

AUTUMN MEETINGS

With a quarter of 2013 over, we are well into the Wagner200 celebrations. This month the WSNZ will hold meetings in Auckland, Christchurch and Dunedin which demonstrate the wide range of topics that the Society offers members.

On 7 April Auckland members will once again be entertained – and educated – by Heath Lees with *Richard Wagner: Before, During and After*.

Heath notes that trying to assess the contribution of such a complex figure as Wagner over two centuries is a bit like trying to chart the ocean in a day. Nevertheless, he has tried to contain his subject by isolating three of Wagner's most obvious and most far-reaching transformations:

- His complete transformation of the world of opera
- His virtual re-writing of the language of music
- His bringing-together of music and the arts.

Using many images and musical examples, Heath will aim to provide an overall picture of just what this strange artist-giant was about in his lifetime; the consequences for the world he lived in, and for our world today. He admits that it won't be the whole story of course, but he does promise that it will be a fascinating tour of a 200-hundred-year horizon through Wagnerian eyes.

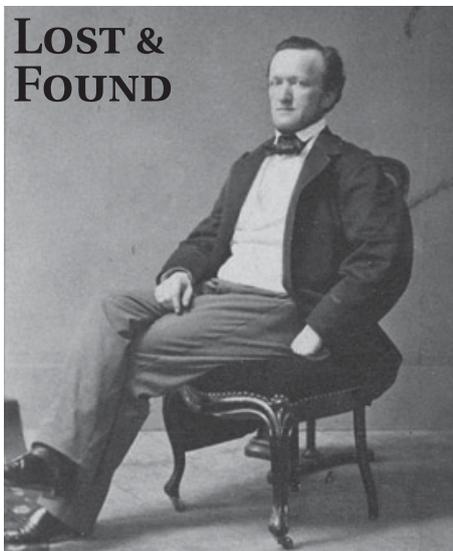
Meanwhile in Christchurch, Sid Kennedy will present *Parsifal* Act 1. Writing about his presentation Sid has provided this cryptic introduction.

"When I turned 60 my mum gave me \$60 to buy a special gift. I chose a Bayreuth Parsifal dvd with Production, Stage Design and Artistic Supervision by Wolfgang Wagner with Siegfried Jerusalem singing the role of Parsifal.

In researching my introduction I found an amazing fact about Wagner's mum, and a perhaps an unrevealed secret desire of Richard Wagner. All will be revealed on 12 April."

Christchurch has a real treat in store!

LOST & FOUND



In the last edition of the newsletter we brought you the story of the Kaplan Daguerreotype of 'Wagner' and Peter Bassett's proof that the image could not have been Wagner. This month we bring you another picture but this time with no controversy attached.

The Bayreuther Wagner-Museum has announced that the above photo of Wagner - once thought lost - has finally been found and bought by them from an on-line auction for €900.

The photo is from a private owner in the U.S. and shows Wagner sitting as a full figure. "That in itself is a rarity" says museum director Dr Sven Friedrich, "because all the other studio photographs Wagner are either half-figures, busts or portraits. Moreover, it is one of the earliest photographic images of Wagner found. It was probably taken in 1861 by Louis Buchheister in Paris".

In Dunedin on 21 April Terence Dennis will present *The Golden Age: Part 1: 1900-1914* in which he will bring to life the great Wagner singers who were caught in sound recording. Featured are some of the actual voices from the pre-1900 Bayreuth Festivals as well as such stellar names as Jean de Reszke, Lilian Nordica and Johanna Gadski. This will be an absorbing travel back in time.

WSNZ MEMBERSHIP

Included with this newsletter – or already sent separately if you receive the newsletter electronically – is an application form for this year's renewal of your membership. We have an exciting range of programmes across our four centres and we hope that you will want to renew your membership in order to enjoy these and the other activities that the Society organizes.

