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CORRELATION OF MUSIC AND POETRY  
IN THE LIEBESTOD FROM TRISTAN UND ISOLDE

by 6791

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A MASTER'S REPORT

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requirements for the degree

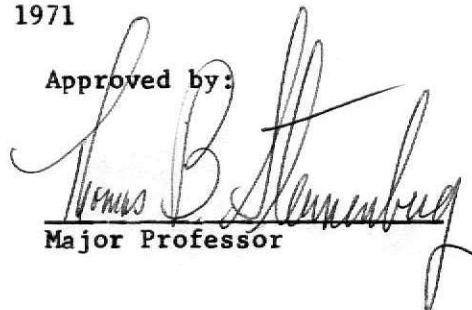
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## INTRODUCTION

The subject of this paper, Correlation of Music and Poetry in the Liebestod from Tristan und Isolde, was undertaken from both the analytical and performing aspects. The Liebestod will be discussed and performed as part of a graduate recital.

There are important reasons for analyzing the Liebestod from the standpoint of the singer. Every singer must be concerned about words. How can their real meaning be conveyed clearly? Wagner presents a special challenge to the singer because as writer of both poetry and music, he is able to fuse these elements into a combination that requires careful investigation to understand. What better way is there to insure comprehension of so difficult a piece of music--especially when such a study would be of untold benefit to the singer as an aid to the actual performance?

A comment about the accompanist ought to be made. A highly proficient accompanist is one who is aware of the words, and who understands the thought-content of the poetry--one who "sings" with the singer. In considering the Liebestod, this quality is not only desirable but essential. It is hoped that this paper might prove valuable to an accompanist by providing some insights into the poetic thought of the Liebestod. The piano part itself is most ungracious. Reducing Wagner's orchestral score to the keyboard hardly lies within the realm of possibility.

The study of the words and music was pursued in various ways. The first thing demanded was a sure knowledge of the meaning of each word. Several translations were read, the best being one by Ernest Newman although he did not translate the entire aria into poetic form. It is partially a



prose summary. Newman contends that the poetry to a large extent defies literal translation. However, to insure a comprehension of the word-painting done by Wagner, it is quite necessary to write out a literal translation even though it does not make very much sense as poetry. The words themselves describe sensations. This in itself is not surprising, but it is interesting to discover the number of different words which Wagner finds to express the sensations of sound, and scent in particular.

The next process entailed investigation of the vocal line to see how words were colored or enhanced when presented within continuous thoughts. Careful reading of the poetry, always in conjunction with the accompaniment, is needed. Realization as to where one thought ends and another begins is a constant concern. It is not always readily apparent where such a change is taking place. Also, within the phrase, specific words are given special emphasis in some way or other.

The technicalities of the music involves a number of areas. The devices used by Wagner with which all music scholars are familiar will be mentioned in specific instances, but will not be discussed as such.

The phases, or long spans of music, are important. How does the music of these phases combine with the poetry? Many times within the long span, shorter groups are found.

The texture: is it "heavy" or "light" and how and where is it varied? This factor was inextricably involved with the orchestration. The complete orchestral score is too cumbersome to work with, so a piano/vocal score was used. Repeated listening to a record of the Liebestod provided helpful information about the instruments and how they were used.

The varying plans of rhythmic intensity has an important part in the over-all effect. Is it a flowing rhythm pattern, or heavy and slow-moving?

What does such a pattern accomplish in helping to create a change or express a mood?

Careful attention to the continuous bass lines underlying related thoughts also formed a significant part of the analysis. This is of prime importance to the basic structure of the composition.

One of the Wagnerian devices has to be mentioned; emphasis upon non-harmonic sounds in strategic places. An awareness of such sounds is quite necessary.

In order to place Wagner's works in some kind of historical perspective, a discussion of opera in the early nineteenth century follows. The center of operatic activity in the early 1800's was Paris. Two main types of opera flourished there: opera comique, which is essentially a French creation, and a style which came to be known as "grand" opera.

"The leading composer of grand opera was Giacomo Meyerbeer in whose works all the best and worst features of the type were concentrated."<sup>1</sup> Meyerbeer (1791-1864), a native of Berlin, had at one time been a fellow-student with Carl Maria von Weber. They remained life-long friends.

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<sup>1</sup>Donald Jay Grout, A Short History of Opera (N. Y.: Columbia University Press, 1947), p. 311.

Weber hoped that Meyerbeer would be the one to create a truly German opera-form, but this was to be Weber's destiny, not that of his friend.

Meyerbeer's early attempts at German opera were complete failures. Upon the advice of Salieri, he went to Venice in 1815 to learn what only the Italians could teach him; namely, how to compose for the voice. Meyerbeer, with usual thoroughness, mastered the Italian style of opera, had many successful productions of his works, Rossini notwithstanding, but grew anxious to conquer other worlds. His most successful Italian opera was II Crociato in Egitto which premiered in Venice in 1824. It was this work which led him to Paris where II Crociato was staged in 1826. The influence of the Parisian environment upon Meyerbeer has been described in the following way:

Paris was the headquarters of the unsettled, restless, tentative spirit which at that time pervaded Europe. The prevailing spirit of eclecticism found its perfect musical counterpart in the works of Meyerbeer. The assimilative power that, guided by tenacity of purpose, enabled him to identify himself with any style he chose, found in this intellectual ferment, as yet unrepresented in music, a well-nigh inexhaustible field, while these influences in return proved the key to unlock all that was original and forcible in his nature. And he found a fresh stimulus in the works of French operatic composers. In his librettist, Eugene Scribe, he found an invaluable collaborator.<sup>2</sup>

Meyerbeer's first grand opera to be unveiled for Parisian audiences in 1831 was Robert le Diable. It created a sensation and made the fortune of the Paris Opera. Other masterpieces were Les Huguenots (1836), Le Prophete (1849), and L'Africaine (1865). The premiere of L'Africaine came after Meyerbeer's death.

