



WAGNER
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MARCH 2017

CELEBRATING THE MUSIC OF RICHARD WAGNER

WAGNER QUARTERLY

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Welcome to the first Quarterly for 2017.

As you all probably know, we had no events at the end of last year because many of our members were at Opera Australia's Melbourne Ring Cycle. I was there for all three cycles, and this time it was an overwhelming success. The most significant improvements arose from the cast changes. The new singers were significantly better than in 2013. In addition, it was a much more harmonious team than before, and the interaction between the various singers, and therefore the acting generally, was much better. This made a huge difference, and the enthusiasm of the audience, at all three cycles, was palpable. All in all, it was a terrific experience.

Two days before the first Melbourne Ring Cycle, there was a concert performance in Hobart of much of Tristan and Isolde, with Stuart Skelton (Tristan), Nina Stemme (Isolde), Monika Bohinek (Brangane), and the TSO conducted by Marko Letonja. It was the only performance in Australia by the amazing Nina Stemme, and the whole experience was quite breathtaking. All three of them sang wonderfully. There was no Kurvenal or King Mark, so they had to cut out certain portions, including most of the third Act. But the way they did this was seamless. The orchestra played superbly, and the wonderful acoustics in the Federation Hall made you realise how we really need those acoustic repairs in the Sydney Opera House. The place was full of Sydneysiders, including many of our members.

We have had two events this year. The first was on 4 February. Dr Graham Bruce, the president of the Queensland Wagner Society and a long time Wagner lover, had managed to acquire from the German Film Library the DVD of a fascinating film by Joachim Herz of the Flying Dutchman. This was unique in my experience. The opera was not taking place on a stage, but was performed as a film normally is -

with actors rather than singers in the various roles, moving in and out of rooms and buildings. They were miming to the sound track of the opera, which was magnificently played and sung by top singers with the wonderful Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. All in all it was a truly unique experience. The second event was the third lecture by Rosamund Bartlett in her trilogy on Wagner in Russia. From all reports, Rosamund's account bringing the history of Wagner into the 21st century was very well received. Colleen Chesterman has written a brief report on both the film and the talk that you can find later in this Quarterly.

We have some terrific further events lined up for the rest of the year, and I hope to see many of you there. Just a reminder that these days we are dependent on our members to contribute food at our functions. You have done a great job thus far. Long may it continue.

This will be my last President's letter. At the AGM in April this year I will not be standing for re-election. I will have been president of this wonderful organisation for seven years, and it is time to move on and for someone else to take over. It has been a great experience, and I will be continuing to take an active role in the society and to attend its functions. So I look forward to seeing you during the year.

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Israeli conducting Wagner be treachery or triumph?

Presented by Shalom and Moira Blumenthal Productions, the world premiere of *YOU WILL NOT PLAY WAGNER* will play from 4 – 28 May 2017 at the Eternity Playhouse, Sydney. See advert on inside front page.

BOOK NOW at
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FOR YOUR DIARY

2017		
24,25,26 & 29 March	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i> . Conductor Daniele Gatti. Director Pierre Audi. Set designer Christof Hetzer. Orchestra of Teatro dell'Opera di Roma. Cast Andreas Schager, Rachel Nicholls, John Relyea, Brett Polegato.	Palace cinemas: Verona & Norton Street
4-28 May	<i>You Will Not Play Wagner</i> . See more information inside the Quarterly and book tickets at website: www.shalom.edu.au	Eternity Playhouse, Darlinghurst
Monday, Wednesday, Thursday August 7, 9, 10. Sunday, 20 August	<i>Lohenrin</i> - by Mebourne Opera - first production in Melbourne for 25 years. No further details yet. Keep an eye on their website: http://www.melbourneopera.com	Regent Theatre & Robert Blackwood Hall, Monash University
Wednesday 9, Saturday 12, and Monday 14, August	<i>Parsifal</i> - semi-staged production by Opera Australia, starring Jonas Kaufmann as Parsifal, Jacqueline Dark as Kundry, Kwangchul Youn as Gurnemanz, and Warwick Fyfe as Klingsor - see details below	Sydney Opera House - concert hall
6 September	Asher Fisch & Western Australian Symphony Orchestra: Inspiring Wagner	Perth Concert Hall 7.30pm
9 September	Saturday Asher Fisch & Western Australian Symphony Orchestra: Wagner's World (see www.waso.com.au/tickets/2017_season/wagner for details of both concerts)	Perth Concert Hall 7.30pm

COMING EVENTS 2017 - 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
April 2	AGM: Concert by young singers. 12.30 pm: Magic Fire - 1955 Film, with Wagner's music arranged by Erich Korngold. Part 2	Goethe Institut 1400pm
May 21	Barbara Brady: Wagner's early opera - <i>Die Feen</i> , followed by Wagner's birthday party. NB: starting time 2:00 pm. NO DVD	Goethe Institut NB: starting time 1400pm
June	No Meeting	
30 July	Dr David Larkin, lecturer at Sydney Conservatorium, presents a seminar on <i>Parsifal</i> , before the OA concert performance, with singers contributing musical highlights. NB: starting time 1:00 pm NO DVD	Goethe Institut NB: starting time 1300pm
13 August	<i>Lohengrin</i> : the first real music drama: Dr Antony Ernst introduces the background to this popular mystical opera. NB: starting time 1:00 pm. NO DVD	Willoughby Unity Church, 10 Clanwilliam St., Willoughby NB: starting time 13:00pm
3 September	A leading musical identity will present a concert. 12.30 pm. DVD - TBC	Goethe Institut 1400pm
8 October	REPORT BACK: Bayreuth 2016 and 2017—Presented by members who received tickets from the Wagner Society. 12.30 pm. DVD - TBC	Goethe Institut 1400pm
19 November	Concert by artists supported by Wagner Society, followed by Christmas Party. NB: starting time 2:00 pm. No DVD	St. Columba's Centre, cnr Ocean and Forth Sts, Woollahra 1400pm

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 each non-Member, unless otherwise indicated.

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

NB: Information about DVDs to be shown before functions will be available before the first function in 2016.

THE MELBOURNE RING C

ANOTHER LOOK AT THE MELBOURNE RING CYCLE, THE 2017 REVIVAL

- DOUGLAS STURKEY

If my memory serves me correctly, this has been my eighth Ring Cycle. (Attendance at individual parts of the Cycle does not qualify.) The Cycles that I've seen include two different productions at the Met, with Birgit Nilsson and Hildegard Behrens respectively. Then there's the Goodall version at the English National Opera, the so-called 'English' one at Bayreuth, the Neidhardt production at Adelaide, a German import that I saw at Prague, and the 2013 and 2016 presentations at Melbourne. As presentations differ among sponsoring authorities, their financial resources, and directors, comparisons are barely relevant and boil down to satisfaction with the singers. But as both of the Melbourne stagings reflect Neil Armfield's vision, and with the benefit of Clive Paget's interpretations, I feel more confident in declaring this year's presentation better than the earlier one. That may be because the stage images—some of which I found somewhat curious on first viewing—have been explained by Paget and are now comprehensible.* This does not mean, however, that the production is without its flaws.