We also hope that members will consider adding a donation to the Wagner New Zealand Foundation when they renew their membership. The Foundation supports the promotion of Wagner both within New Zealand and overseas and its work generally finds its way back to the Society via concerts, publications, presentations etc. For example, the concert performances of *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* in the last two years, as well as our support of artists, have been made possible thanks to the generosity of our members.

Once again we are offering Internet Banking as a payment method for your membership fee. To ensure that we are able to match payments on our bank statement to the correct membership record we would ask that you take care in completing the references for the recipient of the payment (ourselves) as shown on your renewal form.

If you are paying by internet banking then it is only necessary to return the renewal form if you are making any changes to your membership details.

We sincerely hope that you will want to renew your membership of the Society and enjoy the programmes and trips that we offer.

Why not invite someone you know to join up as well?

LISA GASTEEN NATIONAL OPERA SCHOOL

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2012

At the end of last year the WSNZ, through the Wagner New Zealand Foundation, provided Amanda Atlas with a grant to attend the Lisa Gasteen National Opera School in Brisbane. Here is an abridged version of her wonderfully detailed report. If you'd like to read the report in full, please contact the Secretary and we will email it to you.

I was initially attracted to the National Opera School because of Lisa Gasteen herself. She was the first (and only) Australian to win the *Cardiff Singer of the World*, and went on to become a regular guest artist at all the world's major opera houses, singing dramatic soprano repertoire. Now mostly retired from singing, she teaches at the Queensland Conservatorium.

For her Opera School Lisa attracted an amazing group of coaches to work with us including the great German heldentenor, Siegfried Jerusalem.

Other staff included John Fisher, one of the world's pre-eminent coaches and artistic directors, Italian conductor Giovanni Reggioli, German based coach and music director Philip Mayers, along with Sharolyn Kimmorley, Jillian Stolland and Michael Fulcher. Rounding out the faculty were a German agent, a clinical psychotherapist, an Alexander Technique teacher and an art historian!

Based at the Queensland Conservatorium, the school hosted 21 singers and 4 trainee repetiteurs and was organised into 45-minute individual coachings, along with 90-minute group sessions for Alexander Technique, psychotherapy, industry presentations and art history seminars, plus 3 hour public masterclasses. The first two weeks mainly focused on a mix of the group sessions, masterclasses and individual coachings, whilst the last week focused more on rehearsals and repertoire-specific coachings for the final Gala concert.



Amanda Atlas with Siegfried Jerusalem and Lisa Gasteen



The highlight of the entire school for me was my masterclass with Siegfried Jerusalem. I sang Sieglinde's aria '*Schläfst du Gast*' from *Die Walküre*, and gained SO much from his generosity and deep knowledge of the repertoire and the language. He worked intensely on my phrasing and on singing each word from the soul of the character. Working with him made such a difference to my approach to the language in Wagner, and it's amazing how much I learned in such a short time. It was such a thrill, when I started my aria, to hear Siegfried Jerusalem sing the Siegmund lines!

The final Gala concert, in the beautiful acoustic of the Conservatorium theatre, consisted of ensembles that had been selected to try to give every singer the opportunity to perform something from a role they were working on - as a result the repertoire was very diverse, with selections from *Così fan Tutte*, *Der Freischütz*, *Lohengrin*, *Carmen*, *Arabella*, *Fidelio*, *La Bohème*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, and *Die Fledermaus*.

I was assigned the fabulous Elsa-Ortrud duet from *Lohengrin*. Performing that was truly the highlight of my time at the school. Singing such a gorgeous duet in a beautiful space, after having spent three weeks preparing it with some of the top coaches and teachers in the world, was an absolute thrill, and it went extremely well; all the singers performed beautifully, and the audience loved it. So my Australian debut is now complete!

