

RICHARD WAGNER

::

A LIFE OF MUSIC

Compiled & Presented by
Margaret Marsh

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www.computertraining.nz



May 1813: Richard Wagner is born

His family live in Leipzig's Jewish quarter, and he is the ninth child of Johanna and Carl Wagner, a police clerk.

He was baptised at St. Thomas Church, the same Thomaskirche of Bach, Mozart, and Martin Luther fame.

He died in Venice on 13 February 1883.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YIPGE0JjCkQ>





1813: Wagner is 6 months old

His father dies of typhoid fever, and his mother moves in with his best friend, the actor and playwright **Ludwig Geyer**. Johanna and Ludwig are married in August 1814, and until he is 14 Wagner is known as **Wilhelm Richard Geyer**. He believed Geyer was his biological father.

Geyer's love for the theatre was shared by his stepson who took part in his stage performances. In his **1865** autobiography **Mein Leben (My Life)**, Wagner recalls playing the part of an angel. The autobiography was written at the request of King Ludwig II of Bavaria.

As a boy, Wagner showed little enthusiasm or aptitude for music. He was the only sibling in the family not to have piano lessons.

In **1820**, Wagner starts school where he receives some piano instruction from his Latin teacher. He struggled to play a proper scale and preferred playing theatre overtures by ear!

Leubald

RICHARD WAGNERS
JUGENDWERK



1826: Wagner is 13 : Leubald

Leubald was an attempt by the young composer to write a tragic drama in the Shakespearean genre, combining elements of Hamlet, King Lear, Macbeth and Richard III, with influences from Goethe and Kleist. It occupied him while he was at school, first in Dresden and later in Leipzig. The music critic Theodor Adorno noted:

Leubald and Wagner's other early writings are all of a piece with those plays of which high-school pupils are wont to write in their exercise books: the title, the Dramatis Personae, and the words 'Act I'.

This youthful work, long thought lost, was first performed in **1989**. It is full of bloodthirsty Shakespearean plagiarism and unintentional comedy. It is unclear whether or in what manner, Wagner intended to set this text to music, but the desire to do so may have been the factor which led him to begin the study of composition. No music score has survived, only the script of the play.

It has been suggested that the character of **Adriano** in Wagner's later opera **Rienzi** is recognisably based on that of Leubald in this drama.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-JKz1AUI0Y>





1828: Wagner is 15 and studies at the Nikolai-Gymnasium.

1829: At 16 Wagner sees Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient perform opera on stage, and decides to become a musician.

1830: At 17 He enrolls at the **University of Leipzig** to study music.

1831: Wagner is 18 : Piano Sonata in B flat, Op. 1

The piano sonata was composed while he was taking lessons in composition with **Theodor Weinlig**, the Cantor of St. Thomas' church, Weinlig was so impressed with Wagner's musical ability that he refused any payment for his lessons. He arranged for the music to be published as **Wagner's Opus 1** in 1832. It was dedicated to Weinlig.

Wagner had soon composed three orchestral overtures, and a symphony in C, all of which were successfully performed.

Piano Sonata in B flat, Opus 1. 7.46.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Yje9lllocVQ>



K. Hof- & National-Theater.

München, Freitag den 29. Juni 1888.

Zum ersten Male:

Die Feen.

Romanische Oper in drei Aufzügen von Richard Wagner.
In Scene bringt von K. Chor-Regisseur Herrn Strauß.

Personen:

Der Jüngling Hänsel.	Die Fee Sylvia.	Der König König.	Die Königin Königin.	Der Herrscher Herrscher.	Die Herrscherin Herrscherin.	Der Herrscher Herrscher.	Die Herrscherin Herrscherin.
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Die im ersten und zweiten Aufzuge handelnden Töne sind arrangirt von H. Schirmer.
Herr Strauß und werden ausgeführt von den Herren Jungmann, Spargel, Capelli
und den herrlichen Chöre-Ensemble.

Nach dem ersten und zweiten Aufzuge folgen Pausen von je 15 Minuten Zeit.

Neue Dekorationen:

Erster Aufzug: Berggärten, Zweiter Aufzug: Waldlandschaft eines Waldes, Dritter Aufzug: Höhle der unterirdischen Götter, Himmelslandschaft.	Ständliche Dekorationen sind von dem I. I. Hofmalersmeister Herrn Strauß und Burgart in Wien.
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Das decorirte Orchester, Musikherren und Besetzung von I. Orchestermeister
Herrn Carl Zentgraf.

Costüme und Requisiten sind angekauft bei I. Weißner Herrn Josef Stiggen.

Zeitbücher sind zu 50 Pf. an der Kasse zu haben.

