



The Wagner Society of Ireland

Founded 2002

President: Dr. Alexander Anissimov, Conductor



Newsletter

November 2012

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

Dear Member,

It is hard to believe we are already in November and nearing Christmas. It was good to see so many members at our 10th Anniversary dinner and the feedback has been that everyone enjoyed themselves. The Society's President, Alexander Anissimov, sent his congratulations and best wishes from Minsk via our Vice-Chair, Stephen Mennell. Certainly I think we can congratulate Gemma Hussey, who suggested the location and masterminded the event, as the food was excellent, at excellent value, and the room was just the right size.

We have also had this autumn the wonderful performance of *Tristan und Isolde*. One could sit there proud that we had been able to assist Miriam in her preparation for the role. That surely alone showed our benefit as a Society. The performances were of the highest standard and we could be really proud of what was achieved by Fergus Sheil. On behalf of the Society I sent our congratulations to both Fergus and Miriam. It was also a pleasure to welcome some members of the Finnish Wagner Society and I am glad to report they really enjoyed their trip to Dublin.

Looking forward we have filled in more of the dates for next year and it will be a busy one. We continue our exploration of the works of Wagner with Derek Watson with *Die Meistersinger* over two days. We also have another performance of Wagner in Ireland with *The Flying Dutchman* in Belfast and of course the trip to La Scala for *The Ring*. There are as usual a number of interesting talks and I hope we will maintain the high attendance of recent times. The next talk on the 6th December will also be a social occasion as this year we will not have our Christmas dinner given the recent anniversary dinner. I hope you will be able to make it.

The first talk this year was by Chris McQuaid which I heard was very enjoyable but which I unfortunately missed due to work. He tells me that a number of members also missed it due to the Wexford Festival and wish him to repeat the talk. If enough members contact us, we would be happy to arrange an extra meeting. Chris is also suggesting the talk in longer format with two halves of 40 min each with a 10 min interval. Please revert if you are interested.

This newsletter also includes the deferred report from the meeting of the Verband in Prague and some reports of opera abroad. We encourage members to write and share their experiences in the newsletter. With best wishes as our 10th Anniversary Year heads towards Wagner's Bicentenary Year.

Anthony Linehan

SOCIETY PROGRAMME OF EVENTS – 2012/2013

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Time</u>
6 December 2012 Note change of date !	Talk by Jarlath Jennings: ‘Can Technology Help Keep Opera Alive and Relevant to 21st Century Audiences in Ireland?’	United Arts Club 3, Upper Fitzwilliam Street Dublin 2.	8.00 p.m.
	Note: This talk will be shorter than usual – roughly 25/30 minutes with questions - as the plan for the evening incorporates a wine reception to allow members to mingle for a celebratory drink or two.		
<u>2013</u>			
Friday 4 January	Wagner Bicentenary Birthday Celebration – NSO NB – See information about programme and promotional discount on page 3 of this Newsletter.	National Concert Hall, Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2.	8.00 p.m.
Thursday 24 January	Talk by Julian Horton: ‘Was Bruckner a Wagnerian Symphonist?’	United Arts Club 3, Upper Fitzwilliam Street Dublin 2.	8.00 p.m.
Friday 25 to Thursday 31 January	Veronica Dunne Singing Competition – Wagner Prizes NB – See more information on page 3 of this Newsletter.	National Concert Hall, Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2.	To be confirmed
Friday 15 and Sunday 17 February	Fully Staged Performance of <i>The Flying Dutchman</i> . - See message from our Chairman on page 4 of this Newsletter.	NI Opera, Grand Opera House, Great Victoria St., Belfast.	7.15 p.m. And 2.00 p.m.
Wednesday 27 February	10 th Annual General Meeting	United Arts Club 3, Upper Fitzwilliam Street Dublin 2.	8.00 p.m.
Thursday 28 March	Talk by Anthony Linehan: ‘The Human in Verdi and Wagner’	United Arts Club 3, Upper Fitzwilliam Street Dublin 2.	8.00 p.m.
Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 April	Derek Watson Seminar: Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg	United Arts Club 3, Upper Fitzwilliam Street Dublin 2.	To be confirmed
Thursday 23 May	Talk by Ian Fox: ‘The Composer as Librettist – A Comparison between Wagner and Other Composer/Librettists’	United Arts Club 3, Upper Fitzwilliam Street Dublin 2.	8.00 p.m.

