



## AGM - 19 May

The Wagner Society AGM is to be held on Sunday 19 May 2013 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 ..... Ken Tomkins  
Secretary ..... Barry Littlewood  
Treasurer ..... Jeanette Miller  
PR/Liaison ..... Gloria Street  
Committee ..... Lesley Kendall  
..... Bob O'Hara  
..... Les Holborow  
..... Juliet Rowe

If you wish to make a nomination:

Phone: Barry at 09-575 5206

Email: [info@wagnersociety.org.nz](mailto:info@wagnersociety.org.nz)  
to be sent a form. Nominations can also be made from the floor at the meeting.

## MELBOURNE RING PRE-PERFORMANCE TALKS

Word has come through from Melbourne that Heath Lees' pre *Ring* concert talks are being heavily subscribed. Those of you who are attending the *Ring* with the WSNZ group should have received notice of the talks from Renaissance Tours. For those who are making their own *Ring* arrangements and wish to attend Heath's talks we suggest that you book early so as not to miss out. Bookings can be made online by going to:-

[www.melbournerecital.com.au/ringcycletalks](http://www.melbournerecital.com.au/ringcycletalks)

# Ring COUNTDOWN

To prepare us for the Melbourne *Ring* there are a number of events to be held in Melbourne over the next few months and during the cycles.



• **Countdown to the Ring** is a 10-part radio series on *Der Ring des Nibelungen* designed to unravel the practical intricacies and cultural fascination related to Wagner's epic production. To listen to the series go to the *Countdown to the Ring* website: <http://countdowntothering.com/episodes/>. There are currently three episodes available with a new episode scheduled each month until October.

• **The Music of Wagner's Ring and the Life-Cycle of an Audience** will be presented on all opera days from 10.30am to 12.00 at Melbourne Recital Centre. Heath Lees offers an informative and entertaining background to each of the *Ring* operas *Please see panel to the left.*

• **Melbourne Ring Festival**  
16 November to 14 December 2013.  
An umbrella festival of different kinds of performance and activity relating to *The Ring* - full programme later in the year.

• **Symposium - Wagner and Us**  
Uni. of Melbourne 5-8 December 2013  
Will explore and critique Richard Wagner's continuing cultural, political and historical importance to contemporary society. Topics include *Wagner in Australia*, *Wagner and Anti-Semitism*, *Wagner in the Theatre*, the 'Wagner Industry', and others. Keynote Speakers include Patrick Carnegy (UK), Eva Rieger (Germany) and John Deathridge (UK). More details (and bookings at a later date) available at <http://wagnerandus.com.au/>.

• **Free Public Lecture, 5 Dec 2013**  
*Theatre A Old Arts, The University of Melbourne.*

**What happened to Richard Wagner's first offspring Isolde?** An insider look into the Swiss branch of the Wagner dynasty, presented by Prof. Eva Rieger and Wagner's great-granddaughter Dagny Beidler.

• **Opera Australia Insights**  
Learn more about the fascinating planning, production and behind-the-scenes of the 2013 Melbourne *Ring Cycle*. Join Lyndon Terracini, Artistic Director of Opera Australia, and selected cast and crew of the *Ring* production for a series of insightful talks.

**Sunday 24 November:** Lyndon Terracini talks to Norwegian baritone Terje Stensvold and Australian baritone John Wegner about the physical and mental demands of preparing for, and performing in Wagner's *Ring*.

**Sunday 1 December:** Lyndon Terracini talks to Director Neil Armfield and Designer Robert Cousins about the staging of a uniquely Australian *Ring Cycle*, the challenges of pyrotechnics and taxidermy and of the intricate mechanics of getting a production of this scale off the ground.

**Sunday 8 December:** Lyndon Terracini talks to Conductor Richard Mills and German-born tenor Stefan Vinke about the meaning of the work, Wagner's legacy and the lengthy training involved for the musical marathon of the year. For more information go to <http://www.opera-australia.org.au/insights#datesAndTimes>.



State Theatre, Arts Centre, Melbourne



### ANDREW SRITHERAN (LEFT)

Wellington born and currently New York based, Andrew completed his under-graduate studies at the Wellington Conservatorium, before studying at the Eastman school in New York and the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara and the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester.

