



WAGNER  
SOCIETY  
NSW

CELEBRATING THE MUSIC OF RICHARD WAGNER

# WAGNER QUARTERLY

ISSUE NO 20

# 147

DECEMBER 2017

A reminder that your 2018 membership of the Wagner Society NSW is now due. Membership brings many benefits such as discounts at all our functions, access to tickets for Bayreuth, special offers to many musical performances and the informative Quarterly Newsletter. Please renew your membership as soon as possible. You can use Paypal, EFT or cheque - details available on the Society's website: [www.wagner.org.au/about/membership](http://www.wagner.org.au/about/membership).

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I am writing this after a very well received concert and party for Christmas 2017. The three singers – Laura Scandizzo, Rebecca Moret and Sitiveni Talei – gave a delightful performance of a varied repertoire of operatic arias. They were ably accompanied by Francis Greep, who also introduced many of the items. Special thanks must go to Rebecca for stepping in at short notice. She replaced Phoebe Humphreys, winner of the Wagner Society prize in the Eisteddfod, who had been compelled to withdraw on account of flu. Vice-President Leona Geeves must also be thanked for her efforts in arranging this concert.

I was delighted to receive the following email from Christopher McCabe, who joined the Society in early 2017:

Many thanks for the Concert and Christmas party yesterday, I enjoyed both immensely. It was a fitting way to end the year. The musical program was good and we had some very good singing indeed. I especially enjoyed Laura Scandizzo and took the opportunity of thanking her personally. Warm regards, Happy Christmas, and see you in early 2018.

Members attending provided a range of delicious foods. The raffle prizes included DVDs of Bayreuth productions from Universal Music, CDs of the Janowski Ring and a book on Jeffrey Smart donated by Ernes de Zan, and a book on Wagner by John Culshaw, donated by Clare and Margaret Hennessy. Also provided were a champagne tea by The Travelling Tenor and tickets to plays and concerts donated by Griffin Theatre, Sydney Theatre Company, Australian Chamber Orchestra, Australian Haydn Ensemble, Musica Viva, Pinchgut Opera and Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

This year the Committee decided to withdraw funding from the Lisa Gasteen National Opera School as it was focusing its activities on giving their selected singers opportunities to perform with Opera Queensland and the Queensland Symphony Orchestra. We believed that this could be difficult for Sydney-based singers. We also decided not to support the Elizabeth Connell Prize, as finalists were for the most part from overseas.

Instead, we developed opportunities encouraging direct applications from NSW singers, including those studying or working overseas. For example, we assisted emerging Wagnerian singers featuring in the Tait Trust's celebration concert in London in September. I received an enthusiastic

PRESIDENT'S REPORT Continued page 4

**Patron:** Ms Simone Young AM

**Honorary Life Members:** Mr Richard King

Prof Michael Ewans

Mr Horst Hoffman

Mr John Wegner AO

Mr Roger Cruickshank

Dr Terence Watson

Dr Dennis Mather

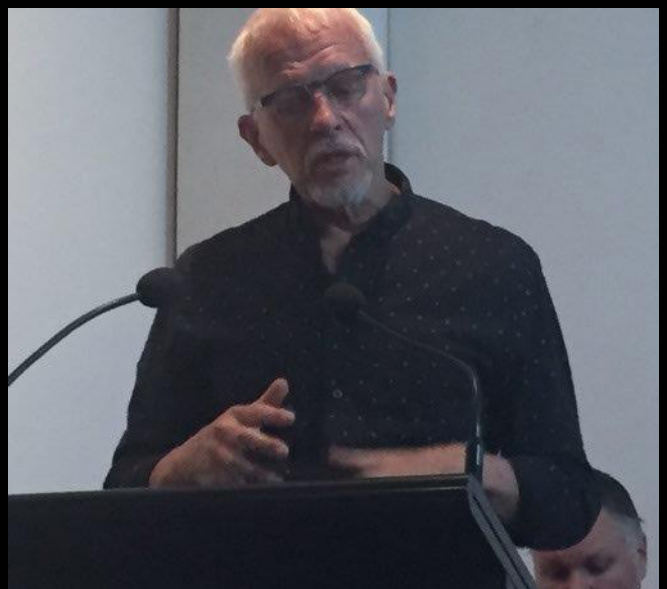
# BAYREUTH 2017 REPORTBACK



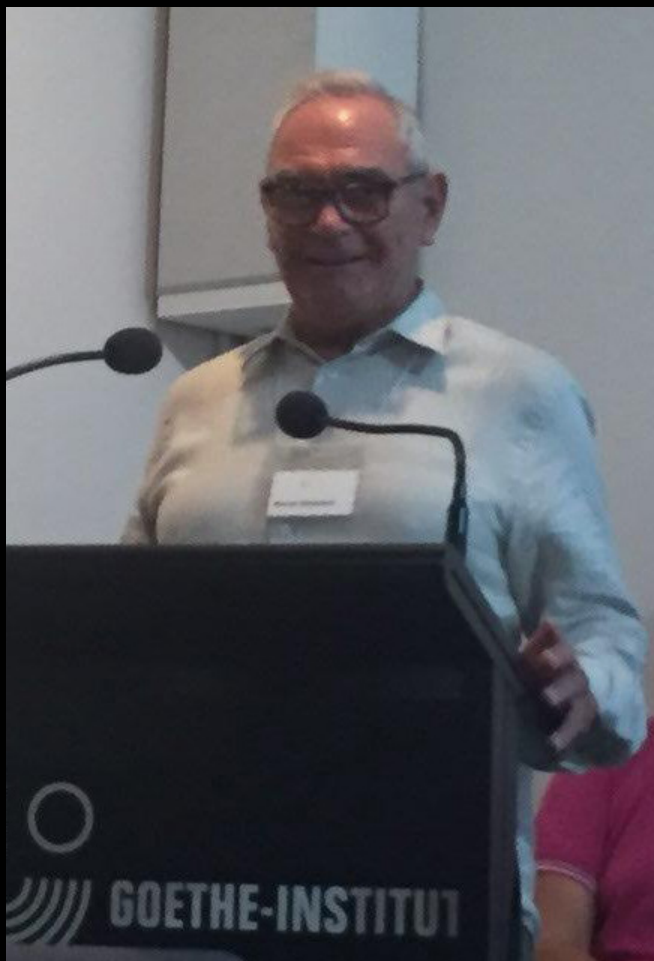
Elizabeth Murphy



Ian Hutchinson



Michael Day-Bayreuth 2017 reportback compere



Warner Whiteford



Robert French with Florian Hummerbacher, committee member

## FOR YOUR DIARY

2018		
2 to 11 February	<i>Tristan and Isolde</i> will be performed by Melbourne Opera in a full production. No further details yet – keep an eye on <a href="http://www.melbourneopera.com/">http://www.melbourneopera.com/</a>	2 to 11 February
Thursday 16 & Sunday 19 August	WASO will bring Stuart Skelton and Eva-Marie Westbroek to Perth for concert performances of <i>Tristan and Isolde</i> . Tickets and details at <a href="http://tickets.waso.com.au/single/PSDetail.aspx?psn=10020">http://tickets.waso.com.au/single/PSDetail.aspx?psn=10020</a>	Perth Concert Hall
13-22 November	Opera Australia's 2018 program includes <i>Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg</i> . A co-production with Covent Garden, the cast will include Melbourne Ring veterans James Johnson as Sachs, Stefan Vinke as Walter, Warwick Fyfe as Beckmesser, with Natalie Aroyan debuting as Eva. Details and tickets at <a href="https://opera.org.au/whatson/events/die-meistersinger-von-nurnberg-melbourne">https://opera.org.au/whatson/events/die-meistersinger-von-nurnberg-melbourne</a>	Melbourne Arts Centre

## COMING EVENTS 2018 - 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	LOCATION
21 January	<b>2.00pm: Starting out as a young tenor:</b> London based Australian tenor Sam Sakker won the prestigious Wagner Prize in London in 2017. He will talk about his recent premiere performance in Liszt's unfinished Opera <i>Sardanapalo</i> .	Goethe Institut
11 February	<b>2:00pm: A social afternoon with Sir John Tomlinson:</b> Legendary British bass talks to us about his life with Wagner's characters. <b>12:30: DVD: Das Liebesverbot Act 1</b> Wagner's comic opera (1836), based on Shakespeare's Measure for Measure. Recording from Teatro Real, Madrid. Conducted by Ivor Bolton. Directed by Kasper Holten. 2017	Goethe Institut
25 March	<b>2.00pm: Wagner on a Shoestring - Suzanne Chaundy's</b> 30 year international career has included directing opera, text based theatre and outdoor festivals. Suzanne directed Melbourne Opera's <i>Tannhäuser</i> (2016), <i>Lohengrin</i> (2017) and <i>Tristan and Isolde</i> (Feb 2018) <b>12.30pm: DVD: Das Liebesverbot Act 2</b>	Goethe Institut
22 April	<b>2.00pm: Annual General Meeting</b> followed at <b>2.30pm</b> by <b>Concert</b> of young singers supported by the Wagner Society	Goethe Institut
20 May	<b>2.00pm: Wagner and Gluck:</b> Life-time Wagner Society member and honorary life member, <b>Professor Michael Ewans</b> is an eminent academic, musicologist and opera director and an expert in Ancient Greek theatre. To be followed at <b>4.00pm</b> by <b>Wagner's Birthday champagne celebration</b> <b>12.30pm: DVD: Wagner's Jews</b> - Documentary by Hilan Warshaw, 2013. Even as Wagner called for the elimination of the Jews from German life, many of his most active supporters were Jewish. Can art transcend bigotry?	Goethe Institut
15 July	<b>2.00pm: TBA</b> <b>12.30pm: DVD: The Wagner Family</b> 2010 film by acclaimed director Tony Palmer about the family in Bayreuth that has survived a mixture of lies, deception, fraud and dangerous political alliances for 140 years.	Goethe Institut
5 August	<b>1.00 – 5.00pm: SEMINAR: Tristan und Isolde - Dr Antony Ernst</b> is a frequent guest lecturer on opera and is a music tour leader in Australia and overseas. (WASO's concert productions of <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> are on 16 & 19 August in Perth.) <b>NO DVD</b>	Willoughby Uniting Church, 10 Clanwilliam St. Willoughby
23 September	<b>2.00pm: Brickbats and Bouquets - Bayreuth 2018</b> Presented by members who received tickets from the Wagner Society and attended the Bayreuth Festival <b>12.30pm: DVD: Wagner – a Genius in Exile</b> 2014 film by Andy Sommer about Antoine Wagner travelling in Switzerland exploring links to his great great grandfather Richard	Goethe Institut
21 October	<b>1.00 – 5.00pm: SEMINAR: Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg - Dr David Larkin,</b> lecturer at the Sydney Conservatorium, presents a seminar as background to the new Opera Australia Melbourne production on 13, 17, 19, 22 November. <b>NO DVD</b>	Goethe Institut
25 November	<b>2.00pm: Concert</b> by outstanding young artists supported by the Wagner Society, followed by <b>Christmas Party</b>	St. Columba Uniting Church. 53A Ocean St, cnr Forth St Woollahra

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](http://www.wagner.org.au).

Admission to each event will be \$25 a Member, and \$30 each non-Member, \$10 (Full-time students) Seminar/Concert \$40 (m), \$45 (n-m), \$20 (fts).

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

email about this from one of our past speakers, Rosamund Bartlett:

Just a quick note to say that I was very pleased to be at the Tait Memorial Trust 25th anniversary concert in London on Wednesday night, and to see acknowledgement of the contribution of the Wagner Society of NSW in the programme. A wonderful Wagner recital with Stuart Skelton and some gorgeous Australian Valkyries, and then I ran into Jane (Mathews) at the party afterwards. Ermes de Zan kindly invited me—he was on our AGNSW tour to Norway and Iceland this May.

Among the singers at that concert was Samantha Crawford, who sang a duet from *Tristan and Isolde* with Stuart Skelton. She received funding for lessons with Dame Anne Evans and Dame Gwyneth Jones. She returned to Sydney briefly in September and we arranged a concert for her in the home of members Ros and Tony Strong. It was a delightful evening, with Samantha not only singing a number of arias but also showing a DVD of the duet she and Stuart Skelton performed. There was a lovely moment when Australian baritone Geoffrey Chard, a friend of Ros and Tony's, asked Samantha to take his best wishes back to Dame Anne Evans as he had sung with her during his time in England.

