

‘A Universal Art, an Art for All’? The Reception of Richard Wagner in the Parisian Press, 1933–1944

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Abstract

From the time that Wagner began to feature as a subject of interest in the French press, writers, critics, and journalists used their discussions of the composer, his music and his writings to articulate ideas about France and Germany. Debate about Wagner became a means to examine national identity, musical and cultural identity, and the Franco-German relationship. This thesis examines the reception of Richard Wagner through the lens of the Parisian press between 1933 and 1944. It follows a body of literature that investigates the reception of Wagner in the French press, particularly in relation to how it reflects upon French identity and the Franco-German relationship. It considers the ways in which the French continued to use Wagner to discuss nation, identity and culture during the period of the Third Reich, and the extent to which Wagner reception from the 1930s and the Occupation interacted with earlier French reception of Wagner. The thesis also considers the question of continuity and rupture, both between the period 1933–44 and previous periods, and between 1933–39 and the Occupation. It examines the extent to which the dramatic change in the French political landscape—which took place when France was invaded by German troops in the summer of 1940—affected the press reception of Wagner, and what this can tell us about how the French nation thought about itself and its relationship with Germany.

The thesis includes an Introduction, followed by five chapters and a short Conclusion. The chapters are organised both chronologically and thematically, covering two main time periods during the Third Reich: 1933–39, and 1940–44. The thesis draws predominantly on sources from the Parisian press, including daily newspapers and weekly or monthly periodicals, supplemented by a limited number of other sources, including musicological and music literature, and concert programme archives. Although the study does not rely heavily on any particular theoretical model, it is situated within the domain of reception theory.

This study argues, through an examination of themes emerging from the Parisian press, that Parisians used Wagner to confront Nazism, grapple with the idea of rapprochement, situate France within a potential New Europe, understand past Franco-German conflict, manage life under the Occupation, and come to terms with the policy of Collaboration.

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This is to certify that:

- (i) the thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD;
- (ii) due acknowledgement has been made in the text towards all other material used;
- (iii) the thesis is fewer than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices

Signature:

Name:

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Note on work titles and translations

All translations of both primary and secondary sources from French to English are my own, unless otherwise stated. All translated material is provided in the text in English translation, with the original French text provided below in a footnote.

Throughout the thesis, titles of Wagner's operas are given in the language in which they were performed. Thus Paris Opéra productions are referred to with French titles, and visiting German productions are referred to with German titles.

Work titles in German, French and English

GERMAN	FRENCH	ENGLISH
<i>Rienzi</i>	<i>Rienzi</i>	<i>Rienzi</i>
<i>Der fliegende Holländer</i>	<i>Le Vaisseau fantôme</i>	<i>The Flying Dutchman</i>
<i>Tannhäuser</i>	<i>Tannhäuser</i>	<i>Tannhäuser</i>
<i>Lohengrin</i>	<i>Lohengrin</i>	<i>Lohengrin</i>
<i>Der Ring des Nibelungen</i>	<i>L'Anneau du Nibelung / La Tétralogie</i>	<i>The Ring of the Nibelung / The Ring Cycle</i>
<i>Das Rheingold</i>	<i>L'Or du Rhin</i>	<i>Rhinegold</i>
<i>Die Walküre</i>	<i>La Walkyrie / La Valkyrie</i>	<i>The Valkyrie</i>
<i>Siegfried</i>	<i>Siegfried</i>	<i>Siegfried</i>
<i>Götterdämmerung</i>	<i>Le Crépuscule des dieux</i>	<i>The Twilight of the Gods</i>
<i>Tristan und Isolde</i>	<i>Tristan et Isolde</i>	<i>Tristan and Isolde</i>
<i>Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg</i>	<i>Les Maîtres chanteurs</i>	<i>The Master-Singers of Nuremberg</i>
<i>Parsifal</i>	<i>Parsifal</i>	<i>Parsifal</i>

Note on referencing of press sources

Full details of the press sources used in the process of researching this thesis can be found in the bibliography and appendices.

In footnotes, archival references are given for press sources only in cases where the sources could not be found in the publications themselves, for various reasons. Where there are press references that do not include author name, date, publication title, or other details, this is because that information was unavailable. I have not used the terms ‘unsigned’ or ‘undated’ to indicate this.

Abbreviations used for archives and libraries are:

BnF: Bibliothèque nationale de France

BmO: Bibliothèque-musée de l’Opéra

INTRODUCTION

In the midst of war in 1915, composer and music critic Gustave Samazeuilh wrote a letter to the short-lived journal *La Musique pendant la guerre*, applauding its editors' initiative and regretting that his wartime responsibilities did not allow him to contribute to the publication. In reference to the ongoing debate in the press over the ban on German music—and specifically Wagner's music—as a response to war, Samazeuilh wrote:

Even in these tragic times, your journal will not have played a negligible role if it has managed both to warn against the regrettable excesses of a facile, supposedly patriotic one-upmanship with regard to the masterpieces of deceased geniuses—masterpieces capable of surviving the most violent conflicts—and above all to inspire in our theatres and concert halls a concern with widening their repertoire and emphasising the richness, strength and variety of our French contemporary school ... ¹

Samazeuilh's wartime characterisation of Wagner's music as a masterpiece 'capable of surviving the most violent conflicts' hints at what was to follow: a prolific body of Wagner criticism that spanned the interwar period, and the Second World War and Occupation, and that returned time and time again to the ability of Wagner's music to transcend conflict and politics.

¹ 'Même en ces temps tragiques, votre revue n'aura pas joué un rôle négligeable, si elle a su à la fois nous mettre en garde contre les regrettables excès d'une facile surenchère soi-disant patriotique à l'égard de chefs-d'œuvre de génies disparus capables de survivre aux plus violents conflits,—et inspirer surtout à nos théâtres et à nos concerts, le souci d'élargir leur répertoire et de mettre complètement en valeur la richesse, la force et la variété de notre école française contemporaine, qui a transporté de ce côté-ci du Rhin la vie même de la musique.'
Gustave Samazeuilh, 'Lettre', *La Musique pendant la guerre* 2 (10 November 1915): 26.

Samazeuilh is unique in this study, not simply because of his prolificness in the studied period (he wrote more articles on Wagner than any other critic between 1933 and 1944), but also because of the fact that he succeeded in transitioning his Wagner criticism from the interwar period into the Occupation, a feat accomplished by no other significant critic studied in this thesis. In general, the Wagner critics of 1933–39 and those of 1940–44 fall into two separate groups, with very little overlap.

Samazeuilh is the only critic to write a significant number of articles during both periods. What makes him interesting in the context of this study, then, is the question of whether he changed the way he wrote about Wagner, and if so, how and why? What did a Wagner commentator of the 1930s need to do in order to survive as a published critic during the Third Reich's occupation of France in the 1940s? How did his discourse on Wagner shift to fit new political circumstances and demands? And what do these changes tell us about the place of Wagner in French culture and, more widely, continuities and ruptures in French attitudes to Germany and German culture over the period of the Third Reich?

In fact, as I will show throughout this thesis, Samazeuilh makes barely discernible changes to his Wagner discourse over this period, and yet his writings are referred to in every single chapter of the thesis, despite each chapter exploring a different discourse on Wagner. Between 1933 and 1939, by making slight changes or using different emphases, he succeeds in simultaneously promoting Wagner as universal, as a tool for rapprochement, and as symbolic of the attraction of Hitler and German fascism. Then, in March 1940, unknowingly on the brink of the Occupation and knowingly in the midst of another press debate about banning Wagner's works as a response to war with Germany, he expresses the same opinion as in his letter to *La Musique pendant la guerre* a quarter of a century earlier:

[Wagner's works] affirm the mark of the genius with enough power that they soar above conflicts, human circumstances, and even the acts of a regime about which [Wagner] ... cannot express an opinion.²

² 'l'œuvre de Richard Wagner ... affirme pourtant avec assez de puissance la griffe du génie pour planer au-dessus des conflits, des contingences humaines, et même des actes d'un régime sur lequel l'auteur de *Parsifal* ... n'a pas en à donner son sentiment'. Gustave Samazeuilh, 'Faut-il exclure Wagner?', *Les Nouvelles littéraires*, 23 March 1940, 4.

Ambiguous enough that it could be interpreted as anti-Nazi or simply pro-Wagner, this remark also sits comfortably with earlier commentary by Samazeuilh, which I will later situate within the universalist discourse, the pro-rapprochement discourse, and the Bayreuth-inspired discourse of attraction/fear, explored in Chapters One, Two and Three respectively. Later, under the Occupation, Samazeuilh repeats many of the same phrases and ideas that he used in his Wagner criticism and commentary of the 1930s, but shapes them to fit the discourse of Wagner as Franco-German Collaboration, discussed in Chapter Five.

From the time that Wagner began to feature as a subject of interest in the French press, writers, critics, and journalists used their discussions of the composer, his music and his writings, to articulate ideas about France and Germany. Debate about Wagner became a means to examine national identity, musical and cultural identity, and the Franco-German relationship. This thesis follows on from a body of literature that investigates the reception of Wagner in the French press, particularly in relation to how it reflects upon French identity and the Franco-German relationship. It asks whether the French continued to use Wagner to discuss nation, identity and culture, and to what extent Wagner reception from the 1930s and the Occupation interacted with earlier French reception of Wagner. It also considers the question of continuity and rupture, both between the period 1933–44 and previous periods, and between 1933–39 and the Occupation. To what extent did the dramatic change in the French political landscape—which took place when France was invaded by German troops in the summer of 1940—affect the press reception of Wagner? What does this tell us about Wagner’s place in French cultural history? And what does it tell us about how the French nation thought about itself and its relationship with Germany?

Wagner and France

The reception of Wagner’s music and ideas in France has been characterised by controversy and polarisation from the beginning, providing subject matter which has proved fertile ground for musicologists and cultural historians since the 1980s. From the mid-nineteenth century, when Wagner made his two ill-fated trips to Paris (1839–

42 and 1860–61),³ to the First World War and the ensuing interwar period, the French developed national, musical, and political ideas through debates about Wagner. In each of these debates and controversies, one element remains consistent: while opposing groups and personalities argued about Wagner, they were in fact articulating ideas about musical style, national identity, and the Franco-German political relationship. If Wagner was the subject of debate, it was because he represented something much larger than his music or writings, although exactly what this was varied widely and changed constantly. The following paragraphs will combine a brief history of the relationship between Wagner and the French with a review of selected secondary literature that has focused on this relationship. Further discussions of literature are included in the following chapters where appropriate.

The association between Wagner and politics began early; Gerald Turbow writes that it was the composer's writings in the French musical press that first gained the attention of Parisian musical circles, and that his polarisation of Parisian society began in the 1850s—a period when none of his operas had been performed on French stages and Parisians were only vaguely familiar with his music through a small number of concert excerpts.⁴ Danièle Pistone's bibliographic article on Wagner in Paris in the nineteenth century reveals the copious letters, articles, books and other documents relating to Wagner that were published between the 1860s and the end of the century.⁵ Just as Wagner had chosen the Parisian press as a forum to express his ideas, Parisians' ideas about Wagner developed and evolved largely in the press. Katharine Ellis has shown that during the 1860s, although music journals could not necessarily be categorised as pro- or anti-Wagner, their contributors did feel compelled to enter the debates in one way or another; Wagner was already too

³ During his lifetime, Wagner made 12 trips to Paris. Most of these, however, were shorter visits. The two trips mentioned here were the longest and most significant. See Martine Kahane and Nicole Wild (eds.), *Wagner et la France*, catalogue for exhibition at Théâtre national de l'Opéra de Paris (Paris: Herscher, 1984), 13–14.

⁴ Gerald D. Turbow, 'Art and Politics: Wagnerism in France', in *Wagnerism in European Culture and Politics*, ed. David C. Large et al. (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1984), 134–9.

⁵ Danièle Pistone, 'Wagner et Paris (1839–1900)', *Revue internationale de musique française* 1, no. 1 (February 1980): 7–84.

Also, a recently completed thesis by Sabine Le Hir examines the relationship between Wagner and France between 1830 and 1861, although the thesis had not been made available at the time of writing, and thus has not been referenced here. See Le Hir, 'Wagner et la France (1830–1861). Nouvelle approche des relations de Wagner avec la France à la lumière de son rapport à l'Allemagne et de la réception française de son œuvre' (PhD thesis, Université François-Rabelais de Tours, 2016).

prominent an issue to ignore.⁶ Indeed, the first time Wagner's ideas caused widespread controversy in the Parisian press was when the Belgian musicologist, writer and composer François-Joseph Fétis published a series of seven articles on Wagner in the *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* in 1852. Ellis points to these articles as the starting point for the polarisation of French society in regard to Wagner; Fétis's language and arguments were so violently negative that they forced other writers to choose a pro- or anti-Wagner stance.⁷

Much of Wagner reception scholarship of the last three decades has focused on the numerous Wagner 'affairs' or scandals that played out in French society during the composer's lifetime and long after his death. The first of these took place during the second of his longer stays in Paris (1860–61), during which he conducted three concerts of his own music at the Théâtre Italien, and succeeded in having his opera *Tannhäuser* accepted at the Opéra. Wagner had long considered having a work performed in France's most prestigious and serious operatic theatre to be the pinnacle of acceptance as an operatic composer, and the beginning of what promised to be a successful career. In comparison to his first fruitless and poverty-stricken period in Paris, then, this second trip seemed infinitely more promising. Yet it was to end in disaster; political opposition to the staging of the work led to rowdy protests inside the opera house. *Tannhäuser* had in fact been accepted at the Opéra mainly for political reasons: Napoleon III ordered its staging in order to placate various groups involved in both domestic and international politics. The result, then, was that opposing political groups took up an anti-Wagner stance in the months preceding the premiere. This was exacerbated by Wagner's refusal to placate the *légitimiste* Jockey Club by adding a ballet to the second act of the opera, which enraged the Club's young aristocrats to the point of creating such a disturbance at the first three performances that Wagner cancelled the remaining performances.⁸

⁶ Katharine Ellis, 'Wagnerism and Anti-Wagnerism in the Paris Periodical Press, 1852–1870', in *Von Wagner Zum Wagnérisme: Musik, Literatur, Kunst, Politik*, ed. Annegret Fauser and Manuela Schwartz (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1999), 51–2.

⁷ Ibid., 52–4. See also, Jean-François Candoni, 'Fétis, François-Joseph', in *Dictionnaire encyclopédique Wagner*, ed. Timothée Picard (Paris: Actes Sud/Cité de la musique, 2010), 712–13.

⁸ Turbow, 'Art and Politics', 146–50. Also see Annegret Fauser and Thomas S. Grey, 'Debate at the Paris Opéra: *Tannhäuser* and the French Critics, 1861', in *Richard Wagner and his World*, ed. Thomas S. Grey (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), 347–71; Eryck de Rubercy (ed.), *La Controverse Wagner. Tannhäuser à Paris en 1861* (Paris: Editions Pocket, 2012).

Annegret Fauser has argued that although the whole *Tannhäuser* debacle has typically been mythologised as an example of the superficiality and narrow-mindedness of Parisian society, opposition to the staging of *Tannhäuser* in fact reflected ‘deep concerns about the future of opera, the primary genre of French cultural life’ at this time.⁹ In this event we see one of the first examples of Wagner being at the centre of a French debate that goes beyond his music and touches on much broader issues of concern for the French. Not only did Wagner and his opera become vessels for French political debate and point-scoring, they also touched on deeper issues related to cultural identity. For many of those opposed to the staging of *Tannhäuser* in 1861, Wagner represented a threat to French operatic tradition, and the Opéra’s status as a State institution meant that this was also a threat to national identity.

While the cancellation of the *Tannhäuser* season in 1861 appeared to be a blow to Wagner and his dreams of Parisian success, Kelly Maynard explains that, on the contrary, the whole affair instigated ‘a flurry of intellectual and cultural responses which lasted for the better part of a decade’, as well as attracting a loyal group of French Wagnerites who were to support the composer in years to come.¹⁰

Meanwhile, another of Wagner’s works was successfully performed in Paris in 1869 at the Théâtre Lyrique: the opera *Rienzi*, composed in 1838–40 in the style of a French grand opera—a genre that Wagner would come to detest. It was the conductor Jules Pasdeloup who, having taken on the direction of Paris’s Théâtre-Lyrique, approached Wagner for permission to stage *Rienzi*. With Wagner’s approval, a French translation was prepared and the work debuted on 6 April 1869. It was highly praised by critics, and the scandal that had engulfed *Tannhäuser* eight years earlier did not resurface. Mark Everist writes that Wagner had decided not to be present in Paris for the production, as he did not want the *Rienzi* production to be seen as an attempt to regain what had been lost with the *Tannhäuser* production—perhaps this absence allowed the performances to proceed without protest.¹¹ Perhaps, too, the French grand opera style of the work was less challenging and more familiar to both audiences and critics, and thus less provocative.

⁹ Annegret Fauser, ‘Cette musique sans tradition: *Tannhäuser* and its French Critics’, in *Music, Theater, and Cultural Transfer*, ed. Annegret Fauser and Mark Everist (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 232.

¹⁰ Kelly Jo Maynard, ‘The Enemy Within: Encountering Wagner in Early Third Republic France’ (PhD thesis, University of California, 2007), 32–3.

¹¹ Mark Everist, ‘*Rienzi*. Théâtre-Lyrique, 1869’, *L’Avant-Scène* 270 (2012): 105.

Nevertheless, it seemed increasingly unlikely that Wagner would fulfil his dream of succeeding as an opera composer in the French capital. Manuela Schwartz has argued that the *Tannhäuser* affair politicised Wagner and turned him towards German nationalism.¹² The Franco-Prussian War (1870–71) cemented this process, and was the context for the publication of Wagner’s ill-fated anti-French farce *Eine Kapitulation (Une Capitulation)*. First published in German in 1873 and in French translation in 1876, as the French were still confronting the humiliation of defeat, the play was to become the second of France’s Wagner affairs. Set during the siege of Paris, which took place during the war, it satirised and belittled respected French figures such as the Republican politician Léon Gambetta, and the revered author Victor Hugo. The 1871 defeat had been a pivotal moment in French history, which caused years of soul-searching for the French, and continued to serve as a reference point for discussions about national identity for decades to come.¹³ When the French learnt about *Une Capitulation*, they were outraged that Wagner’s bad taste had led him to poke fun at a painful period in French history; some of his admirers even went so far as to end their support for the composer.¹⁴

Although Paul du Quenoy has suggested that the publication of *Une Capitulation* had little impact on Wagner’s French admirers, Thomas Grey and Steven Huebner have both argued that it had a profound effect on French musical life, and on the French attitude to Wagner for the rest of the nineteenth century.¹⁵ It provided a target for the residual anger and humiliation surrounding the 1871 defeat, explicitly politicising the discourse surrounding Wagner in the press. This had a very damaging effect on the reception of Wagner’s work in France and undoubtedly contributed to the continued absence of his operas on French stages. Wagner now unequivocally represented German nationalism and chauvinism for the French, and acceptance of his music was directly contingent on political circumstances.

¹² Manuela Schwartz, *Wagner-Rezeption und französische Oper des Fin de siècle* (Sinzig: Studio Verlag Schewe, 1999), 2–7, cited in Fauser, ‘Cette musique sans tradition’, 232.

¹³ For a discussion of how French intellectuals and cultural figures understood the defeat as a symptom of national decay, see Karine Varley, *Under the Shadow of Defeat: The War of 1870–71 in French Memory* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 44–55.

¹⁴ Steven Huebner, *French Opera at the Fin de Siècle: Wagnerism, Nationalism, and Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 12–13; Maynard, ‘Enemy Within’, 34–6.

¹⁵ Paul du Quenoy, *Wagner and the French Muse: Music, Society and Nation in Modern France* (London: Academica Press, 2011), 63–4; Thomas S. Grey, ‘*Eine Kapitulation*: Aristophanic Operetta as Cultural Warfare in 1870’, in *Richard Wagner and His World*, ed. Grey, 94; Huebner, *French Opera*, 13–14.

The conductor Jules Pasdeloup, however, was not deterred. Pasdeloup had been programming excerpts of Wagner works at his *Concerts populaires* throughout the 1860s in the face of condemnation and hostility, and he continued to do so after the Franco-Prussian War, as did the Colonne and Lamoureux concert associations.¹⁶ Yannick Simon writes that Pasdeloup's 'militant' programming of Wagner's music during a period where performing Wagner at all was still uncommon, made a significant contribution to establishing Wagner in the French musical landscape of late nineteenth-century France.¹⁷ Nevertheless, in 1876—the year of the inaugural Bayreuth Festival—a scandal erupted. This was almost certainly related to the publication of *Une Capitulation* in France the previous year. Pasdeloup's announcement in October 1876 of an upcoming performance of the Funeral March from *Götterdämmerung* developed into what the French press dubbed the 'Pasdeloup Scandal'. Pasdeloup's programming decision was debated vigorously in the press, and the opposition was forceful enough to be a cause for concern for the police. Although the concert did go ahead, the *Götterdämmerung* excerpt was followed by loud demonstrations in the concert hall, and it stimulated violent debate in the press for weeks to come.¹⁸

The 'Pasdeloup Scandal' was by no means the last word for those who were heavily opposed to performances of Wagner's works in the wake of the Franco-Prussian War. The 1870s and 80s saw a number of unsuccessful attempts to stage *Lohengrin* in Paris, each one met with violent opposition on both political and musical grounds, and entangled in both domestic politics and issues related to the Franco-German relationship.¹⁹ In an indication of just how political Wagner's music had become, the son of the editor of the prominent music journal *Le Ménestrel* remarked in 1880:

Mr Vaucorbeil [Director of the Opéra] has learnt through the newspapers that he was intending to stage Richard Wagner's *Lohengrin*. Do we need to say that this rumour is unfounded? If, however, Germany one day gave Alsace and Lorraine back to us, no doubt our great opera house would make it a duty and

¹⁶ Steven Huebner, 'Lohengrin in Paris', *History Today* 31, no. 11 (November 1981): 42.

¹⁷ Yannick Simon, *Jules Pasdeloup et les origines du Concert populaire* (Lyon: Symétrie, 2011), 141–4.

¹⁸ Steven Huebner, *French Opera at the Fin de Siècle: Wagnerism, Nationalism, and Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 13–14; Maynard, 'Enemy Within', 37–41.

¹⁹ Huebner, 'Lohengrin in Paris', 42–3.

a pleasure to perform *Lohengrin* and even the *Ring* in return. Who knows, perhaps we will manage to develop diplomatic relations in this way.²⁰

Although the exchange of a Parisian production of *Lohengrin* for the return of Alsace-Lorraine did not occur, the Parisian opera world of the 1880s did not lack musical figures willing to attempt to stage the opera. Kelly Maynard has traced these attempts in detail, from Adolf Neumann's 1881 proposal to stage the opera at the Théâtre des Nations (the project was abandoned due to numerous and varied objections), to Léon Carvalho's planned staging at the Opéra Comique in 1886 (cancelled because of strong nationalist opposition), to Charles Lamoureux's 1887 production at the Eden Théâtre. Although this last production managed to stage a premiere, it also coincided with the Schnaebelé Affair, a political incident that placed great strain on Franco-German relations. Lamoureux's *Lohengrin* became a symbol of German imperialism and the centre of violent anti-Prussian riots around the opera house. Maynard's extraordinary account of the police involvement in the affair, as well as high-level diplomatic involvement and concerns for the opera's potential effect on foreign affairs and the stock market, demonstrate the entanglement of Wagner's music and politics in France.²¹ Steven Huebner writes that, 'The problem with the reception of Wagner's operas in France was not so much that he was German, but that he was Wagner.'²² Yet while it is true that in the years following the Franco-Prussian War, the French did not condemn all German music, it is also true that Wagner had become a symbol of German nationalism in a way that other German composers had not. And while the root of the French problem with Wagner may have not been related to his Germanness, his symbolism consistently provided the French with a means of commenting on Germany and German culture.

In September 1891, *Lohengrin* finally triumphed at the Opéra in a production conducted by Lamoureux, although not without the presence of police and soldiers to

²⁰ 'M. Vaucorbeil a appris par les journaux qu'il se proposait de monter le Lohengrin de Richard Wagner. Est-il besoin de dire que ce bruit n'a rien de fondé ? Si pourtant l'Allemagne nous rendait un jour l'Alsace et la Lorraine, nul doute que notre grand opéra ne se fit un devoir et un plaisir de représenter en retour le Lohengrin et même la tétralogie des Nibelungen. Qui sait, peut-être arrivera-t-on à nouer des relations diplomatiques dans ce sens.'

H. Moreno [Henri Heugel], 'Semaine théâtrale', *Le Ménestrel*, 18 April 1880, 155. Cited in Philippe Reynal, 'Le Wagnérisme à Paris en 1880 : entre essor et rejet', in *La Musique à Paris en 1880*, ed. Danièle Pistone (Paris: Editions Observatoire musical français, 2015), 93.

²¹ Maynard, 'Enemy Within', 41–61.

²² Huebner, 'Lohengrin in Paris', 41.

quell protests outside the theatre. From this point on, Wagner's operas were able to be performed in Paris without causing public disturbance.²³ Ellis's article on the performance of *Lohengrin* in the provinces prior to its premiere in Paris suggests that these earlier productions smoothed the way for the eventual Paris Opéra production. She argues that they functioned as a 'testing ground' which depoliticised Wagner and his music, thus facilitating the successful entry of *Lohengrin* into the Paris Opéra's repertoire.²⁴ Maynard concurs, suggesting that these provincial performances also placed pressure on the Paris Opéra to follow suit.²⁵ Huebner and Maynard also both point to a change in the French public's attitude as the result of a different, less insecure political environment; once the French felt less threatened by Germany, their opposition to the staging of Wagner's operas faded.²⁶

The *Lohengrin* success did not, however, mark the end of the polarising Wagner debates. The operas gradually made their way into the Opéra repertoire and the French became increasingly familiar with the composer's music and ideas. André Spies even writes that in the years between the 1891 *Lohengrin* production and the end of the century, Wagner's operas made up 45 percent of productions of new works staged at the Opéra.²⁷ Yet French opinion remained divided. Jane Fulcher has written extensively on the ways in which, in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth, various groups within French society aligned themselves with or against Wagner and Wagnerism in order to construct political identities and take positions on the future of the French nation. Opposing sides used Wagner's music and writings to support conflicting arguments: sections of the Right held Wagner up as a model for nationalism, while the Left used him as an example of humanism, universalism, and egalitarianism.²⁸ Similarly, Wagner was lauded for his contribution to the 'purification' of French music and for his antisemitic ideas, while being simultaneously equated with the corruptive and deviant qualities of Jewish

²³ Ibid., 44; Maynard, 'Enemy Within', 61–4.

²⁴ Katharine Ellis, 'How to Make Wagner Normal: *Lohengrin*'s "Tour de France" of 1891–92', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 25, no. 2 (July 2013): 121–37.

²⁵ Maynard, 'Enemy Within', 67–8.

²⁶ Huebner, 'Lohengrin in Paris', 44; Maynard, 'Enemy Within', 66–7.

²⁷ André Spies, 'Lohengrin Takes on the Third Republic: Wagner and *Wagnérisme* in Belle-Epoque Paris', *Nineteenth-Century Studies* 3 (1989): 31.

²⁸ Jane F. Fulcher, 'Wagnerism in the Cultural Politics of the French Right and Left before World War I', in *Von Wagner Zum Wagnérisme*, ed. Fauser and Schwartz, 137–54; Fulcher, *French Cultural Politics and Music: From the Dreyfus Affair to the First World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

influence.²⁹ The shifts in interpretation were constant; while Wagner was viewed as a democrat and a revolutionary following the incidents of 1861³⁰ (and partly due to his involvement in the Dresden uprising of 1849), by the 1890s he had come to be viewed in France as a reactionary and associated with the *snobisme* of the upper classes.³¹

By the time the First World War broke out, all of Wagner's mature operas had been performed in Paris and his music was well-known and increasing in popularity. But war caused old resentments to resurface, as Marion Schmid has shown in her study of the wartime press campaign against Wagner (the same campaign that Gustave Samazeuilh was responding to in the quotation at the beginning of this study). Once again, significant musical personalities equated Wagner with France's enemy and the debate played out in the press, in both musical and explicitly political terms. Schmidt writes that Wagner became a tool for the French to redefine their national art and culture.³² And, as it had been in the past, the Wagner question was discussed and debated by numerous non-musical personalities, testifying to its wider pertinence.³³

Little research has been undertaken into the reception of Wagner in France after the First World War. One exception is Fulcher's article on depictions of Wagner as both Jew and anti-Semite, which covers the first three decades of the twentieth century. She traces the appropriation of Wagner by nationalist leagues in the wake of the infamous Dreyfus Affair³⁴ through to the French fascists' attraction to Wagner in the 1930s. Her focus on the leagues and fascism, however, makes her study rather narrow

²⁹ Jane F. Fulcher, 'A Political Barometer of Twentieth-Century France: Wagner as Jew or Anti-Semite', *Musical Quarterly* 84, no.1 (2000): 41–57.

These opposing conceptions of Wagner are also raised by Michael Strasser in relation to an earlier period: see Strasser, 'The Société Nationale and its Adversaries: The Musical Politics of the *Invasion germanique* in the 1870s', *19th Century Music* 24, no. 3 (2001): 238–41.

³⁰ Turbow, 'Art and Politics', 152–3; Jane F. Fulcher, 'Wagner as Democrat and Realist in France', *Stanford French Review* 5, no.1 (1981): 97–106.

³¹ Spies, 'Lohengrin Takes on the Third Republic', 31–6; Myriam Chimènes, 'Elites sociales et pratiques wagnériennes : de la propagande au snobisme', in *Von Wagner Zum Wagnérisme*, ed. Fauser and Schwartz 155–97.

³² Marion Schmid, 'À bas Wagner! The French Press Campaign Against Wagner During World War I', in *French Music, Culture and National Identity, 1870–1939*, ed. Barbara L. Kelly (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2008), 77–91.

³³ Esteban Buch, '« Les Allemands et les Boches » : la musique allemande à Paris pendant la Première Guerre mondiale', *Le Mouvement social* 208 (July–September 2004): 48.

³⁴ The Dreyfus Affair is considered to be one of the most significant events in French history. In 1894, the French Jewish military officer Alfred Dreyfus was accused of leaking military information to the German army and was convicted of treason. When it later emerged that Dreyfus was innocent and that his conviction was part of a cover-up to protect the real offender, a polarising debate ensued, encompassing issues related to French national identity and antisemitism in France. An enormous amount of literature has been devoted to the affair and its effect on French society and politics.

and exclusive, and gives us little clue as to how other segments of French society may have perceived the composer.³⁵ Mathias Auclair's chapter in the recently published book *La Musique à Paris sous l'Occupation* outlines some key points in the history of French Wagner reception at the Opéra during France's 'dark years' (1940–44).³⁶ And Sara Iglesias's book on musicology under the Occupation raises some important questions about the way Wagner was written about by musicologists during this same period.³⁷ The aforementioned studies of nineteenth-century French Wagner reception have given us fascinating and significant insights into French musical, political and ideological debates, particularly in the context of the French relationship with Germany. Yet there is still much work to be done in order to understand how Wagner was perceived, appropriated, and understood in twentieth-century France. Given the dramatic manner in which Franco-German relations developed between 1933 and 1945, an investigation into the French reception of Wagner at this time is an important contribution to our understanding of how the French grappled with one of the most difficult periods in their history.

As I have already shown, there is an evident need to extend research on French Wagner reception beyond the First World War. This becomes even more pertinent in the context of the emerging body of research into musical life in Paris under the Occupation (see Chapter Four for discussions of this body of literature).³⁸ There are, however, more compelling reasons for examining press reception of Wagner during both the 1930s and the Occupation, and they are related to misconceptions or misunderstandings in the current literature about the development of Wagner reception during the period of the Third Reich. Sandrine Grandgambe and Mathias Auclair have begun the process of correcting some of these misconceptions,

³⁵ Fulcher, 'Political Barometer', 41–57.

³⁶ Mathias Auclair, 'Richard Wagner à l'Opéra', in *La Musique à Paris sous l'Occupation*, ed. Myriam Chimènes and Yannick Simon (Paris: Cité de la musique / Fayard, 2013), 71–95.

³⁷ Sara Iglesias, *Musicologie et Occupation. Science et politique dans la France des « années noires »* (Paris: Éditions de la maison des sciences de l'homme, 2014).

³⁸ In particular, see Myriam Chimènes (ed.), *La Vie musicale sous Vichy* (Bruxelles: Complexe, 2001); Karine Le Bail, 'Musique, pouvoir, responsabilité. La Politique musicale de la Radiodiffusion française, 1939–1953', (PhD thesis, Institut d'Études Politiques, 2005); Yannick Simon, 'Claude de France, notre Wagner : le culte de Debussy sous l'Occupation', *Cahiers Debussy* 30 (2006): 5–26; Chimènes and Simon (eds.), *La Musique à Paris sous l'Occupation*; Leslie Sprout, *The Musical Legacy of Wartime France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013); Iglesias, *Musicologie et Occupation*.

debunking the myth of the ‘invasion of German repertoire’, and particularly of Wagner repertoire, at the occupied Opéra.³⁹ Yet the idea of an occupied Paris saturated with Wagner’s music persists, as does the belief that hostility to Wagner and his music continued throughout the interwar period and into the Occupation. Sara Iglesias observes in her recent book that the idea of Wagner as universal, human, or European emerged during the Occupation as a means of facilitating French people’s acceptance of Wagner while they struggled under the German yoke. ‘It is above all Wagner,’ she observes, ‘always imagined as specifically German, who is the object of reinterpretation: he finds himself henceforth bathed in the liberating universal light of Beethoven and other humanist German heroes, the anti-Wagnerian tendency of the French debate having been stifled by censorship.’⁴⁰ But while a universal, European Wagner certainly did exist in the Parisian press under the Occupation, this was not a new phenomenon or a reinterpretation; as I shall show in Chapters One and Two, it was a fundamental part of the discourse on Wagner from 1933, and should be viewed as a response to the Third Reich’s appropriation of Wagner and developments in the Franco-German political relationship. Furthermore, the anti-Wagnerian tendency Iglesias refers to was virtually non-existent in the Parisian press in the years leading up to the war, despite steadily increasing tensions between France and Germany. Thus it was not that censorship had stifled anti-Wagnerism in France, but rather that it had not existed for some time.

Connected to the idea of a German musical invasion of occupied Paris is the idea that Parisians hated Wagner during the Occupation. Mathieu Schneider, for example, blames the French Wagnerian soprano Germaine Lubin for contributing to the arousal of French hatred of Wagner during the Occupation.⁴¹ Given the many historical precedents for the French perceiving Wagner as a symbol of Germany—particularly in times of war—it is not unreasonable to assume that French hatred of Wagner rose in the period 1940–1944. Indeed, it may be true that an element of anti-Wagnerism

³⁹ Sandrine Grandgambe, ‘La Réunion des Théâtres Lyriques Nationaux’, in *La Vie musicale sous Vichy*, ed. Chimènes, 118–19; Mathias Auclair, ‘Richard Wagner à l’Opéra’, in *La Musique à Paris sous l’Occupation*, ed. Chimènes and Simon, 71–95.

⁴⁰ ‘C’est avant tout Wagner, toujours pensé comme spécifiquement allemand, qui fait l’objet d’un réinterprétation : il se trouve désormais baigné de la lumière libératrice universelle de Beethoven et des autres héros humanistes allemands, la tendance antiwagnérienne du débat français étant étouffé par la censure.’

Iglesias, *Musicologie et Occupation*, 336.

⁴¹ Mathieu Schneider, exhibition catalogue *Richard Wagner : vu de France = Richard Wagner : aus gallischer Sicht* (Strasbourg: Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire de Strasbourg, 2013), 186, 201.

returned to France in this period. Yet, as I will show in Chapters Four and Five, anti-Wagnerism was completely absent during the Occupation in both the censored official press and the clandestine press of the Resistance, as it had been consistently from 1933. The idea that the French relapsed into anti-Wagner sentiment during the war is not supported by the evidence that has been examined thus far.⁴²

The present study is certainly not the first to explore themes of universalism and Europeanism in Wagner reception in France. A number of scholars have noted the existence of these themes, in particular during the nineteenth century.⁴³ Du Quenoy, in his overview of the turbulent relationship between Wagner and France, remarks on the prevalence of these themes, particularly in the twentieth century. Du Quenoy deduces from this that a depoliticisation and de-nationalisation of Wagner took place at this time, allowing his music to ‘transcend’ political and national divisions and become submerged into the broader concept of Europeanism.⁴⁴ Regardless of du Quenoy’s lack of acknowledgement that most of the evidence upon which he relies is censored, his thesis that Wagner reception became separated from politics before and during the Occupation must be challenged. He argues that the French disentangled Wagner from politics and nationalism by continuing to listen to his music during periods of growing military hostility, war and occupation. In contrast, I argue that Wagner’s music and writings appealed to Parisian critics partly because they allowed them to engage with politics and ideas; through writing about Wagner, critics were able to write and think about what was taking place in the world around them.

Finally, while many studies of music in occupied France emphasise the existence of continuity in musical life between the pre-war period and the Occupation, none actually study these two periods side by side. I show throughout this thesis that the way Wagner was received under the Occupation was in many ways directly connected to the way he was received in the seven years preceding the war, as well as during the century that preceded the Occupation. An examination of the press reception of Wagner in the period 1933–39 is not only important in itself, but also in

⁴² It is, of course, possible that this sentiment existed, but no evidence of it has yet been brought to light.

⁴³ See, for example, Jane F. Fulcher, ‘Wagnerism in the Cultural Politics of the French Right and Left Before World War I’, in *Von Wagner Zum Wagnérisme*, ed. Fauser and Schwartz, 137–54.

⁴⁴ Du Quenoy, *Wagner and the French Muse*.

its capacity to help us to understand what happened afterwards, in France's 'dark years'.

As indicated in the title, this thesis is a study of the reception of Wagner in the Parisian press between 1933 and 1944. I do not claim to explore all aspects of Wagner reception in France during the stated period. This is strictly a study of the press, although a small number of other sources have been used to complement the large body of press sources used. I also do not claim to discuss every article written about Wagner during the chosen time period, although I have undertaken an extensive and comprehensive survey of Wagner-related press sources for this study. The sources collected during the research phase of this project have been organised into prominent themes, events and discourses, most of which fall into an approximate chronological order—these are presented accordingly in the following chapters. I begin the study with the advent of the Third Reich (1933) because of the focus of this study on the Franco–German relationship, and I end with Liberation (1944), at which point Wagner's music is not performed or discussed in the Parisian press for some time. As is clear from the title, the study is focused on the press in Paris, rather than the entire French press, in order to ensure a manageable scope for the collection and examination of primary sources. This choice also reflects the centrality of Paris as a cultural hub in France and, more widely, in Europe. In addition, the focus on Paris is ideal for a study concerned with Franco-German relations under the Occupation, given the occupying forces' interest in and emphasis on France's capital. Hitler's early morning visit to the Paris Opéra on the day following the German invasion of the city, reveals just how important high Parisian culture was in the eyes of the Third Reich.

Although this study does not rely heavily on any particular theoretical model, it is situated within the domain of reception theory. In particular, it has been undertaken with an awareness of a body of press reception studies relating to Wagner and France, and more broadly, to opera in France and the intersection of socio-political context and French musical life. Reception theory emerged from German literary scholarship in the 1970s, in particular through the work of Hans Robert Jauss, whose influential 1969 essay, 'Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory', introduced a number

of ideas that became the basis for reception theory.⁴⁵ Jauss's essay advocated for a change in focus from the creator or producer of a work, to the receiver of that work; in the case of literature, from the author to the reader.⁴⁶ More recently, in their Introduction to *Reception Study*, James Machor and Philip Goldstein explain that, 'modern reception study limits the governing powers of theory and undertakes the historical analysis of changing interpretive practices.'⁴⁷ It is these 'interpretive practices', and the shifts that they undergo with the passing of time and the changes in socio-political circumstances, that interest me in this study.

Although Jauss was concerned with literary theory, his ideas can be, and have been, applied to the study of music; indeed, Jim Samson writes that musicologists were considering the listener's perspective long before the word 'reception' came into use in art histories.⁴⁸ The need to examine reception is perhaps even more crucial for musicologists than it is for other disciplines; unlike a book or a painting, a musical work does not exist without a performance and an audience. Given the instrumental role played by performer and spectator in bringing a musical work into being, the meanings that the performer and spectator find in the work are an essential element to understanding its place in society.

A study of press reception is a means of uncovering some of the multiple meanings of a musical work or set of works, as it is concerned with how certain listeners and readers (ie. critics) perceive a work and make meaning from it. Furthermore, these meanings shift with time, and tracing these shifts helps us to understand changes in the world in which the writers lived. This brings us, inevitably, to the question of the representability of critics. In this study I consider critics as generally representative of the audiences with whom they share their experience of the work because they share with audiences a similar 'horizon of expectations': they live in the same city, have been exposed to similar ideas and texts, and receive the work at the same time, in

⁴⁵ Hans Robert Jauss, 'Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory', *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 3–45.

⁴⁶ Robert C. Holub, *Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction* (London; New York: Methuen, 1984), xii.

⁴⁷ James L. Machor and Philip Goldstein, 'Introduction', in *Reception Study: From Literary Theory to Cultural Studies*, ed. James L. Machor and Philip Goldstein (New York; London: Routledge, 2001), ix–xvii.

⁴⁸ Jim Samson, 'Reception', in *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, accessed 9 February 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezp.lib.unimelb.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/40600>.

similar circumstances and contexts.⁴⁹ The term ‘horizon of expectations’ refers to Jauss’s concept of a system or structure of references that a reader brings to a text.⁵⁰ By revealing the system, we can make more sense of the meaning that those readers created from the work; conversely, by studying the way in which the work was received, we can make more sense of the readers’ horizon of expectations, or system of references. This is not to say that critics can be equated with audiences; critics may not necessarily reflect the social or economic make-up of their fellow listeners. Further, the sections of Parisian society that attended concerts and productions of Wagner’s music did not reflect the opinions and attitudes of all Parisians. I maintain, however, that a study of critical responses can contribute to an understanding of the society within which the critics operated, and the place of the work within that society. Benedict Anderson’s concept of ‘imagined communities’ is useful here; he argues that nations are imagined political communities, whose members feel a sense of belonging and shared identity despite not knowing all the other members in the community.⁵¹ Critics can thus be viewed as members of an imagined community, whose views they represent to an extent. These communities could be national communities, or much smaller communities representing a political movement or interest. Jeremy Popkin has written about the ability of the press to create imagined communities by forming a sense of collective consciousness.⁵² He writes that newspapers are not simply ‘purveyors of information and ideology ... but also ... important sites for the construction of social and cultural identities.’⁵³ As a site for the construction of identity and community, the press is thus an ideal source to consult for an understanding of Parisian responses to Wagner in light of the evolving Franco-German relationship.

Yet to what extent is this understanding of the press as the voice of an imagined community compromised when we deal with heavily censored press controlled by an authoritarian regime? In this context, it becomes very difficult to argue that the press

⁴⁹ James Johnson makes a similar argument. See Johnson, *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 5.

⁵⁰ Holub, *Reception Theory*, 59. Also see Mark Everist, ‘Reception Theories, Canonical Discourses, and Musical Value’, in *Rethinking Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 378–402.

⁵¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

⁵² Jeremy D. Popkin, *Press, Revolution, and Social Identities in France, 1830–1835* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 14.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 9.

is representative of the general public. I respond to this question in Chapters Four and Five, by suggesting that the press reception of Wagner under the Occupation can be viewed as a process of negotiation on the part of Parisian critics, between German demands and French attitudes. I do not deny that there is an unequal power relationship here; this is not a balanced negotiation between two equal parties. Instead, I contend that an imperative existed for Parisian critics to produce Wagner criticism that was acceptable to French audiences and readers, if not an accurate and balanced reflection of their views. Furthermore, press criticism from this period provides important insights about the Franco-German relationship and how it was articulated through writing about Wagner in the circumstances of the Occupation.

Unlike the thriving French press of the nineteenth century, the press of the interwar period was an industry somewhat in decline.⁵⁴ Pierre Albert writes that the number of daily papers dropped substantially after the First World War, and that readers had a weaker sense of loyalty to a particular paper. Political opinion was relegated to weekly and monthly periodicals, while daily newspapers concentrated on reporting news and current affairs, and discussing daily life.⁵⁵ These daily papers, referred to as the '*journaux d'information*', included *Le Journal*, *Le Petit Journal*, *Le Petit Parisien*, *Le Matin*, *L'Echo de Paris*, *Paris-Soir*, *Paris-Midi*, and *L'Intransigeant*.⁵⁶ In addition to these were the '*journaux d'opinion*', which represented a diverse set of political and social viewpoints. Many periodicals and newspapers engaged with music-related issues. Some of the dailies published reports and reviews of musical events or musical news, but in-depth commentary was left to the opinion journals, many of which engaged with topics relating to Wagner. There were, of course, also some publications dedicated to specific artforms, including a number of musical periodicals: *La Revue musicale*, *Le Ménestrel*, *Le Monde musical*, *Guide du concert*, and *Revue de musicologie*. In particular, *La Revue musicale* and *Le Ménestrel* both reported on musical life in Germany and published a significant number of articles on

⁵⁴ Christophe Charle, *Le Siècle de la presse (1830–1939)* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2004), 247–59.

⁵⁵ Pierre Albert, 'La Presse française de 1871 à 1940', in *Histoire générale de la presse française*, vol. III, ed. Claude Bellanger et al. (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1975), 457–61.

⁵⁶ Charles Antoine Micaud, *The French Right and Nazi Germany 1933–1939. A Study of Public Opinion* (New York: Duke University Publications, 1943), 238.

Wagner-related topics.⁵⁷ Arts periodicals such as *Comœdia* similarly contributed an important body of criticism on the topic of Wagner, his music, and his writings. Perhaps because Wagner's writings touched on many domains outside of music, and because Wagner discourse was so tied up with non-musical questions, many non-musical publications contributed to debates and discussions about the German composer.

Albert detects a palpable change in tone in the French press during the interwar period, and he partially attributes the political instability of the 1930s and the weakening of civil society to this development: 'As a whole, the press, prisoner of the secret interests that it served, or partisan passions, heightened divisions and dragged readers into party or class quarrels. The violence of polemics and personal attacks in the opinion pages often reached an intolerable level.'⁵⁸ The best-selling papers were those that sat to the Right of the political spectrum,⁵⁹ and a number of these espoused violently antisemitic or anti-parliamentarian views. The extremism and vehemence expressed in some of these publications (for example, the nationalist and pro-fascist *Je suis partout*) contributed to a hostile and polarised political climate that was to prove very damaging to France's ability to cope with the threat of war.

War and occupation brought instability to most of the Parisian press and many publications folded, although a small number managed to profit from the situation. Yannick Simon writes that in the case of music periodicals alone, the 57 publications that existed in 1939 before the declaration of war were reduced to 24 during the Occupation. Only one of these 24 was a Parisian publication destined for a general public readership: *L'Information musicale*.⁶⁰ Periodicals operating in Paris under the Occupation had to be authorised by German authorities, and all sections of the press were subject to censorship from both German and French authorities. Indeed, the

⁵⁷ For details on how these two publications reported on German musical life in the first two years of Hitler's reign, see Nathalie Maisongrande, 'La Presse musicale parisienne face à la crise allemande : *La Revue musicale* et *Le Ménestrel* en 1933–34', in *Musique et musiciens à Paris dans les années trente*, ed. Danièle Pistone (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2000), 487–94.

⁵⁸ 'Prisonnière des intérêts occultes qu'elle servait ou des passions partisans, la presse, dans son ensemble, accrût les divisions, et entraîna ses lecteurs dans des querelles de partis ou de classe. La violence des polémiques et des attaques personnelles dans les feuilles d'opinion atteignit souvent un degré inadmissible.'

Albert, 'La Presse française', 483.

⁵⁹ Charles, *Siècle de la presse*, 252; Robert J. Soucy, 'French Press Reactions to Hitler's First Two Years in Power', *Contemporary European History* 7 (1998): 23.

⁶⁰ Yannick Simon, 'Les périodiques musicaux français pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale', *Fontes Artis Musicae* 49, no. 1–2 (2002): 76.

Germans effectively controlled the Parisian press by controlling paper and ink supplies, providing propaganda to journal editors and authors, dictating content, censoring material before publication, controlling news sources, and assuming control of publications while maintaining their appearance as French-run enterprises.⁶¹ Sara Iglesias writes that the occupying authorities viewed the French press as a means of propaganda, and that music critics were seen as having an important role in the process of influencing the French public and promoting the policy of Collaboration:

In the framework of German cultural policy, based on the supposedly ‘apolitical’ seduction of both elites and large sectors of the population, music critics play the essential role of courier, establishing patterns of listening and of reception that transform the German cultural discourse into an acceptable and respectable language for the French as a whole.⁶²

It is for this reason that studying the censored press can still be used as a means to understand what the French were thinking under the Occupation. Although more care needs to be taken in the interpretation of these sources, we can view them as evidence of French critics attempting to negotiate between German demands and French horizons of expectation. Though it may seem unlikely that occupying authorities would bother to ‘seduce’ the French and cater to their tastes and preferences, rather than simply impose ideas and ideology by force, this is in fact exactly what took place, as shown in literature that examines cultural life under the Occupation (discussed in Chapters Four and Five). Indeed, the Germans took great care to ensure the smoothest transition possible into the Occupation, striving to maintain the appearance of a free press that was no different to that of the 1930s. They pursued this strategy by fostering the continuation of many of the pre-war press titles, hiding the

⁶¹ Iglesias, *Musicologie et Occupation*, 77–9; Eva Berg Gravensten, *La Quatrième arme. La Presse française sous l’Occupation* (Lausanne: Esprit ouvert, 2001), 38–44; Stéphanie Corcy, *La Vie culturelle sous l’Occupation* (Paris: Perrin, 2005), 64–5.

⁶² ‘Dans le cadre de la politique culturelle allemande, basée sur la séduction soi-disant « apolitique » à la fois des élites et des larges couches de la population, les critiques musicaux jouent le rôle essentiel de passeur, établissant des schémas d’écoute et de réception qui transforment le discours culturel allemand en un langage acceptable et respectable pour l’ensemble des Français.’ Sara Iglesias, ‘« L’âme, le cœur, et toute l’aspiration d’un peuple ». La critique musicale française, relais de la politique de collaboration ?’, in *La Musique à Paris sous l’Occupation*, ed. Chimènes and Simon, 220.

fact that editorial boards were controlled by Germans, and promoting the existence of publications from both the Right and Left of the political spectrum.⁶³

A significant clandestine press also emerged during this period, in spite of many obstacles such as ink and paper shortages and the difficulty of clandestine distribution. These publications were funded by *la France libre* (the French London-based government-in-exile headed by Charles de Gaulle) from 1941,⁶⁴ and they were united in their condemnation of Collaboration and in their support of the Allies.⁶⁵ As the Occupation dragged on and French attitudes towards their occupiers hardened, the popularity and distribution of the clandestine press grew; by early 1944, these publications were together publishing two million issues a day.⁶⁶ Two of these publications were specifically music-related: *Musiciens d'aujourd'hui* and *Le Musicien patriote*. The former was distributed by the *Front national des musiciens*, a branch of the Resistance movement.⁶⁷ Iglesias has written of the difficulty of reconstructing a history of the Resistance in the area of musicology because of the lack of sources, but these sparse publications at least provide a very small glimpse into an alternative perspective to that of the authorised press.⁶⁸

Although the Parisian press of the 1930s was significantly diminished and weaker than it had been before the First World War, and even more so under the Occupation, it was still considered to be a powerful instrument for both voicing and shaping public opinion. Large sections of the press discussed music, which means that the general public was conscious of music-related issues and the discourses that surrounded them. In addition, questions relating to Wagner were explored in many domains and disciplines that did not normally engage with music. Furthermore, debates about Wagner had traditionally been played out in the Parisian press since the mid-

⁶³ Albert, 'Presse française', 7–9, 40, 44–5; Gravensten, *Quatrième Arme*, 46–7; Claude Levy, *Les Nouveaux Temps et l'idéologie de la collaboration* (Paris: Fondation nationale des sciences politiques/Armand Colin, 1974), 211.

⁶⁴ See Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years 1940–1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 389–401, 427–44;

⁶⁵ Claude Bellanger, 'La Presse clandestine de 1940 à 1944', in *Histoire générale de la presse française*, vol. IV, ed. Bellanger et al., 97–168; Gravensten, *Quatrième Arme*, 88–116.

⁶⁶ Laurent Douzou, 'Usages de la presse clandestine dans la Résistance française', in *Écrire sous l'Occupation. Du non-consentement à la Résistance France–Belgique–Pologne 1940–1945*, ed. Bruno Curatolo and François Marcot (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2011), 133.

⁶⁷ For further discussion of the Resistance movement in the Parisian music world, see Guy Hervy, Guy Krivopissko, Aurélien Poidevin and Axel Porin, *Quand l'Opéra entre en Résistance ...* (Paris: L'Oeil d'or, 2007).

⁶⁸ Iglesias, *Musicologie et Occupation*, 196.

nineteenth century; this was Parisians' site of choice for articulating their thoughts about the composer, and this is reflected in the existing literature on the reception of Wagner in the Parisian press up to the First World War. All of these factors make the press an ideal source for examining the reception of Wagner.

The vast majority of sources upon which this thesis draws belong to the Parisian press, including daily newspapers and weekly or monthly periodicals. All of the press sources used were consulted at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF). The research process involved the consultation of more than 100 papers and periodicals, and the collection of more than 600 individual articles and news items. Many of these were brought together in press clipping scrapbooks collated by Paul Franz (1876–1950), a Wagnerian tenor who began singing lessons at the age of 30 while employed as a railway worker, and made his début in *Lohengrin* in 1908.⁶⁹ Franz's press clippings are held at the Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra national de Paris (BmO). Further research was then undertaken at the BmO, the Département de la Musique, the Département des Arts du spectacle, and the Bibliothèque de recherche at the François-Mitterrand site. Some press sources are now also available on the BnF's digital library Gallica. The press articles used in the process of researching and writing this thesis are listed in the appendices to this thesis, firstly in alphabetical order (Appendix A1) and secondly in chronological order (Appendix A2). A selection of reproductions of significant articles is provided in Appendix C, including my own transcriptions as well as some reproductions from Gallica.

A limited number of other sources were consulted in order to contribute to a more well-rounded picture of Wagner reception in certain sections of the thesis, including musicological and music literature published between 1933 and 1944, and concert programme archives for the same period. Apart from these sources, however, the focus is exclusively on press reception (for reasons outlined above). The sources examined are also limited to French language publications, almost all of which were published in Paris. Although the examination of Paris-based German language publications would have contributed another dimension to the reception study, it would also have resulted in a very different thesis. The chosen focus was firmly on

⁶⁹ Jean-Jacques Groleau, 'Franz, François Gauthier, dit Paul (1876–1950)', in *Dictionnaire encyclopédique Wagner*, ed. Picard, 757.

the Parisian press reception of Wagner, which could only be studied through the examination of French language materials.

While each of the chapters in this thesis is designated a specific time span, and the chapters are organised in a generally chronological order, each chapter focuses on certain themes that emerged in writings on Wagner during that period. The first two chapters cover the period 1933–39, the last two chapters cover the period of war and occupation (1939–44), and the middle chapter straddles both periods.

Chapter One focuses on the year 1933—the *cinquantenaire* of Wagner’s death, when more material on him was published in the press than in any other year studied here—with an awareness that many of the questions and themes that arise during this year were similarly prominent in the following years and up until the outbreak of war in 1939. The chapter examines the way in which the Parisian press responded to, and rejected, the Nazi appropriation of Wagner by employing a universalist discourse, or other similar related discourses. I begin the chapter by explaining the importance of 1933 in French Wagner reception and providing some background on the French political context. This is followed by a section on the treatment of Wagner’s music under the Third Reich, which becomes essential contextual information for the press analysis later in the chapter. I then outline various indicators of what I term a ‘new wave of Wagnerism’ in Parisian musical life, considering the reception of Wagner in performances, public events, and published literature. An analysis of press reception follows, beginning with an examination of how the Parisian press envisaged the relationship between Wagner and France. I analyse the different ways in which Parisian critics discuss and debate what is taking place in Germany in relation to Wagner, and ultimately reject the ‘Third Reich’s Wagner’ in favour of their own Wagner: human, universal, European, classic and even possibly Jewish, or at least ‘a little French’.⁷⁰ I examine the way in which a Nazified Wagner is perceived as a threat to French cultural identity, and I conclude that by 1933, Wagner was too much an integral part of French culture for the French to accept relinquishing him to the Third Reich.

⁷⁰ ‘un peu français’

Guy de Pourtalès, ‘Souvenir à Wagner’, *Marianne*, 15 February 1933, 15.

Chapter Two examines the idea of Franco-German rapprochement through Wagner, looking at the period 1933–39. It asks to what extent this discourse was simply imported propaganda, and whether or not it was accepted and adopted by the French critics. I begin by providing some background information on the historical Franco-German relationship and attempts at achieving peace and rapprochement, as well as a section on Otto Abetz and the promotion of German propaganda through the bilingual periodical *Cahiers franco-allemands*. I then focus on the German conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler and his role in promoting or enacting the idea of rapprochement through Wagner. Through an analysis of Wagner criticism in journals aimed at fostering rapprochement, as well as other journals that reference the idea of achieving rapprochement through Wagner, I consider to what extent the Parisian press accepted the proposal of achieving rapprochement via the German composer. I conclude that while this discourse did exist in the Parisian press, it met with mixed success. It was, however, to later take on new importance as the Parisian press was obliged to come to terms with the Occupation-era narrative of Franco-German Collaboration—a direct evolution of Franco-German rapprochement.

Chapter Three functions as a transition between the two distinct chronological periods covered in this study: 1933–39 and 1939–44. It analyses Parisian critics' responses to the Bayreuth Festival during these two periods. The chapter begins with an introduction to the place of the Bayreuth Festival in French musical life and in the French imagination, and the long-held tradition of French critics travelling to, and reporting on, the Festival. With this context in mind, the chapter proceeds to an examination of the reception of Bayreuth in the Parisian press between 1933 and 1939, with a particular focus on the strong associations that had developed—even in 1933—between Bayreuth and the Nazi Party, and between Wagner and Hitler. I argue that the French press reception of the Festival was marked by a discourse that differentiated it significantly from other French writings on Wagner of this time: a heightened consciousness of the Wagner–Hitler connection, and a resulting tension between the opposing but simultaneous responses of attraction and fear towards the Bayreuth experience. I attribute this to the emotional dimension of attending a Festival, and to a French longing for a strong national identity, something which was clearly lacking throughout the 1930s. The last part of the chapter examines the Occupation period (1940–44), and the small number of articles on Bayreuth that

appeared in the Parisian press during this period. I focus on one particular review of the Festival by Edouard Dujardin, arguing that while it may not be representative, it is nevertheless significant because of the way it responds to German propaganda. This section functions as an introductory glimpse into the following two chapters, which focus solely on the period of the Occupation.

Chapter Four begins with some background explanation of the declaration of war in September 1939 and the ensuing *drôle de guerre* period, and proceeds with an account of the 1940 press debate surrounding the performance of Wagner's music during wartime. It situates this debate in relation to the anti-Wagner campaign in the Parisian press during the First World War, and notes the acute consciousness of the past on the part of critics, and their attempts to make connections between the current debate and that which had taken place a quarter of a century earlier. The chapter then moves forward to outline briefly the events of invasion and occupation in 1940. I provide a summary of the policy of Franco-German Collaboration, and how this was paralleled in the realm of culture, through the policy of cultural collaboration. I then analyse musicological literature published on Wagner, with a focus on Samazeuilh's edited collection on Wagner: *Vues sur la France*. An analysis of concert programming offers points of comparison with the 1930s, and is followed by an examination of the reception of special Wagner-related concert events under the Occupation. I end the chapter with a brief consideration of the clandestine press reception of Wagner during this period. I conclude that the aspects of Wagner reception considered here—ie. the press reception of all Wagner-related elements except for performances at the Opéra (examined in Chapter Five)—was characterised by hesitance and trepidation, both on the part of the occupiers and the occupied. I affirm that Wagner continued to be a means for the French to talk about French culture and nation, in spite of the restrictions on free speech and the censorship of the press.

The final chapter, Chapter Five, focuses on the press reception of Wagner at the Opéra, and the discourse of Wagner as Collaboration. I follow the fate of Wagner's works at this theatre through the *drôle de guerre* period, during which they were not performed, and into the Occupation and their return to the Opéra stage in late 1940. Again, I analyse elements of programming in order to make comparisons between the

interwar period and the Occupation, and to contribute to an understanding of the occupiers' attitude towards the performance of Wagner at one of Paris's most prestigious cultural institutions. The chapter then proceeds with an examination of the *représentations allemandes* of Wagner's works, which formed the most significant aspect of Wagner performance at the Opéra during this time. I argue that the visiting German productions of Wagner works that were intended for French audiences were presented within the discourse of Collaboration, and I assess the varying levels of success of these performances as presented in the press. I also offer an argument for the contribution that censored press can make, in this specific case, to our understanding of French attitudes, in spite of the limitations that censorship imposes on a press reception study.

The Conclusion of this thesis attempts to synthesise the findings of each chapter, and draw together the different threads of Wagner reception that have emerged. I make connections between chapters and time periods, and I analyse the ways in which the various discourses presented here interact with one another. In particular, I argue for the importance of considering the impact of the 1930s, and particularly the period 1933–39, on the events of the Occupation. The awareness of Parisian critics of the historical relationship between Wagner and France (and the French often wrote about Wagner and France as two people) is acutely evident throughout this thesis. As the Conclusion will demonstrate, most of the Occupation responses to Wagner examined here can only be fully explained and comprehended through an understanding of what took place in the 1930s, or more broadly during the interwar period, or even in the nineteenth century. In a gesture towards the future of research on Wagner in France, I offer some suggestions for extending and complementing the research presented here. Finally, I show that Wagner played a fundamental role in French culture and society, enabling the French to articulate ideas about nation, conflict and identity in their past, present and future.

CHAPTER ONE

‘Cantor of the enduring human heart’:⁷¹ Responses to the *cinquantenaire*, 1933

Introduction

1933 was a significant year for Wagner reception in Paris for two reasons. Firstly, it marked the fiftieth anniversary of Wagner’s death, referred to in the Parisian press as ‘*le cinquantenaire*’. As I will show in this chapter, the *cinquantenaire* sparked a flurry of Wagner activity in Paris and an enormous amount of Wagner-related commentary in the Parisian press. This year of intensive press attention provides an ideal opportunity to gain a snapshot of how Parisians were thinking about Wagner, and what he and his music meant to them during this turbulent decade. Secondly, 1933 was the year in which Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany and was thus able to fully implement the National Socialists’ monopolisation and manipulation of Wagner’s music. As I will explain later in this chapter, Hitler’s personal obsession with Wagner, combined with a longstanding Nazi interest in the composer’s writings and ideology, led to a widespread instrumentalisation of Wagner by the Third Reich. This was received by the Parisian press with shock, alarm and outrage. The themes that emerge in the press reception of 1933 were to persist throughout the 1930s until the declaration of war in 1939. Thus a close study of 1933 offers a reliable indication of the ways in which Wagner was received in Paris throughout the decade.

⁷¹ ‘chantre du cœur humain impérissable’.

Marcel Beaufils, ‘Richard Wagner et l’Allemagne’, *L’Alsace française*, 12 February 1933, 134.

This chapter will begin with an outline of the socio-political context of the 1930s in France, which serves as a background to the press responses examined here and in later chapters. I then proceed to an examination of the ‘new wave of Wagnerism’ that took place in Paris in 1933, including the publication of musicological literature, the performance of Wagner’s music in concerts and at the Paris Opéra, and a number of other public events. Before moving on to examine the way in which all this activity was received, I provide a brief summary of the literature dealing with the Third Reich’s use (and abuse) of Wagner’s music and ideas, a subject which became an essential aspect of Parisian press reception of Wagner at this time. The bulk of the chapter is devoted to the ways in which the press responded to Germany’s treatment of Wagner under the Third Reich: I examine efforts in the press to situate Wagner in French cultural history and to reclaim him in the context of the almost unanimously condemned National Socialist project of appropriation. In so doing, I illuminate the various attempts to label Wagner as French, classic, universal, human, and European, in an effort to challenge Nazi rhetoric and propaganda. I argue that by 1933, Wagner had become essential to Parisian musical life. The prospect of losing Wagner to the Nazis moved the Parisian press to argue passionately and stridently for his place in the French musical imagination, and to reposition him as a universal composer who could be worshipped by all.

Background: Socio-political context of 1930s France

In 1933, France was entering a period of political and social instability that would entail the extreme polarisation of the French political arena, the serious repercussions of a global economic crisis (which hit France later than most other European countries), and a seemingly blind and suicidal determination to preserve peace with a foreign regime that was determined to make war. In the domestic sphere, moderate and mainstream views gave way to extremism and violent opposition from all sides of politics. French society was rife with xenophobic, antisemitic and fascist discourses, resulting in what Dominique Borne describes as ‘the time of hatred’ (*le temps de la haine*).⁷² Pierre Laborie has argued that during the 1930s, French society experienced a gradual disintegration of the sense of civic responsibility and shared belonging that

⁷² Dominique Borne and Henri Dubief, *La Crise des années 30. 1929–1938* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1989), 180.

usually help a nation to confront challenges.⁷³ In 1933, this process of falling apart was just beginning. In foreign policy, pacifism ruled the day; the French had been so traumatised by WWI that the avoidance of armed conflict and the maintenance of a non-interventionist stance was a non-negotiable priority. Anti-war sentiment was so pervasive that most people preferred the prospect of occupation to that of war.⁷⁴ Although there were many different brands of French pacifism, driven by different motivations from different political camps, the desire to maintain peace with Germany overrode political and ideological differences and was shared by the majority of French people to the point that it became equated with patriotism.⁷⁵ When Hitler came to power as Chancellor of Germany on 30 January 1933, he did so with a promise to overturn the Treaty of Versailles and the humiliation it was imposing on the German people, and to rebuild a strong and powerful German nation. Yet the Franco-German diplomatic relationship continued to feature a discourse of entente and rapprochement, even as Germany took steps towards rearmament and became increasingly militarily aggressive.

Economic instability and a lack of steady direction from the political leadership contributed to a general atmosphere of unease as the 1930s progressed. Scholars describe this period as being characterised by a crisis of national identity. Jane Fulcher has shown how high culture became an extremely important means of expressing political views and ideas in 1920s and 30s France, and how the state occupied an ‘extended cultural terrain’ following WWI. This resulted in an ideologically charged environment for artists and artistic commentators such as critics. Aesthetics were highly politicised and art was considered to be ideologically meaningful. In particular, Fulcher has argued that art played an important role in the task of defining national identity in this period.⁷⁶ As I shall show in the chapters that follow, culture—and particularly music—was a space where both domestic and foreign politics were played out, and Wagner was to play an essential role in this process.

⁷³ Pierre Laborie, *L'Opinion française sous Vichy* (Paris: Seuil, 1990), 56–62.

⁷⁴ Eugen Weber, *The Hollow Years: France in the 1930s* (New York; London: Norton, 1994), 23–5.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 49–58.

⁷⁶ Jane F. Fulcher, *The Composer as Intellectual: Music and Ideology in France 1914–1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 7–12; Fulcher, ‘The Preparation for Vichy: Anti-Semitism in French Musical Culture Between the Two World Wars’, *The Musical Quarterly* 79, no.3 (1995): 460.

The Third Reich's Wagner

As I have indicated in the Introduction, the press reception of Wagner between 1933 and 1939 was dominated by a preoccupation with the ways in which Germany was utilising Wagner and his music for political purposes. In order to provide some context to this preoccupation, I will briefly summarise some of the relevant scholarship concerning the question of exactly how Wagner and his music were used by the Nazi regime. The question of the extent and nature of the Nazi Party's use of Wagner's music and ideas has engendered controversy and sometimes acrimonious musicological debate in recent decades,⁷⁷ and will only be explored briefly here in order to better understand French responses to Wagner. As I will show below, the Parisian press was in no doubt that Wagner's music was being exploited for political purposes in Hitler's Germany, but it is not always clear what kinds of events or information they were responding to. We know that several French writers, journalists and critics travelled to the Bayreuth Festival and reported vividly in French periodicals on their experiences (see Chapter Three), but apart from these reports there are few indications as to exactly what led the French to believe that Wagner had been appropriated by the new regime in Germany.

Hitler considered his first exposure to Wagner's music in his adolescence as a fundamental and formative experience that influenced him for the rest of his life, and it is undeniable that Wagner was a very significant figure for him throughout his adulthood. A number of scholars have commented on the conflation of the figures of Wagner and Hitler that developed under the Third Reich. Hitler's obsession and identification with Wagner apparently developed to such an extreme that the composer became inseparably associated with the leader of the Nazi regime, at least in Germany.⁷⁸ The personality cult surrounding Hitler and his leadership and domination of the Nazi movement in Germany were widely recognised in the French

⁷⁷ See, for example, the heated exchange between Hans Rudolf Vaget and William Rasch and Marc Weiner on the topic of Paul Lawrence Rose's 1992 book *Wagner: Race and Revolution*: Hans Rudolf Vaget, 'Wagner, Anti-Semitism and Mr Rose: Merkwürd'ger Fall!', *The German Quarterly* 66, no.2 (1993): 222–36; William Rasch and Marc A. Weiner, 'A Response to Hans Rudolf Vaget's "Wagner, Anti-Semitism and Mr Rose"', *The German Quarterly* 67, no.3 (1994): 400–408.

⁷⁸ Hans Rudolf Vaget, '“Du varst mein Feind von je”: The Beckmesser Controversy Revisited', in *Wagner's Meistersinger: Performance, History, Representation*, ed. Nicholas Vazsonyi (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2003), 206; Catherine Coquio, 'Hitler, Adolf (1889–1945)', in *Dictionnaire encyclopédique Wagner*, ed. Timothée Picard (Paris: Actes Sud/Cité de la Musique, 2010), 908.

press of the 1930s. Hitler's identification with Wagner and his love of Wagner's operas were often commented upon, and the association between the two figures was strong (see Chapter Three for a more extended discussion of this phenomenon and its implications). French writers, for example, referred much more frequently to 'Hitlerism' than 'Nazism' and tended to talk about 'Hitlerian Wagnerism' rather than the 'Nazification' of Wagner.

The reopening of the Bayreuth Festival in 1924, and Hitler's developing relationship with the Wagner family into the 1930s, cemented the associations between the Third Reich and Wagner. The closeness between Hitler and Winifred Wagner was public knowledge, and Winifred gradually transformed the Bayreuth Festival into the ultimate site of cultural Nazism.⁷⁹ When Hitler came to power in 1933, the new regime began a systematic policy of using Wagner's music to accompany political events.⁸⁰ It also supported the Bayreuth Festival financially during a time when it would otherwise have been forced to close.

There is no doubt that Wagner's music was given a privileged position under the Third Reich, and considered as highly suitable for arousing the appropriate nationalist emotions during mass gatherings. The questions that have caused heated debate amongst scholars centre around to what extent Wagner's ideas and ideology were important for Hitler and the Nazis, and whether or not they were a precursor of Nazism. Some have argued that there are no parallels between Wagner's ideology and Nazi ideology, but Pierre-André Taguieff has demonstrated that the Nazi press celebrated Wagner as a precursor of Nazi thought, and that Hitler and Wagner shared a wider framework of ideology and political thought.⁸¹ Whether or not Hitler's perception of these parallels is correct, for the purposes of this study it is more pertinent to know how widespread the idea of 'Wagner as precursor of Nazism' was. The answer (according to Taguieff) is that in Germany it was quite widespread indeed.

⁷⁹ Frederic Spotts, *Bayreuth: A History of the Wagner Festival* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1994), 190.

⁸⁰ Pierre-André Taguieff, *Wagner contre les Juifs : Aux origines de l'antisémitisme culturel moderne* (Paris: Berg International, 2012), 208–9.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 196–7. Pamela Potter, though, argues that attempts to demonstrate direct connections have been unconvincing. See Potter, 'Wagner and the Third Reich: Myths and Realities', in *The Cambridge Companion to Wagner*, ed. Thomas S. Grey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 237–8.

From the point of view of the French press, the question of Wagner's place in the Reich manifested itself in three different forms. The first was the visibility and presence of Nazi and Hitler propaganda at the annual Bayreuth Festival, something that all French commentators reported on at the time (discussed at length in Chapter Three). These reports clearly played a large role in disseminating the idea of a Hitlerian or Nazified Wagner. Secondly, the Nazis' use of Wagner's music at pivotal public events (such as the elections that brought the Nazi Party to power and the Day of Potsdam in March 1933),⁸² made a striking impression on French journalists and critics, although this was less widely reported on than the Bayreuth Festival. Thirdly, some French critics would have been aware that Wagner's ideas were influential in the development of the Nazi movement and its ideology.

1933: A new wave of Wagnerism in Paris

Performances of Wagner's music

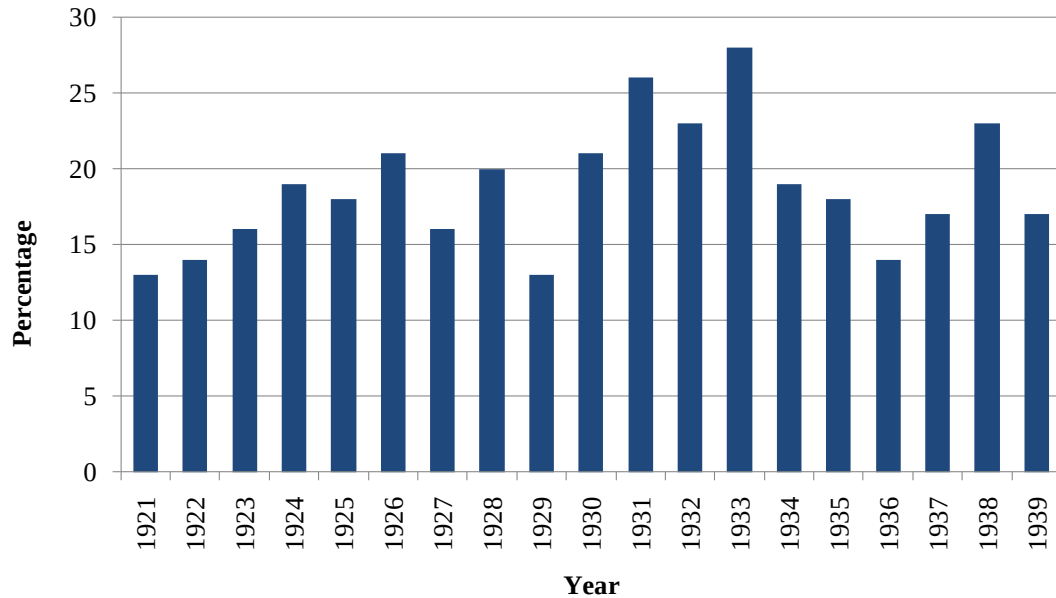
In 1933, Parisian musical life was saturated with Wagner in every format. At the Paris Opéra, there were 55 performances of Wagner's operas over the year; this constituted 28% of all the operatic performances at the Opéra that year (see Figure 1),⁸³ making Wagner the most-performed composer at the Opéra. All but one of Wagner's mature operas were performed in 1933: *Lohengrin*, *Parsifal*, *L'Or du Rhin*, *La Walkyrie*, *Siegfried*, *Le Crépuscule des dieux*, *Tristan et Isolde*, *Les Maîtres chanteurs de Nuremberg* and *Tannhäuser*. (*Le Vaisseau fantôme* was the only work missing from the list; surprisingly, it was not premiered at the Paris Opéra until 1937, although it had been performed in 1897 at the Opéra Comique.) In April and May, a full *Ring* cycle was performed, using the same scenery and costumes that had been developed

⁸² Taguieff, *Wagner contre les Juifs*, 208–9.

⁸³ I have chosen to represent the number of *performances* of Wagner's operas rather than the number of Wagner's works performed. This number is then calculated as a percentage of the number of operatic performances at the Opéra. This method provides a better understanding of the level of exposure that Parisians had to Wagner's works. The information provided here on works performed at the Paris Opéra has been extracted from the *Journal de l'Opéra*, available online at the Bibliothèque nationale de France's online database *Gallica*: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb426079139/date>. Full numerical data is provided in Appendix B1.

for the cycle's Opéra premiere in 1911.⁸⁴ Figure 1 shows that 1933 formed part of a peak period that lasted three years in the middle of the interwar period (1921–1939).⁸⁵

Figure 1: Graph showing performances of Wagner operas as a percentage of all operatic performances at the Paris Opéra, 1921–39



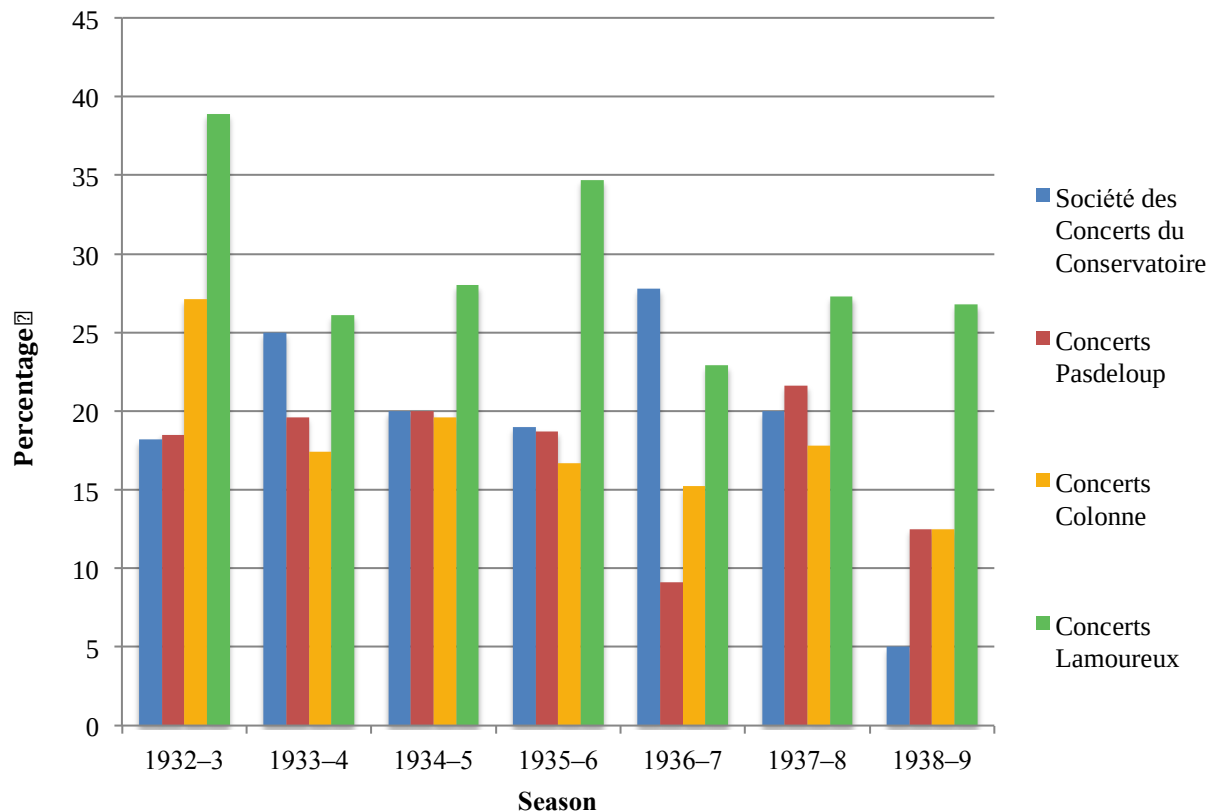
In addition to stagings of Wagner's operas, Parisian audiences also attended countless concerts of excerpts from the operas. The city was host to at least 15 concerts with all-Wagner programs—often referred to as 'Wagner festivals'—performed by all the major concert associations in Paris (Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, Concerts Colonne, Concerts Lamoureux, and Concerts Padeloup), as well as minor ones such as Concerts Poulet and Concerts Siohan, and visiting performances from Arturo Toscanini. Concert excerpts of Wagner's music could also be heard amongst the music of other composers in numerous other concert programmes, including concert tours from the Berlin Philharmonic which invariably programmed music by Wagner (to be examined in Chapter Two). Figure 2 shows that amongst the four major concert associations, the programming of Wagner works in concert seasons between 1932 and 1939 was comparable to the programming of Wagner's operas at the Opéra: in most seasons, most of the associations programmed Wagner's music in 15–20% of the concerts that formed part of their regular seasons. Concerts Lamoureux was the most

⁸⁴ Mathias Auclair, 'L'Anneau du Nibelung', in *Verdi, Wagner et l'Opéra de Paris*, ed. Mathias Auclair, Christophe Gristi and Pierre Vidal (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France/Opéra national de Paris, 2013), 155–81.

⁸⁵ 1921 was the year that the Paris Opéra began programming Wagner's works again, after the ban during the First World War, discussed in the Introduction to this thesis.

prolific Wagner programmer, with more than 25% of its concerts including Wagner works in every season of the studied period except one. With the exception of the 1938–39 season, for which the programming may have been affected by impending war, each association’s programming of Wagner works remained relatively stable during this period.

Figure 2: Graph showing percentages of concerts in major concert associations’ regular seasons that include music by Wagner, 1932–39



Public events relating to Wagner

In commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of Wagner’s death, the musicologist and director of the Bibliothèque et musée de l’Opéra, Jacques-Gabriel Prod’homme, curated an exhibition at the museum which centred around the infamous 1861 *Tannhäuser* affair (discussed briefly in the Introduction to this thesis). Press reports suggest it was a small exhibition of documents such as letters and press articles. Prod’homme was a devoted Wagnerian and a translator of a number of Wagner’s prose works and libretti. His 1921 book *Richard Wagner et la France*—published the same year that Wagner’s operas began to be re-admitted to the Opéra stage after the

war—had provided a spirited defence of Wagner in terms of France's relations with both the man and his music. Prod'homme had dismissed as naive and uninformed the argument that Wagner's influence had destroyed the nineteenth-century French operatic tradition, writing that Wagner had actually done France a favour by elevating the '*mentalité du public*'. Furthermore, he argued that *Une Capitulation* (discussed in Introduction) had simply been misunderstood by the French public and Wagner had never been a pan-Germanist at all.⁸⁶ Perhaps Prod'homme's decision to focus on the *Tannhäuser* affair in his 1933 exhibition was a way of emphasising how far the French had come in their attitudes to Wagner and of trying to put right what he saw as a grave injustice done to the composer by the French people. In any case, it was a choice that reflected a more widespread French interest in the *Tannhäuser* affair, which was clearly an important event in Parisians' understanding of their historical relationship with Wagner and his music. As I will show later in this chapter, the affair was frequently referred to in the Parisian press. The way it was remembered was an important part of the complex narratives and counter-narratives being developed around the history of Wagner reception in France.

Also taking place at the same time as the opening of the exhibition was Thomas Mann's visit to Paris to promote the French translation of his recently published book on Wagner: *Souffrances et grandeur de Richard Wagner*, translated by Félix Bertaux and published by Fayard.⁸⁷ The publication of this work, combined with Mann's presence in Paris and the lectures he gave in relation to the book, had a significant impact in the Parisian press. These events will be examined more closely later in this chapter. Mann was not the only figure to discuss Wagner in public in 1933: Guy de Pourtalès, author of an acclaimed Wagner biography published in 1932, gave a lecture on Wagner at a Wagner concert in February in the Salle Pleyel, and was later reported to have given a lecture on Wagner and France in Berlin for the *Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft* (Franco-German Society) in March. In the same month, the Concerts Colonne premiered a new French translation of *Tristan und Isolde* by Gustave Samazeuilh at the Théâtre du Châtelet, sung by a combined cast of singers from the Paris Opéra and from Bayreuth. Samazeuilh was then to be heard on the radio in

⁸⁶ J.-G. Prod'homme, *Richard Wagner et la France* (Paris: Maurice Sénart, 1921), 32–90.

⁸⁷ Thomas Mann, *Souffrances et grandeur de Richard Wagner*, trans. Félix Bertraux (Paris: Fayard, 1933).

October, filling in listeners on his ‘impressions of the most recent Wagner Festival in Bayreuth’.

Published material relating to Wagner

The volume of Wagner commentary published in the Parisian press in 1933 was remarkable, including the more than 200 articles, reviews, and other Wagner-related commentaries upon which this chapter is mostly based. There were, however, other kinds of Wagner-related publications that emerged during this period, and the most significant of these were the five books about Wagner that were published in 1933: Gabriel Bernard’s *Richard Wagner*;⁸⁸ Pierre Lalo’s *Richard Wagner ou le Nibelung*;⁸⁹ Henri Rebois’ *La Renaissance de Bayreuth*;⁹⁰ and two translated volumes: Thomas Mann’s *Leiden und Groesse Richard Wagners* (in French *Souffrances et grandeur de Richard Wagner*); and Bernard Shaw’s *The Perfect Wagnerite* (*Le Parfait Wagnérien*).⁹¹ To this list could be added Guy de Pourtalès’s *Wagner. Histoire d’un artiste*,⁹² which was published in the previous year but widely discussed by the press in 1933 and considered to be a comprehensive and definitive biography.⁹³

The French works from this list are predominantly biographical, with the exception of Rebois’s book which is focused on Bayreuth as an institution and particularly on the role of Siegfried Wagner, with whom Rebois exchanged correspondence. All these authors are eager to emphasise the role of France and the French in Wagner’s artistic development, to the point that his miserable early visits to Paris in 1839–42 and 1859–60 are depicted as turning points in his career. Bernard, for example, writes that Wagner’s first stay in Paris marked the starting point of his mature composition: ‘It is in Paris, and—however paradoxical this opinion may appear to some—*thanks to Paris* that Wagner makes the turnaround that decides his future. It is in Paris that he

⁸⁸ Gabriel Bernard, *Richard Wagner. Son œuvre, sa vie romanesque et aventureuse* (Paris: Jules Tallandier, 1933).

⁸⁹ Pierre Lalo, *Richard Wagner ou le Nibelung* (Paris: Flammarion, 1933).

⁹⁰ Henri Rebois, *La Renaissance de Bayreuth : de Richard Wagner à son fils Siegfried* (Paris: Librairie Fischbacher, 1933).

⁹¹ Bernard Shaw, *Le Parfait Wagnérien*, trans. Augustin Hamon and Henriette Hamon (Paris: Editions Montaigne, 1933).

⁹² Guy de Pourtalès, *Wagner. Histoire d’un artiste* (Paris: Gallimard, 1933).

⁹³ Pourtalès’s biography is still considered to be a significant contribution to scholarship on Wagner’s life, hence its republication in 2013. See Alain Corbellari, ‘Portalès, Guy de (1881–1941)’, in *Dictionnaire encyclopédique Wagner*, ed. Picard, 1656–7.

begins to know where he is going.’⁹⁴ He goes on to argue that this period was the most significant in Wagner’s entire life. Guy de Pourtalès’s account is more nuanced, and he simply notes the importance of Wagner’s early French admirers in Paris. Henri Rebois exhibits an adoring attitude towards Wagner, his music and his legacy. Like the other authors, he is intent on underlining the importance of France’s support by noting that Wagner’s music is currently more welcome in France than it is in Germany. He attributes this to the music’s deeply human and universal character which transcends time and place, emphasising the fact that it is not a specifically German art.⁹⁵ As I will show in the next section of this chapter, this idea of a universal Wagner was to emerge as one of the most important themes in the French press reception of Wagner in the 1930s.

Pierre Lalo—music critic and son of the Wagnerian composer Édouard Lalo—strives to show the importance of Wagner’s first Parisian stay, suggesting that France may take some credit for Wagner’s development as a composer: ‘Thus it is in Paris that Wagner regains self-awareness and self-possession. He remained there for two more years, battling against misery, struggling to get out of the darkness. But when he left, in 1842, the music for *The Flying Dutchman* was entirely completed: the true Richard Wagner was born.’⁹⁶ This narrative of enlightenment through hardship offers a justification for France’s bad treatment of Wagner in those years. While it does not quite excuse France’s error, it does suggest that its ultimate result was a positive, even essential one; a contribution to Wagner’s eventual success. Again, this was a narrative that was also used frequently by the Parisian press in discussions of Wagner’s experiences in Paris, which will be examined in more detail later in this chapter. The themes that arise from the four above-mentioned books by French authors are indications of the preoccupations of the press during this period; indeed, many of

⁹⁴ ‘C’est à Paris, et—quelque paradoxal que puisse paraître à certains cette opinion—*grâce à Paris* que Wagner fait le retour sur lui-même qui décide de son avenir. C’est à Paris qu’il commence à savoir où il va.’

Gabriel Bernard, *Richard Wagner. Son œuvre, sa vie romanesque et aventureuse* (Paris: Jules Tallandier, 1933), 23.

⁹⁵ Henri Rebois, *La Renaissance de Bayreuth. De Richard Wagner à son fils Siegfried* (Paris: Fischbacher, 1933), 8–9.

⁹⁶ ‘C’est donc à Paris que Wagner reprit conscience et possession de lui-même. Il y demeura deux années encore, luttant contre la misère, s’efforçant sans succès de sortir de l’obscurité. Mais lorsqu’il le quitta, en 1842, la musique du *Vaisseau fantôme* était entièrement achevée : le véritable Richard Wagner était né.’

Pierre Lalo, *Richard Wagner ou le Nibelung* (Paris: Flammarion, 1933), 41.

these authors made important contributions to Wagner criticism in the press of the 1930s.

Wagner in the eyes of the Parisian press

The history of French Wagner reception is permeated by the perception of Wagner's music as fundamentally and essentially German. Indeed, it is this perception that was often at the root of the various Parisian Wagner scandals and, more generally, of French anti-Wagner sentiment in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1933, a very small number of commentators continued to view Wagner and his music within this framework. Philippe Amiguet, for example, wrote in an article entitled 'The Titan of Bayreuth' in the influential moderate-leaning paper *L'Ordre*:

Wagner will always be, before everything else, the musician of a race and of a fragment of humanity. Undoubtedly, in Paris, London and Rome people will appreciate the themes of his operas, they will drink with conviction the beverage of *Tristan*; but the real depth of his works will only be truly understood by those who possess the Germanic *Slimmung* [sic]⁹⁷ ... Yes, one must be German in order to perfectly grasp this frenzy of power followed by devastation which springs out of the Wagnerian temple, carrying off man towards a point situated outside time.⁹⁸

Amiguet was a Swiss writer and journalist who worked in France in the interwar period.⁹⁹ He clearly felt that Wagner ultimately belonged to the Germans, and that the meaning of his music would always remain partially inaccessible to others. An article published three days later in *La République* expressed similar sentiments:

Richard Wagner is, for the great German people, an integral part of the German genius. If music is amongst the most immaterial of arts and thus also

⁹⁷ The author is most likely referring to the German word '*Stimmung*', which may be translated as 'mood', 'sentiment', 'spirit' or 'disposition'.

⁹⁸ 'Wagner sera toujours, avant tout, le musicien d'une race et d'un fragment d'humanité. Certes à Paris, à Londres, à Rome, on appréciera les thèmes de ses opéras, on boira à pleine bouche le breuvage de *Tristan* : mais le fond même de ses œuvres ne sera vraiment compris que par ceux qui possèdent la *Slimmung* [sic] germanique ... Oui, il faut être Allemand pour saisir parfaitement cette frénésie de puissance, puis d'anéantissement qui jaillissent du temple wagnérien, entraînant l'homme vers un point situé en marge du temps'.

Phillippe Amiguet, 'Le Titan de Bayreuth', *L'Ordre*, 13 February 1933, 1.

⁹⁹ Cosandey, Roland, 'Amiguet, Philippe', in *Dictionnaire historique de la Suisse*, 2002, <http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/f/F9123.php>

the most international, in so far as it possesses a fatherland, we can maintain that Wagner's work is essentially German ... It is permissible to see in it [Wagner's work], with all its good points and its failings, a loyal reflection of the German soul.¹⁰⁰

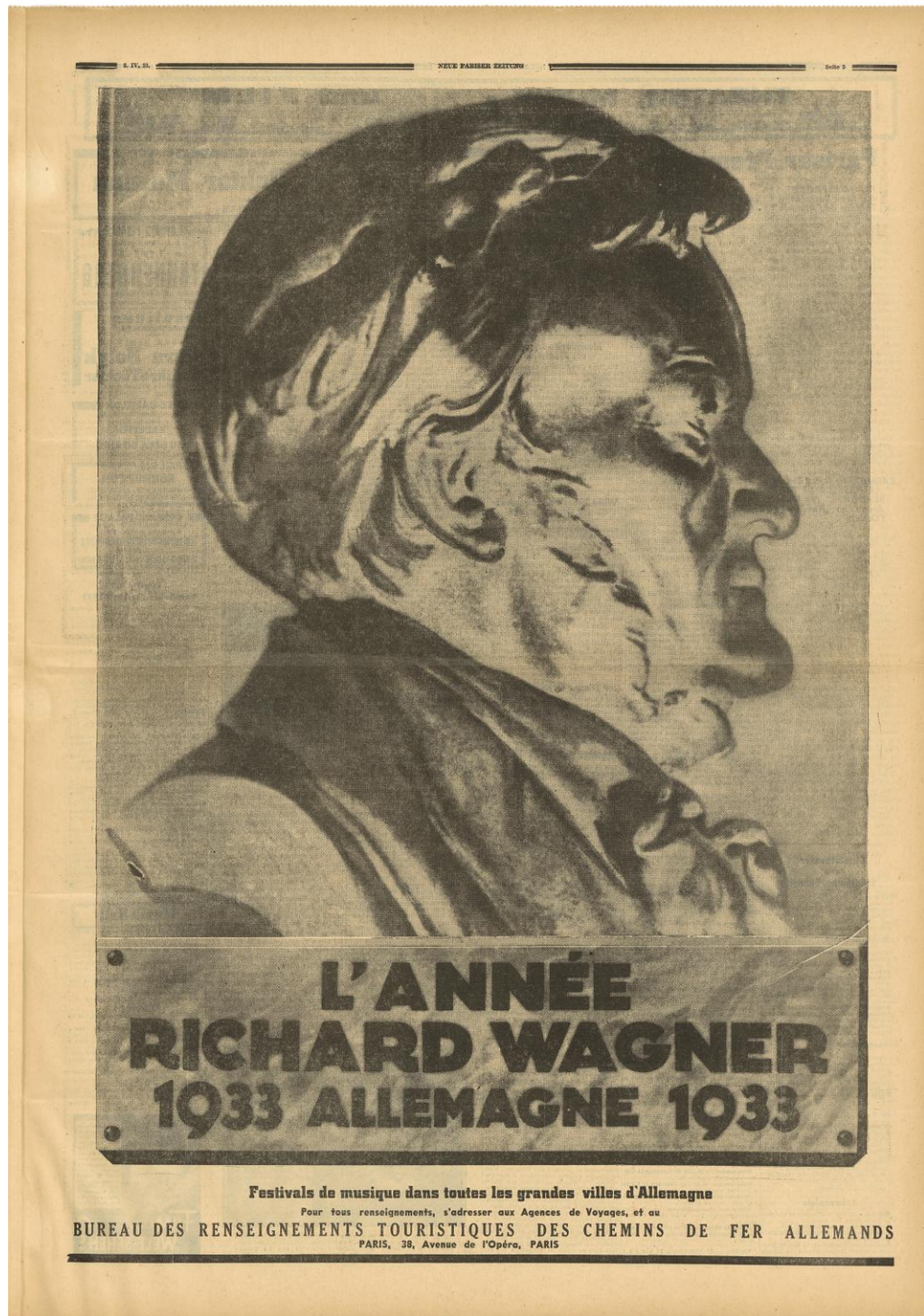
At a time of domestic insecurity in France and political and military threat from Germany, these kinds of judgements are unsurprising. These two articles, like much of the commentary on Wagner that year, were written in the week of the anniversary of his death, which happened to fall two weeks after Hitler's nomination as Chancellor of Germany. Thus the anniversary was celebrated with pomp by the Nazi Party in Germany and milked for all its propagandistic potential. The German *cinquantaire* celebrations were even publicised in France and promoted as tourism opportunities (see Figure 3). Nineteenth-century French critics had repeatedly rejected Wagner for his Germanness, as had the critics of the First World War era; surely the critics of 1933 would do the same in this highly charged context?

In fact, the responses of 1933 were markedly different. While there were a small number of critics who echoed the sentiments expressed in the two articles above by depicting Wagner's music as essentially German, actual anti-Wagner sentiment was absent in 1933. Not one critic suggested that performances of Wagner's music should be avoided for political or ideological reasons. The music itself was, as we have seen, an integral part of both the operatic and concert repertoires, and an accepted and much-loved part of Parisian musical life. Even those critics who did talk about Wagner's music as German music did not do so in order to criticise or reject it. Criticism of Wagner's theories and ideas were always balanced with admiration for his achievements, and for the sheer emotional power of his music. More importantly, Hitler's version of Wagner was rejected and the composer was depicted by the Parisian press as anything but German, as I shall show in the remaining parts of this chapter.

¹⁰⁰ 'Richard Wagner est pour le grand peuple allemand partie intégrante du génie germanique. Si la musique est parmi les arts le plus immatériel et, partant, le plus international, dans toute la mesure encore large où elle possède une patrie, on peut soutenir que l'œuvre de Wagner est essentiellement allemande... il est permis de voir en elle, avec ses qualités et ses défauts, un fidèle reflet de l'âme allemande.'

P. P. [Pierre Porro], 'Il y a cinquante ans mourait Wagner', *La République*, 16 February 1933, 2.

Figure 3: Advertisement for the Reich's celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of Wagner's death in 1933. Source: *Neue Pariser Zeitung*, 8 April 1933. Courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France



Discussions of Wagner in the Parisian press often included references to the idea that France's 'Wagner problem' had been resolved. Critics suggested that although in the past Wagner had been the subject of controversy, debate and scandal, the time had now come for a more objective, less impassioned approach. In the Catholic daily

L'Aube, for example, a journalist encouraged readers to make the most of the fiftieth anniversary commemorations now that Wagner was no longer controversial: 'Now that the sky is no longer clogged up with the smoke of shellfire, let us, without fear, pay tribute to the glory of Wagner ... and let us participate in the celebrations of this fiftieth anniversary.'¹⁰¹ Another writer declared in the music periodical *Le Ménestrel* that, 'today we have escaped the Wagnerian obsession which, although it encouraged the dissemination and popularity of his work, also falsified its character for a time.'¹⁰² Was this a way of suggesting that France and Germany were now at peace and that there was no need to indulge polemical arguments about Wagner and his Germanness? Or that Wagner's music no longer held French composers in its thrall, and that they had moved beyond his influence? Or perhaps it was a way of attempting to move on from the nationalist debates that had plagued the relationship between Wagner and France for decades.

The idea of Wagner's music as an accepted, uncontroversial, standard part of the repertoire was intertwined with the curious assertion by a small number of critics that Wagner's music could now be classified as 'classic'. Henri de Curzon, in the *Journal des débats*, described current French attitudes: '[Wagner's works] have taken on the characteristics of classics. And indeed, they appear to us today to be crystal clear; they seem pure and healthy. We enjoy them without reservation.'¹⁰³ Curzon's 1920 book on Wagner had described the composer's music in similar terms: classic, clear and healthy, as opposed to pretentious, deformed and unhealthy.¹⁰⁴ And other critics in 1933 used similar language, emphasising that Wagner's music was now recognised, established and admitted to the rank of 'classic'. Sara Iglesias writes about the use of this term in French cultural discourse since the nineteenth century,

¹⁰¹ 'Aujourd'hui que le ciel n'est plus obstrué par la fumée des obus, saluons donc sans crainte la gloire de Wagner ... et participons aux fêtes de son cinquantenaire'.

L'Aube, February 1933. Press clipping, BnF BmO, Fonds Paul Franz, vol. 21.

¹⁰² 'nous sommes aujourd'hui sortis de l'obsession wagnérienne qui, si elle a favorisé la diffusion et la popularité de son œuvre, en a pour un temps faussé le caractère.'

Jean Chantavoine, 'Le Cinquantenaire de Wagner', *Le Ménestrel* 95, no. 6 (10 February 1933): 53.

¹⁰³ 'elle a pris caractère de *classique*. Et, de fait, elle nous paraît aujourd'hui claire comme eau de roche; elle nous paraît pure et saine. Nous en jouissons sans arrière-pensée.'

Henri de Curzon, 'A propos du cinquantenaire de la mort de Richard Wagner', *Journal des débats*, 24 February 1933, 4.

¹⁰⁴ Henri de Curzon, *L'Œuvre de Richard Wagner à Paris et ses interprètes (1850–1914)* (Paris: Maurice Senart, 1930).

and the way it changed in meaning over time.¹⁰⁵ In the nineteenth century, ‘classic’ had come to be associated with a national French tradition that was also seen as universal; it was both something that France could claim as its own and something that was greater than France—a kind of universal human truth. Iglesias explains that by the twentieth century, a classic author was one ‘whose work was seminal due to its lasting and universal excellence’.¹⁰⁶ At this point in French history, the term also began to be used as part of ‘an emancipatory undertaking in opposition to the German musical hegemony of the nineteenth century’,¹⁰⁷ and an attempt to claim universality for great French music. French Classicism was held up in opposition to German Romanticism.¹⁰⁸ Thus ‘classic’ came to mean simultaneously ‘French’ and ‘universal’. How, then, should we understand French descriptions of Wagner’s music as ‘classic’? It seems implausible that French critics would suggest that Wagner’s music was aligned with French Classicism and opposed to German Romanticism. And yet, the kind of language that Curzon uses is surprisingly similar to common descriptions of French music. The discourse in France surrounding the return to Classicism that took place during the interwar period used language that emphasised purity, order, clarity, balance and proportion, differentiated from the supposedly heavier, decadent and overly emotional German style. Thus, implausible as it may seem at first, French commentators’ attempts to locate ‘French’ characteristics in Wagner’s music might be explained by a more general desire to downplay earlier tensions and debates and to establish a sense of ownership over the music, in reaction against what they considered to be Hitler’s misappropriation of it.

‘For it is through misery that he attained his truth’:¹⁰⁹ Wagner and France

The French press frequently compared Germany’s sudden championing of Wagner—depicted as hypocritical and opportunistic—with France’s appreciation of Wagner which was, by contrast, portrayed as genuine and longstanding. Paul Achard, whose

¹⁰⁵ Sara Iglesias, *Musicologie et Occupation. Science et politique dans la France des « années noires »* (Paris: Editions de la maison des sciences de l’homme, 2014), 170–76.

¹⁰⁶ ‘celui dont l’œuvre fait autorité par son excellence durable et universelle.’

Ibid., 170.

¹⁰⁷ ‘une entreprise d’émancipation à l’encontre de l’hégémonie musicale allemande du XIX^e siècle.’

Ibid., 171.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ ‘Car c’est par la misère qu’il a atteint sa vérité.’

François Ribadeau Dumas, ‘Une Cinquantenaire illustre : Richard Wagner’, *La Semaine à Paris*, 10–17 February 1933, 4.

series of reports on the 1933 Bayreuth Festival are examined closely in Chapter Three, wrote:

Today, what was once made into a laughing stock is now acclaimed ... the German princes, the public and the critics almost seem to have imagined that they invented and wrote the Ring cycle themselves. Never has the irony of this turnaround appeared as glaringly as today, when the new Germany, shaken by Adolf Hitler and raised by a wave of perhaps unprecedented patriotism, has seized the pure masterpiece and brandishes it like a sword forged on the anvil of German ancestors.¹¹⁰

Arguments such as this were used to stake a claim on Wagner's music. They were strengthened by references to how badly Germany had treated Wagner during his lifetime, which highlighted the hypocrisy of the Third Reich's enthusiastic appropriation. In this vein, Henri de Curzon reminded his readers that,

If [the celebration of the *cinquantenaire*] has taken the form of new exaltation in Germany, it is because a vague and subconscious feeling must have manifested itself in the need for a kind of compensation. Yes, let us not doubt that this is how Wagner would understand these demonstrations if he witnessed them. In his lifetime, how disappointed was he by the incomprehension of his compatriots, how sickened by their hostility? Did he not write that the Bayreuth festivals were judged by the French 'with more fairness and intelligence than by the great majority of the German press'? Did he not declare: 'I am not worried about the French; they will end up understanding me better than the Germans'?¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ 'Aujourd'hui, on acclame ce qu'on a couvert de risées à cette époque et peu s'en faut ... que les princes allemands, le public et la critique ne s'imaginent avoir inventé et écrit la Tétralogie. Jamais l'ironie de ce revirement n'est apparue de façon aussi éclatante qu'aujourd'hui, lorsque la nouvelle Allemagne, secouée par Adolph Hitler et soulevée par une vague de patriotisme peut-être sans précédent, s'est emparée du pur chef-d'œuvre et le brandit comme une épée forgée sur l'enclume des ancêtres germains'.

Paul Achard, 'Quand on joue la Tétralogie dans le temple wagnérien', *Comœdia*, 1 September 1933, 1–2.

¹¹¹ 'S'il a pris, en Allemagne, cette forme d'exaltation nouvelle, c'est qu'un sentiment obscur et inconscient y a dû faire sentir le besoin d'une sorte de réparation. Oui, c'est ainsi, n'en doutons pas, que Wagner, s'il en était témoin, comprendrait ces manifestations. Combien n'a-t-il pas été déçu, de son vivant, de l'incompréhension de ses compatriotes, ulcéré de leur hostilité ? N'a-t-il pas écrit que les festivals de Bayreuth ont été jugés par les Français avec « plus de justesse et d'intelligence que par la

Such a potent quotation from Wagner himself was considered excellent ammunition against German claims on his music. Curzon's remarks demonstrate just how important it was to French commentators to reject exclusive German claims to Wagner and emphasise the importance of French support for his music. Curzon's reference to the French 'understanding' Wagner also neatly dismissed the idea that one had to be German to truly appreciate his art.

The Parisian press also used the *cinquantenaire* as an opportunity to reflect on the relationship between Wagner and France over the last century. Continuing the theme of French support for Wagner, the press credited a number of French artistic and literary personalities as being amongst his earliest supporters and admirers. The contribution and involvement of these personalities, who included people such as Judith Gautier, Arthur de Gobineau and Charles Baudelaire, were frequently invoked in reflections on Wagner and France. These reflections were written with the intention of demonstrating that the French had supported and recognised Wagner's talent and potential at a time when he had not yet been accepted even in his native Germany. Even Wagner's second wife Cosima was occasionally included on this list of 'French admirers', on account of her Parisian mother. Though it may seem bizarre that such claims were made in the same breath as recounting the *Tannhäuser* scandal—a testament to Parisians' low opinion of Wagner at that time—it was a way of redeeming early French attitudes. The idea that France had only recognised Wagner's genius reluctantly was a matter of some embarrassment for the French, particularly once Wagner's music became well-known and popular throughout Europe. Exaggerating the role of Wagner's early admirers was an effective counter-narrative to the *Tannhäuser* story. The fact that many commentators went out of their way to examine the contributions of people such as Gautier and Baudelaire, reveals a continuing need to situate Wagner in French cultural history, as well as to atone for perceived past sins.

grande majorité de la presse allemande » (1876) ? N'a-t-il pas déclaré: « Je ne suis pas inquiet avec les Français; ils finiront par m'interpréter mieux que les Allemands » ?

Henri de Curzon, 'Wagneriana : À propos du cinquantenaire de la mort de Wagner', *Journal des débats*, 4 August 1933, 3.

The quotation attributed to Wagner is also cited by Curzon in his 1920 book (Curzon, *L'Œuvre de Richard Wagner*, 2). Curzon claims that the source of the quotation is Wagner's 1876 letter to Gabriel Monod. An extract of the letter is also published in Gustave Samazeuilh's 1943 *Vues sur la France* (discussed in detail in Chapter Four), but the extract does not contain this quotation. The commentary explains that the letter was first published in French translation in the *Revue politique et littéraire* in February 1883, but I have been unable to locate it.

