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John Warrack. *Richard Wagner: Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. Cambridge Opera Handbooks. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. x, 175 pp. ISBN 0-521-44444-6 (hardcover), 0-521-44895-6 (softcover)

Michael Tanner. *Wagner*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996. x, 236 pp. ISBN 0-691-01162-1 (hardcover). Published in Canada and the United Kingdom by Harper Collins

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Astoundingly, there is one place where Luther's translation differs in a very poignant way from the RSV, and this difference is not noted. BWV 109, *Ich glaube, lieber Herr*, is based on Mark 9:24. A father brings his son to Jesus to be healed. Because of an evil spirit, the boy "foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid." But Jesus turns the tables on the father and tells him that the boy will be healed only if the father has faith, for "all things are possible to him who believes." According to the RSV, the father "cried out and said, 'I believe; help my unbelief!'" In Luther's version, however, the father's plight is made even more dire by the fact that he cried out "mit Tränen" ("with tears"). This very real distinction between the two texts doubtless warrants attention.

Following the main body of the work are a number of indices which help to guide the scholar through the vast repertoire. These include indices of chorale stanzas, librettists, first performance dates, chronological ordering, and liturgical ordering. One quibble about the organization of the book is that although the cantata texts often go on for three or four pages, the headers do not indicate which cantata is being treated. Searches through this very thick volume would be greatly facilitated if such headers had have been included.

All in all, this is an extraordinarily helpful book. The interlinear translations are accurate and literal and the complementary biblical allusions can save a great deal of time that would have been spent pouring over a biblical concordance. Despite the small criticisms noted above, I would encourage any (English-speaking) student of the cantatas to acquire this volume, and I hope that it will be found in all university library music-reference collections.

David Hill

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The invaluable Cambridge Opera Handbook series has been curiously slow to publish volumes on Wagner and Verdi.¹ As such, the appearance of John Warrack's volume on *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* should be cause for celebration, but unfortunately this celebration is somewhat marred by the old-fashionedness — indeed fustiness — of much of the work. A not-dissimilar reaction is occasioned by aspects Michael Tanner's new *apologia* for the composer, entitled simply *Wagner*. Since *Meistersinger* assumes a prominent

¹Other than the *Meistersinger* volume under review, only *Parsifal* (edited by Lucy Beckett) has appeared in the series to date.

place in the difficulties with Tanner's work, and since Tanner himself is a contributor to Warrack's handbook, it seems appropriate to treat both together.

Both works share a now-outmoded view of reception: the belief that Wagner's work(s) are properly interpreted only according to the contexts and conditions in which they were written. Such a belief assumes that the only valid criteria for criticism are those of the composer's lifetime, that works are "frozen" at the death of the author — the physical death, that is, not some poststructural one (which in fact is the problem in a nutshell). In the case of Wagner, this conveniently excuses the composer from what Warrack delicately refers to as the "then-distant future horrors of German nationalism" (p. 31). Wagner's appropriation by Hitler and the National Socialists is of particular relevance to *Die Meistersinger*, since the work was performed annually at Hitler's express wish at the Nuremberg *Reichsparteitage*. Yet works of art continue to accrue meanings as they pass through the years to the present. Such meanings, however distasteful, cannot simply be foreclosed by critical fiat — the move from work to text is now too clearly established. Pieces do not exist in a vacuum, simply "reflecting" their times. Rather, they both reflect and prescribe — and continue their prescriptive force into the present.

My initial plan was to censure Warrack's handbook for its conspicuous silence about the possible anti-Semitic aspects of *Die Meistersinger*, but after reading Tanner's ill-tempered screed on the subject, perhaps silence is preferable. There has been considerable debate on the subject in recent years, both in print and over the Internet. While Marc Weiner's *Richard Wagner and the Anti-Semitic Imagination* did not appear until after the publication of Warrack's handbook,² the arguments of the other central figure in the debate, Barry Millington, are ignored in the Cambridge volume. Briefly, Millington's view is that *Die Meistersinger* needs to be understood alongside Wagner's contemporary xenophobic and anti-Semitic *Was ist deutsch?* (1865) and *Deutsche Kunst und deutsches Reich* (1867). He suggests that Wagner's portrayal of Beckmesser is based not only on the stereotypical description of Jews in his notorious pamphlet *Das Judentum in der Musik* (1850), but also that it conforms to a common stock of anti-Semitic stereotypes found in nineteenth-century Germany in general, and in the Grimm brothers' anti-Semitic folktale *Der Jude im Dorn* (The Jew in the thorn-bush) in particular.³

While some of Millington's points could perhaps be debated, he certainly deserves more respect than the sneering dismissal of him as a "leading 'expert'" (note the scare quotes) by Tanner (p. 15). Within one paragraph, it is implied that Millington is incompetent and absurd. In a chapter, revealingly entitled "Prejudices and Banalities," Tanner — effecting grand distaste — argues that Wagner's anti-Semitism was not worse than that of Luther, Kant, or Marx and at any rate cannot invade the works themselves. To Tanner, Wagner was the

²Marc A. Weiner, *Richard Wagner and the Anti-Semitic Imagination* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995).

