



DIE WALKÜRE SEMINARS

The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, with support from the Wagner Society and the Wagner New Zealand Foundation, is holding *Die Walküre* seminars in conjunction with the concert performances in July. The seminars which take place a couple of weeks prior to the performances, will be free and open to the public, although you will need to register.

Each seminar will take the form of a panel discussion between former NZSO CEO Peter Walls, General Director of NBR New Zealand Opera Aidan Lang, one of the Valkyries and violist Martin Boerner. Martin is on an NZSO exchange from the Niederrheinischen Sinfoniker, Mönchengladbach, Germany. The panel discussion will be followed by a tea break before Peter Walls & Aidan Lang present a joint lecture on the opera.

These seminars will present members with a marvellous opportunity to get inside *Die Walküre* and hear first hand the challenges that it presents to directors, singers, orchestral players and administrators. It's also an opportunity for members to encourage others to find out about one of the great operas.

Please note that the seminars, in some cases, are taking place at different times and locations from usual. In addition the *Deborah Voigt Retrospective* that was scheduled for Auckland on 8 July has been replaced by the *Die Walküre* seminar.

Top: Simon O'Neill – Marco Brescia & Rudy Amisano, Archivio Fotografico del Teatro alla Scala



The opportunity to hear full length Wagner operas in New Zealand is rare, although recently we have been particularly lucky with the APO *Das Rheingold* in 2011 and this year's NZSO *Die Walküre* in three of the main centres.

Die Walküre is of particular interest because Simon O'Neill will sing one of his signature roles – Siegmund. Simon will be supported by a strong international cast including Edith Haller (Sieglinde), Christine Goerke (Brünnhilde), John Wegner (Wotan), with our own Jonathan Lemalu (Hunding) and Margaret Medlyn (Fricka). Add the NZSO with conductor Pietari Inkinen and these three concert performances will be something to remember. Bookings are now open and meals can be pre-purchased for the long (1hr) interval. Information is available by phoning the NZSO on 0800 479 674 or visiting: www.nzso.co.nz/concerts/concert/die-walkure/

Seminar Times

AUCKLAND

Wednesday 4 July 9.30am - 12.00pm

Venue: School of Music, Uni of Auckld

CHRISTCHURCH

Friday 6 July 9.30am - 12.00pm

Venue: LAWS 108, Uni of Canterbury

WELLINGTON

Monday 9 July 9.30am - 12.00pm

Venue: Illot Concert Chamber

OTHER DETAILS:

No admission cost but registration is essential as numbers are limited. To reserve your place email to wagner@nzso.co.nz or phone Michelle: 04 801 3860

Complimentary tea/coffee provided

ON-OFF-ON-OFF

The newly founded Wagner Society of Israel (WSI) has taken the bold step to end the performance ban on Wagner's music in the Jewish state. You will recall the uproar created a few years ago when Daniel Barenboim played the *Tristan* Act 1 Prelude for an encore. This time the WSI hopes that by putting together a private orchestra they can circumvent the boycott. The 100 piece orchestra will play under Asher Fisch who, according to HAARETZ Daily newspaper, "will discuss the influence Wagner's opera *Tannhäuser* had in inspiring Herzl during his first draft of his tract *The Jewish State*, and the way the anti-Fascist Toscanini used Wagner's work to give expression to his humanistic outlook."

As soon as the announcement was made the debate flared up. The University of Tel Aviv [UTA] announced that it would not now permit the event to take place on its campus, following what it describes as "angry protests." It charged that the Wagner Society had "deliberately concealed this basic fact from us [that there would be a concert of Wagner's work]. Which prompted the following reply from the Wagner Society "The excuse that they [UTA] didn't know is totally ludicrous and an outright lie."

A few days later the performance was back on when it was announced it would now take place in the Hilton Hotel, Tel Aviv. But it wasn't to be, the Hilton, despite signing a contract, changed its mind. The concert was off once more.

Asher Fisch, who you will recall conducted the 2004 Adelaide *Ring*, is determined the boycott should be broken. "It is not possible," he said, "that musicians in an orchestra, or singers, will grow up and live their lives as musicians without playing Wagner's music."

"Wagner is one of the most important composers in history – whether you like it or not."

A ROYAL COMMAND

It would be nice to think that when the phone rang in the Dunedin home of Terence Dennis back in early March he was relaxing with a good glass and a book but, knowing Otago University's professor of music, he would have been hard at work preparing for his next project. But this was no ordinary call, for at the other end of the line was one of the world's most respected Divas – Dame Kiri Te Kanawa.

