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The Editor's Thoughts

A Reminiscence

Steve Sokolow

1943–2011

For almost 50 years I had known Steve. That seems to be a very long time. Our friendship was always Wagner-related, not a particularly social one.

In what must have been the early '60s, I was making one of my searches of the City of Berkeley library for Wagner books (the number that they had surprised me). By chance I saw a small notice on a bulletin board that there was to be a ten-session seminar on the *Ring*. It was during the summer and I suggested to my oldest son that it might be interesting. And so we went. It was our first encounter with Michael Barclay. There were many more such programs. Soon I noticed a rather young fellow who was sort of assisting Barclay in several ways. It was not long before it became apparent that the assistant (Steve) knew a great deal about Wagner, sometimes even more than our lecturer. During that time, he assembled a concordance that included every word in the *Ring* libretto and where it appeared in the score. That struck me as being a monumental project.

As I recall, Steve was a graduate student on the UC Berkeley campus at that time and obviously quite bright. Later he moved from Berkeley, but we still saw each other on occasion and always talked about Wagner. Eventually he ended up in Silicon Valley, and with a couple of other fellows, formed a small start-up, Bear Instruments, designing and producing mass spectrometers, a complex instrument used in scientific research. After some years this start-up was sold to Varian Associates, a large pioneer firm in Silicon Valley.

In the early '80s, when the Wagner Society of Northern California

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LEITMOTIVE–*THE WAGNER QUARTERLY*

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David Dalto, Founding Editor (1985–1989) Paul Schofield, Editor (1990)

About the Authors

Winder McConnell ("Siegfried and the Nibelungen Through the Centuries") was born in Belfast, Ireland. He pursued a joint honors program in History and German at McGill University, Montreal, and completed an M.A. and Ph.D. in medieval German literature under Ernst S. Dick at the University of Kansas. He has held positions at Stanford University, the Johns Hopkins University, and the University of Stirling, Scotland. His primary research interest has focused on medieval heroic poetry and he has published books on the Nibelungenlied and Kudrun, as well as translations of the latter, the Nibelungenklage (Lament of the Nibelungs) and, with Marion E. Gibbs (London), of Thomasin von Zirclaria's thirteenth-century primer on etiquette and ethics, *The Italian Guest*. He is currently working on a book entitled *The Otherworld in Medieval German Literature* and an annotated translation of the anonymous fourteenth-century Minneburg (*The Castle of Love*). He is Professor of German and Director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at the University of California, Davis, where he has taught since 1978.

Duane W. Roller ("The Cambridge Companion to Wagner") is Professor Emeritus of Greek and Latin at the Ohio State University. A native of Oklahoma, he received the B. A. and M. A. from the University of Oklahoma and the Ph.D. in Classical Archaeology from Harvard University in 1971. He has been involved in archaeological field excavations for 40 years, including expeditions in Greece, Italy, Turkey, Israel, and Jordan. He is the author of nine books and nearly 100 articles and reviews about all aspects of the ancient world. His most recent work is *Cleopatra: A Biography*, which was published by Oxford University Press in 2010. Professor Roller has written a number of articles on this topic and delivered several public lectures. He also has been a Fulbright scholar three times, including at the Institute of Archaeology of the Karl-Franzens Universität in Graz, Austria, in 2008. He currently resides in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Terri Stuart ("The Wagner Society of Israel") is currently the President of the Wagner Society of Northern California. She has served on the Board for 12 years, 11 years as Treasurer, and 10 years as both Treasurer and Vice President-Director of Programs. She is also on the Board of Directors of the San Francisco Opera Guild-East Bay Chapter and has served on the Board of Directors of Festival Opera (Walnut Creek, CA). Ms. Stuart has been an avid attendee of opera and music events in the greater San Francisco Bay Area for over 20 years and has enjoyed the privilege of attending the Bayreuth Festival on three occasions, most recently in 2011.

Metropolitan Opera New York City 2011 © Ken Howard photo

Jay Hunter Morris as the title character in the Met's new production of Wagner's Siegfried. *Taken during the rehearsal on October 21, 2011 at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City.*

Siegfried and the Nibelungen Through the Centuries

A Brief History

Siegfried and the enigmatic Nibelungen, or Nibelungs, have enjoyed a long tradition, antedating, through oral-formulaic transmission, their first occurrence in written form in the High Middle Ages at the turn of the thirteenth century; later through Wagner's *Ring* cycle (composed over more than a quarter century between 1848 and 1874), and in both the artistic and non-artistic realm into the twenty-first century in arenas as diverse as politics, art, sculpture, architecture, war, film, and psychology. Hefty tomes could be written alone on the literary reception of Siegfried and his otherworldly flock, whether in plays, novels, parodies, or poems.[1] Siegfried is a perpetually problematic hero, one who degenerates into a burlesque figure in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and re-emerges as a tragic hero in Wagner's *Ring.* He fared well from the late nineteenth through to the middle of the twentieth century. Throughout same period, and even beyond, the nebulous Nibelungen conjured up for several generations of Germans the embodiment of what were considered to be innately German traits, namely, honor and loyalty.

1. To cite three major contributions: Werner Wunderlich, *Der Schatz des Drachentödters. Materialien zur Wirkungsgeschichte des Nibelungenliedes* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1977); Werner Hoffmann, *Das Siegfriedbild in der Forschung, Erträge der Forschung 127* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1979); Werner Hoffmann "The Reception of the Nibelungenlied in the Twentieth Century," in: *A Companion to the Nibelungenlied,"* ed. Winder McConnell, Studies in German Linguistics, Literature, and Culture (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1998), 127-152.

Siegfried in the *Nibelungenlied*

Siegfried differs from the heroes of history as well as many a fictional hero if we regard selflessness and self-sacrifice as integral to the hero's being. One is hard-pressed to identify acts or intentions in his life that are primarily directed at serving the welfare of others. In the late twelfth-century *Nibelungenlied,* Siegfried's initial purpose in journeying to Worms was to procure Kriemhild as a bride. This intention is transformed into an aggressive campaign of conquest—a transformation that appears to have originated with his father's warning that the Burgundians were a haughty people and best avoided. The intention was to dissuade; the result was to encourage. It is an aggressive Siegfried who arrives at Worms. Hagen informs King Gunther of Siegfried's feats in the Otherworld,[2] his defeat of the kings Nibelung and Schilbung, the acquisition of their treasure, his killing of their giant allies, his victory over seven hundred Nibelungen warriors, and his slaughtering of the dragon. None of these acts was carried out with the intention of benefiting others; all of them served Siegfried's self-aggrandizement. The role of the dragon as the instigator of *inordinatio* is, in fact, assumed by Siegfried, whose bathing in the monster's blood may be interpreted as his symbolic assimilation of the creature's chaotic essence.

