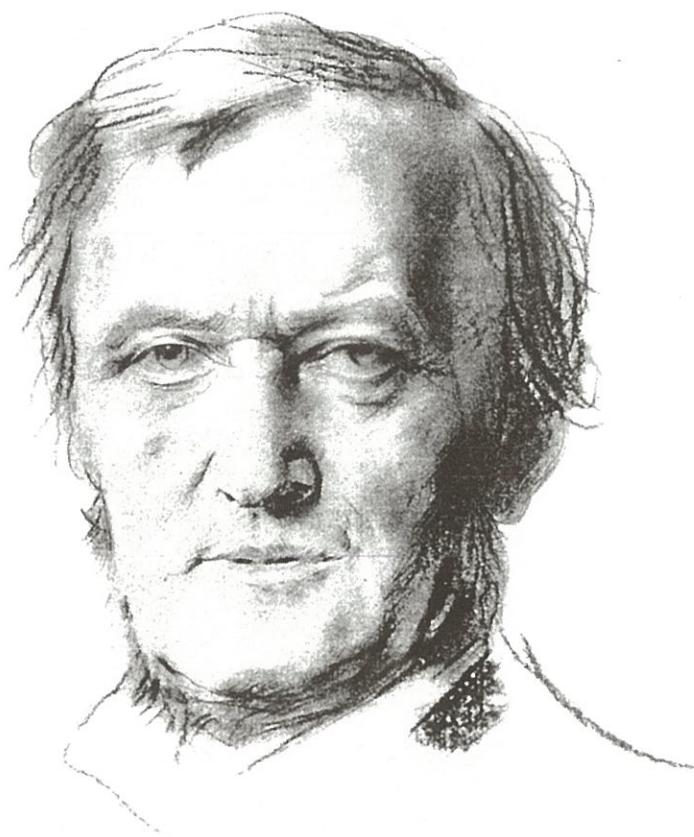


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Leitmotive

THE WAGNER QUARTERLY



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The Editor's Thoughts

Recent Progress in Human Understanding

The British Broadcasting Corporation recently published an article written by a neuroscientist concerning the substantial progress being made in understanding how the human brain remembers certain information.¹

More specifically was how a musician can remember all of the notes of a complete symphony without looking at a written score. Although most musicians frequently refer to the score as they play, some do not, but play just as accurately as those who often glance at the printed page in front of them.

Of particular interest is that these scientists appear to have discovered that even those musicians whose memory has become faulty with respect to everyday matters nonetheless reliably remember each note of the music they play.

1. London, British Broadcasting Corporation "Magazine" 28 April 2015

Searching for an answer as to how it is possible to remember so much music, these same neurologists found some evidence that the memory of most information that all of us retain (not just music) is sent first from our receptors (ears, eyes, etc.) to those parts of our brains which are characteristic only of the more complex brains found in humans.

These higher parts of human brains are capable of evaluating the data to be remembered in terms of many matters of possible importance to the person. If any specific data happens to be troubling, however, the higher level censors can, in effect, not admit that data to the person's memory.

But, perhaps the most interesting for us, is that the BBC article suggests memory of music seems to be transmitted directly to the more primitive

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LEITMOTIVE – *THE WAGNER QUARTERLY*

Robert S. Fisher, Editor
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LEITMOTIVE – *THE WAGNER QUARTERLY* is a journal intended for all persons interested in the works, life, and influence of Richard Wagner (1813–1883). Although many of our authors and readers are scholars affiliated with academic institutions, many are informed lay persons with a keen interest in Wagner studies.

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David Dalto, Founding Editor (1985–1989)

Paul Schofield, Editor (1990)

About the Authors

Lee Rather ("Salvation Through Love: Reflections on Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman*") is a psychoanalyst and psychologist in private practice in San Francisco. He is also a member of the faculties at both the San Francisco Center for Psychoanalysis and the Psychoanalytic Institute of Northern California. He has been a frequent speaker in the "Opera on the Couch" series, an on-going collaboration between the San Francisco Opera and the San Francisco Center for Psychoanalysis.

He has written on topics including the integration of maternal and paternal aspect of personality as well as the unconscious dynamics of creativity. His most recent publication, *'Love and its Subversions in Verdi's Operas, Otello and Aida'* was published in *fort da*, the journal of the Northern California Society for Psychoanalytic Psychology. A new paper, *'Civilization and its Discontents in Mozart's Don Giovanni and Verdi's Rigoletto'* was scheduled for publication in *fort da* in Fall, 2014.

Dame Gwyneth Jones ("Redemption of the Redemptrix") was born in Wales, studied at the Royal College of Music in London and made her professional debut in Zürich. Her debut at Covent Garden, London, was in 1963. As virtually every reader of this journal is aware, she went on to become one of the most sought after Wagner sopranos, and was the Brünnhilde in the 1976 Chereau *Ring* in Bayreuth. She was one who sang Brünnhilde in the Otto Schenk *Ring* at the Metropolitan Opera, New York. She was made a Dame of the British Empire in 1986. She is a Kammersängerin of both the Vienna State Opera and the Munich State Opera. She has received many other honors and has been President of the Wagner Society in London since 1990. Dame Gwyneth Jones has been an Honorary Member of the Wagner Society of Northern California since 1991.

Lisa Burkett ("A Celebration in Seattle") served as Associate Editor of *Leitmotive – The Wagner Quarterly* from 2007–2012. She conducted interviews for the journal with Seattle Opera *Ring* Stage Director, Stephen Wadsworth, in 2004, and recently with the company's retiring General Director, Speight Jenkins.

Salvation Through Love

Reflections on Wagner's The Flying Dutchman

In this essay I consider some themes of psychological importance in Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman*. As a psychologist and psychoanalyst, my focus will be primarily on the psychological structure of the drama rather than the music.

