Richard Wagner is one of the most controversial figures in Western cultural history. He revolutionized not only opera but the very concept of art, and his works and ideas have had an immeasurable impact on both the cultural and political landscapes of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. From “absolute music” to “Zurich” and from “Theodor Adorno” to “Hermann Zumpe,” the vividly written entries of The Cambridge Wagner Encyclopedia have been contributed by recognized authorities and cover a comprehensive range of topics. More than eighty scholars from around the world, representing disciplines from history and philosophy to film studies and medicine, provide fascinating insights into Wagner’s life, career, and influence. Multiple appendices include listings of Wagner’s works, historic productions, recordings, and addresses where he lived, to round out a volume that will be an essential and reliable resource for enthusiasts and academics alike.

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The Cambridge Wagner Encyclopedia

Edited by
NICHOLAS VAZSONYI
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Editor’s preface

The Cambridge Wagner Encyclopedia is the first of its kind in English. Nonetheless, two outstanding single-volume reference books on Wagner have stood the test of time: The Wagner Compendium: A Guide to Wagner’s Life and Music (ed. Barry Millington, 1992), and the Wagner Handbook (ed. Ulrich Müller and Peter Wapnewski, trans. John Deathridge, 1992). More recently, The Cambridge Companion to Wagner (ed. Thomas S. Grey, 2008) has been added to that list. It is telling that although all of these are comprehensive, albeit differently structured, none claims to be an “encyclopedia,” nor are they organized as such. Indeed, how can a single volume possibly cover encyclopedically a life so richly documented (both factually and fictitiously), a body of work so enormously influential, so attentively pondered and interpreted well beyond the spheres of opera and music, and a personality whose reach cannot be measured or captured? Richard Wagner was not just another great composer.

From the start, therefore, this project has been an exercise in compromise. What is essential to know about Wagner, 200 years after his birth, and what is not? Which is more important, the number of topics or the depth with which they are treated?

My guiding principle was to make the encyclopedia a useful and effective starting place for all the kinds of readers this volume has the potential to attract. Who are these anticipated readers? Wagner enthusiasts, those new to Wagner, performers, students of all ages, teachers, even the Wagner expert, who needs to check a fact or wants to explore unfamiliar territory. This book might not give the answer to every question one might have on Wagner, but it will provide the background and basics, as well as some ideas about where to go to find additional, reliable information. Readers will find that not everyone or every work or every issue connected with Wagner has its own entry. However, most everything does appear somewhere in the encyclopedia. There are approximately 550 entries followed by twelve appendices usually in tabular form, offering some basic data on a range of subjects. To find their way around most efficiently, readers should consult the comprehensive index, which contains the titles of works and writings in both German and English, for ease of reference.

I have not made it an editorial policy to refer to works exclusively in one language or another. The default language for this edition is English, and Wagner’s works are often referred to in the course of the entries using the English translation. (However, the German titles of some of his works are so readily understandable in their original that they used consistently: e.g., Tristan und Isolde, Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg, etc.) Even if in the body of the
discussion the English version is used, the headings of the entries themselves are in German. Hence, though it is often The Flying Dutchman in the narrative, the entry is under Fliegende Holländer, Der. Whether one looks up the title in German or in English, however, things are organized in such a way that there should be no difficulty finding the entry. All translations are by the contributors unless otherwise noted.

My main aim at all times was to try to make the reading experience a pleasantly informative one, while also preserving the individual style of the authors. Hence readers will find that some entries are more conversational, some more essayistic, some more formal and academic. Many authors have gone beyond the basics and offer thoughtful reflections on some of the pressing and even troubling issues that seem to be perennial facets of the Wagnerian universe. I did not realize until this project how enormously difficult it is to write a good encyclopedia entry. It is an art form unto itself.

