

WAGNER SOCIETY OF SCOTLAND NEWSLETTER

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May 2026

Dear valued member!

ARE YOU RECEIVING OUR EMAILS?

The Society uses Mailerlite to bulk email our membership, so as to avoid emails being blocked by ISP or sent to Spam folders. However it has been brought to our notice that certain members are not receiving monthly email notifications of talks and other events of interest and relevance to members. One mail client that has been implicated is BlueYonder, but there may be others.

If you have not been receiving our monthly emails, as a priority can you please email chair@wagnerscotland.net so we can troubleshoot? In the meantime, please keep a regular eye on the website Events page to ensure you're up-to-date with the Society's activities.

For now, please bookmark this Sunday's recital 17 May 4pm at the Edinburgh Society of Musicians, which features the tenor James Schouten, accompanied by RCS répétiteur Duncan Williams. This requires registration via Eventbrite, which you access via the Book Now button on the Events page under the Schouten event.

The Society expends considerable energy and financial resources to bring you events of interest, and it is always great to see you at as many events as possible. If you experience any difficulty with the process, please get in touch by email to chair@wagnerscotland.net or phone 07857602004.

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR – *Dr Derek Williams*

Since the 2025 AGM, our new Talks Organiser and 2025 Stipendiary, Roisin Linehan has hit the ground running and there has been an excellent season of talks, some of which you can see summarised below by Secretary John Anderton. Please keep an eye on the website and check emails for upcoming events.

Committee vacancies:

With the stepping down from their roles of Social Media Manager (Robert Brady), Newsletter Editor (Fede Ginsburg Natalucci) and Courses Organiser (Hanna de Bruin) owing to external commitments, we are now inviting Society members to step up and volunteer for these roles. If you've always wanted to be a Courses Organiser, a Newsletter Editor or a Social Media Manager - now is your opportunity! Training will be given, so please get in contact via email to chair@wagnerscotland.net, or by calling 07857602004.

RWVI Annual Congress 2026 - Amsterdam 19 to 22 February 2026

This year's Congress hosted by the Wagner Society of the Netherlands represented a return to the pre-Covid Halcyon Days, with over 220 delegates in attendance, plenty of local sightseeing activities, and the late Pierre Audi's production of *Tristan und Isolde*, which played to a packed house and standing ovation.

Held at the strikingly modern nhow Amsterdam RAI hotel, the RWVI AGM was expected to be a difficult one, with the Association still reeling from the deficit suffered back in 2023, and having fallen increasingly into the red because of revenues trailing behind costs. However, all ended well, with the majority voting to discharge the former Presidium and the former President, Rainer Fineske, to reconfirm of the current Presidium elected at the Berlin RWVI AGM 2024, and to approve an increase in the RWVI levy from €2 per member to €3.50 - the first such increase in more than a decade.

The Congress included a Symposium, a Scholars Concert and Gala Dinner, always invaluable for networking.



The nhow Amsterdam RAI hotel



RWVI delegates gather for the AGM



RWVI President Harry Leutscher welcomes delegates to the AGM



Presidium member and French delegate Cyril Plante performs a selection of Wagneriana



Presidium L>R: D.Williams, M.Schmidt, E.Lobato, K.Colpan, C.Plante, S.Guðmundsdóttir, A.Vermeer-Janse, H.Leutscher, E.Mollard, T.Winiarski



Presidium at Indonesian dinner:
L>R T.Winiarski, E.Lobato,
S.Guðmundsdóttir, E.Mollard,
H.Leutscher, M.Schmidt, D.Williams



Pre-opera drinks reception: L>R Derek Williams,
Ross Whitelaw (New South Wales WS)



RWVI Gala Dinner

Clockwise from right 1-4:
Dutch National Opera & Ballet
production of *Tristan und Isolde*
5. Symposium



BAYREUTH REPORT – *Dr Gabriel Kuhn*

Our scholarship recipient for this year is Maria Wotherspoon. She is currently studying for a Master's of Music in Vocal Performance at the Royal Danish Academy of Music. In July 2025, Maria graduated from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland with a Bachelor's of Music in Vocal Performance. She is very excited to be able to go to Bayreuth and will give a report about her experience at our next AGM.

WSoS members assisting Maria in Bayreuth this year will be Susan Vincent, John Carnegie, Derek Williams and former WSoS Stipendiatinnen Hanna de Bruin and Roisin Linehan.



FROM THE EDITOR – *Federico Ginzburg Natalucci*

Bayreuth Stipendiaten Days 2025



Before Rheingold at Festspielhaus
Stipendianten from Italy, Spain,
Argentina, Brazil, Chile,
Armenia and Mexico

I had the immense honour of participating as a Stipendiat, both as the scholarship holder from RWV Avellino and as a representative of our Wagner Society in Scotland, which had two Stipendiaten and three committee members present: Roisin Linehan, Chloe Lu Ye Miller, Hanna de Bruin, Susan Vincent, and myself.

