

The Wagner Society



IN NEW SOUTH WALES INC.

Newsletter No. 111, March 2008

In Memoriam

CARLO CILLARIO - DIED 13 DECEMBER 2007 - AGED 92

Society Member Richard Mason has drawn your Editor's attention to the death of Maestro Cillario – please see page 5 for an overview of his career.

President's Report

Dear Members

Welcome to our first Newsletter for 2008.

I have to make a confession. My usually placid demeanour was upended last week by a glorious woman (Lisa Gasteen) in an alien setting (a sardine-can in Hobart) and I'm having trouble returning to a stable state. If parts of this report contain more silliness than usual, That Woman is to blame.

December 2007 - Christmas Party

On Sunday December 9, we ended 2007 with a traditional Christmas Party at the Goethe Institut. After showing DVDs on the life of Birgit Nilsson (kindly loaned by June Donsworth) and some musical episodes in the life of a wascally wabbit (kindly loaned by Terence Watson) we moved on to the festivities.

My special thanks to Barbara Brady, who once again donated one of her marvellous Christmas Cakes for our raffle, and to Clare and Margaret Hennessy, who brought some hydrangeas to brighten our festive table, and to all those who manned the tables and helped dispense the seasonal cheer and clean up afterwards.

One member generously bought more than half the tickets in the raffle, and then won almost every prize, proving something about statistics and chance. But, because he was going overseas in a few days, he gave most of his prizes back (including the cake!) to be redrawn. He even tried to give back fourth prize, the framed lithograph of King Ludwig II,

but everyone refused to let it be redrawn, and so he had to take it home.

February 2008 - Talk by Alan Whelan on Wagner Russian escapade in 1863

On Sunday 17 February, Alan Whelan gave our first talk of 2008, on Wagner's three-month stay in Russia in early 1863. Alan recounted that, after 77 fruitless rehearsals for a *Tristan* in Vienna plagued by postponements, Wagner jumped at the chance of getting some income and went to St Petersburg to give two concerts, stopping off on the way in Berlin to see Bülow and see his wife, Cosima, who was in a condition of advanced pregnancy. Wagner introduced the Russian concert-going public to a new phenomenon – the sight of a conductor's back. Previously conductors had apparently faced the audience and beaten time in a desultory

PRESIDENT'S REPORT continued p.3 ▶

NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTS

In Memoriam – Carlo Cillario	P5
The Covent Garden Ring 2007 - One Members' Views	P7
Wagner in Venice & Florence 2007 - Dr June Donsworth	P8
The Bangkok (Somtow) Ring Cycle - Sarah Livingstone	P10
Bruce Hungerford, Australian-born concert pianist	P12
Wagner around Australia in 2008 – Lisa Gasteen returns	P13
Annual Membership Renewal for 2008	P15

PATRON:	Sir Charles Mackerras
HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS:	Prof Michael Ewans
	Mr Richard King
	Mr Horst Hoffman
	Mr Joseph Ferfaglia
	Mrs Barbara McNulty OBE

For Your **Diary**

	2008	
	see below for a number of performances in other states.	

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

SUNDAY DATE	EVENTS - 2008	LOCATION
March 16	Warwick Fyfe - travels in Europe, and experiences around the role of Wolfram in the 2007 revival of the Elke Neidhardt production of <i>Tannhäuser</i> by Opera Australia. (at 1pm Act 1 of The Flying Dutchman)	2pm Goethe Institut
April 20	Glenn Winslade to talk on "Life in Bayreuth" from a singer's viewpoint	2pm Goethe Institut
May 18	AGM with Recital and party	2pm Paddington Uniting Church TBC
June	No Meeting	
July 20	Peter Bassett to talk on 'Lortzing's 1840 Singspiel, Hans Sachs, as inspiration for Wagner's Die Meistersinger'	2pm Goethe Institut
August	No Meeting	2pm Goethe Institut
September 14	Dr Robert Gibson	2pm Goethe Institut TBC
October 19	Goetz Richter (A/Prof. Strings- Chair, String Unit, Sydney Conservatorium) will talk on Nietzsche and Wagner	2pm Goethe Institut
November 16	Visit to the Opera Centre, Elizabeth Street, hosted by Sharna Flowers	Opera Centre, Elizabeth St TBC
November 30	Early Christmas Party	2pm Goethe Institut
	A number of speakers have expressed interest in talking to the Society, but we are still negotiating suitable times for them – and dates for the meetings with the Goethe Institut. The speakers include: Robert Gay, Glenn Winslade, Peter Bassett and Chris Bordrick (NZ Wag Soc president). Details will be confirmed as soon as possible.	
Goethe-Institut address 90 Ocean Street Woollahra (corner of Jersey Road) Paddington Unit Church address 395 Oxford Street, Paddington (parking behind in Gordon Street)		

Committee **2006 - 2007**

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



President's Report continued

manner, like band-masters, and some critics were unhappy with the change.

Alan looked at the influence of the visit on Russian musical performance – for example, it inspired the Mariinsky Theatre to stage *Lohengrin* – and on Russian composers of the period and afterwards, and also the influence of Russia on Wagner, illustrating his talk with musical examples.

March 2008 - Talk by Warwick Fyfe, the 2007 Bayreuth Scholar

Our next function is on Sunday 16 March at the Goethe Institut, where Warwick Fyfe will talk about his travels in Europe, and his experience around the role of Wolfram in last year's revival of the Elke Neidhardt production of *Tannhäuser* by Opera Australia. I asked Warwick to give me a "blurb" outlining his talk, and this is what he sent.

"I feel very privileged to be able to talk to the society on the subject of my trip to Germany as a Bayreuth Scholar and to be able to thank its members in person for the wonderful assistance with which I was provided and without which I would not have had one of the great experiences of my life. I intend to start with an account of events leading up to the trip.

"Last year was a turbulent and frightening one for me. Amongst other things, I thought my career might be over due to a throat condition. This situation arose shortly after I'd received news that I'd been awarded the Bayreuth Scholarship. I will describe my brush with vocal oblivion and the infamous circumstances surrounding my return to the stage as Wolfram. The bulk of my talk will of course focus on my experiences in Germany, before I conclude with a few words concerning current and future projects. I promise to try very hard to be indiscreet. In conformity with the spirit of touchy-feely-ness which obtains in this era of Kevinism, I intend my talk to be partly a conversation. This, along with the use of certain audio visual aids, should help, at least partially, to counteract the soporific effect of the sound of my speaking voice. My love of Wagner's works is as profound as ever, but my knowledge of Wagner reached its peak in my 20s, when it was virtually my sole intellectual passion. In the last decade, however, I've been pursuing other intellectual interests, with the result that my Wagnerian knowledge is a trifle rusty. This is one more very good reason to encourage contributions from an audience comprised of individuals who know a lot more about Wagner than I do. See you on March the 16th!"

In the last Newsletter I revealed that I am an uncloseted and unrepentant Warwick Fyfe groupie, which affliction has sometimes seen me in the audience of operas that I loathe with a passion. I'm looking forward to Warwick's talk enormously.

Tickets for Bayreuth 2008

Since the last Newsletter, we have received two further sets of tickets for Bayreuth in 2008, through the Friends of Bayreuth, bringing our total to 10 sets. In addition, Christine Rothauser from the Richard Wagner Society of South Australia generously offered us a set of tickets to the second cycle, and one of our

members, Ross Whitelaw, will be attending that cycle with members of the South Australian society. Sadly, one of our successful applicants will not be able to travel in August this year, and his tickets have been reallocated.

The members who will now be attending are Vic and Katie French, Maxwell Grubb, Julie Carroll, Diane Wang and Peter George, Brian Freestone and Charles Brady, Robert Thurling, and Anne Jones. The "waiting list" is now headed by Gary Wilson, with Meredith Stokes and David Bremer following.