The great strength of this year's staging was that of two of the Cycle's principal singers. Lise Lindstrom (*Brünnhilde*), a Californian, has buried the old maxim that "the show's not over until the fat lady sings". She has the tall slim athletic figure of a member of a women's basketball league and as much energy as its top players, long blonde hair, and is

absolutely gorgeous! No wonder *Siegfried* fell in love with her at first sight. As if it weren't enough just to look at her, she also has a stunning voice. Heath Lees slipped a clip of Kirsten Flagstad into one of his pre-performance lectures, making a comparison of the two sopranos tossing off 'Hojotoho', and Lindstrom's voice did not suffer.

Her *Siegfried* was Stefan Vinke, who also sang that role in 2013. His voice has matured beautifully, and his performance was very assured. Despite several hours of vocal exertion to get to the hill's fiery summit, he had the high notes and power to rival *Brünnhilde's* in their duet at her awakening. His voice seemed a bit tired at the hall of the Gibichung, but regained its clarity for his encounter with the Rhine maidens and final scene.

James Johnson was not always as vocally commanding a *Wotan* as others that I've heard, but I found his *Wanderer* more engaging than those of others. His 'Farewell' to *Brünnhilde* produced a moment of great emotion which almost reduced me to tears when he threw down his spear and they embraced for the last time. There was an evident genuine bond between the two singers that transcended their roles.

Of the host of other admirable singers and performers, I single out Amber Wagner (*Sieglinde*), Jacqueline Dark (*Frika*), Warwick Fyfe (*Alberich*), Graeme Macfarlane (*Mime*), Daniel Sumegi (*Fasolt and Hagen*), Luke Gabbedy (*Gunther*), James Egglestone (*Loge*), Liane Keegan (*Erda*), and the wonderfully matched ensembles of the Rhine maidens and Valkyries. Bradley Daley (*Siegmond*) had a sore throat and mimed his second act to the excellent tenor voice of a member of the chorus [Dean Bassett-Editor].

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YCLE, THE 2017 REVIVAL

My recollection is that the orchestra was more assured under Pietari Inkinen in 2013 than was always the case this year. The great E flat that begins the “Cycle” was fumbled as other instruments chipped in, and there were also some odd sounds early in *Die Walküre*, but order was restored soon thereafter in both operas. From then onwards the sounds from the pit were produced harmoniously with clarity and, when necessary, overwhelming force. The response of the audience to the conductor and orchestra—all of whom were brought onto the stage at this, the concluding evening of the three Cycles – was ecstatic.

Ross Burns has told me that Neil Armfield likes to put his actors on a bare—or minimally dressed—stage, the audience undistracted by extraneous scenery. This worked very well in Nibelheim where apertures in the black platform suggested gold-mining pits, but not at all when Donner, devoid of his hammer, was obliged to slap the backstage wall with his bare hand in order to conjure up the storm. The total absence of an Ash tree in this production, whether withering or a bushfire blackened stump, remains an egregious error. And there is no convenient way around Wagner’s musical interlude for the transformation of *Brünnhilde’s* crag into the Gibichung court during the course of *Siegfried’s* Rhine journey, when scenery is absent. An empty stage does not cut it: nor does a crowd of streamer-throwing well-wishers and flash-mob dancers. Queries: how did they learn from Brünnhilde’s and Siegfried’s eyrie that he would be setting out to perform further heroic deeds; and how did the horde manage to cross the ring of fire to reach the departure point?

At one of his lectures in Sydney, Antony Ernst observed that the vocal line for *Gunther/Siegfried’s* assault on *Brünnhilde* was so pitched that it could be sung by either a baritone or tenor. At this performance it was sung by the latter, wearing a costume identical to *Gunther’s* court dress. It was whilst singing at this lower register that Vinke’s voice seemed to tire, fortunately to recover later.

There were Aussie touches that resonated with me: the bathers at a popular swimming hole on the Rhine, the circus magic sideshow of the Tarnhelm, the developer/wrecker giants, the Tivoli girls in rainbow feathers (though I think that flimsily clad statuesque females on staircases owe more to the Ziegfeld Follies than to the Tivoli circuit), the minimalism of Hunding’s isolated hut and Mime’s lodging, the Valkyries on trapezes, Fafner putting on his makeup, the setting for the wedding breakfast from hell and much, much more.

Was it worthwhile revisiting this production? Absolutely; and especially for the singing.

You can read Clive Paget’s reviews in *Limelight* at:

www.limelightmagazine.com.au/live-reviews/das-rheingold-opera-australia-review
www.limelightmagazine.com.au/live-reviews/die-walkure-opera-australia
www.limelightmagazine.com.au/live-reviews/review-siegfried-oa
www.limelightmagazine.com.au/live-reviews/review-gotterdammerung-opera-australia

SIEGFRIEDS TOD IN MELBOURNE 2013 - MARIE LEECH

Act 1

When Andrew Ford announced a Melbourne Ring competition on the Music Show on Radio National in November 2013, just pre the launch of the Armfield Ring—‘to describe in 25 words or less a favourite musical moment in The Ring’—the challenge for me was to capture and condense into a mere 25 words my great love and admiration for Siegfried’s Funeral Music, one of the ‘bleeding chunks’ in every sense of the phrase, a dazzling ‘memory parade of motifs’, a piece of music where Wagner’s use of leitmotifs adds multiple dimensions of meaning as they are interwoven and recombined. The sheer irony of labelling this staggering, tragic, epic piece as a ‘musical moment’ was a source of wicked delight.

With a track record of conquering the 25 word challenge in other spheres (most notably, winning tickets to a very edgy cocktail party at the Museum of Contemporary Art for a 25 word competition), I took on the Music Show challenge. How to condense that monumental music, condemned by some as bombastic and raucous but embedded in the hearts of most Wagner/Siegfried lovers as a towering tribute to the hero, was a challenge of Wagnerian proportions. The motivation was not the prize – tickets for the final Dress Rehearsal – but the creative journey.

I sought inspiration in Ernest Newman’s *Wagner Nights*; in Robert Donington’s *Wagner’s Ring and its Symbols*; in Rudolph Sabor’s five volume translation and commentary; and in many DVDs of The Ring. Seeking a clever epigram of high art expressionism, or maybe an esoteric 25 word narrative with a postmodern twist, or a major musical or philosophical insight. But with a day job that spills over into evenings and weekends, a 25 word limit and a seven day deadline, inspiration was not happening.

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Maestro Google revealed some interesting summaries and insights:

‘The stretch of music from the Third Act of *Götterdämmerung*, known as Siegfried’s Death and Funeral Music, in many respects represents the heart of the entire Ring Cycle and indeed the penultimate apex of its vast structure before the final scene itself.

