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THE MUSICIAN, THE PHILOSOPHER AND THE KING

An investigation into the relationship of Richard Wagner
with Friedrich Nietzsche and Ludwig II of Bavaria.

by

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The musician: Richard Wagner
(1813 - 1883)



The philosopher: Friedrich
Nietzsche (1844 - 1900)



The king: Ludwig II of Bavaria
(1845 - 1886)

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CONTENT

<u>CHAPTER</u>		<u>PAGE</u>
I	THE 19TH CENTURY PUT INTO HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE	1
	1.1 NINETEENTH CENTURY BACKGROUND AND VIEW OF LIFE	1
	1.2 THE STATUS OF MUSIC AND MUSICIANS IN SOCIETY	10
II	WAGNER AND NIETZSCHE	17
	2.1 FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE: A BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND	17
	2.2 THE WAGNER/NIETZSCHE RELATIONSHIP	20
III	WAGNER AND LUDWIG II	41
	3.1 KING LUDWIG II: A BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND	41
	3.2 LUDWIG II OF BAVARIA: A 19TH CENTURY SPONSOR	44
	3.3 LUDWIG: THE DREAM KING WHO IMMORTALIZED WAGNER'S CREATIVE WORK	60
IV	RICHARD WAGNER	75
	4.1 WILHELM RICHARD WAGNER: A BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND	75
	4.2 RICHARD WAGNER: A CONTROVERSIAL GENIUS	77
V	CONCLUSION	99
	<u>BIBLIOGRAPHY</u>	120

THE 19TH CENTURY PUT INTO HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

1.1 19TH CENTURY BACKGROUND AND VIEW OF LIFE

In order to understand the views of the 19th century, the prior streams of thought in their turn must be understood. The events and philosophies of the past broaden and impress the thoughts of a given age, its aspirations and its ideals. They also serve to justify specific attitudes of thought as they lay the foundation of a way of life upon which the present and the future is based. Thus are human values and norms moulded and formed, their aim and direction established, leading to further development.

During the Renaissance period, 1450 - 1600, there was a rebirth, an intellectual awakening of man partly as a reaction against the Middle Ages during which the two ruling social systems were the Church and the Aristocracy. Musicians and artists were to a large extent viewed as craftsmen who had to fulfil a practical function at court or in the church and obedience and humility was the norm. When viewing the Renaissance as a reaction against an outmoded order of society one could see it as the revulsion against the suppression of the free expression of man as an individual.

For a variety of reasons ^{1.} the Renaissance further brought

1. i. Cultural advancement was made possible by economic prosperity. The crusades and the means of contact with the east brought about a socio-economic revival. There occurred the rise of a third commercial class.
- ii. Voyages of discovery opened up channels for colonisation; Columbus discovered the New World in 1492, da Gama rounded the Cape in 1498. New maps were drawn.
- iii. There were advances in technology such as the invention of the printing press which led to the availability of cheaper books, active study, independent thought and research. Music printing was done by Petrucci in Venice, 1501.
- iv. Scientific discoveries revealed the earth as round; the telescope and compass were invented and Copernicus gave a heliocentric i.e. sun-centred, mechanistic description of the universe.

an increase in scholarly interest in Classical learning and universities were established to satisfy the demand. Together with this there took place a rapid urban growth and concentrated economic and cultural activity. Leading citizens were often prominent patrons of the arts, the Medici family of Florence being an example of such a patronage system. The intellectual awakening included a revival of Greek and Roman civilization which even now forms part of our cultural heritage. The Greek civilization influenced art, literature and philosophy in a spiritual and humanistic sense, whereas in terms of applied subjects such as mathematics and science as well as in the practical field of architecture this influence pertained more to Roman civilization.

During the Renaissance man came to be all important. The new mood amounted to a tendency to liberate mankind from the authority of the Church and the accent gradually shifted to Reason by which man could control his actions and set his own norms and values in life. The resulting rationalism is a 17th Century product which may be seen as the continuation of Renaissance humanism to the extent that it was the culmination of the belief in man's ability to make nature rationally comprehensible. This rationalistic outlook found further impetus in Isaac Newton's scientific discoveries which articulated the conception of a mechanistically understood law and order in the universe. Rationalism emphasizes reason, which is an ability of man. In contrast to the theocentric world view of the Middle Ages, the Rationalist emphasized the intellect as the only source of certainty, this being epitomized in Descartes' "I think, therefore I am." 2.

According to the rationalistic ideal the mind has privileged access to all knowledge and science through the power of thought. Even as early as the Renaissance some writers had expressed their belief in man's ability to construct an ideal society. The Empiricism and Environmentalism of the 17th and 18th Centuries respectively continued this trend

2. Descartes, Discourse on Method and the Meditations, The Chaucer Press Ltd., Suffolk, Great Britain, 1968, page 53.

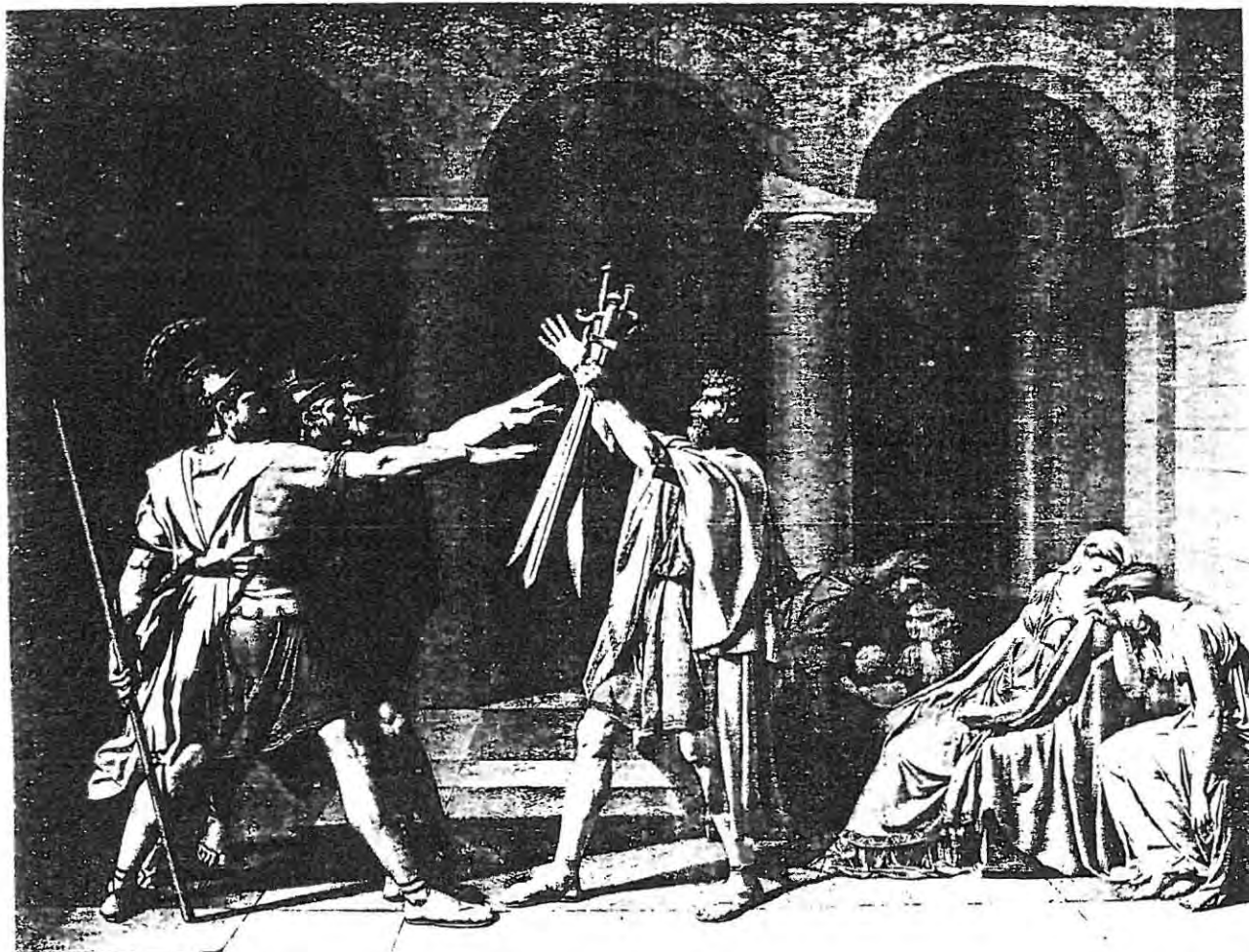
of thought, projecting an absolutely certain system of knowledge which would render mankind as the master of nature. The Empirical tradition, the parallel stream of thought in the 17th Century voiced by Bacon, Locke and Hume was slightly less optimistic than the Rationalist school of thought because of the importance attributed to experience as a true source of knowledge. On the other hand, the Environmentalism of the 18th Century was a descendent of 17th Century Empiricism, believing in the unrestricted possibilities of the development of man through, for instance, controlled education.

The advance of science, being the manifestation of man's newly established independence, encouraged progress in many fields. That which had previously been accepted uncritically as the truth had to be challenged and if found wanting in terms of scientific criteria, discarded. Intellectual Europe in modern i.e. post Renaissance times was in the process of emancipating itself from the past.

New ideas and sentiments appeared in France where the late 18th Century became known as the Age of Enlightenment. The philosophical outlook of this era was not to the liking of either the aristocracy or the church, because it was in contrast to the dogmas laid down by them. In the work of, among others, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712 - 1778) a shift in emphasis occurred from reason to nature. In addition to reason, Rousseau invokes nature as a touchstone in his 'critique of society.' He wanted to change the order and structure of society with the intention of creating one which was more humane, with the accent on freedom and equality of the individual. This came to expression in self-confidence and artistic self assertion and resulted in an idealistic concentration on individualism. For Rousseau as for many other 18th Century thinkers the conventions and traditions of society had to be tested anew with criteria which have their foundation in nature. Here, as elsewhere, in the Enlightenment the emphasis was on change. The ideas of humanism and rationalism which had their roots in the Renaissance gathered momentum, finally culminating in revolution.

With the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 the end of an epoch was reached when the existing order of society was terminated, not only by the execution of King Louis XVI and many members of the aristocracy, but also by the rise of the Middle Class.

A strong feeling of nationalism had already started to develop before the revolution, as can be seen in the stress on virtuous republicanism in the art of Jacques-Louis David e.g. his famous "The Oath of the Horatii."



Oath of the Horatii, by Jacques-Louis David.

Reinforced by the revolution, this nationalism spread to neighbouring countries of post-revolutionary France. German society in particular became proud of its cultural heritage and all wanted to share and participate in this inheritance

in true patriotic spirit. This force also found expression in Kant's "call to duty" as the true criterion of morality. The emphasis on conscience, together with his stress on reason and experience, makes Emmanuel Kant the German counterpart to Rousseau.

The direction of German nationalism is reflected in the succession of Kant by Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. Fichte interprets Kant's critical philosophy in an individualistic, activist manner, which may be seen as the philosophic source of many of the ideas of Romanticism. Schelling on the other hand develops German thought further to an objective idealism which stresses nature as the supreme work of art, and God as the artist. The work of Fichte and Schelling is given a synthesis in the philosophy of Hegel who interprets history as the unfolding of the World Spirit or Logos. For Hegel, this process goes through the self-alienation of the Spirit in nature to its eventual return to itself via man in art, religion and philosophy. In the last, Spirit knows itself once more.

Modern man's reflection on a meaningful existence, as articulated in the different philosophies of rationalism and empiricism, accumulated into the thought of the 19th Century which became the most disunited century to date in European history. Theology and science had long since lost their power to unify Western culture. The pace of living as such had accelerated and this, together with the increasing complexity of knowledge, contributed to the general confusion.

One of the significant developments in 19th Century thought was that of anarchy. This total disregard for rules could be attributed to the concentration on individualism, and the desire for freedom of expression, whereby justice could be done to man's emotional and imaginative life, as opposed to the narrow, rational outlook of the 18th Century. The stress on freedom of expression resulting in a growing subjectivism was a reaction to the law-dominated world projected by science and formed the point of departure for the Romantic Era. A situation had been reached where, instead of

viewing society in static terms, the reciprocal relationship between the individual and the nation was articulated in terms of a changing social organism. The status of man therefore rose in some quarters, though it declined in others, notably in the pessimistic rationalism of Schopenhauer and, in a different way, in the Darwinian brute image of man shaped by evolution. These ideas became manifest in social thought, politics, philosophy and art and were expressive of the diversified 19th Century view of life. All the questions to which man was seeking the answer were re-examined in the light of imagination and of reason: this reason being very different from Locke's or Kant's "understanding." ³.



The Dream of Reason Produces Monsters, by Francisco Goya.

3. Baumer, F.L. Modern European Thought, Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc., New York, 1977, page 287.

The fact that history concerned itself more and more with the individual and the particular than with general laws, was symptomatic of the growing particularization. The context in which the 19th Century reflected the increasing differentiation of Western thought may be seen from the fact that the idea-historian, Franklin Baumer, found it necessary to classify the multiplicity of these ideas into four different worlds of thought. However, these schools of thought were not sealed off from one another and ideas from one did influence and infiltrate the others.

In the first of these, the Romantic world, there was a yearning for the mysterious and this included a reaction against the mechanistic, rationalistic, Newtonian world-view which the Romantics felt was an attempt to subject all life to reason and thus to mechanize and demean it. In opposition to Newton's world, the Romantics offered their own night-time world, as it is the night, in contrast to day, which carries the soul beyond space, projecting the thoughts and emotions into a world of man's own making. Coleridge believed the mind to be wonderfully creative and that by means of imagination, creation and invention, new worlds could be brought to life by man. The Romantics felt that art and even science contained more freedom and spontaneous creation than specified by the order of fixed rules and laws. They were aware of living in a world of creativity and development wherein feelings of passion and an experience of the remote, fantastic and strange could be legitimately expressed. Romanticism touched off a religious revival, and one of the forms of this revival was a new 'nature mysticism.' It was as though man needed to recover his metaphysical and religious bearings in order to justify the emergence of heroes and the creation of great works of art. The influence of Rousseau can be seen in the idea of a return to nature; the Romantics sought to make nature a place in which man could once again live and feel close to God. These "natural supernaturalists"⁴ radicalized the ideas of God and nature, in that they divinized nature, and God was brought down to

4. Baumer, F.L. Modern European Thought, Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc., New York, 1977, page 278

dwell in, for example, the blue sky and in the mind of man. The Romantics commonly saw man in the context of great cosmic forces that enveloped him in a whole or infinity greater than himself. The emphasis on the greater whole does not contradict an equally strong emphasis on individuality and even though Romanticism contributed much to the rise of nationalism, it did not negate individualism. Romantic thought depicted the nation itself as a great individual different from other nations, and the 'Volk', bound together by religion, language and literature, grew and became a living whole greater than its individual parts.

The second, the most optimistic of these worlds, the New Enlightenment, was a continuation in spirit of the 18th Century Enlightenment, exhibiting many of the same general traits. The followers of this movement also displayed the optimism about history and human nature as found in the old enlightenment.

These ideas were taken a step further by the Romantics and philosophers of the New Enlightenment, who, thirsting for the infinite, gave free rein to the emotional and irrational side of human nature. The same preoccupation with social problems and the assault on traditional religion continued, as was the case in the old enlightenment. There was a belief in the greatness of man and in his ability to make his own destiny by providence. Man very nearly became deified in that many of the properties and powers formerly invested only in God, became ascribed to the individual who was viewed as a 'demi-god.'

With Darwinism or Evolutionism the question concerning the nature of man and the behaviour of social groups, including nations, stimulated fresh thinking. After 1859 the idea of evolution dominated European thought and projected a new picture of nature as a "cosmic process",⁵ but without design. With the idea of evolution a new conflict occurred between science and theology. Man himself was viewed as part of the evolutionary process deriving from the

5. Baumer, F.L. Modern European Thought, Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc., New York, 1977, page 339.

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lowly origin of the animal kingdom. However, there was a certain amount of optimism, with the emphasis placed on creativity and on nature's ability to produce new and superior forms. Darwinism helped to mould the least unified of the four worlds of thought, the 'Fin-de-Siècle.'

The phrase 'Fin-de-Siècle' had reference to the decadence of the period 1880 to 1890 which represented neither a unified nor a dominant mode of thought. It was the culmination of certain trends in thinking that had been forming for decades in which there was a revolt against the whole pattern of values and conventions. There was a reaction against positivism and doubts were expressed about God as well as nature. Disillusionment set in, and along with this sceptical climate a new culture arose in which the Self of Subjectivism, and of experience for the sake of experience, were able to thrive. Intuition was the way to truth and could liberate and integrate the human personality. With this came the feeling of not quite knowing where certainty lay.

The 19th Century was an unsettling period in which the irrational meant different things to different people and could inspire either optimism or pessimism. Every century favours a particular mode of thought to convey its deepest convictions, and during the 19th Century the four main trends of thought gave rise to continual change and development. Within Europe itself there was a shift in the balance of intellectual power in which Germany rose as the foremost. The type of national sentiment stressing the uniqueness of, and the difference between, the leading nations, each with its own culture, gave rise to the State of Germany repelling other ideas in order to flourish in purity. She excelled in the natural as well as the cultural sciences, and it is within this climate that Richard Wagner tried to create a new unified world, not only by means of his pen but also through the medium of his musical compositions.

1.2 THE STATUS OF MUSIC AND MUSICIANS IN SOCIETY

Society and its cultural products are very closely intertwined as music had always entered into a symbiosis with the ruling social system. Up to the French Revolution, 1789, music had a certain function within the social structure, a structure ruled by the church and the court, either together or separately. This condition greatly influenced music, giving quality and abundance by its sponsorship. Often the musician was viewed as a craftsman who had to fulfil a function at court or in the church. J.S. Bach, for example, while at the court of Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen during the period 1717 - 1723, wrote mainly instrumental music. On the other hand, from 1723 when in the service of St Thomas church at Leipzig, he concentrated on religious music. However, even though a composer was obliged to obey the dictates of his sponsor, he had a secure livelihood within the structure of the patronage system. The economic and social climate was not ready to accommodate Independent musicians in society.

The church and nobility remained the most important patrons of art throughout the Baroque period, but the careers of many artists now combined service to patrons with independent activity. Handel, while fulfilling his duties as Musical Director to the Elector of Hanover, twice asked for leave of absence to go to London, subjecting himself to disfavour by not returning to Hanover after his second visit in 1712. Although he composed oratorios and operas which were well received, his venture into the business world by establishing his own opera house, proved unsuccessful. Owing to conflict and rivalry he faced bankruptcy. When the Elector of Hanover was crowned King George II of England, Handel gradually won himself back into courtly favour through his music and his growing reputation as one of London's leading musicians.

Towards the middle of the 18th Century two complementary forces converged changing the patronage situation totally.

Most aristocrats could no longer afford to employ composers, while most composers no longer wished to remain in servitude because of the intellectual climate of the Age of Enlightenment. The status of the middle class rose, and the composer-musician was no longer viewed as a servant, but as a respected member of society. The middle class grew stronger throughout the Classical era: the growth of individualism challenging the idea that monarchs rule by divine right.

The Classical period was one of transition in music as well as in society. A preference for simplicity in both art and music emerged: a demand for simpler music which could speak directly to the human mind and soul. The change of taste led to a swing from the contrapuntal style to music where melody and harmony were given more stress. The composer wished for freedom to express the clarity and beauty of his art without the restrictions placed on him by a sponsor requiring fulfillment of his own desires. In the position of Senior Kapellmeister to both Prince Paul Anton Esterhazy and his successor Prince Nicolas "the Magnificent," Joseph Haydn was fortunate. Not only had he no worries concerning his livelihood: his employers were devoted to music, giving him considerable artistic freedom. During the period 1791 - 1795 he was twice invited by Salomon to visit England where, by the end of the 18th Century, music was no longer restricted to the church or reserved for the aristocracy, making it possible for impresarios such as Salomon to arrange public concerts.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's position in society was one of contrast, ranging from the adoration of a worshipping public at a young prodigy's genius in composition and performance, to rejection and misery during the last ten years of his life. He was expected to follow in his father's footsteps under the sponsorship of the Archbishop of Salzburg but, owing to an independent spirit evidenced by a clash of temperament and personality, he broke away from the patronage system and tried to make a living on his own. He was unsuccessful, and led a difficult life in Vienna, where he was burdened by overwork and financial problems in addition to a health

undermined by the severe illnesses of his childhood.

After the French Revolution music entered into a symbiosis with man as the noble man. The composer became the subject of his art, as the music reflected his personality. This philosophic attitude bred self-confidence and artistic self-assertion. Music was no longer written for adoration, but functioned as a mirror expressing the personal emotions of the individual. Music had thus to seek a symbiosis with the philosophical concept not represented by an authority, but by an idea.

Beethoven took up residence in Vienna during the aftermath of the French Revolution. The French troops soon marched through Austria, and aristocrats streamed like refugees into Vienna. The old social order was weakening to the point of chaos, and it was natural in such an environment that there would be changes in the aspirations of young composers such as Beethoven. It was also natural that the social attitudes towards musicians would change, as no longer could they be considered simply the servants of the upper class. The aristocrat of ancestry learned to treat the aristocrat of spiritual worth as his equal. Beethoven was an historical inevitability, and was the first musician of common background to mix with the aristocracy on his own terms. He considered that talent gave him the right to associate on an equal footing with the nobility. Though intermittently sponsored by various princes, he deferred to no-one. He had absolute confidence in his own standards, social and musical, and was fierce in his insistence on originality as the mark of the true artist. He conquered the Viennese aristocracy through sheer force of genius and personality. Beethoven was an individualist who provided universal, well-balanced entertainment for an elite group, but who searched the depths of his soul for the expression of his personal feelings. This situation set the tone for the Romantic movement, of which Beethoven can truly be called the artistic father.

12.

Music received a completely new and exalted status in 19th Century society, and various philosophers and artists assigned to music the ability of world improvement. To the Romantics, Beethoven was the model in this respect, as he represented the depiction of humanitarian ideals as seen, for example, in the choral movement of his ninth symphony based on the words of Schiller's "Ode to Joy." The Romantic artist was viewed as a hero who not only tolerated isolation but also gloried in it, hoping to expose by his own eccentric and sometimes shocking behaviour the moral hypocrisy of the age. The highly charged atmosphere of individualism produced art with heavily subjective qualities. Emotional and personal forces predominated, and states of feeling were accorded great importance. The theme of nature in its many different moods symbolised human emotions which could be gentle and soothing or mysterious and violent. Schubert, in his composition of lieder, chose to sing of natural themes such as the brook, the field, or the countryside. His lieder are filled with symbolism in which the musical sounds are meant to represent the sounds and feelings of life itself.

With nationalism there occurred the rise of a new concert-going public and the secularisation of society. One no longer had only a refined aristocracy, or a religious congregation using art to intensify devotion, but additionally an unsophisticated, sentimental public that valued art primarily as entertainment. Composers now had to convince the public that their music was worthy, as well as being able to fulfil the function of art as a vehicle for entertainment. Many of the pianoforte compositions of Robert Schumann were brought to the attention of this public through the medium of performance by his wife, Clara. However, despite his accomplishments as a composer, and the emotional and artistic partnership he enjoyed in his marriage, he suffered from bouts of depression, and grew less and less able to deal with the world until he was taken to an asylum where he died in 1856.

Misunderstanding, loneliness and suffering were the lot of

Romantic artists. This state of affairs persisted throughout Franz Schubert's career as a composer. His life is a story of divine creative gifts destroyed by poverty and illness, by disappointment, deferred hopes, and cruel neglect. At the age of twenty he gave up his position as a school-teacher. Although most of the time he lived off his friends, who encouraged and helped him, he had no money and no income, except for an occasional pittance from music lessons or the sale of a song.

The 19th Century composer had gained his freedom, but was living in a world which made it difficult for him to survive artistically and economically. Shattered dreams, emotional conflict and depression forced the artist into seeking another world in the realm of fantasy and as an outlet for inspiration. The 'Symphonie Fantastique' by Hector Berlioz, captured the imagination of the public, though it offended many of his musical contemporaries. The programme of the symphony is quite detailed, and develops scenes of strongly Romantic contrasts. The hero, deep in an opium-inspired dream, has visions ranging from one extreme to another, and his mind paints images both wild and poetic. In order to survive, the 19th Century composer now had to satisfy the needs of a fickle public, and Berlioz's music, with its early use of an enlarged orchestra, and its daring exploitation of the possibilities of tone colour, startled many of the audiences of his day.