Other functions in 2008

As I write this letter, we are in the unusual position of having more speakers than we have functions, Glenn Winslade has kindly agreed to address our April meeting on "Life in Bayreuth" from a singer's viewpoint. On September 14, Dr Robert Gibson will address the Society and on October 19 Goetz Richter (A/Prof. Strings- Chair, String Unit, Sydney Conservatorium) will talk on Nietzsche and Wagner. A number of speakers have expressed interest in talking to the Society, but we are still negotiating suitable times for them – and dates for the meetings with the Goethe Institut. The speakers include: Robert Gay, Peter Bassett and Chris Bordrick (NZ Wag Soc president). Details will be confirmed as soon as possible, either in the next Newsletter or by letter and email.

Membership renewals and donations

I'd like to thank members who have renewed their 2008 memberships in such numbers, and particularly those who have given donations so generously.

This year we have introduced electronic subscription payments direct into the Society's bank account, which have been very popular. Next year we'll look at replacing the signed application form for electronic payments with an email.

Each year during membership renewal time, mail correctly addressed to the Society at GPO Box 4574, NSW 2001, is sorted and sent to Kenilworth in Queensland, postcode 4574. The patient and long-suffering staff at Kenilworth then engross the back of the envelope with a dated ink stamp confirming the envelope's brief stop-over in that place, and direct the item back to Sydney. One envelope managed to be mis-directed three times, until one of the good folk in Kenilworth used a big texter to wake their Sydney compatriots up to the item's true destination. (Yes, gentle reader, I probably do need to get a life.)

Dich, tuere Halle

I don't remember who wrote "there's naughtiness in everyone, and twice as much in me!" but it's true. Professor Kim Walker (Dean of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music) is currently giving a series of talks entitled "Great Minds" for the Art Gallery Society in New South Wales, at the gallery's Domain Theatre.

I can't attend anything at this venue without remembering a slip of the tongue during a talk given in this venue some years ago. During a lecture on Wagner's sources for the *Ring* story, the speaker mentioned the "world ash-tray", from which Wotan presumably took a burnt match and fashioned his spear. It's the best segue I know from *Götterdämmerung* to Act 1 of *Carmen*, but alas I've never



President's Report continued

been able to use it.

Alas too for Professor Walker, with history repeating itself in that dear Hall. The notes for her first lecture contained the following typo, in reference to early English keyboard masters (an oxymoron): "Aside from writing songs the English composers also excelled and took the lead in writing pieces for the virginal, a small, rectangular and often legless nun." Even now I can't read the words without dissolving in laughter.

I'm tempted to offer a prize to anyone who can run the world ash-tray and the often legless nun (small, rectangular or otherwise) into a short and pithy sentence!

Lisa Gasteen in Hobart

I have left the best for last. The Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra opened its 60th season on February 28 with a concert which included the Preludes to Acts 1 and 3 of *Tristan und Isolde*, and the *Liebestod* and *Wesendonck Lieder* sung by Lisa Gasteen.

A number of members of the Society and other music-lovers from New South Wales and Queensland attended this concert, many as part of a programme organised by Renaissance Tours, which included a second leg to Adelaide and performances at that city's Festival.

I'd like to thank Robert Gibson, a former member of the Society of long standing and now the Tasmanian Symphony's Publications Editor, for looking after us while we were in Hobart. Walking with Robert to a restaurant on our first evening in Hobart, our group first bumped into Lisa Gasteen, walking back to her hotel after rehearsals, and a little further on into the TSO's chief conductor and artistic director, Sebastian Lang-Lessing. Elsewhere one might have suspected that it was a put-up job, but in Hobart it was just good fortune.

The Hobart concert was followed by a gala dinner to celebrate the Tasmanian Symphony's 60th year, at which both Ms Gasteen and Mr Lang-Lessing were guests of honour. Ms Gasteen was seated between Barbara McNulty and me, and although I'm not usually star-struck, on this occasion I gladly made an exception.

But first to the concert. The *Wesendonck Lieder*, as you know, are one of the few works where Wagner used a text written by someone else. Wagner originally set the five poems for solo voice and piano, between November 1857 and May 1858. Wagner intended that Mathilde Wesendonck should be able to play these piano accompaniments.

During this period, Wagner also orchestrated the piano score for the fifth poem, *Träume*, for chamber orchestra (without voice), and this serenade was performed under Mathilde's window by musicians led by Wagner as a present on her 29th birthday, on 23 December 1857. I cannot say whether or not Mr Wesendonck was tucked up in bed with his wife at the time, but the similarity of both gift and birthday with Cosima's symphonic birthday greeting (*The Tribschen Idyll*) on 25 December 1870 is scary.

In 1880 Felix Mottl, a noted conductor and Bayreuth stalwart after Wagner's death, produced full-blown orchestral

accompaniments for the remaining four songs under Wagner's supervision, and it is with this orchestration that the *Lieder* are most commonly recorded and performed today. (I have read of but not heard an alternative version with orchestration of the first four songs by the German composer Hans Werner Henze.)

This brief history is included because I can never understand why the songs are not performed more often as the small-scale works Wagner originally created for solo female voice and piano, which I find are far more charming than their overblown orchestral cousins. Given the tendency of many Wagnerians to trumpet "authenticity", it's surprising that Herr Mottl's versions are so preferred to Wagner's own delicate and uncluttered piano accompaniments.

That said, Ms Gasteen's rendering of the songs was glorious. The conductor, Sebastian Lang-Lessing, moved seamlessly from the Prelude to Act 3 of *Tristan* into the first song, *Der Engel*, which sounds contrived but worked perfectly. I had been warned about the acoustic of Hobart's Federation Hall (likened by some unfavourably to a sardine can, at least in appearance) before the concert, but I was lucky to have an excellent seat and didn't notice any problems. (Perhaps those giving the warning have forgotten the miserable acoustics we endure in Sydney in both music venues at the opera house?)

This was followed by the familiar bookend pair, the prelude to Act 1 of *Tristan* and the *Liebestod*. Here Mr Lang-Lessing seemed to me to be too loud and too slow, and neither of these helped Ms Gasteen. Friends who listened to the concert broadcast by the ABC tell me that they detected some strain in her voice, but I was too lost in the sound to notice. My overwhelming impression is of being lost in a rich dark voice full of pathos and ecstasy, surging towards the long-awaited resolution of the opening chord of the prelude.

Some point to the tension created throughout *Tristan* by this unresolved chord as proof that Wagner and Mathilde Wesendonck's love was never consummated, so that only in death would the lovers find their salvation. If this is true, we all owe Ms Wesendonck a great debt of gratitude for resisting the Meister's considerable charms and blandishments.

Ms Gasteen's performance was greeted with a standing ovation and prolonged applause, but I sensed that those making the biggest exhibitions of themselves were not local (in the "League of Gentlemen" sense). I wasn't convinced that the locals actually liked Wagner, but at least they were polite enough not to fill every silence with tentative applause like their Sydney cousins do. (My advice - if you don't know when to clap, don't!)

The second half of the concert was Tchaikovsky's 6th symphony. I thought that the concert was the wrong way round and should have had the Wagner last (in the manner of the wine at Cana) so I didn't go back into the hall after the interval, preferring to sit quietly while that great voice slowly faded in my memory.

At the dinner afterwards, I asked Lisa Gasteen why she was singing in every capital in Australia this year except Sydney. It's just bad luck, apparently. Next year she'll be singing here in *Fidelio* for Opera Australia. She has decided to reduce her concert activity for



the next few years to have more time with her family, and while this may see her performing less overseas, it may also see her performing more at home.

And one last dinner-table story. Ms Gasteen's husband and son were supposed to join us around 10.30 at the dinner, but their flight was delayed an hour and a half, and in the end their didn't arrive from the airport until around 12.30am. We were talking, and suddenly Lisa said "they're here" and grabbing her mobile phone left the table and called them. And yes, they were there, outside the restaurant unloading their bags from the taxi. When she came back and sat down, Lisa saw the strange looks on all our faces and asked whether we could feel when someone we loved was nearby?" Our continued bewildered looks answered that question.

Walking back to the hotel around 1.30am in a crisp 8 degree Hobart morning, I felt the surge of that great voice lift my spirits once again. That Woman has another fan!

Roger Cruickshank 5 March 2008

New Members

The following people joined the Society:

Steve Fargo [964].

