



## BAYREUTH BOMBSHELL!

Not that we are superstitious BUT there is something about Christmas/ New Year, the Wagner Society and bad news!!! In 2010 we were forced to postpone Tony Palmer's visit for 2011 after problems arose and he threatened to cancel. So what is going on when we receive more bad news just before Christmas 2011?

While the Tony Palmer postponement affected the Australasian Societies the latest 'bombshell' will be felt by Wagner Societies across the world!

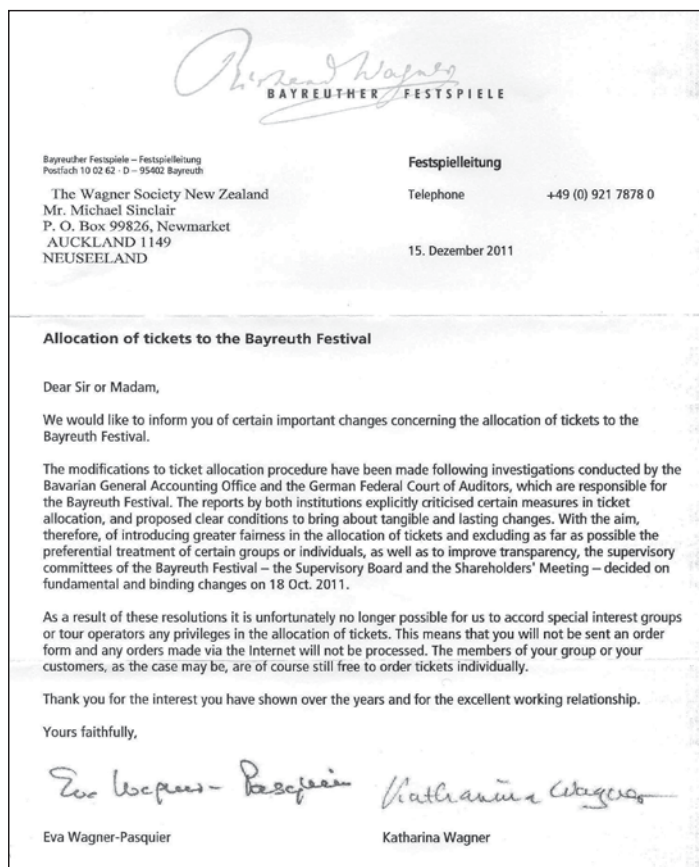
As you can see from the letter opposite, the supervisory committees of the Bayreuth Festival – the Supervisory Board and the Shareholders' Meeting – have decided on fundamental changes to the way tickets are allocated to the Bayreuth Festival. *"As a result of these resolutions it is unfortunately no longer possible for us to accord special interest groups (read - Wagner Societies) or tour operators any privileges in the allocation of tickets. This means that you will not be sent an order form and any orders made via the internet will not be processed. The members of your group or your customers, as the case may be, are of course still free to order tickets individually."*

One of the most upsetting aspects of this letter is the linking of Wagner Societies and travel agents! While the latter obtain tickets and then wrap them up with hotel accommodation and put them on sale at vast profits, the Wagner Societies have since the inception of the Festival existed, in part, to support Bayreuth.

Wagner's initial idea of issuing Patron Certificates, an early form of subscription ticket, failed to generate enough income because at a cost of 300 thalers only the wealthy could afford

to subscribe. It was the enterprising Emil Heckel who thought up the idea to increase participation in the Festival's subscription through Wagner Societies. Instead of asking for large sums of money from a wealthy few, Wagner Societies presented an opportunity for smaller sums to be raised. These funds could then be used to purchase tickets which in turn were balloted to the members. In principle this is the same procedure that has been followed by all Wagner Societies since 1876.

Unlike tour operators Wagner Societies are non-profit making ventures dedicated to promoting the work of Richard Wagner and within each Society there are members who spend a great deal of time ensuring that their organisation is well run and provides interesting programmes for their members. It could be argued that without the support of the Wagner Societies Bayreuth could well have



sunk without trace. There are numerous times in the Festival's history when things looked bleak, particularly after the dark days of National Socialism.