Gottfried Weber has referred to Siegfried as susceptible to a "completely uncontrolled force of nature."[3] This hero defies courtly protocol and challenges Gunther to combat, the prize for the victor being the lands of the defeated. Siegfried is fully aware of the fact that, even if the challenge—motivated solely by his own desire for self-aggrandizement—were legitimate, Gunther has not the slightest possibility of winning, given Siegfried's virtual invulnerability. His provocative taunting of Hagen—wondering aloud why the latter has not taken any action against him—is not calculated to win him friends among the Burgundians. To be sure, he does eventually allow himself to be placated by the compromising words of Gunther's brother, Gernot, but this flagrant display of overweening pride and aggressiveness on his part precludes any possibility of what, paradoxically, he will come to desire, namely, a lasting friendship with the Burgundian royal family.

2. The "Otherworld" is understood here as a venue that deviates from the "normal" world, in this case, the world of the court, in terms of inhabitants, landscape, and mores. "Nibelungenland" is a land identified with creatures of lower mythology (dwarves, giants, a dragon), situated in some nebulous region undefined by traditional concepts of time and space, in which the medieval ideals of moderation and ordo are replaced by excess and the potential for chaos (inordinatio).

3. Gottfried Weber, *Das Nibelungenlied. Problem und Idee* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1963), 22: "noch ganz unkontrollierte Naturkraft." Note also 32: "Rohstoff der Natur" ('nature's raw material'). Weber repeatedly alludes to the lack of moderation and the arrogance of Siegfried.

The hero who enters the Otherworld, as does Siegfried, returns with powers that, used prudently, can be of great benefit to the society that he left behind. Siegfried, however, returns from the Otherworld to courtly society with a penchant for instigating chaos. It will have devastating results.[4] He may wish to reintegrate himself into that society—his marriage to the epitome of courtliness, Kriemhild, could be regarded as one step in that direction – but the "otherness" of his being remains. He makes it abundantly clear that his willingness to venture to Island[5] to procure Brünhild for Gunther is done not out of friendship towards the Burgundian king, but for the sake of Kriemhild: "I undertake to do this not so much from affection for you as for the sake of your beautiful sister."[6] It is precisely this sort of unpredictable slighting of Gunther that is so unnecessary, but which reflects Siegfried's innermost nature. His overweening pride causes him to insult Brünhild as he leaves for Nibelungenland by telling her that he is glad someone has put an end to her arrogance, which she, of course, must interpret as a reference to Gunther, while Siegfried's allusion is most certainly to himself. When he later deprives Brünhild of her ring and girdle, on her second wedding night while he's "taming" her for Gunther, even the narrator states with no little consternation that he cannot understand why Siegfried elected to do so. It is as though Siegfried behaves in accordance with an ethos that is divorced from that which prevails in the world in which he functions. He remains until his death with one foot in courtly society and the other firmly in the Otherworld.

Siegfried conforms to a particular image of the young hero in the Middle Ages. Much of his behavior is archetypal in nature: the brashness and impetuousness that he demonstrates, not only in the Nibelungen tales, whether in Germany or Scandinavia, but also in Wagner's *Ring*, is to be found in other young men of medieval literature. Much of what we see in Siegfried is evident in Gachmuret, the father of Parzival, in Wolfram von Eschenbach's Grail romance of the same name. Moreover, Rivalin, the father of Tristan in Gottfried von Strassburg's tale, is portrayed as the epitome of knighthood, endowed with all of the major virtues, *except* for the fact that he did whatever he wanted

4. In contrast, Beowulf's descent to the watery Otherworld of Grendel's lair and the confrontation with, and victory over, his mother removes forever the threat to the Danes from that quarter. Unlike Siegfried, however, Beowulf brings none of the monsters' chaos back to Denmark and he avoids, for the most part, the pride and arrogance that we associate with Siegfried. But then, Siegfried never had the benefit of a wise friend and mentor such as Hrothgar.

5. "Island" is often identified with Iceland, but Brünhild's realm is difficult to situate in terms of a fixed place. It, too, constitutes a sort of "Otherworld," in which the reins of power are held by an Amazonian-like queen who defies the otherwise patriarchal world beyond her borders. To avoid confusion with the geographically-fixed Iceland, I have retained the original spelling of Brünhild's kingdom.

6. *The Nibelungenlied*, trans. A. T. Hatto (London: Penguin, 2004), 59. Subsequent quotations from the Nibelungenlied are taken from Hatto's translation.

and tended to hold grudges. The great difference between Siegfried and these other individuals, however, is that he is endowed with otherworldly characteristics that make him not only a danger to himself, but also to the courtly world at large.

More than three decades ago, Theodore Andersson asked the question: "Why Does Siegfried Die?" in the *Nibelungenlied*.[7] His analysis led him to the conclusion that there is no good reason presented in the work for the hero's death. However, the first commentator on the *Nibelungenlied*, the anonymous author of the *Klage*, the 'Lament of the Nibelungen" (a text of 2,180 rhyming couplets appended to most of the major *Nibelungenlied* manuscripts), asserted already in verses 38 and 39 that "he himself [Siegfried] met his death as a consequence of his arrogance."[8] Such was the judgment of a contemporary of the *Nibelungenlied* poet. He refrained from expanding on the nature of that arrogance, but may well have been thinking of Siegfried's behavior in the aggregate: the arrogance that he displays upon first arriving at the Burgundian court, his challenge to Gunther, the pride he displays in having "tamed" Brünhild in Gunther's bedroom chamber which prompts him to take, as trophies, her belt and ring, his overweening self-confidence in his ability to master any situation, and the general insensitivity he demonstrates towards Gunther and his court.

There is a great paradox in all of this. When Siegfried, prior to the Danish-Saxon war, is told by a troubled Gunther that the burden he has on his mind should only be shared with close friends, the hero of Xanten[9] alternately blanches and blushes. He truly and sincerely wishes to be considered a friend to Gunther, in particular, and the Burgundians in general. Yet, he remains friendless throughout the epic; one may speak of his "entourage," but, unlike Enkidu in the Babylonian *Gilgamesh*, Roland of the *Song of Roland*, or, to consider more modern heroes and superheroes such as the Lone Ranger or Roy Rogers, Superman or Batman, he has no close friend. Siegfried's "otherness," punctuated and accelerated by his sojourn in the Otherworld of Nibelung, Schilbung, the giants, and the dragon, is characterized by a hubristic tendency to see himself as master of all things; only in the matter of love does he, initially, appear to be in uncharted waters.

7. Theodore M. Andersson, "Why Does Siegfried Die?" in: Stephen J. Kaplowitt, ed. *German Studies in Honor of Otto Springer* (Pittsburgh: K & S Enterprises, 1978), 29-39.

8. *The Lament of the Nibelungen* (Div Chlage), translated and with an Introduction by Winder McConnell (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1994), 5.

9. Xanten, situated on the Rhine approximately fifty miles north of Düsseldorf, was Siegfried's home and the site of the court of his father and mother, Siegmund and Sieglinde. In the *Nibelungenlied*, it is located in the Netherlands.

