A

Abgesang. See *CANZONA*

Absolute music. An aesthetic term typically used to characterize a musical work lacking extra-musical signifiers, such as text or visual images. Broadly conceived, it goes back to the beginning of music aesthetics, but it was Wagner who coined the term.

1. Wagner's negative definition
2. Wagner's change of attitude toward (absolute) music
3. Absolute music as a positive concept

1. Wagner's negative definition

The phrase "absolute music" first appeared as a negative term in Wagner's 1846 *Faust*-inspired PROGRAM NOTES to BEETHOVEN's Ninth Symphony. He described the fourth movement as "almost leaving the confines of absolute music" (die Schranken der absoluten Musik fast schon verlassend, SSD 2:61) with the opening recitative that prepares for the later introduction of words. Because it occurs just once, and without any explanation, there is little evidence to contradict the impression that Wagner used the phrase without intending to coin a term or to refer to anything beyond the immediate context of the instrumental, as opposed to the choral, movements of the symphony.

Three years later, Wagner used the term again in the series of writings from ZURICH. Here, he used it in an emphatically negative way. It seems that Wagner consciously borrowed the term "Absolute" from philosophy, specifically from FEUERBACH's critique of HEGEL. As a philosophical term, Absolute indicates the highest and most abstract value. It is central to the idealist philosophy of Kant, Fichte, SCHELLING, and, above all, Hegel. Absolute-oriented thought dominated philosophy well after Hegel's death. However, with the publication of *Towards a Critique of Hegelian Philosophy* (1839), Feuerbach declared that metaphysical speculation, focused on the Absolute, denied the sensuous materiality of life. Proposing an alternative to Absolute Spirit as a creation of philosophical thought, Feuerbach advocated a more anthropological approach based on the immediacy of sensuous experience. He suggested a radical reordering of being over thinking, the sensuous over the spiritual.

In the wake of Feuerbach's critique, the Absolute became an easy target in the second half of the century. SCHOPENHAUER, who considered himself the archenemy of Hegel, finally became famous when his attack on the Absolute as a metaphysical swindle found resonance.

When Wagner began using the term, then, it had recently received a bold reversal in value, plunging from the unassailable limit of thought to the problematic basis of idealist philosophy. Wagner may have appropriated it in the broadest sense to make the parallel between Feuerbach's radical critique of the venerable Hegelian tradition and his own critique of the Beethovenian heritage. The term further seems to fit Wagner's use in its standing for an abstract system out of touch with reality.

Wagner used the adjective "absolute" pejoratively in *Kunst und Revolution* (1849) but did not refer to "absolute Musik" until his next publication from the same year, *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft*, where it appeared always in relation to Beethoven, "the hero who explored the broad, shoreless sea of absolute music [uferlose[s] Meer der absoluten Musik] to its end and won the new undreamed-of coasts, so that this sea no longer divides continents but rather connects them" (SSD 3:85; PW 1:115). As in Wagner's 1846 essay, Beethoven is portrayed as the composer who finished off absolute music in his Ninth Symphony by introducing words and voices. In a manner somewhat like Feuerbach, Wagner argued that the dialectic of history had made absolute music a thing of the past, and that the time had come to envision an "artwork of the future," a phrase that echoed Feuerbach's call for a "philosophy of the future."

Wagner initially used the term solely in relation to Beethoven's Ninth in order to designate a type of instrumental music that had ended with Beethoven, but his use changed in *Oper und Drama* (Opera and Drama, 1851), where he used "absolute" to characterize not only music, but also other alienated and limited things. Absolute music appears frequently in Parts I and III along with, most often, "absolute Melodie," and "absolute[r] Musiker," but also "absolute Dichtkunst" (poetry), "absolute Glaube" (faith), "absolute Monarchie," and many others. After this excess of absolutes, Wagner seems to have exhausted his contempt for the concept. The only other person who expounded on absolute music at this time was his disciple Theodor Uhlig, who took up the term in his articles for the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* from 1850 to 1852. Wagner did not use the term again, except in one ambiguous context in his 1857 essay *Über Franz Liszts symphonische Dichtungen* (On Franz Liszt's Symphonic Poems).

