

The Raven

Newsletter of

The Richard Wagner Society of the Upper Midwest

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Fall 2007



In this issue

Founders Day Dinner Highlights

Tristan Update

Membership Renewals

And more ...

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 Carol Meade.



Carol with Marilyn Sandford at Bayreuth, 1997.

My Story By Carol Meade

I was introduced to classical music by my mother. I vividly remember her taking me to Northrup Auditorium to see and hear the great contralto Marion Anderson. She entered the stage left wearing a beautiful red velvet dress. I was fortunate to be a student in the Minneapolis Public School system as we were taken to the University of Minnesota on the streetcar to the Children's classical music concerts. The conductor was Dimitri Mitropoulos.



Marion Anderson, 1944,
by Laura Wheeler
Waring.
Nat'l. Portrait Gallery,
Smithsonian Inst.
Gift of Harmon
Foundation

Wagner was not part of my musical education at the time, except that the Saturday movie cartoons often used classical music as background for the antics of Bugs Bunny and Mickey Mouse. The *Ride of the Valkyries* was a favorite. Later, I was a member of a small opera group that got tickets each spring when the Met was in Minneapolis. We were all poor and our seats were in the very top rows of Northrup Auditorium. I was busy with work and raising a family and my opera experience consisted of listening to opera on the radio on Saturday afternoons for many years. When my children grew up and left home, I was able to afford occasional travel to New York and the Met for an opera fix.

Recently I received a letter from Germany as I have about this time every year for the past 14 years. It was an invitation to apply for tickets to next year's production at Bayreuth. I first started getting

(Continued on page 11)

2007 Annual Founder's Day Meeting

By David W. Cline, MD

Members of the Richard Wagner Society of the Upper Midwest gathered Friday, September 14, 2007 at the home of Betty Heefner with John Heefner and John Lassila, cohosting a marvelous buffet dinner.

The Society, founded in 1998, enters its 10th year and we welcomed many new members, raising our membership to 53. We were grandly entertained by Minnesota Opera Resident Artists, soprano Andrea Coleman and



Pianist Jamison Livsey and Soprano Andrea Coleman

accompanist Jamison Livsey, as they performed Wagner's **Wesendonck Lieder**. This song cycle, with poems by Mathilde Wesendonck, was written by Wagner while he was composing *Die Walküre* and shows his first uses of chromatic-harmonic style that he would use in his opera, *Tristan und Isolde*. We noted familiar strains that brought to mind passages from this opera.

Before Andrea performed, Dale Johnson, Artistic Director of the Minnesota Opera, told us how plans are progressing for a Minnesota Opera production of *Tristan und Isolde* scheduled for April 2010. The artist singing *Isolde* has been engaged and other details are falling into place.



David Cline introduces Dale Johnson from the Minnesota Opera

Mr Johnson gave a brief description of the *Tristan and Isolde* production for which our Society is raising money. He

(Continued on page 6)



Saturday, 22 March 2008 Tristan und Isolde

Regal Cinema in Brooklyn Center

6420 Camden Ave N
Minneapolis, MN 55430
763-566-3456

Tickets: \$22 (age 60 and over is \$20)

These performances sell out quickly. If you wish to attend, you should order your tickets now, directly from Regal Cinema.

Deborah Voigt, one of the world's most celebrated Wagnerian sopranos, undertakes this iconic role for the first time at the Met. The leading Tristan of our time, Ben Heppner, portrays the other half of the archetypal couple on their mystical journey of love, sex, and death.

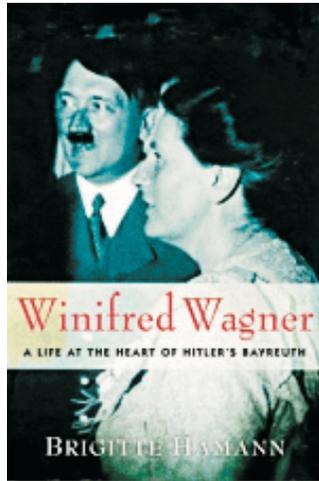
We are planning a pre-performance lecture by noted musicologist, Daniel E. Freeman. Details to follow.

Daniel E. Freeman has taught music history at the University of Illinois, the University of Southern California, and the University of Minnesota, where he now holds a position as lecturer. He also offers annual lecture series in music history at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. A specialist in eighteenth-century European music, he is the author of two books and numerous scholarly essays. His third book, Mozart in Prague, is in preparation.



