



WAGNER  
SOCIETY  
nsw

CELEBRATING THE MUSIC OF RICHARD WAGNER

# WAGNER QUARTERLY

THE BENDIGO RING ISSUE

ISSUE NO 42

# 169

JUNE 2023



**Deborah Humble** as Erda in *Das Rheingold* in Bendigo

## **SOCIETY'S OBJECTIVES**

To promote the music of Richard Wagner and his contemporaries, to explore a wider understanding of their work and to support Wagnerian productions in Australia and emerging Wagnerian performers from NSW

# PHOTOS OF RECENT EVENTS

SUNDAY 12 MARCH TALK BY PETER BASSETT AT THE GOETHE INSTITUT



Afternoon tea



Peter Bassett

SUNDAY 21 MAY AGM AND CONCERT AT AMPICO TOWERS, NEWTOWN



Audience members



Katherine Day and Olivia Swain



Esteban, Olivia, Ellen, Leona and Katherine with Brangayne Wines gifts



Ellen McNeil

## FOR YOUR DIARY

2023

24 June	2pm & 6pm Pacific Opera Pocket Opera <i>Don Giovanni</i>	Independent Theatre, North Sydney
8 – 30 July	Sofia Wagner Festival	Sofia, Bulgaria
8 July	<b><i>Das Rheingold</i></b>	Singapore
14 & 15 October	<b><i>Villains &amp; Valkyries Sing-a-long</i></b> . Willoughby Symphony Orchestra and Chorus with Wagner excerpts conducted by <b>Dr Sarah Penicka-Smith</b>	The Concourse, Chatswood
16, 18 Nov	<b><i>SSO Das Rheingold</i></b> in concert. Conducted by <b>Simone Young</b>	Sydney Opera House
1 – 23 Dec	<b><i>OA Ring Cycle</i></b>	Brisbane

## COMING SOCIETY EVENTS 2023

STARTING TIMES AND VENUE MAY VARY - PLEASE CHECK ONLINE FOR DETAILS | WEDNESDAY ZOOMS TO BE ADVISED

DATE	Some events may be subject to change and further detail in the next newsletter	LOCATION
18 June	12.30pm DVD <i>Frozen Music</i> 2.00pm A conversation with <b>Noel Staunton</b>	Goethe Institut
12 July	7.00 – 9.00pm Reception for <b>Simone Young AM</b>	St Columba
30 July	2.00pm Recital by bass-baritone <b>Chris Curcuruto</b>	St Columba
27 August TBC	12.30pm DVD <i>Magic Fire – The Richard Wagner Story</i> 2.00pm <b>Tahu Matheson</b> OA Conductor talks about the <i>Ring</i> TBC	Goethe Institut
17 September	12.30pm DVD SOH Opening Concert 2.00pm Talk by <b>Constantine Costi</b> , Assistant Director of the Brisbane Ring TBC	Goethe Institut
22 October	12.30pm DVD <i>The Edge of the Possible</i> 2.00pm Talk by <b>Mike Day</b> <i>A Tale of Three Houses – Paris, Bayreuth and Sydney</i> .	Goethe Institut
12 November	10.00.am – 5.00pm <i>Das Rheingold</i> Seminar	Goethe Institut
26 November	2.00pm Concert and Christmas party	TBC

Advice about changes to the Program will be emailed in our e-news 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](http://www.wagner.org.au).  
Admission to each event will be \$25 a Member, and \$35 each non-Member, \$10 (Full-time students); Seminar/Concert \$40 (m), \$50 (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)

## QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS:

**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

Mrs Barbara Brady

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Dear friends,

The last quarter has been replete with Wagner. Three complete cycles of the *Ring* at the wonderful Ulumbarra Theatre in Bendigo and two concert performances of *Tannhäuser* in Melbourne. Both productions delivered at very high quality – commentary and reviews within. It is a privilege not to have to travel overseas for these. Many of our members made the trip south. Twice. Whilst I don't begrudge Adelaide, Melbourne, Perth or Brisbane hosting Wagner performances, I hope that with Simone Young/SSO's concert *Ring* starting with *Das Rheingold* in November, and new management at OA, Sydney will once again become a Wagner city.

With only one viable theatre in Sydney and many of the larger ones presenting the never ending factory line of musicals, new and reheated, mostly reheated, my dream will be a long time coming I think. This is a problem for opera companies as well as the art form. Will it ever be addressed? Should it be addressed? Perhaps this is a discussion for another time. For the time being let us wallow in all the wonderful live Wagner.

It was a pleasure to co-host drinks with Miki Oikawa (President of the WSVictoria) for Wagner Society members from around Australia, New Zealand and Singapore, at the first interval of *Die Walküre* for each cycle of the Bendigo *Ring*. This was a further opportunity to reconnect with friends and make new friends. The Bendigo *Ring* will be long remembered as one with a clear narrative, beautiful images and strongly sung roles. But it will also be remembered as the "friendly" *Ring*, the

social *Ring*, given the geographically tight Festival atmosphere afforded by Bendigo and the amazing side entertainment curated by Greg Hocking and his team. This is what we live for.

The Committee has fleshed out our events programme for the rest of the year. We are still curating the Wednesday Zooms with overseas speakers. Apologies for the sporadic way this has occurred in 2023, but our focus and priority was Bendigo and the briefings/logistics for it. We hope that the upcoming events do justice to the Brisbane *Ring* and the SSO/Simone Young *Das Rheingold*. With regards to the latter we are finalising the details for a one (half) day symposium focusing on the *Preliminary Evening* to the tetralogy. The idea for the symposium is to view the work from diverse disciplines and experiences, a heterogenous approach, to really open our minds to the work before we hear what will be a couple of spectacular performances under Simone Young.

I am writing this after our AGM and Wagner's birthday concert and drinks. A very enjoyable and successful afternoon. See you all at the Goethe Institut in June for a conversation with veteran producer Noel Staunton.

Happy listening.

**Esteban Insausti**

President

Wagner Society in NSW Inc

PS I would like to acknowledge the recent retirement from the Arts pages of the SMH of Jill Sykes AM. A fantastic recorder and critic of our stages for a long time. She remains a treasured member of the WSNW. We wish Jill all the best and more deadline free time to listen to much Wagner!



### NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the Bendigo Ring Issue, so-called because Society members who went to Bendigo still seem to have an after-glow of happiness from the experience. Members Minnie Biggs, Douglas Sturkey and Terence Watson share their thoughts on the production in this issue. Many thanks. Also, thanks to Justice François Kunc for his report on a Helsinki *Die Walküre*. I encourage other members to contribute their thoughts on any interesting Wagner productions they have seen recently. I hope members enjoy the gossip pages featuring the scandalous Lola Montez and her relationship with Bendigo and Wagner. Thanks, as always, to Leona for her proof-reading and fact checking.

**Mike Day**

michaeldayarchitect@gmail.com

### DONATIONS TO HELP THE SOCIETY'S OBJECTIVES

We encourage members to donate to the Society to help with our regular support for artists. We also have a number of special projects for which we encourage your contribution.

**GENEROUS DONATIONS WERE RECEIVED SINCE FEBRUARY 2023 FROM THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS:** Richard Mason, Barbara Brady, Esteban Insausti

### WE WARMLY WELCOME NEW MEMBERS WHO JOINED SINCE FEBRUARY 2023:

Dr Juliet Richters [1273], Mrs Lyn Stephenson [1274], Peter and Jennifer Bromberger [1275], Josephine Key [1276]

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# FUTURE WAGNER SOCIETY EVENTS

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## 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)**

This delightfully intimate and nostalgic documentary reveals the vivid and varied creative life of the SOH during its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year. With **Joan Sutherland, Robert Helpmann, Janet Baker, Cleo Laine, Luciano Pavarotti** and others.

This DVD is the first of three films about aspects of the opera house to be shown to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its opening.

## 2.00PM A CONVERSATION WITH NOEL STAUNTON

**Noel Staunton** is a freelance creative director and producer specialising in large-scale productions and special events. His expertise is in festivals, opera, classical music, musical theatre, contemporary dance and large public events.

Noel was the Artistic Director of the Brisbane Festival from 2010 - 2014. His career in the performing arts has been extensive, working in various high level production and technical positions throughout the UK and Australia, including Glyndebourne Festival Opera, ENO, as technical director for the legendary Goodall *Ring* and technical director at Opera Australia. He has also toured productions extensively throughout Europe and the United States. He produced the first Australian Ring Cycle in Adelaide and was previously the CEO of Sydney Dance Company. He produced *La Boheme* for **Baz Luhrmann** on Broadway.



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## WEDNESDAY 12 JULY 7.00 – 9.00 PM AT ST COLUMBA

### RECEPTION FOR OUR PATRON MAESTRO SIMONE YOUNG AM

An informal social occasion to enjoy wine and canapes and hear Simone tell us what is in store for the next four years with the SSO Ring.

The performances of *Das Rheingold* on 14 and 17 November mark the start of a landmark multi-year project presenting the complete *Ring Cycle* in concert, led by Chief Conductor Simone Young, internationally acclaimed for her mastery



of Wagner's music. This is a rare chance to hear Wagner's masterpiece in Sydney, and will be its first performances here in more than twenty years. In a pure musical experience, the SSO and the finest Wagnerian singers from Australia and Europe appear together on stage – free to unleash Wagner's dramatic and deeply felt sound in all its awesome power. All in the rich acoustic of the Concert Hall.



## SUNDAY 30 JULY AT 2.00PM AT ST COLUMBA

### RECITAL BY BASS-BARITONE CHRIS CURCURUTO AND SOPRANO KORI MILLER

"AN AFTERNOON OF SONGS, SCENES, AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN" WORKS BY WAGNER, MOZART, FLOYD AND OTHERS



Praised for his "satisfyingly rich" and "resonant" tone, Australian bass-baritone **Chris Curcuruto** is quickly making a name for himself both as a soloist and professional opera singer. Hailing from Sydney, Chris was a Young Artist with Pacific Opera and last sang for the Wagner Society in May 2018. Since then, he has been studying and working in Texas singing a wide variety of roles to great acclaim. Presently, Chris is completing a Doctor of Musical Arts (Vocal Performance) degree at the University of North Texas under the tutelage of internationally-renowned voice teacher and pedagogue, Dr. Stephen Austin, and is the recipient of a competitive Winspear Opera Scholarship. Starting in the Fall he has been engaged as Director of Opera Studies, Lecturer in Vocal Pedagogy, and Adjunct Assistant Professor of Voice at the University of Texas at Arlington.

With a soprano voice "possessing indescribable height of emotion", **Kori Miller** is an emerging artist poised to take to the world's operatic and choral stages. "Obviously talented and comfortable on stage" (Charleston Today), Miller is widely recognized for her charismatic characterization and "hauntingly beautiful notes" (Post and Courier).



Miller has enjoyed extensive success both as an active concert artist, most recently singing Handel's Messiah with Irving Symphony Orchestra, as well as a professional choral singer. In 2018, Kori was a Young Artist with Opera Naples, during which time she had the opportunity to coach extensively with Metropolitan Opera singers Bruce Ford, Sherill Milnes, and Verónica Villarroel. Hailing from Charleston, South Carolina, Miller is currently based in Denton, Texas where she is undertaking a Doctor of Musical Arts degree with a related field in opera performance and vocal pedagogy at the University of North Texas. She is currently serving as a Teaching Fellow and studying under internationally renowned pedagogue Dr. Stephen Austin.

## FRIDAY 14 JULY AT 6.45PM AT ROYAL AUTOMOBILE CLUB, MACQUARIE ST

### PACIFIC OPERA CHAIRMAN'S DINNER

**Ian Hutchinson** and the Board of **Pacific Opera** are inviting members of the Wagner Society to attend their fundraising dinner.

Pacific Opera is an amazing institution that survives on a shoestring and provides vital training for our emerging Opera stars through their Young Artists program. One of these Young Artists may well be the next young Australian singer to take the opera world by storm. Only last month Alumna Eva Kong was starring as Cio-Cio-San in Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* in Opera Australia's: Opera On Sydney Harbour.

Today you see many of their gifted Alumni on concert and opera stages in Australia and around the Opera world, equipped and enriched from the knowledge and performance experience that they gained at Pacific Opera. The future is looking very bright, and Pacific Opera goes from strength to strength under the brilliant Artistic Direction

of opera luminaries **Peter Coleman-Wright** AO and **Cheryl Barker** AO. Supported by a team of industry legends, educating, inspiring and delivering excellence.

Wagner Society members are invited to put a table of ten together or join a friend's table for Pacific Opera's Chairman's Dinner & Recital at 6.45 pm on Friday 14 July at the RACA, Macquarie St, Sydney.

The evening will include a Raffle, Silent and Live Auction.

Tickets are \$3,500 for a table of ten (\$2,000 tax-deductable donation) and \$400 per person (\$250 tax-deductable donation) Members who are interested in forming a table should contact Esteban.

