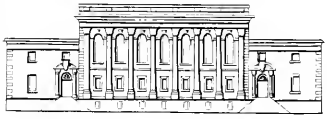

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# RICHARD WAGNER IN HIS REVOLUTIONARY YEARS

(1848-1875)

BY

MARY MOORE

Submitted in partial fulfilment of
the requirements in the Inter-departmental
Major in Revolution and Romanticism.

Sweet Briar College.

June, 1934.

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# RICHARD WAGNER IN HIS REVOLUTIONARY YEARS(1848-1875)

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## I. Early Influences on Wagner.

When Wagner was still a child, newspaper accounts and reports of the Greek War of Independence first aroused his interest in Greek history and mythological stories. Although his study of the grammar of the language was never thorough, he was delighted by the literature - to such an extent that he even attempted to write in imitation of the ancient forms.[1]

About 1827, he became fascinated by the works of E. T. A. Hoffmann. These stories in all probability first instilled that love of mediaeval legend upon which he based so much of his later composition. From Hoffmann's stories and re-interpretations of the old folk-tales, Wagner gained inspiration and ideas for several of his dramas, among which were Tannhauser and Die Gotterdämmerung in particular. Hoffmann, with his romantic, mystic, and fantastic writing and characterization, further influenced the young Wagner in his idea of music. Throughout his life, Wagner was acutely aware of the physical aspects of tones and keys. This conception of thinking of music as alive with mysterious figures probably gained impetus from this author. Wagner writes,

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1. These consisted of an epic poem, numerous verses, and a tragedy. August Apel's poems, "Polyidos" and "Aitolier", also imitations, were acknowledged influences for tragedy. Wagner, Richard : My Life, vol. I, New York, 1911, p. 17.

"The mysterious joy I felt in hearing an orchestra play quite close to me still remains one of my most pleasant memories. The mere tuning up of the instruments put me in a state of mystic excitement. The sound of fifths on a violin was closely associated in my mind with ghosts and spirits".[2] Again he writes of an overture in B Flat Major in which he made a special point of bringing out the mystic meaning of the orchestra into three distinctly different and opposite elements. It is quite probable that here again Wagner's imagination was heightened by Hoffmann's symbolism. He writes,

"I wanted to make the characteristic nature of these elements clear to the score reader the moment he looked at it by a striking display of color. I employed black ink for the brass instruments alone, the strings were to have red and the wind green ink. ---- After the theme of the "black" brass instruments had made itself heard with great emphasis, the "red" Allegro theme started, in which every fifth bar was interrupted by the drum-beat from the 'black' world".

Probably one of the earliest models from which Wagner borrowed material and imitated style was Shakespeare. Besides translating a speech of Romeo into metrical German,[4] he began a huge tragedy "rally based on a modification of Hamlet", but

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2 Ibid., pp. 34-35.

3 Ibid., pp. 63-65.

4 W. J. Henderson, Richard Wagner, New York, 1901, p. 4.

including King Lear, Macbeth, Richard III, and Goethe's Gotz von Berlichingen.[5] In the composition of Das Liebesverbot he took the material from Shakespeare's Measure for Measure, altering it so as to express the revolutionary element - an attack against puritanical hypocrisy and the exaltation of unrestrained sensuality.[6] Of Wagner's deep admiration for Shakespeare and especially his genius, there is no more positive evidence than in the prose-work, Opera and Drama, in which he chooses Shakespeare as a type of creative playwright who is no poet in the usual sense, but a tremendous dramatist not to be understood by analogy with any poet whomsoever.[7] With Shakespeare, as with Beethoven, Wagner felt a definite kinship, recognizing the fundamentals underlying the works of the writer and using them as bases for his own music-dramas. Just how far he succeeded, we can judge according to our own tastes and standards. His achievements certainly claim for him the distinction that no dramatist since Shakespeare has shown such powers of synthesis and execution. But his success in the literary field alone cannot be reckoned without consideration of the other two elements in his work, music and action. It is impossible to eveluate one without the others.

The stimulation which authors such as Hoffmann and Shakespeare provided had great effect upon the imaginative, and, hence, the creative side of Wagner. Their influence, accord-

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5 Wagner, op. cit., p. 29.

6 Ibid., p. 101.

7 Bekker, Paul, Richard Wagner, New York, 1931.

ingly, was much more lasting, and is recognizable in the texts of some of his operas as well as in the subject-matter of some of his prose-works. However, the influence of political writers and revolutionists upon Wagner as a young man was most impressive and significant in relation to character and the development of his personality.

Wagner's susceptibility to the thing of the moment caused him to be carried away with enthusiasm for the "Young Germany" movement which, at that time, was most appealing.[8] With its catchwords of "freedom" and "the emancipation of the flesh"[9] its chief aim was greater independence in social and artistic conditions, although, to achieve this, it was necessary to have more political toleration. Among the early leaders in this effort towards individualism had been Heinrich Laube and Ludwig Borne. They had eagerly attended the meetings of the Burschenschaft, a Student Union extending to all the universities, but gradually their sympathy had turned to cynicism. They recognized their somewhat sentimental regard for the ideals of the movement and they saw the impossibility of any fulfillment of such youthful ambitions. However, their interest had led them to write several books - and stirring ones at that. It was Laube's Das Junge Europa which so impressed Wagner at that period when he was inclined to take life and the world in a rather frivolous manner. He has written that the first portion of this novel had a "most stimulating effect upon him,

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8 Sometime between 1828-1830.

9 Newman, op. cit., p. 97.

more particularly in conjunction with all the youthful hopefulness which at that time pulsated in his veins".[10] This book and Wilhelm Heinse's Ardinghello had aroused the imaginations of the young men af that time; and Wagner had been attracted by this new spirit. The utmost freedom in politics, morals, and literature, the most passionate enjoyment of the fleeting moment, were advocated by these authors:- Ludwig Borne, Carl Gutzgow, Gustav Konig, Laube, and even Heinrich Heine.[11]

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10 Wagner, op. cit., p. 98.

11 Karl Ludwig Borne(1786-1837), political writer and satirist, was active in German political circles during the years 1818 - 1821, when he edited a lively publication, "Das Wage". This was suppressed, however. After the July Revolution (1830) he went to Paris, where he published "Briefe aus Paris", his most important journal and a landmark in the history of German journalism. Its appearance led him to be considered as one of the leaders of the literary party of "Young Germany". vol. IV.

Encyclopedia Brittanica, eleventh edition, New York, 1910.

Karl Ferdinand Gutzgow, novelist and dramitist, exerted a powerful influence on modern Germany. His works dealing with social, intellectual, and political questions, reflect the struggles of nineteenth century Germany of the period at which he wrote. vol. XII.

Heinrich Laube, for his political essays and novel, in which he severely criticized the governmental administration of his country, was placed under police surveillance. His works were confiscated. vol. IV.

(Continued on next page).

In Das Liebesverbot, completed in 1836, Wagner shows his admiration for the principles of the movement. In this, the heavy, hypocritical governor represents his (Wagner's) own countrymen,[12] and the "gloomy puritanism" of Germany is contrasted with "hot-blooded" Sicily.[13] Except in this one text, there is no way to trace directly the influence which these revolutionists had upon Wagner. But it is highly possible that the erotic tendency, which became increasingly marked as he grew older, received great impetus from his contact with their writings and their advocacy of license and indulgence in all things.

Since the literary content of Wagner's work cannot be considered apart from the musical material, it is necessary to find out what men or what type of music served as models or inspiration for Wagner.

During their residence in Dresden,[14] the Geyers frequently had as their guest, Carl Maria von Weber, who, at that time, was conductor of the Dresden Opera, and was an "exceptional and almost superhuman being".[15] Weber, the so-called "Father of German National Opera", in his effort to bind national

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12 Ibid., p. 21.

13 Wagner, op. cit., p. 146.

14 About 1820.

15 Wagner, op. cit., p. 33.

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11 Heinrich Heine was especially influenced by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic rule. "It was his mission to be a reformer, to restore with instruments of war rather than of peace 'the interrupted order of the world'". p. 215, vol. XIII.

sentiment, characters, and folk-lore into an intelligible work, proved to be a great stimulus to the young Wagner. Though not a conscious romanticist, Weber was certainly revolutionary in his desire to awaken the German people to a realization of their own musical individuality, since hitherto they had been dominated by French and Italian opera. His success in this was unquestionable after the performance of Der Freischutz in 1821. In musical design, he was not a great innovator, since the folk-songs which he used closely resembled the aria of the Italian opera. He did employ his themes so as to suggest severally certain characters or scenes. This connection between drama and music Wagner seized upon and developed into the leit-motif . The leit-motif of Wagner was a subject used to denote an episode or the thoughts, emotions, or actual presence of a character. It represented action on the stage at the time or was employed to recall past action or to predict future action. The leit-motif had special significance in unifying the four sections of Der Ring des Nibelungen. Quite probably there was another point of kinship between the two, since Weber, long before Wagner began writing, had thought of opera "as an art-work complete in itself, in which all the parts and contributions of the related and utilized arts meet and disappear in each other, and, in a manner, form a new world by their own destruction".[16] Wagner's synthesis of the arts in his music-drama seems to indicate that he had received inspiration from Weber's attempts at such a fusion. In the latter's three best operas, Der Freischutz, Euryanthe, and

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16 Henderson, op. cit., p. 175.

Oberon, the supernatural element is strongly defined. He obtained this representation of the unreal to a great extent through his orchestration, using his instruments to give pictorial effect. Wagner was impressed readily with this "magic realm" of Weber's, attracted by the "ghostly theme" of Der Freischutz[17] and the music to Oberon.[18] His enthusiasm for Weber is revealed in his later work Lohengrin, which particularly recalls Euryanthe in its supernaturalism.

About the time that he "discovered" for himself the works of E. T. A. Hoffmann, Wagner first heard at a Gewandhaus concert in Leipzig one of Beethoven's symphonies. He immediately became engrossed in studying scores of Beethoven, attracted not only by the actual music, but by the personality of the man, who was considered "half-mad".[19] During the interval between Beethoven's death (1827) and the first time he heard a performance of the Choral Symphony, (1831), Wagner eagerly copied for himself as many scores as he could procure, arranging for piano the "Missa Solemnis" and the symphony which seemed to"form the spiritual keynote of his life".[20] His friend, Heinrich Dorn, wrote that "he possessed most of the overtures; with the sonatas he went to sleep; with the quartets he got up; the songs he sang, the quartets he whistled ( for in his playing

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17 Wagner, op. cit., p. 14.

18 Ibid., p. 34.

19 Ibid., p. 42.

20 Ibid., p. 43.

there was no progress) ; in short, it was a true furor teutonicus, which in its union with an intellect of scientific cultivation and unusual activity, promised to yield vigorous shoots".[21] Naturally, his study of Beethoven influenced his own compositions. These included an overture (1831), inspired by the "Coriolanus" overture, a pastoral play suggested by Goethe's Laune der Verliebten, but more immediately evoked by a performance of Beethoven's "Pastoral" symphony, and the Symphony in C Minor, the style of which is imitative of the earlier writer.