Preise der Plätze:

Ein bester Platz	4 A.	4	Ein zweiter bester Platz im I. Rang	3 A.	4
Ein zweiter bester Platz (I. Rang)	3 A.	4	Ein bester Platz im III. Rang	2 A.	4
Ein dritter bester Platz (II. Rang)	2 A.	4	Ein zweiter bester Platz im I. Rang	1 A.	4
Ein vierter bester Platz im I. Rang	1 A.	4	Ein bester Platz im IV. Rang	3 A.	4
Ein bester Platz im I. Rang	1 A.	4	Ein zweiter bester Platz im IV. Rang	2 A.	4
Ein zweiter bester Platz im I. Rang	1 A.	4	Ein dritter bester Platz im IV. Rang	1 A.	4
Ein dritter bester Platz im I. Rang	1 A.	4	Ein vierter bester Platz im IV. Rang	1 A.	4
Ein vierter bester Platz im I. Rang	1 A.	4	Ein fünfter bester Platz im IV. Rang	1 A.	4

Die Kasse wird um halb sieben Uhr geöffnet.

Anfang um 7 Uhr, Ende um 11 Uhr.

1833: Wagner is 20 : Die Feen – The Fairies

Richard Wagner takes up a position as a part-time chorus master in Würzburg. He composes his first opera **Die Feen**, but it was never performed in his lifetime; it was first performed in Dresden in **1888**. The English premiere was in **1969** and the American premiere was at the New York City Opera in **1982**.

The plot: the fairy **Ada** has fallen in love with a mortal, **Prince Arindal**.

All in fairyland are suspicious of the union and mortal-land has descended into chaos in Arindal's absence ... but the pair are gloriously happy together until Arindal breaks the rules by asking Ada her name (prefiguring Lohengrin). She disappears and he is suddenly pitched into a wilderness.

Ada reappears and sets him tests, all of which he fails, leading Ada to be turned to stone and Arindal to be driven insane. Despite his feeble grasp on reality, Arindal pursues Ada to the underworld, defeats the demons, (shades of Orpheus) and uses the power of song to free his beloved from her entombment. They return to fairyland, the fairy king grants Arindal immortality, and there is great rejoicing.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Krzo5LFTTEk>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oYYG2CMytGM>



1834: Wagner is 21 : Minna

Christine Wilhelmine Planer was appearing with the Magdeburg Theatre Company, she was almost 25. Richard Wagner had arrived to investigate the offer of a position as conductor of the company and was unimpressed by the offer until he met Minna by chance while looking for lodgings for the night. The 21-year-old Wagner changed his mind and accepted the contract in order to pursue her, taking rooms directly beneath hers.

After a stormy courtship, which involved infidelities on both sides, they married in 1836 and were married for 30 years, although for the last 10 years they often lived apart.

In the early years, Minna was the main wage earner, having a successful career as a dramatic heroine who drew both applause for her on stage abilities and for her beauty. She shared in many of the escapades of Wagner's life, including a perilous sea voyage to London, poverty in Paris, following him around Europe after his involvement in the **Dresden Uprising of 1849**, which led to his banishment from Germany.

After Wagner's affair with **Mathilde Wesendonck** in **1857**, Minna mostly lived apart from him.

In later years she developed a heart condition which ultimately claimed her life in **1866**.



1836: Wagner is 23 : Das Liebesverbot - The Ban on Love

Wagner's rarely performed early comic opera in two acts is based on **Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure***. The lively score boasts clear Italian, French and Weberian influences that pre-date the composer's mature voice, yet the music continually delights with the unmistakable emergence of Wagner's precocious genius.

Restrained sexuality versus eroticism plays an important role in the opera; these themes run through many of Wagner's compositions, most notably in *Tannhäuser*, *Die Walküre* and *Tristan und Isolde*. In each opera, the self-abandonment to love brings the lovers into mortal combat with the surrounding social order.

His adaptation of the Bard's play reflects the rebellious mood of a revolutionary Germany, vindicating sensual love and attacking the fanatical repression of sexuality by a puritanical and hypocritical authority.

Orchestra and Chorus of the Teatro Real, Madrid:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=exC-Y9AYye0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tCHiZ77Vdpc>

MANUELA UHL · CHRISTOPHER MALTMAN
PETER LODAHL · ILKER ARCA YÜREK · ANTE JERKUNICA

CHORUS & ORCHESTRA OF THE TEATRO REAL, MADRID
CONDUCTOR IVOR BOLTON · DIRECTOR KASPER HOLTEN

RIENZI

LAST OF THE
ROMAN TRIBUNES



EDWARD BULWER-LYTTON

1837: At 24 Wagner is Musical Director in Riga

1838: He begins work on the tragic opera “Rienzi, the Last of the Roman Tribunes”, based on Edward Bulwer-Lytton's novel.

