

The Cambridge Companion to Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*

The Companion is an essential, truly interdisciplinary, tool for those both familiar and unfamiliar with Wagner's *Ring*. It opens with a concise introduction to both the composer and the *Ring*, introducing Wagner as a cultural figure, as well as giving a comprehensive overview of the work. Subsequent chapters, written by leading Wagner experts, focus on musical topics such as "leitmotif" and structure, and provide a comprehensive set of character portraits, including leading players such as Wotan, Brünnhilde, and Siegfried. Further chapters look to the mythological background of the work and the idea of the Bayreuth Festival, as well as critical reception of the *Ring*, its relationship to Nazism, and its impact on literature and popular culture, in turn offering new approaches to interpretation including gender, race, and environmentalism. The volume ends with a history of notable stage productions from the world premiere in 1876 to the most recent stagings in Bayreuth and elsewhere.

MARK BERRY is Reader in Music History at Royal Holloway, University of London. He is the author of *Treacherous Bonds and Laughing Fire: Politics and Religion in Wagner's "Ring"* (2006), *After Wagner: Histories of Modernist Music Drama from "Parsifal" to Nono* (2014), and *Arnold Schoenberg* (2019). He is a recipient of the Prince Consort Prize and Seeley Medal for his work on Wagner.

NICHOLAS VAZSONYI is Dean of the College of Architecture, Arts and Humanities, and Professor of German at Clemson University in South Carolina. He is the author of *Lukács Reads Goethe* (1997) and *Richard Wagner: Self-Promotion and the Making of a Brand* (Cambridge University Press, 2010) as well as editor of *Wagner's Meistersinger* (2003) and *The Cambridge Wagner Encyclopedia* (2013).

Cambridge Companions to Music

Topics

The Cambridge Companion to Ballet

Edited by Marion Kant

The Cambridge Companion to Blues and Gospel Music

Edited by Allan Moore

The Cambridge Companion to Choral Music

Edited by André de Quadros

The Cambridge Companion to the Concerto

Edited by Simon P. Keefe

The Cambridge Companion to Conducting

Edited by José Antonio Bowen

The Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth-Century Music

Edited by Anthony R. DelDonna and Pierpaolo Polzonetti

The Cambridge Companion to Electronic Music

Edited by Nick Collins and Julio D'Escriván

The Cambridge Companion to the "Eroica" Symphony

Edited by Nancy November

The Cambridge Companion to Film Music

Edited by Mervyn Cooke and Fiona Ford

The Cambridge Companion to French Music

Edited by Simon Trezise

The Cambridge Companion to Grand Opera

Edited by David Charlton

The Cambridge Companion to Hip-Hop

Edited by Justin A. Williams

The Cambridge Companion to Jazz

Edited by Mervyn Cooke and David Horn

The Cambridge Companion to Jewish Music

Edited by Joshua S. Walden

The Cambridge Companion to the Lied

Edited by James Parsons

The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Music

Edited by Mark Everist

The Cambridge Companion to Music in Digital Culture

Edited by Nicholas Cook, Monique Ingalls and David Trippett

The Cambridge Companion to the Musical, third edition

Edited by William Everett and Paul Laird

The Cambridge Companion to Opera Studies

Edited by Nicholas Till

The Cambridge Companion to Operetta

Edited by Anastasia Belina and Derek B. Scott

The Cambridge Companion to the Orchestra

Edited by Colin Lawson

The Cambridge Companion to Percussion

Edited by Russell Hartenberger

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-10851-6 — The Cambridge Companion to Wagner's Der Ring des Nibelungen

Edited by Mark Berry, Nicholas Vazsonyi

Frontmatter

[More Information](#)

