



In January this year the *Toronto Star* carried an article by Martin Knelman under the heading 'Fleming and Goerke: a tale of two divas' in which he writes about the relative positions of two sopranos, one at the twilight of her career and the other at the dawn.

"In New York last weekend I was happy to be in the audience at the Metropolitan Opera House where Renée Fleming, the current reigning star of the Met and the international opera world, is playing the femme fatale who bewitches Paris in *The Merry Widow*.

"But I expect to be even more delighted when Christine Goerke, sure to be the next reigning diva of the Met and the world, sings"... Brünnhilde in Wagner's *Die Walküre* for the Canadian Opera Company in Toronto.

"At the moment, of course, nobody on the planet can outglitter Renée Fleming, who is perfectly cast as a glamour queen in *The Merry Widow* but at 55, Fleming may be in the final act of her career..

"Goerke has not yet shown that capacity for moving beyond opera or achieved that level of fame, but she is a decade younger than Fleming and, in her case, the best is yet to come. She's on the brink of superstar status and it will be exciting to watch her ascent."

What luck for us to have heard Christine in 2012 and have another chance in June. She will soon be off our radar!

## CHRISTINE GOERKE “... ON THE BRINK OF SUPERSTAR STATUS”



## DERRICK KNIGHT COLLECTION

There was strong interest from members wishing to give homes to the Derrick Knight collection, in particular the DVDs. We are pleased to report that, with the co-operation of the members, everyone managed to secure the items they wanted most and we only had to resort to a coin toss for one book!

From the collection of 21 books, 13 DVDs and 1 VHS tape the following were not claimed and would still be available.

### WAGNER BOOKS

*Richard Wagner: His Life His Work, His Century* – Martin Gregor-Dellin  
*Wagner Without Fear* – William Berger  
*The Wagners* – Nike Wagner

### WAGNER VHS VIDEO

*Die Meistersinger Von Nürnberg* - Opera Australia cond. Charles Mackerras (VHS)

Anyone interested in the remaining items should contact Peter Rowe: (Peter.Rowe@minterellison.co.nz).

Finally, on behalf of the society, a big thank you to Jo Knight for not only making the collection available to the membership but for the time she took to dispatch the orders.

## MORE BOOKS

Hot on the heels of the Derrick Knight collection, we received an email from the daughter of former members Noelle and Bert Brownlee, Clodagh Warburton. She has advertised the books, pictured left, on Trade Me for \$20 reserve and \$30 buy now. If anyone is interested she would be happy to sell the lot for \$25.00.

Amongst the collection is Rudolph Sabor's 5 volume set on the *Ring* that is an indispensable guide for anyone who wants to study the work. Sabor provides the German text, English translation and alongside shows the leitmotifs. At \$25 this is great value.

To secure these books please contact: clodagh.warburton@gmail.com

# WSNZ AUTUMN MEETINGS

March and April will be busy months for the WSNZ. On 20 March John Pattinson will prepare Christchurch members for the MetLive production of *Die Meistersinger*. This will be the last chance to see this 'traditional' Otto Schenk production that was introduced in 1993 before it is replaced by a new production by Stefan Herheim that was introduced at the Salzburg Festival in 2013 and is scheduled for the Met 2019-20 season.

In *The New York Times* their critic wrote "It is always an event to have this great opera return to the Met." while the *Financial Times* said: "A dutiful, revived production of Wagner's opera is enlivened by James Levine's conducting."

On 12 April both Auckland and Wellington will hold meetings. In the capital Terence Dennis will look at *Singers in the Era of Cosima Wagner*. As Mistress of Bayreuth Cosima was in charge of 13 Bayreuth Festivals over a 22 year period from 1886 to 1907. During her reign she was criticised for her conservative approach to Wagner's operas which she summed up in her own words as "There is nothing left for us here to create, but only to perfect in detail".

Even after her 1907 retirement, due to ill health, she still 'had her say' as to the singers engaged. The great tenor Lauritz Melchior described how, when he auditioned for Siegfried Wagner at Bayreuth the master's son would slip out of the room for discussions with his mother, Cosima, who was obviously 'listening in'.

