

The Wagner Society



IN NEW SOUTH WALES INC.

Newsletter No. 98, November 2004

President's Report

Dear Members

Neidhardt *Ring*

This is our final Newsletter for 2004, and in less than 4 weeks the first cycle of the Neidhardt *Ring* in Adelaide will begin. This is an historic and monumental undertaking for the State Opera of South Australia, and we in the Eastern States, who cannot hope to dine on such exalted operatic fare in our own cities, will once again pilgrimage to Adelaide and its Festival Hall.

In his review of *Ring* productions at our July meeting, Dr Antony Ernst mentioned that many opera companies are destroyed by the demands of staging the *Ring*, as moths to a flame, and we must all hope that this is emphatically not the case for the State Opera of South Australia. Some stagings of the *Ring* disappear forever after their first performances, and again we must all hope that this can be revived in Adelaide, or perhaps staged in other cities here and overseas.

This *Ring* is being characterised by some commentators as the first truly Australian *Ring*, but I prefer to follow the Bayreuth tradition by naming this *Ring* after its producer, Elke Neidhardt. "Nach Adelaide!"

Society Events

PLEASE NOTE: In response to many requests over the last few years, the Management Committee has decided that all functions for **2005** will begin at **2:00PM**.

On **Sunday 19 September**, Dr Jim Leigh spoke about different recordings of the *Ring* and introduced the film made in November 1964 of the recording of the Solti *Götterdämmerung* in the Sofiensaal, Vienna. The film included a scene in which Solti talks about the choice of tempi for Siegfried's Funeral March, which John Culshaw has persuaded him to take at a faster tempo than he wants, and scenes of singers smoking socially which horrified many of us in this new prohibitionist age.

On **Sunday 17 October**, Dr Terence Watson, Dennis Mather and I are scheduled to talk briefly about different aspects of the *Ring* experience. This, along with Dr Leigh's talk and presentation, and perhaps the different view of the *Ring* that our end-of-year feature will provide, are our Society's contribution to members' preparation for Adelaide.

On **Sunday 7 November**, we will hold our last function of the year. This has been moved to 7 November so that members who wish to, may attend the University of Melbourne's Wagner Seminar the following weekend (13 and 14 November). This will include a members market, and a DVD entitled "Sing Faster! The Stagehand's Ring Cycle", which tells the story of a production of the *Ring* from the viewpoint of the San Francisco Opera's union stagehands.

2005

2005 sees our 25th anniversary and the 100th issue of our Newsletter. We intend to provide a fitting commemoration for these events, so watch your future Newsletters for details.

2005 is not going to be a good year for Wagner performance in Sydney, with performances by the SSO of the overture to *Die Meistersinger* (Act I) the only Wagner music to have been scheduled here so far. This will give the SSO the opportunity to wipe out the memory of the inadequate performance of this overture in August this year at the Wagner/Tchaikovsky

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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	The Wagner Society of Victoria and the University of Melbourne - pre-Adelaide Ring Seminar in Melbourne - see P4 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
November 7	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	1.00pm Goethe Institut
2005 NB: all functions will start at new time of 2.00pm		
February 20	Post - Adelaide Ring Cycle discussion	2.00pm Goethe Institut
March 20	TBA	2.00pm Goethe Institut
April 17	Palm Sunday - Alan Whelan "Symbols in Parsifal"	2.00pm Goethe Institut
May 22	AGM - recital by Conservatorium German language scholarship winners, Wagner's birthday party (this is the actual birthday). This meeting will coincide with the 25 th anniversary of the Society and the 100 th Newsletter - June 2005 issue.	2.00pm Goethe Institut
July 17	Alan Whelan "Perception and Reception of Wagner in the Nazi Period"	2.00pm Goethe Institut
September 18	TBA	2.00pm Goethe Institut
October 16	Composer Nigel Butterly to talk on Liszt and Wagner	2.00pm Goethe Institut
November 20	TBA	2.00pm Goethe Institut
December 11	End of year function - Please bring a plate	2.00pm Goethe Institut
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
Vice President
Vice President
Treasurer
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Roger Cruickshank	9357 7631
Barbara McNulty OBE	9487 1344
Julian Block	9337 6978
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Mary Haswell	9810 5532
Sandy Dudgeon	9489 0570
Dennis Mather	9560 1860
Terence Watson	9517 2786
Peter Nicholson	9436 1097

Newsletter Editor
Public Officer



President's Report continued

concerts at which Lang Lang played Tchaikovsky's first piano concerto. The performance of the Tristan bookends at the same concert – the Prelude to Act I and "milde und lise" ending Act III –was magical.

The only Wagner so far scheduled elsewhere in Australia in 2005 is a concert performance of *Tristan und Isolde* in Brisbane on Saturday 30 July.

Bayreuth 2005

We have applied on behalf of members for 10 tickets to next year's Bayreuth Festival, for Parsifal (Tuesday 23 August), Tannhäuser (Wed 24), Tristan und Isolde (Fri 26), Fliegender Hollander (Sat 27) and Lohengrin (Sun 28).

Visit by Joan Palet i Ibars

Because our Society doesn't have premises of its own, it's often difficult for overseas visitors to contact us when they are here in Sydney. I was therefore delighted recently when I was able to meet Joan Palet, a director of the Orquestra de Cambra Amics Dels Classics in Barcelona and a member of the Wagner Society in Barcelona, after he had tracked me down through the Conservatorium of Music and the Goethe Institut, during the last days of his visit to Sydney.