I recently received an email from Jacques Bouffier, who represents the interests of overseas Wagner societies on the committee of the Richard Wagner Verband International Assembly. He reported that at a board meeting held in Berlin in early November, it was confirmed that the overseas societies will be allocated 100 tickets for each of the 5 operas to be presented in 2018 and these will be for the week 23-28 August. Tickets will be divided between 11 societies this year, in proportion to their membership numbers. There will be no Ring in 2018; the operas are *Der fliegende Holländer*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, *Parsifal* and *Die Walküre* (from the Castorf Ring). The absence of a Ring has resulted in a drop in requests for tickets, which is reflected in the response from our own Society. Jacques will let the Society know how many tickets we have in December. Those interested in applying for them should contact me.

We have had a great response to our trip to Perth for the West Australian Symphony Orchestra concert performances of *Tristan und Isolde*. Twenty members will make the journey to hear Stuart Skelton and Eva-Marie Westbroek in the leading roles.

Sadly, during the last month two long-standing members of our Society have passed away. Bill Suthers, who, with his wife Margaret, was a founder member (number 14), died at the age of 98. Gabriella Bremner-Moore, who along with her husband Michael Moore was a member of the Committee for some years, died unexpectedly after an operation. Both provided significant service to the Wagner Society in NSW, and their presence will be greatly missed.

Our 2018 program leaflet has been designed by Vice-President Michael Day and is available in this issue of the Quarterly. There are two major afternoon seminars: Antony Ernst on *Tristan und Isolde* in August and David Larkin on *Die Meistersinger* in October. We should therefore be well

briefed before the performances of these operas in Perth and Melbourne. We are also delighted to be welcoming a great British Wagnerian bass, Sir John Tomlinson, to a social afternoon in February. There will be a range of other interesting presentations and concerts and we are presenting a variety of exciting DVDs.

Secretary Barbara de Rome has continued to involve many members in the preparation of afternoon teas for our meetings. This is much appreciated by all of those attending.

Jenny Edwards, with the assistance of Florian Hammerbacher, has successfully redesigned and updated our home page. All of you should by now have received instructions on how to log in. You will be able to see a much more attractive site containing a great deal of information about the Society and its events. Jenny is also getting material from members on the history and development of the Society. Photographs and newsletters from early meetings would be gratefully received.

Regrettably, Terence Watson, editor of our highly valued newsletter, *The Quarterly*, has indicated that he is retiring after producing this issue. Terence has been Editor since 2000 and has contributed a great deal to the Society. *The Quarterly* is admired by societies around the world for its articles and layout. Terence has offered to suggest some options to the Committee for ways in which the *Quarterly* processes could be streamlined. Some form of printed news and articles will continue to go out to members. And we are interested in hearing from members how they would like to receive the *Quarterly*.

Let us all look forward to 2018 being another successful year for Wagner lovers and the Wagner Society in NSW.

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## NEW AND RENEWED MEMBERS SINCE SEPTEMBER 2017

James and Sara Carlisle (1201); Dianne and Terry Finnegan (1202); Maggie Brown (1203); John Fawcett (1204).

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## DONATIONS RECEIVED SINCE SEPTEMBER 2017

M F Baumgartner

Our thanks for the generous donations to help the Society's objectives.

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## 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](http://www.wagner.org.au/contact-us).

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# BAYREUTH 2017 VIEWS AND REVIEWS

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## BRICKBATS AND BOUQUETS FOR BAYREUTH 2017 - 8 OCTOBER 2017 REPORT BY MICHAEL DAY

The society had a very lively meeting on October 8 when members who had obtained tickets to Bayreuth through the society reported on the responses they had to the productions they attended. The mood was set by the serving of Bavarian beer, bratwurst, sauerkraut and pretzels, all essential ingredients for the experience of the annual ritual that is the Bayreuth Festival.

I gave a brief illustrated description of the current productions of *Tristan und Isolde*, *Parsifal* and *Die Meistersinger* and then members Ian Hutchinson, Terence Watson, Jenny Ferns and Warner Whiteford spoke about their reactions. The consensus was that musically the three productions were superb—great principals, wonderful chorus and magnificent orchestra. The sets and costumes and especially the lighting were of the highest professional standards. There was less agreement about the directors' interpretation of Wagner's intentions.

*Tristan* had many illogical and unattractive aspects and no feeling for the natural elements—sea, forest and coastal headland—that are such an important part of Wagner's work. Everything was very industrial and hard edge. The interpretation of King Marke was problematic—he was portrayed as a sadistic thug, which goes against the music and the actions of the character as written. Rene Pape sang it beautifully, however Christa Mayer's singing of Brangäne was the highlight for most of us.

*Parsifal* was better received although there were some puzzling elements. Highly detailed productions like this really need to be seen more than once in order to understand all the layers of meaning. Wagner's arguably anti-organized religion message was strongly imagined. Georg Zeppenfeld's Gurnemanz was superbly sung and acted—an often tedious role was made totally engrossing. South Australian bass Derek Welton was excellent as Klingsor.

*Die Meistersinger* was highly anticipated by the Australian contingent at the festival because of the debut of Australian director Barrie Kosky. Importantly, he is the first Jew to direct at the Festival. I thought his interpretation, although risky and challenging, was a triumph, but not everyone agreed. The production started off portraying all of the opera's characters as aspects of Wagner and his family and friends and developed into a trial putting Wagner on the witness stand for his anti-Semitism. It was a very detailed and intelligent production, sometimes very funny and with each act ending with a stunning coup de theatre. All the principals created fully realized and sympathetic characters and the chorus was simply stunningly good.

Elizabeth Murphy then amused and inspired us with her enthusiastic retelling of her first Bayreuth and first Ring

experiences. Elizabeth captured the unique atmosphere: the green hill and flowers; the introductory fanfares; the sausages and beer; the dresses; the gossip; the beautiful interior of the theatre and its wonderful acoustic; the uncomfortable seats; the informative morning talks and the after-show discussions lasting into the early hours.

The afternoon finished up with members talking about the controversial Castorf Ring Cycle which was having its final performances. Esteban Insausti is one of the few people who has seen this production and had something good to say about the quirky interpretation. Ian and Warner weren't so keen, but all agreed it was musically excellent. During the afternoon many of those present in the audience had added insightful comments and I think I can say that the afternoon was amusing and informative for both those who have been to Bayreuth and those who hope to go. We had talked for longer than *Götterdämmerung* Act 1 and we needed more Bavarian beer.

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## REPORT FROM BAYREUTH JENNY FERNS

While Jenny Ferns participated in the Brickbats and Bouquets session, as reported by Mike Day, she also sent your Editor longer reviews of three offerings at Bayreuth this year. The Castorf Ring Cycle has been reviewed in a previous Quarterly - Ed.

### ***Tristan und Isolde*, Bayreuth 20 August 2017**

Conductor: Christian Thielemann; Director: Katharina Wagner; Tristan: Stephen Gould; König Marke: Rene Pape; Isolde: Petra Lang; Kurwenal: Iain Paterson; Melot: Raimund Nolte; Brangäne: Christa Mayer; Ein Hirt: Tansel Akzeybek; Ein Steuermann: Kay Stieffermann; Junger Seemann: Tansel Akzeybek.

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## QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS:

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<b>REPORT FROM BAYREUTH</b> - Jenny Ferns	<b>P.5</b>
<b>THE STOCKHOLM SYNDROME AND WAGNER</b> - Terry and Julie Clarke	<b>P.9</b>
<b>UNCLE ADOLF WAGNER - RICHARD'S MENTOR, FRIEND AND GUIDE INTO AESTHETICS</b> - Terence Watson	<b>P.11</b>

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Being a Middle Ages “capture” story, Act 1 begins with an explanation of the back-story of the conflict between Cornwall and Ireland—a war to do with taxation. King Marke, a childless widower, bids his nephew Tristan (an orphan) to capture Irish Isolde, to become his future wife. Isolde, who was betrothed to Morold, who has been killed by Tristan. Tristan was injured in this event and, as “Tantris”, was brought back to heath by Isolde’s special medicines and healing powers. Isolde has a definite grudge against Tristan in view of the expectation that she is being brought to Cornwall to become the wife of King Marke.

The setting for Act 1 is a labyrinth of kinetic staircases and railings representing the deck of the ship en route to Cornwall. Isolde and Brangäne discuss the back-story. Isolde plans to meet with Tristan and in a friendly manner offer him a peace potion (which she clandestinely intends to switch into a death potion). Brangäne overhears this plan. Unbeknownst to Isolde, Brangäne swaps it for a “love” potion. During the long interchange between Tristan and Isolde, the audience is kept in suspense as to how this outcome will be achieved. Ultimately with much discussion and many exchanges of a large phial of pink (dishwashing?) liquid, neither drinks the fluid, as they are clearly in love. They pour out the pink liquid, while admitting their already dominating infatuation. Nothing changes. Brangäne plays a much more active and supportive role than I’ve seen formerly.

Act 2 is the factory/prison hold of the ship with Tristan, Isolde, Brangäne, and Tristan’s offsider Kurwenal, all under spotlights controlled by wardens, thereby eliminating any possibility of privacy. King Marke, and his offsider Melot are dressed in oversized yellow clothing. In the case of King Marke (Rene Pape new in this 2017 production) wearing an enormous yellow overcoat, topped by a yellow wide-brimmed hat, obscuring any vision of his face, is shown as an aggressor. The duet of Tristan and Isolde is performed mainly under the spotlights, with any suggestion of privacy being achieved by Isolde erecting a flimsy grey cloth screen illuminated from within by solar energy stars, to accompany their ecstatic moments. At the end of the act, Kurwenal performed his usual contorted distracting role with occasional references to loyalty to Tristan. Melot is clearly opposed to Tristan’s disloyalty towards King Marke.

Act 3 commences with a cor-anglais solo that accompanies companions of Kurwenal and Tristan as they bring white lilies (a symbol of death in German custom and literature) predicting Tristan’s *Tod*. The lighting during this scene plays an important role with symbolic illuminated triangles projected at various angles and directions around and above the stage. The central image in these spaces are celestial representations of the red-headed Isolde, constantly being summoned by the ailing Tristan. Petra Lang in appearance and acting portrays the quintessential impetuous Irish maiden more accurately than any other. Brangäne, the ever-loyal companion for Isolde, supports her mistress with dramatic and vocal accuracy with which she solidly describes their relationship. During this scene the orchestra’s luscious

presence below the stage, projects into the auditorium, confirming the presence of many, unseen, performers of untold ability under the management of their mentor, Thielemann. Meanwhile the developing action on stage has Tristan, absurdly, blindfolded under the control of the wardens of this prison. He is therefore unable to defend himself, thereby incurring Melot’s wrath as he lunges again at the non-combatant Tristan, resulting in Tristan’s life ending wound.

Both Tristan and Isoldes’ final soliloquies were conveyed in climactic thrilling singing. King Marke’s solo was less expressive than expected (perhaps due to the overwhelming imposition of the enormous yellow hat). This production, as with many current modern productions, has the characters not really relating to each other effectively.

All performers were richly applauded, with Christian Thielemann, in his traditional blue suit with the Chinese collar, taking the bows on behalf of the well-deserving subterranean orchestra.

### **Parsifal Bayreuth 22 August 2017**

Conductor: Hartmut Haenchen; Production: Uwe Eric Laufenberg; Choir Director: Eberhard Friedrich; Amfortas: Ryan McKinny; Titirel: Karl-Heinz Lehner; Gurnemanz: Georg Zeppenfeld; Parsifal: Andreas Schager; Klingsor: Derek Welton (Australian); Kundry: Elena Pankratova.

This production brings together many references to other oriental stories, non-Christian religious references and, of-course, Christianity. During the playing of the overture the scene is set in the derelict ruins of a bombed-out former Christian church in Mosul on the Tigris River in Iraq during this current period. Many tired pilgrims (refugees) sleep, on colourful mats, foam mattresses, stretchers encased in assorted blankets and sleeping-bags. Under the watchful eye of an anonymous moribund vigilante perched on the roof of the church, the events of Parsifal’s self-discovery and transformation occur. His killing of the swan and his subsequent viewing of a communion service under the tutelage of Gurnemanz makes it clear that he is ignorant of the ways of the community and he has transgressed their rules. He realises he needs to learn from experience with the assistance of Kundry and Gurnemanz.

