



**2023-24**

# **Annual Report**



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Bayreuth Festival 2024

Parsifal, Act II: A Film in Progress

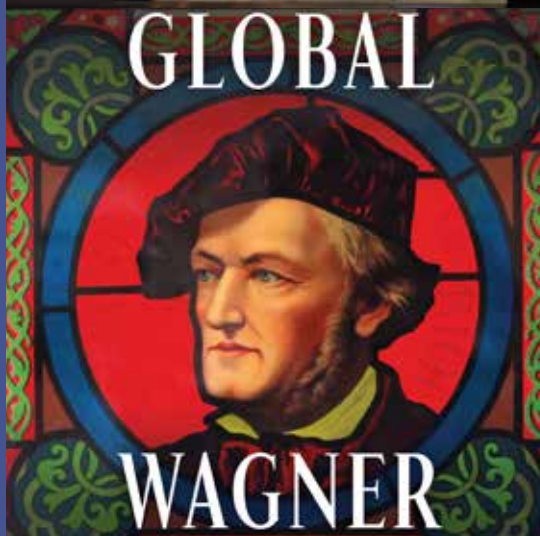
Talk with Metropolitan Opera Concertmaster David Chan

Bayreuth Talk: Soprano Catherine Foster

Tannhäuser Seminar

Documentary screening:  
*Global Wagner – From Bayreuth to the World*

Wagner: Questions of Influence and Originality,” taught by Juilliard Professor John J.H. Muller, IV.




# Introduction

It gives us great pleasure to present the Annual Report of the Richard Wagner Society of New York for the 2023-24 season. We hope that the information in this Report will provide a comprehensive understanding of our work and our ambitions.

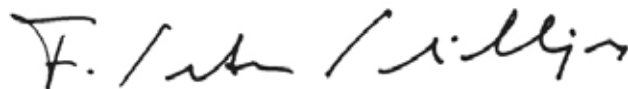
The motto of the Society is “To teach, to learn, to serve.” Our corporate purposes are:

- 1** To provide a forum where individuals who are interested in opera or music in general and the musical works of Richard Wagner in particular can share their knowledge;
- 2** To sponsor regular events for the presentation of programs concerning Richard Wagner and his music;
- 3** To provide opportunities to members of the Corporation and others interested in the music of Richard Wagner to sponsor, participate in or attend performances of his works;
- 4** To educate members of the Corporation and members of the public in the musical works of Richard Wagner through lectures, symposia and similar events;
- 5** To encourage developing artists deemed promising in the Wagner repertoire.

We hope that you will conclude that we are fulfilling our charge.



**John Ryan**  
Chairman of the Board of Directors



**F. Peter Phillips**  
President

# Activities

## Programming

The Wagner Society offers topical educational programs to its members and the public throughout the year. In the 2023-24 Season, the Society offered the following events:

<b>September 19, 2023</b> Review of Recent Wagner Productions; introduction to Joseph Parrish, our Bayreuth Stipendium Awardee	<b>October 18, 2023</b> A conversation with Metropolitan Opera Orchestra Co-Concertmaster David Chen	<b>November 8, 2023</b> Private screening of the film “Global Wagner”	<b>December 10, 2023</b> Annual Seminar on <i>Tannhäuser</i>
<b>January 14, 2024</b> Talk by Barry Millington on “A Collision of Like-Minded Souls”	<b>February 28, 2024</b> Talk by Prof. Hans Veget on “Long Live America: Wagner and the New World”	<b>March 7, 2024</b> Talk by Prof. Larry Wolff on “Art and Social Transformation”	<b>March 14, 2024</b> Special Reception for Maestro Oksana Lyniv
<b>April 27, 2024</b> Events in conjunction with opening night of the Atlanta Opera production of <i>Die Walküre</i>	<b>May 15, 2024</b> Talk by Dr. Patrick Cheng on “Wagner from a Queer Perspective”	<b>June 12, 2024</b> Book Launch, <i>Performing Wagner: A Singer’s Perspective on the Major Tenor Roles</i>	<b>July 25, 2024</b> Private Screening, Opening Night of the 2024 Bayreuth Festival, <i>Tristan und Isolde</i>

Most of these events were livestreamed for members located remotely or otherwise unable to attend personally. Many of them were also recorded for possible future posting on the Society’s YouTube Channel.

