



Changes to the Team

Following the July AGM, some new faces appeared on the committee, and two of our four Centre Co-ordinators changed as well. A new president was appointed, Professor Terence Dennis, who has written the message of Greetings below, and on page 4, a short biography and a personal Wagner note.



Terence Dennis,
incoming WSNZ president

Dear New Zealand Wagner Society Members,

It is indeed a special honour and privilege to greet you as the new President of the Wagner Society, and to assure you that it will be my pleasure and happy duty to foster our Wagner families in the four national centres to the best of my ability.

As you know me from my presentations to all centres over past seasons, I doubt if I need further advocacy, but if so, a brief bio has been supplied (p.4).

From my sessions you will realise that I consider it paramount for us to tread the myriad Wagnerian paths we wish to explore with acumen and holistic resonance, in terms musical and historical, and above all with relish in the very task that brings us all together.

For quite some time I have also been a Trustee of the Wagner Foundation,

and I will be continuing in this role; the duality of this, together with my role as WS President makes eminent sense.

As with all organisations, the NZ Wagner Society will be facing an altered but as yet unforeseeable future environment, given the strictures both global and local imposed by the pandemic.

Under my mentorship and the devoted team assembled in the national centres, I am sure we will be offering a stimulating spectrum of sessions that continue to illuminate the life and work of Richard Wagner.

I pay deep tribute to our previous national presidents Heath Lees and Chris Brodrick, as my time in this position rests upon their sterling and sustained contributions.

Terence Dennis

CHRIS BRODRICK WSNZ PRESIDENT, 2008-2020

At the recent AGM Chris Brodrick stepped down after 12 years as president of the WSNZ.

Gloria Streat from Christchurch has sent us this profile.

Chris was born in England and arrived in New Zealand in 1972, initially on a working holiday. From 1973 he worked for several arts organisations including the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra (CSO), Royal NZ Ballet, Canterbury Opera, and the Court Theatre.

In 1988 he started a pre-press printing company from which he retired in 2014, having decided to enrol as a student at the University of Canterbury – the result of a growing desire for more challenges and further learning. Now Chris has a BA under his belt, and a route already charted towards a PhD in Film Studies.



Chris Brodrick,
outgoing WSNZ president

I have known Chris since his years as General Manager of the CSO. We were fellow attendees at John Pattinson's *Ring* lectures and travelled with the Christchurch group to the first *Adelaide Ring* in 1998, then to the *Rings* in Seattle (2001) and Berlin (2002).

He told me that he first encountered Wagner in 1976 when he was lucky enough to obtain tickets for the ENO production of *Götterdämmerung* with Rita Hunter and Alberto Remedios and conducted by Reginald Goodall. He found it overwhelming, especially the huge sound of Siegfried's funeral march which 'just got louder and louder'.

In May, 2008, Chris succeeded Heath Lees as President of the WSNZ, also taking over the job of newsletter editor, which he relinquished back to Heath in 2018.

The following year, he was awarded the prestigious 'Golden W' badge from the Richard Wagner Verband. This honour, highly coveted, is awarded to Presidents in recognition of ten years in office. It was a special honour for Chris and for WSNZ as it was the first of its kind to be awarded in New Zealand.

Chris leaves the Society in great heart and, going forward, we wish him every success with his future university studies.

Gloria Streat

Looking Back in Wellington

The 5 July meeting in Wellington was regaled with a fascinating gallery of memories from the very well-known NZ baritone Rodney Macann. **John Davidson** writes:

The first Wellington meeting of the year, which was also the first post-Covid-19 event in any of the centres, saw St Andrew's Hall thronged with a near record attendance. The speaker was Rodney Macann (originally scheduled for March), who must be the only international opera singer who has had a second career as a Minister in the Baptist Church and a stint as leader of NZ Baptists!



Rodney Mcann

Rodney's talk was in two parts. In the first, he talked about significant figures — singers, voice coaches and conductors — who had influenced his career, and illustrated what he said with fascinating and often rare sound tracks. Among singers, he highlighted the important Wotan figures of Hans Hotter and David Ward.