I am very hopeful that attending the school will lead to future work in Australia and perhaps further afield. I am a Resident Artist with New Zealand Opera this year and will be covering the role of Senta in their production of *Der fliegende Holländer*. As part of this position I have received funding for coaching, so will use that to work with people on staff at Opera Australia (all contacts made through the contacts I made at the school), and make more inroads into the opera/concert scene across the pond. Moving into the Wagnerian repertoire provides me with good opportunity, as the number of singers who perform it is relatively small and, after receiving the support, encouragement, and expertise of the staff at the Lisa Gasteen National Opera School I know I can be successful. There is no doubt I could never have attended the school without the assistance of the Wagner Society, and so I want to take this opportunity to say thank you so much for allowing me to take up my position there. I know it will only lead to so much more for me professionally. Anytime you need a singer for a function or similar, then please, just let me know!!

"His artistry is exceptional. His sexy, heroic way with Siegmund, and the marvellous introversion he brings to Lohengrin's *In fernem Land*, leave us in no doubt as to why he is today's interpreter of choice for both roles. Yet he brings the same insight and intensity to his new material. His almost baritone lower registers and his ability to sing soft high notes are tremendously persuasive in the *Wesendonck-Lieder*. Tannhäuser's conflict between flesh and spirit is beautifully delineated. Best of all is Rienzi's prayer, in which his almost oceanic tone blends with the elegance of the fine Mozart singer he once was."

Tim Ashley – The Guardian

A MUST HAVE CD!



"There's a moment, early on in *Ein Schwert verhiess mir der Vater*, the opening selection of this superb collection of Wagner arias and lieder, when Jonas Kaufmann, as Siegmund, lets out the huge, long cries of "Wälse!" with extraordinary power... It's one of a series of outstanding moments that confirm Kaufmann as the pre-eminent Wagnerian tenor of his era, including a breathtaking *In fernem Land*. He's helped throughout by the excellent Orchester der Deutschen Oper Berlin under Donald Runnicles... One of the year's landmark classical recordings."

Andy Gill – The Independent

WAGNER SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND

2013 – WAGNER200 PROGRAMME DETAILS

Auckland

Sunday, 7 April 7.30pm

Venue: Music Theatre, School of Music, University of Auckland, 6 Symonds St

Richard Wagner – Before, During and After: Heath Lees takes a panoramic view of Wagner's 200-year-long impact

Sunday, 19 May 7.30pm

Venue: Kenneth Myers Centre, 74 Shortland Street, Auckland

Wagner's 200th birthday celebrations

In addition to our AGM we take the opportunity to celebrate Wagner's 200th birthday

Sunday, 14 July 4.00pm (NOTE TIME)

Venue: Music Theatre, School of Music, University of Auckland, 6 Symonds St

DVD Screening: Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg.

A screening of the recent Glyndebourne production of Wagner's only comedy, starring Gerald Finley, Marco Jentsch and Anna Gabler

Sunday, 8 September 7.30pm

Venue: Music Theatre, School of Music, University of Auckland, 6 Symonds St

Wagner, Paris and Der fliegende Holländer:

In anticipation of New Zealand Opera's new production of Wagner's early work Heath Lees looks at various aspects of the work with musical and visual excerpts

Sunday 8 December 7.30pm

Venue: Music Theatre, School of Music, University of Auckland, 6 Symonds St

Rounding off the Wagner Bicentenary:

Michael Sinclair takes us through the Wagner year with images, music and video from around the world celebrating Wagner's 200th birthday, including a round up from the Melbourne *Ring*

Plus our usual Christmas festivities!

Other Dates:

NBR NZ OPERA

Der fliegende Holländer

WELLINGTON	14, 19, 21 Sept - 7.30pm, 17 Sept - 6.00pm
AUCKLAND	5, 10, 12 Oct - 7.30pm, 8 Oct - 6.30pm

MELBOURNE RING

	CYCLE 1	CYCLE 2	CYCLE 3
<i>Das Rheingold</i>	7pm Mon 18 Nov	7pm Wed 27 Nov	7pm Fri 6 Dec
<i>Die Walküre</i>	5pm Wed 20 Nov	5pm Fri 29 Nov	5pm Mon 9 Dec
<i>Siegfried</i>	5pm Fri 22 Nov	5pm Mon 2 Dec	5pm Wed 11 Dec
<i>G'dämmerung</i>	4pm Mon 25 Nov	4pm Wed 4 Dec	4pm Fri 13 Dec

