

A Letter from the President

Dear Members

Happy New Year, and welcome to our first Newsletter for 2004.

This promises to be an exciting year for Wagner performances in Australia, book-ended as it is by a restudied production of Barrie Kosky's 1996 Flying Dutchman for OA in January and February (a year late for his seven-yearly landfall), and by the Adelaide Ring in November and December.

The 1996 production of The Flying Dutchman was made possible by a bequest from Dr Leonard Hanson, who was president of our Society from its foundation until shortly before his death in 1990, and this restudied production by director Cathy Dadd will have added poignancy for many members because of this connection.

Recent Society Events

On Sunday 16 November 2003, we were fortunate to visit Mr Denis Condon's home and hear, through a technology which is now in the hands of passionate conservators such as Mr Condon, "live" performances by a range of pianists, most of them long dead.

The month before I found myself reflecting, after a particularly fine concert by pianist Barry Douglas in the Angel Place Recital Hall, on the failure of CDs to produce anything like the tone-range and dynamism of concert hall sound in our living rooms. Douglas's concert reminded me that recorded music is often a poor substitute for the sound and experience of a live performance, except where a recorded performance has a historical or personal resonance for us, or is the only choice we have.

As I sat listening to Mr Condon give life again to these pianists on a range of pianos in his music room, I realised that the sound we were hearing was every bit as immediate and "live" as Barry Douglas had been. While unique collections such as this survive, we will always be able to hear "live" pianists from the first part of the last century, through the magic of the piano roll. If only such a mechanism existed for the voice.

On Sunday 7 December, we had our final function of the year – our end-of-year party, preceded by a short video from the American Public Broadcasting Service entitled "Amato: a love affair with opera", about the extraordinary lives of Sally and Tony Amato, and the Amato Opera Company they founded in New York some 56 years ago. Clips from the video and a wealth of material about the Amatos and their company are available from the PBS website, <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/amato/index.html> Sadly, Sally Amato died shortly after the film was made, but if you're planning a visit to New York this year and you want to catch a performance, you can find details of Tony and the Amato Opera's 2003-04 season at the Amato website, <http://www.amato.org/amato0304/season0304.html>

The party was a very social event, and at the suggestion of members at our November meeting, name-tags were provided so we all knew who we were. Our thanks go to Barbara Brady, who provided another of her much sought-after cakes for our raffle, to Barbara McNulty who donated the other raffle prizes and provided a cake for eating, to Shirley Robertson who arrayed before us another magnificent afternoon tea, to Sandy and Phil Dudgeon who used all their wiles to sell raffle tickets, and to Juliet Richters, a new member who drew the winning tickets for us. Thanks, also, to Phil Dudgeon and Terence Watson for pouring refreshing libations for us all. **PRESIDENT'S REPORT continued p.3**

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- P.15 **Annual Membership Renewal for 2004**

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Print Post Approved PP242114/00002

PRESIDENT'S REPORT continued

Future functions at the Goethe Institut

Our first function for 2004 will be Sunday 15 February, and will be a "post-mortem" on Opera Australia's production of *Der fliegende Holländer* - a chance to have your say. We will show extracts from a few other productions for comparison and contrast and to stimulate discussion. If you have a particular production on video or DVD that you would like to comment on, bring that along and tell us why you like it or hate it.

On Sunday 21 March, Antony Ernst will talk on aspects of the Ring as part of our preparation for the Adelaide Ring. A new book by Antony containing articles on each of the Ring operas, which will be published by the Society, will be launched at that meeting. The chapters are significantly revised and rewritten versions of the talks Antony gave to the Society in 1998 before the first Adelaide Ring, with substantial new material.

On Sunday 18 April, Margaret Whitlam will talk about things Wagnerian in her life, and will introduce an act of an opera on DVD or video, which has special meaning for her. Then on Sunday 23 May, Wagner's birthday, we will hold our AGM, followed by a recital by the four Sydney Conservatorium opera students who we have sponsored in German language courses at the Goethe Institut this year - Erin O'Connor, Emily Garth, Rebecca Hilder and Jessica Pratt, accompanied by Sharolyn Kimmorley. They will then be our guests at a catered birthday celebration, which will take the place of the annual luncheon we have enjoyed at The Women's Club over the past few years.

The Neidhardt Ring

Last September I went to a seminar held in Adelaide to introduce the State Opera of South Australia's 2004 Ring. There was a wealth of material from singers, musicians and experts on all aspects of the Ring, but my real interest was in the music and words of Asher Fisch, the Ring's conductor, and of director Elke Neidhardt and her creative team - set designer Michael Scott-Mitchell, lighting and associate designer Nick Schlieper, and costume designer Stephen Curtis.

