



WAGNER
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CELEBRATING THE MUSIC OF RICHARD WAGNER

WAGNER QUARTERLY

IN MEMORIAM JON VICKERS GREAT HELDENTENOR 1926-2015 – obituary inside

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Welcome to the fourth Quarterly for 2015.

2015 has been another busy year for your committee - indeed for the Society generally. We have mounted a number of events and concerts during the year, which have included some fascinating speakers and wonderful singers.

The two principal events since the last Quarterly ended up being completely different. The first, on 13 September, was to have involved the composer and music commentator Andrew Ford, talking about composing after Wagner. Unfortunately, because of a major accident on the M5, our speaker was stuck for hours on the expressway and was unable to attend. This all happened much too late to cancel the event, so instead of listening to a speaker we socialised over an extended afternoon tea. Andrew's talk has been re-scheduled for Sunday 19 June next year.

The other event, on 11 October, involved Neil Armfield—the director of the Melbourne Ring Cycle—talking about the production generally, as well as the plans for next year's performances. Neil had only just returned from working with the Chicago Lyric Opera, and was extremely open and forthcoming in answering questions, first put to him by Colleen Chesterman and then by various members of the audience. His answers were very illuminating, particularly about the environmental aspects of the production. Both these events are described in more detail later in this Quarterly.

Our extremely active Events Sub-committee has already organised some fascinating events for 2016,

which are set out in **COMING EVENTS 2016** of this Quarterly.

As I am sure you all know, the catering for our events is now shared amongst our members. I have been extremely impressed at the quality and variety of the food which has been provided, and I would like to give my heartfelt thanks to members who have taken it upon themselves to assist us in this very important respect. We will continue to need this assistance next year, and we would be extremely grateful if members would consider continuing to help us in this manner.

Finally I would like to remind you that membership of the Society needs to be renewed as from 1 January next year. A membership form is at the back of this Quarterly.

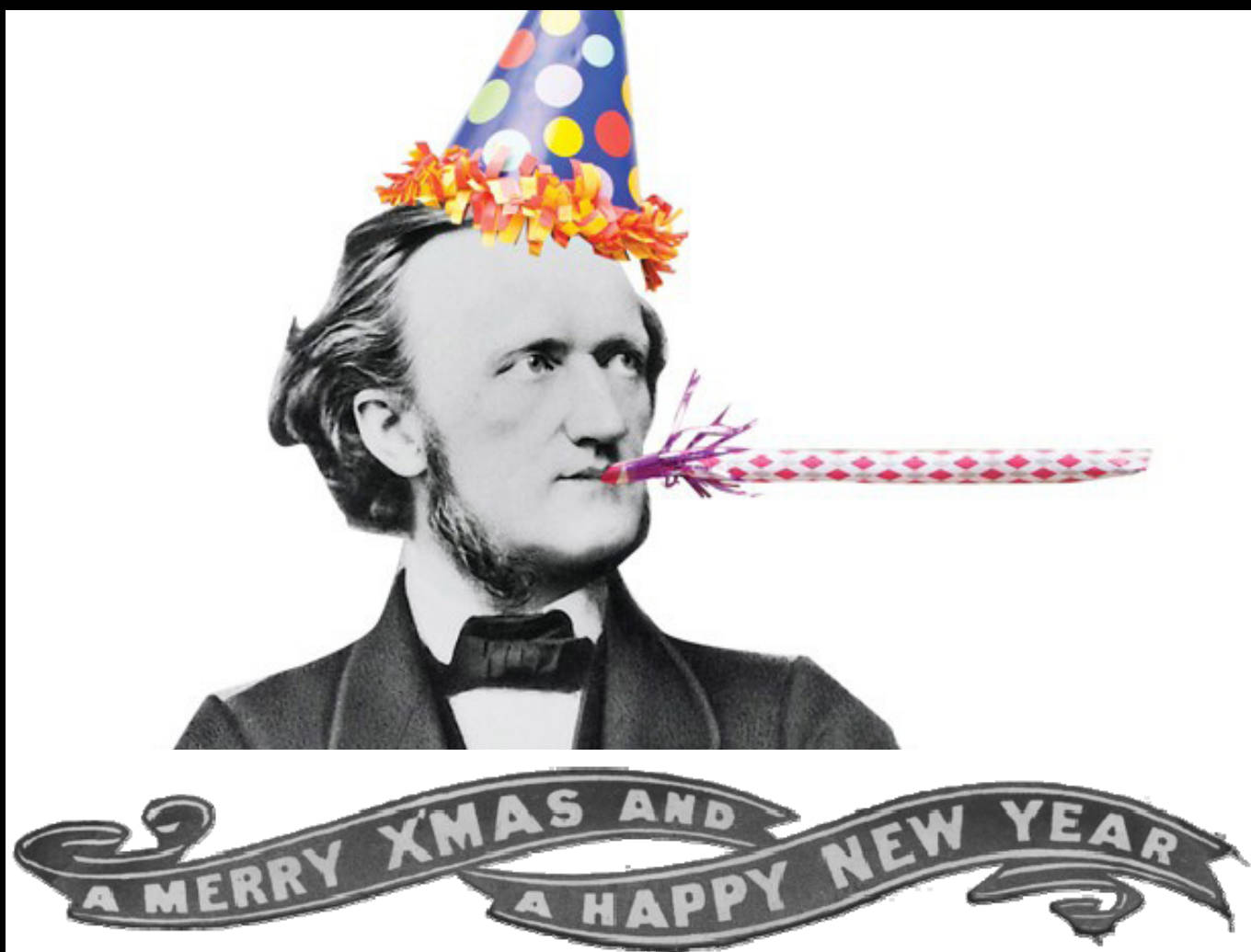
I wish you all a very happy festive season, and look forward to seeing many of you at our 2016 events.



Patron: Ms Simone Young AM
Honorary Life Members: Mr Richard King
Prof Michael Ewans
Mr Horst Hoffman
Mr John Wegner
Mr Roger Cruickshank
Dr Terence Watson



Colleen Chesterman (Vice-President), special guest Neil Armfield, Director, Melbourne Ring Cycle 2016, Jane Mathews (President) at the Wagner Society function, Sunday 11 October 2015



FOR YOUR DIARY

2016

Tuesday, 24 May	Rick's Playlist: "Father" of the Sydney Symphony, Percussionist Rick Miller, will include a piece by Wagner that has "gathered special meaning for him" in this concert	Angel Place @ 6:30pm
Saturday, 19 November	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i> in the Apple Isle: "The most acclaimed <i>Isolde</i> of our times, Swedish soprano Nina Stemme, and superstar tenor Stuart Skelton...perform excerpts from Wagner's sublime <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> under the baton of Marko Letonja." Bookings: 5 October 2015-TSO 2016 Subscribers who purchase a minimum of 8 concerts; 1 to 31 March 2016-TSO 2016 Subscribers who purchase fewer than 8 concerts; 1 April 2016-General public sales	Federation Hall, Hobart @ 7:30 PM
Monday, 21 November to Friday, 16 December	The Melbourne/Armfield Ring Cycle with new singers and singers continuing from 2013: Greer Grimsley—Wotan; Lise Lindstrom—Brünnhilde; Stefan Vinke—Siegfried and Warwick Fyfe—Alberich; Conductor- Pietari Inkinen; Director-Neil Armfield.	Melbourne Arts Centre State Theatre
Thursday, 1 December	SIMONE YOUNG CONDUCTS WAGNER Parsifal: Excerpts from Act II with Stuart Skelton tenor and Michelle de Young mezzo-soprano and BRUCKNER Symphony No.9	Melbourne Arts Centre - Hamer Hall @ 8pm