While Siegfried's death in the *Nibelungenlied*—speared from behind by Hagen—may be viewed as villainous, it is noteworthy that the deed does not appear to harm the reputation of the Burgundians, although the narrator maintains that "[n]o warrior will ever do a darker deed,"[10] and Siegfried himself, in his last moments, claims that the Burgundians have "wronged [their] kinsmen so that all who are born in days to come will be dishonoured by [their] deed."[11] This latter prediction is never realized, and Hagen's dark deed does not preclude his being warned by Dietrich about Kriemhild's ongoing lamentation for Siegfried in the land of the Huns. The murder of Siegfried—whose safety as a guest at the Burgundian court should normally have been considered sacrosanct—is roundly condemned only (apart from Kriemhild and Sigmund) by the narrator in the sixteenth *âventiure* (canto) of the *Nibelungenlied.* There are no immediate or subsequent negative repercussions for the Burgundians among other members of the aristocracy. One might well conclude from this that there had to be some implicit understanding on the part of the latter that the murder, if not entirely justified, was understandable, and that, perhaps, Siegfried was too big for this world, too unpredictable, too much of an outsider. No one of any stature steps forward as Kriemhild's champion, leaving it entirely up to Siegfried's widow to devise a method of achieving revenge. As time moves on, the murder of Siegfried appears to be relativized by the rest of the world, whereas Kriemhild absolutizes it.

Siegfried Beyond the *Nibelungenlied*

Siegfried of the *Nibelungenlied* has in common with Sigurth/Sigurd (of the Scandinavian analogues) that he is a hero who is betrayed and meets his death as a result; a betrayer, albeit an unwitting one, who is himself betrayed. In the Old Norse texts, Brynhild bears primary responsibility for urging his death, whereas it is Hagen—in contrast to the Scandinavian works in which he urges against the act—who, in the *Nibelungenlied*, sets the plot in motion to murder Siegfried.

In the late fifteenth century, Seyfrid is portrayed in the anonymous *Lied vom Hürnen Seyfrid* as a strong, brash, headstrong young man who has no desire to listen to anyone and who wishes only to get away from his mother and father and be on his own. A century later, in 1557, the Nuremberg author, Hans Sachs, wrote a tragedy in seven acts based on the aforementioned *Lied.* His Sewfrid is not endowed with any courtly mores; he is described as haugh-

10. Hatto 130.
11. Hatto 131.

ty and arrogant, and anything but noble in his bearing. In a confrontation with his adversary, Dietrich – this adversarial relationship with Dietrich is a reflection of what we find in the thirteenth-century work, *Der große Rosengarten* and the Old Norse *Thidrekssaga*—concludes with a burlesque description of a terrified Sewfrid fleeing Dietrich to find refuge in Crimhilt's lap.

Siegfried would not regain his status as a respectable, if still somewhat problematical, hero until 250 years later, during the Napoleonic Wars, at a time when Germans turned from their unequivocal, Enlightenment-inspired admiration of the French and French culture, to embrace the literature of their own Middle Ages.

Siegfried appears in a rich variety of guises from his first being mentioned in writing in the late twelfth/early thirteenth century through to the present: as a hero par excellence, an unruly and mischievous "nature boy," a burlesque coward, a naïve victim of others' intrigues, an otherworldly figure who finds himself incapable of integrating himself into courtly society, a man who dies alone, surrounded by family and alleged friends, but who—unlike Roland or Gilgamesh[12]—paradoxically enjoys a close friendship with no one.

Wagner's Siegfried

Wagner's Siegfried in *Der Ring des Nibelungen* is primarily derived from both the Scandinavian analogues with their mythological underpinning and the first part of the German *Nibelungenlied*, in which entities of *higher* mythology (the gods) play no role whatsoever. Wagner was also familiar with, and influenced by, Friedrich Hebbel's drama *Die Nibelungen*, composed between 1850 and 1860. In the *Ring*, Siegfried's role revolves primarily around his apprenticeship under Mime the Smith and his relationship to Brünnhilde and Gutrune. The arrogance encountered in the thirteenth-century epic remains, but Siegfried tends to be portrayed more as the witless fool, a "victim" of the manipulative strategies of Hagen and the memory-erasing efficacy of a magic potion.

The male-female tension, the masculine-feminine dichotomy that is already manifested in the *Nibelungenlied*, is also evident in Wagner's opera, but with the major difference that Brünnhilde can only be restored to life by being "demoted" from the status of a deity to a "mere" human being through the intervention of a man, whom she is destined to obey and for whom, as her father, Wotan, declares, "she'll sit and spin by the fire,/and the world will de-

12. See *The Song of Roland*, trans. Dorothy L. Sayers (London: Penguin Books, 1957) and *The Epic of Gilgamesch*, trans. N. K. Sanders (London: Penguin Books, 1972).

ride her fate!" (*The Valkyrie,* Act III, Scene 2).[13] Brünnhilde herself is confident that no "mere" man will be her conqueror, but rather a hero, born of Wälsung blood, despite her father's determination to destroy the entire Wälsung race.

Wagner's Siegfried first appears as an apprentice to Mime the Smith, in a role similar to that in which we find him in Fritz Lang's 1924 film, *Die Nibelungen.* Wagner's Siegfried is a pest, an irritation for Mime, whereas Lang's Siegfried simply outdoes his master and incurs the latter's envy. In both instances, Mime wishes him dead. The apprentice has usurped the role of the master; in the *Ring,* Mime is obliged to work at the pleasure of Siegfried, who clearly disdains the dwarf.

What is apparent about Siegfried, whether in literature, the *Ring,* or in cinematic representations, is his "otherness." It is not simply the "otherness" of the archetypal hero. Siegfried's essence is characterized by a basic propensity for disturbing the natural order of things, and it makes no difference if this is the Otherworld of Mime in Wagner's opera, the court of Worms in the anonymous *Nibelungenlied,* the cave of Fafnir in Uli Edel's 2004 motion picture release: *Dark Kingdom. The Dragon King,* or Siegfried's relationship to the ethereal Nibelungs in the latter. Wagner's Siegfried is a blustering, self-centered, arrogant adolescent, whose disdain for Mime knows no bounds, an animosity that appears to be solely based on Mime's outward appearance.

It is Siegfried, rather than Mime, the supposed master, who ultimately forges the remaining pieces of Siegmund's sword to make Notung whole again: "Give me the fragments;/I'll have to teach you!" (*Siegfried,* Act I, Scene 3, p. 182). Yet, too much sympathy for Mime would be out of place. True to his calling as a dwarf, he hatches a scheme to put Siegfried into a sleep, kill him, and procure Fafner's ring and the gold for himself. As he explicitly states, he intends to become lord of the world (*Siegfried,* Act I, Scene 3, p. 189).

