

WAGNER NEWS



NEWSLETTER OF THE
RICHARD WAGNER SOCIETY
OF VICTORIA INC.

MARCH 2010

VOL. 7, NO. 1

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

After a short Annual General Meeting at the end of November, we had a visually spectacular presentation by Cameron Menzies. You may recall that we gave him a handsome donation to match his Australian Opera Bayreuth Award. This enabled him to stay longer in Germany, working on Wagner productions there.

All of us who heard Cameron's presentation thought we will benefit for many years as he becomes increasingly involved in productions in Melbourne.

Your committee has fixed the dates for all but one of our functions this year.

The first event is on 25th March and will feature the wonderful musical educator, Professor Heath Lees. He will be giving us a fully illustrated lecture based on one which he gave in Lisbon last year, during the international seminar to commemorate the centenary of the first performance of the Ring there. Heath will be talking about Wagner and the piano. He will

show us how much of the music of Wagner's operas was written in sketch form for the piano; and how he was able to write most of his chromatic music easily by hearing it first on the piano. Later the piano transcriptions became central to play and promote his music.

On Sunday 23rd May we will repeat last year's highly successful Richard Wagner's birthday lunch at the Emerald Hotel, with Jim Carlton describing some Covent Garden and Sadlers Wells productions and proposing the toast. Aubrey Schrader's renowned table quiz will also feature.

On Sunday 27th June at 1 pm we will present a film of a Wagner opera in the comfort of the James Tatoulis Hall (Auditorium) at the Methodist Ladies College (MLC).

On Sunday 18th July at 2 pm we will have our informal midwinter gathering based on presentations by Dimity Reed, 'An Architect's Perspective of the Festspielhaus at Bayreuth', and Shirley Breese, 'Das Rheingold, differing productions, an audio and visual selection from

Chereau onwards'. We hope both presentations will encourage widespread discussion.

The date of a later meeting (September/October) will depend on the availability of our selected speaker.

Our final meeting for the year will be on Monday 29th November or 6th December (date to be confirmed). This will be the Annual General Meeting, before which we will be calling for nominations for all committee positions.

After the meeting we will present 'Richard Wagner and his Women', a 50-minute German film with subtitles, featuring contributions from Michael Tanner and many others. Following the film we will celebrate our Christmas Party. I trust we can persuade Nicky Nixon to make her wonderful Christmas cakes for us again!

—Richard Reed
President



EDITORIAL COMMENT

Regietheater is all the rage in Europe and it seems audiences are divided into a number of camps. Most believe that, whilst innovations are to be encouraged, stage action should be connected to the intentions of the composer, and to the music and text. Others think that a work can be pulled apart and reassembled something like Dadaism. Some directors want to indulge in promoting their own egos, and relegating the composer and/or the librettist to the outer. Finally there are those who believe that nothing should ever change and that works should be presented exactly as written by the composer.

It would be a good idea for members to pen their views and provide a forum for discussion. Members may like to advance their ideas of ways in which Wagner's operas could be modified, if, of course the modification could benefit the finished product. Last year Heath Lees demonstrated how Wagner had great difficulty beginning and ending compositions. Even in his mature works some say Wagner had difficulty with denouements, particularly with repetition and recapitulation.

A common criticism of Wagner's works is that they are too long. Would a pruning exercise be of any benefit? Would those who praised Katherina Wagner's wholesale renovation of *Meistersinger* accept cutting a part or parts out of a work? I, for one, think *Tristan and Isolde* would

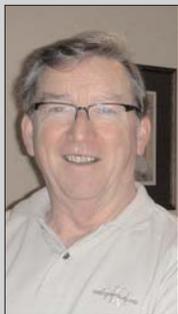
be Wagner's best work if he hadn't stuffed up the ending. When Isolde finally arrives and Tristan dies in her embrace, the music almost goes where I think it should. That is, straight into the 'Liebestod'. But no. Wagner has to have another crack at the ending by reassembling all the minor characters and having Melot get his just desserts, and faithful Kurneval fall on someone's sword. Then King Marke has another lengthy spiel about his sorrow, as if he didn't get a fair go in the last 25 minutes of Act 2. For me, the sublime 'Liebestod' loses some of its theatrical and dramatic impact by this delay.

