Nietzsche's Wagner

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Despite evidence pointing to Richard Wagner's being an anti-Semitic, narcissistic, manipulative, womanizing, unempathetic individual who happened to create great works of musical art, Wagner has continued to be passed down through the ages as simply a "problematic" composer. At best, his behavior could be described as erratic, and at worst could be condemned as downright sinister. All too often, however, these problems are simply glossed over—with passionate supporters instead coming up with new cleverly worded or imaginative conclusions to reason away Wagner's behavior. Unlike many previous scholars, I have not been able to arrive at a possible defense for Wagner's misconduct, nor have I desired to do so. I am concerned, moreover, that previous scholars have contributed to an inaccurate portrayal of Wagner rooted too deeply in his own prose, and thus ignoring how he impacted and was perceived by others.

I argue instead that closer historical engagement with those who broke with Wagner reveals much about the possible dangers of such artistic demagoguery. To this end, I turn to clear and personal testimony from Friedrich Nietzsche—who became a close follower and member of Wagner's cult-like inner circle before a dramatic break—as a way to view Wagner historically with a more critical eye.

Wagner and Art-Artist Dualism

Before considering Nietzsche, it is important to recognize that the strategies used to defend Wagner often insist on separating the art from the artist. His defenders claim awareness

of his faults, but insist on considering his art independently. Such is the case with Edward Said's defense of his friend Daniel Barenboim's encore performance of the prelude to *Tristan und Isolde* in Israel in 2000. Following strong backlash in the Israeli press against Barenboim, Said insisted that Wagner was nevertheless worth hearing despite his antisemitism. Said writes:

> For a mature mind it should be possible to hold together…two contradictory facts, that Wagner was a great artist, and second, that Wagner was a disgusting human being. Unfortunately, one cannot have one fact without the other. Does that mean, therefore, that Wagner should not be listened to? Most assuredly not, although it is obvious that if an individual is still troubled by the association of Wagner with the Holocaust then there is no need at all in inflict Wagner on oneself. All I would say, however, is that an open attitude towards art is necessary. This is not to say that artists shouldn't be morally judged for their immorality or evil practices; it is to say that an artist's work cannot be judged solely on those grounds and banned accordingly.[1]

Said thus argues that though a controversial composer may be viewed as a stain upon music history, their musical creations are still culturally significant and should remain valued for what they are – a contribution to art. The creator-creation relationship is not considered the defining characteristic of a piece of music, therefore banning music written by a composer who had prejudiced views is essentially the destruction of art for the sake of pandering to modern culture.

In some senses, I agree philosophically with such a strategy. Musical works can have value in their own right, and to negate such work based on the composer's values can in its own way suppress something of the historical value in music. Such deliberate editing, though it can

[1] Edward Said, "Barenboim and the Wagner Taboo," in *Music at the Limits* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 296-297.

be considered good natured in the sense that the removal of works tied to a controversial figure may spare a specific group of people some grief, could nevertheless be a philosophically nefarious act whose boundaries become blurred over time. To oversimply this issue removes the complex yet fair solution of praising a piece of music while condemning the discriminatory beliefs the composer may have held.

Where I disagree with Said, however, is in whether the separation between art and artist he describes is truly possible. As it is a personal art form and a product of an imperfect human mind, music is invariably woven with threads of emotion, opinion, and philosophy. Thus, a connection between composer and composition will be an unbroken bond that will follow the life of the musical work. Philosophically, when music is separated from its composer, it does not carry within it an implied sense of morality, and therefore cannot be interpreted to possess a malicious quality. Said's strategy thus sidesteps ethical considerations through decontextualization. Music as a thing itself is void of ethical dilemma and becomes for Said an innocent casualty in a war of censorship. However, suppose the association between composer and their music cannot be avoided in one's mind due to the severe degree of the prejudices the composer may have held. It is absolutely possible that, due to subconscious reinforcement, the mere sound of a certain piece of music can produce feelings of guilt, shame, or discomfort.[2] Such music and the subsequent reactions force the confrontation of hatred, bias, violence, and a vast array of differing opinions.