When Wagner first conceived the Ring in the 1840s he envisaged it as just a single opera called Siegfried’s Death, and although over time his conception grew to become a cycle of four operas, the moment of Siegfried’s death remained central to the denouement [*sic*] of the whole, vast epic. Indeed, Wagner was very much influenced by the pessimistic philosophy of Schopenhauer whilst writing the Ring (an endeavour which took nearly three decades) and this made Siegfried’s death important not just in plot narrative terms but imbued it with a philosophical meaning that colours, in a sense, everything that has gone before and everything that follows.

Musically it is one of the most stirring passages from the Ring, bringing together some of the key leitmotifs of the work in music that combines epic grandeur and poignant humanity in the most breathtaking and memorable manner. Once heard, never forgotten.’ (Last.fm wiki)

And:

‘The true conclusion of the curse of the Ring lies in the devastation of Siegfried’s Funeral March. Again the density of this passage is formidable... Wagner assembles a great mass of the motifs directly connected with Siegfried, virtually in their original forms and at their most recognisable, and crushes them in the inexorable grip of the funeral march. The march itself is composed of only two strands, a steady rhythmic pattern from the timpani, like some giant’s heartbeat, and a desolate, chromatic figure which casts a pall of gloom over the whole piece. The extraordinary synthesis creates a sense of black disillusion, that the very elements which made Siegfried a hero, the hope of the world, should also be the direct cause of his treacherous assassination’.

Interesting insights. But alas, 200 and 133 words respectively. No 25 word solutions from Maestro Google.

Inspiration finally came, poring over books, screens and printouts, and with the Georg Solti Ring playing in the background. A poem emerged, a poem picture of that momentous musical passage, a humble summary of that most special of heroes:

‘A hero’s eulogy

Recalling his Walsung kin,
Siegmond and Sieglinde.
His Rhine glory,
Sword and horn call.
His love,
Brünnhilde.
His destination
Tod... and transformation.’

Appropriate that it should be simple and direct for such is the character of Siegfried, no hidden Freudian complexities, no tortured layers, no philosophical torments. A young man with his trusty Notung, adventuring along the Rhine, a fearless, shining hero, pure and unburdened, unsullied and untouched

by the scheming plots of dwarves, giants and gods. Wagner said: “In Siegfried I have tried to portray the most highly developed and complete human being I can conceive of.”

Act II

On the appointed day, Andrew Ford announced the winners of the Music Show competition and my poem won first prize, tickets to the final Dress Rehearsal, the announcement coming just one week before Rheingold. Tight timing, just a week or so to pull together a Melbourne trip (oh, for a Tristan to or ganise a speedy skim down the coast). That same day job that had hindered the 25 word challenge stood in the way of getting to *Rheingold* and *Walküre*, but other commitments were valiantly rescheduled and I made it to *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*.

There was an air of great excitement and intense anticipation at these final Dress Rehearsals, an atmosphere of being the privileged first few to whom the vision is revealed. There was immense goodwill within the audience—friends and family of various important folk, and media. This cheerful mob was in stark contrast to some of the key players. Lyndon Terracini introduced the operas, clearly very anxious, ‘please understand any stops and starts’ (there were none); while Neil Armfield moved to and fro in what looked like a highly stressed state.

During the interval between Acts 2 and 3 of *Götterdämmerung*, I chatted with a colleague from Opera Australia, and Lyndon Terracini joined us. On hearing about my poem, he exclaimed: ‘Wait till you see how they do it tonight, they wash the body’. And then, a delicious piece of insider gossip: ‘Neil wanted him to do it naked, but Stefan wouldn’t have a bar of it’.

This issue of Stefan’s/Siegfried’s nudity in the death scene threaded through my experience of the Armfield Ring. When I returned to Melbourne for the Third Cycle, I attended an Insight Talk with Stefan Vinke and Daniel Sumegi in conversation with Lyndon Terracini and responding to questions from the audience. Both Stefan and Daniel handled the usual questions about how to deal with Directors and their sometimes challenging ideas really well—‘the Director’s role is to provide the vision and direction, the singers’ role is to carry out the vision, often in negotiation with the Director but the Director has the final say’ etc. All very reasonable and very professional. But as Lyndon took the microphone to move onto another issue, Stefan asked for the microphone back and launched into an agitated attack on nudity, the one thing, he said, he would never agree to.

The next development in this nudity thread was in conversation with Neil Armfield. I had the great good fortune of sitting in the row and seat in front of him for the Third Cycle—he tended to slip in quietly just before the start of most acts. This provided a golden opportunity to gain some insights, an opportunity too good to miss (‘The animals?’ ‘A sort of colonial thing’ and ‘they come and go with Wotan’) and (‘The difference between the First and Third Cycles?’ ‘Some things are much tighter’; and an afterthought: ‘Some things are much looser’; and another afterthought: ‘Not good looser’). I related the nudity saga to him, from Lyndon’s gossip to Stefan’s agitation. Neil replied, in some exasperation: ‘I only wanted him to take his shirt off’.

Perhaps it would have been a distraction had Stefan been naked. There’s a certain element of curiosity about nudity

in and of itself which can be a distraction. Elizabeth Gilbert says in *Eat Pray Love* of the presence of a Guru: “if you’re not careful, you can get all caught up in the celebrity buzz of excitement that surrounds the Guru and lose the focus of your true intention”. So can it be with nudity. Siegfried being clothed took nothing from the sheer beauty and spirituality of the scene; and the removal of the jacket was enough to symbolise undressing. The slow motion, deeply reverent movements, the preparation of the body for the afterlife, the cleansing of the hands and feet and tender support of Siegfried’s body created a Pieta-like scene, evocative of many images in art and sculpture of the Virgin Mary holding the dead body of Jesus. It was breathtakingly beautiful. And then followed the resurrection, the reincarnation of Siegfried as statue, as holy image, living on as a monument gloriously after death, his altar laden with flowers brought by the faithful. Like all religious monuments, to be used as a reminder for the faithful, used for devotion, used for comforting people. It is impossible not to take from this combination - the poignant Pieta scene and the resurrection and reincarnation as statue - a message of Siegfried as Jesus.

Act III *

In an essay written in 1848, Wagner traced a mythical/historical superior race in Germany, and he wrote: ‘In the German Folk survives the oldest lawful race of Kings in all the world: it issues from a son of God, called by his nearest kinsmen Siegfried, but Christ by the remaining nations of the earth...’ A direct pairing of Siegfried and Jesus and at a crucial time in the development of the first seeds of The Ring. The poem *Siegfried’s Tod* was written by Wagner in Dresden in the second half of the same year, 1848. During this same period and probably immediately after completing *Siegfried’s Tod*, Wagner wrote *Jesus von Nazareth*, a dramatic sketch of the last weeks of the life of Jesus Christ, a work always somewhat neglected in the analyses of Wagner’s work. *Jesus von Nazareth* was ultimately abandoned by Wagner—in its own right—and never completed as an opera. But his writings show respect for Jesus as a redemptive force; and his fascination with the man remains constant.

