



WAGNER
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CELEBRATING THE MUSIC OF RICHARD WAGNER

WAGNER QUARTERLY

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Welcome to the first Quarterly for 2015.

We have already had two major events this year. Both of them suffered in different ways from technical difficulties at the Goethe Institute. The first was a wonderful presentation by Dr Rosamund Bartlett on Sunday 15 February on "Russia and Wagner 1841-1941: A century of Reaction and Revolution." This riveting exposition of Wagner's influence in Russia—a subject which is not often touched upon—with musical and visual illustrations, was sadly interrupted when the loudspeaker suddenly ceased working, forcing a considerably abbreviated conclusion to Dr Bartlett's presentation. We later discovered that she had accidentally knocked the microphone, causing a short circuit. If the same thing happens again we will know to briefly turn off the power, and the system should then rectify itself. It was a great pity, but at least we saw the major part of her exposition. A number of members afterwards suggested that we should ask her to return and enlarge upon and complete her presentation. It is too late to do so for this year, but we will certainly take it on board, as she is a most compelling speaker. In the meantime, Colleen Chesterman has written a précis of Rosamund's talk —see below.

The next event was on the evening of Tuesday 10 March, when Professor Heath Lees came to talk to us about how Wagner has been depicted in film over the last 100 years. It goes without saying that, as "film" was the centrepiece of this presentation, it was a matter of considerable concern when the projector at the Goethe Institute did not seem to work. After some phone calls Michael Abicht, who works at the Goethe, arrived, but even he was unable to get the main projector to work. Eventually, about three quarters of an hour after the presentation had been due to start, Michael managed to get an alternative projector working, so we all moved our seats in the opposite direction and saw about



Professor Heath Lees - presenter of talk on Wagner and Film on Tuesday 10 March

two-thirds of Heath's wonderful presentation, about how Wagner has been depicted in film—both films about the man and his life, as well as films of his music and dramas. We were extremely fortunate that it was the incredibly talented Heath Lees who was our presenter that evening, because for the first half of his presentation, while they were working on the projector, Heath sat himself at the piano and played—without music or preparation—a number of transcriptions of Wagner music, and explained the circumstances in which they had come to be transcribed or played for the first time. It ended up being a wonderful and instructive evening.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT *Continued page 3*

Patron:

Honorary Life Members:

Ms Simone Young AM

Mr Richard King

Prof Michael Ewans

Mr Horst Hoffman

Mr Roger Cruickshank

Dr Terence Watson

SOFIA NATIONAL OPERA AND BALLET RING CYCLE - FESTIVAL THEATRE OF FÜSSEN - 12 TO 17 SEPTEMBER 2015

The Sofia National Opera and Ballet is performing a Ring Cycle in the Festival Theatre of Füssen from 12 to 17 September 2015. In sight of the famous castles of King Ludwig II (Hohenschwangau and Neue Schwanstein), the committed admirer and supporter of Richard Wagner, and with several additional activities in the course of this week, these performances will have a festival like character. "Thus, we invite your Society warmly to this very special performance of the "Ring of the Nibelung" in the beautiful Bavarian Allgäu."

These performances come recommended by those who attended last year: e.g., see review by NSW Wagner Society members, Julie and Terry Clarke <http://clarkesailing.com/2014/08/01/bulgarian-opera-interlude/> or www.wagner.org.au/views-and-reviews/latest-reviews-2014/523-a-ring-in-sophia. "There was so much to enjoy in this Ring that criticism is invidious."

They are comparatively inexpensive with excellent casts and orchestra. The cast for 2015 does not yet seem to have been announced but presumably it is similar to last year's.

The Sofia Opera have set aside excellent seats for members of Wagner Societies. To take advantage of these, please email the secretary: Michael Day <michaeldayarchitect@gmail.com> by Friday 10 April with your intention of attending.

If you cannot make the Ring Cycle in Füssen, you might like to consider the earlier cycles in Sophia in 2015: *Das Rheingold*, 23.07, *Die Walküre*, 24.07, *Siegfried*, 26.07, *Götterdämmerung*, 29.07. If you cannot make either of the Ring Cycle performances, keep in mind their premiere in Bulgaria of *Tristan und Isolde* under Director Plamen Kartraloff, and conductor Constantin Trinks, with Martin Iliev (Tristan), Tsvetana Bandalovska, Radostina Nikolaeva and Mariana Zvetkova (Isolde), Atanas Mladenov (Kurwenal), Krasimir Dinev and Plamen Papazikov (Young Sailor) (no mention of King Marke)-opening 26 February 2016.

СОФИЙСКА ОПЕРА И БАЛЕТ
SOFIA OPERA AND BALLET

ПРЕМИЕРА • PREMIERE

26.02.2015 • 18:00

Тристан и Изолда

От Рихард Вагнер

Tristan und Isolde

by Richard Wagner

Следващи спектакли • Next performances
1, 5, 8, 11.03.2015



БИЛЕТИ • TICKETS
Софийска опера и балет, ул. Вазова №1 - Sofia Opera and Ballet, 1 Vazhova Str.
Информации • Call Centre 0298 98 288 • Каса • Ticket Office 02987 13 66
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AH! Modern Priorities!

The other exciting Wagner event this year was Victorian Opera's "Flying Dutchman", presented in conjunction with the Australian Youth Orchestra, at the Palais Theatre in St Kilda, on 14, 17 and 19 February. It was a spectacular success. The orchestra, under the baton of Richard Mills, played superbly, and there was not a weak link amongst the cast. Oskar Hillebrandt was the Dutchman, Lori Phillips was Senta, and Warwick Fyfe was Daland. The settings were interesting, as was the production. We were all given 3D glasses when we went in. I was sitting in the circle, quite a long way back, and the glasses made very little difference. I was incredibly impressed by the Palais Theatre. It has not been used for decades, and they have apparently spent huge amounts of money to prepare it for these performances. It will need considerably more to bring it back to its previous glory, but it was still very beautiful. It has wonderful acoustics, and apparently it can take 3,200 people – almost double the capacity of our Opera Hall. [A full review of this performance is given elsewhere in this Quarterly].

We have many more exciting events scheduled for this year. There are a couple of matters I should alert you to. First, the AGM this year will be held earlier than usual, on 19 April. Secondly, as you probably already know, the Sydney Symphony will be mounting a concert performance of Tristan and Isolde on 20 and 22 June. On the intermediate day, Sunday 2 June, we will be having a social "meet and greet" afternoon at the Goethe, with members of other Wagner Societies. I am very much hoping that the conductor, David Robertson, will be able to join us, and I understand that quite a number of members of the New Zealand Society will also be there. So it will afford a great opportunity to meet Wagner lovers from numerous other places.

For those of our members planning to travel overseas in the next few years for Wagner performances, Camron Dyer has again updated his Raven's Report that is well recognised in Australia and around the world as a "go-to" listing of productions of Wagner's works. On behalf of our members, I would like to thank Camron for this creating this invaluable resource.

I would also like to again thank our members who contribute articles to this Quarterly, as it is an important way for everyone to learn about productions, books, films etc that members have seen or read and to promote knowledge about Wagner and promote his works.

I look forward to seeing many of you at our exciting events during this year.