Whatever criticism can be made of Meyerbeer's works as embodying a basic philosophy of "giving the public what it wants",<sup>3</sup> it cannot be denied

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<sup>2</sup>Mrs. Julian Marshall, "Meyerbeer", Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, Vol. V, 5th Ed., (London: Macmillan & Co., 1954), p. 733.

<sup>3</sup>Grout, p. 312.

that he was a tireless workman, constantly revising everything from notes in the orchestra score to the movements of the singers on stage. Most of all, he must be given credit for the impact which his works exerted upon the grand opera form itself.

A point must be made here about Meyerbeer's influence upon Richard Wagner--an influence, which, undoubtedly, Wagner would have been loathe to admit since his hatred of Meyerbeer is one of the well-documented facts of music history. Grout give this assessment:

The most notable disciple, however, was Wagner whose Rienzi (Dresden, 1842), originally designed for Paris audiences, frankly aimed to surpass Meyerbeer and Scribe on their own ground. All the familiar dramatic scenic apparatus of grand opera was employed in Wagner's libretto and the music itself, with its tunes so often repeated, its monotony of phraseology, its massive choruses and ensembles, and its generally inflated proportions is startlingly like Meyerbeer's. Thus Wagner, like Gluck, began his career by demonstrating his mastery of a style of which he later became the most determined opponent.<sup>4</sup>

Attention must now be given to the beginnings of a full-fledged German opera tradition which reached its culmination in the works of Richard Wagner.

Before 1820 German national opera was known outside its own country only through The Magic Flute and a few other works of the Singspiel type. The performance of Weber's Freischütz at Berlin in 1821 began a development which led within fifty years to a virtual dictatorship of European opera by the music drama of Wagner.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 318.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 357.

Forerunners of the establishment of German Romantic opera which occurred with the performance of Weber's Der Freischütz were E.T.A. Hoffmann's Undine and Ludwig Spohr's Faust both performed in 1816. Weber's review of Hoffmann's Undine, quoted below, reveals many of the basic concepts of the German Romantic opera.

A fair judgment of a work of art that unfolds in time required that quiet and unprejudiced mood which, receptive to every kind of impression, should remain aloof from any definite aim or predisposition of feeling, except for a certain opening of the soul toward the subject matter in question. Only in this way is the artist in a position to gain ascendancy over the soul and the power to draw it, through his emotions and characters, into the world he has created and in which he, a mighty ruler over strong passions, allows us to feel, with and through him, pain and pleasure, as well as love, joy, terror, and hope. Quickly and clearly it will then be shown whether he has succeeded in creating a grand work that profoundly and permanently affects us, or whether his artistry resulting from strokes of undisciplined genius, he has made us admire certain individual traits at the expense of the total effect.

In opera, this kind of effect is harder to avoid, and hence more common than in any other art-form. By opera I naturally mean that type of musical drama which is dear to the Germans: a fully rounded and self-contained work of art in which all the ingredients furnished by the contributing arts disappear in the process of fusion and, in thus perishing, help to form an entire new universe.....<sup>6</sup>

Carl Maria von Weber's Der Freischütz is truly significant in the history of German opera. This work though still in the form of the Singspiel contained all of the elements which set German opera apart from that of any other country and freed it from long-held Italian domination. Grout points out that these elements can be summarized as (1) plots drawn from medieval history, legends, or fairy tales involving supernatural beings and happenings; (2) frequent scenes of humble village or country life; (3) human characters often regarded as agents of supernatural forces, with the eventual victory

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<sup>6</sup>The Essence of Opera, ed. Ulrich Weisstein (N. Y.: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1969), pp. 180-81.

of the hero interpreted in terms of redemption; (4) use of simple, folk-like melodies, distinctly German; (5) strong reliance on harmony and orchestral color for dramatic expression; (6) emphasis in the libretto on mood, setting, and occult significance of the drama.<sup>7</sup>

Of the men who followed Weber, Heinrich Marschner's Hans Heiling (1833), probably exerted the most influence on Wagner.

....in some respects the music looks ahead to Wagner: The frequent chromatic passing tones in the melody, especially at cadences; the use of modulating sequences; and occasionally a passage of grimly powerful declamation.<sup>8</sup>

The beginnings were there, the groundwork was laid for the advent of Richard Wagner and the music-drama.

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<sup>7</sup> Donald Jay Grout, A History of Western Music (N. Y.: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1960), p. 559.

<sup>8</sup> Grout, Short History of Opera, p. 370.