Information on other forthcoming events

Concert on 4 January 2013 celebrating the Bicentenary of Wagner's birth.

The Committee has made a special arrangement with the NCH, as follows:

What Wagner Society of Ireland members get

- *A 15% discount on all tickets priced from €18 to the top price of €35 (not applicable with any other offer).
- *The NCH doesn't charge booking fees.
- *Discount is available once the promotional code is mentioned. This is RTENSOWSI.
- *This can be used for any manner of booking - i.e. online, in person at box office, and telephone booking.
- *We will have a space where members can meet before the concert and during the interval.

What RTE require

- *Discount code **must** be mentioned **at time of booking** to get the discount (RTENSOWSI).

The promotion cannot be back-dated to cover tickets which have already been purchased without giving the discount code.

The programme is a lovely one, which should appeal to many people who are as yet unfamiliar with Wagner's work. We suggest that tickets for the concert might make an excellent stocking filler, or other Christmas gift!

The concert will be conducted by Matthias Bamert, soloist is Miriam Murphy, and the programme consists of:

Rienzi Overture
 Wesendonck Lieder
 Ride of the Valkyries
Tannhäuser Overture
 Prelude and Liebestod from *Tristan und Isolde*
 Prelude to *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.

Veronica Dunne International Singing Competition 2013 - 25-31 January 2013

The Prize of €1,000 donated to this Competition by the Wagner Society of Ireland for the best performance of a song by Wagner in any round of the Competition has been generously matched by a Prize for the same amount in the memory of the late Frank O'Rourke by his family. As a result, the Society's Prize has been allocated to a male, and the O'Rourke Prize to a female, singer. The Competition takes place in the National Concert Hall, with the final taking place at 8.00 p.m. on Thursday 31 January with the NSO. Further details on dates and times of competitors singing Wagner songs will be notified in due course.

The Flying Dutchman in Belfast – February 2013

As you know there will be performances of *The Flying Dutchman* (sung in English, with surtitles as well) on the 15th and the 17th February next in Belfast. The performances are on a Friday and a Sunday. The Friday performance will commence at 7.15 p.m. and the Sunday performance at 2.00 p.m. The question is what members wish to do. Now some will make their own arrangements and maybe there is no need to organise people. However would members like to go Friday night and for us to arrange a rate with a hotel? Would members like us to organise a bus to go up and down on Sunday? Or would members like to travel up on Saturday and return on Sunday after the opera? If members would revert to Anthony at ritaandanthony@eircom.net asap, we will see what the consensus is.

Parsifal - New Met Live in HD Production March 2013

The new Met Live in HD production of *Parsifal* is on in cinemas on Saturday March 2nd at 5pm. The cast will include Jonas Kaufmann in the title role and René Pape as Gurnemanz. Daniele Gatti will conduct.

A full list of forthcoming Live in HD performances – not only from the Met, but also the Berlin Philharmonic and the Bolshoi – is available on the website of Classical Arts Ireland:

www.classicalartsireland.com

Classical Arts Ireland

Classical Arts Ireland is an arts enterprise established in 2011, aiming, among other things, to promote and develop activities for public benefit in opera, ballet and classical music in Ireland; to heighten national and international awareness of Ireland's rich heritage in the classical arts, and to strengthen the place in Irish arts policy and provision of the classical arts. Its activities currently include:

- The promotion of live screenings of the best of international Opera, Ballet and Orchestral music to audiences in communities throughout Ireland, and
- The establishment and development of a long-term programme to produce scholarly performing editions, professional performance, and recordings of the large repertoire of important but unpublished Irish opera and art music.

Classical Arts Ireland is funded purely by revenue from its programme activities, and by private donations in support of its programmes. It is not funded by government or by any government agency.

You can find out more about the organization by checking its website,

www.classicalartsireland.com

which also lists forthcoming opera and ballet performances due to take place in Ireland and is a convenient resource for checking what is in the pipeline.

