

Henry Handel Richardson Society of Australia Inc.

Newsletter November 2013



Picnic Birthday Party and Oration 3 January

We are delighted to announce that our patron, the internationally acclaimed film director, Bruce Beresford, and his wife, the novelist Virginia Duigan, will be coming to the birthday celebrations at *Lake View*, Chiltern, on Friday 3 January 2014. At the end of November Bruce will be returning to Sydney from Los Angeles where he is currently completing a film.

Bruce will deliver the 2014 Oration at the party. His topic will be 'Making the film *The Getting of Wisdom*'.



Virginia Duigan and Bruce Beresford

The film, produced by Phillip Adams, was based on HHR's 1910 novel and released in 1977. It was nominated for five AFI Awards, winning the Best Adapted Screenplay for Eleanor Witcombe. The other nominations were for Best Achievement in Costume Design; Best Achievement in Production Design; Best Achievement in Sound; and for Patricia Kennedy as Best Supporting Actress (playing the role of Miss Chapman).

The cast is an impressive list of Australian actors—Patricia Kennedy, Sheila Helpman, Kerry Armstrong, Barry Humphries, John Waters, Maggie Kirkpatrick, Julia Blake, Terence Donovan, Sigrid Thornton—and features in the leading role of Laura Tweedle Rambotham, Susannah Fowle. Evelyn, the girl with whom Laura forms a deep attachment, is played by Hilary Ryan. Even Noni Hazlehurst appears in one scene—as a maid.

The Committee is planning to show the film during the birthday celebrations.



Evelyn (Hilary Ryan) and Laura (Susannah Fowle)

The Getting of Wisdom was her favourite work, and it remains her best-known novel, a fixture in the Australian literary canon since the 1960s, when it was adopted as a high school text, but omitting the Nietzsche epigraphs, which hinted that this was not intended as a novel for or about children but an ironic autobiographical critique, including the intense experience of homosexual attraction. Her short stories also deal with states of troubling sexual self-consciousness and the pains of transition and transgression.

Extract from C. Probyn, Blackwell's *Encyclopaedia of World Literature*

Notice of 2014 AGM

The AGM will be held in the grounds of Lake View, Chiltern, at 4.45 pm on 3 January 2014. All paid-up members are entitled to stand for the Committee. We would welcome new members. If you are interested in any of the positions, please contact Vice-President Graeme Charles, 69 Conness St, Chiltern Victoria 3683 Phone (03 572 61173).

Email <gcharles@communityaction.coop>

Abendunterhaltung with Henry Handel Richardson in Leipzig/ Germany

On October 23 an evening dedicated to Henry Handel Richardson's compositions and literary texts took place at the *Hochschule für Musik und Theater Leipzig*—the former *Königliches Conservatorium* founded by Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy. An attentive audience listened to a choice of songs composed by the Australian author and to passages from her debut novel *Maurice Guest*. The traditional *Kammermusiksaal* provided a suitable frame for the event since young Richardson, who studied music at the Leipzig *Conservatorium* from 1889 until 1891, might once have performed herself in this very place. Some original documents from Richardson's times of study and a small collection of her published books were on display and contributed to the authentic atmosphere.

The form of *Abendunterhaltung*, deliberately chosen, was meant to build a bridge to the musical taste of the late 19th century when such popular and comparatively informal events were attended and enjoyed by enthusiastic students

of music of the Saxon city. The performance of a dozen of Richardson's shorter songs, arranged and accompanied on the piano by music teacher Sibylle Höhnk and interpreted by three young singers from the *Hochschule*, fresh and with enthusiasm, stirred up much applause. In this way several poems of German authors, such as Otto Julius Bierbaum, Richard Dehmel, Detlev von Liliencron and others, which Richardson had set to music years after her studies experienced their Leipzig première. Alternating with the musical parts Markus Sahr read from chapter nine of the first volume of *Maurice Guest*. The choice of this chapter was fitting to this year's bicentenary celebration of Richard Wagner, a Leipziger by birth, since therein Richardson subjects her set of characters to a performance of *Die Walküre* at Leipzig's Opera House. The reading gave a convincing impression of Richardson's literary powers and her command of drama, humour and keen observation in her novel.



Professor Stefan Weiz

The co-organizers of this cultural event, Professor Stefan Weiz from the English Department of Leipzig University and translator Fabian Dellemann, saw the evening as a welcome occasion to popularize their shared project—a new German translation and re-edition of Henry Handel Richardson's debut novel *Maurice Guest*. Besides the re-establishing of Richardson's most European work for a German-speaking readership they also hope to familiarize a wider audience with the Australian author. Perhaps, one day, Leipzig's municipality will be convinced by the idea of installing a commemoration plaque in one of the places where Richardson had lived and studied. Unfortunately, the house in *Mozartstraße 13*, where Richardson spent the greater part of her stay, was destroyed in war times. However, the building of the old conservatory is still there and enjoys almost the same vivid life as it might have been

in Henry Handel Richardson's time—only the foreign students of today are mostly coming from Asia.

The new translation of the novel *Maurice Guest* takes the most comprehensive Academy Edition by Clive Probyn and Bruce Steele as a textual basis. The first German edition, published by Fischer Verlag in 1912, was translated by Richardson's brother-in-law Otto Neustätter, a Munich eye doctor who made use of the shortened Heinemann edition. Henry Handel Richardson was not pleased with his translation which she thought to be rather rough. And indeed, a then fashionable Nietzschean ring did not much allow for rendering Richardson's expressive syntax and her vivid dialogues.

Although Nietzsche was part of Richardson's reading preferences, the air and the spirit which thus entered the translated text seem after all too German. Time and again they distort Richardson's nuanced observations and evaluations of the new cultural environment she came to live in and flatten her stylistic particularities. The translators of the new German edition intend to subtly adapt the fully restored text to a contemporary usage and understanding of the German language. Of course, the task of translating this eight-hundred page novel will take some time. It proceeds according to the free time schedule of both translators as they are doing the job in addition to their regular obligations and without any remuneration.

In this context, it is remarkable that the independent publishing house *Connewitzer Verlagsbuchhandlung Leipzig* has agreed to publish a new German translation of *Maurice Guest*. Peter Hinke, the owner of the small enterprise and himself a passionate reader of Henry Handel Richardson's texts, values this particular novel for its gripping presentation of an English-speaking student community abroad and the lively picture it draws of the former music capital of Germany, the city of Leipzig. Being a small publisher specialized in local history his budget for ambitious undertakings like this one is rather limited. So therefore any financial support for this cultural non-profit project is very welcome and much appreciated.

Stefan Weiz

Leipzig University

Please don't forget your 2013 subscriptions

Please don't forget that subscriptions were due to be paid from 4 January 2013. If you haven't already done so, please post your cheque for \$15 to: The Treasurer, Henry Handel Richardson Society of Australia, 69 Conness Street, Chiltern, Victoria 3683.

And your 2014 subscriptions will be due on 4 January 2014!

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