I have even heard some suggest that *Götterdämmerung* should begin with Brünnhilde and Siegfried awakening at the rock at dawn, in a transition from the finale of *Siegfried*, instead of yet another recapitulation of what everyone in the theatre already knows. But the Vorspiel and Norns' ensemble is so rich and beautiful musically that, in my opinion, it would be a travesty to remove it to save a mere 20 minutes or so.

Remember that Wagner has been quoted as saying, "I don't care in the least whether my works are given or not. All I am concerned with is that they shall be performed as I conceived them. Whoever can't and won't do that may leave them alone."

These thoughts will no doubt enrage some members, and others may be sympathetic to them. So, let us have some debate or discussion, and please write with your ideas to: email solust@iprimus.com.au —Stan O'Loughlin

LIFTING THE LID ON WAGNER'S PIANO: HEATH LEES



Heath Lees' presentation, 'Lifting the Lid on Wagner's Piano', covers two main aspects. The first, which might be subtitled simply 'Wagner and the Piano', shows how the

young Wagner was frequently rude about the piano. At times he called it more of a musical laboratory than a musical instrument, and claimed that the expressive difference between the orchestra and the piano was so great that no real comparison could be made. And yet Wagner wrote a number of pieces for the piano and, as Heath will show, much of the music for his operas was clearly written in 'sketch' form at the piano—it seems obvious in many places that the way the notes lay under his fingers helped him find the music that he was after. He travelled everywhere with a sturdy Erard grand piano that he had almost tricked Erard's widow

into donating, and in later life he was often pictured seated at the piano. Thanks to the equal-tempered tuning of the piano, he was able to write his most chromatic music easily by hearing it first on the piano.

In sum, it seems clear that, in his youth and early manhood, Wagner had a kind of love-hate relationship with the piano, but that he came to terms with it as life went on, and at the end came to accept it as an important musical resource for composition, and expressive in its own right, for performance.

The second aspect of the talk might be sub-titled 'Wagnerism and the Piano'. In other words, it explores how Wagner's music was introduced to others and spread widely through the piano, which was used to teach, to demonstrate and to win 'converts' in private gatherings and in amateur circles. Heath will offer a brief survey of the kinds of transcriptions that people have produced, from Wagner's day (for example, Liszt) to our own day (for example, Stefan Mickisch in Bay-

reuth). He will also relate how the wagneriste 'showman-pianist' arose in many countries of Europe, where amateur pianists made a name for themselves by offering Wagner 'performances' at the piano, singing, describing, playing and re-composing large passages of Wagner to increasingly devoted audiences.

Some hilarious send-ups of Wagner by pianists young and old will be included as well, and there will be a few examples of the way composers/performers found ways of using the piano to help them break the stranglehold that Wagner's music exercised on later generations of composers.

As usual, Heath will provide lots of examples and illustrations, with some (sometimes rare) video and audio excerpts. He will also give the impression of some live moments from the past through his frequent, dangerously impromptu piano-playing.

• Thursday 25th March 2010, at Flockart Hall, MLC (members \$20, non-members \$25)

PICTURED AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



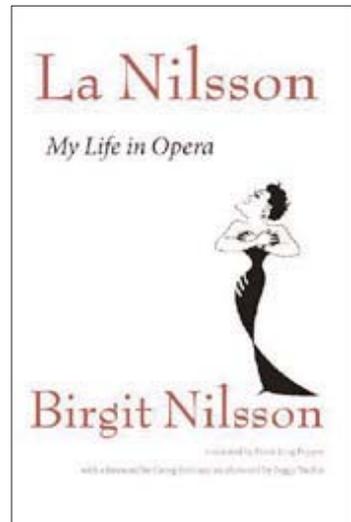
Peter Baines and Lesley Bawden



Maggie Cash, Gamet Edwards and Nan Gillies



Margot and Janet Burke



BOOK REVIEW

LA NILSSON: MY LIFE IN OPERA

I recently purchased via Amazon a lovely hard-back edition of *La Nilsson* by Birgit Nilsson for a fraction of the normal prices paid here. What a great read it is! Of course Birgit was one of the great Wagnerian sopranos and her life story is told in an interesting and often humorous way.

