



# The Wagner Society of Ireland

Founded 2002

President: Dr. Alexander Anissimov, Conductor



## Newsletter

June 2014

### CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

Dear Member

We have ended this year's series of lectures and from the feedback we have received from you I think that were very much appreciated. I should like on behalf of all of us to extend my thanks to the speakers.

We have now turned our mind to the 2014–15 series of talks and you will see in the list below our plans for next year. Again we have aimed to provide an interesting variety of talks. Highlights will undoubtedly include the talk by Barry Millington, and the culmination of our exploration of the *Ring* cycle with Derek Watson.

Our travel plans are for two trips: one to Zürich in late January and one to Leipzig in May. There already appears to be a lot of interest in the May trip. I would also like to draw your attention to the meeting of the Richard Wagner Verband International on 14–17 May in Dessau. The Verband meetings are open to all members and are well attended. Only the meeting of the Chairpersons is closed. This year there is the chance to see a complete Ring Cycle during the Verband meetings. If you are interested in attending we can provide more information.

This newsletter contains a number of reviews of performances abroad which may whet your appetite for trips next year. We very much appreciate these contributions and would encourage members to share their own experiences in future newsletters.

Lastly, on behalf of all the committee I wish you a very enjoyable summer.

Regards,

*Anthony Linehan*  
Chairman

## PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME 2014–15 SEASON

18 September 2014	Barry Millington, ‘The Sorcerer of Bayreuth’
18–19 October 2014	Derek Watson’s seminar on <i>Siegfried</i>
20 November 2014	John Allen, ‘Richard Strauss, a Lifelong Love Affair’
10 December 2014	Christmas entertainment: showing of ‘Wagner in Exile’, followed by drinks
15 January 2015	Michael Murphy, University of Limerick, ‘Public perceptions of Wagner performances in Ireland’
21–22 February 2015	Derek Watson’s seminar on <i>Götterdämmerung</i>
5 March 2015	Annual General Meeting
23 April 2015	Dr Wolfgang Marx, UCD, ‘Albert Lortzing: Hans Sachs, and the first <i>Meistersinger</i> ’
May 2015	Possible piano recital in RIAM

## TRIPS PLANNED FOR THE COMING YEAR

Two ‘official’ WSI trips abroad are planned this coming year. The main one will be to Leipzig on 21–25 May 2015. The following operas will be on at the time:

Friday 22nd *Parsifal*

Saturday 23rd *Liebesverbot*

Sunday 24th *Siegfried*

We are also planning a trip to Zürich in late January or early February. There is only one Wagner opera, *Tristan*, but it is an excellent production by Claus Guth, with Nina Stemme, Stephen Gould and Matti Salminen. The idea is to combine it with tours of the places in Zürich associated with Wagner (the Wesendonck villa, etc.), and also on one day to make a trip to Tribschen on nearby Lake Lucerne. The other opera on in Zürich at the time is *Norma* in a production by Robert Wilson. It should be noted that Zürich is quite expensive and the tickets for the opera in the stalls cost 270CHF, which is about €220. The dates would be as follows:

*Tristan* : Sunday 1 February (or Thursday 29th January)

*Norma*: Tuesday 3 February (or Saturday 31st January)

## SOCIAL MEDIA

For members who are on Facebook, we are currently working on a ‘secret’ group page, due to be up and running by the start of our 2014–15 Season. It is purely for members of the Wagner Society of Ireland, and is by invitation only. To join, please signal your intention by sending an email to [info@wagnersociety.ie](mailto:info@wagnersociety.ie). Our main concern with setting up any social media forum or page is privacy. With that in mind, we are looking at all avenues to make sure that any social media page we do organise is safe and any activity within the page is within the codes of conduct of the Society.

We also hope to have an ‘open’ Facebook page, which we shall use in the hope that it will encourage other Wagner enthusiasts to join our Society. This page will not be like the secret group, in that certain information will be withheld from the open page. Members will also be welcome to ‘like’ this page, as it will help in making other Facebook users aware of the Society’s existence.

If any members have any ideas or questions with regard to social media, please email [info@wagnersociety.ie](mailto:info@wagnersociety.ie).