There are three principal ways to put an opera 'on the couch.' First, we can examine the opera as a psychological expression of the composer's inner life and use it to analyze the composer. Although I will not be attempting this, it is a venerable tradition begun by Freud in his analysis of numerous works of art and literature.¹ A second approach is to treat the opera as if the characters were real people with individual inner lives that we analyze as if they were on the couch. A third approach is also possible in great opera since the characters tend to transcend the personal and move to the universal and symbolic. This approach assumes that the opera consists of "crystallized condensations of complex, over-determined, and enduring emotional themes"² and that we identify with the characters and respond deeply because the opera presents a psychodrama of our own inner lives. This is especially possible with an opera such as *The Flying Dutchman* which, although set in the early modern period, is rooted in tales that have

1. The following papers may be found in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud in (J. Strachey Ed. and Trans.), London: Hogarth Press.
(1908). Creative Writers and Day Dreaming. S.E. 9. 141–156.
(1910). Leonardo da Vinci. S.E. 11, 59–138.
(1913). The Theme of the Three Caskets. S.E. 12, 289–302.
(1914). The Moses of Michelangelo. S.E. 13, 210–241.
(1928). Dostoevsky and parricide. S.E. 28. 175–198.

2. Rather, L. (2012). Love and its subversions in Verdi's *Otello* and *Aida*. *fort da*, Vol XVIII Vol 1: 25–36.

sojourned through many minds over time, and has the quality of timeless myth.

Wagner borrowed heavily from a play by Heinrich Heine³, who in turn had borrowed the Dutchman tale from nautical folklore. And, in certain aspects, the *Dutchman* resembles the tales of Prometheus, Atlas, Odysseus, and the Ancient Mariner. Blending these latter two approaches, I would like to examine the psychological underpinnings of its mythical dimension. The Dutchman once swore an oath that he would never give up trying to conquer nature by sailing around a certain Cape. The devil took him at his word, and cursed him to sail the stormy seas until Judgment Day. An angel of God intervened, and told him that finding a woman who would be faithful until death could redeem him. So, in a compromise between the angel and the devil, once every seven years the Dutchman is allowed to dock and go ashore to search for this woman.

However murky the theology of this back-story, it is the one provided by Senta in her beautiful Ballad in Act II. Senta is entranced by the tragic plight of the Dutchman and fantasizes about being the one woman whose love saves him, leaving little room for her unfortunate suitor, Erik. Senta's father, on the other hand, is entranced by the treasure that the Dutchman has accumulated and selfishly offers his daughter in exchange. Fortunately, when Senta and the Dutchman are brought together, it turns out they do have real 'chemistry' and all goes well until the Dutchman mistakenly accuses Senta of being untrue to him with Erik. The Dutchman abandons his hope of salvation and puts out to sea once again. Senta, proclaiming her true and selfless love, throws herself off the cliff into the sea after him. The curse is thereby lifted and the phantom ship sinks. Wagner's final stage directions are as follows: "In the glow of the rising sun, the transfigured forms of the Dutchman and Senta, clasped in each other's arms, are seen rising over the wreck, and soaring into the sky."

Searching for One's 'Other Half'

The theme of transformation through romantic love is an old one that finds an explanation in Plato's *Symposium*. Here Aristophanes explains that humans were once integrated creatures that were both male and female, with one head, four hands, four feet, and both male and female genitals. Being unified and whole, they had tremendous power and thus presented a threat to the Gods. But the Gods knew if they killed these creatures, there

3. Newman, E. (1949) *The Wagner Operas*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

would be no one then to worship them. Zeus came up with a solution that would allow the creatures to continue to exist, but with greatly diminished strength. Each creature was split in two, and the two halves were sent off in opposite directions to spend the rest of their lives preoccupied with searching for their other half.

Couples therapists⁴ can easily lend support to the psychological kernels of truth embodied in this myth, and since individual analytic work tends to center on Eros in all its difficult, unrequited, and/or fulfilled glories, a psychoanalyst encounters many 'Dutchmen' and 'Sentas', each searching for their 'other halves'. At the risk of sounding reductionist, stereotypic, or, worse in my view, pre-feminist, I would like to consider the deep psychology of this as embodied by the Dutchman and Senta.

The Dutchman

'She taught me to love'; 'she helps me get in touch my feelings'; 'she keeps me grounded'; 'she saved my life, I'd be at sea without her'. In my analytic practice, I often hear expressions like this from men who feel they have found their other half. Psychoanalysts have observed that while both boys and girls have the developmental task of arriving at a sense of individual identity, boys in our culture have a special challenge that is different from girls in important ways.⁵ While both begin in a primary relationship with a woman, the mother the boy is called upon to individuate and develop a so-called 'masculine' identity. Typically this involves dis-identifying with the mother's emotional, nurturing, and caring aspects, and, in the process, trying to become less vulnerable, less dependent, and tougher. One consequence is that the boy may begin to lose touch with his emotional life and to grow into a man who fears closeness with a woman in an intimate relationship that involves empathy through emotional identification.

No wonder men so often feel compelled to prove they are 'real men,' while women are largely immune from a comparable affliction. In earlier times when brute strength, endurance, and physical challenge were much more a part of life than today, the culture constructed and reinforced 'masculinity' as the opposite of 'femininity.' So mythically speaking, when the Dutchman swears that nothing can stop him from conquering the Cape, he embodies this masculine world of omnipotence, competition, and achievement at any cost. The result, however is a sort of a deal with the devil, and,

4. An excellent introduction to this perspective is found in Hendrix, H. (1988). *Getting the love you want: A guide for couples*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

5. Chodorow, N. J. (1978). *The Reproduction of Mothering*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

as we know, when you deal with the devil, there is always a price to pay. By disavowing his more maternal and feminine aspects, the man acquires worldly power, but, in the process, loses touch with the rest of himself (his other half) which has been deadened. I think this psychological constellation is well-represented by the curse and the ghoulish ship full of the dead sailors who cannot be roused by the joyous sailors on shore who try in vain to enliven them into celebrating marital interdependence.

