

Photograph of Thomas Alva Edison (1847-1931) with an Edison Standard Phonograph, 1906. Source Hulton Archive/Getty Images.



**DR CHARLES (CHRIS) SORRELL on  
EARLY WAGNER RECORDINGS  
ON CYLINDER AND DISK**

A Wagner Society in NSW Inc event

2.00pm Sunday 21 June 2026  
Goethe Institut

90 Ocean Street (corner of Jersey Road), Woollahra

To find out more about  
the Wagner Society in NSW Inc please go to:

[www.wagner.org.au](http://www.wagner.org.au)



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## PROGRAMME

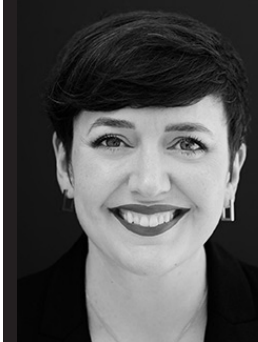
12.00 noon  
DVD TONY PALMER'S **WAGNER**  
PART 2 Episode 3



2.00pm  
DR CHARLES (CHRIS) SORRELL  
on  
**EARLY WAGNER RECORDINGS ON CYLINDER AND DISK**

3.00pm (approx) **REFRESHMENTS**

## YOUR DONATIONS HAVE HELPED THESE STARS



Margaret Plummer



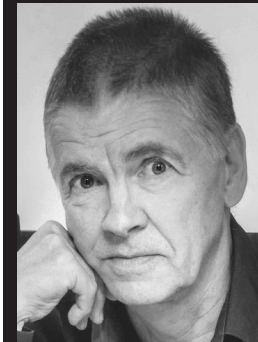
Adrian Tamburini



Olivia Swain



Daniel Sumegi



David Stanhope



Deborah Humble



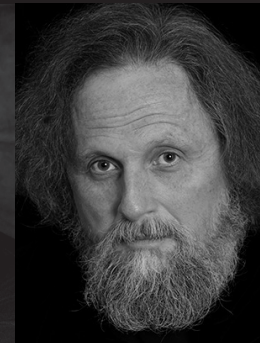
Stuart Skelton



Jennifer Condon



Lisa Gasteen



Warwick Fyfe



Tabatha McFayden



Samuel Sakker

These are some of the 100 ARTISTS the WSNW has assisted OVER 40 YEARS.  
We target \$20,000 annually towards supporting Wagnerian performers from NSW.  
Help continue to support our talented artists.

## PLEASE DONATE

Go to [www.wagner.org.au](http://www.wagner.org.au) and follow the prompts for payment (EFT or PayPal).  
Or contact the President on [ei10wsnsw@gmail.com](mailto:ei10wsnsw@gmail.com)

## WHAT'S COMING UP

Wednesday 9 July, via zoom

7.00pm: **CHRISTOPHER COOK** *Tristan und Isolde* - Whose Love Story?

Sunday 19 July, Goethe Institut

12.00noon: DVD – **Tony Palmer's Wagner Part 3**

2.00pm: **PROF PETER ROENNFELDT** on Wagner & Schumann

Sunday 2 August, St Columba Community Centre

2.00pm: **AN OPERATIC CELEBRATION FOR LEONA** with, amongst others, **JESSICA HARPER** and **BRAD COOPER** accompanied by **BRADLEY GILCHRIST**

Sunday 16 August, Goethe Institut

12.00noon: DVD – **Tony Palmer's Wagner Part 4**

2.00pm: Talk by conductor **SARAH PENICKA-SMITH** on *The Future of Opera & what Wagner has to do with it*

Sunday 13 September, Goethe Institut

12.00noon: DVD – **Tony Palmer's Wagner Part 5**

2.00pm: Talk by Associate Professor **ROSS ANDERSON** on his book about visionary designer Adolphe Appia, *The Appian Way*

Sunday 11 October, St Columba Community Centre

2.00pm: Concert with mezzo-soprano **DEBORAH HUMBLE** and **SHAROLYN KIMMORLEY AM** at the piano

