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Opera at the Metropolitan: The 1896–1897 Damrosch Opera Season and Xaver Scharwenka's "Mataswintha"

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**Opera at the Metropolitan: The 1896-1897 Damrosch Opera Season and
Xaver Scharwenka's *Mataswintha***

**By
David Joseph Rudari**

Doctoral Research Project submitted to the
College of Creative Arts
at West Virginia University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Musical Arts

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Division of Music

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ABSTRACT

Opera at the Metropolitan: The 1896-1897 Damrosch Opera Season and Xaver Scharwenka's *Mataswintha*

David Joseph Rudari

Franz Xaver Scharwenka (1850-1924), was an enterprising and successful pianist, composer, and teacher in nineteenth century Germany who in 1893 composed an opera, *Mataswintha*, based on the novel *Ein Kampf um Rom* by the celebrated German author Felix Dahn. This work, in the style of Richard Wagner, was most earnestly marketed by its publisher Breitkopf und Härtel, yet received only the following four complete performances in its lifetime: an orchestral concert performance and a staged performance in Weimar, Germany and an orchestral concert performance and a staged performance in New York City on April 1, 1897 at the Metropolitan Opera under the auspices of the Damrosch Opera Company. This study explores opera in New York City, specifically at the Metropolitan Opera, as well as the people who brought *Mataswintha* to the Metropolitan, for its second, and final staged performance before the work fell into obscurity. It concludes with a brief description of the work, based on six excerpts that were extracted for Breitkopf und Härtel to license for separate performance.

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CHAPTER 1

OPERA IN NEW YORK CITY AT THE END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

In New York, there is no permanent opera, no permanent *opera-comique*, nor even any operetta theatre which is sure of two years of life... The directors and their companies are all nomads. Most of the artists are just visitors borrowed from the Old World, coming for one season only and then leaving.¹

this is how Jacques Offenbach described opera in New York, America's largest city, upon his arrival to conduct concerts in celebration of the United States' centennial in 1876. In the years immediately following America's Civil War, performances of opera in New York City were sporadic. Traveling companies came and went. Resident companies were formed, flourished, and then faded away.²

The opening of the Metropolitan Opera House on October 22, 1883 marked the beginning of a permanent home for opera in New York City. With its 3,700 seats and the backing of a group of wealthy patrons that included "the two Roosevelts, Iselins, Goelets, the Astors, the three Vanderbilts, the Morgans, myself [George H. Warren], and others,"³ the Metropolitan Opera provided a venue for performances of operas by Wagner, Verdi, Beethoven, and Weber by internationally acclaimed singers and conductors.⁴

Beginnings 1825-1849

Until the founding of the first true resident opera company in the United States, the Metropolitan Opera in 1883, the operatic scene in New York City was at best irregular. With a severe lack of regular performances or established seasons beginning in 1750 with *The Beggar's Opera*, the era was marked with stories of the failures and successes, careers made and lost, and a great deal of perseverance. The history is muddled with the sponsorship of the art form by the

¹ June C. Ottenberg, *Opera Odyssey* (Weedport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994), p. 115.

² Ibid., p. 116.

³ Irving Kolodin, *The Story of the Metropolitan Opera 1883-1950* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), p. 5.

⁴ James Sullivan, editor, *The History of New York State*, Book 12, Chapter 17, Part 1 (New York: Lewis Historical Publications Company, 1927), pp. 9-12.

wealthy and elite of American society and the exclusion of other social classes that had been a part of the budding American theater audience. By 1846-1847, however, the cause for Italian opera changed for the better. During each year after 1846, three to six different companies were performing staged operas in Italian somewhere in the United States. These itinerant companies and their personnel were marked by constant change in the impresarios, personnel, and *prime donne* who eventually appeared in many New York theaters.⁵ While the names and numbers of companies appeared to change during the years prior to the founding of the Metropolitan Opera, the New York public did not stand far behind their European counterparts in terms of the immediacy of the repertoire brought to their city. As indicated in Table 1-1, it was not uncommon for works of major composers to arrive in New York City within relatively few years of their composition.⁶

⁵ Katherine K. Preston, *Opera on the Road* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), pp. 99-100.

⁶ Irving Kolodin, Francis D. Perkins/Susan Thiemann Sommer/Zdravko Blažerković, with J. Shepard and Sara Velez, "New York, Before 1800" in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, second edition (edited by Stanley Sadie, 2001), XVII, p. 819.

Table 1-1 Chronological Presentation of Operatic Repertoire in New York City⁷

COMPOSER	TITLE	YEAR OF COMPOSITION or EUROPEAN PREMIERE	YEAR OF NEW YORK PREMIERE	YEARS BETWEEN PREMIERES
Gay	<i>The Beggar's Opera</i>	1728	1750	22
Rossini	<i>Il barbiere di Siviglia</i>	1816	1825	9
Mozart	<i>Don Giovanni</i>	1787	1825	36
Rossini	<i>Tancredi</i>	1813	1825	12
Rossini	<i>Otello</i>	1816	1825	9
Rossini	<i>Il Turco in Italia</i>	1814	1825	9
Rossini	<i>La Cenerentola</i>	1817	1825	11
Zingarelli	<i>Giulietta e Romeo</i> ⁸	1796	1825	29
García	<i>La figlia dell'aria</i>	1826	1826	same year
Isouard	<i>Cendrillon</i> ⁹	1810	1827	17
Cherubini	<i>Les deux journées</i>	1800	1827	27
Boieldieu	<i>La dame blanche</i>	1825	1827	2
Boieldieu	<i>La calife de Bagdad</i>	1800	1827	27
Mozart	<i>Die Zauberflöte</i> (Eng)	1791	1830	39
Beethoven	<i>Fidelio</i> (Eng)	1805	1830	25
Bellini	<i>Il pirata</i>	1827	1832-33	5-6
Mercadante	<i>Elisa e Claudio</i>	1821	1832-33	11-12
Rossini	<i>Le comte Ory</i>	1828	1833	5
Herold	<i>Zampa</i>	1831	1833	2
Rossini	<i>La gazza ladra</i>	1817	1833	16
Bellini	<i>I puritani</i>	1835	1844	9
Bellini	<i>Beatrice di Tenda</i>	1833	1844-48	11-15
Donizetti	<i>Lucrezia Borgia</i>	1833	1844-48	11-15
Donizetti	<i>Linda di Chamounix</i>	1842	1844-48	2-6
Verdi	<i>I Lombardi</i>	1843	1844-48	1-7
Verdi	<i>Ernani</i>	1844	1847	3
Bellini	<i>Norma</i>	1831	1854	23
Verdi	<i>Rigoletto</i>	1851	1855	4
Verdi	<i>Il trovatore</i>	1853	1855	2
Verdi	<i>La Traviata</i>	1853	1856	4
Meyerbeer	<i>L'Africana</i>	1865	1865	same year
Gounod	<i>Roméo et Juliette</i>	1867	1867	same year
Bristow	<i>Rip Van Winkle</i>	1855	1855	same year
Fry	<i>Leonora</i>	1845	1858	13
Wagner	<i>Tannhäuser</i>	1845	1859	14

⁷ Irving Kolodin, Francis D. Perkins/Susan Thiemann Sommer/Zdravko Blažerković, with Paul Griffiths, "New York, Opera and Musical Theatre" in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, second edition (edited by Stanley Sadie, 2001), XVII, pp. 821-822.

⁸ Also listed in other sources as *Romeo e Giulietta*.

⁹ The Earl of Harewood, *Kobbé's Complete Opera Book*, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1963), p. 364. Etienne's French libretto for Isouard's *Cendrillon* was the basis for Ferretti's text for Rossini's *Cenerentola*.

It appears that, on average, works were premiered in New York within twelve years of their composition and/or European premiere. Those that seem to be most immediate are those of Verdi and Donizetti. Those that have a bit longer interval between European and American premieres are those by Mozart, Rossini, and, of course, *The Beggar's Opera*.

The history of opera in New York seems to begin with the production of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), offered by the Murray and Kean Company, and given at the Nassau Street Theatre on December 3, 1750.¹⁰ With a "run" of five performances,¹¹ it reflected the popularity of ballad opera and companies presenting spoken theater. This early performance of opera in New York City has been described in the *Annals of Music in America* for the year 1750:

The first item of special interest is *The Beggar's Opera* at the "Theatre in Nassau Street," New York. This theater was a rather tumbledown affair and was not built for the purpose. It had a platform and rough benches. The chandelier was a barrel hoop through which several nails were driven, and on these nails were impaled candles, which provided all the light, and from which the tallow was likely to drip on the heads of such of the audience as had the best seats.¹²

The Beggar's Opera would have a return engagement with another company, established by Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Hallam in 1753, the New Theatre, also on Nassau Street, which became New York's first permanent playhouse, offering *Flora*, *Devil to Pay*, *Damon and Phillida*, and *Virginia Unmasked*,¹³ as well as a number of *harlequinades*.¹⁴ Henry Edward Krehbiel, observed that these were the first performances of ballad opera¹⁵ on this side of the Atlantic, and that New Yorkers were "oblivious of the nature of operatic music of the Italian type until Manuel García's

¹⁰ John Kenrick, "Theatre in NYC, a Brief History," <http://www.musicals101.com/bwaythhist1.htm>. (accessed May 16, 2010).

¹¹ Julie Greiner, "A Brief Early History of Broadway Plays," <http://broadway-plays.visit-new-york-city.com/> (accessed May 16, 2010).

¹² Henry C. Lahee, *Annals of Music in America* (Boston: Marshall Jones, Co., 1922), p. 5.

¹³ Gerald Bordman, *American Musical Theatre, a Chronicle*, third edition, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 1.

¹⁴ "Harlequinade," in *Encyclopædia Britannica* (fifteenth ed., 2005), V, p. 708. The *harlequinade* is a play or scene, usually in pantomime in which Harlequin, a male character, has the principal role. Derived from the Italian *commedia dell'arte*, harlequinades came into vogue in early eighteenth century England, with a standard plot consisting of a pursuit of the lovers Harlequin and Colombine by the latter's father Pantaloon and his bumpkin servant Pedrolino. In the Victorian era, the harlequinade was reduced to a plotless epilogue to the main pantomime, which was often a dramatized fairytale.

¹⁵ Elise K. Kirk, *American Opera* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2001), p. 12. Ballad opera is a type of light, satiric play interspersed with strophic songs set to traditional or popular tunes.

troupe came with Rossini's *Barber of Seville*, in 1825.”¹⁶ Until then, Americans enjoyed operas that were more in the nature of musical shows, with or without spoken dialogue or a central plot.¹⁷

Society Goes to the Opera 1825-1849

In 1825 Dominick Lynch, a wealthy New York vintner and prominent member of the New York City social scene, and Stephen Price, the manager of the Park Theatre, brought the Manuel García Italian Opera Company to New York. Lynch, who was interested in promoting social activities for the elite, had traveled to London to recruit opera singers. Price made his own trips to London, and kept apprised of the attractions, including Italian Opera that drew the well heeled.¹⁸ With encouragement from the librettist Lorenzo daPonte,¹⁹ professor of Italian at Columbia, Lynch and Price retained the García Company for a season of seventy-nine performances. The repertoire included Mozart's *Don Giovanni*; Rossini's *Tancredi*, *Otello*, *Il Turco in Italia* and *La Cenerentola*; Zingarelli's *Romeo e Giulietta*; and Garcia's opera *La figlia dell'aria* accompanied by a local orchestra of twenty-four musicians.²⁰ The company opened the run with *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, a shrewd business move, in that Garcia, a tenor, was the first to sing Count Almaviva in 1816, and the work was familiar to New York audiences as an English language version had premiered at the Park Theatre in 1819. The opera had been performed in New York every season thereafter until 1829, as well as around the country.²¹ The company traveled light, with eight singers. García served as principal tenor and manager, the second tenor doubled as the chorusmaster, and the *basso buffo* was the librettist. Others listed on the ship's manifest served as

¹⁶ Henry Edward Krehbiel, *Chapters of Opera*, Second Edition (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1909), p. 16. The use of the English title of Rossini's work is Krehbiel's.

¹⁷ Kirk, *American Opera*, p. 12.

¹⁸ Preston, *Opera on the Road*, p. 101.

¹⁹ Among many other works, daPonte is recognized as the librettist for the three 1780 Italian operas that were pivotal in Mozart's output, *Le nozze di Figaro* (1786), *Don Giovanni* (1787), and *Così fan tutte* (1790).

²⁰ Susan T. Sommer, "New York, Early History," *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* (edited by Stanley Sadie, 1998), III, p. 586.

²¹ Preston, *Opera on the Road*, p. 102-103.

chorus, scenic artists, and support staff. They traveled with no orchestra, but were accompanied by the Park Theatre orchestra which was expanded to twenty-six as one of the largest and most complete orchestras assembled in the United States at the time.²² The troupe appealed to a wide variety of New Yorkers. Ticket prices ranged from \$2.00 for boxes and \$1.00 for the pit, to gallery seats for the usual twenty-five cents.²³ The troupe's initial reception was good, and Preston notes that there was a corresponding increase of sales in the garment industry, which provided dress clothing for those attending the performances. However, by June 1826, their fortunes had changed, and García was unable to make expenses. The ensemble gave its last performance on September 30, 1826, and left for Mexico, where they gave performances for eighteen months before returning to Paris.²⁴

Following the 1826 García performances, the French Opera Company from New Orleans, directed by John Davis arrived. On July 13, 1827, they began their northern tour at the Park Theatre in New York with a company of experienced singers, instrumentalists, and dancers imported from Paris. The run of performances included strong, well-received French repertoire, including Boieldieu's new, and extremely popular, *La dame blanche*, Isouard's *Cendrillon*, Cherubini's *Les deux journées*, Dalayrac's *Maison à vendre*, and other works by well-known contemporary French composers.²⁵

After a five-year absence of opera in New York City, daPonte recruited the tenor Giacomo Montresor and his opera company in the summer of 1832. While the García company's performances were an add-on to an existing theatrical season, the arrival of the Montresor company marked the first attempt by an Italian troupe to give an entire season of opera in the United States. Contracted to present a series of fifty performances of works including Bellini's *Il*

²² Ibid., p. 103.

²³ "The Inflation Calculator"; available from <http://www.westegg.com/inflation/infl.cgi>; Internet accessed May 20, 2010. According to this resource, the ticket prices ranged from \$37 to \$5.00 in 2009 funds.

²⁴ Preston, *Opera on the Road*, pp. 104-106.

²⁵ Ottenberg, *Opera Odyssey*, p. 58.

pirata, Mercadante's *Elisa e Claudio*, and works of Rossini,²⁶ the Montresor company arrived in the fall and performed in New York and Philadelphia from October 6, 1832 through May 11, 1833. In addition to the impresario, the company was comprised of thirty-five individuals, not including spouses, children, servants, and others:

Table 1-2 The Montresor Opera Company Tour, 1832

SINGERS		ORCHESTRA		STAFF	
Soprano	5	Principal strings	3	Orchestra Director	1
Contralto	2	Oboe	2	Chorus Director	1
Tenor	4	Trombone	1	Scene Painter	1
Bass	3	Harp	1	Assistant Painters	3
Basso-buffo	1			Costumer	1
Chorus	6				

Montresor's troupe came to New York at a most advantageous time. According to a critic in the *New York Mirror*, García and his company had initiated a change in the American musical taste, which the critic felt was "nothing short of a musical revolution."²⁷ He believed that the Italian (opera) had converted the ear, and that a great change had been effected with the help of its champions, Austin, Feron, Horn, and Pearson. Pianos were manufactured in great number and in every price range, so that no house was without one, leading to the cultivation of music everywhere.²⁸

Montresor opened the season at the Richmond Hill Theatre (the Italian Opera House) with a performance of *La Cenerentola*, which, like *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, was known in the United States. He was disappointed with the response from the audience and critics and, by the end of his first season, found himself in debt to the committee that had brought him to New York. A series of performances in Philadelphia drew large houses, but did not provide solid receipts, and

²⁶ Sommer, "New York, Early History" *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, III, p. 586.

²⁷ Preston, *Opera on the Road*, pp. 107.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 107.

the company lost money. After returning to New York for a final performance, the company disbanded on May 11.²⁹

In August 1833, another French troupe, most likely Davis' French Opera Company,³⁰ arrived from New Orleans and brought the first performance of Rossini's *Le comte Ory* and Herold's *Zampa*.³¹ In November of 1833, New York's first venue for opera, the Italian Opera House at Church and Leonard Streets, featured a company headed by Vincenzo Rivafrinolli that performed in both New York and Philadelphia. They opened with Rossini's *La Gazza ladra* and backing from Lynch and daPonte.³² The repertoire included eighty performances of eight operas by Rossini, Cimarosa, and Pacini to limited success. The end of the July 1834 season revealed a \$30,000 deficit³³ which daPonte lay at Rivafrinolli's feet. An audit showed that Rivafrinolli was just a bad businessman, not a crook.³⁴ When the Italian Opera House reopened as the National Theatre, it joined other New York theaters as the home to British stars performing repertory in English, popular until the mid 1840s.

On February 3, 1844, Ferdinando Palmo, a restaurateur, opened Palmo's Opera House with the New York premiere of *I puritani*. In four seasons, he introduced Bellini's *Beatrice di Tenda*, Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia*, and *Linda di Chamounix*, and Verdi's *I Lombardi*. At the other theaters, pasticcios of opera in English by Balfe, Rooke, and Benedict remained popular. While Palmo entertained the operaphile on Chambers Street, a more concrete symbol of wealth, social position, and power in the guise of Italian opera was developing on Eighth Street between Broadway and Lafayette.³⁵

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 106-109.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 70.

³¹ Sommer, "New York, Early History" *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, III, p. 586.

³² Preston, *Opera on the Road*, p. 109.

³³ "The Inflation Calculator"; available from <http://www.westegg.com/inflation/infl.cgi>; Internet accessed May 20, 2010. According to this resource, the deficit amounted to \$636,430 in 2009 funds.

³⁴ Preston, *Opera on the Road*, p. 110.

³⁵ Sommer, "New York, Early History" in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, III, p. 586.

One hundred fifty wealthy men were raising money for another opera house. The financial support given earned the subscriber a set number of seats in the new Astor Place Opera House (1,500-1,800 capacity), which opened on November 22, 1847 with Verdi's *Ernani*. The first two seasons were not profitable. Max Maretzek (1821-1897) who served as conductor and impresario was a sophisticated, experienced Czechoslovakian musician with extensive musical contacts who managed to achieve more profitable seasons. In the spring of 1849, he was granted the lease and the opportunity to manage the house. Maretzek's background led him to become a major figure in American opera.³⁶ He was involved in the first New York performances of Verdi's *Rigoletto*, *Il trovatore*, *La traviata*, and the Italian translations of Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine*, and Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*.³⁷

Maretzek, Mapleson, and the Academy of Music 1850-1883

In the 1850s, opera was thought to be an art form that “flourished on failure.”³⁸ There was a shift in the personnel of troupes, as the role of company leader shifted from the leading singer to an impresario who might also conduct. This is where Maretzek shined. The manager attended to the financial arrangements, leasing the theater, publicity, the printing of programs and tickets, and the more delicate aspects of production – Italian personnel hired on European trips, or those hired by agents on the Continent and sent over. Maretzek had studied composition with Ignaz von Seyfried, a student of Haydn, and was a member of the social elite of Paris and London. He moved with ease in the musical circles of both cities and with his work as a composer of operas and ballet, he had an insider's view of the art form in which he worked. He served as the choral director and assistant conductor at Covent Garden under Balfe, so he also had an understanding of the artists that brought the music to the stage. Maretzek's 1849 season at the Astor Place

³⁶ Ottenberg, *Opera Odyssey*, p. 90-91.

³⁷ Sommer, “New York, Early History,” *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, III, p. 586.

³⁸ Ottenberg, *Opera Odyssey*, p. 97.

Opera House included Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Don Pasquale*, and the American premiere of *Maria di Rohan*, followed by Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and *Otello*, and Verdi's *Ernani*.³⁹ In spite of Maretzek's ability to find and book talent for his ensemble, the guaranteed support of the Astor Place subscribers did not continue, and the house closed in 1852.

With the loss of the Astor Place Opera House, the only theater specifically devoted to concert repertoire and opera was the New York landmark, Academy of Music at Fourteenth Street and Irving Place, which opened in October 1854 with a performance of Bellini's *Norma* that featured two of the most renowned European stars of the day, Giulia Grisi and Giovanni Mario. Inaugurated under Maretzek's management, it continued to present regular operatic seasons until 1886.⁴⁰ It had been built at a cost of \$335,000,⁴¹ and featured what was reported to be the largest stage in the world with a seating capacity of four thousand six hundred.⁴²

Through the vicissitudes of operatic production in New York, it was Maretzek's influence promoting Italian opera on the east coast that kept the art form moving forward until the opening of the Metropolitan Opera in 1883.⁴³ Ottenberg suggests that there were two closely connected events that had a telling effect on opera: the emergence of the new style of manager with a focus on business, and the foreign repertory that accompanied the manager. While traveling English troupes were able to bring the more complex Italian repertory to the stage, Maretzek and his contemporaries realized they could no longer depend upon local opera organizations to do so. As companies grew in personnel, cost, and travel routes, the orchestras and choruses might feature some local talent. But the foreign artists became necessary, as they were the only ones who could sing principal and some minor roles in these companies. The new style of manager, like

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 91-92.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 93.

⁴¹ "The Inflation Calculator"; available from <http://www.westegg.com/inflation/infl.cgi>; Internet accessed May 20, 2010. According to this resource, the Academy of Music, were it constructed in 2009, would have cost \$7,901,298.

⁴² Sommer, "New York, Early History," *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, III, p. 586.

⁴³ Ottenberg, *Opera Odyssey*, pp. 97-98.

Maretzek needed to meld the marketing skills of P.T. Barnum with a deft social hand to bring wealth, social prominence, and exclusivity to the art form and the artist, at the same time freezing out other potential audience members, and, even more, the American composer and English language opera.⁴⁴

Musically, the Italian vocal style of Bellini and Donizetti became prominent in the 1840s and 1850s. While *Cenerentola* and *Il barbiere di Siviglia* may have opened the era, it was *Norma* and *Il trovatore* with their longer musical lines that closed it. Arias in translation, even when edited, maintained the lyrical melodic line with ornamentation supported by simple accompaniments that underlined, rather than competed with the voice.⁴⁵ These trends made for a natural progression to an operatic future rooted in the work of the Metropolitan Opera.

Col. James Henry Mapleson (1830-1901) appeared on the New York operatic scene in 1878. An impresario whose career was forged in London, where he managed theaters at Drury Lane, the Lyceum, Her Majesty's Theatre, and Covent Garden, his concept focused on the idea that the star overshadowed the work staged.⁴⁶ Experienced as a singer (although briefly, and with no great critical acclaim) and artist manager, he specialized in the all-star cast and ambitious tours via rail, which he first undertook in 1878. The tour featured a company of one hundred forty, staging one hundred sixty-four performances. Mapleson became a major force in spreading opera to cities away from the East Coast, including Chicago, Cincinnati, San Francisco, and Syracuse, New York.⁴⁷

The Academy of Music had been home to New York's wealthiest patrons since 1854. It was an important and revered symbol of New York's inner circle for whom Mapleson had been

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 110-111.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 110-111.

⁴⁶ Harold Rosenthal, "James Henry Mapleson," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, edited by Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1980) XV, p. 793.

⁴⁷ Ottenberg, *Opera Odyssey*, p. 127-128.

staging opera since 1878. There they could hear familiar works and see and be seen by family and friends.

The Metropolitan Opera 1883-1884

Mapleson and his stars generated a great deal of interest and at the same time the success of the Academy of Music was certainly fostered by the incredible growth in population experienced in New York City at the time. Among its population were captains of industry and finance who were generous patrons of the arts who “pushed themselves forward to claim the social rewards their money entitled them to.” The Academy was a focal point of the social season, and the opera boxes were at the center of that focus. There were thirty boxes, which was a goodly number. The boxholders complained about the cost of the boxes, which changed owners within a very limited circle. Gradually, the circle realized that, while the Academy seemed to satisfy the musical needs of the opera public, a second opera house was needed, if only for social reasons.⁴⁸ Enter the Vanderbilt family and an ill-fated application for a box at the opera:

As, on a particular evening, one of the millionairesses did not receive the box in which she intended to shine because another woman had anticipated her, the husband of the former took prompt action and caused the Metropolitan Opera to rise.⁴⁹

The Academy of Music is generally acknowledged as the location where this incident occurred, and Mrs. William H. Vanderbilt as the individual who was denied access to the box.

It was New York’s Knickerbocker gentry, whose money dated from the American Revolution that held the other boxes while those whose money dated from the Civil War (like the Vanderbilt family), were considered of lesser status (tainted, in Vanderbilt’s words), in spite of their bank balances and portfolios.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ John Dzikes, *Opera in America, a Cultural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 214-216.

⁴⁹ Irving Kolodin, *The Story of the Metropolitan Opera 1883-1950*, p. 4. This quote was extracted from Lilli Lehman’s memoir, *My Path through Life* (G.P. Putnam’s Sons; 1914).

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 4. In 1877, upon the death of her father-in-law, Commodore Vanderbilt, her husband William received an inheritance of ninety-four million dollars (“The Inflation Calculator”; available from <http://www.westegg.com/inflation/infl.cgi>; Internet accessed June 23, 2010 calculates the value at \$1,871,033,347 in

A box at the opera. It was the apple of discord thrown among New York plutocrats. It inspired a social comedy of supply and demand. It provoked the building of New York's fifth opera house, a sequence of events that would seem properly to belong to the realm of Gilbert and Sullivan and not to that of historical fact. ... As Alexander Pope had observed: "Mighty contests rise from trivial things." Trivial or not, the consequences for opera in America would be momentous.⁵¹

Mrs. Vanderbilt felt that the situation was intolerable, and she was determined not to stand for it. She was not alone in her frustration. Kolodin notes that on April 4, 1880, the *New York Times* reported that George H. Warren, a lawyer and broker affiliated with Vanderbilt met with a group of Academy stockholders: August H. Belmont, Pierre Lorillard, (a Mr.) van Hoffman, and William B. Dinsmore.⁵² The meeting resulted in a compromise offer from the Academy Board of Directors to increase the number of boxes to fifty-six from the original thirty. The offer was rejected, as the number was not sufficient to satisfy the newly interested patrons, the boxes were not in the best locations in the house, and the occupants would still remain a minority.⁵³

At this point, the state of artistic affairs at the Academy of Music had not progressed in some twenty years. There had been frequent changes within the management and in troupes of singers. There were few American singers, who after training abroad, returned to appear on the Academy stage. The auditorium was gutted by fire in 1866 and rebuilt on a smaller scale. Production values were poor, featuring shabby scenery and costumes; the chorus singing was lamentable and the orchestra, in spite of Maretzek's efforts, middling. The 1850s Verdi operas served as staples of a well-repeated diet while the canon of Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti repertoire had begun to shrink under reports of poor treatments. However, in comparison, Verdi's *Aida*, a new work, was

2009 funds). According to this resource, the original subscription would equal \$17,562,186 in 2009 funds. Kolodin notes that William lived only until 1885, and in that short time doubled the inheritance. It is feasible that the Metropolitan Opera could have been built for a few hundred thousand dollars, raised from Vanderbilt's resources, alone. Instead he chose to share the opportunity with other millionaires who found themselves excluded from the Academy's list of boxholders.