This quintet will determine, almost completely, the look, feel, sound and taste of this Ring. While their time in the seminar programme was immensely entertaining. Ms Neidhardt admitted that she had something of a reputation for not getting along with conductors, and modestly characterised her relationship with Asher Fisch so far - 15 months before opening night - as being like an amicable courtship. We saw slides of sets and costumes, but the intricate curtains of water and fire whose assembly and dismantling have presumably caused the performances of Rheingold to be rescheduled were only hinted at. Nature will be celebrated realistically, but not traditionally. Ms Neidhardt playfully suggested that if we thought about the kind of place the daughters of the chief of the gods would hang out, we could easily guess her setting for one of the acts of *Walküre*. And to appease traditionalists (or perhaps to antagonise them) Ms Neidhardt has promised a horned Walkure helmet - just one.

I have no doubt that the driving force behind this production is the iron-willed Ms Neidhardt, whose conception is unlikely to be readily negotiable. Just as Rings at Bayreuth are named after their producers - Chereau, Kupfer, Rosalia, Flimm - this will be the Neidhardt Ring.

After the seminar, I saw a trio of figures jauntily weaving through the traffic on North Terrace and Mr Michael Scott-Mitchell, Ms Neidhardt and Mr Nick Schlieper (left to right below), looking like a very relieved Freia in the company of Fafner and Fasolt. Somewhat Bunterishly, I pursued them to snap the following picture.



Our 25th Anniversary

In 2005 we will celebrate our 25th year, and the 100th edition of our Newsletter. We would like, if possible, to have a complete list of all our members during this period, but some of our early records have been lost. If any of you have membership lists or other details, or know of anyone who has, especially from the early years of the Society, we would be delighted to be able to copy them to complete our records and to acknowledge the sources.

Membership renewals

Finally, a reminder for those who have not renewed your membership for 2004. Please complete the form at the back of Issue 94 of this Newsletter and post it, with your cheque, to the Society; otherwise, a reminder notice will be posted out.

My best wishes to you all.

Roger Cruickshank 13 January 2004

FOR YOUR DIARY

<i>Der fliegende Holländer</i>	Opera Australia production 23,26,30 Jan; 3,7,10,13, 18 Feb	Sydney Opera House
The Ring Cycle	State Opera of South Australia announces the production team for Wagner's Ring Cycle - Adelaide 2004	Adelaide 17 Nov to 11 Dec

COMING EVENTS

2004		
February 15	Post-mortem" on Opera Australia's production of <i>Der fliegende Holländer</i> - a chance to have your say	Goethe Institut 1.00 PM
March 21	Antony Ernst talk on aspects of the Ring as part of our preparation for the Adelaide Ring and associated book launch (See President's Letter)	Goethe Institut 1.00 PM
April 18	Special Guest Margaret Whitlam will talk about things Wagnerian in her life and introduce a showing of act of an opera that has special meaning for her.	Goethe Institut 1.00 PM
May 23	Annual General Meeting - followed by a recital by the four Sydney Conservatorium opera students who we have sponsored in German language courses at the Goethe Institut this year - Erin O'Connor, Emily Garth, Rebecca Hilder and Jessica Pratt, accompanied by Sharolyn Kimmorley. See President's Letter for details about the associated Master's Birthday Party.	TBC
June	No function	
July 18	TBC	Goethe Institut 1.00 PM
2005		
February	Post-Adelaide Ring Cycle discussion	
	Goethe-Institut address 90 Ocean Street Woollahra (corner of Jersey Road)	

We will try to find subtitled performances for video presentations, but not all recordings include them, so please feel free to bring a libretto to help with following performances.

COMMITTEE 2003

President and Membership Secretary	Roger Cruickshank	9357 7631
Vice President	Barbara McNulty OBE	9487 1344
Vice President	Julian Block	9337 6978
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Secretary	VACANT	
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	Dennis Mather	9560 1860
Newsletter Editor	Terence Watson	9517 2786
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NEW MEMBERS

The following people have joined the Society since the last Newsletter - Welcome to Susan C Conrade (905)

DONATIONS

The Society welcomes all donations and they can be addressed to the Treasurer, Wagner Society in NSW Inc at the GPO address above. Such donations help us to carry out our objectives of promoting the performance of Wagner's works. Donations are tax-deductible and receipts will be issued.

Donations have gratefully been received from the following members: Naomi Kaldor, Hugh Hallard, Kenneth Reed, Jane Mathews, Anna-Lisa Klettenberg, Anna Ziegler, Roger Cruickshank, Despina Kallinikos and Iphygenia Kallinikos, Siss Hartnett and Britt Hartnett, John Casey, Ingrid Garofali, Sandra Beesley, Mitzi Saunders, Sue Gillies, Nance Grant, Melinda Hayton, Barbara McNulty, Terence Watson, Ross Whitelaw, Helen and Kevin Grant, Richard Mason and Camron Dyer, Tony McDonald, Leona Geeves, Pam and Ian McGaw, Heather and Peter Roland, Elsie and James Moore, Patricia and Roy Hodson, Penelope Seidler, Monica and Aliro Olave, Barbara and Nicholas Dorsch, Bill Brooks and Alasdair Beck, Diana-Rose Orr, Mary Haswell, Isolde Tornya, Marie Hiscock, and Neville Pollard.