In comparison to the *Nibelungenlied* poet, Wagner focuses much more on the Otherworld in his opera. Both the *Nibelungenlied* Siegfried and the Siegfried of the *Ring* deal with a dragon and with a treasure, but the description of Siegfried's adventures in the Otherworld in the former is remarkably short, a mere fourteen stanzas in an epic that comprises a total of 2,379 stanzas. In Wagner, mythology—both higher and lower—permeates the work, and only the scenes set in the Gibichung court have some resemblance to what we associate with Worms in the *Nibelungenlied.*

Wagner's Siegfried is a problematical hero for a number of reasons, not

13. Richard Wagner, *The Ring of the Nibelung,* English translation by Andrew Porter (New York: Norton & Co., 1977), 143. Subsequent references to the *Ring* include the name of the opera, act, scene, and page number in the Porter translation.

least of them being—and in this he mirrors the Siegfried of the *Nibelungenlied*—his lack of true mentors. One of the most pertinent remarks made in *Siegfried* emanates from the dying shape-shifter Fafner, when he refers to Siegfried not only as "bold, youthful, and fearless," but also "unknown to yourself" (*Siegfried*, Act II, Scene 2, p. 206). Siegfried does receive information from others that is vital for his understanding of the world and his place in it, but his ability to decipher that advice is limited at best. Fafner warns him to be on his guard, that the one responsible for pitting him against the protector of the gold is also plotting Siegfried's death. From the woodbird he initially receives the simple message that he will have use of the magic Tarnhelm, "and if he discovers the ring,/it will make him the lord of the world!" (*Siegfried*, Act II, Scene 2, p. 207). The stage directions indicate that Siegfried "has listened with bated breath and enraptured look" (p. 207), but he is not given to reflection. However, when the woodbird repeats Fafner's warning regarding Mime in Act II, Scene 3 (pp. 211–212), Siegfried clearly appears to take notice, particularly as the words he subsequently hears Mime speak reflect the innermost thoughts of the malevolent dwarf. Like Fafner, Mime also falls victim to Notung, Siegfried's sword.

Unlike his counterpart in the *Nibelungenlied*, Wagner's Siegfried has known neither his father nor his mother. He gives expression to his loneliness when he again addresses the woodbird: "...I am quite alone,/have no brothers nor sisters;/and my mother died,/my father fell,/unknown to their son!" (*Siegfried*, Act II, Scene 3, p. 217). There is remarkable pathos in his words:

> Dear little woodbird,
> can you be my guide?
> Can you tell me
> where I'll find a friend?
> You must know some way to help me.
> So often I've called
> and yet no-one has come.
> You, my woodbird,
> you might do better,
> for you've advised me so well.
> (*Siegfried*, Act II, Scene 3, p. 217).

Siegfried, totally oblivious with respect to any knowledge of fear, is eager to learn what it is and hopes to acquire that knowledge from Brünnhilde. The Wanderer (Wotan) views Siegfried as "[f]ree from hate,/joyful and loving," a

hero who "... will achieve/that deed that will free our world" (*Siegfried*, Act III, Scene 1, pp. 224–225). In the subsequent encounter with the Wanderer, however, Siegfried displays a brusque, even rude, attitude towards the "old man," to whom no sign of respect on his part is forthcoming: "Out of my way,/or else you may lose/the other eye that is left you" (*Siegfried*, Act III, Scene 2, p. 228). The Wanderer admonishes Siegfried:

> I see, my son,
> one thing you know –
> to get your way as you want it.
> Yet, be careful,
> for with eyes quite as blind
> as that eye I've lost, you are gazing
> on the eye that is left me for sight.
> (*Siegfried*, Act III, Scene 2, p. 228)

Siegfried epitomizes impetuous youth as described by Gottfried von Strassburg in his *Tristan:*

> Of all the qualities which a lord should have [Rivalin, Tristan's father] lacked not one, except that he over-indulged himself in pleasures dear to his heart and did entirely as he pleased....But his [Rivalin's] downfall was due not to malice, which is the ruin of many, but to the tender years that accompanied him. His warring against his own happiness, as he flowered into early manhood with a young lord's temper and breeding, was caused by his wanton youth, which blossomed in his heart with arrogance. He did as all young people do who never think ahead: he shut his eyes to care and lived for the sake of living. When his life began in earnest to rise up like the day-star and look out smiling on the world, he thought—but it did not happen so—that he would always live like this and revel in the sweets of living. But no, his life that had scarce begun was soon spent. Just when the early sun of his worldly joy was about to shine out dazzlingly, his evening, hidden from him till then, fell suddenly and blotted out his morn.[14]

Siegfried repeatedly rejects what any hero is well advised to embrace if he is not, eventually, to fall prey to overweening pride, namely, a mentor. In medieval literature, a hero not infrequently ignores the sound advice of a good friend (note the *Song of Roland*) or someone much older and wiser, and invari-

14. Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan with the 'Tristan' of Thomas*, trans. A. T. Hatto (London: Penguin Books, 1967), 45–46.

ably to his detriment. A notable exception is the older Beowulf, who, after returning from having slain Grendel's mother, heeds the advice proffered to him by Hrothgar the Dane to keep mankind's transitory status in mind and avoid pride (see above, fn. 4).

As was the case in the *Nibelungenlied,* there is only one arena in which Siegfried appears to be initially unsure of himself, namely, in the matter of love. When Brünnhilde speaks to him of love, Siegfried replies: "Ah, glorious song,/ enchanting to hear;/but yet the meaning is dark" *(Siegfried,* Act III, Scene 3, p. 237). By the end of Act III, Scene 3, however, they have fallen enraptured into each other's arms. Siegfried and Brünnhilde's love is consummated in Wagner's opera. They are in reality what they only appear to be to the uninitiated in the *Nibelungenlied,* namely, lovers. When Siegfried presents the ring of the Nibelung to Brünnhilde, it evokes an unmistakable image of "oneness."

Later, after Siegfried's memory of his liaison and vow to Brünnhilde has been erased, Gutrune's inquisitive nature leads her to query about the manner in which her husband-to-be obtained Brünnhilde for her brother. If some (natural) suspicion lies behind her questioning of Siegfried, the latter is quickly able to dispel any fear on Gutrune's part that he might have been unfaithful to her. In the *Nibelungenlied,* Gunther also appears to have felt some insecurity as he waited for Siegfried to "tame" his bride on the second wedding night. His apprehension—arising from his sense that it is taking Siegfried rather a long time to complete the task—is unfounded, however, and the text makes it quite clear that Brünhilde is a virgin when Gunther takes the shape-shifter Siegfried's place. That is, of course, certainly not the case in Wagner's *Ring.* We know from the end of *Siegfried* and the Prelude to *The Twilight of the Gods* that Siegfried and Brünnhilde have been lovers, although later on Brünnhilde will mendaciously claim in Act II, Scene 4 of *Twilight of the Gods* that Siegfried "forced delight/and love from me" (*Twilight of the Gods,* Act II, Scene 4, p. 296). Whereas, in the *Nibelungenlied,* Gunther would have had physical evidence that Brünhild was a virgin when he finally succeeded in bedding her, this is not the case in the *Ring.*

The ring itself is, of course, the key to comprehending the motivations of the leading protagonists in Wagner's opera. Gunther's reluctance to acquiesce in Hagen's murder of Siegfried echoes what we find in the *Nibelungenlied.* Comparable to the tactics used by Hagen to win over the Burgundian king in the thirteenth-century epic is the suggestion made to Gunther that, through Siegfried's death and the acquisition of the ring, Gunther will have the world at his command. Siegfried is warned about the evil that resides in the ring during his encounter with the Rhine daughters. He is, in fact, prepared to give

them back the ring, until he receives that warning. He declares:

> [I]f you had smiled the ring would be yours.
> But you threatened my limbs and my life:
> now though the ring
> had no worth at all,
> you'd still not get it from me.
> (*Twilight of the Gods*, Act III, Scene 1, p. 311)

Once again, rejection of advice from well-meaning mentors, and we note the similarity to Siegfried's reaction to his father's warning about the bellicose nature of the Burgundians in the third *Âventiure of the Nibelungenlied.* In both instances, it is wise and sober advice, but instead of deterring, it serves to provoke the hero. The Rhinemaidens judge correctly:

> Come, sisters!
> Flee from this madman!
> He thinks he is wise,
> he thinks he is strong,
> but he's stupid and blind as a child!
> (*Twilight of the Gods*, Act III, Scene 2, p. 312)

Siegfried remains blissfully ignorant of the true state of affairs, just as did his counterpart in the *Nibelungenlied.* He has no concept of the power of the ring he has won from Fafner, or of the machinations of Hagen and Alberich, the latter of whom declares:

> ... he knows not
> the might of the ring;
> he makes no use
> of its magical power.
> Laughter and love fill his heart,
> gaily he wastes all his life.
> (*Twilight of the Gods*, Act II, Scene 1, p. 283).