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: Anonymous, Anthony Jones, Naomi Kaldor, Bill Brooks and Alasdair Beck, Cherry Jackaman, Robert Lloyd, Elsie and James Moore, Mary Haswell, Monica and Aliro Olave, Jennifer Ferns, Julie Carroll, Mitzi Saunders, Jane Mathews, Anna-Lisa Klettenberg, Ross Whitelaw, Sandra Beesley, Pam and Ian McGaw, Ivan Shearer, Rae and Russ Cottle, Neville Mercer, Diana Wang and Peter George, Kenneth Reed, Annie and Terry Marshall, Vanessa King, Anna Ziegler, Neville Pollard, F. John Augustus and Kim Ryrrie, Barbara and Ian Brady, Edith and Hans Freeman, Philip Bacon, Iphigenia and Despina Kallinikos, Terry and Greg Chesher, Deanne Whittleston and Anthony Gregg, Janet and Hugh Wayland, Ingrid Garofali, Paola Garofali, Diana-Rose Orr, Patricia Moore, Amanda and George Rosenberg, Heinz Ebert, Steve Fargo, and Heather and Peter Roland.

In Memoriam

Carlo Cillario - Died 13 December 2007 - Aged 92

Society Member Richard Mason forwarded an obituary from *The Daily Telegraph* on the death of Maestro Cillario that has prompted your Editor to compile a longer tribute to one of Sydney's most important musical figures.

"Cillario conducted the première of Franco Zeffirelli's famous production of *Tosca* at Covent Garden in 1964; crowds of people had queued for five days to see Maria Callas who, at the end of that opening night, took 27 curtain calls in an ovation that lasted 40 minutes.... Cillario's conducting career, which had begun as a child prodigy violinist in Argentina, took him to Glyndebourne in 1961...to Barcelona in 1970 for Montserrat Caballé's first *Norma*, and, in 1985, to the Met in New York.... [You can see a snippet of this production at Youtube -<http://youtube.com/watch?v=hmBld82t6xg&feature=related>] Editor]

"In the meantime he had carved out a remarkable niche in Sydney, building what eventually became known as Opera Australia. There, although his preference was for Wagner, he inevitably became known for his interpretation of the great Italian repertory. Cillario's Australian debut came in 1966, when he conducted *Tosca* with Tito Gobbi at the Adelaide Festival. He returned to the country in 1968 with a run of *Tannhäuser* in Canberra. It was in Australia, with its

emerging arts scene and free from some of the drama, prima donnas and politics of the northern hemisphere's opera world, that Cillario spent most of the rest of his career. He saw the company through various artistic and financial crises, eventually retiring to Bologna after a star-studded farewell performance in 2003.

"Despite his serene appearance, on occasion Cillario's Latin temperament and emotions would come to the fore. His shouting during rehearsals became famous in the Australian musical world; so too were his actions to denote his displeasure, such as holding his nose and pulling a mock lavatory chain, or removing his shoe to smell it. But former colleagues recalled his love of the sense of ensemble among artists. "Most mornings he could be found in the theatre pit or in a dressing room, playing chamber music with members of the orchestra or sitting in on a coaching session, making suggestions about technique, repertoire and career path," recalled Moffatt Oxenbould, who was Opera Australia's artistic director for 15 years."

In an extensive obituary in *The Sydney Morning Herald* of 19 December 2007, Oxenbould noted that: "Over the years he had different titles and responsibilities - principal conductor, musical director, musical adviser, music consultant and principal guest conductor. Whatever the title, his was the most constant and enduring musical influence on the company's first half-century.



"He regretted that he did not conduct Mozart operas as often as he would have liked, but was proud that his time here included performances of most of the Wagner operas.

"Cillario once told me: 'Throughout my life I dedicated my work to honour the composers and not myself.' I know this to be true. His contribution to opera in Australia was immense, and his passion, enthusiasm and overwhelming love of music-making, combined with a secure respect for the crafts of the lyric stage, will live on'."

In his December 20, 2007 obituary for The Australian, Stephen Hall (titled "Opera conductor a humble wizard in Oz") wrote: "Cillario's first rehearsal with it in 1968 on the stage of the Elizabethan Theatre in Sydney's Newtown was almost a fiasco. From the podium, with all musicians able to hear, he screamed at me: "You promised me an orchestra!" His meaning was very clear.

"Cillario's sense of humour was put to the test during one of his early performances in Australia of Tannhauser. At that time we only had a chorus of 24, but encouraged by Cillario they managed to sound like 64. We had resisted using a prompter's box; Cillario insisted that Bill Reid, one of our staff conductors, sit beside him in the pit to cue the singers. All went well until the entrance of the guests, when Cillario's trousers became adrift from his braces. "Billone! (Big Bill!)," he muttered. "Aiuto (Help!)." Bill did his best to pull up Cillario's trousers with his right hand, while continuing to cue the stage with his left.

"Somehow, during the applause for the chorus, order was restored and Cillario's trousers firmly secured. Many a conductor I worked with would have been mortified by such an occurrence. Cillario merely got the giggles, and continued to joke about it years later. He could always see the funny side."

In a web post, Bardassa (not otherwise identified) in the On Stage (And Walls) Melbourne website, recalled of Cillario, that in "2000 he was coaching at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and had requested the overture and waltz from Siegfried Wagner's *Der Bärenhäuter*. It was laying about in the vault of a publisher's archive in Hamburg and was proving difficult to trace and because I was the publisher's agent I received a phone call from him in which he explained that as a young man he had seen Siegfried Wagner (who died in 1930) conduct and that that was part of his developing fascination with being a conductor himself.

"Later, watching him conduct Tristan in 1990 he was still an amazing 'shouter' of instructions, right up the final dress ("I did not say vibrato" he yelled during a luscious moment of Tristan - but e [sic] was right, the strings tightened up instantly and began to cut like ice).

"Even though he was in his 70s then he would take the tram back to where he was staying after conducting a Tristan and I (taking the same tram) had a couple of great chats with him about the score. I wrote a couple of things into my Tristan score after one of these midnight rides. Things like the great build up to Isolde's entrance in the last act where the crescendo becomes almost an earthquake."

In her Monday, 24 December 2007 obituary for The Independent, Elizabeth Forbes recalled that Cillario "also conducted several Wagner operas, including *Die Walkre* [sic] with Rita Hunter as Brnnhilde [sic] and, at a revival, Alberto Remedios as Siegmund) and *Das Rheingold*, as well as *Tristan und Isolde* and *Die Meistersinger*, the latter apparently a huge success. In 2003 Cillario conducted a farewell concert in Sydney, then retired."

Finally a reminiscence from Australian conductor, music educator and ABC presenter, Graham Abbott's blog of Tuesday, 18 December 2007, "My own dealings with him were very small compared to many, but no less memorable. In about 1978 or 1979 he conducted a concert with the orchestra at the Sydney Conservatorium. It was during my undergraduate days and I played viola in the orchestra then. The program was music one would not normally have associated with him: Mozart Symphony no 33, Schumann Cello Concerto and Shostakovich Symphony no 5. It was inspiration for young musicians that I can only aspire to nowadays. He conducted the two symphonies from memory and frequently demonstrated details of articulation to us on his violin. It was an awesome experience and I felt the orchestra played miraculously under him. He didn't miss a thing. He laughed, he screamed, he cajoled, he pouted, he sang... He did all that in the rehearsals, too!"

If you would like to read the full obituaries and reminiscences they may still be available at the following websites:

<http://www.smh.com.au/news/obituaries/maestro-nurtured-australian-opera/2007/12/18/1197740267378.html?page=fullpage#contentSwap1>

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,22949968-5013575,00.html>

<http://onstagemelbourne.blogspot.com/2007/12/when-i-wrote-for-inpress-regular.html>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/carlo-felice-cillario-opera-conductor-766766.html>

<http://grahamabbott.artsblogs.com/blog/blog.asp?archive=m2007128666>

[Editor]



The **Covent** Garden Ring **2007**

- Colleen And Mike Chesterman,
Liz Jacka And Lesley Lynch

In the last issue of the Wagner Society newsletter, Richard Mason reviewed the first cycle of the Covent Garden Ring. Based on our attendance at the third cycle we would like to present an alternative view.

