



CELEBRATING
40 YEARS 1980 - 2020



WAGNER
SOCIETY
NSW

CELEBRATING THE MUSIC OF RICHARD WAGNER

WAGNER QUARTERLY

ISSUE NO 34

161

JUNE 2021



Richard King, Colleen Chesterman, Esteban Insausti and Roger Cruickshank cut the Birthday cake celebrating Wagner's birthday and the 40th Anniversary of the Wagner Society

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Dear members and friends,

After the cultural famine of 2020 we are now well on the way to replenishing our spirits as most of the arts companies are back performing live and venues are largely allowed 100% capacity once again. Since my last report the Society has followed our two early Zoom talks with two live recitals (one as part of a double birthday celebration) and a live lecture. We've returned to some of our favourite venues, the Goethe Institut, St Columba and Mosman Art Gallery. I think we can say that our event programme is back. Reports on these can be found within the Quarterly.

Attendance has been excellent at all events and the quality of the performances presented (Laura Scandizzo, Bradley Gilchrist, Cedar-Rose Newman and Tamara-Anna Cislowska) were nothing short of outstanding. Amongst all these live events we also had a fantastic Zoom lecture from Professor Heath Lees from his home in New Zealand. On our return to the Goethe Institut in April, Professor Thea Brejzek gave a most interesting lecture on the emergence of scenography via Adolphe Appia. As part of our 40th anniversary and the great partnership with that venue, Goethe-Institut Director Sonia Griegoschewski provided champagne after Thea's talk which was much enjoyed by all. Sonia sadly is finishing her term as Director Australia later this year which also means that her husband, Committee member Florian

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4 >

SOCIETY'S OBJECTIVES

To promote the music of Richard Wagner and his contemporaries and to encourage a wider understanding of their work.
To support the training of young Wagnerian or potential Wagnerian performers from NSW.

WAGNER'S BIRTHDAY AND 40th ANNIVERSARY CONCERT

AT ST COLUMBA ON 23 MAY

Photos by Lis Bergmann, Pauline Holgerson, Leona Geeves and Mike Day



Ross Whitelaw, Esteban Insausti, Pauline Holgerson, Margaret Whealy, Lis Bergman and Leona Geeves at reception



Tamara-Anna Cislovska



Iconic contralto Lauris Elms AM OBE in the audience



Tamara-Anna & Leona with Brangayne wine



Richard King



Dennis Mather, Roger Cruickshank and Esteban Insausti drawing the raffle prizes



Pauline Holgerson, Roger Cruickshank, Leona Geeves and Terence Watson

FOR YOUR DIARY

2021

28 Oct - 21 Nov 2021	Opera Australia presents 3 cycles of a new <i>Ring</i> at QPAC	Brisbane
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COMING SOCIETY EVENTS 2021

DAYS AND STARTING TIMES MAY VARY | PLEASE CHECK THE SCHEDULE ONLINE FOR DETAILS

DATE	Some events may be subject to change and further detail in the next newsletter	LOCATION
Sunday 11 July	1.00pm ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2.00pm Dr Peter Bassett talks about the <i>Ring</i> from an Eastern perspective	Goethe Institut
Sunday 8 August	12.30pm DVD Wagner's first opera <i>Die Feen</i> (abridged for children) 2.00pm Stephen Mould introduces his two new books	Goethe Institut
Sunday 29 August	2.00pm Concert Pamela Andrews, Jill Sullivan and Michael Curtain present <i>Ariadne's Thread</i> - a recital of German Romantic Music	St Columba, Woollahra
Sunday 12 Sept	12.00pm DVD <i>Silent Wagner: The Life and Works of Richard Wagner</i> 2.00pm Talk by Soprano Anna-Louise Cole	Goethe Institut
Sunday 10 October	2.00pm Concert <i>Heroes and the Holy Grail</i> Presented by Brad Cooper	St Columba, Woollahra
Saturday 16 & Sunday 17 October	Wine tasting trip to Brangayne vineyards, Orange TBC	Orange
Sunday 28 Nov	2.00pm Christmas Party	St Columba, Woollahra

Advice about changes to the Program will be emailed to people who have given their email addresses to the Society's Membership Secretary; the latest updates will also be available on the Society's website: www.wagner.org.au.
Admission to each event will be \$25 a Member, and \$30 each non-Member, \$10 (Full-time students); Seminar/Concert \$40 (m), \$45 (n-m), \$20 (fts).
For Zoom events members will be requested to register; admission is \$10.

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

Patron:

Ms Simone Young AM

Honorary Life Members:

Mr Richard King

Prof Michael Ewans

Mr Horst Hoffman

Mr Roger Cruickshank

Dr Terence Watson

Dr Dennis Mather

Dr Colleen Chesterman

Ms Leona Geeves

QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS:

FUTURE WAGNER SOCIETY EVENTS	P.5
REPORTS ON RECENT MEETINGS	P.8
REPORTS ON 40th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS	P.13
LEONA GEEVES REMEMBERS: THE FIRST DECADE	P.15
SORROW GONDOLA: THE MUSIC AND POETRY OF WAGNER'S LAST DAYS by Marie Leech	P.18
BRANGAYNE OF ORANGE VINEYARD	P.20
HILMA af KLINT (1862-1944)	P.21
FINANCIAL WAGNER SOCIETY MEMBERS AS AT 31 MAY 2021	P.22
IN MEMORIUM	P.23
NEWS FROM SINGERS SUPPORTED BY THE SOCIETY	P.24

Hammerbacher, will be leaving us. This is a blow as Florian has been an integral part of our Committee. We hope that he accepts a role as a roving WSNSW reporter at large. Please join me in wishing both Sonja and Florian all the very best for the future.

Whilst our local cultural life is returning to a pre-pandemic normal, the same cannot be said for our international adventures. It is unlikely that any Australians will be travelling to Bayreuth in 2021. The reduced number of tickets available to a reduced programme makes it almost impossible to be there. Similarly, the International Richard Wagner Congress to be held in Munich between 14 and 17 October. I attended an early morning zoom briefing from Munich and Berlin on this. The programme sounds very interesting but again it is unlikely any Australians will be able to attend. The Verband very kindly is leaving the door open for us in case there is an opportunity to travel.

More positively I can report that I hosted a zoom meeting of Australian and New Zealand Wagner Society Presidents, a first, in which we discussed how we can enhance the informal exchange of information, material and tickets (especially when we are able to travel internationally). The meeting was very positive and cordial on a range of issues. One of the initial results of this exchange will be a coordinated effort to organise a function or functions for Wagner Society members during the various Brisbane Ring cycles. One of the tenets of being a Wagner Society member is the social aspect of attending a Ring, meeting fellow Wagnerians, forging ties and friendships.

In that spirit we celebrated our 40th birthday together with The Master's 208th at St Columba on the 23rd of May. As a birthday present we had a marvellous recital of mainly Lizst-Wagner by Tamara-Anna Cislowska – a wonderful performance. After which we enjoyed reminiscences by Richard King (a founder member and second President) and Roger Cruickshank (No.7 who also led the RW birthday toast with some rousing singing), both travelling through the

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

This is the final of the four issues celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the Society. Thank you to everyone who contributed to the Quarterly over the past year and thanks to members who have sent me positive feedback about how much they enjoy the publication. Thankyou Leona and Lis for proof-reading this issue and thanks to members who submitted photos of the 23 May celebrations.

Mike Day
michaeldayarchitect@gmail.com

bubbles from Tasmania and New Zealand. Many foundation members and Honorary Life Members, as well as Immediate Past President Colleen Chesterman, were in attendance. The event progressed towards a conclusion with all the former and present Presidents jointly cutting the superb birthday cake (thanks Barbara de Rome!).

During the birthday celebration we launched the Wagner Tuba sponsorship drive where we seek to raise \$15,000 to help Melbourne Opera purchase two instruments (we've already donated a similar amount to help purchase the first two tubas - heard to great account during "Das Rheingold" in February). This company's Ring venture will culminate in full cycles in 2024 under Maestro Anthony Negus. We will all be there.

So enjoy this bumper issue of the Quarterly, come or zoom into our events, donate towards our causes so that we can continue to present quality events, support Wagnerian ventures and artists whilst enjoying the work of Richard Wagner. Happy listening and reading.

Esteban Insausti
President, Wagner Society in NSW Inc



MESSAGE FROM OUR PATRON SIMONE YOUNG AM

"It is with great pleasure that I congratulate the NSW Wagner Society in its 40th anniversary year. In that time, the Society has supported and assisted many fine young NSW artists, and among the names you read are many Australians who have had or continue to have stellar careers in the opera houses and on the concert stages of the world. John Wegner AO, Deborah Humble, Stuart Skelton, Warwick Fyfe, Jessica Pratt, Jen Condon, Brad Cooper - just some of the names we know and love who were helped in their early years by the wonderful work of the NSW Wagner Society.

Developing the skills and knowledge required for work in any branch of the highly demanding Wagner repertoire takes time, travel and many, many years of study. Without the assistance provided by the NSW Wagner Society, many of these artists may have had to relinquish their cherished dreams of performing this most strenuous of repertoires, and all of our lives would have been so much poorer for it.

I wish the NSW Wagner Society much enjoyment in its 40th year, and continued success in its fine work supporting young artists of NSW."

FUTURE WAGNER SOCIETY EVENTS

SUNDAY 11 JULY - GOETHE INSTITUT

1.00PM ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

2.00PM DR PETER BASSETT PRESENTS A TALK ENTITLED "HURRY AWAY THEN, TOWARDS THE EAST". *THE RING* FROM AN EASTERN PERSPECTIVE.



Dr Peter Bassett is a writer, speaker and broadcaster on opera. He was Dramaturg and Artistic Administrator for the 2004 Adelaide *Ring* and is a regular contributor to the programs of Opera Australia and other companies. He has published widely on Wagner's works, recorded talks on the *Ring* for Decca, and has

lectured in Europe, North America and throughout Australia and New Zealand. He is President of the Wagner Society in Queensland. For two decades Peter served in the Australian diplomatic service and since 2001 he has led 40 overseas tours for Renaissance Tours. Peter is a regular contributor to the Quarterly.



Peter's talk should prepare the ground for the Brisbane *Ring* in October-November, directed and designed by **Chen Shi-Zheng**, seen here with a model of the set

SUNDAY 8 AUGUST - GOETHE INSTITUT

12.30PM DVD *DIE FEEN*



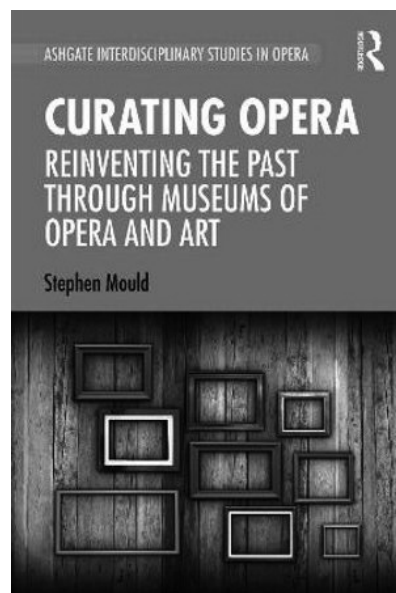
Die Feen (*The Fairies*) was Wagner's first completed opera, composed in 1833 when he was a teenager but never performed in his lifetime. It is a charming fairy tale about the magic of love and music. This delightful (shortened for children to under 50 minutes) performance from the Wiener Staatsoper in 2013 was adapted by **Marc-Aurel Floros**, directed by **Waut Koeken** and conducted by **Kathleen Kerry**

2.00PM STEPHEN MOULD INTRODUCES HIS TWO RECENTLY PUBLISHED BOOKS:

Curating Opera - Reinventing the Past Through Museums of Opera and Art

Curation as a concept and a catchword in modern parlance has, over recent decades, become deeply ingrained in modern culture. The purpose of **Stephen Mould's** study is to explore the curatorial forces at work within the modern opera house and to examine the functionalities and processes that guide them. In turn, comparisons are made with the workings of the traditional art museum, where artworks are studied, preserved, restored, displayed and contextualised – processes which are also present in the opera house. Curatorial roles in each institution are identified and described, and the role of the celebrity art curator is compared with that of the modern stage director, who has acquired previously undreamt-of licence to interrogate operatic works, overlaying them with new concepts and levels of meaning in order to reinvent and redefine the operatic repertoire for contemporary needs.