THE WORKINGS OF THE SYMBOLS IN *PARSIFAL*

I do not have any religious affiliation and so I see this work from moral and neutral point of view.

To understand what Parsifal is about one has to become like young Parsifal in a way: unconscious, not polarized by beliefs on any kind (religious, political, racial). One has to be neutral to make a point.

I believe Wagner intentions were to give us Parsifal's point of view as the stage directions on Act I suggest. Because of his immaturity, Parsifal witnesses something he cannot explain, that is, the celebration of the Office. But, most importantly, he senses the suffering of both the Grail and Amfortas.

He has been called to serve the Grail, but not at this present moment. Parsifal first has to awaken fully as a person. The intuitive feminine in him must make the connection with his masculine aspects.

We have learned that he was raised fatherless, and deprived of the human traits a society inculcates in its members. This is the result of an extreme decision taken by his mother in order to keep him from harm. She is however unhappy - as her name suggests (Hertzeleide = Heart of sorrows) - in her longing for her dead husband.

Parsifal is not attuned with her pain due to his immaturity. When he finds out his mother has died, he responds as a child would, irrationally, as if by punishing whoever caused him pain, not physically in this case, the pain would go away. In this case, he physically attacks Kundry - he almost strangles her. He is a three to four year old in some respects, which I consider a proof of how attuned Wagner was with the workings of the mind.

Parsifal responds with violence in a situation he cannot understand - a reaction of self-preservation, a male trait. On the other hand, he can also kill a benign creature - a swan - just because it looks edible. In accordance with Buddhist principles, you should show respect to all beings even when you have to sacrifice them in order to survive. This action of killing the swan, believe it or not, gave him his first chance to feel guilty because he learns killing is bad. He is forced by Gurnemanz to see what death is really about and so it comes as no surprise that he reacts

so strongly when Kundry gives him the news of his mother's death.

Parsifal distances himself from situations he cannot deal with. When he is unable to handle the sensual play of the Flower Maidens, he resorts to moving away from them. Let's remember, he kept his distance from the Grail and did not take the food and drink offered to him even when he obviously was looking for food sometime before. This is a clue that he is growing.

Back to the flower Maidens: they behave like children to some extent, as the music suggests, but the attraction they produce in him is not sexual and so their games are fruitless. His innocence shields him. He fought Klingsor's army to get close to them, but tries to escape them, not because he thought he was in danger, but because he could not be everything to each one of them.

Parsifal gets in touch with his humanity at the hands of the seductress, Kundry, who attempts to make him feel guilty for abandoning his mother and for his failure to see her suffering (unconsciousness). Kundry's unconscious operates against her to ultimately help herself overcome her curse. The kiss is only a symbol of the fact that only by truly interacting with the evil forces can he understand the deceit at work and, at the same time, decipher the mystery of the Grail.

Kundry's evil side wants to seduce him to serve Klingsor, but the repentant side wants to find the one who will help her by rejecting her sexual advances.

The suggestion that the feminine has to be annihilated in order to be holy is not only ridiculous but also erroneous. Wagner's last years were spent in trying to solve the puzzle of the feminine in us. We just have to remember that most of his operas depict the feminine virtues being the vehicles for salvation; why should he turn against this belief?

The Grail itself is the eternal feminine with its nourishing qualities; it provides purpose, strength and nourishment to those who serve it and so our knights should be complete while serving it. The command to the knights is to preserve the divine symbols and to be loyal to them. To abandon its cause is to some extent to commit adultery against her (the Grail).

I am inclined to believe that Amfortas' failure was the result of thinking he can use the spear and its power to destroy Klingsor. He forgot his command: to safeguard the spear and the Grail. He therefore paid the price for committing adultery against the Grail. We have learned at the beginning of the music-drama that many of Klingsor's men were once Knights of the Grail. All of Klingsor's men were seduced by evil and they forgot their mission: Safeguard the Grail and spear. Their human weakness made them fail, as they have not been appointed to go on any mission to stop Klingsor to begin with.

The spear, as *Parsifal* illuminates us if we take the trouble to follow the text, is not to be used as a weapon. Parsifal has to endure punishment at the hands of everyone who misunderstands him (an armed stranger) and so he never once attempts to use it during his wanderings in search of the Grail. Amfortas let the spear fall into the hands of the evil Klingsor who does use it against the king.

Klingsor despite being in possession of the Spear and even with his evil powers is unable to find his way to the Grail. He is not afraid to confront the knights, but the path to redemption is denied to him because he seeks power and to possess the Grail. The spear will not betray the Grail and Kundry cannot help him find his way to the temple for the simple reason that she comes to serve the Grail knights without knowing how she gets there. The fact that she is allowed in the kingdom of the Grail should be a hint to us that everyone has a right to coexist with the others; she expiates her sins and she may attain redemption because she longs for it.

