



25th
1998–2024
Anniversary
Report

THE WAGNER SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON DC

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To Wagnerians Everywhere.

Your Wagner Society has surpassed a major milestone: 25 years dedicated to “the study and enjoyment of Wagner’s art.” This milestone warrants a major celebration.

In March of 1998, a half-dozen people came together to view Wagner video performances. In short order Prof. Donald Crosby presented a lecture on “The Literary Sources of *Tristan und Isolde*.” On June 16 I talked about “Wagner’s *Ring*, Listening to Leitmotifs,” after which I accepted an invitation to lead a formally organized Wagner Society of Washington DC, a 501c3 nonprofit.

In the ensuing years the Society has offered 240 lectures and seminars. We have sponsored 50 concerts, half from our two emerging singers programs, and half with the renowned pianist and Wagner scholar Jeffrey Swann. We are also proud of our recently-founded Wagner Society Chamber Players.

Since 1999, the Bayreuth Festival has annually allocated tickets for our members.

WSWDC has spent over \$500,000 to fund two programs to assist singers who have the potential for careers singing Wagner. The first was the Emerging Singers Program led by baritone Thomas Stewart and soprano Evelyn Lear. The current program is the American Wagner Project led by sopranos Dolora Zajick and Luana DeVol. “Our” singers, such as Jay Hunter Morris, Issachah Savage, Jennifer Wilson, Daniel Brenna and Julia Rolwing, among others, perform Wagner roles in opera houses around the world.

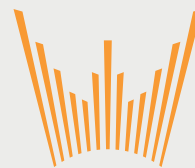
For twenty-five years we have created and sustained a unique three-day retreat, *Wagner in der Wildnis*, providing in-depth study of a Wagner opera or theme, led by concert pianist Jeffrey Swann and the eminent Wagner scholar and author Simon Williams.

We have collaborated on performances with a host of Washington institutions, including the Kennedy Center, the Washington National Opera, the Smithsonian Institution, the Virginia Opera, the National Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Embassies of Germany, France, Austria, Poland and Sweden.

Our esteemed President Emeritus, co-founder Aurelius Fernandez, has often noted the “Gemütlichkeit” that characterizes our WSWDC family. That warm fellowship will again blossom on October 4 at the beautiful French Embassy. We hope you will join us.



Jim
Jim Holman
Chairman



Silver Anniversary Gala Friday, October 04, 2024

Honorary Gala Chairs
Guillermo and Cecilia Schultz

Gala Chair
Frederic Harwood

6:30 p.m.
Cocktail Reception

7:15 p.m.
Performance by Pianist Jeffrey Swann
and American Wagner Project’s Soprano Charlotte Kelso

8:00 p.m.
Dinner
Wagner Award

Special Guests

Luana DeVol, Soprano, Artistic Director,
American Wagner Project

Aurelius (Aury) Fernandez, co-founder,
Wagner Society of Washington DC

Barbara Karn PhD, co-founder,
Wagner Society of Washington DC

Saul Lilienstein, Musicologist,
Wagner Award Recipient, 2004

Jay Hunter Morris, Tenor, Wagner Award Recipient, 2015

Jeffrey Swann, Concert Pianist,
Wagner Award Recipient, 2007

Jennifer Wilson, Soprano, Wagner Award Recipient, 2016

Dolora Zajick, Soprano, Director, Institute for Young Dramatic
Voices/American Wagner Project

Francesca Zambello, Artistic Director Washington National
Opera, Wagner Award Winner 2014

The Gala

Why a Celebration?

Since our founding in 1998 we have dedicated energy and resources “for the study and enjoyment of Wagner’s art.”

We have done this in many ways:

- We have spent over \$500,000 to identify and nurture talent with the capability of singing in Wagner operas.
- We have sponsored over 240 lectures, live and on Zoom, to bring the love and knowledge of Wagner to our members, and the Washington community and beyond.
- We have offered 50 live concerts, many featuring the artistry of Maestro Jeffrey Swann, of the Wagner Society Chamber Players, and for our Emerging Singers Program and the American Wagner Project.
- We have secured tickets for over 350 trips to Bayreuth where members have experienced the *Ring* and other Wagner operas in the theater he built exclusively for his operas.
- Some 1,200 have attended our bucolic retreat, *Wagner in der Wildnis*, for in-depth study of a single Wagner opera or a Wagner theme.

SO WHY A GALA? To mark a milestone. To reconnect and express appreciation to old friends, members, Wagner Award recipients, and one hundred-plus singers and coaches in our two programs that nurture emerging Wagnerian singers.

WHY WAGNER AND FRANCE? We take note of the intimate historical connection between Wagner’s own experiences in Paris and the profound impact Wagner had on many of the great French artists of the late nineteenth century, from Charles Baudelaire to Claude Debussy.

We are honored to offer the Gala at the magnificent French Embassy under the gracious patronage of the **Ambassador Laurent Bili**.

HONORED GUESTS



Luana DeVol (Left) and Dolora Zajick (Right)

Dolora Zajick founded the Dolora Zajick Institute for Young Dramatic Voices in 2009 to provide training for the big voices that are sometimes overlooked by vocal conservatories. In 2013, she spun off the American Wagner Project, for which her colleague Luana DeVol is artistic director. The Wagner Society of Washington DC provides support for both programs as the successor to our Emerging Singers Program. Ms. Zajick a mezzo soprano, has been described by the New York Times as “one of the greatest voices in the history of opera.” Known for her many Verdi roles, her late career roles included Tobias Pickering, Tchaikovsky, Puccini, Wagner, Poulenc, and Britten.

Luana DeVol serves as executive director of the American Wagner Project (AWP), a program spun off in 2013 from Dolora Zajick’s Institute for Young Dramatic Voices. AWP is supported in part by the Wagner Society of Washington DC. Ms. DeVol is best-known for her performance in the German repertory, most specifically Wagner and Strauss. She was selected as Singer of the Year in both 1997 and 2000 by *Opernwelt*, a German opera magazine. Relocating from her native San Francisco to Germany, in 1983 she made her opera debut in a Staatsoper Stuttgart production of *Fidelio*, singing the role of Leonore. From 1987 to 1991 she sang for the Mannheim National Theater opera company. Over three decades she has performed at the world’s most important venues including Vienna, Paris, Munich, Berlin, and Bayreuth, where she recorded a much-heralded Brünnhilde in *Götterdämmerung*.

What is the Anniversary Fund?

We have established a fund to ensure the artistic and financial success of the Society entering its second 25 years. There is much burgeoning talent deserving support and training.

Members and friends who have already committed to support the fund are credited here. We urge you to become a Sponsor—you will enjoy abiding recognition and special perks.

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William Zeile

SPECIAL GUESTS

Jay Hunter Morris, tenor, performed the role of Siegfried in Francesca Zambello's 2011 American *Ring* in San Francisco. He went on to sing the role for the Metropolitan Opera's *Rings* in 2013 and 2014, and for Zubin Mehta's *Tristan und Isolde* in Valencia, singing opposite Jennifer Wilson. Jay attended our Emerging Singers Program in 2001. He received the Society's Wagner Award in 2015.



Jay Hunter Morris (Left) and Saul Lilienstein (Right)

Saul Lilienstein is a musicologist whose popular lectures draw audiences for the Smithsonian Residents Program, the Library of Congress, and the Wagner Society of Washington DC, among others. He received the Society's Wagner Award in 2004.



Jeffrey Swann, internationally-acclaimed concert pianist, has won top prizes in numerous competitions, including La Scala, the Warsaw Chopin competition, and the Queen Elisabeth competition in Brussels. He has performed 15 recitals for the Society, played his own transcriptions of Wagner music, lectured from the keyboard at every Wildnis but the first, and has lectured at the Bayreuth festival. He received the Wagner Award in 2007.



Jennifer Wilson participated in the Emerging Singers Program in 2001, 2003, 2004, and 2010, where she was discovered by Tom Stewart. Covering for an ailing Jane Eaglen at Chicago Lyric Opera, she stepped into the role of Brünnhilde in *Götterdämmerung*. The New York Times critic wrote "she brought down the house." Jennifer went on to become Zubin Mehta's

Brünnhilde, singing his *Rings* in Valencia and in Florence. Jennifer accepted the Wagner Award in 2016.



Francesca Zambello has served as artistic director of the Washington National Opera (WNO) since 2011. An enthusiastic Wagnerian she brought three cycles of the *Ring* to WNO in 2016 starring our Emerging Singers Program tenor Danial Brenna as Siegfried. That same year Ms Zambello brought her American *Ring* to San Francisco Opera, where ESP tenor Jay Hunter Morris sang

Siegfried. In the run-up to 2016, she staged each of the *Ring* operas for WNO, one a year, starting in 2012. On October 26, 2024 she is staging *Gods and Mortals*, a Celebration of Wagner, at WNO. In 2025 she is staging *Tannhäuser* for Houston Grand Opera and will bring it to WNO in 2026. She received the Wagner Award in 2014.

WE LOVE OUR SINGERS



Soprano **Amy Fuller** is a member of the voice faculty of Illinois State University. She describes her experience working with Thomas Stewart and Evelyn Lear in the ESP as a continuing inspiration in her teaching and musical life. She previously taught at Millikin University in Decatur, Illinois, and at the Unit One Voice Division of the University of Illinois in Urbana/Champaign.



Soprano **Eudora Brown** (ESP 2009, 2010) thrilled DC-area audiences with her fiery interpretation of Irene in a 2015 performance of Wagner's rarely seen *Rienzi*, sponsored by the National Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of Piotr Gajewski.



Opposite Eudora was fellow ESP alumnus **Issachah Savage** (AWP) playing the title character Reinzi. Issachah is singing the title role in Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes* in Amsterdam and cannot attend the Gala. He auditioned for the role having received a significant Pohanka Grant from WSWDC.



Tenor **Michael Hayes** (ESP 2003, 2007) has performed a wide variety of roles in opera and musical theater, ranging from Erik in *Der fliegende Holländer*, and the title role in *Otello* to Tony in *West Side Story*, Cable in *South Pacific*, and Freddy in *My Fair Lady*.



Bass-baritone **Roman Ialcic** (AWP 2018, 2019) sang the Dutchman at the 2019 Miami Music Festival, covered Fafner, Fasolt, and Hunding for the 2013 Seattle *Ring*, and was a finalist at the 2014 Seattle Opera International Wagner Competition.



Mezzo Soprano **Deidra Palmour's** (ESP 2006, 2007) extensive and varied repertoire includes the roles of Brünnhilde, Chrysothemis in *Elektra*, and the title role of Rossini's *La Cenerentola*, which she sang with a "gorgeous, buttery mezzo."



Mezzo-soprano **Jennifer Roderer** (ESP 2002, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2011), made her Metropolitan Opera debut in 2017 as La Duègne in Alfano's *Cyrano de Bergerac*. She has sung Fricka in Buenos Aires, Waltraute in Chicago and Seattle, Rossweisse at Opera Pacific, and a Flowermaiden with the Los Angeles Philharmonic.



Mezzo-soprano **Rebecca Sacks** (AWP 2021) sang Fricka in Miami Music Festival's 2022 production of *Das Rheingold*, and Grimgerde in *Die Walküre* with Pittsburgh Festival Opera. A champion of new music, she has premiered concert works and operas with the University of Oregon's Composer's Symposium and the Tai Hei Ensemble in Eugene, Oregon.



Soprano **Julia Rolwing** (ESP 2007-09) has sung the roles of Sieglinde, Senta, Freia, and Isolde, as well as the title roles of Aida, Tosca, Massenet's *Cendrillon*, Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, and Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos* – and Mozart's leading ladies, Donna Anna and Countess Almaviva.



Washington National Opera
The Kennedy Center

Timothy O'Leary
General Director

Francesca Zambello
Artistic Director

It is with great pleasure that I offer my heartfelt congratulations to the Wagner Society of Washington DC and particularly to your long-serving chairman Jim Holman, on the occasion of your twentieth-fifth anniversary gala. As a confirmed Wagnerite, and recipient of the Society's Wagner Award, I have devoted a good portion of my directing career to Wagnerian operas. I am particularly grateful for the Society's abiding support for WNO's 2016 "American Ring." The Society's presence at all three cycles, and your sponsorship of the "Rhine" cruise on the Potomac were essential to our success.

When I schedule Wagner events, including the upcoming "Gods and Mortals: A Celebration of Wagner," and the anticipated "Tannhäuser", I do so confident of the Society's presence and support. Again, my congratulations. Here's to the next quarter century.

Sending warmest wishes,

Francesca Zambello
Artistic Director
Washington National Opera



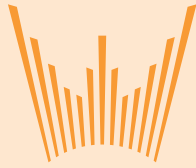
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*Happy 25th
Anniversary
Wagner Society of
Washington DC.
It has been a
wonderful ride.*

Guillermo and Cecilia Schultz,
Honorary Gala Chairs



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Congratulations!

Jim and Diana Holman



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Congratulations to the Wagner Society of Washington!

The Pohanka Family Foundation

As a founding member, John Pohanka would have been proud to be here.
The Foundation is pleased to sustain his love of Wagner.



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SCHILLER THEATER

Through the society Wagner has enriched our lives—musically, intellectually, culturally, and socially with travel and dear friends. Here's to another quarter century and beyond.

— Frederic Harwood and Nedda di Montezemolo

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Thanks to our Wagner society for making so many opportunities available over 25 years.

Tom Powell and Allan Reiter



Tom Powell and Allan Reiter enjoying an intermission break from the 2016 WNO production of the Ring.



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Dick Soderquist in memory
of Cathy Nodgaard Soderquist



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*Congratulations for many
memorable years!*

Roswitha Augusta and Donald Dittberner



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As a youngster, I developed a love for mythology and music that inevitably led me to Wagner's operas.

When I moved to Washington, I considered joining the Wagner Society of WDC, but I was reticent because I knew I was a Wagner-lite, not a Wagnerite. Nevertheless, I joined a few years ago and attended my first "Wagner in the Wildnis". I loved it. I learned a lot and got to know the very welcoming members who also attended. Yes, they know oodles more than I, but they were so happy to share their knowledge and enthusiasm for Wagner's music. This organization is a jewel, and I encourage anyone who is not yet a member to become one. Their mission of advancing the careers of gifted young singers is critical to continuing performances of Wagner's operas, and I feel privileged to support this effort.

I look forward to many more years of expanding and deepening my relationships with Wagner Society members and enriching our shared love of Wagner and his indescribable music.

—Ann Albin



Silver Sponsor

Congratulations!

Bill and Cathy Pastor

Silver Sponsor



Through my satisfying years as President and now President-emeritus, here we are, 25 years later, with inspired leadership, a hard-working Board of Directors, a treasury and program that supports developing singers, and most importantly a membership that supports with their financial contributions and participation in our mission “to promote the study and enjoyment of Wagner’s art.”

Aurelius (Aury) Fernandez and Janet Fernandez



Silver Sponsor

 Wagner Society of New York

Congratulations to the Wagner Society of Washington

Here’s to 25 More Years!

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The Roots of the Wagner Society of Washington, DC



By *Barbara Karn, Frederic Harwood with Aurelius Fernandez*

How does an organization begin? What accounts for its longevity? Who are the people who persevered and did the hard work behind the scenes? How does the organization grow and evolve?

For the Wagner Society of Washington DC, it began in early 1998 when Wagnerite **Janice Rosen** posted a notice on the classical music listserv Opera-L. She asked if there was anyone interested in forming a Wagner Society of Washington DC.

A handful of people responded, and four organized to create a steering committee: **Aurelius (Aury) Fernandez, John Green, Justin Swain, and Ms. Rosen**. After meeting once, they invited **Barbara Karn**, a PhD scientist, who had responded to the listserve, and **RG Head**, a retired Air Force brigadier general who had learned about the initiative by word of mouth.

The nascent Wagner Society of Washington DC now had a steering committee of six. The first meeting was held at **Allen Savada's** home, where they viewed videos – RG recalls it was of *Tannhäuser*.

By March the Society had booked three presentations and secured a room for meetings at Middle C music store in DC. **Professor Donald Crosby**, a friend of RG's, gave a talk on "The

Literary Sources of *Tristan und Isolde*." On March 25, 1998, **Rosamund Bartlett** discussed "Wagner on the Russian Stage."

Then on June 16 **Jim Holman** presented "Wagner's *Ring*: Listening to Leitmotifs," a talk based on his recently published book 'Wagner's *Ring*: A Listener's Companion & Concordance.' Shortly thereafter the Board offered him the Society's chairmanship. A managing director at the multi-national Carlyle Group, Jim had broad connections to Washington's classical music scene, including years on the Board of the Washington Opera – and he was an author.

In short order, Jim recommended five new board members: **John Edward Niles**, a local opera impresario, **Tom Arthur**, a publicist, **Hank Gutman**, an attorney and Washington Opera Board member, and **Jeffrey Roames**, bursar at George Washington University who secured space for presentations at GW's Fungar Hall. The fifth was **John Pohanka**, a member of the Washington Opera board and President of the Pohanka Auto Group.

Almost immediately growth exploded. Jeff obtained meeting space at George Washington University; John Edward spied opportunities to support young singers; Hank filed incorporation papers as a 501(C3), and John and Jim collaborated on programming and membership development. Jim was now Chairman, and Aury was elected President.



The Wagner AWARD

By Frederic Harwood

Since its earliest days, the Wagner Society of Washington DC has recognized notables who have made extraordinary contributions to the study and the enjoyment of Richard Wagner's work, particularly in the Washington DC area. To date, 17 luminaries have been honored.



Chairman J. K. Holman (right) with Martin Feinstein (center) recipient of Wagner Society First Annual Award and Heinz Fricke (left) Music Director, *The Washington Opera*



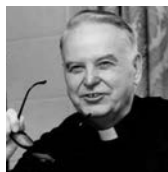
Donald Crosby (right) with fellow award recipients and Chairman Holman, left to right Saul Lilenstein, Chairman Holman, Jeffrey Swann and Prof. Crosby.

Martin Feinstein served as General Director of the Washington Opera during its formative years, from 1980 to 1995, making a singular contribution to WO's development. He nurtured many singers early in their careers, including Jerry Hadley and Denyce Graves. In 1992 he brought Berlin State Opera maestro Heinz Fricke to WO as music director, and staged many Wagner productions, including the pivotal *Tristan und Isolde* attended by Wolfgang and Gudrun Wagner. Honoree 1999.

Thomas Stewart was the reigning Wotan of his generation, and Herbert von Karajan's default bass-baritone. With his wife soprano Evelyn Lear, he co-founded the Emerging Singers Program, launching many significant operatic careers. He was a regular at the Bayreuth Festival for 13 years, singing the baritone roles of Wotan/Wanderer, Gunther, the Dutchman, Wolfram, and Amfortas, a role he sang for 13 consecutive Bayreuth seasons. When Herbert von Karajan launched the Salzburg Festival with a staging of the *Ring* cycle, he cast Stewart as Wotan/Wanderer and as Gunther during the festival's first four seasons; von Karajan recorded the *Ring* with Stewart. *Time Magazine* acclaimed him as "the Wotan of his generation." Honoree 2000.



Placido Domingo, tenor, has sung the role of Siegmund in numerous productions, including the Metropolitan Opera, Paris Opera and Milan's La Scala. With soprano Nina Stemme he recorded an acclaimed studio recording of *Tristan und Isolde* in 2005. He performed with soprano Jennifer Wilson in WNO's 2007 *Dutchman*. He served as General Director of the Washington National Opera from 1996 until 2011. Honoree 2001.



Father M. Owen Lee, critic, musicologist, author and Professor of Classics at the University of Toronto. Father Lee wrote three books on Wagner: *Wagner's Ring: Turning the Sky Around*, *Wagner: The Terrible Man and his Truthful Art*, and *Wagner and the Wonder of Art*. He wrote books on Virgil, Horace, and countless articles on classical and musical subjects. For many years he provided commentary for the Metropolitan Opera Saturday broadcasts. Honoree 2001.

Maestro Heinz Fricke was music director of the Washington National Opera from 1993 until his retirement in 2010. He made his company debut conducting *The Flying Dutchman*, and during his tenure conducted many Wagner productions including *Parsifal*, *Die Walküre*, and *Tristan und Isolde*. Critics wrote that Maestro Fricke had a signal effect on the orchestra's sound and morale. Born in East Germany, from 1961 to 1992 he was Music Director of the Berlin Staatsoper and enjoyed an international reputation as a Wagner conductor. Honoree 2002.



Evelyn Lear, an internationally recognized soprano, was widely acclaimed for her interpretation of the German repertoire, especially Richard Strauss, Mozart, and Berg. She sang more than 40 operatic roles, including all three female leads in Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier*. She appeared with every major opera company in the United States and won the Grammy for classical performance in 1966. With her husband Thomas Stewart she mentored many aspiring singers in her role co-directing WSWDC's Emerging Singers Program. Honoree 2003.



John Pohanka (arm raised) acknowledges appreciation for his Platinum level contribution while Maestro Philippe Auguin applauds



James Morris with the Board of Directors at the Third Gala Benefit 2005 on June 8. (left to right) Phillip Raines, RG Head, John Pohanka, President Aury Fernandez, James Morris, Tom Arthur, John Edw Niles, Betty Byrne, Chairman Jim Holman and Lynne Lambert. (missing from photo: Bill Pastor)



Maestro Saul Lilienstein and one of his famous teaching aids explaining the Tristan Chord

Saul Lilienstein is a popular lecturer for the Society, the Washington National Opera, and the Smithsonian Resident Associates Program. He was a student of Leonard Bernstein and holds a degree in music from Queens College, NY. He has served as artistic director of Baltimore's Handel Choir and Maryland's Harford Opera Theater. He has recorded many presentations for Washington National Opera productions sponsored by the Pohanka Automotive Group. Honoree 2004.

University of Kansas, and the Goethe Institute in Germany. In 1998 he gave the first lecture to the newly formed Wagner Society of Washington DC, on *Tristan und Isolde*.

For the Society his frequent lectures included "*Tristan und Isolde*," "Goethe, Wagner, and the Evolution of Culture," "Sigurd und Brynhildt," and "Wagner and the German Tradition." He translated *The Flying Dutchman* and authored more than 100 scholarly articles. Honoree 2012.



James Morris accepts the Wagner Award from Thomas Stewart

James Morris bass-baritone, inherited the mantle as the world's leading Wotan and Hans Sachs from his friend and mentor Thomas Stewart. The Metropolitan Opera's video recording of the complete *Ring* cycle with Morris as Wotan/Wanderer was described as "exceptional on every count." He was the resident bass/baritone at the Met

for many years, singing Wagner, Verdi, and numerous other roles. He won Grammy Awards for Best Opera Recording for his renditions of *Die Walküre* (1990) and *Das Rheingold* (1991). He recorded Hans Sachs in the Met's *Die Meistersinger*. Honoree 2005.



Jim Holman (left) with Jay Hunter Morris (right)

Jay Hunter Morris performed the role of Siegfried in the Francesca Zambello American *Ring* in San Francisco, 2011, and then in two subsequent *Rings* at the Metropolitan Opera in 2013 and 2014. He was selected by Ms. Zambello for her San Francisco *Ring*. Lightning struck again when he was offered the Met Siegfried. He reprised the role of Siegfried in the Valencia *Ring* with Jennifer Wilson. Honoree 2015.

Jeffrey Swann, internationally acclaimed concert pianist, completed his doctoral dissertation at Julliard on the *Ring*. He has won first prize in the Dino Ciani competition sponsored by La Scala in Milan, a gold medal at the Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels, and top honors at the Warsaw Chopin, Van Cliburn, and Montreal Competitions. His musicianship, punctuated by comments that elucidate the music, is a mainstay for the Society at our concerts, at Wildnis, for Wagner Societies, most especially the New York Wagner Society, and at the Wagner Festival in Bayreuth. His many recordings include the Complete Beethoven Sonatas for which he was awarded Best of the Year by Fanfare magazine. He has recently completed a scholarly book on the leitmotifs in the *Ring*. Since 2010 he has served as Professor of Piano at New York University. Honoree 2007.



Jennifer Wilson, Soprano, was an ESP participant 2001 and 2004 who went on to a major career. She was discovered by Thomas Stewart and Evelyn Lear at the first audition/master class for the ESP in 2001. A turning point in her career came in 2008 at the Chicago Lyric Opera, recounted by Anne Midgette in a New York Times article entitled "The End of the Big American Voice."

Her performance in *Götterdämmerung*, filling in for an ailing Jane Eaglin, "brought down the house." Her Chicago triumph led to a multi-season collaboration with Zubin Mehta, who cast her as Brünnhilde in the Valencia and Florence *Rings*. She sang the role of Aida in Valencia under Lorin Maazel, Gutrune in the Los Angeles *Ring* under James Conlin, and the role of Turandot in her 2015 debut at the Met, a role she recorded with the tenor Andrea Bocelli. Honoree 2016.

John Pohanka was Chairman of the Board of the Washington National Opera in the years when WNO staged the individual operas of the *Ring*, culminating in the highly acclaimed 2016 *Ring* presented in three cycles. In 2019 WNO dedicated its annual Gala to him, recognizing his outsized artistic and financial support. He was an early member of WSWDC's Board. In addition to helping fund the Emerging Singers Program, he co-founded the Miami Wagner Festival, which his family foundation continues to support. He authored *Wagner the Mystic*. Honoree 2009.



