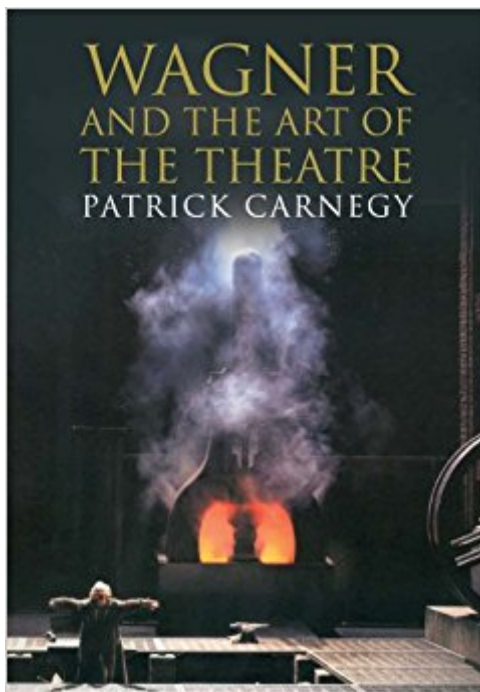


The book was found

Wagner And The Art Of The Theatre



Synopsis

The production of Wagner's operas is fiercely debated. In this groundbreaking stage history Patrick Carnegy vividly evokes the often scandalous; great productions that have left their mark not only on our understanding of Wagner but on modern theatre as a whole. He examines the way in which Wagner himself staged his works, showing that the composer remained dissatisfied with even the best of his productions. After Wagner's death the scenic challenge was taken up by the Swiss visionary Adolphe Appia, by Gustav Mahler and Alfred Roller in Vienna, and by Otto Klemperer and Ewald Dörfelberg in Berlin. In Russia the Bolsheviks reinvented Wagner as a social revolutionary, while cinema left its indelible imprint on the Wagnerian stage with Eisenstein's *Die Walküre* in Moscow in 1940. Hitler famously appropriated Wagner for his own ends. Patrick Carnegy unscrambles the interaction of politics and stage production, describing how post-war German directors sought a way to bury the uncomfortable past. The book concludes with a critique of the iconoclastic interpretations by Patrice Chéreau, Ruth Berghaus, and Hans-Jürgen Syberberg.

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Customer Reviews

"[A] massive undertaking | This book is truly epic in its scope, and it will certainly become one of the standard reference works in English, not only in Wagner but on twentieth-century stagecraft. - Patrick O'Connor, Literary Review (Patrick O'Connor Literary Review 2006-08-01)"...long meditated as well as meticulously researched...its overview is magisterial, and,

despite its considerable length, the crisply organised structure and unfailing lucidity of the prose make it worth the effort of a thorough and continuous reading."---Rupert Christiansen, *The Spectator* (Rupert Christiansen *The Spectator* 2006-10-14)"...one of the most marvellous books I have read this year...Patrick Carnegy recounts with deep scholarship combined with good humour, Wagner's obsession with special effects."---A.N. Wilson, *The Daily Telegraph* (A.N. Wilson *The Daily Telegraph* 2006-12-11)

Formerly a music critic for the *Times* and dramaturg at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Patrick Carnegy has lectured, broadcast, and published widely on Wagner, opera, and the theatre.

This is a comprehensive review of the evolution of ideas on how to stage Wagner operas. The author provides background on various 19th century traditions, and deals extensively with Wagner's own attempts to create not only a new form of opera but perhaps even more importantly a new way of staging opera. His hope was to create productions that would not only do a better job of integrating music and scenery/costumes, etc. but to insure that the stagings illuminated the music. That his ideas were somewhat pompous and inflated in ways that only late 19th century Germans could pull off goes without saying, but the author is sympathetic and goes to some great lengths to explore not only his ideas but their varying successes. Unfortunately the descriptive and visual evidence is somewhat scanty, but Carnegy does his best to suggest what the stagings must have looked like and provides some pictorial representations. Following the death of Wagner there was, of course, a struggle between his wife and others for interpretative rights. Cosima tended to try to carry out what she thought her husband's ideas were in a fairly literal way leading to a kind of fossilization, whereas others wanted to adopt new ways of staging which they thought represented the essence of what he wanted. In that regard the author discusses the effects of new technologies, especially with regard to lighting on the way the operas could be staged. The story continues through the 20th and into the 21st centuries with some productions acquiring more critical success than others. I am not an expert on music or the staging of operas, Wagner or otherwise, but I see a lot of them. I have seen all the operas from *Rienzi* forward multiple times, and I've seen some bizarre stagings that worked and some more traditional ones that didn't. More than most composers Wagner's operas invite a wide range of stagings from the purely abstract to the elaborate and realistic. I found the book to be fascinating although it is far from an easy read. Not for the faint of heart. Nor for those with only a casual interest in Wagner and his operas. But for those of us searching for the perfect staging of the *Ring* or *Parsifal* this remains a definitive source. My only

regret is that having read it I may never open it again -- it's not a source book -- and so I might better have waited for the library to acquire a copy. But money isn't everything. For the right reader, this is an excellent and thought-provoking book.

I am posting this review in three places because these are three 5-star books that I believe should all be read in conjunction: Bayreuth - A History of the Wagner Festival, by Frederic Spotts; Wagner and the Art of the Theater, by Patrick Carnegy; and The Wagner Clan, by Jonathan Carr. All three tell a story about the same time period, each from a different point of view, so that having read all three you have a multi-dimensional view of essentially the same topic. What makes each book outstanding in its own right and even more worthwhile when read together is the historical, political and social perspective that the authors incorporate in each book. Since no one comes to the subject of Wagner without preconceived notions I cannot say that each book isn't without its biases, however regardless of your point of view before you read these books they will provide insight and perspective.

A great journey into how Wagner implemented the visual representation of his extraordinary imagination. Any book like this will inevitably fall short as it arrives in today's world, simply because of the distance between writing and publishing, so you may find the first 2/3s of the book more valuable than the last -- though it is always interesting and well presented. Oh, how I wish all those photos and designs were in color!

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