As you can imagine this news has not gone down well (a slight understatement!) and as I write Wagner Societies world-wide are making their feelings known. Your society has joined with the Australian Wagner Societies in sending a letter to 'the powers that be' to ask them to reconsider. As yet there has been no official response but as soon as one is to hand we will convey the good or bad news.

By way of a bit of background I unearthed this story from the Economist magazine dated 20 June 2011:

*"It is notoriously difficult to get tickets for the annual Bayreuth Festival in Germany, ...the average waiting time for a seat is nine years ..*

*But things may change. On June 15th bean-counters at the Bundesrechnungshof, the federal audit office, recommended to parliament that the Festival, which gets more than €5m (\$7.2m) a year of public money, should change the way it allocates tickets. Only 40% are sold directly to the public... Ill-explained "quotas" take care of the rest: the Society of Friends of Bayreuth gets 23% for its members. Around 30% go to travel agents...*

*According to the audit office's report, assigning tickets is largely handled by five women, some of whom have done the job for more than 20 years. The best way to get around them, suggests a helpful website, is to join a Wagner society outside Europe, or even better start one."*

Really? Have we got news for you!!

## 'ANOTHER BIG YEAR'

2012 is going to be another big year for the WSNZ. It's amazing that we manage to have such diverse programmes year after year and long may it continue!

Our year starts in February with three meetings. Auckland will screen the documentary on the *Wagner Family*, Christchurch will learn all about *Wagner's Women* from Heath Lees while Dunedin will have the opportunity to hear the noted philosopher and Wagner expert Bryan Magee in discussion with Terence Dennis.

There will be a number of opera screenings during 2012 with *Lohengrin* in Auckland, along with *The Flying Dutchman* and Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots* in Dunedin.

In April John Drummond will present *Wagner: Transition & Railway Trains* in Christchurch and in the following month Chris Brodrick will give his *The View from the Stage part 2* talk in Auckland in the second half of the AGM. This latter talk will also be given in Dunedin in September and Part 3 of the series is provisionally planned for Christchurch in October.

In preparation for the visit of Deborah Voigt in July Michael Sinclair will present Auckland members with a retrospective during the week prior to her concert.

Other talks to round out the year include Terence Dennis' *Wagner's Early Operas* in Auckland, Heath Lees' *Wagner's Women* in Dunedin along with a number of social events.

The main Wagner happening in 2012 will be the concert performances of *Die Walküre* in the three main centres. Plans are currently underway to organise something, not yet determined, in conjunction with the NZSO to support the performances. News on this will be in a future newsletter.

All in all we have another exciting Wagnerian year to look forward to.

## WSNZ & WNZF SUPPORTS PERFORMANCES

The Wagner Society of New Zealand through the Wagner New Zealand Foundation is pleased to announce that we will be providing financial support for both major Wagner events this year. The Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra is to receive \$5,000 for their Wagner/ Strauss concert featuring Deborah Voigt on 12 July, while the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra is to receive \$20,000 to support the three concert performances of *Die Walküre* in the same month.

## WORLDWIDE WAGNER –

There has been a request from a number of members for the newsletter to carry information about future performances of Wagner – Worldwide. In future newsletters we will endeavour to create a list of these performances to provide those who intend to travel with information about where the operas are to take place. If possible it would be nice to provide information about the productions and we would be grateful if members could provide reports, like John Davidson's on the Hamburg *Ring*, on any performances they encounter on their travels. These personal views can be either long or short but will no doubt prove to be helpful to other members. Articles or comments can be submitted to [cbrodrick@xtra.co.nz](mailto:cbrodrick@xtra.co.nz).

## WAGNER NEW ZEALAND FOUNDATION

Accompanying this newsletter is a brochure from the Wagner New Zealand Foundation. Through the Foundation, whose aims are to deepen and extend the understanding of Wagner, the Society provides financial support for Wagner events in New Zealand and supports New Zealand artists who wish to further their study of the composer's work abroad. To date the Society and Foundation have provided support for Simon O'Neill's recording with the NZSO, *Father & Son*, awarded a grant to Margaret Medlyn to study in Europe and supported special concerts: *Das Rheingold* in 2010, Deborah Voigt's appearance with the APO and performances of *Die Walküre* this year.