Phillipe Auguin served as music director of the Washington National Opera (WNO) from 2009 to 2018. He has conducted all of Wagner's mature works, including the WNO's three *Ring* cycles, the first *Ring* performed in China, at the Beijing Music Festival, and the *Ring* at Staatstheater Nürnberg. He served as assistant conductor of the Vienna Symphony under Sir Georg Solti and conducted the London Symphony in Westminster Abbey at the memorial for Maestro Solti in 1998. His resume includes 8 operas conducted at Teatro Alla Scala, 7 at the Metropolitan Opera, 14 at the Washington National Opera, and 13 operas at Deutsche Oper Berlin. Honoree 2018.

Donald Crosby PhD was a professor of German Language and Culture at centers for learning including Indiana University, Dartmouth, the

Pohanka Family Foundation/Anne Kline



Anne Kline Pohanka with chairman Jim Holman

“My opera mentor was my father-in-law – John Pohanka. He taught me how to appreciate the natural voice, how to watch the conductor and how to listen to the orchestra.” – ANNE KLINE POHANKA

At the Arts Club on May 12, 2024, the Wagner Award was presented to the **Pohanka Family Foundation** and the Director of the Pohanka Family Office, **Anne Kline Pohanka**. Presenting the award, WSWDC Chairman Holman paid tribute to the leadership of the Foundation in ensuring the performance of opera, and particularly of the Wagner operas so beloved by her father-in-law John Pohanka, one of the earliest members of the Wagner Society of Washington DC. Mr. Pohanka, a brilliant businessman, was recipient of the Society’s Wagner Award in 2009 and co-founder of the Miami Wagner Summer Festival.

In accepting the Award on behalf of the Foundation, Ms. Kline said: “My opera mentor was my father-in-law – John Pohanka. He taught me how to appreciate the natural voice, how to watch the conductor and how to listen to the orchestra – especially the Wagnerian leitmotifs.

“I am proud to say I have his passion for this incredible art form. Today I have the title of Opera Ambassador. My role is to bring new people to the Opera. I just want everyone to try it – just once – and if it is the right opera – they’ll be hooked. “We love supporting the Young Artists at Wolf Trap, the Met’s Laffont Competition and the Washington National Opera. These talented and gifted individuals are the future of both classical and modern American Opera.

“On behalf of my husband Geoff and the Pohanka Family Foundation, I am thrilled to accept the Wagner Award and join a list of such extraordinary people including John Pohanka and Placido Domingo.”



Francesca Zambello has directed 73 different operas, as modern as *West Side Story* (New York City Opera, the Lyric Opera Chicago, Sydney Opera), Tobias Picker’s *American Tragedy* at the Met starring Dolora Zajick, multiple productions of *Billy Budd* which the opera critic Tim Page said was the

finest production he had seen at the Washington National Opera, and Handel’s *Alcina* for the New York City Opera.

Versatile as she is, we consider her forte to be Wagner. In addition to her two *Rings* for Washington National Opera and two iterations of her American *Ring* in San Francisco, she has directed *Der Meistersinger* (Royal Danish Opera), *Tristan und Isolde* (Seattle Opera), the *Flying Dutchman* (Glimmerglass, Bordeaux), *Siegfried* (Washington National Opera), a production of *Gods and Mortals: A Celebration of Wagner* (Kennedy Center October 26, 2024) and the upcoming *Tannhäuser* scheduled for Houston Grand Opera in 2025. Honoree 2014.



Soprano Christine Goerke is a 2024 recipient of the Wagner Award. She is well known to Washington and the society, having sung Brünnhilde for one cycle of our 2016 *Ring*, and the role of Elektra just three years ago. She returns in October 2024 to sing in the Kennedy Center’s *Gods and Mortals: A Celebration of Wagner*.

Hearing Ms. Goerke sing the Immolation scene from *Götterdämmerung* for James Conlin and the Baltimore Symphony in 2023, critic Ellen Scaruffi wrote “Goerke’s masterful interpretation illuminated every phrase....She produced a sound that seemed to come from the depths of the earth.”

Ms. Goerke has sung Ortrud for the Metropolitan Opera’s recent *Lohengrin*, Brünnhilde for Tanglewood and Aspen, and the role of Kundry in *Parsifal*. A versatile and passionate performer, she has sung in the most important opera houses, including the Met, Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, Samta Fe Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Covent Gardens, the Paris Opera, Deutsch Oper of Berlin, and La Scala.



The Bayreuth Festival as a Religious Pilgrimage

In his classical history of the Bayreuth Festival, Frederic Spotts mentions that generations of Wagnerians treat a trip to the event as a religious pilgrimage.



By Martin Donougho

When, in 1998, the Steering Committee that led to the creation of the Wagner Society set forth its goals, procuring Bayreuth tickets was among the highest on the list of desires and lowest on the list of expectations. As Spotts reported in his book, by the early 1990s nearly half a million people were applying for the 58,000 available tickets.

The pilgrimage to Bayreuth is the dream of many a Wagnerian. The opera house with its matchless acoustics, designed and built by Richard Wagner, along with the quality of the playing and singing, the educational and social events held in conjunction with the event, and the camaraderie among attendees, makes Bayreuth an unforgettable experience. For one entire week, participants are immersed in Wagner.

The Society's annual ticket allotment came about as the result of coincidence, boldness, and good luck. Wolfgang Wagner and his wife Gudrun visited Washington in February 1999 for the Washington National Opera's performance of *Tristan und Isolde*. Although the Society was but six-months old, with about fifty members, Jim Holman arranged for us to attend a talk Wolfgang was giving at the Kennedy Center to about 125 Washington Opera patrons, singers, and staff. In a further act of daring, the Board, including Jim Holman, Barb Karn, Janice Rosen,

and Aury Fernandez invited Wolfgang and Gudrun to lunch, which, surprisingly, they accepted. Barb and Janice were seated at one table with Gudrun, and Jim and Aury were at the other with Wolfgang. Barb asked Gudrun for tickets to the festival, and Gudrun said to simply fax her a request. Within a few weeks fifteen sets arrived by mail for the *Ring* plus tickets to three non-*Ring* operas.

For 27 years that annual allotment has arrived, interrupted only by the three years the German government froze all allocations to non-German societies, and the year of the Covid pandemic. Through our relationship with Bayreuth, 320 members have attended the Bayreuth Festival. We value our relationship with the Festspielhaus and more recently through our membership in the Friends of Bayreuth.

BAYREUTH 2000

While we had received 15 sets of tickets, a few more from the society attended the *Ring* directed by Jurgen Flimm. Alan Titus sang Wotan, Placido Domingo sang Siegmund, the great Waltraud Meier sang Sieglinde, Gabriele Schnaut was Brünnhilde, and John Tomlinson sang Hagen. Christoph Eschenbach's controversial *Parsifal* led to both Hans Sotin in the title role and Waltraud Meier leaving mid-production.



Members of the WSWDC Bayreuth Class of 2000 at the Third Cycle on the steps of the Festspielhaus. (left to right) first two rows: Aury Fernandez, Phil Rochlin, Ilse Niedermeyer,, R.G. Head, Janice Rosen, Joan Jackson, Maureen Polsby, Janet Fernandez, Robera MacKay and Helga Thornberg. Back row: Bill Green, Dan Sherman, Barbara Kam. Betty Byrne, Tom Arthur, Yoko Arthur. Missing from picture: Donald and Bonnie Crosby, Carol Hoover, Elise Kirk, Janet Meyer, Bill Pastor, Phil and Kathy Raines, and Adelaide Whitaker.

BAYREUTH 2001

This year marked the 125th anniversary of the festival's founding and the 50th year of the post-war "new" Bayreuth. It was also the year that Wolfgang Wagner nominated his wife Gudrun and their daughter Katharina to serve as co-directors with him of the festival. The Flimm production was conducted by the Hungarian Ádám Fischer. It was also the year that Christian Thielemann assumed a larger musical role, conducting *Parsifal*, *Lohengrin* and *Meistersinger*.



For the second consecutive year, WSWDC was honored to receive a ticket allotment. Among the twenty-six Members of the WSWDC Bayreuth Class of 2001: (left to right): John Trumbour; Janet C. Meyer, Kelley Keenan Trumbour, Brian Lees, Diana Holman, Paul Kearney, Maureen Polsby, Helga Torberg, Jim Holman; (back row) Al Boyd with Joe Abell and Michael Lauver. (August 2001)

BAYREUTH 2002

Fifteen members attended the Flimm *Ring* conducted again by Ádám Fischer.

Thanks to Guillermo and Cecilia Schultz who graciously hosted a briefing buffet dinner for the Class of 2002 before the trip to Bayreuth. Briefings on Bayreuth history and the 2002 operas were presented by Aury Fernandez and R.G. Head; Janet Fernandez and Carol Hoover described the delights of being in Bayreuth for the Festspiele. The 2002 Class returned with warm memories.



Left to Right: Cecilia and Guillermo Schultz; François Roy; Richard Soderquist and Cathy Noodgard; Nina and William Matheson; Beatrice Bobotek; Jim Allison; and Mark Rozell (at end). Not in photo: Robert Lawrence; Howard and Jordan Lynd; William Malone and Mrs. Thomas A. Burger, Jr.



Kathy Faith Greene with Wolfgang Wagner



Aury Fernandez (left) meets with Wolfgang and Gudrun Wagner



Wolfgang Wagner met members of the Wagner Society Board after his talk at the Kennedy Center, February 1999. Left to right: Jeffrey Roames, Aury Fernandez, Janice Rosen, Mr. Wagner, RG Head, John Green, Jim Holman, and John Edward Niles

BAYREUTH 2003

Members attended the Flimm *Ring* plus *Tannhäuser*, *Der Fliegende Holländer*, and *Lohengrin*.



Phillip Rochlin Joseph Abell, Ilse Niedermeyer, Cathy Vohs, Bill Pastor, Lynne Lambert, Marie & Richard Sippel, Sally Bogacz, Georges Rey, Richard & Kathleen Fuller, Peggy Jones, Oliver Dib, Yoko & Tom Arthur, Carole Hoover, Lynne Lambert and R.G. Head; Missing from photo: William Greene, Hank Gutman, William Greene, John Rogers and Maika Siebeck.



Peggy Jones, Oliver Dib, Yoko & Tom Arthur, Carole Hoover, Lynne Lambert and R.G. Head

BAYREUTH 2004

German filmmaker Christoph Schlingensiefel's *Parsifal*, with intimations of fertility and sexuality using film clips of rabbits and other animals, ("The brown bunny production") was the scandal of the festival, eliciting prolonged boos from an enraged audience. The production was so outrageous and incomprehensible that the singers carried signs before the curtain call pleading with concert goers to go easy on them—they were not responsible for the mess on stage. The production overshadowed another fine performance of the Flimm *Ring*.



Some members of the class of 2004 at the Festspielhaus entrance: left to right John Dixon, Kent Obee, John Graham, Ruth Obee, John Kattler, Joan Kugler, Frederic Harwood, Bill Kugler, Richard Soderquist, Cathy Nogaard.



Frau Wolfgang Wagner with Paul Ignatius

BAYREUTH 2005

In a non-*Ring* year between productions, members saw *Parsifal*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Lohengrin*, *Tannhäuser* and *Der fliegende Holländer*. Thirty-five members attended.

BAYREUTH 2006

A new production of the *Ring* was directed by Tankred Dorst and featured Americans Stephen Gould as Siegfried and Linda Watson as Brünnhilde. Christian Tielemann conducted.



Some of the members of the Bayreuth Class of 2006 (front row left to right) Peggy Jones, Janet Fernandez, Betty Byrne, Cathleen Fuller, Cathy and Richard Soderquist, Aury Fernandez and Richard Fuller. (Back row) R G Head, Carole Hoover, Bonnie Becker, Donald Crosby, Lynne Lambert, Sally Lund, Frederic Harwood and Lea McDaniel.

BAYREUTH 2007



Selected WSWDC Members at Bayreuth 2007. Twenty-five members attended the four *Ring* or three *Non-Ring* performances in separate groups from our ticket allotment.

BAYREUTH 2008-2010

2008 and 2009 saw 30 members each year attend the Dorst *Ring* conducted by Christian Thielemann. Christa Meyer sang Brünnhilde, Enrik Wottrich sang Siegmund, and Eva Maria Westbroek sang Sieglinde. In 2010, the last year of the Dorst *Ring*, 23 members saw Lance Ryan as Siegfried, Edith Haller as Sieglinde, and Johann Botha as Siegmund.

BAYREUTH 2011-2015

Bayreuth 2011-2015 was a period of uncertainty, as the federal government of Germany closed the festival to non-German patrons, amidst concerns that German citizens were insufficiently benefitting from the government's financial support. During this respite, the ownership of the festival passed from the Wagner family to the governments of Germany and Bavaria, with lesser percentages going to the city of Bayreuth and the private non-profit Friends of Bayreuth (Freunde von Bayreuth).

BAYREUTH 2016

With problems resolved, our allotment was restored. 21 members attended the revived Frank Castorf *Ring*. Christof Ventriss sang Siegmund, Heidi Melton sang Sieglinde, Catherine Foster Brünnhilde, and John Ludgren Wotan.



At the home of Mark and Annette Golden many Bayreuth 2016 attendees gather for a briefing, left to right: Mark Golden, Kinga Revesz, Jackie Rosen, Janet Fernandez, Stephen Stich, Beth Lilienstein, Betty Byrne, Linda DeRamus, Aury Fernandez, Saul Lilienstein, Claudia Brandt, Leonard Tomaka, Bonnie Becker, Jean Arnold (seated). Not pictured: Roswitha Augusta, Clark Conkling, Etsuro & Yoko Motoyama, Stephen Nissenbaum & Donna Brown, Norman Wagner, Sherman & Matrha Finger.

BAYREUTH 2017-2018

In the final years of the Castorf *Ring*, a dozen members attended each year. In 2018 the festival was attended by Colin Dunham, Frederic Harwood & Nedda di Montezemolo, Stephen Kent, Michelle Krisel & Paul Hare, Peter & Sylvia Scherer, Edward Seidel, and Dick & Cathy Soderquist.



Left to right: Dick & Cathy Soderquist, Edward Seidel, Nedda di Montezemolo, Jacques Bouffier representing the Friends of Bayreuth (Richard-Wagner Verbund International), and Frederic Harwood, who accepted on behalf of Chairman Holman the Verbund's Leadership Award, the Golden W, for his 22 years as Chair of the Wagner Society of Washington DC.

BAYREUTH 2019-2020

2019 attendees were Helen Edwards, Maximillian Exeler, Gerald Heller, Jim and Diana Holman, Samuel McElroy, Rex Moser, and Edward Seidel. They saw *Tristan und Isolde*, *Die Meistersinger*, *Parsifal*, and *Tannhäuser*.

2020 anticipated a star-studded cast for the *Ring*, with American soprano and the society's 2024 Wagner Award recipient **Christine Goerke as Brünnhilde**, Andreas Schragner as Siegfried, Gunther Groissbock as Wotan, and Klaus Florian as Siegmund. This was the first year of the Valentin Schwarz *Ring*. Ms. Goerke withdrew due to scheduling conflicts and her role was assumed by Irene Theorin.

BAYREUTH 2021-2022

The 2022 Valentin Schwarz *Ring* featured top talent including John Lundgren (*Wotan*), Klaus Florian Vogt and Michael Volle (*Meistersinger*), Stephen Gould (*Tannhäuser* and *Siegfried*), and Mr. Vogt, Mr. Groissbock, Lise Davidsen (*Sieglinde*), and Irene Theorin (*Brünnhilde*). Catherine Foster sang Isolde opposite Stephen Gould as Tristan.

BAYREUTH 2024

In addition to the *Ring*, we saw *Tannhäuser*, and *der fliegende Holländer*.

WSWDC's Mark Golden wrote "Schwarz' is an intimate, human-scale story of family relationships and generational conflict. The emotional and often graphically presented physical abuse of children is the key element. In this rendering, the children are the gold. The Rhine daughters, who are the nannies, are negligent, provoking a disheartened Alberich to forcibly abduct one small boy in a desperate attempt to find love."

WSWDC attendees in 2021 were Byung Baird, Jane Bergner, David Bloom, Carlos Carreno, Robert Coleman, Porter Dawson, Helen Edwards, Maximillian Exler, Richard and Kathleen Fuller, David Gallalee, Philippe Hilaire, Barbara Karn, Stephen Kent, Stanley and Judy Milstein.

2022 attendees were Ann Albin, Jim Allison, Porter Dawson, Helen Edwards, Maximillian Exler, David Gallalee, Mark Golden and Shawn McGrath.

Continuing our unbroken string of WSWDC pilgrimages to the Green Hill, and enthusiastic group of 11 attended the festival performances from August 20-26, 2024, including the complete Valentin Schwarz *Ring*, Tobias Kratzer's *Tannhäuser*, Jay Schieb's *Parsifal* and this year's new *Tristan*, directed by Thorleifur Örn Arnarsson.

Other highlights included the traditional post-*Rheingold* dinner, hosted by the Wagner Society of Southern California, which offered an opportunity to interact with members from Wagner Societies from around the world and performers, including Simone Young, Ekaterina Gubanova, and Olafur Sigurdarson, among others.

BAYREUTH 2023

The Scharz *Ring* enters its second year, with some of the more child-centered elements tamped down. The critic Christina Waters wrote "Schwarz gives us a dysfunctional family drama within the capitalistic rubble of a disintegrating natural world of decay, plastic and pollution. ...The Valkyries are un-heroic, "Beverly Hills housewives recovering from plastic surgery, groupies in pink, orange and red shifts."

We saw Christa Mayer as Fricka, Catherine Foster as Brünnhilde, Andreas Schager as Siegfried, and Tomase Konieczny as Wotan.



Adrienne Murphy, Nathalie Coupet, Robin and Art Sagoskin, Ingrid Meyer, Richard Soderquist, Mark Golden & Janet Hendley.
(Not shown: David & Sheila Feinberg, Sara Green)



2023 curtain call



Alberich with helpless Rhinemaidens. Photo: Enrico Nawrath



Back row (left to right): Don Brown Barbara Scott Iain Scott Wayne Blackmon Martin Donougho; Front row (left to right): David Gallalee Stanley and Judy Milstein Ann Albin Jonathan Terrell Frederic Harwood Robert Juellicher

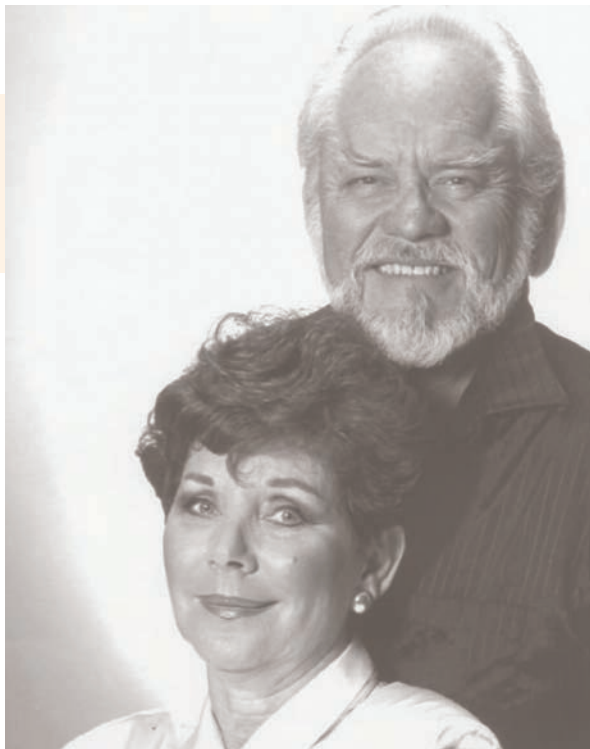


Elderly Rhinemaidens attempting to seduce Siegfried.
Photo: Enrico Nawrath



The Emerging Singers Program and American Wagner Project

By Deborah Diamond



The Evelyn Lear and Thomas Stewart Emerging Singers Program

A JOURNEY TOWARDS EXCELLENCE

In 1999, after a monthly Board meeting of the WSWDC, Program Director John Edward Niles approached Chairman James K. Holman and pointed out that here in the Washington DC metropolitan area lived two giants of the operatic world, Evelyn Lear and Thomas Stewart.

They had moved to Rockville from Santa Fe three years earlier. They were already involved with the Young Artists Program at the Wolf Trap Opera Company, but Niles thought we might approach them about forming a young artists program with the Wagner Society of Washington DC.

The concept was all very vague at that point but, after some initial phone calls, Evelyn Lear, Thomas Stewart, Jim Holman, and Niles met in the winter of 2001 at the L'Ecole du Cuisine Restaurant in Bethesda for dinner. On the back of a paper napkin, Thomas Stewart outlined what he and his wife considered to be the basic outline for a Young Artists Program.

First, it was NOT to be called a Young Artists Program because the emphasis

of this program was to be on the music of Richard Wagner. Evelyn and Thomas felt that the participants in this program MUST be at least 35 years old. To call a 35 year old singer “young” was both insulting and inaccurate. So Tom decided on The Emerging Singers Program (ESP).

Second, it was to be a partnership with the Wagner Society of Washington DC, but it would operate both inter- and intra-dependently of the main body of the parent organization.

Third, it was NOT to be a contest! The singers would be chosen by audition. Those selected, numbering between two to five each year, would come to Washington for one week where they would work intensively with the pianist and with Evelyn and Tom.

At the end of the week, a concert would be given at the German Embassy. After that, the singers would remain in the program and continue to work with Evelyn and Tom, who, along with the Wagner Society of Washington DC, would give them support both professionally and financially for audition trips, lessons, coaching, new photographs, concert wardrobe, and promotional materials. Tom and Evelyn, recalling their difficult early years when they felt they had to move to Europe to gain singing opportunities, were determined that the ESP should focus on developing American singers with the talent to sing the Wagner repertoire.

The Emerging Singers Program grew to become an important element in the

“Evelyn Lear and Thomas Stewart are two of the most distinguished singers of our time. From the 1960s into the 1980s they sang leading roles in every major opera house in the world.”

– Joan Reinthaler, *The Washington Post*, September 23, 2003

vocal scene in the United States. Since its inception, the program received over 500 applications, auditioned close to 200 singers, and presented over a 7-year period for a total of 17 concerts featuring more than 40 singers. Even as we entered our tenth anniversary, about two thirds of the ESP singers actively continued to pursue operatic careers. Many have performed in European opera houses and at major summer festivals.

Evelyn and Tom conducted many master classes together, and together “discovered” and mentored many singers who developed international careers. After Mr. Stewart’s untimely death in 2006, Evelyn Lear continued to work with and inspire emerging American singers.

Evelyn Lear and Thomas Stewart: Their Impact on the Next Generation

The Wagner Society of Washington is indeed fortunate to have partnered with

Evelyn Lear and Thomas Stewart to develop new emerging Wagnerian singers. Evelyn and Tom are recognized for their extraordinary work with emerging singers.

Joan Reinthaler, *The Washington Post*, September 23, 2003 wrote: “Evelyn Lear and Thomas Stewart are two of the most distinguished singers of our time. From the 1960s into the 1980s they sang leading roles in every major opera house in the world. Ms. Lear is renowned for her roles in Strauss, Mozart, and Berg.

“Mr. Stewart is especially revered as the leading Wotan and Hans Sachs of the post-war era. He is the only bass-baritone to sing all four operas of the *Ring* in one week at the Bayreuth Festival, and the only American to sing major roles at Bayreuth for fourteen consecutive years.

“In retirement from star-quality careers on the opera and concert stage, Thomas Stewart and Evelyn Lear, husband and wife, are passing on the wisdom underlying

their artistry to a new generation of singers. ...What is emerging is the maturing to the status of Wagnerian singers, something one attains, if ever, only with considerable physical and artistic development.”

Tim Smith, *The Baltimore Sun*, May 7, 2002, wrote: Lear and Stewart “know good Wagner singing when they see it. ...They help identify, mentor and promote singers who show promise as Wagnerians.” The 4th Concert “...offered a tantalizing notion that a new vanguard of Wagnerians just might be in the offing.”

Mark Estren, *The Washington Post*, June 23, 2006, wrote: “There is no finer tribute to a teacher than the success of his students. The richness and depth of the Wagner performances at the German Embassy on Friday night showed that bass-baritone Thomas Stewart was clearly an inspirational teacher. The concert was a memorial to Stewart, who died last month, and a tribute to his wife of 51 years, Evelyn Lear...”

With the passing of Ms. Lear in 2012 the society folded the ESP into the Dolora Zajick Institute for Young Dramatic Voices, which etc.....By 2013 it was clear that the bigger Wagner voices in the Institute needed

a program of their own, and Ms. Zajick, with the cooperation of the society's John Edward Niles and Chairman Holman, spun off the American Wagner Project, naming the famed Wagnerian soprano Luana DeVol as

executive director. Joshua Baumgartner, who sang for the AWP in 2015, and John Edward Niles serve as program coordinators for the Wagner society.