The crisis at the court of the Gibichungs is unleashed when Brünnhilde recognizes the ring of the Nibelung on Siegfried's finger which the latter, in the guise of Gunther, had taken from Brünnhilde during their skirmish. Hagen seizes the moment, claiming that, if this is, in fact, Gunther's ring,

then Siegfried has deceived Gunther and must pay for his treachery, echoing Brünnhilde's call for Siegfried's death. Siegfried's demise in the *Ring* is justified by Hagen with the laconic remark: "Falsehood is punished" *(Twilight of the Gods,* Act III, Scene 2, p. 319). But his true motivation for the deed has nothing to do with any falsehood on Siegfried's part. The focal point is the ring, and, in the ensuing confrontation between Hagen and Gunther over the latter, Gunther is slain. (We note Gunther's similar demise in Edel's film.) It is the Rhine daughters who reclaim the ring at the conclusion of the opera, shortly before the great, celestial Walhall is enveloped in flames.

Siegfried's Legacy

Over the centuries, the figure of Siegfried has acquired many faces. He is the "recke" ('warrior')—the word is related to English 'reckless'—in the *Nibelungenlied,* whose problematic nature brings chaos to the world of the Burgundians; in Scandinavia, he is the unwitting victim of a scheming mother and here, too, runs afoul of his spouse's kin. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, he retains much of the arrogance associated with his character during the Middle Ages, but is ultimately relegated to the status of a buffoon in a confrontation with the powerful Dietrich. For approximately two hundred years, between the seventeenth and the nineteenth century, he was known only to a handful of scholars, until the Napoleonic Wars kindled renewed interest in the stories of the German Middle Ages. While there is no lack of plays and poems dedicated to him and the story of the Burgundians/Nibelungen during that period, it is Wagner who is chiefly responsible for making Siegfried almost a household word in the wake of the premiere of *Der Ring* between August 13 and August 17, 1876 in Bayreuth. The 1911–1912 illustrations for Wagner's *Ring* by British artist Arthur Rackham (whose ancestor, John Rackham, had been hanged as a pirate in 1720!), provided some of the inspiration for Fritz Lang's 1924 *Nibelungen* film. The story of Siegfried and the Nibelungs provided fertile material for artists from widely diverse schools, ranging from the frescoes created by Julian Schnorr von Carolsfeld for the Royal Residence in Munich between 1827 and 1867, the art deco illustrations of Wagner's *Rheingold* by Aubrey Beardsley, the expressionist sketches of Ernst Barlach and Max Beckmann, to the early twentieth-century Nibelungen sculptures of the Dane, Stephan Sinding, and the nineteen modern sculptures created by the American Edward Kienholz thirty-five years ago using music from Wagner, old radios from the Third Reich (the "Volksempfänger," 'people's receivers'), and garbage.

By the early twentieth century, the *Nibelungenlied* had also become a household word in Germany, with special editions of the work produced for home, school, and the military. Siegfried—and the Nibelungen—were not confined to the literary milieu, but also found expression in the extra-literary and extra-musical spheres. A section of the German defense system in northern France in World War I became known as the Siegfried Line, and the same term was used by the English to describe the West Wall fortifications built facing the Maginot Line prior to World War II. Siegfried, stabbed in the back, provided the model for the "stabbed-in-the-back" accusation against the signers of the Versailles Treaty following World War I. This is intriguing, as it was Hagen who murdered Siegfried in the *Nibelungenlied*, but who later on became the de facto leader of the Nibelungen in the second half of the epic, a Germanic hero to whom supreme loyalty is demonstrated by the Burgundian royal family. This much proclaimed loyalty of the Nibelungen at the conclusion of the *Nibelungenlied* resonated in the term "Nibelungentreue" ('the loyalty of the Nibelungen'), applied not only by Field Marshal Hermann Goering, head of the German Air Force, in reference to the 6th Army at Stalingrad as it went under in January, 1943, to the last Waffen-SS "division" (in name only) in Spring, 1945, the 38th SS Panzer Grenadier Division "Nibelungen," but also to diehard members of the communist SED (Socialist Unity Party of Germany) when the German Democratic Republic collapsed in 1989. Nor has the Siegfried figure remained confined to the Germanic sphere. Clearly impressed by the medieval hero's qualities, but also keenly aware of the circumstances of his death, Tim Pat Coogan referred to Michael Collins, the hero of the Irish Revolution, who was assassinated on August 22, 1922, as the "Irish Siegfried."[15] Perhaps the greatest transformation of all is the brash, haughty, unpredictable hero Siegfried of the Middle Ages into the selfless, Christian Siegfried depicted by Wolfgang Hohlbein and Torsten Dewi in the first volume (2004) of their trilogy on the Nibelungen saga: *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. But Siegfried and the Nibelungen tale have also enjoyed a "lighter touch," and even aficionados of the *Ring* will find it difficult not to derive some delight from Anna Russell's parody of the opera.

Parody, comedy, may signal the demise of a particular hero as hero; in more modern times, it can also herald the death of a literary or cinematic genre. The Western film, for example, which fell on hard times in the United States in the late Fifties and early Sixties, was rejuvenated in the mid-Sixties by the Italians, particularly by the directors Sergio Leone and Sergio Corbucci. Many

15. Tim Pat Coogan, *The Man Who Made Ireland. The Life and Times of Michael Collins* (Niwot, CO: Robert Rinehart Publishers, 1992), xiv, 109.