Jesus is mentioned by name only in *Tannhäuser* (which is focused on sin, guilt and redemption) but Lohengrin is a redemptive, Christ-like figure; the central theme of *Holländer* is redemption through love, a theme common to all of Wagner’s mature works; and, of course, *Jesus von Nazareth’s* premise of the development of a religious hero would serve as a prefiguring exercise for Parsifal, Wagner’s final opera. Wagner was not Catholic, in fact, Aberbach ranks his distaste for Catholicism ‘as second only to his hostility toward Judaism, itself no mean feat, with his animus particularly directed at the Jesuits.’ Instead, Wagner had a tendency towards ‘Jesuitism, the adherence to the personal philosophies and teachings of Jesus rather than to the trappings of religion propounded in his name.’

Wagner created a sort of art-religion in his operas—at the time in Europe, religious dogma was increasingly being questioned, and art was growing in importance to an almost sacred level. And Wagner and those he associated with were both immersed in this movement while at the same time crucial propellers of it. We know that Wagner attended the Passion Play at Oberammergau (Wagner’s patron, King Ludwig II of Bavaria was a major financial supporter of the Passion

Play) and Wagner famously outlined his Credo as: ‘I believe in God, Mozart and Beethoven and likewise their disciples and apostles...’ According to Matthew Giessel: ‘Wagner, of course, considered himself to be the spiritual descendant of musical saints like Beethoven. He therefore had no difficulty in conceiving of himself as the redemptive creator of salvific art, of which *Jesus von Nazareth* functions as an example unique among his works in its reappropriation of the central events of Christianity itself to Wagner’s own artistic ends.’

Giessel also makes the point that ‘while J. S. Bach assigns the role of Jesus to be sung by a bass, presumably to convey a sense of profundity, serenity and solemnity, one can speculate that Wagner would have found such tessitura to be overly detached and otherworldly, and would perhaps have assigned Jesus the voice of a *Heldentenor*—as indeed, he does for the eponymous protagonist of Parsifal—in order to emphasise Jesus’s humanity.’ Wagner’s Siegfried is, of course, generally agreed to be the keystone of the heldentenor’s repertoire.

A wonderful chain of connections back to the Master—his Siegfried/Christ pairing, his themes of redemption—connect with and support the Armfield portrayal of Siegfried’s Tod: Siegfried as Jesus. And thus Siegfried as Saviour. Siegfried as Redeemer. Siegfried as God.

Postlude

The comment by Lyndon ‘they wash the body’ somehow struck a chord of memory, a memory of having seen such a scene before. Returning to Sydney after the Armfield Ring, I searched Siegfried’s death scenes in DVDs, but found nothing similar: most followed Wagner’s very specific instructions for the scene. But I then began checking Siegmund death scenes. As Sabor observes, Siegfried’s death parallels that of his father Siegmund: ‘arrival at a fatal rendezvous; period of rest; death-prophecy ignored; death by spear-thrust’. And there in the beautiful Act 2 of the Boulez/Chéreau *Die Walküre* appeared a strong and intimate parallel with Armfield’s Siegfried’s Tod. When Brünnhilde encounters Siegmund and tells him she will take him to Valhalla, she gently cleanses his body in preparation (Note to Armfield and Vincke: Siegmund/Peter Hofmann removes his shirt. And yes, it is distracting!). The Armfield Ring cannot but be echoing the Chéreau scenes. How touching to see this powerful, profound and provocative image echo across time, across the miles, across ages: from the 1976 Centenary Ring to the 2013 Australian Ring, from Bayreuth to Melbourne, from Chéreau to Armfield. From father to son.

*I am indebted to the insights in the Thesis of Matthew Giessel (Virginia Commonwealth University), entitled ‘Richard Wagner’s Jesus von Nazareth’, for material in Act III

[After seeing the 2013 Melbourne Ring Cycle, a friend of your Editor drew my attention to *Departures* as a possible source of the body washing ritual in *Götterdämmerung*. This 2008 Japanese film is directed by Yōjirō Takita and stars Masahiro Motoki, Ryōko Hirose, and Tsutomu Yamazaki. After a failed career as a cellist, Daigo Kobayashi stumbles across work as a *nōkanshi*—a traditional Japanese ritual mortician. In preparation for the funeral, the body is washed and the orifices are blocked with cotton or gauze. The film was very well received at the time: in 2009, it became the first Japanese production to win the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film.]

RECENT WAGNER SOC

JOACHIM HERZ'S PRODUCTION OF *DER FLIEGENDE HOLLÄNDER* - GRAHAM BRUCE & COLLEEN CHESTERMAN

Our first presentation of 2017 was on February 5 at the Goethe Institut, It was presented by Dr Graham Bruce, then President of the Queensland Wagner Society. He attained his PhD at the Tisch School, New York University, he was author of *Bernard Herrmann: Film Music and Narrative* and was previously Head of Media Studies at QUT. He showed 55 members and visitors the film by Joachim Herz: *Der Fliegende Holländer: ein film nach Wagner*. Despite its fame as the first more or less complete Wagner opera on film, the film is only recently that this ground-breaking black and white film was transferred to DVD. Graham acquired the film from a German film library, provided an introduction and also led a discussion at the end of the screening. Graham has sent us the following summary of his presentation and the main questions asked.

In 1964, Joachim Herz made what is possibly the first film (as opposed to a filmed recording of a stage production) of a Wagner opera, *Der fliegende Holländer*, at the East German DEFA [*Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft*] studios. For years it seemed impossible to see the film, but finally it was released recently in Germany on DVD, and a copy was imported from the DEFA film library.

Herz, an associate of the Berlin director and founder of the Komische Oper, Walter Felsenstein, had made productions of this opera in Berlin, Leipzig, and Moscow, and the success of these encouraged him to make a film of the work. He was keen to make a "proper" film, one which could exploit the full range of the resources of the cinema. Pre-recording of the soundtrack by the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and the singers (in 4-channel magnetic sound) allowed him to choose appropriate actors to mime the voices (and the miming is extremely accurate). Furthermore it allowed him complete freedom in the placement of the actors, in the editing of the visuals, and particularly in creating realistic "asides" and "thoughts" by the actors, the sound track conveying these without lip movement.

Herz's approach to the work was to make the main action the dream vision of Senta, a young woman confined in a restrictive bourgeois merchant family, a romantic, longing for love and freedom. His approach was echoed by subsequent directors, notably Harry Kupfer in his Bayreuth and Berlin productions. The escape from reality was made clear by the changing screen size, the small size of the "reality" scenes expanding into wide-screen for her dream vision.

