



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.

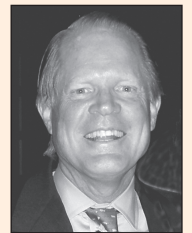
We'll enjoy performances by **American Wagner Project (AWP)** singers, appearances by special guests, a silent auction and more. Proceeds go the American Wagner Project and to provide stipends for emerging talent. *We hope you will mark your calendar for this unforgettable evening.* Look for a September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



Upcoming Events



Jeffrey Swann

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.



Charles Affron

Thursday October 12. Prof. Charles Affron, Professor Emeritus of French, New York University will discuss **From Fremstad to Flagstad: Wagner at the Metropolitan Opera 1908 - 1941**. 7:30, Goethe Institut, 1990 K Street NW. (Enter on 20th Street)

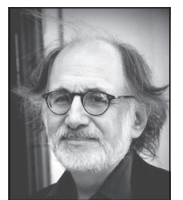
October 29. Oktoberfest for Premium Members. We honor those whose contributions support the American Wagner Project, the Institute for Young Dramatic Voices, and provide stipends for promising young singers. At the home of board member **Mark Golden** and his wife **Annie**. Invitation with times forthcoming.



Angel Gil-Ordóñez

Sunday November 19. Georgetown University Orchestra, Angel Gil-Ordóñez Music Director, in collaboration with the WSWDC and the **Post-Classical Ensemble** of Maestro Gil-Ordóñez 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.



Joseph Horowitz



Saul Lilienstein

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.

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.

20th

ANNIVERSARY

Our Journey

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.



Wolfgang Wagner met with selected members of the first WSWDC Board of Directors at the Kennedy Center after his discussion program with Society members in February 1999. Left to right: Aurelius Fernandez, Janice Rosen, Wolfgang Wagner, R. G. Head, John Green, Jim Holman and John Edward Niles.

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 Aurelius, 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**.



*L to R
Thomas Stewart,
Evelyn Lear,
Justice Sandra Day
O'Connor, John
O'Connor, and Jim
Holman at the 2001
ESP Concert.*

The **Emerging Singers Program** was founded a year later when **John Edward Niles** proposed a partnership between the Society and the famous Wagnerian baritone **Thomas Stewart** and his wife soprano **Evelyn Lear**, who had recently moved to Washington. With **Jim Holman** they created a program to nurture Americans with the potential to sing the Wagner canon.



*Jay Hunter
Morris*



*Jennifer
Wilson*



*Daniel
Brenna*



*Rebecca
Teem*



*Issachah
Savage*



*Soloman
Howard*

Alumni of the ESP and its successor the **American Wagner Project** include **Jay Hunter Morris** (2001) Siegfried in the recent San Francisco Opera and Metropolitan Opera *Rings*, **Jennifer Wilson** (2001, 2004) Brünnhilde in the Valencia and Florence *Rings*, **Daniel Brenna** (2005) Siegfried in the recent WNO *Ring* and

Alwa in the recent Metropolitan Opera *Lulu*, **Rebecca Teem** (2005, 2007) Brünnhilde in the Lübeck Germany *Ring* and Berlin's Deutsch Oper, **Issachah Savage** (2012-13) who won first prize at the 2014 Seattle International Wagner Festival, and **Soloman Howard** (2015) Fafner in the recent WNO *Ring*.



Barb Karn

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 Lilienstein**, baritone **James Morris**, **Thomas Stewart** and **Evelyn Lear**.

WSWDC and the Swedish Embassy celebrate Birgit Nilsson

Spring 2018. With the **Swedish Embassy** we will commemorate the 100th birthday of perhaps the greatest of Brünnhildes, Swedish soprano **Birgit Nilsson**. Date and time to be announced.



The American Wagner Project of 2017-18

By John Edward Niles



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.



Dolora Zajick

The AWP is a partnership between the Society and **Dolora 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



Luana DeVol

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.



