



Wagner on the Potomac

The Wagner Society of Washington DC

August, 2009

Vol. 11 No. 1 & 2

Chairman's Greeting:

We take great pleasure in providing you with this latest edition of *Wagner on the Potomac*. The 2008-2009 season was filled with milestones and achievements, highlighted by our 10th Anniversary and related events. This has been a difficult year for all organizations promoting high culture, but the Wagner Society --- thanks to you --- has flown through with flying colors. We look forward to another wonderful

year, offering to you a wide range of programs, including lectures, concerts, and the annual *Wagner in der Wildnis* retreat.

Needless to say, we cannot sustain these activities without your support. I hope you will carefully consider raising your level of contribution to a higher level! And as always, we are grateful to have won the prodigious loyalty of our Members! For the study and enjoyment of Wagner's art, *Jim Holman*

Evelyn Lear and Thomas Stewart Emerging Singers Program (ESP) Successes on World Opera Stages

More than two-thirds of the singers who have participated in the Evelyn Lear and Thomas Stewart Emerging Singers Program (ESP) over the past ten years continue to actively pursue operatic careers. ESP singers take part in master classes, extensive coaching and career guidance by Evelyn Lear. In something of an ESP coup, three of our singers were engaged in the Chicago Lyric Opera's *Tristan und Isolde* last winter including Jason Stearns, Jennifer Wilson and Jeffrey Springer. Here are examples of ESP singers on world opera stages.

Jason Stearns (ESP concerts 2005, 2006, 2007) sang Macbeth in Rio de Janeiro, Scarpia in Anchorage, the Dutchman at the Savonlinna Festival in Finland, and will sing Jack Rance in Oslo's *La Fanciulla del West* fall, 2009. He will cover for Placido Domingo in the Met production of *Simon Boccanegra* next year.

Jason Stearns (Kurvenal) with Deborah Voight (Brünnhilde) at Lyric Opera's *Tristan und Isolde*



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ESP Singers on World Opera Stages (con't)



**Jennifer Wilson
as Brünnhilde**

Jennifer Wilson (ESP concerts 2001, 2004), sang *Turandot* at Opera Australia, and was the subject of a full-page color photo in BBC Music magazine. Also this year, Jennifer has sung Brünnhilde in *Der Ring des Nibelungen* in Valencia and Florence to great

critical acclaim. The Valencia *Ring* DVD will be released next year.

Carolyn Whisnant (ESP concert 2003) has emerged as a star in Germany. She has recently sung *Elektra* at Frankfurt Opera and Staatstheater Karlsruhe, *Die Frau Ohne Schatten* at Frankfurt and Mannheim's Staatstheater, as well as Brünnhilde at Karlsruhe and Mannheim.



Rebecca Teem

Rebecca Teem (ESP concerts 2005, 2007) sang *Brünnhilde* at Theater Lubeck's *Die Walküre*. Critic Thomas Sutcliff wrote: "The most thrilling performance of all was Rebecca Teem's stocky, youthful Brünnhilde, wonderfully natural in her acting but seriously beautiful in her singing, reminding me at times of Flagstad in

her emotional tones and again of Rita Hunter in her very firm lower register." *Opera Now* (September 4, 2009).

Othalie Graham (ESP concert 2008) starred in the Chorus Pro Musica's concert production of *Turandot* on May 31 in Boston. "Her voice is sumptuous, with firmly-focused, penetrating high notes.... Those awesome high C's were made even more impressive by her dead-on intonation. Possessing beauty, temperament, and superb acting skills, Graham is destined for stardom...." Ed Tapper, *The Edge*, 06.02.09.

Tenth Anniversary Banquet and Awards Ceremony



**Aury Fernandez
and John Pohanka**

The Tenth Anniversary of the Society – formally created in August 1998 – was celebrated with a festive banquet with more than 100 members and friends at the German Embassy on November 6, 2008. A 34-page Tenth Anniversary Report (TAR) chronicling the achievements of the Society in its first decade was unveiled and distributed.

John Pohanka was awarded the Society's highest honor, the Wagner Award, for honorees, including **Placido Domingo**, **James Morris** and **Jeffrey Swann**, who have made extraordinary contributions to the study and enjoyment of Richard Wagner's art. John, a founding board member of the Society, was honored for his many contributions to the Society over the past ten years, and for his outstanding service to opera in Washington DC by serving as Chairman of the Board, Washington National Opera. He championed the Opera's production of *The Flying Dutchman*, in which Senta was sung by our own Jennifer Wilson, and,

over the past four years, the four operas in the WNO productions of *The Ring*.

