

The Wagner Society



IN NEW SOUTH WALES INC.

Newsletter No. 97, August 2004

President's Report

Dear Members

Your committee

I'm pleased to advise that Michael Moore is our new Treasurer, in succession to Elle Rasink, who resigned at our May AGM. I know you will join me in welcoming Mr Moore to the committee and in thanking him for making his time and experience available for us. With Mary Haswell, whom we welcomed as our new Secretary in the previous Newsletter, we now have a full committee.

Recent Society Events

On **Saturday 22 May**, Wagner's birthday, we held our AGM, followed by a recital by the four Sydney Conservatorium opera students whom we 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, the 2003 Bayreuth Scholar. This recital of German operatic music and lieder was an outstanding success, and it gave members the opportunity to hear the quality and depth of talent of these young students from the Conservatorium, some of whom we hope will go on to become the next generation of young stars of opera in Australia, and perhaps internationally.

These singers and Sharolyn then joined us as our guests at afternoon tea, and led us in singing "alles Gute zum Geburtstag" to our birthday boy. The winners of our afternoon raffle were Leona Geeves, who took the first prize of two premium tickets to a winter season performance by Opera Australia (and chose Rosenkavalier), Alister Wong who won two A-reserve tickets (and chose the Barber of Seville), and Julian Block, who won a Ring Cycle CD set featuring John Wegner as Wotan (kindly donated by Judy and Joseph Ferfoglia.)

I'm delighted to report that we will be making further German language scholarships available to students from the Conservatorium next year, and that we made a donation of \$2,000 to Jessica Pratt, who left in early July to take up a number of scholarships in Israel and Italy from which she will return in March next year. We look forward to hearing these scholarship students, and Jessica, singing for us next year.

On **Sunday 18 July**, Dr Antony Ernst gave a talk on Ring productions which is reviewed elsewhere in this Newsletter [p. 5]. Our false starts in the printing of Antony's book on the Ring entitled "The Once and Future Ring" have continued, with the launch which we had advertised not taking place. However, the delays have now come to an end and the book should be appearing soon – certainly in time for our September 19 meeting.

Forthcoming Events

Ring Cycle preparation package: On **Sunday 19 September** and **Sunday 17 October** the Society will be offering members a range of views on how to prepare for the Ring. In September, Jim Leigh has kindly offered to present the film of the Making of the [Solti] Ring Cycle and to offer advice, based on years of Bayreuth attendance (among other Ring performances), on the best way to prepare yourself for the artistic marathon. At the October function, Dr Dennis Mather, Dr Terence Watson and I will be covering a variety of aspects of the Ring, including the music (by Dennis Mather).

PRESIDENT'S REPORT continued p.3

PATRON:	Sir Charles Mackerras
HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS:	Prof Michael Ewans
	Mr Richard King
	Mr Horst Hoffman
	Mr Joseph Ferfoglia

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For Your **Diary**

The Ring Cycle	Robert Gay Lectures: "Gods, heroes and dwarves: Wagner in Adelaide 2004." lecture course over 6 Thursdays – see p. 4 for details	7 October - 11 November
The Ring Cycle	The Wagner Society of Victoria and the University of Melbourne – pre-Adelaide Ring Seminar in Melbourne – see p. 4 for details	13 and 14 November
The Ring Cycle	State Opera of South Australia production of Wagner's Ring Cycle - Adelaide 2004	Adelaide 17 Nov to 11 December
Recital	Lisa Gasteen (details to be advised)	June 2005
<i>Tristan und Isolde.</i>	Queensland Music Festival 2005 with Australian Youth Orchestra, including Brisbane's Lisa Gasteen in Queensland's premiere concert performance - see p. 3 for details	Saturday 30 July 2005

Meetings **Dates** & Coming **Events**

DATE	EVENTS - 2004	LOCATION
September 19	Preparation for the Ring – Part 1 - Jim Leigh - film of the Making of the [Solti] Ring Cycle and the best way to prepare yourself for the artistic marathon	
October 17	Preparation for the Ring – Part 2 – Mr Roger Cruickshank, Dr Dennis Mather, Dr Terence Watson - aspects of the Ring, including the music (by Dennis Mather) and further approaches to and insights into the Ring cycle	
November 7	PLEASE NOTE change of date - End of year function with DVD of "The Stagehand's Ring" (a backstage view of the San Francisco Opera production) and Members' Wagner Marketplace (see below for details) – no December function this year because of the Adelaide Ring	
November 14	End of year function with DVD of "The Stagehand's Ring" (a backstage view of the San Francisco Opera production) and Members' Wagner Marketplace (see below for details) – no December function this year because of the Adelaide Ring	
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 **2004**

