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978-0-521-51996-0 - Richard Wagner: Self-Promotion and the Making of a Brand

Nicholas Vazsonyi

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Richard Wagner

All modern artists have had to market themselves in some way. Richard Wagner may just have done it better than anyone else. In a self-promotional effort that began around 1840 in Paris, and lasted for the remainder of his career, Wagner claimed convincingly that he was the most German composer ever and the true successor of Beethoven. More significantly, he was an opera composer who declared that he was not composing operas. Instead, during the 1850s, he mapped out a new direction, conceiving of works that would break with tradition and be literally “brand new.” This is the first study to examine the innovative ways in which Wagner made himself a celebrity, promoting himself using every means available: autobiography, journal articles, short stories, newspaper announcements, letters, even his operas themselves. Vazsonyi reveals how Wagner created a niche for his works in the crowded opera market that continues to be unique.

NICHOLAS VAZSONYI is Associate Professor of German and Comparative Literature at the University of South Carolina. He is the author of *Lukács Reads Goethe: From Aestheticism to Stalinism* (1997) and the editor of *Searching for Common Ground: Diskurse zur deutschen Identität 1750–1871* (2000) and *Wagner’s Meistersinger: Performance, History, Representation* (2003).

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To my parents

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Acknowledgments

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*

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“Beethoven Instrumentalized: Richard Wagner’s Self-Marketing & Media Image,” *Music & Letters* 89.2 (2008), 195–211.

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“Selling the *Ring*: Wagner’s ‘Enterprise,’” *Inside the Ring, Essays on Wagner’s Opera Cycle*, ed. John DiGaetani (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006), 51–68.

The illustration on the cover, *Richard Wagner* (1871) by Franz von Lenbach, is reproduced with permission of the Nationalarchiv der Richard-Wagner-Stiftung, Bayreuth.

A note on translation and style

In the case of original texts by Richard Wagner, I have used my own translation throughout in consultation with published translations, if they exist. Where the German original is of particular interest, because of Wagner’s choice of words, I have included the full text in the footnotes. In some cases, a single word or short phrase is so striking or significant, that I have included the German in parentheses immediately after the English. Titles of Wagner’s stage and prose works will be given in English, unless the German version is either identical, or the more commonly used form. Hence, *The Flying Dutchman*, but *Parsifal* and *Die Meistersinger*. Specifically in the case of Wagner’s essay “Das Judentum in der Musik,” I depart from the standard translation of “Judentum” as “Judaism” and follow instead Barry Millington’s more fortuitous and faithful “Jewishness in Music,” a version he has used consistently since the publication of his *Wagner* (1984, rev. edn 1992).

In the case of originally German texts by authors other than Wagner, I use the standard English translation (e.g. with Nietzsche and Adorno) unless otherwise indicated. However, most nineteenth-century sources, such as articles from the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, have no published translation, so all translations are again my own. As with the Wagner texts, I include the German original parenthetically or in the footnotes where it seems justified.

In order to facilitate consultation of the German text, I have opted for the aesthetically less appealing footnote, rather than the currently more standard endnote form.

Abbreviations

DHA	Heine, Heinrich. <i>Historisch-Kritische Gesamtausgabe der Werke</i> . Ed. Manfred Windfuhr. Düsseldorf: Hoffmann u. Campe, 1973–97.
DS	Wagner, Richard. <i>Dichtungen und Schriften</i> . Jubiläumsausgabe. 10 vols. Ed. Dieter Borchmeyer. Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1983.
ML	Wagner, Richard. <i>Mein Leben</i> . Ed. Martin Gregor-Dellin. Munich: List, 1963.
NZfM	<i>Neue Zeitschrift für Musik</i>
SB	Wagner, Richard. <i>Sämtliche Briefe</i> . Ed. on behalf of the Richard-Wagner-Stiftung in Bayreuth by Gertrud Strobel and Werner Wolf et al. 18 vols. to date. Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1967–2000; Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1999–.
SSD	Wagner, Richard. <i>Sämtliche Schriften und Dichtungen</i> . Volksausgabe. 16 vols. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, n.d. [1911].
SW	Herder, Johann Gottfried. <i>Sämtliche Werke</i> . 33 vols. Ed. Bernhard Suphan. Hildesheim: Olms, 1994.