The days as a Stipendiat were absolutely wonderful. Personally, I do not have words to fully describe the magical feeling of standing in front of the Bayreuth Festspielhaus for the first time in my life, or visiting the mystical abyss and Richard Wagner's grave. There is something secret and almost spellbinding in that place, a truly religious feeling, comparable to entering St. Peter's Basilica.

The days followed a busy agenda between attending the operas and participating in all kinds of events, which in my personal perspective achieved a very good balance for young people. We had the opportunity to deeply reflect through the tours, walks around Villa Wahnfried, visits to the Festspielhaus, and the operas themselves, while also enjoying social moments, outdoor grills, and celebrations together.



After Parsifal at Festspielhaus L>R
Fede, Hanna, Susan, Roisin, Chloe and Adrian.

Another wonderful aspect of the festival for me was the incredible people surrounding you – musicians with not only the same affinity for Wagner, but often for life in general. The friendships and connections you make during the Bayreuth days seems the ones that remain with you forever.

During our first visit to the Festspielhaus on August 15, we met together with our stipendian: Chloe, Roisin, and Susan Vincent, and enjoyed visiting the opera house together. On the evening of August 19, Chloe, Hanna, Roisin, Susan, and I had a terrific dinner with Adrian Indlekofer after Parsifal. The dinner became a wonderful moment to learn how the Wagnerzimmer began as a museum, to understand its importance for Wagner and Bayreuth history, and to exchange experiences among all of us.

The warm nights of Bayreuth in 2025 will certainly remain with us forever.

Riga, Latvia. Wagner Theatre



Front of the Wagner Theatre
in Riga, Latvia

In September 2025, I had the wonderful opportunity to visit the city of Riga and witness the restoration of the Wagner Theatre. This is currently possibly the most ambitious project ever undertaken by a Wagner society.

In this very theatre, a young Richard Wagner worked as Kapellmeister for two years between 1837 and 1839, before leaving the city while escaping severe financial debts. The theatre is also well known for inspiring Wagner's later vision of the Festspielhaus, particularly the enigmatic orchestral pit and the concealed lighting of the main hall.

The theatre underwent many transformations over the decades, and after the Soviet period it was left in an almost destroyed state. During my week in Riga, I had the wonderful opportunity to meet Māris Gailis, president of the Wagner Society of Riga, whom I interviewed for the RWV Avellino Society. The interview can be found below:

[The Wagner Theater in Riga](#)

During the interview, Māris told me how the Wagner Society of Riga was founded, and how he and his wife, Zaiga Gailis, met Eva Wagner-Pasquier. He also spoke about building a close relationship with the Wagner Society of Venice and about the many challenges and adventures involved in the restoration of the theatre.

At the end of the interview, Māris emphasized the importance of spreading awareness of the project among Wagnerians around the world, as this is currently one of the largest projects in terms of finance and logistics ever undertaken by a Wagner society. The Wagner Theatre is expected to reopen by 2028, and the Society is actively searching for investors, contributions, and funding to complete the restoration.



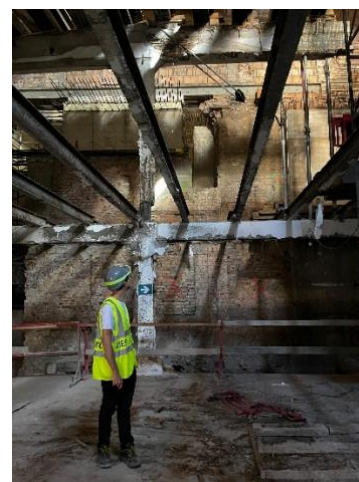
Original facade:
stairs leading to the second gallery



Dance salon above the main hall



President of RWV Riga, Māris Gailis and
Fede at the architecture office in Riga (in the
middle the model of the new Wagner
Theatre



Current view of the location of the original
stage

If you would like to know more about the project and Wagner's life in Latvia, feel free to contact me through my personal email: federicoginzburg@hotmail.com

Events since last Newsletter:

RECENT EVENTS – Dr John Anderton (Secretary)

Summary of Talk on Sunday 11th January 2026 by Zoom

By Joshua Borths on ‘Wagner’s Artistic Foundations’.

Director of Opera Theatre at James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA.

Joshua summarised his early operatic experience and pointed out that most discourses on Wagner’s operas refer to his latter 3 or 4 operas. He indicated that in this talk he would concentrate on the early operas and the influences on these.

Joshua indicated that he had used Wagner’s autobiography *Mein Leben* as a source for his presentation which showed Wagner’s humility, humour, difficulty in learning, easily influenced, great ambition, a man of the theatre, and his life history, starting with *Di Feen* 1834.

Wagner’s travels around Europe were described ,made difficult by lack of money.

The trends in Wagner’s youth included Romanticism, Nationalism (Greek), industrial revolution and artistic ecosystem. Pivotal experiences were the theatre, the cholera epidemic, Beethoven’s 9th symphony, politics, Wilhelmine Schroeder-Devrient.

