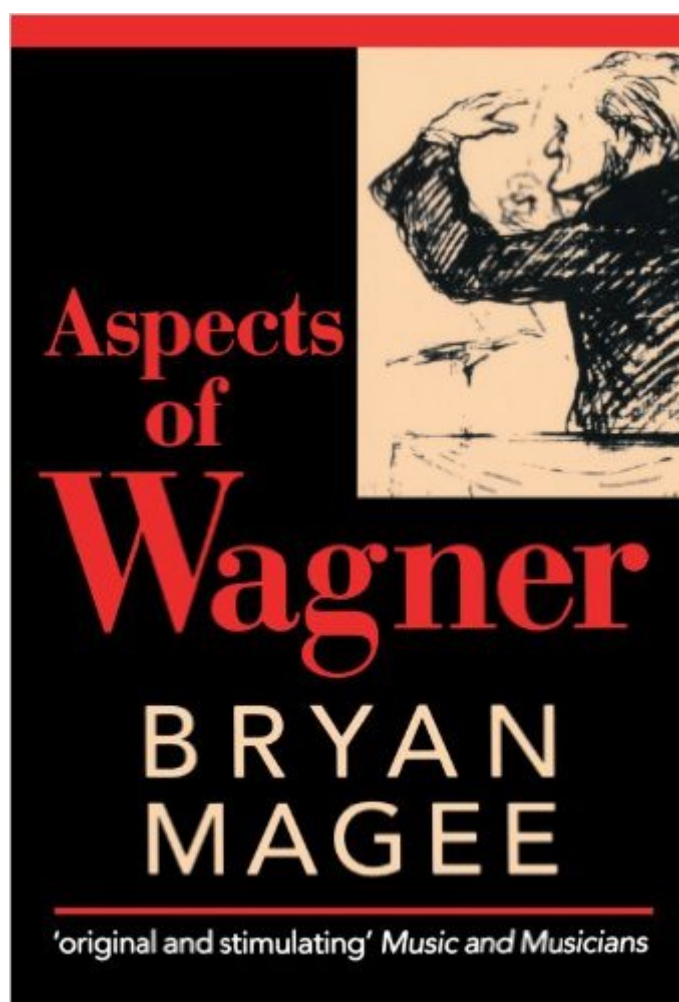


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Aspects Of Wagner



Synopsis

Many music lovers find Wagner's operas inexpressibly beautiful and richly satisfying, while others find them revolting, dangerous, self-indulgent, and immoral. The man who W.H. Auden once called "perhaps the greatest genius that ever lived" has inspired both greater adulation and greater loathing than any other composer. Bryan Magee presents a penetrating analysis of Wagner's work, concentrating on how his sensational and deeply erotic music uniquely expresses the repressed and highly charged contents of the psyche. He examines not only Wagner's music and detailed stage directions but also the prose works in which he formulated his ideas, as well as shedding new light on his anti-semitism and the way in which the Nazis twisted his theories to suit their own purposes. Outlining the astonishing range and depth of Wagner's influence on our culture, Magee reveals how profoundly he continues to shock and inspire musicians, poets, novelists, painters, philosophers, and politicians today.

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Customer Reviews

More than any other figure in the classical Canon, Richard Wagner (1813 - 1883) has provoked a dichotomy of passion in regards to his music, character and legacy. Bryan Magee's **Aspects of Wagner**, a series of concise, articulate essays about the composer and theorist, confronts both sides of the polarization, examining the essential components that inspire such adulation, probing with unusual insight the negative connotations ever associated with mere mention of the name. These aspects, in brief: THEORY: After the success of Lohengrin, Wagner took a six-year

break from composing to recharge the cylinders, theorize and re-examine the operatic form. The result of this sabbatical would shake the foundations of the Canon. For Wagner, no longer would drama be a means to a musical end - window-garnishing syntax to embellish the sonic - instead, music would be the means with which to express the dramatic ~emotion~ of the piece. Music would emphasize, shift and elucidate to the passage of the text, a notion that has proved indescribably influential: the whole of modern film-symphonic owes its debt to this innovation. JEWS: A virulent anti-Semite, repelled by the physical aspect of Jews and critical of their compositional abilities - "shallow and artificial" - Wagner espoused these opinions in the public forum and, in reality, reflected the mindset of mainstream German society during his time. Further propagated by Wagner's widow and offspring, these views influenced Hitler as a youth and were taken verbatim for his totalitarian platform. Wagner's demand for Judaism to be eradicated, via renouncement of faith and conversion to Christian theism, was corrupted by the Nazi propagandists as a call for physical annihilation. More fuel for the critical fire!

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