win.

Klingsor also prophesies the birth of Saint Elizabeth, who is to be the daughter-in-law of Landgrave Hermann. Tragically widowed at 20, Elizabeth was noted for her extreme piety, purity, and her devotion to the poor and the sick. Wagner fused the figure of Sophie, the Landgrave's wife who shielded Heinrich von Ofterdingen from danger, with the character of Saint Elizabeth, so that in *Tannhäuser*, Elisabeth is Landgrave Hermann's niece, the object of Tannhäuser's chaste affection and of Wolfram's unrequited love.

Wagner tells us in *Mein Leben* how the opera got its name, which explains why Tannhäuser is called "Heinrich" (for "Heinrich von Ofterdingen"?) throughout the opera and is never called "Tannhäuser".

"The only thing that Meser was absolutely opposed to was the title of my new opera, which I had just named "Der Venusberg"; he maintained that, as I did not mix with the public, I had no idea what horrible jokes were made about this title. He said the students and professors of the medical school in Dresden would be the first to make fun of it, as they had a predilection for that kind of obscene joke. I was sufficiently disgusted by these details to consent to the change. To the name of my hero, Tannhäuser, I added the name of the subject of the legend which, although originally not belonging to the Tannhäuser myth, was thus associated with it by me ...

"Tannhäuser und der Sangerkrieg auf Wartburg" (Tannhäuser and the Song Contest at the Wartburg) should henceforth be its title, and to give the work a mediaeval appearance I had the words specially printed in Gothic characters upon the piano arrangement, and in this way introduced the work to the public."

Although Wagner had completed the first act of *Tannhäuser* in January 1844 and the second by October of that year, the first performance was not until 20 October 1845, in Dresden. Wagner writes in *Mein Leben*:

"In the beginning of October we had so far progressed with our rehearsals that nothing stood in the way of an immediate production of Tannhäuser save the scenery, which was not yet complete. A few only of the scenes ordered from Paris had arrived, and even these had come very late. The Wartburg Valley was beautifully effective and perfect in every detail. The inner part of the Venusberg, however, gave me much anxiety: the painter had not understood me; he had painted clusters of trees and statues, which reminded one of Versailles, and had placed them in a wild cave; he had evidently not known how to combine the weird with the alluring. I had to insist on extensive alterations, and chiefly on the painting out of the shrubs and statues, all of which required time. The grotto had to lie half hidden in a rosy cloud, through which the Wartburg Valley had to loom in the distance; this was to be done in strict obedience to my own ideas.

*"The greatest misfortune, however, was to befall me in the shape of the tardy delivery of the scenery for the Hall of Song. This was due to great negligence on the part of the Paris artists; and we waited and waited until every detail of the opera had been studied and studied again **ad nauseam**. Daily I went to the railway station and examined all the packages and boxes that had arrived, but there was no Hall of Song. At last I allowed myself to be persuaded not to postpone the first performance any longer, and I decided to use the Hall of Karl the Great out of **Oberon**, originally suggested to me by Luttichau, instead of the real thing. Considering the importance I attached to practical effect, this entailed a great sacrifice of my personal feelings. And true enough, when the curtain rose for the second act, the reappearance of this throne-room, which the public had seen so often, added considerably to the general disappointment of the audience, who had anticipated*

astonishing surprises in this opera.”

The opening night was a disaster.

“With regard to the production itself the conclusions I drew from it were as follows: the real faults in the work, which I have already mentioned incidentally, lay in the sketchy and clumsy portrayal of the part of Venus, and consequently of the whole of the introductory scene of the first act. In consequence of this defect the drama never even rose to the level of genuine warmth, still less did it attain to the heights of passion which, according to the poetic conception of the part, should so strongly work upon the feelings of the audience as to prepare them for the inevitable catastrophe in which the scene culminates, and thus lead up to the tragic denouement. This great scene was a complete failure, in spite of the fact that it was entrusted to so great an actress as Schröder-Devrient, and a singer so unusually gifted as Tichatschek. The genius of Devrient might yet have struck the right note of passion in the scene had she not chanced to be acting with a singer incapable of all dramatic seriousness, and whose natural gifts only fitted him for joyous or declamatory accents, and who was totally incapable of expressing pain and suffering. It was not until Wolfram's touching song and the closing scene of this act were reached that the audience showed any signs of emotion. Tichatschek wrought such a tremendous effect in the concluding phrase by the jubilant music of his voice that, as I was afterwards informed, the end of this first act left the audience in a great state of enthusiasm.”