⁵¹ Dizikes, *Opera in America*, p. 215. The author uses the same quote from Miss Lehman's memoir within the quotation.

⁵² "The Academy of Music," *New York Times* Vol. XXVII, No. 8309, April 30, 1878. p. 5 Messrs. Belmont, Lorillard, and Dinsmore were named to the Board of the Academy of Music in what appeared to be a rancorous fight over a variety of issues, including a \$17,500 assessment to cover operating losses.

⁵³ Dizikes, *Opera in America*, p. 216.

brought to the Academy in 1874 and was replayed infrequently over the next ten years. While it was admired, *Aida* did not gain a foothold with the public. The opinion was held that it was nothing new, it was just Verdi on a larger scale. Italian opera had become so familiar it had begun to seem stale.

From time to time, a remarkable singing star like the soprano Christine Nilsson appeared. Nilsson, a great diva in Europe who was thought to be a reincarnation of Jenny Lind, established herself as the reigning soprano of the American stage, rousing audiences from the routine. With American performances often perfunctory, opera had almost ceased to exist as music drama and had become an occasion for vocal display. It was *Faust* and the operas of Meyerbeer that seemed to be the works that challenged the Italian supremacy until 1878 when Minnie Hauk, an American-born singer in the title role of Bizet's *Carmen* made an impression on the New York public. Following the performance of this harsh, brutal, and shocking opera, *Carmen* joined *Faust* as the most popular of modern operas.⁵⁴

On April 7, 1880 George H. Warren announced to the press that \$800,000⁵⁵ had been subscribed to create a new opera house.⁵⁶ A site on Vanderbilt Avenue, adjacent to Grand Central Terminal was selected, but deeds to some properties did not allow for the construction of a theater on the site. In March 1881, the company purchased the site at Broadway and Thirty-ninth Street at a cost of \$600,000.⁵⁷ The *New York Times* in its March 9 issue dispelled the rumor that this was a Vanderbilt project by stating that of ten thousand five hundred shares, W.H. Vanderbilt owned three hundred, W.K. Vanderbilt owned three hundred, and Cornelius

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 216.

⁵⁵ "The Inflation Calculator"; available from <http://www.westegg.com/inflation/infl.cgi>; Internet accessed May 20, 2010. According to this resource, the original subscription would equal is \$17,562,186 in 2009 funds.

⁵⁶ Dizikes, *Opera in America*, p. 216. According to Dizikes, fifty-five gentlemen subscribed ten thousand dollars to incorporate the Metropolitan Opera and Realty Company.

⁵⁷ "The Inflation Calculator"; available from <http://www.westegg.com/inflation/infl.cgi>; Internet accessed May 20, 2010. According to this resource, the land on which the original Metropolitan Opera stood was purchased for \$13,171,640 and the capitalization was increased to \$23,050,370 in 2009 funds.

Vanderbilt owned one hundred fifty, which translated to five boxes in the Vanderbilt name.⁵⁸

A competition to select an architect took place. After the usual delays and a proposal to abandon the project, the stockholders voted in March 1882 to forge ahead. The winner of the competition was Josiah Cleveland Cady, who designed what the shareholders wanted, “a semi-circle of boxes with an opera house built around them.” The house had four tiers of boxes, one hundred twenty-two, in all, seating seven hundred fifty patrons. It was, for all intents, “a private club to which the general public was grudgingly admitted.”⁵⁹ Cady’s reputation as a builder of churches, hospitals, and college buildings was certainly not suited to the construction of an opera house. Cady’s training had no European influences. He had never been to Europe. He had never built a theater, and he had never been to an opera.⁶⁰

Cady’s attention focused on the interior. The enormous auditorium of three thousand seats was larger than the Paris Opéra, Covent Garden, and the Vienna Opera House. It was built in proportion to the money that drove the project. Its faults were obvious. The sight lines were horrible. There was a definite lack of rehearsal space. The facilities for singers were at best primitive. From the opening night, there was talk of tearing it down. One of its saving graces was its most notable but invisible engineering feature, the overriding effort to make it fireproof.⁶¹ Yet, for all that was wrong, the Metropolitan Opera House quickly achieved international status as the home of an opera company with the longest uninterrupted existence of any organization of its kind in the United States.⁶²

⁵⁸ Kolodin, *The Metropolitan Opera 1883-1950*, p. 5.

⁵⁹ Dizikes, *Opera in America*, p. 218.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 217. After the construction of the Metropolitan Opera, Cady was also the architect for the main building of the Museum of Natural History.

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 217-219.

⁶² Susan T. Sommer, “New York, Early History,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, III, p. 587. The uninterrupted existence is qualified by two periods of inactivity, the 1892-1893 season when the house was closed due to fire, and the 1897-1898 when the Maurice Grau reorganized the company after the death of Henry Abbey.

The Metropolitan Opera House opened at 1423 Broadway and Thirty-ninth Street on October 22, 1883 with a production of Gounod's *Faust*, sung in Italian with a cast that featured Christine Nilsson, a frequent artist at the Academy of Music. It ran in direct competition with Mapleson's Academy of Music, which opened the same night with a production of Bellini's *La sonnambula* that featured the Hungarian soprano Etelka Gerster and tenor Eugenio Vicini, who was making his American debut under the resident conductor, Luigi Arditi.

After providing New York with a superb gaslit structure, the Board of Directors realized that the operation of the theater would need to fall to a professional who would provide for the public entertainment, at a profit that would surpass that of Mapleson at the Academy of Music. The stockholders posted a \$60,000 guarantee against possible losses in a sixty-one performance season. The operator only needed to deal with the stage, the orchestra, the stars, and the extras. The Board selected Henry Abbey, a well-known theatrical producer and artistic manager with little operatic experience, as the first director. His efforts resulted in a loss of \$15,000, weekly, which would bottom out at \$600,000 in the initial season, which included fifty-four performances on tour.⁶³ The losses eventually led to Abbey's resignation. It was more than apparent that New York could not maintain two competing opera companies singing the same repertoire.

⁶³ Kolodin, *The Metropolitan Opera 1883-1950*, pp. 6-7.

Table 1-3: Academy of Music and Metropolitan Opera Repertory, 1883-1884 season.⁶⁴

ACADEMY OF MUSIC		SHARED REPERTORY		METROPOLITAN OPERA	
Donizetti	<i>Linda di Chamounix</i>	Bellini	<i>La sonnambula</i>	Rossini	<i>Il barbiere di Siviglia</i>
Rossini	<i>La gazza ladra</i>	Bellini	<i>I puritani</i>	Mozart	<i>Don Giovanni</i>
Donizetti	<i>La favorite</i>	Verdi	<i>La traviata</i>	Ponchielli	<i>La Gioconda</i>
Bellini	<i>Norma</i>	Meyerbeer	<i>Les Huguenots</i>	Wagner	<i>Lohengrin</i>
Verdi	<i>Ernani</i>	Verdi	<i>Il trovatore</i>	Meyerbeer	<i>Robert le Diable</i>
Verdi	<i>Aida</i>	Verdi	<i>Rigoletto</i>	Bizet	<i>Carmen</i>
Donizetti	<i>L'elisir d'amore</i>	Donizetti	<i>Lucia</i>	Boïto	<i>Mefistofele</i>
Ricci	<i>Crispino e la comare</i>	Gounod	<i>Faust</i>	Thomas	<i>Hamlet</i>
Händel	<i>Semiramide</i>	Flotow	<i>Martha</i>	Thomas	<i>Mignon</i>
Gounod	<i>Roméo et Juliette</i>			Meyerbeer	<i>Le Prophète</i>

Ottenberg remarks that while the construction of the Metropolitan Opera had more to do with money and social hierarchy, the new facility would eventually stabilize New York's operatic life. Within its walls, German opera, at the hands of passionate and competent conductors and artists who were trained in Germany, found a consistent home in the repertory with high standards of musical and vocal artistry.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Ottenberg, *Opera Odyssey*, p. 150.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

CHAPTER 2

GERMAN OPERA IN NEW YORK WALTER DAMROSCH AND THE DAMROSCH OPERA COMPANY

The growth and prominence of the Metropolitan Opera dates from the 1884 season when negotiations failed between the Metropolitan Opera's directors and Ernest Gye, the manager at Covent Garden. Realizing that the prospect of a full season might not be possible, the board adopted a proposal from Leopold Damrosch, to open the house to a season of German opera, which Damrosch would direct.⁶⁶ Besides the apparent musical innovation of the Damrosch plan, the Metropolitan Opera Board of Directors saw it as financially advantageous. Damrosch believed that the well-worn repertory of the past should be replaced by works that were coming to life in Europe, but most especially in Germany. Knowing the works intimately, Damrosch believed that they were unique in presentation and scope, and that they would attract a musically aware German speaking population in New York, with some appeal to the socially elite.⁶⁷

The pattern of German immigration in mid-nineteenth century America was shaped by growing discontent with European governments during the 1848 revolutions. Between 1846 and 1855 over one million Germans of Protestant and Catholic background came to the United States and settled in the larger cities of the East Coast and the Midwest. By the 1920s six million Germans had arrived in the United States, making up the largest ethnic group in the country. They were largely a middle class group, having been employed as journalists, scholars, merchants, artists, doctors, or lawyers. Their cultural heritage was deep rooted and included interest in the arts and literature. They quickly made their presence felt, entering into the political arena and into business. Of profound interest was the desire to introduce the German language

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 151.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 151.

into American culture through countless German language books, newspapers and periodicals, as well as the establishment of a chair of German languages and literature at Columbia University.⁶⁸

Success in business and industry was reflected in the founding of a German hospital and German orphanage in New York City. It was in 1855-56 that a German art gallery held one of the first important shows of European paintings. Germans attracted hostility because of the visible pride they demonstrated in their cultural traditions and for their refusal to give up their cultural heritage. The American response to this was fear, bigotry, and hostility, as was common to the introduction of all immigrant groups in the United States. The number of Germans, their confidence, and their success in business and politics carried them through the 1850s. They organized singing and choral societies, orchestras, and small ensembles. Within twenty years, at least one hundred German singing societies appeared in cities throughout the country. German musicians steadily took control of orchestras and bands, most notably those in Boston, New York, and Chicago. Soon to follow were the orchestras in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Cincinnati, Washington, Buffalo, St. Louis, Indianapolis, Cleveland, Kansas City, and San Francisco, which were led by Germans or German Americans.⁶⁹

The Origins of German Opera in New York City

German Opera had early roots in New York during the 1840s through performances by amateur companies with little experience and little money. The efforts of these amateur companies were crowned by a production of Weber's *Der Freischütz* in German, with an orchestra of thirty and a cast of local singers in 1856.⁷⁰ Seats for these performances were inexpensive, as the performances were intended to serve as a way to strengthen the identity of the

⁶⁸ Dzikies, *Opera in America*, pp. 231-232.

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 231-232.

⁷⁰ Henry Edward Krehbiel, *A Book of Operas, Their Histories, Their Plots, and Their Music* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1909), p. 219. Krehbiel provides the information in a footnote. "The world over *Der Freischütz* is looked upon as peculiarly the property of the Germans, but a German performance of it was not heard in New York till 1856, when the opera was brought out under the direction of Carl Bergmann, at the old Broadway Theatre."

German community, and to reach as large an audience as possible. By 1855 German opera had attained enough support that the management of Niblo's Garden⁷¹ was willing to attempt a German season offering the opportunity for patrons to purchase season subscriptions, which might appeal to a more aristocratic clientele. Three hundred were sold, but this gave no indication of the changes that were to come.⁷²

From the mid-century to the Civil War, German operatic culture was solidly established. In 1854, the Bowery amphitheater was converted into a place called the *Stadt Theater*, suitable for sung and spoken drama. In it, one could see "a replica of what took place in the theaters of the fatherland."⁷³ In April 1859, Carl Bergmann conducted *Tannhäuser* and followed it with *Lohengrin* the following August, thereby introducing New York audiences to the vital role Richard Wagner's operas would play in subsequent years. These performances were quickly forgotten as the production requirements stretched the limits of Bergmann's abilities and the theater facilities too far to bring a performance that would last in memory outside of the German community. In 1862, a company under the direction of Karl Anschutz (1818-1870) gave a season of opera in German with a company of local choristers along with orchestra members and soloists hired in Germany. The rosters featured no stars, but did present singers who were serious artists and who had a great deal of operatic experience. Musical quality took precedence over financial concerns, and the conductor became the principal decision maker. The performances of *Fidelio* and *Der Freischütz* in an authentic German atmosphere proved to be a revelation to the company and its audiences. Anschutz featured four Mozart operas in this season – *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, *Die Zauberflöte*, followed by the first American production of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* on October 10, 1862. The following year the company took over the Academy of

⁷¹ Irving Kolodin, et al, "New York, Concert Life," p. 819. Niblo's Garden was a New York theater on Broadway, near Prince Street.

⁷² Dzikies, *Opera in America*, p. 231.

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 231-232

Music for a season, further evidence of the increased public interest in their efforts. They added Nicolai's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and Flotow's *Stradella* to their repertory. The addition of a German company provided no threat to the regular stockholders and subscribers at the Academy, as the German audiences at that time were not part of fashionable society. It seemed to the stockholders that this addition was strictly a business arrangement in which the cultural and artistic significance of Bergman's efforts were secondary.⁷⁴

Wagner's Operas in New York City

Carl Bergmann was the first important champion of Wagner in America. Originally trained for a career in education, Bergmann decided on a career in music that focused on conducting, once he had arrived in the United States. He was a champion of the music of his generation, Schumann, Liszt, Berlioz, and Wagner, as well as the previous generations, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, whose music was at that point thought of as belonging to the standard repertory. Bergmann believed that new music was complicated. While in Europe, Beethoven was the culmination of the older tradition; he was only a new acquaintance to the American public. Bergmann felt he would achieve a better balance by establishing a central tradition and branching outward.⁷⁵ When told that people in his audience did not like Wagner, Bergmann replied, "Oh, they don't like Wagner? Then they must hear him till they do!"⁷⁶ Theodor Eisfelt, who eventually became the first conductor of the New York Philharmonic, seemed to match Bergmann's efforts in the introduction of the new repertoire, although he was accused of making corrections in the harmonies of masterworks he did not understand.⁷⁷

Theodore Thomas was the most influential Wagnerian of the 1870s. Born in Germany, his family immigrated to America in 1845. He was a violinist, sent out to perform on his own by

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 234.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 234.

⁷⁶ Joseph Horowitz, *Wagner Nights* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 44.

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 44-47.

1859, when he met Carl Bergmann from whom he gained his enthusiasm for Wagner. While Thomas was not a great fan of opera, he presented summer concerts that included Wagnerian excerpts as well as occasional all Wagner programs in the 1870s in New York's Central Park. Thomas occasionally conducted opera, and by the 1880s had become a director of the American Opera Company, which toured the country giving English language performances. In 1873 he established a May Festival in Cincinnati where he presented excerpts from *Tannhäuser*. In 1875 a second festival followed featuring *Lohengrin* excerpts. A four thousand seat music hall built specifically for the third festival was the venue where excerpts from *Lohengrin*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, and *Götterdämmerung* were presented. In 1880 and 1882, more Wagner performances followed with Amalia Materna singing excerpts from *Die Walküre*, and in 1884 Christine Nilsson joined Materna.⁷⁸

Other performances of Wagner followed around the United States while the philosophical debates and the wars of words continued. Yet, nothing happened. In 1876 Wagner inaugurated the Bayreuth Festival. American music critics attended and sent enthusiastic reviews to the New York papers. The dominance of Italian opera continued, while the German repertoire seemed to sneak in.

The most common response to Wagner's music was to complain about its "difficulty and barrenness of melody."⁷⁹ A common characterization given after a New York Philharmonic performance of the *Tannhäuser* overture in 1855 was that it was interesting "more in the difficulties presented than in those qualities which awaken interest or sympathy."⁸⁰ Since entering the United States in concert hall, Wagner's music had spurred a long and heated battle of words in print about his operatic concepts. In 1853, *Putnam's Magazine* had detected the

⁷⁸ Dzikies, *Opera in America*, p. 238.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 235.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 235.

important role words would play in the debate over Wagner's works and ideas. "Herr Wagner, the musical revolutionist in Germany was trying to establish the idea that the words are as essential to an opera as the music."⁸¹ Wagner's books on opera, *The Work of Art and the Future*, *Opera and Drama*, and *A Message to My Friends* spelled out his ideas before his operas were heard, and in some case, before they were even composed. The early works, *Tannhäuser*, *Lohengrin*, and *Der Fliegende Holländer* anticipated a portion of his theories as they moved away from the number opera concept toward a more continuous musical flow. The later works, including *Tristan und Isolde* (1859) and the four operas of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, composed over a twenty-year period, became operas that would revolutionize the European musical scene.⁸²

Wagner was determined to reform opera, which, he believed, had reached its lowest artistic point. He believed that only at his own hand was redemption possible, drawing on the same resources as the Greeks and the Florentine *Camerata*. This concept was intended to reintegrate the arts using mythological subjects. Wagner believed that Greek drama was a form of religious art, drawing power from myth and the celebration of human life. He recognized Greek drama as a total work of art (*Gesamtkunstwerk*) that reflected the participation of an entire artistic community. With the ability to reinvigorate the arts through the use of German mythology, Wagner believed that his creation would transcend entertainment to become a new religion.⁸³ His music drama would mirror the example of Beethoven's works, "expressing the inner human experience, and exploring the mind and psyches of people."⁸⁴ Wagner's music and words would combine in a way that made them inseparable, abolishing traditional solo and ensemble forms, as well as virtuosic display that broke up the dramatic flow of the work and, instead, creating works

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 236.

⁸² Ibid., p. 236.

⁸³ Ibid., pp. 236-237.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 237.

that can be characterized as a seamless whole with singers, scenery and direction, with the orchestra at its center.⁸⁵

Walter Johannes Damrosch

Walter Johannes Damrosch, the German-born American symphonic conductor, composer, and opera *impresario* was born on January 30, 1862 in Breslau Germany. He died in New York City on December 22, 1950. He was the son of Helene Damrosch, a lieder singer who had studied with Franz Liszt, and Leopold Damrosch, who was born in Posen in 1832, founded the Oratorio and the New York Symphony Societies, and conducted New York's first season of German opera. Born to a family whose life centered on music, Walter spent his first nine years in Breslau surrounded by great artists who appeared with his father and the Breslau Orchester Verein, which he founded. Franz Liszt, Richard Wagner, Hans von Bülow, Clara Schumann, Carl Taussig, Joseph Joachim, Pablo de Sarasate,⁸⁶ Georg Martin, Adolf Haenselt, and Anton Rubenstein were not only guest artists, but also houseguests of the family.⁸⁷ Walter's father inspired a love for the classics, reading Greek mythology, fairy tales, and biblical parables, which encouraged his search for the dramatic.⁸⁸

Leopold Damrosch found it increasingly difficult to make a living for his large family under the Prussian bureaucracy and audiences that were not receptive to modern German composers. So, in 1871, when he was invited to journey to New York and become the conductor of the Arion Society, he leapt at the opportunity and left to make a new career and life in New York.⁸⁹ After

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 237.

⁸⁶ Gdal Saleski, *Famous Musicians of a Wandering Race* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1927), p. 111.

⁸⁷ Polly Damrosch Howard and Anita Damrosch Littell, "Walter Damrosch and Opera," *Opera News* Vol. XXVI (January 27, 1962). p. 9.

⁸⁸ Saleski, *Famous Musicians*, p. 111.

⁸⁹ Howard and Littell, "Walter Damrosch and Opera," p. 9.

an enthusiastic letter instructing the family to join him, the Damrosch family set sail aboard the “Hermann” out of Bremen for New York on August 18, 1871.⁹⁰

Walter began his musical studies in Germany, moving to the USA with his family in 1871.⁹¹ In the fourteen years between his arrival in the United States and the death of his father in 1885, Walter went to public school, learned English, practiced piano, studied harmony, and played last chair, second violin in the New York Symphony under his father’s direction. At the age of sixteen (1878) he was engaged to serve as accompanist to the celebrated violinist August Wilhelmj. By the age of eighteen (1880) he was a well-established choral conductor, leading the Newark Harmonic Society.

In 1882, Walter was sent back to Europe to broaden his musical education through contact with prominent musicians. As an adult musician, he was reunited with Liszt, von Bülow, and Brahms. He attended the first production of *Parsifal*,⁹² arriving in Bayreuth a week or two before the first performance though unable to attend some rehearsals, as he had hoped he might. He did, however meet a number of artists who were most happy to receive Leopold’s son. Damrosch was invited to a reception at Wagner’s home, Wahnfried. Upon entering the home, he was met by Franz Liszt, who introduced him to his daughter, Cosima Liszt von Bülow Wagner, who said, “Father, you must introduce this son of our old friend, Dr. Leopold Damrosch, to the *Meister*.”⁹³ At that point, he was ushered into Wagner’s workroom, where, he writes:

I beheld Wagner surrounded by musicians and in front of him the giant tenor, Albert Niemann, well known later on to Wagner lovers in America as a member of the German company at the Metropolitan for a number of years, and also as the creator of *Tannhäuser* in Paris at the tragic and disastrous performances of 1861.

⁹⁰ Saleski, *Famous Musicians*, p. 112.

⁹¹ Howard and Littell, “Walter Damrosch and Opera,” p. 9.

⁹² Saleski, *Famous Musicians*, p. 113.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

Wagner greeted me with kindness, asked about my father, and a few days later sent me, through his publishers, for my father, a manuscript copy of the finale from the first act of *Parsifal* (no orchestral score was at that time engraved) for performances in New York by the Symphony and Oratorio Societies. This was a remarkable act of friendship on his part, and I was very proud to be able to carry the precious score back to my father.⁹⁴

Many noticed Leopold Damrosch's success in America. The year 1883 was notable for two significant events in music history, the death of Richard Wagner in February and the opening of the Metropolitan Opera in October. In Europe, Wagner's death was marked with obituaries that lauded his talent and praised the influence his compositions would have on subsequent composers. In America, where he was not as well known, Wagner passed with relatively little notice.⁹⁵

Wagner's Operas at the Metropolitan

Little more than a year after Wagner's passing, the elder Damrosch, a friend and disciple of Wagner's who had attended the inaugural performance at the Bayreuth *Festspielhaus* as an American reviewer, brought a revolutionary idea to the Metropolitan Opera management that would bring the fledgling company back from the brink of disaster.⁹⁶

After producing their inaugural season under Henry Abbey at a loss of \$600,000,⁹⁷ the Metropolitan Opera faced the 1884 season knowing the costs of staging new operas were far out of the realm of possibility. The deficit was more than one-third of the amount it cost to build the house and can be attributed in part to the costs of starting a new company, an investment that could be amortized over a few seasons. Abbey staged a sizeable portion of the season from scratch, which would strain any company's resources. The boxholders were responsible to cover ten percent of any overage, and Abbey was responsible for the rest. He offered to manage the following year for no salary, if the boxholders would assume the entire debt. Unable to get the

⁹⁴ Walter Damrosch, *My Musical Life* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), pp. 43-44.

⁹⁵ Dzikies, *Opera in America*, p. 239.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

⁹⁷ "The Inflation Calculator"; available from <http://www.westegg.com/inflation/infl.cgi>; Internet accessed July 1, 2010. According to this resource, the deficit would equal \$14,144,438 in 2009 funds.

company's boxholders to take this point of view, the impresario departed and there was no replacement in sight.⁹⁸

The Board of Directors allowed Abbey a benefit performance to raise funds on his own behalf. On April 21, 1884, he presented a gala that featured stars from both sides of the Atlantic, which netted \$16,000, not nearly enough to cover his total debt to the Company. He used the profits from three other ventures to settle the deficit.⁹⁹

In addition to the search for an impresario, the Board of Directors also faced an alternative that was even more difficult to fathom, a new theater remaining dark while there was still an outstanding tax bill. There was also the reality that Mapleson and the Academy of Music would consider the collapse of the Metropolitan Opera Company after a single season a victory. Recognizing those realities, the board entertained an idea from Dr. Damrosch, a leader in the New York musical scene since his arrival from Germany ten years before, to produce a season of German opera at the Metropolitan.¹⁰⁰ Seeing their options, the board, led by Damrosch's friend, James Roosevelt, accepted the proposal.¹⁰¹ Walter Damrosch, at the age of twenty-two, was engaged as the assistant to the director, in addition to a myriad of other duties for his father.¹⁰²

By August of 1884, with the board's approval, Damrosch began to produce opera using the New York Symphony Society, which he conducted, choristers from the New York Oratorio Society, which he had founded and conducted, and principal singers that he recruited from central Europe. By turning to the music dramas of Richard Wagner, the repertory would appeal to the

⁹⁸ John Briggs, *Requiem for a Yellow Brick Brewery* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1969), p. 28. Briggs states that Abbey was dismissed. Other sources suggest that he resigned.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

¹⁰⁰ Dzikies, *Opera in America*, p. 239.

¹⁰¹ Horowitz, *Wagner Nights*, p. 77.

¹⁰² Saleski, *Famous Musicians*, p. 113.

German immigrants and their descendants living in the New York area who had been neglected by the Metropolitan Opera in the past season.¹⁰³

As conductor and producer, Damrosch proposed that the German repertoire and works translated into German would be presented at reduced ticket prices (\$4.00 versus \$7.00), made possible by hiring German singers, who were less expensive than the Italian casts. The ensemble would be featured, rather than individual stars; the orchestra, rather than the resident Metropolitan Opera orchestra, would be the New York Symphony, and the New York Oratorio Society would supplement the German chorus.¹⁰⁴ Damrosch offered his own services for a salary of \$10,000.¹⁰⁵ While he assured that costs would be kept down, the Board of Directors agreed to assume any cost overruns beyond his salary. In contrast, had the Board of Directors allowed Abbey a second season, they would have been faced with an additional minimum assessment of \$3,000 each, so in light of the previous season's losses, this plan was considered a godsend.¹⁰⁶

The late start did not seem to hurt Damrosch's efforts. He knew the musical scene in Europe and America, so he recruited a company that could sing *Rigoletto*, *William Tell*, and *La Juive*, as well as Wagner.¹⁰⁷ His August trip to Europe yielded fine results. He recruited Amalia Materna, who had sung Brünnhilde in the first Bayreuth performances of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* and the first Kundry in *Parsifal* at Bayreuth in 1882, tenor Anton Schott, and contralto Marianne Brandt.¹⁰⁸ In the production of the German works, what mattered more was a capable ensemble

¹⁰³ Irving Kolodin, *The Metropolitan Opera 1883-1950*, p. 7.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁰⁵ "The Inflation Calculator"; available from <http://www.westegg.com/inflation/infl.cgi>; Internet accessed July 1, 2010. According to this resource, Damrosch's salary would equal \$235,743 in 2009 funds.