Soloman Howard as Fafner and Julian Close as Fasolt in Kennedy Center lobby with two WSWDC members (Jeanine Manley & Sabrina Cassagnol)



Jillian Yemen, Eugene (Trey) Richards and William Green



Daniel Brenna takes a bow with Nina Stemme after Götterdämmerung

THE SINGERS

Stefan Algieri	Tenor	2011	Adrian Kramer	Tenor	2021
Courtney Ankerfelt	Mezzo	2019, 2020, 2021	Matthew Lepold	Baritone	2004, 2018
Charles Robert Austin	Bass-Baritone	2003, 2005	Amanda Mace	Soprano	2001
Nathan Bahny	Baritone	2002, 2005, 2011	Shannon Magee	Mezzo	2011
Elizabeth Baldwin	Soprano	2018, 2019	Lorna McLean	Soprano	2024
Diane Barton	Soprano	2005	Krista McClellan	Soprano	2010
Joshua Baumgardner	Tenor	2014	William McCullough	Tenor	2020
Valerie Bernhardt	Soprano	2007, 2008	Shaun McGrath	Tenor	2016
Corey Bix	Tenor	2007	Isabella Molnar Megyeri	Soprano	2011
Alison Bolshoi	Soprano	2002	Daniel Mitton	Bass-Baritone	2016
Maureen Brabec	Soprano	2021, 2022, 2023, 2024	Jay Hunter Morris	Tenor	2001
Daniel Brenna	Baritone	2005	Paul Mow	Tenor	2001
Eudora Brown	Soprano	2009, 2010, 2014, 2015	Erin Murphy	Mezzo	2010
Andres Carillo	Tenor	2024	Kelly Noltner	Soprano	2020
Brian Carter	Tenor	2004	Richard Novak	Tenor	2009
Luciana Cecile	Soprano	2006	Jenna Odem-Schroer	Soprano	2020, 2021
James Chamberlain	Tenor	2024	Amber Opheim	Soprano	2018, 2019
Connie Coffelt	Soprano	2000	Daniel Opitz	Tenor	2014
Patrick Cook	Tenor	2012	Christopher Owens	Tenor	2005
Colleen Daly	Soprano	2011	Deidra Palmour	Soprano	2006, 2007
Brian Davis	Baritone	2015	Aaron Pendelton	Bass-Baritone	2019
Alma De Lon	Soprano	2001	Brian Register	Tenor	2007, 2008, 2009
Lauren Decker	Contralto	2015, 2016	Eugene (Trey) Richards	Baritone	2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021
Richard Demers	Baritone	2002	Jennifer Roderer	Soprano	2002, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2011
Stephanie dePrez	Soprano	2021	Julia Rolwing	Soprano	2007, 2008, 2009
Jason Detwiler	Baritone	2001	Roxanne Rowedder	Mezzo	2003, 2004, 2005
Geoffrey Di Giorgio	Baritone	2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019	Valerian Ruminski	Bass	2009
Hunter Enoch	Baritone	2018, 2020	Jose Sacin	Baritone	2011
Scott Fix	Tenor	2009	Rebecca Sacks	Soprano	2021
Karen Foster	Soprano	2011	Issachah Savage	Tenor	2012, 2013
Gregory Frens	Tenor	2014	Joshua Saxon	Tenor	2005
Amy Fuller	Soprano	2001	Matthew Sink	Tenor	2021
Jerett Geisler	Baritone	2008, 2009	Sarah Lynn Sippl	Soprano	2010
Benjamin Gelfand	Baritone	2009	Brendan Sliger	Tenor	2014, 2015
Othalie Graham	Soprano	2008, 2009, 2011, 2012	David Smith	Tenor	2004, 2006, 2007
Chantelle Grant	Mezzo	2014	Daniel Snyder	Tenor	2009
William Green	Tenor	2016, 2017, 2018	Jeffrey Springer	Tenor	2006, 2007
Lawrence Halksworth	Tenor	2024	Jessey Joy Spronk	Soprano	2019
Karen Harman	Soprano	2006, 2007	Brent Stater	Baritone	2012, 2014
Lawrence Harris	Tenor	2002	Jason Stearns	Bass-Baritone	2005, 2006, 2007
Michael Hayes	Tenor	2003, 2007	Roy Stevens	Tenor	2003, 2004
Adam Herskowitz	Tenor	2010	Gail Sullivan	Soprano	2002, 2003, 2006
Heather Hjelle	Soprano	2022, 2023, 2024	Jason Switzer	Bass-Baritone	2004
Taryn Holback	Soprano	2023	Blake Talbott	Tenor	2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024
Jeffrey Hoos	Baritone	2016	Jeffrey Tarr	Bass	2014
Solomon Howard	Bass	2014, 2015	Rebecca Teem	Soprano	2005, 2007, 2009
Roman Ialcic	Bass-Baritone	2018, 2019	Kara Shay Thomson	Soprano	2008
Pawel Izdebski	Bass	2005, 2010, 2011	Thomas Rolf Truhitte	Tenor	2001, 2002
Brian Jackson	Baritone	2011	Lindsay Vaughn	Soprano	2022
Jon Janacek	Tenor	2019, 2020, 2021	Terina Westmeyer	Soprano	2017
Jessine Johnson	Soprano	2015, 2016, 2017	Caroline Whisnant	Soprano	2003
Ray L. Karnes	Bass-Baritone	2001	Jennifer Wilson	Soprano	2001, 2003, 2004, 2010
Charlotte Kelso	Soprano	2022, 2023, 2024	Jillian Yemen	Mezzo	2016, 2017, 2018
David Kelso	Tenor	2002	Laura Zuiderveen	Soprano	2000, 2001
Ryan Kinsella	Baritone	2007, 2008			
Daniel Klein	Baritone	2008			

The American Wagner Project

By Deborah Diamond

The **American Wagner Project (AWP)**, founded in 2013, is a worthy successor to our **Emerging Singers Program (ESP)**, which we established with Thomas Stewart and Evelyn Lear in 1999. The AWP is the vehicle through which we help identify, support, and develop the next generation of singers who are capable of singing Wagner roles.

The AWP is a department of the Reno, Nevada-based Institute for Young Dramatic Voices, which is led by renowned dramatic mezzo-soprano Dolora Zajick. It is an intensive three-week summer program in which students work one-on-one with carefully selected experts from across the industry on role study, German language diction, and individual voice coaching. As of the summer of 2024, we have provided support to all of the 111 aspiring singers who have participated in the program.

Our alumni have performed 51 of the roles in Wagner's 10 mature works and *Rienzi*, appearing in world-class venues such as the Bayreuth Festival, the Metropolitan Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, the Vienna State Opera, and on many other stages in North and South America, Japan, Hong Kong, and Australia. They have appeared most frequently in the *Ring*, followed by *Tristan und Isolde*, *Der fliegende Holländer*, and *Lohengrin*.

- The roles of Siegfried and Siegmund have each been performed by seven alumni. Brünnhilde and Sieglinde have each been sung by six. Four have sung Freia, and four each

have sung Wotan, Hunding, and Alberich. Three have sung Erda. ESP/AWP alumni also include two Frickas, two Fafners, two Frohs, two Donners, and two Loges. A total of five alumni have appeared as Rhinemaidens, and a total of 27 have appeared as Valkyries.

- Seven of our alumni have sung the role of Tristan. Two each have performed Isolde, King Marke and Kurwenal; one each have appeared as Melot and Brangäne.
- The roles of Erik and Senta have each been performed by five ESP/AWP alumni. Four have sung the Dutchman; one has appeared as Mary, and one as Daland.
- Five alumni have appeared as *Lohengrin*, two as King Henry, two as Ortrud, and one as Elsa.
- Our programs have also produced three *Tannhäusers*, two Elisabeths, two Walthers, and one singer for each of the roles of Beckmesser, Moser, and Eva; one Parsifal, one Flower Maiden; and one Irene, *Rienzi* and *Del Vecchio* in *Rienzi*.



Dolora Zajick is that rare voice type, a true dramatic Verdi mezzo. She has sung the three big Verdi roles – Azucena (*Il Trovatore*), Amneris (*Aida*), and Eboli (*Don Carlo*) with opera companies all over the world, including the Metropolitan, Chicago's Lyric, the San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Italy's La Scala, the Vienna State Opera, London's Covent Garden, and Berlin's Staatsoper. She has appeared in opera and in concert with some of the world's foremost conductors. Marilyn Horne, the reigning mezzo-soprano of the previous generation, called Zajick "a force of nature – and it's not just her amazing voice, it's what she can do with [it] because of her superb technique and dedication." The great operatic soprano Birgit Nilsson said that Zajick is "the only [mezzo-soprano] existing today without any competition in the world."



Luana DeVol is one of the world's most successful dramatic sopranos. Beginning in the mid-1980s, she performed primarily in Europe, where she was twice named "Singer of the Year" by the magazine *Opernwelt*. She received the honor in 1997 for her performances as Elektra at Basel and Isolde at Leipzig respectively, and in 2000 for her performance as Brünnhilde in the *Ring* at Stuttgart. She sang the role of Brünnhilde at Bayreuth in 2001. Since retiring from the stage, Ms. DeVol has given Master Classes, maintained a private voice studio, and served on the Panel of Experts for the New York-based "Career Bridges" for aspiring singers. As General Director of Opera Las Vegas, she produced *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Carmen*, and *Rigoletto*. She is also an adjudicator/judge of voice competitions in the US and abroad.

The profiles of selected ESP and AWP alumni below illustrate the impact they are having on performances of Wagner and other composers throughout the world, particularly in the United States and Europe.



COREY BIX
(ESP 2007)

Tenor Corey Bix has sung seven major Wagner roles in opera houses from Los Angeles to Budapest. He has appeared as Heinrich and Tannhäuser with the Chicago Lyric Opera; as Walther in Kiel and Washington, DC; and as Erik with the Los Angeles Opera, Virginia Opera, Hungarian National Opera, and Arizona Opera. He made his role debut as Lohengrin with Opera Southwest (Albuquerque), and sang the role of Augustin Moser (*Die Meistersinger*) in San Francisco. His performance as Loge in Nashville was “well refined, and his comedy hit true, garnering . . . chuckles from the audience.”

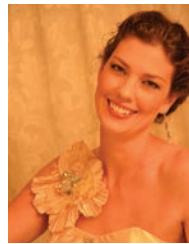
Mr. Bix made his Metropolitan Opera debut in 2022-23 as the Major-Domo in *Der Rosenkavalier*. A signature role is Bacchus in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, which he has performed with four US companies, and with the Vienna Volksoper and the Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe. He has sung numerous other roles, ranging from Florestan in *Fidelio* to the Governor in *Candide*, garnering praise from *Opera News* for his “clear sense of drama and self-possession, exhibiting sturdy, unwavering control, flinty resonance and confident high notes.”



DANIEL BRENNA
(ESP 2005)

Opera Wire describes Daniel Brenna as “one of the best-known heldentenors of his generation, singing across the world in many of the greatest theaters.” His signature role is Siegfried, which he has sung in at least 12 cities from Hong Kong to Helsinki, including San Francisco, Washington DC, and Stuttgart. A Viennese critic described his performance as “beyond compare,” writing “seldom has one heard the barbarously difficult “Forging Song” sung in such an exuberant and sovereign way. Brenna, however, sang . . . with an almost tantalizing nonchalance and still had the power for the final scene, “Heil dir, Sonne! Heil dir, Licht.”

Mr. Brenna has also sung the roles of Siegmund and Parsifal, and garnered praise from the German press for his performance as Tannhäuser in Dortmund.



EUDORA BROWN
(ESP 2009, 2010)

Soprano Eudora Brown thrilled audiences with her fiery interpretation of Irene in Wagner’s rarely performed *Rienzi* with the National Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of Piotr Gajewski. She debuted as Liu in *Turandot* with Opera Hong Kong and appeared in scenes from *Tannhäuser* and *Die Walküre* in concert with the American Wagner Project. Ms. Brown appeared with maestro Antony Walker and Washington Concert Opera for an evening of Richard Strauss, and was heard in Berg’s *Sieben Frühe Lieder* and in the final scene of Strauss’s *Salome*, in concert with Jeffrey Swann and the Wagner Society of Washington, DC.

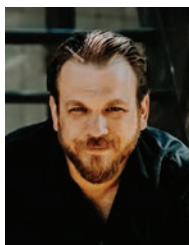
Ms. Brown first gained international attention as a mezzo-soprano in the role of Beatrice in *Beatrice and Benedict* with Santa Fe Opera. Career highlights include *Les Contes d’Hoffman* and the Page in *Salome* with Dallas Opera, Handel’s *Solomon*, Rossini’s *L’Italiana in Algeri*, and Handel’s *Joshua* with Boston Lyric Opera, *Agrippina* with Boston Baroque, and Mercadante’s *Il Giuramento* with Antony Walker and Washington Concert Opera.



LAUREN DECKER
(AWP 2015, 2016)

Contralto Lauren Decker made her European debut with Deutsche Oper Berlin in the 2023-24 season, appearing as Erda and Schwertleite in the *Ring*, Mary in *Der fliegende Holländer*, Third Lady in *Die Zauberflöte*, and Mamma Lucia in *Cavalleria rusticana*. In 2024-25, she is scheduled to sing La Badessa and La Zia Principessa in *Suor Angelica* with the company.

Ms. Decker has made company debuts at other esteemed venues in recent seasons. She appeared with the San Francisco Orchestra in Elgar’s *Sea Pictures*, and with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and at the Aspen Festival in Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 9*. At Aspen, she also sang the Third Lady in *Die Zauberflöte* and Eduige in Handel’s *Rodelinda*. She made her debut with Philadelphia Opera as Giovanna in *Rigoletto*, and as Mistress Quickly in *Falstaff* with Palm Beach Opera.



HUNTER ENOCH (AWP 2018, 2019, 2020)

Bass-baritone Hunter Enoch has been described as a “dramatic presence” in the role of Donner, which he sang at the Miami Music Festival in 2022. A New York critic wrote that he brought a “compelling voice” to the role of

Kurwenal, which he sang with the National Symphony in both Washington and New York. He appeared again as Donner with the Dallas Symphony this year, and as Wotan in *The Ring in One Evening*, with Pacific Northwest Opera in 2021.

Mr. Enoch performs regularly with companies and orchestras across the United States. He has appeared as Scarpia in St. Louis and Anchorage; Jago in Pacific Northwest Opera’s *Otello* and Germont in the company’s *Traviata*; Figaro with Maryland Lyric Opera, and as a soloist in *Messiah* with the Seattle Symphony and Virginia Beach Symphonicity. Mr. Enoch is currently singing in the Dallas Symphony under Fabio Luisi.



AMY FULLER (ESP 2001)

Soprano Amy Fuller is a member of the voice faculty of Illinois State University. She describes her experience working with Thomas Stewart and Evelyn Lear in the ESP as a continuing inspiration in her teaching

and musical life. She previously taught at Millikin University in Decatur, Illinois, at the **Unit One** Voice Division of the University of Illinois in Urbana/Champaign. As “artist in residence” and voice instructor at Tongi University in Shanghai, China, Ms. Fuller directed opera scenes, held masterclasses and lectures, and judged the “Stars of Jiading” Campus Singer Competition.



OTHALIE GRAHAM (ESP 2007, 2009)

Canadian-born soprano Othalie Graham has wowed audiences at Wagner galas throughout North and South America. The *San Francisco Chronicle* described her performance in the

Immolation Scene from *Götterdämmerung* as “fearless. . . Ms. Graham was a full-voiced, dramatically forthright Brünnhilde, lofting true and stirring high notes above the orchestra and fusing them into long-breathed, meticulously arced melodic phrases.” Another critic said she “showed a keen focus, hall-filling power, a span of dynamics and more stage presence than many a singer costumed in a staged opera.”

Ms. Graham has also sung Freia with Nashville Opera, Sieglinde with Festival Theater Hudson, and Isolde in Zagreb, Croatia and with the Orquesta Sinfónica Xalapa. She has sung the role of Aida in Syracuse (Italy), and Turandot at Bellas Artes in Mexico City, in Malaga, Spain, and throughout North America.



MICHAEL HAYES (ESP 2003, 2007)

Michael Hayes recently retired from a 35-year career in opera and musical theater, during which he earned a reputation as one of the world’s most versatile and charismatic tenors. His opera repertoire includes roles

as varied as Erik in *Der fliegende Holländer*, the Duke in *Rigoletto*, Danilo in *The Merry Widow*, and the title role in Verdi’s *Otello*, which he sang with RIA Opera in Amsterdam, Opera de Nantes in France, and Catholic University’s Summer Opera Theater in Washington. In musical theater, he performed numerous roles including Tony in *West Side Story*, Cable in *South Pacific*, Ravenal in *Show Boat*, and Freddy in *My Fair Lady*. His concert credits include selections from *Die Walküre* and *Siegfried*, the title role in Kurt Weill’s *Der Protagonist*, and the tenor soloist in Verdi’s *Requiem* and Mahler’s *Lied von der Erde*.



SOLOMAN HOWARD (AWP 2013-2014)

Soloman Howard’s bass has been described as “sonorous” by *The New York Times*, “superhuman,” by the *Denver Post*, and “a triumph” by *The Guardian*. A native of the District of Columbia, he is well-known to

the area’s operagoers, who have heard him at the Washington National Opera as Fafner in the *Ring*, Sarastro in *The Magic Flute*, Alcide in *La Forza del Destino*, and the Commendatore in *Don Giovanni*. He created the title role of *The Lion, the Unicorn, and Me* for the WNO, where he also appeared in the title role of *Approaching Ali*.

In 2016, the Anti-Defamation League presented their “Making a Difference Award” to Mr. Howard for raising awareness of voting rights through his performances in Philip Glass’ *Appomattox*. He premiered the roles of both Frederick Douglass and Martin Luther King, Jr. in the 2015 version of that opera, which had been revised after the Supreme Court struck down provisions of the Voting Rights Act. In 2021, he was named Ambassador of the Arts by Washington Performing Arts in recognition of his advocacy for the arts and social justice.



ROMAN IALCIC
(AWP 2018, 2019)

Moldovan-born bass-baritone Roman Ialcic made his professional opera debut at age 21 in 2009 in *The Magic Flute* – and was hailed as the “youngest Sarastro in the world.” At the 2019 Miami Music Festival, he “was a commanding presence as the Dutchman. Tall and imposing in a long grey coat, Ialcic sang the monologue “Die Frist ist um” in rounded, molten tones. At times on his knees, he radiated the protagonist’s despair at his cursed existence with mesmerizing intensity. When singing softly, there was warmth, richness and depth in his superbly controlled voice.” He covered Fafner, Fasolt, and Hunding for the 2013 Seattle *Ring*, and was a finalist at the 2014 Seattle Opera International Wagner Competition.



AMANDA MACE
(ESP 2001)

Soprano Amanda Mace made her debut as Ortlinde in *Die Walküre* at the Bayreuth Festival in 2006. She sang the same role at the Bavarian State Opera, Munich in November 2006, and Sieglinde in Vilnius in March 2007. In July 2007 she returned to Bayreuth as Eva in *Die Meistersinger*, and sang Helmwige in *Die Walküre* at the Vienna State Opera later that year. She performed the role of Senta for Mobile Opera in 2010. She has also performed the title roles in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Tosca*, and *Suor Angelia* as well as Leonore and Donna Anna.



JAY HUNTER MORRIS
(ESP 2001)

Tenor Jay Hunter Morris, who accepted the Society’s Wagner Award in 2015, debuted in the role of Siegfried in San Francisco in 2011. He subsequently performed the role in the Metropolitan Opera’s 2011-2012 production of the *Ring* by Robert LePage, which won a Grammy for Best Opera Recording. The *San Francisco Chronicle* said he displayed “the best qualities of a heldentenor with a forward sound, edge and natural high notes.” The *New York Times* praised his “impressive stamina and robust character. . .and in more reflective, lyrical passages. . . tenderness and subtlety.”



DEIDRA PALMOUR
(ESP 2006-2007)

Mezzo-soprano Deidra Palmour was hailed as “a Brünnhilde of one’s dreams” when she sang in *Die Walküre* for Long Beach Opera. The *Los Angeles Times* went on to say that “she was a terrific actress who could also toss off yo-ho-to-ho’s with silvery ease.” She received similar accolades for other roles in her extensive repertoire. In *Elektra*, she “stunningly flesh[ed] out the pert Chrysothemis’ sensuality, her voluptuous yet silvery soprano rising to thrilling climax at the opera’s end.” And in the title role of *La Cenerentola*, “her gorgeous, buttery mezzo had a dark, sexy low range, a crystalline high end, and ...all the technique. . .to make Rossini’s difficult vocal curlicues easy.”



BRYAN REGISTER
(ESP 2007-2009)

Bryan Register is a “powerful Heldentenor” who is in frequent demand for Wagner roles throughout North America and Europe. In the past three seasons alone, he has sung Tristan in Copenhagen, Essen, Cottbus, Santa Fe and Xalapa (Mexico); Parsifal with the Spanish National Orchestra in Madrid; Erik in Pittsburgh and Hong Kong, the latter having been recorded for the Naxos label; and Siegmund in Copenhagen and at the Baden-Baden Festival. He previously appeared as Lohengrin in Brussels, Hong Kong and Savonlinna. In the 2024/25 season, he will give his role debut as Siegfried in a new production of *Götterdämmerung* in Brussels; the season after, his role debut as Tannhäuser will follow. Both seasons, he will also return to his signature role of Tristan.



JENNIFER RODERER
(ESP 2002, 2004, 2006, 2011)

Mezzo-soprano Jennifer Roderer sang a critically acclaimed debut at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires as Fricka in *Die Walküre*. *La Nación* said that she “confirmed the. . .excellence of American singers in . . . idiomatic accuracy and knowledge of the repertoire.” Other Wagnerian credits include Waltraute in *Die Walküre* for Lyric Opera of Chicago and Seattle Opera, Rosswise in *Die Walküre* at Opera Pacific, and a Flowermaiden in *Parsifal* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. The *Washington Post* said that, as Erda, she conveyed “a sense of dignity and world-weariness alongside a voice of low-end punch.”

Ms. Roderer made her Metropolitan Opera debut in 2017 as La Duègne in Alfano's *Cyrano de Bergerac*. She has sung a diverse array of characters at the New York City Opera, including Lady Angela in *Patience*, Jade Boucher in *Dead Man Walking*, and the Third Lady in *The Magic Flute*. She made her European debut at Open Air Gars in Austria as Amneris, winning praise for her "even, voluminous, warm mezzo, an extraordinary singing performance."



JULIA ROLWING
(ESP 2007-2009)

Award-winning dramatic soprano Julia Rolwing has been hailed for both her lyricism and dramatic vocal thrust in opera, oratorio, and recital. In a review of the fall 2007 ESP recital, the *Washington Post* said that her

Sieglinde was "absolutely transfiguring" with a voice "rounded and rich", and in a 2008 concert, the *Post* wrote that she "had all the spacious exuberance and vocal flexibility needed for Wagner's Elisabeth as she greets the hall of the Wartburg fortress in *Tannhäuser*." Ms. Rolwing's Wagner roles have included Freia, Sieglinde, Senta, and a concert reading of *Isolde*, under Maestro David Gilbert of Bayreuth. She has recently sung concert versions of *Die Walküre* and *Siegfried's* Brünnhilde. Her other roles have included the title roles of *Aida*, *Tosca*, *Cendrillon*, and *Dido*, in addition to *Donna Anna*, *Countess Almaviva*, *Stephano*, *Ann Page*, *Lady Billows* and the *Mother* in both *Humperdinck's Hänsel und Gretel* and *Menotti's Amahl and the Night Visitors*, and concert readings of *Don Carlos' Elisabetta*, and *Strauss' Ariadne auf Naxos*.



REBECCA SACKS
(AWP 2021)

Mezzo-soprano Rebecca Sacks garnered high praise for her 2023 debut as Sara in Donizetti's *Roberto Devereux*. *Opera Wire's* critic wrote that "she sang with emotion and purpose. . .her expressiveness was indisputable. . .[her] range

is extraordinary. . .and allows for a varied repertoire." As Santuzza in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, "her impeccable diction and powerful projection ensured that even those in the furthest seats heard her. . .She dynamically inhabited the space, with her physicality enhancing her delivery."

Ms. Sacks sang Fricka in Miami Music Festival's 2022 production of *Das Rheingold*, and Grimgerde in *Die Walküre* with Pittsburgh

Festival Opera. Her other recent roles have included the Witch in *Hansel and Gretel*, Queen Alkmene in *Die Liebe der Danae*, and Dorabella in *Così fan Tutte*.

In the 2024-2025 season, Ms. Sacks will join St. Pete Opera as Mrs. Anderssen in *A Little Night Music*, Philadelphia-based Vox Amadeus as the alto soloist in the Vivaldi *Magnificat* and *Gloria*, and Ping & Woof Opera as the Witch in *Hansel and Gretel*.

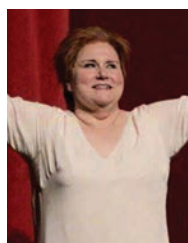


ISSACHAH SAVAGE
(ESP 2012, AWP 2013, 2015-2016)

Tenor Issachah Savage swept the 2014 Seattle Opera International Wagner Competition, winning First Prize, the Audience Prize, and the Orchestra Prize. *Opera News* described his voice in his October 2021

role debut as *Tannhäuser* as "mighty, tough-sinewed. . .loud but compact; assertive, yet capable of tenderness; and invested with unflagging energy. Savage's *Tannhäuser* was everything Wagner wanted." A few months later, the same journal said "Savage gave a remarkable performance as *Siegmond*, combining power and flexibility and singing with unflagging beauty of tone." *San Francisco Classical Voice* called him "a tremendous, heroic Lohengrin. The line of his gorgeous voice in "Mein lieber Schwann" was seamless, the energy unflagging."