This, in turn, informs my desire for a more thorough understanding of who Wagner was from a more objective source than himself and closest devotees. If the ethics of music is rooted

[2] This idea is discussed in Frederick Aldama and Herbert Lindenberger, *Aesthetics of Discomfort: Conversations on Disquieting Art* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016).

in context, and if it may not be possible to separate out that context, then scholars have an obligation to consider more fully the extent to which artists beliefs and actions penetrate their work. In the case of Wagner, some scholars like Marc Weiner have begun this work in relation to Wagner's infamous antisemitism.[3] I believe, however, that there is more to say. Thus I turn to Friedrich Nietzsche.

Nietzsche and Wagner's Toxic Entanglement

In the case of Nietzsche's relationship with Wagner, it is imperative to take Nietzsche's accounts and related documents seriously as primary sources. He had one of the most publicly intimate relationships with his "master," and documentation of some of Wagner's greatest psychological atrocities is readily available. The study of those sources alone reveals Wagner to be a rather sinister character in music history, and it is perplexing that aspects of this history are not more widely known. Table 1 offers a timeline of events relevant to their friendship and subsequent falling out. The details of this relationship are discussed in Joachim Köhler's *Nietzsche and Wagner: A Lesson in Subjugation*.[4] In what follows, I highlight some relevant details.

Nietzsche fell under Wagner's spell of talent and charm as a young adult. He was eventually led to see Wagner as a god-like figure, which made him and other followers easier to manipulate. Nietzsche, along with Wagner's other "disciples," would refer to him as their "master." According to Köhler—who based his reading of the situation largely on Cosima

[3] Marc A. Weiner, *Richard Wagner and the Anti-Semitic Imagination* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995).

[4] Joachim Köhler, *Nietzsche and Wagner: A Lesson in Subjugation*, trans. Ronald Taylor (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

Wagner's diaries—Wagner, upon seeing even a whiff of confidence and ego in Nietzsche, would go out of his way to write to him that Nietzsche was in debt and service to *him*, that Wagner was the lead, and that Wagner was the source of any great ideas that might have come forth in Nietzsche's mind. In other words, Wagner had no issue with and likely took pleasure in making sure his followers knew that he creatively owned them: he was their master, their god, their savior. All of this likely evinces Wagner's rampant narcissism that edges upon complete delusion. More importantly, for Nietzsche, the expectation to fall in line came not from intellectual affinity but from emotional abuse.

The extent to which Nietzsche did fall in line with Wagner's agenda is readily apparent in his first major work: *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872).[5] The final sections this treatise celebrate Wagner's work in general, and *Tristan und Isolde* in particular, as a moment of synthesis in the history of tragedy and a triumph of German art. Remarkably, Nietzsche takes an uncritical attitude toward the opera and its reworking of the work of Schopenhauer. Dissecting Wagner's opera *Tristan und Isolde*, with careful consideration to the philosophical scaffolding upon which the work is built, one can easily see major inconsistencies in the application of Schopenhauer's thoughts on romantic transcendentalism. For example, Bryan Magee points out that the resolution of the opera in *Liebestod* (Love-Death) is in no way supported by Schopenhauer's conception of Will, as the lovers have no assurance that, in the oneness of the beyond, they will even exist in relation to each other in a recognizable way.[6] Wagner's inability—or simple

[5] Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Birth of Tragedy," in *The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1967).

[6] Bryan Magee, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 387-388. Gary Tomlinson makes a similar observation in *Metaphysical Song: An Essay on Opera* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 108: "But a more precise reflection of Schopenhauerian doctrine in the plot is difficult to find. Indeed the final *Liebestod* of both protagonists amounts to their escape through death into the night-world, where their love can find unconstrained, transcendent fulfillment. To many this has seemed more a celebration than a renunciation of

refusal—to incorporate Schopenhauer's thoughts as a whole, alongside Wagner's attempt to "correct" the very Schopenhauerian philosophy he had adopted and consequently used in *Tristan*, indicates that he may have been less interested in the philosophy itself, and more so in how it might suit his agenda.[7] Yet Nietzsche—the philologist and philosopher—readily went along with this. Joachim Köhler describes Nietzsche's more self-aware 1886 critique of the situation, where he explains that, "…when he had been writing 'in the guise of an academic', his sole aim had been to attract kindred spirits and win them to his cause—not, of course, the cause of a scholar but of 'a disciple of an unknown god.'"[8]

