



# The Richard Wagner Society Inc.

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## President's Report to the Society's 33rd AGM 2018

I present The Richard Wagner Society's functions and events since its November 2017 AGM.

### **13 November 2017 — Book Launch (Flockart Hall, MLC)**

The successful Australian launch at last year's AGM of "Ernest Newman: A Critical Biography" (Boydell & Brewer), a critically acclaimed biography by member Dr Paul Watt, musicologist. (Music critic Ernest Newman wrote the celebrated four-volume biography of Richard Wagner.)

### **28 January 2018 — Wagner and Me (Rylands of Hawthorn)**

A wide-ranging conversation between Greg Hocking, Artistic Director of Melbourne Opera, and Anthony Negus, Music Director of Longborough Festival, who was soon to conduct Melbourne Opera's *Tristan und Isolde*.

### **2–10 February — Melbourne Opera's *Tristan and Isolde* (Palais & Monash)**

Our Society "crowd funded" soprano Lee Abrahmsen in the role of Isolde to \$15,000. This unprecedented action for a Wagner Society was conceived by our Secretary Susan Cumming. Despite the "*Tristan* curse" cancelling the opening night, the *Tristan* season was an artistic triumph under the intelligent Wagnerian baton of Anthony Negus. Our members gained admittance to the dress rehearsal and preferential booking to the performances.

### **22 April — Wagner and Liszt: The Anxiety of Influence (Flockart Hall, MLC)**

An exquisite piano recital and exhilarating talk by Israeli-born pianist, Ammiel Bushakevitz, about Wagner and Liszt, whose lives and music entwined like the plaits of a golden braid.

### **20 May — Richard Wagner Birthday Lunch (Rylands of Hawthorn)**

Committee member Gavin Cornish spoke on "Voice Training for Young Singers". Mentone Grammar student, Zoe Lancaster, sang "V'adoro, Pupille" (*Julius Caesar*, Handel) with Richard Montgomery at the piano. Gavin raised the toast by "quaffing" from our Society's Trinkhorn.

### **20–24 June — International Wagner Societies Congress (Innsbruck, Austria)**

The Richard Wagner Verband International (RWVI) is the international body of affiliated Richard Wagner societies. The RWVI is responsible for distributing Bayreuth tickets to member societies on the basis of each society's enrolment and support for Wagnerian singers and productions.

Our Society forwarded a formal motion to the 2018 RWVI Congress by proxy:

*"The RWVI allocate tickets to Wagner societies in the seating areas their members request".*

Through administrative mishap, our proxy was overlooked. The RWVI executive profusely apologized and wants us to re-submit our motion to the 2019 Congress (in Venice).

### **1 July — New Membership Rates**

Annual subscriptions are now \$20, \$40 and \$70—or three-yearly \$54, \$108 and \$189—for student, single and joint memberships.

### **15 July — The Fusion (or Confusion) of Art and *Patrie* (Fitchett Chapel, MLC)**

Dr Rachel Orzech explored the French musical press's contrasting responses, in Paris and Bayreuth, to the Bayreuth Festival under Adolf Hitler's patronage (from 1933). Rachel highlighted the press's tendency to conflate considerations of Art and *Patrie* (*La Patrie* = Fr. *the Fatherland*).

Rachel's theme resonated with our audience. A related talk by Rachel is scheduled for 2019.

## 24–29 August — Young Artists Award for 2018 (Bayreuth Festival)

Through an anonymous donation, our Society presented *The Richard Wagner Society (Victoria) Young Artist's Award for 2018* to opera director Greg Eldridge, comprising tickets to all five Bayreuth Festival operas plus hotel accommodation. Greg assisted Neil Armfield on the 2016 Melbourne *Ring*.

Single-opera tickets were awarded to five “runners-up”: singers Raphael Wong, Maia Andrews, Christiana Aloneftis (*Tristan*), Damien Noyce (*Höllander*) and Daniel Nicholson (*Walküre*).

First-time visitors to Bayreuth benefit from a companionable guide, and Committee member Miki Oikawa, herself a first-time visitor, pleasantly inducted the six young Australian awardees.

## 24 September — How Wagner got to *Die Meistersinger* (Flockart Hall, MLC)

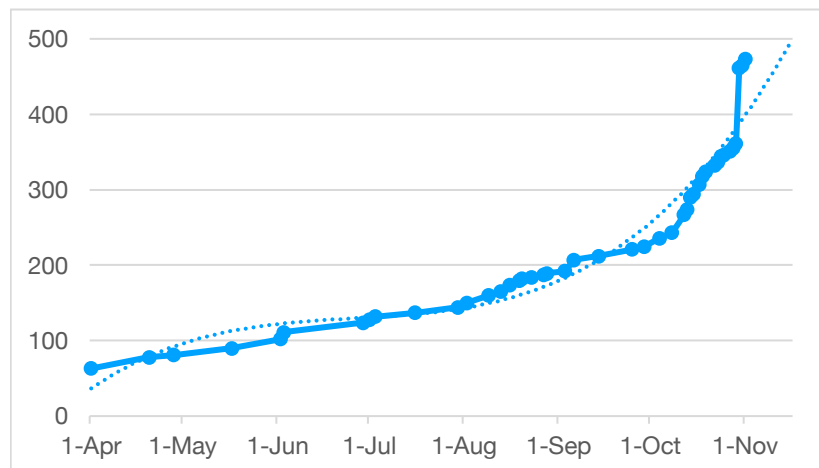
Tahu Matheson, Music Director of Opera Australia, recounted his personal voyage of Wagnerian discovery and explained—from the piano—the unique musical, political and philosophical path that led Richard Wagner toward his monumental paean to human art, his *Meistersinger*.

Tahu's stimulating talk was a perfect introduction to Opera Australia's forthcoming production.

## 1 November — Heath Lees Pre-opera Talks (St John's Lutheran Southgate)

At 3:00 pm today (1 November)—a fortnight out from the season—ticket sales for our Society's pre-opera talk “*Wagner's Mastersingers: Harmony out of Discord*” by Heath Lees at St John's Lutheran Southgate now stand at 473 and are trending towards 500:

Sessions		
<b>Tuesday</b> 13 November	10:30–11:45 am	114
<b>Saturday</b> 17 November	9:30–10:45 am	155
<b>Monday</b> 19 November	10:30–11:45 am	124
<b>Thursday</b> 22 November	10:30–11:45 am	80
<b>Total</b>		<b>473</b>



\* The spike on 30 October is from Renaissance Tour's bulk ticket purchase

## Thanks

I thank all members of the 2017–18 Committee for their contributions to the smooth running of our Society.

In particular, I thank Tom and Ruth O'Dea for the extensive high-quality work they continuously put into operating our website and managing our bookings and finances, and Susan Cumming our hard-working Secretary extraordinaire. I thank our wonderful and generous Auditor, Gordon Edwards, and our Newsletter editor Stan O'Loughlan and skilled layout designer Dawn Voltz.

We now look forward to Heath Lees's pre-opera talks, to Opera Australia's *Meistersinger*, and to a wonderful term under a new and invigorated Committee.

Best wishes to all,

*Trevor Clarke*

1 November 2018