*Louise Coffey*

## INTERNATIONAL RICHARD WAGNER CONGRESS 2015

The next Congress of the Richard Wagner Verband International will take place on 14–17 May 2015 in Dessau, capital of the former Principality of Anhalt. This place has in numerous ways a long and rich tradition of association with Wagner and is also home to two UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

The programme is available to download as a pdf from the website of the London Wagner Society at <http://wagnersociety.org/articles/details-now-available-for-2015-rwvi-congress-in-dessau>

and can also be ordered in hard copy from:

Richard-Wagner-Verband Dessau e.V.  
c/o Gunther Hinsch  
Sebastian-Bach-Str.7  
06844 Dessau-Rosslau

<http://www.rwv-dessau.de/kongress-2015>

During the Congress there will be a complete Ring Cycle on 13, 14, 15 and 17 May. See: <http://der-ring-in-dessau.de/begin>

## ANOTHER FORTHCOMING EVENT

The [Mariinsky Opera](#) and Orchestra under [Valery Gergiev](#) will present Wagner's Ring cycle in Birmingham, UK in November 2014. The event will be part of the UK–Russia Year of Culture 2014. This will be the third performance of highly acclaimed Mariinsky production of Wagner's Ring cycle in the UK, following performances in Cardiff in 2006 and London in 2009. The cycle will be presented at the [Birmingham Hippodrome](#) over four nights of 5, 6, 8 and 9 November 2014. Learn more and order tickets at <http://www.birminghamhippodrome.com/TheRing> (early booking is strongly recommended).

## REPORT ON ANNUAL CONGRESS OF THE RWVI, GRAZ, AUSTRIA

This year's Congress of the Richard Wagner Verband International was held in Graz on 29–30 May. It was my first time I had attended such an event and it was an enjoyable experience.



*RWVI Gala Dinner in Graz: from left to right: Shirley Breese from Australia, James McLoughlin, Dale Bilsland (Chairman of the Wagner Society of Scotland) and Andrea Buchanan (Secretary of the Wagner Society, London).*

Graz is the second largest city in Austria with a population of circa 300,000. It has a long tradition as a student city and its 'old town' is one of the best preserved city centres in central Europe.

The Congress was opened by Heinz Weyringer in the Stefaniensaal and attended by Eva Märtson and Eva Wagner-Pasquier, as well as by a large number of young artists from the Graz University of Music and Dramatic Arts. A magnificent dinner followed with a number of musical interludes performed by the young students. The Stefaniensaal was opened in 1885 by Prince Rudolf and his wife Princess Stefanie after whom it is named.

The following day was the meeting itself which took place in the Graz University. It was a fairly dramatic affair with the election of the President proving to be very divisive. There were two candidates: Andras Bajal from Hungary and Thomas Krakow from Leipzig. It was clear that the outgoing committee did not want Mr. Krakow and a number of them spoke against his nomination. However, he was elected by 32 to 25 votes.

The rest of the meeting was taken up with the election of the various other committee members and was a long and tedious affair. Andrea Buchanan of the London Society was elected.

There was an evening performance of *Lohengrin* at the Graz Opera House that evening followed by a reception.

Next year's Wagner Congress will take place in Dessau, Germany, from 14 to 17 May. There will be a full performance of the *Ring* on the 13, 14, 15 and 17 May in Dessau.

*James McLoughlin*  
4 June, 2014

## WSI TRIP TO FRANKFURT AND KARLSRUHE, 9–12 MAY 2014

This year's trip to Frankfurt and Karlsruhe was very enjoyable and, as ever, made more so by the company. On visiting the two opera houses, I could not help reflecting that whereas I would tend to love the ambiance and architecture of the beautiful old opera houses of Europe I prefer seeing operas in the modern houses with their excellent sightlines and comfortable seats. In both houses we had excellent seats in the stalls, but I noticed that the cheaper seats also had excellent sightlines and looked just as comfortable – something that cannot be said of the older houses.

On our first night in Frankfurt those who had arrived enjoyed a most enjoyable meal together. The following day was *Tristan* in the Oper, which is directly opposite the headquarters of the European Central Bank. The acoustics in the house are excellent, and Jennifer Wilson and Lance Ryan as Tristan and Isolde were vocally very good, especially in a house of this size. In particular the Liebestod was in perfect balance with a wonderful climax where Jennifer Wilson could be heard clearly over the orchestra. The Brangäne and Kurwenal of Claudia Mahnke and Simon Neal added to the performance while Andreas Bauer sang King Mark beautifully. Musically this was an excellent performance, which we all enjoyed and which justified the reputation the Frankfurt Oper has been gaining for Wagner Opera. However, writing at this distance I have already forgotten much of the production. I could not say it was

bad – if it had been, I might remember it better – but I can also say it did little for *Tristan*. Some of the production was simply irritating, such as the chorus movement in the first act. In the third act a constant drip of water onto the stage led to a debate as to whether it was intended, or the result of a leak on a wet night. In either case it was unmusical and irritating.

