

The Raven

Newsletter of

The Richard Wagner Society of the Upper Midwest

Volume II Number 1

Spring 2006



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Letter from the Editor

As many of you know or read in our last newsletter, I was out of commission at the end of last year due to an acute attack of pancreatitis. Three months later I had my gall bladder removed. Today I am feeling much better and more myself. I just wanted to say that all is a-ok once again. Thank you so much for your thoughts, well wishes and welcome backs. They are truly appreciated! I am so happy to be back on the Wagner train again!!

Carol Thomas

How I started with Wagner ...

It is a tradition in our society for members to tell us how they became interested in Wagner. This issue, we feature our treasurer, Jamie Andrews. Jamie is also the Community Education Director for the Minnesota Opera, in charge of inspiring new audiences to opera. He has developed an extensive education program that provides opportunities for students, teachers, and adults through in-school residencies, singing internships for high school students, resources for teacher's, and adult education classes. Jamie comes to the Opera from an education background. With a Bachelor of Music Education from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. He taught band and choir in Minnesota for a number of years.



My Introduction to Wagner
By Jamie Andrews

The story of how I became interested in Wagner's music is similar to others who have shared their stories in this newsletter. Growing up in Monroe, Wisconsin, I was your average band member interested in playing music, but not necessarily classical music or opera, much less Wagner. I was a percussionist throughout my student life and graduated high school with the intension of being a percussion performance major in college. I wanted to be a jazz drummer – not

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Wagner At The Ordway?

Producing Wagner in Minnesota

By Jamie Andrews and David W. Cline

Part of the mission of the Richard Wagner Society of the Upper Midwest is to “Encourage performances of Wagner's works.” This charge encapsulates many ideas, from sponsoring recitals and concerts to supporting fully staged productions of Wagner's works. We would like to focus on one particular area that seems to have a tremendous potential for growth and development. Supporting local organizations like The Minnesota Opera can be an exciting and productive way to have Wagner performed in our own backyard.

Many Wagner Societies around the world offer some support to opera companies producing these works. Beyond serving as cheerleaders for Wagner's music, they raise funds to encourage the production of this type of opera.

“One must have the proper resources”

Producing Wagner can be a very expensive endeavor for any opera company today, just as in Wagner's day. His works demand a large number of singers, expansive sets, a huge orchestra, and extended rehearsal time; all which translate into additional costs for the presenting company. As Dale Johnson, Artistic Director of The Minnesota Opera said, “When producing Wagner, one must have the proper resources to deal with the sheer size and scope of the operas.”

For example, a company that mounts a production of *Tosca* will have a cast of three principals, three comprimario roles, a male only chorus, a children's chorus, and an average size orchestra of about 60. The entire length of the piece is a mere two hours (with intermissions). Put this in contrast to a staging of *Die Meistersinger von Nuremberg*, which calls for 17 principals and comprimario roles, and combined chorus and orchestra of over 150 (and potentially more). Then you must consider the run time of the show which is about five hours long. (Based on just this, you can only image how expensive mounting a Ring Cycle can be!)

So what causes the increased cost? It is due to the number of people involved and the time it takes to perform and rehearse the work. For example, additional singers needed on stage (which the Opera provides housing and travel), extra cost for rehearsal time in the theater, and

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plenty of overtime for stage hands and orchestra. In an average orchestra contract, there is a standard call time for performances (about three hours) and when a performance goes over that, you start paying overtime. There are many other details that we could get into, but you get the picture.

A Minnesota Tristan und Isolde?

On January 13th, 2006 Karen Bachman and David Cline of the RWSUM met with Minnesota Opera's president and CEO, Kevin Smith, as well as the company's artistic director, Dale Johnson, to discuss the production of another Wagnerian opera. Dale reported that Wagner's operas were commonly on the initial list for future productions but practical considerations prevented their making the final cut. These problems included the previously mentioned costs due to opera length, orchestra and cast size, and increased availability of rehearsal space. Both Kevin and Dale discussed inventive ways to handle these problems. Money in sufficient amounts would go a long way towards solving the problems.

Nevertheless, Dale said he had been considering *Tristan und Isolde* as a future Minnesota Opera production. Coproducing it with another opera company would reduce the cost, but still, an additional \$150,000 would be needed to make production feasible. Dale also challenged the Wagner Society to bring in Wagnerians from around the country to attend and perhaps participate in a Wagner Symposium.

This is where our society can help. As a board, we have talked about what the RWSUM could do to encourage the Minnesota Opera to produce Wagner. A goal of raising money to help offset these additional costs is an obvious place to start. Details about how to raise this money will come later, but here are two initial steps that you can do right now to help us reach this goal.

First, sign up new members. Membership dues are a source of income but more importantly, members provide us with contacts to other groups which might be interested in Wagner. This networking will be an important first step to raise money.