"Would", Kiri enquired, "you be available to accompany me for a small concert on 5 March?" "Where?" "Oh, London – or to be more precise, Windsor. This is all very secret, but Prince Philip is hosting a small gathering of 30-35 guest who are patrons to the Outward Bound Trust at Frogmore House"

With tickets bought and bags quickly packed, Terence was winging his way to London to play for British and Opera royalty.

In an interview with the Otago Daily Times on his return, Terence described it as a rare honour to be asked to do a command performance because the Royal Family did not have private recitals as often as they used to.

Frogmore House has been used as a royal residence since Queen Charlotte, wife of George III, bought and extended it in the 1780s. "Our retiring room before the concert was the Duchess of Kent's sitting room, which is closed to the public. The Duchess of Kent was Queen Victoria's mother and this room was filled with Queen Victoria's own artefacts, including a piano and beautiful portraits of the children and herself and Prince Albert – and her piano duet book was there on the table."

The great drawing room in which they gave the recital had been a ballroom.

"It was like walking into another century. It looked like something out of George III's time. Handel could have been in the room!" The recital consisted of works by Handel and Vivaldi, songs by Liszt in French and Italian, Canteloube's *Chants d'Auvergne* for which Dame Kiri is famous, a selection of English folk songs and a song by Argentine composer Ginastera.

Terence, who is a stalwart of the Dunedin branch of the WSNZ, is a trustee of the Dame Kiri Te Kanawa International Foundation, and has also taught at the Solti-Te Kanawa Accademia di Belcanto in Italy. Dame Kiri now spends a lot of time mentoring young singers, but still gives recitals, although she no longer sings in opera.



Prince Philip, Terence Dennis and Kiri Te Kanawa at Frogmore House.

WSNZ AGM – 2012

The Wagner Society held its AGM on Sunday 20 May 2012 and the committee was reappointed for another year.

President Chris Brodrick
 Vice President.....Ken Tomkins
 Secretary Michael Sinclair
 Treasurer Jeanette Miller
 PR/LiaisonGloria Streat
 Committee Lesley Kendall, Bob O'Hara, Les Holborow & Juliet Rowe.

The major discussion at the meeting concerned the withdrawal of Bayreuth tickets from the Wagner Societies. With nothing new to report on the matter, members were told that we were waiting for news from the Wagner Verband who were meeting in Prague on the same weekend as our AGM. Any new information that comes out of that meeting will be passed on to members.

WAGNER IN AUCKLAND

No this isn't one of those 'Elvis spied in Viaduct' stories but a reminder that over the next couple of months Auckland will experience more Wagner than just *Die Walküre*. Firstly on Thursday 12 July the Auckland Philharmonia will present a programme that includes Strauss' orchestral tone poem *Death and Transfiguration* and Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll* along with Strauss *Lieder* and the *Prelude & Liebestod* from *Tristan und Isolde* with American soprano Deborah Voigt as soloist. This concert is supported by the WSNZ and The Wagner New Zealand Foundation.

On Thursday 9 August the APO features more Wagner with a work by American composer Christopher Rouse – *Der Gerettete Alberich* or *Alberich Saved*. Featuring the brilliant percussionist Evelyn Glennie, the work is a fantasy for solo percussionist and orchestra on themes of Wagner and is based on the question of what happens to Alberich at the end of the *Ring*.



FAREWELL

In May, the great German bass-baritone Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (above) died at the age of 86. His extraordinary career, particularly in the field of lieder, resulted in a vast number of recordings including all the songs of Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Hugo Wolf and Strauss suitable for a male voice. He sang a number of Wagner roles, many of them recorded, including Gunther in the Solti *Ring* (*Götterdämmerung*). When asked why he had made the weak Gunther sound so noble Fischer-Dieskau quickly responded "Ah! But he [Gunther] was a King!"

Also dying at the age of 86 was the British bass-baritone Derek Hammond-Stroud. Like Fischer-Dieskau, Hammond-Stroud possessed very good diction and was able to articulate the Gilbert and Sullivan patter songs with ease. Wagnerians will remember fondly Hammond-Stroud's Alberich (*the Ring*) and Beckmesser (*Die Meistersinger*) in Reginald Goodall's famous Sadlers Wells/English National Opera productions of the 1970s.

"Leb wohl, du kühnes herrliches Kind"



Derek Hammond-Stroud as Beckmesser

WAGNER SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND 2012 PROGRAMME DETAILS

Auckland

Wednesday, 4 July 9.30am

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

Die Walküre Seminar:

A panel of Peter Walls, Aidan Lang, one of the Valkyries and violist Martin Boerner discuss Wagner's second *Ring* opera.

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 Deborah 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!

BE IN TO WIN!