DONATIONS SINCE DEC 2014

Carole Bailey; Glen Barnwell; Barbara and Ian Brady; Rae and Russ Cottle; Christine Deer; Hugh Hallard; Helen Halley; Clare Hennessy; Margaret King; David McCarthy; Elizabeth Moser; Nigel Stoke; Terence Watson

NEW MEMBERS

Philippa O'Dowd (1150); Kirsten Farren-Price (1151); Deborah Summerhayes (1152); Aaron Kernighan (1153); Greg Millin; Paul Bodin & Ana Singer

QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS:

Der Fliegende Holländer - Victorian Opera - P.5

Production - Editor, Terence Watson

'The World's Fondest Illusion' - Tristan - P.7

und Isolde - Peter Bassett

Review of Tristan und Isolde at The Berlin - P.9

Staatsoper - David May

"Sensory Overload" - Frank Castorf's Ring - P.10

Cycle - The Year After - Dr Jim Leigh

For Sale: Rare Arthur Rackham Wagner Volumes - P.12

The Raven's Reporting, Compiled by Camron Dyer - P.14

COMMITTEE 2014 - 2015

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FOR YOUR DIARY

2015

29 May & 31 May	Sydney Youth Orchestra conducted by Max McBride: Wagner the Ring Without Words arr. Leinsdorf.	Sydney Opera House @ 8pm
Meeting on Monday 15 June Concert Details: Wellington Fri 12 June 6.30pm; Christchurch Wed 17 June 7.00pm; Auckland Fri 19 June 7.00pm	For Members able and willing to cross the ditch, the Christchurch branch of NZ Wagner Society will host an informal meeting featuring Simon O'Neill and Christine Goerke, soloists in the NZSO Wagner Gala Concert being conducted by Pietari Inkinen in the Hornbrook Arena on Wednesday 17 June. Details of the three concerts at www.nzso.co.nz/concerts/concert/wagner-gala/	NB venue and time for the meeting to be confirmed
20 & 22 June	WONDERFUL NEWS - Sydney Symphony is building on the success of its previous operas in concert to perform <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> . David Robertson will conduct Christine Brewer as Isolde, Stuart Skelton as Tristan, Katarina Karnéus as Brangäne, Derek Welton as Kurwenal, and Stephen Milling as King Marke, with Sydney Philharmonia Choirs and S Katy Tucker's visual enhancement. Echoes of Bayreuth with two intervals including an hour-long dinner break!	Sydney Opera House @ 8pm
November 25, 27 & 29	Sydney Symphony with Edo de Waart: Prelude to Act 1 <i>Lohengrin</i> .	Sydney Opera House @ 8pm

COMING EVENTS 2015 - STARTING TIMES MAY VARY

PLEASE CHECK THE SCHEDULE FOR DETAILS.

DATE	Some events may be subject to change and further detail in the next newsletter	TIME & LOCATION
19 April	AGM, followed by Recital with young artists, who have been the recipients of various Wagner Society Awards – German, Eisteddfod and Lisa Gasteen National Opera School. NO DVD PRESENTATION	Goethe Institut 2PM
24 May	2:00 PM Teilenzzeit (Sharing): Members will share their recent experiences of Wagner operas around the world, followed by a champagne celebration for Wagner's birthday 12:30 PM DVD BBC Great Composers – Wagner narrated by Kenneth Branagh and featuring interviews with artists and scholars	Goethe Institut 2PM
14 June	Dr David Larkin: Exploring <i>Tristan and Isolde</i>. A workshop focusing on this great work that is being performed in concert form at the Sydney Opera House. NO DVD PRESENTATION	Goethe Institut 2PM
21 June	A social occasion with members from interstate Wagner Societies to celebrate the performances of <i>Tristan and Isolde</i> and exchange information (NB LATER START TIME 3PM). NO DVD PRESENTATION	Goethe Institut Time 3PM
July TBC	Sir David McVicar , opera and theatre director will respond to audience questions on his experiences directing Wagner. 12:30 DVD - <i>Lohengrin</i> Act 1 Kaufmann, Harteros, Bayerische Staatsoper/ Nagano	Goethe Institut Time TBC
9 August	Presentation by an Australian artist assisted by the Society – details TBC DVD - TBA	Venue and Time TBC
13 September	Andrew Ford , composer, writer and broadcaster: Composers today - Wagner's legacy 12:30. DVD - <i>Lohengrin</i> Act 2 Kaufmann, Harteros, Bayerische Staatsoper/ Nagano	Goethe Institut 2PM
11 October	Neil Armfield , theatre, film and opera director: The Melbourne Ring: Looking back. DVD - <i>Lohengrin</i> Act 3 Kaufmann, Harteros, Bayerische Staatsoper/ Nagano	Goethe Institut 2PM
8 or 22 November TBC	Xmas concert and party NO DVD PRESENTATION	Venue to be confirmed 2PM

Advice about changes to the Program will be emailed to people who have given their email addresses to the Society's Webmaster; the latest updates will also be available on the Society's webpage: www.wagner.org.au.
Admission to each event will be \$20 a Member, and \$25 per non-Member, unless otherwise indicated.

Goethe-Institut address 90 Ocean Street Woollahra (corner of Jersey Road)

DER FLIEGENDE HOLLÄNDER - VICTORIAN OPERA PRODUCTION 13, 17, 19 FEBRUARY 2015 by Editor, Terence Watson

Conductor Richard Mills; Director Roger Hodgman; Set and Visual Design Matt Scott and Christina Smith; Lighting Design Matt Scott; Costume Design Teresa Negroponte; The Dutchman Oskar Hillebrandt; Senta Lori Phillips; Erik Bradley Daley; Daland Warwick Fyfe; Mary Liane Keegan; Steersman Carlos E Barcenas; Victorian Opera Chorus prepared by Phoebe Briggs; Australian Youth Orchestra

Michael Shmith (15 February 2015 Sydney Morning Herald) nicely puns “Victorian Opera enters a new dimension,” alluding to both the metaphysical aspirations of Wagner’s *Der fliegende Holländer* as well as the company’s venture into 3D technology—and awards the production a very creditable four stars (with which your Editor agrees). Shmith also notes “How fitting to present Wagner’s *The Flying Dutchman* right by the sea.” Indeed, one could imagine the two ships tied up at the St Kilda pier and Daland returning home to one of the grand old houses along the foreshore.

Shmith rightly praised orchestra and conductor: “Crammed into the pit (sardines in a tin came to mind) was the Australian Youth Orchestra, which, let loose on full-length Wagner, played beautifully, with clarity and grace, but also with essential power and oomph. Richard Mills, VO’s artistic director, conducted a sturdy performance, without bombast and with utmost attention to orchestral and stage balance.” Given that the publicity for production the focussed strongly on the attraction of the special effects to be used, it would have been a disappointment had they not added something special to the work. As Shmith contends, they did:

“What brought all this together were the extraordinary 3D moving images projected at the back and sides of the stage. This brought the Dutchman, shall we say, an extra dimension. These images, devised by VO’s performance partner, Deakin Motion Lab, effectively and ingeniously take the audience deeper into the drama without confusing or cheapening it. There are authentic blood-red sails for the Dutchman’s ship, scudding angry clouds for the storm, a sun-lit fiord, and, at the end, beautiful and redemptive Northern Lights.”

Your Editor has to confess to a little choking and teariness at the appearance of the *aurora borealis*: it seemed such an obvious scenic effect to use, but that it has been in any production I have seen suddenly seemed surprising. For me, they added a kind of natural transcendence in keeping with the love story. That the Director chose to extend the image into the realm of supernatural transcendence, as Wagner chose to do in the revised version, with oddly disproportionate silhouettes of the lovers rising and disappearing into the Northern Lights, was not intrusive and did not detract from the overall naturalistic style of the production.

While the 3D effects looked primitive compared with a Hollywood blockbuster’s high definition quality, in his blog Simon Parris (February 15) rightly comments: “Professor

Kim Vincs and her crack team from Deakin Motion.Lab have created spectacular imagery that is all the more valuable for the way it supports the storytelling rather than ever threatening to overwhelm it.” In some ways, in fact, the simple imagery matched the comparatively unsophisticated nature of what Wagner considered his first mature opera. Peter Rose reviewing for the Australian Book Review (March 2015, No. 369), agrees with Parris that the 3D projection “is absorbing and totally suitable for this most protean and renewable of composers.”