Six of us gained tickets through the internet in the opening sale to Friends: we chose the third cycle so that we could see Bryn Terfel's performances as Wotan/ Wanderer and Placido Domingo's performance as Siegmund. This was in the end pointless, due to Terfel's withdrawal at the first rehearsal. Despite the views of our esteemed President, we will however review the performance of his replacement, John Tomlinson. One of us was seeing his 16th Ring, another was a Ring Virgin. All of us were swept away by the cumulative effect of the 4 operas, a view shared by an enthusiastic last night audience on November 2.

Like Richard, our greatest praise is for the fine conducting of Antonio Pappano. We had heard that during the individual performances of the operas in previous years he had presented a very detailed and attentive perspective. Now he had combined this with a commanding sweep through the music, which was superbly fulfilled by the large orchestra, with a few unfortunate errors by the brass. It was dramatic and exciting.

We would guess that Keith Warner's direction had been simplified since the first stagings. Certainly many of the key moments were most powerfully presented. We were particularly impressed by the ending of Act II of Valkyrie, often rather rushed and confused. Through this Act Warner had concentrated on the inter-relationships between the characters and at times in this Act one could feel the tight bonds between Wotan and Fricka, Sieglinde and Brunhilde as if they were rope. It built on the intensity of Act I, when Siegmund and Sieglinde circled each other symbiotically; this was beautifully sung by the young Dutch soprano Eva-Marie Westbroek and the still compelling Domingo. Barry Millington, the surtitled for the operas has written in *Andante* of the influence of Feuerbach's view of the 'I-You' relationship on Warner's interpretation. The philosopher also influenced the characterisation, familiar from many other Rings since Chéreau, of the gods as effete aristocrats, the giants as hostile tradesmen and the growing strength of the human race's ability to overturn the gods of their own making. This was powerfully represented by Warner as golden statues of the gods decorating the Gibichung Hall whence they were taken by young people to be burned in bonfires at the conclusion of *Götterdämmerung*.

Still problematic were aspects of Stephen Lazarides' designs—overfussy in Rhinegold with ropes and ladders coming down from the ceiling, a curious crashed aeroplane in *Siegfried*, dominating Mime's hut – this was apparently meant to represent the means of the Wanderer's journeying, but he did not emerge from the cockpit, just wandered around from the side. But together he and Warner made a powerful use of symbols recurring through the operas – the red rope of fate, the curved steel surrounding Brünnhilde's rock, the whirling white screen that makes a powerful backdrop to the Valkyries' ride.

Richard was particularly critical of John Tomlinson as Wotan/ Wanderer and on this we would vehemently disagree. Certainly his voice is not what it once was, but in this last of the four cycles it was powerful. More than this, in seeing a Ring rather than hearing a recording, one is inevitably drawn to the three-dimensional body, to the power of the performance. In this Tomlinson was magnificent. From the moment in the prologue to Rhinegold, when we see him cutting his spear from the World Ashtree, he represents Wotan as deeply flawed, aware of his failings and railing about his diminution even as he struggles to complete Valhalla. It was a performance that brought to mind a great Lear or Prospero, particularly as he was represented tearing into shreds his collection of wisdom. Rosalind Plowright was brilliant as a shrewish Fricka who knew how to dominate this guilt-wracked figure.

Lisa Gasteen had missed the second cycle with a cold, but returned for the third. Again her voice is weak in some top notes, particularly in the difficult 3rd Act of *Siegfried*. But her acting ability, her energy and intensity, together with some beautiful singing, made for a very powerful *Götterdämmerung*. John Treleaven acted Siegfried as a country innocent, rather than as a fool. His voice is powerful but lacks the intensity and purity of a high heldentenor.

Richard praised the singing of those in the smaller roles, which we would absolutely endorse. In particular, Peter Sidhom's powerful Alberich and Gerard Siegel's neurotic Mime were excellent and in Rhinegold their dreadful experimental laboratory with human body parts scattered around was genuinely horrifying. Sadly the wonderful Philip Langridge had a virus and his Loge was not in good voice. Peter Coleman-Wright was excellent as both Donner and Gunther and Emily Magee sang beautifully as Freia and Guttrune.

The production began with naked Rhinemaidens pushing a ball like a world as they played in the Rhine. At the end of *Götterdämmerung* as they regained the gold, they slipped out of the shabby homeless men's costumes they had worn as they wandered the world mourning their loss and again faced the future (and the audience) in naked beauty. It was a startling and moving image of hope in the future. The applause and flowers at the end indicated the huge delight this production had brought to the audience.



Dr June Donsworth Recalls – Wagner in Venice and Florence 2007

Siegfried 20 June 2007 At Teatro La Fenice.

I want to share with the Society some memories (taken from my journal) of seeing a wonderful *Siegfried* at the newly risen La Fenice in Venice. It may be of interest that I booked this seat by phone +39 041 2424, in February 2007, it cost E126.50 with booking fee included, and for me it was a perfect seat, three rows from the middle and in the center.

[As the Fenice's website reveals, "costumi, scene e parti della decorazione realizzati nel laboratorio dell'Oper der Stadt Köln". The Cologne Opera site reveals that it was last performed there on 16 March 2007, but it appears to have been premiered in November 2002. Editor]

Maestro Concertatore E Direttore: Jeffrey Tate and the Orchestra all Teatro La Fenice. Cast: Siegfried-Stefan Vinke; Mime- Wolfgang Abliger-Sperrhache; The Wanderer—Greer Grimsley; Alberich—Werner van Mechelen; Fafner—Bjarni Thor Kristinsson; Erda—Anne Pellekorre; Brünnhilde- Susan Bullock; Voce di un Uccello—Inka Rina.

Act. 1. Familiar scungy rubbishy place, a caravan, tools, iron pot (for forging Nothung), kitchen area with pots and pans. Siegfried, Stefan Vinke, is actually a YOUNG Siegfried; he wore a khaki shirt and army-type fatigue pants, short dark hair, round unlined face and a very sweet tenor voice. He was very lyrical when singing the tender parts (about his mother), but could boom it out when necessary. His voice never wavered, and kept on the note with the required strength right to the end. The orchestra played wonderfully throughout, being able to suspend time in the quiet scenes and really give it all in the big passages. I was impressed when Mime went to light a cigarette, then almost immediately threw it into the iron pot which instantly burst into flames inside, ready for the forging scene. The Wanderer (Greer Grimsley) looked very elegant in dark blue suit, long grey coat and walking stick for his staff, immaculately groomed grey hair, handsome face, grey fedora, and sang very well indeed; Mime great too. Siegfried comes on with a bear-fur coat and headpiece, not a real bear. The ending of Act 1 was very dramatic: when Siegfried bangs the door of the caravan, it bursts open and fire engulfs the caravan.

Act 11. The dragon scene. Initially the dragon appeared as a shaft of light when the back curtain rose a little, and the dragon roared, but in his big scene the dragon appeared as 2 huge wooden claws which gradually descended to the floor, and from its middle (and mechanical innards) poured forth white snorts of smoke. The forest was great, a series of half cut-off stumps of big trees, giving the scene a sense of foreboding and

calamity (and now I have seen the current Bayreuth Ring, not dissimilar to that). When Siegfried stabbed the dragon, the singer of Fafner himself appeared in dirty forest green clothes covered in red paint (blood presumably). The bird was a dead stuffed bird which Siegfried picked up off the floor and she sang (a bit flat) from the back.

Act 111. The scene between the Wanderer and Erda is in a drawing room with 2 lounges covered in white drapes. Behind is a big picture of Brünnhilde's rock, and there is a roaring fire in a fire place. Erda is concealed in the drapes of the lounge and emerges from them. A great duet between Erda and the Wanderer. Erda is in a long skirt, a nice cardigan and grey felt furry slippers. She is young and slim. They both sing valiantly.

The scene between the Wanderer and Siegfried was very moving. Greer Grimley had very convincingly acted his pleasure at Siegfried's approach. Siegfried was a real brat and the Wanderer's hurt was palpable. The forest floor was covered in straw.