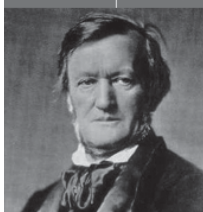
To continue the good work the Trustees are inviting members to consider making a bequest to ensure the good work of the Society and Foundation is continued into the future.



## Wagner Society of New Zealand

Patron: Sir Donald McIntyre

Home Meetings Newsletters Bayreuth Links Foundation Membership Contact



Other pages

Melbourne Ring

NZSO Die Walküre

APO Voigt Concert

## NEW WEBSITE!

Over the past few months Michael Sinclair has been working on a brand new version of the Society's website and we are pleased to announce that this has now been launched.

The new website contains lots of useful information for members including meeting details for each centre, membership information, links to past newsletters, information about Bayreuth and Wagner related links.

The site will also include information on up-and-coming Wagner events and will have a large section on the Melbourne *Ring*, which will provide a vast array of information about the performances and the packages that will be offered by the Society.

The new site can be found at:-  
<http://wagnersociety.org.nz>

We hope you enjoy visiting it!

PO Box 99826, Newmarket, Auckland 1149, New Zealand  
Phone: +64 9 528 0776 | Email: [info@wagnersociety.org.nz](mailto:info@wagnersociety.org.nz)

## MELBOURNE RING 2013 UPDATE

While we are still awaiting the announcement by Opera Australia of the full details of the Melbourne *Ring* they have now released details of their Ring Leader programme through which they are seeking donations for this production. By becoming a Ring Leader you will receive a range of benefits depending on how much you donate.

Perhaps the most important benefit of becoming a Ring Leader is that you will receive priority ticketing, which will begin in February 2012. Ticketing for Ring Leaders will precede ticketing for Opera

Australia Patrons and Subscribers (April 2012) and the General Public (November 2012).

The minimum donation required to become a Ring Leader is A\$1500. Opera Australia have published a brochure for those interested in becoming a Ring Leader and we have a limited number of copies available for members, should they be interested in this programme. Please contact Michael Sinclair on **Ph. 09 528 0776** or by email at:- **[info@wagnersociety.org.nz](mailto:info@wagnersociety.org.nz)** if you would like one.

# WAGNER SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND 2012 PROGRAMME DETAILS

## Auckland

**Sunday, 19 February 7.30pm**

*Venue: Kenneth Myers Centre,  
74 Shortland Street, Auckland*

**The Wagner Family:** A screening of Tony Palmer's latest film about the extended Wagner family.

**NB. Please note the different venue**

**Sunday, 15 April 7.30pm**

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

**Women in Wagner's Life and Art:**

Heath Lees examines Wagner's operatic and real-life women.

**Sunday, 20 May 7.30pm**

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

**Annual General Meeting** - followed by Christopher Brodrick's **The View from the Stage Part 2**.

**Sunday, 8 July 7.30pm**

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

**A Retrospective of Deborah Voigt:**

Michael Sinclair looks at the life and career of dramatic soprano Deborah Voigt in anticipation of her appearance with the APO.

**Thursday, 12 July 7.30pm**

*Venue: Auckland Town Hall*

**Deborah Voigt in New Zealand:** APO concert that includes Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll* and the *Prelude & Liebestod* from *Tristan und Isolde* with Voigt as soloist.

**Saturday 28 July 4.00pm**

*Venue: Auckland Town Hall*

**Die Walküre: Concert performance:**

Simon O'Neill, Edith Haller, Christine Goerke, John Wegner, Jonathan Lemalu & Margaret Medlyn with the NZSO conducted by Pietari Inkinen.

**Sunday, 2 September 5.00pm**

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

**Lohengrin – DVD Screening:**

Production from the Bavarian State Opera with Jonas Kaufmann and Anja Harteros.

**NB This meeting will begin at 5.00pm**

**Sunday 9 December 7.30pm**

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

**Wagner's Early Operas:** Terence Dennis presents *Die Feen* (The Fairies) and *Das Liebesverbot* (The Ban on Love) – plus Christmas festivities!

