



## Wagner around the world in 2009

As another icy blast from Antarctica sweeps up the country and the temperature dives to single digits, it's nice to dream about being somewhere warmer! A beach on a tropical Island or maybe Northern Hemisphere summer? For those of you who intend to get away this winter to seek a warmer climate and possibly indulge your passion for a certain German composer of music dramas, we have set out a summary of Wagner productions for the next six months.

For those who want to see a *Ring Cycle* there are a number from which to choose. In July you will find productions in Zurich, St Petersburg (White Nights Festival) and at the Royal Opera, London. In August you can catch performances in Bayreuth and Seattle with the last cycle for the year in Vienna between October & December. Unfortunately you will have just missed the Valencia *Ring* which took place in June at the stunning Palau De Les Arts Reina Sofia (see later article).

For those interested in performances of *Tristan & Isolde* the choice is Bayreuth (July/Aug), Deutsche Oper Berlin, (Nov), Staatsoper Berlin (Aug), Glyndebourne (Aug), Royal Opera London, (Sept/Oct), Stuttgart (July), Tallinn, Estonia (Sept) and Vienna (Dec) where you will find Simon Rattle conducting.

*The Flying Dutchman* will be performed in Adelaide (Nov), Dresden and Edinburgh (Sept). The latter is a concert performance during the Edinburgh Festival conducted by Simone Young. Later in the year she will conduct it again in Hamburg (Dec) in the same month as a performance in Duisberg.

Katherina Wagner's production of *Tannhäuser* can be seen in Las Palmas, Canary Islands (July) with a different production in the same month in Würzburg. In addition it will be

performed in Bonn (Sept), Nürnberg (Oct/Dec) and Copenhagen (Dec).

*Lohengrin* and swan will be seen in Munich (July), Hamburg (Sept/Oct), Dessau and Vienna (Oct) and Leipzig (Dec).

In Tanglewood, Massachusetts, the Summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, James Levine will conduct a performance of *Die Meistersinger* (July) with James Morris and Johan Botha. Other performances of Wagner's comic opera can be seen in Erl (July), Bayreuth (July/Aug), Darmstadt (Sept), Köln (Sept/Oct) and Dresden (Nov).

The only place you will be able to see *Parsifal* between now and the end of the year is at Bayreuth.

If any of our members are lucky enough to catch any of these productions, we'd love to hear from you and publish a report in the newsletter.

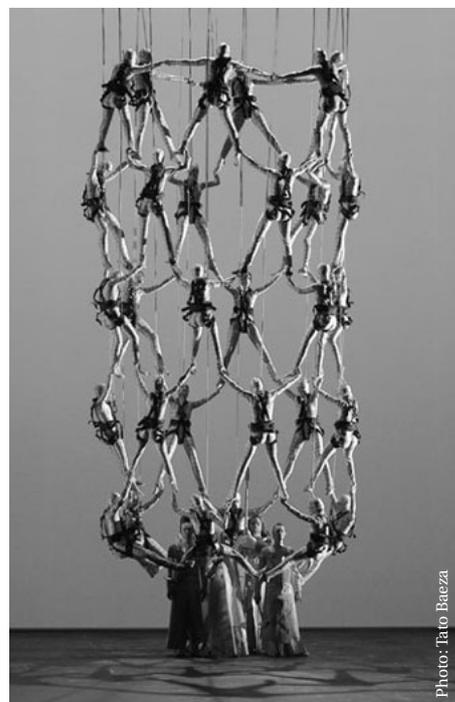


Photo: Ido Baeza

*The Gods enter Valhalla, Rheingold. Palau De Les Arts Reina Sofia, Valencia*

## COMING UP

The WSNZ has another busy couple of months ahead. On 12 July Michael Sinclair looks at *The Story of the Ring – How the text evolved*. This will be followed in early September with a presentation by Elric Hooper on *The evolution of Wagner production*. In early August, Wellington, will hear a talk on *The Flying Dutchman* given by Monica Tempian.

Across the strait, in mid August, Christchurch will host Terence Dennis with *Wagner in Paris* while, a week later in Dunedin, Chris Ackerley will present his talk on *Wagner and Literature*.