President and Membership Secretary	Roger Cruickshank	9357 7631
Vice President	Barbara McNulty OBE	9487 1344
Vice President	Julian Block	9337 6978
Treasurer	Michael Moore	9363 2281
Secretary	Mary Haswell	9810 5532
Members	Sandy Dudgeon	9489 0570
	Dennis Mather	9560 1860
Newsletter Editor	Terence Watson	9517 2786
Public Officer	Peter Nicholson	9436 1097



President's Report continued

On **Sunday 7 November**, we will hold our last function of the year, just before the first cycle of the Neidhardt Ring starts in Adelaide. PLEASE NOTE – the date has changed because a number of members have indicated that they will be attending the Victorian Wagner Society's seminar on 13-14 November and others will be setting off to drive to Adelaide

This last meeting is always a light-hearted affair, and we will have a Members' Market so that you can downsize your Wagner CD collection or recycle those unwanted presents of Wagner paraphernalia you have collected over the years - and know that everything is going to good homes. [See p. 11 for more details] We will also show a DVD entitled "Sing Faster! The Stagehand's Ring Cycle", which in 55 minutes tells the story of a production of the Ring solely from the viewpoint of the San Francisco Opera's union stagehands.

Our 25th Anniversary

A number of members have helped us to fill in some of the gaps in our records. Walter Norris kindly provided material, and Judy and Joseph Ferfaglia sent some photographs taken at early Society functions, all of which has been copied and returned. If anyone else has copies of old membership lists, photos, or other details of our history which you are prepared to allow us to copy, please call me or post it to the Society.

Bayreuth

Ten members have obtained tickets to this year's Bayreuth Festival through our Society: Armand Bartos, Barbara de Rome, Jennifer Ferns, Pauline Holgerson, Renate and Herman Junker, Naomi Kaldor, Barbara McNulty, and Jeffrey Smart and Ermes de Zan. They will be attending the third Ring cycle, which will end the era of Jurgen Flimm's Ring, although what will replace it 2006 is anyone's guess, as you will read in this Newsletter.

Bayreuth Costume

Nearly 2 years ago (in Issue 90 of this Newsletter, December 2002) I reported that Mr Richard King, a former president of the Society and an honorary life member, found something remarkable when he was cleaning out his linen cupboard - a costume from Bayreuth! Herr Reinhard Heinrich, who was costume designer for the 1998 bi-centenary production of *Meistersinger* (the German government's birthday gift to Australia) brought with him a sailor's costume - trousers, jacket and sailor's cap - from the 1978 Kupfer production of the Flying Dutchman at Bayreuth, for which Hr Heinrich was also costume designer. Colin Jones, who was at the time a member of our committee, took the costume around auction houses to have it appraised, and continued to show it to anyone was interested, without getting an enthusiastic offers. A few months ago, the costume sold at auction for \$60. As Mr Jones commented ruefully after the hours of effort he had put into selling the costume, had he known that it would go so cheaply, he would have kept it and made a donation to the Society! Thank you Colin for your hard work in trying to get us a better price for this item.

Members Abroad

Mr Paul Curran, a longstanding member of our Society, will direct a season of *Tannhauser* for La Scala in February 2005. Some years ago Mr Curran gave a talk at a seminar we held at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, discussing opera production, particularly in St Petersburg when he worked at the Mariinsky Theatre. We congratulate Mr Curran on his appointment – the first time, as far as we know, any member of our Society has directed a Wagner opera! *La Padania announced this with the words "... dai nomi importanti come Paul Curran che curerà la regia del "Tannhauser" di Richard Wagner, direttore Jeffrey Tate (interpreti Franz Josef Selig, Robert Gambill e Adrienne Pieczonka a febbraio 2005).*" An important name indeed. [See p. 8 for further details.]

Roger Cruickshank
24 July 2004



Tristan und Isolde Queensland premiere concert performance - Saturday 30 July 2005

The Queensland Music Festival 2005 features the Australian Youth Orchestra and Lisa Gasteen in the Queensland premiere concert performance of Wagner's great love story, *Tristan und Isolde* – starting at 5:00pm in the Queensland Performing Arts Centre Concert Hall.

Conductor, Richard Mills, Chorus Master, James Christiansen, Orchestra, Australian Youth Orchestra, Tristan, John Treleaven, Isolde, Lisa Gasteen, King Marke, Bruce Martin, Melot, Barry Ryan, Kurwenal, David Wakeham, Brangane, Bernadette Cullen.