His enthusiasm for Beethoven remained as intense in his maturity as it had been in his youth. In 1846, he selected the Ninth Symphony for performance by his own orchestra, feeling that it had been slighted by stupid conductors and wanting to reveal the true meaning of the work as he recognized it. To make sure that the public would not miss this opportunity he printed a sketch which later became the foundation for his famous ten-page "Program" on this symphony. In 1870, he published his essay on Beethoven (occasioned by the hundredth anniversary of Beethoven's birth). In this he submitted to the German people a "thorough investigation of the nature of his music - a contribution to the philosophy of music".[22] This great sympathy for Beethoven resulted in Wagner's considering

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21 Finck, H. T. , Wagner and his Works, vol. I, New York, 1907, pp. 31-32.

22 Richard Wagner, Beethoven, translated by Edward Dannreuther, London, 1903, Preface, pp. VII & VIII.

himself a direct descendant of that master. Naturally, the dramatic element in his music appealed to Wagner,[23] as well as his effort to combine the two arts, poetry and music, in the last movement of the Choral Symphony. Wagner regarded Beethoven as having broken down the barriers of formalism along structural lines. Beethoven's great effort was to free music by pouring meaning and emotion into melody - to make music universal as well as personal. Such was Wagner's aim, also. His continuation of the Beethoven tradition in spirit and design has made his works as immortal as those of the man whom he worshipped.

Of the other musical influences on Wagner in his earlier days, we find opera playing an important part.[24] To Wagner's mind, the great fault of the operatic writers had been their neglect of drama and their over-emphasis upon music. This emphasis was laid particularly on melody, which was made florid and as riotous as possible. Rossini, especially, in Italy, had

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23 The dramatic element is seen in the Sixth Symphony (second movement), in the "Coriolanus", "Egmont", and "Prometheus" overtures, and in the Ninth Symphony, last movement.

24 His views about the condition of German opera the first half of the nineteenth century and the position which Italian and French opera held in Germany are expressed mainly in his theatrical writings of the post-revolutionary period, However, I shall refer to them here since Wagner recognized the state of affairs at an early date, but did not set them down in any tangible form till later.

sacrificed continuity and unity of music and libretto for the sake of satisfying the public. He gave every possible opportunity to the singer to display his talents and gratified his audiences with vast, showy arias which had little or no real musical value or significance. Bellini and Donizetti likewise had degraded the opera and made it mechanical. Of the French composers, Gluck had been the most outstanding, since it was he who first attempted to express the real sense of the words by the melody. This had been a definite contribution, certainly. But he went no further in welding music and drama into a single form. His predecessors, Cherubini and Mehul, had broadened or enlarged the old operatic form, but had done little towards achieving a balance between the two. In Germany, Mozart had carried on the Gluck tradition. Of him, Wagner wrote, "This glorious composer, by simply following his instincts, discovered the power of music to attain truthfulness of dramatic expression by an endless variety of means", which is a determining factor for his music.[25] Lack of discrimination in regard to literary material, however, kept him from reaching the ultimate goal, and the real value of his operas lies chiefly in their individual characteristics. Romanticism brought to German opera more definite and truly valuable improvements. Weber, realizing the artificiality of Italian opera, tried to escape from the poisonous atmosphere of the over-embellished arias and introduced the folk-song into his writing. This return to a nationalistic element Wagner felt to be a great step

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25 Finck, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 302-303.

towards the simplification and establishment of sincerity and truthfulness in opera. Weber's attempt to express the dramatic through his orchestration was another approach to the Wagnerian music-drama which was to develop.

We see, therefore, that Wagner, although he did not set down his observation until he had evolved very definite ideas as to his purpose in the re-creation of the operatic form, very clearly recognized the limitations and falsities which existed in opera at the outest of his career. His recognition of these made it more evident that to him belonged the task of producing balanced, harmonious, synthesized works, which, would gratify not only the musician, but the actor, the dramatist, the poet, and the ordinary man as well.[26]

The home in which Wagner grew up probably contributed as much to his destiny as any of these writers or musicians. His father, Carl Friedrich Wagner, was a cultured man, interested in amateur theatricals. Through his association with the theatre Wagner met Ludwig Geyer, who soon after Carl Friedrich's death in 1813, married his widow. Geyer had been left the sole supporter of his family at the age of twenty, and had turned to portrait painting for a livelihood. He had never studied art extensively and, hence, he was never able to develop his talent to the fullest extent. Consequently, all his life he remained, as a painter, something of an amateur.[27] In 1800 he

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26 His achievement of this can be more appropriately discussed in the section on Der Ring.

27 Newman, op. cit., p. 16.

settled in Leipzig. His friendship with C. F. Wagner was probably the means by which he was introduced to some of the amateur actors. His successful appearances on the stage were the cause of his taking up acting professionally. His general intelligence, his wide culture, and the liveliness of his temperament made him particularly admirable in ordinary character parts, although in the more heroic figures, he was hampered by his size and his relatively weak voice.[28] Although he had had no formal training along musical lines, he must have had some ability, for he appeared several times in some of the lighter German Singspiele and French Opera Comique. Wagner's intense admiration for Geyer is quite evident when he writes of him as a "most loving father who took my education in hand with the greatest care and affection",[29] who " never gave way to despair, in spite of the cares and troubles of so large a family, but remained patient throughout".[30] His death in 1821 again left the family without provision.[31] Necessarily, the children were forced to earn their own livelihood.

Albert, the older brother, was acting in Breslau at the time. Rosalie, after an appearance in Geyer's play, Das Erntefest, had shown so much talent that in 1820, she was admitted to the company of Royal Court Players.[32] Louisa also

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28 Ibid., p. 25.

29 Wagner, My Life, p. 2.

30 Ibid., p. 3.

31 Ibid., p. 3.

32 Newman, op. cit., p. 34.

received an engagement at the Breslau Theatre. Clara made a successful debut at the Italian Opera in Dresden in 1821, but her stage career was only temporary since her voice showed the strain put upon it before it had been fully developed. In addition to his gifted brothers and sisters, Wagner's uncle, Adolf Wagner, greatly respected as a scholar, was also deeply interested in the theatre, although in a much more detached, impersonal, intellectual way. He had known Schiller and Fichte and was intimate with Tieck and other celebrities.[33] His literary writing connected with the drama included an essay on the Alcestis of Euripides, a satiric comedy of his own, an essay on the theory of the comic, and numerous translations.[34] Although he may have disapproved of the stage, certainly he was sympathetic towards drama and towards young boys whose tastes in literature needed sharpening and whose minds needed stimulation. During the years Richard Wagner spent as a student at St. Nicholas' School and at the University in Dresden, the elder Wagner was a great influence, for he writes admiringly and at great length of his uncle's companionship and understanding.[35]

From the dramatic and operatic performances at the Leipzig Court Theatre, Wagner was receiving a fresh and vivid set of impressions. Through Rosalie, then a member of the company, he could gain admittance. Of this time, he has written,

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33 Ibid., p. 21.

34 Finck, op. cit., vol. I, p. 6.

35 Wagner, My Life, pp. 26-29.

"That which in mychildhood had been merely the interest aroused by a strange spirit of curiosity now became a more deep-seated possession".[36] The plays of Shakespeare - Julius Caesar, Macbeth, and Hamlet,-those of Schiller, Goethe's Faust, besides several of the latest romantic operas, Marschner's Vampir and Der Templer und die Judin and Auber's Masaniello, were among the most impressive which he saw. More remarkable and more stimulating than all was the performance at Wilhelmine Shroder - Devrient in Fidelio in 1829. Her voice and dramatic appeal gave a new direction to his artistic feelings and exercised a decisive influence over his whole life.[37] Wagner writes,

"If I look back on my life as a whole, I can find no event that produced so profound an impression upon me. Anyone who can remember that wonderful woman at this period of her life must to some extent have experienced the almost satanic ardor which the intensely human art of this incomparable actress poured into his veins".[38]

With his acceptance of the part of conductor of the Magdeburg Theatre, Wagner began his first real association with a theatre. From them until 1848, he held various positions as conductor or director of orchestras ot theatres. His friends were mostly professional artists, musicians or actors. With such companions, living the rather carefree life he did, Wagner himself became an actor.

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36 Ibid., p. 43.

37 Ibid., p. 44.

38 Ibid., p. 44.

## II. Wagner as Revolutionist in Politics.

The world in which Wagner lived and to which he devoted his attention was that of the theatre. To this, as composer, conductor, and producer he brought his interests in music and drama.

In 1841, he received an offer for the production of Rienzi by the Dresden Opera. This necessitated, or so he thought, his return to Dresden from Paris.[46] After some revision in length, the opera was successfully performed for the first time, October 20, 1842. Three months later, The Flying Dutchman was given in Dresden, with Wagner conducting. This, however, was a definite failure, owing to inadequate stage facilities and few rehearsals. His spirits were revived by the offer of the Conductorship of the Opera in Dresden, February, 1843. In such a position, he rose to a conspicious place in the eyes of the people and the court, but prominence led to disgrace and exile.

There is little doubt in the minds of biographers and historians that Wagner's interest in the Dresden revolution of 1848 was due to his intense dissatisfaction with artistic conditions and to his own excitable, impulsive nature. He was not interested in politics until he saw that without political upheaval there could be no regeneration of culture and the arts in Germany.

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46. He lived in Paris from September, 1839, to April, 1842.

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[illegible]

During the July revolutions of 1830 in Paris and the rebellions which took place at that time in other European countries, Wagner naturally was absorbed and delighted with all news of events. He has written, "The world as an historic phenomenon began from that day in my eyes, and naturally my sympathies were wholly on the side of the Revolution, which I regarded in the light of an heroic popular struggle crowned with victory, and free from the blemish of the terrible excesses that stained the first French Revolution. As the whole of Europe, including some of the German states, was soon plunged more or less violently into rebellion, I remained for some time in a feverish state of suspense, and now first turned my attention to the causes of these upheavals, which I regarded as struggles of the young and hopeful against the old and effete portion of mankind. In Saxony, the proclamation of the regency of the future King Frederick, and the granting of a constitution filled me with such enthusiasm that I composed a political overture, the prelude of which depicted dark oppression in the midst of which a strain was at last heard under which, to make my meaning clearer, I wrote the words, 'Friedrich und Freiheit'; this strain was intended to develop gradually and majestically into the fullest triumph."[48] In 1831, the Polish war of independence against Russian supremacy filled him "with growing enthusiasm." The siege and capture of Warsaw, in September 1831, seemed a "personal

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48. Wagner, My Life, vol. I, pp. 47-48.

calamity."[49] His brother-in-law, Friedrich Brockhaus (Ottilie's husband), as president of the Leipzig Polish Committee, entertained many of the exiles in his home. Here Wagner, for the first time, came in direct contrct with political refugees and heard their opinions discussed.