**BOOKINGS:** [olivia.morberger@pacificopera.com.au](mailto:olivia.morberger@pacificopera.com.au)  
+61 468 582 281

## SUNDAY 27 AUGUST AT THE GOETHE INSTITUT

12.00PM DVD *MAGIC FIRE – THE RICHARD WAGNER STORY* (1955, 103 MINS)



Directed by William Dieterle, this 1955 Hollywood film makes extensive use of Wagner’s music, which was arranged by **Erich Wolfgang Korngold**. Although many details about Wagner’s life are accurately portrayed, the film often distorts some facts for dramatic purposes. One high point is the accurate depiction of the riot at the Paris Opera House for the premiere of the revised version of *Tannhäuser*. The film used a very large cast, opulent sets, and lavish costumes. It could be subtitled *Wagner’s Women* as it deals primarily with the maestro’s relationships with Minna, Mathilde and Cosima. Cast: Alan Badel ... Richard Wagner, Yvonne De Carlo ... Minna Planer, Carlos Thompson ... Franz Liszt, Rita Gam ... Cosima Liszt, Valentina Cortese ... Mathilde Wesendonck, Peter Cushing ... Otto Wesendonck

2.00PM A CONVERSATION WITH TAHU MATHESON



**Tahu Matheson** is an Australian classical pianist and conductor. He was born in London in 1977, grew up in Australia, and since 2007 has been a conductor with Opera Australia. Tahu began his piano studies at the age of five with his father, international conductor John Matheson. He has studied piano with Kalle Randalu in Germany, and with Oleg Stepanov and Natasha Vlassenko at the Queensland Conservatorium of Music, where he completed his Master of Music.

In 1995 Tahu won the Queensland Piano Competition and made his professional debut in 1996 with a solo recital at the New Zealand International Festival of the Arts. He has performed widely in Australia, both with orchestras and solo, and has toured Australia for Musica Viva. He is passionate about Wagner’s music and was assistant conductor for the Melbourne *Ring* in 2016 and conductor of the 2022 OA production of *Lohengrin* with Jonas Kaufmann, in Melbourne. He has very recently conducted *Satyagraha* in concert as part of OA’s Melbourne season.

## TANNHÄUSER IN MELBOURNE



Anna-Louise Cole

Opera Australia presented a concert performance of *Tannhäuser* in Hamer Hall on 17 and 20 May. It was conducted by **Johannes Fritzs**, with a stellar cast including **Stefan Vinke**, **Amber Wagner**, **Samuel Dundas** and **Anna-Louise Cole**, who received glowing reviews from all the critics. Anna-Louise spoke to the society on Zoom last September and will be singing Brünnhilde and Sieglinde in Brisbane, with Stefan Vinke as Siegfried.

# REPORTS ON RECENT MEETINGS

## SUNDAY 12 MARCH AT THE GOETHE INSTITUT

12.00PM DVD RICHARD STRAUSS – AT THE END OF THE RAINBOW – A FILM BY ERIC SCHULZ



This was a very interesting insight into the life, work and times of **Richard Strauss**. Members' feedback was very positive and several lively discussions followed during the interval. A pleasant surprise was the beautiful singing of Wollongong-born soprano, **Emma Moore**, whom the Society supported several years ago. She was shown being coached by the great Straussian soprano **Brigitte Fassbaender**. There was some fascinating archival footage of Strauss's minimalist conducting technique, which contrasted amusingly with a brief clip of Georg Solti at his most exuberant.

## 2.00PM TALK BY PETER BASSETT: 'A NEW LOOK AT THE RING'

A substantial and enthusiastic audience welcomed long-time friend of the Society, Wagner specialist **Peter Bassett**, who shared his recent thoughts about new ways of staging Wagner's works.

Peter provided some background to the upcoming Brisbane Ring, including short video clips from the Chinese director/production designer **Chen Shi-Zheng** and costume designer Anita Yavich. We can expect an imaginative, fantastical, production, with the music dictating the actions revealing the universal themes of the myths. Peter will be presenting a series of symposia, talks and interviews in Brisbane during the three cycles. Guests will include the conductor, Philippe Auguin; **Anna-Louise Cole** (Sieglinde, Brünnhilde), **Olivia Cranwell** (Sieglinde, Third Norn); **Liane Keegan**, Erda; and **Luke Gabbedy**, Gunther. Bookings are now open for these talks – highly recommended. Email [pgbassett@outlook.com](mailto:pgbassett@outlook.com)

Peter then talked about the precedents and possibilities for open air productions of opera. He was hopeful that with modern audio technology this will become more frequent. Wagner had proposed outdoor performances and of course his theatre cited the great Greek amphitheatres as precedents.

Peter was full of praise for one of Poland's most famous stages, and without question its most wonderfully located - **Sopot's Opera Leśna** (Forest Opera), a magical open-air theatre nestled in the middle of a serene hilly forest. With a history stretching back over 100 years, including legendary performances of the Ring in the 1920's, the theatre was modernised 10 years ago and boasts one of the best sound and vision systems in Europe.

Peter described an interesting very experimental production of *Das Rheingold* in LA and Detroit using live singers in front of a green screen with animated virtual settings. He then

turned his attention to some of the horrors of *Regietheater*. Members strongly agreed with his criticism of recent productions that entirely ignore the text and intentions of the works. He illustrated this with a comparison of the ways the Valkyrie have been depicted in several productions. Almost all ignored the fact that in the myths they are harpies - signifiers of death.

Peter finished his talk by reflecting on how his view of the Ring has changed. Twenty years ago, he was writing that love holds the story together – it's a tale of human frailty with love and compassion as humanities' last hope. Now he is of the view that the ring is just a band of gold with no actual power - the characters' views of it are deluded. The Ring is about self-delusion because of lack of compassion.

A very stimulating afternoon, enjoyed by all, followed by delicious afternoon tea – thanks to members who brought plates



Forest Opera, Sopot, Poland



## SUNDAY 21 MAY

### 2.00PM ANNUAL WAGNER BIRTHDAY CONCERT

A full house of enthusiastic members and friends enjoyed a delightful concert performed by the first two winners of the Jane Mathews AO Scholarship (sponsored by WSNSW for Pacific Opera); sopranos **Ellen McNeil** and **Olivia Swain**, accompanied by **Katherine Day**. The concert ended with everyone singing *Happy Birthday Dear Richard*. This was followed by a delicious afternoon tea with Barbara Brady cutting the birthday cake (made by Barbara de Rome) and a raffle, with some wonderful Wagner prints as prizes generously donated by our host Robert Mitchell, as well as a selection of books provided by Esteban.

#### PROGRAM

##### Ellen

*Ich bin Euer Liebden sehr verbunden* (The Presentation of the Rose),  
*Der Rosenkavalier*, Richard Strauss  
*Und ob die Wolke sie verhülle*, *Der Freischütz*, Carl Maria von Weber

##### Olivia

*Einsam in trüben Tagen* (Elsas Traum) from *Lohengrin*, Richard Wagner  
*Cäcilie*, *Op 27 No.2*, Richard Strauss

##### Ellen

*Elfenlied*, *Mörrike-Lieder No. 16*, Hugo Wolf  
*Ständchen* (Serenade), *Op. 17 No. 2* Richard Strauss

##### Olivia

*Es gibt ein Reich* from *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Richard Strauss  
*Dich, teure Halle* from *Tannhäuser*, Richard Wagner

## ON RICHARD STRAUSS - AT THE END OF THE RAINBOW - A FILM BY ERIC SCHULZ

THOUGHTS BY MINNIE BIGGS  
 MARCH 13 2023

This was a most rewarding and interesting film, quite inside the life of Strauss with marvelous clips of his conducting.

One line stood out for me:

Strauss conducting *Til Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks* in Vienna 1944.

**Vienna, 1944.**

Many questions.

The Jews in the Viennese orchestras, there must have been many of them, nearly all Jewish musicians in Vienna. What year did they begin to be removed?

Did they all go at once or one or a few at a time?

No need to ask where they went.

Were there so many Aryan musicians in Vienna to fill all those places?

Strauss conducted. As he had conducted a hundred times before. Already quite a few times he led a completely Aryan orchestra.

What about the audience? Also, largely Aryan Austrians. The larger component of Jewish listeners long gone. Maybe one or two hidden in themselves.

1944.

How did they feel, that audience, listening to the joy of *Til Eulenspiegel*? Hearing him chasing the girls, upsetting the

apple carts, were they fully enjoying his merry pranks? Did their mood change with the funeral march, did they mourn his hanging, did they foresee their own end? Did it all really end as a (musical) joke?

1944.

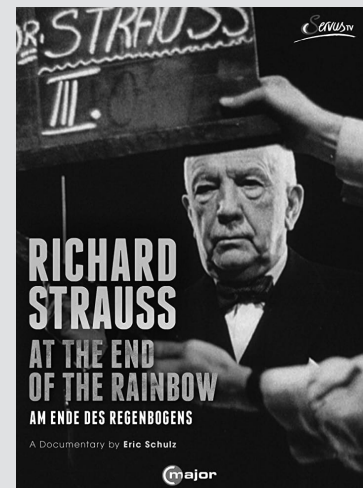
In the middle of a war without end.

Music transcends and Strauss would have conducted the orchestra as he always did, meticulously and himself. He was doing his job, his work, his life work and the (Aryan Austrian) orchestra was playing its instruments with attention and delight. With extra delight working under the composer conductor himself.

Did the music transcend, for that audience? Were they able to forget for an hour the deprivation, the horrors, the memories of the war?

Not initially their war, but now their war.

Alas it was not a musical joke. Not a joke. Not in 1944.



# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - SUNDAY 21 MAY

The AGM was held at 12.30pm on Sunday 21 May at Ampico Towers in Newtown. Official minutes of the meeting will be posted on the website in due course. The minutes of the 2022 AGM were accepted as correct and the 2022 President's Annual Report and the 2022 Financial Report were presented and accepted.

Barbara Brady was confirmed as a Life Member of the Society

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Welcome to the 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Wagner Society in NSW Inc. I would like to thank Robert Mitchell for generously hosting this at Ampico Towers. And I also thank all those who have contributed to the catering today and through 2022.

I will now comment and summarise aspects of our Society's activities for the year 2022. I will limit my commentary to 2022 to align with our financial reporting period. This also makes it easier to report to the RWVI, something that we are obliged to do annually.

### MEMBERSHIP

Our membership currently sits at 228 members. 34 members remain unfinancial. So, expect a reminder shortly to renew as we would very much like you to stay a member. The membership grew slightly from the previous year and it is expected that we may grow some more given all the Wagner that is programmed through 2023.

### FINANCIALS

We continue to hold a reasonable balance and I'll let Margaret Whealy our Treasurer say more about that when she presents her report.

### SUPPORT AND DONATIONS

I report that the Society continues to support young artists. In 2022 we assisted Samuel Sakker, Margaret Plummer, Adrian Tamburini, Nathan Bryon, Michelle Ryan and Chris Curcuruto. Some of us had the opportunity to see and hear Adrian in performance, in various roles, during the Bendigo Ring, to great acclaim. Also, Samuel Sakker has had great success in France with his Tristan. We are very proud of all our artists and our small part in getting them there. The WSNSW will continue our commitment to a \$5,000 annual Scholarship with Pacific Opera named for our late President the Honourable Jane Mathews OA. I'd like to thank Ian Hutchinson, the Chairman of Pacific Opera and member of our Society, for suggesting this and for kick starting the donations towards it. We look forward to hearing Ellen

THE 2023-24 COMMITTEE WAS CONFIRMED AS FOLLOWS:

## COMMITTEE 2023 - 2024

President.....	Esteban Insausti.....	0412 282 070
Vice President 1 .....	Mike Day .....	0413 807 533
Vice President 2 .....	Marie Leech.....	0418 679 626
Treasurer .....	Margaret Whealy.....	0414 787 199
Secretary.....	Ross Whitelaw.....	rosswhitelaw35@gmail.com
Membership Secretary .....	Julie Clarke	
Members .....	Nick Dorsch .....	0419 751 694
	Robert Mitchell	
	June Donsworth	
	Danny May	
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Artists Liaison.....	Leona Geeves .....	lg03415@gmail.com
Public Officer .....	Alasdair Beck .....	0414357441.
Webmaster.....	Lis Bergmann.....	lisbergmann89@gmail.com

McNeil, the inaugural recipient, and Olivia Swain, the second recipient, in a concert later this afternoon.

To see these young artists develop into great performers is just one incentive to give generously to our various philanthropic projects. I hope you all continue to be generous in 2023.

### EVENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

In 2022 we organised 15 events. We had 3 Zoom events, with the producers of the Marjorie Lawrence documentary, Wayne Groom and Carolyn Bilsborow, as well as Christopher Cook and Erica Miner. We had 4 Talks, including Ralph Myers, Peter Bassett and Robert Gay. We showed “Siegfried”, Part 1 of the “Die Nibelungen” a silent film by the legendary Fritz Lang. Leona Geeves organised 5 concerts with the following artists: Rebecca MacCallion, Bronwyn Douglass, Bradley Kunda, Brad Cooper, Jane Ede, Valda Wilson, Nathan Bryon, Daniel Macey, Jessica Harper and Joseph Eisinger, all mainly accompanied by the incomparable Bradley Gilchrist. And on top of all that we had a Masterclass led by Christina Henson Hayes taking seven singers through their paces. This was the busiest year of events in memory for a couple of reasons. First to blow off the cobwebs after 2 years of lockdowns, cancellations and limited attendances. Secondly to say that the WSNSW was back into live events, which is why we all join the Society, to meet other like-minded music lovers in enjoying music and talking about music.