To round out our activities over this time, Michael Sinclair will take a group of 26 to the Seattle *Ring* in August. We hope they have a wonderful time.

### Changes to 2009 programme

Wellington and Dunedin members may wish to note that there have been changes to the 2009 programme. These changes affect dates, times and venues and are given in full detail on page 3.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Society AGM was held in Auckland on Sunday 24 May and was attended by a large crowd. For those who were unable to attend the President's report is printed on the last page of this newsletter. The incoming committee and officers are as follows:-

President ..... Chris Brodrick  
Vice President ..... Ken Tomkins  
Secretary ..... Michael Sinclair  
Treasurer ..... Malcolm Hammond  
Membership/Liaison ... George Risk  
Committee ..... Lesley Kendall  
..... Bob O'Hara  
..... Juliet Rowe  
..... Sidney Smith

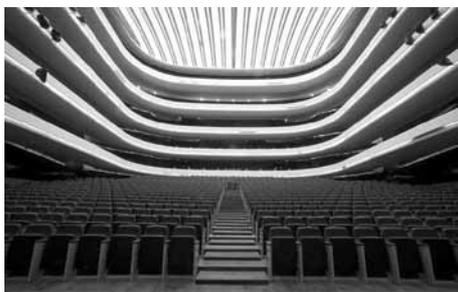


## VALENCIA'S PALACE OF THE ARTS

Is it a fish? Is it a beetle? No! It's Valencia's stunning Palau De Les Arts Reina Sofia which was designed by Spaniard Santiago Calatrava and took ten years to build. It opened in 2005.

The building is 75 metres high with a further 3 levels below ground. The huge curved roof stretches 230 metres in length capping off a 40,000 sq. metre building that contains four auditoriums. The opera hall has 4 tiers of seating, a stage equipped with all major facilities and an orchestra pit capable of housing 120 musicians, the third largest in the world. Sadly, it has suffered a number of incidents since its opening. The first, in December 2006, was the collapse of the main stage platform with the complete set of Jonathan Miller's production of *Don Giovanni*. Then, a year later, the entire complex was flooded when almost two metres of water entered the lower floors of the building and wrecked the stage equipment, electronics and the motors. Despite the set backs, the Palau De Les Arts Reina Sofia has recently put the building through the ultimate test of any opera house: a full production of *The Ring*. It will be interesting to see if this exciting building becomes the iconic symbol for Valencia as its elder brother, the Sydney Opera House, has in Australia's largest city.

## OPERA HOUSES OF THE WORLD



Views of Palau De Les Arts Reina Sofia

## Wagner News from Around the World

### RING MELBOURNE?

When Adelaide lost the Australian Grand Prix to Melbourne they replaced one big event with another, *The Ring!* Well, if the rumours are true Adelaide's Eastern neighbour may well repeat the indignity by putting on a Victorian *Ring* in 2012. The unconfirmed rumour comes from the latest Wagner Society in New South Wales newsletter which reports that, although there is no hard news about a Melbourne *Ring Cycle*, "what is encouraging is that the rumours are all about *when* the production takes place, rather than *if*." Apparently the production has been made possible through the generosity of 'Lonely Planet' publishing co-founder Maureen Wheeler.

### WAHNFRIED RENOVATION

As part of an economic stimulus package, the German Government has pledged €500,000 (\$NZ1,000,000+) to renovate Wahnfried, Richard Wagner's villa in Bayreuth.

### TEACH YOUR CHILDREN WELL

*Raise children on Wagner, urges Arts Council chair Dame Liz Forgan.*

This headline in 12 May edition of the Guardian reported an address given at the Royal Philharmonic Society awards by the chair of Arts Council England. "Throwing children alive into a boiling vat of great music does them no harm at all," said Dame Liz Forgan. She advocated a "deliberate policy of exposing [children] to what might appear to be entirely unsuitable masterpieces at an early age". This, she said, was a tribute to her own experience – which started with an introduction, aged six, to the Liebestod from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* from her passionate, if mildly eccentric, grandfather. It was, she said, the "equivalent of loading a baby's bottle with Napoleon brandy".