COMING EVENTS 2016 - SUNDAY STARTING TIMES MAY VARY

PLEASE CHECK THE SCHEDULE ONLINE FOR DETAILS

DATE	Some events may be subject to change and further detail in the next newsletter	TIME & LOCATION
February 21	Peter Bassett: Recalling the Adelaide Rings and <i>Parsifal</i>	Goethe Institut 2PM
March 13	Rosamund Bartlett: Zigfrid and Bryungilda: A History of the Great Wagner Singers of Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union	Goethe Institut 2PM
April 17	AGM followed by presentation by Trevor Clark (Wagner Society of Victoria): Richard Wagner and the Visual Arts	Goethe Institut 2PM
May 22	Concert by young singers supported by Wagner Society followed by champagne celebration of Wagner's Birthday	Goethe Institut 2PM
June 19	Andrew Ford: After Wagner	Goethe Institut 2PM
July 24	Graham Bruce: Joachim Herz's <i>Flying Dutchman</i>	Goethe Institut 2PM
August 14	Antony Ernst: Nationalism and the North German Music Tradition in Wagner's The Ring of the Nibelung	Venue & Time TBC
September 18	Barbara Brady: Wagner's early operas	Goethe Institut 2PM
October 16	David Larkin: Liszt, Wagner and the audiences of the day	Goethe Institut 2PM
November 6	Concert: Wagner's Piano Music followed by Christmas Party	Venue TBC 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)

NEIL ARMFIELD Q&A WITH THE WAGNER SOCIETY IN NSW - 11 OCT 2015

by Michael Chesterman

Neil Armfield, the director of the Melbourne Ring in 2013, was the guest speaker at a meeting of the Society held on 11 October at the Goethe Institut. Over 60 people attended. Neil answered questions from the Chair (President, Jane Mathews) and the audience during a session lasting about 90 minutes. Neil indicated that Opera Australia's late confirmation that the Ring would be restaged at the end of 2016 meant that some of the 2013 cast were committed elsewhere and couldn't be re-engaged. In addition, Neil himself would have to miss the final rehearsals, because he had been engaged by Chicago Lyric Opera to direct a new production of the Magic Flute.

He was happy about the most important cast changes. Greer Grimsley was regarded as one of the finest current performers of Wotan; Lise Lindstrom (whom he had met recently in New York) had showed more than once (for example, while singing *Turandot* for OA earlier this year) that she was well equipped to take on Brünnhilde for the first time; and Bradley Daley would make a fine Siegmund. It was also particularly pleasing that many of the other roles would be sung by the same performers as in 2013 and that Pietari Inkinen would once again conduct.

In 2016, there would be no major changes to the staging, since there was no money to pay for them. Neil had thought of replacing the spiral walkway in Act 2 of *Die Walküre*, but this was not feasible. He knew that in the opinion of a number of people difficulties in voice projection had been caused by the relatively emptiness of the stage in many scenes, but said that among the cast only Susan Bullock (Brünnhilde) complained about this.

A number of aspects of the staging had, he said, been very highly praised by audiences and by cast members. These included Hunding's tiny and claustrophobic cottage (around which snow was falling) in Act 1 of *Walküre* and the depiction of the dragon Fafner as a man in Act 2 of *Siegfried*. Stefan Vinke (Siegfried in 2016 also) had particularly liked the placing of bunks and children's paraphernalia in Mime's hut in the previous Act. A number of people attending his presentation to the Society agreed with these assessments.

Neil did not wish to alter the emphasis put on any of the themes explored in his production. The Ring, he believed, was not a single operatic work. Instead, it comprised four separate operas, which needed to be approached in different ways. To appreciate this, one needed only to take account of the large span of time between the beginning of *Das Rheingold* and the end of *Götterdämmerung*.

It was important, he suggested, to bear in mind that the story told in these four operas was a story about people. Wagner conceived all the participants—gods, giants, Rhinemaidens and the dragon Fafner included—as human beings. It made sense, therefore, to have a crowd of people on the floor of the stage at the start of the cycle and to use groups of people to

depict significant events: for example, colourful dancers to make up the rainbow bridge at the end of *Rheingold*.

Some of these observations by Neil formed part of his response to a comment by Glen Barnwell, a member of the audience. After thanking him for explaining his concept for the production, she said that it would have been useful to know this before seeing it. She didn't 'get it' in 2013 and found some of the visual aspects ugly. She said that the tendency of directors of non-traditional productions to put their own interpretation on an opera meant that some audience members, such as herself, were using up intellectual energy trying to work out what it was all about, rather than fully enjoying it.

In further response to this comment, Neil suggested that actually his production was a relatively orthodox one. His view of 'concept' productions, such as are often to be seen in Germany, was that it was important to ensure that the 'concept' did not overshadow the telling of the story.

BARRIE KOSKY TO DIRECT *DIE MEISTERSINGER VON NÜRNBERG* AT BAYREUTH IN 2017

Barrie Kosky, director of Berlin's Komische Opera, has been named by Bayreuth Festival director Katharina Wagner to direct a new production of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* in 2017. Kosky will be the first Australian director to work at Bayreuth. "Significantly, he will be the most experienced Wagnerian stage director invited to Bayreuth since the demise of Wolfgang Wagner," says Australian Wagner expert Peter Bassett" (quoted in *Limelight*, Clive Paget, 29 July 2015). Kosky has directed *Lohengrin* in Vienna in 2005; *The Flying Dutchman* in Sydney in 1996 and Essen in 2006; and The Ring Cycle at Hannover in 2009-11. Kosky's production will be conducted by Philippe Jordan with Michael Volle as the cobbler Hans Sachs; Klaus Florian Vogt as Walther von Stolzing; Krassimira Stoyanova as Eva and Johannes Martin Kränzle reprising his Beckmesser.

Kosky's production will be preceded in 2106 by Jonathan Meese's production of *Parsifal* to be conducted by Andris Nelsons. The other new productions slated for Bayreuth include *Lohengrin* in 2018 (conducted by Christian Thielemann and directed by Alvis Hermanis, with star Anna Netrebko as Elsa); *Tannhäuser* in 2019 (directed by the German Tobias Kratzer); and The Ring Cycle in 2020 (no director named yet, but your Editor won't take bets that it's Christian Thielemann).

WAGNER AND PARODY by Peter Bassett

Richard Wagner had a keen sense of parody, as we can see from *Das Liebesverbot*, *Die Meistersinger* and his Aristophanes-inspired *Eine Kapitulation* [Wagner's satirical response to the Prussian defeat of the French forces in the 1870-71 Franco-Prussian war between the two powers-Ed.]. He was greatly amused by [Johann] Nestroy's parodies of *Tannhäuser* and *Tristan*.