In addition to these programs, the Society arranged a variety of events during the 2024 Bayreuth Festival. These included a pre-Walküre welcome dinner, a guided tour of Bayreuth, a beer-tasting event at Maisel Brewery, a pre-Götterdämmerung farewell lunch, an evening at a local biergarten, and a series of informal Artists Talks. Participants in this latter series included soprano Catherine Foster, conductor Simone Young, and others.

# Publications

The Society publishes its members-only bimonthly flagship newsletter, *Wagner Notes*, under the leadership of Nathalie D. Wagner. *Wagner Notes* is a benefit of membership that is highly valued and anticipated by those familiar with it. It includes reviews, articles, notices, photos, announcements of upcoming Society events, schedules of future Wagner productions, and other valuable information. This publication is distributed in either hard-copy or electronic form, at the election of each member.

The Society’s web site, redesigned during the 2023-24 season, provides robust information to a worldwide audience. Members and others receive periodic announcements of events and other information through electronic communications and mailed notices. The revamped website also includes many other features, including online registration for programs and an online shopping capability.

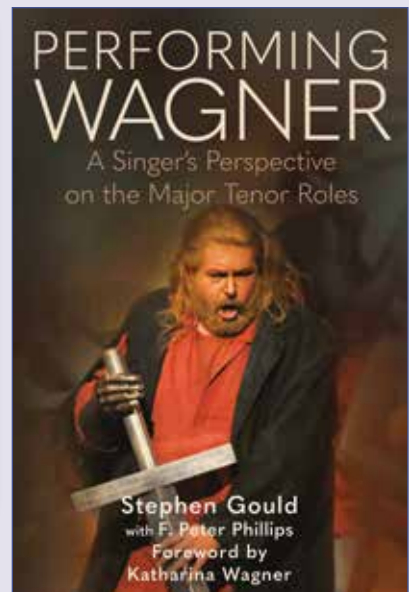
During this year, the Society entered into an arrangement with Toccata Press and the estate of Stephen Gould to make available pre-publication copies of the book *Performing Wagner: A Singer’s Perspective on the Major Tenor Roles*. The book, featuring a Forward by Katharina Wagner and co-authored by Society President F. Peter Phillips, is offered at a steeply discounted price and was the subject of presentations in New York, London and Bayreuth.



Wagner Notes newsletter is published bimonthly for members.



Redesigned website for Wagner Society of New York



New book – *Performing Wagner: A Singer’s Perspective on the Major Tenor Roles*.

# Activities

## Singers' Awards

The Society acts as trustee for certain restricted-use funds established by individuals seeking to support the careers of promising singers. Grants and awards are made upon audition.

This year, applications via video were received from over forty artists from ten US states, Canada, Germany, and the UK. After a rigorous review by the Singers' Committee, twelve singers were selected to take part in the final audition. Following a final audition round held at Merkin Concert Hall on Tuesday, May 21, 2024, tenor Shawn Roth was awarded the Robert Lauch Memorial Fund Award (\$6,000) and mezzo-soprano Sarah-Jane Lewis was awarded the Ursula Springer Award (\$3,000). Encouragement grants of \$1,000 each were extended to baritone Joel Balzun and soprano Hannah Crawford. Grants of \$500 each were made to tenor Jaewon Jung, mezzo-soprano Gretchen Krupp, soprano Marissa Moultrie, tenor John Kun Park, bass-baritone Leo Radosavljevic, baritone Daniel Scofield, soprano Kelly Slawson, and soprano Julia Wolcott.



The judging panel comprised the members of WSNY's Singers' Committee: artist manager Ken Benson; conductor Tyson Deaton; dramaturg Cori Ellison; vocal coach Roger Malouf; and arts administrator Deborah Surdi. Renowned Wagnerian bass-baritone James Morris served as guest adjudicator.

We are pleased to recognize the talents of these exceptional artists and wish them the best in their career development.