But analysts have also observed that when we disavow or split off parts of ourselves, some aspect of us still seeks to reintegrate them in order to make ourselves 'whole' again. From this point of view, the angel of God that Senta sings of probably symbolizes the life force trying to re-establish unity and wholeness. The curse, with its compromise, nicely depicts the Dutchman's psychological entrapment with the devil and psychic death on one shoulder and the angel and the life force of Eros on the other.

Senta

What about Senta's preoccupation with the Dutchman? While men are 'cursed' to leave port and set sail away from the motherland, women are cursed to remain on shore in the motherland trading sailing for spinning. Psychologically this may require disavowing aspects of their own strength, intelligence, independence, and personal power. This may be subtle or overt, depending on culture, class and education, but even in this post-feminist era in an unusually progressive part of the world, I am often surprised what an enduring split this can be at the deepest levels of emotional life in the most modern, assertive, and accomplished women in my practice. From this perspective, Senta is trying to move beyond the constrictions of culturally proscribed femininity. Had she settled for Erik, she would have settled into the domesticity of being a housewife to a hunter, but Senta wants much more. In searching for her other half in the form of the Dutchman, perhaps she is shooting for a higher goal, that of recovering her split-off 'masculine' side. In most productions, we do not meet Senta or see a portrait of the Dutchman hanging on the wall until the beginning of Act II. A recent performance by the San Francisco Opera⁶ handled this in a psychologically astute manner. Even before we meet Captain Daland, normally the first character to take the stage, the production presented Senta painting the portrait of the

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6. San Francisco Opera. *The Flying Dutchman*, Performance November 3, 2013. Patrick Summers (Conductor), Petrike Ionesco (Director & Set Designer), Ian Robertson (Chorus Director), Greer Grimsley (Dutchman), Lise Lindstrom (Senta), Kristinn Sigmundsen (Daland) Ian Storey (Erik).

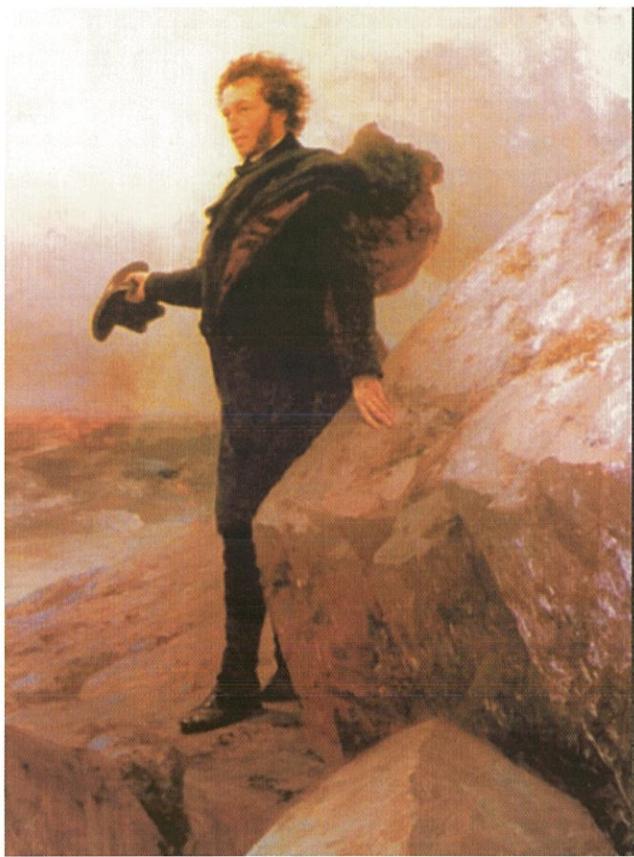
REDEMPTION OF THE REDEMPTRIX

Directing *Der fliegende Holländer*

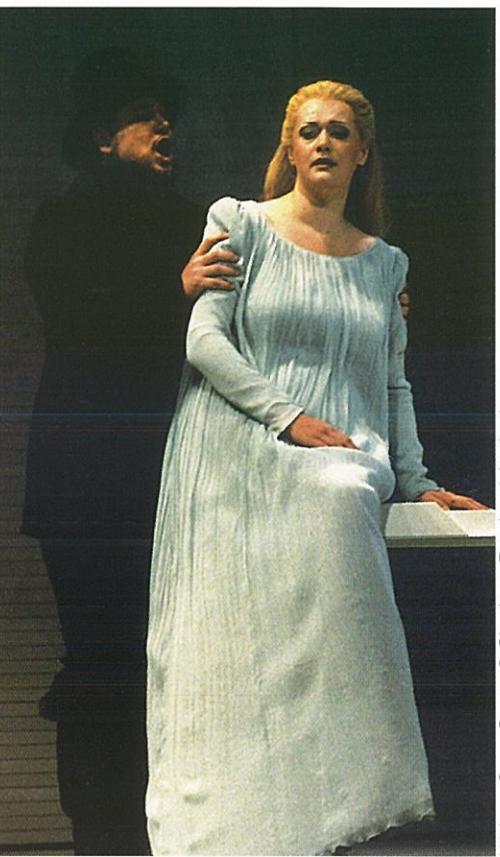
When I was invited to produce a new production of *Der fliegende Holländer* at the Weimar State Opera, a new door opened to expose a totally new world for me on the other side of the curtain. Although I had sung Senta 83 times in more than a dozen different productions including Bayreuth, London, München, Vienna, Berlin, Hamburg, Stuttgart, Leipzig, Paris, Barcelona and Zürich, I now opened my score again and discovered new revelations. I have always thought that music scores are like the best thrillers because the more you look into them, the more you discover.

