

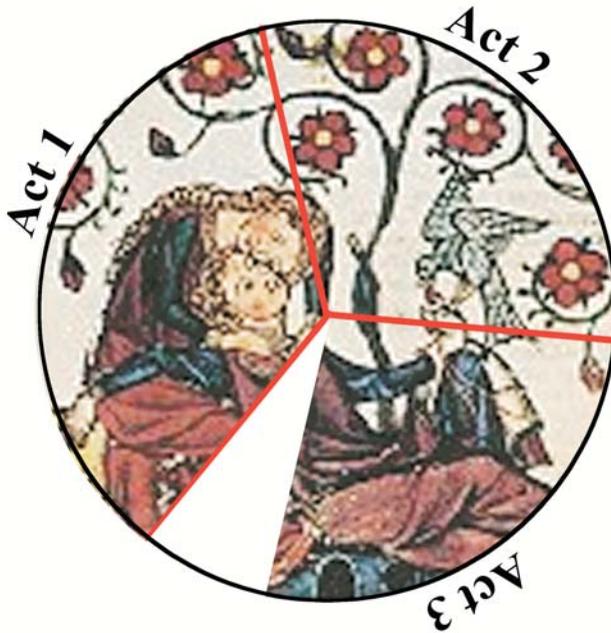
The Raven

Newsletter of

The Richard Wagner Society of the Upper Midwest

Volume IV Number 2

Summer 2008



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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 Rachel Schneider, a retired history professor at the University of Akron and the Kent State-Stark campus. She has helped organize three Wagner Symposia in Canton, Ohio, as well as the newly founded Wagner Society of Ohio.

The Meister and Me

By Rachel R. Schneider



Music has always been a part of my life. My mother had an operatic-trained voice and a profound love of music. My piano lessons started when I was five-years old. In seventh grade, I started studying the cello. Throughout my middle school and high school years in Cleveland, I listened to the Metropolitan Matinee broadcasts almost every Saturday. I loved it all – the glorious melodies of Puccini, the drama of Verdi and the fullness of Wagner.

It was not until my sister, who lived in Seattle, asked me if I would go to *The Ring* with her in 1995, that I began to study Wagner. I bought Deryck Cooke's, *An Introduction to Der Ring des Nibelungen* and listened to it day after day. I played Solti's CDs and followed along with the opera's scores in front of me. It was inconceivable to me that anyone could conceive anything so monumental. The weaving together of all the themes into a harmonious whole. Orchestral parts that could stand alone or be embellished with stunning arias. The sheer totality of it amazed me - the layers and layers.

(Continued on page 8)

Another view of The Metropolitan Opera's HD Simulcast of *Tristan und Isolde*

By Michael McGee

A Perfect Day...Not

“It was the best of times. It was the worst of times.” How better to describe my experience of the Met's broadcast of *Tristan und Isolde* on March 22nd? My wife and I were in Portland, Oregon at the time to see our new grandson, ten week old, Riley James McGee. Before we left Minneapolis, we insured that we had tickets at the Loyd Center 10 Cinema.

I was looking forward to my first viewing of *Tristan*. As a musician and avid Wagner listener, I had wrestled with its chromatic meanderings and rarely made it through the entire opera. I tended to listen to Act III and began to appreciate a kind of intuitive logic inherent in its tonal structure. By the end of March I suppose I had listened to the entire opera seven or eight times, and so, my ears were able to anticipate Wagner's surprises while basking in new discoveries.



Member Michael McGee and Riley

James Levine gave the downbeat and I was awash in the rich harmonies of the prelude. I instantly loved the staging as Act I began. While I was being swept along by the outstanding performances on the wide screen, suddenly the whole stage begins to shrink until it's just a tiny rectangle in the middle of a big empty screen! “Oh no,” I think; “something is terribly wrong!” All my

TRISTAN FUND UPDATE

Will you let the curtain fall before the fat lady sings?

By David W. Cline, MD, President

I am happy to report that the fund for the Minnesota Opera's production of Wagner's Opera, *Tristan und Isolde*, has reached over \$140,000 in written and verbal pledges with a goal of \$150,000. This remaining ten



thousand is equivalent to the last half hour of the opera, which would mean no *Liebested*. Only you can keep the curtain up until the fat lady sings! If you have not done so already, please pledge now using the enclosed form. Do not miss out on this opportunity to be part of this magnificent project, that will enrich our community. Here is a chance to give something back.

Is this how you want to see *Das Liebestod*?
Of our members have pledged, and we hope to make it 100% participation.

Any amount, no matter how small, will help. Over one half

And to those of you who have made a verbal pledge, please complete the written form and return it to the Minnesota Opera. Let us finish the drive, by the date of the Founders Day meeting, September 13, 2008. We will have another cause to celebrate.

New Address

The Society has a new mailing address. It is:

The Richard Wagner Society of the Upper Midwest
P. O. Box 3804
Minneapolis MN 55403

Please make a note of it for future correspondence. Thanks!

Annual FOUNDERS DAY DINNER

10th Anniversary

Who would have known 10 years ago, when three Wagner enthusiasts got together for dinner and some Wagnerian chat, it would expand into the Society it is today? Come participate in the celebration of our Society, our members and future successes such as bringing *Tristan und Isolde* to our Community! Mark your calendars!

