

WAGNER SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND

Patron: Sir Donald McIntyre



NEWSLETTER

“Thanks to everyone, and remember this is not a Leberwohl but an à bientôt!”

At the Society's AGM on 25 May, after 15 years of wonderful service, Heath and Liz Lees stood down from the positions of President and Secretary of the Wagner Society of New Zealand. There was a large turnout of members in attendance and many more who sent good wishes.

With the formal business addressed and a new committee elected it became the first task of the incoming President, Chris Brodrick, to pay tribute to our founding President and Secretary. Chris revealed that life without Heath and Liz had been put to the test in the weeks before the AGM. Firstly the committee had agreed to award both Heath and Liz Life Memberships of the Society and to confer on Heath the new honorary title – President Emeritus.

He then read a number of tributes that had been sent including messages from The German Ambassador to New Zealand, various Wagner Societies and one from our Patron Sir Donald McIntyre. (see page 2)

Then came the time to let Heath and Liz in on the not-so-secret that all the members bar them knew about. In early April the committee (minus President and Secretary) decided that the Society should present something to Heath and Liz to thank them for all their work on our behalf. It was decided that a gift would be purchased and the members asked if they would like to contribute. Through the help of Terence Dennis, we contacted an Antiquarian shop in Bayreuth that specialises in works to do with Wagner. After much consultation with the Lees family, a Franz Stassen lithograph depicting the Rhinemaidens, 'Wagalaweia', was chosen, purchased, shipped to Auckland and framed in time for the AGM. In the meantime an email/letter was sent out to all the members and the contributions flowed in. Our desire to keep news of the present from its recipients required some careful planning. No funds were banked until very



Heath and Liz with incoming President Chris Brodrick and the lithograph.



Franz Stassen – 'Wagalaweia'

close to the AGM in case Heath or Liz saw the bank statement!

In the end the surprise was kept and the only sad note was that not all members could be present to share in the presentation.

Dear Wagner Society Members

The AGM on 25 May at the School of Music in Auckland was something very special for us both. It was a curious mix of joy and sadness, but also one of astonishment when we were presented with an unbelievable double delight — Life Membership of the Society, which we will always treasure, and a magnificent Franz Stassen lithograph which has already transformed our hallway completely.

We note from the certificate that came with the lithograph that Franz Stassen took a mammoth 21 years to complete the three lithographs which make up "Wagalaweia" (The Rhinemaidens). Ours is the second plate and, even though it may not be too obvious from the photo in the newsletter, it is a marvellous and delicate Venus-like impression of one of the Rhinemaidens, and the beginning of the world. We will certainly be visiting the Antiquitäten where the lithograph was purchased in our forthcoming trip to Bayreuth.

The AGM was a super event, with many wonderful plaudits, some heart-warming memories, and a positive recognition of another exciting moment in the Wagner Society's growth. Heath and I were delighted, and yet genuinely humbled by the whole experience, but it was a real pleasure to see the Wagner Society steaming off into its future activities with gusto, and superb teams of people up and down the country all ready to go.

Thanks to everyone, and remember this is not a Leberwohl but an à bientôt!

Every good wish,

Liz and Heath

Heath & Liz Tributes

During the weeks prior to the AGM we received a number of tributes for Heath & Liz. There were messages from the Wagner Societies in Australia, the Wagner Society of Scotland and from the German Embassy in Wellington. From the UK, our Patron Sir Donald McIntyre wrote:- *“If Heath and Liz had asked me if I would allow them to retire I would have said, “NO!” However, if they keep on inspiring the society to grow in health and wisdom while enjoying their retirement I will relent. What a contribution they made!”*

The Richard Wagner Society of South Australia sought divine assistance. *“As we wanted to find the most appropriate words for such an important occasion, we appealed to Richard Wagner, who graciously allowed us to quote from two of his works: Die Walküre and Lohengrin...”*

Holdenrunen for Heath ‘n Liz.