The last scene was very dramatic. A straight row of flames at the back of Brünnhilde's sleeping place. In the foreground was a floor which looked grey and soft. Scattered around this floor were a number of helmets and swords of the dead heroes. In the middle was a grey heap which turned out to be Brünnhilde. Her "awakening" was magic and both Susan Bullock (who is 40-ish, nice face and relatively slim) and Stefan Vinke sang superbly. She had a heavy dark coat over her (her armour) and another coat over a brown dress and bare feet. It was a truly superb ending.

Many in the audience gave a standing ovation at the end, and a very excited audience spilled out into the Campo afterwards. [I love the Italian for a Waldvogel - Voce di un Uccello – sounds like an Italian aria already. Editor]

***Das Rheingold* - 23 June 2007 Teatro Comunale, Florence.**

I obtained tickets for this in February on the Internet http://www.maggiofiorentino.com/index_eng.shtml a cost of E98 for *Rheingold* and E104 for *Walküre*. Once again, they were fantastic seats. This production came from Valencia in Spain. It was conducted by Zubin Mehta and directed by Carlos Padrissa. The Dance Company from Spain, La Fura dels Baus, were an integral part of the action and also acted as technicians on stage, manoeuvring the "fork lifts" etc.

Cast: Wotan: Juha Uusitalo; Donner- Ilya Bannik; Froh-German Villar; Loge- John Daszak; Alberich-



Franz-Josef Kapellmann; Mime- Ulrich Röss; Fasolt-Matti Salminen; Fafner-Stephen Milling; Fricka -Anna Larsson; Freia—Sabina von Walther; Erda- Christa Mayer; Woglinde- Silvia Vazquez; Wellgunde- Ann-Katrin Naidu; Flosshilde-Hannah Esther Minutillo.

Scene 1. 3 Rhine maidens in skimpy black costumes, patterned-leg stockings, a wrapped-thing around the torso, each in her water tank, on a sloping grid stage. Lots of splashing. They sang well. I did not like the Alberich in any way. His look was: grey hair, stocky build, and a kind of plastic apron around his middle. I found his voice un-menacing and I thought he was a wooden actor. Huge digitalised images as a back drop. At the end of the scene, the water baths fill up with more water, the Rhinemaidens do a lot of diving deep into their separate baths, holding their breath for ages, and the water pours out of the baths on to a steel grid floor. Alberich yanks a bag of gold from each tank. On the whole, I think, there was a lot of stage action but with little dramatic effect.

Scene 11. The gods are standing up, each in their elevated separate cage (a contraption a bit like a fork lift). The cages are manipulated into place by black clothed technicians (are they some of the dancers?) and they make the cages sway in the air. Both Fricka and Wotan have good voices, but, because they were trapped in their airborne cages, they were rendered passive, imprisoned in space, with no body language to accompany the words they were singing. The overall effect was that the singing was completely divorced from its emotional meaning and impact, and there was no interaction between the Gods.

Loge came on in a little motorized scooter, very smooth, and it moved in time with the music, but his voice was not satisfying, and he also did not interact as his machine did all the approaching and reversing whilst he stood like a dummy on it. The giants were also in their own mechanically driven crane-cages, with big mechanical legs and arms, and sang well. This scene was introduced by computer graphics of geometry, space images of the world etc. Fricka was a very glamorous young woman, lovely voice, tall white boots and bits of creamy leather and light tan floaty bits off her waist (matching Wotan's outfit). Freia was in a more conventional cream overdress over a gold-coloured underskirt, holding a big shiny red apple. The 2 brothers were in light tan outfits. They sang so far back on the stage that they were hard to hear.

Scene 11. The Nibelheim scene—digitalized images of machines, some kind of human genome operation, big eggs hatching into big babies, a lot of dancers in gold costumes hung up by their ankles and later on, they became gold ingots?? In the Tarnhelm scene, Alberich turns himself into a "dragon", made of several men bent over with flames flickering, and then a quite big green mechanical frog which jumped mechanically. Mime's voice was not to my liking. Alberich

sang most of his Curse lying down, and did not impart a proper sense of threat. Wotan and Loge descend to Nibelheim in a wire cage, through the sky, and this was a great entrance to the scene.

Scene 1V. The last scene has the gods back in their elevated cages; the gold dancers are piled up as the gold to hide Freia. It was disappointing again that Loge's voice was so weak, but the ending was very dramatic as the dancers climbed on to each other in a pyramid fashion and formed a web which represented Valhalla at the back, whilst rainbow coloured lights appeared on the sides.

Overall, I thought the Orchestra playing was mediocre and the productions, although imaginative, lacked drama because of the fork lift concept and mediocre singing.

***Die Walküre*—25 June 2007, Teatro Comunale, Florence.**

Conductor Zubin Mehta: Director Carlos Padrissa: Cast: Sigmund--- Peter Seiffert; Hunding—Matti Salminen

Wotan—Juha Uusitalo; Sieglinde—Petra Maria Schnitzer; Brünnhilde—Jennifer Wilson; Fricka—Anna Larsson; Gerhilde—Bernadette Flaitz; Ortlinde—Helen Huse Ralston; Waltraut—Pilar Vasquez; Schwertleite—Christa Mayer; Helmwig—Eugenia Bethencourt; Grimgerde—Manuela Brass; Rossweisse—Hannah Esther Minutillo.

Act 1. Started with a bare-treed forest (digitalized images) and every so often a wolf (ethereal), and it created the feeling as if one was fleeing through the woods. Eventually Siegmund appears and throws himself on the ground where there is a pile of bones, and amongst them a heap of rags which turns out to be Sieglinde. She is young, dressed in very bedraggled clothes, dreadlocked hair, black tattoos on her arms, and a rope around her neck. She propels herself along the floor by crawling on her arms and feet like an ape. She is definitely a cave-dwelling primitive creature. (pre-homo-erectus?) Siegmund looks old, thickset body, grey hair (they were very badly matched physically). Behind them was a huge digitalized image of a tree. Hunding sung by Matti Salminen—great voice. He is dressed in a forest-green-moss-like loose costume. Siegmund is in fur. Sieglinde is in a strappy black top and a kind of net skirt down to her ankles with an opaque bit to the mid-thigh. When Siegmund and Sieglinde "find" each other, their love allows her to throw off the rope around her neck and take a few tentative steps standing vertically. I thought this whole scene and the "metaphor" was embarrassingly crass and ridiculous and felt like tittering.

Siegmund pulls a red sword out of the digitalized tree: their love song was sung moderately well, but not soaring to great heights. Having been preceded by



such banality, one could not take them seriously. The Orchestra played beautifully in the lyrical moments. When the sun came up, a digitalized owl flew into a tree and blinked at Siegmund and Sieglinde (this was funny and meant to be I think).

Act 11. In the first scene Wotan and Fricka are in their elevated cages again. They both sang well, but the elevated isolated position of their cages freezes them in their own space and prevents emotional interaction. Brünnhilde enters, also in an elevated cage. She is of dumpy build, with a dreadful costume, light tan flanges of material like the other gods, but with a horrible pair of brown frying-pan like breast plates with red dots in the middle, a waist and hip belt in the same colour and of metal-like material. She truly looked a fright—and she had a silly headband to cap it all off. She sang quite well, but really just OK. There were back images of Siegmund and Sieglinde fleeing in to the forest which were very effective. I thought the orchestra played beautifully in the Annunciation scene, but I was not moved at all by Brünnhilde's singing. There was a great feeling of menace before Siegmund and Hunding's battle. Siegmund's death lacked drama and Hunding just stood there stock still after killing Siegmund until Wotan told him "go" and then he dropped down. Brünnhilde was convincing in urging Sieglinde to flee.

Act 111. I went to the Ladies' a bit late in the interval and was locked out of the stalls and had to sit in a box. In fact I think the acoustics were better up there than in the stalls. The Valkyries all had similar costumes to Brünnhilde. After their bit, Wotan arrives in his cage, but does descend from it finally to interact with Brünnhilde. Somehow his farewell did not move me at all, I think because he had been in his cage up until then and we, as the audience, had not built up any rapport with him and so could not get involved in his grief and the terrible poignancy of his farewell. The placing of Brünnhilde on the rock was beautifully done, a huge disc descends, then it turns over to be horizontal, supported all around by the black clad dancers (members of La Fura dels Baus). Brünnhilde and Wotan climbed on to the disc, he covered her, and at the very end, with the last strands of music, a flame was passed from one black helmeted dancer to the next around the edges of the disc until there was a whole circle of flame. It was very effective, but somehow the singing in this scene did not bring the usual tears to the eyes.