¹⁰⁶ Horowitz, *Wagner Nights*, p. 76.

¹⁰⁷ Dzikies, *Opera in America*, p. 239.

¹⁰⁸ William H. Seltsam, *Metropolitan Opera Annals* (New York: H.W. Wilson, Co. and the Metropolitan Opera Guild, Inc., 1947), p. 7.

cast. Damrosch was able to borrow the German casts for reasonable fees. Any two singers in the German cast could be hired for the cost of one of the Italian stars.¹⁰⁹

Table 3-1 Leopold Damrosch German Season at the Metropolitan Opera 1884-1885¹¹⁰

DATE	COMPOSER	OPERA	DATE	COMPOSER	OPERA
Nov 17	Wagner	<i>Tannhäuser</i>	Jan 7	Meyerbeer	<i>Les Huguenots</i>
Nov 19	Beethoven	<i>Fidelio</i>	Jan 9	Auber	<i>La Muette di Portici</i>
Nov 21	Meyerbeer	<i>Les Huguenots</i>	Jan 10-m	Meyerbeer	<i>Les Huguenots</i>
Nov 22	Wagner	<i>Tannhäuser</i>	Jan 12	Meyerbeer	<i>Les Huguenots</i>
Nov 24	Weber	<i>Der Freischütz</i>	Jan 14	Meyerbeer	<i>Le Prophète</i>
Nov 26	Wagner	<i>Tannhäuser</i>	Jan 15	Wagner	<i>Lohengrin</i>
Nov 28	Rossini	<i>Guillaume Tell</i>	Jan 16	Halévy	<i>La Juive</i>
Nov 29-m ¹¹¹	Beethoven	<i>Fidelio</i>	Jan 17-m	Wagner	<i>Tannhäuser</i>
Dec 1	Wagner	<i>Tannhäuser</i>	Jan 19	Wagner	<i>Lohengrin</i>
Dec 3	Wagner	<i>Lohengrin</i>	Jan 21	Halévy	<i>La Juive</i>
Dec 5	Rossini	<i>Guillaume Tell</i>	Jan 23	Meyerbeer	<i>Le Prophète</i>
Dec 6-m	Wagner	<i>Lohengrin</i>	Jan 24-m	Halévy	<i>La Juive</i>
Dec 8	Wagner	<i>Lohengrin</i>	Jan 25	Benefit Concert for the Chorus	
Dec 10	Mozart	<i>Don Giovanni</i>	Jan 26	Halévy	<i>La Juive</i>
Dec 12	Meyerbeer	<i>Les Huguenots</i>	Jan 28	Meyerbeer	<i>Le Prophète</i>
Dec 13	Mozart	<i>Don Giovanni</i>	Jan 30	Wagner	<i>Die Walküre</i> ¹¹²
Dec 15	Wagner	<i>Lohengrin</i>	Jan 31	Wagner	<i>Die Walküre</i>
Dec 17	Meyerbeer	<i>Le Prophète</i>	Feb 2	Wagner	<i>Die Walküre</i>
Dec 19	Rossini	<i>Guillaume Tell</i>	Feb 4	Wagner	<i>Die Walküre</i>
Dec 20-m	Meyerbeer	<i>Le Prophète</i>	Feb 6	Meyerbeer	<i>Le Prophète</i>
Dec 22	Meyerbeer	<i>Le Prophète</i>	Feb 7-m	Wagner	<i>Die Walküre</i>
Dec 24	Wagner	<i>Tannhäuser</i>	Feb 9	Wagner	<i>Lohengrin</i>
Dec 25	Meyerbeer	<i>Le Prophète</i>	Feb 11 ¹¹³	Wagner	<i>Tannhäuser</i>
Dec 26	Beethoven	<i>Fidelio</i>	Feb 12	Wagner	<i>Die Walküre</i>
Dec 27	Wagner	<i>Lohengrin</i>	Feb 14	Meyerbeer	<i>Le Prophète</i>
Dec 29	Auber	<i>La Muette di Portici</i>	Feb 15	Concert	
Dec 31	Wagner	<i>Lohengrin</i>	Feb 19	Wagner	<i>Tannhäuser</i>
Jan 2	Verdi	<i>Rigoletto</i>	Feb 20	Wagner	<i>Die Walküre</i>
Jan 3-m	Auber	<i>La Muette di Portici</i>	Feb 21	Halévy	<i>La Juive</i>
Jan 5	Wagner	<i>Tannhäuser</i>			

Damrosch worked tirelessly in October and announced that fifty-eight evening and matinee performances would take place over a thirteen week season. Many potential operagoers of the day could not afford the ticket prices of the inaugural season, so Damrosch announced that ticket

¹⁰⁹ Horowitz, *Wagner Nights*, p. 76.

¹¹⁰ Seltsam, *Metropolitan Opera Annals*, pp. 8-10. The table is a compilation of the information on pp. 8-10, eliminating the names of cast members. From 1884-1885 through the close of the 1890-1891 season, all operas were sung in German.

¹¹¹ This denotes a matinee performance.

¹¹² This marks the first production of *Die Walküre* at the Metropolitan Opera.

¹¹³ Dr. Leopold Damrosch was stricken with pneumonia and died on February 15. His son Walter conducted for him at the performances on February 12 and 14. John Lund conducted the performances on February 15, 19, 20, and 21.

prices would be half those of the previous season: Orchestra \$3.00, Dress circle \$2.00, Balcony \$1.50, and Gallery \$.50.¹¹⁴ With these new prices, the audience could include some of the Italian and German immigrants who were previously unable to afford the price of a ticket. The inclusion of French and Italian repertoire in the company was seemingly intended to strike a balance with the “elaborate and ponderous compositions”¹¹⁵ of Wagner, while the centerpiece of the season would be the presentation of *Die Walküre*.¹¹⁶ Damrosch had Abbey’s sets and costumes at his disposal for the French and Italian repertoire that was to be sung in German translation. He had approval to copy the sets and costumes used at Bayreuth for the *Ring* cycle.¹¹⁷

The first season of German opera brought to the Metropolitan Opera a musically knowledgeable audience who were also serious listeners. The press offered countless accounts of the January 30, 1885 performance of *Die Walküre*, describing the rehearsal process and discussing the length and complexity of the work. The reviewers were enthusiastic, offering lavish praise of the singers, the orchestra, and the *impresario*. The evening was “Damrosch’s crowning achievement and Wagner’s night.”¹¹⁸ New York was well acquainted with Wagner’s operas by this time, but until these productions, never through the efforts of a Wagnerian troupe as stable as the one Damrosch brought to the Metropolitan. The audiences saw Wagner as theater, with solid dramatic ideals that flew in the face of the Italianate luxury. Damrosch and his casts took dramatic integrity for granted, and the critics, like Henry Edward Krehbiel, took note of both effective musical presentation and the incredible character portrayals.¹¹⁹

The success of *Die Walküre* was grounded in Damrosch’s choice of Amalia Materna as Brünnhilde. Materna had learned the role from Wagner, who insisted that his singers could act.

¹¹⁴ Dzikies, *Opera in America*, p. 240.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 240.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 240.

¹¹⁷ Horowitz, *Wagner Nights*, p. 76.

¹¹⁸ Dzikies, *Opera in America*, p. 241.

¹¹⁹ Horowitz, *Wagner Nights*, p. 78.

The remaining cast included Anton Schott as Siegmund, Auguste Seidl-Kraus as Sieglinde, and Josef Staudigl as Wotan. Marianne Brandt sang Frikca and Gerhilde. The orchestra was outstanding, and the stage director Wilhelm Hock was also imported from Germany to bring the music drama to life in a manner consistent with Wagner's with only minor adjustments.¹²⁰

In 1885, tragedy struck the Damrosch family when, on February 10, less than ten days after the triumph of *Die Walküre*, Leopold Damrosch fell ill while conducting a rehearsal of Verdi's *Requiem*. The maestro, who conducted both the New York Symphony Society and the New York Oratorio Society, in addition to his duties at the Metropolitan Opera, felt ill and was unable to continue, claiming a cold and a chill. The following day, Damrosch met with his son Walter, who was serving as his assistant, and reviewed the score of *Tannhäuser* so that Walter could conduct the opera that night in his father's stead. This became Walter's Metropolitan Opera debut, at the age of twenty-three.¹²¹ Walter assumed the conducting duties for these operas with little difficulty thanks to these sessions.¹²² The following evening, after another session with his father, Walter conducted *Die Walküre*, and then Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète*, on the fourteenth. On the fourteenth, Leopold's condition worsened, and on the fifteenth, he died during the early hours of the morning.¹²³ He was fifty-two years of age. The concert he was to conduct at the Metropolitan that evening went on with chorusmaster John Lund conducting. Leopold's funeral was held in a Metropolitan Opera house that was filled to overflowing on February 18, 1885. The stage, set for the hall scene in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, was filled with the members of the Oratorio Society of New York and the chorus of the Metropolitan German Opera.¹²⁴ It lacked some of the religious components of a traditional funeral, but it was among the most impressive funerals ever

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 79.

¹²¹ George Martin, *The Damrosch Dynasty* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, Co., 1983), pp. 83-84.

¹²² Howard and Littell, "Walter Damrosch and Opera," p. 10.

¹²³ Martin, *The Damrosch Dynasty*, pp. 83-84.

¹²⁴ Howard and Littell, "Walter Damrosch and Opera," p. 10.

witnessed in New York City.¹²⁵ Henry Ward Beecher¹²⁶ gave the funeral address, and the Metropolitan Opera Board of Directors was in attendance to pay tribute.¹²⁷ Assistant Bishop H.C. Potter of the Protestant Episcopal Diocese of New York sent a tribute that was read at the service.¹²⁸ Three days after the funeral, Walter took the Metropolitan German Opera Company on tour, leading successful performances in his father's stead.¹²⁹

At the end of that first German season, the accountants showed that the Damrosch arrangement had paid off in terms of prestige, popularity, and financial success. The operating deficit was only \$40,000, or \$570 per shareholder.¹³⁰ This was a significantly better figure than that of the previous season. In finding a replacement for Damrosch, the Board of Directors chose to split the duties of the new general manager with an executive secretary, Edmund Stanton, who was in place to watch for the shareholders' interests and limit their financial responsibility.¹³¹ In the summer of 1885, Walter again set sail for Europe, this time with his brother Frank, and Edmund Stanton, Managing Director of the Metropolitan Opera, bringing back with him contracts for the appearances of Lilli Lehmann, Marianne Brandt, Lorenzo Alvary, Emil Fischer, and the conductor Anton Seidl.¹³²

Anton Seidl (1850-1898), who had served as an assistant to Wagner at Bayreuth, and a member of the second generation of Wagner conductors, was selected as the new musical director and conductor.¹³³ Seidl, who had served as choral director to Hans Richter, one of the greatest

¹²⁵ Martin, *The Damrosch Dynasty*, p. 83.

¹²⁶ Article "Henry Ward Beecher" in *Encyclopædia Britannica* (fifteenth ed., 2005), II, p. 43. Henry Ward Beecher (1813-1887) was a prominent Congregationalist clergyman who was the pastor of the Plymouth Congregational Church in Brooklyn, New York.

¹²⁷ Damrosch, *My Musical Life*, p. 1.

¹²⁸ Article "The Last Tributes Given," *New York Times*, XXXIV, No. 10,441 (February 19, 1885), p. 1.

¹²⁹ Howard and Littell, "Walter Damrosch and Opera," p. 10.

¹³⁰ Dzikies, *Opera in America*, p. 242.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

¹³² Saleski, *Famous Musicians*, p. 113.

¹³³ Horowitz, *Wagner Nights*, p. 81. The author notes that upon Leopold's death, Walter was sent to Europe to find a replacement for his father, and that it was Walter who delivered the contact to Seidl.

Wagner disciples, had a reputation as an exacting and meticulous musician.¹³⁴ He had lived with the Wagner family in Bayreuth for six years, had worked as a copyist for Wagner, and had helped Wagner with correspondence. When Seidl received invitations to conduct, Wagner encouraged Seidl to accept these initial conducting engagements, and establish his own career. Seidl had traveled with Wagner as an assistant, coaching the singers for the initial performance of the *Ring*, and implementing a number of the staging details.¹³⁵ Seidl later led performances at Leipzig and Bremen, led the first complete *Ring Cycle* in London in 1882, and conducted a successful Wagnerian tour in Europe with the Neumann Opera Company in 1883. By bringing new singers with him, including the great soprano Lilli Lehmann, Seidl ensured that the Metropolitan Opera, and the Damrosch plan, would be in good hands.¹³⁶ Seidl told friends that Wagner himself had encouraged him to settle in the United States. When Leopold Damrosch offered Seidl's wife a contract to appear at the Metropolitan in *Die Walküre*, she did so with her husband's future endeavors in mind.¹³⁷

Another voyage in April 1887 enabled Damrosch to have a summer to analyze Beethoven symphonies with von Bülow. On the eastbound voyage he met Andrew Carnegie, who invited young Damrosch to visit his home in Scotland. When there, he met the steel magnate James G. Blaine and his daughters. Margaret Blaine eventually married Walter Damrosch and her father in due course became the president and chief supporter of two Damrosch societies.¹³⁸

Damrosch's studies with von Bülow were quite successful. They meticulously went through all nine Beethoven symphonies, discussing phrasing, orchestral balance and volume in order to realize Beethoven's intent. The elder musician was flattered by the attention paid to him, for he felt that it was the first time that any musician had sought him out for this kind of instruction.

¹³⁴ Dzikies, *Opera in America*, p. 242.

¹³⁵ Horowitz, *Wagner Nights*, pp. 82-84.

¹³⁶ Dzikies, *Opera in America*, pp. 242-243.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.

¹³⁸ Saleski, *Famous Musicians*, p. 113.

With von Bülow's recommendation, Damrosch attended the local conservatory to study counterpoint and attend piano classes. Looking back on that period of study, Damrosch reflected that he received much from von Bülow, but that it took years to properly digest the wealth of ideas regarding interpretation and technique.¹³⁹ That period of study helped establish Damrosch as a conductor who was an advocate for composers of English, French, Slavic, and American background. He did not represent the Italians. He measured music by German standards, and orchestral music was measured against Beethoven.

In his article *German Opera and Everyday Life*, Walter Damrosch spoke of the fascination with Wagner in the United States. He considered the appearance of Wagner at the Metropolitan in 1884 to be "one of the most remarkable phenomena in the art-history of America," and he characterized Americans as:

A people descended from all the nationalities of the globe, with no mythological past of their own, have received with enthusiasm and growing appreciation a series of musical dramas based on... the old German mythology, played in a world absolutely foreign to their own, and governed by certain art-laws which revolutionized all preconceived ideas on this subject.¹⁴⁰

He stated that Americans appreciated this as something transcendent that appealed to the intellect as well as the imagination. The melodies and harmonies of the *leitmotifs* were associated with the stage action.¹⁴¹ Damrosch believed that the American public's interest in Wagner's music dramas would increase as they became more familiar with the music, and the rather frivolous view of opera would change to a more serious attitude when the audience realized that the music and drama of German opera served a higher purpose than the "amusement operas" to which they were accustomed. He believed that the public now realized that opera could be a much more noble pursuit.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Martin, *The Damrosch Dynasty*, p. 95.

¹⁴⁰ Walter Damrosch, "German Opera and Everyday Life" *The North American Review* (Vol. 149, No. 397), 1889. pp. 699-701.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 699-701.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 704.

The period from 1885 to 1891 brought additional triumph for the German repertory and Wagner's music dramas with Anton Seidl and Walter Damrosch at the podium. Seidl led the Metropolitan premieres of *Die Meistersinger* and *Tristan und Isolde* in 1886. The following year, the premiere of *Siegfried* established that Wagner's music drama existed on a different plane than other opera. Described as:

... not an enjoyment but a task ... [*Siegfried*] was learned and complex and demands some study, and thus militates against its success among those who seek musical performances simply as a mode of entertainment.¹⁴³

In 1888, *Götterdämmerung* was very well received, as was the 1889 makeshift production of *Das Rheingold*.¹⁴⁴ It was thought that Wagner kept the Metropolitan open and at the same time had brought the Academy of Music to an end.

The 1886 Mapleson season at the Academy failed. His star Adelina Patti no longer appeared and her replacement, Minnie Hauk, the first American Carmen, failed to draw. Mapleson introduced Massenet's *Manon*, which also met with failure. Stating that he could not fight Wall Street, Mapleson left America and the Academy of Music for England. The opera house was used by touring companies for the next ten years, and then ceased to serve in that capacity, facing demolition in 1929.¹⁴⁵

In spite of the artistic advances brought about in the Wagner seasons, there were skirmishes and differences of thought within the Metropolitan Opera organization. The subscribers were bored and irritated by the four-hour darkness in the house. The socialite boxholders could not see and be seen. So, the board legislated that the lights could not be lowered during performances. The boxholders were noisy, rude, and disruptive during performances, much to the dismay of other patrons. Stanton attempted to appease all sides by diluting the original Damrosch plan, introducing repertoire that was more accessible to a wider audience, and programming Italian

¹⁴³ Dzikies, *Opera in America*, pp. 242-243.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 242-243.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 243.

works with Wagnerian influence. Those efforts failed miserably, and in 1891, Henry Abbey was brought back to the house, along with John Schoeffel and Maurice Grau. The Italian and French repertory, once again performed in the original languages, became the mainstay of the house, with only Seidl remaining as conductor. Two new conductors were brought in, and Walter Damrosch exited to continue other endeavors on the New York musical scene.¹⁴⁶

It was a natural reaction from the seven years of opera in German and the pendulum swung far to the other side. A company of truly great singers had been assembled by the new managers, the audiences reveled in their *bel canto*, and as Abbey, Schoeffel, and Grau assumed the entire financial responsibility of the enterprise, the directors of the opera house were also well satisfied. They had become tired of the growing deficits of the German opera.¹⁴⁷

German opera and its newfound audience were able to save the Metropolitan Opera from the brink of disaster, but could not transform the Metropolitan Opera into an American Bayreuth. It did, however, show that the repertoire had a following that would make it feasible to include in an overall season, given the proper production approaches. It further opened the collective American ear to the new music coming from Germany and its composers, and it focused attention away from the Italian repertoire that had long dominated musical culture.¹⁴⁸

In the seven years after Leopold Damrosch's death, his successor, Anton Seidl, a Wagner disciple, brought all of Wagner's operas from *Rienzi* through the four operas of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* to the Metropolitan Opera. Five productions were the American premieres of these works. The Metropolitan Opera performances coincided with the peak of Wagner's popularity in America and in Europe, with celebrated singers and conductors who had appeared at Bayreuth. The productions, conceived by Wagnerites in the image of Wagner's originals, made the Metropolitan virtually a German house. Losses were reduced from \$40,000 in the first Damrosch year to \$25,000 in the first year under Seidl. The advance sales for the 1889-90 season, with German repertoire in place was \$80,000, a figure to be reckoned with that brought a 43-3

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 244.

¹⁴⁷ Damrosch, *My Musical Life*, p. 194.

¹⁴⁸ Ottenberg, *Opera Odyssey*, p. 151.

stockholder vote in favor of the season. There were even German performances of the Verdi staples *Il Trovatore* and *Aida*. By 1890-91, of the seventeen operas presented, eight were by Wagner.¹⁴⁹

However, as the novelty of the Wagner repertoire faded, and as their serious, scholarly nature eventually exhausted the boxholders, change was unavoidable. In 1891 Abbey returned to the Metropolitan and the daily management was given to Maurice Grau, who knew the public taste. Grau built the company around admirable singers and repertory sung exclusively in French and Italian. He believed that audiences attended opera to hear fine singing, which motivated him to assemble some of the most brilliant casts ever assembled in America.¹⁵⁰

The move was neither widely supported nor welcomed by the press that represented the German-born public. It was believed that without opera in German, the Metropolitan would also abandon German opera, “the music of the future,” in favor of the old fashioned Italian repertory. Through the tragedy of the 1892 fire, a resolution, or at least a truce, was achieved. If a company was to continue, regardless of the choice of repertoire, the opposing forces realized that their focus must turn toward the restoration of the house. With the fire went, according to Kolodin,

... the softer elements of the membership. Only those who cared enough about opera not to count its cost or those who had so much money that the cost did not matter took up the burden of refinancing the reconstruction. Most of the stockholders of the newly formed Metropolitan Opera and Real Estate Company were in the second category, and they soon evolved a formula whereby important money losses were held to a minimum for three decades.¹⁵¹

It was in this atmosphere that the Metropolitan Opera continued. Under Abbey and Grau, the Metropolitan Opera successfully replicated the repertory of London’s Covent Garden, where Grau also served as impresario during this period. German opera returned to the Metropolitan Opera in 1896 with a resident production of *Tristan und Isolde* under the direction of Anton

¹⁴⁹ Sommer, “New York, The Metropolitan Opera,” *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, III, p. 587.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 587.

¹⁵¹ Seltsam, *The Metropolitan Opera Annals*, p. 9.

Seidl.¹⁵² After positive audience response to the production of *Tristan*, at the close of the 1896 season, Walter Damrosch rekindled the notion brought forth by his father nearly ten years before. With the financial backing of William Steinway, a Wagner Society, and the proceeds from the sale of his home, along with the Metropolitan Opera costumes, scenery, and properties at his disposal, Damrosch brought a season of German opera, independent of the Metropolitan Opera management, to the Metropolitan with some success. He also managed to launch a multi-city tour. The Damrosch Opera Company remained a fixture in New York City for four seasons. It is in this new light, also with the influence of William Steinway, that Xaver Scharwenka was able to present his opera *Mataswintha* to the New York City audience in 1897.

Walter Damrosch was certainly a man with influence. A friend to Andrew Carnegie, he shared many long walks and talks about the advancement of education, peace, and the arts. However, Carnegie was a man of limited musical interest. He liked choral singing. He did not like opera, but preferred oratorio. He was not an *aficionado* of particularly intricate symphonic works. Yet, at some point in the summer of 1875, Walter persuaded Carnegie to accept the presidency of the Symphony Society and the Oratorio Society. With this, Carnegie assured that there was no problem with the rent for the rehearsal spaces for either organization. But, more importantly, Damrosch and Carnegie began to discuss the construction of a new hall for both organizations, which opened as Carnegie Hall in 1891. The industrial magnate who had given of his fortune for the construction of libraries moved into the world of the performing arts.¹⁵³

The Damrosch Opera Company

The Damrosch Opera Company existed for four seasons from 1894 until 1898. It played at the Metropolitan Opera House, the old New York Academy of Music, and the Philadelphia Academy. On tours to principal cities in the United States reaching as far west as Denver, the

¹⁵² Sommer, "New York, The Metropolitan Opera," *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, III, p. 589.

¹⁵³ Martin, *The Damrosch Dynasty*, pp. 103-114.

company brought Wagner's music dramas, Beethoven's *Fidelio*, and other operas to audiences that had never heard these works.¹⁵⁴

Damrosch intended to form a company that combated what he believed was a growing apathy toward German opera within the general opera-going public. He further hoped to address a complaint against the management of the Metropolitan Opera. When the management of the Metropolitan Opera in 1891 replaced the German company originated by Walter's father Leopold, and continued by Anton Seidl with an Italian-French company under the management of Abbey, Schoeffel, and Grau, they dissatisfied a large portion of their audience. *Die Meistersinger*, sung in Italian, even with Seidl conducting, did not provide the same aesthetic experience as the opera sung in German. The critics and the public rained down complaints.¹⁵⁵ As a result, despite excellent French and Italian opera performances, the German repertoire steadily declined in quality while the Metropolitan Opera management did nothing. They blamed the composer and the public when they looked at the unsold seats at a Wagner performance. Infuriated, Damrosch moved to prove the arguments wrong.

Upon his departure from the Metropolitan Opera in 1891, Walter did not set Wagnerian opera aside. He scheduled orchestral and vocal excerpts from the music dramas within the concerts he gave with the New York Symphony. Anton Seidl, who was conducting less frequently at the Metropolitan under the French-Italian system, did the same with concerts at the New York Philharmonic from 1891 to 1898. Both concert series featured the music sung in the original German, which was in contrast to the Metropolitan's practice of Wagner and Beethoven sung in Italian and French.

¹⁵⁴ Howard and Littell, "Walter Damrosch and Opera," p. 12.

¹⁵⁵ Martin, *The Damrosch Dynasty*, pp. 144-145.

In February 1894,¹⁵⁶ Walter produced and conducted a fully staged performance of *Die Walküre* in German with the rudimentary staging and scenery. The critics were not kind, but the public response to the opportunity to hear Amalia Materna as Brünnhilde, Anton Schott as Siegmund, and Emil Fischer as Wotan was outstanding.¹⁵⁷ According to the *New York Times*:

Those who have not heard the music drama at all since it was last performed in the Metropolitan Opera House were naturally eager to revel once more in the play of tremendous emotions voiced in Wagner's music. Those who have been in Paris lately and witnessed performances of *La Valkyrie* were anxious to efface memories of a sweetly-sentimental vocal treatment, in which the significance of the book was quite lost. And perhaps there were a few who had never heard the music drama at all, and were ready to do so for the first time.

Certainly there was a great audience present. This winter has been notable for brilliant assemblies for the sake of charity. Last night's performance was for the benefit of the Workingmen's School... and it will be memorable by reason of its pecuniary success. It was fortunate for the projectors of the entertainment that several well-known Wagner artists chanced to be in or near New York... [cast list eliminated] The orchestra was that of the Symphony organization and the conductor Walter Damrosch.

The performance was, of course, given under many difficulties. The stage at [Carnegie] Music Hall is small and not provided with the necessary apparatus for the setting of such a work as *Die Walküre*. Again, the space accorded the orchestra is so narrow and so long that the musicians are stretched out in too long a line to do effective work. In spite of these and other obstacles, the performance moved with considerable smoothness and was commendable in its earnestness of spirit.