## Christchurch

**Friday 17 February 7.30pm**

*Venue: Lecture Theatre A6, University of  
Canterbury*

**Women in Wagner's Life and Art:** Some of Wagner's most intriguing operatic characters are women – often appearing as part-angel, part-demon - Elisabeth, Venus, Kundry ...Heath Lees investigates.

**Friday 20 April 7.30pm**

*Venue: Lecture Theatre A6, University of  
Canterbury*

**Wagner: Transition & Railway Trains**

Otago University's Professor John Drummond discusses the coincidence of Wagner's development at a time when he made important railway journeys.

**Tuesday 18 May 7.30pm**

*Venue: TBA*

Our annual **Pot Luck dinner** to celebrate RW's 199th birthday (May 22).

**Wednesday 25 July 5.00pm**

*Venue: CBS Canterbury Arena*

**Die Walküre: Concert performance**

Simon O'Neill, Edith Haller, Christine Goerke, John Wegner, Jonathan Lemalu & Margaret Medlyn with the NZSO conducted by Pietari Inkinen.

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

## Wellington

**Sunday 1 April 4.00pm**

*Venue: TBC*

**Die Walküre & the coming of age of**

**Wagner's musical language:** Heath Lees kicks off the 2012 Wellington programme

**Sunday 22 July 3.00pm**

*Venue: Michael Fowler Centre*

**Die Walküre: Concert performance**

Simon O'Neill, Edith Haller, Christine Goerke, John Wegner, Jonathan Lemalu & Margaret Medlyn with the NZSO conducted by Pietari Inkinen.

*Other Wellington events for 2012 will be announced in due course.*

## NEW MEMBERS

A big Wagnerian welcome to:

Anthony & Christine Arnesen . *Dunedin*  
Mark & Gill Horton..... *Wellington*  
Grant Winterburn..... *Auckland*

## FAREWELL

Helene Mann .....*Dunedin*

## Dunedin

**Sunday, 26 February 2.00pm**

*Venue: Carrington College, 57 Heriot  
Row, (Turn right at top of Pitt Street)*

**Colloquium With Bryan Magee & Terence Dennis**

Professor Bryan Magee, noted Philosopher and Wagner expert, discusses with Terence Dennis aspects of Wagner, including his notorious treatise *Jewry in Music*.

**Sunday, 25 March 2.00pm**

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

**Meyerbeer Les Huguenots – DVD**

**Screening:** a presentation drawn from two filmed versions, 'updated' from the Deutsche Oper, Berlin and 'traditional' from the Australian Opera (Joan Sutherland's Farewell Gala performance). See why the opera was celebrated as "La nuit des sept étoiles" (The Night of the Seven Stars), and what impressed the dramatic ideals of the young Wagner.

**Sunday, 20 May 1.00pm**

*Venue: Barclay Theatre, Otago Museum*

**Der Fliegende Holländer – DVD**

**Screening:** Harry Kupfer's staging at Bayreuth (filmed 1985). One of the most acclaimed Wagner productions of the post-war period.

**Sunday, 30 September 2.00pm**

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

**The View from the Stage Part 2:**

Christopher Brodrick (WSNZ President) looks at those who attended the Bayreuth Festival between 1882 (the second Festival) and the outbreak of World War 1 in 1914.

**Sunday, 4 November 2.00pm**

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

**Women in Wagner's Life and Art:**

Some of Wagner's most intriguing operatic characters are women – often appearing as part-angel, part-demon — Elisabeth, Venus, Kundry . . . . Heath Lees investigates.

**Sunday, 2 December 12.00 noon**

*Venue: Carrington College, 57 Heriot  
Row, (Turn right at top of Pitt Street)*

**Christmas Luncheon:** followed by the famous documentary *The Golden Ring* which offers insights into the Decca recording of *Götterdämmerung*, made in Vienna in the early 1960s.

# SIEGFRIED - HAMBURG



Wotan summons Erda from the stack room (above) and Siegfried about to go into the forest (right)

## John Davidson continues his thoughts on the Hamburg Ring.

I could hardly wait to get in to *Siegfried* but came out feeling badly let down. In general, Young kept the volume of the orchestra too consistently high and the singers were often forced to shout. Even Struckmann, otherwise excellent again, was struggling by the time of the library scene (of which more later).