*Lebt wohl: Habt Dank: Euch - kühnes, tüü’ges Paar -
Bieten wir sel’gen Gruss! - Ihr scheidet zwar vom
Hochheil’gen Sitz, -
Bleibt aber stets und treu bei uns und tief in unser’n
Herzen.*

*Mannen, Mägde, Ritter und Damen, Freie, Edle aus
allen Landen -*

Preisen und zollen Euch Lob und Liebe ab

(Sehr frei nach Richard Wagner)

*Farewell! Our thanks! To you, brave, bold and
beauteous pair!*

*We offer now our Holy Greeting! You are, indeed,
leaving to those who come after,*

*The Sacred Throne. - But in the depths of our
heart your valiant deeds will tarry long with us.*

*So: vassals and maids, knights and damsels fair,
freemen, nobles from all bournes and regions,*

Praise, glorify and in tribute offer both love and fealty!

(Very free after Richard Wagner)”

It was Les Holborow, writing on behalf of the Wellington members, who beautifully summed up the feelings of all of us in the WSNZ.

“We are sorry that none of our members can be present to speak in person of our deep gratitude and appreciation for the contribution which both Heath and Liz have made to the success of our branch. It is no exaggeration to say that Heath has been the backbone of our programmes, giving our members great enjoyment and renewed enthusiasm for Wagner’s works by his engaging presentations of a range of both familiar and unfamiliar materials. Both through these occasions and in connection with the well-planned and organized trips to performances overseas which many of our members have undertaken he and Liz have become and will remain good friends to many of us. We thank them and wish them well at this time and look forward to continued visits to Wellington as the Society continues to prosper on the foundation which they have laid.”



Chris Brodrick New WSNZ President

While the focus of the AGM on 25 May was on saying thank you to Heath & Liz the formal part of the evening saw the election of a new committee.

Taking over the role of President is Christchurch based Chris Brodrick. Born in Hampstead, London, Chris came to New Zealand in 1972. After seven years as a television film editor, Chris was appointed the General Manager of the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra. In 1985 he moved to Wellington as General Manager of the Royal New Zealand Ballet before returning to Christchurch where he took on a number of roles including Chairman of Canterbury Opera. In the late eighties he started his own business in the printing industry in which he is still involved.

Chris experienced his first Wagner back in 1976 when he attended a performance of *Twilight of the Gods* at English National Opera. The performance was part of what came to be known as the Goodall *Ring*, after the production’s conductor Reginald Goodall. That performance made a big impact but it wasn’t until the International Festival’s *Die Meistersinger* and the first Adelaide *Ring* eight years later that Chris was presented with the opportunity to really get inside Wagner’s work. The Wagner Society, as well as John Pattinson’s lectures at Canterbury University’s Continuing Education, not only deepened the knowledge but enhanced the whole Wagner experience. And in a case of the more you learn the more you want to know, Chris has made his own studies and turned those into presentations for the Wagner Society. He has presented talks on *Wagner and the Visual Arts* and *Wagner at the Movies* to branches of the WSNZ and in July will take them to Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth with Sydney and Brisbane booked for September/October.

The opportunity to present in Australia comes after Heath Lees’ tour in 2006 and provides a wonderful opportunity to forge closer links with our cousins on the other side of the Tasman.

New Committee New Contacts

President..... Chris Brodrick
Vice President Ken Tomkins
Secretary Michael Sinclair
Treasurer John Hambling
Membership/Liaison George Risk
Committee Pam Hall
Bob O’Hara, Juliet Rowe, Sidney Smith
Honorary Solicitor..... Peter Rowe
Honorary Auditor..... Jonathan Blakeman

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

All enquiries regarding WSNZ administration should be directed to the new secretary:

Michael Sinclair
PO Box 99826
Newmarket
Auckland 1149
New Zealand
Phone: 00-64-9-528-0776
Email: msinclair@xtra.co.nz