For members who would like to acquaint themselves with the book before the talk Stephen has an electronic copy, which he is prepared to share through his Dropbox, for a small fee. Stephen has generously agreed to donate the proceeds to the Society. Details of the link will be on our e-news



CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 >



The Marks of a Maestro – Annotating Mozart’s ‘Jupiter’ Symphony

Co-written with
Raymond Holden

While the book is nominally about Mozart’s Jupiter Symphony, it also has a Wagnerian aspect to it – specifically the influence of Wagner’s music dramas upon the revival of the works of Mozart at the turn of the twentieth century, and during Mahler’s tenure in Vienna.

Stephen Mould studied music in Sydney and London, subsequently pursuing a career in opera houses, where he has been employed as a coach, musical assistant, conductor and senior administrator in Germany, Belgium, Australia and the USA. For thirteen years he was a member of the staff of Opera Australia, as a musical assistant, conductor and Head of Music. He is currently senior lecturer in conducting and operatic studies at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, The University of Sydney.



SUNDAY 29 AUGUST - ST COLUMBA

2.00PM CONCERT - ARIADNE’S THREAD A RECITAL OF GERMAN ROMANTIC REPERTOIRE BY PAMELA ANDREWS, JILL SULLIVAN AND MICHAEL CURTAIN



Soprano **Pamela Andrews** is an experienced performer and has appeared as a soloist with several local and Tasmanian orchestras with a repertoire including Beethoven, Dvorak, Haydn and Mozart and many works by contemporary composers. Pamela holds a Master of Music degree (ANU), a Bachelor degree with Honours (University

of Tasmania), Diploma of Music (University of Tasmania) and Associate Diploma of Music (Australian Music Examinations Board). Pamela currently studies with internationally renowned Wagnerian mezzo-soprano **Deborah Humble**, and in 2018 and 2019 was a Finalist in the Sydney International Song Prize. In 2018 and 2019, Pamela performed in the Tasmanian Scenic Opera Tour; performing concerts around the island state in unique settings and historical buildings. Most recently, Pamela has been busy performing with the Opera Australia Chorus in Opera Australia’s seasons of opera, as well as preparing concert projects.

She has performed in the chorus of West Australian Opera, Opera Queensland, recorded for the former Victoria State Opera and was the soloist on the soundtrack for the highly awarded feature film *Fade to White*. In 2016 she joined the chorus of Opera Australia for its Sydney Summer Season and in 2016 she joined the chorus of Opera Australia for its Sydney summer season and returned to them in later years for the company’s first production to be sung in Polish (*Krol Roger*) and *Tosca*.

Jill has a strong commitment to public education in the arts and is sought after as a speaker for pre-concert talks and musical interest groups, facilitating connections between performers, supporters and the community. In 1990 Jill co-founded the Lieder Society of Western Australia (now Art Song Perth), an organisation she still actively supports.



A versatile musician, **Jill Sullivan** has studied piano, violin, and voice. Jill graduated from the University of Manchester with an Honours degree in Arts (Opera Studies) and also holds a Bachelor degree in Medicine from the University of Tasmania and Licentiate Diploma of Music (Singing) A.M.E.B. Jill has performed throughout Australia and has an extensive concert, chamber and recital repertoire.



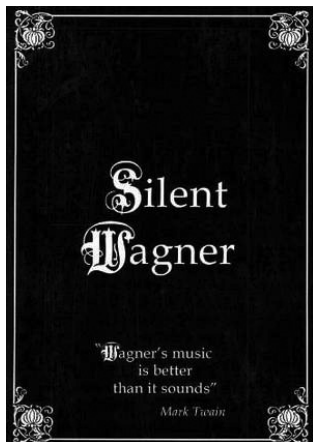
Pianist **Michael Curtain** studied piano performance and accompaniment with **David Miller AM, Clem Leske**, and **Natalia Ricci** at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. He is currently a

repetiteur at Opera Australia and is the musical director for their touring schools program. He has performed in concert with many of Australia’s leading singers, including **Amelia Farrugia, Samuel Dundas, Natalie Aroyan, Anna Dowsley, Jonathan Abernethy**, and **Jane Edwards**. Michael is also a repetiteur for the Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, Sydney Children’s Choir, Sydney University Graduate Choirs, and previously the Tasmanian Chorale and St Mary’s Cathedral (Hobart) as assistant organist. His work with ensembles includes the Sydney Symphony Fellowship, Sinfonia and Sinfonietta, the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra, and currently the Strelitzia Ensemble.

Michael has been an official accompanist for the McDonald’s Sydney Eisteddfod and the Joan Sutherland & Richard Bonyngue Foundation.

SUNDAY 12 SEPTEMBER GOETHE INSTITUT

12.00PM DVD *SILENT WAGNER: 'THE LIFE AND WORKS OF RICHARD WAGNER'*

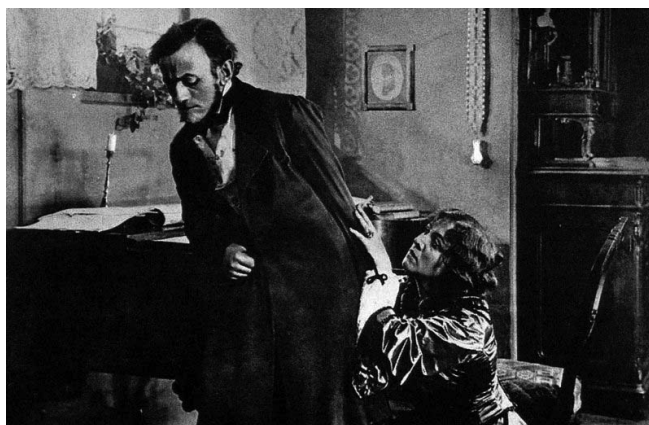


The film *'The Life and Works of Richard Wagner'*, directed by **Carl Fröhlich**, was first released on 20th November 1913. It was the first ever 'bio-pic', and as such about who else but Wagner? What is extraordinary, however, is that it predates **D.W.Griffiths** and *'Birth of a Nation'* (1915), usually described as the first 'long' silent, at a time when the great majority of silents ran for 10 minutes at most.

Fröhlich's film runs for over 80 minutes. The DVD includes commentary from **Tony Palmer**, acclaimed director of the 1983 TV series about Wagner, starring **Richard Burton**.

Starring **Giuseppe Becce** as the composer (he later became a distinguished composer himself for almost 100 talkies), and made when Wagner's widow **Cosima** was still omnipotent in Germany, it raises the question for instance of who exactly was Wagner's father? Was it **Ludwig Geyer**, the Jew? Fröhlich went on to have a chequered career. A member of the Nazi

party from 1933, he was eventually appointed President of the Reichsfilmkammer, the Nazi trade organisation which controlled access to all film activities. At the end of the war he was arrested and, although de-Nazified in 1948, his studio having been badly damaged during the war never resumed production. His films were then confiscated by the Federal Republic. This film has been fully restored from the original print and keeping the authentic tints to ensure it is as close to what Carl Fröhlich would have wanted.



Giuseppe Becce as Wagner

2.00PM TALK BY ANNA-LOUISE COLE



Hailed as "an exceptional young soprano" by Opera magazine UK (February 2017), **Anna-Louise Cole** is an Australian young dramatic soprano, and was a member of Opera Australia's **Moffat Oxenbould** Young Artist Program. For Opera Australia Anna-Louise performed the roles of Gerhilde in *Die Walküre* and the Dritte Norn in *Götterdämmerung* in the 2016 Melbourne *Ring* and she will be Sieglinde in the first two Brisbane *Rings* and Brünnhilde in the third Cycle.



Anna-Louise Cole (in center) in OA's Melbourne Ring

WAGNER SOCIETY E-NEWS

Our regular Wagner Society e-news are emailed to members at the addresses they have provided. Occasionally some members do not appear to have received these emails. This could be because their email address has changed, or emails have been going into their spam or junk mail, or for some other reason. If you feel this applies to you, please let the Membership Secretary know by filling out the Contact us form on the website or by emailing webmaster@wagner.org.au and we will work to resolve this issue.

GENEROUS DONATIONS WERE RECEIVED FROM THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS:

C Bailey, S M Kelly, Julie King, Florian Hammerbacher, Esteban Insausti, Dianna-Rose Orr, Michael Day.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM will be held at the Goethe Institut at 1.00pm on Sunday 11 July. Previous minutes, President's Report, Financial Report and nomination forms will be emailed to members two weeks before.

REPORTS ON RECENT MEETINGS

SUNDAY 21 MARCH 4.00PM via ZOOM

HEATH LEES TALKED TO US FROM NZ ABOUT *WAGNERISM AFTER ALEX ROSS*



on Jewish and Black Wagner, and Feminist and Gay Wagner, (indicating that Wagner actually transcended the problem of race.)

**Wagnerism in America has now been awarded true prominence.*

He suggested a book called *Wagner Nights: An American History* by **Joseph Horowitz**. And goes on to describe a whole chapter devoted to the American author **Willa Cather**. This chapter in the middle of the book is a sort of pause in the relentless history and density of the rest. Ross became quite the Cather devotee!

The second half of the book is more politically oriented, except for the chapters on **Joyce, Eliot and Woolf**.

Finally,

Wagnerism has been thoroughly updated for the 21st Century.

Heath Lees is the most engaging, informed, charming, clear speaker who has a close relationship with Ross and therefore speaks in a particularly connected manner about the subject, which is also his great passion. We are blessed to have him talk to us!

(Just a little while afterwards a friend wrote: ‘just reading Willa Cather’s *“The Song of the Lark”*. It has a theme of opera and the Ring Cycle (which only emerges in the last 100 pages or so) which makes me wonder if you would enjoy the novel. I find the novel a bit odd overall although I think Willa Cather is an outstanding writer. ‘Grist for our mills!’)

Minnie Biggs April 2021

Fifty-seven Wagnerites from as far afield as London joined together on Zoom to listen to the ineffable **Heath Lees** speak to us from New Zealand about *Wagnerism after Alex Ross*. Heath said he thought that word was a bit ominous! (the ‘after’?)

A “new epoch”, Wagner looked at straight in the face, the full phenomenon. What about Wagnerism before Ross? Not ever before, actually, was there study on Wagnerism as such. Was it surprising how ubiquitous Wagner was in the last century? He is the lens for the culture of that time. Lees gave us a few bullet points, around which he spoke; the first was

**Wagnerism is now revealed as a world-wide subject that has extended enormous influence on the art, culture and society of the time.*

He showed a collage of images from a New York book/music show, which Lees then took us through, pretty much encompassing or touching on the contents of the book.

Baudelaire invented Wagner, or appropriated him into his own idea of modernism which led to the second bullet point:

**Wagner is now accepted as signalling the birth of modernism.*

Among much else, Baudelaire wrote to Wagner “I felt that this music was mine.”

Proust used leitmotifs in his work, as did **James Joyce** in a quite different stream of consciousness way. **Isadora Duncan** danced Wagner essence.

More than one thousand films used his music, (mostly the Ride.)

Lees then took us to the chapter titles, the first where Ross’s language about music- the most beautiful- soars. He went on to how each country saw him through their own different eyes. Most curious or unexpected might be the chapters

EDITOR’S NOTE

An exciting aspect of Heath’s presentation was the inclusion of video clips from a Zoom conversation between him and Alex Ross, which was an excellent warm up for Alex’s Zoom session with us on 6 June.

The meeting was introduced by President Esteban Insausti, who welcomed visitors from New York, London, New Zealand and around Australian and was summed up with thanks from Past President Roger Cruickshank (in New Zealand).

PS I urge everyone to read the book – its available in Paperback and I found it to be a really fascinating read.

Mike Day

SUNDAY 18 APRIL 2.00PM - GOETHE INSTITUT PROF THEA BREJZEK TALKED ABOUT REVOLUTIONARY SWISS STAGE DESIGNER ADOLPHE APPIA

On Sunday 18 April an enthusiastic group of 40 members and friends gathered at the Goethe Institut for the first time in 18 months to watch a DVD and listen to a talk. We were warmly welcomed by the Director of the Institut, **Sonja Griegoschewski**, who congratulated the Society on reaching our 40th anniversary. We have been using the Institut as our base for 30 years and Sonja expressed the wish that we will continue for another 40.