CORRELATION OF MUSIC AND POETRY  
IN THE LIEBESTOD FROM TRISTAN UND ISOLDE

The following analysis of the Liebestod from Tristan und Isolde will show the relationship between the thought-content of the poetry and the music. The continuous flow of the music provides the support upon which the whole structure is built. The total effect far transcends the specific thought-content in the vocal phrases.

The reader is expected to make frequent reference to the piano/vocal score found in Appendix I.

The first statement by Isolde, as she kneels beside Tristan's body, "Mild und ließe wie er lächelt", a two measure span, is sung pianissimo. Soft brass chords are used in the accompaniment. The next statement, "wie das Auge hold er öffnet," requiring two more measures, is a trifle louder. The orchestration is altered to correspond to the slight thought change. Low tremolo strings and low woodwinds are added to the brass. Seven measures of music are needed to express the next poetic thought which begins in m. 5 and ends with m. 11. At m. 7, Isolde's words are, "Immer lichter, wie er leuchtet". Violins enter to rise with the voice to a crescendo at "leuchtet" thus giving special meaning to this crucial word.

Example 1

The musical score for Example 1 is presented in two systems. The top system features a vocal line in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. The lyrics are: "säht ihr's nicht? / see ye not? / Im-mer lich-ter / how he, bright and / wie — er leuch - tet, / bright - er burn - ing,". The bottom system shows the piano accompaniment, starting with a piano (*p*) and crescendo (*cresc.*) marking. The piano part includes chords and arpeggiated figures in both hands, with a 3-measure rest indicated in the right hand at the end of the first system.

Starting with the next phrase, "Sternumstrahlet hoch sich hebt?" a fuller orchestral sound is called forth matching Isolde's mood of joy as she beholds the transfigured Tristan. The rhythm pattern differs from the preceding five measures. Block chords replace the tremolo bass. A greater crescendo is heard at the word "hoch" than the one in m. 8, thereby emphasizing the word. The harmonic texture rapidly thins out as it moves to another change of thought indicated by an obvious change of key and a change of tempo.

### Example 2

9 10 11

stern - um - strah - let hoch sich hebt?  
stream - ing star - light, heaves him high?

*p molto cresc.* *dim.*

Now a six-measure span of music corresponds to Isolde's description of Tristan:

Seht ihr's nicht?  
Wie das Herz ihm muthig schwillt,  
voll und hehr im busen ihm quillt?

The change of key and tempo at m. 12 has already been mentioned. A new rhythmic figure appears. Harmonic texture is thin; horns and woodwinds are used in m. 12 and m. 13 with low strings added in m. 14.



## Example 3

Etwas bewegter.  
Poco più animato.

Seht ihr's nicht?  
See ye not

*p dolce*

18325 *sempre con Pedale*

Although Isolde continues to describe Tristan as only she is able to see him, there is a difference in her description evidenced also in the music. In m. 18 she begins to tell how his soft breath is still coming from his lips:

Wie den Lippen,  
wonnig mild,  
süsser Athem sanft entweht:  
Freunde!

The upper line of the accompaniment in ms. 18 and 19 is built on two leitmotifs skillfully combined to make the listener even more aware of Isolde's inner feelings.

## Example 4

Parting Song Motif from Act II  
Transfiguration Motif

Wie den Lip - pen,  
From his lips - - - how

*p dolce*

The mood in this eight-measure passage (m. 18 through m. 25) is especially tender. It is echoed in the orchestra using mainly flutes and low strings. The rhythm pattern now has a running sixteenth-note figure predominating. A sudden *pianissimo* takes place in m. 24 where a falling octave on the last syllable of "entweht" simulates a sigh escaping from Tristan's lips.

The following three measures (26,27,28) tell an entirely different story. Tremolo strings in an ascending line oppose a descending bass line creating tension in the music as Isolde's words show agitation, "Seht! Fühlt und seht ihr's nicht?" A full orchestral sound is heard in m. 28. The last two chords in this measure--E-G#-B-D<sup>♯</sup> with the G# in the bass moves to a transitional chord of the augmented sixth (G<sup>♯</sup>-B-D<sup>♯</sup>-E#) with the G<sup>♯</sup> in the bass. The distinctive sound of the augmented chord produces a feeling of anticipation which is resolved as the G<sup>♯</sup> in the bass line and the E# of the top line move to F# in m. 29.

#### Example 5

Suddenly, the sound falls away in m. 29. From here to m. 43, a total of fifteen measures, Isolde asks a long, compound question. Shorter spans lie within the fifteen measures. As the questioning changes in aspect, so

does the music. The poetry from m. 29 to the first half of m. 33 reads:

Höre ich nur diese Weise,  
die so wundervoll und leise.....

Horns and woodwinds are heard in m. 29 in contrast to the full orchestra of only one measure before. The rhythmic pattern is noticeably different. In this same measure, the upper line of the orchestra is an octave higher than the voice corresponding to the wonderful, soft melodies which Isolde says she hears. Emphasis is given to the word "wundervoll" in m. 31 by placing the first syllable on a major-minor seventh chord (G#-B#-D#-F#) with a D# in the bass and G# in the vocal line. The G# moves down to F#, then to E for the final syllable.

#### Example 6

The musical score for Example 6 spans measures 29, 30, and 31. The vocal line is in German with English translations below. The piano accompaniment features a complex rhythmic pattern with dynamic markings *pp* and *poco cresc.*, and the instruction *sempre con Pedale*.