Mme. Materna has not been seen here as Brünnhilde since the first season of German opera at the Metropolitan. Her impersonation, while not so rich vocally, is dramatically as excellent as ever. Anton Schott declaimed the music of Siegmund vigorously, though untunefully, and was intelligent in action.... As for Herr Fischer, while it is undeniable that his voice has lost some of its power and vibrancy, he still gives a noble and touching performance of the unhappy Wotan. The performance will be repeated on Saturday afternoon.¹⁵⁸

Damrosch, excited by the response, rented the Metropolitan Opera house for March 26, 28, and 31, and with the same cast repeated *Die Walküre*, followed with two performances of *Götterdämmerung*.¹⁵⁹

At the Metropolitan Opera House last night, the serious old days of grand opera in German seemed to have returned. For the benefit of the University Settlement Society and the New York Kindergarten Association a performance of the final drama of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* namely, *Die Götterdämmerung*, was given. It is three years since this mighty work has been heard, and, although last night's performance was for obvious reasons much below the level of the good old days, the music drama again demonstrated its right to a place among the masterworks of all time. It is not necessary at this late day to dwell upon the grandeur of the story of this drama, nor the

¹⁵⁶ The author states that the performance was February 17. The first performance reviewed was given on February 14 with the repeat performance on the February 17.

¹⁵⁷ Martin, *The Damrosch Dynasty*, p. 145.

¹⁵⁸ Review: "German Opera Once Again," *New York Times*. XLIII, No. 13,254 (February 14, 1894), p. 4.

¹⁵⁹ Martin, *The Damrosch Dynasty*, p. 145.

remarkable power and beauty of the music. It need not be supposed that praise of this drama means dispraise of other immortal masterpieces that have been heard in the Opera House in the last few months. There is room in a sensible world for many varieties of art, and Wagner need not crowd [out] Verdi, Gounod, Bizet, or – Mozart.

There were many demerits in last night's performance, but as the evening's labor was for charity, most of them may be dismissed without comment. It ought to be said, however, for the benefit of those who may not be familiar with the later Wagnerian dramas that it is not necessary to ejaculate Wagner's declamatory passages with a vocal method founded on main strength, as Herr Anton Schott (Siegfried) seems to think it is. There are some persons who are proud to call themselves Wagnerites who do not admire what Herr Schott fondly fancies is singing. It should be said for the tenor, however, that he looked the part, enunciated the text excellently, and acted with dignity.

Mme. Materna cannot any longer look like Brünnhilde, but her voice is in a good state of preservation, and she knows all the [Bayreuth] traditions. Her performance was, therefore, intelligent and forcible, though it must be admitted that it is not likely to efface recollections of the great one seen and heard in the first performance of the drama here. Herr Emil Fischer's interpretation of Hagen retains all its excellences. The singer was in surprisingly good voice last night. Frau Koert-Kronold as Guttrune and Herr Emil Steger as Gunther contributed weak elements to the performance. Frau Koert-Kronold, Marcella Lindh, and Marie Mauer were the three Rhine maidens. The chorus of Gunther's vassals did its work very well. Mr. Walter Damrosch conducted the music-drama for the first time in this city and acquitted himself with great credit. The orchestra under his direction was a good one, and it played Wagner's powerful music with vigor and earnestness. Considering that the work was produced outside of a regular season, it was well put on the stage and went with smoothness. A very large audience was present and the applause at the ends of the acts was very warm. The drama will be performed again on Saturday afternoon.¹⁶⁰

Henry Edward Krehbiel noted the performances in the following way:

They were slipshod affairs, with makeshift scenery and a stage not at all adapted for theatrical performances; but the public rose at them, as the phrase goes, and Mr. Damrosch felt emboldened to give a representation of *Götterdämmerung*, with the same principals at the Metropolitan Opera House, on March 28th.¹⁶¹

Putting aside the negative aspects within an overwhelmingly positive public response and energized by this success, Damrosch moved forward to organize his German opera company with the support of William Steinway. Damrosch offered Anton Seidl, a rival for Steinway's financial support for his own German company ambitions, the opportunity to share the conducting responsibilities equally between them. Seidl walked away, and Steinway's check for \$,2500 went to Damrosch, ending Seidl's plans for good. Armed further with the backing of a Wagner Society

¹⁶⁰ Review: "Wagner's Ring Tragedy," *New York Times*, XLII, No. 13,291 (February 29, 1894) p. 4. The reviewer seems to bear out Damrosch's urging to the Metropolitan Opera management that Wagner in the original language can, and should be part of a regular season.

¹⁶¹ Krehbiel, *Chapters of Opera*, p. 256.

and the profits of the sale of his home in New York City, Damrosch established the Damrosch Opera Company. With the list of subscribers and cash in hand, he approached Henry Abbey, the Metropolitan's leader and suggested that a German night be inserted into each week of the Metropolitan's regular season. Abbey refused and offered Damrosch, instead, the opportunity to rent the opera house for eight weeks at the end of the season. Despite Abbey's warnings,¹⁶² Damrosch, assured by the promise of a New York season and a sizeable tour that would reach as far west as Kansas City, accepted the offer and pressed forward and began to hire singers and make arrangements for scenery.¹⁶³ Abbey offered Damrosch, as a part of the rental, the use of the house's stock of costumes, scenery, and properties – a veritable treasure trove for the Wagner disciple.¹⁶⁴ So, like his father ten years before when he began the Metropolitan's German productions, Walter spent the summer of 1894 traveling Europe to recruit singers for his new company. His efforts brought the American debuts of Johanna Gadski and Rosa Sucher; others included Max Alvary and Emil Fischer.¹⁶⁵

The difference between 1884 and 1894 was that Damrosch *père* had the Metropolitan Opera's resources and name to support his efforts. Damrosch *fils* was working on his own to bring seven of the most difficult operas in the repertory to the stage in one season. Henry Edward Krehbiel commented on the opening season:

... The whole affair was Mr. Damrosch's own venture, he being at once manager, artistic director, and conductor, but, as I have intimated, he had the backing of an organization called the Wagner Society, which was chiefly composed of women. The season came hard on the heels of the Italian and French season. Mr. Damrosch's leading singers were familiar with Wagner's works, but practically he had to build up his institution from the foundation and to do it within an incredibly short time. With such rapid work we are familiar in America, but in Germany to have suggested such an undertaking as the organization of a company, the preparation of a theater, and the mounting, rehearsing, and performing of seven of the most difficult and cumbersome works in the repertory of the lyric drama within the space of five or six weeks would have been to have invited an inquest *de lunatico*. I do not wish to be understood as mentioning these things wholly

¹⁶² Martin, *The Damrosch Dynasty*, p. 146. Abbey warned Damrosch, "My boy, don't do it. You'll lose every cent you have in the world."

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 146.

¹⁶⁴ Howard and Littell, "Walter Damrosch and Opera," p. 11.

¹⁶⁵ Gadski and Fischer would be part of the ensemble that presented *Mataswintha* in 1896-1897.

in the way of praise—the results from an artistic point of view disclosed much too often that they were blameworthy—but what credit they reflect upon the tremendous energy, enterprise, and will power of Mr. Damrosch must be given ungrudgingly and enthusiastically. Plainly he was inspired with strength of conviction quite out of the ordinary line of that spirit of theatrical speculation upon which we have so often depended for the large undertakings in music. It was a belief based on something like religious zeal, and under the circumstances what he did was an even more remarkable feat than that accomplished by his father in 1884.¹⁶⁶

The first “Damrosch season” opened with a performance of *Tristan und Isolde* on February 25, 1895. Two additional performances of *Tristan*, along with four *Siegfried*, four *Lohengrin*, two *Götterdämmerung*, three *Tannhäuser*, three *Die Walküre*, and three *Die Meistersinger* followed on the rented Metropolitan stage. Two concert performances of *Parsifal* at Carnegie Hall were given with the season concluding with the tour. The season netted a profit of \$53,000.¹⁶⁷ Krehbiel commented further on the success:

... And such a success! Not only far in advance of what the fondest Wagnerites had dared to hope for as a tribute to their master's art, but one which compelled them to rub their eyes in amazement and grope and stare in a search for causes. Twenty-one times in succession was the vast audience room crowded, and when the time was come for striking the balance on the subscription season there was talk, only a little fantastic if at all, of receipts aggregating \$150,000, or nearly \$9,000¹⁶⁸ a performance. I should like to keep the thought of this unparalleled financial success separate from that of the artistic results attained. Between the financial and artistic achievements there was a wide disparity; but that fact only sufficed to emphasize the obvious lesson of the season, namely, the vast desire which the people of New York felt again to enjoy Wagner's dramas. Fortunately I can make a record of the capaciousness of that hunger without necessarily lauding its intelligence and discrimination.¹⁶⁹

The second season (1896) took place on the stage of the Academy of Music, due to a feud between Damrosch and the Metropolitan management. It saw the addition of Milka Ternina and David Bispham to its roster; Katharina Klafsky and Otto Lohse also joined, but returned to Europe at season's end. It brought the inclusion of a non-German opera to the stage, the premiere of Damrosch's *The Scarlet Letter* in Boston on February 10, 1896. The season was a difficult one because it was a depression year. Damrosch wrote, “I did not retain my quickly gained

¹⁶⁶ Krehbiel, *Chapters of Opera*, pp. 255-257.

¹⁶⁷ Martin, *The Damrosch Dynasty*, p. 146. “The Inflation Calculator,” Internet accessed April 27, 2010. According to this resource, the season's profits, would be \$1,297,680 in 2009 funds.

¹⁶⁸ “The Inflation Calculator,” Internet accessed April 27, 2010. According to this resource, the aggregate receipts were \$3,181,719.11, or nearly \$229,021.15 a performance in 2009 funds.

¹⁶⁹ Krehbiel, *Chapters of Opera*, p. 257.

fortune long.”¹⁷⁰ With the inclusion of its southern tour, the company ended the year with a deficit, but not nearly as large as the deficit encountered by the Metropolitan with their small German faction.¹⁷¹ Damrosch learned that his audiences, especially those in the South and West appreciated Wagner, but wanted a more balanced tour, so, in an attempt to strengthen both houses, Damrosch and Abbey agreed to “swap” singers. Damrosch added Emma Calvé to bring *Carmen* into his repertory, and Abbey added some Damrosch singers to the Metropolitan Opera’s weak German ‘wing.’ In this move, a truce was declared, and Damrosch struck an agreement with the management for further rental of the Metropolitan Opera House for the 1897 season.¹⁷² This rental proved to be beneficial for the Metropolitan.

The 1896-1897 Metropolitan season had not started well. Lillian Nordica declined her contract upon hearing the news that Nellie Melba had taken over the role of Brünnhilde.¹⁷³ Katherine Klafsky, who had been engaged for Wagnerian roles, died following brain surgery in September. She had never reached the Metropolitan.¹⁷⁴ Lehmann was in the United States, but was under contract to Walter Damrosch, and thus unavailable. On October 17, 1896, Henry Abbey, who, along with Grau and Schoeffel, was one of the Metropolitan Opera’s triumvirate managers, died. In December, Melba’s performance as Brünnhilde was disastrous, and had damaged her voice. She was advised to rest, and in January 1897, left for Paris and a three-month respite from singing.¹⁷⁵ Lastly, in February, 1897 Baritone Armand Castlemary¹⁷⁶ died onstage, during a performance of Flotow’s *Martha*.¹⁷⁷ Maurice Grau took stock of the events of the season, including inconsistent performances, and decided that the best option was to suspend

¹⁷⁰ Howard and Littell, “Walter Damrosch and Opera,” p. 12.

¹⁷¹ Martin, *The Damrosch Dynasty*, p. 149.

¹⁷² Ibid., p. 149.

¹⁷³ Kolodin, *The Metropolitan Opera 1883-1950*, p. 124.

¹⁷⁴ Briggs, *Requiem*, p. 51.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 51.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 51. Castlemary, cast as Tristano was blocked to run about the stage and stumble. At age sixty-three, the exertion was too much. He suffered a heart attack, collapsed, and died in the arms of Jean de Reszke. The audience applauded, as they thought he was acting.

¹⁷⁷ Kolodin, *The Metropolitan Opera 1883-1950*, pp. 124-128.

activities and reorganize. Once again, when the Metropolitan was faced with a large, empty piece of real estate that was not generating revenue while on the tax rolls, the Damrosch family waited in the wings.¹⁷⁸ Abbey's death brought production at the Metropolitan Opera to a standstill. The formal season ended with a production of *Siegfried* in February 1897 followed by five post-season performances, one concert, and a staged testimonial benefit for Henry Abbey's daughter, Kitty. The Damrosch arrangement from the previous season allowed for the house to remain open and operate into the spring season of 1897, while the Metropolitan reorganized, and the Maurice Grau Opera Company that had emerged took a year's hiatus from production. The Metropolitan Opera reopened with a resident company in the fall of 1898.¹⁷⁹

In reflecting on this grand venture, Walter Damrosch wrote:

To re-enter the Metropolitan on such a Wagnerian wave after German opera had been so ignominiously snuffed out five years before, was a great triumph and satisfaction for me, more especially because my father had laid the foundation eleven years before.¹⁸⁰

In a letter to Henry Edward Krehbiel, he added: "I was driven by an irresistible impulse which, so far, seems to have led me right."¹⁸¹ Damrosch also wrote:

I had again planted the flag of Wagner firmly in American ground and naturally did not want to see it pulled down again. I therefore called on Abbey and Grau and – as I had no desire for managerial honors, the artistic side of it only interesting me – begged them to add a German department to their really splendid galaxy of French and Italian artists and to let me take care of it for them. But at that time they did not seem ready to alter their traditional operatic scheme, and my suggestion did not meet with a favorable response. I then decided that I would go on myself.¹⁸²

Walter's repertoire choices seemed to follow those made by his late father. The 1895 season included the complete *Ring* cycle, *Tristan und Isolde* (opening night), *Die Meistersinger*, *Lohengrin*, and *Tannhäuser*. The singers for this initial venture, like his father's eleven years before, were recruited from Germany: Rosa Sucher of the Berlin Royal Opera, Johanna Gadski

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 124-128.

¹⁷⁹ Seltsam, *Metropolitan Opera Annals*, p. 89.

¹⁸⁰ Damrosch, *My Musical Life*, p. 111.

¹⁸¹ Horowitz, *Wagner Nights*, p. 178.

¹⁸² Damrosch, *My Musical Life*, p. 113.

also from Berlin, Emil Fischer of the Dresden Royal Opera, and Max Alvary, who had studied at Bayreuth. Damrosch also found an English singer, Marie Brema, who also had studied at Bayreuth, but was a virtual unknown. The 1896 season began with a performance of *Fidelio*, and included Damrosch's own opera, *The Scarlet Letter*. The 1897 season opened with *Die Walküre* and, at the request of William Steinway, the production of Scharwenka's *Mataswintha* (see Tables 3-2 and 3.3).¹⁸³

Table 3-2 Damrosch Opera Company Season 1897

DATE	COMPOSER	OPERA
Mar 8	Wagner	<i>Die Walküre</i>
Mar 10	Wagner	<i>Der Fliegende Holländer</i>
Mar 13-m ¹⁸⁴	Wagner	<i>Die Walküre</i>
Mar 15	Wagner	<i>Lohengrin</i>
Mar 16	Mozart	<i>Die Zauberflöte</i>
Mar 17	Wagner	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i>
Mar 19	Wagner	<i>Die Meistersinger</i>
Mar 20	Wagner	<i>Lohengrin</i>
Mar 22	Wagner	<i>Tannhäuser</i>
Mar 24	Wagner	<i>Siegfried</i>
Mar 29	Wagner	<i>Das Rheingold</i>
Mar 31	Wagner	<i>Die Walküre</i>
Apr 1	Scharwenka	<i>Mataswintha</i>
Apr 2	Wagner	<i>Götterdämmerung</i>

¹⁸³ Damrosch, *My Musical Life*, pp. 107-115.

¹⁸⁴ This denotes a matinee performance.

Table 3-3 The Damrosch Opera Company Roster, 1897 ¹⁸⁵

VOICE TYPE	ARTIST'S NAME	VOICE TYPE	ARTIST'S NAME
Soprano	Mathilde Denner	Tenor	Carl Holbach
Soprano	Riza Eibenschutz	Tenor	Paul Kalisch
Soprano	Johanna Gadski	Tenor	Ernst Kraus
Soprano	Lena Gottich	Tenor	Philip Leilman
Soprano	Lena Hartmann	Tenor	Edward Richter
Soprano	Marie Hartmann	Tenor	W. Sannee
Soprano	Lillian Lehmann	Baritone	Wilhelm Mertens
Soprano	Lillian Nordica	Baritone	Gerhard Stehmann
Soprano	Mina Schilling	Bass-Baritone	Emil Fischer
Soprano	Augusta Vollmar	Bass-Baritone	Carl Somer
Soprano	Georgine von Januschowsky	Bass	F. Henn
Mezzo Soprano	Marie Brandis	Bass	Henirich Hobbing
Mezzo	Marie Mattfeld	Bass	H. Newmann
Tenor	Heinrich Bartels	Bass	P. Otto
Tenor	Fritz Derschuch	Bass	Wilhelm Xanten
Tenor	Fritz Ernst	Bass	M. Behrens

Conductor: Walter Damrosch

Composer/Conductor: Xaver Scharwenka

In the 1897-1898 seasons a partnership was formed with Charles A. Ellis, who managed the Soprano Nellie Melba. With her addition, the Damrosch Company advertised a season of “Grand Opera in French, German, and Italian.” The company presented *La Traviata*, *Aida*, and *Il barbiere di Siviglia* in Italian, as well as *Faust* and *Roméo et Juliette* in French. Damrosch added a conductor for the Italian repertoire, Oreste Bimboni. The German repertoire included the more usual Wagner fare, including a production of *Der Fliegende Holländer*, last seen at the Metropolitan in 1892. Bimboni and Damrosch shared the French repertoire, and Damrosch alone conducted the German productions. The Damrosch Company had adopted the ‘wing’ production system. ¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ Kolodin, *The Metropolitan Opera 1883-1950*, pp. 128-129. “The casts were otherwise of erratic quality, with a persistent indisposition of (Tenor Ernst) Kraus causing Kalisch to appear in roles (Siegmond particularly), which he would have preferred not to sing. One of the attractions of the season was meant to be Xaver Scharwenka’s *Mataswintha*, with Kraus as King Witichis. It was finally given with Gerhard Stehmann, a baritone, in the role, and the composer – unfortunate man! – conducting ‘with authority.’ The date was April 1.”

¹⁸⁶ Martin, *The Damrosch Dynasty*, p. 150.

After the addition of the French and Italian components, with the change in name to include Ellis and an inactive Metropolitan Opera, it seemed that the Damrosch-Ellis Company would be secure as the leading company in the nation, so long as Walter Damrosch was at the helm. Yet, Damrosch announced in April 1898 that he would not manage the company another year. He agreed to conduct some of the German operas and Ellis would continue as a manager. Deficits mounted rapidly and the company was disbanded.¹⁸⁷

With the increasing responsibilities of running his own company and the persistent desire to give his attention to purely musical work, Damrosch was faced with the reality that closing down operations might be for the better.¹⁸⁸ Another plausible reason is exhaustion. In retrospect Damrosch wrote:

... I had to travel continually and during the entire five months of a season carried a company of one hundred seventy people, including an orchestra of seventy men, as I considered so large an aggregation my solemn duty as a Wagner disciple and propagandist.¹⁸⁹

At the same time Damrosch disbanded the opera company, he also resigned his positions with the New York Symphony and the Oratorio Society. He saw no way to ease his schedule, short of shutting down for a period of time. He was tired of dealing with singers. He wrote that [he]

... Found that many singers were like children with no clear conception of right or wrong. Their constant life in close proximity to each other at rehearsals and performances often begets an exaggerated conception of themselves and their importance to the world. They think that as their contact with the public is only over the footlights, where they receive enthusiastic acclaim for their artistic representations, the public literally exists only for the purpose of hearing them sing, and they willingly ignore the fact that the public may have other interests, such as family, finance, politics or religion to claim its attention. As it is important for a manager not only to maintain a balance in his ledger, but to seek the best results that a disciplined ensemble may attain, he cannot always be in harmony with all the individual desires and demands of his artists. He must often cast his opera in opposition to their personal pride, and I have letters today from several of the greatest artists of my company insisting that they must leave or break their contracts because I have wounded their deepest sensibilities in putting so and so in the role which they claimed for their very own...

I carried on my opera company for another year in conjunction with Mr. Charles Ellis, and then definitely resolved to cease all managerial activities and to confine myself to purely musical work.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 150.

¹⁸⁸ Howard and Littell, "Walter Damrosch and Opera," p. 12.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p.12.

It took me some time to arrive at this decision, as opera work has also a very fascinating side, and I had made real friends with many of my singers.¹⁹⁰

Damrosch conducted the American premieres of Tchaikovsky's Fourth and Sixth Symphonies; works of Wagner, Mahler and Elgar, and American composers Carpenter, Loeffler, Daniel Gregory Mason, and Deems Taylor. He commissioned Gershwin's *Concerto in F*, and conducted the premiere of *An American in Paris*.¹⁹¹ His long service to the Oratorio Society of New York and the New York Symphony Society had begun at his father's death in 1885. He resigned from the Oratorio Society 1898 and the latter in 1928, after the merger that formed the New York Philharmonic Society. In his letter to the board, he wrote that he chose to retire before he was forced out, while he could still "swing his arms." He was concerned for the strain that a full season would cause him, and knew that he could not share the position of Music Director without detriment to the orchestra. He agreed that he would still appear as a guest conductor and direct the Children's and Young People's Concerts, which he greatly enjoyed.¹⁹²

In his later years Damrosch became a champion of orchestral music programs broadcast over the radio. His own radio "career" began on October 18, 1923 as part of a Beethoven series with the New York Symphony, and Damrosch was the first to conduct an orchestral concert relayed across the USA. In 1927 he was named as a musical advisor to the NBC network. Damrosch presented a 'Music Appreciation Hour' based on his children's concerts for schoolchildren throughout the USA and Canada, and presented lecture-recitals that were staples in the New York concert scene. Those programs began in 1928 and continued until 1942.

Walter Damrosch was honored by Columbia University with the MusD degree in 1914. He furthered music education by organizing a bandmaster's training school for the American

¹⁹⁰ Damrosch, *My Musical Life*, pp. 124-128.

¹⁹¹ Henry Edward Krehbiel, Richard Aldrich, and Henry Cope Colles (revised), "Walter Johannes Damrosch" *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (edited by Stanley Sadie, 1980) V, p. 175.

¹⁹² Martin, *The Damrosch Dynasty*, pp. 304-305.

Expeditionary Force in France and helped found the American Conservatory at Fontainebleau. He was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1932.¹⁹³

He died on Friday, December 22, 1950. His funeral, more musical than prayerful, was held at St. James Episcopal Church in Manhattan. He was buried beside his wife in the cemetery in Bar Harbor, Maine.¹⁹⁴

Walter Damrosch's venture into the world of opera is important. He brought German opera, and more specifically that of Wagner in its original form, to the stage. The public indeed wanted German opera and it was up to the company to learn how to strike the balance so that the company could be profitable and, at the same time, present operas of high artistic merit with reputable singers.

W.J. Henderson, in the *New York Times Supplement* wrote most enthusiastically about the beginning of the 1896-1897 season.

Richard Wagner has come to town. Mr. Damrosch's season of grand opera in German has begun. Grand opera in German in these days means simply performances of Wagner in the original text and the Bayreuth spirit, with occasional intermezzi in the shape of Beethoven's *Fidelio*. Last season, Weber's *Der Freischütz* and Damrosch's *Scarlet Letter* were added to the list. This year we are to have Mozart's *Magic Flute* and Scharwenka's *Mataswintha*, but both are outside of the organized plan of the season. The fact remains that grand opera in German has come to mean Wagner. The season of opera in French, German, and Italian given by Mr. Grau and his associates (at the Metropolitan Opera) is the more catholic of the two to which this city is treated, whereas in German the repertoires are set far wider than any we get here. That is because the German opera houses are conducted upon the stock-company plan, the greater artists being engaged as "stars" for limited series of performances. This would be an admirable system for New York, if the public would be contented with casts which did not embrace all the world's greatest singers at once. But thanks to Mr. Grau's system, New York cannot be quite satisfied in these days unless *Tristan und Isolde* is given, with Lilli Lehmann, the two deReszkes, and others of the same kind in the cast. We do not go to hear the opera, but the artists.

... I wish the whole of the Grau company could sit in the auditorium of the Metropolitan Opera House and study one single feature of the Damrosch performance. That is the manner in which the artists help to preserve the dramatic illusion by addressing their declamation to one another and not to the audience. The simple difference between singing to the audience and to the characters on the stage is one of the secrets of that "rare German spirit" of which we hear so much. In this matter the Germans are incontestably right. And not a note of the music is lost.

... The concert world goes whirling on, in spite of the presence of opera; and singers sing more or less correctly, quartets play more or less perfunctorily, and accompanists accompany

¹⁹³ Krehbiel, et al, "Walter Damrosch," p. 175.

¹⁹⁴ Martin, *The Damrosch Dynasty*, pp. 404-406.

more or less mechanically. There are few really good accompanists. The fact is, that accompanying is an art in itself. Good pianists often fail in it, because they are too independent. The best accompaniments I have ever heard are those of Walter Damrosch and Arthur Nikisch.

... The promised revival of Mozart's *Magic Flute* on Tuesday evening will be an interesting incident in the operatic season. The work has not been heard here for years, and its performance will afford an agreeable variety in a season devoted almost wholly to Wagner.¹⁹⁵

Where his father had offered the solution of an all-German company in 1884 and Abbey, Grau, and Schoeffel offered the French-Italian balance with Wagner sung in translation, Walter Damrosch found the balance between the two, developing the wing system, and forced the Metropolitan Opera to respond in kind. When Damrosch pulled away and ceased operation, the Metropolitan was poised for a successful future in the 'wing' system, which they maintain to the present day, and which most large opera houses imitate.

¹⁹⁵ W.J. Henderson, "Music," *New York Times Supplement* XLVI, No. 14,217 (March 14, 1897), p. 14.

CHAPTER 3

XAVER SCHARWENKA AND FELIX DAHN

Franz Xaver Scharwenka was a renowned and enterprising musician with a career that spanned two continents. Born in Samter, Posen, Germany on the Feast of the Epiphany, January 6, 1850, his talents as a pianist were highly regarded, and during his lifetime the critical reviews of his personal performances and his works were most complimentary.¹⁹⁶ He was referred to as “a fine and brilliant player, and a young composer of remarkable endowments.”¹⁹⁷

As a composer of character pieces for piano, four piano concerti, chamber works, a symphony, and one opera, Scharwenka’s artistic circle evolved to include many important musicians, including Joseph Joachim, Franz Liszt, Johannes Brahms, and Max Bruch. He was recognized as a good friend of the conductor Anton Seidl. At Seidl’s untimely death in March 1898, the family asked Scharwenka to serve as a pallbearer¹⁹⁸ at Seidl’s funeral, held at the Metropolitan Opera.¹⁹⁹ When he was not concertizing or composing, Scharwenka was a dedicated teacher, school administrator, and advocate for musicians throughout Germany. His autobiography suggests a kind, well-educated individual with a penchant for humor and mischief, but serious in his musical endeavors.