In the current production in Bayreuth, by Uwe Eric Laufenberg and conducted by Hartmut Haenchen, other transformations also occur. A widely relevant interpretation, inclusive of current political developments helps to breakdown barriers, which maybe not of Richard Wagner’s intention. This all was conveyed by beautiful solo, as well as ensemble singing from all of the main singers, together with the huge chorus, both on and off stage, prepared by Eberhard Friedrich. The orchestra, conducted by Hartmut Haenchen delivered the usual wonderful standard of individual and collective performances. There was outstanding singing by Georg Zeppenfeld as Gurnemanz and Andreas Schager as Parsifal, as well as Aussie, Derek Welton as Klingsor. Soprano Elena Pankratova presented fearless

and multi-talented acting and singing performance. Stage presentation and lighting in particular, kept the dramatic topical relevance at the forefront.

The action on stage reminded us of the sensitivity of the local individual events, past and present, giving the feeling of involvement with these experiences as they happened. Environmental issues, as well as clever scene changes, kept it topical. At various times, where appropriate, crowds of “pilgrims”, here disguised as refugees (? Muslims) find succour in the partially destroyed church. Kundry rescues and comforts a small child (reminiscent of the dead child washed up on the Greek coastline recently), emblematic of her constant wish to “serve”. One fascinating change of scene involved Google world, with an image extending from the church to outer space, presented as digital images on the stage-front scrim surface. The return journey back to Earth and specifically to the Iraq destination brought us back to the subject at hand.

Kundry showed diverse talents, incorporating many personas in the one character. Despite her constant need for sleep, the range of stage-craft requires enormous and diverse skills. Not a slightly-built person, in Act II, Elena Pankratova was shown as an aged participant suffering the effects of early Parkinson’s Disease with a quivering hand. Her attention also turned to domestic duties, including the cleaning out of the small bar-fridge and the disposal of undesired objects into the nearby bin located in an almost destroyed annex of the Mosul church. The lengthy amorous scene with Parsifal, clothed as a militant intruder, culminating in the “kiss” scene requires singing superbly in a supine position—and enormous skill and concentration. She also washes Parsifal’s feet, using her hair as a towel, (in reference to Mary Magdalene) in order to show her loyalty in service of the Grail monks. Parsifal begins to learn from her, and Gurnemanz, about worldly matters and wishes to take responsibility for his actions.

Amfortas, here a relatively youthful, slightly-built individual, was more mobile than most of his languishing counterparts in other productions. Nevertheless, in Act I, his wounds were not healed by the exotic tincture brought by Kundry, nor the bathing, nor the wilful aggravation of the wound and stigmata by his brethren, in order to create sufficient blood-flow to provide enough blood for the Grail monks’ communion. (At this point a member of the audience, sitting in the middle of the stalls, fainted and had to be extracted from the auditorium.)

The crown-of-thorns provided Amfortas with the symbolic relationship with Christ and the Grail monks’ commitment to their Christian religion. Klingsor, here depicted as a Muslim, with his prayer-mat confusion and weird collection of Christian crucifix memorabilia, may have been intended to suggest Wagner’s concern/criticism of religion being a curse for all mankind. Klingsor was most preoccupied with his collection of crucifixes, one of which in particular had an unusually phallic design. His flower-maidens, all providing excellent choral skills, were transformed from chador-

wearing anonymous street citizens to lusciously under-dressed belly-dancers. A curiously humorous introduction to this production occurred, at an early point in his scene, when Klingsor, though apparently also a long-term resident of Mosul, had difficulty determining the direction of Mecca. When placing his prayer-mat at the relevant time, he discovered, with the use of a compass, that he had been offering his prayers in the wrong direction. (This may have been to recognize some unfamiliarity with his current location, of the Australian singer, Derek Welton, having come from the wrong hemisphere.)

Act III is set in the overgrown ruins of the church, showing the dominance of nature. The “Good Friday Music” accompanies a scene depicting final overthrow of all religious dogma and universal mutual respect pervades all participants as well as the audience in an effort to break down human-created barriers. At the conclusion of the opera the diverse remaining residents and neighbours, including rejoicing (naked) maidens taking a shower in a spontaneous waterfall, on the advice of the very aged Titurel (Karl Heinz Lehner), all relinquished allegiances to their various deities and joined a new wave of friendship between the members of Parsifal’s congregation, including the Monks of Amfortas’s brethren, together with various sects and passing pilgrims of various denominations. The concluding orchestral procession included the conscious awareness of the passive observing audience by means of the use of spotlights and house lights, uniting all participants, members of the cast, including Parsifal, creating a microcosm of an idealized future of goodwill and togetherness. The observing vigilante remained unmoved by the whole process.

### ***Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* Bayreuth 27 August 2017**

Conductor: Philippe Jordan; Director: Barrie Kosky; Choir Master: Eberhard Friedrich; Hans Sachs: Michael Volle; Veit Pogner: Gunther Groissbock; Kunz Vogelgesang: Tansel Akzeybek; Konrad Nachtigal: Armin Kolarczyk; Fritz Kothner: Daniel Schmutzhard; Balthasar Zorn: Paul Kaufmann; Ulrich Eisslinger: Christopher Kaplan; Augustin Moser: Stefan Heibach; Hermann Ortel: Raimund Nolte; Hans Schwarz: Andreas Horl; Hans Foltz: Timo Riihonen; Walther von Stolzing: Klaus Florian Vogt; David: Daniel Behle; Eva Pogner: Anne Schwanewilms; Magdalene: Wiebke Lehmkuhl; Ein Nachtwachter: Karl-Heinz Lehner; Helga Beckmesser harpist: Barbara Mayr.

Wagner’s only “comedy” *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* was first performed in Munich in 1868. It is the 12<sup>th</sup> production of *Meistersinger* at Bayreuth since its inception. It describes a post Reformation (Protestant) Nuremberg of the 16<sup>th</sup> century where society managed itself with a town council of tradesmen (guild) members. One important member of this group was the Town Clerk, in this case Sixtus Beckmesser.

This production is the first time a Jewish director has been appointed for any opera at the Bayreuth Festspiele.

Despite the presence of a forlorn swallow circling the auditorium for all of the first Act, the minor distraction did little to reduce the impact of the extraordinary re-creation of a fictional living/lounge-room in Villa “Wahnfried”. (\*literal translation: freedom from delusion, folly, madness,): (the home in Bayreuth of the Wagner family) in the 1870s. Date- and time-specific information, as extracted from Cosima Wagner’s diary, was shown, in German, on a scrim in front of the open curtain during the overture. A great deal of activity of the household presented family and various visitors enjoying an afternoon-tea party. The hypothetical extended Wagner family, including two Newfoundland dogs (returning from a walk in the adjacent Hofgarten with Richard), introduced various look-alikes of Richard Wagner, covering several generations. Serving maids and callers-by created an ever-increasing sense of activity in the enormous sitting-room. A grand piano mutely accompanied the overture whilst being “played” 4-handed, by “Richard Wagner” and “Franz Liszt”. The Wagner character transmogrified into Hans Sachs as did the Liszt into Veit Pogner, (father of Eva), both members of the guild of Meistersingers of Nuremberg. Hermann Levi, Wagner’s then current resident conductor (impersonated by Beckmesser) participated in the afternoon-tea but provided his own sandwich wrapped in brown-paper, together with a glass of milk as his appropriate beverage. An obvious reference to his Jewish kosher food requirement. (He is an assimilated citizen but still an “outsider”.)

The remaining Meister (craftsmen, not necessarily singers) entered the living room through the elevated lid of the grand piano. Other people used various doorways to gain access. A succession of parcels, letters and deliveries of luxury items addressed to Richard Wagner arrived. The mail, including the accounts for the newly arrived items, were forwarded to Cosima. (Items delivered to Richard Wagner included some new shoes, some elegantly woven silk fabric and a box of variously coloured perfumes, which were duly smelled and passed amongst surrounding guests.)

In an effort at authenticity in this production, teapots and coffee pots and cups and saucers of real porcelain were used, accompanied by a large box of “Nuremberger Lebkuchen” (traditional local biscuits), which were circulated and consumed by younger members of the family, guild members and their friends. Cosima/Eva acted as hostess to Richard Wagner/Hans Sachs. Identifying who was who took a while to unravel, but lots of humorous diversions made this Act really memorable.

Lots of energetic activity of the opening scene (usually set in the outskirts of a Nuremberg church), eventually settled into the thanks-giving hymn session, where the obviously Jewish associate of Wagner (Hermann Levi)/Beckmesser found it difficult to participate in the Christian kneeling and crossing for prayer at the appropriate times. Sixtus Beckmesser, played and sung by Johannes Martin Kranzle, had acquired all the Jewish affectation which could have type-cast him for life,

however his singing, and dancing, in extremes occasionally, showed his extra skill, the lute playing with the suspect accompaniment to his songs, requires a sense of the absurd.

Michael Volle as Hans Sachs had an extended vocal presence as the central character. Most suitable support came from the delightful assistant shoe-maker, David. Daniel Behle (who also sang Froh in *Das Rheingold*) is a rising star to keep an eye on.

Act II commences in a dually functional place. A room set out as a court-room, but with a floor of a green meadow where picnics can be held and people can place themselves in positions to overhear others’ conversations. Sachs is at work making/repairing shoes. Eva is pleased about Walther’s interest in entering the forthcoming competition. Walther learns quickly what is expected of him, and inspired by a dream, and with the assistance of Hans Sachs, composes a song that complies with the structure both poetical and musical of what the rules require. Sachs acts as the scribe for Walther’s ideas. He leaves the text lying around; it is found by Beckmesser who adapts it for his own purposes. He becomes the object of humour (and anti-Semitic ridicule) at various times whilst practising his singing, accompanying himself on a lute. Some of his singing has a particularly Sephardic cantorial nuance. He persists with his rehearsal of his song while also trying to impress a young lady sitting at a nearby window, thinking that she may be Eva. During Beckmesser’s practice singing and dancing, Hans Sachs hammers out his criticism using a judicial gavel as a substitute for his usual shoe-hammer. The volume and persistent banging, together with the mood of the crowd also attending this bucolic scene inside the “courtroom” (welcoming the festival of Johannestag the following day) creates great confusion. A Night-watchman is heard, and his call restores the area to its usual peacefulness. In the disturbance Beckmesser is injured requiring him to have his hands bandaged and rendering him unable to accompany himself on his lute when competing for the Prize Song.

The scene-change during Act II, behind an open curtain, is achieved by six or eight large hooks being lowered from above and being attached to the green carpet (meadow) and raised out of sight. The room reverts to a courtroom (reminiscent of that in which the Nuremberg Trials were held in the 1950s decorated with the national flags of Britain, USA, France and USSR), a suitable venue for a competition to take place. The final scene of Act II presents a most confronting image to confirm the message being conveyed by the suggested anti-Semitic portrayal of the persona of Beckmesser. A huge inflated balloon arises at front stage in the shape of a stereotypical Jewish man’s head [as used in the Nazi propaganda tool: *Der Stürmer*—Ed.]. It occupies the whole of the open area of the proscenium. As the scene concludes it deflates and in doing so, leans forward, exposing the top of his head, capped by a yarmulke on which a large Star of David is embroidered. As the curtain closes there is no doubt about the dichotomy of ideas which are being exposed in this production.

For Act III the scene remains the formal “court” room. Sachs is interrupted from his shoe-making by various



visitors. Walther inspired by another dream finds a concluding section for his song. A side story confirms Eva's interest in Walther's success but also acknowledges her respect of, and affection, for Sachs. David and Magdalena are also present and a beautiful quintet results. Sachs sings a long private soliloquy where he acknowledges the crazy state of the world.

The second part of Act III involves the whole community celebrating St Johannes Day. Wonderful Renaissance costumes (Klaus Bruns), including wigs and headwear, set the production in Bruegel-like accuracy. The celebration still takes place in the courtroom setting but additional flags and banners give it greater festivity. One brown-clad [US], armed military official remains in position to manage decorum of the situation. Hans Sachs sings a very patriotic song, praising German "Art" and nationalism.

Because of his inability through his earlier injury, Beckmesser enlists the help of a harpist to assist him to play his lute accompaniment. He makes a thorough mess of the song and then he and the harpist disappear. The final scene with the removal of the crowds, which Kosky had so well manipulated arriving on stage, and leaving, transforms to reveal the singular character of Wagner/Sachs. He stands in the witness box/podium conducting an ersatz orchestra, revealed by a rising curtain and sitting on an approaching platform, to imply the dominance of music being the art form to convey culture appreciation universally over the negative aspects of history.