Mr. Savage has won similar accolades in the roles of the Emperor in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, King Waldemar in Schönberg's *Gurrelieder*, Bacchus in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Narraboth in *Salome*, and the High Priest in *Idomeneo* at the Metropolitan Opera. This month, Mr. Savage sings the title role in *Peter Grimes* with the Dutch National Opera.



REBECCA TEEM
(AWP 2005, 2007, 2009)

Soprano Rebecca Teem has performed major Wagner roles at theaters throughout Germany. She made her role debut as Brünnhilde in Lübeck, followed by appearances in two complete *Ring* cycles in

Frankfurt, and in *Götterdämmerung* in Leipzig and Munich. She also sang Gerhilde at the Deutsche Oper Berlin, and *Isolde* in Lübeck. The DVD of the Lübeck *Ring* in which she appeared won Germany's prestigious Echo-Klassik Award in 2012.

Ms. Teem began her stage career as a mezzo-soprano with roles such as Second Lady in *The Magic Flute*, Princess Eboli in *Don*

Carlo, and Azucena in *Il Trovatore*. She made her switch to dramatic soprano in the role of Tosca at the New York Opera Forum, subsequently singing title roles in *Aida*, *Elektra*, and *Turandot*.



CAROLINE WHISNANT (ESP 2003)

Soprano Caroline Whisnant made her European debut at the Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe as Elektra in 2004. She was then immediately invited to debut as Brünnhilde in that theater's 2004-06 production of the *Ring*. From 2004-2010 she was a member of the renowned State Theater of Mannheim, where she appeared as Ortrud, Senta, Elisabeth, and Brünnhilde. She has also sung Senta in Buffalo, Brünnhilde in *Die Walküre* in Cagliari, Stockholm, and Essen, and Sieglinde at the Alte Oper Frankfurt. Her other roles have included Turandot, Anna Bolena, Tosca, Lady Macbeth, and Ariadne in *Ariadne auf Naxos*.



JENNIFER WILSON (ESP 2001, 2003-2004, 2010)

Soprano Jennifer Wilson became an overnight sensation in 2008, when she replaced an indisposed Jane Eaglen as Brünnhilde in *Götterdämmerung* in Chicago. The *New York Times* critic wrote, "Ms. Wilson not only sang the killer leading role . . . she also sang it so well, with a huge, beautiful sound and dramatic nuance, that she brought down the house." Ms. Wilson received the Society's Wagner Award in 2016.

Prior to her breakthrough, Ms. Wilson had sung Helmwig, Guttrune, and the Third Norn in Chicago's 2005 *Ring* cycles. She had also appeared as Senta at the Washington National Opera, and in *Die Walküre* in Paris and Hamburg. Her Chicago triumph led to a multi-season collaboration with Zubin Mehta, who cast her as Brünnhilde in the Valencia and Florence *Rings*. Her performance in *Götterdämmerung* in Valencia was described as "one of the great strengths of this cycle. . . She seems more human and vulnerable for the exchanges in Act I but she takes on eviscerating power in Act II. . . The immolation is powerful and compelling, rising to a fully assured peak and a beautiful climax."



The Cast of Miami Music Festival's *Das Rheingold*



From left to right: William McCullough, Stephanie de Prez, Hunter Enoch, Eugene Richards, and Jon Janacek

In 2022, the AWP cooperated with the Miami Music Festival's (MMF) Wagner Institute in a production of *Das Rheingold* in which nine of the cast members were AWP alumni.

- **Eugene Richards** (AWP 2015-20) sang **Wotan**. A dramatic baritone, he has sung the Dutchman for Vegas City Opera. He sang the role of King Henry in *Lohengrin*, and Hunding in *Die Walküre*, at MMF in 2018, and the role of the Wanderer for Staatstheater Kassel in 2019.
 - **Rebecca Sacks** (AWP 2020-22), a mezzo, sang **Fricka**. She has also performed the roles of Grimgerde (*Die Walküre*) and Brangäne (*Tristan und Isolde*) in Jane Eaglen's Mastersinger Program for Young Dramatic Voices.
 - Soprano **Stephanie de Prez** (AWP 2021) sang sweetly as the vulnerable **Freia**. She has also sung the roles of Woglinde in *Das Rheingold* and Gerhilde in *Die Walküre*.
 - Baritone **Hunter Enoch** (AWP 2018-2020) sang **Donner**. He was featured in the Wagner Society's 2019 Gala at the Swedish Embassy. DC-area audiences have also heard him in the role of Kurwenal in Act II of *Tristan und Isolde* under the baton of Gianandrea Noseda.
 - **Jillian Yemen** (AWP 2016-18) sang **Erda**. A rich, ringing mezzo tending toward contralto, her other roles include Hansel in *Hansel and Gretel*, and the Muse in *Tales of Hoffman*.
 - **William McCullough** (AWP 2020), **Froh** is a tenor who sang in Opera Las Vegas' 2019 production of Britten's *Noah's Flood*.
- He has performed Erik in *Der Fliegende Holländer* and sung "Wintersturme" and "Du bist der Lenz" from *Die Walküre* for the Future Voices of Opera recital in Henderson, NV.
- **Jon Janacek** (AWP 2019-2021), **Loge** is a dramatic tenor who has sung the role of Rodolfo for Vegas City Opera and sang the title role in Miami Music Festival's 2018 *Lohengrin*, in which he displayed "an attractive lyricism."
 - Baritone **Geoffrey di Giorgio** (AWP 2014-2019) sang **Alberich**. He has sung Kurwenal in San Francisco Opera's *Tristan und Isolde* and placed in the Metropolitan Opera's National Council Auditions. He has a "stentorian voice that rings loud and clear."
 - **Taryn Holback** (AWP 2022-23), a mezzo, sang **Flosshilde**. She has performed in Teatro Nuovo's productions of Barber's *Vanessa* and the role of Cecilia March in Mark Adamo's *Little Women*.

The production was directed by MMF Artistic Director Michael Rossi and generously underwritten by the John J. Pohanka Family Foundation. Critic James L. Paulk wrote in the online magazine *Classical Voice North America* that it was "a singular event, gripping and memorable in the best Wagnerian tradition."

ESP and AWP Annual Concerts

By Bonnie Becker

A total of 100 ESP and AWP singers have performed at recitals in or near Washington DC every year since 2000, with an “intermission” for the COVID pandemic. The Society sponsors these events to give the singers exposure and experience, and to give Washington-area audiences the pleasure of hearing them.

Many of the early Emerging Singers concerts were held at the German Embassy under the auspices of Wolfgang Ischinger, who was Germany’s Ambassador to the US from 2001-2006.

- In April 2000, mezzo-soprano Laura Zuiderveen and dramatic soprano Connie Coffelt performed under the rubric of “Wagner’s Heroines.”
- Five Emerging Singers were showcased in May 2001: tenors Jay Hunter Morris and Paul Mow, sopranos Amanda Mace and Amy Fuller, and bass-baritone Ray Karns.
- The ESP concert in October 2000 featured tenor Thomas Rolf Truhitte, soprano Jennifer Wilson, baritone Jason Detwiler, and soprano Laura Zuiderveen. Mr. Truhitte sang again in May 2002, along with soprano Jennifer Roderer, baritone Nathan Bahny, and soprano Gail Sullivan.
- Mr. Bahny performed again in October 2002, along with tenors David Kelso and Lawrence Harris, baritone Robert Demers, and soprano Alison Bolshoi. The concert in May 2003 featured baritone Charles Robert Austin, soprano Gail Sullivan, mezzo-soprano Roxanne Rowedder, and tenor Michael Hayes.
- The 2003-04 season began with an all-*Ring* ESP concert in September, featuring soprano Caroline Whisnant, tenor Roy Stevens and baritone Charles Robert Austin. The performance, accompanied by the Friday Morning Music Club Orchestra under the baton of Sylvia Alimena, was part of a three-day event sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution. Ms. Alimena also conducted the Emerging Singers concert in May 2004, with performances by tenor Roy Stevens, baritone Matt Lepold, soprano Jennifer Wilson, and mezzo-soprano Jennifer Roderer.

The German Embassy often hosted our concerts again between 2004 and 2010.

- The concert in October 2004 featured mezzo-soprano Roxanne Rowedder, tenors Brian Carter and David Smith, and baritones Jason Switzer and Matt Lepold.
- In May 2005, the tenth ESP concert showcased seven aspiring Wagnerians: bass-baritone Charles Robert Austin,

sopranos Rebecca Teem and Diane Barton, baritones Daniel Brenna and Nathan Bahny, bass Pawel Izdebski, and tenor Joshua Saxon.

- The October 2005 concert featured soprano Rebecca Teem, mezzo-soprano Roxanne Rowedder, baritone Jason Stearns, and tenors Joshua Saxon and Christopher Owens.
- The concert in October 2006 was dedicated to the memory of ESP co-founder Thomas Stewart. The program included selections from *Die Meistersinger*, *Lohengrin*, *Das Rheingold*, *Tannhäuser*, and *Tristan und Isolde* performed by sopranos Deidra Palmour and Kara Harman, tenor Jeffrey Springer, and bass-baritone Jason Stearns.
- In November 2007, sopranos Julia Rolwing and Valerie Bernhardt; baritone Ryan Kinsella; and tenor Corey Bix performed selections from *Die Meistersinger*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Die Walküre*, *Das Rheingold*, *Parsifal*, *Lohengrin*, and Act III, Scene 3 of *Götterdämmerung*. *Washington Post* music critic Cecelia Porter hailed the event under the headline “Young Singers Triumphant in Wagner Roles.”
- In June 2008, the program featured the complete Act I, Scene 3 from *Siegfried*, the Siegmund/Sieglinde Duet from *Die Walküre*, other excerpts from *Die Walküre* and *Götterdämmerung*, and the “Dutchman’s Monologue” from *Der Fliegende Holländer*. Performers included sopranos Julia Rolwing and Valerie Bernhardt, tenor Bryan Register and baritone Ryan Kinsella.
- Sopranos Othalie Graham and Kara Shay Thompson, and baritones Jerett Gieseler and Daniel Klein performed in October 2008. In March 2009, the concert took place at the Austrian Embassy. Singers included Mr. Gieseler and soprano Rebecca Teem, tenors Richard Novak and Daniel Snyder, and bass Valerian Ruminski.
- The German Embassy hosted the ESP concert again in April and October 2010. The April program featured sopranos Karen Foster and Natalie Bergeron, bass-baritone Benjamin Gelfand, and tenors Scott Six, Patrick Cook, and Brent Stater. Singers in the October program included sopranos Jennifer Wilson, Sarah Lynn Sippl, Krista McClellan, mezzo-soprano Erin Murphy, and bass Pawel Izdebski, showcasing selections from *Die Walküre*, *Lohengrin*, *Das Rheingold*, and *Der Fliegende Holländer*.

Emerging Singers concerts also took place in a variety of other venues in DC, Virginia, and Maryland.

- In June, 2006, the Oakcrest School in McLean, Va. hosted a program that included the Prelude to Act I of *Die Meistersinger*, the Magic Fire Music from *Die Walküre*, and excerpts from *Tristan und Isolde*, *Siegfried*, and *Götterdämmerung*. The performers included sopranos Kara Harmon, Gail Sullivan, Luciana Cecile; mezzo-soprano Jennifer Roderer, and tenor David Smith, accompanied by the McLean Orchestra conducted by Sylvia Alimena. The *Washington Post's* review of the performance ended with the unusual plea, "More Wagner, please!"
- Opera Roanoke hosted the Emerging Singers concert in October 2009 under the direction of maestro Stephen Smith.
- Tenors Jeffrey Easter, Richard Novak and Jeffrey Ambrosini, bass-baritone Ben Gelfand, and mezzo-soprano Shannon McGee performed at the Arts Club of Washington DC in November 2009.
- The Kennedy Center Concert Hall provided the stage for the two final concerts of the Thomas Stewart and Evelyn Lear Emerging Singers Program.
- In May 2011, ESP soloists joined the Washington Chorus for a performance titled "Mostly Mahler." The soloists were sopranos Colleen Daly, Karen Foster and Othalie Graham, mezzo-sopranos Shannon Magee and Jennifer Roderer, tenor Stefan Algieri, baritones Bryan Jackson and Jose Sacin, and bass-baritones Nathan Bahny and Pawel Izdebski. *Washington Post* music critic Joe Banno wrote that the concert "drew a massive sound from the soloists, most notably soprano Othalie Graham, tenor Stefan Algieri, and bass Pawel Izdebski, whose voices seared through the orchestra." A highlight of the evening was Evelyn Lear performing the narration from Weber's *Die Drei Pintos*.
- In May 2012, ESP soloists and the Washington Chorus collaborated under the baton of Julian Wachner on a program of "Essential Wagner." ESP singers included tenors Patrick Cook and Issachah Savage, baritone Brent Stator, and soprano Othalie Graham. *Washington Post* music critic Anne Midgette praised "the able tenor Patrick Cook" and "the penetrating soloist Othalie Graham [who] took on the trickier parts of "The Ride of the Valkyries." She also wrote that there "was an extra thrill in the final selection, with tenor Issachah Savage singing the famous "Prize Song" from *Meistersinger*. I wasn't prepared for the easy, rich, warm sound that poured out of him in one of the most beautiful arias in the repertory. ...His is a world-class voice."

After the passing of Evelyn Lear in 2012, WSWDC founded the American Wagner Project in partnership with Dolora Zajick's

Institute for Young Dramatic Voices. Headed by Luana DeVol, AWP held its inaugural concert in April 2014. Three singers performed selections from *Das Rheingold*, *Tannhäuser*, *Parsifal*, the *Wesendonck Lieder*, and *Die Walküre*: mezzo-soprano Lauren Decker, heldentenor Gregory Frens, and soprano Eudora Brown. In June 2014, tenor Issachah Savage performed a solo recital for the Society, featuring excerpts from the roles of Siegmund, Amfortas, and *Lohengrin*.

Since then, AWP has sponsored a concert every year – except during the pandemic – at various venues in DC.

- In March 2016, AWP director Luana DeVol and WSWDC board member John Edward Niles presented a program featuring baritone Eugene Robinson, soprano Jessine Johnson, and mezzo Lauren Decker at the Katzen Arts Center of American University.
- In April 2017, mezzo-soprano Gillian Yemen, tenor William Green, and bass-baritone Daniel Mitton, took the stage at the Katzen Center to perform selections from *Der Fliegende Holländer*, *Die Walküre*, *Tannhäuser*, and *Parsifal*.
- In March 2018 Swiss Ambassador Martin Dahinden hosted the AWP concert at the embassy residence. Baritone Eugene (Trey) Richards performed portions of *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*; soprano Jillian Yemen sang several *Wesendonck Lieder*; and tenor William Green sang "Mignonne," a song by Wagner on a text by Pierre de Ronsard. Mr. Green and Ms. Yemen together sang selections from Act III of *Parsifal*.
- The Swedish Embassy was the venue for the concert in May, 2019. Soprano Amber Opheim performed Elsa's "Dream" from Act I of *Lohengrin*; tenor Jon Janacek, *In Fernem Land* from Act III of *Lohengrin*; and baritone Hunter Enoch, "Wie Todesahnung" from Act III of *Tannhäuser*. Together Ms. Opheim and Mr. Janacek sang the "Discovery of Love" duet from Act I of *Die Walküre*.
- Three AWP singers performed at the Arts Club of Washington in May 2023. Tenor Jon Janacek sang "Allgemacht'ger Vater" from Wagner's *Rienzi*, and Heather Hjelle sang *Suicidio!* from Ponchielli's *La Gioconda*. Maureen Brabec and Ms. Hjelle dramatized the confrontation between Elsa and Ortrud from *Lohengrin*, followed by Mr. Janacek and Ms. Brabec in the duet in which Elsa demands to know Lohengrin's name.
- "Vocal Vistas – Italian and Wagner Arias" was the theme of the AWP concert in April 2024. The program featured soprano Charlotte Kelso and tenor James Chamberlain, at Live! At 10th and G Street NW.



2000: Bravos and Kudos at the end of the concert! (Photo, left to right) Thomas Stewart, Evelyn Lear, mezzo-soprano Jennifer Roderer, Maestra Sylvia Alimena, tenor David Smith, sopranos Gail Sullivan, Kara Harman, and Luciana Cecille (who sang from a balcony as the Waldvogel accompanying David Smith's Siegfried).



2001: The performers accept the applause, left to right: Jason Switzer, Mathew Lepold, David Smith, Brian Carter, Roxanne Rowedder and Betty Bullock with Evelyn Lear, Thomas Stewart and John Edward Niles.

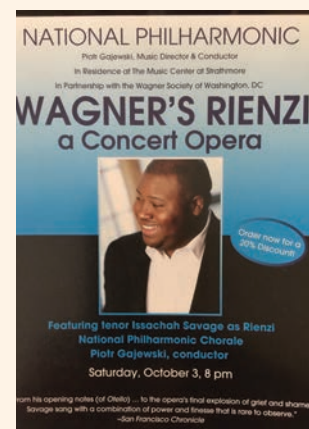


5th Emerging Singers Concert (October 11, 2002). Evelyn Lear and Thomas Stewart present bouquets to the singers; left to right: David Kelso, (tenor); Alison Bolshoi (soprano); Nathan Bahny (baritone); Betty Bullock (piano); Lawrence Harris (tenor) and Robert Demers (baritone).

Our Singers Take On *Rienzi*

By Bob Misbin

On October 3, 2015, WSWDC partnered with Piotr Gajewski of the National Philharmonic to present a concert version of Wagner's early work *RIENZI* at Strathmore. Although extremely popular in Wagner's time, the work is almost never performed today, largely because of the size and length of the original. The cast featured AWP/ESP alumni Issachah Savage, Eudora Brown, and Jason Stearns. The cast also starred Mary Ann Stewart with Kevin Thompson, Robert Baker and Stephen Bryant in smaller roles.



A regrettable part of Wagner's legacy is the racism that prevailed at the Bayreuth Festival before the end of World War 2. This ended in 1961 when Wieland Wagner cast Grace Bumbry to be "Die Schwarze Venus" (the black Venus) in *Tannhäuser*. Black men have had a more difficult time being accepted as opera singers at Bayreuth and around the world. WSWDC

is very proud to have fostered the career of the African American heldentenor Issachah Savage. Mr Savage was the obvious choice to be cast by Maestro Gajewski as *Rienzi* for the National Philharmonic production at *Strathmore*. This was the first time we can find that a black tenor has sung the title character in a Wagner opera.

Mr Savage has been acclaimed around the world for performances of Siegmund, *Tannhäuser*, *Aida* and *Otello*. Most recent is his June 2024 performance of the Beethoven ninth symphony at the Kennedy Center with the National Symphony Orchestra under Gianandrea Noseda. Commenting on the "Ode to Joy", Michael Ardor Brodeur of the *Washington Post* described Issachah's "magnificent presence with a voice made for joy at a grand scale performance."



At the German Embassy, left to right: Tenor Bryan Register, pianist Betty Bullock, soprano Julia Rolwing, soprano Valerie Bernhardt, Evelyn Lear and bass-baritone Ryan Kinsella accept the applause of the appreciative audience.



2002: The 7th Emerging Singers Concert concluded the Seminar weekend. In photo left to right: Thomas Stewart; Mary McLaughlin, Program Coordinator, The Smithsonian Associates; baritone Charles Robert Austin; soprano Caroline Wisnant; Friday Morning Music Club Conductor Sylvia Alimena; tenor Roy Stevens; and Evelyn Lear.



2005: The 11th concert in the twice-yearly series was presented on Friday, October 14, 2005, at the German Embassy. Taking their bows after the concert (left to right) are Soprano Rebecca Teem, Evelyn Lear, Thomas Stewart, Mezzo-soprano Roxanne Rowedder, Baritone Jason Stearns, Tenor Joshua Saxon, Betty Bullock (piano) and Tenor Christopher Owens.



Bass-Baritone Charles Robert Austin, Thomas Stewart, Soprano Rebecca Teem, Soprano Dianne Barton, Baritone Nathan Bahny, Evelyn Lear, Bass Pawel Izdebski, Tenor Joshua Saxon and Baritone Daniel Brenna. (See our website www.wagner-dc.org for the concert program.)



2009: Evelyn Lear conducted a master class with soprano Julia Rolwing and tenor Brian Register for a small group of large contributors to thank them for their support for the Evelyn Lear and Thomas Stewart Emerging Singers Program.



2009: Applause for pianist Betty Bullock Betty Bullock, renowned pianist for singers at concerts since the creation of the Evelyn Lear and Thoms Stewart Emerging Singers Program (ESP) in 2001, accepts applause from the audience and singers at the 18th ESP on March 12. (in photo left to right) page turner Helen O'Connell, bass-baritone Valerian Ruminski, Betty Bullock, tenor Richard Novak, baritone Jerett Gieseler, Evelyn Lear, tenor Daniel Snyder, and soprano Rebecca Teem.



20th ESP Concert. Left to right: John Edward Niles, pianist Betty Bullock, tenor Jeffrey Easter, Evelyn Lear, tenor Richard Novak, bassbaritone Ben Gelfand, tenor Jeffrey Ambrosini and (partially visible) mezzo-soprano Shannon McGee at the Arts Club, Washington DC. (November 2009)



21st ESP Concert. Left to right: sopranos Karen Foster and Natalie Bergeron, pianist Betty Bullock, bass-baritone Benjamin Gelfand, Evelyn Lear, tenors Scott Six, Patrick Cook and Bret Stater at the German Embassy. (April 2010)



2011: Maestro Julian Wachner at the Mostly Mahler concert with mezzo Jennifer Roderer (left) and soprano Othalie Graham (right).

Mostly Mahler, in cooperation with the Washington Chorus under the direction of Maestro Julian Wachner at the Kennedy Center. WSWDC and the Thomas Stewart and Evelyn Lear Emerging Singers Program provided the soloists for the Washington Chorus' 50th Anniversary *Mostly Mahler* concert. Selections were from Mahler's 8th and 3rd, the second Resurrection Mass, *Das Klagende Lied*, and *Ruckert-Lieder*. A highlight was Evelyn Lear performing the narration for von Weber's *Die Drei Pintos*.

In this, the 23rd ESP concert, soloists included sopranos Colleen Daly, Karen Foster and Othalie Graham, mezzosopranos Shannon Magee and Jennifer Roderer, tenor Stefan Algieri, baritones Bryan Jackson and Jose Sacin, and bass-baritones Nathan Bahny and Pawel Izdebski. Roderer (2002, 04-07), Bahny (2002), and Izdebski (2005) are ESP alumni.

Washington Post music critic Joe Banno wrote that the concert "drew a massive sound from the soloists, most notably soprano Othalie Graham, tenor Stefan Algieri, and bass Pawel Izdebski, whose voices seared through the orchestra.... An abridged Act 3 from Mahler's orchestration of *Die Drei Pintos*, (narrated by Evelyn Lear and featuring more lyrical voices, including Colleen Daly, baritone Jose Sacin, and Bryan Jackson), was treated with a Straussian lightness of touch." (May 3)



2013 AWP Concert: Joshua Baumgardner, Jeffrey Tarr, Chantelle Grant, Eudora Brown, American Wagner Project's Dolora Zajick and John Edward Niles



2011: For the second year WSWDC provided the soloists for The Washington Chorus' spring concert: *The Essential Wagner*. Soloists included soprano Othalie Graham, tenor Patrick Cook, tenor Issachah Savage, and baritone Bret Stater, under the baton of Maestro Julian Wachner.



2016: Left to right: Soprano Jessie Johnson, Luana DeVol, pianist Betty Bullock, mezzo Lauren Decker, Baritone Eugene Richards.



2020: From left to right: Dolora Zajick, Luana DeVol, Pianist Betty Bullock, Hunter Enoch, Amber Opheim, and Jon Janacek



Jessine Johnson



Eugene Richards



Jeffrey Hoos



Jillian Yemen



Daniel Mitton



William Green

AWP Participants for 2016

Promising singers have been selected for the 2016 American Wagner Project. All are preparing specific roles which they will either be singing or auditioning for in 2016-17.

Soprano Jessine Johnson returns from last summer's program to prepare the roles of Senta, Elsa, and Ariadne.

Baritone Eugene Richards returns this summer to prepare the roles of Wolfram and Amfortas.

Jeffrey Hoos is a baritone in his second year with IYDV but his first year with AWP. A 26-year old from Marlton, NJ, he is preparing the role of Alberich.

Mezzo Jillian Yemen, a graduate of the University of Toronto, is preparing the roles of Ortrud, Kundry and Fricka.

Bass-baritone Daniel Mitton is from Toronto, singing in his first AWP. He is preparing the roles of Gurnemanz, Daland, and Hagen.

William Green is a tenor in his first year with AWP. He is preparing the roles of Siegmund and Loge. A graduate of Stetson University, he is from Milton, GA.



Amber Opheim



Roman Lalcic



Elizabeth Baldwin

AWP Singers for 2018

Amber Opheim is a soprano who completed a Masters in vocal performance from Chicago's DePaul University. She holds a fest position at Konzert Theater Bern Switzerland. At AWP she is learning the role of Sieglinde. She can be seen on YouTube.