The talk was followed by refreshments provided by members of the committee plus champagne very generously provided by Sonja.



Professor Thea Brejzek

ADOLPHE APPIA AND THE EMERGENCE OF SCENOGRAPHY

Professor Thea Brejzek, Professor in Interior Architecture at the University of Technology Sydney

Prof Brejzek started with the influence on the theoretical writings of **Adolphe Appia** (1862 – 1928) of Wagner’s proposal in *Artwork of the Future* (1849) for a Gesamtkunstwerk (total artwork). In turn Appia’s ideas influenced **Wieland Wagner’s** restaging of

the operas in Bayreuth after the war. She talked about Appia’s early reactions to Bayreuth’s staging and his designs for *Tristan* and *Parsifal*. His revolutionary use of lighting and new technology to create atmosphere to support the actor changed the practice of scenography forever. An interesting video clip illustrated Appia’s Festival Theatre in Hellerau, Dresden, where he worked with architects, designers, musicians and choreographers turning his theoretical concepts into theatrical reality. Through the use of control of light intensity, colour and manipulation, Appia created a new perspective of scene design and stage lighting. Appia’s work has been a great inspiration to the innovative director **Robert Wilson**, who has designed iconic productions around the world for the

past 50 years. Thea ended with some exciting new developments in Virtual and Augmented Reality which are being used by directors to bring theatre to audiences in new ways.

Due to technical issues Thea was unable to show many slides but her vivid verbal description, based on her experiences in the theatre, brought her talk alive. Her talk and slides are available on the Society’s website. Below is a selection of images and excerpts from various other writings that give a background to the talk.



Director Sonja Griegoschewski

Appia and Bayreuth

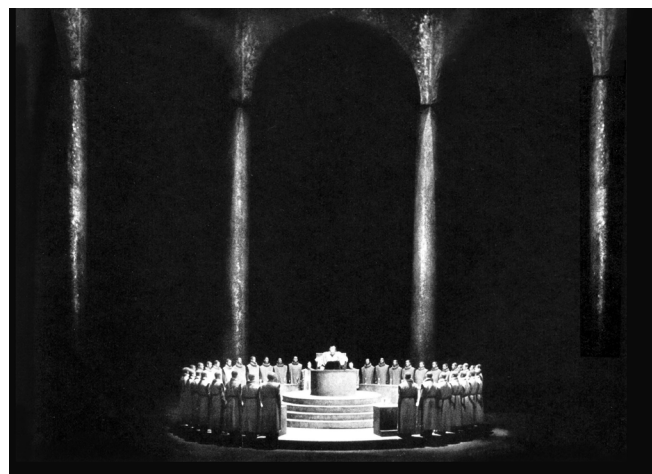
...On his first visit to Bayreuth in 1882, the Swiss producer, Adolphe Appia, declared: ‘If every aspect of the auditorium expresses Wagner’s genius, everything the other side of the footlights contradicts it’. This criticism was echoed by G.B. Shaw. Although Wagner was the greatest dramatist of the nineteenth century, his naturalistic stagings came to be regarded as backward-looking. Yet there were some who regarded the 1882 production of *Parsifal* as definitive; the increasingly dilapidated sets for that production were used until 1930.

When **Winifred Wagner** tried to introduce a new staging, Wagner’s daughters **Eva** and **Daniela** circulated a petition, which declared that the original sets on which the eyes of the Master had reposed possessed a timeless validity and must be preserved. This petition received the signatures of, among others, Richard Strauss, Toscanini and Newman.

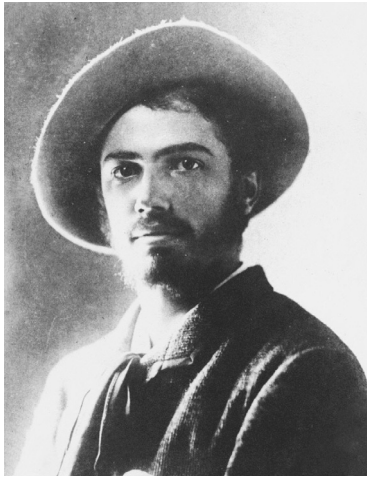
At the reopening of the Bayreuth Festival in 1951, Wieland Wagner shocked the Wagnerian world by adopting, in his new



Adolphe Appia *Parsifal* 1920



Wieland Wagner *Parsifal* 1951



Adolphe Appia

staging of *Parsifal*, the minimalist ideas set out by Appia in his Basle staging of *Die Walküre*. Appia had seen that a naturalistic pictorial representation, no matter how skillful, was unsuitable for Wagner's music. He preferred fully three-dimensional, semi-representational sets and exploited the developing technology of stage lighting, just

as Richard Wagner surely would have done. Under Appia's influence, Wieland turned the operas inside out, preferring at first abstraction and later a pervasive psychological symbolism to bring out the (Jungian and Freudian) mythic dimensions of the works. **Ernest Newman** wrote in the Sunday Times: "This was not only the best *Parsifal* I have ever seen and heard but one of the three or four most moving spiritual experiences of my life."

Excerpt from *Montsalvat – The Parsifal Pages* by **Derrick Everett** <https://www.monsalvat.no/parsifal-staging.htm>

Theory

...Before his (**Gordon Craig's**) influence was felt, however, Adolphe Appia, probably the most powerful theorist of the new movement, had written his remarkable book, *Die Musik und die Inszenierung*. In this, as an artist, he attempted to deduce from the content of the Wagner music dramas the proper stage settings for them..... Appia started with the principle that the setting should make the actor the all-important fact on the stage. He saw the realistic impossibility of the realistic setting, and destructively analysed the current modes of lighting and perspective effects. But, unlike the members of the more conventional modern school, he insisted that the stage is a three-dimensional space and must be handled so as to make

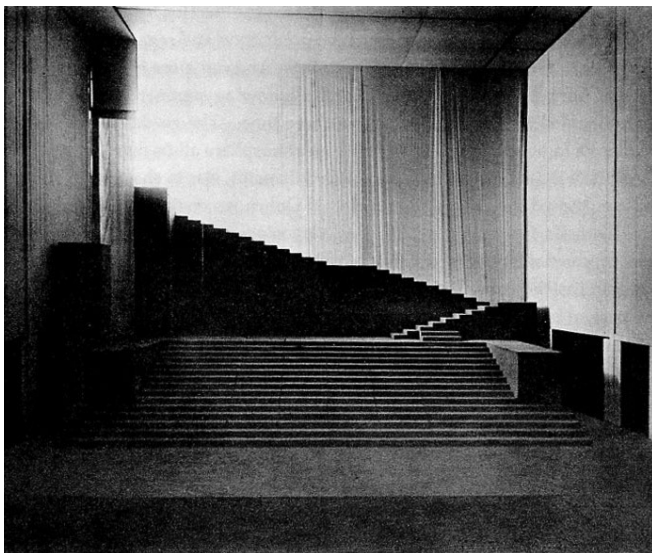
its depth living. He felt a contradiction between the living actor and the dead setting. He wished to bind them into one whole - the drama. How was this to be done? Appia's answer to this question is his chief claim to greatness- genius almost. His answer was-"By means of the lighting."

The lighting, for Appia, is the spiritual core, the soul of the drama. The whole action should be contained in it, somewhat as we feel the physical body of a friend to be contained in his personality. Appia's second great principle is closely connected with this. While the setting is obviously inanimate, the actor must in every way be emphasised and made living. And this can be accomplished, he says, only by a wise use of lighting, since it is the lights and shadows on a human body which reveal to our eyes the fact that the body is "plastic"-that is, a flexible body of three dimensions. Appia would make the setting suggest only the atmosphere, not the reality of the thing it stands for, and would soften and beautify it with the lights. The actor he would throw constantly into prominence while keeping him always a part of the scene. All the elements and all the action of the drama he would bind together by the lights and shadows. With the most minute care each detail of lighting, each position of each character, in Appia's productions is studied out so that the dramatic meaning shall always be evident.

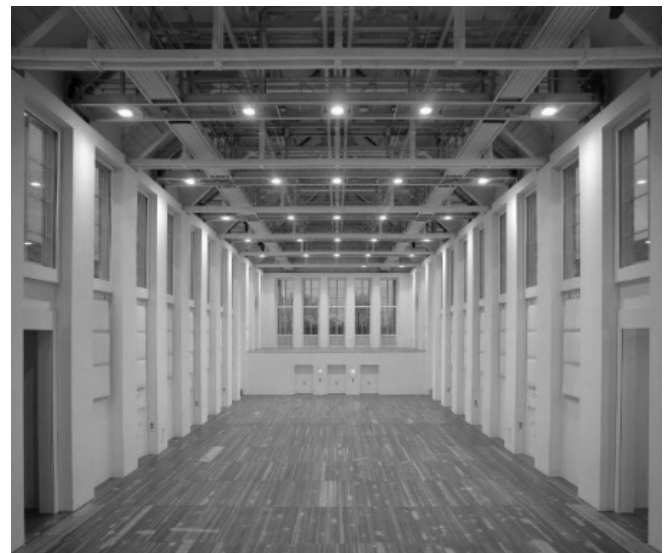
Extract from an analysis of Appia by **Hiram Kelly Moderwell** in his book, *The Theatre of To-day* Published by John Lane in 1914

Hellerau

The Hellerau Festival Theatre was built in 1911 to a design by the architect **Heinrich Tessenow**. Tessenow's plan was to bring to life the visions of the stage designer Adolphe Appia and the music educator Émile Jaques-Dalcroze in a layout that was to point the way for modernism with its clear lines and functional structure. This building was a visionary alternative to all traditional theatres: featuring a retractable orchestra pit, freely combinable stage elements and rows of audience seating, Appia's hall did not have any permanent fittings – neither a stage nor a curtain – making it a



Adolphe Appia *Orpheus & Eurydice* 2013

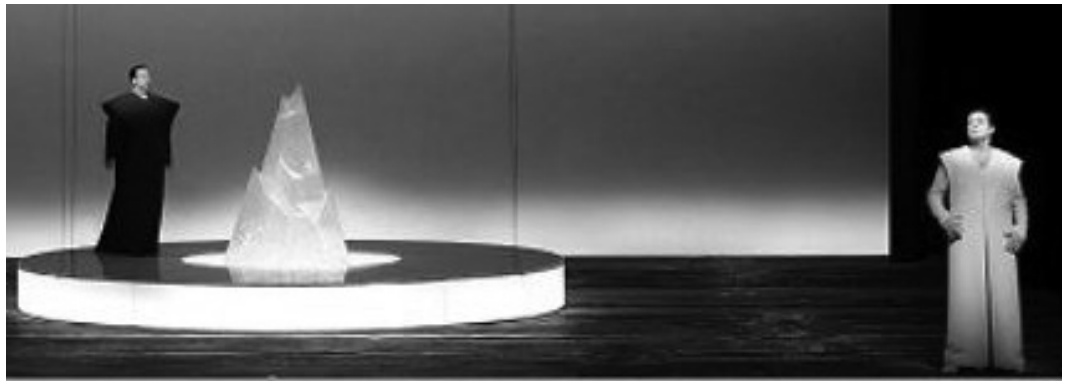


Hellerau Festspielhaus interior

“cathedral of the future” (Appia) in which the audience and performers were supposed to merge into spiritual and sensory unity. The real curiosity, however, was the lighting concept developed by the Georgian painter and stage designer Alexander von Salzmann. The ceiling and walls were lined with white waxed

sheets of cloth, behind which thousands of bulbs produced a diffuse indefinite light that rid the room of every last grain of naturalism, bathing it in transparency and transcendence.