He won The Most Promising Young Singer award: Bad Wildbad, Germany in 2002, The National Mozart Competition, UK 2002 and The National Wagner Prize for the Best Potential Heroic Tenor in 2003. Full roles performed include Pollione in *Norma*, Don Jose in *Carmen*. Excerpts include: the title role in *Otello*, Florestan in *Fidelio*, Calaf in *Turandot*, Siegmund in *Die Walkure*, Dimitri in *Boris Godunov* and Cavaradossi in *Tosca*. Recent performances have included a series of Opera Gala concerts throughout England, Pinkerton in *Madame Butterfly* for Clonter Opera and a Rosenblatt recital at St Johns Smith Square.

*(This is the only information I could find on Andrew and may be a little out of date. Ed)*

### NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

While Simon O'Neill was suffering from allergies, Vienna Opera's musical director Franz Welser-Möst had an attack of lumbago. As he raised his baton at the end of the first act of *Parsifal* he felt severe lower back pain, collapsed and was rushed to hospital. The opera continued after a substitute stepped in.



Leipzig, the city that is closely associated with JS Bach, Mendelssohn and Robert and Clara Schumann was also the birth place of Richard Wagner. He went to school, learned the basics of music theory and premiered his first compositions in the city. But Leipzig has had, until now, an uneasy relationship with the Maestro due in part to his failure to pay back his debts and the manner in which he conducted his private life. Two children out of wedlock was a hard fact to swallow for Leipzig's provincial and very moral-minded culture at the time. Time heals and in this 200th year of his birth things are set to change. Under the slogan "Richard ist Leipziger..." (Leipzig's own Richard...), a variety of events are planned as is a new Wagner museum and a walk that includes sites in the city and its surroundings with which Wagner was associated.

## PASSING TENORS

A drama within a drama was played out at the Metropolitan Opera in early April involving a couple of Kiwis and a performance of *Die Walküre*. The New York Times' Anthony Tommasini takes up the story. "Before the 11 a.m. performance began, Peter Gelb, the Met's general manager, announced that Mr. [Simon] O'Neill had woken up with an allergy attack but would try to weather through. Pretty soon, though, Mr. O'Neill's normally strong, clarion voice sounded tight and patchy. He struggled until the moment in Act I when Siegmund, a wounded stranger who has shown up at the hut where Sieglinde lives with her bullying husband, Hunding, is left alone for the night. Then Mr. O'Neill walked to the wings, and a cover tenor, already suited up, stepped on stage".

Simon's cover was fellow New Zealand tenor, Andrew Sritheran.

Anthony Tommasini continued "It is hard to imagine more difficult circumstances for a Met debut. Mr. Sritheran took over the role just before one of the most vocally challenging passages for Siegmund, climaxing with the defenceless young man's two cries of "Wälse!," remembering the father who had promised a sword would be awaiting him in his time of need. Mr. Sritheran's singing, over all, was dark-hued and burly. He managed to save the day."

"I spoke to Simon this morning and he said that he wasn't feeling too good and I should be ready," Sritheran said during an intermission on the live radio broadcast. "And so I warmed up and went through the staging this morning early and skated over here on my skateboard and did my thing."

There would be very few singers who would skateboard to their biggest engagement!! Understudy's understatement?

On 12 May RNZ Concert will broadcast the performance as part of Opera on Sunday.



Over the last few months our President Emeritus Heath Lees has been occupied making a documentary on the *Ring. A Tale Told in Music*, written and presented by Heath, is made up of four illustrated, 50 minute, DVD documentaries, produced in conjunction with the Melbourne *Ring*. Filming in Australia has been completed and the production now moves to Europe to complete the project.

The WSNZ, through the Wagner New Zealand Foundation has agreed to support the project with a grant of \$10,000. With a planned international release *A Tale Told in Music* will not only mean that Heath's analysis of the *Ring* will be preserved for posterity but that it will also be seen by a world-wide audience.

In the next issue of the newsletter we will run a more in depth article on this project and how it came about.

## RNZ CONCERT COMPOSER OF THE WEEK

The lilting tones of Heath Lees will be heard over the airwaves during May as he has been engaged by Radio New Zealand Concert to present two Composer of the Week programmes on one composer – Wagner.

To celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Maestro's birth Heath will present *Wagner in Perspective* on 12 May and *Wagner in Performance* on 19 May. The *Composer of the Week* talk is broadcast at 9am on Sundays (repeated at 7pm on Mondays) and music associated with the talk can be heard on weekdays between 9 & 10am.