³Barry Millington, "Nuremberg Trial: Is There Anti-Semitism in *Die Meistersinger*," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 3 (1991): 247–60. Millington's latest response, "Wagner Washes Whiter," *The Musical Times* 137 (December 1996): 5–8, conveniently cites the previous contributions to the debate.

most explicit of men and would not bother to encode his hatred of the Jews had he wanted his works to express it; for him, the very intricacy of Millington's argument stands as its own refutation. Tanner does not seem to grasp that ideologies work principally through *false* consciousness, and curiously seems to value the unexamined aesthetic response over reflection (seen in his anti-academic comments throughout), thus ironically reproducing the very intoxicated response to Wagner that he traces in *Wagner* (pp. 46–47, for example).⁴ Given Wagner's anti-Semitism (which Tanner does not deny), reflected not only in public pronouncements, but also in his shameful treatment of Jewish colleagues such as Hermann Levi, and the terrible use to which Wagner's writings and works were placed in the Nazi era, it is surely too much to write that Wagner's "most vexing feature" is his "capacity for making writers on him, many of them securely established in academic jobs, reveal their priggish and disapproving lack of imagination" (p. 25).

Despite Tanner's clear reluctance to engage seriously some very real questions occasioned by Wagner, his book will be welcomed by those who love Wagner's works above all. Indeed, it is Tanner's primary argument that the works themselves are the only things worthy of study. Written in a vigorous and often witty, if occasionally contentious, style, Tanner's book continually sheds new light on these well-known works while simultaneously interrogating many of our reactions to Wagner. For example, it is *Tristan und Isolde* rather than *Parsifal* that is examined as a religious drama: "along with Bach's St. Matthew Passion, ... one of the two greatest religious works of our culture" (p. 140). It is "a work of anti-civilization" and "we worship it partly because we are unable to understand it"; it marks the defeat of criticism (pp. 154–55). While following broadly chronological lines in which a chapter is devoted to each work (with *Tristan* and *Meistersinger* coming properly between the acts of *Siegfried*) Tanner traces several themes throughout. The first, the relationship between the absolute artist and society, is applied to both Wagner's heroes and the composer himself. A second theme uncovered by Tanner might be termed, tabloid-style, When Good People Do Bad Things: Wagnerian characters, like the Dutchman, Tannhäuser, Wotan, Tristan, Amfortas, Kundry, and Parsifal tend to deal with the consequences of their (bad) earlier actions by either committing some extreme act or by being redeemed through the intercession of another person. Finally, in a rather brilliant move, Tanner parallels the existential nature of many Wagnerian characters — their longing for death arising out of a paradoxical wish to be truly alive, to live life to its utmost — with the response awakened by the works themselves: it is impossible to be indifferent to Wagner. Like Thomas Mann's writings about Wagner, which *Wagner* most closely resembles, Tanner's provocative and occasionally frustrating book will reward repeated readings with new insights about old works.

⁴On p. 211, for example, he discusses the phenomenon of born-again Wagnerism: an overwhelming first encounter with the Master, after which authors either go no further beyond this initial response, or feel compelled to "displace it by endless discussions of one or another aspect of the life and work which are, in the end, quite pointless."

Unlike Mann's celebrated ambivalence, which underlies all of his Wagnerian writings, Tanner reveals only his love for the composer.

In *Wagner*, Tanner makes it quite clear from that outset that he will eschew "musical technicalities" (p. ix) in favour of an exploration of the effect and themes of the works. Warrack's *Meistersinger* handbook could almost make the same claim, as it contains rather a lot on the background and the text itself, as well as productions of the work, and surprisingly little about the music. Four chapters are by Warrack himself; two are by Lucy Beckett, one by Michael Tanner, and one by Patrick Carnegie.