Postscript: The idea of Barrie Kosky being chosen to direct *Meistersinger* was a great opportunity for him to show *Meistersinger* in a different light. Normally, small reference is made to the "individuality" of Beckmesser. He is often shown as a "different" character in the Nuremberg society. Most productions continue as bright picturesque entertainments with a few humorous touches. Little emphasis is given to the serious discussion of the role of "German Art" as described by Wagner, in the more recent light of German history. Here, there is a clear suggestion that Richard Wagner's anti-Semitism was a fact of life. In the gardens adjacent to the Festspielhaus an extensive permanent display recognises the sacrifices of many former participants/performers at the Bayreuth Festival during the National Socialist times. Current management wants to acknowledge the historic wrongs imposed on those people in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century who had any kind of Jewish heritage.

Barrie Kosky bravely joined with the performers in taking a bow at the end of the opera. His appearance was initially met with mixed feelings, though quickly the applause dominated any negative original impulse. There is much positive to take away from this production, much humour and with further thought, much more to appreciate. I understand a HD video will be filmed during the performances in Bayreuth in the Summer of 2018. A simulcast was shown across the whole of Europe during one of the performances in August 2017.

## THE STOCKHOLM SYNDROME AND WAGNER

Terry and Julie Clarke

In 1973, two ex-convicts attempted to rob the Kreditbanken in Stockholm taking four of the bank employees hostage. They were held for six days and tortured. After their release, the hostages refused to testify against their captors and instead raised money for their defence. Nils Bejerot, a Swedish criminologist and psychiatrist, was consulted at the time and described a situation where hostages develop a psychological alliance with their captors as a survival strategy during captivity. This became known as the Stockholm Syndrome.

What has this got to do with Wagner?

One of the multiplicity of decisions which a director of The Ring Cycle must make is how to portray the relationship of the goddess Freia with the giant Fasolt in *Das Rheingold*. In most productions, she is seen to be terrified of the giants and to withdraw from them as much as she can. However, the beauty of some of Fasolt's music does occasionally tempt a director to allow Freia to show at least a certain sympathy towards the giant.

In a production of The Ring Cycle we attended in May 2017, we saw another interpretation of the relationship.

On her first entrance, Freia as usual was seen to be fleeing in terror from the giants. However, towards the conclusion of the opera, when the giants return with Freia to exchange her for the gold, she was seen to be deeply enamoured of Fasolt and positively clung to him. Furthermore, after he had been murdered by Fafner, she mourned beside his dead body. I considered this to be a prime example of the Stockholm Syndrome.

And where did we witness this production? Of course, it was in Stockholm.

[Under Conductor Marko Letonja, and with the direction of Staffan Valdemar Holm, and with the costume and set design of Bente Lykke Møller, the cast included such luminaries in the Wagner realm as: Wotan—John Lundgren; Alberich—Johan Edholm; Mime—Niklas Björling Rygert; Erda—Katarina Leoson; Siegmund—Michael Weinius; Sieglinde—Cornelia Beskow; Brünnhilde—Nina Stemme; Siegfried—Lars Cleveman; Gunter—Ola Eliasson; Hagen—Falk Struckmann; Gutrune—Sara Olsson; Waltraute—Katarina Dalayman—Ed.]

## DELIGHTFUL MUSICAL EVENTS AND DISCUSSIONS AT THE WAGNER SOCIETY IN NSW by Leona Geeves

### SAMANTHA CRAWFORD RECITAL

Our Wagner Society was delighted to help fund Australian soprano, **Samantha Crawford**, for coaching in London with iconic Wagnerian soprano, **Dame Anne Evans**. Samantha was invited to sing with a tranche of Aussie and NZ singers at a **Tait Memorial Trust** concert in London alongside Sydney Heldentenor, **Stuart Skelton**.

On 19 October on a balmy Sydney evening, at the lovely home and garden of members, Ros and Tony Strong (who had attended the concert in London and heard Samantha there) Samantha fitted us in a thank you recital and accompanied by Sydney's **Bradley Gilchrist**, sang the

Wesendonck Lied, *Schmerzen, O Sachs, mein Freund* from *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, *Einsam in trüben Tagen* from *Lohengrin*, and *Du bist der Lenz* from *Die Walküre*.

Afterwards we saw a short film of the *Walkürenritt* from the **London Tait Memorial Trust 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary recital**, featuring such wonderful singers as **Eleanor Greenwood** (also a recipient of Wagner Society funding), Valda Wilson, **Liane Keegan**, and Ashlyn Tymms. Both artists and our hosts were presented with **Brangayne Wines of Orange**, followed by champagne and snacks in the garden and a chat with the artists.

### CHRISTMAS CONCERT AND PARTY

As usual we were treated to a wonderful Christmas concert, on Sunday 19 November, this time with a program hastily altered to slot in **Rebecca Moret**, who kindly consented to replace a voice-less, indisposed Phoebe Humphreys.

**Francis Greep**, our very talented accompanist, juggled items and we had a wonderful time listening to one of our favourite Society dramatic sopranos, **Laura Scandizzo**, (who has been singing in the opera Australia chorus) sing *Es gibt ein Reich* and *Ebben, ne andrò lontano*, both of which she had sung to the **German President** the week before, as well as *Dich, teure Halle*. Rebecca Moret, a former Pacific Opera young artist and Opera Australia Schools company artist,

sang *Einsam in Trüben Tagen* and *Ritorna vincitor!* **Sitiveni Talei**, also in the chorus of Opera Australia, sang *Largo al factotum* and *Avant de quitter ces lieux* and finished the concert with a funny duet with Laura "We love the Opera!" (See photo at end of the Quarterly.)

All our artists were presented as usual with **Brangayne wines**, kindly supplied by Brangayne Wines of Orange, and the afternoon ended with champagne and Christmas fare and the obligatory raffle, with great prizes, CDs from **Universal Music**, double theatre and concert passes and a special prize of high tea with **Travelling Tenor** artists, **Helen Sherman** and **Adam Player**, appearing in Pinchgut Opera's Coronation of Poppea.

### BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE MELBOURNE RING, 2016 – A FASCINATING LOOK AT LANGUAGE AND THE METHOD OF LEARNING A DIFFICULT ROLE IN A LANGUAGE YOU DON'T SPEAK!

The Wagner Society had sponsored, baritone, **Luke Gabbedy**, as Gunther in the 2016 Ring. He also covered the role of Donner. Luke had completed a Diploma of Performing Arts and Bachelor of Music Performance at the West Australian Conservatorium of Music, been a finalist in major singing competitions and had sung over 30 roles with Opera Australia. But he had only once sung a role in German!

**Tanja Binggeli** is the German Opera Language Coach for Opera Australia where she has worked on the company's German language productions for the past 10 years, including two complete seasons of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, and *Parsifal*. Tanja also worked managing the Music Department and Young Artist program from 2008-2012 under former Associate Music Director, Tony Legge. Tanja has been teaching the opera course at NIDA since 2013 and is writing her first book on the topic of Classical Music

and the Human Body. She was training to be a classical singer when she undertook a degree in European languages with Honours in German. (see also photo at the end of the Quarterly.)

On Sunday 3 September, they spoke to us about their backgrounds and lives and what brought them together on Wagner's major work. They discussed the difficulty of singing in a language you don't speak and how they actually go about learning a complicated role in a foreign language. German is a very difficult language and the vowel sounds are many and varied, as well there is the difficulty of placement of emphasis on syllables and words.

"It is so important that a singer understands what they are singing about," Tanja says. "It's also helpful to understand the subtle differences between English and the language they're singing in, to know the real flavour of individual words."

## UNCLE ADOLF WAGNER - RICHARD'S MENTOR, FRIEND AND GUIDE INTO AESTHETICS by Terence Watson

Your Editor has taken the great liberty of including in his Swan Song edition of *The Quarterly* an edited version of one aspect of his research the last few years into Wagner's intellectual heritage from. I have been editing the Newsletter and then *The Quarterly* since about September 2000 and have considered it to be a privilege and honour, but also a pleasure, especially in being able to compile contributions from so many interesting and provocative members of the Wagner Society in NSW—and some non-members too. In recent years, we have been able to incorporate some colour into the magazine, which has enabled us to reproduce photographs from many happy snappers at Society functions, but also at various overseas performances of Wagner's works.

I would also like to thank the many members of the Wagner Society in NSW Management Committee with whom I've worked over the years. Especially important for the Newsletter and *The Quarterly* are the Presidents' Letters from Barbara McNulty, Roger Cruickshank, Jane Mathews, and current President Colleen Chesterman. These Letters are primary channels for information to members about a range of matters, including the vagaries of members' access to tickets to performances during the annual Bayreuther Festspiele.

I cannot finish, though, without reminding members that most of the visual feast that you see in each edition has had very little to do with me, but a great deal to do with the people at our printers BEE Printmail in Artarmon with whom I have been working since I took over the Editor position from Barbara Brady. I would especially like to thank Michael Ritchie for his highly creative and intelligent layout of the content I send him each quarter in a very humble and often messy Word document. I am always delighted with the way in which he has been able to transform that messiness into the high-quality publication that you receive in your mailboxes.

.....

One of the people to exert a major, but underappreciated, influence on Richard Wagner was his uncle Gottlob Heinrich Adolf Wagner (1774-1835) (although Richard spelled his name Adolph). Richard's encounters with Adolf seem to have been crucial not only in elevating Adolf and all he represented to a special place in Richard's life-long



Adolf Wagner painted by Christian Ludwig Friedhelm (1781-1810)

regard, but also in laying the foundations of Richard's *Weltanschauung*. As a widely-read, relatively open-minded thinker and writer, as well as a poet and dramatist, Adolf's life and achievements gave Richard one of few models and solid anchors in his highly erratic early life and intellectual development, although perhaps with mixed effects. Biographies usually note that Richard and Adolf were close for a while, and that the uncle had a positive effect on the nephew's development, but they rarely go into details, partly because details of Adolf's life are few and scattered.

Richard tells us in his memoir: "What attracted me most strongly in my uncle was his blunt yet still humorously expressed contempt for the modern pedantry of state, church and school" [*Mein Leben—My Life*—Trans. Andrew Gay, Ed. Mary Whittall, New York: Da Capo Press, shortened to ML hereafter—page 24]. We can see here something

of the attitudes Richard was to take to those topics in his Dresden and Zurich essays, although the views in those essays are only occasionally “humorously expressed,” but are regularly full of “contempt.” Richard indirectly reinforces this perception by also relaying to us the fact that he believed he and his uncle shared “...wide areas of agreement in all the important aspects of life, knowledge, and art” [ML 25]. Indeed, Adolf seems to have been on a par with the other major role model and cultural hero in Richard’s life. The fact that Adolf and Schiller actually met would have only added weight to Adolf’s status in Richard’s estimation.

Like his nephew, Adolf attended the Thomas School in Leipzig from 1792, and later studied theology and philosophy at the University of Leipzig. In 1797, it seems that he had published *De Alcestide Euripidea*, which seems to be an academic study, possibly his dissertation, in Latin of Euripides’ *Alceste*. Significantly, in 1798, he attended lectures by the then very famous philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte at the University of Jena. Fichte was considered to be the authoritative successor to Kant. At this time, Jena was the centre of both German Idealism—one of the responses to Immanuel Kant’s philosophy—and *Frühromantik* or Early German Romanticism. It seems that Adolf spent up to a year, until late 1799, in Jena, then the intellectual centre of the German states (about 70 kms from Leipzig and 170 from Dresden). Adolf’s presence in Jena and his awareness of its intellectual and cultural life is significant for Richard’s intellectual development. At some point, he acquired the title of Doctor, presumably an academic title.

Leipzig was a major publishing centre, at a time (the 1810s-20s) when, under a Saxon king relatively independent of the growing power of the more repressive Prussia, censorship was relatively relaxed. This meant that uncle and nephew possibly had access to a wide range of contemporary, relatively progressive, material, thanks to Adolf’s friendship with the local publishers. In addition, therefore, to any access that his uncle gave him to books, Richard had access to Adolf’s personal knowledge of a number of major figures of his and Richard’s time: Johann von Goethe, ETA Hoffmann, Friedrich von Schiller, Fichte, Friedrich Schelling, Ludwig Tieck, Georg Friedrich Creuzer, Heinrich von Kleist, and Adam Müller, among others.