Measure 29: *pp*  
Hö - re ich nur die - se Wei - se, die so wun - der -  
Hears none else the mu - sic yon - der that so soft and

Measure 30: *poco cresc.*

Measure 31: *poco cresc.*

*sempre con Pedale*

At m. 33 the voice starts the "Transfiguration" motif on beat three. Thereafter the motif is passed to the cello, the flute, and back to the voice. The pattern of this motif is utilized effectively to bring about a constant downward flow in the music matching the poetic meaning.

Wonne klagend,  
Alles sagend,  
mild versöhnend aus ihm tönend....

Beginning on an E<sup>b</sup> in m. 34, the bass line moves down by half-steps reaching the D a full octave below the starting point in m. 44. (See Appendix I, pp. 24-25). The orchestral sound gradually diminishes as the poetic idea and musical line descend.

Isolde has been relating the sensations which she feels are streaming from Tristan's being into hers. With the last two notes of m. 38, her thoughts turn inward. There is a sense of wonder at her own emotions.

.....in mich dringet,  
auf sich schwinget,  
hold erhallend um mich klinget?

Coinciding with these words is a darker orchestral color achieved with the oboe following the vocal line while tremolo strings continue an ever-descending bass line. At the same time, tension is built using a divergent line in the voice as it moves upward to a climax which takes place in m. 42 and m. 43. The full orchestra enters at m. 42, builds a tremendous crescendo to the end of m. 43, continuing into the next phase at m. 44.

### Example 7

41 42

hal - lend um mich klin -  
blasts a - round me blow -

43 44

get?  
ing?

Hel - ler  
Blow - ing

molto cresc.

f p

3

The F# in m. 42 provides an example of Wagner's use of an appoggiatura as a non-harmonic tone. It is given prominence by placing it on the first beat of the measure. This plus the holding of the E# which moves to E<sup>4</sup> provides a telling effect on the word "klinget".

A span of twenty-one measures (44 through 64) is needed to reach the poetic and musical climax of the Liebestod. This is a long phase, sub-divided into shorter phrases. The orchestra plays the "Exultation" leitmotif in measures 44, 45, and 46 to enhance Isolde's words, "Heller schallend, mich um wallend."

### Example 8

#### "Exultation" Motif

1. *45* *3* *46* *3*

schal - - lend, mich um wal - - lend, sind es  
clear - - er, grow - ing near - - er, are they

*f* *p* *f* *p*

The violins are brought in in full strength at m. 44 for the first time. An anchor on E in the bass for three measures provides space for this thought thereby giving it emphasis.

A change occurs with the last two beats of m. 46. A sequence pattern is begun in the orchestra. The violins carry the top line, starting softly, building the line gradually by halfsteps while executing a poco a poco stringendo e crescendo to beat three of m. 54.

Starting in m. 46, the slowly rising chromatic pattern begins on a G# as Isolde asks, "sind es Wellen sanfter Lüfte?" Immediately the musical line

moves up A# as though asking a question also. "Sind es Wolken wonniger Düfte?" The line moves to A. Another question. Now there is a slight change. Before the words, "Wie sie schwellen, mich umrauschen" are finished, the B-natural has been reached (m. 51). Such movement will continue. The questions are not answered yet. The constant repetition of unresolved chords in a different harmonic situation each time heightens the tension throughout this passage.

Two measures, part of m. 52, all of 53, and part of 54, are different because the poetic thought changes. Isolde asks, "Soll ich athmen, soll ich lauschen?" The chromatic upper line moves almost immediately from B-natural to C-natural in m. 52, to C# in m. 53. However, in m. 54, a dramatic change takes place on beat three. The change is characterized by these factors: a sudden pianissimo; the carefully prepared bass line comes to rest on an F#-- the beginning of a six-measure pedal-point; Isolde's questioning becomes more dramatic, more intense.

Soll ich schlürfen, untertauchen?  
Süss in Düften mich verhauchen?

In the following example, the top line of the accompaniment moves up an entire octave in m. 56. The violin sound becomes more intense, and the whole orchestral texture becomes fuller. The recurring chromatic pattern is marked.

## Example 9

1. 53 ath - - men, soll ich lau - - schen? Soll ich  
breathe them? Dare I hear them? Shall I

54

1. 55 schlür - fen, un - ter - tau - chen, süß in Duf - ten mich ver -  
drink them, dive a - mong them, Where in per - fume they have

56

*pp*

*cresc*

Attention is directed to m. 58 in example 10. Actually, the final poetic thought begins with the two eighth-notes on beat four in m. 57. Isolde questions no longer. She is poised on the threshold of an answer. M. 58 exhibits the only time signature change in the Liebestod and it is for just that one measure. This indicates its importance. In this measure, the drive to the ultimate climax begins. It is also the beginning of the last span of poetry.

## Example 10

1. *hau - chen? In dem*  
*flung them? In their*  
*wo - - - gen-den*  
*bil - - - low-y*

Next Isolde sings, "in dem wogenden Schwall, in dem tönenden Schall" (ms. 57, 58, 59, and part of 60). Tension builds to its highest point musically in ms. 59 and 60 as Isolde, almost overcome by her emotions, tries with even more intensity to express the answer she now knows she has found. Violins maintain tension, playing in octaves, repeating five times in two measures (59,60)  $F\sharp-G^4-G\sharp$ , while the bass clings to the  $F\sharp$  pedal-point.