*Set in Rome, it is based on the life of **Cola di Rienzo** (1313–1354), who succeeds in defeating the nobles and their followers. Magnanimous at first, he is forced by events to crush the nobles' rebellion against the people's power, but popular opinion changes and even the Church, which had urged him to assert himself, turns against him. In the end the populace burn the Capitol, in which Rienzi has made a last stand.*

During a **1839** visit to the resort town of Boulogne, Wagner approaches **Meyerbeer** with a partial draft of Rienzi, and the elder composer responded with encouragement. Meyerbeer also introduces Wagner to Ignaz Moscheles, this was Wagner's first meeting with real international musical celebrities.

Rienzi premiered in Dresden in **1842**, it was an immediate success. This, his first real success of any kind, was crucial in Wagner's career, launching him as a composer to be reckoned with.

Rienzi Overture. 12.54.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xhGmo6qE1dc>



1839: At 26 : Flight from Riga.

Wagner escapes his creditors. He travels to London and then to Paris.

Wagner's extravagant lifestyle plus Minna's retirement, caused him to run up huge debts that he was unable to repay. He was writing **Rienzi** and hatched a plan to flee his creditors in Riga, escape to Paris via London and make his fortune by putting Rienzi on to the stage of the Paris Opéra.

However, this plan quickly turned to disaster: his passport having been seized by the authorities on behalf of his creditors, he and Minna had to make a dangerous and illegal crossing over the Prussian border, during which Minna suffered a miscarriage.

Boarding a ship whose captain had agreed to take them without passports, their sea journey was hindered by storms. The ship at one point took refuge in a Norwegian fjord. A trip that was expected to take a week finally delivered the Wagners to London 3 weeks after leaving Riga.



1841: At 28 Wagner writes The Flying Dutchman

Wagner's experience of Paris was also disastrous. He was unable to get work as a conductor, and the Opéra did not want to produce *Rienzi*. The Wagners were reduced to poverty, relying on handouts from friends and from the little income that Wagner could make writing articles on music and copying scores.

Wagner hit on the idea of a **one-act opera** on the theme of the **Flying Dutchman**, which he hoped might be performed before a ballet at the Opéra.

*“The voyage through the Norwegian reefs made a wonderful impression on my imagination; the legend of the **Flying Dutchman**, which the sailors verified, took on a distinctive, strange colouring that only my sea adventures could have given it.”*

The Flying Dutchman - shows early attempts at operatic styles that would characterise his later music. He uses a number of **leitmotifs** or "leading motifs" associated with the characters and themes which are introduced in the overture. In this first masterpiece, a ship's captain is condemned to endlessly travel the seas in search of true love.

The Flying Dutchman Overture. 11.33:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ezqen5-UxIQ>

7 Minute Highlights. 7.00:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t7iRJ0EC798>



TANNHÄUSER

1842: Wagner is 29

The Wagners gladly returned to Dresden, where **Rienzi** is triumphantly performed on October 20.

1843: The Flying Dutchman was less successful, since the audience expected a work in the French-Italian tradition similar to *Rienzi* and was puzzled by the innovative way the new opera integrated the music with the dramatic content.

Wagner is appointed **Royal Saxon Court Conductor**, a post he held until 1849.

1845: Tannhäuser is premiered in Dresden. An opera in three acts, libretto and music by Wagner. The story, based on 2 Germanic legends, centring on the struggle between sacred and profane love, as well as redemption through love, a theme running through most of Wagner's work.

Tannhäuser is coolly received but soon proves a steady attraction. After this, each new work achieves public popularity despite persistent hostility from many critics.

The opera remains a staple of major opera houses in the 21st century.

Tannhäuser Overture. 14.31.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-NI4WixVUg>

Tannhäuser- Dich, Teure Halle! 3.42.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Buys0urFJSA>



1846: Wagner is 33 : Lohengrin and the Uprising in Dresden

The **Lohengrin** story tells of a mysterious knight who arrives in a boat drawn by a swan to help a noble lady accused of murdering her brother. He marries her but forbids her to ask his origin; she later forgets this promise, and he leaves her, never to return.

Wagner is involved in **politics** and becomes a **revolutionary**, and this involvement in left-wing politics abruptly ended his welcome in Dresden.

Widespread discontent came to a head in **1849**, when the unsuccessful **May Uprising** in Dresden broke out, in which Wagner played a minor supporting role. Warrants were issued for the revolutionaries' arrest. Wagner had to flee, first visiting Paris and then settling in Zürich, Switzerland.

Wagner was to spend the next 12 years in exile from Germany. He had completed **Lohengrin**, the last of his middle-period operas, before the Dresden uprising, and now wrote desperately to his friend **Franz Liszt** to have it staged in his absence. Liszt conducted the premiere in **August 1850**.

Lohengrin Prelude:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zyodILZEFg>



1852: Wagner is 39 : Mathilde Wesendonck

Exiled from his native land following the failed revolution of **1848**, the impoverished Wagner is in Zurich working on his opera **Tristan and Isolde**. There he meets **Otto and Mathilde Wesendonck**, who admirer his music.