The break between Wagner and Nietzsche was dramatic and intense enough to have been its own opera, but it was by no means unexpected. Nietzsche was not a blind, naïve follower throughout the entirety of this decade-long "friendship," and as he became a more independent thinker, he began to act defiantly by seeking out what Wagner had forbidden: connections with the Jewish community and French culture. Beyond that, Nietzsche's bold disagreements came in several forms. Realizing that the inaugural Bayreuth festival in 1876 was a cultural center for the newly consolidated German Empire (with which he disagreed), he excused himself from the proceedings save for a short appearance, and then left due to "illness": an audacious lack of support on the part of the festival founder's lackey. This likely would have irked Wagner, and Nietzsche likely knew this, as his patterns of behavior were well known among those closest to him. According to Köhler, "[Wagner's] brother Albert accused him of acknowledging people's

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their individuality. It has seemed closer, that is, to an ultimate apotheosis of romantic love, with its foundation of unabashed selfhood, then to Schopenhauer's brooding renunciation of self."

[7] Wagner even went so far as to write to Schopenhauer's estate to correct the philosopher's work; see Magee, 388. For more on Wagner's thoughts on Schopenhauer, see Richard Wagner, "Beethoven," in *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, vol. 5, trans. William Ashton Ellis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 57-126.

[8] Köhler, *Nietzsche and Wagner*, 77.

existence only as long as they were of use to him: as soon as their usefulness came to an end, they ceased to exist."[9] When in 1878 Wagner presented Nietzsche with a prose draft of *Parsifal*, Nietzsche was appalled by what he perceived as a lack of respect towards his religion.[10] According to Walter Kaufmann, Nietzsche viewed *Parsifal* as "exploiting Christianity for theatrical effect."[11] Nietzsche's publication of *Human, All Too Human*, with the intentional inclusion of a French motto and dedication, along with the clear message that he "repudiated nationalism emphatically and proposed the ideal of the 'good European,'" all but ended their relationship.[12]

Less well known is what Köhler calls the "mortal insult" that likely motivated Nietzsche's break.[13] In 1877, Wagner wrote letters to Nietzsche's doctors under the guise of worry for Nietzsche's health. Using intimate information on Nietzsche's sexuality, Wagner disclosed personal information on masturbation habits that essentially pointed to Nietzsche's homosexuality: a devious strategy, as Wagner knew that information would leak to the public and cause the kind of scandal that could completely ruin Nietzsche's life and condemn him either to prison or exile. Evidenced here is Wagner's complete inability to part ways without childishly lashing out and stepping into his full potential as "the kind of man who could kill with words."[14]

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[9] Köhler, *Nietzsche and Wagner*, 139.

[10] His own break with Christianity followed thereafter, but Nietzsche's father was a preacher, and he remained devout at the time. Wagner's own intentions of "redeeming" Christianity are discussed in Richard Wagner, "Religion and Art," in *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, vol. 6, trans William Ashton Ellis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 211-252.

[11] Walter Kaufmann, "Translator's Introduction," in *The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1967), 149. Such reactions to seemingly false religiosity in music were common in Germany this period. See Gundula Kreuzer, "Oper im Kirchengewande"? Verdi's *Requiem* and the Anxieties of the Young German Empire," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 58, no. 2 (2005): 399-450.

[12] Kaufmann, "Translator's Introduction," 149.

[13] Köhler, *Nietzsche and Wagner*, 139-157.

[14] Köhler, *Nietzsche and Wagner*, 140.

Nietzsche's discovery of Wagner's final blow nearly led him to challenge Wagner to a duel, but realizing he still respected Wagner's old age and status, he simply limped away defeated with his resentment to burn. It was not until Wagner's death in 1883 that Nietzsche began a more public campaign of bitter honesty tied thoroughly to his new critical philosophical perspective.

Nietzsche's Critiques from the 1880s

On the surface, Nietzsche's position on Wagner in the 1880s was that Wagner was all flash and no substance, and thus capable of pedaling dangerous ideas packaged in seductively powerful art. In context, however, it is clear that his writings demonstrating the well-understood and well-documented phenomena of an abuse victim finally being free of their tormentor and seeing someone they might have held in high regard under the harsher light of reality.[15] In *The Case of Wagner* (1888), Nietzsche presents a critique of his former master. From a cathartic meditation to a scathing review of all things Wagnerian, Nietzsche unleashes decades worth of pent-up frustration, bitterness, and not least of all, pain.