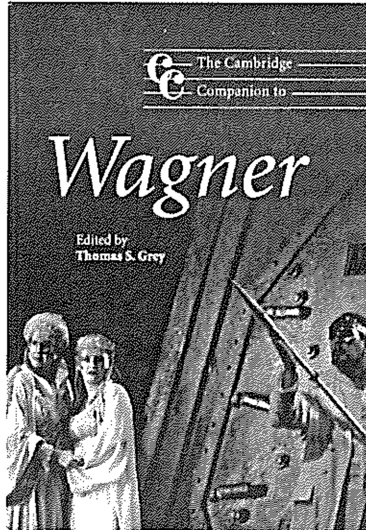
would agree, however, that this re-emergence of what had been, historically, the most successful cinematic genre met its demise with the descent into burlesque and virtually slapstick comedy set against the Western background in the late Sixties and early Seventies. What strikes us about Siegfried, however, is that he does not undergo a linear transformation from hero to buffoon and from notoriety to obscurity. Siegfried resurfaces as a hero in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and is just as impressive in stature as he undoubtedly had been 700 to 800 years earlier. In the aftermath of the Second World War, he has again lost much of his heroic persona; his nadir, and that of the Nibelungs, was attained, perhaps, in Adrian Hoven's soft pornographic film of 1971: *Siegfried und das sagenhafte Liebesleben der Nibelungen* (which appeared in the United States under the title: *The Long, Swift Sword of Siegfried).*

It would be imprudent to suggest unequivocally that stories of Siegfried and the Nibelungen will still be circulating another 1300 years from now. And yet: In the twelfth-century *Völsunga Saga,* a dying Sigmund, father of Sigurd and husband of Hjordis, gives his wife the broken pieces of his sword to guard well, for "[o]ur son will bear it [Gram] and with it accomplish many great deeds, which will never be forgotten. And his name will endure while the world remains."[16] Sigmund's prophecy has, to date at least, not remained idle speculation; in October, 2006, *USA Today* listed Siegfried as no. 7 on its list of "Imaginary Luminaries: The 101 Most Influential People Who Never Lived."

—Winder McConnell

16. *The Saga of the Volsungs. The Norse Epic of Sigurd the Dragon Slayer,* trans. Jesse L. Byock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 54.

The Cambridge Companion to Wagner



The Cambridge Companion to Wagner, edited by Thomas S. Grey. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.ISBN 978-0-521-64299-6.Paperback $30.99.

A new significant book about Richard Wagner is a momentous occasion, and the *Cambridge Companion to Wagner* will certainly rank as one of the most important of the current era. Sixteen essays by fourteen scholars, under the skilled editorship of Thomas S. Grey (also a contributer to the volume) provide a fascinating and often new insight into many aspects of the composer's career. Unlike many collections of essays, the contributions flow together in a smooth arc that makes the book particularly readable and remarkably consistent in tone. The volume is not meant to replace more detailed books like Barry Millington's *Wagner Compendium* (London 1992), but rather to present a synthetic selection of important issues in Wagner's career (and afterlife) that provide an accessible introduction to this most fascinating and complex of personalities.

The sixteen essays are grouped into four categories that take the reader from issues of Wagner's own self-view and his early artistic development to the complexities of his reputation and interpretation after his death. The first section, on biography and history, is admirably introduced by John Deathridge's discussion of the issues of the Wagner autobiography: the often unreconciled themes of Wagner as he was, as he wanted to be remembered, and as others (both contemporaries and those later) saw him. Autobiography (and to some extent biography) are notoriously fragile media of expression—this

has been the case since the genres were invented in Greek antiquity—and Wagner's changing self-image caused alterations to his own written version of himself. Needless to say, such adaptation did not end with his death: others have continually tampered with the data and have created varying images of the composer that have varied over time.

The second essay, by editor Thomas S. Grey, explores Wagner's "apprenticeship," the environment of his first three completed operas (seen as a progression to journeyman status and an eventual diploma with the creation of *Rienzi*). Close attention is paid to the heady operatic environment of the 1820s and 1830s that was the world of the composer's adolescence and youth, one of not only familiar names such as Weber, Rossini, and Bellini, but those no less influential who have largely vanished from the modern operatic repertory such as Spohr, Marshner, and Auber. Wagner's dual status as a musician and dramatist is emphasized: his first known work was a play, not a piece of music, and to the end of his life he was ambivalent as to whether he was a composer or playwright, coming, as he did, from a talented theatrical family.

Finishing the first section of essays, Mitchell Cohen explores the development of Wagner's political ideas, leading to his involvement in the Dresden revolt of 1849. From the very beginning of his operatic career, the composer wrote about worlds in collision (fairies and mortals, Germans and Italians, or class warfare), and the events in Dresden can be seen as the political fulfillment of these artistic concepts. Strongly influenced by the anarchism of the era, Wagner was also a product of the world that would produce his younger contemporary Karl Marx.

The second group of essays spans the operas from *Flying Dutchman* to *Parsifal*. Stewart Spencer looks at the three Romantic operas (*Dutchman*, *Tannhäuser*, and *Lohengrin*), placing them firmly in the context of Wagner's inheritance of the German Romantic tradition (that in fact was already dying out), yet at the same time also seen as a move away from pure Romanticism to a mythic history that was to be the core of his later works. Barry Millington focuses on the *Ring*, a topic not easily condensed into a dozen pages, but admirably done. The emphasis is more on what led Wagner to the *Ring* than the *Ring* itself. It is interestingly suggested that the idea of the *leitmotif* may have its origins in Wagner's views of Greek tragedy, especially the recurring imagery of Aeschylus. Moreover, there is an outline of Wagner's progression through aborted dramatic treatment of social revolutionaries (Barbarossa, Jesus, Achilles, all projects that he dabbled with before settling on Siegfried), as well as his movement from early utopian views to Schopenhauer. This is followed by an excellent analysis of the *leitmotif* concept itself by Thomas S. Grey,

especially its ability to illustrate past, present, and future.

Moving away from the *Ring*, two essays examine the operas that intruded onto its composition. John Daverio considers *Tristan*, not only in terms of its musical innovation, but the skillful use of medieval epic (altered as necessary) to create the essentially new art form of modern music drama. Stephen McClatchie's essay on *Meistersinger* deals less with the opera itself than its appropriation by German nationalism and eventually the Third Reich: it had been seen as the definitive German opera as early as the unification of Germany in 1871, and by the 1920s, even before the Third Reich had any official status, the opera became a significant symbol of Germanness. In the following years it would be repeatedly used by the Nazis as their musical symbol.

Wagner's last, and in some ways most problematic, opera, is the subject of the essay by Glenn Stanley. Understanding *Parsifal* has always been difficult, and this essay skillfully works it way through the various pitfalls of this unusual opera with its many layers of interpretation, including German mythology, Buddhism, and an idiosyncratic view of Christianity, all fitted into a musical style that is unmistakably Wagner but points ahead to the twentieth century.

The third section of the book is directed toward ideology. Wagner's often-maligned literary writings are examined by James Treadwell, whose focus is the question of how the writings illuminate the composer. Rightly he points out that Wagner was often more a journalist than a theoretician: the writings were frequently created on the spur of the moment in response to a specific stimulus. He wrote essays, reviews, and longer works throughout his life (his first published work is contemporary with his first opera, and he was writing an essay when he died). Especially important is the collection that he wrote in Zürich in the 1850s when he was between *Lohengrin* and the *Ring*, feeling a strong need to make himself heard and to explain art (his art) to an unresponsive world. Many of the longer writings are difficult to understand in the original, and English translations are often problematic, so it is nice to have at the conclusion of the essay a list of accessible writings in decent English translation.