Aury Fernandez, President Emeritus, was honored for his service over the past ten years as founding President and Board Member. Aury's contributions include initiating the *Wagner in der Wildnis* program, helping secure the Society's allotment of Bayreuth tickets and serving as Bayreuth liaison for the past ten years, and the Society's newsletter. He was co-editor of the Tenth Annual Report, which detailed the Society's growth and contributions to opera in the Washington area.

THE 2008-2009 SEASON

by Bonnie Becker

Jeffrey Swann: “The World of Nature: Wagner, Schumann, Liszt, Debussy & Messiaen” illustrated common ties to nature among these four Romantic composers. September 8 at the German Embassy.

Saul Lilienstein: “Wagner and Brahms” explained the personal and musical relationship of two musical giants. October 16 at Funger Hall

17th Emerging Singers Program - Sopranos Othalie Graham, Kara Shay Thompson; baritones Jerett Gieseler and Daniel Klein. October 23 at the German Embassy.

Saul Lilienstein: “What to Listen for in Wagner” an analysis of the four works featured on an all-Wagner program by the National Symphony. October 27 at the Kennedy Center Terrace Theatre.

Wagner Society of Washington DC 10th Anniversary Celebration: Presentation of the Wagner Award to **John Pohanka** and Appreciation Award to **Aurelius Fernandez** and presentation of the Tenth Anniversary Report (TAR) November 6 at the German Embassy.

Donald Arthur: “Die Meistersinger in Bayreuth” Discussion of the documentary film about Katharina Wagner’s controversial production. November 13 at Funger Hall.

Iain Scott: “Wagner Moments: Ten Magic Moments in Wagner” Discussion program with Canada’s leading Wagner expert. December 4 at Funger Hall.

James Ross: “The Wagner Orchestra” Continuing his December 2008 program at the Gothe Institut, a discussion of Wagner’s *On Conducting* and analysis of a variety of conductors. January 14 at Funger Hall.

An Evening with Evelyn Lear The beloved co-founder with her late husband Thomas Stewart of the Emerging Singers Program recounted her fascinating career. February 19 at Funger Hall.

18th Emerging Singers Program Soprano Rebecca Teem ; tenors Richard Novak and Daniel Snyder; baritone Jerett Gieseler; bass Valerian Ruminski; accompanied by Betty Bullock under the direction of Evelyn Lear. March 12, Austrian Embassy.

Jim Holman: “Siegfried--Wagner’s Scherzo” an introduction to the WNO performances of *Siegfried*. March 13 at the WNO Millennium Stage.

Donald Crosby: “Sigurd and Brynilt” explained the “Literary and Mythological Origins of Wagner’s Doomed Couple” and how Wagner wove fact, fiction and his own imagination to create *The Ring*. May 14 at Funger Hall.

Siegfried Cast Dinner Party for the 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. May 17 at the Magic Gourd Restaurant

Emerging Singers Program (ESP) Master Class Soprano Julia Rolwing and Tenor Brian Register were the subjects of Evelyn Lear’s master class attended by premium ESP contributors at the home of Jim and Diana Holman on May 30.

The 9th Annual Wagner in der Wildnis: *Tristan und Isolde*. Jeffrey Swann (music) and Simon Williams (drama); Aury Fernandez (King Marke, the succession situation in Bayreuth, and latest Wagner literature) Betty Byrne (libretto reading director). A set of 5 DVDs comprising nine hours of the Swann and Williams lectures is available; contact Aury Fernandez on 301.907-9475 or e-mail www.auryfern@aol.com. June 5-7 weekend at Cacapon Resort, Berkeley Springs, WV.

Members and Friends Annual Garden Party. Attended by more than 100 members and friends of the Society. June 16 at home of Jim and Diana Holman.

2009 Bayreuth Festival for Society ticket holders – week of August 24.

The Tenth Annual Report chronicles the Society’s ten-years of activities including the Emerging Singers Program and other contributions to the study and enjoyment of Wagner’s art. The 34-page report was distributed to members, the Washington cultural community, and Wagner Societies worldwide, including Bayreuth. Copies are available, free of charge, from office manager Jackie Rosen.

The Study and Enjoyment

Wagner in der Wildnis IX, June 5-7, 2009 Berkeley Springs WV

Program of Lectures

Simon Williams

- *Tristan und Isolde*: Where It Came From and Why It Was Written
- Romantic and Sexual Crisis in *Tristan und Isolde*
- *Tristan und Isolde*: A Stage History

Jeffrey Swann

- *Tristan* and the Mystic Experience
- *Tristan* and the Harmonic Language of Expectancy
- Questions and Answers Discussion

Aurelius (Aury) Fernandez

- Reflections on King Marke; Wagner Literature and Bayreuth Briefing

Betty Byrne

- *Tristan und Isolde* Libretto Reading



Professor Simon Williams, who has lectured at every *Wildnis* weekend since the first one in 2001, presented his lectures on Wagner's drama.



