



# Wagner on the Potomac

The Wagner Society of Washington DC

August, 2012

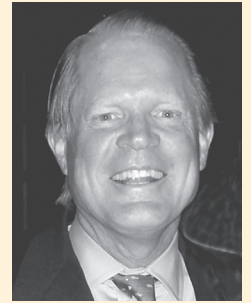
Vol. 14

## Greetings from the Chairman:

What a season we have had! *The Essential Wagner* Concert in the Kennedy Center! An evening with Jay Hunter Morris, and an evening with Asher Fisch! Jeffrey Swann's lecture/concert, and another triumph at *Wagner in der Wildnis*! A Master Class with Evelyn Lear, and the *Meistersinger Seminar* by Saul Lilienstein!

How can we top all that? Just watch! The 2012/2013 season will include an even more spectacular array of programs, focused on the worldwide celebration of the Wagner Bicentennial. 2013 will belong to Wagnerians everywhere, and WSWDC will lead the way. Renew now and enjoy the upcoming season!

J. K. Holman, Chairman



## The Richard Wagner Bicentennial

### Autumn 2012 Events

**Friday, September 21, 2012,**

Piano Concert by Maestro Jeffrey Swann: *Evoking the Infinite*. Works by Bach, Fauré, the *Liebesnacht* and *Brangäne's Watch* from *Tristan und Isolde*, and Schubert's *Sonata in B flat*. The United Church, 1920 G Street, N.W., Washington DC, 7:30 pm. Reception to follow.



**Friday, October 12, 2012,**  
**A Celebration of the Life and Career of Evelyn Lear**  
co-hosted by **Frederica von Stade, Richard Stilwell, and Jim Holman**. Fonger Hall, GWU, 2201 G Street, NW, Washington DC. 7:30 pm.  
*See page 4.*



January 8, 1926 - July 1, 2012

**Thursday, November 15, 2012, Prof. Paul du Quenoy**, author of *Wagner and the French Muse*, speaks on the subject of his book. Dr. du Quenoy is Professor of History at the American University of Beirut-WDC campus. Fonger Hall, GWU, 7:30 pm.

**Bicentennial Year Membership Offer —**  
**Two Memberships**  
**for the Price of One**  
**see page 7 for details.**



### 2013 Events

**Sunday, September 29, 2013,** Washington National Opera, *Tristan und Isolde* **cast party** co-hosted by WSWDC after the matinee performance.

**Spring, 2013, Verdi and Wagner**, a seminar with **Maestro Saul Lilienstein**. Goethe Institut, date and time TBD.

**Weekend of May 31-June 2, 2013, Wagner in der Wildnis: Siegfried**, with **Maestro Jeffrey Swann** and **Prof. Simon Williams**. Capacon State Park, Berkeley Springs, WV.

**Additional events in honor of the Bicentennial** include seminars, lectures, concerts and a gala being planned with organizations such as the Washington National Opera, the National Symphony, the Goethe-Institut, the Smithsonian Institution, the Library of Congress, and the German Embassy. Watch the website for details and further announcements.

### OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS TO NOTE

**Monday - Friday, September 10 - 14, 2012,** PBS broadcast of Metropolitan Opera's *Ring* with the ESP's Jay Hunter Morris as Siegfried.

**Friday, September 21 and Sunday, September 23, 2012,** Opera Roanoke, *The Flying Dutchman*.

**October 4 - 6, 2012,** National Symphony Orchestra performs *Tristan und Isolde Prelude* and *Liebestod*.

**October 11 - 13, 2012** NSO performs Wagner's *Wesendonck-Lieder*.

**Friday, September 13 and Sunday, September 15, 2013,** Baltimore Lyric Opera, *The Flying Dutchman*.

## The 2011-2012 Season: A Retrospective by Bonnie Becker

(Funger Hall, below, refers to programs at George Washington University, Washington DC.)

Pianist **Jeffrey Swann** opened the new season with a concert, *LisztOmania and Wagner Too*, Spectrum Theater, Rosslyn, VA. September 24, 2011.

**WSWDC Wagner Award** presented to **Prof. Donald Crosby**, professor emeritus of German Language and Culture, University of Connecticut. Spectrum Theater. September 24.