....

“That very evening I decided to remedy the defects of the first night before the second performance.”

....

*“Every day that elapsed between the first and second performance left the result of the former more and more problematic, until at last it appeared to be a generally acknowledged failure. While the public as a whole expressed angry astonishment that, after the approval they had shown of my **Rienzi**, I had paid no attention to their taste in writing my new work, there were many kind and judicious friends who were utterly perplexed at its inefficiency, the principal parts of which they had been unable to understand, or thought were imperfectly sketched and finished. The critics, with unconcealed joy, attacked it as ravens attack carrion thrown out to them.”*

And so Wagner's intermittent and lifelong rewriting of *Tannhäuser* began. In March 1861, Wagner once again put his *Tannhäuser* before an audience, this time in Paris, and this time in French. The results were no better than the premier in Dresden, although for different reasons.

The Paris Version contains significant changes, not least the translation of the text into French (although most performances of the Paris Version today use a German libretto.) Most famously, the opening scene was doubled in length, in part by significantly expanding the opening ballet which was in the first act and not, as the rules of French Grand Opera required, in the third. A solo for Walther was removed from Act 2, the orchestral introduction to Act 3 was shortened, and the end of the opera was remodelled to include Venus on stage, where in the Dresden version the audience only heard the Venus motif. Wagner thought that prior to this change, audiences were confused about what was happening onstage.

Most commentators assert that the misplaced ballet in Act 1 caused the disruption to the Paris performances, although it may be that French antipathy for the Austrian Princess Metternich was also a factor, the Emperor (Napoleon III) having given orders for a performance of *Tannhäuser* at the request of Princess Metternich, whom Wagner called “the good fairy of the whole enterprise”.

In “Mein Leben”, Wagner wrote of the second performance, which took place on 18 March 1861, that:

“... the first act promised well. The overture was loudly applauded without a note of opposition. Mme. Tedesco, who had eventually been completely won over to her part of Venus by a wig powdered with gold dust, called out triumphantly to me in the manager's box, when the 'septuor' of the finale of the first act was again vigorously applauded, that everything was now all right and that we had won the victory. But when shrill whistling was suddenly heard in the second act, Royer the manager turned to me with an air of complete resignation and said, 'Ce sont les Jockeys; nous sommes perdus.' Apparently at the bidding of the Emperor, extensive negotiations had been entered into with these members of the Jockey Club as to the fate of my opera. They had been requested to allow three performances to take place, after which they had been promised that it should be so curtailed as to admit of its presentation only as a curtain-raiser to introduce a ballet which was to follow.

“After the performance Bülow broke out into sobs as he embraced Minna, who had not been spared the insults of those next to her when they recognised her as the wife of the composer. Our trusty servant Therese, a Swabian girl, had been sneered at by a crazy hooligan, but when she realised that he understood German, she succeeded in quieting him for a time by calling him Schweinhund at the top of her voice.

“Hearing that in spite of everything a third performance was fixed, I was confronted with only two possible solutions of the difficulty. One was, to try once more to withdraw my score; the other, to demand that my opera

should be given on a Sunday, that is to say, on a non-subscriber's day. I assumed that such a performance could not be regarded by the usual ticket-holders as a provocation, for they were quite accustomed on such days to surrender their boxes to any of the general public who chanced to come and buy them."

Wagner chose to stay at home and avoid this third and final performance.

"Princess Metternich had remained at home, as she had already had to endure the coarse insults and ridicule of our opponents at the first two performances.

*"She indicated the height to which this fury had risen by mentioning some of her best friends, with whom she had engaged in so virulent a controversy that she had ended by saying: 'Away with your free France! In Vienna, where at least there is a genuine aristocracy, it would be unthinkable for a Prince Liechtenstein or Schwarzenberg to scream from his box for a ballet in **Fidelio**. I believe she also spoke to the Emperor in the same strain, so that he seriously debated whether by police intervention some check could not be put upon the unmannerly conduct of these gentlemen, most of whom, unfortunately, belonged to the Imperial Household."*

It is easy to see why, after two failed premiers, Wagner might comment years later, as recorded in Cosima's diaries, that he stilled owed the world a *Tannhäuser*!

