Twenty years! A milestone. Our programs prosper, testimony to our founders’ vision, dedication, and the power of Wagner’s genius. A milestone calls for a celebration. At their Residence the German Ambassador the Hon. Peter Wittig and his wife the Hon. Huberta von Voss-Wittig will host our Gala, with dishes prepared by their German chefs, premier German wines, and pastries.

We’ll enjoy performances by American Wagner Project (AWP) singers, appearances by special guests, a silent auction and more. Proceeds go the American Wagner Project and to provide stipends for emerging talent. We hope you will mark your calendar for this unforgettable evening. Look for a September postcard announcing date and time.

In addition to the Gala, we are planning two other embassy events. This coming Spring at the Swedish Embassy we celebrate the 100th birthday of arguably the greatest recorded Brünnhilde, the Swedish soprano Birgit Nilsson. And on May 17 the Swiss Embassy is hosting the American Wagner Project recital by singers who attended the summer 2017 institute. The event is emceed by Luana DeVol and Delora Zajick.

We hope you will join us for our 20th Anniversary Gala and the rest of our events in what promises to be an exciting year. Please remember that while your membership is vital to our events and programs, the contributions of Premium Members help fund the AWP and provide stipends that help support our young singers. Please consider a Premium Membership if you can. And welcome to our 20th year.

Jim Holman, Chair

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Upcoming Events

Sunday September 17. Jeffrey Swann inaugurates our 20th year with a thrilling concert featuring Beethoven’s most audacious work, Diabelli Variations. In the July 24 New Yorker Richard Brody wrote: “Alongside Bach’s Goldberg Variations, Beethoven’s Diabelli is one of the twin peaks of the classical music repertoire. On Friday night, I saw the pianist Jeffrey Swann deliver a thrilling performance.” Jeffrey will also play the Spinning Song from Dutchman, and a selection from the Ring. American University Katzen Hall, 3:30. Free of charge to renewing members. $15 to non-members. Free parking below the concert hall.

Sunday November 19. Georgetown University Orchestra, Angel Gil-Ordonez Music Director, in collaboration with the WSWDC and the Post-Classical Ensemble of Maestro Gil-Ordonez and Joseph Horowitz, will present excerpts from Parsifal and Die Walküre. Appearing will be bass baritone Kevin Deas and AWP tenor William Green. Gaston Hall, Georgetown University, 5PM. Pre-concert talk starts at 4:15. Admission is free of charge.

Wednesday December 6. Maestro Saul Lilienstein, popular presenter at the Smithsonian Residents Program, the Washington National Opera, and for the Society presents Wagner On the Mind in Eastern Europe. 7:30, Goethe Institut.

October 29. Oktoberfest for Premium Members. We honor those whose contributions support the American Wagner Project, the Institute for Young Dramatic Voices, and provide stipends for promising young singers. At the home of board member Mark Golden and his wife Annie. Invitation with times forthcoming.

May 17 2018. The Swiss Embassy will host the American Wagner Project concert by singers from the 2017 Institute. Selections will be from the roles the singers have been preparing. Soprano Luana DeVol will emcee. 3:00pm. Reception to follow.
In May of 1998 a small group of Wagner enthusiasts met to create a Wagner Society for Washington DC. Aurelius Fernandez, who became our first president, Barbara Karn, Janice Rosen and R. G. Head asked Jim Holman to join the steering committee as Chairman; in short order they recruited John Edward Niles, Phil Raines, Tom Arthur, and then Betty Byrne and John Pohanka, among others. The first meeting was held in the back room of Middle C music store. Prof. Don Crosby, a Wagner Award recipient, presented The Literary Sources of Tristan und Isolde. Fewer than 20 were in attendance.