The 19th Century saw the composer critic: the versatile musician with literary tendencies. He no longer lived in a narrow world of which boundaries were laid down by the court or church, but became involved in religion and politics, voicing his opinions in journals and newspapers. He was aware that the pen is a powerful weapon through which his fame would spread, thereby ensuring that he became known and remembered not by his music alone. In the diaries of Cosima Wagner she quotes Richard as saying: "The musician who does nothing but write music from morning till night, entirely ignoring the world of ideas, must be an ox - he is missing

far more than those who, knowing nothing of music, observe the rest of the world." ⁶.

Of the musicians of the 19th Century it was mainly Liszt who undertook to make the public aware of the new status of music and musicians. He demanded, that in the interest of cultural progress, music be introduced in elementary schools. He wanted cheap editions of the great masterworks to be available to the masses. In his six articles on the position of artists (1835), he strongly criticized the existing status of teachers and the conditions under which music was being taught. His ideas on music incorporated religious and humanitarian ideals.

Because music is able to express what language cannot say, it gives the ultimate depth of expression, and therefore some composers and philosophers felt that music had become the most important art form of the 19th Century. Schopenhauer was distrustful of the power of words, and placed more emphasis on feeling. He looked upon music not as the copy of the "Ideas," but as the copy of the "Will" itself; and because music speaks of the "Thing" itself, its effect is more powerful and penetrating than that of the other arts. According to Hegel, life is a never-ending state of progressional development, and in musical creation this logical progress can be seen. The composer is in conflict with a world full of opposing forces, which he resolves in imaginative musical forms. The state of development in which music exists at the moment reflects the state of cultural development of a certain group at the time. Hegel felt that music is a synthesis of reason and feeling, and that the irrational becomes rational through the medium of vocal music. Schopenhauer, in the other hand, believed that through music man can escape from the irrational will which dominates his life, and can achieve union with the universal will.

6. Wagner, Cosima. *Cosima Wagner's Diaries*, Collins, St. Jame's Place, London, 1978, Volume I, page 181.

There was a vast source of aesthetic ideas on music in the 19th Century, but on the whole they were narrowly conceived to suit a particular set of demands. However, they do form a source of material for research and are a great help in the understanding of music in general, and of the music of the Romantic era in particular. It is within the historical and philosophical setting that we come to a real understanding of Wagner's musical style. Music was developing towards a merger of the arts, and this was exemplified in his "Gesamtkunstwerk" where poetry, drama, music and painting became part of his music dramas. He felt strongly that there should be no dominating factor in a musical composition, that all should combine equally and flow without interruption to form the whole. In Wagner this resulted in a positive fusion of the arts, and through this fusion a new style was born. However, it was in the aesthetical approach forming the basis for achieving this fusion, that Wagner was to lose the friendship of the philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche. Although both shared the same view of the manner in which the new musical style was to uplift man and free him from the shackles of Romanticism, they later had sharp differences of opinion.

This short discussion serves as an introduction which merits an investigation into the life of Nietzsche.

WAGNER AND NIETZSCHE

2.1 FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE: A BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Friedrich Nietzsche was born on 15 October 1844 at Röcken, near Lützen, in the province of Saxony. His father, Karl Ludwig Nietzsche was a vicar and his mother was the child of a pastor, a combination conducive to a religious upbringing. As a youth it was Nietzsche's delight to seclude himself and read the Bible, or read it to others with such feeling as to bring tears to their eyes. He remained a preacher to the end and stated, "What I am not, that for me is God and virtue." ⁷

After the death of his father and his brother, the family moved to Naumburg where Nietzsche attended a private school in preparation for the Cathedral Gymnasium, Schulpforta near Naumburg. He entered the Gymnasium in 1854 and had good reason to be proud of this institution, as Fichte and Schlegel, among other philosophers, had spent their student days there.

Nietzsche's studies were constantly made difficult by persistent headaches and eye pains and in 1856 he had to leave the Gymnasium temporarily. At the age of fourteen he received a full scholarship as a live-in student at the State School at Pforta. There the rigorous discipline enforced upon the students constricted his intellectual mobility, which he always tried to regain during vacations. During the next few years his headaches became worse and the medical record mentions his hard gaze, short sightedness and the torment he underwent from erratic headaches. It was felt that the headaches may have been heredity, for Nietzsche had been conceived when his father was ill and suffering with softening of the brain. Nevertheless, in 1864 Nietzsche obtained his diploma receiving excellent marks in his major subjects, but just passing mathematics.

7. Nietzsche, Friedrich. Thus Spake Zarathustra, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1967, page 146.

At the end of his schooldays he distinguished himself with an outstanding contribution in classics, 'De Theognide Megarensi.' He spent two unproductive semesters studying classics in Bonn where he suddenly passed into a period of sensual riot with his college mates. But soon wine, women and tobacco disgusted him and he reacted with great scorn towards the society of his time and his country.

After a brief experience of military service he continued his academic life as a philologist and became a Doctor of Philology. At twenty five the Swiss Government awarded him a full professorship, appointing him to the chair of classical philology at the University of Basle. Not far from Basle was Tribschen, the home of Richard Wagner where Nietzsche spent many happy days in the company of his closest friend.

Nietzsche described himself as being earnest in all manner of circumstances and towards the end his work grew in bitterness. He attacked people as well as ideas; Wagner, who was no longer his hero was publicly ridiculed. Christianity also became his target because there was so much true moral spirit in him that he was able to differentiate between the genuine and the artificial. In his philosophy of Nihilism, the traditional Christian view of life was condemned and exposed as hypocritical.

Disease and increasing blindness were the physiological cause of his breakdown, while even his laughter became neurotic as his mind disintegrated. He gave way to paranoid delusions of grandeur and persecution, his last book 'Ecce Homo' being full of mad self-praise.

In January 1889, Nietzsche collapsed in a street in Turin, Italy. He blindly stumbled back to his attic room from where he wrote the most unusual letters to Cosima Wagner. He also wrote to Burckhardt and Overbeck, two of his friends, and his letter to Brandes bore the signature "The Crucified." Overbeck rushed to Nietzsche's aid and found him ploughing the keyboard with his elbows, singing and crying his Dionysian ecstasy. He was taken to an asylum, but soon his aged

mother came to look after him. When she died in 1897 Nietzsche was taken by his sister to live in Weimar. There, at last, he experienced the peace and quiet which he never enjoyed when he was sane. He died in 1900.

"Seldom has a man paid so great a price for genius." ⁸.

8. Durant, Will. The Story of Philosophy, Washinton Square Press, New York, 1961, page 447.

2.2 THE WAGNER/NIETZSCHE RELATIONSHIP

The first consequence of the friendship between the two men was that Nietzsche enthusiastically perused Wagner's poetic and aesthetic writings. He clearly realised Wagner's admiration for Antiquity, but possibly set too much store by it. In a letter to Nietzsche in 1872 Wagner admitted that, as a youth he had become excited about Classical Antiquity, and was particularly fascinated by Greek mythology, as well as being drawn to the study of the Greek language. However, the study of Greek civilization which helped shape young Wagner, and made him seem right for a career in classics, had a negligible effect on his life's work. Perhaps Nietzsche overestimated Wagner's enthusiasm for Antiquity, resulting in his failure to understand why Wagner's music dramas evolved into stage productions far removed from the standard of Classical Greek serenity and purity. Yet Nietzsche could not have remained in complete ignorance of the direction into which Wagner's music was heading, as he had already experienced misgivings that Romantic music in particular, was bound to evolve into the most un-Greek of all forms of art. This concern and confirmation became a source of disillusionment to him, with regard to the anti-Classical music of his idol, Wagner. 'Tristan' had epitomised the standard of Nietzsche's ideals, even though after hearing the opera he confessed to not understanding Wagner's music, thus showing that his enthusiasm was far from blind. However, his further expectations could have been influenced by pre-occupation with his own cause, with Wagner as the redeemer of cultural life, to the extent that his ideal was shattered by 'Parsifal', which to him was a contradiction of all he had expected.

Their ideas differed with regard to the importance laid on the element of nationalism. Wagner believed that when Greek drama died, and was absorbed into European culture, it split into a number of single arts. The concept of a new totality could only lie in a work of art whose true author was the nation. He was of the opinion that the Hellenic model would make the people realize that THE Art constituting the essence of a nation, is born of the needs of that nation, and is the

very substance of all who experience this collective need. He evoked this model when delineating his concept of a total artwork of the future, by which he hoped to solve the problem of unification. On the other hand, Nietzsche's evolution was without a nationalistic undertone, and his interest was focused on probing the Greek intellect through the study of Greek literature. In 'The Birth of Tragedy', Nietzsche said: "Everything that rises to the surface in the Apollonian portion of the Greek tragedy (in the dialogue) looks simple, transparent, beautiful. In this sense the dialogue is a mirror of the Greek mind, whose nature manifests itself in dance, since in dance the maximum power is only potentially present, betraying itself in the suppleness and opulence of movement."⁹ He held the viewpoint that each and every Greek activity is surrounded by a philosophical world view, in which all that is single and isolated disappears, and all that remains is totality and unity. In his lecture 'The Greek Musical Drama', of which he sent a copy to the Wagners at Tribschen, he discussed his re-interpretation of the Greek mind, and gave a description of Greek art. In many great minds of the past, including Goethe, Schiller and Heine, Nietzsche found the polarity of 'Apollonian' and 'Dionysian,' two concepts acquiring a key function in his thought. For Nietzsche the antithesis of the two notions became a synthesis in Greek drama: the hostile Greek gods, Apollo and Dionysus joining into necessary interdependence. In early Greek culture he saw that two forms of art, tragedy and music, could be characterised as Apollonian and Dionysian. In ancient Greek mythology, Dionysus was the god of wine and fertility, while Apollo was the god of medicine, music, poetry and all the fine arts. At Dionysian festivals prizes were offered for the best tragedies and comedies, and in this way the cult came to be closely associated with the development of Greek drama. The Dionysian chorus, in Nietzsche's opinion, evolved into tragedy, whereas music nourished myth, which the theatre then tamed in performance. The musical performance at these festivals can be pictured

9. Nietzsche, Friedrich. The Birth of Tragedy, Doubleday and Company, Inc. United States of America, 1956, page 59.

as a communion of the feelings, first expressed in dance and song, then intensified, leading to self-oblivion, in which the music became well-nigh visible to the disciples of Dionysus. From this perspective of the origin of tragedy in the Dionysian chorus the orchestra in front of the stage gains a deeper significance. Originally the stage and the action were contained by the singing. Wagner similarly explained the relationship between music and action; but now the orchestra, rather than the chorus, had to fulfil the creative mission of the music. He affirmed that the sound of music could be seen on the stage. His orchestra was thus hidden from view, so as not to distract the audience, nor detract from the unification of the concept of the whole art work. The classicist Nietzsche, must have been fascinated by what Wagner said about the essence of Greek theatre, and while still under the spell of Wagner, decided to write his first book 'The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music.' He believed that Wagner was another Aeschylus, restoring myths and symbols, and writing music and drama again in the Dionysian manner. Wagner's dramatic style seemed to set both a standard goal and measure for a musical theatre movement which would endure for a long time. He further felt that there should be a reformation of German music, as too long had the German spirit passively reflected the art of Italy and France. The German people should recognise that their own instincts are sounder than those of foreign cultures.

Both Wagner and Nietzsche studied the philosophy of Schopenhauer, whom they believed to be the only philosopher who understood music. He gave music a special place in the meaning of life, in that it seemed to express directly the form and reality of things. Music may not be able to convey any rational knowledge, but for the duration of its performance all temporal needs are taken from us. Schopenhauer maintained that one could free oneself in music, because it affects the feelings directly, and touches something more subtle than the intellect: the soul. His impact on Wagner was powerful and lasting, as the composer now applied conscious formulae for attitudes artistically expressed in 'The Ring' and 'The Flying Dutchman.' The philosopher offered Wagner the key to a deeper understanding of his own work. Contemplating the philosophy that compassion, rooted in the deepest part of human will, is the only true basis

for all ethics, made Wagner think differently about his own art. Previously he had looked upon music as a means of expression which required for its realization an object to which it lends expression: drama. But Schopenhauer's theory of music brought him to a different view, that music is not an image or a reflection of the will but that in music the will can manifest itself directly. Wagner's earlier viewpoint, that the arts are directly and impersonally gathered under the dominion of the word, changed after reading Schopenhauer's magnum opus, 'The World as Will and Idea.' In this, music is described as the highest, most liberating form of art, able to express what words cannot; the essence of the metaphysical with no mediating representation. What Schopenhauer heard in music as a tidings from the world beyond Wagner wanted to bring forth in his own music, as he believed Schopenhauer to be the one philosopher to recognise the very essence of music. In his autobiography, Wagner said: "What fascinated me so enormously about Schopenhauer's work was not only its extraordinary fate, but the clearness and manly precision with which the most difficult metaphysical problems were treated from the very beginning."¹⁰ Intuition, along with his grasp of music, led Wagner to regard music as predominant in opera. In his article 'Opera and Drama' Wagner postulated the idea that modulation as an expression of constantly changing emotions was a function of the poetry. These ideas were bound to result in random sequences of keys within the overall structure of his work, a technique that Nietzsche later flatly rejected. Wagner tied his theory of the 'Gesamtkunstwerk' to Schopenhauer's views of the symbolism of dreams and visions. Because of its clairvoyance, music is celebrated as being superior to all other arts; its kinship to poetry is purely illusory, as a piece of music retains its character no matter what lyrics are sung to it. To illustrate this point, Wagner pointed out that in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Schiller's verses were set to music with no regard for the words, and it is the inspiration of the hymnal melody which uplifts the listener.

10. Wagner, Richard. *My Life*, Constable and Company, Ltd. London, 1911, Volume II, page 615.

Nietzsche was still under Wagner's influence while working on his third Untimely Reflection, 'Schopenhauer as Educator', in which he planned to present a powerful, self-contained thinker as a model. What attracted him about Schopenhauer, and what he sought in Wagner, was the concept of an ideal philosopher who had to be honest, serene and steadfast if he were to set an intellectual direction for young mankind. "In Wagner the man Nietzsche saw the very incarnation of his ideal. 'The day I found Wagner,' he wrote, 'I was happy beyond description. So long had I been seeking for the man who stood on a higher plane than I did, and who really comprised me.'"¹¹ By now Nietzsche had reached a situation corresponding to his Wagner worship, as although he no longer shared Schopenhauer's principles, he was nonetheless still interested in the philosopher and his work. Even though disappointment was setting in regarding his ideal of Wagner and Romantic music in general, he recognised Wagner's music philosophy as 'a costly distinction' available to very few at that moment. Thus it was that the philosopher Schopenhauer, and the musician Wagner, were fused for Nietzsche into one person. If Wagner initially appeared to embody what Schopenhauer calls genius, then the philosopher as educator becomes a synonym for Wagner. To von Gersdorff he wrote, "I have found a man who reveals to me, as no other does, the image of what Schopenhauer called the 'genius' and who is penetrated through and through by that wonderfully deep philosophy. This is no other than Richard Wagner."¹¹

Nietzsche devoted his life as a philosopher to seeking the answer to what musical romanticism is, and believed the result of this quest held the key to the future of music. According to him, 19th century man was living an aimless life, in which harmonious fusion could never be attained through the artwork of the future. He must have been distressed at the contradiction and confusion caused by the evidence of the reality presented to him, and the ideal he clung to,

11. Lea, F.A. The Tragic Philosopher, A Study of Friedrich Nietzsche, Methuen and Co. Ltd., London, 1957, pages 29 and 31.

regarding the outcome of Wagner's music philosophy. The Romantics emphasized that quality in music which is able to touch man, and never had the soul of the musician been so overwhelmingly revealed as in Romanticism. Nietzsche felt that, if music testified to the living soul in nature, then it was the mouthpiece for romantic ideals. However, he questioned the Romantic outlook that the goal of music was to arouse the emotions, as could not the impact of the music per se suffice in bringing itself into effect?

Nietzsche regarded the cause of humanity as his own, and in his idealism strived to make ideas come true individually and socially, through the task of renovating cultural life. At first he was fascinated by Romanticism's rejection of everyday life, shown in the continual longing for, and understanding of, the metaphysical. Later he began to question this point of protest against reason, which had become a dominant factor in the life of mankind. His philosophy of Nihilism was a protest against the view of life held by 19th Century society, as the majority of people were existing in a world of their own making, constituting a meaningless reality without value and worth, or any definite goal towards which to strive. Mankind was unable to find the answer to the questions life imposed upon it, and sought a reality apart from everyday experience, into the realm of the metaphysical. Nietzsche disliked that aspect of Romanticism the ideal of which was to allow freedom of expression to the extent of projecting the imagination into the mysterious. "His general attitude toward the 'beyond', the 'real world' and the thing-in-itself: he says again and again in different ways, these things do not exist."¹² Nietzsche found that the love of the mysterious which existed in Romanticism was in turn transferred into Christian mysticism. The path of philosophical thought had thus gone from theoretical reason without religion, to religion without reason. He stressed that Christianity had become a traditional way of life, and because of this, there existed an artificial actualization

12. Hollingdale, R.J. Nietzsche, The Man and His Philosophy, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., London, 1965, page 85.

of the values and norms set by the dogma of religion. Elaborating this view Nietzsche wrote: "How little Christianity cultivates the love for honesty and fairness may be pretty well judged from the character of the writings of its literary men. They put forward their conjectures as boldly as dogmas, and are not often honestly at a loss regarding the interpretation of a scriptural text." ¹³. He believed that it was wrong to see the sign of the Christian in a faith, or as seeking redemption through Christ. In 'The Genealogy of Morals' he said: "Jesus of Nazareth, the gospel of love made flesh, the 'redeemer', tho brought blessing and victory to the poor, the sick, the sinners - what was he but temptation." ¹⁴. Nietzsche later modified his views expressing in 'The Anti-Christ' that all that is Christian should be put into practice as exemplified by Christ in the life He lived, and in the man who died on the cross. Mankind was unable to withdraw from the viewpoint held by the masses, to free itself from slave-morality.

By 1864 Nietzsche experienced a complete loss of religious belief, which ultimately led him to his attacks on Christianity, and a sudden transference to the philosophy of Schopenhauer. His religious independence initially drew him to Schopenhauer's pessimism, which constituted the view that even the experience of beauty is not lasting. Nietzsche believed that knowledge through virtuousness, such as the Christian ideal, does not signify any progress, nor an escape from this existence. Nietzsche transformed his pessimism into metaphysical optimism by stating, in 'Beyond Good and Evil', that the most world-affirming man was the one who had not only come to terms and learned to live with what was and is, but also actually wanted to have things

13. Nietzsche, Friedrich. The Dawn of Day, T. Fischer Unwin, London, 1903, page 74.

14. Nietzsche, Friedrich. The Genealogy of Morals, Doubleday and Company, Inc. United States of America, 1956, page 168.

that way, as they were and are. He was disturbed by Schopenhauer's definition of the tragic as a path to resignation. He felt that this concept of tragedy as a negating art and a symptom of degeneracy impaired Schopenhauer's entire psychology, to the extent of misunderstanding genius, art itself, morality, beauty and knowledge. Furthermore, Schopenhauer's views on tragedy were far removed from, and contradictory to, the views of tragedy Nietzsche perceived in Greek drama. The withdrawal from Schopenhauer was unavoidable, though it did not necessarily entail a withdrawal from Wagner.

For Nietzsche, the question of science and the analysis of problems carried the death seeds of all culture. The impoverishment of Western art through a purely scientific perspective of the world, was already looming, and he hoped fervently that a new art form would save mankind. The dogmatism of faith should be ousted from the field, as mankind had to get beyond Schopenhauer's demand for renunciation and compassion as the quintessence of Christian doctrine. Morality could hardly justify the world any longer, and Christianity became just another form of analytical disintegration. He rejected the shallow optimism that contents itself with the achievements of given circumstances in life, but he did not reject the will to live. Nietzsche believed that the Greeks affirmed life; Wagner, he now felt, denied it. However, his high esteem for Antiquity, and its healthy doctrine of life, was not necessarily compatible with Wagner's philosophy. Perhaps Wagner was unconsciously rooted in middle-class Christian soil. For Nietzsche the opposite of Antiquity and Christianity, as well as the negation of life for spiritual salvation, demanded a choice from the confessor of faith. He was convinced that Wagner's art could set the Germans against stale Christianity, and lead German mythology to an experience of the world in terms of Antiquity and heathendom. But it was not the pseudo-Christian tendencies in the later Wagner that decided Nietzsche's estrangement. This had already come about earlier, and mainly in the area of aesthetics. The crucial question was: art in the sense of ancient tragedy, or modern theatre obeying the demands of the day? He did not consider theatre

as embodying the unification of arts enjoying equal status, a goal over-riding the value of absolute music. While Wagner saw the inclusion of the Chorus in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, as surpassing the limits of absolute music, Nietzsche felt that the symphonic composer had reached not for the degenerate world, but for the more pleasant and joyous sound. The true character of Nietzsche's viewpoint is evinced in his marked antipathy towards anything theatrical. Why was Nietzsche not aware from an earlier date that he was opposed to this facet of Wagner's creation? It was common knowledge that Wagner came from a theatrical background, and had been closely associated with the atmosphere of the theatre and all the requirements of theatrical production. In Wagner we find one of the few composers who not only wrote his own librettos, as well as composing the music to suit them, but who also organised and directed the performances. Nietzsche had been thrilled by 'Tristan', the most untheatrical of all Wagner's works, and his love for Wagner created the image of a genius in whom to have faith. When the composer declared Bayreuth the setting for the triumph of a new art form, that seemed to promise to Nietzsche the ultimate victory over all theatrics.

Nietzsche made the mistake of going to the first Festival at Bayreuth with an ideal. He still viewed Bayreuth with the hope that Wagner, and his art, would be presented there in a new way. He was thrilled by the vision of a festival at which both performers and spectators would be united in feelings raised to an enormous pitch. Nietzsche did not find the festival he was hoping for, and as a result was bitterly disappointed, and actually felt repulsed by the distortion and over-excitement there. In his Fourth Untimely Reflection, 'Richard Wagner in Bayreuth,' 1876, he mentioned that, in the picture of that tragic artwork there, he saw the struggle of individuals with all things that confront them: the struggle with power, law and convention. He believed that individuals cannot lead a finer life than when they make themselves ripe for death, and sacrifice themselves in the struggle for love and justice: for art does not exist for the struggle itself, but for the intervals of calm prior to and during the struggle. Such an aesthetics is a far

cry from the area of agitation and propoganda which art, especially in the case of Wagner, has always been striving to touch.

It was the masses, and not the chosen few, who came to witness the performance of 'The RingCycle' at the first Festival, held at the 'Festspiele' in Bayreuth. The illusory nature of Wagner's ideal became clear to Nietzsche when he observed the people he met at Wagner's home "Wahnfried." Amorous, bored, unmusical patrons mingled with the wealthy 'do-nothings' of Europe. Wagner's music, with its secret and persuasive sensuality, struck Nietzsche as a device for binding together a society in which everyone was merely out for pleasure. The people who mattered all but vanished amid the elegant toilettes and diamonds. To Nietzsche, those who attended were a parody who gave the Festival its flavour. Wagner also suffered from this disappointment as, in a letter written to Heckel, he mentioned that the enterprise originally projected was actually a complete failure. Nor did Nietzsche find it the greatest symphony of all, but instead, grand opera. The intoxicating influence of the music did not live up to the moderation he reckoned as an essential element of human nature. Wagner's original argument against grand opera turned into a rejection of the Classical style of music, and yet, everything about Wagner aroused emulation, and not just his success. Nietzsche could be won by the magic of a musical inspiration, but was repelled by what he felt to be the 'Ring's' bombast and empty noise. As an incorrigible opera lover, he now felt that this art form had to be conceived anew, in contradiction to Wagner.

It is difficult to establish precisely when Nietzsche started having misgivings about Wagner and his works, but he must have had qualms as early as during the resettlement in Bayreuth, and in the midst of the first Festival he bade farewell to Wagner. However, Nietzsche had not as yet freed himself from the master; the conflict between loyalty to his friend and his own conviction still remained unresolved. As fate would have it, the two men were destined to meet once more on 2 November, 1876, after which they parted never to see one another again. During a stroll in Sorrento with

Nietzsche, Wagner's fate was sealed when he discussed his work on 'Parsifal,' and got deeply involved describing a Christian experience he had had. Nietzsche considered it impossible for Wagner, who had declared himself an atheist to the bitter end, ever to return to naïve faith. Where Wagner saw ideals, Nietzsche saw things that were human. How had 'Parsifal', this final stumbling block between the friends, come about? It was beyond Nietzsche's comprehension. Wagner had gloried in the success of the Festival performances, but became frustrated by the sponsorship failure and huge financial deficit. The productive composer thus now sought refuge in the new work, 'Parsifal'.

