

timeout | talkingpoint

Realtime

Odd

LOS ANGELES: A Los Angeles police detective has broken the world record for the longest ferris wheel ride after going round and round for 25 hours. Detective Gus Martinez climbed aboard the 40m wheel at Santa Monica Pier's Pacific Park at 7.30am local time on Thursday. Except for hourly five-minute breaks, he did not stop riding it until 8.30am on Friday. "He finished quite solidly," said Guinness World Records adjudicator Philip Robertson. The previous mark, 24 hours and 30 minutes, was set by a woman in Dublin, Ireland, last year. — PA



DVD

Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy

Actor Gary Oldman gets it all sorts of right in this 1970s Cold War thriller starring as a British Intelligence Officer who has come out of forced retirement to try and find a Russian double agent high up in MI6. Based on the John Le Carre novel, this is a slow yet very deliberately built piece which pays off for those who delight in getting deep within drama. — CRAIG MILLER

TV

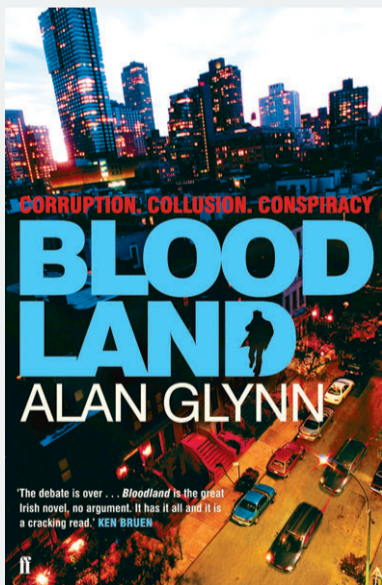
Laid, ABC1, 9pm

In tonight's season finale, Roo (Alison Bell) and E.J. (Celia Pacquola) have a confession session that leads to some startling revelations regarding Marcus (Damon Herriman), E.J.'s tryst and the bile-inducing secret E.J. has been guarding involving Jan (Deborah Kennedy). Roo again tries to mend bridges with Charlie (Abe Forsythe) but his condition has worsened. — TIM MARTAIN

Book

Bloodland, Alan Glynn, Faber & Faber, \$30

A young Irish journalist is warned off his impending biography about a screen starlet who died in a fiery helicopter crash. A routine security assignment goes to hell in the Congo, with the fallout likely to derail a US senator's presidential hopes. And an Irish ex-PM, mired in corporate corruption and grim cover-ups, is hitting the booze (and his wife), as the scandal threatens to go ballistic. The cast of characters tangled in Alan Glynn's web of intrigue is so extensive that at times it's hard to keep track. But as the action intensifies in this complex, deftly-woven global thriller the strands combine for a fittingly explosive denouement. — MIKE DALEY



Pop tweets



Gordon Currie
@hiplingo,
Northern
Ireland
Bearable in
small doses.

Twitter's company, Facebook's a crowd.



Caprice Crane
@capricecrane,
LA/NY
Novelist/
Screenwriter/
TV Writer

My favorite thing about the word "totes" is when people don't say it.

Brave new

OPERA has entered the modern era with a new style of production driving multimedia performance and high-definition filming.

Tasmanian operaphiles and have long been starved for operatic action, with both audiences and artists forced to fly interstate or overseas for cultural fulfilment.

There are rare exceptions, however; such as Constantine Koukias and IHOS Opera's performance *The Barbarians* during MONA FOMA 2012.

The stand-out performance, inspired by the iconic Greek Alexandrian poet Constantine Cavafy, combined immersive, multi-sensory avant-garde opera theatre with live orchestration and digital projections.

The minimal installation in City Hall was in collaboration with award-winning Tasmanian architectural and spatial design studio Liminal Spaces and a team of digital artists and technicians.

In August next year, *The Phantom of the Opera* premieres in Tasmania through the Tasmanian Theatre Unit Trust and Craig Wellington Productions, comprising the biggest regional release here since *Les Miserables* 18 years ago.

Tasmania's cultural withdrawal from opera is to be alleviated in the meantime by an ambitious new cinema program bringing the New York Metropolitan Opera to the intimate Museum of Old and New Art cinema in HD.

"High definition" is a term you may not associate with the stuffy, staid idea of old-fashioned opera outings, but the art form is storming a new, tech-enabled stage with renewed vigour.

It may be the key to opera's survival, as the industry faces challenges for the companies, artists and audiences in how to make 400-year-old art form relevant in 2012.