Another component of our events is the extension of the Wagner network in Australia and beyond. We started sharing our zoom events specially with our sibling Societies in Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia as well as New Zealand. This together with conscious effort to meet at Wagner performances helps cement our friendships as well as that network that can assist in things like procuring and exchanging tickets. This is why the WSNSW continues to be part of the international Wagner network by continuing our membership of the RWIV and the Freunde von Bayreuth. I had the pleasure of meeting with Rainer Fineske, the President of the RWVI, in Berlin whilst there for the Staatsoper Ring. It is important to meet face to face to better exchange ideas and reinforce the connections.

### BAYREUTH AND WAGNER PERFORMANCES

2022 saw many of our members travelling overseas again. There were sizeable contingents attending the Wagner Festival of all the operas in Leipzig as well as the Bayreuth Festival and later the new Ring in Berlin. We had a brief “debrief” at the Christmas Party but given the number of people that attended these key events, mainly signalling a normalisation of performances internationally after 2020-21, we must organise a proper debrief in 2023, which will include the Bendigo Ring.

Whilst in Bayreuth, Ross Whitelaw and myself, met with the President of the Singapore Society. We now have extended our Australasian network to include Singapore (in the same time zone as Perth Western Australia) for future zoom events. These connections and friendships have been reaffirmed at the Bendigo Ring and, hopefully, later this year when *Das Rheingold* is performed in Singapore in July.

### THE COMMITTEE

Thank you for your wonderful work and support through 2022. We are getting to be a well-oiled machine. But as with all machines we need constant upgrades and maintenance. We are still looking for help to maintain our important communications (social media and beyond) as well as our archives. I also want to acknowledge the unstinting help of our non-voting members, Leona Geeves with artists, and Lis Bergmann on archives and Social Media. As well as our long serving Public Officer Alasdair Beck, who will be back for 2023.

Our ambitions are always to improve what we have, so more help, feedback, and your ideas, are always welcomed.

With that I conclude my report and commend it to the membership.

#### Esteban Insausti

President

Wagner Society in NSW Inc

21 May 2023

## HONORARY LIFE MEMBER

Every now and then we look to elevate one of our members to Honorary Life Membership as a modest gesture of thanks and gratitude for a significant contribution. In the case of **Barbara Brady**, membership number 380, the contribution is vast and long ranging. She has served on the Committee, edited the Wagner Newsletter (now the Quarterly), presented talks to the society on her favourite subject of the early works of Wagner, and was the legendary supplier of Wagner birthday cakes for many years. In 2008 Barbara compiled a 10 part radio series called “Wagner and Friends” which went to air on 2MBS-FM. Leona Geeves, amongst others, are trying to locate it for a rerun in the Station’s 50<sup>th</sup> year. And on top of that Barbara has been a consistent and ridiculously generous donor to the Society. So, Barbara, in gratitude for your work, time and generosity we have the honour of elevating you to Honorary Life Membership of the Wagner Society in NSW. Please join me in acclamation.



Barbara Brady cuts Wagner’s birthday cake watched by President Esteban Insausti.

## TREASURER'S REPORT FOR THE 2022 YEAR

The Treasurer's reporting for the 2022 year is exactly as reported by our Auditors, with the exception that they wrote back \$190 of 2022 Membership fees received in December 2021 that they took out the previous year. Lectures and functions income (including raffles and book sales) at \$18,318 has increased considerably over the 2021 and 2019 years; this category was at \$12,401 in 2021 and \$14,629 in 2019. 2020 was lower due to Lockdown. On the expenses side, there has obviously been an increase in function room hire and presenter expenses. Overall, allowing for these categories and catering, we made a profit of \$8,782 compared with \$5,796 in 2021. General donations are a little lower than in 2021 but there were other specific donation categories (Melbourne Opera Tubas and Pacific Opera/Jane Mathews Scholarship) altogether totalling \$10,833 compared with \$15,295 in 2021 including FARA. There was an excess of expenses over income in relation to Sponsorships/Scholarships and the specific donation categories of Pacific Opera/Jane Mathews Scholarship and Melbourne Opera/Tubas over 2021. Sponsorships/Scholarships at \$15,604 are higher than in 2021 at \$8,276 but less than in 2019 at \$26,739. However, the \$15,604 adds to the other above categories of Melbourne Opera/Tubas and Pacific Opera Jane Mathews Sponsorship totalling \$36,054 compared with \$29,526 in 2021. Other operating expenses includes expenses incurred for the web, bank, auditors, PO box, insurance, stationery, video recording. As has previously been stated, the Committee has continued its conscious decision (in view of the large amount of funds held - \$56,834 on the Balance Sheet) to overspend for the year on Sponsorships/Scholarships and other categories at \$36,054 compared with \$29,526 in 2021 and hence the loss of \$10,014 compared with a loss of \$3,113 in 2021.

**Margaret Whealy**  
4 May 2023

## WAGNER SOCIETY IN NSW INC. BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2022

	Note	2022	2021
		\$	\$
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Westpac Cheque Account		4,139.85	14,506.10
Westpac Cash Reserve		52,693.70	52,531.32
Cash at Bank		56,833.55	67,037.42
Total Current Assets		56,833.55	67,037.42
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		<u>56,833.55</u>	<u>67,037.42</u>
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Membership Revenue in Advance		-	190.00
Total Current Liabilities		-	190.00
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>		-	190.00
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<u>\$56,833.55</u>	<u>\$66,847.42</u>
<b>MEMBERS EQUITY</b>			
Retained Profits		56,833.55	66,847.42
<b>TOTAL MEMBERS EQUITY</b>		<u>\$56,833.55</u>	<u>\$66,847.42</u>

## PROFIT AND LOSS STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2022

	2022	2021
	\$	\$
<b>INCOME</b>		
Membership	13,815.00	15,065.00
Lectures and Functions	18,318.26	12,401.00
Donations	1,558.33	2,680.00
FARA Donations	-	500.00
Bayreuth Ticket Sales	27,633.10	-
Advertising Income	2,100.00	-
Pacific Opera Jane Mathews Sponsorship	3,510.00	1,250.00
Melbourne Opera Donations / Tuba	5,765.00	10,865.00
Sale of Assets	-	3,000.00
Interest Received	162.38	10.07
Total Income	<u>72,862.07</u>	<u>45,771.07</u>
<b>Less EXPENSES</b>		
Bank Charges	182.12	247.92
Newsletter	7,206.23	7,573.42
FARA	-	5,000.00
Function Catering Expenses	501.40	1,323.15
Function Room Hire	5,033.00	1,439.50
Payments to Presenters	4,001.98	3,842.40
Bayreuth Ticket Expenses	26,881.80	-
Bayreuth Memberships	1,012.06	1,146.45
Sponsorships/Scholarships	15,604.52	8,276.29
Pacific Opera Jane Mathews Sponsorship	5,450.00	1,250.00
Melbourne Opera Donations / Tuba	15,000.00	15,000.00
Other Operating Expenses	2,001.83	3,784.50
	<u>82,875.94</u>	<u>48,883.63</u>
<b>Operating Profit (Loss) before Income Tax</b>	<u>(10,013.87)</u>	<u>(3,112.56)</u>
Total Available for Distribution	<u>(\$10,013.87)</u>	<u>(\$3,112.56)</u>

## FINANCIAL WAGNER SOCIETY MEMBERS AS OF 21 MAY 2023

Kay Abrahams [966], Paul Alger [255], Margrit Bachmann [1132], Carole Bailey [663], Ros Baker [1090], Glen Barnwell [944], Patrick John Barrer [1227], Colin Baskerville [817], Barbara Beasley [1104], Alasdair Beck & Dr Bill Brooks [765], Dr Jane & Philip Beeby [985], Marco Belgiorno-Zegna [1109], Ron & Kim Bennett [1258], Janelle Berents [1044], Lis Bergmann [1209], Minnie Biggs [1130], Richard Bloor [967], Erica Booker [1271], Bettina Boss [1272], Jan Bowen AM [743], Charles Brady & Brian Freestone [840], Barbara Brady [380], Claire Brauer [1050], Maggie Brown [1203], Frances Butcher [918], Dr Andrew Byrne & Allan Gill [1242], Georgina Carnegie [1207], John Carrigan [1183], Dr John Casey [114], Humphrey Charles & Pauline Alexander [951], Dr Colleen Chesterman [649, HLM], Prof Michael Chesterman [649], Noel and Hetty Cislowski [1256], Julie & Terry Clarke [496], Daryl Colquhoun [732], Rae & Russ Cottle [843], Alexander Cozzolino [930], Gavin Crank [1193], Dr Peter Craswell [1030], Anita Crawford [1268], Roger Cruickshank [669, HLM], Rhonda Dalton [1121], Catherine Davies [921], Michael Day [606], Michele Day [1264], Barbara de Rome [207], Ermes De Zan [865], Prof Christine Deer [1064], Dr June Donsworth [884], Nick & Barbara Dorsch [154], Camron Dyer & Richard Mason [544], Jenny Edwards [1034], Keith Elvy & Peter Dunphy [988], Prof Michael Ewans [0, HLM], Jennifer Ferns [34], Lyndall Foldvary-Khoury [1231], Chris Ford [1088], Robert (Bob) Foster [850], Warwick Fyfe & Dr Ruth Frances [755], Richard Gastineau-Hills [68], David Geer [1264], Leona Geeves [87, HLM], Suzanne Gerozisis [1269], Helen Gillam [1170], Michael Gleeson-White [1085], Dr Miriam Goodwin & Rolf Duels [1037], Dr Elizabeth Gordon-Werner [878], Dr Andrew Goy [723], Tim Green [933], Hugh Hallard [799], Helen Halley [1007], Dr Pat Harvey [427], Simon Hatcher [333], Alan Hauserman & Janet Nash [876], Robert Henderson [1005], Clare & Margaret Hennessy [19], Pauline Holgerson [863], John Hughes [1199], Dr Gail Huon [1168], David Hurwood

(1249), Ian Hutchinson [1103], Esteban Insausti & Agnes Brejzek [433], Dr Glynis Johns [1120], Brett Johnson & Alan Ren [779, 1217], Anne Jones [861], Renate Junker [866], Dr Susan Kelly [4], Dr Heinz Kestermann [995], Julie King [7], Richard King [15, HLM], Anna-Lisa Klettenberg [847], Irena Kowalski [536], The Hon Justice Francois Kunc SC [999], Hannelore Laundl [962], Stephanie Lee [1255], Dr Marie Leech [916], Carole & Dr Jim Leigh [452], Dr David Lillystone [1219], Gary Linnane [960], Lynette Longfoot [922], Kurt Looser [1124], Peter Mason & Henry Burmester [997], Dr Dennis Mather [696, HLM], Danny May [1244], Diana McBain [419], Christopher McCabe [1196], Dr David McCarthy [648], Phillip McEachran [1049], Pam & Ian McGaw [548], John McGrath [310], Helen Meddings [1114], Irene & Wolfgang Merretz [115], Dr Robert Mitchell [1014], Christine Moore [1247], Michael Moore [819], Helen & Bill Naylor [543], Monica & Aliro Olave [735], Linden Ramsay [1265], Diana-Rose Orr [844], Melanie & Sarah Penicka-Smith [1270], Colin Piper [222], Reginald Neville Pollard [1239], Kevin Herbert Powell [1222], Kenneth Reed AM [41], Vivien Reed [1233], Garry Richards [366], Juliet Richters [1273], Janice Roberts & Achim Leistner [1140], Peter Rowe [1189], Dr John Sanders [972], Mitzi Saunders [683], Mandy Shaul [1178], Nizza Siano [619], Renate Siegel [1215], Patricia Smith [1221], Dr Lourdes St George [895], Lyn Stephenson [1274], Nigel Stoke [1136], John Studdert [696], Douglas Sturkey [902], Isolde Sültemeyer [978], Prof Hugh Taylor AC [990], Prof Paul Thom & Cassandra Parkinson [1211], Robert Thurling [830], Robert & Estelle Tsenin [1226], Nadine Wagner [1100], Dr Warren & Susan Walsh [956], Dr Terence Watson [657, HLM], Derek Watt [1241], Dr Greg Watters [892], David Wayne [1181], Margaret Whealy [1149], Simon Whitaker [1267], Warner Whiteford [1188], Ross Whitelaw [527], Graeme Wiffen [1220], Robert Woodley [1248], Jill Hickson Wran [1108], Roswitha Wulff [1186], Elizabeth Yashadhana & Zane Saunders [1229], Steven Yu [1237], Alfredo Zaniboni [946]

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# LOLA MONTEZ

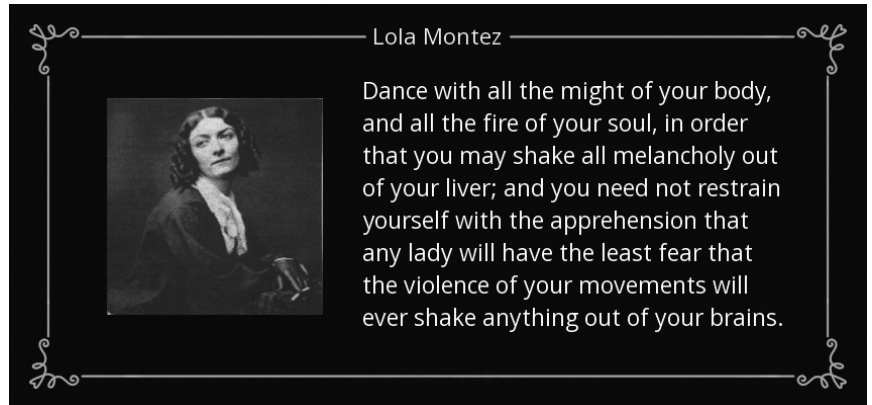
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## LOLA MONTEZ, WAGNER AND BENDIGO

**Editor's note:** during the Bendigo *Ring* Psychiatrist Geoffrey Seidel (President of the Wagner Society of South Australia) gave a talk about Lola Montez, Wagner and Bendigo, which I couldn't attend, but members who did said it was very informative and amusing. Below are some excerpts from other sources.