Footnotes:

Both *Fidelio* and *Madama Butterfly* had disastrous premieres which resulted in the works being substantially rewritten, and they are both generally staged today in their revised versions. While the case of *Tannhäuser* is complicated by the fact of two failed premiers, about which Lady Bracknell would have had something to say, a "Dresden Version" based on the failed 1845 production remains in the repertoire and is regularly performed and recorded, in addition to the substantially rewritten "Paris Version", now given in German, which is broadly the same as the work performed in Paris in 1861. It seems almost anti-Wagnerian to continue to perform the "Dresden Version", given Wagner's clearly-expressed dissatisfaction with it, and efforts to which he went to improve its dramatic realisation.

Tannhäuser took longer than some other Wagner works to become the darling of regietheatre, but it is now regularly re-interpreted, and not always badly. I was delighted to read a review in the May/June 2007 edition of "Opera Now" by Francis Muzzu of a new production of *Tannhäuser* by Vera Nemirova at Oper Frankfurt, where Wolfram strangles Elizabeth during his Act 3 aria. This is not Wolfram's pre-sentiment of Elizabeth's death, as usually shown in other productions, but a description of the journey of Elizabeth's soul past Venus' planet as Wolfram kills her. I hope to see Nemirova's production if it is restaged!

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. A major update from Camron for this issue follows.

September 2007

Aachen *Holländer* – September 9, 14, 19, 22, 30.
 Baden-Baden *Tristan und Isolde* – Sept 23, 27, 30.
 Dresden *Lohengrin* – September 23, 30.
 Frankfurt *Tannhäuser* – September 9, 20, 23, 29.
 Halle *Die Meistersinger* – September 22.
 Linz *Götterdämmerung* – Sept 23 [concert].
 Lübeck *Das Rheingold* – September 15, 30.
 Munich *Holländer* – September 30.
 Stockholm *Götterdämmerung* - Sept 15, 20, 29.

October 2007

Aachen *Holländer* – October 7, 14, 20.
 Dresden *Lohengrin* – October 3, 7.
Meistersinger – Oct 14, 17, 20, 24, 27, 31.
 Essen *Tristan und Isolde* – October 7, 14, 20.
 Frankfurt *Tannhäuser* – October 5.
 Görlitz *Die Walküre* – October 17.
 Halle *Die Meistersinger* – October 3, 14, 31.
 Kiel *Tannhäuser* – October 12, 21.
 London The Royal Opera
 3 *Rings* - Oct 2, 4, 7, 9; 17, 19, 21, 24
 October 26, 28, 31, November 2, 2007.
 Lübeck *Das Rheingold* – October 14.
 Lyon *Siegfried* – October 18, 21, 24, 27.
 Munich *Holländer* – October 5, 9.
 Stockholm *Götterdämmerung* – October 3, 8.
 Tokyo *Tannhäuser* – Oct 8, 11, 14, 17, 21, 24.
 Trier *Die Walküre* – October 21, 26.
 Weimar *Siegfried* – October 6, 27.
 Yokohama *Tristan und Isolde* – October 8.

November 2007

Aachen *Holländer* – November 2, 25.
 Bremen *Tristan und Isolde* – November 11, 18.
 Ghent *Siegfried* – Nov 4, 7, 10, 13, 15, 18, 23,
 25, 28.
 Görlitz *Die Walküre* – November 14, 21, 24.
 Halle *Die Meistersinger* – November 11.
 Leipzig *Rienzi* – November 16, 18, 21, 24.
 London The Royal Opera
 3 *Rings* – Oct 26, 28, 31, Nov 2.
 Lübeck *Das Rheingold* – November 3, 17.
 Lyon *Siegfried* – November 7, 10, 13.
 Meiningen *Holländer* – November 7.
 Munich *Tristan und Isolde* – Nov 11, 18, 24, 30.
 Trier *Die Walküre* – November 3.
 Weimar *Siegfried* – November 10.