The first decision which I had to make was to choose my designer: I immediately thought of a very talented young French designer, Laurent Berger, who was actually a friend of my daughter Susannah. I had seen one of his productions in Paris and liked his style very much. Laurent was thrilled to accept my invitation and we immediately started to work.

We went to Weimar, the city of Goethe, Schiller and Liszt, several times, in order to discuss the financial budget and to visit the various workshops. We were told that the budget was extremely low, but after seeing their excellent carpentry, painting, dressmaking, millinery, wig making and makeup departments and also their incredibly large storehouse for old costumes and requisites, we decided that somehow we would be able to manage. We only had to pay from our budget the actual cost of the materials like wood etc., and the work would be done by the employees. The storehouse "Fundus" was amazing! Hundreds of coats and jackets in all materials and styles, wool, fur, leather etc., trousers, shirts, skirts, dresses, hats, shoes, boots, buttons, rolls of material, just everything!! All were waiting to be used and/or changed into something else by altering the cut and style, or maybe changing the collar,



The Dutchman with his jewel-filled back pack.



Erik pleads with Senta

Weimar State Opera © Charlotte Burchard, both photos



The Dutchman has opened his pack to show Daland the dowry he offers.

Weimar State Opera © Charlotte Burchard photo



Weimar State Opera © Charlotte Burchard photo

As the Dutchman and Senta ascend to heaven, his ship sinks, the Dutchman's curse finally broken by Senta's being 'Faithful until Death'. And, in this production, the crew also ascend to heaven.

The Editor's thanks to Frau Leine of the Weimar State Opera for searching the archives for photos from their production of November 2003. Also thanks to Professor Emeritus Raul Pimentel of the California State University, San Jose for his lengthy efforts in locating the person at Weimar State Opera who was able both to have these photos digitized and sent to us. All of the photos in this article are copyrighted and must not be reproduced in any form without the written permission of Weimar State Opera.

.size or length. I was in seventh heaven and bursting with ideas. I have always designed all my own clothes, including my gowns for concerts. We inspected the stage and spoke with the various people responsible for the stagecraft, measurements, lighting etc. and spent hours in the Duchess Anna Amalia Library (which burned down in 2004 and was re-opened in 2007 after extensive renovation), and libraries in other cities, searching through books and paintings for inspiration for the set and costumes.

I wanted to create a production which would be faithful to the original score but filtered through eyes of today. Therefore, I chose costumes with simple lines reflecting the Norwegian fashion in the 19th century at the time of Wagner, when he sailed from Riga to London in 1839. During this two week sea journey, they were forced to anchor in two Norwegian Harbors because of heavy storms; one of these harbors was Sandvika, which is referred to by Daland when his ship was also forced to land there. This experience obviously inspired Wagner in his writing of *Der fliegende Holländer*, especially the tempestuous, raging sea, the howling winds and the calls of the seamen, which we hear in the orchestration and men's chorus.

Whilst in Riga, Wagner had read "From the memoires of Herren von Schnabelewopski", where the story of the "Flying Dutchman" is incorporated. Especially Heine's treatment of the redemption of the Ahasverus of the Oceans gave him everything he needed to use this saga as a subject for his opera.

Like Wagner, I felt it was imperative that the ocean should play a major role and be ever present in the first and third act and it was for this reason that we opened the stage as much as possible in order to reveal a fantastic horizon of waves, above which the Dutchman's ship appeared like a magical flaming heart, not floating on the waves, but suspended in the air as if striving to reach heaven and redemption.

In the Dutchman's first monologue, he sings "Voll Überdruss wirft mich das Meer ans Land" (Full of nausea the sea threw me onto the land) and from this I drew the conclusion that he does not leave his boat like a normal human being—but is "spat" out by the ocean. Therefore, I decided that he would make his entrance from the waves, emerging out of the mists. I then had to find a way for him to carry the jewels which he would present to Daland, when asking for the hand of his daughter Senta. We found a fabulous painting by Iwan Alasowski, together with Ilja Repin 1877 of "Abschied Alexander Pushkins vom Meer" (Alexander Pushkin's farewell to the sea), where one sees him carrying a large bundle on his back. This was the perfect solution! Very beautiful and very practical!

In contrast, Daland's ship was enormous, with masts and ropes for the sailors to climb up and down. It crossed the stage from one side to the other behind a billowing blue gauze towards the end of the overture. The meeting between the Dutchman and Daland is very important because it immediately establishes the characters of these two men. The Dutchman is weary and desperate, whereas Daland immediately reveals his greed and lust for wealth, eager to grab the jewels in exchange for his daughter Senta.

Erik, did not exist in the version of Heine; Wagner added him in order to provide the drama and conflict, between the Dutchman and Senta; she rejects Erik's love in order to redeem the Dutchman. In actual fact Erik is the only character who possesses true love. Both the Dutchman and Senta only long for redemption—to save and be saved, they both have this as the main purpose for which they strive.

Senta, is constantly praying that she will be the one who will save him from his doom; she doesn't fit into the world in which she lives and is ecstatically happy when he actually enters her life. The Ballade which she sings was, in fact, the first thing that Wagner composed in this work; it was the core from which the rest of the opera developed. Originally, he composed it a tone higher in A Minor. I have sung it in this key, but found the tessitura rather uncomfortable and the tone lost the warmth it had in the lower key.

In the second act Erik tells Senta how, in his sleep on the cliff, he dreamt that he saw the Dutchman's and Daland's ships arriving in the bay. Freud said that the contents of dreams usually stem from something which one has experienced. But when Erik was on the cliff, he must have actually seen the two ships arriving in the cove below and rushed down to investigate; therefore, what occurred had not yet happened. He recognized the Dutchman, saw the exchange of jewels and foresaw the future, which made him race back over the cliffs in a total frenzy to confront Senta before the other men arrived. They would have to sail around the coast which would take longer. So I had Erik on stage in the first act, hiding behind the ship in order to overhear and see the exchange of the jewels.