Rose, though, was less impressed with aspects of the production: “Onstage, however, there was at times a distinct want of direction, especially with the principals. For several awkward minutes in their Act II duet, the Dutchman and Senta remained motionless, as if stranded. Paradoxically, when the chorus (in excellent voice) appeared, everything became mobile, boisterous, convincing.... This was clever theatre, alert and alive.” Your Editor can recall a number of performances, not the least the last production for Opera Australia, in which the same extended moment of stasis occurred. It could be argued that this is a representation of the timeless world into which the characters move in anticipation of their future union in eternity—or so they both dearly hope at this point. However, your Editor agrees that all the chorus members were in fine voice, with verve and subtlety as needed.

Peter Bassett, writing for Limelight magazine (16 February), reminded us that Wagner had particular views about the way in which the work should be staged (not that his views are mandatory) and at least one role was to be sung: “The composer’s stage directions have generally been followed, and attention has also been paid to *his Remarks on Performing the Opera ‘The Flying Dutchman’*, first published in 1853. Evidence of the latter came with the Dutchman’s crucial monologue *Die Frist is um*, sung by the excellent and highly experienced German baritone Oskar Hillebrandt. “[The Dutchman’s] first phrases should be sung without the slightest emotion, as by one completely exhausted’ wrote Wagner, and this was how it was done.” This directorial stance might have led some to conclude that Hillebrandt was vocally underwhelming, when he was reflecting Wagner’s conception of the character. For your Editor, Hillebrandt mostly sang with conviction and passion, but seemed to tire towards the end, as many singers do.

As would be expected, assessments of the principal singers’ performances were not uniform, partly, it would seem, because Oskar Hillebrandt might have been indisposed on opening night. Your Editor attended the other two performances and was similarly of the view that the singing was not entirely even. Andrew Furfmann, writing for Crikey.com (20 February), considered “American dramatic soprano Lori Phillips brought a warm, sensual tone” to Senta. However, your Editor thought that her voice was not entirely consistent through her registers, with the lower notes fading a little in power. Given the glowing

reviews Phillips has received for her performances of Senta at the Metropolitan Opera and Brünnhilde at Seattle, she has a great future, and her voice is likely to strengthen in the lower registers as she matures. Rose commented of Phillips: “After an assured Ballad, Phillips rose to great heights in the duet with the Dutchman and the subsequent one with Bradley Daley (relishing his high notes as Erik).” Rose provocatively mused of Phillips: “How fine she would be here too, if Opera Australia succeeds in raising the many millions to stage another Ring. Imagine a bayside Ring, away from the subterranean bourgeois plush of the State Theatre.”

Your Editor agrees with Rose’s opinion of Daley, though I would go further to opine that he has a voice smack in the middle of the *Fach* for this role—secure throughout his register, expressive and supple, used effectively in the service of the role, confident and passionate on stage. He emerged as a benchmark for the other principals, except for Hillebrandt, who still seemed to be finding their interpretation of the roles.

On Warwick Fyfe as Daland, Bassett suggests: “Warwick Fyfe sang the role of Daland with a beautiful tone and rock-solid delivery. His characterisation was not so much that of an old sea dog as of a wily merchant, implied by his fidgety movements.” While some seemed to think that Fyfe’s voice lacked power in the bass register, he certainly hit the notes. His characterisation also seemed to your Editor to fit nicely with Wagner’s conception of the character as one of the Parisian philistines he pilloried in his theoretical essays as willing to trade almost anything, including a child for money.

It was also a delight to see and hear Liane Keegan return to a stage in Australia—another Wagnerian standard voice sadly underutilised in this country. The role of Mary, Senta’s maid, is a hard one to sustain in competition with such strange creatures as the Dutchman and Senta, but Keegan gave her a strong presence, bustling kindheartedly between the spinners and the increasingly bemusing Senta.

Apparently, this production is the first in a series of planned collaborations with Deakin University’s Motion.Lab, and will move to Perth later this year. Given the success of this production, it will be worth keeping an eye out for the other two. It also seems appropriate to give the last word to Professor Vincs, in an interview with Adam Bender from Computerworld on 8 January: “Computer generated imagery has tremendous potential for making opera more accessible. The expense of dragging massive sets across the country has meant that most opera performances don’t leave Australia’s major capital cities. Now that we have explored the visual possibilities of 3D in ‘The Flying Dutchman,’ we will take a closer look at creating more portable opera in the next two projects.”

Bender’s interview is rather cheekily titled: “3D adds depth to The Flying Dutchman in Melbourne,” but the sentiment is apposite: anything that makes Wagner’s works come alive to modern audiences is surely welcome? Your Editor recalls that the first rumours of a Ring Cycle in Melbourne floated the idea that the settings could use all or largely 3D projections that would enable a production to be transported easily and adapted to many sizes of stages.

For the full reviews mentioned above, you can click on the following links:

www.smh.com.au/entertainment/music/victorian-opera-enters-a-new-dimension-20150215-13f3pu.html#ixzz3TaYkHchu

<http://simonparrismaninchair.com/2015/02/15/victorian-opera-the-flying-dutchman-review/>

www.australianbookreview.com.au/arts-update/opera-and-music/101-arts-update/2389-the-flying-dutchman

www.limelightmagazine.com.au/live-reviews/review-flying-dutchman-victorian-opera#sthash.E7WzIiic.dpuf

www.computerworld.com.au/article/563475/3d-adds-depth-flying-dutchman-melbourne/

THE UPS AND DOWNS OF WAGNER ON FILM - A TALK BY HEATH LEES

Heath Lees (see photo on inside front cover), for 25 years professor of music at Auckland University, broadcaster, writer and musicologist, presented popular introductory lectures for all 3 cycles during the Opera Australia Ring in Melbourne in 2013. To illustrate points he used **The Ring—A Tale told in Music** four newly pressed DVDs, a unique mixture of education and entertainment, with Heath’s delightful blend of humour and wisdom. Preparing these DVDs, Heath found a number of films about Wagner going back almost a century. In this talk to the NSW Wagner Society on Tuesday 10 March, **The Ups and**

Downs of Wagner on Film, he discussed the various portrayals on film of Wagner biography and Wagner performance, despite the technical problems alluded to in the President’s Letter in this issue. Heath covered three major areas, films on or including elements of Wagner’s biography (such as the 1913 silent film *Richard Wagner* directed by Carl Froelich and had Giuseppe Becce in the lead role who also wrote the musical score as Wagner’s music was too expensive), films of performances of Wagner works, and films using Wagner’s music (including the (in)famous opening to Francis Ford Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now*).

'THE WORLD'S FONDEST ILLUSION' - *TRISTAN UND ISOLDE*

by Peter Bassett

In the 13th Century romance *Tristan* by Gottfried von Strassburg, the Breton knight Tristan and the Irish princess Isolde fall in love when a maidservant mistakenly gives them a love-potion, believing it to be wine. In Wagner's version of the story, Tristan and Isolde are already in love before they drink the potion, although neither feels able to admit this to the other. Only when they believe they are about to die from drinking poison do they discard their inhibitions and fall passionately into each other's arms.

The notion that suicide provides a way out of their dilemma originates with Isolde but it is she who, in the end, chastises Tristan for going to his death without her. The so-called *Liebestod* is an expression of her need to restore him to life so that, together, they may pass transfigured into the wondrous realm of night.

What is this place for which Tristan and Isolde long, and which causes them to behave so unpredictably? King Marke is desperate to know, but Tristan tells him: 'O King, what you ask you can never learn.' Then he turns to Isolde and says something that baffles everyone but her: 'Wherever Tristan is now going, will you, Isolde, follow him? In the land of which Tristan speaks, sunlight never shines; it is the dark land of night from which my mother sent me when, in death, she received me and in death let me go to reach the light. I awoke from where she bore me in the refuge of her love: the wondrous realm of night. That is what Tristan offers you, and where he goes on ahead.'