Overall, I thought this production had lots of faults in its conception. Basically the idea of the gods being in elevated cages destroyed the emotional impact of the whole opera. The images of the First Act (prehistoric, apelike Sieglinde being "freed" from her bonds to Hunding (the rope around her neck was too too much) also just destroyed one's capacity to take this production seriously.

Sarah Livingstone on the Progress of the Bangkok (Somtow) Ring Cycle

[Sarah is a member of the Wagner Society of Western Australia and has kindly sent us a short report on the Somtow Sucharitkul production of the Ring. Members may remember that we covered this ambitious project in an earlier issue - No. 104, June 2006. Editor]

Thailand was lovely; the two performances of *Die Walküre* that I attended were really well done with a lot of hard work being put into the production. Unfortunately Thailand is not really ready for Wagner. On the first night, the Theatre was only about 10% full. Twenty minutes after the performance was due to start, Somtow Sucharitkul, the conductor and director, appeared on stage and said "Hello, a warm welcome to you all – all fifteen of you! Let's hope the other thousand are stuck in a traffic jam!" He then went on to say that two of the lead singers, due to sing the Sieglinde and Hunding roles were indisposed but would still try and sing their level best. For a minute there I felt sorry for him. I have to say that I could barely notice any glitches in their singing. Most of the singers were young and Brünnhilde was a lovely Taiwanese singer, Jennifer Chen, whose voice and dramatic quality were brilliant. An Australian in the audience remarked that here was a Brünnhilde who looked the part (and sang superbly)!

Most of the cast were in Thai costumes, which worked well – and Hunding was in a military uniform, but didn't look ruthless enough. I must confess I could not quite see the Japanese occupation connection, which the opera was supposed to have.

There were quite a few extras – Sieglinde was portrayed as a royal (or high caste) and had a few maidservants to pander to her every need, (very Thai), so did Wotan and Hunding (who had men and boys to attend to them). Valhalla's heroes were slowly being bought to life by the Valkyries, so that was almost pure Wagner.

The sets were quite good, although a bit sparse at times compared to last year's *Rhinegold* (considering the financial constraints Somtow had to face). The production had a definite Asian feel to it with the Yin-Yang mandala always on the background. There were some video images, but they worked only some of the time, and best at the final scene where red lights portrayed the flame and video images of smoke (unfortunately not directly above the lights).

The orchestra was not quite up to standard as Wagner's music was too much of a challenge at times - but they pulled through and moved the whole opera along.

For the second performance, (this time the hall was about 25% full), which started late again, Somtow appeared once again on stage to apologise for the late



start and a technical hitch – a violinist had dropped her bow through the cracks on the orchestra pit and the pit was being raised while the bow was being retrieved. As the pit was being lowered I heard this scream “STOP” - it was Somtow. He hadn't quite managed to move away from the descending pit! Visions of a squashed Somtow flashed through my mind!

All things considered, Somtow is a very courageous man and a real visionary. For him to follow his passion in a country that doesn't *understand* his passion is remarkable. It really was a very brave performance.

Somtow was at the foyer at each interval talking to the patrons, mostly European expats and a few visitors. He invited Peter Bassett and me to the cast party held at his studio in some back alley in the heart of Bangkok. Thankfully we were given a lift – we would have never found this place having to give directions to a taxi! It was good meeting members of the production team and some of the singers, most of whom are American and European. They have great respect and admiration for Somtow and appreciate the enormous effort he puts in his work.

I hope to make it to *Siegfried*, which is supposed to be staged towards the end of next year. [According to Somtow's plans, the cycle is scheduled for a complete performance with his staging of *Götterdämmerung* in 2010 – Editor.]

Seattle **Opera** Appoints Asher **Fisch** as **Company's** Principal Guest **Conductor**

In an 16 October 2007 media release, Speight Jenkins general director of the Seattle Opera announced that “Israeli conductor Asher Fisch has been named as the company's principal guest conductor and will assume both a significant role in conducting future performances at Seattle Opera as well as serving as a musical advisor to the general director.

Fisch, who is currently music director of Tel Aviv's Israeli Opera, most recently conducted Seattle Opera's August performances of *Der Fliegende Holländer* and was subsequently awarded the company's artist of the year award for the 2006-07 season. He made his Seattle Opera debut in 2003 leading performances of *Parsifal*, and since then has returned to pace the company's productions of *Lohengrin* and *Rosenkavalier*. In August 2008 he is slated to conduct Seattle Opera's second International Wagner Competition.”

Interestingly, in the company's media release's list of Fisch's conducting achievements there is no mention of the 2004 Adelaide Ring Cycle – just an oversight? Nonetheless, I'm sure all Wagnerians in Australia will wish him well with his appointment and hope that it will not preclude him from returning to conduct any future revival of the Adelaide Ring.

[Editor]

Book Notice: “**The Redeemer** Reborn: *Parsifal* as the Fifth **Opera of Wagner's Ring**”

- By Paul Schofield

On a website for the Triplicate News (http://www.triplicate.com/news/story.cfm?story_no=7507) your Editor has come across this book, published on 2 February 2008 by Amadeus Press. According to the Editor of Triplicate News, Matthew C. Durkee, who interviewed the author for his article “Zen and the art of the Wagnerian opera”: “in 2001, ordained Buddhist monk Paul Schofield asked permission to leave his monastery in Mt. Shasta so he could work on a book about the operas of Richard Wagner. Durkee apparently said: “I came out to explain to the modern world what Buddhism and Wagner really mean.” [The Editor of this Newsletter tends to bristle when anyone claims to tell anyone else what something “really” means – it's usually a prelude to a strongly ideological misunderstanding.]

According to Durkee, Schofield elaborated: “There has been a lot written about this in the last few years, but it's not correct because they don't know enough about Buddhism.” “Wagner himself was very interested in Buddha in 1854, having read Schopenhauer's book,” Schofield says.

Given that Buddhism, like most religions and political doctrines, has had many schools and schisms over the centuries, one could be forgiven for wondering again about Schofield's certainty about the “correct” interpretation of Buddhism or Wagner's operas. He seems to acknowledge that the Western understanding of Buddhism was severely hampered by only having access to “excerpts that were being translated,” so it rather begs the question of how Wagner was more accurate in his interpretation than Schopenhauer – it may be that it is because Wagner is the artist and Schopenhauer only a philosopher.

According to the article, Schofield considers that “Schopenhauer developed a new philosophy centered on Buddhist principles of renouncing the material world in pursuit of spiritual enlightenment”, but I suspect, from my little knowledge of Schopenhauer that, Buddhism was largely a source of new ways of looking at old Western philosophical problems and a useful counter to Western materialism. Schopenhauer considered “spiritual enlightenment” a species of error since it assumes that one can separate oneself from the Will that seeks only to desire in its unending cycle. While Schopenhauer was attracted to the notion of Nirvana, of release from a world of suffering caused by unsatisfiable desire, it was not quite the state of blissful non-existence of Buddhism since Schopenhauer did not believe there was an afterlife or god or salvation. The closest one could come to Nirvana was to lose oneself occasionally in the experience of art, especially music. The capacity for humans to stand outside their experience of being manipulated by the Will may lead to a sense of



detachment and calmness, but for Schopenhauer those experiences can only be temporary until the Will surges again through desire and returns us to suffering.

One of Schofield's more interesting assertions, according to the report, is that "When Wagner read Schopenhauer's 'The World as Will and Representation,' he embraced the idea of reincarnation not just as a theory but as a reality. Reincarnation was not simply a theoretical speculation. It was for Wagner an actual living reality that he embraced and accepted." Wagner as a believer in reincarnation is not one of the images I have garnered from reading Wagner's works and letter, so I will have another look to see if Schofield's assertion can be supported.