¹⁹⁶ Robert S. Feigelson, Introduction to Xaver Scharwenka, *Klänge aus meinem Leben: Erinnerungen eines Musikers*, translated by William E. Petig, Introduction by Robert S. Feigelson (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 2007), vii.

¹⁹⁷ H.V. Hamilton, "(Franz) Xaver Scharwenka." *The Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, second edition, Vol. IV: p. 249.

¹⁹⁸ Obituary: "Anton Seidl," *New York Times*, XLVIII, No. 15,045 (March 31, 1898), p. 7.

¹⁹⁹ Article "The Death of Mr. Seidl," *New York Times*, XLVIII, No 15,044 (March 30, 1898), p. 12. Seidl died from "acute gastritis from irritant poisoning and cirrhosis of the liver" on March 28, 1898. His funeral took place on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera one year after the Damrosch Opera premiere of Scharwenka's *Mataswintha* on that same stage.

Michael P. Mihalyo, Jr., makes reference to Scharwenka's enterprise in his dissertation on Scharwenka's works for the piano:

The key to his achievements, along with discipline and determination, arose from his ability to take advantage of the opportunities that materialized throughout his lifetime. The successful intertwining of multiple musical endeavors as performer, teacher, editor, and composer kept Scharwenka prominent in the musical circles of his day.²⁰⁰

In spite of those attributes, it was his decline in health and his death in 1924 that proved to be tragic in more than one way. Not only was there an irreparable break in the Scharwenka family, but also there was a complete disappearance of his works from the vast canon of Romantic era music. Perhaps a premonition lay in the events after 1897, when the listing of Scharwenka's *Mataswintha* was removed from the Breitkopf und Härtel catalog, a mere four years after its first inclusion, and within a year after its inaugural performances at Weimar and the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

Nonetheless, it is sad to note that by 1939, a mere fifteen years after his death, Xaver, and his brother Phillip Scharwenka became a part of satire shared between George Gershwin and Oscar Levant, appearing only as a footnote in the collected essays of the musical raconteur Oscar Levant, published as *A Smattering of Ignorance*:

We had our constant gags about "favorite" composers for the sake of mock interviews. As a satiric commentary, they were invariably men with the most grotesque names we could discover – such as César Cui, Xavier [sic] Scharwenka (or was it Phillipe [sic]? and as the final crushing blow, Ed Poldini, composer of *Poupée Valsante*.²⁰¹

It is disappointing that Levant, a brilliant pianist who was acquainted, it seemed, with everyone prominent in music circles in the first half of the twentieth century, and who performed numerous solo concerts and appearances with great American orchestras, was only interested in Scharwenka for his name, and did not acknowledge his musical greatness.

²⁰⁰ Michael P. Mihalyo, Jr., "The Life and Keyboard Works of (Franz) Xaver Scharwenka" (D.M.A. Research Project, West Virginia University, 2002), p. 10.

²⁰¹ Oscar Levant, *A Smattering of Ignorance* (Garden City, New York: Garden City Publishing Co., Inc., 1940), pp. 190-191. The misspellings of Xaver and Phillip are Mr. Levant's.

Early Life

Given the names Theophil Franz Xaver at baptism,²⁰² Scharwenka's genealogy can be traced back to Bohemia and Germany in the 17th century. Wenceslas Scharwenk (also Scherwensky), a native of Prague, had migrated to Frankfurt/Oder in 1696. Thus, Scharwenka's earlier ancestors were of Slavic descent, but the family cultivated German ways of acting and thinking. Xaver's father, August Wilhelm Xaver Scharwenka was a Protestant, and like all his male ancestors, worked as an architect, with no special love for music. Xaver's mother Apollonia Emilie Golisch Scharwenka was of Polish-Catholic descent. She had never learned an instrument, but had a passionate love for music. After their marriage in 1844, the couple purchased an old piano, which served primarily as a large piece to decorate a room. Scharwenka described their mixed marriage as exceptionally happy. He and his older brother Philip (b. 1847) were brought up as German Protestant Christians.²⁰³

Governance of this region of Poland had been somewhat unsettled, as it had shifted from local and provincial rule to control by the German government. The atmosphere of the city was a tolerant one. The local patriotism seemed to overcome national and religious differences within the community, and it served as a formative influence in Scharwenka's early childhood.²⁰⁴

Scharwenka's exceptional musical talent surfaced early. His brother began piano study around 1854. While Phillip was in a lesson, Xaver listened from the next room. Soon, the precocious younger brother was reproducing the same melodies, correctly harmonized, at the piano. As time passed, Xaver's skill improved so that he was performing from memory and

²⁰² Xaver Scharwenka, *Klänge aus meinem Leben: Erinnerungen eines Musikers*, translated by William E. Petig, Introduction by Robert S. Feigelson (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 2007), p. 3. The name Theophil was from one of his godparents. Those of Franz and Xaver were from his mother's favorite siblings, Franz and Xaveria.

²⁰³ Ibid., pp. 5-7.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

improvising tunes with great joy. He also observed the church organist during services and provided wind for the organ by pumping the bellows.²⁰⁵

At the age of six, Xaver had his first rudimentary lessons at the piano. He began to play the violin as well, with guidance from his uncle, Ludwig Golisch. The family spent the summer months on the land owned by his uncle in the small village of Ruxmühle, in Poland. It was here that Xaver learned the folk dances of the land, the *Mazurka*, the *Oberta*, and the *Krakowiak*, by ear without the benefit of sheet music.²⁰⁶ While Scharwenka only lived in Poland a short time before his family left to relocate to Berlin, it might well have been that in these summers he formed his identification with Poland. It also may explain in part his affinity for the music of Chopin and the influence the Polish folk idiom had on his own composition. While Chopin maintained a great love for Poland and a great melancholy for his separation from her, Scharwenka's alliance was first, compositional, and second, nationalistic.

In the summer of 1856, Xaver's mother came down with a painful sore throat, which caused her to make a trip to Bad Salzbrunn to take a cure. Xaver was allowed to travel with her by train and then by coach to the spa town. It was there that he encountered the resort's orchestra. He was constantly in the music pavilion, and never let the string or wind players out of his gaze for very long. He met the conductor, who showed the young Scharwenka instruments, and allowed him to attempt to make sounds with them. He joyfully advanced his music education while his mother returned to health.²⁰⁷

In 1858, in search of a higher level of scholastic education and in the wake of several severe business losses that nearly destroyed his financial status, Scharwenka's father chose to relocate the family to Posen, where his sons could attend the *Gymnasium*. The stay in Posen was

²⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 10.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 5.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 14.

relatively brief, as there were no real opportunities for their father to prosper. Upon their arrival, finding no work as an architect, he began to work as a land surveyor, assisted by Xaver, who took on the operation of the surveyor's level and aided in the calculations.²⁰⁸

Scharwenka recalled that during his Posen days, he was deeply involved in his music study, learning and interpreting Mendelssohn's *B minor Capriccio* and other such pieces. He performed the *Trio in C minor*, op. 1, no. 3 of Beethoven with his fellow students. During the summers, the family continued to travel to Ruxmühle, where he again could enjoy the countryside and plays the piano and fiddle. Ruxmühle became a frequent retreat in later years for Scharwenka. With a piano, his manuscript paper, and his sheet music, he could work undisturbed in a familiar atmosphere to complete projects and prepare performances.²⁰⁹

Arrival in Berlin

In 1865, the family relocated to Berlin. Xaver and Phillip were enrolled in Theodor Kullak's *Neue Akademie der Tonkunst*.²¹⁰ Xaver became a student of Kullak, a student of Carl Czerny, who had been a student of Beethoven. He took composition classes with Richard Wüerst, who was a student of Felix Mendelssohn. Xaver made his debut at an Easter concert in Berlin in 1867, playing Mendelssohn's *Piano Concerto in D minor*.²¹¹ He graduated from the Kullak academy with skills in performance, conducting, and composition, and at the age of eighteen joined the teaching staff of the Kullak academy, where he remained for five years.²¹²

In 1869, Scharwenka sent a set of five small works to Breitkopf und Härtel for their consideration. They included his first book of *Polish Dances*, Op.3. He received a letter of

²⁰⁸ Ibid., pp. 17-18.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., pp. 20-22. Ruxmühle became a part of the Polish republic and was at the time that Scharwenka wrote his autobiography. Communication, he said, was very difficult, yet he could still receive "desired country gifts" from the region, especially at the time of Kaiser Wilhelm II.

²¹⁰ Theodor Kullak (1818-1882) opened his *Neue Akademie der Tonkunst* in 1855. It was one of the largest musical institutions in Germany in its time, boasting over one hundred teachers and one thousand one hundred students.

²¹¹ Scharwenka, *Klänge aus meinem Leben*. pp. 25-30.

²¹² Ibid., p. 30.

acceptance, in which the company offered to arrange for royalties. Shortly thereafter, he ventured to the publishing house with other works in hand. After meeting both Breitkopf and Härtel, Scharwenka left with the addition of more works to their catalog, one hundred *taler*, and six free copies of music. A lifetime relationship with the publisher was formed.²¹³

In November 1869, Scharwenka made his public debut as a composer and performer at the Berlin *Singakademie*, with the Berlin Symphony Orchestra, directed by Wüerst. The concert opened with a Scharwenka *Overture*, continued with Scharwenka as soloist in the Schumann *Concerto in A minor*, the Mendelssohn *Prelude and Fugue in E minor*, the Chopin *B minor Scherzo*, and an *Octavo Etude* by Kullak. The concert concluded with Scharwenka performing the *E-flat major Concerto* of Liszt. With the addition of a few encores, the concert was considered a magnificent achievement. The reviews were encouraging, and Kullak offered Scharwenka a fifty-*pfennig* raise in pay per hour. He accepted, and his solo career was launched at the age of nineteen years.²¹⁴

Composer, Artist, and Teacher

In 1870, Moritz Moszkowski performed Scharwenka's *Polish Dance*, Op. 3, No. 1 for Franz Liszt. When Liszt asked Moszkowski about the composer, he gave Scharwenka's name, and Liszt proffered an invitation to Scharwenka so they could meet. On the day of their meeting, Scharwenka played two of his Polish Dances and Liszt's *Ricordanza*. He then asked the master if he could hear the *C major Polonaise*, as he would like to study it. Liszt played the work, adding material as he went along. He left the meeting with a Havana cigar, a glass of cognac, and an invitation to participate in a concert celebrating Beethoven's centennial.²¹⁵

²¹³ Ibid., pp. 31-32.

²¹⁴ Ibid., p. 33.

²¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 35-36.

With continued publication and concert activity that included a second concert at the Berlin *Singakademie* in 1871, Scharwenka's musical stock in Europe continued to increase. He met Brahms and Hans von Bülow, and enjoyed the premier performance of Wagner's *Ring Cycle* at Bayreuth, where he announced his engagement.

In October 1881, Scharwenka and his brother (Ludwig) Phillip founded the Scharwenka Conservatory in Berlin. In 1886 he conducted the first in a series of orchestral concerts devoted to the music of Berlioz and Beethoven, while continuing to tour extensively and perform his works in collaboration with other artists including the conductor Hans Richter and the violinist Joseph Joachim. The triple role as pianist, composer, and educator would occupy Scharwenka for the rest of his career.²¹⁶

Scharwenka in America

Although Scharwenka had made significant strides as composer, pianist, and teacher in his native Germany, he had his sights set on America as early as 1890. In that year, a representative of the Behr Brothers Piano manufacturers of New York had visited him, presenting him with a piano and an invitation from the owners to visit the factory in New York. Scharwenka accepted the gift and the invitation, and made his journey to America in short order. He wrote about the visit and the upcoming voyage in his autobiography:

... That intrigued me tremendously. An ocean voyage! It was a fantastic prospect for this landlubber who, except for the Müggelsee and Wannsee, had only gotten to know the Great and Little Belt and the English Channel. With pleasure I accepted; soon thereafter I packed my trunk, insured my life – each finger extra – embraced my mother, wife, children, and whatever else presented itself to say goodbye, and steamed off into the wide blue sea. Oh how wonderful!²¹⁷

Scharwenka was well received in the United States. His visit ended with a reception and banquet hosted by the conductor Anton Seidl. "The artistic world of New York," about one hundred twenty artists and other prominent figures of the city, attended the event held at the

²¹⁶ Suttoni, "Xaver Scharwenka" in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, XXII, pp. 439-440.

²¹⁷ Scharwenka, *Klänge aus meinem Leben*. pp. 97-98.

Brighton Beach Hotel. Seidl, as the master of ceremonies, gave the following humorous welcome to the assembled guests:

Gentlemen! If I wanted to honor the musician Scharwenka, I would have to give a speech at least an hour long. But that would not at all be necessary, since probably all of you who more or less belong to the “trade” know Mr. Scharwenka as a musician as well as I do. Therefore, I want to confine myself to honoring Scharwenka the man, to be sure an honorable man. A man who comes to America to play the piano out of enjoyment and not to take in as many dollars as possible, without a doubt must be an honorable, even an extremely honorable fellow. Nevertheless, I hope in the interest of all of us as well as in that of the music-loving public, that in the next years he will cast off this high sense of honor and in addition to the man, he will show us Scharwenka the musician. As long as he is still high minded, however, I raise my glass and drink to the health of Xaver Scharwenka, who for the time being is still an honorable man.²¹⁸

Scharwenka returned to Germany in August 1890, and in four short months crossed the Atlantic again, to begin a concert tour of the United States. On January 23, 1891, seventeen days after his forty-first birthday, he gave his debut concert at the Metropolitan Opera (repeated on the following day),²¹⁹ performing his *First Piano Concerto*,²²⁰ the Beethoven *Emperor Concerto* (*Concerto in E-flat major*), and some solo pieces. Scharwenka included two scenes from his unpublished opera *Mataswintha*, with Antoine Mielke as Mataswintha and Heinrich Gudehus as Witichis, and the orchestra and chorus of the Metropolitan Opera with Anton Seidl conducting.²²¹ From New York, the 1891 tour continued at breakneck pace to as far west as Omaha, Nebraska. It was during this tour that Scharwenka decided to relocate to America, with the assistance of the Behr Piano Company.²²² At its conclusion, Scharwenka returned once again to Germany.

On the occasion of Scharwenka’s 1891 tour of the United States, Henry Edward Krehbiel, a highly respected critic for the *New York Tribune* composed a rather lengthy article that appeared in *Harper’s Weekly*. It should be noted that, at the time of the Metropolitan Opera’s move to a

²¹⁸ Ibid., p. 98.

²¹⁹ William H. Seltsam, *Metropolitan Opera Annals*, p. 49. The source mentions neither the Scharwenka concert nor Seidl’s participation. It notes a matinee of *Don Giovanni* and no scheduled evening or next-day performance. There is no listing of Scharwenka as a guest artist on the season’s roster (p. 47).

²²⁰ Rafael Kammerer, “Viable, vibrantly alive – Scharwenka and Henselt.” *The American Record Guide*, Vol 37 (October 1970), pp. 84-86. The source states that Scharwenka dedicated the concerto to Franz Liszt, who thought highly of it and performed it in Berlin.

²²¹ Scharwenka, *Klänge aus meinem Leben*, pp. 100-102.

²²² Ibid., pp. 100-102.

German season under the direction of Dr. Leopold Damrosch, Krehbiel's opinion and three articles about *Tristan und Isolde* sparked a great deal of interest in the opera. And so one might assume that Scharwenka's cause in the United States was helped by Krehbiel's enthusiastic welcome. He wrote:

The coming of a musician to America for the purpose of appearing in our concert-rooms in the twofold capacity of composer and performer (possibly also, in a threefold capacity, if opportunity should offer for an exercise of his skill as a conductor) is an occurrence far enough out of the ordinary to invite some words of comment and introduction. Xavier Scharwenka invites broader and deeper interest by coming under such circumstances than if the purpose of his visit were the common one of the peripatetic virtuoso Rubenstein, himself the finest combination of the creative and reproductive musician that ever visited our shores, has uttered the dictum that musical composition stopped short with the death of Chopin. The dictum, which, if it is to be feared, contains a pretty strong personal equation, is somewhat too harsh to meet with general acceptance. It is surely unjust to the compositions of him who uttered it, and may even be thought to require interpretation in the presence of that small coterie of Chopin's *epigoni* of which the two Scharwenkas and Moszkowski are the shining lights. Fifteen years ago these names were associated in the critical as well as the popular mind with little else than music of the salon – graceful and airy trifles, the occupation of a careless moment. Now the larger forms are engrossing their attention; and since all the members of the coterie are still comparatively young men, it may be said that their account with the Muses has only been opened. Even Rubenstein's dictum will not tempt the world, more curious and anxious than ever before to observe the career of a genius, to strike a balance, and rule off the page.

Of the Scharwenka brothers, whose names have been made familiarly by the many American pupils who have studied at their conservatory in Berlin, as well as by their compositions, Xavier is the younger by three years. In his own estimation his life has not been eventful, "I have never been an alderman," he writes, "nor held a position under the government. I have never aspired to the position of general superintendent of any public art institute, nor have I ever desired to become superintendent of the police force. I have always paid my taxes promptly (when able), been vaccinated according to regulations, served in the army from 1873 to 1874 in compliance with the law, held some positions of municipal trust, and got married in 1877. Such a curriculum vitae may be droll; it is surely not romantic. But this is not the fault of Herr Scharwenka or his parents. The romantic element in musical biography has been stifled by the spirit of the age; yet even if it had not been, Herr Scharwenka's freedom from the ordinary affectations of the artistic tribe would have dissuaded him from exploiting such stories of youthful precocity as used to be the staple of the life sketches of artists...

That Herr Scharwenka is a handsome man is told by his portrait. He is large of frame, but active physically and mentally. His conversation is animated, incisive, varied. His nature is capitally reflected in the finest of his works for piano-forte that has been heard in the American metropolis – the concerto in b-flat minor. Only as an episode in the first division, an *allegro patetico*, is a slow movement admitted to the work. The music, especially the scherzo, is eager, energetic, impetuous, fiery. His published works include this and another piano-forte concerto, a symphony in c minor, a quartet for piano-forte and strings, two trios, two sonatas for piano-forte, one for violoncello, one for viola, and a number of songs and *salon* pieces.²²³ His last work, on the completion of which he is now engaged, is a grand opera in three acts, entitled *Mataswintha*, two excerpts from which are to be performed at his first concert in New York. In the score, *Herr Scharwenka has frankly placed himself among the adherents of the modern dramatic style of*

²²³ Henry Edward Krehbiel, "Xaver Scharwenka" *Harper's Weekly* Vol XXXV, No 1779 (January 24, 1891), p. 68.

writing who derive their methods measurably from Wagner.²²⁴ The opera is projected on a large scale, and is too full of external and internal action to admit the complacent reeling off of the old forms, which were carried over into the lyric drama from instrumental music. It tells a story in connection with the fall of the Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy after the death of Theodoric the Great in the sixth century of our era. The book is drawn from Felix Dahn's romance, *Ein Kampf um Rom*. Mataswintha, the tragic heroine in this tale, is a granddaughter of Theodoric, who, finding that her love is not requited by Vitiges, the soldier king elected as Theodoric's successor, conspires with the enemies of her people, and aids Belisarius to destroy the Ostrogothic monarchy, and restore Byzantine authority in Italy, only to be stricken by remorse at the sight of the corpse of Vitiges and the consequences of her insane rage. She sets fire to a granary in the imperial city of Ravenna, and seeks death in the flames *à la* Brünnhilde. The story has an infusion of historical elements, and is well adapted to operatic ends. Herr Scharwenka planned the book, but left the writing to a friend. He has completed the composition of the music, and is now engaged on the orchestration.

In each department of musical activity, Herr Scharwenka has won distinction. Composer he must remain on impulse. Virtuoso he was in the early part of his career. Pedagogue he has been, with scarcely a day of interruption, for the last ten years. He is therefore inclined to look upon his American visit, which is to continue till May, as a delightful relaxation, and, artistically, at least, a profitable diversion.²²⁵

In the fall of 1891, Scharwenka returned with his brother Phillip, and together, opened a branch of his conservatory at 81 Fifth Avenue, New York City, where Xaver taught piano and Phillip taught music theory. Xaver rented a home in Brooklyn that was large enough to accommodate his family, who would arrive within the year. During 1891-1892, he maintained a strenuous schedule of teaching and concert activity, which resulted in the growth of the conservatory, his reputation as a teacher, and increased notice of his talents as a performer. Both Scharwenkas returned to Berlin in June 1892: Phillip, to assume directorship of the Berlin Conservatory and Xaver, to concertize, collect his family, and return to New York, which he did in September.²²⁶

²²⁴ Ibid., p. 68. The use of italics in this excerpt is the current author's choice, as to highlight the reference to *Mataswintha* in the article.

²²⁵ Ibid., p. 68.

²²⁶ Scharwenka, *Klänge aus meinem Leben*, pp. 114-116.

Mataswintha

In 1892 and 1893, between numerous concert appearances, which included performances of *Mataswintha* excerpts in Cincinnati, Scharwenka managed return trips to Germany where he spent extended visits with family and friends. In 1893 he completed the score to what would be his only opera, *Mataswintha*. Scharwenka had begun the work in 1888, after reading the Felix Dahn novel *Ein Kampf um Rom*. Breitkopf und Härtel published it in 1893, prior to the moderately successful orchestral premiere of the work in the Kroll Concert Hall, Berlin, on September 22, 1893.²²⁷ The opera received its fully staged premiere at the *Hoftheater*, the King's Opera House in Weimar on October 4, 1896. Scharwenka, in search of other performances, was able to arrange for an orchestral performance on February 13, 1897 in New York and another fully staged performance at the Metropolitan Opera, under the auspices of the Damrosch Opera Company on April 1, 1897. The reviews and public reception of the work at all performances were most favorable, new productions were arranged and with all of that, Scharwenka had the makings of a hit on his hands. Yet, the hit never materialized. Scharwenka traveled west for concerts in Chicago, Minneapolis, St. Paul, Denver, Salt Lake City, and venues in California followed by a brief residency in Missouri at Hardin College. He returned to New York and, in a "quiet hideaway" on Long Island, completed the rough draft of his *Third Piano Concerto*. A visit to the vacation home of the Vanderbilts in Newport, Rhode Island for a "command performance" for the Commodore and his friend Theodore Roosevelt was a great success with Scharwenka and the New York Philharmonic performing. Scharwenka returned to Europe to begin another move back to Berlin. He stayed a brief time in Berlin. Returning to New York and making arrangements to leave the New York branch of his conservatory to the leadership of Emil Gramm, he prepared to leave once again for Europe. This farewell was especially difficult, as

²²⁷ Ibid., pp. 114-116.

shortly before his departure, William Steinway and Anton Seidl died. Scharwenka, a good friend, was a pallbearer and Mrs. Scharwenka was at Mrs. Seidl's side. Scharwenka returned to Berlin in the fall of 1898.

After Mataswintha

The next twenty-six years were full years for Scharwenka. He concertized in Berlin in January of 1899 with his *Piano Concerto No. 3* and the Chopin *Polonaise* with its *Andante spianato*, which Scharwenka had orchestrated. He took on a concert tour to Finland, and upon his return, was confined to bed, seriously ill, for six weeks. The American press erroneously reported his death with these reports reaching Berlin. On the advice of his physician, he was forbidden to smoke. Scharwenka reported that a good friend would come to his bedside and smoke in his presence for two hours, giving him "small compensation."²²⁸

The sudden illness that had overtaken him made a sudden departure, revitalizing him to board a ship and travel to New York for a short visit with friends and return trip to his "black friends" at Hardin College, Missouri. On the first of June 1899, he crossed the ocean again, to London, where he played the *Piano Concerto No. 3* in the Crystal Palace under the direction of a deaf August Manns, and gave recitals in the city and its environs.²²⁹

The summer of 1899 (through the summer of 1915), he summered with his family in Tarasp, where he underwent treatments. While there, he befriended the residents of a Capuchin monastery who had purchased a new church organ, on which a balance was owed. Scharwenka arranged several church concerts, and played the organ. He also served as the Sunday organist. Because of Scharwenka's kindness, a "very tidy sum" found its way into the organ fund.²³⁰

By 1900, Scharwenka was increasingly active in the German musical community. He was

²²⁸ Ibid., p. 125.

²²⁹ Ibid., pp. 126-127.

²³⁰ Ibid., pp. 126-127.

appointed to the Royal Academy of the Arts in Berlin on January 13, 1900, and was made a member of the senate in 1901. In 1903, along with Gustav Holländer,²³¹ Gustav Kulenkampff,²³² and other Conservatory representatives, Scharwenka founded the Music Teacher's Federation, and was named chairman. The aim of the Music Teacher's Federation was to provide for the betterment of the music teaching profession²³³ and make the general levels (*Lehrniveaus*) at conservatories more consistent by including examination boards. This was to distinguish the Conservatories from what Schneider-Dominco refers to as the "pure profit-working institutions."²³⁴ After some revision of by-laws, and the election of officers, (Scharwenka was named President), the Federation sponsored a Music Education Congress held at the Philharmonic Hall in Berlin and a meeting in the Reichstag Building, to which local civic, educational, and musical leaders were invited. According to Scharwenka, all in attendance supported the organization and its goals. Scharwenka wrote:

Much useful work was accomplished during the three days of deliberations, including lectures with discussions, presentations, and demonstrations of new instructional material, development of courses of instruction in individual subjects, drafts of testing regulations, and so on.²³⁵

Scharwenka was an active music journalist, writing for *The New Yorker Staatszeitung*, contributing reports on musical life in Berlin. He was also a reporter for the *Monthly Musical Record* in London. Scharwenka tired of this activity quickly, stating that "... listening to music every evening, and not always good music, and then... have to write about after one had drilled

²³¹ Gaynor G. Jones. "Gustav Holländer," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians Vol 11* p. 620. Holländer was a violinist, teacher, conductor, and composer who studied at the Leipzig Conservatory with Ferdinand David. Further study included violin with Josef Joachim and composition with Friedrich Kiel at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin. He, Heinrich Grünfeld and Scharwenka founded the Berlin subscription Chamber Music concerts.

²³² Watson Forbes. "Georg Kulenkampff," in *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians* p. 978. Kulenkampff (1849-1921) was a German pianist and composer whose studies, teaching career, and performing career centered in Berlin. He composed six operas.

