

# SUNDAY 19 JANUARY ON ZOOM

**7.00PM FROM LONDON** BEN WOODWARD, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF REGENTS OPERA, TALKED WITH ROSS WHITELAW ABOUT THE SLIMMED DOWN *RING*

**Ben Woodward** is founder and Artistic Director of Regents Opera in London, who are about to undertake a complete *Ring Cycle* - quite the feat for a “fringe” opera company, with no government funding.

Regents Opera was founded - as Fulham Opera - in 2011, with a performance of *Das Rheingold* fully staged in a small 120-seat church, with piano accompaniment, provided by Woodward. After this was a huge success, the company moved forward to giving a pair of complete *Ring Cycles* in 2014, with piano, adding just a flute and a horn for the latter two operas. That company has, over the past decade, by way of various productions of Verdi, Strauss, other Wagner (*Holländer* and *Die Meistersinger*), now come full circle to give fringe opera productions of the *Ring* once again, though this time, in an arrangement for 22 instruments (single wind, 3 horns playing 2 parts, trumpet, bass trombone and 12 strings plus organ), which will be fully staged on a 3m x 10m thrust stage in the boxing arena in York Hall in London's east end. The Irish director **Caroline Staunton**, of the Staatsoper Berlin, will direct, with Woodward conducting. They are good mates - sharing their love of opera, rugby and drinking.

Ben Woodward was inspired to become a conductor at age ten, was an organ scholar at Trinity College, Cambridge, then the Guildhall

School of Music in London, and has worked at the Staatsoper Hannover, and Landestheater Flensburg and the ROH. He now lives in Berlin with his wife **Catharine**, who, having just sung Gerhilde at Bayreuth (and will be doing so again this year), in this *Ring Cycle* will sing Brünnhilde.

When asked about his approach to conducting, Ben stressed the importance of the text; what are the characters saying - what is their intent? He sings along - saying that when he sings he discovers the right speed. He sees the conductor as a conduit between stage and pit - acting as one to make the performance as exciting as possible. The zoom was recorded and will be available on our site in due course. WSNSW president Esteban Insausti and secretary **Ross Whitelaw** have very generously donated money towards Regent Opera's ongoing productions, as part of WSNSW's initiative to build up world-wide links between the various Wagner Societies and small unsubsidised opera groups.

Former WSNSW Committee member, **Kay Collins**, recently sent Leona this note from London: “Hi Leona, I saw the *Götterdämmerung* dress rehearsal they did at the start and invited the Wagner Society. It was so different and fantastic. I am going to *Die Walküre* on Tuesday next week. Can't wait it's so good!” Kay Collins