In his 'Anti-Christ' Nietzsche's chief accusation was that Christianity first brought sin into the world. On the other hand, Wagner believed sin to be a natural phenomenon, which he could only fight with the believing saviour, Parsifal, because he could not abolish it simply as an invention. On such a basis, 'Parsifal' challenged Nietzsche to the extent that he felt one could only laugh at the work. He preferred Siegfried the rebel, to Parsifal the saint, and could not forgive Wagner for coming to see in Christianity a moral value and beauty far outweighing its theological defects. In 'The Case of Richard Wagner' he accused the composer of flattering every facet of Christianity and every form of religious decadence. He heaps on the head of Wagner, whom he once so adulated, everything characterizing Socrates, Christianity, and Schopenhauer. Add to these decadence, which in his eyes was the most despicable thing of all. Yet he admitted to being one of the most corrupt Wagnerians; "Well, I am the child of this age, just like Wagner, - i.e., a decadent; but I am conscious of it; I defended myself against it." ¹⁵.

The relationship between the two men was by no means a usual one, in the sense that during its early stage their bond

15. Durant, Will. The Story of Philosophy, Washington Square Press, New York, 1961, page 412.

bordered on the hero-worship of Wagner by Nietzsche. They shared not only a rapport in matters of common interest, but also a spiritual love. It was inevitable that two great figures such as Wagner and Nietzsche should become close companions, as not only had Nietzsche long been an admirer of Wagner and his music, but also the admiration was mutual, as "The Master would say 'My Nietzsche' to him, and this 'My' was the loftiest dignity he had ever bestowed." ¹⁶. In recognising the very real depth of feeling they had for each other, one may appreciate the personal repercussions, brought about through the later realisation that the motivating ideas and individuality concerned in achieving their objectives was contrary to what each believed and expected of the other.

Nietzsche's desire to meet Wagner could have stemmed from the time, in 1861 when, after playing the piano score of 'Tristan and Isolde', he was completely won over to him. However, it was not until 1868 that a meeting between them was arranged in Leipzig, when Wagner, being requested to play a song composed by Nietzsche, announced his desire to meet him incognito. At the time of their first encounter Wagner was at the height of his artistic productivity, while Nietzsche was on the point of taking up his duties as Professor of Philology at Basel University. Both men had reached a peak in their careers, and although Nietzsche was only twenty-four years of age and Wagner fifty-five, they had much in common, not only in the field of music, but also in that of philosophy. Four weeks after this first meeting, Nietzsche wrote to his friend Rhode, that he and Wagner could walk the path of subversive and constructive aesthetics together, and be carried away by the emotional sweep of his music. Furthermore, through Wagner's music, Nietzsche believed that he could find himself, and get to know himself by way of an intuitive discovery. Thus it

16. Fischer-Dieskau, Dietrich. Wagner and Nietzsche, The Seabury Press Inc., New York, 1976, page 75

was that a friendship which lasted sixteen years was cemented; a mutual sharing between two men of similar interests, although from different backgrounds.

Nietzsche came from a religious background, and at times Wagner was rankled by the virtuousness Nietzsche displayed before his denunciation of Christianity as a religion. He soon became part of the household at Tribschen, where Wagner, Cosima and their two daughters had set up home. It must have demanded a great deal of self-control from Nietzsche to frequent such a liberal household, considering that the circumstances of unmarried co-habitation were contrary to his upbringing. However, he viewed Wagner and Cosima as far beyond other mortals, and this could possibly have been seen as excusing their behaviour. The Wagners expressed a desire for Nietzsche's company at every turn, but failed to realize how much valuable time Nietzsche was giving them, as he was fairly overlaid with his many study courses and highly taxing work. However, Nietzsche was delighted to steal time from his duties at Basel for these visits to Tribschen, and for the first time since childhood, experienced something like a home. Cosima often made use of Nietzsche, for example, when private letters of Wagner had been published without his knowledge, Nietzsche was requested to put an advertisement in a well-known newspaper, saying that they did not have the approval of the master. At this stage of the relationship there is no mention of resentment of Nietzsche's part over carrying out such a favour for his friend. More than likely he was pleased to be of service to Wagner, and it became apparent only at a later date that he could not understand the composer's attitude, as he believed that he had always done his utmost to please Wagner. "God knows how often I give the Meister offence," he writes; "each time it happens it takes me by surprise, and I cannot understand what has caused it." ¹⁷.

There can be no doubt that these visits, twenty-three in

17. Hollingdale, R.J. Nietzsche, The Man and His Philosophy, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1965, page 108.

all, meant a great deal to Nietzsche, for he wrote to Wagner that he "would never give away the days at Tribschen for anything in the world, the days of intimacy, of serenity, of sublime hazards - of profound moments."¹⁸ After the Wagners moved to Bayreuth in 1872, Nietzsche told Gersdorff how much the three years spent near Tribschen had meant to him, and how happy he was to have captured the Tribschen world for himself forever in his book. One can imagine that the setting and atmosphere at Tribschen was idyllic and conducive to compatible discourse, providing momentary escapes from the pressures of everyday life. It also kindled goodwill and trust, as according to Cosima, Nietzsche had a cheering influence on Wagner, his presence dispelling 'doleful moods.' Whether or not Tribschen bore any influence on the relationship would be difficult to define, but one can ascertain that frequent contact kept the two men in touch with each other's trend of thought, and the direction in which their ideas were leading them. After the move to Bayreuth, the two friends were unable to be in the same close contact they had previously enjoyed.

Wagner was destined to arouse Nietzsche's personality, and play a crucial part in his development as one of the most important modern thinkers. Nietzsche had a gift for writing, as well as the audacity to speak out and say precisely what he felt. While these literary attacks were objective and impersonal, the two friends enjoyed a reciprocal relationship, in which each respected the other's viewpoint, giving both moral and verbal encouragement and support. Nietzsche's two lectures 'The Greek Music Drama' and 'Socrates and Tragedy' kindled misunderstanding and dread in the audience. Even though Wagner showed scepticism toward the former lecture, it was his support which gave Nietzsche, then lacking self-confidence, the encouragement he needed to continue writing. In his second edition of 'The Birth of Tragedy', there appeared a long epilogue in which Nietzsche praised

18. Fischer-Dieskau, Dietrich. Wagner and Nietzsche, The Seabury Press Inc., New York, 1976, page 28.

Wagner and his 'Tristan.' This new book made life difficult for Nietzsche, and the author's downfall as a scholar and philosopher appeared to be sealed. He was aware that his uncompromising intellectual insights made him a social outsider, and his friendship with the Wagners could hardly ease his tensions. Wagner, like Nietzsche, also had to put up with attacks, and was even accused of suffering from delusion in an article written by Doctor Pushman. Pro- and anti-Wagner parties had been forming, and Nietzsche could not comprehend why so many important men refused to side with Wagner.

Wagner recognised Nietzsche's gift for writing, and profited from the young man's devotion by exploiting this literary talent for his own cause. When worried by the absence of large donations promised by patrons for the Festival Theatre Nietzsche shared these worries, and in 1873 travelled to Bayreuth to help his friend. Nietzsche was requested to approach the wider masses to pledge contributions, and he composed 'An Appeal to the Germans.' With the triumph of his project in view, the master demanded that all his friends put their own affairs aside, and devote themselves exclusively to his cause. They were to suffer when he suffered, and cheer up whenever obstacles were disposed of. The philosopher did make an effort, but continued writing works that had nothing to do with Bayreuth.

In the early days Nietzsche was still under the sway of Wagner's pamphlets against the Jews. However, he later became a fierce enemy of racism, and here too, he and Wagner were of different opinions. Nietzsche felt that ever since Wagner had been in Germany, he had lowered himself to everything Nietzsche despised, even Anti-Semitism. On the one hand, Wagner had Jews like Heinrich Porgess and Felix Mottl among some of his most intimate friends, while on the other hand, he became excited about the political writer Konstantin Franz's theories of Anti-Semitism and his nationalistic support of a German Reich. Wagner's wife, Cosima, further influenced him by pushing away his socialist and revolutionary ideas, supplanting them with anti-Jewish views. Thus,

further resentment could have been caused when Nietzsche, while in Sorrento, spent the entire winter with, among others, Dr. Paul Rée, the radical Jew.

The first apparent misunderstanding between the two men occurred as early as 1873 during the resettlement at Bayreuth. Nietzsche was invited to visit the Wagners after a vacation in Naumburg, where he was absorbed in his writing. The scholar, however, had no intention of curtailing his short, quiet working time, and failed to foresee the hurt feelings in Bayreuth. The friendship deteriorated to the point where the two men would openly bait each other, and this, too, shows lack of understanding and trust. While on a visit to the Wagners at Bayreuth, Nietzsche provoked Wagner by depositing a keyboard reduction of Brahms's 'Song of Triumph' on the grand piano in the drawing room of Wahnfried, when he knew that Wagner had a great distaste for Brahms's highly traditional music. Perhaps Nietzsche was frustrated by Wagner's attitude, as he found Brahms actually more German than Wagner, and believed Brahms to be the spokesman of the North German soul. After the incident, Wagner burst out and remarked: "I would give a hundred marks on the spot just to have such fine behaviour as Nietzsche, always noble, always dignified." ¹⁹. Whereas Wagner's outburst quickly subsided, Nietzsche bore him a grudge for this insult for a long time. He refused to visit the composer for two years, until July 1876, during the final rehearsals of 'The Ring.'

Nietzsche put Wagner's mood of ill-humour down to financial worries, and his shock at the younger man's critical attitude toward the times. The two men were no longer in accord, and intentionally or unintentionally, continued to hurt each other's feelings. Nietzsche's crisis-ridden health possibly contributed to the rift between him and Wagner, since the sickness increased his hypersensitivity and irritability, making him prone to abrupt reactions. He appears to have

19. Fischer-Dieskau, Dietrich. Wagner and Nietzsche, The Seabury Press Inc., New York, 1976, page 119.

felt how greatly his progressive illness made him dependent on a few friends, and their sacrifices. He was also aware that his condition was not just temporary, and that he would require constant care. In October 1877 Wagner caused a grave incident when he took the liberty of informing Nietzsche's physician Dr. Otter Eiser, that Nietzsche's sufferings were basically due to 'excessive masturbation.'²⁰ The fact that this report got to Nietzsche's ears reflects unfavourably on the doctor. Nietzsche was beside himself and construed the incident as a vicious and destructive nastiness, and spoke of it as a 'mortal offence.' Wagner's biographers on the other hand, usually see a loving concern in this correspondence between the composer and Dr. Eiser. Nietzsche was unable to forgive Wagner for this insult, as he communicated to Overbeck that there was something like a mortal offence between him and Wagner, and it might have turned out dreadfully, had the composer lived longer.

Nietzsche began openly to display his antagonism to Wagner, and used his composition 'Hymn to Friendship' for expressing his relationship to Wagner. One of the interludes in the composition was 'as in bittersweet remembrance' and Cosima believed that 'Hymn to Friendship' had brought about the rupture between the two friends. It was fortunate that Wagner, after reading the complete essay 'Richard Wagner in Bayreuth', failed to perceive both Nietzsche's explicit criticism and change of outlook, and told Nietzsche that the book was tremendous, and that he wondered how Nietzsche had come to know him so well. "On the 3rd January 1878 Wagner sent Nietzsche a copy of the recently-published text of 'Parsifal'. The following May 'Human All Too Human' appeared, and Nietzsche sent Wagner a copy."²¹ The new opus, 'Human, All Too Human' was an anti-Wagner treatise, in which Nietzsche freed himself of the things that did not belong to his nature. "In 'Ecce Homo', he recalls how he

20. Fischer-Dieskau, Dietrich. Wagner and Nietzsche, The Seabury Press Inc., New York, 1976, page 159.

21. Hollingdale, R.J. Nietzsche, The Man and His Philosophy, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1965, page 135.

received, in exchange for 'Human, All Too Human,' a splendidly bound copy of 'Parsifal', inscribed, 'To his dear friend Friedrich Nietzsche, from Richard Wagner, Ecclesiastical Councillor' - did it not sound as if two swords had crossed?"²². Nietzsche said nothing to Wagner, but realised just how lastingly his book would shock the Wagners. He had added a dedication pretending that many things in the book could be taken humorously. He also tried to have the book printed anonymously, but the publisher could not be persuaded to do this. Nietzsche's notes included the draft of a letter seeking to reconcile the composer with the content of the book, explaining that in it he brought to light his innermost feelings about people and things. He clung to the hope that a rupture between them was still avoidable, and that Wagner would permit him the freedom of his own convictions in their friendship. However, the Wagners shrouded themselves in silence, and it was only in the third of his articles, 'Public and Popularity' that Wagner was sarcastic and critical of Nietzsche's views, although allusively and with a self-control that was quite out of character. His reaction to the book was characterized more by sorrow than anger.

The collision with such a completely opposite temperament as Wagner's, left the worshipping Nietzsche a shattered and despairing man. It was hard for Nietzsche to abide on his course, and yet at times have a different opinion from his idol. He was able to pass the test of this conflict by allowing nothing to entice him away from his cause, not the great political movement of Germany, not the artistic agitation of Wagner, and not the philosophical lure of Schopenhauer. It is fortunate that Nietzsche believed he lacked all political and social ambitions, and was permitted to say what he thought. When studying the life and work of Nietzsche, one is confronted with a man, born to be a genius, and dedicating his life to the cause of what he felt to be the betterment of human nature. He saw his task as thoroughly renovating cultural life. We are struck by the fact of a man who became embittered by life itself, but to the end pushing himself relentlessly, a life marred by over-

22. Lea, F.A. The Tragic Philosopher, A Study of Friedrich Nietzsche, Methuen and Co. Ltd. London, 1957, page 248.

work, ill-health and an inner drive. He had an emotionally over-sensitive nature, with an introspective view of life which often left him in the depths of depression. In contrast to this, Wagner's own anxieties did not keep him from working: his melancholy was never permitted to gain the upper hand.

The conflicting mental state resulting from Nietzsche's inner struggle for and against Wagner must have been difficult for him to bear. His respect and admiration for Wagner conflicted with the realisation that his idol was not, after all, what he expected him to be. His dreamy-eyed adulation of Wagner had built up a mental image of a crusader who would, through the example of his music, show the human race a new way of life. When this image was shattered, his feelings evolved into a love-hate situation. He was a man who walked his own path, but in contrast to Wagner was spared any personal enemies, and could thus defend ideas for their own sake. When he himself was the aggressor, he battled against a type, rather than a person. However, the attacks based on vanity and impure motives were often more against Wagner's person than his art. Wagner admitted that a man defending a cause for its own sake, often learns during the struggle that the opponent's interests lie elsewhere. Wagner was not the only one whom Nietzsche renounced; he was unable to keep up any lasting friendships, except with Peter Gast, his unconditional disciple.

Wagner, in explaining Nietzsche's emotions, used psychological motives, especially self-righteousness. Nietzsche even depicted himself as envious; he operated with a psychology of resentment, by positing an immaculate sense of life, free of any scruples, as a pure value. He saw this sense of life imperilled by Wagner's personality and work. He had ultimately rejected almost every other security of a societal nature: the community of professional scholars, the Protestant Christianity of his ancestors, and finally his homeland and state. Wagner returned to all these traditional values, both as an individual and as a composer, and thereby stood close to his 'Zeitgeist'.

It is unfortunate that a close bond, such as the one which existed between Wagner and Nietzsche, was to be torn apart by differences of opinion. They led to their public criticism of each other, involving all the unpleasantness of a scandal, which, once it had started, was difficult to suppress. As feelings ran so high, the ultimate break must have been confusing and painful to both. They had shared so many happy hours together, discussing their interests and enjoying the companionship which the mutual covering of common ground brings. There must surely have been regret when misplaced words or contrasting opinion brought bitterness and resentment instead of understanding and tolerance. Nietzsche's adoration of his master was such that he would do anything within his power to please him. When circumstances did not allow this, when disillusionment set in with what he felt to be Wagner's lack of understanding, he possibly not only felt rejected, but also felt a sense of frustration at being misunderstood. In a relationship such as this, there could be no middle path; the heights of loving and mutual respect, turned into a bitterness expressed in condemnation, not only of their work, but also of their individual characters. The public denunciation was portrayed in articles written by each against the other, almost as though they felt the need of public exposure. Possibly one of the reasons for this manner of criticism was that each expected too much of the other. The relationship had commenced with a unity of thought but an unbalanced level of expectation. When the reality became clear, each felt betrayed and reacted accordingly. A balanced level of relationship would have included the elements of mutual trust, respect, understanding, and a certain amount of give and take, combined with tolerance and compassion. When realisation of the true state of affairs was revealed, the two men were unable to come to terms with the situation and accept that, though their goals of universal growth and unity were compatible, their points of departure in achieving this same goal were different. Wagner tried to achieve this goal through his music, while Nietzsche wished to fight the decadence of mankind through education and the intellect. Each felt very strongly towards his own cause. They did not

use their insight to make allowances for the other's point of view.

When one has built up an image of what one would like another to be, and expects him to act in accordance with this expectation, and is suddenly confronted by the complete opposite, the shock of this realisation touches not only the emotions and lower consciousness, but also destroys the ideal which has been built up. Nietzsche expected Wagner to follow the same pattern of thought as he did, without making allowances for changes of direction, such as those concerning Wagner's Christian ideals. From the outset they were in agreement on so many issues of importance. Contact between them was frequent and allowed for an up-to-date observation of the other's point of view. However, there has to be progress and change, and it is man's right to be true to himself. When a change of viewpoint is brought about, one should be permitted to maintain one's individuality and freedom of expression within the boundary of one's moral outlook and obligation to the view of life of society at the time.

It is a pity that two great men, each endowed with superior intellect, were unable to rise above their differences, not necessarily with an acceptance of the other's point of view but by coming to terms with situations, and in so doing, subdue their subjectiveness, and channel the results of their labours into improving the lot of mankind.

After Wagner's death, Nietzsche confessed to Peter Gast that it was hard to be an opponent of the man one venerated the most. It was an ageing, changed Wagner against whom he had to defend himself. As for the 'real' Wagner, this was the Wagner he had so closely known, and had seen himself as his heir. He admitted that Wagner was the most complete man he had ever known, and in this sense he had suffered a great loss for six years. Nietzsche's scorn of Wagner betrays how crucial that man had been for him; a friend who had become his foe, and from whom he thought he had become so remote. A crucial relationship had ended without reconciliation.

CHAPTER THREE

WAGNER AND LUDWIG II

3.1 KING LUDWIG II: A BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Ludwig Friedrich Wilhelm was born Crown Prince of Bavaria on 25 August 1845, at Nymphenburg near Munich, the summer residence of the Bavarian Royal family. He was christened Ludwig because his birthday coincided with that of his grandfather, Ludwig I. He was the first child of King Maximilian II and Queen Marie.

Young Ludwig had much in common with his sentimental, art-loving grandfather. It was from him that the Crown Prince inherited his passion for building and his love of romanticism. Queen Marie recorded in her journal that the young Prince, then aged six, showed an interest in art. He loved building with toy bricks; especially churches and monasteries. She also recorded that he listened with pleasure to the Bible stories she told him. He loved dressing up as a nun and enjoyed acting.

When Ludwig was nine, and his brother, Prince Otto, was six their governess, Fraülein Sybille Meilhaus, was replaced by their first tutor, Generalmajor Theodor de la Rosée. Ludwig was devoted to Fraülein Meilhaus and kept in touch with her until her death in 1881. His friendship for the Fraülein was one of the few permanent attachments he made in his life. Ludwig learned more slowly than Otto, and though he came to speak French fluently, he did not excel in Latin and Greek.

In summer the royal family often went to Castle Hohenswangau in the Bavarian Alps. Here Ludwig acquired from his father his love of German legends and his longing for the solitude of the mountains. Queen Marie was a keen mountaineer, and the boys and their current tutor often went with her on quite stiff climbs. One unfortunate tutor, the epileptic, Baron Wulffen, who had pleaded in vain to be left behind, climbed an awkward rock to pick edelweiss for the Queen and fell, injuring himself seriously. The accident made a

deep impression on the young princes.

Soon after this it was noticed that Ludwig, by now fourteen, suffered from mild hallucinations. These took the form of hearing imaginary voices addressing him. The Court doctor assured the Queen that there was no cause for alarm. She was, however, concerned that Ludwig might have developed, or inherited, some disease or instability through the prevalent inbreeding with European royal families.

In 1863 Bismarck visited Nymphenburg and was impressed with Ludwig even though he felt that the Crown Prince's thoughts were elsewhere and that it was only by an effort that he could bring himself to make polite conversation.

On 10 March 1864 Maximilian died, and Ludwig, then nineteen, ascended the throne. He was at first conscientious and hard working. The ministers who imagined that he would be content to remain a mere puppet were quickly disillusioned. Their efforts to bully him failed, and he was soon to make changes in the Cabinet. Each morning at nine o'clock he was ready to receive the Cabinet Secretary, Pfstermeister. He did modestly inquire of Pfstermeister what his father would have done when some difficult decision had to be taken. However, Ludwig could be stubborn, and also had a temper. Those who saw him lose it said that his face became suddenly so transformed that it was barely recognizable.

To the people of Munich, however, who did not yet see these darker moods, he seemed to be a Prince Charming, an Apollo, another Lohengrin. Ludwig's romantic appearance made a profound impression on men and women alike.

Ludwig was an admirer and patron of the composer Richard Wagner. He worshipped theatre, and contributed towards the fulfilment of Wagner's dream, the Bayreuth Festival Theatre.

In 1870, on the initiative of Bismarck, Ludwig addressed a letter to the German princes calling for the creation of a new empire. He brought his territories into the newly found-

ed German Empire in 1871. His fear for the independence of his crown was allayed by a number of special privileges for Bavaria. However, his demands for a substantial territorial increase remained unfulfilled.

Alarmed by the Bavarian people's Pan-German enthusiasm and weary of feuding with his ministers over his moves to strengthen the church, he retired more and more from politics, devoting himself increasingly to his private pursuits. He concerned himself only intermittently with affairs of state, preferring a life of moral seclusion and developing a mania for extravagant building projects.

In the early 1880's the King withdrew from society almost completely. Finally on 10 June 1886, he was declared insane and two days later was removed to Starnberger See. The following day both Ludwig and Bernhard von Gudden, the psychiatrist, were found drowned in the See.

3.2 LUDWIG II OF BAVARIA: A 19TH CENTURY SPONSOR

The relationship between Ludwig II and Wagner was on a different level from that which Wagner shared with Nietzsche. Ludwig's interest in Wagner centred on the composer's music, particularly the sagas of the music dramas which satisfied his need of poetic unreality. He preferred isolation in order to absorb the operas audibly and visually thereby creating a world of his own, far removed from the reality of everyday life. It was not by chance that Wagner's music should have had such significance for him for even as a neurotic youth he had found in the music an outlet for his pent-up emotions.

While still young as Crown Prince, he often visited the Royal Opera and acquired an extensive knowledge of repertoire. His father, however, did not allow him to see the Munich premiere of Lohengrin, but a description of the performance by his governess gave rise to his vivid interest in the opera. In 1861 he witnessed a performance of Lohengrin conducted by Franz Lachner, and was overwhelmed by its pageantry, its movement and its dramatic force. Later, as king, he wrote to Wagner that it was 'Lohengrin' which had sown the seed of enthusiasm and love for the composer in his heart. The seed developed and while writing he was reminiscing, cherishing Wagner and what Lohengrin had meant to him.

'Tannhäuser' made an even stronger impression on Ludwig. According to Embassy secretary, von Leinfelder: "It had a truly demoniac effect on him, but not a pleasant one" ²³. At the point where Tannhäuser enters the Venusburg, Ludwig's body would go into convulsions. They were so severe on one occasion that von Leinfelder feared Ludwig would have an epileptic fit. The secretary said, "Do not imagine that it was music that endeared Wagner to the prince's youthful mind ... The composer would never have conquered him; it was the poet who enthralled the young prince's dreamy disposition." ²³.

23. Gregor-Dellin, Martin. Richard Wagner, His Life, His Work, His Century, William Collins Sons and Co. Ltd., London, 1983, pages 336 and 337.

After hearing 'Lohengrin' and 'Tannhäuser', Ludwig memorized the librettos. He also read Wagner's other dramas and was especially attracted to the phrase 'Artwork of the Future.' During the following year the despairing preface to 'The Ring', with its forecast that the music would never be completed, fell into his hands. In it Wagner had set forth the idea of the production of a cyclic work at a great festival, to be financed by some liberal-minded prince. When Ludwig read this he knew that he would be that prince. Wagner meanwhile found himself in a desperate financial and mental position. After the final failure of 'Tristan and Isolde' in Vienna, extensive debts forced him to an overhasty flight to Switzerland. He feared his end and wrote to his friend Peter Cornelius, mentioning that a good and truly helping miracle must happen in order to prevent this. He felt that there was only 'one' who could help him, the 'right one' who must exist somewhere, but where to find him? The composer did not have to look very far as the miracle, in the form of a royal sponsor, found him.