She added that "If I had been forced to start with clapping games, or tooting *Frère Jacques* on the recorder, I fear I might have turned to crime or even netball as more exciting alternatives,"

### CLEANING OUT THE CUPBOARD?

After only nine months as co-director of the Bayreuth Festival, Wagner's great grand-daughter Katherina has already introduced a number of changes. None will match the controversy of her new plan: opening the family archives to researchers to investigate her family's links with the Nazis.

Katherina, who is no stranger to controversy, is reported in the Guardian as saying she feels she has a duty to do what previous generations have avoided. "When I was growing up, I was repeatedly confronted with this topic," she said. "Was my grandmother Hitler's lover? To what extent was my father embroiled with Hitler? No one in the family ever spoke about it. If my sister and I don't ask the questions, who then will? There's a shadow hanging over Bayreuth, and I feel a responsibility to try to get some clarity," Katharina said. She wants "independent, renowned historians, and not only those with an affinity to Bayreuth" to carry out their investigations "independently of me and my family".

Watch this space!

# WSNZ 2009 PROGRAMME DETAILS



## JOHN MATHESON (1928 - 2009)

Dunedin born conductor John Matheson who recently died in Brisbane, aged 80, was one of the finest conductors of opera to come out of New Zealand. His career took him to the major opera houses of the world where he was in demand as a coach and conductor. John worked as Georg Solti's assistant on the recordings of *The Ring* and was credited for guiding Sir Donald McIntyre to become a Wagnerian singer. John worked with our Patron on a number of Wagner projects. In the 1970s the two joined with the NZSO to record 'Wagner Monologues' on the Kiwi Pacific label. (*Still available from Kiwi Pacific*). In 1990, to celebrate New Zealand sesquicentennial, John conducted the finale of *Die Meistersinger* at a special concert at Covent Garden in which Sir Donald, as Hans Sachs, was joined by an all New Zealand cast. The only Wagner John Matheson conducted from the pit in New Zealand was the Auckland season of *The Flying Dutchman* with Donald McIntyre in the title role in the early 1990s. The May 2009 edition of Opera News contains in depth and informative tributes about John's career from Peter Coates, Richard Green & Roger Wilson.



Seattle's Cassidy Quinn Brettler

## Auckland

**Sunday, 12 July 7.30pm**

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

Michael Sinclair presents: *The Story of The Ring* – How the text evolved

**Sunday, 6 September 7.30pm**

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

Elric Hooper presents: *From Maestro to Myth* – The evolution of Wagner production

**Sunday, 6 December 7.30pm**

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

*Wagner Pot Pourri* - A Christmas celebration. An evening of requests, roundups, selections and surprises

*Auckland entrance fee of \$5.00 per person, per meeting except for the 6 September meeting where the fee will be \$10.00 per person.*

## Wellington

**Sunday, 9 August at 4pm**

*Venue: St Andrew's on the Terrace*  
Talk by Monica Tempian from Victoria University on the composition of *The Flying Dutchman*

**Sunday 29\* November at 4 pm**

**(\*To be confirmed)**  
*Venue: St Andrew's on the Terrace*  
Roger Wilson - a lecture/recital to include some Wagner songs

## WOODBIRD TWITTER?

As opera companies world-wide follow the Metropolitan Opera and broadcast their productions to cinemas, Seattle Opera has gone one step further. In an effort to make *The Ring* accessible to younger generations, Seattle has engaged 19-year-old Cassidy Quinn Brettler to produce a 'vlog' (Video Blog) "*Confessions of a First-Time Opera Goer*" which will record her first experience of Wagner's Tetrology which opens next month. Throughout the rehearsal and performance schedule, Cassidy will conduct interviews with artists, attend rehearsals and meet up with *Ring* fans. The vlog will be posted on Cassidy's and Seattle Opera's Facebook and Twitter accounts. You never know members of the WSNZ may well become Twitter stars!