Parisian critics, however, did not avoid discussing the *Tannhäuser* scandal. They did not downplay the terrible way in which Wagner had been treated and his music rejected; rather, the failed *Tannhäuser* production was considered as probably the most significant event in the early history of relations between Wagner and France. Again, the press seemed to want to demonstrate how much things had changed in the France–Wagner relationship since the embarrassment of the scandal. In *La République*, Pierre Porro wrote that the French had an obligation to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary, not simply to show their admiration for Wagner and his music, but also to demonstrate their remorse for the events of 1861. ‘France has,’ he added, ‘however belatedly, done its best to make amends. Thirty years after this stupid cabal, Wagner was all the rage.’¹¹² Porro’s comments indicate that the events of 1861 remained fresh to Parisians in the 1930s—70 years later, they had not yet put the *Tannhäuser* scandal behind them.

In a similar way to the Wagner biographers discussed above, critics in the press showed a special interest in the two periods when Wagner lived in France and attempted to establish his career at the Paris Opéra. Though acknowledged as difficult, these extended visits were viewed as the ‘making’ of Wagner, as discussed earlier in the context of books published on Wagner in 1933. Jules Bernex, for example, writes:

And yet, it is in Paris that Wagner had become fully aware of his musical destiny. The formation of ‘Wagnerism’ dates from his articles in the *Revue musicale* and his conception of *The Flying Dutchman* [both took place during Wagner’s first stay in Paris 1839–1842].¹¹³

¹¹² ‘la France a tardivement, mais de son mieux, réparé. Trente ans après cette stupide cabale, Wagner faisait fureur.’

P., ‘Il y a cinquante ans’, 2.

¹¹³ ‘Et pourtant, c’est à Paris que Wagner avait pris conscience de son destin musical. La formation du « wagnérisme » date de ses articles de la *Revue musicale* et de sa conception du *Hollandais volant*.’ Jules Bernex, ‘Le Cinquantenaire de Richard Wagner. Sa vie à Paris’, *Bref*, 16 February 1933. Press clipping, BnF BmO, Fonds Paul Franz, vol. 21.

Similarly, François Ribadeau Dumas writes that in spite of Wagner's Paris travails,

his most productive years, those that were born from his work and his indignation, he knows that he owes them to these Parisian winters of forced labour.

For it is through misery that he attained his truth.¹¹⁴

Dumas's claim—that Wagner's miserable and impoverished stay in Paris was actually the source of his inspiration and allowed him to realise his genius—was a common one in the press of the time. Guy de Pourtalès made a similar claim in which he argued that,

Of the years that Wagner spent in Paris, we only ever evoke the miseries. It is time to also evaluate what he acquired there. Firstly that strong self-knowledge given by a lack of success. Then the useful irony, the sense of work, the technique of the theatre, and, by contrast with the opportunism he saw, the feeling of his own greatness.¹¹⁵

Portalès's work on Wagner was highly respected in the Parisian literary world and his biography was considered to be a definitive and nuanced assessment of the composer's personal life. His insistence that Wagner actually *gained* something from his time in Paris must have been a welcome approach to this part of the 'Wagner and France' story.

And yet French critics went even further in their efforts to own a part of Wagner's history and legacy. Not only did they argue that Wagner had learnt some hard life lessons in Paris which had contributed to his artistic development, they also claimed that France had contributed to his compositional output. In one of a collection of articles on Wagner in *L'Alsace française*, Gustave Cohen emphasised the French contribution:

¹¹⁴ 'ses années les plus fécondes, celles qui sont nées de son travail et de son indignation, il sait qu'il les doit à ces hivers parisiens de travaux forcés. Car c'est par la misère qu'il a atteint sa vérité.' Dumas, 'Une Cinquantenaire illustre', 4.

¹¹⁵ 'Des années qu'il passa à Paris, l'on n'évoque jamais que les misères. Il serait temps d'évaluer aussi ce qu'il y acquit. D'abord cette forte connaissance de soi que donne l'insuccès. Puis l'utile ironie, le sens du travail, la technique du théâtre, et, par contraste avec ce qu'il voyait d'opportunisme, le sentiment de sa grandeur.' Guy de Pourtalès, 'Souvenir à Wagner', *Marianne*, 15 February 1933, 15.

When we speak of Wagner and of France, of which he spoke so unfairly and unjustly after 1870, it seems that there is only antinomy, struggle, and contradiction; however, he is nowhere more passionately loved than in France. No great concert without Wagner—that seems to be our slogan ... without France, a great part of his work—and not least *Lohengrin*, *Tristan*, *Parsifal*—would never have existed, as they are inventions of the French literary genius, orchestrated by German musical genius.¹¹⁶

Cohen is referring here to the common belief that some of Wagner's libretti were based on old French myths and stories, and that French culture and heritage were thus responsible for providing Wagner with inspiration for some of his masterpieces. This was not a new idea; French critics had made the case for this since the late nineteenth century—particularly in relation to *Lohengrin*—and it was a subject that continued to be raised in the press from time to time. Later in the decade, Jacques-Gabriel Prod'homme was to publish an article titled 'A French Source of Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelungs*?'. The article once again emphasised the importance of Wagner's first stay, during which he came to clearly understand his 'life mission'. Prod'homme then moved on to a discussion of the various sources that had provided inspiration for Wagner. Most importantly, he mentions a French book that introduced Wagner to Scandinavian poetry, which apparently provided the initial inspiration for the *Ring* cycle.¹¹⁷ Iglesias notes that Prod'homme republished this article under the Occupation, but removed the question mark at the end of the title, changing a supposition into an assertion.¹¹⁸ Such a small but significant change demonstrates the importance of this issue of influence; by 'proving' that Wagner's time in Paris was productive, formative, and influential, French writers bolstered the perception that Wagner owed at least a part of his success to France and the French.

¹¹⁶ 'Quand on parle de Wagner et de la France, dont il a si mal et si injustement parlé après 1870, il semble qu'il n'y ait qu'antinomie, lutte, contradiction : cependant, il n'est nulle part plus passionnément aimé que chez nous. Pas de beau concert sans Wagner, telle semble être notre formule ... sans la France, une immense partie de son œuvre et non la moindre, *Lohengrin*, *Tristan*, *Parsifal*, n'existerait point, car ce sont des inventions du génie littéraire français, orchestré par le génie musical allemand'.

Gustave Cohen, 'Richard Wagner et le moyen âge français', *L'Alsace française*, 12 February 1933, 125.

¹¹⁷ Jacques-Gabriel Prod'homme, 'Une source française de l'« Anneau du Nibelung » de Wagner?', *Mercure de France*, 15 October 1937, 439–44.

¹¹⁸ Iglesias, *Musicologie et Occupation*, 89.

This sense of ownership over Wagner's music was extended to the point of claiming that Wagner was a kind of honorary Frenchman. Pourtalès claimed that 'Wagner, so fundamentally German, really is a little French'.¹¹⁹ Other critics boasted that Wagner was currently performed more frequently in France than in Germany. Pourtalès's remark about Wagner being 'a little French' should not be dismissed as flippant or inconsequential. In fact, it emerges as one of the most significant questions posed by French commentators on Wagner since the nineteenth century: Does Wagner's music belong to the Germans, to the French, or is it universal? For Pourtalès, who, as the decade wore on, seemed to be trying to salvage Wagner from Nazism without openly criticising the Third Reich, the idea of Wagner being both fundamentally German and a little French was a means of accepting his Germanic artistic inspiration and his German roots while rejecting any sense of exclusivity that the Third Reich appeared to assume in relation to Wagner. Yes, Wagner was a German composer, but this did not mean that the French were unable to understand his music and ideas, or incapable of fully appreciating him. The practice of 'adopting' music by composers of another nationality seems to have been common: Meyerbeer—a German Jew—had been adopted by the French in the golden age of grand opera;¹²⁰ Berlioz was to be adopted by the Nazis during the German occupation of France in the 1940s, when he was proclaimed as 'three-quarters German'.¹²¹ From a twenty-first-century perspective, the depiction of Wagner as anything other than essentially German during the Nazi period seems improbable. For the French in 1933, however, it was certainly a conceptual possibility, and one that allowed them to defy propaganda from Germany.

Wagner and the Jews

Vehement antisemitic sentiment was a dominant feature of interwar French society, particularly in the 1930s when far Right groups strengthened their influence, and the effects of the Depression encouraged the French to search for a scapegoat.¹²² Given

¹¹⁹ 'Wagner si foncièrement allemand est réellement un peu français.'

Portalès, 'Souvenir à Wagner', 15.

¹²⁰ Kerry Murphy, 'Berlioz, Meyerbeer and the Place of Jewishness in Criticism', in *Berlioz: Past, Present, Future: Bicentenary Essays*, ed. Peter Bloom (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2003), 90–104.

¹²¹ Yannick Simon, 'Hector Berlioz, compositeur français « aux trois quarts Allemand »', in *La Musique à Paris sous l'Occupation*, ed. Myriam Chimènes and Yannick Simon (Paris: Fayard/Cité de la Musique, 2013), 83–95.

¹²² Paula Hyman, *From Dreyfus to Vichy: The Remaking of French Jewry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 199–201; Paul J. Kingston, *Anti-semitism in France During the 1930s: Organisations, Personalities and Propaganda* (Hull: University of Hull Press, 1983); Paula Hyman, *The*

this inclination towards antisemitic thought, and the introduction of antisemitic laws in the neighbouring Third Reich, one would assume that Wagner's own antisemitism—and, in particular, his infamous 1850 essay *Das Judentum in der Musik*¹²³—would have aroused keen interest in the Parisian press. Indeed, one would think that the high volume of press commentary about the way in which the Third Reich was utilising Wagner for political purposes would include debate about Wagner's theories about Jews and Jewishness. Yet this was not the case: Wagner's antisemitism was rarely discussed in the Parisian press of the 1930s. There was one issue, however, that attracted a surprising amount of attention: the question of Wagner's paternity. The issue centred around a persisting rumour that Wagner's biological father was not Carl Friedrich Wagner but rather Ludwig Geyer—the man who Richard's mother married after Carl Friedrich's death, and who Richard knew as his stepfather. Geyer was suspected of having Jewish origins, which was at the heart of the rumour.¹²⁴ Although the writers who mentioned it in the press insisted that it was unimportant, they found themselves unable to let this glorious irony pass unmentioned: the Nazis had chosen a potentially Jewish composer as the symbol of pure German art. Henry Malherbe, in particular, discussed the issue over several articles in *Le Temps*, beginning in October 1932 in a review of Pourtalès's biography, and stretching until August 1933. On 17 and 24 May 1933 his regular column 'La Musique' was sub-headed 'Wagner's origins': a two-part investigation into the topic that he insisted was insignificant. Malherbe was the literary critic for *Le Temps*, and was to publish a book in 1938 titled *Richard Wagner révolutionnaire*, in which he again took up the issue.

An anonymous article in the satirical weekly *D'Artagnan* provides a good example of the tension between triviality and seriousness around this issue, albeit with some

Jews of Modern France (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 137–48. Also see Jackson, *France: The Dark Years*, 104–9; Michael R. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 34–44; Robert Michael, *A History of Catholic Antisemitism: The Dark Side of the Church* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 138–9.

¹²³ First published in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 3 and 6 September 1850. For an English translation, see Richard Wagner, 'Judaism in Music', trans. William Ashton Ellis, in *Judaism in Music and Other Essays* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 75–122.

Peter Bloom has shown that the essay was published in French translation almost immediately after its first publication in the original German. See Peter Bloom, 'The French Text of Wagner's *Das Judentum in der Musik*', *Notes* (December 2010): 263–83.

¹²⁴ This rumour has never been substantiated. See Danielle Buschinger, 'Geyer, Ludwig (1779–1821)', in *Dictionnaire encyclopédique Wagner*, ed. Timothée Picard (Paris: Actes Sud/Cité de la Musique, 2010), 798.

confusion about the question of Wagner's supposedly Jewish origins (this article is the only one that suggests that his mother was Jewish):

Everywhere in Germany they are celebrating Richard Wagner's 120th birthday with great nationalist pomp.

Hitler is preparing to glorify the great composer as a national hero. And the least we can say is that Wagner deserves to be honoured in such a way. But even so, there is an indication in the Führer's decision ... It appears, in fact, that Hitler has resigned himself to not extending his hatred against the Jews to the great men who brought fame to Germany. And this 'indulgence' is dictated, it seems, by wise thought. Because one may wonder, otherwise, how many great men would be left for the Germans to celebrate! Wagner, for example, was born to a Jewish mother. His principal master, Meyerbeer, was a Jew. And it is the great writer and poet Heinrich Heine, a Jew, who, through his advice, determined Wagner's magnificent career as a composer.¹²⁵

Other writers, like Malherbe, took a more serious approach to the question.

Malherbe's 1938 book seemed to be an attempt to discredit the Nazi appropriation of Wagner by emphasising his revolutionary background,¹²⁶ and a significant section of this book was devoted to the paternity issue, which the author claimed had received a large amount of interest when published in the press in 1933.¹²⁷ In the book, Malherbe is unequivocal about his reasons for paying attention to the issue:

¹²⁵ 'Partout, en Allemagne, on s'apprête à célébrer le 120e anniversaire de Richard Wagner, en grande pompe nationaliste.

Hitler se dispose à glorifier le grand compositeur ainsi qu'un héros national. Et le moins qu'on puisse dire, c'est que celui-ci a bien mérité d'être ainsi honoré. Mais il y a tout de même, dans cette décision du Führer, une indication ... Il apparaît, en effet, que Hitler s'est résigné à ne point étendre sa haine contre les juifs, aux grands hommes qui illustrèrent l'Allemagne. Et cette « indulgence » est dictée, semble-t-il par une sage pensée. Car on peut se demander combien, dans le cas contraire, il resterait aux Allemands de grands hommes à fêter! Wagner, par exemple, naquit d'une mère juive. Son principal maître, Meyerbeer, était juif. Et c'est un juif, le grand écrivain et poète Henri Heine, qui, par ses conseils, décida de la magnifique carrière de compositeur de Wagner.'

'L'anniversaire de Wagner', *D'Artagnan*, 22 April 1933.

¹²⁶ The concept of Wagner as a symbol of revolution was not new, but it was uncommon in France since his music came to be an acceptable part of standard repertoire. For more on Wagner as revolutionary, see Gerald Turbow, 'Art and Politics: Wagnerism in France', in *Wagnerism in European Culture and Politics*, ed. David C. Large, William Weber and Anna Dzamba Sessa (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1984), 152–3; Jane Fulcher, 'Wagner as Democrat and Realist in France', *Stanford French Review* 5, no. 1 (1981): 98.

¹²⁷ Henry Malherbe, *Richard Wagner révolutionnaire* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1938), 259–96.

As strange as it may seem, Richard Wagner has become the great inspiration for Germany's racist policies. The new leaders of the Reich proudly align themselves with some of the theories asserted by the Saxon master. They take him to be the energetic and pure incarnation of German genius.

In this context, the origins of Richard Wagner are once again being questioned.¹²⁸

These words are, of course, not published until 1938. But Malherbe has explained that the idea of writing about the identity of Wagner's biological father originated in 1933: his comments in the book are simply the endpoint of what began five years earlier in his press columns. The very fact that he included this in his book shows how significant the issue was, and it is similarly revealing that he makes an explicit connection between Wagner's paternity and the Reich's appropriation of his theories.

Why were French journalists and critics so interested in the question of Wagner's paternity? Sowing doubt about Wagner's origins was a way of undermining the Nazis' enthusiastic appropriation of him. His status as a Nazi symbol rested on his credentials as a representative of the pure, German race and its national art. French critics were well aware that any hint of 'Jewish blood' would corrupt Wagner's status. This meant that while they were conscious that the identity of Wagner's biological father seemed like a trivial piece of gossip, they nevertheless dwelt on the question because of the threat it posed to Germany's adoption of Wagner as its national composer. Indeed, the French press were not the only ones to take the matter seriously; when Hitler established a Wagner Research Centre in Bayreuth in 1938, its first priority was to correct the rumour about Wagner's paternity,¹²⁹ viewed by the Nazis as the product of Jewish conspiracy.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ 'Si étrange que cela puisse paraître, Richard Wagner est devenu le grand inspirateur de la politique raciste de l'Allemagne. Les nouveaux dirigeants du Reich se réclament avec fierté de quelques-unes des théories professées par le maître saxon. Ils le tiennent pour l'incarnation énergique et sans aucun mélange du génie allemand.

À ce propos, on vient de soulever une fois de plus la question des origines de Richard Wagner.' Ibid., 259.

¹²⁹ Spotts, *Bayreuth*, 175.

¹³⁰ David Dennis, "'The Most German of All German Operas': *Die Meistersinger* Through the Lens of the Third Reich', in *Wagner's Meistersinger: Performance, History, Reception*, ed. Nicholas Vazsonyi (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2002), 103–4.

These references in the French press to the possibility of Wagner's Jewish origins raise further important questions about how the French responded to the issue of Wagner's antisemitism, and whether they made connections between Wagner's antisemitism and the antisemitism of the Third Reich. In general, the French press demonstrated an awareness of Wagner's antisemitism and the ideas he had put forward in his pamphlet *Judaism in Music*, but, as I have already indicated, it was not a topic of great concern to them. Many writers such as Julien Tiersot¹³¹ and Guy de Pourtalès¹³² made passing references to *Judaism in Music*, to Wagner's hatred of Meyerbeer, and to Wagner's ideas regarding Jews' inability to produce real art as opposed to good imitations.¹³³ But these writers rarely linked Wagner's antisemitism to the Nazis' appropriation of him, at least in 1933. The lack of general interest in this issue in the Parisian press could be partly explained by the high level of antisemitism that had come to be acceptable in French society at this time. Paula Hyman has described the widespread dissemination of antisemitic ideas in the press and popular literature in the 1930s, as well as its infiltration into intellectual spheres and even government rhetoric.¹³⁴ Wagner's arguments against Jews in the music world had been later perpetuated by the French composer Vincent d'Indy in the early twentieth century.¹³⁵ Perhaps these ideas had been absorbed to the point that they were barely worth commenting on.

There was, however, a small amount of interest shown in two Jewish publications, and each had a different view on the question. *La Tribune juive* called for a boycott of the 1933 Bayreuth Festival, to express opposition to the antisemitism of both the Third Reich and Wagner himself.¹³⁶ The paper claimed that Wagner's antisemitism was being widely discussed in the German Jewish community during the year of the *cinquantaire*. The anonymous author argued that while Wagner was undeniably

¹³¹ Julien Tiersot, 'La Pensée, l'action et l'œuvre de Richard Wagner', *La Revue de France*, 1 August 1933, 485–509.

¹³² Guy de Pourtalès, 'Musique', *Marianne*, 24 May 1933, 15.

¹³³ See Wagner, 'Judaism in Music', 75–122.

¹³⁴ Hyman, *Jews of Modern France*, 138–48.

¹³⁵ Vincent d'Indy, *Cours de composition musicale*, vol. III (Paris: Durand, c1909–c1912), 103–117; d'Indy, *Richard Wagner et son influence sur l'art musical français* (Paris: Delagrave, 1930), 11–14.

¹³⁶ Although minor, this debate in the Jewish press is interesting in the light of the post-Second World War polemic around the performance of Wagner's music in Israel, a debate that remains alive today. See Na'ama Sheffi, *The Ring of Myths: The Israelis, Wagner and the Nazis*, trans. Martha Grenzeback (Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2001); Christian Merlin, 'Israël', in *Dictionnaire encyclopédique Wagner*, ed. Picard, 979–80.

antisemitic, his antisemitism could not be equated with that of Hitler.¹³⁷ On the other hand, Léon Algazi—a Romanian-born Parisian Jewish composer and musicologist—declared in *L'Univers israélite*¹³⁸ that Jews had never held Wagner's antisemitism against him and were determined to continue enjoying and performing his music.¹³⁹

At the other extreme was an article published by Jean Drault in 1933 in *La Libre Parole*, a periodical run by the notoriously antisemitic Henry Coston, who had relaunched it as a continuation of Edouard Drumont's equally antisemitic *La Libre Parole* (1892–1924).¹⁴⁰ Drault and Coston were close friends. In his article, Drault argued that the fiftieth anniversary of Wagner's death had not been properly recognised in Paris because of a longstanding Jewish conspiracy against Wagner. This conspiracy stemmed from the fact that Wagner had revealed the awful truth about Jews and Jewish music in *Judaism in Music*, and that the gang of Jews who ruled Paris had conspired against him and his music in return. Hence Wagner's inability to have his works performed in Paris and the scandalous failure of *Tannhäuser* in 1861. The conspiracy, according to Drault, continued to the current day, with one exception: 'As for the Wagnerian repertoire, it will always be performed [in Paris]. It yields an enormous profit for the Jewish impresarios who have monopolised it.'¹⁴¹ The article was little more than a rehash of many of the ideas introduced in Wagner's *Judaism in Music*, combined with common antisemitic tropes such as the mercenary 'Jewish impresario'. These ideas had since been recycled by others such as Drumont and the composer Vincent d'Indy;¹⁴² they centred around the supposed Jewish incapacity for

¹³⁷ A. N., 'À propos du cinquantenaire wagnérien', *La Tribune juive*, 17 February 1933, 102–3; A. N., 'Wagner et les Juifs', *La Tribune juive*, 3 March 1933, 133–4; 'Boycottons le Festival Wagner à Bayreuth', *La Tribune juive*, 30 June 1933, 404.

¹³⁸ *L'Univers israélite* was a publication founded in 1844, supported by the officially recognised Jewish institutions in France, and widely read in the French Jewish community. Ariel Danan writes that it was particularly concerned with encouraging its readers to separate religion from politics, presumably in order to promote Jewish integration and assimilation into French society. See Ariel Danan, 'Les Français israélites et l'accession au pouvoir de Léon Blum, à travers *L'Univers israélite*', *Archives juives* 37, no. 1 (2004): 98–9.

¹³⁹ Léon Algazi, 'Wagner et les Juifs. À propos d'un cinquantenaire', *L'Univers israélite*, 24 February 1933, 677–8.

¹⁴⁰ In 1935, Drault published a book about Drumont and *La Libre Parole*. See Jean Drault [Alfred Gendrot], *Drumont, La France juive et La Libre Parole* (Paris: Société française d'éditions littéraires et techniques, 1935).

¹⁴¹ 'Quant au répertoire wagnérien, il sera toujours joué. Il rapporte énormément aux imprésarii juifs qui l'ont accaparé ...'

Jean Drault [Alfred Gendrot], 'À propos d'un cinquantenaire : Wagner anti-juif', *La Libre Parole*, 1933. Press clipping, BnF BmO, Fonds Paul Franz, vol. 21.

¹⁴² D'Indy, *Cours de composition musicale*, vol. III, 103–17; D'Indy, *Richard Wagner et son influence sur l'art musical français* (Paris: Delagrave, 1930), 11–14.

true artistic inspiration and genius in general (which was apparently a result of Jewish rootlessness ie. Jews' lack of a national homeland), and the Jewish conspiracy against Wagner in particular. Drault's article also repeated and elaborated upon an earlier article by Coston, entitled 'Wagner and the Jews' and published in *La Nouvelle France* (which was to become *La Libre parole*) in 1930.¹⁴³ Drault makes no mention of Wagner-related events in Germany, or the connections between Wagner and the Nazi Party. It is in no way representative of the French press overall, but nevertheless noteworthy for its continuation of Wagner's own ideas, and for the insight it provides into the way that one small section of the extreme Right attempted to exploit the *cinquantenaire* in order to put forward an antisemitic political agenda.

Two years after the fiftieth anniversary, a small number of articles appeared in the Parisian press on the subject of the connection between Wagner's antisemitism (and racism) and that of the Third Reich. The most comprehensive of these was a nine-page article by Gabriel Méresse in *La Revue politique et parlementaire*, published in January 1935. The article's title—'The Racism of Wagner and Adolf Hitler'—makes an immediate assumption that the two figures shared an ideological framework, and proceeds with a comparison and analysis of Wagner and Hitler's ideas on race. The author argues that both men held very similar ideas in relation to race, nationalism and antisemitism, and that many of Wagner's ideas can be found in the National Socialist programme. The main difference between the two, according to Méresse, is that Hitler has begun to act out ideas which, for Wagner, had remained in the realm of ideology.¹⁴⁴ Similar comparisons are drawn in an article in *Mercure de France* published a few months later, whose authors argue that Hitler and Wagner shared many of the same beliefs, and that Wagner would probably have approved of the direction taken by the Third Reich, despite Thomas Mann's arguments to the contrary (to be discussed later in this chapter).¹⁴⁵ This kind of commentary demonstrates that while these comparisons and connections were not yet being made in 1933, two years later they were indeed part of the public consciousness. Nevertheless, the focus

¹⁴³ Henry Coston, 'Wagner et les Juifs', *La Nouvelle France*, 1930. Press clipping, BnF BmO, Fonds Paul Franz, vol. 21.

¹⁴⁴ Gabriel Méresse, 'Le Racisme de Wagner et d'Adolf Hitler', *Revue politique et parlementaire*, 10 January 1935, 70–78. See Appendix C9.

¹⁴⁵ Jean Vinchon and Bernard Champigneulle, 'Hitler et le wagnérisme', *Mercure de France*, 15 June 1935, 508–20. See Appendix C10.

tended to be on racism in a general sense rather than antisemitism, which elicited very little comment as a separate phenomenon.

‘How should France respond to Hitlerian pseudo-Wagnerism?’:¹⁴⁶ Responses to the Reich’s appropriation of Wagner

The French press’s commentary on Wagner and Germany, however, went well beyond issues of racism and antisemitism. The questions that preoccupied French writers and critics when it came to Wagner in 1933 centred around their attempts to situate Wagner and identify where and to whom he belonged. The Third Reich’s obvious attempts to claim Wagner for its exclusive political use intensified these questions and they were discussed endlessly in the Parisian press. The Bayreuth Festival was a major source of commentary (see Chapter Three), but the press also commented frequently on the Nazi appropriation of Wagner in a more general sense, and the identification of Hitler with Wagner. These things were considered to be a serious cause for concern, alarm and even outrage.

In *Aux Écoutes*, a furiously anti-German paper that called for a pre-emptive war against Germany in 1933,¹⁴⁷ an unsigned article condemned with disgust the politicisation of Wagner, claiming only half-jokingly that, ‘Next winter, in Berlin, the total failure of Nazi theatre will only be able to be masked by compulsorily designating the audience. After compulsory military service in the so-called work camps, there will be compulsory service at the theatre.’¹⁴⁸ The author felt that Wagner was being forced on Germans as a political obligation, and complained bitterly that this was far from Wagner’s dream of opening Bayreuth for free ‘to any German whose soul is sensitive to German art.’¹⁴⁹ Although the Nazi actions deplored in this article would have had no actual effect on the French, the use of Wagner’s works and

¹⁴⁶ ‘Comment réagir en France contre le pseudo-wagnérisme hitlérien ?’

Maurice Bouvier-Ajam, ‘Une Religion : le wagnérisme’, *Le Ménestrel* 95, no. 50 (15 December 1933): 485. See Appendix C1.

¹⁴⁷ Pierre Albert, ‘La Presse française de 1871 à 1940’, in *Histoire générale de la presse française*, vol. III, ed. Claude Bellanger et al. (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1975), 592.

¹⁴⁸ ‘L’hiver prochain, à Berlin, la faillite totale du théâtre nazi ne pourra être masquée qu’en désignant d’office les spectateurs. Après le service militaire obligatoire dans les camps dits de travail, il y aura le service obligatoire au théâtre.’

‘À Bayreuth’, *Aux Écoutes*, 5 August 1933. Press clipping, BnF Arts du spectacle, Recueil ‘Festival de Bayreuth en 1933’, 8-RO-7104 (2), p. 9.

¹⁴⁹ ‘à tous les Allemands dont l’âme est sensible à l’art allemand.’
Ibid.

the Bayreuth theatre for such blatant political exploitation was deeply disturbing to the author.

René Lauret, a frequent commentator on German affairs, reported from Berlin for *Le Temps* at the time of the fiftieth anniversary celebrations. He wrote that the German public ‘seems to be scarcely concerned about the political exploitation of Wagner’s name by certain political parties.’¹⁵⁰ Lauret discusses the links between Hitler and the Wagner family, and the ways in which the regime is appropriating Wagner and his music. These remarks make up half of his report from Berlin, entitled ‘Life in Berlin’, which indicates the importance of the fiftieth anniversary, not just for the German public, but also for French readers.

Malherbe is more damning than Lauret. In his article ‘Wagner’s Lesson: Who is Still Listening to the Master’s Last Lessons?’, he laments the current regime’s preference for the use of violence over intelligence and its deafness to Wagner’s real ‘lesson’:

the spirit of violence—provided that these two words do not clash with each other—has once again infiltrated everything. Here and there, they want to resurrect the old collapsed way, with its rages, its passions and its ill-fated prejudices. The prominent leaders of our universe only attract favour and popularity by stirring up the spectre of civil or foreign war with cutting recklessness and insulting snobbery.

The plans and humanitarian declarations of the statesmen brought together in Geneva can no longer liberate us from our apprehensions. The harassing and brutal spectacle before our eyes would have us believe that the Council of the Society of Nations sits at who-knows-which inaccessible heights, amongst the clouds.

The intellectuals and artists who are still motivated by noble human thoughts are abandoned in the shadows, persecuted, doomed to contempt, banished.

Malherbe continues in this manner for some time. The quotation above makes no reference whatsoever to Wagner himself or his music; rather Wagner provides an

¹⁵⁰ ‘Son public semble peu se soucier de l’exploitation politique du nom de Wagner par certains partis.’ René Lauret, ‘La Vie à Berlin’, *Le Temps*, 22 February 1933, 2.

opportunity for Malherbe to comment with dismay on the state of German politics. He eventually returns to Wagner at the end of the article, asking:

Has Wagner's teaching, from his supreme years, remained unheeded for his compatriots? At a time when they evoke on all sides his esteemed person, the agitators who have Germany's destiny in their hands show themselves the most resistant to his final lessons. If the great artist rose from his tomb, would he recognise as his own those who are now being allowed to dupe and enslave his nation?¹⁵¹

Malherbe's comments are remarkable, not simply because he is so eloquently angered by what is taking place in Germany, but also because he places Wagner at the centre of all this. In his eyes, Germany is committing a crime not against its own people, but against Wagner's wishes and advice. The German people have been disloyal to Wagner's legacy and his lessons have remained unlearned—this is the real betrayal for Malherbe. And the betrayal is made worse by the fact that its perpetrators claim to share Wagner's ideological perspective—a claim that seemed to be particularly hurtful to the French.

I return now to Pourtalès, normally to be relied upon for a balanced, calm and carefully articulated assessment regarding Wagner and Germany. In this article in *Marianne*, however, his tone is different:

It is Wagner's politics and 'racism' that shape the new-style Wagnerians much more than his music. Previously a musical religion, Wagnerism has now

¹⁵¹ 'l'esprit de violence—si toutefois ces deux mots ne jurent pas ensemble—s'est de nouveau partout infiltré. Ici et là, on veut ressusciter l'ancien mode écroulé, avec ses fureurs, ses passions et ses préjugés funestes. Les chefs marquants de notre univers ne se donnent faveur et popularité qu'en agitant avec des témérités tranchantes et des forfanteries injurieuses le spectre de la guerre civile ou étrangère.

Les projets, les déclamations humanitaires des hommes d'État réunis à Genève ne sauraient plus nous délivrer de nos appréhensions. Le spectacle harcelant et brutal que nous avons sous les yeux nous ferait croire que le Conseil de la Société des Nations siège à je ne sais quelles hauteurs inaccessibles, parmi les nuages.

Les intellectuels et les artistes qu'animent encore de nobles pensées humaines sont rejetés à l'ombre, persécutés, voués au mépris, bannis ...

L'enseignement de Richard Wagner, dans ses années suprêmes, est-il donc resté lettre morte pour ses compatriotes ? C'est aux jours où l'on évoque de tous les côtés sa haute figure que les factieux qui disposent de la destinée de l'Allemagne se montrent les plus réfractaires à ses ultimes leçons. Si le grand artiste se levait de sa tombe, reconnaîtrait-il pour siens ceux que l'on commet maintenant à duper et asservir sa nation ?

Henry Malherbe, 'La Leçon de Wagner. Qui écoute encore les derniers enseignements du Maître ?', *L'Intransigeant*, 28 March 1933, 1, 3. See Appendix C2.

become the State religion ... [The new Germany] wants to ignore Wagner's sceptical and troubled soul, deeply uncertain and uneasy, in a constant search for an imperturbable god, in order to hear only the ardent prophet of a future of which it believes it is the embodiment ... In Wagner's works, it sees nothing but a 'regeneration by the people', of which the People's Chancellor, Adolf Hitler, is the immaculate Parsifal.¹⁵²

The author's alarm at this misunderstanding and misuse of Wagner is palpable; he appears to take it almost as a personal insult. The concept of Wagnerism as a State religion in Germany is mentioned by a number of other commentators during this period. It indicates that the press perceived the importance of Wagner to the Third Reich as large-scale and potentially very dangerous.

Even Pourtalès's strong language pales in comparison to Maurice Bouvier-Ajam's series of articles in the prominent music journal *Le Ménestrel*. Bouvier-Ajam was not a music specialist but was nevertheless deeply interested in Wagner. In December 1933 he devoted a significant three-part article in *Le Ménestrel* to an examination of contemporary understandings of Wagner and Wagnerism in France and Germany. He begins the first instalment of the article by summarising National Socialism's interpretation of Wagner's moral doctrine in four points:

1. Affirmation of the superiority of the German race ...
2. Affirmation of the validity of entitlement by force ...
3. Affirmation of the primacy of the superman ...
4. ... affirmation of the sacredness of victory by force ...¹⁵³

¹⁵² 'c'est la politique et le « Racisme » de Wagner qui modèlent les wagnériens nouveau style, bien plus que sa musique. Autrefois religion musicale, le wagnérisme est devenu à présent religion d'Etat ... [L'Allemagne nouvelle] veut même ignorer de Wagner l'âme sceptique et trouble, jusqu'au bout incertaine, inquiète, et à la recherche d'un dieu impassible, pour n'écouter que l'ardent prophète d'un futur qu'elle croit incarner ... Dans l'œuvre wagnérienne, elle ne voit plus qu'une « régénération par le peuple », dont le Chancelier-du-Peuple, Adolf Hitler, est l'immaculé Parsifal.'

Guy de Pourtalès, 'La Saison de Bayreuth (II)', *Marianne*, 30 August 1933, 15. See Appendix C3.

¹⁵³ '1. L'affirmation de la supériorité de la race allemande ... 2. L'affirmation de la validité du droit créée par la force ... 3. L'affirmation de la primauté du sur-homme ... 4. ... l'affirmation de la sainteté des victoires par la force.'

Maurice Bouvier-Ajam, 'Une Religion : le wagnérisme', *Le Ménestrel* 95, no. 49 (8 December 1933): 474. See Appendix C1.

Bouvier-Ajam then takes these four points and attempts to disprove them in detail, drawing on information about Wagner's political involvement, quotations from his writings and examples from his operas. His alarm stems from his observation that 'racist Germans' are seizing hold of the figure of Wagner with the intention of promoting him as a forerunner of Hitlerism. He complains that 'a crowd of unscrupulous hacks, each one more Aryan than the next, have scrawled and are still scrawling interminable columns to prove that Wagnerism has become, in some way, a State religion.'¹⁵⁴ The author's concern seems to escalate as the article advances; he goes so far as to state that, 'All in all, we are witnessing the most astounding error that a group of wage-earning intellectuals has ever spread around the world.'¹⁵⁵

The last instalment of the long article is titled 'How to respond in France to Hitlerian pseudo-Wagnerism?'.¹⁵⁶ Bouvier-Ajam clearly views Hitler's appropriation of Wagner's music as highly dangerous, not just to French or European musical culture but to France itself. The appropriation of Wagner, he argues, goes hand in hand with attacks on French music and the brainwashing of young Germans about the superiority of German art over all others. He calls for France to support the education of young French people in their own 'ancestral art' so that they will one day be strong enough to make a stand against what he refers to as 'Hitlerland'. 'It is absolutely imperative', he declares, 'that friends of music are committed to spreading the truth about Wagner and to destroying the harmful effects of the Hitlerian campaign.'¹⁵⁷ Bouvier-Ajam seems to be arguing here that France is partly to blame for the successful Nazi appropriation of Wagner because it has not effectively strengthened its own national culture.

Two weeks after the last instalment of Bouvier-Ajam's series, *Le Ménestrel* published a response by André Savoret, entitled 'Wagner, the Miscreant?'. Although Savoret

¹⁵⁴ 'une foule de folliculaires, tous plus aryens les uns que les autres, a scribouillés et scribouille encore d'interminables colonnes pour prouver que le wagnérisme est devenu, en quelque sorte, la religion d'état.'

Bouvier-Ajam, 'Une Religion : le wagnérisme', *Le Ménestrel* 95, no. 48 (1 December 1933): 461. See Appendix C1.

¹⁵⁵ 'En définitive, nous sommes en présence de la plus formidable erreur qu'un groupe d'intellectuels salariés ait jamais répandue sur le monde entier.'

Bouvier-Ajam, 'Religion', 8 December 1933, 475.

¹⁵⁶ 'Comment réagir en France contre le pseudo-wagnérisme hitlérien?'

Bouvier-Ajam, 'Une Religion : le wagnérisme', 15 December 1933, 485. See Appendix C1.

¹⁵⁷ 'il faut absolument que les amis de la musique aient à cœur de répandre la vérité sur Wagner et de détruire ainsi les effets nocifs de la campagne hitlérienne.'

Ibid.

disagreed with some minor aspects of Bouvier-Ajam's article, he was generally supportive of its arguments. In particular, he refused to accept Nazi claims that Wagner was the prophet of the Third Reich, and argued against any suggestion that Wagner was responsible for the racist theories propagated by the Nazis. Savoret clearly agreed with Bouvier-Ajam's attempt to repudiate the Wagner–Hitler connection that had become such a strong association in Germany, and now also in France.¹⁵⁸ In an indication of how prominently this issue featured in the journal, Bouvier-Ajam then responded to Savoret three weeks later. He defended his arguments against some of Savoret's criticisms and clarified his own views on Wagner's philosophy.¹⁵⁹ Although in disagreement on some issues, both authors considered the Third Reich's use of Wagner to be dangerous, and worthy of deeper investigation.

According to Bouvier-Ajam, the threat posed by Nazi appropriation was a real threat to French culture, and if this was a common perception it explains the sense of alarm that was so palpable in the 1933 press. In the past, it had been Wagner and his music that posed a threat to France and French culture, and the French response had been to reject his music and prevent it from being performed. Now, however, Wagner's music was so popular with the general public and such an integral part of Parisian musical life that it actually had to be defended from the threat of appropriation. Bouvier-Ajam devotes the last part of his article to suggesting possible ways of combatting the threat that German 'pseudo-Wagnerism' poses in France: that is, the possibility that the false view of Wagner promoted by the Nazis will come to be accepted outside of Germany and that it will be used as a weapon to attack French art and French artists, who have not been trained in the kind of ultra-nationalism with which German youth are currently being inculcated. These fears should be considered in the context of insecurities about national culture and identity in the 1930s: if France proved incapable of constructing an assertive national musical identity, it was in danger of being swamped by the aggressive cultural nationalism of Germany.

An interesting complement to these views is an article by Werner Heimersdorf published in the *Revue d'Allemagne*—a monthly publication edited by a group of

¹⁵⁸ André Savoret, 'Wagner, le mécréant?', *Le Ménestrel*, 29 December 1933. Press clipping, BnF BmO, Fonds Paul Franz, vol. 22, p. 45.

¹⁵⁹ Maurice Bouvier-Ajam, 'À propos de la philosophie de Richard Wagner', *Le Ménestrel* 96, no. 3 (19 January 1934): 23–4.

French Germanists, in collaboration with a small number of Germans, including Thomas Mann.¹⁶⁰ Jacques Le Rider has written that the *Revue d'Allemagne* was a product of a broader push by some French intellectuals in the late twenties and early thirties to work towards mutual comprehension and cultural rapprochement between France and Germany.¹⁶¹ Le Rider notes, though, that these causes became more and more difficult to defend by 1930,¹⁶² and this would certainly have been the case by 1933. Heimersdorf's article, entitled 'Richard Wagner et la France',¹⁶³ is purportedly a response to Henry Malherbe's articles on Wagner's origins in *Le Temps*, published in the previous month and discussed earlier in this chapter. Heimersdorf is mostly interested in Wagner's origins because of the implications they may have on the German regime's use of Wagner for political purposes. He entertains the idea that evidence will be found to prove Wagner's Jewish origins, and unequivocally states that, 'musical life in Germany would find itself happily purified,—and it truly needs it—if Wagner could no longer be used for political ends.'¹⁶⁴ Heimersdorf is highly critical of what is taking place in Germany:

We do not tolerate this Wagner case.¹⁶⁵ It is the political rhetoricians who have stirred it up by throwing the themes of [Wagner's] musical dramas into everyday political battles. This exploitation of Wagner, which dates back to Henry Thode, a man devoid of all critical thinking, and to the Englishman Houston Stewart Chamberlain, is in contradiction with the moral foundation of his entire oeuvre.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁰ See Chapter Two for a detailed examination of the rapprochement context within which Heimersdorf's article was written.

¹⁶¹ Jacques Le Rider, 'La *Revue d'Allemagne* : les germanistes français, témoins et interprètes de la crise de la République de Weimar et du nazisme', in *Entre Locarno et Vichy. Les relations culturelles franco-allemandes dans les années 30*, ed. Hans Manfred Bock, Reinhart Meyer Kalkus and Michel Trebitsch (Paris: CNRS, 1993), 363–4.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 370.

¹⁶³ Werner Heimersdorf, 'Richard Wagner et la France', *Revue d'Allemagne et des pays de langue allemande* 7, no. 68 (15 June 1933), 505–11. See Appendix C4.

¹⁶⁴ 'Car la vie musicale en Allemagne se trouverait heureusement purifiée, — elle en a fort besoin — si Wagner ne pouvait plus servir à des fins politiques.'

Ibid., 505.

¹⁶⁵ 'Ce cas Wagner' (in English, 'this Wagner case') is a reference to Nietzsche's 1888 essay *Der Fall Wagner* (*Le Cas Wagner*). In the essay, Nietzsche turned against Wagner, whom he had previously admired. In the French press of the 1930s the term, 'un cas Wagner' was frequently used to refer to past Wagner affairs.

¹⁶⁶ 'Nous n'admettons pas ce cas Wagner. Ce sont les rhéteurs politiques qui l'ont suscité en jetant les thèmes de ses drames musicaux dans les luttes politiques de chaque jour. Cette exploitation de Wagner

Heimersdorf's references to Thode and Chamberlain are worth noting; he appears to blame them, rather than Hitler, for the current exploitation of Wagner in Germany. Both men were married to daughters of Cosima Wagner,¹⁶⁷ and both were influential in the development of Nazi ideology and philosophy. Neither feature very prominently in French writings on Wagner at this time, although references to Chamberlain's influential racist theories did appear in the Parisian press.

Heimersdorf does not stop at criticising German misuse and exploitation of Wagner; he goes further, praising the way in which Wagner has been treated in France and comparing it favourably to the National Socialists' appropriation in Germany:

The French never knew Wagner as a 'case'. Wotan is not a party hero for them, nor is Siegfried a national hero. They have never had commentators to turn Wagnerian music dramas into national epics and to put the clamour of the orchestra at the same level as the pathos of political speeches. They have not had the opportunity to listen first in order to 'moralise' next. They have experienced Wagner outside of all national sentimentality, from a certain point of view; far beyond the cult of Wotan, so to speak, that is to say as pure musicians and philosophers. This is why, in France, Wagner had no tangible influence of terror, oppression or incitement to violence. On the contrary he acts deeply, he leads towards a happy serenity, in philosophy as well as in music.¹⁶⁸

Given the various scandals and affairs that shaped France's relationship with Wagner since the mid-nineteenth century, it is curious that Heimersdorf would argue that Wagner had never become a 'case' in France. Curious, also, is his suggestion that

qui remonte à Henry Thode, homme dépourvu d'esprit critique et à l'anglais Houston Stewart Chamberlain, est en contradiction avec le fondement moral de toute son œuvre.'

Heimersdorf, 'Richard Wagner et la France', 507.

¹⁶⁷ Thode was married to Daniela, daughter of Cosima and Hans von Bülow; Chamberlain was married to Eva, daughter of Cosima and Richard Wagner.

¹⁶⁸ 'Les Français n'ont jamais connu Wagner comme un « cas ». Wotan n'est pas pour eux un héros de parti, ni Siegfried un héros national. Ils n'ont jamais eu de commentateurs pour faire des drames musicaux wagnériens des épopées nationales et mettre sur le même rang les fracas de l'orchestre et le pathos de discours politiques. Ils n'ont pas l'occasion d'écouter d'abord pour « moraliser » ensuite. Ils ont senti Wagner hors de toute sentimentalité nationale, à un certain point de vue ; par delà le culte de Wotan, de loin, pour ainsi dire, c'est-à-dire en purs musiciens et en philosophes. C'est pourquoi, en France, Wagner n'a pas eu d'influence matérielle, terreur, oppression et excitation à la violence. Bien au contraire il agit en profondeur, il mène vers une heureuse sérénité, en philosophie aussi bien qu'en musique.'

Heimersdorf, 'Richard Wagner et la France', 508.

Wagner had never been used for political purposes in France, and that the French perspective had been unsullied by nationalism. These arguments seem designed to flatter the French—by suggesting that they have a more pure, unadulterated appreciation and understanding of Wagner’s music than the Germans—and to provide him with a platform to criticise the German regime. And, just like Bouvier-Ajam, he views the appropriation of Wagner as a threat of serious proportions:

Wagnerian music found itself mixed up in the ambitions of German politics [during the First World War]. However, if Germany itself brings this music back into the domain of political battles, as a representative of a party, it could reproduce a Wagner case, of which the effects on international intellectual life would be much more ill-fated than any of the previous battles around Wagner.¹⁶⁹

Heimersdorf’s proposed solution to this dangerous situation is simply to publish the truth about Wagner’s paternity—he claims that the revelation that Wagner’s father was indeed the supposedly Jewish Louis Geyer would remove Germany’s ability to exploit the composer and his music. Whether or not Heimersdorf truly believed that the matter was this simple, or whether the issue of Wagner’s paternity was simply a pretext for denouncing the Nazis’ appropriation of him, it is nevertheless significant that the author was willing to so openly attack the actions of the German regime, albeit in a French journal. In fact, Heimersdorf goes further than any of the French commentators in his condemnation of what is taking place in Germany—his language is stronger and his accusations more blatant than most of those writing in the French press. Yet he is writing for a French audience, presumably with the knowledge that his arguments will be acceptable to readers of the *Revue d’Allemagne*. It is also significant that these views appear in a journal that had begun only six years earlier as an attempt to encourage understanding and rapprochement (see Chapter Two). Heimersdorf’s article demonstrates not only that these kinds of political aims were played out in the cultural arena, but also that by 1933, it was becoming evident to the French that mutual comprehension between France and Germany may be a lost cause.

¹⁶⁹ ‘La musique wagnérienne s’est trouvé mêlée aux ambitions de la politique allemande. Or si l’Allemagne elle-même ramène cette musique sur le terrain des luttes politiques, comme représentative d’un parti, il est fort à craindre qu’il ne se reproduise un cas Wagner, dont les effets sur la vie intellectuelle internationale seraient bien plus funestes qu’aucune des luttes précédentes autour de Wagner.’
Ibid., 511.

‘A human and universal Wagner, not a Nazi Wagner!’¹⁷⁰

The sense of alarm that was evident in the French press was less related to the identification of Wagner as ‘German’, and more related to the Nazi version of what ‘Germanness’ meant. Unlike in previous periods of French history, the press did not resort to an anti-Wagner campaign. As we have seen, an outright rejection of Wagner would have been impossible in France in 1933; his music was too integral to Parisian musical life. Moreover, French public opinion in relation to Germany was characterised by ambivalence and insecurity rather than unanimous hostility; pockets of fiercely anti-German sentiment did exist, but they certainly did not represent the majority, and thus an anti-Wagner/anti-German campaign would have been unlikely to have attracted widespread support. How, then, did the French press protest against Germany’s claim to exclusive ownership of Wagner?

The labelling of Wagner’s work as ‘universal’ or ‘human’ was a fundamental aspect of Parisian press reception of Wagner at this time, and one that constituted a form of protest.¹⁷¹ Critics and journalists wrote that his greatest achievement was to have created ‘A universal art, an art for all’,¹⁷² and called for ‘a human and universal Wagner, not a Nazi Wagner!’.¹⁷³ Henri Rebois explained that while the composer’s genius was ‘Germanic in its roots, it [was] profoundly *human* in its flourishing and thus should not be monopolised.’¹⁷⁴ A critic in the Right-wing pro-fascist paper *L’Ami du peuple* lamented the fact that ‘50 years after his passing ... Wagner, universal genius, is an instrument of pan-Germanist propaganda’.¹⁷⁵ Music, these critics argued, transcended borders and concepts of nation and race:

¹⁷⁰ ‘Un Wagner humain et universel, non point un Wagner nazi!’

Francis Ambrière, ‘Parentés de Wagner’, c.1933. Press clipping, BnF BmO, Fonds Paul Franz vol. 22, p. 101.

¹⁷¹ This was not the first time Wagner had been depicted by the Parisian press as universal. See Jane Fulcher, ‘Wagnerism in the Cultural Politics of the Right and Left before World War I’, in *Von Wagner zum Wagnérisme: Musik, Literatur, Kunst, Politik*, ed. Annegret Fauser and Manuela Schwartz (Leipzig: Leipzig Universitätsverlag, 1999), 137–54.

¹⁷² ‘un art universel, un art pour tous’.

Jean Delaincourt, ‘Où en sommes-nous avec Wagner?’, *L’Ami du peuple*, 30 January 1933, 5.

¹⁷³ Ambrière, ‘Parentés de Wagner’.

¹⁷⁴ ‘germanique dans ses racines, il est profondément *humain* dans son épanouissement et, partant, ne doit pas être sujet à d’accaparement.’

Henri Rebois, ‘Des souvenirs sur Siegfried Wagner’, *Comœdia*, 24 April 1933, 2.

¹⁷⁵ ‘Cinquante ans après qu’il s’est éteint ... Wagner, génie universel, est un instrument de propagande pangermanique.’

[Wagner] was German in blood and to his very marrow ...

But the great geniuses go beyond their race to spread out and dissolve into humanity. Certainly, the Nibelungen take their roots, which have grown since the 13th century, from the Germanic soil and the *Mastersingers* also derive from a national tradition. So we should not be surprised that these masterpieces abound with Germanisms. But, when love sings or art claims its rights, their accents take on a human sound, that all races and all eras understand and admire. This is the time to say that art has no homeland ...

... while libretti have a race or are related to one, music is a universal language and sounds overcome borders to enlarge and impose their domination.¹⁷⁶

Although the author of this article—the Republican politician and writer Louis Barthou, who had published two books on Wagner—makes no attempt to challenge Wagner’s Germanic roots or inspiration, his argument rests on the idea that the most significant quality of the music is its ability to speak to all, regardless of nation or race.¹⁷⁷

Marcel Beaufils expressed similar sentiments:

[In most of Wagner’s music dramas] there was enough to speak to the Man in us, beyond borders, beyond races and beyond time periods. For this part of the Human, of the authentic infinity, not tied to a metaphysical mode or a national

Marcel Espiau, ‘Les Allemands qui vont célébrer avec éclat le cinquantenaire de Wagner semblent oublier que pendant trente ans ils méprisèrent sa musique et le laissèrent presque sans ressources’, *L’Ami du Peuple*, 6 February 1933.

¹⁷⁶ ‘Il était allemand dans le sang et jusqu’aux moelles ...

Mais les grands génies débordent leur race pour se répandre et se fondre dans l’humanité. Certes, les Nibelungen prennent leurs racines, qui ont poussé depuis le XIII^e siècle, dans le sol germanique et *Les Maîtres Chanteurs* dérivent aussi d’une tradition nationale. Il ne faut donc pas s’étonner que ces chefs-d’œuvre abondent en germanismes. Mais, quand l’amour chante ou que l’art revendique ses droits, leurs accents prennent un son humain, que toutes les races et que tous les temps comprennent et admirent. C’est le cas de dire que l’art n’a pas de patrie ...

... tandis que les livrets sont d’une race ou s’y rapportent, la musique est une langue universelle et les sons franchissent les frontières pour élargir et imposer leur domination.’

Louis Barthou, ‘Richard Wagner cinquante ans après sa mort’, *Annales*, 10 February 1933. Press clipping, BnF BMO, Fonds Paul Franz, vol. 21.

¹⁷⁷ For a biography of Barthou, see Robert J. Young, *Power and Pleasure: Louis Barthou and the Third French Republic* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1991).

style, Wagner remains, despite his faded scenery, cantor of the enduring human heart.¹⁷⁸

Again and again, French critics attempted to convince themselves (as much as their readers) that while Wagner may have been German, he also belonged to humanity, and thus to the French. Surrendering his music to the domain of German national culture was simply not considered. The idea of Wagner as ‘cantor of the enduring heart’ encapsulated this: he was the voice of humanity, singing humanity’s song and speaking for all, regardless of national origin.

Jane Fulcher has written of how the question of universal art preoccupied French discourse on music after WWI—a period in which nationalism and the concept of the nation became integral to understanding and defining culture and identity. ‘National’ art was considered to be the ultimate expression of the nation’s soul, and yet in the case of Wagner this presented a problem that needed a solution:¹⁷⁹ How to justify a love for Wagner’s music when it was the national art of another nation, and a former enemy nation at that? Sara Iglesias has placed these questions in the context of a battle to liberate French music and culture from German hegemony.¹⁸⁰ Universalism presented a convenient solution to these struggles—it did not deny music’s national qualities, but it did allow the French to appreciate and claim understanding of German music, without betraying their own national culture.

Wagner the European

Amongst these discussions of universality and nationalism in Wagner’s music was another idea: that of Europeanism. Julien Prévotaux has explained Europeanism as a French intellectual and political ideal that grew directly out of the trauma of the First World War, and a consequent determination never to repeat the conflict and horror of that period. The goal of a unified Europe, Prévotaux argues, became almost synonymous with pacifism in France and Franco-German rapprochement.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ ‘il y avait là suffisamment à dire à l’Homme en nous, par delà les frontières, par delà les races et par delà les temps. Pour cette part d’Humain, d’infini authentique, non-rattachée à une mode métaphysique, ou à un style national, Wagner reste, malgré ses décors fanés, chantre du coeur humain impérissable.’

Beaufils, ‘Richard Wagner et l’Allemagne’, 134.

¹⁷⁹ Fulcher, *The Composer as Intellectual*, 11, 28–9, 92–3.

¹⁸⁰ Iglesias, *Musicologie et Occupation*, 170–71.

¹⁸¹ Julien Prévotaux, *Un Européisme nazi. Le Groupe Collaboration et l’idéologie européenne dans la seconde guerre mondiale* (Paris: François-Xavier de Guibert, 2010), 83–113.

Europeanism's most loyal supporters were not deterred by the advent of fascism in Germany, and the concept was later used by the Third Reich to articulate its vision for a German-dominated 'New Europe' during its occupation of France.¹⁸² In 1933, however, Europeanism signified reconciliation and the preservation of peace—the coming together of France and Germany as friends rather than enemies. And yet, unlike those who so stridently opposed the Nazi appropriation of Wagner, proponents of Europeanism tended to be pro-Nazi. This lends some ambiguity to the issue. Did critics who depicted Wagner's music as 'European' mean to challenge or support what the Third Reich was doing with Wagner?

A number of commentators on Wagner made reference to Europeanism as a means of challenging nationalist claims on Wagner. Frédéric Beucler, after having stated that geniuses such as Wagner belong not just to their homeland but also to 'Humanity', explained:

[Wagner's] *patrie* was Germany since he was born in Leipzig in 1813. But at a time when we must learn to speak European, and we must realise a Franco-German entente for the sake of peace, we can ... pay tribute to his genius.¹⁸³

For Beucler, Europeanism—like universalism—gave the French permission to appreciate Wagner and put aside nationalist concerns. Indeed, a blurring of the lines between universalism and Europeanism is often present in references to Wagner in the press. Pierre Laclau's concert review published in the notoriously fascist and pro-Hitlerian weekly *Je suis partout* exemplifies this conflation of the two ideas:

[The concerts] were very successful, even though neither [programme] was French in intention or form. And this is simply very characteristic: nowhere does the European spirit blow with as much freedom as it does amongst musicians. The optimists will say it is because they express themselves through a universal language.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Ibid., 302–4.

¹⁸³ 'Sa Patrie fut l'Allemagne puisqu'il naquit à Leipzig en 1813. Mais au moment où il faut apprendre à parler européen, où il faudrait, pour la paix, réaliser l'entente franco-allemande, nous pouvons bien ... rendre hommage à son génie.'

Frédéric Beucler, *Bienfaisance*, 1933. Press clipping, BnF BmO, Fonds Paul Franz, vol. 21.

¹⁸⁴ 'Ils ont obtenu beaucoup de succès, quoique ni l'un ni l'autre ne fût français ni d'intention ni de forme. Et cela déjà est très caractéristique : nulle part, l'esprit européen ne souffle avec autant de

Although it is difficult to tell exactly how these authors position themselves in relation to Germany and to National Socialism, their comments show how Wagner was used as a means of indirectly exploring political possibilities. Both authors make explicit connections between music and political relations. Celebrating Wagner is considered here to be a means of contributing to political entente, and encouraging a European way of thinking. Furthermore, a love of Wagner is framed in terms of political and diplomatic imperatives.

A similar confusion or conflation of universalism and Europeanism can be observed in the press commentary that surrounded Thomas Mann's Paris lecture on 18 February 1933. This event had a significant influence on much of the French discourse surrounding Wagner that year. Mann gave the lecture in two versions: in French at the Théâtre des Ambassadeurs, and in German at the Foyer de la Nouvelle Europe. This in itself suggested a Europeanist approach, as well as a desire to communicate with Germans exiled in Paris, or French-born Germanists. The lecture originated in Mann's book *Leiden und Groesse Richard Wagners*, commissioned by the Goethe Society to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Wagner's death. It was first presented as a lecture in Munich on 10 February. Mann's relationship with Wagner's work was difficult and complex. He wrote about Wagner throughout his life and often expressed his contradictory responses of deep attraction to the music and intellectual criticism of the ideology behind it.¹⁸⁵ In spite of, or perhaps because of his lifelong veneration for the music, he never shied from criticising and rejecting many of Wagner's ideological beliefs. Nevertheless, he immediately identified Hitler's use of the music as misguided and dangerous, and the lecture was an unapologetic warning against appropriating the music for political purposes. 'It is thoroughly inadmissible', he wrote, 'to ascribe a contemporary meaning to Wagner's nationalist gestures and speeches—the meaning that they would have today. To do so is to falsify and abuse them, to sully their romantic purity.'¹⁸⁶ While Hitler and the Nazi Party are never specifically mentioned in the essay, it is clearly an attack on Nazi appropriation:

liberté que parmi les musiciens. C'est, diront les optimistes, qu'ils ont le truchement d'une langue universelle.'

Pierre Laclau, 'Deux concerts', *Je suis partout*, 25 March 1933, 6.

¹⁸⁵ Stéphane Pesnel, 'Mann, (Paul) Thomas (1875–1955)', in *Dictionnaire Encyclopédique Wagner*, ed. Timothée Picard (Paris: Actes Sud/Cité de la musique, 2010), 1214–26.

¹⁸⁶ Thomas Mann, 'The Sorrows and Grandeur of Richard Wagner', in *Pro and Contra Wagner*, trans. Allan Blunden, ed. Patrick Carnegiey (London: Fischer Verlag, 1985), 140.

It is nothing but demagoguery when today the ‘German sword’ lines—or indeed that key statement at the end of *Die Meistersinger*: ‘Zerging’ in Dunst das Heil’ge Röm’sche Reich, uns bliebe gleich die heil’ge deutsche Kunst’ [And were the Holy Roman Empire to fade away, Holy German Art is here to stay!]¹⁸⁷—are thundered tendentiously into the auditorium by the basses, in order to achieve an added patriotic effect. It is these very lines ... that prove how totally intellectual and apolitical Wagner’s nationalism was: for they speak of a downright anarchic indifference to political structures ...¹⁸⁷

Mann does not attempt to deny Wagner’s ‘Germanness’; indeed, he argues that this very quality in Wagner’s music is ‘profound, potent and beyond all doubt’. And yet he also stresses the fact that this music was ‘made for the larger world, and accessible to the larger world’,¹⁸⁸ and he makes reference to a wider European community that shares an appreciation and understanding of this very German art. The essay ends thus: ‘Let us be content to honour Wagner’s work as a powerful and complex phenomenon of German and Western European life, which will ever continue to serve as a profound stimulus to art and knowledge.’¹⁸⁹

The lecture events were widely reported in the Parisian press and Mann’s position clearly resonated strongly with all those critics who commented on it. The combination of his evident passion for the music and his objections to its political appropriation was perfectly pitched to the Parisian press, and Mann’s intellectual status gave his opinions an additional layer of authority. The lecture given at the Foyer de la Nouvelle Europe was followed by a response by the French writer André Maurois, who later helped Mann to immigrate to the United States.¹⁹⁰ In his response, subsequently published in *Le Quotidien*, Maurois praises Mann’s lecture and approves of the German writer’s argument that Wagner’s music is fundamentally German while also being universal. In support of Mann’s speech, he adds two comments:

The first is that by truthfully depicting the men of his country, the great novelist, whether he wishes to or not, helps other people to understand them. Through works of art we can penetrate a common source of human passions

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 141.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 144.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 148.

¹⁹⁰ Jack Kolbert, *The Worlds of André Maurois* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1985), 50.

which, beneath differences in custom and language, remains identical amongst the nations, fixed in space, unchanging in time.

My second remark relates to what you were telling us the other day about these myths as old as humanity, deeply buried in the collective soul and to which every writer, every musician must appeal if he wants to touch what is most secret and strong in man.

But perhaps there is indeed some hope for unfortunate Europe in the fact that many of the myths that we live are common to all Westerners. Knighthood, Tristan's potion, the mystery of the Grail belong to a European civilisation. Europe is not without collective memories. She has known before the unity which today she seeks in vain.

But alas, how quickly diminishes the number of those whose great voice can be heard beyond the limits of their native country.¹⁹¹

By appealing to a collective cultural history and memory shared by all Western Europeans, Maurois uses Mann's lecture to support his own, typically French, opposition to the Nazi appropriation of Wagner, and to suggest that Europe can only be saved through recognition of these common values and history. Through comments on the unity that 'unfortunate Europe' seeks in vain, he draws attention to the current atmosphere of insecurity and turmoil in Europe, and he sees universalism as a solution. Although he avoids open criticism of the Nazi regime, he clearly aligns himself with Mann's position on the universality of Wagner's music, claiming that the stories of Wagner's operas belong to a European civilisation, not a German one. A significant number of other critics mentioned Mann's book in their articles on

¹⁹¹ 'La première, c'est qu'en peignant avec vérité les hommes de son pays le grand romancier, qu'il le souhaite ou non, aide d'autres peuples à les comprendre. À travers les œuvres d'art, nous pouvons pénétrer jusqu'à ce fonds commun des passions humaines qui, au-dessous des différences de mœurs et de langage, demeure identique parmi les nations, immobile dans l'espace, immuable dans le temps. Ma seconde remarque se rattache à ce que vous nous disiez l'autre jour de ces mythes aussi vieux que l'humanité, profondément ensevelis dans l'âme collective et auxquels tout écrivain, tout musicien doit faire appel s'il veut émouvoir ce qu'il y a en l'homme de plus secret et de plus fort. Mais peut-être y a-t-il justement, pour la malheureuse Europe, quelque espoir en ce fait que beaucoup des mythes dont nous vivons sont communs à tous les Occidentaux. La chevalerie, le philtre de Tristan, le mystère du Graal appartiennent à une civilisation européenne. L'Europe n'est pas sans souvenirs collectifs. L'unité, qu'aujourd'hui elle cherche en vain, elle l'a connue autrefois. Mais, hélas ! qu'il diminue rapidement le nombre de ceux dont la grande voix peut être entendue au delà des limites de leur pays natal.' André Maurois, 'Discours', *Le Quotidien*, 1933. Press clipping, BnF BmO, Fonds Paul Franz vol. 21.

Wagner, and several wrote about his ideas in some detail.¹⁹² His comments about the profound Germanness of Wagner were skipped over, but his opposition to the political misuse of the music in Germany and his emphasis on its universality were applauded and reiterated.

Conclusion

Paris in 1933 was the focus of a new wave of Wagnerism that had been building throughout the interwar period, and climaxed in the year of the *cinquantenaire*. In spite of the historically difficult relationship between Wagner and the French, and the current atmosphere of political and diplomatic tension between France and Germany, Parisians' loyalty to the German composer did not wane in response to Hitler's attempts to exploit his music for political purposes; on the contrary, Parisian Wagnerism blossomed and solidified. The Nazis' appropriation of Wagner was widely and loudly condemned, but the anti-Wagner sentiment that had reared its head so many times in the history of Paris's relations with Wagner was totally absent. Instead, the Parisian press sought to reposition Wagner in numerous ways, all designed to allow them to reclaim the composer and his music from Nazi Germany. It was not so much that Parisians did not want to admit Wagner's Germanness; rather, that they wanted 'a human and universal Wagner, not a Nazi Wagner!'¹⁹³ The lack of correlation between the political viewpoints of various sections of the Parisian press and their arguments relating to Wagner suggests that the Parisian rejection of a 'Nazi Wagner' was bipartisan; almost all commentators were arguing for the same thing, albeit with different motivations and sometimes through different means. Once again, Wagner proved to be a vessel for the viewpoints of many different political groups; in one sense, he provided a point of unity in an otherwise deeply divided community. Not only was Wagner's music deeply cherished in France, but he had also been accorded a unique place in the French musical imagination, whereby he functioned as a tool for the French to articulate who they were and who they wanted to be, both musically and nationally. Hitler's vision of Wagner as exclusively German left no room for 'other Wagners'—French or otherwise—and this posed a threat to French musical identity. The Parisian press had no intention of surrendering Wagner to

¹⁹² For example, Bouvier-Ajam, 'Religion', 15 December 1933, 485; 'Wagner jugé par un écrivain allemand'. Press clipping, BnF BmO, Fonds Paul Franz vol. 22, p. 91; Ambrière, 'Parentés de Wagner'.

¹⁹³ Ambrière, 'Parentés de Wagner'.

Hitler's 'new Germany' because they had absorbed him into their musical history, musical discourse and musical life.

CHAPTER TWO

‘Bringing together human hearts’:¹⁹⁴ Wagner as diplomacy, 1933–39

Introduction

In his work on the history of Wagner’s music at the Paris Opéra, Mathias Auclair has made reference to the use of Wagner as an important diplomatic tool for France and Germany in the process of working towards détente in the late 1920s and early 1930s.¹⁹⁵ German performances of Wagner in France, Auclair argues, were a means of establishing a friendly relationship through culture. Given the popularity of Wagner’s music with the French, and the importance of Wagner as a national figure for Germany, it is not difficult to understand why he was chosen for this purpose. Yet until now no-one has asked how this utilisation of Wagner’s music was received, and whether the idea of détente or rapprochement through Wagner was understood and accepted by the French. In Chapter One I focused on the Parisian press’s rejection of what they perceived as the Nazis’ appropriation of Wagner as a symbol of the German nation; in Chapter Two I ask whether the press also rejected the use of Wagner as a symbol for Franco-German rapprochement.

The 1930s saw France caught between two competing forces in regard to the Franco-German relationship: on one hand, an investment in the post-World War One diplomatic attempts of the 1920s to bring about genuine détente after the difficult relations caused by the war; on the

¹⁹⁴ ‘rapprocher les cœurs humains’.

Gustave Samazeuilh, ‘Bayreuth et la France’, *Cahiers franco-allemands*, September 1937, 279. See Appendix C12.

¹⁹⁵ Mathias Auclair, ‘La Postérité’, in *Verdi, Wagner, et l’Opéra de Paris*, ed. Mathias Auclair, Christophe Gristi and Pierre Vidal (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France/Opéra de Paris, 2013), 80; Mathias Auclair, ‘Richard Wagner à l’Opéra’, in *La Musique à Paris sous l’Occupation*, ed. Myriam Chimènes and Yannick Simon (Paris: Cité de la musique/Fayard, 2013), 73.

other hand, a pressing need to confront the escalation of Germany's military aggression towards its neighbours, including France. The idea of fostering Franco-German rapprochement was referred to frequently in the press, as the French public and its politicians overwhelmingly supported the maintenance of peace over all other options. War still seemed unlikely by the middle of the decade and Hitler continued to spout a rhetoric of peace and rapprochement, supported by flourishing cultural exchange initiatives. Wagner's music played an important role, both in the discourse of rapprochement developed in the Parisian press, and in the cultural exchange activities that took place throughout the 30s. In the background, though, Germany followed a steady program of rearmament, reoccupation of the demilitarised zone in the Rhineland and, more generally, the dismantling of the various agreements made in the 1919 Treaty of Versailles.

This chapter begins with an overview of Franco-German relations following the Franco-Prussian war—a seminal historical event that continued to influence the diplomatic and political relationship between France and Germany more than 60 years later. This overview is followed by a brief examination of the nature of German propaganda in France between 1933 and 1939, and the role of Otto Abetz—a significant figure in Franco-German cultural relations from the 1920s until the end of Germany's occupation of France. I then consider the role of the conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler in performing Wagner's music in Paris as part of a programme of cultural exchange, and the extent to which Furtwängler was viewed by the Parisian press as a representative of the Nazi regime or a promoter of rapprochement. I also examine an anti-Nazi protest that took place during one of Furtwängler's performances with the Berlin Philharmonic in Paris. The remaining parts of the chapter assess the different ways in which the idea of rapprochement through Wagner was received by sections of the Parisian press, and to what extent Germany's propagandistic narrative of Wagner as symbol of rapprochement was accepted. The chapter ends with a focus on the Wagner criticism of Gustave Samazeuilh, particularly those articles published in the bilingual periodical *Cahiers franco-allemands*.

Historical background: Franco-German relations

The Franco-German relationship was built on a series of conflicts, each engraved into the collective memories of both nations. The 1870 Franco-Prussian War, in which France had suffered humiliating defeat and the loss of Alsace-Lorraine to Bismarck's new German Empire, remained a painful memory for the French well into the twentieth century. Open

conflict ensued again with the outbreak of the First World War; for France, this war presented an opportunity to win back Alsace-Lorraine. Germany's defeat in 1918 and the stipulations of the Versailles treaty—which obliged Germany to admit to full responsibility for the war and to pay large sums in reparations—were a source of lasting national shame for the German people. Hitler was able to leverage this sentiment to build support for National Socialism and come to power in 1933. France, meanwhile, was so deeply traumatised by the First World War that in the 1930s the majority of its people preferred the prospect of foreign occupation to that of war.¹⁹⁶ The remilitarisation of the Rhineland and increasingly aggressive gestures made by Hitler was concerning for the French, but not enough to outweigh their desire for peace. This same desire also bred widespread French support for Franco-German rapprochement initiatives in the interwar period, even as Germany moved towards military conflict.

The Locarno accords, signed in 1925, were a response to the diplomatic difficulties presented by the Treaty of Versailles. The harsh measures taken against Germany after the war had hindered improvements in international relations in Europe. In the Locarno accords, Germany accepted its new western borders and obtained reintegration into the international community. The foreign ministers of the two countries—Aristide Briand and Gustav Stresemann—were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts to preserve peace through the accords. The term 'spirit of Locarno' emerged at this time, referring to efforts at rapprochement in diverse areas of French and German society, and attempts to reduce hostility and build trust and friendship between the two countries. Rapprochement efforts included non-official cultural exchange initiatives, such as reciprocal tours and visits by artists, musicians, writers and intellectuals. As the Opéra director Jacques Rouché gradually allowed Wagner's works back into the repertoire following the ban during the First World War, Wagner became a tool for diplomacy and the star of Rouché's program of cultural exchange.

Hans Manfred Bock argues that within the framework of international relations, the movement and control of ideas and information have the potential to be a very powerful way of influencing, controlling, or even monopolising perceptions about a nation.¹⁹⁷ This applies

¹⁹⁶ Eugen Weber, *The Hollow Years: France in the 1930s* (New York; London: Norton, 1994), 23–5.

¹⁹⁷ Hans Manfred Bock, 'Les Relations culturelles franco-allemandes entre Locarno et Vichy. Un champ de recherche spécifique', in *Entre Locarno et Vichy. Les Relations culturelles franco-allemandes dans les années 30*, ed. Hans Manfred Bock, Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus, Michel Trebitsch and Beate Husser (Paris: CNRS, 1993), 21–2.

to cultural transactions just as much as economic or political ones. Hitler clearly recognised this potential for control and influence through culture, and by the early thirties German rapprochement activities were undergoing a transformation into propaganda activities. Rather than aiming at peace, reconciliation and the reciprocal exchange of cultural products, the ultimate goal for Germany became the normalisation of Nazi culture in French society in the guise of rapprochement.¹⁹⁸ Karen Fiss argues that the French were deceived by the mask of cultural cooperation, and that this deception played an important role in the French defeatism and denial that resulted in German occupation in 1940. In spite of all the warning signs and increasing hostility from Germany, France continued to pursue rapprochement until early 1939.¹⁹⁹ Thus Germany was able to use the practice of cultural rapprochement to influence and control France's perception of Nazism.

Otto Abetz and German propaganda in 1930s France

Otto Abetz—who was to become the German ambassador to France during the Occupation—had been engaged in cultivating Franco-German relations since the 1920s. Married to a French woman, Abetz saw himself and the Germans he worked alongside as francophiles devoted to bringing France and Germany closer together and nurturing mutual comprehension between the two nations. In 1930, he had begun organising meetings of French and German youths, in an effort to forge links and overcome prejudice and hostility.²⁰⁰ From these initial cultural exchanges, Abetz eventually developed an influential network of French intellectuals and cultural figures, which he was later to use to great political advantage.²⁰¹ Barbara Lambauer writes that the infrastructure of cultural exchange and the network of contacts set up by Abetz in the 1920s and 30s enabled him to implement the cultural collaboration policies that came to define cultural life in occupied Paris (discussed in detail in Chapters Four and Five).²⁰² Abetz's position in relation to France was a complex one; he had a deep reverence and love for French culture and yet he believed in the superiority of German culture and the need to convince the French people of the benefits of National Socialism. Lambauer places Abetz's activities in the 1930s in the broader context

¹⁹⁸ Karen Fiss, *Grand Illusion: The Third Reich, the Paris Exposition, and the Cultural Seduction of France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 19–21.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 15–18

²⁰⁰ Martin Mauthner, *Otto Abetz and his Paris Acolytes: French Writers who Flirted with Fascism, 1930–1945* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2016).

²⁰¹ Barbara Lambauer, 'Otto Abetz, inspirateur et catalyseur de la collaboration culturelle', in *Les Intellectuels et l'Occupation, 1940–1944. Collaborer, partir, résister*, ed. Albrecht Betz and Stefan Martens (Paris: Éditions Autrement, 2004), 67–8.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 65.

of a rise in German policies designed to counterbalance increasing military aggression.²⁰³

Between 1933 and 1939, Abetz worked to maintain his French connections, mollify French concerns about the threat of war with Germany, and infiltrate French intellectual circles in order to influence the French press and thus public opinion in regard to Germany.²⁰⁴

In 1935, Abetz and Fritz Bran founded the *Comité France-Allemagne* (CFA), an organisation supposedly established to promote peace and rapprochement between France and Germany. The group was intended to act outside the political sphere, and was made up not of Nazi sympathisers, but of French intellectual and cultural figures known to be supportive of entente.²⁰⁵ Philippe Burrin writes that the *Comité* presented itself ‘as a body of people of goodwill anxious to reveal the peace-loving and friendly face of Nazi Germany.’ In actual fact, its main purpose was to convince the French of the benefits of National Socialism.²⁰⁶ From 1936, the CFA published a bilingual periodical entitled *Cahiers franco-allemands*, or *Deutsch-französische Monatshefte*. The *Cahiers* published articles supposedly encouraging French readers to gain a better understanding of Germany and German culture; the moderate tone utilised by many of its authors (most of whom were drawn from Abetz’s extensive personal network in Paris) concealed the much less conciliatory position and objectives of its directors. Michel Grunewald argues that the ultimate reason for the existence of the publication was to defend Hitler’s policies to the French.²⁰⁷ Articles on cultural events and issues, including music, were common. A frequent theme was to espouse the ability of music to unite divided peoples and improve the Franco-German relationship.²⁰⁸ The publication had a wide readership in France, and was thus an effective tool in Abetz’s overarching plan of pro-Nazi propaganda.²⁰⁹ As I shall show in the remaining parts of this chapter, the *Cahiers franco-allemands* engaged actively in the discourse of Wagner as rapprochement.

²⁰³ Barbara Lambauer, *Otto Abetz et les Français ou l’envers de la Collaboration* (Paris: Fayard, 2001), 83.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 83–129.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 89–90.

²⁰⁶ Philippe Burrin, *France under the Germans: Collaboration and Compromise*, trans. Janet Lloyd (New York: The New Press, 1996), 53–5; Fiss, *Grand Illusion*, 27–30.

²⁰⁷ Michel Grunewald, ‘Le « Couple France-Allemagne » vu par les Nazis. L’idéologie du « rapprochement franco-allemand » dans les *Deutsch-Französische Monatshefte/Cahiers Franco-Allemands* (1934–1939)’, in *Entre Locarno Et Vichy*, ed. Bock et al., 131–3.

²⁰⁸ For example, Wolfgang Fortner, ‘La Jeune Musique allemande et française’, *Cahiers franco-allemands*, December 1936, 419–21; Pierre Lerol, ‘Les Rapports musicaux franco-allemands’, *Cahiers franco-allemands*, June 1936, 220–21.

²⁰⁹ Lambauer, ‘Otto Abetz, inspirateur et catalyseur’, 73.

Wilhelm Furtwängler: Face of rapprochement through Wagner?

During the interwar period, German conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler became the face of an important aspect of Franco-German cultural rapprochement through his tours to Paris with the Berlin Philharmonic, the Berlin Staatsoper, and singers from the Bayreuth Festival. Jacques Rouché had initiated a program of annual exchange tours between the Berlin Staatsoper and the Paris Opéra at the beginning of the decade. The tours began in 1931 with a German-language performance of *Tristan und Isolde* conducted by Leo Blech, who was superseded by Furtwängler the following year.²¹⁰ The vast majority of these tours included performances of Wagner's music, either in the form of orchestral excerpts or entire productions of the operas.

The question of Furtwängler's support of the Nazi regime has generated controversy amongst scholars and the general public in the past, and continues to be the subject of a heated debate.²¹¹ What concerns us here, however, is his role as one of the most prominent German performers of Wagner's music in Paris during the 1930s, and how he was perceived by the Parisian press in the context of Franco-German relations and attitudes to Germany. Hitler's coming to power in 1933 had precipitated the exile of many German artists, including conductors, singers, and musicians. The conductors Otto Klemperer, Fritz Busch and Bruno Walter, for example, all left Germany in 1933 to escape the regime, as did a number of less well-known conductors.²¹² Furtwängler, on the contrary, stayed in Germany and continued to perform under the Nazi regime. By staying in Germany, however, he was not necessarily supporting Hitler or the Third Reich; it is well-documented that he protested against Nazi policy and spoke out publicly against discrimination, defying certain orders from Hitler or other Nazi officials, refusing to treat his performances as a means of Nazi propaganda, and generally making himself very unpopular with the regime. Nevertheless, the prestige and honour he could potentially lend to the Reich made Hitler reluctant to publicly denounce or attack him. Furtwängler continued to conduct for the regime sporadically during the Second World War. Audrey Roncigli explains his decision to stay in Germany rather than go into exile: 'he did not envisage his country as a "Nazi Germany", but rather as a "Germany

²¹⁰ Auclair, 'La Posterité', 80.

²¹¹ Audrey Roncigli's recent book examines the historiographical debate about Furtwängler since the end of the Second World War. See Roncigli, *Le Cas Furtwängler. Un chef d'orchestre sous le IIIe Reich* (Paris: Imago, 2009).

²¹² Ibid., 42.

governed by the Nazis”, a “Germany reduced to silence”, a Germany in which music had perhaps become even more necessary than before.’²¹³

Furtwängler conducted orchestral and operatic performances of Wagner in Paris between 1928 and 1938, and he was adored by the Parisian public and the press. (During the Occupation he refused to perform in France and other occupied countries, saying that he would never go there as a victor.)²¹⁴ His operatic performances in Paris in 1933–8 were exclusively of Wagner works (see Figure 4 for details of all Wagner performances by Furtwängler in Paris during this period). These included numerous occasions when he was guest conductor for the orchestra of the Paris Opéra, as well as performances with the visiting Berlin Staatsoper in 1937 for the *Exposition universelle*. The repertoire for these performances was limited: *Tristan und Isolde* was performed on four occasions, *Die Walküre* on three occasions, *Die Meistersinger* twice, and *Siegfried* once. Most of these performances were sung in German with German singers—an unusual occurrence in France at that time, where Wagner was sung in French until the mid-twentieth century.²¹⁵ The performances of the works in German could be interpreted as a kind of assertion of superiority, and a means of suggesting that *real* performances of Wagner were *German* performances. Indeed, this was certainly the case later under the Occupation (discussed in Chapter Five). Germaine Lubin, one of the greatest French Wagnerian sopranos of the early twentieth century, was the first to begin singing Wagner in German, and her ability to do so was much remarked upon in the press.²¹⁶

²¹³ ‘Furtwängler n’envisageait pas son pays comme une « Allemagne nazie », mais comme une « Allemagne gouvernée par les nazis », une « Allemagne réduite au silence », une Allemagne dans laquelle la musique était peut-être devenue encore plus nécessaire qu’auparavant.’
Ibid, 239.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 60.

²¹⁵ Christian Merlin, ‘Avatars du *Ring* de Wagner : l’histoire de ses traductions françaises’, in *La Traduction des livrets. Aspect théoriques, historiques et pragmatiques*, ed. Gottfried R. Marschall (Paris: Presses de l’Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2004), 473.

²¹⁶ See Chapter Five for a more detailed discussion of Lubin’s role in the French reception of Wagner under the Occupation.

Figure 4: Table showing Wilhelm Furtwängler's performances in Paris, 1933–38²¹⁷

DATES	ENSEMBLE	VENUE	WAGNER REPERTOIRE	LANGUAGE	NOTES
2 & 4 May 1933	Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra	Paris Opéra	2 May: Overture <i>Der fliegende Holländer</i> 4 May: Prelude <i>Lohengrin</i> Overture <i>Tannhäuser</i> Overture <i>Die Meistersinger</i>	N/A	Protest by <i>Union pour la lutte contre l'antisémitisme</i>
8 & 10 June 1933	Paris Opera	Paris Opéra	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i>	German	With Lauritz Melchior, Alexander Kipnis, Herbert Janssen, Frida Leider, Sabine Kalter
13 & 15 June 1933	Paris Opera	Paris Opéra	<i>Die Walküre</i>	German	With Lotte Lehmann, Leider, Kalter
17 & 19 April 1934	Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra	Paris Opéra	17 April: No Wagner repertoire 19 April: Funeral March <i>Götterdämmerung</i> <i>Siegfried Idyll</i> Overture <i>Holländer</i>	N/A	—
29 & 31 May 1934	Paris Opera	Paris Opéra	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i>	German	With Melchior, Kipnis, Janssen, Leider
5 & 7 June 1934	Paris Opera	Paris Opéra	<i>Die Meistersinger</i>	French and German	With Lehmann, Max Lorenz, Janssen.

²¹⁷ I wish to thank Audrey Roncigli for information she provided on Furtwängler's Parisian performances. In compiling this table, I also consulted the website of the Wilhelm Furtwängler Society (www.furtwangler.net), the *Journal de l'Opéra* on Gallica (<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb426079139/date>), and numerous press sources.

Chapter Two

DATES	ENSEMBLE	VENUE	WAGNER REPERTOIRE	LANGUAGE	NOTES
30 May & 1 June 1935	Paris Opera	Paris Opéra	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i>	German	With Leider, Melchior, Kalter.
4 June 1935	Paris Opera	Paris Opéra	<i>Die Walküre</i>	German	With Lehmann, Leider, Melchior, Friedrich Schorr, Kipnis
14 & 19 May 1936	Paris Opera	Paris Opéra	<i>Die Meistersinger</i>	German	With Maria Müller, Berglund, Max Lorenz, Jaro Prohaska
27 & 29 April 1937	Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra	Paris Opéra	27 April: Overture and Bacchanale <i>Tannhäuser</i> Overture <i>Die Meistersinger</i> 29 April: Overture <i>Holländer</i>	N/A	—
7 September 1937	Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra	Paris Opéra	[No Wagner repertoire]	N/A	—
8 & 11 September 1937	Berlin Staatsoper with own orchestra ²¹⁸	Théâtre des Champs-Élysées	<i>Die Walküre</i>	German	Bayreuth production Part of <i>Exposition universelle</i>
8 & 10 May 1938	Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra	Paris Opéra	8 May: No Wagner repertoire 10 May: Prelude <i>Parsifal</i> Overture <i>Tannhäuser</i>	N/A	—

²¹⁸ The Berlin Staatsoper also performed *Tristan und Isolde* on this tour, on 9 & 12 September, also at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées and part of the *Exposition universelle*. These performances, however, were not conducted by Furtwängler, but by Karl Elemendorff, and thus they do not feature in this table.

Chapter Two

DATES	ENSEMBLE	VENUE	WAGNER REPERTOIRE	LANGUAGE	NOTES
21 & 23 June 1938	Paris Opera	Paris Opéra	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i>	German	100th performance of this work at Paris Opera. With Germaine Lubin, Margarete Klose, Janssen.
3 & 5 December 1938	Orchestre de la société philharmonique de Paris	Salle Pleyel	3 December: No Wagner repertoire 5 December: Overture <i>Holländer</i>	N/A	—
27 December 1938	Paris Opera	Paris Opéra	<i>Siegfried</i>	German	With Lubin, Joachim Sattler.
21 & 23 June 1939	Paris Opera	Paris Opéra	<i>Die Walküre</i>	German	Cancelled by order of French government.

L'Union pour la lutte contre l'antisémitisme

At the beginning of May 1933, Furtwängler visited Paris with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra to conduct two concerts, both of which included works by Wagner (see Figure 4). In spite of (or perhaps because of) Furtwängler's reputation, and the high regard held for the Berlin Philharmonic in Paris, a group called *l'Union pour la lutte contre l'antisémitisme* planned to disrupt the concerts as a protest against the Third Reich's antisemitic policies. Hitler had come to power only three months earlier, and the first Jewish exclusion laws had come into effect on 1 April (one month before Furtwängler's visit), together with a Nazi-sponsored boycott of Jewish businesses. Further antisemitic legislation was passed throughout the month of April, and then throughout the year.²¹⁹ The response of the *Union pour la lutte contre l'antisémitisme* suggests that Parisians were well-informed about these changes to German law, which had only taken place in the few weeks leading up to the concerts. Their decision to use the concerts as a site for protest also suggests that they were conscious of Furtwängler and the Berlin Philharmonic's position as German cultural exports. The protests, however, did not take place as planned; a compromise was reached in which members of the group were allowed to attend the concert and release small pieces of paper (possibly printed flyers) from the upper balconies into the audience below during the interval, as a symbolic protest.²²⁰

Why did the *Union pour la lutte contre l'antisémitisme* agree to conduct a symbolic protest rather than a disruptive one? Audrey Roncigli has noted that France's reception of Furtwängler differed from that in Belgium and the Netherlands in the 1930s. She argues that for the French, Furtwängler continued to be associated with cultural rapprochement and honoured as a prestigious artist, to the point that he was awarded the *Croix de commandeur de la Légion d'honneur* in February 1939 as France and Germany were on the brink of war.²²¹ A closer look at the singers that Furtwängler performed with on his Paris tours (see last column in Figure 4) reveals a striking number of talented European singers who were exiled from Germany at some point during the 1930s. Some of these singers—such as Alexander Kipnis and

²¹⁹ David Engel, *The Holocaust: The Third Reich and the Jews*, 2nd ed. (London; New York: Routledge, 2013), xiii.

²²⁰ See Berta Geissmar's personal recollection of this incident in Geissmar, *The Baton and the Jackboot* (London: Columbus Books, 1944), 83–4.

²²¹ Roncigli, *Le Cas Furtwängler*, 110.

Max Lorenz—were forced to leave because they were Jewish or had Jewish relatives. Others, such as Herbert Janssen and Sabine Kalter, had openly expressed their opposition to Nazi policies and thus remaining in Germany became untenable. Roncigli suggests that Furtwängler's decision to perform in Paris with exiled Germans who were unable to perform in Germany was very popular in France.²²²

Furthermore, on 11 April 1933, as the antisemitic measures were coming into effect in Germany, but before the Berlin Philharmonic concerts in Paris, Furtwängler had published a public letter to Joseph Goebbels (Minister of Propaganda in the Third Reich). The letter denounced antisemitic measures that targeted German Jewish musicians. Furtwängler defended the musicians with the argument that politics should never enter the realm of art. The only question that should be considered, he argued, was whether these people were good musicians who produced good art. He did not actually denounce antisemitism itself, but rather the effect it was having on musical life in Germany.

The letter was published in the Parisian press ten days before the first Furtwängler concert on 2 May in *Les Nouvelles littéraires*, as part of a regular report on cultural life in Berlin.²²³ It was then republished in the May issue of *La Revue musicale*,²²⁴ with the following introduction:

La Revue musicale proudly reproduces in full, in the translation that appeared in *Les Nouvelles littéraires*, the letter that Wilhelm Furtwängler addressed to the Minister of Public Instruction of the Reich, standing up for music, equity and common sense.²²⁵

²²² Ibid., 108–10.

²²³ Pascal Copeau, 'La Semaine à Berlin', *Les Nouvelles littéraires*, 22 April 1933.

²²⁴ Yannick Simon speculates that the decision taken by the editor of *La Revue musicale*—Robert Bernard—to publish Furtwängler's letter is likely to have been the reason for the subsequent publication of Bernard's name in the Nazis' dictionary of Jewish musicians. See Simon, 'Robert Bernard et le devenir de *La Revue musicale*', in Henry Prunières (1886–1942). *Un musicologue engagé dans la vie musicale de l'entre-deux-guerres*, ed. Myriam Chimènes, Florence Gétreau and Catherine Massip (Paris: Société française de musicologie, 2015), 449.

²²⁵ 'La Revue musicale tient à reproduire *in extenso*, en la traduction parue dans les *Nouvelles littéraires* la Lettre que Wilhelm Furtwängler prenant la défense de la musique, de l'équité et du bon sens, a adressée au Ministre de l'Instruction Publique du Reich.' Wilhelm Furtwängler, 'Pour que la politique n'asservisse pas la musique (lettre au Ministre de l'Instruction publique)', *La Revue musicale* 136 (May 1933): 398–9.

La Revue musicale makes its position clear from the beginning, although it does little more than reproduce the letter: it supports Furtwängler's call for music to be above politics, and to end the discrimination against Jewish German musicians.

Two months after the May concerts, journalist Pierre Abraham reflected on the letter and its effects in the *L'Europe nouvelle*, a weekly journal founded after the First World War, dedicated to promoting peace in Europe and Franco-German rapprochement. Abraham claimed that the news of the Third Reich's antisemitic legislation affecting Jewish artists had initially prompted the Parisian public to return the tickets they had bought for Furtwängler's Berlin Philharmonic concerts. The publication of his letter, argued Abraham, had convinced them to attend after all. Abraham described Furtwängler as a hero:

With courage, this 'Aryan' conductor was the only one in Germany to protest against the persecutions affecting men such as Bruno Walter, Reinhardt, etc. ... The response he received from his government, also published by the press, was evasive and embarrassed. It could not be otherwise ... The concerts were acclaimed and everything was limited to the distribution of small flyers on which it was declared that in the presence of M. Furtwängler's attitude the French audience would refrain from noisy protests.²²⁶

The protest organised by the *Union pour la lutte contre l'antisémitisme*, then, was a rather sophisticated one. Conscious that Furtwängler and the Berlin Philharmonic could be viewed as representatives of the Third Reich and its policies, the group had chosen them as an appropriate target for political protest. In light of Furtwängler's public defence of Jewish musicians, however, the group decided to downgrade the level of disruption they caused, and the concerts were able to proceed without incident. Yet the protest was not entirely cancelled, which suggests that the presence of a German conductor and a German orchestra was still seen as symbolic of the Reich to an extent, even if the individual performers were deemed to be innocent, or

²²⁶ 'Avec courage, ce chef d'orchestre « aryen » s'élevait, seul en Allemagne, contre les persécutions menées à l'égard d'hommes comme Bruno Walter, Reinhardt etc. ... La réponse qu'il reçut de son gouvernement, également publiée par la presse, était dilatoire et embarrassée. Il ne pouvait être autrement ... Les concerts furent acclamés et tout se borna à la distribution de papillons imprimés dans lesquels il était déclaré qu'en présence de l'attitude de Furtwängler le public français renonçait à des protestations bruyantes.'
Pierre Abraham, 'Wagner en allemand à l'Opéra', *L'Europe nouvelle*, 8 July 1933, 648–9.

at least neutral. Although Wagner's music was not explicitly mentioned in the press discussion of these events, it was the cornerstone of Furtwängler's repertoire, and an important element of his position as a German cultural export, regardless of his personal political views.

No other protests against Furtwängler or against performances of Wagner's music were reported in the Parisian press until after the declaration of war (see Chapter Four for a detailed examination of the debate over performing Wagner in wartime).²²⁷ Perhaps groups such as the *Union pour la lutte contre l'antisémitisme* realised that cultural figures such as Furtwängler and Wagner remained precious elements of French culture and history, and that the Parisian music world would not be sympathetic to the prospect of rejecting them as vessels of Nazi propaganda.

'Superior', 'authentic', and 'faithful': Furtwängler's performances of Wagner

The Parisian press was quick to praise Furtwängler in the following months and years, and there was no further evidence to suggest that he was understood as a representative of Nazi Germany. His performances of Wagner's music were regularly celebrated as being the world's best. Reviewing the performances of *Tristan* and *Die Walküre* conducted by Furtwängler at the Paris Opéra in June 1933 in *L'Ami du peuple*, Raymond Balliman wrote:

The principals and the conductor charged with championing these works have been known to us for a long time. They have even appeared on our most prestigious stage [the Opéra] so often—and also in many of our concert series—that they have acquired for us a reputation equivalent to a kind of citizenship [*droit de cité*].

In spite of this, we still experience an artistic joy upon attending their performances. By interpreting Wagner, they are moving in their own specific

²²⁷ Roncigli writes that there were no protests at all against Furtwängler or touring German musical institutions during this period. See Roncigli, *Le Cas Furtwängler*, 110.

fields and they bring us a faithful, comprehensive, lively interpretation of the Bayreuthian Word.²²⁸

Furtwängler's position towards the Reich is not mentioned by Balliman—perhaps because *L'Ami du Peuple* was a hugely popular extreme right-wing publication, known for its antisemitism, and thus Furtwängler's views would not have been in harmony with those of the publication. Balliman's comments do, however, suggest that Furtwängler's performances of Wagner—and indeed 'German' performances of Wagner in general—are more 'authentic' than French performances. This suggestion was often insinuated, if not claimed directly, in the Parisian press, which tended to assume that the Germans performed Wagner better. The conductor Gustave Bret, for example, reviewed the same performances as Balliman, remarking that while they were good performances, Furtwängler could not be expected to produce a miracle with the Paris Opéra orchestra and make it sound like the Berlin Philharmonic.²²⁹ Similarly, Charles Tenroc wrote in a 1935 review of Furtwängler's conducting of *Tristan* with the Paris Opéra orchestra:

We must recognise the superiority of these German performances over those that are continually given to us. What does it take [to achieve this superiority]? Firstly it is about style, this style that has the specific characteristic of sticking to the Wagnerian conception and construction and which, as such, adapts to the mentality of the performers, just as Debussy and Fauré's styles are the monopoly of French performers, and as that of Verdi is that of Italian singers.²³⁰

²²⁸ 'Les protagonistes et le chef d'orchestre chargés de défendre ces ouvrages nous sont depuis longtemps connus. Ils ont même si souvent paru sur notre première scène de musique—et aussi dans nombre de nos grandes associations symphoniques—qu'il [*sic*] ont acquis chez nous une réputation équivalente à une sorte de droit de cité.

Malgré cela, on éprouve toujours une joie artistique à assister à leurs manifestations. En interprétant Wagner, ils se meuvent en leur élément spécifique et nous apportent du Verbe bayreuthien un commentaire fidèle, compréhensif, vivant.'

Raymond Balliman, 'Représentations allemandes. La Valkyrie', *L'Ami du Peuple*, 15 June 1933.

²²⁹ Gustave Bret, 'La Walkyrie sous la direction de M. Furtwaengler', 15 June 1933. Press clipping, BnF Arts du spectacle, Recueil 'Wagner. La Walkyrie', 8-RO-6898 VII (1931–3), p. 49.

²³⁰ 'Il faut bien reconnaître la supériorité de ces représentations allemandes sur celles qui nous sont données en série. A quoi tient-elle? Au style d'abord, ce style d'un caractère spécifique qui tient à la conception et à la facture wagnériennes et qui, comme tel, s'adapte à la mentalité des interprètes comme le style de Debussy et de Fauré est le monopole des traducteurs français, comme celui de Verdi est celui des chanteurs italiens.'

Charles Tenroc, 'Représentations en allemand. « Tristan und Isolde »', *Comœdia*, 11 June 1935, 4.

The suggestion that superiority in performance depended on nationality or race, while not unique to the Nazi worldview, is consistent with Nazi racist ideas about art and nationalism. Charles Tenroc had been president of the *Ligue nationale pour la défense de la musique française*, founded during the First World War to support the ban on German music, promote French music and musicians, and protect ‘national artistic heritage’.²³¹ The league’s slogan, ‘*La musique de France aux Français*’, gives an indication of the highly nationalist nature of the league and its aims. This puts Tenroc’s review of *Tristan* into context: having been heavily involved in the nationalisation of music during the First World War, he had now internalised the message that Nazi Germany wanted to convey about the superiority of German culture, and Nazi ideological beliefs about the nationalist origins of true art, and the need for art to be rooted in national culture. For the Third Reich, performances of Wagner’s music by Furtwängler were the perfect means of disseminating a message of superiority; Parisians were already enamoured of Wagner, and the Germans had a longer tradition of performing his music and could do so in its original form (ie. in the German language).

Wagner at the 1937 *Exposition Universelle*

Wilhelm Furtwängler and Wagner’s music both played an essential role in the so-called rapprochement activities that took place during the 1937 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris. The tradition of international exhibitions that emerged in the nineteenth century was based on ideas related to cultural exchange and pride in national culture. Annegret Fauser writes that at the 1889 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris, ‘almost all music was presented within a nationalist framework ... The resulting tension between the notion of music as national and racial signifier on one hand, and the ideal of musical universalism on the other were among the issues that influenced both the critical reception of music at the *Exposition Universelle* and subsequent debate about the place of music in changing worlds.’²³² In 1937, the nationalist dimension of the Exposition remained strong, and participating countries continued to use the opportunity presented by the Exposition as a means to construct a national identity for an international audience. Fauser’s description of the tension

²³¹ Jane Fulcher, *The Composer as Intellectual: Music and Ideology in France, 1914–1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 31.

²³² Annegret Fauser, *Musical Encounters at the 1889 Paris World’s Fair* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005), 12.

between nationalism and universalism in the 1889 Exposition could just as well have been a description of the Third Reich's approach to culture: emphasise the nationalistic aspect of German cultural exports such as Wagner's music, while also arguing that they are universal and can speak for all people.²³³ Karen Fiss has described Germany's participation in the Exposition as 'the height of the Nazi campaign for a Franco-German rapprochement, as well as the height of French hopes that such a peace with their hereditary enemy could be achieved.' Fiss's book effectively highlights the disconnect between French and German aspirations—on one hand, the cunning of German authorities who managed to convince the French that they simply wanted reconciliation and peace, while simultaneously becoming increasingly militarily aggressive and planning for war; on the other hand, the overwhelming French desire for genuine peace and rapprochement which facilitated their deception by Germany.²³⁴ Germany's musical contribution to the Exposition made a great impression on French critics, and Wagner's music was an essential element in its success.

The full title of the event was *Exposition Internationale. Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne*, and it ran between May and November in 1937. Although the planning for the Exposition had begun in 1934, it was ultimately hosted by Léon Blum's Popular Front government of 1936–8. Blum's Popular Front government was staunchly anti-fascist and did not support Hitler's regime in Germany, yet it failed to condemn what was taking place in Germany and it turned a blind eye to the growing threat of war and invasion posed by its neighbour. The Popular Front's response to the prospect of war was to focus on maintaining peace with Germany and avoiding rearmament—Blum clung on to a hope for peace while Germany strengthened itself economically and militarily.²³⁵

The Popular Front's foreign policy was reflected in the fact that Germany was permitted to construct one of the most imposing pavilions of the entire Exposition: a massive 54-metre tower topped with an eagle and a swastika, placed symbolically opposite the equally enormous Soviet pavilion which featured a 25-metre statue called

²³³ Sara Iglesias discusses this concept of German music as both national and universal under the Third Reich. See Iglesias, *Musicologie et Occupation*, 303–9.

²³⁴ Fiss, *Grand Illusion*, 44.

²³⁵ Dominique Borne and Henri Dubief, *La Crise des années 30. 1929–1938* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1989), 166–8.

The Worker and the Kolkhoz Woman—a man and a woman brandishing a hammer and sickle (see Figure 5). Images of these two pavilions confronting each other, separated by the Eiffel Tower, are an extraordinarily powerful illustration of France's political predicament at that time.

Figure 5: Postcard image of the German and Soviet pavilions at the 1937 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris. Source: Wikimedia Commons, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Paris-1937Expo.jpg>



As part of Germany's contribution to the Exposition, ten days were devoted to celebrating German art (referred to as '*la Semaine artistique allemande*') between 3 and 12 September. The Reich sent its most prestigious musical ensembles and personalities to Paris for the event: the Berlin Staatsoper, the Berlin Philharmonic, and Wagnerian soloists such as Maria Müller, Frida Leider, Margarethe Klose and Rudolf Bockelmann. This contribution alone suggests how important the performances were for German authorities, and the French press response testifies to the success of the venture. The music and literary critic René Dumesnil reflected on the entire week of performances in the October issue of *Mercure de France*:

amongst all the musical performances for which the 1937 Exposition served as a pretext, this 'German week' will remain in our memory as a model of how things should be done and as evidence of the effectiveness of the means

employed to succeed. Because it was a resounding success, and it would be difficult to say that one or the other of these concerts was less perfect.²³⁶

The centrepiece of the week of German art was the performances of Wagner operas: two performances of *Die Walküre* conducted by Furtwängler (see Figure 4) and two performances of *Tristan und Isolde* conducted by Karl Elmendorff, both performed by the Berlin Staatsoper at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées. Both operas were advertised as Bayreuth productions, which lent them an added air of authenticity and excitement. While the week's festivities included many other musical and artistic events, the press agreed unanimously that the Berlin Staatsoper performances were the highlight of the week, and even of the Exposition itself. In *Le Monde musical*, they were described as a 'total, unquestionable, absolute success', in spite of the fact that Germany had chosen to showcase the music of old German masters rather than a new generation of composers.²³⁷

The *Walküre* and *Tristan* performances marked the Berlin Staatsoper's first visit to Paris. The entire company was transported on a special train, including soloists, chorus, 100 orchestral musicians, Bayreuth scenery, and technical staff. Parisian critics were overwhelmingly impressed with the performances, and frequently made unfavourable comparisons with the state of French music. Dumesnil, for example, admiringly quoted Walther Funk, Vice-President of the *Reichskulturkammer* (the Reich Chamber of Culture), at length, writing that the visiting German artists,

gave the most brilliant demonstration of the speech by the Secretary of State Mr Walther Funk ... in the declaration by which he defined the meaning of these performances: 'The artist serves his nation.'

But one lesson emerges from these celebrations, and it is the surprising cohesion of these troupes ...

²³⁶ 'entre toutes les manifestations musicales auxquelles l'Exposition de 1937 a servi de prétexte, cette « semaine allemande » restera dans notre souvenir comme un modèle de ce qu'il fallait faire et comme un témoignage de l'efficacité des moyens employés pour réussir. Car sa réussite fut éclatante, et il serait difficile de dire que l'un ou l'autre de ces spectacles ait été moins parfait'. René Dumesnil, 'Semaine artistique allemande à Paris', *Mercure de France*, 15 October 1937, 407–8. See Appendix C11.

²³⁷ 'réussite complète, incontestable et absolue'.

A. Mangeot, 'La Semaine musicale allemande', *Le Monde musical*, August–September 1937, 209.

This is a lesson which we would not like to be lost on our artists, but we would also hope that they did for them, in France, what is being done in Germany, and that people understood the duty of the State in such circumstances. I cite Mr Walther Funk again who defined this duty: ‘To urge artists to great tasks whose object is not only to respond to the specific demands of the present, but also to awaken the great creative forces of the past so that the young generation can measure its works against the eternal values of German culture.’ Let us replace here the words ‘German culture’ with ‘French culture’, but let us not spend any less than the German State’s aid for the arts, and in particular music, let us understand that they have understood that in peacetime, there is no better affirmation of the force of a people: ‘Art,’—I quote again, because in truth one cannot reflect too much on this courteous lesson,—‘art only becomes culture if it is the sublime expression of a people strong enough to imprint its own effigy in its era.’ Those who have followed the performances and concerts of the ‘German week’ are in no doubt that its organisers attained the goal that they aimed for.²³⁸

The music critic Jean Poueigh used strikingly similar language to Dumesnil, making reference to the inferior state of France’s musical life, as well as ‘lessons’ to be learnt and the impressive unified quality of the German ensembles:

Since French music, treated like the poor relation, revealed its inadequacy, we were given a lesson once more by foreign initiatives ... no listening

²³⁸ ‘ont donné la démonstration la plus brillante de cette parole du Sous-Secrétaire d’Etat M. Walther Funk ... dans la déclaration par laquelle il définit le sens de ces manifestations: « L’artiste rend service à sa nation. »

Mais une leçon se dégage de ces fêtes, et c’est l’étonnante cohésion de ces troupes ... Cette leçon-là, nous voudrions certes, qu’elle ne fût pas perdue pour nos artistes, mais nous souhaiterions aussi que l’on fit pour eux, en France, ce que l’on fait en Allemagne, et que l’on comprît le devoir de l’Etat en de telles circonstances. Je cite encore M. Walther Funk qui a défini ce devoir: « Convier les artistes à de grandes tâches qui ont pour objet, non seulement de répondre aux exigences particulières du présent, mais encore de réveiller les grandes forces créatrices du passé, de sorte que la jeune génération puisse mesurer ses œuvres en critérium de ces valeurs éternelles de la culture allemande. » Remplaçons ici les mots « culture allemande » par « culture française », mais ne ménageons pas plus que les Allemands l’aide de l’Etat aux arts, et en particulier à la musique, comprenons comme ils l’ont compris qu’il n’y a point, dans la paix, de meilleure affirmation de la force d’un peuple: « Art—je cite encore, car, en vérité, on ne saurait trop méditer cette courtoise leçon—l’art ne devient culture que s’il est l’expression sublime d’un peuple assez fort pour imprimer à son époque sa propre effigie. » Ceux qui ont suivi les représentations et les concerts de la « Semaine allemande » ne doutent point que ses organisateurs aient atteint le but qu’ils visaient’. Dumesnil, ‘Semaine artistique allemande’, 407–8.

experience can rival in grandiosity and perfection the concerts and performances of the great German week.