2. Wagner's change of attitude toward (absolute) music

This 1857 essay, published as an open letter in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, is ambiguous because it is not clear how much it evidences a move toward Schopenhauer's view of music. There are certainly passages that praise music in a way that seems to indicate a different mindset than that of *Oper und Drama*, for instance:

> For music is so chaste, sincere, and inspiring by nature that everything it touches is transformed. But just as certain is the fact that music can only be perceived in forms which were originally foreign to it, forms derived from external aspects of human experience. Such forms achieve their latent and truest significance when applied to music in this way. Nothing (NB: as it is revealed to human experience) is less absolute than music, and the champions of an absolute music [die Verfechter einer absoluten Musik]

> obviously don't realize what they are saying. To point out their confusion it would suffice to have them name, if they could, any music whose form is not derived from corporeal motion or from verse (according to the causal circumstances).
>
> (SSD 5:191; TRANS. GREY 425)

Here, Wagner offers a dualistic understanding of music in which there is music itself, its essence, and the music accessed by humans through form; absolute music exists but humans cannot access it; therefore music as we know it is not absolute because all of it comes to us through form-giving dance or poetry. Whereas before Wagner had condemned absolute music, here he denies it ever could even exist as music – which in turn creates an unacknowledged contradiction. In his later writings, Wagner continued to avoid renouncing what he had written earlier, leading to infinite confusion.

Most accounts of Wagner's changing AESTHETICS describe a move from the early 1850s, in which he insisted music must serve the drama, to a belief in the primacy of music: in short, he switched from the philosophy of Feuerbach to that of Schopenhauer, from anti-Romanticism to Romanticism, from anti-metaphysics to metaphysics. However, Carl DAHLHAUS has presented a different account of Wagner and absolute music. He argues that although Wagner only used the *term* absolute music in a negative way, his *idea* of absolute music was a positive part of his aesthetic views throughout his life, even in the Zurich writings. For Dahlhaus, the idea of absolute music was that instrumental music, previously maligned for its lack of representational capabilities, was discovered to convey an alternative world by virtue of its very lack. This was first articulated by the early Romantics (Wackenroder and Tieck), shared by HANSLICK, and pushed to its extreme (music would exist even if the real world didn't) by Schopenhauer. Dahlhaus claims that this idea of absolute music was so strong throughout the nineteenth century that it even underlay attacks, such as Wagner's in the 1850s.

3. Absolute music as a positive concept

In 1857, Wagner referred to the "champions of absolute music," presumably Hanslick and supporters of Hanslick, especially in the *Niederrheinische Musikzeitung*. However, this was Wagner's phrase. Hanslick did not call himself a "champion of absolute music" and did not use the term. After the early part of the 1850s, the term is scarcely to be found in either a positive or negative sense for decades. It was only around 1880 that the opposition "program music and absolute music" became the burning aesthetic debate of the later nineteenth century, with Hanslick, BRAHMS, and Dvořák most often associated with the absolute music camp.

After Wagner's death, a few of his supporters tried to retake the term. Using some very twisted reasoning, Rudolf Louis described Bruckner's symphonies as absolute music and claimed these instrumental works were consistent with Wagner's aesthetic beliefs. After the massive upheaval of World War I, however, Romantic metaphysical music became anathema; absolute music took on a new meaning, and lost its historical beginnings with Wagner.

