

# WEDNESDAY 12 FEBRUARY ON ZOOM

**12.00PM FROM LA** DR JOHN MASTROGIOVANNI CONTINUED HIS *PARSIFAL* TALK

On Wednesday, 12th February last, we were again fortunate to have **Dr John Mastrogiovanni**, President of the Wagner Society of Southern California and renowned *Parsifal* scholar, give us an hour of his time via Zoom to discuss Acts 2 and 3 of *Parsifal*. Anyone who took in his talk last year on Act 1 wouldn't want to miss this. Unfortunately numbers were relatively small, due no doubt to having to programme the talk for noon our time due to the time zone difference between here and California. John did a short recap of his previous talk, reminding us that *Parsifal* is perhaps the fifth opera in Warner's *Ring Cycle*, opening on the same note upon which *Götterdämmerung* closes. *Siegfried's* chord structure is resolved in the music of *Parsifal*. *Siegfried* has been reincarnated into *Parsifal*, Brunnhilde into Kundry – “the one who knows”. After all, Kundry enters on a horse, transformed by the *Götterdämmerung* fire. Venturing into Act 2, Klingsor, the

creation of Titurel, is a mirror image of him. While Montsalvat is all religiosity, not faith, Klingsor's garden has neither, mocking both religion and spirituality. Kundry has the will to live, to love and to redeem. Ultimately, the base nature of mankind is defeated by compassion and Klingsor dies. When Act 3 commences, Titurel is also dead, reinforcing the mirror image idea referred to earlier. *Parsifal* appears, a personification of the masculine part of the Grail. Kundry is the personification of the feminine part. The message here is that the masculine and the feline parts of human nature makes us whole. There is the famous kiss between *Parsifal* and Kundry in Act 2 but there is a second kiss in Act 3 when *Parsifal* kisses Kundry's hair as she washes his feet – the kiss of redemption. John emphasised the importance of the original stage directions of Wagner, especially in Act 3 with regard to the Spear and the Grail. They are meant to together symbolise the wholeness within us.

This was emphasised by a brief excerpt from the Met's recent production featuring **Jonas Kaufmann**, which is well worth watching. *Parsifal* unites the Spear and the Grail to great dramatic and emotional effect. More than one of the participants in this Zoom shed a tear. All in all, I recommend the recording to those who didn't see it first up (and don't forget his Act 1 talk). You will have a new appreciation of *Parsifal* thanks to our guest speaker, John Mastrogiovanni. I also recommend his book on *Parsifal* for a deeper dive into this fascinating work.

**Ross Whitelaw**