Second, volunteer for any of the committees that the Wagner Society has to offer. If you are interested in fundraising, please let us know.

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Any and all help with this will only make our group stronger. Any organization will only be as strong as its members, so we encourage everyone to help out in some way.

Editor's Note: Jamie Andrews is the RWSUM program director and is the Community Education Director for The Minnesota Opera. David W. Cline is the founder and President of the RWSUM.

Tax Exempt Status

IT IS OFFICIAL!

The Board of Directors of The Richard Wagner Society of the Upper Midwest is pleased to announce that the society has been granted official federal 503(c) tax exempt status dated May 12th, 2006! This means that all contributions to the society will be fully tax deductible beginning from when the application was first submitted in June 2005.

We owe a great debt of appreciation to Jamie Andrews for the extensive amount of work that he performed to complete the application and to make necessary changes and resubmissions. We thank you very much, Jamie!

Before the federal tax exemption was filed, John Heefner and his son filed an exemption request with the State of Minnesota which also has been completed. We thank John and his son for their work on our behalf also.

With this newsletter, you are aware of our fund drive to raise money to support Minnesota Opera's production of a Wagner opera and for The Wagner Young Artist Fund. We now can go forward with a formal campaign to achieve these goals. What a glorious opportunity is before us!

Your President, David W. Cline MD

Upcoming Events

Lecture

By Dr. Matthew Bribitzer-Stull

*From Nibelheim to Hollywood:
The Associativity of Harmonic Progression*

Wednesday, 14 June, 2006
6:00 - 7:00 PM
Minnesota Opera Center
620 N. 1st St.
Minneapolis MN

Conventional wisdom holds that the tonal-dramatic musical language of nineteenth-century Europe—particularly Wagner’s—is alive and well in the modern-day film score. Most-often cited in support of this claim are the chromatic harmony and Leitmotive (associative themes) shared between the two genres. This study begins with Wagner’s notorious “Tarnhelm” music from Das Rheingold and then proceeds to later dramatic works that include salient presentations of the opening “Tarnhelm” harmonic progression, demonstrating the progression’s remarkable commonality of sinister, eerie, and eldritch associations in contexts ranging from nineteenth-century art music to scores from science-fiction, fantasy, and horror movies of the post-1975 orchestral film music renaissance.



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Lecture
By Donald Arthur

Thursday, 9 November, 2006
6:00 PM
Minnesota Opera Center
620 N. 1st St.
Minneapolis MN



Hans Hotter

Translated and edited by Donald Arthur
Forewords by Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau and Zubin Mehta
Coming in September from Northeastern University Press
ISBN 1-55553-661-1

An expanded and updated translation of the memoirs of the great German bass-baritone.

Hans Hotter (1909-2003) was one of opera's most influential and profoundly moving artists of the twentieth century. His imposing frame and austere, high-browed profile made him an ideal figure of tragic dignity, unequaled in his era as Wotan, Amfortas, the Dutchman, Scarpia and the Grand Inquisitor in *Don Carlo*, and several Strauss roles, including three world premieres of that composer's works. Hotter made his debut at age twenty-one in Troppau, Germany (now Oppava, Czech Republic), and by the age of thirty was a leading artist at the prestigious Bavarian State Opera in Munich. Although he never joined the Nazi party and avoided appearances at Bayreuth while under Nazi control, Hotter remained active in German theaters throughout the war. He achieved his vocal prime after the war and was a featured performer in Munich, Vienna, Bayreuth, New York, San Francisco, London's Covent Garden, and Salzburg. In addition to his long and acclaimed opera career, Hotter was also a distinguished stage director, teacher, and an incomparable lieder singer, celebrated for his mastery of Schubert's song cycle *Die Winterreise*.

Donald Arthur is a former orper singer, actor, screenwriter, and author. A native of New Rork City, he now divides his time between Munich and Malta.

DvD Nights First Thursdays 7-9 PM

We meet approximately the first Thursday of every month to watch and discuss various productions of Wagner's dramas currently available on DvD. Coffee and Tea will be provided by host Kevin Edgar. If you like, bring some snacks to share. (A kitchen is available.) The address is 700 Douglas Ave, Minneapolis. (Which is located two blocks south of the Walker Art Center on the Corner of Douglas and Hennepin.) The apartment building is called Kenwood Gables. *If you are planning to attend please let Kevin know by email (wagner@bke.org) or phone 612-381-9429.*

The schedule is

6 July Lohengrin Act I
3 August Lohengrin Act II
September - No Meeting (Bayreuth Recovery)
5 October Lohengrin Act III
2 November TBA
7 December TBA
4 January No Meeting (General Recovery)

Minnesota Opera's Win-Win Alliances Program

We have exciting news to share with you! The Wagner Society has been invited to participate in a unique fund raising opportunity through the Minnesota Opera's "Win-Win Alliances Program." The Minnesota Opera has launched a major campaign of its own to increase its subscriber base for the 2006-2007 season. The Win-Win Alliances Program offers the Wagner Society and its supporters the opportunity to enjoy opera as well as raise revenue for our organization and its *Tristan* fund.