When the tension has reached almost unbearable proportions, Wagner brings release with a fortissimo climax in m. 61 on an E Major chord. The violins move down the notes of the "Exultation" motif. Isolde has reached the revelation she was seeking. A transcendent love uniting her with Tristan is within her grasp. She sings, ".....in des Weltathems wehendem All."



## Example 11

The climax is prolonged for four measures with the full orchestra plus the voice woven into one bright, beautiful web of sound.

The poetry then reads, "vertrinken, ersinken" in measures 65, 66, and 67. The strings mirror the words with a downward movement, then drop out entirely, leaving the flute to take over the descending line. A change of texture is evident. The thought-span begun in m. 65 continues to the end of the vocal line in m. 71. However, the entire phase began in m. 57. In measures 68 and 69, a darker orchestral sound is heard underlying the words "unbewusst". The key changes to e minor. Tremolo strings and harp arpeggios augment the mood. Isolde seems suspended.

The final words, "höchste Lust!" (m. 70, 71) are in B Major. There is a transparency in the orchestral sound as the violins softly play the "Exultation" motif. A mood of sublime joy pervades the words and music.

**APPENDIX I**

Un-glü-ckes l'n-ge-stüm, wie er-reicht es, wer Frie-den bringt? Die  
wild is the course of woe, for the bring-er of joy to'er-take! Death's

*ff* *f* *p* *cresc.*

*poco accel.*

Ern-te mehrt' ich dem Tod. Der Wahn häuf - - - te die  
har-vest I did but swell, fresh woes er - - - ror com-

*poco accel.* *più f* *ff* *ff*

Allmählig zurückhaltend.  
Rallentando poco a poco.  
Brangäne.

(Isolda, unconscious of all around her, turns her eyes

Noth! Hörst du uns nicht? I-sol-de! Trau-te! Vernimmst du die Treu-e  
pell Hearstthous not? I-sol-da! Dearest! Mis-tak-est thou not the

*p*

Sehr mässig beginnend.  
Molto moderato cominciare.  
Isolda.

with rising inspiration on Tristan's body)

nicht? Mild und lei-se wie er lä-chelt,  
truth? Fair and gently he is smiling;

*pp* *pp*

294

3 4 5

wie das Au - ge hold er öff - net, seht ihr, Freunde,  
see, his eyes he soft - ly o - pens! See, my friends, ah!

6 7 8

säht ihr's nicht? Im-mer lich-ter wie — er leuch - tet,  
see ye not? how he, bright and bright - er burn - ing,

*p cresc.*

9 10 11

stern - um - strah - let hoch sich hebt?  
stream - ing star - light, heaves him high?

*p molto cresc.* *dim.*

*La. \* La. \**

Etwas bewegter.  
*Poco più animato.*

12 13

Seht ihr's nicht? Wie das Herz ihm  
See ye not how his heart with

*p dolce*

18325 *sempre con Pedale*

1. 14 15

mu - thig schwillt, voll und  
cour - age swells, strong and

*p*

1. 16 17

hehr pure im Bu - sen ihm quillt?  
pure with - in him it wells?

1. 18 19

Wie den Lip - pen,  
From his lips - how

*p* *p dolce*

1. 20 21

won - nig mild, sü -  
soft and sweet comes

*p* *p dolce*

298

22 23 *p*

- sser A - them sanft ent -  
the breath he - breathes to

*p dolce*

24 25

weht. Freun - del  
me. me. Friends, ahl

*p dolce*

26 27 28

Seht! Fühlt und seht ihr's nicht?  
seel Feel ye, see ye not?

*p cresc*

29 30 31

Hö - re ich nur die - se Wei - se, die so wun - der -  
Hears none else the mu - sic yon - der that so soft and

*pp poco cresc*

*sempre con Pedale*

18325

32 voll und lei - - - se, Won - - -  
full of won - - - der, sweet - - -

8

*dim.* *più p* *pp*

34 - ne kla - gend, Al - les  
- ly ring - ing, all things

8

*dolce*

36 sa - gend, mild ver - söh - nend aus ihm -  
sing - ing, from him swell - eth, peace fore -

*più p*

38 tö - - nend, in mich drin - get, auf sich schwinget, hold er -  
tell - - eth, round me grow - ing, thro' me flow - ing, trum - pet -

*morendo* *pp* *cresc.*

*morendo*



298

41 42

hal - lend um mich klin -  
blasts a - round me blow -

*molto cresc.*

43 44

- get? Hel - - ler  
- ing? Blow - - ing

*f* *p*

45 46

schal - - lend, mich um wal - - lend, sind es  
clear - - er, grow - ing near - - er, are they

*f* *p* *f* *p*

47 48

Wel - - len sanf - - ter Lüf - te? Sind es  
waves in air of a - zure? Are they

18325



49 50

1. Wol - - ken won - - ni-ger Duf - te? Wie sie  
waves of per - - fumeand plea - sure? How they

*cresc.*

51 52

1. schwel - len, mich um - rau - - schen, soll ich  
heave them, how they near them! Dare I

53 54

1. ath - - men, soll ich lau - - schen? Soll ich  
breathe them? Dare I hear them? Shall I

*pp*

55 56

1. schlür - fen, un - ter-tau - chen, süß in Duf - ten mich ver -  
drink them, dive a - mong them, Where in per - fume they have

*cresc.*



301

65 66 67

er - trin - ken, ver - sin - ken,  
Sink down in and drown in

*dim.*

*sempre con Pedale*

68 69

un - be - wusst, höch -  
dream - less rest, high -

*pp*

(Isolda, as if glorified, sinks gently in Bran-

70 71

- ste Lust!  
- est, best!