The ensembles, very well rehearsed, ruled by a unanimous awareness, discipline, and understanding, contribute to an unsurpassable expression of art and beauty. Each artist is only one element merged into the whole, a unity that knows in turn when to shine and when to fade. The cohesion, the homogeneity, the balance of the ensemble acquire their full meaning from it.²³⁹

Reviews of the Wagner performances were particularly complimentary, including lavish praise of Furtwängler, the soloists, and the Berlin Staatsoper orchestra. Critics focused on the high standard of playing and, as is evident in the quotations above, the qualities of cohesion and unity within the ensembles. Once again, the Parisian press seemed to have internalised Germany's message about the superiority of German culture. This sense of admiration was often expressed through commentary on the comparative state of French music and culture, or through timid hopes that France might be able to reciprocate by exporting some of its own cultural products to Germany.

Reception of Wagner in journals dedicated to rapprochement

The interwar period saw the emergence of a number of Parisian journals established with the stated goal of maintaining peace in Europe and promoting and developing rapprochement in Franco-German relations. The *Revue d'Allemagne et des pays de langue allemande* (1927–1933)—discussed in Chapter One—was one of these journals. Attached to the *Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft*, it aimed to 'spread and

²³⁹ 'Puisque la musique française, traitée en parent pauvre, révéla son insuffisance, la leçon nous a été donnée cette fois encore par des initiatives étrangères ... nulle audition ne peut rivaliser en grandiose et perfection avec les concerts et les représentations de la grande semaine allemande. Tous ces ensembles, préparés de longue date, régis par une conscience, une discipline, une compréhension unanimes, concourent à une expression d'art et de beauté insurpassable. Chaque artiste n'est qu'un élément fondu dans le tout, une unité sachant tour à tour briller et s'effacer. La cohésion, l'homogénéité, l'équilibre du dispositif en tirent leur signification intégrale.' Jean Poueigh, 'Spectacles de l'Exposition', *La Revue universelle*, 1 October 1937, 254.

deepen French readers' knowledge about Germany' outside the political sphere.²⁴⁰ Its editors and writers were predominantly French Germanists, dedicated to increasing French knowledge and understanding of German culture, and thus bringing the two nations closer and erasing past hostility.²⁴¹ Elana Passman writes that the *Revue d'Allemagne* used culture to project a neutral stance in terms of Franco-German politics, and to create a space for the negotiation of Franco-German relations.²⁴² She places the *Revue d'Allemagne* in the context of a broader effort in the interwar period to achieve rapprochement and peace through civic activism, in the face of increasingly tense diplomatic relations.²⁴³ Other similar journals included Romain Rolland's *Europe* (1923–1939), and Louise Weiss's *L'Europe nouvelle* (1918–1940).²⁴⁴ The dates of these publications alone demonstrate the fact that they were begun in the era of the Locarno accords and began petering out once the Nazis came to power. They were established in the hope of preventing another military conflict, maintaining peace in Europe, and encouraging cooperation and rapprochement between France and Germany. As the thirties progressed, it became increasingly difficult for these journals to uphold their goal of peace and reconciliation in Europe in the face of Germany's mounting aggression.²⁴⁵ Between them, the journals published a number of articles on Wagner in this period. As I have shown, although German performances of Wagner in the 1930s were prized by Parisians and considered to be the most 'authentic' and of the highest possible quality, the critics examined thus far did not frame these performances as cultural rapprochement. What, then, was the response of critics writing for these rapprochement journals to the suggestion that Wagner could become a means for realising their dream of lasting peace and reconciliation?

²⁴⁰ Elana Passman, 'Civic Activism and the Pursuit of Cooperation in the Locarno Era', in *A History of Franco-German Relations in Europe: From 'Hereditary Enemies' to Partners*, ed. Carine Germond and Henning Türk (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 106.

²⁴¹ Gilbert Merlio, 'Lichtenberger, d'Harcourt, Vermeil : trois germanistes français face au phénomène nazi', in *Entre Locarno et Vichy*, ed. Bock et al., 375.

²⁴² Passman, 'Civic Activism', 106.

²⁴³ Ibid., 110.

²⁴⁴ For an examination of Louise Weiss's political life and aims, and the goals of *L'Europe nouvelle*, see Marie-Emanuelle Reytier, 'La Journaliste et femme d'influence Louise Weiss (1893–1983) : pacifiste et féministe par opportunisme ou par conviction ?', in *Femmes, culture et pouvoir. Relectures de l'histoire au féminin XVe–XXe siècles*, ed. Catherine Ferland and Benoît Grenier (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2010), 287–305.

²⁴⁵ Le Rider, 'Revue d'Allemagne', 370.

Significantly, critics writing for the rapprochement journals rejected the Third Reich's attempts to present Wagner as a means for rapprochement. In March 1936, for example, Germaine Laureillard wrote a lengthy article in *Europe* on 'Thomas Mann and German thought'. She applauded Mann's stance on Wagner and depicted Mann as a champion of humanism and tolerance in the midst of intolerance and racism.²⁴⁶ Mann, she claimed, argued that, 'Wagner would clash today with the hatred of National Socialism, for everything that is new, young and democratic, and would see himself treated by the Third Reich as a *Kulturbolchevist*.'²⁴⁷ This is hardly rapprochement language, and supporting Mann three years after he had gone into exile from Nazi Germany was a clear message of disapproval towards the regime. Indeed, *Europe* had published articles by both Thomas and Heinrich Mann since its early years.

Similarly, the Austrian Jewish writer Joseph Roth, who had been in exile in Paris since 1933, published an article in *Europe* exactly two years after Laureillard's, entitled 'The Myth of the Germanic "Soul"', in which he accused Germany of explaining and excusing all of its actions through the deceptive concept of the 'German soul'. Hitler, he argued, did not genuinely love Wagner's music—he simply exploited its symbolism.²⁴⁸ Like Laureillard, Roth is openly critical of the Nazis' exploitation of Wagner, and neither writer makes reference to the idea of Franco-German rapprochement through Wagner, or otherwise. A 1933 article by Werner Heimersdorf on Wagner in the *Revue d'Allemagne et des pays de langue allemande* (discussed in Chapter One) is consistent with Laureillard and Roth's views on Wagner, as they were expressed in *Europe*. Although Heimersdorf's article is ostensibly about Wagner and France, the German author is far more interested in Wagner and Germany; like the aforementioned authors, he condemns the Nazis' exploitation and monopolisation of Wagner, implicitly rejecting the idea of rapprochement through Wagner.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ Germaine Laureillard, 'Thomas Mann et la pensée allemande', *Europe* 159 (15 March 1936): 344.

²⁴⁷ 'Wagner se heurterait aujourd'hui à la haine du national-socialisme, pour tout ce qui est neuf, jeune et démocratique, et se verrait traiter dans le III^e Reich de *Kulturbolchevist*.' Ibid., 343–4.

²⁴⁸ Joseph Roth, 'Le Mythe de l'âme germanique', *Europe* 183 (15 March 1938): 313–18.

²⁴⁹ Werner Heimersdorf, 'Richard Wagner et la France', *Revue d'Allemagne et des pays de langue allemande* 7, no. 68 (15 June 1933): 505–11. See Appendix C4.

The fact that two out of the three authors discussed here had experienced Nazi Germany firsthand, and were not necessarily writing from a French perspective, is pertinent. Both Roth and Heimersdorf were writing as Germans/Austrians who had escaped Nazi Germany and therefore were highly unlikely to support rapprochement.²⁵⁰ And yet, the rapprochement journals chose to publish their opinions and expose their views to a French readership disposed to advocating for peace and reconciliation. It seems, then, that those who were dedicated to effecting genuine Franco-German rapprochement saw past Germany's efforts to present Wagner's music as a means to achieve mutual understanding, and instead sided with the vast majority of critics who interpreted Germany's attitude towards Wagner as one of appropriation and monopolisation. Nicole Racine explains that *Europe*, for example, genuinely desired to improve relations and understanding between France and Germany, but that its editors and writers were greatly concerned by the rise of Nazism, and viewed Nazi Germany as unreceptive to rapprochement.²⁵¹ Dedicated rapprochement journals, then, were undeceived by rapprochement rhetoric coming from Nazi Germany, and thus remained unconvinced about the idea of achieving good Franco-German relations through Wagner's music.

‘Cordiality, reciprocal goodwill and mutual comprehension’:²⁵² French hope for rapprochement through Wagner

There were, however, a small number of critics in the Parisian press who did take on the rhetoric of rapprochement in the context of Wagner's music. While not the majority by any means, some of these critics were well known and respected, and wrote for prominent publications. Their views are worth examining not only for these reasons, but also because they demonstrate the way in which Germany's depiction of Wagner as rapprochement was adopted by elements of the Parisian press. This depiction was to become an essential tool for framing Wagner in Paris under the

²⁵⁰ In Roth's case we can be certain that he was in exile from Nazi Germany because of his Jewish origins. In regard to Heimersdorf, I have been unable to find any additional information on his background or circumstances. He is, however, openly critical of Nazi Germany, which suggests he was in exile.

²⁵¹ Nicole Racine, 'La Revue *Europe* et l'Allemagne, 1929–1936', in *Entre Locarno et Vichy*, ed. Bock et al., 642–3.

²⁵² 'de cordialité, de bonne volonté réciproque et de mutuelle compréhension'.

Robert Bernard, 'La Semaine musicale allemande', *La Revue musicale* 177 (1 October 1937): 260–61.

Occupation, helping to introduce the idea of Franco-German collaboration based on an underlying assumption of German cultural superiority.

These critics referred to Wagner as a way of avoiding conflict and paving the way towards peace and understanding between the two nations. Emmanuel Garry, for example, wrote in *Le Monde musical*: ‘In conclusion, let us hope that the prestigious language of the great Master [Wagner] contributes to the brotherly rapprochement of human hearts that so many misunderstandings have too often prevented from understanding one another.’²⁵³ Rebois had similarly championed the idea of ‘rapprochement of peoples through art’, recalling a letter he received from Siegfried Wagner in which he congratulated Rebois on a recent lecture on Bayreuth, writing, ‘Bravo ! Bravissimo ! dear Mr Rebois. I believe that we two are doing more for the *Entente Cordiale* than the “gentlemen in Geneva.”’²⁵⁴ Rebois was entirely serious about the ability of art—and particularly Wagner’s art—to achieve a rapprochement that politics could not.

Most of the references in the press to the potential of Wagner’s music to bring the French and German people closer together occur later than 1933. The concept was particularly prominent in 1936–37, in the lead up to and during the *Exposition Universelle*. Paul Carrère encapsulates the sentiment in the title of his 1937 article ‘La Musique ambassadrice de paix’. Published just after the end of the Exposition, the article begins with an examination of Hitler’s intentions and motives in the European context. Carrère points to Hitler’s hypocrisy and notes that Hitler insists on the need for peace while simultaneously discarding the Treaty of Versailles and building up his nation’s military forces. Carrère goes on to argue that,

Everyone, with the exception of a few maniacs, agrees on the absolute necessity of a sincere rapprochement between the two great nations, a rapprochement which will be the basis of peace in Europe and in the world ...

²⁵³ ‘Souhaitons, en conclusion, que le prestigieux langage du grand Maître contribue au rapprochement fraternel des cœurs humains que tant de malentendus empêchent trop souvent de se comprendre.’

E. Garry, ‘Festival de Bayreuth’, *Le Monde musical*, 30 September 1933, 260.

²⁵⁴ ‘Bravo ! Bravissimo ! cher Monsieur Rebois. Je crois que nous deux faisons plus pour l’Entente Cordiale que les « messieurs à Genève ».’

Henri Rebois, ‘Des souvenirs sur Siegfried Wagner’, *Comœdia*, 24 April 1933, 1–2.

Should we not pay homage to the pacifist influence of the arts on the most divided of men? Recently, in Paris, on the occasion of the Exposition, some very beautiful concerts of German music took place, which provoked the enthusiasm of French listeners. They applauded wildly for several minutes the musicians and singers who, notably, under the impeccable direction of Mr Furtwängler, interpreted Beethoven's and Wagner's thought. It was a delight. The critics were unanimous in expressing their admiration for these performances which had transported them into the realm of ecstasy.²⁵⁵

Carrère is under no illusion, then, about Hitler's aggression, but he still appears to believe in the concept of obtaining peace through the arts. And one of these arts is Wagner's music—an integral element of Germany's contribution to the Exposition, which Carrère praises so highly in terms of its capacity for 'pacifist influence' on 'the most divided of men'.

Georges Pioch is more explicit about the ability of music to promote reconciliation: in his 1936 review of Furtwängler's performance of *Die Meistersinger* at the Paris Opéra he states that by mounting the work, the director of the Opéra Jacques Rouché had,

done the most to call Germans, French and all Europeans to be in communion with this human *patrie* where, better than anywhere else, life is good: music.

...

The performance of *Meistersinger* is one of those that we can say reconciles us with life.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁵ 'Tout le monde, à l'exception de quelques énergumènes, est d'accord sur l'absolue nécessité d'un rapprochement sincère entre les deux grandes nations, rapprochement qui sera la base de la paix de l'Europe et du monde ... ne devons-nous pas rendre hommage à l'influence pacifique des arts sur les hommes les plus divisés ? Récemment, à Paris, à l'occasion de l'Exposition, de très beaux concerts de musique allemande eurent lieu, qui provoquèrent l'enthousiasme des auditeurs français. On applaudit à tout rompre et durant des minutes entières, les musiciens et les chanteurs allemands qui, notamment, sous la direction impeccable de M. Furtwaengler, interprétèrent la pensée de Beethoven et de Wagner. Ce fut un enchantement. Les critiques furent unanimes à exprimer leur admiration pour ces auditions qui les avaient transportés dans des sphères d'extase.'

Paul Carrère, 'La Musique ambassadrice de paix', *La Nouvelle revue*, 1 December 1937, 223–4.

²⁵⁶ '[il] aura sans doute, le plus fait pour appeler les Allemands, les Français et tous les Européens à communier de cette patrie humaine où, mieux que partout ailleurs, il fait bon vivre : la musique ... La

Interestingly, Pioch—a journalist and politician actively involved in anti-fascist and pacifist movements in the thirties—uses his article to denounce Nazism and reclaim Wagner from Hitler. ‘A thousand Hitlers,’ he writes, ‘rambling misunderstood nonsense about Richard Wagner, the monstrous leader of *Nazism* insolently claiming to be one of them, will not manage to push me away, or detach me from [Wagner].’²⁵⁷ For Pioch, embracing the unifying and fraternal qualities that he finds in Wagner’s music is a means of rejecting Nazi appropriation, rather than a way of achieving rapprochement with Nazi Germany, a project in which he shows no interest.

The majority of writers referring to the idea of Wagner as rapprochement were, like Paul Carrère, responding to the performances that were part of the *Semaine artistique allemande* in the 1937 Exposition. This strongly suggests that these performances were promoted as such by Germany. A number of critics expressed views that sounded as though they had been written by Otto Abetz himself, such was their enthusiasm for good Franco-German relations. Robert Bernard, for example, expressed his surprise that the Nazis had chosen Wagner as their representative composer. Nevertheless, he argued, these kinds of cultural exchanges,

imprinted with cordiality, reciprocal goodwill and mutual comprehension, put a ray of hope into the sphere of international relations whose balance is so unstable, and which proves—too often, alas!—that men and nations prefer to speak about peace than to protect it, and are little concerned, in most domains, with getting to know and understand one another. There is no doubt that such artistic rapprochements do more for the singularly threatened cause of agreement between peoples than the numerous political speeches to which we have learnt to give no more credit than they deserve, and than the facts—if not other speeches—belie in such an offhand way.²⁵⁸

représentation des *Maîtres-chanteurs* est de celles dont on peut dire qu’elles nous réconcilient avec la vie.’

Georges Pioch, ‘Les Maîtres-Chanteurs de Nuremberg’, 30 May 1936. Press clipping, BnF BmO, Dossier d’œuvre *Les Maîtres chanteurs* 1936.

²⁵⁷ ‘Mille Hitler divaguant à méconnaître Richard Wagner, dont le chef monstrueux du *nazisme* se réclame insolemment, ne parviendraient pas à m’écarter, à me détacher de lui.’

Ibid.

²⁵⁸ ‘ces échanges empreints de cordialité, de bonne volonté réciproque et de mutuelle compréhension, mettent une lueur d’espoir dans l’ensemble de relations internationales dont l’équilibre est si instable et qui prouvent—trop souvent, hélas !—que les hommes et les nations préfèrent parler de la paix à la sauvegarder, et qu’ils ont si peu le souci, dans la plupart des domaines, de se connaître mutuellement et

Bernard—who was later to associate himself with a number of collaborationist journals and activities under the Occupation²⁵⁹—shows here a concern for the state of international relations, which was probably a veiled way of expressing concern about specifically Franco-German relations. He also communicates his belief (similar to Pioch's) that cultural exchange could remedy the situation, and that the German performances of Wagner's operas were a very successful means of doing so.

Critics such as Rebois and Bernard who referred to Wagner's music as a means for rapprochement rarely explained why it might be particularly suited to that purpose. This suggests that Wagner's music was not viewed as having a particular unifying or reconciliatory quality, either in the musical or extra-musical material. Rather, it seems that seeing Wagner as rapprochement was simply a way for the French to retain an element of ownership over the music through the idea that the French and German peoples could be brought together through a shared love of Wagner's music. Guy de Pourtalès was especially intent on this kind of discourse, emphasising that Wagner himself was a 'Europeanist'. In a review of a Wagner concert he had attended in Tribschen in 1933, Pourtalès admired the conducting skills of Count Gilbert Gravina, son of Blandine Wagner and grandson of Hans von Bülow:

Let us hope that our musical ensembles will invite him to come and direct a concert in Paris during the next season. That would be sweet revenge for the *Europeanism* (still so contested in Germany) of Wagner and of his direct or indirect descendants. And an interesting demonstration of what our old Latin genius can achieve when it is superiorly balanced with the Germanic genius.²⁶⁰

Some days later, Gustave Samazeuilh published a report on this same event at Tribschen, in which he reported that Pourtalès 'in turn gave a speech in the name of

de se comprendre. Il est hors de doute que de tels rapprochements sur le plan artistique font plus, pour la cause singulièrement menacée de la concorde entre les peuples, que maints discours politiques auxquels nous avons appris à ne pas donner plus de crédit qu'ils n'en méritent et que les faits—si ce n'est d'autres discours—démentent avec tant de désinvolture.'

Bernard, 'La Semaine musicale allemande', 260–61.

²⁵⁹ Simon, 'Robert Bernard', 454–5.

²⁶⁰ 'Espérons que nos associations musicales l'inviteront à venir, dès la saison prochaine, diriger un concert à Paris. Ce serait une belle revanche pour l'*européanisme* (encore si contesté outre-Rhin) de Wagner et de la descendance directe ou collatérale. Et une intéressante démonstration de ce que peut obtenir, lorsqu'il est supérieurement dosé au génie germanique, notre vieux génie latin.'

Guy de Pourtalès, 'Pèlerinage à Tribschen', *Marianne*, 12 July 1933, 8.

Wagner's French friends.' According to Samazeuilh, Pourtalès spoke of the important contribution of Cosima and her 'French aristocratic lineage which gave her so much distinction and which allowed her ... to serve the work of the genius to whom she had consecrated her life'.²⁶¹ In Samazeuilh's reporting of Pourtalès's speech, Cosima's devotion to her husband's career becomes France's contribution to Germany's genius. In his own article (cited above), Pourtalès depicts the coming together of the French and German peoples through Wagner's music as a matter of loyalty to Wagner's ideals and beliefs—as if this is what Wagner would have really wanted. This is expressed even more pointedly in another article by Pourtalès published two years later in *La Presse*:

Hitler's Germany proclaims loud and clear that she [Germany] wants no quarrel with us, and that no enmity persists any longer between her and France. Since she uses Wagner's name so ardently, may she remember some words that the great musician wrote in Paris in 1840: 'Our two nations have only one music. From their intimate union and the habitual exchange of the most distinguished talents, the result for art in general has been a double inspiration and a magnificent richness of which we already have brilliant evidence.' May these words of a young and unknown 27-year-old man remain the political 'leitmotif' of the old Wotan who today sits on the throne of the Germanic Mount Olympus.²⁶²

For Pourtalès, like Carrère, this idea of rapprochement through Wagner functions as a rejection of Germany's 'ownership' of Wagner—if Germany is encouraged to 'share' Wagner with France then his music must belong partially to the French and is no longer exclusively German. Given Pourtalès' alarm at Nazi Germany's exploitation of

²⁶¹ 'prit à son tour la parole au nom des amis français de Wagner.'

'son ascendance aristocratique française qui lui donnait tant de race et qui lui permit ... de servir l'œuvre du génie auquel elle avait consacré sa vie'.

Gustave Samazeuilh, 'Le Musée Richard Wagner à Tribschen', *Le Temps*, 27 July 1933, 2.

²⁶² 'L'Allemagne de Hitler proclame bien haut qu'elle ne nous cherche point querelle, qu'aucune inimitié ne subsiste plus entre elle et la France. Puisqu'elle se réclame si ardemment de Richard Wagner, qu'elle se souvienne des paroles que le grand musicien écrivait à Paris en 1840 : « Nos deux nations n'ont qu'une musique. De leur union intime et de l'échange habituel de leurs talents les plus distingués, il est résulté pour l'art en général une double inspiration et une fécondité magnifiques dont nous avons déjà d'éclatants témoignages. » Puisse ce mot d'un jeune inconnu de vingt-sept ans être demeuré le « leitmotiv » politique du vieux Wotan qui trône aujourd'hui sur l'Olympe germanique.' Guy de Pourtalès, 'Wagner et la France', *La Presse*, 29 March 1935, in *Vers l'affrontement ou Marianne, Wotan et la S.D.N. Recueil d'articles de Guy de Pourtalès (1933–1935)*, ed. Doris Jakubec and Anne-Lise Delacrétaz (Paris: Honoré Champion/Fondation Guy de Pourtalès, 1996), 205.

Wagner and his attempts to depict Wagner as ‘a little French’ (see Chapter One), the critic’s insistence on Wagner’s ‘Europeanism’ and the benefits of Franco-German détente are unsurprising. Pourtalès, a Swiss Frenchman who had been educated in Germany, was drawn in his work to questions about the relationship between France and Germany, and the future of Europe, which he viewed as being in the process of collapse. His biographers write that he was greatly alarmed by the rise of Nazism and the weakening of the Third Republic, but that he viewed politics from an aesthetic and ethical angle rather than an ideological one.²⁶³ He was committed to a Europeanist ideal and longed for the end of conflict and a synthesis of the French and German ‘*esprits*’.²⁶⁴ For Pourtalès, Wagner encapsulated these wishes and hopes for rapprochement and a European ideal—not a Nazi Europe, but a unified, romanticised Europe.

Gustave Samazeuilh and rapprochement: a pathway to Collaboration

Gustave Samazeuilh persistently preached about the potential of Wagner’s music to bring about rapprochement throughout the 1930s. Introduced to Bayreuth and the wonders of Wagner’s music by his father in the 1890s, Samazeuilh held a deep reverence for the German composer, and devoted a large part of his life’s work to writing criticism of his music and translating his works and letters. He published frequently on Wagner in a large array of Parisian journals and newspapers, including the *Cahiers franco-allemands*. The importance of brotherly understanding and reconciliation in difficult times was a recurring theme in his Wagner commentary between 1933 and 1939. For example, in August and September 1933, *Le Temps* published Samazeuilh’s ‘Bayreuth letters’, which reported on celebrations of the *cinquantenaire*. The second letter finished thus:

His prestigious language, like that of all great masters, brings closer together in a fraternal way the human hearts that are so often prevented from understanding one another by so much prejudice, and so many misunderstandings skilfully maintained by those who thrive on them. Let us honour [Wagner’s music], in these troubled times, for the great example it

²⁶³ Jakubec and Delacrétaiz, *Vers l’affrontement*, 10–11.

²⁶⁴ Alain Corbellari, ‘Portalès, Guy de (1881–1941)’, in *Dictionnaire encyclopédique Wagner*, ed. Timothée Picard (Paris: Actes Sud/Cité de la musique), 1656–7.

offers us, and which if we want to understand it in its true spirit of freedom, singularly goes beyond the calculations, the interests, the ambitions of a political party whatever it may be. May its breath and its grandeur exalt us, light our own path, and help us to know it.²⁶⁵

This paragraph is repeated almost word for word in Samazeuilh's article in *La Revue musicale* the following year, with a subtle change that directs the second last sentence of the above paragraph more openly at the Nazi Party:

Let us never stop honouring [Wagner's music] for the great example it offers us, and which—if we want to hear it in its true spirit of freedom—singularly goes beyond the calculations, the interests, the ambitions of the political party which today makes it, for the needs of its cause, its 'state religion'.²⁶⁶

This second version of Samazeuilh's message of peace and understanding is subtly but significantly different, and the effect is pointedly critical of the way in which the Nazi Party was appropriating Wagner. The phrase 'a political party whatever it may be', has been changed to refer directly to the Nazi Party which has made Wagner's music into a 'state religion'. For Samazeuilh at this point in time—like a number of the other writers mentioned earlier—the idea of Wagner as rapprochement has become a means of rejecting German monopolisation of Wagner; if his music is to be shared between two (or more) peoples, Germany cannot have exclusive ownership.

Later, though, Samazeuilh's perspective seems to shift subtly once again. He continues with the rhetoric of rapprochement through Wagner, but any hint of criticism of Germany disappears. Indeed, in 1937 Samazeuilh publishes an article in the *Cahiers franco-allemands* on the phenomenal success of the Exposition's *Semaine artistique allemande*, and particularly the performances of *Die Walküre*. He quotes

²⁶⁵ 'Son prestigieux langage, comme celui de tous les grands maîtres, rapproche fraternellement les cœurs humains que tant de préjugés, tant de malentendus, savamment entretenus par ceux qui en vivent, empêchent trop souvent de se comprendre. Honorons-la, en ces temps troubles, pour le grand exemple qu'elle nous apporte, et qui si on veut le comprendre en son véritable esprit de liberté, dépasse singulièrement les calculs, les intérêts, les visées d'un parti politique quel qu'il soit. Puisse son souffle et sa grandeur nous exalter, éclairer notre propre route, et nous aider à la connaître.'

Gustave Samazeuilh, '(II) Le Bayreuth du cinquantenaire', *Le Temps*, 1 September 1933, 2.

²⁶⁶ 'Ne cessons pas de l'honorer pour le grand exemple qu'elle nous apporte, et qui—si on veut l'entendre dans son véritable esprit de liberté—dépasse singulièrement les calculs, les intérêts, les visées du parti politique qui en fait aujourd'hui, pour les besoins de sa cause, sa « religion d'état ».' Gustave Samazeuilh, 'Allemagne: Le cycle du cinquantenaire à Bayreuth', *La Revue musicale*, January 1934, 73.

passages from some German reviews of a concert of French music in the previous year in order to prove his point:

the *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung* wrote: ‘Once more, Art was the great instigator of peaceful understanding between peoples ... it would be desirable if these exchange concerts took on at least the same importance as international sports matches.’ For its part, the *Deutsche Zukunft* further added: ‘These evening performances must consolidate and strengthen fertile ties and relations between peoples, a source of common culture, and amplify them. Internally, they create precious obligations of gratitude, and they are, externally, the sign of friendly relations.’ These excellent words summarise wonderfully the beneficial lesson that we can draw, from both sides of the Rhine, from the superb *Semaine artistique allemande* which has just taken place in Paris, at the beginning of September.²⁶⁷

The same issue of *Cahiers franco-allemands* includes a second article by Samazeuilh entitled ‘Bayreuth and France’, which examines the influence of Wagner and his music on France and French composers. The same rhetoric appears, as Samazeuilh enthuses over Wagner’s music: ‘the prestige of a language capable, by its very essence, of bringing together human hearts, that so many prejudices and misunderstandings, skilfully maintained by the party spirit, too often prevent from understanding, appreciating, and complementing one another!’²⁶⁸ The article finishes with a paragraph that bears very close resemblance to the author’s 1933 and 1934 articles cited above, exhorting readers to consider Wagner as a beacon of tolerance and fraternity in these ‘troubled times’.²⁶⁹ And the same sentiments are expressed once again by Samazeuilh in *Les Nouvelles littéraires* the following year, in a report

²⁶⁷ ‘la « Berliner Börsen-Zeitung » écrivait : « Une fois de plus, l’Art a été le grand instigateur de paisible compréhension entre les peuples... il serait à désirer que ces concerts d’échange prissent au moins la même importance que les matches internationaux. » De son côté, la « Deutsche Zukunft » ajoutait : « Ces soirées doivent consolider et resserrer, de peuple à peuple, des liens et des relations fécondes, source de culture commune et les amplifier. Elles leur créent à l’intérieur, de précieuses obligations de gratitude, et elles sont, pour l’extérieur, le signe de rapports amicaux. » Ces excellentes paroles résument à merveille la bienfaisante leçon qu’on peut dégager, des deux côtés du Rhin, de la superbe Semaine artistique allemande qui vient de se dérouler à Paris, au début de septembre.’ Gustave Samazeuilh, ‘La Semaine artistique allemande à Paris’, *Cahiers franco-allemands*, September 1937, 290. See Appendix C12.

²⁶⁸ ‘les prestiges d’un langage capable, vu son essence même, de rapprocher les cœurs humains, que tant de préjugés, de malentendus, savamment entretenus par l’esprit de parti, empêchent trop souvent de se comprendre, et de s’apprécier en se complétant !’

Gustave Samazeuilh, ‘Bayreuth et la France’, *Cahiers franco-allemands*, September 1937, 279.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 283.

on the festivals of Bayreuth, Munich and Salzburg: '[the music] goes straight to people's hearts, and, in its grandeur, can even usefully bring them closer together, in these troubled times where each must find his path, respectful of others, and know how to stick to it.'²⁷⁰

By 1937, Samazeuilh's perspective on Wagner fitted perfectly with the objectives of the *Cahiers franco-allemands*: he conveyed a sincere belief in rapprochement through Wagner's music but refrained from criticising the Nazis' use of Wagner, and he even went so far as to quote German papers on their encouragement of increasing cultural understanding and rapprochement through art. Indeed, Samazeuilh was unknowingly preparing himself for the significant role he was to play under the Occupation as an agent of cultural collaboration through the works of Wagner.

Conclusion

Press responses to the idea of achieving rapprochement through Wagner suggest that two different understandings of the concept of rapprochement were at play. On the one hand, the French clearly understood rapprochement to mean the reconciliation and coming together of two peoples that had previously had difficult or even hostile relations. This rapprochement would be achieved through building trust and enhancing mutual understanding, particularly in the realm of culture, and it was promoted by certain journals such as *L'Europe nouvelle* and the *Revue d'Allemagne*. The French writers who published articles in these journals genuinely believed that if they could simply educate their compatriots about Germany, and if German writers could do the same in relation to France, a peaceful future could be attained. On the other hand, however, the Third Reich promoted a rapprochement which sounded like the French rapprochement described above, but which had entirely different aims. Behind the rhetoric of peace and understanding was the desire to infiltrate French culture with the concept of German cultural superiority, and to introduce propaganda about Hitler's peaceful intentions and the benefits of National Socialism. These aims were exemplified by the *Cahiers franco-allemands*.

²⁷⁰ 'elle va aux cœurs, et peut, par sa grandeur même, les rapprocher utilement, en ces temps troublés où chacun doit trouver sa route, respectueuse d'autrui, et savoir s'y tenir.' Gustave Samazeuilh, 'Voyage au pays de la musique', *Les Nouvelles littéraires*, 13 August 1938, 8.

Overall, the Parisian press did not adopt the concept of rapprochement through Wagner, with the exception of writers such as Samazeuilh, who accepted the idea in good faith, without seeming to comprehend its more disturbing implications. Rarely did the Parisian press suggest that Franco-German relations could be improved via Wagner's music. Indeed, a number of French writers rejected the idea, while others accepted it only in order to condemn the Nazi appropriation of Wagner, turning the concept on its head: if Wagner could be shared by France and Germany, then Germany did not have an exclusive claim to his music. More interestingly, while few critics took on a 'Wagner as rapprochement' discourse, many uncritically internalised the idea of German cultural superiority. Furtwängler's performances of Wagner between 1933 and 1938 facilitated this idea: Parisian critics and audiences adored him just as they adored Wagner's music, and praise for his performances and those of the singers and orchestras led by him, was unqualified. Because of this pre-existing sentiment of admiration amongst the Parisian musical public, both Wagner and Furtwängler were ideal vessels for insinuating the superiority of German culture. Strangely enough, Furtwängler's public protest against Nazi antisemitism worked in the Third Reich's favour by increasing admiration for the conductor and thus enabling the successful promotion of the Reich's cultural exports in France. These attitudes amongst the Parisian press, combined with the attitude of critics such as Samazeuilh who genuinely believed in the ability of Wagner's music to overcome political and national barriers, were to pave the way for the rhetoric of Franco-German cultural collaboration during the Occupation

CHAPTER THREE

Art and *patrie*: The Bayreuth Festival, 1933–43

Introduction

Since its inauguration in 1876, the Bayreuth Festival—as both a real and imagined event—has been fundamental to France’s reception of Wagner and his music. The Festival was the unlikely realisation of Wagner’s dream to create an annual festival centred around a specially designed theatre for the performance of his music dramas. Against all odds, Wagner found a benefactor with the will and the funds to support his dream: Ludwig II, King of Bavaria. Christian Merlin writes that Bayreuth was always more of a political project than a festival in today’s terms.²⁷¹ Although its appropriation by the Nazi Party in the 1930s is widely known and has been extensively discussed, the Festival had long been a political tool, even during Wagner’s lifetime. Frederic Spotts writes that the establishment of Bayreuth as an institution was a defining moment in the process of cementing Wagner’s permanent place in the life of the German nation:

Wagner without Bayreuth would have been like a country without a capital ... once consummated in a physical centre and site of a recurring celebratory Festival, the enterprise was inevitably drawn into the ideological vicissitudes of the young country.²⁷²

²⁷¹ Christian Merlin and Pierre Flinois, ‘Bayreuth’, in *Dictionnaire encyclopédique Wagner*, ed. Timothée Picard (Paris: Actes du Sud/Cité de la Musique, 2010), 201–2.

²⁷² Frederic Spotts, *Bayreuth: A History of the Wagner Festival* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1994), viii.

Spotts also suggests that the Festival performances had a unique resonance for the German people, as opposed to non-German visitors who had ‘a purely aesthetic reaction’.²⁷³ Yet for the French, this was certainly untrue; their responses to the Festival and the way they accorded it a place in their reception of Wagner more generally, went far beyond aesthetic judgements and reactions.

This chapter covers the two main time periods studied in this thesis: 1933–39, and the Occupation (1940–44).²⁷⁴ I begin with background information on the place of Bayreuth in French life since the late nineteenth century, and a brief history of the Festival in the twentieth century. I then examine the French attitude of religious devotion to, and admiration of, the Festival, an attitude which began at the inaugural Festival and continued into the periods covered in this chapter. I consider the ways in which the Festival changed in the eyes of the Parisian press from the time that Hitler came to power, and I examine how the Nazification of the Festival manifested itself from the perspective of Parisian critics, and their subsequent responses. This is followed by a further exploration of the competing and opposing responses of admiration and fear, and what this might say about French responses to Germany and German culture more generally during this period leading up to the war. The last part of the chapter—that which deals with the period of the Occupation—functions as a kind of introduction to the following two chapters, which focus on the Occupation years. I analyse the very small number of Bayreuth-related articles that appear in the occupied Parisian press, in the context of the political situation of France at the time. As I shall show, Parisian responses to the Bayreuth Festival were just as entangled in politics and the national psyche as the German responses to which Spotts refers.

Bayreuth in French life and the French imagination, 1876–1933

The inaugural Bayreuth Festival in 1876 attracted a number of French visitors and a significant response from the Parisian press. Albert Lavignac’s French guide to Bayreuth lists 52 French visitors to the 1876 festival, a figure that more than doubled at the next festival in 1882.²⁷⁵ Musicologist Georges Servières reported in his 1887 book *Richard Wagner jugé en France* that *Le Temps*, *Le Gaulois* and *L’Estafette* all

²⁷³ Ibid., vii

²⁷⁴ In effect, however, the material in this chapter extends only to 1943, as there was no discussion of Bayreuth in the Parisian press in 1944. This is reflected in the chapter title.

²⁷⁵ Albert Lavignac, *Le Voyage artistique à Bayreuth* (Paris: Ch. Delagrave, 1897), 549–51.

sent music critics to report on the events. According to Servières, some papers sent Wagnerian critics, while others intentionally sent critics with established anti-Wagnerian reputations.²⁷⁶ Camille Saint-Saëns was sent by *L'Estafette* to report on the festival; he praised Wagner's music and innovative theatre design, but condemned both 'Wagneromania' and 'Wagnerophobes'.²⁷⁷ Lavignac's lists of French visitors to Bayreuth between 1876 and 1896 are a clear indication of the exponential growth in popularity of (and perhaps curiosity about) Wagner's music during the last two decades of the nineteenth century; by 1896, the numbers had reached above 700. Moreover, many of those visitors were significant musical, artistic and literary personalities: Judith Gautier, Catulle Mendès, Camille Saint-Saëns, Ernest Chausson, Léo Delibes, Edouard Dujardin, Vincent d'Indy, Charles Lamoureux, Charles Delagrave, Paul Dukas, Jules Massenet, André Messager, Julien Tiersot, Théodore de Wyzewa, Claude Debussy, and many others.²⁷⁸

Travelling to Bayreuth and attending the Festival quickly became a fashionable ritual in certain Parisian circles—members of the upper classes liked to be seen at the Festival, even if they knew nothing whatsoever about Wagner or his music dramas. The fact that Wagner's works were still not being performed on French stages added to the exclusivity of Bayreuth, and this in turn added to its attraction. Myriam Chimènes has documented the way in which Wagnerism became 'synonymous with snobbery, and the pilgrimage to Bayreuth henceforth inscribed itself in the "cultural practices" of the privileged social classes'.²⁷⁹ The extent of this snobbery and exclusivity riled some people; Chimènes reports that Debussy irritably asked, 'Would the snobs confiscate Wagner's music from musicians?'²⁸⁰ Nevertheless, Wagnermania in Paris raged on. Of course, this is not to suggest that French Bayreuth attendees were all fashionable, ignorant snobs; as the aforementioned list of personalities suggests, many were members of Parisian artistic circles who were genuinely

²⁷⁶ George Servières, *Richard Wagner jugé en France* (Paris: Librairie illustrée, 1887), 189–206.

²⁷⁷ Camille Saint-Saëns, 'L'Anneau du Nibelung et les représentations de Bayreuth, août 1876', in *Camille Saint-Saëns. On Music and Musicians*, ed. Roger Nichols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 101–7.

²⁷⁸ For full lists, see Lavignac, *Le Voyage artistique*, 549–78.

²⁷⁹ 'Wagnérisme va progressivement rimer avec snobisme et le pèlerinage à Bayreuth s'inscrit désormais dans les "pratiques culturelles" des classes sociales privilégiées.' Myriam Chimènes, 'Élites sociales et pratiques wagnériennes : de la propagande au snobisme', in *Von Wagner Zum Wagnerisme*, ed. Annegret Fauser and Manuela Schwartz (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1999), 156.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 189.

passionate about Wagner's music and ideas, which were to have a lasting influence on their lives and work.

The delay in the arrival of Wagner's operas to French stages was an important factor in placing Bayreuth at the centre of French Wagnerism of the late nineteenth century. In the decade following Wagner's death, French visitors to the Festival were reportedly more loyal attendees than the Germans.²⁸¹ As the French were deprived of seeing the operas staged in their own country, travelling to Germany was one of their only opportunities to experience Wagner's music other than in the concert hall. The Bayreuth Festival was considered to be the site of the most 'authentic' performances because Wagner's staging and production directions were treated with great loyalty and respect, and of course because the works were performed in a theatre designed by the genius himself. Lavignac's book testifies to the importance of Bayreuth visits in French society at this time: his guide to Bayreuth for French visitors (published in English translation within a year of initial publication in French),²⁸² includes sections such as 'How to get to Bayreuth', and 'Life in Bayreuth', advising first-time visitors on matters such train routes, possible day trips and daily budgets. Such a book would certainly not have been published unless there was a significant level of mainstream interest.

As the ritual of visiting the Bayreuth Festival developed, so too did a tradition of writing about the Bayreuth experience in diaries, letters, journal articles and books. Coverage of the festival became an important inclusion in numerous Parisian press publications and, as with the first festival, many sent critics to Bayreuth to report on the events. The overall tone of these missives was one of enthrallment, fervent admiration, and rapturous praise. It was generally agreed that the music was brilliant, the singers were amongst the world's best and the stagings set the standard for Wagner productions worldwide. Some critics wrote a series of reports or reviews from Bayreuth, often published as 'Lettres de Bayreuth', or something similar. Accounts of the Bayreuth experience were also often relayed in personal

²⁸¹ David C. Large, 'Reception: Posthumous Reputation and Influence', in *The Wagner Compendium: A Guide to Wagner's Life and Music*, ed. Barry Millington (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), 385.

²⁸² Albert Lavignac, *The Music Dramas of Richard Wagner and his Festival Theatre at Bayreuth* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1989).

correspondence.²⁸³ A sense of being awed and overwhelmed was common in many of these reviews, reports and letters.²⁸⁴

Another feature of French reports from Bayreuth, noted by Chimènes and many other observers, is the religious language used to describe every aspect of the event. The hill upon which the opera house was built was referred to as the ‘sacred hill’, Wagner was a God, the atmosphere in the opera house was described as ‘blessed’ or ‘sanctified’, Wagnerism was a religion, and the voyage to Bayreuth was invariably described as a pilgrimage. Jules G. Freson’s 1890 book, for example, was entitled *Bayreuth: A Pilgrimage of Art*; Albert Lavignac’s guide was *The Artistic Journey to Bayreuth*; and in 1892 Emile de Saint Auban published *A Pilgrimage to Bayreuth*.²⁸⁵ Parisian visitors to the town behaved in accordance with this religious discourse, worshipping Wagner’s music and theatre and considering their visit to be an artistic pilgrimage. Exclusive Paris-based events such as ‘Petit Bayreuth’ and ‘Bayreuth de poche’ tried to recreate the excitement and exclusivity of the Bayreuth Festival at home in Paris, and added to the sense of religious devotion and cult-like behaviour.²⁸⁶

The outbreak of the First World War meant closure for the festival, which was not re-opened until 1924, under the directorship of Wagner’s son Siegfried who had taken the reins from his mother Cosima. The Wagner family and the Festival had traditionally supported nationalist and racist right-wing politics.²⁸⁷ These tendencies re-emerged in a more exaggerated and dangerous form upon the re-opening of the Festival, along with a strong relationship between the Festival and the Nazi Party. Adolf Hitler became friendly with Siegfried Wagner and his wife Winifred Wagner, who took over direction of the Festival when Siegfried and his mother Cosima both died in 1930. Winifred Wagner and Hitler notoriously became very close in the 1920s and 30s, to the point that rumours of their engagement were reported in the French

²⁸³ Chimènes, ‘Élites sociales et pratiques wagnériennes’, 189–95.

²⁸⁴ Interestingly, Kelly Jo Maynard has discussed similar responses to hearing Wagner concert excerpts in France in the 1880s, where critics and audiences commonly described the ‘extreme physical, emotional and psychological effects of hearing his music’. See Maynard, ‘The Enemy Within: Encountering Wagner in Early Third Republic France’ (PhD thesis, University of California, 2007), 148.

²⁸⁵ Jules G. Freson, *Bayreuth : un pèlerinage d’art* (Paris: Fischbacher, 1890); Lavignac, *Le Voyage artistique*; Emile de Saint Auban, *Un pèlerinage à Bayreuth* (Paris: Albert Savine, 1892).

²⁸⁶ Chimènes, ‘Élites sociales et pratiques wagnériennes’, 158–67.

²⁸⁷ See Pamela Potter, ‘Wagner and the Third Reich: Myths and Realities’, in the *Cambridge Companion to Wagner*, ed. Thomas Grey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 235; Spotts, *Bayreuth*, 130–42.

press in 1933.²⁸⁸ Under Winifred's direction the Festival was rapidly transformed into a site of cultural Nazism and became increasingly dependent on the financial support provided by Hitler and the Nazi Party, particularly once the party came to power in 1933. The Festival soon became the equivalent of a German national theatre—without financial support from the Nazis, it would have been forced to close.²⁸⁹ Having alienated an important part of its audience by so overtly politicising the Festival experience, Winifred was obliged to increase the Festival's dependence on the Nazi regime and align it with Nazi goals and values.²⁹⁰ From 1933, one of Bayreuth's principal reasons for existence was to support the regime and enforce its politicisation of art. Pierre Flinois writes that the production style became increasingly grandiose and ostentatious, with an emphasis on impressive, crowd-pleasing spectacle devoid of intellectual or psychological content.²⁹¹

In *A Pilgrimage to Bayreuth*, Saint Auban had described the Festival as a cosmopolitan paradise where there was 'no distinction between peoples or races' and where 'the universal alliance replaces the Triple Alliance'.²⁹² As I have shown in Chapter One, in the 1930s the French continued to argue for Wagner's universalism in the face of the Nazi appropriation and nationalisation of Wagner's music. How, then, did the French press respond to the politicisation and Nazification of Bayreuth, their 'Mecca of Wagnerism'²⁹³ since the late nineteenth century? And did these responses change under the Occupation?

Bayreuth in the Parisian press, 1933–39

The *cinquantaire* celebrations of 1933 stimulated an increased interest in the Bayreuth Festival amongst the French press, not simply because Wagner was already prominent in the collective consciousness of the Paris music world, but also because of a curiosity on the part of French observers to witness the atmosphere at the Festival

²⁸⁸ See, for example, 'Hitler fiancé à Mme Winifred Wagner', *Comœdia*, 15 February 1933, 2; 'Wagner héros national', *Je suis partout*, 11 February 1933, 3. Also see Brigitte Hamann, *A Life at the Heart of Hitler's Bayreuth*, trans. Alan Bance (London: Granta, 2005), 247.

²⁸⁹ Large, 'Reception: The Bayreuth Legacy', 389–92; Spotts, *Bayreuth*, 169.

²⁹⁰ Merlin and Flinois, 'Bayreuth', 208.

²⁹¹ Ibid.; Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 215–30.

²⁹² 'Aucune distinction de peuples ni de races.'

'L'alliance universelle y remplace la triple alliance.'

Saint Auban, *Pèlerinage*, 32.

²⁹³ 'La Mecque du wagnérisme'.

Ibid.

following Hitler's recent rise to power. Reports and reviews of the Festival—sometimes in more than one instalment—were not restricted to music or arts publications; a number of well-known daily or weekly newspapers such as *Le Temps*, *Le Figaro* and *Marianne* devoted column space to articles and news items about the Festival. It was clearly a topic that attracted the interest of a reasonably wide readership. Although the reports certainly diminished in number somewhat after 1933, they did continue to appear up to 1938.

The religious language that had permeated nineteenth- and early twentieth-century French discourse on Bayreuth persisted in the press of the 1930s. References to the 'sacred hill', the 'temple' of Bayreuth, and the 'pilgrimage' were still common, as were descriptions of Wagnerism as a religion. Critics also frequently commented on the religiosity of the entire experience and the attitude amongst audience members of absolute devotion to Wagner and his music. Paul Achard, who wrote a very significant series of eight articles published in the arts journal *Comœdia*, vividly described the atmosphere of the town in one of his early instalments, entitled 'Impressions of Bayreuth: The Wagner Religion in 1933':

From one to the other of these two glorious boundary stones [the Festival Theatre and Wahnfried (the Wagner family residence)] between which the town stretches, one walks beneath a quivering dome of flags on which the three old imperial colours mix with those that seem to announce, by their symbol of the cross [swastika], the coming of a new redeemer, the occurrence of a 'third empire'. But the atmosphere remains religious, and the art stays pure even if the spirit is less so. It is in Bayreuth that one must hear Wagner's work. The ambience is part of the aesthetic emotion.²⁹⁴

Later, in another instalment entitled 'When the *Ring* is Performed in the Wagnerian Temple', Achard's language is permeated with the idea of religious sacrifice as he describes Wagner's work as being, 'above the fray, above all frays. Haloed by death, by the martyrdom that had it endure the stupidity and ferocity of men, quasi-sanctified

²⁹⁴ 'De l'une à l'autre de ces bornes glorieuses entre lesquelles s'étend la ville, on marche sous un dôme frissonnant de drapeaux où les trois vieilles couleurs impériales se mêlent à celles qui semblent annoncer, par leur signe crucial, la venue d'un nouveau rédempteur, l'événement d'un « troisième empire ». Mais l'atmosphère reste religieuse, et l'art reste pur si l'esprit l'est moins. C'est à Bayreuth qu'il faut entendre l'œuvre de Wagner. L'ambiance fait partie de l'émotion esthétique.' Paul Achard, 'Impressions de Bayreuth : le culte de Wagner en 1933', *Comœdia*, 28 August 1933, 2.

by the glorious piety that surrounds it'.²⁹⁵ Achard's description of the last moments of the performance of *Parsifal* at the end of the Festival, cements the sense of religiosity that permeated his perception of the Festival:

the attitude, the conduct, the piety of the public contributed to giving this performance all of its grandeur. Not a word, not a murmur, not a gesture, no applause. Religious silence. Each of the 1680 audience members, when all sound and all flame were extinguished, left the enormous theatre with silent steps, on tiptoes, just as one leaves a church after a funeral mass, when the last altar candle has been extinguished.²⁹⁶

Achard's missives not only give us a sense of the persistently religious nature of the Bayreuth experience, but they also show the continuing powerful effect of the Festival on French visitors. In most of his eight Bayreuth articles he describes being deeply touched or affected by the experience in some way, whether it is simply through observing the crowds' reaction to Hitler's presence at the performances (to be examined later in this chapter), or whether it is his own responses to the music and the drama that take place inside the theatre. His eight reports were each published on the front page of *Comœdia* over the space of about three weeks, ensuring a significant level of visibility to regular readers of the daily publication, and suggesting that his detailed descriptions, reflections and critiques were received with keen interest.

The quality of the performances at Bayreuth was generally considered to be extraordinarily high, and French critics were very complimentary both of the singers and of the orchestra. Most critics writing in the Parisian press upheld Bayreuth's status as the gold standard for Wagner productions around the world, and few dared to suggest that any stagnation had occurred. André Maurel and Henri de Curzon were the exceptions to this rule, complaining as early as 1933 that Bayreuth had become a

²⁹⁵ 'au-dessus de la mêlée, de toutes les mêlées. Auréolée par la mort, par le martyre que lui a fait subir la bêtise et la férocité des hommes, quasi sanctifiée par la glorieuse piété qui l'entoure ...'

Paul Achard, 'Quand on joue la « Tétralogie » dans le temple wagnérien', *Comœdia*, 1 September 1933, 2.

²⁹⁶ 'l'attitude, la tenue, la piété du public ont contribué à donner à cette manifestation toute sa grandeur. Pas un mot, pas un murmure, pas un geste, pas un applaudissement. Le silence religieux. Chacun de ces 1680 spectateurs, lorsque tout bruit, toute flamme se furent éteints, a quitté la salle immense, à pas feutrés, sur la pointe des pieds, ainsi qu'on sort d'une église, après une messe mortuaire, lorsque le dernier cierge est éteint.'

Paul Achard, 'La Soirée de *Parsifal* et sa parfaite beauté', *Comœdia*, 17 September 1933, 2.

museum and a commercial enterprise.²⁹⁷ Yet this was a minority view, and in general the word ‘Bayreuth’ carried connotations of prestige; performances from ‘Bayreuth singers’, for example, were highly valued in 1930s Paris, and reviews from Bayreuth were consistently laudatory. One example is Boes’ review in *Le Ménestrel*, which overwhelms the reader with superlatives: the Ring is described as ‘this sound edifice, the most majestic that has ever been built for the greatest glory of Music’, Frida Leider is not only a singer with ‘perfect technique’, but also ‘the most vehement, most passionate actress there is’, and the review continues in this vein.²⁹⁸ This kind of language was common in reviews and descriptions of the Festival throughout the 1930s: it is clear that the institution and its productions had not lost their power and excitement for the French.

Although adulatory and religious language had been common in the French reception of Bayreuth since the nineteenth century, in 1933 it took on a new dimension. No longer simply a manifestation of the obsessive French Wagnerism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it now also signified the fact that the French press was being drawn into the hysterical adulation of Hitler that became a powerful phenomenon at the Festival for the rest of the decade. As I will show, the conflation of the personas of Hitler and Wagner brought new meaning to the religious discourse and the language of adoration used by French critics to discuss and describe the Festival experience.

Bayreuth: Cultural Capital of the Third Reich

A recurrent theme that emerged in reports on the Festival from the 1930s was the assertion that ‘nothing has changed’. The frequency with which this assertion appears suggests that critics were responding to expectations or assumptions that the Festival would change under the Third Reich. Indeed, their tone was sometimes defensive. Guy de Pourtalès was at pains to prove that Germany was unchanged in 1933:

²⁹⁷ André Maurel, ‘Bayreuth. Une entreprise commerciale supérieurement montée’, *L’Ordre*, 2 August 1933. Press clipping, BnF Arts du spectacle, Recueil ‘Festival de Bayreuth en 1933’, 8-RO-7104 (2), p. 6–8; Henri de Curzon, ‘Revue musicale. Wagneriana, à propos du cinquantenaire de la mort de Wagner’, *Journal des débats*, 4 August 1933, 3.

²⁹⁸ ‘cet édifice sonore, le plus majestueux qui ait jamais été construit pour la plus grande gloire de la Musique’.

‘la technique parfaite’.

‘l’actrice la plus véhémence, la plus passionnée qui soit.’

Boes, ‘À Bayreuth’, *Le Ménestrel* 95, no. 35 (1 September 1933): 351.

French people who ventured to cross the German border this summer had been warned that they risked great trouble: concentration camp, prison, perhaps even death. Yet here we are, a good group of music-lovers who did not fear coming anyway to confront Fafner in Bayreuth. We speak our language in public, we discuss freely, we critique, we admire, we judge and (so far) we are nonetheless welcomed everywhere with perfect courtesy.²⁹⁹

Gustave Samazeuilh similarly reported in *La Petite Gironde* in 1933 that ‘life in Bayreuth under the Third Reich did not appear noticeably different’, in spite of the omnipresent swastika flags in the town, the constant presence of ‘brownshirts’, and the bookshops selling more portraits of Hitler than of Wagner.³⁰⁰ Pourtalès had remarked upon these things too, and upon the general presence of Nazi propaganda from the moment he stepped off the train. Samazeuilh echoed Pourtalès in his observation that the ‘brownshirts’ (*Sturmabteilung*—the Nazi paramilitary wing) were ‘always perfectly courteous and even obliging to foreigners, and in particular to French people in search of information’.³⁰¹

And yet these same critics, as well as many others, invariably made note of the visual indications of Nazification around the town, giving the distinct impression that something fundamental *had* changed. There is a striking tension between their insistence on continuity and their clear uneasiness about the obvious changes in the ‘atmosphere’ of the Festival. As they reassured their readers that Bayreuth was just as it had always been, they seemed to be reassuring themselves. In particular, the saturation of the town with Nazi propaganda and Hitler paraphernalia was mentioned by almost every single critic who reported from Bayreuth between 1933 and 1939. Although they did not use the term ‘Nazification’, it is clear that this is exactly what they were witnessing and that it made a great impression on them. The presence of

²⁹⁹ ‘On avait mis en garde les Français qui s’aventureraient, durant cet été, à passer la frontière allemande : ils risquaient de gros ennuis : le camp de concentration, la prison, peut-être même la mort. Or, nous sommes ici une bonne troupe d’amateurs de musique, qui n’avons pas craint de venir quand même affronter Fafner à Bayreuth. Nous parlons notre langue en public, nous discutons librement, nous critiquons, nous admirons, nous jugeons et n’en sommes pas moins (jusqu’ici) accueillis partout avec une parfaite courtoisie.’

Guy de Pourtalès, ‘Bayreuth 1933 (I)’, *Marianne*, 23 August 1933, 15. See Appendix C3.

³⁰⁰ ‘la vie à Bayreuth, sous la règne du troisième Reich, n’a pas paru sensiblement modifiée.’

Gustave Samazeuilh, ‘Le Cinquantenaire de la mort de Wagner à Bayreuth’, *La Petite Gironde*, 1933. Press clipping, BnF BmO, Fonds Paul Franz, vol. 22, p. 147.

³⁰¹ ‘les « chemises brunes » sont nombreuses, mais toujours parfaitement courtoises et même obligeantes pour l’étranger, et en particulier le Français en quête d’un renseignement’.

Ibid.

swastika flags flying from the windows of the town buildings, the portraits of Hitler being sold in bookshops and on street corners, and the visible presence of the ‘brownshirts’ were mentioned by many critics, some of whom tried to capture the changed atmosphere for their readers:

On the well-maintained streets, narrower than ours, parade the Nazi platoons in impeccable order beneath the forest of red swastika flags; further on, the square insignia of the Roman Legions, topped with a golden eagle, flap in the wind ...

Bayreuth is bedecked in honour of the chancellor: a profusion of banners quartered with swastikas, the portraits of the *Führer* sit next to the innumerable effigies of Wagner, the new Germany naively spreads out before its guests its audacity and its hopes.³⁰²

Critics also remarked upon the change in audience demographic, commenting that there were fewer foreign visitors. Achard wrote that the audience was almost exclusively German,³⁰³ Rebois claimed that a number of foreigners had abstained for political reasons,³⁰⁴ and Emile Vuillermoz triumphantly reported that many habitual Wagnerians had chosen to hear Bruno Walter—exiled from Nazi Germany because of his Jewish origins—conduct *Tristan* at the Salzburg Festival instead of attending Bayreuth.³⁰⁵

Hitler’s attendance at the Festival was a prominent point of discussion, and the titles of many of the articles and reports reflected Hitler’s centrality in the minds of French reporters and critics: ‘Hitler in Bayreuth’, ‘Hitler Attends 50th Anniversary Celebrations at Bayreuth’, ‘Bayreuth Under Hitler’, and ‘Bayreuth, Capital of the

³⁰² ‘Sur les routes bien entretenues, moins larges que les nôtres, défilent les sections nazistes dans un ordre impeccable sous la forêt de drapeaux rouges à croix gammée ; plus loin les enseignes carrées des légions romaines, surmontée d’un aigle d’or, claquent au vent ...

Bayreuth est pavoisée en honneur du chancelier : une profusion d’oriflammes écartelés de croix gammées, les portraits du *Führer* voisinent avec les innombrables effigies de Wagner, la nouvelle Allemagne étale naïvement devant ses hôtes son audace et ses espoirs.’

J.-L. Gaston Pastre, ‘Bayreuth sous Hitler’, *La Revue hebdomadaire* 35 (2 September 1933): 72–3. See Appendix C5.

³⁰³ Achard, ‘Quand on joue la « Tétralogie »’, 1.

³⁰⁴ Henri Rebois, ‘Le Festival de Bayreuth’, *Figaro*, 15 August 1933, 4.

³⁰⁵ Emile Vuillermoz, ‘*Tristan et Isolde* à Salzbourg’, *Candide*, 24 August 1933. In *Emile Vuillermoz. Critique musicale 1902–1960. Au Bonheur des soirs*, ed. Jacques Lonchampt (Paris: L’Harmattan 2013), 235–7.

Third Reich. From Wagner to Hitler'. This continued to be the case throughout the 1930s; even by mid-1938, for example, Samazeuilh was reporting on the same indicators of the Nazification of Bayreuth as he had in 1933:

Multiple swastika standards, flags of all dimensions at the smallest of windows, celebrate the presence of the chancellor Adolf Hitler who, loyal to his tradition and except for a quick plane trip to Breslau, insisted on following the entire first cycle. His comings and goings between Wahnfried, where he stays, and the theatre, his successive appearances in the central box, at the restaurant beside Mrs Winifred Wagner, Dr and Mrs Goebbels, still strongly hold the attention of the crowds, and do not fail to provoke disciplined storms of convinced '*Heils*'.³⁰⁶

All of these descriptions of the Festival and the town focused on visual indicators of the changes taking place more broadly in Germany—they described more concrete manifestations of other, less easily-articulated changes in the atmosphere at Bayreuth. It seemed easier to describe the flags and the frenzied adulation of the crowds, than to declare outright that Bayreuth had been Nazified, which would have required a judgement that the French were not yet willing to make. Indeed, most Parisian critics were very hesitant to express an opinion on the mixing of art and politics in Bayreuth; they genuinely seemed to lack a clear position on what they were witnessing. This sense of ambiguity contrasts strikingly with the outspoken opposition to the Nazification of Wagner discussed in Chapter One.

The merging of the personas of Wagner and Hitler at the Festival became an obsession for the French press. Jean-Edouard Spenlé expressed it thus: 'More and more, deep affinities are asserted between the Wagnerian mystique and the Hitlerian mystique.'³⁰⁷ Critics reported Hitler's arrival at the Festival Theatre with fascination,

³⁰⁶ 'De multiples étendards à croix gammées, des drapeaux de toutes dimensions aux moindres fenêtres, fêtent la présence du chancelier Adolf Hitler qui, fidèle à sa coutume, et, sauf un rapide déplacement en avion à Breslau, a tenu à suivre tout le premier cycle. Ses allées et venues entre Wahnfried, où il habite, et le théâtre, ses apparitions successives dans la loge centrale, au restaurant voisin aux côtés de Mme Winifred Wagner, du Dr et Mme Goebbels, retiennent toujours vivement l'attention de la foule, et ne manquent pas de provoquer des ouragans disciplinés de « heil » convaincus.'

Gustave Samazeuilh, 'Lettre de Bayreuth', *Le Temps*, 20 August 1938, 6.

³⁰⁷ 'Entre la mystique wagnérienne et la mystique hitlérienne s'affirment ainsi, de plus en plus, des affinités profondes.'

and described in great detail the behaviour of the crowds who greeted him and their total devotion to obeying his orders (see Figure 6). They eloquently depicted scenes from both outside and inside the theatre, and even described Hitler's behaviour towards the Wagner children in the restaurant after the performance, or the way in which he responded to applause from the audiences. Some journalists seemed more interested in describing these scenes than reviewing the operas: one example is *Paris-Midi*'s 'special envoy', whose title indicates his priorities: 'When Adolf Hitler Goes to the Celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of Wagner in Bayreuth'. The article includes only one line about the first act of *Siegfried*, and uses the rest of the column space to discuss the town, the journey, Hitler's presence, and the way the crowds respond to him.³⁰⁸

As discussed in Chapter One, Hitler's personal obsession and identification with Wagner has been well documented by scholars, as has the inseparable association between the two figures in 1930s Germany. French critics at Bayreuth saw this inseparability as causing a conflation between the idolisation of Wagner and the adulation of Hitler, and they were clearly unsure what to think about it. A sense of uneasiness is present in many of the reports—the strength of emotion with which Germans in Bayreuth responded to Hitler *and* Wagner affected them deeply, but almost none of the French reports from the first half of the 1930s were willing to condemn it. Accustomed to worshipping Wagner like a god, and writing about his works as sacred artworks, when they visited Bayreuth under the Third Reich they suddenly found themselves in a position where worshipping Wagner meant worshipping Hitler. Although the responses examined in Chapter One show a keen desire to separate the figures of Wagner and Hitler and deny the conflation that Hitler promoted, those who actually visited Bayreuth found themselves unable to make this separation; the power of the music and the atmosphere at Bayreuth were too seductive. This explains their reluctance to criticise Hitler's Nazification of Wagner and Bayreuth.

Jean-Edouard Spénlé, 'Bayreuth 1933. Réflexions sur l'art wagnérien', *Mercure de France*, 1 July 1934, 15. See Appendix C8.

³⁰⁸ 'Quand Adolf Hitler assiste aux fêtes du cinquantenaire de Wagner à Bayreuth', *Paris-Midi*, 19 August 1933. Press clipping, BnF Arts du spectacle, Recueil 'Festival de Bayreuth en 1933', 8-RO-7104 (2), p. 15–16.

Figure 6: Photo of crowds greeting Adolf Hitler at the Bayreuth Festival, 1940. © Süddeutsche Zeitung Photo/Alamy Photo



This reluctance changes subtly as the 1930s progress and France inches closer to war with Germany. Critics begin to admit that something has changed in Bayreuth after all, and that the atmosphere is decidedly different. Even Gustave Samazeuilh, who wrote so confidently in 1933 that ‘life in Bayreuth ... did not appear noticeably different’,³⁰⁹ writes in 1936 that the omnipresent swastika flags and Hitler portraits in the town,

[create] an ambience inevitably quite different from that which was known and loved by those who come [to Bayreuth] to bring back old memories, from the time when the masterpieces that you know had only their internal strength and the enthusiasm of their perceptive supporters to defend them against official incomprehension and scepticism.³¹⁰

³⁰⁹ Samazeuilh, ‘Cinquantenaire de la mort de Wagner’.

³¹⁰ ‘crée une ambiance forcément assez différente de celle qu’ont connue, qu’ont aimée ceux qui viennent évoquer ici d’anciens souvenirs, à l’époque où les chefs-d’œuvre que vous savez n’avaient pour les défendre contre l’incompréhension ou le scepticisme officiels que leur force interne, et l’enthousiasme de leurs partisans clairvoyants.’

This change in tone was probably a response to Germany's increasingly aggressive military and political stance towards France, and a greater awareness of the threat that Germany presented. Interestingly, there is also a suggestion of nostalgia for the old times, where Wagner was still controversial in France and his supporters were in the minority.

Antisemitism at Bayreuth

Like all aspects of German cultural life under the Third Reich, the Bayreuth Festival was affected by the antisemitic exclusionary laws introduced by the Nazis from 1933. As discussed in Chapter Two, Parisians were well informed about these laws and their implications in Germany. The decision by one of Bayreuth's most celebrated conductors—Arturo Toscanini—to cancel his appearance at the 1933 Festival in protest against the Reich's antisemitic measures, brought these issues to the notice of the Parisian press. Richard Strauss was chosen to replace Toscanini. The French press widely reported these developments with some interest, as did newspapers around the world. Toscanini's decision was universally respected by French commentators, who were nonetheless disappointed that the maestro would not be appearing at the Festival. The loss of Toscanini was also a great blow to Winifred Wagner and the Bayreuth Festival, and an uncomfortable reminder that the Festival could not escape the negative consequences of its close relationship with Hitler and the Nazi Party. Henri Rebois claimed that significant numbers of foreign visitors withdrew from the Festival in response to Toscanini's decision,³¹¹ and another article reported that,

The performances didn't have their customary sparkle either. Strauss did not succeed in having us forget Toscanini and the casting suffered from some abstentions due to antisemitism.³¹²

Gustave Samazeuilh, by contrast, refused to take sides on the issue, going out of his way to express his respect for Toscanini's 'honourable' decision which, according to Samazeuilh, demonstrated Toscanini's artistic independence and love of freedom and

Gustave Samazeuilh, 'Le Soixantième Anniversaire du théâtre de Bayreuth', *Les Nouvelles littéraires*, 15 August 1936, 8.

³¹¹ Henri Rebois, 'Le Festival de Bayreuth', *Figaro*, 15 August 1933, 4.

³¹² 'Les représentations n'ont pas eu non plus leur éclat accoutumé. Strauss n'a pas réussi à faire oublier Toscanini et la distribution souffre de quelques abstentions due à l'antisémitisme.' 'À Bayreuth', *Aux Écoutes*, 5 August 1933. Press clipping, BnF Arts du spectacle, Recueil 'Festival de Bayreuth en 1933', 8-RO-7104 (2), p. 9.

justice. Samazeuilh nevertheless applauded Strauss's performances and the 'high quality of his style and expression'.³¹³ Samazeuilh's reluctance to pass judgement on either party is consistent with his established strategy of appearing to remain nothing more than a neutral music-lover; his support of Franco-German rapprochement—discussed in Chapter Two—can be seen in a similar light, and he is generally unwilling to be openly critical of any political stance.

Yet while Samazeuilh refused to criticise antisemitism in the context of the Festival, Henri Rebois and others were certainly prepared to remark upon its impact. In general, though, the tone of these remarks was one of unease; outright condemnation was very rare. The absence of Jewish audience members at the Festival, for example, was commented on in a number of articles in the French press, but was not dwelt upon, as we see in an article by Jules-Louis Gaston Pastre: 'Beside the rich agrarians there can be seen the powerful industrialists; they are all there, except for the Israelites who now have only a few seats in Wagner's temple.'³¹⁴

The anonymous author cited earlier, who wrote in *Aux Écoutes* about the effect of antisemitism on casting at Bayreuth, suggested that the exclusion of Jews was a betrayal of Wagner's dream:

A number of seats, formerly reserved for wealthy Jews and which now remained empty, were now occupied by 'brownshirts'. Thus is realised Wagner's wish that the house of Bayreuth be open for free to all Germans whose soul is sensitive to German art.³¹⁵

The tone of these comments leads the reader to suspect that the author's problem is not with antisemitism, but rather with its effects. *Aux Écoutes* was a highly nationalist

³¹³ Gustave Samazeuilh, 'Allemagne: Le cycle du cinquantenaire à Bayreuth', *La Revue musicale*, January 1934, 72; Gustave Samazeuilh, 'Bayreuth. Représentations et exposition wagnériennes', *Le Miroir du monde*, 2 September 1933, 276.

³¹⁴ 'À côté des riches agrariens, on se montre les puissants industriels ; ils sont tous là, sauf les Israélites qui n'ont plus dans le temple de Wagner que quelques sièges'. Gaston Pastre, 'Bayreuth sous Hitler', 74.

³¹⁵ 'Nombre de fauteuils, loués naguère par d'opulents israélites et qui fussent demeurés vides maintenant, ont été occupés par des "chemises brunes". Ainsi se trouve réalisé le vœu de Wagner qui souhaitait que sa maison de Bayreuth fût ouverte gratuitement à tous les Allemands dont l'âme est sensible à l'art allemand.' 'À Bayreuth', *Aux Écoutes*.

anti-German periodical with a significant circulation,³¹⁶ thus its authors are more likely to have been anti-German than pro-Jewish. The article cited above, although appearing sympathetic to ‘wealthy Jews’, is most likely designed to illustrate Germany’s decline, rather than to defend European Jews.

The editor-in-chief of *L’Homme libre*, Eugène Lautier, similarly used his reports on Bayreuth to condemn Germany by criticising antisemitism, although from a different political perspective than the critic of *Aux Écoutes*. *L’Homme libre* was a Republican paper, initially founded by Georges Clemenceau just before the outbreak of the First World War. Lautier wrote in his review of *Parsifal* at the 1933 Festival:

Another surprise, this time a happy one! Frida Leider’s name is on the program. They had told us in Paris that we would not hear this admirable artist, because ... *non-Aryan*.³¹⁷

One star for the Wagner family! One star for Hitler himself! This absurd prescription was not carried out.³¹⁸

Lautier continues by further discussing the issue of German antisemitism and its effect on European politics more broadly. The article that began as an opera review becomes an opinion piece on the state of politics in Europe, and its position on the front page of the paper suggests just how importantly it was viewed. Bayreuth criticism once again becomes a means for discussing relations and differences between France and Germany, and the article even ends with a discussion of ‘French Nazism’, and the problems faced by France as a nation.

An interesting counterpoint to these articles is provided by *La Tribune juive*, a Strasbourg-based publication of the interwar period. *La Tribune juive* was the main

³¹⁶ Pierre Albert, ‘La Presse française de 1871 à 1940’, in *Histoire générale de la presse française*, vol. 3, ed. Claude Bellanger, Jacques Godechot, Pierre Guiral and Fernand Terrou (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1975), 592.

³¹⁷ Leider’s husband Rudolf Deman, concertmaster of the Berlin Staatsoper orchestra, was Jewish. He retained his position in the orchestra until 1938. See Jean-Jacques Groleau, ‘Leider, Frida (1888–1975)’, in *Dictionnaire encyclopédique Wagner*, ed. Picard, 1075–6.

³¹⁸ ‘Autre surprise, heureuse cette fois ! Le nom de Frida Leider est sur le programme. On nous avait dit à Paris que nous n’entendrions pas cette admirable artiste, parce que ... *non aryenne*. Un bon point à la famille Wagner ! Un bon point à Hitler lui-même ! Cette absurde prescription n’a pas été consommée.’

Eugène Lautier, ‘À Bayreuth, sous Hitler. Parsifal laïcisé et annexé’, *L’Homme libre*, 27 July 1933, 1. See Appendix C6.

mouthpiece for the Jewish community of the Alsace-Lorraine region; it would have been read by many in this community, and by very few outside of it. A small article in its '*Chronique*' section called for a boycott of the Festival on account of Nazi antisemitism. Interestingly, the article also mentions Wagner's own antisemitism:

Already the great composer Toscanini, Italian and Aryan, has refused to participate—however indispensable he is—in this homage of Hitlerian antisemites for the antisemite Wagner.

Let us hope that others will understand this lesson ... We must boycott the Wagner Festival as an expression of antisemitism and a manifestation in its favour.³¹⁹

This anonymously penned article is notable for its outright condemnation of the Festival because of the political and ideological views of its political and financial supporter: the Nazi Party. No other writer in the French press was willing to even suggest forgoing the Festival as a political protest, and this conforms to the general attitude of ambivalence and uncertainty in respect to the evident changes that the Festival had undergone. Few were willing to even admit that the Festival was different from what it had once been, and those that were willing did so almost in passing, as if it were a minor point in comparison to the main object: worshipping the music of Wagner. Even Paul Achard, who spent significant portions of his columns describing the changed atmosphere at Bayreuth, seemed unsure how to judge what he was describing. As an aside, he mentioned that returned tickets from Jewish regulars were donated by the Festival to young people. 'In any case, it is wonderful', he commented, 'that this recompense of choice is given to university students who do not have the means to buy themselves such a treat.'³²⁰

In short, Parisian critics who reported from the Bayreuth Festival saw antisemitism as a minor side issue in relation to the other indicators of Nazification at the Festival.

³¹⁹ 'D'ores et déjà le grand compositeur Toscanini, italien et arien, a refusé son concours, pourtant indispensable, à cet hommage des hitlériens antisémites, à l'antisémite Wagner. Espérons que d'autres comprendront cette leçon ... Il faut boycotter le Festival Wagner, comme une émanation de l'antisémitisme et une manifestation en sa faveur.'

'Boycottons le Festival Wagner à Bayreuth', *La Tribune juive* 15, no. 26 (30 June 1933): 404.

³²⁰ 'Quoi qu'il en soit, il est heureux que cette récompense de choix soit attribuée à une jeunesse universitaire qui n'a pas les moyens de s'offrir pareil régal.'
Achard, 'Impressions de Bayreuth : le recueillement du public', 1.

Unlike the author from *La Tribune juive*, they were certainly not willing to condemn the Festival in order to protest against antisemitism. Neither were they willing to reject the Nazi appropriation of Wagner in a more general sense, as had the critics examined in Chapter One. Indeed, elements of the Festival appeared to hold a deep attraction for Parisian critics at Bayreuth, an attraction that could be traced back to the sense of admiration and reverence that had been fundamental to French reception of the Festival since 1876.

The attraction of the ‘*furor teutonicus*’³²¹

On seeing Adolf Hitler received at Bayreuth like Siegfried himself resuscitated, entering the theatre between two lines of hands lifted towards the sky, bowing down before Winifred Wagner as if he were a messenger from God, and taking his place in the midst of a crowd ... on seeing, after the show, the entire theatre rise in a climax of enthusiasm as they had at Potsdam in 1914 and, arms outstretched, sing ‘*Deutschland über alles*’, one may note that the Third Reich has taken on Wagner as its own.³²²

These were Paul Achard’s first impressions of Bayreuth in 1933. They convey a mixture of fascination and fear, admiration and repulsion, that deftly capture the predicament of Parisian critics who reported from the Festival between 1933 and 1939. I argue that the uneasiness that can be detected in Parisian critics’ reports from Bayreuth in response to the Nazification of the Festival is the result of these competing sentiments.

In her book *Grand Illusion*, on the 1937 *Exposition Universelle*, Karen Fiss examines the French attraction to a fascist aesthetic that emerged in the 1930s. She argues convincingly that the lack of a strong national identity in France led the French to

³²¹ Jean Vinchon and Bernard Champigneulle, ‘Hitler et le wagnérisme’, *Mercure de France*, 15 June 1935, 520. See Appendix C10.

³²² ‘En voyant Adolf Hitler reçu à Bayreuth ainsi que Siegfried lui-même ressuscité, gagnant le théâtre entre une double haie de mains levées vers le ciel, s’inclinant devant Winifred Wagner comme s’il était un envoyé de Dieu le Père et gagnant sa place au milieu d’une foule ... en voyant, après la représentation, toute la salle, à bout d’enthousiasme, se lever comme à Potsdam en 1914 et, le bras tendu, chanter le *Deutschland über alles*, on constate que le Troisième Reich a pris Wagner à son compte.’ Achard, ‘Impressions de Bayreuth : le culte de Wagner’, 1–2.

admire what they perceived as strong leadership and national identity in Germany.³²³ Fiss is certainly not the first to comment on the Nazis' successful fusion of art and politics, and the powerful effect of the aestheticisation of politics.³²⁴ As discussed in Chapter One, French politics in the 1930s were characterised by a sense of insecurity, politicians were viewed as weak and ineffective, and the parliamentary system was under serious attack. Part of the attraction of fascism, then, was that it provided a sense of direction. The Nazi Party displayed its power and vision through visual and physical means: mass gatherings, large and highly disciplined parades and marches, impeccably well-organised events and impressive visual pomp on a grand scale. The effectiveness of these kinds of demonstrations of power cannot be underestimated; they evoke emotions of pride, excitement, power, strength, and a sense of belonging, and they arguably function to dull the intellect and trigger emotional responses. In the midst of a lack of direction from their own political leadership, many French people looked to Germany and liked aspects of what they saw. German fascism appeared to offer security and purpose, as well as the excitement and emotional uplift of participating in a mass movement. The Nazi Party's co-option of the Bayreuth Festival from 1933 meant that experiencing the Festival became experiencing German fascism, and the strong emotional response that French critics had traditionally written about was funnelled into a whole new purpose and given new meaning.

The French press reception of Bayreuth in the 1930s reflected this attraction to ceremony and spectacle, and the admiration for the way in which Hitler and the Nazis were transforming a weak and disunited nation into a strong and powerful one. If the admiration is sometimes confused or ambivalent, it is nevertheless openly expressed by numerous critics. Hitler's ability to leverage Wagner's music and the Festival event itself in order to whip up a nationalist frenzy focused on pride in German culture, was a source of envy for the French. In the first article of a three-part series in *Marianne*, Pourtalès wrote admiringly of the 'enormous joy [and] unwavering athletic confidence' that one could feel 'vibrating through the entire [German] people'.³²⁵ Yet in the second article, published one week later, he criticises the appropriation of

³²³ Karen Fiss, *Grand Illusion. The Third Reich, the Paris Exposition, and the Cultural Seduction of France* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2009), 99.

³²⁴ See various scholars cited in Pierre-André Taguieff, *Wagner contre les Juifs : aux origines de l'antisémitisme culturel moderne* (Paris: Berg International, 2012), 208. Also see Frederic Spotts, *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics* (London: Hutchinson, 2002).

³²⁵ 'L'on sent vibrer dans tout ce peuple une joie énorme, une confiance sportive, inébranlable'. Guy de Pourtalès, 'Bayreuth 1933 (I)', 15. See Appendix C3.

Wagner's supposed racism and accuses 'new Germany' of misunderstanding and misusing him.³²⁶

The following quotation from Jean Chantavoine—a French Germanist and devoted Wagnerian—conveys the strength of emotion and the sense of admiration provoked by his experience of witnessing the crowds' reaction to Hitler at Bayreuth, as well as a hint of discomfort at being swept up in the adoration of the dictator:

Wednesday 25 July, 5 o'clock in the evening: the last fanfares which announce *Rhinegold* have just rung out. The dark amphitheatre has filled. Fifteen hundred audience members, standing, backs turned to the stage, focus their gazes on one of the boxes which form the back of the theatre. A man appears there: dinner jacket, robust and medium stature, a mass of brown hair covering the left side of his forehead down to the eyebrow; under the nose, a squared moustache; one thinks of a composite portrait of Charlie Chaplin and Mr Edouard Herriot [former French Prime Minister]. Without a cry, without a word, without a murmur, a thousand straight arms extend toward him, in mute unison, for a salute whose gesture of enthusiasm is a tacit oath ... I have seen in my life—and even in Germany under Wilhelm II—plenty of events: none of whose eloquence seemed to me deeper and—why not say it?—more human than the silence of this humanity ...³²⁷

Chantavoine's description is chilling, and yet he cannot help but be impressed with what he sees at Bayreuth, although he shows some reticence in admitting his admiration and pleasure. Furthermore, his style of description suggests his response is an emotional one rather than an intellectual one.

³²⁶ Guy de Pourtalès, 'La Saison de Bayreuth (II)', *Marianne*, 30 August 1933, 15. See Appendix C3.

³²⁷ 'Mercredi, 25 juillet, 5 heures du soir : les dernières fanfares qui annoncent *l'Or du Rhin* viennent de retentir. Le sombre amphithéâtre s'est rempli. Quinze cent spectateurs, debout, le dos tourné à la scène, concentrent leurs regards sur une des loges qui forment le fond de la salle. Un homme y paraît : smoking, stature robuste et moyenne, un paquet de cheveux bruns couvrant jusqu'au sourcil la moitié gauche du front ; sous le nez, une moustache carrée ; on pense à un portrait composite de Charlie Chaplin et de M. Edouard Herriot. Sans un cri, sans un mot, sans un murmure, mille bras droits se tendent vers lui, en un muet unisson, pour un salut dont le geste d'élan est un serment tacite ... J'ai vu dans ma vie—et en Allemagne même, sous Guillaume II—bien des manifestations : aucune dont l'éloquence m'ait pas paru plus profonde et—pourquoi ne pas le dire ?—plus humaine que le silence de cette humanité ...'

Jean Chantavoine, 'À Bayreuth. L'Anneau du Nibelung', *Le Ménestrel* 96, no. 31 (10 August 1934): 288. See Appendix C7.

Gustave Samazeuilh was less hesitant than many of his fellow critics to express admiration, frequently commenting on how Germany had learnt to promote its national art in an effective way, and how France should follow suit. When the 1934 Festival performances were broadcast on French radio, Samazeuilh gathered with a group of Wagnerian friends every afternoon in Paris to follow the broadcasts. In an article about these broadcasts, he wrote about how well suited the medium of radio was to the task of promotion of national culture: ‘Let us hope that in our country ... we know how to make the most of this lesson, and become better aware of the wonderful assistance that the airwaves bring us for spreading abroad ... the multiple riches of our music’s past and present.’³²⁸ Samazeuilh’s comments reflect a widespread agreement amongst those who reported from Bayreuth that Hitler and the Nazis had been very effective in mobilising Germany around the idea of pride in national culture, and in promoting the strength of this culture abroad. The accompanying implication was that France was inadequate for not having achieved something similar, and that it should look to Germany as a model.

French critics were acutely aware of the way in which Hitler exploited and manipulated the emotional power of Wagner’s music and of the Bayreuth Festival experience for political purposes. Yet, unlike the angry and alarmed press reactions examined in Chapter One, direct reports from the Bayreuth Festival did not tend to convey anger. Critics carefully described exactly what was taking place in Bayreuth, and while this was evidently deeply disturbing to many of them, it did not provoke outrage, nor any attempts to reclaim Wagner from the Nazis. A very pertinent example of this is a 13-page article in *Mercure de France* by Jean Vinchon and Bernard Champigneulle. The authors first describe vividly their attendance at the Festival (although given the date of the article, it is likely that they are referring to the previous year’s Festival). They continue:

It is not one of the Führer’s lesser skills to have succeeded in putting the strengths of German music, and those of Wagner in particular, at the service of his political dreams.

³²⁸ ‘Souhaitons que chez nous ... on sache profiter de la leçon, et mieux s’aviser des merveilleux concours que nous apportent les ondes pour répandre à l’étranger ... les multiples richesses du passé et du présent de notre musique.’
Gustave Samazeuilh, ‘Bayreuth à la radio’, *Le Temps*, 21 August 1934, 4.

Hitler enjoys the well known German taste for theatre and parade. He himself manages with rigour the grandiose ceremony of the assemblies where he gives speeches ... Music has always been a prelude, enveloping, imperious, in order to put the crowd into a state of enthusiastic receptivity which makes it hypersensitive to the famous vocal inflections of the chancellor. It is also music which, through the reinforced emphasis of its vocal and instrumental masses, will awaken in their hearts the hidden resonances of its ardent vocabulary; and always with the national songs, it is Wagner who will dispense to the crowds,—sensitive as women,—the great collective exaltations that they have come in search of like food.³²⁹

Vinchon and Champigneulle clearly see Wagner's music and its capacity for grandiose gestures as the primary vehicle through which Hitler manages to manipulate the masses into the emotionally receptive state he desires. Although the quotation above shows admiration for Hitler's abilities, other parts of the article express doubt, uncertainty and fear in relation to what they have seen in Bayreuth:

The shadow of the composer of the *Ring* always hovers over the German crowds; it exalts and stimulates it; it is one of the elements that activates the sacred fire, this eternal *furor teutonicus* of which it is unfortunately quite probable that we have not seen the last of its ravages.³³⁰

Interestingly, Sara Iglesias writes that Champigneulle was to become one of very few French writers who adopted a National Socialist-style musicology under the Occupation. Unlike other French music history writers, he fully absorbed Nazi racism and antisemitism and applied them to music in his 1941 book *Histoire de la*

³²⁹ 'ce n'est pas la moindre habileté du Führer d'avoir su mettre les forces de la musique allemande, de celle de Wagner en particulier, au service de ses rêves politiques.

Hitler entretient le goût bien connu de l'Allemand pour le théâtre et la parade. Il règle lui-même avec rigueur le grandiose cérémonial des assemblées où il prend la parole ... La musique a toujours préludé, enveloppante, impérieuse, pour mettre la foule dans l'état de réceptivité enthousiaste qui la rend hypersensible aux célèbres inflexions vocales du chancelier. C'est la musique aussi qui viendra par les accents renforcés de ses masses vocales et instrumentales, éveiller dans les cœurs les résonances secrètes de son ardent vocabulaire ; et toujours avec les chants nationaux, c'est Wagner qui dispensera aux foules,—sensibles comme des femmes,—les grandes exaltations collectives qu'elles viennent quêter comme une nourriture.'

Vinchon and Champigneulle, 'Hitler et le wagnérisme', 508.

³³⁰ 'L'ombre de l'auteur de la Tétralogie plane toujours sur la foule allemande ; elle l'exalte et la stimule ; elle est un des éléments qui activent le feu sacré, cet éternel *furor teutonicus* dont il est malheureusement bien probable que nous n'avons pas fini de connaître les ravages.'
Ibid., 520.

musique.³³¹ Evidently, although the citation above communicates an element of fear in the face of Germany's '*furor teutonicus*', he eventually succumbed to it and embraced it.

Paul Achard's eight *Comœdia* articles of 1933—which provide the reader with a rare opportunity to follow one critic's Bayreuth experience over a significant period of time and in a significant level of detail—epitomise the vacillation between admiration and fear. He contradicts himself frequently; he is alternately repulsed and admiring. In his first instalment on 28 August, he criticises the German people for displaying a sudden adoration of Wagner after having rejected and ignored him for decades, and he describes in detail the total Nazification of the Festival experience. But at the end of the same article, he describes the religious atmosphere and the unique sacredness of the Bayreuth theatre, declaring that, 'On coming out of the last performance of the masterpiece of masterpieces [*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*] ... I am ready to raise my right hand to swear and say Heil Hitler!'³³² In another instalment on 1 September, though, he laments, 'But how are we to stop men from constantly confusing art and *patrie*?'³³³ It is as if his emotional and intellectual responses are battling each other; he is adamant that the politicisation of art, and the use of music for political purposes, is a tragedy, and yet he is carried away by its successful implementation at the Bayreuth Festspielhaus.

Like a number of critics between 1933 and 1936, Achard is particularly interested in *Die Meistersinger*, perceiving it to be the most suitable for German propaganda, and for expressing the nationalistic sentiment that the Third Reich was so drawn to. Indeed, *Die Meistersinger* was 'inextricably entwined' with the Nazi movement, to the point that Hitler declared it to be the Reich's official opera in 1935.³³⁴ There is no doubt that since its conception the opera has been understood as a national work, and

³³¹ Sara Iglesias, *Musicologie et Occupation. Science, musique et politique dans la France des « années noires »* (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 2014), 71–2.

³³² 'au sortir de la dernière représentation du chef-d'œuvre des chefs-d'œuvre, j'approuve ce projet et je suis prêt à lever la main droite pour jurer et à dire Heil Hitler !'

Achard, 'Impressions de Bayreuth : le culte de Wagner', 2.

³³³ 'Mais comment empêcher les hommes de confondre à tout propos l'art et la patrie ?'

Achard, 'Quand on joue', 2.

³³⁴ David B. Dennis, "'The Most German of All German Operas': *Die Meistersinger* Through the Lens of the Third Reich', in *Wagner's Meistersinger*, ed. Vazsonyi, 110–13.

has been used to define and understand German national identity.³³⁵ French critics clearly understood this well; Paul Achard's second last instalment in *Comœdia* on 15 September 1933 is centred around the performance of this opera, and he curiously devotes a large part of the article to an outraged protest against what he perceives as a dilution of its national character. He insists specifically on the opera's 'German character' and complains that the French translation of Hans Sachs' famous final song (presumably in the program) erased the reference to German art by replacing it with a phrase that omits any mention of Germany: '*le Saint Art Allemand*' (holy German art) has been changed to '*un saint royaume d'art*' (a holy kingdom of art). Achard writes:

If there is something rigorously German, it is the art of the Meistersingers. So why this misleading interpretation, this lack of loyalty towards Wagner and towards the French public? Who are they wanting to deceive and why? Do they hope to give the work an air of Internationalism, of 'above the fray', and thus camouflage the specifically German character of *Meistersinger* and in particular of the final scene? That would be puerile. Everyone well knows that the art of the Meistersingers drew on Germanic folklore and what this brought to it.³³⁶

Achard continues in this outraged vein, expressing his disappointment with director Hans Tietjen's staging of the last scene, which did not convey the expected 'national character'. Yet, in a different tone, he also again describes the way in which, during the last act, the entire audience rose and sang '*Deutschland über alles*' with their arms extended (presumably in a Nazi salute). He comments that,

The music, incidentally, justifies all enthusiasm, one would almost be tempted to say: all madnesses. Whatever nation one belongs to, one feels uplifted and

³³⁵ Stephen McClatchie, 'Performing Germany in Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*', in *The Cambridge Companion to Wagner*, ed. Thomas S. Grey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 134–50.

³³⁶ 'S'il y a quelque chose de rigoureusement allemand, c'est bien l'art des Maitres Chanteurs. Alors pourquoi cette interprétation mensongère, ce manque de loyauté envers Wagner et envers le public français ? Qui veut-on tromper et pourquoi ? Espère-t-on donner à l'œuvre un air d'Internationalisme, d'« au-dessus de la mêlée » et camoufler ainsi le caractère spécifiquement allemand des *Maitres Chanteurs* et en particulier de la scène finale ? Ce serait puéril. Chacun sait bien ce que l'art des Maitres Chanteurs a puisé dans le folklore germanique et ce qu'il lui a apporté.' Paul Achard, 'Les Maîtres Chanteurs de Nuremberg', *Comœdia*, 15 September 1933, 2.

transported so high that one would wish that these pages were written by one's own *patrie*.³³⁷

Achard cannot hide his discomfort nor his attraction: the nationalistic grandiosity and emotional pull of the music and the staging in a work like *Die Meistersinger* is clearly irresistible, and yet only two weeks earlier he was wondering how to prevent men from conflating art and *patrie*. The French fascination with Germany's ability to fuse art and politics originated in a yearning to experience something similar in French music and culture. Desperately lacking their own strong national cultural identity, not to mention a chauvinistic one, French critics at Bayreuth were seduced by the combined personas of Hitler and Wagner, and the way in which the Festival was utilised by the nation's leaders to provoke a sense of strong collective identity.

Indeed, the concept of Germany's 'collective soul' was prominent in the press, as was a fascination with the idea of *la foule* as a character, or a unity. These sentiments and ideas seemed to be particularly provoked by performances of *Die Meistersinger* and observations of audience reactions at these performances. Lautier, for example, wrote:

It's not about protagonists.

Meistersingers, it's the masses.

They are the residents of a city, their interests, their occupations, their concerns, their rivalries, their idiosyncrasies, their generosity, the whole unifying and purifying itself in an effort of unifying and philharmonic art.

It is the people that is the main actor; the stars are only episodic characters, extras.

...

Here [Germany] we exude the meaning of the *collective*. The philosophers taught it. The artists, poets or musicians, have translated it in their masterpieces. The people perceives, grasps, adapts itself, bends itself.³³⁸

³³⁷ 'On s'explique pourquoi, cette année, toute la salle s'est levée, le bras tendu et a entonné le *Deutschland über alles*. La musique, d'ailleurs, justifie tous les enthousiasmes, on serait presque tenté de dire : toutes les folies. À quelque nation qu'on appartienne, on se sent soulevé et transporté si haut qu'on souhaiterait que ces pages eussent été écrites par sa propre patrie.'
Ibid.

Lautier compares this land of the collective to France, an ‘individualist country’.³³⁹ His admiration for Germany is evident, but is tempered by disgust towards the Reich’s antisemitic policies, and an awareness that the Nazis had chosen to ignore the music’s aesthetic meaning, in favour of giving it a political meaning.

Like Lautier, Achard, and others, Jean-Edouard Spenlé perceived *Meistersinger* as representing a unified, collective identity, where *la foule* was the main character: ‘magnificently unanimous, collective soul which speaks through thousands of bodies,’³⁴⁰ (Spenlé and others report that there were 750 performers on stage at the 1933 performance of *Die Meistersinger*). For Spenlé—a specialist in German philosophy and literature—this ‘collectiveness’ was a specifically German quality that was given ultimate expression in Hans Sachs’ salute to the glory of German art at the end of the opera. He describes the delirious, fanatical applause of the audience, and then writes:

It seemed that all Germany, the eternal Germany had materialised in this dazzling vision ... Forgotten, all the political divisions and the horrors of the still recent civil war; forgotten, the ever present nightmare of unemployment; driven out forever the ghost of this class war, maker of civil war and social hate, that a half-century of Marxism had implanted in German hearts and minds. A new Germany, unified and united, awoke and came into consciousness in the presence of the performance of this people’s unanimity ... Never had a work of art brought, in times of anguish, such a prophetic vision, such a comforting message, the feeling of such a miraculous release, of such an unwavering confidence in the future.³⁴¹

³³⁸ ‘il ne s’agit pas des protagonistes.

Les Maîtres chanteurs, c’est la foule.

Ce sont les habitants d’une ville, leurs intérêts, leurs occupations, leurs soucis, leurs rivalités, leur travers, leur générosité, le tout s’unissant et s’épurant dans un effort d’art corporatif et philharmonique. C’est le peuple qui est l’acteur principal ; les vedettes ne sont que des personnages épisodiques, des figurants ... Ici nous respirons le sens du *collectif*. Les philosophes l’ont enseigné. Les artistes, poètes ou musiciens, l’ont traduit dans leurs chefs-d’œuvre. Le peuple devine, saisit, s’adapte, se plie.’

Eugène Lautier, ‘Bayreuth, capitale du IIIe Reich. De Wagner à Hitler’, *L’Homme libre*, 26 July 1933, 1. See Appendix C6.

³³⁹ ‘pays individualiste’.

Ibid.

³⁴⁰ ‘magnifiquement unanime, âme collective qui parle par des milliers de corps’.

Spenlé, ‘Bayreuth 1933’, 14–15.

³⁴¹ ‘On aurait dit que toute l’Allemagne, l’éternelle Allemagne, avait pris corps dans cette vision éblouissante ... Oubliées, toutes les divisions politiques et les horreurs de la guerre civile, encore

Though Spenlé is describing the audience at Bayreuth, he is also describing Germany as a whole—he sees in the several hundred audience members a microcosm of the nation. The performance of Wagner’s *Meistersinger* and the reactions it sparks in its audience not only encompass for Spenlé and other French critics Germany’s past, present and future, but also comment on France’s own predicament. As Achard is quoted as saying above, such a spectacle makes one wish not that one were German, but perhaps that *Die Meistersinger* were French.³⁴²

While historians of 1930s France have written extensively on French aspirations of rapprochement with Germany, and the ways in which Germany deceived France into maintaining hope for peace even as Germany prepared for war and occupation (see Chapter Two), few have mentioned French *admiration* for what was taking place in Germany. According to historians of French fascism, Benito Mussolini was far more popular than Adolf Hitler in France, and Mussolini’s particular brand of fascism was more appropriate to the French context.³⁴³ Robert Soucy writes that even the more extreme sections of the right-wing French press only expressed tentative admiration for certain aspects of Nazi policy; fear of German invasion outweighed other, more attractive aspects such as the Reich’s repression of Marxism.³⁴⁴ And yet French reports from Bayreuth, particularly in the first three or four years of the Nazi regime, suggest otherwise. Regardless of the political orientation of the publication they appeared in, French reviews of the Festival between 1933 and 1937 conveyed an overwhelming sense of admiration and even envy of the spectacle of ‘Bayreuth under Hitler’: the scenes of mass adoration (of Hitler *and* Wagner, sometimes indistinguishable from one another), the powerful visual signifiers of nationalism, and

récente ; oublié le cauchemar du chômage toujours présent ; chassé à jamais le fantôme de cette lutte de classes, faulx de guerre civile et de haine sociale, qu’un demi-siècle de marxisme avait implantée dans les cerveaux et les cœurs allemands. Une Allemagne nouvelle, corporative et unie, s’éveillait et prenait conscience d’elle-même devant le spectacle de cette unanimité populaire, unanimité dans la joie du travail et unanimité dans la foi religieuse, une Allemagne nouvelle qui rêve de ressusciter ces corporations ... Jamais œuvre d’art n’avait apporté, en des heures d’angoisse, une vision si prophétique, un message si réconfortant, le sentiment d’une si miraculeuse délivrance, d’une si inébranlable confiance en l’avenir.’

Ibid., 17.

³⁴² Achard, ‘Les Maîtres Chanteurs’, 2.

³⁴³ Dominique Borne et Henri Dubief, *La Crise des années 30. 1929–1938* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1989), 92–4; Robert Soucy, ‘French Press Reactions to Hitler ‘s First Two Years in Power’, *Contemporary European History* 7 (1998): 36–7.

³⁴⁴ Soucy, ‘French Press Reactions’, 21–38.

the use of music and theatre as a means to provoke emotion for political purposes, were all inescapably attractive. These attitudes of adoration and admiration were, of course, offset by a sense of unease and even revulsion, resulting in a palpable tension in many of the reviews. And yet, the almost total rejection of the Nazification of Wagner that I examined in Chapter One was absent from the writings of those who reported from Bayreuth.

Why did the Bayreuth Festival elicit responses that were so different, not just from the prevailing sense of alarm and outrage discussed in Chapter One, but also from more general French press responses to Hitler's regime, as outlined by Soucy and others? I argue that there are two explanations for this. Firstly, Wagner's music, and the experience of hearing it at Bayreuth, still maintained a deep hold on French audiences; something that is evident from their awed descriptions of the performances at Bayreuth, and their continued use of religious language in relation to the Festival. Maynard's descriptions of the ways in which the French experienced performances of Wagner's music as a powerful sensory experience in the last decades of the nineteenth century provide a suggestion for the possible origins of later French responses;³⁴⁵ although the novelty may have worn off somewhat by the 1930s, critics continued to write of feeling overawed and overwhelmed. This testifies to the emotional power of the experience, and helps to explain why they felt torn between attraction and fear: they could not resist being swept up in their own physical and emotional responses to the performances. Yet they were fully conscious of the danger this represented to France, and of the questionable ethics of employing Wagner's music for these purposes. Unlike the commentary examined in Chapter One, though, this awareness of the threat posed by Hitler's manipulation of Wagner was clouded by their direct physical experience of the Festival, which seemed to dull intellectual judgements and political agendas.

Secondly, as I have suggested above, the Bayreuth experience represented to the French something their own country lacked, and something that the nation desperately wanted and needed: a clear national identity and direction, embodied by strong leadership and centred around a unified cultural identity. Given the longstanding French obsession with Wagner and his music, particularly during the interwar period,

³⁴⁵ Maynard, 'Enemy Within', 146–78.

it is unsurprising that French critics were seduced by what they saw taking place in Bayreuth. The attraction of Nazi Germany's fascist aesthetic explains in large part the press reception that is examined in this chapter; for French critics, the combination of seeing Wagner's works performed at Bayreuth—an important site of pilgrimage for the preceding half-century—and experiencing the thrill and power of the highly nationalistic and well-disciplined spectacle of Nazism, was irresistible, regardless of their political or ethical positions. Furthermore, this deep-seated attraction to aspects of Nazism surely contributes to an explanation of the events of the early 1940s in France, and to the way in which German authorities were able to successfully implement the programs of Franco-German cultural collaboration which will be examined in Chapters Four and Five.

Bayreuth in the Parisian press, 1940–44

As France moved closer to war, direct reports on the Bayreuth Festival were few and far between and, unsurprisingly, in 1939 not a single article on Bayreuth was published in the Parisian press. The Festival did, however, carry on in spite of the turmoil in Europe. Winifred Wagner cancelled the 1940 Festival when war was declared, only to see it reinstated by Hitler, who evidently considered it to be a national priority.³⁴⁶ By this point the event was totally dependent on the Chancellor's financial and moral support, and its role had changed significantly. The Festivals held between 1940 and 1944 were referred to as 'War Festivals', and were run through the Nazis' leisure and tourism organisation Strength Through Joy (*Kraft durch Freude*). Tickets were distributed to wounded soldiers, arms factory workers, and Nazi officials, as well as some VIP guests. The Festival had now become predominantly an event for internal propaganda, and there was much less focus on utilising it as a propaganda tool directed towards other European countries such as France. Frederic Spotts writes that it became little more than 'an opportunity for cultural propaganda, and cultural propaganda of a particularly brutal and belligerent sort', to the point where the event seemed to have little to do with either Wagner or opera.³⁴⁷

Because the Festival was no longer open to the public, the Parisian press was only able to provide reports or reviews upon invitation from the *Führer* himself. It appears

³⁴⁶ Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 322.

³⁴⁷ Spotts, *Bayreuth*, 190–93.

that the only Parisian publications able to report on the Festival during wartime were *Comœdia* in 1941 and the *Cahiers franco-allemands* in 1943. Both these journals were, of course, controlled by the German authorities under the Occupation. *Comœdia*, a daily theatre journal that had run between 1907 and 1937, reopened in occupied France as a weekly arts journal that trumpeted its ‘independence’ and neutrality while taking an uncompromisingly collaborationist line.³⁴⁸ It was a very popular journal, beginning with a print run of 45 000 in its first month.³⁴⁹ Its very first issue upon reopening contained an article by music critic Pierre Leroi, entitled ‘In Bayreuth on the “Sacred Hill”’. Although the article is actually a response to the 1941 Paris tour of the Berlin Staatsoper and Bayreuth artists (examined in detail in Chapter Five), Leroi reflects on the Bayreuth experience, and the way in which it constitutes ‘An example for France’.³⁵⁰ Suggesting that France could perhaps establish a Debussy festival, he writes that, ‘Bayreuth is one of Germany’s purest glories. A great example has thus been given to us.’³⁵¹ This admiring tone in relation to Bayreuth and Germany demonstrates continuity with the sentiments considered in the earlier sections of this chapter, yet it now takes on a new meaning: as France is now occupied by Germany, and Germany is in the midst of a campaign of seductive cultural domination in France, admiration of the Bayreuth Festival and the place of Wagner in Nazi Germany constitutes approval and support of the new policy of Franco-German Collaboration, as would be expected in the state-sanctioned Parisian press under the Occupation. What is interesting, though, is that the admiring tone that was so prevalent in the 1930s press makes the Occupation-era admiration possible—there is no violent rupture or stark inconsistency with the prevailing views of the 30s. Rather, a smooth transition is achieved between pre-war and Occupation rhetoric, making the new Wagner discourse of occupied Paris easier to accept. As we shall see in the following chapters, this was exactly what the occupiers had hoped to achieve.

Comœdia published two more anonymously-authored articles on Bayreuth in 1941, both of which actually reported on that year’s Festival. These appear to be the only reports on Bayreuth published in the Parisian press that year. They were little more

³⁴⁸ Olivier Gouranton, ‘*Comœdia*. Un journal sous influences’, *La Revue des revues* 24 (1997): 111–12.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 114.

³⁵⁰ ‘Un exemple pour la France’

Pierre Leroi, ‘À Bayreuth sur la « colline sacrée »’, *Comœdia*, 21 June 1941, 7.

³⁵¹ ‘Bayreuth est une des plus pures gloires d’Allemagne. Un grand exemple nous a ainsi été donné.’ *Ibid.*

than propaganda, praising Hitler for insisting that, ‘despite the war, nothing is sacrificed in conserving all the beauty of the works performed.’³⁵² The author goes on to report on a speech made by the head of the German Labour Front (*Deutsche Arbeitsfront*) Robert Ley, who made similar speeches at each one of the War Festivals. Ley’s main argument, obediently repeated by *Comædia*, was that Germany’s war was ‘a crusade of culture against barbarity’, and that ‘Germany’s victory will be a victory for culture.’³⁵³ The idea of preserving beauty in the midst of war and horror resurfaces in the second review, published in the following edition:

A deep meaning emerges from the fact that above the fray, on the eve of so much upheaval, the worship of the beautiful can momentarily wrest men from their own destiny, protect them from unavoidable tribulations, and carry them at once to the spirit’s greatest heights, amongst the treetops where the pure air of perfect beauty blows.³⁵⁴

The romanticised imagery of raising men to great heights through culture strongly suggests Nazi rhetoric, and it is clear that the *Comædia* articles had as their main purpose the promotion of German culture and its effect on the people.

The only other review of the Festival published in the Parisian press under the Occupation was in the *Cahiers franco-allemands* in late 1943. As discussed in Chapter Two, the German-run *Cahiers* was a bilingual publication established by the Comité France-Allemagne as a means of cultivating acceptance of National Socialism in France, under the guise of promoting peace and rapprochement. In 1943 it published a three-page article by Edouard Dujardin, entitled ‘Bayreuth 1943’. Dujardin’s article is highly significant in that it is the only in-depth piece of writing on the Bayreuth Festival published in the Parisian press during the time that France was occupied by Germany. Dujardin’s own personal history of intense involvement in

³⁵² ‘Le chancelier Hitler a tenu à ce que, malgré la guerre, rien ne soit sacrifié pour conserver toute leur beauté aux œuvres représentées.’

‘Les Festspiele wagnériens se sont ouverts par le « Vaisseau fantôme », *Comædia*, 26 July 1941, 7.

³⁵³ ‘la croisade de la culture contre la barbarie.’

‘La victoire de l’Allemagne sera celle de la culture.’

Ibid.

³⁵⁴ ‘un sens profond se dégage du fait qu’au-dessus de la mêlée, à la veille de tant de bouleversements, le culte du beau puisse arracher momentanément les hommes à leur propre destin, les préserver des inéluctables vicissitudes, et les porter, d’emblée, aux plus hautes altitudes de l’esprit, parmi les cimes où souffle l’air pur de la parfaite beauté.’

‘Les Fêtes de Bayreuth’, *Comædia*, 2 August 1941, 7.

French Wagnerism makes the article all the more important, as it provides an opportunity to look at whether his ideas about Wagner evolved over time, and whether they were influenced by political circumstances and a censored press.