Last week, *The Australian* newspaper hosted a roundtable discussion to look for answers to the question: where to for opera in the 21st century?

The wide-ranging discussion covered everything from advances in technology to industrial agreements, reaching regional audiences,



REBECCA FITZGIBBON Culture

renewing Australian repertoire and the role of education in attracting a new generation of fans.

Technological developments in particular were heralded as returning to the forefront of contemporary opera.

Only 10 years ago, The Metropolitan Opera, an 140-year-old institution, was in perilous decline with an ageing audience that was decreasing in size each year.

But with The Met's new general manager Peter Gelb in 2004, the grand institution was successfully diverted by digital innovation.

One of Gelb's keys to refreshing the opera company's reach and clout was to present productions outside the live theatre environment, with *The Met: Live in HD* screenings licensed around the world.

The series has been a success in over 1500 cinemas in 40 countries, including here in Tasmania.

To whet the appetite for the upcoming screenings, MONA is showing the 2008 documentary *Wagner's Dream* tomorrow night, in which award-winning filmmaker Susan Froemke follows visionary director Robert Lepage's five-year project to bring German composer Richard Wagner's immense *Ring* cycle to The Met stage.

It is as epic and fraught with danger as Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (The Ring of the Nibelung, *The Ring Cycle* or just *The Ring*) should be.

The Ring is a cycle of four epic operas based on characters from the Norse sagas and has a reputation of



being a production feat of both endurance and technicality.

The four-cycle, 16-hour opera – in which Valkyries fly through the air, characters swim underwater, the god of storms strikes a hammer to summon thunder and lightning, apocalyptic fires engulf the land, rivers rise up to cover all, and gods walk up a rainbow bridge – is an astounding spectacle for operaphiles and operaphobes alike.

And under the visionary direction of Lepage, The Met Opera exceeds many limitations and expectations.

Lepage's solution for the \$16 million Met production was to

The case for making it plain

WHY not say "change" rather than "effect modifications", or "publish" rather than "promulgate", or "pay" instead of "remunerate"?

So say plain speaking advocates fighting to end "gobbledygook".

Winning such a battle "would benefit everyone", said people gathered in Washington recently for a three-day conference aimed at banishing jargon from laws, application forms, public notices, and even user manuals for television sets.

The event was organised by Clarity, a worldwide group of lawyers, top managers and heads of government services who argue for the use of plain language in place of legalese.

And it drew people from 20 countries, including Australia, France, Qatar, Estonia, and the Scandinavian nations.

"How can you have a democracy when the citizen does not

understand what the government is saying?" said Annetta Cheek, board chair of the Centre for Plain Language, at the event.

"It's becoming a more and more common perception in all sectors that they have to be more inclusive in their communication."

In 2010 the US adopted a law encouraging the simplification of administrative language.

The Swedish government, meanwhile, employs five lawyers to write its laws in simple language, and Portugal has introduced similar measures.

In France, for example, legal guidance on victims' rights is difficult to collate because there are so many documents and so many references that they are "obscure", said Olivia Zarcate, a young legal specialist at the conference.

Cheek said the damaging effects of jargon had been seen in the global financial crisis in 2008, as waves of

mortgage owners failed to understand what they were signing up for.

"The world financial crisis would have been less damaging if people had understood what those long documents said," Cheek said, referring to mortgage and credit applications, noting that finance is an area that affects everyone.

"If they had understood that in five years their interest payments would go through the roof, that if they didn't pay their credit card on time, their interest would go through the roof", less harm would have been done.