For the second act set, Laurent produced a very light, smooth cut wooden room, which was inspired by a sauna and extended out over the proscenium arch, giving the stage a larger, lighter and modern look. He invented tables, chairs and spinning wheels which were able to disappear like magic through the walls, on arrival of the Dutchman, leaving the stage totally empty for the following duet. There was also a picture hanging on the wall, with a "Double" of the Dutchman, who made very slight movements during the "Ballade" and

(Continued on page 24)

A Celebration in Seattle

A 50th Anniversary, the Future of Wagner Singing, and an Extraordinary Farewell

For Wagnerians in the U.S. and worldwide, traveling to Seattle in the month of August has been a tradition since 1975 as we attended Seattle Opera's three diverse productions of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* and other works in the Wagner canon. Invariably there has been a sense of celebration associated with our journey: we meet and greet the friends from near and far who join us to experience the works of our favorite composer. August 7–9, 2014 was no exception – we traveled to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Seattle Opera, the return of the International Wagner Competition, and a special gala concert in honor of Speight Jenkins' retirement following 31 years as General Director.

Seattle Opera's year-long commemoration of its 50th anniversary culminated with these special events. The company was founded in 1963 by Glynn Ross, who dared to bring opera to a region of the country not yet known for its arts community. It was his dream of producing an annual summer *Ring*, beginning in 1975, that put Seattle Opera on the international map as a Wagner capital.

For a detailed account of Seattle Opera's 50-year history, including audio and video clips, visit <http://seattleopera50.com/>. A striking book by music critic Melinda Bargreen, *50 Years of Seattle Opera*, was released for the August celebration.

The International Wagner Competition (IWC) was first presented in 2006 and repeated in 2008. As in past years, singers between 25 and 40 years of age who had not performed a major Wagner role qualified to apply. Speight

Jenkins, along with Aren Der Hacopian, Director of Artistic Administration, screened 60 CDs from applicants from which 26 were selected for auditions. They listened to singers in Munich, London, New York, and Seattle, selecting eight finalists and two alternates.

What could be more appropriate for a celebration? Two of Wagner's major works, *Tannhäuser* and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, center around singing competitions. In Seattle, two significant milestones were marked by celebrating the future of Wagner singing. Finalists would compete for two First Prizes of \$25,000 each, an Orchestra Prize of \$5,000, and an Audience Choice Prize of \$5,000. Additionally, Speight personally would select one finalist to appear in the gala concert two nights later.

Eight singers originally were scheduled to appear in the IWC, but the program and company's web site were updated during the preceding week when a ninth finalist was admitted. Competitors were:

David Danholt, tenor, Copenhagen, Denmark
Helena Dix, soprano, Melbourne, Australia
Ric Furman, tenor, Macomb, Illinois
Suzanne Hendrix, mezzo-soprano, Charles City, Iowa¹
Roman Ialcic, bass, Chisinau, Moldava
Tamara Mancini, soprano, Pottsville, Pennsylvania¹
Kevin Ray, tenor, West Point, New York¹
Issachah Savage, tenor, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania^{1, 2}
Marcy Stonikas, soprano, Elmhurst, Illinois²

As we arrived in McCaw Hall, an announcer asked patrons to gather on the grand staircase for a special presentation. We squeezed in to witness Seattle Center Director, Robert Nellams, unveil a plaque in honor of Speight at the spot where he welcomed audience members since the hall's opening in 2003.

As the house lights dimmed, the curtain rose to reveal four Wagner tuba players seated on the stage. The musicians opened with the Valhalla theme from the *Ring*. Speight entered to announce that, thanks to a generous donor, the instruments were created by the master builder and purveyor to the Vienna Philharmonic. He then introduced his successor, Aidan Lang, who revealed the next surprise of the evening. Seattle Opera engaged Daron Hagen,

1. Alumna/alumnus of the Merola Opera Program

2. Recipient of William O. Cord Memorial Grants from The Wagner Society of Northern California



Seattle Opera © Alan Alabastro photo

IWC Finalists eagerly await winner announcements (l-r): Marcy Stonikas, Issachah Savage, Kevin Ray, Tamara Mancini, Roman Ialcic, Suzanne Hendrix, Ric Furman, Helena Dix, and David Danholt.



Seattle Opera © Alan Alabastro photo

Speight Jenkins congratulates overjoyed multiple IWC winner, Issachah Savage.



Seattle Opera © Elise Bakketun photo

The entire company assembled to sing 'Wach' auf!' to Seattle's own mastersinger poet, Speight Jenkins.



Seattle Opera © Rozarii Lynch photo

It rained confetti! Nuccia Focile, Greer Grimsley, Stephanie Blythe, Joyce Castle, Alwyn Mellor and the Seattle Opera Chorus celebrate Speight Jenkins' 31 years leading the company.

whose *Amelia* was commissioned and premiered by the company in 2010, to compose a special motif to be played by the debuting Wagner tubas. Aidan recalled that in the *Ring* we have the Fate Motif, so now we have the Speight Motif. The musicians performed the brief but complex motif.

The competition began. Each finalist sang two arias; no two singers performed the same selection. The program began with a familiar opening aria, "Dich, teure Halle" from *Tannhäuser*, followed by such favorites as "Winterstürme" from *Die Walküre*, Senta's Ballad from *Der fliegende Holländer*, and Isolde's Liebestod. These were complemented by selections less often performed out of context such as "Geliebter, komm" from *Tannhäuser* and the rarely heard "Gerechter Gott" from *Rienzi*.

The quality of the finalists was quite high. Each left his or her individual mark on the competition, exemplifying what Speight indicated in his program notes that he sought in choosing candidates: "...the technical aspect and size of the voice, the level of maturity of their singing, their involvement in the words, their German diction, and the sense that they really know who the character is they are portraying."

