

DOUBLE LAUNCH FOR DUNEDIN

New Wagner Society Centre Opens with Terence Dennis' CD Release

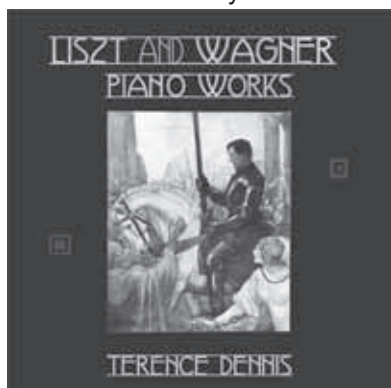
More than 120 people filed into the University of Otago's Marama Hall last Sunday (16th March) for the Dunedin launch of Professor Terence Dennis' *Wagner-Liszt* CD, and the founding of the Dunedin Centre of the Wagner Society of New Zealand.

Peter Chin, Dunedin's Mayor and music-lover, wished a great reception for the CD, and a long and resounding success for the Centre.

Heath Lees, WSNZ President, spoke about the place of the world's Wagner Societies, and about the founding of the Society in New Zealand, fifteen years ago. He welcomed the formation of the Dunedin Centre and remarked on the number of exciting events that were already lined up for 2008.

Dunedin, he said, would be a strong player on the New Zealand Wagner scene, and with Terence Dennis at the helm, there would certainly be many fascinating programmes and events.

For Sunday's programme, Terence Dennis had built all his illuminating introductions and performances around the pieces featured on his newly released CD.



The impressive cover of the new CD



Master (Terence Dennis, front) and apprentice (Jaroslav Novak) limbering up for the "Mighty Mastersingers"

In addition to a number of short musical "gifts" that Wagner had written for his friends to play on the piano, there were extracts from Liszt's Fantasy on themes from Wagner's *Rienzi*, the one-movement *Sonata for Mathilde Wesendonck*, and (with Heath Lees) the complete piano duo arrangement by J. Rubenstein of Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll*.

The most memorable musical item was undoubtedly the opening piece — Max Reger's arrangement for piano duo of Wagner's mighty "Mastersingers" overture, which Terence played with one of his piano pupils, Jaroslav Novak.

Before and after, in the Marama Hall foyer, Lesley Kendall was signing up enthusiastic attenders by the dozen. Lesley had been a WSNZ committee member in Auckland before she moved to Dunedin and her commitment and hard work on behalf of the new Centre will help to get it off to a terrific start.

Chris Brodrick and others from Christchurch were also present, all of them excited by the strong South Island contingent that the WSNZ now has. Chris guessed that Dunedin is the most southerly Wagner Society in the world, and he's probably right.

As part of the weekend celebration, Professor Heath Lees gave a lecture on Monday 17 March on Wagner's influence on the French poet Mallarmé. The lecture was well attended, and afterwards there was much of that wonderfully animated polyphonic conversation that also marks many Wagner Societies elsewhere, but is specially intense and jovial in New Zealand. Dunedin may have just arrived in WSNZ circles, but already it's got the marks of an enjoyable circle of music-lovers, all united in their fascination for the music of Wagner. Long may it flourish.



Lesley Kendall, Dunedin Secretary, welcoming new members

Looking Back Fifteen Years On

WSNZ Moments and Memories

This year sees the 15th year of the WSNZ existence. The beginnings were in 1994 when about 30 interested people gathered in the Music Theatre at the University of Auckland and decided to set up a Wagner Society with Sir Donald McIntyre as Patron. Since then there have been star-studded speakers, transfixing trips to Wagner places

abroad, “heavenly long” sittings of complete Wagner operas, and a steady expansion of numbers and centres throughout the country. In the second half of this year’s AGM evening, on 25 May, Heath Lees, the retiring president, will speak about some of the defining moments in the Society’s birth and growth, but here are a few ‘sneak preview’ images

1994



The First Committee: Uwe Grodd (Liaison); Liz Lees (Secretary); David Bone (Hon. Solicitor); Michelle Staff (Treasurer); Heath Lees (President); Sally Sloman (Committee Member); Colin Nicholson (Vice-President)

In March 1994, Sir Donald McIntyre came to the University of Auckland to give a series of master-classes and performances. After a concert in the Maidment Theatre, Sir Donald addressed a meeting in the foyer. Professor Heath Lees followed, and formalised the wish of the meeting to establish a Wagner Society. Later, on 22 May (Wagner’s birthday), a number of these interested people re-convened in the Music Theatre to form the Society, set up the very first Committee, and draft a programme.