Mr Palet, who was visiting family in Sydney, was accompanied by two of his sisters, and a family friend who has able to translate for us. He presented the Society with a number of publications, including copies of the Wagner Society in Barcelona's quarterly magazine "Wagneriana", a book in English entitled "100 years of Wagner in Catalonia", a publication celebrating the 65th anniversary of the Orquestra de Cambra Amics Dels Classics in Barcelona, with which Mr Palet was associated from 1937, first as a cellist, and later as a conductor for many years, and many other books. He also presented us with a commemorative CD issued in May 2003 by the Associacio Wagneriana in Barcelona, featuring this orchestra conducted by Mr Palet. Mr Palet's son, Joan Palet, is currently a cellist with the orchestra.

Although my meeting with Mr Palet was brief, and the tyranny of language made our communication awkward, I was overwhelmed by his warmth and generosity, and his enthusiasm for the music of Richard Wagner. It's a pity that he wasn't able to meet more of our members and attend one of our functions while he was here.

Robert Gay Lectures

Robert Gay's series of six lectures at Sydney University's newly relocated Centre for Continuing Education entitled "Gods, heroes and dwarves: Wagner in Adelaide 2004" has begun. There are two classes each Thursday, one in the afternoon and the other in the evening, which are both fully subscribed and accommodate 60 students each. There was so much interest in these talks that the CCE was obliged to close the waiting lists. Curiously, they did not move the lectures to larger venues, or do anything else which might have allowed more people to attend, and it's difficult for outsiders to understand the CCE's management's apparent indifference to satisfying the demands of fee-paying students.

Olive Coonan

A death notice appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald on Saturday 4 September for Olive Coonan, a former member of the Society. Olive joined the Society in April 1983, and was at different times its president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer, from which position she retired at the AGM in July 2000.

Olive was made an honorary life member at that meeting in recognition of her services to the Society, but resigned from the Society and from her honorary life membership in May 2001 after irregularities were found in the Society's financial records. Olive died on September 1, aged 74. She is survived by her eight children, sixteen grand-children and one great-grand-daughter.

Roger Cruickshank
10 October 2004

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:

Donation in kind from Mr Roger Cruickshank (opera tickets for raffle prizes) and Mr David Campbell (Bayreuth scarf for raffle prize).



New Members

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

Welcome to Joe Kelleher (913), Paola Garolali (914), John Small (915), Marie Leech (916) and Robert Spillane (917).

Bayreuth Parsifal 2004 (performance of Wednesday 18 August 2004)

The first opera Christoph Schlingensiefel ever directed was *Parsifal* at this year's Bayreuth Festival. In an attempt to counter criticisms of ossification the festival director, Wolfgang Wagner, offered Schlingensiefel artistic freedom "as big as his mouth". It was a bold appointment, but fitting for a festival which has always been on the threshold between art and politics.

Why appoint Schlingensiefel?

Christoph Schlingensiefel was born in 1960 in Oberhausen in the Ruhr area of Germany. His father was a pharmacist. As a child he made Super 8 films and won prizes as a 12 year old. After twice failing to get into the Munich Film and Television School he studied Art History and Philosophy for five semesters, then quitting to form a film production company. His first film "Tungunski - Die Kisten sind da" (Tungunski- the crates are there) attracted favourable reviews in 1983 and he went on in the period 1989-1992 to make the German trilogy "100 Years Adolf Hitler- the last hours in the Fuehrer bunker", "The German chain saw massacre" and "Terror 2000" a drastic reflection on a broad sweep of German history which attracted its share of criticism for its horror film style. In 1993, he made further films exploiting Christian religious symbols in arguing conflicts between political power and hopes of redemption.

In "The 120 days of Bottrop" (1997) Schlingensiefel did a remake of Pier Paolo Pasolini's notoriously shocking "Salo-the 120 days of Sodom", banned in many countries, including Australia, although shown briefly here about 10 years ago. It is deliberately designed to create a painful and involving experience for the spectator. Particularly relevant to the present review, in 1997 Schlingensiefel also created his first effort at performance art or installation with "documenta X" in Kassel. In this activity passers-by could observe through a window Schlingensiefel and his team in a room surrounded by sandbags, eating, sleeping, acting and destroying valuable artworks. He was investigated by the police for displaying slogans like "Death to Helmut Kohl". This installation was part of a theme "My felt, my fat, my hare-48 hours surviving for Germany". The hare will become very important in his *Parsifal*.

Schlingensiefel first became associated with Wagner in the radical theatre company, the Berlin Volksbühne. He devised the comedy "The Berlin Republic or the Ring in Africa" wherein Gerhard Schroeder wants to put on the

Ring in the Namibian (former German South West African) desert (like Herzog's Fitzcarraldo) and Doris, his wife, kills the Minister for Culture to the strains of Siegfried's funeral march.

Following this was the "Deutschlandsuche 99", a theatrical activity in which 99 common objects were distributed among 10 German states, New York and Namibia to the accompaniment of loud Wagner music. The objects included used tampons, sanitary napkins, dead mice, tickets to the Reichstag, stuffed animals, coffee and applause meters. In New York, Schlingensiefel dressed as an orthodox Jew and the objects were thrown into the Hudson River. In Namibia, the activity was carried out via 12 jeeps with speakers mounted so that the frequency of the music could be altered. A highlight was the playing of Wagner to the seals at Cape Cross. The objects were meant to represent Germany at the end of the millennium.

In June 2000, he put 12 asylum seekers in Vienna in containers and allowed their monitoring via cameras and the internet. They were played tapes of Joerg Haider daily and a large sign "Ausländer raus" was erected over the container city. One asylum seeker was released for each spectator raising his voice in protest. This direct action caused a great scandal in the Austrian media.

In 2001, he directed his first work of classical theatre, Hamlet, in the Zurich Schauspielhaus, integrating neo Nazis into German history. In the same year he directed Rosebud-the Original (from Citizen Kane) at the Berlin Volksbühne. Under the motto "Porn to be Wagner" all Walküren in the world were to be destroyed. This is the origin of his later and significant Church of Fear and Atta Atta installations.