The IWC was conducted by Sebastian Lang-Lessing in his Seattle Opera debut. Music Director of the San Antonio Symphony, he led an acclaimed production of *Rienzi* at the Deutsche Oper Berlin and *Carmen* and *Les pêcheurs de perles* for San Francisco Opera. The orchestra, composed of members of the Seattle Symphony Orchestra, is highly experienced in Wagner and created a ravishing sound under their debuting maestro's baton.

Audience members were asked to adjourn to the lobby to vote. It was apparent that casting ballots was an easy decision for some and required deliberation for others. One finalist seemed to be the favorite, although it appeared that every contestant had his or her champions. Seattle Opera staff members and volunteers furiously counted ballots as the judges came to a decision. IWC judges were:

Stephanie Blythe, internationally renowned mezzo-soprano, Seattle Opera's Fricka and Waltraute

Peter Kazaras, tenor and stage director closely affiliated with Seattle Opera

Aidan Lang, General Director Designate of Seattle Opera

Evans Mirageas, producer of Seattle Opera's *Ring* recording and Artistic Director of Cincinnati Opera

Stephen Wadsworth, stage director of the 2000–2013 Seattle Opera *Ring*

Speight introduced the judges and the finalists. He noted that the length of time the judges deliberated was testimony to the high caliber of the finalists. The winners were:

Audience Choice Prize — Issachah Savage

Orchestra Prize — Issachah Savage

First Prize (two prizes selected by the judges)

David Danholt

Issachah Savage

Speight's choice to perform in the gala concert — Issachah Savage

The award to David Danholt proved the upset of the evening. Initially an alternate, he was advanced to finalist during rehearsals. His performance of Parsifal's final monologue, "Nur eine Waffe taugt," was powerful while his delivery of Walther von Stolzing's Prize Song was lyrically beautiful.

It was no surprise that Issachah Savage swept the competition after his phenomenal interpretations of two contrasting selections, "Amfortas! Die Wunde" and "Mein lieber Schwan." He inhabited the character of Parsifal as he came to comprehend Amfortas' anguish. His farewell, as Lohengrin is called to duty yet heartbroken at leaving his beloved Elsa, was poignant.

The first of two nights of celebration drew to a delirious close with the future of Wagner singing appearing strong and bright.

Two evenings later, we gathered in an adorned McCaw Hall for the Speight Celebration Concert. Maestro Lang-Lessing and the orchestra opened the program with the Act II prelude to *Die Walküre*. The curtain rose to reveal Brünnhilde and Wotan from the 2013 *Ring*, Alwyn Mellor and Greer Grimsley, with spears in tow launching into "Nun zäume dein Roß" and "Hojoto-ho!" There could not have been a better choice to open this gala concert.

The program included additional selections of Wagner: Christiane Libor and Clifton Forbis in the impassioned Act I Finale of *Die Walküre* and Ms. Mellor's rapturous Liebestod. Verdi was well represented by Antonello Palombi's heartfelt "O, tu che in seno agli angeli" and Mary Elizabeth Williams' anguished "Pace, pace, mio Dio" from *La Forza del Destino*, plus Gordon Hawkins' ominous delivery of Iago's Credo and the explosive Act III *Otello* duet with Mr. Palombi and Nuccia Focile. Maestro Carlo Montanaro, a frequent guest at the company, conducted the Verdi selections and shared the podium for the remainder of the evening with Maestro Lang-Lessing.

Tributes were interspersed by emcee, mezzo-soprano Joyce Castle, who shared hilarious stories with the aid of company stalwart, Peter Kazaras. The

Seattle Opera Chorus was featured throughout the program, opening the second half with the Entry of the Guests from *Tannhäuser*. The chorus accompanied soloists Stephanie Blythe in “Ah! Que j'aime les militaires” from *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein*, Peter Rose in the Death of Boris from *Boris Godunov*, and Mary Elizabeth Williams in “My Man’s Gone Now” from *Porgy and Bess*.

One of the evening’s most touching moments was Greer Grimsley and Stephanie Blythe, veterans of many *Ring* productions, offering words of homage to Speight. Both credited him with shaping their early careers by casting them in Wagner roles (Telramund and Fricka, respectively.) They then introduced the newest member of the Seattle Opera Wagner family, IWC winner Issachah Savage, who reprised his splendid “Mein lieber Schwan.” Our favorite Wotan and Fricka returned with a change of pace, “J’ai gravi la montagne” from *Samson et Dalila*.

Rounding out the program were company favorites tenor William Burden performing “Kuda, kuda” from *Eugene Onegin* and baritone Brett Polegato delivering Pierrot’s Tanzlied from *Die tote Stadt*; the two also collaborated on a staple of gala concerts, “Au fond du temple saint” from *Les pêcheurs de perles*. Ms. Focile and Ms. Libor returned, respectively, for Margherita’s fervent “L’altra notte” from *Mefistofele* and Tosca’s desperate prayer, “Vissi d’arte.” Bass Arthur Woodley’s reflective “Vi ravviso” from *La somambula* and mezzo-soprano Kate Lindsey’s charming “Non più mesta” from *La Cenerentola* provided the evening’s *bel canto* offerings, with Ms. Lindsey joining Ms. Melior and Mr. Rose for an affecting “Soave sia il vento” from *Così fan tutte*.

A concert celebrating Seattle Opera’s 50th anniversary and Speight’s 31 years at the helm could only conclude with Wagner. Greer Grimsley was visibly choked up as he broke our hearts once again with Wotan’s Farewell from *Die Walküre*. The final speaker of the evening, Stephen Wadsworth, appeared before the curtain, recounting his years of directing with the company. He described the ovation Speight invariably received whenever he stepped onstage, if only to announce a cast change. That was a perfect segue to the grand finale: the curtain rose to reveal Speight surrounded by the evening’s principals and chorus. Following his convivial words of gratitude, the company closed the program by singing praises to Seattle’s own mastersinger poet – a highly moving “Wach’ auf!” from *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.