Christchurch

Friday 12 April 7.30pm

Venue: Lecture Theatre A6, University of Canterbury

Parsifal Act 1: To mark Wagner's 200th birthday Sid Kennedy presents a Bayreuth *Parsifal* produced by Wagner's grandson Wolfgang, with a brief introduction of 3 leitmotifs and an overview of temple bells. There will be a DVD screening of Act 1, with a cast including Siegfried Jerusalem, Hans Sotin, Eva Randova, and conductor Horst Stein

Friday 24 May TBA

Venue: TBA

Bi-centenary dinner to celebrate RW's 200th birthday

Friday 16 August 7.30pm &

Friday 13 September 7.30pm

Venue: Lecture Theatre A6, University of Canterbury

Singing in the Rhine: a Beginner's

Guide to Wagner's Ring. John Pattinson presents an illustrated two-part series which, as the Melbourne *Ring* approaches, aims to dispel any trepidations for newcomers and to provide a timely refresher for gnarled old veterans

The rest of the year's programme has still to be finalised.

Wellington

Sunday 23 June at 7.30pm TBC

Venue: TBA

Birthday Party: A belated celebration of the Master's birthday, taking the form of a dinner with light-hearted entertainment

Sunday 14 July at 11.00am

Venue: The Film School, 86 Vivian St
Joint meeting with the Opera Society.

DVD screening of **Die Meistersinger:**

PLEASE NOTE: As spaces will be limited, members should confirm their attendance by emailing Tibby Simcock (tibby.warmington@gmail.com)

Sunday 25 August at 4.00pm

Venue: St Andrew's on the Terrace
Aidan Lang on *Der fliegende Holländer* which opens on 14 September

Sunday 20 October at 4.00pm

Venue: St Andrew's on the Terrace

Richard Wagner – Before, During and After: Heath Lees takes a panoramic view of Wagner's 200-year-long impact

Other Wellington events for 2013 will be announced in due course.

Dunedin

Sunday, 21 April 2.00pm

Venue: Sale-Black House, Department of Music, The University of Otago

The Golden Age Part 1 (1900 -1914):

An absorbing travel back in time in which Terence Dennis brings to life the great, pre-war, Wagner singers who were caught in sound recording

Sunday, 16 June 10.00 or 10.30 (TBC)

Venue: Barclay Theatre, Otago Museum

Tristan und Isolde – DVD Screening:

Jean-Pierre Ponnelle's Bayreuth staging which was considered one of the most beautiful and poetic ever and was filmed in 1983

With Johanna Meier (Isolde), René Kollo (Tristan), Matti Salminen (King Mark), Hanna Schwarz (Brangäne)

Sunday, 8 September 2.00pm

Venue: Sale-Black House, Department of Music, The University of Otago

The Golden Age Part 2 (The

inter-war years): Terence Dennis continues his fascinating journey with live performances from Bayreuth and Covent Garden. The era of Furtwängler, Beecham, Leider, Flagstad and Melchior

Sunday, 6 October 2.00pm

Venue: Sale-Black House, Department of Music, The University of Otago

Contrasts and Compliments:

Terence Dennis discusses how great composers such as Verdi and Chausson drew from Wagner to renew their own traditions

Sunday, 1 December 12.00 noon

Venue: Marama Hall, University of Otago

Christmas Luncheon: Special Wagner concert to conclude the Wagner200 Year as well as celebrating Christmas and our sixth birthday

ERRATA

In the last issue of the newsletter we published incorrect information regarding the 14 July meeting in Wellington. The venue, of this joint meeting with the Opera Society, is now confirmed as *The Film School, 86 Vivian Street, Wellington.*

NEW MEMBERS

A big Wagnerian welcome to:

Gwen Marvin.....Auckland
Peter Moule..... Auckland
Patrick Reilly.....Wellington

In October 2012 the *Melbourne Age* published this fascinating article about a nearly forgotten Australian Brünnhilde.