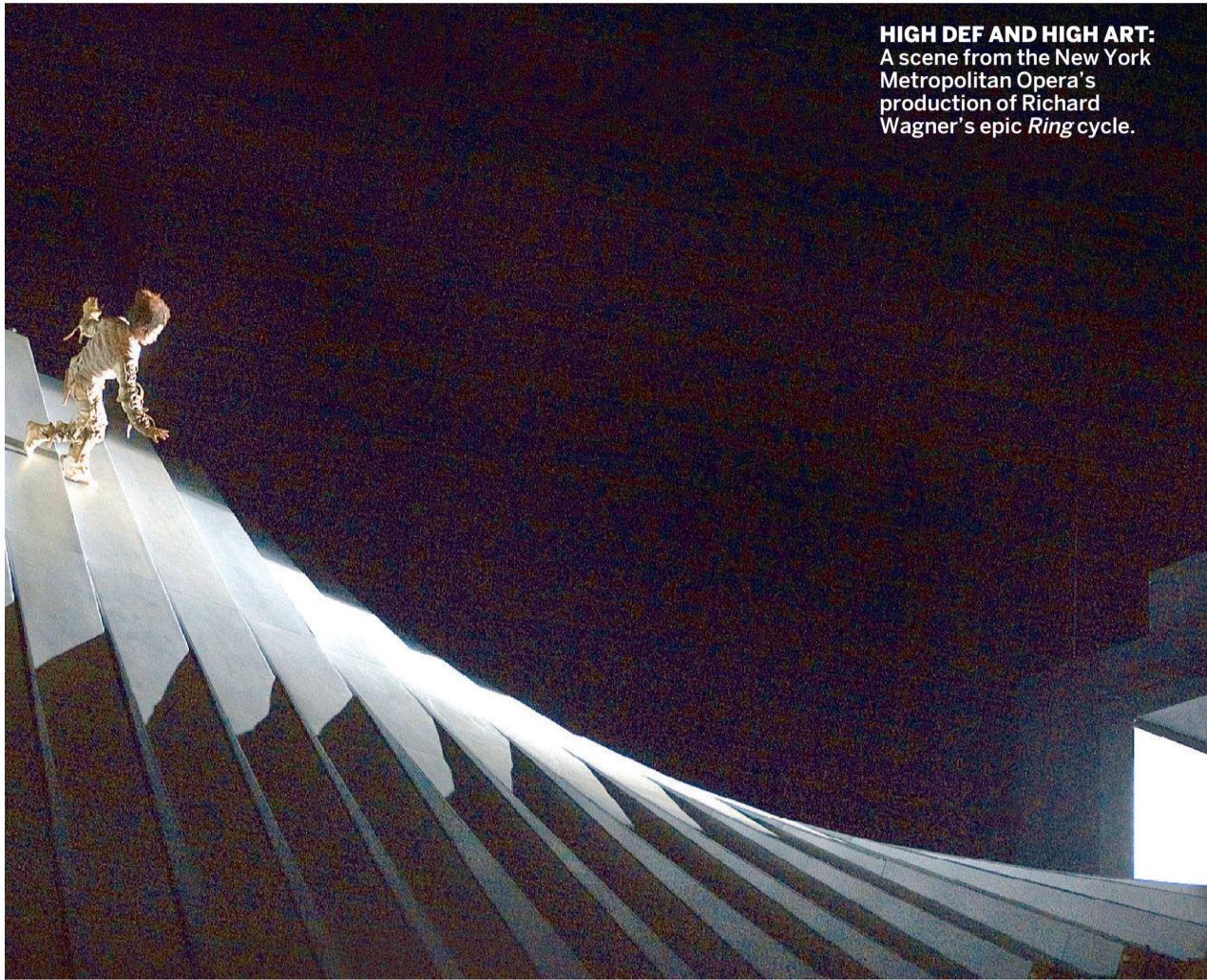
Joseph Kimble, a professor at the Thomas M. Cooley Law School, said stripping out jargon would benefit both the writers of documents as well as the people who read them.

"It pays off for everybody," said Kimble. "Plain language can restore faith in public institutions. Poor communication is the great hidden cost of doing business."

AFP

timeout | **talkingpoint**

world of opera



HIGH DEF AND HIGH ART: A scene from the New York Metropolitan Opera's production of Richard Wagner's epic *Ring* cycle.

It may be the key to opera's survival, as the industry faces challenges ... in how to make 400-year-old art form relevant

create an extraordinary 45-tonne contraption named "The Machine". It consists of two 8m towers connected by a horizontal axis 1.5m in diameter. Attached to this are 24

planks that rise, fall, ripple and splay around the computerised axis, creating dramatic simulations of Wagner's imaginary cosmos, aided by live video that reacts to the

movement of the performers. The costumed performers in abseiling carabineers precariously swing, fly over, climb up, slide down, scramble across, and ride horses on The Machine, while simultaneously singing the notoriously difficult dramatic opera passages.

The *Ring* and its mythically based libretto, written over the course of 26 years from 1848 to 1874, have been interpreted in a variety of ways by opera companies.