Auckland's meeting on 12 April starts at the early time of 3.30pm and will feature a performance of *Die Walküre* from La Scala, Milan conducted by Daniel Barenboim with Waltraud Meier as



*Singers in the Era of Cosima Wagner: Anna von Mildenburg as Isolde (left) and Hans Breuer as Mime (Right)*



*Nina Stemme, as Brünnhilde, pleads for help from her Valkyrie sisters (above). The Carvaggio-esque contrast and lighting gives the La Scala Walküre Act 3 (below) an old master feeling.*

Sieglinde and Simon O'Neill as her twin brother, Siegmund.

"This was opera magic where Daniel Barenboim brought out the full depth and passion of Wagner's music." – *The Daily Telegraph*. Even the nerdy reviewers on Amazon have given this performance 4 five star reviews out of the 8 reviews

## AUCKLAND MEMBERS

The admission charge for Auckland's 12 April meeting, the showing of *Die Walküre*, will be \$10.00 for members and \$15.00 for guests. There will be a separate charge, that Ken Tomkins will confirm, for those attending the dinner between Acts 1 & 2.



# WSNZ HAS NEW BANK ACCOUNT

With this edition of the newsletter we have included a membership renewal form for the 2015-16 year which we sincerely hope you'll fill out and return. When you do, can you please make sure, if you previously paid your subscription by internet banking, you update the WSNZ bank information as this has changed in the last 12 month.

Our new account is at Kiwibank:

**No: 38-9015-0531788-00**

**Name: The Wagner Society of New Zealand**

Our preferred method of payment is by direct credit, as this saves both you and us a great deal of time, but can you please ensure that you include your name in the Particulars box, the amount of your subscription in the Code box and if you have included a donation, the amount in the reference box.

Like all societies we are dependent on our membership for without you we wouldn't have a Society. So we thank you for your continued interest and encourage you to invite new members to sign up.

## GREMLINS

Unfortunately John Pattinson was unable to give his talk on *Wagner and the Operatic Drug Scene* at the Auckland meeting on 22 February because of a breakdown in the University's DVD equipment. John has very kindly agreed to give this talk at the 12 July meeting. Admission to the meeting will be free to those members who attended the 22 February meeting. John Drummond's talk on Wagner and Hotels will be given next year.

## NEWSLETTER – HELP!

I have now been writing and producing the WSNZ newsletter for over 10 years which, give or take a few, is 60 editions. To be honest I am finding it more and more difficult to bring you fresh stories and sometimes feel I am simply repeating myself. An example of this was in this edition when I wrote a story only to find I had written the same piece of news in the last newsletter.

I certainly don't want to bore the members and would therefore welcome some fresh blood and new ideas to ensure this newsletter continues to be interesting.

There is also a need to have a succession plan because I really can't envisage writing this for another 10 years. Would any members who would be interested in writing a newsletter or providing contributions please contact me. I will be happy to carry on with the layout - in the meantime.

**Chris Brodrick (cbrodrick@extra.co.nz)**

# WAGNER SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND

## 2015 PROGRAMME DETAILS

### Wellington

**Sunday, 12 April at 4.00pm**

*Venue: St Andrew's on the Terrace Hall*

**Singers of the Era of Cosima Wagner:**

Professor Terence Dennis features some rare Wagner recordings

**Sunday 14 June at 4.00pm**

*Venue: St Andrew's on the Terrace Hall*

Simon O'Neill and Christine Goerke, both of whom will be the stars of the *Wagner Gala* on Friday, 12 June, will talk about their training, their careers, and performing Wagner's music.'

**Monday 22 June at 7.00 pm**

*Venue: The Bergman Theatre, Paramount Cinemas, Courtenay Place*

**Joint meeting with the Opera Society.**

Screening of the Chéreau *Das Rheingold* with Sir Donald McIntyre

**Sunday 13 September at 4.00pm**

*Venue: St Andrew's on the Terrace Hall*

**Wagner and Hotels:**

Professor John Drummond presents two life-changing moments for Wagner which took place in hotels: one in Chemnitz in 1849 and one in Stuttgart in 1864