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.



Siegfried Cast Party, May 17, 2009

Aury Fernandez presented his reflections on King Marke based in part on his role as a supernumerary courtier in the 1999 Washington National Opera production. He is wearing an original Wagner necktie created by Bonnie Becker!



The cast party with more than 100 guests was hosted by the Society on May 17 to honor the cast and staff from the WNO production of *Siegfried*. Guests included conductor **Michael Guttler**, Assistant

Director **Andrea Dorf**, and **Gordon Hawkins (Alberich)**, **Andreas Conrad (Mime)**, and **Micaela Maultsby (Songbird)**. The event was held on May 17 at the Magic Gourd Restaurant.

New York Wagner Society Participants: **Jeffrey Swann**, **Melody Bunting**, **Esther Milsted**, **Mark Villamar** (New York Wagner Society Treasurer), **Allyn** and **Caryl Von Neida**, members.



Christina Scheppelman, Director of Artistic Operations at the Washington National Opera (WNO), greets **Irene Theorin** who sang the role of Brünnhilde in the WNO production of *Siegfried*.



ent of Wagner's Art

The 18th Evelyn Lear & Thomas Stewart Emerging Singers Concert, June 12, 2009 at the Austrian Embassy, Washington DC



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.

Master Class Fundraiser by Evelyn Lear, May 30, 2009 & Members and Friends Annual Garden Party, June 16, 2009 Holman Residence



Hosts Diana and Jim Holman



Brian Register and Julia Rolwing

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



At the garden party: long time Society stalwarts Diana Stanley, Bonnie Becker, Donald Crosby and Tom Stanely.

Bayreuther Festspiele 2009

Tickets to the Bayreuth Festival remain one of the prized benefits of membership in the Society. Board Member Guillermo Schutz manages the distribution of Society's allotment. This year 30 members will attend the Festival. Announcements of the 2010 Festival will be made in December.

Members and Contributors 2008-2009

by Lynne Lambert and Bill Pastor

Our members stayed loyal and generous in 2009, making us one of the few arts organizations who did not lose members. Many members increased their giving levels, and we are indeed grateful. Members are our most important resource, and we appreciate your support and enthusiasm. A few statistics: We remain the second largest Wagner Society in the United States, after New York, and our membership continues to grow every year -- to 520 in 2009, including 47 new members. To continue growing, we need your help and ask each of you to recruit at least one new member in 2010.

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The Wagner Society of Washington DC

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Aurelius Fernandez

President Emeritus

Editors:

Aurelius Fernandez

Frederic Harwood

UPCOMING CONCERTS

Friday September 25, 2009 at 7:30 pm: JEFFREY SWANN, Pianist, *Wagner and Proust: a Soiree in the Salon* at the Embassy of Austria, reception to follow.

October 17, 2009: THE 19TH ESP CONCERT with the **Roanoke Symphony** David Stewart White, conductor. Soloists **OTHALIE GRAHAM**, **BRIAN REGISTER**, and **JULIA ROLWING**. Call Office Manager Jackie Rosen regarding accommodations, tickets and transportation. Tel 703.370.1923 or see www.wagner-dc.org.

UPCOMING LECTURES and EVENTS:

At Fungler Hall, The George Washington University,

October 15: DANIEL SHERMAN PhD, speaks on "*Hidden Treasures from a Hoard of Gold: Mining a Mountain of Wagner Recordings*" based on his personal collection of historical recordings and biographies of singers and conductors.

November 14: PROFESSOR KLAUS SCHULTZ was a member of the management team of the Bayreuth Festival 2002 to 2008.

November 15: GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG CAST PARTY

December 10: JAMES WEST Ph.D, speaks on *Wagner, Nietzsche and the Spirit of Music*. He is Professor of Humanities at Middlebury College.

January 14: Maestro Ryan Brown is artistic director of Opera Lafayette.

February: Saul Lilienstein renowned musicologist and lecturer for Washington National Opera and the Society.

June 4-6: Wagner in der Wildnis, Cacapon Resort State Park, WV.

August 2010, Bayreuth Festival

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Upcoming Events:
September 25: Pianist Jeffrey Swann at the Austrian Embassy
October 17: 19th Emerging Singers Concert at Roanoke VA
November 15: Götterdämmerung Cast Party

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