Klingsor lives in an imaginary world, the world of illusions, as Parsifal puts it. Parsifal lets the spear reveal this by making this imaginary world disappear in front of our eyes, as the stage directions say. Klingsor is not a man or a woman symbol; he depicts how twisted we can become when we crave for power, riches, at the expense of the suffering of others: we lose our humanity. The spear, once freed from evil hands, cannot harm the appointed one. That is why it stops suspended right above him: he is firm and committed to his mission. Parsifal shows understanding towards suffering from every being, evil ones included. He offers love and redemption to Kundry, not the illusory one she is used to; she does not accept it despite her longing to achieve redemption. Parsifal describes our resistance to take the right path as when an addiction takes hold of us: alcoholism, drug addiction, for example. We find it hard to stop ourselves even when acknowledging our addictions; we do not move away of the sources of our addiction to improve our chances to beat it. Kundry wants to break the curse, but does all she can in order to fail.

The overture gives us the first taste of the feeling of longing for unity of the male and female symbols (spear and Grail). The Grail is love and suffering as a result of being the receptacle of Christ's blood and by being exposed by the sinner who caused the loss of its unity. Wagner conveys the feeling of separation and longing for reunion in this cloud formation effect (the music expands

and contracts ethereally suggesting that, despite the Grail's willingness to nurture us, it needs to get back what is lost, the spear).

All characters in *Parsifal* are polarized and therefore incomplete so they have trials to go through in order to grow. When we listen to every musical theme of our characters, we realise that even those who act wrongly, who have given in to the evil side, have the chance to make up for their wrong doings and so we are allowed to pity them, and identify with them - a Buddhist principle. Everyone has the capacity to do good and bad and it is always up to us to decide which to do. We sometimes harm others involuntarily, as young Parsifal does, but this does not make us evil. However, when we knowingly cause grief to others and find this rewarding, then we are on evil ground.

Kundry, when serving the Grail, behaves erratically, like a beast, not at peace. This reminds us of young Parsifal, but, unlike Parsifal, who does not know anything, she suffers the burden of knowing too much. She knows she has caused much pain and sorrow to many and she is forced firsthand to witness this. She now longs for forgiveness and eternal rest. When in the hands of the sorcerer, she is unable to resist him and she is forced to serve him by seducing his enemies. [Klingsor's self-castration kept him from falling victim to her and now she is forced to serve him instead seducing his enemies. This is mentioned in their encounter before Parsifal arrives.] In this, Kundry resembles Amfortas who relives his fall from grace over and over when officiating for the Grail: he is powerless to stop the longing. Kundry longs for repentance, but this does not come from knowledge alone of the wrongdoing, but also from moving away from evil. Acting blindly or following wrong commands is no excuse for committing a crime.

The work does talk about doing good deeds for humanity and so I guess that is why everyone gets what they deserve. Regardless of how well intended they were, the knights were subject to failure once they took matters into their hands. Defend the integrity of the Grail is their command; it is not their role to seek those who think differently or oppose them and to change or destroy them.

SYMBOLS: SPEAR AND GRAIL

The unity of masculine and feminine: separated they long to be reunited. The Grail is the feminine and the spear the masculine that form this unity. When separated, neither can function fully. The music conveys the longing for unity that is only resolved when they are reunited and so we hear a sort of death theme. But this music should not be confused with the liberation of Kundry who is granted eternal peace. Instead is a Tristanesque sort of end if you listen carefully: a Renunciation theme.

The Knights of the Grail need the communion to get in touch with the universal feminine. It provides them with nourishment, strength and purpose. Even after the fall from grace of Amfortas, the Grail continues fulfilling the needs of the Knights. Much like Herzeleide taking care of Parsifal (she always suffers), the Knights fail to hear the

laments of the Grail. However, poor Amfortas has to witness it over and over each time he performs the holy office. For the Knights the holy office is a blissful experience, but for both Amfortas and the Grail it is definitely the opposite. We can thus admire the supreme sacrifice they both have to make to keep the community together.

The fact that Parsifal witnesses the last unveiling of the Grail and Amfortas refusing to perform the ceremony until the very day the spear is returned is no coincidence. The Grail knows the evil forces cannot threaten her kingdom because Parsifal's time has come. Even when there is no one to guard her properly, there is no need. Everyone has to go through a trial of cleansing themselves so they can decide if they have the endurance and strength to keep their faith or if they will take the easy path (bending to the dark side) and turn against their fellow men.

The Grail is never powerless as some suggest. Men must have a choice (freedom). Parsifal is the fool in the sense of not being acquainted with the ways of the world (lust for knowledge, satisfaction of sexual urges); he does not have opinions on religions, politics, and social structures. He is therefore the perfect candidate to serve as an instrument to the Grail's purpose, but he has to acquire knowledge and learn to identify with the suffering of others (compassion) before he begins his quest. The curse on him (wandering) allows him to mature and to prove himself worthy of serving the Grail. Amfortas gained the office by inheritance, not through trials as his father Titurel did, and so he was not prepared for this task. This time the Grail makes sure its purity will be guarded properly.