PRICE: A Reserve \$55, B Reserve \$50, B Reserve Concession \$45

Refreshment Package \$45: The refreshment package includes a light meal, alcoholic beverage/s and dessert. Menu details will be available in 2005. GST is applicable to the refreshment package.

Further details, including biographies of the artists and online bookings, are available from the Queensland Music Festival at <http://www.queenslandmusicfestival.com.au/events/tristan.html>. Otherwise, you can telephone: 61 7 3010 6600 Fax: 61 7 3010 6666 or email to [mail:info@queenslandmusicfestival.com.au](mailto:info@queenslandmusicfestival.com.au).

Lisa Gasteen's Isolde - Stuttgart

Shirley Apthorp (Financial Times, London) on July 5 2004 18:45 gave Lisa Gasteen an enthusiastic review:

"Lisa Gasteen's Isolde was of international stature. That she has the volume, stamina and range for the part we have known for years. "What was new was the way that under Perceval she's grown into her own body, with a new physical confidence and fluidity that spilt into the way she sang."

Our roving Raven, Camron Dyer, also saw the production recently and sent this short review that endorses Ms Apthorp's enthusiasm: "In last night's performance (22 July 2003) of T&I in Stuttgart. Lisa was magnificent. She gave us the best ever vocally dramatic performance of the role we have ever seen. Even better than her rendition of the role at Covent Garden a couple of years ago. . It was our most exciting performance so far of this trip. The Tristan of Gabriele Sadé was a baritone version. Very sturdy full on performance."

Lothar Zagrosek (after the Stuttgart Ring Cycle that was recently televised by SBS) conducted the Stuttgart State Opera orchestra and Luk Perceval directed, with Gabriel Sadé as Tristan, Wolfgang Schöne as Kurwenal. Annette Kurz did the sets, Philip Bussmann did the video and Mark Van Denesse did the lighting.

"Gods, heroes and dwarves: Wagner in Adelaide 2004." Robert Gay Lectures

Robert Gay is giving a course of lectures for Sydney University's Centre for Continuing Education entitled "Gods, heroes and dwarves: Wagner in Adelaide 2004." There are six Thursday lectures in the course, starting on 7 October and finishing on 11 November, in the week prior to the first cycle of the Neidhardt Ring. You can book by phoning the Centre for Continuing Education on 9351 2907, quoting Course 044 4130 for the 10:30am - 12:30pm Thursday meetings, and Course 044 4140 for the 6:30pm - 8:30pm Thursday meetings. The cost of either course is \$158.00.

The Richard Wagner Society Inc, Victoria & the University of Melbourne - Wagner's Ring of the Nibelung A Symposium

The program for the weekend of 13-14 November 2004 includes presentations from John Deathridge, Keynote Address: "Siegfried Hero", Kerry Murphy and Sue Cole on "Wagner Performances in colonial Australia", Heath Lees on "Ring Themes and Undercurrents" [sic], Michael Ewans on "The Ring Orchestra and Ring Conducting", Oswald Georg Bauer on "Interpretations of the Ring", Jeffrey Smart "An Artist at the Ring" and Robert Gutman, "Wagner's Changing Attitude to the Holy Roman Empire"

Cost: \$95 full registration; \$65 concession; one day registration \$59/39; half day registration \$30/20

Address for registration Wagner Symposium, Faculty of Music, University of Melbourne, Melbourne Vic 3010

Telephone enquiries (03) 8344 7889



New Members

The following person has joined the Society since the last Newsletter -

Welcome to Mary Meppem (912)

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:

Terry and Greg Chesher, Richard Buckdale and Murray Johnstone, Alan Hauserman and Janet Nash, William Felbel, Carole Bailey, Ann Weeden, Walter Norris, Sir Nicholas and Lady Shehadie, Margaret Whitlam, and Patricia and Roy Hodson.

Noel Staunton called in to assist SA Opera Company with Ring logistics

Under the somewhat exaggerated headline, "Lord of the Ring rides to the rescue", the Sydney Morning Herald of Wednesday 19 May 2004 (p.18) carried an interesting story by Jill Sykes about the Opera Company calling on Mr Staunton's expertise to smooth out "some weighty technical problems", as SA State Opera's general director, Stephen Phillips said, created by the huge scale of The Ring Cycle and Elke Neidhardt's staging of it. As well as reporting the current status of the budget 30% over – ie some \$4M over the initial \$11M), the article notes that "Staunton, whose Wagner history includes 2½ Ring cycles with the English National Opera in London from the early 1970s to the mid-1980s, was at first lukewarm, resisting a return to old ground".