**Sunday 29 November**

*Time and venue to be confirmed*

**Christmas Party.** Details later

*One further meeting will be arranged for either August or October.*

### Christchurch

**Friday, 20 March at 7.30pm**

*Venue: Lecture Theatre A6, University of Canterbury*

**Introduction to *Die Meistersinger*:**

John Pattinson presents an introduction to Wagner's comic opera ahead of the New York MetLive screening at the Academy Cinema

**Friday 8 May at 7.30pm**

*Venue: Lecture Theatre A6, University of Canterbury*

**Chéreau Wagner Commemorative.**

With the death in 2013 of the French opera and theatre director Patrice Chéreau, Prof. Terence Dennis presents a commemorative tribute, drawn from the 1979 filming of his *Ring* at Bayreuth

**Monday 15 June at 6.00 – 8.30pm**

*Venue: Rangi Ruru Boardroom, Hewitts Road, Merivale*

*(NB Both early start and new venue)*

An informal meeting, including wine and nibbles, with Simon O'Neill and Christine Goerke, soloists in the NZSO *Wagner Gala Concert* being held in the Hornbrook Arena on Wednesday 17 June. \$10 admission

### Auckland

**Sunday, 12 April at 3.30pm**

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

**Die Walküre: complete opera from La Scala Milan:** A magnificent production featuring our own Simon O'Neill with Waltraud Meier as Sieglinde

**Sunday, 24 May at 7.30pm**

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

**AGM & Wagner in Exile:** Chris Brodrick introduces a documentary by Antoine Wagner in which he heads to Switzerland on the trail of his great, great-grandfather Richard Wagner who spent several years in political exile amongst the Alps

**Sunday, 12 July at 7.30pm**

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

**Wagner and the Operatic Drug Scene**

John Pattinson will present an illustrated talk on the potions, elixirs, philtres, drugs and mind-altering substances that Wagner included in his operas.

**Sunday, 6 September 7.30pm**

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

**VIP evening:** with Simon O'Neill and Heath Lees

**Sunday 6 December 7.30pm**

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

**Christmas Function:** Featuring a Pot-pourri of Wagneriana plus our famous cake and wine

### Christchurch cont..

**Friday 7 August at 7.30pm**

*Venue: Lecture Theatre A6, University of Canterbury*

Sid Kennedy presents Act 3 of the Wolfgang Wagner Bayreuth production of *Parsifal*, with a preceding talk entitled *Parsifal, and Piratical Persil*

**Friday 25 September at 7.30pm**

*Venue: Lecture Theatre A6, University of Canterbury*

**Wagner and the Operatic Drug Scene**

John Pattinson will present his illustrated talk on the use of mind altering substances in Wagner's operas

**Friday 30 October at 7.30pm**

*Venue: Lecture Theatre A6, University of Canterbury*

An illustrated talk based on Arthur Rackham drawings for *The Ring Cycle*, as seen in Heath's *A Tale told in Music*, presented by Jenny Lee

**Sunday 29 November** Christmas BBQ, venue and time to be confirmed.

### Dunedin

**Sunday, 24 May at 1.00pm**

*Venue: Barclay Theatre, Otago Museum*

**Operatic Perspectives: Rossini's *William Tell***

Rossini's crowning masterpiece, the grandiose *Guillaume Tell* influenced Wagner as a composer for the dramatic stage. This superlative performance from La Scala, Milan is conducted by Riccardo Muti, with Giorgio Zancanaro in the title role, along with soprano Cheryl Studer and tenor Chris Merritt.

**Sunday, 19 July at 12.30pm**

*Venue: Te Rangi Hiroa College Viewing Lounge, 192 Castle Street*

**Wagner: *Lohengrin***

A magnificent performance from the Vienna State Opera, conducted by Claudio Abbado with Plácido Domingo in the title role, Cheryl Studer as Elsa, Robert Lloyd as King Heinrich, Hartmut Welker as Telramund and Dunja Vejzovic as Ortrud.

**Sunday, 6 September at 2.00pm**

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

**Historical Perspectives: The First Recorded *Ring***

Terence Dennis presents a guided tour of the highlights of HMV's *Ring* recordings made between 1926-1932, including such singers as Frida Leider, Florence Austral, Lauritz Melchior, Walter Widdop, Friedrich Schorr and Ivar Andresen

**Sunday, 29 November at 12.00pm**

*Venue: To be confirmed*

**Christmas Luncheon followed by *Wagner In Exile - DVD***

Antoine Wagner heads to Switzerland on the trail of his great, great-grandfather Richard Wagner who spent several years in political exile amongst the Alps.