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Actors and Singers. See *Über Schauspieler und Sänger* (1872)

Adorno, Theodor Wiesengrund (b. Frankfurt am Main, 11 Sep. 1903; d. Visp, Switzerland, 6 Aug. 1969), sociologist, musicologist, philosopher, founding member of influential Frankfurt School. Studied philosophy, music and sociology in Frankfurt, and music in Vienna with Alban Berg. Appointment at Frankfurt University (1930), left Germany in 1933, exile in United States 1938–49 (primarily New York and Los Angeles), returned to Frankfurt after the war. A product of German idealism (especially HEGEL and NIETZSCHE) tempered by the Weimar years, Adorno developed a Marxist-based theory of mass culture influenced by the sociologist Max Weber. Idealism and Marxism thus formed the twin poles of his dialectical approach to Wagner.

1. *In Search of Wagner* (1937–1938)
2. "Wagner's Relevance for Today" (1963)
3. "On the Score of *Parsifal*" (1956)

1. *In Search of Wagner* (Versuch über Wagner) (1937–1938)

Adorno's most substantial contribution to Wagner criticism, written between autumn 1937 and spring 1938, and partially revised before publication in book form in 1952. It is intimately bound up with Frankfurt School co-founder Max Horkheimer's essay "Egoism and the Movement for Emancipation: Toward an Anthropology of the Bourgeois Era" (1936), and is essentially a Marxist critique of Wagner the great bourgeois. For Adorno, Wagner is a paradigmatic figure in the post-1848, early industrial period during which the bourgeoisie emerged as a political force. His works, as products of this age, "provide eloquent evidence of the early phase of bourgeois decadence" (153). But, in the course of ten densely argued chapters, Adorno goes well beyond a simple Marxist critique by homing in on the ambiguities and contradictions in Wagner, especially the central paradox that the "qualities that prompted his contemporaries to speak of 'decadence' is also the path to artistic success" (44). This provides the critical agenda for a complex interweaving of philosophy, ideology, and a penetrating music criticism honed by his studies with Berg. Adorno manages to touch on something approaching a comprehensive discussion of the composer and his work.

Just to mention a few topics: he identifies the "allegorical rigidity of leitmotif" (46), critiquing the inherent tension between the static nature of the LEITMOTIV as "miniature pictures" (45) and the dynamic requirements of musical development over an extended period: "Allegorical rigidity has infected the motive like a disease. The gesture becomes frozen as a picture of what it expresses" (46). In Wagner's harmony, he sees an ambiguity which becomes in itself a means of expression: "In Beethoven and well into high Romanticism the expressive values of harmony are fixed: dissonance stands for negation and suffering, consonance for fulfillment and the positive" (67). He praises Wagner's "art of ORCHESTRATION" as "the productive share of

color in the musical process 'in such a way that color itself becomes action' . . . something that did not exist before Wagner" (71). *LOHENGRIN* marks the point at which the principle of instrumental combination becomes structurally significant. Adorno's concept of phantasmagoria is an important critical tool in understanding illusion in Wagner's works and, from a Marxist perspective, is a device by which "Wagner's operas tend to become commodities. Their tableaux assume the character of wares on display" (90). In one of the most quoted passages, Adorno suggests that "all the rejects of Wagner's works are caricatures of JEWS" (23).

In Search of Wagner pulls no critical punches. Nevertheless, Adorno's subtlety of argument and criticism, rooted in a profound knowledge of Wagner's scores, is offset by the difficulty of extracting that which is of lasting critical value from the time-specific ideology driven by his Marxist agenda.

2. "Wagner's Relevance for Today" (1963)

In September 1963, Adorno gave a lecture in Berlin, "Wagner's Relevance for Today," in which he revisits his earlier work in a critique of its underlying thesis, "that of the relation between societal aspects on the one hand and compositional/aesthetic aspects on the other" (584). The musical criticism also expands on some earlier points, such as Wagner's use of sequence, which throws new light on the problem of allegorical rigidity as antithetical to musical development. Reviewing Wagner from a post-1945 perspective, Adorno "comments about the historical changes in the attitude towards Wagner's art," declaring "I cannot ignore the political aspect. Too much catastrophe has been visited on living beings for a consideration that purports to be purely aesthetic to close its eyes to it" (585). To the later Adorno, it is not possible "to separate out the ideological and hold on to pure art" (587). The motor of his critical agenda is the paradox that "what is magnificent in his [Wagner's] work cannot be separated from what is questionable" (596).

