

The Raven

Newsletter of

The Richard Wagner Society of the Upper Midwest

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Winter 2009



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Master Class Review

*Time to renew your Membership
(Yes, Yours!)*

Upcoming Events

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 member Dennis Anderson.

Wrestling with Wagner

by Dennis L. Anderson



Sabra and Dennis Anderson

Richard Wagner and I have long had a love-hate relationship. I do not like Richard Wagner. He was arrogant, pompous, self-promoting, narcissistic, chauvinistic and intolerant. His Antisemitism, while in line with popular attitudes in many parts of Europe in the 19th century, was especially intense. He was ruthless in undercutting musical competitors. It is difficult to find much to like about Wagner the man. And then there is the music! Luxuriant, nuanced, introspective, brash, unexpected, doing precisely in words and orchestration what the composer wanted. It is epic, haunting, ultimately inescapable, if not the “only game in town.” He was a seminal influence on music during his life and for decades after.

I first became aware of Wagner's music when I learned an English translation of “Holder Abendstern” while searching for a vocal solo for a high school competition half a century ago. While I eventually performed something else, Lohengrin's ballad remained in my consciousness and I became more and more familiar with many of Wagner's orchestral overtures, preludes and interludes.

As I pursued my studies of modern German history in graduate school – I spent my career as a professor of German and European history – the surface dichotomy between a despicable person and his extraordinary music bothered me greatly. There were times when I would turn off the radio at the first chords of the Dutchman or Meistersinger overtures. But this phase was transitory.

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A Master Class to be Remembered



Dennis Petersen



Megan Wagner Floan



Obed Floan

by Jamie Andrews & Carol Thomas

On November 23rd, Society members were treated to a Master Class session at the Minnesota Opera Center. A Master Class is where a veteran/seasoned singer listens to and critiques a student singer. In this evening we were watching and listening to resident artist Dennis Petersen evaluate performance pieces from Obed Floan and his wife, Megan Wagner Floan, each singing from the Wagner repertory.

With piano accompanist Kathy Kraulik, Obed started the evening, singing “Allmächt’ger Vater” (Rienzi’s prayer) from *Rienzi*. He sang the piece in its entirety first. Then, as Obed began to sing it again, he was critiqued by Dennis, who interrupted his singing to instruct and emphasize ways to make it better. Dennis would talk to his student as well as the audience on the hows and whys Obed should sing the piece in a certain way. Sometimes this meant hearing the same verse or verses over and over - not always easy to stop in the middle of a Wagner song!

Obed then sang “Morgenlich Leuchtend” (or the Prize song) from *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. Again, Dennis would stop Obed’s singing to suggest where vocal areas needed emphasizing or projected enunciation.

Next, we heard the beautiful voice of Megan Wagner Floan. She came in as substitute for Seth Keeton, who was ill and could not attend the class. Megan sang what’s commonly known as “Senta’s Ballard” from *Der fliegende Holländer*. Dennis critiqued her as he did Obed.

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Membership Renewals

Yes, 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 2010**. A form is included for your convenience. Please make any necessary corrections to it and mail to

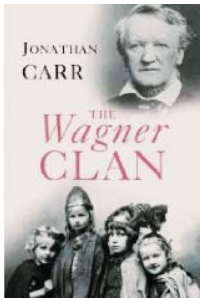
The Richard Wagner Society of the Upper Midwest
P.O. Box 3804
Minneapolis MN 55403

If you have any questions about your membership status contact membership@wagnertc.org or call Carol Thomas at 612-559-6468.

Book Club

The Wagner Clan: The Saga of Germany's Most Illustrious and Infamous Family

by Jonathan Carr



Paperback: 432 pages
Publisher: Grove Press 2009
Language: English
ISBN-13: 978-0802143990

A copy is in our library and several copies are also available at the Hennepin County Public Library. The paperback edition is still in print for approximately \$14.

Thursday February 18th 7-9 PM
Common Roots Cafe
2558 Lyndale Avenue South
Minneapolis MN

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Book Club

(Continued from page 4)

The Common Roots Cafe offers beverages, including wine and beer, and food appears to very good. The Cafe also offers a nice back room that is private and able to seat 20 people ready for a great discussion.

In order to be informed of any last minute changes, you MUST RSVP for this event to Carol Thomas by email info@wagnertc.org or by phone 612-559-6469 by 15 February.