1996

Within a couple of years, the WSNZ had been incorporated and joined the Wagner Society Verband, and the Friends of Bayreuth. In 1996, thanks to a generous allocation of tickets, about twenty-five members were able to visit the Wagner Festival in Bayreuth.



President and Secretary in Leipzig, at the spot marking Wagner’s birthplace.

The Glitterati on the forecourt of the theatre in Bayreuth. They’re hard to see, but the Kiwis are firmly in the centre!

1998



Adelaide provided a marvellous boost for the Australian and NZ Wagner Societies with their brave mounting of the *The Ring* in 1998. The WSNZ sent 80 members to this, the first large-scale trip up to then, and still remembered as one of the Society’s most successful visits ever.

By the time of the first Adelaide *Ring*, the Kiwi travelling troupe had grown to eighty

2002



(Far Left) Berlin: Two dozen Kiwi travellers being photographed on the steps of the Staatsoper, during its Kupfer/Barenboim festival.

(Left): In front of the Charlottenburg Palace in Berlin, Peter Rowe, Hon Solicitor, with a new hat, and the President, with a new tie. Behind them, Liz is considering buying a new umbrella.

PROGRAMMES AROUND NEW ZEALAND FOR 2008

AUCKLAND

Saturday 12 April, 7.30pm
 (Please note date and day)
 Sunday, 25 May, 7.30pm
 Sunday, 20 July, 7.30pm
 Sunday, 14 September, 7.30pm
 Sunday, 7 December, 7.30pm

Music Theatre, School of Music, 6 Symonds Street

Wagner and the Sea (Heath Lees). *The Flying Dutchman* and *Tristan*. Includes excerpts from the new *Tristan* DVD.
 AGM, followed by a nostalgic Valkyrie-Ride through 15 years of the WSNZ.
The Flying Dutchman (a complete viewing).
 A Wagnerian Pot-Pourri: Requests and Round-ups, Selections and Surprises.
 Star-studded debate on the motion "That *Götterdämmerung* is the weakest *Ring* opera"

WELLINGTON

Sunday 20 April, 4pm

 Sunday, 15 June, 4pm
 Sunday, 31 August, 4pm

National Library Auditorium, Molesworth/Aitken St, Thorndon

Wagner and Liszt recital by Terence Dennis, including excerpts from the new CD featuring music from both composers. Heath Lees will join Terence Dennis for a piano-duet version of the *Siegfried Idyll*.
Massey Museum Theatrette, Buckle Street
Wagner and the Sea (Heath Lees); see Auckland's 12 April programme.
 Chris Brodrick presents *Wagner at the Movies*.

CHRISTCHURCH

Saturday, 29 March, 7.30pm

 Friday, 11 April, 7.30pm
 Friday, 23 May, 7.30pm
 Friday, 27 June, 7.30pm
 Friday, 19 September, 7.30pm
 Friday, 24 October, 7.30pm
 Sunday, 7 December

Music Centre Chapel, Barbadoes Street

Wagner and Liszt recital by Terence Dennis, (See Wellington's 20 April programme).

Lecture Theatre A6, University of Canterbury

Liszt and Wagner: Unlike Artists, Uneasy Friends, and Uncomfortable Relatives? (Heath Lees)
 Pot-Luck Meal for Richard Wagner's Birthday.
 Michael Sinclair, the brains behind *theoperacritic.com*, will present *Wagner and The Web. Drink, Drugs and the Rest: Wagner's History of Substance Abuse* (John Pattinson).
From Maestro to Myth — the Evolution of Wagnerian Production (Eric Hooper)
 Christmas Barbeque; venue and time to be announced.