Lola Montez was born Maria Dolores Eliza Rosanna Gilbert in Ireland in 1821 and died in New York in 1861. Alone, but not poor, she was only 39 years old. A sad ending for a woman whom Richard Wagner defined as a "demonic creature".

Lola Montez was the first woman to be photographed with a cigarette in her mouth. She was the first courtesan actress named Grande Horizontale. Avant-garde to the core. And much more: Lola Montez was an average dancer, a passionate lover, a feminist and a big liar, one of the most amazing characters of her time.




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## LOLA MONTEZ AND RICHARD WAGNER

An excerpt from *Life as Opera - From Lola Montez to Mata Hari* by Martin Blythe  
[http://www.sexualfables.com/life\\_as\\_opera.php](http://www.sexualfables.com/life_as_opera.php)

Once upon a time, in Starnberg near Munich, **Richard Wagner** was working on pre-production for his groundbreaking new opera *Tristan and Isolde*. The year was 1865. Across Europe, in Paris, Georges Bizet was on a train to the nearby village of Le Vésinet. Unlike Bizet, Wagner was feeling very self-satisfied. His moody opera had been completed five years earlier and still it had not been performed anywhere. But at last, an invitation had arrived, from **King Ludwig II of Bavaria** – Ludwig was a huge Wagner fan – summoning him to Munich to mount the kind of extravaganza that Wagner always intended for this opera.

Wagner was single again; his wife had left him for good this time. Life now was to be lived in a state of perpetual crisis. He was broke, of course, and he knew he was not welcome in most of the great cities of Europe. But things were looking up. As he prepared the opera for rehearsals, he recalled how the adventuress **Lola Montez** had careened around Europe 20 years earlier, before she too had settled in Bavaria. Lola crept into his thoughts often these days. She was only four years in the grave and the strange connection between them haunted him. Wagner was well on his way to becoming the celebrated composer whose music would dominate the late 19th century world, while Lola Montez never would be heard of again. But there had been strong and ironic resemblances between them.

Their careers had been launched at the same time -- Wagner's with a successful performance of *Rienzi* in Dresden in 1842 and

Lola's with a Spanish routine during intermission in *The Barber of Seville* on the London stage in 1843. As they both became better known, they moved in the same fashionable crowd and Wagner began monitoring Lola's progress. Inevitably, they collided one day in Dresden, whereupon he sized up his doppelgänger. Lola was in the company of **Franz Liszt** -- we only have her word for it -- after a series of whirlwind marriages and affairs in India, London, Paris, Warsaw and St. Petersburg. She hardly noticed Wagner of course and he resented it. The genteel set seemed entertained by Lola, who had so little respect for the niceties of polite society -- a cynicism she kept all her life, even as she enjoyed its decadence. Wagner knew she was never really accepted by them; dancers were forever on the borderline. But it seemed to make no difference! She was uniformly roasted in the press (when they weren't being paid off) and audiences booed and hissed most places she went, yet this did not dent her ability to draw a crowd. Far from it, for her appeal lay in the "tease" whereby the audience was incited to participate and react, in the venerable tradition of music hall and pantomime. Frequently she became the main draw!

Wagner found this irritating. Her kitsch dance routines with the castanets and fans and extravagant costumes were the embodiment of everything that was wrong with contemporary opera. She was a lower-class tramp with a mean temper, and though she wore great clothes (something he appreciated), he could not understand her popularity. He had not been surprised when Liszt dumped her in Paris. Perversely though,



Caricature on the abdication of King Ludwig I of Bavaria. The growing opposition against him reinforced by his affair with Lola Monte forced him to resign during the march revolution

after an initial fiasco, Lola had been embraced enthusiastically by the Parisians and she stayed on to enjoy it. Wagner was envious. Paris was the most fashionable place to be and being popular there meant something. But after a duel resulted in the death of her lover, she was obliged to leave Paris in a hurry, and so she had come to Bavaria. A story not unlike Wagner's as he fled from his creditors, one city after another:

Lola first imposed herself upon the good citizens of Munich in October of 1846. There is a famous legend of how she first met the King, **Ludwig I** (Ludwig II's grandfather). She sought out the cafe in town where Ludwig's chief adviser took his coffee in the morning and contrived to fall off her rented horse at his startled feet. Of course, he sprang gallantly to the lady's assistance, and it wasn't long before he was promising her an audience with the King. When the big day arrived, Lola overheard Ludwig in the next room trying to get out of the meeting so she raced past the two guards and strode in front of the 60-year-old Ludwig. The story varies a bit at this point. Some say that as she was standing in front of Ludwig he asked "Nature or art?" a question that could well be asked of many of today's celebrities. She took up a stiletto letter opener from Ludwig's desk and cut her blouse open to prove there was no padding. Perhaps she had the stiletto in her clothes for just this very moment? Others report that as the guards wrestled with her, her dress was torn off the shoulder and that she ripped the other shoulder off for good measure, baring her full breasts before his royal gaze. At any rate Ludwig was impressed.

No surprise then that within the year Lola was running the government of Bavaria, or at least ordering it around. But, true to form, she also went out of her way to cause offense. One could argue that the Bavarians needed a shake-up, but it also seems evident that Bavaria's conservatism provoked Lola

to new excesses. In the end it was the nationality issue that became her downfall: she manipulated Ludwig into granting her Bavarian nationality, the titles of Countess of Landsfeld, Baroness von Rosenthal, Canoness of the Order of St. Theresa, her own villa, and 20,000 florins a year -- all at taxpayers' expense. Her enemies complained bitterly, "National feeling is wounded; Bavaria believes itself to be governed by a foreign woman, whose reputation is branded in public opinion." With all of Europe already in an uproar -- this was 1848, the year of revolutions -- the king unwisely dismissed his government. Things went from bad to worse and the college students did what students do best -- they protested and then rioted. The king revoked his naturalization order and Lola was forced to flee across the border, disguised as a boy. Ludwig was not able to hold on to his throne, but the citizens felt that they could forgive the old man his follies.

### TRISTAN AND ISOLDE

For Wagner, *Tristan and Isolde* would represent everything that Lola Montez was not. The opera would continue a theme he had been working on in the earlier *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* -- the search for the perfect woman, the ideal soulmate. It was a worthy theme that had interested intellectual men through the centuries. For Wagner, as with Beethoven and Goethe, it had real-life implications: it turned on the question of how he should behave with women whom he adored physically and spiritually but who were married to other men. In other words, these were women he could not, or should not, have.

Perhaps for this reason, Wagner was drawn to the story of Tristan, Isolde and King Mark, the tragedy of a love triangle gone bad. Wagner by 1865 was himself in just such a triangular relationship with Mr. and Mrs. Von Bülow -- **Hans von Bülow** was his conductor but it was the wife **Cosima von Bülow** who was spending most of her time with him. (She asked her husband for a divorce in 1868 and he eventually granted it. It was finalized in 1870, by which time Wagner and Cosima already had three children together. They married later that year.)

It seems the inspiration needed to compose *Tristan and Isolde* had come earlier, from his time spent in Zürich and Venice in 1858-59 in the company of the magnificent **Mathilde Wesendonck**. It seems equally likely Wagner never slept with Mathilde, who was married, but she apparently called forth in him that hopeless passion and exquisite torture that comes from experiencing *Tristan and Isolde*. It is the ever-shifting distance between desire and denial -- the woman one desires yet who is faithful to someone else. This tension (influenced by reading Schopenhauer) afforded a glimpse of what Wagner took to be nothing short of the meaning of life, whether one called it the infinite or immortality or oblivion or death (Liebestod). For Wagner, opera could focus us on that feeling. It inspired a sense of surrender to what sometimes can turn into overwhelmingly powerful passions. If the opera fan could not feel those desires, then the more pity them. Wagner felt that through music one could achieve a virtual disintegration of the self. One could experience rapture, transcendence, orgasm and then peace of mind, something many music critics feel he comes closest to in *Tristan and Isolde's* second act duets and its finale. By that time, Isolde has dropped dead over Tristan's body. It's not for everyone.

How ironic then that Wagner's most adoring fan – the young King Ludwig II -- loved Wagner and his operas with a lusty passion that mocks Wagner's lofty pretensions. Ludwig was almost certainly homosexual and the snottier courtiers had Wagner picked out as one of Ludwig's boys, earning him the nickname "Lolotte," a reference to Lola. The legends abound, and it seems that Ludwig on occasion enjoyed himself recreating the erotic Venusberg scenes from *Tannhäuser* at the court. Another time, Wagner caught Ludwig parading around the palace with the Swan Knights of *Tannhäuser* and on one particularly ugly day, Wagner had found him dressed up to resemble Lola Montez. Whether this was to tease the courtiers and bureaucrats or to tease Wagner, or whether Ludwig was simply making an ironic commentary upon a celebrated moment in Bavarian history, he did not know. At the present time Ludwig was enthusiastically suggesting that he cast himself as Isolde with Wagner as Tristan, for horsing around the castle. How many other composers had this problem with their patron Wagner wondered? Certainly, he knew **Voltaire** had had to keep the young **Frederick (the Great)** at beyond arm's length. Unfortunately, Wagner's own flamboyant taste in rich colours, silks, furs and perfumes didn't help. One of his nastier critics would perceive an aura of homosexuality vibrating throughout the music of his operas. What could you do with critics like this?

At the end of 1865, *Tristan and Isolde* was performed successfully in Munich and Wagner felt vindicated. Yet, true to form, he was fleeing Bavaria within months, all good will used up and

deeply in debt once again. The irony here is that Wagner was repeating the flight of Lola Montez in 1848, running away from a Ludwig. Damned if he would dress up as a girl though.

For Wagner, the highest state one might aspire to with Lola Montez was being eaten alive by her, which had its merits. Yet they were really little different from each other – both were impetuous and arrogant, reckless spenders and restless spirits at heart. Lola had been a rival for the world's attention in the worst possible way. While music critics have lambasted Wagner's extravagance and his ego, fewer have acknowledged his ability to cultivate his public image, just as Lola did, and for a decade she had been better at it and, as a result, more famous. Word of her death in New York had reached Europe quickly – a true measure of her cultural impact perhaps? Wagner considered her the most vulgar spirit of the age in which he now found himself. There was something so...American...about her. How appropriate she go and live there. Lola had been a burlesque of womanhood, a painted and jewelled harpy who was all facade and no substance. Her body, her physicality, her lusty desires, her narcissism had been the very opposite of the ethical and spiritual values he felt people should aspire to. Indeed, Europe seemed to be turning into everything tawdry that Lola had stood for. Of course, Wagner's impact on late 19th century music would be enormous and Lola's ultimate impact on contemporary culture would be minimal, yet at the time she was an equally valid symbol of where 19th century European culture was headed...



Lola Montez in America



## LOLA MONTEZ AND BENDIGO

Lola Montez performed to packed houses in Bendigo, Ballarat, Castlemaine, Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide during the gold-rush in 1855/56.

Lola Montez was the original dirty dancer and bad-girl global celebrity. Although she visited Victoria before its connection to the world via telegraph, her reputation preceded her. She was known primarily as a dancer, but not a particularly good one; so, she was an early example of the celebrity who's famous for being famous. In short, Lola Montez was the Paris Hilton of her day. Like the present-day staple of gossip mags, her fame was forever linked to sex and scandal.

Lola arrived in Melbourne to find the city still humming from the discovery of gold. With the influx of miners from all over the world, and with the Eureka Stockade rebellion a recent memory, Lola Montez may have expected a frontier society which would give her greater acceptance than she could hope to find in stratified Europe. However, Lola did experience censure, focused on her notorious 'Spider Dance'. This was a faux Spanish folk dance which involved her energetically searching her skirts for an invisible spider, then stamping it to death. The local critics were hostile to luke-warm: The Argus described it as "utterly subversive of all ideas of public morality"; The Age was initially impressed, until a second reviewer decided the dance was "simply ridiculous".

Things were easier for Montez in gold mining country.

"Bendigo and Ballarat were turning into settled towns, but their goldfields still held large migratory male populations," says historian David Goodman. "Entertainment was very welcome, so touring companies and other entertainers

quickly got onto a circuit through the area." Ever the canny self-publicist, Lola visited Ballarat miners at their diggings, and shouted them at local bars.

Though Montez was only in the colony for a few months, she brought an air of international glamour to this remote part of the Western world. Did her success foreshadow the cultural cringe by which Australians sought validation from imported figures and culture?

No, says Goodman. "International entertainment was welcome, but 'cultural cringe' is anachronistic. Most of the population had only been here a couple of years, so they're not thinking of themselves as Australian. Gold rush Melbourne is a very cosmopolitan society; more so than an English regional city like Bristol, for example."