In late May 2010 we will discuss some of the books related to the background of the Ring. They are: **Das Nibelungenlied: Song of the Nibelungs** by Burton Raffel, translator, together with **The Saga of the Volsungs (Penguin Classics)** by Jesse L Byock, translator.

Sometime in October 2010, we will discuss **WAGNER AND VENICE** by John W. Barker

The Flying Dutchman **Madison Opera - April 2010**

A Reminder that the Madison Opera Company of Madison, Wisconsin will be presenting *Der Fliegender Holländer* in April. A few members are planning on attending the Sunday Matinee on April 11. More information may be found at their website www.madisonopera.org or by phone 608-238-8085. If you would like to coordinate your visit with other members, contact Jamie Andrews at 612-342-9573.

Tristan Und Isolde **Seattle Opera - August 2010**

Seattle Opera will perform *Tristan und Isolde* in August 2010. The cast includes Clifton Forbis, Analena Persson, Greer Grimsley and Stephen Milling. Minnesota Opera patrons will remember Greer Grimsley as our Dutchman in *Der Fliegende Holländer*. More information may be found at www.seattleopera.org

Anderson

(Continued from page 2)

It was in the 70's that I became enmeshed in the Ring. It began with examining leitmotifs and expanded to studying text when Andrew Porter's wonderful translation appeared. I spent an unconscionable number of hours comparing German and English texts, listening to both German and English recordings and radio broadcasts and viewing anything available on television. Bill Parker's broadcasts on Minnesota Public Radio were an important part of this process. My very tolerant wife, Sabra, gave me a present of the complete LP recordings of the Boulez Ring at the Met, which I still cherish. And we attended a complete English language Ring cycle by the Welsh National Opera while living in England in 1987. (I had seen productions of Rheingold and Walkuere in Germany earlier.)

Fast forward to 2005. Under very serendipitous circumstances Sabra and I became the accidental holders of tickets to Bayreuth through the Richard Wagner Society of the Upper Midwest, and the last week of August of that year on the "gruenen Huegel" was one of the most memorable of our lives. Thank you.

A postscript: I always have been and still am an incorrigible and passionate avocational singer. I have been in the choruses of myriad staged opera productions. Ironically the only time I have sung Wagner (other than in the shower) was in a concert adaptation of the Pilgrim's Chorus from Tannhaeuser a very long time ago.

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The Richard Wagner Society of the Upper Midwest is now on Facebook! Join us at www.facebook.com. Create a discussion, see the latest details on events, and check out who else is interested.

Follow us on Twitter for last minute updates on events.
WagnerSocietyUM at www.twitter.com.

Video Nights 7-9 PM

Second Tuesdays

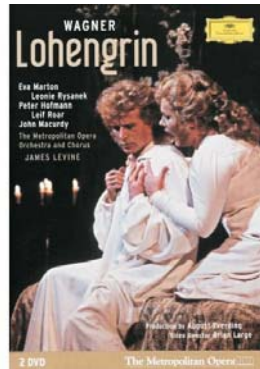
Currently, we are viewing

Lohengrin

The Metropolitan Opera, 1986

James Levin, conducting

Lohengrin Peter Hoffman
Elsa Eva Martin
King Henry John Macurdy
Telramund Leif Roar
Ortrud Leonie Rysanek
Herald Anthony Raffell



Future Videos have yet to be determined. If there is one you would like to see, let us know.

Please Note: There will be no meeting in April 2010.

The current schedule is:

09 February 2010	<i>Lohengrin Act 3</i>
09 March 2010	<i>TBA</i>
13 April 2010	<i>NO MEETING</i>

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.

Master Class

(Continued from page 3)

The class was 2 hours of Wagnerian songs and instruction. Afterwards, Dennis answered questions from the audience. The evening was truly an enlightening experience not only for the audience, but for the singers as well!

New Members

We have no new members to report. Our best recruiters are our members. *So get out and recruit some!!!* If you know of anyone with an interest in Wagner or his music, please tell them about us.

On the cover:

Dennis Petersen (left) directs Obed Floan (right) at a Wagner Master Class as members watch in amazement. Accompanist Kathy Kraulik (center) patiently waits to play the same passage again. Photo: Jamie Andrews

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