After a foreword by Georg Solti, the book starts with her debut at The Met in which you can really feel the build up of tension and then great release and joy after success at one of the great opera houses.

The book then jumps back to her early life and upbringing on a Swedish farm, her discovery by a local choirmaster and her success in getting a place at the Swedish Academy and Opera. Her constant observation is how her voice was nearly ruined by four voice teachers and how in the end she stayed away from all voice teachers!

The sections then are not chronological but cover topics like Rudolf Bing and a series of locations where she sang, including Vienna, Buenos Aires, Italy and, of course, Bayreuth. There are some great stories told, such as getting caught up in a revolution in South America, working at La Scala and her run-ins with Wieland Wagner and Von Karajan.

The last section of the book is devoted to fans (she was stalked by a mysterious female fan for a number of years), her husband Bertil, and recordings, including the making of the Decca Ring with Solti and Culshaw. The book ends with a career summary and milestones and a comprehensive discography.

Birgit Nilsson died in 2007 (she was born in 1918) and at the end of her career ran master classes in New York. What shines through this very enjoyable read is her shrewdness in making deals and her sense of humour. This book is well worth a read.

—Lindsay Thorrington

A NEW 'HOLLÄNDER' IN ADELAIDE IN NOVEMBER

Australians being somewhat starved for local Wagner performances in recent years, a November visit to Adelaide for *Der Fliegende Holländer* seemed a good idea. And so it proved.

The sets were quite abstract. A steeply raked stage with lots of dark blue, skeletal ships and not much else except very effective lighting provided a sufficient background for the drama. There were lots of silly complaints about the shipping. Audiences should surely realise by now that the days of so-called realism are long over, just as they are in almost all other art forms, and abstraction, particularly (as here) of the gentler kind, is now the more exciting décor.

I hated the recurrent wind machine, hated the interval inserted after 'Act II' (why?) and was in two minds about the spinning wheels which had turned into long threads of 'glow-worms' held and twisted by the maidens in time to the lovely chorus. At first, this particular abstraction was attractive but my recollection is that it soon palled and distracted one's attention from the excellent choral singing.

Stuart Skelton sang and performed the finest Erik I've ever heard and seen. He was almost matched by John Wegner as the Dutchman, while Daniel Sumegi, who has disappointed on several occasions, displayed a rich tone and some feeling for the role of Daland. Wegner indeed sounded better than ever and has lost none of his stage presence.

Margaret Medlyn as Senta behaved as though she were a Verdi heroine, comely emotions well to the fore and no sign of any neurosis, romantic or tight-lipped or otherwise. Nor was her singing really acceptable—she was off-pitch several times in the ballad, rather nervously managed the difficult duet with Wegner and recovered herself to be reasonably effective in the last 'act'. Oh for another Elizabeth Whitehouse!

The orchestra played extremely well for Nicholas Braithwaite. The choral singing provided much excitement, and its comparatively low numbers were very cunningly used by the director in the great maritime choruses to sing sometimes the goodies and then the baddies without one really noticing.

I was very impressed with the youthful director Chris Drummond and his youthful set and lighting designer Geoff Cobham whose joint conception, with the generally splendid realisation of the music, allowed much of the romantic grandeur of the work to shine through.

If we have been starved for Wagner, a number of Victorian visitors were also nearly starved for food. The café at the Festival Theatre had very little to offer and the competition for what there was, caused some merriment among us and some Adelaidians.