Book Club News

Review of last meeting by Robert Brittain



The few hardy souls who braved one of the worst rainstorms in my receding memory arrived a bit waterlogged, but ready to discuss one of the more complex public figures of Nazi-era Germany—Winifred Wagner. After drying off and having some cake, we settled into a discussion that centered on two aspects of Winifred Wagner’s turbulent life—first, her all-encompassing wish to further the Wagner family (of which she became the matriarch following the deaths of both Cosima and Siegfried) and secondly her fascination with USA (Winifred’s sometime code reference for “*unser seliger Adolf*” or our blessed Adolf).

Everyone agreed that Winifred was a tragic character. Motivated by desire to see the family and festival prosper like it never had before, and finding both a protector and benefactor in Adolf Hitler, thus doing much to further the associations of Wagner’s art with anti-Semitism and hatred. As reading material, her close relationship with Hitler made her both fascinating and repulsive.

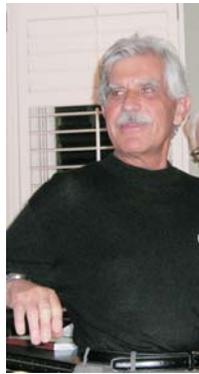
Some readers wondered if the author wasn’t sensationalizing her relationship with Hitler to sell more books. Certainly, there was more to Winifred’s life than the time she spent with Hitler, however, the book makes it very clear that not only did she seek out the company of Hitler, often driving for hours just for a few minutes of his time, but also showing that the wartime festivals owed to the regime and to Hitler personally, since the Nazis purchased 142,000 tickets for the wartime festivals, turning them into state-provided holidays for soldiers home on leave. In fact, even before the war, there was an abundance of money flowing from the Nazi government to support the festivals. One could

(Continued on page 10)

Dinner

(Continued from page 3)

described some ideas of a potential director for the production and that he is thinking



Co-host
John Heefner

to set each act in a different era, but creating a narrative throughout by emphasizing the sensual and passionate relationship between Tristan and Isolde. Mr Johnson mentioned that Margret Jane Wray, a native of Minnesota, has signed on to sing Brangäne.

He also mentioned a few other potential singers and a conductor, but at this point, things are still up in

the air. The Tristan Fund is at \$125,000+.

It is noted that many of the RWSUM members have not yet pledged to financially support the project. Members who have not yet sent in a pledge form are asked to do so before the year is out (a pledge form is enclosed in this newsletter).



Co-hosts Betty Heefner
and John Lassila

We had on display a contribution in kind from Paul Lowe, artist member from Los Angeles: three oil paintings (shown on the front cover of this newsletter) of scenes from Bayreuth. These paintings are for sale, with the proceeds to go to the Tristan Fund.

Matt Bribitzer-Stull announced that the essays from the Dutchman conference have been published as a book. **Richard Wagner for the New Millennium: Essays in Music and Culture (Studies in European Culture and History)** is an interdisciplinary collection merging insights from Musicology and Music Theory with explorations of the Wagner's vast socio-cultural impact from such fields as History, German, and Disability Studies to explore the composer's legacy. Topics include the value of naming musical themes in the music dramas, the status of Wagner in Israel, and the assignment of "Jewish" characteristics in both Wagner's music and polemics and, in recent years, to his great-grandson, musicologist Gottfried Wagner. Other contributors include Robert Gauldin, Warren Darcy, Marc Weiner, and Paul Rose.

The rest of the evening's festivities included the usual roll call in which members reported their past years' Wagner experiences was as interesting as usual. Members who visited Bayreuth this year reported their experiences. Highlights were visiting backstage from the Festspielhaus, meeting Eva Wagner, Wolfgang Wagner's daughter and contender for the directorship of the Festspiel, critiques of performances of the *Ring*, *Tannhäuser*, *Parsifal* and the controversial new production by Katharina Wagner of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. This was the last year of Christoph Slingensiefel's *Parsifal*. He was given a standing ovation (but only partially and with some boos), when he took his seat at the beginning of the third act.



*Matt Bribitzer-Stull
with The Book*

Like the Bayreuth Festival, this Founders Day meeting had an inspirational and exciting quality. It was joyous to be with other Wagnerians. I want to personally and publicly thank the Board of Directors: Woody Andrews, Jamie Andrews, Kevin Edgar, John Heefner, and Carol Thomas; as well as Karen Bachman for their help in devotion to make the society and its projects so successful.