Isolde's reply is equally cryptic: 'Now you are returning to your own land to show me your inheritance. How could I flee a land that spans the whole world? Wherever Tristan's home may be, there Isolde will dwell.'

So why then does she stay behind in Cornwall instead of going with the wounded Tristan to his family seat at Kareol? The superficial answer is because Marke prevents her from leaving, and only relents when Brangäne reveals the truth about the love-potion. But the deeper reason is that 'being together' doesn't involve going anywhere in particular in the physical world. The land of which Tristan and Isolde speak - where sunlight never shines and which spans the whole world - is beyond temporal existence. Of course, this means nothing to Kurwenal, who thinks his master has fallen victim to that dreadful sorcery: love, 'the world's fondest illusion'. 'See now what thanks love has won for him' he says, 'the thanks that love always wins!'

But 'love' isn't the illusion; the illusion is the world that Kurwenal, Marke, Brangäne - and we - mistake for reality.

Until the last scene of all, Tristan and Isolde are caught in a struggle between the outer and inner worlds; a struggle that the former - the world of duty and propriety, loyalty and appearance - seems bound to win. We are made aware of

this struggle from the moment the curtain rises, when the unaccompanied voice of a young sailor intrudes on Isolde's brooding, and rouses her to fury. Soon afterwards, the cries of other sailors punctuate her confrontation with Tristan and provoke him into snatching the goblet and swallowing death. But Brangäne's misplaced devotion deprives the lovers of the death they had wanted and, by the end of the first act, the outer and inner worlds are once again clamouring for their attention. So distracted do the suicidal pair become that they barely know what is happening.

'Where are we?' asks Tristan, unable even to remember who is waiting for them on the quay. 'Which King?'

'Where am I?' stammers Isolde. 'Am I living?'

The curtain falls on the apparent triumph of the outer world of society, politics and power. But, amidst the excitement, shouting and fanfares, the two lovers - with eyes only for each other - hardly notice that the world exists at all.

In the second act, the lovers are able to catch a glimpse of the realm of perfect union and timeless reality - the world of night - before the world of honour and jealousy - the realm of day - violently reasserts itself. The act begins stridently with the motif of day, followed by expressions of the lovers' impatience, and then Isolde's longing. The feverish orchestral activity falls away and we hear the evocative sounds of distant hunting horns, which, in turn, melt into the sounds of a summer's night. Never before had music conveyed such a wonderful transition from day to night, from the harsh glare of the outer world of reason to the soft embrace of the private world of emotion.

If the second act is an apostrophe to the night, the third act returns to the world as we know it - the world of illusion, of separate existences, of yearning and suffering. At Kareol, Tristan suffers unimaginable torment in the full glare of the day. He had wanted to die but Melot's sword had inflicted only a hideous wound. Melot's crime - like Brangäne's before it - had been to cheat Tristan of death. Isolde too remains suffering in the realm of day, as Tristan knows only too well. 'I heard the crash of death's door closing behind me' says Tristan, 'but now it stands ajar. I must break forth from night to take her back with me...ah, Isolde, when will you quench the flame...when will the light die out?' At first hearing, it seems he is reliving his interminable wait for the torch to be extinguished in Isolde's garden - the signal for their physical reunion. But in fact it is another light to which he now refers - the light of unsatisfiable yearning.

Towards the end of Marke's great monologue in Act Two, the king, faced with betrayal by the pair who meant most to him, asks the anguished question: 'Who will make the inscrutable, deep, mysterious reason known to the world?' Wagner had no doubt as to who could provide the answer.

His reading of Schopenhauer's masterpiece *The World as Will and Representation* in 1854, helped him to see how the old tale of illicit love could be given an undreamt-of significance, and he immediately prepared a prose sketch, which is now lost. Wagner also had no doubt about the impact of Schopenhauer's work on his own life: 'The effect that it was gradually taking upon me was extraordinary' he wrote, 'and, in any case, became decisive for my entire life.'

But it would be wrong to think that this revelation was entirely of Schopenhauer's doing, for Wagner himself had already been moving towards some of the ideas that his idol dealt with so comprehensively in his writings. This explains his joy in receiving confirmation from the works of a man he described as: 'the greatest philosopher since Kant'.

Schopenhauer, following in the footsteps of Immanuel Kant and, more distantly, Plato, wrote of the illusory nature of the world as we perceive it, with its inevitable frustration and pain - equated in *Tristan und Isolde* with the all-deceiving 'day'. We normally associate 'truth' with 'light' - the very word 'enlightenment' suggests as much - but in *Tristan* this idea is stood on its head. Here, the world of daylight belongs not to the realm of actuality but to the realm of illusion. This is because, as human beings, we can only have an incomplete perception of reality, brought to us via our senses and mental faculties. Beyond that perception of reality is the reality itself ('the thing-in-itself'), which we do not and cannot know directly. 'Night' in *Tristan und Isolde* is not the realm of ignorance but that of timeless reality. It symbolises the true but inaccessible being of what we perceive as the world of phenomena, and is therefore a desirable refuge from the unsatisfiable longing of this life.

The second notion of fundamental importance to *Tristan* is expressed in Schopenhauer's treatise *On Death and its relationship to the Indestructibility of Our Inner Nature*. This expresses the view that dying is a moment of liberation from one-sided 'individuality' - an individuality that can never constitute the innermost kernel of our true being.

In Schopenhauer's philosophy - and therefore Wagner's - the will to live (which is an instinctive force in human nature) is a cosmic error, for it perpetuates the endless cycle of yearning, disappointment and yearning again. This interdependence of suffering and desire (or attachment) was central to the revelation of the Buddha in the 6th Century BC, and was enshrined by Wagner in the so-called Tristan chord and the motifs that lead to and grow out of it.

The most intimate knowledge of the will to live, said Schopenhauer, is to be found in the ecstasy of sexual love, which is one of the most powerful images in the opera. However, the will to live is essentially selfish. So, how can sexual love be an impulse towards a timeless reality in which there is no 'self'? Wagner maintained that sexual love was not just an impulse to maintain life - an expression of the will to live - but a longing for the transcendence of individual boundaries and union with the universe. 'Then I myself am the world' sing the lovers at the height of their passion. Wagner believed he had made an important

advance on Schopenhauer's theory on this point, and he even wrote a letter to the philosopher on the subject, but never sent it.

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

'Plurality' said Schopenhauer, 'is merely illusory, and in all the individuals of this world there is made manifest only one, single, truly existent being, present and ever the same in all...'

It is fascinating to see how Wagner was thinking his way towards a Schopenhauerian position long before he encountered the latter's writings, and how he was already immersed in Tristanian concepts years before jotting down that first sketch in 1854.

In his seminal essay *The Artwork of the Future* written in 1849, soon after fleeing Dresden, he wrote: 'In the kingdom of Harmony there is therefore no beginning and no end; just as the objectless and self-devouring fervour of the soul, all ignorant of its source, is nothing ... but longing, yearning, tossing, pining...and therefore everlasting falling back upon itself.'

In *A Communication to my Friends* of 1851, when Tristan was still years into the future, he wrote: 'What, in the end, could this love-yearning - the noblest thing my heart could feel - what could it be than a longing for release from the present, for absorption into an element of endless love, a love denied to earth and reachable through the gates of death alone?'

These were the issues that caused him to redefine what was possible on the operatic stage, and to find a new musical language with which to express it.

REVIEW OF *TRISTAN UND ISOLDE* AT THE BERLIN STAATSOPER IN THE SCHILLER THEATRE BERLIN ON 28 DECEMBER 2014 by David May

The Berlin Staatsoper staged an unforgettable performance of *Tristan und Isolde* at the Schiller theatre in Berlin on 28 December last year, which I was lucky enough to see.