²³³ Scharwenka, *Klänge aus meinem Leben*, p. 127.

²³⁴ Matthias Schneider-Dominco. *Xaver Scharwenka (1850-1924) Werkverzeichnis* (Göttingen: Hainholz Verlag, 2003), p. 32.

²³⁵ Scharwenka, *Klänge aus meinem Leben*, p. 128.

students for five to six hours – no... Not I.”²³⁶

The Klindworth-Scharwenka Conservatory continued to operate, but at what Scharwenka considered an unfavorable status. The long-time director, Dr. Goldschmidt was unable to devote a great deal of time to its operation, due to health concerns and his literary endeavors. So, Xaver and his brother Phillip supervised the day-to-day operations of the conservatory along with Robert Robitschek, who had served in minor directorial roles within the conservatory. Robitschek took to the work quickly, and with the Scharwenkas made ambitious plans for the future of the conservatory, which included a new building, the Blüthner- and the Klindworth-Scharwenka Hall. With one thousand students, and forty-five teachers, the conservatory celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1906. In 1914, Scharwenka stepped down as director and teacher, Phillip died in 1917, and Robitschek continued on alone.²³⁷

In October 1910, Scharwenka embarked on another concert tour to the United States. He presented his *Fourth Piano Concerto* with the New York Philharmonic, under the direction of an ailing Gustav Mahler. Scharwenka wrote that Mahler conducted his work in an accomplished manner, but the following week, when Scharwenka appeared with the orchestra in Beethoven's *Third Piano Concerto*, Mahler's conducting contributed to a near catastrophe. Scharwenka said that his beat was difficult to follow, and despite attempts to accent beats, he had to “ride along with the chase.” This trip to the United States lasted five months, with most of it spent in the South. He returned in 1912, visiting the eastern states and Canada. The return trip to Germany after the 1912 trip marked his twenty-sixth ocean crossing. He did not return to the United States again.²³⁸

In 1913 Scharwenka busied himself with the Federation of German Performing Artists,

²³⁶ Ibid., p. 129.

²³⁷ Ibid., p. 130.

²³⁸ Ibid., pp. 133-134.

founded in Düsseldorf on April 16, 1912. Its foundation was based on securing rights for performing artists in their dealings with concert agents and businessmen. The organization's leadership had little experience in such matters and made mistakes that caused fractures in the group, so there was a decision to move the group to Berlin and reorganize under the leadership of others who were more experienced. During this move, a splinter group, the Professional Society of Practicing Artists emerged, and Scharwenka, without knowing of the fractious relationship between the two societies, accepted the Presidency. When he learned of the division and recognized that the two organizations would not adequately serve the needs of musicians, he began negotiations to bring the two groups together. There was little progress. With the advent of World War I, there were indeed signs that the two societies needed to unify. Scharwenka announced that without unification, he would resign. Negotiations pressed ahead and on September 15, 1914, the merger took place.

In spite of the divisions, the Federation of German Performing Artists was indeed still active, bringing to light employment law for concert agents and administrative regulations on appropriate conduct for concert agents. With the outbreak of war, the federation changed its focus to wartime relief and the founding of an Aid Alliance for Musicians and Performing Artists of Greater Berlin. They collected funds, clothing, and food stamps for soup kitchens to support the poor and middle class. In October of 1914, a soup kitchen for artists was opened. In 1915, with input from the federation, a decree establishing an imperial commissioner for war relief and appropriate agencies was signed. This commission supervised charity performances allowed under specific rules, so as not to abuse the performers.

Before the Armistice was signed in 1918, the federation founded a concert department, which served as a charitable employment agency. Its work continued and expanded to allow one hundred sixty-five concerts in the 1921-1922 season throughout Germany and other countries.

The federation's activities expanded into the Imperial Economic Council and the establishment of constitutional labor law to safeguard the performing artists in areas of insurance, taxes, and trade. Under Scharwenka's leadership, the federation formed allegiances with like organizations in other cities and gained the trust of the authorities to fulfill its mission as a professional organization, and make greater contributions to advance German musical life.²³⁹

In the 1880s Scharwenka demonstrated his skill as an editor for collections of works of Schumann and Chopin. Along with his constant work for the Music Teacher's Federation, his concert career, and his teaching, Scharwenka was left with little time to compose. He revised works, but seemed to dedicate himself more to piano pedagogy, publishing a four volume *Meisterschule des Klaverspiels* and *Methodik des Klavierspiels*²⁴⁰ and he assumed the editorial duties of the Breitkopf und Härtel *Handbücher der Musiklehre*.²⁴¹

As Scharwenka approached the age of sixty-eight, his performance career slowed to include only charity appearances. He was commissioned to write a biography and study of Felix Mendelssohn in 1921, and completed his own autobiography in the company of family and friends in 1922. He died on December 8, 1924.²⁴²

Felix Dahn

Felix Dahn was a German jurist, historian, poet, and novelist, who made his greatest contribution as a scholar of German antiquity. He was born February 9, 1834 in Hamburg, to parents who were notable actors in the local theater. When his parents found work in the Bavarian Royal Theatre, the family relocated to Munich.²⁴³ Dahn had a private tutor and was an avid reader of history.

²³⁹ Ibid., pp.135-139.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 130. *Masterschool of Piano Playing and Methodology of Piano Playing*, published in 1907.

²⁴¹ Suttoni, "Xaver Scharwenka," *The New Grove Dictionary*, XXII: p. 440. The translation is *Handbooks of Teaching Music*.

²⁴² Scharwenka, *Klänge aus meinem Leben*, p. 142.

²⁴³ Article "Felix Dahn," in *Encyclopædia Britannica* (fifteenth ed., 2005), III, p. 848.

Dahn studied law and philosophy at the University of Munich (1849-52) and in Berlin (1852–53). He taught jurisprudence at the universities of Munich, Würzburg, Königsberg, and Breslau, where he was appointed rector in 1895.²⁴⁴ After meeting Theodor Fontane,²⁴⁵ Dahn was motivated to write heroic historical ballads. Additionally an author of love lyrics and didactic poems, Dahn took his ideas from Joseph Victor von Scheffel,²⁴⁶ Emmanuel Geibel,²⁴⁷ and Paul Heyse.²⁴⁸ While a professor at the University of Würzburg in 1863, Dahn attempted to join the army for the Franco-Prussian War, but was rejected. He served as a nurse in the Red Cross.²⁴⁹

Dahn's most substantial historical works are *Die Könige der Germanen*, 11 vol. (1861–1907); *Die Urgeschichte der germanischen und romanischen Völker*, 4 vol. (1881–90); *Deutsche Geschichte von der Urzeit bis 843* (1883–88). His vast collection of poetry, while largely made up of ballads, is best known for the verse epics on subjects of early German history: *Harald und Theano* (1854–55) and *Die Amalungen* (1857–58, published in 1876).²⁵⁰ Dahn was most successful in the historical novel genre, winning great acclaim for *Ein Kampf um Rom*.²⁵¹

Ein Kampf um Rom

Dahn began *Ein Kampf um Rom* in Munich in 1859, continued it in Ravenna, Italy, and completed it in Königsberg, Germany in 1876. Its German publication came later that year.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 848.

²⁴⁵ Article “Theodor Fontane” in *Encyclopædia Britannica* (fifteenth ed., 2005), IV, p. 867. Fontane (1819-1898) was a journalist, novelist and poet, regarded to be the first master of modern Realistic fiction in Germany. He wrote popular ballads and historical novels, most notably, *Vor dem Sturm* (1878).

²⁴⁶ Article “Joseph Victor von Scheffel” in *Encyclopædia Britannica* (fifteenth ed., 2005), X, pp. 510-511. Scheffel (1826-1886) was a poet and novelist, best known for his humorous epic *Der Trompeter von Säckingen*, and the historical novel *Ekkehard* (1855). A fluent poet, his appeal to sentimental popular taste made him one of the most widely read German authors of his time.

²⁴⁷ Article “Emmanuel von Geibel” in *Encyclopædia Britannica* (fifteenth ed., 2005), V, p. 163. Geibel (1815-1884) was a German poet and dramatist, the center of a circle of literary figures drawn together in Munich by Maximilian II of Bavaria. He is known for lyric poetry and the translations of Roman and ancient poets.

²⁴⁸ Shirley Emmons and Wilber Watkins Lewis. *Researching the Song*, p. 122. Article “Paul Heyse” in *Encyclopædia Britannica* (fifteenth ed., 2005), IV, p. 908. Heyse (1830-1914) was a German writer and member of the traditionalist Munich school. He received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1910. Schooled in classical and Romance languages, he was a master of the short story, chiefly, *L'Arrabiata* (1855). He published novels and unsuccessful plays. His best works are translations of Leopardi and other Italian poets. Hugo Wolf set his poems to music.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 122.

²⁵⁰ “Dahn,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, p. 848.

²⁵¹ Ibid., p. 848.

Further publications and translations in other languages ensued.²⁵²

Dahn and Richard Wagner shared a common pursuit, the justification and promotion of nationalistic goals. Dahn unsuccessfully tried to compose an operatic libretto as an attempt to create a national art. His success with the reading public came in the role as chief representative of the archeological novel, fiction based on academic research. Richard Strauss and Max Reger set his lyric poetry to music.²⁵³

Because of the vast amount of historical background included in his works, Dahn's critics described them as "professorial novels." *Ein Kampf um Rom* is believed by many to be his best known and most widely read work. It was dedicated to Dahn's friend and colleague Ludwig Friedländer, with the inscription:

Wenn etwas ist, gewaltiger als das Schicksal, dann ist's der Mut, der's unerschüttert trägt.²⁵⁴

Set mainly in sixth century Italy, and partly in Byzantium, *Ein Kampf um Rom* describes the decline and fall of the Ostrogothic Empire, beginning in 526 AD with the death of the great Gothic king Theodoric.²⁵⁵ It describes the last twenty-seven years of the Gothic nation under the various kings who came after Theodoric, until the elimination of the entire nation after the battle of Taginae by the Byzantine eunuch and general Narses in 553 AD.²⁵⁶

Dahn's extensive research drew heavily on *The Gothic Wars*, by the contemporary historian, Procopius, who was also woven into the story. Dahn's story follows history with great attention. All the major events in the novel actually took place and it is assumed that with consideration to its great detail, the majority of the novel is historically accurate. It is believed that the major characters actually lived, while the character of the Prefect of Rome is an amalgamation of many

²⁵² Herb Parker, "Translator's Preface" to *Ein Kampf um Rom* (London: Athena Press, 2005), pp. 9-10.

²⁵³ Emmons and Lewis, *Researching the Song*, p. 122.

²⁵⁴ Parker, "Translator's Preface" to *Ein Kampf um Rom*, p. 10. Translation: "If there is anything mightier than fate, it is the courage to bear it undaunted."

²⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 10. According to Parker, Theodoric appears with his *Waffenmeister* Hildebrand as Dietrich von Bern in Germanic mythology. According to the translator, the term *Waffenmeister* is not easily translated. It literally means "armourer," but bears with it the implication of tutor and mentor of a young warrior.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 9-10.

individuals.²⁵⁷ For the story of *Mataswintha*, Scharwenka chose books five and six, which are the two books that tell the story of King Witichis.

At the time of his death, on January 2, 1912 at Breslau, Germany [now Wroclaw, Poland],²⁵⁸ it was noted that Dahn supplied a number of musicians, namely Scharwenka, with material for their compositions. Heinrich Vogl and Ferdinand Doebber composed other operas from his stories, and Weinpartner, Ingeborg von Bronsart, K. von Perfall, Christian Sinding, and others set his poetry as *Lieder*.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 9-10.

²⁵⁸ "Dahn," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, p. 848.

²⁵⁹ "Felix Dahn," "Music" *Nation*, XCIV #228 (May 30, 1912), p. 548.

CHAPTER 4

MATASWINTHA, OPERA IN FOUR ACTS BY XAVER SCHARWENKA

In 1893, Scharwenka completed the score to what would be his only opera, *Mataswintha*, a work he had begun in 1888, after reading the Felix Dahn novel *Ein Kampf um Rom*. Breitkopf und Härtel published it in the same year, prior to the moderately successful orchestral premiere of the work in the Kroll Concert Hall, Berlin, on September 22, 1894.²⁶⁰

The *New York Times* provided the following synopsis of the opera for its performance at the Metropolitan Opera in 1897:

Mataswintha, grand opera, in four acts, which will be produced by the Damrosch Opera Company at the Metropolitan Opera House on March 23, for the first time in America, deals with an episode during the final history of the Goths in the middle of the sixth century. The libretto is by Dr. Ernst Koppel, after Felix Dahn's famous historical novel, *A Battle for Rome*. The hero of the opera is King Witichis, who is looked upon by the Goths as the last of the great monarchs of their race, and in whom they centre their hopes for future greatness. He is clandestinely wedded to Rauthgundis, a free daughter of the mountains and, at the opening of the opera, is paying a visit to his happy bride, when a deputation of Gothic nobles call on him and urge him to enter into a marriage with the fair Princess Mataswintha, the last descendent of King Theodoric. This marriage would bring about the union of all the Gothic tribes, and they would thus be victorious against the common enemy, Rome. In this terrible conflict between duty and love, Witichis is determined by the recollection of the solemn oath which he once paid to the cause of his people.

"Ne'er to falter, ne'er to waver Should fate yield frown or favor To the holy cause all giving Welfare, fortune, all renouncing."

He leaves his bride, and, in the second act, is seen at the court of Mataswintha, in Ravenna, who receives him like the long-expected man of her choice. They are married with brilliant ceremonies, but Mataswintha's love is soon turned into deep hatred when Witichis, in the bridal chamber, confesses that he only consented to the union from patriotic and self-sacrificing motives. He relates to his enraged spouse all about the lovely girl he left behind, and, as a sign that there could never be anything more than formal union between them, he places a sword between his own and Mataswintha's couch.²⁶¹ Mataswintha is furious, bids him to leave, and, in her fury, destroys the bust of Ares standing in her room, which, up to the personal arrival of Witichis, was, for her, a symbol of the beloved hero. Then Mataswintha takes her terrible revenge. She betrays the King to the common enemies, and when Witichis, wounded to death, returns from the battlefield to Ravenna, she is ready to face him with a gleeful confession of her guilt. But when, at the side of the dying Witichis, she finds Rauthgundis, who has never faltered in her love and devotion, she does penance and destroys her own life by burying herself beneath the ruins of a burning granary, which was ignited at her own instigation.²⁶²

²⁶⁰ Scharwenka, *Klänge aus meinem Leben*, pp. 114-116.

²⁶¹ A similar reference is found in *Tristan und Isolde*.

²⁶² Article "The Story of *Mataswintha*," *New York Times*, XLVI, No. 14,217 (March 14, 1897), p. 21.

In 1893 the publishing house of Breitkopf und Härtel introduced Scharwenka's work in their current catalog.

Xaver Scharwenka, whose composing career was swiftly launched on its glittering flight but then was silenced for quite a while, offers for the first time an opera as a mature work of his creativity, the subject of which is based on Felix Dahn's masterwork *The Battle for Rome* which introduces us Germans to an immensely interesting era as Italy became a German kingdom and wise politicians tried to blend Roman culture with German might. This kingdom founded by that powerful personality Theoderich the Great and, under more favorable circumstances, called upon to impress the German spirit upon the old (classical) world loses its unifying features with the death of Theoderich who lived on in the legends surrounding Dietrich von Bern.²⁶³

Drawing from excerpts of reviews found in contemporary journals and newspapers, such as that which had appeared in the *Neue Berliner Musikzeitung*, the Breitkopf und Härtel catalog attempted to entice prospective customers to peruse and present the opera in whole, or in part.

The *Neue Berliner Musikzeitung* reviewed the orchestral premiere:

Early on Saturday evening the composer Xaver Scharwenka, who is visiting us from America gave a concert performance of his opera *Mataswintha* to an audience that had been invited and furthermore showed up in large numbers at the former Kroll Theatre Hall. The libretto of this three act opera has been put together by Dr. Ernst Koppel after the book *Fighting for Rome* by Felix Dahn. It is inevitable that one will receive only a highly incomplete impression of an opera in concert guise. It is a risky business to come to a conclusion about the stage effectiveness of such a performance, especially of an opera such as this that demands first class portrayals of its *Tristan und Isolde* like characters, not only with vocal mastery but with every movement and facial expression in accord with the underlying music. This music is of the highest quality. It follows along Wagnerian lines and while not expanding on them does continue them in a highly flattering manner in as far as the composer does not fall into a creative swoon and force out unmelodic floods of sound, but truly engulfs the ear with waves of beautiful melodies that can even touch the heart.²⁶⁴

Ever the enterprising musician, Scharwenka was most certainly looking for performances and with the help of Bernhard Stavenhagen, the conductor at the *Hoftheater* King's Opera House in Weimar, *Mataswintha* had its stage premiere in October of 1896.²⁶⁵ Amalia Joachim, the wife of the famous violinist, Joseph Joachim, and friend of Johannes Brahms and Scharwenka, sang the title role.

²⁶³ "Xaver Scharwenka" in *Mittheilungen der Musikalienhandlung*, Translated by Dr. Mary-Bess Halford-Staffel (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, February, 1893), pp. 1262-1263.

²⁶⁴ "Xaver Scharwenka" in *Mittheilungen der Musikalienhandlung*, Translated by Dr. Mary-Bess Halford-Staffel (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, October, 1894) pp. 1262-1263.

²⁶⁵ Scharwenka, *Klänge aus meinem Leben*, pp. 117-118.

Figure 4-1: Amalia Joachim as *Mataswintha*, 1896²⁶⁶

In addition to the review from the *Neue Berliner Musikzeitung*, the first orchestral performance received other favorable reviews, including:

From *Klavierlehrer* [a journal for piano teachers], O. Eichberg wrote:

On a purely musical level the work offers much that is most pleasing. It is always of noble expression, the instrumental sound blooms, albeit this kind of beauty is obtained in a somewhat regulated fashion. Wagner's influence is clearly recognizable, however, which this author points out not to censure but in praise and support, although the wish remains that the composer had achieved in his invention and development of Leitmotifs the same apt precision and dramatic incisiveness as the master of Bayreuth.

Amongst the most beautiful parts of the score is the overture which is composed of the main motifs. It sounds marvelous, develops in a well augmented manner, and is an excellent introduction to the whole opera. Without a doubt it will soon become a favorite in the concert hall. In Act I the delicately atmospheric depiction of the happy relationship of Rauthgundis and Witichis is notable. Even better is Act II in which the inherent intensity of Mataswintha's characterization is of the highest achievement. Act III, however, is perhaps too overwhelmed by the purely declamatory...²⁶⁷

The premiere performance in Weimar also drew strong notices:

The Weimarer Zeitung:

The music that Scharwenka has composed for this text belongs amongst the best witnesses of the present age. Nobly and elegantly conceived, it offers a great deal of pleasure in its artful construction. It reveals a rich and melodic invention. The system of Leitmotifs is meaningfully carried through without forcing itself obtrusively into the foreground. Scharwenka's motifs are resonant and mostly melodic to the ear. Indescribable delicacy defines the melting motif of "conjugal love" that marks the great love scene of Act I. Supported by the trembling syncopations of the horns it elevates the death scene of the final act to the heights of devastating tragedy. We are no Hans von Wolzogen [a German critic who produced thematic guides of Wagner's

²⁶⁶ Photographs of Amalia Joachim as Mataswintha from the collection of Evelinde Trenkner, President of the International Xaver Scharwenka Society, Lübeck, Germany.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 1263.

Leitmotifs amongst other things] and are not equipped to write “signposts through the music of *Mataswintha*”; the musical and dramatic significance of the circa 20 tone symbols with their hidden connections to one another must be left to the investigation of one more qualified such as he. The harmony of the new opera is universally bold and ever changing, the music constantly modulating itself often in a striking manner. The handling of the voices everywhere is to their advantage although the singers are often confronted with great difficulties. The orchestra is handled in virtuoso fashion, the composer draws out powerful and uncanny effects from the muted horns and from the deeper register of the clarinet. The orchestration makes an elegant impression with its beautiful moderation and dynamic contrasts. The characteristic nobility of tone remains even at moments of greatest excitement to powerful effect. In addition fresh choral vivacity unfolds in this richly melodic score. The closing chorus of Act II is effective while the *Schnitterlied* and the slave girls’ seductive song that is surrounded by arabesques on the violin are of great charm.²⁶⁸

***The Kölnische Zeitung*: October 8, 1896 wrote:**

The style of the music is modern for the most part. The musical invention is significant and despite the temptation of some of the situations is never derivative. Scharwenka’s mastery of instrumentation is nothing new to those who know his work. The overture, which is in D major except where it is interrupted by a short middle movement in G major, is of great beauty and of often magical sounds.²⁶⁹ The love duet of the reunited married couple is wonderful, and musically astounding, and of shattering intensity is Witichis’ renunciation, brought about by his urgently demanding friends, which is of course a high point unmatched in the subsequent scenes of the opera except perhaps by the death song of the loving couple in the final act. The bridal song at the beginning of Act III is original in its tenderness.²⁷⁰

The *Berliner Borsen-Courier*: October 6, 1896 stated:

The overture is very finely wrought and sounds wonderful. The duet between Witichis and Rauthgundis (Act I, scene 3) is a magnificently lyrical piece as is Witichis’ reverie about his wife (Act II, Scene 4) and his narrative “Far away in the stillness of the woods” that is accompanied by horns and is tenderly evocative. The death of the king (Act IV) is also most moving and the great E major ensemble in Act II makes a grand effect before the shift to Act III which is without a doubt the most successful part of the opera. All these beauties were recognized by the public (which included a number of visiting critics) and which did not stint its applause. The composer received lively acknowledgement after the great ensemble at the end of Act II and at the conclusion of the opera.²⁷¹

The *Vossische Zeitung* stated:

On October 4 the first sold out performance took place at the Grand Duke’s court theatre of the new opera *Mataswintha* by Xaver Scharwenka of Berlin. Parts of the opera have achieved successful public performance in Liverpool and other cities, so we were justified in looking forward to the success of the opera. Seldom since Wagner’s *Tristan* and Strauss’ *Guntram* have so many music critics assembled as at this evening’s premiere performance. Unanimous and of

²⁶⁸ Review *Mataswintha* in *Mittheilungen der Musikalienhandlung*, translated by Dr. Mary-Bess Halford-Staffel (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, November, 1896) p. 1590.

²⁶⁹ In both editions of the score, and the conductor’s score, the *Overture* begins in E-flat major and moves to G-flat major.

²⁷⁰ Review *Mataswintha* in *Mittheilungen der Musikalienhandlung*, translated by Dr. Mary-Bess Halford-Staffel (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, November 1896), pp. 1591.

²⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 1591.

one accord for all its variety of expression was the applause as it gained momentum from act to act throughout the performance. The vociferous demands for the appearance of the composer as well as of the conductor and of the artists were certainly not an expression of courteous gratitude but rather the gratifying proof that great art performed with warm devotion can arouse enthusiasm that is fully justified. Scharwenka's new work not merely increases but without a doubt enriches our German opera in an enduring fashion.²⁷²

However, Scharwenka himself devotes little comment to these first performances:

In the course of the winter Stavenhagen concertized in the United States. On the occasion of a visit at my home, he saw the score of my opera. He asked for the piano arrangement and the text, took both with him to his hotel, returned the next day... On October 4, 1896, the premiere performance of my work took place in the Hoftheater in Weimar.

... The performance of my opera in Weimar and the lovely impressions that I received during the summer spent in Europe gnawed at my heart greatly... As a small compensation for the dashed hopes I can list the performance of my *Mataswintha* at the Metropolitan Opera House.²⁷³

Mataswintha at the Metropolitan

Fresh from his success in Weimar, Scharwenka was most interested in yet more performances, so, he looked to America. In the meantime, Scharwenka had become a Steinway artist, teaching in a studio at the Steinway establishment on Fourteenth Street (Steinway Hall). It was through William Steinway that Scharwenka and Walter Damrosch were brought together leading to the 1897 premiere of *Mataswintha* under the auspices of the Damrosch Opera Company on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera House.

As Damrosch explains:

... The German composer Xaver Scharwenka, was at that time living in New York as piano virtuoso and teacher. He had, years before, composed an opera which he was anxious to perform, and William Steinway and others asked me if I would let him have my opera company for this purpose, so that he could conduct it himself at an extra performance. I agreed and a good cast was selected.²⁷⁴

²⁷² Ibid., pp. 1591.

²⁷³ Scharwenka, *Klänge aus meinem Leben*, pp. 117-118.

²⁷⁴ Damrosch, *My Musical Life*, p. 138. The *Mataswintha* cast included members of the cast that premiered Damrosch's opera *The Scarlet Letter* in Boston, also in 1896.

Table 4-1: Damrosch Opera Company Cast Listing for *Mataswintha*²⁷⁵

VOICE	CAST MEMBER			April 1, 1897 <i>Mataswintha</i>
Soprano	Mme.	Riza	Eibenschutz	Rauthgundis
Mezzo/Alto	Mme.	Marie	Mattfeld	Aspa
Soprano	Mme.	Georgine	von Januschowsky	Mataswintha
Tenor	M.	Fritz	Ernst	Totila
Bass-Bar	M.	Emil	Fischer	Grippa
Baritone	M.	Wilhelm	Mertens	Arahad
Ten	M.	Ernst	Kraus	Witichis: Original
<i>Baritone</i>	<i>M.</i>	<i>Gerhard</i>	<i>Stehmann</i>	<i>Witichis: Substitution</i>
Conductor	Xaver Scharwenka			

Interestingly enough, before the Metropolitan Opera performance, there was another orchestral reading (concert version) of *Mataswintha* given in New York by the Manuscript Society on February 13, 1896.²⁷⁶ It is likely that the performance was undertaken at the behest of one of its members, Anton Seidl.²⁷⁷

On March 14, 1897, the *New York Times* printed an article announcing the details of the upcoming Damrosch Opera Company season for the Metropolitan Opera:

Mataswintha, Xaver Scharwenka's opera, was produced for the first time on October 4 in Weimar under the auspices of the Grand Duke of Saxony and created a profound impression. The papers at that time stated that never since the first production of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* had a similar number of leading critics from all the art centres of Germany been assembled at any night. Mr. Xaver Scharwenka, at that time, conducted the opera himself, as he is going to do at its first production in New York...

New scenery and costumes have been provided for the production of *Mataswintha*, which will be the only novelty brought out during the Damrosch season.

... *Mataswintha*, grand opera, in four acts, which will be produced by the Damrosch Opera Company at the Metropolitan Opera House on March 23, for the first time in America deals with the Goths in the middle of the sixth century...²⁷⁸

²⁷⁵ Aida Favia-Artsay, "Met Special Seasons" *Hobbies – The Magazine for Collectors* (December 1958) pp. 29-30.