With Freakstars 3000 in 2002, he created the first ever TV magazine program for handicapped people, confronting people with what is "normal" and what is "handicapped". The show had a backing tape "Nut looking for screwing".

In January 2003, the first of his Atta Atta evenings (Art is destroyed) was held at the Volksbühne. Here he linked Art and Terror (Mohammed Atta was the lead September 11 pilot). Part of *Tannhäuser* was played. The set was a commune encompassing a US airforce base, an Afghan refugee camp and a slum where the unemployed lived.. Religious symbols were used. He related his own works to Wagner, real politics and the failure of Art to deal with Terror. He dealt with the failure of religion and art in the face of terrorism and introduced the redemption concept.

In March 2003, the Church of Fear concept was introduced. There is now no religion or art that can overcome the world of terror. Man must learn to live with the fear of war and terror. In June 2003 he was asked to direct *Parsifal* at Bayreuth. He immediately flew to Bhaktapur in Nepal to search for Buddhist elements for use in *Parsifal*. He then staged an action at the Venice biennale where seven monks sat on concrete tree stumps for seven days around a small wooden church. In September he staged a one man pilgrimage to create the first pillars of the Church of Fear in Frankfurt, ending in Communion at the Bockenheimer Depot.

The second Atta evening was held in the Vienna Burgtheater in December 2003. "Atta



in *Bambiland*”, which satirised the US TV imagery of the Iraq war in the form of an oratorio. Explicitly using the image of Parsifal witnessing anxiety, terror, war and chaos, the Bayreuth *Parsifal* would be a further part of the Church of Fear.

The third Atta evening “Attabambi Pornoland” (the journey of the pig) was dedicated to “the pig that grunts in all of us”. Introduced in Wagnerian style as an “aesthetic love and death song”, the performance dealt with redemption, blood, sex, death, and the pornography of violence ie. parliamentary sittings, September 11 and the Iraq war. *Tannhäuser* and *Parsifal* were cited and part of the show was a soap opera in Wahnfried. In some performances Schlingensiefel played the part of Wagner. Parsifal was shown as connected to Amfortas’s wound via a heart- lung machine, that is, supplying pure blood. This show is directly related to the *Parsifal* concept of redemption through pity, to the late Wagner writings on racial purity, and to the final Schopenhauerian denial of the will. It is antecedent of the Schlingensiefel Bayreuth *Parsifal*, which can be seen as the fourth Atta evening. Schlingensiefel has said -no less - that he is the redeemer of Wagner, the pure fool, and that Bayreuth is the Grail. In directly bringing Wagner’s life and thoughts into his work Schlingensiefel is echoing Syberberg in his 1982 *Parsifal* film.

In an interview at a Bayreuth *Parsifal* Workshop held in June 2004 at the Festspielhaus, Schlingensiefel made three further observations of relevance. Firstly, the spectator is an integral part of any of his performances and no two performances are the same, including performances of his Bayreuth *Parsifal*. Secondly, he has said in interviews that he regarded the invitation to Bayreuth (from Katharina Wagner, Wolfgang’s daughter by his second wife and his preferred successor) as a great honour and that he would take the production seriously: the question not being how he would change Bayreuth, but how Bayreuth would change him. Thirdly, he admitted to using film clips from his previous Atta productions in the Bayreuth *Parsifal* and to constantly changing the order of use in rehearsals.

Wagner’s road to Parsifal

The main message of *Parsifal* is the rejection, in favour of fellow feeling with man and nature, of our tendency to think in terms of power and self-assertiveness. Wagner saw *Parsifal* as the cosmic culmination of the Ring , a recycling of nature- death and a better rebirth. Wagner arrived at it after a long genesis, dating from his earliest familiarity with the Wolfram epic in the early 1840s in Paris, via the unwritten music dramas *Jesus of Nazareth* (1849) and *Die Sieger* (1856). The former espoused the concept that Jesus had overturned the law of history that violence could only be defeated by further violence; the latter, the Schopenhauerian concept of redemption through denial of the will, specifically the will to sexual love.

In his late philosophical work “Religion and Art” (1880), and subsequent addenda to it, Wagner reveals a lot of thinking that has informed his *Parsifal* and, I believe, Schlingensiefel’s as well. Some background knowledge of this work is necessary to be able to interpret the 2004 production.

In a famous formulation, Wagner claimed that when religion became artificial it was the role

of art to preserve its essence by apprehending the mystical symbols which religion believed literally true and to present their inner meaning in idealised form. When pure Christianity had become the religion of the rich and more used as a tool of political and military power and property, it was the duty of art to redeem it through music, the only art which corresponds to true Christianity, being that concerned with compassion and recognition of the frailty of the world. In this respect he saw a pure religion as free of denominational ties and encompassing Buddhism as well as Christianity, and by implication Hinduism and Islam. While rejecting the Old Testament god as a god of revenge and violence rather than peace, he nevertheless was sympathetic to the early Jewish Cabbala, with its ideas of vegetarianism, sexual asceticism, metempsychosis (Kundry) and the unity of time and space. This sympathy negates the recent attempts to portray Parsifal as anti semitic (eg Gutman, Rose) .

Wagner saw both the need for removal of racial inequality by partaking of Holy Communion, drinking the blood of Jesus, and the need for regeneration following the degeneration of humanity as a result of world historical processes, mainly capitalisam (which he did not attribute to the Jews, as sometimes claimed). He also rejected Gobineau’s notion of white superiority.

He also presciently foresaw the 19th Century equivalent of Schlingensiefel’s Church of Fear by drawing attention to the late 19th Century arms race. At that time the weapons of mass destruction were dynamite, torpedoes and battleships and there was a need for humans to learn to live with this fear.