Marbecks has just received stock of Deutsche Grammophon's specially priced four-disc set of *Die Walküre*, featuring an all-star cast, and the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, with the distinguished James Levine conducting. This recording is highly recommended by Gramophone Magazine and is available in-store for only \$40.00 or on-line for \$35.99. (<http://www.marbecks.co.nz> - then search for Walkure - umlaut optional)

In addition, when you purchase this recording, you'll go into the draw to win one of three gift baskets courtesy of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra to coincide with the concert performances *Die Walküre* in July.

Each gift basket contains:

– Two complimentary tickets to *Die Walküre*, presented by the NZSO

Christchurch

Friday, 6 July 9.30am

Venue: LAWS 108, University of Canterbury

Die Walküre Seminar: A panel of Peter Walls, Aidan Lang, Amanda Atlas & Martin Boerner discuss Wagner's second *Ring* opera.

Wednesday 25 July 5.00pm

Venue: CBS Canterbury Arena

Die Walküre: Concert performance

(See Auckland, 28 July for details.)

Friday 10 August 7.30pm

Venue: A6, University of Canterbury

On Singing Wagner: Otago University's Judy Bellingham with John Pattinson

Friday 26 October 7.30pm

Venue: A6, University of Canterbury

The View from the Stage - Part 3 (1924

-1944) Chris Brodrick continues his series on the Bayreuth Festival visitors.

Wellington

Monday, 9 July 9.30am

Venue: Illot Concert Chamber

Die Walküre Seminar: A panel of Peter Walls, Aidan Lang, Lisa Harper-Brown & Martin Boerner discuss Wagner's second *Ring* opera.

Sunday 22 July 3.00pm

Venue: Michael Fowler Centre

Die Walküre: Concert performance

(See Auckland, 28 July for details.)

Sunday 19 August 2.00pm (*note time*)

Venue: St Andrew's on the Terrace

Wagner & his Contemporaries: Farewell concert for Thomas Gaynor, piano with Isabella Moore, Soprano, & compered by Margaret Medlyn.

– *Father & Son* – an EMI CD featuring Simon O'Neill singing Wagner with the NZSO

– Sibelius: Symphonies, featuring the NZSO (a double CD set courtesy of Naxos)

– Adelaide *Ring* Highlights, (a double CD set courtesy of Melba records)

– *Boris Godunov* opera on CD, featuring Boris Christoff

– An 85 minute DVD sampler courtesy of Arthaus Musik

There will be three separate draws: one for the Upper North Island, a second for the Lower North Island and a third for the South Island.

"The Metropolitan Opera Orchestra are one of the stars of this performance. The playing is always secure, ...nurtured by Levine to produce a richness of detail unsurpassed in any other recording."

–GRAMOPHONE

Dunedin

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 1882 – 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 Golden Ring* documentary.

NEW MEMBERS

A big Wagnerian welcome to:

John Farrell..... Wellington

Jim & Margaret Collinge ... Wellington

Fay Swann..... Wellington

Carolyn Halliday..... Auckland

Peg Upfold..... Wellington

Arnold & Reka Solomons .. Wellington

Lloyd Berry..... Wellington



CONGRATULATIONS...

...to Margaret Medlyn (right) who was made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit (ONZM) in recognition of her services to opera in the recent Queen's Birthday honours. Margaret is Head of Classical Performance Voice at New Zealand School of Music which she fulfils alongside her singing career. In July she will sing Fricka in the NZSO concert performances of *Die Walküre*.

...to Dame Malvina Major (left) who has been made a Member of the Order of New Zealand (ONZ) – New Zealand's highest honour. The award recognizes her "outstanding service to the Crown and people of New Zealand...."

Many many congratulations from all of us in the WSNZ.

THE INTERNET - UPS & DOWNS

“Cast the hateful ring in the Rhine!” Unfortunately, Waltraute’s pleas are falling on Brünnhilde’s deaf ear and *Götterdämmerung* continues towards its fiery conclusion. While the two Valkyries discuss the fate of the Gods I continue with my work writing this article for the next newsletter. Every now and again there is a tremendous crash, but then this is a live recording from a performance at the Paris Opera so one must accept the odd extraneous noise. It’s the Latvian radio announcer that takes a bit of getting used to – you just have to be patient – there’s a full 8 minute introduction! But I can’t complain this full recording of *Götterdämmerung* is streaming on to my computer courtesy of the internet and it’s free!!! (Oh Act 2 has just begun! What gloriously evil music!)

The availability of streamed operas over the internet is one of a number of positive aspects the world wide web offers us. While the *Götterdämmerung* I am currently listening to is a streamed radio broadcast, last Sunday I ‘watched’ a live 2010 concert performance of *Parsifal* from Amsterdam’s Concertgebouw featuring Klaus Florian Voigt (Parsifal), Katarina Dalayman (Kundry), Robert Holl (Gurnemanz) and Falk Struckmann (Amfortas). The performance, conducted by Jaap van Zweden currently Dallas Symphony Orchestra Music Director, won a prestigious 2012 Edison Award.