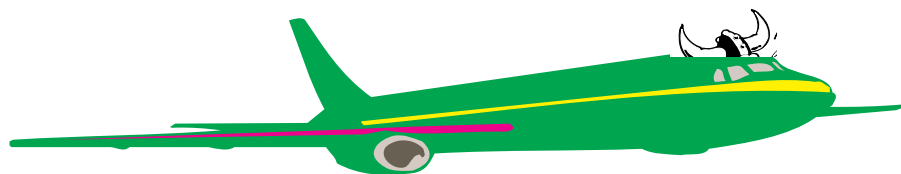
DUNEDIN

Sunday, 18 May, 3pm
 Sunday 7 September, 3pm

 Sunday, 7 December

Marama Hall, University of Otago

Terence Dennis and Judy Bellingham: the *Wesendonck Lieder* and *Wagner in Zurich A Return from Riga — Wagner, Weber, and 'The Flying Dutchman'*. (Terence Dennis). (Venue to be confirmed).
 Catered lunch followed by *Tannhäuser* DVD. (Venue and time to be confirmed).



Wagner Trips Overseas, 2008

First the Bad News . . .

Alas, owing to a lack of numbers, the proposed trip to Melbourne for the concert performance of *Der Fliegende Holländer* will not take place. Anyone still interested in attending this concert under their own steam should contact Michael Sinclair (email: msinclair@xtra.co.nz) for more details.

And Now the Good News . . .

On the other hand the interest in the trip to Seattle to attend the Ring in 2009 has been exceptionally strong and it is expected that this trip will go ahead. Further information will be available over the coming months. If you have not yet registered your interest please do so now by contacting Michael Sinclair (email: msinclair@xtra.co.nz). Space may be limited.

LASER DISCS

The Committee of the Wagner Society has decided that it is no longer possible to make use of the laser disc collection that it used so frequently during the first few years of operation.

If any member would like to have these discs they are more than welcome to them. The discs would need to be collected from 37 Thatcher Street, Kohimarama, or they could possibly be posted out, but this would have to be done at the receiver's expense.

If you are interested in the discs, please contact Liz Lees know by 1 May. After this date they will be disposed of. See the panel on the right for details.

<i>Der Fliegende Holländer</i>	Festspielhaus Bayreuth	Nelsson/Kupfer
<i>Der Fliegende Holländer</i>	Savonlinna Opera Festival	Seegerstam
<i>Götterdämmerung</i>	Festspielhaus Bayreuth	Boulez/Chéreau
<i>Lohengrin</i>	Festspielhaus Bayreuth	Schneider
<i>Die Meistersinger</i>	Festspielhaus Bayreuth	Stein/Wagner
<i>Parsifal</i>	Festspielhaus Bayreuth	Stein/Wagner
<i>Parsifal</i>	Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's film	Jordan
<i>Siegfried</i>	Festspielhaus Bayreuth	Boulez/Chéreau
<i>Das Rheingold</i>	Festspielhaus Bayreuth	Boulez/Chéreau
<i>Tannhäuser</i>	Festspielhaus Bayreuth	Davis/Friedrich
<i>Tannhäuser</i>	Metropolitan Opera	Levine/Schenk
<i>Die Walküre</i>	Festspielhaus Bayreuth	Boulez/Chéreau
<i>Wagner Gala</i>	Concert live from Berlin	Abbado
<i>Wagner in Bayreuth</i>	Opera excerpts staged in Bayreuth	Boulez, Barenboim, etc.
<i>The Making of the Ring</i>	Documentary filmed at Bayreuth	
<i>Richard Wagner -Classics 24</i>	Film with music	Stein & Knappertsbusch

NEWS and NOTES

Bayreuth Plans Public Viewings

The Bayreuth Festival is considering broadcasting some performances to a town square in Bayreuth. It is hoped that the first broadcasts will take place this year, although no decision has been made as to the operas to be screened (although *The Ring* has been excluded).

Christopher Ventris to sing Parsifal

English tenor Christopher Ventris has been confirmed to sing the role of Parsifal in the new production of the opera to be staged at the Bayreuth Festival this year. The production is to be directed by Stefan Herheim.