Wagner's music was the passion of Ludwig's life and he was certain that if he should be king, he would show the world that he knew how to honour this genius. On 10 March 1864, Crown Prince Ludwig succeeded his deceased father, Maximilian, to the throne of Bavaria. Ludwig had longed for the day when, as King of Bavaria he would appear and devote his power to serve Wagner. It was providential that on 2 May 1864, while Wagner was hiding from his creditors at a hotel in Stuttgart, there was a knock on the door. The visitor, Bavarian cabinet secretary von Pfistermeister, brought not a writ, but an invitation. Wagner was requested to go to Munich and grant the King the 'privilege of knowing him' and caring for him for ever. Wagner was presented with a portrait of Ludwig II together with a ruby ring. The message attached to this was: "As this stone is glowing, so the king burns with longing to see the creator of Lohengrin." ^{24.}

The following day Ludwig welcomed Wagner in his Munich

24. Münster, Robert. König Ludwig II, und die Musik, Rosenheimer Raritäten, 1980, page 18.

residence. This marked the beginning of a unique friendship between the poet-composer and the idealistically-minded king who was determined to free his protégé from the burdens of life. The king wished to constitute himself as the composer's protector, providing him with the power and means to carry out his future plans. Ludwig expressed his devotion in highly romantic terms: "I will procure for you the peace you have longed for in order that you may be free to spread the mighty wings of your genius in the pure ether of rapturous art. Oh, how I have looked forward to the time when I could do this! I hardly dared indulge myself in the hope of so quickly being able to prove my love to you."²⁵

The king offered Wagner a fee of 30,000 gulden for completing the 'Ring' and paid all his debts. In addition, the composer was granted an annual allowance of 8,000 gulden plus occasional cash advances. Wagner's fortunes were transformed and at the stroke of a pen he was raised from the position of a miser's pensioner to that of a protector's favourite. Ludwig saw himself as the supreme liberator of an overpowering art and resolved to give Wagner all he required. Wagner in return was to do nothing but compose and advise him. The composer expressed his gratitude in a letter to Frau Wille saying that he was to be his own master, not a Kapelmeister, nothing but himself and Ludwig's friend. "My external relation to him is quite undefined; he is happy to have me near him, is taking care of my living quarters, and has left it to me to arrange with his trusted cabinet secretary for a salary, which I may draw regularly."²⁶ His happiness was so great that he felt quite overwhelmed by it. Free from the pressing burden of debts, he was jubilant: "How everything is won, my most daring hope surpassed."²⁷ Wagner now saw the possibility of living only for his artistic

25. Osborne, Charles. Wagner and his world. Thames and Hudson, London, 1977, page 69.
26. The Durrell Collection. Letters of Richard Wagner, Macmillan Co., Great Britain, 1950, page 421.
27. Fisher-Diskau, Dietrich. Wagner and Nietzsche, The Seabury Press Inc., New York, 1976, page 14.

goals and surrounding himself with his proven paladins. But none of the people he summoned could deny that the abnormal relationship between the king and Wagner was not without its dangers. Even Hans von Bülow, one of Wagner's closest friends, was fully aware of this.

After the meeting with Ludwig, Wagner moved into a comfortable country house in Kempfenhausen on Lake Starnberg. He often visited the king in nearby Castle Berg, mostly during the afternoon coffee hour. As the king was prevented from attending public concerts during his period of mourning, Wagner arranged to have short extracts from his latest works performed on the piano. For this purpose he summoned his friends Hans von Bülow and Karl Klindworth to Munich. During the visits to Castle Berg, Wagner presented the King with detailed plans concerning future performances. The 'Meistersinger' was to be completed and 'Parsifal' was planned for 1872. The king, too, had plans, intending to introduce a new direction in education and future music presentations. The prevailing conditions at the Munich Conservatory required re-organisation and Ludwig commissioned Wagner to prepare a report for the building of a new Music School. In 1865 Wagner presented his ideas to the King in an extensive journal. He was of the opinion that the new music institute should be centred on a school for vocal art. This would provide the singers with the necessary tools for the vocal and performing demands of his operatic works. The curriculum should also include such subjects as mime and gymnastics. The Royal School of Music was inaugurated in the Autumn of 1867. The fact that it provided an extensive program of musical education was chiefly due to the endeavour and enthusiasm of its first musical director, Hans von Bülow.

While the plans for the new music School were being put into operation, Munich believed its artistic position to be secure. The public admired Franz Lachner, the Director of Music, who was well disposed towards Wagner. However, even though he and Wagner respected each other, their personal relationship was not one of friendship. Their differences could be explained by the manner in which each approached artistic principles. The Director was a very conservative

musician, a representative of classical composition, while Wagner was exploratory and breaking new frontiers. Lachner, who had been Royal Court Conductor since 1836, later resigned.

As early as 1864, soon after their meeting, Wagner persuaded the King to build him a theatre of his own. He had described the idea of a Festival Theatre in his preface to 'The Ring of the Nibelungen.' The special Wagner theatre was to be based on an amphitheatre arrangement in which the orchestra would be hidden from view. On Wagner's suggestion the architect, Gottfried Semper, was commissioned to draw up plans. To Ludwig, who was to scatter fairy-tale castles around his kingdom, a mere theatre presented no great difficulty. Neither he nor Wagner could have foreseen the opposition and resentment this proposition would produce. Ludwig's cabinet had not been opposed to Wagner being summoned to Munich in the first instance. They might have shrugged when the young king covered Wagner's debts and gave him a house. The young ruler's excitement may have struck them as a 'royal whim.' However, when the architect Semper was entrusted with building a Festival Theatre, not only were the philistines amazed and scandalized, there was also some concern in the King's Exchequer.

Munich knew little about Wagner's greatness, but a good deal about his arrogance and extravagance. Of those who witnessed the premiere of 'Tristan and Isolde' on 10 June 1865, few recognized its value except perhaps the 'half-mad' Ludwig, who immediately announced it to be his favourite opera. 'Tristan,' one of the great masterpieces of Romanticism, was directed and conducted with almost superhuman effort by Hans von Bülow. He mentioned that it was the greatest success which a premiere of a Wagner work had ever achieved. During the 'Tristan' year, Wagner came more and more under public attack for his grandiose style of living and his position of superiority. Much ill-feeling originated from the high salary he received, as well as various extra funds which came from the king's purser. Wagner exposed himself to criticism and when he tried to act as Ludwig's political advisor he made many enemies. Wagner kept a journal for Ludwig in which he developed the article 'What is German', in 1865. According

to him J.S. Bach was an aid to understanding the German Spirit. Furthermore, wherever beauty and nobility came into being without an eye to profit, this spirit would manifest itself. He went so far as to suggest that Ludwig form a people's militia, place himself at the head of the German movement and elect himself Emperor. All this constituted Wagner's active intervention in politics. Ludwig had the composer's outline proposals copied and submitted them to his ministers for implementation.

During November 1865 Wagner spent a week as Ludwig's guest at Castle Hohenschwangau. At this time Munich was a hot-bed of political intrigue, for war between Prussia and Austria was expected. The Cabinet Ministers visiting the Castle came into contact with Wagner and the political discussions the composer held with them resulted in his resolve to overthrow the government. He urged Ludwig to dismiss Cabinet Ministers Pfistermeister and Pfordten and to appoint a new cabinet. The king, in turn, had been ingenuous enough to mention the matter to Pfistermeister himself. Wagner's influence on the king became a cause for concern and the ministers soon began to plot his downfall. Pfordten made it plain to the king that public indignation might sweep him from the throne as it had once deposed his grandfather. He wrote to the king stating that Ludwig should choose between the love and esteem of his loyal subjects and the friendship of Richard Wagner.

The composer's presence in Munich was fast becoming intolerable. Wagner, the Royal 'adviser,' as a foreigner and revolutionary was doubly suspect. To his other enemies he added the clerics who openly denounced him and his works. The journalists had resumed their malicious campaign against him, accusing him of practising the politics of the future instead of music of the future. According to public reports, the paid music-maker and barricade-man of Dresden, who once planned to blow up the royal palace of that town, now intended to estrange the king from his loyal servants. Not satisfied with this, he wished to replace them with men of his own political complexion - isolate the king, and exploit him. Ludwig went to Munich where he met with his

ministers. During this time the king took counsel at greater length than he had ever done in the previous course of his reign. At first, he had seemed to agree with Wagner's proposal to remodel his cabinet, but after careful consideration he left it as it was. Matters were drawing to a head and Ludwig was presented with a signed petition requesting Wagner's removal. On 7 December 1865 the king was no longer able to resist the pressure being put upon him by his ministers. When his cabinet threatened to resign, Ludwig reached his decision that Wagner must leave Bavaria. Lütz, the second cabinet secretary, was instructed by Ludwig to call on Wagner and communicate his decision. The following morning Wagner had it in writing and that evening he read a newspaper report to the same effect. For two days and nights he conducted a correspondence with the king in which he vainly sought a public repudiation of the misleading facts and figures broadcast by his detractors. Though privately of the opinion that Ludwig had lost his head, Wagner refrained from turning on him. He preferred to maintain an appearance of friendship, partly to avoid weakening the king's position still further and partly, no doubt, to preserve his annual stipend. On 10 December, Wagner left by train for Geneva where he proposed to resume work on 'Die Meistersinger.' Wagner, the disparaged, the banished, whom even the king's favour could not protect from the hatred of the Münchenerers once more sought refuge in Switzerland. Not until seven years after his withdrawal from Munich could Wagner return there as a citizen. Meanwhile, Ludwig continued to pine for his favourite, writing to Wagner and telling him to be of good cheer as "Your Friend will never desert you." ²⁸, Wagner in turn wrote bitterly, mentioning the treachery, incompetence and vanity of Ludwig's ministers through whom Bavaria was seeking to save herself by a shameful surrender.

On 30 March 1866, Wagner and von Bülow's wife, Cosima, the new love in Wagner's life, settled at the villa Tribschen

28. Gregor-Dellin, Martin. Richard Wagner, His Life, His Work, His Century, William Collins Sons and Co. Ltd., London, 1983, page 363.

for which Ludwig paid the rent. In May Wagner received a telegram from Ludwig re-iterating his desire to abdicate and retire to Switzerland as a private citizen, provided that he could live at the 'Dear one's side.' Wagner was appalled; for Ludwig was of no use to him without his power and his exchequer. In reply he urged the king to be patient, remain amidst his people and devote himself to the affairs of state. But Ludwig's messages were immediately followed by himself in person. He had left Munich secretly and presented himself at Wagner's door. However, with the strongwilled Cosima in residence, it was not so easy for Wagner to encourage the 'love-besotted' Ludwig. Within two days the young king was back in Bavaria facing a public outcry at his behaviour.

Ludwig's disillusionment with his friend had to be prevented. In a desperate attempt to convince Ludwig that his friendship with Cosima was purely platonic, Wagner and Cosima managed to persuade her husband to spend the summer with them at Tribschen. At this time Cosima was pregnant with Wagner's second child. They then appealed to Ludwig to write a letter to von Bülow, complimenting him on the purity and nobility of his wife's character, and deploring the gossip that was being circulated about her. Ludwig dutifully signed the letter, but it failed to make its full impact when made public. The unusual style clearly revealed that it had been drafted by Wagner. The composer could no longer prevent the young king from realising that he was being used. However, Ludwig's loyalty was such that he continued to be faithful to his hero's artistic ideals and to support him generously.

The departure of Wagner to Switzerland and the knowledge of the composer's secret liaison with his wife, made von Bülow submit his resignation. In March 1867 Wagner went to Munich to negotiate von Bülow's recall with the king. The composer wanted to be assured that 'Die Meistersinger' production and the Royal School of Music were safely in von Bülow's expert hands before Cosima dragged the whole truth out into the open by leaving her husband for good. On 23 December Wagner again paid a visit to Munich, but failed to settle matters to his satisfaction. He returned to Tribschen in February 1868, his relations with the king at their lowest ebb. However, in April after the storm around

Wagner had past, von Bülow returned to Munich. The king promoted him to the position of court conductor and director of the newly-founded music school. Cosima returned to Munich on 20 May, and Wagner followed the next day to supervise 'Die Meistersinger' rehearsals. Wagner once again stayed with the von Bülows. In June, visitors from all over Europe arrived to attend the first performance of 'Die Meistersinger.' Three days prior to the premiere von Bülow predicted that the Maestro should celebrate a triumph as no genius could ever experience during his lifetime. On 21 June 1868, the premiere took place at the Royal National Opera House under the direction of von Bülow. The performance was an extraordinary success. The king invited Wagner to the royal box where he could accept the ovations of the public. The press wrote: "The impression which the royal craze made on the public was overwhelming; one was silenced."²⁹ Wagner, who himself considered 'Die Meistersinger' to be his best work, called the day of the premiere the greatest day of his life. Years later, he still described to Cosima the dream-like condition in which he found himself on that day.

On returning to Tribschen after a short stay in Italy, Cosima left for Munich to confront her husband. The von Bülow scandal erupted and Ludwig vented his annoyance in writing to his new Court Secretary, Döfflipp: "I have become thoroughly disgusted with the everlasting wrangles and complaints of Wagner, Bülow, Porges, Fröbel and the rest. I have been so lenient and patient with these people, and conferred so many benefits on them, that they should have good cause to be satisfied and grateful. My patience is at last wearing thin."³⁰ When Döfflipp pronounced the whole situation suspect, Ludwig voiced his own first private suspicion that there might be some truth in the rumour which he had never been able to bring himself to believe: "Is it really a case of adultery? Then alas!"³⁰ It was in-

29. Münster, R: König Ludwig II, und die Musik, Rosenheimer Raritäten, 1980, page 26.

30. Gregor-Dellin, Martin: Richard Wagner, His Life, His Work, His Century, William Collins Sons and Co. Ltd., London, 1983, pages 372 and 373.

evitable that Ludwig should have learned the truth for Cosima gave birth to Wagner's third child in June 1869. The interpretation of Wagner's music had been the mission of von Bülow's life, yet he understandably found it impossible to be the disciple of a master who betrayed him before the world. The completely broken von Bülow divorced Cosima the following year, after which he left for Italy and never met Wagner again.

After the von Bülow scandal the king broke off all relations with Cosima. Had she not prevailed upon him publicly to pledge her innocence? However, he could not bring himself to break off his relationship with Wagner. He could never forgive his beloved friend's treachery, but on the other hand he could not cease to serve and revere the artist. Yet, on 1 November when Wagner stopped over at Munich while journeying to Leipzig, Ludwig declined to grant him an audience.

The outer peacefulness of the 'Triebtschen days' was deceptive, for Cosima and Wagner were greatly upset about the fact that the king wanted to arrange a performance of 'Das Rheingold' and 'Die Valkyrie' in Munich. For the king's birthdays of 1865 and 1866 Wagner had presented him with the scores of this music which formed the first and second parts of the composer's as yet incomplete 'Ring of the Nibelungen.' Contrary to Wagner's intention that the whole cycle should be performed as a complete work, the king could not wait for the finalization of 'The Ring.' Against the wish of the composer, Ludwig arranged a performance of 'Das Rheingold' for September 1869 and that of 'Die Valkyrie' for June 1870. Wagner suggested, unsuccessfully, that if the works were to be performed, then it should be in front of a private audience only. However, the king stood by his decision and ordered the performances by invoking his contractual rights. The events leading up to the premiere of 'Das Rheingold' were bizarre, for Wagner decided to regain power and influence in Munich by sabotaging the performance. He wanted von Bülow's successor Hans Richter, as the theatre's administrator, instead of Baron von Perfall. In this way Wagner hoped to rule through Richter who was young and inexperienced. On the grounds that the production had been badly organised and would discredit the composer, Wagner hoped and expected

that Ludwig would dismiss von Perfall. When realizing that he was being misled by his ex-hero, Ludwig was furious. On his arrival in Munich, Wagner was astonished to find that he was refused admittance to the 'Das Rheingold' rehearsals. The composer did not attend the premiere of 'Die Valkyrie', and the king missed it through illness. Wagner now used every excuse for holding back the score of 'Siegfried', thereby preventing the king from staging a Munich premiere of the third part of 'The Ring' tetralogy.

The composer considered the performances of 'Das Rheingold' and 'Die Valkyrie' damaging to his projected four-part Festive Drama. Ludwig had not accepted Wagner's artistic reasons for interfering. Wagner wrote to Peter Cornelius: "The king loves my music; but he doesn't care how it's performed." ³¹. After the performance of 'Rheingold', while Wagner was busy with the orchestral sketch of 'Götterdämmerung', he received a letter from Ludwig who wrote: "I think you imagine my job (if I may term it that) to be easier than it is. Standing so fully, so absolutely alone in a bleak, joyless world, alone with my views, misunderstood and distrusted, is no small matter ... Pity those who have to cope with the masses, lucky those who can deal with individuals as you do. Oh, I have gotten to know mankind, believe me; I came to them with true love, and was rejected, and such wounds take a long time to heal." ³¹. Ludwig grew more and more distant to his idol, Wagner. After 'Die Meistersinger' premiere, there was little social or intellectual contact between them until the Bayreuth Festival.

For a long time Wagner had been hoping to carry out his plans for a Festival Theatre in Munich with Ludwig's help. However, through differences of opinion and especially the high cost involved, the project could not be developed by 1867. Wagner thought of moving the 'Festspiele' to Nuremberg, but decided against it. The locale could not be a metropolis or an industrial centre: he was seeking the idyllic conditions of a small town. Twenty-five years earlier he had seen Bayreuth and felt love at first sight for the 'sleepy

31. Fishcher-Diskau, Dietrich. Wagner and Nietzsche, The Seabury Press Inc., New York, 1976, pages 31 and 36.

Margravia' town. Ludwig had originally offered Wagner the use of the Margrave Opera House in Bayreuth, which had one of the largest stages in Bavaria. However, Wagner declined this offer because he considered the setting too small for the production of his works. The composer was now fully committed to the idea of having Bayreuth generate new impulses for art. In line with his plan he had decided not to permit his operas to be mounted anywhere else. In May 1870 he had stated: "People must understand that for my works, which outer chance has flung into the genre of 'opera', I would have to have my very own playhouse, to which not the indolent opera public, accustomed to utter trivia, would be invited, but only such people who hitherto remained away from those shallow entertainments." ³².

In 1872 the Wagners moved to their new home in Bayreuth, which Ludwig had donated to them. The house, with its symbolic name 'Wahnfried', meaning 'illusive peace', became a byword in the world of music. Wagner's dream was materializing and plans for the Theatre were put into operation. Carl Tausig, the 'ad hoc' manager of the Festival, who feverently admired Wagner, succeeded in enrolling the necessary number of patrons for the event. Now the main pillar of action was Countess von Schleinitz, who became the influential and indefatigable promoter. Later, Wagner admitted that he owed the creation of Bayreuth to her. By Spring 1872 Wagner, without Ludwig's help, had at his disposal a capital of some 300 000 thalers. However, by the end of that year it was clear that less than a third of the patronage shares had been taken up. Early in 1873, Wagner, who had just spent several exhausting weeks scouring western Germany for suitable singers, set out to raise funds by giving concerts in Dresden, Hamburg, Berlin and Cologne. On 2 August the roof-wetting of the theatre building took place. Unfortunately the resources, which came mainly from private means, diminished, and the completion of the Hall was in jeopardy. The only hope was Ludwig, whom Wagner approached

32. Fischer-Dieskau, Dietrich: Wagner and Nietzsche, The Seabury Press Inc., New York, 1976, page 67.

to stand surety for the project. The king at first refused, and all seemed lost. The reason for this decision was that Ludwig was offended by Wagner's failure to set a certain poem of Dahn's to music. But the composer had no idea that the request had come from the king and wrote at once explaining the misunderstanding. In her diary Cosima records: "To the King he writes that, if his royal benefactor requires music from him, he hopes he will allow h. to write his own verses for it; also that he did not pay any particular attention to Herr Dahn's poem, since he gets scores of such requests, and anyway he could have found no melody suitable for such an archaic verse meter. At the same time he told the King of his decision to abandon the performances." ³³. Following this letter, the King agreed to help. Even though Ludwig's finances were not too good, he granted a credit of 100 000 thalers. The property bought with the money was mortgaged to the king and the receipts from the patrons and societies were to be paid over to him until the debt was repaid.

During the summer of 1876, the First Festival of the now complete 'Ring' was staged. On the night of 6 August King Ludwig arrived at Bayreuth in his 'special' train. Wagner welcomed his former friend at the station. Deeply moved, he uttered his gratitude to the king for his willingness to attend the dress rehearsals. Being extremely shy and anti-social, the king did not wish his presence to be revealed. He avoided any contact with the crowd and even a drive through the decorated streets of the town was unbearable to him. He took up residence at the pleasure palace of the Margravine of Bayreuth, situated in the middle of a park that provided seclusion. The king, accustomed to working by night and sleeping by day, kept Wagner for a private conversation until morning. Ludwig was present at the four final rehearsals of 'The Ring' immediately before the premiere on 13 August. The public was surprised when he appeared again in Bayreuth between 27 and 30 August. During the performance of 'Siegfried', the third of the four 'Ring' evenings, Wagner sat next to the king.

33. Wagner, Cosima, *Cosima Wagner's Diaries*, Collins, St. James's Place, London, 1973, Volume I, page 720

When 'The Ring' terminated with 'The Twilight of the Gods', Ludwig retreated into seclusion immediately.

In spite of its great success, the First Festival ended with an enormous deficit. When, yet again, Wagner had to appeal to Ludwig to rescue Bayreuth from its financial difficulties, he was not refused. This second financial arrangement not only made the 1882 Festival possible, it also laid the foundation for later similar events. By a fictitious arrangement based on an assessment of the royalties which performances of Wagner's works in the Munich opera might have produced, the unpaid loan was wiped out. The fiction lay in the fact that Wagner had already signed away his Munich rights to the king in return for a yearly pension. This sum, combined with other donations, certainly represented a considerable reward. But more important was the undertaking to pay royalties for the future not only to Wagner himself, but also to his heirs for twenty years after his death. On this basis the continuation of the Bayreuth Festival was secured.

In October 1878 Wagner completed the 2nd act of 'Parsifal'. Ludwig who had once more drawn close to Wagner, was the first to receive the news. The composer wrote: "I have flung myself into purgatory and re-emerged safe and sane. I know - this labour too is worthy of Us." The letter is signed: "His immortal own for this world, Richard Wagner."³⁴. By the autumn of 1880 Wagner apparently regretted giving 'Parsifal' to the King to cover the Festival debts, and he reneged on the agreement: "How can a drama openly presenting the most sublime mysteries of the Christian faith be performed in theatres such as ours next to an opera repertory and in front of an audience such as ours? I would really not take it amiss if our church authorities were to raise highly justified objections to the exposure of the hallowed mysteries on the same boards on which frivolity makes itself comfortable yesterday and tomorrow, and to a public that only feels attracted to frivolity."³⁴. As if he had never mortgaged

34. Fischer-Diskau, Dietrich. Wagner and Nietzsche, The Seabury Press Inc., New York, 1976, pages 166 and 170.

'Parsifal' to the king, Wagner demanded: "Parsifal may be performed for all time only in Bayreuth and nowhere else. Never shall Parsifal be offered as an amusement to the public in any other theatre, and my making sure of this is the only thing now occupying me and making me determine how and by what means I can assure the destiny of my work. I feel daily as if I were writing my last will and testament."³⁵ A few days later the king indulgently gave in and retracted all earlier agreements about the performance of 'Parsifal.' Thus ended the right that the king had acquired in 1876 to stage 'Parsifal' in Munich.

At the time of the 'Parsifal' production Ludwig's chief conductor was Hermann Levi, the son of a rabbi. Wagner, furious that the king had apparently rejected the Anti-Semitic message of 'Parsifal', attempted to turn Ludwig against Levi. Ludwig's comment, that religious and racial differences were unimportant compared with the essential brotherhood of mankind, was a bitter blow to the composer. The king insisted that, unless Levi were to conduct, there would be no performance of 'Parsifal.' Wagner now resorted to other tactics: he made himself personally so offensive to Levi that the conductor asked to be relieved of the task of conducting 'Parsifal,' and had to be coaxed back. Finally, however, Wagner realised he was defeated and wrote to Ludwig agreeing that he would accept Levi without enquiring into the conductor's religion. When the king's response indicated his distaste for racial intolerance, Wagner informed Ludwig that he considered the Jewish race to be "the born enemies of pure Mankind and all that is noble in it."³⁶ It was against this background that Levi conducted the first performance of Wagner's sacred Christian drama, 'Parsifal.'