December 2007

Aachen *Holländer* – December 5.
 Bremen *Tristan und Isolde* – December 2, 26.
 Düsseldorf *Tannhäuser* – December 16, 22, 30.
 Ghent *Siegfried* – December 1.
 Halle *Die Meistersinger* – December 1, 25.
 Hamburg *Tannhäuser* – December 8, 13, 16.
 Leipzig *Rienzi* – December 7, 9.
 London The Royal Opera
Parsifal – December 6, 9, 15, 18, 21.
 Lübeck *Das Rheingold* – December 2, 26.
 Meiningen *Holländer* – December 29.
 Milan *Tristan & Isolde* Dec 7, 11, 16, 20, 23, 28
 Paris Bastille

Tannhäuser – December 6, 9, 12, 15, 18,
 21, 24, 27, 30.
Die Walküre – December 18.
 Staatsoper - New Ring Cycle begins
Die Walküre - Dec 2, 6, 9, 13, 16, 20
Siegfried – December 8.

January 2008

Baden-Baden Mariinsky Theatre
Holländer – January 17, 20, 22.
 Berlin Deutsche Oper
The Ring – January 5, 6, 10, 12.
The Ring – Jan 6, 11, 20, 27; 8, 13, 23,
 30.
 Düsseldorf *Holländer* – January 6, 20.
 Görlitz *Die Walküre* – January 16.
 Leipzig *Lohengrin* – January 12, 20.
 Los Angeles *Tristan und Isolde* – Jan 19, 23, 27, 31.
 Lübeck *Das Rheingold* – January 19.
 Madrid *Tristan und Isolde* – January 15, 17, 19,
 21, 23, 25, 27, 30, 31.
 Mannheim *Lohengrin* – January 27.
 New York The Met
Die Walküre – January 7, 14, 28.
 San Diego *Tannhäuser* – January 26, 29.
 Stockholm *The Ring* – Jan 5, 12, 15, 19; 23, 26, 29,
 February 2.
 Stuttgart *Holländer* – January 25, 28.
 Vienna Staatsoper
Meistersinger – Jan 12, 16, 19, 23, 26.

February 2008

Berlin Deutsche Oper
Die Meistersinger – February 2, 10, 16.
 Darmstadt *Parsifal* – February 10, 17.
 Dortmund *Götterdämmerung* – February 10.
 Los Angeles *Tristan und Isolde* – February 3, 6, 10.
 Madrid *Tristan und Isolde* – February 4.
 Meiningen *Holländer* – February 1.
 New York The Met
Die Walküre – February 2, 6, 9.
 San Diego *Tannhäuser* – February 1, 3.
 Stockholm *The Ring* – January 23, 26, 29, February
 2, 23, 26, March 1, 8.
 Stuttgart *Holländer* – February 2, 8, 13, 20, 26.
 Vienna *Holländer* – February 9, 12, 15.

March 2008

Barcelona *Tannhäuser* – March 19, 25, 27, 29, 31.
 Berlin Staatsoper
Die Meistersinger – March 16, 19, 24.
Tannhäuser – March 30.
 Cologne *Tannhäuser* – March 15, 23, 28.
 Dresden *Parsifal* – March 21, 24, 27.
 Dortmund *Götterdämmerung* – March 21.
 Duisburg *Parsifal* – March 9, 16, 21.
 Düsseldorf *Die Meistersinger* – March 23, 30.
 Essen *Tannhäuser* – March 29.
 Görlitz *Die Walküre* – March 24.
 Hamburg *Das Rheingold* – March 16, 19, 24, 27.
 Hanover *Tannhäuser* – March 9, 16.
 Leipzig *Parsifal* – March 15, 21, 23.
Lohengrin – March 29.