Until the revolution in Dresden in 1849, Wagner had no contact with any political organization. His friendship with Heinrich Heine and Laube during the years in Paris stimulated him from the artistic standpoint. Their criticisms of literature and of music probably contributed a great deal to Wagner's development, making him sensitive and discriminating in his tastes. In Dresden, he was associated with August Rockel, who had great natural musical talent and was a man of culture and wide experiences. Wagner has left these comments about him:-

"He was unusually clear-headed and possessed a rare capacity for teaching and educating himself in every branch of knowledge; he was, moreover, so genuinely true and good-hearted that he soon became my intimate friend and comrade. He was, and continued to be, the only person who really appreciated the singular nature of my position towards the surrounding world, and with whom I could fully and sincerely discuss the cares and sorrows arising therefrom."[50] Rockel later became one of the most active leaders of the Dresden uprising. His artistic motives certainly were changed by

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49. Ibid., p. 72.

50. Ibid., p. 308.

[illegible] brother-in-law, [illegible] (Mr. [illegible]), a [illegible] of the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] of the [illegible] in his [illegible] [illegible] that they, each in [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

overpowering hatred for the conditions existing then. Naturally, he stimulated Wagner's interest in politics a very great deal. Ferdinand Hiller and Robert Schumann, both interested in the advancement of art along the lines which were then exphasized, i.e., subjectivity and self-expression, were also friends of Wagner. Schumann seemed quite sympathetic to Wagner's work; but Wagner apparently did not reciprocate the same esteem. Schumann was too conservative to benefit by his views.[51] J. Schnorr, widely recognized as a cartoonist and painter, and director of the museums at Dresden, was another member of this rather cosmopolitan circle. Through him, Wagner not only appreciated the influence which they could have on artistic conditions, but was greatly stimulated by his knowledge of German folk-lore. Whenever one of his plays was to be produced, Laube came to Dresden and while there associated with this group. Of his plays, Wagner has written that "his most successful pieces were those in which popular interest was excited by catch-phrases. This interest was always more or less associated with the politics of the day, and generally involved some obvious diatribes about 'German unity' and 'German liberalism'."[52] Berthold Auerbach, the compiler of German stories, although of humble parentage, was a figure in the highest artistic and theatrical circles. What particularly attracted Wagner to him was his complete frankness in discussing Judaism. This interest in universal "brother-hood," to speak, was current at that time and a subject which Wagner and his associates vigorously championed.

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51. Ibid., p. 386.

52. Ibid., p. 389.

Such were the companions with whom Wagner talked and shared hopes. All of them were essentially romanticists, either in their ideals or in their work. Their chief effort was to free art from convenionalities and formal standards, to educate their readers, audiences, admirers, and the public at large in what they believed to be the finest art and to arouse enthusiasm over the condition of art in Germany. Thus their efforts were romantic in spirit - in their emphasis on personal expression - and nationalistic - in their emphasis on the country's recognition of its own resources and possibilities.

Wagner was imbued with these ideals. Through his own operas he was striving to realize a unity of the arts, although he had not yet evolved and carried out definite ideas such as are found in the "Ring" cycle. He had accepted the appointment of Conductor at Dresden in the hope of projecting his ideas towards unity in performances.[53]

As the years passed, and Wagner became known to the public, it was natural for him to want recognition of his works. His Rienzi has been quite successful in Berlin and in Dresden. But he realized that his later operas, The Flying Dutchman and Tannhauser, which artistically were infinitely superior to Rienzi, had been quite neglected. Besides this, he had received little royal patronage and support. He had requested several changes in the theatre and these requests has been completely ignored. Baron von Luttichau, the Court Intendant and supervisor of the opera, had caused numerous

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53. William Wallace, Richard Wagner, New York, 1925, p. 100.

upsets in Wagner's career. Luttichau's lack of appreciation and supercilious attitude toward Wagner caused him much unhappiness and discontent.

Besides this hostility towards him from the court and the Intendant, Wagner, as always, had financial difficulties. His personal assumption of a great deal of the financial responsibility for the productions of Tannhauser, October 1845, had left him heavily in debt. Other theatres were not willing to accept his works, for the report had gone abroad that they were exceptionally difficult for the singers and also from the scenic standpoint. Thus his income was not increased by the sale or performance of his work. Added to current disasters, past debts which had accumilated through the years were pressing. It is quite probable that jealousy of the riches of the upper classes and pity for his own mean position underlay much of his action as a revolutionary.

As he grew older and his ideas matured and his interests extended, he became more sensitive to the conditions in the artistic world. Especially he noted the provincialism of the Dresden Theatre. Not only was Luttichau ignorant of really fine work, but he was blind to the proverty of the establishment. Without sufficient funds, only mediocre productions were achieved, with only second-rate performers assisting. The critics, antagonistic towards Wagner, were never inclined to praise the work at the theatre. The court was unsympathetic - and uneducated artistically. So, in 1846, Wagner submitted his "Report concerning the Royal Kapelle," in which he drafted a scheme for the improvement of the

orchestra, insisting on the provision for a greater number of players, shorter working periods, more frequent rehearsals, and regularly scheduled concerts. The changes meant only a slight additional expense which would be offset by greatly improved performances bringing in greater receipts. The report was received by Luttichau and laid aside for a year with no recognition.

Thus Wagner turned his attention to politics, hoping that through governmental readjustments the State would be improved, and that eventually artistic conditions would be bettered.

The news of the February Revolution in France, 1848, did not come as a particular shock to him. He had witnessed the erection of the forts detachés around Paris, which Louis Philippe had carried out after the July Revolution of 1830. The Swiss war and the Sicilian revolt at the beginning of the year 1848, had caused widespread alarm; but Wagner did not attach great significance to their probable influence on other countries. He doubted that the proclamation of the Republic in France would have any real importance.[54] Evidence that there was great sympathy with the monarchy in Saxony may be found in Wagner's account of a concert February, 1848, at which the King was present. He had selected Mendelssohn's Symphony in A Minor and the Fifth Symphony of Beethoven. Since they are both in minor keys, he felt that the combination would mean a particularly depressing program for the audience, already

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54. Wagner, op. cit., p. 435.

strained and anxious after the political upheavals which had just taken place. He wrote:-

"Lipinsky, the leader of the orchestra, comforted me by exclaiming 'Let us play only the first two movements of the Symphony in C. Minor, then no one will know whether we have played Mendelssohn in the major or the minor key.' Fortunately, before these two movements began, to our great surprise, a loud shout was raised by some patriotic spirit in the middle of the audience, who called out 'Long live the King!' and the cry was promptly repeated with unusual enthusiasm and energy on all sides. Lipinsky was perfectly right: the Symphony with the passionate and stormy excitement of the first theme, swelled out like a hurricane of rejoicing, and had seldom produced such an effect on the audience as on that night."[55] Soon after this, a new ministry was elected, consisting partly of Liberals and partly of Democrats, who advocated a thoroughly democratic constitution. The sympathetic attitude of the people towards these procedures indicated their confidence in the government as well as their love for their ruler.

The events which took place in Vienna and Berlin made no particular impression upon Wagner, although he was quite "pleasantly" surprised by the dissolution of the Bundestag and the meeting of the Parliament at Frankfort in its place.[56] He must have been referring to the preliminary

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55. Ibid., p. 436.

56. Ibid., p. 437.

assembly, held from March 31 to April 4, 1849, which arranged for the elections of an assembly to draw up a constitution for united Germany. The elections were held during April and May, but the Parliament of Frankfort did not meet until May 18, 1849.

Not until Lohengrin was completed, March 1848, did Wagner turn his attention directly to the political situation.[57] He realized that reform within his country was necessary for social welfare and inevitable after the various uprisings in the neighboring nations. In his own eagerness to see something done, he wrote "a popular appeal in verse to the German rulers and people to inaugurate a great crusade against Russia, as the country which had been the prime instigator of that policy in Germany which had so fatally separated monarchs from their subjects.[58] Wagner again writes, "I wanted action instead of words, and actions which would force our princes to break forever with their old traditions, so detrimental to the cause of the German Commonwealth."[59] Certainly, he had an intense desire for actual revolution, but no sense of proportion.

His friend, August Rockel, who had long since given up musical ambitions, was particularly active in behalf of the Vaterlands-Verein, one of two political unions in Dresden. His personal unhappiness and extreme poverty had made him an ardent socialist. Wagner probably absorbed much of his radical-

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57. He had received some encouragement for his enthusiasm from his friend, Dr. Herman Franck. Very naively and yet confidently Wagner writes that Franck had imbued him with fairly sould political judgment.
Wagner, My Life, col I., p. 438

58. Ibid., p. 439.

59. Ibid., p. 438.

ism and through him, perhaps, became interested in the Vaterland's-Verein.[60]

Before this club on June 14, 1848, he delivered a fiery address on "What Relation do Republican Endeavors Bear to the Kingship?"[61] in which he stated that "the aim of our Republican efforts: our efforts for the good of all make for treating the so-called attainments of the immediate past not as a goal in themselves, but as a beginning."[62] He wished to see the extinction of aristocracy and the First Chamber. Since the Folk is to be but one, there could and should be only one House of the people's deputies. Each person should be allowed to vote. Especially the poorer classes should have a share in making the laws to protect them from poverty and need. The root of all the misery in the social state is money. Therefore, if the human race is to be fully emancipated, it cannot rely upon money for its maintenance. "When arrived at the complete rebirth of man's society, then we must march toward the highest tasks of civilization - its activation and its spread." Through colonization of new lands, German culture would touch all other nations.

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60. Wagner states that his participation in this union was dictated by artistic motives wholly.

Wagner, My Life, vol. I, p. 441.

61. This was published as a supplement to a short-lived news - paper, the Dresdener Auzeiger, of June 16, 1848.

62. Quotations from this speech found in Richard Wagner, Prose Works, vol. IV. translated by W. A. Ellis, London, 1895, pp.136-144

The king would be asked to be the first Republican of all. "Monarchy, i. e., the rule of one, is a lie," for the King should belong with all his thoughts, feelings, and actions to the affairs of the Folk, "But we, the people of Saxony, are Republicans. Let this prince, the noblest King declare Saxony a free state." At the head of the Free State (the republic) the hereditary King will be, in the noblest meaning of his title "Furst," the First of the Folk, the Freest of the Free!" Such was the momentous speech which Wagner made in his eagerness for reform. It is a curious piece, very idealistic, very radical, and very theatrical.

In 1849, when the Dresden theatre was being threatened with the withdrawal of its subsidy from the government, Wagner drew up his plan for the reorganization of the theatre, in which he recommended the establishment of a National Theatre, to be managed for art's sake and not as a commercial proposition. He enumerated and set down the various officers and people to be employed and the salary each should make. He proposed the establishment of branch-theatres whose repertoires should be selected by a committee of the theatre. In such a way, the people would see better plays and better performances. There should be a school for training artists and a union of musicians. In this whole work, Wagner is no longer a visionary, but a practical, common-sense, far-sighted man, who realizes that the state of art in Germany has reached such a point that complete re-organization of theatrical and musical institutions is necessary. In this essay he is conspiciously forgetful of his own interests, and is no longer Richard Wagner, the great

leader in the revival of culture, but a very earnest speaker who feels that action is necessary if Germany is going to survive culturally.