The discussion following the screening focussed particularly on the following:

- the duet when the Dutchman and Senta first meet which takes the couple outside the confines of the house through a ruined church and into the countryside while the soundtrack gives us their sung thoughts then their "dialogue";
- the "horror film" depiction of the Norwegian sailors and Ruth Berghaus's innovative choreography of the Dutch sailors' dances and choruses;
- the ending of the film as Senta, awakened from her dream, leaves the house to seek freedom outside and perhaps to put her escapist dream into practice.

ROSAMUND BARTLETT: RUSSIAN WAGNERIANS IN THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURIES - COLLEEN CHESTERMAN

The presentation by Rosamund Bartlett on 12 March was very popular, attended by 53 members and visitors. She reminded us of the excellent Russian singers of the early 20th century, particularly the great basses, such as Kolovsky, Lemeshev and Reizen, whom she had discussed in her 2016 presentation. That had highlighted the popularity of Wagner during the period before and after World War I. She described the suppression of Wagner's music during the Stalinist period, when none of his operas were performed. She played the little-known 15th symphony of Shostakovich (1971) in which he quotes musical memories of his life, including references to Wagner's Ring, from *Die Walküre* onwards.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1997 provided opportunities for a renewed interest in Wagner spearheaded by Valery Gergiev at the Mariinsky. She showed footage of a 1997 *Parsifal* directed by the UK's Tony Palmer, with a set drawing on Russian icons and a cast of 150. A promotional video showed a beautiful young Anna Netrebko as a Flower Maiden. Gergiev's commitment continued with *Der fliegende Holländer* (1998), *Lohengrin* (1999) and the full Ring Cycle in 2003, using a number of directors and designs referencing the Eastern Russian steppes and Caucasian mythology. This Ring travelled the world to such houses as Covent Garden. Gergiev also negotiated the building of a new Mariinsky Theatre and the redevelopment of the former Michalovsky Theatre.

While Gergiev ensured that St Petersburg led the Wagnerian revival, Moscow followed the example of expanding opera theatres while also introducing some Wagner. It expanded opera from the Bolshoi, very large, to a New Stage, for smaller chamber opera. There are also a number

RECENT PRESENTATIONS

of newer or restored theatres. The Novaya Opera was built in 1997, in art nouveau style, with 700 seats, under the conductor Kolobov, whose name is now included in its title. The Helikon Opera is smaller, seating 250, and presents productions by Opera Moscow. This theatre shows influences from European opera houses. A recent project was *Das Liebesverbot*. A production of Lohengrin in 2008 was directed by the Danish director Kasper Holten, later Director of Covent Garden.

Rosamund pointed out that some of the choices in Russia in recent times have been conservative and cited 3 productions of *Der fliegende Holländer*. The first in July 2013 was in the Michalovsky Theatre in St Petersburg and used a young director and designer, who clad the cast in modern dress. A September 2013 production in Ekaterinburg's 1912 baroque style theatre was directed by Garry McCann from the UK and was rather austere. The Bolshoi in 2013 revived a 2004 production using Peter Konowitschy from Germany as director with leads from Canada and the US.

Tannhäuser continues to be a popular choice. One production was at the Novaya, a great achievement in this small theatre. Another *Tannhäuser* was staged in Novosibirsk, in a huge 1944 opera house, which is the largest in Russia. With a young director and stars from Europe this caused a huge scandal, particular criticism focusing on the use of images from the crucifixion on the poster. It raised the ire of the culture minister, leading to the dismissal of the conductor.

An interesting point raised by Rosamund was that Russians are beginning to sing in German, rather than Russian, which had always been the language of choice. So interest in Wagner is rising and Russia may become a future venue for presentations of Wagner productions.

The lecture was preceded by a showing of *Magic Fire* a 1955 film on Wagner's life, with music arranged by h Korngold. It was very popular with those watching. We will repeat the middle section together with the ending which was not able to be shown because of time constraints. This will be at 12.30 before the AGM on April 2 at the Goethe Institut.

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BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE WAGNER SOCIETY IN NSW FACEBOOK PAGE by Florian Hammerbacher

Dear members of the Wagner Society in NSW, with this brief article, Leona Geeves, Vice President, and I would like to draw your attention that the Society has, for some time, had a Facebook page and to provide some insights of what we want to accomplish with the use of social media. We plan to offer you a follow-up article with further insights and articles in the next quarterly.

Did you know that your Society has already been on Facebook for quite some time? If you have not done so already, please like your Society's page on www.facebook.com/WagnerNSW !

You can follow a lot of our activities there, as this is a medium which requires significantly less maintenance compared to our homepage on the internet at: <http://www.wagner.org.au>. This enables us to post more often and sometimes also from "behind the scenes". We plan to do even more in the future to engage more frequently with people who have an affinity for classical music in general and with Wagner in particular.

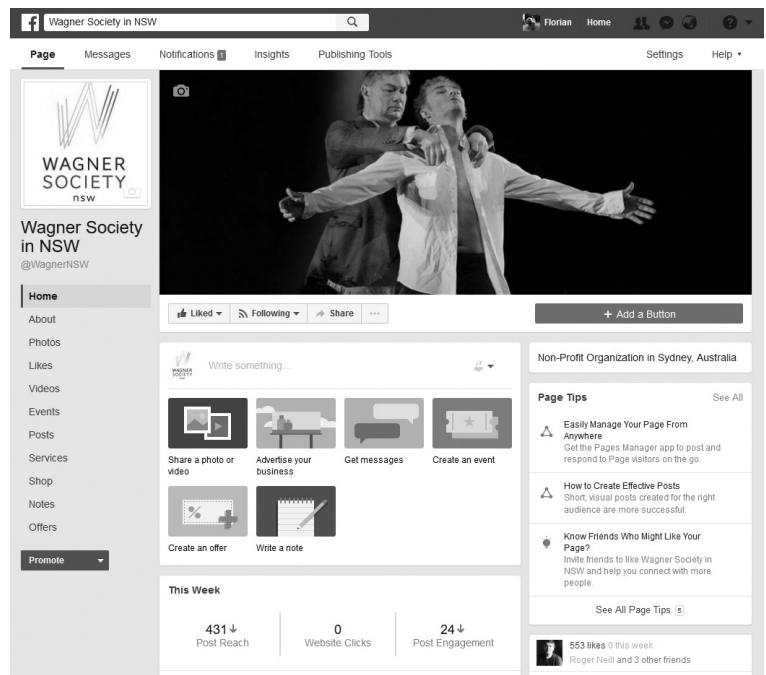
Over the past months, we were able to actually become more engaged with these communities. Point in case: the announcements and event reminders for our phenomenal and groundbreaking talk on Soviet and Russian Wagnerians in the 20th and 21st centuries by Dr Rosamund Bartlett was seen by over 2500 people in NSW and created a lot of interest as well as a significant amount of interaction with people who have not followed our Facebook page prior. We also had an increase in the number of visitors to the function on 12 March 2017, as you can see in the report in this Quarterly.

NEW AND RENEWED MEMBERS SINCE JUNE 2016

Mr B Bravery [1194]; Ms Barbara Ross [1195];
Mr Christopher McCabe [1196]; Ms M Serra [1197].

