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John Warrack

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Carl Maria von Weber  
*portrait by Ferdinand Schimon  
painted in 1825*

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*SECOND EDITION*  
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JOHN WARRACK

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## PREFACE

ON THE afternoon of 15th December 1844, Richard Wagner addressed the group of mourners gathered in Dresden for the reinterment of Weber's remains. It was a deeply affecting occasion, the return to Germany after eighteen years of the composer whose life had been so closely bound up with the movement towards national independence; and Wagner knew how to play upon his hearers' sympathies. 'There never lived a more German composer than you,' he declared, going on in much quoted words to assert that while the Englishman might honour Weber and the Frenchman might admire him, only the German could truly love him. Certainly in Germany Weber has always been held in an affection of almost personal intensity, touching as he does on so much in the common experience of his countrymen; but his appeal to musicians and music-lovers all over the world has not lessened with the years, nor has his influence on composers of succeeding generations been confined to his own country. Berlioz, Liszt, Chopin and Debussy were among his greatest admirers and beneficiaries.

Yet while his life and work have been documented with great thoroughness in Germany, comparatively little has appeared elsewhere. England, the country which approached him with the invitation that led to *Oberon* and in whose capital he was to die, has produced fewer studies than his accepted significance would warrant. Apart from the inadequate version of Max Maria von Weber's life of his father and Julius Benedict's charming little memoir, all that has appeared in book form has been William Saunders's brief survey in the 'Master Musicians' series. An American work by Richard and Lucy Poate Stebbins, *Enchanted Wanderer*, is based on more thorough, professional research than its title and style might suggest, but is not intended to do more than recount for the general reader the colourful story of Weber's life without reference to his music.

In attempting a fuller study of Weber's life and work, I have tried not only to discuss the music in some depth but also to suggest how important it is to an understanding of what went into the later achievements of Romanticism. I have also hoped to show how the most representative musician of his



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age responded to a Europe struggling to be reborn in the chaotic aftermath of the French Revolution and the turmoil of the Napoleonic Wars. It was a time when, perhaps more than at any other phase of European history, the arts spoke for a broad mass of people; and it was one when a significant proportion of poets, writers and painters looked to music as the ideal art. Weber at once took an essential part of his character from the period and helped to give it a distinctive artistic colour. If he lacked a Wagnerian force of personality to compel everything around him to his own use, his gentleness, his sharp wit, his acute perception of the world as a colourful tragi-comic drama make him a particularly human and diverse composer; and his genius for dramatizing experience of almost any kind into music ensured that he became an exceptionally lucid mirror of an age. Consequently it has been essential to deal with the music as part of Weber's life, as he came to write each work, and not to try and discuss it as if it were some activity totally divorced from the man he was and the world he lived in. I have made major breaks in the narrative only in the case of the most important operas, over each of which I have taken a chapter so as to examine how, from their literary origins, they were shaped into a vehicle for Weber's particular kind of dramatic music. To facilitate reference to individual sections, I have sometimes repeated or re-emphasized facts; but each work is intended to be viewed in the context of a continuously developed theme.

In referring to Weber's works, I have made use of the numbers allotted in chronological order of composition by F. W. Jähns in his monumental thematic catalogue, *Carl Maria von Weber in seinen Werken* (1871). Though subsequent research has filled in some gaps left by Jähns and corrected some errors, the book remains authoritative and provides a system of reference much more convenient than the opus numbers. These are incomplete, confused and contradictory, Weber and his various publishers having often taken different action over the numbering of a work or omitted to number it altogether. Since opus numbers are still often attached to a good many of the works, I have included those in conventional use; but there is a strong case for going over to general use of J. numbers.

I have incurred many debts of gratitude during the preparation of this book. The following libraries were generously forthcoming with facilities for working, with access to sources and with invaluable help and advice: the Music Department of the German State Library, Berlin; the Library of the Rudolfinum, Prague; the Music Department of the National Museum, Prague; the Leningrad Public Library; the Library of the Royal College of Music, London; the Department of Printed Books and Department of Manuscripts of the British Museum, London; the London Library; and the College of Arms. I am also grateful for help and advice on specific points to Mr. Peter Branscombe, Mr. Julian Bream, Dr. Wilfried Brennecke, Mr. Oliver Davies, Dr. Karl-Heinz Köhler, the late Dr. Joseph Löwenbach, Mr.