With regard to conductors, he sang the praises of Reginald Goodall, as well as Georg Solti and Otto Klemperer. Having been a music student in London in the 1960s, he had experienced the musical wealth of the Royal Opera House and the ENO in those years. He noted the wave of New Zealanders who had begun international operatic careers then, and pointed out that we were experiencing a new wave of this kind at the moment.

When he returned to New Zealand, he found that distance forced him to turn down important Wagnerian roles. Ironically, though, he thought this may have been fortunate, since he could well have done damage to his voice at that particular time. Indeed, he spoke about one harrowing time when he suffered total loss of voice, as many singers do.

The second part of his talk was devoted to anecdotes and other matters concerning Sir Donald McIntyre, but not included in Sir Donald's recently published memoirs. Rodney's rich singing voice is matched by his speaking voice. His beautifully enunciated and entertaining talk received resounding applause. A truly wonderful start to the year!

Centre Programmes till December

Wellington

September/October: 4pm — exact date TBA

St Andrew's Hall, 30 The Terrace

Georgia Jamieson Emms on 'The Ring: the Speed Cycle'.

Sunday, 29 November at 5pm

End of year party

hosted by Elizabeth McLeay and Les Holborow.

Auckland

Venue: St Heliers Community Centre, 100 St. Heliers Bay Road

Sunday, 20 September at 2.30pm

Parsifal, complete. Introduced by Simon O'Neill (dinner details to follow by e-mail).

Sunday, 6 December at 7.00pm

Christmas fare of Wagner items, plus cake and wine.

Dunedin

All venues will be publicised locally

Sunday, 13 September at 2.00pm

Wagner on Wagner: Terence Dennis on Opera and Drama.

Sunday, 4 October, time TBA

Götterdämmerung. The complete Act 2 from The Met.

Sunday, 29 November, 12 noon

Venue: Carrington College, 57 Heriot Row

Our Christmas lunch date followed by goodies à la Wagner.

Christchurch

October Afternoon Meeting: Details TBA

Siegfried: DVD screening, with a meal between the acts.

Sunday, December: Details TBA

Christmas Function

Four Rings and an AGM in Auckland

Covid-19 brought chaos to our AGM, which had to be postponed twice. A third attempt was arranged to precede Heath Lees' presentation on 'The Ring' on 12 July. It was to be held via ZOOM, but gremlins got into the equipment, which quickly ZOOM-ed out of control. Everyone made the best of it and a basic AGM duly appointed the committee and office-bearers. **Sidney Smith** wrote the following report:

Unfortunately, ZOOM didn't work, so Chris Brodrick, the outgoing second president since 2008, missed hearing all the lovely things Heath (the first president) said about him. Best wishes to Chris in his new venture: a doctorate in film studies. He got a big round of applause, which he couldn't hear. Technology!!!

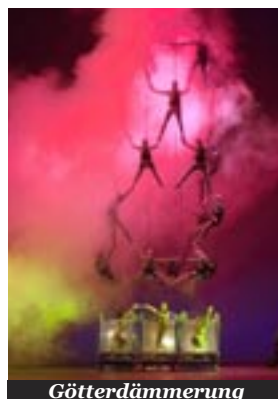
The new president is Terence Dennis, to much acclaim. Jeanette Miller, Treasurer, went through the financials, giving an extra vote of thanks to John Hambling, who has been auditor for much longer than he thought he'd signed on for.

Then we moved to Heath's presentation. There's always something new to learn about *The Ring*. Did you know it needs about 135 performers (not counting the orchestra)?

Heath reminded us that Wagner turned composition on its head when he maintained that the words determined the music, rather than *vice versa*. We were then introduced to the 'mythus', Wagner's early prose study for *The Ring*, and to seven literary sources including Grimms' *Fairy Tales*. *Sleeping Beauty* appeared as background inspiration for Brünnhilde's long sleep before the kiss from Siegfried, the archetypal hero of German myth.

Threaded through the talk were excerpts from four different Ring DVDs. *Rheingold* was the early von Karajan film version, dating back to the first Salzburg Easter Festival in 1967. For *Valkyrie*, we watched part of the 1978 DVD of the Chéreau production conducted by Boulez.