The production, by Harry Kupfer, has apparently been around for some years now and it is easy to see why it remains a favourite with the Berliners. The simplicity of design (a giant statue of a fallen angel which rotates to provide various perspectives, serves as the set for all three acts) matches the conceptual approach, which focuses on all the relationships. The intensity of the metaphysical bond between Tristan and Isolde is paramount and clearly conveyed. Additionally, Kurwenal, King Marke and Brangane are not just “extras” to the drama, but their own stories have intensity and complexity.

Daniel Barenboim conducted the Berlin Staatskapelle in amazing form. Barenboim’s conducting is not to everyone’s taste. In 2013, I heard him conduct the Ring Cycle at the same location and was struck by the unique timbres he extracts from each instrumental section. The brass especially are coaxed to produce a full and rich sound, which, while less evident in the orchestration of *Tristan*, creates an aurally stunning impact. On this occasion, even more than in the Ring, I was struck by how the strings produced timbres, which made the most familiar music seem new and re-energised. This was especially evident in the anguished repeated rising four note motive in the Act 3 Prelude and the ecstatic surges of the Prelude to Act 1. It isn’t a subtle reading of the score, but it’s an engrossing and polished romantic view, which gripped the audience from beginning to end.

The supporting cast was outstanding. Roman Trekel made a solid Kurwenal and he is an intelligent actor. Ekaterina Gubanova delivered the strength of tone for Brangäne, contrasting well with the tone of Isolde, yet delivering the most dreamy warning I have heard.

To hear Rene Pape as King Marke was the ultimate in luxury casting. In many other’s hands the Act II monologue can be tedious, but with the combination of Pape’s beautiful sonority with Barenboim’s deft expression and pacing (and some magnificent solo wind playing), the moment is a joy. In the right hands this often-maligned stretch of music can stand majestically on its own, as is seen in its inclusion as an item in Pape’s album *Gods, Kings and Demons* (again with the Staatskapelle)

Peter Seiffert was a strong Tristan. Here is an outstanding singer/actor. I have never heard him in a recording that does him justice. In the theatre, he delivers as good a Tristan as you will hear anywhere. The detailed delivery of phrasing in the Act 2 duet may have seemed a little fussy to some, but I found it suited the style perfectly, emphasising the music’s ability to capture the subtlety of the emotions.

The long stretch of monologue in Act III (another potential moment where audience attention can fade) was gripping in its building intensity. Once again, Barenboim’s control and shaping of the shepherd’s sad tune fragments, floating in and out like Tristan’s consciousness, was mind blowing.

But the greatest factor at work that night was the Isolde of Waltraud Meier. There can be few in the history of performances of this work who have matched such an amazing vocal timbre and style with the most sensitive and expressive dramatic portrayal. Meier’s dramatic skills are worthy of the greatest stars of stage and screen. Her facial expressions and body movement are mesmerising and add incredible complexity to the character. To watch the drama of the intense emotional development of Act I was almost too much to bear when combined with Meier’s vocal magic and Barenboim’s intense and colourful musical direction. In the 2013 *Walküre*, Seiffert and Meier brought the house down with their Siegmunde and Sieglinde . My expectations were high for the Act II duet. I was not disappointed. This was something very special.

Meier is approaching 60 years of age but her vocal and physical presence give no indication of this. Only in the opening moments of the *Liebestod* were some pitching problems evident, though I felt probably brought on more by the intention to convey the intensity of the dramatic moment. In any case, the problems were short lived and the audience experienced the *Liebestod* as an emotional tidal wave.

DIE MEISTERSINGER VON NÜRNBERG AND DER FLIEGENDE HOLLÄNDER SCREENINGS - MEMBERSHIP DRIVE AND THANKS TO MEMBERS FROM THE EVENTS SUB-COMMITTEE

We have been fortunate to have screenings of two high quality productions of Wagner operas from the Metropolitan Opera and Covent Garden presented at cinemas within the last month. This was a golden opportunity for us to try to reach potential new members. A number of members volunteered to distribute our new brochure at the screenings and we wish to thank them for this. Thanks go to: Jenny Ferns, Mailis Wakeham, Helen Meddings, Mitzi Saunders, Clare Hennessy, Alasdair Beck, Colleen Chesterman, Terence Watson, Tony Jones, Mike Day, and Barbara de Rome.

“SENSORY OVERLOAD” - FRANK CASTORF'S RING CYCLE - THE YEAR AFTER by Dr Jim Leigh

The new Ring at Bayreuth, first seen to concerted prolonged booing in 2013, was received with general warm approval in 2014 and one can readily see why. Director Frank Castorf's dramatic technique is “überforderung” or overload, that is, sensory overload. People who were initially flabbergasted have since been educated about his style. The same thing happened with Patrice Chéreau's Centenary Ring of 1976.

Castorf is a theatre director and had never directed an opera before this Ring. He has however greatly influenced other opera directors, notably Kriegenburg (director of the Munich “gymnastic ballet” Ring); Schlingensiefel (“decomposing hare” Bayreuth *Parsifal* 2004) and Meese (“god knows what” Bayreuth *Parsifal* 2016). Castorf's basic idea is that theatre should not force a linear narrative on the spectator, but rather get her/him to feel in the theatre the same uncertainty and insecurity she/he feels in modern life. We hear the news, watch TV and films, play video games, use mobile phones and i-devices, but do we know if what we see and hear is true or if it has happened seconds, minutes or months ago?. We get 24 hour continuous news on hundreds of different services and they all have different spin. Then there is the advertising.

Castorf is from the former East Germany (DDR) and obviously can still mount a strong critique of capitalism. Wagner's Ring does this as well of course, emanating as it does from 1848, the time of the German attempted revolutions and Marx's *Communist Manifesto*. It is love and not commercial property contracts that will create the new world order.

The main argument of Castorf's Ring relates to the parallel but different stories of oil exploitation in the East and the West. In the West we have a 1960s Texas gas station/motel on Route 66 and the New York Stock Exchange. In the East we have the 1920s Baku oilfield in Azerbaijan (Stalin started his career as a union official here), and the Schkopau plastic products of the DDR Buna chemical works. The idea is that oil (gold) leads to useless corrupt financial speculation in the capitalist West and socially useful household products in the socialist East.

Linking these major scenic leitmotifs are other settings including Berlin Alexanderplatz just before German reunification (Siegfried), a Mount Rushmore showing Marx, Stalin, Lenin and Mao (Siegfried), a doner kebab shop and vegetable store in Berlin (Gibichung Palace) and an Afro-Cuban Santería Cult altar (Norns).

The most overloading and disorientating effect of all, however, is the extensive use of film clips to show the Wagner Ring actions, which are not often in the correct time relation to the score and text and sometimes even contradict what is seen on stage. Another feature is the use of many supernumerary characters. One actor in particular plays

many different roles. Patric Seibert (also assistant to the director and dramaturg) seems to be on the stage for the whole cycle as a coach to the cast and the stage technicians, as well as representing bartenders, beer garden waiters, Siegfried's bear and others. He was so omnipresent that Carole and I were tempted to play the children's game of “Where's Wally).

All main characters are constantly followed around by cameramen and their actions constantly repeated for us in the “news” videos. This worked particularly well for me in closed room scenes but as intended, distracted somewhat when I didn't know what to watch or believe.

Real motor vehicles (a Mercedes Oldtimer convertible, a BMW Isetta bubblecar and a metallic silver multi-purpose caravan) feature prominently but the biggest bang of the evening was the firing of a real Kalashnikov AK 47 assault rifle as Siegfried kills Fafner (who is only a man and not a dragon). The latter event requires a hearing loss health and safety warning to the audience in the evening cast list program! (Siegfried does not forge a sword but assembles one Kalashnikov from parts by comparing it to a second complete one as a model).