Klingsor takes a turn to the evil side after failing to fit in, to attain sanctity; he thinks that by castrating himself he can achieve his goal, which is of course not the case. The desire to do well and be good has to come from within and not from outside. When Klingsor castrated himself he committed a crime towards himself and therefore could not be accepted in the community of the Grail.

Amfortas thinks that by denying the nourishment that comes from the service and from the bread and wine, he will attain eternal peace, which he thinks is the innocent fool. He turns away from the eternal feminine and forces everyone around him to share his suffering. This I think is part of the workings of the Grail to enable everyone to learn and be reborn when the spear is restored to its place.

Parsifal is always humble and never once feels the symbols are there for him to use. This of course is proof that Wagner never attempted to elevate him to God's level. The symbols are subservient to the highest level (God and the son Christ). All Knights and the King are given the satisfaction of being good enough to undertake a task. Remember they never know everything; they are always acting on a human level.

This of course is only my point of view and is what I want to see in this piece. To me is almost ridiculous to think

that the artist who could paint levels of this spiritual beauty had no other thing in his mind than to incline us to inhumanity. I think everyone has the right to take from this work whatever message they like, but this again is only a reflection of the way they see their world.

Wagner related to all these characters: he knew he had so many imperfections, but luckily for us, he knew he had the genius to make of his art a memorable and enduring one.

Cecilia Segura November 2003

Bayreuth 2003 New Production of *Der fliegende Holländer*

Like the other recent Bayreuth production, *Tannhäuser*, this is an entirely thought through production by the Director, Claus Guth, but how did he bring together such disparate concepts as puppet theatre and Freudian dream psychology.

Barry Kosky's production of Dutchman for Opera Australia (to be restudied in 2004), took as its premise that everything in the opera happens in Senta's mind and created a sense of psychological dislocation and unsatisfied fantasy and desire. However, Guth's production takes this approach to even greater insights.

As I understand it, Guth's basic premise is that Senta is dealing with an unresolved Elektra complex involving her father by dissociating her personality into all the other major characters and distorting the other minor characters in a variety of ways. All except Erik, who appears to be present to Senta's consciousness as a real, undistorted element of reality and is not given by the Director any bizarre actions to do on stage.

Given my assumption about Senta's Elektra complex, her internal image of her father (Daland - Jaakko Ryhänen) is exactly mirrored in the Dutchman (John Tomlinson). They are dressed exactly the same, even look physically very similar, and have the same mannerisms, such as cleaning their glasses in the same way. Guth even has them stand behind each at times, I guess to indicate where their representations in Senta's mind is merging her real father with the object of her awakening and/or repressed sexual desire. That is, Senta's father is displaced into the fantasy figure of the Dutchman she has created from the book she has read from her childhood onwards.

Since Guth seems to be using Freud's account of our mind's "dream work" (described in his *The Interpretation of Dreams*), elements of personality can be represented in dreams as real, living people even though, for example, chronologically, they shouldn't appear in the dream. So Guth gives us Senta as a young girl about six years old, played by a non-speaking girl - that is, about the age at which Freud speculates the Elektra complex develops. Senta also appears in her usual guise. She also possibly appears as an older figure: the maid, Mary since she is also dressed in the sailor's dress that the young girl and

Senta wear, effectively reinforcing the impression that they are the same person at different ages.

This splitting of aspects of Senta's inner life into aspects of each of the major characters (excepting Erik) is reversed with the Spinners, the Sailors and the Townspeople who are all collapsed into identical costumes and behaviour. For example, in a wonderful touch, the Spinners are all mirror reflections of the Andrews Sisters in 1930-40s costumes and blonde hairstyles. They sing, dance and react like Busby Berkeley dancers - ie as one, with no individual personalities. This suggests that, to Senta's mind, these women are all the same: conformist, with limited imagination, perfect and so a threat to Senta's precarious self-image. This impression is reinforced by Senta appearing as an overweight, frumpish, clumsy, plain late developing adolescent who often gestures as if to hide the Spinners from her eyes and ears.

Similarly, the Sailors are mirror reflections of each other and they move in stylised marionettish ways, also suggesting that, for Senta, they do not really exist as people because they have little significance for her inner life. In Act III, when the women arrive to farewell their sailor men, they are also dressed like marionettish caricatures, rather like Russian Babushka dolls, and dance stiffly. The effect of these directorial decisions is to dehumanise the minor characters and create a disquieting, surreal atmosphere in keeping with the nightmarish way in which the opera develops.

This scene climaxes in a magnificent coup de theatre with a huge puppet of death, dressed like the Dutchman - and Daland - diving headfirst into the scene and appearing to grab Senta and take her up into the flies/heavens/ death. This Senta is, however, another puppet and the real Senta stand below in terror watching a dream-presentation of her deepest fears about the character of the Dutchman - he may bring about her death - and she collapses in shock at what her unconscious mind is suggesting.