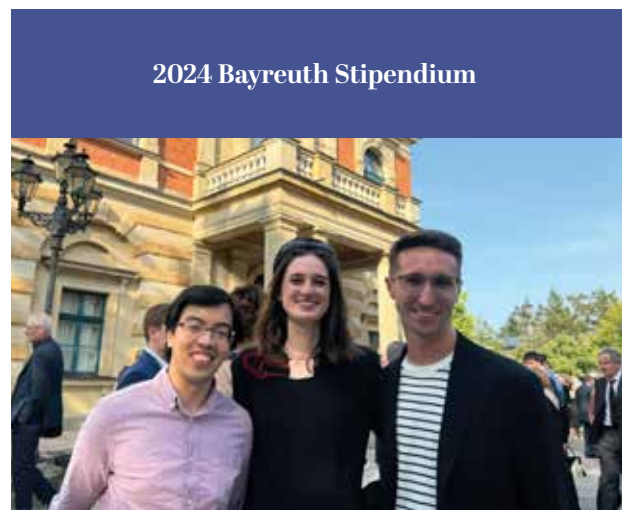
## Bayreuth and Other Affiliated Organizations

The Society's Affiliated Organizations Committee administered the 2024 Bayreuth Stipendium, selecting three promising young artists to participate in activities and opportunities for fellowship and education during the 2024 Bayreuth Festival: Jacob Brown, a New York-based scenic designer; Caroline Couch, a BA-MPA student at New York University and Executive Director of chamber music ensemble Village Verein; and Tengku Irfan, an accomplished pianist and student of Orchestral Conducting at The Juilliard School.

The Wagner Society of New York's three 2024 scholarship recipients attended the annual program, organized by the Richard Wagner Scholarship Foundation, that occurred during the 2024 Bayreuth Festival. This Foundation was established over 100 years ago to promote the professional development of young people interested in Richard Wagner and his works. Its former participants include well-known singers, musicians, stage directors, and administrators that specialize in Wagner performance.

The Society had hitherto sent one such individual per year to this prestigious program. In 2024, due to the generosity of Mr. Kevin Salinger, Dr. Edward Seidel, and one anonymous donor, the Society sent two additional talented and highly qualified young participants. The Society is proud to support both the Scholarships Foundation's mission and the careers of these three aspiring Wagner professionals.

One of the most coveted benefits of membership in the Wagner Society is the opportunity to procure priority tickets to the Bayreuth Festival. This season, the Committee received and allocated numerous Bayreuth tickets received through the Gesellschaft den Freude von Bayreuth and the Richard Wagner Verband International, both of which the Society supports through institutional membership. The Committee also assisted in the distribution of tickets from members who privately received tickets they could not use.



Tengku Irfan, Caroline Couch, and Jacob Brown

The Society has maintained contact with other Wagner Societies in North America and the United Kingdom, periodically hosting Zoom discussions and seeking collaboration and mutually advantageous new initiatives. It has also enhanced its productive relationship with such producing organizations as the Metropolitan Opera and Atlanta Opera.

# Membership

The Wagner Society of New York closed its 2023-24 season with 628 members. We are grateful for the consistent support of our members, whose dues and contributions constitute by far the largest single source of revenue for our programming.

During the recent pandemic seasons, members were retained regardless of their maintaining dues payments. This practice was discontinued during the 2022-23 season. It is noteworthy that, although some minor attrition was experienced in overall dues-paying membership during this time, membership revenues have increased. This was the result of many of our members' increasing their membership categories, or making outright contributions in addition to their membership dues, in recognition of the challenges that the Society confronted during that period and their commitment to its continued success.

During this year, substantial changes were made to the infrastructure by which membership data are retained, tracked and used. Additionally, the process of membership renewal was made easier by enhancement of both online and postal notices.

**Member Benefits**

Programs, Recitals, Lectures, Classes, Film Screenings, Concertgoing, and many more events