—Aubrey Schrader



ADELAIDE 'FLYING DUTCHMAN' IMPRESSIONS

I recently had the good fortune to return to the 'scene of the Ring' and see the State Opera of South Australia production of Wagner's *Flying Dutchman*. On arrival I walked down to the Festival Theatre and saw that the State Theatre was doing a production of *King Lear* next door so the weekend started off with a front row ticket for an excellent production. This was a local production starring John Gaden, not the Bell Shakespeare recent production. Interestingly, John Bell was seen in attendance and at intermission in the bar, so he was obviously keeping an eye on the opposition.

The next morning was a good

opportunity to see in a cinema complex *In Search of Beethoven*, a terrific documentary on Beethoven's life, which was most enjoyable. All this before *The Flying Dutchman* that night which was the premiere performance! Although comparatively small, Adelaide has a very strong arts presence.

So to the *Dutchman* and straight to the chase. I was left a little disappointed as I am not a fan of minimalist production—I like my opera and Wagner lavishly presented—and this was not the case. Even with a small budget I think the look and presentation could have been much better. I had only seen *Dutchman* once before at the Berlin Deutsche Oper back in the '70s and when the ghost ship hove into view you gasped and fell back in your seat. Here a thin outline of mast and sails on a flat background was not inspiring of much emotion at all.

The music and orchestra were very good under the baton of Nicholas Braithwaite and the chorus was also very strong. The opera was dominated by the voice and presence of John Wegner as The Dutchman and his performance was the highlight of the night. We are fortunate indeed to be able to see an artist of his stature so regularly in this country. Daniel Sumegi was an impressive Daland and Stuart Skelton as Eric showed real improvement from his Ring performances.

I was disappointed with Margaret Medlyn as Senta whose voice I felt was quite thin early in her performance and I felt she never gave us access to Senta's motivation for her actions. The ending had some impressive silk and laser effects; however the 'twin light bulb' ending of the *Dutchman* and Senta did not resonate with me.

In summary, it was great to see the Master's work performed again in an opera rather than concert setting and I enjoyed the great singing by Wegner but overall I came away craving more. I have read online reviews and see that my opinion was not shared but I am glad that other people seemed to have a better time than me.

As a postscript, two weeks later I saw Graeme Murphy's *Aida* and came out of the theatre feeling the way I wanted to in Adelaide but could not.

Brave effort and keep trying, State Opera of South Australia.

—Lindsay Thorington

CAMERON MENZIES: AN OPERA DIRECTOR ON THE RISE



Following the Richard Wagner Society Annual General Meeting on Monday 30th November 2009 at Flockhart Hall, Cameron Menzies, recipient of our society's award in 2008, presented an entertaining illustrated talk to members and friends.

Cameron was the winner of the Opera Foundation Bayreuth Scholarship and when the Society became aware of his request for additional funding to broaden his production experience the scholarship amount was matched to extend his stay overseas.

Cameron began his career as an actor training with producer Hayes Gordon and to extend his abilities he pursued singing with the Victorian College of the Arts. Talent and motivation is sometimes bolstered by lucky breaks. Cameron received his in the form of walking and acting the role of Count de Luna as Jonathan Summers sang from the wings in the Opera Australia production of *Il Trovatore* directed by Elke Neidhardt who also directed the Adelaide Ring. Cameron was one of the assistant directors on this production so he was very familiar with the staging. This experience led to the opportunity to apply for the Bayreuth grant.

In Germany, Cameron trained with three companies over three months and was assistant director to

Kirsten Harms at Deutsche Oper Berlin for her then new, ultimately controversial, *Tannhäuser*. He described how in this extreme minimalist production the huge stage was empty with the wings and firewall visible as there were props but no set. In her concept of the opera the characters of Elisabeth and Venus are the same woman, i.e. Elisabeth, but in *Tannhäuser's* head she was Venus. Costumes had a red, yellow and blue Lego look topped with cartoon-type headgear. A watery Venusberg contained 60 naked Venuses with *Tannhäuser* lowered down to join them. Hell was represented by red and gold gargoyles which were based on old woodcut illustrations. The production was panned because, although a visual spectacle, it did not follow the narrative. From his descriptions of the props, characters and scenes, supported by some photos, it seems that Cameron has had a full 'Regietheater' experience.