It was our good fortune that Wolfgang Wagner, Artistic Director of the Bayreuth Festival and Richard Wagner’s grandson, and his wife Gudrun were in Washington February 1999 to attend the Washington National Opera’s Tristan und Isolde. Wolfgang gave an address to WNO, and afterwards Jim invited the Wagners to lunch with Aury, Barb, and RG. The conversation turned to Bayreuth and in a stunning act of bravado our group asked the Wagners for an allotment of tickets. Without blinking an eye, Gudrun said yes. In a few months sets of tickets for the Ring plus other Bayreuth productions arrived in the mail. In our twenty years over 400 members and friends have made the Bayreuth pilgrimage in a relationship now carried forward through the Richard-Wagner-Verband International Association.

Wagner in der Wildnis formed in 2001 when member Barb Karn suggested a scholarly retreat to explore a single Wagner opera. Her idea was championed by Aurelius Fernandez and Betty Byrne. Barb and Betty secured the Cacapon WV site. Today, coordinated by Lynne Lambert and Jackie Rosen, Wildnis draws 70 enthusiasts to Cacapon Park in Berkeley Springs WV to hear presentations by Simon Williams, Professor of Dramatic Arts at UC-Santa Barbara, and Jeffrey Swann, concert pianist and esteemed Wagnerian. Wildnis enters its 18th year.

We have presented The Wagner Award to 15 scholars and artists who have made extraordinary contributions to the enjoyment and understanding of Wagner’s art. The most recent honorees are Prof. Donald Crosby, John Pohanka, Jay Hunter Morris, Jennifer Wilson, and Francesca Zambello. Previous honorees include Jeffrey Swann, Saul Lillienstein, baritone James Morris, Thomas Stewart and Evelyn Lear.
The American Wagner Project of 2017-18
By John Edward Niles

The American Wagner Project (AWP) was established in 2013 to identify and train young singers possessing the capabilities to sing Wagner. It is headed by soprano Luana DeVol, with support from Tom Christof for German diction and John Edward Niles, a conductor who teaches stage presence, movement and preparation.

The AWP is a partnership between the Society and Delora Zajick’s Institute for Young Dramatic Voices, a three-week summer institute held at the University of Nevada – Reno. IYDV was founded in 2009 to “identify and nurture dramatic and large voices and to guide these unique talents” to the world’s opera stages. Except for singers at the beginning Discovery Level, tuition is free. However, living expenses and travel are not funded and the singers depend on their own resources or grants.

Every day for three weeks participants engage in training for voice, diction, movement and dramatic acting. A total of 26 are enrolled this year, 6 in AWP.

The Society has been AWP’s largest single source of funding with an annual commitment of about $30,000. We earmark an additional $10,000 for singers who in the opinion of Ms. Zajick and Ms. DeVol are ready for major opera house debuts. One such singer is Lauren Decker who was in line for a break-out grant in 2017 before the Chicago Lyric Opera offered her a year-long contract. Other recipients were Issachah Savage and Soloman Howard.

We may, in addition, distribute up to $10,000 in smaller grants. One recent recipient, tenor Eugene (Trey) Richards, who performed at two of our AWP recitals, used his grant to work with Dennis Doubin, conductor and coach with the San Francisco Opera’s Merola program. This opportunity in turn led to Trey’s selection as one of 16 finalists in Denmark’s 2017 Lauritz Melchior Competition held in November. Another grant went to Terena Westmeyer, a soprano of stunning promise.

The contributions from our Premium Members define our level of support for the AWP/Institute, and especially the number and size of singer grants.

AWP Participants for 2017

Soprano Jessine Johnson returns for the third year. A finalist at the Southwest Vocal Competition, Phoenix, she is preparing the roles of Senta, Elsa and Sieglinde.

Baritone Eugene (Trey) Richards returns to prepare for November’s Lauritz Melchior competition in Denmark. Trey is one of only two contestants invited from the US.

Mezzo Jillian Yemen is preparing the roles of Brangane and Venus. She sang in the 2017 AWP recital.

Tenor William Green is preparing Parsifal in November with the Georgetown University Orchestra – Post-Classical Ensemble concert, co-sponsored by the Society.

Soprano Terina Westmeyer, in her first year at AWP, has already received two development grants from the NY Wagner Society. She is working on Brünnhilde.

