

# WAGNER SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND

Patron: Sir Donald McIntyre



## NEWSLETTER

### Wagner at the Movies + Puccini, Britten & Verdi

When something big happens in opera it's usually the appearance of a new star. This month, August, sees the arrival in New Zealand of what is being described as an opera phenomenon. While stars shine brightly in the heavens this event will see the stars appear in a cinema near you! From August to December selected New Zealand cinemas will present Metropolitan Opera: Live in HD, a series of live performance transmissions shown in high definition (HD). This initiative from New York's Met started in the 2006-07 season with six operas shown in movie theatres throughout the States. After an incredible response the programme has been expanded for the 2007-08 season to eight operas reaching over 600 venues in North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia — and now New Zealand.

According to the Wall Street Journal "The show is shot with a dozen cameras, some of which move, and the changes in perspective provide new dimensions to a stage picture usually seen from a single vantage point. . . Seeing the production in a high definition transmission was a different, though equally compelling experience."

The operas being screened are *Roméo et Juliette*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Macbeth*, *Manon Lescaut*, *Peter Grimes*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *La Bohème* and *La Fille du Régiment* and will be shown in the following cinemas:

Bridgeway Cinema *Northcote*  
Rialto *Newmarket*  
Rialto *Tauranga*  
Victoria Cinema *Hamilton*  
Cinema Gold *Palmerston North*  
Cinema Gold *Havelock North*  
Penthouse Cinema *Wellington*  
The Suter & State Cinemas *Nelson*  
Rialto *Christchurch*  
Rialto *Dunedin*

The Metropolitan Opera HD Live is sponsored by the law firm Minter Ellison Rudd Watts in association with The Arts Channel.



photo Ken Howard



photo Beth Bergman

Scenes from the Metropolitan *Tristan & Isolde*

The exciting prospect for members of the Wagner Society of New Zealand is the chance to see the Met's production of *Tristan & Isolde*. This production, you will remember from a previous newsletter, was supposed to have brought together the dream team of Deborah Voigt and Ben Heppner to sing the lead roles. Unfortunately illness intervened and these two great singers only managed to be on stage for one of the six performances. In the Metropolitan Opera HD Live performance that will screen in November Tristan will be sung by Robert Dean Smith who was flown from Europe to sing this single performance.

The full cast list is as follows:

James Levine *Conductor*  
Dieter Dorn *Production*  
Deborah Voigt *Isolde*  
Michelle DeYoung *Bragäne*  
Robert Dean Smith *Tristan*  
Eike Wilm Schulte *Kürwenal*  
Matti Salminen *King Mark*

Running time : 5 hours 35 mins  
with 2 intervals

The *Tristan & Isolde* schedule for **most, but not all** centres is the same:-

Saturday 22 November at 6pm  
Sunday 23 November at 1pm  
Wednesday 26 November 10am

Please check your local paper, call the cinema closest to you from the list in the left hand column or go to:-

<http://www.nzmetopera.com/>  
where you will also be able to find information and screening schedule for the other seven operas.

Look out for productions from San Francisco Opera, La Scala in Milan and London's Royal Opera House to also start appearing at your local cinema as these opera institutions look to the lead given by the Metropolitan Opera New York.



## Meistersinger Webcast

While the Metropolitan is leading the way in bringing opera to the cinema, the Bayreuth Festival has shown that it is also thinking to the future and, in doing so, is embracing new technology. A few weeks before the opening of the Festival at the end of July it was announced that Katharina Wagner's production of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* would be streamed live over the internet. The webcast which took place on 27th July was limited to 10,000 subscribers who paid 49 Euros to download the event. It wasn't necessary to watch the live streaming as the subscription allowed you to view the performance twice before 2 August.

The *Die Meistersinger* performance was, according to the BBC, the first video recording of a Bayreuth Festival performance since 1991, and the first in front of a live audience.

In addition to the webcast, the performance was also shown, for free, on a large screen in Bayreuth's town square. According to reports an estimated 38,000 people came to watch the opera although that number included multiple comings and goings during the event.

Alexander Busche, who helped to organize both the Webcast and the big screen, said the viewing was like watching German soccer fans surrounding a screen in a beer garden during a championship match -- only quieter.

"It was amazing to see thousands of people sitting there, quietly staring at the screen," Busche said. "You almost didn't want to move for fear of disturbing them."