Since his return, Cameron has been busy as artistic director for Lyric Opera, among other projects. He worked in Sydney as assistant director on the Opera Australia performances of *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* with Richard Bonyng, with whom he had valuable conversations about music. He is currently resident director at the Melbourne Opera School as well as working for the Stonnington City Council on 'Opera in the Park' and with Michael Kantor at the Malthouse on *The Threepenny Opera* which is a co-production with the Victorian Opera.

Cameron showed his passion for this area of the arts throughout his presentation which indicated our Society's generous response was a good investment. We will watch his career with interest.

—Shirley Breese

The Editor apologises for acknowledging Peter Baines as the writer of the article 'Vienna Staatsoper Museum' in the November 2009 issue of *Wagner News*. The article was compiled and written by Dr Dennis Robertson.



The Ring Cycle at The Met in Spring 2012

The Metropolitan Opera's new Ring cycle, which will be staged by pioneering Canadian theatre director Robert Lepage, is to feature American soprano Deborah Voigt singing her first Brünnhilde in the United States, tenor Ben Heppner performing the demanding role of Siegfried and Welsh bass-baritone Bryn Terfel as Wotan. The company has also confirmed that tenor Jonas Kaufman has agreed to sing the role of Siegmund with Eva-Maria Westbroek as Sieglinde. The Met's music director James Levine is scheduled to conduct.

The 2010-11 season—the second season that general manager Peter Gelb will have planned in its entirety—will present *Das Rheingold*, the first opera in Lepage's Ring cycle at the Opening Night Gala on September 27 2010; a full performance-cycle of Wagner's tetralogy is slated for the following, 2011-12, season.

Lepage has said that his Ring will be influenced by a particularly Nordic aesthetic, and will evoke the 'dramatic and mythic coast of Iceland, a place where the land shook and spoke back to the early Viking settlers'.

'At a time when global warming and climatic change make us more conscious than ever of the fragility of this lonely planet, the Ring's romantic power to evoke the conflicting forces between man and the divinities of nature makes more than a lot of sense,' Lepage is quoted as saying in press materials issued by the company.

'When you stage these works you are not only staging a new production, you must create a new world that explains the old one.'

WAGNER PERFORMANCES AROUND THE WORLD



MARCH 2010

Berlin Staatsoper: Tristan und Isolde, March 21, 28



Berlin Deutsche Oper

Darmstadt: Parsifal, March 28

Detmold: The Ring, March 28, 30, April 1, 4

Dortmund: Lohengrin, March 14

Dresden: The Ring, February 21, 27, March 2, 7; 10, 12, 14, 17

Essen: Siegfried, March 28

Frankfurt: Parsifal, March 7, 18, 21

Geneva: Parsifal, March 18, 21, 24, 27, 30

Gera: Tannhäuser, March 19, 26

Kaiserslautern: Holländer, March 3, 10, 16

Kiel: Die Meistersinger, March 20, 28

Leipzig: Lohengrin, March 6

Lubeck: Die Walküre, March 7; Das Rheingold, March 20

Mannheim: Siegfried, March 13

Meiningen: Tannhäuser, March 26, 28

Milan: Tannhäuser, March 17, 20, 24, 27, 30

Munster: Parsifal, March 28

Oslo: Tannhäuser, March 6, April 10 [no other dates].