**Thomas Stewart and Evelyn Lear Emerging Singers Program (ESP) Master Class** with Evelyn Lear, featuring Othalie Graham, Adam Hershkowitz, Kevin Ray, Darik Knudsen, Bret Stater, and Isabel Molnar Meggeri. WNO Workshop, Tacoma Park. November 12.

**Philip Kennicott**, culture critic, *Washington Post*, spoke on *Wagner and Mark Twain*. Funger Hall. November 17.

**Prof. Andrew Zimmerman**, Professor of History, The George Washington University, *The Revolution of 1848*. Funger Hall. October 13.

**J. K. Holman**, editor, *Quo Vadis, Wagner: Approaching the Bicentennial*, 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 Fall, 2011 by WSWDC.)

**J. K. Holman**, Chair, WSWDC spoke on *Wagner, Christianity and Redemption*. Funger Hall. April 12, 2012.

**An Evening with tenor Jay Hunter Morris (ESP 2004)**, who sang the role of Siegfried in the 2011 San Francisco *Ring* and in the 2012 Metropolitan Opera *Ring*. Moderated by the Vocal Arts Society's artistic director **Peter Russell**. DACOR House. May 7, 2012.

**Julian Wachner**, conductor and music director, The Washington Chorus, and **J. K. Holman: Reflecting on The Essential Wagner**. American University. May 10, 2012.

**24th ESP concert, The Essential Wagner with The Washington Chorus** featuring soloists from the Emerging Singers Program. Kennedy Center Concert Hall. May 22.

**Asher Fisch**, Israeli-born Principal Guest Conductor of the Seattle Opera and conductor of the 2013 Seattle *Ring* shared his insights into conducting Wagner and on performing Wagner in Israel. Goethe-Institut. June 25.

Twelfth annual **Wagner in der Wildnis** studying *Die Walküre* with **Maestro Jeffrey Swann** and **Prof. Simon Williams** from UC-Santa Barbara. Graves Mountain Lodge, Virginia. June 8-10.

### THE WAGNER AWARD - PROF. DONALD CROSBY

With references to Act III of *Die Meistersinger* in which Hans Sachs convinces Walter to honor the tradition of German art represented by the Meistersinger Prize, Prof. Donald Crosby accepted the 2011 Wagner Award. Prof. Crosby is the eleventh recipient of the award, given to "a person who has made extraordinary contributions to the study and enjoyment of Richard Wagner's art." Participating in the presentation were Jim Holman, Chairman of the WSWDC, and previous Wagner Award winners Jeffrey Swann and Saul Lilienstein.

Prof. Crosby, University of Connecticut professor emeritus of German Language and Literature, gave the first lecture at the founding meeting of the WSWDC in December 1999. Since then he has spoken on topics such as "Sigurd und Brynhildt," "Wagner in His Cultural Context," "Tristan and Isolde: Debt to German Literary Romanticism," "Wagner in Switzerland," and "Origins of Originality: Wagner and the German Tradition."



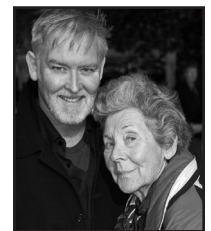
**Donald Crosby (right) with fellow award recipients and Chairman Holman, left to right Saul Lilienstein, Chairman Holman, Jeffrey Swann and Prof. Crosby.**



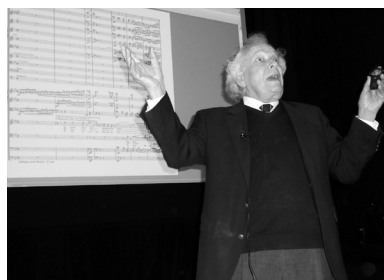
**Maestro  
Asher Fisch**



**Maestro  
Julian Wachner**



**Evelyn Lear and  
Jay Hunter Morris**



**Maestro Saul Lilienstein** at *Die Meistersinger*, an all day seminar co-sponsored with the Goethe-Institut. March 19. (This program is available on a four disc CD set through the WSWDC office.)