Report of the Meeting of the Verband of the Wagner Societies in May 2012 in Prague

The meeting of the Verband is always an enjoyable occasion with Wagnerians from around the world meeting to attend performance and seminars and various organised trips. Having attended this meeting over the last few years one of the more enjoyable parts is meeting acquaintances from the other Wagner Societies and discussing and comparing experiences. One of the consequences of Helen and I meeting the Finnish delegates this year was their decision to take the opportunity to attend *Tristan* when it was performed in Dublin. Subsequently they did so, as members who met them at one of the *Tristan* performances are aware.

The key meeting at the Verband however is the meeting of the Chairpersons of the various Societies. This used to be a fairly straightforward affair but in 2011 it turned into an exceptionally long and divisive meeting which necessitated a subsequent exceptional meeting in Frankfurt to resolve. The 2012 meeting also threatened to be divisive given the strong feelings that arose about the way the societies had been treated by the Bayreuth Festival on the issue of tickets. In the event the meeting was successful, largely due to the fact that the Verband's President, Prof Märtsen, managed this emotive topic quite well, having first moved it up the agenda. Given its importance and the interest attached to it I attach below here the relevant section from the Minutes of the meeting:

"Ticket policy Bayreuther Festspiele"

The President once more explicitly emphasises that the German Associations never had any right to tickets of the Bayreuther Festspiele. Nor does the honorary office of the Chairperson entitle to special treatment in the ticket policy. Chairpersons who have been active in the Association for some time confirm that there were never tickets for the Bayreuther Festspiele in the past. It was a generous present of Wolfgang Wagner who granted a ticket allotment to the Wagner Associations.

When the management of the Festspiele informed the Associations in a letter in December last year that there would no longer be any special allotments for the Wagner Associations as at the next Festspiele season, the President wrote numerous letters and conducted many phone calls to revoke this decision. The politicians seem to be divided as to who is even responsible in this matter. The Bavarian ministry referred the President to Berlin, whereby Berlin in turn referred her back to the ministry. However, one name was never mentioned regarding the allotments: the management of the Festspiele! They are - contrary to Wolfgang Wagner! - now employees of the Federal Government and subject to its instructions.

The Administrative Board has provided the managers of the Festspiele with an allotment of 1,000 tickets at their disposal for the youth patronage. This allotment was given to the Scholarship Foundation following the immediate approval by the management of the

Festspiele. In return, the "Festival of young artists" - which has by all means been in existence for 60 years - has not received any tickets at all!

The President, Mr Krakow and Prof. Dr. Schneider met with the managers of the Festspiele and Mr Emmerich in Bayreuth in April. During this meeting the management of the Festspiele elucidated how much they depended on the political executing agencies! The present financial restrictions determine the events in Bayreuth. As the subsidies come from the public sector, the management of the Festspiele is bound by the political instructions. However, the managers of the Festspiele ensure us of their support on all points, but at the same time ask for understanding in return if their hands are tied at some decisions.

Unfortunately, the President has to date not been able to find out the amount of tickets involved in the Association allotment. It is easy to extrapolate the number for the German associations. In contrast, the orders of the non-German Associations were placed through private names. In their cases respective allotments were ordered and purchased in order to distribute them to the members. Nor were there any answers to date following the direct enquiry by the President to the Associations - with the exception of Cape Town.

The President has prepared a letter on behalf of the delegates assembly directly to the Federal Minister of Culture at the Bundeskanzleramt, Mr Bernd Naumann, as she has never received any reply from his employees. There is no higher office for the President to turn to. In this letter the President clarifies that, although we do not have a right to Festspiele tickets, this ticket allotment has significantly supported our honorary efforts. The decision to eliminate the ticket allotment for the Wagner Associations should therefore be once more considered and revoked. The letter shall be displayed following the delegates assembly and all delegates are asked to sign it.

A request to speak by the RWV Frankfurt/Main registered prior to the delegates assembly, with which the discussion is to be opened, has become moot in light of the previous explanations of the President.

William Scott of the Wagner Society of Scotland, who also speaks for another 15 Associations, thanks the President for the explanations. It had not been evident that the management of the Festspiele was dependant on the political executing agencies to such an extent. The communication with Bayreuth had not been satisfactory for this reason. The Wagner Associations considered it extremely insulting to be called a "travel agency" in the letter of the management of the Festspiele! He thanks the President that the highest political office responsible shall now be entrusted with the issue by the prepared letter. Mr Scott further promises to submit to the President the number of tickets which the 16 Associations represented by him have received in the past.