Siegfried had a long gestation, from 1856 to 1871, with many interruptions (including love affairs). Heath chose from a Stuttgart Staatsoper production from 2003 which was pretty zany but the singing was incomparable.



Götterdämmerung

Finally, we got to *Götterdämmerung* with the startling but effective La Fura dels Baus production from Valencia in 2007. We enjoyed the final scene, multitudinous acrobats hanging above the Rhine Maidens and fire everywhere, into which Brünnhilde rides.

And did you know just how many times the theme for the curse appears throughout the cycle? Or that the first four notes of the curse are the inverse of the theme for the ring itself?

Yes, there's always something new to learn about *The Ring*.

AGM Elections

Office-Bearers and Committee Members as elected at the recent AGM:

PresidentTerence Dennis

Vice-PresidentKen Tomkins

Secretary.....Peter Rowe

Treasurer Jeanette Miller

PR/Liaison.....Cynthia Hawes

Other members:

John Davidson, Ashley Day, Juliet Rowe, Adrian Simcock

Leb'wohl

Bill Bell, d.18 July, a loyal and long-standing Auckland member.

New Members

Heather Carew.....Wellington

Peter Stewart.....Auckland

John Whooley.....Wellington

More Home Team Changes

Lesley Kendall • Dunedin Centre

When Lesley Kendall joined the Wagner Society in 1997, it was a time of rampant Adelaide *Ring* fever. Lesley slipped quietly into the Society, but it wasn't long before she came to full notice by volunteering as a committee member, and then as Minutes Secretary. After that, the Wagner Society meetings were run like IBM, with professional agendas and minutes to match. When Heath and I went overseas in 2005, Lesley was there, helping to organise all Auckland meetings.

But it was not to last, and she announced that she was moving to Dunedin. She had always loved the south, and this was where she wanted to spend her retirement.

But because she was Lesley, she promised to set up a new WSNZ centre in Dunedin. And so she did. With a couple of years, loads of hard work and many confabs with Terence Dennis, the Dunedin Centre had its inaugural meeting on 16 March, 2008 with a concert that included Terence and Heath with a two-piano version of the *Siegfried Idyll*.

The twelve years of Centre activities that followed made us all want to go and live in Dunedin! Lesley was chief organiser for more than sixty events, including several lunches and at least one annual, fully-catered event. She welcomed around twenty guest speakers, including overseas 'stars' like Bryan Magee and Siegfried Jerusalem. In super-harness with Terence Dennis, she ran a richly varied programme that made the Deep South resound with fascinating and original topics — a sparkling list that goes on and on.

And wouldn't it be great if people like Lesley could also go on and on? But this year she decided that her term of twelve years needed to be drawn to a close. As a final gift of service, she wrote a hugely helpful manual for her successor. How glad we are that Lesley has so willingly put such a large part of her life into making the Dunedin centre into a cultural focus and a beating heart for Wagner and Wagnerism.

Vielen Dank Lesley! And thanks to the new co-ordinator Ashley Day, you can just go along to the next meeting and enjoy it, knowing you don't have to organise it!

Liz Lees

Gloria Streat • Christchurch Centre

Gloria is an enthusiastic and talented musician who led the Christchurch branch of the Wagner Society for over twenty years. As a teenage clarinet player she was an inaugural member of the National Youth Orchestra of New Zealand, followed by a number of years playing in orchestras both amateur and professional in Dunedin and Christchurch, along with several chamber groups such as the Ilam Wind Ensemble.

In one of these orchestras, she met Garth Streat, a businessman and jazz lover, and they married in 1978. From that time they raised seven children — three of hers, three of his and one of theirs. Together they shared a passion for music that took them over three decades to concerts and operas throughout New Zealand, Australia and Europe.

In 1998 Gloria and Garth visited Adelaide with a group of Christchurch Wagner enthusiasts for the first Southern Hemisphere performance of the *Ring Cycle* which sparked an urge in the breasts of some of the attendees to set up a Christchurch Branch of the WSNZ.