Wagner's passionate and scandalous affair with Mathilde, whose 5 poems he sets to music, titled the **Wesendonck-Lieder**, is explored in the film, **The Zurich Affair**.

In **1858** Minna intercepts a romantic letter from Wagner to Mathilde. After the resulting confrontation, Wagner leaves Zurich for Venice, forever remembering Mathilde as '**my one and only love**'. Minna goes to Dresden to stay with her family.

The Zurich Affair – Wagner's One and Only Love. 1.10.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4y03AVCPH1c>

Wesendonck-Lieder - 5. Traüme – Dreams. 4.33

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qhDYew7qETg>

Wagner's Impact on Films:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pmQBPyJYg6c>

1848 : Wagner is 35 : The Ring of the Nibelung

The **Nibelung** of the title is the **dwarf Alberich**, and the ring in question is the one he fashions from the **Rhinegold**. (The Lord of the Rings?) Wagner wrote the libretto and music over the course of about **26 years**. The four parts that constitute the **Ring Cycle** are:

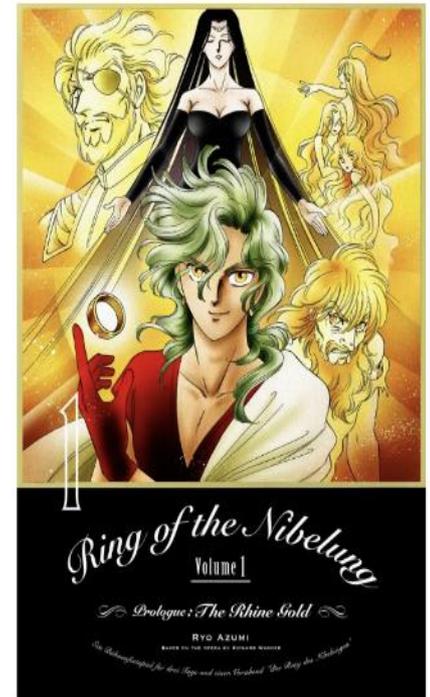
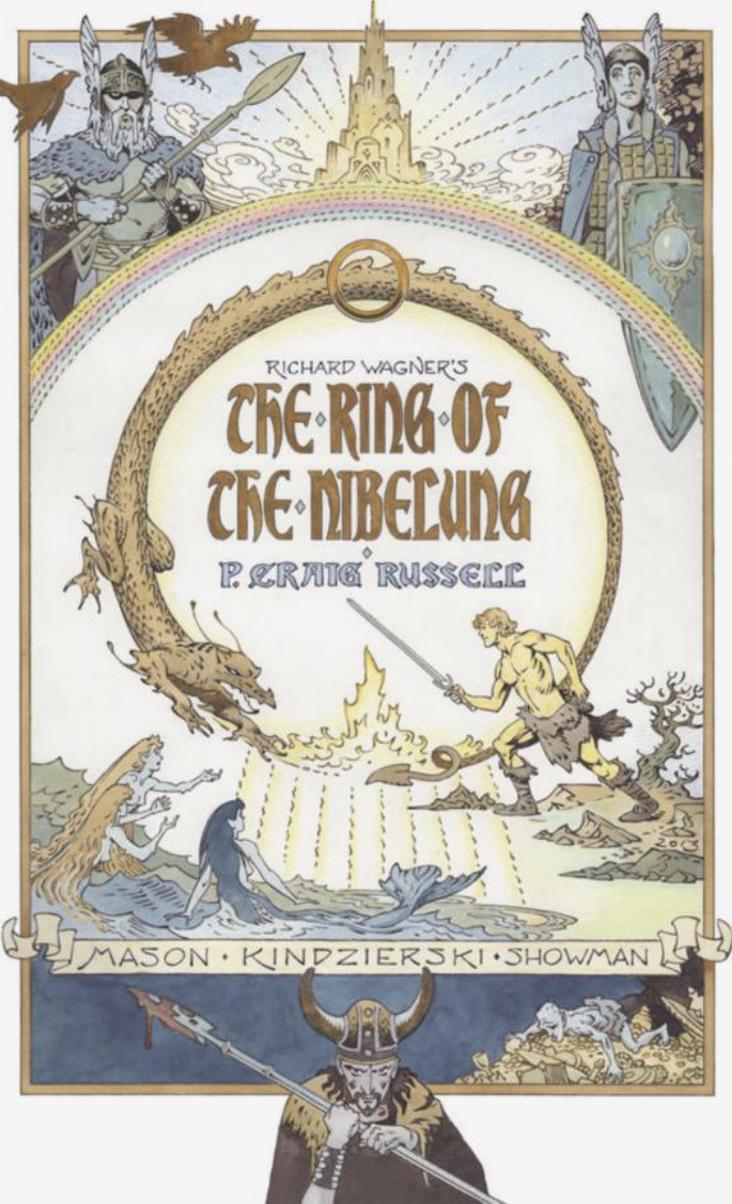
- ◆ Das Rheingold (The Rhinegold)
- ◆ Die Walküre (The Valkyrie)
- ◆ Siegfried
- ◆ Götterdämmerung (Twilight of the Gods)

A Monumental Work: The cycle is a work of extraordinary scale. A full performance of the cycle takes place over **4 nights** at the opera, with a total playing time of about **15-16 hours**, depending on the conductor's pacing.