Paris: Opéra Bastille: Das Rheingold, March 4, 10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 25, 28

Salzburg: Easter Festival: Gotterdammerung, March 27

Stuttgart: Parsifal, March 28

Vienna Staatsoper: The Ring, March 20, 21, 25, 28; Holländer, March 11, 14, 17

APRIL 2010

Berlin Staatsoper Fesstage: Tristan und Isolde, April 5

Deutsche Oper: Rienzi, April 5, 11; The Ring, April 17, 18, 21, 25; 28, 29, 30, May 2

Budapest: Parsifal, April 2, 10

Cologne: Die Meistersinger, April 5, 25

Darmstadt: Parsifal, April 2

Dessau: Lohengrin, April 3

Detmold: The Ring, March 28, 30, April 1, 4

Dortmund: Lohengrin, April 2, 18

Dresden: Parsifal, April 2, 5

Dusseldorf: Parsifal, April 2, 5

Frankfurt: Parsifal, April 2, 5

Geneva: Parsifal, April 2

Gera: Tannhäuser, April 3, 18

Greifswald: Holländer, April 17

Hamburg: Holländer, April 17, 21, 25

Hildesheim: Die Meistersinger, April 5

Kaiserslautern: Holländer, April 16

Kiel: Die Meistersinger, April 4

Leipzig: Rienzi, April 2, 18; Das Rheingold, April 24

Lubeck: Das Rheingold, April 25

Meiningen: Tannhäuser, April 10, 17, 28

Milan: Tannhäuser, April 2

New York: The Met: Holländer, April 23, 26, 30

Oslo: Tannhäuser, March 6, April 10 [no other dates].

Salzburg: Easter Festival: Götterdämmerung, April 5

Stuttgart: Parsifal, April 1, 5, 11, 25

Vienna Staatsoper: Parsifal, April 1, 4, 7



Vienna Staatsoper

Zurich: Die Meistersinger, April 10, 17

MAY 2010

Berlin Deutsche Oper: The Ring, April 28, 29, 30, May 2

Budapest: Tristan und Isolde, May 29

Chemnitz: Tannhäuser, May 14

Dessau: Lohengrin, May 13

Dortmund: Lohengrin, May 16

Dusseldorf: Tristan und Isolde, May 29

Essen: Die Walküre, May 13, 16; Siegfried, May 23

Frankfurt: Das Rheingold, May 2, 7, 15, 22

Gera: Tannhäuser, May 9

Hamburg: Lohengrin, May 23

Hanover: Die Walküre, May 23, 30

Hildesheim:

Die Meistersinger, May 13

Kaiserslautern:

Holländer, May

9, 15

Kiel: Die Meistersinger, May 13, 29

Leipzig: Das Rheingold, May 2, 2010.

Los Angeles: The Ring, May 29, 30, June 3, 6

Meiningen: Tannhäuser, May 9, 20, 23

Milan: Das Rheingold, May 13, 16, 19, 22, 26, 29

New York: The Met: Holländer, May 3, 6, 10, 14

Paris: Opéra Bastille: Die Walküre, May 31

Stralsund: Holländer, May 8

Vienna Staatsoper: Lohengrin, May 30

Zurich: Die Meistersinger, May 1, 8

JUNE 2010

Budapest: Tristan und Isolde, June 1, 16; Die Meistersinger, June 20, 24, 27

Cardiff: Die Meistersinger, June 19, 23, 26, 29

Chemnitz: Tannhäuser, June 19

Cologne: The Ring, June 1, 2, 4, 6; 8, 9, 11, 13

Dusseldorf: Tristan und Isolde, June 3, 20, 26

Essen: Das Rheingold, June 10

Frankfurt: Das Rheingold, June 3, 6, 12

Gera: Tannhäuser, June 30

Glyndebourne: Die Meistersinger, no actual dates

Hamburg: Lohengrin, June 6

Hanover: Die Walküre, June 4, 18, 20, 24

Kiel: Die Meistersinger, June 27

Los Angeles: The Ring, May 29, 30, June 3, 6; 8, 10, 13, 16; 18, 20, 23, 26

Paris: Opéra Bastille: Die Walküre, June 5, 9, 13, 16, 20, 23, 26, 29

San Francisco: Die Walküre, June 10, 13, 19, 22, 25, 30



San Francisco Opera

Vienna Staatsoper: Lohengrin, June 3, 6; Tannhäuser, June 16, 20, 24, 27; Parsifal, June 30