His American dentist and friend in later life, Newell Sill Jenkins, recorded in his *Reminiscences*: 'To my great delight, I found that he had an extraordinary sense of humour and that he was very fond of amusing anecdotes, telling them in a dry manner which added much to their piquancy. I have myself observed the awestricken reverence with which some of his worshippers approached him seemed to him fit subject for raillery, and indeed it was sometimes so exaggerated that the temptation to turn it into ridicule must have been irresistible.'

Once, at a dinner at Wahnfried, Wagner spoke gravely and at length of his intention to establish a new religion as soon as

he had finished *Parsifal*. It was all a joke at his own expense, although some listened wide-eyed until Cosima and Jenkins fell about laughing. (See Grey, Thomas S., *Richard Wagner and his World*). Even while working on the Ring he was able to make jokes about its characters: 'Siegfried is progressing well. Alas, a blot of ink has found its way on to the beautiful portfolio—probably Mime's fault.' (Letter from Richard Wagner to Frau Ritter, 6 May 1857.)

Readers might enjoy Kieran Tapsell, *The Valhalla Building Dispute*, Australian Law Journal (ALJ) Vol 70, No. 5 (May 1996) p. 415-420; *The Flight of the Valkyries* (ALJ) Vol 70, No 11 (Nov. 1996) p. 925-932, and *Götterdämmerung* (ALJ) Vol 71, No 3 (March 1997) p. 224-231.

[Peter has also given your Editor another essay on *Wagner the Comedian* that will appear in the March 2016 Quarterly.]

LISA GASTEEN NATIONAL OPERA SCHOOL CONCERT

by Colleen Chesterman

The Brisbane-based Lisa Gasteen National Opera School established by internationally acclaimed Wagnerian soprano Lisa Gasteen provides elite opera coaching for Australian-based opera students. Lisa established the school to provide Australia with opera training comparable to that of the best schools in Europe and North America. In the program, established professionals from Australia and overseas coach advanced classical voice students and young professionals in a unique, intensive four week program that includes repertoire classes, voice lessons, music coaching, practical musicianship and language skills. The School is held annually in Brisbane at the Queensland Conservatorium at Griffith University in November/December.

During the training the students perform in a *Liederabend* (Evening of Song) and a Gala Concert, providing the opportunity to audition for agents and professional managements within the industry. This has resulted in employment with Australia's opera companies and symphony orchestras and has created international opportunities for alumni.

Since the beginning of the School, the Wagner Society has supported each year a student from NSW with either tuition or living expenses. Those supported have been Amanda Windred, Christopher Richardson, Matthew Riordan and Ayse Gökür Shamy; in 2015, we are supporting tuition for Lucy Bailes who won the Wagner Society German Aria Prize at the 2015 City of Sydney Eisteddfod.

In October, the School held a concert at the Cell Block Theatre, National Art School, to thank NSW supporters and spread information about the school. This was funded by philanthropist Kenneth Reed, AO. To recognize the Society's contribution, we were offered 40 free tickets. We happily gave these to members who had assisted the Society through 2015, such as, catering volunteers, those offering accommodation to finalists in the Elizabeth Connell Prize, donors and committee members.

It was a most enjoyable afternoon, chaired by Leo Schofield, who has cast graduates in Brisbane Baroque. It began with a video showing the School's operations, featuring among others Chris and Matthew. Three young singers from the 2014 intake then performed arias from *Don Giovanni*, accompanied by Bradley Gilchrist who has played so often in Wagner Society concerts. Finally, Lisa, in fine voice, sang Mahler's *Ruckert Lieder*, accompanied by Sharolyn Kimmorley. Attendees then enjoyed delicious food, champagne and conversation in the leafy courtyard. It was certainly a generous acknowledgment of our support for the School over five years.

QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS:

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THE RING IN BUCOLIC AUSTRIAN TYROL - JULY 2015

by June Donsworth

The logo for the Tiroler Festspiele Erl Sommer is one of profiled cows in a row, alternating with a Cello—charming and a bit quirky, a perfect introduction to this four day Ring Cycle, held in the Passionsspielhaus [Passion playhouse—referring to the tradition of performing the Christian passion story] in a very green valley in the Austrian Tyrol. The instigator of this Ring in the Tyrol is the charismatic and great storyteller Gustav Kuhn. He is the “Musicalische Leitung und Regie” and it is very much his conception and execution. We, a group with Renaissance Tours, were very lucky to have him talk to us in the splendid next door building, the two year old Festspielhaus, (a black angular spiky building which sits in striking contrast next to the white round-fronted older Passionsspielhaus). They make a stunning statement in this beautiful countryside.

The meeting with Kuhn was kindly arranged for us by Sharolyn Kimmorley, who is in Erl each year as repetiteur to prepare the singers, whilst her husband Brett Berthold is playing Double Bass in the orchestra. Kuhn explained to us that his conception for The Ring is that, although it is in modern dress, it is very “traditional” in that his ideas remain close to Wagner’s text and he has not imposed a new, political or idiosyncratic interpretation on the basic story. In other words, his Ring is very much NOT Regietheater.

In the Passionsspielhaus, the audience sits close to the singers, as the stage is wide and shallow, and the orchestra sits behind the singers, in a stepped vertical pyramid, warmly lit by the glow from their music stands, forming the backdrop for the stage. The six harps are at the top of the pyramid, with their spikes forming a triumphant top flourish to the ensemble. Brilliant, visually and aurally. The rationale for this is that the 120-piece orchestra does not overwhelm the singing, and the acoustics in this 55 year-old theatre are excellent.

We enjoyed people watching the crowd outside the theatre, each afternoon still in blazing sunlight, and especially enjoyed the Austrian women and men dressed up in their “Trachtenmoden” (traditional mode).

DAS RHEINGOLD

Das Rheingold started well, with the three Rhinedaughters, dressed in filmy, floaty blue, mauve and green dresses swaying and swinging from tall ladders manipulated by black clad men. Alberich (Thomas Gazheli) dressed in a grey suit and vest, was suitable grabby and lusty and sang with great force. In Valhalla, both Wotan and Loge were also in grey suits, with Loge’s only concession to his character being marked by a bright red tie and wonderful red shoes. Wotan (Michael Kupfer) really never hit his stride and Loge was rather static in his acting. The Nibelung scene was reasonably simple and effective, but the horror of the Nibelungs’ slave status somewhat diluted because they were acted by



Fasolt (American football player [“god”]) and Fafner (prize ice hockey player sung by Andrea Silvestri)

children aged about 12, with the girls all sporting luxurious blonde ponytails. Fricka was tall and glamorous and sang very well. Kuhn had explained to us that one of only a few “contemporary” interpretations was to imagine Froh and Donner as current sporting “gods”, so Fasolt was an American football player, Fafner a prize ice hockey player. Alberich was marvelous in voice and acting when the Ring was wrestled off him. The rainbow bridge was missing, but at the finale some of the Gods ascended through the pyramid of the orchestra.