At first Ludwig announced that he would attend the premiere. But, three weeks before the opening, he unexpectedly sent his apologies. Deeply hurt, Wagner wrote to the king: Who inspired me to this highest and ultimate upsurge of all my

35. Fischer-Diskau, Dietrich. Wagner and Nietzsche, The Seabury Press Inc., New York, 1976, page 170.

36. Münster, Robert. König Ludwig II, und die Musik, Rosenheimer Raritäten, 1980, page 112.

spiritual energy? With a constant eye on Whom did I execute all this, daring to look forward to success? The now assured success will become the greatest failure in my life: what good is it all if I cannot gladden His heart with it? And it is the last thing I shall create. The terrible fatigue, which allows me only just enough strength today for these few lines, tells me what point I have reached with my strength." ³⁷ 'Parsifal' was indeed Wagner's last work and it had its premiere during the second Bayreuth Festival in July 1882. Ludwig did not attend any of the sixteen performances of the opera. Only after the composer's death did he hear 'Parsifal' in six special presentations in Munich during 1884 and 1885.

The original purpose of Wagner's plan was to build a theatre for the people, dedicated to German art. It was to be independent of the princes and their court operas, with all their artificial fashions and intrigues. This theatre was not intended to be used for Wagner's work alone. However, Bayreuth has been reserved for the composer's work from the beginning, and still is.

37. Fischer-Dieskau, Dietrich. Wagner and Nietzsche, The Seabury Press Inc., New York, 1976, page 183.

3.3 LUDWIG: THE DREAM KING WHO IMMORTALIZED WAGNER'S CREATIVE WORK

Wagner's friendship with Ludwig II has often been hymned as the fulfillment of a dream and the pinnacle of the composer's career. Wagner was always aware of the value of the king both to him and his work, as without Ludwig he could not have existed. But for Ludwig, there would never have been a Bayreuth Festival, the composer might have been irretrievably ruined and his later works never written.

There was something childlike about Ludwig's affection for Wagner. It was that very quality which proved so detrimental to them both. Ludwig's politically hazardous fondness for living 'cacooned' in fantasy came as a challenge to Wagner who, not content with marching his blindly devoted disciple toward the 'Grail', felt driven to mobilize the entire kingdom of Bavaria as well. He sought to manipulate the keyboard of practical politics and exert an influence on ministerial and musical appointments. It could have been possible that the composer's incentive acquired impetus after the meeting he had with an elderly clairvoyant, Frau Dangel, early in 1865. She endeavoured to persuade Wagner that he had a mission to save Ludwig from his enemies. The composer's influence upon the king was always inexplicable to his contemporaries. His natural egoism was anything but a benign influence on the king because it could not fail to enhance his own prestige. Financial support may not have been the only reason for his cultivation of royalty. He enjoyed the company of the rich and powerful, and aspired to live like them, which he did when he could afford to. The enthusiastic, often exuberant chord struck by the king originated in his limitless respect for Wagner the artist. The composer was the extraordinarily capable senior partner in their exchange of thoughts. He knew how to approach the king and to guide him, but there were limits. On political matters and important decisions such as the Cabinet reshuffle, Ludwig could not be influenced. When Wagner's articles on Karl Sand, a disciple of Friedrich Jahn, appeared in a government newspaper, even Ludwig began to worry. Jahn's

theory, propagating the creation of a new nobility based on duty to the state, was disturbing. Ludwig exercised his authority by heeding the advice of his ministers and ordered publication of the articles to cease.

In the early stage of their relationship Wagner's response to Ludwig had been all that he could have wished. Visiting him daily, the composer would spend hours with the young man. Later, however, when Cosima appeared on the scene, this became rather more difficult for Wagner and led to Ludwig becoming jealous of Cosima. Ludwig was to grow more and more capricious, alternating royal favour with sudden quarrels. He would write almost hysterical letters of apology and reconciliation to Wagner. After a discord it was always Ludwig who re-established contact. It was understandable that two men, each of such different temperament, would have experienced periods of strain. At times even a well meant gesture could be misinterpreted: when the king sent a portrait of Beethoven to Wagner for his birthday, the composer was offended by this gift for which he could not find a place. Wagner, too, tried to please and gladden the heart of his king. For Ludwig's nineteenth birthday he composed a 'March of Homage' and intended to complete 'Die Meistersinger' in time for Ludwig's wedding on 12 October 1867. However, even though the king's engagement was broken off the opera was completed ten days later.

During Wagner's stay at Castle Hohenschwagau, Ludwig arranged that the 'morning call' from 'Lohengrin' was played from several towers of the castle by the oboe players of the First Infantry Regiment. When the days of bliss at the castle ended, Ludwig made Wagner a farewell present of a watch with a picture of Lohengrin inside the lid. The king ordered a display of fireworks followed by a performance of special significance: it was given directly beneath the ancestral home of the knights of Schwangau. Ludwig's aide-de-camp, Prince Paul von Tassus, re-enacted the operatic hero, Lohengrin's arrival. Dressed as the Swanknight and drawn by an ingeniously constructed and illuminated swan, he glided across the lake to the strains of the 'Lohengrin' music performed

by royal musicians. Ludwig was so enchanted by this that it was repeated the following night. He even wrote to Wagner seeking detailed information about an authentic Lohengrin costume.

Wagner and Ludwig fell in love with the character roles they played. Worse still, they forgot that they were acting. When the king, aged twenty four, appeared at Wagner's front door at the villa Tribschen, he had himself announced as 'Walter', the romantic hero of 'Die Meistersinger.' On the 22 May 1868, while the rehearsals for the premiere of this opera were in progress, Wagner joined Ludwig aboard the steam yacht 'Tristan' and sailed the Starnberger See. They enacted roles from the opera when 'Junker Stolzing' treated 'Hans Sachs' to a birthday lunch on board. Their exaggeration of the noble and ideal betrays the artificiality of the roles they were playing. Himself a great dramatist and composer, Wagner saw through the charade in retrospect. When Cosima mentioned that she had been reading some of his letters to the king, Wagner commented that the tone was not good, but that he did not set it. As time went by the two men forgot themselves and neglected to keep their distance. Ludwig, who worshipped at Wagner's shrine, would write, "My Dearest Beloved." Wagner's replies were neither more nor less deferential. Because of the frankness with which the composer informed others of his relationship with Ludwig, one tends to surmise it was not physical. Also, the possibility of a homosexual relationship can be ruled out as their correspondence reposes less in these verbal embraces than in the fact that their extravagant phrases betoken a departure from reality.

The death of the maestro touched the King deeply. Wagner had been his only true friend in a lonely and unreasonable world. As the composer's body was carried from Venice to Bayreuth, the king arranged that the cortege stop in Munich to pay his last respects. Ludwig did not attend the funeral, but remained at Castle Hohenschwangau to be alone with the memories of his dear friend.

Bayreuth had offered Ludwig poor return for his years of devotion. By its very festival nature it forced him, being within his territory, to play host to all the visiting princes and celebrities who wished to attend. This had not been his desire at all. Wagner was not for him a means of self-glorification, but a deep aesthetic necessity. There is much evidence to suggest that it was not music at all that so attracted Ludwig to Wagner's world of drama. He was susceptible to auditory stimuli and fond of mythology. More important than the music were the subjects and characters themselves which were idealized by his poetic fancy into a combination of all the arts. Wagner had stated that art may be regarded as a 'dream image' which comforts and lifts one above the sordid actuality of distress. In doing so, art becomes a refuge for unalterable reality. Ludwig wanted to enjoy the composer's works in privacy, as a man, not as a king. To indulge this desire he had been willing not only to assist Wagner in achieving the composer's ultimate goal, but also to build a castle which would serve as a home for himself, enabling him to find the refuge he sought.

Much has been written about the fabled King of Bavaria, whose castles have attracted thousands of visitors each year. Particularly, during his later years, Ludwig was famous for holding exhibitions and promoting the arts. His buildings gained their individual quality from their connection with the theatre: Neuschwanstein Castle from Wagner's operas; Linderhoff, Herrenchiemsee and the 'oriental' buildings from the private performances he held. He had a great sense of theatrical splendour, a boundless ambition, and before his eyes the constant model of Versailles on which Castle Herrenchiemsee is based. As a major work of 'Historicism', Neuschwanstein illustrates the creative achievements of 19th Century art. It also contributed important benefits to the arts and crafts of Munich as well as creating work for his subjects.

King Ludwig II was the son of Maximilian II, who maintained family traditions by establishing and endowing the National

Museum. Ludwig's grandfather, Ludwig I, virtually founded the Munich Art Gallery. While his father and grandfather had built principally for the public, Ludwig II's castles and palaces were built for himself. He was responsible for the building of Castles Neuschwanstein (1859 - 1886), Linderhoff (1874 - 1878) and Herrenchiemsee (1878 - 1886). The king, after the frustrations of his first years on the throne, turned away from the residence town of Munich and took refuge in his beloved mountains. He had spent seventeen happy years of his youth at Castle Hohenschwangau. However, he had felt harassed by the 'prose' of his mother, Queen Marie, who could not appreciate his ideals. To Ludwig, Hohenschwangau was a paradise on earth that was alive with his ideals. The impressions he gained there probably had a decisive influence on him and eventually inspired him to build and furnish Neuschwanstein Castle in its present form. Two ideas had seized the imagination of the young king: the typical late Romantic fancy of restoration, and the idea of a new castle of the Swanknight, Lohengrin. Already, in the middle of the 19th Century, Ludwig's father had the intention to rebuild the old castle of Hohenschwangau, where the Neuschwanstein Castle is situated today.

On 13 May 1868, Ludwig wrote to Wagner telling him of his intention to rebuild the castle ruins of Hohenschwangau in the true style of the castles of the ancient German knights. It was to be constructed on the model of the original Wartburg in which heroes and legends of the German Middle Ages would come alive in a unique way. Ludwig mentioned the beauty of the locality, the setting near the Poellatgorge, granting a splendid view over the Bavarian Alps. The castle would lie embedded amidst thick forest surrounding the Alp Lake and the smaller Swan Lake. He felt the situation to be holy and unapproachable except for the gods who would be there with them, breathing the air of heaven. The arrival of Ludwig's beloved hero on the Alpsee provided a

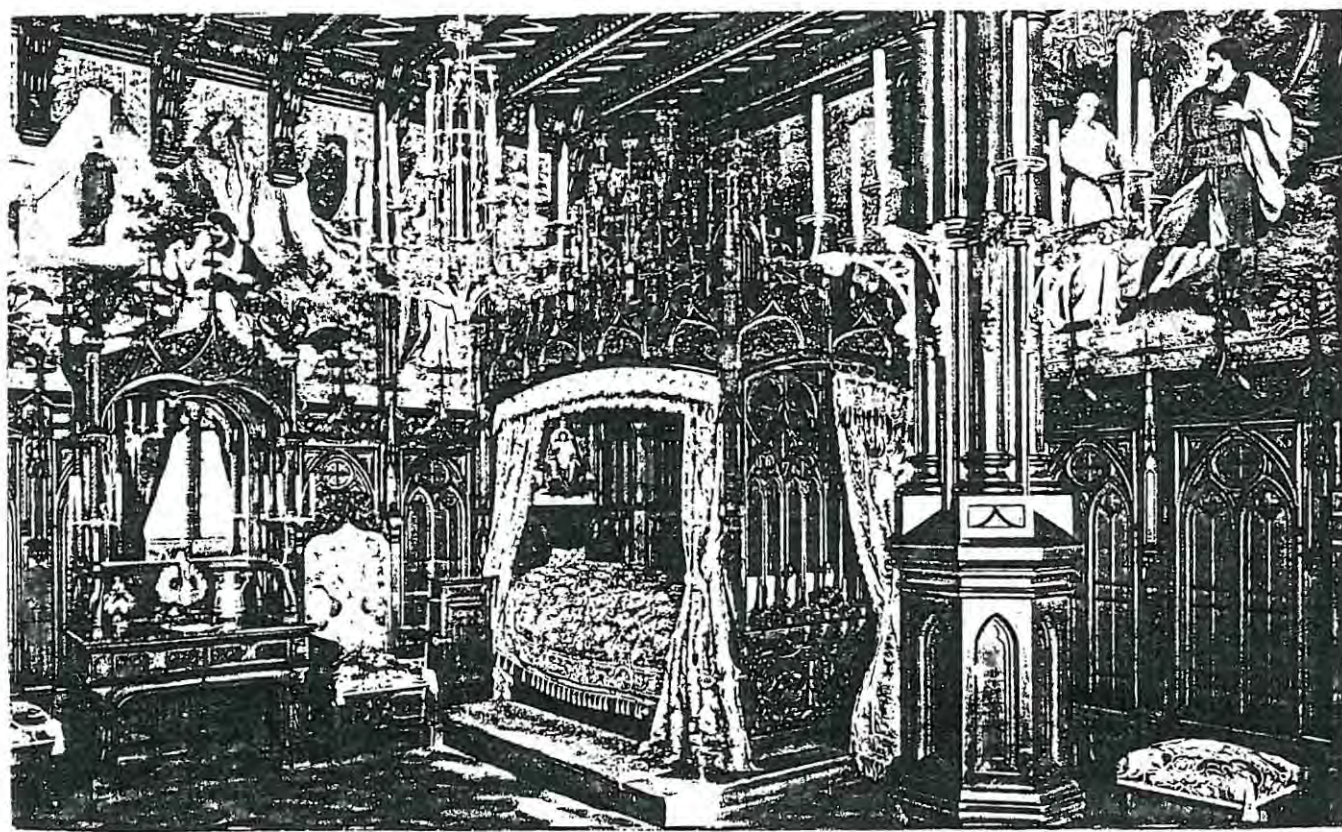
delightful prelude to the building of the new castle. In 1868 the site was levelled and construction of a road begun. The plans for the castle were finally completed, and on 5 September 1869 the foundation stone was laid. The king himself was keenly interested in every small detail of the interior and frequently ordered corrections to be made before work could begin. He devoted special attention to the planning of the mural paintings, his interest in these possibly originating from the time his father had Hohenschwangau painted with murals of regional myths while Ludwig was still a child. He had also become familiar with the Lohengrin saga as painted on the walls of Hohenschwangau, his father's castle, long before his fateful experience with Wagner's opera of the same name. Dr Hyazinth Holland, a historian of literature and specialist in medieval iconography, furnished Ludwig with a collection of suggestions for the decoration of the castle. Ludwig set up a nearly impossible deadline for the building. He ordered the paintings of his apartments to be finished by Christmas Day of 1881. Later, the programme of Neuschwanstein had to be altered frequently to meet his changing ideas.

Since Ludwig intended the castle Neuschwanstein to be a 'temple' in Wagner's honour he chose motifs for the decorating almost exclusively from Wagner's operas. He was, however, determined to return to the historical roots of Wagner's work and ordered that the paintings should revive the real sagas and not the composer's interpretations of them. Ludwig required painters who were familiar with medieval poetry and who would, by virtue of their acquaintance with literature, reflect the king's spiritual concept. This concept was based on both truth and imagination; but although poetically glorified, any exaggeration of the 'historical truth' would be condemned as a farce. The significance of some of the works can only be seen as being an integrating part of the castle: as a 'total work of art.' He once wrote to Wagner saying that he had tried to create an art in harmony with his personal view of the universe.

The pictures in the dining room of Neuschwanstein show details from the life at Wartburg Castle at the time of the legendary Singer's Contest, about 1207. Wagner had chosen this theme together with the Tannhäuser saga as the subject for one of his most beautiful operas.



The lonely king had a predilection for sumptuous bedrooms and the main bedroom at Heuschwanstein is built in neo-gothic style. The oak-carvings at the foot-end of the canopy above the bed represent the resurrection of Christ symbolizing the near-relationship between sleep and death. The room is decorated with scenes from the love drama, 'Tristan and Isolde.'



The murals in the dressing-room deal with poetry and represent scenes from the life of the 'Minne Sanger', Walther from 'Die Meistersinger.'



The living room at Neuschwanstein represents the 'Lohengrin' saga and the paintings are dedicated to the Swanknight. There is a mural of Lohengrin's arrival in Antwerp as well as a painting of the miracle of the Holy Grail. Given a special place is a smaller sitting corner, the 'Swan' corner, The swan was a favourite symbol of Ludwig II and there is also a large flower vase in the shape of a swan.

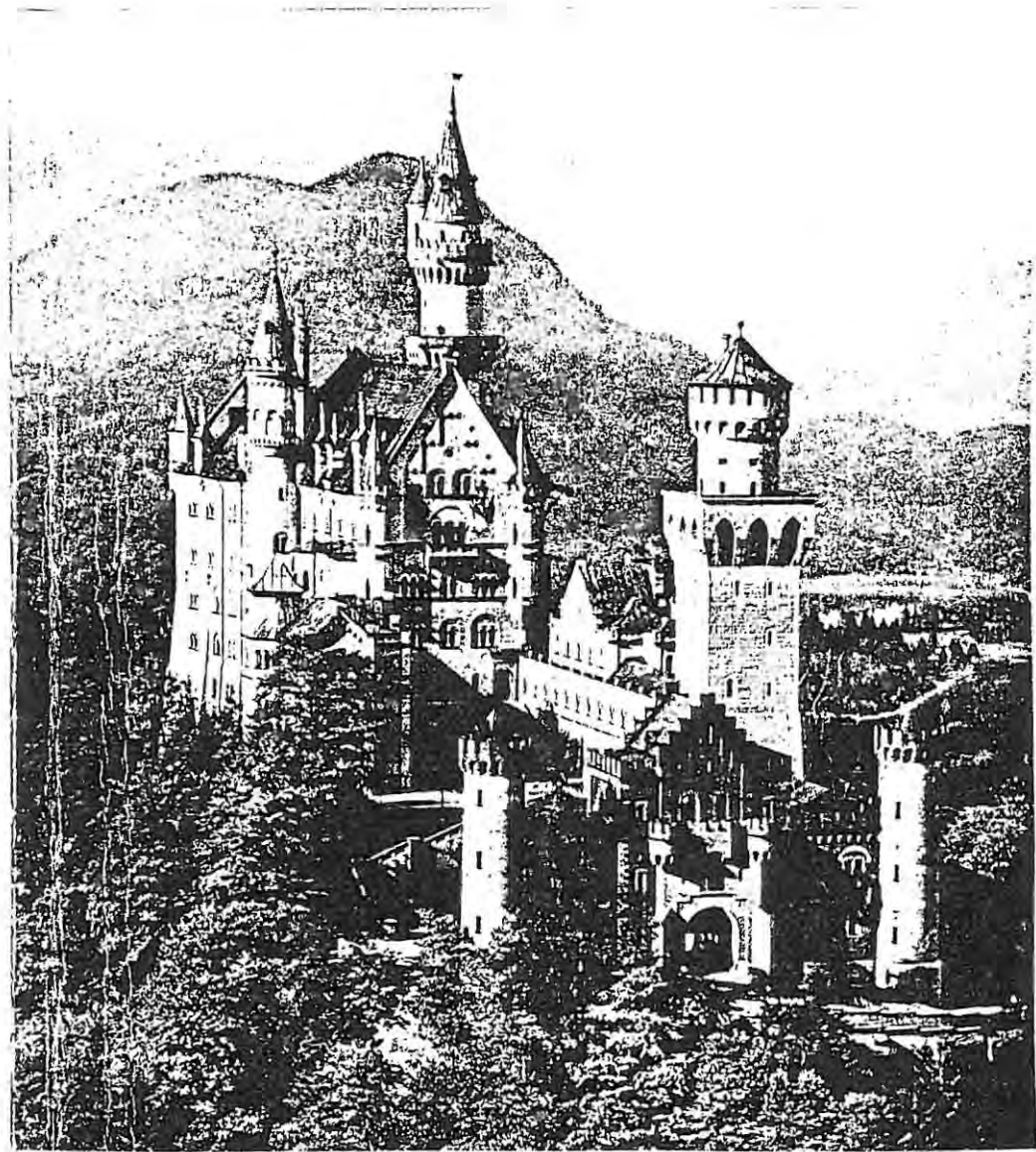


Ludwig had a special relationship with 'Parsifal.' He was easily able to identify with the story and had the 'Hall of Singer's' feature murals from the saga. During Ludwig's life, the Minstrel Hall was never used. Only in 1933, festive concerts were arranged on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of Wagner's death. Musical events of this kind took place until 1939. During these concerts, the hall was illuminated by the light of more than 600 candles. The angular and panelled pine-wood ceiling gives the hall very good acoustic qualities. Concerts have taken place in the Singers' Hall every year since 1969.



The creative achievements in the castle range from the detail found in the throne hall's romanesque chandeliers to such amazingly 'modern' solutions as single pane windows. In addition, the king's projects reveal the application of the most modern technical devices of the time, as for example, the hot and cold running water and a grill of fully automatic turning spits in the kitchen. As early as 1884, Neuschwanstein Castle was centrally heated by warm air from the cellar and the ground floor.

The romanesque style of architecture is obvious in the design of the building as a whole as well as in its ornamentation: the round arched portals, the arcade windows and towers, the position of columns, the baywindows and pinnacles.





*Neuschwanstein at the time of the death of Ludwig II, 1886.
Engraving by R. Assmus*

Ludwig had been a dreamy, solitary, unhealthy looking boy but in early manhood became very handsome. On his accession to the throne he rapidly developed symptoms of melancholia. He was subject to fits of violent temper and of sudden, unaccountable caprice. Ludwig was a man who mistook dreams for reality and filled the capital and its surroundings with monuments and castles like a fairyland. Although he became engaged to Princess Sophie of Bavaria in 1867, he was notably insensitive to the influence of women. The engagement was broken that same year and he remained single throughout his life.

Ludwig's castles and palaces were reserved for his exclusive use. To him, Neuschwanstein was more than an illusory world into which he wished to withdraw in protest against the bourgeois world which showed no understanding of him: it

was to be his very life, in which dream and reality blended and history lived again. To Ludwig, the world of myths and legends was not merely a stage setting, but a real existence of beauty and peace. He could live in isolation and not feel lonely, surrounded by the characters and stories brought to life in Wagner's operas.

In building his castles, Ludwig had acted with extreme skill and energy, something he completely lacked in political matters. In no way did he deplete the State Treasury by these undertakings, but paid everything out of his own resources. However, when the privy purse ran heavily into debt and building had to stop, his life lost its purpose. Ludwig had threatened to take his own life, and such threats were taken seriously. He was in residence at Castle Neuschwanstein when Dr von Gudden, a psychiatrist, appeared and declared the king to be in need of treatment. Ludwig became a prisoner in his own castle. On 12 June 1886, a Government commission ordered him to Castle Berg. Ludwig questioned how von Gudden could have declared him insane without having examined him. The king, if he were 'mad' was sane enough to realize that the doctor's behaviour was unethical. His own brother, Otto, who was ultimately to succeed him as king, but in name only, had also been declared insane. On arriving at Castle Berg, Ludwig seemed calmer and von Gudden felt that the King had accepted his situation. On 13 June the two men set out on that fateful evening walk in the castle garden around Lake Starnberg. Their bodies were found in the lake a few hours later.

All Europe was shocked by the news of the King's dramatic death, and many prominent people paid warm tributes to him; typical of these was the comment of Paul Verlaine, who spoke of him as the only true King of the century.

For mankind Neuschwanstein remains a vision of beauty far beyond anything that modern man has been able to create. Wagner's creative work was so closely linked to the name of

the King, that it was not surprising that Ludwig should have declared: "I was the first to recognise the artist for whom the whole world now mourns; I saved him for the world." ^{38.}

38. Münster, R. König Ludwig II, und die Musik, Rosenhaimer Raritäten, 1980, page 132.

"All our dreams," said Vincent d'Indy, "even that of composers who most energetically deny the imputation, come from the spring which rises at the feet of the titanic Wagner. Richard Wagner still casts his great shadow over all our musico-dramatic productions." ³⁹.

39. Ewen, David. Great Composers, published by H.W. Wilson Co., New York, page 409.

CHAPTER FOUR

RICHARD WAGNER

4.1 WILHELM RICHARD WAGNER : A BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Richard Wagner was born on 22 May 1813, in Leipzig to Karl Friedrich and Johanna Wagner.

His artistic abilities developed from an early age. At ten years old he showed interest in Greek tragedy; at twelve he won the school prize for a poem to commemorate the death of a fellow pupil; the following year he was writing a tragic drama, whilst two years later he was setting it to music and composing other pieces as well. By the age of eighteen he had entered Leipzig University and was studying harmony and counterpoint at the St. Thomasschule. He had already composed his C Major Symphony.