As a teenager living on a farm at Deans Marsh in the foothills of the Otways, opera singer Marjorie Lawrence would ride a horse through the paddocks while singing to the sheep. The mad scene from *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *Land of Hope and Glory* were favourites. Therefore in 1936 at New York's Metropolitan Opera House - the Met - she had no fear when she rode a horse on to the stage while singing her signature role, Brünnhilde, in the Immolation scene of Richard Wagner's opera *Götterdämmerung*. It caused a sensation.

Lawrence is almost forgotten today but conductor Richard Bonyngne rates her among Australia's top opera singers, along with Dame Nellie Melba and his late wife, Dame Joan Sutherland. In the 1930s, the soprano was a genuine diva of the Paris Opera and the Met. Where lesser sopranos balked, Lawrence conquered Wagner's powerful, technically challenging epics. Her extraordinary rise to fame is documented in *Wotan's Daughter – The life of Marjorie Lawrence*, a new biography by Richard Davis (Wakefield Press). Davis says Lawrence is "ripe for re-evaluation" 33 years after her death. "She was on the cusp of being forgotten if her story was not told fairly soon. There was a danger she could slip through the cracks of history and that would be a shame. She was such a great Australian, such a great artist and such a splendid character that she deserved more than being forgotten." Lawrence rivalled Norwegian superstar Kirsten Flagstad for lead roles at the Met in a golden age of Wagner. But in her prime in 1941, after marrying New York GP Tom King, Lawrence was paralysed by polio. It was then, supported by King, she showed her true grit by recovering

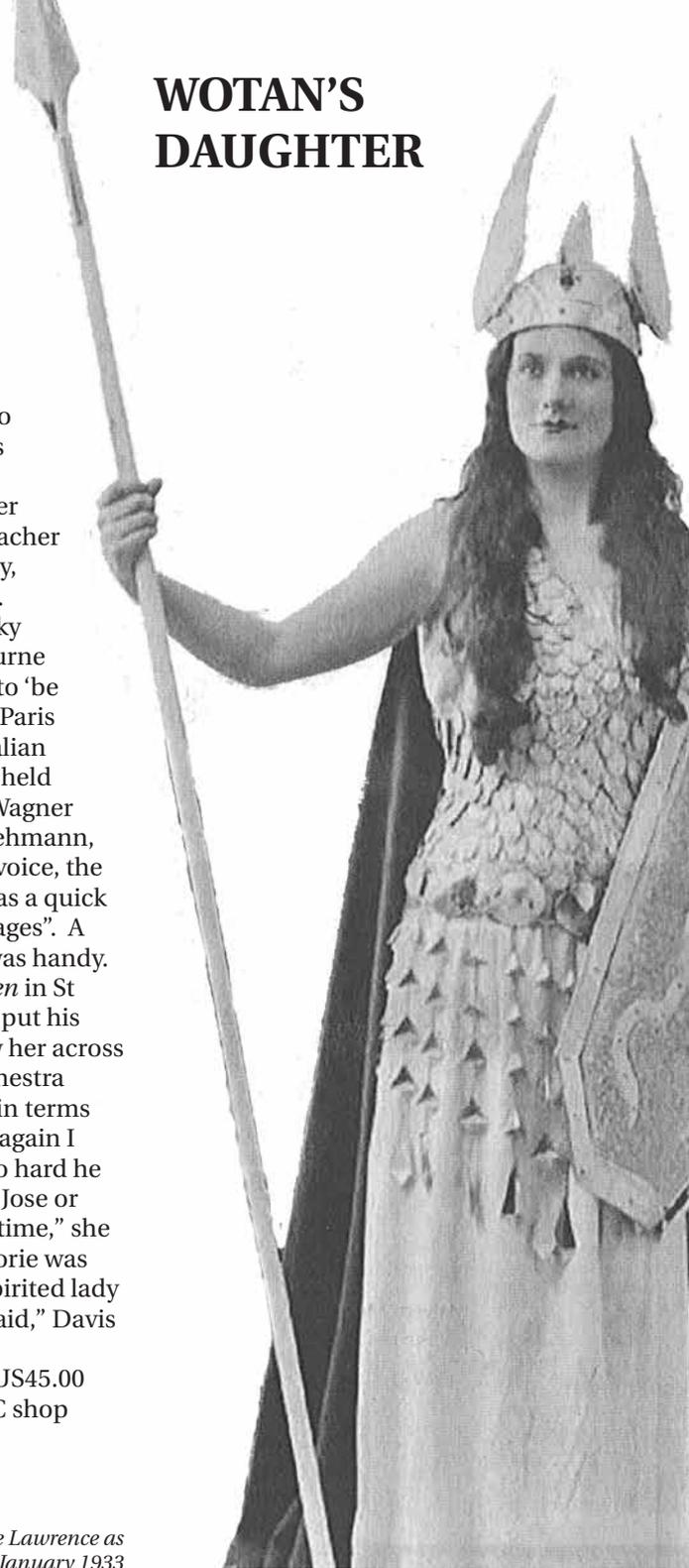
to perform once more, in improvised sitting roles in operas such as *Aida* and *Tristan und Isolde*.