The Opera house in Bremen



## Horst Stein dies aged 80

The conductor Horst Stein, who was for many years closely associated with the Bayreuth Festival, has died at the age of 80. In the *Guardian* obituary, Barry Millington wrote that "*Stein was born in Elberfeld (now part of Wuppertal in Germany's Ruhr region), in the same town, by chance, as fellow conductors Hans Knappertsbusch and Günter Wand. He attended the Musikhochschule in Frankfurt and the Cologne Conservatory, where he studied composition with Philipp Jarnach, and conducting with Wand.*"

In 1955 he conducted at the opening of the restored Berlin State Opera and subsequently was appointed Staatskapellmeister. During his career he held positions at Hamburg State Opera, the Mannheim National Theatre, Vienna State Opera and was principal conductor with the Bamberg Symphony and the Suisse Romande Orchestras.

His association with the Bayreuth Festival started in 1952 when he began work as a conducting assistant to such conductors as Joseph Keilberth, Hans Knappertsbusch, Clemens Krauss and Herbert von Karajan. From 1969 to 1986 Stein conducted 138 performances at the Festival including the 1983 centenary production of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* which is available on DVD.

## Heath & Liz present update

Once all the contributions to Heath and Liz's retirement present were collected and the costs of purchasing and framing the Franz Stassen lithograph were deducted there was still an amount left over. At its June meeting the Committee decided to present the balance to Heath and Liz to put to something of their own choice. They have chosen to use the funds towards tickets to a performance of *Rienzi* in Bremen, North Germany on 23rd October.

An interesting snippet of information about Franz Stassen appears in Jonathan Carr's book *The Wagner Clan*.

In the 1930s "*Much encouraged and influenced by Franz Stassen, an artist friend of his father's, Wieland honed his painting skills and began constructing models of stage sets that showed real promise although still in a firmly traditional mould.*" (P.198)



## Heldentenor to Judge Lexus Song Quest

Legendary German tenor Siegfried Jerusalem has been secured by the New Zealand International Arts Festival to judge the 2009 *Lexus Song Quest* whose final will be held in Auckland on Thursday 23 April 2009.

Siegfried Jerusalem is internationally renowned as one of the leading Wagnerian tenors of the last 30 years. He is noted for singing principal tenor roles at the Bayreuth Festival for 22 consecutive years. Since 2001 Siegfried Jerusalem has been the Director of the College of Music in Nuremberg and devotes himself to the training of young singers.



## Helmut Pampuch 1940 -2008

Helmut Pampuch, who was born in Upper Silesia in 1940, was one of the world's most famous tenor buffos. He made his debut at the Bayreuth Festival in 1978 and went on to become one of its most faithful servants, singing roles in *The Ring*, *Parsifal*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Lohengrin* and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* over the last 30 years. He was a long standing member of the Deutsche Oper am Rhein which he joined in 1973. He is perhaps best remembered for his Mime in *Der Ring des Nibelungen* which he sang not only in Bayreuth, but also at the Bavarian State Opera in Munich, the Metropolitan Opera, the Opéra National de Paris and the San Francisco Opera. He also made a number of guest appearances in Berlin, Hamburg, Cologne, Stuttgart, Frankfurt, Zurich, Geneva, Venice, Rome and Bologna.

# Films, Flight, Fathers & Phials

With the change of seasons at the end of the month the WSNZ 'springs' into life with four meetings in four centres in just over four weeks.

First out of the blocks is Wellington where Chris Brodrick will present *Wagner at the Movies* in the Massey Museum Theatre on Sunday 31 August. On a recent trip to Australia Chris presented this talk to the Wagner Societies in both Melbourne and Adelaide. He will return to present it in Brisbane in late September.

*Wagner at the Movies* looks at how the Master's music has been used in films from the early 'silent' films to today's blockbusters.

The following week in Dunedin (7 Sept), Terence Dennis will present *A Return from Riga - Wagner, Weber and The Flying Dutchman* in which he invites you to come and explore Wagner's colourful early life as music director in Riga, his extraordinary flight from that city together with his wife Minna and Robber the dog, and the stormy sea voyage across the Baltic Sea: sublimated in *The Flying Dutchman*.

The *Dutchman* is Wagner's earliest opera to retain regular performance and, as such, is recognised as a masterwork of German Romanticism, vividly infused with the sounds of the sea and by the poles of eternal damnation and redemption.

Terence Dennis also presents Wagner's early masterpiece in terms of the influences of the early German Romantic opera composers Weber and Marschner.

On Sunday 14 September, Michael Sinclair will present his talk *Wagner on the WWW*. This presentation is filled with some fascinating information including websites to visit and clips that can be seen on YouTube. For those who haven't seen Mario Del Monaco sing *Ein Schwert verhiess mir der Vater* (*My father promised me*



Mario Del Monaco: Wäääääääääääääää!