# WAGNER SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND 2013 – WAGNER200 PROGRAMME DETAILS

## Auckland

Sunday, 19 May 7.30pm

Venue: Kenneth Myers Centre,  
74 Shortland Street, Auckland

**Wagner's 200th birthday celebration:**

WSNZ AGM followed by Wagner's 200th birthday celebration

Sunday, 14 July 4.00pm (NOTE TIME)

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

**DVD Screening: Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg.**

A screening of the recent Glyndebourne production of Wagner's only comedy, starring Gerald Finley, Marco Jentsch and Anna Gabler

Sunday, 8 September 7.30pm

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

**Wagner, Paris and Der fliegende**

**Holländer:** In anticipation of New Zealand Opera's new production of Wagner's early work Heath Lees looks at various aspects of the work with musical and visual excerpts

Sunday 8 December 7.30pm

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

**Rounding off the Wagner Bicentenary:**

Michael Sinclair takes us through the Wagner year with images, music and video from around the world celebrating Wagner's 200th birthday, including a round-up from the Melbourne *Ring* and our usual Christmas festivities!

### Other Dates:

#### NBR NZ OPERA

##### Der fliegende Holländer

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| WELLINGTON | 14, 19, 21 Sept - 7.30pm,<br>17 Sept - 6.00pm |
| AUCKLAND   | 5, 10, 12 Oct - 7.30pm,<br>8 Oct - 6.30pm     |

#### MELBOURNE RING

|                      | CYCLE 1              | CYCLE 2              | CYCLE 3              |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Das Rheingold</i> | 7pm<br>Mon<br>18 Nov | 7pm<br>Wed<br>27 Nov | 7pm<br>Fri<br>6 Dec  |
| <i>Die Walküre</i>   | 5pm<br>Wed<br>20 Nov | 5pm<br>Fri<br>29 Nov | 5pm<br>Mon<br>9 Dec  |
| <i>Siegfried</i>     | 5pm<br>Fri<br>22 Nov | 5pm<br>Mon<br>2 Dec  | 5pm<br>Wed<br>11 Dec |
| <i>G'dämmerung</i>   | 4pm<br>Mon<br>25 Nov | 4pm<br>Wed<br>4 Dec  | 4pm<br>Fri<br>13 Dec |

### NEW MEMBERS

A big Wagnerian welcome to:

Patrick Reilly ..... Wellington  
Gwen Marvin ..... Auckland  
Peter Moule ..... Auckland  
Peter Cresswell & Carol Potts ...Auckland

## Christchurch

Sunday 26 May 12.00pm

**\*PLEASE NOTE NEW DATE & TIME\***

Venue: 1/42 Marriner Street, Sumner

**Wagner's 200th birthday celebration:**

Starting at midday with a BYO finger food lunch at Kate Livingston's home (ph. 326 3002) followed by the Met Opera's production of *Parsifal* at the Hollywood Cinema at 2pm

Friday 16 August 7.30pm &

Friday 13 September 7.30pm

Venue: Lecture Theatre A6, University of Canterbury

**Singing in the Rhine: a Beginner's**

**Guide to Wagner's Ring.** John Pattinson presents an illustrated two-part series on the *Ring* with the dual aim of dispelling any trepidations for newcomers and to provide a refresher for veterans

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

## Wellington

Sunday 23 June at 5.00pm

Venue: 26 Wade Street, Wadestown

**Birthday Party at Tibby & Adrian**

**Simock's:** A belated celebration of the Master's birthday, taking the form of a drinks party with light-hearted entertainment and brief talks by some prominent Wagnerian enthusiasts".

Sunday 14 July at 11.00am

Venue: The Film School, 86 Vivian St

Joint meeting with the Opera Society.

DVD screening of *Die Meistersinger*:

**NB:** Spaces limited, members should confirm attendance by emailing tibby.warmington@gmail.com)

Sunday 25 August at 4.00pm

Venue: St Andrew's on the Terrace

Aidan Lang on *Der fliegende Holländer* which opens on 14 September

Sunday 20 October at 4.00pm

Venue: St Andrew's on the Terrace

**Richard Wagner – Before, During and**

**After:** Heath Lees takes a panoramic view of Wagner's 200-year-long impact

*Various attempts have been made to organise another meeting for Wellington but all have fallen through.*

### MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL REMINDER

2013/14 membership subscriptions are now due. Thanks to everyone who has already paid and a friendly reminder to those who have still to renew. If you are one of these you can pay either by cheque to **63 Speight Road, St Heliers, Auckland 1071** or by direct credit as outlined in the renewal form that was sent last month.