Another trick of Castorf's is to lead the spectator to think that some prop on the stage will be used to further the illustration of the text, but they are not. For example, the whole oil rig in Azerbaijan could be expected to blaze up in *Walküre* act 3 but only a single oil barrel does. At the end of *Götterdämmerung* Brünnhilde splashes petrol all over the set but again no great blaze occurs. Even in *Rheingold* there is a scene where Loge is playing around with a cigarette lighter near petrol and we expect something to happen and it doesn't.

We do not initially see swimming Rhinemaidens, but the girls are seen later in a video clip. We could expect some sort of transformation of the upper floor of the Texas motel into Walhall but instead the only reference is a video clip showing William Randolph Hearst's mansion Xanadu in California.

There is also a fair bit of violence and sexual activity on stage and some of this is in Wagner's text. Some is not. Wotan first appears in bed in a motel room in a threesome with Fricka and Freia. In *Rheingold* Erda appears as an old girlfriend of Wotan- possibly as a prostitute or brothel madam, while in Siegfried Act 3 she “goes down” on Wotan in a way not intended by Wagner's “hinab”. Hagen kills both Siegfried and Gunther with a baseball bat but Siegfried's death is shown earlier in a different form on a video when he encounters the Rhinemaidens. Most of Wagner's great scenes are passed over on the stage but shown in video clips. Nibelheim is in the silver caravan. The rainbow bridge is represented by the lowering of the Texan flag at the motel and its replacement by a gay rights rainbow flag.

There is a sword in a tree trunk visible on the first floor of the gigantic oil rig in *Walküre* Act 1, but Siegmund does not go near it. Instead we see a video of him pulling out the sword behind an adjacent workshop. The Siegmund-Sieglinde love duet is accompanied by a video of a woman eating a cake and then trying on nightie. As Siegfried is about to be conceived a giant picture of Lenin appears. The creation of a free hero to start the revolution is nigh.

There are some good effects. The gigantic oil rig is used spectacularly at times. The annunciation of death scene and the ride of the Valkyries take place at a great height on the stage. The dead heroes appear to be an allusion to the Kurdish chemical warfare victims under the Hussein regime. Wotan's farewell is accompanied by a massive oil pump swinging like a cradle rocking, and threatening the orchestra pit cover.

Mime's forge is again the silver caravan, now at the foot of Mount Rushmore. Fafner's cave is in Berlin Alexanderplatz. The Woodbird, who sports an oversize Native American headdress in the style of Sitting Bull, not only tells Siegfried how to find Brünnhilde but also what to do with her when he awakens her. Wotan confronts Siegfried for the last time accompanied by a moving video clip of an old man in a vast forest. The sleeping Brünnhilde is not found where she was at the end of *Walküre*, near the oil rig, but at the foot of Mount Rushmore and the awakening scene and love duet follow a further scene change back to a beer garden in Berlin.

Here is inserted one of the most bizarre scenes in the whole production. At the end of the love duet two large crocodiles crawl slowly on to the stage; they begin to copulate. Then the smaller (female) crocodile eats a girl, who I assumed was the Woodbird without her extravagant headdress. Siegfried quietens the large (male) crocodile by feeding it the umbrella from the beer garden table. Then the female crocodile regurgitates the girl into Siegfried's arms and, mightily relieved, he can finally start to do to Brünnhilde all the things that the Woodbird taught him about. Apparently in the first cycle of 2014 there were three crocodiles, a change since 2013, symbolising perhaps the next generation (after all Brünnhilde is shown in the Copenhagen Ring giving birth to a baby in the finale).

I took all this to be consistent with showing that Siegfried has still not learnt fear and to show some real dragons as Siegfried recalls the confrontation with Fafner (as a man) which also failed to teach him fear. Or possibly it was just a big joke by Castorf.

In *Götterdämmerung*, Siegfried farewells Brünnhilde in the silver caravan again, at the foot of Mount Rushmore, presumably close to Mime's forge. There is no Rhine Journey and indeed there is no Rhine in the whole production. The Gibichung Hall (vegetable shop and doner kebab shop in Berlin) is supposed to show that just as the gods in *Rheingold* are seedy and corrupt so also are human royalty. Gutrune arrives in an Isetta bubble car.

Some, but not all, of Hagen's vassals also tote Kalashnikovs. The spear oath is sworn in the silver caravan which miraculously now re appears near the vegetable shop. The deaths of Siegfried and Gunther are described above. Brünnhilde just walks away at the end.

All this may remind you of the 2004 Schlingensiefel *Parsifal* with its multiple distracting images. But Castorf is different. His Ring does relate to the fundamentals of Wagner's Ring and somehow the stage goings on were not anywhere near as distracting for the spectator as those in the Schlingensiefel *Parsifal*.

Did all this also distract the singers or orchestra? Hardly at all.

Catherine Foster (Brünnhilde) was *the* standout. She sang effortlessly and she believed in the production. Others who impressed were Norbert Ernst (Loge), Markus Eiche (Donner), Claudia Mahnke (Fricka, Waltraute and 2nd Norn) Anja Kampe (Sieglinde) and Attila Jun (Hagen). As Wotan/Wanderer, Wolfgang Koch was at his best in *Siegfried*. He was much weaker in the lower lying passages in *Walküre*. Only Lance Ryan (Siegfried) really disappointed—and was booed by some.

The chorus was excellent (chorusmaster Eberhard Friedrich). The orchestra under new Bavarian State Opera director Kirill Petrenko performed with shining intensity and individual instrumental clarity, enunciating all leitmotifs, if not always in tempo with the singers, or indeed the stage actions. The sets (Aleksander Denić) were magnificent, especially the oil rig in *Walküre* and the motel/petrol station in *Rheingold*. The video work (Andreas Deinert, Jens Crull) and the "extra" work of Patric Seibert deserve great praise. Patric also gave much illuminating insight into the production in a talk arranged by the Friends of Bayreuth in the Steingraber Haus.

Overall, I really enjoyed this Ring. Perhaps it is more Castorf's than Wagner's but that did not worry me.

Some other points about 2014 in Bayreuth

Both Wahnfried and the Margrave's Theatre were closed for renovation. Stefan Mickisch was not there due to illness but the monumental 9 CD set of his analysis of the 261 (yes!) leitmotifs in the Ring was available and able replacements for his introductory lectures were Sven Friedrich (free) in the Festival theatre itself this year and Hans Martin Gräbner in the Walhall Lounge (on the hill above Festival theatre). The latter, who is new, gives talks at the grand piano, and sings, while you sit with a drink at a table for 12 Euro. He is no Mickisch but very good value. There are new and better train connections to Regensburg and Coburg for day trips. Thurnau by bus was also fun on the tiny local roads.

The future of Bayreuth?

The word is: don't expect to see anything there in future *except Regietheater*: I think this is how it should be too. Under Katharina Wagner we have already seen major changes: her own innovative productions; hiring of radical directors; the early Wagner works performed at Bayreuth; performances in cinemas; children's adaptations; on-line ticketing; "hot" ticketing for more performances; and a modernised Wahnfried museum with a new section. Long may it continue thus.

FOR SALE: RARE ARTHUR RACKHAM WAGNER VOLUMES AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE BY WAGNER SOCIETY IN NSW MEMBER

A member of the Society has very generously donated two volumes of Arthur Rackham's illustrated libretti of the four Ring operas: *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* in Volume 1, and *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung* in Volume 2. These are limited editions. They are dated 1910, numbered 96 and signed by Rackham himself. The illustrations are extraordinarily vivid. Patricia Baillie, a highly experienced antiquarian book expert and a member of the Society, has examined the books and written the following comments:

"Two handsome vellum bound volumes, Arthur Rackham: Illustrations of The Ring Libretti. *Der Ring des Nibelungen – Ein Bühnenfestspiel für drei Tage und einen Vorabend, von Richard Wagner*. Two volumes. Contains libretti of : *Das Rheingold & Die Valkyrie* (vol. I) and *Siegfried & Götterdämmerung* (vol. II). Ruetten und Loenig, Frankfurt A/M. 1910-1911. Limited edition, signed by Arthur Rackham. This is no.96. 25 x 19cm, bound in original publisher's full vellum, gilt titles, t.e.g., others untrimmed. Gilt medallion with 'RW' to front cover.