3. "On the Score of *Parsifal*" (1956)

In 1956 Adorno wrote a short essay "On the Score of *PARSIFAL*" which, for those who find *In Search of Wagner* and its sequel forbidding and convoluted, contains the essence of his thought. Its subtle probing of the elusive musical character of *Parsifal* as aural experience goes some way towards explaining the cultic, elliptical character of the work. "It is as if the style of *Parsifal* attempts not only to present the musical ideas, but also to compose their own aura to accompany them; this aura forms not in the moment of the event, but in its aftermath. One can only follow the intention by submitting even more to the music's echo than to the music itself" (73).

Adorno's Wagner criticism is comparable only with NIETZSCHE's later Wagner polemics and Thomas MANN's *The Sorrows and Grandeur of Richard Wagner* as a response to the excesses and distortions of the cult of Wagner worship. The cultural issues he identifies in Wagner's works (ANTI-SEMITIC caricature, eroticism, political significance, etc.) have to a greater or lesser extent driven Wagner debate since the middle of the twentieth century; his criticism of Wagner's music raises many important challenges which have yet to be met.

ROGER ALLEN

Theodor Adorno, *In Search of Wagner* (see bibliography).
"Wagner's Relevance for Today," *Essays on Music* (see bibliography): 584–602.
"On the Score of *Parsifal*," trans. and commentary by Anthony Barone, *Music & Letters* 76.3 (1995): 384–97.
Max Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music* (Cambridge University Press, 1993).

See also SEXUALITY AND EROTICISM

Aesthetics.

Wagner's aesthetics may seem a formidable topic yet, despite the labyrinthine complexities of some of his major theoretical statements and the convoluted prose in which he habitually expressed himself, his artistic agenda is readily defined: to realize an ideal fusion of poetry and music as a means of dramatic expression. There is no general agreement as to the extent to which Wagner's aesthetics remained consistent; it is certainly true that his view of the comparative importance of music and poetry underwent several changes during his career. Yet this underlying aesthetic trajectory of realizing to the full the expressive potential of dramatic poetry through music remained constant from his earliest writings to the essays of his last years and, in spite of numerous diversions along the way, provides a fundamental cohesion to his creative project. Preoccupation with the relationship between poetry and music is apparent in one of the earliest articles attributed to him, *Pasticcio* (1834), in which he compares the current state of German opera unfavorably with the expressive qualities of the Italian style; he looks forward to the day when "a man will come who in this good style will re-establish the shattered unity between poetry and song" (SSD 12:9; PW 8:64).

1. The writings of the Paris years (1839–1842)
2. The Zurich essays (1849–1852)
3. Schopenhauer
4. *Beethoven* (1870)
5. Last years

1. The writings of the Paris years (1839–1842)

The journeyman Wagner's writings from PARIS are significant in charting both his aesthetic development during his formative years, and the evolving connection between his artistic program and a political agenda bound up with wider societal concerns. In 1840 and 1841 he produced three writings which first appeared in French translation in the *REVUE ET GAZETTE MUSICALE DE PARIS* and subsequently in the *Abend-Zeitung* (DRESDEN). They are cast in narrative form and are amongst the most directly accessible of his prose works. In the first of these, *Eine PILGERFAHRT ZU BEETHOVEN* (A Pilgrimage to Beethoven, 1840), Wagner articulates his own ideas on the development of opera in the form of statements attributed to the older composer which strikingly anticipate his own later thought: for example, that instruments represent rudimentary organs of creation and nature. "What they express can never be clearly defined or put into words . . . It is quite otherwise with the genius of the human voice. The voice represents the heart of man and its well-defined individual emotion" (SSD 1:110; Wagner/Osborne 76). *Ein glücklicher Abend* (A Happy Evening, 1841) is cast in the form of a fictional dialogue in which Wagner expounds his ideas on the expressive powers of