## Dunedin

Sunday, 16 June 10.30 am

Venue: Barclay Theatre, Otago Museum

**Tristan und Isolde – DVD Screening:**

Jean-Pierre Ponnelle's Bayreuth staging, which was considered one of the most beautiful and poetic ever and was filmed in 1983

With Johanna Meier (Isolde), René Kollo (Tristan), Matti Salminen (King Mark), Hanna Schwarz (Brangäne)

Sunday, 8 September 2.00pm

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

**The Golden Age Part 2 (The**

**inter-war years):** Terence Dennis continues his fascinating journey with live performances from Bayreuth and Covent Garden. The era of Furtwängler, Beecham, Leider, Flagstad and Melchior

Sunday, 6 October 2.00pm

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

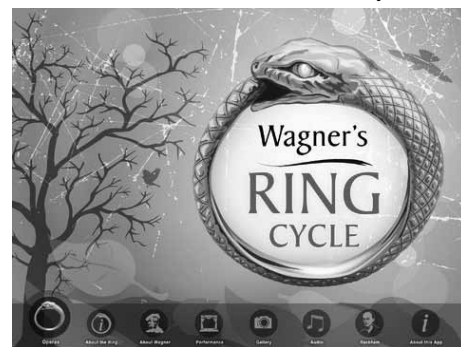
**Contrasts and Compliments:**

Terence Dennis discusses how great composers such as Verdi and Chausson drew from Wagner to renew their own traditions

Sunday, 1 December 12.00 noon

Venue: Marama Hall, University of Otago

**Christmas Luncheon:** Special Wagner concert to conclude the Wagner200 Year as well as celebrating Christmas and our sixth birthday



Classical label Naxos has released an app for iPad: Wagner's *Ring Cycle*. Aimed at experienced Wagnerphiles and newcomers alike, it costs \$12.99 on the App Store and focuses on the key 'leitmotifs' from the four operas.

The app includes 130 illustrative audio clips from the operas, as well as two full tracks from each, with explanations, musical notation, and biographical text on Wagner himself.

Go to iTunes App store and search for Wagner *Ring*.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2012/13

As we celebrate the 200th birthday of our *raison d'être*, Wilhelm Richard Wagner, I am pleased to present the President's report for the year 2012/13. While the report does not cover Wagner's actual birthday celebrations, as they fall in the 2013/14 year, we did start 2013 in celebratory style with the visit of Peter Bassett who presented a fascinating talk on not only Wagner but that other giant of 19th century opera who was also born in 1813, Giuseppe Verdi. In addition and thanks to the work of Michael Sinclair we will end the celebration year with around 100 members attending the *Ring* in Melbourne, just before Christmas.

For the Wagner Society of New Zealand the 2012/13 year was another hive of activity centred around a stunning series of *Die Walküre* performances by the NZSO that brightened up a particularly damp winter. We are very fortunate to have been given the chance to experience home grown Wagner with the performances of *Das Rheingold* (2011), *Die Walküre* (2012) and the forthcoming *Höllander* later this year.

Our sponsorship of these events, through the Wagner New Zealand Foundation, has been of considerable help and we should once again recognise the enormous contribution of Roa Morrissey as without her bequest these events would have been just that bit more difficult to stage.

Administering our charitable arm, The Wagner New Zealand Foundation is a committee of Heather Simpson, Sir Michael Hardie Boys and Terence Dennis under the chairmanship of Peter Rowe. During the year 2012/13 they supported the NZSO *Die Walküre* concerts, the APO's Christine Brewer performance, Amanda Atlas attending the Lisa Gasteen Opera School and Heath Lees' DVDs on the *Ring*. On behalf of the members of the WSNZ I'd like to extend our thanks to the Foundation for their work during the last year.

As our Society has come of age it now functions on a series of different levels. As mentioned, the Foundation looks after sponsorship activities and works directly with the National Committee that has overall responsibility for The Wagner Society of New Zealand. This committee has devolved the running of each centre to four informal regional committees who plan and run each centre's programmes. In all we have at least 20 members who are actively involved in running the society.