Dirk Monreal, RWV Bonn/Siegburg, thanks the Executive Committee for having acted in such a prudent manner in this almost hopeless situation. This letter now exhausts all options and he appeals to the delegates to await the further developments with consideration, calm

and composure.

Dr. Jutta Winckler, RWV Minden, who had expected a fight based on the many emails in the run-up, reads a short episode from the Festschrift at the 100-year anniversary of the RWV Minden at the conclusion of the discussion. As early as in 1891 (!) there were angry protest letters because the Administrative Board in Bayreuth had completely cancelled a preferred allotment of Festspiele tickets for the Wagner Association's.

Other items of note at the meeting of the Verband included:

The opera performances in Prague were balanced. *Parsifal* was well staged and acted in a relatively straight-forward production: Eva Urbanova was a particularly impressive Kundry. A local production of Smetana's *Bartered Bride* was very attractive. I had not heard this opera before and I really enjoyed the opportunity to hear it sung in the vernacular by Czech singers. Finally, we attended *Così Fan Tutte* in the Estates Theatre which is a jewel of a theatre - and where, incidentally, *Don Giovanni* was first performed. The production was modern but true to the spirit of the work and again it was a pleasure to hear the work in a theatre of the correct size.

Anthony Linehan

2013 Verband Meeting

For any member interested in travelling to this event, next year's Congress of the Richard Wagner Verband will take place in the Composer's birthplace, Leipzig, on 18 – 22 May. Members interested in finding out more about the event can download a full programme and registration form from the website of the Leipzig Wagner Verband:

<http://wagner-verband-leipzig.de/engl/>

While only assigned Committee members can attend formal meetings, an array of tours, concerts and opera performances is on offer for Society Members and their family or friends.

There will be further information about this in a subsequent Newsletter.

Reviews

[Review of Ring Cycle, Munich, in The New York Times, 17 July 2012 – by Zachary Woolfe](#)
Society member James McLoughlin, who attended the Ring Cycle in Munich this summer, strongly recommended this review, which he endorses as closely matching his own reaction to the performances. To avoid running foul of copyright laws, a link to the article is included here:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/18/arts/music/a-ring-fit-for-a-time-of-austerity.html?emc=eta1>

Tristan und Isolde at BGE Theatre, Dublin 30 September and 3 and 6 October 2012

It must be a matter of delight to members of the Wagner Society of Ireland, that this courageous project proved to be such a success. Many members attended more than one performance and took the opportunity to encourage, or bring along, friends and family who might not otherwise have decided to attend such an unfamiliar and lengthy event. Members also had an opportunity to welcome a contingent of 14 from the Wagner Society of Finland, who very much enjoyed their visit to Dublin (including Chapelizod!), Wicklow and of course the Opera itself. The Theatre and surrounding forecourt and hostelrys were abuzz each evening with a throng of operagoers who were clearly enjoying themselves mightily. Reaction from the press was very favourable, and some members particularly enjoyed an article by Michael Dervan of the Irish Times in advance of the Opera, lamenting the dearth of Wagner performance in this country and the resulting gap in the experience of Irish audiences and composers alike, as well as drawing attention to the existence of our Society. Again, for copyright reasons a link is included rather than a reproduction of the whole article:

<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/features/2012/0928/1224324530791.html>

Hopefully, the success of this enterprise will encourage more frequent performances of Wagner's music, and further productions of his operas in Ireland over the coming years.

Wagner Society Website

We would remind members to keep an eye on the www.wagnersociety.ie website. Michael Marr keeps it as up-to-date as possible, and fresh information often appears there in advance of circulation in the newsletter or by special communication.

NEWSLETTER

Circulation and Interim Updates

The Newsletter is circulated by email unless members do not have an email address, in which case it is sent by ordinary post. Updates or reminders are also sent by email from time to time.

Contributions

The Committee welcomes contributions members themselves might like to send us, whether brief reports on performances or recordings of Wagner's works, or thoughts on aspects of his work that they would like to share with other members of the Society. Contributions can be sent by email to: info@wagnersociety.ie