The set is, likewise, a mirror image: the bottom half (a large mansion entrance lobby with a number of doors and windows, reflecting Daland's mercantile success) is reflected upside down as the upper half of the set. Winding from stage front right across the back of the set and ending stage rear left (top) is a huge staircase on which much of the action takes place. The inversion would, of course, appear "normal" in a dream, but it worked to unsettle my perceptions, as I wondered what it represented as it clearly partook of the mirroring or doubling approach of the whole production. It could represent a literal interpretation of Senta's "topsy-turvy" world, but it could also represent the Freudian mind with the upper half perhaps being Senta's super-ego and the main stage being the Id, where Senta's libido is acting out in dreams its sexual fantasies. Senta moves up and down the stairs between the top and bottom trying to find out the "truth" of her experiences.

All of these doublings, distortions, inversions and mirror reflections certainly forced me to rethink my belief that I

knew *Der fliegende Holländer* and to appreciate the limitations of the Kosky interpretation, similar though in initial conception though it may have been to Guth's vision. If my contention is correct that the production dramatises Senta's Elektra complex, then all the doublings etc make some sense. Freud posits that a prepubescent girl falls in love with her father, but quickly realises that it is not possible to carry this love to expression in any obvious way. Her choices are then either to accept that impossibility and find another object for her love or stay fixated at this stage of development until something else happens.

Guth's Senta appears to be stuck in an unresolved Elektra complex that is represented by her appearance at three different ages. It would also account for her undeveloped social skills and her resentment of the perfection and self-assuredness of the Andrews Sister Spinners.

Realising that her father is no available as a sexual object, Senta then, in her immaturity, transfers her desires to the Dutchman figure she has come across in the book that she and her six year old personality carry round the stage. In this context, it matters not if a "real" Dutchman is invited home by Daland: in Senta's dream world he exists anyway. This transference accounts for the Dutchman and Daland as mirror images: they are to Senta. Senta has evaded the Freudian super-ego's ban on father love by transferring her emotions to a mirror image and giving the reflection another name.

Guth has added to the darkness and pessimism of his production by reviving the original ending in which Senta and the Dutchman do not rise skyward into transcendence. Instead, the Dutchman wearily, defeatedly, mounts the stairs and disappears behind the huge red velvet curtains at the top. Senta, finally, resolving to follow the Dutchman runs up the stairs and throws the curtains aside to reveal - a blank wall that she spends the last moments of the opera beating her fists against in a moving image of despair. It is at this moment that it seems that all the action has in fact been happening in the mind of the elderly, blind Senta look alike usually taken as Mary her maid, who sits in her rockingchair reliving this traumatic experience until she dies.

Guth's radical dissection of the story and the characters was matched by the sets and costumes of Christian Schmidt and the musical direction by Marc Albrecht who matched Guth's expressionistic interpretation with suitable contrasts of musical style with occasionally quite exaggerated dynamics to underscore, for example, Senta's horror or the grotesque marionette dance of the sailors.

Similarly, Daland's words are supported by music that I had not realised must be Wagner's satirical account of popular salon music of the Paris that treated him so badly. Albrecht was able to give this bourgeois, conformist music both a sentimental lilt and a touch of menace in contrast with Senta's anguished signing. Senta's first humming of the Dutchman story came out as the sound of someone in pain and despair - an arresting moment. Adrienne Duggers's huge voice, wide range and

impressive control enabled her to match Albrecht's orchestra's huge dynamic swings that, in turn, helped establish Senta's mood and personality swings.

Erik, sung by Endrik Wottrich (whom I heard first as David in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* in 1996 and again in 1998) has developed physically and vocally, so it was an easy task to imagine him as a burly hunter. His voice also matched Dugger's in power and he also brought committed acting to his portrayal. He perfectly represented the touchstone of "normal" life in Senta's perfervid imagination.

Tomlinson and Ryhänen were extraordinarily well-matched vocally (although Ryhänen's is somewhat stronger than Tomlinson's these days) and this helped consolidate the impression that they were aspects of the same person.

The Steuermann, played and sung ably by Tomislav Mužek, wandered in and out of this production in a most unsettling way. He carried a lit candle and peered into what must have been oppressive darkness apparently having difficulty in finding his way - an ironic touch for a Steersman. He appeared neither to see nor interact with anyone else on stage. He seemed to be paired with Senta's maid Mary (Uta Priew), who is also blind in this production and hence similarly unable to provide any guidance to anyone else. Within Senta's dream, a Steersman who cannot find his way or guide anyone is a

telling image of a personality that has lost its direction and its place in the world.

In Agence France-Presse of 27 July 2003, similar views were put by the reviewer who commented, among other things, that:

"The young German director Claus Guth made an impressive debut here on Richard Wagner's famed Green Hill, offering a deeply disturbing glimpse into madness and psychosis in his new reading of [The Dutchman], which opened the 92nd Bayreuth Festival.... Guth and his set designer Christian Schmidt were enthusiastically applauded by Bayreuth's notoriously critical first-night audience, even if a few boos were heard as they took their bows at the end of the evening.