For me the low point was Act Two. If you are going to stage an opera realistically, by which I mean in a modern house and in modern costume, then the characters have to behave somewhat realistically. Tristan was not much of a lover as he kept his duffle coat on the whole time in the bedroom. And what woman breaks a glass lamp on the floor if you intend to be walking barefoot on the floor? Do people really stand on beds in their shoes if they intend to make love? Needless to say, for the love duet the lights were on full in the room. A less romantic scene it would be hard to imagine. These idle thoughts of mine would not have occurred if there had been any chemistry between Jennifer Wilson and Lance Ryan but there was none. If one did not know the plot and listen to the music but just showed a silent recording of the stage action to someone, they would never have described the plot. Now I know that someone will argue that *Tristan und Isolde* is all about interior feelings and not outward emotions – but if you wish to make that point, then do not produce it as a realistic drama. But enough of a rant. To summarise: because of the musical performance it was still a very good and enjoyable evening but the production, yet again, failed.

Of Karlsruhe the following day I had somewhat lesser expectations. I thought *Meistersinger* might be quite a demand for the resources of the house. In the event this turned out to be one of the most enjoyable, and thought-provoking productions of *Meistersinger* I have seen and one I would willingly have sat through again the following day to catch all the bits I missed.

Before I turn to the production I should address the musical performance. The singers, while not well known, were all well suited to their roles. They were primarily from the ensemble of the opera house, and that showed in their familiarity with each other. Daniel Kirch as Walter, a guest, was a fine singer who was singing this role for the first time. He tired a bit toward the end, but his assumption in general was very successful. The Beckmeister of Armin Kolarczyk was particularly enjoyable, while the Hans Sachs of Renatus Meszar was a very interesting interpretation of a man very much in love with Eva and struggling with his emotions. At times I missed the warmth of voice that would be suited to a more mellow portrayal, but as performed his assumption of the role was outstanding. The Eva of Christina Niessen showed the depth of the resources available in the ensemble of the opera house. Lastly, the conducting of Justin Brown allowed the work to flow with many details noticeable while not distracting. I think Wagner would have been delighted with the performance.

With regard to the production, it again was updated to a realistic setting with three areas on the very wide stage; two rooms on stage left and right and a central hall/rehearsal room. Unlike in the *Tristan*, each character was well delineated and believable. The story seemed to revolve around a choral society, with Walter trying to join to get his Eva. Act Two was a visual joy, with the centre set being a copy of the historical original set. I found out later that the idea was that it was Walter dreaming he was in *Meistersinger*. The set rotated to the famous Wieland production of *Meisteringer* ‘ohne Nürnberg’, and then rotated to a modern street scene. In each setting the costumes changed. There were many visual gags such as the Mouse from the Bayreuth *Lohengrin* wandering into the wrong opera. As the riot at the end of the act developed, the scenery rotated faster and faster with characters from one setting ending up in another. I have rarely heard so many genuine laughs at an opera as I heard during that Act and was reminded that this is, after all, a comedy.

Act Three took a more serious turn with Sachs struggling with his feelings, but all was resolved at the end with Walter winning a TV competition. The ending was also well managed, with Sachs in front of the curtain which consisted of posters for all different productions of *Meistersinger*. The curtain rose again to show the opening of the opera with Walter now the choir master and a new Walter arriving to distract Eva.

*Anthony Linehan*

## THE RING CYCLE IN GENEVA – MAY 2014

The Grand Théâtre Genève launched its own *Ring* cycle in March of last year with considerable success. It has rerun the series a number of times, and I attended the latest set, 18–25 May, 2014. The Theatre is quite splendid, built in full nineteenth-century *Belle Époque* style and opened in 1871. However, during the closing stages of *Die Walküre* in 1951, the magic fire went out of control and the building was largely burnt down – nobody killed luckily! Only the main foyer and the elegant salons above it were saved. The Theatre was reopened in 1961, with a new auditorium and stage area. Rather than copying the original, the present auditorium, seating 1488, is modern in style and very elegant, with much wood used in its facings, not unlike Wexford. The stage is enormous, and possesses amazing machinery allowing for all kinds of effects.