Shawn McGrath is a 29 year old heldentenor from Portland in his first year at AWP. He has been studying with Jane Eaglen at Baldwin Wallace College.

Renew Your Membership Now!! The 2018 Membership Year runs January 1 - December 31.

Renew now and when you do please consider adding a gift to support the singers in the Society’s American Wagner Project.
**Wagner in der Wildnis 2017**

The 17th annual *Wagner in der Wildnis* retreat was held June 16-18 in Berkeley Springs WV, in keeping with Wagner’s preference for the contemplative Bayreuth rather than the bustle of Munich. Some 70 members gathered to study *Parsifal* and view the Niklau Leinhoff Baden-Baden production. Presentations were by the dream team of pianist Jeffrey Swann and Prof. Simon Williams. In a brief ceremony we toasted Prof. Williams’ retirement from UC Santa Barbara. Lynne Lambert and Jackie Rosen coordinate the weekend.

**Change Comes to Washington National Opera**

The Washington National Opera announced the impending departures of Musical Director Maestro Philippe Auguin and Executive Director Michael Mael. Mr. Mael is leaving because, in his words, it is time to do something different. Maestro Auguin’s contract expires in 2018 and it will not be renewed. The Washington Post’s music critic Anne Midgette wrote that the WNO Ring was “gorgeously conducted by its musical director, Philippe Auguin.” It is a shame, she wrote, “to jettison someone whose biggest collaboration with Zambello, the Ring, got such magnificent results.” A WSWDC member observed that while the San Francisco and WNO Rings were the same production, the WNO Ring was markedly superior, due to the mastery of Maestro Auguin. Philippe has made a number of presentations to the Society and prominently attended our Ring Cruise in 2016. Auguin is coming back to Guest Conduct.

Michael came when the WNO faced financial disaster and with Ms. Zambello has put the company on firm financial and artistic footing, culminating in the financially and artistically successful 2016 Ring. Michael was instrumental in ensuring our participation in the 2016 Ring programming. We extend our gratitude and best wishes to both.

**Bayreuth 2017**

WSWDC secured an allotment of tickets to the August 2017 Bayreuth Festival, including 11 sets of Ring tickets, and between 6 and 8 to *Tristan und Isolde*, *Parsifal*, and *Der Meistersinger*. Ring tickets ranged from $796 to $1588 a set. Tickets for the non-Ring operas range from $50 to $365 each. Tickets are awarded based on membership longevity, volunteer activities, and level of financial support for the American Wagner Project.

**The Wagner Society Has a Working Board**

Chairman Jim Holman leads the board and books the monthly meetings. Bonnie Becker works membership. Betty Byrne does publicity and mailings. Jim Giragosian manages the website including email blasts. Mark Golden does sound for *Wildnis*. Frederic Harwood edits the newsletter. Lynne Lambert manages the finances and co-chairs *Wildnis*. John Edward Niles manages the AWP. John Pohanka manages special projects. Guillermo Schultz is our Bayreuth representative. Jackie Rosen, an ex-officio board member, manages the office, the membership database, and co-chairs *Wildnis*. We welcome Helen McConnell to the 2018 Board. We thank Roswitha Augusta for her service the past two years.
Homage to Shakespeare on the 400th year since his death saw WSWDC’s favorite pianist Jeffrey Swann open the season illustrating the complementary genius of Wagner and Shakespeare with portions of Midsummers Night’s Dream (Mendelssohn/Liszt), Tempest Sonatas (Beethoven), Macbeth and the Three Witches (Smetana) and Siegfried’s Funeral March (Wagner). Katzen Arts Center with a dinner party following at Cafe Deluxe, September 17.

A lecture by Peter Kalkavage, author and faculty member at St. John’s College, contrasted Schopenhauer’s Will and Wagner’s Eros, with Nietzsche’s philosophy added into the intellectual stew. German Heritage Museum with a reception following, October 13.