"Up-and-coming German conductor Marc Albrecht, also making a stunning festival debut, directed a strong, if not great, cast of singer-actors....

"The Doppelgänger is one of the key themes of Romantic German literature, allowing you to peer into the abyss of the soul,' Guth said. And the figure of the Dutchman was a screen onto which not only Senta projected her secret desires and longings, but Daland and Erik, too. Guth's is a fascinating multi-layered reading of Wagner's drama, full of tantalising and constantly shifting ideas and images that demand to be seen again." **Terence Watson**
November 2003

THE RING CYCLE - ADELAIDE 2004 - THE COUNTDOWN BEGINS:

The following information about the 2004 Adelaide Ring comes from an article by Jill Kitson in the 2004 Adelaide Festival booklet published late 2003:

"Most companies develop a Ring Cycle over several years and bring the four operas together after each has been staged individually. But this tiny South Australian company, with just four permanent staff, is doing what only Bayreuth does: staging a complete Ring Cycle of four operas in one majestic sweep.

"At the time of interviewing, she had recently finished the first scene of *Rheingold*, set at the bottom of the River Rhine where the maidens cavort. Neidhardt was admiring of her singers' physical daring: 'It's amazing what these girls are prepared to do — jumping, rolling, diving. My job is to make sure there are zero opportunities for boredom. I wouldn't forgive myself if anyone got bored.

"More than 20 companies are involved in building the set, while the University of Adelaide is researching the fire and water aspects. "I can safely say this would be the biggest and most technically complex production in this country," says Stephen Phillips. 'It is calling on special effects that have never been seen before. But ultimately it is about music making...'"

Victorian Symphony Orchestra all-Wagner concert

On Thursday 9 and Friday 10 September, the Victorian Symphony Orchestra is giving an all-Wagner concert at the Victorian Arts Centre, Melbourne. The programme is:

Tannhäuser - overture

Tristan und Isolde - Prelude and Liebestod

Die Walküre - Act 1

Artists are Larissa Shevchenko, Glen Winlade and Bruce Martin.

The Wagner Society of Victoria has arranged for subscriber discounts to be available to members of the Wagner Society in NSW. If you're interested, call (03) 9685 2444 telling them that you are a member of the Wagner Society and you will be given the Subscribers discount.

SEATTLE OPERA'S NEW HOME

The New York Times of 5 August 2003 carried an article By ANTHONY TOMMASINI: "Seattle Opera Gamble: The Results Are In" about the new Marion Oliver McCaw Hall, the new home of the Seattle Opera's

Tommasini notes that it was "only with [a] performance of Wagner's "Parsifal," a new production and the official opening event of McCaw Hall, was the public finally able to answer the most important question: How does the renovated hall sound?

"This is one case, however, where the risk [of renovation] paid off. The new auditorium is acoustically excellent.

"I had some initial misgivings about the acoustics, but I think I was reacting more to the way the Israeli conductor Asher Fisch approached the subdued opening segment of the 100-minute first act. This radically ruminative music invites the slow tempos Mr. Fisch took....By the second act, with its stormy music for Klingsor the sorcerer, Mr. Fisch found his footing. The pacing and shaping of the third act, even during the quietly despondent passages, were deftly handled...."

Mr Tommasini was generally complimentary about the British tenor Christopher Ventris as Parsifal, the baritone Greer Grimsley as Amfortas, soprano Linda Watson as Kundry and bass Stephen Milling as Gurnemanz, but lukewarm about the production by the Swiss director François Rochaix, with sets, costumes and background designs by Robert Israel.

Mr Tommasini summarised that the "hallmark of the production came with Mr. Rochaix's sensitive direction of the cast. He has tried to de-emphasize the specifically Christian imagery of the opera and make Parsifal a less Christlike figure."

The Seattle Opera company has now presented the 10 major Wagner operas - a record that Opera Australia needs to be encouraged to emulate!

Ed. January 2004

Hans Hotter, singer and opera director, born January 19 1909; died December 8 2003

Penelope Turing, in the Guardian on Friday December 12, 2003 wrote an extensive obituary for Hans Hotter, including this summary:

"Nobody who heard Hotter in his prime - as the Dutchman, Sachs, Wotan or Gurnemanz - is ever likely to forget the experience, nor indeed his interpretations of lieder. In all, his innate gift of making words tell brought the given music to life. In spite of his vast voice, he could fine his tone down to a velvet-like timbre in the most delicate, hushed mezza-voce, most memorably as Wotan bade a final farewell in *Die Walküre* to his beloved Brünnhilde, voice, emotion and style in ideal harmony". The full article is at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/germany/article/0,2763,1105315,00.html>.

On Wednesday, 10 December, Donald Arthur, a personal friend of Hotter, wrote an extensive reminiscence on the newsgroup : <http://www.wagnersf.org/forum/posts/1074.html>

"Dear Friends: Last Saturday afternoon, December 6, at 5:30 P.M., my dear friend and wise mentor, Hans Hotter [died].