*pp*

gana's arms down upon Tristan's body. There is great distress and emotion among the bystanders. Mark

blesses the dead)

*morendo* *rallentando* *pp*

(The Curtain falls during the final pause)

**APPENDIX II**

## WAGNER

"Despite his sizeable contributions to the realm of ideas in the nineteenth century, it is solely as a musician that Richard Wagner had a strong and explicit impact on the culture of the West. His influence upon the course of music throughout the final portion of the last century and during the early decades of our own is immense."<sup>1</sup>

An attempt must be made to state the importance of Richard Wagner upon the history of music in general, and opera in particular. Much information is available. Many scholars have written about Wagner, and, as was true in his own day, there are those who believe that he succeeded in his "mission", and those who believe he did not.

What was the mission that has so preoccupied the exploration and judgment of numerous great minds from Wagner's day to the present?

Perhaps it can best be described with the term Gesamtkunstwerk..." ....his ideal of opera as a drama of significant content, with words, stage setting, visible action, and music all working in closest harmony toward the central dramatic purpose."<sup>2</sup> Newman describes it this way:

He did not look upon himself merely as an "opera composer", turning out operas in order to live, and competing in the open market with other opera composers for the public's money. He felt that he had a mission--that of regenerating Germany through the theatre. Had he possessed an income which would have raised him above material cares he would never have wished for much more than a few performances of his works that should serve as models not only for operatic production but for operatic composition.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Raphael, Richard Wagner (N. Y.: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1969), p. 130.

<sup>2</sup>Donald Jay Grout, A History of Western Music (N. Y.: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1960), p. 567.

<sup>3</sup>Ernest Newman, The Life of Richard Wagner (N. Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1941), 4 vols., III, p. 70.

Edward J. Dent defines Wagner's ideal in even more comprehensive terms:

"It was said a few pages back that Beethoven, in Fidelio, often seems to forget the actual characters on the stage and lose himself in the contemplation of a moral idea. Wagner does the same thing, but with more deliberate intention and with a new technique of his own. This could not become possible until and after Beethoven had perfected the process which in sonatas and symphonies is called "development"; it was only this technique which made it possible for Wagner to drop the old system of isolated songs with opportunities for applause at the end, and create a continuous style of music which allowed no thought of applause, not even a moment of respite until the end of each act. This forced audiences, as Wagner was consciously determined to achieve, into a new attitude toward opera.... An opera had to be taken seriously, and the audience had to give themselves up to it, abandoning all independence of personality like a patient submitting to an anaesthetic. And this applied not only to the audience; the singers and the orchestra, the scene-shifters, too, were compelled to make the same utter self-surrender and become no more than atoms absorbed into the one mighty stream of the composer's imagination."<sup>4</sup>

Grout is able to summarize Wagner's contribution in this was:

He brought German Romantic opera to its consummation, in much the same way that Verdi brought Italian opera; he created a new form, the music drama; and the harmonic idiom of his late works carried to the limit the Romantic tendencies toward the dissolution of Classical tonality, becoming the starting point for developments still active to the present day.<sup>5</sup>

How did Wagner attempt to accomplish the task of providing continuous music with no formal divisions into recitatives, arias, or other set numbers?

Two principal means served him well: the leitmotif, and a structural framework. "A leitmotif is a musical theme or motive associated with a particular person, thing, or idea in the drama."<sup>6</sup> Wagner was able to use

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<sup>4</sup>Edward J. Dent, Opera (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1949), Rev. Ed., p. 76.

<sup>5</sup>Grout, History of Western Music, p. 561.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 564.

these motives in such a way that they "...are the essential musical substance of the work; they are used not as an exceptional device, but constantly, in intimate alliance with every step of the action".<sup>7</sup>

As to the structural framework, a comprehensive investigation has been made of Wagner's methods by Alfred Lorenz in four studies entitled Das Geheimnis der Form bei Richard Wagner (The Secret of Form in Richard Wagner).

Lorenz shows that all the music dramas are cast in definite musical forms, and that the formal clarity is evident not only in each work as a whole, but also in the constituent sections, down to the smallest. The structure of the music is inseparable from that of the drama, and one of its fundamental elements is the key scheme.<sup>8</sup>

The main forms used Wagner were ABA and AAB. "Das Rheingold, for example, is a large ABA form in Db, with an introduction in Eb (dominant of the dominant)."<sup>9</sup> Grout finds "it is impossible in the face of his (Lorenz's) demonstration not to be convinced of the essential orderliness, at once minute and all-embracing of the cosmos of the Ring, as well as of Tristan, Die Meistersinger, and Parsifal. It is an orderliness not derived at second hand from the text but inhering in the musical structure itself."<sup>10</sup>

To pursue yet another side of Wagner's genius, it is necessary to explore the philosophical and psychological elements which are present in the operas and music dramas. "Lohengrin proved to be, except for the inspired recession in Die Meistersinger, the last of Wagner's operas. Tristan und Isolde was the first of his music dramas...."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 565.