JULY 2010

Birmingham WNO: Die Meistersinger, July 6, 10

Cardiff: Die Meistersinger, July 3

Dusseldorf: Tristan und Isolde, July 11, 18

Essen: Das Rheingold, July 1, 15; Die Walküre, July 10; Siegfried, July 17

Las Palmas: de Gran Canaria, Teatro Pérez Galdós: Holländer, July 17, 20, 23

Mannheim: Götterdämmerung, July 11

Munich: Lohengrin, July 25, 29; Tannhäuser, July 28, 31



Munich Opera House

Zurich: Die Meistersinger, July 3

SEASON 2010/11

Amsterdam: The Ring, New production begins.

Berlin Staatsoper: The Ring [no actual dates]

Hamburg: The Ring, 2 cycles [no actual dates]

Milan: The Ring [no actual dates]

New York: The Met: The Ring, New production begins

SEPTEMBER 2010

Enschede: Die Walküre, [no actual dates]

Lubeck: Götterdämmerung, September [no actual dates]

OCTOBER 2010

Enschede: Die Walküre, [no actual dates]

Hamburg: Götterdämmerung, October 17 [no other dates]

DECEMBER 2010

Milan: Die Walküre, December 7 [no other dates]

2011

Baden-Baden: The Ring, [no actual dates]

Barcelona: Parsifal [no actual dates]

APRIL 2011

Hanover: Siegfried, [no actual dates]

JUNE 2011

Berlin: Deutsche Oper: Parsifal, June 26, 29

Hanover: Götterdämmerung, [no actual dates]



Hanover Opera House

Lubeck: The Ring, June 2011 [no actual dates]

San Francisco: The Ring, June 14, 15, 17, 19; 21, 22, 24, 26; 28, 29, July 1, 3

JULY 2011

Berlin Deutsche Oper: Parsifal, July 1, 3, 6, 9

San Francisco: The Ring, June 28, 29, July 1, 3

SEPTEMBER 2011

Enschede: Siegfried, [no actual dates]

OCTOBER 2011

Enschede: Siegfried [no actual dates]

SEASON 2012

New York: The Met: The Ring, 3 cycles [no actual dates, probably Spring]

MAY 2012

Munich: Siegfried, May 27, 31

JUNE 2012

Munich: Siegfried, June 3

JULY 2012

Munich: Das Rheingold, July 10; Siegfried, July 6, 13

SUMMER 2012

Toulouse: Tannhäuser, [no actual dates]

SEPTEMBER 2012

Enschede: Götterdämmerung [no actual dates]

OCTOBER 2012

Enschede: Götterdämmerung [no actual dates]

DECEMBER 2012

Milan: Siegfried, December 7 [no other dates]

2013

Amsterdam: The Ring [no actual dates]

Baden-Baden: The Ring [no actual dates]

Milan: Götterdämmerung, Spring 2013 [no actual dates]

APRIL 2013

Munich: Holländer, April 14, 17, 20

JUNE 2013

Milan: The Ring, [no actual dates]

Munich: Holländer, June 28

JULY 2013

Munich: Das Rheingold, July 13

AUGUST 2013

Seattle: The Ring, 3 cycles [no actual dates]

SEPTEMBER 2013

Enschede: The Ring [no actual dates]

OCTOBER 2013

Enschede: The Ring [no actual dates]

DON'T FORGET THE LOS ANGELES 'RING'

Cycle 1:

Das Rheingold May 29, 7.30pm

Die Walküre, May 30, 6pm

Siegfried June 3, 6pm

Götterdämmerung, June 6, 5pm

Cycle 2:

Das Rheingold June 8, 7.30pm

Die Walküre, June 10, 6pm

Siegfried June 13, 12 noon

Götterdämmerung, June 16, 6pm

Cycle 3:

Das Rheingold June 18, 7.30pm

Die Walküre, June 20, 6pm

Siegfried June 13, 12 noon

Götterdämmerung, June 26, 5pm

Whispering Woodbird



2013 will be the bicentenary of the births of Wagner and Verdi and the centenary of Britten, so expect a lot of productions.