The first and shortest work, Das Rheingold, has no interval and is one continuous piece of music typically lasting around **2.5 hours**, while the final and longest, Götterdämmerung, takes up to **5 hours**, excluding intervals.

Metropolitan Opera Trailer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uNq7F6KJW0c>



1848 : Wagner is 35 : The Ring of the Nibelung

- ◆ Das Rheingold (The Rhinegold)
- ◆ Die Walküre (The Valkyrie)
- ◆ Siegfried
- ◆ Götterdämmerung (Twilight of the Gods)

Wagner's Ring explained in 10 mins:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fLcV2vhb1wM>

Metropolitan Opera Trailer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uNq7F6KJW0c>

Wagner's Dream, MetOpera Trailer:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FBmDU7RKI_s

Das Rheingold Vorspiel:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=luf1NOAWvug>

Die Walkure: Act I Scene 1: Prelude:

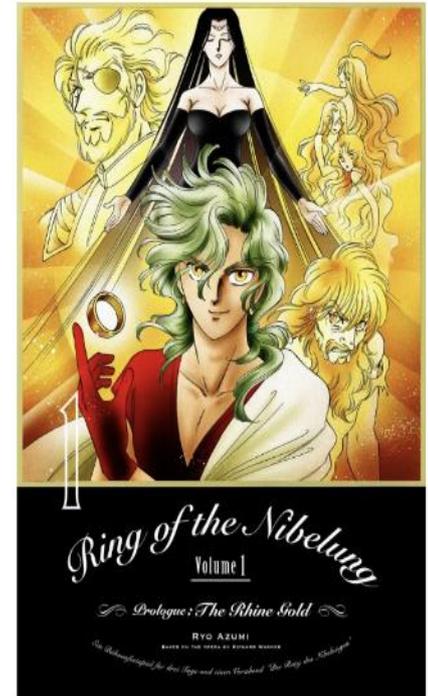
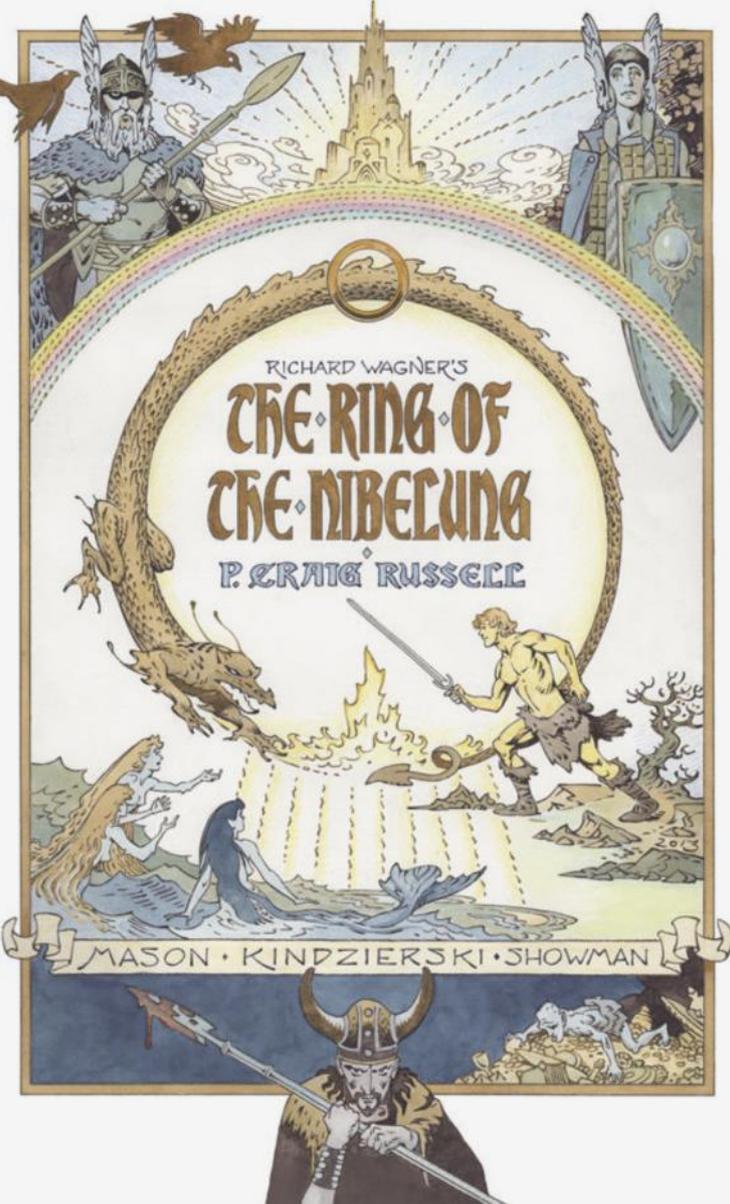
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ncbHEKkdxIM>