<sup>8</sup> Grout, A Short History of Opera (N. Y.: Columbia University Press, 1947), p. 389.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 389

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 390.

<sup>11</sup> Wallace Brockway and Herbert Weinstock, The World of Opera (N. Y.: Random House, 1966), p. 233.



At this point, also, because of the many years in which Wagner's thinking shifted, changed, and matured especially in regard to the composition of Der Ring des Nibelungen, the following chart is set forth:

	First Sketches	Begun	Ended	First	Performance
Tristan und Isolde	-----	1857	1859	1865,	Munich
Die Meistersinger	1845	1861	1867	1868,	Munich
Der Ring des Nibelungen:	Poem begun	1848,	finished	1852	
1. Das Rheingold	-----	1853	1854	1869,	Munich
2. Die Walkure	-----	1854	1856	1879,	Munich
3. Siegfried	-----	1854	1871	1876,	Bayreuth
4. Gotterdammerung	-----	1870	1874	1876,	Bayreuth <sup>12</sup>
Parsifal	1857	1876	1882	1882,	Bayreuth

In a remarkable book by Robert Raphael entitled simply Richard Wagner, the author contends that "Wagner, the dramatist of ideas, has either been ignored or misunderstood."<sup>13</sup> Raphael treats the story of Richard Wagner as a ten-act drama beginning with Rienzi (1842), and ending with Parsifal (1882). Rienzi, done in the French grand opera manner was a dead-end for the composer. Consequently, in Der fliegende Holländer, Raphael says that Wagner "becomes a mythologist in order to deal with cultural problems in terms of a metaphorical treatment of legend or history."<sup>14</sup> In the figure of the Dutchman, Wagner develops the anti-role which "symbolizes how the Self alone becomes the source of value, and how this sense of identity, at the same time, is unshackled from all previous traditional and prescribed roles, whether from nature, God, or society."<sup>15</sup> The basic message is concerned with "pervasive empathy....

<sup>12</sup>Dent, p. 77.

<sup>13</sup>Raphael, p. 10.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 21-22.



seen as the basis for all morality, and as the cohesive element throughout the social structure."<sup>16</sup> The question of salvation through empathy in Senta's love for the Dutchman remained unanswered. "It was many, many years before Wagner provided an answer."<sup>17</sup>

With Tannhäuser, Wagner again uses the theme of the outcast and society. Tannhäuser attempts to re-enter society from below just as the Flying Dutchman. His redemption must be brought about by a woman whose empathy, however, reaches beyond Christianity's and society's illusions about love and proper behavior in order to stretch far enough for them both. Wagner came to realize that the problem of re-entry into society by the Romantic hero could not be solved. "One longs to enter society to regain meaning and order; yet if one denies these things to society, there remains no valuable structure to re-enter."<sup>18</sup>

Lohengrin brought a furthering of the problem and a step toward a solution. The myth is one of Wagner's own essence as a Romantic as well as alienated artist. "Elsa is society, and Wagner-Lohengrin is the complete artist who by his transcendent authority, hopes to redeem it."<sup>19</sup>

Wagner now begins to "view social man as entirely inadequate, just as previously he began to regard the values of society as thoroughly questionable."<sup>20</sup>

Studies of Teutonic and Norse mythology provided Wagner with the material he need for the gigantic undertaking of the Ring. "By the time he finished it (sic) in the fall of 1852, Wagner was able to tell us why society cannot be redeemed by a transcendent morality; or, for that matter, by any morality.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 30-31.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

He also shows us why it cannot be saved at all."<sup>21</sup>

Das Rheingold, might be described in the briefest possible terms as conveying the message of the horror of power. "Wagner is saying that power not only may never be reconciled with order and moral responsibility, but that it shatters freedom and love as well....."<sup>22</sup>

With Die Walküre one is made aware of the horror of parenthood. By now Wotan has sired nine daughters, the Valkyries, and the twins Siegmund and Sieglinde.

Each one of Wotan's apparently conflicting needs merely reflects the various ways in which parental authority seeks the exploitation of offspring as blind instruments of its will. Nor is this all. For as soon as the offspring rip away the masks of the sanctity of parenthood, the parent casts them off and even cuts them down as no longer serviceable tools of his divinity. Seldom in drama has the nature of parenthood, with its intrinsic horror been as neatly exposed as Wagner does throughout the Ring.<sup>23</sup>

Wotan continues to search for an answer to the terrifying problem of how to create freedom and social justice in Siegfried. "The idea of freedom and value being fashioned by power is, as Wagner shows, a basic contradiction. They cannot Wagner seems to imply be created at all."<sup>24</sup>

Wagner could not complete Siegfried until he had clarified his own thinking on the major problem of the adequacy of passion and transcendental love. In a letter written to August Röckel in August, 1856, he mentions that "besides the Nibelungen pieces I have yet a Tristan and Isolde (love as a terrible torment) in my head."<sup>25</sup> He turned his complete attention to solving the problem of the love between Brünnhilde and Siegfried by working

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 53

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

on Tristan und Isolde. Only in this way could he begin to understand "why love, as he knew it was to develop in Act III of Siegfried and in Die Götterdämmerung, proved to be so absolutely destructive."<sup>26</sup>

To conclude the message of the Ring as it takes place in Götterdämmerung, nothing is redeemed. "There remains solely the assurance of man's hopelessness and limitless frustration."<sup>27</sup>

Raphael contends that in Die Meistersinger Wagner is essentially disinterested in either the Mastersingers or in Nuremberg.