The teachings of **Émile Jaques-Dalcroze** also offered an alternative to previous dance and theatre traditions: they revolved around the “man in motion” who, by deliberately exercising his rhythmic abilities, was brought up to be a holistic individual who incorporated art, work and life all at once, who not only “knew” but also “felt”. **Wolf Dohrn**, a close friend of **Karl Schmidt**, met Émile Jaques-Dalcroze and brought him to Hellerau. The newly founded educational institution quickly became a success, with Dalcroze starting lessons as early on as October 1910. At the first public school fête in the summer of 1912, known as the “Festival”, the students performed scenes from Gluck’s “*Orpheus and Eurydice*” before 500 journalists and an audience of more than 4,000, as well as improvisation and group exercises. At the second festival a year later, an audience of 5,000 in the Festival Theatre then watched a full performance of “Orpheus and Eurydice”. The viewers included **G.B. Shaw, Oskar Kokoschka, Stefan Zweig, Max Reinhardt, Franz Werfel, Rainer Maria Rilke, Paul Claudel, Gerhart Hauptmann** and many other European intellectuals. The radically new staging approach at the Festival Theatre was diametrically opposed to the traditions on the stage of the Semper Opera House, in the centre of Dresden. Alongside disapproval, it also met with great enthusiasm and sparked interest throughout Europe. Hellerau, then a suburb of Dresden, became, and remains, a centre for European modernism. <https://www.hellerau.org/en/history/>



Robert Wilson *Parsifal* Act 1 Los Angeles 2005 (Recreation of 1991 production) Mark Swed

Robert Wilson

Robert Wilson (born 1941) is the supreme example of director as scenic writer. He draws on a wide variety of artistic sources, from symbolism to the visionary architecture of the late twentieth century, from surrealist dream imagery to post-modern choreography and the perceptual modes of so-called ‘maladjusted’ children. He is unique in his uncompromising fidelity to the realisation of his own visions in performance, fuelled by a quasi-mystical belief in the therapeutic power of art as a stimulus to the individual imagination. He takes his place in the tradition of visionary mystics and romantic innovators of the last 150 years which has its origins in the ‘music drama’ of Richard Wagner and subsequently in the theories of **Edward Gordon Craig**. Wagner’s principle theoretical legacy is the concept of the Gesamtkunstwerk: a synthesis of disparate art forms — dance and movement, light, design, music — into a total work of art.

Bradby D., Williams D. (1988) Robert Wilson. In: Directors’ Theatre. Modern Dramatists. Palgrave, London.

Review of Robert Wilson’s *Parsifal*

Beginning with a hallucinatory sunrise, slow as real time, the lighting never once loses its spellbinding magic over five hours. In an atmosphere of such visual perfection, Wilson enacts “*Parsifal*” mainly in a drama of color and luminosity, which serves both to bring the music psychedelically close and simultaneously distance the drama vastly.

Excerpt from review in Los Angeles Times by **Mark Swed** March 1991

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SUNDAY 6 JUNE 11.00AM via ZOOM - A CONVERSATION WITH ALEX ROSS

Zoom meeting with THE **Alex Ross** and OUR **David Larkin**

Report by Minnie Biggs

Fifty-two guests from NZ and the east and west coasts of USA and Australia enjoyed listening to 'the most significant music critic in the world', Alex Ross, author of *WAGNERISM - Art and Politics in the Shadow of Music*, as described and introduced by David Larkin.

In response to the question, Ross spoke of his background. He was quite slow coming to Wagner. His family of music listeners and goers did not include Wagner operas among their records, and when Alex took out an LP of Lohengrin from the public library, aged about 12, (! My exclamation point) he wasn't sure what to make of it. It did not stick. Finally at college, listening to more opera. he was still a bit skeptical, and not until he heard live performances at the Met did it really hit him.

Larkin asked about why he (deliberately) chose to leave Wagner as a person out of this book, and why he did not speak about his influence on musicians, and composers, rather than focusing on all other branches of the arts. Because, he felt, while Wagner did influence later composers, he did not exert any more influence than many others, such as Bach, whereas his influence outside music was widely, wildly extensive.

Interesting discussion as to whether Wagner's influence came out of the times, or from himself personally: a bit of both. No question that his artistic capacity and as a potent dramatist around structural action was unique to him. But the times, the late 19th century, were times of great change and transformation.

Also exploring the differences in the nationalist reception of Wagner: the French and the German characters evident while the Americans embraced the wide-open possibilities.

What might be CORE in view of the always conflicting power and ambiguity, vagueness in Wagner and his writings? The almost deliberate confusion he dwelt in?

Myth. Only and succinctly the Power of Myth. Myth can be adapted by anyone. Anywhere. Any peoples. Any time. All times.

About the subtleness of indirect influence, that many artists who were not actually aware of him, nevertheless, whose work fell into a sort of echo or perhaps resemblance to Wagner, such as Yeats, Whitman. As distinct from those who were confessedly Wagnerites, such as Mann, Joyce and Cather.

Gesamtkunstwerk, Wagner only used the word 5 times, yet it was so often taken up that Wagner was tired of it, even in his lifetime. (My personal observation is that his work WAS it, and that is enough.)

At a page in the 300s Ross says that Wagner's influence had hit its peak at the beginning of World War I. So, what



happened in the next 300 pages? And to bring us up to date? Indeed, it shifted and often in more dangerous ways- the German nation, and of course a lot about Nazism, and how and to what extent all that is to be considered. That ambiguity comes back into play, with the Nazis picking and choosing what they wanted to use, discarding the religiosity of Parsifal, ignoring Wagner's anti-Semitism, which was certainly well known; it was not useful to Hitler. Whom Ross describes as a 'helpless fan' of Wagner. Later, post WW2, Wagner was seen as the wounded artist.

David Larkin was terrific. He asked and explored bigger and deeper than anyone heretofore. How I'd love to be a fly on the wall for their next hour of conversation!

Finally, some questions- about hero worship and Wagner's liking to cross dress, and the homosexuals in his family, son and grandson: he was not critical, rather sympathetic, clearly ahead of his time. Later Bayreuth became a Mecca for gays. so, that, of course, later still he would be attacked for his (not) pro- gay stance.

Lastly, nothing Wagner did was non - political, even Tristan which Ross had said was a refuge from politics. The Ring is claimed by the Left and the Right and the Middle. Altogether political.

Finally, Ross said that writing his book *WAGNERISM* has been the greatest education of his life.

Larkin responded: reading the book *WAGNERISM* will be the greatest education of our lives.

Minnie Biggs, June 6 2021



SUNDAY 23 MAY - ST COLUMBA COMMUNITY CENTRE, OCEAN ST, WOOLLAHRA

2.00PM - WAGNER-LISZT PIANO RECITAL BY TAMARA-ANNA CISLOWSKA

PROGRAMME

STRAUSS (arr. Grainger): *Ramble on The Rose-Bearer (Der Rosenkavalier)*

WAGNER (arr. Liszt): *Recitative and Romance from Tannhäuser 'Evening Star'*

JOE HISAISHI: 'The Road to the Valley' from *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*

LISZT: *R.W. - Venezia*

LISZT: *Am grabe Richard Wagners*

WAGNER (arr. Liszt): *Elsa's Dream*

WAGNER (arr. Liszt): *Isolde's Liebestod*

VERDI (arr. Liszt): *Paraphrase on Rigoletto*

3.00PM - WAGNER'S BIRTHDAY PARTY AND CELEBRATION OF THE SOCIETY'S 40th ANNIVERSARY

(Originally planned for August 2020 but rescheduled because of Covid-19 lockdowns)

In his introduction to the event President **Esteban Insausti** (Member No 443) reminded us that Tamara-Anna's first mentor and champion was the distinguished Wagner expert **Werner Baer MBE**. He was a much-loved foundation member and first Honorary Life Member of the Society and he gave the very first talk to the Society on 6 July 1981. The first function was on 9 March 1981 in the AMP theatre - a film about the Bayreuth Centenary. The first AGM was held on 22 May 1981 (see copy of the Minutes elsewhere in the Quarterly).

After the recital Tamara-Anna was thanked by Esteban and presented with Brangayne wines by past Vice President, Honorary Life Member and current Artists' Liaison **Leona Geeves** (87). Esteban then welcomed Honorary Life Members and Past Presidents **Richard King** (15) (who we flew up from Hobart), **Roger Cruickshank** (669) (who we flew over from Auckland) and **Dr Colleen Chesterman** (649). Other Honorary Life Members present included **Professor Michael Ewans** (Member No 0), **Dr Dennis Mather** (696) (Past Treasurer) and **Dr Terence Watson** (657) (Past



Tamara-Anna Cislowska

Quarterly Editor). Also most welcome were Foundation Members **Dr Susan Kelly** (04) (our first Vice President), **Julie King** (07), **Clare** (our first secretary) and **Margaret Hennessy** (19) and **Jenny Ferns** (34). A special welcome was given to iconic Australian Contralto **Lauris Elms AM OBE** in the audience.

RICHARD KING

At the 40th celebrations Past President and Honorary Life Member **Richard King** spoke to us about his introduction to classical music as a boy and his early interest in the Esoteric, Theosophy and Eurhythmics. Richard told us how from an early age he was interested in the deep underlying philosophical and spiritual truths of the myths, rather than the superficial aspects of a singer's personality or technique or a director's neuroses. He mentioned three seminal publications that influenced his thinking and that he believes still have great relevance to the understanding of Wagner and the grand scheme of things. These are detailed below. All are available from Amazon. Richard's book **Synchronicity and Dreaming: Guidance for our Lives** was introduced in the December 2019 Quarterly.

Aspects of Wagner by **Bryan Magee** 1988 The man whom W.H. Auden called 'perhaps the greatest genius

that ever lived' has inspired extremes of adulation and loathing. In this penetrating analysis, Bryan Magee outlines the range and depth of Wagner's achievement, and shows how his sensational and erotic music expresses the repressed and highly charged contents of the psyche.

For Freedom Destined by **Franz E. Winkler** 1974 An in-depth study of the text and music of Wagner's Ring and Parsifal from the perspective of our human potential to evolve toward greater capacity for freedom.

Mysteries of the Great Operas by **Max Heindel** 2013 This Early Work by Max Heindel takes a look at the mystical significance of five famous operas: 'Faust', 'Parsifal', 'The Ring of The Niebelung', 'Tannhauser' and 'Lohengrin'. It is yet another classic piece of occult literature by the renowned Danish mystic.



A LETTER TO THE EDITOR FROM JENNY FERNS

23 May 2021

Oh, what a lovely party!

Although it seems like only yesterday, to-day we celebrated the Wagner Society in NSW Inc.'s 40th birthday, (as well as Richard Wagner's 208th birthday).

Members and friends, old and new, came together at St Columba Community Centre in Woollahra to mark the occasion.

It was framed around a brilliant piano recital by prominent pianist and broadcaster Tamara-Anna Cislowska. Playing a Yamaha Grand piano, Tamara-Anna gave the instrument such a work-out as it has probably never experienced before. It, and her performance, rose to the occasion with flying colours.

Many other highlights took place during the celebrations, all managed with flawless organization by Society President Esteban Insausti, together with experienced competent committee members, and other member luminaries who were gathered together for the first time.

Speakers and special guests and committee members and conscripts were all acknowledged for their major contributions over the years. The key speaker was past President and Honorary Life Member Richard King. Now hailing from Tasmania, Richard reminded us, in great detail, of the founding events of the organization in Sydney with the wholehearted support he and co-founder, Dr. Leonard Hansen, had from the Verband and the London Wagner Society in sharing their Constitution, around which the NSW Wagner Society's constitution is based. The impact of Wagner's operas and music, including the legends on which many are based, has motivated further study and interest over many years, for Richard and many others ever since.

Clare and Margaret Hennessy brought along albums of photos and memorabilia from various trips to the Bayreuth Festival, recording meetings with famous celebrities during autograph opportunities in their time-out. It is proposed to have these images scanned for placement in the Society's website.

As is typical of the Society's celebrations, a well-run Raffle is an integral part for fund-raising. This time was no exception. With the ambition to raise funds to contribute to the purchase of another two Wagner Tubas to present to the Melbourne Opera Company for next year's "*Die Walküre*" production, people were invited to buy plenty of tickets. Generally, the prizes consist of valuable, pre-loved, donated items from a wide source, mostly Wagner related books, programmes, CDs, DVDs etc.

Past President Roger Cruickshank gave a witty speech about some of the trials and tribulations of the Society and proposed the Birthday toast to the Master, followed by singing Happy Birthday to the Master and to the Society.

This was topped off with the "icing on the cake" in the form of a magnificent, especially baked chocolate layer cake with fondant embellished with a portrait of Richard Wagner himself, prepared by past Secretary Barbara de Rome. This was formally cut by the three former Presidents and the current President and ceremoniously demolished and distributed by the chef herself. A masterful piece of construction and destruction. The afternoon tea, prepared by Committee members and accompanied by suitable beverages, covered a wide range of sweet and savoury delicacies, ranging from vegan and gluten-free to cheese platters and sweets, to suit all tastes.