**Editorial conventions**

In order to facilitate locating the full original texts of letters and diary entries, the convention followed here is to list the dates only, with no reference to specific editions. Thus readers can easily locate and look up either the German or translated versions. Cross-references to other entries are marked by the use of *small caps*. Such cross-references are usually marked only on their first appearance per entry. Additionally, when entries relate to others, but no cross-reference appears in the main text, a “see also” section is added at the end for further reading within the encyclopedia. This is then followed by a bibliography which gives full publication information of works cited in the entry, as well as suggested sources for further reading. In the event that the book in question is cited frequently, an abbreviated title is given at the end of the entry with full details in the select bibliography at the end of the encyclopedia.

**Nicholas Vazsonyi**
Columbia, USA, 2012
Acknowledgments

There are many people to recognize and thank, without whom this project would not have come to fruition at all, and certainly not as quickly as it did. In the first place, Vicki Cooper, senior commissioning editor at Cambridge University Press, showed amazing faith and confidence for inviting me to take on this daunting, exciting, fascinating, draining, occasionally frustrating, and ultimately highly rewarding project, even if it did sometimes rob me of my sleep and sanity.

I would also like to recognize and thank the editorial advisory board: Celia Applegate, Thomas Grey, Barry Millington, Sanna Pederson, and Eva Rieger. Both individually and collectively, they helped me with the conception and design, and thereafter stood at the ready with whatever was needed at the time to keep this project running smoothly. In the end, eighty-seven scholars—representing eleven academic disciplines and residing in nine countries around the world—contributed entries for the encyclopedia. Despite the inevitable bumps and missed deadlines along the way, it was the highlight of my task as editor of this project to work with these dedicated, knowledgeable, eloquent people I am honored to be able to call colleagues.

A few of the contributors helped additionally with specific entries and with larger issues. John Deathridge was there from the very start with suggestions for entries, solutions to problems, and as a resource with his seemingly limitless knowledge of all things Wagner; Mike Ashman, who ended up not being able to write an entry of his own, provided important and timely information concerning video recordings; David Cormack, whose article on Jessie Laussot appeared after the entry on her had been written; Ulrich Drüner, who provided additional information on publications and sources. Roberta Marvin, editor of the *Cambridge Verdi Encyclopedia*, and author of the VERDI entry in this volume, was enormously helpful with advice, hints, and support, especially at the beginning of this project, when I was struggling with its enormity. Verdi and Wagner may have been polar figures of nineteenth-century music, but in the case of the Cambridge Encyclopedia projects there was only harmony and collegiality.

My thanks go also to Anno Mungen, director of the Forschungsinstitut für Musiktheater at the University of Bayreuth. For two years in a row, he made sure I got tickets to the Bayreuth Festival, keeping my connection to the ongoing tradition and its many ramifications current. This exposure in turn was enormously helpful as I worked through the entries for this volume.

I was fortunate to have graduate students who assisted with much of the work gathering raw data. Leigh Buches, a graduate student at the University of
South Carolina, was diligent, dependable, and always cheerful, even if the work was sometimes less than thrilling. Later, I was helped enormously by Kyle Miller, a graduate student at the University of Oklahoma, whose assistance was made possible by Sanna Pederson with funds from her Mavis C. Pitman endowed chair. You will see the names of these students credited at various points in the volume. Peter Kay, who had already set the music examples for my own book on Wagner's self-promotion, once again did a spectacular job. My thanks to him also for the speed and accuracy of his work. The preparation of this book would not have been possible without the production team at Cambridge University Press, in particular the careful and exacting eye of the copy editor, Sara Peacock.

Last I would like to thank my own institution’s help in facilitating this project, first and foremost the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences at the University of South Carolina, Mary Ann Fitzpatrick, who at a time of budgetary crisis nevertheless gave me an extra travel stipend which enabled me to conduct research and also meet in person with some of the authors. I also received a Provost’s Humanities Grant from the University of South Carolina which gave me some much needed extra time to work on this project.

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Abbreviations


NZfM *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*.