Hear, meet, and support the next generation of Wagner Singers

Access to priority tickets at Bayreuth

Subscription to *Wagner Notes*, our bimonthly newsletter



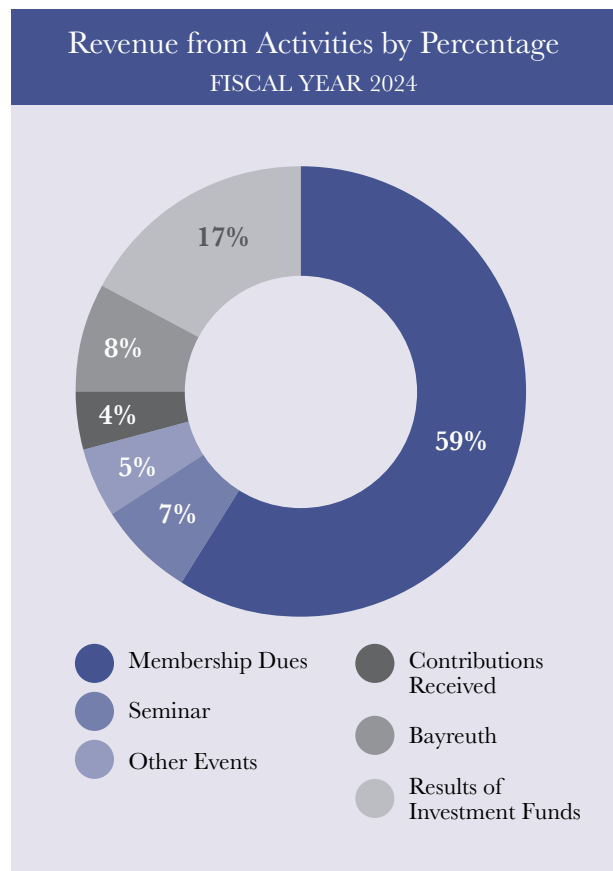
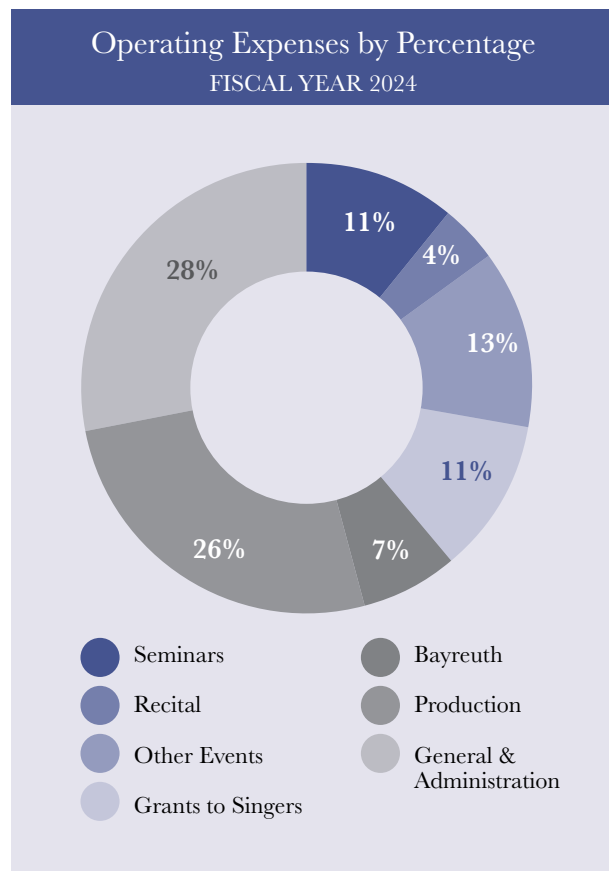


# Finances

In the fiscal year ending August 31, 2024, the Society continued to solidify and grow its financial condition, enhanced by technology permitting it to attract resources through remote operations to enhance its reach beyond the New York Metropolitan region.

The most significant portion of our assets are the endowment funds, the uses for which are restricted. Income from the endowment funds is used to fund awards to promising Wagnerian singers in the form of the Lauch Award and the Springer Award. The Kit Gill Fund is also used to fund grants with the expectation that the fund will be fully depleted in the next four years.

Many thanks to the members of the Society for their continued support, especially for those that recognize the value and significance of our activities by maintaining membership at the higher levels of subscription, thereby providing much needed funds supporting our activities and grants to singers.