Movie Night featured Antoine Wagner, a 5th generation descendent of Wagner and a 6th generation descendent of Liszt, and his documentary Wagner: A Genius in Exile that traces Wagner’s flight to Zurich after involvement with revolutionary movements in 1848 and 1849. Goethe-Institut, November 17.

In Wagner, Mann, and Mahler, popular lecturer Saul Lilienstein explored relationships of Wagner’s work to that of other geniuses by demonstrating his influence on the music of Gustav Mahler and even the structure of literature by Thomas Mann. Goethe-Institut, December 8.

WSWDC chairman Jim Holman shared his thoughts about Tristan and the Delights of Ambiguity with a review of the political, scientific, and artistic revolutions occurring during Wagner’s lifetime and how Tristan und Isolde embodied the spirit of these changes. Goethe-Institut, January 26.

Maestro Philippe Auguin, Music Director of the Washington National Opera, further developed the theme of Wagner’s influence on other artists in his presentation Wagner, Flaubert, and Proust. Goethe-Institute, March 2.

The annual American Wagner Project Recital, under the leadership of founders Luana DeVol and Dolora Zajick and organized by WSWDC board member John Edward Niles, featured mezzo-soprano Gillian Yemen, tenor William Green, and bass-baritone Daniel Minton accompanied by pianist Betty Bullock with selections from Der fliegende Hölnder, Die Walküre, Tannhäuser, and Parsifal. Katzen Arts Center with a cast dinner party following at the Café Deluxe, April 2.

In focusing on Wagner and His Texts, John Edward Niles, the Society’s American Wagner Project liaison and faculty member, 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-Institut, April 27.

The 17th annual Wagner in der Wildnis weekend retreat explored the mystical aspects of Parsifal with the journey led by perennial favorites pianist Jeffrey Swann and Professor Simon Williams. Simon’s retirement from the University of California-Santa Barbara was recognized by his WSWDC friends! Cacapon Resort State Park, WV, June 15-18.
2017 Premium Members

Contributions from Premium Members support opportunities for American Wagner Project singers.

Meistersinger’s Guild $5,000
Mark and Annette Golden
Frederic Harwood and
Nedda di Montezemolo
Jim and Diana Holman
John and Lynn Pohanka
Guillermo and Cecilia Schultz

Sponsor $500-$999 (Contd.)
Maika Siebeck
Richard and Marie Sippel
Richard and Cathy Soderquist
Steve Steinbach
Barbara A. Teichert
Mark Villamar and Esther Milsted
Wiliam Zeile and Maria Yang

Patron $250-$349 (Contd.)
Jonathan Reel and
Michael Timinski
Kinga Revesz
Joachim Roski
Jean Sammet
Alix and Erik Sundquist
Ken and Dorothy Woodcock

Pilgrim’s Chorus $2,500-$4,999
Anita and Ross Dacal
Thomas Powell

Golden Ring $1,000-$2,499
Roswitha Augusta and
Donald Dittberner
Julia Butters
Betty M. Byrne
Aurelius and Janet Fernandez
Richard and Kathleen Fuller
Stephen and Mary Sue Kitchen
Lynne Lambert
Roberta McKay
Robert Misbin
Paul Palmer
William and Cathy Pastor
Allan Reiter
Thomas P. and Diane Stanley

Donor $350-$499
Katharina Arnhold
Jean Arnold
Joanne Barnhart
Sara and Guillermo Calvo
William Malone
Eliot and Blaine Marshall
Nancy E. O’Hara
Kenneth Quandt
Ida Tgeknavorian

Welcome 2017 NEW MEMBERS
Katherine Altom
David Arnaudo
Ross W. Berg
Rev. G. Julia Brigham
Leigh Conner
Christopher A. Finta
Edward Kable
Daniel Kopti
Natalie Liu
Dr. Geraldine McArdle
Ian Rich
Harriet A. Rogers
Harrison Rose
Susan Noel Rudy
Jacqueline S. Schreiber
Stephen E. Stitch
Mary L. Zoeter