²⁷⁶ Alfred Lowenberg, *Annals of Opera 1597-1940* (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1978), col. 1197.

²⁷⁷ Article "Seidl Funeral Services," *New York Times*, XLVIII, No. 15,045 (March 31, 1898) p. 7. There is a reference to: "The Directors of the Manuscript Society, of which Anton Seidl was a member met yesterday afternoon..."

²⁷⁸ Article "Mataswintha," *New York Times*, XLVI, No. 14,217 (March 14, 1897) p. 21.

Originally scheduled for March 23, 1897, the performance was postponed. This announcement appeared in the *New York Times* on March 18, 1897:

It is announced that owing to the elaborate scenic preparations and assiduous duties of the principal members of the Damrosch Opera Company in the forthcoming Wagner cycle, the first performance of Xaver Scharwenka's opera *Mataswintha* has been postponed until Thursday, April 1.²⁷⁹

According to a study by Aria Favia-Artsay, the Damrosch repertoire for that season included the following: *Die Walküre*, *Der Fliegende Hollander*, *Tannhäuser*, *Lohengrin*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Die Meistersinger*, *Siegfried*, *Das Rheingold*, *Mataswintha*, and *Götterdämmerung* presented by an ensemble of thirty-three principal singers, chorus, and orchestra, from March 8 to April 3, 1897 with a two or three day gap between performances.²⁸⁰ Since the Damrosch Opera Company rented the Metropolitan Opera House, its sets, props, and costumes for the season, it is most likely true that there were production difficulties associated with the Wagner operas.

The original placement of *Mataswintha* in the rotation (March 23) would have put it between performances of *Lohengrin* and *Tannhäuser* on March 22 and 24, so the move was most certainly in the company's best interest, as it would allow for more preparation time. There was also some kind of problem with the tenor who was to appear as King Witichis. While Scharwenka makes no mention of the production difficulties in his autobiography, Walter Damrosch does shed light on the project:

... The tenor part was to have been sung by Ernst Krauss, a rather conceited heroic tenor who, not finding the part to his liking, pleaded hoarseness only the day before the performance. There was, of course no substitute, and it seemed as if the performance would have to be cancelled, which would have been a cruel experience for the composer. To my astonishment [Gerhard] Stehmann appeared and said very simply: "Give me the part and I will learn it for to-morrow night." When I interposed, "But this is a tenor part and you are a bass baritone," he answered: "Give it to me. I think I can transpose a few of the high notes and can at least save the performance." Scharwenka, overjoyed, gave him the part and he sang and acted it the following evening without a mistake – a truly remarkable feat.

²⁷⁹ Article "Theatrical Gossip," *New York Times*, XLVI, No. 14,221 (March 18, 1897) p. 7.

²⁸⁰ Favia-Artsay, "Met Special Seasons," pp. 29-30

I grew very fond of him, not only because of his musicianly qualities but also because as a man he was so simple and honorable, and I was glad to hear later on that he had made an excellent position for himself in Vienna.²⁸¹

The reviews of the performance, which indeed took place on April 1, 1897, were mixed, but generally positive.

MR. XAVER SCHARWENKA'S OPERA, "*MATASWINTHA*" as reviewed by Mr. Krehbiel in the *New York Tribune*.

Mr. Xaver Scharwenka enjoyed a unique sensation at the Metropolitan Opera-House last night. He conducted a performance of his own opera, a work entitled *Mataswintha*, which on this occasion had its first representation in America. It has been an open secret for several weeks that the cost of bringing *Mataswintha* forward was about \$4,000.²⁸² Mr. Scharwenka hired house, orchestra, company and scenery from Mr. Damrosch. The receipts were his, and the appearance of the audience last night indicated that daring as was the adventure it was yet carried through successfully. Nearly every one of the boxes in the second tier was occupied; so were half of the boxes in the first tier; orchestra and balcony were filled, and a large number of persons sat in the gallery. It was a gathering, too, that was handsome in appearance, unusually gay in apparel for a German audience, and, though manifestly filled with the kindest sentiments toward the composer, still discriminating in its bestowal of applause. Of course, there were calls for the composer after every act, wreaths by the dozen, and gigantic floral offerings, whose inscribed streamers will long help to keep the memory of the occasion alive in Mr. Scharwenka's mind, should he be in danger of forgetting it.

The opera was produced under difficulties. It had withstood its baptism of fire in Weimar last October, and before then fragments of it had been performed here in concert form. When the composer took up his residence in New York he gave a concert at which the prelude, a chorus and an ensemble were performed. The pianoforte score had then been printed by Breitkopf und Härtel, and the work had been accepted for performance at Munich. Why it has not yet been heard in the Bavarian capital is not a matter of public history. The story is probably one of the familiar kind, involving personal equation on the part of intendant or manager. Certain it is that *Mataswintha* is quite as worthy of a place in the repertory of the German opera-houses as a dozen of the works which have been heard there within the last ten years. The production here was first set down for March 24, but a postponement became necessary. On Tuesday the illness of Herr Kraus, the tenor, who was to have sung the principal man's part, compelled his withdrawal from the cast. There was no understudy and no substitute to be had except Herr Stehmann, an extremely useful but not brilliant member of Mr. Damrosch's company; and he is a barytone singer. He learned the part in two days, and so great was the admiration for this feat felt by the audience last night that he was permitted to carry off his share of the honors notwithstanding that he was far from letter perfect and the music was not adapted to his voice.

The opera is liberally endowed with pageantry, and, properly furnished with costumes and stage decorations, would make a brave show. Here, of course, generosity of judgment was invited, for the scenes, save the last, which presents a public square in Ravenna (time, middle of the sixth century) and ends with the destruction by fire of a public storehouse for grain, were all built up from the stock furnishings of the Metropolitan Opera-House. But the audience was as lenient in this respect as toward the singers. There was, indeed, enough to admire in the music to make such leniency easy. Mr. Scharwenka's opera is full of beautiful things. It opens monotonously, for want

²⁸¹ Damrosch, *My Musical Life*, pp. 138-139.

²⁸² "The Inflation Calculator"; available from <http://www.westegg.com/inflation/infl.cgi>; Internet accessed April 27, 2010. According to this resource, this production would cost \$101,787.17 in 2009 funds.

of variety of tempo and mood in the first act, but with the arrival of the pageantry in Mataswintha's court, which leads it to depart from the idiom of the later Wagner (which prevails otherwise throughout the score), and to adopt that of the Wagner of the "Lohengrin" period, with a bit of Meyerbeerian patois, it becomes animated and brilliant to a degree. The style is thoroughly modern. The blood of the drama flows through the orchestra, which is handled in a masterly manner, though one is tempted to wish at times that the composer had been a little less fond of muted horns and other Wagnerian effects, which are excellent when used as sparingly as ingeniously and with as good purposes as Wagner uses them. A fine sense of the dramatic expressiveness of harmony is also noticeable in the music. The vocal parts, except a few set pieces, such as a chorus of harvesters, a march in the second act, a piece of church music in the last, are all in that free arioso style introduced by Wagner.

The greatest part of the credit for the performance must go to Mr. Scharwenka, for his superb conducting of the work—so sure, so easy, so authoritative. After him to the orchestra, then to Mme. Januschowsky (whose earnestness and zeal made up for much of the want of charm in her voice and appearance), then to Herr Fischer and Herr Mertens. The rest was a struggle with the impossible by mediocre singers, though Fraulein Eibenschutz compelled some sympathy.²⁸³

Mr. W. J. Henderson commented in the *New York Times*:

The first appearance in the dramatic field of a composer already so well known in the domain of instrumental music, particularly in chamber and piano-forte music, as Xaver Scharwenka would be an interesting event if the opera had been imported in the regular way. It becomes more interesting now that the composer is a resident of New York and that his opera has been produced under his personal direction, having been given only once in Europe, at Weimar, last year. The Metropolitan was rather more than fairly filled last night by an audience very willing to be pleased. The applause began with the ending of the overture, which is already known as an effective concert piece, and reached its climax at the close of the second act, the finale of which is the most ambitious and perhaps the most successful number of the new work. The composer, the *prima donna*, and the personator of the tenor were repeatedly called before the curtain, and there was quite a bombardment of "floral tributes."

The story of *Mataswintha* is an excellent one for operatic purposes. It is not confused in its details, and its emotional schedule is straightforward, simple, and elementary. It is a pity that all the composers who think they are followers of Wagner, when they are merely imitators of his manner, do not grasp the real significance of his theory about the employment of the myth as the subject for the drama in music. He held that the plastic simplicity and unity of mythical stories permitted the composer to concentrate his musical expression upon a few fundamental emotions. It does not require a keen observer to perceive that the essential part of this theory, an irreproachable theory, is not the myth, but the fundamental emotions. Given a story in which the action is chiefly psychological, as in *Tristan und Isolde*, and you have a series of mood-pictures, which are fully within the scope of musical illustration. *Mataswintha* is built on such lines, and hence the story is well suited to operatic treatment.

This story is told in a well-made libretto written by Ernst Koppel of Berlin, and is based on an episode in Felix Dahn's novel, *The Battle for Rome*. The text is occasionally puerile, but in general, it is equal to that of most recent operas, which is saying a good deal. The composer is intensely modern in his musical methods. He uses none of the set forms of the old Italian opera writers, but employs the modern declamatory arioso for his monologues and duets, discarding recitative altogether. There is not a single bar of recitative, pure and simple, in the whole work. Scharwenka also writes large scenes in musical dialogue, and introduces massive ensembles where possible. He shows good judgment in the distribution of his musical effects between the voices

²⁸³ Review: "Mr. Xaver Scharwenka's Opera, *Mataswintha*" *Music: A Monthly Magazine, Devoted to the Art, Science, Technique, and Literature of Music*, Vol. XII (Chicago: Music Magazine Publishing Company), May-October, 1897, Vol. XII, pp. 108-111.

and the orchestra. He deserves praise for recognizing at all times the paramount importance of the voices, and never smothering them with orchestral noise. He employs the Wagnerian leading motive with moderation and with considerable skill. He has not used it anywhere more effectively than when he introduces the motive of Witichis' love for Rauthgundis in the hero's duet with Mataswintha. The melodic measures in the work are circumscribed by the composer's insatiable hunger for changeable harmony. No composer of our period, except for Charbrier, has made such a parade of key-complexity. The score of *Mataswintha* is an enharmonic study. Such a harmonic scheme is, of course, not unsuited to the depiction of struggling passions; but one longs in vain for points of repose. There are no places in *Mataswintha* where the imagination may pause in the contemplation of pure, sculpturesque beauty, as in the love song of Siegmund or the duet in *Tristan und Isolde*.

Hence the essentially lyric element is deficient in this score. It is all musical bustle, hurry, push, aggression. It lacks contrast; it lacks broad, elementary tints. The bridal song, in the third act, the love duet in the first act, and the ensemble at the close of the second are the most symmetrical and tangible things in the whole opera. The ensemble is a broad and inspiring piece of writing, worthy of a place beside the best work of its kind done in recent years. But much of the most ambitious writing of the composer is elusive and unconvincing, and it must be frankly admitted that there are long periods of wearisome aridity in *Mataswintha*. The technique of his art Mr. Scharwenka knows thoroughly, and he handles the orchestra with a firm hand. But, if the truth must be told – and this is the place for it – *Mataswintha* is not an inspiration. There is no echo in it of an overflowing imagination. It is admirably made, and it commands respect. But it does not melt or thrill, and one goes away from the opera house with only the conviction that he has heard the result of earnest effort on the part of an aspiring composer.

The most striking fact about the performance was that, owing to the illness of Herr Kraus, who had been cast for the part of Witichis the part was given at the last moment to Herr Stehmann, who had not only not known a note of it two days before the performance, but who is not a tenor. The transposition required by this fact, however, was not so great as would be the case with most tenor parts. Every allowance, of course, is due to a singer who undertakes to create a part on a notice so embarrassingly short. But in fact, upon this score there was no allowance to be made.

To all appearance the singer was perfectly familiar with the part, and he sang the music without the slightest evidence of embarrassment or any other emotion. His torpor was especially marked by contrast with the fervor of Mme. von Januschowsky. Her *Mataswintha* was from first to last characterized by musical and dramatic earnestness. It never lacked life and movement, and at the climacteric points of the drama, especially in the rejection of her political suitor, rose to the requirements of the situation.

The quality of Miss Eibenschütz's voice was exhibited to advantage in her two scenes with her lover. Herr Fischer was in good voice, and of course was entirely adequate and satisfactory. The orchestra rendered the difficult and complicated score very nearly to perfection, showing the results of repeated and careful rehearsal, and the composer conducted with authority.²⁸⁴

²⁸⁴ W.J. Henderson, Review: "Mataswintha," *New York Times*, XLVII, No. 14,234 (April 2, 1897) p. 8.

From *The Brooklyn Eagle*:

Mataswintha, a romantic opera by Xaver Scharwenka was performed at the Metropolitan Opera house last night for the first time in this country, under the leadership of the composer, assisted by members of the Damrosch Opera company. Mr. Scharwenka has adhered consistently to the Wagnerian method throughout, the vocal parts are written in melodious recitative, with no set forms, and the orchestra is treated as a very vital and dramatic factor in the action. The score does not show great originality or melodic invention, and it is almost a foregone conclusion that, in following his model so closely, the composer should have been somewhat reminiscent, but his work is, throughout, serious and musicianly and the orchestra is handled cleverly, with smoothness and nice color. Unfortunately, the composer has been somewhat hampered by his libretto, which lacks action and is poorly constructed, so that there are several intervals of uninteresting dialogue. But whenever the opportunity offers for more lyrical treatment, Mr. Scharwenka's score abounds in beautiful and melodious effects. Mention might be made of the duet in act I, and the fine, if somewhat Meyerbeerish, ensemble at the close of act two, and much of the music allotted to *Mataswintha*, which has a splendid dramatic quality. In last night's performance first honors easily went to the orchestra, which was led in a masterly manner by the composer. Mme. Von Januschowsky, who assumed the role of *Mataswintha*, has one glaring fault – her voice, which is shrill, with a distressing vibrato. But she worked with such vigor and determination that it partly atoned for that defect. Mlle. Eibenschutz gave a perfectly colorless performance of the part of *Rauthgundis*, without even a glaring fault to disturb its monotony. Herr Kraus, who was to have sung the part of *Witichis*, was ill, and Herr Stehmann assumed the role at two days' notice. The music does not lie in his voice, which is a baritone, while the part is written for tenor, but he deserved credit for his difficult undertaking, which made the production of the opera possible. Mr. Fishcher sang the small part of *Grippa* satisfactorily, but the rest of the cast was quite inadequate. Over the doings and appearance of the chorus a charitable veil [veil] of silence should be drawn. The large audience was in a friendly mood and disposed to overlook shortcomings. The composer was called out after each act and made the recipient of numerous and huge floral offerings and enough laurel wreaths to crown every statue in Prospect Park.²⁸⁵

The Music of *Mataswintha*

Mataswintha, an opera in four acts with a libretto by Dr. Ernst Koppel based on Felix Dahn's *Ein Kampf um Rom*, music by Xaver Scharwenka was published by Breitkopf und Härtel in 1893.²⁸⁶ The conductor's score used for this study had been annotated and signed by Scharwenka in Berlin on August 11, 1897.²⁸⁷

Breitkopf und Härtel released eight excerpts of the opera for separate performance in their 1896 catalog: the *Overture*, *Holde Blüthen*, *blü'nde Lust* (women's chorus with Alto solo), *Dank*

²⁸⁵ Review: *A New German Opera: Mataswintha by Xaver Scharwenka Given Last Night. The Brooklyn Eagle* (Vol 51, No. 97) April 2, 1897.

²⁸⁶ The four act opera version of *Mataswintha* was actually the second version of the opera that Scharwenka submitted to Breitkopf und Härtel. The first version was written in three acts with a transformation (*Verwandlung*) group of three scenes. Scharwenka substantially revised the first version to create the four act opera that is researched in this document. A non-literal translation of the *libretto* was made from the three act version by Helen D. Tretbar. There is not an extant copy of a *libretto* for the four act version.

²⁸⁷ Xaver Scharwenka, *Mataswintha* Partitur (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, undated).

euch, ihr Treuen (Duet); *That'st du den fürchterlichen Eid* (Aria); *Wie der Duft mir den Sinn umfängt* (Soprano Aria); *Die Ernte vorüber gewunden der Kranz* (Chorus); *Domine Jesu Christe* (Double Choir); *König Witichis' Werbung* (Orchestra).²⁸⁸ The 1897 catalog lists only orchestral excerpts, the *Overture* and *König Witichis' Werbung*.²⁸⁹ In 1898, the opera was not listed in the publisher's catalog.²⁹⁰ Given the titles of the excerpts and no other extant information,²⁹¹ logical starting points and ending points were determined for each excerpt through examination of the conductor's score and the four-act vocal score.

The performance requirements are substantial:

Table 4-2: The Scoring of *Mataswintha*²⁹²

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

King Witichis, Tenor	Totila, the King's Brother in Arms, Tenor
Rauthgundis, his wife, Soprano	Grippa, Count of Ravenna, Bass (Baritone-Bass)
Mataswintha, Soprano	Arahad, a distinguished young Goth, Baritone
Aspa, her Confidant, Alto	A Slave-girl, Mezzo Soprano
CHORUS:	Distinguished Goths from Witichis and Mataswintha's entourage. Envoys from Ravenna, Shepherds, and Hunters, Townspeople, etc. ²⁹³

ORCHESTRAL FORCES

WINDS	BRASS	PERCUSSION	STRINGS
Piccolo	Horns 1,2,3,4	Timpani	Violin I and II
Flute 1&2	Trumpet 1,2,3	Cymbals/Triangle	Viola
Oboe 1&2	Trumpets onstage		Violoncello
English Horn	Trombone 1,2	Harp	Contrabass
Clarinet 1&2	Bass Trombone		
Bass Clarinet	Tuba		Organ
Bassoon 1&2			
Contrabassoon			

²⁸⁸ Xaver Scharwenka, *Mataswintha* in *Mittheilungen der Musikalienhandlung*, translated by Dr. Mary-Bess Halford-Staffel (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1896), p. 1589.

²⁸⁹ "Xaver Scharwenka" in *Mittheilungen der Musikalienhandlung*, translated by Dr. Mary-Bess Halford-Staffel (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, September, 1897).

²⁹⁰ *Mittheilungen der Musikalienhandlung*, (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, October, 1898).

²⁹¹ Dr. Andreas Sopart, Archivist at Breitkopf und Härtel in e-mail correspondence to the present writer. Any materials having to do with *Mataswintha* were lost in the Second World War. There was no record of correspondence in the collection of the International Xaver Scharwenka Society.

²⁹² Scharwenka, *Mataswintha* Partitur, i. The translations of the character descriptions are the present author's work.

²⁹³ The choral forces must be large enough to accommodate double chorus writing.

Table 4-3: Summary of Scenes and Corresponding Extractions²⁹⁴

SUMMARY OF SCENES		
Overture*		
The time: The middle of the sixth-century A. D.		
ACT I: Witichis' Country home near Fäsula		
SCENE	DRAMATIS PERSONÆ	EXCERPT TITLE
Scene 1	Rauthgundis, Chorus of Shepherds and Hunters	
Scene 2	Rauthgundis, Totila	<i>Die Ernte vorüber gewunden der Kranz</i>
Scene 3	Rauthgundis (Totila and Chorus), Witichis	
Scene 4	Previous, add Totila	
Scene 5	Previous, add Grippa and Goth Envoys	<i>That'st du den fürchterlichen Eid</i>
ACT II: Room in the King's Palace in Ravenna		
Scene 1	Mataswintha, Aspa	
Scene 2	Previous, add Arahad	
Scene 3	Mataswintha, Aspa, Grippa	
Scene 4*+	Previous, add Witichis and Chorus	<i>Dank euch, ihr Treuen</i>
ACT III: Bridal Chamber ²⁹⁵		
Scene 1	Aspa and Slave-girl	<i>Holde Blüthen, blü'nde Lust</i>
Scene 2	Mataswintha	<i>Wie der Duft mir den Sinn umfängt</i>
Scene 3	Mataswintha, Witichis	
ACT IV: Square in Ravenna		
Scene 1	Mataswintha, Arahad	
Scene 2	Rauthgundis	
Scene 3	Witichis, Totila, Grippa, Rauthgundis	
Scene 4*	Mataswintha, <i>Song in the Church</i>	<i>Domine Jesu Christe</i>
Scene 5	Witichis, Totila, Grippa, Chorus	
Scene 6	Rauthgundis	
Scene 7	Rauthgundis, Mataswintha, Chorus	
Scene 8	Previous, add Witichis, Totila	

+ The excerpt *König Witichis' Werbung* includes the aria *Dank euch, ihr Treuen* and reuses the orchestral material from the scene.

* Double chorus

²⁹⁴ Xaver Scharwenka, *Mataswintha* Partitur, i. The translations of the instrument names are the present author's work.

²⁹⁵ The scenes that make up Act III, were originally the "transformation," in the three act version, as Act II, Scenes 5, 6, and 7.

The reviewers of the time favorably compared Scharwenka to Wagner and called the work “Grand Opera” or “Romantic Opera.” They compared it to *Tristan und Isolde*, and used terms that were, and continue to be, associated with Wagner’s music dramas, namely the *Leitmotif*.

In examining the conductor’s score and noting the extractions that Breitkopf und Härtel made for the excerpts, one can see that Scharwenka left no doubt about the details of the score. He used full orchestra, including Bass Trombone, Stage Trumpets, Bass Clarinet, and Contrabassoon. He indicated quite specifically where and how he wanted the phrases shaped in terms of the tempo, *rubato*, *accelerando*, attacks, and expressive quality. In the *Overture*, alone, he has no fewer than ten tempo indications. He often provides specific metronome markings at the start of a section to keep the conductor close to his vision. His dynamic indications are well noted, and the stage directions detailed. While there has been no study of Scharwenka’s compositional process, perhaps Scharwenka was looking for his own *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

Scharwenka has chosen to use continuous music. There are no recitatives, nor are there marks in places that could lead one to believe that a phrase is to be sung in a recitative style. It is noted that with Scharwenka’s attention to detail he frequently omitted time signature changes between the scenes, while noting frequent time changes within a Scene. This suggests that the new scene is an *attaca*, where the music is not to cease, but rather, bring the viewer/listener into the action with little time for reflection. In the spirit of this continuous articulation, and observing Scharwenka’s lettering in the orchestral score, the present author has chosen to number the measures consecutively in each act. Act I contains 1405 measures, including the *Overture*. Act II contains 697 measures, including its prelude. Act III contains 671 measures, including its prelude. Act IV contains 891 measures, including its prelude.

The Excerpts

Scharwenka chooses to begin this work with a substantial *Overture*, which is the first excerpt Breitkopf und Härtel presented in their catalog. The score calls for full orchestra: Piccolo, paired Flutes, paired Oboes, English Horn, paired Clarinets, Bass Clarinet, paired Bassoons, Contrabassoon, Horn 1, 2, 3, 4, Trumpet 1, 2, and 3; paired Trombone, Bass Trombone, Tuba, Timpani, Percussion (Cymbals and Triangle), Harp, Violins I, and II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass.²⁹⁶ It is structured in the key of E-flat major at the outset, modulates to G-flat major, and concludes in E-flat major. Scharwenka used an A-B-A form. In the piano/vocal edition of the opera, he provides both the concert ending and the ending which transitions into the opening of Act I.

Example 1: *Mataswintha: Overture*, mm. 1-6.²⁹⁷

The *Overture* concludes with a return of the opening material, elongating the structure and moving toward a final E-flat major chord.

²⁹⁶ Scharwenka, *Mataswintha*, Partitur, pp. 1-23.

²⁹⁷ Xaver Scharwenka, *Mataswintha*, an opera in four acts, piano/vocal edition (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1893), p. 1.

Example 2: *Mataswintha: Overture*, transition to Act I, Scene 1, mm. 156-171.²⁹⁸

The second excerpt is a chorus *Die Ernte vorüber gewunden der Kranz*, extracted from Act I, Scene 1. It takes place at King Witichis' country home, and was written for SATB Chorus of Shepherds and Hunters. There are no principal singers involved. The score calls for Paired Flutes, Horn 1, 2, 3, 4, Timpani, Violins I, and II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass.²⁹⁹ It is structured in the key of F major, and remains in that key. It is structured as a two-part song form: A-B with a repeat of the last phrase of B. Scharwenka's melody and harmonies are diatonic, using the primary intervals and moving stepwise, or in simple skips and leaps to embody a folk-song character. He uses some imitative writing after the initial entrance of the men to suggest the chase that might ensue as part of the round dance choreography. The chorus begins with the C octave figure at measure 257.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 6.

²⁹⁹ Scharwenka, *Mataswintha* Partitur, pp. 30-35.

TRANSLATION

Die Ernte vorüber, gewunden der Kranz; lasst
feiern den Tag uns mit Spiel und mit Tanz!
Nun hurtig, ihr braunen Feldjungfräulein, ihr
holden, nun schmückt euch zum fröhlichen Reihn.

Ihr Burschen, ihr schmucken wir stellen uns ein
zum Spiel und zum tanz.
Ihr holden Mädchen, schmückt euch zum Spiel
und zum Tanz!
Heia!

The harvest is over, the wreaths are wound; let's
celebrate the day with fun and dancing! Now
make haste, you young women, tanned by your
work in the fields, lovely you are, so dress
yourselves in your finery for the merry dances.

And you, young men, stop working and get
yourselves ready for the fun and dancing!
Lovely young women, deck yourselves out for the
fun and dancing!
Heia!³⁰⁰

Example 3: *Mataswintha*: Act I, Scene 1, Chorus, *Die Ernte vorüber*, mm. 255-269.³⁰¹

Ziemlich belebt. ♩ = 69. (Heimkehrende Schnitter und Hirten ziehen draussen vorüber.)

255 Die ersten acht Takte hinter der Scene.

CHORUS

Sopran. Die Ern - te vor - ü - ber, ge - wun - den der

Alt. Kranz; — lasst fei - ern den Tag uns mit Spiel und mit

Tanz!

Tenor. Die Ern - te vor - ü - ber, ge - wun - den der

Bass.

260 265 269

³⁰⁰ Scharwenka, *Mataswintha*, piano/vocal score, translated by Dr. Mary-Bess Halford-Staffel, pp. 10-13.

³⁰¹ Scharwenka, *Mataswintha*, piano/vocal score, pp. 10.