Unfortunately, his appeal for reform was unnoticed. The authorities having charge of the theatre ignored him; his friends were revolutionists, - a new government might bring about a new civilization. In February, 1849, he wrote for Rockel's journal, Volks-Blatter, his article on "Man and Established Society," in which he writes that man's battle with existing society is inevitable. "This fight is the holiest, the sublimest ever fought, for it is the war of consciousness with chance, of mind with mindlessness, morality with evil, of strength against weakness; it is the fight for our destiny, our right, our happiness."[63] A second essay, "The Revolution," is a dynamic, passionate cry of praise:

"The old world is crumbling, a new will rise therefrom; for the lofty goddess Revolution comes rustling on the wings of storm, her stately head ringed round with lightnings, a sword in her right hand, a torch in her left, her eye so stern, so punitive, so cold; and yet what warmth of purest love, what wealth of happiness streams forth toward him who dares to look with steadfast gaze into that eye! Those who have never known joy listen in rapt silence to the rustle of the rising storm, which fills their ears with Revolution's greeting: I am the e'er-rejuvenating, ever-fashioning Life, where I am not, is Death! I am the dream, the balm, the hope of sufferers! I come to you, to break all fetters that

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63. Wagner, Prose Works, vol. VIII. p. 230.

that oppress you, to redeem you from the arms of Death and pour young Life through all your veins. Whatever stands, must fall: such is the everlasting law of Nature, such the condition of Life, and I, the eternal destroyer, fulfill the law and fashion ever-youthful life."[64]

On the first of May, 1849, the Chamber of Deputies in Saxony was dissolved. On the third, the uprising began, when the Communal Guard attacked the Arsenal and the Royal Palace. Barricades were thrown up in the streets; and, although there was not much fighting, everyone feared the worst. On the fourth of May, the King fled with his court; Dresden was in the hands of a Provisional Government, at the head of which was Rockel.

Wagner, carried away by all the excitement, had printed several placards bearing the words "Seid Ihr mit uns gegen fremde Truppen? (Are you on our side against the foreign troops?)" These were fixed on those barricades which he thought would be the first to be attacked, and were intended to bring the Saxon troops to a halt if they were commanded to attack the revolutionaries. However, in all the confusion they were unnoticed.[65] To get a better view of the whole procedure, Wagner spent the night of the sixth of May in the Kreug Tower, overlooking the public square, across from the Town Hall. On Sunday, the seventh, the opera house was burned. The rumor spread that Wagner had set it on fire. Realizing

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64. Ibid, Vol. VIII, pp. 232-238.

65. Wagner, My Life, Vol. I, p. 478.

his predicament, he left for Chemnitz to seek shelter in his sister Clara's home. But his relatives were aware that the consequences from protecting a revolutionary would be more than serious. So, a few days later, Wagner, under an assumed name, fled to Weimar to his friend, Liszt. The discovery of his actual participation in the Revolution and of his association with Rockel resulted in a warrant for his arrest. Naturally this made his position in Weimar still more precarious. So, on May 28th, he crossed into Switzerland and into exile from which he was not to return for thirteen years.

After the completion of the scare of Lohengrin, March 1848, Wagner wrote no music until 1852, when he resumed work on Der Ring.[66] After a short visit to Paris, June 1849, he returned to Switzerland, where, during the next three years, he wrote his three famous prose-works - "Art and Revolution," "Art-Work of the Future" and "Opera and Drama."

It is not remarkable that Wagner became wholly absorbed in theoretical writing and stopped musical composition. The fermentation of events for at least three unhappy years inevitably caused a distinct shift in his interests. He was more acutely aware of the superficiality and the arrogance of the upper classes, although he probably measured a whole class to a great extent by his contact with Luttichau. In his opinion, the government was short-sighted since there was no official interest in the development of theatres and provision for the

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66. In the summer of 1848, he had conceived the idea for the Nibelung cycle, but had set it aside during the following troubled years.

improvement of those which did exist. He thought the standards of society entirely distorted, for there was by far too great emphasis on money. His friends, Rockel and Bakunin,[67] were ardent revolutionists. Lastly, he, Richard Wagner, had been utterly neglected. Such were his thoughts. Naturally, he could not readily dispose of the plans and ideas which had been in his mind for so long a time. Therefore, he set them down.

An examination of his writings reveals their dual significance, although in them Wagner shows that he is essentially an artistic rather than a political revolutionary. In his earlier political pamphlets,[68] he seems to be sincerely interested in the State. But one is inclined to think that he had few reasoned convictions, for he writes in too hysterical a manner to be very convincing. He seems to be merely intoxicated with the desire to get results quickly. His conception of the "Folk" as the savior of civilization is a natural application of his democratic tendencies to this ideal. But his faith in the ability and response of which he believes the "Folk" capable is rather blind. Seemingly, he

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67. Mikhail Bakunin, 1814-1876, Russian anarchist, was arrested and condemned to death for his violent participation in the Dresden uprising. His revolutionary principles are most destructive. He rejected all forms of religion or authority, believing that the free man was the man obeying only the laws of nature. Encyclopedia Brittanica, vol. III, p. 231.

68. "Republic and Monarchy," "The Revolution," and Man and Established Society."

does not take into account the real nature of men. The "Folk" is one glorious brotherhood, sharing all things commonly, educating the world and uplifting degenerate art. Such an ideal places great responsibility upon a very cosmopolitan nation!

Wagner's conception of a republic with an hereditary ruler, a King who is the "First of the People," is rather contradictory. In this, he has failed again in appreciating human nature, painting a picture of an utterly unselfish Prince whose whole life will be concentrated in cooperating with his people, his comrades, now, and who gives all of his attention to the well-being of the group.

Evidently, Wagner is unaware that his own maladjustment in society is due chiefly to his egotism, and it is a pity that, although he believes in altruism for the members of the new State, he cannot take stock of himself and reform himself as well as his fellow-countrymen.

He is acutely aware of the fact that money is a source of evil. Accordingly he proposes to dispense with it. Certainly one of the main reasons for the revolutions, not only in Germany, but all over Europe, was economic trouble. But one is inclined to think that Wagner is viewing a problem through his own eyes and, in the guise of a social-minded patriot, is giving vent to his personal, selfish hatred.

Thus it is hard to consider Wagner as a political theorist. Like him, many of the writers of that time were extreme idealists. He can be excused to a certain extent

for that weakness. His impractical aspirations cannot be taken as sound or a result of logical principles. They must be discredited accordingly. The basic criticism of Wagner concerns him as a man, not a theorist. If he had made any attempt to reconcile his own way of living and his own personality with his ideals we might be more tolerant. We cannot put much faith in abstract principle, which is not upheld to some degree by actual practice.

## III. Wagner as Revolutionist in Art.

The exile from Dresden had cut Wagner off from the musical world which he had hoped to reform. The Revolution had swept from him his position, a permanent income, and the prestige which might have enabled him to command attention. All these were gone, but not his enthusiasm. Wagner can be justly criticized for his hysterical participation in the actual Revolution of May. It was just a momentary, thoughtless action which resulted most disastrously. But his sympathy with revolution, his recognition of the expediency and necessity for change, cannot be overlooked, since he placed such emphasis on the artistic benefit which would result.

Feeling the necessity of expressing himself in some definite way, he turned to writing. In the years spent in Switzerland following his exile, he wrote out his theories, hoping to influence the German nation in making them see the real necessity and value of reform. All his antagonism towards conditions, artistic, political, and social, is revealed in his three essays, "Art and Revolution, "Art-work of the Future," and Opera and Drama. He is not a destructive critic always. His constructive ideas and ideals reveal his sincerity and earnest interest.

The object of the first essay, "Art and Revolution," was to re-instate art in the world of his day and to discover the relations between art and the state, or, as Wagner writes,

"Our object will naturally be to discover the meaning of Art as a factor in the life of the State, and to make ourselves acquainted with it as a social product."[1] He says that with the Greeks, the perfect work of art, the Drama, was the nation itself, the expression of a free and beautiful public life. With the dissolution of the Athenian state came the downfall of Tragedy. Since that time, two thousand years ago, Philosophy, not Art, has been the supreme guide in the lives of men. In the Roman state, the rich and poor alike were slaves, miserable, degraded, and completely corrupt. Such a condition could never bring forth art, for art is pleasure in itself, in existence and in community. Then came Christianity which is neither Art, nor ever capable of bringing forth from itself the true and living Art." The Greek was free, living openly and enjoying the world and his friends; the Christian shut himself away into his cloister, unable to create anything truly artistic because to be true to his faith he could only derive his inspiration from abstract thought and not from the world of the senses. Hence, the art of Christian Europe was incurably and irreconcilably split between the force of conscience and the instinct of life, between the ideal and the reality. Only when the enthusiasm for Christianity had waned, and the Church had openly revealed herself in her real light as a temporal ruler, only then did the Renaissance of Art come, seeking guidance

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1. Richard Wagner, "Art and Revolution," Prose Works, vol. 1. translated by William Ashton Ellis, London, 1900, p. 31.

from the pagan art of Greece. In the days of Louis XIV, worldly dominion protected art.

In the present, (in Wagner's day), art is in a far worse condition - she has sold herself, body and soul, to Commerce. "The true essence of our art is Industry; its ethical aim, the gaining of gold; its aesthetic purpose, the entertainment of those whose time hangs heavily on their hands." The stage materializes the ruling spirit of social life, just as the Greek stage reflected the spirit of life in Athens. But it is the representation of soulless and hollow affairs and human relations. The Drama is no longer the one supreme creation of man's mind; the theatre is merely the convenient locale for the exhibition of heterogeneous art-wares. The weakness of the Drama is apparent, since it is divided into two opposing orders - the play and the opera. The play can never express any deep passion or have any great moral import. It is nothing but intrigue. Likewise, the opera can never really accomplish the lofty purpose of Drama. It is an incoherent mixture of sensuous impressions, vocal, scenic and instrumental. Audiences ask only for distraction and amusement. Artists have only the acquisition of wealth and fame as incentives for performance or creation.

"The public art of the Greeks, epitomized in the Tragedy, was the expression of the deepest and noblest principles of the people's consciousness"; at present, man's deepest and noblest consciousness expresses itself not in the

stage, but in denunciation of it. The whole populace witnessed the performances on the Greek stage; only the wealthy classes attend modern stage productions. What was Art for the Greeks has become mere handicraft. The Greek, however, lived in a free, ennobling life since he was relieved of manual labor by slaves. Unfortunately, man has not done away with slavery. The slave has not become a freeman, but the freeman, a slave. The greed for gold, the enslaving master, is our curse. Gold is the only means by which a man can obtain relative freedom, and all, even the artist, are now intent upon gaining wealth.