In asserting that "Wagner portrays the whole panorama of existence from the fall to salvation and reincarnation in his operas. He's using the fall and reincarnation not to convert anyone to Buddhism, but merely as an artistic symbol", Schofield is asserting his right to **an** interpretation of both the Ring Cycle and *Parsifal*, but not to **the** interpretation.

There is much to be said, as Schofield apparently argues that "Wagner's opus, the Ring cycle, is incomplete without a later Wagnerian opera, Parsifal." Indeed some productions have made an explicit connection between the works, including, if my memory serves me correct, the 2000 Bayreuth Ring Cycle that ended with a very young

Parsifal entering from backstage through a door in a huge metal wall.

The article suggests that "Schofield believes the Ring ends with only partial redemption for its main characters. Wagner's later play Parsifal represents reincarnations of the Ring's major players, who achieve full redemption by also rescuing the spear and achieving full enlightenment." This position, of course, assumes that Wagner was concerned about such redemption and, even more contentiously, that there is any credibility to the assertion that some or any of the Ring characters are "reincarnated" in those of *Parsifal*. It is a commonplace of literary criticism that artists often use a similar constellation of character traits, ideas, images, plots and so on in their work, because it represents what most deeply concerns them about the way the world and people work, but to elaborate that into a proposition that, because there are such similarities, Wagner intended the characters of *Parsifal* to be reincarnations of the characters of the Ring Cycle is certainly brave. But it does provide a strong incentive to read the book to find out the line of argument that Schofield uses to justify his contention.

If you're interested in reading the article without the Editor's commentary, you can find it at http://www.triplicate.com/news/story.cfm?story_no=7507. The Editor would love to incorporate your review of the book into a future Newsletter! [Editor]

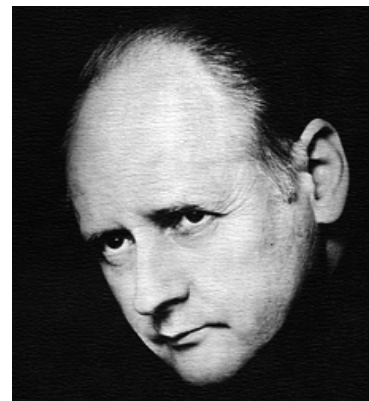
Bruce Hungerford - Australian-Born Concert Pianist

Members may remember that the winner of the special prize in the Society's 25th Anniversary essay competition, Nathan Parry, wrote about the piano music of Richard Wagner (No. 103, March 2006 and No. 104, June 2006), basing his essay in part on the fact that Australian Pianist, Bruce Hungerford, had recorded them all in a series of Bayreuth masterclasses in 1960. Recently, I stumbled across some further information about Hungerford, not the least that he was extremely highly regarded by many critics and fellow pianists.

From the New York Times obituaries: 26 January 1977: "Died. Bruce Hungerford, 54, Australian-born concert pianist and Egyptologist; in an auto accident; just after giving a slide lecture on Egypt at Rockefeller University in New York City. When he was pianist in residence at the Bayreuth Festival master classes, Hungerford recorded all the piano music of Richard Wagner. More recently he was acclaimed for his powerful, deeply sensitive interpretations of Beethoven, both in concert and on records."

In a memorial notice in the New York Times, published on 25 January 1987, Tim Page wrote: "Ten years ago tomorrow, the pianist Bruce Hungerford died in an automobile accident in the Bronx at the age of 54. Since then all of his recordings have gone out of print, and one will search in vain for his name in the New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians. Yet Hungerford has not been forgotten. Many aficionados consider him one of the most temperate, original, penetrating and deeply satisfying of his generation, and rank his incomplete survey of the Beethoven sonatas (he had recorded only two-thirds of the cycle at the time of his death) with the classic interpretations of artists such as Wilhelm Backhaus, Claudio Arrau and Yves Nat."

Hungerford was born in 1922 in Melbourne, where he began his music studies, then later studied piano with Ignaz Friedman in Sydney in 1944. During the same year, Hungerford insisted on playing for conductor Eugene Ormandy, while Ormandy was on a tour in Melbourne. Ormandy eventually arranged for Hungerford to go to America in 1945 and study with Ernest Hutcheson at the Juilliard School of Music in New York. He came to the Juilliard School in 1945, where he studied with Carl Friedberg and Myra Hess. He made his New York debut in 1951. In his later years, he was a member of the piano faculty at the Mannes College of Music. In 1947 Olga Samaroff suggested that Hungerford either try to establish himself in Europe as a concert pianist or move back to Australia and become a piano teacher. Although Hungerford continued to perform in the United States for the next ten years, he felt that he needed to conquer Europe in order to launch a major career, so he moved to Germany in 1958 and began concertizing all over the continent. It was during this time that he recorded his Bayreuth Masterclasses—the original tapes of which are in his archives at the University Libraries, University of Maryland (<http://www.lib.umd.edu/PAL/IPAM/IPAMhungerford.html>).



Hungerford was not only a pianist but a learned Egyptologist - he was returning home from delivering a lecture on Egypt at Rockefeller University when he was killed. He was also something of a mystic, with an interest in psychic phenomena, reincarnation and the theories of Edgar Cayce.

Here's a sample of some critical views on Hungerford's playing: "From start to finish, Mr. Hungerford's Beethoven playing was a model of its kind: flexible within an over-all, unshakeable, regularity of pulse; logical and lucid in outline, and vigorous without ever losing sight of details in the flush of excitement." And: "Hungerford's playing has been compared to a combination of fire and ice. He was full of passion and conviction and had very little tolerance for any approach that was not his own. One of the things that made his playing so excellent was this incredible confidence that he was right." "He had a very powerful personality and was really sort of a guru to a lot of people. When I think about him, I remember his beautiful sound, his probing mind, and the intensity that vitalized everything he did."

If you are interested you could read the rest of Page's memorial review at the New York Times (<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B0DEED81E3FF936A15752C0A961948260&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=all>). The Bruce Hungerford Memorial Foundation still awards a prize to young pianists that the recipients regularly mention in their biographies.

Fortunately, it seems that Hungerford's Beethoven recordings were re-issued by Vanguard (Catalog #: 1193) in 2003 and may still be purchased (you could try the Archiv website http://www.arkivmusic.com/classical/albumList.jsp?name_id1=41438&name_role1=2&bcorder=2). Sadly, the Wagner LPs appear not to have been re-issued - yet. However, if you happen to have a copy of the black vinyl recordings, we could arrange a hearing at a future Society meeting - please let the Editor know. [Editor]

A Feast of Wagner Around Australia in 2008 – Featuring Australian Wagnerian Soprano Lisa Gasteen

BRISBANE

29 March

The Queensland Orchestra

Johannes Fritzsch, cond.

Deborah Riedel

Christian Elsner

Philip Kang

Messiaen: *Les Offrandes Oubliées*

Howard: *Gravity's Rainbow* (Premiere)

Wagner: *Die Walküre Act 1*

28, 29 November

The Queensland Orchestra

Muhai Tang, cond.

Cyprien Katsaris, piano

Wagner: *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg, Prelude Act I*

Beethoven: Piano Concerto No 3

Liszt: *Mephisto Waltz*

R. Strauss: *Also Sprach Zarathustra*

PERTH

7, 8 March (Gala opening to WASO's 2008 season)

West Australian Symphony Orchestra

Asher Fisch, cond.

Lisa Gasteen

Harry Peeters

Kirsti Harms

Ledger: *The Madness and Death of King Ludwig* (Premiere)

Wagner: *Götterdämmerung, Siegfried's Rhine Journey, Funeral Music.*

Die Walküre, Act III

13, 14 June

West Australian Symphony Orchestra

Tadaaki Otaka, cond.

Christianne Stotijn

Wagner: *Tannhäuser Overture and Venusberg Music Wesendonck Lieder*

R. Strauss: *Ein Heldenleben* (A Hero's Life)

ADELAIDE

9 August

Adelaide Symphony Orchestra

Arvo Volmer, cond.

Lisa Gasteen

Wagner: *Tannhäuser "Dich, teure Halle..."*

Lohengrin, Preludes to Act I and Act 3, and Elsa's Dream

Tristan und Isolde, Prelude and Liebestod

R. Strauss: *Der Rosenkavalier Suite*

Salomé, closing scene.