DONATIONS RECEIVED SINCE JULY 2016

Heinz Ebert, Anna-Lisa Klettenberg, Jane Mathews, Barbara Brady and "Anonymous" We were not able to identify a person who donated through our bank account. If this was you, and you would like a proper personal acknowledgement, please contact your Editor through the Society's website: wagner_nsw@optusnet.com.au.



Front page of Wagner Society in NSW Facebook site

We aim to become even better in engaging and sharing relevant content with you. For our next article, we will show you how to invite your friends on Facebook to become followers of our Facebook page. We also want to share more about the criteria we have to meet in order to share material on Facebook. For now, we ask you to start thinking about all the exciting photos, videos and links you already have and which you would like to share with a broader audience.

In conclusion to this first article about our activities on Facebook:

- If you have not done so already, please like us on www.facebook.com/WagnerNSW !
- Start spreading the word and invite your friends on Facebook to like our Page as well.
- Start thinking about material you want to share with the members and friends of the Wagner Society in the future, especially with many of us bound for Europe later this year to attend performances and festivals there.

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.

UPDATE FROM SINGER ELEANOR GREENWOOD - SUPPORTED BY WAGNER SOCIETY IN NSW AWARD

I am extremely grateful for the support I received last year from the Wagner Society of NSW. It allowed me to pay for a sublet during my recent stay in Berlin for the first month of this trip. During that time I was able to continue lessons

with my Berlin-based teacher and have continued sessions with coaches. These have been very beneficial to my development. There has been a lot of suggestion from coaches and others that I may move on to the higher repertoire eventually and I have been looking at *zwischen-Fach* roles while working on technique. It was also noted that I can

sing the high mezzo repertoire and much of it suits me well at the moment.

Much of my time was also put towards applying for and securing an 'Artist Visa', so as to be allowed to work in Germany as a non-national, as this is a vital requirement for moving forward. I received this visa in the last month of my stay.

Berlin is quite a multi-cultural place and I have been invited to sing the Christmas Oratorio in the USA with a specialist Bach Society in May. I am back in Australia as I'll be singing for the upcoming Opera in the Paddock – an opera event

in New England. I will then return to China to tour with the Heidelberg Choral as the Mezzo Soloist singing varied repertoire.

Thank you so much again for the support of the award I received. It was absolutely helpful to my stay and meant I could spend money on lessons and coaching sessions. I cannot thank the Society enough for supporting me in this way and I can only hope my future will continue to reap the benefits of my stay in Berlin.

With sincere thanks,
Eleanor Greenwood



Eleanor Greenwood

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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 2024

April 2017

Bad Elster *Tannhäuser* - April 17, 2017.
 Berlin Deutsche Oper
The Ring - April 1, 2, 5, 9; 13, 14, 15, 17, 2017.
 Staatsoper
Parsifal - April 8, 14, 2017.
 Bern *Tannhäuser* - April 1, 5, 8, 11, 23, 27, 30, 2017.
 Bremen *Parsifal* - April 9, 14, 23, 2017.
 Budapest Hungarian State Opera
Siegfried - April 2, 2017.
Parsifal - April 11, 14, 17, 2017.
 Buenos Aires *Das Liebesverbot* - April 26, 28, 29, 30, 2017.
 Chemnitz *Die Meistersinger* - April 1, 16, 2017.
Parsifal - April 14, 2017.
Tannhäuser - April 15, 2017.
 Coburg *Parsifal* - April 9, 13, 16, 23, 30, 2017.
 Darmstadt *Tannhäuser* - April 22, 30, 2017.
 Dresden *Lohengrin* - April 28, 30, 2017.
 Eisleben *Tannhäuser* - April 22, 2017.
 Essen *Lohengrin* - April 1, 2017.
 Gelsenkirchen *Tristan und Isolde* - April 8, 2017.
 Greifswald *Tannhäuser* - April 13, 2017.
 Houston *Götterdämmerung* - April 22, 25, 29, 2017.
 Karlsruhe *Das Rheingold* - April 14, 22, 2017.
Die Walküre - April 15, 2017.
 Kiel *Siegfried* - April 9, 16, 2017.
 Krefeld *Lohengrin* - April 15, 22, 2017.
 Leipzig *Parsifal* - April 14, 2017.
 Lille *Holländer* - April 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 2017.
 Lyon *Tristan und Isolde* - April 2, 5, 2017.
 Magdeburg *Holländer* - April 7, 22, 2017.
 Mannheim *Parsifal* - April 9, 14, 2017.
Lohengrin - April 17, 2017.
 Meiningen *Die Meistersinger* - April 7, 16, 22, 2017.
Tannhäuser - April 14, 26, 2017.
 Milan *Die Meistersinger* - April 2, 5, 2017.
 Munich *Tristan und Isolde* - April 13, 17, 21, 2017.
 New York *Holländer* - April 25, 29, 2017.
 Nuremberg *Siegfried* - April 9, 16, 2017.
Götterdämmerung - April 30, 2017.
Das Rheingold - April 8, 26, 2017.
 Oldenburg *Tannhäuser* - April 8, 29, 2017.
 Poznan *Parsifal* - April 9, 2017.
 Salzburg Salzburg Easter Festival
Die Walküre - April 8, 17, 2017.
 Szczecin *Tannhäuser* - April 2, 8, 2017.
 Tallinn *Holländer* - April 20, 28, 2017.
 Tokyo Bunka Kaikan Hall
Götterdämmerung - April 1, 4, 2017.
Tristan und Isolde - April 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 2017.
 Trieste *Parsifal* - April 2, 6, 9, 13, 16, 2017.
 Vienna *The Ring* - April 30, May 1, 7, 10, 2017.
Holländer - April 6, 2017.
 Vilnius *Siegfried* - April 2, 9, 16, 2017.
 Wiesbaden *Das Rheingold* - April 13, 2017.
Die Walküre - April 14, 2017.
Götterdämmerung - April 23, 2017.
The Ring - April 26, 27, 29, May 1, 2017.

May 2017

Barcelona *Holländer* - May 2, 6, 10, 14, 18, 22, 26, 28, 2017.
 Berlin Deutsche Oper
Lohengrin - May 7, 11, 16, 20, 2017
 Buenos Aires *Das Liebesverbot* - May 2, 2017.