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## PREFACE

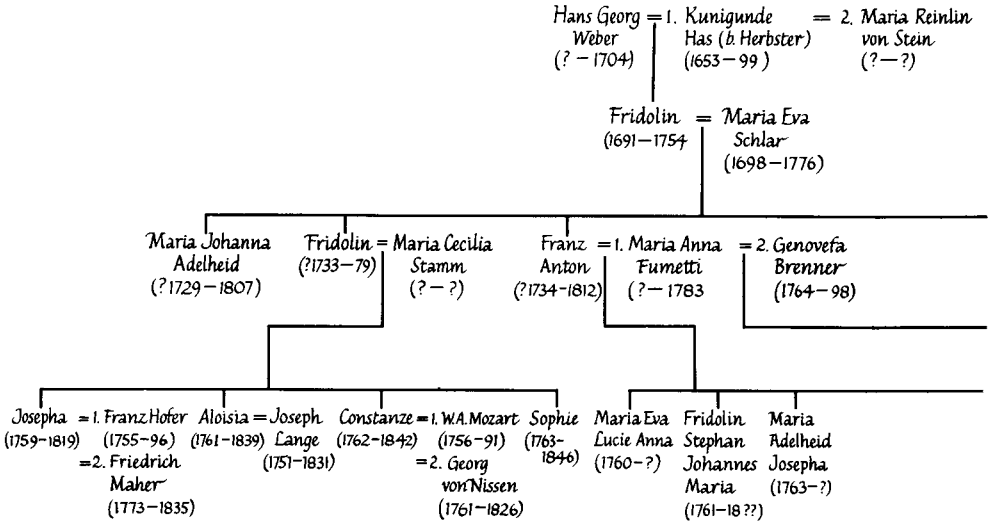
II

David Lloyd-Jones, Mr. Richard Macnutt, Dr. Jaroslav Mašťalíř, Miss Joan Trimble, Frau Friederike von Wedelstädt, Mr. Harold Rosenthal and Dr. Hans Schnoor; and for medical opinion on the course of Weber's illnesses to Dr. John Greenwood Gant. Mr. Andrew Porter read the entire typescript and contributed a wealth of perceptive and scholarly comment. My thanks are also due to the Editors of *The Musical Times*, *Opera* and *Opera Annual* for allowing me to use material that originally appeared in their pages; to *The Sunday Telegraph*, as music critic of which I was enabled to undertake essential journeys to Germany, Czechoslovakia and Russia; to the BBC and *The Gramophone* for the loan of scores and records; to Miss Tessa Trappes-Lomax for adding much useful comment to her work as typist; and to Mr. F. T. Dunn for preparing the Index.

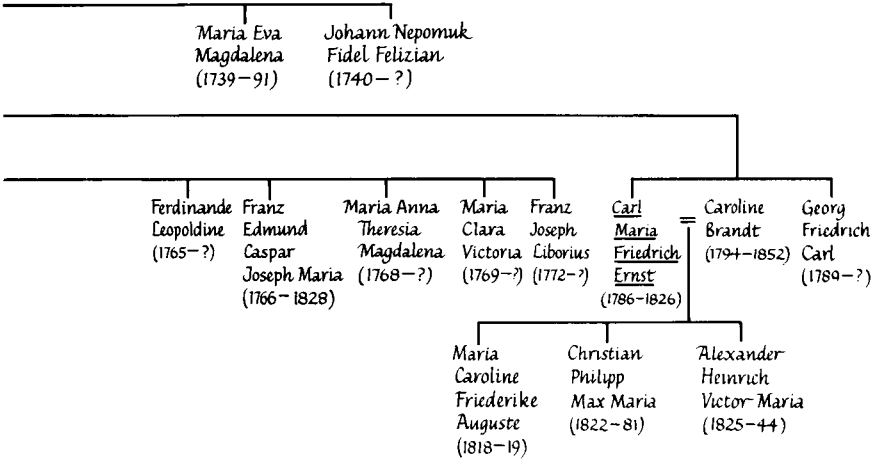
For the second edition, I have added an extra chapter attempting a summary of Weber's stylistic characteristics and historical significance, in the light of the material presented in the book. I have also now included a fuller bibliography and a family tree, and have taken the opportunity of correcting a number of errors, many of them drawn to my attention by friends and correspondents. I am particularly grateful in this respect to Mr. Winton Dean and to Dr. Howard Ferguson, and to the translator of the German edition, Dr. Horst Leuchtmann, who made a number of very useful suggestions in the course of his work.