Yet Art is in its essence the same, with the difference that, with the Greeks it lived in the public conscience whereas today it lives only in the private mind. Thus Greek art, since it was a worthy expression of the public conscience, was conservative. At present, true art is revolutionary, because it is opposed to the ruling communal spirit. Only a great revolution, "not slavish restoration", can bring back the highest Art-Work, can reunite the separate arts which arose from disintegration of the Greek Drama. This revaluation can be accomplished through Nature, which man has crushed. Culture has destroyed itself; and so the artificial must be overcome by Nature. We must be born again as free men, not slaves. We must attain the free dignity of manhood. "From the Greeks we learned that Beauty and Strength, as attributes of public life, can alone prove lasting blessings when they are the

common gifts of all mankind. Revolution will give Strength to the new man, Art his Beauty." When man knows at last that he is free and no longer has to struggle for existence, his best energy will assert itself as pure artistic impulse. Industry will no longer make him serve, but will serve him, leaving him leisure for the pursuit of Beauty. All individual impulses will become artistic and will be focused in the Drama, "the feast of man's joy."

Industrialism has debased all activity and has particularly dominated the theatre. When the theatre is freed from commercial purposes, i. e., when the public has free access to all performances and the state provides for the payment of all artists and productions, then will Art, true and noble, flourish. In its expression of the finest and the best, it will reveal a new world and a new humanity.

In "Art and Revolution," Wagner is concerned chiefly with the social and political means by which he may achieve a realization of his artistic ideal.

Wagner gives fuller and more definite expression to his artistic hopes in the second prose tract, "The Art-work of the Future." This shows in detail his previously stated views and contains the same elements - emphasis on "the Natural Man," "The united Manhood," the subservience of art to Luxury and commercialism, and the shallowness of art in his day. Finally, in elaborate explanations, he shows

how the new art-work will be found and of what elements it shall be composed.

The basis of his theory is the necessity of having a new, free humanity for the sake of a new art. "Man will never be that which he can and should be, until his life is a true mirror of nature, a conscious following of the only real necessity, the inner natural necessity, and is no longer held in subjugation to an outer artificial, unnecessary, arbitrary power. Then, for the first time, Man will become a living man; whereas till now he has merely existed, dictated to by this Religion, Nationality, or State. In like manner will Art not be the thing she can and should be, until she is or can be the true, conscious image and exponent of the real man, and of man's genuine, nature-bidden life; until she therefore need no longer borrow the conditions of her being from the errors, perversities, and unnatural distortions of our modern life."[2] The vital force, whose procedure will be governed by Nature and Necessity, and from which alone true Art can come, is the Folk, "the epitome of all those men who feel a common and collective Want." Those opposing the Folk feel no Want. Their need is only artificial and is gratified by luxury. This need of luxury is insatiable and unnatural, but it is sovereign of the world.

The artist realizes that his thought can only gain redemption in a "physically-present art-work," one which is based on actual life and real emotions. "The great united

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2. Ibid., vol. I. p. 71.

art-work, using each branch of Art as a means to the great end - the unconditioned, absolute portrayal of perfected human nature - can be the instinctive and associate product not of one or two lonely spirits, but of the united Manhood of the Future." The Art of Greece owed its greatness to the joint activity of all its producers, i. e. the members of the community. In such a way, Wagner feels that men must unite to make the art of the future the expression of universal human nature.

The outer man expresses himself to the eye, and the inner man to the ear. But he cannot express his inner nature adequately without vocal Tone, which "is the immediate utterance" of deep feeling and emotion within the heart. When the direct expression of vocal tone finds its limits of conveying distinctly and clearly the separate feelings, then Speech comes to its aid. The whole man is the man of intellect (speech), heart (tone), and body (gesture). Thus the three arts, Poetry, Tone and Dance, representing the three chief artistic faculties of the entire Man, have united to form the perfect art-work, the Drama. Separately they can express only a part of man's thought and emotion; together they express the entire being, they become universal and not merely individual.

Rhythm binds the arts of Dance and Tone, and without it, there would be no art of Dance, and none of Tone. Music both unites and separates Dance and Poetry. "In rhythm and in melody both Dance and Poetry regain their true essence, materialized and endlessly enhanced and beautified. Music has advanced into the realm of universal art, and fulfilled

what neither of the other severed arts had skill to do. She attained the force of the most heroic, most loveworthy self-sacrifice, - of mastering, may, of renouncing her own self to reach out to her sisters the hand of rescue. This redemption of Music from out of her own peculiar element into the real of universal art is achieved in the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven. Poetry cannot create the genuine art-work because it cannot satisfy the many desires of the listener. It must be written to be acted, not alone to be read, since the eye, as well as the ear, must be satisfied. Shakespeare, like Beethoven, has proved himself an "Artist of the Future" through creating universal, not individual, works of art. "Only when these two Prometheus' - Shakespeare and Beethoven - shall reach out hands to one another; where the marble creations of Phidias shall besstir themselves in flesh and blood; where the egoist's painted counterfeit of nature shall stretch its ample breadths on the warm life-blown framework of the Future State - there first, in the fellow-artists, will the Poet also find redemption."

The Opera of the past has been no real union of the arts, but simply "a mutual compact of the egoism of the three related arts - Dance, Tone, and Word, contracting with each other for supremacy for a given length of time. Only from a like and common impulse of all three sister arts can their redemption into the true Art-Work become a possibility. Only when the ruling religion of Egoism, which has split the entire domain of art into crippled, self-seeking art tendencies and art-vanities, shall have been mercilessly dislodged and torn up root and branch from every moment of the life of man, can there

be a new Artwork of the future, a new religion, a new Society. The plastic arts - Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting - further co-operate to convey a true picture of Nature in the dramatic art-work. But this art-work is conceivable only when it proceeds from a common urge of every art towards the most direct appeal to a common public. In it each separate art will attain its first complete appraisement, yet united with the other arts will form the Drama - the mirror of Life and Understanding. The Drama, the complete and only genuine art-work, will owe its being to the Folk, the Artist of the Future.

In the longest and most detailed of his essays, Opera and Drama, Wagner gives his most valuable opinion on this musico-aesthetic question of the drama. The first part of the work deals with operatic music. He writes that the musical basis of the Opera is the aria, originally derived from the folk-song in which poetry and music were inextricably woven together in a single unit. It was rendered by the art-singer merely to exhibit his vocal dexterity. The singer became the object of the composer's aim - all was sacrificed for his virtuosity. The poet, consequently, was forced to shape his contributions in deference to the artist. "The Poet's duty was to confine himself to dramatic sketches of one settled pattern, devoid of color and affording ample elbow-room to the musician for his experiments. Mere stereotyped rhetorical phrases were the prime requirement from the poet, for on this soil alone could the musician gain room for the expansion that he needed, but which was yet in truth entirely undramatic. His drama was a

mere make-believe of the real Drama. The Musician thus had to write into his music not only the expression of the Drama, but its content as well."[3]

Wagner continues, Rossini, entirely unconcerned with form, turned his whole attention to the composition of Melody - which was just melody and nothing else, which delighted only the senses. He wrote for the public. With Rossini, the life-history of the opera came to an end. Since then, the Opera - writer has been occupied solely with inventing pleasing melody.

Reaction against Rossini came with Weber's use of German Folk-tunes in his operas. Weberian melody is of broad and general emotional expression, has no adornment, and speaks sincerely and directly to the hearts of men, no matter what their nationality. In this true and simple melody, he came nearer the dramatic expression in giving the purely-human aspect a prominent place. But Weber likewise made melody the actual factor of his opera, though it was far more noble than the sensual, frivolous melody of the Italian composer. Wagner feels that his efforts failed and thus illustrate the fact that Music is unable in herself to become the genuine Drama. Necessarily, Music must be taken up <u>into</u> the drama. Other composers, French and German, followed in Weber's train in their search for folk-melodies. "The Folk-element has ever been the fruitful fount of Art, so long as it was able to lift itself by natural channels into art-work." But the folk-element introduced into opera did not make it an art-work. The folk-tunes degenerated

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3. <u>Ibid</u>, vol. II. pp. 32-33.

into the aria, and the Folk itself became the Mass, the chorus. Folk-legends lost their dramatic possibilities and natural beauty when the composer exalted the nationalistic side, the State.

Up to Wagner's day, every real and determinant influence upon opera had issued from the domain of Absolute Music, never from that of poetry, nor from the co-operation of both. After Rossini, vocal melody was varied by the introduction of instrumental melody. But this was unsatisfactory, since instrumental melody, also, was incapable of expressing the purely-human in the form of definite, individual feelings. With the modern Italian and French opera, the whole of operatic art, singers, melody, action and words is mechanical. The true essence of the opera is nothing but Effect. It has become a mere article of fashion. "Necessarily then, Drama, the end of expression, cannot be used as a means to that end, but Music must surrender to the poet and, as a means, aid in the achievement of the end - true Drama!" The only salvation for music lies in sensible co-operation with the poet.

The second section of Opera and Drama deals with the "Play and the Nature of Dramatic Poetry." The literary poem, Wagner says, appealing to the imagination and not the senses, is an artificial art. All the separate arts address themselves to the force of imagination alone. "They merely suggest: an actual representation to them would be possible only could they parley with the universality of man's artistic receptivity, could they address his entire sentient organism, and not his imagination alone; forthe true Art-work can only be engendered

by an advance from imagination into actuality, i. e. physicality." One veritable Art, not the arts, should exist. Modern Drama is wrongly considered a branch of literature, although it is true that it is not complete drama.

Hereupon, Wagner goes into a detailed discussion of the modern drama. He deals with Romance and Greek tragedy, the two-fold origin of the Drama, between which extremes the whole of dramatic literature sways undecidedly. The romance did not portray the complete man, that is, it showed the outer man, but did not adequately reveal his inner thoughts and emotions. "The mastery of the outward stuff to show the inner view of the essence of that stuff could only be brought to a successful issue by setting the subject itself before the senses in all the persuasiveness of actuality - in the Drama. Shakespeare condensed the narrative romance into the Drama by making it suitable for stage performance. The limitations of scenery was the only appeal left to Phantasy, since the actors and word-content appealed directly to the senses and fulfilled the requisites of actuality."

Wagner then takes up French and German dramatic art, which have swung on the one hand ~~and~~ between the romances and history and on the other, the perfect form of the Greek drama. "We have no Drama, and can have no Drama. In Modern Drama, only the most elaborate devices of literary mechanism produce poetry. With this Drama, true Music can have nothing to do."

In two ways man is a poet; in his beholding and in his imparting. "His natural poetic gift is the faculty of condensing into an inner image the phenomena presented to his

senses from the outside, his artistic gift, that of projecting this image outwards. The genuine artwork of Drama, the Greek tragedy, was based upon the Myth - the exposition of the Folk as the essence and truth of natural phenomena." Greek tragedy is the artistic embodiment of the spirit and content of Greek Myth. As in this Myth, the widest-ranging phenomena were compressed into closer and ever closer shape, so the Drama took this shape and re-presented it in the closest, most compressed of forms. The view-in-common of the essence of things, which in Myth had condensed itself from a view of Nature to a view of men and morals, here appeal in its most distinct, most pregnant form to the most universal receptive-force of Man; and thus steps, as Art Work, from Phantasy into reality."