DIE WALKURE

Act I was a domestic scene, with kitchen cabinets, table and chairs, a tall dresser at the back, with what looked like a washing basket with some white linen piled in it. The sword Nothung was sticking out of the front centre stage. It was ridiculously easy to pull out! Siegmund made a big thing about having hurt his knee and throughout he limped. Sieglinde was tall, good facial bone structure and acted with great dignity and the best voice of the three in this Act. There was definite palpable emotion transferred between Sigmund and Sieglinde. Hunding in leather jacket and pants lacked the menace and threat in his voice that should fill this scene with foreboding and make the love scene so tragically transitory. At the end of the love scene some invisible threads pull the white linen up out of the washing basket and it drops over and envelops the lovers (reminiscent of a mosquito net). A bit corny.

In Act II, Wotan (Vladimir Baykov), dressed in grey trench coat, black hat and sunglasses, had a lyrical voice, but was lacking in command. Brünnhilde (Bettine Kamp) was very slim, with lovely natural brown curly hair, dressed in silver leather pants and a very becoming long silver coat, sang beautifully and was very warm and loving towards Wotan. Fricka (Hermine Haselbock) was magnificent—tall, slim, red leather pants and vest, red high-heeled boots and with a good, strong soprano voice. The scenery was composed of different shaped and sized boxes scattered on the stage. For me, the

Annunciation of Death scene lacked the pathos and intensity that can bring tears to the eyes. In the fight scene, although Siegmund had his sword, Hunding for some reason killed Siegmund with a pistol.

In Act III, the Valkyries rode bicycles! Kuhn had told us a joke about this. He said he had tried to buy on Ebay a *Lufbross* (flying horse), but had only succeeded in acquiring a *Stahlbross* (steel horse), which explained (according to the joke) why the Valkyries rode bicycles instead of horses. This scene worked very well. The Valkyries were dressed in silver grey skirts and vests (one with VERY short shorts), boots, floating grey gauzy bits off their shoulders, riding grey bikes with their spokes filled in with grey paper. Some of them carried dismembered limbs. Brünnhilde entered on a stylised wooden horse with Sieglinde slung over the saddle.

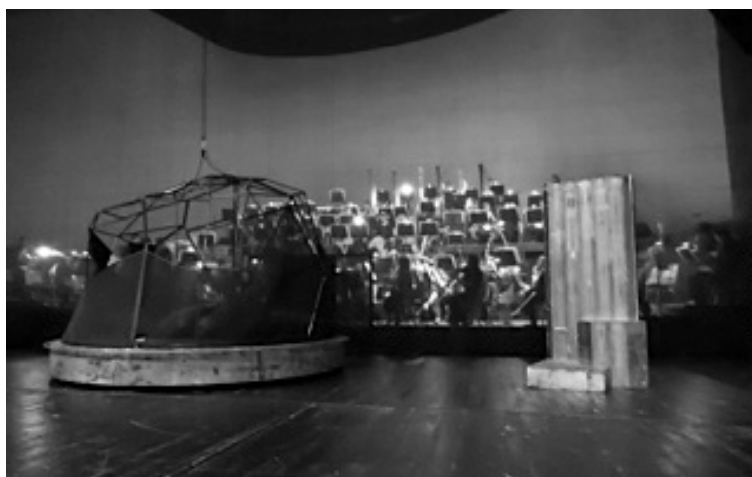
Her helmet was a black velvet riding hat. Her voice and acting, terrific. Her pleading to her sisters and their refusal to help was very effective. There was a strong emotional connection between Brünnhilde and Wotan in the farewell scene.

SIEGFRIED

In Act I, the scene consisted of a cooking place to the left, in the middle some kind of grinding thing with a grid in front of it glowing red, and to the right an anvil also glowing red. Siegfried, youngish, with thickset body, came in with a cardboard bear, and from then on carried a teddy bear with him everywhere. Mime sang in a very “straight” voice without the usual nasal twangy “character” style. The Wanderer was the excellent Thomas Gazheli. He had been Alberich in *Rheingold*.

In Act II, the tall pillars on either side of the stage were lowered horizontally to create the forest. The first scene, mostly in the dark between Alberich and Wanderer, was very powerful. The dragon was hidden in a net at the back and when the net was removed, the dragon was revealed to consist of lit up wooden jaws, and was sung by Andrea Silvestri, with a wonderfully deep resonant voice. Siegfried (Michael Baba) appeared very casual and unperturbed whilst Mime sang and his thoughts were understood by Siegfried. Siegfried got up from where he was sitting and wandered over to Mime and very casually stabbed him. In the scene between Siegfried and the Wanderer, Siegfried was just not brattish or arrogant enough for my liking. This scene should be a heartbreaking disconnect between two generations, instead it was a bit limp.

In Act III, the centre of the stage was a black structure resembling a meat safe, which turned out to be Brünnhilde’s rock. The Wanderer pulls up a trapdoor and a gorgeous Erda popped up. She had a cherubic face, dressed in midnight blue dress with long train that trailed after her and nearly tripped her up when she was up on the stage. A great scene. Then the waking up scene. The meat contraption lifted. All those little girls and one black boy who had been the Nibelungs came down through the audience with lit-up flares, formed a circle around Brünnhilde’s oval alabaster bed, which had a silvery grey mattress and plump silver grey cushions hiding her. Brünnhilde (Joo-ann Bitter) finally arose—she was a fine looking woman, tall and slim with sheer black long sleeved coat dress and inside that a white satin top. She had an



Brünnhilde’s rock “meat safe” - Orchestra behind

excellent, lovely voice. Siegfried unimpressive. They finally embraced and the bunch of kiddies re-appeared and sat on the edge of the alabaster bed, clutching teddies!

GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG

The Norns, in net-like costumes, wound cords around steel spiky structures. James Roser from Sydney sang a very credible Gunther. For me, the best scene was that between Hagen (Andrea Silvestri) and Alberich (Thomas Gazheli), two of the best singers in the whole Ring. Hagen was asleep in front of a bench with Alberich suspended above him and gradually lowered. It had a dreamy quality to it. Brünnhilde’s immolation scene was quite effective, with real (and smelly flares) making the flames.

Gustav Kuhn conducted with great gusto, and received enthusiastic applause. I am not a skilled music critic but I thought the orchestra was fine.

The whole experience, the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, of The Ring in Erl was a delight. Many excellent singers, some great acting, some very effective scenery achieved quite simply, very good orchestral playing and the special visual and aural charm of seeing the pyramid of the orchestra behind the singers. The audience clearly loved it, as did we, and for us it was an unforgettable experience.

[All of June’s photos in colour are on the Wagner Society in NSW website www.wagner.org.au — Editor.]

DONATIONS RECEIVED SINCE AUGUST 2015

No donations received

NEW AND RENEWED MEMBERS SINCE JUNE 2015

1169 Patrick James Timbs Hall; 1170 Helen Gillam; 1171 Florian Hammerbacher; 1172 Denise Bradley and Bruce King; 1173 Marje Ashworth; 1174 Greg Ellis

CHRISTIAN THIELEMANN, *MY LIFE WITH WAGNER* - BOOK REVIEW

by Colin Baskerville

Christian Thielemann, *My Life With Wagner*

London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2015, isbn 978 0 297 60855 4. Translated from the German by Anthea Bell.