Chemnitz *Die Meistersinger* - May 1, 2017.
Parsifal - May 6, 2017.
 Darmstadt *Tannhäuser* - May 14, 25, 2017.
 Dresden *Lohengrin* - May 1, 2017.
 Düsseldorf *Holländer* - May 12, 20, 25, 2017.
 Frankfurt *Holländer* - May 20, 25, 28, 2017.
 Gelsenkirchen *Tristan und Isolde* - May 7, 13, 2017.
 Hagen *Holländer* - May 6, 19, 24, 31, 2017.
 Halberstadt *Tannhäuser* - May 21, 2017.
 Hanover *Holländer* - May 7, 19, 31, 2017.
 Houston *Götterdämmerung* - May 4, 7, 2017.
 Karlsruhe *Das Rheingold* - May 7, 2017.
 Kiel *Das Rheingold* - May 13, 2017.
Die Walküre - May 14, 2017.
Siegfried - May 25, 2017.
Die Feen - May 26, 2017.
 Krefeld *Lohengrin* - May 7, 20, 2017.
 Magdeburg *Holländer* - May 11, 2017.
 Meiningen *Die Meistersinger* - May 6, 2017.
Tannhäuser - May 26, 2017.
 Minsk *Holländer* - May 18, 2017.
 Munich *Tannhäuser* - May 21, 25, 28, 2017.
 New York *Holländer* - May 4, 8, 12, 2017.
 Nuremberg *Götterdämmerung* - May 14, 2017.
The Ring - May 23, 25, 28, June 4, 2017.
 Odense Carl Nielsen Hall
Götterdämmerung - May 20, 2017.
Tristan und Isolde - May 14, 21, 25, 2017.
 Passau *Tannhäuser* - May 23, 24, 2017.
 Riga *The Ring* - May 17, 18, 20, 22; 24, 25, 27, 29, 2017.
 Stockholm *Holländer* - May 19, 2017.
 Tallinn New National Theatre
Siegfried [highlights concert] - May 17, 2017.
The Ring - April 30, May 1, 7, 10; 20, 21, 28, June 5, 2017.
 Vilnius *Holländer* - May 17, 2017.
 Wiesbaden *The Ring* - April 26, 27, 29, May 1; 23, 24, 26, 28, 2017.

June 2017

Baden-Baden *Das Rheingold* - June 3, 2017.
 Berlin Deutsche Oper
Lohengrin - June 4, 10, 2017
 Bishop's Sutton Grange Park Opera
Die Walküre - June 29, 2017.
Parsifal - June 5, 2017.
 Bremen Béla Bartók National Concert Hall
Parsifal - June 8, 21, 2017.
The Ring - June 15, 16, 17, 18, 2017.
Rienzi - June 19, 2017.
Parsifal - June 15, 18, 25, 2017.
 Darmstadt *Tannhäuser* - June 15, 2017.
 Düsseldorf *Das Rheingold* - June 23, 25, 29, 2017.
 Frankfurt *Holländer* - June 3, 5, 10, 2017.
 Gelsenkirchen *Tristan und Isolde* - June 4, 2017.
 Hagen *Holländer* - June 9, 17, 2017.
 Halle *Holländer* - June 16, 21, 2017.
 Hanover *Holländer* - June 18, 2017.
 Karlsruhe *Siegfried* - June 4, 10, 25, 2017.
 Kiel *Siegfried* - June 3, 30, 2017.
Das Rheingold - June 27, 2017.
Die Walküre - June 28, 2017.
 Krefeld *Lohengrin* - June 25, 2017.
 Leipzig *The Ring* - June 28, 29, July 1, 3, 2017.

Longborough *Tristan und Isolde* - June 8, 10, 12, 14, 2017.
 Lübeck *Holländer* - June 9, 15, 24, 2017.
 Mannheim *Parsifal* - June 4, 15, 2017.
 Meiningen *Tannhäuser* - June 3, 2017.
Die Meistersinger - June 11, 2017.
 Munich *Tannhäuser* - June 4, 8, 2017.
 Nuremberg *The Ring* - May 23, 25, 28, June 4; 7, 11, 15, 18, 2017.
 Prague National Theatre
Lohengrin - June 8, 10, 14, 17, 2017.
Tannhäuser - June 10, 15, 2017.
 Riga *Tannhäuser* - June 4, 10, 15, 23, 30, 2017.
 Saarbrücken *Lohengrin* - June 9, 11, 13, 2017.
 Saint-Etienne New National Theatre
 Tokyo *Siegfried* - June 1, 4, 7, 10, 14, 17, 2017.
The Ring - May 20, 21, 28, June 5, 2017.
 Vienna *Götterdämmerung* - June 5, 2017.
 Wiesbaden

July 2017

Bayreuth *Die Meistersinger* - July 25, 31, 2017.
Tristan und Isolde - July 26, 2017.
Parsifal - July 27, 2017.
The Ring - July 29, 30, August 1, 3, 2017.
 Bishop's Sutton Grange Park Opera
Die Walküre - July 1, 5, 9, 12, 15, 2017.
 Düsseldorf *Das Rheingold* - July 2, 12, 14, 16, 2017.
 Erl *Lohengrin* - July 8, 29, 2017.
The Ring - July 13, 14, 15, 16, 2017.
 Hagen *Holländer* - July 2, 13, 2017.
 Karlsruhe *Siegfried* - July 2, 2017.
 Krefeld *Lohengrin* - July 2, 2017.
 Leipzig *The Ring* - June 28, 29, July 1, 3, 2017.
 Munich *Tannhäuser* - July 9, 2017.
 Regensburg *Holländer* - July 15, 2017.
 Sofia *Parsifal* - July 4, 6, 8, 10, 2017.
 Zurich *Lohengrin* - July 4, 8, 12, 16, 2017.

August 2017

Bayreuth *Die Meistersinger* - August 7, 15, 19, 27, 2017.
Tristan und Isolde - August 2, 6, 12, 16, 20, 2017.
Parsifal - August 5, 14, 21, 25, 2017.
The Ring - July 29, 30, August 1, 3; 8, 9, 11, 13; 23, 24, 26, 28, 2017.
Die Walküre - August 18, 2017.
 Esbjerg *Die Walküre* - August 25, 27, 29, 2017.
 Melbourne *Lohengrin* - August 7, 9, 10 (and a concert performance at Monash University TBC).
 Sydney *Parsifal* - August 9, 12, 14, 2017.

September 2017

Minden *Siegfried* - September 10, 15, 17, 21, 24, 2017.
 Prague National Theatre
Lohengrin - September 2, 10, 23, 2017.

October 2017

Karlsruhe *Götterdämmerung* - October 15, 2017 [no other dates].
 Tokyo New National Theatre
Götterdämmerung - October 1, 4, 7, 11, 14, 17, 2018.

November 2017

Chicago *Die Walküre* - [no actual dates].
 Duisburg *Das Rheingold* - November 4, 2017 [no other dates].

2017/2018 Season

Chemnitz *The Ring* - [no actual dates].

2018/19 Season

Chemnitz *The Ring* - [no actual dates].
 Esbjerg *Das Rheingold* - [no actual dates].
 New York *The Ring* - [no actual dates].

January 2018

Dresden *The Ring* - January 13, 14, 18, 20; 29, 30, February 1, 4, 2018.
 Düsseldorf *Die Walküre* - January 28, 2018 [no other dates].

February 2018

Dresden *The Ring* - January 29, 30, February 1, 4, 2018.