How significant was her visit to our developing colony? There's no question that Lola Montez was one of the most colourful characters to visit Victoria, in the most colourful era of its history. But on the face of it, it's hard to see her as anything more than a footnote.

Maybe her memory lives on because, like Oscar Wilde, Lola Montez seems a contemporary figure trapped in an unforgiving earlier age. Or possibly, despite all our advances in equality between the sexes, we're still fascinated by a woman who could break all rules of female propriety and get away with it.

**Excerpts from article by Tim Richards on [aerohaveno](http://aerohaveno.blogspot.com/2019/10/lola-montez-un-victorian-in-victoria.html)**  
<http://aerohaveno.blogspot.com/2019/10/lola-montez-un-victorian-in-victoria.html>

### Bendigo had never seen a night at the theatre quite like it

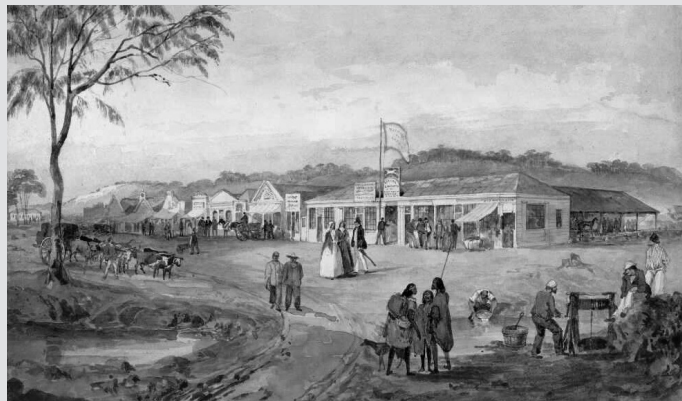
On the evening of 2 April 1856, residents of the thriving gold mining town had paid five shillings to see a performance of Asmodeus, or The Little Devil.

It wasn't the play they were interested in, but its star, Lola Montez. Celebrated and condemned in the world's media, she was a magnet for scandal and gossip.

However, she was about to be upstaged. As a thunderstorm raged outside, a bolt of lightning broke through the roof, darted toward the stage, and struck with explosive force.

Audience members screamed, actors ran wildly across the stage, and scenery smouldered in the aftermath. The Bendigo Advertiser, with a delightful sense of understatement, later described it as "a scene of real interest, not often paralleled on the stage".

Montez remained in place throughout. After the confusion had abated, she calmed the audience and reportedly remarked that no stage effects would be required in the circumstances: "Only a little brandy". The show went on, increasing Lola's popularity with the punters



Watercolour by an unknown 19th-century artist of McPherson's Store in Bendigo in 1853, the present location of Charing Cross and the Alexandra Fountain

## THE BENDIGO RING

### THE MELBOURNE OPERA'S PRODUCTION OF *DER RING DES NIBELUNGEN* IN BENDIGO

A Personal Report by Minnie Biggs

Bendigo was built on gold.  
The Ring is built on gold.  
The ring is gold.

The connection feels more poignant as the operas take place at Ulumbarra in Bendigo; an old jail made into a beautiful well-designed hall. No one goes to jail in the Ring although many should. Nevertheless, a suitable resting place for the Ring of the Nibelung. Jail. Not heaven, not the underworld, not the forest, not the sky. The jail.

We go down in the mine, the Deborah mine in Bendigo town, down to the underworld, down to the dark of the Nibelung, down in a noisy lift, ninety seconds, to wet, muddy earth below the water level. Yes, the place where they mined the gold. Only we were privileged to hear Maestro Negus and a group of musicians and a glorious Lee Abrahmsen (who sang Sieglinde) regale us with the Siegfried Idyl and the Wesendonck Lieder, more appealing than I have ever heard them. Intimate in the damp dark, our hard hats with flashlights removed for the occasion.

The word that really describes this Ring is beauty. From the very first video image of clouds rolling past as the orchestra leads us to the bottom of the Rhine and to the maidens, some swimming above and some below. The grace of the swaying swimming maidens on poles, and later the Valkyries riding high into the sky over the riders below, exquisite.

Soon we are introduced to the magical effective stage that rises and falls, a circle in the middle of it, the first notable circle, of many beautiful circles, rings. The circle at the back often showing the sky, or clouds reflecting the action in the story, dark, menacing, rushing, slowing. The ease of the moving stage hardly noticeable, contributing to the overall pleasing effect.

The costumes gorgeous, every woman in the theatre longs to have Fricka's gown. The lighting is perfect.

A few memorable scenes: Brünnhilde on the rock, dressed in silver against the black, later against deep blue, stunning. Siegfried dead, in white, in a dark circle. The Gibichung house, red carpet, empty circle in the middle, smart modern



Concert in the Deborah mine

sculptures. Even the white edged chair benches chic, the background golden curtains wafting up. Guttrune in simple plain dark pink, the men in fitted plain suits, dark green, brown. Later the vassals at the front of the stage dressed in black, with measured movements, choreographed. Heart stopping.

Many Wagnerian singers, that is, nearly all Wotans and Brünnhildes have arguably wonderful voices and also what I call a wavery quality. On tune but ever so slightly hovering off. Wavering. Warwick Fyfe's Wotan and Antoinette Halloran's Brünnhilde did not, their voices were always right on, beautiful. Fyfe's sung German language was notable for its purity and preciseness.

Suzanne Chaundy let the music and the story tell the story. On stage the singers, and the orchestra in the pit. No need for extra unnecessary imaginative distracting details. Just simplicity.

At the end of *Das Rheingold* and after every act of the Ring thereafter, people got up from their seats, smiling, a bit dazed, vaguely exchanging similar smiles with strangers and friends. A feeling of lightness pervaded the halls and walls of the old jail. An agreement, a coming together in the wonder, the miracle of this beautiful production, everywhere, everyone smiling, happy. Not the usual atmosphere for a Ring Cycle.

Let us hope for a repeat in a couple of years, so we may all come together and smile again. With gratitude to the Melbourne Opera for this outstanding and memorable production.

## MEMBERS' PHOTOS FROM BENDIGO

Many Wagner Society members attended at least one of the three cycles and everyone agreed what a wonderful experience it was, with many extra Festival events – talks, recitals and tours – all of a high standard. Sydney visitors got to meet members from other Australian Wagner Societies and caught up with members of the cast in the local bars and restaurants. Singers supported by the Wagner Society were prominent in some of the major roles. Standouts were; **Warwick Fyfe** (Wotan), **Deborah Humble** (Erda, Waltraute), **Eleanor Greenwood** (Sieglinde, Ortlinde, Third Norn) and **Adrian Tamburini** (Hunding, Hagen). Our Vice-president **Marie Leech** was tireless with her networking, aimed at bringing the societies closer and recruiting new members, as was **Leona Geeves**.



Vice president Marie Leech with Director Suzanne Chaundy Cycle 1



Eleanor Greenwood (Sieglinde), James Egglestone (Siegmund), Marie Leech Cycle 1



Members Mel and Sarah Penicka-Smith with Bradley Cooper (Siegfried) Cycle 3



James Egglestone (Loge/Siegmund), his wife Antoinette Halloran (Brünnhilde), their agent Patrick Togher, Warwick Fyfe (Wotan) (WSNSW member Cycle 1 interval)



Interval drinks with happy members of WSVictoria and WSNSW Cycle 1



Secretary Ross Whitelaw, Deborah Humble (Erda, Waltraute), Marie Leech Cycle 3



Miki Oikawa (President, Wagner Society of Victoria), Juliana Lim (former Pres WS Singapore) Esteban Insausti, Agnes Brejzak at Die Walküre . .

## MELBOURNE OPERA'S BENDIGO RING CYCLE - 2ND CYCLE

Review by Dr Terence Watson



The Ulumbarra Theatre



The Ulumbarra Theatre

Conductor: **Anthony Negus**; Melbourne Opera Orchestra

Creative Team—Director: **Suzanne Chaundy**; Set: **Andrew Bailey**; Lighting: **Rob Sowinski**; Costumes: **Harriet Oxley**; Video Design: **Chris Hocking**; Sway Pole Director: **Phillip Gleeson**.

### PERFORMERS:

*Das Rheingold*—Alberich: **Simon Meadows**; Wotan: **Warwick Fyfe**; Fricka: **Sarah Sweeting**; Freia: **Lee Abrahmsen**; Fafner: **Steven Gallop**; Fasolt: **Darren Jeffrey**; Froh: **Jason Wasley**; Donner: **Christopher Tonkin**; Loge: **James Egglestone**; Mime: **Robert Macfarlane**; Erda: **Deborah Humble**.

*Die Walküre*—Siegmond: **James Egglestone**; Sieglinde: **Lee Abrahmsen**; Hunding: **Steven Gallop**; Wotan: **Warwick Fyfe**; Brünnhilde: **Antoinette Halloran**; Fricka: **Sarah Sweeting**; Gerhilde: **Rosamund Illing**; Ortlinde: **Eleanor Greenwood**; Waltraute: **Jordan Kahler**; Schwertleite: **Dimity Shepherd**; Helmwig: **Olivia Cranwell**; Siegrune: **Naomi Flatman**; Gringarde: **Caroline Vercoe**; Rossweisse: **Sally-Anne Russell**.

*Siegfried*—Siegfried: **Bradley Daley**; Brünnhilde: **Antoinette Halloran**; Mime: **Robert Macfarlane**; The Wanderer: **Warwick Fyfe**; Alberich: **Simon Meadows**; Fafner: **Steven Gallop**; The Woodbird: **Rebecca Rashleigh**; Erda: **Deborah Humble**.

*Götterdämmerung*—Siegfried: **Bradley Daley**; Brünnhilde: **Antoinette Halloran**; Waltraute: **Deborah Humble**; Gunther: **Chris Hillier**; Gutrune: **Kerry Gill**; Alberich: **Simon Meadows**; Hagen: **Steven Gallop**; First Norn: **Liane Keegan**; Second Norn: **Rosamund Illing**; Third Norn: **Olivia Cranwell**; Woglinde: **Rebecca Rashleigh**; Wellgunde: **Naomi Flatman**; Flosshilde: **Karen Van Spall**.

Sway Pole Performers: Ashley Grunberg, Emily Ryan, and Meiwah Williams – but only two of them performed in their three appearances (twice as auxiliary Rhine Daughters, once as auxiliary Valkyries on horses on the poles!).

Since I reviewed this production of *Das Rheingold* in the March Newsletter Issue 33 / 160 and *Die Walküre* in the March Newsletter Issue 37 / 164 (both available on the Wagner Society in NSW website: [www.wagner.org.au](http://www.wagner.org.au)), I will only make passing comments on them before more extensive comments on the other two music-dramas.

The first point to make about the completed cycle is how significant Melbourne Opera's achievement is in Australian cultural history. It is the first production of The Ring Cycle in an Australian regional city; the first by a smaller Australian opera company (again putting Opera Australia on notice about its record of producing Wagner's operas); and the first to engage Australian singers for all the roles, (with the exception of Darren Jeffrey, who is English).

All the reviews of the cycles 1 & 2 praised the production as a generally unqualified success. I add my gratitude to Melbourne Opera for taking such a risk and completing it so magnificently. The coherence of the production—the common, but adaptable set with its moveable platform and ¾ circle as the backdrop; the exquisite lighting designs and video projections that underscored subtly and sensitively each scene's emotional

and psychological focus; the stage movements and interactions for most of the characters; and the exhilarating support from the conductor and orchestra for the singers who put their hearts into their portrayals—all contributed to a thoughtful, persuasive interpretation of one of the most complex artworks of the western cultural tradition. Chaundy's no-nonsense oasis of respect and appreciation among the frequent approaches that seek to critique (and even demolish) Wagner from within, or even from outside, his artwork. I would happily recommend this production to anyone coming to The Ring Cycle for the first time, as I would recommend the Metropolitan Opera's 1987 Otto Schenk production for its similar faithfulness to Wagner's stage directions and straightforward presentation of the narrative (and cast).

If you were not at one of the Bendigo cycles, I encourage you to search the web for images of the production to see how beautiful the set, lighting, and video projections were. The production can stand proudly in comparison with those of major opera companies around the world, indeed higher and more proudly than some recent Ring cycles in Bayreuth, for instance.

## Das Rheingold

Where **Eddie Muliaumaseali**'i had sung Wotan in the first outing of this music-drama, **Warwick Fyfe** sang the role in all three of the Wotans in the 2nd Bendigo cycle, Erda was now **Deborah Humble**, and Fasolt was now **Darren Jeffrey**; otherwise, the major singers were the same as in the Melbourne premiere. In her program note, director **Suzanne Chaundy** explains her thinking about the way in which Wagner's work can be seen to relate to contemporary problems: "The other operas in the cycle are largely about people—albeit some heroic ones. We have asked ourselves what is the essence of the characters; the Gods, Giants, Nibelungen and Rheinmaidens [sic] and how they can be presented in a way that speaks to contemporary audiences, to reinforce the eternal relevance of this story of the machinations of power, entitlement and greed." The Bendigo cycles enabled her to complete her vision.