## **BAYREUTH INTERRUPTUS** by Guillermo Schultz

It was with considerable distress that the world's 140 Wagner Societies received a letter in December 2011, from the Festspielhaus stating that our ticket allotments were being cancelled. The letter cited audits by the Federal German government and the government of Bavaria to the effect that German citizens, who subsidize the Festival, are denied Festival tickets because some 65% of the tickets are committed to allotments. For WSWDC this interrupts 12 consecutive years at Bayreuth, with an allotment first awarded after Wolfgang and Grudrun Wagner visited Washington DC in 1999.

Wagner societies vigorously protested through the office of Prof. Eva Maertson, president of *Richard-Wagner-Verband International EV*. Nathalie Wagner, president of the New York Wagner Society, wrote a much more direct protest signed by the 14 North American societies. The gist of our protest is that it is unfair to lump Wagner Societies, with their educational and cultural mission, and which account for only about 2% of the Bayreuth tickets, with the commercial travel agencies, unions and political and business associations which claim most of the allotments.

I met with the head of the Freunde von Bayreuth on August 16. She said there is general recognition that Wagner societies are "different" and should receive some type of preference, but this has to be done in a more "fair/balanced" way. The German government is concerned that many foreign Wagner societies enjoy allocations not available to many German societies, that some small societies receive more tickets than other much larger societies, and that tickets from some societies end up on the black market. We are confident that our concerns are being heard and discussions are ongoing. (In the August 2012 issue of *Opera*, Robert Turnbull investigates the upheaval over the Bayreuth ticket allotments.)

## **WAGNER IN DER WILDNIS 2012**

For the 12<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, on June 8-10, some 70 members returned to our weekend retreat, *Wagner in der Wildnis*, this time to study *Die Walküre* with pianist **Jeffrey Swann** and **Prof. Simon Williams**, UC Santa Barbara. The weekend was coordinated by the Society's **Lynne Lambert** and **Jackie Rosen**. A studio quality recording of all seven lectures is available in a boxed set of 10 CDs for \$42 through the WSWDC office. (703-370-1923 or order online at [www.wagner-dc.org](http://www.wagner-dc.org).)

Next year *Wagner in der Wildnis* will focus on *Siegfried* with Maestro Swann and Professor Williams as the speakers. We will return to Capacon State Park, Berkeley Springs, WV. Dates are May 31-June 2, 2013.



*The Wildnis "Dream Team" Jeffrey Swann (left) and Simon Williams (right), led seven separate sessions during the weekend devoted to Die Walküre.*

## **THE WASHINGTON CHORUS ESSENTIAL WAGNER, WITH SOLOISTS FROM THE EMERGING SINGERS PROGRAM**



*Soloists Othalie Graham (far left), Bret Stater, Issachah Savage (far right) join Evelyn Lear (seated), Maestro Julian Wachner, and Jim Holman (center).*

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**. In a *Washington Post* review, **Anne Midgette** wrote that "A group of young soloists--the event was produced with the Wagner Society's Thomas Stewart and Evelyn Lear Emerging Singers Program--had the chance to get some Wagner experience onstage

including **Othalie Graham** and the able tenor **Patrick Cook**. ...The penetrating soloist Othalie Graham took on the trickier parts of the *Ride of the Valkyries*."

Midgette continues, "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. Wachner gave him a special bow and the audience roared for him in an appropriate salute."

Through the Emerging Singers Program, we continue to identify and nurture great American singers. With Julian Wachner, this year we brought the genius of Richard Wagner to The Washington Chorus' audience, many of whom, Wachner noted, asked "Wagner?" but who were on their feet, Midgette wrote, roaring approval as the concert ended.



## In Memoriam



***Evelyn Lear Jan. 8, 1926 – July 1, 2012***

***Thomas Stewart Aug. 29, 1928 – Sept. 24, 2006***

The Wagner Society has lost a great artist, singer, teacher – and above all, a friend, Evelyn Lear. It has been the greatest achievement and privilege of the Wagner Society to have been intimately associated with Eve and her late husband, the brilliant base-baritone Thomas Stewart, since the year 2000. The world of opera will never forget Evelyn's astounding career, her triumphs singing Mozart, Strauss, Berg, and many others. The opera world today is sprinkled with singers whose careers have been touched by Tom and Eve. It is in their honor that the Wagner Society of Washington DC moves forward with the Evelyn Lear and Thomas Stewart Emerging Singers Program. Please join Eve's friends, Frederica von Stade, Richard Stilwell, and others in a tribute, Friday October 12, Fonger Hall, GWU, 7:30 pm.