poetry and music: "It is an eternal truth that where the speech of man stops short, there the art of music begins" (SSD 1:140; Wagner/Osborne 83). In this concentrated discourse, there is even a direct anticipation of Wagner's much vaunted "discovery" of SCHOPENHAUER in 1854: "What music expresses is eternal, infinite and ideal. It speaks not of the passion, love and longing of this or that individual, but of passion, love and longing in themselves" (SSD 1:148–9; Wagner/Osborne 90). A further important article defining Wagner's evolving theory of opera dating from the Paris years is *Über die Ouvertüre* (On the OVERTURE, 1841) in which Wagner praises the overture to *Don Giovanni* as distilling the essence of the drama that is to follow. "Here we found the drama's leading thought delineated in a purely musical way but not in a dramatic shape ... Moreover, the musician most surely attains the Overture's artistic end, to act as nothing but an ideal prologue, translating us to that higher sphere in which to prepare our minds for Drama" (SSD 1:201–2; PW 7:161).

These years in Paris were not only a time of considerable intellectual ferment for Wagner, but also a period in which the foundations of his later development were laid; by the time he left for Dresden in 1842, the elements of the aesthetic program which were to nourish his later works were largely in place. These ideas also fed into the period of intense creative activity which saw the composition of the so-called "Romantic operas," *TANNHÄUSER* (1845), *LOHENGRIN* (1848), and the first stirrings of the *RING* project before his involvement in the DRESDEN UPRISING of 1849 forced him into exile and precipitated a further period of intense theoretical activity.

2. The ZURICH essays (1849–1852)

The three extended theoretical tracts written in the early years of Wagner's exile in Switzerland represent the aesthetic fulcrum of his creative project. It is also true to say that from this point onwards it becomes impossible to separate his artistic agenda from his post-revolutionary political idealism. In *Die KUNST UND DIE REVOLUTION* (Art and Revolution), he claims to rediscover the ANCIENT GREEK idea of Art as the expression of community. "With the Greeks the perfect work of art, the Drama, was the abstract and epitome of all that was expressible in the Grecian nature. It was the nation itself – in intimate connection with its own history – that stood mirrored in its art work, which communed with itself and within the span of a few hours, feasted its eyes with its own noblest essence" (SSD 3:28; PW 1:52). In *Das KUNSTWERK DER ZUKUNFT* (*The Artwork of the Future*, 1849/50) this expression of an ideal community comes to be elided with and politicized as the German "VOLK." HEGEL's influence is also discernible in Wagner's discussion of the arts as belonging to a hierarchical system. Hegel's aesthetic formulation is applied to dance, music, and poetry as the three "sister arts" most necessary for an operatic composer. "The ocean binds and separates the land: so does Music bind and separate the two opposite poles of human Art, the arts of Dance and Poetry" (SSD 3:81; PW 1:110). The fusion of the arts into a total work of art or *GESAMTKUNSTWERK* is further developed in what is arguably Wagner's most important theoretical tract: *OPER UND DRAMA* (Opera and Drama, 1851). This book-length treatise covers a vast agenda. Most important for the

understanding of Wagner's aesthetic development is Part III, in which he develops a theory of opera whereby the means of dramatic expression is a synthesis of speech and tone (the composer as "Tondichter"), with the orchestra adopting the expressive role of the chorus in a Greek tragedy. "That which could not be expressed by gesture in the language of vocal music found expression in a language totally divorced from words, namely that of the orchestra, capable of communicating to the ear what gesture communicated to the eye" (SSD 4:176; Bujić 61).