# Leadership

## Board of Directors

The Board of Directors governs the Society. Its members are:

Donald Crawshaw  
Paul Deutschmann  
Raymond Ko  
Jillian Murray  
Dolores Perin  
F. Peter Phillips  
John Ryan  
Kevin Salinger  
Mark Luis Villamar  
Nathalie D. Wagner

## Officers

The Society's officers are responsible for fulfilling the operational responsibilities set forth in the by-laws and executing the activities of the Society as determined by the Board of Directors. The officers are:

Chairman of the Board: John Ryan  
President: F. Peter Phillips  
Secretary: Dolores Perin  
Treasurer: Mark Luis Villamar  
Assistant Treasurer: Paul Deutschmann  
Registrar: Jillian Murray

## Committees

The work of the Society is substantially performed by various committees appointed by the Board of Directors. These Committees and their members are listed below.

### Executive Committee

The Executive Committee consists of the Chair of the Board of Directors, the President, the Treasurer, the Registrar, the Secretary, and the Chair of the Governance and Nominating Committee. It is convened by the Board Chair at request of any officer, and renders advice or takes corporate action between Board meetings, subject to the limitations in the Bylaws and to the further limitation that it may not authorize the expenditure of Society Funds in an amount greater than \$1,500. Its members are:

John Ryan (Chair)  
Donald Crawshaw  
Jillian Murray  
Dolores Perin  
F. Peter Phillips  
Mark Luis Villamar

## **Governance and Nominating Committee**

The Governance and Nominating Committee acts as resource to the Board in regard to best practices in governance. It also makes recommendations to the Board regarding nominations of directors and officers, and Committees (including membership of Committees). Its members are:

Donald Crawshaw (Chair)  
Raymond Ko  
Kevin Salinger  
Mark Luis Villamar

## **Affiliated Organizations Committee**

The Affiliated Organizations Committees undertakes all responsibilities involving relationships between the Society and other similar entities. It manages the annual Bayreuth Stipendium program and manages the relationship between the Society and the Bayreuth Festival, the Richard Wagner Verband International, and the Gesellschaft den Freude von Bayreuth. It also initiates and maintains mutually beneficial relationships with other Wagner Societies, music and theatre departments of regional universities, the Metropolitan Opera, and other organizations producing or teaching about Wagner's works. Its members are:

Caroline Couch (Richard Wagner Verband International Liaison)  
Claudia Deutschmann (Bayreuth Liaison)  
Ako Imamura  
Raymond Ko  
Kevin Salinger (Stipendium Liaison)

## **Singers' Committee**

The Singers' Committee makes recommendations to the Board for grants from Lauch, Springer, and other restricted-use funds. The Committee is responsible for producing at least one recital of a Lauch or Springer awardee per year. Its members are:

Tyson Deaton and Cori Ellison (Co-Chairs)  
Ken Benson  
Roger Malouf  
Deborah Surdi

## **Development Committee**

The Development Committee plans and executes initiatives to enhance revenues, including special events. It prepares grant applications as opportunities arise and, with President, fosters relationships with major donors. It is currently inactive.

## **Finance Committee**

The Finance Committee creates the annual budget for Board approval; monitors financial activity and fiscal health of corporation; and makes recommendations to the Board regarding financial matters (including investments) as it deems appropriate. Its members are:

Mark Luis Villamar (Chair)  
Paul Deutschmann  
Betty Kranzdorf  
William W. McGinty  
Gary Mezzatesta  
John Ryan

## Membership and Communications Committee

The Membership and Communications Committee devises strategies for membership retention and growth, including managing membership value proposition, encouraging membership growth among students and younger people, investigating joint membership with other Societies, and other initiatives. It maintains and updates the Society's web site; manages communications to members and to general public; and maintains an active presence on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. Its members are:

Jillian Murray (Chair)  
Doru Bercea  
Marco Catella  
Paul Deutschmann  
Betty Kranzdorf

## Programming Committee

The Programming Committee creates substantive programming for Society members and the public, including the annual seminar. It selects topics and speakers, engages venues, oversees marketing, and executes each event (hosting, venue management, financial accounting, post-event reporting, etc.). Its members are:

F. Peter Phillips (Chair)  
Carey Alexander  
Noble Bratton  
Donald Crawshaw  
Griffin Kaiser  
Alice Kenny  
John J.H. Muller, IV  
Jillian Murray  
Dolores Perin



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We actively seek volunteers for leadership positions and hope that anyone interested in furthering the work of the Society will contact the President at [info@WagnerSocietyNY.org](mailto:info@WagnerSocietyNY.org).