Many of the "weighty technical problems" have been created by Elke Neidhardt's determination to take Wagner's stage directions at face value and so to use water and fire in as spectacular manner as achievable in a modern theatre.

Stephen Phillips apparently felt the need to call on the expertise of someone with many years' experience in producing large scale stage works and Noel Staunton happened to be close at hand, having returned to Australia earlier this year. Staunton has extensive experience, having worked with not only Baz Luhrman on the famous Broadway run of *La Boheme*, but also with Neidhardt at Opera Australia.

Noteworthy, Staunton is quoted as saying: " No scenery ever saved the *Ring* cycle. If Wotan, Brünnhilde and Siegfried can't sing it and you don't have a decent conductor in the pit, no scenery will save it."

According to the report: "As executive producer his job is to solve some very tricky problems like making sure the pyrotechnics are approved and safe and that there are enough trucks waiting outside the Festival Theatre each night to remove the specially constructed scenery."

If you think that the Adelaide Ring Cycle might be having its fair share of problems, it is probably sailing smoothly in calm seas with fair winds in comparison to what has been happening at Bayreuth in recent months. Read on!

Antony Ernst on The Ring Cycle

To help members prepare for the Adelaide Ring Cycle, now only three months away, Antony Ernst threw out a number of challenging and provocative points for us to think about during his address on Sunday, 18 July.

- *Why has the number of Ring Cycle productions increased around the world since the 1980s? "Any opera house that can and some that can't!" – mount Ring productions, that is. For a Director, the Ring Cycle has become the "grand aesthetic statement about the world" through a performance tradition in which the Director is expected to take position, have a vision. The statement can be straightforward and representational, as tends to be the case in US opera houses, or the radical interpretations more common in European opera houses.*
- *The impact of Ring Cycle productions on theatrical theory and practice* The massive cultural change in Europe and the US after World War II had an impact on what was aesthetically valid in opera productions, while Wagner's 19th Century "progressive" ideology and associated aesthetics are disavowed. Wagner's intense rehearsals for the Ring Cycle inspired later Directors to create a unified work of art out of the multiple aspects of a music drama.
- *The relevance of Wagner's personality and preoccupations, as mediated by the Ring Cycle, to the 20th Century "Wagner's neuroses are ours".* Wagner's personality, with all its ruthlessness, megalomaniacal, self-aggrandizing impulses has become the "standard" for the 20th and 21st Centuries. These neuroses, according to Wagner, had their roots in the rise of the capitalist and industrialist society in the mid 19th Century and found one of its most effective expressions in the music and imagery of the dystopic Nibelungen foundry. The Ring Cycle is the only work of high art that gives us an insight into our own world. The scale and complexity of the work enables multifarious interpretations. The mythic component of the Ring Cycle enables Directors to reflect the nature of their times, as mediated through their own values, beliefs and prejudices.



- *Wagner's heritage and the rise of the cinema* The invention of recording was instrumental in making Wagner's music available at a time when serious art music was becoming more remote and inaccessible. The Ring Cycle and the world of cinema, to a large extent, exploits the same mythical material of the Hero, the journey, the trial, the solving of the riddle, the restoration of the world to unity and purity. In addition, Wagner's neurotic belief that the world is governed by forces that no one, including the gods, can control, but which need to be opposed even if they cannot be overcome, provides a basic Hollywood plot line. The Hollywood fantasy factory has taken over the concept of the Gesamtkunstwerk to churn out cinematically complete worlds. Many of Wagner's musical followers, such as Korngold, Bernard, Ernst Gold, who left Germany for the USA in the 1930s, helped to translate the musical idiom at the same time as film directors were adapting Wagner's visual imagination and marrying these to the mythic plot line. A younger generation conditioned by the Wagnerian inheritance as adopted and adapted by Hollywood may, one day, make it way to Wagner in the opera house.

Lars von Trier Withdraws from Directing **The Ring Cycle** at Bayreuth and Hiccups with Schlingensiefel's *Parsifal*

The Bayreuth establishment issued a press release on 4 June 2004 to signal a rare event in the history of the prestigious Festival. The Danish film director, Lars von Trier, has withdrawn from the team for the new production of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* at the 2006 Bayreuth festival after spending more than two years on the project, the festival's organisers have announced.

The communiqué explains von Trier's decision in the following words:

Lars von Trier's decision to withdraw from the production, with the proclaimed goal to create a new staging concept of a Wagner-opera, in celebration of Wagner's original ideas and settings, was purely motivated by his personal conviction that, from a realistic point of view, the dimension and requirements of this version of the "Ring" would clearly exceed his powers, and that therefore he would not be able to fulfil his ambitions of his own high standards and the special standards of the Bayreuth Festival.