JOHN WARRACK

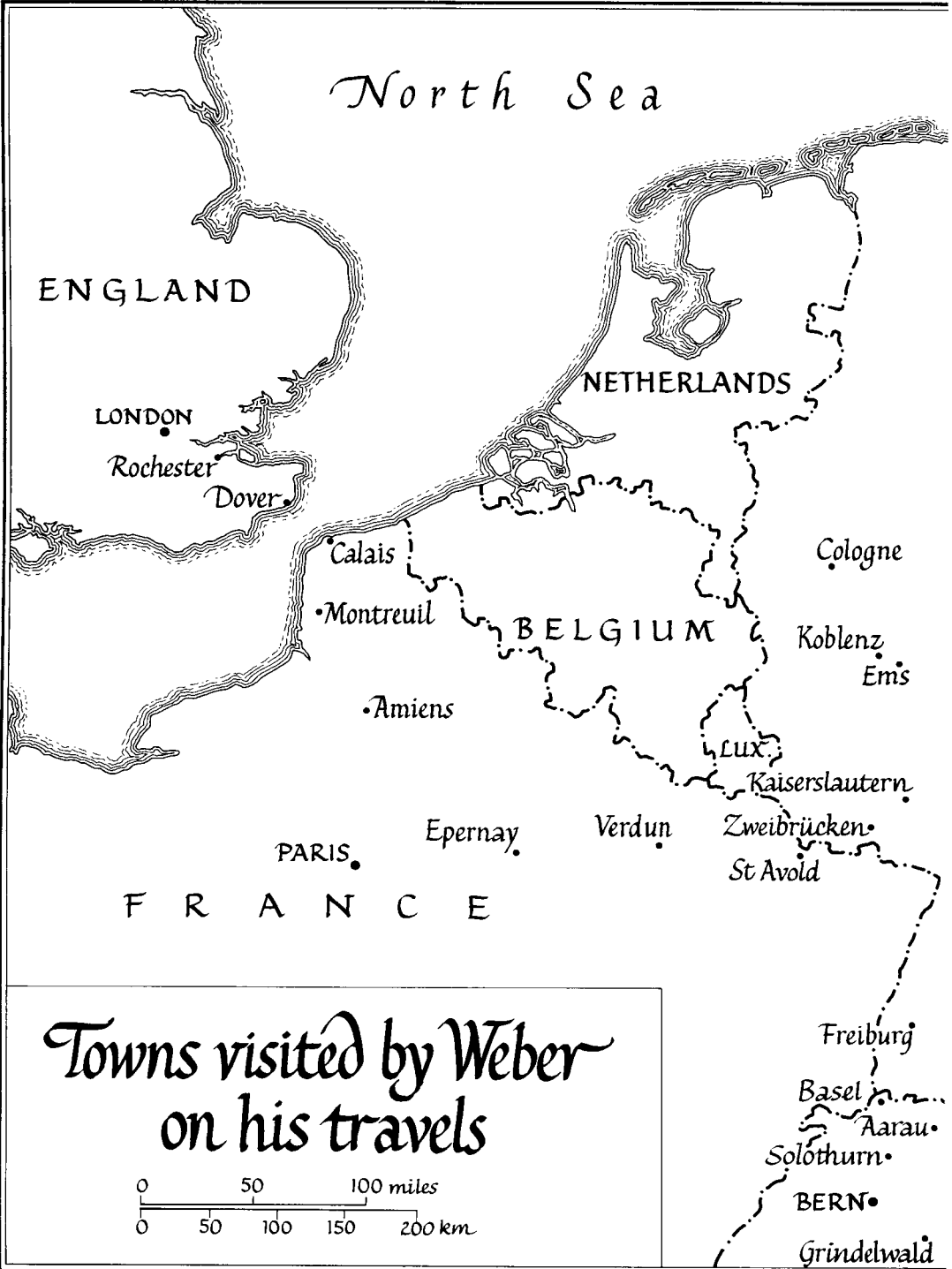
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# Family Tree