Distinguished Wagner conductors rarely write books with a total focus on the composer. Both Daniel Barenboim's *A Life in Music* and Zubin Mehta's *A Memoir* are autobiographical. Christian Thielemann briefly mentions his childhood and early training, but then progresses to Wagner. An international publisher would retitle the book as "The Book of Bayreuth." This book is based on conversations that took place between August 2010 and July 2011 in Bayreuth, Berlin, Salzburg, and on the Attersee with Christine Lemke-Matwey (p 252). For the purposes of publication in English, references are made to the latest (2015) Bayreuth production of *Tristan und Isolde*.

The book is recommended for all Wagner and other classical music lovers. The published text is chatty but requires close concentration. Christian Thielemann brings forth valuable insights. At the same time he discloses many amusing incidents stemming from Bayreuth. It is unclear why the movie director Lars Von Trier accepted but then withdrew from directing a new Ring cycle. However, Christian Thielemann provides an example of the infamous movie director behaving strangely, difficult and eccentric. The author accompanies Wolfgang and Gudrun Wagner to Copenhagen to discuss a proposed Ring cycle production. Lars Von Trier suddenly stands up, tears off his clothes and invites them to swim with him in an icy pool. So much for his proclaimed understanding of the Ring as "a great theatre of illusion" performed in "an atmosphere of enriched darkness" (p 110). On the other hand, Lars Von Trier states the Last Word: "If we want Wagner, then Wagner is what we want" (p 95).

The book is in three sections: a brief outline of his early career followed by in-depth descriptions of Wagner's *Cosmos* and Wagner's Music Dramas. As befitting a serious conductor the first chapter of the *Cosmos* details The Wagnerian Orchestra, Words and Music and The Subjects.

A photo shows the Bayreuth Rogues' Gallery. Here photo portraits of veteran Bayreuth conductors are displayed in this area. The author gives a potted history. For example, Anton Seidl (1850 to 1898) conducted The Ring 135 times mostly with a Touring Wagner Company. Can you believe—135 times? Your reviewer has walked down this hallowed hall and remains convinced that Bayreuth has a flair for contracting outstanding conductors. There have been very few duds but the challenges of conducting from the pit are formidable. For example, Sir Georg Solti politely left.

Thielemann covers the Festival Theatre, the pit, the acoustics and Wagner family chat in the next chapter. For those who have experienced performances in the Festival Theatre this is familiar text. As for the Wagner family itself, well, gossip has been a feature in the German press from day one.

There is an extensive section on the composer's hostility towards Felix Mendelssohn covering material unknown to contemporary Australian readers. Christian Thielemann says "Wagner did lasting damage to Mendelssohn's reputation" (p82). He describes it as "character assassination, and it had consequences" (p85). The obvious consequence was fuelling the blatant anti-Semitism of the time. The National Broadcasting Symphony Orchestra was founded in Sydney in 1932. The reviewer has been unable to locate the programs to see exactly which compositions of Mendelssohn were played. Sir Eugene Goossens, appointed to the renamed Sydney symphony orchestra, certainly scheduled and recorded Mendelssohn works. For that reason this chapter section on Wagner and Mendelssohn is "news" to some of us.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD PERFORMANCE?

The architectural element, mastering the conducting of opera on the grand scale, reading Wagner, directing, singing, interpretation.... In an ideal world conductors and performers of Wagner operas are fluent in the German language. The American soprano Deborah Polaski said that a deep understanding of the language was a prerequisite to singing the notes. She sang Brünnhilde at Bayreuth under James Levine—he conducted long before Christian Thielemann's arrival at Bayreuth.

WAGNER FOR BEGINNERS: AREN'T WE ALL?

The third section is Wagner's Music Dramas. Here Christian Thielemann discusses each opera by Origins, Cast and Orchestration, Plot, Music and Recordings. His analyses are stimulating and informative. Their length is adequate for the task of informing the reader and opera goer of the basics. Hardy literates can progress to detailed, scholarly works. Even the famous Grove Dictionary entries are merely a stepping point.

The author devotes one paragraph to the cinema. We learn that Erich Wolfgang Korngold starred in a Hollywood biopic of Wagner, *Magic Fire* (1955, directed by Wilhelm Dieterle) as the conductor Hans Richter. Thielemann omits to tell us that, in addition to acting, Korngold scored Wagner's music for the soundtrack, earlier on he scored Mendelssohn's music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* also directed by Wilhelm Dieterle in Hollywood. William Dieterle directed a silent biopic of Ludwig II, King of Bavaria, in 1930. Luchino Visconti explored the relationship between Ludwig II and Wagner in greater depth in 1972. Thielemann as a performing musician does not address this historical side of Bayreuth's foundation. There are many more visitors to Ludwig's castles looking at frescoes and painting of scenes of Wagner's operas than listeners in the Festspielhaus performances.

Thielemann does not address the new phenomenon of watching Wagner operas on DVDs, Blu-Ray discs and internet streaming. For those of us who are not fluent in the German language watching surtitles in German and/or English is a big bonus to our understanding and

appreciation of these master works. The audience sitting in the Bayreuth theatre may be privileged, but there are no sub/surtitles and certainly no air conditioning. The author discloses that renovations in the 1960's make the installation of air conditioning "impossible."

On the other hand, his selection of historic recordings is endlessly fascinating. He draws our attention to many worthwhile performances. Many of these are from non-Bayreuth opera houses. Toscanini is one of the first legendary Bayreuth conductors to record a complete opera. The only recording of Toscanini conducting a complete Wagner opera comes from the 1937 Salzburg production of *Die Meistersingers von Nurnberg*; the music was recorded on Selenophone a film soundtrack medium. Even after Ward Marston's remastering the sound is disappointing. Toscanini's Bayreuth performances are discussed on pages 46-47. Toscanini's portrait is beside that of Furtwangler in the Rogues' Gallery. Karl Elmendorff conducted an abridged Bayreuth Festival recording of *Tannhäuser* in 1930. Otherwise, Karl Muck and Siegfried Wagner recorded only short excerpts from Bayreuth. A Naxos CD includes the *Parsifal* bells that were melted down in World War 11.

Thielemann's "desert island" Ring performance is Furtwangler conducting in a Rome radio studio in 1953. Martha Modl sings Brünnhilde; there is a touching photo of her with the conductor in the year 2000. She died in 2001. The selection of photos is surprisingly diverse but includes Wieland Wagner's production of *Parsifal* in 1951, the centenary Patrice Chéreau Ring in 1976, as well as Hans Neuenfels *Lohengrin* in 2010—yes, the one with colourful rats. Bayreuth productions are a workshop in progress. Katharina Wagner is determined to push audiences way beyond their comfort zone. Unfortunately, there is a shortage of opera directors, set and costume designers able to satisfy and bring to stage life her vision. The 2006 Tankred Dorst and Ursula Ehler directed Ring Cycle was a major disappointment in respect of a "workshop in progress." The directors took no chances to improve the interaction between the characters (p109).