Joshua provided a table of the works and events which had influenced Wagner during these early years including many plays and operas, and pointed out the lack of biblical reference, visual art, and German mythology.

Joshua was thanked enthusiastically for his talk which gave great insight into Wagner’s earlier life and operas.

Summary of Talk on Sunday 1 February 2026 on Zoom

By Nicholas Vazsonyi

The Chair DW introduced Dr Nicholas Vazsonyi who was speaking on Zoom from South Carolina as follows:

Dr Nicholas Vazsonyi - American academic, author, and artistic director. Since 2023, he has been Dean of the College of Arts and Humanities at Clemson University, USA. His talk was titled “Belonging” relating to Wagner’s German nationality and culture.

Dr Vazsonyi delivered a detailed account of Wagner’s life with reference to the effect that various events and qualities have played in giving the reader or listener to Wagner’s works a feeling of ‘belonging’ to Germany and German culture.

NV discussed the influence of ‘modernity’, Marxism, and Wagner’s early years living outside Germany on ‘belonging’. He outlined the contribution of Wagner’s “Was ist Deutsch” (1865) on German culture and identity, and outlined the qualities of ‘Germanness’.

NV conflated Wagner’s sense of ‘not belonging’ while living outside Germany with a feeling of being ‘outlawed’. Many of the characters in Wagner’s operas did not ‘belong’ to the situation of the opera.

Wagner's solution to the feeling of not belonging was to create the Festspielhaus at Bayreuth and the various Wagner Societies worldwide have followed suit.

Finally, NV described the sense of being 'grounded' in Wagner's music and noted the use of the 'descending fourth' interval in his operas such as *Meistersinger*.

Detailed discussion followed (KD, MD, LM, DW, JG) and all contributors thanked NV profusely for the high quality of his talk and the interest it had provoked.

IN OTHER NEWS

In May 2026 the Mahler Players will give two semi-staged performances of Wagner's final work, *Parsifal*. In 2024 and 2025 the Players performed Acts 2 and 3 in isolation and are excited now to take things to the next level. Cast members include Sir John Tomlinson returning in his signature role of Gurnemanz alongside the orchestra and chorus, conducted by WSoS Stipendiat Tomas Leakey. These will be the first complete performances of Parsifal in Scotland since 2003.

Wednesday 27th May 2026, 4pm at Inverness Cathedral

and

Sunday 31st May 2026, 4pm at Inverness Cathedral

Wagner Society of Scotland members are eligible for discounts. Please contact chair@wagnerscotland.net for details.

Link for further information and bookings:

<https://mahlerplayers.co.uk/parsifal/>

SUMMER FESTIVAL - 2026 Bulgaria

Tickets are very affordable, and WSoS members who have previously gone to Sofia have given very favourable reports not only of the operas, but of the countryside and the people. There is still time to book for the operas listed below.:

https://www.operasofia.bg/en/repertoire/WAGNER_FESTIVAL

SOFIA OPERA WAGNER FESTIVAL

DAS RHEINGOLD

26 May Tuesday 19:00

DIE WALKÜRE

27 May Wednesday 18:00

SIEGFRIED

29 May Friday 18:00

GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG

31 May Sunday 16:00

LOHENGRIN

12 June Friday 18:00

TANNHÄUSER

14 June Sunday 16:00

TREASURER'S REPORT – *Alberto Massimo*

Since our AGM, we have had the pleasure of welcoming to our society three new members. At present we also have 7 student members and 92 members who are fully paid up members. There are still quite a number who have not paid their subscription yet and I would urge them to do so. Our society needs funds in order to be able to send a stipendiat each year to Bayreuth, so please, if you can, donate to our stipendiat fund.

TEA WITH WAGNER MONTHLY ZOOMS – *Susan Vincent*

These will be restarting from early September, Tuesday afternoons, monthly. An email will be sent out to members, and a notice added to the website when this happens.



The Society's aim is to promote the knowledge and appreciation of the life & works of Richard Wagner.

The Wagner Society of Scotland is registered as a Scottish Charity No SC028209

Find out more at <https://wagnerscotland.net>

COMMITTEE

Chair: Derek Williams

chair@wagnerscotland.net

Secretary: John Anderton

secretary@wagnerscotland.net

Treasurer/MembershipSecretary: Alberto Massimo

membership@wagnerscotland.net

Talks Organiser: Roisin Linehan

talks@wagnerscotland.net

Website/Catering supervisor: Christine Proudfoot

proudfoot1@blueyonder.co.uk

Newsletter Editor:

Vacancy

Bayreuth Tickets and Scholarship: Gabriele Kuhn

gabriele.kuhn@btinternet.com

Social Media Manager:

Vacancy

Courses Organiser:

Vacancy

Conversation Group Director: Susan Vincent

susan@susanvincent.org

Please direct any Newsletter correspondence to newsletter@wagnerscotland.net.

The Wagner Society of Scotland is proud to be a member of the International Association of Wagner Societies (*Richard-Wagner-Verband International*, RWVI).