The contacts for enquiries relating directly to the individual centres are:

Auckland

Michael Sinclair (details above)

Wellington

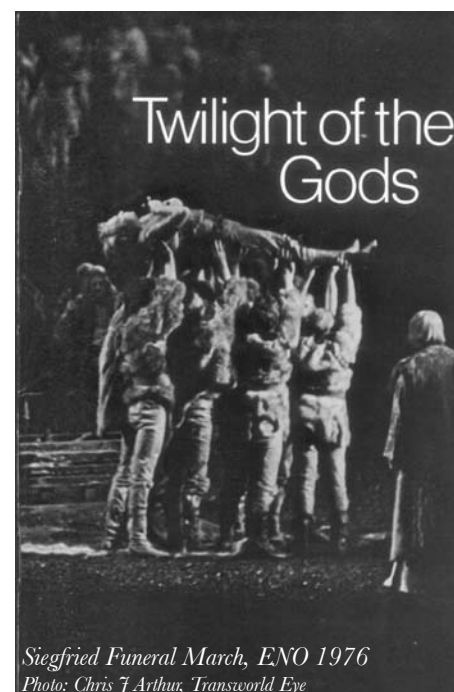
George Risk
Phone: 09-476-6394
Email: g.risk@gns.cri.nz

Christchurch

Gloria Streat
Phone: 03-332-3242
Email: gstreat@xtra.co.nz

Dunedin

Lesley Kendall
Phone: 03-487-8229
Email: lvkendall@xtra.co.nz



2008 PROGRAMME

Auckland

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

Sunday, 20 July 7.30pm

The Flying Dutchman (a complete viewing)

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

Dunedin

Sunday 7 September 3.00pm

Venue: To be confirmed

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

Sunday, 7 December

Venue and time to be confirmed

Catered lunch followed by *Tannhäuser* DVD

Christchurch

Venue: Lecture Theatre A6, University of Canterbury

Friday, 27 June 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

Friday, 26 September 7.30pm

Please note change of date

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

Venue and time to be confirmed

Christmas BBQ

New Members

A very Warm Wagnerian Welcome to:-

Roger Marbeck (Ode Records)..... *Auckland*
 Terence Dennis..... *Dunedin*
 Ashley and Lesley Day *Dunedin*
 Rodney Hamel *Dunedin*
 Edwin Nye & Brenda Leigh..... *Dunedin*
 Joy Schwass..... *Dunedin*
 Sarah Bisley *Auckland*
 Josef & Anthony Schneider *Auckland*

Seattle

Those of you who registered for the information packs for our proposed trip to see *The Ring* in Seattle next year should now have received them. We hope that the information provided will inspire you to join us on this exciting trip! If you have not previously registered your interest but would like to receive the information pack then please contact Julie Larking at GO Holidays on 09 914 4681 or by email jlarking@gogogo.nz.

Auckland Meetings

Due to the unavailability of speakers for the debate we had planned in December it has been necessary to change the programmes for the Auckland meetings in September and December (although note that the dates remain the same).

The details are set out at the top of this page.

Farewell

It is with sadness that we report the deaths of:-
 Gordon Bloomfield *New Plymouth*
 Roa Morrissey *Auckland*
 June Beale..... *Auckland*
 Valerie Lovis..... *Christchurch*
 Bernard Howard..... *Christchurch*

Leb Wohl, du kühnes, herrliches Kind!



The Green Hill Cooks

Recipes and opera: two passions combined in one book

Wellington member, Michael Ashdown, found this on the internet and has kindly translated it from German.

The gift for the Wagnerian, who has everything: *The Green Hill Cooks*. Get the recipe of Christian Thielemann's roasted veal and Waltraud Meier's eco-pork or learn of the cooking of Gerhard Siegel's mother.

The Green Hill Cooks features stories and recipes, all set against the background of the Bayreuth Festival: in it, artists, guests and celebrities slave over a hot stove, opera and the passion they bring to both. And, as with Wagner, this round of recipes isn't something for beginners, but rather for those who've already developed a taste for cooking.