Another important text is Wagner’s letter to Ernst von Weber (1879) supporting his anti-vivisectionist movement and attacking the misuse of science and lack of fellow feeling for animals. He saw vivisection as bad as experimentation on poor humans and thought medical advances would be more likely achieved via preventive measures such as better hygiene and diet. He saw the rich as suffering from dietary excess and the physiologists as experimenting for their own glory rather than for mankind and animalkind.

Bayreuth and Parsifal

Parsifal is not an ordinary opera and not even an ordinary music drama. It was designated a Buehnenweihfestspiel – a festival play of consecration – and was written precisely with Bayreuth in mind. It was a summation of all Wagner’s thinking and from 1882-1914, with one or two exceptions, could only be seen at Bayreuth, in a production barely changed from the original. This fidelity to the original production extended until Cosima’s death in 1930. Productions elsewhere followed the Bayreuth model. Attending *Parsifal* was more like attending a religious ceremony and to this day it is customary not to clap at the end of Act 1. An interesting exhibition at Bayreuth’s Neuen Rathaus this year traces *Parsifal* productions in detail and I attended a meeting of the Bayreuth branch of the German Wagner Society on *Parsifal* history and the 2004 production.

The succession to Wolfgang Wagner is still undecided. He wants Katharina to have it but she has little experience as a director of opera. She has been named however as director of the new 2007 *Meistersinger*. Wolfgang has countered criticism of ossification at Bayreuth by inviting



outside directors in recent years, becoming progressively more risk taking in radicalism. Who knows what Lars von Trier (director of such films as *Zentropa*, *Breaking the Waves*, *The Idiots*, *Dogville*) would have done with the Ring had he not withdrawn. By allowing Katharina to nominate Schlingensiefel, I believe Wolfgang is trying to pre-empt claims by more theatrically experienced and conservative members of the Wagner family (such as Nike). He knows shock value is necessary to preserve the Bayreuth Institution.

Around Bayreuth this year there were 800 plastic dogs: an installation by Ottmar Hoerl to celebrate Wagner's love of animals. Throughout his autobiography, Cosima's diaries and the Brown Book, some 16 dogs can be identified. The relevance of this is that Hoerl's previous installation was 7000 green hares in the main market place to celebrate 500 years since Dürer's birthday in Nuremberg (1971). This was in recognition of Dürer's famous painting *Junger Feldhase* (Young hare in the field) of 1504, a symbol of pure nature. Why are hares important? Because they are the dominating image in the Schlingensiefel production which I now come to.

The production itself

Conductor :Pierre Boulez, Amfortas: Alexander Marco-Buhrmeister, Titurel: Kwangchul Youn, Gurnemanz: Robert Holl, Parsifal: Endrik Wottrich, Klingsor: John Wegner, Kundry: Michelle de Young.

The set is a series of solid scenes and real actors, constantly rotating, accompanied by moving black and white films at different parts of the stage which are turned on and off at different times, and on occasion the film dominates the entire set. There is a played out Schlingensiefel background and a foreground of the actual Wagner *Parsifal*.

The difficult or impossible thing for the spectator is to watch what is going on, to concentrate on the opera drama itself, and to take in the music simultaneously. Much of the criticism of the production relates to this difficulty and some have described it as *Parsifal* being reduced to a film score.

However, in the light of the aforementioned concerns, much of the imagery can be justified. Schlingensiefel is not just representing the music drama *Parsifal* by Wagner, but is also representing what it means, what Wagner thought it meant, how Wagner created it, how others have received it and how this all relates to his own view of the world. In other words he has deconstructed *Parsifal*. In this he was following Syberberg, but without the Wagner=Hitler connection. Every image I took in seemed justified. The Dramaturg (Carl Hegemann) suggested to Schlingensiefel that he should seek to show in pictures and music Wagner's near-death experience (what he would have seen just as he died in Venice) and perhaps this was also intended. Further, the Bayreuth program book contains essays on "Religion and Art" and also on Carrie Pringle, the flower maiden with whom Wagner is supposed to have had an affair with just before his death.

In Act 1, most scenes depict a Namibian or Nepalese detention facility, with tents, cages, barbed wire, sentry towers. A kraal. Or even Guantanamo Bay. However, there are background live and film images of Wahnfried, Venice (Palazzo Vendramin, Wagner's place of death). Gurnemanz's narration is played out. There are images of two men castrating (or masturbating) each other. There

are vague images of other people. There are images of what looks like flow cytometry of cells in a wound healing or non healing process (some have said these are amoebae) . There are images of knights being entrapped. Kundry wears graffiti spattered overalls; Parsifal is a Christ like figure in white, as is Amfortas; Gurnemanz is also in white but has a red beard. The esquires and knights are dark skinned. Throughout various religious symbols come and go: obvious Masonic imagery and distorted pretzel shapes, said to be Mayan. The recurring hare symbol is always there and as Parsifal shoots the swan, the hare is carried on stage in a hutch and dissected by a mysterious little man in glasses (a physiologist vivisectionist). Other scenes of suffering animals (beached seals) and human squalor come and go. The transformation music is accompanied by a larger screen image showing distorting shapes like speeded up embryonic growth and further religious symbols, including the hare with a wound. In the first communion of the knights, they are represented as a collection of clerical figures from all races and religions, black, white and coloured, including Rabbis. There is never a Grail to be seen except at the very end of Act 3 when a fleeting film shows devil worshippers drinking from a cup. Throughout, one reads graffiti on bits of the constantly moving set "Queste" (Italian for these), "Heilige Hunde betet fuer uns" (holy dogs pray for us), "Kraal" (South African for compound, pun on Grail or grail) , Stallorder, Runen, Gott" (state of pigsty, runes, God), "Wir wieder winnen" (we win again , winnen is Anglo German). There was no customary awed silence at the end of Act 1- rather a boing and applause competition, won eventually by the applause.