Saturday 21 November, Goethe Institut

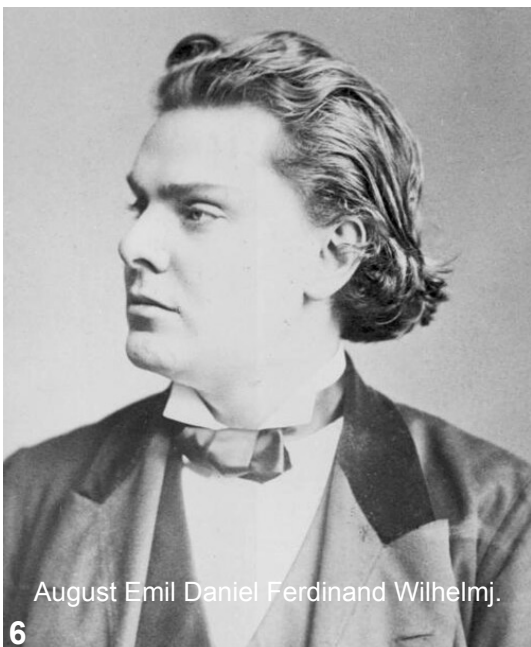
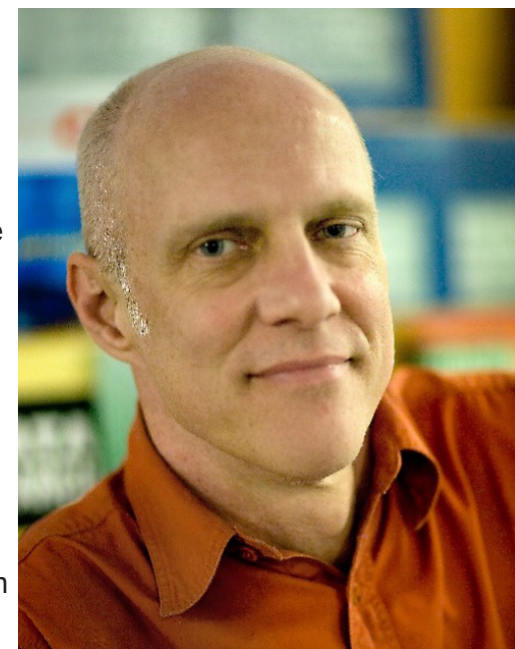
10.30am – 5.00pm: **SYMPOSIUM** on *GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG*

Sunday 13 December, St Columba Community Centre

2.00pm: **CHRISTMAS CONCERT** and party

## CHRIS SORRELL

Charles C. (Chris) Sorrell is a senior academic staff member of the School of Materials Science and Engineering, UNSW Sydney (formerly University of New South Wales), which he joined in 1987. He has been the Professor of Ceramic Engineering since 1997. While his professional expertise is limited largely to ceramic materials, one of his two personal passions is art. In this regard, he has specialised in the print arts of the French Etching Revival, having completed or nearly completed catalogues raisonnés of Edgar Chahine (Armenian/French, 1874-1947), Gabrielle-Marie Niel (French, 1831-1919), and Georges Rubel (French, 1945-). His second personal passion is music, largely fine music and opera from the baroque period to the present. His interest in early sound recordings was kindled by his 7th grade music teacher, who exposed his class to an early cylinder player. He began collecting mechanical musical instruments and recordings seriously when he was a teenager in the US Midwest, concentrating on Edison instruments and cylinder (160 rpm) and disk (80 rpm) recordings. Through this, he developed a keen interest in the popular music of his parents' and grandparents' time, informed by his mother's encyclopaedic knowledge of all of the hits of both periods. When he came to Australia to begin his Ph.D. in 1981, he formed a more specialised collection in Sydney. This collection includes a rare long-play console (1926), of which he is the second owner, and thirteen of the fifteen microgroove records (20-24 minutes per side, 80 rpm) which were released during 1926-1929.



(*Spalding continued*) under the conductor Édouard Colonne (1838-1910). He debuted in the US as violin soloist at Carnegie Hall on 8 November 1908, performing the same concerto with the New York Symphony Orchestra under the conductor Walter Damrosch (1862-1950). He is perhaps best known for having given the world premiere of the Samuel Barber *Violin Concerto* on 7 February 1941 with the Philadelphia Orchestra under the conductor Eugene Ormandy.