## Christchurch

**Friday, 14 August 7.30pm**

*Venue: Lecture Theatre A6, University of Canterbury*

Terence Dennis presents: *Wagner in Paris* - Exploring Wagner's periods of crisis and ultimate inspiration in the City of Love

**Friday, 18 September 7.30pm**

*Venue: Lecture Theatre A6, University of Canterbury*

Chris Brodrick presents: *Wagner & the Visual Arts*. A repeat presentation from 2006

**Friday, 9 October 7.30pm**

*Venue: Lecture Theatre A6, University of Canterbury*

John Pattinson presents: *The Black Sheep of the Family* – An introduction to *Rienzi*

**Sunday, 29 November 6.00pm**

*Venue: Jonet & Tony Ward's home 949 Shands Road, Christchurch*  
Christmas BBQ

## Dunedin

**Sunday, 23 August 2.00pm**

**\*NOTE DATE CHANGE**

*Venue: Music School Lecture Room, Sale-Black House, University of Otago*  
Chris Ackerley presents: *Wagner and Literature*. 'Chantant dans la coupole' – the voices of *Tristan und Isolde* and *Parsifal* in TS Eliot's *The Waste Land*

**Sunday, 27 September 2.00pm**

*Venue: Dunedin Public Art Gallery*  
Chris Brodrick presents: *Wagner and the Visual Arts* - A look at some of the artists who were influenced by the Master of Bayreuth. (In conjunction with Friends of the Art Gallery)

**Saturday, 7 November 12.30pm**

**\*NOTE DATE & VENUE CHANGE**

*Venue: Barclay Theatre, Otago Museum*  
*Ludwig* - Luchino Visconti  
A DVD screening of the film based on the life of Wagner's benefactor, King Ludwig II of Bavaria

**Sunday, 6 December 12.30pm**

**\*NOTE CHANGE OF TIME & VENUE**

*Venue: Barclay Theatre, Otago Museum*  
Complete viewing of the famed Bayreuth production of *Lohengrin*, and our end-of-year Christmas function

## NEW MEMBERS

A very Warm Wagnerian Welcome to:-  
John & Margaret Skegg..... Auckland  
Betty Rawlings..... Dunedin

## DEATHS

....and farewell to:-  
Marcus Poole..... Wellington

Over the last few years our President Emeritus, Heath Lees, would sum up the year's activity with one word. In 2007, for instance, he talked about 'diversity' and last year the word was 'maturity.' Well so much has happened in the last twelve months that a single word will not suffice and therefore for this year's report I propose two words, 'transition' and 'development.'

Any organisation that sees the retirement of a charismatic leader is bound to go through a transition. But when that leader is also linked to the Society Secretary it becomes less straightforward. An analogy would be to think of the Society as a car, which in the course of a short space in time loses the driver and the engine!

With a new President, residing outside Auckland, a new Secretary living in Auckland and a fledgling branch in Dunedin, co-ordination and communication became a high priority.

The National Committee, although Auckland based, includes Membership Secretary, George Risk, in Wellington and myself in Christchurch. To allow the two of us to take an active part in committee meetings without the expense of flying to Auckland, we had to make use of some modern technology. It works like this. While the Auckland committee members congregate in the offices of Minter Ellison Rudd Watts in Auckland, George and I sit in our respective Wellington and Christchurch homes, waiting for the phone to ring. That sound heralds the start of a telephone conference call. The system has worked very well and we recently extended it by seconding Lesley Kendall on to the committee to give Dunedin a voice. In addition we invited Les Holborow from Wellington and Gloria Streat from Christchurch to join in our discussions on a consultative basis. This system not only allows us to disseminate news and ideas amongst the four centres but will see more co-ordination in our programming.

We are very fortunate that we have the use of this facility and our thanks go to Peter Rowe for making his office and technology available to us. Peter must also be thanked for his work as our honorary solicitor, in particular for his work on behalf of the Foundation and for agreeing to continue in this position for another year.

In August we received the sad news that our Treasurer, John Hambling, was stepping down due to ill health. While we sought a replacement, Michael Sinclair took on the dual tasks of Secretary and Treasurer which he fulfilled until the end of the financial year. Our new Treasurer, Malcolm Hammond, will take over at the start of the 09/10 financial year. A very big thank you to John for all the work he's done for the Society and we wish him the speediest of recoveries.