Wagner's Zurich essays occupy a pivotal place in his creative program and are crucial to an understanding of his developing conception of musical drama, or MUSIC DRAMA, for want of a better term. It is tempting but misleading to read them as theoretical templates for the composition of his later works from *Das RHEINGOLD* onwards. They certainly articulate the ideas that were to provide the impulse for subsequent creative work, but in so doing Wagner was rationalizing the advances he made in the composition of the Romantic operas and in the process of forging a musical language suitable for the composition of the *Ring* tetralogy, rather than providing a blueprint for future creation. Wagner's ideas are therefore a function of the dramatic works rather than the works a realization of theoretical principles. At no point did Wagner ever set words to music in the literal sense, even when in the case of *GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG* he was composing a text set down over twenty years previously. He wrote his own libretti in order to realize an already conceived musical mood into speech. When Wagner "composed" a previously written poem, he was expressing in musical terms the dramatic essence of that poem rather than setting it to music. In this rather simplistic, even banal, statement is contained not only the essence of Wagner's aesthetic ideal but also the reason why his music has such expressive force: the drama is contained within the music.

For those who are perplexed by the often opaque style of the Zurich writings, two subsequent essays, the autobiographical *Eine MITTEILUNG AN MEINE FREUNDE* (A Communication to my Friends, 1851) and *ZUKUNFTSMUSIK* (Music of the Future, 1860) can be read as supplements that clarify many of the more obscure passages in the earlier tracts. In *Zukunftsmusik*, Wagner critiques his earlier Zurich essays, freely acknowledging their difficulties, in an attempt to elucidate more clearly his ideas in an explanatory foreword to a French prose translation of *Der FLIEGENDE HOLLÄNDER*, *Tannhäuser*, *Lohengrin*, and *TRISTAN*, cast in the form of an open letter to his French friend Frédéric Villot. This latter essay contains Wagner's most direct and incisive statement of his artistic ideas, formulated at that crucial point in his development immediately following the completion of *Tristan*. "Here, rapidly outlined, you have the basis of that artistic ideal which became ever clearer to me and which I once felt compelled to describe fully in theoretical terms" (SSD 7:95; Wagner/Jacobs 18). Wagner leaves his readers in no doubt that his theories are a reflection of his artistic impulses rather than a template for future creative work: "My theories were virtually little more than an abstract expression of the artistic process then at work within me" (SSD 7:118; Wagner/Jacobs 32).

3. Schopenhauer

It is well known that Wagner read Schopenhauer's *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (The World as Will and Representation) in 1854, and that the philosopher's influence on him was profound (see Wagner's letter to Liszt 16[?] Dec. 1854). This event, whilst undoubtedly significant, should not be taken at face value and is to be interrogated. We have already seen how in *Ein glücklicher Abend* (1841), Wagner was moving close to Schopenhauer's view of music, although this essay was written some thirteen years before Wagner's supposed epiphany experience. Compare the passage quoted above with the following from Schopenhauer: "Music does not express this or that particular or definite pleasure, this or that affliction, pain, sorrow ... but joy, pain, sorrow themselves, to a certain extent in the abstract, their essential nature" (Schopenhauer 261). Schopenhauer's influence on Wagner's aesthetic program was clearly strong but should not be exaggerated by taking Wagnerian hyperbole at face value. From the outset, Wagner shared much of the same aesthetic ground as Schopenhauer. This is evident in that the eponymous character in *Der fliegende Holländer* (written over a decade before Wagner's first documented encounter with Schopenhauer), in his world weariness and longing for death exhibits all the characteristics of a good Schopenhauerian. Wagner was attracted by the strong element of fantasy in Schopenhauer's philosophy, which resonated with his creative temperament. Wagner's so-called "discovery" of Schopenhauer in 1854 gave his developing concept of musical drama the philosophical and intellectual legitimacy he sought, yet as a creative artist he remained autonomous and answerable only to his own artistic vision. The Schopenhauerian elements in the *Ring*, *Tristan*, *Die Meistersinger*, and *Parsifal* are there and cannot be denied; yet exaggerated claims that Wagner's later creative output was entirely driven by Schopenhauer are misleading.