I look forward to the next decade and another party like this one to celebrate the 50th Jubilee with all those who were there to-day to be joined by the next generation of Wagner lovers and additional newly enrolled Society members.

Roll on May 22, 2031.!

Best wishes,

Jennifer Ferns



Jenny with her raffle prize



Birthday cake baked by Barbara de Rome



LEONA GEEVES REMEMBERS: THE FIRST DECADE

Thinking back over the 40 years of the Wagner Society in NSW made me realise that it has been part of my life for almost the whole of that time – at first in attending events and more lately organising those events – talks and concerts, and seminars, and promoting young singers and working out the processes by which we can assist them, by approving the applications for funding from young and emerging singers and creatives.

Intro

I think my first knowledge of the Wagner Society came when I saw an ad in the Herald for a session – lecture with piano examples, on I think Wagner themes, at the AMP Theatre at Circular Quay (now sadly demolished). It was led by the wonderful musician, Werner Baer MBE (who had worked with my father at 2CH and later at the ABC.) He was an eminent musician and composer and one of the Jewish refugee composers). His session had, I seem to recall, pianist Bill Lloyd playing the Leitmotifs.

Early Days: Concordia Club

I recall lengthy recorded sessions (vinyl LPs of course) combined with much coffee and possibly alcohol at the German Concordia Club, at Stanmore, near Newington. These were organised by committee member, Jean-Louis Stuurup. They were great sessions of wonderful music and camaraderie and interesting committed people. And I think over time I would have heard all the mainstream Wagner operas.

Earliest Days: The Print Room

In March 1982, I met Richard King at his gallery, **The Print Room**, - the **Wagner Society HQ** – Dowling Street, Woolloomooloo, when my late father, popular historian Philip Geeves, launched the Robert Emerson Curtis book of sketches on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. There was such a crowd that we all gathered in Dowling Street and my father launched the book from the upstairs verandah! This was a happy introduction to the then Wagner Team and HQ, and I joined up gladly. My membership number is 87, and it would have been 1982 when I joined.

The programs in the early years of the Society were intense but maybe that was because it was before the days of the internet and streamed services, and life was simpler. The program embraced talks, seminars, recitals, receptions, dinners and opera performances both in Sydney and the Eastern seaboard. There were two tours to Bayreuth, organised by Neutral Bay Travel, but I will leave those for another time.

The Print Room hosted many events, often revolving around Wagner performances in Sydney. Donald McIntyre was in Australia to play Hans Sachs in the 1988 *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. But he had been at an event earlier at the Print Room. The new German Vice Consul had been invited as a guest to one of these events. The President was introducing the guest of honour and acknowledging various people including the new German Vice Consul – he nodded to an older distinguished man, who looked a bit confused, and kept nodding towards him. Finally, a young smartly dressed woman introduced herself as the Vice Consul. It was very funny.

Other venues we patronised were the Goethe Institut, until it had renovations in the 1980s when the Society had to acquire a range of venues, such as the Opera Centre on Elizabeth Street, the Metcalfe Auditorium at the State Library of NSW, and the Church in the Marketplace at Bondi Junction. The annual dinners took place in



Mary Watts, Leona Geeves, Peters Cousens at an Annual Dinner



Werner Baer MBE



Leonie Rysanek & John Shaw, *Tosca* Sydney 1983. Photo prov: Brian Castles-Onion AM



Rita Hunter CBE



a range of large hotels in Sydney, including the Menzies at Wynyard, the Sebel Townhouse in Elizabeth Bay, and the Southern Cross (now The Vibe, near Central).

Talks And Seminars

The Society celebrated the return of various singers from Germany and we heard tenor, Connell Byrne, who was returning for a season with the Tasmanian Opera Company in 1983, talk on the challenges facing a tenor in Wagnerian roles. We also heard him sing on another occasion.

In 1983 there was a reception for Kenneth Neate (formerly known as the Singing Policeman), an Australian Wagnerian tenor, who had had a long career in Germany, had sung at Bayreuth and was Professor of Voice at the Richard Strauss Conservatorium of Music, Munich. Ken was returning to Australia to judge the Metropolitan Opera Auditions. He spoke about the 'Wagner Voice' at the Print Room, in Woolloomooloo.

In the very early days the Society's then Patron, Sir Charles Mackerras, spoke on 'Love or power – The fatal choice', at the Qantas Theatre in George Street. Some years later, local author, Nancy Phelan launched her biography of Sir Charles; *Charles Mackerras : a musicians' musician*.

We saw videos of Wagner performances and interviews with singers and directors. We had interesting seminars on every popular Wagner opera and some Strauss ones as well, such as in 1985, on Strauss' *Elektra* including such speakers as Richard Toop (Conservatorium); 'Richard Strauss – the man and his music;' 'Aspects of Greek Drama' by Professor Michael Ewans (University of Newcastle); 'On performing Elektra' by Richard Armstrong (conductor, Welsh National Opera) demonstrated by aspects of the 1982 film of the opera with Leonie Rysanek.

There was a 1987 seminar on *Lohengrin*: - 'Cuts and Omissions in Performances' by Dr Leonard Hansen 'A Musical analysis of *Lohengrin*' by Professor Dennis Hennig 'Myths of the Holy Grail and the Swan Knight' by Professor Andrew Riemer with a panel discussion on the *Lohengrin* production comprising as well Maestro Stuart Challender and Elizabeth Connell. The Swan's farewell was sung by Virginia Lamb, followed by a reception for Elizabeth Connell.

We had a group booking for that *Lohengrin* at the opera house. Often allied to seminars we had group bookings at concerts and staged performances of Wagner in the Concert Hall. These became like a mini-Bayreuth and instead of the overpriced buffets provided by the SOH, members and friends took their own hampers and camped on the steps of the opera house discussing the finer points of the performance over pâté and cheese and other culinary delights.

A 1989 seminar on *Die Walküre* with speakers, such as Dennis Hennig - the score - - Professor Andrew Riemer - the myths on which the Ring is based - Discussion panel - speakers plus Donald Shanks and John Wegner, chaired by member Arthur Carter (who also produced the Wagner Society programs on public radio station, 2 MBSFM (now Fine Music)).

Another seminar, this time on *Tannhäuser* with speakers: Werner Baer MBE who discussed the opera and some musical aspects - John Clifton-Everest - 'The German lure of the Venusberg' and the wonderful Sandra Hahn who sang *Elizabeth's Greeting* and *Elizabeth's Prayer*.

We were all very excited when the Government of Western Germany gave Sydney a bicentennial gift in 1988 of *Die*

Meistersinger von Nürnberg. We had a seminar with the following speakers: Dennis Hennig, (Conservatorium of Music): Analysis of the opera - Dr Ken Moulden (Department of Germanic Studies, Sydney University): Analysis of the libretto - Brian Taylor (Department of Germanic Studies, Sydney University): Historical mastersingers - Sir Charles Mackerras: The opera's demands on a musician and how he would be approaching conducting the opera. - Dr Leonard Hansen introduced members of the cast: Helena Doese, Eva, Paul Frey, Walter, John Wegner, Nightwatchman, and Reinhard Heinrich, costume designer, and Heather Begg. This was followed by a champagne reception.

This continued onto an annual dinner at the Menzies Hotel, at Wynyard, where we had Reinhard Heinrich as a guest of honour, (he sketched my portrait on a menu, when I asked for his autograph). John Wegner sang and was outrageously funny. The Society had sponsored him as a young singer and he greatly valued the connection and we became like his Sydney family. We had earlier had Michael Hampe, from Cologne Opera, speaking to us - he was the director on that production. That same year at the Christmas party the delightful John Wegner, talked to us about his time in Europe as winner of the 1987 Bayreuth Scholarship, for which we were a major sponsor.

Over the years, we had talks by Arthur Carter and Michael Tesoriero playing old recordings of Wagner singers; Noel Staunton, Technical Administrator, Australian Opera; baritone and opera tour leader, Robert Gay on 'Liszt and Wagner'; Prof. Andrew Riemer - 'Wagner's Ring: How German is it?' Moffatt Oxenbould, Artistic Director, Australian Opera, on the AO's Wagner repertoire, Alison Gyger (Jones) talking on Wagnerian opera in Australia, and Simone Young. Active member, Arthur Carter and Ramon Josey also spoke on 'Wagnerian Singers in Australia'; Robert Gay gave a presentation on Wagner's early operas: *Die Feen*, *Das Liebesverbot* and *Rienzi*. Wagner Lieder weren't forgotten and member and musician, Dorothy McCormack, spoke eloquently about them.

Dinners

There was a memorable dinner at the Wentworth, where the Society's Honorary Life membership was bestowed on Leonie Rysanek, who was in Sydney to sing *Tosca*, with her husband, Ernst-Ludwig Gausmann.

The 1985 annual dinner celebrated Rita Hunter, who sang and entertained guests with amusing tales about productions and her life. She was awarded Honorary Life Membership of the Society for her services to the Wagner tradition in Australia. Werner Baer MBE accompanied Rita on the piano and performed a transcription of 'Happy birthday for Richard'. And Michel Arnould, our Secretary, who worked in fashion, created a flowing hot pink kaftan for Rita and gifted it to her.

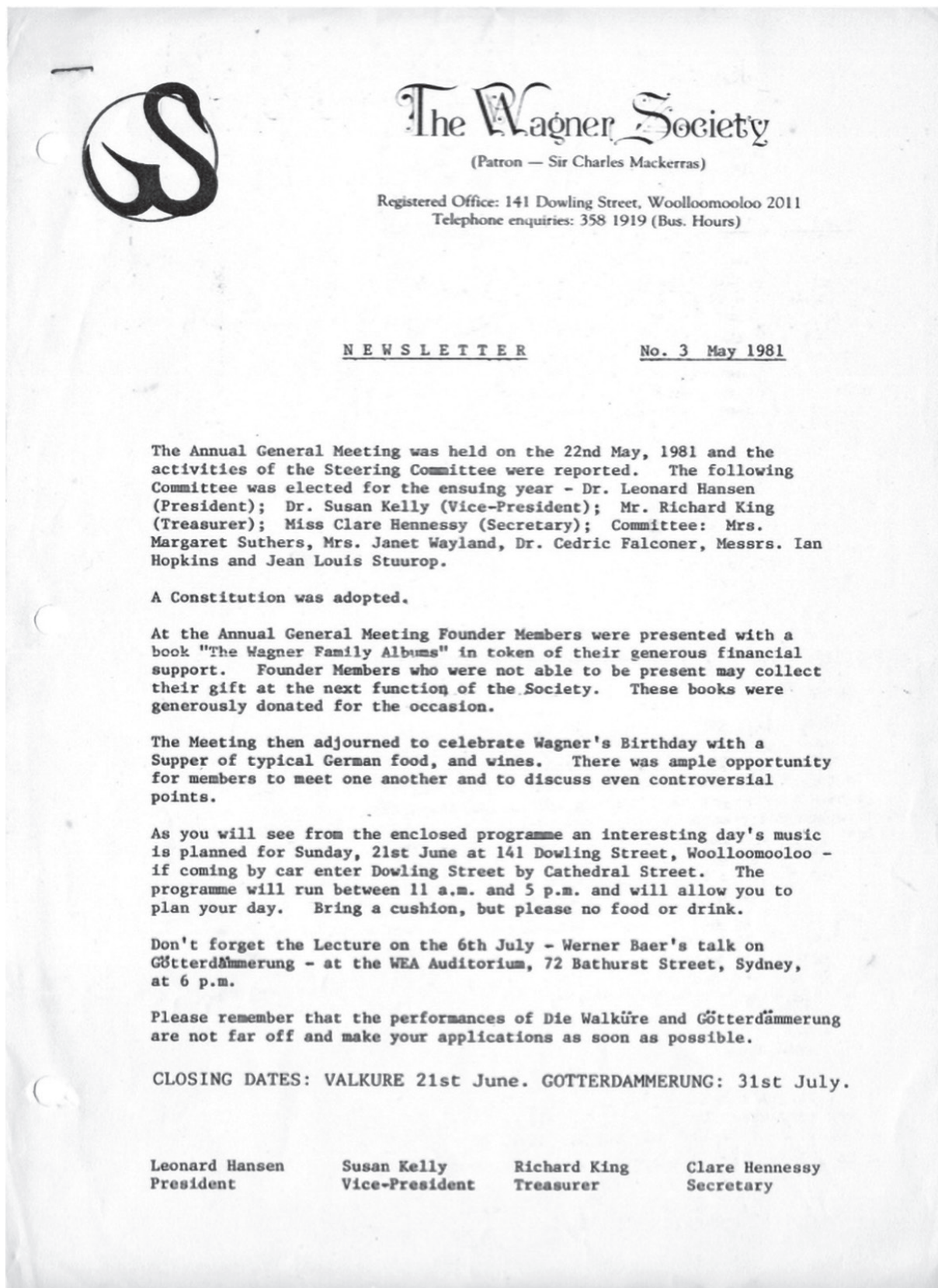
Another dinner, in 1986, was for tenor Ronald Dowd, who sang *Tannhäuser's* narration, accompanied by Werner Baer MBE, and later, talked about the early days of opera in Australia and his exploits throughout his long career.