In 1943, Dujardin was 82 years old and had been attending the Bayreuth Festival for more than 60 years, giving him a unique perspective on its evolution and its place in German society.³⁵⁵ He was famous for co-founding the literary journal *La Revue wagnérienne*, which ran for two years at the height of French Wagnerism in the mid-1880s. Dujardin's own variety of Wagnerism was influenced by his distaste for what he saw as the superficiality and emptiness of French opera. The Franco-Prussian War of 1870 had led many French people to blame the 'immoral' and hedonistic values of the Second Empire for France's defeat, and to search for a new pathway for French culture and society. For Dujardin, Wagner's music represented artistic progress and thus the way forward for France.³⁵⁶ The focus of *La Revue wagnérienne*, however, was on the literary ramifications of Wagnerism rather than on the music itself, and Noel Verzosa writes that the *Revue* eventually lost credibility amongst more 'musically oriented readers'.³⁵⁷ Nevertheless, Dujardin's personal passion for the music did not weaken and he continued to be a regular and devoted visitor at the Bayreuth Festival.

Dujardin's Festival visit of 1943 was different from his previous visits, in that he was an invited guest and probably one of very few French visitors, rather than a paying attendee—tickets to the War Festivals were distributed by the *Führer* and Winifred Wagner only. The invitation may be seen as a rather desperate measure on the part of the Third Reich: by this point it was becomingly increasingly clear that Germany might lose the war, and French public opinion was gradually turning from sympathy with the Allies and the Resistance to outright support for them.³⁵⁸ Dujardin was presumably invited on the agreement that he would subsequently publish a glowing report in the *Cahiers franco-allemands*. Indeed, Dujardin's report is more than glowing: it is a wholehearted endorsement of the Nazi worldview and of Bayreuth's

³⁵⁵ Albert Lavignac's list of French Festival attendees during the first 20 years of the Festival's existence records Dujardin's attendance at six of the 11 Festivals. See Lavignac, *Le voyage artistique*, 549–78.

³⁵⁶ Noel Verzosa, 'Wagner Reception and French Modernity Before and After Baudelaire: The Case of the *Revue wagnérienne*', *Music Research Forum* 22 (2007): 7.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁵⁸ Pierre Laborie, *L'Opinion française sous Vichy* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1990), 282–7.

place within it. He is clear from the outset that his experience of the Festival, complemented by a few days of tourism in Germany, allows him to provide an eyewitness account of the state of Germany in 1943.³⁵⁹ Bayreuth, he seems to suggest, is a microcosm of Germany. He then goes on to explain the significance of his own longitudinal perspective of the Festival:

I had gone to Bayreuth for the first time in 1882 [the second Bayreuth Festival] and had returned frequently. So I saw in turn the victorious Germany of 1871, then the defeated Germany of 1919, before seeing the once again victorious Germany of 1943. And, since this is a matter of providing an eye-witness account, mine is that, victorious or vanquished, Germany remained the same. No more conceitedness after the victory than anger or even bad temper after the defeat. Same moral conduct, same preoccupation with art. Same courteous welcome for foreigners, notably for the French.³⁶⁰

Dujardin depicts Bayreuth as a serene and peaceful place; like the critics of the 1930s, he is eager to note that nothing has changed, and that the Germans are polite, welcoming people and hold no grudge against the French. And yet we know that the War Festivals were significantly different, if only because of the changed demographic of the audiences.

Before discussing the performance itself (*Die Meistersinger*), Dujardin comments on what he calls ‘a curious phenomenon’:

Wagner’s will was to create an eminently German art, and in reality everything is deeply German in his realisations, in the text and the spirit of his works as much as in their interpretation and presentation. And this work, so intensely German, groups together, through a community of emotions, believers of all nations in a kind of spiritual internationalism.

³⁵⁹ Edouard Dujardin, ‘Bayreuth 1943’, *Cahiers franco-allemands* (September–December 1943): 235. See Appendix C20.

³⁶⁰ ‘J’étais allé à Bayreuth pour la première fois en 1882 et y étais retourné fréquemment. J’ai donc vu tour à tour l’Allemagne victorieuse de 1871, puis l’Allemagne vaincue de 1919, avant de voir l’Allemagne de nouveau victorieuse de 1943. Et, puisqu’il s’agit d’apporter un témoignage, le mien est que, victorieuse ou vaincue, l’Allemagne est restée la même. Pas plus de forfanterie après la victoire, que de colère ou même de mauvaise humeur après la défaite. Même tenue morale, même préoccupation d’art. Même accueil cordial envers les étrangers, notamment envers les Français.’
Ibid.

Here is the model of an internationalism which would be not the odious unification of all peoples, but rather their fraternal union, a kind of confederation where each one conserves its specific characteristics, that is to say, its own soul. This is the ideal toward which Europe should reach, and it is what Houston S. Chamberlain posed in his *Foundations [of the Nineteenth Century]* and, we cannot repeat it enough, what contemporary Germany strives to achieve.

No climate is better suited to such an achievement than that of Bayreuth, and we understand that the German government grants the work of the *Festspiele* a completely different support than it would grant to a simple art town.³⁶¹

It is clear here that Dujardin is using the Bayreuth Festival—and his participation in it—as a model for Hitler's New Europe, or at the very least the idea of New Europe that Hitler had sold to the French over the preceding decade: a Europe where France could maintain its national characteristics, and where the French could continue worshipping Wagner as they had in previous decades, but where German culture was also seen as 'international', and maintained a superior status to all other national cultures. Dujardin's article contains no commentary on the performance itself, other than to say that it was a 'perfect success'.³⁶² Bayreuth's interest for him lies only in its symbolic position at the heart of Nazi Germany, and as a representation of Germany's achievements and aspirations. Given that Dujardin's initial attraction to Wagner was born in the context of a more widespread admiration for German culture, and a belief that France needed to emulate aspects of what was happening in Germany, his position on Wagner and Bayreuth in this article could be seen as unsurprising. And

³⁶¹ 'La volonté de Wagner a été de créer un art éminemment allemand, et en réalité tout est profondément allemand dans ses réalisations, aussi bien dans le texte et l'esprit de ses œuvres que dans leur interprétation et leur présentation ; et cette œuvre si intensément allemande groupe, par le fait d'une communauté d'émotions, des fidèles de toutes les nations dans une sorte d'internationalisme spirituel.

Il y a là comme modèle d'un internationalisme qui serait, non pas l'unification odieuse de tous les peuples, mais leur union fraternelle, sorte de confédération où chacun conserve ses caractères particuliers, c'est-à-dire son âme propre. C'est là l'idéal vers lequel l'Europe devrait tendre, et c'est celui que Houston S. Chamberlain a posé dans ses « Grundlagen » et, on ne saurait assez le répéter, celui que l'Allemagne contemporaine s'efforce de réaliser.

Nul climat mieux que celui de Bayreuth n'est propice à une telle réalisation, et l'on comprend que le gouvernement allemand accorde à l'œuvre des Festspiele un tout autre appui que celui qu'il accorderait à une simple ville d'art.'

Ibid., 236.

³⁶² 'parfaite réussite'
Ibid., 237.

yet his attitude towards Wagner as expressed in this article also represents a fundamental change: throughout his life, Dujardin was genuinely and passionately interested in Wagner's music and in the implications of his art for other art forms such as literature. In the article cited above, however, his intellectual engagement is reduced to a political framing of Wagner that validates the Nazi worldview.

The tone of Dujardin's article is also significantly different from that of the articles examined in Part I of this chapter: the ambivalent mixture of fear and attraction is gone. Although he repeats the assurance of the 1930s that 'nothing has changed', he cannot afford to equivocate about Wagner and Bayreuth as critics had in the 1930s. The mixed feelings that were so evident in that pre-war period, and that were a reflection of growing unease about Germany and general instability in French domestic life, were no longer an acceptable way of responding to Wagner, and thus to Germany. What was now required was an assertion of Bayreuth's continuing dominance and an explanation of how it fitted into the new worldview from a French perspective, and this was exactly what Dujardin provided.

CHAPTER FOUR

From *le cas Wagner* to *la France européenne*, 1939–44

Introduction

The period 1940–44 in French history is often referred to as *les années noires*: the dark years. Certainly, it was a dark time for those who lived through it, and is now considered as a dark time by all who look back on it: war, invasion, occupation, deprivation, and a surfeit of moral dilemmas. Yet paradoxically, Paris was the centre of a lively and brilliant cultural life during this period. Music played an important role in Parisian culture at this time, both for ordinary Parisians and for the authorities who ruled over them. This is not to say, though, that the massive political rupture suffered by the entire nation had no effect on culture; rather, that culture—and particularly music—became integral to the ways that authorities exercised their power and attained their political goals, and the ways that Parisians responded to the new political circumstances. If music became a political tool for both the Vichy and German authorities, it also became a means for Parisians to make their own political decisions according to the unique set of circumstances in which they found themselves. As Henry Roussio states: ‘Yes, the French sang under the Occupation, but not always to the same tune, nor at the same tempo, nor for the same reasons.’³⁶³

This chapter examines the press reception of Wagner from 1939 to 1944 in all areas of Parisian musical life except the Paris Opéra (the subject of Chapter Five). It covers two discrete periods that divide the chapter into two parts: the first begins in September 1939 with the declaration of war and ends in June 1940 with the arrival of German troops in Paris. This

³⁶³ ‘Oui, les Français ont chanté sous l’Occupation, mais pas toujours avec les mêmes refrains, ni sur les mêmes cadences, ni pour les mêmes raisons.’

Henry Roussio, ‘Avant-propos’, in *La Vie musicale sous Vichy*, ed. Myriam Chimènes (Bruxelles: Complexe, 2001), 16.

part examines the debate in the Parisian press over the performance (or non-performance) of Wagner's music during the *drôle de guerre* period in late 1939 and early 1940, and the connections between this debate and the press campaign against Wagner during the First World War. The second part of the chapter covers the period of the Occupation: June 1940 to August 1944.³⁶⁴ In this section I assess the press response to Wagner under the Occupation through an examination of Wagner-related literature, and the programming of Wagner by concert associations in their regular seasons and for special Wagner celebrations. I end with a brief consideration of how Wagner is represented in the clandestine press of the Resistance.

Wagner in the wartime press, September 1939–June 1940

Background: Declaration of war and the *drôle de guerre*

By 1939, French politicians, as well as the French public, had begun to view war as inevitable, and a sense of defeatism prevailed. The Munich Agreement signed in September 1938 by Hitler, Chamberlain, Mussolini and Daladier had been viewed by many in France as a pragmatic move towards preserving peace, despite widespread ambivalence about its implications.³⁶⁵ Since then, however, it had become clear that France—along with its allies—had been duped by Hitler. Jean-Pierre Azéma writes:

Barely six months after Munich, the French and the British had to face reality: Hitler, who was certainly not a gentleman, was tearing up the scrap of paper from Munich and was playing with gunpowder. They had to resign themselves to war, which nevertheless broke out in a surprising manner.³⁶⁶

On 1 September 1939, Germany invaded Poland. Britain and France declared war on Germany two days later, within six hours of one another. Thus began the period referred to by the French as *la drôle de guerre*—the Phoney War. Historians describe it as a period of ambivalence, disorganisation, waning motivation and low morale on the part of soldiers who had been mobilised but found themselves waiting for months on end for some kind of action.

³⁶⁴ As in Chapter Three, however, the focus remains on the years 1940–43, as there was very little written on Wagner in the Parisian press in 1944.

³⁶⁵ Jean-Pierre Azéma, *De Munich à la Libération (1938–1944)* (Paris: Seuil, 2002), 9–121; Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years 1940–1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 91–3.

³⁶⁶ 'Six mois à peine après Munich, Français et Britanniques devaient se rendre à l'évidence : Hitler, qui n'était décidément pas un gentleman, déchirait le chiffon de papier de Munich et jouait avec la poudre. Il fallut se résigner à la guerre qui éclata pourtant de manière surprenante.' Azéma, *De Munich à la Libération*, 32.

The French, argues Pierre Laborie, had no idea why they were at war and what they were fighting against.³⁶⁷

Yannick Simon writes that the *drôle de guerre* provoked a discussion in the musical press about the state of French music, and the potential aesthetic impact of war on French composition and musical life. The old debates that opposed and compared French and German musical styles resurfaced, and the importance of developing a French style to combat the dominating influences of German music strengthened.³⁶⁸ At the Paris Opéra, German and Italian works were removed from programming.³⁶⁹ Nevertheless, Karine Le Bail has argued that some music institutions and publications took the line of promoting the idea of music as the carrier of peace, beauty and succour in difficult times. National French radio, for example, promoted a policy of ecumenicalism in relation to programming; Le Bail notes that this was far from an apolitical policy, but rather an attempt to steer clear of the infamous blanket bans on German music that had been implemented during the First World War.³⁷⁰ Musical life also faced restrictions, as musicians and employees of musical organisations were mobilised, and entire organisations were moved away from Paris by the government (for example, the Orchestre national and the state radio station were both moved westward to Rennes when war broke out). Some institutions, such as the Opéra and the Opéra Comique, closed for a short period upon the declaration of war, only to be re-opened a few months later.³⁷¹ Simon writes that public taste changed too; ‘serious’ music was preferred over anything that suggested light entertainment or superficiality.³⁷²

Le cas Wagner

In 1914, a heated debate had broken out in the Parisian press over the question of performances of German music, and in particular Wagner’s music, during wartime. The debate was instigated by Camille Saint-Saëns’ provocative attacks on Wagner’s music, and his suggestions that Wagner’s works should be banned from French stages. A number of other prominent writers and musicians soon weighed in on the issue. The debate became explicitly political, with Saint-Saëns claiming that the Germans were using Wagner as a

³⁶⁷ Pierre Laborie, *L’Opinion française sous Vichy* (Paris: Seuil, 1990), 214.

³⁶⁸ Yannick Simon, *Composer sous Vichy* (Lyon: Symétrie, 2009), 8–24.

³⁶⁹ Sandrine Grandgambe, ‘La Réunion des théâtres lyriques nationaux’, in *La Vie musicale sous Vichy*, ed. Myriam Chimènes (Bruxelles: Complexe, 2001), 111.

³⁷⁰ Karine Le Bail, ‘Musique, pouvoir, responsabilité. La politique musicale de la Radiodiffusion française, 1939–1953’ (PhD thesis, Institut d’Études Politiques de Paris, 2005), 64–6.

³⁷¹ Grandgambe, ‘Réunion des théâtres’, 110–11.

³⁷² Simon, *Composer sous Vichy*, 10–11.

weapon of war, and other figures such as Jean Cocteau and Vincent d'Indy defending Wagner and German art. Concepts such as the German 'contamination' of French culture, and the need to keep French music 'pure', became tools in a battle that encompassed much more than music.³⁷³ Ultimately, Saint-Saëns' camp won: German music was banned in France until the end of the war and, as I have mentioned in earlier parts of this study, Wagner's operas did not return to the Paris Opéra until 1921.³⁷⁴

This debate and the subsequent ban were clearly at the forefront of Parisian critics' minds when France found itself once again at war with Germany in late 1939 and early 1940. The response, though, was different to what it had been a quarter of a century earlier. Although I have found no evidence of any official bans, Le Bail writes that during the *drôle de guerre*, France underwent 'a Wagnerian detoxification therapy': works by Wagner were not forbidden to be performed, but rather the performance or broadcasting of his music was 'discouraged' because it was judged unwise to perform it given the circumstances.³⁷⁵ Nevertheless, an examination of the press at the time shows that some writers were under the impression that there was indeed a ban in place. André Delhay wrote on 17 January 1940 that,

[Philippe] Gaubert took down the poster that announced a performance of *The Flying Dutchman*.³⁷⁶ [Georges] Duhamel, the day after the day when he proclaimed that the airwaves would offer the music of all countries to French people in wartime, decided that 'musicians who insulted France would be excluded'. Since then, Wagner is banned from French radio, stage, and concerts.

³⁷³ Marion Schmid has analysed the press debate in detail. See Schmidt, '“A bas Wagner !” The French Press Campaign Against Wagner during World War I', in *French Music, Culture, and National Identity 1870–1939*, Barbara L. Kelly (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2008), 77–91. Also see Jane F. Fulcher, *The Composer as Intellectual: Music and Ideology in France 1914–1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 28–31.

³⁷⁴ Esteban Buch notes that the State took no active role in the ban or the debate that surrounded it; the decision was left up to musical organisations that had the power to institute it. See Buch, '« Les Allemands et les Boches » : La musique allemande à Paris pendant la Première Guerre mondiale', *Le Mouvement social* 208 (July–September 2004), 60.

³⁷⁵ 'une cure de désintoxication wagnérienne'.
'« déconseillée »'.

Le Bail, 'Musique, pouvoir, responsabilité', 64–5.

³⁷⁶ Philippe Gaubert was Music Director at the Paris Opéra at this time. According to the *Journal de l'Opéra*, *Le Vaisseau fantôme* was supposed to have been performed on 1 September 1939, and was cancelled due to political circumstances (Germany invaded Poland on 1 September, and Britain and France declared war on Germany two days later).
See *Journal de l'Opéra*, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k910853d/f9.image>

We can now only enjoy it on disc.³⁷⁷

Indeed, Georges Duhamel—Controller General of Artistic Programmes on the national French radio station—had attempted to reconcile his deeply held love of Wagner’s music with pragmatic political concerns, which ultimately created the impression of hypocrisy. He later tried to explain his decision:

When, at the beginning of the war the High Council of Radio Broadcasting got back to work and we talked about music, I immediately posed the question of Wagner. Having learnt from experience, we very much intended, it goes without saying, not to fall again into certain mistakes of 1914. The High Council accepted the proposed phrase: ‘Everything that is beautiful is ours. Everything that is human is ours.’ Nevertheless, we reached an agreement to avoid certain disturbing allusions. It would be quite ironic, for example, to have the famous ‘pact theme’ resounding today, this theme which, throughout the *Ring* cycle, breaks out in serious situations. For Wagner’s characters always feel the need to sign, even with their blood, treaties that they then betray, and not without enthusiasm.³⁷⁸

Duhamel makes it clear here that the Council was reluctant to officially ban Wagner, but nevertheless felt that the broadcasting of his music had the potential to be dangerous or provocative, and needed to be dealt with sensitively. It is unclear at what point the matter became an issue of public interest, but the first mention of it in the Parisian press is in early January, when Jacques Heugel, chief editor of *Le Ménestrel*—the most prominent music journal in France at that time—published a rather strident article arguing against any attempts to ban performances of Wagner’s music because of the war. Heugel claimed that, ‘Eager to

³⁷⁷ ‘Gaubert arracha l’affiche où était annoncée une représentation du *Vaisseau fantôme*. Duhamel, le lendemain du jour où il avait proclamé que les ondes offriraient aux Français en guerre de la musique de tous les pays, décida que « les musiciens qui ont insulté la France seraient exclus. » Depuis, Wagner est proscrit de la T.S.F., de la scène, des concerts français.

On ne peut plus le déguster qu’en disques.’

André Delhay, ‘La Quatrième Exécution capitale de Richard Wagner à Paris’, *L’Ere nouvelle*, 17 January 1940, 1.

³⁷⁸ ‘Quand, au début de la guerre, le Conseil supérieur de la radiodiffusion s’est remis à l’ouvrage et qu’on a parlé de musique, j’ai tout de suite posé la question de Wagner. Instruits par l’expérience, nous entendions bien, il va sans dire, ne pas retomber dans certaines erreurs de 1914. Le Conseil supérieur acceptait la formule proposée : « Tout ce qui est beau est à nous. Tout ce qui est humain est à nous. » Toutefois, nous sommes tombés d’accord pour éviter certaines allusions inquiétantes. Il serait assez ironique, par exemple, de faire aujourd’hui retentir le fameux « thème du pacte », ce thème qui, tout au long de la Tétralogie, éclate dans les situations graves. Car les personnages de Wagner éprouvent toujours le besoin de signer, même avec leur sang, des traités qu’ils trahissent ensuite, non sans allégresse.’

Georges Duhamel, *Positions françaises. Chronique de l’année 1939* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1940), 166.

be useful, and remembering the exploits of the *wagnérophages* [Wagnerians] of 1914, a certain number of idle intellectuals have set off the ritual offensive against Wagner. Already, in the concerts, we no longer dare to play a note by the great Saxon.³⁷⁹ Heugel's argument is based on the conviction that while Hitler may have 'annexed' Wagner, the *Ring* itself is 'a violent indictment, not only of Hitlerism, but of Prussian Germanism.'³⁸⁰ Curiously, Heugel's strongly worded article, which included two censored lines presumably relating to the current political predicament of France, received no response in the Parisian press during the following days.

The issue was not revived in the press until a concert in early March by the merged Colonne and Lamoureux concert associations. The two associations had agreed to a merger in response to a drop in musician numbers caused by mobilisation and other war-related factors. The arrangement lasted from December 1939 to May 1940.³⁸¹ On 8 March 1940, *Le Ménestrel* reported on an 'incident' at the Colonne-Lamoureux concert of the previous Sunday, where three of Wagner's works—the *Tristan* and *Lohengrin* Preludes and the *Tannhäuser* Overture—were programmed to be performed alongside Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*. It was, according to the article, the first time Wagner's music had appeared on a programme in France since the declaration of war, and 'someone' decided it was an inadvisable programming choice. The *Tristan* and *Lohengrin* Preludes were thus replaced by music by Debussy and Ravel, and the *Tannhäuser* Overture remained as the closing work on the programme. The reporter from *Le Ménestrel* described the overture as a 'calling card ... [designed to] potentially allow any hostile audience members to leave the Chatelêt before the work was performed, as a discreet protest.'³⁸² In the event, however, not a single audience member left the concert hall; rather, they remained seated and followed the performance with an enthusiastic and lengthy standing ovation. The reporter commented that this reception could be understood as warm gratitude mixed with regret at the timidity of the gesture. The

³⁷⁹ 'Désireux de servir à quelque chose et se rappelant les hauts faits des wagnérophages de 1914, un certain nombre d'intellectuels désœuvrés ont déclenché contre Wagner l'offensive rituelle. Déjà, dans les concerts, on n'ose plus jouer une note du grand Saxon.'
Jacques Heugel, 'À propos de Wagner ... encore !', *Le Ménestrel* 102, no. 1 (5 January 1940): 8. See Appendix C13.

³⁸⁰ 'un violent réquisitoire, non seulement contre l'hitlérisme, mais contre le germanisme prussien.'
Ibid.

³⁸¹ Alexandre Laederich, 'Les Associations symphoniques parisiennes', in *La Vie musicale sous Vichy*, ed. Chimènes, 222.

³⁸² 'une carte de visite ... de permettre éventuellement aux auditeurs hostiles de quitter le Chatelêt avant l'exécution de l'œuvre, en matière de protestation discrète.'
P. B., 'Concerts Colonne-Lamoureux', *Le Ménestrel* 102, no. 10 (8 March 1940): 43. See Appendix C14.

article ended with the following comment: ‘The French public understands that Wagner cannot be “annexed” by the contorted propaganda of Hitlerism.’³⁸³

Two days later, Pierre Berlioz began publishing short interviews in *Le Jour* with prominent musical figures responding to the question: ‘Should we play Wagner again?’, and a debate ensued in the press over the following fortnight. Strangely, the programming of Wagner at the Colonne-Lamoureux concert itself does not appear to have caused any disturbance whatsoever; in fact, all reports commented with surprise on the calm manner in which the concert proceeded, and many commentators praised conductor Paul Paray and approvingly quoted his statement that ‘music has no borders’.³⁸⁴ Indeed, it seems that the press stirred up its own debate, probably in response to Berlioz’s interviews, which tended to encourage a black-and-white, for-or-against attitude to the issue. This had the effect of polarising the views of the general public where they had not necessarily been polarised before. It also lent the issue a degree of prominence: a significant number of critics and publications treated it as a serious issue worthy of deeper discussion, and the interpreter André Kaminker even gave a lecture on the issue, entitled ‘Music and War: the Wagner Case’.³⁸⁵

Critics were generally divided on the matter. Berlioz’s series of interviews publicised the opinions of four significant musical figures. Berlioz reminded readers of the ban on Wagner during the First World War, and noted that since war had been declared, Wagner had disappeared from programmes. He asked:

Will we have a Wagner case and will we see again the polemic which divided French musicians during the Great War of 1914–1918? ... Is it time for a resurrection [of Wagner’s music]? What could be the benefits or the dangers? And are the arguments that had been made by public opinion in 1914 still valid?’³⁸⁶

These questions make it clear that the Parisian press viewed the current Wagner debate as being clearly framed by and inextricable from the First World War Wagner ban and the way

³⁸³ ‘Le public français comprend que Wagner ne saurait être « annexé » par la propagande grimaçante de l’hitlérisme.’

Ibid., 44.

³⁸⁴ See, for example, ‘La Première Audition de guerre d’une œuvre de Wagner provoque de légers incidents’, *Le Matin*, 12 March 1940, 2; ‘La Revue des faits’, *Le Journal des débats*, 13 March 1940, 3; Pierre Berlioz, ‘Wagner chez Colonne’, *Le Jour*, 11 March 1940, 4.

³⁸⁵ The lecture was advertised in a number of the daily papers. No subsequent report of the event appears to have been published.

³⁸⁶ ‘Aurons-nous un cas Wagner et reverrons-nous la polémique qui pendant la Grande Guerre de 1914–1918, divisa les musiciens français? ... Une résurrection est-elle opportune? Quels peuvent en être les bienfaits ou les dangers? Et les arguments qui avaient dressé l’opinion publique en 1914 sont-ils encore valables? Pierre Berlioz, ‘Faut-il rejouer Wagner en France?’, *Le Jour*, 10 March 1940, 1–2. See Appendix C15.

it had divided the French public at the time. Thus their responses were conditioned by the way the earlier debate had been carried out, and a consideration for whether or not they wanted that experience to be repeated.

Pierre Berlioz's first interviewee was Henri Busser, director of the Opéra Comique. Although Busser admitted that in terms of Wagner as a musician, there was no more reason to ban his music than to ban Beethoven's or Schumann's, he argued that Hitler's connection with Wagner made the composer of the *Ring* a special case, and it would be inadvisable to return his music to programmes at the present moment. He explained:

All of Hitler is in the *Ring* and we have before us the Siegfried Line.³⁸⁷

...

Unfortunately, Wagner's work presents a very particular psychosis. Without going back over all the hatred that the man had dedicated to France ... it's this constant exaltation of violence and force.

The *Ring* holds the germ of all Hitler's theories. These are theft, betrayal and murder, which are at the core of almost all Wagnerian heroes, and these heroes are symbols for Hitler, who assimilates himself only too easily to them ...

Wagner's work is the reflection of the Germanic soul, brutal and conquering, it is the face of eternal Germany; but at the moment when the line where our sons will perhaps fight tomorrow is called *Siegfried*, it seems to me inopportune to lavish our applause on it.³⁸⁸

Busser's objection is based on the ideas at the heart of Wagner's operas, ideas which epitomise for him the cruelty and violence of France's enemy. Yet he gives the impression that if Wagner's music had not been appropriated by the Nazis, and his ideas had not been

³⁸⁷ The Siegfried Line was a German defence line constructed opposite the French Maginot Line which ran along the Franco-German border in north-eastern France.

³⁸⁸ 'Tout Hitler est dans la « Tétralogie » et nous avons devant nous la ligne Siegfried. ... Malheureusement, l'œuvre de Wagner présente une psychose bien particulière. Sans aller reprendre toute la haine que l'homme avait vouée à la France ... c'est cette exaltation constante de la violence et de la force.

La *Tétralogie* contient en puissance toutes les théories d'Hitler. Ce sont le vol, la trahison et le meurtre qui sont le propre de presque tous les héros wagnériens, et ces héros sont des symboles pour Hitler, qui ne s'assimile que trop à eux ... l'œuvre de Wagner, c'est le reflet de l'âme germanique, brutale et conquérante, c'est le visage de l'Allemagne éternelle ; mais au moment où la ligne où nos fils se battront peut-être demain s'appelle *Siegfried*, il ne me paraît pas opportun de lui prodiguer nos applaudissements.'

Berlioz, 'Faut-il rejouer Wagner en France ?', 2.

developed by National Socialism, his works would have been considered as little more than German music. For Busser, it is the Wagner–Hitler connection that makes this music more dangerous than any other in wartime, and this connection obviously adds a new dimension to the debate, one that had certainly not existed during the First World War.³⁸⁹ Busser’s point of view was one that was rarely heard before the declaration of war; as the earlier chapters of this thesis show, the French were far more concerned with maintaining a French claim to Wagner than they were with rejecting Wagner because of his links to Hitler and Nazi Germany. Busser’s need to reject Wagner as a way of rejecting Germany was borne out of new political circumstances, and although many critics in the *drôle de guerre* period disagreed with him, his perspective certainly had some support. Significantly, a year and a half after having written this article, when the German occupation of France was well under way, Busser was removed from his position at the Opéra Comique, apparently on account of the ideas on Wagner and Hitler expressed in this article.³⁹⁰

Léon Daudet—an important player in the prominent extreme Right movement *Action française*—seemed to share Busser’s position. Daudet had been a vocal supporter of the ban on Wagner’s music during the First World War, in spite of the fervent Wagnerism of his youth, which he described as a kind of obsessive escape from the medical training he and his fellow students were undertaking at the time.³⁹¹ Even in 1908—the first year of *Action française*’s eponymous publication—Daudet had been warning his readers of the dangers of listening to Wagner’s music because of its ability to dissolve one’s energy and courage and

³⁸⁹ Interestingly, it seems that Busser was not always so vigorously anti-Wagner. In the BnF catalogue, he is listed as a contributor to the 1892 edition of *Lohengrin*, with Charles Nutter’s French translation of the libretto. Much later, he provided musical analysis of *Rienzi* and *Le Vaisseau fantôme* for the 1951 edition of Lavignac’s *Voyage artistique à Bayreuth*.

³⁹⁰ Yannick Simon, ‘Robert Bernard et le devenir de *La Revue musicale*’ in Henry Prunières (1886–1942). *Un musicologue engagé dans la vie musicale de l’entre-deux-guerres*, ed. Myriam Chimènes, Florence Gétreau and Catherine Massip (Paris: Société française de musicologie, 2015), 450.

Note that Barbara L. Kelly’s entry on Busser in *Grove Music Online* states that Busser was dismissed because of remarks on Wagner published in *Paris-Soir*, and Yannick Simon writes that Busser was dismissed because of an interview he gave to *Les Échos de Paris* in May 1940. (Simon also suggests that Busser may have been dismissed because of suspected Jewish heritage; his name appeared in the 1941 edition of the *Lexicon der Juden in der Musik*.) Neither of these accounts is entirely correct. While Busser’s dismissal was reported in *Paris-Soir*, his remarks on Wagner were only published in *Le Jour*, and it is these remarks that must have been held against him. Mathias Auclair writes that a letter from Jacques Rouché confirms that Busser was dismissed because of an interview he gave in which he dishonoured both Hitler and Wagner. It is almost certain that Rouché was referring to Busser’s interview with Pierre Berlioz, published in *Le Jour* on 10 March 1940 (see Appendix C15). See Barbara L. Kelly, ‘Büsser, Henri’, *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, accessed 18 April 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezp.lib.unimelb.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/04443>; Simon, *Composer sous Vichy*, 95; Auclair, ‘Richard Wagner à l’Opéra’, 75.

³⁹¹ Léon Daudet, ‘Wagner et nous’, *La Revue du siècle*, September 1933, cited in Charles-Henry Hirsch, ‘Les Revues : *La Revue du siècle*’, *Mercure de France* 247, no. 849 (1 November 1933): 694–6. This first appeared in Daudet, *Devant la douleur. Souvenirs des milieux littéraires, politiques, artistiques et médicaux de 1880 à 1905. 2ème série* (Paris: Nouvelle librairie nationale, 1905), 206.

lower one's guard, like an opium.³⁹² Daudet, who held strong anti-German convictions despite his admiration of fascism, was convinced of Wagner's pan-Germanism and saw him as playing a significant role in contemporary German imperialism, writing in January 1940 that 'Wagner belonged, before his time, to the swastika.'³⁹³ He described pan-Germanism as, 'the night, the darkness of Leipzig and of Hitler. We await, with confidence, the victorious dawn.'³⁹⁴ Yet his anti-Wagner stance was complicated by his history of Wagnerism in his youth, and his position in the debate was not a strident one. Some weeks after the January article he published a second article, titled 'Le Cas Wagner', proclaiming that '*Salus populi suprema lex esto*' (The health of the people should be the supreme law), and suggesting that, 'It would be best to leave [Wagner] aside'.³⁹⁵

The writer Clément Vautel took it upon himself to respond to Daudet's arguments, prompting yet another critic—Jean B. of *L'Ordre*—to provide commentary on the heated exchange and attempt to disentangle the arguments.³⁹⁶ Vautel published three articles in quick succession in *Le Journal*, in his customary column entitled 'Mon film', and it is clear from his comments that the articles attracted correspondence from his readers. His first article drew readers' attention to Daudet's apparent hypocrisy, reminding them that in 1887 Daudet had ridiculed anti-Wagner protestors who prevented the season of *Lohengrin* that had been planned at the Opéra. Now, Vautel pointed out, Daudet was recommending that Wagner be 'left aside'. Vautel refused to take sides on the current '*cas Wagner*', but admitted that Wagner's work glorified the ever more powerful Germany, and wondered whether a ban might be appropriate given the current Franco-German relationship.³⁹⁷ Two days later, Vautel expanded on the theme but continued to avoid making a clear statement on the question of '*Faut-il rejouer Wagner?*' He quoted both Paul Paray ('Music knows no borders!') and Camille Saint-Saëns ('If art has no *patrie*, artists have one.'). He was certain, however, that German cultural influence was dangerous and, like Busser, he used the metaphor of the military defence lines separating France and Germany to make his argument:

³⁹² Léon Daudet, 'Au marmiteon de Lohengrin', *L'Action française*, 29 April 1908, 1.

³⁹³ 'Wagner appartenait, avant la lettre, à la Croix gammée.'

Léon Daudet, 'Wagner et le pangermanisme', *L'Action française*, 23 January 1940, 1. See Appendix C16.

³⁹⁴ 'ce pangermanisme c'est la nuit, la ténèbre de Leipzig et d'Hitler. Nous attendons, avec confiance, l'aube victorieuse.'

Ibid.

³⁹⁵ 'Mieux vaut le laisser de côté'.

Léon Daudet, 'Le Cas Wagner', *L'Action française*, 11 March 1940, 1. See Appendix C17.

³⁹⁶ Jean B., 'Pour ou contre l'ostracisme ? A propos du « cas Wagner »', *L'Ordre*, 18 March 1940. Press clipping, BnF Arts du spectacle, Recueil 'Richard Wagner', 8-RO-7400 (VII) no. 2.

³⁹⁷ Clément Vautel, 'Mon film : Wagner et le marmiteon', *Le Journal*, 12 March 1940, 3. See Appendix C18.

In France, incidentally, Germanism has an intellectual, artistic and social impact that is far more belligerent than that of all the bellicose ‘heroes’ of the mythology put into music by Wagner.

Our higher education has almost lost its traditional characteristics, its national spirit, by adopting the methods of the *doktors* and the *professors* of Berlin, Heidelberg, Iéna.

We must fight against this insidious invasion ... Excluding Wagner’s music from our programmes would not be enough: French taste, spirit, and genius also need a Maginot Line.³⁹⁸

Vautel’s military metaphors are no coincidence; in spite of his refusal to explicitly advocate for a ban on Wagner, he quite deliberately evokes the vulnerability of French culture and national identity, and views them as being endangered by Germany in the same way as France’s physical borders are under threat. Although he does not say so explicitly, one senses that for Vautel, Wagner’s music is just one element of this greater threat; just as France institutes military protection of its physical borders, it must also guard itself against damaging cultural invasion.

Pierre Berlioz’s second interviewee was the composer Georges Hüe. He took the opposite view to Busser, arguing that Wagner’s operas were works of genius and that Wagner could not be called to account for the current political situation: ‘let us not mix art and politics.’³⁹⁹ Hüe’s words echoed those of André Delhay, who had asked his readers in January of that year: ‘would it not be reasonable to acknowledge that it is childish to mix art and politics, especially when it comes to a universal genius?’⁴⁰⁰

The third interviewee—Philippe Gaubert, the Director of the Paris Opéra, who was earlier condemned by André Delhay for cancelling a performance of *Le Vaisseau fantôme* scheduled

³⁹⁸ ‘Le germanisme exerce d’ailleurs, en France, une action intellectuelle, artistique, sociale autrement conquérante que celle de tous les « héros » belliqueux de la mythologie mise en musique par Wagner. Notre haut enseignement a failli perdre ses caractéristiques traditionnelles, son esprit national, en adoptant les méthodes des *doktors* et des *professors* de Berlin, de Heidelberg, d’Iéna. Il faut lutter contre cette invasion perlée ... Exclure de nos programmes la musique de Wagner ne suffirait pas : le goût, l’esprit, le génie français ont aussi besoin d’une ligne Maginot.’

Clément Vautel, ‘Mon Film : L’autre ligne Maginot’, *Le Journal*, 14 March 1940, 3. See Appendix C18.

³⁹⁹ ‘ne mêlons pas l’art à la politique.’

Pierre Berlioz, ‘Faut-il rejouer du Wagner?’, *Le Jour*, 11 March 1940, 4. See Appendix C15.

⁴⁰⁰ ‘est-ce qu’il ne serait pas raisonnable de convenir qu’il est puéril de mêler l’art à la politique, surtout lorsqu’il s’agit d’un génie universel ?’
Delhay, ‘Quatrième Exécution capitale’, 2.

for the day that Germany invaded Poland—was less strident about his position than either Hüe or Busser. He argued cautiously that,

The Wagner question is still sensitive.

We are still feeling too greatly the effects of German aggression to return with a deliberate step to he who glorified so highly the eternal instincts of the Germans. From a purely musical point of view, Wagner is truly a titan. The place he occupies is immense. He has inspired an entire generation of composers and we cannot consider ignoring this.

Nevertheless, from a national perspective, it seems to me that we could wait a little. It is perhaps a bit premature to return to it so quickly and there are enough French composers to supply this first symphonic season of the war.

At the Opéra, his works are on standby for the moment and I do not believe the moment has yet come to change our course of action.⁴⁰¹

Gaubert's efforts to appear reasonable and measured are revealing, and reflect a more widespread attitude that supported a 'temporary' ban on the performance of Wagner's works, without actually condemning Wagner or his music. All this seemed based on an assumption that audiences would not appreciate hearing Wagner's music during wartime, when sensitivities were heightened. And yet, the reported responses to the Colonne-Lamoureux concert in March suggested otherwise.

Pierre Berlioz's fourth and final interviewee was Jacques-Gabriel Prod'homme, the chief librarian of the Paris Opéra library (discussed in Chapter One). Prod'homme was a fervent Wagnerian, a well-respected musicologist and critic, and the author of a significant body of translations of Wagner's prose works and libretti into French. His 1921 book *Richard*

⁴⁰¹ 'La question Wagner est encore délicate.

Nous sommes encore trop sous le coup des agressions germaniques pour revenir d'un pas délibéré à celui qui glorifia si haut les instincts éternels des Germains. Au point de vue purement musical, Wagner est véritablement un titan. La place qu'il occupe est immense. Il a enthousiasmé toute une génération de musiciens et l'on ne peut pas songer à s'en passer.

Toutefois, sur le plan national, il me semble qu'on pourrait attendre un peu. Il est peut-être un peu prématuré d'y revenir si rapidement et il y a suffisamment de compositeurs français pour alimenter cette première saison symphonique de guerre.

À l'Opéra, ses ouvrages sont en sommeil pour l'instant et je ne crois pas que le moment soit encore venu pour changer de ligne de conduite.'

Pierre Berlioz, 'Le Cas Wagner. L'Opinion de Philippe Gaubert', *Le Jour*, 12 March 1940, 4. See Appendix C15.

Wagner et la France, which consisted of two parts. The first, ‘Wagnerism in France Before the War’, was a brief history of the difficult reception of Wagner’s works in France. The much longer second part was entitled ‘The Wagner Question Since the War’, and discussed debates in the press about banning Wagner’s music during the First World War. In the book, Prod’homme vigorously defended Wagner against all the arguments that had been levelled against him (or his music) and concluded that his pan-Germanism never really existed at all. Written while Wagner’s music continued to remain absent from the Opéra stage, Prod’homme’s book can be seen as an attempt to rehabilitate Wagner’s music in France following the war.⁴⁰²

When interviewed by Berlioz for *Le Jour*, Prod’homme simply responded, ‘A quarrel about Wagner? ... This is ancient history! I don’t see the point of taking up the cudgels for a question that is long dead!’⁴⁰³ He insisted that in terms of nationalism, the question of performing Wagner in France was not even an issue, and claimed that during the 1870 Franco-Prussian War, Wagner’s works were played ‘constantly’ at the Paris Opéra. This was a bizarre assertion, particularly as he claimed that it was based on archival research; Wagner’s works were not successfully performed at the Paris Opéra until the 1891 *Lohengrin* production. He also makes the dubious claim that *Die Meistersinger* was written with an anti-German intention in mind. He continues:

I must surprise you, but, to my mind, the only position that one can take currently is purely commercial. Wagner[’s music] has been in the public domain since January 1914. Each time we play it, the company concerned receives the royalties. These are allocated to the beneficiaries, that is, the translators, the adaptors, or their heirs. There is no reason to deprive them of it. Likewise for the symphonic societies which survive with difficulty. If Wagner allows them to balance their budget, in the end all musicians will benefit.

⁴⁰² Jacques-Gabriel Prod’homme, *Wagner et la France* (Paris: Maurice Sénart, 1921).

⁴⁰³ ‘Une querelle à propos de Wagner ? ... Mais c’est de l’histoire ancienne ! Je ne vois pas l’utilité de rompre des lances sur une question qui est morte depuis longtemps !’
Pierre Berlioz, ‘Le Cas Wagner. « Wagner est un classique ... »’, *Le Jour*, 15 March 1940, 4. See Appendix C15.

No, believe me, at a time when Wagner has completely fallen in Germany, where they play his music less and less, to create a quarrel about him would truly be blowing on cold embers.⁴⁰⁴

Prod'homme's assertions are surprising, not only because he claims that Wagner is going out of fashion in Germany, when we know that his music was in fact being heavily promoted by the Reich, but also because he reduces the matter to a commercial one. Whereas in the past he engaged in the debate over Wagner's place in France, here he suggests that he is refusing to do so (although he is engaging with it simply by agreeing to be interviewed on the matter). The sub-heading of the article—Prod'homme's quotation 'Wagner is a classic'—is supposed to place Wagner above politics and nation, and on a universal plane, accessible to all. As it had been in 1933, it was part of an attempt to remove Wagner from national debates that opposed France and Germany, and prevent Wagner's music from being claimed exclusively by Germany. Given Prod'homme's lifelong investment in the composer's music, this was perhaps the only dignified path open to him when asked for an opinion on what the status of the music should be during wartime.

It was Gustave Samazeuilh who had the last word on the matter on 23 March, in the art and literature periodical *Les Nouvelles littéraires*. As always, he portrayed himself (and Wagner) as being above politics:

You will allow me to not associate myself with the polemics that some seem to be resuscitating, like in 1915, about the work of Richard Wagner which they feel should disappear for now from our programmes. Just like the works of Bach, Mozart and Beethoven, however, Wagner's work affirms the mark of the genius with enough power that it soars above conflicts, human circumstances, and even the acts of a

⁴⁰⁴ 'Je dois vous étonner, mais, à mon sens, la seule position qu'on puisse prendre actuellement est une position purement commerciale. Wagner est tombé dans le domaine public depuis janvier 1914. Chaque fois qu'on en joue, les sociétés intéressées encaissent les droits d'auteur. Ceux-ci sont répartis aux ayants droit, c'est-à-dire les traducteurs, adaptateurs ou leurs héritiers. Il n'y a pas de raison pour les en priver.

De même pour les sociétés symphoniques qui vivent péniblement. Si Wagner leur permet d'équilibrer leur budget, au fond tous les musiciens en profiteront.

Non, croyez-moi, au moment surtout où Wagner est complètement tombé en Allemagne, où on le joue de moins en moins, créer une querelle à son sujet, ce serait vraiment souffler sur des cendres froides.'

Ibid.

regime on which the author of *Parsifal*, jealous all his life of his independence, and passed away 57 years ago, cannot express an opinion.⁴⁰⁵

Citing the many illustrious French composers who had admired Wagner as a composer, and applauding the sensible behaviour of the audience at the Colonne-Lamoureux concert earlier in the month, he wrote approvingly that ‘common sense and a sense of justice have always been French virtues.’⁴⁰⁶ These comments formed part of Samazeuilh’s sustained efforts to deny that Wagner could be used as a weapon, and to portray himself as an innocent music-lover who refused to take sides. The article, entitled ‘Should we Exclude Wagner?’, was the only Wagner-related article he published during the *drôle de guerre*. Although he was no longer able to promote Wagner as a means of Franco-German rapprochement since war had been declared in September 1939, he was nevertheless able to retain some continuity in his argument by taking up his old refrain that Wagner was ‘above’ political conflict.

Those who chose to defend Wagner during the *drôle de guerre* period—and it seems that this was the majority—continued to use arguments about universalism and Wagner’s attachment to France and French culture that had been made throughout the 1930s. Henri Busser’s opinion—that Wagner’s music should be banned during the war because it contained the dangerous germ of Hitlerism—was unusual. Nevertheless, there were a number of critics or public musical figures who, although refusing to condemn Wagner or his music, felt that it would be wise to refrain from playing Wagner while sensitivities were high, despite the fact that the audience behaviour at the Colonne-Lamoureux concert in March had been very subdued. The rapprochement discourse discussed in Chapter Two was, of course, entirely unsuitable for the wartime context, and therefore disappeared completely from the press during this short period when France was at war and not yet occupied. The debate over banning Wagner’s music that had taken place in the press during the First World War framed the debate of 1940, 25 years later. The vitriol of the earlier debate was considered to be a source of shame—something not to be repeated if at all possible. And yet it continued to affect the critics of 1939–40, partly because many of them were the same critics who had

⁴⁰⁵ ‘On me permettra de ne pas m’associer aux polémiques que certains semblent ressusciter, comme en 1915, autour de l’œuvre de Richard Wagner qui, à leur sens, devrait en ce moment disparaître de nos programmes. Tout comme celles de Bach, de Mozart, de Beethoven, elle affirme pourtant avec assez de puissance la griffe du génie pour planer au-dessus des conflits, des contingences humaines, et même des actes d’un régime sur lequel l’auteur de *Parsifal*, jaloux toute sa vie de son indépendance, et disparu, au surplus, depuis 57 ans, n’a pas en à donner son sentiment’.

Gustave Samazeuilh, ‘Faut-il exclure Wagner?’, *Les Nouvelles littéraires*, 23 March 1940, 4.

⁴⁰⁶ ‘Le bon sens et le sentiment de la justice ont toujours été des vertus françaises.’
Ibid.

expressed opinions in the First World War debate. One major difference, however, was that while the First World War critics did not even consider the performance of Wagner during wartime (their debate revolved around the question of whether to perform Wagner *after* eventual victory over Germany),⁴⁰⁷ those of the *drôle de guerre* period debated whether or not to play Wagner *during* wartime.

Wagner in the occupied press, 1940–44

Defeat and occupation

The rapidity of the French defeat by Germany in June 1940 came as a devastating surprise to the majority of French people. Just six weeks after the fighting began in May, German tanks were rolling into the streets of Paris. The country was sent into a state of chaos and disarray, as millions of people left their homes in a mass southward exodus, including two million panicked Parisians. Pierre Laborie writes that the military defeat and general state of national disintegration was simply the culmination of a gradual falling apart that had been taking place for some time.⁴⁰⁸ France's state of denial leading up to the war, and its refusal to respond to Germany's increasingly aggressive stance during the 1930s, left the French totally unprepared for what was to come.

The entry of German troops into France sent the French government into a crisis from which the 84-year old Maréchal Pétain—known as the 'hero of Verdun' for his military leadership during the Battle of Verdun in the First World War—emerged as the new French Prime Minister on 16 June. Pétain viewed armistice as the best solution to France's predicament, and the majority of French people agreed with him. He portrayed armistice as the only way to ensure the survival of the French nation, and he envisioned a place for France in a future Nazified Europe. Pétain's image was that of a saviour: both a war hero and a reassuring grandfatherly figure who could be relied upon to rescue the nation. Just as he offered the French a sense of comfort and security, armistice seemed to offer the prospect of peace and a return to a version of normality following the chaos of the preceding weeks.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁷ Buch, '« Les Allemands et les Boches » ', 45–69.

⁴⁰⁸ Laborie, *L'Opinion française sous Vichy*, 68.

⁴⁰⁹ See Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order 1940–1944* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001; 1972), 8–15; Charles Sowerwine, *France since 1870: Culture, Politics and Society* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 199–200; Jackson, *France: The Dark Years*, 123–4.

Armistice was signed on 22 June, and in early July the French government abolished the Third Republic and accorded Pétain full powers as Head of State. France was divided into two zones: the Free Zone in the south—administered by Pétain’s government, which was based in a city in central France called Vichy—and the Occupied Zone in the North, which was under German control.⁴¹⁰ The Occupied Zone covered three fifths of the country and included the richest and most productive territories, including Paris.⁴¹¹ The new regime was accepted by the majority of French people with a sense of resignation and defeat; although Charles de Gaulle and his London-based government-in-exile were offering an alternative to armistice and Franco-German collaboration, it attracted very little interest.⁴¹² Charles Sowerwine asserts that at the beginning of the Occupation in 1940 there was almost universal admiration for Pétain and support for the Vichy government.⁴¹³

Collaboration

On 24 October 1940, four months after armistice had been signed, Hitler met with Maréchal Pétain in a train carriage at Montoire train station. It was here that the two men agreed on the infamous policy of Collaboration. Early historical accounts have depicted Collaboration as a policy that was dictated by the Nazis, and suggested that the Vichy government acted as a shield for the French people during the Occupation.⁴¹⁴ The history of the Occupation was also initially dominated by a Resistance-centric perspective, encouraged by de Gaulle’s insistence on moving on from the ‘dark years’ and refusing to see the ‘real France’ as bearing any responsibility for the Occupation.⁴¹⁵ Since the publication of Robert Paxton’s groundbreaking *Vichy France* in 1972, however, historians have been at pains to point out that armistice and occupation were not the only options available to French leaders, and that Pétain and the Vichy government were voluntary participants in Hitler’s Europe. Not all French people were resisters. Collaboration with Germany was a French goal pushed by French leaders; Hitler simply agreed to it because he saw how it might benefit Germany’s

⁴¹⁰ This arrangement lasted until November 1942, when German troops invaded and occupied the Free Zone, bringing an end to the Vichy government’s administration of this part of France and extending German occupation to the entire country.

⁴¹¹ Burrin, 11.

⁴¹² *Ibid.*, 21–7;

⁴¹³ Sowerwine, *France since 1870*, 213.

⁴¹⁴ Paxton, *Vichy France*, x–xii.

⁴¹⁵ Jackson, *France: The Dark Years*, 1–9

war effort and his plans for expansion and domination. In fact, Hitler had to be persuaded to agree to the arrangement.⁴¹⁶

Pétain saw Collaboration as offering the possibility of greater autonomy than other countries occupied by Germany at the time. His understanding was that French authorities would continue to organise and control certain aspects of the running of the State, particularly in the Free Zone, giving him the opportunity to implement his plans for a ‘National Revolution’.⁴¹⁷ Hitler, on the other hand, was persuaded of the benefits of collaboration once he realised that he could utilise French authorities to carry out German orders, thus freeing up German soldiers and administrators to contribute to the war effort elsewhere. Germany maintained ultimate power in almost all domains, and the ability to draw upon France’s resources for the war. The situation in effect gave the French government the illusion of a degree of power while in actual fact it was at the mercy of Hitler’s will.⁴¹⁸

When Germany occupied France in June 1940, and when the two countries agreed on the policy of Collaboration in October that year, neither the occupiers nor the new Vichy government had a coherent cultural policy. Nevertheless, it is clear that both authorities recognised the potential of culture—and of music in particular—to have a political function, and to reinforce their respective political programs. My focus here will be on the policies of the German authorities in occupied Paris, and the ways in which Parisians responded to them, as it was the occupiers’ policies that significantly affected the performance and reception of Wagner’s music during this time.⁴¹⁹

Musical life was, of course, greatly affected by war and occupation. The mobilisation of French men, the antisemitic exclusion laws introduced by the Vichy government, and the censorship regulations imposed by both sets of authorities, all had a significant impact on musicians and musical life.⁴²⁰ In spite of this, Parisian musical life flourished between 1940

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., 139; Paxton, *Vichy France*, xv, xviii; Sowerwine, *France since 1870*, 195, 204.

⁴¹⁷ For further reading on the Vichy government’s ‘National Revolution’, see Philippe Burrin, ‘The Ideology of the National Revolution’, *The Development of the Radical Right in France: From Boulanger to Le Pen*, ed. Edward J. Arnold (London: Macmillan Press, 2000), 135–52; Jackson, *The Dark Years*, 142–65.

⁴¹⁸ Azéma, *De Munich à la Libération*, 70–74.

⁴¹⁹ Vichy policy, where it did affect Parisian musical life, had a much greater impact on issues related to French music and composers than it did on the performance of German music. See Simon, *Composer sous Vichy*. Also, Karine Le Bail’s recently published book deals with the experiences of French musicians and composers under the Occupation. The book was published after the time of writing, however, and thus is not referenced here. See Le Bail, *La Musique au pas. Être musicien sous l’Occupation* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2016).

⁴²⁰ Ibid., 32–45; Yannick Simon, ‘La SACEM et l’étatisation du droit d’auteur’, in *La Vie musicale sous Vichy*, ed. Chimènes, 53–67; Jean Gribenski, ‘L’Exclusion des juifs du Conservatoire (1940–1942)’, in *La Vie musicale sous Vichy*, ed. Chimènes, 143–56.

and 1944, and cultural historians of the period have consistently remarked upon the surprising amount of continuity in musical life between the 1930s and the Occupation years.⁴²¹ This was partially the result of certain French administrators believing that handing over or shutting down cultural institutions would amount to defeat and loss of national identity.⁴²² More importantly, though, German authorities were determined to maintain a lively cultural life in occupied Paris for numerous strategic reasons. Firstly, maintaining order was a top priority for the occupying authorities; the more the French could govern themselves, the fewer resources the Germans needed to expend on occupying France. A healthy cultural life provided distraction from the difficult conditions that many Parisians were living under and discouraged French hostility towards the occupiers. The overall German strategy was to create an impression that life had returned to normal, thus fostering acceptance of the Occupation and of France's new subordinate place in a Nazified 'New Europe': occupation by seduction rather than by force.⁴²³ As Manuela Schwartz has observed, 'In the eyes of the Nazi observers, music plays the role of political neutraliser and deflects attention from the politico-military conflict.'⁴²⁴

Secondly, it was through culture that Germany hoped to influence France's intellectual and artistic elite, and gradually introduce notions of German cultural superiority to the French. A number of scholars have commented on the Nazis' seemingly contradictory aims of both weakening the French domination of European culture (particularly that centred on Paris) and using Parisian cultural life to flaunt its own power and to maintain order amongst the French population.⁴²⁵ In any case, music was an ideal medium through which to achieve all of these aims, and this was quickly recognised by the occupying authorities. German music was already well liked in France and was thus the perfect tool for discreetly and stealthily demonstrating cultural superiority.⁴²⁶ The aim was never to import National Socialism into

⁴²¹ Le Bail, 'Musique, pouvoir, responsabilité', 5; Simon, *Composer sous Vichy*, 4; Henry Rousso, 'Vichy : politique, idéologie et culture', in *La Vie culturelle sous Vichy* ed. Jean-Pierre Rioux (Paris: Complexe, 1990), 19–38.

⁴²² The director of the Opéra, Jacques Rouché, is one example. See Grandgambe, 'Réunion des théâtres', 109–26.

⁴²³ See Stéphanie Corcy, *La Vie culturelle sous l'Occupation* (Paris: Perrin, 2005), 30; Le Bail, 'Musique, pouvoir, responsabilité', 113; Frederic Spotts, *The Shameful Peace: How French Artists and Intellectuals Survived the Nazi Occupation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 35–6.

⁴²⁴ 'Aux yeux des observateurs nazis, la musique joue un rôle de neutralisant politique et détourne du conflit politico-militaire.'

Manuela Schwartz, 'La Musique, outil majeur de la propagande culturelle des nazis', trans. Laetitia Ingraio, in *La Vie musicale sous Vichy*, ed. Chimènes, 99.

⁴²⁵ For example, see Corcy, *La Vie culturelle*, 45.

⁴²⁶ Schwartz, 'La musique', 89–104; Schwartz, 'La politique musicale dans les territoires conquis par l'Allemagne nazie', in *Le Troisième Reich et la musique*, ed. Pascal Huynh (Paris: Fayard, 2004), 132–5.

France, or to ‘Germanify’ French culture, but rather to weaken it to the point of total submission, and relegate France to a position of inferiority.⁴²⁷

The management of cultural policy and events in occupied Paris was overseen by two German authorities: the *Propaganda-Abteilung* (Propaganda Department), attached to Germany’s Ministry of Propaganda and answerable to Joseph Goebbels, and the *Institut allemand* (German Institute), attached to the German Ministry for Foreign Affairs, headed by Karl Epting and overseen by Otto Abetz, who headed the German Embassy in Paris. The Vichy government also held some authority and responsibility for culture in Paris, although most of their decisions could be overruled by German authorities if necessary. Corcy writes that the *Propaganda-Abteilung* had four stated aims: to repress all anti-German feeling and its manifestations, to circulate an attractive image of Germany, to monitor public opinion, and to liaise with the Reich’s counterespionage service.⁴²⁸ As for the *Institut allemand*, Barbara Lambauer writes that Abetz’s primary task was deception: ‘to put the French under the illusion that Hitler only made war with them reluctantly; that he desires peace with them.’⁴²⁹ It is this approach of deception and illusion that distinguished the methods of the *Institut allemand* from those of the *Propaganda-Abteilung*, and that characterised Abetz’s perspective on Franco-German relations both before and during the Occupation.

Alan Riding has remarked that with hindsight it seems as if Abetz spent the 1930s rehearsing for the Occupation.⁴³⁰ He had worked towards this for a long time. Under him, the Comité France-Allemagne and its mouthpiece, the *Cahiers franco-allemands*, had toiled to change the French view of Hitler and National Socialism to a positive one during the 1930s. Portraying Nazi Germany as peace-loving and desirous of rapprochement, they employed a discourse of peace and entente while plotting the rise of Germany and German culture and the fall of France, as discussed in Chapter Two. Now Abetz was in a position to achieve what he had hoped for, once again using culture as a political weapon. Flown to Paris 20 hours after the occupation of the city, and appointed ambassador some weeks later,⁴³¹ he was the perfect choice to take charge of cultural policy. His training in subtle, manipulative

⁴²⁷ Le Bail, ‘Musique, pouvoir, responsabilité’, 271; Denis Peschanski, ‘Une Politique de la censure ?’, in *La Vie culturelle sous Vichy*, ed. Rioux, 67; Spotts, *The Shameful Peace*, 63.

⁴²⁸ Corcy, *La Vie culturelle*, 29.

⁴²⁹ Barbara Lambauer, ‘Otto Abetz, inspirateur et catalyseur de la collaboration culturelle’, in *Les Intellectuels et l’Occupation, 1940–1944. Collaborer, partir, résister*, ed. Albrecht Betz and Stefan Martens (Paris: Editions Autrement, 2004), 74.

⁴³⁰ Alan Riding, *And the Show Went On. Cultural Life in Nazi-Occupied Paris* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 21.

⁴³¹ Lambauer, ‘Otto Abetz’, 74.

propaganda during the interwar period proved integral to the policy of seduction that underpinned cultural collaboration during the Occupation.

‘*Une noble alliance*’:⁴³² Wagner in musicological literature

Even before Hitler and Pétain had met at Montoire and agreed on the policy of Collaboration, French publishing houses signed a convention with the occupying authorities regarding censorship. They agreed to prevent publication of anything that might damage German interests or the German reputation, and to abide by *la liste Otto*: a list of banned books that were to be removed from bookshops and libraries.⁴³³ Sara Iglesias has explained that censorship in the French publishing industry effectively functioned through a system of self-censorship which, like Collaboration, gave the French the illusion of some autonomy when they were in fact controlled by the occupying authorities and abiding by German rules.⁴³⁴ Nevertheless, both Iglesias and Yannick Simon have noted that books on music were much less likely to be the subject of censorship than other kinds of non-fiction, partly because French musicologists tended to avoid making explicit connections between music and politics.⁴³⁵

Iglesias and Simon have also both written of a major program of German to French translation initiated by the *Institut allemand*, intended to subtly introduce German authors and ideas to the French population.⁴³⁶ The project extended to books on musical and musicological themes, and biographies of composers were particularly popular. Wagner featured prominently in these publications; of the nine German books on music that were translated into French under the Occupation, four were collections of Wagner’s writings.

In addition to these four collections, five other books related to Wagner and his music were published under the Occupation (see Figure 7 for details on all of these books). These nine books on Wagner included the collections of Wagner’s writings and letters referred to above, as well as books written by French authors. Some of the latter were new editions of old

⁴³² Richard Wagner et al., *Vues sur la France : suivies d’hommages à Richard Wagner et des deux conférences sur Wagner et la France par H.S. Chamberlain* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1943), 25.

⁴³³ Iglesias, *Musicologie et Occupation*, 55.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, 55–6.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*, 26, 58; Yannick Simon, ‘Les écrits sur la musique publiés sous l’Occupation (1940–1944)’ : Étude des ouvrages conservés à la bibliothèque municipale d’Angers dans le fonds Riobé’, *Société française de musicologie* 89, no. 1 (2003): 110.

⁴³⁶ Iglesias, *Musicologie et Occupation*, 58, 243–50; Simon, *Composer sous Vichy*, 99–100.

For a comprehensive examination of musicological literature published under the Occupation, see Iglesias, *Musicologie et Occupation*, 53–76. Iglesias also provides a chronological list of all books on music published during this period: *Musicologie et Occupation*, 411–18.

works, and others were first editions. Five of these nine books were prefaced by Gustave Samazeuilh, who clearly played an important role in the dissemination of Wagner-related musicological literature in occupied Paris.⁴³⁷ His only other involvement in a book-length publication during this period was an essay prefacing Joseph Gregor's book on Richard Strauss—another French translation of a German work.⁴³⁸

The books on Wagner prefaced by Samazeuilh during the Occupation were all published in 1943, except for the new edition of Wagner's *Mes Œuvres* which was published in 1941. In the preface of *Mes Œuvres*, Edmond Buchet proclaims 'a true revival of Wagner' in Europe,⁴³⁹ seeming to herald the collection of books to be published two years later. The 1943 books included Judith Gautier's letters to and writings on Wagner,⁴⁴⁰ translations of Wagner's letters to his first wife Minna,⁴⁴¹ and translations of letters exchanged between Liszt and Wagner.⁴⁴² The last of this list was *Vues sur la France*, which was both prefaced and edited with commentary by Samazeuilh, and was divided into three parts:⁴⁴³

- I: *Vues sur la France* (selected writings by Wagner)
- II: *Hommages à Richard Wagner* (excerpts of French writings on Wagner)
- III: *Richard Wagner et la France* (translated transcriptions of two lectures on Wagner given by Houston Stewart Chamberlain in Vienna, 1892)

⁴³⁷ Simon, 'Les écrits sur la musique', 100; Iglesias, *Musicologie et Occupation*, 247.

⁴³⁸ Joseph Gregor, *Un Maître de l'opéra Richard Strauss : avec des lettres du compositeur* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1942).

⁴³⁹ 'une véritable renaissance de Wagner'

Edmond Buchet, 'Avant-propos', in Richard Wagner, *Mes Œuvres* (Paris: Corrêa, 1941), 10.

⁴⁴⁰ Judith Gautier, *Auprès de Richard Wagner : Souvenirs (1861–1882)* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1943).

⁴⁴¹ Richard Wagner, *Lettres de Richard Wagner à Minna Wagner*, trans. Maurice Rémon (Paris: Gallimard, 1943).

⁴⁴² Richard Wagner and Franz Liszt, *Correspondance de Richard Wagner et de Franz Liszt*, trans. L Schmidt and J. Lacant (Paris: Gallimard, 1943).

⁴⁴³ Wagner et al., *Vues sur la France*.

Figure 7: Table of books on Wagner published in France during the Occupation, 1940–44

TITLE	AUTHOR	TRANSLATOR/PREFACER	YEAR OF PUBLICATION (AND YEAR OF FIRST EDITION WHERE APPLICABLE)	TRANSLATED FROM GERMAN?	PUBLISHER
<i>Mes Œuvres</i>	Richard Wagner	Pref. Edmond Buchet Intro. & trans. Jacques–Gabriel Prod’homme	1941; 1910	yes	Corrêa
<i>Quatre poèmes d’opéras</i>	Richard Wagner	Pref. Gustave Samazeuilh	1941; 1861	yes	Mercure de France
<i>Wagner. Histoire d’un artiste</i>	Guy de Pourtalès	–	1942; 1932	no	Gallimard
<i>La Tétralogie</i>	Albert Pauphilet	–	1942; 1938	no	H. Piazza
<i>Richard Wagner et la Tétralogie</i>	Charles Hertrich	–	1943	no	Editions des flambeaux
<i>Auprès de Richard Wagner</i>	Judith Gautier	Pref. Gustave Samazeuilh	1943	no	Mercure de France
<i>Lettres à Minna</i>	Richard Wagner	Trans. Maurice Rémon Pref. Gustave Samazeuilh	1943	yes	Gallimard
<i>Vues sur la France</i>	Richard Wagner et al.	Trans. Robert Pitrou Pref. Gustave Samazeuilh	1943	some	Mercure de France
<i>Correspondance</i>	Richard Wagner & Franz Liszt	Trans. L. Schmidt & J. Lacant Pref. Gustave Samazeuilh	1943	yes	Gallimard

This book was by far the most significant publication on Wagner to appear in French under the Occupation.⁴⁴⁴ The combination of very carefully selected writings by and about Wagner, and Chamberlain's lectures on the place of France and the French in Wagner's life and work, was undoubtedly political. Samazeuilh's substantial preface echoed many of the same themes that he emphasised in his Wagner criticism of the 1930s and the *drôle de guerre*: the capacity of Wagner's music to rise above political circumstances, and its ability to bring together French and German minds and foster brotherly understanding. After comparing Wagner's work to Siegfried's enduring and indestructible sword, he ends with the following exhortation:

Let us honour [Wagner's work], let us love it especially in these painful and troubled times, for the great example of artistic freedom that it brings us, instead of trying—as sometimes happens, alas!—to minimise or diminish it for reasons unrelated to music. May its breath and its richness, like those of all great masters of the art, raise men above themselves, help them to know and to follow their paths, in a spirit of tolerance and understanding.⁴⁴⁵

As always, Samazeuilh insinuates that Wagner's music is entirely unrelated to the world of politics, war and conflict, while simultaneously making blatantly political points by highlighting things such as Wagner's hope for a 'fusion of the French spirit with the Germanic spirit';⁴⁴⁶ a phrase which seems tailor-made for collaborationist rhetoric.

Part I of the book includes 12 excerpts of Wagner's writings with some kind of connection to France. Most are taken either from his essays or his letters. The selection is glaringly biased, comprising only those writings that speak positively of France and the French. Unsurprisingly, the volume does not include a translation of Wagner's infamous satirical play *Eine Kapitulation*. The play is, however, referred to in this section of the book, in extracts from an 1876 letter from Wagner to the French

⁴⁴⁴ Yannick Simon has briefly discussed the book in *Composer sous Vichy*, 104–5.

⁴⁴⁵ 'Honorons-la, aimons-la surtout, en ces temps douloureux et troublés, pour le grand exemple de liberté artistique qu'elle nous apporte, au lieu de chercher, comme il advient parfois hélas ! à la minimiser ou à la diminuer pour des raisons étrangères à la musique. Puissent son souffle et sa richesse, comme ceux de tous les grands maîtres de l'art, élever les hommes au-dessus d'eux-mêmes, les aider à connaître, à suivre leurs routes, dans un esprit de tolérance et de compréhension.'

Gustave Samazeuilh, 'Avant-propos', in Wagner et al., *Vues sur la France*, 22.

⁴⁴⁶ 'la « fusion de l'esprit français et de l'esprit germanique »'.
Ibid., 11.

historian Gabriel Monod, in which Wagner explains that he had no intention of insulting the French people in his play.⁴⁴⁷ Similarly, Wagner's long explanation of his perspective on the 1861 *Tannhäuser* affair, is included,⁴⁴⁸ but in Part II (homages to Wagner), none of the negative press that proliferated during the affair is reproduced. Part I mainly consists of extracts where Wagner comments on his good relations with the French, and his approval of French music, French composers and French musical excellence. The very first selection, entitled 'A Noble Alliance', was reproduced from an article on German music published by Wagner in the *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris* during his first stay in Paris. It begins:

One can argue that in terms of dramatic music, the Germans and the French have only one, and that the productions have seen the light of day in one or the other country, which is more a question of place than a fundamental difference. This intimate union between two nations, and the habitual exchange of their most distinguished talents, has resulted in a double inspiration and a magnificent fertility for art in general, of which we already have brilliant evidence. It remains to hope that this noble alliance is more and more consolidated. For where can one find two peoples, two countries, whose harmony and brotherhood promise the most brilliant destinies in art, if not Germany and France?⁴⁴⁹

It is clear why this extract was chosen; ideas such as the 'union of two nations' and hopes for a bright shared cultural future fit very comfortably into the Occupation's collaborationist vision. Such extracts downplay Wagner's Francophobia and his nationalism, and encourage a view of Wagner as a misunderstood and unfairly vilified Francophile who supported a good Franco-German relationship. Another extract—a letter from Wagner to the French writer and art critic Champfleury, written in 1870—exhibits similar sentiments. In the letter, Wagner writes of his dream to create an

⁴⁴⁷ Richard Wagner, 'Le Génie français. Lettre à Gabriel Monod (fragments)', in *ibid.*, 51–2.

⁴⁴⁸ Richard Wagner, 'Lettre sur l'exécution de *Tannhäuser* à Paris', in *ibid.*, 39–50.

⁴⁴⁹ 'On peut avancer qu'en fait de musique dramatique, l'Allemand et le Français n'en ont qu'une, que les productions aient vu le jour dans l'un ou l'autre pays, ce qui est plutôt une question de lieu qu'une différence fondamentale. De cette intime union entre les deux nations, et de l'échange habituel de leurs talents les plus distingués, il est résulté pour l'art en général une double inspiration et une fécondité magnifique dont nous avons déjà d'éclatants témoignages. Il nous reste à souhaiter que cette noble alliance se consolide de plus en plus. Car où trouver deux peuples, deux pays, dont l'accord et la fraternité puissent présager à l'art des destinées plus brillantes, sinon l'Allemagne et la France?' Richard Wagner, 'De la musique allemande', *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, 12 & 24 July 1840, cited in *ibid.*, 25.

‘international theatre’ in Paris, which would result in a fusion of French and German minds.⁴⁵⁰

The very last extract in Part I of the book is written by Louis de Fourcaud, who purports to be simply transcribing an extraordinary ‘interview’ he had with Wagner five years prior. Entitled ‘Richard Wagner and French Opera’ and originally published in 1886, it recounts Fourcaud’s conversations with Wagner in Bayreuth in 1879. Fourcaud writes that on the second day of their meeting, ‘[Wagner’s] speech, ingenious up to that point, suddenly took such a striking and powerful turn that each sentence was engraved in my memory.’⁴⁵¹ Fourcaud cites Wagner as describing the French musical world as an exciting place to be, and the French as having a true understanding of his art:

What is happening at the moment in the musical domain in France ... is extremely interesting. The French feel and understand theatre much better than any other people ... There were many of you here [Bayreuth] in 1876; I cannot repeat enough how touched I was by your attitude ...

Indeed, since my first steps in your country, I had had the joy of seeing my ideas adopted and defended by an elite of writers and artists, keen to bring their national arts onto the broadest and best paths.⁴⁵²

Later in the extract Fourcaud cites Wagner as encouraging all artists to turn to nationalism as the source of their inspiration:

If poets, musicians, painters, and artists of all kinds from the end of this century are truly committed to fulfilling a noble task, believe me, they must

⁴⁵⁰ Richard Wagner, ‘Lettre à Champfleury’, in *ibid.*, 50.

⁴⁵¹ ‘Ses discours, ingénieux jusque là, prirent soudainement un tour si frappant et si fort que chaque phrase s’en grava dans mon souvenir.’

Louis de Fourcaud and Richard Wagner, ‘Richard Wagner et l’opéra français. Entretien avec Louis de Fourcaud’, in *ibid.*, 56.

⁴⁵² ‘Ce qui se passe, à l’heure qu’il est, dans le domaine musical, en France ... est souverainement intéressant. Le Français sent et comprend le théâtre beaucoup mieux qu’aucun autre peuple ... Vous étiez nombreux ici en 1876 ; je ne puis répéter assez combien j’ai été touché de votre attitude ... D’ailleurs, dès mes premiers pas dans votre pays, j’avais eu le bonheur de voir mes idées adoptées et défendues par une élite d’écrivains et d’artistes, jaloux de faire entrer leurs arts nationaux dans les voies les plus larges et les plus droites.’
Ibid.

strive to restore national character to all the arts. This is a crucial point, and one on which I cannot put enough emphasis ...⁴⁵³

It is not difficult to see why this text was included in the selection, presumably by Samazeuilh. The union of France and Germany, the insistence that Wagner was a friend of the French and had never intended to insult them, and the comments on the importance of national differences in all art forms; all these reinforce messages that the occupying authorities were attempting to disseminate, in the form of apparently unbiased historical documents that outline the relationship of a German composer with the French nation and people.

Part II of the book attempts to represent the other side of this relationship: French perspectives on Wagner, his ideas, and his music, as expressed in 40 excerpts of writings from the 1840s to the 1930s. Although Samazeuilh hastened to explain in his preface that he had assembled the extracts in this section while ‘voluntarily leaving aside writings touching on politics or polemics which are today without interest’,⁴⁵⁴ the selectivity of these writings make it clear that he did no such thing. Texts discussing the scandals that surrounded the staging of *Tannhäuser* in 1861 and the publication of *Eine Kapitulation* in 1875 were included, but only if they were written in defence of Wagner. In fact, negative criticism of Wagner was entirely absent from the book, and the authors whose texts comprise Part II were all admirers of Wagner: Charles Baudelaire, Émile Ollivier, Théophile and Judith Gautier, Auguste de Villiers de l’Isle Adam, Stéphane Mallarmé, and many others.

A number of these texts present excuses for Wagner’s bad behaviour or his Francophobia. Gabriel Monod, for example, explains in an extract from his 1897 book *Portraits et souvenirs*, that,

Even without completely admitting the apologetic explanation that he gave of the meaning of his *Capitulation*, which was destined, according to him, to mock German theatre directors who are always ready to plunder the French

⁴⁵³ ‘Si les poètes, les musiciens, les peintres, les artistes de toute sorte de la fin de ce siècle, ont réellement à cœur de remplir une noble tâche, croyez-moi, qu’ils s’efforcent de restituer à tous les arts les caractères nationaux. C’est un point capital, et sur lequel on ne saurait trop insister...’
Ibid., 57.

⁴⁵⁴ ‘Tout en laissant de côté volontairement les écrits touchant à la politique ou à des polémiques aujourd’hui sans intérêt’.
Gustave Samazeuilh, ‘Avant-propos’, in *ibid.*, 19.

dramatic repertoire, it is certain that he never dreamed of basely flattering national passions. His word, like his thought, was free of all motives of self-interest.⁴⁵⁵

Also included is an extract written by Gustave Samazeuilh's father Fernand, under the pseudonym Th. Ferneuil, first published in the *Revue de Paris* in 1896. Despite its date, Fernand Samazeuilh's text promotes a very similar view of Wagner to that developed later by his son and, importantly, that of the occupying authorities in the 1940s:

Wagner put forward an indisputable truth when he said, in 1876, after the first performance of the *Ring*: 'Finally, we have a German art.' ... Yet this art, eminently national, is nonetheless cosmopolitan. In Wagner's lyric dramas, despite what some commentators have said, the music is what is essential, the symphonic development of the themes and the driving motifs. And it is in this way that Wagner's art addresses all peoples.⁴⁵⁶

Fernand Samazeuilh goes on to discuss the role of music as the 'common language' of the nineteenth century, erasing all nationalities and races and allowing Wagner's music to simply speak to the 'modern man'. Guy de Pourtalès's extract in the book—initially written as a speech given in February 1933—similarly suits the collaborationist vision by describing the double celebration of Wagner and Gobineau in 1933 as a unification of the German and French civilisations.⁴⁵⁷

Houston Stewart Chamberlain's lectures in Part III aim to explain the ways in which France and the French assisted Wagner in his life work, both by helping him to form a sense of national identity, and by supporting him when he was poor, struggling, and unappreciated. The first lecture discusses the important role of France in Wagner's

⁴⁵⁵ 'Même sans admettre complètement l'explication apologétique qu'il y donnait du sens de sa *Capitulation* destinée, d'après lui, à railler les directeurs des théâtres d'Allemagne toujours prêt à piller le répertoire dramatique français, il est certain qu'il n'a jamais songé à flatter basement les passions nationales. Sa parole, comme sa pensée, étaient libres de tout mobile intéressé.'

Gabriel Monod, 'Richard Wagner chez lui', in *ibid.*, 206.

⁴⁵⁶ 'Wagner émettait une vérité indiscutable quand il disait, en 1876, après la première exécution du *Ring*: « Enfin, nous avons un art allemand. » ... Mais quoi, éminemment national, cet art n'en est pas moins cosmopolite. Dans les drames lyriques de Wagner, en dépit de certains commentateurs, l'essentiel est la musique, le développement symphonique des thèmes et des motifs conducteurs. Et par là justement l'art de Wagner s'adresse à tous les peuples.'

Th. Ferneuil, 'Impressions de Bayreuth 1896', in *ibid.*, 212.

⁴⁵⁷ Guy de Pourtalès, 'Wagner et Gobineau', in *ibid.*, 222.

life, and the impact of France and French culture on his artistic development. The second lecture focuses on his French admirers, many of whom are authors of the texts in Part II, or recipients of Wagner's letters in Part I. Notably, Chamberlain blames all of Wagner's failures and misfortunes on 'the Jews'. According to Chamberlain, Wagner's first stay in Paris was disastrous because he did not know any 'real French' people, only Jews such as Meyerbeer and Maurice Schlesinger for whom Wagner's failure was in their best interests.⁴⁵⁸ Wagner's second stay was more successful, writes Chamberlain, until a campaign led by German Jews ruined the *Tannhäuser* season of 1861.⁴⁵⁹ It is clear that these lectures were chosen firstly because they emphasised the French contribution to Wagner's life and work, and secondly because they explained away Wagner's early failures using the Nazis' favourite scapegoats: the Jews.⁴⁶⁰ Furthermore, Chamberlain—who had been devoted to Wagner's music and had eventually married into the Wagner family—was the author of the notoriously racist work *Die Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century), a book whose theories on race were very influential in the Nazi Party.⁴⁶¹ The inclusion of his perspective on Wagner and France, infused with antisemitism as it was, must have also been seen as a means of subtly re-introducing him to the French as an important thinker in the Nazis' New Europe.

Wagner's domination of musicological literature under the Occupation indicates the importance of his role in cultural collaboration. Through the publication of both his own writings and the writings of others on his music, life and ideas, occupying authorities attempted to simultaneously promote Franco-German collaboration and German cultural supremacy. Notably, they decided not to translate and publish contemporary German writings on Wagner, perhaps because they felt that this would have been received by the French as too propagandistic. Instead, they carefully selected French commentary on Wagner and excerpts of Wagner's work that matched the ideas they wanted to disseminate about the relationship between France and Germany and the place of German culture in France.

⁴⁵⁸ Houston Stewart Chamberlain, 'Richard Wagner et la France. II', in *ibid.*, 259.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 261.

⁴⁶⁰ Chamberlain's antisemitic explanations of Wagner's failures in Paris were later repeated by Parisian critics such as Jean Drault, discussed in Chapter One. See Drault, 'À propos d'un cinquantenaire : Wagner anti-juif', *La Libre parole*, 1933. Press clipping, BnF BmO, Fonds Paul Franz, vol. 21.

⁴⁶¹ Houston Stewart Chamberlain, *Die Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (München: F. Bruckmann, 1899).

Wagner in concerts under the Occupation: Symbol of France's place in New Europe?

Concert associations

Although Parisian musical life came to a halt during the turmoil of invasion and occupation in mid-1940, once the occupying authorities had established themselves and many Parisians had returned to their home city, music began to return to theatres and concert halls. The four main concert associations—la Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, les Concerts Colonne, les Concerts Padeloup and les Concerts Lamoureux—were all restored with the aid of state subsidies. The Concerts Colonne, however, became the Concerts Gabriel Pierné due to the Jewish origins of its namesake and founder Edouard Colonne.⁴⁶² In return for the subsidies, all aspects of the running of the associations were monitored by the State, including programming; programmes were submitted to the authorities two weeks before each performance.⁴⁶³ As mentioned above, the Colonne and Lamoureux associations had merged during the *drôle de guerre*, but they separated again under the Occupation. The fact that occupied Paris was able to support four major concert associations—not to mention all the other concert activities that took place outside of the major associations and their regular seasons—is a testament to the rich musical life that persisted in the most difficult of circumstances, and the willingness of Parisians to participate in it. Moreover, it demonstrates that both the Vichy government and the occupying authorities considered music to be integral to their respective political programs; without their support, it would not have been possible for the concert associations to survive.⁴⁶⁴

The extraordinary popularity of Wagner's music in concert excerpts in the decade leading up to the Occupation, and the subsequent quasi-ban on his music during the *drôle de guerre*, raises questions about the performance of Wagner in concerts under the Occupation. How much of Wagner's music was being performed by the major concert associations during 1940–44? Was there a rise or a drop in the performance of Wagner's music in comparison to the preceding decade? Given the propensity of

⁴⁶² Laederich, 'Les Associations symphoniques parisiennes', 217.

⁴⁶³ Ibid., 220, 225.

⁴⁶⁴ Laederich has written of the financial and practical difficulties confronted by the concert associations during this period. See *ibid.*, 220–23. Yet she also writes that under the Occupation there were more concerts and greater ticket sales than ever. *Ibid.*, 217.

occupying authorities to encourage the promotion of Wagner and his music through the publication of musicological literature, were these priorities reflected in concert programming? An analysis of the four major concert associations' programming reveals, firstly, that as far as Wagner's works are concerned, there was little difference between the period 1933–39 and the Occupation, once the *drôle de guerre* ban on his works and the disruption of war and invasion is taken into account.⁴⁶⁵ Figure 8 shows that overall, with some exceptions, the percentage of concerts that included Wagner works in each regular season hovered around 20% during both periods. The Concerts Lamoureux consistently programmed a larger percentage of concerts that included Wagner works than the other concert associations. The programming of Wagner works did decrease for the Société des Concerts in the 1940s, but for the other concert associations it remained fairly consistent.

Secondly, Figure 9 shows that the number of all-Wagner concerts (where Wagner's music is exclusively programmed, often referred to as 'Wagner Festivals') performed in a season reduced slightly from the 1930s to the Occupation. This reduction, however, can be attributed to the lower number of concerts in each regular season during Occupation. No all-Wagner concerts were performed by any of the four major concert associations during the 1939–40 season, which can be explained by the *drôle de guerre* debate on performing Wagner's music, discussed earlier in this chapter. Indeed, only one concert included Wagner's music at all during this season, and this was the Colonne-Lamoureux concert in March 1940 that provoked the debate.⁴⁶⁶ Wagner's music was not programmed again by any of the major associations until October 1940—the beginning of the following season.

⁴⁶⁵ To maintain consistency, all analysis of programming discussed here is based on each association's regular concert season and does not include special concerts or events. Thus it is quite likely that the real figures for concerts of Wagner's music are somewhat higher than presented here. Information on programming has been gathered from concert association archives, programme announcements in *Le Ménestrel* and *L'Information musicale*, and programming information gathered by Noémie Leprevost. See Leprevost, 'Les Concerts Padeloup sous l'occupation allemande 1940–1944', (Masters thesis, University of Rouen, 2011).

⁴⁶⁶ See Appendix B2 for all figures on programming of Wagner by the four major concert associations in the studied period.

Figure 8: Graph showing percentages of concerts in major concert associations' regular seasons that include music by Wagner, 1932–44⁴⁶⁷

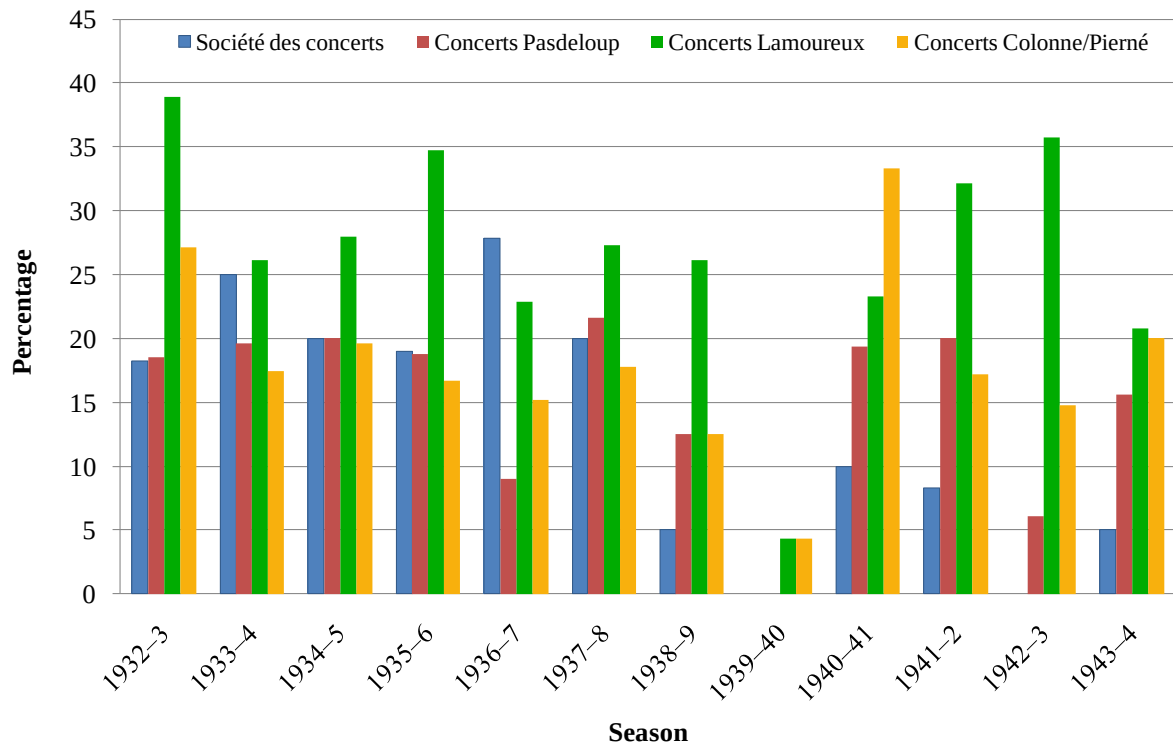
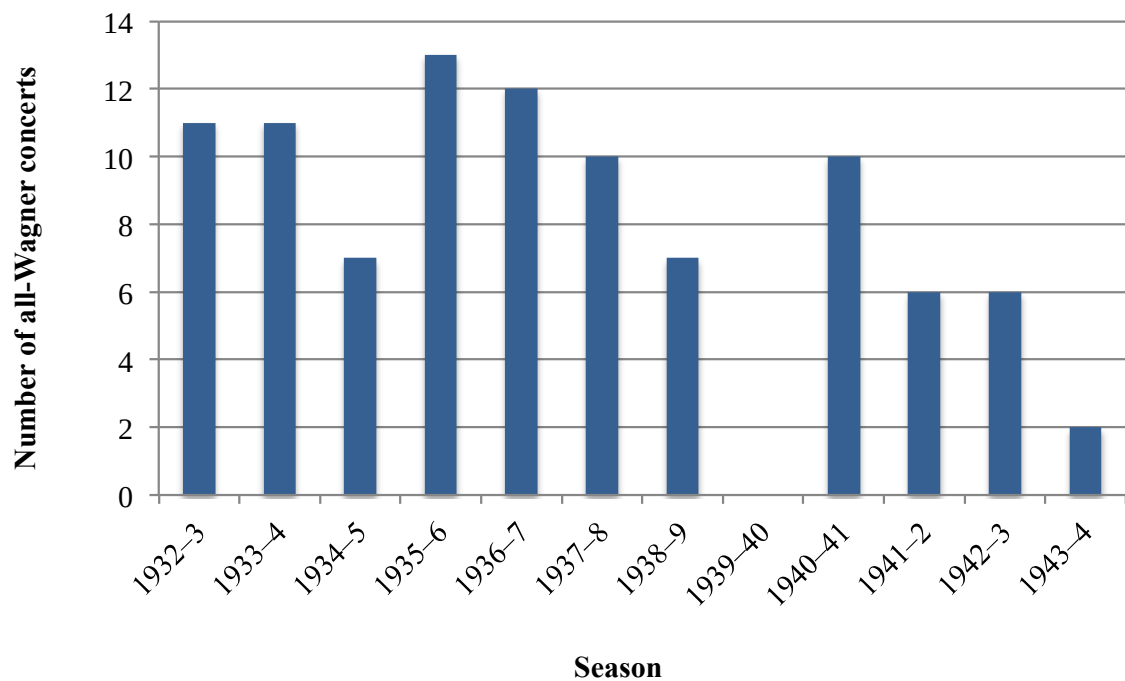


Figure 9: Graph showing number of all-Wagner concerts programmed by four major concert associations in each season, 1932–44



⁴⁶⁷ The 1939–40 Colonne-Lamoureux season is represented on the graph as two separate seasons from two separate associations, whereas it was actually one and the same season from the two merged associations.

Thirdly, little change can be seen in the choice of repertoire between the 1930s and the Occupation; the same excerpts were played, and often repeated within a season, just as they had been in the 1930s. For example, between the 1932–33 and 1943–44 seasons, the Concerts Lamoureux played the Overture from *Les Maîtres chanteurs* twice or thrice in almost every season, while the Concerts Pasdeloup performed the *Tannhäuser* Overture between one and four times in almost every season. This repetition of works within the one season had been normal practice for decades, and it continued under the Occupation.

The concerts analysed above were all part of the concert associations' regular seasons, but in addition to these, each concert association programmed special events and concerts. During the Occupation, the Société des Concerts participated in two such events that were Wagner-related: firstly, concerts for the German-sponsored exhibition *La France européenne* in 1941, and secondly, concerts to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary (*le soixantenaire*) of Wagner's death in 1943. The following sections will examine these two events and the noteworthy commentary that they attracted in the press.

La France européenne, 1941

One of the means by which the occupying authorities, and in particular the *Institut allemand*, attempted to manipulate French cultural events for political means was by mounting public exhibitions in Paris. There were four of these major exhibitions mounted under the Occupation: *La Franc-maçonnerie dévoilée* in 1940, *La France européenne : La vie nouvelle* (1941), *Le Juif et la France* (1941–2), and *Le Bolchevisme contre l'Europe* (1942).⁴⁶⁸ As is clear from their titles, each exhibition was unambiguously aimed at promoting Nazi ideology and fostering fear of Freemasons, Jews and Communism. *La France européenne* was inaugurated in June, lasted for five months and was held in the Grand Palais where it attracted 635 000 visitors.

The concept of a 'European France' drew directly on the Nazi vision for a Nazified 'New Europe' in which France was simply a subjugated state under German control. Through the Collaboration agreement, the Vichy government had expressed its desire

⁴⁶⁸ Burrin, *France under the Germans*, 292–3.

to be a part of this New Europe, although it soon became clear that its role would be as a subordinate rather than equal partner. Recent histories of the Occupation in France, beginning with Robert Paxton's *Vichy France*,⁴⁶⁹ have emphasised the element of continuity between interwar France and occupied France, and a number of scholars have pointed out connections between the Europeanism movement of the interwar period and the Collaborationists of the Occupation. Julien Prévotaux insists that the 1920s and 30s in France saw the genesis of the attitudes that led to collaborationism which, for an important group of French intellectuals, was seen as an opportunity to construct a new Europe free from war. Prévotaux traces a clear path from interwar pacifism to the collaborationism of 1940–44.⁴⁷⁰ The history of rapprochement and reconciliation efforts between France and Germany in the years preceding the Occupation (discussed in Chapter Two) was exploited by the Nazis to ensure a smooth transition into Collaboration and subordination.⁴⁷¹ Iglesias writes that the music of New Europe, according to the Nazi worldview, was to be at once nationalist and universal; German music was cast as universal, but each nation retained its specificities.⁴⁷² The *La France européenne* exhibition of 1941 and the concerts that were associated with it were part of this worldview.

On 4, 5 and 7 September, the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire performed three concerts at the Grand Palais to celebrate the exhibition. All three concerts were 'Wagner Festivals'—no music by composers other than Wagner was performed. Up until the day of the first concert, notices in the collaborationist daily *Paris-Soir* and the weekly arts journal *Comœdia* advertised Charles Munch as the conductor of these three concerts. On 4 and 5 September, however, *Le Matin* (another collaborationist daily with an extreme pro-Nazi stance)⁴⁷³ announced that Munch had withdrawn on medical advice and that he would be replaced by the esteemed Gustave Cloëz for the entire series.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁶⁹ Paxton, *Vichy France*.

⁴⁷⁰ Julien Prévotaux, *Un Européisme nazi. La Groupe Collaboration et l'idéologie européenne dans la Seconde Guerre Mondiale* (Paris: François-Xavier de Guibert, 2010), 83–113.

⁴⁷¹ Jackson, *France: The Dark Years*, 81.

⁴⁷² Iglesias, *Musicologie et Occupation*, 294–337.

⁴⁷³ Claude Lévy and Henri Michel, 'La Presse autorisée de 1940 à 1944', in *Histoire générale de la presse française*, vol. 4, ed. Claude Bellanger, Jacques Godechot, Pierre Guiral and Fernand Terrou (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1975), 42.

⁴⁷⁴ *Le Matin*, 4 September 1941, 2; *Le Matin*, 5 September 1941, 2.

As we shall see, this was not the only time Munch declined to conduct Wagner concerts in Paris under the Occupation.⁴⁷⁵ Munch's position in occupied France was exceptional and complicated. Born in Alsace-Lorraine during the time of its annexation to the German Empire, Munch had fought in the German army during the First World War, after which Alsace-Lorraine once again became French territory. In 1932 he moved to Paris from Leipzig for political and professional reasons, and was conductor of the Société des Concerts from 1938 and throughout the Occupation.⁴⁷⁶ His biographer D. Kern Holoman writes that,

Münch stayed as far above politics as possible but was also able to show whichever side of his heritage needed to be on display; both the Germans and the French knew that having him at the helm of the Parisian musical establishment was in their best interests.⁴⁷⁷

Munch's position, then, was somewhat privileged, which probably allowed him to refuse to conduct concerts about which he felt politically uncomfortable, without serious repercussions. In any case, he did not conduct the September concerts for the *La France européenne*, which strongly points to their perceived political purpose.

The concerts received very little attention in the press, but those reviews and articles that were published were surprisingly negative about the choice of repertoire. First was Marcel Delannoy, who published an article in *Les Nouveaux Temps* the day after the last of the three concerts. Delannoy—who belonged to the Groupe Collaboration⁴⁷⁸ and was condemned after Liberation for promoting propaganda of the enemy⁴⁷⁹—was commenting on the concerts as an aside to his article on the recent visit of the Berlin Philharmonic. He praised the way Germany had supported and

⁴⁷⁵ In fact, Holoman lists a number of occasions on which Munch refused to participate in apparently political projects, including the infamous visit of French musicians to Vienna for the 150th anniversary of Mozart's death. See D. Kern Holoman, 'Controverses à la Libération autour de l'attitude de Charles Munch', in *La musique à Paris sous l'Occupation*, ed. Chimènes and Simon, 212–13.

⁴⁷⁶ D. Kern Holoman, *The Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, 1828–1967* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 444.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 450.

⁴⁷⁸ 'Le Groupe Collaboration' was a French group that existed during the Occupation with the aim of organising events that brought French and German people together. Yannick Simon writes that it was an extension of Abetz's Comité France-Allemagne. The Groupe Collaboration included a subdivision dedicated to music. See Simon, *Composer sous Vichy*, 100–106.

⁴⁷⁹ Leslie Sprout, *The Musical Legacy of Wartime France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 71–2.

promoted its national musical culture, and lamented that France had not done the same:

It is without doubt that a long promotional campaign, supported by deep faith, has powerfully served the influence of the German musical genius, and that of Bach, the very first. What have we done to make known Couperin, Rameau and Gabriel Fauré, whose name barely goes beyond the Meuse River? Alas! Just today we would like to know, for example, that the interminable *Wagner Festival*, organised by *La France européenne* will soon find a parallel in a Berlioz–d’Indy–Chabrier–Debussy–Ravel–Stravinsky festival ...

To those who would object that France has bigger fish to fry now than its musicians, I will answer that the moment was never more favourable. What am I saying? The exaltation of French cultural and artistic values—the only ones intact—is a patriotic necessity. We have no other battle to lead.⁴⁸⁰

Although Delannoy’s main point relates to what he perceives as the neglect of French music and the need to support it as Germany has done, his reference to the three Wagner concerts belies an irritation that is later shared by other commentators in the press, and that was not present in the 1930s press. Lucienne Delforge, a pianist who wrote music criticism for several of the collaborationist periodicals, complained in *Beaux-Arts*:

Why are we having these three Wagner festivals at the Grand Palais? Do we imprudently want to emphasise the difference that separates Paris from Bayreuth? Do we want to nourish comparisons that will not all be to our advantage? ... France has nourished and educated enough musicians of foreign nationalities to call itself European. To cite just four: César Franck the Belgian, Albéniz the Spaniard, Arthur Honegger the Swiss, Igor Stravinsky

⁴⁸⁰ ‘Il est hors de doute qu’une longue propagande, soutenue par une foi profonde, ait puissamment servi le rayonnement du génie musical allemand, et celui de Bach, tout le premier. Qu’a-t-on fait, chez nous, pour faire connaître Couperin, Rameau, et Gabriel Fauré donc [*sic*] le nom passe à peine la Meuse ? Hélas ! Aujourd’hui même on aimerait savoir, par exemple, que le sempiternel *festival Wagner*, organisé par la *France européenne* trouvera bientôt une symétrie dans un festival Berlioz–d’Indy–Chabrier–Debussy–Ravel–Stravinsky ...

À ceux qui m’objecteraient que la France a d’autres chiens à fouetter maintenant que ses musiciens, je répondrai que jamais le moment ne fût plus propice. Que dis-je ? L’exaltation des valeurs culturelles et artistiques françaises—seules intactes—est une nécessité patriotique. Nous n’avons pas d’autre combat à mener.’
Marcel Delannoy, ‘L’Orchestre philharmonique de Berlin’, *Les Nouveaux temps*, 8 September 1941, 2.

the Russian. Would this not express, better and more, the deep meaning of the Grand Palais exhibition? Would they not be in their true place?⁴⁸¹

A month later, Delforge returned to the same topic:

As for Wagner, I will continue to repeat what I said about the Wagner festivals at the Grand Palais exhibition. No-one professes more than me the Wagner religion. No-one confesses it with more of the absolute. But it is not by outrageously inflicting it on the public that we will manage to make them love it better. Particularly as it is not such a long time ago that this same inconstant public took the liberty of scandalous protests, to which Paul Paray did justice at the time. Today, the people's favour is of the same extra-musical order as was—yesterday—its noisy baseness. It would be good to remember this and not to involve musicians in these crises of contradictory hysteria.⁴⁸²

Delforge was a committed collaborationist. A one-time lover of the virulently antisemitic author Louis-Ferdinand Céline, she was active as both a performer and a critic under the Occupation, and eventually fled France to Sigmaringen in Germany with members of the Vichy government exiled there after the Allies entered France.⁴⁸³ In the article cited above, Delforge protects herself by declaring her love of Wagner. By openly criticising the programming of the exhibition concerts, she rejects Wagner as a symbol of Europeanism; Franck, Albéniz, Honegger, and Stravinsky would all have been better choices to exemplify France's place in the new Europe. She also seems to suggest that programming based on non-musical (i.e. political) factors

⁴⁸¹ 'Que viennent faire, au Grand Palais, ces trois festivals Wagner? Veut-on, imprudemment, marquer la différence qui sépare Paris de Bayreuth? Veut-on nourrir des comparaisons qui ne seront pas toutes à notre avantage? ... La France a nourri et formé suffisamment de musiciens de nationalités étrangères pour s'affirmer européenne. Pour n'en citer que quatre : César Franck le Belge, Albéniz l'Espagnol, Arthur Honegger le Suisse, Igor Strawinsky le Russe. N'exprimeraient-ils pas, mieux et davantage, la signification profonde de l'exposition du Grand Palais ? N'y seraient-ils pas à leur vraie place ?' Lucienne Delforge, 'La Chronique musicale', *Beaux-Arts* 78, nos. 36 & 37 (19 & 26 September 1941): 16.

⁴⁸² 'Quant à Wagner, je ne cesserai pas de répéter ce que j'ai dit, à propos des festivals à l'exposition du Grand Palais. Nul ne professe, plus que moi, le culte de Wagner. Nul ne le confesse avec plus d'absolu. Mais ce n'est pas en infligeant outrancièrement au public que l'on parviendra à le faire mieux aimer. D'autant qu'il n'y a pas si longtemps ce même inconstant public se permettait de scandaleuses manifestations, dont Paul Paray fit bonne justice à l'époque. Aujourd'hui, la faveur de la foule est du même ordre extra-musical, que l'était—hier—sa bruyante bassesse. Il serait bon de s'en souvenir et de ne pas mêler les musiciens à ces crises d'hystérie contradictoire.'

Lucienne Delforge, 'Nouveautés musicales', *Beaux-Arts* 78, no. 41 (24 October 1941): 10.

⁴⁸³ For an account of what took place in Sigmaringen, see Henry Rousso, *Pétain et la fin de la Collaboration. Sigmaringen 1944–1945* (Bruxelles: Complexe, 1984).

should be condemned—a curious assertion given her apparent devotion to the occupiers’ political program. Less than two years later, Delforge took on a different tone; Sara Iglesias reports that on 21 May 1943, Delforge gave a lecture at the *Institut allemand* on Wagner and France, to celebrate Wagner’s 130th birthday. Delforge used the lecture to depict Wagner as a devoted francophile and the saviour and guide of European music.⁴⁸⁴

Meanwhile, Honegger himself was stirring up a debate in *Comœdia* on the very same question. A French-born Swiss composer whose music flourished under the Occupation, his political position regarding the occupying authorities has been the subject of debate. While he never explicitly supported Nazi ideology, he did benefit from the professional opportunities with which the occupying regime presented him, to the point that in 1943 he was asked to leave the musicians’ Resistance organisation he had joined—*Le Front national des musiciens*—and after Liberation French musicians banned performances of his music for six months.⁴⁸⁵ Before any of this took place, however, he published a review on 13 September 1941 of all three Wagner concerts at *La France européenne*, arguing that an exhibition that was supposed to showcase France’s place in a new Europe should have programmed French music, not Wagner. Leslie Sprout writes that it was Honegger’s spirited defence of French music in his *Comœdia* columns that had impressed his colleagues in the first place, and encouraged them to invite him to join the Resistance.⁴⁸⁶ In his review, Honegger questioned why, ‘in 1941, musical France is thus represented by the works of Richard Wagner’.⁴⁸⁷ He then noted the concert associations’ innumerable all-Wagner concerts preceding these three concerts (in the 1940–41 season Padeloup and Lamoureux each programmed three all-Wagner concerts and Gabriel Pierné programmed four),⁴⁸⁸ and accused the organisers of ‘mediocre’ and unimaginative programming. Not wanting to come across as anti-Wagner, he explained himself in strikingly similar terms to Delforge:

⁴⁸⁴ Iglesias, *Musicologie et Occupation*, 238.

⁴⁸⁵ Leslie Sprout, ‘*Le Chant de Libération* et la réhabilitation d’Honegger’, in *La Musique à Paris sous l’Occupation*, ed. Chimènes and Simon, 119–20; Sprout, *Musical Legacy of Wartime France*, 40–41.

⁴⁸⁶ Sprout, ‘*Chant de Libération*’, 120.

⁴⁸⁷ ‘En 1941, la France musicale est donc représentée par les œuvres de Richard Wagner’.

Arthur Honegger, ‘Le Festival Wagner au Grand Palais’, *Comœdia*, 13 September 1941, 3.

⁴⁸⁸ See Appendix B2.

No one admires more than me the miraculous genius of this master amongst masters. Certainly he is well avenged today for the idiotic sniggers, the stupid incomprehension that greeted him in this city a hundred years ago. His victory is total and more magnificent than any other, since it is of the domain of the mind. But his cause has been won for a long time in the heart of all the artists in the world. Is it then truly necessary to affirm it so heavily and would it not be better to serve it than to abuse it less?⁴⁸⁹

Honegger did not stop there; two weeks later, his *Comœdia* column was provocatively entitled ‘May the Law of the Least Effort in the Symphonic Associations Cease’. Again he complained that the concert associations were relying too heavily on music by Beethoven and Wagner:

during the winter of 40–41, the Beethoven Festival [i.e. an all-Beethoven concert] followed the Wagner Festival, which itself preceded a Beethoven-Wagner Festival. In normal times, this would simply prove the laziness of directors and the purely commercial perspective in which these companies position themselves. But in the times we are living in now, it was even more serious. One could believe in a baseness, a servility which makes one blush and which could not even hope for support from those who are its object.⁴⁹⁰

Unsurprisingly, the administrative heads of the four concert associations took offence this time, and responded on 1 November in a letter to *Comœdia*. They defended their decision to program music by Beethoven and Wagner given those composers’ deserved popularity with the Parisian public, and protested that their programming of

⁴⁸⁹ ‘Nul plus que moi n’admire le miraculeux génie de ce maître parmi les maîtres. Certes, il est bien vengé aujourd’hui des ricanements imbéciles, de la stupide incompréhension qui l’accueillit dans cette ville il y a cent ans. Sa victoire est totale et plus grandiose qu’aucune autre, puisqu’elle est du domaine de l’esprit. Mais sa cause est depuis longtemps gagnée dans le cœur de tous les artistes du monde. Est-il alors vraiment nécessaire de l’affirmer aussi lourdement et ne serait-ce pas mieux la servir que d’en abuser moins ?’

Ibid.

⁴⁹⁰ ‘au cours de l’hiver 40–41, le festival Beethoven a suivi le festival Wagner, qui précédait lui-même le festival Wagner-Beethoven. En temps normal, cela prouvait simplement la paresse des chefs et le point de vue uniquement commercial auquel se plaçaient ces entreprises. Mais dans le temps que nous vivons, c’était encore plus grave. On pouvait croire à une bassesse, à une servilité qui fait monter le rouge au front et qui ne pouvait espérer aucune adhésion de ceux-là mêmes qui en étaient l’objet.’ Arthur Honegger, ‘Que cesse la loi du moindre effort dans les associations symphoniques’, *Comœdia*, 27 September 1941, 1.

French music and contemporary music was plentiful.⁴⁹¹ And, although they did not mention it in their letter, on 26 and 28 September the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire performed two concerts of French music as part of the *La France européenne* exhibition—these concerts were not part of their regular season. Nevertheless, Honegger's response—published alongside the letter—was defiant and unapologetic. It ended with the following statement: 'French music owes much to the Associations, but the Associations have a duty, above all else, to French music. *Noblesse oblige*.'⁴⁹²

Although the primary issue raised by Honegger, Delforge and Delannoy is whether or not the concert associations were supporting French music (and particularly contemporary French music), their concerns were clearly stimulated by the performances of Wagner's music. Moreover, the complaints indicate that, at least from the point of view of certain prominent critics, Paris had reached saturation point in terms of Wagner concert excerpts. Yet it is not clear whether Parisian audiences agreed with the critics; surely the concert associations performed Wagner's music frequently because audiences loved to hear it? It is nevertheless significant that a small handful of critics who were usually supportive of the regime, used their reviews of these concerts to voice opposition to the idea of Wagner as a symbol of French Europeanism. These are almost the only examples of negative responses to Wagner in the German-sanctioned press during the Occupation, and, in effect, they collectively protest against the substitution of French music (to symbolise European France) with Wagner's music.