Roman Lalcic is a bass-baritone from the Republic of Moldova. With AWP he is studying the role of Wotan. Mezzo soprano Jillian Yemen, in her second year with AWP, is studying the role of Erda in both *Das Rheingold* and *Götterdämmerung*. Eugene (Trey) Richards, in his third year, is preparing Wotan/the Wanderer. Besides the Melchior competition and auditions at German companies, he retained an agent who is arranging auditions such as Wotan in Pforzheim's upcoming *Das Rheingold*.

Elizabeth Baldwin, an Ohio native, was praised as "ferociously talented" by the San Francisco Examiner. She has participated in the San Francisco Opera's Merola program and was a National Semi-finalist in the Met's National Council Auditions. She recently sang Sieglinde with Miami Music Festival's Wagner Institute.

AWP Participants 2020-2021



Stephanie dePrez



Maureen Brabec



Jenna Schroer



Rebecca Sacks



Jon Janacek



Blake Talbott



Elizabeth Baldwin



William McCullough



Eugene (Trey) Richards



Courtney Ankerfelt



Hunter Enoch

AWP Singers for 2023-2024



Lawrence Halksworth



Andres Carrillo



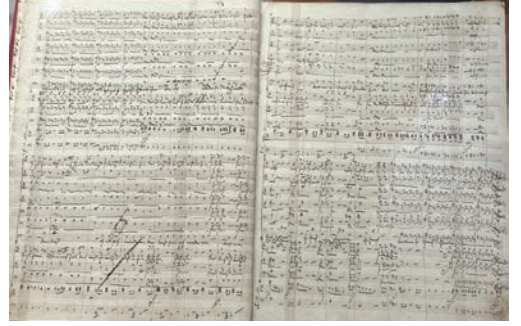
Blake Talbott



2023 AWP Concert: Left to right: Joshua Baumgardner, Heather Hjelle, Luana DeVol, Jon Janacek, Maureen Brabec



April 2024 Recital: Charlotte Kelso and James Chamberlain



Programs & Presentations

The Wagner Society of Washington DC began its first 25 years with a spirited presentation in the cramped backroom of the Middle C Music Store. Below are summaries of the remarkably wide-ranging WSWDC program topics and activities for a quarter of a century!

By Bonnie Becker

1998-1999

“Literary Sources for *Tristan und Isolde*”.

Professor of German language and literature Donald Crosby outlined the literary background for Wagner’s opera. Middle C Music Store

“**Wagner on the Russian Stage**”. A world authority on Russian performances of Wagner operas Rosamund Bartlett highlighted productions from 1840 to 1991. Middle C Music Store.

“Wagner’s *Ring*: Listening to Leitmotifs”.

Future WSWDC chairman Jim Holman explained how the leitmotifs enhance understanding of plot and character development. Programs for the next several years took place in Fungler Hall at George Washington University unless otherwise noted.

“**Wolfgang Wagner’s Productions in the New Bayreuth**”. Author of a biography of bass-baritone Hans Hotter during and after World War II, Penelope Turning provided insights from her book *The New Bayreuth* about how the Bayreuth Festival has changed.

“Reminiscences of Wagner Performances”.

Former general director of the Washington National Opera Martin Feinstein shared his experiences from decades with opera production, singers, and conductors.

“Ringdisc”.

Creator of an interactive guide to Wagner’s *Ring* operas Monte Stone demonstrated how to use his computer program to search and analyze *Ring* music and text.

“Modern Misconceptions of the Medieval *Tristan Legend*”.

Associate professor from Catholic University of America Joan Tasker Grimbirt discussed the sources and background for Wagner’s *Tristan*.

“**Siegfried**”. Professor Marie Travis of George Washington University previewed a screening of the Fritz Lang film classic and led a discussion following.

“Wagner and Architecture”.

Author of *Wagner Without Fear* William L. Berger explained an uncommon association with Wagner.

“Paraphrases and Transcriptions of Wagner’s Operas”.

Pianist Stefan Mickish, a frequent lecturer at Bayreuth, played themes from *Tristan und Isolde*, *Götterdämmerung*, and *Parsifal* and provided commentary. German Embassy.

“Backstage with the Washington National Opera”.

WSWDC founder Janice Rosen led a guided tour of the sets for *Tristan und Isolde* as well as the facilities for costumes, make up, wigs and dressing rooms. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

“Opera Insights”.

WNO music director Heinz Fricke, *Tristan und Isolde* director Lofti Mansour, musicologist Saul Lilienstein and WSWDC member Donald Crosby were participants in the lecture series. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

“Wagner on Wagner”.

Grandson of Richard Wagner and director general of the Bayreuth Festival Wolfgang Wagner shared the challenges of working with the Festival and his family legacy. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

1999-2000

“An Evening with Thomas Stewart”.

Internationally acclaimed bass-baritone and WSWDC member Thomas Stewart reminisced about his decades of performing Wotan and other Wagner roles.

“Emotional Influence of *Die Meistersinger*”.

Conductor and musicologist Saul Lilienstein spoke movingly about the effect of this opera on German national emotion.

“Wagner Says No!”

Translator of Wagner’s autobiography *Mein Leben* Andrew Gray defended Wagner against continuing distortions and “sheer nonsense”.

“*Tannhäuser*—Video and Discussion”.

Opera production and staging expert Phillip Raines compared an avant guard production in Munich with the solidly traditional one by the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

“**Wagner in Seattle**”. Classical music critic Speight Jenkins, famous for “Live from the Metropolitan” radio program, described the exciting productions of Wagner operas by the Seattle Opera.

“*Tannhäuser*”. Canadian expert on Wagner Iain Scott analyzed the opera’s structure, demonstrating his points with audio excerpts.

“**Jon Vickers**”. Author Jeannie Williams discussed her insightful biography of the Canadian tenor famous for a huge voice and powerful stage presence.

“**The *Ring* as a Whole**”. Author Paul Heise spoke of his lifetime work on the book *The Wound That Will Never Heal*, an allegorical interpretation of the *Ring of the Niebelungen*.

“*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*—A Fresh Look”. Popular lecturer for Washington Opera Insights series Saul Lilienstein provided new perspectives on an old masterpiece.

“**Wagner: The Complete Epic**.” WSWDC board member Phillip Raines showed the Tony Palmer nine-hour biopic of Wagner’s life starring Richard Burton in a three part series.

“Mahler: Champion and Disciple of Wagner”.

Author of a three-volume monograph about Mahler, Henry-Louis de La Grange explained Mahler’s support for Wagner despite his own work having been banned by the Nazis even as Wagner’s was celebrated.

2000-2001

“*Parsifal*: A Christian’s View”. National Public Radio host Lou Santacrocce asked if Nietzsche was correct in describing Wagner as “helpless and broken before the cross.”

“Parsifal: A Visual Journey”. WSWDC board member Phillip Raines showed three approaches to *Parsifal* with scenes from productions by the Met, Bayreuth, and the Syberburg film.

“Parsifal Insights”. British singer, director, author and lecturer Jonathan Lewsey shared his perceptions about *Parsifal* from his career in opera.

“Schubert and Wagner: A Better Mystery of Life”. Schubert scholar Frank Ruppert pointed out similarities in their works that show common inspiration.

“Parsifal at Bayreuth”. British music critic and historian of the Bayreuth Festival Penelope Turing described changing production styles for *Parsifal* over the years.

Back Stage Tour. WSWDC founder Janice Rosen hosted a backstage tour of the Washington National Opera production of *Parsifal* Kennedy Center for the performing Arts.

“Wagner: The Power of Two”. WSWDC chairman James K. Holman shared insights on Wagner from his book, *Wagner’s Ring: A Listener’s Companion and Concordance*.

“Conducting the Works of Richard Wagner”. Conductor of the Washington National Opera Heinz Fricke described his experiences with the WNO production of *Parsifal* and other operas.

“Uncommon Resonance: Wagner’s Long Reach”. Musicologist and lecturer Saul Lilienstein pointed out the influence of Wagner on composition and literature in Europe and America in the post-Wagner generation.

“Opera Singers and Silent Film”. Silent film expert with the Library of Congress Paul Freyer hosted a screening of the 1904 Edison version of *Parsifal*, the first Wagner opera to be put on film.

2001-2002

“Photographer at the Metropolitan Opera”. Official photographer for the Metropolitan Opera Winnie Klotz illustrated her lecture with photos of Met singers in various Wagner productions.

“Dialectics in *Die Meistersinger*—Sacred Rituals”. Musicologist Carol Berger explored

the philosophical, psychological and artistic neuron-network forming this complex Wagner drama.

“Origins of Originality--*Die Meistersinger* in Historical Contexts”. Professor of German literature and cultural history Donald Crosby described the 16th century guilds of master singers and the historical Hans Sachs.

“*Parsifal*: A Silent Film”. Film scholar and critic Paul Fryer presented a lecture-screening of the 1904 silent film which was jointly hosted by WSWDC and the Library of Congress.

“Wagner’s Influence on American Composers”. Frequent contributor to *American Opera* Elise Kirk explained Wagner’s influence on the esthetics, dramaturgy and musical ideology of American composers.

“Human Dramatic Elements in *Die Meistersinger*”. WSWDC board member Phillip Raines illustrated how Wagner’s words and music explain the opera’s character and relationships.

“Baptism of the Morning Dream—*Die Meistersinger Quintet*”. Canadian Wagner expert Iain Scott shared what makes *Die Meistersinger* his favorite opera.

2002-2003

“*Die Walküre* and the Dream of the Secret”. Princeton professor of music Carolyn Abbate expanded on thoughts from in her critically acclaimed book *In Search of Opera*.

“At the Heart of *Die Walküre*: Forgiveness vs. Redemption.” Musicologist Carol Berger’s lecture was accompanied by 37 pages of reference documents distributed as a future reference.

“Sleep in the *Ring*”. Author of *Classically Romantic* Jeffrey L. Buller, professor at Mary Baldwin College, spoke of sleep as a metaphorical and philosophical principle in the *Ring* operas.

“*Wagner, the Mystic*”. Philanthropist for the performing arts and a WSWDC founder John Pohanka explained that from his experience of a half century of study of Wagner’s art has come his realization that the mystical reaction listeners may have to Wagner’s music is an intended result of Wagner’s metaphysics.

“A Ride through a Production of *Die Walküre*”. WSWDC board member Phillip Raines used video excerpts to demonstrate the difficulties in staging *Die Walküre*.

“*Die Walküre* on the Mind of Mann”. Musicologist and popular lecturer Saul Lilienstein discussed the influence of Wagner on German novelist Thomas Mann.

“An Evening with Evelyn Lear”. Famous soprano Evelyn Lear, co-founder of the WSWDC Emerging Singers Program, reminisced about her career highlights.

2003-2004

“*Siegfried*: The Wurm Turns”. Dean of Mary Baldwin College and opera expert Jeffrey Buller gave three perspectives on *Siegfried* and why the dragon says, “You don’t know who you are.”

“Beware of Wagner Heroines!”. Author James McCourt explained why some Wagner heroines -- Isolde, Kundry, Brünnhilde and Venus-Elizabeth -- are out to kill the men they love!

“Two Rings--Wagner’s *Der Ring des Nibelungen* and Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*”. Author of *Heroic Legends of the North* Edward R. Haymes, professor of German and comparative literature, described how the two great works illuminate each other.

“*Tristan and the Mystic Experience*”. Pianist Jeffrey Swann spoke from the piano, giving musical examples of ideas presented in the course of the lecture which was followed by a reception. German Embassy in Washington, DC.

“Wagner Night at the Movies” A double bill featured a BBC documentary *The Golden Ring* about making the *Ring* conducted by Sir George Solti; also film featuring Wagner satirist Anna Russell.

“The Wagner Industry and the Audience of the Future”. German professor Nicholas Vazsonyi asserted that Wagner planned a market for his unique musical works and “artwork of the future.”

“A Ride with the Valkyries”. NY City Opera dramturg Cori Ellison explained what Valkyries are and why they and Brünnhilde are imprinted on our culture.

“Where is Wagner’s *Faust*?” President of the American Goethe Society Irmgard Wagner, professor of German at George Mason University, asked why Wagner never composed music for Goethe’s *Faust* and explored if there are equivalents and parallels to *Faust* in Wagner’s music dramas.

“Der Ring des Nibelungen: Wagner’s Epic Vision.” A three-day seminar co-sponsored with Smithsonian Associates was keynoted by Seattle Opera General Director Speight Jenkins. Other speakers included Carolyn Abbate, Princeton University, Virginia Opera artistic director Peter Mark, New York City Opera dramaturg Cori Ellison, photographer for the Metropolitan Opera Winnie Klotz. . . Seventh ESP concert concluded the seminar. Smithsonian Institution.

“Singing in the Ring”. As part of the Ring Seminar, two round-table discussions featured comments by Speight Jenkins, president of the American Goethe Society Irmgard Wagner, lecturer Saul Lilienstein, world famous baritone Thomas Stewart, soprano Jennifer Wilson, and Washington Post music critic Tim Page. Smithsonian.

2004-2005

“The False Prophet: *Le Prophète* and Denunciation”. A long-time aide to Wolfgang Wagner, Oswald Georg Bauer, spoke on Wagner’s strategy of denunciation and explained the impact that the 1850 premiere of this opera in Paris had on Wagner.

“Wagner in Silent Film”. Critic Paul Fryer, an expert on opera singers and the film industry, presented a lecture-screening of the 1912 one-hour-long silent film *Life of Richard Wagner*.

“Tchaikovsky’s Miracle”. Assistant professor of music at Princeton University Simon Morrison explained why the composer’s *Sleeping Beauty*, premiering in 1890 seven years after Richard Wagner’s death, provides an antipode to Wagner’s teachings and music.

“Tristan und Isolde: The Music Drama in which Nothing Happens”. WSWDC board member and expert on opera staging Phillip Raines gave a multi-media presentation illustrating how several directors have successfully met the challenge of a real drama with static action.

“Wagner and Suicide”. Author of *Richard Wagner and the Modern British Novel* John DiGaetani discussed the ideas put forth in his most recent book, *Wagner and Suicide*.

“Can Poetry Matter?—Role of Poetry in Popular Culture”. Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts Dana Gioia shared his thoughts on poetry, music, literature and the arts.

“Wagner Without Fear”. National Public Radio host William Berger, author of *Verdi with a Vengeance*, encouraged his audience to appreciate Wagner’s music dramas, despite their reputation for being too difficult.

Recital and reception in the Supreme Court. In a generous gesture of encouragement and support for the WSWDC, Justice Sandra Day O’Connor hosted a reception for supporters, volunteers, and her Court colleagues Justices Ruth Bader Ginsberg and Stephen Bryer. Emerging Singers Program participants Jennifer Wilson and David Smith performed several arias.

2005-2006

“Tristan und Isolde Weekend”. A weekend seminar was co-sponsored by the Smithsonian Resident Associate Program and WSWDC. Seminar speakers were: Peter Mark (conductor of the Virginia Opera), Carolyn Abbate (Harvard), Iain Scott (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation), Saul Lilienstein (Washington-based musicologist), Jeffrey Swann (concert pianist), Professor John DiGaetani, Jeffrey Buller (dean of Mary Baldwin College), and Winnie Klotz (official photographer of the Metropolitan Opera). A performance by the Virginia Opera Company and a cast dinner party followed the next day. Center for Performing Arts at George Mason University.

“Magical Moments and Video Magic”. WSWDC board member Phillip Raines shared personal favorite scenes from his video collection of several productions of *Tristan und Isolde*.

“Writing an Opera Libretto”. Dana Gioia, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, described the challenges and rewards of writing a libretto for a composer’s music.

“New Perspectives on *The Flying Dutchman*”. Harvard music professor Carolyn Abbate illustrated connections between opera and “movie music” with examples of Wagner themes from variety of films.

“Carriers of the Wagner Flame”. Artistic director for the Opera Theatre of Northern Virginia John Edward Niles described composers Humperdinck, Pfitzner, and others as Wagner’s musical successors.

“Coming to Terms with History: Nietzsche and the Ring”. Popular author of *Richard Wagner and Festival Theater* Simon Williams discussed the relationship between Nietzsche and the *Ring*.

“Wagner and Strauss Songs: Women and Love”. Kennedy Center lecturer Irwin Shainman compared Wagner’s “Wesendonck Lieder” to Richard Strauss’ “Four Last Songs”.

“Liszt as Wagner’s Cultural Ambassador”. Canadian music professor Alan Walker spoke about the help Liszt gave to Wagner in the 1860s as Wagner himself acknowledged.

“Berlioz and Wagner: Master Sculptor & Master Singer”. Professor of music at St. Louis Washington University Hugh MacDonald gave an insightful description of the relationship between the two great composers. Levine School of Music.

“Inspiration of Italy on Richard Wagner”. Opera expert Iain Scott showed how travel in Italy inspired Wagner to imagine Klingsor’s garden, the E-flat chord of *Das Rheingold* and other signature ideas.

2006-2007

“Nobody’s Perfect—George Bernard Shaw as Wagnerite”. Wesleyan professor Alfred Turco described Shaw as a Wagner interpreter and advocate in the 1890 publication *The Perfect Wagnerite*.

“Four Directors, One Ring”. Editor of New Opera Quarterly David Levin discussed a new production of the *Ring* that had multiple stage directors and production teams working together.

“Visualizing *Die Walküre*”. Author of *Decoding Wagner* Thomas May showed how different designers and directors, such

as Appia, Eisenstein, and Wieland Wagner, envisioned *Die Walküre*.

“Wagner in Switzerland: Genius in Residence”. Professor of German literature and cultural history Donald Crosby highlighted Wagner’s musically productive years in Switzerland and his interactions with the Wesendoncks, the von Bülowes, Semper, and Nietzsche.

“The Artistry of Thomas Stewart”. Washington Post music critic Tim Page and Evelyn Lear led a memorial tribute to Thomas Stewart featuring recordings of his famous Wotan and other great roles.

“The Life and First New York Career of Astrid Varnay”. Filmmaker Donald Collup commented on the documentary he produced about this legendary soprano who took on a remarkable number of opera roles.

2007-2008

“Hans Hotter -- An Operatic Giant”. Opera singer, actor, and lyricist Donald Arthur spoke of translating the memoirs of the famous German bass-baritone *Der Mai ist mir gewogen (Spring Was Good to Me)*.

“Poetics of Wagner, Shelley, and the Music of Lyric Drama”. Cambridge scholar Jessica Quillin showed the influence on Wagner of British Romantic poets, particularly Shelley.

“Passion, Magic, and Wagner’s 17th Century Operatic Inheritance.” Conductor and artistic director of Opera Lafayette Ryan Brown illustrated influences on Wagner of early opera traditions.

“Die Meistersinger-- A Dream No Longer a Dream”. Author Jeffrey Buller pointed out the emphasis of 19th century German themes such as the widespread public attention to dreams in Wagner’s only “official” comedy.

“The Flying Dutchman”. WSWDC chairman James K. Holman explained the central theme of redemption through love in this early career opera that Wagner attributed to experiencing a storm at sea. Kennedy Center Millennium Stage.

“Parsifal as the Fifth Ring Opera”. Wagner scholar and Buddhist monk Paul Schofield discussed ideas from his book *The Redeemer*

Reborn about the role of Buddhism in Wagner’s philosophy.

“The Wagner Orchestra”. An all-day program opened with musicologist Saul Lilienstein providing a comprehensive lecture on music styles that influenced orchestra followed by pianist Jeffrey Swann who described the instrumentation of Wagner’s major works and James Ross who demonstrated a Wagner tuba and gave a mini-lesson in conducting. Goethe-Institut.

“Women in *The Flying Dutchman*: What Were They Thinking?” Emerging Singers Program founder Evelyn Lear and former ESP participant Jennifer Wilson traded opinions suggested by the plot and the music. National Museum of Women in the Arts.

“The Valkyries and Their Infamous Ride”. NYU professor of music Robert Bailey explained how the famous music relates thematically to their ride in *Die Walküre*.

“Wagner in Hollywood”. Three films were shown as part of the special *Ring* exhibition featuring costumes, images, and videoclips from the WNO’s *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*. Goethe Institute.

“Wagner’s Tough Ladies of Opera.” WNO American *Ring* director Francesca Zambello and the WNO director of artistic operations Christina Schepplmann discussed Wagner’s dynamic female characters. Women’s Museum Performance Hall.

“Appropriation of Wagner: Germany in 1930s”. Frequent Smithsonian lecturer Saul Lilienstein explained how Wagner’s music written in the mid-1800s was caught up in artistic currents and political developments of the 1930s.

2008-2009

“What to Listen for in Wagner”. Musicologist and popular lecturer Saul Lilienstein analyzed the four Wagner works featured on a Washington National Symphony program. Kennedy Center Terrace Theatre.

“Die Meistersinger in Bayreuth”. Opera singer, actor and lyricist Donald Aurther discussed the documentary film about Katharina Wagner’s controversial production in Bayreuth.

“Wagner Moments: Ten Magic Moments in Wagner”. Canadian Wagner expert Iain Scott discussed ten pivotal points in the plots of several Wagner operas.

“The Wagner Orchestra”. British conductor James Ross discussed Wagner’s *Essays On Conducting* and compared conducting styles of several widely known conductors. Goethe Institute.

Siegfried: Wagner’s Scherzo”. Author and WSWDC chairman James Holman described the eponymous character in *Siegfried* in conjunction with a production by the Washington National Opera. Kennedy Center Millennium Stage.

“Wagner and Brahms”. Popular lecturer Saul Lilienstein explained the personal and musical relationship between the two musical giants.

“Sigurd and Brynhild: Literary and Mythological Origins of Wagner’s Doomed Couple”. Professor of German literature and cultural history Donald Crosby explained how Wagner interwove elements of fact, fiction and his own imagination to create characters for the *Ring*.

“An Evening with Evelyn Lear”. Soprano Evelyn Lear, beloved cofounder with her late husband Thomas Stewart of the WSWDC Emerging Singers Program, recounted her fascinating career that included 40 different roles.

Master Class for Emerging Singers. ESP founder Evelyn Lear gave a Master Class for soprano Julia Rolwing and tenor Brian Register that WSWDC premium members were invited to observe. Residence of Mr. and Mrs. James Holman.

2009-2010

“Wagner’s Music and the Jews”. Frequent Smithsonian lecturer Saul Lilienstein took on this controversial topic and pointed out the contradiction between Wagner’s antisemitic writings and personal interaction with Jewish conductors and musicians.

“Wagner, Nietzsche, and Nineteenth Century Thought.” Professor James West from Middlebury College spoke on the complex relationship between these two geniuses of their time.

“Wagner and Gluck’s *Armide*”. Conductor Ryan Brown, artistic director of Opera Lafayette and a leader in the revival of Baroque opera, spoke on the relationship of Wagner to Gluck’s seldom performed opera *Armide*.

“The Icelandic *Eddas*: Wagner, Tolkien, and Beyond”. Professor Donald Crosby, frequent WSWDC lecturer, showed how Germanic mythology influenced both 19th century Wagner and 20th century J.R.R. Tolkien. “Myth and the Mind” series at Library of Congress.

“Heroes of the *Ring*”. Resident lecturer for Santa Fe Opera Desirée Mays spoke about the larger-than-life superhero types such as Siegfried but also other characters who were courageous in less obvious ways.

“Siegfried Wagner—A Very Original Composer”. Founder of the International Siegfried Wagner Society Peter Pachl highlighted the career of Richard Wagner’s son, himself an opera composer and director of the Bayreuth Festival.

“Wagner in the 21st Century”. Founder of the Bard Music Festival Leon Botstein, conductor of both the American Symphony Orchestra and the Jerusalem Symphony, discussed how modern productions have kept Wagner’s operas relevant in modern times.

“Wagner Recordings You (Probably) Don’t Know.” WSWDC member Dan Sherman shared his collection of infrequently heard historic recordings from the early days to contemporary recordings.

“View from Bayreuth”. As a dramaturge and intendant at several German opera houses Klaus Schultz spoke about his experiences as a member of Wolfgang Wagner’s artistic and management team for the Bayreuth Festival.

“Ring Marathon”. An uninterrupted, all-day, screening from 8 am to midnight of the entire Valencia *Ring* was held for WSWDC members and free-of-charge to the public. Of the 300 attendees, 50 made it through the whole 16 hours, from start to finish! Emerging Singer soprano Jennifer Wilson sang as Brünnhilde.

“Book Launch for Wagner the Mystic”. The event honored author and former chairman of the Washington National Opera John

Pohanka and was co-hosted by Guillermo and Cecilia Schultz, John’s son Geoffrey Pohanka, and his daughter-in-law Anne Kline with proceeds from sales of the book designated to support the Emerging Singers Program. Waterview, Arlington, VA.

2010-2011

“Goethe, Wagner and the Evolution of Kultur”. An all-day symposium was headlined by popular lecturer Saul Lilienstein, professor of German literature and culture Donald Crosby, professor Bryan Gilliam, and professor Peter Beicken. In an evening concert pianist Jeffrey Swann performed selections related to topics discussed during the symposium. German Embassy.

“Richard Wagner—Self-Promotion and the Making of a Brand”. University of South Carolina professor Nicholas Vazsonyi described Wagner’s reputation in modern marketing terms.