## Wagner Society of New Zealand President's Report May 2009 (Edited version for the newsletter)

During the year we received an indication from Robert Johnson that he wished to be relieved from his duty of looking after the web site. At present there is little change to the site from month to month, so Michael Sinclair, as our resident web expert, is handling that task.

Thank you to Robert for ensuring the Society has had a presence on the web over the years.

That the transition of the Society has gone smoothly is thanks to the hard work of the committee. My thanks go to Vice President Ken Tompkins, Bob O'Hara, Sidney Smith, Minute Secretary Juliet Rowe, and Pam Hall for all their work not only nationally but on the local level, where they have been helped by David Colemore-Williams. Pam Hall, who first came on to the committee in 2006, has decided not to stand again this year. Pam, thank you for the input and help you've given us over the last three years.

A big thank you to our former Secretary, Liz Lees, for help in the transition and to our President Emeritus, Heath Lees, who has always been available to offer good advice. I'd like to make special mention of George Risk who does wonderful work as Membership Secretary, and during the last financial year processed just over 400 membership applications. Another who deserves our thanks is Michael Sinclair who has done an amazing job as Secretary/Treasurer/Web master/Contributor, as well as organising the Auckland programme and preparing the hall for meetings.

But while the Society has a mainly Auckland based National committee, we could not function without the work carried out in the other centres. These members are not officially elected, but take on the responsibility to organise our events on a local level. Without them we would find it extremely difficult to function. Thanks to Les Holborow, John Morrison, Ann Mallinson & Tibby Warmington in Wellington; Gloria & Garth Streat, Jenny Lee & John Pattinson in Christchurch; and Lesley Kendall and Terence Dennis in Dunedin.

Between the four centres we managed 22 meetings during the year. These included six different speakers with nine talks on subjects as far ranging as *Wagner and the Sea*, *The Flying Dutchman* and *Wagner theatre production to Wagner at the Movies*, *Wagner on the Web* and *Wagner's History of Substance abuse!* There were DVD presentations of *Dutchman*, *Rheingold* and *Tannhäuser* as well as a

performance of the *Wesendonck Lieder* given by Judy Bellingham and Terence Dennis. When you add in the Wagner's Birthday and Christmas social events we certainly provide a wide ranging programme! In addition, we produced five newsletters with content as diverse as our programmes.

During the year I was invited to visit the five Wagner Societies in Australia to present *Wagner and the Visual Arts* and *Wagner at the Movies*. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet our cousin societies across the Tasman and build some strong Australasian bonds.

Once again we had a good presence in Bayreuth and we were delighted to read Heath's report in the November newsletter. During the year we started planning for two overseas trips to take place in 2009. The first, in August, will see 26 of our members off to Seattle for *The Ring* under the leadership of Michael Sinclair, and in October I'll be taking a group of 23 to *The Flying Dutchman* in Adelaide.

During the year the Charitable status of the Wagner Foundation was established which now allows us to transfer donations to a body that can make full use of its funds without a tax liability. The advantage of this structure became immediately clear when, late last year, we were advised that the Society was a beneficiary in the will of former member, the late Roa Morrissey. Initially we were told that the sum was to be \$30,000 but, after probate, we were informed that we had not only been given \$30,000 but half her residual estate, a sum that came to \$116,321.09. This money has been transferred into the Foundation and the committee is looking at a number of exciting projects that, prior to Roa's bequest, would have proved beyond our means.

So, while at the beginning of the year we could be described as being in transition, by the end we were very much into development. It amazes me how diverse and dynamic the Society is, and maybe that is the genius of Wagner in offering so many different facets to explore. With another diverse and interesting programme this year, it looks as though the development will continue.

Finally, a big thank you to all our members for without your involvement there would be no Society. Although that car I mentioned earlier may have been a smooth V8 driven by Scotland's best, Jim Clarke or Jackie Stewart, today it has a new engine that will take a bit of time to run in and a driver who may from time to time graunch the gears, but as time passes the engine will ease and the driver will get more confidence. Thank you for coming on the ride. It's been a privilege to represent you as President.

Chris Brodrick, President