While the lighting effect for the arrival of the sun, a golden glow bathing the stage, was impressive; the gold itself was not. Alberich opens a little trapdoor and grabs a handful of what I took to be alluvial gold and smeared it over himself, making me wonder how he made a ring and a Tarnhelm out of that small haul. However, in Bendigo, the idea of alluvial gold seemed much more credible. As with the original production, Loge arrives, resplendent in a flame red suit with black pinstripes, a yellow T-shirt, and a cheeky porkpie hat with a red riband. Now, the costuming seemed to make both a political and a character point. As well as being dressed like a Mafia spiv, Loge, or rather **James Egglestone**, behaved like a Mafia heavy as well. Indeed, Egglestone was the only performer, in my opinion, who confidently and completely inhabited his character, filling his every moment on the stage with meaningful stances, gestures, and expressions. The descent into Nibelheim was again effected by raising the god's dais a little to reveal that the underside was fitted with pipes and lights suitable for an underground gold smelting operation—again very relevant in the context of Bendigo's goldmining history.

Perhaps because the Ulumbarra Theatre's stage is not as deep as the Athenaeum Theatre, characters who entered stage rear previously were now entering from stage front, as did Erda to warn Wotan to also surrender the ring to the giants. Again, very impressively, her face is projected onto the scrim at the rear of the stage where she appears rather like a cross between Medusa without serpentine hair and a portrait on an ancient platter with crazed glaze. This face slowly mouths something, but I still could not tell whether she was saying any or some of Erda's actual words. The image, though, again added *Unheimlichkeit* to the scene. The final moments of the production contained some of the most effective images. As the gods process up three small stairs at the back of the set, into the base of an enormous three-quarter circle cut into the



Das Rheingold Scene II

backdrop, through which we can see the tower of Valhalla, the dais rises to frame them, as if in a family portrait. Under the dais, and right at the back of the Nibelheim-space, a row of white-blue lights appears, with stage smoke drifting through them, suggesting the Rhine river again. Next, a row of rainbow-coloured lights appears behind. From the flies above, more rainbow lights bathe the stage and the stage smoke that is, by now, drifting up to the stage and into the auditorium—altogether a lovely image.

This was another exceptional performance of which the orchestra can again be very proud. Negus's direction resulted in a nuanced performance, with none of the voices drowned by Wagner's more exuberant dynamics. I do not know how many of the orchestra's members have played for Melbourne Opera's previous Wagner productions, but the orchestra is building up that impalpable quality that shines through when Wagner's style seeps into the performers' own relationship to the music to create what is often called the Wagner tradition of playing.

I have already commended James Egglestone for his embodiment of Loge, but I wish also to praise his voice, which again seemed to me to be one of the few of the cast to fit the character's *Fach* like a glove. The gods in general, though, failed again to persuade me that their voices were ideal for their roles. I still have reservations about the way in which Alberich in *Das Rheingold* is directed to behave like the village idiot, and yet becomes a threat to Wotan's universe in *Die Walküre* and *Götterdämmerung*. And the way in which Mime in *Siegfried* is turned into a campy, nasty, deceitful caricature, and asked to don a pink apron! In Wagner's text, Mime is indeed nasty and deceitful, but he is also as desperate for appreciation and affection as Siegfried and so a complex study in ambivalence and desire—one of Wagner's fortes in characterisation.

I must praise again Meadows' voice. When he rose to his full height, freed briefly of the silly mannerisms of his characterisation, he thundered his curse in a thrilling, chilling voice that I could believe belonged to a character of great malevolence and power, who was also intelligent enough to conceive plans that would challenge the putative all-powerful god of the universe.

## Die Walküre

With Melbourne Opera's *Die Walküre*, the significance of **Andrew Bailey's** conception of the major set elements of *Das Rheingold* becomes clearer, and created anticipation about how the set would be used for the last two as yet unseen music-dramas. The platform that descended and rose as needed in the first work to distinguish between the upper and lower realms of the gods and Nibelheim, served again generally to separate the world of the gods from the world of Sieglinde, Siegmund, and Hunding. When raised, the platform, with its hole in the middle, served as part of the backdrop, within which **Rob Sowinski's** lighting effects and **Chris Hocking's** video designs produced a wondrous variety of skylines from glorious dawn to threatening storm clouds, as well as effective changes of mood lighting on the stage, including an intensely bright light for Fricka's interrogation of Wotan. Out of a hole in the stage of Act 1, the tree Wagner calls for at the centre of Hunding's home stretches high into the flies, but it looks dead and wrecked, with all its branches broken off, as if Wotan had broken off most of the branches as he practised to make the spear that now has his runes of contract burned onto it.

In all cases, the singing in this revival was again admirable, and easily comparable with the standard in many other productions of *Die Walküre* I have seen. Chaundy is to be commended for eliciting such committed performances from her cast and having them move on the stage as if they really lived in the world of the music-drama. As the most immediately, emotionally arousing of the Ring Cycle operas, deliberately intended as such by Wagner, it can be easy to arouse superficial responses at particular moments during the drama. But it is much harder to craft a series of related actions and relationships that lead inexorably, it should feel, to each act's climax, but Chaundy achieves this with great skill. Sieglinde (sung again by Abrahmsen) and Siegmund (now sung by Egglestone) whose ranges of vocal delivery matched their emotional expression impeccably. Egglestone looked the part, tall and handsome, with a powerful, flexible tenor voice, a nice contrast to his louche Loge. Abrahmsen again conveyed a touching mixture of innocence, fear, and desire. The tenderness between them helped Chaundy "portray this epic work in a truly affecting way," as her notes say.

Wotan and Brünnhilde now take centre stage as their relationship breaks down through his intransigence (motivated as much by fear as by a sense of authority flouted) and her emerging independent identity. The Todesverkündigung is another of the moments in which Wagner pulls the heartstrings almost to breaking point. **Antoinette Halloran** and Egglestone wrought genuine pathos out of this scene, while also persuading me that this was a discussion between two highly intelligent people about the best course of action for all three characters. I have always understood this scene as the beginning of Brünnhilde's awakening into a subjectivity independent of her father, through the expansion of the compassion she has already shown Wotan after his demolition



*Die Walküre* Act III curtain call

by Fricka, and which will eventually blossom into her self-realisation in *Götterdämmerung*. The conclusion of this scene was also reinforced by the striking scenic image created with the lovers in the well of the ring circle of the stage, and Brünnhilde standing statuesquely above and behind them as she promises to protect him against her father's express command.

The swarming of the Valkyries at the beginning of Act 3 was again highly effective; their individualised movements around the stage showed their agitation and increasing fear of Wotan's anger as Brünnhilde reveals to them what she has done. Each Valkyrie was nicely characterised by some gesture or movement and intonation. Then Wotan storms in, bellowing anger, resentment, and betrayal. I have always admired Fyfe's voice; his power is something to witness. His skills in characterisation and his vocal power have grown even stronger and more subtle than in the original production of this music-drama.

Fyfe uses small gestures very effectively. Small moves to embrace Brünnhilde, then pulling back and sighing in frustration; waving his spear ineffectually; walking around in apparent aimlessness; then stabbing his spearpoint into the stage in impotence—all convey the impasse to which Wotan's own ambition, lust, self-disgust, and laws have brought him. Fyfe recapitulated the intense physical contact and sense of brokenness in the god of that earlier portrayal. It contrasted strongly with the increasing understanding Brünnhilde now shows, and the wistful compassion she bestows on the god who is falling to pieces before her eyes even more dramatically than after his encounter with Fricka.

Our Brünnhilde—Antoinette Halloran—as far as I can find, has not sung this role before. However, she was the Valkyrie Helmwig in the same production in Singapore in which Warwick Fyfe sang Wotan: *Die Walküre*, Orchestra of the Music Makers, Esplanade Concert Hall, Singapore, Singapore. You could watch this very fine semi-staged performance at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=TBSp8qQiiiQ&ab\\_channel=OrchestraoftheMusicMakers](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TBSp8qQiiiQ&ab_channel=OrchestraoftheMusicMakers).

I was therefore a little apprehensive that Halloran would be able to match **Bradley Daley's** Siegfried as, in *Die Walküre*, she seemed either a little under-powered or holding her voice a little in reserve for the challenges ahead: it turned out to be the latter. While her voice was adequate to this opera, her acting showed that she understood the character very well.

A large part of the success of the production was due to the inspiring playing of the Melbourne Opera Orchestra who again put their hearts and souls into bringing the music to thrilling life.

There were many goose-bumpy moments with the playing of the clarinetist and oboist in the solos in which they accompany many of the most touching moments in the work. I found Negus's quite fast tempi matched very satisfyingly the rises and falls of the emotional intensity of the drama, and again guided the narrative energetically, but with subtlety and nuance in the moments of quietness and intimacy. Negus and the orchestra players were also helped by the warm acoustics of the Ulumbarra theatre. In this theatre, I was told, some of the orchestra players were actually under the floor of the first few rows of seats.

## Siegfried

The setting for Act 1 was also located under the raised platform, showing a very messy lair for Mime and Siegfried, with the smelting and metalworking paraphernalia stage left and a kitchen stage right. A set of stairs led from behind these sets through the centre hole of the platform through which we could see a dark blue sky. Fyfe/Wotan/Wanderer made his first appearance in the opera to taunt Mime (again Robert Macfarlane) with his inability to admit his incapacity to mend Siegfried's father's sword, broken in *Die Walküre* by Wotan. Fyfe played up well the barely disguised disdain Wotan has for the stupid, self-centred Nibelung who cannot see the offer Wotan is making to give him the answer to the problem of re-forging Nothung. Sadly, Mime is made an object of heavy-handed directorial comedy so that the menace that he should show is diminished.



Antoinette Halloran as Brünnhilde

Act 2 is set on the platform, which is now turned into a forest by the simple act of dropping from the flies numerous bands of off-white cloth decorated with slashes of black to represent branches. This simple scenic gesture was remarkably effective in suggesting a new world in which there might be a chance for renewal, but of course greed and deceit are already in the forest: Fafner in his lair, Alberich skulking in the shadows, the Wanderer about to enter, and Mime on his way with Siegfried. Again, the lighting effects and video projections enhanced the music's sense of menace and doom. In the  $\frac{3}{4}$  circle a scaly body was projected to hint at what was about to happen.

When Siegfried awakens the dragon, the green scaly body changes into a dark golden Chinese dragon's head, perhaps another nod to Bendigo's rich heritage of Chinese life and culture dating from the gold rushes. The dragon continued to writhe across the screen until Siegfried kills the giant. The Woodbird coyly flits among the drapery trees until she flies off to show Siegfried the way to his future bride. Intriguingly, after Siegfried kills both Fafner, with whom he quickly established a kind of heroic rapport, and Mime, Siegfried seems to develop a degree of compassion for them both, while also mocking them by positioning their bodies back to back as if guarding the entrance to Fafner's lair

Wotan's summoning of Erda at the beginning of Act 3 was so powerful I wondered if any creature could have resisted the call. Again, Humble as Erda was stately, though deeply confused and conscious that her time had passed. Her voice

and body conveyed her resignation and despair poignantly. The confrontation between Siegfried and Wotan was another highlight. Their voices were very well matched, with Fyfe reducing his volume to signal his own resignation and despair, but also his reluctance to concede to himself that the end for which he had wished earlier was now approaching as the on-fire Siegfried smashed his spear on his way to his first lay.

While Halloran took a while to warm up in her appearance at the end of the opera, Daley had been singing powerfully and very expressively for some 3 hours (showing that his previous fine interpretation of a loving Siegmund to his sister/wife was just one side of a highly talented actor-singer). Nonetheless, they were very well matched vocally and in their interactions.

The performance more than met my expectations: the singers were convincing, the set continued to be used in clever and appropriate ways for the different locations, and the orchestral playing had strengthened, as if they were now relishing the increasingly complex and demanding writing Wagner was producing after finishing *Tristan und Isolde* and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. The orchestra's playing in the opening to act 3, which Wagner wrote after the aforementioned works, sent goosebumps up and down my spine—a rare occurrence in my jaded old age. The lighting and video effects for Brünnhilde's awakening, reflecting her greetings to the light and the sun, presented a dazzling sunrise, leaving me with joy and wonder as the lovers embraced as Siegmund and Sieglinde had done under moonlight.

## Götterdämmerung

With both Daley and Halloran having won our ears and appreciation for their acting, I knew that the experience of the final music-drama would be memorable. And it was. From the weird opening bars, through the Norns' long lament over time past, present, and not to come (for them), to Siegfried and Brünnhilde sorting out their marital relationship (into a very conventional set of roles, thanks Wagner), to Siegfried's arrival in the Gibichung Hall, the 2+ hours of the Prelude and Act 1 passed very quickly (aided by Negus's still fast tempi). I am grateful to Cosima Wagner for her insistence that there be a scene between Brünnhilde and her sister Waltraute, since it gave Halloran and Humble the chance to sing together as they range from gentle joy at seeing each other again, through appeals and rejections, anger and resentment, to the final raging parting—a true highlight of vocal and physical characterisation.



Bradley Daley (Siegfried), Steven Gallop (Hagen), Christopher Hillier (Gunther)

Again, the drawbridge platform created the spaces, with the Norns underneath (though they were supposed to be on a mountaintop), and the Gibichungs in a modernist, minimalist living room that must have cost a fortune from the local de rigueur interior designer—only two very uncomfortable looking small benches to sit on! However, through the  $\frac{3}{4}$  circle at the rear we could see over the Rhine River to the other bank. The river very effectively changed colour and movement in accordance with the emotional temperature and moods of the characters and their actions.