According to the communiqué from the Bayreuther Festspiele, "It is with a certain sadness that the two sides have gone their separate ways." However, von Trier's decision now gives the Festival a little less than two years to find a new director, work out an interpretation and

create if for the Bayreuth stage. So far, German conductor Christian Thielemann is still scheduled to conduct whatever production emerges from this situation.

In a subsequent communiqué, the Bayreuther Festspiele reassured potential audiences that it is still intending to mount a new production of *The Ring Cycle* in 2006, in the traditional way. A festival spokesman, Peter Emmerich, said that they are trying to find a new director who could work with all the singers had been signed up for the new *Ring*.

According to the Festspiele website, both von Trier and the Festival management had resorted to consulting lawyers about the situation, with a Festival "source" asserting that suggestions that von Trier's requirements were not met at all times and that von Trier and the Festival management did not agree that this was the case were "groundless statements" intended to divide von Trier and Wolfgang Wagner.

The new production for 2005 is *Parsifal*, which is being directed by Christoph Schlingensiefel. Speaking of Schlingensiefel! He is the centre of some controversy as well. According to a report in Agence France-Presse of 8 July, rehearsals for *Parsifal* had been suspended for a few days while Schlingensiefel took sick leave, after a "row" with Wolfgang Wagner. The report also suggests that Schlingensiefel had received undertakings from the Festival management that his artistic freedom would be "respected".

AND THEN: media reports of mid July then told us that Schlingensiefel has returned to the Festspielhaus to finalise his production of *Parsifal*. According to the media reports, Schlingensiefel is looking for a hideaway to retreat to after the opening night (or even during the premiere!) because he is expecting some audience members to be greatly offended by his interpretation. Schlingensiefel is, apparently, taking a fairly pragmatic approach to his inaugural opera production, seeing it as an opportunity to develop his own artistic vision further. The production will be conducted by Pierre Boulez, also known as an iconoclast in his younger years, but now, apparently, acting as a mediator and smoother of ruffled artistic and administrative feathers. [See more P9.]

Wagner-Rallye 2004

Speaking further of Christoph Schlingensiefel - in his role as artistic non-conformist and provocateur - the Director also makes an appearance in a surprising context: the Wagner Car Rally that he organised to cover a number of cities in the German Ruhr (Bochum, Castrop-Rauxel, Dortmund, Gelsenkirchen, Gladbeck, Bottrop, Mülheim/Ruhr, Essen, Herne und Oberhausen). The Rally was partly organised in conjunction with the celebrations for the new Philharmonic Concert Hall in North-Rhine/Westphalia.

The novelty with this rally was that all the participants had to play Wagner's music from loudspeakers as they careered across the Ruhr.





Schlingensief the Auto-Director, preparing to rally the Knights for Parsifal - Ed

On the website is a series of "RatundTat" questions or tasks that each pair of contestants had to complete in each of the cities, including questions about Wagner. For example:

Fotografieren Sie folgende Straßenschilder innerhalb Hernes! Richard-Wagner-Straße. [Photograph the following streetsigns in inner Hernes. Richard-Wagner Street]

Letzte Ausfahrt Bayreuth! Muttertag naht! Kaufen Sie 1 Rose für Gudrun Wagner. [Last exit to Bayreuth! Mother's Day draws near! Buy one rose for Gudrun Wagner]

Das Parsifal-Paket: Bringen Sie beim gleichen Autospezialisten die günstigen Preise für folgende Produkte in Erfahrung! The *Parsifal* parcel – the initial letters are the clue!} Politur. Achsmanschetten, Radblenden, Sportschalldämpfer, Imprägnierspray, Fahrzeugfedern, Auspuffblenden, Lenkungsdämpfer

Dschungel Dortmund: Welche Bewohner des Dortmunder Zoos tragen den Namen einer Figur aus einer Wagneroper. [Jungle Dortmund: Which inhabitant of the Dortmund Zoo bears the name of a figure from a Wagner opera?]

Our Karlsruhe correspondent (member Marc Greyling, now living and working in Germany) has provided us with some translations of the Wagner-Rallye website information () as well as some related information about Herr Schlingensief. Fortunately, too, the owners of the website have given us permission to reproduce some of the photographs from the Rally that have a particularly Wagnerian flavour.

Marc found this quote from the organiser, Schlingensief, on the NDR (broadcasting service) culture website ():

"Hier bewegen sich eben Einzelteile in einem großen Ganzen, der Betrachter ist Teil dieses Ganzen. Das hat mich eigentlich in meinen Aktionen auch immer schon interessiert, dass ich ja auch versuche, den Wagner aus dem elitären Holzschuppen rauszuholen und dann mal eben auf die Straße zu bringen."