## 2008 PROGRAMME

### Auckland

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

**Sunday, 14 September 7.30pm**

*Wagner on the WWW*: Michael Sinclair looks at what can be gleaned on Wagner from the Internet, including many musical and video excerpts

**Sunday, 7 December 7.30pm**

*Wagner and Christmas*: A Wagnerian pot-pourri – requests and round-ups, selections and surprises

### Wellington

**Sunday, 31 August 4.00pm**

*Venue: Massey Museum Theatre, Buckle St*

Chris Brodrick presents: *Wagner at the Movies*

**Sunday, 9 November 4.00pm**

*Venue: National Library Auditorium, Molesworth/Aitken Streets, Thorndon*

Elric Hooper presents *'From Maestro to Myth' - the evolution of Wagnerian production*

a sword) from *Die Walküre* Act 1 are in for a real treat. His rendition of *Wälse! Wälse!* just has to be heard for its sheer audacity.

Del Monaco joins a large cast of singers past and present who combine to make a very entertaining evening.

Our busy month ends on Friday 26 September when John Patinson follows his *The Importance of being Erda* talk of 2005 with *'Drink, Drugs & the Rest': Wagner's History of Substance Abuse*.

In an article in the New York Times in December 2007 entitled *Sex'n'Drugs'n'Wagner*, Peter Bloch, editor of Penthouse Magazine, wrote:

*"The Ring, now being performed at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City, violates just about every modern taboo imaginable. Moreover, history proves it dangerous. Consider a warning label that was once proposed: "Warning: Contains lyrics or matter which describes or advocates one or more of the following: suicide; explicit sexual acts including but not limited to rape; sodomy; incest; bestiality and sadomasochism; murder; morbid violence; or the use of illegal drugs." Wagner's epic manages to include almost all of these offences, often cloaked in seductive, heart-pounding music whose rhythms all too often can move an incautious listener to be carried away by - even identify with - the evils being acted out on stage."*

John Patinson's innate sense of delicacy precludes public investigation of most of the above; instead, his lecture will restrict itself to consideration of *"Drink, Drugs and the Rest: Wagner's History of Substance Abuse"*

### Christchurch

*Venue: Lecture Theatre A6, University of Canterbury*

**Friday, 26 September 7.30pm**

John Pattinson presents: *'Drink, Drugs & the Rest': Wagner's History of Substance Abuse*

**Friday, 24 October 7.30pm**

Elric Hooper presents *'From Maestro to Myth' - the evolution of Wagnerian production*

**Sunday, 7 December**

*At the home of Noelle & Bert Brownlee 66 Clyde Road, Ilam, Ph. 348 7629*

Christmas Function

### Dunedin

**Sunday 7 September 2.00pm**

*Venue: Kakapo/Takahe Room, Ground Floor, Otago Museum*

Terence Dennis presents *A Return from Riga - Wagner, Weber and The Flying Dutchman*

**Sunday, 7 December 12.30pm**

*Venue: Barclay Theatre, 1st Floor, Otago Museum*

Catered luncheon and Christmas Wagner Celebration followed by *Tannhäuser* in DVD performance

Potions, elixirs, philtres, drugs, mind-altering substances, have long been mainstays of literature and drama. Inevitably, opera composers have had frequent recourse to these handy household items, and Wagner is by no means an exception. Not only *the Ring* but also almost the entire Wagnerian oeuvre (*Parsifal* included) is carried along on a wave of drug dependency. Furthermore, it's a sobering thought (for the rest of us) that, from the moment he slays Fafner, Siegfried is continually under the influence of drink. On the other hand, the most famous love potion in history could quite possibly turn out to have been nothing more than a glass of water....



Tristan & Isolde - John William Waterhouse

# Happy Families

*Chris Brodrick meets up with our Wagnerian cousins in Australia and receives a surprise on his return home.*

The machinations of the Wagner family and Wolfgang's successor as director of the Bayreuth Festival are akin to *Dallas* meets *Dynasty*. With the world watching, an announcement will be made at the end of this year's festival as to who will take over the reins. But as we sadly watch while a family tears itself apart in the name of great art, it is worth standing back and taking stock of the greater Wagnerian family, the Wagner Societies.

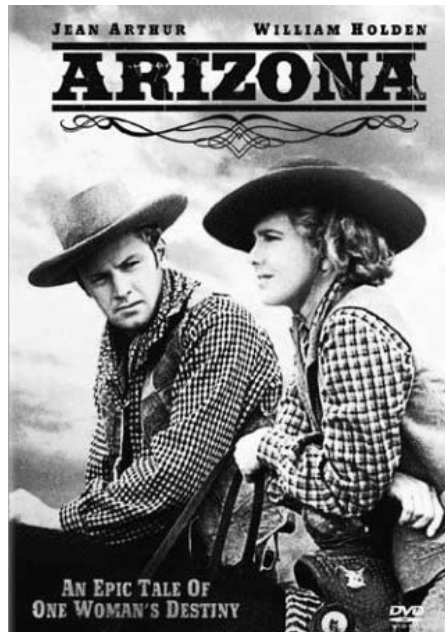
Having just returned from a three-city tour of Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth presenting Wagner talks, I am delighted to report that the greater Wagner Family is in good heart. Yes, we all face the same problems of ageing membership, the difficulty in attracting new members and looking for new ways to stimulate the membership, but despite these basic problems there is still an underlying strength of companionship, a desire to learn and of course a love of the works of Richard Wagner.