At the conclusion of the above, and as a bonus, Terence Dennis will give a piano recital of works from Wagner's Swiss period.

### NZSO WAGNER GALA

**Wellington**

**Friday, 12 June at 6.30pm**

*Venue: Michael Fowler Centre*

**Christchurch**

**Wednesday, 17 June at 7.00pm**

*Venue: Horncastle Arena*

**Auckland**

**Friday, 19 June at 7.00pm**

*Venue: Auckland Town Hall*



## WHERE'S WALLY?

The English National Opera's new production of *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg* featured a frontcloth (above), that greeted the audience as they entered the theatre, featuring 103 of the most famous cultural figures from the German speaking world – from Bach to Goethe, from Mozart to Thomas Mann, Beethoven to Pina Bausch.

Glyn Pursglove writing on the *Seen and Heard* Website summarized an interview given by director Richard Jones, for the programme, where he offered the reasoning behind their choice of artists.

*They are all original artists. They have revised their art forms, their areas of thinking, or changed how their discipline has been perceived. They are both rule-breakers and rule-makers*

*What's important though, is that they are avatars – conduits. They are the future Walther von Stolzing's who will work against the establishment but be absorbed into it*

*I'd like to think that the audience will identify and reflect on the achievements of these Germans during the show.*

Those of you who can cast your minds back to the good old days of 1967 and the 'Summer of Love' will remember the release of the Beatles album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* and the montage cover featuring 66 'famous' people including actors, sportsmen and scientists. Remember how we studied the image and tried to work out who was who? Well, thanks to the *Guardian* newspaper, who have not only published the image of the frontcloth but provided the answers, you have the chance to revisit those heady days of 'Flower Power and Free Love'! See how many names you can extract from the image of the frontcloth.

Apologies if the photo isn't totally sharp but it was the best we could find on the internet. Hopefully, though, it will be good enough to enable you to have a go.

To save you going mad with frustration Richard Wagner does NOT feature.

We'll have the answers for you in the next edition of the newsletter.



## RELIEF ALL ROUND

At the end of 2014 there was a collective Wagnerian sigh of relief with the announcement that controversial German performance artist Jonathan Meese (above) will *not* direct *Parsifal* at the 2016 Bayreuth festival because his staging is too expensive.

The choice of Meese for the new production of *Parsifal* was controversial from the start because the Berlin-based artist is notorious for his use of swastikas and Hitler salutes in his performances.

Meese, who is a painter, theatre director and performance artist, has a chequered history with the German authorities and artistic community. In 2013 he was found not guilty by a court in Kassel of performing the Nazi salute as an act of public provocation. The case had been brought against him after he was accused of twice making the salute at an event called *Megalomania in the Art World*. His lawyers had maintained that the

German constitution protects artistic freedom and the court agreed that the gesture had indeed been a part of an "interview-turned-art performance". Meese also outraged an audience in Mannheim when he performed a simulated oral sex act on a plastic dummy of an alien, which was adorned with a swastika.

The 2016 *Parsifal* production will be conducted by Andris Nelsons but a new director is still being sought.

## DOUBT OVER 2016 *Ring*

The Australian newspaper recently reported that plans by Opera Australia to re-stage the 2013 Melbourne *Ring* have run into funding difficulties.

It had always been envisaged that the *Ring* would be performed every three years meaning 2016 would see the production back in Melbourne. But reluctance from the Victorian Major Events Company to support a 2016 *Ring Cycle* means the opera company cannot confirm bookings with singers or announce the season. This despite the 2013 *Ring* injecting \$15.8 million into the Melbourne economy.

VMEC supported the 2013 *Ring* with cash and in-kind marketing, said to be worth about \$2m, but Maureen Wheeler, the co-founder of Lonely Planet, — who gave \$5m in 2013 and has promised another \$2.5m — said she was told informally that VMEC support was not certain, because "you don't need to do any marketing".

"How shortsighted is that?" she said. "They desperately want to say that Melbourne is the cultural capital. What have they done that comes close to this?"

Watch this space!