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### Wagner as Man and Artist

Ernest Newman (1868–1959) was undoubtedly the greatest Wagnerian critic of his age. (His magisterial four-volume *Life of Richard Wagner* is also reissued in this series.) In this 1914 work, he attempts ‘a complete and impartial psychological estimate’ of a complex and frequently misinterpreted genius. He notes that such an attempt would have been impossible before the publication in 1911 of Wagner’s autobiographical *Mein Leben*, but in his opening chapter he also warns against a naïve reading of that work, and of others by people ‘who combine the maximum of good intentions with the minimum of critical insight’. He is clear-sighted about the strengths of Wagner the artist, not least his need to be ‘the central sun of his universe’, which of course led to Wagner the man behaving pettily, selfishly and frequently as a tyrant. This lucid account richly deserves its place in the history of Wagner studies.

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WAGNER  
AS MAN & ARTIST

BY  
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## PREFACE

SOME apology is perhaps needed from an author for writing three books on the same subject. I can only plead in extenuation that the subject of Wagner is inexhaustible; and I am defiant enough to refuse to pledge myself not to repeat the offence in another ten years or so. It is possible that readers who have done me the honour to make themselves familiar with my *Study of Wagner* (1899) may discover that in the present book I express myself differently upon one or two points. My defence is that even a musical critic may be allowed to learn something in the course of fifteen years; and I can only hope that if here and there I have changed sides since then, the side I am now on is that of the angels.

In spite of the size of this volume, many readers will no doubt feel that it either discusses inadequately several aspects of Wagner's work and personality, or that it passes them over altogether. Again I plead guilty; but to have followed Wagner up in every one of his many-sided activities,—in all his political, ethical, economic, ethnical, sociological and other speculations—would have necessitated not one book but four. I have tried to keep within the limits of my title—first of all to study Wagner as a man, and then his theory and practice as a musician. His operas are now so universally known that I could afford to dispense with detailed accounts of them; in any case the reader will find them fully described in a hundred books, and best of all in Mr. Runciman's admirable *Richard Wagner, Composer of Operas*—though I must dissent from Mr. Runciman's views on *Parsifal*. Nor could I bring myself to attempt a biography of Wagner. A new biography, incorporating all the material that the last ten years have placed at our disposal, is urgently needed. The work of Glasenapp is copious enough and fairly accurate,

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but it is hopelessly uncritical of Wagner either as man or artist, —to say nothing of its occasional lapses into the disingenuous. But even if I had felt that I were qualified for a new biography of Wagner I should have shrunk appalled from the magnitude of the task. I have preferred to give the reader a chronological digest of Wagner's life in the Synthetic Table at the conclusion of the present volume, and for the rest to try to reconstruct him as man and musician from his own letters, his autobiography, the letters and reminiscences of others, his prose works, and his music. As the book is going to press I learn that a new edition of his correspondence, containing some two thousand hitherto unpublished letters, is to appear under the editorship of that indefatigable Wagner researcher Dr. Julius Kapp. But it ought to be possible to reconstruct the man from the 2700 letters of his that we already have, though the picture will no doubt need some filling-in and perhaps some corrections in detail when Dr. Kapp's edition is available. With the expiration of the Wagner copyrights, and the passing of the control of his letters out of the hands of Villa Wahnfried, we may hope for a higher standard of literary rectitude in these matters than we have been accustomed to in the past. The earlier, and even some of the later, editions of the letters have been so manipulated as to be thoroughly misleading. I have drawn attention to one or two of these manipulations in the following pages.

I have made all translations from the prose works, the letters, the autobiography, &c., direct from the originals. This has necessitated referring to them throughout in the German editions; but no one who has the current English versions will have any difficulty in tracing any particular passage by means of dates and indices. I cannot hope that with prose so involved as that of Wagner's I have always been able to achieve perfect accuracy; but I am consoled by the consciousness that native German scholars to whom I have referred a few passages have been as puzzled over them as myself.

I have used Wagner's prose works in the latest edition (the fifth) of the *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen* (always referred to in the following pages as *G.S.*), the Wagner-Liszt correspondence in the new and expanded and more conscientiously edited

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third edition, and all the other letters in the latest editions available. The operas are always referred to in the new Breitkopf edition.

I have to express my thanks to several friends for help of one kind and another,—to Mr. Bertram Dobell, the publisher of my earlier *Study of Wagner*, for allowing me to make whatever use I liked of that book for the present one; to Messrs. Breitkopf and Härtel for placing at my disposal a set of proofs of the full scores of Wagner's earliest unpublished operas, *Die Hochzeit* and *Die Feen*, and proofs of a number of other unpublished compositions of his; and, above all, for lending me the manuscript score of the still unpublished opera *Das Liebesverbot*. I am indebted also to Professor H. G. Fiedler, Mr. R. A. Streatfeild, and other friends for assistance of various sorts.

Some of the matter of the book has already appeared in the *Fortnightly Review*, the *Contemporary Review*, the *Nation*, the *New Music Review* (New York), the *International* (New York), the *Musical Times*, and the *Harvard Musical Review*. My thanks are due to the editors of these journals for permission to reproduce such portions of the articles as I desired to make use of here.

E. N.

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