In each centre we visited we were honoured to meet a wide cross-section of people in both age and occupation and at the centre of these groups was a small engine room of members who organised meetings and prepared the facilities. What struck me was that although each centre is isolated from each other, like New Zealand, there are so many ways in which we can co-operate and help each other out for the common good.

For instance the five Australian Societies, like New Zealand, all produce newsletters. While a lot of the content is for local consumption there are other stories that could be shared. Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find a notice offering tickets to the 2009 Vienna Ring from a member in Perth who is unable to go. These are just a couple of ways in which Wagnerians can help each other out.

I had more evidence of this co-operation in late July when I received a small package in the post. Inside was a letter and a DVD. The letter was from Maria Infiesta the President of the Associació Wagneriana de Barcelona. She wrote

*"In our Wagneriana we regularly comment on what we take as interesting articles published in Wagnerian magazines and newsletters from all over the world. In Number 64 (January 2008) we commented on your article about Wagner and Films in which you wrote that you had not found a Western with music of the Meister.*



*We are sending you herewith a DVD on which we have recorded a small fragment of the Western Arizona where the wedding march from Lohengrin is being played. We hope this will please you in case you have not yet found it."*

Pleased?!! I was thrilled! Thrilled not only because I can now include a Western in *Wagner at the Movies* but even more so for the wonderful act of friendship and collegiality from a fellow Wagnerite on the other side of the world.

Let's hope that the new generation in charge of Bayreuth will be able to work together in the same way as the Wagner Societies.

## Special Notice for Auckland Members

With a number of the committee away overseas for the meeting on 14 September we'd like to ask for a couple of volunteers to help set up the Music School prior to the event. If you can help, could you please contact Michael Sinclair on Ph: (09)528 0776

## Vienna Ring Tickets

We recently received a notice from the Western Australia Wagner Society to say that one of their members has tickets to the Vienna State Opera's *Ring Cycle* that they are unable to take up. The details, if you are interested, are:-

Dates 6,7,9 & 11 June 2009

Conductor; Franz Welser-Most

Director: Sven-Eric Bechtolf

Cast includes: Nina Stemme, Stephen Gould, Juha Uusitalo, Johan Botha

Cost per set (four operas) Euros 817

Contact: bpearce@westnet.com.au

## International Wagner Congress Geneva, May 2008

Dr Christine Rothauer, a member of The Richard Wagner Society of South Australia, has sent the following report back from the International Wagner Congress held in Geneva in May this year. The Congress (or to use its correct title the Richard Wagner Verband International e.V.) is the overarching body representing some 136 national and regional Wagner Societies with around 37,000 members.

*"This year the congress has at last turned a new page in its long history. The International Association was created in 1994 and, while it has grown over the years, none of the International members had the right to vote on any of the issues. It meant that the board of management was elected without our consent and we were powerless to change the constitution.*

*This year the German associations that held all the power were faced with a protest and after the two speeches delivered by Dr Christine Rothauer and Dr Oster from Strasbourg, a motion was voted unanimously to amend the constitution, to give to the International Associations the right to vote and hopefully have only one accounting system for the two associations.*

*Prof Eva Märston from Hanover has replaced Josef Lienhart as President. An International Commission has been elected, consisting of three members whose task is to amend the constitution. Their president is Frau Ingrid Buddle representing Germany, Dr Christine Rothauer from Adelaide and Dr Fotis Papatthanassiou from Athens."*

Congratulations Christine! We look forward to hearing more news on the reforms.



For the first time ever, the legendary centenary production of Wagner's *The Mastersingers*, conducted by Reginald Goodall is released as a 4-CD set on Chandos Opera in English. Broadcast live on the BBC from Sadler's Wells Theatre on 10 February 1968 Goodall conducted a cast of such luminaries as Alberto Remedios, Norman Bailey, Derek Hammond-Stroud, Gregory Dempsey, Margaret Curphey and Ann Robson.

*"There might be flaws in this long-awaited CD release of the original performance, but few of them come from Goodall's thrilling grasp of Wagner's late comic opera. Compelling, joyous, often magnificent, Goodall displays a great sense for overall dramatic architecture and a spaciousness that highlights detail."*

The Times, 5th July 2008