In his postscript, we see Nietzsche razor-sharp and direct, opening with, "One pays heavily for being one of Wagner's disciples."[16] In a bold use of repetition as a literary device, Nietzsche proceeds to repeat that statement to begin every other paragraph for the remainder of his first postscript – shedding light on how his pain was felt among others as well as stressing

[15] The ways in which trauma might inform the study of music history is a growing field of research. For an introduction, see Michelle Meinhart and Jillian C. Rogers, "Introduction: Theorizing Trauma and Music in the Long Nineteenth Century," *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* (forthcoming, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479409822000039)

[16] Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Case of Wagner," in *The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1967), 181.

that being in Wagner's circle necessitated a personal loss. He takes stabs at Bayreuth and the theatre at large, making claims that Wagner corrupted the taste of his audiences. He eviscerates everything Wagner might have touched or influenced in his lifetime, and as though his seething is audible through the page, he writes, "One cannot serve two masters when the name of one is Wagner."[17]

One of the most poignant portions of his treatise incorporates his transformed view of love. When we take Nietzsche seriously as both a primary source and as one of Wagner's closest victims of abuse, it is evident that this shift in view is representative of his journey from subservient disciple to a self-actualized, independent thinker. Crucially, he does this in relation to Bizet's *Carmen* (1875), a French opéra-comique (and thus not a piece of German art) that he celebrates for its thematic and musical stylistic differences from Wagner's music dramas. Detailing how he – following Wagner – once thought of love as purity, an antidote, a "higher virgin," he immediately switches gears to detail a more realistic version in Bizet's opera, one grounded in nature: love as conflict.

> …Love as *fatum,* as fatality, cynical, innocent, cruel – and precisely in this a piece of nature. That love which is war in its means, and at bottom the deadly hatred of the sexes! – I know no case where the tragic joke that constitutes the essence of love is expressed so strictly, translated with equal terror into a formula, as in Don Jose's last cry, which concludes the work:
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> 'Yes, I have killed her,

[17] Nietzsche, "The Case of Wagner," 185.

I – my adored Carmen!'

> Such a conception of love (the only one worthy of a philosopher) is rare: it raises a work of art above thousands. For on the average, artists do what all the world does, even worse – they misunderstand love. Wagner, too, misunderstood it. They believe one becomes selfless in love because one desires the advantage of another human being, often against one's own advantage. But in return for that they want to *possess* the other person.[18]

This is in line with the ways in which Nietzsche had been trying to reframe ethics and morality in works from the 1880s like *The Genealogy of Morals*, in which he argues that "virtue" reflects the will of the strongest and thus generates resentment.[19] Yet this clearly tracks with Nietzsche's own experiences with Wagner. It is reasonable to argue that he is looking back on that relationship, realizing how he had been taken advantage of, possessed and used like a material good, all under the guise of an idealization. The "virtuous" love he associates with Wagner is for him now false, hollow.

In the following section, Nietzsche smoothly transitions by citing his own experiences to make what had been implicit in their relationship into now explicit points of Wagnerian hypocrisy and manipulation. He turns accusations once thrown at him back at his ex-master, laying bare Wagner's projections that he tried to use against his own disciples:

> The return to nature, health, cheerfulness, youth, *virtue!* – And yet I was one of the most corrupted Wagnerians. – I was capable of taking Wagner seriously. – Ah, this old magician, how much he imposed upon us! The first thing his art offers us is a magnifying

[18] Nietzsche, "The Case of Wagner," 158-159

[19] Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Genealogy of Morals," in *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and RJ Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1967), 15-163.

> glass: one looks through it, one does not trust one's own eyes – everything looks big, *even Wagner*. – What a clever rattlesnake! It has filled our whole life with its rattling about "devotion," about "loyalty," about "purity"; and with its praise of chastity it withdrew from the corrupted world. – And we believed it in all these things.[20]

Defiantly triumphant over his former impressionability, Nietzsche invokes personal memories of their one-sided relationship as he pushes back against Wagner's audacity in exploiting him. Wagner is painted as a trickster, a traveling snake oil salesman – a man of big words and fancy illusions with no substance to stand on. As he recounts the parts of Wagner that most disgust him, it is clearly Wagner's insincerity that most affects him, as his sincerity was a mask that few saw beneath until they were discarded. The prevailing sentiment here is that Nietzsche was cheated and duped, and all that he was accused of not giving Wagner was just Wagner projecting to the world all that he would never be, namely devout, loyal, and pure.