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

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.



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.



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

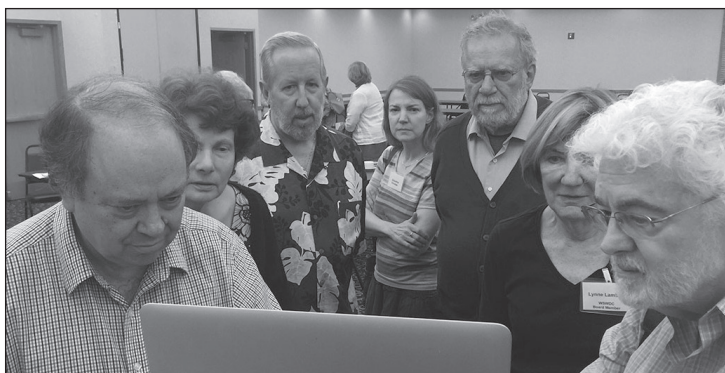


Shawn McGrath is a 29 year old heldentenor from Portland in his first year at AWP. He has been studying with Jane Eaglen at Baldwin Wallace College.

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



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

The 17th annual *Wagner in der Wildnis* retreat was held June 16-18 in Berkeley Springs WV, in keeping with Wagner's

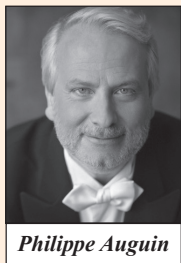
preference for the contemplative Bayreuth rather than the bustle of Munich. Some 70 members gathered to study *Parsifal* and view the **Niklau Lehnhoff** Baden-Baden production. Presentations were by the dream team of pianist **Jeffrey Swann** and **Prof. Simon Williams**. In a brief ceremony we toasted Prof. Williams' retirement from UC Santa Barbara. **Lynne Lambert** and **Jackie Rosen** coordinate the weekend.

Marc Nicholson continued his contribution to preserve the *Wildnis* lectures for the WSWDC web page. The lectures are also available on CD and may be ordered from the WSWDC office. The 18th Annual *Wildnis* will focus on *Tristan und Isolde* June 1-3, 2018.



Marc Nicholson

Change Comes to Washington National Opera



Philippe Auguin

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 Midgett** 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



Michael Mael

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.

Our 20th Anniversary Gala



Early 2018. The Society will celebrate our 20th Anniversary with a Gala at the residence of the German Ambassador the **Hon. Peter Wittig** and his wife the **Hon. Huberta von Voss-Wittig**. Event chair **Cecilia Schultz**, teamed with **Betty Byrne**

and **Jackie Rosen**, plans for artists from The **American Wagner Project**, a silent auction and many surprises. Proceeds are tax deductible and support the AWP/Institute of Young Dramatic Voices, providing individual stipends for AWP singers. There will be a formal invitation.

2016-2017 Retrospective

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.



President emeritus Aury Fernandez with Antoine Wagner.

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

by **Bonnie Becker**



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 Holländer*, *Die Walküre*, *Tannhäuser*, and *Parsifal*. Katzen Arts Center with a cast dinner party following at the Café Deluxe, April 2.



A 2017 AWP rehearsal: Luana DeVol (L), Gillian Yemen, Dann Mitton, William Green, and John Edward Niles (back to the camera). The pianist is Betty Bullock.

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.



John Pohanka

John Pohanka, a founding member of the WSWDC and former Chairman of the Washington National Opera, shared little known opera history in *Maria Callas, Wagnerian Soprano* by describing her early career performances in *Tristan und Isolde*, *Parsifal*, and *Die Walküre*. Goethe-Institut, May 18.

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

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
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Lynne Lambert
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Patron \$250-\$349

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Jean Sammet
Alix and Erik Sundquist
Ken and Dorothy Woodcock

Welcome 2017 NEW MEMBERS

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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

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)

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(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

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☐ **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

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