Hommage à Wagner, 1943

A year and a half later, another Wagner-related opportunity presented itself to the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire: the sixtieth anniversary of the composer's death. (Also celebrated that year were the fiftieth anniversary of the première of *La Walkyrie* in Paris, and Wagner's 130th birthday.) Although the *soixantenaire* certainly did not provoke as much excitement and press coverage as the *cinquantenaire* of 1933 (see Chapter One), some events were planned to mark the

⁴⁹¹ 'Le sort de la musique contemporaine dans les associations symphoniques', *Comœdia*, 1 November 1941, 5.

⁴⁹² 'La musique française doit beaucoup aux Associations, mais les Association se doivent avant tout à la musique française. Noblesse oblige.' Arthur Honegger, *ibid*.

event in February and March 1943. On 13 February—Wagner’s birthday—the Vichy-controlled station *Radio nationale* broadcast a concert by the Orchestre national which included excerpts from *Le Vaisseau fantôme*, *Parsifal*, and *Tristan*, as well as Wagner’s *Faust* Overture. The concert was preceded by a lecture entitled ‘Hommage à Wagner’, given by Samazeuilh, the text of which was published in the radio station’s weekly publication *Radio nationale* the same week. Samazeuilh trotted out all of his usual themes: the need for young French composers to learn from Wagner, and the ability of his music to provide a path forward in troubled times.⁴⁹³ He also published an article in *Comœdia* announcing two concerts that were to be performed in March by the Société des Concerts, noting that,

Our main concert societies have singularly abused, in the last few years, ‘Wagner Festivals’ composed of more or less ludicrous samplings, to the detriment of so many other unknown or unjustly forgotten works which wait their turn. Is it necessary to emphasise that this time will not be at all similar? ... This French homage to the memory of the Master on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of his death is given as a special event. Thus it will not harm the other sessions of the Société des Concerts. *Tristan* and *Götterdämmerung* have not featured in the Opéra’s normal repertoire for a long time. The *Faust* Overture is almost entirely unknown to the general public, in spite of its [importance in heralding Wagner’s future style].⁴⁹⁴

Even Samazeuilh, then, was unhappy about the repetitive programming of Wagner by the concert associations, although he did not advocate for replacing the Wagner works with French music, but rather for playing lesser known Wagner works. His comments about the programming are strange; while it is true that by 1943 the Paris Opéra had not staged *Tristan* in its own season since 1936 (although it had been performed in

⁴⁹³ Gustave Samazeuilh, ‘Il y a soixante ans mourait Richard Wagner’, *Radio nationale*, 7–13 February 1943, 9.

⁴⁹⁴ ‘Nos grands concerts ont singulièrement abusé, en ces dernières années, des « Festivals Wagner » composés d’échantillonnages plus ou moins saugrenus, au détriment de tant d’œuvres inédites ou injustement oubliées qui attendent leur tour. Est-il besoin de souligner qu’il ne s’agit, cette fois, de rien de semblable ? ... Cet hommage français à la mémoire du maître à l’occasion du sixantième anniversaire de sa mort est donné hors série. Il ne nuit donc en rien au cours des autres séances de la Société des Concerts. *Tristan* et le *Crépuscule des Dieux* n’ont pas figuré depuis fort longtemps au répertoire normal de l’Opéra. L’ouverture de *Faust* est quasi ignorée du grand public, malgré toute sa signification annonciatrice.’

Gustave Samazeuilh, ‘Hommage français pour le sixantième anniversaire de la mort de Richard Wagner’, *Comœdia*, 13 February 1943, 7.

1938 and 1941 by visiting German artists) and *Götterdämmerung* since 1934, the concert associations had been performing the very same extracts on the *soixantenaire* programme several times a year for many years. Even the *Faust* Overture, which Samazeuilh claims is ‘unknown’, had been performed at least six times by the major concert associations in the last decade,⁴⁹⁵ including in the current and previous seasons (1941–42 and 1942–43).

The March Wagner concerts by the Société des Concerts were conducted by Alfred Cortot, as Munch had once again refused to take part.⁴⁹⁶ Cortot was a pianist, conductor, and administrator, who had thrown himself enthusiastically into musical Collaboration. He was later punished for his activities under the Occupation, both by the National Purification Committee that operated after Liberation, and by the French public who protested violently when he returned to Parisian stages in 1947.⁴⁹⁷ In his roles as administrator and performer, he aligned himself in numerous ways with the values and policies of both the Vichy government and the occupying authorities.⁴⁹⁸ Cortot’s association with Wagner’s music was longstanding; he had been employed as a répétiteur in Bayreuth in 1901, had conducted the Paris première of *Götterdämmerung* in 1902, and had recently conducted *Tristan* in Vichy. François Anselmini writes that Cortot saw himself as having practised Franco-German collaboration for 40 years, long before the official Occupation policy was agreed upon.⁴⁹⁹ The Occupation allowed him to particularly devote himself to the music of Wagner,⁵⁰⁰ so he was an obvious choice to replace Munch. Moreover, he was undoubtedly a political choice; as Myriam Chimènes has shown, he was the ultimate ‘musician collaborator’.⁵⁰¹ Adding to the collaborationist atmosphere of the *Hommage à Wagner* events was the participation of the French Wagnerian soprano Germaine Lubin who, as we shall see in Chapter Five, was a leading figure in the domain of musical Collaboration.

⁴⁹⁵ Three times by the Concerts Lamoureux, once by the Concerts Pasdeloup, and twice by the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire. Regular seasons only.

⁴⁹⁶ Holoman, *The Société des Concerts du Conservatoire*, 456–7.

⁴⁹⁷ Myriam Chimènes, ‘Alfred Cortot et la politique musicale du gouvernement de Vichy’, in *La Vie musicale sous Vichy*, ed. Chimènes, 47–9.

⁴⁹⁸ François Anselmini, ‘« Notre national et international Cortot ». Répertoire et pratiques d’un artiste engagé’, in *La musique à Paris sous l’Occupation*, ed. Chimènes and Simon, 177–89.

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 184–6.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 187.

⁵⁰¹ Chimènes, ‘Alfred Cortot’, 35.

Press coverage of the March Wagner concerts was not extensive, but they did receive positive reviews. Lucienne Delforge regretfully concluded that audiences would always choose Wagner over lesser known contemporary French composers, particularly in the current difficult times.⁵⁰² Alain Laubreaux, an avidly collaborationist journalist, wrote a review entitled ‘Wagner’s Victory’, depicting the concerts as the continuation of a process of ‘revenge’ begun with the Berlin Staatsoper’s visit to Paris in 1941 to perform *Tristan* (to be discussed in Chapter Five). ‘What revenge for Wagner!’, he commented.⁵⁰³ He recounted the difficult path to acceptance of Wagner’s works in France, contrasting this with the current situation:

Wagner’s music has taken on a symbolic value in France. It constitutes the surest connection between peoples who have been up until now torn apart. It shows, in the passionate communion of souls, the right path to reconciliation.⁵⁰⁴

As outlined earlier, the programming of Wagner’s music in concerts was characterised by a high level of consistency with the preceding decade, both in terms of quality and quantity; the concert associations continued programming approximately the same number of Wagner concerts, and the programmed repertoire also remained the same. Yet other things did change; for the first time, the musical press began to complain about the over-programming of Wagner to the detriment of French music, and they rejected the use of Wagner in the context of promoting France’s place in Nazi Europe. Although Lucienne Delforge seemed to call for an end to the politicisation of music, it is clear that the performance of Wagner was just as political as it had always been.

Wagner in the eyes of the Resistance

As discussed in the Introduction to this study, very few traces of clandestine press commentary on music under the Occupation survive. The few records that do, must be treated as important documents, as they are the only existing counterpoint to the

⁵⁰² Lucienne Delforge, ‘Le Public a raison’, *La France socialiste*, 13 March 1943, 3.

⁵⁰³ ‘Quelle revanche pour Wagner !’

Alain Laubreaux, ‘Victoire de Wagner’, *Le Petit Parisien*, 31 March 1943, 2.

⁵⁰⁴ ‘La musique de Wagner a pris en France une valeur de symbole. Elle constitue le lien le plus sûr entre les peuples jusqu’ici déchirés. Elle montre, dans la communion passionnée des âmes, le droit chemin des réconciliations.’

Ibid.

censored, biased perspectives that emerge from the rest of the Occupation press. The Resistance press allows us a rare glimpse into what a significant portion of the French population may have really thought about Wagner, and how Wagner was utilised by groups opposing the German and Vichy authorities. Yet these glimpses must also be considered with care; the very small amount of evidence that survives does not allow us to draw wide-reaching conclusions. Two music periodicals of the Resistance are conserved at the Bibliothèque nationale de France: *Le Musicien patriote*, of which only one issue survives, dated September 1943; and *Musiciens d'aujourd'hui* which comprised eight issues dated between November 1941 and July 1944, of which only four survive. Both papers feature hand-written headlines and must have been printed and distributed with much difficulty, given the extremely limited and highly controlled availability of ink and paper. Both were linked to the *Front national de la musique*—a branch of one of the Resistance movements.⁵⁰⁵

The authors of these two publications considered that writing music articles and reviews for the non-clandestine press, performing music in German- or Vichy-approved concerts, attending German-approved musical events and socialising with German authorities, and playing or speaking for Radio-Paris were all morally compromising activities that amounted to collaborating with the enemy. Readers were encouraged to support French music in all forms, compose patriotic music, and generally spread the message of the Resistance and encourage others to join.⁵⁰⁶ In general, articles were less concerned with condemning German music and more focused on supporting French music and musicians, and depicting French composers as patriotic creators of a national art.

Of the issues that survive from the clandestine musical press, only one contains an article primarily related to Wagner or his music. Published in *Musiciens d'aujourd'hui*, it discusses a special 'collaborative' production of *Die Walküre* performed at the Paris Opéra in May 1943 (discussed in further detail in Chapter Five). There are, however, a number of references to Wagner and Wagnerism in other issues. The most significant of these is a series of articles on Debussy in *Musiciens d'aujourd'hui*. Yannick Simon has examined these articles from the perspective of

⁵⁰⁵ For a more comprehensive discussion of *le Front national de la musique*, see Simon, *Composer sous Vichy*, 336–50; Guy Krivopissko and Daniel Virieux, 'Musiciens : une profession en résistance ?', in *La Vie musicale sous Vichy*, ed. Chimènes, 333–51.

⁵⁰⁶ 'Faisons le point', *Musiciens d'aujourd'hui* 4 (October 1942): 1–2.

Debussy reception under the Occupation, and the ways in which Debussy was utilised by different groups for differing political purposes.⁵⁰⁷ As well as discussing Debussy, however, the anonymous author of the article also comments on Wagnerism in France, and in doing so, he/she reveals clues about how Wagner was received in the Resistance press. Although Wagner's music is not explicitly criticised, Debussy is depicted as having fought to 'liberate' France from the suffocating grip of Wagnerism.⁵⁰⁸ Wagner's domination of French music is portrayed as something from which French composers needed to escape. One of the articles—entitled 'Debussy le libérateur'—claims that Debussy's 'penetrating intuition had made him discover in the author of *Tristan* the mortal dangers of an aesthetic and an ethic that today's Hitlerian Germany has made its own.'⁵⁰⁹ Of course, the idea of French composers needing to escape the overwhelming influence of Wagnerism was a common one during the nineteenth century, but was rarely revived in the twentieth century. Yet here, in the clandestine press of the Occupation, Wagnerism is generally portrayed as a negative force in the course of French music history; one that needed to be resisted and overthrown. As a metaphor for France's situation under German occupation, the image of Debussy resisting and overthrowing Wagner is ideal. It is worth noting, however, that Wagner himself is never the subject of commentary, and his music is only mentioned in terms of its effect on French music. It is 'Wagnerism' that is the problem.

Incidentally, while the Resistance press was busy portraying Debussy as a liberator, the German-sanctioned press wrote of Wagner as having liberating tendencies, as remarked upon by Iglesias.⁵¹⁰ The Resistance press, however, needed Debussy to liberate the French *from* Wagner, whose music had a potentially dangerous effect on French music, which was in danger of drowning under Wagner's heavy influence. Nevertheless, the Resistance press seemed reluctant to fully condemn Wagner and his music, or even to state that it should not be played; instead, they warned of its potential dangerous effects and the need to support French music with patriotic zeal.

⁵⁰⁷ Yannick Simon, 'Claude de France, notre Wagner. Le culte de Debussy sous l'Occupation', *Cahiers Debussy* 30 (2006): 5–26.

⁵⁰⁸ 'Debussy musicien français', *Musiciens d'aujourd'hui* 4 (October 1942): 3–4; 'Debussy le libérateur', *Musiciens d'aujourd'hui* 6 (June 1943): 4.

⁵⁰⁹ 'Son intuition pénétrante lui avait fait découvrir chez l'auteur de *Tristan* les périls mortels d'une esthétique et d'une éthique que l'Allemagne hitlérienne d'aujourd'hui fait siennes.'

'Debussy le libérateur', 4.

⁵¹⁰ Iglesias, *Musicologie et Occupation*, 334.

Perhaps the Parisian public's continuing love of Wagner meant that outright condemnation was too high a risk to take.

Conclusion

The malleability and potential symbolic power of Wagner and his music resulted in an acute awareness from all parties of the need to employ caution when dealing with Wagner in the context of *drôle de guerre* France and, later, occupied France. This awareness was combined with a noticeable consciousness of France's historical relationship with Wagner, and what implications it may have for attitudes to Wagner in 1939–44. Wagner and his music could take—and, in the past, had taken—on diverse meanings for the French, and some of these meanings were potentially dangerous. Thus the critics who engineered and participated in *le cas Wagner* press debate in 1940 constantly referred to the anti-Wagner press campaign of the First World War, and discussed whether it was possible to avoid repeating the divisiveness of that earlier debate. Their positions were also noticeably more restrained than they had been 25 years earlier; the overwhelming response, with some exceptions, was that French musicians should temporarily refrain from performing and programming Wagner's music in order to prevent unnecessary provocation. Anti-Wagner sentiment barely reared its head in this debate. Indeed, the only critic who openly condemned Wagner's music and its connections with Hitler's ideology—Henri Busser—was later to be punished by occupying authorities for the strength of opinion that he expressed.

During the Occupation, the treatment of Wagner from both the occupiers and the occupied was similarly characterised by caution and tentativeness. For example, instead of translating contemporary German views on Wagner into French in order to promote a Nazi interpretation of the German composer and his music, German-controlled French publishing houses instead chose to publish French writings on Wagner. These were carefully selected to fit the Third Reich's preferred interpretation of Wagner, but rather than being presented through overtly propagandist material, it was communicated subtly through respected French voices from the past. This was clearly a very deliberate choice; not one of the books published on Wagner in occupied France was a translation of a German work, except for translations of Wagner's own writings. It was also an indication of French critics' preoccupation with reflecting on Wagner's place in French cultural history.

Even the clandestine press refrained from expressing actual anti-Wagner sentiment, at least in the small number of surviving sources. The object of its wrath is not Wagner himself, nor even his music, but rather the historical Wagnerian influence on French music. Again, this suggests a preoccupation with the history of Wagner and France, and a reliance on references to the past in order to articulate the concerns of the present: the influence of Wagnerism on French composers had long ceased to be a real cause for concern in the French musical world, but in the circumstances of occupation it provided a convenient metaphor for the battle faced by the French Resistance. In the previous century, French critics would not have hesitated to attack Wagner and his music as a symbol of German nationalism; in 1939–1944, Wagner was too important to the French for them to categorically reject him. Just as the Parisian critics of 1933 refused to reject Wagner in response to the Third Reich's attempts at appropriation, so too did those of the *drôle de guerre* Wagner debate of 1940, and those writing in the clandestine press of 1942–43. Even critics writing in the occupied, censored press managed to express ambivalence towards the occupiers' vision of Wagner in France: as I have shown, the choice of Wagner's music to represent France's place in Europe, for example, was relatively unpopular, and Parisian critics did not hold back from expressing their disapproval. As I shall show in Chapter Five, however, this sense of ambivalence and even disapproval was not characteristic of the overall reception of Wagner in the Parisian press during the Occupation; critical responses to performances of Wagner's works at the Paris Opéra were far from equivocal.

CHAPTER FIVE

Wagner as Collaboration: the Paris Opéra, 1939–44

Introduction

Given Wagner's position as the ultimate symbol of German cultural superiority, and Parisian audiences' long-established love for Wagner's music, one might expect that German authorities would turn the occupied Paris Opéra into a shrine to the German composer, saturated with nationalistic symbolism. Yet paradoxically, although the Opéra did become the occupying authorities' primary site for promoting the idea of Wagner as a symbol of Franco-German collaboration, the programming of Wagner's operas decreased significantly in both number and diversity during the Occupation. Unlike the concert associations' programming, where Wagner's music remained mostly unaffected, the programming of Wagner at the Opéra changed substantially during France's 'dark years', and not in his favour.

This chapter will focus solely on the reception of Wagner at this institution. It begins with an account of the fate of Wagner's music at the Opéra upon the declaration of war and through the *drôle de guerre* period, followed by an analysis of the programming of Wagner's music under German occupation. I then consider the press reception of a number of different productions of Wagner's works at the Opéra, in particular German touring productions, and what press responses may tell us about the place of Wagner's music in one of France's most prestigious cultural institutions—highly coveted by Hitler and highly symbolic for both Paris and its occupiers. I hope not only to illustrate the remarkable co-option of the cultural sphere into the political sphere, but also to explain how the censored Parisian press negotiated demands to promote German art as superior, maintain the illusion of an equal Franco-German

partnership, and take into account French attitudes towards Wagner and French culture. As with the previous chapter, the sources I use here have their limitations because of the repression of press freedom during this period. I do include, however, a small counterweight to the mass of German-approved press, in the form of a clandestine article on a production of *Die Walküre* at the Opéra. The chapter concludes with the argument that overall, the idea of Wagner as Collaboration suited both German demands and French attitudes, presenting a fragile solution to France's perpetual 'cas Wagner'.

1939: The end of Wagner as rapprochement?

1939 began as a normal year at the Paris Opéra as far as the programming of Wagner was concerned. Between January and August, the Opéra was running simultaneous productions of *Lohengrin*, *La Walkyrie*, and *Le Vaisseau fantôme*; until just a week before the declaration of war, Wagner's operas were being performed between one and six times a month.

Nevertheless, Jacques Rouché, the director of the *Réunion des théâtres lyriques nationaux*,⁵¹¹ had been affected by the increasing political tensions of 1939; in March he had written to the Minister of National Education to confirm two performances at the Opéra of *La Walkyrie* conducted by Wilhelm Furtwängler and performed by a troupe of German singers in June.⁵¹²

These performances would have been a continuation of Furtwängler's traditional tours to Paris to perform Wagner's operas, in the spirit of rapprochement (see Chapter Two). Even on the brink of war, both Rouché and Furtwängler were clearly still willing to pursue the arrangement. In early April, however, the Foreign Affairs Minister wrote to Rouché, advising him to postpone a final decision about arrangements for the Furtwängler visit 'because of the current circumstances'.⁵¹³ A number of letters then followed from the Minister for National Education to Rouché, encouraging him to postpone any decisions, and eventually announcing that the tour would have to be abandoned.⁵¹⁴ The Minister directed Rouché to cite 'technical

⁵¹¹ A brief explanation of this organisation is provided in the next section of this chapter.

⁵¹² Jacques Rouché, letter to the Ministre de l'Éducation nationale, 18 March 1939. BnF BmO, Fonds Rouché, Pièce 108 (12).

⁵¹³ 'en raison des circonstances actuelles'

Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, letter to Jacques Rouché, 4 April 1939. BnF BmO, Fonds Rouché, Pièce 108 (16).

⁵¹⁴ Ministre de l'Éducation nationale, letters to Jacques Rouché, 13, 28 April, 19 May 1939. BnF BmO, Fonds Rouché, Pièce 108 (17), (20), (22).

reasons' as an explanation for the cancellation; political motivations were not to be raised.⁵¹⁵ Rouché then agreed to cancel the performances.⁵¹⁶

The archived letters between Rouché and the two ministers do not provide a justification for the cancellation; the letters are written as if all parties understand the reasons for such a decision. It seems safe to assume, however, that in April, the French government was anticipating potential war with Germany, and thus was reluctant to approve visits by high-profile German artists. The fact that the visit was to feature a work by Wagner must have added to bureaucratic concern surrounding the performances; although the opera was very well-loved by French audiences, there is no doubt that Parisians were aware of the ways in which the Nazi regime associated itself with Wagner's music. A German-language performance by German artists of the music used by the Third Reich to promote nationalist sentiment was potentially very inflammatory at a time when France was on the brink of war. And yet, from the time the Nazis came to power in 1933, there appears to have been only one incident of Parisians protesting against the Third Reich via a performance of Wagner's music by Furtwängler. The incident occurred in May 1933 and was never repeated (see Chapter Two). In spite of this, the government of 1939 clearly considered it inadvisable to allow the performances to proceed. The cancellation was not reported in the Parisian press.

1940: Opéra occupied

As I have outlined in the previous chapter, the German invasion of France in May 1940 and the subsequent French defeat was fast and unexpected (at least for the French). Armistice was signed on 22 June, and the following day Hitler arrived in Paris to survey the city newly under his power. The first place he visited, at 6am, was the Opéra. Just over one week later, on 1 July, the Reich's Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels followed suit with a morning visit to the Opéra and its library.⁵¹⁷ These visits were gestures that demonstrated the symbolic power of the Paris Opéra and its place in the Nazi imagination, as well as the importance that Hitler attached to high culture, and to French culture. Hitler's visit uncannily foreshadowed the significant role the Opéra stage was to play in the policy of Collaboration.

⁵¹⁵ Ministre de l'Education nationale, letters to Jacques Rouché, 28 April, 19 May 1939. BnF BmO, Fonds Rouché, Pièce 108 (20), (22).

⁵¹⁶ Jacques Rouché, letter to the Ministre de l'Education nationale, 23 May 1939. BnF BmO, Fonds Rouché, Pièce 108 (22).

⁵¹⁷ See entries for 23 June and 1 July 1940, *Journal de l'Opéra*, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb426079139/date>

Just before war had broken out, the French government had overhauled the way that the Opéra and the Opéra-Comique were managed in Paris. They took over full control of the two institutions, which were brought together under a new organisation: the *Réunion des théâtres lyriques nationaux* (RTLN). Jacques Rouché, who had directed the Opéra since the First World War, was made administrator of the RTLN just prior to the temporary closure of both institutions due to the outbreak of war. In the month before war was declared, six out of the 17 evenings of performances were allocated to Wagner's operas: *Lohengrin* (performed for the 579th time), *La Walkyrie* (439th performance), and *Le Vaisseau fantôme* (19th performance). On 1 September—the day that Germany invaded Poland and France mobilised its troops—the *Journal de l'Opéra* recorded that *Le Vaisseau fantôme* had been scheduled for performance but was not performed. Following the declaration of war, the Opéra and Opéra-Comique both re-opened a month later, only to be closed again upon the invasion of Paris in June 1940.⁵¹⁸ During this period between re-opening and invasion, restrictions were placed on the programming of certain repertoire at the Opéra: German and Italian works were officially banned from the stage, so there was no question of staging Wagner's operas.⁵¹⁹

Following the invasion of German troops and the beginning of the Occupation, German authorities wasted no time ensuring that operatic life in Paris was re-established. The Opéra's doors were once again re-opened in August 1940, and Jacques Rouché continued in his directorship of the RTLN. Rouché had a degree of authority in matters of programming, but he was ultimately dependent on the approval of German authorities.⁵²⁰ Rouché was firmly dedicated to the survival of the Opéra—which, for him, was symbolic of the survival of France—thus he was willing to do almost whatever it took to retain French control of the theatre.⁵²¹ He was also determined to oversee the return of Wagner works to the Opéra stage because of their financial reliability,⁵²² but was initially prevented from doing so by a short-term ban on the performance of German works, which lasted for a couple of months after re-opening. Justine Gourbière has suggested that the ban was due to a concern on the part of the occupying authorities that the performance of German works could be perceived as

⁵¹⁸ Sandrine Grandgambe, 'La Réunion de théâtres lyriques nationaux', in *La Vie musicale sous Vichy*, ed. Myriam Chimènes, (Bruxelles: Complexe, 2001), 109–11.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid., 111. In reality, however, Verdi's *Rigoletto* and *Aïda* and Mozart's *La Flûte enchantée* were all performed several times during this period.

⁵²⁰ Sara Iglesias, *Musicologie et Occupation. Science et politique dans la France des « années noires »* (Paris : Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 2014), 34; Justine Gourbière, 'La Programmation de l'Opéra Garnier pendant l'Occupation allemande (1940–1944)' (Masters thesis, Paris X, 2006), 38–55.

⁵²¹ Grandgambe, 'La Réunion de théâtres lyriques nationaux', 113–17.

⁵²² Mathias Auclair, 'Richard Wagner à l'Opéra', in *La Musique à Paris sous l'Occupation*, ed. Myriam Chimènes and Yannick Simon (Paris: Cité de la musique/Fayard, 2013), 76.

politically provocative by the French public, and could cause public disturbances.⁵²³ Mathias Auclair, however, attributes the Germans' reluctance to allow Rouché to program Wagner to a dislike for 'Frenchified' versions of these works, particularly as they were still being sung in French, which did not appeal to the Germans.⁵²⁴

Wagner's triumphant return

By late 1940, however, German works were beginning to reappear on Opéra programmes and Rouché had managed to negotiate the slow return of Wagner's works to the Opéra stage, subject to approval from authorities, as with all programming.⁵²⁵ *Le Vaisseau fantôme*—the work that was to be performed on 1 September 1939 when the Opéra was closed down—was the choice for Wagner's reappearance at the Opéra on 18 November 1940, and it was warmly welcomed by the occupied Parisian press. Curiously, *Le Vaisseau fantôme* had not been premiered at the Opéra until 1937, although it had been performed at the Opéra Comique in 1897.⁵²⁶ Thus for most Parisian opera-goers it was a relatively new work, receiving only its 19th performance at the Opéra in November 1940, whereas most other Wagner operas had been performed on that stage hundreds of times.

Critics of the 1940 performances were not generally enamoured of the opera itself; most noted that it was not Wagner's best work, but that it showed the beginnings of his genius. What they were enthusiastic about was that Wagner's music was once again being performed on Paris's most prestigious stage, and they almost unanimously condemned its removal in the first place. 'Wagner's name finally reappears on the Opéra posters which it should never have left',⁵²⁷ proclaimed Adolphe Borchard in *Le Petit Parisien*, a highly popular and successful Parisian daily that had managed to transition smoothly from the 1930s into the Occupation.⁵²⁸ Pierre Christophe celebrated Wagner's 'triumphant entry under the dome of the Palais

⁵²³ Gourbière, 'Programmation de l'Opéra Garnier', 62–3.

⁵²⁴ Auclair, 'Richard Wagner à l'Opéra', 77. Also see Manuela Schwartz, 'La politique musicale dans les territoires conquis par l'Allemagne nazie', in *Le Troisième Reich et la musique*, ed. Pascal Huynh (Paris: Fayard, 2004), 135.

⁵²⁵ Auclair, 'Richard Wagner à l'Opéra', 76.

⁵²⁶ Simon Hatab, '*Le Vaisseau fantôme*', in *Verdi, Wagner et l'Opéra de Paris*, ed. Mathias Auclair, Christophe Gristi and Pierre Vidal (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France/Opéra national de Paris, 2013), 201.

⁵²⁷ 'Le nom de Wagner reparaît enfin sur l'affiche de l'Opéra qu'il n'aurait jamais dû quitter.' Adolphe Borchard, '*Le Vaisseau fantôme* de Richard Wagner', *Le Petit Parisien*, 20 November 1940. Press clipping, BnF Arts du spectacle, Recueil 'Le Vaisseau fantôme 1940', 8-RSUPP-1004 (1).

⁵²⁸ Claude Lévy and Henri Michel, 'La Presse autorisée de 1940 à 1944', in *Histoire générale de la presse française*, vol. 4, ed. Claude Bellanger, Jacques Godechot, Pierre Guiral and Fernand Terrou (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1975), 48–9.

Garnier',⁵²⁹ and Guy de Téramond declared in the extreme Left daily *La France au travail*: 'With what satisfaction we saw Richard Wagner again on the Opéra's posters!'⁵³⁰ Georges Pioch, writing in the collaborationist paper *L'Œuvre*, was particularly critical about the way Wagner's music had been treated:

Through this performance of *The Flying Dutchman*, Richard Wagner takes back his place in our principal theatre for music. The humiliating thing is that he left it, banished as he was, since September 1939, by our unstable masters. They were thus aiding the war in its eternal task, which is to exalt human recklessness high enough to maintain it above everything else.

Pioch went on to link the Wagner 'ban' of 1939–40 to that of the First World War:

This [ban of 1939–40], however, was only a timid relapse of what, from 2 August 1914 to the end of December 1918, had been, for us, a law that was never broken. Back then, not only Wagner, but all the masters of German music were driven out of our theatres and our concert halls.

Before proceeding with his review of the current performance, Pioch advised his readers that they should try to forget the shameful behaviour of 1914–18, presumably by embracing Wagner wholeheartedly under the new regime.⁵³¹

None of the critics who reviewed *Le Vaisseau fantôme* mentioned the war or occupation directly, and they avoided discussing the actual reasons and motivations for removing Wagner's music from concert and opera programs, or for returning it. Pierre Christophe probably came the closest in his review for *Le Cri du peuple*, where he alluded to the objections against Wagner:

⁵²⁹ 'entrée triomphale sous la coupole du Palais Garnier.'

Pierre Christophe, 'Le Vaisseau fantôme', *Le Cri du peuple*, 21 November 1940, 4.

⁵³⁰ 'Avec quelle satisfaction nous avons vu de nouveau Richard Wagner sur les affiches de l'Opéra !'

Guy de Téramond, 'Le Vaisseau fantôme', *La France au travail*, 19 November 1940, 4.

⁵³¹ 'Par cette représentation du *Vaisseau Fantôme*, Richard Wagner reprend sa place dans notre premier théâtre de musique. L'humiliant, c'était qu'il l'eut quittée, banni qu'il fût, dès septembre 1939, par nos maîtres précaires. Ainsi, ceux-là aidaient-ils la guerre dans sa tâche éternelle, laquelle est d'exalter assez hautement l'inconscience humaine pour la maintenir au dessus de tout.

Ce n'était là, d'ailleurs, qu'une timide récidive de ce qui, du 2 août 1914 à fin décembre 1918, avait été, chez nous, une règle jamais enfreinte. Alors, non seulement Wagner, mais tous les maîtres de la musique allemande furent boutés hors de nos théâtres et nos concerts.'

Georges Pioch, 'Le Vaisseau fantôme', *L'Œuvre*, 23 November 1940, 2.

Let us hope that the resumption of the *Flying Dutchman* is the prelude to the *Ring* cycle. Music has never had a homeland, and Wagner's genius goes a hundred miles beyond the pettinesses that have been inflicted on him.⁵³²

Yet this is little more than a vague intimation of the complexities surrounding the place of Wagner's music in French culture at this point in time; critics were clearly restricted in their ability to link politics and music, or to express a political point of view, other than celebrating Wagner's return to the stage.

It is worth noting that the critics who published reviews or commentary on this production were not the same critics who had engaged in the *drôle de guerre* press debate about performing Wagner's music earlier in the year (see Chapter Four). For the most part, they also had not published articles on Wagner in the press during the 1930s. Yet many of their names were to become familiar in Wagner press criticism under the Occupation; Pierre Christophe, Adolphe Borchard, Marcel Delannoy, and Louise Humbert all wrote reviews of *Le Vaisseau fantôme* in 1940, and all went on to write articles on important Wagner-related events under the Occupation. None had been prominent in Wagner criticism before 1940. *Le Vaisseau fantôme*, then, was a foundational moment for Wagner criticism in occupied Paris, and it set the stage for what was to come.

Programming under the Occupation

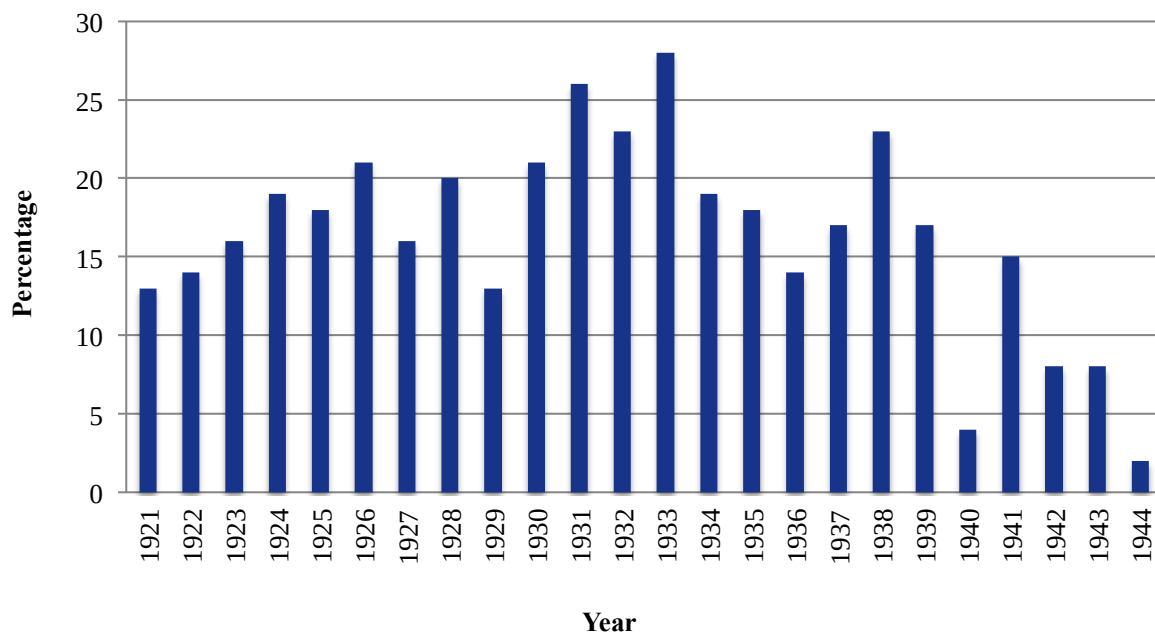
A number of scholars have cited figures on the programming of Wagner works at the Opéra under the Occupation. In her 2001 chapter on the RTLN, Sandrine Grandgambe writes that Wagner's operas made up 7.5% of works performed at the Opéra under the Occupation,⁵³³ a figure later cited by Stéphanie Corcy and Yannick Simon.⁵³⁴ Mathias Auclair, however, provides slightly different figures: he writes that 'during the interwar period, Wagner's works constitute[d] 15.56% of the Opéra's programming; under the Occupation, 6.5%.⁵³⁵ None of the authors cited above explain how their figures were calculated, but it is clear that the difference between the interwar period and the Occupation is substantial in Auclair's calculations. Additionally, Justine Gourbière points out that while Wagner was the most-performed composer at the Opéra in the years preceding the Occupation, he descended to eighth place under the Occupation and the performance of his works decreased by 52%.⁵³⁶

⁵³² 'souhaitons que la reprise du *Vaisseau Fantôme* soit le prélude de la Tétralogie. La musique n'a jamais eu de patrie et le génie de Wagner dépasse de cent coudées les mesquineries qui lui ont été infligées.' Christophe, 'Le Vaisseau fantôme', 4.

Auclair views this as the beginning of a more permanent trend away from programming Wagner, which continued into the postwar period.⁵³⁷

As in Chapter One, the figures I present here calculate performances of Wagner's works as a percentage of performances of all operatic works at the Opéra.⁵³⁸ Figure 10 graphs these percentages during the years between 1921 (when Wagner's music was re-admitted to the Opéra after the First World War) and 1944. The graph clearly shows a peak in performances of Wagner's works in the early 1930s, reaching 28% in 1933 (discussed in Chapter One), and a significant drop during the Occupation, with low points of 4% in the turbulent year of 1940, and 2% in 1944, the year France was liberated from German occupation. The average percentage during the whole interwar period—excepting the two years after the First World War when Wagner's works were still absent from the Opéra stage—is 18.7%. In the 1930s (1930–39) this figure rises to 20.6%, whereas under the Occupation it drops to 7.4%.

Figure 10: Graph showing performances of Wagner operas as a percentage of all operatic performances at the Paris Opéra, 1921–44



⁵³³ Grandgambe, 'La Réunion des Théâtres Lyriques Nationaux', 119.

⁵³⁴ Stéphanie Corcy, *La Vie culturelle sous l'Occupation* (Paris: Perrin, 2005), 244; Yannick Simon, *Composer sous Vichy* (Lyon: Symétrie, 2009), 217.

⁵³⁵ 'pendant l'entre-deux-guerres, les œuvres de Wagner constituent 15,56% de la programmation de l'Opéra ; sous l'Occupation, 6,5%.'

Auclair, 'Richard Wagner à l'Opéra', 72.

⁵³⁶ Gourbière, 'Programmation de l'Opéra Garnier', 26.

⁵³⁷ Auclair, 'Richard Wagner à l'Opéra', 82.

⁵³⁸ As in Chapter One, the information provided here on works performed at the Paris Opéra has been extracted from the *Journal de l'Opéra*, available online at the Bibliothèque nationale de France's online database *Gallica*: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb426079139/date>. Full numerical data is provided in Appendix B1.

Figure 11 shows the changes in diversity of Wagner repertoire from 1933 to 1944. In 1933—the year of the *cinquantième*—all of Wagner’s mature operas were played at the Opéra with the exception of *Le Vaisseau fantôme*, which had not yet had its Opéra premiere. The repertoire remains relatively diverse until the outbreak of war in 1939, at which point diversity decreases rapidly. *Le Vaisseau fantôme* is performed every year under the Occupation, and by 1944 it is the only Wagner work still being performed at the Opéra. The only other Wagner works performed during this period are *L’Or du Rhin*, *La Walkyrie*, and *Tristan et Isolde*.

Figures 10 & 11 include all performances of Wagner staged during this period, and do not distinguish between the Paris Opéra’s own productions and visiting German productions staged at the Opéra. Under the Occupation, however, not only did performances of Wagner’s music decrease at the Opéra, but a significant proportion of the performances were by German touring companies, including some performances that were specifically for German soldiers stationed in Paris, and were not open to French audiences. Figure 12 provides more details about the exact nature of Wagner performances during the Occupation. It shows that the diversity of Wagner repertoire performed at the Opéra during this period was even narrower than it seems in Figure 11: the only Wagner works that were staged by the Paris Opéra itself were *Le Vaisseau fantôme* and *L’Or du Rhin*. All other performances of Wagner works were staged by visiting German companies and were only performed twice or thrice at the most. Two of the four visiting productions—*Die Walküre* in 1941 and *Der fliegende Holländer* in 1942—were for German audiences only. If we take this into account, over four years, there were only 51 performances of Wagner’s operas that were open to French audiences in occupied Paris, and only four works were performed in total (*Le Vaisseau fantôme*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *L’Or du Rhin* and *Die Walküre*). In comparison, during the years 1935–8, for example, there were 126 performances of Wagner’s operas at the Opéra, and all but one of Wagner’s ten mature operas were performed.⁵³⁹ These figures make it clear that Parisians’ access to seeing Wagner’s operas performed on stage during the Occupation was severely limited.

⁵³⁹ *Götterdämmerung* was the only work not performed in this four-year period, although it was performed in the two previous years: 1933 and 1934.

Figure 11: Table showing Wagner repertoire and numbers of performances at the Paris Opéra, 1933–44

	<i>Le Vaisseau fantôme</i>	<i>Tannhäuser</i>	<i>Lohengrin</i>	<i>L'Or du Rhin</i>	<i>La Walkyrie</i>	<i>Siegfried</i>	<i>Le Crépuscule des dieux</i>	<i>Tristan et Isolde</i>	<i>Les Maîtres chanteurs</i>	<i>Parsifal</i>
1933		3	10	3	11	2	9	2	7	8
1934		7	7		11	5	3	2	2	
1935			10	3	10			2		7
1936		5	6		3			9	2	
1937	1		17						9	
1938	14		2	11	9	1		4		
1939	4		10		7					
1940	4									
1941	13			6	2			2		
1942	4			9						
1943	9				3					
1944	5									

Figure 12: Table showing details of Wagner works performed at the Paris Opéra during the Occupation, 1940–43

DATE OF FIRST PERFORMANCE	WORK TITLE	COMPANY	LANGUAGE	NUMBER OF PERFORMANCES	NOTES
18 November 1940	<i>Le Vaisseau fantôme</i>	Paris Opera	French	32 (1940–44)	—
11 March 1941	<i>Die Walküre</i>	Mannheim Opera	German	2	For German soldiers only
22 May 1941	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i>	Berlin Opera	German	2	—
3 November 1941	<i>L'Or du Rhin</i>	Paris Opera	French	14 (1941–42)	—
3 July 1942	<i>Der fliegende Holländer</i>	Cologne Opera	German	2	For German soldiers only
18 May 1943	<i>Die Walküre</i>	Paris Opera in collaboration with state opera companies of Cologne, Vienna, Duisborg and Hanover.	French and German	3	—

Why did the performance of Wagner works drop so significantly under the Occupation, given that Wagner's music was so integral to the Third Reich's propaganda and ideology? Auclair's chapter is dedicated to answering this question, and he offers more than one possible answer. Firstly, as discussed earlier, he argues that the Germans did not like 'Frenchified' versions of Wagner's works being performed, and they particularly objected to Wagner being sung in French.⁵⁴⁰ Of course, if Wagner was to be the ultimate symbol of German superiority, German authorities could hardly condone his music being sung in the language of the country they had just occupied. And yet, all scholars of cultural life in occupied Paris insist that German cultural policy was motivated by a desire to convince the French that

⁵⁴⁰ Auclair, 'Richard Wagner à l'Opéra', 77.

‘nothing had changed’, and keeping them entertained and distracted. Given the overwhelming popularity of Wagner in the decade preceding the Occupation, surely one of the best ways of achieving this goal would have been to continue to perform Wagner’s works at the Opéra? And surely the Germans would not have been primarily motivated by their own artistic tastes in matters of cultural policy? Auclair suggests, however, that the large number of seats requisitioned for Occupation forces at the Opéra meant that occupying authorities had a direct interest in the theatre’s programming.⁵⁴¹ Secondly, Auclair argues that Wagner’s works were not performed frequently because Hitler had directed occupying authorities to avoid interfering with Parisian cultural life wherever possible.⁵⁴² But the sudden decrease in performances of Wagner at the Opéra was an interference in itself; while Rouché was keen to return Wagner to the Opéra stage, it is clear in the figures presented above that his success in doing so was greatly restricted. If the Germans were truly concerned that performing Wagner in Paris would be perceived as a political provocation, the success of the 1941 performances of *Tristan* by the Berlin Staatsoper (to be discussed later in this chapter) should have been enough to convince them otherwise.

Représentations allemandes at the Opéra

Mannheim National Theatre’s *Die Walküre* (1941) and Cologne Opera’s *Der fliegende Holländer* (1942)

In March 1941, the Mannheim National Theatre toured to Paris and staged two performances of Wagner’s *Die Walküre* at the Opéra. The program booklet for these performances is both stunning and confrontingly symbolic: printed in deep royal blue text complemented by gold decoration, the swastikas and Nazi imagery in the design are more prominent than the announcement of the opera and its composer (see Figure 13). While this image has occasionally been used as a means of illustrating the idea of Nazi-sponsored Wagner performances in occupied Paris, the Mannheim *Walküre* performances were not seen by Parisians at all, and they received no attention in Parisian papers;⁵⁴³ as the front cover makes very clear, they were German performances of a German work intended for a German audience. Nevertheless,

⁵⁴¹ Ibid., 81.

⁵⁴² Ibid.

⁵⁴³ The only trace of the event in the Parisian press was an article by Heinrich Strobel in a German-language paper: Strobel, ‘Walküre für die Wehrmacht’, *Pariser Zeitung*, 13 March 1941, 5.

Auclair notes that these performances left a lasting impression on French collective memory because of the way the Opéra was decorated in swastika flags.⁵⁴⁴

Figure 13: Cover page of programme for Mannheim National Theatre's *Die Walküre* at the Paris Opéra, 1941. Source: BnF BmO, Carton 2238 'Die Walküre 11 & 13 mars 1941. Représentations allemandes'. Courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.



⁵⁴⁴ Auclair, 'Richard Wagner à l'Opéra', 71. Nigel Simeone also comments on a similar aspect of these performances: Simeone, 'Making Music in Occupied Paris', *Musical Times* 147, no. 1894 (Spring 2006): 27–8.

A similar event took place on 3 and 4 July 1942, when the Cologne Opera visited Paris to stage two performances of *Der fliegende Holländer*. No trace of these performances exists in the Parisian press, and even the *Journal de l'Opéra* only records the first performance, noting that it was a '*représentation allemande*'.⁵⁴⁵

Given the degree of control that the occupying authorities exercised over the Parisian press, one can only assume that these Wagner events were not reported on because they were not destined to make an impression on Parisians but were rather directed at German soldiers and occupying authorities. This explanation also fits with the occupiers' cultural policy of subtly reinforcing Nazi cultural ideology while maintaining a facade of normality in Parisian cultural life.

Berlin Staatsoper's *Tristan* (1941): 'a gift for which we must be grateful'⁵⁴⁶

There was, however, one touring German Wagner production which was unmistakably staged for Parisians: the Berlin Staatsoper's two performances of *Tristan und Isolde* at the Opéra in May 1941. At this point in time, the only Wagner work accessible to Parisians at the Opéra since the outbreak of war in September 1939 was *Le Vaisseau fantôme*, which had been staged nine times since its return to the Opéra in November 1940. For a population that had been accustomed to having Wagner works on the Opéra stage for between 25 and 70 evenings a year in the decade preceding the war, and having the opportunity to see all of Wagner's mature opus within the space of a few years, this was a significant change, particularly given that, as already mentioned, *Le Vaisseau fantôme* was not considered by Parisian critics to be the best of Wagner's works. In this context, then, it is easy to understand why the prospect of hearing *Tristan* sung by some of the world's best Wagnerian singers, with the prestige of a 'Bayreuth production' (publicity for the performances claimed that they included the cast, sets and costumes from Bayreuth), generated great excitement.

Unlike the touring productions from the Mannheim National Theatre and the Cologne Opera, the Berlin Opera's visit received an extraordinary amount of press attention,

⁵⁴⁵ See *Journal de l'Opéra*, Gallica, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k910856j/f7.item.zoom>

⁵⁴⁶ 'un cadeau dont nous devons savoir gré'

'L'Opéra de Berlin à Paris', *Les Nouveaux Temps*, 15 May 1941, 2.

indicating that the Parisian press had been directed to promote the event. Articles began appearing before the troupe arrived, brimming with anticipation. In *Les Nouveaux temps*—a collaborationist paper created by Otto Abetz to ‘balance out’ the Right-dominated Occupation press⁵⁴⁷—an anonymous author announced the imminent arrival of the company and emphasised the importance and prestige of its visit. The article continued:

The enchanted world of Bayreuth in Paris: here is a gift for which we must be grateful to the Institut allemand. It is also through such contact that the communion of peoples is delivered and affirmed.⁵⁴⁸

The article’s ingratiating tone and gratitude towards Abetz’s *Institut allemand*, and its reference to peoples coming together, was typical of the press coverage in general. Pierre Christophe’s article published on the front page of *Le Cri du peuple*—a Vichy-subsidised daily founded by the *Parti populaire français*—used strikingly similar language:

In responding to the invitation from Paris’s Institut allemand, the Berlin Staatsoper is giving a true gift to Parisians: a magnificent gift, unique in the world.⁵⁴⁹

The troupe’s arrival in Paris was a significant press event. On 16 May, a trainload of 300 German singers and musicians pulled into the Gare du Nord to be greeted by Parisian paparazzi, eagerly waiting to photograph, film and interview the newly arrived celebrities for the next day’s front-page news.⁵⁵⁰ The Paris visit was part of a European tour that had already passed through Budapest and Rome. The troupe included the Berlin Staatsoper chorus and orchestra, soloists associated with the Bayreuth Festival, and the young rising star conductor Herbert von Karajan. They brought with them on the train full scenery and costumes from Bayreuth. As well as

⁵⁴⁷ See Claude Levy, *Les Nouveaux Temps et l’idéologie de la collaboration* (Paris: Fondation nationale des sciences politiques/Armand Colin, 1974).

⁵⁴⁸ ‘La féerie de Bayreuth à Paris, voilà un cadeau dont nous devons savoir gré à l’Institut allemand de l’avoir préparé. C’est aussi par de tels contacts que la communion des peuples se prononce et s’affirme.’

‘L’Opéra de Berlin à Paris’, *Les Nouveaux Temps*, 15 May 1941, 2.

⁵⁴⁹ ‘En répondant à l’invitation de l’Institut allemand de Paris, le Staatsoper de Berlin fait aux Parisiens un véritable cadeau ; cadeau magnifique, unique au monde.’

Pierre Christophe, ‘Le Staatsoper de Berlin à l’Opéra de Paris’, *Le Cri du peuple*, 14 May 1941, 1.

⁵⁵⁰ See news footage of the troupe’s arrival: ‘Concert Wagner au Palais de Chaillot’, *Institut national de l’audiovisuel*, <http://www.ina.fr/video/AFE85000549>, 0:05.

the two planned performances of *Tristan*, there were to be two performances of Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Mozart's death.⁵⁵¹ The *Tristan* performances were also supposed to celebrate important anniversaries: Wagner's 128th birthday, and the 100th anniversary of the composition of *Der fliegende Holländer*, which had taken place in a small French town called Meudon, during Wagner's first stay in France.

The theme of bringing French and German people closer in what was variously described as 'musical collaboration', 'cultural communion', 'the true beginning of cultural relations', 'a lesson in civilisation', and a means of helping two peoples to understand each other, was strikingly prominent in the press reception of this event. The collaborationist discourse emphasised the equal standing of France and Germany and determinedly avoided any mention of comparison of national musical standards and traditions. The idea of musical or cultural superiority/inferiority was never overtly mentioned, although occasionally subtly hinted at. Instead, the press used words such as 'peace' and 'harmony', and often employed the concept of overcoming or transcending borders between peoples. This is neatly exemplified by an article published in *L'Œuvre*, which described the performances as a 'gesture in favour of the architectural art of sounds which has no homeland'.⁵⁵² This is a clear reference to the polemical phrase '*l'art n'a pas de patrie*', a saying that had been an important element of the First World War Wagner debate in the Parisian press (see Chapter Four).⁵⁵³

Numerous Parisian papers promoted the arrival of the German troupe on their front pages (see Figure 14). The excitement generated by their presence extended to

⁵⁵¹ As part of the Third Reich's celebrations of this important Mozart event, a group of French musical personalities were invited to participate in the festivities taking place in Vienna in December 1941. Participation in this tour was later considered to be a prime example of musical collaborationism, and was used as evidence of the participants' betrayal of the French nation. In his book chapter on the Parisian celebration of the event, Jean Gribenski cites numerous studies of the Mozart celebrations held in Vienna. See Gribenski, 'Mozart, « musicien européen » ou créateur d'une musique « d'essence germanique » ? Les célébrations à Paris en 1941', in *La musique à Paris sous l'Occupation*, ed. Chimènes and Simon, 103.

⁵⁵² '[un] geste en faveur de l'art architectural des sons qui n'a pas de patrie.'

'L'Opéra de Berlin donnera trois soirées de gala', *L'Œuvre*, 14 May 1941, 1, 3.

⁵⁵³ Camille Saint-Saëns famously negated this expression in 1881, and again during WWI, when he declared that 'if art has no homeland, artists have one' (*si l'art n'a pas de patrie, les artistes en ont une*). See Saint-Saëns, *Écrits sur la musique et les musiciens*, ed. Marie-Gabrielle Soret (Paris: Vrin, 2012), 293.

glowing pre-emptive reviews, such as the following which appeared in *Le Matin*, a prominent daily newspaper supported by German authorities:

As we know, tomorrow evening, the Staatsoper will perform *Tristan and Isolde*, for which the dress rehearsal will take place this evening. An enthusiastic and fervent public will applaud incomparable artists in one of Wagner's purest masterpieces, the story of mystical love, where the composer realised the full potential of his genius and found the complete expression of his art.⁵⁵⁴

The arrival of Winifred Wagner in Paris on the morning of the first performance of *Tristan* only added to the press interest in the event. She was photographed and filmed arriving at the Gare de l'Est and being greeted by the director of the Institut allemand Karl Epting (see Figure 15).⁵⁵⁵ Her presence clearly lent a sense of additional prestige to the occasion, and she was referred to in the papers as Richard Wagner's daughter-in-law, rather than as the director of the Bayreuth Festival.

The programme for these performances of *Tristan* included an essay entitled 'Wagner and France' by Gustave Samazeuilh.⁵⁵⁶ In the essay, Samazeuilh traces the history of Wagner's interactions with France and the French people; while he does not avoid mentioning the difficult reception of Wagner's music in France, he is at pains to emphasise the important role that France played in Wagner's artistic development. As with previous press articles, Samazeuilh writes of how it was in France that Wagner really discovered himself and found inspiration for some of his most important works. He lists Wagner's French supporters who, he claims, understood Wagner better than anyone else. France can even take credit for producing Cosima, Wagner's selfless and devoted wife. Samazeuilh also revisits the highly successful performances of *Die Walküre* and *Tristan* during the *Semaine artistique allemande* in the 1937 Exposition

⁵⁵⁴ 'Demain soir, le Staatsoper représentera, comme on sait, « Tristan et Isolde », dont la répétition générale aura lieu ce soir. Un public enthousiaste et fervent applaudira des artistes incomparables dans l'un des plus purs chefs-d'œuvre de Wagner, le poème de l'amour mystique, où le musicien a donné toute la mesure de son génie et trouvé l'expression achevée de son art.'

'Demain soir à l'Opéra le Staatsoper donnera *Tristan et Isolde*', *Le Matin*, 21 May 1941, 2.

⁵⁵⁵ For example, see 'Mme Winifred Wagner est à Paris', *L'Œuvre*, 23 May 1941, 1; 'Mme Winifred Wagner belle-fille de l'illustre musicien a assisté à l'Opéra', *Le Petit Parisien*, 23 May 1941, 1; 'La belle-fille de Wagner à l'Opéra', *Le Matin*, 23 May 1941, 1.

Also, see news footage of Winifred Wagner's arrival: 'Concert Wagner au Palais de Chaillot', *Institut national de l'audiovisuel*, <http://www.ina.fr/video/AFE85000549>, 0:22.

⁵⁵⁶ Gustave Samazeuilh, 'Wagner et la France', in programme booklet for *Tristan et Isolde*, 22 and 25 May 1941. BnF BmO, Carton 2238 'Tristan et Isolde 22 & 25 mai 1941'.

(discussed in Chapter Two). Finally, he brings out his habitual line about the ability of Wagner's music to 'bring together the hearts of men by the magic of its genius accents'.⁵⁵⁷ It is worth noting that most of these elements in Samazeuilh's 'Wagner and France' narrative were present in his Wagner criticism and commentary throughout the 1930s. His particular perspective on the relationship between Wagner and France fitted conveniently into the collaborationist discourse of the Occupation, and this helps to explain his apparent role as France's German-sanctioned Wagner expert during the Occupation.

Figure 14: Photo of German singers arriving at the Gare du Nord for the Berlin Staatsoper's performances of *Tristan und Isolde* in May 1941. Source: *Le Matin*, 17 May 1941. Courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France



The press coverage of the two *Tristan* performances on 22 and 25 May was both extensive and uniform. Adolphe Borchard—who had applauded Wagner's return to the Opéra six months before, and who published two articles on the Berlin *Tristan*

⁵⁵⁷ 'l'art du Maître ... rapproche les cœurs des hommes par la magie de ses accents géniaux.' Ibid.

performances in *Le Petit Parisien*—described the event as a ‘triumphal evening’,⁵⁵⁸ as did the anonymous critic for *La France au travail*.⁵⁵⁹ In *L'Œuvre*, the troupe’s entire visit was described as ‘the Institut allemand’s brilliant series of musical performances’,⁵⁶⁰ and overall, critics were unanimous in their appreciation of the high quality of every aspect of the *Tristan* performances. Furthermore, the majority of reports and reviews related to the events were published as front-page news, and frequently included photos and illustrations designed to capture the reader’s eye. Pierre Christophe was in raptures over the performances, claiming that,

There is a certain artistic perfection before which one can only bow down.

The performance of *Tristan and Isolde*, offered to Parisians by the Institut allemand, is without doubt a monument of art that we will never see again.⁵⁶¹

The theme of gratitude to the Institut allemand was recurrent, as was the idea that the performances were a vague force of unification and reconciliation. *L'Œuvre*’s anonymous critic waxed lyrical about the perfection of both the opera and the production, before moving on to a more poetic reflection on the power of Wagner’s music during those performances:

May I say it? An evening like this one—where three thousand hearts, three thousand minds, who were not united by fraternal vows, have, up to their own intoxicated oblivion, communed with immortal beauty—what has been accomplished is much more than the necessary reconciliations which, alone, can open up a habitable future to peoples: it is the reconciliation of Man with himself. And this, which is the eternal miracle of Music and the Poet, is first of all their daily good deed.⁵⁶²

⁵⁵⁸ Adolphe Borchard, ‘La Soirée triomphale à l’Opéra de « Tristan et Isolde » par les artistes de Bayreuth’, *Le Petit Parisien*, 24 May 1941, 2.

⁵⁵⁹ ‘Triomphe de *Tristan et Isolde*’, *La France au travail*, 24 May 1941, 1–2.

⁵⁶⁰ R. B., ‘Après la brillante série des manifestations musicales de l’Institut allemand, on parle d’un voyage à Berlin de l’Opéra de Paris’, *L'Œuvre*, 28 May 1941, 1.

⁵⁶¹ ‘Il y a une certaine perfection artistique devant laquelle on ne peut que s’incliner. La représentation de « Tristan et Isolde », offerte par l’Institut allemand aux Parisiens, est sans doute un monument de l’art comme nous n’en reverrons plus.’

Pierre Christophe, ‘Paris a acclamé la troupe du Staatsoper de Berlin’, *Le Cri du peuple*, 24 May 1941, 1, 3.

⁵⁶² ‘Puis-je le dire ? Un soir comme celui-ci—où trois mille cœurs, trois mille esprits, qui n’étaient pas unis par des vœux fraternels, ont, jusqu’à l’oubli enivré d’eux-mêmes, communié dans l’immortel beauté—ce qui s’est accompli, c’est beaucoup plus que les réconciliations nécessaires qui, seules,

Figure 15: Photo of Winifred Wagner arriving at the Gare de l'Est. Source: *L'Œuvre*, 23 May 1941. Courtesy of Bibliothèque nationale de France



Related to the idea of reconciliation was the theme of collaboration, which was referred to constantly in both explicit and implicit ways. When Karajan was interviewed by *L'Œuvre* just after the Staatsoper's arrival in Paris, he bluntly touted the idea with little discretion:

The Staatsoper's tour, from the point of view of collaboration ... could not be more opportune. Collaboration is a desirable and necessary thing that can only be profitable to two peoples particularly sensitive to the musical art.⁵⁶³

For Karajan, there was no doubt that the Staatsoper tour was an integral element in the policy of Collaboration. The title of the article makes his point inescapable: 'Mr

peuvent ouvrir aux peuples un avenir habitable : c'est la réconciliation de l'Homme avec lui-même. Et cela, qui est le miracle éternel de la Musique et du Poète, est d'abord leur quotidienne charité.'

'Tristan et Isolde', *L'Œuvre*, 31 May 1941, 2.

⁵⁶³ 'Le voyage du Staatsoper, au point de vue de la collaboration ... est on ne peut plus opportun. La collaboration est une chose désirable et nécessaire qui ne peut être que profitable à deux peuples particulièrement sensibles à l'art musical.'

O. B., 'À la veille des galas de l'Opéra M. Herbert von Karajan chef d'orchestre du Staatsoper de Berlin nous parle de la collaboration artistique franco-allemande', *L'Œuvre*, 17 May 1941, 1.

Herbert von Karajan, conductor of the Berlin Staatsoper, speaks to us about Franco-German artistic collaboration' (see Figure 16).

Figure 16: Excerpt from news article featuring interview with Herbert von Karajan. Source: *L'Œuvre*, 17 May 1941. Courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France



Louise Humbert, music critic for the pro-fascist, racist and collaborationist journal *La Gerbe*—created by the German Embassy⁵⁶⁴—published two articles related to the *Tristan* events: one on the morning of the first performance, and a second which reviewed the opera and was published a week later. Humbert was an unapologetically collaborationist writer who had embraced the Occupation with open arms.⁵⁶⁵ The recurrent themes discussed above can be found in her initial article, but she is unusually dedicated to elaborating and philosophising upon them; unlike many of the other articles published about the same event, hers is not formulaic. In the first article, she writes:

Under the auspices of the Institut allemand which does not cease to demonstrate its beneficial activities, the Berlin Opera, renowned worldwide, is currently honouring us with its presence. This gesture, in the current climate, goes well beyond its artistic impact; it could not be more meaningful, nor more comforting.

While any attempted initiatives pose a complicated, difficult problem, having decided and having taken the trouble to bring us the elite of its musicians and singers with all the necessary equipment so that the performances would conform exactly to those which are the pride of the great Central European capital [Berlin], is this not a token of esteem, friendship even, on the part of Germany, to which we should show ourselves to be sensitive?

Humbert goes on to claim that Wagner (along with Mozart) has been ‘sent’ by the Third Reich as a kind of racial ambassador:

The messengers that the Third Reich sends us are Mozart and Wagner, two Germans of pure race, who have long found their way to our hearts. In each of them is incarnated a good share of the characteristic and often opposing virtues of the Germanic soul: its depth and its fantasy, its sentimentality and its taste for grandeur, for heroism, its kindness and its rigour, in short everything which diversifies and completes a race which balances Nordic and Meridional elements.

⁵⁶⁴ Robert Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard, New Order 1940–1944* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 256.

⁵⁶⁵ Simon, *Composer sous Vichy*, 57, 110.

The article ends thus:

Such times are advantageous. They are an occasion to experience the fact that there is no better means to appease and bring closer together the hearts and minds of humans, than to unite them around a great thought or a noble sentiment.⁵⁶⁶

The themes of reconciliation, cooperation and collaboration that emerge from Humbert's article are no different from those in the rest of the press coverage of the *Tristan* performances. Yet Humbert handles them more expertly; while many of the other articles appear to follow received formulas—beginning with gratitude to the Institut allemand, followed by praise for the quality of the performances, and ending with one or two lines about how the event brings peoples together—Humbert has clearly taken on the collaborationist enterprise with energy and vigour, rather than robotically repeating standard information and phrases.

The formulaic nature of these articles suggests that much of the basic content was dictated by authorities directly to the journalists. Indeed, as already mentioned in the Introduction to this study, German authorities did prescribe some press content: the Germany Embassy held twice-weekly lectures for journalists, as well as a '*thé de presse*' on Wednesdays, when afternoon tea was provided alongside films and

⁵⁶⁶ 'Sous les auspices de l'Institut allemand qui ne cesse de se manifester d'une bienfaisante activité, l'Opéra de Berlin, de renommée mondiale, nous honore, actuellement, de sa visite. Ce geste, en de semblables conjonctures, va bien au-delà de sa portée artistique; il n'en saurait être de plus significatif, ni de plus réconfortant.

Alors que toute velléité d'entreprise pose un problème difficile, compliqué, avoir décidé, avoir pris la peine d'amener à nous l'élite de ses musiciens et de ses chanteurs avec tout le matériel nécessaire pour que les représentations soient exactement conformes à celles qui font l'orgueil de la grande capitale centre-européenne, n'est-ce pas de la part de l'Allemagne une marque d'estime, voire d'amitié, à laquelle nous devons nous montrer sensibles?

[...]

Les messagers que nous envoie le III^e Reich, sont Mozart et Wagner, deux Allemands de pure race, qui depuis longtemps ont trouvé le chemin de nos cœurs. En chacun d'eux se sont incarnés une bonne part des vertus caractéristiques, souvent opposées, de l'âme germanique : sa profondeur et sa fantaisie, sa sentimentalité et son goût de la grandeur, de l'héroïsme, sa gentillesse et sa rigueur, tout ce qui diversifie et complète, en somme, une race où s'équilibrent les apports nordiques et méridionaux.

[...]

De tels moments sont salutaires. Ils sont une occasion d'éprouver qu'il n'y a pas de meilleur moyen, pour apaiser, rapprocher, les esprits et les cœurs des humains, que de les unir autour d'une grande pensée ou d'un noble sentiment.'

Louise Humbert, 'Le Staatsoper de Berlin est à Paris', *La Gerbe*, 22 May 1941, 11.

lectures.⁵⁶⁷ In addition, the *Propaganda Abteilung*'s agency *Presse-Gruppe* distributed instructions to journalists, not only directing them to publish on certain topics in particular ways, but also warning them to avoid specific topics or news items.⁵⁶⁸ In light of this, we can be almost certain that a large percentage of the content published in reviews of the *représentations allemandes* at the Opéra was provided by German authorities. Yet a small number of critics such as Louise Humbert went well beyond what had been provided to them and fully immersed themselves in collaborationist ideology, making it their own.

Germaine Lubin: Collaboration personified

Germaine Lubin, the enormously successful French Wagnerian soprano who performed the role of Isolde in the Berlin Staatsoper performances, was the focus of a significant amount of press attention. The cast had been advertised as a 'Bayreuth cast', meaning that it was the same cast that had performed *Tristan* at the 1939 Bayreuth Festival (*Tristan* had not been programmed at the 1940 Festival): Lubin as Isolde, Max Lorenz as Tristan, Margarete Klose as Brangäne, and Jaro Prohaska as Kurwenal. Lubin was an unusual exception amongst this all-German cast, particularly given that under the Third Reich, Bayreuth casting was almost entirely German.⁵⁶⁹ After singing the role of Isolde in Paris throughout the 1930s, Lubin had triumphed in Bayreuth when she made her debut there as Kundry in 1938, followed by a highly acclaimed performance as Isolde in 1939. She quickly made the acquaintance of both Hitler and Goebbels at this time, and went on to become friendly with the Wagner family.⁵⁷⁰ Furthermore, from 1919 she established a relationship with Maréchal Pétain, which Aurélien Poidevin has characterised as 'platonic love', and which she refused to renounce even after Liberation.⁵⁷¹

Lubin's uncompromising political tendencies led to her severe punishment at her post-war political trial, where she was condemned for what was seen as her

⁵⁶⁷ Barbara Lambauer, 'Otto Abetz, inspirateur et catalyseur de la collaboration culturelle', in *Les Intellectuels et l'Occupation, 1940–1944. Collaborer, partir, résister*, ed. Albrecht Betz and Stefan Martens (Paris: Editions Autrement, 2004), 83.

⁵⁶⁸ Eva Berg Gravensten, *La Quatrième Arme. La presse française sous l'Occupation* (Lausanne: Esprit ouvert, 2001), 51.

⁵⁶⁹ Christian Merlin and Pierre Flinois, 'Bayreuth', in *Dictionnaire Encyclopédique Wagner*, ed. Timothée Picard (Paris: Actes Sud/Cité de la musique, 2010), 209.

⁵⁷⁰ Aurélien Poidevin, 'Germaine Lubin, une Maréchale trop Germanophile', in *La Musique à Paris sous l'Occupation*, ed. Chimènes and Simon, 201–2.

⁵⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 199.

instrumental role in Collaboration.⁵⁷² Under the Occupation, however, she was Collaboration's ultimate positive symbol, playing her part in the glorification of German culture while bestowing honour on France in a manner that could not be viewed as threatening German superiority. Her ability to sing Wagnerian parts in the German language—which was very unusual for a French singer at that time—and the prestige of having been admitted to the Bayreuth 'family', were sources of great pride for the occupied Parisian press. *Le Matin* interviewed her upon her arrival in Paris with the rest of the Berlin Staatsoper/Bayreuth Festival troupe in mid-May. The front-page article included photos of her and other singers at the Gare du Nord, accompanied by the director of the *Institut allemand*, Karl Epting (see Figures 14 & 17). Lubin seemed eager to promote the links between Wagner and France:

I think that the painful legend of Tristan and Isolde, particularly the *Invocation of Night*, remains, amongst Wagner's most beautiful pages of traditional French inspiration, the most sensitive for the music-loving public. Wagner, misunderstood, was a bit of a Tristan and he loved Paris where he lived unknown.⁵⁷³

In the article shown in Figure 17, Lubin goes to great lengths to emphasise the French contribution to the event, describing *Tristan* as having sprung from 'French inspiration', and sneaking in a reference to Wagner's love of Paris.

The press seized on Lubin's involvement in the tour as an ideal example of the spirit of collaboration. In anticipation of her visit, Pierre Christophe from *Le Cri du peuple* approvingly quoted her as saying, 'The day when the artistic elites of the two countries better understand each other, the borders will seem less high.'⁵⁷⁴ After the first performance of *Tristan*, an anonymous critic remarked in *La France au travail* that Lubin 'obtained a triumphal success, as much from the French public as from the

⁵⁷² Ibid., 197–206.

⁵⁷³ 'Je pense que la douloureuse légende de Tristan et d'Isolde, en particulier *l'Invocation de la Nuit*, reste parmi les plus belles pages de Wagner d'inspiration traditionnelle française la plus sensible au public mélomane. Wagner, incompris, fut un peu Tristan et aima Paris où il vécut ignoré.'

'Mme Germaine Lubin nous parle du rôle d'Isolde', *Le Matin*, 17 May 1941, 1, 3.

⁵⁷⁴ 'Le jour où les élites artistiques des deux pays se seront mieux comprises, les frontières paraîtront moins hautes'.
Christophe, 'Le Staatsoper de Berlin à l'Opéra de Paris', 1.

German public.’⁵⁷⁵ *Le Matin* was even more explicit about the collaboration symbolism embodied by Lubin:

The great French artist has very often, as much in Paris as in Bayreuth, played Wagnerian heroines. Her presence in the midst of the Staatsoper troupe makes manifest the spirit of collaboration which drives this magnificent achievement by the Institut allemand.⁵⁷⁶

Lucien Rebatet—a virulently antisemitic journalist and writer, and a committed fascist—was particularly vocal on the subject of Lubin. Philippe Gumpłowicz has commented on the fact that in the mainstream press of the interwar period, Rebatet was one of very few music critics to make connections between politics and music.⁵⁷⁷ He had long been fascinated with the music of Wagner, and later wrote of how it was in fact Wagnerism that brought him to Hitlerism.⁵⁷⁸ During the Occupation he wrote articles for *Le Cri du peuple* and *Je suis partout*. In the latter publication, he wrote proudly:

Our compatriot Germaine Lubin represented us amongst these foreigners not because of a symbolic gallantry [on the part of the Germans towards the French], nor even for the courageous attitude she took in the new Franco-German politics, but because she is one of the top Isolde today, which is why she belongs to the Bayreuth troupe.⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁵ ‘elle a obtenu un succès triomphal, tant de la part du public français que du public allemand.’ ‘Triomphe de *Tristan et Isolde*’, 1–2.

⁵⁷⁶ ‘La grande artiste française a bien souvent, tant à Paris qu’à Bayreuth, incarné les héroïnes wagnériennes. Sa présence au milieu de la troupe du Staatsoper rend manifeste l’esprit de collaboration qui anime cette magnifique réalisation de l’Institut allemand.’

‘Demain soir à l’Opéra le Staatsoper donnera *Tristan et Isolde*’, *Le Matin*, 21 May 1941, 2.

⁵⁷⁷ Philippe Gumpłowicz, *Les Résonances de l’ombre : musique et identités : de Wagner au jazz* (Paris: Fayard, 2012), 152.

⁵⁷⁸ Lucien Rebatet and Pierre-Antoine Cousteau, *Dialogue des vaincus : prison de Clairvaux, janvier–décembre 1950*, cited in Timothée Picard, *Verdi-Wagner. Imaginaire de l’opéra et identités nationales* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2013), 44–5.

⁵⁷⁹ ‘Notre compatriote Germaine Lubin nous représentait au milieu de ces étrangers non point par une galanterie symbolique, ni même pour la courageuse attitude qu’elle a eue aussitôt dans la nouvelle politique franco-allemande, mais parce qu’elle est une des premières Isolde aujourd’hui, et qu’elle appartient en cette qualité à la troupe de Bayreuth.’ Lucien Rebatet, ‘L’Opéra de Berlin à Paris’, *Je suis partout*, 26 May 1941, 9.

Figure 17: Excerpt from news article including interview with and photo of Germaine Lubin.
Source: *Le Matin*, 17 May 1941. Courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France



The following day another of Rebatet's articles was published in *Le Petit Parisien*, reviewing the Staatsoper's tour overall. Rebatet summarised his perspective in the title: 'A Lesson on Civilisation'. He felt that the press had neglected an important aspect of the Staatsoper performances, and in his attempt to redress this, he depicted the tour as being enormously significant for Franco-German political relations, but also for the state of the French nation. It is worth quoting this article at length because it demonstrates the significance of the tour in the eyes of a politically motivated music critic such as Rebatet:

up until now, we have not highlighted enough the feeling that most of the French audience members experienced at their very core, even if they did not all formulate it clearly.

These audience members instinctively perceived the exceptional, singularly new character of these memorable evenings. Germany invited us to celebrate two men of universal glory, two of these great musicians whose genius has formed so many connections between our country and Germany: Mozart, so tenderly loved and studied in France; Wagner, who has counted amongst the French many of his most passionate disciples, and who counts among us, over the last century, innumerable admirers.

This commemoration brought together on the same platform German and French artists; in the same room, a crowd of French music-lovers rubbing shoulders with German music-lovers; on the same poster, the names of the nations' capitals which, however, are still legally at war with one another.

I believe that few amongst us could have imagined such a ceremony a year ago, when, confounded in military and civilian convoys in retreat, we were trying to calculate how of this horrible adventure could end for our *patrie*, with an inexpressible anguish at the bottom of our hearts.

Our people had been persuaded that they were fighting to save civilisation. In the name of this same cause, statesmen, after having unleashed the most ferocious and insane of wars, had no other concern than to prolong it, to kindle its fires, to spread its ruins from the Polar Ocean to the Orient.

Do we not think that there is much more civilisation in this moving encounter, centred on marvellous works, between hundreds of men who were facing one another just a little earlier with arms in their hands, who now seek in their common admiration for some of the most immortal testimonies of the Western spirit, a site of reconciliation?

I am not saying that through this encounter our civilisation is from now on assured of lifting itself out of the debris and the rivers of blood where it is

fighting with difficulty. But, thanks to such an event, it is possible for us now to conceive of the hope of it.⁵⁸⁰

Like Louise Humbert, Rebatet goes beyond formulaically reporting on the brilliant success of the performances and commenting on the way that France and Germany were brought together by the event, instead depicting the performance of Wagner at the Opéra during the Occupation as a means of saving the French nation. Civilisation, he argues, occurs in collaboration, not war. Although the article is purportedly about the Mozart performances as well, Rebatet is undoubtedly focused on Wagner: after the section quoted above, Rebatet goes on to review the *Tristan* performances, explaining that Karajan's performance was superior to that of many French conductors. As shown in Figure 18, the emphasis on Wagner is reinforced by an illustration of Wagner's bust to the left of the title 'A Lesson on Civilisation'.

For Rebatet, Wagner plays the role of liberator and exemplifies the merits of Collaboration. He is not only concerned with the 'reconciliation' of two peoples officially at war, but he sees in Collaboration the opportunity for the French nation to redeem itself, and lift itself out of the bloody hole it has found itself in, through Wagner. As discussed in Chapter Four, Sara Iglesias has commented on this idea of

⁵⁸⁰ 'jusqu'ici on n'a pas assez mis en lumière ce sentiment que la plupart des spectateurs français ont éprouvé au fond d'eux-mêmes s'ils ne l'ont pas tous nettement formulé.

Ces spectateurs ont perçu instinctivement le caractère exceptionnel, singulièrement nouveau, de ces mémorables soirées. L'Allemagne nous y conviait à célébrer deux hommes d'une gloire universelle, deux de ces grands musiciens dont le génie a noué tant de liens entre le pays d'outre-Rhin et le nôtre : Mozart, si tendrement aimé et étudié chez nous ; Wagner, qui a compté parmi les Français maints de ses plus passionnées disciples, qui compte chez nous, depuis un siècle, d'innombrables admirateurs. Cette commémoration réunissait sur le même plateau des artistes allemands et français ; dans la même salle, une foule de mélomanes français côtoyant des mélomanes allemands ; sur la même affiche, les noms des capitales des deux nations qui, cependant, sont encore juridiquement en guerre l'une l'autre [sic].

Je crois bien que peu d'entre nous auraient pu imaginer une semblable cérémonie il y a un an, lorsque, confondus dans les colonnes militaires et civiles de la retraite, nous tâchions de supputer ce que pourrait bien être pour notre patrie la fin de cette horrible aventure, avec une angoisse inexprimable au fond du cœur.

On avait persuadé notre peuple qu'il se battait pour sauver la civilisation. Au nom de cette même cause, des hommes d'Etat, après avoir déclenché la plus féroce et la plus folle des guerres, n'ont eu d'autre souci que de la prolonger, que d'attiser ses incendies, d'étendre ses ruines depuis la mer polaire jusqu'à l'Orient.

Ne pense-t-on pas que la civilisation est bien plutôt dans cette émouvante rencontre, autour d'œuvres merveilleuses, de centaines d'hommes qui s'affrontaient tout à l'heure les armes à la main, qui cherchent aujourd'hui dans leur commune admiration pour quelques-uns des plus immortels témoignages de l'esprit occidental, un terrain de réconciliation ?

Je ne dis pas que par cette rencontre notre civilisation soit désormais assurée de se relever des décombres et des flots de sang où elle se débat à grand peine. Mais, grâce à une telle manifestation, il nous est possible d'en concevoir l'espérance.'

Lucien Rebatet, 'Une Leçon de civilisation', *Le Petit Parisien*, 27 May 1941, 2. See Appendix C19.

Wagner as a liberating force, arguing that it became one of the main themes of Wagner discourse in occupied France.⁵⁸¹ Iglesias sees this as a new aspect of Wagner reception that emerged under the Occupation, in opposition to the earlier French rejection of Wagner as destructive, invasive, and German. I argue, however, that the idea of Wagner as transcendent or liberating was evident at least from 1933, as the French struggled to find a way to oppose the depiction of Wagner as exclusively German. The development of these ideas during the 1930s made the Nazis' task in 1940 inestimably easier as they attempted to stealthily exert influence in the French musical world.

Figure 18: Excerpt from review by Lucien Rebatet of Berlin Staatsoper's performances of *Tristan und Isolde*. Source: *Le Petit Parisien*, 27 May 1941. Courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France

APRÈS LES GALAS DE LA STAATSOPER

UNE LEÇON DE CIVILISATION

par
Lucien Rebatet



LES récentes représentations que l'Opéra de Berlin vient de donner à Paris ont suscité de nombreux et précieux commentaires. Je crois cependant que jusqu'ici on n'a pas assez mis en lumière ce sentiment que la plupart des spectateurs français ont éprouvé au fond d'eux-mêmes s'ils ne l'ont pas tous nettement formulé.

Je crois que bien peu d'entre nous auraient pu imaginer une semblable cérémonie il y a un an, lorsque, confondus dans les colonnes militaires et civiles de la retraite, nous tâchions de supputer ce que pourrait bien être pour notre patrie la fin de cette horrible aventure, avec une angoisse inexprimable au fond du cœur.

On avait persuadé notre peuple qu'il se battait pour à grand peine. Mais, grâce à une telle manifestation, il nous est possible d'en concevoir l'espérance.

La splendide représentation de *Tristan et Isolde*, qui vient de nous être offerte, appelle encore quelques réflexions ; celles-ci d'un ordre musical, mais sur lesquelles il n'est pas inutile non plus d'insister.

Il existe chez nous un pré-

fort négligé dans l'opéra de son temps, une part considérable, mais il n'a jamais souhaité que cette part fût écrasante. Bien au contraire, il a toujours considéré ses drames musicaux comme d'immenses symphonies où l'orchestre et les voix, ayant un rôle d'égale importance, doivent harmonieusement s'équilibrer.

C'est dans cette tradition que M. Herbert von Karajan, jeune *Kapellmeister* au noble et ardent visage, vient de diriger *Tristan et Isolde* chez nous. Il l'a fait en artiste magnifique. D'un orchestre splendidement discipliné, souple et

⁵⁸¹ Iglesias, *Musicologie et occupation*, 334–5.

The 100th anniversary of *Le Vaisseau fantôme* at Meudon: ‘Germans and French come together’⁵⁸²

While they were celebrating the anniversaries of Wagner’s birth and Mozart’s death, both German and French authorities seemed eager to capitalise on the presence in Paris of important visitors such as Winifred Wagner. Thus an official ceremony and exhibition were organised at Wagner’s former home in the small town of Meudon, just outside Paris, to commemorate the passing of 100 years since Wagner had composed *Le Vaisseau fantôme* (or *Der fliegende Holländer*) there. The ceremony was arranged to coincide with the week of the Berlin Staatsoper *Tristan* performances. As with *Tristan*, the events held at Meudon attracted significant press attention, particularly because both Winifred Wagner and her son Wolfgang Wagner (21 years old at the time) were in attendance (see Figure 19). The exhibition launch was held on 25 May and was documented by a number of Parisian newspapers and journals. Otto Abetz and Fernand de Brinon (French ambassador in the occupied territories) were both present at the ceremony; according to a report published in the *Bulletin de la Société des Amis de Meudon-Bellevue*, Brinon presided over the ceremony.⁵⁸³ Other notable guests were Karl Epting (director of the *Institut allemand*), Jacques Rouché (administrator of the RTLN), Heinz Tietjen (artistic director of the Bayreuth Festival), Alfred Cortot (pianist and administrator, heavily involved in cultural collaboration), and the music critics Gustave Samazeuilh, Jacques-Gabriel Prod’homme and Louis Laloy, amongst others.⁵⁸⁴

⁵⁸² ‘Des Allemands et des Français s’assemblent pour goûter les mêmes chefs-d’œuvre’, *Le Petit Parisien*, 27 May 1941, 5.

⁵⁸³ A. de la Harpe, ‘Inauguration de l’Exposition « À Meudon en 1841 » et centenaire du *Vaisseau fantôme*, le 25 mai 1941’, *Bulletin de la Société des Amis de Meudon-Bellevue* 24 (July–August 1941): 460–65. BnF BmO, C. Pièce 886(4).

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid.

Figure 19: Photos taken at the celebrations to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the composition of *Le Vaisseau fantôme* at Meudon. Source: *Paris-Soir*, 27 May 1941. Courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.



Journalists and critics made little comment on the contents of the exhibition, although the catalogue shows that it included Wagner's scores and writings, as well an exhibit of portraits of Wagner's French admirers including Berlioz, Liszt, Théophile Gautier, Judith Gautier, Charles Lamoureux, Vincent d'Indy, Fernand Samazeuilh and Gustave Samazeuilh, amongst others.⁵⁸⁵ The focus of the press was firmly on the prestige of the attendees at the exhibition opening, and how they spoke about Wagner and France. The presence of very senior political figures such as Abetz and Brinon

⁵⁸⁵ Catalogue: 'Exposition « À Meudon en 1841 » et centenaire du *Vaisseau fantôme*', 1941. BnF BmO, C. Pièce 886(2).

testify to the political nature of the event, and the fact that it was clearly seen as strategically important for Franco-German collaboration. Transcripts of parts of Brinon's speech were reproduced in a number of publications two days after the event. The following excerpt is put together using the differently abridged versions published in *Le Petit Parisien*, *Le Matin*, and the *Cahiers franco-allemands* (a third abridged version was also published in *Paris-Soir*):

Have men ever experienced such a sight? War continues on French territory, Germany and France live in a system of suspension of hostilities; however, an unprecedented event in the history of war has taken place ... prisoners have been sent home.

Compromises between former enemies are being made on a daily basis and are progressing well ... Germans and French come together to savour the same masterpieces of genius, whether they belong to Germany or whether they belong to France. This is what we could think of in the sublime wonder of the performance of *Tristan and Isolde* where a French voice mixed with German voices; this is what I was thinking of, yesterday evening, in the moment when Germans and Frenchmen, united by the same enthusiasm, were cheering the conductor of the Berlin Opera.

Today, we celebrate, in intimacy but certainly in a spirit which greatly transcends the present conditions, one of the greatest geniuses in music. For me, having constantly hoped that Germans and French would one day be united in good, as in bad fortune, I am delighted by this ceremony. I believe it expresses a noble hope. I hope it will later mark one of the symbolic stages of collaboration.

Mr Ambassador ... I thank you for your presence here, for the instructions that your Führer gives you and for your conciliatory action. I thank the German high military authorities who understood the meaning of this meeting and who kindly wanted to delegate their representatives ... And, finally, Madame [Wagner], I express deep gratitude to you. By embodying before our eyes the family of the great man whose name you carry, over the last week you have been the symbolic link that, on difficult days and amongst too much lack of

understanding that still remains, brings us closer to the appeased world which is being forged today whose pain and birth evoke the immortal music of Richard Wagner.⁵⁸⁶

Brinon's speech is explicitly political, not to mention almost farcical in its devotion to Collaboration ideology and rhetoric. He treats the Meudon event as a conclusion to a suite of cultural propaganda events: the Staatsoper's performances at the Opéra, an orchestral concert at the Palais de Chaillot (performed by the Berlin Staatsoper orchestra, conducted by Karajan, and attended by Winifred Wagner), and the centenary celebrations at the Meudon exhibition. Wagner was an integral part of every one of these events, and his music served to symbolise Collaboration, with more than a hint of German cultural superiority. Just as Brinon described Winifred Wagner as a symbolic link bringing appeasement closer, Wagner had become the symbolic link in Franco-German collaboration, enabling supposed political reconciliation through art. Lubin's role was also highlighted, as she became the symbolic French voice that mingled with German voices on stage, bringing together two estranged peoples.

Samazeuilh predictably added his voice to the cause, writing in *L'Illustration* that the *Tristan* performances and the Meudon ceremony 'tower above the sad circumstances of the hour and, under the auspices of a great genius, allow the hearts of men to come

⁵⁸⁶ 'Les hommes connurent-ils jamais des spectacles pareils ? La guerre se poursuit sur le territoire de la France, l'Allemagne et la France vivent dans un régime de suspension des hostilités ; pourtant, fait sans précédent dans l'histoire des guerres ... des prisonniers sont rendus à leurs foyers. Des accommodements entre les ennemis d'hier se font au jour le jour et progressent heureusement ... Des Allemands et des Français s'assemblent pour goûter les mêmes chefs-d'œuvre du génie, qu'ils appartiennent à l'Allemagne ou qu'ils appartiennent à la France. Voilà à quoi on pouvait penser dans l'émerveillement sublime de la représentation de *Tristan et Isolde* où une voix française se mêlait aux voix allemandes ; voilà à quoi je songeais, hier soir, dans le moment où Allemands et Français, unis par un enthousiasme pareil, acclamaient le grand chef d'orchestre de l'Opéra de Berlin.

Aujourd'hui, nous célébrons, dans l'intimité mais certes dans un esprit qui dépasse beaucoup les conditions présentes, l'un des plus grands génies de la musique. Pour moi, qui ai constamment souhaité qu'Allemands et Français soient un jour associés dans la bonne, comme dans la mauvaise fortune, je me réjouis de cette cérémonie. J'ai la conviction qu'elle exprime une noble espérance. Je souhaite qu'elle marque plus tard l'une des étapes symboliques de la collaboration.

Monsieur l'ambassadeur ... Je vous remercie pour votre présence ici, pour les instructions que vous donne votre Führer et pour votre action apaisante. Je remercie les hautes autorités militaires allemandes qui ont compris le sens de cette réunion et qui ont bien voulu déléguer leurs représentants ... Et, enfin, Madame, je vous exprime une profonde reconnaissance. En incarnant devant nos yeux la famille du grand homme dont vous portez le nom, vous avez été depuis une semaine le trait d'union symbolique qui, dans les jours difficiles et parmi trop d'incompréhensions demeurant encore nous rapproche du monde apaisé qui se forge aujourd'hui dont la douleur et dont l'enfantement évoque l'immortelle musique de Richard Wagner. '

'Des Allemands et des Français s'assemblent', 5; 'Richard Wagner et la France', *Le Matin*, 27 May 1941, 3; 'Richard Wagner', *Cahiers franco-allemands*, May-June 1941, 194-5.

closer together and to better understand one another.’⁵⁸⁷ Meanwhile, the critic for *Comœdia* was eager to give credit to the French people for having initiated the Meudon event, and for having honoured Wagner from the beginning of his career. He described the celebrations as,

A purely French idea, to which the German authorities subscribed with keen enthusiasm and the greatest sentiment of gratitude.

...

An event in honour of one of the greatest representatives of German thought, certainly; but equally to the glory of French culture which, whatever people may say, welcomed the first demonstrations of the Wagnerian genius with the greatest sympathy.⁵⁸⁸

It is worth remembering that this insistence on a version of history which depicted the French as having appreciated and supported Wagner while he was unknown and struggling had been used in the 1930s to situate him in French cultural history and thus counter German attempts to appropriate him for nationalistic purposes (see Chapter One). Critics continued to refer to this depiction under the Occupation, in particular through listing, referring to, or discussing Wagner’s French supporters, as can be seen in the above quotation (and as has been examined in Chapter Four). Despite events such as the *Tannhäuser* scandal of 1861 and the ban on Wagner’s music during the First World War being common knowledge, the idea that France had welcomed Wagner at a time when he was being rejected by the rest of the world was frequently alluded to. Moreover, the use of this idea seemed to have successfully transitioned from the interwar period—when the Parisian press was mainly concerned with combatting Wagner’s appropriation by Nazi Germany—into the Occupation, when all depictions of Wagner had to be sanctioned by the Nazis.

⁵⁸⁷ ‘elles s’élèvent au-dessus des tristes contingences de l’heure et permettent, aux cœurs des hommes, sous les auspices d’un grand génie, de se rapprocher et de se mieux comprendre.’

Gustave Samazeuilh, ‘Deux hommages à Richard Wagner’, *L’Illustration*, 7 June 1941.

⁵⁸⁸ ‘Idée purement française, à laquelle ont souscrit, avec le plus vif empressement et le plus grand sentiment de reconnaissance, les autorités allemandes ... Manifestation en l’honneur d’un des plus grands représentants de la pensée allemande certes ; mais à la gloire également de la culture française, qui, quoi qu’on ait pu dire, accueille avec une sympathie si grande les premières manifestations du génie wagnérien.’

‘Wagner au musée Meudon’, *Comœdia*, 21 June 1941, 6.

‘*Symbole exact de la fraternité d’art franco-allemande*’:⁵⁸⁹ A collaborative *Walküre*, 1943

La Walkyrie was one of Wagner’s most popular operas in Paris: 50 years after its premiere at the Opéra, it had been performed 440 times, more than all the other music dramas except *Lohengrin*. Yet since the beginning of the war, it had not been performed at the Opéra at all, except for the two aforementioned guest performances by Mannheim National Theatre, which were not open to Parisians. In a final attempt to enlist Wagner’s music in the cause of Collaboration, occupying authorities organised a ‘collaborative’ staging of *Die Walküre* at the Paris Opéra in 1943. Performed on the 18, 20 and 22 May, it was promoted as a commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the première of *La Walkyrie* at the Paris Opéra, as well as the sixtieth anniversary of Wagner’s death and his 130th birthday. It involved the participation of five opera companies: Paris, Cologne, Vienna, Duisbourg, and Hanover. Curiously, it was sung in both French and German: each singer sang in his/her mother tongue. This was presumably seen as a means of physically enacting Collaboration on stage, although ironically it resulted in a situation where the characters sang to each other but the singers did not understand one another.

Like the 1941 Berlin Staatsoper production of *Tristan* in Paris and its associated Meudon ceremony, the collaborative *Walküre* production also involved an official reception. This was hosted by Epting and attended by important artistic and political personalities, including a number of German officials, as well as Jacques Rouché, Gustave Samazeuilh, Germaine Lubin, and many others.⁵⁹⁰ The press reception also exhibited some of the same characteristics as the press coverage of *Tristan*, although there was significantly less advance promotion of the performances compared to 1941.

Lucienne Delforge was the only critic to explicitly refer to the symbolism of the ‘collaborative’ nature of the production, writing that,

the fiftieth anniversary of the Parisian premiere of *The Valkyrie* joins the 150th [sic] anniversary of Richard Wagner’s birth, in an apotheosis that is the true symbol of the Franco-German fraternity of art. Indeed, under the direction

⁵⁸⁹ Lucienne Delforge, ‘La Musique’, *Beaux-Arts* 79, no. 104 (30 May 1943): 13.

⁵⁹⁰ ‘Les Artistes de la « Walkyrie » ont été reçus à l’Institut allemand’, *Paris-Midi*, 22 May 1943, 2.

of Rudolph Krasselt, a flexible Wagnerian who ‘clings’ to the text, Hélène Bouvier [playing Fricka], [Henri] Médus [playing Hunding] and their French colleagues commune with their German partners with the same fervour, and bestow on the work, the admirable masterpiece, this character of permanence in the greatness and power that characterise and define Richard Wagner.⁵⁹¹

This is the only suggestion in the authorised press that the production was received as Franco-German collaboration, despite the fact that it seems to have been intended as such. In fact, while critics were generally very complimentary of the performances, which they judged as being of very high quality, the combination of languages was a source of controversy. Marcel Delannoy, Robert Bernard, and a critic who signed as J. P. for *L’Atelier*, all condemned the decision to cast French singers singing in French opposite Germans singing in German. Delannoy and Bernard criticised the practice from an artistic point of view, and both suggested that it was not uncommon in France and was particularly disruptive when practised in Wagner’s operas.⁵⁹² J. P. went further than this, suggesting that the French should not have been included in the production at all:

The mix of French and German voices has something bewildering about it. The poverty of the text in our language only translates imperfectly the grandeur and beauty of the feelings expressed: I doubt that everyone found it to their taste. Since they were set on thinking big, why did they not give all the roles to German artists, better qualified than anyone to defend the musical genius of their race.⁵⁹³

⁵⁹¹ ‘le cinquantenaire de la création parisienne de *la Walkyrie* rejoint le cent cinquantenaire de la naissance de Richard Wagner, dans une apothéose qui est le symbole exact de la fraternité d’art franco-allemande. En effet, sous la direction de Rudolph Krasselt, wagnérien souple et “collant” au texte, Hélène Bouvier, Médus et leurs camarades français communient avec leurs partenaires allemands dans une même ferveur et confèrent à l’œuvre, au chef-d’œuvre admirable ce caractère de permanence dans la grandeur et la puissance qui caractérisent et définissent Richard Wagner.’

Ibid.

⁵⁹² Marcel Delannoy, ‘La Walkyrie’, *Les Nouveaux Temps*, 23 May 1943, 2; Robert Bernard, ‘Le Cinquantenaire de la Walkyrie à l’Opéra’, *Le Cri du peuple*, 24 May 1943, 2.

⁵⁹³ ‘Le mélange des voix françaises et allemandes a quelque chose d’ahurissant. La pauvreté du texte en notre langue ne traduit qu’imparfaitement la grandeur et la beauté des sentiments exprimés : je doute que tout le monde l’ait trouvé à son goût. Puisqu’on était décidé à voir grand, pourquoi ne pas avoir confié tous les rôles à des artistes allemands, mieux qualifiés que personne pour défendre le génie musical de leur race.’

J. P., ‘Cinquante ans après sa création à Paris *La Walkyrie* est reprise à l’Opéra’, *L’Atelier*, 5 June 1943. Press clipping, BnF Arts du spectacle, Recueil ‘La Walkyrie 1943’, 8 – RSUPP – 1256, no.13.

If German authorities were aiming to gradually break down French domination of the cultural sphere, and introduce the idea of German cultural superiority, J. P.'s review suggests that they had begun to achieve their aims. Other critics similarly used the event as an opportunity for comparison, although not all agreed that the French singers compared badly to the Germans. Paul Le Flem wrote in *Le Matin* that, 'Beside these admirable German artists, the French did not prove unworthy.'⁵⁹⁴ But the composer and critic Arthur Hoérée disagreed:

In terms of the singers ... one must recognise that the strong voices belong, whatever the nationality, to a particular race where everything is conditioned for vocal volume, and also for stamina.⁵⁹⁵

Hoérée's appraisal of vocal quality based on race adds another dimension to J. P.'s observation that the Germans are best placed to perform Wagner's music because they share racial origins with the composer. These kinds of judgements, which attribute racial characteristics to vocal ability, fit perfectly with German objectives to demonstrate cultural superiority. They suggest an emerging French lack of confidence in French singers' ability to perform Wagner's music to a high standard, and the increasing pervasion of racist Nazi ideology throughout all spheres of Parisian society, including cultural life and, more specifically, music criticism.

Although it is arguably difficult to draw conclusions from comments by such a small number of critics who expressed these doubts, they add to a general impression that the 1943 *Walküre* was less successful than the 1941 *Tristan*. Certainly, there was less fanfare in the press in 1943 than there had been in 1941; while the *Tristan* event was copiously photographed and its celebrities interviewed by journalists, almost no photographs were published in relation to *Walküre* and there was little publicity relating to the singers or artists involved in the production. This was perhaps due to tighter restrictions on paper and ink and, more generally, greater economic hardship as the war wore on. Perhaps, too, it reflected a more widespread change in public opinion. Pierre Laborie has traced the evolution of French public opinion under the

⁵⁹⁴ 'Auprès de ces admirables artistes allemands, les Français n'ont pas démerité.'

Paul Le Flem, 'Reprise de *La Walkyrie* à l'Opéra', *Le Matin*, 22–23 May 1943, 2.

⁵⁹⁵ 'Côté chanteurs ... on doit reconnaître que les fortes voix appartiennent, quelle que soit la nationalité, à une race particulière où tout est conditionné pour le volume vocal, pour la résistance aussi.'

Arthur Hoérée, 'Le Cinquantenaire de la « Walkyrie » à l'Opéra', *Comœdia*, 22 May 1943, 5.

Occupation, and he writes that by Spring 1943, the tide of opinion had turned definitively against both the Vichy government and the occupiers. Public sentiment was characterised by lassitude, apathy, discouragement, an obsessive wish for the end of war, and a striking lack of initiative.⁵⁹⁶ The Occupation was wearing Parisians down, and the vast majority maintained an attitude of passivity and resignation. Perhaps Parisian critics reflected this in seeming to be simultaneously more susceptible to German cultural propaganda and less enthusiastic about propaganda events such as the *Walküre* performances.

There was one tiny section of the Parisian press that was certainly not willing to back down in the face of cultural assault: the clandestine musical press. As discussed in Chapter Four, a small clandestine press specialising in arts and culture did exist by 1943, including a music periodical entitled *Musiciens d'aujourd'hui*. In its issue dated July 1943, this publication printed an article on the *Walküre* collaborative production. Its critic was scathing:

The papers are full of news about the ‘collaboration’ of French and German artists in the ‘beautiful and exceptional performances’ of *The Valkyrie* that have just been given at the Opera under the auspices of the German Institute.

Collaboration? Wait for it. The four main roles in the work were held by artists from the Operas of Vienna, Dresden [*sic*] and Duisbourg. The secondary roles of Hunding and Fricka, as well as the group of Valkyries, were abandoned to the French.

German conductor. German director.

This is what, without raising an eyebrow, they call a collaboration.⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹⁶ Laborie, *L'Opinion française sous Vichy*, 287–93. Also see Jackson, *France: The Dark Years*, 277–82.

⁵⁹⁷ ‘Les journaux sont remplis d’échos sur la “collaboration” d’artistes français et allemands aux “belles représentations exceptionnelles” qui viennent d’être données de la “Walkyrie” à l’Opéra sous les auspices de l’Institut allemand.

Collaboration ? Tenez-vous bien. Les quatre grands rôles de l’ouvrage y étaient tenus par des artistes des théâtres de Vienne, de Dresde et de Duisbourg. Aux Français étaient abandonnés les rôles secondaires de Hunding et de Fricka, ainsi que l’ensemble des Walkyries.

Chef d’orchestre allemand. Metteur en scène allemand.

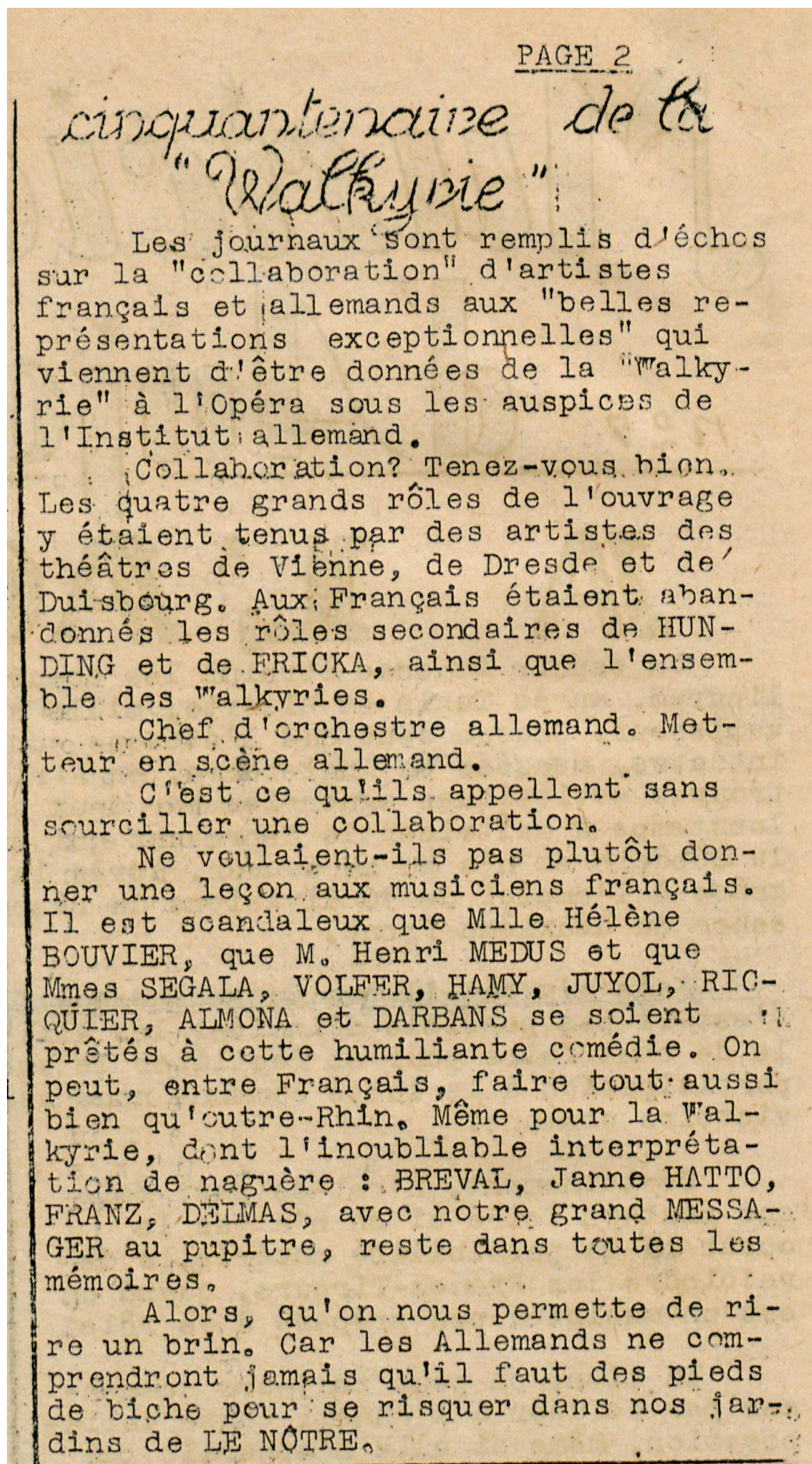
C’est ce qu’ils appellent sans sourciller une collaboration.’

‘Cinquantenaire de la “Walkyrie”, *Musiciens d'aujourd'hui*, July 1943, 2.

The sarcasm and hatred that drips from this article is startling and it stands in sharp contrast to the commentary of the collaborationist press. The author undoubtedly views this production of *Die Walküre* as a metaphor for France's political situation. He/she proceeds to claim that, rather than a true collaboration, the casting was designed in such a way as to teach French musicians a lesson—one that was thoroughly rejected by the critic (see Figure 20). Crucially, the author offered no criticism of Wagner or of his music. Rather, his/her objection was to the inference that French singers were not capable of performing Wagner's music dramas to a high standard, and that a German-dominated production was passed off as an equal collaboration. The parallels to France's political situation are clear: Germany's version of Collaboration is a situation where Germans dominate, while the French are allocated the bit parts and offered a 'lesson'.

The performance of Wagner's works at the Opéra is characterised by contradiction and paradox. Despite representing the epitome of German cultural achievement, being widely associated with Nazi ideology, and being guaranteed to provide financial success for the Opéra, Wagner's operas were performed infrequently in German-occupied Paris. And yet the reception of these performances, while touting the new rhetoric of Franco-German Collaboration, was also characterised by continuity with the 1930s. The occupied Parisian press used many of the same terms it had used in the preceding years: transcendence, universality, reconciliation. Furthermore, the reception was intensely political: from the reluctance of German authorities to approve Rouché's productions of Wagner's works, to the performance of highly symbolic German productions as staged Collaboration, and the eagerness of critics to embrace them as 'a lesson in civilisation', Wagner's presence or absence at the Opéra was never neutral.

Figure 20: Article commenting on the collaborative production of *Die Walküre* in 1943, published in a clandestine journal. Source: *Musiciens d'aujourd'hui*, 7 July 1943. Courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France



Conclusion

Although it cannot be argued that the occupied Parisian press represented French public opinion, it is possible to view the press reception of Wagner as a negotiation process in which French critics attempted to balance German demands and French attitudes. The German approach in matters of culture was one of subtle seduction, not blunt propaganda. Thus the discourse around Wagner had to be carefully chosen in order to avoid angering or repelling readers. The idea of Wagner as German nationalist would have been totally unacceptable to the French—we know this because of the way Nazi appropriation of Wagner was received in the Parisian press from 1933 (see Chapter One). The idea of Wagner as symbol of Collaboration and reconciliation, however, may have provided a more acceptable resolution to the French problem of Wagner and Germany. For French Wagner lovers who had often struggled to reconcile their deep attraction to Wagner's music with his German nationalistic associations, an approach to his music as a means for reconciliation and cooperation may have been an appealing solution because it promised to allow them to indulge their love of his music without feeling as though they were betraying France. In fact, far from betrayal, they were promoting the communion of two peoples and a future peaceful New Europe. While this kind of Wagner discourse was quite strong in the reception of the 1941 *Tristan* production, the sense of hope that supported this vision had begun to fade by the time the collaborative *Walküre* was staged in May 1943. Not long after, the 'New Europe' dream was to begin crumbling—15 months after those performances of *Die Walküre*, Paris was liberated.