After he returned to Leipzig at the end of 1799 and over the next six years or so, Adolf wrote a number of biographies, such as *Lebensbeschreibungen berühmter Reformatoren: ein Lesebuch für seine Glaubensgenossen (Lives of Famous Reformers; a reading book for fellow believers)*, histories and translations of poetry, including his 1806 study of *Zwei Epochen der Modernen Poesie in Dante, Petrarka, Boccaccio, Goethe, Schiller und Wieland (Two Epoch of Modern Poetry in Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Goethe, Schiller and Wieland)*. Foreshadowing the direction that his nephew was to take, in 1826 Adolf wrote *Theater and Audience, a Didascalía* [a catalogue of dramatic works, containing, for example, the names of the dramatists, their plays, and the dates of production], which seems to have included an argument for the reform of the German theatre, and which might have been a model for Wagner’s

later proposals for reforming the Saxon and Bavarian court theatres. He also designed *Schauspiele*, that is, theatre productions.

As an accomplished linguist, he translated works from English, French, Italian, Greek and Latin. Among his publications, by which, among other things, he earned his living, are for instance a number that we can assume interested Wagner with his interest in Greek and Shakespearean drama, such as an 1813 translation of Sophocles’ *King Oedipus*. Adolf Wagner also contributed a supplement or “Overview to the mythical System” to Johann Arnold Kanne’s *System der indischen Mythe, oder Chronus und die Geschichte des Gottmenschen in der Periode des Vorrückens der Nachtgleichen (System of Indian Myths, or Chronos and the History of the Godmen in the Period of the Progression of the Equinox)*—also dedicated with thanks to Adolf. In 1808, Wagner published *Verwahrung gegen die Schmähung (Safe-keeping against Vilification)*, then the 1810 translation of William Coxe’s *History of the Austrian Houses: from Rudolph von Habsburg to the Death of Leopold the Second (Geschichte des Hauses Oestreich: von Rudolph von Habsburg bis auf Leopold des Zweiten Tod; 1218 – 1792)* in three volumes—published by the Brockhaus publishing company into which Richard’s sisters Luise and Ottilie were soon to marry. In 1817, Adolf translated *Posthumous writings and correspondence: along with his life. Dr. Benjamin Franklin’s life (Nachgelassenen Schriften und Correspondenz: nebst seinem Leben. 3, Dr. Benjamin Franklin’s Leben)* in three volumes. In 1819, he translated a dual language edition of Byron’s tragedy *Manfred*, possibly with his own annotations. In 1830, he edited *Opere di Giordano Bruno Nolano: in due volumi (The Works of Giordano Bruno Nolano: in two volumes)*. In 1834 he published a German adaptation of *Shakspeare’s leben. Aus dem englischen des Augustin Skottowe* in three volumes. He also translated, with an Introduction, *Frauenbilder; oder, Charakteristick der vorzüglichsten frauen in Shakspeares dramen (Pictures of Women: or, Characteristics of the most excellent women in Shakspeare’s dramas)* originally by Mrs. Anna Jameson. Adolf’s introduction to this work would seem worth researching to see if it’s commentary might have had an influence on the young Wagner’s conception of the role and significance of women in drama, and possible in life. In 1825, Adolf edited Alexander Murray’s *Zum europäischen Sprachenbau oder Forschungen über die Verwandtschaft der Teutonen, Griechen, Celten, Slaven und Inder (On the European language or research on the relationship of the Teutons, Greeks, Celts, Slavs and Indians)*; it was published in Leipzig. This work might easily have predisposed Wagner to build on his growing knowledge of ancient Greek with other apparently related languages.

At the very least we can be sure that all these works were in Adolf’s library for Wagner to read and discuss. In this incomplete list of Adolf’s works, there is considerable scope for speculating about what ideas, imagery, stories, poetic styles, mythological research, historical perspectives and interpretations, understanding of other poets and dramatists, etc Wagner might have derived from them well before he started his educational “catch-up” period after his return from Paris to Dresden in 1842.

Although Adolf might have made the acquaintance of Goethe in Jena (there seems to be no direct record), he met Schiller and was deeply impressed by him, as Richard's account in the first pages of his memoir *Mein Leben* shows:

On an excursion to Jena, during which he and a friend appear to have found their way into some musical and oratorical associations, he also visited Schiller; for this purpose he had armed himself with an errand for the management of the Leipzig Theater, which wanted to acquire rights to perform [Schiller's] recently completed *Wallenstein*. He later described to me the enchanting impression made upon him by Schiller, with his tall trim figure and irresistibly winning blue eyes. His only complaint was that, as a result of a well-intentioned trick played on him by a friend, he was caused great and humiliating embarrassment. This friend had actually managed to send Schiller in advance a volume of Adolf Wagner's poems; the stricken young poet was thus obliged to accept friendly words of praise from Schiller, deeply convinced that he owed them solely to Schiller's humane generosity' [ML 9-10].



Richard Wagner in Paris as a young man. German composer. Drawing by E.B. Kietz, signed 1842. (Getty Images)

In the history of German letters in the 1780s-1830s, it is hard to separate the influence of Goethe and Schiller so intertwined was their relationship. From Richard's perspective, though, his uncle's high regard for Schiller, and Richard's own early aspiration to model himself on Schiller, meant that Schiller's writings were a powerful influence on Richard's ideas and art practice than Goethe's. As attested by Richard's many comments about both Adolf and Schiller, recorded by Cosima in her *Diaries*, Wagner's images of the two older men blended together to a degree into an idealised model of humanity, which he came to call the *Reinmenschlich* or "purely human" in his Dresden and Zurich essays of the late 1840s and early 1850s.

During both Wagner's lives in Leipzig and Dresden, the two cities were the centres of profoundly impressive cultural life. Many of the artists and philosophers who feature in histories of German intellectual life lived in either or both cities, studied at Leipzig University, or had friends in the city whom they often visited. The royal court in Dresden had one of the first art galleries open to the public. Wagner notes of his

uncle: "Gifted with social abilities and particularly with a fine tenor voice, imbued as well with an interest for the theater, he seems in his youth to have been welcome as a literary figure among a fairly wide circle of acquaintances in Leipzig" [ML 9].

Richard's serious engagement with Adolf began in 1822. Richard had been living in Possendorf outside Dresden, where some of his family were then living and, it turned out, his father Friedrich was dying. Adolf, after attending the funeral, escorted Richard back from Possendorf to Dresden from whence he was sent to stay briefly in Eisleben with a younger brother of Ludwig Geyer; the latter was soon to become his stepfather. In 1823, at the age of nine, he was fetched back to Leipzig to live briefly with his uncle, as well as his aunt Friedericke Wagner, and the owner of the house Jeanette Thomé, who formed an odd trio. In *Mein Leben*, Richard recalls his first sight of Adolf in his study in the house

...amid a chaotic mass of books in dowdy indoor attire, the most striking feature of which was high and pointed felt cap..... A strong inclination to independence had

driven him to this strange retreat. Originally destined for theology, he soon gave this up to devote himself solely to philosophical and philological studies. Profoundly disinclined to function as a professor or in any formal teaching capacity, he tried from early on to make a meager living from literary work [ML 9].

Adolf's alleged desire for independence, his unorthodox dress, and his commitment to earning his living from his own pen have echoes in Richard's emerging character. However, Richard was soon returned to his family in Dresden. In the meantime, Adolf, though considered to be happily a bachelor, decided in 1824 to marry Sophie Wendt, a sister of his friend Amadeus Wendt.

Richard had, in mid-1827 somewhat unethically, "...used a rather far-fetched pretext to force a breach" with the Kreuzschule in Dresden [ML 21], and to live in a garret and become a writer, as part of his "...firm determination from that time forward not to allow any mere school pedantry to check my free development." His mother and sisters Ottilie and Cäcilie had moved back to Leipzig to join his sister Luise, whose recent appointment to a position in a theatre in Leipzig and her "...need to establish herself in higher social circles" provided him with the opportunity to change schools [ML 22]. Richard arrived back home at Christmas 1827. Richard claimed that Luise's bourgeois aspirations determined which of Leipzig's two schools he would attend: "There are two advanced secondary schools in Leipzig: the older one, St Thomas', and the other and more modern, St Nicholas'. The latter at that time enjoyed a better reputation than the former; accordingly, I had to try to get into it" (ML 22).

The choice was, however, not so arbitrary or socially ambitious as Richard implies, since St Thomas's was primarily for students studying for the priesthood. The school he chose was dedicated to St Nicholas, the medieval Catholic patron saint of merchants and wholesalers. Graduating from this school would also give him access to the student costume he so keenly desired to wear. In fact, he confesses that it was his picture of student life that "...filled me for now with an ever increasing love of rebellion for its own sake" [ML 22]. Richard was clearly not happy most of the time at school since he regularly felt that his talents were not properly appreciated and, in particular, he objected to "...the arrogantly pedantic system of instruction" he claimed was undertaken at Leipzig and led to his "...complete turnabout from the path of formal academic training..." [ML 22]. With this antagonistic attitude, he "...henceforth comported [him]self in such a manner as never to win the friendship of a teacher at this school" [ML 22]. Such juvenile rebelliousness, together with his rejection of academic education and training need to be taken into account in any attempt to try and understand the views, principles and values he offers us in the Dresden and Zurich essays as well as all his other theoretical writings.

Later, in 1827, when Richard returned from Dresden, where study at the Kreuzschule had been relatively pleasing and productive, to Leipzig, where he joined his family. Richard

now began a more or less consistent association with Adolf. Richard's biographer Joachim Köhler notes also that Adolf was impressed by Richard's knowledge of the Greek classics, "encouraging Uncle Adolf to think that he was once again in the presence of his late brother Friedrich" [Köhler, Joachim. 2004 *Richard Wagner The Last of the Titans*. New Haven: Yale University Press 42—hereafter abbreviated to Köhler 2004 page]. On one occasion, after Richard had impressed Adolf with his knowledge and command of ancient Greek, Adolf took Richard back to the Thomä House and showed him books in "an old bookcase.... These, Adolf explained, had been his brother's books and were now to belong to Wagner. Richard believed Friedrich Wagner had bequeathed him a veritable treasure in the form of books by classical writers in valuable complete editions" [Köhler 2004 42]. It would be useful to know the contents of the library that Wagner inherited from his father Frederick, but it was not the only possible source of information about philosophy and art for the young Richard. There was also Adolf's library about which it would be very useful to know more, since Richard spent so much time in it.

Richard's conversations with Adolf, whose "manifest knowledge [of] not only philology, but also philosophy" stimulated his own thinking, to the extent that he contemplated a career as a philologist [ML 22]. On his regular visits to Adolf's house and their walks around Leipzig, Adolf and the now fifteen year-old Richard engaged in "profound and frequently heated discussions. The subject was essentially everything serious and exalted in the realm of knowledge. His huge library had excited me to feverish reading in all directions so that I jumped avidly from one area of literature to another, **without achieving a basic grounding in any of them**" [ML 23 my emphasis]. Köhler suggests: "Wagner heard his uncle hold forth on classical philology and German idealistic philosophy...." [Köhler 2004 43]. Given Adolf's Idealist interests, he would probably have owned works by Immanuel Kant, Friedrich von Schelling, Friedrich von Schiller, Ludwig Fichte and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and probably the associated literary figures Friedrich Hölderlin and Friedrich Leopold, Freiherr von Hardenberg, usually known as Novalis.

However, the older Richard, reflecting in his memoirs on this period of his life, recognised a need to balance the picture: "The fact that my bizarre inclinations were not merely caused by a desire for superficial amusement was shown by the zeal with which I attached myself to this learned relative" [ML 22]. Despite Richard's very evident affection for his uncle, he acknowledged a number of limitations on their intellectual intercourse: "Unfortunately, he forgot...that he went far beyond my youthful powers of comprehension, both in substance and in manner of expression" [ML 23]. Nevertheless, we can surmise that some aspects of these discussions, and the reading Richard undertook in his uncle's extensive library, came to form a significant layer in Richard's intellectual development, with the uncle's values, principles, prejudices and preferences etc influencing Richard in ways of which he was perhaps not aware at the time, or later.