The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock

Edited by Simon Frith, Will Straw and John Street

The Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music

Edited by Eric Clarke, Nicholas Cook, Daniel Leech-Wilkinson and John Rink

The Cambridge Companion to the Singer-Songwriter

Edited by Katherine Williams and Justin A. Williams

The Cambridge Companion to the String Quartet

Edited by Robin Stowell

The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera

Edited by Mervyn Cooke

The Cambridge Companion to Wagner's Der Ring des Nibelungen

Edited by Mark Berry and Nicholas Vazsonyi

Composers

The Cambridge Companion to Bach

Edited by John Butt

The Cambridge Companion to Bartók

Edited by Amanda Bayley

The Cambridge Companion to the Beatles

Edited by Kenneth Womack

The Cambridge Companion to Beethoven

Edited by Glenn Stanley

The Cambridge Companion to Berg

Edited by Anthony Pople

The Cambridge Companion to Berlioz

Edited by Peter Bloom

The Cambridge Companion to Brahms

Edited by Michael Musgrave

The Cambridge Companion to Benjamin Britten

Edited by Mervyn Cooke

The Cambridge Companion to Bruckner

Edited by John Williamson

The Cambridge Companion to John Cage

Edited by David Nicholls

The Cambridge Companion to Chopin

Edited by Jim Samson

The Cambridge Companion to Debussy

Edited by Simon Trezise

The Cambridge Companion to Elgar

Edited by Daniel M. Grimley and Julian Rushton

The Cambridge Companion to Duke Ellington

Edited by Edward Green

The Cambridge Companion to Gershwin

Edited by Anna Celenza

The Cambridge Companion to Gilbert and Sullivan

Edited by David Eden and Meinhard Saremba

The Cambridge Companion to Handel

Edited by Donald Burrows

The Cambridge Companion to Haydn

Edited by Caryl Clark

The Cambridge Companion to Liszt

Edited by Kenneth Hamilton

The Cambridge Companion to Mahler

Edited by Jeremy Barham

The Cambridge Companion to Mendelssohn

Edited by Peter Mercer-Taylor

The Cambridge Companion to Monteverdi

Edited by John Whenham and Richard Wistreich

The Cambridge Companion to Mozart

Edited by Simon P. Keefe

The Cambridge Companion to Arvo Pärt

Edited by Andrew Shenton

The Cambridge Companion to Ravel

Edited by Deborah Mawer

The Cambridge Companion to the Rolling Stones

Edited by Victor Coelho and John Covach

The Cambridge Companion to Rossini

Edited by Emanuele Senici

The Cambridge Companion to Schoenberg

Edited by Jennifer Shaw and Joseph Auner

The Cambridge Companion to Schubert

Edited by Christopher Gibbs

The Cambridge Companion to Schumann

Edited by Beate Perrey

The Cambridge Companion to Shostakovich

Edited by Pauline Fairclough and David Fanning

The Cambridge Companion to Sibelius

Edited by Daniel M. Grimley

The Cambridge Companion to Richard Strauss

Edited by Charles Youmans

The Cambridge Companion to Michael Tippett

Edited by Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones

The Cambridge Companion to Vaughan Williams

Edited by Alain Frogley and Aiden J. Thomson

The Cambridge Companion to Verdi

Edited by Scott L. Balthazar

Instruments

The Cambridge Companion to Brass Instruments

Edited by Trevor Herbert and John Wallace

The Cambridge Companion to the Cello

Edited by Robin Stowell

The Cambridge Companion to the Clarinet

Edited by Colin Lawson

The Cambridge Companion to the Guitar

Edited by Victor Coelho

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-10851-6 — The Cambridge Companion to Wagner's Der Ring des Nibelungen

Edited by Mark Berry , Nicholas Vazsonyi

Frontmatter

[More Information](#)

The Cambridge Companion to the Harpsichord

Edited by Mark Kroll

The Cambridge Companion to the Organ

Edited by Nicholas Thistlethwaite and Geoffrey Webber

The Cambridge Companion to the Piano

Edited by David Rowland

The Cambridge Companion to the Recorder

Edited by John Mansfield Thomson

The Cambridge Companion to the Saxophone

Edited by Richard Ingham

The Cambridge Companion to Singing

Edited by John Potter

The Cambridge Companion to the Violin

Edited by Robin Stowell

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-10851-6 — The Cambridge Companion to Wagner's Der Ring des Nibelungen
Edited by Mark Berry , Nicholas Vazsonyi
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

The Cambridge Companion to

WAGNER'S *DER* *RING DES* *NIBELUNGEN*

.....

EDITED BY

Mark Berry

Royal Holloway, University of London

Nicholas Vazsonyi

Clemson University



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-10851-6 — The Cambridge Companion to Wagner's Der Ring des Nibelungen
Edited by Mark Berry, Nicholas Vazsonyi
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India

79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107108516

DOI: 10.1017/9781316258033

© Cambridge University Press 2020

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2020

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd, Padstow Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-107-10851-6 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-107-51947-3 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	page xi
<i>List of Music Examples</i>	xii
<i>List of Contributors</i>	xiv
<i>Preface</i>	xv
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xvii
 Introduction	
<i>Mark Berry and Nicholas Vazsonyi</i>	1
 Part I: Myth	57
1. Greek Tragedy and Myth	
<i>Jason Geary</i>	59
2. Wagner and the Rise of Modern Mythology	
<i>Stefan Arvidsson</i>	70
 Part II: Aesthetics	83
3. The <i>Ring</i> in Theory and Practice	
<i>Arnold Whittall</i>	85
4. Form and Structure	
<i>J. P. E. Harper-Scott</i>	102
5. Listening for Leitmotifs: Concept, Theory, Practice	
<i>Christian Thorau</i>	124
6. The Bayreuth Concept and the Significance of Performance	
<i>Roger Allen</i>	141
 Part III: Interpretations	157
7. Characters in the “World” of the <i>Ring</i>	
<i>Mark Berry</i>	159
8. The <i>Ring</i> as a Political and Philosophical Drama	
<i>Anthony Arblaster</i>	185
9. The Idea of Nature	
<i>Thomas Grey</i>	205
10. Gender and Sexuality	
<i>Chris Walton</i>	232