From its inception in 1999, Gloria and Garth were part of the organising group and encouraged its development, hosting meetings and viewings as well as social events in their home. We all remember fondly the great Christmas BBQ's up in the Cashmere Hills.

When the Christchurch branch needed a long term organiser back in 2000, Gloria stepped up and has run the branch superbly. She has introduced our speakers with flair and warmth, liaised with the other branches, ably managed the paper work and most importantly, looked after the refreshments for us all!

We are all very grateful to you, Gloria and hope you relax and enjoy being part of the Christchurch branch now without having to work so hard.

You can be sure we'll all do our best to keep it going in a similar spirit.

Jenny Lee

High-Flying Wagner Conductor Grounded



(Agency photo)

Not an orchestra in sight! Pietari Inkinen goes for a walk near his home in Switzerland.

In April this year, the Finnish conductor Pietari Inkinen turned forty. We in New Zealand had come to know him during 2008-2016, when he was chief conductor and music director of the NZSO. As many WSNZ members will remember, he covered himself in glory when he stepped in at a late stage to rehearse and conduct all three cycles of Melbourne's 2013 *Ring*.

Three years later, more glory accrued when he conducted the revived production again in Melbourne. These successes, plus warm praise in the musical press, led to an invitation to conduct the 2020 *Ring* in Bayreuth, which would have made this 40th birthday year an *annus mirabilis* for him. Sadly, Covid-19 got in first. The festival was cancelled and Inkinen's dreams were shattered.

To mark his birthday on 29 April, journalist Samuli Tiikkaja published an interview with him in Finland's major daily the *Helsingin Sanomat* (www.hs.fi/kulttuuri/art-200006488638.html). Thanks to the journalist's friendship with Auckland member Sidney Smith, we have been given permission to re-print excerpts:

'This summer was supposed to see the fulfilment of a dream for Pietari Inkinen.

He had been appointed to the Bayreuth music festival to conduct *The Ring*.

'For me as a conductor,' says Inkinen, '*The Ring* in Bayreuth would have been the highlight of my career, and in my 40th birthday year, too. It could not get any better than that'. But the cancellation changed everything. 'My Bayreuth debut has to wait a bit longer' he adds.



Earlier times: Inkinen in full flight with the NZSO (Photo:NZSO)

Worldwide, the diaries of artists have been emptied. Conductors cannot travel. Currently, Inkinen is at home in Switzerland. He has a flat with his

fiancée in Basel and a holiday home in Zermatt in the Alps. 'My fiancée is also working at home and during the breaks we like to do some gardening', he says on the phone from Basel. During quarantine though, he finds he has more time than normal to study new scores — and also to play the violin.

In the early years of his career, Inkinen toured around a lot as a visiting conductor until he found his first appointment as a

conductor in New Zealand, where he was music director of the NZSO for eight years.

'It was just a gut feeling [to choose] New Zealand. There were other alternatives, but the atmosphere [in New Zealand] was something that seemed to suit me best. A skilful orchestra in the new world without any sorts of prejudices nor a huge weight of tradition. I just felt that I could accomplish a lot with these musicians.'

Since leaving New Zealand, Pietari Inkinen has become chief conductor of three superb orchestras — the Prague Symphony Orchestra, the Japan Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Deutsche Radio Philharmonic Orchestra.

It's very sad to have to relate that, like Bayreuth, they too have all been currently silenced due to the continuing Covid-19 upheavals.

Brisbane Ring Postponed

As a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Opera Australia has made the difficult decision to postpone its new *Ring* cycle to 2021. The company's CEO Rory Jeffes cited border restrictions and social distancing requirements as the main reasons for the cancellation of the performances scheduled to have taken place in November/December this year. So it'll be a year yet before Wagner lovers will be able to see this exciting new production. But it seems worth the wait. Three cycles will be presented between 29 October and 20 November 2021 with the same cast and creative team as in the planned performances in 2020.

Terence Dennis Life and Work

Terence Dennis was born in Christchurch, is a graduate of the University of Otago and of the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik, Cologne, Germany, and currently Blair Professor and Head of Classical Performance studies at the University of Otago School of Performing Arts.