Richard's early biographer Runciman contends that Adolf certainly had a profound effect on Richard's attitudes to state, church, bureaucracy, and conventions in general:

Adolph loathed authority, especially the authority of irresponsible court officials; and in some of his preserved letters he lashes these gentry, the scum of humanity and the parasites of courts, with scathing sarcasm. His sarcasm had no practical result, because the officials never saw it if they had they would have shrugged their fat shoulders and gone to draw their comfortable salaries. But he taught Wagner that officialdom is the curse of the human race; and in after years that certainly had some practical results at the moment calamitous to Wagner; in the long run beneficial to him and the human race. Perhaps of all forms of authority that which Adolph found least tolerable, that which he taught Richard to loathe and hate and spit upon, was official authority in art matters [John F. Runciman. 1913 *Richard Wagner Composer of Operas*. London G. Bell and Sons, Ltd. 29—hereafter Runciman 1913 page].

Richard's personal attitudes to authority tended to make him as many enemies as friends, and his resentment at having to deal with bureaucrats, as well as his belief that little art other than his own had any worth led him to trenchant critiques of most other artists and philosophers, as well as State and Church in his Dresden and Zurich essays.

In *Mein Leben*, Richard recalls his early exposure to philosophical discussion during the lead up in Leipzig to his ill-spent university year of 1831, at the age of 17 years:

I now began to imagine that because I had become a student I ought to attend some lectures. From Traugott Krug...I tried to learn the first principles of philosophy; a **single hour** sufficed to make me give this up forever. Two or three times, nevertheless, I attended lectures on aesthetics given by one of the younger professors, a man called Weiss [Christian Hermann Weiße]; such exceptional perseverance was attributable to my personal interest in Weiss, whom I had met at the house of my uncle Adolph. Weiss had just translated Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, and dedicated it, with a polemical intent, to Hegel, if I remember correctly.

On that occasion I had listened to a conversation between these two men about philosophy and philosophers, which impressed me very deeply. I recall that Weiss...justified the much criticized lack of clarity in his writing style by contending that the deepest problems of the human spirit could not be solved for the benefit of the mob. **The maxim, which struck me as highly plausible, I at once accepted as the guiding principle for everything I wrote....** Although I thought I could count on Weiss to provide suitable intellectual nourishment, I did not succeed in continuing my attendance at his lectures, as my desires in those days drove me far from the field of aesthetic studies [ML 54 my emphases].

Richard's "desires" at this time included, among others, writing and composing, and finding employment and a wife, in that order, since the law precluded any male marrying who

could not support a wife. Richard's avowed lack of interest in formal aesthetic theory should be taken with a grain of salt. However, this early experience of participating in a relatively lay level of philosophical discussion influenced the way in which Richard later considered philosophy—as a discipline that dealt in a much lesser way than the arts with important topics and that could be mined for nuggets of information to bolster his own evolving views on art and its role in society. There is no doubt that Adolf and Professor Weiße treated their topics with a seriousness that also influenced Richard.

At the very least, I suggest we can speculate that Adolf would have given Richard an introduction to the philosophical and aesthetic practice of Kant, post-Kantian Idealists and *Frühromantische* writers who figured large in contemporary intellectual and cultural debates. While Richard clearly reacted against many of the Idealist school's views, as evidenced by many critical comments in his Dresden and Zurich essays, his later development just as clearly shows the continuation of specific ideas, values and principles (especially aesthetic ones) from members of German Idealism and *Frühromantik*, also evident in those same essays.

Relatively undirected reading and discussions became characteristic of Richard's whole intellectual life, but his discussions with Adolf would have not only covered much interrelated material of interest to him, but also possibly showed him logical thinking—perhaps to little benefit. The focus of the discussions on art and aesthetic philosophy would have reinforced Richard's growing conviction that only art contained real truth about the world and that he would have a significant role to play in improving the moral quality of the world, since art at this time was generally accepted as a transformative agent that could elevate and correct human nature.

Köhler informs us that Adolf "had studied with Fichte and Schelling, but his philosophical outlook was influenced by Hegel, for whom world history represented the revelation of the absolute spirit" [Köhler 2004 10]. However, there is much evidence that Adolf had a much wider view of philosophy than Hegel. Glasenapp's early biography of Richard emphasises more strongly than Köhler admits the exposure of Adolf to Fichte and possibly to Schelling (Glasenapp, C. F. 1900 *Life of Richard Wagner*. Trans. W. Ashton Ellis. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co, Vol. I 21—hereafter cited as Glasenapp 1900 page). We gain a better picture of Adolf's philosophical interests from an obituary from *Neuer Nekrolog der Deutschen (New Obituaries of the Germans)*:

It was Jena more than any other place, that now attracted our young friend; Jena at that time the home of German letters, where Fichte, Schelling, Steffens, the two Schlegels [August and Friedrich], [translator, Johan Dietrich] Gries and [poet, Clemens] Brentano were revolving round "the triad constellation" Goethe, Schiller and [dramatist, novelist, poet, Christoph Martin] Wieland. With a friend, and not without adventures, he journeyed thither in 1798, made the acquaintance of Schiller, and was welcomed almost daily to the poet's hospitable house until Schiller himself removed to Weimar [1799]. He also attended the lectures of Fichte, who, called to Jena four years earlier,

had begun to found his own philosophic system while forming the amorphous minds of students [“From an old collection entitled ‘Neuer Nekrolog der Deutschen’” (Weimar, Voigt), xiii. 649-51, quoted verbatim, it seems, in Glasenapp 1900 18-19].

We also know from Glasenapp that Adolf attended lectures by Fichte, before the philosopher was forced to resign from Jena University over his part in one of the age’s major philosophical and political controversies, the *Atheismsstreit* (Atheism Battle), in which accusations of pantheism (taken to be equivalent to atheism, since it denied the traditional role of the Christian God in the world) were thrown as weapons in a cultural and religious struggle. As an artist who was also an acquaintance of and deeply influenced by Schiller, it is arguable that the early Schelling was also an important influence on Adolf. While it is difficult to determine, on the evidence available to me, whether Adolf might have attended Schelling’s lectures, it is clear from the Glasenapp’s account that Adolf studied and worked in Jena between 1798 and the end of 1799.

Among the many inter-connections between Adolf’s life in Leipzig and his year in Jena, we know, for example, of the “famous meeting of a number of the ‘Jena Circle’ Romantics at the home of August and Caroline Schlegel, with [Friedrich] Schlegel, Tieck, and [the poet] Jean Paul in attendance” that took place from 11-14 November 1799 [Novalis *Fichte Studies*. 2003 Ed. & trans. J. Kneller. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press xxxvii]. Novalis was also at this meeting. Novalis had also met and become a friend of Schiller in Jena in 1790, matriculated from the University of Leipzig in 1791, visited Friedrich Schlegel in Leipzig in 1792 and in 1795 met with Fichte and Hölderlin in the Jena home of the Kantian philosopher Friedrich Niethammer. “Jena Circle” denotes a very loose grouping of generally like-minded, very young philosophers, writers, and philosopher-artists, who were attempting to come to terms with Kant’s philosophy, the discussions pro and anti it had generated about the claimed inadequacies and lacunae in that philosophy, and with the most ambitious attempt to reformulate Kant’s ideas by Fichte in his work-in-progress *Wissenschaftslehre* or the Doctrine of Knowledge, or Theory of Science (the translation is tricky!). After this heady period of about ten years (effectively the 1790s), as members of the “Circle” came to and went from Jena, some died young, one went insane, and others diverged dramatically from their moment of shared endeavour.

In this context, it is also likely that Adolf would have heard about or even known the highly intelligent but sickly Novalis. It is also possible that, since Adolf was in Jena at the time, he might have come to know something of the conversations at the “famous meeting.” This meeting is one of the most important and intriguing events to have occurred in German letters and history, more so because there are scant notes about what was discussed. It is fair, though, to speculate that, whatever was discussed, was further debated in the wider Jena and Weimar communities for some time, and came to be reflected in the subsequent writings of those who met that weekend. [Manfred Frank has attempted to reconstruct this

weekend of discussions in *Unendliche Annäherung: die Anfänge der philosophischen Frühromantik (Endless/Infinite Convergence: The beginning of philosophical Early Romanticism*, Suhrkamp, 1997.)

Among the points that Novalis, for example, might have made—and Adolf might have heard about in Jena—were that there were limits to the kind of rational philosophy that all the Jena Circle believed they were practising and that poetry (*die Poesie*)—or the exercise of the imagination—was an alternative way of representing the Absolute or ground for which many of them were seeking in their philosophising. This is of no small passing interest in Richard’s intellectual history, since Tieck and Friedrich Schlegel arranged for many of Novalis’s works to be published in Leipzig in 1802, with a later volume in 1846. At the earlier date, Adolf could have read them and imbibed some of the ideas of this founder of *Frühromantik*. Similarly, Richard could have read them later and also discussed them with Adolf.

In the winter semester of 1799-1800 Schelling held his first lectures on the foundations of the philosophy of art. During the winter semester of 1798-99 and the summer semester of 1799 he also lectured on transcendental Idealism, the philosophy of nature, and the organic doctrine of nature [Schelling, F.W.J. 1989 *The Philosophy of Art*. Ed. trans. and intro. by D.W. Stott. Foreword by D. Simpson. Minnesota: Minnesota University Press liii—hereafter Schelling 1989 page]. It is possible that Adolf took his own notes of the lectures that then became available to Richard; if not, then there were sets of notes of both Schelling’s Jena and Würzburg art philosophy lectures by other students: “Although the lectures themselves were first published only in 1859...they circulated very quickly as student notes [after the lectures]...” [Schelling 1989 lii]. Important to note is the fact that the “lectures in Jena were immensely popular; in the fall of 1802, with over 200 students between his two lecture courses, some students had to be turned away because of lack of space” So, it is possible, though not certain, that Adolf had a number of opportunities to hear Schelling’s lectures on art, as well as to read Schelling’s 1800 *System of Transcendental Idealism* [Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von. 1993 Trans. Peter Heath. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press—hereafter Schelling 1989 page] and possibly read one of the sets of student’s notes on the lectures on art.

Schelling and Hegel were friends and companions in their early years, when Schelling’s ideas on art were taking critical shape; and Hegel’s own lectures on aesthetics, not delivered until 1818, owe much to Schelling even as they depart from him [Schelling 1989 xi]. Hegel’s lectures on aesthetics were also not published until after his death in 1831, but, as with Schelling’s lectures, student notes of the lectures were in circulation. Richard never claimed to have read Hegel’s lectures on art, but that does not prove that he did not at some time read the student notes. One can also suggest that, had Adolf read Hegel’s first published work to gain a major audience, his 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit*, he would have found much of it an elaboration of key ideas of Schelling.

As well as talking with the young Richard, it is conceivable that Adolf and Weiße gave him some “introductory” texts



on philosophy and aesthetics to read in preparation for his university years. In addition to Kant's admirable and very famous 1784 essay *What is enlightenment?* calling for maturity in thinking for oneself, there are a number of other texts that could have provided what Adolf and Weiße may have considered sound pedagogical instruction.

Schiller's 1794 *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, Schelling's 1800 *System*, and Fichte's 1807 *The Addresses to the German Nation* are interesting candidates not the least because, in contrast to the work of Kant and the relatively recent Hegel, they are direct and eschew the technical argumentation of Kant about the nature of knowing, and the science of logic. Richard's Dresden and Zurich essays, though, do show significant evidence of his direct response to Kant's model of the architecture and functions of the mind and its relationship to the body and the emotions, although with a characteristic reformulation (but that is a story for another time). What Richard actually knew of Kant's three *Critiques* at this time is a moot point, since he does not refer, in the available material, to the philosopher until the essays written after he discovers Schopenhauer and that philosopher's high regard for aspects of Kant's ideas.

The apparent *lacuna* of Kant works in his library at Wahnfried (and hence at least since he lost his earlier library when he fled Dresden in 1849, although the catalogue of Richard's library there does not mention Kant) was filled by Cosima Wagner with a Christmas present of Kant's works in December 1869; as she recorded on Sunday, 5 December: "Arrival of Kant's works for R. at Christmas" [*Diaries* Vol I, 170]. Cosima's *Diaries* record references by Richard to Kant that increase in number after he began to read his Christmas present.

However, at this early stage of Richard's intellectual development, these three writers—Fichte, Schiller, and Schelling—who were, among others, key figures after Kant and writing at the same time as Hegel, shared a fundamental conviction that the aesthetic sensibility was crucial to humanity achieving its highest potential. Their privileging of the artist and his aesthetic judgement and creativity would have made complete sense to the trio of Richard, Adolf and Weiße who probably already believed in the pre-eminence of the aesthetic capacity because of the popularity of the ideas deriving from Kant, among others in the mid- to late-18<sup>th</sup> century. Given the older men's Hegelian affiliations, their discussions might also have pointed out to Richard how Hegel's views represented a major advance on the thinking of Fichte, Schiller and Schelling, a point of view in keeping with Hegel's own theory of the dialectical evolution of knowledge, although one open to dispute in the wider field of the history of philosophy.