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## MONEY VALUES

The values given are only approximate, and no allowance has been made for the change in the purchasing power of English money since the early nineteenth century. Moreover, as Weber complained in his letters from London, the cost of living was higher in England than on the Continent (roughly 25%). During his travels on the Continent in 1825, Sir George Smart noted that 24 kreuzer or 8 groschen equalled 1s., a 'dollar' (thaler) equalled 3s., and a Louis equalled £1.

- 4 Pfennig = 1 Kreuzer (about ½d.)
- 3 Kreuzer = 1 Groschen (about 1½d.)
- 60 Kreuzer = 1 Gulden (about 2s.)
- 90 Kreuzer = 1 Reichsthaler (about 3s.)

### *Gold*

- 4½ Gulden = 1 Ducat (about 9s.)
- 7½ Gulden = 1 Pistole (about 15s.)
- 8 Gulden = 1 Friedrich d'or (about 16s.)
- 9 Gulden = 1 Carolin (about 18s.)

The French Louis d'or was worth rather more than 2 Ducats, i.e. about £1.

## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AMZ</i>	<i>Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung</i> . Leipzig, 1798–1848.
BM	British Museum.
D-Bds	Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, Berlin.
<i>DM</i>	<i>Die Musik</i> . Berlin and Leipzig, 1901–15; Stuttgart, 1922–43.
Grove	<i>Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians</i> , 5th edn, ed. by Eric Blom (1954).
Hirschberg	Leopold Hirschberg: <i>Reliquienschrein des Meisters Carl Maria von Weber</i> (1926).
J	F. W. Jähns: <i>Carl Maria von Weber in seinen Werken: chronologisch-thematisches Verzeichniss seiner sämtlichen Compositionen</i> (1871).
<i>JbMP</i>	<i>Jahrbuch der Musikbibliothek Peters</i> . Leipzig, 1895–1940.
Kaiser	Georg Kaiser: <i>Sämtliche Schriften von Carl Maria von Weber</i> (1908).
<i>M&amp;L</i>	<i>Music and Letters</i> . London, from 1920.
MMW	Max Maria von Weber: <i>Carl Maria von Weber: ein Lebensbild</i> (3 vols., 1864–6).
<i>MQ</i>	<i>The Musical Quarterly</i> . New York, from 1915.
<i>MT</i>	<i>The Musical Times</i> . London, from 1844.
<i>NBJb</i>	<i>Neues Beethovenjahrbuch</i> . Augsburg, 1924–39.
<i>NZfM</i>	<i>Neue Zeitschrift für Musik</i> . Leipzig, 1834–1902; Mainz, from 1951.
RCM	Royal College of Music.
<i>Weberiana</i>	F. W. Jähns: <i>Weberiana</i> . The comprehensive collection of MSS, documents, printed scores, books, pictures, mementoes and other relevant material catalogued and lodged with other books and MSS in the <i>Weber-Gedächtniszimmer</i> in the Music Department of the D-Bds.
WG	<i>Carl Maria von Weber: Musikalische Werke. Erste kritische Gesamtausgabe</i> (3 vols. only completed, 1926).
WoO	Werk ohne Opuszahl.
<i>ZfM</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Musik</i> . Leipzig, 1919–35.
<i>ZMw</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft</i> . Leipzig, 1936–43.