Marc's loose translation: In this spectacle it's precisely all about individual components comprising a greater whole. The observer is a participant in the whole thing. In my work it has always fascinated me to attempt to deliver Wagner out of the elitist upper-drawer and set him upon the streets.

Schlingensief is, apparently, keen to emphasise opportunities for cultural inter-change, or, as he says: "only where different experiences meet can harmonies result and possibilities of change emerge". This is particularly necessary in cities such as Duisberg with problems of social isolation and unemployment.

This may or may not prove illuminating for those of our members who will be seeing the premiere of Schlingensief's *Parsifal* this month. **[The Editor would greatly appreciate reviews for the Newsletter.]**

Marc also provided a quick translation (between work commitments) of another "spell-binding" page on the Wagner-Rallye website () about an attempt to film *Götterdämmerung* in Vienna at the end of World War II. Marc writes

"...it is the story of a "performance" and filming in Vienna, in the last hours of the war, of fragments of *Götterdämmerung*, principally Act III, Scene 1, "Siegfried und die Rheintöchter" up to end of Scene 3, and part of Act I. It seems to have been a last act of propaganda and morale-boosting on the part of the Third Reich. Thanks to Americans bombs, the opera house burnt out and, for safety, the musicians and singers were divided up and located in different bunkers across the city for the recording and connected to each other by army field telephones and rudimentary loudspeakers. By chance they got hold of the last 3000m of 35mm COLOUR Agfa film stock in the city and with 5 cameras recorded the performance. The filming includes the sounds of the soviet bombing and artillery fire "accompanying" the music. Scene 2 and 3 of Act III were recorded 9 times.

"The story goes on to describe how the film could not be successfully smuggled out and came into the hands of the Soviets, was lost in one of their archives and only came to light in 1991. It was re-discovered and developed in Hungary and brought to Venice with the intention of presenting it in the Venice Duomo on the 10th anniversary of Luigi Nono's death. It was worked on by a team in Paris and the fragments restored to what Gerard Schlesinger, *Cahiers du Cinéma*, calls a "gruesome beauty". He gives a point by point description of the film annotated with his remarks including such rhetorical questions as: Should they not have performed *Rheingold* instead of *Götterdämmerung*? That would have been a more hopeful musical beginning and better propaganda than a drama of demise."

Judging by the website reports and the extensive photographic coverage, also on the website, the event would have been quite spectacular to witness and to participate in. Below are some photos from the opening and closing events, featuring the Maestro in a very unfamiliar guise, but one I'm sure his ego would have found flattering!





The Grand Finale Gala for the Rally, with spectacular Dance and Show interludes, was opened by Rene Thaler accompanied by the Cheerleaders of the Rheingold Herten

In case you're wondering, the winners of the rally were Clemens Becker and Lutz Thiele with a total of 196 points.

The Wagner-Rallye website also has a number of reviews of the event from other newspapers, magazines and websites, including Spiegel Online, the Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung, Salzburger Nachrichten and Das Opernnetz that you may wish to read, if your German is better than mine!

If I understand properly, the second Wagner Rallye, will take place in 2005 in New York, so keep any eye out for what will, undoubtedly, be another unique Wagner celebration.



Wagner-Rallye greets the final Victor

The Gesamtbäckereiwerk



You just never know where Wagner will pop up these days and to what he might be now turning his hand. This latter day Wagnerian enterprise shows Wagner attempting to modify the concept of the Gesamtkunstwerk into the more commercially profitable concept of the Gesamtbäckereiwerk. Photo kindly provided by our Raven's Reporting duo, Camron Dwyer and Richard Mason, from Olympia (capital of Washington State) earlier this year. As Richard rightly comments: "Perhaps Olympia is an appropriate site for Wagner's other business?"

Tannhäuser

by Paul Curran

Society member, Paul Curran, who has addressed the Society in the past on his other productions over the last few years in Russia and the UK, will direct a season of *Tannhäuser* with La Scala in Milan in February 2005 with the conductor, Jeffrey Tate (at the **Teatro Degli Arcimboldi** 5, 8, 11, 13, 16, 19, 23 February 2005). Best wishes to Paul.

Bayreuth Scholarship 2004

The Opera Foundation has advised the Society that the government of the Federal Republic of Germany has confirmed the award of the Bayreuth Scholarship to Cathy Dadd who directed the recent Opera Australia production of *Der fliegende Holländer*. We wish her well in her time in Germany and look forward to new and interesting Wagner productions by her in Australia.