x Contents

Part IV: Impact	245
11. Critical Responses <i>Barbara Eichner</i>	247
12. Placing the <i>Ring</i> in Literary History <i>David Trippett</i>	269
13. Specters of Nazism <i>Tash Siddiqui</i>	297
14. The <i>Ring</i> in Cinematic and Popular Culture <i>Adrian Daub</i>	317
15. Notable Productions <i>Barry Millington</i>	337
 <i>Bibliography</i>	356
<i>Index</i>	380

Figures

5.1	Leitmotif listening in practice: motif table by Carl Waack from piano score of <i>Rheingold</i> (Breitkopf & Härtel: Leipzig, 1910)	page 125
5.2	Final scene of <i>Götterdämmerung</i> from Patrice Chéreau’s Bayreuth production, taken from Pierre Boulez, <i>et al.</i> , <i>Der “Ring” Bayreuth 1976–1980</i> (Kristall Verlag: Berlin and Hamburg, 1980), book jacket, by courtesy of Bayreuther Festspiele	139
6.1	Cross section of the Festival Theater	152
12.1	Faustin Betbeder, “Wagner,” <i>Figaro</i> September 26, 1876. Collection: Trippett	271
12.2	Aubrey Beardsley frontispiece to his projected “Comedy of the Rhinegold,” <i>The Savoy</i> 8 (December 1896), 43–4	283

Music Examples

4.1	<i>Das Rheingold</i> , scene 1	page 106
4.2	<i>Götterdämmerung</i> , Vorspiel	108
4.3	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i> , opening	115
4.4	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i> , conclusion	115
4.5	Grail motif, original version, from <i>Parsifal</i> , act 1	117
4.6	Grail motif, transformed version, from <i>Parsifal</i> , act 3	117
4.7	Valhalla motif, “prime form,” from <i>Das Rheingold</i> , scene 2	120
4.8	Valhalla motif, “Tarnhelm form,” from <i>Götterdämmerung</i> , act 1, scene 3	120
4.9	Tarnhelm motif, from <i>Das Rheingold</i> , act 1, scene 2	121
4.10	Valhalla motif, “cursed form,” from <i>Die Walküre</i> , act 2, scene 2	122
7.1	Spear motif	162
7.2	Violence of spear creation	162
7.3	Valhalla motif	163
7.4	The curse (trombones)	163
7.5	Wotan’s frustration	165
7.6	Erda motif	175
7.7	<i>Die Walküre</i> opening, cello solo	177
7.8	<i>Götterdämmerung</i> , closing phrase	180
7.9	Hagen motif	182
9.1	“Woman/nature” motivic complex from Loge’s narration in <i>Das Rheingold</i> , scene 2, as recalled in the “Forest Murmurs” episode of <i>Siegfried</i> , act 2	209
9.2	Woodbird motif in “Forest Murmurs” episode of <i>Siegfried</i> , act 2	210
9.3	Woglinde’s “lullaby”-melody from the opening of <i>Das Rheingold</i> , scene 1	210
9.4a	Erda/Nature motif (minor form) from <i>Das Rheingold</i> , scene 4 (Erda’s warning)	214
9.4b	Nature motif (major form) from middle of Erda’s warning, <i>Das Rheingold</i> , scene 4	214

xiii List of Music Examples

9.4c	Twilight of the gods motif as inversion of Nature motif, <i>Das Rheingold</i> , scene 4	215
9.5	World Ash Tree motif (minor-mode variant of Valhalla), <i>Götterdämmerung</i> , Prologue	221
9.6	Rheingold motif as example of triadic “Nature motif” type, <i>Das Rheingold</i> , scene 1	222
9.7	Valhalla motif as example of triadic “Nature motif” type, <i>Das Rheingold</i> , scene 2	222
9.8	Wotan’s sardonic “blessing” of Alberich (<i>Nibelungen-Segen</i>), <i>Die Walküre</i> , act 2	222
9.9	Rhinemaidens’ cry (“Rheingold! Rheingold!”), original “Nature motif” version, <i>Das Rheingold</i> , scene 1	224
9.10	Minor/diminished variant of Rhinemaidens’ cry as the Nibelung “servitude” or “enslavement” motif, <i>Das Rheingold</i> , scene 3	225
12.1a	Premonition of the sword motif, emblematic of Wotan’s mission, <i>Das Rheingold</i>	287
12.1b	Premonition of Siegfried’s downfall, <i>Götterdämmerung</i> , act 3 scene 2	287
12.1c	The underlying harmonic corruption of Siegfried’s C major	288