Köhler has also pointed out that Weiße "was another of Schelling's followers" and Richard "can scarcely have remained in ignorance of his aesthetic model" during Weiße's lectures [Köhler 2004 296]. It is likely that, by 1831, with Schelling's reputation in decline, Weiße may have sided with Hegel, who had won the philosophical status battles with his previous schoolmate and friend. It is also possible that Weiße and Adolf debated the relative merits of Schelling and Hegel while Richard listened, alternately bemused and intrigued. More research on what Weiße wrote

and taught would help to refine our knowledge about whose philosophy he might have promoted to Richard through his conversations and his lectures.

However, we know from another of Richard's offhand remarks in *Mein Leben* that he had read at least some of Schelling's 1800 *System of Transcendental Idealism*, one of the key texts of the early 1800s on aesthetic theory, "which had been recommended to me by Gustav Schlesinger, a friend of Laube," [ML, p. 429]. Richard mis-remembered his friend's name. According to Whittall, the editor of the translation of *Mein Leben* used in this study, the friend was "actually Gustav Schlesier (1811-?), a writer and journalist, who worked on Laube's *Zeitung für die elegante Welt* and then for Lewald's weekly *Europa*" [ML 776, footnote to page 429]. Since Schlesier was some three years older than Richard and already writing for Laube's journal, we can assume that he was more familiar with contemporary philosophical debates, which included those being fostered by Young Germany and Young Hegelians by whom Schelling, for not entirely fair reasons, was viewed as the arch-conservative of all living German philosophers.

Of his knowledge of, or at least exposure to, Schelling's thought, Glasenapp reports Richard recalling something of his school experiences at the age of 13: "...he writes from Riga, eleven years after, to remind an old Dresden schoolmate how they had once "sworn...at the Kreuzschule, a death to all Creuzerian symbolism," [o]f [*sic*] how he had commenced philological epopees [epic poetry] and tragedies, how Schelling's transcendental idealism had tripped them up at Leipzig, etc., etc" [Glasenapp 1900 93-94]. Oh, that Glasenapp had more detail to give us! Glasenapp reports that Schelling's philosophy probably continued to be the subject of coffee shop discussion among the Leipziger intellectuals in 1832, especially, it seems in Kintschy's restaurant or coffeeshop: "Hither, besides [Heinrich] Laube [see below], came...Gustav Schlesier, Richard's comrade from the Dresden Kreuzschule, who had passed with him into the Nikolai, and whom we have already met as his coadjutor in the discussion of 'Schelling's transcendental idealism;' with many another" [Glasenapp 1900 93-94].

From the reference to Schlesier and Laube it is probable that Richard had attempted to tackle Schelling after his university year at Leipzig and while he was working in Magdeburg, that is around 1834-35, since he befriended Laube and other members of the Young Germany movement in 1834. Richard protested that he could not get past the first few pages. In *Mein Leben* he recalls the period after his return to Dresden from Paris (April 1842) as the time when his interest in philosophy re-awakened (although we will remember that he was not that interested in the subject when he had the chance to study it at university in Leipzig) and he picked up Ludwig Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity*, the relatively new incendiary thrown into the debates between philosophy and theology, and between the New or Young and Old Hegelians:

I had always felt an inclination to try to fathom the depths of philosophy, rather as I had been driven by the mystical influence of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony to plumb the deepest recesses of music. My first attempts with philosophy had been a complete failure. None of the Leipzig professors

had been able to hold my attention with their lectures on basic philosophy and logic. I had later obtained Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism*...but upon reading even its first few pages had scratched my head in vain to make anything of it.... During the last period of my residence in Dresden I had nonetheless tried to do justice to this old, now newly awakened urge.... -For my introduction to the philosophy of Hegel I chose his *Philosophy of History*. Much of this impressed me, and it appeared as if I would gain admittance to this inner sanctum by this route. The more incomprehensible I found many of the most sweeping and speculative sentences of this tremendously famous intellect, who had been commended to me as the keystone of philosophic understanding, the more I felt impelled to get to the bottom of what was termed "the absolute" and everything connected with it. The revolution [of 1848-49] interrupted this effort... [ML 429-30].

While the reference to Hegel is relevant for Richard's theorising in the essays written during his time in Dresden and then in Zurich, after he fled the collapse of the Dresden uprising, this passage illustrates the odd way in which Richard believed that, without a grounding in "basic philosophy and logic," he could expect to pick up the most complex philosophical texts on offer in the German language and understand them on a quick skimming—genius or not. The reference to "the absolute" is to one of the major philosophical problems of the time: whether or not it is possible to think an absolute ground, a fundamental principle or supposition, that stood as evidently true by itself and upon which a system of philosophical deductions could be built that would, eventually, account for the world. To the point at which Richard was writing his memoir, (he began dictating it to Cosima in July 1865), no one had indisputably posited such a principle, although Wagner had offered one early in *The Artwork of the Future*: "Das Erste, der Anfang und Grund alles Vorhandenen und Denkbaren, ist das wirkliche sinnliche Sein. (The first [thing], the beginning and foundation of all that exists and all that is conceivable, is actual sensuous being) [82, translation modified]. While the statement is consistent with Wagner's Feuerbachian materialism, it is also highly contestable, and so does not constitute a foundational principle on which Wagner could base a coherent philosophical system.

I argue that the later section of Schelling's work on the nature of art were to have considerable significance for the evolution of Richard's theory of art. Richard conveniently omits to mention that the sixth section of Schelling's work contains a comprehensive theory of art: "Deduction of a Universal Organ of Philosophy, or: Essential of the Philosophy of Art according to the Principles of Transcendental Idealism." In §2, for instance, Schelling makes one of the most ambitious ambit claims for art and artists ever adduced during any discussion of aesthetics:

a) The work of art reflects to us the identity of the conscious and unconscious activities. But the opposition between them is an infinite one, and its removal is effected without any resistance from freedom. Hence the basic character of the work of art is that of an *unconscious infinity* {synthesis

of nature and freedom}. Besides what he has put into his work with manifest intention, the artist instinctively, as it were, to have depicted therein an infinity, which no finite understanding is capable of developing to the full. [...] So it is with every true work of art, in that every one of them is capable of being expounded *ad infinitum*, as though it contained an infinity of purposes, while yet one is never able to say whether this infinity has lain within the artist himself, or resides only in the work of art. [...]

b) Every aesthetic production proceeds from the feeling of an infinite contradiction, and hence also the feeling which accompanies the completion of the art-product must be one of an infinite tranquility; and this latter in turn, must also pass over into the work of art itself. Hence the outward expression of the work of art is one of calm, and silent grandeur, even where the aim is to give expression to the utmost intensity of pain or joy [Schelling 1989 225].

I suggest that most people reading Schelling's claims would feel a certain familiarity with them: they underpin, in various forms, what many people think art is both like to experience, and that artists who create a "true work of art" are, somehow, more in touch with deep wellsprings of human nature and experience. It is therefore, I contend, almost impossible for Richard not to have read this chapter and not to have imbibed such grand claims for himself as an artist and to have accepted such a high benchmark as appropriate for his future career. It is true, though, that Richard later filtered Schelling's views—or the general views of the Jena Circle about the relationship between art and philosophy, creativity and knowledge for instance—through his later reading, discussions and theorising as it appears in the Dresden and Zurich essays. However, it is arguable that the most significant change to the views of the Jena Circle came through Ludwig Feuerbach, whom Richard started to read in the early 1840s, and that change was to insist more strongly than the German Idealists and *Frühromantiker* had on the primacy of the body in human experience of the world.

The formulation and popularisation of these new aesthetic ideas were aided and abetted by a number of poets, such as Hölderlin and Novalis, both of whom would in all likelihood also have been well known to Adolf and Weiße and, probably through them, to Richard. While there seems to be no direct evidence that Richard read Fichte's *Addresses*, he certainly had read Schiller's *Letters*. The works are veritable chapbooks for the views that Richard later expounded in his Dresden and Zurich essays, that is, up to his discovery of Schopenhauer in late 1854. Schelling's *System* is an instance of the *Symphilosophie* or *Sympoesie*, practised by the members of the Jena Circle in, for instance, the famous meeting of 1799 mentioned above. This collegiate philosophising—in a creative, speculative and poetic mode—meant that many ideas were shared, refined and shared again. Schelling's *System* can, therefore, be seen as a distillation of many of the ideas, principles and values shared, at least for a while, by many if not all the members of the Jena Circle.

Richard, through Cosima Wagner's *Diaries*, offers the best summations of Adolf's importance to him. Some fifty years

after Richard started his discussions with Adolf in Leipzig, Cosima in Zurich writes: “We talk about vital relationships, and R. ends by saying, ‘You are the only person who has given me anything, to whom I have listened willingly and attentively; you and Uncle Adolph; otherwise nobody has brought me thing’” [*Cosima Wagner’s Diaries* Vol. 1, Sunday, 25 August 1872, p. 529]. We might question whether or not, in general, this is a fair statement by Richard, given the many debts of many kinds he owed to many people during his life, but, if he means a degree of intellectual stimulation and a sense of *Sympatico*, then his statement is probably reasonable, although it unfairly discounts the sympathy and understanding he received from, for instance, Friedrich Nietzsche during their brief friendship.

Richard’s early biographer Runciman offers a critical evaluation of Adolf:

He was a studious, retiring man, and in the course of time produced some books that are worthless, or all but worthless, now. Of course the Bayreuth worshippers and idolizers of the Wagner family will have it that he, being one of the family, was inevitably a man of superlative gifts; but...there is nothing to justify such an assumption. A cultivated man of sound sense he must have been; and it is true he was in some slight touch with a few of the stronger artistic and literary spirits in that very dull and disheartening period; it is true that he influenced, wholly for good, Richard a few years afterwards. When that is said all is said [Runciman 1913 23].

However, in *Mein Leben*, Richard vouchsafed an incisive assessment of his uncle’s limitations and merits:

...he was highly winning in conversation and manner; his manifold knowledge, which embraced not only philology but also philosophy and belles lettres with equal warmth, made his conversation extremely appealing.... On the other hand, the fact that he was denied the gift of writing as winningly, or even with adequate clarity, was one of the curious imperfections of this man, which markedly weakened his impact on the literary world, and at times even subjected him to ridicule on account of the incomprehensible and pompous sentences which were to be found in his occasional polemical writings. This weakness did not, however, frighten me away, because for one thing I was in the thick of a murky period of my own development in which literary bombast appeared to me all the deeper if I could not understand it, and because, in the second place, I conversed much more with my uncle than I read of his works [ML 22-23].

Much the same assessment could be made of Richard’s polemical writings as he makes of Adolf’s. It is possible that Richard picked up rather more of Adolf’s faults in argumentation and expression than he was able to acknowledge at that time, or later. For instance, he offers a final glowing estimation of his uncle in Bayreuth. On Monday, 13 May 1874, Cosima records Richard reminiscing about Adolf (in contrast to contemporaneous competitors of Richard in the sphere of dramatics—Gustav Freytag and Karl Gutzkow (a court dramaturg with whom Richard found it difficult to work in Dresden in the mid-1840s): “Heavens,

when I think of my Uncle Adolph! I should have been proud to introduce you to him, to say to you: This is the race from which I stem. The fine and gentle tone of his speech, the noble and free form of his mind: he was a genuine product of the school of Goethe” [*Diaries*, Vol. 1, 757].

Part of the rationale for looking at the relationship between Richard and Adolf so closely is my belief that what we are exposed to in our life, including complex, intellectual ideas, values and principles, are incorporated—for better or worse and in more or less accurate detail, even with complete misunderstanding at times—into our basic ways of relating to the world. This exposure can only be reinforced if the person who introduces us to those ideas, values and principles is someone we admire deeply. We need not be Freudian about the nature of the relationship, although, in Richard’s case, Adolf certainly filled a role left vacant by the deaths of Richard’s father and stepfather early in his life. Nor do we need to insist that these ideas, values and principles remained unchanged throughout the artist’s life: he clearly developed many of these in his idiosyncratic manner in the light of subsequent reading and discussions with more knowledgeable friends. Yet, Adolf clearly gave young Richard the intellectual stimulation that he was not receiving at school or home.