The singing in this act was very even, with the balance between the various characters ebbing and flowing according to the narrative flow. In general, the singers' tasks were made a little easier because the Ulumbarra Theatre, with 950 seats, is smaller than the larger Regent and Her Majesty's Theatres (over 2000 and 1800 seats, respectively) in which the previous productions were presented. This meant that all the singers in The Ring Cycle did not need to strain their voices to project to the cheap seats at the back, and that there was more chance for interaction between the singers as they did not need to reserve all their energy for projecting. The bloodbrother oath scene between Siegfried, Gunther, and Hagen had, for example, almost the atmosphere of two mates in a pub drinking each other's health.

One of my favourite scenes in this work is the unheimlich encounter between Hunding and Alberich at the beginning of Act 2 in which they attempt to outmanoeuvre each other in their pursuit of the ring. It is a moment of high dramatic irony, since we know (if we are familiar with the story) that neither will gain the prize. The following musical interlude is also one of my favourites as the gentle horn music heralding the dawn modulates into the corrosive harmonies and motif of the Curse.

The arrival of the Vassals in Act 2 for only the second chorus episode in The Ring Cycle, after the Valkyries have left the scene, is always a highlight of *Götterdämmerung* and we were not disappointed. Their discipline, accuracy, diversity, and sheer vocal power were gripping. The choral buzz rose again when the women arrived to add vocal and colourful variety (the Vassals are all in black). Hunding's summoning of the Vassals was also thrilling and menacing in its intensity.

The scenery for this act was spectacularly simple, with a huge, but what I took to be ironic, Celtic love knot posing as both a religious icon and a very stylish light descending from the flies to hover over the Gibichung's modernist Hall. While Gunther (**Christopher Hillier**) was adequate to the role of a silly, decrepit representative of a moribund royal house, he was out-sung and out-acted by his half-brother Hagen (Steven Gallop again after his intimidating appearance as Hunding). Halloran rose to rousing vocal and acting heights in her denunciation of Siegfried's apparent deceitfulness and her spearpoint oath.

In Act 3, Daley's final aria, delivered as he dies from Hagen's spear thrust into his back, was increasingly emotional, lyrical, and intense as he remembers his first encounter with Brünnhilde. The scenery was exquisite, with the dying Siegfried, among the forest draperies, lifting his arms toward the blue heavens in the  $\frac{3}{4}$  circle. Siegfried's Funeral March was appropriately thunderous and lyrically wistful and melancholy by turns. Back in the Gibichung Hall, as Brünnhilde calls for a funeral pyre for Siegfried, herself, and Grane, the lighting changes to violent red as the fire takes hold. Halloran certainly let her voice rip for the Immolation scene taking the entire audience with her as she farewelled the gods, and sent the ravens to take the embers of the Ash Tree to set Valhalla afire. In the  $\frac{3}{4}$  circle we briefly saw two huge projections of ravens obeying her call. She then tenderly lay beside Siegfried to be



consumed. Unfortunately, as the Rhine River rises to flood the Gibichung Hall, the sway dancers return, and refuse to depart. We are then treated to a never-ending swaying pair over the top of the couple who are supposed to be the centre of the drama—the dead Siegfried and Brünnhilde engulfed in flames. In Wagner’s text, the Rhine River retreats as the fire reaches Valhalla and destroys the gods, as well as the Gibichung Hall. In my view, keeping the sway polers ducking

back and forth destroyed what should be the transcendent effect of the music and the final image.

As far as I could see, the other 949 audience members rose with me to give all the performers and creative team a thunderous ovation of gratitude for such a wondrous and moving experience. As with my responses to most other productions of The Ring Cycle, I was ready to start again.

## THE BENDIGO RING CYCLE SETS A NEW STANDARD FOR OPERA IN AUSTRALIA

The Bendigo Ring Cycle was a surprisingly satisfying achievement, given that it is the product of a registered charitable organisation, supported by very generous sponsors, and probably the Bendigo City Council and Tourism Victoria, and it will enter Australian theatrical history for its ambition and the quality of its accomplishment. Victorian Opera, in contrast, receives about 67% of its income from government sources. Melbourne Opera website notes: “The current Melbourne Opera Orchestra has been developed into Melbourne Opera’s third orchestra since its formation in 2002. The Orchestra leads an active concert life as well as playing in the opera pit. The Melbourne Opera Orchestra has appeared at the Melbourne Concert Hall (Hamer Hall), Crown Casino, Her Majesty’s Theatre, and the Athenaeum Theatre, and at numerous regional Performing Arts Centres and wineries, and in December 2015-January 2016 undertook a very successful tour into China, and has been invited to make two further visits there this year.” On this basis, we can look forward to the orchestra building on its remarkable achievements in playing Wagner’s artworks, especially after the guidance, training, and encouragement of their conductor for their most recent productions of Wagner’s operas Anthony Negus.

According to Wikipedia, “Melbourne Opera was founded in 2002...dedicated to producing opera and associated art forms in Melbourne, Victoria. [...] Melbourne Opera is the business and trading name of South East Regional Touring Opera Ltd. [...] Despite receiving no government funding since its foundation, the company mounts between three and five main stage productions each year.” Apparently, in 2005, it was to be funded by a grant of A\$7.6 million from the Australian government for the development of opera in Victoria—it seems that none of the money reached Melbourne Opera. Over 18 years, it has produced 38 operas, and employed a 96 member orchestra, 177 performers, and 329 chorus members. Of The Ring Cycle in particular, Sophie Founé reports in her “Ring cycle premieres” article in the 30 March 2023 Bendigo Times: “With an all-Australian cast, aside from the conductor, the production has involved about 300 people over three years and cost \$5 million.”

I understand that the box office returns broke even for the three cycles—I hope that this is a preliminary and conservative result so that Melbourne Opera decides it is worthwhile reviving it in the next few years. And, after The Ring Cycle, and a 2018 *Tristan und Isolde*, can we look forward to *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and *Parsifal* before long? I certainly hope so.

### REACTION TO THE BENDIGO RING by WAGNER SOCIETY MEMBER DOUGLAS STURKEY

The whole festival-like experience in Bendigo was wonderful. A conscious decision had been taken to perform the four parts of each Cycle on Fridays and Sundays over two consecutive weekends, in the expectation that visitors would pump some money into the economy during the intervening weekdays. For those of us who needed even more music, there were superb recitals on the non-“Ring” days which illustrated the work of Wagner’s contemporaries who were influenced (positively or negatively) by his *oeuvre*. I went to almost everything.

The staging of Melbourne Opera’s production of the Cycle was excellent. It was clear, uncluttered and faithful to the text, for which Director, **Suzanne Chaundy** deserves considerable credit. This was my tenth “Ring Cycle”; and there were scenes which were the best I have ever seen. Just to pick the first - the ascent to Valhalla at the end of *Das Rheingold*. Gone was the staircase to the heavens painted in rainbow stripes, to be replaced by joyful New Year’s Eve-type revelry amongst the gods in which silent ‘fireworks’ (no bangs!) emitted puffs of ‘clouds’ in rainbow colours. It really looked like a celebration in

honour of the realisation of Wotan’s ambition, even though we never saw the castle.

Musically, the whole effort was commendable. There were ‘stars’ like **Warwick Fyfe**’s Wotan/Wanderer, and **Antoinette Halloran**’s Brünnhilde (although some others would have preferred a rounder and fuller voice), to whom I would add my personal plaudits to **Deborah Humble** (Erda/Waltraute), **James Egglestone** (*Loge/Siegmond*), and **Bradley Daley** (Siegfried). The orchestra, under **Anthony Negus**, was pretty good too, although the brass section clearly had some noticeable weaknesses. Nevertheless, the grand sweep of the score upheld its majesty and the orchestra certainly swept us along, comfortably so.

I did not meet anyone who was not impressed by Melbourne Opera’s overall presentation. It was well worth the effort (to get to Bendigo) and the accommodation/ticket costs. And the venue - a renovated and imaginatively rejuvenated Sandhurst Gaol, now the Ulumbarra Theatre - is an excellent and interesting destination in its own right, with good seating and sightlines for around 900 patrons

## MEETING OF YOUNG WAGNERIAN RESEARCHERS OF THE WAGNERIAN ASSOCIATION OF MADRID

On March 8, 2023, the Wagnerian Association of Madrid brought together four young researchers in their “Tertulias del Moderno” to present their research projects related to the work and influence Richard Wagner.

It is often said that there are hardly any composers who have been studied more and better than Richard Wagner. However, an excellent pool of young researchers in Spain continues to show us through their work and doctoral theses that there are still many aspects of Richard Wagner’s work to be investigated

In order to disseminate these important works, the Wagnerian Association of Madrid organized on March 8, as part of its cycle “Tertulias en el Moderno”, the First Meeting of Young Researchers. Four young researchers had the opportunity to explain, present and discuss their research work.

The event was opened by Sacui Cao, a PhD student in the Linguistic, Literary and Theatrical Studies program at the University of Alcalá de Henares. In his presentation he spoke of the different influences that the work of Richard Wagner exerted on Rubén Darío. In this sense, Sacui not only highlighted the influence of the swan in the poet’s poetry, but also the direct or indirect presence of eminently Wagnerian synesthesias, alliterations and turns. It became clear how Wagner’s aesthetic influence manifests itself in two very different ways in Darío’s poetry: through the presence of Wagnerian characters and a very personal creative reception.

Next, Daniel Barba Rodríguez, a doctoral student from the Department of Architecture Theory and Projects of the University of Valladolid, focused his exhibition on *The Ring of the Nibelung*. More specifically, he spoke of the idea of space, project and scenographic strategies of the Fura dels Baus in his production of *The Ring of the Nibelung* in Valencia (2007-2009). In his presentation, Daniel explained how La Fura, faced with the physical immersion of the public, sought the visual immersion of the viewer with this show, implementing six very specific project strategies. The presentation clearly exposed how the handling of space proposed by La Fura can be seen as an update of the concept of total work of art, applied to the contemporary aesthetics of visual culture.



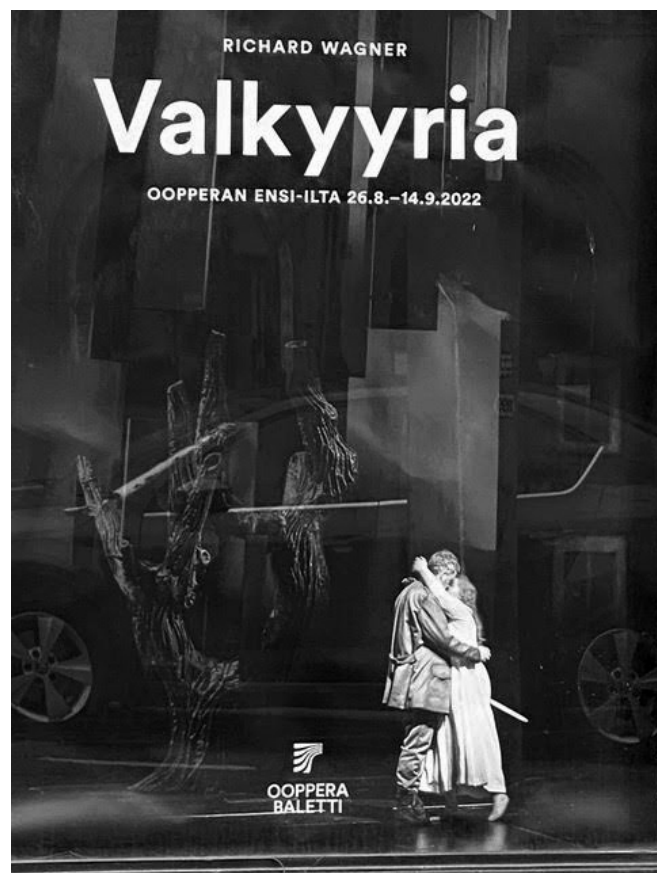
José Javier Torija Rodríguez, a doctoral student in the Linguistic, Literary and Theater Studies program at the University of Alcalá de Henares, spoke to us about Wagner’s reception in Spain as a political activist. This, in fact, has not yet been dealt with by research in an exhaustive way. However, in terms of results that we can consider provisional, we have that there was a very polarized early reception that was echoed, among others, by authors such as Juan Valera. It was also very interesting to learn some details about José Javier’s own book on the revolutionary Wagner, entitled *The Red Republic of Richard Wagner*.

The event was closed by David Ferreiro Carballo, PhD in Musicology from the Complutense University of Madrid and currently a researcher in the Juan de la Cierva Program at the UCM. In his presentation he spoke to us about the reception of Richard Wagner’s lyrical drama in the work of Conrado del Campo. David exposed Conrado del Campo’s career with great success and conciseness and spoke of the many influences that can be seen in the Spanish musician. Especially noteworthy are all those palpable in the “lyrical drama in two acts” *El final de don Álvaro*, where chromatic games, use of leading motifs and a Wagnerian feel constantly permeate the score. This work, moreover, was presented at the Teatro Real in Madrid in 1911: the same year that *Tristan and Isolde* premiered in the capital.

After the four presentations, in a friendly and relaxed discussion within the Hotel Moderno de Madrid itself, all attendees had the opportunity to exchange their opinions with the speakers and get to know them better over a Spanish wine.