By twenty-one, Wagner was composing steadily and completed his first opera 'Die Feen' which, although scheduled for its premiere in Leipzig the same year, was never heard in his lifetime. He had accepted the post of conductor of the Bethmann Company, based in Magdeburg, and was composing 'Das Liebesverbot', which was staged in 1836, but failed, bringing the Bethmann Company down with it.

He was soon appointed to the Königsberg theatre, but it too, failed, and thereupon he transferred to Riga, followed by the creditors of both Magdeburg and Königsberg. His stay at Riga was short-lived: a pre-occupation with the composition of 'Rienzi', together with his current dislike of the abundance of Italian opera being produced there, led to him being suspended. In a short while he left for Paris, where for three years he lived in privation, although completing 'Rienzi' and composing 'The Flying Dutchman.' However, his hopes that his works would be accepted in Paris thus enabling them to be accepted in his own country, were dashed. Three years later, in 1842, he left for Dresden where 'Rienzi' had been accepted for production in October, and where he was appointed second conductor at the court opera. Dresden also saw the production of 'The Flying Dutchman' and in 1845 that of 'Tannhäuser.'

This period also sees a disastrous interest in politics, and the Dresden revolt, in which Wagner's radical opinions see him on the losing side. He fled to Weimar and thence to Switzerland as a political refugee. He was forty-eight years old when, at last, the decree of banishment from Germany was revoked. The period of exile was marked by poverty and a severe deterioration in his personal affairs. Wagner had married Minna Planer in 1836, but happiness proved elusive and their lives together were a succession of partings and reconciliations until her death in 1866. Almost every parting led him into the arms of another woman: Jessie Laussot, 1850, Mathilde Wesendonck, 1854. Nevertheless, Wagner's development as a drama musician continued, almost as if poverty and unhappiness were the fuels of his artistic fire. In 1851 his book 'Oper und Drama' was completed and 'The Ring' conceived.

It was through his friendship with Franz Liszt that in 1853 Wagner met the composer's daughter, Cosima, who later became his second wife.

In 1861 Wagner settled near Vienna where 'Lohengrin' was produced. During 1864 he was threatened with imprisonment for debt, and had to leave Vienna secretly. The composer went to Stuttgart, in Switzerland, and in May the significant meeting with Ludwig II of Bavaria took place. The King was instrumental in producing Wagner's operas 'Tristan and Isolde', 1865, and 'Die Meistersinger', 1868. While on a visit to Leipzig during the same year, Wagner met the philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche.

In 1876 the famous Wagner Festival Theatre at Bayreuth was completed, and opened with the production of 'The Ring'. After the production of 'Parsifal' at Bayreuth, Wagner went to Venice where he died on 13 February 1883.

4.2 RICHARD WAGNER: A CONTROVERSIAL GENIUS

Controversy surrounded Richard Wagner throughout his life, and not least, at his birth. Although born to Johanna and Karl Wagner, there was a suspicion that his actual father was in fact the actor, writer and painter Ludwig Geyer.

Wagner was born in Leipzig on 22 May 1813. Karl Wagner died six months later, and within less than a year, on 14 August 1814, Wagner's mother married Geyer.

Although no doubt influenced by his 'stepfather', Wagner's artistic inheritance was surely more than coincidental. Certainly the artistic environment maintained by Geyer was conducive to the development of the young Wagner, whose sisters, Clara and Rosalie, were soon destined for the operatic stage.

The family's home was in Dresden, and at the age of seven, Wagner's education began nearby at Possendorf village school. When Geyer died in 1822, Wagner was brought nearer home to the Kreuzschule where he spent the following six years. His education was broken once more when, at the beginning of 1828, he changed to the St. Nicholas School in Leipzig. There is some evidence that Wagner was frequently at loggerheads with his teachers; this is borne out by two observations which he has given us in his autobiography. Writing up his period at the Kreuzschule he speaks of: "My neglect of school reached such a point that it could not but lead to a rupture."⁴⁰ Of his period at St. Nicholas he writes of despising the dry monotony of school regime. He eventually had to leave the St. Nicholas School "too deeply in disgrace with the staff of masters ever to hope for any promotion in the University from that quarter."⁴⁰ In June 1830, he entered the St. Thomasschule where he received his first formal music study under Theodor Weinlig.

40. Wagner, Richard, My Life, Constable and Company Ltd., London, 1911, Volume I, pages 28 and 46.

A major problem in the personality of Wagner is that of identity, and through this, of insecurity. The fact that he received an interrupted education, mostly away from home, could have contributed towards this feeling of insecurity. In his formative years it appears that young Wagner was known as Geyer, the name in which he was registered in the books of the Kreuzschule in Dresden. The wisdom of using this name is debatable. Had he been an only child, then marriage of Geyer to Wagner's mother so soon after the child's birth could have justified the name Geyer. But Wagner had two older sisters at home, both of whom were considered Karl Wagner's daughters. It would not have taken an intelligent boy long to investigate his name compared with that of his sisters, and perhaps affords a reason for the reversion to the name Wagner in 1826, when he was thirteen. Whether Wagner ever directly questioned his parenthood is not known, but he claimed to be the son of Geyer, even though nothing conclusive was proved. Additionally, the death of Karl Wagner so soon after Wagner's birth meant that he never knew the man whose name he bore for the greater part of his life. These three factors: the adoption of Geyer's name, the search for proof of his father's identity, together with an inability to decry his mother, and his lack of direct association with Karl Wagner, all combined towards a feeling of insecurity. This affected his relationship to the three women who influenced his life as well as his relationship to other people.

Indications of insecurity are apparent from the Diary of Cosima, who records Wagner's descriptions of his nightmares when his age-old fears of rejection are relived in his dreams. "R. dreamed his old dream — that he had offended me, that I wished to leave him, that he then wanted to starve himself to death." ⁴¹ They are apparent also in his compositions, which indicate a lifelong continuation of the problem: the

41. Wagner, Cosima. *Cosima Wagner's Diaries*, Collins, St. Jame's Place, London, 1978, volume II, page 991.

conflicts in 'The Ring' are derived from identity; some of the heroic figures of his operas are prefaced by a father's death, for example Tristan, Siegfried and Parsifal were all born after their father's deaths.

As a young child the tuning of the orchestra would portend the supernatural to Wagner; when he heard the fifths of violins he beheld ghosts. However, the most potent cause of his insecurity was possibly his mistrust of people, which one can deduce from the nature of his dreams. In these, Wagner saw himself as the victim of his two wives, his children, his friends, his professional colleagues and strangers. For example, in his dreams of Minna, his first wife, she is depicted as quarrelsome and vindictive.

Wagner displayed a dual personality about his association with Minna. He both wanted and rejected her. He wrote to Apel that his relationship with Minna was one of love and trust and that he would leave the rest to fate. She was the recipient of his confidences, being kind, practical and sympathetic. When he suffered his frequent bouts of erysipelas, in which his features became swollen, she tended him."When later on I had an attack of erysipelas, from which I often suffered, and with my face all swollen and frightfully distorted concealed myself from the world in my gloomy room, Minna visited me repeatedly, nursed me, and assured me that my distorted features did not matter in the least."⁴² He obviously desired and appreciated her service then. On the other hand, he would rant and rave at her for hours on end, forcing her into a situation in which she could not do otherwise than leave home.

From the start, their relationship was a stormy one and the pattern of their life together, with its many separations, could be said to have been set even before their marriage.

42. Wagner, Richard. My Life, Constable and Company Ltd., London, 1911, Volume II, page 110

They met during Wagner's term as Musical Director of the Magdeburg Theatrical Company, where Minna was the leading juvenile actress. When Minna's position at the theatre became intolerable because of her rival Madame Grabousky, she left for an engagement at the theatre in Berlin. At a committee meeting of the Magdeburg Theatrical Company, Wagner attacked the stage manager so vehemently that he agreed to take Minna back. Her absence had unhinged the composer to the extent that his urgent, temporary need of her compelled him in his letters to make passionate demands for marriage. "Open your heart, Minna, if you don't I am going to compel you; by God, I shall come to Berlin and tear you away by force, and if that should pain you, tell me that you don't love me any longer, and so give me the death blow! My dear, my dear, no one was ever loved as much as you! I will prove my love to you by renewing now with unceasing strength my offers for our union; if you reject this union there will be other ways to convince you of the power of my love. This is sworn by your RICHARD."⁴³ She agreed to marry him, and triumphant and in tears he welcomed her home.

The fact that years later he could write of Minna in very casual terms shows how inconsistent he could be. "I longed for peace and quiet, and hoped to find these most effectively by getting married, and so putting an end to the state of things that had become the source of so much anxiety to me."⁴⁴.

After their marriage in 1836 their relationship soon became intolerable. They had married in haste, with little money. The pastor officiating at the ceremony was made to witness

43. The Durrell Collection. Letters of Richard Wagner, Macmillan Co., Great Britain, 1950, page 37.

44. Wagner, Richard. My Life, Constable and Company, Ltd., London, 1911, Volume II, page 153.

an ugly, argumentative scene in front of the altar. He was forced to reprimand the couple and remind them of the presence of God. The misfortunes which attended most of Wagner's productions could have affected his married life and have led to his many fits of jealousy and irrational outbursts of temper. After six unhappy months of penury and heart-break, Minna's courage deserted her and she left home to live with her parents in Dresden. Wagner was in misery for months, imploring her to return: when she did, he freely forgave her affair with another man. There had been previous indiscretions in Minna's life. At age sixteen she bore a daughter, Natalie, the shame of whose parentage was concealed by Minna through the simple expedient of passing the child off as her sister. Wagner knew this, but he too kept the secret for years. Natalie herself did not learn the truth until she was an old woman.

These irregularities in Minna's life had little or nothing to do with the failure of her marriage to Wagner. In their first year together she left him twice, but even though the composer forgave her, they remained at odds. Minna was a woman of limited intelligence. "I always felt somewhat distressed, uncomfortable, and ill at ease whenever I tried to pass a few pleasant hours in the society of my wife."⁴⁵ With every year that passed Wagner's complex brain developed until not only his ideas and his music, but his simplest actions became incomprehensible to her. His ego needed a great deal of support, while Minna's insecure personality required constant attention.

From Königsberg, in East Prussia, the couple moved to Riga where the only thing that kept Wagner going was his work on the opera 'Rienzi'. He had lost his position as conductor and was worried by debt. By the summer of 1839 he decided to give up his conducting career and

45. Wagner, Richard. My Life, Constable and Company, Ltd., London, 1911, Volume II, page 547.

devote his life to the composition of operas. This was the most critical single decision of his entire life. He believed that the only way he could get his 'Rienzi' produced in Germany would be to get it produced in Paris first. The reason why Wagner chose to go to Paris rather than back to Germany had to do with the unsatisfactory state of operatic affairs in his native country at that time. Their departure from Riga and the voyage on the 'Thetis' was his first step into the unknown. As it turned out, Wagner accomplished none of his aims in Paris, but suffered two and a half years privation so cruel that he spoke of the experience forty years later only with tears. Of this period in his life, Wagner wrote: "May and June had gone by, and during these months our troubles had grown steadily more serious.....Soon, our lack of funds began to make itself felt with a severity that was very discouraging.... One day it came to a climax. Being absolutely without money, I started out, early one morning, to walk to Paris—for I had not even enough to pay the railway fare thither—and I resolved to wander about the whole day, trudging from street to street, even until late in the afternoon, in the hope of raising a five-franc piece; but my errand proved absolutely vain, and I had to walk all the way back to Meudon again, utterly penniless." ^{46.}

He respected Minna a great deal for sharing his Paris hardships during the years 1839-42. The anguish which the composer underwent during that time found its only compensation in the loyalty and self-sacrificing devotion of Minna, as well as that of a few faithful friends from Germany. Minna's courage and devotion were beyond all praise. The poverty they experienced made their former life appear affluent by comparison. Several times they were on the verge of starvation, and on two occasions he was imprisoned for debts. They had to take in boarders, and each dawn Minna was reduced to cleaning the boarder's shoes. She pawned her few remaining trinkets and was

46. Wagner, Richard. My Life, Constable and Company Ltd., London, 1911, Volume II, page 245.

driven by necessity to sell the pawn tickets. Wagner was forced to accept hack work, but serious composition continued and 'Rienzi' was completed in 1840. One year later he finished 'The Flying Dutchman.' In Paris he was humiliated as a man, and worse still, rejected as a composer. However, he was conscious of a rapidly growing creative power. "Everything went easily, fluently. I actually shouted for joy, as I felt through my whole being that I was still an artist."⁴⁷ 'Rienzi' was accepted by the Dresden Opera Company. With borrowed funds, the Wagners left Paris to attend the premiere, which took place on 20 October 1842.

Shortly after the production of his two operas, 'Rienzi' and 'The Flying Dutchman', Wagner was made Kapellmeister of the Dresden Opera. He remained at Dresden for six years, hard at work, but fundamentally an unhappy man. Wagner took an active part in the revolution of 1849, and a warrant was issued for his arrest. He fled to Zurich where his wife joined him. Minna's worst troubles with Wagner began shortly after they left Dresden. In 1850 poverty forced him once more to seek a career in Paris. It was during this time that the first serious threat to their marriage appeared in the form of Jessie Laussot of Bordeaux, from whom Wagner received financial aid. She too, was unhappily married, and they fell violently in love. Wagner visited her at Bordeaux, and tried to persuade her to elope with him to the Near East. Rumours of their love reached Minna, and she insisted he return to his business in Paris. Minna's letter decided Wagner to break with her, and inform her of his intention to travel. Jessie's husband found out about the affair, and threatened to shoot Wagner. Minna meanwhile had taken a small house by the lake at Zurich, and furnished it according to Wagner's wishes in the hope that he would one day return to her. It is possibly unfair to accuse Minna of deserting Wagner on the many occasions when she left him as she

47. Milton Cross, *Encyclopedia of the Great Composers and Their Music*, Doubleday and Co., 1962, page 851.

could have been driven to take such action not only by their numerous quarrels, but also by her husband's relations with other women. His treatment of Minna was often inexcusable. On 27 July, Wagner rejoined Minna and they once again had to adapt themselves and expect little of each other. This unsettled state of affairs was depressing for them both. To Frau Ritter, Wagner wrote, "Not a year... has passed recently without bringing me once to the very verge of a decision to make an end of my life." ⁴⁸.

While at Zurich, Wagner became a constant guest of the Wesendoncks. At first the relationship with Mathilde, Otto Wesendonck's wife, had been that of master and pupil. However, the friendship developed and she later brought Wagner the reality of true love. In April 1857 Wagner moved into a small house, the 'Asyl,' adjoining the Wesendonck mansion. The circumstances must have been intolerable for Minna, who was understandably consumed by jealousy. There was no attempt at secrecy about the affair; both Otto and Minna were fully aware of it. Wagner's passion for Mathilde was sublimated in the music of 'Tristan and Isolde', which he was composing. Like Tristan, Wagner loved a woman who was plighted to his friend. Wagner soon had to relinquish Mathilde, for Otto Wesendonck provided the funds for the composer and Minna to go to Paris in order that he forget Mathilde and try to mend his sadly mutilated marriage. Wagner wrote to Liszt mentioning that he was at the end of a conflict in which everything he held sacred was involved. After three weeks Wagner returned from Paris believing that he now had his emotions for Mathilde under control. Although Otto understood his wife's feelings for Wagner, Minna had not properly realized Mathilda's relationship with Richard. After intercepting a letter which Wagner had written to Mathilda, she became very agitated, a situation which worsened her heart disease. She then agreed to go to Dresden where she would be cared for by their faithful Dr. Pusinelli. When she had recovered physically and mentally, as well as overcome her jealousy, Wagner would rejoin her.

48. Jacobs, R. L. Wagner, J.H. Dent and Sons Ltd. London, 1968, page 57.

Mathilda and Wagner realized that the renunciation of their love could be effective only if they separated. On 17 August 1858 Wagner abandoned the 'Asyl' and travelled to Venice. There he met the Wesendoncks and found them completely reconciled and happy. He realized bitterly that his longing for Mathilde, which separation had never stilled, was utterly futile.

The composer's personal life was becoming turbulent and complicated. His misfortunes warped him to the extent that he felt Minna had displayed an intolerable lack of understanding in her refusal to recognize the necessity of his relationship with Mathilde. He wrote to the effect that, without the understanding of the one we believe we love, all love is an illusion. The expense of having to support Minna and his inability to marry again only added to his frustrations. Possibly because of all this, Wagner could write so coldly in his autobiography, 'My Life', of Minna's 'coarse misunderstanding' and ruthlessly expose her limitations. This is a contradiction as at the time he had both felt and as far as he could, behaved compassionately towards her. He had even written her the cosy, chatty letters he knew she liked, had made plans for her, and tried to live with her again.

One of the letters written by Wagner to Minna in February 1862 brought about the sequence of events which led to their final separation. In this letter he mentioned to Minna that she was right in that another visit would be the most miserable thing that could happen to them both. He said that he was looking for peace, and a mood conducive to work. If Minna felt she could devote herself completely to this, his final purpose in life, then he would say to her, "come" and everything else would take care of itself. Minna ignored the clear logic of this letter, but sensed his loneliness and took advantage of the choice he gave her. Within a week she appeared at Biebrich, where Wagner was staying, and there followed ten miserable days. They were pleased to see each other, but when a letter from Mathilde arrived the next morning, all peace was at an end.

According to Wagner, Minna indulged in what he called 'that vulgar tone' again, which made him lose all self-control.

Minna's version of the incident appeared in a letter written to Natalie from Dresden on 6 March. She said that when the letter from Mathilde arrived during breakfast, Wagner ranted and raved before she had uttered a single word. He told her it was not her business, and that he could correspond with whom he liked. A few days later another letter arrived from Mathilde and Minna then told Wagner that he could abuse her as much as he wished; she would not react. He ranted for three-quarters of an hour, until she finally told him that he had no idea of the rights of a wife. As fate would have it, a belated Christmas present also arrived for Wagner from Mathilde. Minna's fortitude held out for the next five days after which she went to Dresden. She further told Natalie that she had to convince herself that her husband's behaviour was so horrible that it was impossible to live with him.

Wagner had once admitted in a letter to Minna that fate had linked her to one of the strangest of men. Minna did try to understand his complex nature, not only because she loved him but believed that there was good in his heart after all. However, Wagner was in many ways an unpleasant person who used women for his own ends, and caused much harm for those about him. Minna suffered to such an extent that after their final separation she cried in a letter to a friend, "If these twenty-five years could be erased from my life, I would be happy!"⁴⁹ Minna was the woman who had suffered most at Wagner's hands, yet remained most faithful to him through the storms of his passions, and loved him most truly all her life long. Wagner's attempts at excusing his behaviour towards Minna have served only to tarnish his memory.

The final break in the always unstable partnership came when Richard met the formidable Cosima von Bülow, daughter

49. Hurn, P.D. *The Truth about Wagner*, Cassell and Co. London, page 238.

of Franz Liszt. Cosima and Wagner decided to live together, and after 1864 Minna found herself alone. Cosima flung herself body and soul into serving the life of Richard Wagner. Between 1864 and 1869, she had turned herself into an indispensable extension of the master's will, giving him support with constant encouragement. Twenty-four years his junior, Cosima was able to provide Wagner with the regular boosts which his ego demanded. However, there was a price to pay. As a result of this irregular union, Liszt was estranged from Wagner until 1872. King Ludwig was compelled to ask Wagner to leave Munich because of the scandal over Cosima, whom he refused ever to set eyes on again. And Cosima herself was compelled to follow her father's example in bearing illegitimate children. It had been a sadness to Minna that her union with Wagner had been childless, but this was due to an internal injury, the result of a fall on the journey from Riga. Fortunately for Cosima, the death of Minna in 1866 permitted marriage to Wagner, although this did not take place until 1871.

Cosima's greatest desire had been to create a home which was also a salon, and to ensure that she was an important part of the life of the great man. Her contribution towards the fulfilment of Wagner's genius was considerable. She subordinated her life and will to the composer. But this very act of continuous submission only proved that she was mistress of an equally strong will. She exerted a strong influence over Wagner, who was far from being weak-willed himself. She soon began to cut Wagner off from the friends who had known and admired both him and Minna. Furthermore, she handled all his correspondence and generally had things her own way. Cosima encouraged Wagner to write, realizing that through the written word his name carried to wider circles than his music alone could. The glitter and luxury of Bayreuth came into being and Wagner was exalted as the great master of music.

Eventually Wagner was unfaithful to Cosima, but she wisely ignored the incident preferring to concentrate on her mission. One of her principal duties was to record Wagner's life story and keep a diary of his daily activities. Even

after Wagner's death she continued to worship his memory. This she did by keeping the Festival at Bayreuth alive by producing, directing and casting performances of his operas. The Festival survived, and when she retired in 1906 the theatre was flourishing financially.

It is not true to say that Cosima understood the importance of Wagner's art while Minna did not. During the twenty-five years with Minna, eleven operas were conceived, poems for nine of them were finished, music for seven of them completed and half of the eighth composed. Four of the operas, namely, 'Rienzi', 'The Flying Dutchman', 'Tannhäuser' and 'Lohengrin' were produced. In all his life with Cosima he conceived no new work, only finishing 'Götterdämmerung' and 'Parsifal', both of which had long ago been completed in his mind. However, three operas 'Die Meistersinger', 'The Ring' and 'Parsifal' were produced and Cosima was a great help to Wagner in the establishment and continuation of his work at Bayreuth.

Wagner believed that throughout history, music was going through a process of evolution: that music is continually developing. The separate art forms had developed on their own, and in order to attain higher perfection, they should fuse, forming a 'Gesamtkunst'. These forms should exist in a symbiotic state, each being enriched by the qualities of the others. The quality of art was an important factor in regard to the composer's ambitions for the artistic future of Europe. These hopes were based on the one hand upon a universal, social regeneration and, on the other, upon the extraordinary and unprecedented development of music. The ancient world could have had no conception of the limitless capacities for emotional expression which, for example, Beethoven gave to art, and which had opened to Wagner vistas of dramatic possibilities.

Reflecting his German cultural heritage Wagner's music dramas were something entirely new and not an attempt at reforming the opera. In his writings, Wagner criticized the theatrical and musical standards in Germany at the time.

For example, in the report concerning the New School of Music in Munich, he stated that theatre is the centre from which all truly national culture is diffused. He returned to the point of practical shortcomings which lay in the fact that Germany had never possessed a national musical theatre. Such a theatre should act upon national taste and in its turn be acted upon by the nation. It should develop a classical style of execution, such as could adequately reflect the peculiarly Germanic spirit of its poets and composers. He thus had no patience with the routine performances of Italian works at the Dresden Opera. He wanted to conduct only the finer German works; those of Mozart, Beethoven and Weber. The composer wrote a long report to the King of Saxony with plans for a more efficient operation of the entire musical institution. He saw the opera house as a temple where a new art could be made to flourish. Alas, these imaginative plans were turned down as being impractical.

Wagner's predilection for putting subjects from the literature of German legend into dramatic form was something which had its origins deep within him. In this inner nature, feelings and thoughts of his German forefathers lived on in strange intensity. Wagner has vividly recorded the origin of these thoughts: "The baldest legend spoke to me of its ancient home, and soon my whole imagination thrilled with images; long-lost forms for which I had sought so eagerly shaped themselves ever more clearly into realities that lived again."⁵⁰ This feeling was so strong that he himself felt that he had come into the world a particularly German type, the most German of all Germans. He once said that he could create his music only to his texts and both text and music were based on the German language and the German spirit.

In his article 'The Artwork of the Future', Wagner elaborated his concept of a unified artwork. The new music drama was to be a genuine human drama in which the

50. Wagner, Richard. My Life, Constable and Company Ltd., London, 1911, Volume II, page 314.

whole nature of the German 'volk' would be reflected. Like the Greeks, the Germans had a heritage of myth and legend, and were a nation of 'high-souled' dreamers and 'deep-brained' thinkers. It was in 'State and Religion', written for Ludwig II, Wagner said that the ideal of his art was to portray the rebirth of Germany, a nation of supreme potential. At times this belief misled him, as in the article 'German Art and Policy', where he disparaged foreign influences upon the development of German art and culture. Wagner believed that the Germans had naïvely allowed themselves to become so impressed by foreign cultures that they were underrating their own. His beliefs further misled him on the Jewish question when writing the article 'Judism in Music.' He felt that Jews did not share the German heritage and so were alien to the people among whom they lived. He held the viewpoint that integration would be impossible as then the Germans would cease to exist. During the 1870's, Wagner's anti-Semitism became personal and he identified the Jews with all that was evil. His early dealings with Jewish moneylenders had filled him with mistrust. He later modified his views, yet his relationship with Jews continued to be a 'love-hate' one. His contrary nature is displayed by his rejection of the Jewish nation on the one hand, while accepting Samuel Lehrs as his Jewish companion in misfortune on the other hand. He wanted his art to reflect the ideals of those who felt a common bond, and because he considered all Jews aliens, they were excluded. Wagner persistently confused religious, social and political factors, a confusion very well illustrated in his article 'What is German?'