The words on a supertitle said it all: “Hail Speight! Seattle’s beloved Speight!”

—Lisa Burkett

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Dutchman, and she continues to work on it when she makes her appearance again. Somewhat reminiscent of art therapy, this way of depicting her emphasizes a Senta that is very active in the psychological work of rediscovering and creatively developing her other half, the repressed masculine aspects of herself.

The Missing Mother

Moving from the mythic to the individual and personal, there are probably other questions in our minds. What other reasons might we imagine to explain why Senta is so wrapped up with saving the Dutchman that she would jump off a cliff into the sea? And why is Captain Daland so quick to sell his daughter to the Dutchman? And where is Senta's mother?

We do not know and we cannot know, but we can creatively imagine. Perhaps Senta, having lost her mother, has also lost her father who has turned to worldly wealth as a solution for his grief in having become a widower, this rather than mourning his loss and staying emotionally close to Senta. Further, this raises the possibility that Senta's desire to redeem the Dutchman carries a displaced longing to help a father who is lost at sea with grief. Perhaps when she jumps off the cliff, she is getting two birds with one stone: saving her father while reuniting with her mother in death. Or perhaps the Dutchman represents what became of Captain Daland following the loss of his wife. They do seem to be subliminally linked by the fact that when they meet, the Captain is seven miles from home and the Dutchman is seven years from shore.

Finally, Captain Daland may be viewed as the precursor to the greedy Dwarves and Giants of Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelung*, representing the desire for wealth and power over love. From this perspective, we could think about Captain Daland, the Dutchman, and Senta as being at different developmental stages in their capacity to love. Daland would represent the base instinct of greed and self-interest over love. The Dutchman, at the next stage of evolution, realizes that love is more valuable than wealth and achievement, but at the same time, he remains confused and troubled. Because he feels that love can be bought and sold, he projects this sensibility into his prospective 'other half', making it nearly impossible to recognize the true love he seeks. From this outlook, Senta would represent the highest form of selfless love.

The theme of love and salvation is ubiquitous in Wagner's work, and I will end by quoting from a letter written to his friend, August Röckel, a composer-conductor who was politically active with Wagner in the revolutions in 1848. In the spirit of the themes emphasized in this brief essay, the letter may emphasize the need to reunite the 'masculine and feminine' parts of ourselves.

"Love in its most perfect reality is only possible between the sexes: it is only as man and woman that human beings can truly love. Every other manifestation of love can be traced back to that one absorbingly real feeling, of which all other affections are but an emanation, a connection, or an imitation. It is an error to look on this as only one of the forms in which love is revealed, as if there were other forms coequal with it, or even superior to it. He who after the manner of metaphysicians prefers unreality to reality, and derives the concrete from the abstract—in short, puts the word before the fact—may be right in esteeming the idea of love as higher than the expression of love, and may affirm that actual love made manifest in feeling is nothing but the outward and visible sign of a pre-existent, non-sensual, abstract love; and he will do well to despise that sensual function in general. In any case it were safe to bet that such a man had never loved or been loved as human beings can love, or he would have understood that in despising this feeling, what he condemned was its sensual expression, the outcome of man's animal nature, and not true human love. The highest satisfaction and expression of the individual is only to be found in his complete absorption, and that is only possible through love. Now a human being is both man and woman: it is only when these two are united that the real human being exists; and thus it is only by love that man and woman attain to the full measure of humanity. But when nowadays we talk of a human being, such heartless blockheads are we that quite involuntarily we only think of man. It is only in the union of man and woman by love (sensual and super-sensual) that the human being exists; and as the human being cannot rise to the conception of anything higher than his own existence—his own being—so the transcendent act of his life is this consummation of his humanity through love."⁷

—Lee Rather

7. Part of letter IV, January 25, 1854 from *Richard Wagner's Letters to August Roeckel*, translated by Eleanor C. Sellar, London: Arrowsmith, 1897; pp.83-85.

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then disappeared the moment the shadow of the Dutchman fell across it, on his entrance. He made a model for me to work with, complete with tiny figures and boats, which reminded me of my childhood, when I played for hours on end with the dolls' house which my father had made for me. With this I could plan all the moves of the characters and see the effect of how they would then look on stage.

We discovered an incredibly beautiful painting by Iwan Ainasowski "Untergang des Schiffes "Lefort" 1858 (Sinking of a Ship), where one sees the souls of the drowned ascending into heaven, towards the Saviour with open arms. This gave me the idea that the souls on the cursed ship of the ill-fated Dutchman were also captured by the ocean. But where were all the faithless women who had failed to hold their promises of everlasting love?

"Vom Fluch ein Weib allein kann mich erlösen, ein Weib, das Treu' bis in den Tod mir hält. Wohl hast du Treue mir gelobt, doch vor dem Ewigen noch nicht: dies rettet dich! Den wiss; Unsel'ge, welches das Geschick, das jene trifft, die mir die Treue brechen: Ew'ge Verdammniss ist Ihr Los! Zahllose Opfer fielen diesem Spruch durch mich! Du aber sollst gerettet sein! Leb' wohl! Fahr' hin, mein Heil, in Ewigkeit!

"From the curse, only a woman can free me, a woman, who is faithful to me until death. Yes, you have sworn to me to be faithful; but not yet before God: This saves you! But know unhappy one, which fate everyone befalls if she breaks her promise: Eternal damnation is her fate! Countless victims fell into this curse through me! You however should be saved! Farewell! Gone, my salvation, in Eternity!

It suddenly became clear to me that all the doomed women were also on the ship and this gave me the vision of all the souls emerging in the mist out of the ocean, with upstretched arms. I immediately went to speak with the person in the management who was in charge of the finances to ask if I could have 25 more lady extras. He said "Oh, you can have as many as you like, but you do not have any money to clothe them!" He was very surprised when I told them that I didn't need costumes because they would all be naked as they were souls and one would only see their arms coming out of the mist, so they need not worry. You can imagine that word went around, like a bush fire, which probably helped ticket sales, but the result was very poetic and beautiful.