Act 2 is a tour de force for Klingsor who is black, naked to the waist and wears a weird headpiece suggestive of paganism. "Our" John Wegner dances about violently and has to do some quite heavy gymnastics on the stage including swinging and climbing. He said in an interview that his Australian Rules football background helped in this. In the Herzeleide narration of Kundry, a boy Parsifal is also present (following Syberberg). The catching of the spear and the sign of the cross is fudged: Klingsor merely places the spear in the ground; it is obscured by lighting and Parsifal picks up a shepherd's crook beside it. However, the destruction of the magic garden is illustrated by Klingsor rushing up a ladder into a rocket or nuclear missile which is launched into space. Kundry appears in several incarnations, including a fat Arabian look in Act 3 and in a 1930s Deanna Durbin dress in Act 2. After the kiss she is spattered all over with blood. Given that Schlingensiefel varies the show each time, I cannot honestly say I saw Van Gogh's sunflowers, the Mona Lisa, and Tomato soup tins that other critics noticed.

Act 3 shows ruined buildings and an aged Gurnemanz. Progressively, the hare images dominate and the hare decays, with liquefying flesh, flies, worms and maggots appearing. As Gurnemanz muses on the equality of all living things, a laser display of either burgeoning blossoms or astrological maps dominates the stage. The Good Friday music is accompanied by an extraordinary burst of growth of living things, plant and animal, normal and abnormal, both concrete and abstract. The second transformation scene is equally disturbing. Wagner's religious actors are transformed into military and political actors in the second knights scene. A bloated capitalist appears and the final "Redemption to the Redeemer" is



played out as a film of the decaying hare dominates the stage, fading to black.

John Wegner said in an interview that the production would appeal to younger people and the recycling of nature was a valid image. Others have accused Schlingensief of excessive self promotion to "beat up" a contrived scandal.

Boulez conducted a finely crafted and perfectly played impressionistic score in exactly 4 hours, fast but not as fast as in 1970. Unfortunately, the music apart from the Prelude was often put into the background by the stage action. However, in a strange sort of way it seemed coordinated at least in colour and rhythm if not in precise choreography. I would like to see it again; not actually trying to look at everything, but just let it be semi subliminal. It is particularly dangerous to use opera glasses in this respect. Notable among the singers were Robert Holl and John Wegner. Marco- Burmeister was rather weak as Amfortas and Michelle de Young variable. Endrik Wottrich was an engaging Parsifal.

Special mention must be made of the costume designer Tabea Braun for the amazing range of costumes.

Apparently Schlingensief complained and then apologised about the technical facilities available to him but to my eyes the technical production was mind blowing.

Wottrich has declared he will not return to this production because of his opinion of Schlingensief, which, as reported in *Der Spiegel* 34/2004, is very low indeed. However, the same magazine hints at jealous rivalry between Wottrich and Schlingensief for the affections of Katharina Wagner so the full story may be less clear. In the Festival Theatre foyer there is a letter on display from the artists to the audience exhorting the festival patrons to make up their own minds and not read the critics and gossip magazines.

Schlingensief has created a *Parsifal* experience that is more his than Wagner's, but I believe he has justified nearly everything I saw and heard without doing disrespect to Wagner. It is a difficult experience in the theatre unless you have a lot of background and could even be considered as a new form of art. He has attempted to bring opera into the streets. But wouldn't Wagner have wanted that. "Kinder, macht neu [Children, make new]".

Review by Dr Jim Leigh
September 2004

PARSIFAL 2004 Bayreuth

Christoph Schlingensief, the producer of the 2004 Bayreuth *Parsifal* is variously described as a *Performance artist* and the *enfant terrible* of the German theatre who uses irony to carry his message. He is said to believe that modern society has lost touch with nature and with its inherent spiritualism. Further he believes that western democracies are governed by fear and to demonstrate this belief he has founded 'The Church of Fear' and decreed that we should all worship the god Fear. A major installation at the 2002 Venice Biennale promoted this idea.

With this basis it is no surprise that the new *Parsifal* was different. It is hard to explain adequately just how different it was, indeed apart from the music, wonderfully played by Pierre Boulez, it was hard to

recognise the libretto we all know so well. The production abounded with symbolism layered on symbolism.

The curtain rose on a very crowded stage. The entire set was mounted on a huge revolve which was almost the width of the stage. There were a number of small chainwire enclosures topped with rolls of barbed wire. Some had tents but all were crowded with bits of this and that. Gurnemanz, Robert Holl, was dressed as a shaman in animal skins and the two knights were black. Kundry duly arrived with the balsam which looked like a large pretzel.

There were so many layers to each section of the set which revolved on and off that it was impossible to take everything in and to add to the sensory overload there were frequent periods when apparently unconnected images were projected on to the set. Many signs and slogans were painted on objects but as these were in German we missed the point of most of them but we did work out one that said 'The Death of Art' in a scene that had replicas on many of the world's great paintings strewn about including the Mona Lisa. Also prominent were two rabbits reminiscent of Dürer, and several very large pretzel like idols.

In the scene where Parsifal kills the swan, the Knights, who were dressed to represent all the world religions, dipped their hands into a large stone statue of a woman and then smeared their bloody hands on Parsifal.

Act 2 opened with Klingsor, John Wegner, black from head to foot, clad in a pair of shorts and carrying a crook rather than the spear. We were told that Schlingensief believes that the crook is a better image than the spear as the force of 'nature' is drawn up through the shaft of the crook and is then reflected back down on the community. Klingsor moved about his kingdom for the rest of the Act including one passage by way of a flying fox. When the garden is destroyed he leaves the scene in a rocket ship.