Wagner, who bore a new world in him as artist and as man, came more and more into conflict with the artistically and politically reactionary views of his time: he became a revolutionary. In 1848 the revolution in Paris spread to Berlin and Vienna. The Frankfurt Parliament was inaugurated to legislate for a new united Germany. Wagner had been profoundly stirred by the revolution. It seemed that

his solitary struggle was to be merged in a great popular uprising. In a new society the theatre would be reformed, and his artistic goal would be reached. He wished to forget the world and the hypocrisy of the political parties, which revolted him. Wagner believed that the needs of the time would add impetus to the revolution. In Spring 1849, revolution broke out in Dresden. Wagner participated in this revolution, and as a result had to take refuge in Weimar, before going on to Switzerland. Although the revolution had failed, this fact only intensified Wagner's urge to uplift society. It was not a random process. The urge developed, matured and took possession of him. It can be explained by the factors of presentiment and recollection, which governed this process. His childhood fears had been sublimated and replaced by others. Wagner, the man, sought refuge in illusion because of a deep existential dread. Political convictions meant nothing to him except in relation to the idea of musical drama, the measure of all things to him. He became a revolutionary at a time when he saw social upheaval as the only means of bringing to the theatre, art in place of entertainment. He related social philosophy to art, not art to social philosophy.

For the sake of art, Wagner submitted to the situation of not being understood. Like Lohengrin, he felt himself as from another world—the saviour of German art. For the sake of dramatic expression he had broken the conventional design of opera. Drama was his aim, so he wrote a new kind of drama reaching back to the great elemental figures of medieval history, saga and myth. Such figures he termed 'purely human.' He wanted to express the human emotion which underlines action in all its appearances. It would attract the senses simultaneously and by doing so, achieve a concrete, dynamic, synthetic embodiment of truth. He once wrote that he was deeply convinced that any work of art could only be truly effective if all that is of importance to the imagination be imparted to the senses. He turned to the myth instinctively as not only did the myth

contain ideal poetical material, it also dealt with the deepest human problems. By seeking his themes from mythology he was presented with the universal, not the particular, and this freed him from the tyranny of historical fact. He could concentrate on the psychological, rather than the physical expression of his subject and through this achieve genuine unity of form. He was able to dramatise the myth and show that in it, the poetic perceptions of a whole race are so concentrated as to receive their most palpable and intelligible expression. He felt it to be an ideal dramatic form which would stand in relation to the spirit of existence. The individual, when confronted with the world of things which cast their alien shadow over him, feels an affinity with the world of myth. He displays this affinity through the gesture of falling silent, and this gesture was in fact of crucial importance to Wagner.

The problem of the artwork of the future was how the scattered elements of modern existence generally, and of modern art in particular, could be united and interfused in order to form an adequate expression of the vast whole. Wagner tried to make the drama independent of all purely intellectual motives and elements. He wished to construct his music drama in such a way that it would appeal and speak at once to the feelings of all men of poetical perception. It was only with the aid of music that this could be accomplished, as being free from the restraint of narrow nationality, it could become universally intelligible. In music, the language understood by all mankind, Wagner found the equalizing power which could make a universal communication of the innermost artistic intuitions possible. Wagner proceeded to demonstrate how mythical matter, the nature of which is always essentially emotional, demands the great language of emotion: music, for its proper presentation. It is the aim of drama to present, in the most universally intelligible manner, the poet's perception of purely human individuality. The entire work of art envisaged by Wagner was musical in spirit and could have been conceived only by a man of universal, artistic instincts, and who was at the same time a great musician.

It has always been recognized that Wagner's aesthetic philosophy is present in his music dramas. He was so completely under the spell of his work that it was ever-present to him and he could derive nourishment from the most trivial events in his life. 'Rienzi' was more than a project: it was the fulfilment of a wish. Wagner, embodied in 'Rienzi,' was gloriously at war in the cause of his art in a hostile, corrupt world. Wagner was a victim of his dramatic will. Not content to seek escape from this world by conjuring his musical instinct to create another, he dramatised his daily life in this. In 1848 Wagner had been drawn to the final episode of 'The Ring' because it embodied his life situation at the time. A tragedy greater than Siegfried's death is presented: the tragedy of the world that destroyed him. Wagner had experienced Siegfried's love and his freedom, and could tell Liszt that it was true inspiration that gave him the plan of the 'Ring Cycle.'

Wagner was less concerned with the symbol than the symbolized; less in music as abstract sound than conjurer of fancies and emotions. A revealing example of Wagner's mysticism is provided by this passage from 'My Life': "Der Freischutz' in particular appealed very strongly to my imagination, mainly on account of its ghostly theme. The emotions of terror and the dread of ghosts formed quite an important factor in the development of my mind. From my earliest childhood certain mysterious and uncanny things exercised an enormous influence over me. If I were left alone in a room for long, I remember that when gazing at lifeless objects such as pieces of furniture, and concentrating my attention upon them, I would suddenly shriek out with fright, because they seemed to me alive. Even during the latest years of my boyhood, not a night passed without my waking out of some ghostly dream and uttering the most frightful shrieks, which subsided only at the sound of some human voice." ⁵¹. Wagner also records that in periods of drowsiness during the day, he had visions of the keynotes

51. Wagner, Richard. My Life, Constable and Company Ltd., London, 1911, Volume I, page 14.

of the third and the dominant which seemed to take on living form and reveal their mighty meaning to him. During the voyage on board the 'Thetis' he had a vision of the legendary vessel, 'The Flying Dutchman' which inspired him to compose that opera. Wagner's psychic ability was also demonstrated during his stay in Italy in 1848. One day he returned to his room in Spezia after a country walk and sank down exhausted, utterly relaxed. He described that he felt himself sinking in swiftly flowing water. The rushing sound of the water formed itself into a musical sound, giving the chord of E-flat major, which continually re-echoed in broken form. Back at Zurich he plunged into composing the prelude to 'Das Rheingold' and based it on this chord.

Closely bound up with Wagner's general psychic condition, was his unusual power of conception, balanced by an equally strong desire to pour out the impressions he received. He had the intense urge to communicate these impressions to others. The manner in which he reworked the emotions and ideas awakened in him, and put them into durable form, reveals his special creative gift as a poet musician. He possessed the very rare gift of becoming perfectly conscious of all his mental experiences and of being able to give a cool, as well as complete account of his passions. He spoke only of what he had seen or felt himself. There is no filtering of other men's ideas or thoughts.

Wagner found that taking long walks alone always induced a pleasantly productive composure. He was very climate-conscious and for composing needed fine weather. The sun influenced his joy in creating. He was a morning worker, his evenings being devoted to correspondence. His condition during inspired creation was characterized by complete oblivion of the world around him. He mentioned that there must be an indescribable inner peace present which is active only when the senses are in a sort of dream state, when he no longer saw or heard distinctly. He was so completely under the spell of his work that it became part of him. His life and art were fused together in the profoundest sense

so that separation of artist and man was impossible for him.

Wagner had a strong personality, being able to detach himself from his problems and rise above disappointments. It appears that misfortune inspired him to greater efforts and he was even able to work under strain and heartbreak. After his separation from Mathilde Wesendonck, he went to Venice where he remained in solitude, composing the second act of 'Tristan.' The waterways and songs of the gondoliers acted as balm to his soul and it was possibly provident that he was to die there. Although Wagner had loved Mathilde, the fact that he lost her did not break him — it actually spurred creation. For him, it seems that love involved the renunciation of love. He had always been torn by the conflict between the compulsion of desire and that of morality. Having renounced passion and been freed from the curse of desire, he could write a work celebrating holy art, reconciling the personal with the impersonal. It was a music drama dealing with the tragic fundamentals of human nature. He had progressed spiritually since composing 'Tannhäuser' in which he humanized the emotion of desire by presenting his hero as suffering under the compulsion of an inner psychological conflict: the conflict between the desire of the flesh for pleasure and the spirit for redemption. The core of Wagner's aesthetic philosophy was a rigorous artistic morality in the name of which he set out to reveal man's yearning for redemption. He expressed this so wonderfully in the music of 'Parsifal' in which passion is renounced for the sake of eternal life. What he had wanted to show in 'The Ring' was the inevitable decline of the world in its previous historical phase, and to contrast this with Siegfried, the fearless, joyful man of the future. By voicing the fears of the helpless people, his music signalled help for them. In doing so it renewed the promise contained in the age-old protest in music: "the promise of a life without fear." ^{52.} But as he came to carry out his

52. Adorno, T. In Search of Wagner, Hedwood Burn Ltd., London, page 156.

plan in 'The Ring' he was compelled to recognise that unconsciously he had been pursuing another, much deeper idea. What he had perceived in his poem to 'The Ring' was not just a single phase of world history, but the nature of the world as such in all its phases. His watchword was 'forward', not to a differently organized society, but to the new man.

At the very outset of his career Wagner had recognized himself as a unique being, for whose needs society must cater. He had grown up in an environment where his family and teachers encouraged him to see the sky as the limit. His self-elected peer group were the immortals: Homer, Shakespeare and Schopenhauer. Now that he had proved himself to be a unique being, his needs had multiplied. He was a master and had to live like one by having comfortable furniture, fine clothes, travelling first class and mixing with the important people in society. When reading of the luxury and extravagance which marked his later career, it is well to remember the odds against which he had earlier struggled, and over which his indomitable spirit had triumphed. It is more than probable that the harrowing years of frustration, humiliation and suffering experienced in Paris during 1840 did much to warp his personality. He was abnormally sensitive, even for a musician. Consider the effect of the succession of slights, disappointments and intrigues he had endured. One of his biggest disappointments was the fact that he was barred from returning to his homeland for his role in the Dresden revolution. One can understand his bitterness because such was the dreamy unreality of his state of mind at the time, that he could not decide whether he was guilty of treason. Indicative of Wagner's unreality are these words he later wrote of the Dresden period: "Now that the powers of reaction were everywhere more and more openly bracing themselves for conflict, the final decisive struggle seemed indeed close at hand. My feelings of partianship were not sufficiently passionate to make me desire to take any active share in these conflicts. I was merely conscious of an impulse to give myself up

recklessly to the stream of events, no matter whither it might lead,"⁵³. He was grateful for Minna's help in obtaining an amnesty for his role in the revolution. The founding of the German Empire in 1871 filled Wagner with hope. He was gratified not by the military victory, but by Germany's new solidarity and her pride.

It appears that Wagner was never for long free from debt. Even after King Ludwig of Bavaria entered his life and supported the composer financially, he was still forced into a situation in which he had to write letters begging for money. At the outset, Wagner had decided that his operas would be accepted more quickly if published at his own expense, and he borrowed the money for this. Wagner believed that the 'world' should recognise and provide the means for him to produce his work. Because his music dramas were on such a grand scale, requiring a special theatre, elaborate organisation and complicated effects, they needed considerable funds. He was a man who was very conscious of his own values and no scruples could deter him from gratifying his wants, no matter how trivial or grandiose.

Wagner made enemies more easily than he made friends. He brooked no disagreement or differences of opinion even on trivial matters. He took positive pleasure in riling critics and wrote with an acid pen. Although he had reached a high degree of perfection in his creations, he was the victim of much criticism. This criticism stung Wagner into many bitter rejoinders. The world paid him back in his own coin, in the unflattering, personal criticism aimed at him. He was said to be the model of conceit who was so opinionated that the slightest disagreement with his ideas both excited and exasperated him. He was a nervous, intense and irritable man, said to have a cruel mouth and the eyes of a fanatic.

Wagner was impatient of all restraint, being surrounded by laws, political, social and moral, which he unhesitatingly

53. Wagner, Richard. My Life, Constable and Company, Ltd., London, 1911, Volume II, page 472.

defied. He waged relentless war on everything that did not suit him and was a man incapable of compromise. Had he compromised, or, for example, thwarted his needs by cutting down expenses or allowed his huge works to be shortened or simplified, he would have been lost. He staked everything on the power of the truth as he saw it, and in the end he won. He had, as he mentioned after 'The Ring' Festival, attained his goal once and shown the world the true meaning of his work. Wagner shared with other great artists the belief that he was above ordinary moral restraints. Geniuses do not live by ordinary codes, nor must they be judged by them. Liszt describes Wagner: "In a word, a great and overwhelming nature, rather like a Vesuvius, which when it erupts scatters forth sheaves of flame and at the same time sprays of roses and lilac." ^{54.}

By extraordinary effort the true meaning of Wagner's unique, elaborate art was revealed. It was as if art, in generating for itself a Wagner, not only bestowed on him the power to conceive, but infused him with a devotion needed to realize his conceptions. He longed not so much for admiration, however sincere, but for the understanding of a community who valued art as he valued it. The composer knew only one integrity, his art. He was willing to go to any lengths to bring it to fruition, for in his mind the end justified the means. Thus his integrity towards his art remained unblemished. However discreditable were his actions as a man, his behaviour as an artist was on the highest and most idealistic plane. In the life of a man of abnormal receptive powers, the purpose of his existence must be looked for in the realms of thought rather than in that of action. The biographical facts then become less significant and less worthy of attention than they would be in the life of a man of worldly affairs. Wagner's works must in the end be left to speak for themselves.

54. Jacobs, R.L. Wagner, Published by J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd., London, 1968, page 125.

CONCLUSION

By investigating the friendship of Richard Wagner with Friedrich Nietzsche and Ludwig II of Bavaria, this thesis is primarily concerned with the moral and psychological influence they had on each other. In particular we are concerned over the manner in which the relationships effected Wagner's life and work.

Richard Wagner's great goals were the unification of all the performing arts as exemplified in his 'Gesamtkunstwerk', and the establishment at Bayreuth of a National Theatre for Germany. But before his ambition could come to fruition there were many difficulties to be surmounted, not the least being his perennial money problems. The fact that he was able to rise above his problems overcoming all the setbacks, reflects great credit on this genius. But clearly none of his achievements would have been possible without an unswerving faith in what he was doing. At times he no sooner felt near to success, when misfortune struck once again. Up against the tremendous pressure of financial difficulties and opposition to the production of some of his works, he persevered until they were accepted and recognized. In her Diaries, Cosima quotes Wagner telling her "that at times he has unbounded confidence in his strength ... at times he feels he would need only an effort of will to find himself hovering high over everything. We will not go under, he declares." ⁵⁵.

Both Nietzsche and Ludwig contributed towards the making of Wagner as man and as musician. The relationship Wagner shared with Ludwig II was destined by circumstances of social position, as well as that of 'borrower and lender' to be on a different level from that which the composer had with Nietzsche. It was fortunate for Wagner that Ludwig appeared at the time when the composer was in dire

55. Wagner, Cosima. *Cosima Wagner's Diaries*. Collins, St. James's Place, London, 1978, Volume I, page 81.

need of financial help. Fortunate, too, was the fact that Ludwig appreciated the Wagnerian music drama, and felt a similar, inner driving compulsion as did the composer, to witness the production of his works. It was Ludwig, who through his sponsorship, was able to ensure that the composer's last works were produced.

The King's appearance in Wagner's life was providential for the composer had just fled Vienna to escape his creditors. Wagner was well aware of this fateful intervention for he said: "But my life was to have no more of these alarms; the dangerous road along which fate beckoned me to such great ends was not destined to be clear of troubles and anxieties of a kind unknown to me heretofore, but I was never again to feel the weight of the everyday hardships of existence under the protection of my exalted friend." 56.

The ideas and ideals of Ludwig II are difficult to define because he did not express his opinions clearly. However, we do know that his ideals were closely linked to the Wagnerian music drama and by his championing of the composer he revived Munich's fame as a city of music and the theatre. It appears that Ludwig wished to avoid any unpleasant confrontation, unless pressurized into action. This was the case when his Cabinet gave him no alternative in banishing Wagner from Munich. Also, he must have been aware of the undercurrents surrounding Wagner's opera 'Parsifal' as it could not have been coincidental that Wagner had nicknamed Ludwig, 'Parsifal.' He preferred to stay away from the premiere rather than be exposed to public controversy. At a private performance of 'Parsifal' in Munich, Ludwig could approach the work as a romantic opera, giving him the fulfilment he needed. In Wagner's operas he wished to see only a musical and dramatic counterpart to the scenes of medieval knightly and religious pageantry, scenes which were later to cover the walls of Neuschwanstein.

In setting out on this Wagnerian journey, one could ask the question why it becomes necessary for mankind to seek seclusion and respite in a world of myth and legend. Do the

56. Wagner, Richard. *My Life*. Constable and Co., London, 1911, Volume II page 368.

pressures of life become such a burden that we need another outlet? A visit to Neuschwanstein Castle has the immediate affect of projecting one into another world, possibly as a visit to twentieth century Disneyland affects many people today. The setting surrounding Neuschwanstein is magnificent; the wonderful view of the forests, Alps and Lakes; all contribute to the beauty. Inside, the murals and furnishings supply the atmosphere of life in the mythical regions of German folk-lore. Why did Ludwig feel the need to build this castle, and want to live there for the rest of his life in isolation? How much was Ludwig effected by Wagner, the man and composer? We do not really know.

The bond between Wagner and Nietzsche was that of a common cause, the purification and emancipation of the German nation. However, although their ideals were similar, the ideas on how to achieve these aims were different. Both men were prolific writers who laid out their thoughts in the many published texts available to this day. Even a change of thought or feeling was noted making it possible to follow the trend of their thinking. Nietzsche did not waver from his conviction that Germany's future lay along the path of ancient Greek culture. Wagner, on the other hand was later to substitute the Greek idea with everything German. In 'The Birth of Tragedy' Nietzsche said: "No one shall wither our faith in the imminent rebirth of Greek antiquity, for here alone do we see a hope for the rejuvenation and purification of the German spirit through the fire magic of music. What else, in the desolate waste of present-day culture, holds any promise of a sound, healthy future?"⁵⁷.

It is thus clear that Nietzsche was concerned with problems relating to the predicament of modern man, presupposing a crisis in human affairs. The philosophy of ancient Greece occupied his mind, with art and the people, myth and custom inextricably linked. He believed that the decline of Greek tragedy was a process which went together with the degeneration of the Greek national character. Nietzsche's

57. Nietzsche, F. The Birth of Tragedy, Doubleday and Co., U.S.A., page 123.

evaluation of Athenian tragedy was precisely Wagner's and his theory as to why it declined was expressed in Wagner's words: "To Philosophy and not to Art, belong the two thousand years which, since the decadence of Grecian Tragedy, have passed to our own day." ⁵⁸.

Further problems for Nietzsche were the decline in Christian belief and Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection. Nietzsche was a scientific philosopher who examined individual questions in his search to understand reality. Natural selection was for him evolution free from every metaphysical implication. He had lost faith in revealed religion.

Both Wagner and Nietzsche felt that for too long powerful forces from the outside had compelled the German spirit to subserve their forms. The Germans should emancipate themselves from outside influences to discover a genius of their own. Nietzsche believed that the German spirit would then stand before other nations provided that it was able to learn from the Greeks. It was to Germany that he looked for the rebirth of Hellenism.

Nietzsche found ideas he could use in Wagner's writings on aesthetics. In 'Art and Revolution', the composer said that the individual arts were once component parts of a single art-work, the tragedy of ancient Athens. "Drama," he says, "is the 'highest' conceivable form of art because, in its true perfection, it is a union of all the arts." ⁵⁹. In 'The Art-work of the Future', Wagner said that Nature produces art not through the individual but through the mass. This brings us to the second main clause of Wagner's aesthetic: the true artist is the 'volk'. The 'volk' had been submerged through individuality and should be made conscious of its 'mission of redemption', which was to restore to art 'the intrinsic laws of nature.' In her

58. Hollingdale, R.J. Nietzsche, The Man and His Philosophy,
59. Routledge and Kegan, London, 1965, pages 87 and 72.

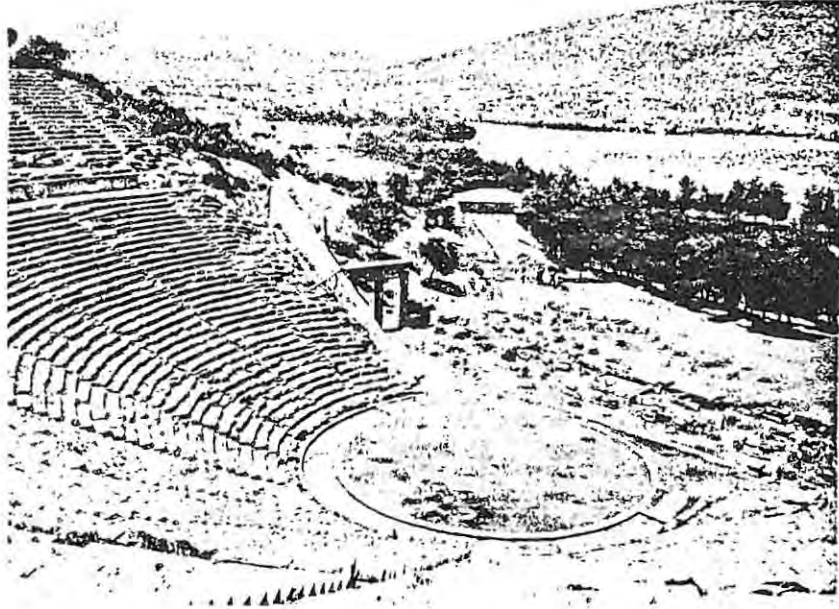
Diaries, Cosima wrote: "Richard speaks with some emotion of the German spirit which raised itself from a state of submission and devotion to take its place among the most liberated of spirits. 'One could really be excused for ascribing a special mission to the German spirit. And it is not easy to renounce that.'" ⁶⁰.

It was in 'A Communication to my Friends', that Wagner announced his ideal and intention of providing Germany with a model for the restoration of the theatre. He laid out his plans for the Festival at which the folk-art-work of the future would be produced. These art-theories influenced Nietzsche into seeing drama through Wagner's eyes. Previously he had taken no special interest in drama; later he was to despise it. After attending a performance of the Prelude to 'Tristan and Isolde' and the Overture to 'Die Meistersinger', Nietzsche heard the very voice of his ideals in Wagner's music. He believed that the union between German philosophy and music pointed to a new mode of existence.

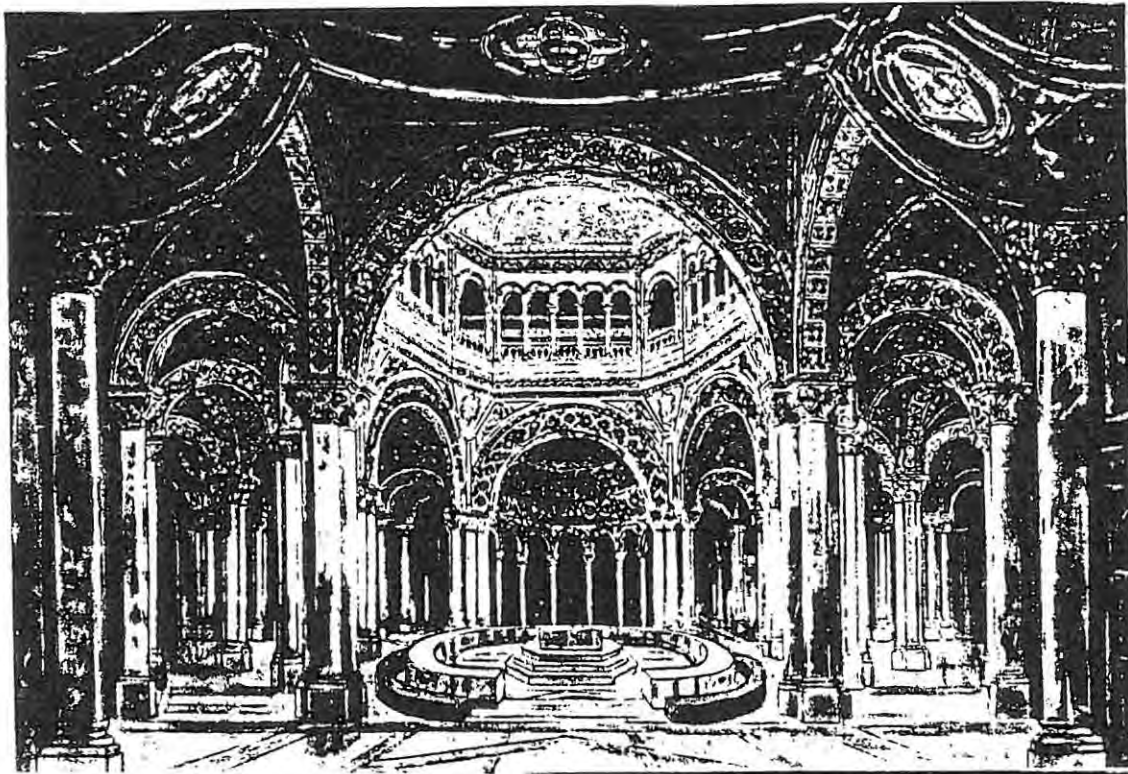
One of the differences between the two men was that Wagner made use of the German legend whilst Nietzsche's ideal of the theatre was bound up with Greek mythology. Wagner based his librettos on German mythology, believing it to be the soul of the German race. He said: "If all that I regarded as essentially German had hitherto drawn me with ever-increasing force and compelled me to its eager pursuit, I have found it suddenly presented to me in the outlines of a legend based upon the old and well-known ballad of 'Tannhäuser'". ⁶¹

60. Wagner, Cosima, *Cosima Wagner's Diaries*, Collins, St. Jame's Place, London, 1978, Volume II, page 870.

61. Wagner, Richard. *My Life*, Constable and Co., London, 1911, Volume II, page 260



Ruins of the Hellenistic theatre at Epidaurus, Greece.