Die Meistersinger is really all about art, illusion, and erotic love.... The ultimate configuration is in fact so incredibly perfected that the colorful panorama of sixteenth century Nuremberg and its guilds--which it ostensibly is--ends by becoming one of the most complicated and misunderstood works of art ever seen.<sup>28</sup>

The underlying message from Wagner is "telling us through Hans Sachs that the individual's genius becomes meaningful solely as it is integrated with the community, and that the artist's salvation becomes significant only if he manages to introduce novel value into society via its sacred illusions."<sup>29</sup>

One act remains in the drama--Parsifal. Intended to function in a Christian context, Wagner substitutes art for religion. His final message to the world revealed in the last music-drama is "power over the self, control of identity through insight, an insight it must be remembered, made possible by means of the power of empathy."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 58

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 71

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 73

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 92

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

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CORRELATION OF MUSIC AND POETRY  
IN THE LIEBESTOD FROM TRISTAN UND ISOLDE

by

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B. M., Marymount College, 1964

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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The subject of this paper, Correlation of Music and Poetry in the Liebestod from Tristan und Isolde, was undertaken from both the analytical and performing aspects. The Liebestod will be discussed and performed as part of a graduate recital.

There are important reasons for analyzing the Liebestod from the standpoint of the singer. Every singer must be concerned about words. How can their real meaning be conveyed clearly? Wagner presents a special challenge to the singer because as writer of both poetry and music, he is able to fuse these elements into a combination that requires careful investigation to understand. What better way is there to insure comprehension of so difficult a piece of music--especially when such a study would be of untold benefit to the singer as an aid to the actual performance?

A comment about the accompanist ought to be made. A highly proficient accompanist is one who is aware of the words, and who understands the thought-content of the poetry--one who "sings" with the singer. In considering the Liebestod, this quality is not only desirable but essential. It is hoped that this paper might prove valuable to an accompanist by providing some insight into the poetic thought of the Liebestod. The piano part itself is most ungracious. Reducing Wagner's orchestral score to the keyboard hardly lies within the realm of possibility.

The study of the words and music was pursued in various ways. The first thing demanded was a sure knowledge of the meaning of each word. Several translations were read, the best being one by Ernest Newman although he did not translate the entire aria into poetic form. It is partially a prose summary. Newman contends that the poetry to a large extent defies

literal translation. However, to insure a comprehension of the word-painting done by Wagner, it is quite necessary to write out a literal translation even though it does not make very much sense as poetry. The words themselves describe sensations. This in itself is not surprising, but it is interesting to discover the number of different words which Wagner finds to express the sensations of sound, and scent in particular.

The next process entailed investigation of the vocal line to see how words were colored or enhanced when presented within continuous thoughts. Careful reading of the poetry, always in conjunction with the accompaniment, is needed. Realization as to where one thought ends and another begins is a constant concern. It is not always readily apparent where such a change is taking place. Also, within the phrase, specific words are given special emphasis in some way or other.

The technicalities of the music involves a number of areas. The devices used Wagner with which all music scholars are familiar will be mentioned in certain instances, but will not be discussed as such.

The phases, or long spans of music, are important. How does the music of these phases combine with the poetry? Many times within the long span, shorter groups are found.

The texture: is it "heavy" or "light" and how and where is it varied? This factor is inextricably involved with the orchestration. The complete orchestral score is too cumbersome to work with, so a piano/vocal score was used. Repeated listening to a record of the Liebestod provided helpful information about the instruments and how they were used.

The varying plans of rhythmic intensity had an important part in the over-all effect. Is it a flowing rhythm pattern, or heavy and slow-moving? What does such a pattern accomplish in helping to create a change or express a mood?



Careful attention to the continuous bass lines underlying related thoughts also formed a significant part of the analysis. This is of prime importance to the basic structure of the composition.

One of the Wagnerian devices has to be mentioned: emphasis upon non-harmonic sounds in strategic places. An awareness of such sounds is quite necessary.

### Historical Perspective

Background material with regard to those who influenced Wagner will be found in the introduction to the paper. Giacomo Meyerbeer, as representative of the French grand opera form, and Carl Maria von Weber, who contributed greatly to the German Romantic opera, are discussed.

### Appendixes

Appendix I contains a piano/vocal score of the Liebestod. The reader will need this for reference in order to understand the analysis.

Appendix II contains material concerning Wagner's importance to the history of music in general, and opera in particular. Two principal means which are essential to his compositional technique are set forth: the leitmotif and the structural framework. A short summary of each of Wagner's operas and music-dramas is included with emphasis upon the psychological and philosophical aspects of these works beginning with Rienzi (1842), and concluding with Parsifal (1882).