The Flowermaidens were all black but we saw very little of them. It was in this scene that one of the more bizarre events occurred. Throughout the work a middle aged couple in contemporary dress moved about like sightseers. They apparently are friends/patrons of Schlingensief and appear in all his productions as a representation of audience/community participation. It was the woman of this couple who performed to the Flowermaiden music. While Parsifal reclined on the floor she gyrated in front of him, hands on hips with the odd pelvic thrust. Seductive it was not.

When Kundry, a Lana Turner look alike in this scene, kisses Parsifal the blood from his clothes is passed to her and he emerges in a spotless white robe looking like a blonde Christ while she now has the front of her gown covered in blood.

Act 3 was equally strange. Kundry is now dressed as a black South African Bushman and the drama ends with all the major characters dead and a projection above the stage of a dead rabbit putrifying complete with blowflies and maggots. We were told that this represents the ongoing cycle of life and the ability of 'nature' to triumph over all adversity.

The music under Boulez was sublime and had a wonderful shimmering quality, never hurried but always beautiful, though he cut nearly an hour from the previous production. The cast sang wonderfully despite the difficulties with



which they had to cope. John Wegner was outstanding, singing strongly but with great expression and tone. Michelle de Young, Kundry, Enrick Wottrich, Parsifal and Robert Holl as Gurnemanz were all well cast and performed to a very high standard.

It was a shattering experience and not one I would want to repeat. It did help enormously to be able to talk at length to someone who had been involved in the production and get some insight into what we had seen and start to

understand some of the reasoning behind it. It is generally known that Schlingensiefel visited Namibia early this year and came to believe that some native tribes have retained their links to 'nature' and have incorporated these links into their spirituality. Despite the fact that the production was effectively finished in April of this year Schlingensiefel insisted on making major changes and incorporating his experiences in Namibia.

Review by B. McNulty
September 2004

The Raven's Reporting, Compiled by Camron Dyer

There is a regularly updated comprehensive list on the Society's Website www.wagner-nsw.org.au that takes the list to 2013. A major update from Camron for this issue.

January 2005

Amsterdam
Anchorage
Barcelona
Bielefeld
Budapest

Dresden
Halle
Hamburg
Hanover
Hildesheim
Honolulu
Karlsruhe
London

Lubeck
Mannheim
Norfolk

Rennes
Toronto
Vienna

Virginia Opera
Götterdämmerung - January 29.
Holländer - January 21, 23, 26, 29.
Parsifal - January 28.
Holländer - January 21.
The Ring - January 6, 9, 12, 15; 20, 23, 26, 30.
Tannhäuser - January 30.
Tristan und Isolde - January 30.
Die Meistersinger - January 2.
Tristan und Isolde - January 21.
Tannhäuser - January 22, 28.
Holländer - January 28, 30.
Das Rheingold - January 5.
ROH
Das Rheingold - January 4, 7, 10.
Tristan und Isolde - January 15, 30.
Tristan und Isolde - January 16.
Tristan und Isolde - January 28, 30.
Holländer - January 17, 19, 21, 23.
Siegfried - January 27, 30.
Parsifal - January 12, 16, 21.

February 2005

Amsterdam
Barcelona

Detmold
Dresden
Fairfax

Geneva

Gothenburg
Hamburg
Hildesheim
Honolulu
Leipzig
Madrid

Mannheim

Milan

Norfolk

Richmond

Stuttgart
Toronto
Trieste
Vienna

Virginia Opera
Götterdämmerung - February 1, 4, 7, 10, 14, 17.
Parsifal - February 1, 4, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14.
Tannhäuser - February 5.
Tannhäuser - February 3, 6.
Tristan und Isolde - February 11, 13.
Tristan und Isolde - February 10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 25, 28.
Die Walküre - February 20.
Holländer - February 25.
Tannhäuser - February 12, 20.
Holländer - February 1.
Tannhäuser - February 26.
Lohengrin - February 16, 19, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28.
Holländer - February 5.
Tristan und Isolde - February 13.
Tannhäuser - February 5, 8, 11, 13, 16, 19, 23.
Tristan und Isolde -February 2, 4, 6.
Tristan und Isolde -February 18, 20.
Götterdämmerung - February 13, 20, 27.
Siegfried - February 2, 5, 8, 11
Lohengrin - February 24, 26.
Staatsoper
Tristan und Isolde -February 9,13,20.

March 2005

Berlin

Budapest
Chemnitz
Chicago

Detmold
Dresden
Duisburg
Gothenburg
Hamburg
Helsinki
Hildesheim
Kiel
Krefeld
London

Madrid
Mannheim

Munich
Naples
New Orleans
Oslo
Stuttgart

Trieste
Udine

Venice
Vienna

Zurich

Deutsche Opera
The Ring - March 12, 13, 18, 20.
Staatsoper Festtage
Parsifal - March 19, 28.
Parsifal - March 25, 29.
The Ring - March 19, 20, 26, 28.
Götterdämmerung - March 19, 26.
The Ring - March 28, 29, 31, April 2,
Tannhäuser - March 25.
Parsifal - March 25, 28.
Parsifal - March 6, 20, 25, 28.
Die Walküre - March 6.
Holländer - March 4, 13, 16.
Parsifal - March 19, 21, 23, 25.
Tannhäuser - March 17, 25, 28.
Parsifal - March 13, 25.
Tannhäuser - March 5, 9, 13, 25, 29.
ROH
Die Walküre - March 5,9,12,15,19,22, 28.
Lohengrin - March 1, 4, 7.
Lohengrin - March 6.
Holländer - March 18.
Parsifal - March 25.
Parsifal - March 20, 24, 27.
Die Walküre - March 24, 26, 30.
Siegfried - March 9, 12.
Die Meistersinger [concert] - March 19.
Götterdämmerung - March 6.
Tristan und Isolde - March 25, 28.
Lohengrin - March 1, 3, 6, 9, 12.
Teatro Verdi, Trieste
Lohengrin - March 20.
Parsifal - March 12, 15, 18, 20, 23.
Staatsoper
Parsifal - March 24, 26.
Lohengrin - March 6, 9, 13, 16, 20.