But, you may well ask how do you find out about these streamed operas? The answer is: the internet!

I have recently come across a wonderful Wagner site: The Wagnerian (<http://www.the-wagnerian.com/>). This site is a veritable treasure trove of Wagner news, information and streaming video & audio. Here you will find cast lists and dates for productions like the Seattle or Met *Rings*, news - a new novel featuring Wagner, even the NZSO Press release announcing next month’s *Valkyrie* (along with credit to the Wagner Society of New Zealand and the Wagner New Zealand Foundation.)

Along with these really interesting web sites the internet has other positive aspects to those of us seeking information. While Amazon has caused considerable damage to the independent bookshops by diverting sales on-line there is an up-side to buying over the internet: second hand books!

With hundreds, probably thousands, of second hand bookshops placing their stock on line it doesn’t take long to track down an out of print book. When you do find it there are inevitably a number of copies in different conditions from which to choose. You can just as easily

purchase the book from the UK or America; it doesn’t matter where the book is as your credit card crosses all national boundaries.

For my research for the *View to the Stage* series of talks I found a book on the internet by Hans Myer called *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth 1876–1976*. It was offered for sale by a British second hand dealer who packed it up and posted to me in Christchurch. When I opened the book I found that the previous owner had filled it with newspaper clippings about all things Wagner, some of which included his/her handwritten comments.

The first ‘insert’ was the December 1972 edition of *Wagner - The Magazine of the Wagner Society* (on the first page you find that this is the London Wagner Society). What a fascinating look back at the past. It appears that in 1972 The London branch was having venue problems. With a membership in excess of 650 the Bedford Street room where they met was only licenced, under fire regulations, for 70. To stay at Bedford Street would require them to “turn away at the door any persons in excess of seventy.”

Under letters to the editor, David Crampton is concerned at the “dramatic irregularities in the *Ring*, the most glaring is the final fate (unstated) of Alberich. Are we to assume he is drowned/burnt? Or is he left to roam the world, a constant threat?... I should be interested in any readers’ ideas on this rather serious oversight.” Forty years on this question remains unanswered although Auckland members will be able to hear American composer Christopher Rouse – *Der Gerettete Alberich* or *Alberich Saved* which looks at this very question at an APO concert on 9 August.

At the back there is a priority booking form for Covent Garden’s production of *Parsifal*. (For those who have recently bought or intend to buy tickets to the Royal Opera please divert your eyes.) Top price, in the Orchestra Stalls, is £6.80p ranging down to £1.00 in the Amphitheatre sides. Those were the days!

The most interesting article though is an interview with Donald McIntyre. Remember this was 1972, so four years before he triumphed in the Bayreuth Chereau *Ring*.

In the light of what was to come his comments make an interesting read. “I began singing Wagner because I was asked to. That is still the main reason, but I also continue singing his works because the characters in my opinion are as full as any in opera...When starting a role I go through the text until I understand it; with Amfortas I found understanding the text was not very easy - there is one

The Wagnerian Home page

section with a sentence that carries over five pages in the score: ‘Des Weihgefässes göttlicher Gehalt...ach! keine Büssung je mir stillt! Erbarmen! Erbarmen! You can lose the meaning half-way; it’s very involved, even for Wagner!”

Later on he talks about the future “Next summer at Bayreuth I shall sing four performances of Amfortas and [am] in a complete *Ring*. (He will thus be the first **British** Wotan to sing a complete *Ring* at Bayreuth).”

I’m sure we can forgive this little slip as I’m sure that British Wagnerians are equally as proud of our great New Zealander. But while this little mistake in a newsletter would have been seen by the 650 members of the London Wagner Society I did come across a web site which claimed Donald McIntyre was Australian! Unfortunately as this ‘fact’ is now available to billions of internet users it will be hard to correct. And that is the down side of the WWW.

But overall the great opportunities that the web now presents us with, like streaming of opera, far outweighs the negative side. So what shall I have next weekend... Lohengrin? Tristan? Oh now comes the problem of choice!

COMING UP!

On Friday 10 August at 7.30pm, Christchurch will present a recital/lecture, *On Singing Wagner*, by Judy Bellingham, the Senior Lecturer in Voice at Otago University, in conjunction with John Pattinson at the piano.

Meanwhile on Sunday, 2 September at 5.00pm Auckland members can see the Bavarian State Opera production of *Lohengrin* on DVD with Jonas Kaufmann and Anja Harteros. **Please note that the screening will start at 5pm.**