

Sunday 18 October 2020: Dr David Larkin, via Zoom

**Beyond the opera house: CS Lewis & Wagner Reception
in Edwardian Britain, by Dr David Larkin
4 - 5.30pm, Sunday 18 October 2020
via Zoom**



About Dr Larkin's talk:

Dr Larkin has provided the following introduction to his talk:

In his autobiography *Surprised by Joy*, C. S. Lewis (1898-1963) memorably described how the chance sight of one of Arthur Rackham's Ring Cycle drawings in his teenage years was a life-changing event, when a feeling of 'pure "Northernness" engulfed [him]'. After reading prose summaries and verse translations of the Ring, he wrote a lengthy poem based on the plot of Rheingold. Although he was on his own admission a 'layman [with] no music education', Lewis even penned a short essay on the composer in his adolescence. He also chased up the recordings of Wagnerian 'highlights' which were in circulation at the time. However, it was not until 1918, long after the essay was written, that he finally experienced *Die Walküre* in full in the theatre.

Lewis was far from being the first British literary figure to conceive a passion for Wagner: in the preceding decades writers as different as E. M. Forster, Ford Madox Ford and Virginia Woolf had all succumbed to the spell of the music dramas, at least for a time. However, Lewis's path to Wagner differs from theirs in one significant way: it was not sparked off by an immersive theatrical experience. Getting acquainted with Wagner via pictorial and literary channels was in fact quite easy, given how saturated the media were with all things Wagnerian in the early 1900s. Yet it was the existence of recorded excerpts which provided a crucial new avenue of approach, without which his enthusiasm would certainly have faltered. In my talk, I will retrace Lewis's journey, with special attention given to what was available on sound recordings before World War I. Lewis thus serves as an early instance of how the gramophone created new audiences for Wagner.

About Dr Larkin:

David Larkin is a senior lecturer in musicology at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, University of Sydney, specialising in nineteenth-century music. He joined the University in 2010, after two years as a postdoctoral research fellow attached to the School of Music, University College Dublin sponsored by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences.

His music education began at the Royal Irish Academy of Music in Dublin, where he studied piano, violin and organ. He graduated from University College Dublin in 1999 with a first-class honours BMus degree, and in 2002 was awarded the MLitt degree with distinction for a thesis exploring the musical and personal connections between Liszt and Wagner. In 2007, he gained his PhD from the University of Cambridge for a dissertation entitled 'Reshaping the Liszt-Wagner Legacy: Intertextual Dynamics in Strauss's Tone Poems.'

Dr Larkin's previous presentations to the **Wagner Society in NSW** include:

- a Seminar on *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (21 October 2018) - This seminar was illustrated with musical extracts put together by Warwick Fyfe, singing Beckmesser and featuring him along with other Opera Australia singers Shane Lawrence, Donna Balson and Dean Bassett accompanied by Thomas Johnson
- a Seminar on *Parsifal* (30 July 2017) - in which Eleanor Greenwood (who sang Kundry), Warwick Fyfe (who sang Klingsor) & Bradley Gilchrist (pianist) performed an extract from Act 2 of *Parsifal*.
- Exploring *Tristan und Isolde*: a workshop – An Unresolved Enigma (14 June 2015).

Recording

The Wagner Society in New South Wales
18 October 2020

Beyond the opera house: C. S. Lewis & Wagner reception in Edwardian Britain



David Larkin
Sydney Conservatorium of Music, University of Sydney



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Talking: David Larkin



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From Daryl Colquhoun to Everyone
Thank you, David. Brilliant!