Acclaimed both overseas and in New Zealand for his performances and teaching, he has regularly partnered many distinguished visiting international artists and leading resident artists. Particularly notable is his extensive recital partnership with Dame Kiri te Kanawa, with whom he has given around fifty concerts across the world, including two Royal Recitals, for both Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh at Frogmore House, Windsor and for the State Visit of Charles, Prince of Wales and Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall.

Of special note was their recital at a World Heritage 9th century temple in Nara, Japan, filmed for Japanese television. Their 2016 recital tour in NZ and Australia was dubbed by one prominent critic as a sublime partnership.

Other noted international collaborations include recital tours with bass-baritone Sir Bryn Terfel, soprano Margaret Marshall, mezzos Kathleen Kuhlmann and Sarah Walker, bass-baritone Sir Donald McIntyre, and German prizewinning cellist Maria Kliegel.

He has been official pianist for seven international string competitions, official pianist for the finals of the Mobil and Lexus NZ Song Quests since 1991 and guest adjudicator for the regional finals of the prestigious Metropolitan Opera Auditions Contest in the USA.

Terence Dennis was appointed to the NZ Order of Merit in 2004, and is a Fellow both of the Royal Society of New Zealand and of the NZ Academy of Humanities. He is also a Trustee both of the Kiri te Kanawa Foundation and of The New Zealand Wagner Foundation.

His CD of Piano Works of Wagner & Liszt was issued in 2007, and his recital CD, *Distant Beloved*, featuring German song-cycles by Beethoven, Wagner and Strauss with tenor Simon O'Neill was released internationally by DECCA recordings in February 2019. This CD went on to win the 2019 NZ Music Awards (Classical).

Together they presented a Gala Titus Recital for the Dallas Grand Opera in January 2019.

Goodbye to Print

Members are reminded that the newsletters will be all-digital next year. This means that after this September issue, there will be no more printed copies specially sent out by post, but all members will receive a pdf of the newsletter by e-mail instead. You can also download a copy of the newsletter at any time from the WSNZ website at any time (www.wagnersociety.org.nz).

This current newsletter is the last to be centrally produced this year, and will give place to the end-of-year 'local' newsletters prepared by the four Centre Co-ordinators and made available end November/beginning December.

'My Own Wagnerian Journey' by Terence Dennis

In the early — perhaps even in the very earliest — days of my own music training, Wagner was always 'there' even if at first it was as something nebulous, rather like something hidden in the storm-tossed mountain tops of *Die Walküre*.

On one such storm-tossed late winter afternoon I was in a lecture given by my own Blair Professor predecessor, Sir Peter Platt, in his opera course: we were about to enter Wagner's world and in the gathering dusk he put on the prelude to *Tristan und Isolde*, in Furtwängler's celebrated recording. I never forgot what I heard at that moment . . . the forbidden fruit of the sorcerer in sound had been truly plucked, savoured and devoured.

Since those times the music of Wagner has been a deep and integral part of my own performing life, as my CD's attest: the first one presented the piano works of Wagner along with piano pieces that Liszt wrote as tributes on Wagner's death....plus his *Rienzi Fantasy*, as this was rather neglected in the catalogues. It had been written for Liszt's star pupil Hans von Bülow, first husband of Liszt's daughter Cosima, before she left him for Wagner: and of course it has one of the all-time Great Tunes!

My international partnership with Simon O'Neill has afforded many moments of Wagner on the stage, from arias and scenes from the operas to the *Wesendonk Lieder*, that are featured on our recent Decca CD. Then of course the many lectures on topics across the spectrum from *Die Feen* through to *Parsifal*.

But for me the moving moment was recently when a first year university piano student of mine asked something about Wagner, as I was busy giving a series of lectures on *Wagner and Music Drama*; I quietly took the piano score of *Tristan* and played him some sections from the love duet and the end of the second act where Tristan bids farewell, in those most haunting of phrases: he listened, was very still, and gently said he had never heard anything like that before: I was taken back to that stormy dark afternoon where I too had sensed something deeper than I had previously heard, and I thought what a privilege it was to hand down the torch and perhaps give another young person a glimpse into the unfathomable.