“Notung Doing? What Happened on Siegfried & Brünnhilde’s Second Night Together?” Canadian author and Wagner expert Iain Scott answered the tabloid style question with an analysis of their complicated relationship.

“Bringing Wagner’s Vision to Life”. Pianist and musicologist Daniel Freeman from the University of Minnesota led an all-day seminar with musical examples by Emerging Singers alumni soprano Jennifer Wilson and tenor Daniel Snyder. Ripley Hall, Smithsonian.

“Russian Opera: In the Shadow of Wagner”. Middlebury College professor James West explained the benefits and difficulties of following the tremendous impact that Wagner had on the music world.

Master Class. WSWDC members were invited to observe Emerging Singer Program founder Evelyn Lear in preparing sopranos Othalia Graham and Colleen Daly and baritone-bass Pawel Izdebski for a “Mostly Mahler” concert with the Washington Chorus at the Kennedy Center. Ms. Lear’s residence.

“Richard Strauss: Out of Wagner’s Shadow”. Duke University professor Bryan Gilliam showed how Strauss dealt with

the need to differentiate his art from the dominating influence of Wagner.

“Re-discovering Richard Wagner Through His Music”. Musicologist Saul Lilienstein showed how there is more to Wagner and his music beyond his popular reputation. Co-sponsored with the Goethe Institute.

2011-2012

“Wagner and Mark Twain”. Washington Post culture critic Philip Kennicott explained this unusual pairing because both drew on myths and folktales from their different cultures.

“The Revolution of 1848”. Professor of history at George Washington University Andrew Zimmerman spoke about Wagner’s active involvement in the revolutionary spirit sweeping Europe at that time.

“Quo Vadis? Wagner: Approaching His Bicentennial”. Author and editor J.K. Holman, outlined his collection of essays by more than a dozen Wagnerites including Leon Botstein, Francesca Zambello, Barry Millington, and Saul Lilienstein reflecting on Wagner in the 21st Century. Published in 2011 by WSWDC.

“An Evening with Tenor Jay Hunter Morris”. Vocal Arts Society’s artistic director Peter Russell moderated an interview with Emerging Singers alumnus who sang the role of Siegfried in the 2011 San Francisco *Ring* and in the 2012 Metropolitan Opera *Ring*. DACOR House, Washington D.C.

“Die Meistersinger”. Musicologist and popular lecturer Saul Lilienstein gave an all-day seminar that was recorded on a four-disc CD set. Co-sponsored with the Goethe Institute.

“Wagner, Christianity and Redemption”. WSWDC chairman Jim Holman explained how the Christian concept of redemption appeared in Wagner’s work.

“Master Class”. ESP founder Evelyn Lear demonstrated to WSWDC members how she provides personal coaching for ESP singers Othalia Graham, Adam Hershkowitz, Kevin Ray, Darik Knudsen, Bret Stater, and Isabel Molnar Meggeri. WNO Workshop, Tacoma Park.

“Reflecting on The Essential Wagner”.

Conductor and music director of the Washington Chorus Julian Wachner and WSWDC chairman J. K. Holman engaged in a spirited dialog concerning the most significant aspects of Wagner’s life and art.

“Conducting the Ring”. Israeli-born conductor of the 2013 Seattle *Ring* Asher Fisch shared his insights into conducting Wagner and experiences performing Wagner in Israel. Goethe Institute.

WSWDC Wagner Award was presented to Prof. Donald Crosby, professor emeritus of German Language and Culture, University of Connecticut. Spectrum Theater.

2012-2013

A Celebration of the Life and Career of Evelyn Lear, hosted by Frederica von Stade, Richard Stilwell, and Jim Holman, was held for friends, professional colleagues and WSWDC members to honor the memory of acclaimed soprano Evelyn Lear, a co-founder of the Thomas Stewart and Evelyn Lear Emerging Singers Program.

“French Muse: Music, Society, and Nation in Modern France”. Author Paul duQuenoy spoke about French admiration of Wagner and his enduring influence despite some years of rivalry and conflict between France and Germany. Goethe Institute.

“An Interview with Father Martin Owen Lee”. Commentator Iain Scott’s videotaped conversation with the legendary opera scholar illustrated Father Lee’s contribution to “the study and enjoyment of Wagner’s art”. Goethe Institute.

“Wagner and Verdi”. In recognition of the 200th birthday of both Wagner and Verdi, musicologist Saul Lilienstein gave a six-session course on the parallel development of the two composers. Ripley Center, Smithsonian.

“Wagner: Composer Fit for a King.” Music director Marin Alsop conducted the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra in an all-Wagner program and shared incidents from Wagner’s relationship with King Ludwig II. WSWDC chairman Jim Holman gave the pre-concert talk. Music Center at Strathmore.

“Wagner’s Conception of the Italian Renaissance.” Professor emeritus of German Studies at Smith College Hans Rudolf Vaget explained how the ideas of the Renaissance influenced Wagner’s work. Goethe Institute.

“Sorcerer of Bayreuth: Richard Wagner and his Work and World”. Editor of the *Wagner Journal* Barry Millington discussed his most recent book about Wagner. Goethe Institute.

“Themes of Parsifal”. Lecturer Saul Lilienstein conducted an all-day symposium on the music, characters, and themes of *Parsifal* in preparation for simulcasts by the Metropolitan Opera. Goethe Institute.

“The Orchestra in Wagner Operas”. Music director and conductor of the National Philharmonic Piotr Gajewski discussed the role of the orchestra in Wagner’s operas. Goethe Institute.

“Conducting Wagner”. Maestro Asher Fisch shared his experiences conducting Wagner from his debut with *Der fliegende Holländer* to his position as music director of the Israeli Opera and Seattle Opera’s 2013 *Ring*. Goethe Institute

“Interview with Soprano Dolora Zajick”. Artistic director of the Vocal Arts Society Peter Russell reviewed the extensive opera career of Ms. Zajick and her work as co-founder of the Institute for Young Dramatic Voices. Goethe Institute.

“Selections from Wagner and Beethoven”. A participant in the 2012-13 WSWDC Emerging Singers Program Issachah Savage performed selections from Wagner and Beethoven on the Millennium Stage. Kennedy Center.

“Five Great German Romantic Operas”. The popular and indefatigable Saul Lilienstein included Wagner’s *Der fliegende Holländer* in an all-day seminar covering his choice for the Big Five of German Romantic operas. Goethe Institute.

“200th Birthday Tribute to Wagner”. Conductor Piotr Gajewski and the National Philharmonic Orchestra presented an all-Wagner concert as a 200th birthday tribute. Music Center at Strathmore.

2013-2014

“Collaborative Effort for *Tristan und Isolde*”. Cast members and the creative team of the Washington National Opera shared how they collaborated to stage a very challenging Wagner opera. Goethe Institute.

“Wagner and Diaghilev: *Gesamtkunstwerk* and the Ballets Russes”. American University professor Juliet Bellow used an exhibit at the National Gallery of Art to compare two visions of total art. Goethe Institute.

“Ludwig II”. As part of the Wagner Bicentennial, E Street Cinema showed the dramatized biography of the eccentric king of Bavaria who was Wagner’s essential patron.

“Richard Wagner in the Movies”. WSWDC Chairman Jim Holman illustrated the uses and abuses of Wagner’s music in popular films with clips from ten films. Goethe Institute.

“Wagner According to Hollywood”. Professor of music at Harvard University Carolyn Abbate illustrated how Wagner’s operas provided a model for classic Hollywood film music as multimedia works. National Gallery of Art.

“Richard Wagner--Venetian Diary of the Rediscovered Symphony”. The recent film directed by Italian Gianni Di Capua documenting Wagner’s rediscovery of his own symphony composed before he was twenty received its US premiere. Library of Congress.

“Wagner and Verdi at the Piano”. Liszt scholar Alan Walker explained transcriptions made by Franz Liszt of Wagner’s music with pianist Valerie Tryon playing examples. Library of Congress.

“Prelude to *Tristan und Isolde*”. American University faculty member Yuliya Gorenman and American University Symphony and Chorus illustrated the revolutionary nature of this music. National Presbyterian Church.

“Siegfried”. A film of the opera conducted by Daniel Barenboim and recorded at Teatro alla Scala in Milan was shown as part of the Wagner Bicentennial. West End Cinema.

“The Making of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*”. Historians from the Library of Congress Music Division Music Nicholas Alexander Brown and David H. Plylar introduced a documentary of the famous Patrice Chereau production and an excerpt from the 1980 revival. Library of Congress.

“Wagner’s Jews”. Film-maker Hilan Warsaw explored the paradox of Wagner’s well-known anti-Semitism and his personal and musical relationships with numerous Jewish musicians. Goethe Institute.

“Anton Seidl, Good Night, and Wagner at Coney Island”. Author Joseph Horowitz explained how conductor Anton Seidel brought Wagner to American audiences in the late 1800s. Georgetown University.

“Wagner and Rousseau”. University of Virginia Professor of English and Comparative Literature Paul Cantor described Wagner’s *Ring* as a reinterpretation of traditional religious views of the Creation and Fall. Goethe Institute.

Master Class. Internationally acclaimed mezzo-soprano Dolora Zajick, Director of the Institute for Young Dramatic Voices, conducted a master class for soprano Eudora Brown, mezzo Chantelle Grant, tenor Joshua Baumgardner, baritone Brent Stater, and bass Jeffrey Tarr. Arts Club of Washington.

The American Wagner Project, a new partnership between WSWDC and the Institute for Young Dramatic Voices, held its first auditions to identify and support Americans with potential for singing the works of Wagner. Washington National Opera Studios.

The first singer sponsored by WSWDC under the American Wagner Project tenor Issachah Savage reprised his valedictory recital, choosing excerpts from the roles of Siegmund, Amfortas, and *Lobengrin*. Arts Club of Washington.

2014-2015

“Strauss Was from Venus, Wagner Was from Mars”. In cooperation with the Washington Concert Opera, WSWDC Chairman Jim Holman spoke about Wagner’s influence on Richard Strauss’ opera *Guntram*

in recognition of the 150th birthday of Richard Strauss. Goethe Institute.

“Conversation on Wagner”. Musicologists Saul Lilienstein and Joe Horowitz engaged in a free-form dialog augmented by audio excerpts and video clips to share their insights on Wagner’s personality and influence on subsequent composers, particularly Mahler. Goethe Institute.

“A Feminist Perspective on Opera Interpretation: The Case of Wagner’s *Der fliegende Holländer*”. Author Courtney Howland discussed her book which gives a feminist analytic framework for Wagner interpretation. Goethe Institute.

“Wagnerian Influence on *Guntram*”. WSWDC chairman Jim Holman and maestro Antony Walker discussed the Washington Concert Opera premiere of this Strauss opera. Goethe Institute.

“Preparing for the Dutchman”. General director of Vocal Arts DC Peter Russell interviewed bass-baritone Eric Owens about his music career and his role of the Dutchman in the Washington National Opera production of *Der fliegende Holländer*. Reception followed at Arts Club of Washington.

“Music of the *Ring* and the Life Cycle of an Audience”. Professor of Music at Auckland University Heath Lees explained how the increasing complexity of the music in the four *Ring* operas causes the audience to mature from childhood through adolescence, parenthood, and old age. Goethe Institute.

2015-2016

“*Rienzi*, Wagner’s First Major Success”. Conductor of the National Philharmonic Piotr Gajewski and John Edward Niles, program director of the American Wagner Project, discussed the musical, dramatic and historical background of this rarely performed opera as a leadup to an NP concert performance. Arts Club of Washington

“Interview with Issachah Savage”. Classical radio WETA host Marilyn Cooley interviewed rising star tenor Issachah Savage about his background, experience working with the late Evelyn Lear in the WSWDC

Emerging Singers Program, and preparation for the title role in *Rienzi*. www.weta.org/fm/features/classicalconversations/tenor-issachah-savage-373790

***Rienzi*, the Last of the Tribunes.** Wagner’s first opera was performed by the National Philharmonic, co-sponsored by WSWDC, and starred tenor Issachah Savage, soprano Eudora Brown, and baritone Jason Stearns, all alumni of WSWDC’s Emerging Singers Program and/or the American Wagner Project. Music Center at Strathmore.

“When Time and Space Become Interchangeable”. Musicologist Saul Lilienstein, popular lecturer for the Smithsonian and the Kennedy Center, explored the magical moments in Wagner’s music dramas with examples from *Flying Dutchman* to *Parsifal*. Goethe Institute.

“*Tannhäuser*: Catastrophe and Triumph”. WSWDC chairman Jim Holman explained Wagner’s creative process in dealing with revisions made to *Tannhäuser* as it evolved from being an old warhorse, then an awkward hybrid, and eventually a prophetic precursor of the future of music. Source Theater.

“Joys and Challenges of Doing a *Ring*”. Washington National Opera music director Philippe Auguin and WSWDC chairman Jim Holman joined in a lively conversation about preparing for the upcoming presentation of Wagner’s *Ring*. Kennedy Center Terrace Gallery.

“The Washington *Ring*”. Radio host Marilyn Cooley from Classical WETA interviewed WSWDC chairman Jim Holman about the story and background of Wagner’s *Ring* in anticipation of a production by the Washington National Opera. www.weta.org/fm/features/classicalconversations/wagners-ring-beginners-486197.

“*Liebesnacht*: Dedicated to the One You Love!” In collaboration with the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, WSWDC presented a concert of romantic music with musicians from the National Symphony Orchestra performing Wagner’s Siegfried Idyll. Reception followed at the Embassy.

“The Washington *Ring*”. Radio host Marilyn Cooley from Classical WETA interviewed WSWDC chairman Jim

Holman about the story and background of Wagner's *Ring* in anticipation of a production by the Washington National Opera. www.weta.org/fm/features/classicalconversations/wagners-ring-beginners-486197.

2016-2017

“Schopenhauer’s Will and Wagner’s Eros”. Author Peter Kalkavage from St. John’s College pondered the concepts of “want” and “desire” and mixed in some Nietzsche philosophy. German Heritage Museum with a reception following.

“Wagner: A Genius in Exile”—film for Movie Night. A documentary made by Antoine Wagner, a 5th generation descendent of Wagner and a 6th generation descendent of Liszt, traces Wagner’s flight to Zurich after involvement with revolutionary movements in 1848 and 1849. Goethe Institute.

“Wagner, Mann, and Mahler”. Popular lecturer Saul Lilienstein explored the relationship of Wagner’s work to that of other geniuses by demonstrating his influence on music by Gustav Mahler and literature by Thomas Mann. Goethe Institute.

“Tristan and the Delights of Ambiguity”. WSWDC chairman Jim Holman reviewed the political, scientific, and artistic revolutions during Wagner’s lifetime and how themes in *Tristan und Isolde* embodied the spirit of these changes. Goethe Institute.

“Wagner, Flaubert and Proust”. Maestro Philippe Auguin, music director of the Washington National Opera, further developed the theme of Wagner’s influence on other artists. Goethe Institute.

“Maria Callas, Wagnerian Soprano”. WSWDC founder and former chairman of the Washington National Opera John Pohanka shared little known opera history by describing Callas’ early career performances in *Tristan und Isolde*, *Parsifal*, and *Die Walküre*. Goethe Institute.

“Translating Wagner and His Texts”. American Wagner Project liaison for WSWDC John Edward Niles, gave his insights on helping singers and audiences understand how various translations and even the German language itself can

influence understanding of Wagner’s librettos. Goethe Institute.

2017-2018

“Wagner’s Quest”. WSWDC Chairman Jim Holman described the Holy Grail as a metaphor for desires beyond reach in a pre-concert lecture in conjunction with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra performance of selections from *Parsifal*. Music Center at Strathmore.

“Fremstadt to Flagstaff: Wagner at the Met, 1908-1941”. Author Charles Affron, emeritus professor at New York University, used vintage audio-visual clips and insights from his book *Grand Opera: The Story of the Met*. Goethe Institute.

“Selections from Wagner’s Parsifal and Die Walküre”. The Georgetown University Orchestra, directed by Angel-Gil Ordoñez joined the Post-Classical Ensemble in a concert featuring bass baritone Kevin Deas and tenor William Green (an alumnus of the American Wagner Project). Gaston Hall, Georgetown University.

“Wagner on the Mind in Eastern Europe”. Popular Smithsonian lecturer and Wagner Award winner Saul Lilienstein discussed how Wagner’s innovations influenced the operas and symphonic works of Smetana and Dvorak. Goethe Institute.

“Wagner and Religion: Salvation and Redemption”. Author and WSWDC chairman Jim Holman discussed how Wagner’s innovative and unique music expressed traditional Christian beliefs. Goethe Institute.

“Conducting Verdi’s Don Carlo”. Music director of the Washington National Opera Philippe Auguin gave insights into the mental and musical preparation needed before the curtain rises for an opera conductor. Goethe Institute.

“The Best of Wagner’s Ring”. A pre-concert lecture by WSWDC favorite Saul Lilienstein explained Wagner’s grand themes condensed into a short-form version of the *Ring* as presented by the National Symphony Orchestra and Wolftrap Opera. Wolftrap National Center for the Performing Arts.

2018-2019

“Wagner: Sliced, Diced and Fried”. Producer at Classical KBYU-FM in Salt Lake City Walter Rudolph mixed clever musical arrangements and parodies to demonstrate Wagner’s humor and creativity. Goethe Institute.

“Matilde Wesendonk: Isolde’s Dream”. French-American author Judith Cabaud introduced her book about Wagner’s creative muse and platonic paramour that drew on material from previously undiscovered sources. Goethe Institute.

“Wagner’s Sonic Explorations”. WSWDC favorite Saul Lilienstein demonstrated Wagner’s orchestral inventions from early symphonies through his operatic masterpieces. Goethe Institute.

Master Class. American Wagner Project leaders Luana DeVol and Dolora Zajick conducted a week-long coaching experience for several of our promising young singers: Amber Opheim, Alexandria Shiner, Emma McDermott, and Hunter Enoch with WSWDC members invited to observe the final Master Class. Arts Club of Washington.

“Richard Wagner: Whence Cometh He?”. WSWDC Board member John Edward Niles posed the question as he explored how Mozart, Beethoven and Weber influenced the development of Wagner’s unique genius. Goethe Institute.

“WNO: Today and Tomorrow”. General director of Washington National Opera Timothy O’Leary shared his experiences from his first year of leading the WNO toward its goals of artistic excellence, community impact, and financial strength. Goethe Institute.

“Wagner I Love, but Truth I Love Even More”. UC-Berkeley classics professor Kenneth Quandt pointed out some of the literary and philosophical shortcomings of Wagner but declared all such are forgiven because of the glorious music. Goethe Institute.

2019-2020

“The Wagner Symphony”. WSWDC Chairman Jim Holman pointed out

the overlooked influence of Beethoven's symphonic style--orchestral primacy, thematic cohesion, and leitmotiv--on Wagner's operas. Levine School of Music.

“Wagner’s First: *Die Feen*”. Artistic director of the Washington National Opera and Wagner Award recipient Francesca Zambello previewed her upcoming Glimmerglass production of this rarely performed work with excerpts by soprano Alexandra Shiner and tenor Ian Koziaran, accompanied by Rob Ainsley. Sixth and I Historic Synagogue.

“Remembering Father Owen Lee”. Canadian musicologist Iain Scott recalled the career of the long-time popular commentator for the Metropolitan Opera Broadcasts, author of several books on Wagner, and an early recipient of the WSWDC Wagner Award. George Washington University Marvin Center.

“Prize Song Theft Thwarted”. WSWDC board member John Edward Niles used a clever analysis of the German text and examples from the music to show how ridicule thwarted poor Beckmesser’s attempt to steal Walther’s contest song in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. Levine School of Music.

Because of the corona virus pandemic, the Society canceled its spring and summer in-person events. However, we were able to produce seven online webinars offered free to the public worldwide. Most of the programs can be viewed on YouTube through a link on our webpage www.wagner-dc.org

“Lobengrin, the Last and Greatest of the German Romantic Operas”. WSWDC chairman Jim Holman explained how this opera sets the themes of obsessive love, political intrigue, and social fragmentation evident in all seven of Wagner’s subsequent works. Online webinar.

“The Immolation Scene from *Götterdämmerung*”. Pianist Jeffrey Swann performed piano transcriptions to highlight how Brünnhilde’s self-sacrifice resolves the complex plots from the preceding *Ring* operas and presages a new world in the future. Online webinar.

“Rienzi’s Prayer”. Exciting young Wagner tenor Issachah Savage, one of the discoveries of WSWDC’s American Wagner Project,

gave a live performance and described his background, musical training, and feelings about the composers whose music he brings to life. Online webinar.

“Imagination and Reality”. Musicologist Saul Lilienstein described the challenge of transferring Wagner’s dramatic creativity to the stage with film examples from *Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, and *Götterdämmerung*. Online webinar.

“Tristan and the Delights of Ambiguity”. Building on Leonard Bernstein’s declaration that *Tristan und Isolde* is the “central work in all music history,” Jim Holman spoke about the political, artistic and scientific developments during Wagner’s lifetime that influenced his work. Online webinar.

“Wagner’s Music Dramas and the Jews”. Frequent Smithsonian lecturer Saul Lilienstein provided thoughtful insight and historical facts to help audiences appreciate Wagner’s magnificent music despite his personal shortcomings. Online webinar.

2020-2021

Having successfully made the abrupt transition from in-person events to on-line in April of 2020, the Society continued to present lectures, interviews and live concerts into 2021. We were delighted that 551 unique attendees logged on for a total attendance of 1,601. Wagnerians from 16 states and 9 foreign countries joined us across time zones, oceans, and international boundaries. Most of the online programs are available on YouTube or through the link on our website www.wagner-dc.org.

“Wagnerism: Art and Politics in the Shadow of Music”. Former music critic for the Washington Post Anne Midgette interviewed author Alex Ross about his new book that traces Wagner’s influence on the art, literature, and music of the 20th century. YouTube channel of the Politics and Prose bookstore, Washington, DC.

“Wagner’s Unbelievable Life and Indispensable Music in One Evening”. WSWDC chairman Jim Holman provided an introduction for those new to Wagner while offering veterans inspiration for further study through a survey of Wagner’s biography

and excerpts from each of the ten major operas. Online webinar. www.wagner-dc.org.
“Voices of the Future”. Founder and director of the Institute for Young Dramatic Voices Dolora Zajick and Luana DeVol, director of the American Wagner Project, teamed up to discuss how their own outstanding careers influence their work with young singers who participate in the Institute and the AWP. Online webinar. www.wagner-dc.org

“What Beckmesser Said and What Eva Said”. Theater director John Edward Niles explained that contemporary translations of *Die Meistersinger* generally corrupt the brilliant nuance of Wagner’s humor as when Beckmesser muddles the “Prize Song” or in Eva’s asides about her problems with men. Online webinar. www.wagner-dc.org

“Three Other Tenors: *Lobengrin*, *Walter*, and *Tristan*”. Canadian musicologist Iain Scott interviewed Ben Heppner, the world’s leading heldentenor from 1988 to 2014 when he retired, who focused on his approach to the three very different roles, using film clips to illustrate his craft. Online webinar. www.wagner-dc.org

“Quest: Journey and Pilgrimage in Wagner”. Professor of classics at Florida Atlantic University Jeffrey Buller discussed his book *Classically Romantic: Classical Form and Meaning in Wagner’s Ring*. Online webinar. www.wagner-dc.org

“Wagner and God”. Popular lecturer Saul Lilienstein used a provocative title to probe the deep connection between Wagner’s recognition of the spirit of God confronting the sensual world such as that presented in *Tannhäuser*. Online webinar.

“Wagner’s Voyage of Self-Discovery through Beethoven.” Concert pianist Jeffrey Swann used piano transcriptions of themes from *Der fliegende Holländer* and *Parsifal* to demonstrate how Wagner’s genius was influenced by an evolving understanding of Beethoven. Online webinar.

2021-2022

“Wagnerism and Wagner Studies”. A benefit of online programming—Professor Heath Lees discussed the Alex Ross book *Wagnerism: Art and Politics in the Shadow*

of Music from his home in New Zealand! Online webinar.

Live again! Our first in-person activity since the beginning of the pandemic—*The Great Helden Tenors*. Author and lecturer Geoffrey Riggs focused particularly on the tenors who are prominent in Wagner operas. The program was also our first effort at a hybrid presentation, available simultaneously live to the audience in attendance, and also to on-line viewers. Arts Club of Washington and online webinar.

“Re-examination of Wagner and Brahms”.

A celebratory wine bar preceded the in-person program by popular lecturer Saul Lilienstein who discussed the rivalries, parallels, and connections between two dramatically different men. A video recording was streamed a week later so members had a choice of in-person attendance or streaming or both! Arts Club of Washington.

“Three Pillars of Modern Western

Culture”. WSWDC member Bill Pastor shared in person what inspired him to write his recent book *Three Pillars of Modern Western Culture: Richard Wagner’s Impact on James Joyce’s Ulysses and Marcel Proust’s In Search of Lost Time* and explained how Joyce and Proust employed the Wagnerian concepts of leitmotifs and endless melody. The video recording was streamed a week later. Arts Club of Washington.

Master Classes. American Wagner Project director Luana DeVol and John Parr, head coach at the Deutsche Oper Berlin, invited WSWDC members to observe coaching of AWP singers Eugene Richards, Jon Janacek, and Geoffrey di Georgio as they prepared for roles in *Das Rheingold* at the Miami Beach Classical Music Festival. Arts Club of Washington.