The German myth was like the Greek, in its religious essence and intuitions. But Christianity entirely changed its nature, ~~in~~laid its hands upon it and the Romance of the Middle Ages. "The Drama goes from within outwards; the Romance from without inwards. In the Drama, a sinewy and fully self-developed individuality enriches its surroundings; in the Romance, the surrounding feeds the desires of an empty individuality. Thus the Drama lays bare the organism of mankind in that it shows the individuality as the essence of the species; whereas the Romance shows us the mechanism of history, according to which the species becomes the essence of individuality. The Drama gives us the man; the Romance explains to us the citizen; the one shows us the fulness of human nature, the other apologizes for its penury on plea of the State. The

Drama, then, shapes from innermost necessity, the Romance from outer constraint." The poet's art has turned to politics, and the true poet cannot come to light again until there is no more politics.

The Myth is true for all time, its content inexhaustible throughout the ages. In the Myth we see "an intelligible picture of the whole history of mankind, from the beginnings of Society to the inevitable downfall of the state." The Political State lives solely on the vices of society; it destroys free individuality. Its essence is caprice, whereas the essence of the free Individuality is necessity. To bring again the free, self-determining Individual, the State must be annulled. The State, dogmatic, fettering might that it is, has assumed the education of an individual's character, has forced its morale upon him, and has taken away the instinctiveness of his views. It could not curb freedom of thought, however. The poet by necessity could not portray the free man, but could only imagine him; he could not represent him for Feeling, but could only suggest him to Thought. Drama, therefore, has been an appeal to the Understanding and to the Imagination and not to the Feeling. "The return from Understanding to Feeling will be the march of the Drama of the Future, in so far as we shall advance from the thought-out individuality to the genuine individuality." With the destruction of the State, the free, the purely-human individual will proclaim himself. The Drama will express and delineate the free individual, appealing directly to the senses, "by emotionalising the intellect." True drama will strive to grasp the organic unity of life

through feeling. This will be inspired and accomplished by the Myth.

By Word-speech, the poet can select his material, but cannot make it a reality. Only Tone-Speech can spontaneously express the inner Feeling. In Word-Speech (language) "we can only impart our emotions to the Understanding, but not to the implicitly understanding Feeling. It was natural, therefore, that Feeling should have sought a refuge from absolute intelledtual-speech by fleeing to absolute tone-speech music."

The poet cannot realize his aim through Word-speech, since he cannot address Feeling. He cannot direct all his attention to the Understanding, for he must supplement it by Music, appealing to Feeling. The true drama must unite the two - speech or Understanding with tone, or Feeling, in order to give expression to the free individual, the purely human.

In attempt to convey his message to Feeling, the poet has tried to tune the organ of Understanding - Word-Speech - by rhyme and melody. Up to this time, he has done nothing toward reaching the Feeling. He has only forced the unsympathetic superficial attention of the ear and has merely transferred thought to thought, understanding to understanding.

Word-speech and Melody have been divorced so long that they are no longer connected with each other. When the two have been applied to each other, Melody has destroyed the rhythm of the word-verse, drowned its end-rhyme, disfigured the accents of the words, and confused their meaning. "When Melody thus esubordinated herself, then she not only exposed the lie and ugliness of verse's sensuous Setting, together with the

stultification of its Content but she robbed herself of all power of showing herself in sensuous beauty and raising the verse's Content to an Enthralling movement of Feeling." The Poet must so "employ the speaking accent as the only measure-giving movement for his verse, that in its return it will establish a wholesome rhythm, as necessary to the verse itself as to the melody." As we have taken away from the Drama all accidental, petty action, and taken from the Content all that savored of the State or of History, in order to reach the purely-human, so we have to take away from the verbal expression all that springs from and answers to the Feeling so that the purely-human core alone shall remain. We thus arrive at the natural basis of Rhythm in the spoken verse, as displayed in the liftings and lowerings of the accent, which in turn can only come to light through its intensification in the rhythm of music."

Speech is a defunct organism which only the Poet can bring to life again by breathing into it Music. The Folk preserves the roots of words; the essence of these roots is the vowel, which finds full enunciation in Musical Tone; while the consonants convert the open sound from a movement of general expression into a particular one. Hitherto, poet and musician have addressed but half the man. The poet turned to his eye alone, the musician, to his ear. The musician will show the kinship of the vowel sounds through giving them full emotional value by means of Musical Tone. Here the Word-Poet stops, and the Tone-Poet begins. The Melody of the Tone-Poet is "the redemption of his endlessly conditioned thought into a deep-

felt consciousness of the highest emotional freedom."

Modulation can bring about a full expression of feeling which the Stabreim (alliterative verse) can only partially do. A stabreimed verse of one expressed Emotion would be kept in one key by the musician. When it combines two opposite emotions, the musician would modulate according to the change in Feeling.

In the Drama of the Future, only those characters who exert at all times a decisive influence upon the plot may remain. The chorus merely supporting the melody in increasing the harmonic value of sound, must disappear. Neither the Chorous nor the main characters are to be used by the poet as a symphonic body of musical tone for bringing out the harmonic stipulations of the Melody. But the Orchestra can realize the poet's aim. It can make the harmony plain and can characterize the Melody as no symphonic vocal-mass is able to do. Through its instruments the orchestra has in its power the faculty of the "unspeakable," i. e., that which the voice the organ of understanding cannot express. It does this in three ways - by its alliance with Gesture (having rhythm in common), by recalling a past emotion of which the singer only is thinking, and by giving a foreboding of emotion to follow.[4] The orchestra is the moving matrix of the Music, which provides the uniting bond of all Expression.

Unity of artistic form has to be the emotion of a united Content, couched in an artistic Expression, through which it

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4. Through the leit motif.

can announce itself entirely to the Feeling. This entire rousing of the Feeling was impossible to the Word-Poet through Word-speech. He could only address the Understanding. Therefore, he must join the Tone-Poet, who through vocal and orchestral appeals to the Feeling. The orchestra, with its faculty of recalling and predicting, is the means for preserving unity of expression. It must be governed, however, entirely by the poetic rather than the musical aim and must direct the feelings of the audience solely to the dramatis personae. "The melodic moments of the orchestra will necessarily have come only from the weightiest motives of the drama." In this way, Musical and poetic Form will be bound together addressing Understanding and Feeling. "The genuine Drama is an organic Be-ing and Becom-ing."

The musician and poet must join in order to generate the real Drama. Every moment of the Musician's expression must contain the Poetic aim. Likewise, the Poet "can only measure the height of poetry to which his aim has reached by the completeness with which it can be realized in the musical expression. What is not worth being sung is not worth the poet's pains of telling."

Wagner writes that the success of the true Drama depends upon the public. This public must want, must feel the need of such an art-work and must not seek mere diversion. The "begetter" of the Art-work of the Future, the Artist of the Present, has the power of seeing before him a new world, in which the real man, the purely-human being, lives. The Artist sees the Folk as the owner of the future.

In review of these three works, "Art and Revolution," "The Artwork of the Future" and Opera and Drama, certain theories may be regarded as fundamental in considering Wagner, the revolutionist and the romanticist. His basic belief is that real art is the pure and noble expression of a free community. This art will not be produced until we have a new, redeemed humanity. Free, self-determining men who have been relieved of the drudgery of manual labor and who are thus independent of industrial and material worries will find outlet for their energies in the artistic expression of their well-being.

The existing States are "the most unnatural union of men, called into existence by mere external caprice, i. e., dynastic interests. They yoke together a certain number of men for once and all, in the furtherance of an aim which either never answered to a need they shared in common, or, from the change of time and circumstance, is certainly no longer common to them now."[5] The modern state is wholly tyrannical, materialistic, and enslaving. There is no freedom without money, and the effort to accumulate wealth makes man a slave.

Wagner is obviously attacking his countrymen for their worldliness, because he feels his own poverty so acutely. They have all they desire; he is a poor wanderer, friendless, without a position or an income, and alone in the world. As his self-pity increases, so his resentment against the wealthy

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5. "Art-Work of the Future," Wagner, op. cit. v.I, p. 203.

classes and the state rises. He says that only a revolution can bring change and a return to the perfect life. His zeal carries him beyond reason. His idealism has no practicality and hence no weight, since it seems impossible to conceive of a Folk, who would not be anxious for worldly possessions and who would be so genuinely interested in the aesthetic rather than the material.[6]

Wagner's interest in the classic period of Greece is characteristically romantic and is definitely influential upon his ideas of the Folk and Art. "His conception of the free Greek" - a Mythical being evolved by Wagner out of his own inner consciousness expressed his inner and real nature in the highest form of art, the Drama. The whole populace attended the productions of the Greek tragedy. In Germany of Wagner's day, the theatre was only a place of amusement, where the wealthy went to be distracted. As the Greek life was fine, pure, free, and sincere, so was their art. As the German State and the German people are corrupt, insincere in their relations and shallow, so istheir art, which is split into various branches and executed (not

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6. It is interesting to watch the change which comes over Wagner, when, in later years after he had been received and honored by King Ludwig II and had all possible wants satisfied, he ceases to attack wealth; for he, himself, is now comfortable. His luxurious tastes knew no limit. He had to have rich furnishings and elegant surroundings "in order to write his music."

Newman, Wagner as Man and Artist, pp. 131-134.

7. Ibid., p. 183.

inspired) for fame or money. The revolution will bring a new people, a new art, and the true drama! The state will be abolished. Wagner never considers under what sort of government or contract men shall live harmoniously. The desire for self-expression and the love of the beautiful and artistic will unite the Folk. Certainly, Wagner's romantic idealism is only too obvious here. His imagination leads him to beautiful dreams. His own desire for self-expression and recognition prompts his theory. But how happy he would be or how well he would adjust himself in the community of the future, one cannot be reasonably sure.

In the drama, Wagner conceives of the union of all the arts. He gives greater emphasis to music and poetry and gesture than to sculpture, painting and architecture, probably because of more interest and knowledge of the first three. In the drama, he states, each individual art, by co-operation with the others, will receive its fullest recognition and highest fulfillment. In his own Music-dramas, however, he fails in his own theory. More and more, we realize that the musical content far surpasses the literary text.[8] Wagner believes that interpretation of the poetic content through music, the combination of Word-speech and Tone-speech, the strengthening of the Intellectural by the Emotional, is the ideal to be sought and found in the drama. Since he attempts

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8. The artistic element-stage and scenery - naturally have no value in themselves but serve as a background for the drama. Wagner believes that interpretation of the poetic content

to achieve this in his own work, he believes that this relationship of poetry and Music is the only legitimate and and acceptable one. One without the other is unconvincing, unreal and untruthful. His egotism again asserts itself. But in analysis of his works, he reveals himself hardly a poet at all: "he was simply a writer of words for music-words to which the music had to add emotional beauty that the genuine poet would have conveyed by speech alone."[9]

To the orchestra, Wagner assigns particular prominence. Taking themes from the highest dramatic moments of the spectacle or using them to represent persons or the feelings of those persons, the orchestra has the power of recalling past emotions or ideas, to suggest future action or emotion, or in other ways to combine with gesture. This recalling or foretelling of emotion, action, or characters is the function of the melody which the orchestra employs. It is the leit-motif of Wagner, which is such a definite contribution to the musical drama. It strengthens it by unifying the music, the gesture, and the literary content. Wagner's adept and ingenious handling of several motives at once is evidence not only of his great contrapuntal skill, but of his ability to unite "Understanding" and "Feeling" in a hitherto unparalleled way.