CONCLUSION

This study has asked and responded to questions about what Wagner meant to the French during the period of the Third Reich, how this was expressed in the Parisian press, and how this can contribute to our understanding of how the French thought about their own national cultural identity, and their relationship with Germany and German culture. Since his writings and music began to provoke debate in the mid-nineteenth century, Wagner was used by the French as a vehicle to explore an enormous range of ideas and arguments about art, politics and society. But the ideas and ideologies that he and his music were supposed to represent shifted constantly, affected by changes in both domestic and foreign politics, by Wagner's own behaviour and actions during his lifetime, and by developments in French musical culture. Over the space of a century, the French depicted him as a symbol of everything from democratic revolution to authoritarian antisemitism.⁵⁹⁸ Surely no other figure in the French musical imagination was so malleable and open to interpretation. Jane Fulcher writes that, 'Like all great works, Wagner's possess an openness of meaning that allows them to be used or abused ideologically from a number of different perspectives.'⁵⁹⁹ But it was not just Wagner's music that was constantly interpreted and re-interpreted—it was also his writings and his image. When critics wrote about 'Wagner', they were not referring to a man but rather to a changing collection of ideas brought together in the figure of Richard Wagner.

And yet the apparent rapidity of changes in interpretation is not an indication that Wagner was not taken seriously. On the contrary, as I have shown throughout this thesis, he was fundamentally important to the French because he had become a tool

⁵⁹⁸ Some of these shifting interpretations are discussed in the Introduction to this thesis.

⁵⁹⁹ Jane F. Fulcher, 'A Political Barometer of Twentieth-Century France: Wagner as Jew or Anti-Semite', *Musical Quarterly* 84, no.1 (2000): 53.

for them to understand themselves. Initially, as he emerged onto the stage of French musical life, Wagner was simply a controversial German composer with divisive music and ideas. But soon parts of the French musical world became infatuated with his music, and important French musical figures devoted themselves to promoting and gaining acceptance for it in France, while others were just as devoted to opposing it and preventing its performance. Even for those who argued against the composer and tried to remove him from French musical life, Wagner had become integral to their musical world. As more French people engaged with Wagner's music and writings, and with the writings of others on Wagner, he became a means for them to articulate what was taking place in French musical life, as well as French social and political life. By talking about Wagner, they expressed ideas about music, culture, society, and nation. And it was for this reason that when the Third Reich began to indicate in the early years of its regime that Wagner belonged to the Germans and that Wagner stood for not just any Germany, but Nazi Germany, the French began to register outrage and defiance. They had come to love Wagner's music. It had become an essential element of Parisian musical life. Indeed, as I have argued, they had begun to rely upon Wagner to understand themselves, and to hone their sense of what it meant to be French. The prospect of being excluded from this world was deeply concerning. Their approach, then, was to reject the Third Reich's claim that Wagner represented Nazism and create a counter-claim founded on his transcendence of Germanness.

The first major conclusion of this study is that the dominant perception of Wagner in 1930s France was one that depicted Wagner as a universalist communicating to people of all nations, and particularly to the French. While Jane Fulcher has argued that the French fascists' d'Indyist interpretation of Wagner as a 'purifier' of French music was widely propagated in the 1930s to the point of becoming the predominant view,⁶⁰⁰ my thesis has shown that this is a significant but niche interpretation that was not representative of the French press overall. Unlike in previous periods of French history, where political orientation determined critics' positions on Wagner, in 1933 the French press united on at least one issue: the Third Reich was appropriating Wagner and exploiting his music for political purposes, and this was a move that needed to be defied and rejected. While Emile Vuillermoz used a review of *Tristan und Isolde* to condemn Hitler's insidious influence on art and culture, in the right-

⁶⁰⁰ Fulcher, 'Political Barometer'.

wing pro-fascist paper *Candide* in 1933,⁶⁰¹ Guy de Pourtalès expressed similar sentiments in his Bayreuth reviews in the left-wing Republican paper *Marianne*, which criticised the nationalist meddling of the State in Wagner's art.⁶⁰² Rejection of Germany's appropriation of Wagner was achieved in different ways and through different paradigms, but the aim was similar: to ensure that Germany could not have an exclusive claim to Wagner.

A corollary to this conclusion is that by the 1930s, Wagner was so firmly embedded in French tradition and French history that anti-Wagnerism was almost non-existent. The French had finally come to a point where they could debate and disagree with his ideas and writings without feeling the need to reject him outright. While they had spent much of the nineteenth century attempting to protect French music from the dangerous influence of Wagner and Wagnerism, by the 1930s they were more concerned with protecting 'their' Wagner from the Nazis. It was no longer Wagner's Germanness that was the problem; rather, it was the Nazis' redefinition of what that Germanness meant. Even more surprisingly, this attachment to Wagner and refusal to resort to anti-Wagnerism continued when France declared war against Germany and anti-German feeling was most prominent. Indeed, even the clandestine press that operated under Occupation was uninterested in rejecting Wagner or his music; its position was anti-Collaboration, not anti-Wagner.

As I have shown in Chapters Two and Three, the discourse of Wagner the universalist was not the only discourse present in the French press of the 1930s; other discourses existed alongside it, either in opposition or in complement. The idea of Wagner as symbol of Franco-German rapprochement was one of these; although much less prominent than that of Wagner the universalist, it was significant because it was specifically tailored for the French, and promoted by Germany in France. It was also significant because it appeared to contradict the opposing message coming from Germany at that time: Wagner as symbol of Germany. While the French were receiving the message from Germany that Wagner belonged to the Third Reich, they were also receiving a parallel message that he was a symbol of rapprochement, and

⁶⁰¹ Emile Vuillermoz, 'Tristan et Isolde à Salzbourg', *Candide*, 24 August 1933. Cited in Jacques Lonchampt, *Emile Vuillermoz. Critique Musicale 1902–1960. Au bonheur des soirs* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2013), 235.

⁶⁰² Guy de Pourtalès, 'Bayreuth 1933 (I)', *Marianne*, 23 August 1933, 15; 'La Saison de Bayreuth (II)', *Marianne*, 30 August 1933, 15; 'La Saison de Bayreuth (III)', 6 September 1933, 15. See Appendix C3.

thus could be shared. This dualism coming from Germany was an accurate reflection of the way that the Reich's cultural strategy in France was communicated during the 1930s and later during the Occupation: while representatives of cultural diplomacy such as Otto Abetz promoted a rhetoric of friendship and peaceful rapprochement between the two countries, other elements in the Nazi camp schemed to infiltrate France with ideas about German cultural superiority, the benefits of National Socialism, and the weaknesses of the French political system and the French nation.

The second major finding of this study is that, while the notion of achieving rapprochement through Wagner found a few French sympathisers in the first half of the 1930s, the view of Wagner as universalist ultimately prevailed. It may seem surprising that critics who supported genuine Franco-German rapprochement rejected Wagner as a vehicle for achieving it because they viewed Nazism as a threat and Germany's proposition as insincere. But my research has shown that in discussing the role of Wagner in Franco-German relations, these critics seemed to make a distinction between rapprochement with Germany, and rapprochement with the Nazis. Thus the idea of Wagner as rapprochement was disregarded in favour of the universalist interpretation, which better suited these critics' hopes for peace, friendship and understanding. Even some of those critics who did take on the discourse of rapprochement through Wagner seemed to understand it as a rejection of Nazi Germany's appropriation of the composer, with the same aim as the universalist discourse: to reject any exclusive claims to Wagner or his music.

While these competing yet almost complementary discourses on Wagner developed between 1933 and 1939, another emerged, one which relied on the Hitler–Wagner connection that was so prominent in Germany during this period. This new discourse did not crystallise until Hitler came to power in 1933 and was not evident in earlier French Wagner reception. It was dependent on a specific site and a specific event: the annual Bayreuth Festival. The third major conclusion of this thesis is that the way in which French critics at Bayreuth wrote about Wagner was significantly different from other French commentary on Wagner in the same period. The sense of outrage that was part of the 'Wagner as universalist' discourse discussed in Chapter One was absent from reviews of the Festival. Instead, an ambivalent mixture of fear and attraction was evident, as was a marked consciousness of the inseparability of Hitler's

and Wagner's personas and what they symbolised. Against the backdrop of France's own national identity crisis and lack of strong political leadership, French critics found irresistible the ceremony of the Festival, the adoration of the national leader, the high emotions provoked by the music and drama, and the fervent patriotism of the crowd. Torn between repugnance and admiration, French critics at Bayreuth expressed themselves through a new discourse characterised by ambivalence and high emotion, which reacted against Germany's claim to Wagner while simultaneously being seduced by it. This chapter looks both backwards and forwards in its examination of the responses of 1930s French critics: back to the post-1871 French admiration for victorious Germany following France's humiliating defeat, and forward to help explain the initial success of the Collaboration policy in occupied France.

The *drôle de guerre* period and the press debate that took place over the performance of Wagner's music presents an ideal case for comparison with a similar debate over Wagner performance during the First World War. Many of the circumstances were the same, yet the tone of the debate was totally different; consistent with Wagner reception throughout the 1930s, very few critics and commentators expressed an anti-Wagner viewpoint, even if they argued against performing Wagner's music in wartime. In comparison with the vehemence of the debate that had taken place 25 years earlier, that of 1940 had a very different focus; those who argued against playing Wagner while France and Germany were at war were arguing for a temporary ban with the aim of maintaining order, avoiding unrest, and respecting the political sensitivities of that historical moment. While the First World War critics debated the question of whether Wagner should be performed *after* the war, those of the Second World War did not even consider this a question. By the time war broke out in 1939, Wagner had attained a permanent and transcendent place in French musical life.

The fourth major finding of this thesis is that during both the 1930s and the Occupation, critics constantly used history—and particularly the history of Wagner's reception in France—to discuss the contemporary relationship between Wagner and the French people. Just as the 1930s press persistently and frequently retold the stories of the *Tannhäuser* scandal and Wagner's visits to Paris as a way of understanding Wagner's place in interwar France, so in 1940 they debated the question of wartime

Wagner performance by referring to the First World War ban, as discussed in Chapter Four. This reliance on references to the past in order to articulate the concerns of the present characterises the press reception of Wagner examined throughout this study. The historical relationship between Wagner and France was at the forefront of critics' minds, and it was often understood as a series of past conflicts, each providing a lesson to be learned. History was used as a means of comparison, a point of reference, and a way of ensuring that past mistakes were not repeated.

This relationship to the past was necessarily less evident and more fraught once France was occupied. The fifth major conclusion of this thesis argues that Wagner became a vehicle for performing Collaboration at the Opéra during the Occupation, in spite of the fact that Parisians had less exposure to Wagner's operas during this period. The Berlin Staatsoper's 1941 Paris *Tristan* was the pinnacle of staged Collaboration and a demonstration of the extent to which the political sphere infiltrated the domain of culture in occupied Paris. Although this study has not examined any sources that represent a German perspective, the format of the Parisian press reviews and the story they tell provide clues as to the aims and methods of the occupiers. The similarity in the format, tone, and opinions expressed in articles related to the 1941 *Tristan* performances strongly suggests that critics were directed to include certain information about the performances and to examine them within the framework of Collaborationist discourse. I argue, however, that we can learn something about the French perspective from these press sources, despite the fact that they are censored; if we take into account the German approach of propaganda by seduction rather than by force and if we consider the Parisian critic as a kind of courier or go-between mediating the occupiers' message for the French public, then the censored press can still reveal something about how the French thought about Wagner during this dramatic period of their national history. Required to uphold the policies and ideologies of the occupier without overtly upsetting French readers, critics presented Wagner as a means for the French and the Germans to come together, reconcile, and move forward into a bold New Europe, dominated by Germany and thus by German culture. What better symbol than Wagner, irrevocably associated with German nationalism, and yet loved by the French?

Furthermore, ‘Wagner as Collaboration’ was not too much of a conceptual stretch from ‘Wagner as universalist’ (Chapter One), or from ‘rapprochement through Wagner’ (Chapter Two): both these narratives suggested a ‘sharing’ of Wagner, which suited the French very well. Neither was the French Bayreuth discourse (Chapter Three) alien to this new way of situating Wagner within French culture; the element of admiration that emerged in French reports from Bayreuth after 1933 was entirely welcome in the Collaboration discourse, which spoke of the friendship between Germany and France but also insinuated German cultural superiority. The admiration expressed in reviews of the Berlin Staatsoper/Bayreuth Festival’s 1941 tour can be seen as having its origin not only in the Furtwängler exchange tours of the 1930s, and the long French practice of travelling to Bayreuth and sending glowing reviews back to the French press, but also more generally in the post-1871 French admiration of the strength of German nationalism. The tradition of worshipping Wagner at Bayreuth extended from 1876 through to the 1930s, when admiration of the Festival became, for several French critics, inextricable from adoration of Hitler. The transition from this to the consistently rapturous praise of *Tristan* in 1941 is a smooth one.

Of course, I have not argued in this thesis that a comparison of 1933–39 and 1940–44 is solely characterised by continuity. It goes without saying that the outrage expressed by so many French critics in the 1930s in response to the Reich’s appropriation of Wagner was absent from the authorised press of the Occupation years because the expression of anti-Nazi sentiment was not possible. This sentiment almost certainly still existed, but could not be voiced in the press. Thus it is difficult to find evidence of it. Even so, much of what was written about Wagner in the occupied press can still be understood through looking at the discourses examined in the first three chapters of this thesis. Whether or not this was intentional or coincidental on the part of the occupiers, it very much worked in their favour; the idea of achieving Franco-German collaboration through Wagner was plausible, if not agreeable, *because of* the discourses of universalism, rapprochement and admiration that were prominent before the war.

If there is one element that unites the different threads of Wagner reception explored in this thesis, it is that Wagner continued to feature prominently in French discussions

about what it meant to be French, and about the nature of their relationship to Germany. The high level of press engagement with the Third Reich's treatment and uses of Wagner between 1933 and 1939 is evidence of this. Why was the Parisian press so deeply affected by the Reich's attitude to Wagner? I suggest that Parisian critics saw it as a comment on, and a threat to, their own national identity, which had become tied up in questions relating to the relationship between Wagner and France. As I have already argued, critics who wrote about Wagner between 1933 and 1944 were steeped in a concern for the historical France–Wagner relationship, and were constantly looking back to the past in an effort to understand their present. If we are to properly understand what Wagner meant to the French during this period, we must not only situate their reception of him within its contemporary socio-political context, but also within the context of a rich and conflict-ridden century-old relationship between Wagner and France.

This study has focused on the reception of Wagner as viewed through press sources; there are, of course, other means of studying reception which have not been covered and which would most likely contribute to expanding the picture painted here. Privately held collections of letters and diaries, if they exist, could allow us to gain a more intimate perspective through a private medium on how the French thought about Wagner. This would be a particularly valuable perspective for the period of the Occupation, for which glimpses of uncensored and unofficial viewpoints are so rare. Radio is another medium that was not examined here, and that could effectively complement and add to the data I have presented on concert and opera programming. This study has also been limited to the French side of the story about Wagner in Paris 1933–44; the German perspective has not been studied, although a small number of tentative conclusions have been suggested. As Robert Paxton's pioneering work has demonstrated, research into German archival sources and the German press may illuminate the story from the other side, elaborating on Germany's various roles in relation to France: fellow nation, hostile neighbour, enemy in war, and occupier. Further research into French archives could also yield interesting results; this study has not investigated, for example, details about the performances themselves, such as staging, costumes, and changes in interpretation.

By widening the geographic scope of the study beyond Paris, new conclusions and nuances could almost certainly be drawn. In particular, a study of Wagner reception in the press of the Free Zone in occupied France (1940–42) would make an interesting comparison to the reception of the Parisian press, which was based in the Occupied Zone. This may enlighten us as to whether the Vichy government of France attempted to manipulate or influence performances of Wagner’s music, and to what extent the occupying authorities, or simply the state of being a nation occupied by Germany, had any influence over Wagner reception in the Free Zone. Also interesting would be to examine the reception of Wagner in the Alsace-Lorraine region, near the German border, throughout the 1930s (or even earlier), to investigate what effect the political history of the area might have had on attitudes and responses to Wagner. In fact, a broader study of Wagner reception in Alsace-Lorraine in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries could be a very fruitful avenue to pursue. Similarly, the press reception of Wagner in other German-occupied countries would make a fascinating comparative study, and may shed light on whether the unique Franco-German Collaboration policy, and the history of Franco-German relations, resulted in a different reception of Wagner.

To place this study in a more concrete context, a wider and more comprehensive study of the reception of German music in France during the period of the Third Reich would contribute to the growing body of literature on French music during this period, and would add to our understanding of how French attitudes to German culture were affected by the advent and evolution of the Reich. This would also allow a comparison between the reception of Wagner and that of other German composers, helping us to understand to what extent Wagner held a unique place in French culture, musical life, and collective memory. Are the findings of this study an exception in the context of general attitudes to German music during this period? Or did other German composers elicit similar responses from the French press? And what implications does this have for our understanding of Wagner’s importance to the French?

Another obvious and important path to follow on from this study is the reception of Wagner in France post-Second World War. Philippe Olivier writes that the journal *Franc-tireur*, born out of the Resistance, condemned the revival of *Le Vaisseau fantôme* in 1946, while protests dogged a staging of the *Ring* cycle in Toulouse in

1949.⁶⁰³ A more comprehensive examination of these events and others in the post-war period could provide a fascinating comparison with the Occupation, as well as insight into French attitudes to Germany in the aftermath of war and occupation.

An in-depth study of critics such as Gustave Samazeuilh, who features so prominently in French writings on Wagner in the studied period, would also provide some important context for the work presented here. Tracing the way in which someone like Samazeuilh contributes and adapts to the various changing discourses on Wagner over a significant period of time, as I have tried to do here, reveals important clues about how French critics oriented themselves in relation to the political landscape, negotiating between their own instinctual positions and the political exigencies of the time. Without a broader sense of Samazeuilh's development as a writer, his political orientation, and his attitudes to French and German culture in general, however, it can be difficult to understand how and where his views on Wagner should be situated within the wider context of political orientation and Wagner reception. Detailed examinations of the lives, careers, and writings of the significant critics of the 1930s and 40s would help us to better comprehend and contextualise the intellectual and ethical decisions they made during this politically fraught period.

This study has shown how important an understanding of the 1930s is for comprehending the Occupation. Historians of France have understood this for some time, making connections with earlier movements and events such as the Dreyfus Affair at the turn of the century, the emergence of fascist leagues in the interwar period, and the short but dramatic existence of Vichy France in the 1940s. Musicological studies of the Occupation period, however, have only just begun to fill what had been a large gap in French music history and, to date, have rarely compared the two periods (the 1930s and the Occupation) in any detail. Very few studies of music in 1930s France help us to understand musical life and debates under the Occupation. It is this important study of continuity and rupture that I have undertaken here, as a contribution to, and extension of, past studies of Wagner reception in the French press.

⁶⁰³ Philippe Olivier, 'The Ring in France 1911–2006', *The Wagner Journal* 3 (2009): 65–6.

In the process, I have shown how debates and discussions about a significant musical figure such as Wagner can be used to talk about nation, conflict, and identity. Earlier in the thesis I outlined two questions that the French were asking in the 1930s: Where does Wagner belong, and to whom? In a sense, this thesis has explored the same questions, by tracing interpretive shifts and investigating the motivations behind these interpretations. Through this approach I have attempted to shed light on the way that Wagner, a German composer, became a fully integrated part of French culture and history. In the twelve years covered by this study, the Parisian press used Wagner to confront Nazism, grapple with the idea of rapprochement, situate France within a potential New Europe, understand past Franco-German conflict, manage life under occupation, and come to terms with the policy of Collaboration; in other words, in the years 1933–44 Wagner was a means for the French to articulate who they were, who they had been, and who they wanted to be.

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<i>Cahiers franco-allemands</i>	<i>Aux Écoutes</i>	<i>Aujourd'hui</i>
<i>Candide</i>	<i>Écho de Paris</i>	<i>Beaux-Arts</i>
<i>Comœdia</i>	<i>Europe</i>	<i>L'Information musicale</i>
<i>Figaro</i>	<i>Excelsior</i>	<i>La France au travail/La</i>
<i>Gringoire</i>	<i>L'Ami du peuple</i>	<i>France socialiste</i>
<i>Je suis partout</i>	<i>L'Ère nouvelle</i>	<i>La France européenne</i>
<i>Journal des débats</i>	<i>L'Europe nouvelle</i>	<i>La Gerbe</i>
<i>L'Action française</i>	<i>L'Éveil des peuples</i>	<i>Les Nouveaux Temps</i>
<i>L'Âge nouveau</i>	<i>L'Homme libre</i>	<i>Les Ondes</i>
<i>L'Alsace française</i>	<i>L'Humanité</i>	<i>Radio nationale</i>
<i>L'Aube</i>	<i>L'Ordre</i>	<i>Neue Pariser Zeitung</i>
<i>L'Illustration</i>	<i>L'Univers israélite</i>	
<i>L'Intransigeant</i>	<i>La Grande Revue</i>	
<i>L'Œuvre</i>	<i>La Liberté</i>	
<i>La Croix</i>	<i>La Libre parole</i>	
<i>La Nouvelle Revue</i>	<i>La Lumière</i>	
<i>française</i>	<i>La Nouvelle Revue</i>	
<i>La Presse</i>	<i>La Petite Gironde</i>	
<i>La Revue des deux mondes</i>	<i>La République</i>	
<i>La Revue universelle</i>	<i>La Revue de France</i>	
<i>La Semaine à Paris</i>	<i>La Revue de Paris</i>	
<i>Le Cri du peuple</i>	<i>La Revue du siècle</i>	
<i>Le Jour</i>	<i>La Revue hebdomadaire</i>	
<i>Le Journal</i>	<i>La Revue mondiale</i>	
<i>Le Matin</i>	<i>La Revue musicale</i>	
<i>Le Petit Journal</i>	<i>La Tribune juive</i>	
<i>Le Petit Parisien</i>	<i>Le Courrier musical</i>	
<i>Le Temps</i>	<i>Le Guide du concert</i>	
<i>Mercure de France</i>	<i>Le Ménestrel</i>	
<i>Musiciens d'aujourd'hui</i>	<i>Le Monde musical</i>	
<i>Paris-Midi</i>	<i>Le Quotidien</i>	
<i>Paris-Soir</i>	<i>Le Rempart</i>	
<i>Revue de musicologie</i>	<i>Les Nouvelles littéraires</i>	
	<i>Marianne</i>	
	<i>Revue bleue</i>	
	<i>Revue d'Allemagne et des</i>	
	<i>pays de langue allemande</i>	
	<i>Revue de France</i>	
	<i>Revue politique et</i>	
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A1: Alphabetical list of Wagner-related articles published in the Parisian press, 1933–44

This appendix details the press articles collected in the course of my research, arranged in alphabetical order by author and title. I have included only French-language articles and only those from the period of the thesis, 1933–44. Some of the articles are not fully documented as they were obtained in collections of press clippings rather than directly from the press source. These articles may be missing author, date or publication title. In these cases, I have included all the information available to me. Where these are used in the body of the thesis, I have documented the archival source that held the relevant press clipping. The articles listed here are divided into two separate lists: those by anonymous or unknown authors, and those that are authored.

Articles by unknown or anonymous authors

- ‘À Bayreuth.’ *Aux Écoutes*, 5 August 1933, 6.
- ‘À Bayreuth.’ *Journal des débats*, 5 August 1933, 2.
- ‘À l’Opéra, Georges Thill a, hier soir, incarné pour la première fois Parsifal.’ January 1933.
- ‘À propos de Wagner.’ *Je suis partout*, 18 February 1933, 3.
- ‘À propos du cinquantenaire de la mort de Wagner.’ January 1933.
- ‘Bayreuth à Paris.’ *L’Œuvre*, 16 May 1941, 1.
- ‘Boycottons le Festival Wagner à Bayreuth.’ *La Tribune juive* 15, no. 26 (30 June 1933): 404.
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- ‘Collaboration!’. *Cahiers franco-allemands*, September/October 1940, 253–6.
- ‘Debussy le libérateur.’ *Musiciens d’aujourd’hui*, June 1943, 4.

- ‘Debussy musicien français.’ *Musiciens d’aujourd’hui*, October 1942, 3–4.
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- ‘Der « Ring der Nibelungen » in Der Grossen Oper.’ *Neue Pariser Zeitung*, 29 April 1933, 5.
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- ‘Die Berliner Staatsoper in Paris.’ *Cahiers franco-allemands*, May-June 1941, 192–3.
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APPENDIX A2: Chronological list of Wagner-related articles published in the Parisian press, 1933–44

This appendix details the press articles collected in the course of my research, arranged chronologically. As in Appendix A1, I have included only French-language articles and only those from the period of the thesis, 1933–44. Some of the articles are not fully documented as they were obtained in collections of press clippings rather than directly from the press source. These articles may be missing author, date or publication title. In these cases, I have included all the information available to me. Where these are used in the body of the thesis, I have documented the archival source that held the relevant press clipping. This list includes a small number of undated articles whose content indicates that they were published during the period of the thesis.

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APPENDIX B1: Table of programming data at the Paris Opéra 1921–44

This appendix details the numerical data used to create graphs and draw conclusions related to the programming of Wagner's music at the Paris Opéra, 1921–44. All data was sourced from the *Journal de l'Opéra*, available on Gallica:
<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb426079139/date>

YEAR	NUMBER OF OPERA PERFORMANCES	NUMBER OF PERFORMANCES OF WAGNER WORKS	PERCENTAGE
1921	261	34	13%
1922	257	37	14%
1923	260	41	16%
1924	276	52	19%
1925	275	50	18%
1926	303	65	21%
1927	275	44	16%
1928	283	56	20%
1929	269	35	13%
1930	265	55	21%
1931	239	62	26%
1932	202	46	23%
1933	196	55	28%
1934	182	35	19%
1935	181	32	18%
1936	167	24	14%
1937	168	28	17%
1938	178	41	23%
1939	125	21	17%
1940	100	4	4%
1941	146	22	15%
1942	143	11	8%
1943	150	12	8%
1944	96	2	2%

APPENDIX B2: Table of concert programming data 1932–44

This appendix details the numerical data used to create graphs and draw conclusions related to concert programming of Wagner's music by the four major concert associations, 1932–44. The data refers only to each association's regular concert season (usually October–April). Press sources, archival sources, and previous research were used for collecting the data; sources are indicated in footnotes for each concert association.

		SOCIÉTÉ DES CONCERTS DU CONSERVATOIRE ⁶⁰⁴	CONCERTS PASDELOUP ⁶⁰⁵	CONCERTS COLONNE / PIERNE ⁶⁰⁶	CONCERTS L'AMOUREUX ⁶⁰⁷	TOTAL
1932-33	Number of concerts including Wagner works	4	10	13	14	41
	Number of concerts in regular season	22	54	48	36	160
	Number of all-Wagner concerts	1	5	5	0	11
1933-34	Number of concerts including Wagner works	5	9	8	12	34
	Number of concerts in regular season	20	46	46	46	158
	Number of all-Wagner concerts	0	5	5	1	11
1934-35	Number of concerts including Wagner works	2	10	9	14	35
	Number of concerts in regular season	10	50	46	50	156
	Number of all-Wagner concerts	0	1	5	1	7

⁶⁰⁴ Sources: Programme information on <http://hector.ucdavis.edu/SdC/>; *Le Ménestrel* concert programmes published Friday prior to Sunday concert.

⁶⁰⁵ Sources: Noémie Leprevost, 'Les Concerts Pasdeloup sous l'occupation allemande 1940–1944', (Masters thesis, University of Rouen, 2011); *Le Ménestrel* concert programmes published Friday prior to Sunday concert.

⁶⁰⁶ Sources: *Le Ménestrel* concert programmes published Friday prior to Sunday concert; *Le Ménestrel* reviews published after concert; *Figaro* concert announcements published on day of concert.

⁶⁰⁷ Sources: *Le Ménestrel* concert programmes published Friday prior to Sunday concert; *Le Ménestrel* reviews published after concert; *Figaro* concert announcements published on day of concert.

		SOCIÉTÉ DES CONCERTS DU CONSERVATOIRE ⁶⁰⁴	CONCERTS PASDELOUP ⁶⁰⁵	CONCERTS COLONNE / PIERNE ⁶⁰⁶	CONCERTS LAMOUREUX ⁶⁰⁷	TOTAL
1935-36	Number of concerts including Wagner works	4	9	8	17	38
	Number of concerts in regular season	21	48	48	49	166
	Number of all-Wagner concerts	1	3	5	4	13
1936-37	Number of concerts including Wagner works	5	4	7	11	27
	Number of concerts in regular season	18	44	46	48	156
	Number of all-Wagner concerts	1	2	3	6	12
1937-38	Number of concerts including Wagner works	4	11	8	12	35
	Number of concerts in regular season	20	51	45	44	160
	Number of all-Wagner concerts	0	3	4	3	10
1938-39	Number of concerts including Wagner works	1	3	6	12	22
	Number of concerts in regular season	20	24	48	46	138
	Number of all-Wagner concerts	0	2	3	2	7
1939-40	Number of concerts including Wagner works	0	0	1		1
	Number of concerts in regular season	0	20	23		43
	Number of all-Wagner concerts	0	0	0		0
1940-41	Number of concerts including Wagner works	3	6	9	7	25
	Number of concerts in regular season	30	31	27	30	118
	Number of all-Wagner concerts	0	3	4	3	10
1941-42	Number of concerts including Wagner works	2	6	5	9	22
	Number of concerts in regular season	24	30	29	28	111
	Number of all-Wagner concerts	0	2	2	2	6

		SOCIÉTÉ DES CONCERTS DU CONSERVATOIRE ⁶⁰⁴	CONCERTS PASDELOUP ⁶⁰⁵	CONCERTS COLONNE / PIERNE ⁶⁰⁶	CONCERTS LAMOUREUX ⁶⁰⁷	TOTAL
1942-43	Number of concerts including Wagner works	0	2	4	10	16
	Number of concerts in regular season	25	33	27	28	113
	Number of all-Wagner concerts	0	2	2	2	6
1943-44	Number of concerts including Wagner works	1	5	5	5	16
	Number of concerts in regular season	20	32	25	24	101
	Number of all-Wagner concerts	0	1	0	1	2

APPENDIX C: Selection of press articles

This appendix comprises transcriptions and reproductions of select press articles that are referred to in the thesis. Each article or group of articles is numbered and is referred to in footnotes where that article is first fully referenced. All reproductions are sourced from Gallica; all transcriptions are my own.

C1: Three-part article by Maurice Bouvier-Ajam, 'Une Religion : le wagnérisme.' *Le Ménestrel* 95, nos. 48, 49 & 50 (1, 8 & 15 December).



UNE RELIGION : LE WAGNÉRISME

L chef du Bureau de Presse national-socialiste allemand, M. Dietrich, n'a pas craint d'affirmer : « Adolf Hitler est l'incarnation de l'héroïsme indestructible de la Nation des *Nibelungen* ! » Voilà une déclaration qui pourrait servir de préface à la remarquable étude parue dans *l'Homme libre* où M. Eugène Lautier montre comment on est parvenu, sur les scènes allemandes, à faire acclamer le chancelier en la personne de Siegfried !

Richard Wagner, nul ne le conteste, est le génial rénovateur de la légende germanique, qui ranima les héros ambitieux des périodes brumeuses et farouches de l'ancienne mythologie. Il était tout naturel que les racistes allemands s'emparassent de lui et voulussent lire dans son œuvre la prédiction de l'hitlérisme contemporain. Et une foule de folliculaires, tous plus aryens les uns que les autres, a scribouillé et scribouillé encore d'interminables colonnes pour prouver que le wagnérisme est devenu, en quelque sorte, la religion d'état (1).

En présence de ces faits, nous nous proposons *premièrement* de nous livrer à l'étude impartiale de la religion personnelle de Richard Wagner; *deuxièmement* de voir quel système moral se déduit de cette religion; *troisièmement*, pourquoi on doit et comment on peut réagir contre la propagation de la nouvelle croyance : le pseudo-wagnérisme hitlérien.

La religion de Richard Wagner.

Qu'ils se nomment Julius Kapp, H. S. Chamberlain, Combarieu ou Louis Barthou; qu'ils se livrent à une étude minutieuse comme M. Henri Lichtenberger, ou qu'ils commentent avec brièveté comme F.-J. Fétis; qu'ils polémiquent comme Glasenapp, ou qu'ils romantisent comme M. Guy de Pourtalès; qu'ils s'appuient sur des notes privées comme M. Du Moulin-Eckart, ou qu'ils partent de documents épistolaires comme M. Elbert Lenrow; qu'ils soient de sévères historiens comme M. Paul Landormy, de fidèles traducteurs comme M. J. Prod'homme, ou d'aimables érudits comme M. Max Koch, — il semble décidément que tous les grands biographes de Wagner se désintéressent de sa religion. — Pourquoi?

La raison en est simple : chaque auteur, même s'il étudie un sujet classique, se pique d'originalité et

redoute le lieu commun. Or, c'est bien une banalité que la peinture du Wagner farouche protestant de la légende, de ce Wagner intransigeant qui fit abjurer le catholicisme à Cosima pour qu'elle adoptât la doctrine luthérienne (1) ! Et, dès lors, on prête à Wagner toutes les pensées d'un « chrétien mystique et passionné », au point que l'on compare certains de ses personnages aux « élus du jansénisme pascalien » (W.-F. Müller), et qu'on lui attribue des théories qu'il conviendrait mieux de donner à son illustre homonyme, le pasteur Charles Wagner !

Que de fois, et sous combien de signatures a-t-on vu affirmer « la foi vibrante du Titan de Bayreuth, son espoir en Demain, son abandon à la Providence » (*id.*). Voyez, nous dit-on, il soumet les héros les plus glorieux, les femmes les plus résolues, les Dieux les plus énergiques aux ordres secrets du destin, du Fatum qui brise ou couronne les efforts mais « qui appellera tous les morts à une même béatitude éternelle par une même rédemption chrétienne ». (Pierre Raymond, in *Wagner prophète*). Toute la musique de Wagner apparaît désormais comme un élan vers le Ciel, un acte d'espérance et de foi, une prière émue et vibrante que le roi du Walhalla lui-même adresse au Roi des dieux et des rois. Et l'on ne manque pas de comparer Wagner à « Baudelaire, l'auteur de *Bénédiction* et d'*Élévation* » ou à « Lamartine, auteur de *la Chute d'un ange* » (Raymond, *id.*). M. Müller, après avoir exalté « la foi confiante du Maître » ne va-t-il pas jusqu'à unir l'inspiration de *la Walkyrie* à celle de *l'Ecce Homo* de Van Dyck et à celle de *la Fin de Satan* ! Ce sont bien là les miracles des associations d'idées et les fantaisies du rapprochement esthétique cher aux critiques contemporains ! Mais, sans tomber dans de tels excès, quel est le wagnérien qui n'a pas affirmé cent fois : Wagner est un prophète, un apôtre, un saint, un Messie..., ou même un Dieu descendu sur la terre des splendeurs du höchste Schloss ?

Poètes, peintres et musiciens entretiennent à qui mieux mieux la légende dorée, et les biographes adoptent, *a priori*, cette conception. Hélas, rien n'est plus inexact. Il est grand temps de réagir, *documentés en mains*, contre une telle erreur.

* *

Ce désir de réaction a animé la jeune école des musicologues. Mais celle-ci est tombée dans l'exagération contraire : l'explication du génie wagnérien par la

(1) Ainsi que le révèle son *Journal* (si utilement compulsé par le comte Du Moulin-Eckart), Cosima adopta d'elle-même le protestantisme pour établir cette apparente communauté de foi entre elle et Richard, qui n'avait rien demandé et comprit mal la touchante preuve de soumission et d'amour qui lui fut donnée. Reconnaissons d'ailleurs que Cosima resta catholique de cœur, malgré elle et que son mari demeura aussi peu chrétien qu'aura-paravant.

(1) Il y a à ce sujet d'intéressantes remarques faites par M. J.-L. Garvin dans *The Observer* du 17 septembre 1933. Voir surtout l'étude du Dr Dorten dans *l'Amateur des Temps Nouveaux* du 3 novembre 1933.

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seule psychologie. Nos fils riront de notre naïveté pré-tentive lorsqu'ils liront tous ces ouvrages d'après-guerre où le biographe, fidèle aux enseignements de l'Université et de M. Stefan Zweig (1), prétend trouver le *deus ex machina* du secret de l'artiste par l'étude réfléchie de son comportement et l'analyse des composants de sa synthèse mentale, pour jargonner comme un disciple de Janet.

Bref, on a fabriqué un *cas Wagner* cher aux émules de Binet, et les conclusions les plus inattendues sont venues couronner ces thèses inutiles. Que l'on voie en Wagner un *Dameninitiator*, comme le veut l'Institut Berlinoise de Recherches Sexuelles — quelle jolie raison sociale ! — ou un *paranoïaque-héroïque* (2) comme l'étiquette certain fanatique de Delmas et Boll, on en vient toujours à rabaisser l'étude purement philosophique à une fumisterie dite psychologique. Et M. de Pourtalès va jusqu'à ne prendre en considération que le côté humain de Wagner, et à n'expliquer son inspiration que par sa sensualité. L'artiste, selon lui, c'est ce Wagner qui délaisse Minna, tourmente Maria et Jessie et, abandonnant Mathilde à son prosaïque époux, épouse « sa chère Cosima » qu'il arrache à Bülow et qu'il s'empresse de tromper, au nom de l'Art bien entendu, avec Judith. L'inspiré, c'est ce « disciple très authentique de Goethe » que mènent « son esprit de conquête et son instinct de domination », « ce Wagner de la soixante-quatrième année s'offrant sans scrupules vains et sans timidité de vieillard aux derniers aiguillons d'une chair qui ne se refroidit point. » Et sa création artistique s'explique tout entière par cette sensualité irréfutable : « Cavale brûlante abattue aux pieds de Parsifal, Kundry est le type de la femme asservie au poète, de la pécheresse vaincue par le divin amour. » (G. de Pourtalès, in *Wagner, histoire d'un artiste*.)

On aura beau nous rabâcher que Lohengrin et Parsifal sont de curieux exemples de freudisme avant la lettre, cela ne saurait nous décider à entreprendre une étude de la « libido » chez les héros wagnériens, et à voir en Wotan le champion de l'équilibre sexuel, alors que la brune et farouche Brunehilde serait le symbole du désir et que la blonde et douce Sieglinde incarnerait le renoncement !

La vérité à cet égard semble être que Wagner, comme nombre d'artistes perpétuellement émus par les découvertes de leur génie, ne trouva jamais la compagne parfaite, la Muse et l'épouse en un seul être, ce qui ne suffit d'ailleurs pas à excuser sa conduite.

Quelle que soit la vogue actuelle, nous persistons dans une plus classique compréhension du génie bayreuthien et, sans attendre les fameuses « révélations » promises par MM. Hurn et Root au sujet des rapports entre Wagner et Minna Planer (3), nous croyons encore que la philosophie eût sur l'âme et sur l'œuvre du compositeur plus d'influence que la chair et la pathologie réunies !

« Tout génie porte un masque » a dit Nietzsche. Wagner-homme est le masque de Wagner-poète : sa religion officielle cache sa croyance réelle et, si la

connaissance de la vie intime de cet être léger, voire inconscient, révèle parfois sa vraie morale — donc la vraie source de son inspiration — encore faut-il ne la considérer que comme un moyen et non comme une fin.

* *

Partant de cet audacieux postulat, nous avons cherché quelques précisions au sujet de la « philosophie-religion » du Siegfrieds Pater — ainsi que l'appellait ironiquement Chabrier — dans les œuvres des historiens les plus autorisés. Nous n'avons rien trouvé (1). Laissant volontairement de côté les *Œuvres Complètes* (2) de Wagner en vertu de ce principe qu'aucune thèse ne s'explique par soi-même, nous avons orienté nos recherches sur un autre terrain. Les *Lettres* de Liszt, l'autobiographie *Mein Leben*, surtout différents recueils de *Lettres de Wagner* (parmi lesquelles la *Correspondance* avec Mathilde Wesendonck dont M. Pierre Lalo s'est si utilement servi pour son bel ouvrage : *Richard Wagner ou le Niebelung* qui vient de paraître chez Flammarion) et les *Erinnerungen an Richard Wagner* par H. von Wolzogen nous ont dévoilé la vraie philosophie de Wagner, et sa vraie religion (3).

Nous regrettons de ne pouvoir faire toutes les citations que nous avons relevées à l'appui de notre thèse. Il résulte de ces recherches que nous avons désormais l'absolue conviction que WAGNER N'A JAMAIS ÉTÉ UN CHRÉTIEN, NI MÊME UN DÉISTE, NI MÊME UN SPIRITUALISTE. Il est un *positiviste*, dans toute l'acception du terme : de quinze ans plus jeune qu'Auguste Comte, c'est encore avec ce philosophe qu'il a le plus d'affinités dans sa conception de l'humanité et de l'individu. Il ne croit pas à la béatitude éternelle, il ne croit pas en « Dieu créateur et fin du monde » (P. Raymond, *id. infra*), il ne croit pas que le génie soit un don de la Providence, mais il se réfugie dans un respect altier des « religions des humbles » et dans une admiration peut-être sincère d'un Christ purement humain, qui s'est révélé zélé des vertus et modèle des hommes, sans avoir reçu aucune mission. Un christianisme sans messianisme ? (4) Du *renanisme*, tout au plus !

(1) A vrai dire, M. de Pourtalès dans son *Wagner* paru en 1932, à la N. R. F., cite la phrase de la *Lettre à M. Ernest de Weber* dont nous parlons plus loin, mais il n'y attache aucune importance et rentre aussitôt dans l'étude psychologique.

(2) Parues chez Delagrave, en 13 volumes, traduction de J. Prod'homme.

(3) Qu'on nous permette de remarquer au passage que, seule entre tous ces documents, *Mein Leben* (Ma vie) existe en édition française (chez Plon). Les *Lettres de Liszt* dont la plupart sont écrites en français et dont l'intérêt est très grand, n'existent qu'en édition allemande alors que les *Lettres à Paganini* sont publiées dans une édition américaine (traduction anglaise de M. Lenrow) et que les *Erinnerungen* par M. de Wolzogen n'ont été éditées qu'en Allemagne.

(4) Il est en effet une forme de protestantisme assez éloignée du christianisme traditionnel. Elle n'admet pas la divinité de N. S. mais le considère comme le modèle des hommes. Le représentant le plus qualifié de cette conception religieuse nous semble être le pasteur Étienne Giran, dans son livre *En marge des dogmes* et surtout dans son *Jésus de Nazareth*, qu'il aurait été intéressant de comparer avec l'esquisse de Wagner, porteuse du même titre (Voir Pourtalès, *id. infra*, p. 164). Une différence notable : selon les protestants très libéraux dont nous avons parlé, Jésus, qui n'est pas Dieu, est cependant la source de la rédemption : selon Wagner, il n'est que la source de l'amour, de l'exaltation d'un altruisme ressemblant étrangement à celui que Comte se plaît à reconnaître en l'instinct de l'homme, à la suite de Rousseau. (Cf. *Lettres Wagner-Liszt*. Tome I^{er}. N° 107).

(1) Biographe quasi-officiel du Docteur Freud,

(2) Cf. la critique de cette thèse par Bouvier-Ajam in *Psychiatrie et Musique*, numéro du *Ménestrel* du 8 septembre 1933.

(3) Révélations dont M. Newmann a démontré l'inutilité et auxquelles M. de Pourtalès refuse de s'arrêter. — Cf. à ce sujet la *vérité sur Wagner* de MM. Hurn et Root, les *articles* de M. Newmann répondant à cet essai, et la *préface* du *Wagner* de M. de Pourtalès.

Après la vie terrestre, la mort irrémédiable du corps et de la pensée. Mais Jésus a montré comment il convient de vivre une vraie vie et, tout en se gardant bien de devenir charitable ou modeste, Wagner estime que Jésus est l'exemple parfait des êtres humains — ce qui n'empêche pas la plus belle des vies de mener au néant. — N'est-ce pas plus près de M. Paul Langevin que du Saint Curé d'Ars ou du Pasteur Monod?

Un passage de la *Lettre à Monsieur Ernest de Weber* (1) est particulièrement significatif à cet égard. Richard Wagner écrit : « *Je ne crois pas en Dieu*, mais au divin qui s'est révélé à nous en la personne d'un Jésus sans péché. Je crois au divin qui nous a montré dans un exemple unique la voie de la rédemption, conduisant au delà des voies humaines par la naïveté parfaite et la plus pure beauté. *Cette voie mène à la mort*, mais le Christ nous a donné l'exemple d'une belle mort, aboutissement d'une belle vie. »

Nous ne croyons rien devoir ajouter à cet aveu : Wagner fut un matérialiste. Lui-même l'a reconnu.

Sans doute, on pourra répondre que Wagner fut un matérialiste d'esprit et non point de sentiment, que l'intuition affirmait ce que niait l'intelligence, que le cœur disait oui quand le cerveau disait non ; on pourra citer à l'appui de cela plus de cent passages admirables : la fin du *Ballet des Filles-Fleurs* avec sa superbe envolée vers les cieux ; le symbolique récit de Hans-Sachs ; le véritable *lied*, ému et fier à la fois, du Roi au premier acte de *Lohengrin* ; les protestations enflammées de Brunehilde dans *la Walkyrie* ; que savons-nous encore ? — Et l'on nous dira que ce sont là des preuves définitives d'une vie intérieure ardente et d'une foi d'autant plus vibrante et émouvante qu'elle est involontaire et inavouée. Nous ne nions pas tout cela, bien que nous ayons l'intime conviction qu'aucune page de Wagner n'est animée de cet enthousiasme mystique, de cette grandeur chrétienne, de cette foi prenante et sublime que nous trouvons par exemple dans *Le repos de la Sainte-Famille* de *L'enfance du Christ* de Berlioz, dans le *Sanctus* de la *Messe en ré* de Beethoven, dans le *Pie Jesus* du *Requiem* de Fauré, dans le subtil et poignant andante du *premier Quatuor* de Debussy, et dans *la Tragédie de Salomé* de M. Florent Schmitt.

Mais revenons aux faits en eux-mêmes. *Le Quotidien*, journal peu suspect de chauvinisme, a enfin lâché cette déclaration : « En Allemagne, tout commence par des considérations philosophiques et tout finit par des coups de fusil ou de canon. » On serait tenté d'ajouter : « ou des deux à la fois. » C'est bien la leçon de l'histoire !

Aussi les théoriciens de l'hitlérisme ne s'embarrassent-ils pas de considérations philosophiques et, armés d'une sèche philosophie que la violence animera, ils ont la finesse de faire connaître au peuple, non sans déformation, les thèses que les musicistes n'ont pas encore prises au sérieux.

(A suivre.)

Maurice BOUVIER-AJAM.

(1) La *Lettre ouverte à Monsieur Ernest de Weber* dont nous citons un passage (traduction G. de Pourtalès, in *Wagner*, p. 400) a été écrite pour les *Feuillets de Bayreuth* et consiste en un vigoureux plaidoyer contre la vivisection (que M. Hitler vient d'interdire en Allemagne). Elle figure dans les *Erinnerungen* par Wolzogen. (Voir J. Doch : *La campagne de Wagner contre la vivisection*.)

Voir à la 3^e page de la couverture les Programmes des Concerts.

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UNE RELIGION : LE WAGNÉRISME

(Suite) ⁽¹⁾

La morale wagnérienne.



MAINTENANT que la philosophie-religion de Wagner nous apparaît nettement, sa morale va en découler naturellement : elle emprunte au protestantisme le plus humain et le moins divin une très haute considération de soi-même, qui exclut volontiers toute humilité sincère au nom d'un respect humain voisin de l'orgueil ; elle demande un constant perfectionnement de l'âme dans le seul but de parvenir au sommet de la montagne sociale, de dilater sa personnalité — son « moi » — et d'imposer son génie. C'est la morale de l'ambition et par là, mais par là seulement, Wagner se rapproche de Goethe (2).

Sa conception positiviste de l'humanité, de l'altruisme, des religions « désuètes », de l'individu et de la vie devait fatalement conduire Wagner à se construire pour lui tout seul une pseudo-religion. Il abandonne toute foi et même toute métaphysique ; puis, partant du fallacieux concept de l'homme souverain, il tombe dans l'*humanisme* au sens strict du mot... et nous nous souvenons la phrase que M. Jacques Heugel prête à l'abbé de son livre *En Spirale* : « Le Diable s'est vêtu en humaniste, et c'est des humanistes que descendent les philosophes de notre XVIII^e siècle. » Eh ! oui, l'œuvre de Wagner, fruit de sa « religion », est bien celle d'un philosophe destructeur et profane, d'un élève de Rousseau qui a exagéré encore cette doctrine initiale au point de devenir non point l'égal d'un Lavertujon, mais d'un Littré ou d'un Renan !

Outre ce positivisme, la religion de Wagner consiste en un perpétuel culte du Moi, en une conception de la souveraineté de l'homme tout à fait proche — et pour causes ! — de celle de Nietzsche première manière. Beaucoup d'écrivains, et des plus notoires, ont relevé cette « influence du nietzschéisme sur le wagnérisme » (P. Raymond, *id. infra*) mais sans y trouver « aucune contradiction avec un mysticisme très pur et une foi chrétienne d'une incontestable sincérité » (*id.*). Selon M. Joseph Doch, ce n'est là qu'une « conséquence logique du culte protestant qui exalte le moi et cherche à surhumaniser l'être humain par l'ambition et la volonté afin de l'élever vers Dieu. » La chose est possible : un

certain protestantisme, particulièrement répandu en Allemagne et actuellement en progrès en France, n'est guère qu'une religion de l'ambition permanente basée sur l'exaltation de la personnalité et l'enrichissement des facultés humaines. On est alors bien loin de l'humilité du catholique et de « l'ambition altruiste » (ainsi que l'a nommée le Pasteur Fechner) du protestant intégral. L'éducation de Wagner, toute protestante qu'elle ait été, ne fut pas *chrétienne* : elle a poussé Wagner à prendre la religion pour une philosophie, à devenir un humaniste, point un croyant. Nombreux sont ceux qui, pour les mêmes motifs, ont suivi la même évolution.

Quel que soit l'intérêt de cette opinion, bien plus près de la vérité est M. Léon Daudet lorsque, dans son livre *Les horreurs de la guerre* sous le titre *Un philosophe du combat : Nietzsche*, il retrouve chez l'auteur d'*Ainsi parla Zarathustra* ce que nous retrouverons chez l'auteur du *Götterdämmerung*, à savoir « ce principe darwinien que la lutte est le sel de la vie et qu'une seule paix est possible ici-bas : celle de la mort. »

L'orthodoxie d'une telle religion est jugée !

Mais, à notre avis, ce ne fut point l'influence de Nietzsche qui fut essentielle sur Wagner. Ses héros et ses dieux ne sont que des incarnations des vertus et des vices humains et, qu'ils soient Fridga-Rancune, Siegfried-Honneur, Sigmund-Persécution, Sieglinde-Résignation, Hagen-Traîtrise ou Gunther-Lâcheté, tous essaient en vain de concevoir des idéals célestes et d'atteindre des bonheurs chimériques : le Destin fatal qui les guide en apparence n'existe même pas en fait ; il n'est que l'intangible loi du monde, et l'ordre naturel des choses impose une croyance en une force supérieure à laquelle cherchent à se conformer les héros les plus ambitieux, mais qui n'est qu'illusion...

Ce n'est pas au Lamartine de la *Chute d'un Ange* qu'il faut comparer Wagner. Pas même au Vigny d'*Eloa*. C'est à Leconte de Lisle, ce matérialiste impénitent qui voyait en un nirvâna suprême (nettement emprunté aux religions hindoues) l'anéantissement de tout esprit. Et que l'on ne nous parle plus de « spiritualité confiante » ni de « prière fervente » (Müller) lorsqu'il s'agit d'une description suggestive des qualités humaines ou de l'éclat ambitieux d'un orgueil chaque jour entretenu et favorisé.

Que l'on nous pardonne d'avoir rejeté un préjugé bien enraciné. Notre conclusion n'implique pourtant qu'un retour à la logique : on n'a certainement pas été sans remarquer, à la lecture des lignes précédentes, que la religion de Wagner découle d'abord et avant tout de la doctrine de Schopenhauer. Cette philosophie prima sur Wagner l'influence du nietzschéisme ; et si l'on pouvait supposer une union de la philosophie nietzschéenne et de la religion protestante en l'âme

(1) Voir le *Ménestrel* du 1^{er} décembre 1933.

(2) Cf. Bouvier-Ajam : *Goethe et Wagner* (Revue Coude-à-Coude, n° 137).

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de Wagner, du moins faut-il reconnaître l'impossibilité d'une fusion entre cette religion et le pessimisme systématique du Bossu de Dantzig (1). — Nietzsche, c'est la lutte pour la domination : il y a encore, à la rigueur, un but à la vie. « Schopenhauer, c'est la souffrance pour l'anéantissement : d'où ce conseil normal que donne le philosophe — mort à soixante-douze ans de sa belle mort — de se soustraire le plus tôt possible par le suicide aux tracas de l'existence. » (2) Une telle conception a-t-elle des droits au christianisme, et même au spiritualisme le plus inconsistant ?

Un seul écrivain a songé à faire le rapprochement Wagner-Schopenhauer (3) *au point de vue croyance*. C'est Nietzsche lui-même qui écrit : « Pour moi, tout ce qu'il y a de meilleur et de plus beau se rattache aux noms de Wagner et de Schopenhauer, et je suis heureux et fier d'être en cela d'accord avec mes meilleurs amis. » (4)

Cet accord ne devait pas durer longtemps, mais la philosophie de Nietzsche prendra naissance dans ces points caractéristiques de la morale schopenhauerienne, d'où sourd également ce qu'on a convenu d'appeler *la religion de Richard Wagner* (1) : l'amour immodéré de soi ; l'orgueilleuse conception de la souveraineté de l'homme ; le renoncement à la croyance en Dieu, en la vie éternelle, en l'efficacité de la prière — en un mot : en le renoncement à la foi.

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Comment les théoriciens de l'hitlérisme interprètent-ils donc la morale wagnérienne ? Nous n'avons pas l'intention de donner une étude détaillée de leur curieuse adaptation, mais seulement un résumé de ce qui serait, d'après eux, la vraie doctrine de Wagner, prophète du national-socialisme.

La doctrine de Wagner comprend, selon eux, quatre points essentiels :

1° L'affirmation de la supériorité de la race allemande,

(1) A notre sens, il faut moins prendre en considération l'influence réciproque de Wagner sur Nietzsche qu'observer leur *évolution parallèle*, partant des mêmes principes schopenhaueriens, et aboutissant tous deux, *mutatis mutandis*, à la même conception de l'humanité. C'est ce qu'a compris le R. P. Sanson dans son remarquable traité de *la Souffrance et nous*.

(2) Cours de philosophie du professeur H. Lesage.

(3) Dans sa biographie de *Nietzsche*, le professeur Andler a compris la profonde empreinte dont le schopenhauerisme a marqué la philosophie de Nietzsche d'une part, et la morale wagnérienne d'autre part. Malheureusement, trop attaché à démontrer la supériorité de l'auteur de *Humain, trop humain*, il refuse à Wagner une doctrine aussi complète et ne songe pas à y découvrir le fond de sa religion mais seulement un accessoire de son inspiration.

Quant au rapprochement Schopenhauer-Wagner *au point de vue esthétique*, il s'impose : voir à ce sujet *L'esthétique de Schopenhauer* par A. Fauconnet ; et *Les Éléments de l'esthétique musicale* de H. Riemann dont il existe une excellente traduction par M. G. Humbert chez Alcan.

Pour bien comprendre l'influence de Schopenhauer-philosophe sur Wagner-poète-compositeur, il convient de faire à leur égard une « application pratique » des études de MM. Bourguès et Dénéreaz sur *La Musique et la vie intérieure* et peut-être de celles que nous avons données dans le *Ménestrel* des 10 juin et 25 novembre 1932, 24 mars 1933 sous les titres *Psychologie et Musique*, *Métaphysique et Musique*, *Morale et Musique*. Il convient également de méditer, dans ce même but, les théories de MM. Lucien Arréat (*Mémoire et Imagination*) et A. Bazaillas (*Musique et Inconscience*).

(4) Nietzsche : *Lettres choisies* (Édit. Stock, p. 31). Aussi dans le *Wagner* de Pourtalès (N. R. F., p. 349).

que Wagner aurait proclamée tacitement par son admiration et son amitié pour Gobineau, et qu'il aurait démontrée matériellement par sa contribution à l'édification du Cercle Gobineau.

2° L'affirmation de la validité du droit créé par la force. Il y a à ce sujet une déduction réjouissante due au Professeur Köhler : les dieux des légendes wagnériennes terrassent victorieusement des héros qui, eux-mêmes, au nom de leur idéal, terrassent d'autres personnages. Le Destin couronne ceux qui ont vaincu : Wotan est le maître de la Nation des Dieux et doit restaurer sa puissance sur le monde assombri qu'il éclairera de sa lumière triomphale. Ça se chante : *Deutschland über alles!*

3° L'affirmation de la primauté du sur-homme : même principe : le héros que le Destin couronne est l'expression vivante des volontés supérieures, qu'il soit le champion apparent du Bien (Siegfried) ou du Mal (Hagen), puisqu'il surpasse, par sa personnalité puissante (1), ceux qu'il a courbés sous sa loi. Par conséquent, M. Adolf Hitler, moderne Lohengrin — quoique fils d'un Parsifal autrichien (mais c'est là une si vieille histoire!) — est le sur-homme du jour.

4° En conclusion de tout cela, l'affirmation de la sainteté des victoires par la force : les hommes se débattent contre l'ordre implacable des choses et les héros ne se dégagent de la foule qu'à coups de matraque. Leur domination est sacrée puisqu'ils écrasent de leur individualité supérieure, au nom de l'idéal de la race, leurs « frères inférieurs ». Raccord très net, et mille fois signalé (2), avec les théories de la lutte pour la vie, de la force créatrice du droit, Hegel et Compagnie... Et un petit retour à Gobineau pour déclarer que la « race allemande » étant la plus pure de toutes se doit d'être la plus forte, la plus grande, la dominatrice de toutes les autres (3).

* *

Or, comment Wagner lui-même interprétait-il sa propre théorie ? Il devait la connaître au moins aussi bien que M. Goebbels et que M. de Neurath, puisqu'il en était l'auteur.

Wagner, nul ne l'ignore — consultez à ce sujet n'importe quelle biographie — appartient toujours aux partis avancés, prenant part à la grève de Leipzig alors qu'il n'était encore que collégien et avouant en toute occasion une horreur insurmontable des pouvoirs dictatoriaux. Ceci suffirait à montrer la vanité des thèses hitlériennes, mais nous préférons répondre aux quatre points précédemment étudiés :

1° Wagner n'a jamais affirmé la supériorité de la race allemande : non seulement il est l'auteur du peu germanique *Rienzi*, mais encore il se flatte de donner aux héros et aux Dieux de ses drames des « âmes universelles ». Ce qu'il veut, c'est présenter quelques

(1) Cette personnalité peut puiser sa force dans la légende, même dans la « légende chrétienne » : ainsi Lohengrin.

(2) Notamment par M. Charles Maurras, bien qu'à notre sens le positivisme de ce philosophe rapproche sur plus d'un point sa doctrine de celle d'Hegel.

(3) Il faut lire à ce sujet le magnifique exposé du Professeur Georges Blondel fait à l'Institut International d'Anthropologie sous le titre « *Que faut-il penser de la pureté germanique?* » et le livre du professeur T. E. Karoten, de l'Université d'Helsingfors (Finlande), paru chez Payot sous le titre *Les Anciens Germains*.

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tableaux humains de la perpétuelle lutte entre le Bien et le Mal, considérés en sociologue plus qu'en métaphysicien ; c'est représenter l'humanité entière par le modèle de ces personnages antiques qui ne sont que des moyens artistiques d'exprimer un idéal social, et non point exclusivement germanique. Ainsi que le montre fort bien M. Émile Corra, que nous avons eu par ailleurs l'occasion de combattre (1), Wagner fut atteint à un moment de sa vie (1877-1880) par une crise de Gobinisme aiguë (2). — Il en garda l'idée que la race allemande était la race élue, et c'est pourquoi, outre par amour inné de sa patrie, il y choisit ses modèles d'humanité, *utilisés au nom d'un idéal universel*. — Ajoutons à cela que nous savons scientifiquement aujourd'hui que Gobineau était dans l'erreur, que sa thèse du dolycocéphalisme n'était point faite pour enorgueillir les Allemands et que M. Hitler en fait volontairement une fausse application (3).

2° Wagner n'a jamais affirmé la validité du droit créé par la force : les hommes se débattent contre l'implacable fatalité des choses, mais leur lutte est vaine et les plus grandes victoires ne conduisent qu'à l'anéantissement, ou au retour à la norme traditionnelle. Et ceci, quelle que soit la volonté des pantins humains travaillés sans cesse par cet orgueil qu'ils doivent cultiver par simple ambition, dans l'espoir de vivre une belle vie qui mène à une belle mort, comme l'indique la *Lettre à Weber*. L'homme s'efforce de créer : la nature lui répond par son ordre réalisé, qu'il s'agisse des univers ou des cités.

3° Wagner n'a jamais affirmé la primauté du surhomme : nous répétons à ce sujet que Wagner est bien plus près de Schopenhauer que de Nietzsche, et que sa conclusion logique est que tout effort humain n'a pas de retentissement ni dans un invisible qui n'est que néant, ni dans un monde visible qui n'est qu'immuabilité. L'effort produit l'orgueil, non le droit ni la vertu : il est stérile et mène à la mort tout comme le renoncement.

4° Wagner n'a jamais affirmé la sainteté des victoires par la force, d'abord parce qu'un incroyant ne donne aucun sens vrai au mot sainteté, ensuite parce qu'il fut un internationaliste, prêchant la morale de l'Humanité à la manière de Comte, et en plus, ne désirant aucunement la supériorité d'un pays sur les autres. A cet égard, des preuves nombreuses nous restent. A Naples, Wagner s'écrie : « Voilà ma vraie patrie ! ». A Berlioz il déclare : « Toutes les races se côtoient comme les pays se limitent, mais l'Art dépasse les frontières et survole les pays et les peuples. » Il fut de toutes les révolutions, ami de Bakounine, meneur des troubles de Dresde, vantant publiquement « la supériorité des hommes sur les cercles qui les enserrent et les divisent », rejetant avec dégoût toute conception autoritaire de gouvernement. Loin de lui l'idée d'une force primant le droit. Il veut au contraire que chaque individu s'enorgueillisse de sa propre liberté, et cherche par tous les moyens à

l'exprimer, à la faire jaillir et briller. Ce poète dont on veut faire l'apôtre du nazisme a plus d'un point commun avec le socialiste anarchiste Proudhon ! (1)

En définitive, nous sommes en présence de la plus formidable erreur qu'un groupe d'intellectuels salariés ait jamais répandue sur le monde entier. Nous ne nous sommes pas attaché à une controverse littéraire, désireux seulement de montrer par les faits les plus incontestables et d'après les documents les plus certains quelle était la vraie doctrine de Wagner : chrétienne, elle ne l'est à aucun titre, encore qu'elle puisse plus aisément s'appuyer sur un protestantisme trop large et philosophique que sur le catholicisme traditionnel ; mais elle n'est pas davantage conforme à l'idéologie allemande contemporaine qui ne peut esquiver un rapprochement avec le wagnérisme qu'au moyen d'erreurs et surtout de mensonges.

(A suivre.)

Maurice BOUVIER-AJAM.

(1) Contrairement à l'opinion de M. André Sanson, il se trouve donc à l'opposé des collectivistes Karl Marx et Saint-Simon.

Un Scandale.

Dans son numéro du 29 septembre dernier, le *Ménestrel* a annoncé que M. René Chauvet vivement intéressé par l'article publié le 20 mars 1931 sous la signature de M. Paul Bertrand, concernant les perfectionnements modernes dont a été dotée la scène du Théâtre Costanzi de Rome (devenu Théâtre Royal de l'Opéra), avait invité M. Ansaldo, ingénieur-technicien de la salle de l'Opéra de Rome, à se rendre à Vichy en vue d'apporter à cette dernière scène les transformations réalisées par lui à Rome. Ce projet d'aménagement a reçu l'entière approbation de la Compagnie fermière, qui a accordé à M. René Chauvet l'allocation de crédit nécessaire à la transformation de la scène du Casino conformément au plan Ansaldo. Il en résultait que Vichy eût doté la France d'une installation scénique modèle.

Mais, l'établissement de Vichy appartenant à l'État, l'autorisation ministérielle d'entreprendre ces travaux est indispensable ; et depuis un mois, il n'y a plus paraît-il, en France, de Ministre autorisé à signer une pièce de cette importance (!!!) Si d'ici 15 jours cette formalité n'est pas remplie, le beau projet dont la Compagnie fermière du Casino de Vichy accepte de faire seule les frais devra être abandonné. Il en résulte que l'incurie administrative et parlementaire continue à compromettre de la manière la plus grave les intérêts artistiques du pays, même lorsqu'aucune question d'ordre budgétaire n'entre en jeu.

Voilà comment les efforts d'art sont encouragés et soutenus en France ! On le savait depuis longtemps. Hélas, cette lamentable histoire de la transformation de la scène du Casino de Vichy en apporte une preuve nouvelle, et combien navrante !

(1) Cf. Revue Coude-à-coude, n° 121 (février 1932).

(2) « Wagner s'enthousiasma pour l'Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines ; il communiqua son enthousiasme à Frédéric Nietzsche (sic), avant de se brouiller avec lui ; puis à l'un de ses admirateurs le professeur Schemann... » (E. Corra, *Le Gobinisme*, in *Revue positiviste internationale* du 1^{er} août 1933... pardon, du 17 Dante 1451).

(3) Voir les études de MM. Maurice Muret (*l'annexion de Gobineau*) dans le *Journal des Débats*, Maurice Ajam (*la Gobinite*), dans la *Dépêche de Toulouse*, Bernard Auffray dans l'*Ordre*.

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UNE RELIGION : LE WAGNÉRISME

(Fin) (1)

Comment réagir en France contre le pseudo-wagnérisme hitlérien ?

Le grand écrivain allemand Thomas Mann, dans son livre *Souffrances et grandeur de Richard Wagner* (Fayard, éditeur), s'est attaché à montrer le compositeur ne vivant que pour son œuvre et travaillant sans répit à la construction d'un monument dont il avait conçu, dès la première heure, tout l'édifice : il oppose ainsi une sincérité objective à toutes les fallacieuses intentions politiques qu'on prête à Wagner aujourd'hui. Conclusion : non seulement ce livre a été fort mal accueilli en Allemagne et la presse a employé surtout la méthode du silence, mais encore le Gouvernement du Reich a interdit la publication de tout travail ancien ou futur de cet écrivain. — Voilà les faits. Donc, de ce côté-là, aucune réaction n'est possible. M. Goering répondrait sans doute à M. Jules Sauerwein, s'il était interrogé sur ce sujet, que la crainte d'attaques étrangères est telle en Allemagne que l'on est bien obligé de tenir en éveil les sentiments belliqueux de la jeunesse dans tous les domaines — philosophiques... et musicaux (2) comme les autres — et par tous les moyens — mensongers et fallacieux comme les autres. — C'est une morale très spéciale : en tous cas elle n'est pas wagnérienne !

Comment donc réagir en France ?

Cette politique allemande présente, en effet, trois dangers principaux à notre égard :

1° Si elle n'est pas contredite, elle menace d'être admise par l'opinion étrangère et ainsi de donner des bases logiques à ce qui n'est qu'une erreur criminelle.

2° Elle contribue à donner à la jeunesse allemande une orientation ultra-nationaliste à laquelle ne répond aucunement l'éducation de la jeunesse française qui, de ce fait, se trouve sur ce terrain en infériorité. C'est dangereux.

3° Elle est rigoureusement contraire à ce principe beethovenien, admis par Wagner, que l'Art plane sur les peuples et les arts, et elle cherche à faire du génie wagnérien, universellement respecté, une arme de combat contre les arts étrangers, et parfois même contre les théâtres et les artistes étrangers. On a vu des critiques allemands, obsédés par leur doctrine raciste, revendiquer pour l'Allemagne « le monopole Wagner »

(1) Voir le *Ménestrel* des 1^{er} et 8 décembre 1933.

(2) La musique adouci les mœurs. (Vieil adage français.)

et s'attaquer à notre Opéra National dans le but de faire ressortir la grandeur des efforts du Reich pour honorer « le prophète de l'hitlérisme » sur les scènes allemandes. Il y a là une simple question de fait qui, à notre sens, ne doit en rien être mêlée à cette question du wagnérisme en dépit des efforts des musicographes germaniques : il est vrai que « le Reich a fait des dépenses considérables pour les scènes allemandes et y représente *Lohengrin* aussi bien que *Faust* (1) avec un éclat inconnu des scènes françaises. Mais ceci n'empêche pas que le spectateur qui a assisté à des séances en Allemagne et à l'Opéra de Paris est convaincu de ce fait que certains chanteurs français ne le cèdent en rien aux plus grands chanteurs de l'Opéra de Berlin, et que l'on peut affirmer que, si le Gouvernement français avait pour ses scènes lyriques la même générosité que le Reich pour les siennes, l'Opéra de Paris, doté d'une administration parfaite, d'un orchestre qui est un des plus remarquables du monde, d'une troupe excellente et d'une mise en scène chaque jour plus complète, rendrait un aussi éclatant hommage à Wagner et à tous les autres grands compositeurs. » (Otto Horhn.)

Reste à répondre aux deux premiers points :

Pour le premier, la chose est simple : il faut absolument que les amis de la musique aient à cœur de répandre la vérité sur Wagner et de détruire ainsi les effets nocifs de la campagne hitlérienne.

Pour le second point, la réponse est beaucoup moins aisée. Le Gouvernement du Reich ne s'est pas contenté de faire de Wagner l'augure du nazisme, mais a organisé, de la façon la plus intelligente, le réveil des vieux airs allemands. Non seulement des compositeurs plus ou moins officiellement subventionnés ont encarté dans leurs œuvres maintes mélodies du temps jadis, mais encore on enseigne aux enfants des écoles les chansons du moyen âge et des siècles pré-révolutionnaires. M. Goering a laissé entendre que cette adoption du passé n'est qu'une imitation de la France après la Révolution (2), mais nous ne répéterons jamais assez que le but de ces efforts est d'exalter chez cette jeunesse des sentiments patriotiques et racistes tout animés de la folie hégélienne : lutte pour la vie, force créatrice du droit, Deutschland über alles, Heil Hitler! Deutschland und Affentum ! Nous sommes là, bien que nous soyions au xx^e siècle... peut-être à cause de cela...

Bien au contraire, la France ne fait aucun effort pour orienter ses potaches vers les voies fleuries de l'art, et, les privant d'une culture musicale vraiment française, est responsable de l'enthousiasme de la jeune école pour

(1) Allusion à certain musiciste allemand qui essaie de persuader ses lecteurs que l'opéra *Margarete* (c'est-à-dire : *Faust*) en dépit de la nationalité de Gounod, appartient en bien propre au répertoire allemand par suite de son inspiration goethienne !

(2) Cf. interview par M. Sauerwein dans *Paris-Soir*.

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un art absolument contraire à notre mentalité. Nos critiques n'ont aucun respect pour les chants populaires : nombreuses, et injustes, sont les moqueries décochées sans cesse au *père Gounod* pour sa joyeuse chanson à boire de *Faust*, alors que la critique allemande ne cesse de louer le



de l'Andante de la *Symphonie en sol majeur* d'Haydn (1).

Différence de conception artistique, dira-t-on? C'est plus grave que cela : le Français cherche sans cesse la fantaisie, et s'il ne puise pas son inspiration dans la légende ou l'histoire de son pays, dans la tradition ou dans l'expérience de ses prédécesseurs, c'est qu'il en a perdu toute connaissance et ne cherche plus qu'à exprimer le rythme de son siècle sans faire appel aux beautés naïves du passé. Qu'il est éloigné de la « doctrine » de l'auteur du *Jardin sous la pluie* qu'il revendique comme son maître!

Ce n'est que le jour où notre jeunesse française sera imprégnée des principes traditionnels de son art ancestral que non seulement elle puisera son inspiration dans ces enseignements profitables, mais qu'elle sera assez forte pour éviter de trébucher dans le piège pseudo-wagnérien qu'on lui tend. Et un jour, ce sera elle qui convaincra l'Allemagne de son erreur, car elle aura des connaissances réelles, loyales, certaines et définitivement acquises à opposer au bourrage de crâne trompeur et nocif dont on sature la jeune Hitlerland. Sous les yeux charmés des Joseph Canteloube, des Paul Le Flem, des Max d'Ollone et autres maîtres restés fidèles serviteurs du génie français, ce serait bientôt ce renouveau de l'art généreux et pur dont l'inspiration se puise dans le celtisme le plus sincère, le plus noble, le plus sentimental, le plus oublié... et que tant de modes différents, voire contraires, peuvent exprimer!

Tous ces projets, dictés par le bon sens et l'amour du pays, sont-ils donc irréalisables? Non : il suffirait que l'Éducation Nationale ordonnât, parallèlement au cours d'Histoire de l'Art (2) des lycées et collèges, un cours obligatoire d'art musical français, reprenant l'exposé historique et analytique de toutes les expressions artistiques de la pensée française en matière musicale.

Un tel avis sera-t-il écouté ou ridiculisé?

Comprendra-t-on qu'il y a un danger et qu'il faut un remède, ou préférera-t-on la plus facile inertie?

Nous le saurons bientôt... En attendant, c'est le moment de répéter le vers du catéchisme républicain :

Espérons dans le doute et... soyons vertueux!

Maurice BOUVIER-AJAM.

(1) Air d'origine viennoise importé en Allemagne vers le ^{xv}^e siècle et devenu chanson populaire.

(2) Il est possible que le Ministre ait eu l'intention de faire rentrer la Musique dans ce cours. En fait, les professeurs (sauf quelques rares exceptions) se contentent d'un cours d'histoire de la peinture, de la sculpture et de l'architecture. De plus, ce cours est, dans certains établissements, facultatif et, par conséquent, assez mal suivi.

NOTRE SUPPLÉMENT MUSICAL

(pour les seuls abonnés à la musique)

Nos abonnés à la musique trouveront, encarté dans ce numéro, *Noël Nouvellet*, de Julien Tiersot, extrait des *Mémoires Populaires des Provinces de France* (10^e série).

C2 : Henry Malherbe, 'La Leçon de Wagner.' *L'Intransigeant*, 28 March 1933, 1, 3.

LA LEÇON DE WAGNER

Qui écoute encore les derniers enseignements du maître ?

Le malheur du temps ne vient-il pas du mépris qu'on affiche pour l'art et pour l'esprit ?

par HENRY MALHERBE

On vient de commémorer un peu partout dans le monde le cinquantième anniversaire de la mort de Richard Wagner. Dans notre espace ont retenti sans arrêt les atterres symphonies théâtrales du grand musicien défunt. On nous a apporté de nouveaux éclaircissements sur sa vie, son œuvre et sa pensée.

Wagner n'a pas seulement tenu le premier rôle dans son temps par son mâle génie lyrique ; il a aussi voulu mettre en circulation et en honneur des principes réclamés par la sagesse humaine et la civilisation.

Dans les dernières années de son existence tumultueuse, il adopta une attitude qui mérite plus que jamais d'être signalée et comptée.

Au mépris de ses intérêts et de sa gloire, il s'en prit directement à Bismarck. Il déclara que l'esprit de Bach, de Beethoven et de Goethe ne régnait pas l'Allemagne depuis la venue au pouvoir du chancelier de fer.

Précaire victoire que celle de la force ! L'intelligence ne maintient-elle pas, seule, en toute rencontre, la suprématie d'une nation ?

Trois ans avant sa mort, Richard Wagner soutenait ouvertement que l'annexion d'une province importe moins au triomphe définitif d'un peuple que le rayonnement d'une nouvelle œuvre d'art. Le célèbre écrivain anglais Carlyle avait déjà fait connaître que le trésor spirituel laissé par Shakespeare était d'une valeur infiniment plus sûre pour la Grande-Bretagne que tout son empire colonial.

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Puisqu'on s'est évertué à honorer la mémoire de Wagner, voilà le vrai fond de souvenir qu'on en devait particulièrement révéler, en Allemagne plus encore qu'ailleurs.

Car l'esprit de violence — si toutefois ces deux mots ne jurent pas ensemble — s'est de nouveau partout infiltré. Ici et là, on veut ressusciter l'ancien monde écroulé, avec ses fureurs, ses passions et ses préjugés funestes. Les chefs marquants de notre univers ne se donnent faveur et popularité qu'en agitant avec des témérités tranchantes et des forfanteries injurieuses le spectre de la guerre civile ou étrangère.

Les projets, les déclamations humanitaires des hommes d'Etat réunis à Genève ne sauraient plus nous délivrer de nos appréhensions. Le spectacle harcelant et brutal que nous avons sous les yeux nous ferait croire que le Conseil de la Société des Nations siège à je ne sais quelles hauteurs inaccessibles, parmi les nuages.

Les intellectuels et les artistes unaniment encore de nobles pensées humaines sont rejetés à l'ombre, persécutés, voués au mépris, bannis. L'écrivain Heinrich Mann et deux de ses confrères, renommés pour leur foi au libéralisme, sont obligés à donner leurs démissions de membres de l'Académie de Berlin. Le fameux savant Einstein erre dans l'exil. Des professeurs allemands de l'Ecole des Beaux-Arts sont chassés de leurs chaires. La police hitlérienne fait des perquisitions chez les gens de lettres, vole ou détruit leurs manuscrits. Comment évaluer ce que le trésor de l'esprit humain perd dans l'inqualifiable aventure ? Peut-être que dans ces écrits disparus se trouvent des réformes et des pensées essentielles pour la marche en avant de toute notre civilisation...

Faut-il citer d'autres pays où l'on traque les penseurs indépendants, où l'intelligence est devenue proprement l'ennemie ?

→ Voir la suite en 3^e page, 5^e colonne

AU FIL DES HEURES

La France et les Trois

M. Paul-Boncour a prononcé hier un discours prudent, où il s'est efforcé de rassurer la Pologne et la Petite-Entente sans cependant opposer un refus formel à M. Mussolini et à M. Mac Donald. Il est possible néanmoins, si l'on ne néglige pas certains détours de phrases, et si l'on se hasarde à lire entre les lignes, de discerner la politique que le gouvernement français se propose de suivre.

Sur le désarmement, qu'a dit notre ministre des Affaires étrangères ? Que nous sommes d'accord sur certains points avec M. Mac Donald, et avec d'autres délégations sur certains points aussi. Que, par conséquent, la sagesse consiste à se borner à enregistrer dans une première convention ces points d'accord. Puis, un organisme permanent de négociation et de contrôle préparera une seconde étape. Ce qui veut dire, à n'en pas douter, qu'il ne s'agit point d'accepter le plan Mac Donald mais seulement d'y puiser quelques généralités acceptables. Quant aux propositions concrètes, elles seront examinées par un comité qui reste à créer, et qui permettra à chacun « de voir enfin clair dans les armements du voisin ».

M. Paul-Boncour estime donc que le problème du désarmement neut

La leçon de Wagner

»→ Suite de la première page

Mais nous-mêmes n'avons-nous rien à nous reprocher ?

Avouons-le, l'œuvre d'art qui vient d'éclorre ne rencontre plus dans le public d'ardeurs agissantes, comme autrefois. On ne crée des réputations universelles qu'aux vedettes industrielles du cinéma et du sport. Dans le domaine qui est purement de l'esprit, quels grands hommes avons-nous fait surgir pour l'admiration des foules ? L'opérette niaise, le film puéril, la chanson diffusée par T.S.F., l'exploit athlétique appellent l'attention générale. Une partie de l'élite s'y laisse peu à peu gagner elle-même.

L'artiste, qu'inspire un idéal généreux, se verra-t-il bientôt forcé de vivre en tremblant dans la solitude et la misère ? Car il lui est de plus en plus malaisé de conserver indépendance et dignité, s'il veut ménager ses propres affaires. Le ressort, le nerf de nos créateurs de beauté non industrialisée se brisent sous les coups de malheurs immérités.

Les découvertes mécaniques ont si bien transformé et rempli notre existence qu'aucune marge n'est plus laissée au rêve, ni à la méditation. Le progrès intellectuel et moral aurait dû accompagner, sinon précéder, le progrès matériel.



Rares sont nos contemporains qui envisagent tout ce que cette situation a de poignant. Félicitons-nous qu'en regard des pays infectés de violence la France continue de rester la patrie de l'esprit, où les hommes libres se réfugient. Arrivera-t-elle à donner au monde ses impulsions tutélaires ? A substituer aux sentiments de haine les sentiments de concorde qu'elle proclame ?

Les meilleurs d'entre nous agitent ces questions avec frémissement et, chaque jour, dans une anxiété grandissante. A considérer l'aveuglement et la dureté de certains chefs de l'étranger, qui ne craint pour l'orientation, voire pour l'existence de la civilisation ?

Osons le dire, comme nous le pensons : sans notre pays, l'humanité présente, malgré toutes les inventions scientifiques, serait à un âge de décadence, à l'une des plus basses époques de son histoire.



L'enseignement de Richard Wagner, dans ses années suprêmes, est-il donc resté lettre morte pour ses compatriotes ? C'est aux jours où l'on évoque de tous côtés sa haute figure que les factieux qui disposent de la destinée de l'Allemagne se montrent les plus réfractaires à ses ultimes leçons. Si le grand artiste se levait de sa tombe, reconnaîtrait-il pour siens ceux que l'on commet maintenant à duper et asservir sa nation ?

HENRY MALHERBE.

C3: Three articles by Guy de Pourtalès:

‘Bayreuth 1933.’ *Marianne*, 23 August 1933, 15.

‘La Saison de Bayreuth (II).’ *Marianne*, 30 August 1933, 15.

‘La Saison de Bayreuth (III).’ *Marianne*, 6 September 1933, 15.

BAYREUTH 1933

On avait mis en garde les Français qui s’aventureraient, durant cet été, à passer la frontière allemande : ils risquaient de gros ennuis : le camp de concentration, la prison, peut-être même la mort. Or, nous sommes ici une bonne troupe d’amateurs de musique, qui n’avons pas craint de venir quand même affronter Fafner à Bayreuth. Nous parlons notre langue en public, nous discutons librement, nous critiquons, nous admirons, nous jugeons et n’en sommes pas moins (jusqu’ici) accueillis partout avec une parfaite courtoisie. Je dois à la vérité de reconnaître que depuis la gare frontière et son douanier en tunique d’autrefois jusqu’au nazi en chemise brune qui nous offre son propagande imprimée et les portraits d’Hitler, chacun se montre envers nous cordial et empressé. L’Allemagne toute entière a du reste comme un sourire de fête. Et Bayreuth plus que toute autre ville. Car c’est l’année Wagner et le wagnérisme (musique, art, philosophie) vient d’être institué religion d’Etat. Le Chancelier en personne a présidé la grande commémoration du 13 février à Leipzig ; il a assisté au premier cycle des Festspiele sur la « colline sacrée », et fort habilement resserré les liens entre la vieille Allemagne impériale et wagnérienne d’une part, et, de l’autre, le troisième Reich, jeune, ardent, pauvre et inculte, qui se suffisait depuis six mois du Horst-Wessel-Lied.

Bayreuth est pavoisé comme aux jours du vieil empereur Guillaume 1er, de Dom Pedro et du roi Louis II, partout flotte le drapeau rouge-blanc-noir, et sur le théâtre des fêtes, une immense croix gammée. Le bleu et le blanc des Wittelsbach a presque totalement disparus. Ainsi que le pittoresque et traditionnel costume vert des promeneurs du dimanche, les chapeaux de feutre avec leur pinceau à barbe et les jeunes filles toute brodées d’edelweiss. Le Reich porte le même costume des bords du Rhin aux montagnes bavaroises : la chemise brune, la casquette de skieur, la culotte sombre, les bottes militaires du S.A. officiel. Et l’on rencontre partout des bataillons de Mädchen-in-Uniform bleu. Aux devantures, les portraits du Führer voisinent avec celui de Wagner, et le Parsifal de l’Allemagne Nouvelle semble avoir détrôné dans toutes les vitrines l’ancien Parsifal aux boucles brunes et au manteau d’hermine, que deux générations de femmes ont rêvé (bien vainement) de séduire.

Mais dans ce vieux pays romantique les princes conservent tout de même leur prestige. L’on dirait presque qu’il va croissant depuis quelques semaines. En tout cas à Bayreuth. Car le Kronprinz et sa très charmante femme, la Kronprinzessin, sont parmi les hôtes de la petite ville en liesse. La foule se presse sur leur passage. Les bras se lèvent pour le salut à la romaine. Les « heil » retentissent. On entend prononcer les noms de Kaiser et de Kaiserin par certains enthousiastes, et, sauf la coupe et la couleur des nouvelles tenues—sauf aussi les cheveux d’argent du prince impérial—le spectacle de la rue est le même qu’il y a 20 ans dans n’importe laquelle de ces petites résidences royales. La grande Allemagne d’autrefois renaît doucement des cendres de la guerre et des ruines des bourgeois. La révolution est faite. Le régime hitlérien s’organise avec le concours d’une immense et brillante jeunesse, qui sera la bourgeoisie de demain. Une aristocratie nouvelle se prépare. L’on sent vibrer dans tout ce peuple une joie énorme, une confiance sportive, inébranlable, nées de l’excès

même de sa misère. Et les dieux de Walhalla entonnent un chœur d'action de grâces en l'honneur de Freia reconquise et de Siegfried triomphant.

Car Siegfried triomphe chaque jour au Festspielhaus devant la foule recueillie. Toscanini n'est pas venu pour « raisons politiques », ni Furtwaengler pour « raisons personnelles ». Mais Elmendorf et Richard Strauss les suppléent et une distribution de premier ordre assurent aux 2,000 spectateurs du *Ring*, des *Maîtres chanteurs* et de *Parsifal* un plaisir presque parfait. (« Presque », car l'on est ici un peu plus que difficile, et l'on exige en tout le meilleur. Je reviendrai là-dessus lorsque le rideau sera tombé pour la dernière fois sur le grand vitrail en bleu mineur de Monsalvad régénéré.)

En attendant il faut accomplir les pèlerinages obligés. Il faut saluer, au cimetière, la tombe franciscaine de Liszt, sous sa petite croix de bois ; celle de Siegfried Wagner, encore fraîche et toute fleurie ; celle du poète Jean-Paul, que recouvre un épais manteau d'oubli en lierre. Puis, dans le jardin de Wahnfried (la maison de Wagner), les tombes jumelles de Richard et de Cosima, devant lesquelles viennent s'incliner, en files silencieuses, les fidèles aux bras chargés de roses.

Dans la maison du maître, où claque la croix gammée, Mme Siegfried Wagner reçoit les personnes de sa connaissance avec une bonne humeur infatigable et fait les honneurs de la galerie des bustes, du salon aux reliques où voisinent, sous vitrine, les sachets de parfum envoyés par Judith Gautier au temps de la naissance de Parsifal, l'encrier du compositeur, des médailles, des douzaines de petits souvenirs anonymes dont l'histoire est perdue. Aux murs les portraits de Schiller, de Goethe, de la comtesse d'Agoult, de Schopenhauer. Sur des chevalets, ceux de Cosima et de Wagner par Lenbach. Il semble que tant d'artistes illustres ont ici leur domicile de famille, qu'ils lient entre eux conversations. Et c'est tout naturellement que notre entretien avec la jeune Mme Wagner s'engage sur le nouvel adepte du maître, dont la protection puissante a rendu à ces lieux paisibles une signification politique qu'un demi-siècle d'art et de musique avait recouverte de silence.

Car le chancelier Hitler doit revenir à Bayreuth. Et Mme Wagner redoute presque son retour, après l'impression si forte de son séjour.

« Ce souvenir, ajoute-t-elle, restera inoubliable. Il aime profondément la musique. C'est un artiste, et d'une extrême sensibilité. Vous savez qu'il est peintre. Il a même songé autrefois à composer pour *Tristan* de nouveaux décors. Mai il fut aussi où il rêve de se vouer à la musique. Et peut-être, si la mission dont il est aujourd'hui chargé par les destin ne l'eût fatalement, et comme mystiquement conduit au gouvernement de l'empire, l'aurions-nous vu venir à nous comme chanteur. »

Alors seulement, en refermant la porte du salon, j'aperçus sur le coin d'une table la photographie du Führer, sa petite moustache, son [regard ?] pensif. Peut-être songe-t-il que le [?] Siegfried allemand ne tonne pas tous les jours, comme Wotan dans le burg des géants mais qu'il [?] dans la forêt en écoutant chanter l'oiseau prophète.

LA SAISON DE BAYREUTH (II)

En cette saison commémorative, Bayreuth offre aux visiteurs une nouveauté d'importance. Déjà, depuis quelques années, un Musée du Souvenir a été installé dans une aile du Palais des Margraves, par les soins de Mlle Wallem, la fidèle secrétaire du biographe Glasenapp. Mais, pour riche qu'il soit en portraits, en lettres, en objets de

toute sorte, ce musée n'avait pu se flatter d'apporter [sic], à la grande histoire wagnérienne—qui est celle d'un demi-siècle d'histoire de l'esthétique—de documents neufs de quelque importance. Jusqu'à la mort de Mme Cosima (1930), fidèle gardienne de la légende officielle du maître, il fallait se contenter de son Autobiographie, des fragments de sa correspondance, des six volumes patentés de Glesenapp [sic ?], des recueils de souvenirs publiés par ceux qui entourèrent Wagner durant les dernières années de sa vie. Mais on savait pourtant que les archives de Wahnfried renfermaient encore une quantité de pièces inédites du plus vif intérêt. Avec l'assentiment de [feu ?] Siegfried Wagner le comte Eckard Du Moulin fut le premier à pouvoir puiser dans ce riche trésor, et ses deux gros volumes sur Mme Cosima ont été le fruit de ses laborieuses recherches. Mme Winifred Wagner vient à son tour de servir magnifiquement la mémoire de son illustre beau-père en autorisant une exposition unique de documents inconnus, exposition aux seuls visiteurs de Bayreuth en 1933.

« Le génie au travail », ainsi s'intitule cette rétrospective, organisée par le Dr Otto Strobel dans une salle du Palais du Gouvernement de la Haute-Franconie. Les quelques 200 pièces réunies là ne sont évidemment qu'une fraction intime de l'énorme production wagnérienne, si l'on songe aux 2,000 pages de poésie écrites de sa main, à ses milliers de lettres, aux 10 volumes de son œuvre en prose et aux 9,000 pages de ses compositions musicales. Mais ces 200 pièces sous vitrine forment le plus vivant commentaire de cette destinée extraordinaire, et elles apportent des renseignements précis sur bien des points de son histoire restés obscurs ou controversés. Elles sont, pour tous les amateurs de musique, une vue profonde et souvent révélatrice sur le travail à la fois tenace et inspiré du maître, sur le mécanisme logique de son développement orchestral, cette sorte « d'engrenage » qui est son caractère essentiel.

Ce qui frappe à première vue, c'est la clarté de la pensée, l'ordre surprenant des idées. Dès sa première jeunesse, Richard Wagner se manifeste par une netteté d'écriture surprenante. Ses copies de l'*Egmont* de Beethoven, sa réduction au piano de la *IXe Symphonie*, faite à l'âge de 17 ans, n'ont pas une faute, pas une bavure. Ses premiers essais de fugue et de contrepoint révèlent une sûreté complète, sûreté qui s'affirme avec ses premières grandes compositions personnelles, dont nous avons sous les yeux l'exemple étonnant dans le manuscrit des *Fées*, au bas duquel on lit le fameux *Finis. Laudetur Deus* du 7. XII. 1833. Puis voici quelques lettres à sa mère, à sa sœur Rosalie, l'esquisse du ballet de *Rienzi* et les manuscrits de Paris en langue française, dont *Les Adieux de Marie Stuart*, par Béranger, transcrits de la main du jeune compositeur, l'*Ouverture pour Faust* et les ébauches du *Vaisseau fantôme*. À quelques années de là, en 1845, nous trouvons la toute première notation de l'idée des *Maîtres chanteurs*, saisie comme au vol par Wagner durant une cure à Marienbad et qu'il ne devait reprendre que 16 ans plus tard. Et, du même moment, le plan de *Lohengrin* dont il fut soudain tellement obsédé qu'il ne put rester dans sa baignoire toute l'heure prescrite par le médecin, se rhabilla et se précipita chez lui afin de le coucher par écrit. Comme ce sera presque toujours le cas dans la suite, on voit Wagner se mettre aussitôt au travail et transcrire coup sur coup : d'abord l'esquisse en prose de l'œuvre en gestation, puis le poème complet, puis l'esquisse orchestral au crayon, puis enfin la partition entière à l'encre et presque sans ratures. Si quelque chose peut donner l'idée de ce qu'on appelle « l'inspiration », ce sont bien ces ébauches crayonnées, fiévreuses, mais déjà si fortement charpentées qu'on y trouve tout le principal de ses ouvrages.

Voici, dès 1848, l'idée-mère de son *Anneau du Nibelung* sous ce titre : « La légende du Nibelung, un mythe », signée et datée : H. W. oct. 48. L'on y voit que l'auteur a tout d'abord développé l'action du *Crépuscule des Dieux* qui semble avoir été à la fois le point de départ et le centre même du drame, alors que les thèmes de *L'Or du Rhin*, de la *Walkyrie* et de *Siegfried* n'y sont compris que comme épisodes. Et c'est peut-être ce qui explique que le *Crépuscule* (primitivement intitulé : La Mort de Siegfried) ait gardé un caractère un peu différent, un peu plus opéra, que les drames musicaux d'une si haute et simple poésie qui en précédèrent la composition musicale.

Malheureusement l'exposition ne contient rien sur l'époque révolutionnaire de 1849, ce qu'il fait regretter ; sans doute n'a-t-on pas jugé à propos de faire entrer le visiteur dans le détail des idées « avancées » que Wagner exprime durant cette partie de sa vie, et qui lui valurent l'exil ... Nous passons aussitôt après à la période zurichoise, riche de ses principales œuvres littéraires (*L'Œuvre d'art de l'avenir*, *Art et Révolution*, *Opéra et Drame*) dont les manuscrits nous sont montrés. Et bientôt (1851) la lettre à Uhlig, datée des bains d'Albisbrunn, en Suisse, où Wagner confie à son ami (an même temps qu'à Liszt) son projet de diviser le *Nibelung* en trois drames et un prologue, ainsi que la première esquisse en prose de *l'Or du Rhin*, suivie par le développement complet du livret d'ensemble.

Mais à côté de ces pièces capitales, auprès desquelles se rangeront tout à l'heure les manuscrits (prose, vers, esquisses musicales et partitions) de la *Walkyrie*, de *Siegfried*, du *Crépuscule* et des *Maîtres chanteurs*, que d'émouvants et humbles témoignages des angoisses, des luttes et des amours du « génie au travail ». C'est vraiment ici qu'on sent battre le cœur d'un homme, qu'on voit vivre et s'organiser sa pensée. Les lettres à sa première femme, Minna Planer, toutes remplies de conseils, d'inquiétudes, d'agacements aussi. Le petit carnet de poche où Wagner note les idées qui lui venaient pour un drame bouddhique, *les Vainqueurs*, dont il n'écrivit jamais que le titre et ces pages éphémères (datées de Zurich, le 16 mai 1856). Le manuscrit du poème de Tristan, copié sur papier rose, et dont les dernières lignes contiennent une correction où l'on touche du doigt ce mystérieux *savoir* du génie. Wagner avait primitivement donné à Isolde ces deux cris, au moment de sa mort : « Zu ertrinken ; zu versinken ». Jugeant sans doute que ces « zu » risquaient de couper le mouvement final, suprême explosion de douleur, il les supprime d'un gros petit trait de plume pour ne laisser que « ertrinken, versinken, unbewusst, höchste Lust », etc. ... suivis de ses initiales : R.W. 18 sept. 1857. C'est le moment même où il écrivit à Mathilde Wesendonck : « J'achevai le poème et t'en apportai le dernier acte. Tu m'étreignis en disant « maintenant je ne souhaite plus rien ». Ce jour-là, à cette heure précise, je suis né de nouveau. » Voici le manuscrit musical du 1er acte, avec la célèbre dédicace à Mme Wesendonck ; et, de la même époque, les ébauches des *Cinq Poèmes*, composés pour elle durant ce même bel été d'amour sur la Colline Verte de Zurich. Au bas de l'admirable *Douleurs* (Schmerzen), Wagner a esquissé plusieurs fins et noté ces mots pour celle qu'il aimait : « Il faut que cela devienne toujours plus beau. »

En 1861, Wagner étant à Paris, il ajouta la Bacchanale que l'on connaît à son *Tannhäuser* sur la demande du directeur de l'Opéra. Nous en voyons ici le brouillon d'orchestre, muni d'indications en français : « Apparition d'Europe ; apparition de Léda et du Cygne ». Puis c'est la première page cette Autobiographie tant discutée, entreprise à la prière de Louis II : quelques feuilles d'un journal intime commencé pour ce royal protecteur et bientôt interrompu par les événements de Munich. Enfin, l'entrée de Cosima dans la vie du compositeur exilé pour la seconde fois et dont nous repérons, dès lors, partout, la présence apaisante. La mort subite de Minna (janvier

1866) signale pour ainsi dire le commencement officiel de leur liaison par une dépêche de Mme de Bülow à Wagner, alors de passage à Marseille : « Mon âme t'enveloppe dans cette heure grave. Si possible envoie nouvelles. Cosima. » Il devait, quelques semaines plus tard, se remettre aux *Maîtres chanteurs*, dont le 1er acte fut terminé à Genève le 17 mars 1866, peu de jours avant l'installation des deux amants à Tribtschen.

J'ai raconté ici même que la ville de Lucerne venait d'acheter cet ermitage illustre où Wagner composa une grande partie de la Tétralogie et ses *Maîtres* presque en entier. On y devrait déposer[?] certaines de ces pages précieuses, nées en ces lieux, et dont l'une des plus fameuses est la scène de pugilat entre les bourgeois de Nuremberg, à la fin du IIe acte. Elle est datée du 6 sept. 68, soir 11 heures, et Wagner y ajouta de sa main : « Bonne nuit, Cosima. » C'est ainsi qu'il aimait à converser encore avec celle qui dormait dans la pièce voisine et dont il sépara le moins possible sa pensée au cours des vingt dernières années de sa vie. On peut dire que Mathilde Wesendonck fut la femme de son cœur, et Cosima Liszt celle de son esprit.

Enfin, témoin émouvant des suprêmes moments de Wagner : le carnet de poche où Cosima notait en quelques mots, pour son journal, les faits de chaque journée. Il est ouvert à la page qu'elle écrivit à Venise le 12 février 1883, veille de la mort, « Richard très drôle. Plaisanterie. Donne du chocolat à E. ... Parie longuement et très tard dans sa chambre. » Sur le feuillet voisin, le peintre Joukowsky, alors en séjour à Venise, a dessiné la tête du maître lisant, car, ce soir-là encore, Wagner fit une lecture à haute voix. Ce grand laborieux est mort à la tâche, puisque le lendemain il travailla toute la matinée à son essai sur « Le féminin dans l'homme » dont voici les deux seules pages, crayonnées, raturées, et qui se terminent par ces mots : « Amour ... tragique ... », les derniers tracés de sa main. Ils résument de manière saisissante cette existence tourmentée et combative, mais extraordinairement *accomplie*, réalisée.

Car il est assurément peu d'artistes qui aient laissé un exemple aussi riche des possibilités, des déficiences et des grandeurs de l'homme. Peu dont la vie offre une matière plus diverse à l'étude. A qui donc élèverait-on aujourd'hui un Bayreuth ? Quelle œuvre d'art attirerait encore tant de pèlerins passionnés et susciterait tant de controverses ? Où trouverait-on ailleurs des disciples prêts à combattre pour défendre jusqu'aux erreurs et aux faiblesses de leur maître ? On observe dans la politique seulement un tel déchainement de passions. Et il nous faut constater que c'est la politique et le « racisme » de Wagner qui modèlent les wagnériens nouveau style bien plus que sa musique. Autrefois religion musicale, le wagnérisme est devenu à présent religion d'Etat. La vérité n'a que faire où parlent si haut les sentiments. Le nationalisme exalté de l'Allemagne nouvelle répudie Goethe et Nietzsche, ces deux maîtres de la liberté spirituelle. Elle veut même ignorer de Wagner l'âme sceptique et trouble, jusqu'au bout incertaine, inquiète, et à la recherche d'un dieu impassible, pour n'écouter que l'ardent prophète d'un futur qu'elle croit incarner. Elle méconnaît ainsi la pensée la plus haute, la plus « artiste » de Wagner. Mais c'est de foi et d'enthousiasme qu'elle se nourrit. Pour elle, la liberté n'est qu'un mythe déchu. Dans l'œuvre wagnérienne, elle ne voit plus qu'une « régénération par le peuple », dont le Chancelier-du-Peuple, Adolf Hitler, est l'immaculé Parsifal.

(A suivre)

LA SAISON DE BAYREUTH (III)

Quittons maintenant Bayreuth-Ville, ses musées, ses expositions, son Schlöss du XVIIIe, son Vieil Opéra rococo, ses magasins où voisinent les [chopes?] et les lasses-wagner, les « sabres-Notung », les « épées-Parsifal », et les croix gammées en or, en émail ou en celluloïd, pour monter jusqu'au Festspielhaus. De 3 h. ½ à 4 heures, le flot d'autos escalade l'Acropole wagnérienne entre deux haies de curieux et de gendarmes. Devant le Théâtre des Fêtes, les voitures se vident rapidement. Et le prologue du spectacle se déroule sur les terrasses de l'arène en brique rouge, où la foule se repaît longuement du spectacle des toilettes féminines, des messieurs en smoking. Puis c'est une presse déferente pour voir la Kronprinzessin descendre de sa limousine. Les bras se lèvent pour un « heil » respectueux, et l'héritière impériale, souriante, va prendre place démocratiquement au premier rang de l'amphithéâtre. Mais soudain, la poussée devient plus forte, les « heil, heil », redoublent ; c'est le capitaine Roehm, chef d'état-major général de l'armée nazi, au visage couturé aux cicatrices, qui vient d'arriver. Il s'arrête longuement et avec complaisance devant les photographes. Puis, une ruée générale, une immense clameur : « Goering ! Heil ! Heil ! Heil ! » Un homme massif, en chemise brune, au faux profil mussolinien, descend d'une torpédo bourrée d'officiers dans la nouvelle tenue. Et le duumvir du IIIe Reich salue lentement, gravement, avant de monter à la loge royale de Louis II, où il s'installe dans le fauteuil central. On sait maintenant que Hitler ne viendra pas. Une auto de sa suite ayant eu un accident, le Führer est resté au chevet de son aide de camp blessé. La foule envahit alors les gradins du théâtre, l'obscurité se fait, une minute d'absolu silence, et le rideau se lève.

Une des innovations du Festspielhaus, cette année, c'est les nouveaux décors. M. Heinz Tietjen, intendant général des Théâtres d'Etat de Berlin, a pris en mains la régie de Bayreuth. Et M. Tietjen, comme ses amis Hitler et Goering, c'est la révolution. Révolution accueillie avec enthousiasme par les jeunes, pour qui est suspect tout ce qui ne sent pas son 1933. Révolution âprement discutée par les vieux Bayreuthiens, qui demandent qu'on ne s'écarte pas de la tradition. Or, la question se pose ici plus directement que partout ailleurs : Wagner-1933 doit-il être la même que Wagner-1883 ? Si sa musique, évidemment ne peut être modernisée, ne faut-il pas rajeunir et simplifier son décor ? Et puisqu'on utilise la technique la plus récente pour créer une certaine atmosphère de la légende indispensable à l'ambiance générale du poème de l'*Anneau*, puisqu'on fait mouvoir des nuages, puisqu'on agite les flots du Rhin, et qu'on y balance des sirènes au milieu des vagues, cela ne suffit-il pas à l'illusion ? Et ne sied-il pas de remiser au Musée Wagner tous les vieux accessoires qui donnent à la Tétralogie son aspect puéril : la lourde ferblanterie des dieux, les amazones qui sillonnent le ciel de la Walkyrie, les Fafner vomissant le vapeur du chauffage central, le heaume enchanté qui ne rend que trop visibles les trucs d'Alberich ? M. Tietjen a adopté un moyen terne qui ne paraît pas toujours heureux ni rationnel. Il a supprimé en partie les flammes de Loge, toutes les cavales célestes, le crapaud de Nibelheim, le bûcher final de Brunhilde, qui étaient pourtant nécessaires au sens du mythe. Mais il nous a laissé à la fois un Fafner à la fois monstrueux et bouffon, dont on comprend que l'œil crocodilesque et la petite voix creuse n'aient guère fait peur à Siegfried. Il a rayé Grane de la distribution de la *Walkyrie*, mais il a multiplié par 2 ou par 3 les dimensions du Saint-Esprit dans *Parsifal*. Il a enlevé aux dieux leur cuirasses pour les vêtir de tuniques romaines, et les déesses de robe du soir. Il a stylisé le rocher de Brunhilde, foudroyé le vieux [?] du monde et remplacé le fil des Nornes par un câble de transatlantique. Il a ramené aux dimensions d'un jardin de curé la forêt lunaire où

s'engouffraient jadis Sigmund et Sieglinde. Mais, en revanche, il a développé de façon magistrale le sentier en pente par où la troupe des chasseurs emporte le cadavre de Siegfried. En deux mots : il a librement interprété les indications de Wagner, modernisé la mise en scène historique, abandonné les vieux décors de Hoffmann, Brückner, Joukowsky et les costumes classiques de Hans Thoms pour les substituer les fantaisies du peintre munichois Doktor Emil Preetorius, « rénovateur de la présentation scénique de 1933 ».

Ce bouleversement a une importance qu'on ne saurait méconnaître. Car enfin, si Paris, Londres et New-York, et même Munich et Berlin ont le droit de monter Wagner avec une certaine liberté, on attend de Bayreuth qu'il demeure strictement fidèle aux intentions du maître. Le Festspielhaus fut fondé dans le seul dessein de fournir un modèle-standard des volontés de Richard Wagner. Et l'on sait avec quel soin celui-ci s'est occupé du détail de son œuvre, tant pour la musique que pour l'interprétation dramatique, la mise en scène, les costumes et la machinerie. On ne devrait jamais toucher ici aux indications précises de l'auteur. Mme Cosima ne l'eût point permis. Et qu'importe après tout si la figuration du *Ring* est désuète ! On ne songe plus guère à sourire de toute cette féerie mythologique qui n'est, après tout, qu'une convention comme tant d'autres. L'essentiel n'est pas de croire aux réalités physiques du monde des dieux, mais de s'abandonner aux sublimes beautés de cette transposition musicale des sentiments de l'homme. Shakespeare aussi a fait paraître Juno, Cérès, Iris, Obéron, Titania sur la scène, et la poésie n'y a rien perdu. Le nouveau réalisme bayreuthien ne nous a pas rapproché de la vérité terrestre en supprimant quelques visions d'artiste et en noyant dans une obscurité trop constante les habitants du Walhall. Car l'obscurité du plateau semble avoir été l'un des dogmes de la régie de 1933. Et nous l'avons sans cesse regretté, parce que le drame y a perdu en émotion et en subtilité. Tout cela sent son Max Rienhardt, moins le génie. Et c'est du génie qu'il faudrait pour « rénover » Wagner.

Heureusement la musique, elle, ne se rénove pas ; et le 1er acte de la *Walkyrie*, le 2e de *Siegfried*, le 3e du *Crépuscule* ainsi que les *Maîtres chanteurs* tout entier demeurent des sommets inégalables de l'art lyrique.

Karl Elmendorff a conduit la *Tétralogie* avec sa fermeté coutumière, dans un mouvement que d'aucuns jugèrent trop rapide ; que pour ma part, au contraire, je trouvais parfois un peu trainant. Mme Leider y fut par endroits admirable, bien que la fatigue ne lui ait pas permis de terminer le *Crépuscule* avec toute la puissance et l'élan que lui donna naguère l'incomparable tragédienne Mme Larsen-Todsen. Et si je n'ai pas su apprécier toujours la voix rondouillette de M. Lorenz dans le rôle de Siegfried, ni moins encore le Wotan complètement immobile de M. Prohaska (combien l'on regrette l'absence de Schorr !), en revanche, Mme Maria Muller fut une Sieglinde exquise de finesse, de grâce, de pureté naïve. Mme Onegin demeura merveilleuse dans tous les rôles dont elle s'était chargée (Fricka, la 1er Norne, Waltraute). On n'entendit peut-être jamais de plus belle Erda que Mme Enid Szantho, et M. List nous révéla un Fafner et un Hagen du plus grand style.