With the Society maintaining a membership of around 400 spread from almost North Cape to the Bluff, the task of holding it together falls on this group

of dedicated people to keep things ticking over. While this is a positive state of affairs we must be mindful that the task of keeping the society functioning should not be confined to only a few.

At the end of last year Secretary, and Auckland organiser Michael Sinclair, announced he was standing down from his Society roles as he intended to spend more time overseas. In looking for a replacement for Michael it became clear that the tasks that he was happy to look after were, collectively, quite daunting for anyone wishing to take them over. So we decided that it was time that we separated the Auckland organiser role from that of the National Secretary. At the beginning of this year we welcomed Barry Littlewood, who stepped into Michael's secretarial shoes, while Ken Tomkins agreed to look after the Auckland programme.

We hope that this move will encourage more members to become involved with running the WSNZ as new blood brings new ideas and allows us to refresh. We must also recognise that none of us is getting any younger so it is vitally important that we attract new, younger, members so that the society can continue to flourish.

On behalf of all the membership I express our deep gratitude to Michael Sinclair for all the work he has contributed to the Society. His knowledge of the world of opera has been of tremendous benefit to members not only with his presentations but his organisational skills. For instance, he has graciously agreed to continue his work on organising the trip to the *Ring*.

Working alongside Michael in Auckland were Ken Tomkins, Juliet Rowe, Bob O'Hara, David Colemore-Williams and Helen Kirkman.

Les Holborow led the Wellington team with Tibby Simcock, Anne Mallinson, Michael Ashdown and John Morrison who was replaced by John Davidson for the latter part of the year. In Christchurch the meetings were run by Gloria Streat, John Pattinson, Elizabeth Cooch and Jenny Lee while Lesley Kendall and Terence Dennis looked after Dunedin. In addition, thanks to Liz Lees and Margaret Thomas for their work with Juliet Rowe in dispatching the newsletter.

Sadly one of the Society stalwarts, John Morrison, died in July 2012 a few days before the performances of *Die Walküre*. John was instrumental in the founding of our Wellington branch and very much involved in that centre's programming. He is a sad loss to the Society.

Once again thanks to our auditor John Hambling and to Peter Rowe for the use of the telephone conference call facilities of Minter Ellison that enable the National Committee to carry out the

Society business. The members of that Committee: Ken Tomkins, Vice President; Jeanette Miller, Treasurer; Juliet Rowe, Minute Secretary; Barry Littlewood, Secretary; along with Les Holborow, Gloria Streat, Lesley Kendall and Bob O'Hara deserve our utmost gratitude as without their commitment there would be no Society.

The statistics of the year show:

- 3 *Die Walküre* performances and seminars
- A performance by Christine Brewer
- 7 editions of the newsletter
- 23 meetings over the four centres
- 9 different speakers and/or performers
- 4 opera screenings

To all those who presented, wrote articles and contributed to our successful year - thank you!

The ongoing saga of Bayreuth tickets rumbled on during the year. At one point there seemed hope when it was pointed out that the economic activity in Bayreuth's businesses, like hotels and restaurants, was suffering due to the downturn in the attendance of Wagner Society members from outside Europe. The mayor of Bayreuth was particularly vocal in her disagreement with the policy. But that hope was dashed when at the end of the year, we received confirmation of the new policy from the Bayreuth Festival administrative board along with a reduced number of tickets for the 2013 festival which were obtained through the Friends of Bayreuth. The move to not supply tickets to the Wagner Societies has caused a great deal of consternation among the majority of the 130 world-wide Wagner Societies. Directly in the firing line is the Wagner Verband who are supposed to represent the international societies. With no member of the Verband board from outside Europe, annual general meetings only held inside Europe and their recent rise in membership fees, many in the international group asking if it is worthwhile to be a member of such a closed and ineffective organisation. Your committee wrote to the Verband in February 2013 to ask their opinion on the advantages for the WSNZ staying within the Verband. To date no reply has been received!

The geographic distance between us and Europe makes our influence in such matters insignificant but it may be to our advantage to lend our support to the likes of the Wagner Society of New York and have them speak on our behalf. It is such a shame that, in this year of celebration, the family of world-wide Wagner Societies should be thrown into conflict. Let's hope that by the next big celebration in 2026, the 150th anniversary of the first Bayreuth festival, a solution can be found to satisfy both sides of the argument.

**Christopher Brodrick President**