Bayreuth remains a mecca for outstanding conductors. *My Life with Wagner* was first published in the German language in 2012. Christian Thielemann as of June, 2015 has a new title *Musikdirektor* which has been created especially for him. The bonus is a car parking space at the Festival Theatre. In Germany that is a big deal.

EMAIL ADDRESSES FOR EASY CONTACT AND ADVICE ON FUNCTIONS AND DEALS!

Regular emails are sent to those members of the Society whose email addresses we have on file. If you have not been receiving these emails, please ensure we have your current email address by filling in the form on the Society's contact web page: www.wagner.org.au/contact-us.

THANKS FOR WAGNER SOCIETY IN NSW FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Dear Leona Geeves and the Wagner Society in NSW,

I am writing to thank you sincerely for the wonderful honour of receiving the Wagner Award at the Sydney Eisteddfod 2015.

This Award means a great deal to me and is an incredible encouragement as I move into new repertoire.

I have recently been encouraged by industry experts to now learn the role of Brangäne, and to continue preparing the R Strauss trouser roles, as well as some other Wagner roles, in preparation for my study trip to Germany. This trip is a result of winning the McDonalds Operatic Aria Competition, also at the Sydney Eisteddfod.

I look forward to improving my German, studying these roles in great depth and improving my understanding of the culture, history and philosophy of this music. My love of German music is very strong and it is a great privilege to be able to focus on it in greater depth. It will also be vital to prepare thoroughly my musical and language related interpretations of the roles I am suited to performing, with people that know the repertoire thoroughly.

It is an honour to receive the Award from the Wagner Society but I'm also sure that having it on my CV will help me significantly as I delve further into this repertoire. It really is fantastic that an award exists to encourage those singers who might suit the German repertoire.

Thank you so much again for your support and thank you for providing this opportunity to young Australian singers via the Sydney Eisteddfod.

Sincerely and with thanks,
Eleanor Greenwood
Mezzo Soprano

Hi Leona,

I just received the most wonderful surprise in the mail, an award for the best German language song or aria at the Sydney Eisteddfod!

I wanted to send you a note to say thanks for sponsoring the award and let you know how honoured I am to be chosen. There were so many great singers and I truly appreciate it.

My most sincere thanks,
Laura

IN MEMORIAM: JON VICKERS - 1926-2015

by Terence Watson

Jon Vickers, one of the greatest Heldentenors on record, died on 10 July 2015 aged 88 years from the ravages of Alzheimer's disease. The Vickers family issued a formal statement summing up Vickers' achievements and qualities.

"It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of our father, Jon Vickers, after a prolonged struggle with Alzheimer's disease. He is survived by one sister, his five children, 11 grandchildren and two great grandchildren. His family and dearest friends remember him for his ringing laughter, warmth, and generous spirit. A man of the land who was the most at home on his farm, surrounded by nature and his family, he had an abiding search for the truths and essences of life.

Born, October 29, 1926, in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, Jon was the sixth of eight children. The Canadian born heroic tenor was one of the greatest opera singers of the 20th century. He performed opera's most demanding roles, Tristan, Siegmund, Parsifal, Otello, Aeneas, Peter Grimes and more, with searing vocal intensity and powerful dramatic interpretation; his performances are still recalled to this day. Vickers was a deeply religious and private man. From smalltown, rural Saskatchewan to a celebrated career on the world's major stages he was regarded for his powerful stage presence and his deeply thoughtful characterizations. He possessed a uniquely powerful and distinctive voice, which when combined with his superior acting ability, made him one of the most exciting operatic artists of his time.

In 1950 he was awarded a scholarship at The Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, where he studied for five years. Invitations soon followed to sing in New York concert performances of *Fidelio* and *Medea* and, in 1956, to audition for David Webster of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden where he made his debut as Gustavus III (*Riccardo*) in 1957. He also sang Don José and Aeneas in Berlioz' *Les Troyens* and in 1958, added Verdi's Radames to his repertory. That same year he sang Don Carlo in Luchino Visconti's famous production conducted by Carlo Maria Giulini, debuted at the Bayreuth Festival as Siegmund, appeared as Samson in Handel's oratorio and performed Jason to Maria Callas' *Medea* at Covent Garden. Vickers 1958 Bayreuth debut as Siegmund in *Die Walküre* launched one of his signature roles and an international career destined to extend well over 3 decades. In 1959 he was invited to the Vienna Staatsoper with Herbert Von Karajan and made his San Francisco debut.

He joined the Metropolitan Opera in New York in 1960, (debuting as Canio in *Pagliacci*), where he sang a wide range of German, French and Italian roles for more than 25 years.



Jon Vickers as Siegmund at the Metropolitan Opera

In *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *Carmen*, *Don Carlo*, *Aida*, *Peter Grimes*, *Fidelio*, *Otello*, *Tristan*, and especially in *Les Troyens* as Aeneas, he was highly praised by the world's major critics. Indeed, in his London appearance as Aeneas - a role Vickers later said was 'written for a tenor who didn't exist' - he met the lyric-dramatic-spiegel demands with such remarkable skill that reviewer Jacques Bourgeois described him as the most heroic tenor to come forward since Del Monaco. Enormous successes then followed at Dallas, Vienna, Milan and Buenos Aires, placing his outstandingly dramatic *heldentenor* talent in great demand.

Reviewers reveled in metaphoric descriptions of Vickers' unique voice: 'towering', 'achingly beautiful', 'of clarion power', 'tireless', 'ringing with truth', 'holding a hundred colors and inflections' (critic John Ardoin 1971) or Herbert Breslin's comment,

'An iron column that weeps tears.' After one 1964 Bayreuth performance of *Parsifal*, Peter Diggins wrote that 'the audience gasped at the sheer beauty of the Canadian's voice.' Criticized at times for seeming to sacrifice a beautiful note for the sake of character development, Vickers claimed that his approach to acting 'hung on the music, absolutely everything I do as an actor I find a motivation for in the music.' His robust, powerful voice was admirably equipped to transport the listener to the shadowy realm of Wagner, and his interpretive insights remain a standard to which other tenors strive. The 20th century's leading conductors, (including Herbert von Karajan, with whom he made many recordings, including *Tristan*, *Otello*, *Die Walküre*, *Fidelio*, *Carmen* and *Pagliacci*), repeatedly returned to his vocal (and physical) suitability for such heroic roles, calling on his rare abilities to read a composer's deepest personal intentions, and his unique capacity to reveal these dramatic dimensions.

Holding strong convictions, Vickers wrestled with portraying certain characters notably Parsifal—and actually refused to perform some roles on moral grounds – specifically, Tannhauser. Other roles included, Nerone (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*), Hermann (*The Queen of Spades*), Vasek (*The Bartered Bride*), Pollione (*Norma*), Erik (*Der fliegende Holländer*), Don Alvaro (*La forza del destino*), Herod (*Salome*) and the title roles of *Andrea Chenier*, *Samson* (both Saint Saëns and Handel).