"While always interested in music, as were many other members of his family, he initially heeded the warning of his grandfather Hotter, last in a long line of Bavarian blacksmiths and an amateur zither virtuoso, contending that making music at home was a noble pastime, while making music professionally was something only vagabonds do. Nevertheless, when he completed his academic studies, he was so drawn to the art, he decided to continue on to Munich's Music Academy, where he studied everything but singing, majoring in church organ".

Opera Australia Mastersingers

The recording of Opera Australia's production of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* with Donald McIntyre and conducted by Sir Charles Mackerras is at last being released in the UK on Arthaus Musik this month (January 2004). The Arthaus Musik number is 100 122.

Arthaus Musik is also releasing the Tony Palmer documentary *Parsifal - The Search for the Grail*, which is about his Kirov production and features large chunks of the performance, with Gergiev conducting and Plácido Domingo as Parsifal. The Arthaus Musik number is 100 610.

DAYS WITH THE WAGNER SOCIETY IN ADELAIDE

The Richard Wagner Society of South Australia Inc in association with the Elder School of Music is organising three days of entertainment on pause days during each of the cycles of the Adelaide Ring.

Each day's entertainment will be different. Speakers include Speight Jenkins (Seattle Opera), Bill Gillespie (Sydney), Heath Lees (Auckland), Hans Vaegt (Massachusetts), Sally Kester (Perth), Margaret King (Adelaide) and Andrew Riemer (Sydney). Singers and members of the orchestra will also drop in, and students of the Elder School of Music will perform the *Siegfried Idyll* in period costume on two of these days, but you'll have to book to find out who is going to be there on your pause days. Just complete the details below and mail with your cheque to:

Days with the Wagner Society
The Richard Wagner Society of South Australia Inc
P O Box 307
NORTH ADELAIDE SA 5006

Name:

Address:

PostCode:

Phone
Home

Phone
Work

CIRCLE THE DAYS YOU WISH TO ATTEND

Cycle 1 Sunday 21 November	Cycle 2 Sunday 28 November	Cycle 3 Wednesday 8 December	
Number of places required	@ Cost \$	= Total Cost \$	
COST	ONE DAY	TWO DAYS	ALL 3 DAYS
Wagner Society members	\$60	\$110	\$160
Non-members	\$70	\$120	\$170



UNCLE RICHARD WANTS
YOU

TO JOIN THE *MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE* OF
THE WAGNER SOCIETY IN NSW

To help our work in promoting the works of
Richard Wagner
we need your talents and skills

Previous experience useful, but not critical -
committee members will be Very happy to give advice and help.

Please call or President, Roger Cruickshank,
on 9357 7631

Annual Membership Renewal for 2004		
1. Please provide your name, address and membership number if your Newsletter address label does not appear on the back of this page		
Name	
Address City.....State.....P' Code.....	
Membership Number.	
2. Please renew my/our membership from 1 January to 31 December 2004 on the following basis (please tick one)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Single member \$50 (single pensioner member \$30)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Shared members \$75 (shared pensioner members \$50)	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Students \$20 (include a copy of your current ID Card)	
3. I/We wish to donate the following amount to the Society. (Donations of \$2 or more are tax-deductible, and receipts will be issued. All donations are acknowledged in our Newsletter*.)		\$ _____
4. Total - Please make your cheque or money order payable to The Wagner Society in NSW Inc and post it to:		
The Treasurer The Wagner Society in NSW Inc GPO Box 4574 Sydney NSW 2001		\$ _____
5. Signatures		
...../...../200.....	Signature	Signature
Date renewed	Name in BLOCK LETTERS	Name in BLOCK LETTERS

*Your donations, and money left over from membership subscriptions after the Society has paid for its operating costs, including the cost of the Newsletter and website, are used to meet the Society's aims, for example by sponsoring performances of Wagner's works, individual singers, and the Bayreuth Scholar.

Stuttgart Opera's 4 Producer version of the The Ring Cycle

For those of you loved - or who didn't believe what they saw, but would like to double-check - the Stuttgart Opera's Ring Cycle recently televised on SBS is appearing on DVD! *Die Walküre* is now available with conductor Lothar Zagrosek, Director, Christof Nel, designs by Karl Neidl and singers Jan-Hendrik Rootering (Wotan), Angela Denouke (Sieglinde), Renate Behle (Brünnhilde), and Robert Gambil (Siegmund). The reference number is TDK 10 5207 9 DV-OPRDNW - two discs.

Das Rheingold was released earlier, also on DVD. This was directed by Joachim Schlömer, conducted by Zagrosek, with, among others, Wolfgang Probst as Wotan, Robert Künzli as Loge, Michaela Schuster as Fricka, and Esa Ruutunen as Alberich.

ADDRESS

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(most website addresses used in this Newsletter will be on the Wagner Society's website in the relevant article)

Address for Sunday Functions

Goethe Institut

90 Ocean Street Woollahra (corner of Jersey Road)