April 2005

Amsterdam
Berlin

Bielefeld
Bordeaux
Budapest

Chicago

Detmold
Dresden
Helsinki
Hildesheim
Karlsruhe
Kiel
Krefeld
Leipzig

Staatsoper
Das Rheingold - April 28.
Tannhäuser - April 28.
Holländer - April 2.
Tristan und Isolde - April 14, 17, 21.
Erkel Theatre
Lohengrin - April 10, 16, 30.
The Ring - March 28, 29, 31, April 2; 4, 5, 7, 9; 11, 12, 14, 16,
Tannhäuser - April 21, 23.
Parsifal - April 1.
Parsifal - April 4, 6.
Tannhäuser - April 3, 24.
Holländer - April 16, [no other dates].
Parsifal - April 16.
Tannhäuser - April 16, 24.
Tannhäuser - April 29.



London	ENO <i>Götterdämmerung</i> - April 2, 6, 9, 16, 20, 23, 27, 30.	Stuttgart	<i>Das Rheingold</i> - June 4. <i>Die Walküre</i> - June 5. <i>Siegfried</i> - June 12.
Magdeburg	<i>Holländer</i> - April 8.	Vienna	Staatsoper <i>Parsifal</i> - June 23, 26, 30.
Mannheim	<i>Holländer</i> - April 5. <i>Lohengrin</i> - April 13.	Wroclaw	Opera Dolnoslaska in Hala Ludowa [People's Hall] <i>G</i> Bayreuth <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - July
Mexico City Centre	Festival of Mexico in the Historical	25, 31.	
Naples	<i>Siegfried</i> - April 7, 10, 12, 14.	Duisburg	<i>Die Meistersinger</i> - July 10.
New York	<i>Die Walküre</i> - April 3, 6.	Erl	<i>The Ring</i> - July 22, 23, [5pm], 23 [11pm], 24 [11am].
Paris	The Met <i>Die Walküre</i> - April 19, 23.	Frankfurt	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - July 2, 3, 7, 9, 10, 14, 15, 17.
Prague	Bastille <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - April 12, 16, 20, 24, 28.	London	ROH <i>Die Walküre</i> - July 8, 12, 15.
Stuttgart	<i>The Ring</i> - April 17, 23. May 1, 14.	Mannheim	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - July 2. <i>The Ring</i> - July 8, 10, 17, 28. <i>Lohengrin</i> - July 24. <i>Die Meistersinger</i> - July 31.
Vienna	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - April 3.	Munich	<i>Holländer</i> - July 2, [no other dates].
Zurich	Staatsoper <i>The Ring</i> - April 12, 17, 24, May 1. <i>Lohengrin</i> - April 9, [no other dates].	Osnabrück	<i>Holländer</i> - July 1, 3, 7, 9, 12, 16.
May 2005		Plauen	
Amsterdam	<i>Das Rheingold</i> - May 2, 5, 8, 11, 15, 18.	August 2005	
Basel	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - May 2, [no other dates].	Bayreuth	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - August 7, 12, 18, 26.
Berlin	Staatsoper <i>Tannhäuser</i> - May 1, 5, 8, 16, 20.	Seattle	<i>The Ring</i> - August 7, 8, 10, 12; 15, 16, 18, 20; 23, 24, 26, 28. <i>Die Meistersinger</i> - [no actual dates].
Budapest	Deutsche Oper <i>Holländer</i> - May 22, 29.	Tokyo	
Copenhagen	Erkel Theatre <i>Lohengrin</i> - May 7.	6 Season	
Dresden	<i>Siegfried</i> - May 7, 9, 12, 14, 22, 24, 27.	Paris	Chatelet <i>The Ring</i> - [no actual dates].
Hamburg	<i>Holländer</i> - May 5, 7, 11. <i>Lohengrin</i> - May 29.	September 2005	
Hildesheim	<i>Die Meistersinger</i> - May 5.	Liège	<i>The Ring</i> - September 17, 24, October 1, 8.
Kiel	<i>Lohengrin</i> - May 16, 22.	Tokyo	<i>Die Meistersinger</i> - [no actual dates].
Krefeld	<i>Tannhäuser</i> - May 4, 20.	October 2005	
Leipzig	<i>Parsifal</i> - May 28.	Liège	<i>The Ring</i> - September 17, 24, October 1, 8; 12, 15, 19, 22.
Magdeburg	<i>Tannhäuser</i> - May 5, 15.	London	The Royal Opera <i>Siegfried</i> - October 3, 7, 10, 14, 18, 22.
Mannheim	<i>Tannhäuser</i> - May 8. <i>Holländer</i> - May 8, 27. <i>Tannhäuser</i> - May 5, 29. <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - May 14. <i>Parsifal</i> - May 16.	Wroclaw	Opera Dolnoslaska in Hala Ludowa [People's Hall] <i>The Ring</i> - October 6, 7, 8, 9.
Munich	<i>Tannhäuser</i> - May 29.	January 2006	
Nuremberg	<i>The Ring</i> - May 5, 14, 26, June 5.	Toronto	<i>Götterdämmerung</i> - [no actual dates][6 performances Jan/Feb]
Paris	Bastille <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - May 4, 7.	Vienna	<i>Die Walküre</i> - January 8, 2006.
Prague	<i>The Ring</i> - April 17, 23. May 1, 14; 16, 18, 20, 22.	February 2006	
Stuttgart	<i>Die Walküre</i> - May 22, 26.	Copenhagen	<i>Götterdämmerung</i> - February 10 [no other dates].
Vienna	Staatsoper <i>The Ring</i> - April 12, 17, 24, May 1. <i>Holländer</i> - May 6, 10, 14.	Toronto	<i>Götterdämmerung</i> - [no actual dates][6 performances Jan/Feb]
June 2005		March 2006	
Berlin	Deutsche Oper <i>Holländer</i> - June 1, 5.	Mexico City	Festival of Mexico the Historical Centre <i>Götterdämmerung</i> - March 16, 19, 21, 23.
Copenhagen	<i>Siegfried</i> - June 2.	Spring 2006	
Dortmund	<i>Das Rheingold</i> - June 19, 26.	Cardiff	<i>Holländer</i> - [no actual dates].
Dresden	<i>Lohengrin</i> - June 1, 5.	Helsinki	<i>Die Meistersinger</i> - [no actual dates].
Duisburg	<i>Die Meistersinger</i> - June 19, 26.	April 2006	
Düsseldorf	<i>The Ring</i> - June 7, 10, 13, 26.	Copenhagen	<i>The Ring</i> - [no actual dates]
Frankfurt	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - June 30.	Frankfurt	<i>Parsifal</i> - April 23, 26, 30.
Hamburg	<i>Die Meistersinger</i> - June 5, 12.	London	The Royal Opera <i>Götterdämmerung</i> - April 17, 22, 27, 30. <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - April 17, 21, 25.
Hildesheim	<i>Lohengrin</i> - June 18.	Vienna	
Kiel	<i>Tannhäuser</i> - June 4.	May 2006	
Mannheim	<i>Parsifal</i> - June 30.	Copenhagen	<i>The Ring</i> - [no actual dates]
Munich	<i>Holländer</i> - June 4.	Frankfurt	<i>Parsifal</i> - May 14, 20, 25, 28.
Nuremberg	<i>Tannhäuser</i> - June 25. <i>The Ring</i> - June 2, 5.	London	The Royal Opera <i>Götterdämmerung</i> - May 3, 6.