At the end of the opera, Senta and the Dutchman disappeared into the misty waves and the Dutchman's ship disappeared up into the heavens, leav-

ing the silhouettes of the chorus against the horizon, like a beautiful Caspar David Friedrich painting.

The first day of rehearsals began with my conception talk, where I explained everything to everyone, showing them pictures of the sets and costumes. Then I started to work with the singers, who all were engaged in the house. The conductor, who was the music director, was there the first day, but then went off to do another engagement and we did not see him again until the orchestra rehearsals began, which was at the end of the rehearsal period. Also to my irritation I discovered that the singers often had other rehearsals or performances and were, therefore, not always available for my rehearsals. This often meant re-planning the rehearsal schedule. I found myself helping the singers with their diction, vocal technical problems, dancing with the young seaman and the chorus, conducting when necessary, attending all the costume fittings to make sure that the fit was perfect—this was usually at 7 a.m., before my rehearsals started, as were also the lighting rehearsals. The days flew by and were long, exhausting, but exhilarating! The premier was a great success and the Public loved it. The entire experience gave me great satisfaction and I was grateful to have been able to learn so many new aspects of the profession which had been mine for so many years. I truly discovered that life on the other side of the curtain is an exciting world and I hope that I will be able to work there often in the future!

— Dame Gwyneth Jones



Weimar State Opera © Charlotte Burchard photo

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(from an evolutionary perspective) emotional centers of the brain without review by potential internal censors.

Thus, these scientists, in their search to find why some persons can remember so much music may have found, at the same time, a possible explanation as to why music can so frequently move us, create an emotional response in us. It may be that music at least for some humans, bypasses much of the usual thought processes and directly stimulates fundamental elements of our being.

If this by-passing phenomenon is confirmed by further scientific studies, it may help explain why some music can so deeply move us, i.e., can create in us significant emotional response.

Other Studies of the Human Brain

Many neuroscientists are devoting a great deal of effort to understanding the brain. With the development of contemporary non-destructive imaging systems (CT scans, MRI and ultrasound among others) the productivity of such research has been greatly increased and at a cost within the reach of many more organizations than heretofore.

One outstanding example of brain research that does not require a doctorate to understand and is available to almost everyone is the Public Broadcasting Service Charlie Rose-produced television series about the human brain.

Each program is approximately one hour long and has been organized by Eric Kandel, a professor at Columbia University. Professor Kandel is a Nobel Prize winner. Usually several scientists present their findings both verbally as well as with CT scans and

MRI results projected on the screen and explained. This series does not have a regular schedule, but information about Professor Kandel's many programs can be found at <http://charlierose.com>.

As neuroscientists better understand how the human brain functions, the issues of our human response to music will become increasingly clear.

Emotion in Music

Deryck Cooke (1919–1976) had written a great deal, including the monumental *I Saw The World End*, a work intended to analyze the *Ring*. Unfortunately Cooke died after completing only the first two operas.² Bryan Magee wrote a memoir about Deryck Cooke which prefaced a posthumously published collection of Cooke's essays.³ In his memoir, Magee tells of once discussing with Cooke the first full length book that Cooke had written, *The Language of Music*. Cooke said that it was written (1959) "primarily *against* the long-held and still fashionable Stravinskian view that music is not expressive of emotion—is not, indeed, expressive of anything."⁴

Michael Tilson Thomas wrote an obituary when Claudio Abbado died: "...The art of music is about the balance of emotions and intellect. Abbado, who was 80 when he died on January 20, achieved that balance perfectly..."⁵

The late Sir Colin Davis, during an interview⁶ late in his lifetime, is quot-

2. Steve Sokolow, a founder and long President of the Wagner Society of Northern California, felt Cook's thinking was the best.

3. Deryck Cooke, *Vindications* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

4. *ibid*

5. *Time* magazine, February 3, 2014.

6. September 23, 2012 by Andrew Clark, music critic of the British newspaper, *Financial Times*.

ed as having thought that many of the great symphonic works (in which category he included Wagner's *Ring*) are coded language for the battle between good and evil: "However grand your ideas about yourself, about the world you live in, about what is right and noble, they are not going to survive without a colossal struggle..."

He seems to have been thinking about the deep feelings he had experienced for so many years when hearing a particular piece of music. Some such music "...is a demonstration of all the good human qualities, grandeur, nobility, generosity...if you spend a half hour with a Haydn symphony, he'll convince you that the world can't be such a bad place—such joyous sounds. But the music of Hagen and Alberich tells you the opposite. It's horrible."

It seems to me that Sir Colin was

quite certain that music can be a gateway to a better understanding of the world as we find it.

Wagner surely recognized that understanding the world and the human mind both to be supremely important. His genius⁷ led to an early great work *Art and Revolution* predating Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents* by 80 years. Ultimately, Wagner came to believe love was the only solution⁸

7. W.H. Auden is quoted "...Wagner was possibly the greatest genius who ever lived." Bryan Magee, *Aspects of Wagner*, Second Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p 48.

8. See Wagner's fourth letter to August Röckel.

David Littlejohn 1937–2015

Author, critic, and University of California, Berkeley professor emeritus David Littlejohn was a member of this journal's Editorial Advisory Board from its inception. He was a widely recognized authority on virtually all cultural subjects, and wrote reviews and commentary for many publications including *The Times of London* and *The Wall Street Journal*. Additionally, he wrote fourteen published books. In 2011, he wrote a lengthy analytical essay for this journal concerning a then new interpretation of Wagner's *Ring* at San Francisco Opera. Professor Littlejohn was born in San Francisco, graduated from the University of California, Berkeley and earned his PhD at Harvard University. Any and all conversations with him were always fascinating. He will be missed.

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