- Jim Holman

## Emerging Singers Program's Future

Since 1999, the Thomas Stewart and Evelyn Lear Emerging Singers Program has pursued its mission to identify and nurture American singers with the potential to sing the Wagner canon.

Conceived by Thomas Stewart and Evelyn Lear, with the Society's Jim Holman and John Edward Niles, the program's many successes are today seen on stages throughout the opera world. Even as we mourn Tom's untimely death in September 2006, and now Evelyn's death this past July 1, the Board is planning the future of the ESP in their memory.

For 2012-13, the ESP will focus on the development of a tenor of exceptional promise, Issachah Savage. The Society will provide support for his attendance at the Institute of Young Dramatic Voices Summer Institute in Utah, support further training for him throughout the year, and sponsor a concert featuring him this coming year.

Issachah Savage, pictured below with Evelyn Lear, is a 33-year-old Washington resident, described by the *Post's* music critic Anne Midgette as possessing a "world-class voice." He is a graduate of Catholic University, where he sang in the summer opera program. Although he has only recently started singing Wagner, he has already won the first place award in the Wagner Division for both the Liederkrantz Foundation Competition and the Gerda Lisner Competition.



In 2011 he attended the Institute of Young Dramatic Voices Summer Institute, and won a scholarship in 2012. WSWDC will support additional training for him at the Summer Institute, and throughout the year provide coaching in voice, acting, German, and physical fitness. John Edward Niles is mentoring his progress. After Issachah's triumph at The Washington Chorus concert, some members asked about supporting his extraordinary talent. If you would like to be a Friend of Issachah, contact Jackie Rosen in the WSWDC office.

## Emerging Singers Program Updates



**Jennifer Wilson (ESP 2001, 2004)** has had a fantastic year. She performed Isolde at the Edinburgh Fest and at Valencia, Bilbao, Leipzig and Hong Kong, Brünnhilde in Leipzig and Deutsch Oper's *Die Walküre*, Senta in Tokyo and Vienna, Turandot with Schleswig-Holstein and Munich, Lenore in Valencia, and *La Gioconda* in Rome with Roberto Abbado. Upcoming is the 2013 Valencia *Ring*.

**Jay Hunter Morris (ESP 2004)** had a breakout year, including the role of Siegfried in the San Francisco *Ring* and the Metropolitan Opera *Ring* in 2011 and 2012, where he is also scheduled for 2013. He sang Captain Ahab for Adelaide Opera, San Diego and San Francisco, will sing Tristan in Valencia (with Jennifer Wilson) and in Los Angeles' *Holländer*. In the role of Siegfried he starred in the Met's DVD of the *Ring* and is featured on the PBS rebroadcast of the Met's *Ring*, September 10-14, 2012.

## Emerging Singers Program Updates



**Rebecca Teem (ESP 2005, 2006)** completed two seasons singing Brünnhilde with Opera Lübeck's *Ring*, which won a German Golden Echo (Grammy) as outstanding classical DVD of 2012. She will be singing Brünnhilde in Frankfurt Oper's 2012 *Ring*. She is also scheduled for Deutsch Oper's Gerhilde, Brünnhilde, and Turandot.

**Othalie Graham (ESP 2008, 2011-2012)** sang Turandot for Pensacola Opera, Arizona Opera, and Vancouver Opera, the role of Minnie in Nashville, sang Beethoven's *9th* with the Philadelphia Orchestra, and Verdi's *Requiem* with Atlanta Symphony. Featured in *The Essential Wagner* with The Washington Chorus, she was photographed in concert by *The Washington Post*.

**Carolyn Whisnant (ESP 2003)** sang Brünnhilde for Essen Oper and in Karlsruhe's *Ring*, the role of Turandot in Mannheim, and the role of Claire Zachanassian in Geisen Oper's *Der Besuch der Alten*. She is scheduled for upcoming performances in Wiesbaden, Frankfurt, and Turin.