Dieter Borchmeyer explores the complex relationship between Nietzsche and Wagner, and Thomas S. Grey examines another convoluted relationship, Wagner and the Jewish question. Anti-Semitism as a social phenomenon of the nineteenth century is carefully traced, and then connected with Wagner's eventual antipathy toward Meyerbeer, which seems to have, insofar as the composer was concerned, brought the social phenomenon to a personal level. Yet the essay concludes that the composer's anti-Semiticism was generally ef-

fected through his role as a public figure, not his music.

The final section is about Wagner's influence. Annegret Fauser discusses Wagnerism. The composer's effect on later music is perhaps fairly familiar, but the essay reaches into his influence on visual arts (Cezanne, Gaughin, the pre-Raphaelites), and his influence on the intimacy between music and painting that developed in the early twentieth century, most notably in the Vienna Succession. Pamela M. Potter explores Wagner and the Third Reich, noting the significance of the close chronological proximity between the fiftieth anniversary of Wagner's death and Hitler's assumption of power, and Hitler's early, personal affinity for Wagner's music (allegedly as early as 1905) as well as his lavish personal support of the Bayreuth Festival (from 1923). The suggestion is that the Third Reich's attitudes to Wagner were more personal than ideological.

In the only illustrated section of the book, Mike Ashman looks at the staging of Wagner's works, from the composer's own involvement to modern productions. It is interesting to learn about the haphazard nature of staging of the early works, for it was not until the 1860s that the composer fully realized the need for proper attention to the staging, and only with the early Bayreuth festivals that a full-fledged production team came into existence. The current state of staging of Wagner operas is a well-known item of great controversy, and this essay summarizes many of the high and low points without being judgemental. Astonishingly, as early as 1929 there were minimalist non-narrative stagings, as shown by Ewald Dülberg's Bauhaus-inspired sets for the *Flying Dutchman* that year in Berlin. The final essay, by Arnold Whittall, is a fine summary of current issues in criticism and analysis of the composer, beginning in the latter nineteenth century but with its focus on the years since the 1960s.

An important feature of this book is the excellent and lengthy chronology of Wagner's life and works, perhaps the most readable and informative yet produced. There are a selective but good bibliography, a solid index, and copious notes. Obviously each reader will approach this work for his or her own purposes, but it is a remarkable creation that provides an excellent summary of the composer in many of his varied personae. Scholars and educated non-specialists will find much that is new, and those less familiar with the Wagnerian universe will find it a definitive outline of the man, his work, and his influence.

—Duane W. Roller

The Wagner Society of Israel

An Interview with Jonathan Livny, Founder

There was no shortage of events and dates to mark in Bayreuth this year. It was the bicentennial celebration of Franz Liszt's birth, the 100th Bayreuth Festival, the closure of Haus Wahnfried for an extensive remodel. There was also the performance of the *Siegfried Idyll* by the Israel Chamber Orchestra under the leadership of Roberto Paternostro. Maestro Paternostro is Jewish and comes from a family which lost 80% of its members in the Holocaust. When the Israeli press announced this, it sparked controversy in Israel. It is this controversy which led to the founding of the Wagner Society of Israel by Jonathan Livny. Livny lives in Jerusalem where he is an attorney. I was able to conduct a lengthy interview with Mr. Livny over breakfast at the Arvena Kongress Hotel during the last week of the 2011 Festspiele. The following are excerpts of this interview.

TS: You and I travel the world to hear the works of Richard Wagner. How did you first get infected with this Wagner mania?

JL: My father was a German Jew. On my father's side we go back to the 1500s in Germany. We have a Stammbuch, a family tree, which traces our family back to 1530 in Hanau am Main. My father grew up in Hanau and then he completed university and a doctorate in Berlin, became a jurist and worked

for the German government. Then in 1933 the Nazis passed the Nürnberg Laws forbidding Jews to work for the State. My father always considered himself a German and so the next day he went to work. He was dragged by the scruff of his neck and was kicked down the stairs of his office. He went home and packed his suitcase and left. I still have letters of my grandmother admonishing him for leaving "Unser Deutschland". We felt that nothing could happen to us, my grandfather had been awarded the Iron Cross in WW I. German Jewery put German culture first and Wagner was part of German Jewish heritage. My father arrived in Palestine, then under British rule, with a picture album, clothes and Schallplatten [phonograph records]. In amongst those records was *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg.* I listened to Wagner since I was a kid. Later he bought the large 33 ⅓ albums with more Wagner. My father taught me that Wagner was great—the best composer in the world, but the worst person. My mother was Russian from Great Britain, her parents were from the Ukraine and my parents met in Haifa. I came to Wagner naturally. As I grew older I became more interested and eventually became a Ring-ie.

I despise Wagner as a human being and I won't even go to his grave. To me he is an abhorrent man and his anti-Semitism is of the worst kind. One of the difficulties that we have in Israel is that there is now a close and very special relationship with Germany. But, it took a long time to build. I am the second generation—it was my Father who fled Germany to Palestine. I understand the difficulties toward this country which literally vomited out the people who were it's mainstay in culture, commerce, in politics—in everything. In Germany Jews were equals. Think of people like Mendelssohn the philosopher, Mendelssohn the composer, Heine, Mahler, Einstein and Freud.

After that (Palestine became) the state of Israel and in the beginning everything German was boycotted. So now you see Israeli Jews driving Mercedes and VW.

Wagner is the only part of the German boycott which still remains and this is largely because he put his anti-Semitism into words.

TS: How did you come to found the Society?

JL: I maintain that you can separate Wagner the person from Wagner the musician.

The idea for a Society has been germinating in me for a long time. In Israel there is no official government sanction against Wagner. But, it has become a highly politicized issue. And as a liberal, I am against any kind of censorship of what you should listen to or what you should see. I founded the Society

when something pivotal happened. An Israeli orchestra—the Israel Chamber Orchestra—decided to play Wagner in Bayreuth and in Israel people went berserk. And the Orchestra, instead of standing by what they had decided to do, reacted and wouldn't even rehearse in Israel. And when I read that in the newspaper I got seven of the top people in the music community in Israel and I registered the Israel Wagner Society in November of last year (2010). The other impetus was last year in Bayreuth at the Southern California Wagner Society banquet all the other Societies had a representative stand and introduce their Society. I stood and said that next year I would like to be able to introduce the Wagner Society of Israel—I never dreamed it would take such a short period of time.

TS: Congratulations—Any way you look at it, it is tough to maintain a Wagner Society, retain membership, keep it vital, thriving and reach out to get new members. It's very tough. It's a challenge to our Society even after nearly 30 years. How do you intend to expand your Society?

JL: I get lots of free advertising—negative advertising in the press. In everything that comes up about Wagner, the press will add on "And the Wagner Society of Israel was founded this year". We had our first meeting about a month ago. Here is what we will try to do and what we plan to do: Our first project is to set up a lecture series on Wagner and his music, all across the country. And secondly, we are creating a website, because the Israelis are among the strongest users per capita of the Internet. And the third thing is that we are going to do a major concert which will be revolutionary. We are doing this with the very famous Israeli conductor Asher Fisch. The Society will hire the musicians and we will perform a complete act of a Wagner opera. We don't want to do just the *Wesendonck Lieder*, which we have done.