It works like this: we (the Wagner Society) "sell" new Minnesota Opera season subscriptions to ourselves, our family and friends,

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Alliances

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our corporations and clients, and The Minnesota Opera contributes 25% of the proceeds directly back to our organization. This is a “win-win” growth opportunity for the Wagner Society and the Opera.

The Minnesota Opera announced its 2006-2007 season on March 16 and has available to us all the materials we need to sell the season ticket subscriptions for the five-show opera package. As a friend of the Wagner Society, you simply place your subscription order on a form coded for this program, or tell the box office you are participating in the Wagner Society’s Win-Win Alliance. The Opera returns 25% of the package ticket prices to the Wagner Society. In this way you are supporting both the Minnesota Opera and the Wagner Society and enjoying five nights at the Opera. Subscription packages range in price from \$125 (for a partial-view seat on a weeknight) to \$545 (for an orchestra-level seat on opening night). That means the Wagner Society can generate \$31.25-\$136.25 for each new subscription sold. Ticket packages are available in all price ranges and for all the performances. (This program works for new subscriptions only, not renewals. New subscriptions means any subscription that is not a renewal order from a current 2005-2006 subscriber.)

As a Wagner Society friend, if you sell a subscription to a client or friend whom you would like to interest in the Wagner Society and you yourself are a subscriber, you will have five occasions to cultivate this interest. If you are a Wagner Society friend selling to a business client, you have five more opportunities to see your client. If you are an employer or you sell to your employer, the tickets can be used as incentives or gifts for employees.

The Wagner Society believes this is a good opportunity for us to raise revenue, enjoy the opera, and strengthen the commitment to supporting the arts.

Please call or email Jamie Andrews for additional information at 612.342.9573 or andrews@mnopera.org. How many would you like to participate in this campaign? The Win-Win Alliance commenced on March 16 and will last until September 23.

Support the Wagner Society and the Minnesota Opera at the same time: WIN-WIN!

Jamie Andrews

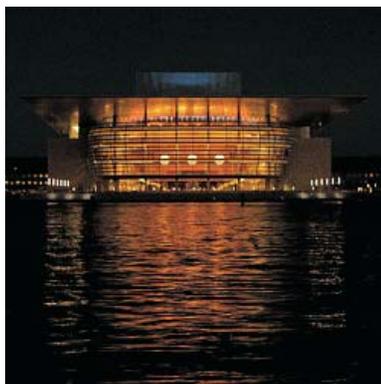
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an Education Director for an opera company! But between hearing the finale to the last act of *The Marriage of Figaro* (which really got me hooked on opera) and playing the noted band transcription of *Elsa's Procession to the Cathedral* from *Lohengrin*, something stuck.

I remember just getting so caught up in the harmony of *Elsa's Procession* (and having plenty of time to listen because there is very little for the percussion section to do), it always seemed like I was hearing something new every time we played it. There was something so compelling and dramatic about this piece and I needed to learn more. A similar experience was when I had for the first time, a really fine wine. The taste is so wonderfully complex that you have to have more. From there, I learned the popular orchestral excerpts and then in college, jumped into the full works. During my college days, I also became intrigued with the man himself. I read everything I could get my hands on about Wagner, including the four volume biography, The Life of Richard Wagner by Ernest Newman.

The rest is history, as they say. Even now with as many live performances as I have attended and working in the opera field, I still feel like a kid when I hear Wotan's Farewell, the Good Friday music, or (yes even today) *Elsa's Procession to the Cathedral*.

If you would like to share your story, please let us know! Email Newsletter@wagnertc.org or contact the editor, Carol Thomas, at 763-442-9432.



Next Issue:

Member's reports from Copenhagen.

"Brünnhilde did WHAT at the end???"

Is Anyone Out There?

Give us your feedback! We are interested in your opinions, your input, anything you, as member, are willing to share with your fellow Society members. We warmly invite and encourage members to tell us of their Wagner related experiences, information, reviews, photos. If you would like to contribute to the newsletter, contact Carol Thomas by email Thomasc33@comcast.net or by phone 763-442-9432. Unsure how to write it up? Feel free to contact Carol. We can gather your information and write it up for a piece in the newsletter. Members will be given a copy of any articles written, for final approval.

New Member

Robert Brittain

Our best recruiters are our members. If you know of anyone with an interest in Wagner and his operas, please tell them about us.

On the cover: The Ordway Center for the Performing Arts
in St. Paul, Minnesota
Photo courtesy B. K. Edgar

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