Siegfried. Act 1. Prelude:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Im3ZSPnWPDs>

Götterdämmerung (final scene)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AIVHw3_7X-E&t=15s





1857-59: Wagner is 44 : Tristan and Isolde

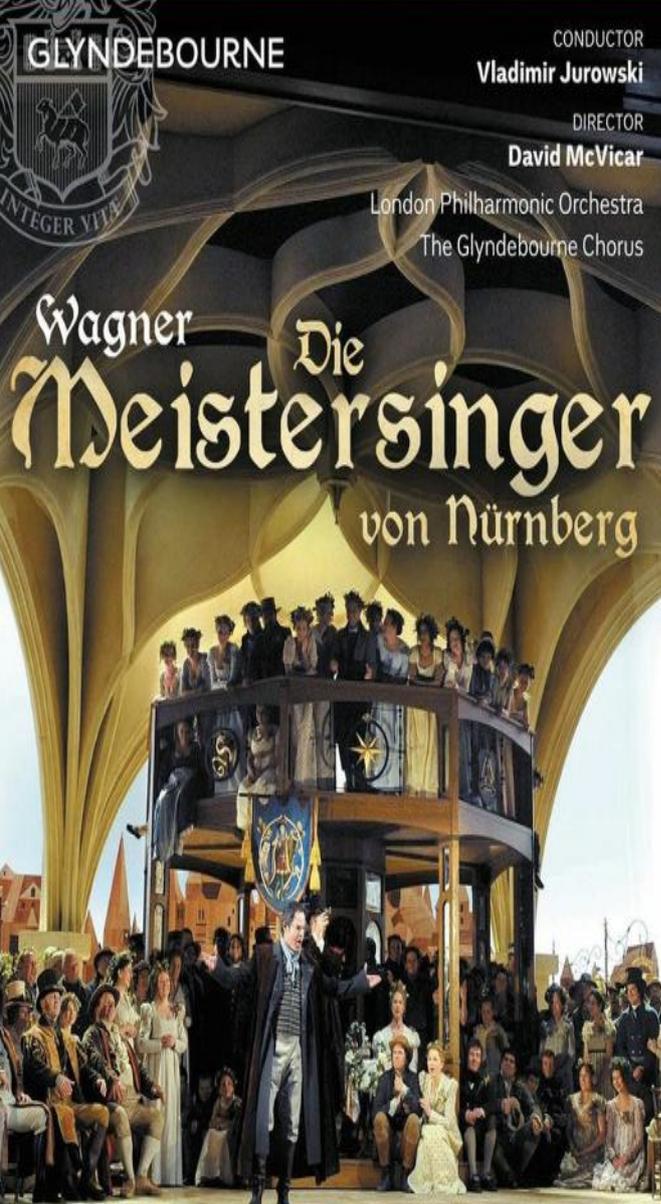
The themes of romance, love, and death are found in the story of **Tristan and Isolde** who are lovers in a medieval romance based on Celtic legend. The hero Tristan goes to Ireland to ask for the hand of the **Princess Isolde** for his uncle, **King Mark of Cornwall**. On their return the two mistakenly drink a love potion fall deeply in love. After many adventures, they make peace with Mark, who marries Isolde.

The distraught Tristan goes to Brittany, where he marries another noble woman named Isolde. When he is wounded by a poisoned arrow, he sends for the first Isolde. His jealous wife tells him his true love has refused to come; he dies just before she arrives, and she dies in his arms. The original poem has not survived, but it exists in many other stories and became part of Arthurian legend.

Tristan and Isolde – Liebestod – Love Death:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wU3Q-Jvo1_w

Tristan & Isolde full movie: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J2IFJSfdwYU>



1868: Wagner is 55 : The Mastersinger of Nürnberg

Set in **Nuremberg** in the mid-16th century, goldsmith **Pogner** promises his daughter **Eva's** hand in marriage to the winner of a song contest, to which three men are potentially eligible. But upon closer inspection, what is at first glance a harmless farce emerges as a profound social analysis. Wagner uses his protagonists to show how a community deals with tradition and those who break with it. Just how much innovation and deviation from the norm it can tolerate?

It is the only comedy among Wagner's mature operas (his early *Das Liebesverbot* is rejected). It is also unusual among his works in being set in an historically well-defined time and place rather than in a mythical setting. It is the only mature Wagner opera based on an entirely original story, and in which no supernatural or magical events feature.