For example, Renate Schmidt cooks an asparagus salad with Nürnberger Bratwürstchen (Nuremberg grilling sausages); mezzo-soprano Waltraud Meier sizzles up a cutlet of organic pork with Mediterranean vegetables and green asparagus; tenor Gerhard Siegel, who has declared his mother's recipes to be sacrosanct, fills involtini with a basil-pesto



Christian Thielemann and Katherina Wagner sign copies of Der Hügel Kocht at the launch.

mixture; conductor Christian Thielemann cooks a saddle of venison on a bed of calf's sweetbreads, served together with chanterelles and balsamico sauce, with side servings of mixed vegetables and Spätzle (thick Southern German egg noodles); violinist Ulf Klausenitzer spreads champagne zabaione over mixed berries and fruit sauce; entertainer Roberto Blanco dishes up pasta e fagioli à la Mama Giusella; and Bayreuth's mayor, Dr. Michael Hohl, assisted by his wife Hannelore, prepares Schäufele (shoulder of pork, South German style) in a brown beer sauce, and for dessert there's Fränkische Hollerküchle (Franconian elderflower berry fritters).

Recipes, casually told stories, biographies and, last but not least, photographs to entice the reader into the kitchen, and to the markets and table, are all melded together into a kaleidoscope of colour to whet the appetite – be it culinary or musical – indeed, to whet one's appetite for the Bayreuth Festival.

The editor of the book is Roland Wagenführer, and it has been published by the Ellwanger publishing house and retails for 19.90 euros.

President's Report

May 2008

(edited version for Newsletter)

Ladies and Gentlemen, Fellow-Members, Tonight marks the beginning of our fifteenth year as the Wagner Society of New Zealand. It was May 1993 when we held our first official meeting, on a Sunday evening with about 45 people present – the whole society at the time. It seems a long time now. In my report last year I spoke of a Year of Diversity, and this year, still keen to try to sum it all up in a word, I would say we have had a Year of Maturity.

Overall, we had twenty meetings up and down the country, and there were six newsletters since March 2007, alternately edited by Chris Brodrick and myself. In both these areas our activity is becoming more ambitious and more professionalised. The topics are always Wagnerian of course, but wider-ranging, and increasingly sophisticated in their presentation. Good presentations now travel around the country, and although this costs money, it means that the whole country shares in the most interesting subjects, even if the entry fee has to be adjusted in the light of increased travel and accommodation costs. This is an issue that the new committee will no doubt be looking at early on. Highlights from the programmes in Auckland have been Chris Brodrick's wonderful subject interest and computer expertise in Wagner at the Movies, and Terence Dennis's fascinating presentation of the Wagner Liszt/piano connection. The fact that Simon O'Neill also popped in to sing the sword monologue from *Die Walküre* was just an added extra! Our featured opera this year was *Tannhäuser*, which we viewed in two "bites", in July and September.

In Wellington, in April, Margaret Medlyn and Bruce Greenfield gave an excellent concert of Wagner items; I presented there the subject of Wagner and the French, and last April Terence Dennis performed his Wagner/Liszt lecture-recital, plus CD launch. Christchurch had a whole 7 meetings – good for them! – and covered similar ground, plus a complete *Tannhäuser* video session. Of course *Tannhäuser* was topical this year since in October we arranged a trip to Sydney to see Elke Neidhardt's production, and some 60 members went there.

