

## **Richard-Wagner-Verband International Annual Kongress: 29 May–1 June 2014**

This, the International Association of Wagner Societies (RWVI), unites regional Associations around the world. As a German-based Organisation it was founded in 1909 but ‘internationalised’ in 1991 to render all Wagner Societies around the world eligible for membership. There are some 130 member Societies, the most recent being Cuba and I have just received a ‘circular’ email intimating a plan to form a Society in Mongolia! The Wagner Society of Scotland is rightly proud to be a member. While many composers have Societies dedicated to their works these are locally or nationally based and I cannot think of any other composer who has inspired such a worldwide network of supporting Societies. There is much pleasure to be gained from being part of that worldwide family of Richard Wagner lovers.

The purpose of the RWVI mirrors our own, namely to promote and deepen the understanding of Richard Wagner's works and provide support for the next generation of artists through the Richard-Wagner-Stipendienstiftung (Richard Wagner Scholarship Foundation) founded at the composer's behest, to which this Society sends a scholar every year. The RWVI also works to ensure the continued success for the Bayreuth Festival, and promotes a Triennial Singing Competition to be held in Karlsruhe in October 2015.

The RWVI Kongress is held each year and this year the Austrian City of Graz played host. The official function of the Kongress is the Delegates' Meeting at which Verband matters are discussed and which I attended on behalf of the Wagner Society of Scotland. However, all members of affiliated Societies are entitled to attend the social and cultural events that are organised.

In 2009 the RWVI elected its first Präsidium (Committee). These serve for a five year term, and a new Präsidium fell to be elected this year. The structure is complicated but designed to balance the interests of German (numerically in the preponderance) and non-German Societies. The election process meant that the whole meeting assumed the proportions — and in the case of the Presidential election, the drama — of one of Wagner's operas!

Two candidates offered themselves for election as President — András Bajai, President of the Hungarian Society and Thomas Krakow President of Leipzig. Both candidates made short presentations in support of their candidacy followed by an hour of vigorous questions and debate. Thomas Krakow, who is known personally to me and was supported by our Society, won comfortably. Fortunately the remaining elections proceeded without disquiet, and I am pleased to report that among those elected were Jacques Bouffier of Paris (Non-German Vice-President), and Andrea Buchanan of London and Selma Gudmundsdottir of Iceland as Non-German Members. All three were supported by our Society.

The RWVI website in German, English and French is a useful resource — <http://www.richard-wagner-verband.de> — which lists the full new Präsidium under ‘Contact’. The Minutes of the Meeting together with an address by the new President have been posted on our website.

Culturally, Graz chose to showcase three Austrian delights — food, drink, and music! The Kongress opened with a sumptuous meal, preceded by and with each course interspersed with singing and instrumental performances by students from the Graz Conservatoire of Music; the Kongress closed with a delightful lunch accompanied by traditional Austrian music. Musically we were offered a fascinating and well sung production of *Lohengrin* in the

beautiful Graz Opera House, and a quite wonderful Choral Concert in Graz Cathedral (Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* and Bruckner's *Te Deum*).

The cultural centrepiece was the Final of the Ring Award, presented by Oper Graz to a young team of Director and Designer. This year 91 Teams from 29 Countries entered and we attended the presentations of the three finalists — Act II of *der Freischütz*. On a personal note the team I favoured did not win.

Next year's Kongress takes place in Dessau-Roßlau from 14 to 17 May 2015. It is an easy train ride from Berlin and all members of the Wagner Society of Scotland are welcome to attend. The Kongress will feature a Ring Cycle in the Anhaltisches Theater. I have Brochures; please contact me if you would like a copy. Alternatively full details can be downloaded from [www.rwv-dessau.de](http://www.rwv-dessau.de). Strasbourg will host in 2016.

Dale Bilslund