**Valerie Bernhardt (ESP 2007, 2008)** sang the Mozart *Requiem* at Carnegie Hall, and *Tosca* and *La Boheme* for Opera of New Jersey. In July she gave a "focused, spirited performance" (*NY Times*) in the lead of a new opera *Victoria Woodhull*, and August 25 sang Brünnhilde in NY Lyric Opera's *Die Walküre*.



**Jerrett Geisler (ESP 2008)** sang Escamillo for Opera Roanoke, Zurga in Hawaii Opera Theater's *The Pearl Fishers*, Figaro in Opera Grand Rapids' *Barber of Seville*, *La Boheme* for Stockton CA Opera, and arias from *Il Trovatore* and *Don Giovanni* for Neue Sinfonieorchester Berlin. He is scheduled to sing in Virginia Opera's upcoming productions of *The Pearl Fishers*, *Die Fledermaus*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and *The Marriage of Figaro*.

**Colleen Daly (ESP 2009)** sang Musetta for Lyric Opera Baltimore and Des Moines Metro Opera, Violetta in Opera Delaware's *La Traviata*, covered NY City Opera's Violetta, sang the Countess in Annapolis Opera's *Marriage of Figaro*, sang the role of Thäis in Opera Company of Middlebury's *Thäis*, and was the soprano soloist in Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem* with the Handel Society of Dartmouth College.

**Adam Herskowitz (ESP 2010)** sang the First Armed Man and covered Froh for the Metropolitan Opera *Ring*, joined the Met's 2012 tour of Japan, sang Calif with the Toledo and Minnesota Operas, and won second place in 2011 in the Wagner Category of the Liederkrantz Competition.

**Patrick Cook (ESP 2009, 2012)** sang in The Washington Chorus' *Essential Wagner* and in Maryland Opera Studio's *Postcards from Morocco* and *Miss Havisham's Fire*.

**Karen Foster (ESP 2009)** sang Isolde for Oslo's Den Norske Opera, and covered Elsa for Chicago Lyric Opera's *Lohengrin*.

**Isabella Molnar Meggeri (ESP 2011)** sang arias by Mozart, Verdi, Puccini and Dvorak with the New Philharmonia of New Jersey, the role of Tosca with the New Orleans Opera, and sang the lead role in Opera Bastille's *Arabella*.

**Daniel Snyder (ESP 2011)** sang Cavaradossi and Pinkerton with Mississippi Opera, Tom Buchanan in Ensemble Parallele's (San Francisco) *The Great Gatsby*, Dexter in San Francisco Opera's *Heart of a Soldier*, and Don Jose in Portland's *Carmen*.

**Jose Sacin (ESP 2001)** sang *Manon Lescaut* with NY Lyric Opera, and was soloist for concerts with The Ludwig Symphony, Atlanta Symphony, Opera Guild of Northern Virginia, Mallorca Symphony (Spain), Entre Mundo in Hartford, Concert Detroit, Opera Delaware, the role of Eisenstein in Opera Camarata of Washington DC's *Die Fledermaus*, and in the In Series of Washington DC's productions of *A Hand of Bridge* and *El Barberillo de Lavapies*.

Opera Roanoke's production of *The Flying Dutchman*, September 21 and 23, 2012, features a trio of ESP alumni from 2007-08, with **Ryan Kinsella** as The Dutchman, **Julia Rolwing** as Senta, and **Bryan Register** as Erik. Ryan has recently performed in Barber's *Anthony and Cleopatra* for the NY City Opera at Carnegie Hall, and in Gluck's *Alcester* with **Deborah Voigt**. Julia recently was soprano soloist for the Cherry Hill (NC) Music Festival's *Liszt and American Music*. Bryan has recently performed concert and semi-staged versions of the role of Siegmund for Opera Roanoke and Opera Birmingham.

### AN EVENING WITH JAY HUNTER MORRIS

May 7, 2012 at DACOR.