**August Emil Daniel Ferdinand Wilhelmj** (1845-1908) was a German violinist and teacher. A close friend of Wagner, he led the violins at the 1876 premiere of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*.

Notes and images of singers and musicians heard this afternoon kindly supplied by Chris Sorrell.



Thomas Edison in front of the original sound recording/playback device circa 1878.



Jacques Urlus as Siegfried.

**Jacques Urlus** (1867-1935) was a Dutch dramatic tenor whose recordings of Wagner are considered to be amongst the best ever made. He was famed for his performances in *Lohengrin*. He auditioned for Cosima Wagner in 1898 but was not invited to sing. He first sang at Bayreuth in 1911-1912 as Siegmund in *Die Walküre*. He premiered in the US in 1912 as Tristan in *Tristan und Isolde*. He premiered at the Metropolitan Opera in 1913 as Tristan but this was a disaster as he had a cold and lost his voice. Only a week later, he triumphed as Siegfried and restored his reputation, cementing his position as the Met's lead Heldentenor. His last performance of Wagner was as Tristan in 1931 in Amsterdam. During this time, Urlus gained a reputation as a specialist in the vocal works of Mahler. Today, Urlus is regarded as being one of the best Wagner interpreters of all time.



Fritz Feinhals as Hans Sachs with Josef Geis as Beckmesser in 1907.

**Fritz Feinhals** (1869-1940) began his career at the Essen City theatre in 1895. He joined the Munich Court (later State) Opera in 1898, remaining until his retirement in 1927. He debuted at the Met in 1908 as Wotan in *Die Walküre*. At the Wagner Festival in the Prinzregententheater in Munich, he appeared as Hans Sachs, Wotan, Telramund, Amfortas, and Kurwenal, with great success. He sang at Covent Garden as Telramund in 1907. He also performed at the Deutsches Theater in Prague (1910), Berlin Court Opera (1911 as Hans Sachs), Staatsoper Berlin (1919), Hoftheater Stuttgart (1916), Karlsruhe, Mannheim, and the Komische Oper in Berlin. From 1903, he was heard at Wagner performances in Amsterdam, last appearing there in 1909 as Telramund in *Lohengrin*. He travelled to North America several times and was engaged by the Metropolitan Opera in New York during the 1908-1909 season.



Thomas Hardie Chalmers as Marcel in *La Boheme*

*(Feinhals continued)* At the Met, he sang Wotan in *Die Walküre* (1908), subsequently taking on many Wagner roles. His notable roles included Hans Sachs, Wotan, Telramund, Kurwenal and Amfortas. He was renowned as a great actor on the opera stage and also had a very successful career as a concert and oratorio singer. His powerful voice and imposing presence made him one of the leading interpreters of Richard Wagner's operatic characters. He was married to Elise Feinhals (1869-1924), mezzo soprano who worked with Mahler. She sang the mezzo part in the Munich premiere of Mahler's 2nd Symphony in 1900 under the direction of Mahler.

**Thomas Hardie Chalmers** (1884-1966) was an American actor and baritone who sometimes sang in the tenor range. He recorded for Columbia (1908), Edison (1911-1922) and Zonophone (1908-1909). He made his operatic debut in



Albert Spalding.

*(Chalmers continued)* 1911 in Fossombrone, Italy, which hosts classical and opera performances. He debuted with the Met in 1917 as Valentine in *Faust*. He was a contemporary of Caruso and Farrar; he was best known for his French and Italian lyric roles. He is considered to be the first American-born baritone to sing with the Met. He remained with the Met for 5 years. Following a tonsillectomy in 1923, he was forced to give up singing and transitioned to stage acting and silent films. He also appeared on television in the 1950s and 1960s.

**Albert Spalding** (1888-1953) was an American violinist and composer. He was considered one the leading violinists of the day. His professional debut as a violin soloist was at age 17 at the Nouveau Théâtre in Paris on 6 June 1906, performing the Saint-Saëns *Violin Concerto No. 3* with the Concerts Colonne *(continued on page 6)*