Vickers' distinctive portrayal of Britten's *Peter Grimes* offered the opera world an unprecedented sensitivity towards, and an historic interpretation of a wronged human soul's slide into insanity and is among the roles for which Vickers is best remembered. "The meeting of character and singer," critic Leighton Kerner said of Vickers' Grimes, "has proved to be one of the mightiest collisions in 20th century opera."

In great demand internationally for three decades, Vickers sang in Ottawa's Christ Church Cathedral at the funeral of his friend John Diefenbaker in 1979 and in 1984, performed *Peter Grimes* in Toronto. In 1988 he announced his retirement and gave his final performance in a concert version of Act II of *Parsifal* at Kitchener's Centre in the Square, although in 1998 he did return to Canada from Bermuda (his home since 1973) to perform Strauss's *Enoch Arden* for spoken voice and piano at the Montréal Chamber Music Festival.

Vickers was a recipient of many honors and awards and held seven honorary degrees, two Grammy awards and in 1969, was invested as a Companion of the Order of Canada. Receiving the Molson Prize in 1976 and the Evening Standard Award in 1978, he was named to the Academy of Vocal Arts Hall of Fame for Great American Singers in 1985.

'Art is a wrestling with the meaning of life,' Vickers once said. Since society no longer resists 'the pull of success,' it can no longer 'define or draw a line between what's art and what's entertainment.'

The obituary in *The Guardian* noted Vickers "...was a singer whose muscular musicality and sense of drama made him one of the outstanding operatic tenors of his generation. [...] With simple gestures, words and notes, a heroic character was made manifest. No experience in the opera house of the time was more overwhelming than the violence with which he could lay bare the anguish of Otello or, in *Pagliacci*, the tragic clown Canio – characters tormented beyond human endurance to a wholly animal fury." Of Vickers' famous reservations about performing certain roles, the obituary also observes: "His refusal to sing in *Tannhäuser* because it offended his Christian convictions was just one indication that Vickers, who was nicknamed "God's tenor", was a performer apart from most of his operatic colleagues. Another was his insistence that art must appeal to the intellect and not merely to the senses. For Vickers, artistry went far beyond singing." The obituary also mentions

his commitment to finding his characters' inner natures: "Even those who might have preferred more decorative singing, however, could never deny that Vickers always transcended the merely melodramatic. His technique and imaginative vocal colouring would never allow him to take short cuts to make an effect. He would take great risks in interpreting familiar classical roles, freeing them from a tradition which in some cases had become little more than a routine, and his characterisations always made psychological sense."

William R Braun in *Opera News* sums Vickers' career: "A Vickers performance in the opera house was a grand, sweeping, overriding affair. It was often a performance of extremes, something more readily comparable to what Marlon Brando or Zero Mostel might do than to what his operatic colleagues did. It was not so much that Vickers might combine staggering rage and a clarion trumpet of a voice with pianissimo singing; it was that, as in Act III of *Otello*, he might combine these in a single phrase. Critical reactions could be extreme as well when Vickers was onstage, but most operagoers were swept away by the sheer exaltation of his *Parsifal* or his *Florestan* in *Fidelio*."

Braun also comments on Vickers' stance on some of the roles he was asked to perform: "Vickers was an unusual singer in his insistence on projecting the moral dimension in his roles. *Florestan*, whose first word is 'Gott,' and *Parsifal*, whose empathy with the wounded Amfortas leads him to empathy with Christ, were natural fits. In a famous interview with Studs Terkel he excoriated *Tristan and Isolde*. "They were not nice people.... It may be a great love story between two quite horrible human beings."

www.theguardian.com/music/2015/jul/12/jon-vickers

www.operanews.com/Opera_News_Magazine/2015/7/News/Jon_Vickers_Tenor_Obituary.html

WAGNER'S RING: A MUSICAL GUIDE

Will Fraser of Fugue State Films has approached the Wagner Society in NSW seeking support, through a crowd funding project, to produce a DVD, which, he hopes "will be of interest to all Australian Wagnerites—I am collaborating with WASO and Asher Fisch and you can watch Asher explain what we are doing in a short film here—www.fuguestatefilms.co.uk/wagner.

Fraser explains: "We plan to film the lectures about the Ring live in front of an audience in the Perth Concert Hall—hopefully on Thursday December 10th. We are crowdfunding—we've raised £35,000 [£38,065 as of 20 October—Ed.] of our £80,000 target, but we won't be able to make the film unless we reach our target. We are offering DVDs for prebuy, with different levels with perks etc, with prices ranging from £29.50 to £1450, plus the opportunity to invest sums greater than £2000. [Details of how to crowdfund are on the website: www.fuguestatefilms.co.uk/wagner—Ed.]

"If the project goes well we plan a second phase that would include a big boxed set with lectures on all the other Wagner operas plus a documentary about Liszt's influence on Wagner, so this is hopefully the start of something significant for Wagner in Perth!"

Fraser advises that his company "specialise[s] in excellently-crafted films with recordings in lovely boxed sets. We've won the Deutschen Schallplattenkritikpreis three times and also "best documentary" in the BBC Music Magazine Awards (for *The Genius of Cavaille-Coll* ["...the great French organ builder whose work inspired the magnificent compositions of the French Romantic Organ School—Franck, Widor, and Guilmant"- see www.fuguestatefilms.co.uk/cavaille-coll/default.html—Ed.]), and on two occasions we've been DVD of the month in both Gramophone and BBC Music Magazine at the same time. And our Wagner campaign is mentioned in the current November issue of BBC Music Magazine on p14.

"I hope you like what we plan to do, and I look forward to your response."

Will Fraser
Fugue State Films
+44-(0)207-502-6861
www.fuguestatefilms.co.uk

THE DENIS CONDON COLLECTION OF REPRODUCING PIANOS AND ROLLS by Robert Mitchell © 2015

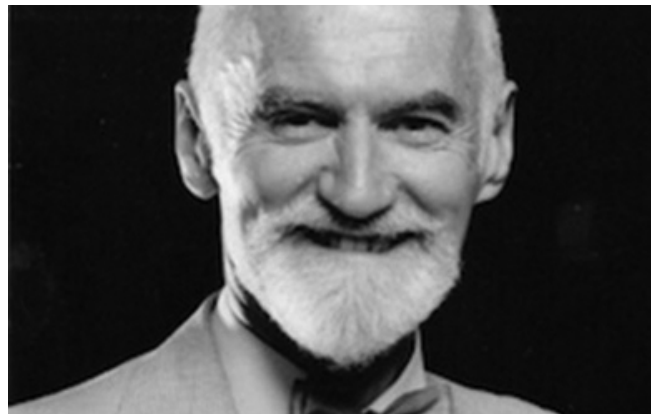
Many members of the NSW Wagner Society and Sydney's music circles in general would remember the late Denis Condon. He was a music lecturer, adjudicator and broadcaster. But perhaps most significantly he regularly hosted evenings of piano music, including for the Wagner Society, at his Newtown home which housed his collection of seven pianos, four instruments that played the piano and 7500 piano rolls. The instruments were not of the type commonly known as 'pianolas'. While they were based on the same pneumatic principle, they were a highly sophisticated version, with electric motors replacing the pedals that created the vacuum which activated the pneumatics. These instruments were developed and marketed to well-to-do clientele between 1904 and the early years of the Second World War.