Jay Hunter Morris is one of the ESP singers (2004) who has made it big, singing the role of Siegfried in the 2011 San Francisco *Ring* and in the 2012 Metropolitan



Ken Howard, Metropolitan Opera

Opera *Ring*. By his own admission, he came "out of nowhere" to become a reigning Siegfried of American opera. Buried deep in the pool of covers and leads for small opera companies, Jay was picked by Francesca Zambello to sing Siegfried in San Francisco. Retained by the Met as a cover in 2012, Jay stepped in when Gary Lehman became ill, performing to considerable acclaim.

Jay is featured in the Met's DVD of the *Ring*, and in PBS' broadcast of the Met *Ring* September 10-14, 2012. He was profiled in the February 2012 issue of *Opera News*.

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### Departure of Christina Scheppelmann from Washington National Opera



The Society notes the resignation of Christina Scheppelmann as Director of Artistic Operations for the Washington National Opera. Since 2002 Christina has been a steadfast friend of the WSWDC, cooperating with us in cast parties after *Tristan und Isolde* at Constitution Hall, *Die Walküre* at the

German Ambassador's residence, and at River Restaurant after *Götterdämmerung* in 2010. With Francesca Zambello, she brought the individual operas of the *Ring* to WNO in 2007 - 10, and has worked to schedule the WNO *Ring* for 2014. We thank her for her friendship, and wish her the best in her new position.

### In Memoriam: Jerry Floyd

It is with deep regret that we note the passing in April 2012 of Jerry who was a perceptive and prolific contributor to *The Wagner Journal*, *Wagner Opera.net* and the New York Wagner Society Wagner Notes. His wise council to *Wagner on the Potomac* will be missed.

## MEMBERSHIP 2013

### A SPECIAL OFFER TO CELEBRATE THE BICENTENNIAL OF RICHARD WAGNER'S BIRTH!

**Renew your membership for 2013 now and enroll a new member or a new couple free for a year!**

*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, or access the form and pay online at our web site: [www.wagner-dc.org](http://www.wagner-dc.org)*

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*(Reminders of events will be sent by e-mail and regular mail.)*

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☐ **Meistersingers' Guild** \$5,000 and up

☐ **Pilgrims' Chorus** \$2,500 to \$4,999

☐ **Golden Ring** \$1,000 to \$2,499

☐ **Sponsor** \$500 to \$999

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#### MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

- An invitation to all free lectures, a subscription to the WSWDC newsletter, and priority notice of all events.

**Meistersingers' Guild, Pilgrims' Chorus, Golden Ring, Sponsor, Donor, and Patron categories also receive:**

- Priority for reserving ticketed Wagner Society programs.
- Priority for lodge accommodations at the *Wildnis* weekend.
- *Quo Vadis, Wagner? Approaching the Bicentennial*, edited by J. K. Holman. *Please indicate if interested.* ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

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## Upcoming Programs

**Lectures at Funger Hall are free and open to the public!**

**Friday, September 21, 2012.** Maestro Jeffrey Swann, Pianist. *Time Suspended – Music that Evokes the Infinite*. 7:30 pm. The United Church, 1920 G Street, NW, Washington DC.

**September 10-14, 2012.** PBS broadcast of the Metropolitan Opera *Ring*, with ESP emeritus Jay Hunter Morris as Siegfried.

**Friday, October 12, 2012.** A Celebration of the Life and Career of Evelyn Lear co-hosted by Frederica von Stade, Richard Stilwell, and Jim Holman. 7:30 pm. Funger Hall, GWU.

**Thursday, November 15, 2012.** *Wagner's Reception in France*, with Paul du Quenoy PhD, American University of Beirut - Washington DC. 7:30 pm. Funger Hall.

**Weekend of May 31-June 2, 2013.** *Wagner in der Wildnis: Siegfried*, with Maestro Jeffrey Swann and Prof. Simon Williams. Capacon State Park, Berkeley Springs, WV.

**September 29, 2013.** Washington National Opera, *Tristan und Isolde* post-performance cast party co-sponsored by WSWDC.



The Wagner Society of Washington DC

The Wagner Society of Washington, DC  
PO Box 58213  
Washington, DC 20037  
Tel: (703) 370.1923 • Fax: (703) 370.1924  
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**A BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OFFER --TWO MEMBERSHIPS FOR THE PRICE OF ONE (See page 7)**

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