The *Ring* team comprised German conductor Ingo Metzmacher, who was born in Hanover and is a rising star with appearances at Deutsche Oper, Vienna State Opera, Covent Garden and Salzburg. The designer is Jürgen Rose from Bernberg, who has designed productions in Bayreuth, New York, Salzburg and particularly the Munich State Opera. He has worked closely in recent years with the director – the amazing 79-year-old Dieter Dorn, who has directed opera at Bayreuth, the Metropolitan, Salzburg, Vienna State Opera and many other places. He is a shining light to all those who believe you should never stop working and his production was fresh, imaginative and full of clever ideas.

Their production was modern but as one critic has said, ‘sticks to the script’. There are no ridiculous extraneous stupidities as we saw with the dreadful *Tristan* in Würzburg (I still shudder at the thought). This means there *are* German producers and designers who know how to stage an opera. There were many oddities, of course, but they all sat within the storyline. The Gods went to Valhalla all right, but in a large helium balloon, and the like!

The singing was excellent all round, some of it really good. German soprano Petra Lang, despite her small rotund appearance (sorry Tara!), is a fine actress but when she open her mouth she really can deliver the goods, tirelessly – fabulous voice. We had two Wotans, both good. First, American Tom Fox (no relation) for the nights one and two, and then Icelander Tomas Tomasson for the other. They were both commanding figures, with Thomasson just tipping the balance in his favour with his splendid timbre. English tenor John Daszak was a robust Siegfried (he looks for all the world like comedian Dara O’Brien), though he tired a little at the end of *Siegfried*. Will Hartmann and Michaela Kaune were incestuously excellent as the twins. Swedish baritone John Lundgren was a scary and darkly-voiced Alberich and Andreas Conrad, from Dresden, created a splendidly dotty Mime, the forging scene being particularly wittily done.

The many other roles were well filled and, most important of all, the music was beautifully played by the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande in the pit, a real luxury. Metzmacher was particularly good in the quieter ‘chamber music’ sequences and the Forest Murmurs were especially memorable. In all, this is a workmanlike modern production that doesn’t stretch the bounds of credibility and provides a well thought-through, entertaining and even witty take on the four nights. I certainly thought it worthwhile, though the cost of living in Geneva is horrendous!

*Ian Fox* © 2014

## *DER RING DES NIBELUNGEN IN DIJON*

Having seen various Ring productions in recent years, I decided to travel to Dijon, France, for something a little different – a performance of the Ring scheduled for only two days, Saturday/Sunday 5–6 October 2013. It was a most enjoyable experience!

Dijon has a beautiful, modern, acoustically optimised opera house. In the large foyer there was an exhibition dedicated to Friedelind Wagner, celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of her return from exile. The orchestra pit was deep, similar to Bayreuth, the musicians invisible to most of the audience.

The performance was entitled *The Ring of the Nibelung – There and Back*. The day before, there was a seminar explaining the development of the Dijon two-day Ring. (This was of course all in French but I believe I got most of it). The mayor of Dijon gave a welcoming speech, stating that one of the ideas of squeezing the *Ring* into two days, over a weekend, was to make it more accessible to the general public. Another incentive was the availability of some tickets for prices as low as €5.

The conductor, Daniel Kawka, the director, Laurent Joyeux and their staff then explained their ideas. This would not be the first two-day Ring. One was produced in Cologne in recent years, uncut, with two orchestras, three Wotans and one very dedicated and hardened audience. In Dijon it was decided to have only one orchestra and one Wotan but not to cut anything out of the Ring. Instead the approach was to start off with a blank sheet and fill it with what they considered the key, important pieces from Wagner’s *magnum opus*. They kept strictly to his music and libretto, but it appears to me that they ended up with time to spare, as they also commissioned Brice Pauset, their (very modernist) resident composer to come up with Prologues to *Das Rheingold* and to *Siegfried*!

*Das Rheingold* opened with an almost bare stage, the initial action consisting of an Old Woman (Erda?) refusing to give a Man (Wotan?) the Book of Knowledge for which he had asked her. This book-related theme continued throughout the four operas.

Although I am not a fan of modern music, Pauset’s composition (with words in French/German by Stephen Sazio, ending with Brünnhilde’s ‘wisst ihr, wie das ward?’) fitted the action, the singing–whispering of the hidden chorus and the use of unusual instruments not known in Wagner’s days. We moved seamlessly from this Prologue to the familiar sounds of the low E-flat and the 146-bar beginning of *Das Rheingold* and to the *Ring* proper.