Another romantic interest which appears in his theories and also in his musical works is his concern with the Myth. The folk-legend exemplifies the purely-human and shows the natural emotions and thoughts common to all men, whether the

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9. Ibid., p. 212.

narrative deals with mortals or gods.

Wagner's scathing criticism of the opera is based on his belief that the opera-writers have completely distorted ~~the simple~~ the simple folk-tunes, folk dances, and folk-stories and submerged them in the artificial arias, libretto, and ballet. He is justified to a great extent in his attack on the sensuous appeal in the melody of Rossinian and French opera. Yet often in his own work, the sensuous element is overpowering, frequently most unpleasant.[10] However, his expression of feeling, which he emphasizes so strongly in his theoretical writing, cannot be decried. It is purposely done; and in following his aesthetic ideal, he is sincere and earnest.

His conception of a "dynamic" drama, i. e., an ever-growing art-work, is idealistic, to be sure, but very revolutionary. The union of all the arts, the union of all thought and emotion, the representation of the "purely-human," the portrayal of the unreal and the fantastic as the real and the actual, the presentation of the old as the new - these are his aims in drama. For him, the drama was to show mankind and the world, fundamentally the same and yet forever progressing and revealing new aspects. He has fulfilled his ideal in many ways. Even the most familiar listener probably will find something new in the old material. Truly, Wagner's work may be called a "Be-ing and a "Becom-ing."[11]

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10. The "Venusberg Music" from Tannhauser, Act I.

11. "Opera and Drama, Wagner, op. cit. v. II, p. 350.

The composition of Der Ring des Nibelungen, was interrupted time and time again. In the summer of 1848, Wagner made a sketch for a drama, "The Nibelungen Myth." At first he intended to write a three-act drama, entitled "Siegfried's Death." But the Revolution in the following year halted his work. The next three years were occupied chiefly by his theoretical writings. So it was not until 1852 that he resumed his work on the Siegfried legend. The twenty-two years which followed were taken up with the working out of this theme and with the writing and completion of Tristan and Die Meistersinger.

His nationalism reveals itself in the short essay, "The Nibelungen," written in 1848. In this, Wagner deals at length with the folk-myth as opposed to history. He states that history scarcely ever reveals, and then incompletely, material for a judgment of the instinctive motives of the endless conflicts of whole races and nations. In Religion and in the saga, we must seek to find it most convincingly. "Religion and the saga are the pregnant products of the people's insight into the nature of things and men." The Folk sees its essence in the definite personalities which it gives to the gods and the heroes of its religion and saga. To these characters, the people gradually impart their own nature. Therefore, the Folk is thoroughly sincere and truthful in its stories and inventions, whereas the learned historian is unable to understand with mind and heart the subject with which he deals."[12]

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12. The Nibelungen," Wagner, Ibid., vol. VII, pp. 259-298.

Discarding two other subjects, "Jesus of Nazareth" and "Friedrich Barbarossa," which he had considered possible for adaptation to drama, he took up the Siegfried subject and completed the text in 1848. This work which he called "Siegfried's Death" is almost identical with the present Die Gotterdämmerung.[13] But, evidently, he felt that the material was too great for a single opera and that he was inadequate to write the music for it.[14] In 1851, as he was working on his artistic theories, he felt the necessity of having an introduction, "The Young Siegfried." This appeared afterwards as Siegfried, the third drama in the Nibelung series. Soon the advisability of extending these two texts was evident. Die Walkure was written and lastly Das Rheingold as a preface play to the trilogy. The poems were completed in 1852. The next year, Wagner began work on the music, hoping to finish the cycle within three years. The scoring of Das Rheingold was accomplished, January 1854, and that of Die Walkure, April 1856. That same year Siegfried was begun. The work on Tristan and Die Meistersinger, however, came as an interruption; and for nine years Wagner did not touch Der Ring. Even then, the composition of Siegfried was diverted by other works. So it was not until 1871 that he finished the scoring for the third section. Three years later the tetralogy was completed.

Der Ring des Nibelungen with its infinite complications and endless variety of artistic aspects is Wagner's attempt at

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13. Ernest Newman, Stories of Great Operas, New York, 1928, p. 158.

14. Ibid., p. 158.

realizing his artistic theories concerning the Drama, in which all the branches of art are united.

It is impossible and irrelevant to discuss in detail the various sources from which Wagner obtained material for his text. The legend appears in Scandinavian, Icelandic, and German sagas, but is greatly modified and altered by Wagner's imagination. It belongs neither to Northern nor German mythology, but to a special cult which Wagner himself originated with the aid of various folk-stories which he changed and synthesized.[15] The four dramas deal with the curse which the Nebelung Alberich has laid upon the power-giving Ring, which he forged from gold stolen by him from the Rhine-Maidens. The Ring brings disaster to all who possess it. It finally brings about the final destruction of the race of gods, and only comes to an end when the last victim, Brunnhilde, delivers the world from the terrible fate, by returning the Ring to the purifying waters of the Rhine.

Wotan, the mightiest of the gods, is the main figure. Upon him all the action of the tetralogy is concentrated. His will dominates and rules the various characters and episodes. Der Ring is the tragedy of Wotan.[16] He is most conspicuous in the first drama, Das Rheingold; his treaty with the giants for the building Valhalla compels him to seek payment for their work. With the exception of Loge, he is the first to know of Alberich's

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15. Albert Lavignac, The Music Drama of Richard Wagner, New York, 1918, p. 156.

16. H. S. Chamberlain, The Wagnerian Drama, London, 1923, p. 170.

life and destiny are variously reflected in those of his characters.[17] His personal disappointments have enabled him to see much more clearly that one cannot always attain his desires. From what he regarded as his unique position, Wagner tries to show the world that life is a ceaseless conflict betwen personal ambition and the destiny of fate. Through the medium of the stage, he, the pseudo-philosopher, reveals his theories. He looks down upon the world and all its inhabitants, as Wotan, from his eminence, looked down upon the world of gods and its creatures. Wagner transplants the present into the past and interprets thepast in the light of the present and future. He reads into the universally known myth the personal, romantic elements.

Inevitably with the folk-legend come the supernatural and the unreal. In Alberich, the force of evil, in Freia, the spirit of eternal youth, in Fricka, the embodiment of morality, in Fafner, the dragon who inspires fear - in all of these, the elemental characteristics and traits of human nature are personified. In their essence they are "purely-human." In Wagner's use of them, he is not only adhering to his theoretical demands, but with his innate strong dramatic comprehension, he makes them real, alive, and vital. A critic may say that any one can do this successfully. But how much more convincing Wagner makes them can be seen by a consideration, not only of the psychological, dramatic, and literary contents of his work, but also of the artistic and

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17. Chamberlain, op. cit., p. 159.

the musical.

Before him, opera writers had set to music both superior and inferior texts. The inevitable result had been dominance of music over the literary content. As Wagner has pointed out, the poet was overshadowed by the musician. Poetry was adapted to melody, regardless of rhythm, accent, or meaning. Wagner was the sole creator of his music-dramas. Wagner has stamped himself as a revolutionist in practice as well as in theory by composing both text and music for his operas. Though the music of Der Ring is supposedly inspired by the literary text, it is indisputably far superior.

He recognizes the simplicity of his mythological subject and characters. They necessarily must speak simply and directly. In keeping with the old legend and the terseness of the lines, Wagner very appropriately uses the older verse forms which were employed in the Middle Ages by various Teutonic and Scandinavian races - the Stabreim, or alliterative verse.[18] In this form, there is conciseness and ruggedness which is easily carried over into the music. The rhythm and accent caused by alliteration are further aids, since the fundamental stresses must fall concurrently with the musical stresses. But the text of the Nibelung cycle, in spite of Wagner's efforts, is weak and is of little value as literature. Wagner has a feeling for pure poetry but not the ability to compose it; he is simply a versifier who

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18. L. Archier Leroy, Wagner's Music Drama of the Ring, London, 1925, p. 38.

wrote words for music, words sometimes admirably suited for this purpose, sometimes poorly suited.[19]

The dramatic action and the poetic text of Der Ring can not be considered apart from the music. For although Wagner believed that music should be a means toward the end of his drama, he falls into the same lines which previous composers had followed. In his strengthening of the libretto and the action by music and the orchestra, he makes his music the real art-work. His dramatic sensibilities, his intense emotion, his romanticism and his appreciation of tonal and instrumental color are combined in the music. He tells the story through motives, building dramatic and emotional climaxes through his harmony and his orchestration, and expressing the lyricism and the meaning of the poetic line through vocal melody. In many instances, the text fails to show the real conflict which is going on in the minds of the

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19. Newman, Wagner as Man and Artist, p. 296.

The following lines reveal impurity in accent, rhythm, and fall of cadence.

"Dich Mutter lass'ich nicht zieh'n, da des Zauber's machtig
ich bin;
Urwissend stachest du einst der Sorge stachel in Wotan's
wagendes Herz;
Mit Furcht vor schmachvoll feindlichem Ende fullt' ihnde
dein Wissen,
Dass bangen band seinen Muth."

Richard Wagner, Vocal score of Siegfreid, New York, 1904, pp. 254-5.

characters.[20] However, in music, he brings out the thought in such a telling way that the audience is able to grasp the significance of the situation and feel with the character the intensity of the moment. Such is the final solo of Brunnhilde in the last act of Die Gotterdammerung. She sings:

"Oh ihr, der Eide ewige Huter!
Lenkt euren Blick auf mein bluhendes Leid;
Erschaut eure ewige Schuld!
Meine Klage hor', du hehrster Gott!
Durch seine tapferste That dir so tanglich
erwunscht,
Weihtest du den, der sie gewirkt, dem
Fluche dem du verfielest,
Mich musste der Reinste verrathan, dass
wissend wurde ein Weib!
Weiss ich nun was dir frommt?
Alles, Alles, Alles, weiss ich,
Alles ward mir nun frei.
Auch deine Raben hor'ich rauschen,
Mit bang ersehnter Botschaft send' ich
die Beiden nun heim.
Ruhe, ruhe, du Gott!"[21]

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20. Chamberlain, op. cit., p. 188.

21. Wagner, vocal score of Die Gotterdammerung, pp. 324-6.

while Brunnhilde carries her own independent melody, the orchestra denotes the themes of "Walhalla," "Announcement of a New Life," "Curse of the Ring," "Annunciation of Death," and the "Distress of the Gods" and so expands the thought and intensifies the emotion the text.[22]

In accordance with his new dramatic ideas, Wagner developed a new musical form. He revolutionized the treatment of operatic music in composing on a symphonic rather than a Melodic principle. Following Beethoven's example, he used short, plastic motives and wove them into a symphonic network. The leit-motif of Wagner's tetralogy is not only a dramatic, but a symphonic-dramatic instrument.[23] In the operas which he had written before this cycle, he had used the device similar to the later leit-motif. But it had been a much longer theme, for the most part merely labeling a character. Such motives appear in Das Liebesverbot, Rienzi, the Flying Dutchman, Tannhauser, and Lohengrin. They are usually used separately and with no psychological purpose behind them. The leit motif, as it appears in Der Ring, is used to denote a particular character , dramatic event, or significant thought

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22. Titles of themes taken from Ernest Newman, Stories of Great Operas.