MELBOURNE

25, 28, 30 August

Melbourne Symphony Orchestra

Oleg Caetani, cond.

Bjarni Kristinsson

Lisa Gasteen

Stuart Skelton

John Wegner

Sian Pendry

Adrian Dwyer

Wagner: *Der fliegende Holländer*

23, 24 November

Melbourne Symphony Orchestra

Sir Charles Mackerras, cond.

Wagner: *Tannhäuser: Overture and Venusberg Music*

Dvorak: *Serenade for Strings in E major, Op.22*

Delius: *The Walk to the Paradise Garden*

Elgar: *'Enigma' Variations, Op.36*

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



Members as at 31 December 2007

Paul Alger, Jessie Anderson, Carl Andrew, F. John Augustus and Kim Ryrie, Philip Bacon, Sybil Baer, Carole Bailey, Patricia Baillie, Norma Barne, Glen Barnwell, Douglas Barry, Colin Baskerville, Janette Bates, Marlene Baumgartner, Margareta Baxter, Sandra Beesley, Patricia Bellamy and Carolyn Bloch, Phillip Bennett, Rosemary and Julian Block, Tony Bonin, Jan Bowen, Barbara and Ian Brady, Gabriella Bremner-Moore and Michael Moore, Bill Brooks and Alasdair Beck, David Brown, Susan and James Buchanan, Richard Buckdale and Murray Johnstone, Margaret Budge, Frances Butcher, Richard Button, Margot Buttrose, Julie Carroll, Stephen Carroll, John Casey, Maurice Cashmere, Ann Casimir, Alexander Cater and Rosemary Cater-Smith, Humphrey Charles and Pauline Alexander, Terry and Greg Chesher, Colleen and Michael Chesterman, Julie and Terry Clarke, Christopher Coffey, Aviva and Alec Cohen, Adrian Collette, Daryl Colquhoun, Joan and Maxwell Connery, Susan Conrade, Rae and Russ Cottle, Alexander Cozzolino, Moya Crane, Roger Cruickshank, Elizabeth and Barry Dale, Catherine Davies, Michael Day and Philip Cornwell, Barbara de Rome, Lorenza dei Medici, David Delany and Alister Wong, Charlotte and Hartmut Derichs, Ian Dicker, Susette and Martin Dickson, Clyde Dominish, Harry Donaldson, Brian Donovan, June Donsworth, Barbara and Nicholas Dorsch, Barbara and Andrew Dowe, Brian Ducker, Sandy and Phil Dudgeon, Heinz Ebert, Phillip Emanuel, Clive Evatt, Michael Ewans (Honorary Life Member), William Felbel, Igor Ferdman, Judy Ferfaglia and Joseph Ferfaglia (Honorary Life Member), Jennifer Ferns, Michele and Onofrio Ferrara, Mary and Graeme Fogelberg, Bob Foster, Edith and Hans Freeman, Brian Freestone and Charles Brady, Stephen Freiberg and Donald Campbell, Vic and Katie French, David and Sabina Full, Warwick Fyfe, Ingrid Garofali, Paola Garofali, Richard Gastineau-Hills, Leona Geeves, Diana Wang and Peter George, William Gillespie OAM, Sue Gillies, MaryAnne and Nick Gillott, Elizabeth Gordon-Werner, Andrew Goy, Robert Graham, Helen and Kevin Grant, Nance Grant, Dennis Gray, Tim Green, John Gregory-Roberts, Paul Gresham, Joan Griffin, Maxwell Grubb, Peter Hall, Hugh Hallard, Wendy and Andrew Hamlin, Derek Harrison and Marcus Susanto, Siss Hartnett and Britt Hartnett, Pat and Frank Harvey, Mary Haswell, Simon Hatcher, Alan Hauserman and Janet Nash, Melinda Hayton, Clare Hennessy, Margaret Hennessy, Marie Hiscock, Patricia and Roy Hodson, Horst Hoffmann (Honorary Life Member), Pauline Holgerson, Glenn Horne, Theo Hudson, Cynthia Hughes, Irvine Hunter, Ian Hutchison, Agnes Brejzek and Esteban Insausti, Elizabeth Jacka, Cherry Jackaman, Judith Jacks, Douglas Jamieson, Peter Jenkins, Brett Johnson, Gillian and Brian Jones, Colin Jones and Paul Curran, Anne Jones, Anthony Jones, Erika Jumikis, Renate and Herman Junker, Naomi Kaldor, Despina Kallinikos, Iphygenia Kallinikos, Angela Kayser, Richard King (Honorary Life Member), Vanessa King, Anna-Lisa Klettenberg, Sylvia and Karl Koller, Ira Kowalski, Hannelore Laundl, Marie Leech, Paul Lehmann, Carole and Jim Leigh, Britta and Harry Littman, Robert Lloyd, Lynette Longfoot, Bruce Love, Charles MacKerras (Patron), Colin Mackerras, Erin Flaherty and David Maloney, Charles Manning, Jennifer Manton, Libby Manuel, Annie and Terry Marshall, Camron Dyer, Dennis Mather and John Studdert, Jane Mathews, Diana McBain, David McCarthy, Tony McDonald, Gillian and Kenneth (Tim) McDonald, Pam and Ian McGaw, John McGrath, Robert McHugh, Barbara McNulty OBE (Honorary Life Member), Mary Meppem, Neville Mercer, Irene and Wolfgang Merretz, Judi Mitchell, Patricia Moore, Elsie and James Moore, Elizabeth Moser, Judith Mulveney, Peter Murray and Andrew Laughlin, David Mutton, Helen and Bill Naylor, Barbara and Peter Nicholson, Margery and Geoffrey Nicoll, Walter Norris, Monica and Aliro Olave, Diana-Rose Orr, Audrey and John Palmer, Claire Pate, Colin Piper, Neville Pollard, Marian and Rodney Purvis, Elle Rasink and Kate Aitken Rasink, Kenneth Reed, Garry Richards, Juliet Richters and Alan Whelan, Shirley Robertson, Heather and Peter Roland, Amanda and George Rosenberg, Lorraine Royds, Mitzi Saunders, Cecilia Segura, Penelope Seidler, Ruth Shane, Ivan Shearer, Sam Sheffer, Sir Nicholas and Lady Shehadie, Nizza Siano, Tina Skidmore, John Small, Jeffrey Smart and Ermes de Zan, John Snelling, Robert Spillane, Hannah and Willi Spiller, Lourdes St George, Ross Steele, Richard Steele, Vince Stefano, Meredith Stokes and David Bremer, Richard Stone and John Thomson, Douglas Sturkey, Jean Louis Stuurup, Margaret and Bill Suthers, Annemarie Swebbs, Charles Terrasson, Pamela and Graham Thomas, Peter Thompson, Robert Thurling, Isolde Torny, David Triggs, Paddy Trumbull, Susan Upton, John Vallentine, Warren and Susan Walsh, Jane and Barry Walters, Terence Watson, Greg Watters, Ann Weeden, Ross Whitelaw, Margaret Whitlam, Deanne Whittleston and Anthony Gregg, Suzanne Williams, Gary Wilson, Gary Linnane, Alfredo Zaniboni, Sharon Zelei, and Anna Ziegler.



Annual Membership Renewal for 2008

1. Please provide your name, address and membership number.			
Name		
Address	Street		
	City	State	P'Code
Membership Number		
2. Please renew my/our membership from 1 January to 31 December 2008 on the following basis (<i>please tick one</i>)			
<input type="checkbox"/>	Single member \$50 (single pensioner member \$30)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Shared members \$75 (shared pensioner members \$50)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Students \$20 (<i>include a copy of your current ID Card</i>)	\$	
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. Please post this form to The Treasurer The Wagner Society in NSW Inc GPO Box 4574 Sydney NSW 2001		\$ Total Sent	
5. Please make your payment by posting your cheque or money order made payable to The Wagner Society along with this form to the address above, or Use your bank's internet banking facilities to send your payment electronically to: 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
6. Signatures			
 Signature Signature	
...../...../2008 Date renewed Name in BLOCK LETTERS Name in BLOCK LETTERS	



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)**