Munich	<i>Parsifal</i> – March 20, 23.	<i>Lohengrin</i> – May 22, 25, 28.
Münster	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i> – March 29 [no other dates].	
New York	The Met <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> – March 10, 14, 18, 22, 25, 28.	
Paris	Bastille <i>Parsifal</i> – March 4, 7, 11, 14, 17, 20, 23.	
Salzburg	Easter Festival <i>Die Walküre</i> - March 15, 24.	
Stockholm	<i>The Ring</i> – February 23, 26, March 1, 8.	
Stuttgart	<i>Holländer</i> – March 19, 24, 28.	
Vienna	Staatsoper <i>Parsifal</i> – March 20, 22, 26. <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> – March 24, 28.	
April 2008		
Barcelona	<i>Tannhäuser</i> – April 3, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 18, 22.	
Berlin	Staatsoper <i>Tannhäuser</i> – April 6, 12, 22, 26.	
Cologne	<i>Tannhäuser</i> – April 4, 6, 18.	
Dessau	<i>Parsifal</i> – April 26.	
Essen	<i>Tannhäuser</i> – April 4, 6, 12, 17, 23.	
Gera	<i>Lohengrin</i> – April 25.	
Görlitz	<i>Die Walküre</i> – April 13.	
Hamburg	<i>Das Rheingold</i> – April 2, 9.	
Mannheim	<i>Holländer</i> – April 12.	
Riga	<i>Siegfried</i> - April 25 [no other dates].	
Strasbourg	<i>Die Walküre</i> – April 18, 21, 27.	
Stuttgart	<i>Holländer</i> – April 10, 20.	
Vienna	Staatsoper <i>Siegfried</i> - April 27 <i>Holländer</i> – April 8, 11, 14. <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> – April 1.	
May 2008		
Amsterdam	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i> – May 6, 10, 14, 18, 21, 25, 28.	
Barcelona	<i>Die Walküre</i> – May 28, 31.	
Bergen	<i>Siegfried</i> - May 22.	
Berlin	Deutsche Oper <i>Lohengrin</i> – May 10, 16, 20, 25. Staatsoper <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> – May 12.	
Bielefeld	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i> – May 18, 24.	
Braunschweig	<i>Lohengrin</i> – May 11, 24, 31.	
Cologne	<i>Tannhäuser</i> – May 3, 10, 16.	
Dessau	<i>Parsifal</i> – May 4, 17.	
Detmold	<i>Rheingold</i> – May 31 [no other dates].	
Essen	<i>Tannhäuser</i> – May 11, 22.	
Geneva	<i>Lohengrin</i> – May 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20.	
Gera	<i>Lohengrin</i> – May 2.	
Hanover	<i>Tannhäuser</i> – May 1.	
Mannheim	<i>Parsifal</i> – May 12.	
Mulhouse	<i>Die Walküre</i> – May 16, 18.	
Munich	<i>Holländer</i> – May 11, 14, 18.	
Nuremberg	<i>Lohengrin</i> – May 3, 18, 22.	
Saarbrücken	<i>Lohengrin</i> – May 3, 8, 16, 21, 31.	
Strasbourg	<i>Die Walküre</i> – May 2, 6.	
Vienna	Staatsoper <i>Siegfried</i> – May 1, 4, 8, 11, 14	
June 2008		
Aix-en-Provence	<i>Siegfried</i> - June 28.	
Antwerp	<i>Götterdämmerung</i> –June 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20	
Berlin	Deutsche Oper <i>Holländer</i> – June 8, 12, 17, 21, 29. <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> – June 1, 8, 21.	
Bielefeld	<i>Lohengrin</i> – June 22.	
Braunschweig	<i>Holländer</i> – June 28.	
Bremen	<i>Parsifal</i> – June 21.	
Dessau	<i>Tannhäuser</i> – June 22, 25, 28.	
Dresden	<i>Die Meistersinger</i> – June 29.	
Essen	<i>Tannhäuser</i> – June 1, 7.	
Freiburg	<i>Die Walküre</i> – June 8, 20.	
Ghent	<i>Götterdämmerung</i> – June 29.	
Leipzig	<i>Lohengrin</i> – June 1, 29.	
Munich	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i> – June 30.	
Nuremberg	<i>Lohengrin</i> – June 1, 8.	
Saarbrücken	<i>Lohengrin</i> – June 8.	
Stralsund	Theater Vorpommern <i>Holländer</i> – June 27 [no other dates].	
Valencia	<i>Siegfried</i> – June 14, 17, 22.	
Vienna	Staatsoper <i>Lohengrin</i> – June 1.	
July 2008		
Aix-en-Provence	<i>Siegfried</i> - July 1, 4, 7. <i>Tannhäuser</i> – July 28, 31. <i>Parsifal</i> – July 2008. <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> – July 26.	
Baden-Baden	<i>Holländer</i> – July 1, 3, 5.	
Bayreuth	<i>Die Walküre</i> – July 3, 10, 12. <i>Götterdämmerung</i> – July 3, 6, 9, . <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> – July 4. <i>Die Meistersinger</i> - July 31.	
Bremen	<i>Lohengrin</i> – July 13.	
Freiburg	<i>Götterdämmerung</i> – July 5.	
Ghent	<i>The Ring</i> – July 9, 10, 12, 13.	
Munich		
Nuremberg		
Weimar		
August 2008		
Baden-Baden	<i>Tannhäuser</i> – August 3, 6.	
Bayreuth	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i> – August 5, 14, 18, 26.	
September 2008		
Lübeck	<i>Die Walküre</i> – Sept [no actual dates].	
Vienna	Staatsoper <i>Holländer</i> – September 19, 22, 26.	
October 2008		
Bremen	<i>Rienzi</i> – no actual dates.	
Hamburg	<i>Die Walküre</i> – Oct 19 [no other dates].	
November 2008		
Vienna	Staatsoper <i>Lohengrin</i> – November 16, 19, 23.	