## AN ACCIDENTAL VALKYRIE IN HELSINKI

Wagner Society member The Hon Justice **François Kunc** sent us this review from Finland



Let me explain immediately that the (happy) accident was all mine and not Wagner's. I was in Finland last August/September to fulfill an ambition to attend the annual Sibelius Festival in Lahti, just north of Helsinki. It was by good luck rather than good management that my pre-festival days in Helsinki coincided with the second performance of the Covid-delayed *Die Walküre* in the evolving cycle by the Finnish National Opera. And it was, as they say, well worth the detour.

The cast were, as best I could tell, nearly all Scandinavian, and mostly Finnish. For a country of 5.5 million, it punches well above its weight when it comes to classical music. In the new modern concert hall known as the Musiikkitalo there was a glass case containing batons of famous Finnish conductors: there were a lot batons, with the names of all of the former owners being well known on the world musical stage.

So, what of the performance? Outstanding in nearly all respects. The opera house is large and modern. It was lovely to encounter members of the Finnish Wagner Society in the foyer selling their wares. (see photo) I had a seat just off centre about a third of the way back in the stalls and enjoyed a clean acoustic that carried both orchestra and voices with what I thought was an ideal balance of definition and warmth.

The two critical pairings - Siegmund (Joachim Bäckström) and Sieglinde (Miina-Liisa Väreälä), and Wotan (Tommi Hakala) and Brünnhilde (Johanna Rusanen) – were exemplary. Bäckström had a beautiful rather than big tenor which matched his characterisation, which moved in Act I from exhaustion to exaltation in a fine musical arc. And while not a huge voice, he was well able to produce the ringing tones the part requires. Väreälä also has a wonderful voice which I suspect still has a way to go in development, but confidently presented the emotional palette the role requires.

As Wotan, dressed in a black SS style uniform, Hakala gave his all, perhaps starting to tire towards the end. His was one of the most poetic Wotans I have heard, putting well thought through emphasis and meaning into the words, ensuring that colour and volume brought out the text to its best advantage. Rusanen was an engaging Brünnhilde, who conveyed a real sense of the enthusiastic ingenue, desperately wanting to please Wotan, but who is then shocked and confused at her own strange, new feelings for the twins. I was left looking forward to seeing how she would develop the character into the loving, tragic, defiant adult of *Götterdämmerung*.

The rest of the cast were all well and truly up the task. One of the joys of revisiting these great works is when a director creates a moment which, like a lightning flash, casts a familiar scene or character in a new perspective for the viewer. For me one such moment came when the fine Hunding of Turunen insinuated a relationship of sexual abuse of Sieglinde by himself and one of his Neiding cohort. It was chilling and spoke volumes about who Hunding was, in this case emphasised by being dressed as some kind of priest (as to which more below).

Notwithstanding my overall strong recommendation for this production, I did have some reservations. The Finland National Opera Orchestra under Hannu Lintu had a fine sound and maintained an overall excellent balance with the singers. It was definitely a case of co-operation rather than competition between stage and pit. However, from what I thought was generally such a good orchestra, there were several moments of poor ensemble between brass and strings, together with two or three distractions of wayward playing by the brass.

It was only the second performance of the run, so I hope these moments were able to be repaired. It was particularly disappointing in hindsight after the quality of what I heard a few days later in Lahti. The fault may have been compounded by what I thought were some unnecessarily fast tempi from Lintu. While not inviting a Knappertsbusch like pace, I personally prefer less St Vitus dance than is sometimes the fashion (and, yes, I must confess to luxuriating annually in the great, but by today's standards hopelessly lugubrious, Karl Richter recording of the Matthew Passion).



that was the only unwelcome distraction in what was overall a very fine performance. And if you want to see it for yourself rather than just read about it, I am delighted to report that it is available for free viewing on demand at arena.yle.fi.

I hope you will forgive me if I end where I began – Sibelius. Lahti is a former industrial town a short drive north of Helsinki.

The production was not without its oddities, or at least things which may have seemed odd to me without appreciating the full cultural resonance of some touches for Finns. The general setting seemed to be Second World War with Wotan in black Nazi-style uniform operating out of a bunker. But the Neiding appeared to be back in the nineteenth century, in what struck me as an isolated Old Believer community deep in the forest. Hunding was dressed as a priest with a prominent pectoral cross (albeit in the Western style), which of itself is fine, but which made his pagan appeal to Fricka feel rather out of place.

There was also one piece of distracting *Regietheater* (with apologies if I just did not get the point). When the Valkyries brought the dead heroes to Valhalla, most of them (and all of the non-singing supernumerary Valkyries, several played by men) bared their chests to wave large, fake breasts at the audience. However, at least for this audience member,

You can visit Sibelius' home and grave in the countryside on the way. The town is on the shore of one of the largest of Finland's 160,000 (or thereabouts) lakes and surrounded by some of the however many millions of the country's birch trees. On the beautiful lakeshore they have built a stunning timber concert hall encased in what looks like a glass box. The hall is home to the Lahti Symphony Orchestra under the very impressive chief conductorship of Dalia Stasevska. And they know how to play Sibelius.

In addition to the home team, the festival guest orchestra was the Estonian Festival Orchestra under its founder Paavo Järvi. The Estonians are another Baltic musical powerhouse. Their performance of the Sibelius Second Symphony was quite simply the best I have heard anywhere. Don't let 30 hours flying put you off if you ever get the chance to hear them play.



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## WAGNER SOCIETY YOUTUBE CHANNEL

We encourage members to visit our YouTube channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/c/wagnersocietynsw>

In addition to including many fascinating early recordings and illustrations there are clips from earlier and recent Wagner Society concerts and talks.

## IN MEMORIAM

### ROSALIND MAYBANKE STRONG AM

27.4.1945 – 4.3.2023



In the March Quarterly we mourned the passing of Wagner Society member **Tony Strong** on 15 January 2023. Sadly, his beloved wife **Ros** passed away on 4 March. We send our condolences to their family

### GRACE BUMBRY

**Grace Bumbry**, a singer of radiant charisma, expansive range and superstar glamour who became one of the first African Americans to conquer the international opera stage, died on May 7 at a hospital in Vienna. She was 86.

Few audiences had ever heard a Black singer perform in an opera house when Ms. Bumbry was growing up in St. Louis in the 1930s and '40s, the daughter of a railway clerk and a schoolteacher. Segregation dominated American institutions, including the local music conservatory, where Ms. Bumbry was denied entrance despite the talent she had shown from her earliest days singing in the choir of her family's Methodist church.

Championed by contralto Marian Anderson, she launched her career in Europe in the years after Anderson, Leontyne Price and other Black singers had begun to break down opera's colour barrier.

When Wieland Wagner engaged the 24-year-old for the role of Venus in the 1961 Bayreuth production of *Tannhauser* he received hundreds of letters of protest, and the German press exploded with sensational headlines about the Black intruder in the sacred Aryan shrine. One correspondent asserted that "If Richard Wagner knew of this he would be turning in his grave."

But Wieland Wagner stood by the artist who had been dubbed *die schwarze Venus* (the black Venus), saying that the role "must convey eroticism without resorting to the clichés of a Hollywood sex bomb, yet she cannot personify the classic passive idea...When I heard Grace Bumbry I knew she was the perfect Venus; grandfather would have been delighted!"

Indeed, following the production's first performance on 24 July a jubilant audience commanded 42 curtain calls during its 30-minute ovation, the most rousing demonstrations occurring



Grace Bumbry as Venus Bayreuth 1961

during Bumbry's bows. Grace Bumbry sang *Turandot* in Graeme Murphy's production for the Australian Opera in 1991

Editor's note: I was extremely fortunate to see Grace Bumbry as *Salome* at Covent Garden in 1970. She was mesmerizing with phenomenal stage presence – you couldn't take your eyes off her.

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## NEWS FROM SINGERS SUPPORTED BY THE SOCIETY

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### CELESTE HAWORTH MEZZO-SOPRANO

The Society is assisting **Celeste Haworth** financially to take coaching in Europe in August/September to prepare for her roles in the Brisbane Ring (performing First Norn and understudying Erda). Celeste sang for the Society in June 2018. Her most recent engagements for OA were a soloist in the Great Opera Hits Concert Series, and as Flora in La Traviata in both Sydney and Melbourne.”



### SAMANTHA CRAWFORD

**Samantha Crawford** has had a busy European winter and spring and will debut as **Santuzza in Cavalleria Rusticana for West Green House Opera** in July.

Her debut album ***dream.risk.sing.*** will be released on Delphian Records on 29 September. It features the first ever recordings of Charlotte Bray’s new song cycle *Crossing Faultlines*, Libby Larsen’s songs from her *The Birth Project* and the **two new piano and voice arrangements of songs from Judith Weir’s *woman.life.song.***

Members can catch up with Samantha’s recent and upcoming performances on her website: [www.samanthacrawford.com](http://www.samanthacrawford.com)



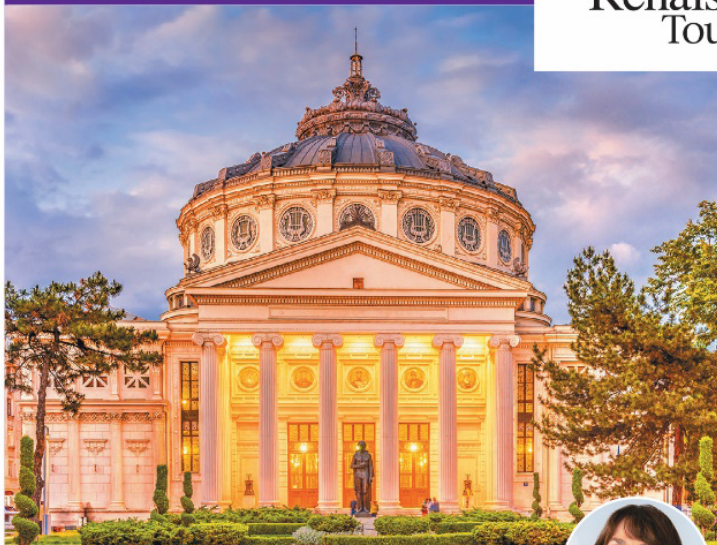
### BRANGAYNE OF ORANGE VINEYARD

Brangayne of Orange has 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





Renaissance  
Tours

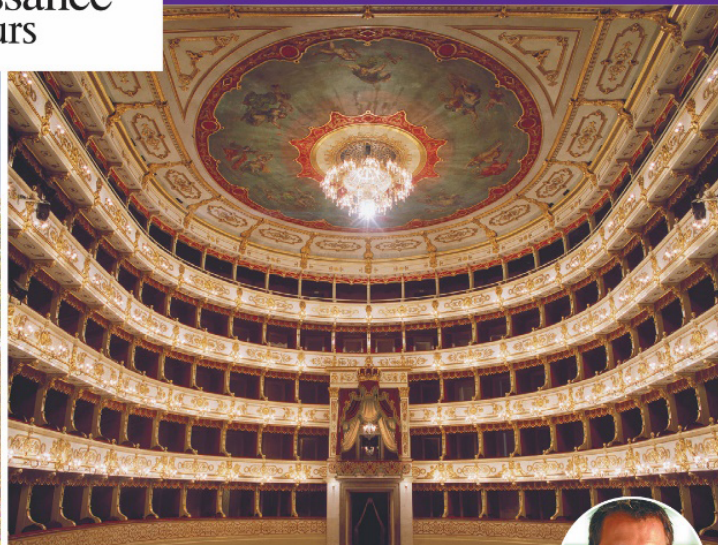


### Romanian Rhapsody

*George Enescu Festival in Bucharest*  
with Mairi Nicolson

28 August – 11 September 2023 (15 days)

Discover the extraordinary George Enescu Festival, featuring the world's most acclaimed orchestras, conductors and soloists.



### Opera Bellissima

*Venice, Parma and Milan*  
with Damien Beaumont

23 September – 05 October 2023 (13 days)

Be captivated by fine opera performances and delight in the musical, art and culinary treasures of northern Italy.



### The Brisbane Ring

with Peter Bassett

14–22 December 2023 (9 days)

Marvel at the captivating production of the *Ring* by director Chen Shi-Zheng as he explores Wagner's legendary tale through a futuristic lens, using towering, moving digital panels to create an immersive virtual world.



### Christmas in Germany

*Hamburg, Dresden, Leipzig and Berlin*

with Scott Curry

14–28 December 2023 (15 days)

Celebrate fine opera and music in the historic opera houses and concert halls of Hamburg, Dresden, Leipzig and Berlin.

Australia's finest collection of cultural and special interest tours.

For detailed information visit [renaissancetours.com.au](http://renaissancetours.com.au),  
call 1300 727 095 or contact your travel agent.

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Act II *Götterdämmerung* in Bendigo

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### 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](mailto:webmaster@wagner.org.au) and we will work to resolve this issue

### WAGNER SOCIETY NEWSLETTERS AND QUARTERLIES ONLINE

The online library of Wagner Society Newsletters and Quarterlies is now complete. Every publication, from the first Newsletter dated February 1981 to the latest December 2020 Quarterly, is now on the Society's web page: [wagner.org.au/society-newsletter](http://wagner.org.au/society-newsletter). Please note that, as this web page is accessible only to members of the Society, members will need to log in.

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## ADDRESS FOR SUNDAY FUNCTIONS

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

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