Les *Maîtres chanteurs de Nuremberg*, remis à neuf aussi, avec un luxe de choristes et un développement scénique presque exagéré (600 personnes en scène au dernier tableau), restent à mon goût le chef-d'œuvre de Wagner. Comme le disait Hans de Bülow en 1868, les *Maîtres* vivront tant que vivra la langue allemande. Pièce d'un bout à l'autre équilibrée et constamment heureuse en trouvailles vocales et orchestrales, elle fut conduite par M. Tietjen, que personne ne s'attendait à savoir au

pupitre. Mais cet intendant général se tira de sa tâche sans accroc, et M. Prohaska, dans Hans Sachs, se montra nettement plus à son aise que dans le rôle de Wotan.

Disons enfin que les chœurs et tous les rôles secondaires, d'un bout à l'autre du cycle, durent tenus avec cette finesse nuancée, cette perfection, ce « fondu dans l'ensemble » qui placent Bayreuth au-dessus de tous les théâtres wagnériens et contribuent à maintenir ici une atmosphère de dévotion à l'œuvre, d'étude, de sérieux, dont les profanes mêmes découvrent le bénéfice. Ajoutons aussi que Mlle Marcelle Bunlet, unique cantatrice française de Bayreuth, remplit ses rôles de Walkyrie et de 1er Fille-Fleur en artiste généreuse et qui sait faire passer le « service » du maître avant l'intérêt personnel. Pour la curiosité du fait, il faut mentionner que dans le Trio des Filles du Rhin, Mlle Bunlet était entourée d'une Anglaise et d'une Danoise, symbolisant à elles trois cette Société des Nations de l'Art dont Wagner rêve aux jours laborieux et difficiles et la gloire ne lui avait point encore été dispensé.

C'était un quart de siècle avant *Parsifal*. Ce succès monstre ! Cette trop sublime « spécialité » de Bayreuth ! On voudrait pouvoir aimer comme tout le reste cette apothéose du génie blessé et agonisant. Mais je ne sais quelle pudeur vous retient et vous gêne devant ce suprême lever de rideau sur le sang, le péché et la rédemption de l'homme. Un tel spectacle est déjà ébauché dans *Tannhäuser*, je le sais et peut-être n'y a-t-il rien de plus logique qu'une route partant de la Rome des Papes pour aboutir à Monsalvat, cathédrale intérieure de l'âme. Mais on ne la parcourt pas entièrement, cette route, on ne s'y sent pas poussé par la foi qui transporte. Et pourtant Wagner a-t-il jamais écrit musique plus belle que celle de l'*Enchanteur du Vendredi Saint* ? Ou celle qui accompagne le voyage du chaste pèlerin vers la haute nef de Tituel ?

Il a rêvé d'être un saint. Le saint lui apparaissait seul comme divin dans l'univers. Mais devenir un saint, n'était-ce point renoncer à être artiste ? Devant ce dilemme, Wagner s'effraya. Le sens même de sa vie lui parut compromis s'il choisissait le sacrifice. Il opta donc pour l'art. Et l'art resta sa manière d'aimer, de prier, de faire son salut. Toutefois *Parsifal* en demeure imprégné de nostalgie, et comme frappé d'une sorte d'impuissance tragique. Car dans son temple n'habite aucun dieu. L'autel du Graal est dédié à la seule souffrance de l'homme. L'amour qu'ici l'on révère est l'amour de Tristan, et Amfortas n'est autre que l'amant d'Isolde [enchanteant?] sa blessure jusque sur le seuil de la mort.

Ainsi Wagner est resté fidèle malgré lui à son caractère. Il a entendu l'appel de Zarathoustra : deviens ce que tu es – ce que tu fus – ce que tu ne saurais t'empêcher d'être. La leçon de Bayreuth est que l'art n'est pas seulement, comme le voulait Goethe, un moyen de réconciliation entre les peuples, mais encore une réconciliation de chacun de nous avec soi-même.

C4 : Werner Heimsersdorf. 'Richard Wagner et la France.' *Revue d'Allemagne et des pays de langue allemande* 7, no. 68 (15 June 1933): 505–11.

RICHARD WAGNER ET LA FRANCE (1)

Le monde attend depuis longtemps la publication de l'autobiographie de Wagner. Elle commence, dit-on, par les mots suivants : « *Je suis le fils de Louis Geyer.* » Il existe douze exemplaires de cette biographie; aucun de leurs propriétaires n'a confirmé jusqu'à ce jour cette remarque. Mais, chose essentielle, ils ne l'ont pas davantage réfutée, et Bayreuth non plus, bien que des indices biographiques de Wagner rendent la chose encore plus vraisemblable. Le 8 mars Guy de Pourtalès écrivait dans « le Temps » : « La question, accessoire en soi, n'a d'importance que pour la minutie d'un biographe. » Guy de Pourtalès est un biographe wagnérien français qui s'est présenté dans notre cercle comme un apologiste du maître allemand (1).

La phrase de Guy de Pourtalès éclaire d'une vive lumière la position de Wagner en France et en Allemagne. Un mythe qui s'élabore actuellement autour du Maître de Bayreuth s'effondrerait, si l'on savait de façon irréfutable qu'il était le propre fils de Louis Geyer. Car la vie musicale en Allemagne se trouverait heureusement purifiée, — elle en a fort besoin — si Wagner ne pouvait plus servir à des fins politiques.

Rien d'étonnant que les Allemands reprennent aujourd'hui les écrits de Nietzsche : *le cas Wagner*, et *Nietzsche contre Wagner*. Tous deux redeviennent actuels, car il y a

(1) Voir à ce sujet *Le Temps* du 17 et du 24 mai, feuilleton de M. H. Malherbe. (N. de la R.).

un nouveau cas Wagner. Je relis les vieilles lignes familières des *Intempestives* où Nietzsche analysait, célébrait Wagner, et le présentait au peuple allemand comme « interprète et glorificateur d'un passé ». On veut les faire servir aujourd'hui à des fins politiques. N'importe quelle revue national-socialiste — hélas ! comment s'empêcher de parler politique ! — réimprimerait *Richard Wagner à Bayreuth*.

Lorsque Nietzsche voit la « Treue », astre éblouissant planant au-dessus de Wagner, cela donne au sénateur Evola un prétexte pour prôner une communauté culturelle italo-allemande. Ce Romain qui tient à flatter la nouvelle Allemagne, reconnaît une tradition allemande allant du roi Mark jusqu'à Bismarck : « Si « Treue » était déjà un terme typique des antiques communautés allemandes, la « fides » était, elle aussi, une des divinités romaines les plus anciennes et les plus originales. »

Etrange orgueil démagogique d'après lequel il n'y aurait de fidélité qu'en Allemagne et en Italie ! Et pourquoi n'accorder de vertus morales qu'à une seule nation, et bien pis, juger d'après elles l'œuvre musicale de toute une vie ?

Les *Intempestives* fournirent à la jeunesse allemande de 1900 la justification dialectique qu'il lui fallait pour son culte de Wagner. Nietzsche lui fit reconnaître en *Tristan* l'incarnation de la philosophie de Schopenhauer. *Tristan* était le véritable « opus métaphysicum », avec sa « nostalgie insatiable, incomparablement douce, des mystères de la Mort et de la Nuit » — ce mélange couleur d'or clair, tout pénétré de simplicité et d'amour, de pensée contemplative et de malice ; liqueur délicieuse que Wagner a versée à tous ceux qui ont profondément souffert dans la vie ».

— « *Tristan* ? Un jeu sacré qui vous rend mûr pour sacrifier à la justice et à l'amour et combattre pour eux ».

Les *Intempestives* traitent peu de la pure musique. C'est par les voies de la philosophie que Nietzsche conduit la jeunesse vers Wagner. A la fin seulement il écrit quelques pages à propos de Wagner musicien, et celles-là même sont imprégnées d'idées générales.

· Peut-être avions-nous tort de fonder d'abord sur la philosophie notre amour pour Wagner, et ensuite seulement sur la musique. En tout cas il est mille fois plus discutable encore de se déclarer wagnérien pour des raisons politiques, uniquement parce qu'il a mis en musique de vieilles légendes germaniques et s'est laissé aller à un pathos évocateur du cliquetis des armures moyennageuses. En vérité, nous avons été à Wagner pour des raisons cent fois plus spirituelles et plus nobles.

Le Nietzsche de 1875-1876 nous avait convertis à lui. Le Nietzsche de 1888, adversaire de Wagner, nous ne le suivions plus. Bien plus, quelque chose nous liait au mysticisme chrétien, et le cas Wagner nous attachait encore bien plus étroitement au poète dramatique et à l'enchanteur musical.

Nous n'admettons pas ce cas Wagner. Or, il y en a aujourd'hui un autre en Allemagne, et bien plus dangereux. Ce sont les rhéteurs politiques qui l'ont suscité en jetant les thèmes de ses drames musicaux dans les luttes politiques de chaque jour. Cette exploitation de Wagner qui remonte à Henry Thode, homme dépourvu d'esprit critique et à l'anglais Houston Steward Chamberlain, est en contradiction avec le fondement moral de toute son œuvre. Elle nie les origines philosophiques de son inspiration, et ne projette sur l'écran de l'actualité qu'une caricature de Wagner. Et si l'on veut nous forcer aujourd'hui à reconnaître dans le prélude du *Crépuscule des Dieux* des parallèles à certaines emphases rhétoriques, si l'on veut empoisonner notre esprit par des analogies de ce genre, alors nous nous détournerons avec honte et indignation d'un tel culte wagnérien. — Difficile non est scribere satiram. — Et nous nous réfugierons vers un art moins démesuré, vers une musique plus légère, plus ailée qui, ayant surmonté la matière et dissous en pure mélodie le pathos philosophique, nous accueille d'un souffle divin et harmonieux, au lieu de nous agiter violemment par des passions faciles. Le nouveau cas Wagner nous réveille. Elançons-nous hors de cette atmosphère de simoun, vers Mozart, vers Haendel, vers Bach.



Les Français n'ont jamais connu Wagner comme un « cas ». Wotan n'est pas pour eux un héros de parti, ni Siegfried un héros national. Ils n'ont jamais eu de commentateurs pour faire des drames musicaux wagnériens des épopées nationales et mettre sur le même rang les fracas de l'orchestre et le pathos de discours politiques. Ils n'ont pas eu l'occasion d'écouter d'abord pour « moraliser » ensuite. Ils ont senti Wagner hors de toute sentimentalité nationale, à un certain point de vue; par delà le culte de Wotan, de loin, pour ainsi dire, c'est-à-dire en purs musiciens et en philosophes. C'est pourquoi, en France, Wagner n'a pas eu d'influence matérielle, terreur, oppression et excitation à la violence. Bien au contraire il agit en profondeur, il mène vers une heureuse sérénité, en philosophie aussi bien qu'en musique. Qui a assisté à une représentation de Wagner en France sait combien les musiciens et chanteurs y essaient toujours de l'immatérialiser et de lui donner une apparence plus légère et plus sérieuse.

On savait déjà que l'influence de Wagner était forte en France, qu'elle allait en étendue et en profondeur. Mais on a pu s'en rendre compte précisément grâce au livre de Kurt Jäckel, le jeune romanisant de Breslau. K. Jäckel a publié chez Priebart, à Breslau, dans la collection romaniste dirigée par Fritz Neubert, un ouvrage de 600 pages, en 2 tomes, sous le titre *Richard Wagner dans la littérature française*. Le nom de Wagner y apparaît à la fois comme un symbole dans la lutte contre le positivisme et un appel jeté par l'école symboliste.

L'œuvre d'art synthétique dans laquelle la peinture, la poésie et la musique paraissaient inséparables, est une conception du XVII^e siècle, comme l'écrivait alors Luigi Rossi. Ses champions étaient *le Tasse* pour l'Italie, *Ronsard* pour la France. Cette vieille idée romaine, Richard Wagner l'a

reprise devant les fresques des Carrachi, dans la galerie du Palais Farnèse, et transposée dans notre temps. Il expliquait, Jäckel le fait ressortir particulièrement, que « la doctrine wagnérienne de l'œuvre synthétique est plus que toute autre propre à réunir sous la direction du Maître, tous les « gens d'esprit » (ces derniers mots en français dans le texte) qui étaient excédés depuis longtemps par les errements de l'Opéra ». Et Baudelaire qui exerça une influence décisive sur le lyrisme français, a compris le premier et le plus profondément, ce que Wagner lui-même entendait par « la transfusion de la raison dans le sentiment ». Dès que son action se fit sentir sur la France, elle se marque non seulement dans la musique, mais aussi dans la poésie et le drame. Ce sont Gérard de Nerval, Prosper Mérimée, Edouard Schuré et Théophile Gautier qui s'inspirent en même temps de la poésie et de la rhétorique wagnérienne. Quoique les textes de Wagner ne dussent pas être lus comme des poèmes en soi, indépendants de la musique, — Nietzsche avait beau insister là-dessus, — c'est pourtant son art de manier la langue qui frappa les Français. C'est à l'influence du Maître allemand qu'il faut attribuer certaines formes de pittoresque, de nuances verbales, d'allitérations fréquentes qui apparurent alors dans la poésie française. En 1876, Wagner était déjà si connu en France, on le discutait de tant de côtés, que « Wagner à Bayreuth », une des considérations inactuelles de Nietzsche, fut traduit dès 1877 et approfondit de façon décisive l'influence de Wagner sur la France. Jäckel a établi une liste soigneuse, étendue et probante, d'après laquelle presque tous les poètes et écrivains de valeur ont passé par une période wagnérienne : de Théodore de Banville et Verlaine jusqu'à Mallarmé et Verhaeren, de Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, Théodore de Wyzewa et Zola jusqu'à Péladan, Marcel Proust et Romain Rolland. Ajoutons qu'une tendance un peu pédantesque le poussant à être absolument complet, Jäckel a même relevé quantité de noms un peu accessoires dans l'ensemble de l'histoire littéraire.

Ce qui est le plus intéressant, c'est l'attitude de Barrès en

face de Wagner. Dès sa jeunesse il subit sa domination si complètement, qu'il ne s'en débarrassera plus de toute sa vie. Ce n'est que plus tard que des raisons politiques obligèrent le nationaliste qu'il était devenu à se mettre sur la défensive.

« Il est clair, écrit-il dans le *Correspondant* du 25 septembre 1915, que certains ouvriers français, en adoptant le marxisme, certains amateurs, en se livrant aux rêves wagnériens, d'autres curieux, en applaudissant les délires de Nietzsche, ont trahi la cause de la France. » Ce disant, il est naturellement obligé de se donner l'air de n'avoir jamais accordé la moindre importance à Wagner. En bref on a l'impression que désormais Richard Wagner n'est définitivement plus rien pour lui. Mais on est frappé par une chose : c'est que même alors il ne se contente pas de refuser une fois pour toute son adhésion à Wagner ; au contraire il y revient tantôt ouvertement, tantôt en des allusions plus ou moins cachées. Une seule explication s'impose : c'est que des raisons nationales le forcent à combattre Wagner en France. Quant à lui-même, il n'arrive pas à s'en dégager, ainsi qu'il l'a un jour avoué sans détour dans les « Amitiés Françaises (1) ».

Pendant la guerre, Barrès a combattu de façon acharnée Wagner. Se joignant à Frédéric Masson et à Camille Saint-Saëns, il voyait en lui l'avant-coureur du militarisme impérial, le fracas de tonnerre de sa musique lui rappelait le rythme bruyant de musiques militaires allemandes. Maurice Donnay les secondait, voyait en Wagner : « Le symbole musical du despotisme et de l'impérialisme. » Mais Paul Souday, dans *le Temps*, et Jean Marnold, dans *le Mercure de France*, s'opposent aux accès de colère de ces Français de marque. En 1920, la série d'articles de Marnold a paru sous le titre d'ensemble : « Le cas Wagner ». De nombreux jugements défavorables à Wagner, de 1876 jusqu'à la guerre, se trouvent rassemblées dans ce livre. Cette collection contenant du reste pour la majeure partie l'opinion de journa-

(1) Kurt Jäckel *Wagner en France*, p. 105.

listes peu connus, est intéressante parce qu'elle nous montre que la musique wagnérienne s'est trouvée mêlée aux ambitions de la politique allemande. Or, si l'Allemagne elle-même ramène cette musique sur le terrain des luttes politiques, comme représentative d'un parti, il est fort à craindre qu'il ne se reproduise un cas Wagner, dont les effets sur la vie intellectuelle internationale seraient bien plus funestes qu'aucune des luttes précédentes autour de Wagner. Les polémistes français feraient alors resservir — et cette fois à meilleur droit, — les bas arguments politiques tirés du « cas Wagner ». Et aucun Marnold ne pourra plus nous venir en aide. Et cela se produirait au moment précis où l'Angleterre, la France et l'Italie, ayant oublié les batailles nationales du temps de guerre, autour de Wagner, lui consacrent des festivals et l'honorent par des représentations toutes animées du plus pur esprit de la musique. Il se peut que l'on veuille définitivement liquider le cas Wagner. Mais alors tous les bons musiciens se détourneront de lui pour se réfugier auprès de Bach, Beethoven et Brahms. Ces « trois grands B » n'ayant pas laissé de journaux intimes, de discussions philosophiques sur leur art, ni d'autres récits littéraires, leur permettront de s'adonner à une musique située hors des atteintes de la politique.

Comprendra-t-on maintenant l'appel que nous adressons aux propriétaires de l'autobiographie de Wagner, afin qu'ils déclarent : « La phrase : Je suis le fils de Louis Geyer, est l'expression de la vérité. » Une telle déclaration arracherait d'un seul coup aux funestes querelles de la politique, pour le replacer dans la plus pure sphère de l'art, notre grand maître allemand qui appartient à la nation tout entière.

WERNER HEIMERSDORF.

C5: J.-L. Gaston Pastre. 'Bayreuth sous Hitler'. *La Revue hebdomadaire* 35 (1933): 72-9.



BAYREUTH SOUS HITLER

Des ondulations larges, parfois abruptes, d'amples prairies coupées d'arbres fruitiers et de céréales ; sur les sommets de noires et profondes forêts, descendant parfois jusqu'aux ruisseaux retentissants ; vers le sud, les eaux vont au Danube, vers le nord, au Main. C'est la Franconie. Des villages pimpants et élégants, des maisons avenantes, quelques-unes polychromes, aux murs et volets peints de frais. Tous les balcons sont fleuris. Au loin, des groupes de jeunes gens se livrent à des exercices sportifs, qui ressemblent fort à du service en campagne. Sur les routes bien entretenues, moins larges que les nôtres, défilent les sections nazistes dans un ordre impeccable sous la forêt des drapeaux rouges à croix gammée ; plus loin les enseignes carrées des légions romaines, surmontées d'un aigle d'or, claquent au vent.

Dans les bourgades, comme dans les vastes villes aux maisons cloisonnées, sous les hauts pignons gothiques, les brasseries sont prises d'assaut ; les gens sont bien vêtus ; rien de minable, rien d'étique, les Allemagnes (vues de l'extérieur) donnent une impression frappante de prospérité, voire de richesse plantureuse... Une vaste kermesse dans une paix sentimentale et ménagère ; la Germanie est le pays de toutes les contradictions et des amples contrastes.

Des Allemands m'affirment que dans les villes stricte-

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ment industrielles, la misère est terrible... Nous verrons.

Voici onze mois que je n'avais couru l'Allemagne ; en une année bien des choses ont pu changer.

Bayreuth, que traversa Napoléon dans sa fameuse marche stratégique qui le conduisit à Iéna, une petite ville de 30 à 40 000 habitants, assez industrielle, déshonorée par de hautes cheminées d'usines, paisible, riante parmi les jardins fleuris, ceinte de fraîches forêts.

L'an de grâce 1933, « l'année de Wagner », comme on dit en Germanie, rassemble, sur la « Sainte Colline », ces pèlerins venus des quatre coins du monde. Wagner, dramaturge, musicien, poète et philosophe, répand toujours sur l'univers une fièvre admirative que les années semblent attiser encore. Cinquante ans ont passé sur la tombe du maître, et l'œuvre prodigieuse du poète-musicien se dresse sans une ride, dans une telle pureté de style, dans une telle harmonie de proportions qu'on ne peut concevoir ni imaginer œuvre humaine plus haute, d'une aussi vivante, frémissante et noble splendeur.

Le théâtre idéal que Wagner rêva, voulut et construisit, va connaître une fois de plus la gloire de représentations incomparables, écoutées dans le respect et la ferveur, encore que le festival ait comporté quelques erreurs légères.

Bayreuth est pavoisée en l'honneur du chancelier : une profusion d'oriflammes écartelés de croix gammées, les portraits du *Führer* voisinent avec les innombrables effigies de Wagner, la nouvelle Allemagne étale naïvement devant ses hôtes son audace et ses espoirs. Bayreuth est présentement un poste d'observation de choix.

Dans l'immense théâtre, dans la non moins vaste salle de restaurant où les tables sont prises d'assaut pendant les interminables entr'actes, on se montre le roi d'Espagne, le roi Ferdinand de Bulgarie, la princesse de Savoie, les ambassadeurs de France et d'Italie, le prince Auguste de Hohenzollern, les princes de la maison de

Bavière ; parmi le menu fretin des auditeurs émergent quelques personnalités de choix.

De nombreux uniformes. L'Allemagne militaire et féodale ne tardera sans doute point à renaître de ses cendres. Ces officiers qui écoutent les bavardages sublimes, héroïques et philosophiques du « Ring », portent d'élégants uniformes, neufs et bien coupés, qui tranchent parmi les smokings et les robes basses, lesquelles voisinent avec les vêtements de sport... Que de contrastes dans la lumière ou dans le silence ! Parmi les jardins aux larges allées, de magnifiques voitures. A côté des riches agrariens, on se montre les puissants industriels ; ils sont tous là, sauf les Israélites qui n'ont plus dans le temple de Wagner que quelques sièges...

Un peloton d'infanterie, baïonnette au canon, rend les honneurs au dictateur, acclamé, chaque fois qu'il se montre, avec une violence ardente mais contenue. Auprès du dictateur nazi, assez vulgaire, le prince Auguste, fils de Guillaume II, en uniforme de général hitlérien ; les femmes font la révérence, les officiers baisent la main du prince. Ce geste n'est peut-être pas très démocratique, mais l'Allemagne d'Hitler se moque de la démocratie comme d'une noix vide. Un certain jour, le *Führer* ayant dû s'absenter, la représentation de *Siegfried* fut retardée d'une heure sans explication, parce que tel était le bon plaisir de Son Excellence ; les Allemands s'exécutèrent « sans hésitation ni murmure » comme il est dit dans nos règlements militaires. Jamais les Wittelsbach n'auraient osé prendre de telles libertés vis-à-vis de leurs sujets. Autres temps, autres mœurs !

Il est présentement dans la norme germanique, de comparer Hitler à Wagner et à Goethe ! L'Olympien de Weimar et le Titan de Bayreuth sont les cimes de la culture germanique. Quelle figure peut faire l'ex-ouvrier, peintre auprès de ces géants ? « *Il nous apporte l'espérance*, répondent les Allemands. Nos interlocuteurs

ajoutent, ou n'ajoutent pas, suivant les circonstances, qu'Hitler promet aux Germains de reconstituer leur pays dans sa toute-puissance, tel qu'il était avant 1914 ; il ira plus loin, il fera renaître le Saint-Empire romain-germanique, que Napoléon détruisit au traité de Presbourg.

Il ne s'agit plus pour la Prusse de fédérer tout ce qui est allemand, mais de l'absorber. « L'idée allemande » a refait l'unité du Reich, compromise par la défaite, elle essaie de conquérir l'Autriche ; ce sera ensuite le tour de la Suisse alémanique, puis de l'Alsace (*sic*)... Ainsi se construira le nouveau Saint-Empire ; car l'hitlérisme, malgré quelques ressemblances extérieures, n'est pas un rameau de l'arbre fasciste. C'est un tronc autrement vigoureux et qui porterait facilement un feuillage aux ombres redoutables.

A tout interlocuteur français, l'Allemand pose une question, toujours la même : « Que pense votre pays d'Hitler ? » Mais lorsqu'on l'interroge, il est réservé, plus que réservé, prudent jusqu'à la crainte, car le chancelier terrorise les Allemands. Cependant, outre ce qu'on peut voir quand on a de bons yeux, on entend des choses fort intéressantes quand on possède des oreilles et si l'on sait écouter.

Voici les jardins et les salons de Wahnfried, la villa de Wagner. C'est ici que le musicien fit halte après avoir écrit ses œuvres principales, à l'exception de *Parsifal* ; la tragédie chrétienne fut composée plus tard, en Suisse et en Italie. En ces lieux que fréquenta le maître, non loin de la dalle de pierre qui recouvre son tombeau, sa belle-fille, Mme Winifred Wagner, reçoit ses hôtes et ses visiteurs avec un mélange de superbe (n'est-elle pas un peu la reine de Bayreuth ?) et de charmante simplicité. C'est le moment d'être attentif. Dans ces jardins fleuris, on rencontre les représentants de toutes les tribus germaniques et, comme il sied, on entend bien des choses. Hitler est un familier de la maison, on a même dit qu'il aurait pu épouser la

l'elfe-fille de Wagner ; pendant les représentations le petit-fils du Maître, un jeune garçon de seize ans, était assis près du dictateur. Qu'entend-on dans cette demeure florale et sylvestre, entre la table où fut écrit le poème du *Crépuscule* et le piano où fut composé *Tristan*, et dans ces frais jardins, autour de la tombe du Maître que des mains reconnaissantes et pieuses ensevelissent sous les fleurs ? On y entend Strauss parler musique. En effet, l'illustre auteur de *Salomé* était venu conduire *Parsifal*, Toscanini ayant refusé de participer au festival à la suite des mesures prises contre ses collègues israélites. La présence de Strauss, l'appui financier donné par le Reich aux fêtes wagnériennes, que de précieux indices ! Dans ces jardins si bien fréquentés, il nous a été donné d'entendre aussi les couplets du racisme intégral : la domination du monde promise à la race élue, au dolichocéphale blond ; un gobinisme exaspéré, reposant, à tout prendre, sur une série d'erreurs historiques dont certaines sont voulues. Ce racisme agressif se rattache aux « mentalités primitives » de M. Lévy-Bruhl. Tout étranger peut facilement devenir pour les hitlériens un ennemi puisqu'il ne participe pas aux rites magiques de la tribu. On trouve aussi, dans ce racisme, à côté de la flamme fulgurante de Nietzsche, le « climat » religieux, passionnel et politique qui marqua la « Réformation ». On croit entendre, par moment, la grande voix de Martin Luther.

Ah ! on ne ménage guère les Juifs ! On les accuse de tous les méfaits possibles et imaginables : destructeurs, négateurs, révolutionnaires-nés, usuriers, transportant en tous lieux leur désordre intellectuel et moral, éternels colporteurs de la révolution humaine... J'en passe. En revanche, plusieurs Allemands m'ont affirmé que si on avait pris de strictes mesures pour préserver l'Allemagne du « virus juif » (*sic*), il n'y avait eu ni violences ni sévices. Opinion que, naturellement, je n'ai pu contrôler. De même on a expulsé d'Allemagne les « brutes intellectuelles » : en-

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tendez les écrivains soupçonnés de quelque sympathie pour Israël.

On parle tout aussi durement des économistes de l'école libérale. On considère que, politiquement et économiquement, la plupart des dirigeants républicains furent inférieurs à leur tâche et trop souvent d'une moralité discutable; les politiciens d'après guerre se laissaient acheter avec une facilité inconnue sous le régime impérial. La crise économique, qui accable l'Allemagne depuis bientôt cinq ans, a mis à nu les tares du capitalisme issu de l'école libérale. Les dirigeants politiques et économiques sont responsables, affirment mes interlocuteurs, du suréquipement de l'Allemagne et d'un incroyable gaspillage de capitaux, tranchons le mot, d'une lourde gabegie. La faillite du socialisme a été aussi complète que celle du libéralisme économique. Partant d'une idée absurde, l'égalité des hommes et des races, le marxisme a ruiné les bourgeois, les paysans et les ouvriers. Il a jeté sur le pavé six millions de chômeurs au bas mot.

Hitler apporte-t-il un remède? Il le prétend. Le dictateur veut relever l'Allemagne par la moralité, l'honnêteté et le travail en s'appuyant, avant tout, sur l'agriculture. La race aryenne vivra désormais de la terre allemande : « Notre race et notre terre », telle est la devise. Hitler respectera l'héritage et la propriété privée, mais ne respectera peut-être pas le « travail des capitaux ». Il est dans sa doctrine de supprimer le prêt à intérêt et d'établir une sorte de monopole d'État sur les banques.

En somme, en Allemagne comme ailleurs, « l'économie dirigée », c'est-à-dire le contrôle de la production, de la circulation et de la distribution des richesses, veut à la fois se substituer à l'économie libérale défaillante et combattre le bolchevisme socialiste sous toutes ses formes. Il s'agit d'un empirisme nouveau, riche d'avenir, destiné à régénérer l'Allemagne et à conquérir le monde, qui nous ramène toutefois jusqu'à un certain point aux méthodes

de Colbert et aussi à celles du moyen-âge. Comme l'a noté finement François Le Grix : « Toute l'économie du moyen âge est fondée sur la notion de contingentement. »

Et le concordat? Je me suis entretenu à Nuremberg et ailleurs avec plusieurs ecclésiastiques, des franciscains en particulier, rencontrés à Bayreuth aux représentations wagnériennes ; ils étaient si réservés, que rien ne transparaissait de leurs sentiments intimes.

Reste le problème militaire. On connaît la position prise par le chancelier : « Désarmement pour tous ou liberté absolue des armements. » C'est au fond à cette liberté que l'Allemagne aspire. Sur ce point tout interlocuteur german est formel. L'Allemagne veut redevenir ce qu'elle était avant 1914 : la puissance la plus redoutablement armée du globe. S'il est impossible, à un touriste, de contrôler les armements d'outre-Rhin, la militarisation de la nation fait, d'année en année, des progrès qui frappent tout Français de sang-froid.

Les Allemands, pour justifier le service militaire obligatoire, qu'ils ne tarderont pas, sans doute, à rétablir, évoquent une raison assez savoureuse : « Parvenus à leur vingtième année, disent-ils, nos jeunes gens sont ingouvernables, la discipline des gymnases, des universités ou des sociétés sportives est insuffisante. Pour former un honnête homme le régiment est indispensable. Là seulement on apprend à obéir, on acquiert le sens des responsabilités. Nous n'avons aucune pensée belliqueuse, mais nous voulons le retour au service militaire obligatoire, c'est pour notre race une nécessité. » Des hommes sérieux, des Français qui habitent l'Allemagne et que je sais peu suspects de pessimisme ou d'exagération prétendent que dans de nombreuses usines on fabrique des canons, des mitrailleuses, des tanks et des munitions.

Notons toutefois, pour ne point nous abandonner à un pessimisme débilitant, que la France conserve outre-Rhin un immense prestige. Chaque fois que je vais en

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Germanie, mes interlocuteurs me demandent ce qu'attendent « nos deux grands et nobles pays, égaux dans la bravoure et la fierté pour s'entendre et faire régner sur le monde la paix franco-germanique ». Le temps est venu, m'affirment de nombreux Allemands, de rapprocher les élites des deux pays.

L'accueil fait à nos compatriotes, le fait que, pendant les fêtes de Bayreuth, Molière a voisiné avec Wagner et avec Goethe, le souvenir de nos victoires, mille autres indices, enfin, qu'il serait fastidieux de rapporter, indiquent que notre pays, comme au temps de Richelieu, comme sous Louis XIV, comme sous Louis XVIII pourrait tenir une place immense, non pas seulement immense, mais décisive, dans l'équilibre européen qui est aujourd'hui l'équilibre mondial. Mais encore faudrait-il qu'il fût autrement gouverné et dirigé...

J -L. GASTON PASTRE.

C6: Two articles by Eugène Lautier:

'Bayreuth, capitale du IIIe Reich. De Wagner à Hitler.' *L'Homme libre*, 26 July 1933, 1.

'A Bayreuth, sous Hitler. Parsifal laïcisé et annexé.' *L'Homme libre*, 27 July 1933, 1.

« BAYREUTH, CAPITALE DU III^e REICH »

De Wagner à Hitler

Bayreuth, 23 juillet.

J'étais venu seulement pour entendre de la musique. *Hic, fous. Hic, las...* Ici, la fontaine. Ici, la lumière! Je ne pensais plus à ce que l'on avait raconté naguère au sujet des relations du Führer avec la famille Wagner. Et les journaux français, toujours un peu distraits, ne me l'avaient point rappelé.

D'ailleurs je n'aperçois pas ici beaucoup de confrères toujours en quête d'enquêtes, et qui négligent, pour visiter les Esquimaux, les bagnards ou les anthropophages, des sujets si voisins et dignes de leur talent...

Je viens de voir en trois jours ici comment on peut ajouter à la luxurieuse polyphonie de Wagner une orchestration supplémentaire et inattendue, une orchestration hitlérienne.

Je viens de voir comment, dans cette construction cyclopéenne du maître de Bayreuth, dans cet univers de lumière, d'images, de sons, de couleurs, de pensées, de passions, de symboles et de réalités humaines, on peut loger un épisode commun de la lutte pour l'hégémonie des peuples et pour l'orgueil des hommes politiques...

✶

On croit avoir entendu les *Maîtres chanteurs* à Paris, à Londres, à Berlin. On se trompe.

Il y eut, certes, de grands artistes en France, des interprètes de Wagner, égaux sinon supérieurs à tous: Van Dyck, Reszke, Delmas, Lucienne Bréval, Rose Caron. (Je note, en passant, que deux sur cinq avaient vu le jour en deçà de nos frontières.)

Mais il ne s'agit pas des protagonistes.

Les *Maîtres chanteurs*, c'est la foule.

Ce sont les habitants d'une ville, leurs intérêts, leurs occupations, leurs soucis, leurs rivalités, leurs travers, leur générosité, le tout s'unissant et s'épurant dans un effort d'art corporatif et philharmonique.

C'est le peuple qui est l'acteur principal; les vedettes ne sont que des personnages épisodiques, des figurants.

On ne peut pas essayer de nous montrer cet aspect véritable de l'œuvre en France, pays individualiste.

Ici nous respirons le sens du collectif. Les philosophes l'ont enseigné. Les artistes, poètes ou musiciens, l'ont traduit dans leurs chefs-d'œuvre. Le peuple devine, saisit, s'adapte, se plie.

Et voilà pourquoi les *Maîtres chanteurs* à Bayreuth, nous

Je commence à comprendre. Le Führer est là, dans une de ses capitales.

Sur la première page de la seconde *Fremdenliste*, qui publie les noms des personnes logées dans des habitations privées, je vois: en tête, comme il sied, *Adolf Hitler, chancelier de l'Empire allemand*; puis, le docteur *Joseph Goebbels, ministre du Reich*; puis, en serre-file, à sa place subalterne, toujours comme il sied: le prince *Auguste Wilhelm de Prusse*...

Au commencement de la Révolution, le citoyen Bouchard s'agaçait de ne plus être appelé Montmorency. Il se plaignait à Rivarol, pamphlétaire royaliste, et de beaucoup d'esprit:

« Après tout, disait Bouchard, je descends du maréchal de Montmorency qui... Je descendrais du comte de Montmorency que... Je descendrais du duc de Montmorency dont... »

« Eh! mon cher, s'écria Rivarol à son tour exaspéré, pourquoi donc êtes-vous tant descendu... »

Hitler est là, dans une de ces Fürstenloge, où je voyais s'étaler jadis, il y a quelque quarante années, Ferdinand de Bulgarie.

Je le retrouve encore ce Cobourg-Orléans, ou cet Orléans-Cobourg, teat détrôné perdu dans la foule des wagnériens fidèles comme vous et moi.

Il a encore du chic, avec sa batte blanche, son nez en croissant de lune, son œil clair et sa parole vive. Il suit porter son veston gros bleu bien coupé, son pantalon gris sombre, son feutre gris clair et ses guêtres blanches.

Il descend lui aussi, il est même descendu, mais avec « de la tenue » comme recommande Mora-Morny au dernier chapitre de ce beau roman: *les Rois en exil*.

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Sur la colline de Wagner, il n'imita pas le cobourgisme de Guillaume II que je suivais en journaliste, il y a trente-six ans, sur le mont des Oliviers. Il y a, sans doute, de l'affectation dans cette modestie.

A l'entrée, on nous avait distribué un avis officiel recommandant aux spectateurs de s'abstenir de toute manifestation superflue, car l'œuvre qu'on allait entendre suffisait à consacrer l'expansion de l'esprit germanique.

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Et voilà pourquoi les *Maîtres chanteurs*, interprétés à Bayreuth, apparaissent comme une nouveauté à qui-conque ne les a pas entendus ici.

Le dernier des acteurs joue son petit rôle avec amour et jusqu'à la dernière syllabe proférée, jusqu'au plus humble geste, parce qu'il a conscience d'être utile et nécessaire.

À la fin du II^e acte, dispute et tumulte. Aucune confusion possible avec une nuit du Quartier latin ou des Halles ou du Montmartre, nuit de tapage nocturne. C'est un sport véhément, collectif encore, une guerre presque civile. Le contingent mis en ligne dépasse de beaucoup les effectifs de nos grands théâtres.

Mais, dans la scène finale du III^e acte, concours des chanteurs, défilés des corporations, apothéose de Hans Sachs — dont le génie éternel domine la vaine querelle des générations, — la scène est envahie par une armée de personnages ou de choristes.

Plus de sept cents sont à la fois devant nous! Ils évoluent avec une apparence de spontanéité, mais sans mesurer. Tout est vif, jeune, puissant. Les groupes agitent leurs drapeaux, leurs emblèmes. Point de ces dentés somptueux, prétentieux, mures comme on en voit toujours quand un directeur de chez nous s'avisait de nous éblouir par quelque récitation qui copie les méthodes des Folies-Bergère.

C'est le nombre, la rapidité, la variété des costumes, aux couleurs vives sans verroteries ni bijoux faux.

C'est la joie des danseurs; c'est l'instinct logique qui fait se confondre et se réunir toutes ces escouades, les précipite à la rencontre de nouveaux cortèges, dicte leurs acclamations, inspire leurs chants, et crée l'eurythmie avec tous ces éléments épars.

C'est la simplicité et l'ingénierie du décor: devant nous, la plaine avec l'estrade préparée, au second plan le pont sur la Pegnitz, pont en dos d'âne qui nous permet de mieux voir les allées et les venues, — et qui recule et approfondit les maisons de Nuremberg au troisième plan.

Et la vie, inépuisable, infatigable dirait-on, lisse, éclatante, respandit grâce à toutes ces couleurs, à tous ces mouvements, à toutes ces lignes, baignée de mélodies et d'accompagnements dont on finit par oublier la profusion, — de même que le soleil, la verdure et la mer nous semblent des choses d'acier.

« Bayreuth, capitale du III^e Reich », disaient hier les journaux de la ville,

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Lorsqu'au deuxième entr'acte, le Führer est allé vers la restauration comme tout le monde, les admirateurs et les curieux l'acclamaient de leurs *Heil* répétés. Il n'avait pas l'air de s'en apercevoir, ne distribuant à la ronde ni regards, ni sourires *quêtés*.

Il causait avec un voisin, levant sa main droite de temps à autre par le geste hitlérien qui sert à la fois de remerciement et de salut.

Ainsi, tout autour du théâtre s'affirmait la pensée claire qui fit choisir les *Maîtres chanteurs* pour inaugurer la saison de 1933, le glorieux cinquantième de la mort de Wagner.

Jubilé d'art, que l'on détourne de sa signification esthétique ou pieuse, et dont on se sert pour fortifier l'âme collective d'un peuple, pour exalter aussi le mouvement corporatif qui est au programme de tous les régimes fascistes, de celui de M. Mussolini, de celui du chancelier Hitler, — et qui s'affirme déjà dans le mouvement nazi français, fruit éclatant à la suite du dernier congrès socialiste de Paris, promesse accueillie chez nous avec reconnaissance par tous les partis de réaction.

Sur vingt et une représentations wagnériennes, cette année, il y aura deux séries du *Ring*, cinq fois *Parsifal* et huit fois les *Maîtres chanteurs*.

Le plus grand nombre de journées est ainsi donné à l'œuvre éducative dont j'ai dit plus haut l'éloquente, l'éblouissante exécution...

Le nazisme français va s'efforcer de suivre. Car il y a du changement chez nous: pour avoir cessé d'être française, la France est un pays qui ne précède plus, mais qui suit et qui stagne. Dans quelle voie peut-il désormais espérer de rattraper les autres?

En descendant de la colline wagnérienne, je songeais à Scipion l'Africain et je modernisais en l'appliquant à mon pays son apostrophe désespérée:

« Le jour approche qui verra tomber Troie la cité sainte, et Priam, et son peuple imbecile. »

Voyez l'étymologie dans toute sa force. J'ai bien le droit de penser et de parler en latin, quand je me sens plongé dans cet océan de germanisme toujours jeune et primitif, toujours plus fort.

C'est Nietzsche qui a exprimé cette admirable pensée: « Il n'y a rien de plus douloureux que de mourir de soif au milieu de la mer. »

EUGÈNE LAUTIER

A BAYREUTH, SOUS HITLER

Parsifal laïcisé et annexé

Bayreuth, 25 juillet 1933.

La représentation de *Parsifal*, avant-hier, était fixée selon la coutume à 4 heures de l'après-midi. Quand nous arrivions au théâtre, la nouvelle nous fut donnée que les portes s'ouvriraient seulement à 4 heures et demie.

Je sais bien que, d'après Tacite, les Germains étaient toujours en retard à leurs assemblées. Mais il y avait une raison spéciale, cette fois, aux raisons très importantes.

Le circuit d'une course d'automobiles — épreuve d'endurance de 2.400 kilomètres — passait aux environs immédiats de Bayreuth et barrait certaines routes. Avant tout, l'épreuve d'endurance, la motorisation du pays, l'outillage à toutes fins, l'avenir!

Parsifal pouvait attendre avec sa lance, arme périmée dont on ne conteste pas à Genève le caractère nettement défensif.

Autre surprise, heureuse cette fois! Le nom de Frida Leider est sur le programme. On nous avait dit à Paris que nous n'entendrions pas cette admirable artiste, parce que... non arrivée.

Un bon point à la famille Wagner! Un bon point à Hitler lui-même! Cette absurde proscription n'a pas été consommée.

Cela n'empêche pas le *Bayreuther Tagblatt*, dans un article où sont indiqués les points stratégiques des ennemis du III^e Reich, de montrer le quartier général des communistes à Prague, des social-démocrates à Zurich et Amsterdam, des juifs à Paris!

Pourtant, c'est à Londres que 40.000 personnes manifestaient l'autre jour contre l'antisémitisme allemand. Mais, à Berlin comme à Rome, on pardonne tout à Londres. On sait peut-être que les démonstrations anglaises ne tirent pas à conséquence.

Des mots! Des mots! Des mots! Mais, dans le même moment, M. Henderson déploie tout le zèle dont il est pourvu, et même l'intelligence qui lui manque, à faire une tournée en Europe pour désarmer la France. Rien d'autre n'importe...

Quatre heures et demie! Les automobiles sont passées. La représentation de *Parsifal* peut commencer.

Heures splendides! Pourquoi nous aurait-on privés de Frida Leider? Grâce à M. Jacques Rouché, qui est un grand directeur en même temps qu'un gentleman accompli, nous l'avons entendue à l'Opéra de Paris, il y a quelques années.

« *un chef-d'œuvre!* » disait Anton Seidl. « *Non, c'est un miracle!* » répondit Franz List.

Les chevaliers du Graal, satisfaits, ont défilé avec leurs manteaux couleur de flamme, bien plus beaux, plus frais, plus jeunes que les manteaux rouge ordinaire dont on les revêt ailleurs. Ils ont salué leur nouveau chef, un *Parsifal* par le droit de l'audace et de la volonté qui succède aux maîtres débilés, d'intentions pures mais incapables d'aller jusqu'au bout.

La colombe qui plane sur l'autel pendant la dernière scène regardait, semble-t-il, vers une loge centrale.

Était-ce une vraie colombe de paix? Et de quel côté le sentiment religieux le plus intense?

Il reste des religions en Allemagne, mais d'un prestige singulièrement amoindri. On tracasse les juifs, on réduit le centre catholique à la domesticité, on menace les dignitaires (!) de l'église, le pape a peur, signe le concordat.

Il n'y a de Dieu que le Dieu allemand, Hitler est son prophète. Il a retrouvé souillée dans les officines de la basse politique, des marchands d'onguents comme Stresemann (grand homme pour la diplomatie française), des jésuites comme Brüning, et des *gentlemen-riders* comme von Papen, il a retrouvé la lance de *Parsifal*.

Aux chevaliers en manteau de flamme, il a joint le cortège personnel des hommes, femmes, jeunes filles, enfants qui se répandent dans la ville avec leurs costumes nuancés de kaki brun poussant avec une gravité joyeuse leurs vivats, leurs *Heil*, en attendant — combien de temps encore? — le *Heil* dir *im Siegerkruiz*, qui fut déjà chanté, il y a un peu plus d'un demi-siècle sur le champ de courses de Longchamp...

Quelle étrange époque! Mustapha Kemal a laïcisé la Turquie. M. Mussolini a fait du pape son chapelain, docile et l'a traité de menteur au Sénat romain. L'Espagne a secoué le joug de la domination religieuse.

Seule la France — la France républicaine et laïque, laissez-moi rire! — se cléricise avec application. Sous Herriot en 1924, le Concordat a été reconnu comme existant en Alsace, afin de rendre la tâche plus facile aux autonomistes et aux antifrançais.

Sous Poincaré-Briand, l'année suivante, on a scellé par l'ambassade du Vatican, la chaîne qui nous liait.

Si les gouvernements de gauche ont fait cette politique, et se sont tous prosternés à Canossa suivant le mot de M. de Monzie, inutile d'insister.

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Je fus frappé de son incontestable maîtrise dans Isolde. Je l'ai écrit ici même, et j'ai décliné alors à certaines coteries. Mais j'avais raison. Le reste ne compte pas. Et, depuis plus de quarante années, j'ai tout de même acquis un peu d'expérience du répertoire wagnérien.

Mme Frida Leider est revenue plusieurs fois à Paris, et il y a quelques mois encore. Elle est toujours meilleure. Tout artiste véritable se démontre par un effort continu. Le mécontentement de soi-même: voilà le principe.

Dans ses *Mémoires*, Eugène Delacroix a écrit cette phrase que je cite sans avoir le texte sous les yeux, mais dont je garantis le sens aussi grand qu'un monde:

« Pour achever, l'artiste doit avoir un cœur de lion ». O statues incomplètes de Michel-Ange, monuments interrompus, voilà votre secret!

Samedi, dans *Parsifal*, Mme Frida Leider a tenté et réussi l'effort qui parachève.

Vous connaissez l'œuvre. Vous savez comme une artiste qui se satisfait à bon compte réussit à représenter assez convenablement le rôle de Kundry. Quelques attitudes de coquetterie un peu lasses au II^e acte, le poids du péché et l'assablement simulé avant la rédemption, cela suffit d'ordinaire.

Mais la présence réelle et permanente d'une âme qui vibre à tous les sons de l'orchestre et de la voix! Le tribut de soi-même perpétuellement offert! Le dédain des procédés par quoi l'on peut dissimuler la fatigue, la distraction, le défaut d'intérêt!

La conscience délicate et sensible qui fait du regard toujours tendu, des lèvres parfois muettes, de l'oreille attentive, de tout le visage une lyre, une harpe vibrante dont le compositeur n'avait pas noté les mouvements et les nuances!

Voilà ce que nous devions hier à la grande artiste juive dont la chair et les nerfs sont bien comme les nôtres et, dans le cas présent, supérieurs.

Selon la coutume, après *Parsifal*, on n'applaudit pas. On remémore le dialogue historique du soir de la première, il y a un demi-siècle. « C'est

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La France cléricale est le seul pays où le Vatican excommunie à foison et refuse les sacrements aux catholiques de l'*Action Française*! Les néo-socialistes tendent la main aux gens de droite pour constituer un parti nazi à tendances antisémites!

Nous voilà revenus à 1894. « *Esprit nouveau* » : préface du conseil de guerre. A quand la nouvelle affaire Dreyfus? Ou quelque chose d'approchant?

Maison de fous! Quand donc le gouvernement demandera-t-il à M. Camille Chautemps, ministre de l'Intérieur, d'aller conférer à Berlin avec son collègue M. Frick, qui prépare des projets de loi pour prescrire la stérilisation des aliénés, des crétins et autres anormaux?

Nous en avons aussi, et probablement davantage si l'on juge d'après les symptômes inquiétants qui se révèlent chaque jour.

EUGÈNE LAUTIER

L'enlèvement par des nazis de trois personnes dans la Sarre

Genève, 26 juillet. — La commission gouvernementale du territoire de la Sarre a envoyé au président du conseil de la Société des nations un télégramme pour le mettre au courant des incidents au cours desquels trois personnes, dont deux seraient des ressortissantes françaises, résidant en territoire sarrois, ont été enlevées et transportées en Allemagne.

Le texte de ce télégramme a été immédiatement transmis aux gouvernements siégeant au conseil. Il sera publié incessamment.

On croit savoir que dans ce télégramme, la commission gouvernementale de la Sarre se borne à informer la Société des nations. Elle indique, en outre, qu'elle a demandé au gouvernement allemand la mise en liberté immédiate des personnes arrêtées, et qu'elle a en outre exigé qu'elles soient reconduites en territoire sarrois.

Actuellement, le conseil de la Société des nations n'est donc pas saisi de cet incident aux fins de prendre des décisions.

On fait remarquer, en effet, que la commission gouvernementale de la Sarre possède des pouvoirs très étendus pour le maintien de l'ordre et qu'il ne saurait être question de mettre en mouvement la procédure internationale que si la commission gouvernementale n'obtenait pas satisfaction.

C7: Two articles by Jean Chantavoine:

'A Bayreuth. L'Anneau du Nibelung.' *Le Ménestrel* 96, no. 31 (10 August 1934): 288-9.

'A Bayreuth. Les Maîtres chanteurs – Parsifal.' *Le Ménestrel* 96, no. 33 (24 August 1934): 298-9.

LE • MÉNESTREL

A BAYREUTH

L'Anneau du Nibelung.

Mercredi 25 juillet, 5 heures du soir : les dernières fanfares qui annoncent *l'Or du Rhin* viennent de retentir. Le sombre amphithéâtre s'est rempli. Quinze cents spectateurs, debout, le dos tourné à la scène, concentrent leurs regards sur une des loges qui forment le fond de la salle. Un homme y paraît : smoking, stature robuste et moyenne, un paquet de cheveux bruns couvrant jusqu'au sourcil la moitié gauche du front ; sous le nez, une moustache carrée ; on pense à un portrait composite de Charlie Chaplin et de M. Edouard Herriot. Sans un cri, sans un mot, sans un murmure, mille bras droits se tendent vers lui, en un muet unisson, pour un salut dont le geste d'élan est un serment tacite... J'ai vu dans ma vie — et en Allemagne même, sous Guillaume II — bien des manifestations : aucune dont l'éloquence m'ait pas paru plus profonde et — pourquoi ne pas le dire ? — plus humaine que le silence de cette unanimité...

Celui qui en est l'objet a bien pu, — avec un tact qui lui fait honneur — interdire à Bayreuth, pendant les festivals, tout hommage dont Wagner ne serait pas le héros. Wagner ne règne pas seul cette année sur la colline réverée : le Chancelier Adolf Hitler partage sa royauté.

**

On a tout dit sur Bayreuth, sur la disposition de cette salle austère et commode, sur la fosse où l'orchestre demeure invisible. Que ce dispositif dérobe au public l'agitation du *Kapellmeister*, qu'elle soustraie celui-ci à la tentation de manifester d'abord son talent par des effets de tignasse secouée, d'épaules accablées et de poings trémulants, cela est fort bien. Il est mieux encore que la sonorité des cent instruments y prenne cette onctueuse homogénéité, cette profondeur de résonance, où les timbres se fondent comme les couleurs du prisme dans la lumière. Les cuivres se marient aux cordes d'une façon surprenante : peut-être le hautbois perd-il parfois un peu de son mordant.

Les représentations de *l'Anneau du Nibelung* ont été, dans leur ensemble, soignées et dignes du prestige qui s'attache au nom de Bayreuth. Paris en connaît déjà quelques-uns des protagonistes : le chef d'orchestre M. Karl Elmendorff, M^{mes} Frieda Leider, Maria Müller, Sigrid Onégin, MM. Bockelmann, Max Lorenz, Erich Zimmermann, etc. J'ai retrouvé chez M. Elmendorff, surtout dans *l'Or du Rhin*, une légère tendance à presser certains mouvements et l'on souhaiterait aussi, surtout dans *l'Or du Rhin* lorsqu'ils y paraissent pour la première fois, plus de relief dans la présentation des motifs. Au cours des autres soirées, M. Elmendorff a refréné sa hâte : peut-être en est-il résulté çà et là (notamment dans *Siegfried* et dans *le Crépuscule*) un peu de déséquilibre. Mais l'ensemble de son interprétation reste satisfaisant.

Je ne me donnerai pas le ridicule — assez stérile — de distribuer des bons points ou des notes moins favorables à tel ou tel artiste. Le Wotan puissant et sobre de M. Bockelmann, le chaleureux Siegmund de M. Fritz Völker, le robuste, rayonnant et allègre Siegfried de M. Max Lorenz, le Mime prodigieusement subtil et précis de M. Zimmermann, l'énergique Gunther de M. Prohaska, le pesant Fasolt de M. Andresen, l'exquise Sieglinde de M^{me} Maria Müller, la majestueuse Fricka de M^{me} Sigrid Onégin, la candide Gutrune de M^{me} Flagstad sont inoubliables. Dans un si bel ensemble, on hésite à noter que M^{me} Frieda Leider (Brünnhilde) montre plus de lyrisme que de vigueur, avec une voix incertaine à l'aigu (les « recruteurs » de Bayreuth ont-ils jamais entendu, à Paris, M^{me} Marjorie Lawrence ?), que Woglinde chante trop haut, que le cor de Siegfried a une ou deux fois bavé, etc., etc.

Mais il est difficilement admissible que, au cours de la

Tétralogie, le rôle d'Erda ne soit pas tenu par la même artiste dans *l'Or du Rhin* et dans *Siegfried*. En revanche, quelque plaisir que l'on éprouve à entendre souvent la voix splendide (parfois un peu forcée, maintenant), de M^{me} Sigrid Onégin, on comprend mal que cette éminente cantatrice incarne successivement, dans *l'Or du Rhin* et dans la *Walkyrie*, Fricka, dans *Siegfried*, Erda, dans le *Crépuscule*, la première Norne et Waltraute.

Le spectacle est ordonné de main de maître par M. Heinz Tietjen. Il est bon que, sur des scènes lyriques, le régisseur général soit avant tout, comme M. Tietjen, un musicien accompli, qui entende le langage des rythmes, des thèmes, des harmonies et des timbres. Avec M. Tietjen, les mouvements d'ensemble ou les gestes individuels projettent en visions exactes et plausibles les suggestions de la musique. Ainsi se réalise l'équilibre essentiel conçu par Wagner entre le monde subconscient de l'orchestre et le monde visible de la scène, qui en est une émanation. Des épisodes comme la mort de Siegfried et le cortège funèbre ont été réglés de façon à en accroître encore l'écrasante émotion.

Toutefois, quelques accidents secondaires dans la représentation seraient sévèrement relevés, s'ils se produisaient sur une scène française : des mains de comparses surgissaient parfois derrière le décor et, dans *Siegfried*, à la fin du premier acte, le bloc de pierre où Siegfried essaye le tranchant de son glaive s'est séparé en deux avant de recevoir le coup, maladresse ridicule qui ruine l'effet d'une si belle scène.

**

Les éléments du spectacle qui appelleraient le plus de réserves et, osons le dire, les plus sérieuses, sont le décor et l'éclairage.

Ici se posent assurément des problèmes complexes et délicats. Il y a des œuvres immortelles et je pense que *l'Anneau* est du nombre ; il n'y en a pas d'intemporelles. En particulier, les ouvrages dramatiques, avec leurs décors et leurs costumes, sont disputés entre l'âge qui les a vus naître et, d'année en année, le temps où ils sont représentés. Conflit difficile à résoudre et dont le metteur en scène se voit tenté de chercher la solution dans la mode et dans les progrès techniques (1).

Ces progrès, dans des pays moins routiniers et sur des théâtres mieux dotés que les nôtres, se sont surtout manifestés dans le domaine de l'éclairage.

Bayreuth a donc sacrifié à la mode de la stylisation et à la technique des « projections ». Mais *trahit sua quemque voluptas* et l'on est allé trop loin dans cette voie. Passons sur des détails comme l'accoutrement de Hagen, mieux fait pour un traître des *Vêpres siciliennes* que pour un rude guerrier de la préhistoire germanique. Passons sur l'abus des rochers stratifiés, zébrés par le zigzag de petits chemins praticables, que nous voyons trop souvent au cours des quatre soirées.

Il est beaucoup plus fâcheux que l'on escamote purement et simplement les détails difficiles à réaliser : les dieux n'escaladent plus l'arc-en-ciel de *l'Or du Rhin* ; nous ne voyons plus au second acte de la *Walkyrie*, ni les béliers de Fricka (dont je fais bon marché), ni le coursier de Brünnhilde ; non plus qu'au second acte de *Siegfried* l'oiseau qui guide le héros victorieux et dont les ailes battent à l'orchestre. Surtout, nous ne voyons plus dans la Chevauchée des Walkyries l'ombre même d'un cheval. A quoi

(1) Ces lignes étaient écrites lorsque j'ai pu prendre connaissance d'un remarquable article de la *Zeitschrift für Musik* (VIII, août 1934, pp. 818 et suiv.) où M. Max Morold étudie avec une parfaite sagacité les problèmes de la mise en scène wagnérienne. Sans intervenir dans la polémique assez aigre qui s'était élevée entre M. Morold et Wahnfried, je dois reconnaître que les conclusions, rigoureusement objectives et irréfutables, de l'auteur ne sont pas infirmées, tout au contraire, par les expériences tentées à Bayreuth.

bon désormais le rythme de cette page illustre? La réunion des Vierges guerrières n'est pourtant pas un *Kaffeekränzchen*... Enfin, au terme du *Crépuscule*, on ne voit pas Brünnhilde se précipiter sur le bûcher; l'écroulement du Walhall se ramène à la fonte d'un énorme iceberg au-dessus d'une nappe d'eau agitée. Plus trace des hommes et des femmes qui, selon les indications de Wagner, manifestent leur intense émotion, etc.

Tout cela est remplacé par des effets de projections, heureusement exécutés, mais contraires à l'esprit comme à la lettre du drame et de la musique. De même, au cours des quatre soirées, on multiplie à tort et à travers des effets de nuages, fort beaux en soi, mais intempestifs quand le démiurge lui-même (c'est Wagner que je veux dire) ne les a pas prévus.

Le plus grave est l'abus insupportable de la pénombre, dont la représentation souffre, presque d'un bout à l'autre des quatre soirées. Jamais le premier plan n'est éclairé; les personnages, en se mouvant sur la scène, traversent des zones de ténèbres où ils disparaissent pour un temps. Des scènes, des actes entiers se passent dans une obscurité monotone, fatigante et illogique. Le réveil même de Brünnhilde, dans *Siegfried*, est à peine éclairé, malgré les exigences formelles de la situation, du texte, des tonalités et des timbres. Le second acte du *Crépuscule* commence, on le sait, dans la nuit. À peine le soleil s'est-il levé que la fin de l'acte nous montre déjà un effet de soir tombant: le jour a duré moins d'une heure! Ce système d'éclairage soi-disant rationnel (mais la vérité, au théâtre, est l'illusion, non la raison) triomphe dans les silhouettes, détachées sur un fond clair, aussi voit-on cet effet répété à l'envi et amené parfois non sans contrainte.

Dans cette technique et — suite dangereuse — dans cette esthétique de l'éclairage, on reconnaît les procédés du cinéma. Mais avec ces procédés, on en reconnaît, hélas, l'esprit qui se superpose et parfois se substitue à l'esprit du théâtre wagnérien. Pour un peu, si l'on n'y met ordre,

A BAYREUTH

Les Maîtres Chanteurs - Parsifal

A tort ou à raison, il n'y a pas, dans Wagner, d'œuvre qui me touche et m'émeuve autant que les *Maîtres Chanteurs*, parce qu'il n'y en a pas où une musique aussi candide interprète des sentiments aussi simples et aussi humains.

Bayreuth assure aux *Maîtres Chanteurs*, comme aux autres ouvrages de Wagner, l'incomparable sonorité de son orchestre caché. Il confie les rôles principaux à des artistes d'élite, dont Paris a pu applaudir récemment quelques-uns : M. Bockelmann, Hans Sachs pénétré de bonhomie et d'émotion ; M. Ivar Andresen, Pogner plein d'autorité ; M. Eugen Fuchs, Beckmesser pittoresque sans exagération caricaturale ; M. Herbert Jansen, Kothner impayable par sa versatile solennité ; M. Max Lorenz, Walther chaleureux ; M. Martin Kremer, David alerte et gai ; M^{me} Maria Müller, exquise de tout point dans Eva ; M^{me} Ruth Berglund, parfaite dans Magdalena. Quant aux chœurs, véritable armée de chanteurs, ils brillent par une précision, une souplesse et une qualité de voix dont Paris ne se doute pas.

Enfin, l'obligation de respecter certaines données précises de temps et de lieu pour évoquer le Nuremberg du xvi^e siècle, soustrait les décors à l'arbitraire et à l'excès de stylisation que l'on observe parfois dans le *Ring*. Et, grâce au Ciel, le dernier tableau nous a permis de voir enfin — une seule fois au cours de six soirées ! — la scène de Bayreuth éclairée d'une façon logique, suffisante et à peu près totale.

La direction musicale de M. Karl Elmendorff, assurément soigneuse et précise, ne paraît pas obéir à une conception d'ensemble. Certaines scènes de transition (les entretiens de Sachs avec Eva au second acte, avec Walther au troisième,) sont menées dans un mouvement trop vif, après quoi le remerciement d'Eva semble, au contraire, pâtir d'un excès de lenteur, comme en a souffert auparavant le prélude lui-même du troisième acte. Une œuvre aussi homogène que les *Maîtres Chanteurs* veut, dans l'interprétation générale, un parti plus net, une ligne plus ample et mieux suivie.

La mise en scène est, jusqu'à la scène finale, d'une vie et d'une justesse accomplies. Au premier acte, chacun des Maîtres a son allure, ses gestes, son caractère individuels. La rixe nocturne qui termine le second acte unit l'enchevêtrement scénique à la précision musicale. C'est toutefois le seul épisode où l'orchestre caché n'équilibre peut-être pas suffisamment le poids des masses chorales.

Le dernier tableau groupe, dans la prairie de la Pegnitz, un nombre de choristes qui se chiffre par centaines. Le choral d'hommage à Sachs y prend une puissance magnifique. Les mouvements de cette armée s'exécutent avec une sûreté impeccable, à laquelle un effectif moins imposant permettrait peut-être plus d'aisance et de spontanéité.

N'y a-t-il pas là quelque excès de nombre ? Je n'en répondrais pas. La question de mesure qui se pose ici est celle que soulèvent, au concert, les grandes œuvres chorales de Bach. Le Nuremberg des *Maîtres Chanteurs* n'est pas la ville d'un demi-million qui déborde aujourd'hui l'ancienne enceinte. C'est encore une petite cité, étroitement ceinturée, où les scènes populaires elles-mêmes gardent un caractère d'intimité. Sur des théâtres allemands de province — dont les ressources ne peuvent rivaliser avec celles de Bayreuth — j'ai vu cette proportion observée de la façon la plus heureuse, parce qu'elle était la plus naturelle, parce qu'on y sentait une ville, sœur ou parente de Nuremberg, vivre de sa vie propre, sans souci d'exception ou de gala. A Bayreuth, la splendeur du dernier tableau des *Maîtres* frise l'enflure...

**

A l'inverse des *Maîtres Chanteurs* et malgré ses grandes beautés, *Parsifal*, une fois de plus, ne me laisse que des impressions mitigées et il m'est décidément impossible d'y voir le chef-d'œuvre de Wagner. Le drame lui-même, par sa conception, par le caractère de ses héros et souvent par la recherche amphigourique de la langue, sent la formule et trahit la fatigue d'une imagination qui puise inconsciemment dans ses anciennes trouvailles. Parsifal ressemble tantôt à Siegfried, tantôt à Lohengrin; Klingsor est un décalque d'Alberich; Amfortas rappelle le Hollandais maudit; Kundry enfin, dessinée en traits violents mais indécis, qui vont du cri au silence, Kundry, symbole alterné de la perdition et du dévouement, Kundry est bien le personnage le plus irréel, le plus incohérent et le moins vivant que Wagner ait conçu.

Musicalement, le second acte tout entier est un trou : pour en mesurer la profondeur, calculez la distance entre la scène du voyageur et d'Erda, dans *Siegfried* et le dialogue de Klingsor avec Kundry... Comparez la valse des Filles-Fleurs aux ondulations des Filles du Rhin. Et dites si vous trouvez dans le duo de Parsifal et de Kundry rien qui rappelle, soit pour la gravité l'apparition de Brunnhilde à Siegmund, soit pour la passion le duo de Tristan, soit pour l'ingénuité l'éblouissement de Siegfried devant Brunnhilde dévoilée...

Restent les deux préludes, du premier et du troisième actes, la scène de l'initiation au premier acte, tout le troisième acte enfin, avec la résignation de Gurnemanz, l'enchantement du Vendredi-Saint et la scène finale de la Rédemption — encore que l'effet de cette scène soit affaibli par le souvenir de la scène analogue, plus développée et plus belle — qui termine le premier acte.

J'ajoute que, tout admirables qu'elles soient (et je ne leur marchandais pas l'admiration) ces deux scènes supposent, pour produire leur plein effet, la perspective sonore que, seul, le théâtre de Bayreuth réalise entre les divers groupes du chœur. Le régisseur fait ici plus que de seconder le musicien; il collabore avec lui; j'allais presque dire qu'il l'inspire et le détermine. S'il faut voir dans ces deux pages sublimes — je ne conteste pas qu'elles le soient — l'achèvement du *Gesamtkunstwerk*, de l'œuvre d'art total, on se demande si la musique, pour parfaire cette totalité, ne cède pas à l'accessoire (dans les deux sens du terme) un peu plus que de raison. Le sublime, soumis à des conditions si particulières de régie, ne prend-il pas quelque chose d'un peu précaire? On pense malgré soi au mot terrible de Rodin et aux traces de vérité que précipite parfois l'acide du plus injuste sarcasme : « Une mauvaise messe ». Et l'on se rappelle que ni la *Passion selon Saint-Mathieu*, ni la *Flûte enchantée*, ni le *Quatuor en ut* dièse mineur ne requièrent semblable appareil...

Appareil dont Bayreuth voudrait revendiquer le privilège — avec le monopole de *Parsifal* lui-même — sans justifier cette prétention par une fidélité scrupuleuse aux prescriptions de Wagner. *Parsifal* est en effet représenté, cette année, dans des décors et avec des costumes nouveaux, établis par M. Alfred Roller, pour remplacer ceux que l'on devait à la collaboration de Wagner et du peintre Joukovsky. La clairière du premier acte, avec son lac tranquille et ses arbres épais, rappelle à la fois les primitifs et Böcklin; l'imitage de Gurnemanz, au troisième, ferait penser plutôt à Segantini et l'on trouve peu de parenté entre ces paysages voisins. Le temple, avec ses colonnes polies, est d'une harmonieuse sobriété, mais le rideau de feuillages, dans le jardin magique est d'une banalité toute provinciale. Comme dans *L'Anneau*, l'éclairage est d'ordinaire insuffisant : au premier acte, il se borne à projeter sur le milieu du plateau un disque pareil à celui que dardait naguère l'abat-jour, sur les tables de famille. Trop d'ombre aussi dans le temple, où les graves évolutions des chevaliers restent à peine visibles. Et puis, toujours comme

dans *L'Anneau*, on escamote les effets difficiles, comme l'écroulement du palais de Klingsor. Nous ne voyons pas non plus tomber sur la scène en battant de l'aile le cygne que vient de frapper Parsifal. Deux écuyers vont chercher cette volaille dans la coulisse et l'apportent comme une oie grasse, achetée chez le plus prochain *Wild-und Geflügelhändler*.

M. Richard Strauss dirigeait la représentation de *Parsifal* : il lui a suffi de quelques mesures pour révéler au pupitre la présence, non plus d'un chef d'orchestre honorable comme M. Elmendorff, mais d'un grand musicien. Toutes les parties sereines, contemplatives et mystiques de l'œuvre (les seules qui donnent à *Parsifal* son caractère et sa valeur), M. Richard Strauss leur a prêté une sorte de transparence sonore vraiment magique; il les a interprétées en outre avec une sobriété, une émotion, une pureté sans pareilles et, si j'ose dire, une splendide humilité, s'effaçant devant l'œuvre qu'il servait en diacre fidèle. Cette sereine et limpide transfiguration, M. Richard Strauss ne pouvait la maintenir dans les scènes farouches (et si artificielles) de *Parsifal*. Pour éviter ou masquer les disparates, il s'est au moins gardé d'en accentuer la violence pour n'en pas souligner la fragilité.

L'interprétation de M. Richard Strauss se communiquait non seulement à l'orchestre mais aux chœurs, admirables par la qualité du son, la précision des attaques, la finesse des nuances et, presque toujours, la sûreté de l'intonation.

Les protagonistes, il faut le dire, n'atteignaient pas à ce niveau : avec MM. J. von Manowarda (Gurnemanz), Prohaska (Amfortas), Burg (Klingsor) et Sauer (Titirel), ils ne dépassaient pas celui de la correction. Mme Martha Fuchs, elle aussi, ne montrait que du mérite dans le rôle de Kundry. Quant à M. Helge Roswänge, s'il prêtait à Parsifal une silhouette juvénile et une intelligente vivacité, il ne dispose encore que d'une voix gutturale et pointue qui le rend inférieur à son rôle. La palme revient à Mme Ruth Berglund pour la pureté émue que, comme « voix d'en haut », elle a mise dans la phrase du *Reiner Tor*. La tradition de Bayreuth, qui revivait déjà sous la baguette de M. Richard Strauss, veut ainsi que les plus petits rôles soient tenus d'une façon remarquable. Oui bien, mais peut-être ce soin devrait-il s'étendre, sans exception, jusqu'aux têtes de file...

Jean CHANTAVOINE.

LE RÉPERTOIRE DE L'OPÉRA-COMIQUE de 1848 à 1873.

(Suite) (1)

1850

Œuvres nouvelles.

GRISAR : <i>Les Porcherons</i> , 12 janvier. . .	66	représentations.
(Mocker, Sainte-Foy, Bussine, Herman-Léon; M ^{mes} Darcior, Decroix.)		
THOMAS : <i>Le Songe d'une Nuit d'été</i> , 20 avril. (Boulot, Couderc, Bataille; M ^{lle} Lefebvre.)	69	—
JOSSE : <i>Le Talisman</i> , 1 ^{er} juillet.	20	—
(Ponchard, Carvalho; M ^{mes} Lemerrier, Decroix.)		
ADAM : <i>Giralda</i> , 20 juillet.	59	—
(Bussine, Sainte-Foy, Audran; M ^{mes} Miolan, Meyer.)		
POISOT : <i>Le Paysan</i> , 16 octobre.	19	—
(Jourdan, Duvernoy; M ^{lle} Decroix.)		
MASSÉ : <i>La Chanteuse voilée</i> , 26 novembre	8	—
(Bussine, Audran; M ^{lle} Lefebvre.)		

(1) Voir le *Ménestrel* des 3 et 10 août 1934.

C8: Jean-Edouard Spenlé. 'Bayreuth 1933. Réflexions sur l'art wagnérien.' *Mercur de France*, 1 July 1934, 5–27.

BAYREUTH 1933

RÉFLEXIONS SUR L'ART WAGNÉRIEN

Bayreuth 1933, — date fatidique dans les fastes de l'art wagnérien. D'abord parce que date commémorative. Cette année-là a été célébré avec éclat en Allemagne le cinquantenaire de la mort du Maître. Cinquante années se sont écoulées depuis cette mort, au cours desquelles l'art wagnérien n'a cessé d'attirer les foules vibrantes et subjuguées, et le charme opère comme à la première heure. Il y a dans ce triomphe posthume et continu quelque chose d'unique, je dirais presque de fabuleux. Chaque soir, le globe terrestre est comme enveloppé d'un réseau d'émissions wagnériennes et chaque soir l'apothéose se renouvelle dans les salles de théâtre et de concert du monde entier. Comparé à une pareille popularité, qu'est-ce que le culte de Goethe, religion toute littéraire, confinée à l'intérieur d'une confrérie d'érudits et d'intellectuels?

Sans doute une bonne part de ce succès est due à l'instrument même dont Wagner a su tirer de si prodigieux effets, — et qui est la musique, c'est-à-dire l'art le plus direct, le plus communicatif, le plus universel, — sorte de haut-parleur où se sonorisent toutes les vibrations de notre vie moderne et dont la voix est instantanément diffusée à travers le monde entier. Wagner, le premier, a eu le pressentiment de toutes les puissances miraculeuses que recélait la musique. Il a été le grand thaumaturge des temps modernes. Il a inventé un vocabulaire

magique, capable d'exprimer les silences les plus profonds de l'âme moderne, il a inventé une science des philtres et des sortilèges par où, d'emblée, il nous attire dans son monde enchanté, désormais aussi essentiel, aussi indispensable à notre vie que la réalité où nous vivons quotidiennement. Que nous le voulions ou non, nous subissons l'entraînement des Sirènes, nous sommes tous atteints par « l'intoxication wagnérienne ».

Mais cette prodigieuse clairvoyance des secrets de l'âme et cette miraculeuse puissance d'évocation ne représentent qu'un des aspects de l'art wagnérien. Ce qui, déjà pour les contemporains, a fait la grande nouveauté de cet art, c'est que Wagner faisait avant tout appel à la *foi* de ses adeptes, c'est qu'en même temps qu'un miracle artistique il présentait un miracle religieux autour duquel il entendait grouper une chapelle de fidèles et de croyants. « Il s'agit ici de Religion, de Fidélité et de Foi », disait-il un jour d'une voix sévère à un de ses disciples, Edouard Schuré, qui élevait quelques objections. Cette idée d'apostolat a été, dès le début, le tyran inexorable auquel il a sacrifié tout. Comme l'a si bien montré M. Pierre Lalo, dans son livre admirable intitulé *Richard Wagner ou le Nibelung*, quand on lit les lettres de Wagner, ses lettres d'amour ou ses lettres d'amitié, on est frappé du peu d'humaine tendresse qu'elles contiennent. De ceux qui l'approchent, hommes ou femmes, il ne veut qu'une chose : qu'ils aient foi en son génie, qu'ils se mettent au service de son œuvre. Sans ce fatalisme ou, si vous préférez, sans cette « mystique » wagnérienne, l'extraordinaire destinée de son œuvre ne serait pas concevable. On connaît le mot admirable de celui qui fut le premier grand croyant du nouveau culte, — l'ami infatigablement secourable et l'intrépide champion de la toute première heure : j'ai nommé Franz Liszt. A l'heure où Richard Wagner, le révolutionnaire de 48, réfugié en Suisse, était réduit à la misère et, ce qui est plus grave encore, réduit au silence et à l'impuissance, Franz Liszt l'a soutenu non seulement de sa bourse, mais surtout de sa foi inébranlable. Et, comme un jour le com-

positeur, devant qui toutes les portes s'étaient fermées, annonçait à son frère d'armes le projet de composer sur le motif de l'Anneau du Nibelung toute une tétralogie, c'est-à-dire une œuvre dont les dimensions seraient tellement colossales qu'aucun théâtre actuellement existant dans le monde entier n'en pourrait réaliser l'exécution ni la mise en scène : « Hardi ! lui répondit son vaillant compagnon. Mets-toi à l'œuvre ! Ne te laisse arrêter par rien ! Construis-nous quelque chose qui fasse songer aux instructions données jadis par le Chapitre de Séville à l'architecte chargé de bâtir la cathédrale. « Bâissez-nous un temple qui fasse dire aux générations futures : Ils étaient fous, ces messieurs du Chapitre, qui ont ordonné une pareille construction. » *Et pourtant la cathédrale est là !* »

La cathédrale est là ! — Et ce miracle, réponse du Créateur aux incrédules, aux sceptiques ou aux moqueurs, — il s'appelle encore aujourd'hui Bayreuth. Car Bayreuth, c'est le miracle wagnérien à l'état permanent. A cet art si différent, qui imposait au public des habitudes si neuves, et aux exécutants, chargés de le réaliser, des exigences si inouïes, à cet art qui rompait avec toutes les traditions, avec toutes les institutions existantes, théâtres, orchestres, écoles de chant — et qui a dû tirer du néant tous les organes nécessaires à sa réalisation — à cet art si exclusif, si tyrannique, il fallait un théâtre à lui. Bayreuth est le symbole d'une Réforme germanique de l'Art, pareille à la Réforme religieuse de ce Luther à qui, vers la fin de sa vie, Wagner aimait tant de se comparer ; — l'art wagnérien est la protestation de la conscience artistique allemande contre une tradition corrompue, la protestation de la Foi vivante contre les œuvres mortes, contre le répertoire routinier, contre le sacrement banal offert, ou plutôt vendu, chaque soir, à vil prix.

Si tel est *l'esprit* de Bayreuth, reconnaissons pourtant que son *histoire* a connu bien des vicissitudes. Voici d'abord l'ère prophétique et héroïque. Bayreuth n'est encore qu'une Terre promise. La tribu wagnérienne se ré-

duit à une petite troupe nomade qui couche sous la tente et porte d'étape en étape l'arche sainte. Dans toutes les capitales d'Europe, dans les salles de concert, à Paris, à Londres, à Saint-Pétersbourg, on se bat pour Wagner. Cette élite militante se recrute parmi toutes les nations, elle parle les langues les plus différentes. La France est représentée par les Baudelaire, les Mallarmé, les Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, les Catulle Mendès, les Judith Gautier, les Edouard Schuré, les Padeloup, les Gabriel Monod. Ce sont là les ouvriers, les croyants de la première heure dont la foi combative a édifié le sanctuaire encore tout intérieur du culte nouveau.

Puis, en juillet 1876, après cinq années de pourparlers, de négociations et de propagande inlassable, le Temple, enfin construit, ouvre ses portes et alors sont inaugurés les premiers *Festspiele*. Déjà, la première équipe se sent un peu perdue, dépaysée, comme noyée dans cette foule nouvelle qui n'a pas reçu le baptême de feu des premières initiations, — foule composite, un peu inquiétante par son zèle tapageur et par son étalage de vanités mondaines : vedettes du théâtre, de la presse, de la critique, dont on se chuchotait les noms au passage, milliardaires américains, snobs cosmopolites, altesses très titrées à qui était réservée une rangée de loges spéciales. Même le vieil empereur Guillaume se crut obligé, entre deux grandes manœuvres, de venir déposer à Bayreuth la carte de visite du nouvel Empire. Il poussa la condescendance jusqu'à écouter, sans s'endormir, cette musique à laquelle il ne comprenait goutte et, de temps en temps, se penchait vers son aide de camp en chuchotant : « Quelle horreur ! quelle horreur ! »

Et en cette même année 1876, se produisit aussi la première défection, celle du disciple de la dernière heure, le plus choyé de tous : Frédéric Nietzsche. « Ma grande erreur, écrivait-il après une courte apparition, c'est d'être venu à Bayreuth avec un idéal ! » Entre le rêve et la réalité, l'écart était vraiment trop grand. Plus désespérante encore que la qualité passablement suspecte de ce nouvel auditoire wagnérien, apparaissait au disciple in-

transigeant l'attitude du Maître. L'ancien proscrit de 48 se laissait aduler et encenser. Il succombait à la victoire. Il sombrait dans son apothéose. Symptôme plus grave encore : déjà le sanctuaire était livré à la ruée des pan-germanistes qui, le jour, s'entassaient dans les brasseries de la petite ville et vociféraient la nouvelle victoire de l'art allemand. Entre cette propagande d'un nationalisme tapageur, entre cette popularité de mauvais aloi, et une certaine avant-garde de l'art, le divorce se dessinait. Peu à peu, la haute intellectualité européenne allait se détacher du maître de Bayreuth pour suivre l'appel du disciple renégat, du nouveau prophète qui venait de lancer dans le monde ses pamphlets foudroyants : *Le cas Wagner et Nietzsche contra Wagner*.

Cependant le sanctuaire subsistait, suprême asile. Mais voici que surgit pour lui une menace imprévue. De par la volonté du défunt, *Parsifal* devait rester éternellement le monopole exclusif de Bayreuth. Or, en 1913, trente ans après la mort du Maître, en vertu des dispositions de la loi allemande sur la propriété artistique, *Parsifal* tombait dans le domaine public. En déposséder le sanctuaire, n'était-ce pas livrer à toutes les profanations le trésor sacré du tabernacle, exposer à tous les outrages le miracle impollué du Saint-Gral? La question fut passionnément discutée dans la presse; elle fut même portée à la tribune du Reichstag. En fin de compte, force resta à la loi et les premières représentations libres eurent lieu — oh! ironie du sort! — à Monte-Carlo. Le Saint-Gral voisinait avec la roulette! Six mois plus tard éclatait la grande guerre. Cette même année où *Parsifal* annonçait sur toutes les scènes d'Europe son message de paix, d'amour et de rédemption, cette même année a vu le plus infernal déchaînement de haines et de violences! Bayreuth, pour de longues années, devait fermer ses portes. Les rouvrirait-il jamais?

Même la paix revenue — ou ce qu'on est convenu d'appeler « la paix » — le sanctuaire resta muet et désert. En ces temps de détresse économique, c'eût été folie que de risquer pareille aventure financière, car, pécuniaire-

ment parlant, les représentations de Bayreuth, même à la plus belle époque, ont toujours été une mauvaise affaire. Et puis l'horizon restait chargé de trop de souvenirs pénibles, de trop de menaces et de trop de haines encore mal éteintes. Ce ne fut guère qu'en 1927, pour commémorer le cinquantenaire de l'inauguration, qu'on vit enfin se dessiner ce qu'on a appelé « la Renaissance de Bayreuth (1) ». Elle a revêtu un double caractère : d'abord un caractère technique; et puis surtout un caractère politique et national.

La renaissance technique a été l'œuvre surtout du fils de Richard Wagner, de Siegfried Wagner. Quelle destinée tragique que celle de cet héritier! Quel fardeau redoutable que celui de ce nom glorieux auquel, pour comble de disgrâce, se trouvait accolé le prénom héroïque de Siegfried! « Mes parents, écrivait-il mélancoliquement, m'ont baptisé Siegfried. Je n'ai brisé aucune enclume, tué aucun dragon, franchi aucune mer de flammes, et cependant j'espère n'être pas indigne de porter ce nom. » Il pensa d'abord continuer la lignée en composant à son tour des opéras. Faut-il admettre, comme il se l'imaginait, que la comparaison accablante avec le vol de l'aigle ait d'emblée paralysé l'essor de l'aiglon? Lui-même souffrait cruellement de cette disgrâce, — jusqu'au jour où il comprit que, devant une supériorité si écrasante, la seule attitude possible était de se mettre résolument à son service. Il se fit donc, avec une complète abnégation, le régisseur et le metteur en scène de l'œuvre paternelle; il devint l'ouvrier infatigable du nouveau Bayreuth. A lui sont dues ces merveilles de mise en scène qui ont mis au service du drame wagnérien les suprêmes perfectionnements techniques de l'art théâtral. D'abord une science incomparable dans la gradation savante de l'éclairage. Au théâtre de Bayreuth se trouve annexée une usine électrique où s'alimentent les miracles d'une véritable féerie lumineuse. Avec son éclairage continuellement changeant, mouvant et animé, dis-

(1) Voir le livre de Henri Rebaix : *La Renaissance de Bayreuth*. Paris, librairie Fischbacher, 1933.

tribuant sans cesse à nouveau les couleurs, les ombres et les lumières, selon les jeux de scène ou de physionomie qui doivent être rehaussés, selon les sentiments ou les intentions qui doivent être manifestés, cette lumière *vivante* fait une sorte d'accompagnement irradiant, aussi varié, nuancé et chatoyant, désormais aussi indispensable que l'accompagnement musical venu de la fosse de l'orchestre.

C'est ensuite un art nouveau du décor qui rompt résolument avec le poncif d'un faux naturalisme, lequel prétendait nous donner l'illusion du réel. Le nouveau décor wagnérien cherche avant tout l'effet saisissant que produisent certaines *perspectives symboliques*. Il me souvient d'avoir vu, non à Bayreuth, mais à Wiesbaden, la nouvelle mise en scène de *Tristan et Isolde*. Au second acte, au lieu du traditionnel sous-bois avec ses feuillages rigides et touffus qui écrasent la scène, masquent l'horizon, prennent tout l'air respirable, voici, au sommet d'une falaise, un coin du *Burg* du roi Marke, et, sur une sorte de terrasse, un léger bosquet d'arbres aux silhouettes simplifiées avec un ciel immense, un vaste ciel marin qui semble refléter dans sa profondeur la présence invisible de la mer dont on croit deviner la rumeur à l'horizon lointain. N'est-ce pas sur cette perspective symbolique que doit se détacher ce grand drame d'amour auquel la mer se trouve si intimement associée? Et s'imagine-t-on jusqu'à quels soins de détail, dans la combinaison de certains jeux de scène, un pareil art doit s'abaisser pour obtenir un effet dramatique inattendu? Un exemple, entre mille, rapporté par M. Henri Rebois et emprunté à cette sensationnelle reprise de *Tannhäuser* qui fut le grand événement de la saison de 1930. Lorsqu'au troisième acte Tannhäuser rentre de son pèlerinage à Rome, — qui ne lui a valu que la malédiction du pape, — désarmé, hagard, lamentable épave humaine, grâce à un minutieux réglage de la lumière, seule son ombre agrandie est d'abord projetée sur la scène.

Siegfried Wagner n'eut pas la joie d'assister au triomphe de ses efforts. Six jours avant l'ouverture de la sai-

son de 1930, pendant une répétition de ce même *Tannhäuser*, auquel il avait donné tous ses soins depuis deux ans, il dut quitter précipitamment le théâtre, en proie à une crise cardiaque. Il mourut peu de temps après. Sa veuve, Mme Winnifred Wagner, a recueilli l'héritage de Bayreuth, et les deux triomphales saisons de 1932, et surtout de 1933, montrent que cet héritage est géré avec autorité et habileté.

Disons d'abord que le miracle artistique de Bayreuth apparaît toujours dans son impeccable perfection. Et notez que cette perfection ne tient nullement à la présence de quelques grandes vedettes. On peut voir ailleurs des Parsifal, des Hans Sachs, des Beckmesser qui égalent ou même dépassent ceux que nous a présentés Bayreuth l'été dernier. Peut-être même pourrait-on reprocher aux représentations de Bayreuth de viser à une perfection trop immuable, trop strictement stylisée et qui ne s'obtient parfois qu'aux dépens de la vie, du naturel, de la spontanéité. Mais ce qui est ici incomparable, c'est l'ensemble, l'ambiance, l'atmosphère. Où entend-on ailleurs qu'à Bayreuth, dans *Parsifal*, des chœurs d'enfants *a capella* d'une si cristalline transparence, d'une si immaculée fraîcheur? Même dans les théâtres où le style liturgique est scrupuleusement respecté, une oreille tant soit peu subtile discerne parfois des violons introduits en contrebande pour servir de soutiens aux voix de la maîtrise. A Bayreuth, pareille fraude serait inconcevable. Et où trouver dans le monde entier quelque chose de comparable au fondu de cet orchestre souterrain d'où le son monte tamisé, amorti, telle une Voix unique aux timbres immatériels? Après une pareille audition, on garde l'oreille sensibilisée à l'excès. Tout autre orchestre vous choque, avec l'étalage de sa batterie et de ses instruments, avec ses masses chaotiques, imparfaitement brassées et fondues, dont le son heurté n'a pas été tamisé par le délicieux écran amortisseur de Bayreuth! Oh! l'inoubliable enveloppement de ces modulations de *Parsifal*, qui s'enroulent et se déroulent, et où se trouve réa-

lisée la plus délicate, la plus voluptueuse spiritualisation des timbres et des sons qui se puisse rêver! « Des nuées qui doucement se déchirent et se referment », en ces mots Wagner a défini lui-même l'impression que doit donner l'orchestration de *Parsifal*.

Mais ce sont là des impressions déjà connues. Même sous la baguette de Richard Strauss, cette perfection déjà atteinte n'a pu être dépassée. Et cela se conçoit. Le style liturgique de *Parsifal* ne se prête pas à l'innovation. Sa perfection est immuable, en dehors du temps et du changement. La grande nouveauté, l'événement sensationnel de Bayreuth 1933, ce ne fut pas *Parsifal*, ce furent les *Maîtres Chanteurs*. Nous verrons tout à l'heure les raisons d'ordre politique qui ont donné à cette représentation un éclat inattendu. Parlons, pour commencer, art pur.

Si *Parsifal* est l'œuvre liturgique, — une extase religieuse et musicale à laquelle il faudrait en vérité les voûtes d'une église, et non l'illusion profane de la scène, — par contre, les *Maîtres Chanteurs* sont une kermesse tout en couleurs vives et éclatantes, en joyeuses fanfares, en mouvements de foule tumultueux, avec, simplement, à l'arrière-plan, un drame voilé, — l'amour refoulé du poète Hans Sachs, l'amour du veuf déjà grisonnant, pour la fraîche enfant qui sera le prix du concours du chant, la jeune Eva, — drame caché qui ne se déroule que dans les profondeurs de l'orchestre. C'est en somme une orgie musicale qui accompagne une kermesse colorée. C'est dire qu'ici le régisseur passe au premier plan. Et il faut reconnaître qu'un régisseur de grande envergure s'est révélé l'été dernier dans la personne de M. Heinz Tietjen.

Mais aussi de quels moyens il disposait! La scène de Bayreuth n'est pas précisément très large. La disposition de la salle en éventail étalé rétrécit, nécessairement, l'ouverture de la scène qui occupe la section centrale de cet éventail, où convergent tous les rayons. Mais cette scène a, par contre, une profondeur de 45 mètres! Pour la première fois, cette profondeur a été utilisée jusque

dans ses plans les plus reculés. Quel espace magnifique pour le déploiement des cortèges et de la fête populaire qui se déroule au 3^e acte, sur l'esplanade de Nuremberg! 750 choristes et figurants y ont pris cette année leurs ébats. Et quelle foule — recrutée parmi les habitants de la ville, dont chacun apportait là sa note personnelle, sa physionomie particulière, et surtout l'enthousiasme sacré d'une patriotique participation! Et voici maintenant la grande innovation de M. Heinz Tietjen. Il a voulu que le personnage principal de la pièce fût précisément cette foule, cette âme populaire, vibrante et explosive. Avant lui, tout ce dernier tableau gardait, malgré tout, quelque chose d'une parade d'Opéra. Les corps de métiers, bannières déployées, descendaient, bien alignés, vers la rampe pour débiter leur couplet, face au public — à peu près comme fait le chœur des soldats dans le *Faust* de Gounod. Puis, tout à coup, après ce défilé, la scène se trouvait comme nettoyée; des couples de valseurs, déguisés en villageois et villageoises, surgissaient on ne sait d'où et dessinaient en tourbillonnant des figures de danse savamment entrelacées, — tel l'ancien corps de ballet. Enfin, du haut de l'estrade où ont pris place les Maîtres Chanteurs, Hans Sachs, le prince des poètes, lançait pour terminer sa glorification de l'art allemand, comme un roi de tragédie faisant une palabre, face au public. Tout cela était artificiellement ordonné, découpé en une succession d'épisodes distincts et bien réglés, comme les numéros d'un programme. La foule n'était là que pour faire nombre et pour faire écho. Dans le nouvel arrangement de M. Tietjen, tout est changé. Les corporations défilent au beau milieu de l'agitation populaire qui continuellement les enveloppe de ses remous. Plus de corps de ballet faisant irruption sur la scène; mais, aux accents de la danse, la foule tout entière est entraînée dans une ronde populaire. Il faut avoir vu sur la scène de Bayreuth 1933 ce dernier tableau avec ses 750 figurants; il faut avoir vu cette foule immense, où chaque physionomie a son expression, où chaque geste est différent, foule étonnamment diverse et pourtant magnifiquement una-

nime, âme collective qui parle par des milliers de corps, tour à tour acclame, danse, brusquement se recueille en une méditation impressionnante, pour entonner ensuite en un unisson formidable le fameux choral : « *Wachet auf! Réveillez-vous!* », et enfin, à la suite d'un prodigieux *crêscendo*, explose en un *hosannah* délirant à la gloire de l'Art et des Maîtres allemands, — sans qu'un seul instant ce tumulte réglé par la musique dégénère en désordre ou en chaos. C'est là qu'on saisit sur le vif le secret de cet art wagnérien des ensembles, par où il touche aux fibres les plus secrètes de l'âme allemande et que je définirais : une orgie disciplinée.

Mais il y a eu, dans cette soirée, plus qu'une révélation d'art. Bayreuth 1933, c'est la manifestation, très concertée, d'une Allemagne politique nouvelle. Cet esprit nouveau saisit le visiteur dès la sortie de la gare. Il voit sur la colline qui domine la ville se dresser, parmi les frondaisons, le *Festspielhaus*, le théâtre de Bayreuth, sur lequel flotte une hyperbolique bannière rouge. Bien avant la représentation (qui a lieu à 4 heures de l'après-midi), déjà la foule s'achemine en flots ininterrompus, foule très mêlée, habits de gala et costumes de touristes, parmi lesquels les chemises brunes ne peuvent se compter. Un peu avant l'ouverture des portes, un bref signal retentit : une double haie en un clin d'œil se forme devant l'une des entrées qui conduit directement à la loge officielle. C'est pour donner passage à quelque ministre ou général, représentant du III^e Reich. Le jour où j'ai vu les *Maîtres Chanteurs*, le premier rang de la loge officielle était occupé par le corpulent ministre de l'Air, ou plutôt du « plus lourd que l'air », M. Göring, flanqué du ministre de la Reichswehr, le général von Blomberg, type de l'officier prussien, raide, impassible, figé, le monocle vissé à l'œil. Le chancelier Hitler, qui est un ami personnel de la famille Wagner, était venu quelques semaines auparavant.

Entre la mystique wagnérienne et la mystique hitlérienne s'affirment ainsi, de plus en plus, des affinités profondes. Dans ses mémoires, intitulés *Mein Kampf*, le

chancelier Hitler raconte la grande révélation qu'il reçut, à l'âge de 12 ans, lorsqu'il assista pour la première fois, dans la petite ville autrichienne de Linz, à une représentation de *Lohengrin*. Rêvait-il alors déjà d'être un jour le Chevalier au Cygne attendu par la blonde Elsa, je veux dire par l'Allemagne livrée aux puissances du mal, — le Sauveur acclamé par les foules et chargé par le Saint-Grail de remettre en ordre les affaires de l'Empire allemand? Et ce ne sont point là de simples visites de courtoisie. Une autre fois, le 6 août 1933, c'est le ministre de la Propagande, le Dr Goebels, qui assiste à une représentation des *Maîtres Chanteurs* et profite du premier entr'acte pour lancer dans le monde, devant le micro, un sensationnel speech, où il proclame l'alliance étroite et indissoluble entre l'art wagnérien et la nouvelle Allemagne nationale-socialiste.

Sans aucun doute, il règne à Bayreuth un esprit nouveau. L'œuvre même en a été touchée. Des intentions ont été découvertes, qui étaient loin de la pensée de l'auteur. Qu'on se rappelle, par exemple, la fin du premier acte. Le jeune chevalier, Walther von Stolzing, pour conquérir la jolie Nurembergeoise dont la main a été promise au vainqueur du tournoi des chanteurs, sollicite son admission dans la corporation des Maîtres Chanteurs de la ville. Mais cette demande soulève parmi le vénérable aréopage un certain émoi. La scène bientôt se partage en deux camps: d'un côté les vieux maîtres, les vieilles barbes, et de l'autre côté les jeunes apprentis. Les « plus de quarante ans » restent attachés aux règles d'un code poétique suranné et ne peuvent encaisser l'improvisation fouguese par où se présente le jeune conquérant. Ils ergotent, palabrent, parlementent. Mais, de l'autre côté de la scène, les jeunes sont massés autour de l'impérieux novateur en qui déjà ils ont reconnu le Führer et qui se dresse, debout sur son siège, le buste cambré, le profil hautain, contemplant d'un œil méprisant cette parlote de vieux radoteurs, lui qui se sent le dictateur de demain.

Entre ces deux mondes, le poète Hans Sachs essaie

bien de faire le pont. Il se tourne vers les hommes du passé, les adjure de ne pas s'obstiner dans ce qu'il appelle *die alten Gleise* (« les ornières du passé ») — et avec quelle insistance l'acteur a souligné cette expression! Seule l'inflexible consigne de Bayreuth a empêché à ce moment les applaudissements d'éclater. Et lorsque, tout à la fin du dernier acte, Hans Sachs, non plus du haut d'une tribune, mais cette fois descendu au milieu de cette foule dont il incarne l'âme populaire et le dynamisme contagieux, entonne son hymne à la gloire de l'art allemand, — hymne instantanément répercuté par cette vibrante unanimité, — alors ce furent des minutes inoubliables. A peine le rideau tombé, toute la salle était debout, frémissante, transportée, fanatisée, et pendant près de cinq minutes se prolongea une ovation délirante. Chose inouïe! Pour la première fois le rideau de Bayreuth s'est relevé sur cette apothéose! On aurait dit que toute l'Allemagne, l'éternelle Allemagne, avait pris corps dans cette vision éblouissante, de laquelle l'auditoire ne pouvait plus arracher ses regards. Oubliées, toutes les divisions politiques et les horreurs de la guerre civile, encore récente; oublié, le cauchemar du chômage toujours présent; chassé à jamais, le fantôme de cette lutte de classes, faultrice de guerre civile et de haine sociale, qu'un demi-siècle de marxisme avait implantée dans les cerveaux et les cœurs allemands. Une Allemagne nouvelle, corporative et unie, s'éveillait et prenait conscience d'elle-même devant le spectacle de cette unanimité populaire, unanimité dans la joie du travail et unanimité dans la foi religieuse, une Allemagne nouvelle qui rêve de ressusciter ces corporations enrubannées d'ouvriers, d'artisans et de poètes, tous entraînés par la même acclamation triomphale, portés par le même élan, à la fois national et religieux. Jamais œuvre d'art n'avait apporté, en des heures d'angoisse, une vision si prophétique, un message si réconfortant, le sentiment d'une si miraculeuse délivrance, d'une si inébranlable confiance en l'avenir. Voilà déjà le sens profond que Nietzsche découvrait dans cette prodigieuse et éclatante ouverture des *Maîtres*

Chanteurs dont il disait : « Cette musique est comme l'Allemagne: elle est d'hier et elle est d'après-demain. Elle n'a pas encore son aujourd'hui. »

Oui, il règne à Bayreuth un esprit nouveau. L'ancien Bayreuth, celui d'avant-guerre, se donnait encore des allures de sanctuaire. Il appelait à lui une élite cosmopolite d'esthètes, de décadents raffinés, de désaccordés, de désenchantés romantiques. C'était, selon la pittoresque et amusante expression de Thomas Mann, une sorte de « Lourdes musical ». On voyait, pendant les entr'actes, les spectateurs se promener avec des mines de miraculés extatiques. Le nouveau Bayreuth a rompu avec cet esthétisme cosmopolite et avec ce romantisme décadent. Il se fait le porte-parole d'une Allemagne nouvellement « réveillée ». Pendant les entr'actes, les groupes animés qui se croisent dans les allées qui entourent le *Festspielhaus* s'abordent en faisant le salut fasciste et avec la formule sacramentelle: *Heil Hitler*. Cette pensée nationaliste et raciste n'est-elle d'ailleurs pas formulée dans la fameuse péroraison où Hans Sachs, le représentant de l'Art allemand et le porte-parole de Wagner, sépare, par une barrière infranchissable, le pur germanisme, les pures valeurs germaniques — *was echt und deutsch* — de toute cette corruption, de cette frivolité et de ce néant que représente le monde des « Welches », c'est-à-dire des peuples latins, — « *welscher Dunst und Tand* » ? C'est l'éternelle opposition entre germanisme et humanisme, entre le monde germanique et le génie latin, — ou, si vous voulez encore: entre la Forêt germanique et la civilisation méditerranéenne, ces deux antipodes de l'Europe moderne. Et c'est sur cette opposition qu'il y aurait lieu de retenir encore un instant notre attention.

Richard Wagner a voulu être un artiste spécifiquement allemand, le grand Réformateur allemand de l'art moderne et le Restaurateur du mythe germanique. C'est là le sens « polémique » qu'on découvre au fond de son œuvre. Il s'est posé en adversaire irréductible de la « civilisation » française. A cette propagande européenne

qu'avait exercée naguère l'« esprit français », il a voulu opposer la propagande contraire de la « musique allemande ». C'est à Paris que, jeune débutant, il a fait, pendant ce malheureux séjour de 1839 à 1842, ce que son biographe français, M. de Pourtalès, a appelé « l'apprentissage de la haine », et cette haine a pris chez lui un caractère à la fois artistique, religieux et national, — elle a pris d'abord pour objet une certaine formule d'art qui célébrait alors à Paris ses plus grands triomphes et qui allait représenter à ses yeux le mal incarné, le Principe diabolique de toute corruption morale : l'opéra. Wagner a porté à l'opéra, français ou italien, la même haine sacrée que Luther avait jadis portée à la messe et à la Rome catholique.

Il serait trop long d'exposer toute cette critique de l'opéra que Wagner a longuement développée dans le fameux traité intitulé *Oper und Drama*, où il a développé son art poétique. Ce qu'il importe de retracer, c'est qu'en attaquant cette formule d'art, le Maître allemand entend attaquer du même coup toute une « société », plus exactement toute une « civilisation » dont l'opéra représente à ses yeux le produit le plus authentique, l'image fidèle, l'expression adéquate. Pour la première fois est nettement posée ici cette grande antithèse, indéfiniment ressassée par tous les pangermanistes, entre une « civilisation » où s'exprime au fond une certaine « décadence » et par où se caractérise le génie latin, plus particulièrement l'esprit français, et d'autre part la « culture », principe essentiellement germanique de « régénération ». « Où que nous regardions dans le monde « civilisé », écrivait Wagner, nous constatons la *dévi*ation de l'homme. » Cette décadence procède de causes multiples. Elle tient à des causes morales, politiques et sociales. On sait que Siegfried était, dans la conception première, une sorte de Messie communiste ou anarchiste. A lui de briser le sortilège malfaisant de l'Or du Rhin, c'est-à-dire de la Propriété, du Capital. A lui aussi, jeune révolutionnaire de 48, de partir en guerre contre les « contrats périmés », de délivrer Brünhilde, c'est-à-

dire de réveiller et d'émanciper la Femme endormie, et de célébrer avec elle, en pleine forêt, les noces symboliques de l'amour libre. On sait aussi que, sous l'influence de Schopenhauer d'abord, plus tard sous l'influence de Gobineau qui fut un hôte familier de la villa Wahnfried, cette conception première, toute sociale et politique, de la « Révolution » s'est changée en une doctrine de plus en plus mystique et raciste de la « Régénération ». Wagner cherche de plus en plus les causes de cette décadence dans une corruption du sang, et il réserve au seul génie germanique la mission de régénérer une humanité corrompue et dégénérée. C'est à quoi sert le mythe. Voyez Siegfried. Il représente — et l'expression est de Wagner lui-même — « l'homme nu », c'est-à-dire le geste primitif, la nudité héroïque de la race, sans aucun des mensonges, des déguisements, des costumes sous lesquels la civilisation travaille à le cacher ou à le déformer. Il est l'incarnation du blond Germain ou de l'Aryen blond magnifié par Gobineau — en même temps que se révèle à son oreille de primitif la musique secrète de la Forêt que nos sens de civilisés ne savent plus percevoir. Ainsi, de la fusion nécessaire et intime du mythe et de la musique naît le « drame musical », formule wagnérienne vraiment synthétique et régénératrice de l'œuvre d'art intégrale.

Est-il besoin de montrer tout ce qu'il y a de théorique, de systématique et d'artificiel dans cette outréculante construction de l'esprit? Quel artifice déjà dans ce parti pris de réduire la civilisation latine à cette unique formule d'art qu'est l'opéra! Heureusement, il y a chez Wagner deux personnages : l'homme à système et l'artiste inspiré. Rien n'éclaire mieux chez lui cette dualité que l'attitude qu'il adoptera de plus en plus vis-à-vis de cette civilisation méditerranéenne qu'il avait si sévèrement jugée. Son cerveau de fanatique a beau la condamner : elle trouve dans sa sensibilité une foule de complicités secrètes. Elle exerce sur lui une sorte d'envoûtement, contre lequel il se défendra de moins en moins. Elle devient pour lui la forme enchantée d'une

« décadence » à laquelle il se sent, par bien des fibres secrètes, intimement rattaché. Et l'intermédiaire entre cette « civilisation » et Wagner, ce sera surtout et toujours l'Italie.

On pourrait marquer dans cette initiation trois stations successives.

La première, ce fut un court voyage que Wagner fit en touriste, en l'an 1852, à travers le Tessin, et qui le conduisit jusqu'au lac Majeur et aux îles Borromées. Cette première vision de la terre italienne fut certes un éblouissement, mais qui se changea presque aussitôt en malaise, en hostilité sourde.

La visite aux Iles Borromées, écrit-il dans ses *Mémoires*, m'enchantait au point que mon ravissement m'inquiéta. Je me demandais comment tout cela était possible et ce que je devais en faire. La sensation de me trouver *dans un lieu auquel je n'appartenais pas* m'en chassa au bout d'un seul jour.

Voici donc la première réaction de cet Allemand luthérien : la Beauté méditerranéenne lui apparaît une tentation mauvaise, un fruit défendu, le *Venusberg*, c'est-à-dire un lieu qu'il lui faut fuir au plus vite. *Vade retro, Satanas!* Manifestement, ce n'est pas là le climat de son âme. Ce n'est surtout pas le climat de son art, nordique et protestant. Qu'importe la beauté de ce décor qui lui parle de joie, d'harmonie, de lumière ? Ce qui manquera toujours à Wagner, ce sont précisément ces vertus méditerranéennes qui s'appellent la mesure, la sobriété, le goût, la légèreté, la grâce, la danse, le rythme, c'est cette finesse ailée et enjouée qui met dans la musique de Mozart un « midi de la musique », — c'est cette « perfection méditerranéenne » dont notre grand Maître méditerranéen, Paul Valéry, a donné la formule exquise dans son *Essai sur l'Ame et la Danse*. Voilà qui restera toujours aux antipodes de l'art wagnérien. On connaît le mot du peintre Lenbach, disant un jour à Richard Wagner : « Votre musique, eh oui ! elle nous transporte au ciel, mais elle nous y conduit en camion. »

Mais voici une seconde étape. En 1860, Richard Wagner est obligé de fuir son asile de Zurich à la suite de ce malheureux roman d'amour qui faillit porter le trouble dans la villa de ses protecteurs, les Wesendonck. C'est pendant le séjour qu'il fit alors à Venise qu'il composa, dans quelles fièvres et dans quelles extases ! une grande partie de son *Tristan et Isolde*. Cette fois, Venise l'enchanteresse. Les lettres qu'il adresse à son Isolde lointaine sont un hymne continuuel à la gloire de cette ville enchanteresse qui lui a offert le refuge de ses « cent solitudes profondes ». Mais la Venise qu'il magnifie, ce n'est pas la Venise du grand jour, aux somptueux décors, ni la Venise populaire et bariolée du Carnaval. Celle qu'il aime, c'est la Venise secrète de la nuit, avec le chant des gondoliers qu'il épie dans son insomnie ; c'est le charme surtout, fait de fièvre et de langueur, qui monte la nuit de la lagune et qui évoque à sa pensée l'image d'un monde agonisant, d'un passé en décomposition, d'une vie qui s'éteint dans le nirvâna, bref, pour employer l'expression de Maurice Barrès, ce qu'il aime, c'est « *la mort de Venise* ».