Latest Publications Received

- Finnish Wagner Society - Wagneriaani No 22
- Goethe Institut Inter Nationes, Kulturchronik No 4 2003
- Opera Foundation Australia, Notes Newsletter July 2004
- Opera Royal de Wallonie, Le Petit Figaro, No 37, Nov-Dec 2003
- Osterreichische Richard-Wagner-Gesellschaft (Graz), Richard Wagner Nachrichten, Jahrgang 16/3 Juli - September 2004
- Richard Wagner Society of South Australia Inc, Newsletter 173 June 2004
- Richard Wagner Society of Victoria Inc, Wagner News July 2004
- Wagner Society of New York, Wagner Notes Vol XXVII No 3 June 2004
- Wagner Society of New Zealand, Newsletter Vol 5 No 8 July 2004
- Wagner Society of Northern California, Leitmotive Vol 18 No 1 Spring 2004
- Wagner Society of Northern California, News and Notes, Vol IX No 2 June 2004
- Wagner Society in Queensland Inc, Newsletter No 20 July 2004

The Wagners among Friends



The Wesendoncks feign death until the Wagners, sensing the sudden awkwardness, are compelled to leave and to return to their other special friends, the von Bülow! [Apologies to Gary Larsen's *Far Side* cartoons – Ed]



Information

International Richard Wagner Congress in Leipzig on 4 – 8 May 2005, with performance of Berlioz *Les Troyens* on 5 May and Tannhäuser on 8 May by the Leipzig Opera, and of Handel's *Hercules* on 6 May by the Halle Opera.

The Raven's Reporting, Compiled by Camron Dyer

You can check the previous Newsletter No 96 (May 2004). There is also a regularly updated comprehensive list on the Society's Website <http://www.wagner-nsw.org.au>. A small update from Camron for this issue.

Zurich

Der fliegende Holländer - December 4, 7, 10, 12, 15, 19, 21, 2004.

Lohengrin - March 6, 9, 13, 16, 20, 2005

Lohengrin - April 9, 2005.

Stop Press

The 25 July 2004 premiere of Schlingensiefel's production of *Parsifal* has indeed been preceded by and generated more controversy! Not only have there been extreme reactions to Schlingensiefel's visually complex and challenging conception of the work, but there have been accusations of racism levelled against Schlingensiefel by Endrik Wottrich, the *Parsifal*, and by Wottrich against Schlingensiefel.

It is alleged that Wottrich took exception to Schlingensiefel's setting of the opera in Namibia (as well as other places such as Nepal) and hence the inclusion of black people among the Knights, as well as having turned *Parsifal* into an "abomination" that detours a long way from Wagner's original. Schlingensiefel is reported to have accused Wottrich of racism because of his objections to the black performers: Wottrich has a notion of German purity that I cannot share. Wottrich is reported to have responded that it is Schlingensiefel as a Nazi dictator who is being the racist by attempting to isolate him.

Meanwhile, reports of the production itself are, predictably mixed. They range from relatively positive, such as the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* opining that the opera has been returned to Bayreuth in "very good form", to less enthusiastic reports, such as the *Critic's Notebook*, in whose view, "This 'Parsifal' neither schocked nor soared. Mr Schlingensiefel delivered a production that was visually anarchic and thematically cryptic but at times intriguing and certainly tame by German stage standards.

And what of the production. As well as its exotic settings and range of faces, the production is reported to be awash with visual images; not just a multiplicity of religious symbols and iconography scattered over the stage, but also words written on the sets, and overlaying it all a film projected onto scrim, the set and the floor. The film apparently ends by showing a long scene of a rabbit decomposing that synchronises with the last scenes of the opera. Most commentators are bemused by this! The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* regards this production as the "darkest version...ever put on stage" (31 July). FAZ also points out that a display in Bayreuth's new city hall demonstrates that all previous productions since 1934 have depended on a very symmetrical, balanced, structured visual imagery, "but Schlingensiefel and his team have wreaked havoc with this arrangement."

But whatever the reaction to the production, most comments were favourable about Boulez's conducting and interpretation of the musical score, apart from FAZ whose reviewer commented: "The sound is colorless, the orchestra seems to be turned down: breaks that are holes with no tension, block-like phrases placed next to each other, movement patterns that disintegrate into individual incidents and are thus insistently deprived of their mystique, sharp instances of over-accentuation". One reviewer complimented John Wegner as a "vocally splendid and suitably sinister Klingsor". Congratulations to John Wegner for yet another highly commendable debut at Bayreuth. All this same review said of Wottrich was that his Parsifal was a "pure-voiced (if skeptical) Parsifal". However, having heard Wottrich as a young David then a somewhat more mature David a few years later in Wolfgang Wagner's *Meistersinger* and then as Erik in Gut's production of *Der fliegende Holländer* in 2003, I would certainly be keen to hear his Parsifal.