The Prize Song - Morning Dream Song:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-415xy5zT7s>



1869: Wagner is 56 : Cosima and the Siegfried Idyll

Cosima, 24 years his junior, was the illegitimate daughter of Franz Liszt. She became his second wife in 1870 and with him built the **Bayreuth Festival House** as a showcase for his stage works. After his death she devoted the rest of her life to the promotion of his music and philosophy. Commentators have recognised Cosima as the principal inspiration for Wagner's later works, particularly **Parsifal**.

Wagner composed the **Siegfried Idyll** as a birthday present for **Cosima**, after the birth of their son **Siegfried** in **1869**. It was first performed on Christmas morning, 25 December 1870 by a small ensemble on the stairs of their villa in Switzerland. Cosima awoke to its opening melody.

Wagner's opera **Siegfried**, which premiered in 1876, incorporates music from the Idyll.

Siegfried Wagner, their son and successor as festival director, made his Bayreuth conducting debut in 1896.

Siegfried Idyll:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k4TIm1_wYtU





1882: Wagner is 69 : Parsifal

Parsifal is a three-act opera, or a dramatic stage production set to music. It was Wagner's last opera, he died in 1883.

Parsifal is a version of the story of the **Arthurian knight Percival** and his hunt for the **Holy Grail**, which is believed to be the cup **Jesus Christ** used during the **Last Supper**. Parsifal begins not knowing his own name or background, but by eventually learning who he is through cursed **Kundry's** actions, he defeats the villain **Klingsor**, recovers and returns the Holy Spear, heals Amfortas, and becomes the saviour and leader of the **Knights of the Grail**.

Wagner described it to Cosima as his "last card". It remains controversial because of its treatment of Christianity, its eroticism, and its expression, as perceived by some commentators, of German nationalism and antisemitism.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8u82vI7Kwll>

The Tristan Cord

Tristan und Isolde's opening chord (F, B, D sharp, G sharp: now known as the 'Tristan Chord') revolutionised how composers treated tonality. Without it, Debussy might not have been so readily drawn to individual chords, bell-like or whole-tone; and Schoenberg would not have embarked on his voyage far from the shores of conventional tonality which resulted in *Erwartung* and *Pierrot Lunaire*.

Before Tristan, it had been a given in music – at least since Bach's time – that a discord must be resolved onto a concord. But Wagner, expressing his central characters' almost ecstatic pain of unrequited love, created a chord to which there is no obvious closure, least of all in the opening Prelude. Only in the last Act, with Isolde's so-called 'Liebestod', is resolution finally reached. Wagner's example inspired not only Schoenberg's adventures in 'extended tonality', but also Scriabin, whose *Divine Poem* pays explicit homage to Tristan, and whose subsequent works became infused with what he called the 'mystic chord'.

Furthermore, through not being instantly resolved, the 'Tristan chord' soon became widely known as an identifiable sound in its own right. Parry, a follower of Wagner's 'rival' Brahms, wryly acknowledged this in his 'Blest pair of Sirens', making the 'Tristan chord' the 'harsh din' that resulted from 'disproportioned sin'. More frivolously, Britten in his opera *Albert Herring* had the chord played while his hero drank a 'potion' of lemonade spiked with rum, lasting through his subsequent minute-long fit of hiccups.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dWLP7lBomW8>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tristan_chord

The Wagner Tuba

The Wagner tuba was conceived by Richard Wagner while he was working on *Das Rheingold* and envisaged a quartet of instruments which he called Tuben. The opera's Valhalla motif was initially intended for trombones but then changed to Tuben in the orchestral draft. Wagner probably had in mind the ancient Bronze age Nordic horn, or lur, when he designed the Wagner tuba. The aim was to bridge the gap in timbre between the horn and trombones, and so blend the sounds of the brass section more effectively. Being a smaller sized tuba it would also integrate the sound of the new bass tuba (created in 1835) with that of the horns. The quartet of Wagner tubas would also be able to function on their own as a choir.

From its earliest beginnings as a musical instrument, the Wagner tuba has always been a little controversial. Even its name has been a source of confusion for although it contains the word tuba, this instrument is in fact a kind of horn. It uses the same mouthpiece as a horn and is played by traditional horn players. Its history and development have been subject to sketchy and often incorrect analyses, as have descriptions of the instrument's qualities.