Patron $250-$349
Joseph Abell
Donna Brown
Victoria Cordova
Linda DeRamus
Deborah and Craig Diamond
K. Burke Dillon
Elizabeth Graves
Rita Grunwald
Joan Jackson
Kenneth Johnston
Barbara Karn
Stephen Kent
Betty Kranzdorf
Suzanne Legault
Marilyn Mautz
Greg and Leria McConeghy
Lea McDaniel and Bill Hatcher
Ingrid Meyer
Marc E. Nicholson
William Pearson and
Rick Trevino

Sponsor $500-$999
Bonnie Becker
Thomas C. Brennan
John and Polly Brunelli
Porter G. Dawson
Marc DePaul
Robin Elwood
Benno Gerson
William Greene and Kathryn Faith
Margaret Jones
Dr. Stanley Milstein
M.B. and Susan Oglesby
Jack Roth
Robert W. Schreiber

2017 NEW PREMIUM MEMBERS
Porter G. Dawson
Stephen Kent
Paul C. Palmer
Steve Steinbach
Ida Tgeknavorian
MEMBERSHIP 2018

The WSWDC membership year runs from January 1 through December 31 regardless of the time of year you join. To become a member, please either mail this form with your check or credit card authorization to WSWDC, P. O. Box 58213, Washington DC 20037, or fax it to 703-370-1924. Please print legibly! You may also access the form and pay online at our web site: www.wagner-dc.org

☐ New Member  ☐ Renewal (for 2018)

Name ________________________________ ________________________________

Dual Member’s Name (if applicable) ________________________________

Address ________________________________ ________________________________

City __________________ State __________ Zip __________

Home Phone __________________ Office/Cell/Fax __________________ E-mail __________________

(Reminders of events will be sent by e-mail and regular mail.) Please print very clearly!

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES (Check one category only.) Membership dues and donations are tax-deductible in accordance with federal law. The Wagner Society of Washington, DC is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

☐ Individual Regular $60   ☐ Friend $125 and above     ☐ Golden Ring $1,000 and above

☐ Dual $100                  ☐ Patron $250 and above     ☐ Pilgrims’ Chorus $2,500 and above

☐ Individual Senior or Nonresident $50 ☐ Donor $350 and above     ☐ Meistersingers’ Guild $5,000 and above

☐ Youth (age 28 and under) $10     ☐ Sponsor $500 and above

☐ Employer Matching Grant Form Enclosed

☐ I would like to contribute additional funds to support AWP singers and programs $ ________________________________

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

- An invitation to all lectures, a subscription to the WSWDC newsletter, and priority notice of all activities.
- Meistersingers’ Guild, Pilgrims’ Chorus, Golden Ring, Sponsor, Donor, and Patron categories also receive:
  - Invitations to special events such as this year’s Oktoberfest
  - Priority for lodge accommodations at the Wildnis weekend.
  - WAGNER’S RING, A Tale told in Music. A set of 4 DVDs presented by Professor Heath Lees

Please indicate if interested. ☐ Yes  ☐ No

FORM OF PAYMENT: (do not send cash) ☐ Check Enclosed  ☐ Visa  ☐ MasterCard

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Signature __________________________________________________________

Premium Memberships support the AWP program and stipends for young singers – Please consider becoming a Premium Member
Sunday September 17 Pianist Jeffrey Swann plays Beethoven’s Diabelli Variations, the Spinning Song from The Flying Dutchman, and a selection from the Ring. Katzen Center, 3:30.

Thursday October 12 Charles Affron PhD discusses From Fernstad to Flagstad: Wagner at the Metropolitan Opera 1908 – 1941. 7:30 Goethe Institut.

Sunday October 29 Oktoberfest invitational to honor the Society’s Premium Members.

Sunday November 19, Georgetown University Orchestra and Post-Classical Ensemble present selections from Parsifal and from Die Walküre. Georgetown University Gaston Hall, 5:00.

Wednesday December 6, Saul Lilienstein: Wagner on the Mind in Eastern Europe. 7:30 Goethe Institut.