The first act worked well enough and was well received. Mime's place was a rather spartan room with two beds and washing machine plus other props. Christian Franz reappeared as Siegfried and this role suited him much better than Siegmund. Moreover, he didn't run out of puff, as he had done when I'd seen him in the role at Bayreuth. So he has to get a tick for that. He was portrayed as totally boyish, as Siegfried tends to be these days, with brown shirt and baggy brown shorts and rumbustious behaviour – he was in bed at the start and got up to put on a bear's mask and shine torches to frighten Mime. He later knocked down the clothes line that Mime had put up for the clothes he took out of the washing machine. He also specialised in throwing things around and ripping up books. He also threw books into the fire for the forging scene along with his doll (he was growing up, you see, but he still had a long way to go!) The forging scene was clever – at one point Siegfried took the motor out of the washing machine and set it spinning. The interlude between the Wanderer and Mime was excellent.

The setting for Act 2 was most effective, the general consensus being that it was a conservatory. Anyway, a bowed, tiled wall framed the greenery of the forest, and it was clear-cut. Alberich was now a rather pathetic alcoholic, and Wotan was into his alcohol too. When it was time for Siegfried to go into the forest (out of which Fafner's amplified voice came), the greenery parted revealing an identical bowed wall at the very back of the stage – it was almost as though the characters were trapped within walls. The dying

Fafner (Tsybalyuk again) appeared in human form. Siegfried was shown to be affected by the killing of both Fafner and then Mime – an unexpectedly sensitive side of him was revealed. The Woodbird was clumsily handled, though the singer did well enough.

The third Act was the real let-down. The set for the final scene was still basically the place where we'd left Brünnhilde, but it was now very dilapidated (after many years!) with one broken window and slightly differently configured. But before that we had found ourselves in a library, no less, and the Erda summoned by Wotan turned out to be a very sleepy and nervous librarian summoned from the stack room. When Siegfried broke Wotan's spear, part of the library wall collapsed with a loud crack and all the books fell down, creating a gap through which Siegfried passed. A brilliant coup de théâtre in itself but, like the bed scene in *Das Rheingold*, it didn't really seem part of a consistent concept, even though Siegfried had already ripped up books, an activity which he and Brünnhilde were also about to do in their bonding scene. The point was made by one of our party that the library symbolised the received wisdom of the world which had now become outdated and redundant, and that's a fair enough comment (you could also say, of course, that libraries and books themselves are now old-fashioned – how many of you have kindles? – and that old-fashioned librarians are doomed to be put to sleep for ever!). However, the very fact of the splitting of Wotan's spear symbolizes the end of the old order anyway, so the library conceit was really just that, a conceit for the moment.

Anyway, the final scene was the real problem. Brünnhilde never really woke up properly, being nowhere near as good as she had been in *Die Walküre*. Siegfried was still strong, but he was shouting and the voices of the two simply didn't blend together. Moreover, Brünnhilde on more

than one occasion was just under her top note. Since the orchestra was too loud anyway, the beautiful music did nothing at all for me. It was bordering on the unmusical. Siegfried nearly couldn't open the window to get in to her in the first place. When Brünnhilde addressed the sun and the light, the area outside the 'rock' was pitch black. The 'ring' of fire wasn't surrounding her and what there was of it (only a small section) had gone out before Siegfried attempted to approach her. All in all, it just didn't work in any way – sorry!

## BIZARRE BITS!

Some of our members obviously spend too much time on their computers! Christchurch member 'Symphony' Sid Kennedy has unearthed a whole new world of Wagner on YouTube. While these performances will not replace hearing the *Ring* in the Festspielhaus these 'mini' operas rival some of the avant-garde productions in famous opera houses around the world. With no prima donnas to deal with and sets that are brightly coloured and interlock, the idea may well catch on. Confused? Well if you take the words 'mini', 'brightly coloured' and 'interlock' you may be able to guess that these productions are staged with.....Lego!

Yes, just Google 'Lego Wagner' and you will be able to enter a whole new world! To get you started here are a couple of web addresses: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0S529AyJ0ZA> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ScSsKiPdm3M>

For those who would like to revisit the famous animated version of the *Ring* it can also be found on YouTube at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUMZLm2V50c>