Nietzsche's feelings, however, were complicated. Mere months after writing *The Case of Wagner* in 1888, he appears to make a 180 degree turn in his description of their relationship in his autobiographical *Ecce Homo*. In that book, he recalls his time with Wagner in a more positive light: "Speaking of the recreations of my life, I must say a word to express my gratitude for what has been by far the most profound and cordial recreation of my life. Beyond a doubt, that was my intimate relationship with Richard Wagner."[21] What on the surface would appear a blatant contradiction needs further exploration. Using Nietzsche's reflections, an argument could be levied in an attempt to invalidate his previous claims of mistreatment. Such an argument

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[20] Nietzsche, "The Case of Wagner," 160.

[21] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo," in *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1967), 247.

becomes less tenable with a closer reading. When considering, for example, Nietzsche's admission a few pages later, "I was a Wagnerian," it is important to note the subtlety in his writing.[22] His use of the past tense indicates that though he was at one point disillusioned, he recognizes that he is no longer under Wagner's spell. Such emotional complexity should not be mistaken for contradiction, but for a mature attempt to reconcile both an intense love he had for his old mentor and the utter heartbreak that was delivered by Wagner's betrayal. Nietzsche scholar and philosopher Walter Kaufmann offers a similar analysis, stating, "Nietzsche's picture is stylized, not false. There is, of course, hindsight in it; but readers of Sartre should know, if they have not learned it firsthand from Nietzsche himself, that an act is one event, and the way we interpret it afterward and relate ourselves to it is another."[23] Nietzsche's enlightened ruminations must be approached with nuance and not dismissal; his attempt to come away from that heartbreak having learned from it – insisting that he had become a strengthened individual – should not cast doubt upon the suffering that he endured at the hands of his old master.

If anything, it is more profoundly human of him to reflect and come to the understanding that though he suffered, he loved, and though he loved, he suffered. And should there be any doubt of that suffering, we need not look past Nietzsche's striking reaction to Wagner's passing. In a letter to his friend Malwida von Meysenbug on February 21, 1883, he writes: "W[agner]'s death has affected me terribly; although I'm now out of bed, I still haven't got over it. – Even so, I believe that, in the long run, this event will be a source of relief for me. It was hard, very hard, to have to spend six years opposing someone whom one had revered and loved as much as I had

[22] Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo," 249.

[23] Walter Kaufmann, "Editor's Introduction," in *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo* (New York: Random House, 1967), 206.

loved W[agner]."[24] Such a reaction only serves to underscore the complexity and humanity of Nietzsche's emotions in the face loss, betrayal, and profound self-examination. More importantly, the nuance in his reactions as presented through his writings only enhances the impression that his is not an embellished account; Nietzsche was speaking his truth.

Nietzsche Contra Wagner, Once More

If we recognize that Nietzsche's writings – especially those on Wagner – were plainly connected to Nietzsche's toxic relationship with the composer, we might also question recent research on this topic. In his 2017 book *Beyond Reason: Wagner contra Nietzsche*, Karol Berger sought to achieve a critical understanding of Wagner's art, focusing especially on illuminating large-scale musical forms in his music dramas.[25] Although Berger acknowledges Wagner's best-known faults, his focus on finding and interpreting structure tends to paint Wagner in a fantastical and genius light. At times, this comes through in questionable lines of argument regarding Wagner's own inconsistencies, which Berger claims were attempts to "reinvent" himself for the sake of creative survival:

> Moreover, and this is perhaps most admirable about this complex person, the reinvention never stopped. From beginning to the end he remained faithful to his prophetic mission,

[24] Quoted in Dieter Borchmeyer, *Drama and the World of Richard Wagner*, trans. Daphne Ellis (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 299. Borchmeyer's commentary on this letter is noteworthy: "He took to his bed when he heard the news, which reminded him not only of his deep sense of sadness at the irreplaceable human loss that he had felt at the time of his break with Wagber but – just as intensely – of his satisfaction at having finally broken free from Wagner and taken the decisive step toward self-autonomy."