June 2006

Barcelona
Frankfurt

Lohengrin - June 30.
Parsifal - June 5.

July 2006

Aix-en-Provence
Barcelona

Das Rheingold - [no actual dates].
New Sir Simon Rattle Ring
Lohengrin - last performance July 30,
[no other dates].

September 2006

Toronto

The Ring - 3 cycles over Sep/Oct - 12
Sept - 1 Oct

October 2006

Toronto

The Ring - 3 cycles over Sep/Oct - 12
Sept - 1 Oct


Easter 2007

Salzburg

Easter Festival
The Ring - first of the Ring operas with
a full cycle in 2010.

Society History and Anniversaries

This issue and the next few issues of the Newsletter will contain reproductions of some early documents from the Society's early years in the lead up in 2005 to the 25th anniversary of the Society's foundation and the 100th Newsletter. Today: a copy of the original Membership application form.



THE WAGNER SOCIETY
(Patron - Sir Charles Mackerras)

Registered Office - 141 Dowling Street, Woollomooloo, 2011
Phone enquiries - 358.1919 (Bus. Hours)

The Wagner Society has been formed by a group of enthusiastic music lovers to promote the performance of Richard Wagner's works in Australia.

The Society aims therefore to:-

- * Further the knowledge and appreciation of the life and works of Richard Wagner and his contemporaries;
- * Encourage the presentation of the music of Richard Wagner in Australia;
- * Financially assist and encourage singers and musicians in the furthering of their career - e.g. Scholarships, Master Classes.

All lovers of Wagnerian music, and indeed all music lovers, are invited to join the Society, and as members, enjoy the following:-

- * Functions which would include recitals, talks, film showings and attendance at receptions for visiting artists and celebrities;
- * Regular music appreciation sessions, compiled from historic recordings;
- * The Society's regular Newsletter;
- * Preferential bookings and concessions for various musical and theatrical performances.

***** SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY OFFER ----- JOIN NOW AND SAVE!!!! *****
*** -- Membership taken out NOW will be valid until MARCH 31, 1982.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

The Wagner Society, 141 Dowling Street, Woollomooloo, 2011.

I wish to become a member of The Wagner Society in the following category:-

N.B.!!!! <input type="checkbox"/>	JOINT FOUNDATION MEMBERSHIP (Husband and Wife)	\$75.00
!!!! <input type="checkbox"/>	FOUNDATION MEMBERSHIP	\$50.00

<input type="checkbox"/>	ORDINARY MEMBERSHIP (Annual Subscription)	\$15.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	JOINT MEMBERSHIP (Husband and Wife)	\$25.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	PENSIONER/YOUNG MEMBERSHIP (under 25)	\$ 7.50

----- N.B.!!!! Thereafter, normal membership fees apply -----

Mr/Mrs/Miss
(Full first name and surname in BLOCK letters)

Address Postcode.....
(BLOCK letters)

If under 25 - please include birth date Telephone(D).....
If a Pensioner - please quote No..... (E).....

I/We enclose cheque/postal note/money order, payable to The Wagner Society,
for \$.....

Signature Date



But **here is** the **form** for 2005

<h2>Annual Membership Renewal for 2005</h2>		
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	Street	
	City State P'Code	
Membership Number.	
2. Please renew my/our membership from 1 January to 31 December 2005 on the following basis (<i>please tick one</i>)		
<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 (<i>include a copy of your current ID Card</i>)	
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		
 Signature Signature
..... / /200 Date renewed Name in BLOCK LETTERS
 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.

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. PLEASE BRING A PLATE



ADDRESS

Please note our permanent address for all correspondence

The Wagner Society in New South Wales Inc

GPO Box 4574 SYDNEY NSW 2001

Telephone: 9357 7631 (Roger Cruickshank, President)

Website: <http://www.wagner-nsw.org.au>

Website enquiries: webmaster@wagner-nsw.org.au

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

Wagner Society in New South Wales Inc

GPO Box 4574 SYDNEY NSW 2001

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