During World War II she sang for Allied soldiers around the world. She sang for US president Franklin D. Roosevelt at the White House and for the Queen at Buckingham Palace. Her autobiography was made into an Oscar winning film, 1955's *Interrupted Melody* starring Eleanor Parker. Lawrence later became a respected opera teacher at Southern Illinois University, and died in Arkansas in 1979. Davis says Lawrence was lucky to be trained by a top Melbourne teacher, Ivor Boustead, then to 'be recommended' to legendary Paris teacher Cecile Gilly by Australian baritone John Brownlee. She held her own with the "titans" of Wagner such as Flagstad and Lotte Lehmann, "thanks to the quality of her voice, the fact she worked very hard, was a quick learner and good with languages". A touch of the Aussie larrikin was handy. In rehearsal for Bizet's *Carmen* in St Louis in 1941, a leading man put his knee on her throat and threw her across the stage almost into the orchestra pit. "I told him in no uncertain terms that if he ever did that to me again I would kick him in the balls so hard he wouldn't be able to sing Don Jose or anything else for a very long time," she wrote. After she fell ill, "Marjorie was an enormously strong and spirited lady and I think that came to her aid," Davis says.

Wotan's Daughter costs \$AUS45.00 and is available from the ABC shop (shop.abc.net.au)

Marjorie Lawrence as Brünnhilde, January 1933

WOTAN'S DAUGHTER



CORNWALL COUNCIL CELEBRATES 2013 BY MOVING TRISTAN'S GRAVE TO MAKE WAY FOR A BUS STOP

Under this wonderful headline The Wagnerian web site (www.the-wagnerian.com) reported on some Cornish moves that have nothing to do with Morris dancing!

The Tristan Stone, said to mark the spot of the real Tristan's grave - and thus theoretically the place of the Liebestod, has stood in Fowey, in Cornwall since at least the 5th century - but not for much longer. Cornwall Council has given permission for the stone (which contains the inscription "Drustans hic iacet Cunomori filius or 'Drustanus lies here, the son of Cunomorus') to be moved to make way for a "Park and Ride" to service a new housing estate to be built on land nearby.

It is worth noting that this is not the first time the stone has been moved, as it originally stood closer to Castle Dore (an Iron Age and early medieval hill fort) than it now does. We believe it was last moved to make way for a "round-a-bout". We wonder what would happen if Stonehenge was moved for similar reasons?