TS: When did you do that?

JL: We did that with Asher Fisch and his girlfriend who is a German singer. We took a hall in Tel Aviv and it (the concert) was part of a lecture series, a very popular lecture series. There was no furor. However this proposed concert will likely create a furor. To get an existing orchestra would be difficult, because orchestras depend heavily on public funding. They fear financial repercussions and so they are not willing to undertake this. Even the Israel Chamber Orchestra, when asked to repeat the program of Wagner, Mendelssohn, Mahler and Tzvi Avni, a German composer who currently lives

in Israel—they refuse to repeat the same concert in Israel. They are afraid of public opinion and the loss of public funding. So the Wagner Society of Israel concert will be funded through the sale of tickets and through fund raising. We will do it, it will become a fact and we will break the boycott. Wagner is not played on Public Radio—a very good public classical music station, 24 hours a day of classical music.

TS: Will you be reaching out to other Wagner Societies for support?

JL: Yes and I will be raising funds overseas (anyone wishing to help this new group may get instructions by emailing "WagnerSocNC@gmail.com").

TS: So tell me, what do you plan in the way of a lecture series? That's especially interesting to me because we have a very active, monthly series of lectures and when Wagner is performed we hold a symposium. What are you doing in the way of education?

JL: There are very well organized lecture series, music lecture series, throughout Israel. It is very popular in Israel, in nearly every city in Israel there are lectures through open universities, music schools, and so on. We intend to be influential in getting those existing series to consider presenting a series of lectures about Wagner. We know that in the music schools Wagner is taught very extensively and we have lots of music professors in Israel who are very, very keen on Wagner's music. We will do this by going through existing channels and not separately under the auspices of the Wagner Society of Israel.

TS: Our meetings are largely attended only by our own members. We did have an influx of non-members because of the advertising by the San Francisco Opera.

JL: The Wesendonck concert drew 250 people to a concert at 12:00 in the afternoon! It's an amazing thing—250 people came to a mid-afternoon Wagner concert in Tel Aviv.

TS: Who are your members, in general?

JL: We have a professor of Musicology, who is a famous musician. His great love is Verdi, but he is a very active member of our Society. We have a person who is the head of a music school. We have the widow of a judge. My wife is a

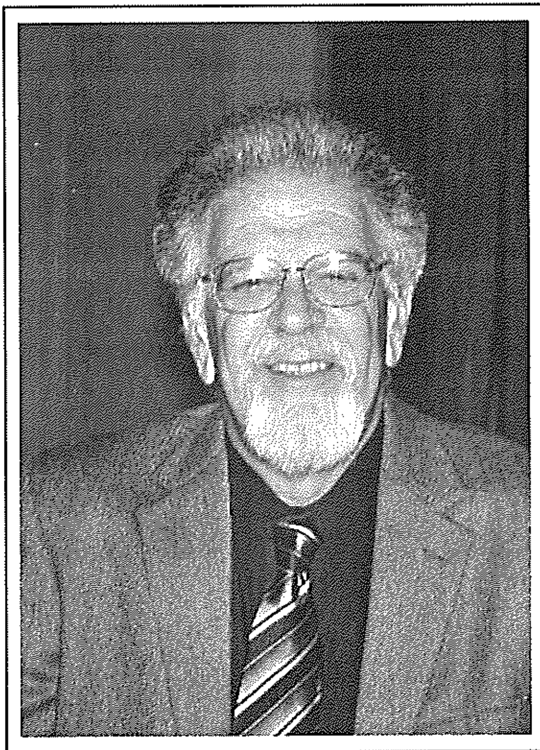
Wagnerian through immersion in our marriage and she is my partner in this craze of Wagner, but not quite as crazy as I am. We have people from all walks of life. A Society member [who happened to join us during the interview] is a great example—he's a physician and music lover. Our members are music lovers.

When we founded the Society a lot of people came out of the woodwork. We found out that there were many Israeli people who regularly attended Bayreuth. This is the first time there is an official group of Israeli Wagnerians in Bayreuth.

TS: We thank you for your time and on behalf of the members of the Wagner Society of Northern California, we wish you and the Wagner Society of Israel continued success.

—Terri Stuart

A Reminiscence



Steve Sokolow
1943 – 2011

(Continued from page 4)

was formed, I was not surprised to see Steve. I first attended the third meeting, as I recall, but I believe that he had been there from the first. Soon his scholarship with respect to Wagner became ever more apparent, as did his charming and always pleasant personality. I cannot recall meeting anyone who did not like him. Early on, he was elected to the Board of Directors; I did not follow until the mid-'80s. But we then served together on the Board and, of course, had many occasions when we worked with the others to resolve the sometimes contentious issues of this young organization. Because of his active association with the Wagner Society from its earliest days to the present and because of his remarkable fund of knowledge about Wagner, he had a great deal of authority—but he was never authoritarian.

Several years after I became the editor of *Leitmotive*, Steve and I started having lunch together to discuss Society matters—mostly as related to the journal. These meetings soon occurred several times a year, but were rarely set up more than a week in advance: it was almost always just the two of us. At a more recent lunch, probably last spring, Steve said to me, "You know, Bob, my real role with the Wagner Society is that of Rabbi." We both laughed, but there was much truth in what he had said.

Naturally, a lot of our talking centered around the journal, but often we discussed other matters as well. Lately, we worried together about what might happen if I could no longer be editor, and we worried about what we would

(Continued from page 30)

do if Terri Stuart were incapacitated. But, as I recently told Terri, it never occurred to either of us to plan for Steve no longer being able to be president—not much foresight on our part.

Well, Steve is gone now, struck down not by Hagen's spear, but by an equally potent assailant. We can be thankful that Steve did not have to experience the lengthy and painful explanations that Siegfried endured: from his own perspective, Steve's suffering was extremely brief. Even if the rest of us have felt a great loss and the unpleasant recognition of the reality of life and what it is all about, Steve's death, for Steve, was about as merciful as it gets.

But it is hard to let go of someone you have known so well for so very long, and especially when none of us was at all prepared for his demise—there was not even a hint that he was vulnerable. I doubt that he will ever be replaced.

WAGNER WROTE...

"But now the July Revolution took place [he was 16]; with one bound I became a revolutionist, and acquired the conviction that every decently active being ought to occupy himself with politics exclusively. I was only happy in the company of political writers, and I commenced an Overture upon a political theme. Thus I was minded, when I left school and went to the university: not, indeed, to devote myself to studying for any profession—for my musical career was now resolved on—but to attend lectures on philosophy and aesthetics. By this opportunity of improving my mind I profited as good as nothing, but gave myself up to all the excesses of student life; and with such reckless levity, that they very soon revolted me. My relations [family] were now sorely troubled about me, for I had almost entirely abandoned my music. Yet I speedily came to my senses; I felt the need of a completely new beginning of strict and methodical study of music, and Providence led me to the very man best qualified to inspire me with fresh love for the thing [Theodor Weinlig]."

— From the *Autobiographic Sketch* (included in the volume titled "The Art-Work of the Future and Other Works," (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1993) p6. Translated about 1895 by William Ashton Ellis.

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