Ainsi, le Midi ne sera jamais pour Wagner ce qu'il était pour Goethe : la terre de la beauté classique, une école de sagesse, d'équilibre, d'ordre, de lucidité, en somme une école de vie et de santé supérieure, — mais une forme enchanteresse de la décadence. A cette civilisation méditerranéenne que récemment Paul Valéry nous montrait disciplinée par la parole publique, par la dialectique, par le *forum*, régie par la logique, par les normes et les lois de la Cité, attachée avant tout à construire la personnalité humaine et à énoncer le Droit, à cet Ordre lumineux, policé, fait à la mesure de l'homme, l'art wagnérien oppose ses monstres, ses géants, ses nains, ses dieux pessimistes, ses Pécheurs maudits, ses femmes extasiées ou hystériques, ses philtres et ses enchantements. Il n'est pas une Sagesse classique, mais une Ivresse romantique ; non une Connaissance lucide, mais une Science démonique des sortilèges qui insufflent à l'âme l'abandon total à toutes les puissances occultes,

Il est aussi une école de nirvâna, une pharmacopée de tous les élixirs de la décadence, une « intoxication » disait Nietzsche. « La Nuit plus belle que le Jour », — « la Mort plus désirable que la Vie », — voilà le langage que Wagner a écouté à Venise. Ou plutôt: Venise n'a fourni que le décor complice, un stimulant artistique, à cette fièvre romantique et à ce goût germanique de la mort.

Il y a enfin une troisième station, et qui s'appelle *Par-sifal*. Pour comprendre le sens profond de cette œuvre terminale, il faudrait commencer par se rappeler la grande lassitude qui s'est emparée de Wagner après les représentations triomphales de Bayreuth en 1876. Ne l'oublions pas, il y a deux hommes chez Wagner. Il y a le fanatique, le recruteur d'hommes, l'organisateur infatigable, — et il y a l'artiste ouvert à toutes les suggestions de sa sensibilité. Il y a l'Allemand aux instincts robustes, énergiques, combatifs, dominateurs, sorte de barbare victorieux, — et puis il y a le musicien raffiné, décadent, un des artistes les plus déchirés et les plus douloureusement vibrants, à certains égards, les plus féminins, expert dans l'art de toutes les séductions, épris d'étoffes soyeuses et de parfums, martyrisé par ses nerfs, avec des contrastes inouïs de morbidité et d'éclatante santé, de paroxysme et de léthargie, de triomphe et de découragement, atteint surtout au suprême degré de cette névrose si caractéristique du musicien, où il faut voir la rançon de tant d'ivresses provoquées, de tant d'extases prolongées, névrose qui se traduit chez lui par un besoin, de jour en jour accru, de silence, de repos, de nirvâna, bref d'*euthanasie*.

Pour celui-là, combien décevantes avaient été les tapageuses ovations de Bayreuth 1876 ! Un instant, il eut l'idée de liquider cette entreprise qui, même financièrement, se soldait par un déficit angoissant, et d'aller planter sa tente quelque part, loin de cette Allemagne ingrate. Il songea à l'Amérique; il songea même à Marseille ou à Toulon. Finalement, comme toujours, ce fut l'Italie qui l'emporta. Un secret aimant l'y attirait, comme à son pôle contraire. « Vivre en Allemagne, mou-

rir en Italie! » avait dit Cosima. Elle ne pensait pas prédire si juste!

Parsifal, le suprême miracle, en grande partie a vu le jour en Italie. Il en a gardé la luminosité et l'atmosphère plus douce. C'est à la villa Angri, près de Naples — la blanche villa sur le Pausilippe, avec ses colonnades enfouies dans les pins et les cyprès; c'est ensuite à Palermo, au milieu des parfums de roses dont les émanations étaient si capiteuses et si pénétrantes, que Wagner disait que désormais les roses de Bayreuth lui paraîtraient bien fades et inodores, — c'est là que bien des scènes de *Parsifal* ont pris figure. Pour la première fois apparaît ici un climat plus chaud, un ciel plus méridional. Le style gothique est abandonné, même dans l'architecture décorative. La coupole du dôme de Sienne a suggéré le plan de la coupole du temple du Saint-Gral. C'est au dôme de Palermo qu'est emprunté ce mélange de style mauresque et chrétien choisi comme motif décoratif pour la colonnade du temple du Saint-Gral. Symptôme plus grave encore : la musique de Wagner commence à s'italianiser et à se catholiciser. Le musicien vise à présent à la pureté de la ligne mélodique et à une simplicité, à une naïveté tout archaïques. Surtout la musique d'église des vieux maîtres italiens l'enchanté. « Voilà enfin de la vraie musique, auprès de laquelle le reste n'est que jeu d'enfants », dit-il après avoir entendu le *Miserere* de Léo, chanté par la maîtrise du Conservatoire de Naples. Par delà Beethoven trop pathétique, par delà le choral luthérien, il veut remonter jusqu'à Palestrina, jusqu'à la mélodie liturgique et aux modulations du plain-chant.

Je ne saurais comparer l'impression que laisse l'audition de *Parsifal* qu'à celle qu'on éprouve dans certains cloîtres du Midi qu'a envahis une floraison de roses blanches, qui suspendent leurs festons aux arceaux des colonnades et répandent jusque sur les tombes du petit cimetière leurs pétales et leurs parfums. La blancheur virginale des fleurs et des murs, la pureté intense du ciel, cette proximité familière des images de la vie et de la mort, tout cela forme une symphonie, amortie par le

silence monastique et par la sévérité des lignes architecturales. Est-ce l'œuvre d'un chrétien? J'en doute fort, car il y a, malgré tout, trop de raffinements dans cette simplicité, trop d'appâts et de calcul dans cette naïveté. *Parsifal* est le plus théâtral des miracles religieux. Qu'eût pensé un Pascal, voire même un Boileau, d'une pareille exhibition des mystères de la Foi chrétienne? Ce qui donne à *Parsifal* sa note et aussi son parfum de décadence, c'est plutôt une sorte de bouddhisme occidental, le bouddhisme d'un artiste ultra-raffiné qui, après avoir goûté les ivresses et tous les désenchantements, aspire au grand Repos et, en composant cette œuvre d'une perfection suprême, s'est construit à lui-même un magnifique tombeau qui sera le sanctuaire où se perpétuera son culte. *Parsifal* est le *Requiem* somptueux de Richard Wagner. L'année même qui suivit son achèvement, le 13 février 1883, le Maître passait imperceptiblement de vie à trépas dans le palais Vendramin, dans cette Venise où il avait évoqué naguère les chants de mort de Tristan et Isolde. « Vivre en Allemagne; mourir en Italie »; sa destinée était accomplie.

§

Ai-je réussi à rendre la complexité, je dirais même l'ambiguïté de cette œuvre qui présente une double face et qui est un événement à la fois *allemand* et *européen*. Goethe, lui aussi, était un événement à la fois allemand et européen, mais c'était un événement en quelque sorte orienté en sens inverse. Le Maître de Weimar résumait en lui le XVIII^e siècle classique, humaniste et cosmopolite. Toute son aspiration a tendu à briser les étroitesse du moule allemand; tout son effort réfléchi était orienté vers « ce qui n'est pas allemand », vers ce qui dépasse l'Allemagne; toute son œuvre a tendu à *européaniser l'Allemagne*, et c'est cette aspiration vers l'universalité humaine qui chez lui a primé tout le reste. — Tout au contraire, Wagner résume le XIX^e siècle romantique et nationaliste. Il a voulu *germaniser l'Europe*. Il a voulu être avant tout Allemand, le Réformateur allemand du

théâtre et de la musique, le metteur en scène d'une Renaissance du mythe et du monde germaniques, et l'actif propagandiste d'une sorte de pangermanisme musical dont les victoires, à travers le monde, coïncidant avec les victoires des armées allemandes, seront bientôt considérées comme la manifestation triomphale de la même mission, de la même mystique germaniques. L'Allemagne d'aujourd'hui n'a donc pas tout à fait tort de le considérer comme le précurseur de cet esprit nouveau qui l'anime. On a lu dans les journaux la fête solennelle donnée, cette année même, le 6 mars 1934, pour la pose de la première pierre du colossal monument national élevé au grand compositeur par la ville de Leipzig, qui est sa ville natale.

Du point de vue allemand, écrivait au lendemain de cette journée la *Gazette de Leipzig*, on ne rend pas justice à Richard Wagner, si on ne le traite qu'en musicien. *La musique n'a été que l'instrument dont il s'est servi pour conquérir le monde.* Pour nous, il est autre chose encore qu'un musicien. Il réalise avant tout le type nouveau du chef, du conquérant, du « *Führer* ».

Voilà le point de vue allemand actuel. Et sans doute Wagner a été le glorificateur de la Race et de la Foi germaniques. On ne saurait méconnaître cet aspect délibérément « polémique » de son œuvre. Mais, comme dit l'autre, « il y a fagot et fagot ». Autre chose est d'appeler l'élite à communier à Bayreuth, autre chose de l'enfermer dans des camps de concentration. Pour Wagner, le germanisme est un principe purement *spirituel* de régénération et non une formule de gouvernement *politique*. Et puis, on ne saurait trop le répéter, il faut distinguer chez lui, entre l'apôtre, le prophète, le théoricien fanatique d'une certaine formule du germanisme, — et le musicien, lequel est vraiment devenu un artiste européen. Est-il bien sûr qu'il ait fait de sa musique un simple instrument au service du germanisme? Ne pourrait-on pas avancer avec tout autant de raisons qu'inversement il a fait du germanisme un moyen de propagande,

un programme d'agitation en faveur de sa musique ? Ainsi que l'a si finement montré Thomas Mann dans un article courageux, qui a été traduit en français et qui est intitulé *Grandeur et souffrances de Richard Wagner* (article qui a fait scandale en Allemagne et a soulevé contre l'auteur toute une campagne de diffamations et provoqué une véritable mise à l'index), le nationalisme de Wagner est pour une bonne part un masque qu'il s'est donné, c'est un germanisme décoratif, à grandes fresques, qui fait que l'étranger se récrie : « Ah ! ça, c'est bien allemand, par exemple ! » Libre donc aux Allemands d'aujourd'hui de ne voir en Wagner que le conquérant, le fanatique, et de faire de sa musique un instrument au service de leur propagande raciste. Ces bruyantes manifestations wagnériennes n'auront qu'un temps ; mais la musique de Wagner, elle, demeurera toujours. Sachons la dégager de ces alliances compromettantes.

Une Française, wagnérienne de la toute première heure, la comtesse Gasparin, écrivait en 1853 :

Un jour, je ne sais lequel, Wagner régnera souverainement sur l'Allemagne et sur la France. Nous ne verrons pas cette aurore, ni vous, ni moi, qu'importe, si de loin nous l'avons saluée !

Avouerais-je que je goûte médiocrement ces prophéties emphatiques, et que le langage d'un certain fanatisme wagnérien ne m'est pas plus sympathique sous une plume française que dans une bouche allemande ? Il ne s'agit pas du tout de faire « régner souverainement » Wagner, ni en France ni en Allemagne. Combien je préfère cette phrase modeste qu'écrivait le vieux Maître italien Verdi — lequel a su rendre hommage à son rival allemand, quoique inversement le Maître allemand n'ait jamais voulu voir en Verdi qu'un musicien du passé :

Le jour viendra peut-être où il ne sera plus question de mélodie ou d'harmonie, de musique italienne ou de musique allemande, de musique du passé ou de musique de l'avenir — mais où on ne parlera plus que de la musique, tout simplement.

JEAN-ÉDOUARD SPENLÉ,

C9: Gabriel Méresse. 'Le Racisme de Wagner et d'Adolf Hitler.' *Revue politique et parlementaire* 42, no. 162 (10 January 1935): 70-78.

LE RACISME DE WAGNER ET D'ADOLF HITLER

C'est un soir de 1901. A la lueur des quinquets du théâtre de Linz, une troupe de passage joue, tant bien que mal, un opéra wagnérien : *Lohengrin*. Les décors sont laids, les costumes défraîchis. Néanmoins, les acteurs réussissent à émouvoir un modeste public de commerçants, de petits rentiers et de fonctionnaires, qui se montre d'autant moins exigeant qu'il est sevré de distractions. La salle est pleine à craquer. Dans cette foule anonyme et endimanchée, un enfant de douze ans, éperdu d'admiration, se grise de musique, de poésie et de joie. C'est Adolf Hitler.

Il a entendu récemment le *Guillaume Tell* de Schiller, ses sentiments patriotiques sont exaltés, il a appris à glorifier le crime politique. L'opéra wagnérien lui ouvre d'autres horizons : il apprécie maintenant la valeur symbolique des légendes germaniques.

Cette rencontre de Richard Wagner et du futur Reich-Führer, *Lohengrin* de l'Allemagne nouvelle, est contée dans *Mein Kampf*, avec le souci évident de soutenir une mystique, de soigner une propagande. Innocent stratagème. Il n'en est pas moins vrai que l'influence du musicien sur l'homme politique est d'autant plus durable et profonde qu'ils sont, tous deux, les types caractéristiques de la race germanique. Ne soyons pas étonnés en retrouvant dans les programmes nationaux-socialistes, les idées sociales, raciales et religieuses les plus chères à Wagner. Tandis qu'avec le musicien, elles étaient restées dans les limites de l'idéologie, elles prennent maintenant une attitude intransigeante et sont assénées à coups de poings, de crosses et de talons dans les cervelles

d'outre-Rhin. Wagner était un utopiste, Hitler est un homme d'action, mais les idées sont restées les mêmes.

Ils ont tous deux — le compositeur et le peintre en bâtiment autrichien — un sentiment national très développé qui ne saurait être contesté. L'un et l'autre ne cessent de proclamer la toute-puissance de l'Allemagne, ses vertus d'héroïsme, de sagesse, d'intelligence. « Honorez vos maîtres allemands », chante le chœur des *Maîtres Chanteurs*.

Ce commun amour pour la patrie les entraîne à une exaltation, un orgueil démesuré qui leur fait proclamer le peuple germanique un peuple-roi, un peuple-messie (1). « Les peuples « changent rarement de visage. Le visage des Allemands a « toujours été plein d'intelligence. Le cœur des Allemands « a toujours été brave. Le poing des Allemands a toujours été « fort. » — « Qu'est-ce que le nationa-socialisme ? » s'écrie Hitler au Congrès de la Victoire à Nuremberg : « Une nouvelle conception du monde ! »

De cet orgueil national dérivent les doctrines raciales. Elles sont d'une folle intransigeance. Si nous en trouvons les prémices dans les livres wagnériens, les nationaux-socialistes se révèlent beaucoup plus exaltés. L'idée de la race aryenne est utilisée par eux à des fins politiques et, comme telle, exploitée dans tous les domaines.

« L'Aryen est le Prométhée de l'humanité ; l'étincelle « divine du génie a, de tout temps, jailli de son front lumineux : il a toujours allumé à nouveau ce feu qui, sous la « forme de la connaissance... montrait ainsi à l'homme le « chemin qu'il devait gravir pour devenir le maître des « autres êtres vivants sur cette terre. » (2)

Le devoir de tout bon Allemand reconnu de race pure est donc de vivre comme un Aryen.

Dans cette rage de se prêter aux exigences ancestrales, le national-socialisme étudie passionnément les récits mythologiques, les épopées germaniques où Wagner a puisé l'essentiel de ses poèmes. Ce qui n'était pour l'un que le prétexte d'une œuvre d'art devient pour les autres la règle d'une nouvelle vie. Les nazis voient, dans ces récits populaires, le testament de leurs ancêtres ; dans cette recherche de la vérité

(1) Correspondance officielle du parti nazi. Cf. *Le Temps*, 15 sept. 1934.

(2) *Mein Kampf*, page 289.

aryenne, ils ne dédaignent aucun problème, si insignifiant soit-il, et n'échappent pas au ridicule.

La *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* ne vient-elle pas de déclarer gravement que le mot *hourrah*, n'étant pas germanique, ne peut être employé par des Aryens. Afin d'y substituer un cri d'enthousiasme digne du Führer, on doit écarter le mot *heil* comme suspect et adopter le cri de guerre des Walkyries : « *Hojotoho ! Hejaha !* » De même, l'*Arbeiterturn*, organe officiel du Front du Travail, s'assure, après de laborieuses recherches, que la célébration du premier mai n'est pas une invention marxiste. Les communistes en ont volé l'idée aux premiers Aryens, en particulier à Wotan, « dieu « du ciel source de toute culture, dieu de l'art militaire, des « sciences et des arts ». Cette folie, cette incohérence n'est pas le seul privilège des journalistes du parti ; les chefs tout-puissants de l'hitlérisme, gagnés de ce délire racial, sont pris dans le tourbillon. Hermann Goering, ministre de l'Air, président du Reichstag, bras droit du Führer, en multiplie personnellement les exemples. En juin 1934, il convoque le corps diplomatique à la villa Schorfheyde, près de Berlin, qui est mise à sa disposition par l'Etat. Sa dernière marotte est de s'y livrer à l'acclimatation du bison. Après une heure d'attente, les ambassadeurs en grands uniformes, chamarrés de décorations, ont la surprise de le voir arriver revêtu d'une peau d'ours, appuyé sur un javelot, un coutelas à la ceinture (1). Dans cet appareil — aryen — Goering déclare qu'il est indigne d'un brave d'attaquer un animal autrement qu'à l'arme blanche...

L'ennemi mortel de l'Aryen est le Juif, ce « parasite, ce « bacille dissolvant de l'Humanité » (2).

La doctrine de l'antisémitisme, base du national-socialisme, puise dans les déclarations de Richard Wagner un encouragement sérieux. Les sarcasmes d'un musicien sur un Meyerbeer, un Mendelssohn sont inspirés par leur origine israélite. « La « corruption du sang et l'influence démoralisante du ju- « daïsme, telles sont les causes principales de notre dé- « chéance. » (3) — « J'avais une vieille dent contre toute jui- « verie et ce sentiment de rancune est aussi nécessaire à ma

(1) Cf. *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 15 août 1934. L. Gillet.

(2) *Mein Kampf*.

(3) Chamberlain : *Richard Wagner*.

« nature que la bile l'est au sang. Un jour vint où ce maudit
 « griffonnage juif porta ma colère à son comble et alors je finis
 « par éclater. Le coup a porté et me semble avoir été terrible
 « et j'en suis bien aise, car je voulais faire trembler ces
 « gens-là. » Rapprochons de ces documents l'article IV du
 programme nazi ; l'antisémitisme s'y exprime avec la même
 haine. « Ne peuvent être citoyens que ceux qui sont conci-
 « toyens. Ne peuvent être concitoyens que les hommes de
 « sang allemand et ceci en dehors de toute considération con-
 « fessionnelle. Les Juifs n'étant pas de sang allemand ne sont
 « pas des concitoyens. » Et cette déclaration d'Hitler dans
Mein Kampf : « Celui qui, le matin, lit un journal juif et n'y
 « trouve pas une accusation contre lui, peut se reprocher de
 « n'avoir pas bien employé son temps la veille. Dans le cas
 « contraire, en effet, il serait sali et injurié par les Juifs. Celui
 « qui se dresse avec force contre les ennemis mortels de notre
 « nationalité et de notre race aryenne, a le droit d'espérer la
 « haine et la persécution de cette tribu. »

Pour les questions religieuses, l'influence de Richard Wagner est indéniable, mais elle se manifeste d'étrange manière. Le délire racial des nationaux-socialistes les porte à la création d'une religion aryenne puisée tout entière dans la mythologie nordique commémorée par le musicien dans la *Tétralogie*. Dans cette crise d'athéisme, les Hitlériens auraient pu, cependant, accepter les idées du compositeur. Celui-ci n'est pas catholique ni protestant. Il réprouve les cérémonies du culte et, dans une lettre à M. Wesendonck, confesse qu'il a trouvé « inexprimablement déplaisante cette cérémonie de clin-quant ». Wagner se crée une religion philosophique à son usage : il croit à l'avenir de l'humanité basée sur l'amour des hommes les uns pour les autres ; à la doctrine de la régénération ; à la valeur rédemptrice de la souffrance.

Les Hitlériens rejettent cette religion philosophique qui leur paraît encore entichée de christianisme. Ils se montrent hostiles au catholicisme qui est « une religion étrangère à « notre race, une importation sémite » (1), afin de créer une religion raciale groupant autour de la Croix Gammée les ado-

(1) *Le Temps*, mai 1934. R. Allier. Cf. *Kaempfernde Kirche*.

rateurs de Wotan et de Thor. Les dieux de la Tétralogie reçoivent ainsi les prières des Allemands du xx^e siècle ; étrange effet de la civilisation !

Tel récit du mariage de deux adeptes de la nouvelle croyance évoque, d'une manière saisissante, le résumé d'une scène d'opéra wagnérien. Jugez-en plutôt :

« L'assistance entonna un hymne au printemps, puis le « consécrateur exposa aux époux la légende de Sigurd qui, « chevauchant à travers les montagnes, vit un grand feu s'élever vers le ciel. S'approchant, il découvrit la guerrière « Brunnhilde cuirassée et casquée. De son épée, il trancha la « cuirasse de Brunnhilde endormie par le pouvoir magique « d'Odin. Puis le professeur Hauer lut un fragment du *Zarathustra* sur les devoirs des époux. Enfin, il bénit le couple en « invoquant la terre, notre mère, et le ciel, notre père, qui « portent et baignent tous les humains. »

Si les adorateurs des dieux aryens sont moins nombreux que M. Rosenberg, fondateur de la nouvelle croyance n'aimerait le faire croire, la mythologie germanique devient, de jour en jour, plus familière aux nationaux-socialistes. « Le Walhalla, séjour des héros allemands », « Wotan, père de l'Allemagne », sont autant de clichés pour leurs discours et servent de prétexte à la glorification de la race aryenne.

Au point de vue social, les opinions hitlériennes se rapprochent, en bien des points, du programme présenté par Richard Wagner, en 1849, au Vaterlandsverein. Le musicien condamne le communisme comme « une utopie dangereuse et irréalisable », « la plus ridicule et la plus stupide de toutes les doctrines » ; de même la lutte contre le marxisme, cette « peste mentale d'origine juive », est un des articles de foi du parti nazi.

Au Vaterlandsverein, Wagner se montre l'adversaire du capitalisme, il proclame la souveraineté du peuple et propose un programme économique, où « des associations de production « échangeraient les produits de leur activité » afin de « coopérer à l'entretien et au bonheur de l'humanité », système qui s'apparente, somme toute, au régime corporatif.

De son côté, l'auteur de *Mein Kampf*, en raillant la bourgeoisie, composée d'après lui de « radoteurs » et de « lâches », rend hommage à la sagesse populaire que son parti se pique

de représenter. Il préconise les corporations qui ont le devoir de veiller au développement de la richesse économique de l'Etat et sont ainsi les soldats pacifiques de l'Allemagne nouvelle.

Sur le terrain de la politique extérieure, le Reich-Führer retrouve encore Richard Wagner. « Tout ce qui me désole au moment où je tâche de me mettre en rapport avec l'esprit français, c'est d'y rencontrer trop de sentimentalités », écrivait Wagner à Judith Gauthier... « Il y a une sorte de fausse poésie qui, assez longtemps, a été soutenue comme une vraie poésie par un charme propice qui flattait l'esprit d'une nation sanguinaire. Cet esprit ne connaît que le présent, l'actualité, et c'est pour cela qu'il est d'une étroitesse si pénible pour ceux qui veulent s'expliquer avec lui. Au contraire, la nourrice de l'Allemand était l'Histoire : d'y remonter c'était notre instruction qui nous consolait et nous fortifiait... Accepte le sort tel qu'il est jeté, comme un jugement de Dieu et étudie le sens profond de ce jugement. » Si le musicien est guidé, ici, par l'ivresse de la victoire et les rancœurs de l'artiste incompris par les Parisiens, l'opinion d'Hitler, exprimée dans *Mein Kampf* est plus catégorique. Il méprise les Français, « ce peuple qui tombe au niveau du nègre » (1). « Il faut qu'on le sache bien : l'ennemi mortel, le plus inexorable du peuple allemand, est et demeure la France, qui que ce soit qui gouverne en France, maintenant ou plus tard. Il faut que l'on comprenne cela en Allemagne, de telle sorte que la volonté de vivre de la nation allemande ne dépérisse plus dans une simple défense passive, mais soit rassemblée dans une dernière explication active et soit jetée, pour des buts allemands, les plus grands possibles, dans une dernière lutte décisive. C'est seulement alors qu'on sera en état d'achever la lutte éternelle et en soi si stérile entre nous et la France, mais ce sera à la condition que l'Allemagne ne voie, dans la destruction de la France, qu'un moyen pour pouvoir ensuite donner enfin à notre peuple tout le développement possible. » (2)

Wagner avait en horreur l'Allemand homme de lettres et bel esprit, type de la *kultur* germanique. Hitler ne se montre

(1) et (2) *Mein Kampf*.

pas moins sévère en accablant de sarcasmes ces « dégénérés », ces « chevaliers de l'encrier » (1). Ils ne peuvent comprendre, dit-il, le sens des révolutions politiques « qui ne sont jamais faites sous le signe de la plume d'oie » (1). Leurs combats intellectuels, stériles « jets de limonade », sont tournés en ridicule. Cette haine passionnée des intellectuels — l'Aryen n'est pas intellectuel — s'unit assez étrangement chez Hitler au culte de l'Histoire, à la manie des citations.

Hitler oppose à l'écrivain, constructeur de systèmes, incapable d'action brutale, l'orateur qui électrise la foule. Il connaît personnellement la « puissance magique de la parole » (1) dont Wagner avait goûté la griserie à la tribune du Vaterlandsverein.

Les nationaux-socialistes ont hérité de Wagner ses dons de metteur en scène, son amour du kolossal. Ils s'en servent à des fins politiques.

L'auteur de *Mein Kampf* sait apprécier la valeur psychologique de la parade qui exalte les sentiments populaires et rend la foule électrisée capable des plus grandes choses. Il entretient soigneusement le goût inné du peuple allemand pour cette « magie suggestive » (1) en multipliant les parades, les défilés, les retraites aux flambeaux, favorables aux belles attitudes, aux éclats de voix, au déploiement de troupes, de drapeaux.

Chacune de ces manifestations est minutieusement réglée pour le plus grand profit de la propagande. Le récent Congrès du Travail à Nuremberg n'échappe pas à la règle. 52.000 hommes du Service du Travail défilent en chantant devant le Reich-Führer.

En lisant dans *Le Temps* du 6 septembre 1934 le compte rendu de cette journée, on se croit soudainement transporté dans une salle de théâtre. Ces réponses du chœur à un récitant, scandées sur un rythme guerrier, cette ambiance quasi religieuse, cette mise en scène fastueuse, évoquent, d'une manière frappante, quelque opéra wagnérien.

« Le Führer salue : « Heil, hommes du Travail. » D'une « voix tonnante, 52.000 hommes répondent : « Heil, mon « Führer. » Puis les colonnes s'ébranlent lentement et l'on a « presque l'impression d'une marche de lansquenets du « Moyen Age. Les tambours battent et un chant de lansquenets

(1) *Mein Kampf*.

« retentit : « Faites flotter au loin les drapeaux, nous voulons
 « aller à l'assaut, fidèles, à la manière des lansquenets. » Tout
 « à coup, retentissant dans la masse énorme des régiments
 « bruns-gris, se détache une voix claire qui prononce le ser-
 « ment de fidélité du service du travail au Führer. Un chœur
 « répond : « Nous voici, nous sommes prêts, nous conduirons
 « l'Allemagne vers une nouvelle époque. »

« De nouveau une voix s'élève, elle demande : « Camarade,
 « d'où viens-tu ? » De tous les coins de la vaste plaine reten-
 « tissent alors les réponses : « De Poméranie, de Bavière, du
 « Rhin, de Königsberg, de la Baltique, de Thuringe, de Silé-
 « sie, et de la Sarre, pour laquelle nous combattons. » Une
 « deuxième voix demande : « Camarade, quel métier as-tu ? »
 « Et de nouveau, les voix répondent : « Nous venons de nos
 « enclumes, de nos bureaux, de nos salles de cour, etc. » Puis,
 « sur un ton d'accusation : « Autrefois, j'étais chômeur, et
 « mes mains se desséchaient. »

« Maintenant, un chœur s'élève jusqu'à la tribune : « Nous
 « n'avons pas vécu dans le tonnerre des obus, et pourtant
 « nous sommes des soldats. » Les bras se lèvent pour com-
 « mémorer les morts de la guerre, les drapeaux s'inclinent
 « sur le gazon. Les régiments gris-bruns s'écrient : « Flandre,
 « Somme, Liège, Duna, Isonzo, Est, Ouest, Sud. »

« Ensuite les étendards se redressent et un chant monte :
 « Nous te servirons avec notre bêche, car nous sommes les
 « soldats du travail, nous ne te trahisons jamais. »

En dehors de ces grandioses manifestations, où tout est con-
 certé pour mieux frapper les imaginations populaires, les
 heures décisives du national-socialisme bénéficient du même
 goût pour la mise en scène. Les sanglantes journées de juin.
 présentent à toutes les mémoires, ressemblent à un scénario
 cinématographique. Décisions rapides, gestes pathétiques,
 belles attitudes, confusion des traîtres, dégradation des offi-
 ciers, avilissement d'anciens amis, assassinats au coin d'un
 bois, fusillades dans une cour obscure, rien n'y manque, pas
 même les commentaires de la presse hitlérienne qui, par le
 réalisme inouï des comptes rendus, accentue encore cette
 impression théâtrale.

Adolf Hitler a le don, comme Wagner, de créer une
 mystique en donnant à quelques idées simples et humaines la

valeur de préceptes groupant des hommes d'aspirations diverses autour d'un même étendard : l'amour passionné de la patrie. Ce qui fait la grande force du Reich-Führer et du musicien révolutionnaire, c'est leur commune dévotion pour les traditions populaires. Ils savent tirer un enseignement de cette mythologie nordique, de ces épopées où les premiers Germains brossaient le récit de leurs guerres, de leurs amours, de leurs conquêtes. En s'appuyant ainsi sur l'héritage ancestral, sur l'idée raciale, ils encouragent son attachement aux ancêtres et donnent à leur œuvre une grande portée, une signification poétique, une base solide et une force explosive.

Ces idées grandioses rapprochent Richard Wagner du Reich-Führer. Ils sont bien, tous deux, de la même race et caractérisent la continuité du tempérament germanique qui ne saurait nous étonner. Car, en y regardant de plus près, l'Allemagne de Frédéric II se retrouve dans celle de Bismarck et dans l'Allemagne des nationaux-socialistes. L'Allemagne représente un long héritage d'idées, de coutumes, de traditions qui, en façonnant les individus, leur laissent une marque ineffaçable. Les générations qui se suivent sont soulevées par les mêmes enthousiasmes et les mêmes haines dont l'expression s'exalte à des époques déterminées dans certaines figures de l'Histoire. C'est ainsi qu'Adolf Hitler est le disciple de Wagner et que leur similitude d'idées sur les problèmes les plus importants de la vie d'outre-Rhin est assez remarquable pour être soulignée et nous fait apprécier, d'une façon nouvelle, l'extraordinaire vénération des nationaux-socialistes pour Richard Wagner.

Un tel état d'esprit doit nous faire réfléchir. L'Allemagne est entretenue dans un état constant de surexcitation qui porte ses dirigeants à une aussi grande exagération dans les idées que dans les faits. Leurs ambitions démesurées, leurs projets de réforme visant à la régénération de l'humanité, leur attitude intransigeante et brutale, leur fol orgueil offrent une certaine grandeur, mais présentent aussi de réels dangers que l'on ne saurait méconnaître et dont nous avons le devoir de nous défier, car de cruelles expériences nous en ont fait apprécier la gravité.

Gabriel MERESSE.

C10: Jean Vinchon et Bernard Champigneulle. 'Hitler et le wagnérisme.' *Mercur de France*, 15 June 1935, 508–20.

Nous lisions, il y a quelques semaines, une dépêche de Berlin :

... Cette formidable manifestation de confiance du peuple allemand en son Führer s'est terminée ce soir à l'Opéra, par la représentation de *Tannhäuser* devant un parterre de chefs nationaux socialistes et de généraux de la Reichswer.

C'est un fait entre mille. On voit très bien ce que les éblouissantes images de Tannhäuser peuvent jeter de lustre et de prestige sur une assemblée de messieurs en uniforme nazi et de vieux militaires. Et ce n'est pas la moindre habileté du Führer d'avoir su mettre les forces de la musique allemande, de celle de Wagner en particulier, au service de ses rêves politiques.

Hitler entretient le goût bien connu de l'Allemand pour le théâtre et la parade. Il règle lui-même avec rigueur le grandiose cérémonial des assemblées où il prend la parole. Un décor constellé d'étendards sert généralement de fond à la tribune massive et surélevée où il discourt. La musique a toujours préludé, enveloppante, impérieuse, pour mettre la foule dans l'état de réceptivité enthousiaste qui la rend hypersensible aux célèbres inflexions vocales du chancelier. C'est la musique aussi qui viendra par les accents renforcés de ses masses vocales et instrumentales, éveiller dans les cœurs les résonances secrètes de son ardent vocabulaire ; et toujours avec les chants nationaux, c'est Wagner qui dispensera aux foules,—sensibles comme des femmes,—les grandes exaltations collectives qu'elles viennent quêter comme une nourriture.

Au moment où Guillaume Ier, à Versailles, est couronné Empereur d'Allemagne, Wagner a terminé l'*Anneau du Nibelung*. Quelques années plus tard, l'Empereur vient à Bayreuth, inaugurer le fameux théâtre que le musicien, grâce à Louis II, aura pu faire construire pour réaliser le rêve qu'il porte en soi depuis longtemps. A partir de ce moment-là, Wagner est entré dans le Panthéon des gloires nationales. Ses Niebelungen et les dieux de son Olympe ont pris leur place dans le Walhalla, élevés par Louis Ier, au milieu des sapins qui dominent le Danube, à quelques kilomètres de Ratisbonne. Désormais, l'Empire ne cessera de l'utiliser pour la glorification de ses buts nationalistes ou impérialistes.

Guillaume II, prince romantique par tant d'aspects et qui aimait à s'identifier à des personnages de légende, devait aider à implanter la mythologie de Bayreuth dans l'esprit de ses sujets. Siegfried, Wotan, les Filles-Fleurs et les Walkyries deviennent de vivantes réalités religieuses. Tandis que Louis II, peu musicien, s'était simplement attardé aux images visuelles que lui représentaient les mythes wagnériens pour se fournir de motifs d'exaltation à ses rêveries, les gouvernements prussiens en exploitèrent la force dynamique. Avec la guerre, le romantisme allemand vécut son rêve le plus puissant. Le Michel se change en Siegfried, forgeant le heaume et le glaive. Ludendorff, en particulier, est hanté par l'esprit de la Tétralogie. C'est du nom des héros des Niebelungen qu'on baptise les ouvrages fortifiés. En 1918, la principale ligne de retraite de l'armée allemande portait le nom de Brünhild. Elle était profondément bétonnée et passait pour imprenable. Elle devait rester semblable à la Walkyrie couchée sur la montagne, vivante et intacte au milieu des flammes.

Le wagnérisme eut à pâtir de la défaite allemande. Dans les soubresauts qui agitérent le pays jusqu'à l'arrivée d'Hitler au pouvoir, le culte national de l'auteur de la *Tétralogie*, eut à subir, au point de vue national, une désaffection. Bayreuth fut même laissé à l'abandon. Les saisons ne furent reprises qu'en 1924. Chose curieuse, c'est le public français que, sevré de Wagner pendant la guerre, manifesta alors le plus d'enthousiasme pour sa musique. Au moment où les jeunes compositeurs se détachaient complètement de l'inspiration wagnérienne, le public se ruait aux festivals dominicaux des grands concerts pour applaudir inlassablement le prélude de *Tristan* ou les *Murmures de la Forêt*, et il demandait à l'Opéra les œuvres de Wagner, beaucoup plus que celles du répertoire lyrique français.

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Aujourd'hui, par la volonté d'Adolf Hitler, Bayreuth a reconquis son prestige. Pendant la saison, le chancelier habite le plus souvent Bayreuth ... Suivons la rue Richard-Wagner dans la direction du faubourg de Dürschnitz. Après avoir longé la grille du jardin de Wahnfried, nous trouvons un passage étroit qui conduit au Hofgarten et nous arrivons à une petite maison de briques qui dépend de la demeure de la famille Wagner. Un milicien en uniforme noir monte la garde devant la porte. Sur le trottoir, saisies de respect et parlant peu, vingt-cinq ou trente personnes épient l'heureuse circonstance qui leur permettra de voir leur Führer. Nous nous arrêtons un instant avec un groupe de Bavares en culotte de peau. Une fenêtre ouverte permet de voir une pièce au rez-de-chaussée où une vieille gouvernante fait le ménage. C'est une chambre de l'appartement du maître. A certaines heures, des voitures rapides et silencieuses conduisent là des personnages importants. Dans l'air, un vrombissement fait lever la tête vers l'avion personnel d'Hitler qui tourne autour de Bayreuth comme ce soir il tournera autour de la colline du théâtre.

Hier, nous avons appris l'assassinat de Dolfuss. Fin juillet 1934, fin juillet 1914, Vienne, Serajevo. En haut lieu, les autorités s'affolent. La censure a saisi tous les journaux français, alors qu'elle a laissé passer le *Daily Mail* et le *Corriere de la Serra*. Pourtant, celui-là évoque à propos des derniers événements les gangsters de Chicago et l'autre annonce une concentration des troupes italiennes vers le Brenner. Comme Wagner, Hitler ne veut plus connaître qu'un ennemi : la France. Frau Müller, notre hôtesse, femme d'un membre des S.A., nous le redit au milieu des larmes pendant qu'elle apporte le petit déjeuner. Frau Müller expose avec une attention soutenue, malgré son émotion, l'opinion que la propagande du parti lui a apprise. Nous avançons que nous sommes français. Elle veut bien admettre nos qualités personnelles mais frémit en évoquant les autres, la horde des barbares qui attendent de l'autre côté du Rhin l'heure où ils pourront anéantir la « culture ». Un autre écho de la propagande, plus terriblement éloquent que la voix de Frau Müller, l'effigie d'une bombe d'avion, se dresse malencontreusement au milieu du marché de la rue Maximilien. Au cours de notre promenade mélancolique de Bayreuth, au lendemain de l'assassinat de Dolfuss, cette torpille nous hante comme un cauchemar.

Ainsi le glaive Nothung, d'abord brisé en tronçons, redevient peu à peu, sous le marteau de Siegfried, l'épée aiguisée qu'Hitler, après Guillaume, va menacer au nouveau de tirer du fourreau. Des psychiatres et des journalistes avaient raconté autrefois que Guillaume était fou, que les tares héréditaires des Hohenzollern avaient déséquilibré son système nerveux. Et voilà qu'un autre homme, placé au centre du même peuple, recommence avec les mêmes détails les mêmes aventures ...

La journée avance. Quatre heures approchent. Nous nous préparons pour monter au Festspielhaus. Dans le pavillon voisin de Wahnfried, quelqu'un passe son smoking, pendant qu'un secrétaire lui lit les dernières lettres du courrier. Dans la longue Mercédès qui l'emporte au théâtre, Hitler continue son travail. Depuis vingt minutes, le peloton des miliciens fait la haie devant l'entrée. Au commandement, la double file noire se met au garde-à-vous ; le chancelier descend au milieu de la foule des têtes qui s'inclinent, et monte rapidement les marches du perron. Sur son smoking sombre, une seule note de lumière brille à sa boutonnière : une petite croix de fer.

Nous avons regagné notre place dans la salle. Toute l'assistance est tournée vers la loge où Mme Winifred Wagner et Mme Gœbbels se trouvent au premier rang. Gœbbels, Goering sont déjà là, l'un en smoking, l'autre en uniforme gris-bleu de général d'aviation. Une lumière voilée descend des cintres, baignant les visages dans une atmosphère enveloppée qui évoque les lithographies de Fantin-Latour. C'est la lumière même que nous retrouverons tout à l'heure sur la scène, cette lumière surnaturelle que voulait Wagner. Hitler vient d'entrer rapidement et prend sa place sur le devant de la loge. Est-ce l'éclairage ? Est-ce l'émotion des derniers événements ? Il apparaît alors d'une pâleur de cire sous la mèche noire, ramenée plus en arrière que d'habitude. Cette figure pâle se détend pour un bref sourire pendant que les mains de la foule se dressent vers lui. Ceux qui ne saluent pas sont l'exception : les étrangers, et, là-bas, au premier rang, ce prince de la maison impériale qui sourit avec mépris ...

L'acte terminé, Hitler donne le signal des applaudissements, sauf si l'on joue *Parsifal*, puis se retire dans le salon, pendant que la foule tente d'apercevoir sa silhouette derrière le rideau à fleurs de lis choisi autrefois par Louis II. Avant chaque acte, la même scène se renouvelle.

Après la représentation, tout le monde se retrouve au restaurant du théâtre. Hitler est assis avec ses collaborateurs, à la table de Mme Wagner. Son visage est moins blafard, plus humain que dans la loge. Avec quelques légumes et quelques fruits, il prend la tasse de lait qui est sa boisson habituelle. Mme Winifred Wagner elle-même n'ose pas allumer son éternelle cigarette. Quand, au bout d'une heure, Hitler se lève et disparaît, suivi bientôt de Gœbbels et de Goering, les Wagner regroupent les amis et les artistes.

C'est la fête des artistes aujourd'hui, et, quand l'un d'eux entre dans la salle du restaurant, il reçoit, au milieu des applaudissements, le rameau vert cueilli suivant la tradition près de la tombe de Wagner. Pourtant, personne n'oublie le Führer absent et, près de nous, quelqu'un l'évoque dans ses salons vieillots de Wahnfried, assis sur le canapé près du piano où, parmi des livres et des tableaux, trône un grand paon ... Il a là devant lui une vitrine où les enfants de Wagner conservent parmi les derniers souvenirs de leur aïeul l'indicateur des chemins de fer qu'il consulta avant son dernier voyage à Venise—Venise, le Sud, la route qu'après les reîtres d'autrefois, les Allemands seront toujours condamnés à suivre, même s'ils ont renié Goethe.

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On a douté parfois de la sincérité politique de Wagner. On a voulu voir le désir d'une brève satisfaction de vanité dans les courbettes et les sourires qu'il adressait alors à l'Empereur. Reniait-il tout un passé révolutionnaire ? Son esprit « quarante-huitard » s'opposerait-il aujourd'hui au nationalisme hitlérien, comme le certifie M. Thomas

Mann ? Serait-il au contraire le meilleur serviteur du Führer, comme le pensent et le veulent la plupart de ses concitoyens ? Cette façon de diriger à sa guise la volonté des morts nous a toujours paru assez outrecuidante ; nous ne pouvons que chercher un enseignement dans leur vie et dans leur œuvre. Hitler, en tout cas, ne s'y est pas trompé. Il a formellement réclamé Wagner pour l'un des siens. C'est que leur double destin se poursuit avec des ressemblances indiscutables, malgré la différence des temps. Tous deux sont Allemands du Sud. Tous deux ont subi l'attrance du Nord et, pour s'y mieux soumettre, se sont efforcés de dépouiller la pensée et les sentiments latins. L'un et l'autre ont rejeté tour à tour le christianisme et les influences classiques, avec force au temps de leur jeunesse, avec plus de réserve dans leur âge mûr. Après leur succès, tous deux ont de même tenté d'oublier ces particularités saxonnes et tyroliennes qui s'opposaient à l'unification de la Patrie allemande.

Les deux Allemands se sont toujours sentis assez lointains des demi-Slaves de Prusse. Berlin n'a jamais pu conquérir leur cœur. Hitler, chaque fois qu'il le peut, revient à Nüremberg, à Bayreuth, dans sa villa de la campagne bavaroise. Et l'auteur de *Tristan*, que le destin semble avoir marqué pour mourir à Venise, semblait ne séjourner qu'à regret dans la capitale du Reich. N'est-ce pas ailleurs que bat le vrai cœur de l'Allemagne, sur la route d'Italie et du soleil ? Nous reconnaissons l'attrance ancestrale vers le pays merveilleux « où fleurissent les citronniers ». Quelle exaltation dut animer le Führer lors de sa fameuse rencontre avec la Duce sur la place Saint-Marc ensoleillée et vibrante d'enthousiasme !

Hitler a commencé sa vie publique au lendemain de 1928. Wagner, né en 1813, l'année de la bataille des Nations, a été imprégné pendant toute son enfance des souvenirs de cette journée de Leipzig, où les Saxons ont rompu le charme qui unissait l'Allemagne à Napoléon. Le destin d'Hitler est ramassé, brutale, déroulé suivant le rythme précipité de ce temps-ci. Celui de Wagner, tout aussi brutal si l'on considère la somme des drames qu'il a traversés, le paraît moins à cause de la longueur des étapes qui étaient encore permises au XIX^e siècle.

Tous deux furent empoignés de bonne heure par la magie de la musique, considérée par eux comme le premier des arts. Wagner, dès la première adolescence, dès qu'il connaît Homère, se plaît à imaginer la possibilité d'une épopée musicale allemande. Et le jeune Hitler, ouvrier à Vienne, trouve le moyen d'économiser les quelques pièces de monnaie nécessaires pour entendre Wagner du poulailler de l'Opéra.

Le romantisme moderne échappe à ces influences initiales que connut Wagner durant sa fréquentation des cénacles de 1830. Les groupements des premiers nationaux-socialistes sont en parfaite communion avec l'esprit de ces cénacles : c'est la haine du philistin ; c'est ce désir d'action révolutionnaire qui veut briser les anciens cadres pour établir les bases d'une société nouvelle. Le socialisme hitlérien a été marqué par l'empreinte profonde du rêve actif des jeunes Allemands de l'époque romantique.

Après 1830, Wagner commence à prendre le bâton qu'il met aux mains du pèlerin au fronton de sa maison de Bayreuth. Il se rend à Vienne, bien qu'il n'aime guère cette ville pénétrée d'influences françaises et soumises à la slavophilie des Habsbourg.

Wagner, qu'il fût à Leipzig, à Prague, à Magdebourg ou en Russie subissait toujours ce mirage d'une France sans doute plus honnie qu'abhorrée. Il put réaliser son rêve en venant s'établir à Paris. Le musicien a rencontré en France des succès et des échecs. Il

était fort apprécié par un bon nombre d'écrivains romantiques ; des politiques rêveurs, comme Emile Olivier ou Jules Ferry, l'ont applaudi ; Napoléon III l'a soutenu, *Rienzi*, monté par Padeloup en 1869, reçut un accueil triomphal. On ne saurait donc expliquer par la fameuse cabale de *Tannhäuser* ses imprécations contre la France. Les échecs que Wagner connut maintes fois en Allemagne pouvaient non moins l'atteindre. Sans doute les réactions d'un auditoire parisien étaient-elles plus sensibles à son cœur ? ... En fait, il s'est toujours beaucoup intéressé à la France, même lorsqu'il la poursuivait de sa haine par la parole et par la plume. Il est curieux de constater que sa brochure *Art et politique allemande*, parue en 1868, rend sur ce point presque le même son que *Mein Kampf*. « L'ennemi mortel, l'ennemi impitoyable du peuple allemand est et restera la France. », écrit Hitler ; tandis que Wagner, opposant la civilisation allemande à la civilisation française, annonce que l'écrasement de celle-ci permettra seule à celle-là de s'épanouir librement. Les races latines ont des expressions d'art superficielles que « l'œuvre d'art et de l'avenir », confondue avec l'œuvre d'art allemande, anéantira. Et Wagner prévoit que, sous la domination de l'œuvre d'inspiration métaphysique où tous les arts seront fondus, on verra s'éteindre les derniers échos des opéras français ou italiens, qu'il compare à des « filles de joie ».

Les théoriciens du national-socialisme partagent cette même considération pour l'humanisme occidental. Ils y ajoutent les aigreurs et les fureurs qui sont nées des humiliations du traité de Versailles.

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Il est superflu de dire tout ce que l'âme wagnérienne a d'universel et d'immédiatement accessible à l'âme occidentale. Son caractère européen, si bien défini par Nietzsche avant qu'il ne l'opposât aux clartés latines de Bizet ne peut être contesté ; Wagner pensait d'abord en esprit du XIXe siècle de culture cosmopolite, en romantique intégral imprégné d'humanitarisme et de mystique sentimentale ; mais, au lieu que les petites cours allemandes où vivaient les beaux esprits de son temps trouvaient un prestige, un refuge à leurs rêves, un refoulement à leurs troubles romantiques, un remède à leur pessimisme et à leurs forces déclinantes, dans une amoureuse contemplation des derniers fastes de notre ancien régime, Wagner puisant dans le vieux fonds national germanique, se forgeait une conception de l'avenir, s'exaltait dans une inspiration messianique qui le portait à placer son œuvre dans une atmosphère surnaturelle où, un jour ou l'autre, vivrait un monde régénéré. Une forme idéale de civilisation lui apparaissait comme un astre éblouissant, vers qui l'humanité devait se tourner. Ses efforts eussent été vains sans doute, et sa musique eut été noyée dans la plus nuageuse des métaphysiques, si, pour servir de support à ses concepts, il n'eût rencontré, et compris, et sorti, la force concrète des vieux mythes populaires de la nation.

Comme le vieux Guillaume Ier, beaucoup d'Allemands ne voient dans les œuvres de Wagner que le côté « vieux-dieu allemand », ou l'aspect pittoresque ou coloré, déjà vaguement national-socialiste, à la manière des *Maîtres-Chanteurs*. Et l'Allemagne des professeurs devait aussi faire fumer l'encens devant l'autel du dieu de Bayreuth. Wagner a cru dans une humanité régénérée, dans un avenir révolutionnaire, assez vague, il est vrai, qui donnerait « la Force, l'Art, la Beauté ». Il écrivait, en 1849 : « Mon rôle est de provoquer la révolution partout. » Et, de Paris, il prêchait la Révolution universelle. Mais son esprit révolutionnaire ne revêtait-il pas

inconsciemment la forme de ce messianisme pangermain dont nous avons connu tant d'exemples ? Il était avant tout allemand. « Je porte mon Allemagne en moi-même », écrivait-il à Listz [sic]. Nous n'attachons pas une très grande importance à son mauvais pamphlet francophobe : *Une capitulation*, écrit surtout pour assouvir la rancœur que lui avaient causée ses insuccès parisiens. Nous en attachons davantage à son esprit nordique, antiroman, à son esprit déjà « raciste ». Ce révolutionnaire paraît, somme toute, assez semblable à la plupart des révolutionnaires aryens de l'Allemagne, à ceux de 1914 ou à ceux de 1935, qui en Sarre votèrent allemand. La Révolution universelle fut pour lui, comme elle doit être pour tout bon patriote, surtout un article d'exportation. Au reste, la dernière partie de sa vie fut canalisée dans un sens officiel et très conforme aux volontés bismarckiennes.

Dès 1859, s'est exprimé sous une forme assez dure le racisme de Wagner. Il avait vivement souffert, devons-nous dire, du succès de Meyerbeer et de Mendelssohn, comme il souffrira bientôt de ceux d'Offenbach. Dans la *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, il publie un article anonyme contre les artistes juifs. Nous y reconnaissons un accent qui frappe aujourd'hui souvent nos oreilles : le juif allemand n'est pas un Allemand ; son origine le rend incapable de comprendre le génie de la race ... Wagner reprendra cet article douze ans plus tard, après son mariage avec Cosima, en lui donnant cette fois l'autorité de sa signature.

Hitler n'est pas un guide pour son peuple. Lié à lui par des liens de sensibilité, il ne lui fournit pas de directives (différent en cela de Mussolini, dont l'intelligence dominatrice a modelé l'Italie). Hitler a su exprimer les sentiments profonds de l'Allemagne, qui l'aime parce qu'elle se reconnaît en lui. Il la flatte et ses moyens sont d'un démagogue. Nous avons parfois peine à le comprendre, car ses modes de démagogie sont souvent opposés à ceux qui sont habituellement employés en France. Chez nous, la propagande officielle, dont les habitudes sont essentiellement électorales, ne peut qu'en temps de guerre, et avec quelles difficultés ! exalter l'héroïsme ; tandis que l'héroïsme du peuple allemand est continuellement surexcité, magnifié, utilisé par ses chefs ; on enseigne à la nation un évangile de renoncement aux biens immédiats, d'orgueil, de dureté ; on lui impose une foi dans la nécessité de la souffrance et dans le mépris du bonheur. Les héros de Wagner témoignent qu'il est beau de donner sa vie pour de beaux mythes. Aux obscurs destins de tant de ses personnages qui éveillent de si profonds échos dans les forces confuses de l'instinct germanique, viennent s'adjoindre, par le processus des impératifs kantien, des éléments d'action qui donnent un sens à la vie, exaltent les contraintes et aboutissent à cette politique qui plonge ses racines dans un mysticisme romantique assez morbide et s'épanouit dans un matérialisme lucide, précis, positif et brutal. Un jeune nazi, talons joints, embouche le cor de *Tristan* pour sonner le ralliement.

Aussi, ne pouvons-nous nous étonner du contraste de Wahnfried. Face à la tombe de celui qui a porté en soi le rêve de l'« œuvre d'art de l'avenir », d'un opéra allemand hors de toute mesure où tous les arts doivent concourir à l'expression des idées instinctives et intraduisibles dans le langage parlé, se dresse la demeure privilégiée du dictateur populaire, dont l'action semble tendre vers la formation d'une sorte de monstrueux Saint-Empire.

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Wagner a parfaitement symbolisé l'*Homo duplex* allemand, qui a toujours étonné les observateurs et les philosophes. « Je suis à la fois Faust et Méphisto », disait Goethe. Toujours nous verrons l'âme germanique aux prises avec des énergies antagonistes. C'est l'opposition de la Venusberg et de la Wartburg. C'est l'enchantement de cette musique où les puissances solennelles, pures, sereines, alternent avec les mouvements tortueux et souterrains. L'ambivalence collective de l'Allemagne n'a jamais laissé de surprendre ses voisins. Toujours nous avons été séduits par l'exquise sensibilité allemande et terrifiés par ses brusques retours. Nous avons goûté l'enchantement des tableaux idylliques d'outre-Rhin : les yeux bleus du vieux hobereau qui, à côté de son pot de bière, fume sa pipe de porcelaine, en caressant la servante aux bras fermes et au rire frais ; les bourgeois propres et dignes qui, le dimanche, au sortir du temple, les oreilles pleines de chorales de Bach, vont disserter paisiblement sous les tilleuls ... Et nous imaginons toujours difficilement que ce sont ceux de la ruée de Belgique en 1914, ceux des exécutions hitlériennes du 30 juin, ceux de Dolfuss ...

Wagner satisfait l'une et l'autre des tendances contradictoires de l'esprit allemand. Imbu de renoncement ascétique et de cette doctrine de non-vouloir qu'il apprit chez Schopenhauer, il y a aussi en lui un côté d'homme d'action ; et ses drames portent à la fois la marque du pessimisme le plus sombre en même temps que celle d'une éclatante vitalité.

Nous fûmes témoins l'an dernier à Nuremberg, dans ces rues qui ont servi de cadre aux *Maîtres-Chanteurs*, d'un de ces immenses cortèges civiles et d'allure militaire comme on peut en voir aujourd'hui dans presque tous les pays d'Europe. Ceux d'Allemagne sont les plus importants ; l'instinct grégaire de son peuple le poussait déjà, à la fin du siècle dernier, à des rassemblements de parade qui, bien que plus minces, préfiguraient ceux d'à présent. Ici les sections se succédaient au pas cadence, uniforme et serrées autour des drapeaux à croix gammée. Les hommes paraissaient joyeux de se sentir anonymement incorporés à l'immense masse brune qui remplissait la rue de son rythme puissant. Tout à coup, une autre troupe fit tache, une tache pittoresque et vivement colorée sur le fond monotone. Ses drapeaux, portés sur l'épaule à la manière ancienne, étaient éclatants, historiés comme des armoiries et surchargés des figures héraldiques. Les costumes, les rapières, les hautes bottes évoquaient le moyen âge. Les étudiants passaient dans leur tenue romantique. Ils semblaient l'incarnation du romantisme même. Avec eux, à la suite des enseignes de leur Führer, mais gardant ses prestigieux étendards, il nous semblait voir défiler toute la vieille Allemagne, celle de Luther, celle de Goethe et de Schiller, celle de Herder, de Fichte, de Novalis, celle de Richard Wagner enfin, le dernier des grands romantiques.

Comme durant tout le XIXe siècle, le rêve traditionnel et la réalité marchaient côte à côte ... Et cette vision nous ramenait vers le *Second Faust* :

D'abord grand et puissant, à présent je marche avec sagesse et circonspection ...
Qu'il est insensé, celui qui dirige ses regards soucieux de ce côté, qui s' imagine d'être au-dessus des nuages, au-dessus de ses semblables ; qu'il se tienne ferme sur cette terre : le monde n'est pas muet pour l'homme qui vaut quelque chose.

La sagesse du vieux Goethe s'opposait à l'individualisme outré du « Sturm und Drang » comme elle s'opposait à l'exaltation wagnérienne, comme elle s'oppose aux délirantes émotions collectives de la nouvelle Allemagne. Mais l'Allemand a vu

surgir les spectres des quatre femmes grises de *Faust* : la Famine, la Dette, le Souci, la Détresse. Et il a pu s'écrier comme Faust devant elles : « Je n'ai fait qu'accomplir et désirer encore. » Moeller van Den Bruck, le plus noble des théoriciens du national-socialisme, au destin si tragiquement émouvant, écrivait, en conclusion de son *Troisième Reich* : « Le nationalisme allemand combat pour le Reich final. Il est toujours désiré. Et il ne sera jamais accompli. » Il semble que l'Allemagne cherche toujours un idéal incompatible avec son propre bonheur. Les grands chocs politiques qu'elle a éprouvés n'ont fait que débrider ses instincts, qui viennent galoper à la suite du plus fort, du plus terrible, du plus frénétique d'entre eux : l'instinct de domination. Et l'orgueilleuse ivresse de la force anxieusement reconquise a remplacé le bonheur raisonnable que désirent les peuples qui ne sacrifient pas la logique aux chimères. Parce que Wagner a proclamé par la voix de ses héros le droit à satisfaire ses instincts sans le contrôle de la morale ni même de la logique, Hitler l'a reconnu pour l'un des siens. Pour entraîner la nation, il s'en sert comme d'une fanfare à la tête d'un régiment. L'ombre de l'auteur de la Tétralogie plane toujours sur la foule allemande ; elle l'exalte et la stimule ; elle est un des éléments qui activent le feu sacré, cet éternel *furor teutonicus* dont il est malheureusement bien probable que nous n'avons pas fini de connaître les ravages.

C11: René Dumesnil. 'Musique : Semaine artistique allemande à Paris.' *Mercure de France*, 15 October 1937, 407–9.

Pendant huit jours les troupes allemandes venues à Paris pour la « Deutsche Kulturwoche »—Staatsoper de Berlin, Orchestre de la Philharmonique de Berlin, chœurs de M. Bruno Kittel, solistes de Bayreuth, et de Munich, l'élite des musiciens d'outre-Rhin—ont donné la démonstration la plus brillante de cette parole du Sous-Secrétaire d'Etat M. Walther Funk, vice-président de la Reichskulturkammer [sic] dans la déclaration par laquelle il définit le sens de ces manifestations : « L'artiste rend service à sa nation. » Il est certain qu'entre toutes les manifestations musicales auxquelles l'Exposition de 1937 a servi de prétexte, cette « semaine allemande » restera dans notre souvenir comme un modèle de ce qu'il fallait faire et comme un témoignage de l'efficacité des moyens employés pour réussir. Car sa réussite fut éclatante, et il serait difficile de dire que l'un ou l'autre de ces spectacles ait été moins parfait : *la Walkyrie*, *Tristan*, la *Neuvième Symphonie*, les plus beaux lieder de Schubert, de Schumann, d'Hugo Wolff et de Richard Strauss, le *Te Deum* d'Anton Brückner, l'alleluia du *Messie*, *Naenie* de Brahms, *le Chevalier à la rose*, et enfin la création en France d'*Ariane à Naxos* de M. Richard Strauss, tel est l'extraordinaire apport de cette « semaine allemande », sans compter une soirée de ballets. La place est trop mesurée pour parler en détail de chacune de ces représentations ou de chacun de ces concerts : elle serait tout entière occupée par la simple énumération des artistes dont, en justice, chacun devrait être cité. Mais une leçon se dégage de ces fêtes, et c'est l'étonnante cohésion de ces troupes, c'est la conscience avec laquelle chacun, depuis le chef, depuis un Furtwaengler, un Clemens Krauss et un Elmendorff jusqu'au dernier figurant, remplit son rôle, oublie sa propre gloire ou, même plus modestement sa propre personne pour ne songer qu'à l'œuvre, pour se donner tout entier à la tâche commune, accepter lorsque l'intérêt de l'ouvrage le commande, un emploi qu'il pourrait à bon droit trouver indigne de sa réputation, et faire preuve d'une bonne volonté et d'un entrain qui, en définitive, rehaussent comme le dit M. Walther Funk le prestige de la nation. Cette leçon-là, nous voudrions certes, qu'elle ne fût pas perdue pour nos artistes, mais nous souhaiterions aussi que l'on fit pour eux, en France, ce que l'on fait en Allemagne, et que l'on comprit le devoir de l'Etat en de telles circonstances. Je cite encore M. Walther Funk qui a défini ce devoir : « Convier les artistes à de grandes tâches qui ont pour objet, non seulement de répondre aux exigences particulières du présent, mais encore de réveiller les grandes forces créatrices du passé, de sorte que la jeune génération puisse mesurer ses œuvres en criterium de ces valeurs éternelles de la culture allemande. » Remplaçons ici les mots « culture allemande » par « culture française », mais ne ménageons pas plus que les Allemands l'aide de l'Etat aux arts, et en particulier à la musique, comprenons comme ils l'ont compris qu'il n'y a point, dans la paix, de meilleure affirmation de la force d'un peuple : « L'art—je cite encore, car, en vérité, on ne saurait trop méditer cette courtoise leçon— l'art ne devient culture que s'il est l'expression sublime d'un peuple assez fort pour imprimer à son époque sa propre effigie. » Ceux qui ont suivi les représentations et les concerts de la « Semaine allemande » ne doutent point que ses organisateurs aient atteint le but qu'ils visaient : ils n'oublieront pas de si tôt la *Walkyrie*, le *Chevalier*, et l'*Ariane* qu'ils ont si chaleureusement applaudis.

C12: Gustave Samazeuilh. 'La Semaine artistique allemande à Paris.' *Cahiers franco-allemands*, September 1937, 290–92.

L'hiver dernier, au lendemain d'un brillant concert de musique française donné à Berlin sous les auspices de l'Académie des Beaux-Arts de Prusse et avec le concours de l'Orchestre philharmonique dirigé par M. Albert Wolff, la « Berliner Boersen-Zeitung » écrivait : « Une fois de plus, l'Art a été le grand instigateur de paisible compréhension entre les peuples ... Il serait à désirer que ces concerts d'échange prissent au moins la même importance que les matches internationaux. » De son côté, la « Deutsche Zukunft » ajoutait : « Ces soirées doivent consolider et resserrer, de peuple à peuple, des liens et des relations féconds, source de culture commune, et les amplifier. Elles leur créent à l'intérieur, de précieuses obligations de gratitude, et elles sont, pour l'extérieur, le signe de rapports amicaux. » Ces excellentes paroles résument à merveille la bienfaisante leçon qu'on peut dégager, des deux côtés du Rhin, de la superbe Semaine artistique allemande qui vient de se dérouler à Paris, au début de septembre.

Je ne puis malheureusement songer ici, comme je l'ai fait ailleurs, à examiner par le détail la série des manifestations qui, malgré l'époque estivale, a attiré au Théâtre des Champs-Élysées et à la Salle Pleyel une assistance non moins nombreuses qu'enthousiaste. Leurs points culminants ont sans doute été les soirées de la « Neuvième Symphonie » et de la « Walkyrie » où le Dr. Furtwaengler s'est surpassé, et nous a donné la mesure de tout ce que la sensibilité frémissante d'un chef de son envergure peut obtenir de troupes d'élite tendues vers le même but : servir une œuvre de génie au lieu de s'en servir pour des fins personnelles. L'interprétation de la Symphonie beethovénienne, à laquelle collaboraient le merveilleux instrument collectif, capable de tous les élans, de tous les effacements qu'est l'Orchestre philharmonique berlinois, et les chœurs souples et éloquents du Professeur Bruno Kittel, a été, en quelque sorte, tournée toute entière vers l'expression, vers l'exaltation de la ligne mélodique, sans perdre pour cela sa force rythmique et son ampleur sonore aux moments voulus. Le développement du premier morceau, plein de mystère et de destinée, les variations de l'andante, la première apparition instrumentale, quasi immatérielle, de l'illustre thème pacificateur du Finale furent des minutes que n'oublieront pas de sitôt ceux auxquels il aura été donné de les savourer ! Il en fut de même pour les hauts moments sonores de la Walkyrie, grâce à la présence de tout l'ensemble bayreuthien de cette année, longuement acclamé par le public entier. Sous l'égide magistrale et profondément expressive de W. Furtwaengler, les grands artistes que sont Mmes. Frida Leider, Maria Müller, Margarethe Klose, MM. Rudolph Bockelmann, Franz Voelker, Joseph von Manowarda, sans oublier la cohorte ardente de Walkyries ont donné toute leur mesure, et trouvé des accents qui, partis du cœur, allaient aux cœurs, tandis que, avec des moyens techniques presque improvisés, M. Heinz Tietjen faisait le tour de force d'établir une mise en scène profondément fidèle à l'esprit wagnérien, et féconde en trouvailles d'éclairage émouvantes, comme celles de l'Annonce à la Mort, au deuxième acte ... Tout en ne présentant évidemment pas une qualité aussi exceptionnelle, la représentation de « Tristan et Isolde » a eu une belle tenue d'ensemble, grâce aux dons de mouvement et de vie de M. Karl Elmendorff qui était au pupitre du chef. Mme Martha Fuchs pénétrera sans doute davantage avec le temps les divers aspects du rôle d'Isolde. Mais elle a une voix généreuse, une belle présence. M. Carl Hartmann fait, en Tristan, un effort valeureux. Mme. Klose est une admirable Brangoene, M. Janssen un persuasif Kurwenal, M. de Manowarda un Marke de classe, et les nouveaux décors de M. Preetorius,—dont le

premier par sa plantation, n'est pas sans soulever ses objections—, ne manquent ni de poésie ni de couleur.

On a unanimement regretté qu'encore convalescent, M. Richard Strauss n'ait pas pu prendre, à la tête de la visite allemande, la place qui lui revenait de droit, et venir, dans ce Paris qu'il aime, dans cette France à laquelle il fut toujours fidèle, diriger le « Chevalier à la rose » et « Ariane à Naxos ». Il avait délégué, pour le suppléer, M. Clemens Krauss, l'actuel directeur de la musique de l'Opéra d'Etat de Munich, qui est familier avec son esprit et son style, et a donné aux deux œuvres leur véritable allure, libre et primesautière, au lieu de les alourdir et de les ralentir comme il advient hélas ! si souvent. Sans oublier la représentation du Chevalier à laquelle Mmes. Ursuleac, Ranzack, Cebotari, MM. Krenn, Roswaenge, Fuchs, prêtèrent un vif agrément, et une mise en scène si adéquate, l'intérêt fut surtout suscité que « Ariane à Naxos » jusqu'ici inconnue sur les bords de la Seine. On sait par le double caractère lyrique et comique, qui en fait peut-être une des partitions les plus personnelles et les plus réussies de son célèbre auteur, rend sa réalisation musicale et scénique particulièrement délicate. Mme. Viorica Ursuleac, Ariane noblement émouvante, Mlle. Erna Berger, Zerbinetta délicieuse de grâce sémillante et de virtuosité vocale, M. Roswaenge, Bacchus persuasif, les nombreux rôles secondaires, ont fait face de la meilleure façon aux difficultés de leur tâche, dans un cadre scénique où M. Tietjen montre toutes les ressources de son intelligence. Quant aux trente-sept solistes de l'orchestre de l'Opéra d'Etat de Berlin, dont la valeur fut dûment fêtée au cours des soirées wagnériennes, ils se sont voués avec zèle le plus heureux à la mise en valeur d'une instrumentation dont tour à tour la légèreté, la couleur, la poésie expressive, et même aux pages, finales, l'ampleur, sont, pour une oreille avertie, le plus délicat des régals, et témoignent d'une surprenante maîtrise.

La place me fait défaut pour vous entretenir de la soirée de ballets qui inaugura la Semaine. On y a applaudi, le danseur-mime Harald Kreuzberg, le ballet du « Deutsches Opernhaus » de Berlin qui a montré de la cohésion dans diverses évocations pittoresques européennes, et l'ensemble Günther de Munich, qui tire d'ingénieuses applications de la gymnastique rythmique de M. Jacques-Dalcroze, et les développe sur de curieuses musiques où les instruments à percussion jouent un rôle important ... Quant au concert de la Salle Pleyel,—où se produisirent alternativement la superbe phalange chorale masculine de Cologné dirigée par M. Eugène Pabst, dans des pages romantiques et populaires, les chœurs Kittel, l'orchestre Philharmonique berlinois dans des fragments du Messie de Haendel, du Te Deum de Bruckner, et M. Heinrich Schlussnuss dans des lieder romantiques et modernes dont il est l'interprète éloquent et communicatif,—il fut aussi une des belles réussites de cette Semaine que les musiciens ne virent se terminer qu'à regret. Elle restera certainement, tant par l'ampleur de sa conception, que sa réalisation, la variété de son programme, un honneur pour ceux qui l'ont menée à bien, et, sans conteste, un des plus beaux souvenirs de l'Exposition de 1937. Puisse la musique française, qui en est certes digne par sa richesse, par sa diversité, et est souvent si mal connue hors de nos frontières, trouver une occasion analogue de dispenser ses prestiges à l'étranger !

C13: Jacques Heugel, 'A propos de Wagner ... encore!' *Le Ménestrel*, 5 January 1940, 8.

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## A propos de Wagner... encore!

Désireux de servir à quelque chose et se rappelant les hauts faits des wagnérophages de 1914, un certain nombre d'intellectuels désœuvrés ont déclenché contre Wagner l'offensive rituelle. Déjà, dans les concerts, on n'ose plus jouer une note du grand Saxon.

Nous avons dit maintes fois, ici-même, à quel point il était ridicule de voir dans le génie wagnérien une expression du prussianisme ou du pangermanisme et dans Wagner une sorte de chevalier teutonique qui, de nos jours, porterait la chemise brune. Sans doute Hitler se l'est annexé. Mais n'a-t-il pas, également, annexé l'Autriche, la Bohême, la Pologne? N'oublions pas que, si Wotan représente assez bien l'éternelle Allemagne politique, — il conclut des pactes qu'il s'efforce ensuite de tourner et, conseillé par l'inquiétant Loge, joue au plus fin, pour son malheur, avec Albérich, le tyran bolcheviste, — c'est Siegfried, honteusement trompé par ce Prussien de Hagen, qui représente le véritable génie germanique. La Tétralogie est un violent réquisitoire, non seulement contre l'hitlérisme, mais contre le germanisme prussien. L'esprit qui anime toute l'œuvre ne s'oppose nullement à nos conceptions occidentales et chrétiennes, et Wagner, qu'attirait d'autre part la « matière » celtique (Lohengrin, Tristan, Parsifal), a donné à la vieille légende scandinave et rhénane une couleur très curieusement occidentale.

L'auteur d'une *Capitulation* eut des faiblesses, des petitesse. Qui le nie? Aucun « génie » n'en fut exempt. Qu'on

nous jette la pierre! Nous estimons que nos féroces wagnérophages feraient mieux, au lieu de perdre leur temps d'aussi lamentable façon, de songer un peu aux buts de guerre, au futur traité de paix, à la rive gauche du Rhin,

(2 lignes censurées)

à la lutte contre le bolchevisme, à l'affranchissement de la France et à Celui qui a fait de cette France le plus beau des royaumes terrestres. Il y aurait là de quoi remplir la vie de toute une génération d'intellectuels intelligents. Et voilà qui serait plus utile que d'attaquer, d'un esprit aussi léger que routinier, l'œuvre d'un homme dont le génie, à l'opposé de celui de Nietzsche, ne voulut jamais rien détruire de ce que nous révérons et saurons défendre, s'il le faut, jusqu'à la mort.

Jacques HEUGEL.

C14: Pierre Berlioz. 'Concert Colonne-Lamoureux.' *Le Ménestrel*, 8 March 1940, 43-4.

### Concerts Colonne-Lamoureux

3 Mars. — Festival Beethoven (*Première et Neuvième Symphonie*). Direction Paul Paray.

10 Mars. — Un Festival Berlioz-Wagner était annoncé avec la *Symphonie fantastique* du premier, les *Préludes de Lohengrin*, de *Tristan et Yseult* et l'Ouverture de *Tannhäuser* du second. A la réflexion, il sembla probablement à quelqu'un imprudent de consacrer la moitié du programme à Wagner, dont le nom, depuis le début de la guerre, n'a encore figuré sur aucune affiche française. Et l'on décida de remplacer *Lohengrin* et *Tristan* par la *Petite Suite* de Debussy et *Ma Mère l'Oye* de Ravel. Wagner ne figurait plus qu'avec l'Ouverture de *Tannhäuser*, constituant une carte de visite, une sorte d'essai timide tenté en fin de séance, afin, sans doute, de permettre éventuellement aux auditeurs hostiles de quitter le Châtelet avant l'exécution de l'œuvre, en matière de protestation discrète.

Non seulement personne, bien entendu, n'en fit rien, mais des ovations, des acclamations sans fin saluèrent cette œuvre illustre, enlevée magnifiquement par M. Paul Paray, qui termina la séance sur une note de singulière grandeur. Cet enthousiasme, manifesté de façon impressionnante par toute une salle debout, comportait, à l'adresse des Concerts Colonne-Lamoureux, un chaleureux remerciement pour sa louable initiative et un regret tacite pour le geste un peu timoré qui, après coup, lui fut sans doute suggéré. L'expérience que l'on a souhaitée est faite, et elle a été décisive.

Le public français comprend que Wagner ne saurait être « annexé » par la propagande grimaçante de l'hitlérisme.

P. B.

**C15:** Four articles by Pierre Berlioz in *Le Jour*:

‘Faut-il rejouer Wagner en France ?’ *Le Jour*, 10 March 1940, 1–2.

‘Faut-il rejouer du Wagner ?’ *Le Jour*, 11 March 1940, 4.

‘Le Cas Wagner. L’opinion de Philippe Gaubert.’ *Le Jour*, 12 March 1940, 4.

‘Le Cas Wagner. « Wagner est un classique ... »’ *Le Jour*, 15 March 1940, 4.

#### FAUT-IL REJOUER WAGNER EN FRANCE ?

A propos de la réapparition du nom du dramaturge allemand sur les affiches parisiennes, M. Henri Büsser nous dit : « Tout Hitler est dans la « Tétralogie » et nous avons devant nous la ligne Siegfried ».

– Une de nos grandes associations symphoniques ayant affiché pour sa séance dominicale quelques fragments d’œuvres de Richard Wagner, avec la *Symphonie fantastique* de Berlioz, s’est vue invitée au haut lieu à modifier son programme.

Aurons-nous un cas Wagner et reverrons-nous la polémique qui pendant la Grande Guerre de 1914–1918, divisa les musiciens français ?

On se souvient du geste du grand Camille Saint-Saëns levant l’étendard de la révolte contre le culte wagnérien, et ses brillantes passes d’armes littéraires avec Paul Souday, auteur des *Dernières Imprécations de Camille*, et dont le patriotisme était indiscutable.

A la vérité, Richard Wagner fut banni de notre vie musicale pendant toute cette période cruelle.

Il ne faisait sa réapparition à l’Opéra que le 5 janvier 1921, avec *La Walkyrie*, dirigée par Camille Chevillard.

Depuis le 1er septembre 1939 son nom a de nouveau disparu de nos programmes. Une résurrection est-elle opportune ? Quels peuvent en être les bienfaits ou les dangers ? Et les arguments qui avaient dressé l’opinion public en 1914 sont-ils encore valables ?

C’est ce que nous avons demandé au compositeur Henri Büsser, membre de l’Institut, qui dirige l’Opéra-Comique avec la compétence que l’on sait et dont la classe de composition du Conservatoire a formé toute une génération de musiciens français.

– Le cas Wagner est complexe, nous dit Henri Büsser. Il ne me paraît pas opportun de l’agiter en ce moment. Mon opinion est qu’il faut encore écarter Wagner de nos programmes.

« Non en tant que musicien, naturellement ; il faudrait, à ce compte, aussi bien proscrire Beethoven ou Schumann.

« Malheureusement, l’œuvre de Wagner présente une psychose bien particulière. Sans aller reprendre toute la haine que l’homme avait vouée à la France, ce que nous reprouvons dans son œuvre, et que la période cruelle que nous traversons rend encore plus sensible, c’est cette exaltation constante de la violence et de la force.

« *La Tétralogie* contient en puissance toutes les théories d’Hitler. Ce sont le vol, la trahison et le meurtre qui sont le propre de presque tous les héros wagnériens, et ces héros sont des symboles pour Hitler, qui ne s’assimile que trop à eux, de même qu’autrefois Guillaume II s’identifiait volontiers à *Lohengrin*, le chevalier du Graal.

« On pourra objecter qu’en ce moment en Allemagne on joue volontiers de la musique française, mais ceci est certainement le fait d’une propagande intéressée. On

ne peut donc pas en faire état.

« Croyez-moi, l'œuvre de Wagner, c'est le reflet de l'âme germanique, brutale et conquérante, c'est le visage de l'Allemagne éternelle ; mais au moment où la ligne où nos fils se battront peut-être demain s'appelle *Siegfried*, il ne me paraît pas opportun de lui prodiguer nos applaudissements. »

#### FAUT-IL REJOUER DU WAGNER ?

« L'avis de M. Georges Hüe »

– « Nous avons exposé hier l'opinion de M. Henri Büsser sur l'opportunité de donner des œuvres de Wagner dans nos concerts symphoniques. Voici maintenant l'opinion du maître Georges Hüe, membre de l'Institut, qui oppose à l'opinion de M. Büsser les arguments suivants.

– Mon opinion est catégorique, nous dit le compositeur de Siang Sing, non seulement il faut jouer du Wagner mais je ne comprends même pas qu'on ait cessé de le jouer depuis le début des hostilités. C'est exactement comme si nous retirions de nos musées des sculptures ou des peintures d'artistes allemands. On peut être un excellent patriote et admirer Holbein ou Albert Durer. Ce n'est pas une raison parce que Hitler est un fervent wagnérien pour que nous soyons privés d'entendre les œuvres d'un des plus grands génies musicaux dont l'œuvre constitue une des plus belles manifestations d'un esprit surhumain et dont l'emprise sur les musiciens fut immense. Or, Wagner est mort depuis cinquante-sept ans et les événements actuels, pour aussi cruels qu'ils soient, ne peuvent en rien décider de son influence.

Surtout, conclut Georges Hüe, ne mêlons pas l'art à la politique. »

#### LE CAS WAGNER. L'OPINION DE PHILIPPE GAUBERT

– « La question Wagner est encore délicate, nous dit Philippe Gaubert, directeur de l'Opéra, et qui dirigea pendant de longues années l'orchestre de la Société des concerts du Conservatoire.

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« Nous sommes encore trop sous le coup des agressions germaniques pour revenir d'un pas délibéré à celui qui glorifia si haut les instincts éternels des Germains. Au point de vue purement musical, Wagner est véritablement un titan. La place qu'il occupe est immense. Il a enthousiasmé toute une génération de musiciens et l'on ne peut pas songer à s'en passer.

« Toutefois, sur le plan national, il me semble qu'on pourrait attendre un peu. Il est peut-être un peu prématuré d'y revenir si rapidement et il y a suffisamment de compositeurs français pour alimenter cette première saison symphonique de guerre.

« A l'Opéra, ses ouvrages sont en sommeil pour l'instant et je ne crois pas que le moment soit encore venu pour changer de ligne de conduite. »

#### LE CAS WAGNER. « WAGNER EST UN CLASSIQUE... »

« Wagner est un classique ... » nous dit M. J.-G. Prod'homme conservateur de la bibliothèque de l'Opéra.

– Une querelle à propos de Wagner ? nous dit M. J.-G. Prod'homme, l'érudit conservateur de la bibliothèque de l'Opéra, mais c'est de l'histoire ancienne ! Je ne vois pas l'utilité de rompre des lances sur une question que est morte depuis longtemps !

Au point de vue musical, Wagner est classé. N'oubliez pas qu'il est né seulement trois ans après Schumann, qu'il avait déjà quatorze ans à la mort de Beethoven, vingt ans quand Brahms est né, et qu'il est mort il y a plus d'un demi-siècle. Il est maintenant un classique. Il en a tous les caractères : son influence a produit tout son effet ; et il y a beau temps qu'on se l'est assimilé au même titre que tous les novateurs. On ne fait plus de « Wagner » depuis vingt-cinq ans. Si les auditeurs réclament ses œuvres, on ne voit pas pourquoi on les leur refuserait plus justement que celles de Weber et de Mendelssohn. Eh bien ! Il faut leur en donner.

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Au point de vue national, la question ne se pose même pas. Wagner fut parfois antifrçais, toujours antiprussien, mais s'il s'attaqua à tout le monde, il eut le respect du beau. Il ne faut pas oublier ces lignes de la conclusion de son ouvrage sur Beethoven : « Un bienfaiteur du monde a le pas sur un conquérant du monde. »

Savez-vous ce que j'ai découvert en compulsant les archives de l'Opéra ? C'est que pendant la guerre de 1870 on joua constamment Wagner à l'Opéra de la rue Le-Peletier. Son nom y fut constamment affiché. Quant à dire que ce qu'il a écrit contre la France était pour se venger de ses succès chez nous, c'est totalement faux.

Il s'est élevé aussi bien contre ses compatriotes dans des cas identiques. Les Prussiens, férus de musique italienne, l'avaient en horreur et Wagner le leur rendait bien.

D'ailleurs *Les Maîtres Chanteurs* furent écrits dans une intention antiallemande. La première version comportait des noms propres qui ridiculisaient ses contemporains.

Il fut même affreusement vexé par Guillaume Ier qui s'étant rendu à Bayreuth sur son invitation et qui pour le récompenser de ses efforts ne trouva rien d'autre à dire : « Je n'aurais jamais cru que vous puissiez réussir. »

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La plupart de ses héros, certes, sont des barbares, mais ce sont ceux des légendes scandinaves et ceux de la vieille Allemagne. Quant à *Parsifal*, c'est le chevalier français Perceval.

Je dois vous étonner, mais, à mon sens, la seule position qu'on puisse prendre actuellement est une position purement commerciale. Wagner est tombé dans le domaine public depuis janvier 1914. Chaque qu'on en joue, les sociétés intéressées encaissent les droits d'auteur. Ceux-ci sont repartis aux ayants droit, c'est-à-dire les traducteurs, adaptateurs ou leurs héritiers. Il n'y a pas de raison pour les en priver.

De même pour les sociétés symphoniques qui vivent péniblement. Si Wagner leur permet d'équilibrer leur budget, au fond tous les musiciens en profiteront.

Non, croyez-moi, au moment surtout où Wagner est complètement tombé en Allemagne, où on le joue de moins en moins, créer une querelle à son sujet, ce serait vraiment souffler sur des cendres froides.

**C16:** Léon Daudet. 'Wagner et le pangermanisme.' *L'Action française*, 23 January 1940, 1.

## Wagner et le pangermanisme

Par quarante degrés au-dessous de M. d'Ormesson, deux mille cygnes ont été gelés dans les glaces, en Suède. Mauvais présage pour la mémoire de Richard Wagner, le maître de *Lohengrin*. Je pense à lui bien souvent, car il a enchanté ma jeunesse et celle de mes amis de l'Ecole de Médecine, les deux frères Maurice et Charles Nicolle, Vaguez, Darier, Paul Delbet, Cazin. Nous étions une trentaine à l'applaudir chez Lamoureux et Colonne le dimanche et à le commenter, chez mon père, féru de Wagner mais clairvoyant et qui, dans un entretien avec Hugues Le Roux au *Temps*, a démêlé les rythmes belliqueux du passionné de Tribschen et du railleur des *Maîtres Chanteurs*. Wagner fut en effet, par son génie musical et l'universalité de ses thèmes, le plus grand apôtre du germanisme contre la guerre de 1870, qui fit l'unité allemande et la seconde de nos trois guerres puniques, où l'emporta, avec quelques autres, Scipion-Mangin. Son pamphlet contre Paris assiégé n'était pas, comme on l'a cru, une rageuse boutade, mais bien l'impression, d'ailleurs stupide, d'une haine satisfaite. Sa formule vis-à-vis de nous était le « Je hais et j'aime ». *Odi et amo* du poète latin et comme il lui fallait une « sorcière » pour *Parsifal*, il alla chercher la belle, la délicieuse Judith Gautier (Konndry), dont il fut passionnément épris, laquelle donna tant d'alarmes à sa légitime épouse Cosima, dont Nietzsche aussi, qui les fréquentait, se tenna. Etrange milieu, qui rappelle les *Affinités Electives* de Goethe, avec un bruit de canon et de baisers à la cantonade.

Henry Malherbe a écrit une page magnifique sur l'esprit de révolution dans l'œuvre géante de Wagner. Mais l'esprit de guerre y est aussi, comme l'avait discerné Alphonse Daudet, et Wagner appartenait, avant la lettre, à la Croix gammée. Le type wagnérien qui hantait le vieux maître et qu'il appelait « le fou pur », « der reine Thor » [« le fou », ça c'est vrai; « pur », ça c'est une autre affaire], n'est pas si loin de l'équipe de Berchtesgaden. Quant à l'oiseau qui guide Siegfried, je le connais bien, c'est le corbeau des champs de bataille, au vol lourd, au bec charognard, et qui aujourd'hui parcourt l'Europe en croassant.

A peu près dans le même temps que Wagner, le type même de l'esprit germanique (*Sturm und Drang* — tempête et tumulte —) écrivait *Tristan et Yseult*, de son écriture sans « portée » musicale, et qui enrageait les chefs d'orchestre. Mistral à Maillane, de sa plume d'or, écrivait *Mireille*. La lumière même est différente... « tout est sombre, le ciel est noir » dit Yseult. Et ce pangermanisme, c'est la nuit, la ténèbre de Leipzig et d'Hitler. Nous attendons, avec confiance, l'aube victorieuse.

Léon DAUDET.

C17: Léon Daudet. 'Le Cas Wagner.' *L'Action française*, 11 March 1940, 1.

# Le cas Wagner

La question se pose, paraît-il, de nouveau de savoir s'il convient de représenter Wagner en France. Ceci nous reporte à la précédente guerre et aux contestations de Saint-Saëns et de Paul Souday. Mais Saint-Saëns était orfèvre et Souday, fort ignorant en littérature, comme le prouve assez sa critique du *Temps*, n'avait pas plus de don musical. Aujourd'hui, après le livre de Lalo et les articles d'Henry Malherbe, il n'y a plus le moindre doute. *Salus populi suprema lex esto*. Wagner fait partie du pangermanisme, partie intégrante et agissante. Ce fut et c'est un combattant. Mieux vaut le laisser de côté puisqu'aussi bien c'est le marmiton de Lohengrin qui avait raison. Je parle ici en ancien wagnérien, d'avant 1914, et en admirateur passionné de *Tristan*.

A l'époque dont je parle, Wagner n'était pas le seul point de contact entre l'Allemagne du traité de Francfort et la France. Il y avait aussi Kant et Hegel, qui avaient été les maîtres de Renan, et la foule pressée des maîtres du laboratoire d'outre-Rhin. Bon nombre de nos amis et camarades allaient en Allemagne suivre les cours de Kolliker et de ses collègues. Koch se posa à un moment, avec l'appui de Guillaume II, en émule de Pasteur. Sauf Charcot, antigermaniste sur toute la ligne et même antiwagnérien, une grande partie de l'Ecole de médecine, professeurs et agrégés, frayaient avec les collègues allemands; et l'histoire des congrès, à cette époque, serait bien curieuse à écrire. C'était le temps où Herbert de Bismarck, d'ordre de son père (voir le livre de Bainville et de Roux) écrivait de la part de son « Vater » : « Que Gambetta dissimule ses relations avec nous. » Bismarck disait de son côté à sa femme, qui l'interrogeait : « Non, je n'ai pas vu Gambetta à Varzin. Mais rappelle-toi le jour où je suis sorti quatre heures dans l'après-midi avec Rottembourg (son secrétaire). » Ce qui est significatif.

L'affaire Schnœbele, où l'Allemagne recula et dut reconnaître qu'elle était dans son tort, marque, en 1886, une ligne de démarcation fort nette. Puis vint le boulangisme, crise nationaliste, où le quartier Latin s'abstint de prendre parti pour Boulanger, contrairement à ce qui a été affirmé. J'ai vu ces choses de près, étant alors étudiant en médecine, radical et patriote.

Léon DAUDET.



**C18:** Three articles by Clément Vautel:

‘Mon film : Wagner et le marmiton.’ *Le Journal*, 12 March 1940, 3.

‘Mon film : L’autre ligne Maginot.’ *Le Journal*, 14 March 1940, 3.

‘Mon film : Encore Wagner.’ *Le Journal*, 20 March 1940, 3.

## **MON FILM: Wagner et le marmiton**

Tiens, tiens, Léon Daudet donne raison au marmiton !

Il s’agit du gâte-sauce qui, en 1887, lorsque l’Eden-Théâtre joua *Lohengrin*, fut considéré comme le type du wagnérophobe. Tous les membres de l’« élite intellectuelle » disaient, écrivaient au lendemain de l’orageuse soirée qui, avenue de l’Opéra et sur les boulevards, nécessita l’intervention de la police et même de la garde :

— Il fallait un marmiton à la tête de cette manifestation des bécotiers contre le génie !

Léon Daudet était alors de cet avis-là. Il a bien changé, puisqu’il écrit aujourd’hui :

Wagner fait partie du pangermanisme, partie intégrante et agissante. Mieux vaut le laisser de côté puisque aussi bien, c’est le marmiton de *Lohengrin* qui avait raison.

Il ne s’agissait d’ailleurs pas, en cette aventure, du musicien Wagner, mais de Wagner le francophobe, l’auteur d’un outrageant, d’un ignoble pamphlet sur Paris assiégé. Les Parisiens se souvenaient de ce coup de pied de l’âne.

Que l’œuvre de Wagner soit la glorification de la grande, de la toujours plus grande Germanie, c’est un fait, et cette musique-là n’a certainement

pas adouci les mœurs de nos voisins d’outre-Rhin.

Emil Ludwig — Allemand libéré comme Henri Heine — écrit dans *Barbares et musiciens* que vient de publier en fascicule *Notre combat* :

Les Français ne s’aperçurent pas du tout qu’avec Wagner, c’était le pangermanisme qu’ils applaudissaient à l’Opéra de Paris. Car tous ces dieux trompeurs, ces héros perfides, ces demi-vierges, aux rêves inconscients, ces ordines et ces cavaliers caractérisent la puissance mondiale allemande et le désir d’y parvenir. Il est profondément significatif que Hitler soit wagnérien.

Oui, et il croit être lui-même un héros, voire plusieurs héros de Wagner. Il se dit :

— N’ai-je pas reforgé l’épée de Parsifal ? N’ai-je pas délivré Elsa ligotée à Versailles ? Le Graal, n’est-ce pas moi qui en ai la garde ? N’est-ce pas à Berchtesgaden que s’élève le nouveau Montsalvat ?

Mais faut-il, alors que nous avons vaincu l’Allemagne — et nous comptons bien la vaincre encore — proscrire Wagner de nos théâtres et de nos concerts ? Je ne sais ce qu’en pense le marmiton, sans doute devenu un « chef », et qui doit d’ailleurs préférer — comme moi — Berlioz, Gounod, Bizet, à l’auteur du *Crépuscule des dieux*. — CLÉMENT VAUTEL.

## MON FILM: L'autre ligne Maginot

Ce n'est pas parce que Wagner est allemand que sa musique est déclarée indésirable par certains habitués des Concerts Colonne : la preuve en est qu'ils ne réclament pas la proscription des œuvres de Beethoven, de Bach, de Schubert, de Mendelssohn, etc.

Non, ce qui pourrait justifier l'expulsion de Wagner, c'est que le vrai leit motif de son œuvre est la glorification, l'exaltation du pangermanisme le plus orgueilleux.

Mais cette propagande a-t-elle agi sur nous ? Wagner n'a guère influencé, en France, que des musiciens. L'un d'eux, qui était de Marseille et s'appelait Rey, alla même jusqu'à ajouter à son nom un « er » wagnérien.

Intervenant dans une querelle qui a plus d'importance que celle du Lutrin, le maestro Paul Paray, directeur des Concerts Colonne, a pris parti en déclarant :

— Souvenons-nous que la musique ne connaît pas de frontières !

Soit, mais au slogan : « L'art n'a pas de patrie », quelqu'un a ajouté :

— Les artistes en ont une ! Le germanisme exerce d'ail-

leurs, en France, une action intellectuelle, artistique, sociale autrement conquérante que celle de tous les « héros » belliqueux de la mythologie mise en musique par Wagner.

Notre haut enseignement a failli perdre ses caractéristiques traditionnelles, son esprit national, en adoptant les méthodes des docteurs et des professeurs de Berlin, de Heidelberg, d'Iéna.

Certain « modernisme » venu d'outre-Rhin a su forcer nos portes avec ses meubles, ses tableaux, ses objets d'art. C'est aussi le germanisme qui triomphe, à Paris, avec des bâtisses comme le « Central » — un vrai *Rathaus* — du faubourg Poissonnière ou les nouveaux palais du Trocadéro, tout pareils aux *Palästen* édifiés pour les expositions de Cologne et de Dusseldorf.

Passé encore... Mais le marxisme nous est venu d'outre-Rhin, et c'est plus grave. D'ailleurs, au fond, tout cela se tient.

Il faut lutter contre cette invasion perlée... Exclure de nos programmes la musique de Wagner ne suffirait pas : le goût, l'esprit, le génie français ont aussi besoin d'une ligne Maginot. — CLÉMENT VAUTEL.



## MON FILM: Encore Wagner

A la suite de mes deux petits articles sur l'« affaire Wagner » — une petite affaire de rien du tout — j'ai reçu plusieurs lettres. Voici, de l'une d'elles, un passage échantillon :

Comment, vous vous rangez parmi les tristes individus qui veulent proscrire Wagner de nos concerts et de nos théâtres ? Ces blasphémateurs du dieu de la musique ne méritent que le mépris. Et qui se rassemble s'assemble, monseigneur !

Si je m'exprimais à la façon de ce correspondant « hindigné », je répondrais :

— Abominable calomnie ! Je suis un nouveau Leuwigues et j'en appelle à la postérité ! Je dirai plus simplement :

— Quand donc ai-je réclamé l'expulsion de Wagner ? Quand donc ai-je blasphémé le dieu de la musique ? Voyons les textes.

Dans mon premier article, j'ai écrit :

Faut-il, alors que nous avons vaincu l'Allemagne — et nous comptons bien la vaincre encore — proscrire Wagner de nos concerts et de nos théâtres ?

Dans le deuxième :

Cette propagande d'auteur de la Tétralogie a été l'apôtre, le prophète le plus sonore du pan-

germanisme) a-t-elle agi sur nous ? Wagner n'a guère influencé, en France, que des musiciens.

Ce n'est pas là, me semble-t-il, requérir l'expulsion de Wagner, en qui les manifestants de chez Colonne voyaient d'ailleurs, non pas le musicien, mais l'insultant francophobe de 1870 et le Tyrtée de la toujours plus grande Allemagne.

Seulement, voilà, j'aurais dû m'indigner, moi aussi, stigmatiser ces « tristes individus », peut-être même réclamer l'arrestation de ces « blasphémateurs ». Eh bien, non, je ne suis pas wagnérien à ce point-là... N'est-ce pas mon droit ?

Et voilà qui me rappelle un mot de Gaston Carraud, grand prix de Rome, critique musical de *La Liberté*, homme entre tous réservé, modéré, mais dont les articles exprimaient, tyranniquement, des admirations éperdues ou des haines furieuses.

— Quelle passion ! lui avais-je dit.

— C'est que, me répondit-il de sa voix douce, la musique est un art passionné. — CLÉMENT VAUTEL.

C19: Lucien Rebatet. 'Une Leçon de civilisation.' *Le Petit Parisien*, 27 May 1941, 2.

## APRÈS LES GALAS DE LA STAATSOPER



# UNE LEÇON DE CIVILISATION

par  
**Lucien Rebatet**

**L**ES récentes représentations que l'Opéra de Berlin vient de donner à Paris ont suscité de nombreux et précieux commentaires. Je crois cependant que jusqu'ici on n'a pas assez mis en lumière ce sentiment que la plupart des spectateurs français ont éprouvé au fond d'eux-mêmes s'ils ne l'ont pas tout nettement formulé.

Ces spectateurs ont perçu instinctivement le caractère exceptionnel, singulièrement nouveau, de ces mémorables soirées. L'Allemagne nous y conviait à célébrer deux hommes d'une gloire universelle, deux de ces grands musiciens dont le génie a noué tant de liens entre le pays d'outre-Rhin et le nôtre : Mozart, si tendrement aimé et étudié chez nous; Wagner, qui a compté parmi les Français maints de ses plus passionnés disciples, qui compte chez nous, depuis un siècle, d'innombrables admirateurs.

Cette commémoration réunissait sur le même plateau des artistes allemands et français; dans la même salle, une foule de mélomanes français côtoyant des mélomanes allemands; sur la même affiche, les noms des capitales de deux nations qui, cependant, sont encore juridiquement en guerre l'une l'autre.

Je crois que bien peu d'entre nous auraient pu imaginer une semblable cérémonie il y a un an, lorsque, confondus dans les colonnes militaires et civiles de la retraite, nous tâchions de supputer ce que pourrait bien être pour notre patrie la fin de cette horrible aventure, avec une angoisse inexprimable au fond du cœur.

On avait persuadé notre peuple qu'il se battait pour sauver la civilisation. Au nom de cette même cause, des hommes d'Etat, après avoir déclenché la plus féroce et la plus folle des guerres, n'ont eu d'autre souci que de la prolonger, que d'attiser ses incendies, d'étendre ses ruines depuis la mer polaire jusqu'à l'Orient.

Ne pense-t-on pas que la civilisation est bien plutôt dans cette émouvante rencontre, autour d'œuvres merveilleuses, de centaines d'hommes qui s'affrontaient tout à l'heure les armes à la main, qui cherchent aujourd'hui dans leur commune admiration pour quelques-uns des plus immortels témoignages de l'esprit occidental, un terrain de réconciliation ?

Je ne dis pas que par cette rencontre notre civilisation soit désormais assurée de se relever des décombres et des flots de sang où elle se débat

à grand peine. Mais, grâce à une telle manifestation, il nous est possible d'en concevoir l'espérance.

■ ■ ■

La splendide représentation de *Tristan et Isolde*, qui vient de nous être offerte, appelle encore quelques réflexions; celles-ci d'un ordre musical, mais sur lesquelles il n'est pas inutile non plus d'insister.

Il existe chez nous un préjugé tenace, qui veut que Wagner soit un musicien assourdissant. Ce lieu commun a contribué à éloigner certains amateurs du vieux maître de Bayreuth. D'autres, par réaction, ne rêvent que d'être emportés dans des tempêtes de cuivres wagnériens. Trop de chefs d'orchestre ont sacrifié chez nous à ce goût en se livrant, lorsqu'ils dirigent les *Maîtres chanteurs*, *Tristan* ou la *Tétralogie*, à de véritables orgies de sonorités.

Cette habitude est si bien ancrée que quelques honorables vieillards, fort répandus dans le Paris musical et y tenant même des places éminentes, répétaient volontiers l'autre soir que, en somme, « on entendait mal l'orchestre de *Tristan* ».

Ils proféraient ainsi une authentique hérésie. Wagner s'est expliqué cent fois à ce sujet. Il a rendu à l'orchestre,

fort négligé dans l'opéra de son temps, une part considérable, mais il n'a jamais souhaité que cette part fût écrasante. Bien au contraire, il a toujours considéré ses drames musicaux comme d'immenses symphonies où l'orchestre et les voix, ayant un rôle d'égale importance, doivent harmonieusement s'équilibrer.

C'est dans cette tradition que M. Herbert von Karajan, jeune *kapellmeister* au noble et ardent visage, vient de diriger *Tristan et Isolde* chez nous. Il l'a fait en artiste magnifique. D'un orchestre splendidement discipliné, souple et uni sous sa main, comme un orgue gigantesque, il obtient une gamme infinie de nuances. Quelle valeur, quel relief prennent alors de solennels éclats des cuivres, lorsqu'ils succèdent à des *pianissimi* aussi légers et veloutés ! Il baigne de clarté les moindres détails. Ce colossal poème de l'amour et de la mort nous apparaît ainsi dans toute sa vivante et riche complexité, avec ses suaves murmures, ses capiteux soupirs, ses bercements de vagues marines, ses rougeolements de brasiers, sa fièvre mystique, ses cris aussi d'une farouche grandeur.

## Un concert de l'Opéra de Berlin au Palais de Chaillot

Samedi soir, l'Institut allemand nous conviait à un concert au cours duquel l'orchestre de l'Opéra de Berlin, sous la direction de M. Herbert von Karajan, interprétait un programme bien fait pour mettre en évidence les mérites exceptionnels d'un tel orchestre et d'un tel chef. Je m'honore de le dire, une telle nuit méritait d'être

**C20:** Edouard Dujardin. 'Bayreuth 1943.' *Cahiers franco-allemands*, September–December 1943, 235–7.

Des représentations wagnériennes à Bayreuth en pleine guerre ? ... Non seulement la chose a été possible, mais c'est surtout pour les soldats allemands et leurs familles qu'elles ont été organisées. D'après ce qui m'a été dit là-bas, ceux-ci y étaient les invités du Führer qui avait, en effet, pris la charge de l'organisation des Festspiele, tout en laissant un certain nombre de places à la disposition de la famille Wagner pour elle et ses invités personnels, mais aucune place n'était mise en vente. Ayant eu le privilège d'être de ceux-là, j'ai pu assister à la première des représentations, et, par la même, celui de voyager en Allemagne du Sud et de faire un séjour de quelques jours à Munich. Ainsi m'est-il permis d'apporter un témoignage, évidemment de portée restreinte, mais personnellement vécu, sur l'Allemagne de 1943.

J'étais allé à Bayreuth pour la première fois en 1882 et y étais retourné fréquemment. J'ai donc vu tour à tour l'Allemagne victorieuse de 1871, puis l'Allemagne vaincue de 1919, avant de voir l'Allemagne de nouveau victorieuse de 1943. Et, puisqu'il s'agit d'apporter un témoignage, le mien est que, victorieuse ou vaincue, l'Allemagne est restée la même. Pas plus de forfanterie après la victoire, que de colère ou même de mauvaise humeur après la défaite. Même tenue morale, même préoccupation d'art. Même accueil cordial envers les étrangers, notamment envers les Français. A l'époque de la disette, dans les années qui ont suivis 1918, j'ai vu la foule s'irriter contre certain profiteurs étrangers qui venaient avec leurs florins dévaliser un pays ruiné ; colère bien légitime d'ailleurs. Mais j'ai toujours pu parler français à haute voix dans la rue, en chemin de fer, dans les théâtres, sans jamais soulever le moindre incident.

Quant à imaginer que le pays soit la proie d'une soldatesque ou simplement que l'élément militaire tienne le haut du pavé, rien ne serait plus contraire à la vérité.

C'est donc dans une atmosphère de sérénité que nous avons pu, ma femme et moi, au mois de juillet, passer quelques journées à Bayreuth, puis à Munich, et prendre place au théâtre de Wagner parmi la foule des spectateurs.

Les représentations du théâtre wagnérienne à Bayreuth n'auraient aucune raison d'être, je veux dire que personne ne se dérangerait et ne ferait ce voyage assez long, si ces représentations ne se déroulaient dans un cadre idéal et si elles n'étaient véritablement d'une qualité supérieure à tout ce que se fait ailleurs. Le cadre a été souvent évoqué, et il n'y a plus à y revenir ; on a décrit mille fois la pure atmosphère de cette petite ville, la situation du théâtre lui-même, la montée du public, puis le retour par ces belles nuits d'été, le charme jamais épuisé des brasseries, cafés, restaurants, quelques-uns en plein air, où tout semble fait pour isoler de la vie courante, pour mettre l'esprit dans un état spécial où l'art est roi ... Et ici se produit un phénomène bien curieux. La volonté de Wagner a été de créer un art éminemment allemand, et en réalité tout est profondément allemand dans ses réalisations, aussi bien dans le texte et l'esprit de ses œuvres que dans leur interprétation et leur présentation ; et cette œuvre si intensément allemande groupe, par le fait d'une communauté d'émotions, des fidèles de toutes les nations dans une sorte d'internationalisme spirituel.

Il y a là comme modèle d'un internationalisme qui serait, non pas l'unification odieuse de tous les peuples, mais leur union fraternelle, sorte de confédération où chacun conserve ses caractères particuliers, c'est-à-dire son âme propre. C'est là

l'idéal vers lequel l'Europe devrait tendre, et c'est celui que Houston S. Chamberlain a posé dans ses « Grundlagen » et, on ne saurait assez le répéter, celui que l'Allemagne contemporaine s'efforce de réaliser.

Nul climat mieux que celui de Bayreuth n'est propice à une telle réalisation, et l'on comprend que le gouvernement allemand accorde à l'œuvre des Festspiele un tout autre appui que celui qu'il accorderait à une simple ville d'art.

Ainsi comprend-on la parfaite réussite des représentations qui ont été donné l'été dernier. Les « Maîtres Chanteurs » avaient été montés avec le soin le plus attentif, et il faut dire que la réussite est due à l'héritière de la famille Wagner, à Mme Winifred Wagner, la veuve de Siegfried Wagner, le fils du maître, qui a assumé l'administration générale des Festspiele, avec, pour collaborateurs, l'intendant général Heinz Tietjen, directeur général du Théâtre, chargé en outre de la mise en scène ; son fils, le peintre Wieland, chargé d'établir des décors nouveaux et qui a étonnamment réussi à ressusciter le vieux Nuremberg des « Maîtres Chanteurs », et le célèbre chef d'orchestre wagnérien Abendroth.

Quant aux artistes, il faudrait les citer tous, aussi bien ceux qui ont tenu les petits rôles que les protagonistes ; car le théâtre de Wagner n'a, en effet, rien de commun avec celui, autrefois à la mode, où des comparses quelquefois misérables entouraient tant bien que mal une grande vedette. C'est une des caractéristiques du théâtre de Bayreuth que les petits rôles y sont toujours confiés à des artistes de même valeur que les premiers rôles.

On parle pour l'année prochaine d'une reprise des « Maîtres Chanteurs », dont il serait dommage de laisser dormir le magnifique matériel, et qu'accompagnerait une reprise du « Vaisseau Fantôme ». Mais la nouvelle n'a encore rien d'officiel.