Opera North in the UK is planning a complete Ring cycle starting 2011 with one drama introduced each year. They will bring forward new singers where possible in the hands of Sir John Tomlinson, a Wagnerian with more experience than virtually anyone else alive. He will be working closely with Richard Farnes, musical director of Opera North, who will conduct the cycle.

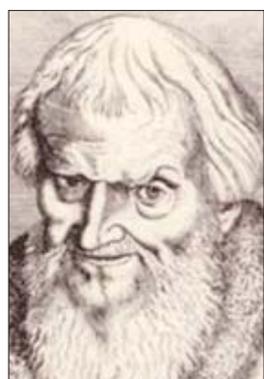
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Rumour also hath it that the new artistic director of Opera Australia, Lyndon Terracini, is intending to give Melbourne its first ever 'Ring' cycle beginning with *Rhinegold* in 2012. We do not know whether this is in conjunction with Ms Wheeler and her very generous financial offer.

•••

On 13th October 2009, Placido Domingo was presented with the inaugural Birgit Nilsson prize by King Carl Gustav at a ceremony at the Royal Swedish opera. He has pledged to use this to support young artists in his own Operalia competition to create his own award for Wagner singing. Quite apart from this, Placido has recently become a baritone and has sung the title role in Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra*. His versatility knows no bounds.

•••



Hans Sachs and the Ehekarussell (Marriage Roundabout) Fountain in Nuremberg:

The real Hans Sachs was a celebrated mastersinger

and prolific writer of songs, poems, plays, serious work and stories active in Nuremberg from 1514 to 1569. He died there in 1576, aged 81.

Sachs was a contemporary of Albrecht Durer and Martin Luther. As a journeyman shoemaker he

travelled throughout Germany learning his trade and settled back into the town of his birth when he became a master shoemaker in 1517. Although he has fallen in and out of favour as a writer over the years, this fountain celebrates his poem about marriage and commemorates one of Nuremberg's famous sons.

In 1519 Hans Sachs married Kunigunde Kreutzer, who died in 1560, and he took as second wife in 1561 Barbara Harscher, a widow of 27. We do not know if he was happily married but he certainly used his wit and keen observation of others to provide incidents and characters for all his work.

Sachs' marriage poem was vividly interpreted by sculptor Juergen Weber in a controversial fountain erected over a subway ventilation shaft in 1984. Bronze figures depict love, courtship, family, fighting, dissatisfaction and death in realistic tableaux around the central figure of Hans Sachs.

The text of the poem, in German, of course, inscribed on a marble heart is translated as follows:



Bittersweet Married Life

God be praised and honoured who has given me a god-fearing wife with whom I have lived for 22 years. God gave me a home even longer. Although in my married life both sweet and sour have often happened 'my wife' is heaven and hell, devil and angel, peace and strife. (Thanks to Shirley Breese)

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It has come to my attention that Dliscurio have a copy of the very hard to get Copenhagen 'Ring' if anyone is interested.

—Stan O'Loughlin

Bayreuth plans for the future

2010: New production *Lohengrin*

Conductor: Andris Nelsons

Producer: Hans Neuenfels

2011: New production *Tannhäuser*

Conductor: Thomas Hengelbrock

Producer: Sebastian Baumgarten

2012: New production *Der Fliegende Holländer*

Conductor: Christian Thielemann

Producer: Sebastian Nubling

2013: New production *Der Ring des Nibelungen*

Conductor: Kirill Petrenko

Producer not known yet

2014: No new production

2015: New production *Tristan and Isolde*

Conductor: Christian Thielemann

Producer: Katherina Wagner

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