"The renowned illustrator, Rackham, has given us here splendid illustrations of Wagner's heroic Ring

Cycle. There are 64 tipped-in, tissue guarded, colour plates. The set presents very well indeed. There are a few marks and some very light soiling to the vellum bindings and occasional light browning or foxing to some pages. Overall, a handsome copy, in excellent condition, of this rare set.

"Note on the set numbering: For the American and British editions, both also dated 1910 & 1911, some claim that the edition was 1100 or, some, 1150 copies, all signed by the artist. This set is numbered in Rackham's hand as no. 96, making it an early printing of the edition."

Patricia also made enquiries about any other similar volumes of the Rackham libretti. There are currently two sets on the internet market, although it is unlikely that they are as early as no.96. Both are selling for a little over \$A5,000. In the circumstances, we thought that we should make these two volumes available for purchase by our members for the starting price of \$4,000. Anyone who is interested in purchasing these unique volumes should contact Society President, Jane Mathews, by email at mathews@ozemail.com.au.

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WAGNER IN MOSCOW AND ST PETERSBURG - PRESENTATION BY DR ROSAMUND BARTLETT By Colleen Chesterman

Our first meeting for 2015, at the Goethe Institut on February 15, was attended by over 70 members and friends. The DVD shown marked the Society's support for the first Elizabeth Connell Prize, to which we had contributed the prize for second place. Those present were able to see the 5 finalists, who were from Australia, England, Poland and the United States. Each of them sang two arias, of which three were Wagner arias. (The two others had sung Wagner arias in the semi-final). The audience at the Institut was thrilled by the performance of the *Liebestod* by the winner Anna Patrys of Poland, so warmly praised by the jury chair, Richard Bonyngne. The winner of the Wagner Society Prize, Justine Viani, was also much praised. Both these singers have returned to Europe, performing in significant roles and auditioning. We thank the Joan Sutherland and Richard Bonyngne Foundation for allowing us to show the Finals DVD. The committee has agreed to support the second prize in the 2015 competition.

Dr Rosamund Bartlett then presented a stimulating talk, with copious illustrative material, on *Wagner in Moscow and St. Petersburg, 1841-1941: A Century of Reaction and Revolution*. Dr Bartlett is a writer, scholar, translator and lecturer. She has lectured on Russian literature, music and cultural history at universities and public institutions around the world. Her major interests are the comparative history of European Modernism, opera, and the intersection between politics, history and the arts. She has written numerous articles and program notes on Russian music and opera, including for the Grove Encyclopaedia and the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.

She began by describing her introduction to this area of study. Embarking on a Ph.D. at Oxford University, she thought of exploring her areas of previous study, Russian and music. By accident she found in the library stacks volumes of Wagner's writings translated into Russian, so covered with dust that she knew at once they had never been read or noticed. Her delight in exploring this area, even though she had not at that stage seen a Wagner opera, led to her discovery of the significant impact that Wagner had on Russian music, theatre production and culture. Her Oxford doctoral thesis was published as *Wagner and Russia* by Cambridge University Press in 1995.

In her well-illustrated lecture, Dr Bartlett emphasised the isolation of Russia from European cultural concerns in the 19th century. The initial interest in and enthusiasm for Wagner's music and ideas came from a small group of symbolist poets from the 1840s to 1860s. This is not surprising considering that Russia was slow in developing an interest in opera: it was not until 1843 that Tsar Nicholas I supported the establishment of the Italian Imperial Opera in Moscow. By 1860 the Mariinsky Theatre was established in the more Europeanised St Petersburg and in 1862 the St Petersburg Conservatoire. A key figure was Alexander Serov, an important music critic, opera composer and an enthusiast for Wagner's compositions. He encouraged Wagner to visit Russia in 1863.

Interestingly Wagner's reputation as a 'revolutionary' caused much concern, and spies followed Wagner during his tour.

Dr Bartlett suggested that despite their relatively late introduction, Wagner's music and ideas found more fertile ground in Russia than anywhere else in Europe. Musicians and others were often divided. Mussorgsky for example disliked his 'revolutionary' music, whereas Tchaikovsky was positive about Wagner's innovations. Russian aristocrats were supporters. In 1868 *Lohengrin* was performed in Russian translation at the Bolshoi and in St Petersburg; *Tannhäuser* received its first performance in 1874. A major breakthrough was the lengthy tour of impresario Angelo Neumann's Richard Wagner Opera Company, which from its first performances in Leipzig in 1878 carried *The Ring* far beyond Bayreuth. It reached St Petersburg and Moscow in 1889 with Karl Muck as conductor. Apparently Tolstoy came to Moscow for the production, but did not attend the full cycle. He saw enough of *Siegfried* to pen a hostile description of the whole tetralogy in a late tract called 'What is Art?' But the tide of support for Wagner was developing in Russia, culminating in a production of *Tristan and Isolde* in 1899. Russian singers such as Felia Litvinne, the leading Brünnhilde, became well-known Wagner interpreters.

She looked briefly at the twentieth century. Disciples such as Diaghelev and Stanislavsky and aristocrats such as Sergei Volkonsky attended Bayreuth. Chekhov was a Wagner supporter; Dr Bartlett suggested his four great plays were influenced by the structure of *The Ring*. She pointed out that Wagner was seen as a supporter of revolution and that his theoretical works were widely translated.

More importantly he was a catalyst for dramatic experimentation in Russia, often based on Adolphe Appia's examples. Vsevolod Meyerhold in 1909 produced *Tristan and Isolde* at the Mariinsky in St Petersburg with stripped back staging and use of movement. He followed this after the Revolution with a radical *Rienzi*. The constructivist artist Vladimir Tatlin designed a *Holländer*. An extraordinary photograph of a Walther in a bizarre hat came from a *Meistersinger* production, in which Walther was a young merchant who overthrew the feudal structure, but was ruined by his own acquisitiveness! The rise of Hitler posed many problems for Wagner production, but the non-aggression pact of 1939 enabled film director Sergei Eisenstein to produce *Walküre* at the Bolshoi.

Dr Bartlett had reproduced historic recordings from early Russian Wagner productions, but sadly a blow to one of the microphones short-circuited the sound system. Many regretted not hearing the wonderful Russian voices! Fortunately, Dr Bartlett has agreed to present to us when she returns to Sydney in 2016. We hope she will focus on Russia during the 20th century, Revolution and after, with the historic recordings. The questions that followed the presentation showed that for most of us it had been a revelation of Wagner's important influence on Russian culture and theatre.

THE RAVEN'S REPORTING, COMPILED BY CAMRON DYER

There is a regularly updated list on the Society's Website www.wagner-nsw.org.au that takes the list to 2020.