Since 1869, when King Ludwig II of Bavaria insisted on special previews – against Wagner's protests – of the

LORD OF THE RING

WAGNER'S Dream is screening at 2pm tomorrow at MONA. Bookings at www.mona.net.au/what's-on/cinema-program

The complete season of *Wagner's Ring Cycle from Met Opera: Captured Live in HD* begins screening on June 30 at MONA with the first cycle, *Das Rheingold*. Bookings at www.mona.net.au/what's-on/cinema-program and details at ringcycle.metoperafamily.org

Go online to watch the *Wagner's Dream* trailer: www.themercury.com.au

unfinished opera's cycles *Das Rheingold* and *Die Valkyrie* at the National Theatre in Munich, there have been interpretations and reinterpretations.

They have included a fairytale Ring, a Marxist Ring, a post-nuclear war Ring, a feminist Ring, a multinational corporate protest Ring and an Old West Ring. The Met Opera's newest may be seen as the Tech Ring. It's a promising, inspiring and perhaps daunting indication of where opera may be heading for those involved and those in the audience.

In December 2013, Opera Australia presents its first complete staging of Wagner's epic cycle *Der Ring des Nibelungen* at the Arts Centre in Melbourne.

The production incorporates the talents of acclaimed Australian theatre, film and opera director Neil Armfield (*Waiting for Godot*, *Twelfth Night*, *Candy*), award-winning Australian conductor Richard Mills (*Tristan and Isolde*, *Love of The Nightingale*, *Batavia*), and designer Robert Cousins (*Balibo*, *Romulus*, *My Father*, *Candy*) and marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of Richard Wagner. High expectations. No pressure.

fitzgibnonr@news.net.au

You said it

Health system bailout closer

What happened to Kevin Rudd's "the buck stops with me" in relation to the federal health takeover? Just another promise by a politician to get votes. All this federal money (if it comes) will do is keep this State Government in power until the next election. Health still needs fixing at a deeper level. A federal takeover of all health is the only answer.

Scott Purdon, of Hobart

Federal know they don't want to take over any health system because of the work and money involved proving the hollow promises and threats if the states didn't do this or that. Federal Labour has been dictating a policy to the Tasmanian Government that doesn't work in a state that doesn't have enough investment in industry for the economy. Just look at the utility cost debacle that's echoed across the country.

Paul Carroll, of Lindisfarne

JOIN THE DEBATE



The Tasmanian health system is in need of a major overall, after years of Labor incompetence. There should be a holistic approach to all layers of health for Tasmanians. The elective surgery process is a joke, people have to roll up a minimum of eight times before they are taken seriously for need of their surgery. State responsibilities should be taken over by the feds, after all anything is better than what we have.

Lionel Brown, of Hobart

Thank you Andrew Wilkie for your profound influence in our Federal Parliament. Without your support for this funding boost the short-sighted State Health Minister Michelle O'Byrne would still be foundering in her usual suspended state of arrogance that she continually displayed towards public health in Tasmania.

Robin Halton, of North Hobart

Ms O'Byrne forgot to mention we also have an incompetent, nepotistic government and health bureaucrats who can't run a bath!

Andrew Baker, of Hobart

Phone use clues to personality



SOCIAL TOOL: Many Australians just can't get by without their smartphones.

MANY of us have trouble functioning without sliding our finger over that shiny, vibrating device in our hand.

Whether it's organising a calendar, keeping up with friends or checking a work email after hours, many Australians just can't get by without their smartphone.

So it's perhaps not surprising psychologists are now studying the extent to which our use of smartphones reflects our personality.

Associate Professor Amanda Gordon, of the University of Canberra, says the "zookeeper" is the most common type of smartphone user, accounting for more than a third of connected Australians.

The zookeeper uses smartphone apps up to three times a week to organise their family life on a calendar, check an email and look at weather forecasts.

"Mobile handsets are now considered a life partner for most, holding valuable information and helping people to carry out their day-to-day lives through email, calendar, weather apps and social networking," she said.

Another personality type, the "constantly online professional", is contactable 24 hours a day.

To them, their smartphone is a business partner, mailbox and organiser all in one package.

More than two-thirds of these people check their emails once a day and are regular users of gaming apps.

The "fear of missing out" user is regarded as a social enthusiast who uses their smartphone to access their friends' activities.

They are frequent users of social media and are early adapters to new apps.

Then there is the "social creator" who like to voice their opinion first to avoid being seen as followers.

They frequently comment on online review and current affair sites, forums and blogs, and have a selection of news apps which they access up to four times a week.

The study of 1000 Australians for Optus was completed in March.

AAP

Hesaid it



Her wardrobe is unbelievable. It's amazing. I think that's why I have to keep playing!

– Soccer star David Beckham on his 10-month-old daughter Harper's clothes.