Gudrun Wagner: 1944 - 2007

It saddened me to hear of the unexpected death of Wolfgang Wagner's wife, Gudrun. Only three months ago I received a very nice thank you note from Gudrun. Upon my arrival at Bayreuth, I presented The Wagners with gifts of raisins (cranberry raisins), wild rice, and apples.

22 August 2007

Dear Dr. Cline,

My husband, Katharina, and I were touched by your nature gifts and thank you very much for them. We are sure we will taste creation in origin. With our best wishes, Katharina, Gudrun and Wolfgang Wagner.

My sincere condolences to Wolfgang and Katharina.

David Cline

Election Results

The annual meeting of the members was held pursuant to notice at the home of Betty Heefner in Minneapolis, Minnesota at approximately 9 PM on Friday, 14 September 2007. David Cline announced that the principal order of business was the election of six directors of the Society. The following were duly nominated: Jamie Andrews, Woody Andrews, David Cline, Kevin Edgar, John Heefner and Carol Thomas. There being no other nominations, the six persons named were unanimously elected as the directors of the Society on motion duly made and seconded.

Woody Andrews, Secretary

Dr. Sven Friedrich

By Rhea L. Sullivan

Dr. Sven Friedrich, Director of the Richard Wagner Museum in Bayreuth, spoke to Wagner Society members on October 25, 2007.

Dr. Friedrich's presentation was an appraisal of the life of Cosima Wagner. He posed the question of whether Cosima had any true identity beyond Wagner and his legacy. Dr. Friedrich posits that Cosima's identity was derived from Wagner's life, and his works and -- after Wagner's death -- it was Cosima, who carried on Wagner's work and established and strengthened the Bayreuth Festspiel and made it what it continues to be today -- an international artistic institution. Cosima also, by making Siegfried her sole heir, created the Wagner dynasty and she preserved the documents and references from Richard Wagner's life and works and set up the archive that is located today at Wahnfried.

Cosima subscribed to the idea of complete self-realization through service to her beloved counterpart, Richard Wagner. She represents a paradox: she loathed the women's movement and yet, she was quite unusual for a woman of her era. She was the most successful female artistic director in the history of theatre.

Dr. Friedrich also showed many historic photos of Wagner and his family, the Festspielhaus and images from past Bayreuth productions. There was also some speculation about the future artistic direction of the Festspiel.

A Nazi at the Opera: Wagner's Myth and Music as Propaganda in Nazi Germany

A Lecture by Robert Brittain

Thursday, 21 February 2008
6:00 - 9:00 PM

The Minneapolis Club
729 South 2nd Ave
Minneapolis



6:00-cocktails / 6:30-lecture / 7:30-dinner

Membership Renewals

It is that time of year again, time to renew your membership! Our membership year is on a calendar year basis. In order to retain your Bayreuth ticket priority, we must receive your renewal by **15 March 2008**. A form is included for your convenience. Please make any necessary corrections. If you have any questions about your membership status contact membership@wagnertc.org or call Carol Thomas at 612-559-6468.

New Members

David & Nancy Bergerson John Lassila Tom Nichol
Cheryl Salamanca Rhea Sullivan

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

Book Club

(Continued from page 5)

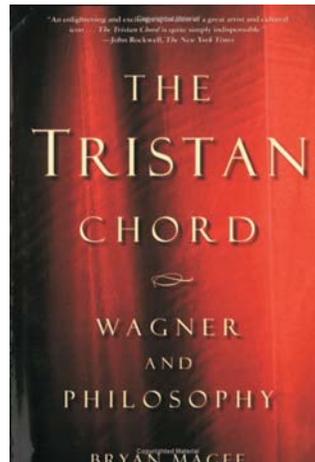
speculate whether this stemmed the Wagner family's early support of Hitler or from Hitler's fascination with Wagner's life and music.

On the topic of Winifred's relationship with Jewish people in Germany there seemed to be plenty of evidence of her helping friends and even people she was barely acquainted with to escape the Nazi regime. A number of people were released from concentration camps or from Gestapo custody based simply on phone calls or letters from Frau Wagner. On the flip side, one is shocked and appalled by the anti-Semitic slurs that Winifred, Siegfried and her two sons (and even Friedelind for a short period!) only too eagerly display prior to the Nazis coming to power.