December 2008

Vienna Staatsoper
Götterdämmerung-Dec 8, 11, 14, 19, 28.

February 2009

Strasbourg *Siegfried* – Feb 2009 [no actual dates].

March 2009

Barcelona *Die Meistersinger* – March [no actual dates].

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

Stuttgart *Lohengrin* – March 2009 [no actual dates].

April 2009

Barcelona *Meistersinger* – April [no actual dates].

Munich *Holländer* – April 9, 12.

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

Riga *Götterdämmerung*-April 24 [no other dates].

Salzburg Easter Festival
Siegfried - April 4, 13.

May 2009

Bergen *Götterdämmerung* - May 21.
Munich May 14, 17, 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].

September 2009

Lübeck *Siegfried* – September [no actual dates].

Season 2009/10

Barcelona *Tristan und Isolde* – No actual dates.

October 2009

Hamburg *Siegfried* – October 18 [no other dates].

November 2009

Vienna *The Ring* - 2 cycles [no actual dates].

**Application Form for Tickets to the Bayreuth Festival 2008
through the Wagner Society in NSW Inc.**

Holding Deposit	\$2,500 incl. \$100 handling fee*	\$2,500 incl. \$100 handling fee*
	Applicant 1	Applicant 2

Name

Address

Phone

(day)

(night)

Membership No

Signature/s

Tick the box if you wish to be allocated the **less expensive** tickets of those allocated to the Society.

*Based on the average cost of last year's allocation of sets of tickets plus 10% to cover ticket price increases. The Society levies a \$100 charge to cover administrative and related costs.

At the AGM on 21 May 2006, Members agreed to change the process for balloting the sets of tickets the Society receive from the Bayreuth Festival Office. Preference will now be given to Members of two or more years standing who have not, within the past five years, received tickets to Bayreuth through the Society. Otherwise, the process for applications for sets of tickets for the Festival in 2007 has not changed, and is:

1. any member of the Society may apply for 1 set of tickets in her or his own name and must forward a cheque for \$2,500 with their application form.
2. two members with a shared membership may apply for one set of tickets in each of their names (ie two sets of tickets for the two members) and must forward a cheque for \$5,000 with their application form;
3. application forms and cheques must reach the Society (at its GPO Box address) **by Sunday, 30 September 2007**;
4. in December, the Society expects to receive advice of the number of sets of tickets that have been allocated. If the Society receives all the tickets that were applied for, then a ballot will be held to allocate the seats among the successful applicants as follows:
 - a. Applicants who are members of two or more years standing who have not within the past five years received tickets through the Society will be balloted first;
 - b. other applicants of two or more years standing will be balloted second; and
 - c. the remaining applicants will be balloted last.
5. Cheques from successful applicants will be banked, and each successful applicant notified of their seat numbers (and given a refund or asked for further money as required.).
6. if the Society receives fewer tickets than were applied for, then a ballot will be held to determine which applicants will be successful, and their seat allocation. The same process will be followed as in "4", except that cheques will be returned to unsuccessful applicants.

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

Website enquiries: webmaster@MACROBUTTON HtmlResAnchor 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)