Simon O'Neill's Siegmund

Simon O'Neill scored a resounding success as Siegmund in his one and only performance in *Die Walküre* at the Metropolitan Opera in early February. One reviewer stated, "he sang with a combined fervour and lyricism," and described O'Neill as a "major asset."

New Tristan DVD Acclaimed

The new OpusArte Tristan, based on the recent Glyndebourne production with Nina Stemme (Isolde), Robert Gambill (Tristan), Katerina Karnéus (Brangäne) and Bo Skovhus (Kurwenal) has been praised to

the skies by the critics. In the London Times, Neil Fisher says he "can't recommend it enough"

With the exception of Gambill, all singers gather sumptuous bouquets, but the DVD production itself attracts the highest praise for its "careful camerawork, thoughtful extras and slick controls". The DVD world is already well afloat on a sea of Tristans, so this must be something special.

Note: Heath Lees will use examples from this DVD in his forthcoming presentation 'Wagner and the Sea' in Auckland and Wellington.

OTHER NOTICES

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

It's time to renew your vows to the WSNZ once again, and members will find their renewal forms enclosed with this newsletter. The society continues to be a vital part of the arts scene in NZ and this is due to your continuing support and fidelity. Many thanks for making it happen.

WAGNER SOCIETY LIBRARY

A number of Wagner-based DVD's, videos and books are available for members to borrow if they wish. You will find an updated list of these enclosed with the newsletter. For library materials the contacts are as follows:

Pam Hall/Auckland
wagner@kiwilink.co.nz - 09-446-3404

George Risk/Wellington
g.risk@gns.cri.nz - 04-476-6394

Gloria Streat/Christchurch
gstreat@xtra.co.nz - 03-332-3242

Lesley Kendall/Dunedin
lvkendall@xtra.co.nz - 03-487-8229

PARKING

Auckland members will find enclosed the re-issue of a recent sheet about parking for events at the School of Music. The meeting in February was badly affected by two major events in town which were rescheduled to 'our date' — Sunday, 24. Oh dear! The joy of living in Auckland. Let's see if we can do better next time.

The Wagner-NZ Foundation

Set up a couple of years ago, the Wagner-NZ Foundation is now firmly established. It has its own committee and has been accumulating funds to enable the setting up of New Zealand-based, Wagner related activities, eg, scholarships and prizes for promising Wagner singers of New Zealand origin and financial contributions towards the visits of Wagner scholars and artists. With the close of the tax year on 31 March, you might like to consider making a donation to this fund. On your membership form you'll find a line below the information about the subscription fees. All contributions to the Foundation are welcome, very tax deductible, and are acknowledged and receipted.

NEW MEMBERS

A big, Wagnerian welcome to:
Ms Jasmin Archer (Auckland) and
Mr Bill and Mrs Diana Wilson (Dunedin)

NZ OPERA SOCIETY

DVD SHOWINGS (AUCKLAND)

9 April: *La Bohème*

In the Raye Freedman Theatre
Epsom Girls' Grammar School
Silver Road, Epsom, at 7.30pm

DVD SHOWINGS (WELLINGTON)

27 March: *Tales of Hoffman* (Offenbach)
23 April: *The Nightingale* (Stravinsky)
and *L'enfant et les sortilèges* (Ravel)
In National Library Auditorium,
Aitken St., Thorndon at 7.30pm

Note 23 April AGM at 6.30pm)

WAGNER SOCIETY AGM 25 MAY

The Wagner Society AGM is to be held on Sunday, 25 May, 2008, at the School of Music, 6 Symonds Street, Auckland, at 7.30pm.

So far, Committee and Office-Bearer nominations have been received as follows:

President..... Chris Brodrick

Vice President..... Vacant

Secretary..... Michael Sinclair

Treasurer John Hambling

Membership/Liaison..... George Risk

Committee (4 members)

*Pam Hall
Bob O'Hara
Juliet Rowe
Vacant*

Nominations are invited for the vacant positions, or for any of these posts.

If you wish to make a nomination, phone Liz at 09-528-1184 and she will send you a form, or e-mail handelees@xtra.co.nz. Nominations can also be made from the floor of the meeting.