The especially recorded rolls were not only encoded with the usual holes that caused the notes to play but also with extra holes that controlled the volume at which each note was played. Accents, crescendos, diminuendos and pedalling were all controlled from the roll. Pianists would record their performances at what looked to them like a regular concert grand piano. But it was attached to complex machinery that measured the velocity of each piano hammer. Following an editing process that created a perforated paper roll, the pianists could hear on a play-back piano a reproduction of their performances with all the nuance and subtlety of the originals. The instruments were marketed as 'reproducing pianos' and most of the famous pianists of the early 20th Century made rolls and endorsed them as being accurate reproductions of their playing. Further, many composers made rolls of their own music.

Begun in 1948, when the pianos were falling into disrepair and radio and the gramophone were now more popular for home entertainment, Denis's collection developed over



Denis Condon and Piano rolls



Denis Condon 1933-2012

the years into one of the most significant in the world—not the largest, but extremely important—as it contained many examples of rare rolls that did not appear in other collections. Composers like Rachmaninov, Ravel, Grainger, Saint-Saëns, Fauré, Stravinsky, Gershwin and Richard Rodgers made reproducing piano rolls.

As the study of historical performance practice developed—having begun in the mid-20th Century with the early music movement—the collection became of increasing interest to performers and academics alike. Because piano-playing styles and tastes were constantly changing, professional and student pianists from around Australia and overseas would visit to hear legendary artists (many of whom had never made any other recordings and several of them the pupils of Liszt) and to gain insights into performance traditions that were developed closer to the time when the music was contemporary. Of particular interest to Wagner lovers are rolls of transcriptions by various composers of Wagner's music and also recordings by répétiteurs who played for rehearsals at the Bayreuth Festival.

Following Denis's death in 2012, it became obvious that a more suitable home had to be found for the collection of instruments, rolls and all the related ephemera that Denis had collected over more than 60 years. Ideally the collection would remain intact and in Australia. It was Denis's wish that the collection should go to an institution where it would be maintained and heard rather than merely stored and displayed but not played. Sadly no music institution in Australia had the resources to house, maintain and curate such a large collection and it soon became obvious that the search for a new home had to be broadened. After some 18 months the Historical Sound Archive at California's Stanford University became interested and following a year's negotiation the entire collection was moved there. The fully privately funded Stanford University had found significant donors who understood the value and importance of the world-renowned collection to fund its acquisition and transportation – the latter a not insignificant cost.

At Stanford the 'Denis Condon Collection of Reproducing Pianos and Rolls' not only honours Denis's name in perpetuity but forms the nucleus of an already expanding resource. The 2015 symposium 'Reactions to the Record' (the fifth annual

event under that title) was based around the collection and was attended by performers, students, teachers and academics from all around the US and from as far afield as Lithuania and, of course, Australia. At that symposium Stanford's 'Player Piano Project' was officially launched and the long weekend culminated in a performance of Grieg's Piano Concerto played by Percy Grainger using the same roll that Denis had prepared for Sydney Opera House performances with the SSO and John Hopkins in 1978.

Although the move to California may appear to have been the loss of a significant piece of Australian heritage, Stanford has already established an on-going program of restoration and maintenance for the instruments. Most importantly, however, it is Stanford's mission to digitize all the original material

that is suitable, including the paper rolls—many of which are now over 100 years old and becoming brittle—and to make it available on line free of charge to anyone interested in learning about period performance. Already there are several articles and YouTube clips on the Player Piano Project website, which is worth a visit [<https://library.stanford.edu/projects/player-piano-project>].

Thanks to the staff and philanthropists at Stanford together with world-wide communications via the internet, Denis's collection is not lost to Australians. It is available to be seen and heard by a wider audience than it may have been able to experience it had it remained in Australia.

Robert Mitchell © 2015

WAGNER SOCIETY MEMBERS - SPECIAL OFFERS AND 10% DISCOUNTS - ASK BEFORE YOU PURCHASE AT:

The Wagner Society Management Committee has negotiated a 10% discount for Wagner Society members: just mention that you are a member!



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ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL 2016

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<input type="checkbox"/>	Single member \$65 (single pensioner member \$36)	
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3. I/We wish to donate the following amount to the Society.
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 All donations are acknowledged in our Newsletter by name, not amounts.)*

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Please complete this form and post it to:

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4(c). There is a new facility on the Society's Home page (www.wagner.org.au) for credit card payments using PayPal.

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- Premium seats to Opera Australia's production of Wagner's Ring Cycle, directed by Neil Armfield, conducted by Pietari Inkinen, and with Lise Lindstrom as Brünnhilde, Bradley Daley as Siegmund and Stefan Vinke as Siegfried;
- Attend enlightening and educational lectures by Wagner expert, Professor Heath Lees, which will be given on the morning of each performance in the Elisabeth Murdoch Hall at the Melbourne Recital Centre;
- In a small group explore Melbourne, including a backstage tour of the Arts Centre Melbourne, a guided tour at the National Gallery of Victoria, a guided tour of Melbourne's secret lanes and arcades and a delightful day tour to the Yarra Valley including a visit to Coombe, which was once the home of Dame Nellie Melba.

Photo © Jeff Busby

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ADDRESS

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Telephone: 9360 9822 (Jane Matthews, President)

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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)

A DAY WITH THE RING

If you are going to be in Melbourne during Opera Australia's Ring cycles in November/December next year, you won't want to miss one of the full-day symposia A Day with the Ring being held between the performances of *Die Walküre* and *Siegfried* in each cycle, on Thursday 24 November, Saturday 3 December and Tuesday 13 December 2016.

Conceived and chaired by Peter Bassett on behalf of Renaissance Tours, these symposia will feature sessions on The Evolving Stage, dealing with the changing focus of Ring productions since Wagner's time including filmed reconstructions of the 1876 performances; Visions of the Ring, the relationship between the Ring and the visual arts; the Götterdämmerung Choruses; What happened to Siegfried, the changing place of Siegfried at the heroic centre of Wagner's drama, and the most celebrated performance of a great Victorian-born Brünnhilde, Marjorie Lawrence. There will also be conversations with singers from the Melbourne production and with musicians of the Ring orchestra, and distinguished panellists will share their views on the production. The symposia will be held in the conference centre of the monumental State Library of Victoria, and the day will include a buffet lunch and morning and afternoon teas.

Joining Peter will be art expert, author and curator Christopher Menz; Opera Australia Chorus Master Anthony Hunt, and ABC presenter and author Christopher Lawrence as well as special guests from the production, from academia and the media. For further details and booking information see the Renaissance Tours website at <http://renaissancetours.com.au/tours/opera/a-day-with-the-ring>. Admission is open to the general public.



Malcolm and Yvonne Pearse with Neil Armfield (right), director of the Melbourne Ring Cycle to be revived by Opera Australia in 2106



Bayreuther Festspielhaus im Winter

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