What can be said however, is that its hybrid construction and limited repertoire often result in problems of intonation for the French horn player who doubles on the instrument, especially if they are a less than skilful player. The Wagner tuba's tone, however, is rightly admired for its nobility and dignity, whilst its use and notation have always been a bit of a puzzle to prospective composers. The difficult issue of notational method has often led to confusion over transposition for the player. (Right: B-flat Wagner Tuba)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SIU7PMISOkU&t=13s>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wagner_tuba



The Leitmotif

A leitmotif is a "short, recurring musical phrase" associated with a particular person, place, idea, object, state of mind, supernatural force, or any other ingredient in a dramatic work. It means a "leading motif", or "guiding motif", and has been defined as a "short musical idea ... melodic, harmonic, or rhythmic, or all three", a salient recurring figure, musical fragment or succession of notes that has some special importance in or is characteristic of a composition: "the smallest structural unit possessing thematic identity".

The technique is notably associated with the operas of Richard Wagner, and most especially his *The Ring of Nibelungen*, although he was not its originator and did not employ the word in connection with his work.

The *Ring Cycle* uses hundreds of leitmotifs, often related to specific characters, things, or situations. While some of these leitmotifs occur in only one of the 4 operas, many recur throughout the entire cycle. Wagner had raised the issue of how music could best unite disparate elements of the plot of a music drama in his essay "*Opera and Drama*" (written in 1851); the leitmotif technique corresponds to this ideal.

Although usually a short melody, it can also be a chord progression or even a simple rhythm. Leitmotifs can help to bind a work together into a coherent whole, and also enable the composer to relate a story without the use of words, or to add an extra level to an already present story.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bR2EobBG9wQ>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leitmotif>

Bayreuth Festspiele

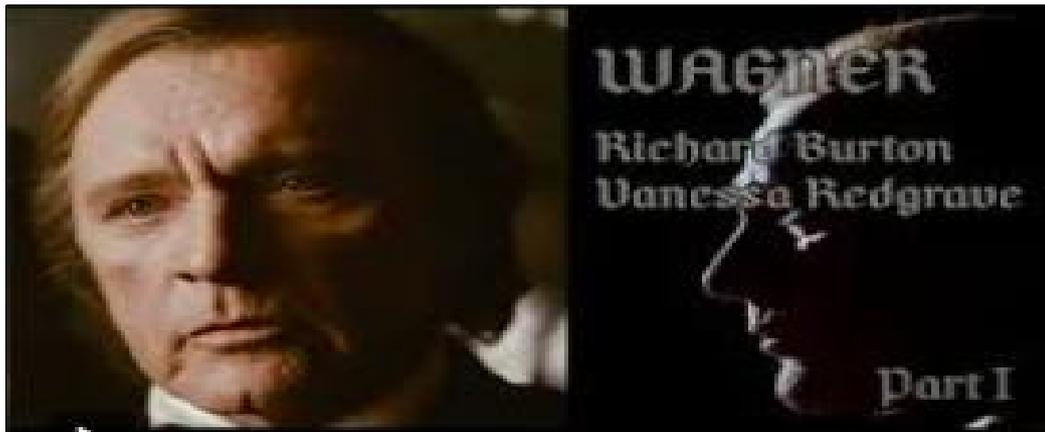
The Bayreuth Festival is a music festival held annually in Bayreuth, Germany, at which performances of stage works by Richard Wagner are presented. Wagner himself conceived and promoted the idea of a special festival to showcase his own works. In 1870 Wagner and his wife Cosima visited Bayreuth but on inspection, the opera house proved to be inadequate. However, the town council proved open to assisting Wagner with the construction of an entirely new theatre, and the Festival was planned to launch in 1873.

Wagner personally supervised the design and construction of the theatre, which contained many architectural innovations to accommodate the huge orchestras for which Wagner wrote, as well as the composer's particular vision about the staging of his works. The Festival has become a pilgrimage destination for Wagnerians and classical-music enthusiasts. Today, the festival draws thousands of fans to Bayreuth every summer. It is very difficult to get tickets, because demand greatly exceeds supply; the waiting time is between five and ten years (or more).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GG1xaEVOTNY&t=307s>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayreuth_Festival





WAGNER Film - 4 Part TV Series - 1983

Vanessa Redgrave, John Gielgud, Laurence Olivier, and Ralph Richardson, Gemma Craven. The cast also includes the composer William Walton, and his wife Susan Walton, in the roles of the royal couple Frederick Augustus II of Saxony and Maria Anna of Bavaria.

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R0rAB3yCwFw&t=0s>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=--BA3fWEoBc>
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kylUqeREx1E>
4. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J897QmsByLM>

The Ring of the Nibelung – Parts 1 & 2

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIscn46C1cE>

The Ring of the Nibelung – Parts 3 & 4

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GXKZqVESgWQ>



The Wagner Family

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X4hmHBYzQw8>

Tristan & Isolde opera:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J2IFJSfdwYU>

Lohengrin opera:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iuQIfS2GIB0>

Tannhäuser opera:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aRwX_fXjmLw

The Mastersinger of Nürnberg opera:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQ2VtHPbRd0>

The Flying Dutchman opera:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ctI5CLkelMg>

Parsifal, Bayreuth Festival:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eqOBEH-JRhs>