Date: Saturday, September 13

Time: 6pm-9pm

Location: Germanic-American Institute
301 Summit Avenue
St. Paul, Minnesota

Directions, map and program details will follow at a later date.

Bayreuth 2009 Ticket Requests Due by 20 September 2008

No, that is not a miss-print. If you would like to attend Bayreuth next year, you need to start thinking about it now. As in past years, we will be ordering tickets to the third cycle, approximately August 23-29, 2009. Again, the number of tickets requested will reflect the interest expressed by our members *before* we order. Therefore, to meet the anticipated Bayreuth deadline of 15 October, members wishing to attend Bayreuth in 2009 must submit requests by the 20th of September 2008. Exact dates and costs will not be known until we receive our order form in September, but based on past years we anticipate that the price of a ticket to *The Ring* would range from \$600 - \$900, and \$450 - \$750 for the other three. Tickets to individual operas are not available. The exact price will depend on the specific tickets allocated (if any) and the exchange rate. Look for a separate mailing later this summer.

Tristan und Isolde

(Continued from page 3)

enjoyment of the grand opera deserts me and all I can think about is the shrunken miniature that I am obliged to endure. I simply cannot accept this atrocity in the middle of Wagner; such grand music from such a trivial image. But there's more: suddenly there are several disembodied singing heads popping up from behind the small frame...and they are sliding to and fro in some random fashion in this horrible nightmare before my eyes. I glance at my daughter-in-law and her eyes are closed. I follow suit and close my eyes, too, so that I might reconnect with the music I love. A few moments later, I peep through squinted eyes and now the image is restored to its original grand scale. I breathe a sigh of relief and begin to enjoy the performance once more. The Met technicians have corrected the mistake and now I will be able to enjoy my first live performance of Tristan. But my peace is short lived and, once again, the screen begins to recede into the center of the wide, now empty, movie screen.

Having been a video editor for a number of years I was probably more distracted than most viewers because I am so used to tuning into technical video details. I know what fun it is to play with video images, but this was not the proper venue. It seemed to me that there were two performances going on simultaneously: the opera production and the video manipulations. There was enough full screen time for me to deeply enjoy the Met performance, however I think picture-in-picture of close-ups while maintaining the full screen image could have worked. It was the *shrinking* of the image that diminished my concentration and enjoyment.

I endured this tug of war through three acts while looking forward to Isolde's Liebestod to bring the entire opera to an ecstatic conclusion. But, no. It was not to be. Isolde shrinks to a tiny portrait which belies the grand eruptions of Wagner's music. We can't even see Tristan's sad body. As the rectangle grows toward the final climax, it's too late. The mood has been ruined by a video editor run amuck. I went immediately to a computer and registered my heated complaint to the Met's website. "Never again!" I beg.

Never again.

Video Nights 7-9 PM

Second Tuesdays

Video nights will be suspended until the fall. In October we resume
with

Der Ring Des Nibelungen

(Complete Cycle recorded in 1990)

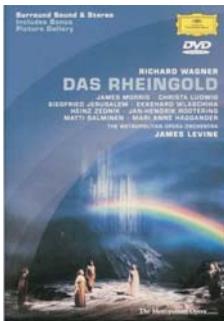
The Metropolitan Opera

James Levin, conducting



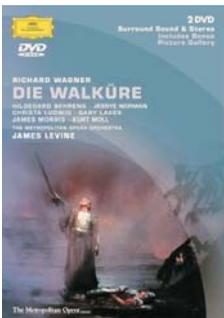
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Mari Anne Häggander
Jan-Hendrik Rootering

Matti Salminen
Heinz Zednik,
Birgitta Svendén
Jessye Norman
Gary Lakes
Hanna Lisowska



The current schedule is:

14 October 2008	Rheingold, Scenes 1 & 2
11 November 2008	Rheingold, Scenes 3 & 4
9 December 2008	Walküre Act 1
13 January 2009	Walküre Act 2
10 February 2009	Walküre Act 3



This event is hosted by Kevin Edgar at 700 Douglas Ave, Minneapolis. If you are planning to attend please let Kevin know by email (wagner@bke.org) or phone 612-381-9429.

Schneider

(Continued from page 2)

I thought I was prepared for my first live performance of *The Ring* when I went to Seattle. Hah ! As the primordial E-flat began *Das Rheingold*, I got shivers. It was thrilling but I also thought - fifteen hours, four nights, can I make it? I was enthralled. The hours passed so quickly that when the curtain came down on the destruction of Walhalla, it seemed too soon. I wanted to shout “Encore” and have it start all over again.

I was addicted to Wagner, especially *The Ring*. I have seen only nine productions but then I got a late start. My quest now is not for The Grail but for the perfect Ring production. A quest for a lifetime.

Book Club

Death-Devoted Heart: Sex and the Sacred in Wagner's “Tristan and Isolde”

by Roger Scruton.

This is proving to be quite a challenging book. We have decided to hold off the next book club meeting until Fall. Further details will follow. If you have any questions, please contact Carol Thomas at info@wagnertc.org or 612-559-6468.

**On the cover:
Our *Tristan und Isolde* fund has almost reached its goal. Only about \$10,000 remains. Please do your part to help us succeed.**

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