2022-23

“Staging a Wagner Opera”. Artistic director of the Virginia Opera Adam Turner shared the joys, challenges, and creative thinking that goes into producing a Wagner opera, particularly the improvisations caused by two years of the pandemic. Online webinar.

Die Walküre. WSWDC co-sponsored Virginia Opera’s production, the second in the *Ring* Cycle that Virginia Opera is presenting over a four-year period. George Mason University Center for the Arts.

“Wagner as Musical Craftsman”. Popular lecturer Saul Lilienstein used examples from *Tristan und Isolde*, *Die Meistersinger*, and *Parsifal* for this lecture in hybrid format. Arts Club of Washington (in-person) and webinar (later online) or both!

“Richard Wagner: Four Masterpieces”.

WSWDC chairman Jim Holman gave a short course on *Tannhäuser*, *Lohengrin*, *Tristan und Isolde*, and *Parsifal* through Osher Lifelong Learning that provided an introduction for those new to Wagner but also nuggets of new material for those familiar with these operas. American University.

“Movie Night (with Popcorn!)” A popular WSWDC activity featured *Twilight of the Gods: Nietzsche Contra Wagner*, an imagined confrontation between two geniuses whose friendship had decayed into bitter enmity, with comments by WSWDC member Bill Pastor and Saul Lilienstein. Arts Club of Washington.

“Talking Rivers, Talking Waters—the Rhine, Wagner, and the Rhine Maidens”.

WSWDC chairman Jim Holman participated in the Kennedy Center’s inaugural River Run Festival, explaining the role of the Rhine River as the beginning and end of the four opera *Ring* cycle. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

2023-24

“Attaining Wisdom: Wotan’s Growth in the Ring.” Julliard professor John J.H. Muller shared his insights into the maturation of Wotan as one of the most powerful features of the *Ring*. In-person at the Arts Club of Washington.

“Conducting Siegfried”. Artistic director of the Virginia Opera Adam Turner discussed with interviewer Sabrina Cassagnol the artistic and logistical challenges of staging this opera at three different venues in the state of Virginia. Online webinar.

Siegfried. WSWDC co-sponsored Virginia Opera’s production, third in the planned four-year presentation of the complete *Ring*. George Mason University Center for the Arts.

“Long Live America: Richard Wagner and the United States”. Long-time Wagner scholar Hans R. Vaget from Smith College described the three situations in which Wagner seriously considered moving to America. Arts Club of Washington.

“Wagner and Dance”. Frequent lecturer Saul Lilienstein focused on how choreographers have enhanced the dramatic impact of Wagner’s operas. Arts Club of Washington.

“Global Wagner: From Bayreuth to the World”. Movie Night featured a documentary directed by Axel Brüggeman that The Wagner Journal praised for “offering us glimpses of how far-flung parts of the world are responding to the Wagnerian spell”. Arts Club of Washington

“The Rhine, Wagner, and the Rhine Maidens.” In reprise of his contribution to the Kennedy Center’s RiverRun Festival, WSWDC chairman Jim Holman explained the crucial roles of the Rhine maidens as they begin and end the four-opera cycle of the *Ring*. Online webinar.





Jeffrey Swann and the Wagner Society Chamber Players

By Bonnie Becker

The Wagner Society of Washington DC has featured some 20 concerts, often at the beginning of the fall calendar, by internationally renowned concert pianist Jeffrey Swann. For the past six years, Maestro Swann has been joined by the Wagner Society of Washington DC Chamber Players, musicians from the National Symphony Orchestra organized by violist Jennifer Mondie.

Our relationship with Maestro Swann dates back to 2002, when he accepted an invitation to join the faculty of our Wagner in der Wildnis program. Annually we celebrate his artistry as a concert pianist, his erudition as an educator, and his pitch-perfect knowledge of the Wagner canon.

This relationship is well founded. Writing in The New York Times of July 19, 2008, Allan Kozinn noted: “Lecturing is something performers need to think about seriously before embracing; too much chattiness can try an audience’s patience if the musician doesn’t have the talent for it or hasn’t prepared. Mr. Swann doesn’t have that problem ... because his comments, however lengthy, are packed with both obscure and commonplace information and are clearly prepared carefully, even though they give the impression of being off the cuff.”

2003-2004

“**Tristan and the Mystic Experience**” was the title of an unusual lecture at the piano by pianist Jeffrey Swann that gave musical examples of ideas presented in the lecture. German Embassy with reception for members and guests following.

2006-2007

Pianist Jeffrey Swann presented “**Chopin as Proto-Wagnerian**” in a performance that revealed the subtle connections between these two seemingly very different composers. German Embassy.

2008-2009

“**The World of Nature: Wagner, Schumann, Liszt, Debussy & Messiaen**” was explained by pianist Jeffrey Swann by highlighting how each of the four composers infused a reverence for nature into his music. German Embassy.

2009-2010

In an unusual topic “**Wagner’s Influence on Proust**”, pianist Jeffrey Swann pointed out the influence of Wagner on one of the most significant authors of the 20th century. Austrian Embassy.

2011-2012

For the opening of the new season, pianist Jeffrey Swann put together music commentary about “**LiztOmania and Wagner Too**”. Spectrum Theater, Arlington, VA.

2012-2013

Pianist Jeffrey Swann was “**Evoking the Infinite**” in his performance of works by Bach, Faure, and Schubert in comparison with two pieces from Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde*: “*Liebesnacht*” and “*Bragangäne’s Watch*”. The United Church, Washington D.C.

2013-2014

The second half of the Wagner Bicentennial was celebrated by pianist Jeffrey Swann and ESP soprano Kara Harmon with “**A Love Letter to Richard on His 200th Birthday**” in the form of the “*Wesendonck Lieder*”.



Jeffrey Swann plays *Wesendonck Lieder*

2014-2015

“**The World on the Brink of the Abyss: Music in 1914**” performed by pianist Jeffrey Swann and ESP soprano Eudora Brown marked the 100th anniversary of World War I with music by Scriabin, Ravel, and Ives. Katzen Arts Center, American University.

2015-2016

Pianist Jeffrey Swann highlighted “**The Visionary Genius of Beethoven**” in a program of piano sonatas that was dedicated to the memory of charter WSWDC member and fellow Wagner Award honoree Donald Crosby. Katzen arts Center, American University.

2016-2017

In an “**Homage to Shakespeare**”, pianist Jeffrey Swann played portions of *Midsummer Night’s Dream* (Mendelssohn/Liszt), *Tempest Sonatas* (Beethoven), *Macbeth and Three Witches* (Smetana) and *Siegfried’s Funeral March* (Wagner). Katzen Arts Center with dinner following at Cafe Delux.

2017-2018

For the WSWDC 20th anniversary, pianist **Jeffrey Swann** reprised his highly acclaimed New York performance of Beethoven’s Diabelli Variations. Also on the program was “*The Spinning Song*” from *Der Fliegende Holländer*, and a selection from the *Ring*. Katzen Arts Center, American University.

2018-2019

Pianist Jeffrey Swann opened our 21st year by celebrating “**The Intimate Side of Wagner**”. Selections included Liszt’s “*Harmonies poetiques et religieuses*,” “*Annees de pelerinage*,” and *Mephisto Waltz*; Berg’s *Sonata No. 1*, and Debussy’s *Arabesques* and “*L’isle joyeuse*.” 3:30 Katzen Arts Center, American University followed by reception at Cafe Deluxe.

2019-2020

Frequent favorite pianist Jeffrey Swann was joined the **Wagner Society Chamber Players**, a group organized by Washington National Symphony violist Jennifer Mondie that included NSO associate concertmaster Ying Fu, violist Abigail Kreutzer, and violinist

Lisa-Beth Lambert, for a concert opening the 22nd season. The program comprised “*Capriccio Sextet*” from Richard Strauss’ opera *Capriccio*, *Siegfried Fantasy* created by Swann, and Chopin’s *Piano Concerto No. 1*, arranged for piano and string quartet. Katzen Arts Center, American University.

2020-2021

A live concert was commissioned by the WSWDC to support musicians during the pandemic. Pianist Jeffrey Swann and the **Wagner Society Chamber Players** combined for a live performance online featuring Swann’s piano transcription of Wagner’s “*Siegfried Idyll*”, Beethoven’s *Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major*; and Fouré’s *Piano Quartet No. 1 in C Minor*. Recorded at the Arts Club of Washington DC and distributed as an online webinar. www.wagner-dc.org.

2021-2022

“**Brahms, Bruckner and Wagner**” was the title of a WSWDC commissioned concert by the **Wagner Society Chamber Players**. The program comprised Brahms’ *Clarinet Quintet Opus 115* and Bruckner’s *String Quintet in F*,



Jeffrey Swann (third from left) and the Wagner Chamber Players



Violist Jennifer Mondie and Maestro Jeffrey Swann perform *Sonata in A Major for Violin and Piano*

with commentary provided by **Jeffrey Swann** on the relationship of Richard Wagner to the two compositions. This live concert, our first hybrid programming, was videorecorded at the Arts Club of Washington DC, and also available for viewing on-line.

2022-2023

Pianist Jeffrey Swann collaborated for an in-person concert “**Wagner, Mozart, and Schubert**”, with the Wagner Society Chamber Players to perform Mozart’s *Piano Concerto No. 12 in A Major*, piano transcription of the “Norn Scene” from *Götterdämmerung*, and Schubert’s *String Quintet in C Major*. Arts Club of Washington.

“**Wagner, Chopin, and Schoenberg**”. Maestro **Jeffrey Swann** returned to the stage with the **Wagner Society Chamber Players** for another live performance, featuring a piano transcription of the Act III quintet from *Die Meistersinger*, four Chopin piano preludes, and Schoenberg’s *Verklärte Nacht*. Arts Club of Washington with reception following.

2023-2024

“**French Wagnerism**” was the theme for a program combining the talents of pianist Jeffrey Swann, National Symphony Orchestra violist Jennifer Mondie, and WSWDC chairman Jim Holman to explore the birth of Wagnerism in France and describe how several French composers were inspired by Wagner and themes from his operas. Arts Club of Washington.

2024

Pianists Jeffrey Swann and Jim Holman played Faure’s *Souvenir de Bayreuth* for Four Hands.

The program notes stated that Mr. Holman, “WSWDC Chairman, began playing the piano when he was five.” The program goes on to say that “He played badly then and has only gotten worse. Usually, he only plays when he is alone. Today will hopefully be his last public performance.” The performance was rewarded with warm and prolonged applause.

This number was followed by Maestro Swann’s performance of Gabriel Fauré’s

Nocturn No. 6 and the Wagner/Liszt/Moszkowski piano transcription, with Swann’s own bridge and coda adaptations, of *Prelude* and *Venusberg* from *Tannhäuser*.

Finally, Maestro Swann and violist **Jennifer Mondie** of the Wagner Society Chamber Players performed Franck’s *Sonata in A Major for Violin and Piano*, adapted for viola.



Jim Holman (left) and Jeffrey Swann (right) take a bow



Anne Kline talks pays tribute to John Pohanka



Wagnerians Just Like to Have FUN!

CELEBRATIONS AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

By Bonnie Becker

1998-1999

An **Opening Night reception** was hosted by the **Wagner Society of Washington DC** (WSWDC) for all Washington National Opera (WNO) *Tristan und Isolde* ticket holders from the New York, Chicago, and Dallas Wagner Societies. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

First Annual Wagner Society Award was given to **Martin Feinstein**, former Washington National Opera general director at celebration including food, skit and music!

1999-2000

Thomas Stewart, internationally acclaimed Wotan and founder of our Emerging Singers Program, received the Second Wagner Award at the annual banquet from WSWDC board member **John Edward Niles** who emceed the entertainment with stories of his experiences as director of the Opera Theatre of Northern Virginia.

2000-2001

The WSWDC hosted an **opening night hospitality suite** enjoyed by 300 opera attendees of the WNO performance of *Parsifal*. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

A video of **Plácido Domingo**, general director of the Washington National Opera, receiving the third **Wagner Award** was the highlight of the annual banquet.

Gala dinner to benefit the Emerging Singers Program was held at the Evermay Mansion in Georgetown. **Father Martin Owen Lee**, familiar to followers of the Metropolitan Opera long-time radio broadcasts, received the fourth **Wagner Award**.

2001-2002

Berliner Festtage: A dozen **Wagner Society members** attended a festival in Berlin that staged 10 Wagner operas in 2 weeks, the first time since the 1930's that the major Wagner operas had been presented together in a single event. The WSWDC attendees took turns hosting lively après-opera parties!

At the annual banquet, **Maestro Heinz Fricke**, director of the Washington National Opera, received the **Wagner Award** amidst the festive, spring atmosphere of the Arts Club of Washington DC.

Thirty WSWDC members made an **excursion to the Metropolitan Opera** in New York for a matinee performance of *Die Meistersinger* with dinner following in a Manhattan restaurant.

2002-2003

In the celebratory atmosphere of our milestone 5th anniversary, the **Wagner Award** was given to **Evelyn Lear**, particularly to recognize her work with the Emerging Singers Program. A memorable recording of Ms. Lear herself singing "*Dich teure Halle, grüss ich wieder*" from *Tannhäuser* was a special experience for the warmly appreciative audience.

2003-2004

The elegant, antique-decorated salons of the Diplomatic and Counselor Officer Corps (Retired) was the setting for a **gala benefit** to support the Emerging Singers Program.

At the **annual banquet and award ceremony**, popular lecturer **Saul Lilienstein** joined the growing list of Wagner Award recipients and was honored particularly for his unique CD commentaries on *Die Walküre* and *Parsifal*. Arts Club of Washington DC.

2004-2005

Bass-baritone **James Morris**, the world's leading Wotan of this generation, received the **Wagner Award** from **Thomas Stewart**, the world leader in this role for the previous generation. The poignant ceremony took place at the Society's 2005 **Gala Benefit** at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in Washington, DC on June 8, 2005.

2006-2007

Opening Night party for the cast of the WNO production of *Die Walküre* and WSWDC members was held at the official Residence of the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany.

2007-2008

The **Flying Dutchman Gala Benefit** took place at the French Embassy in recognition that Wagner wrote *Der fliegende Holländer* while in Paris. An authentically costumed "Dutchman" was guest of honor! **Saul Lilienstein** received the Wagner award and WETA-FM's **Chip Brienza** emceed the lively after-dinner auction.

2008-2009

The Siegfried cast dinner party for the WNO cast and creative team included conductor Michael Guttler, Gordon Hawkins (Alberich), Irene Theorin (Brünnhilde), Micaela Oeste (Woodbird), and Christina Sheppelmann, director of artistic operations for the WNO. Magic Gourd Restaurant.

10th Anniversary Celebration included presentation of the **Wagner Award** to **John Pohanka**, an Appreciation Award to **Aurelius Fernandez**, and publication of the Tenth Anniversary Report. German Embassy
A festive **garden party** at the home of Jim and



Cast party after Wilson's *Met* debut. John Pohanka, John Niles, Jim Holman, Jennifer Adams, Frederic Harwood, Betty Byrne



John Pohanka, Nedda Demontezemolo and Betty Byrne on the Rhine cruise



Diane Stanley, Bonnie Becker, Jim Holman, and Jackie on the Rhine cruise

Diana Holman was attended by more than 100 members and friends, some in formal garden party attire!

2009-2010

A **cast party** after a WNO performance of *Götterdämmerung* was attended by conductor **Philippe Auguin** and singers **Jon Frederic West** (Siegfried), **Irene Theorin** (Brünnhilde), **Gidon Saks** (Hagen), **Elizabeth Bishop** (Waltraute) along with **Christina Scheppelmann**, WNO director of artistic operations. The 600 Restaurant, Washington DC.

2010-2011

A **cast party** celebrated **Virginia Opera's** production of *Die Walküre* with WSWDC members mingling with soloists and artistic staff. George Mason University Center for the Performing Arts, Fairfax, VA.

2012-2013

Wagner's 200th Birthday Party, with many guests in creative period costumes, was co-hosted by "Wagner himself" (a.k.a WSWDC chairman **Jim Holman**) who joined pianist **Jeffrey Swann** for a four handed performance of Fauré's "Memories of Bayreuth." Residence of the German Embassy Cultural Attache.

2013-2014

A **cast dinner party** followed the opening performance of the Washington National Opera's production of *Tristan und Isolde* at which time director **Francesca Zambello** was presented the WSWDC's **Wagner Award**.

2014-2015

Jay Hunter Morris, internationally acclaimed tenor and alumnus of the Emerging Singers

Program, received the 2015 **Wagner Award**. Jay's appearance as Erik in the WNO production of "*Holländer*" was underwritten by WSWDC members Donald Dittberner and Roswitha Augusta. Arts Club of Washington.

Chairman **Jim Holman** hosted a dinner and listening session to honor our Premium members. Attending were **Roberta McKay, Tom Brennan, Aury and Janet Fernandez, Suzanne Legault, Bill and Cathy Pastor, Tom Powell, Donald Crosby and Bonnie Becker, Richard and Kathleen Fuller, Stephen Kitchen, Barb Karn, Marie and Richard Sippel, Roswitha Augusta and Donald Dittberner, Tom and Diane Stanley, Robert Schreiber, and Frederic Harwood**. Al Crostino Restaurant.

The Society sponsored the annual member appreciation **garden party**, hosted by **Diana** and **Jim Holman**. Rain forced us to run from the garden, but the wine came with us, so it was still a jolly party!

2015-2016

"**Dining on the DC Rhine**", a spectacular dinner cruise, turned the Potomac River into the DC version of the Rhine as we celebrated production of a complete *Ring* cycle by the Washington National Opera! Piped aboard by several Wagner tubas, guests enjoyed cocktails on the open upper deck as we floated past Washington's famous monuments glowing in the sunset. Nina's Dandy cruise ship, Alexandria, VA.

Jennifer Wilson received the 14th **Wagner Award** from Board member **Betty Byrne** and previous award winner **Saul Lilienstein** at the American Wagner Project recital. Jennifer represented a dramatic example of the influence the Emerging Singers Program had on discovering and developing new talent as Jennifer went from a local church choir to lead roles on opera stages across the world.

2017-2018

An **Oktoberfest party** at their home was given by WSWDC Board member **Mark Golden** and his wife **Annie** for the Society's premium contributors to recognize their support for the Society and the American Wagner Project's young singers. Clifton, VA

The WSWDC celebrated its 20th anniversary at the Residence of the German Ambassador the **Hon. Peter Wittig** and his wife the **Hon. Huberta von Voss-Wittig**. The event chaired by **Cecilia Amtmann Schultz** included a cocktail reception, silent auction, and an elegant dinner prepared by the ambassador's personal chef. **Maestro Philippe Auguin**, music director of the Washington National Opera, received the **Wagner Award** for his superb work conducting the 2016 WNO production of the four-opera cycle *Der Ring des Nibelungen*.

A **garden party** in her honor marked the retirement of **Jackie Rosen**, WSWDC office manager and event planner extraordinaire, to recognize her administrative contributions and personal attention to Society members for more than a decade. Home of Diana and Jim Holman.

2018-2019

At the **Bayreuth Festival** in Germany, WSWDC Chairman was awarded the **Golden W** by the vice president of the **Richard-Wagner Verband International**, in recognition of Holman's 22 years of leadership of the Wagner Society of Washington DC, one of the world's most active Wagner Societies. Accepting the award at the Festival on Mr. Holman's behalf was WSWDC board member **Frederic Harwood**.

WSWDC Chairman **Jim Holman** and his wife **Diana** hosted a **garden party** in honor of new members at their home.

Wagner in der Wildnis

A PERSONAL JOURNEY

By Bob Misbin

The Wagner society was still in its infancy when members Ilse Niedermeyer and Bill Green got the idea to try to recreate Wagner's concept for a festival in a bucolic setting, far away from the city. Ilse and Bill's proposal met with skepticism by some members of the board, but the sense of adventure prevailed and Wagner in der Wildnis became the first of the longstanding successful projects undertaken by the WSWDC. The event was "members only" and I joined up specifically to be able to attend.

This turned out to be a life changing experience for me and led to the many friendships that I have kept to the present day in addition to being a tremendous source of knowledge and especially fun.

The weekend was spearheaded by Treasurer Barb Karn and included lectures by Simon Williams, Professor of Theatre at University of California at Santa Barbara. The main event was a dramatic reading to of The Rheingold text prepared by Maureen Polsby. Simon read the role of Wotan, king of the gods and one of the greatest tragic figures in all opera. I volunteered to be the "music director" meaning that I selected various excerpts from the Solti Rheingold to play during the reading. People were asked to make their own costumes and props. I was tasked with constructing a tarnhelm and was advised to go to G Street Fabrics, a store in downtown DC known for a wide variety of materials. Trying to be somewhat of a smart ass I asked the sales lady where I could get material with which to make a tarnhelm. Without batting an eye she said "Go down the second corridor

and turn left." Miracle of miracles, this turned out to be correct and led me to an appropriate silvery fabric needed for the tarnhelm.

The first Wildnis took place at Capon Springs Farm in West Virginia, June 8 -10, 2001. Over 30 members attended. Retired General RG Head played the clever Loge.

True to his character, RG stated that since this was the first production of a Wagner opera to ever take place in West Virginia, we should invite the locals to attend. This meant that the performance started with standing room only. But as old-time standees like me knows, if you wait around a bit during a Wagner opera, a good seat will become available. Indeed, a steady trickle earlier led to a rush for the door to accompany the descent into Nibelheim in the orchestra. Too bad they missed hearing the real operatic voice of contralto Laura Zuiderveen bellowing out her warning "Weiche Wotan".

Despite this lack of appreciation by the general audience, the performance proved to be lots of fun for us participants. Especially noteworthy to me were Janice Rosen who made a pathetic but sympathetic Mime, and Phil Raines who was an energetically malevolent Alberich. However, his performance was criticized by another one of the principals as "overacted." How you can "overact" Alberich is beyond me, and Phil did not take well to this criticism. The result was a schism between supporters of Phil and supporters of his critic. This meant two competing cast parties to celebrate the event. In a way this was just as well because no single room would have been large enough to accommodate all of us simultaneously.

At that time, Capon Springs Farm served as a religious retreat, and enforced some strict rules of behavior. People were encouraged to attend the flag raising every morning. Gentlemen were forbidden from wearing ties in the dining room, even the whimsical tie I was wearing had to be removed. And of course, no drinking in public. But drinking was allowed in the privacy of one's own bedroom as were other forms of decadence. Phil Raines served wine and beer in his room and his detractor in another room. Barb Karn and I attended both, trying to heal this schism looking forward to a united front for Walkure the following year. We were unsuccessful. Alberich does not appear



Barb Karn and RG Head at the Arts Club of Washington DC, circa 2001



Phil Raines with his wife at the Arts Club circa 2001



Some cast members from Das Rheingold reading: (left to right) Alberich (Phil Raines); Froh (Aury Fernandez), Flosshilde (Barb Karn); Loge (R.G. Head); Mime (Janice Rosen); Fricka (Maureen Polsby) and Wotan (Simon Williams), (Backgrou) State Manager (Bill Green), Donner (Steve Zuiderveen) and "Conductor" (Bob Misbin)



Left to right Jeffrey Swann, Melody Bunting Swann, Mark Golden, Jacqueline Schreiber, Simon Williams, Lynne Lambert and Francis Rizzo view a clip from Parsifal.

in Walkure so Phil had a good excuse not to attend where he would need to confront his detractor again. Phil did perform Alberich in Siegfried at Wildnis in 2003 but could not return for *Götterdämmerung*. Contrary to what Wagner had intended, our Alberich ascended to Valhalla, although much too early. We continue to miss him.

The second Wildnis took place June 7-9, 2002, in Cacapon Resort State Park near Berkley Springs West Virginia. This place was less judgmental so we could pursue our Dionysian pursuits without restraint.

For the dramatic reading of *Die Walküre*, Simon was Wotan, king of the gods. I gave up playing recorded music in favor of live accompaniment by Jeffrey Swann. Jeffrey is a noted pianist and musicologist especially knowledgeable about Wagner who Aury Fernandez had met at a meeting of the New York Wagner Society. Simon and Jeffrey worked great together and became known as the "dream team" at later Wildnises. Jeffrey was especially insightful about Wagner's use of leitmotifs. Other

composers had used "calling cards" to represent individual characters or ideas, but Wagner greatly expanded this. All the music to be heard in the *Ring* will either be heard again or has been heard already. The only exception is Fricka's short passage in Act 2 of Walkure after she destroys the basis for Wotan's plan for how to save the gods from destruction. This music is a turning point in the entire four opera cycle. But for reasons unknown even to Jeffrey, Wagner uses it only once.

In addition to the dramatic reading with commentary by Simon and Phil, member Bill Pastor spoke about Wagner and Philosophy. A total of thirty members attended.

The third Wildnis took place June 9 -11 2003 at Cacapon Resort State Park. There was a dramatic reading of Siegfried put together by Betty Byrne with musical illustrations by Jeffrey Swann and commentary by Simon Williams. WSWDC member Bill Pastor lectured on the historical sources that Wagner used for Siegfried.