And since Winifred died in 1978, she couldn't respond to the book (pro or con) by Hamann, which we all agreed was well-documented and researched. To see Winifred as close to reality as possible, we watched about 15 minutes of Hans Jürgen Syberberg's three-hour film interview with Winifred from 1976, in which she says that she would be just as happy today to see Adolf Hitler come walking through the door as she was in 1933. For me, and others in the room, that pretty much summed things up—as complex as she might have been, her life was entwined with one of the most universally reviled figures in all of history, one whom she unapologetically defended to the very end.

Next Book

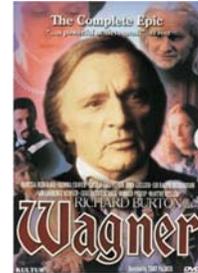
Our next book is: *The Tristan Chord: Wagner and Philosophy* By Bryan Magee. The meeting is tentatively scheduled for February, 2008. Exact details will follow. Should you need assistance, or have any questions, contact the event coordinator, Carol Thomas, at 612-559-6468.



Video Nights 7-9 PM

Second Tuesdays

Wagner - The Complete Epic (1983)
Starring: Richard Burton, Vanessa Redgrave
Director: Tony Palmer



The current schedule is:

Tuesday, 8 January 2008 Richard Burton as Wagner, Part 3

Tuesday, 12 February 2008 Richard Burton as Wagner, Part 4

This event is hosted by Kevin Edgar. Coffee and tea are provided. 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.

Meade

(Continued from page 2)

these invitations when I learned how to apply for tickets after having been in New York for a week for the "Ring" with my friend Marilyn Sandford. Leading up to this trip, I had seen the Met's production of the *Ring* on television and was hooked on Wagner. I started reading about leitmotifs and got recordings so I could recognize them in the four operas. After 7 years of requesting tickets to Bayreuth, "the letter" finally came saying I had tickets for 2 for the next summer's *Meistersinger*. It seems to take about 7 years to get tickets by this method. Today I sent the invitation back with a note saying they could discontinue sending them as I can now get tickets through the Richard Wagner Society if I choose to go to Bayreuth again. I will miss the yearly excitement of learning if I have been offered tickets or not.

I regularly attend the monthly meetings of the Wagner Society DVD club. The setting is comfortable, the TV is big, the sound is great and the fellowship with other Wagner fans is wonderful.

If you would like to share your story, please let us know! Email Newsletter@wagnertc.org or contact the editor, Carol Thomas, at 612-559-6468.

On the cover:

Three oil paintings of scenes from Bayreuth, Germany by member Paul Lowe. Top left: "Old Bayreuth", an alley just outside of Die Eule Restaurant; Top Right: "Stadtkirche, Bayreuth"; Bottom: a street scene is outside the Dötzer Restaurant (formerly Da Corrado) on Sophienstraße, looking north towards Maximilianstraße and is titled "Sunday Morning."

Mr Lowe first studied art in Ventura College with Bernard Dietz before receiving a scholarship to Art Center College of Design. There he was privileged to study with Lorser Feitelson, Joseph Henninger, John La Gatta, Reynold Brown, Paul Souza and Don Puttman. After graduating with Great Distinction earning a degree in Bachelor of Art, he worked in freelance advertising illustration; his clients, among others, included Robinson's, Bullock's, I. Magnin and Bullock's Wilshire and Lord & Taylor in New York. Paul left advertising art in 2003 and is now painting full time and is an internationally collected artist. He is a painting patron member of the California Art Club, Associate Member of the Oil Painters of America.

He has exhibited at The 20th Annual Harbor Art Exhibit, at the Laguna Plein Air Association's annual Juried exhibition in 2004, at the 2006 Oil Painters of America Regional Exhibition and was chosen the Artist of the Month for the American Artist website. Paul has participated in the California Art Club's "Floating Waters and Coastal Vistas" exhibition in which he won the Special Jury Award, and has shown at the Oil Painters of America's 2007 National Juried Exhibition, and will show at the 2007 Oil Painters of America Western Regional Exhibition. Paul is also to participate in Pasadena Museum of History's exhibition of Contemporary Masters, Artistic Eden in August. He has taught figure drawing at the Art Center College of Design and is featured in The Complete Book of Fashion Illustration published by Prentice Hall.

Paul is represented by Galerie Gabriele in Pasadena, California where his one man show of works from his travels to Bayreuth and Berlin was featured in the January 2006 issue of American Art Collector. His scenes from Bayreuth paintings are appraised at \$10,500 (\$3,500 each) and are for sale, the proceeds to go to the Tristan Fund.

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