Warrack's first three chapters deal with the basic materials of the work: the sources and genesis of the text, the synopsis, and the historical background of the *Meistersinger* and their art. His discussion of Wagner's changing views about Hans Sachs and his significance during the creative process (pre- and post-Schopenhauer) is usefully supplemented by translation of many of Wagner's sketches and drafts for the text. Warrack traces Wagner's exposure to and use of such well-known sources as Jakob Grimm's *Über den altdeutschen Meistergesang* (Göttingen, 1811) and Johann Christoph Wagenseil's Nuremberg Chronicle (*De Sacri Rom. Imperii libera civitate Norimbergensi commentatio* [Altdorf, 1697]), as well as those not so familiar: E.T.A. Hoffmann's story *Meister Martin der Kufner* (1819) and *Norika* (a *Nürnbergische Novellen aus alter Zeit*) by August Hagen (Leipzig, 1827), among others. He also does not fail to mention the operas by Johann Ludwig Deinhardstein (1827) and Albert Lortzing (1840), *Die Meistersinger's* operatic ancestors. The chapter on the historical *Meistersinger* informs us about the men and their occupations, the rules of the guild, and the rules of composition for both poems and music (*Töne*). Of particular interest is Warrack's elucidation of "Wach' auf," the chorale sung by the crowd in praise of Sachs at the beginning of the last scene. The nightingale mentioned in the text is none other than Luther himself, and in *Die Meistersinger* Wagner sets the first eight lines of Hans Sachs's own poetic ode to the great Reformer, *Die Wittenbergisch Nachtigall* (1523), to a Lutheran chorale of his own devising.

In his final chapter, Warrack uses Hans Sachs's great monologue on the idea of *Wahn* (illusion) as a springboard for considering some of the larger issues awakened by the work: the tension between order and disorder, balance and constriction, and adventure and chaos (p. 111). While this may seem an oddly narrowing choice for the single chapter in the volume devoted primarily to consideration of the music itself, in practice it works well. Although his focus is primarily on the monologue, Warrack is able to allude to many of the most salient features of key and theme which structure the work as a whole.

Lucy Beckett's first chapter, "Sachs and Schopenhauer," is devoted to disagreeing with the supposedly common view that *Die Meistersinger* is not a Schopenhauerian work, but rather is Nietzschean in its unabashed affirmation of life, its unrelenting sunniness and good humour.⁵ She would see it instead as

⁵I am not fully convinced by this alleged sunniness. Beckett writes, "if [!] there is a dark streak in *Die Meistersinger* it has usually been found only in the pantomime cruelty of Beckmesser's humiliation" (p. 76). Leaving aside for a moment the later National Socialist appropriation of the work, which is (or

the most Schopenhauerian of Wagner's works and the clearest demonstration of Schopenhauer's ethical conclusions about the necessity of renunciation, embodied of course in Sachs. The bulk of her discussion demonstrates how Wagner's plans for *Die Meistersinger* changed after he was introduced to Schopenhauer's writings by Georg Herwegh in 1854, and she cleverly notes that, just as Wagner's focus in the *Ring* shifts from Siegfried in the 1840s to Wotan in the 1850s, so too does his focus shift in the genesis of *Die Meistersinger* from Walther to Hans Sachs. For Beckett, Sachs is the perfect embodiment of the Schopenhauer's teachings. She might usefully have furthered her discussion of the Schopenhauerian implications of *Not* (need, distress) and *Wahn* by examining what Curt Mey regarded as a musical *Urmotiv*: the first four notes of the motive that opens the third act.⁶ This gesture, which is especially prominent in the third strophe of the *Schusterlied* and in the great scene of renunciation in act III, is an example of what Hans von Wolzogen termed a "parallel": a "word" from the expressive language of music in general, and — unlike a leitmotive — found in similar contexts in different works. The gesture in question is found in both the *Ring* and *Tristan und Isolde*.⁷ In *I Saw the World End*, Deryck Cooke saw it as a love motive, which of course has Schopenhauerian connotations: love, particularly sexual love, is precisely the opposite of renunciation, and is, for Schopenhauer, a great evil.⁸ This musical gesture comes into play later in the volume as well. Michael Tanner's very odd chapter about themes of redemption and coping in the work ("Richard Wagner and Hans Sachs") tries to distance *Meistersinger* from the metaphysical profundities of *Tristan* by focussing upon the moment of their closest contact: the climactic scene in the third act when Walther sings the last verse of his song to Eva and Sachs. Here, Eva "is clearing shaping up for the role of Isolde" but is cut off firmly by Sachs, who has no wish to share King Mark's fate (the famous quotation of the beginning of *Tristan*) and brusquely cuts off Eva's "brief flirtation with the metaphysics of transcendental love" (p. 93). According to Tanner, her next utterance, in the Quintet, could never be sung by Isolde, yet Eva's solo opening is punctuated by the *Not* motive which, as we have mentioned, Isolde *does* sing (beginning of act II, Frau Minne episode). Clearly Eva is not over it yet. The ambivalence that Tanner traces in *Meistersinger* must be extended towards his chapter as well, and readers should perhaps be directed instead to what he has to say about it in his own book, discussed above (although