Contributors

Roger Allen – University of Oxford

Anthony Arblaster – University of Sheffield

Stefan Arvidsson – Linnæus University

Mark Berry – Royal Holloway, University of London

Adrian Daub – Stanford University

Barbara Eichner – Oxford Brookes University

Jason Geary – Rutgers University

Thomas Grey – Stanford University

J. P. E. Harper-Scott – Royal Holloway, University of London

Barry Millington – Editor, The Wagner Journal

Tash Siddiqui – Independent Scholar

Christian Thorau – University of Potsdam

David Trippett – University of Cambridge

Chris Walton – Basel University of Music

Arnold Whittall – King's College, London

Preface

It is March 2020 and both editors sit isolated in their respective spaces, self-quarantined along with the rest of civilization, as we all await the Coronavirus pandemic sweeping the globe to do its worst and pass on. It is a profoundly Wagnerian moment. Humanity has been stripped, reduced to the barest of essentials: fate, family, love, and death. It is the world best imagined in the dramas of Sophocles, yet at the same time, as Wagner, perhaps before anyone else, understood it, profoundly modern.

Paralyzed and dazed though most of us feel, press on we must, because this, as Wagner shows us, is also what humans do. Nevertheless, both editors find themselves separated from their reference materials, not to mention that all libraries have been closed. One consequence is that some final tiny bibliographic and reference details could not be checked. We beg our readers' forgiveness.

We also owe thanks to many people. Perhaps first of all to Vicky Cooper, who is no longer at Cambridge University Press as this book nears completion. But she was the commissioning editor and the inspiration for this volume, as she was for so many others. In many ways, Cambridge University Press's outstanding contributions to music history and culture in recent decades are a result of her vision and leadership. Thank you for all of this, Vicky!

Thanks also to our contributors, one and all. They showed consummate professionalism and extraordinary patience as this volume lumbered on. Both editors were simultaneously involved in other demanding administrative, teaching, and research commitments; and so, for some stretches, this volume necessarily took a back seat. Our apologies.

Special thanks go to Alex Ross, who very kindly read a draft of the Introduction and offered helpful feedback. Alex has been such a vital bridge between academic musicology and the educated public. Given his prominence and work schedule, his generosity of spirit and time is inspiring.

Thank you also to Christopher Kimbell for his exemplary work in compiling the index. We could not have asked for a more comprehending and hard-working collaborator. And thanks also to the College of Arts & Sciences, University of South Carolina, for providing the funding to cover indexing costs.

xvi Preface

Lastly, our thanks go to the production team, starting with Kilmeny McBride, who has shown good humor and extreme patience with two vagrant editors who have not always been able to respond as quickly as we are sure she would have wanted or deserved.

On a personal note, one of the editors would like to thank his brother, sister-in-law, and nephew for the roof over his head on his hurried return to England, lockdown impending; his partner for keeping him saner and more loved, albeit in a state of enforced separation, than would otherwise have been the case; and his many other friends, family, and colleagues for support and solidarity. The other editor thanks his mother. This volume coincided with a particularly sad and difficult period in his life and, as ever, his mother was there. He also thanks his children who have helped him understand what Wagner – childless himself for so long – had intuitively understood about that indescribable bond between parents and their offspring.

Mark Berry, Wales, Yorkshire

Nicholas Vazsonyi, Columbia, South Carolina

Abbreviations

* Cosima Wagner diary entries will be noted with date only either in the body of the text or in the footnote. Full sources can be found easily in the starred volumes below which are arranged chronologically.

- CCtW* *The Cambridge Companion to Wagner*, ed. Thomas S. Grey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008)
- CD** *Cosima Wagner Diaries*, trans. Geoffrey Skelton (London: Collins, 1978)
- CT** *Cosima Wagner, Die Tagebücher*, 2 vols, ed. Martin Gregor-Dellin and Dietrich Mack (München and Zürich: Piper, 1976)
- CWE* *The Cambridge Wagner Encyclopedia*, ed. Nicholas Vazsonyi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013)
- PW* *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, trans. William Ashton Ellis (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1892–9); paperback repr., Lincoln, NE, and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995)
- SB* *Richard Wagner Sämtliche Briefe*, 35 vols (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1979–)
- SL* *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, trans. and ed. Stewart Spencer and Barry Millington (London: J. M. Dent, 1987)
- SSD* *Sämtliche Schriften und Dichtungen Sämtliche Schriften und Dichtungen*, 16 vols, ed. Richard Sternfeld and Hans von Wolzogen (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1912–14)
- TWJ* *The Wagner Journal*

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-10851-6 — The Cambridge Companion to Wagner's Der Ring des Nibelungen
Edited by Mark Berry , Nicholas Vazsonyi
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)