The names of the excellent singers were not those with which we are familiar from the

worldwide *Ring* circuit. Thomas E. Bauer, a prize-winning Lieder recitalist, was a powerful and impressive Wotan. The brilliant young American tenor Daniel Brenna delighted the audience in the roles of Siegmund and Siegfried. I know we will hear more of him in future years. Josefine Weber was, to me, the best Sieglinde I have heard for a long time. But the star of the show was Sabine Hogrefe, whose singing and portrayal of Brünnhilde was flawless and spine-chilling.

The rest of the cast was, with few exceptions, in excellent voice. They all had to work very hard as there was some doubling/tripling/quadrupling up. For example we had Manuela Bress singing Fricka, Waltraute, Schwertleite and 2nd Norn. There were only four Walkyries on stage, but singing all eight parts!

The European Wagner Orchestra was assembled specially for the occasion. Unfortunately it occasionally lacked power and precision, particularly in some of the important brass passages.

Naturally the action was cut back to fit the two-day format: Wotan and Loge themselves fetched up the gold from Niebelheim on handy pallets; Fafner did not kill Fasolt (and thus we missed the first dramatic effect of Alberich's curse on the ring); the conversation between Wotan and Fricka in Act 2 of *Die Walküre* was too brief, but at least most of the rest of the Act was left untouched; the Wanderer and Mime did not meet; *Götterdämmerung* started directly in the Hall of the Gibichungs. There were some other strange changes also: The Rhinemaidens did not cavort in the river, instead they gambolled through falling snow and pelted Alberich with snowballs; the three Norns sang their trio as a Prologue to *Siegfried*, with Wagner's libretto but 'music' – more like sound effects – by Pauset.

But there were also innovative ideas: for instance, Alberich's dragon in *Das Rheingold* was a projected image, not unusual, but the projector was obviously controlled by Alberich himself, confirming the transformation by means of that link. Instead of a Woodbird, we had a flock of birds – six boy sopranos whose acting and singing of the role was very professional.

For me the only disappointing part was when, at the end of *Die Walküre*, Wotan summoned Loge who actually reappeared, carrying some flimsy fairy lights which he placed randomly near the impressive rock on which Brünnhilde was reposing. A sad, anti-climactic ending: some red fire projected onto the white, swan-shaped mountain would have been a much better effect to go with the dramatic music which brings that opera to its climactic conclusion.

For the statisticians: How long was the Dijon 2-day *Ring*? Well, *Das Rheingold* lasted for 1h 30', plus 27' for the Prologue; *Die Walküre* 2h 35' plus one 20' interval; *Siegfried* was 2h 20' plus 16' for the Prologue and a 20' interval; finally the shortened *Götterdämmerung* came to 2h 10' plus 20' for the interval, a total of 9h 18' of music..

Both days ended with very loud, rhythmic and prolonged applause from an extremely enthusiastic international audience.

Perhaps my review above sounds a little critical and negative. But the important question is: would I travel to Dijon again to see this production if it is restaged? Answer: Oui, absolument!

*Michael Marr*

## WAGNER IN BUDAPEST OPERA FESTIVAL 2014

The 2014 Wagner Festival held in June was a triumphant success and was enjoyed by all of the WSI who attended. Held yearly in June the festival consists of a Ring Cycle held over four days and another Wagner opera, *Tannhäuser* this year. There is the added bonus of the regular season in the 'old' opera house in Budapest and some members attended the performances of *Elektra* and *Rosenkavalier*. For diehards a performance of *Gone With The Wind* in Hungarian at the Operetta Theatre was available.

The Wagner performances were at the Palau des Arts. This is a stunning centre, opened in 2005 and overlooking the Danube. The Béla Bartók National Concert Hall is 25 metres wide, 25 metres high and 75 metres long. The acoustic is superb, seating is comfortable, sightlines are excellent, access to the city centre is convenient (public transport free to seniors) and the price of tickets very cheap. There are sufficient eating and drinking stations on all levels. Beware the queue jumpers!

The cycle ran over four days. We had two Brünnhildes, Irene Theorin and Petra Lang, two Siegfrieds, Jay Hunter Morris and Christian Franz.

Adam Fischer (an outstanding conductor) described the cycle as 'an alternative performance style to Bayreuth'. The artists entered and exited from doors at the side of the stage, from either end of a large continuous series of screens at the back of the stage on an elevated walkway connected to the lower stage by a series of steps. The screens opened at times to allow access to and exit from the walkway and one could see through the screens at times (very effective for Erda's appearances). The main use of the screens was for illustration and illumination – some of it stunning, some tiresome and repetitive, but technically faultless. The highlights for me were the scene in Niebelheim when Alberich used the Tarnhelm to turn himself into a dragon and a toad (brilliant), the scene when Fafner kills Fasolt (shocking but so effective), the flashing sword in *Siegfried* (stirring), Loge and the fire scene at the end of *Walküre* and the Immolation scene with the whole screen and the supertitles screen filled with images of fire.

