

MEDIA RELEASE

16 July 2019

Asher Fisch and WASO's *Tristan und Isolde* Win Prestigious Helpmann Awards



West Australian Symphony Orchestra is delighted to be recognised with maestro Asher Fisch by Australia's peak industry body, Live Performance Australia, in a ceremony held in Melbourne. WASO takes home two prestigious Helpmann Awards for Best Individual Classical Music Performance (Asher Fisch) and Best Symphony Orchestra Concert (WASO).

The annual Helpmann Awards recognise distinguished artistic achievement and excellence in the many disciplines of Australia's vibrant live performance sectors and these two awards represent outstanding recognition among the best of the best in live classical music for 2018.

In many ways, *Tristan und Isolde* was the peak of Asher Fisch's first five years as Principal Conductor and Artistic Adviser of WASO with The Australian recognising this achievement noting "terrific playing from an orchestra at the top of its game." Over this time, his artistic vision and astute programming have developed and confirmed the capability of the orchestra to take on this pinnacle of the orchestral/operaic repertoire for WASO's 90th Anniversary year.

The opera in concert performance in Perth was a massive undertaking for WASO, made possible as a result of a two year fundraising campaign where generous donors and partners including Wesfarmers Arts helped to make this dream a reality. Their commitment to this bold vision was validated with unanimous praise for the production featuring 5-star reviews in The Australian, Limelight Magazine, Australian Book Review and The West Australian noting a "magnificent playing of the highest order", "assurance and a passionate, almost erotic, intensity" between conductor and orchestra, and an "exceptional cast", "a conductor of highest accomplishment on the podium, an orchestra consistently on its musical toes and a cast of A1 singers" delivering an "unforgettable" account of Wagner's masterpiece, all resulting in a "loud and universal standing ovation" at Perth Concert Hall.

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West Australian
Symphony Orchestra
ASHER FISCH PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR

PRE-ORDER THE RECORDING NOW

WASO and ABC Classics celebrate this award-winning production with a landmark new live recording of Wagner's towering creation in the history of music. *Wagner: Tristan und Isolde* featuring a deluxe 3-CD release set including full libretto is available to [pre-order now](#) through ABC Classics.

DON'T MISS WASO's 2019 GALA CONCERT

German soprano Gun-Brit Barkmin made an astonishing debut performance as Isolde and will return to perform with WASO 23 & 25 August for the 2019 Gala Concert, [An Evening with Gun-Brit Barkmin](#).

STAY TUNED FOR OUR 2020 SEASON ANNOUNCEMENT

In 2020, WASO aims to match the majesty and precision of *Tristan und Isolde* in a year-long program celebrating the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth including another landmark work to open the year in February. WASO's 2020 Season will be announced on August 26. Sign up to WASO's [SymphonEnews for updates](#).

WASO's *Tristan und Isolde*

Tristan und Isolde featured a remarkable cast of singers including Stuart Skelton, one of the world's greatest Wagner singers. One of his signature roles, Skelton has performed Tristan to great acclaim all over the world, from The Metropolitan Opera in New York to the English National Opera and Germany's Baden-Baden Festival, hailed as "a Tristan for the ages", his performance "an unflagging, glorious lighthouse of Wagnerian singing, with inexhaustible power, vibrant resonance allied to warmth, subtlety and grace, and committed dramatic expression".

Isolde was sung by German soprano Gun-Brit Barkmin, acclaimed over her glittering career for her interpretation of leading roles in works by Janáček, Britten, Berg, Wagner and Richard Strauss. Her Isolde was hailed as "thrilling", "an extraordinarily complete portrayal" that was "a revelation". The WASO team was so astonished by her performance that she was immediately invited back to perform with the orchestra on 23 & 25 August 2019 for *An Evening with Gun-Brit Barkmin*, our Gala Concert.

They are joined on this recording by an all-star cast including Ekaterina Gubanova, Boaz Daniel and Ain Anger, alongside the West Australian Symphony Orchestra conducted by their Principal Conductor Asher Fisch, one of today's supreme Wagner interpreters.

Tristan und Isolde changed forever the rules about what music should and could be, and introduced concepts – including chromaticism, dissonance and even atonality – which would define the development of music throughout the 20th century.

But it is above all a work of staggering beauty, of love unfulfilled, where singers and orchestra come together in some of the most sublime music ever written. "Life and death, the whole import and existence of the outer world," wrote Wagner himself, "here hang on nothing but the inner movements of the soul."

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and Cultural Industries





West Australian
Symphony Orchestra
ASHER FISCH PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR

Album available to preview [here](#).

Tristan und Isolde

Music and libretto by Richard Wagner 1813–1883

Stuart Skelton Tristan | **Gun-Brit Barkmin** Isolde
Ekaterina Gubanova Brangäne | **Boaz Daniel** Kurwenal
Ain Anger King Marke | **Angus Wood** Melot
Paul O'Neill Young Sailor / Shepherd
Andrew Foote Steersman

WASO Chorus
St George's Cathedral Consort

West Australian Symphony Orchestra
ASHER FISCH Conductor

Recorded live in concert, 16 & 19 August 2018
3CD | Available 16 August 2019 | ABC 481 8518

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