

# SUNDAY 2 FEBRUARY AT THE GOETHE INSTITUT

**2.00PM TALK BY ROBERT GAY ON COSIMA WAGNER: *GUARDING THE LEGACY: COSIMA IN BAYREUTH 1883-1906***  
(ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED FOR 20 OCTOBER 2024)

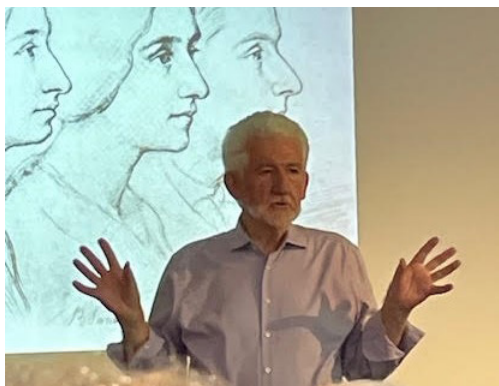


**Robert Gay** has been a favourite guest at WSNSW meetings for many years, with his entertaining and knowledgeable talks about various opera subjects. This talk was a walk through the history of, and the contributions to, the Bayreuth Festival under the control of the formidable **Cosima Liszt/von Bülow/Wagner**. After showing some domestic archival photos of the Liszt and von Bülow families, Robert spoke for nearly two hours referring to a detailed timeline handout sheet. Members generally know that Cosima carried on with

the Festival after Wagner's death but many of us were probably unaware of the forcefulness of Cosima's personality and her manipulations in order to achieve her aims. She made her very famous father Franz Liszt attend the Festival in 1888 so she could use his fame to give legitimacy to her endeavours, but wouldn't allow him to stay at *Wahnfried*. When he died early in the Festival she refused to allow him the last rites. (Liszt was a Catholic Abbé but Cosima was a Protestant convert; she didn't approve of his behaviour and resented that she had been born out of wedlock). Robert explained very clearly how, on Wagner's death, (he died without a will), Cosima used her knowledge of German Law to have Siegfried (who was 13 years old when his father died), declared the sole heir, despite the fact that Wagner and Cosima had had two daughters before the birth of Siegfried. (Cosima had previously borne two daughters to Hans von Bülow). By doing this she could keep control of the Festival until Siegfried was much older. A fascinating talk about a formidable woman.



Suzan Penny and Marg Whealy



Robert Gay with sketch of Cosima, Blandine and Daniel Liszt



Esteban Insausti and HLM Barbara Brady who was celebrating her 90th Birthday



Jenny Ferns and Renate Junker