
Editorial

In 2013 the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music in conjunction with the Melbourne Richard Wagner Society hosted the symposium 'Wagner and Us' in connection with Opera Australia's Melbourne production of Richard Wagner's *Der Ring Des Nibelungen*. International presenters included Eva Rieger, John Deathridge, Patrick Carnegie and Wagner's great-granddaughter Dagny Beidler.

This volume of *Context* publishes a selection of the papers presented at the symposium. Given Eva Rieger and Dagny Beidler's intense engagement with Wagner celebrations in 2013, we asked them to write an informal piece about the Wagner anniversary celebrations in Germany and Switzerland, as they experienced it. The volume opens with their delightful overview.

The other papers deal with varied topics, however three out of the eight examine Wagner and Australia. Peter Tregear looks at the reception of Wagner in early Federation Melbourne and speculates on whether the shift in appreciation from the heroic figure of Siegfried to the music and language of metaphor in *Tristan* was related to changing aesthetic responses to the European settler experience in Australia. Sue Cole examines G.W.L. Marshall-Hall's passion for Wagner in the context of the intellectual and musical milieu in which he moved before coming to Melbourne, arguing that the difficulties that he encountered in Melbourne may well have been largely predictable. And I examine the touring Quinlan Opera Company's premiere performance of the *Ring* in Melbourne in 1913 and question the impact of Australia's geographical isolation on its reception.

Of the other papers, only one actually addresses a Wagner opera in detail. Solomon Guhl-Miller re-evaluates and questions the commonly held view of the reversal of Wotan's 'negation of the will' between Acts II and III of *Siegfried* by his apparent acts of self-preservation in Act III of the opera. Wagner production is the topic of Michael Ewans' paper, which examines the significance of and challenges presented by two landmark Wagner productions: Patrice Chereau's Centenary *Ring* (1976) and Nikolaus Lehnhoff's *Parsifal* (2004).

The other papers examine Wagner and another significant figure and Wagner outside Germany. Rachel Orzech looks at Parisian responses to the beginnings of the Nazi appropriation of Wagner's music in the 1930s, and the ways in which the French saw this as a real and dangerous threat to France. Michael Halliwell examines the influence of Shakespeare on Wagner, in particular on the *Ring* where Wagner exploits Shakespearean situations and themes,

such as the father-daughter relationships of Lear/Cordelia and Wotan/Brünnhilde. And Sophie Boyd-Hurrell looks at how Theodor Adorno's *In Search of Wagner* can be considered both a critique and a rescue of Wagner's musical works. She offers a speculative extension of Adorno's project into the present in order to explore the possibility that Wagner's music might be said to herald some political configurations of today.

The symposium itself was a great success, and this volume of *Context* gives a sense of the wide-ranging and in many cases significantly new approaches to Wagner that were presented.

Kerry Murphy

CONTEXT

A JOURNAL OF MUSIC RESEARCH

www.conservatorium.unimelb.edu.au/context
music-context@music.unimelb.edu.au

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The editors of *Context* welcome contributions in the form of articles, reviews, letters, research reports and edited interviews with composers and other music practitioners. Please refer to the Guidelines for Contributors on the website for further information. A detailed style guide is available on request.

Closing dates for submissions: *Context* accepts articles and reviews at any time for the next available issue. Material received by 30 April will usually appear in that year's volume. Publication of the single, annual issue is scheduled for November.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Context is available in a free, electronic version only. There is no charge attached to subscriptions. Subscription enquiries may be made to *Context* via email to: music-context@music.unimelb.edu.au

CONTACT

Context
Melbourne Conservatorium of Music
Faculty of the VCA and MCM
The University of Melbourne VIC 3010
AUSTRALIA