[25] Karol Berger, *Beyond Reason: Wagner contra Nietzsche* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017).

but was never fully satisfied with the content, and so he continued to develop and deepen both from one music drama to the next.[26]

Given that he is thus inclined to justify inconsistencies as "reinvention" rather than as reflections of the complex and often desperate realities Wagner faced professionally, it is not surprising that Berger's take on Nietzsche's relationship to Wagner is similarly inclined to recast the situation idealistically and in Wagner's favor. His thirteen-page summary of their history frames their falling out as tied more to Nietzsche's philosophical move away from both Schopenhauer and the politics of the German Empire, and does not mention either the cultish nature of Wagner's inner circle, or the humiliating correspondence with Nietzsche's doctor.[27] Similarly, his nineteen-page evaluation of *The Case of Wagner* does not consider the intensely personal nature of Nietzsche's treatise, offering instead a decontextualized critique.

I strongly disagree with this approach. Though Berger is technically free to dismiss Nietzsche's experience from the discussion, and adopt such an abstracted perspective, I think doing so avoids the heavy responsibility of putting art into context, uncomfortable though it may be. It might have even been preferable for Berger to have assessed Wagner's art without context at all while refraining from making any character judgements on or contextual justifications for Wagner. In doing so, he would have been looking at Wagner's art in a type of historical vacuum, and thus had more freedom to draw analytical conclusions about its structure. Analyzing music is fundamentally different from creating conclusions about the composer based on musical insights, as those two scholarly activities often pull in different directions and do not form a complete

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[26] Berger, *Beyond Reason*, 360. See also Berger, xii: "The specific content of his message never ceased to evolve, but his self-understanding as someone with a message to deliver remained constant."

[27] Berger, *Beyond Reason*, 163-176. Nor is this unique to Berger; Dieter Borchmeyer's chapter on Nietzsche and Wagner also makes no mention of this intensely personal episode. See Borchmeyer, *Drama and the World of Richard Wagner*, 288-307.

whole. Berger's point about intentional "reinvention" stemming from creative genius runs counter to my intuition: how is one to create such a historical narrative by focusing on the art itself instead of on the broadest range of historical evidence leading up to the art? In this way, I think Berger's assertions are flawed historiographically by his attempt to pull more meaning from Wagner's work than he does from any other aspect of Wagner's life. Doing this not only results in a skewed perspective, but it may have allowed room for idolatry to color his view of such a blatantly nefarious character whose well-documented mistreatment of those around him can only be missed if his artwork has been integrated into the identity of his defender. In this way, Wagner yet again manipulates an admirer of his work, blinding them to who he really is, and creating yet another victim to the same tactics that others, like Friedrich Nietzsche, also experienced.

To frame Wagner as "just another composer" in the Western canon is naïve and possibly destructive. The interest in his music shown by Hitler and the Third Reich on account of its nationalistic and anti-Semitic values is reason enough to put a harsher spotlight on Wagner. To this I would add that we ought to consider more closely Nietzsche's testimony on Wagner's manipulativeness and the ways in which it was manifested in his music. If he is right, then Wagner may have offered a blueprint of sorts for propaganda. Preventing the disillusionment of this polarizing and indecent figure in music history is a responsibility that should no longer be taken as lightly as I have experienced it to be. Wagner's is a complicated case that, when studied properly, will likely induce complex and conflicted emotions, as it very well should.

Table 1 – A Nietzsche-Wagner Timeline

Date	**Wagner (1813-1883)**	**Nietzsche (1844-1900)**
1854	Begins to study the philosophy of Artur Schopenhauer	
1857-59	Composes *Tristan und Isolde* (premiered in Munich, 1865)	
1869		Accepts an academic position in philology in Basel, Switzerland, begins his friendship with Wagner
1872		Publishes *The Birth of Tragedy*
1874	Moves to Wahnfried in Bayreuth, Germany	
1876	First Bayreuth Festival, premiere of the *Ring* cycle.	Disillusionment with Wagner begins, interests turn toward philosophy, especially the history of morality and critiques of faith
1877-82	Composes *Parsifal* (premiered at Bayreuth, 1882)	
1878		Publishes *Human, All Too Human*, sends a copy to Wagner, essentially ending their friendship
1879		Resigns his academic post
1882-88		Nietzsche's most productive period. Writings include *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, *The Genealogy of Morals*, and *The Case of Wagner*