4. *Beethoven* (1870)

This seminal essay, written to mark the centenary of Beethoven's birth, is the major aesthetic statement of Wagner's later years. It represents not only a partial revision of his earlier theories informed by his ongoing assimilation of Schopenhauer but, more significantly, a reflection on and reassessment of his aesthetic position at this critical point in his career, driven by the cathartic creative experience of *Tristan und Isolde* and *Die Meistersinger*. The central thesis, embedded within a heady mix of historical and literary observations shot through with a good deal of strident anti-French rhetoric, is that music contains the essence of the drama within itself: "Music does not present ideas taken from everyday phenomena, but is rather itself a comprehensive idea of the world, automatically including drama, since drama again expresses the only idea of the world on the same level as that of music" (SSD 9:105; Bujić 70). This, together with Wagner's statement that his works are "deeds of music made visible" ("ersichtlich gewordene Taten der Musik," SSD 9:306) from his essay *Über die Benennung "Musikdrama"* (On the Term "Music Drama," 1872), is often taken to mean that Wagner in his later years reversed his position on the respective importance of music and poetry. Such

an assumption represents not only a partial understanding of one of the central theses of *Opera and Drama* – that a means of expression (music) has been made the object while the object of expression (the drama) has been made the means – but is far too blunt a critical tool in the interrogation of Wagner's ever-fluctuating ideas on the relationship between poetry and music.

5. Last years

As is well known, during his last years Wagner's thought turned to disturbing issues of ideology and race which found expression in his so-called *Regenerationsschriften* (REGENERATION essays) and, through the writings of the so-called BAYREUTH CIRCLE, flowed inexorably into the turbulent racial politics of extreme NATIONALISM. This represents the troubling face of Wagner's progressive politicization of his aesthetic project. In striking and welcome contrast to these problematic texts, he penned a series of short articles for the *BAYREUTHER BLÄTTER* on the craft of operatic composition, which are remarkable for their clarity of expression and contain the accumulated wisdom of a lifetime's practical experience. Of particular importance is *ÜBER DIE ANWENDUNG DER MUSIK AUF DAS DRAMA* (On the Application of Music to Drama, 1879), in which Wagner explains with a clarity rare in his earlier theoretical writings his conception of dramatic music: "it is here, in what we may call for short the 'musical' Drama, that we reach sure ground for calmly reckoning the application of Music's new-won faculties to the evolution of noble, inexhaustible art forms" (SSD 10:184; PW 6:182).

Wagner's aesthetic journey thus ended where it began: with reflections on the nature of the relationship of music and poetry in musical drama. Throughout his life he relentlessly pursued this question not so much with the systematic rigor of the philosopher, but with the single-minded zeal of the artist. Wagner's aesthetic ideas were images of the creative imagination that drove the artistic project so memorably and succinctly described in *Zukunftsmusik* as a "channeling into the bed of musical drama the great stream that Beethoven sent pouring into German music" (SSD 7:97; Wagner/Jacobs 19). ROGER ALLEN

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Aktionskreis für das Werk Richard Wagners (currently Deutsche Richard-Wagner-Gesellschaft e. V.). This conservative group of Wagner fans, whose president in 2012 was Rüdiger Pohl (Berlin), was founded in 1977, in response to the 1976 centenary production of *Der RING DES NIBELUNGEN*, staged in Bayreuth by Patrice CHÉREAU. The Aktionskreis pleaded for *Werktreue* (fidelity to the work), meaning productions that adhered to the staging instructions as written by Wagner in the score, as opposed to *Regietheater* (director's theater) which they rejected wholesale as an illegitimate and wrong-headed directorial intervention that misrepresents (Ger. *entstellt*) the work as intended by the