Other dinners celebrated iconic local Wagnerian artists, such as Raymond Myers, Robert Allmann, Conal Coad, and John Pringle, and opera administrator, Moffatt Oxenbould. By the mid 90s the dinners had morphed into lunches and Wagner's birthday luncheon guest of honour was politician and music lover, Bob Carr at the Ritz Carlton.



CELEBRATING 40 YEARS 1980 - 2020

NEWSLETTER NO 3, MAY 1981 REPORTING ON THE AGM HELD ON 22 MAY 1981

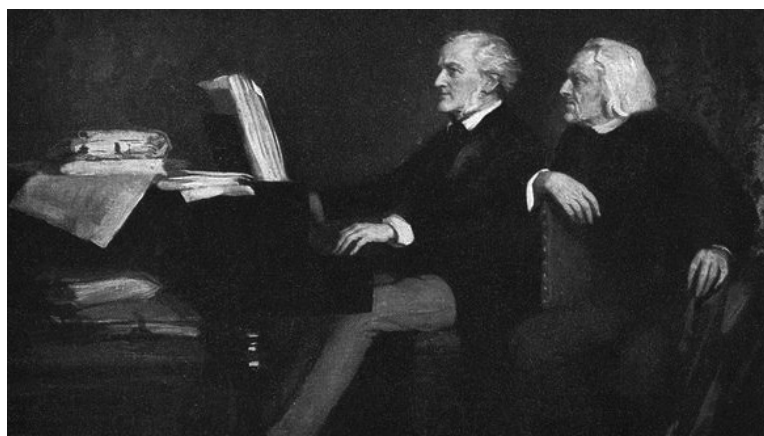


SORROW GONDOLA: THE MUSIC AND POETRY OF WAGNER'S LAST DAYS

By Marie Leech



Ca' Vendramin Calergi



Wagner and Liszt

Wagner completed *Parsifal* in January 1882, and a second Bayreuth Festival was held for the new opera, which premiered on 26 May. Wagner was by this time extremely ill, having suffered a series of increasingly severe angina attacks. During the sixteenth and final performance of *Parsifal* on 29 August 1882, he entered the pit unseen during act 3, took the baton from conductor Hermann Levi, and led the performance to its conclusion.

After the festival, the Wagner family journeyed to Venice for the winter. Wagner died of a heart attack at the age of 69 on 13 February 1883 at Ca' Vendramin Calergi, a 16th-century palazzo on the Grand Canal.

The long funeral procession to Bayreuth began with the funeral gondola bearing Wagner's remains over the Grand Canal to Venice's Santa Lucia railway station and from there to Germany where he was buried in the garden of the Villa Wahnfried in Bayreuth.

Music: Franz Liszt: La Lugubre Gondola

The genesis of *La Lugubre Gondola* is well documented in letters from which we know that Liszt was Wagner's guest in the Palazzo Vendremin on the Grand Canal in Venice in late 1882. While there, Liszt saw a procession of black-draped funeral gondolas and may have had a premonition there of Wagner's death. This was the inspiration for the first version of the work: a piano piece. This piece was recomposed the next month, in January 1883, and very shortly thereafter arranged for violin or cello and piano. The piano version was published in 1885 - the only version published in Liszt's lifetime - and is known as *La Lugubre Gondola II*. A short letter from Liszt in 1885 tells something of his feelings about the composition:

Letter from Liszt to Ferdinand Taborszky, 1885

First of all, dear friend, will you be so kind as to go to my house with Frau von Fabry? I stupidly forgot there—in the bedroom, *not* in the *salon*—the beautiful and revised copy of a composition for piano and violin or violoncello, together with the transcription of the same for pianoforte alone.

The title is “*La lugubre Gondola*” (the funeral gondola). As though it were a presentiment, I wrote this *élégie* in Venice six weeks before Wagner's death.

Now I should like it to be brought out by Fritsch (Leipzig), Wagner's publisher, as soon as I receive it from you in Weimar. Hearty greetings to your family.

Ever faithfully yours,

Liszt

The opening melodic line of *La lugubre gondola II* can be seen to be inspired by Wagner's melodies and the unresolved and unfinished phrases are reminiscent of the Prelude to *Tristan and Isolde*. According to musician Timothy Judd, the work is ‘filled with intimations of *Tristan*. It opens with a solitary, searching line which suggests a dreamy remembrance of *Tristan und Isolde*'s “longing motif”.

Poetry: Tomas Tranströmer: Sorrow Gondola No 2

The *Sorrow Gondola* is a 1996 poetry collection by the Swedish poet and writer Tomas Tranströmer. The title of Tranströmer's 1996 collection refers to *La lugubre gondola* by Franz Liszt. Tranströmer is acclaimed as one of the most important Scandinavian writers since the Second World War. Critics praised his poetry for its accessibility, even in translation - his poetry has been translated into over 60 languages. He was the recipient of the 2011 Nobel Prize in Literature.

The *Sorrow Gondola* is regarded as Tomas Tranströmer's most subtle and elegiac book, and the pathos of the volume is compounded by the fact that it would be Tranströmer's final individual collection. In 1990 Tranströmer suffered a debilitating stroke that left him partially paralyzed and impaired his powers of speech. The book's title poem, *Sorrow Gondola No. 2*, a meditation on Richard Wagner's final months, was completed shortly before the poet's stroke, and it is one of his most ambitious efforts. His method in this poem is juxtapositional, alternating sections devoted to the relationship between the dying Richard Wagner and his father-in-law Franz Liszt with vignettes drawn from the poet's own life and dream-life.

SORROW GONDOLA NO. 2 - TOMAS TRANSTRÖMER

Translation by Patty Crane

I

Two old men, father- and son-in-law, Liszt and Wagner, are staying by the Grand Canal together with the restless woman who is married to King Midas, he who changes everything he touches to Wagner. The ocean's green cold pushes up through the palazzo floors. Wagner is marked, his famous Punchinello profile looks more tired than before, his face a white flag. The gondola is heavy-laden with their lives, two round trips and a one-way.

II

A window in the palazzo flies open and everyone grimaces in the sudden draft. Outside on the water the trash gondola appears, paddled by two one-oared bandits. Liszt has written down some chords so heavy, they ought to be sent off to the mineralogical institute in Padua for analysis. Meteorites! Too heavy to rest, they can only sink and sink straight through the future all the way down to the Brownshirt years. The gondola is heavy-laden with the future's huddled-up stones.

III

*Peep-holes into 1990.
March 25th. Angst for Lithuania.
Dreamt I visited a large hospital.
No personnel. Everyone was a patient.
In the same dream a newborn girl
who spoke in complete sentences.*

IV

Beside the son-in-law, who's a man of the times, Liszt is a moth-eaten grand seigneur. It's a disguise. The deep, that tries on and rejects different masks, has chosen this one just for him- the deep that wants to enter people without ever showing its face.

V

Abbé Liszt is used to carrying his suitcase himself through sleet and sunshine and when his time comes to die, there will be no one to meet him at the station. A mild breeze of gifted cognac carries him away in the midst of a commission. He always has commissions. Two thousand letters a year! The schoolboy who writes his misspelled word a hundred times before he's allowed to go home. The gondola is heavy-laden with life, it is simple and black.

VI

*Back to 1990.
Dreamt I drove over a hundred miles in vain.
Then everything magnified. Sparrows as big as hens
sang so loud that it briefly struck me deaf.*

*Dreamt I had drawn piano keys
on my kitchen table. I played on them, mute
The neighbors came over to listen.*

VII

The clavier, which kept silent through all of Parsifal (but listened), finally has something to say. Sighs . . . *sospiri* . . . When Liszt plays tonight he holds the sea-pedal pressed down so the ocean's green force rises up through the floor and flows together with all the stone in the building. Good evening, beautiful deep! The gondola is heavy-laden with life, it is simple and black.

VIII

*Dreamt I was supposed to start school but arrived too late.
Everyone in the room was wearing a white mask.
Whoever the teacher was, no one could say.*

The American poet **David Wojahn** provides some commentary about the poem:

"The poem is majestic and melancholy and seems in some eerily unconscious way to foreshadow the poet's own encounter with disability. The poem's final two sections are classic Tranströmer. We first see Liszt composing and playing



Tomas Tranströmer

the piano sonata which gives the poem its title, and the section is stately and sinister by turns. The final section, brusque and fragmented, relates an ominous dream:

VII

The clavier, which kept silent through all of Parsifal (but listened), finally has something to say. Sighs . . . *sospiri* . . . When Liszt plays tonight he holds the sea-pedal pressed down so the ocean's green force rises up through the floor and flows together with all the stone in the building. Good evening, beautiful deep! The gondola is heavy-laden with life, it is simple and black.

VIII

Dreamt I was supposed to start school but arrived too late. Everyone in the room was wearing a white mask. Whoever the teacher was, no one could say.

How wondrous these lines are! The hallmarks of Tranströmer's method are abundantly in evidence: the unsettling anthropomorphism of the clavier finally "having something to say," the conflation of Liszt's music with the relentless power of the sea, and a dream that seems meant to instruct but instead ends in enigma. And yet, within this mixture of moody atmospheric and uncertainty comes the wonderfully bracing line that seems to me the most crucial in the poem, "Good evening, beautiful deep!"

Farewell, Maestro Wagner, across the years; and in music and poetry.

BRANGAYNE OF ORANGE VINEYARD

As a token of thanks to performers and speakers at our monthly meetings the Wagner Society gives them gifts of bottles of wine generously provided by Brangayne of Orange. The winery has also kindly agreed to offer Members a 10% discount if they purchase any of their wines. Please call and order by phone (02 6365 3229) and mention your membership of the Wagner Society.

The “Brangayne” and “Ynys Witrin” vineyards lie on the north eastern slopes of the extinct volcano Mount Canobolas, near Orange in New South Wales, one of the highest and coldest grape districts in Australia. Often under snow in winter and mild in summer, the cold climate offers ideal conditions for the production of premium grapes, combining generous fruit flavour, acid and length in wines of intensity and elegance. The long ripening period and the deep, rich volcanic soil, position Brangayne among the few vineyards in Australia capable of producing distinctive cold climate wines of high calibre.

Brangayne came into the Hoskins Family in the 1930s, and for sixty years, Edgar and Winsome Hoskins and later Don and Pamela Hoskins grew apples, pears, peaches and cherries on the property. Then, in 1994, the fruit trees were replaced by wine grapes. The vineyard today is managed by David Hoskins.

The property was named “Brangayne” by Winsome Hoskins, after the character who attends the tragic Isolde in Wagner’s opera Tristan and Isolde, and who prepares a love potion for her.

The label was designed by Ian Kidd & Karin Seja of IKD Design Solutions in Adelaide. Artist Anelia Pavlova was commissioned to create the etching, which depicts Isolde and Brangäne who is preparing the Drink of Love. Tristan is just visible in the background, as he stares wanly at the moon. This scene is taken from Act I of Wagner’s Opera ‘Tristan and Isolde’.

FEATURED WINES INCLUDE:



2019 'Isolde' Reserve Chardonnay

Grown at the Brangayne vineyard, this wine is a vibrant medium gold with traces of green. It exhibits fine varietal aromatics with nuances of white peach, melon, citrus and underlying cashew nut. This is complemented by limited malolactic fermentation in hand selected French oak barriques resulting in a complex fine mid-palate flavour with underlying minerality, and a textural finish.