In this passage, Wagner has united words and music. But the writer feels that he has gone beyond his original theory and intention in making the music even more expressive than the words.

23. Newman, op. cit., p. 276.

or emotion. It is employed in connection with contemporary action, characters, or situations. It also is used to recall past situations and to foretell the future. The Leit-motiff has a definite intellectual as well as emotional function in the symphonic development of the dramas. Although a theme may arouse an emotion or suggest a mood, it may imply a definite thought or conception. Such is the "Sword" motive, the symbol of noble heroism. This is a distinct contrast to the descriptive motive of the "Rhine," which paints a picture of the smooth-flowing, powerful river.

In his earlier works, Wagner uses motives of considerable length in order to balance the length of the poetic lines. They were vocal in origin, treated simply and directly as existent themes.[24] In Der Ring, the motives are amazingly short and concentrated. The "Adoration of the Gold" motive, and those of "Smithing," the "Dragon," "Distress of the gods," and the "Shout of the Valkyries" are each one measure in length. The "Ring" motive, and those of "Walkalla," "Erda," "Brunnhilde's Slumber," and "Night of the Gods" are two bars in length. Few of them extend beyond four measures. Their connection with the verse indicates the brevity of the lines in Der Ring. Whether Wagner wrote the music subject to and governed by the literary material is questionable. In Opera and Drama, he emphasizes the necessary supremacy of poet over composer. But it is probable that he instinctively wrote the verse for the cycle in such a

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24. Ibid., p. 276.

way that it would not interfere with the musical form.[25]

The difficulty of presenting a cycle of four separate, but evolutionary dramas could be solved by Wagner only by repeating in each division part of the material which had previously appeared. This was to insure an understanding of the developments of that section when produced by itself. This was the only possible solution. Yet it makes the action quite tedious and uninteresting. Through the musical structure, Wagner relieves the numerous repetitions and heightens their significance by the increasing force of the music. In Das Rheingold the orchestra is more or less a support for the singer. It is rarely conspicuous and gives the vocal melody opportunity for independent expression. Gradually it comes into prominence until in Die Gotterdammerung it is the orchestra, not the action, which carries the emotional and dramatic episodes to sweeping climaxes. The words of the singers, if considered separately, have to be and are expressive of the intensity and seriousness of the plot. But through the music the thoughts and emotions which arise in the singer are conveyed to the audience. On the orchestra, then, the real dramatic significance falls.

Instead of the alternating aria and recitative of the Italian and Frenche operas, Wagner composed throughout, with orchestral continuity. There is no pause in the musical structure. With him, the aria of the older operform has become a dramatic narrative song, without embellish-

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25. Ibid., p. 278.

ments to display the singer's virtuosity. The melodic line is intimately connected with the structure and meaning of the words. This is another revolutionary contribution. There is no set pattern which Wagner follows, regulating solos, duets, or larger choral combinations. Each song seems to be a spontaneous, dramatic enunciation, in no way like the bel canto lyric of the Italian opera. The song is used by Wagner only as a full expression of the literary material. Phrases of vocal melody may be used as leit-motifs, later on being taken over as instrumental melody. Such are the "Donner" and the "Adoration of the Gold" motives in Das Rheingold.

The continual use and re-use of the leit-motifs by the orchestra weave a close structure which bind together not only the various scenes of the separate divisions of Der Ring, but the four dramas in a unified whole. By the Preludes to the acts of the various sections there is indication of the action to come or a creation of a mood for the forthcoming action. In these preludes Wagner uses leit-motifs recalling past or predicting future scenes, weaving them in such a way as to give a tone-picture of the action which has gone before the act which is to follow. This tone-painting is due not only to certain definite themes, but even more to the use of the instruments themselves and the harmonic structure of the composition. Wagner's sensitivity to the timbre of the various instruments enables him to create vast and subtly changing effects. In the prelude to Das Rheingold, the motive which characterize the Rhine is given by the double

basses, succeeded by the cellos, elaborated by the violins and carried to a great climax by the whole orchestra with its resilience and great number of instrumental tonal qualities. In the prelude to the second scene, the English horn announces the "Valhalla" motive, in the amplification of which the trombones and trumpets join to create the feeling for stateliness, dignity, and strength associated with the gods and their home.

The harmonic structure of Wagner's music plays a conspicuous part in the dramatic effects which he creates. Modulation, chromaticism, alteration of chords, counterpoint - all contribute in emphasizing the action of the stage. The classic writers of absolute music had "standardized" and set into definite rules the harmony which should be followed. These harmonic laws, based on key relationships, had placed more or less constraining bounds on the creative musician. With the assertion of personal feeling and expression of thought in music, composers necessarily had to expand their work by fuller, freer, more diversified harmony. Wagner, following his own specifications for the musician in Opera and Drama, conditions his harmony according to the melody which has been inspired by the poetry. Horizontal harmony, or Melody, is enriched by vertical harmony, or Chords, through which the emotional content of the melody is expressed. The poet has thus dominated the musician by conditioning the horizontal harmony by verse. But the musician only can elucidate the real meaning of the verse through the vertical harmonic fabric. In the

end, then, he seems to supersede the literary writer.

Although Wagner uses chromatics freely, many of the melodies of Der Ring are built on the diatonic scale and are harmonised simply. Such is the "Rhine" theme, which is based on the tonic chord and is extended through 136 measures, solely on the tonic chord, with a pedal point sustaining the key note of E. flat. Such is the "Walhalla" motive, which is harmonised by the three primary chords of the scale, the tonic, sub-dominant, and dominant. Likewise, the "Sword," the "Ride of the Walkyries," "Brunnhilde's Sleep," and others are built on the first two or three primary chords of the scale. But Wagner does not rely solely upon diatonic harmony. His departure from the diatonic to the chromatic scale occurs when increased richness of intention demands an increased richness and variety of harmony.[26] Through chromatic scale, he extends the circle of key-relationships and hence the breadth and variety of his modulations. The effects produced by seemingly shifting modulations are remarkable and unparalleled by any of his contemporary composers. Wagner was not a revolutionist in harmonic principles, for he did not invent new chords or devices. He simply employed to the best advantage those devices and methods of writing, such as the apporggiatura, altered chords, chords of the ninth, and those built on the second of the scale, the chromatic as well as the diatonic scale, and all the innumerable harmonic figures at the disposal of the composer.

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26. Edwin Evans, Wagner's Teaching by Analogy, London, p. 7.

Wagner's works in "Der Ring" may truly be called "music-dramas." Not only through the texts, but also in the music Wagner achieves his dramatic goal. He is revolutionary in his approach towards the new form, discard- the older operatic method of writing. He is romantic in his use of a mythological subject in his personification of the supernatural, in his emphasis on emotion, and in his delineation of moods through tonal painting.

## IV. Conclusion.

We cannot estimate fairly the influence which Wagner has had on succeeding generations. Like Bach and like Beethoven, he closed a period and exhausted a form in his musical achievements.[1] Debussy, in France, drew inspiration for his opera, "Pelleas et Melisande" from Wagner's conception of the true art-work. He carried his predecessor's ideal to an even greater point in his union of a beautiful poetic text and exceptionally fine music. In suggesting moods or atmosphere as seen in the Prelude to Das Rheingold, Wagner pointed to the impressionism in music of which Debussy was the greatest exponent. But impressionistic music appeals primarily to the senses. Wagner retained the element of appeal to the intellect and thus he was essentially a writer of program music. Richard Strauss, contemporary with Debussy, has followed Wagner in this respect and by expanding the pictorial element has made his music the essence of realism. He derived additional inspiration from Wagner's symphonic structure and has employed themes, denoting characters, emotions, and thoughts, reminiscent of Wagner's manner. The fact that two of the greatest musicians of the early twentieth century showing this influence, have nevertheless, followed two utterly different trends in their composition is convincing proof of the complexity and variety of aspects which Wagner's music reveals. The influence of

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1. Newman, Wagner as Man and Artist, p. 324.

IV. Conclusion.

Wagner's revolutionary technique is conspicuous in the latter works of Verdi, in the operas of the Russian nationalists,[2] and in a great deal of the music of modern composers,[3] among whom are Maurice Ravel, Alexander Scriabin, and Igor Stravinsky.

In Die Meistersinger, Wagner challenged his contemporaries and posterity. The Mastersingers, living in the sixteenth century, were typical bourgeois and the self-appointed conservators of art. Their aim was to preserve and encourage good music. In their zeal, however, they became absorbed with setting as high standards as possible through many rigid requirements. The candidate, desiring to become a "master," had to conform strictly to these rules.

Wagner's hatred of conventionality in art is poured into Die Meistersinger. He sees a parallel between the mastersingers and the Italian opera writers, with their pettiness, strictures, and narrowness. He regards each group, in its effort to foster the spread of good music, as slowly killing it.

In Hans Sachs, the broadminded, liberal mastersinger who sees the future destruction of art if conditions continue as they exist, Wagner is really typifying himself. In Sach's appeal to his comrades to abolish all their rules and specifications and to preserve the purest and noblest songs of their country, Wagner is making a plea

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2. Alexander Serov in The Power of Evil.

3. Leroy, op cit., p. 45.

to his fellow-countrymen, urging them to beware of foreign falsities and to seek in their own national heritage the elements of true art.

The "people" in Die Meistersinger spontaneously acknowledge Walther the winner of the master's prize. They acclaim him, although he has not followed the specifications of the master's guild. It is the beauty, not the form of his song which appeals to them. Wagner sees in them the "Folk", who demand from music only the most expressive and the most natural elements. Their demands are the shaping influences on the execution and creation of really true art.

In modern Germany, Hitler is carrying on these revolutionary ideals of Wagner. In popularizing Wagnerian opera, and especially Die Meistersinger,[4] he is upholding a great German composer, who has seen the necessity for national pride. Hitler is not concerned so much with the protection of German art from foreign influences as was Wagner. Hitler is strengthening the nationalistic trend. In his anti-Semitic campaign, he is again ruling out non-national influences and races, trying to weld the nation into a purely German whole. What will be the outcome of his project, we are in no position to estimate. His emphasis on nationalism in art has resulted in the destruction of many great works composers of which are unfortunately not Germans. In his effort to establish pure, nationalistic art, he has left himself open to criticism. Time

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4. He opens his meetings with the prelude to Die Meistersinger.

alone and the reactions of the German people will tell whether he is justified. Although Hitler has put a rather different interpretation on the nationalistic phases of Wagner's principles, through him, Wagner now has the recognition which was withheld in his own day.

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