
REPORTS ON RECENT MEETINGS

SUNDAY 18 JUNE AT THE GOETHE INSTITUT

12.30PM DVD *FROZEN MUSIC – THE SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE, IT’S MORE THAN JUST OPERA* (1984, 53 MINS)

Members loved this funny, charming and nostalgic documentary about the vivid and varied creative life of the SOH during its 10th Anniversary year. With **Joan Sutherland, Robert Helpmann, Janet Baker, Cleo Laine, Luciano Pavarotti** and others.

2.00PM A CONVERSATION WITH NOEL STAUNTON

Our president, **Esteban Insausti**, highly recommended that the society invite **Noel Staunton**, to talk to us about his long relationship with Wagner productions over many years. Noel didn’t disappoint. Prompted by Esteban, Noel started with his experiences working as a technician on the legendary Goodall *Ring* at the ENO in the early 70’s. This production was a triumph, musically and technically, (and sung in English). After this, Noel worked on the ENO **Mark Elder** *Ring*, which was beset by many problems and abandoned after only mounting *Die Walküre*. Noel observed that mounting a *Ring* has many challenges not faced by other operas. The *Ring* is very complicated, needing extra resources, time, space and money.

Noel was a key player in the realisation of the 2003 Adelaide *Ring*, where he was called in as a trouble-shooter when the production was having difficulties. He successfully raised the extra money necessary, rationalised the sets, and sorted out the technical and regulatory problems of using large volumes of water (Fairy Liquid made it look more ‘watery’), and huge amounts of gas for Brünnhilde’s fire. Noel had worked with designer **Michael Scott-Mitchell** on the 2000 Olympic cauldron, so was familiar with fire and water. (He

obviously also knows about air as he was also responsible for blowing up 800 balloons for each *Siegfried* performance). He also worked with fire and water for the wonderful **Neil Armfield** *Tristan und Isolde* in the SOH Concert Hall in

1992. Noel was critical of the SOH orchestra pit, which is too small for the orchestra needed for the *Ring*, but did observe that many overseas companies are staging smaller and more intimate productions with some success

Noel completed his conversation with Esteban with thoughts about how much he loves Wagner’s music and what a privileged career he has had working with wonderful singers and designers