The lowlight was the very beginning, when dirty scummy water filled a tank and my heart sank to think of the possible images that were to come our way over the next 15 hours. As one of our party said pithily 'I could have done without the pigeon house water'.

The Rhinemaidens were dressed in ball gowns and were very fine, in all senses. Hartmut Welker as Alberich acted and sang well. Egils Silins as Wotan was very impressive in general with a fine voice and an imposing presence. They were both dressed in tails for all their appearances as were Froh (Zoltan Nyari) and Donner (Oskar Hillebrandt), both somewhat less impressive.

Gerhard Siegel as Mime was outstanding and one of the stars of the whole cycle. His acting was superb and in my opinion he outsang both Siegfrieds. The reception he received was tumultuous. Walter Fink was Fafner and Hunding and had an extraordinarily cavernous voice which evoked enthusiasm from the audience. Judit Nemeth was imposing as Fricka and Second Norn. A local favourite, she is an experienced Bayreuth hand and it shows. The chorus in *Götterdämmerung* were well marshalled on the stage and upper walkway. The funny masks were a little ludicrous. Erika Gal as Erda was very impressive, but it was disappointing that the screen doors were not opened for her scene in *Götterdämmerung* as

they had been in *Rheingold*. Kurt Rydl divided opinion as Hagen. Some of us felt he was shouting, but he was evil personified and a formidable actor.

Anja Kampe was brilliant as Sieglinde. She looked fantastic, acted beautifully, sang like a dream and interacted well with Christian Franz. Her reception at curtain call was shattering and very well deserved. She will sing Senta in Budapest in the June 2015 *Holländer*. Booking is open for 2015.

Christian Franz had a tough cycle. He sang Loge in *Rheingold*, Siegmund in *Walküre* and Siegfried in *Götterdämmerung*. He was dressed more casually, with a crumpled black shirt hanging out at the waist and poorly cut trousers. He was arresting, could sing all the notes and acted well. He was great as Loge, outperformed in all areas by Anja Kempe in *Walküre* and good in *Götterdämmerung*. I liked him and, as Barkis said in David Copperfield, 'he was willing'.

I also liked Jay Hunter Morris. He looked the part as Siegfried, seemed a little lost at times on stage and sang with a good line and was the enthusiastic young man that Siegfried is. For me he lacked the last bit of steel in his voice to cut through the heavy orchestra. Overall a very enjoyable performance.

Irene Theorin was excused at the beginning of *Walküre* as she had injured herself in the days before and had to use a stick all through. She walked quite slowly and was in distress. She is a formidable singer and easily overrode the orchestra in the Immolation scene. A very strong overall performance.

Petra Lang and Jay Hunter Morris were very good together in *Siegfried*. She had crystal clear top notes and a good and strong presence. I feel she would find the full cycle a strain.

There were a lot of extras. Dancers followed Alberich around (a distraction), two ravens were present for Wotan's scenes (hilarious interaction with Mime in the Wanderer scene in Act 1 of *Siegfried*) and Siegfried's appearances in *Götterdämmerung* (very appropriate and to me an addition). Ravens also appeared on screen flying around which I also liked

The most significant extra was a man dressed in a red dress suit and depicting Loge. He acted slowly and gymnastically and was an irritation to some members but I felt his presence emphasized the significance of Loge in the whole *Ring* cycle.

I would recommend this *Ring* cycle to all members. The emotional tension was high, the singing was of a high standard and Budapest is a fine place to visit.

Some of the New York Society that we met went and booked for next year before the full cycle was over. Welcome to Jennifer Brennan, our new member from Germany via Ireland whom we met at the Palau. A special thank you to our colleagues from the Wagner Society of New York, Kit Gill (Vice-President) and Mark Villamar and his wife Esther. A word of greeting to Rick from Victoria, Australia, who was staying in our hotel and who was given 'honorary membership status' during the cycle. He was persuaded to come with us and thoroughly enjoyed himself. A WSI trip to see the Melbourne Ring might be a step too far, but failing that go book for Budapest 2015 soon. You will be thrilled.

*Paul Magnier*