should be) impossible to forget in the massive processions of the last act and in Sachs's final address — not that the address was *intended* as an expression of militant German nationalism, but it was interpreted as such in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s — Wagner's treatment of Beckmesser is difficult to overlook. Mocked from the outset, he is beaten by the rioting mob at the end of act II, and in the last act, after his public humiliation, is expelled from the body politic of Nuremberg. This is a rather sobering portrayal of mob rule and is certainly more than a "pantomime."

⁶Curt Mey, *Die Musik als tönende Weltidee: Versuch einer Metaphysik der Musik. Erster Teil: Die metaphysischen Urgesetze der Melodik* (Leipzig: Hermann Seemann Nachfolger, 1901), 292–303, esp. 297–98.

⁷For a detailed study of the gesture in question, see Jeffrey L. Stokes, "Contour and Motive: A Study of 'Flight' and 'Love' in Wagner's 'Ring,' 'Tristan,' and 'Meistersinger'" (Ph.D. diss., SUNY Buffalo, 1984).

⁸Deryck Cooke, *I Saw the World End: A Study of Wagner's Ring* (London: Oxford, 1979), 48–62, esp. 61.

he does makes some interesting points about the bittersweet endings of many great comedies, like *Le nozze di Figaro* or *Così fan tutte*).

Beckett's second chapter, "*Die Meistersinger*: naïve or sentimental art?," interprets *Die Meistersinger* as a "secondary epic," a largely sentimental, reflective, and reflexive work. Although she does clearly allude to Schiller's use of *sentimentalisch*, she is never quite clear about its opposite, naïve, although it is employed in the chapter's title.⁹ This view of the work as a secondary epic is paralleled with Carl Dahlhaus's idea of "secondary diatonicism," and the phenomenal songs (that is, those sections of the work heard as music by the fictional characters on stage — Walter's songs, for example) of the work are examined in some detail. Towards the end of the chapter, she tries to recuperate aspects of the naïve into her interpretation, so that *Die Meistersinger* is seen, finally, as a synthesis of both, but her reluctance to define "naïve" makes this critical move rather hard to accept, since until the final two pages she has been primarily concerned with the sentimental.

As already noted, there is very little mention about the anti-Semitic content of the work: Millington's work is nowhere cited, and the possible implications of modelling Beckmesser after Eduard Hanslick are not explored. The handbook is also reticent about the work's later history in the Third Reich. In fact, Patrick Carnegy's interesting chapter on the stage history of *Die Meistersinger* is the only one to mention it in any detail. Warrack's reluctance to explore the issue of anti-Semitism and his resistance to a critical interpretation of the work which encompasses the intervening 130-some years are disappointing. It may be symptomatic of the overall old-fashionedness of approach that the bibliography is not current; it omits both Ray Komow's award-winning dissertation on Wagner's sketches and drafts for the work, and William Kinderman's recent article on the *Schusterlied*.¹⁰

Stephen McClatchie

David Kimbell. *Italian Opera*. National Traditions of Opera, no. 2. General editor: John Warrack. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. xviii, 684 pp. ISBN 0-521-46643-1 (softcover).

Nearly four years after its initial release in hardcover, David Kimbell's imposing study on the traditions of Italian opera has now been released in paperback. This fact alone represents something of an accomplishment for its publisher, especially given the bulk of the book. Although its contents remain unchanged, the publisher has requested a series of new reviews. What follows, then, represents some philosophical musings concerning a book which may already be familiar to some readers.

⁹Nor does she actually give a source for Schiller's distinction, which may be found in his "On Naive and Sentimental Poetry" (*Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* [1795]), translated by Julius A. Elias (New York: Ungar, 1966).

¹⁰Ray Komow, "The Genesis and Tone of 'Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg'" (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1991); William Kinderman, "Hans Sachs's 'Cobbler's Song,' *Tristan*, and the 'Bitter Cry of the Resigned Man'," *Journal of Musicological Research* 13 (1993): 161–84. Komow's research won a prestigious AMS-50 Fellowship from the American Musicological Society.