While Endrik Wottrich has, apparently, called the director's interpretation of *Parsifal* an abomination, in part because it employs African myths and images and nudity and the director is alleged to joked about black performers rendered invisible in the dark production, the production does not seem to have required Schlingensiefel to take refuge in the hills. Wottrich has put his credentials on the line, at least, by saying that he would not return to sing the role of Parsifal at next year's festival.

While Schlingensiefel has shocked the bourgeoisie with such films as *The German Chainsaw Massacre* and other stage productions also with nudity and Nazi references, this *Parsifal* production appears not to have provoked a major outcry in the audience for the premiere, despite the *Bild's* headline that the scandalous production has bunnies fornicating – although only in the video overlay to the production.

According to other reports, Schlingensiefel thought before the opening night that the Festspiele management may

have been developing cold feet over his eclectic use of iconography from almost any religion but Christianity and the provocative statements written over the set. There, however, more practical points of dissension between the Director and the management, it appears, that focus, not unexpectedly, on the cost of various components of the production. It seems that Schlingensiefel was very disappointed that the management would not upgrade their video projection equipment (at a cost of at least 20,000 euros). Management countered by pointing out that the building of a special rotating stage for the production had already cost 140,000 euros.

Regardless of the quality of the video projection, the reports of the premiere make it clear that Schlingensiefel's production is a multi-media event that will demand a high level of concentration from the audience – not made any easier by the task (if the audience member accepts it) of recognising, interpreting and synthesising all the religious and artistic symbols and statements, as well as the African inspired costumes into a coherent response. It seems that at least some of the inspiration for this approach to *Parsifal* resulted from Schlingensiefel's recent trip to Africa that resulted in a last minute reinterpretation and conceptualising of the work.

It is easy to appreciate Schlingensiefel's apparent comment that the offer from Wolfgang Wagner to direct an opera at Bayreuth was one of those legendary offers that one cannot refuse. As part of the deal, Schlingensiefel is reported as saying that he promised not to interfere with the music, if he was left alone to direct the staging. Pierre Boulez may have been relieved to hear this as he returned to conduct *Parsifal* after an absence of 25 years.

STOP **STOP** PRESS

Mended fences and olive branches – at least an email from Schlingensiefel to the Festspiele management that conveys an apology for his earlier comments about the inadequacies of the audio-video technology in the Festspielhaus

[The Editor would greatly appreciate reviews for the Newsletter]



APPLICATION FORM FOR TICKETS TO THE BAYREUTH FESTIVAL 2005

through the Wagner Society in NSW Inc.

Holding Deposit	\$2100 incl. \$100 handling fee*	\$2100 incl. \$100 handling fee*
	Applicant 1	Applicant 2
Name		
Address		
	(day)	
	(night)	
Phone		
Membership No		
Signatures		
<p>*Based on the average cost of last year's allocation of sets of tickets plus 10% to cover ticket price increases. The Society levies a \$100 charge to cover administrative and related costs.</p>		

1. any member of the Society may apply for 1 set of tickets in her or his own name and must forward a cheque for \$2,100 with their application form;
2. two members with a shared membership may apply for one set of tickets in each of their names (ie two sets of tickets for the two members) and must forward a cheque for \$4,200 with their application form;
3. application forms and cheques must reach the Society (at its GPO Box address) by 5pm on Wednesday, 1 September 2004;
4. a copy of the Society's full policy for the application for and allocation of Bayreuth Festival tickets is available on request to the President;
5. in December the Society expects to receive advice of the number of sets of tickets that have been allocated. If the Society receives all the tickets that were applied for, then a ballot will be held to allocate the seats among the successful applicants according to the policy. Cheques from successful applicants will be banked, and each successful applicant notified of their seat numbers (and given a refund or asked for further money as required).
6. If the Society receives fewer tickets than were applied for, then a ballot will be held to determine which applicants will be successful. The same process will be followed as in "5", except that cheques will be returned to unsuccessful applicants.

Members' Weihnachtsmarkt (Christmas Market)

Members of the Wagner Society in NSW are invited to bring new or second-hand Wagnerian recordings, publications, memorabilia etc to the end of year function – Sunday, 7 November. As with the previous Market some years ago, sellers will be charged a fee of \$5 to display their wares. There is no charge to purchasers – however, donations are always welcome.



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

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