The Grail Temple for the production of 'Parsifal' at Bayreuth. Paul von Joukowsky's design, which was used at Bayreuth from 1882 to 1933.

In 'The Birth of Tragedy', Nietzsche said: "The structure of the Greek theatre reminds us of a lovely mountain valley: the architecture of the stage resembles a luminous cloud configuration which the Bacchae behold as they swarm down from the mountain tops; a marvellous frame in the centre of which Dionysus manifests himself to them." ⁶². The theatre of ancient Greece had been the centre and supreme expression of a people's cultural life. "Our love of what is beautiful does not lead to extravagance." ⁶³.

Nietzsche and Wagner had been united by an allegiance to a common cause. The hopes of both men were centred on Bayreuth which had become the symbol and source of German emancipation to them. It was an expectant Nietzsche who attended the first Bayreuth Festival, and a bitterly disillusioned one who left. The awakening is best conveyed in his own words. "Anyone who has any idea what visions had been flitting across my path even at that time can guess how I felt when I one day came to myself in Bayreuth. It was as if I had been dreaming ... Where was I? I recognised nothing, I hardly recognised Wagner. In vain I scanned my memories. Tribschen - a distant isle of the blessed: not the shadow of a resemblance. The incomparable days of the foundation-stone laying, the little band of initiates who celebrated them and who did not lack fingers for delicate things: not the shadow of a resemblance. What had happened? - Wagner had been translated into German! The Wagnerian had become master of Wagner! ... Truly, a hair-raising crowd! ... Not a single abortion was missing, not even the anti-Semite. - Poor Wagner! To what a pass had he come! - Better for him to have gone among swine! But among Germans!" ⁶⁴.

62. Nietzsche, F. The Birth of Tragedy, Doubleday and Co. U.S.A., 1956, page 54.

63. Bowra, C.H. Classical Greece, Time-Life International, U.S.A. 1975, page 20

64. Hollingdale, R.J. Nietzsche, The Man and His Philosophy, Routledge and Kegan, London, 1965, page 118.

If one remembers the vast contrast between the simplicity of the Greek Theatre — Nietzsche's ideal — and Wagner's elaborate presentation, one can more easily grasp the obvious reason for Nietzsche's violent reactions to 'The Ring'.

Nietzsche mentioned the hysteria and over-excitement which Wagner had brought upon the stage. The musician had now become an actor, and to Nietzsche, this total transformation of art into play-acting was a symptom of degeneration. Wagner represented the arrival of the actor in the world of music. The philosopher felt that the way in which the composer used his creative talents reflected a desire for power. Nietzsche believed that as a consequence, Wagner was creating a little world of his own, one in which his word was law. One thing which, in the course of time Nietzsche learned from Wagner was that even the sincere man is still very much an actor.

An indication of the artificiality of the atmosphere which Bayreuth generated is referred to in Tchaikovsky's report of a visit to the Festival in 1876. "The town was in a state of great excitement. Crowds of people, natives and strangers, were gathered together from the four corners of the earth..... During the Festival itself, food was the main interest of the public, the performances themselves taking second place. Cutlets, baked potatoes, omelettes are much more enthusiastically discussed than the music of Wagner." ⁶⁵.

In his book 'The Wagner Case', Nietzsche criticizes the composer as being decadent, Wagner being characterized as part of the artistic degeneration of the latter half of the nineteenth century. Although he criticized Wagner, Nietzsche was actually censuring the Germany of his day. He felt that Wagner had misled him, and he was unable to forgive the composer for once having enslaved him. As

65. Osborne, C. Wagner and His World, Thames and Hudson, London, 1977, page 102.

Wagner's success grew Nietzsche became more perturbed for he felt that the composer was now misleading all Germany. The philosopher once said: "What was it I never forgave Wagner? That he condescended to the Germans." ⁶⁶. In later life, Nietzsche viewed the true German as the middle-class man, the contented conformist in thought and morals. Because of Wagner's attitude of condescension towards the ordinary people, Nietzsche considered him to be decidedly un-German. To the popular view that Wagner was above all German, and the national poet of the new Reich : Nietzsche countered with the claim that the composer was a French decadent.

Nietzsche felt that it was Schopenhauer's influence on Wagner which had so changed his art, "to such a degree that his later aesthetic views completely contradict his earlier ones." ⁶⁷. He also attacked Wagner's ambiguity, the radical change in the composer's notion of the position of music itself. Wagner was to see music as the culmination of all art, but corresponding to this rise in the value of music there came an increase in the prestige of the musician. He now became an oracle, a kind of mouthpiece of the absolute.

It was not because Nietzsche thought Wagner to be a minor musician, but because he knew him to be a major one, that he launched his attack on the composer.

'Parsifal'

In attempting to assess Wagner's works and their effect at the time of their presentation as well as their influence on later generations, it is necessary to examine one of his most controversial music dramas, 'Parsifal'.

The work has been viewed as having Christian overtones, as in it, the composer returned to the Grail legend, which had obsessed him from his youth. Wagner based

66. Hollingdale, R.J. Nietzsche, The Man and His Philosophy, Routledge and Kegan, London, 1965, page 77.

67. Nietzsche, F. The Genealogy of Morals, Doubleday and Co., U.S.A. 1956, page 236.

his text on the poems of Wolfram von Eschenbach and other literary sources. The Holy Grail is the cup from which, according to the Arthurian and Provençal myths, the Saviour drank at the Last Supper. The cup became an object of quest for the Knights of Arthurian legend. It could be said to symbolize the 'life-blood' of eternal life. Viewed from this aspect, the theme of 'redemption' is clearly portrayed in 'Parsifal'. In Cosima's Diaries, she records Richard singing and playing to her the "heavenly scene of the uncovering of the Grail! As tender and exalted as Salvation itself! The words 'Wine and Bread of the Last Supper' sound like an ancient saga told by angels."⁶⁸.

The leading Wagnerian soprano, Gwyneth Jones, has commented: "I suppose what people get out of the 'Ring' is a kind of ersatz religion, I mean not ordinary Christianity or any other formal religion, but they get something which puts them in touch with the essence of religion. I feel this when I'm singing the 'Ring' or 'Parsifal', the music is so sacred that I sense a great closeness to God. By the third act of 'Parsifal' with the Good Friday music I am always crying my eyes out on the stage."⁶⁹. The English critic Bernard Levin, also says that he has never succeeded 'in sitting through to the end of the 'Ring' without weeping.' Yet, Wagner said in the Diaries that he did not need the hypothesis of Christianity, nor of God to express the negation of the will in the 'Ring'. He showed this as being accomplished through the individual strength of a proud nature such as Wotan's, without the intervention of a higher grace.

However, through his articles written for the 'Bayreuther Blätter', Wagner presented and justified the religious symbolism of 'Parsifal' to himself and his followers. It

68. Wagner, Cosima. Cosima Wagner's Diaries, Collins, St. Jame's Place, London, 1978, Volume II page 21.

69. Hodson, P. Who's Who in Wagner's Life and Work, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1984, page 132.

could be said that 'Parsifal' came as the final 'blow' for Nietzsche. Even though he was not ignorant of the change in Wagner's views, the question of what had happened haunted him for years. They had previously shared an affinity of thought that art is essentially non-Christian. Wagner had clearly announced this in 'Art and Revolution' and Nietzsche retained this view for the rest of his life. In 'The Dawn of Day' he said: "Christianity, in the moral province, knows nothing but the miracle — the sudden change of all valuations, the sudden laying aside of all habits, the sudden irresistible affection for new objects and persons." ⁷⁰. To him, the definite Christian connections associated with The Grail, further categorized Wagner as degenerate. In 'The Wagner Case', Nietzsche said of the composer: "he flatters every kind of Christianity and every religious form and expression of decadence.... Richard Wagner,.....a decrepit and desperate romantic, collapsed suddenly before the Holy Cross." ⁷¹.

On the other hand, 'Parsifal' has been viewed not only as an un-Christian — but also as an anti-Christian work. Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) said: "I do not want to discuss the music of 'Parsifal' nor the music of Wagner in general.... what I find revolting in the whole affair is the underlying conception which dictated it — the principle of putting a work of art on the same level as the sacred and symbolic ritual which constitutes a religious service."⁷². Robert Gutman writes that in 'Parsifal', Amfortas contrasts the divine blood of Christ with his own sinful blood, corrupted by sexual contact with Kundry, a racial inferior; this criminal miscegenation epitomizing the Aryan dilemma. Nietzsche, who believed racial mixture to be the source of great cultures, recognized the opera as 'a work of malice....an outrage on morality.'

70. Nietzsche, F. The Dawn of Day, Fischer Unwin, London, 1903, page 77.

71. Durant, W. The Story of Philosophy, Washington Square Press, New York, 1953, page 412.

72. Hodson, P. Who's Who in Wagner's Life and Work, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1964, page 142.

'Parsifal' has also been viewed as political and anti-Semitic. An analogy has been drawn by Gutman between Wagner's fantasy that all of Europe's Jews and their works might be made to vanish with the wave of an Aryan lance, like Klingsor and his enchanted castle falling to ruin before the sign of the cross made by the reclaimed spear in Parsifal's hand. In 'Know Thyself', Wagner observed that only when his countrymen awoke and ceased party bickering, would there be no more Jews. Certainly, Wagner was not the only one with Nazi-like ideas and a program for racial regeneration. But his musical genius and the increasing popularity of his works gave his theorizing a unique and fateful power.

At twelve, Hitler saw 'Lohengrin,' his first introduction to opera. Presumably his enthusiasm was not only for the romantic sentiment associated with the swan-knight, but also the nationalistic passages. There is the German king's call for a Reich which would crusade against eastern villains menacing German soil. 'A German sword for the German land! Thus will the power of the Reich be established!' Gutman is of the opinion that 'Parsifal' could have shown the way in the shattering realization which came to the hero in the magic garden. 'Germany awake!' was the slogan under which Hitler brought the 'great solution' to reality. He claimed that Wagner was the 'greatest prophetic figure the German people has had.' He read the Wagnerian prose and stated that 'whoever wants to understand National Socialist Germany must know Wagner.'

Parallels have been drawn between 'Parsifal' and Hitler, but did the Führer not perhaps learn the wrong lessons from the opera? Hitler failed to understand Wagner's allegory for he claimed to have built up his religion out of 'Parsifal' saying that 'one can serve God only in the garb of the hero.' But whatever interpretation Hitler placed on 'Parsifal', Wagner's hero was instructed in the arts of peace and had to lay aside weapons of power. The Grail holds all forms of life, even that of a swan,

sacrosanct, and the opera said as much to Hitler when he watched it. But the Führer naturally saw and heard only what he wanted. It would be worthwhile remembering that Wagner once said that to a certain extent it was a matter of indifference to him whether people understood his verses, since they would certainly understand his dramatic action. He claimed to be no poet, and did not care if people reproached him for his choice of words, as in his works the action is everything.

In acknowledging the subjective nature of art, the questions must arise: what was Wagner's purpose for 'Parsifal', and did he succeed in it? The moral, if not the morality, would have been known initially to Wagner alone. He should not be blamed for any misconception of his ideas, nor the outcome of such misjudgement. He was no longer alive to defend himself against the accusations aimed at him, nor to prevent the possible repercussions. One cannot help wondering whether Wagner would have written and produced 'Parsifal' had he known the baneful influence it would have on the man whose actions could lead to so much human misery. Wagner had tried to justify the religious symbolism of 'Parsifal.' The German connections must be thought to be secondary or imaginary as in her Diaries, Cosima records Richard as saying: "I am writing 'Parsifal' only for my wife — if I had to depend on the German spirit, I should have nothing more to say." 73.

The Influence of Wagner on the History of Music.

In assessing Wagner as a creative musician one must take into account not only his achievement, but also his influence on the history of music.

As a musical dramatist and as a composer, Wagner's influence was a powerful one. Few operatic composers have been able to follow him in providing their own librettos. All,

73. Wagner, Cosima. Cosima Wagner's Diaries, Collins, St. Jame's Place, London, 1973, Volume I. page 1000.

however, profited from his original ideas, which enabled them to introduce greater dramatic depth, continuity and cohesion in their works.

Some of the post-Wagnerian operas firmly established in the international repertory are Humperdinck's, 'Hansel and Gretel' and 'Der Rosenkavalier', 'Elektra', 'Ariadne' and 'Salome' of Richard Strauss. In 1880 Humperdinck met and became friendly with Wagner in Italy. He was invited to join Wagner at Bayreuth, where he assisted with the production of 'Parsifal'. Of all the post-Wagnerian composers, Strauss successfully shows the influence of the master. Because of his early enthusiasm for the operas of Wagner he was nicknamed 'Richard the Second.'

In Austria, the composer Anton Bruckner was a fervent admirer of Wagner, despite the fact that he disliked opera on the whole. He met Wagner in 1865 and dedicated his third symphony to the master. Another Austrian composer, Gustav Mähler always had a sympathetic understanding of Wagner's music and became an outstanding interpreter of the master.

Wagner's influence on later writers and composers was widespread. From Feuerbach to Freud the stream of thought clearly reflects Wagner's symbolic art. The symbolism evident in such French composers as Debussy, hints at Wagnerian ideas. In his remarkable opera 'Wozzeck', based on a real life story, Berg also showed how much he had assimilated Wagner. What appears significant now is not just how far Wagner influenced other composers, but the trend which he together with them, represents.

In the purely musical field, Wagner's influence was even more far-reaching. He developed a wide expressive range, creating a unique emotional world of its own. In doing so he raised the melodic and harmonic style of German music. Wagner's free modulation and intensive development of chromaticism was later carried further by Schoenberg,

producing in our century that chain-reaction of atonality and serialism.

The standards set by the original Bayreuth performances were musical, historic and dramatic. Wagner's single-handed creation of his own type of musical drama was a fantastic achievement, considering the scale and scope of his art.

Wagner's influence also penetrated the literary field. Bernard Shaw, the noted playwright and music critic, admired Wagner's work; in 'The Perfect Wagnerite', he explained in simple terms the ideas behind 'The Ring'. The English novelist and poet, D.H. Lawrence, became acquainted with the Nordic sagas and owed a considerable debt to the music of Wagner. In his early novel 'The Trespasser', and in his stories, 'The Primrose Path' and 'The Witch à la Mode', he respectively explored the themes of erotic ecstasy, love and death and immolation.

Wagner even had devotees amongst bandsmen. Edwin Swift's discovery of Wagner in the late 1870's led to the creation of his 'Bayreuth' selection. 'Linthwaite' became one of the leading bands of the day and placed Wagner's music firmly before bandsmen and their audiences. The Halifax-horn composer, Sir George Dyson, remembered that he had 'first heard Wagner on a brass band.'

In 1871 Emil Heckel started a Wagner Society to help fund the Bayreuth Festival. Today there are Wagner Societies throughout the world. In the periodical 'Opera' Volume 36, 1935, a group of Scottish members of the Wagner Society mention that they have long felt a lack of events in Scotland.

It is not possible to separate Wagner's music dramas from his character and his ideas. The composer's life, the thoughts that he expressed in his prose works, were all dramatized on the stage. Certainly, he would refuse to

disassociate his dramas from the ideas that fed them. For Wagner, his productions were projections into the realm of art of all he wished to accomplish as a social and political reformer.

A century has passed since Wagner's death, yet still the religious, political and philosophical arguments about him continue. In the periodical 'Opera', Rolf Liebermann comments: "Wagner the composer must always be admired, but as a poet and thinker he remains controversial. Years ago on Hamburg Radio we broadcast a dozen or so programmes analysing his political and theoretical writings. It is impossible to ignore the racism and contempt for the 'common man' which runs through his works and which Adolf Hitler must have found to match his own ideas so perfectly." Recalling the harsh words about Wagner which Stravinsky had once voiced, Liebermann was astonished to find the famous Renoir portrait of Wagner in Stravinsky's study in Beverly Hills. When questioned, he replied: "I've changed my opinion, Wagner is a great master and is spiritually always with me. A genius can do a great deal of harm to the world, but he can never be wrong." 74.

In 1908 the French novelist, Andrè Gide (1869-1951) was asked to find out from the leading artistic and intellectual figures, especially in France, what their opinion of the influence of Wagnerism was. He replied: "I hold the person and the work of Wagner in horror.....This amazing genius does not exalt so much as he crushes. He permitted a large number of snobs, of literary people, and of fools to think that they loved music, and a few artists to think that genius can be acquired. Germany has perhaps never produced anything at once so great or so barbarous." 75.

74. Liebermann, R. 'In Support of Music Theatre', Opera, Volume 34, No. 2, February 1983, page 138.

75. Hodson, P. Who's Who in Wagner's Life and Work, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1964, page 41.

A contrasting viewpoint was given by the Austrian composer and master of the German Lied, Hugo Wolf (1860-1903) who wrote to his friend Henrietta Lank: " 'Parsifal' is without doubt by far the most beautiful and sublime work in the whole field of Art." ⁷⁶. The opera no doubt exhibits the finest grain and the subtlest workmanship of all Wagner's creations. He worked lovingly at the orchestration, at times producing only a few measures a day. On hearing 'Parsifal', Alexis-Emmanuel Chabrier wrote in 1889, that he had never in all his life had a comparable artistic experience. When Jean Sibelius visited the Bayreuth Festival in 1889 he said that nothing in the world had ever made so overwhelming an impression on him, as 'Parsifal.' It is interesting to note, on the other hand, that Robert Schumann, while admitting the power of 'Tannhäuser' as a stage piece, insisted that Wagner was 'not a good musician' and that his music was 'often quite amateurish.' That Wagner was able to generate so much controversy, was in itself an achievement. Critics could ask themselves how it could happen that in the entire world more has been written about Wagner, than about anyone else in the whole history of art.

On 17 May 1877, during his last visit to London, Wagner read the complete text of 'Parsifal' to a circle of friends and admirers, his audience included George Eliot. Dänreuther recalled the occasion: "The reading was a wonderful feat. The great actor-poet at his best, an improvisation perfectly balanced — every part stood forth as that of an individual — particularly in the second act. One heard the words, one heard the latent music. It was Bayreuth in miniature."⁷⁷.

76. Hodson, P. Who's Who in Wagner's Life and Work, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1934, page 174.

77. Rosenthal, H. 'Wagner in London', Opera, Volume 34, No. 3, March 1935, page 257.

Thanks to the able direction of Sir Georg Solti, Wagner's works have in recent years achieved a new popularity in Britain. Following the presentation of the composer's works under the great conductor, Arturo Toscanini, he achieved new fame in Italy. Toscanini, incidently, was Wagner's great champion calling him 'the greatest composer of the century.'

Since the Second World War the state of Israel has imposed an unofficial ban on the performance of Wagner's works. The main reason for this being the composer's theoretical anti-Semitism. The English musicologist, Hans Keller, who himself survived the Nazi death camps, comments: "To be sure, one does occasionally hear Wagner on Israeli radio — without his name being mentioned. On such occasions the bitterly ironical descent to the Nazi level is complete: in my lifetime, the only comparable miscarriage of musical justice happened early in 1938 when I turned on Vienna radio to chance upon Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto, played by the Nazi's single fiddling star, George Kulenkampf — and upon this closing announcement: 'The composer of the concerto is unknown.' " ⁷⁸. Keller added that only the Nazis and the boycotting Israelis have ever Nazified Wagner.

It was Zubin Mehta (b. 1936) who broke the unofficial Israeli ban on performances of Wagner's work when he conducted the Prelude to 'Tristan' at a Tel Aviv concert on 15 October 1961. He justified his action by mentioning the number of Volkswagens and West German-made T.V. sets in Israel. He further mentioned that he had the support of 113 out of the 115 members of the orchestra as well as thousands of subscribers to their concerts throughout Israel. "We must destroy the anti-Wagnerian myths. It is vital that we perform the music of the nineteenth

78. Hodson, P. Who's Who in Wagner's Life and Work, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1984, page 60.

century's greatest revolutionary after Beethoven. If an orchestra cannot play Beethoven and Wagner, it might as well not exist." ⁷⁹.

Listening to Wagner's music after the passage of time we readily concede that it is the music that is the most important. Telling confirmation of this assessment was given by Arnold Schoenberg when he wrote: "For me Wagner is an eternal phenomenon, quite independent of how the currents of fashion regard him. One cannot even call Wagner's world of ideas obsolete or antiquated." ⁷⁹. In his 'The Life of Richard Wagner', Ernest Newman, probably the greatest critic who ever lived wrote: "About the polemics of the would-be critics of Wagner..... there is nothing more to say..... today when we can survey his work from sufficient distance in time, we recognize Wagner as one of the three or four genuinely original spirits in the entire history of music; indeed, in a certain sense, even as that one of them whose effect has been most fruitful and transforming." ⁷⁹. In 1927, after a performance of 'Tristan' he said: "The more I know Wagner, the more convinced I am that this is the most wonderful artist-mind that the earth has ever seen." ⁸⁰.

Knowledge of Wagner's underlying ideas obviously add to and provide an extra dimension when listening to his works. However, an understanding of these ideas is not indispensable for our enjoyment or appreciation — the music speaks for itself. Some composers have consciously submitted to

79. Hodson, P. *Who's Who in Wagner's Life and Work*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1984, pages 85, 128 and 97.

80. Steane, J. 'Newman of The Sunday Times', *Opera*, Volume 33, No. 6, June 1982, page 539.

Wagner's influence while others have been unconscious of it. Benjamin Britten thought that appreciation or receptivity could be replaced with depreciation or ridicule. But, Hans Keller showed the repressed influence of Wagner in Britten's 'Albert Herring' to be in creative operation, down to its thematic invention and the nature of its rhythmic articulations. Britten remarked that Keller had discovered 'things' of which he, himself, had not been conscious.

Wagner clearly believed that he had a mission — to revive the cultural heritage of the German people by presenting to them music dramas incorporating the national legends, and in a manner to which they could relate. Portrayed in the typical Wagnerian drama is not only the decadence and corruption of the world, but also his idea of the way in which human weaknesses — greed, jealousy, hatred and power hunger — can be conquered with the concept of 'redemption through love'; his heroines do not live for love, they die for it. Cosima has recorded: "Richard expressed his pleasure at having provided in 'Der Ring des Nibelungen' a complete picture of the curse of greed for money and the disaster it brings about." ⁸¹. In 'Parsifal', it is possible that Amfortas, the Grail King, and Kundry, the alluring Madonna of dual personality, symbolized humanity with its conflicting good and evil, its aspirations of purity and its relapses into sin.

Many would decry Wagner's mysticism, slate his anti-Semitism, question his morality, but few who would not acknowledge the greatness of his art. 'The ideas have been superseded; Wagner's music can never be superseded'. Thus all music lovers should approach Wagner's work without reservations, bias or preconceived ideas.

81. Wagner, Cosima. Cosima Wagner's Diaries, Collins, St. James's Place, London, 1978, Volume II, page 324.

It is perhaps appropriate that Friedrich Nietzsche, one of Wagner's severest critics, should have the last word.

"At a performance of a Wagnerian art-work one is not aware of what is interesting or enjoyable, or of Wagner himself, or of art at all: one feels only the necessity of it all." 82.

82. Nietzsche, F. Richard Wagner in Bayreuth, Cambridge University Press, Great Britain, 1983, page 244.

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