April 2018

Düsseldorf *Siegfried* - April 7, 2018 [no other dates].
 Enschede Nederlandse Reisopera
Holländer - [no actual dates].
 Karlsruhe *The Ring* - [Easter][no actual dates].

May 2018

Duisburg *Die Walküre* - May 31, 2018 [no other dates].
 Karlsruhe *The Ring* - [Pentecost][no actual dates].

June 2018

San Francisco *The Ring* - June 12, 13, 15, 17; 19, 20, 22, 24; 26, 27, 29, July 1, 2018.

July 2018

San Francisco *The Ring* - June 26, 27, 29, July 1, 2018.

September 2018

Minden *Götterdämmerung* - [no actual dates].

October 2018

Düsseldorf *Götterdämmerung* - October 27, 2018 [no other dates].

November 2018

Chicago *Siegfried* - [no actual dates].
 Gothenburg *Das Rheingold* - [no actual dates].

January 2019

Duisburg *Siegfried* - January 26, 2019 [no other dates].

May 2019

Duisburg *Götterdämmerung* - May 5, 2019 [no other dates].
The Ring - May 23, 26, 30, June 2, 2019.

June 2019

Duisburg *The Ring* - May 23, 26, 30, June 2, 2019.
 Düsseldorf *The Ring* - June 13, 16, 20, 23, 2019.

September 2019

Minden *The Ring* - [no actual dates].

November 2019

Gothenburg *Die Walküre* - [no actual dates].

March 2020

Chicago *Götterdämmerung* - [no actual dates].

April 2020

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

November 2020

Gothenburg *Siegfried* - [no actual dates].

2020/21 Season

Esbjerg *Siegfried* - [no actual dates].

November 2021

Gothenburg *The Ring* - [no actual dates].

2022/23 Season

Esbjerg *Götterdämmerung* - [no actual dates].

2024

Esbjerg *The Ring* - [no actual dates].

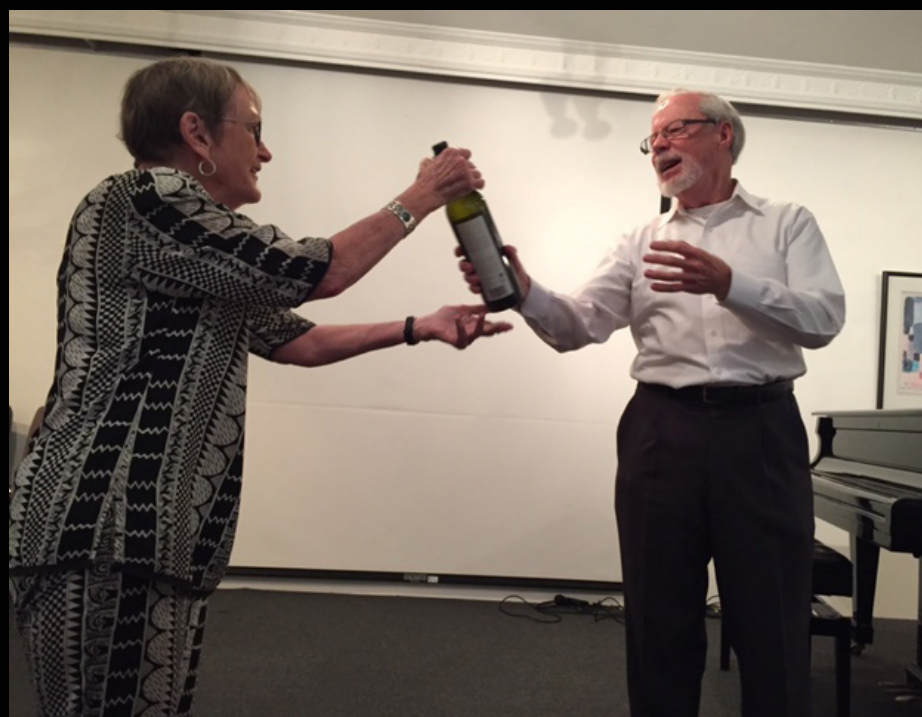
FROM THE SUBLIME... - THE ARTS IN MELBOURNE



Poster for the November-December 2016 revival of Opera Australia's The Ring Cycle of Richard Wagner at the Melbourne Arts Centre



Poster in prime position on the front of the Melbourne Arts Centre – bumping The Ring Cycle



President Jane Mathews presenting speaker Graham Bruce at the 4 February 2017 Sunday function with a bottle of wine from our partners Brangayne of Orange Vineyard (see notice inside for special offer to Members) (photo by Mailis Wakewham).



Rosamund Bartlett completing her trilogy of talks to the Wagner Society in NSW on Wagner in Russia on 12 March 2017 (photo Mailis Wakeham)

ADDRESS

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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)

Dear Roger,

The Committee of the Wagner Society in NSW has asked me to extend to you our best wishes for your retirement to greener pastures across the Tasman.

We greatly appreciate the enormous effort you have put into the Society over the decades and especially value your terms as President when you steered us through some stormy seas. Your scholarship and commitment to the educational and musical aims of the Society were exemplary and your subversive wit enlivened many an extended committee meeting. You are missed.

Please keep in touch and know that you will always have a place in our hearts.

Fond regards,
Mike

Michael Day
Secretary



Immediate Past President of the Wagner Society in NSW, Roger Cruickshank

Dear Mike

Thank you and the Committee for your kind wishes.

I have yet to unpack my books and papers, so the enormity of my move across the ditch hasn't sunk in. Rural South Taranaki is a forgotten land, even if *Lonely Planet* apparently said that Taranaki was number two on its list of "must visit" places for 2017. I'd take a deep breath before acting on their advice.

Waverley, population around 800, was a thriving, prosperous town 50 years ago, and now it's in serious decline. An ideal place to play the country pumpkin, and very restful. 45km to the southeast lies Wanganui, a town of some 40,000, which every January hosts the annual summer school of NZ Opera, including public recitals, masterclasses and an end-of-school concert. I met Sharolyn Kimmorley at one of those.

I've been to NZ Opera's production of *The Mikado* in Wellington. In a country which has embraced being PC rather too enthusiastically, there was debate in the press about the inherent racism of white singers in Japanese roles, and some critics urged the public to boycott the performances. Sigh.

Last Friday, Waverley hosted a Grass Roots Rugby (Union) match between the Hurricanes and Crusaders, and for a few hours the local population swelled to around 5,000. I went for the occasion. After the game there was a lolly scramble, and the opportunity for selfies with one's heroes, but alas the rain had set in and I reluctantly abandoned the lolly scramble and walked home.

My only commitment to returning to Australia is to being in Melbourne in early August for *Lohengrin*, and then in Sydney for two performances of *Parsifal*. I don't think that there's a Society function while I'm there, but I'm bound to catch up with some of you at the *Parsifal* performances.

Best wishes to you and the Committee for a fabulous 2017.

Regards,
Roger

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