April 2015

Berlin Deutsche Oper
Lohengrin - April 19, 25.
Staatsoper
Tannhäuser - April 2, 5.
Parsifal - April 3, 6, 12, 18
Tristan und Isolde - April 1, 4, 7,
State Opera
Parsifal - April 3, 6,
Parsifal - April 3, 12, 2 .
Chemnitz
Dessau *Das Rheingold* - April 5.
Götterdämmerung - April 18.
Parsifal - April 3, 6, 2015.
Helsinki *Die Meistersinger* - April 4, 11, 18.
Houston *Die Walküre* - April 18, 22, 25, 30.
Karlsruhe *Parsifal* - April 3, 19.
Kiel *Holländer* - April 2.
Leipzig *Parsifal* - April 3.
Siegfried - April 12, 26.
The Ring - March 31, April 2, 5, 8.
Linz *Die Meistersinger* - April 26.
Mannheim *Parsifal* - April 3.
Die Walküre - April 26.
Marseille *Holländer* - April 21, 24, 26, 29.
Meiningen *Tannhäuser* - April 3, 17.
Mulhouse *Tristan und Isolde* - April 17, 19.
Munich *Götterdämmerung* - April 2, 5.
Nuremberg *Siegfried* - April 8, 19, 26.
Prague State Opera
Tannhäuser - April 2, 28.
Holländer - April 9, 18.
Saarbrücken *Tristan und Isolde* - April 2.
Stockholm *Tristan und Isolde* - April 2.
Strasbourg *Parsifal* - April 2, 5, 8.
Vienna *Lohengrin* - April 6.
Wiesbaden

May 2015

Bielefeld *Tannhäuser* - May 31.
Dessau *The Ring* - May 13, 14, 15, 17.
Dresden *Holländer* - May 2, 8, 13.
Houston *Die Walküre* - May 3.
Karlsruhe *Parsifal* - May 14, 24.
Kiel *Holländer* - May 10, 29.
Leipzig *Parsifal* - May 22.
Siegfried - May 24, 30.
Das Rheingold - May 28.
Die Walküre - May 29.
Tannhäuser - May 31, 2015
[concert performance].
The Ring - May 8, 10, 14, 17.
Linz *Holländer* - May 9, 11.
Luxembourg *Die Meistersinger* - May 10, 25, 31.
Mainz *Die Walküre* - May 25.
Mannheim *Tannhäuser* - May 23, 25.
Meiningen *Siegfried* - May 3, 17, 25.
Nuremberg *Holländer* - May 16, 22.
Saarbrücken *The Ring* - May 16, 17, 20, 25; 30, 31,
June 4, 7.
Vienna *Tristan und Isolde* - May 17, 24.
Wels *Tannhäuser* - May 20, 22.
Wiesbaden *Lohengrin* - May 25.

June 2015

Berlin *Das Rheingold* - June 18, 24.
Bielefeld *Tannhäuser* - June 4, 7.
Budapest Palace of Arts
The Ring - June 11, 12, 13, 14.
Dessau *The Ring* - June 23, 24, 26, 28.
Dresden *Holländer* - June 18, 21.
Karlsruhe *Parsifal* - June 4.
Leipzig *Tannhäuser* - June 7, 2015
[concert performance].
Mainz *Die Meistersinger* - June 4, 7.

Mannheim *Parsifal* - June 4.
Nuremberg *Siegfried* - June 21, 28.
Pforzheim *Lohengrin* - June 6, 10, 13, 20.
Saarbrücken *Holländer* - June 4, 10.
Sydney Sydney Symphony Orchestra
Tristan und Isolde - June 20, 22, 2015
[concert performance].
Vienna *The Ring* - May 30, 31, June 4, 7.
Wroclaw *Holländer* - June 5, 6, 7. Munich

July 2015

Bayreuth *Tristan und Isolde* - July 25.
Lohengrin - July 26.
The Ring - July 27, 28, 30.
Holländer - July 31.
Erl *Tristan und Isolde* - July 10, 18.
Die Meistersinger - July 11, 19.
The Ring - July 23, 24, 25, 26; 30, 31,
August 1, 2.
Mainz *Die Meistersinger* - July 5, 19.
Munich *Tristan und Isolde* - July 8, 12.
Nuremberg *Siegfried* - July 19.
Pforzheim *Lohengrin* - July 7, 10.
Sofia *The Ring* - July 4, 5, 7, 9.
Zurich *Lohengrin* - July 4, 8, 11.

August 2015

Bayreuth *Tristan und Isolde* - Aug 2, 7, 13, 18, 23.
Holländer - August 3, 8, 15, 19, 28.
Lohengrin - August 4, 16, 20, 27.
Siegfried - August 5.
The Ring - July 27, 28, 30, August 1, 9,
10, 12, 14; 21, 22, 24, 26.
The Ring - July 30, 31, August 1, 2.

September 2015

Dresden *Holländer* - September 18, 21, 25.
Minden *Das Rheingold* - September 9, 2015 [no
other dates].
Füssen *The Ring* - September 12-17 (Sofia
National Opera and Ballet)

October 2015

Halle *The Ring* - Oct 30, November 1, 6, 8.
New York *Tannhäuser* - October 8, 12, 15, 19, 24,
27, 31.

November 2015

Halle *The Ring* - Oct 30, November 1, 6, 8.
San Francisco *Meistersinger* - Nov 18, 21, 24, 27.

December 2015

San Francisco *Die Meistersinger* - December 2, 6.

2015/16 Season

Nuremberg *Götterdämmerung* - [no dates].

January 2016

Toronto *Siegfried* - January 23, 27, 30.

February 2016

Barcelona *Götterdämmerung* - February 28.
Dresden *Die Walküre* - 20, 23, 28.
Toronto *Siegfried* - February 2, 5, 11, 14.

March 2016

Barcelona *Götterdämmerung* - March 3, 7, 11, 14, 19.
Budapest State Opera
Die Walküre - 3, 6, 10, 13, 17, 20.
Salzburg Osterfestspiele
Lohengrin - March 19, 28.

April 2016

Houston *Siegfried* - April 16, 20, 23, 28.
Tokyo *Siegfried* - April 7, 10.
Washington DC *The Ring* - April 30, May 2, 4, 6.

HOW THINGS HAVE CHANGED! KLEIN WHO?

'The wild Wagnerian corybantic orgy, this din of brasses, tin pans and kettles, this Chinese or Caribbean clatter with wood sticks and ear-cutting scalping knives. . . . Heartless sterility, obliteration of all melody, all tonal charm, all music. . . . This revelling in the destruction of all tonal essence, raging satanic fury in the orchestra, this diabolic, lewd caterwauling, scandal-mongering, gun-toting music, with an orchestral accompaniment slapping you in the face. . . . Hence, the secret fascination that makes this music the darling of the feeble-minded royalty, the plaything of the camarilla, of the court flunkeys covered with reptilian slime, and of the blasé hysterical female court parasites who need this galvanic stimulation by massive instrumental treatment to throw their pleasure-weary frog-legs into violent convulsions . . . the diabolical din of this pig-headed man, stuffed with brass and sawdust, inflated, in an insanely destructive self-aggrandizement, by Mephistopheles' mephitic and most venomous hellish miasma, into Beelzebub's Court Composer and General Director of Hell's Music—Wagner!'

Peter Bassett has drawn our attention to this contemporary assessment of Wagner and his work by Julius Leopold Klein (1810-1876) in his 13 volume *History of the Drama (Geschichte des Dramas)*. If you are interested in reading more of Herr Klein's insights, and you read German, you can download a free e-book from www.archive.org (<https://archive.org/details/geschichtedesdra04kleiuoft/>).



Richard Wagner, par Gill. *Richard Wagner, par Grand-Cateret* [*L'Éclipse*, 18 Avril 1869] (Richard Wagner, by Gill. Richard Wagner, by Grand Cateret) [*The Eclipse*, April 18, 1869]



Le nouveau siège de Paris en 1891 by Moloch (The new siege of Paris - a reference to the German siege of Paris in 1870-71)

FOR WAGNER'S REVENGE ON HIS DETRACTORS - JUST LOOK AT THE LIST OF WAGNER PERFORMANCES AROUND THE WORLD IN THE RAVEN'S REPORTING.

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(All website addresses used in this Newsletter are reproduced in the PDF version of the newsletter on the Wagner Society's website in the relevant article - Members Area)



The Brass Fanfare before the start of each half of the Melbourne *Dutchman* performances - themes from the opera as interpreted by conductor Richard Mills



Wagner Society in NSW members, John Studdert, Dennis Mather and Roger Cruickshank before the last performance of the Melbourne *Dutchman*.

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ADDRESS FOR SUNDAY FUNCTIONS

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