2017 'Tristan' - Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz, Merlot

This blend of three classic varieties, grown on the Ynys Witrin vineyard, is vibrant red in colour with purple hues. It displays elegant varietal fruit, with underlying leafy briar & berry aromas, and nuances of tobacco leaf and fine integrated French oak. The palate is long and supple, enhanced by the blackcurrant & cherry characteristics of Shiraz and the complementary softness of Merlot, and completed by a fine soft tannin finish.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Wine Tasting Excursion. The Society is planning a bus trip to visit the Brangayne vineyards on 16 & 17 October; when the Rhododendron Gardens should be in bloom. More details will be in our e-news.

Mike Day



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WAGNER SOCIETY IN NSW YOUTUBE CHANNEL

We encourage members to visit our YouTube channel. In addition to including many fascinating early recordings and illustrations as well as clips from some earlier Wagner Society concerts, we intend to include some future concerts and talks as well. Once we reach 100 subscribers (currently there are 52) we will be able to have a much more user-friendly link to the channel than at present. To access the channel, it is easiest to search for YouTube Wagner NSW.

HILMA af KLINT (1862-1944)

One of the painters that Alex Ross discusses in his *Wagnerism* book is **Hilma af Klint**. He highlights her *Parsifal* Series, a collection of 144 mystical paintings that may derive its name from Wagner's opera. Ross writes: 'The Parsifal Series progresses from images of dark confinement – a point of light at the centre of a grey-black spiral – to a shimmering chromatic spectrum of squares and circles. The series suggests a journey of initiation, like Parsifal's long, fitful progress toward the Grail. It could be the "invisible theatre" of which Wagner dreamed'. Like the legend of the Holy Grail, these paintings represent a search for spiritual knowledge through various levels of consciousness. The images that follow explode with chromatic gradations of colour as the artist worked through different formal permutations to develop a visual rhythm in the overall series. Tiny, cryptic symbols are inscribed throughout, as are the Swedish words for forward, backward, downward, inward, outward, and upward. A disciple of Rudolf Steiner, influenced by the spiritualist practices of her time, af Klint believed that her paintings contained messages for humanity communicated to her through the visions she received from spirits.



ground-breaking paintings and, convinced the world was not ready for them, stipulated that they not be shown for twenty years following her death.

The Art Gallery of New South Wales is exhibiting *Hilma af Klint: The Secret Paintings*, featuring more than 100 works, from 12 June until 19 September – 'A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to discover the extraordinary artistic achievements of this trailblazing artist who stood for too long outside the accepted story of European modernism'. A centrepiece of the exhibition is *The Ten Largest 1907*, ten huge exuberantly colourful paintings, brimming with wondrous arrangements of shapes and motifs, through which the artist

explores the four stages of human development. Other highlights include af Klint's rarely seen early botanical watercolours; her experiments with the spiritualist group The Five; a large selection of works from the *Paintings for the Temple* cycle; more than 30 abstract watercolours from the last decades of the artist's life, several of which have never before been placed on public exhibition; and a selection of notebooks, which give fascinating insights into her influences and processes.

When af Klint began creating her radically abstract paintings in 1906, they were like little that had been seen before: bold, colourful, and untethered from any recognizable references to the physical world. It was several years before **Wassily Kandinsky**, **Kazimir Malevich**, **Piet Mondrian**, and others would take similar strides to free their own artwork of representational content. Yet af Klint rarely exhibited her

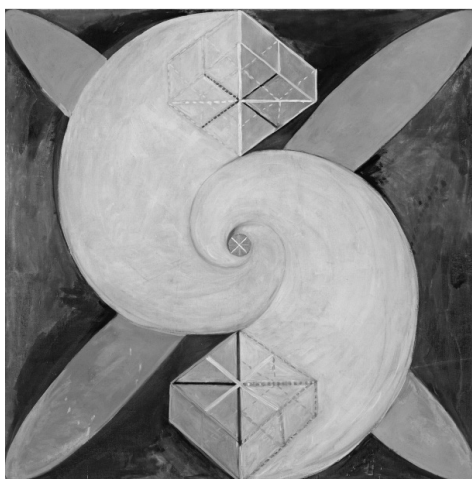
EDITOR'S NOTE

I saw many of these works exhibited at the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin in 2013. They are extraordinary and I encourage members to go and see the AGNSW exhibition.

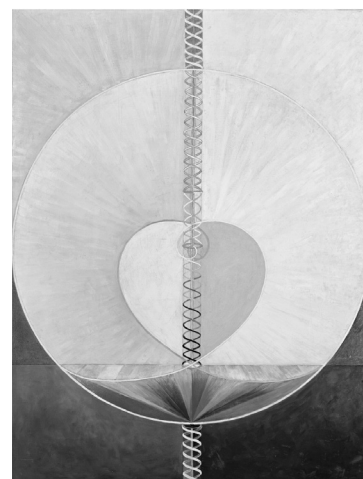
Mike Day



Svanen nr 1 1915



Svanen nr 21 1915



Duvan nr 1 1915

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WE WARMLY WELCOME NEW MEMBERS WHO JOINED SINCE MARCH 2021:

Robyn Tupman 1252, Dianne Samuel & Denis Fisk 1253, Prof Thea Brejzek & Prof Lawrence Wallen 1254, Stepha-nie Lee 1255, Hetty and Noel Cislowska 1256

THE RAVEN'S REPORTING, COMPILED BY CAMRON DYER

There is a regularly updated list of upcoming performances worldwide of Wagner's works on the Society's web page: wagner.org.au/ravens-reporting that takes the list to 2024

IN MEMORIUM

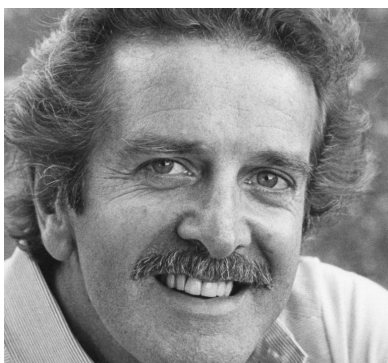
Two of the greatest opera singers Australia has ever produced both died on Saturday 20 March - soprano Taryn Fiebig and tenor Robert Gard OBE.



Taryn Fiebig 1972 -2021

Taryn Fiebig, the much-loved, highly regarded Australian soprano, who performed regularly for Opera Australia and Pinchgut Opera, was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in 2017. She withdrew from a number of roles to undergo treatment before returning to the stage in 2018. However, the cancer returned and she passed away on 20 March 2021, aged 49. Her family said in a statement that she died at home in Elizabeth Bay, NSW with her husband Jud Arthur, family members

and friends by her side, surrounded by masses of soft pink roses. Society members will remember her wonderful performances as the Woodbird and Gutrune.



Robert Gard OBE 1927 -2021

Robert Gard OBE was born in Cornwall, England, in 1927 and studied at the Guildhall School of Music with Dino Borgioli, whose students also included Australian soprano **June Bronhill**. “Bob came to Australia in 1960 with a tour of *The Merry Widow* and returned to star in a production of *Lock Up Your Daughters* in Melbourne in 1961,” conductor Brian Castles-Onion AM said in a statement for Opera Australia. “This was followed by roles in *Kismet*, *Once Upon a Mattress* and *Showboat* before he was invited to join Opera Australia in 1963. Bob was immediately welcomed into the Australian operatic community.”

What followed was an incredible string of roles for between the 1960s and his final performance for the OA in 2008, including roles in new Australian operas such as **Richard Meale** and **David Malouf’s** *Voss*, and **Alan John** and **Dennis Watkins’** *The Eighth Wonder*. He performed an exciting Loge in 1979 and a memorable Siegmund in 1981.



Christa Ludwig 1928 -2021

Christa Ludwig was one of the outstanding singers of her generation, acclaimed alike in lieder and opera, where she was highly regarded for her matchless interpretations of an impressively wide range of roles. Wagner roles included, Venus, Ortrud, Brangäne, Fricka, Waltraute and Kundry.



OUR FORGOTTEN DIVA: AN EVENING TO REMEMBER FLORENCE AUSTRAL

Newcastle Digital Library, 12 Stewart Avenue, Newcastle West 2302

Wednesday 14 July 2021 - 6 - 7pm

Join the Newcastle Digital Library for an evening with former opera singer **Hilary Oliver** from the Florence Austral Society to remember our forgotten diva, Florence Austral.

In 1922, Florence made her début with the British National Opera Company. At short notice, without stage or orchestral rehearsal, she replaced the lead singer as Brünnhilde in Wagner’s *The Valkyrie*. She was an instant and lasting success.

In 1952 she moved to Newcastle and took up a teaching position at the newly formed Newcastle branch of the New South Wales State Conservatorium of Music.

Hilary will discuss Florence’s life, operatic career and her link with Newcastle.

Bookings essential

<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/our-forgotten-diva-an-evening-to-remember-florence-austral-tickets-149822845163>

Exhibition Images from The Florence Austral Archive Collection will be displayed on the Storywall and The Magic Box at the Newcastle Digital Library until September 2021. They will highlight images, items and stories from the life and times of Florence Austral.

NEWS FROM SINGERS SUPPORTED BY THE SOCIETY

AN UPDATE FROM JESSICA HARPER

Dresden (and Germany, at large) is carefully emerging from a lockdown, which has lasted since November 2020. We have had no live music, no restaurants, no leisure activities or shopping (aside from the supermarket, of course, and there have been loo paper shortages here too...) and barely any social contact for a very long time. I have been able to stay sane (...just) by swapping hearty homemade tucker for an hour of music with my coach most weeks, and spending time sailing wilfully down musical research rabbit holes.



Just before lockdown I had competed in the Glyndebourne Opera Cup Semi Finals in Lewes, England. This will always be a precious memory, as singing on the stage in such a special theatre was marvellous. It felt like the auditorium was giving me a warm hug as I performed my Rossini and Mozart arias. This is the last public performance I have done since the pandemic status hit the world, which is frankly not at all bad, given that it was at Glyndebourne, of all places.

At the conclusion of the competition Joseph (my spouse; a cellist, and also hailing from Sydney) and I were faced with the decision – do we return to Australia, or do we stick it out in Dresden and keep working with our wonderful teachers? Given what we both gave up to get ourselves to Europe in the first place, and knowing that we hadn't even scratched the surface of what we hoped to achieve here, we both decided to stay. This has proved time and time again to be the right decision, even though it has had its challenges.

A city of beauty, even in the depths of winter (and the one just gone by was certainly a dark and cold one! I finally understand what Mimi means when she sings about the thaw and the first rays of April sun); Dresden has taken great care of us. The foreigner's office has granted me several extensions on my bridging visas, which has meant that I've been able to take advantage of the admittedly limited opportunities that are here at the moment, but thus remain in front of audition panels and keep clawing my way towards gainful employment as a professional singer. Competitions have been the only way to do this, as agent auditions are being cancelled or and moved six months down the track.

I was able to compete in important international competitions, such as the Tenor Viñas Competition in Spain (and I'm

only one of two Australians to make the Semi Finals in the competitions six decades of history. The other, incidentally, was my dear singing teacher of several years and friend to the society Andrew Dalton, who won the English Song Prize in 1981), the International Virgilijus Noreika Competition (Vilnius, digitally), The Royal Overseas League Singer's Prize in London and the Kammeroper Schloss Rheinsberg Competition in Berlin over the last few months. The Ottavio Ziino Competition in Rome and Eva Marton International Singing Competition in Budapest

have been postponed to this year, and I look forward to representing Australia in these wonderful cities as well.

I've been considered for some roles and productions in Austria and back in Australia which have had to be cancelled, but that does bode well for the future when everything can open in earnest and without the threat of mass Covid outbreaks. I am particularly looking forward to the time when I can sing in person for the Wagner Society, to show my immense gratitude for your support.

With new-found time up my sleeve in lockdown number one, I delved into watching many operas I had not previously seen and was desperate to know more about. I discovered the magic of the *Ring Cycle* through the Met Opera On Demand productions from 1990/91. I have now truly drunk the coolade with Wagner and could not be happier. *The Ring* was supposed to open the season here at the Semperoper, but that has been rescheduled for another year. I'm eagerly anticipating my first live experience of this masterwork, as well as all of his others!