The fourth Wildnis took place Jun 4-6, 2004, again at Cacapon State Park. 45 members attended. The main event was a



The Reading Cast for Die Walküre: L to R. R.G. Head (Sigmund), Tim Scanlon (Hunding), Carole Hoover (Sieglinde), Carol Berger (Brünhilde), Janice Rosen (Gerhilde), Simon Williams (Wotan), Melody Bunting (Schwerleite), Pat Kirkham (Rossweise), Maureen Polsby (Fricke), Peggy Jones (Siegrune), Ellen Silver (Helmwige), (kneeling) Louise Austin Remmey (Ortlinde). Missing from photo: Nancy O'Hara (Grimgerde) and Judy Agard (Waltraute).



The all-star cast for the Siegfried libretto reading (left to right) Nancy O'Hara (Mime); Tom Stanley (Siegfried); Kathleen Fuller (Mime); Maureen Polsby (Brünhilde), Tim Scanlon (Fafner); Aury Fernandez (Siegfried); Simon Williams (Wotan); Janice Rosen (Woodbird); Melody Swann (Siegfried); Jeffrey Swann (piano); Brian Lewen (Alberich); Lynne Lambert (Erda) and Betty Byrne (Director).



Simon Williams as Hagen appeals to Lynne Lambert as Brunnhilde and Frank Pierce as Gunther reading the libretto. In background Betty Byrne, Director



Member Henry Bardach (Klingsore) waves a prop cape to RG Head (Parsifal), Carole Hoover (Kundry), and other readers in the background – who shared in the applause.

Götterdämmerung theatrical reading directed by Betty Byrne with baritone Matt Lepold of the Emerging Singers Program. I attempted to try to take his place. Phil's shoes would be no easy task to fill so I decided to sing my opening line "Schlaefst du Hagen mein Sohn (are you sleeping Hagen my Son)?" Of course, I sang it loud enough to easily awaken the sleeping Hagen, played by Simon Williams. Glancing over at Jeffrey Swann I perceived a smile of approval, so I knew that I had succeeded in entering on the appropriate pitch.

The fifth Wildnis took place June 3-5, 2005. Having completed the four works of the *Ring Cycle*, we decided to tackle *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. Betty Byrne director the dramatic reading with Simon as Hans Sachs. Armed by my success as Alberich, I could not resist taking on Beckmesser so I could sing some of his funny music.

The sixth Wildnis took place June 2-4, 2006, with a dramatic reading of *Parsifal* by Betty's players with Simon as Gurnemanz, RG Head as Parsifal, Carol Hoover as Kundry and Henry

Bardach as Klingsor. As usual, there was commentary and illustrations by the dream team of Simon and Jeffrey.

I decided not to attend this Wildnis. For reasons I do not understand, I find the music of *Parsifal* almost unbearably moving. A few minutes into the prelude and my eyes well up with tears. I did not think I could listen to Jeffrey's playing without breaking down. It was perhaps fortuitous that I did not attend. Relations with the Cacapon Springs management had not been going well. Feeding us all together seemed a bit challenging for them. We were also required to check out no later than 11 am on Sunday morning, even though the program did not end until after lunch. On one occasion, Aury Fernandez, despite his career as a skilled diplomat nearly got into a fist fight. Imagine interrupting the transcendent music of the spell of Good Friday with the announcement by Cacapon management– "Everyone has to check out by 11 am!"

An infestation of bedbugs caused WSWDC to abandon West Virginia for its next Wildnis.



The cast for the Saturday night libretto reading directed by Betty Byrne (left to right) Tim Scanlon (crowd/people), Maria Prytula (Apprentices), Phil Pulaski (Meistersinger), Jean Lauderdale (Magdalena). Victoria Cordova (David), Jeffrey Swan (orchestra at the piano!). Betty Byrne (director) Bob Misbin (Beckmesser). Carole Hoover (Eva), Simon Williams (Hans Sachs acts 2 & 3), RG Head (Walter), Henry Bardach (Hans Sachs act 1), Jack Sulser (Pogner) and Mark Golden (Kothner) Missing from photo: Jean Arnold and Aury Fernandez (night watchman).



Libretto reading cast: Roberta McKay, Betty Byrne, Frank Pierce, Roland Cross, Robin Elwood, Simon Williams, Jean Arnold, Jeffrey Swann, Florence Pulaski, Susan Pulaski, Phil Pulaski, Bob Misbin, Audrey Pendergast, Victoria Cordova, and Jean Lauderdale.



Cast for the “Saturday Night Live” libretto reading aloud in English. Left to right: Ruth Mitchell, Sue Bogner, Jeffrey Swann, Frank Pierce, Susan Pulaski, Phil Pulaski, Simon Williams, Robin Elwood, Bob Misbin, Victoria Cordova and Jean Nelson.

The seventh Wildnis took place June 2-4, 2007, at the Graves Mountain Lodge in Syria Virginia. Imagine if Wagner had wanted something even more bucolic than Bayreuth, and instead, placed his Festspielhaus at Eagle’s Nest or some similar slope in the Bavarian Alps.

For the eighth Wildnis we returned to Cacapon State Park in West Virginia, having been assured that the bedbug problem had been solved. We were also allowed to expand the group to seventy. The event took place June 6-8, 2008, and began with a welcome by WSWDC President Jim Holman. Simon and Jeffrey discussed *Tannhäuser* with a dramatic reading led by Betty Byrne.

The ninth Wildnis took place June 5-7, 2009. The event was devoted to *Tristan und Isolde*. Simon discussed where this work came from and why it was written, with special emphasis on the romantic and sexual crisis that Wagner faced during its creation. Jeffrey discussed how the new harmonic language achieved the mystical experience probably unequalled in any other work before or since. Betty Byrne once again directed the libretto



Jeffrey Swann



Aury and Janet Fernandez celebrating his 80th

reading. Aury Fernandez discussed King Marke based on his reflections as a super in a Washington Opera production in 1999.

The tenth Wildnis took place June 4-6, 2010, and focused on Wagner’s early operas *Die Feen*, *Das Liebesverbot*, and *Rienzi*. Betty Byrne once again directed a dramatic reading, this time of *Der fliegende Holländer* (The Flying Dutchman).

Having done all of Wagner’s operas, we began a repeat of the *Ring* cycle over the next four Wildnises but without the dramatic readings. *Das Rheingold* took place Jun 3-5 2011. We also celebrated the 80th birthday of WSWDC cofounder Aurelius (Aury) Fernandez.

Beginning with the twelfth Wildnis, June 8-10 2012 Jackie Rosen and Lynne Lambert took over coordinating the event.

We discussed *Die Walküre* on June 8-10, 2012.

May 31 - June 2 2013 was *Siegfried*, with viewings of three different production, Act 1 from the Schenk production at the MET, Act 2 from Jossi Wiler’s Stuttgart production and Act 3 from Copenhagen’s Belch Holton production. On May 30 – June 1, 2014, we completed the cycle with *Götterdämmerung*. The viewings were Act 1 from Pierre Audi’s 1999 Netherlands *Ring*, Act 2 from Patrice Chereau’s 1981 Bayreuth production and Act 3 from Daniel Barenboim’s 2013 La Scala production. Special recognition was given to WSWDC board member Mark Golden who ensures the quality and reliability of the sound and video essential to Wildnis.

For the fifteenth Wildnis it was decided to discuss topics rather than complete operas. What was chosen was “Themes of love” with lectures and illustrations by Simon and Jeffrey. The videos were Chereau’s *Tristan und Isolde* Act 2, Chereau’s *Walkure* Act 1, and a portion of the “Magic fire” a film about Wagner’s life with Yvonne De Carlo and Alan Bedel.



Coordinators Jackie Rosen and Lynne Lambert with Aurelius (Aury) between them during lunch break in 2016.



Alan Reiter and Tom Powell

There was also an Opera Quiz with questions by Simon and Jeffrey. The entire group participated in part 1 to narrow the field. The four finalists were Erik Sundquist, Peggy Jones, Bob Misbin and Frank Rizzo. Lynne and Jackie awarded first prize to me for my answer to the question:

“What advice would you give to an operatic character to prevent them from getting into trouble?”

My response was:

“From Wagner’s *Lohengrin*, I would tell Elsa to stop asking so many questions.”

My prize was a family tree place mat, showing the genealogy of all the characters in the *Ring* grouped as gods, non-gods, and part gods (Wotan’s children, brother and sister Siegmund and Sieglinde, and their son Siegfried).

The sixteenth Wildnis was devoted to *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and took place June 3-5, 2016. A video of the David MacVicar’s Glyndebourne production was screened. The seventeenth Wildnis took place Jun 16-19 2017 with lectures and commentary on *Parsifal* by Simon and Jeffrey. Niklau Lehnhoff’s Baden Baden production was screened. Seventy members attended.

The eighteenth Wildnis took place June 1-3, 2018, with

lectures and illustrations of *Tristan und Isolde* by Jeffrey and Simon. Peggy Jones, Erik Sundquist and Mark Golden discussed the minor characters. DVDs of Patrice Chereau Act 1 from La Scala, Daniel Barenboim’s Act 2 from Bayreuth, and Zubin Mehta’s Act 3 were screened.

The nineteenth Wildnis took place Jun 14-16, 2019. The topic was the influence of Wagner on modern culture. In preparation we were urged to read Proust’s “In Search of Lost Time”, specifically “Overture” and “Swann in Love”, Thomas Mann’s “Death in Venice”, “Blood of the Walsungs”, “Tristan”, “Greatness and Suffering of Richard Wagner”, and commentaries on James Joyce’s “Finnegan’s Wake” were recommended. As usual, Simon lectured with musical illustrations and commentary by Jeffrey.

We screened Pierre Audi production of Schoenberg’s *Gurre-Lieder* and Chereau’s *Elektra*. Sabrina Cassagnol organized book discussions from Bill Pastor and Tom Stanley. Mark Golden managed the sound. We honored 86-year-old Betty Byrne, one of the society’s earliest members, who worked with Aury Fernandez to put Wildnis together when first proposed by Barb Karn.

The pandemic prevented Wildnis from taking place in 2020 and 2022, much to the disappointment of long time Wildnis participants Allan Reiter and Tom Powell lounging during lunch break in 2018.



Opera quiz



Betty Byrne



Left to right: Sabrina Cassagnol, Lynne Lambert, Jeffrey Swann, and Simon Williams



WSWDC member Jean Arnold with heldentenor Ian Storey at Worcester Cathedral 2018

The twentieth Wildnis took place June 3-5, 2022. We reconvened in Cacapon for a program on Wagner’s influence on the artist and society. Simon Williams spoke about enlightenment, romanticism and Victorian medievalism. He entitled his subject “The Creative Artist – Pariah or Savior.” Jeffrey Swann gave three talks with musical illustrations. The first was entitled “The artist in Society – A Faustian pact or a Model for Salvation.” The second was entitled “Old Music and New Music, Good Music and Bad Music.” The third was entitled – “Competitions Then and Now.”

Wildnis was again organized by Lynne Lambert and Sabrina Cassagnol.



Lynne Lambert



Sabrina Cassagnol

The twenty first Wildnis took place June 2-4, 2023. The focus was “Time and Timelessness” in the *Ring*. Jeffrey gave three talks with musical illustrations. The

first talk was entitled “Time Recaptured: Remembered Past and Imagined Future.” For his second talk, Jeffrey borrowed from Thomas Mann for a talk entitled “Very Deep is the Well of the Past”. His third talk was entitled “Time and Work in Progress.” Simon Williams also gave three talks. The first was entitled “The Ruthlessness of the Past”. The second talk was called “Questions of Time in the *Ring*”. For his third talk, Simon attempted to answer the question that has always plagued opera lovers, especially Wagnerians. Must a long opera be boring? The title of his answer was “How the *Ring* Flourishes through Changing Times.”

The screenings were Chereau’s *Das Rheingold* Scene 1, and *Die Walküre* Act 3, and Herheim/Runnicles *Götterdämmerung* Act 3. Aury Fernandez hosted a book fair as he has done so well many times before.

For the twenty second Wildnis May 31- June 2, 2024, Simon and Jeffrey returned to Wagner’s transcendent work, *Tristan und Isolde*. Jeffrey’s topics were “Why is the Music of Tristan so Revolutionary?” “Day vs Night: Time pressing forward vs Time Suspended?,” and “How and Why *Tristan* is cut: Arguments for and Against Cuts.” We welcomed attendees from as far away as Cincinnati, Houston, and Germany.

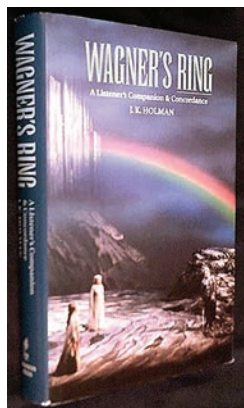
Simon’s topics were “*Tristan and Isolde*: Wagner’s Most Subversive Music Drama”, “*Tristan und Isolde* as Neoclassical Tragedy” and “*Tristan und Isolde* as Romantic Comedy”.

The video chosen featured British Tenor Ian Storey as Tristan. A special treat was a Zoom meeting with Ian Storey himself arranged by member Jean Arnold. Jean met Ian in 2008 when she was a volunteer for the Washington National Opera and was assigned to transport Ian to and from Dulles airport so he could shuttle between performances of *The Flying Dutchman* in Washington and *Otello* in Los Angeles. Opera Director Placido Domingo was confident Ian could do both roles. Ian Storey had his doubts. He found this constant travel disorienting. Ian joked with Jean that part of her job was to remind him that being in Washington he had to start his role with Erik’s “Senta! Willst du mich verderben?” and not *Otello*’s “Esultate!” Jean and Ian’s friendship developed further when he sang *Tristan* in Washington in 2013. A few years later in 2018 they met up in England as shown in the picture taken at Worcester Cathedral.

We are deeply grateful for the loyal attendance and gracious generosity of Guillermo and Cecilia Schultz, who have donated many cases of delicious wine for the enjoyment of Wildnis participants for many years.

Publications

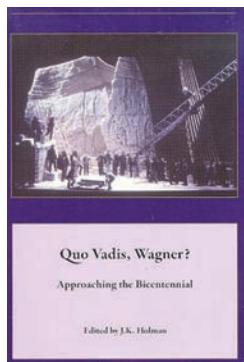
The Society advances the knowledge and appreciation of Wagner's music by sponsoring and supporting scholarly publications. We are proud to have published three of the books ourselves. In addition to our publications, we publish annually a newsletter, which recounts the society's annual events and points to concerts, lectures, tickets to Bayreuth, and resources. The society also maintains an archive of lectures and concerts, available on our website www.wagner-dc.org



Wagner's Ring: A Listener's Companion and Concordance (Amadeus Press)

By Chairman J.K. Holman

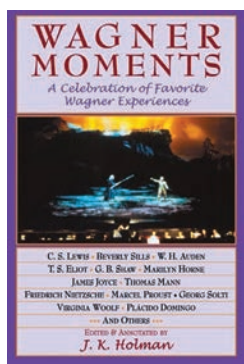
This book explores the mythology, story, music, characters and language of Wagner's monumental work. At its heart is a concordance of the keywords in the four librettos, a powerful reference tool. The volume also includes a brief synopsis of each of the four operas, a presentation of the 145 principal musical motives in order of appearance, and a discussion of the characters and their relationships, listing their appearances and the musical motives associated with them.



Quo Vadis Wagner: Approaching the Wagner Bicentennial

By Chairman J.K. Holman

This is a collection of annotated essays by prominent Wagnerians such as Maestro Jeffrey Swann and Thomas May regarding the power and beauty of Wagner's operas.



Wagner Moments

By Chairman J.K. Holman

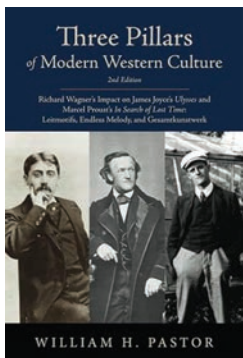
Most Wagnerites remember and celebrate the precise moment when they got hooked on Wagner's music. The introductory essay is by Leon Botstein, president of Bard College and conductor of the American Symphony Orchestra. The music dramas of Richard Wagner have, for the last 150 years, thrilled and amazed listeners everywhere. In *Wagner Moments*, author J. K. Holman has assembled 100 such moments, from the living and dead, famous and not so famous, from Charles Baudelaire to Placido Domingo, musicians and non-musicians. Mr. Holman edits these stories, placing them in their biographical and historical context.



Wagner the Mystic

By Board Member John Pohanka. Published by the Wagner Society of Washington DC.

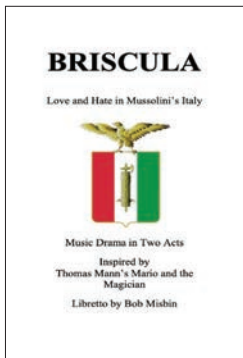
The kinship between religious mysticism and the transformative experience of listening to Wagner's music lies at the heart of this unique and illuminating book. John Pohanka, a life-long student of philosophy and founding member of the Washington Wagner Society, applies the perspectives of both music-lover and philosopher to help us appreciate and understand this phenomenon. Delving into Wagner's writings and methods, Pohanka traces influences on Wagner's thoughts from as diverse sources of mystical philosophy as Plato, Schopenhauer, Jesus and Buddha. Pohanka also explores the recurring motifs of mysticism that permeate the operas, including the ineffable wonder of becoming one with the universal, the falling away of time and space, the paradox of finding oneself only through losing oneself, and salvation through transcendence. Wagner's creation of the invisible orchestra and ritualistic celebration at Bayreuth further reinforce the religious aspect of his revolutionary approach to opera.



Three Pillars of Modern Western Culture

By member Bill Pastor

Richard Wagner's music dramas created a seismic shift in Western culture and changed the artistic landscape of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Three of Wagner's artistic innovations, leitmotifs, endless melody, and Gesamtkunstwerk, played a major role in the development of Modern literature. This book, *Three Pillars of Modern Western Culture*, focuses on Wagner's influence on two literary masterpieces of the early 20th century: James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*. In particular, this work illustrates how the techniques and principles of leitmotifs, endless melody, and Gesamtkunstwerk are incorporated throughout *Ulysses* and *In Search of Lost Time*.



Briscula the Magician

Member Bob Misbin wrote the libretto for *Briscula the Magician* with music composed by the young American Frances Pollock. *Briscula*, inspired by "Mario the Magician" a novella by Wagnerite Thomas Mann, dramatizes fascism developing from mob psychology. The opera premiered in 2020 by Bel Cantanti Opera company in Rockford Maryland.

The libretto is based upon a trip Thomas Mann's family took to Italy where they observed the ascendant Mussoini take power. A magician takes control of his audience through rudeness and intimidation. Horrified, little did they know what was in store for them in their native Germany.

The Music of the Ring: A Study and an Exploration

By Jeffrey Swann

This book is a detailed study and analysis of the music of this, the longest and most complex of all musical works. The Leitmotives of the *Ring*--the building blocks upon which the gigantic edifice is constructed--are studied in depth, and followed with over 900 illustrated musical examples along their journeys of metamorphosis and evolution through nearly every measure of the work. Through this study, countless aspects of the structure and meaning of the *Ring* are revealed and many more are suggested. It can serve as a reference book for both serious and casual lovers and students of Wagner: but it is above all a starting point and guide for each person's own voyage of discovery into this exciting and unique creation.

This book is in preparation and is being published by the Wagner Society of Washington DC.

The Wagner Society of Washington DC Board

Jim Holman has served as Chair since the formation of the Society in 1998. He is the longest serving Chair/President of any Wagner Society in the world, and has been honored as such by the Friends of Bayreuth, the international association of Wagner societies.

In June, 1998 Jim gave the Society's third lecture. Immediately the Steering Committee invited him to serve as Chairman. Before joining the Society, Jim served as a managing director of The Carlyle Group, a large Washington-based multinational private equity firm. He is a former Board member of the Washington Opera, and author of the books *Wagner's Ring, a Listener's Companion & Concordance*, and *Wagner Moments, A Celebration of Favorite Wagner Experiences*.

For the Society, he books lectures and concerts.

John Edward Niles was recruited in 1998 by Jim Holman and is the second longest-serving Board member. He has spent his career conducting and producing operas in Washington and beyond. He initiated the relationship with Thomas Stewart that led to the Emerging Singers Program, and spotted the opportunity to work with Dolora Zajick's IYDV and with Michael Rossi's Miami Music Festival. Since 1999 he has managed the Society's relationship with the ESP, the IYDV, and the AWP.

Ann Albin joined the Board in 2024. She is a Bayreuth regular and a member of Friends of Bayreuth. A CPA, she recently retired from the Treasury Department. She has degrees in music and accounting.

Justin Frank MD joined the Board 2024. He is a former clinical professor of psychiatry at the George Washington Medical Center. He is author of the New York Times best sellers "Bush on the Couch," "Obama on the Couch," and "Trump on the Couch."

Frederic Harwood joined the Board in 2006. He co-founded a consulting firm in the pharmaceutical industry and served as executive director of a large non-profit here in Washington. Since 2008 he has written and edited the Newsletter.

Mark Golden joined the Board in 2007. He is CEO of the Association for Diagnostic and Laboratory Medicine. For the Society he manages the Bayreuth relationship, including acquiring and distributing tickets.

Bonnie Becker joined the Board in 2017. She is in charge of membership, including renewals. For 27 years, before retiring in 2001, she served as Title IX Coordinator in the Compliance Office for Fairfax County Schools.

Sabrina Cassagnol joined the Board in 2019. She is our webmeister and is co-director of Wildnis along with Lynne Lambert. She is the Chief Compliance Officer for an institutional brokerage firm.

Deborah Diamond joined the Board in 2019. She manages the Society's Marketing and Public Relations, a role she inherited from Betty Byrne. She was an intelligence analyst for 34 years.

Joshua Baumgardner joined the Board in 2022, assuming leadership of our relationship with the AWP and the IYDV, along with John Edward Niles. Joshua is no stranger to the Society. In 2014 he was a tenor in the AWP, studying under Luana DeVol. Joshua is currently Vice President at TTR Sotheby's International Realty.

Ex-officio **Will Stewart** is the Society's Business Manager, Zoom enabler and technical guru.

Legacy Board Members

Aurelius (Aury) Fernandez, President Emeritus, co-organized the Steering Committee that led to the creation of the Society in 1998.

He served as President until 2008. For a dozen years he wrote and edited the Society's Newsletters. Aury is a retired USIA Foreign Service Officer.

Janice Rosen initiated the list-serve that led to the formation of the Society. She served on the Board from the founding until 2002.

Barbara Karn joined the steering committee which formed the Society, serving on the Board from 1998 to 2003. She was instrumental in the formation of Wildnis and in securing the Society's tickets to the Bayreuth Festival. With a PhD, Barbara was an environmental scientist at EPA where she built and managed a program in nanotechnology, before moving on to the NSF.

RG Head was a member of the Steering Committee that formed the Society. He served on the Board from our founding until he moved to San Diego in 2008. A retired brigadier general in the US Air Force, RG has written five books on military history and tactics since his retirement.

John J. Pohanka was recruited to the first Board, in 1998 and remained active until his death in 2020. John was a long-time member of the Washington National Opera Board and for several years served as its chair. He founded the Palm Beach Wagner Society, and co-founded the Miami Summer Music Festival. He was a brilliant businessman, taking his father's single Oldsmobile dealership and building it into one of the nation's largest automotive networks.

Betty Byrne, one of our earliest members, served on the Board from 2000 until 2023. She managed publicity and mailings, before turning the job over to Deb Diamond in 2021. She enjoyed a long professional career focusing on Information Technology.

Guillermo Schultz served on the Board from 2007 until 2022. For 20 years he worked for an affiliate of the World Bank until leaving to form a Washington-based investment group. Fluent in German and in the Spanish of his native Mexico, he managed the Society's relationship with Bayreuth.

Jackie Rosen, Business Manager 2000-2020. During the period of our most explosive growth Jackie managed our membership files and financial records. She was our meeting planner, including the "Cruise on the Rhine" (Potomac) for the WNO *Ring* in 2016. In her career Jackie was coordinator of volunteer services at the Washington Opera.

Lynne Lambert served on the Board from 2003-2023. She was a Foreign Service Officer who served in Tehran, Athens, Paris, London, and Budapest before retiring in 2001. She is the Society's treasurer and for many years managed the Wildnis Program along with Jackie Rosen, and now with Sabrina Cassagnol.



Jim Holman



John Edward Niles



Lynne Lambert



Frederic Harwood



Mark Golden



Betty Byrne



Tom Arthur



Bonnie Becker



Sabrina Cassagnol



Deborah Diamond



Joshua Baumgardner



Will Stewart



Guillermo Schultz



Aury Fernandez



Janice Rosen



Barb Karn



RG Head



John Pohanka



Jackie Rosen

Tom Arthur 1998-2009
 Henry (Hank) Gutman, 1998-2008
 Phillip Raines, 1998 -2010
 Elliot Marshall, 2002-2012
 Bill Kugler, 2002-2004
 Bill Pastor, 2004-2009
 Nancy O'Hara, 2006-2010
 Jim Giragosian, 2010-2020
 Diane Stanley, 2010-2013 and co-chair
 Tenth Anniversary Gala
 Audrey Prendergast, 2012-2014
 Helen McConnell, 2017-2019
 Yoko Arthur, co-chair Tenth
 Anniversary Gala

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The Wagner Society of Washington DC is committed to developing emerging Wagnerian talent. We could not fulfill that mission without the help of our Premium Members, our most generous donors. We thank the members who champion our mission.

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