Richard’s understanding of the significance of a mentor in a young person’s life seems to have made its way into his theorising about the nature of art and human beings. In his 1851 essay *Opera und Drama*, he imagines a relationship between an older poet and a younger musician (as a way of talking about the internal relationship of the poet and musician in one artist), with the latter younger, “if not necessarily in point of years, yet at least in point of character” [*Opera und Drama*. 1900 Trans. F. Ashton Ellis. London: K. Paul, Trübner 355—hereafter O&D 1900 page]. This relationship is a form of mutual creativity in which the relationship will come to resemble “Love:”

This younger person, through standing closer to Life’s instinctive utterance—especially in its lyric moments,—might well appear to the more experienced, more reflecting Poet, as more fitted to realise his aim than he himself is; and from this his natural inclination towards the younger, the more buoyant man—so soon as the latter took up with willing enthusiasm the poetic-aim imparted to him by the older—there would bloom that fairest, noblest Love, which we have learnt to recognise as the enabling force of Art-work. By the very fact that the Poet saw his—here necessarily merely hinted—aim completely comprehended by the younger man, and that this younger man was competent to understand it, there would be knit that bond of Love in which the Musician becomes the ‘necessary’ bearer; for the latter’s share in the conception is the inclination to spread abroad, with warm and flowing heart, the boon received. Through this inclination, incited in another, the Poet himself would win an ever waxing warmth toward his progeny, which must needs determine him to the most helpful interest in the birth itself. Just the twofold energy of this Love must needs exert an infinite artistic force, inciting, enkindling, and empowering on every hand O&D 1900 355-56].

The procreative imagery used here is characteristic of Richard's Dresden and Zurich essays, and warrants a study in itself (another story for another day). That imagery aside, we can see here a version of the relationship of mutual exchange and development between the older and younger relatives in Leipzig in the 1820s. There is no doubt that Adolf recognised his nephew's talents and encouraged them, though neither had any clear idea at the time where those talents might lead Richard. Leaving aside Richard's contention that the persons to whom he is referring are actually just two aspects of the same artist, itself an interesting observation, we can read this parable as suggesting Adolf planted seeds in young Richard's mind that took many years to bear fruit, but, when they did, the fruit turned out to be exceptionally rich and nourishing. The parable also attests to the warmth of the relationship between the two men in the relatively short period they spent time together.

We can also use the parable to illustrate Richard's behaviour later in his life as he took an increasing number of young, talented men, and some women, under his wing; most of them remained close to their mentor, but some, such as Friedrich Nietzsche, found it necessary to flee to protect their own autonomy and identity. Such a practice also had the advantage of creating a cadre of acolytes dedicated to promulgating Richard's views and promoting his artworks.

The significance of Adolf in introducing Richard to the immensely exciting cultural and intellectual milieu that was exploding across some of the German states, including his own Saxony, flows through to his much later response to Schopenhauer's philosophy, which he first read in October 1854. Richard summed up his initial reaction thus: "... it required a complete revolution in my rational outlook, such as was finally brought about by Schopenhauer... [1987 *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*. Trans. & Ed. S. Spencer and B. Millington. New York, London: W. W. Norton & Co; Letter to August Röckel, Zurich, 23 August 1856, 358—hereafter Wagner 1987 page]. "It" was his current outlook, which he described as a positive, Greek one: what that might mean is open to discussion. However, some years later, Richard ventured the opinion that some aspects of Schopenhauer's philosophy needed "correction." In a letter of 1 December 1858 to Mathilde Wesendonck from Venice, Richard, laid up in bed with gastritis and a leg ulcer, opined:

During recent weeks I have been slowly rereading friend Schopenhauer's principal work, and this time it has inspired me quite extraordinarily, to expand and—in certain details—even to correct his system. The subject is uncommonly important, and it must, I think, have been reserved for a man of my own particular nature, at this particular period of his life, to gain insights here of a kind that could never have disclosed themselves to anyone else [Wagner 1987 432].

Exactly, what those qualities of his might be that would enable him to undertake such a task is open to discussion, as well. The letter to Mathilde Wesendonck, though, was written less than three and a half years after a letter to Jakob Sulzer (a new friend made in Zurich after Richard fled the 1849 Dresden uprising), in which he confides, in the midst of a severe bout of depression:

...I cannot begin to describe what I then feel and how, as if by magic, I am suddenly permitted an insight into the essence of life itself in all its undivided coherency, an insight which I now longer see as mawkish sentimentality but which I recognize as the most genuine and most profound way of looking at things, which is why I have taken a great liking to Schopenhauer in particular because he has instructed me on these matters to my total satisfaction {?} [Wagner 1987 338, 10/12 May 1855].

Much has happened in between the two accounts of Schopenhauer's philosophy and its truthfulness to life (Richard's at least), not the least of which is his ejection from the semi-paradise of the Asyl in the grounds of the Wesendonck's Zurich villa into further exile in Venice. Indeed, the emotional and spiritual divorce from Mathilde Wesendonck (and his physical separation from his wife Minna) account in large part for the general terms of his "correction" of Schopenhauer's philosophy. In the same letter to Mathilde Wesendonck he asserts:

It is a question, you see, of pointing out the path to salvation, which has not been recognized by any philosopher and especially not by Sch., but which involves a total pacification of the will through love, and not through any abstract human love, but a love engendered on the basis of sexual love, i.e. the attraction between man and woman. It is significant that in reaching this conclusion (as a philosopher, not as a poet, for as such I have my own material) I have been able to use the material of the concepts which Sch. himself provides. The presentation of this argument will take me very deep and far.... [...] The result, however, will inevitably be very important, and fill in the gaps in Schopenhauer's system in a thorough and satisfactory fashion. We shall see if ever I feel inclined to do anything about it [Wagner 1987 432]

Unfortunately, he seems not to have felt "inclined to do anything about it" in any formal sense, though his subsequent music-dramas, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Die Meistersingers von Nürnberg* and *Parsifal*, suggest ways in which he thought that alternatives to Schopenhauer's ideas could be articulated. The account he gives (in the sentences indicated by my lacuna) of his thinking about how to fill in the "gaps in Schopenhauer's system" does not illuminate what he had in mind, apart from suggesting that the kind of ecstatic union of sense and intelligence some people feel some of the time at the height of sexual consummation is an alternative way of expressing Schopenhauer's Will to Exist as a Will to Love or Sex. What is, though, a little unclear is how such an experience is likely to achieve that "total pacification of the will" of which Richard writes, except momentarily in the quietus after orgasm. Such a solution, though, does not really take us out of Schopenhauerian territory, since a belief in the defeat of the Will to Exist in orgasm is one of the delusions Schopenhauer rails against in his writings. According to Schopenhauer, we will continually be hounded by our sexual desires, and unsatisfied by their satisfaction, until we cultivate an ascetic attitude and forgo all sexual activity, or lose ourselves in contemplation of great art. How, though, there might be another way of interpreting Richard's claim that he had "corrections" for Schopenhauer's philosophy is yet another story for yet another day.

## TO RICHARD WAGNER - POEM BY SIDNEY LANIER

I saw a sky of stars that rolled in grime.  
All glory twinkled through some sweat of fight,  
From each tall chimney of the roaring time  
That shot his fire far up the sooty night  
Mixt fuels -- Labor's Right and Labor's Crime --  
Sent upward throb on throb of scarlet light  
Till huge hot blushes in the heavens blent  
With golden hues of Trade's high firmament.

'Fierce burned the furnaces; yet all seemed well,  
Hope dreamed rich music in the rattling mills.  
'Ye foundries, ye shall cast my church a bell,'  
Loud cried the Future from the farthest hills:  
'Ye groaning forces, crack me every shell  
Of customs, old constraints, and narrow ills;  
Thou, lithe Invention, wake and pry and guess,  
Till thy deft mind invents me Happiness.'

'And I beheld high scaffoldings of creeds  
Crumbling from round Religion's perfect Fane:  
And a vast noise of rights, wrongs, powers, needs,  
-- Cries of new Faiths that called 'This Way is plain,'  
-- Grindings of upper against lower greeds --  
-- Fond sighs for old things, shouts for new, -- did reign  
Below that stream of golden fire that broke,  
Mottled with red, above the seas of smoke.

'Hark! Gay fanfares from halls of old Romance  
Strike through the clouds of clamor: who be these  
That, paired in rich processional, advance  
From darkness o'er the murk mad factories  
Into yon flaming road, and sink, strange Ministrants!  
Sheer down to earth, with many minstrelsies  
And motions fine, and mix about the scene  
And fill the Time with forms of ancient mien?

'Bright ladies and brave knights of Fatherland;  
Sad mariners, no harbor e'er may hold,  
A swan soft floating tow'rds a magic strand;  
Dim ghosts, of earth, air, water, fire, steel, gold,  
Wind, grief, and love; a lewd and lurking band  
Of Powers -- dark Conspiracy, Cunning cold,  
Gray Sorcery; magic cloaks and rings and rods;  
Valkyries, heroes, Rhinemaidens, giants, gods!

\* \* \* \* \*

'O Wagner, westward bring thy heavenly art,  
No trifle thou: Siegfried and Wotan be  
Names for big ballads of the modern heart.  
Thine ears hear deeper than thine eyes can see.  
Voice of the monstrous mill, the shouting mart,  
Not less of airy cloud and wave and tree,  
Thou, thou, if even to thyself unknown,  
Hast power to say the Time in terms of tone.'

Sidney Clopton Lanier (1842–1881) has been acknowledged as being one of the finest poets produced by the South in the nineteenth century. Though critics differ about his importance to twentieth-century poetry, it is generally accepted that he stands with Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, the New England poets, and Herman Melville as a major contributor to the making of American poetry of the last century. Apart from this, he has a minor reputation for his controversial critical theory, which sought to unite poetry and music, and for his studies of Shakespeare, the “forerunners” of Shakespeare, and George Eliot. The considerable number of anthologies which include his poetry testify to his established place in the history of American romanticism. ([www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/sidney-lanier](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/sidney-lanier))

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## ALFRED FORMAN “THE WORLD’S FAREWELL TO RICHARD WAGNER”

Farewell, Great Spirit! Thou by whom alone,  
Of all the Wonder-doers sent to be  
My signs and sureties Time-ward, unto me  
My inmost self has ceased to be unknown!  
Others have been as glasses where was shown  
The fashion of my face, or where to scan  
The secrets of my utmost offspring—Man—

And learn to what his worth or shame had grown.  
The worship of their names has filled the sky,  
Their thunder has been heard, their lightning seen,  
Yet after-suns have rolled themselves on high  
And still have found me with unaltered mien;  
Thou only hast so dealt with me, that I  
Can be no more as if thou hadst not been.

To Mr. Forman fell the task of first translating the Ring into English, or, at least, some language resembling it ("Fifty thy ravens take to their feathers," etc Alex Ross). ([www.therestisnoise.com/2013/11/more-bad-wagner-poetry.html](http://www.therestisnoise.com/2013/11/more-bad-wagner-poetry.html).)

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**BAYREUTH 2017 - RESPITE DURING *DIE MEISTERSINGERS VON NÜRNBERG***



(l-r) Robert French (Bayreuth first timer), Colin Baskerville, Pauline Holgerson & Michael Day (Committee Secretary) (Photo: Terence Watson)



Warner Whiteford and Dr Elizabeth Murphy with friend at Bayreuth 2017 (Photo: Jenny Ferns).

**RECITAL FOR WAGNER SOCIETY IN NSW CHRISTMAS PARTY 2017**



(l-r) Leona Geeves (Wagner Society in NSW Vice-President), Laura Scandizzo, Rebecca Moret, Sitiveni Talei, and Francis Greep (accompanist) (Photo: Barbara Beasley)



Tanja Binggeli & Luke Gaddeby presentation on preparing to sing Wagner in German - with wine donated by our partner Brangayne of Orange Vineyards (Photo: Leona Geeves)

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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)

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Weihnachtsmarkt Bayreuth—Christmas Market in Bayreuth (Photo: © Bayreuth Tourismus & Marketing GmbH)



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The Wagner Quarterly is laid out, produced and distributed by the friendly and expert team at BEE Printmail  
49 Herbert Street, Artarmon NSW 2064, Ph: 9437 6917, Email: [beeprint@printd.com.au](mailto:beeprint@printd.com.au)

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