The big news this year was the birth of a Wagner Society centre in Dunedin, officially launched on 16th March. Thanks to the sterling efforts of Lesley Kendall, one-time Minutes Secretary who recently moved from Auckland to Dunedin, the large Wagner interest in the lower South Island has now been stirred up and channelled into a formal group. Allied to this is the presence of Professor Terence



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Dennis at the University of Otago, always a Wagner fan, but one whose base in Dunedin had made him somewhat inaccessible to us in the past. With the appearance of his Liszt/Wagner CD on Ode Records at the end of 2007, the moment was ideal for the founding of a centre, and the other Wagner Society centres have also benefited enormously from his recent illustrated lectures around the country. Two meetings have now been held in Dunedin: the March launch, to which about 120 people came, and a further meeting just a couple of weeks ago, with the *Wesendonck Lieder* as its centrepiece, performed by Judy Bellingham and Terence Dennis. New enrolments are still coming in, but we can boast some two dozen members in Dunedin, which is an impressively strong beginning.

And speaking of numbers I note that in my last report I mentioned that, including our handful of honorary members, we had just broken through the 400 barrier by March 2007. By March 2008, this figure stood at 425 and, as we speak, on the verge of another year, the excellent number of 352 renewals has been chalked up, which is really encouraging.

During the past year, the WSNZ has put its stamp on the Wagner activities that take place both in this part of the world, and beyond, and it marks the new maturity in our evolution. I suppose I have to say that the first sign of this was when I myself finally managed to have my book finished and published, and this is now being acquired by libraries, schools and individuals the world over. Building on that, my trip round all the Australian Wagner Societies some 6 months ago yielded much in the way of future links, like the Perth Wagner Society's imminent hook-up with us in next year's trip to the Seattle *Ring*. An even more valuable indication was in the invitation to Chris Brodrick to tour the Australian Wagner Societies, with his lecture *Wagner and the Fine Arts*, and *Wagner and the Movies*. I should also mention Terence Dennis's CD on Wagner and Liszt piano music, which was snapped up at all its launch appearances with us in NZ and then went straight into the NZ Top Ten at Number One. Yes, we're making an impact

here and beyond, and that's heartening, and wonderful to see.

During the year, ten lucky members went to the Bayreuth Festival, and the reports back were as usual full of stories of overwhelming surroundings, spellbinding, sometimes controversial performances, and always energetic discussions. Our Secretary tells me that since the Wagner Society began in this country, a total of 130 people have gone over the last 14 years, and it's no doubt true to say that they would not have had this opportunity had it not been for the presence and continuing activity of the WSNZ.

As I said last year, good results are due to good people, and we have some of the best. In John Hambling we have a treasure of a treasurer; the more he tries to retire the more people are desperate for his time and skills; and he produces simplified, easy-to-understand accounts that Jonathan Blakeman, our Auditor this year, described in the word 'Immaculate'. As Membership Secretary, George Risk continues to handle the increasing paperwork that an ever-expanding roll of members generates. Chris Brodrick's help with the Newsletter has been wonderful, and John Morrison, Les Holloway and their dedicated co-workers in Wellington also need to be heartily thanked, as do Gloria and Garth Street, Jenny Lee and John Pattinson in Christchurch – and now also Terence Dennis and Lesley Kendall in Dunedin. The committee in Auckland are Living Treasures – Pam Hall, Juliet Rowe, whose husband Peter is also the ever-ready Honorary Solicitor, Bob O'Hara and Michael Sinclair, whose up-to-date professional and technical expertise will be of immense value to the society in the future.

As you know, I am regretfully standing down from the presidency of the Wagner Society as from tonight, but will of course be back as occasional presenter and regular member in the future. Liz is also stepping down as secretary but she, like me, is absolutely delighted to see the team that's likely to be voted in tonight. With Chris, Michael, Ken, and the others, Liz and I leave our parts in the governance of the society, confident that it's in extremely strong hands, and we are positively agog to see the changes and developments that will happen in the next few years. Nothing will thrill us more than seeing the society grow ever stronger and in new directions. And we know it will. My description of a Year of Maturity is a well-deserved one.

So in offering this Annual Report for your acceptance, Liz and I would like to say to the society that we helped to found, and which has given us so much pleasure and life-enhancement, good luck for the future, and thank you. - Heath Lees