I have also been spending my time furiously learning roles and song cycles. I've not been allowed to work in Germany for the entire pandemic and have been making a little bit of money here and there as an English teacher to stay alive. Therefore, I have spent as much time as possible researching repertoire which I am singing now, and will sing in the near future, as it's unlikely I'll ever have this much time at my disposal ever again. It has been such a welcome distraction and has kept me motivated.

Living in Dresden; a city so full of history, is also a huge help. All major European composers (especially the Germans... go

figure) had spent time in this city during their lives, as it was very much the cultural centre of Europe for a very long time. The Elbe river, flowing through the middle of the city, was once one of the most important European trade routes, that supported the artistic life which thrived here for a couple of centuries before WWII.

We have a small apartment in Freidrichstadt, which is a short walk from the old town in Dresden (and of course the opera house and concert halls) and is a conglomeration of remaining and rebuilt buildings from before and after WWII. Around the corner from us is a building which housed the one and only Richard Wagner while he was writing *Lohengrin* in the 1840's. Across the road from this building is a graveyard where Carl Maria von Weber is buried in the family plot. A completely unassuming grave, but I always take musically minded guests there, as they understand the importance of this composer. He remains one of the most lauded famous people of Dresden. So loved, that when the Semperoper reopened in 1989 after being rebuilt, *Der Freischütz* was the chosen work to be performed. Should the Weber Museum reopen this summer, as is the prediction across Europe, I look forward to visiting it.

If one travels out towards the Blaue Wunder bridge, one will find the birthplace of Clara Schumann. A woman so talented, she inspired not only the works of her husband Robert, but also of Brahms and many other now celebrated composers of the early German Romantic period.

The Wagner Society of NSW was kind enough to help me pay for intensive German lessons at the Goethe Institut in 2019 when I arrived in Dresden. This has served me extremely well while I have lived here and allowed me a far greater

social life with German speakers as well as English speakers, not to mention comfortably conducting auditions for Houses and agents alike in German! I am so grateful to the society for helping me again to pay for some German and Wagner centric coaching over the next few months. The plan is Waldvogel and Eva (and maybe Elsa if we have time), Agathe (*Freischütz*), as well as lieder by Clara Schumann, Robert Schumann and Richard Strauss. I look forward to giving you a digital recital to show the fruits of my labour!

What sets Australians apart from many other cultures is the way we look out for each other. There are rather a lot of Aussie musicians and artists on the continent and many chat threads have been created and remain active since the world shut down. Though I am as sick of video calls as the next person, this community and culture of checking in on and supporting each other is something to be proud of.

The last quarter of the year brings the winds of change for me. After my German repertoire centric summer I will head west to Belgium to take up a Postgraduate Concert Soloist position at the Royal Conservatoire of Antwerp. Once this degree is done in mid 2022 I hope I can restart house auditions, as so many have been postponed and cancelled. Thankfully we're slowing getting jabs through the population, so I remain quietly confident that we will all be performing again before long.

Thank you so much again to the Society for your financial assistance. The fact that I can fiscally afford to coach anything at all at the moment is wonderful.

Sending love to you all!

Jessica

CHRISTOPHER CURCURUTO CATCHING UP ON FACEBOOK FROM TEXAS

Notwithstanding the very real possibility that I have forgotten about some stray assignment... I've just submitted what I think is my last paper for the semester, finishing out the first year of my Doctorate with a good chance at a 4.0 (high distinction) average! This year, I've also been lucky to have been able to perform with Fort Worth Opera in a digital production of **Joe Illick** and **Mark Campbell's** beautiful children's opera, *Stone Soup*, innovatively directed by **Steven D. Morris** and tenaciously produced by **Sheran Keyton**.

I've sung in two socially distanced productions with UNT Opera, as Raimondo in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and Gus O'Neill in *Later the Same Evening* (Musto), under the direction of our ever-supportive Chair of Opera **Jonathan Eaton** and the exacting baton of our acting Music Director, **Willem Van Schalkwyk**.

Next up was a digital performance of *Jack and the Beanstalk* by **John Davies** (adapting the music of **Sir Arthur Sullivan**) for The Dallas Opera, again rehearsed over Zoom and filmed in front of a green screen. **Ryan Lescalleet**, our director, extracted every possible nuance out of the text in a very

theatrical rehearsal process, and **Mary Dibbern** our Music Director made sure that I didn't get too carried away with the fun of it all!

Finally, I was fortunate to be a Mary Ragland Emerging Artist with Nashville Opera, working with our Director **John Hoomes**, pianist **Amy Tate Williams**, Education Manager **Hannah Marcoe**, and a host of other consummate professionals to remotely film the role of Wolfgang Bigbad for another digital production, this time of *The Three Little Pigs* (also by John Davies, adapting music by Mozart), as well as other bits and pieces for their extensive outreach program. We presented Q&A's almost daily to children across Tennessee, even though I was physically in my apartment in Texas. In fact, I've never met any of my Nashville colleagues in person, even the ones I appeared in an opera with! I'm looking forward to working with Nashville Opera again on an upcoming project this June!

So... it has been busy, but fruitful. I am doing what I came here to do and honestly, I think I am presently at my happiest. That said... thank goodness for the summer break...

JESSICA BLUNT



Jessica achieved all High Distinctions in her postgraduate studies at the Sydney Conservatorium and has performed as a soloist in New York's Carnegie Hall and for operas and concerts in Sicily and Verona. She has also performed in two productions with Opera Australia before the COVID19 shutdown. The Wagner Society is providing financial help to Jessica to continue her studies in the Master of Arts (Performance) degree at the Royal Academy of Music, The University of London, commencing September 2021. This degree will provide her with unrivalled education, opportunities, and networking to further her career.

SAMANTHA CRAWFORD

Hello friends, The past 12 months have brought a rollercoaster ride of emotions. From the grief of work lost and separation from my friends, family and community of fellow music makers, to the joy of welcoming our second daughter, Aurora, in April last year. We've also lived through seemingly endless dust in house renovations at our new home but are delighted to have more space and the beach nearby. Looking ahead, I've some very rewarding projects happening in the studio and cannot wait to be finally back performing to live audiences.

Update from last 12 months:

- **Judith Weir CBE** is writing new arrangements of songs from *woman.life.song* for myself and pianist, **Lana Bode**, to perform.

This summer, Lana and I will also perform the world premiere of a newly commissioned song cycle by Charlotte Bray, about women at work to poems by Nicki Jackowska, called *dream.risk.sing* which highlights five aspects of the life of a modern woman; childhood, love life, motherhood, career and legacy. The concert will be live streamed on June 23 to comply with current government guidelines, but we hope to invite a live audience too.

- **Feb '21** - I shared joys and challenges of being a parent in performing arts with AA Opera podcast
- **Apr '20** - I was grateful to receive a Help Musicians Coronavirus Award in support of opera and concert contracts lost.
- **Mar '20** - I wrote an article for SWAP'ra offering practical advice for performing roles during pregnancy, with a toddler, abroad.

Hope to catch you at a live performance soon.

With love,

Samantha

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Renaissance Tours



Music, Ballet and Art in Melbourne

Anna Karenina, the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and NGV Winter Masterpieces with Andy Bromberger | 23–27 June 2021 (5 days)

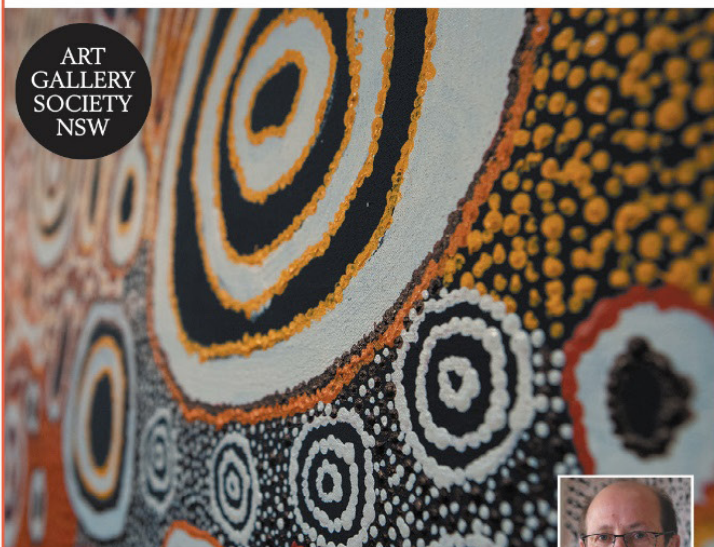
Be enthralled by performances from The Australian Ballet and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, and view the NGV's *French Impressionism* exhibition.



Renaissance Tours Festival of Chamber Music

Mitchelton Winery, Nagambie, Victoria with Stewart Kelly 20–23 September 2021 (4 days)

Delight in Renaissance Tours' exclusive festival of chamber music, at Mitchelton winery in country Victoria.



ART GALLERY SOCIETY NSW



Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair

Plus the Telstra Aboriginal Art Awards, and rock art of Kakadu with Wally Caruana | 05–10 August 2021 (6 days)

Immerse yourself in Australia's annual showcase of the best Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, and visit Kakadu National Park.



The Ring in Brisbane

Cycle I with Peter Bassett 28 October – 05 November 2021 (9 days)

Revel in visionary director Chen Shi-Zheng's production of *The Ring*, enhanced by a symposium convened by the Richard Wagner Society.

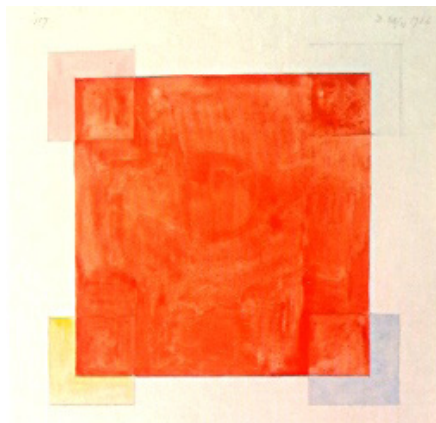
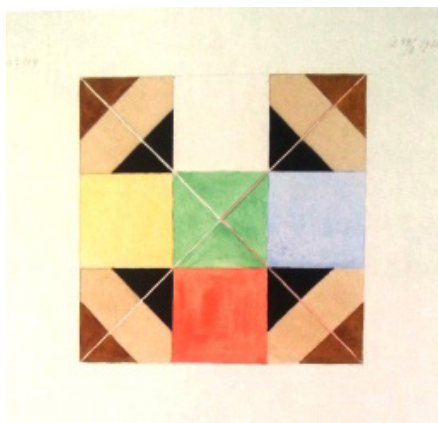
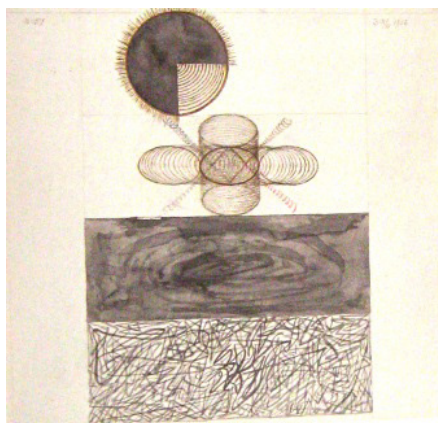
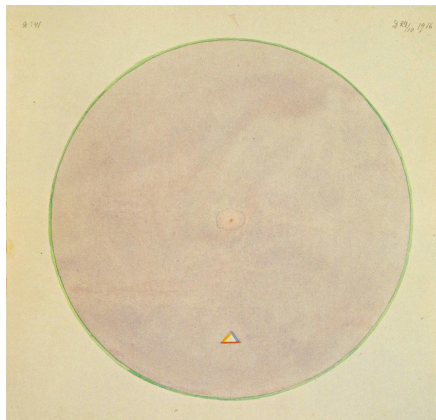
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[All website addresses used in this Newsletter are reproduced in the PDF version of the Quarterly on the Wagner Society's website in the relevant article – For Members Only, members will need to log in]



Parsifal Series Nos 1, 41, 51, 69, 124 and 128 Hilma af Klint (1916)
Exhibition at the Moderna Museet, Stockholm 2013

ADDRESS FOR SUNDAY FUNCTIONS

(unless otherwise advised in Coming Events)
Goethe Institut, 90 Ocean Street Woollahra (corner of Jersey Road)

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