The third excerpt is the aria *That'st du den fürchterlichen Eid* extracted from Act I, Scene 5. It is written for Queen Rauthgundis, Grippa, and TTBB Chorus of Gothic Nobles.³⁰² It was scored for paired Flutes, paired Oboes, English Horn, paired Clarinets, Bass Clarinet, paired Bassoons, Contrabassoon, Horn 1, 2, 3, 4, Trumpet 1, 2, and 3; paired Trombone, Bass Trombone, Tuba, Timpani, Harp, Violins I, and II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass.³⁰³ Its key structure is A-minor, D-major, C-major, E-major. It is through composed, as there is no repetition of text or melodic material. The aria begins at measure 1291.

TRANSLATION

That'st du den fürchterlichen Eid in dunkler,
schicksalsschwerer Stunde, so sei zu halten ihn
bereit; weihe einzig dich dem heil'gen Bunde.
Zich' hin denn, Witichis, mein Held, du Stolz der
Welt, zich' hin zu uns'res Volkes Heil; das
höchste Los ward dir zu Theil!

Willst brechen du den Eid, weil du dich mir
geweiht?

(Theure Frau! Seht sie leiden! Rauthgundis! Fest
und muthig steht sie treu!)

Es leuchtet hell das Liebesopfer zur Halle unsres
Himmelsherrn; er lenkt der Menschen Erdenlose,
er löscht nun meines Lebens Stern. Aus meinen
Armen, den liebeswarmen, muss ich ihn lassen!
O Witichis! Grausames Los! Jeden Erdenglückes
ledig - Herr, mein Heil, sei du mir gnädig.

If in a dark and fateful hour you took that terrible
oath, be prepared to keep it; consecrate yourself
alone to that holy bond.

Leave me, Witichis, my hero, you pride of the
world, leave me for the good of our people, you
who were awarded the highest of destinies.

Will you break your oath because you consecrated
yourself to me?

(Most cherished wife! See how she suffers!
Rauthgundis! Courageous and firm she remains
in her loyalty to me!)

The sacrifice of our love burns brightly in the
halls of our heavenly Lord; He guides the fates of
men on earth, He extinguishes now the star of my
life whom I must release from the warmth of my
loving arms! O Witichis! Dreadful fate! Denied
all earthly happiness, be gracious to me, Lord, and
grant me salvation [in heaven].³⁰⁴

³⁰² It is assumed that Witichis, Grippa, and the Chorus of Nobles could be extracted in a concert performance of the excerpt.

³⁰³ Scharwenka, *Mataswintha* Partitur, pp. 170-183.

³⁰⁴ Scharwenka, *Mataswintha*, piano/vocal score, translated by Dr. Mary-Bess Halford-Staffel, pp. 66-71.

Example 4: *Mataswintha*: Act I, Scene 5, Rauthgundis' Aria, *That'st du den fürchterlichen Eid*, mm. 1287-1305.³⁰⁵

Sehr langsam und schwer.

Weib und Wil - len, Leib und Le - ben!

Weib und Wil - len, Leib und Le - ben!

Rache, Weib und Willen, Leib und Le - ben!

Sehr langsam und schwer.

p *pp* *p* *molto cresc.* *f* *dim.*

1287

Rauthgundis (zu Witichis, welcher während der letzten Vorgänge in stumpfer Theilnahmlosigkeit verharret hat).

molto espr. That'st du den fürchter - li - chen Eid in dunkler, schicksalsschwerer

1295

(bedeutsam)

Stunde, so sei zu hal - ten ihn be - reit; - weih' ein - zig dich dem

1300

Ruhig, aber nicht schleppend. $\text{♩} = 84$.

heil'gen Bun - de! Zieh' hin denn,

1305

³⁰⁵ Scharwenka, *Mataswintha*, piano/vocal score, pp. 66.

The fourth excerpt is a duet *Dank euch, ihr Treuen*, excerpted from Act II, Scene 4. It takes place in a salon in Mataswintha's palace, and is written for King Witichis, Mataswintha, and double chorus representing the nobles of Witichis' and Mataswintha's courts.³⁰⁶ It is scored for full orchestra, Piccolo, paired Flutes, paired Oboes, English Horn, paired Clarinets, Bass Clarinet, paired Bassoons, Contrabassoon, Horn 1, 2, 3, 4, Trumpet 1, 2, and 3; paired Trombone, Bass Trombone, Tuba, Timpani, Harp, Violins I, and II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass.³⁰⁷ It is structured in the key(s) of C maj, E-flat maj, G-flat maj, C maj, G-flat maj and is in a through-composed form, as there is no melodic repetition. It is reminiscent of a Wagnerian duet, as there is no point in the score where Witichis and Mataswintha are singing together for an extended period. The duet alternates between the two characters, and begins at measure 552.

TRANSLATION

Witichis: Dank euch, ihr Treuen, für den Ruf; er stählt den Muth zu schweren Tagen. Nun aber frage ich, Hohe, dich: darf auch für dich den Dank ich sagen?

Mataswintha: Du darfst es, Held. Willkommen mir in Königshöhen gross und hehr, willkommen mir in dieser Stadt, in meines Ahnherrn Hallen! Der Amalungen Tochter dankt beglückt dir und euch Allen.

W: Verdien' ich, Herrin, diese Huld? Wie zoll' ich dir des Dankes Schuld?

R: Nun, lass die Frage frei mich thun: Reichst du mir hochgesinnt die Hand, der ich, wie stets, dir unterthan, als Gothenglückes heilig Pfand, vereint zu wandeln gleich Bahn, uns unsres Volkes Noth zu weih'n zu weih'n vereint ihm Schutz und Schirm zu sein?

Witichis: Thank you for your loyalty, for your acclamation which steels my courage for the dark days [ahead]. But now I ask you this, exalted one, may I also thank you?

Mataswintha: You may, hero. You are welcome with royal honours, great and noble, welcome to this city and to my ancestral halls! The daughter of the Amalungen is happy to thank you one and all.

W: Sovereign lady, do I deserve to be so favored? How can I possibly repay you?

R: Now let me freely answer your question: do you extend to me your hand in a noble manner, which I, ever your liege man, accept as a holy pledge for the prosperity of the Goths, so that we may, ever united, travel the same path dedicated to shielding and safeguarding our people from the perils that surround them?

³⁰⁶ It is assumed that in an excerpted performance, the double chorus could be eliminated.

³⁰⁷ Scharwenka, *Mataswintha* Partitur, pp. 275-292.

M: Du willst aus dumpfem Dämmerleben mich zu der Thaten Tag erheben? Du kommst zu mir, die fern der Welt, ein schwer Geschick gefesselt hält. Nimm meine Hand und nimm mein Leben, es sei dir freudig hingegen. Gemeinsam sei uns Glück und Leid, gemeinsam Tod und Ewigkeit

W: Wie greift ihr Wort mir an das Herz, wie fasst mich dumpfer, wilder Schmerz!

Taucht eine Sonne auch empor, gedenk' ich der, die ich erkor, die ich auf ewig jetzt verlor.

M: Do you want to raise me from the dark and stifling twilight of my life to the deeds of day? You have come to me, one who far from the world has been shackled by a cruel fate. Take my hand and take my life which I happily dedicate to you. Let us share both happiness and sorrow as well as death and eternity.

W: How her words grapple with my heart as I am seized by sorrow both wild and dull!

As surely as the sun rises I think of her whom I chose and whom I have now lost for ever more.³⁰⁸

Example 5: Mataswintha: Act II, Scene 5, Duet, Dank euch, ihr Treuen, mm. 552-566.³⁰⁹

Mässig.
Witichis.
Dank euch, ihr Treuen, für den Ruf; erstält den Muth zu schwe-ren Ta-gen.

(zu Mataswintha gewendet)
Nun a-ber frag'ich, Ho-he, dich: darf auch für

Mataswintha.
dich den Dank ich sagen? Du darfst es, Held. Willkommen mir in

Kö-nigs-eh-ren gross und hehr, willkommen mir in die-ser Stadt, in

³⁰⁸ Scharwenka, *Mataswintha*, piano/vocal score, translated by Dr. Mary-Bess Halford-Staffel, pp. 102-108.

³⁰⁹ Scharwenka, *Mataswintha*, piano/vocal score, pp. 102.

The fifth excerpt is a chorus *Holde Blüten*, from Act III, Scene 1. It takes place in Mataswintha's Bridal Chamber before her wedding to King Witichis. Composed in 9/8 meter, it is written for a slave girl (Sklavin) and SSA Chorus. There is also a section written for Aspa, Mataswintha's confidante.³¹⁰ The score calls for Paired Flutes, paired Oboes, paired Clarinets, Bass Clarinet, paired Bassoons, Horn 1, 2, 3, 4, Timpani, Percussion (Triangle), Harp, Violins I, and II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass.³¹¹ It is structured in an A-B-A form. Scharwenka's melody and harmonies appear to embody a folk-song character. There is some musical repetition.

TRANSLATION

Holde Blüten, blüh'nde Lust, athmet Wonne
heisser Brust! Mit des Glücks geheimer Stunde
seid in lieblich heiterm Bunde.

Bräutlich geschmückt, selig entzückt, hold
Herrin, sei gepriesen! Glück ist über Nacht
genah, sonnig lacht es deinem Pfad.

Glühende Rosen, reine hauchet der Nacht
balsamischen Duft!

Lilien, würzet die Luft!

Glühende Rosen, reine Lilien, bräutlicher
Kammer würzet die Luft, hauchet der Nacht
balsamischen Duft.

Aus der fernen Sonnenheimath Wohlgerüche
seltner Art hab' ich zu der Liebesfeier, treuer
Hoffnung voll, gespart, Für dich sei's
verschwendet, dir sei's gespendet, holde Herrin
voller Güte, liebeich goldenes Gemüthe!

Lovely blossoms blooming in happiness, inhaled
by passionate breasts that are full of joy! Join with
those sweet and happy bonds that, in a secret hour,
unite in felicity.

Decked out as a bride, rapturously happy, praises
to you, our fair sovereign lady! Happiness
has blocked out the night and shines like the sun
merrily upon your path.

Glowing roses, breathe the pure balsamic
fragrance of the night!

Lilies, spice the air!

Glowing roses, chaste lilies, add your fragrance to
the bridal chamber, [so they may] breathe the
balsamic fragrance of the night!

Full of hope and faith, I have saved these exotic
aromas from eastern lands which I now lavish
upon this feast of love and upon you, my good
and lovely mistress, refined like gold in the
fulfillment of your love!³¹²

³¹⁰ It is assumed that in an excerpted performance, the part of Aspa would be removed, and the orchestra would continue to perform her music until the return of the chorus and slave girl.

³¹¹ Scharwenka, *Mataswintha* Partitur, pp. 30-35.

³¹² Scharwenka, *Mataswintha*, piano/vocal score, translated by Dr. Mary-Bess Halford-Staffel, pp. 119-133.

Example 6: *Mataswintha*: Act III, Scene 1, Women's Chorus, *Holde Blüthen*, mm. 22-28.³¹³

Vorhang auf.

22

Eine Solavin.

Sopr. I. Chor der Solavinnen. Hol - de Blü - then,

Sopr. II. Hol - de Blü - then,

Alt. Hol - de Blü - then,

blü - hen - de Lust, ath - met Won - ne bei - ner

blü - hen - de Lust, ath - met Won - ne bei - ner

blü - hen - de Lust, ath - met Won - ne bei - ner

blü - hen - de Lust, ath - met Won - ne bei - ner

28

The sixth excerpt is Mataswintha's aria *Wie der Duft mir den Sinn umfängt*, from Act III, Scene 2. It takes place in Mataswintha's bridal chamber before her wedding to King Witichis. The score calls for Piccolo, paired Flutes, paired Oboes, English Horn, paired Clarinets, Bass Clarinet, paired Bassoons, Contrabassoon, Horn 1, 2, 3, 4, Trumpet 1, 2, and 3, paired Trombone,

³¹³ Scharwenka, *Mataswintha*, piano/vocal score, pp. 119.

Bass Trombone, Tuba, Timpani, Harp, Violins I, and II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass.³¹⁴

Its key structure is D-flat major, C-major, D-flat major C major. It is through-composed. The aria begins with the introduction at measure 137.

TRANSLATION

Wie der Duft mir den Sinn umfängt, wie das
Gewölbe mich beengt!

Kriegsgott! herrlich anzuschauen, bist des
Helden hehres Bild. Selig will ich ihm vertrauen,
naht er sich stark und mild.

Kriegsgott! Meinem stillen Sehnen hast
verschwiegen du gelauscht, als ich unter heissen
Thränen mich an dir, dem Stein, berauscht.

Kriegsgott! Meines Glückes Stunde ist
gekommen hehr und gross, und in langer sehntem
Bunde blüht das Glück aus meinem Schoss.

Ich erwach zu neuen Lenzen durch des Helden
sel'ge Wahl, Kriegsgott!

Dich mit Blumen kränzen will ich heut zum
letzten Mal.

Darf ihm selbst jetzt Blumen spenden. nicht nur
seinem Bild von Stein. Alles wird sich wenden
und ich werde selig sein.

How the fragrance engulfs my senses, how the
walls suffocate me!

God of War! Glorious to behold, you are the
exalted image of my hero. With rapture I shall
entrust myself to him as he comes to me,
strong yet mild.

God of War! You have listened in silence to my
silent longing as your stony presence enraptured
me causing my hot tears to flow.

God of War! The hour of my happiness, noble
and great, is at hand and in long desired union
my felicity shall flourish within my womb.

I awake to to a season of new springs because my
hero chose me to be so blessed, God of War!

Today I will crown you with flowers for the last
time.

Now I am allowed to garland the man himself
with flowers not just his portrait made of stone.
Everything will change and I shall know bliss.³¹⁵

³¹⁴ Scharwenka, *Mataswintha* Partitur, pp. 328-354.

³¹⁵ Scharwenka, *Mataswintha*, piano/vocal score, translated by Dr. Mary-Bess Halford-Staffel, pp. 135-141.

Example 7: *Mataswintha*: Act III, Scene 2, Mataswintha's aria, *Wie der Duft mir den Sinn* umfängt, mm. 135-154.³¹⁶

(Da Aspa sich entfernen will, umarmt Mataswintha sie)

135

Mat. (allein, umherblickend, nach einer Pause).

Wie der Duft mir den

perdendosi

142

Lebhafter.

Sinn umfängt, wie das Gewölbe mich beengt!

pp

p

(zu der Aresbüste tretend)

Sehr feurig. ♩ = 144

Kriegsgott!

molto cresc.

ff

p

f

herrlich anzusehen, bist du der Heldenhelden

154

³¹⁶ Scharwenka, *Mataswintha*, piano/vocal score, pp. 135.

The seventh excerpt from the Breitkopf und Härtel catalog is the Act IV, Scene 4 chorus *Domine Jesu Christe*. It takes place outside a church in Ravenna, as King Witichis are in the church. It was written for double chorus with Organ accompaniment, only.³¹⁷ It is structured in a through composed form, with the accompaniment material from the opening phrase, “Domine Jesu Christe” providing a postlude. Its key structure is C major, A minor, A major, C major. The text is taken from the Offertory prayers of the *Requiem* Mass.

TRANSLATION

Domine Jesu Christe,
Rex gloriæ, libera me.

Lord Jesus Christ,
Glorious King, free me.³¹⁸

Example 8: *Mataswintha*: Act IV, Scene 4, Chorus, *Domine Jesu Christe*, mm. 290-297.³¹⁹

Orgel und Gesang in der Kirche.

CHOR I.
Sopr. Do-mine Je-su, Do-mine Je-su
Alt. Do-mine Je-su Chri-ste, Do-mine Je-su
Ten. Do-mine Je-su, Do-mine Je-su
Bass. Do-mine Je-su Chri-ste, Do-mine Je-su

CHOR II.
Sopr. Do-mine Je-su Christe.
Alt. Do-mine Je-su Christe.
Ten. Do-mine Je-su Christe.
Bass. Do-mine Je-su Christe.
Do-mine Je-su Christe.

(Orgel.)
Pedal.

290 297

³¹⁷ Scharwenka, *Mataswintha* Partitur, pp. 460-461.

³¹⁸ Translation provided by the current author.

³¹⁹ Scharwenka, *Mataswintha*, piano/vocal score, pp. 175-178.

The Motives

Like Wagner in his later music dramas, Scharwenka uses *Leitmotif* techniques to show character interaction, previous action, or to foreshadow an event. While this is in no way an exhaustive study, motives have been identified within the Breitkopf und Härtel excerpts. Four motives in the *Overture* recur in the other excerpts and five motives that appear outside the *Overture* that reappear in other places. The labels assigned are created based on the text of the scenes in which they appear. One motive is labeled based on a comment in the review from the *Weimarer Zeitung*.

The Overture Motives

Overture Motive A: “Witichis’ Motive”

This motive is stated in mm. 1-4 and echoed in mm. 5-7.

Example 9: *Mataswintha: Overture*, First Statement of “Witichis Motive,” mm. 1-6.³²⁰

The Witichis Motive appears in four places after the initial statement. The first is at end of the *Overture* as it moves to Act I, Scene 1. The motive is fragmented, with the opening two measures of the motive repeated in the treble staff at mm. 156-157 and mm. 158-159. Scharwenka then uses the first measure of the motive, repeated four times in the treble staff at mm. 160-163, and as a final statement, he augments the rhythmic values of the motive in the treble staff at mm. 164-165, as it leads to the cadence.

³²⁰ Ibid., p. 1.

Example 10: *Mataswintha Overture*: First Appearance of “Witichis Motive,” mm. 156-171.³²¹

The musical score is written for piano and horn. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The score is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 156 to 160. It begins with the instruction "Breit." above the staff. The piano part starts with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic and a crescendo hairpin. The horn part enters in measure 158 with a "Horn." instruction. The dynamics for the horn part are *molto dim.* and *p*. The second system covers measures 165 to 171. It begins with the instruction "(Vorhang auf.)" above the staff. The piano part has a "un poco cresc." instruction. The horn part has a "Engl. Horn." instruction. The dynamics for the horn part are *sf*, *p più dim.*, and *pp*. The score ends with a fermata in measure 171.

³²¹ Ibid., p. 6.

The second appearance of the “Witichis Motive” is in Act II, Scene 4, the treble staff at mm. 665-668, at the conclusion of *Dank euch, ihr Treuen*, as the combined entourages give their approval to the union of Witichis and Mataswintha.

Example 11: *Mataswintha*: Act II, Scene 4, Second Appearance of “Witichis Motive,” mm. 665-670.³²²

The third appearance happens in the treble staff of the final measures of Act II, Scene 4 (mm. 689-690) as accompaniment to the ensemble after King Witichis and Mataswintha announce their union. Scharwenka then extracts the second measure of the motive and states it twice in the treble staff at m. 691. He finishes the act with the use of the rhythmic structure as an ascending arpeggio in the treble staff at m. 692 to lead toward the cadence.

³²² Ibid., pp. 109-110.

Example 12: *Mataswintha*: Act II, Scene 4: Third Appearance of “Witichis Motive,” mm. 689-697.³²³

The fourth appearance occurs in the Prelude to Act III, Scene 1 as Mataswintha is preparing for her wedding day. It is a similar structure to the first statement in the *Overture*, complete with fuller echo.

Example 13: *Mataswintha*: Act III, Scene 1, Fourth Appearance of “Witichis Motive,” mm. 1-7.³²⁴

³²³ Ibid., p. 117

³²⁴ Ibid., p. 118.

Overture Motive B: “God of War Motive”

Example 14: *Mataswintha: Overture*: First Statement of “God of War Motive,” mm. 80-87.³²⁵

Wieder etwas ruhiger.

Pos. u. Hrf.

f

dim.

pp

poco cresc.

Nach und nach beschleunigend.

80

82

85

87

The “God of War Motive” appears in Act II, Scene 4 in the piano staves at mm. 613-616. It appears for the first time in the piano staves at mm. 617-619, and is then fragmented in the piano at mm. 620-622 when Mataswintha tells Witichis to take her hand and her life, which she has dedicated to him. This foreshadows not only their wedding, but the battle that is to take place in the fourth act.

³²⁵ Ibid., p. 3.

Example 15: *Mataswintha*: Act II, Scene 4, First Appearance of “God of War Motive,” mm. 611-622.³²⁶

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is 3/4.

- System 1 (mm. 611-614):** The vocal line begins with the lyrics "fern der Welt, ein schwer Geschick ge-fes-selt hält?". The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. Markings include "dolce" and "3" (triplets) in the piano part.
- System 2 (mm. 615-618):** The vocal line continues with "Nach und nach belebter. Nimm mei-ne Hand und". The piano accompaniment is marked "poco cresc." and "mf". A measure rest of 15 measures is indicated at the start of the system.
- System 3 (mm. 619-622):** The vocal line continues with "nimm mein Le-ben, es sei dir". The piano accompaniment is marked "cresc. poco a poco" and "R.H." (Right Hand). The system concludes with the lyrics "freu-dig hin-ge-".

³²⁶ Ibid., p. 106.

The “God of War Motive” appears in the Prelude to Act III in the treble score at mm. 15-18, as Mataswintha is preparing for her wedding to Witichis. It again foreshadows the God of War bringing conflict between Mataswintha and Witichis.

Example 16: *Mataswintha*: Act III, Scene 1: Second Appearance of “God of War Motive,” mm. 15-18.³²⁷

³²⁷ Ibid., p. 118.

The “God of War Motive” appears again in Mataswintha’s aria, *Wie der Duft mir den Sinn umfängt* in the piano score of Act III, Scene 2, at mm. 194-197 and again at mm. 198-200, as she addresses the God of War, telling him that the hour of her happiness is at hand. Yet the orchestra tells a different story.

Example 17: *Mataswintha*: Act III, Scene 2, Second Appearance of “God of War Motive, mm.193-200³²⁸

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 193 to 197, and the second system covers measures 198 to 200. The vocal line is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The piano accompaniment is in the same key and time signature. The score includes various dynamic markings and tempo changes.

System 1 (mm. 193-197):

- Measure 193: *pp* (pianissimo), *rauscht.* (rushing).
- Measure 194: *pp*, *Kriegs - - gott!* (War - - God!).
- Measure 195: *poco cresc.* (poco crescendo), *Mei - nes Glü - - ckes* (My - happiness).
- Measure 196: *poco cresc.*
- Measure 197: *poco cresc.*

System 2 (mm. 198-200):

- Measure 198: *mf* (mezzo-forte), *Stun - - de* (Hour).
- Measure 199: *p* (piano), *ist - - ge - kom - - men* (is - - come).
- Measure 200: *cresc. poco a poco* (crescendo poco a poco), *hehr* (glorious).

Tempo changes: *Etwas beschleunigend.* (Somewhat accelerating) at the beginning of measure 198.

Handwritten annotations: *193*, *195*, *200* are written below the piano part. *Ad.* (Adagio) is written below the piano part at measures 194, 195, 196, and 198. ** Ad.* is written below the piano part at measures 195, 196, 199, and 200.

³²⁸ Ibid., p. 137.

Overture Motive C: “Mataswintha’s Hatred:”

Example 18: *Mataswintha: Overture*: First Statement of “Mataswintha’s Hatred Motive” mm. 120-124.³²⁹

It appears in Act IV, Scene 4. The stage direction reads:

About to plunge the torch into the granary, Mataswintha hears the first bars of the hymn (*Domine Jesu Christe*). The expression of wild hatred on her face gradually disappears and gives way to a milder mood. Ever sorrowful, she is remorseful and wants to escape without finishing the work of destruction, as Witichis appears in the open church door. As Mataswintha’s troops advance, the look of demonic hatred returns. She disappears into the granary.³³⁰

“Mataswintha’s Hatred Motive” appears in the bass clef of the piano staves, where Scharwenka marks a transition to the choral scene in the Church, Act I, Scene 4 at mm. 284-285. It appears quite differently, as it is at a *pianissimo* marking for strings and clarinets in the first statement, and in the trombones at a *fortissimo* dynamic, thus truly underlining Mataswintha’s hatred of Witichis.

Example 19: *Mataswintha Act IV, Scene 4*: First Appearance of “Mataswintha’s Hatred Motive” mm. 284-289.³³¹

³²⁹ Ibid., p. 5.

³³⁰ Ibid., p. 175.

³³¹ Ibid., p. 175. The translation is the current author’s.

Overture Motive D: “Rauthgundis Motive”

Scharwenka sets this motive also, in the treble clef of the piano reduction at mm. 128-134.

Example 20: *Mataswintha Overture*: First Statement of “Rauthgundis Motive,” mm. 125-134.³³²

The image shows a musical score for the first statement of the "Rauthgundis Motive" from the *Mataswintha Overture*, measures 125-134. The score is written for piano and strings. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked "Langsam. ♩ = 69." and the mood is "zurückhaltend" (restrained). The dynamics range from *ff* (fortissimo) to *p* (piano). The score includes markings for "L.H." (Left Hand) and "R.H." (Right Hand). The motive is first introduced in measure 125 in the right hand, then in measure 128 in the left hand, and finally in measure 130 in the right hand. The motive is characterized by a descending eighth-note scale followed by a half note. The score also includes markings for "Str." (strings) and "dolciss." (dolcissimo).

It appears in Act I, Scene 4 when Witichis tells Grippa of his concealed marriage to Rauthgundis. Grippa asks who the woman is, and he replies, “She is my wife.” It is set in the treble staff of the keyboard system at mm. 973-980.

³³² Ibid., p. 5.

Example 21: *Mataswintha* Act I: Scene 4, First Appearance of “Rauthgundis Motive” mm. 973-984.³³³

Witichis (reicht Rauthgundis die Hand und zieht sie an sich).
Wieder sehr ruhig. ♩ = 76.
dolcissimo

973

Witichis.
Du sahst sie nie, weil ich sie heimlich barg vor al-ler
Welt zu mei-nes Her-zens Frieden. Grüss, Grippa, denn in ihr mein Weib,
cre - - scen - - do
pp

980 984

It appears in a fragment in Act II, Scene 4 in the treble staff of the keyboard systems at mm. 646-when Witichis, singing of his love for Mataswintha recalls Rauthgundis, whom he left behind, and who is lost to him forever.

³³³ Ibid., p. 47.

Example 22: *Mataswintha* Act II, Scene 4: Second Appearance of “Rauthgundis Motive,” mm. 646-650.³³⁴

Sehr ruhig. ♩ = 76.

die ich er - kor, die ich auf e - wigjetzt ver - lor.

p dolce espr.

molto cresc.

molto espr.

p cresc.

646 650

“Witichis wie in Traum versunken. Mataswintha, welche während der letzten Worte mit wachsender Spannung auf Witichis geblickt hatte, tritt nahe an ihn heran und betrachtet ihn kummervoll bewegt. Witichis blickt auf und begegnet den fragenden Blicken Mataswinthas.”

656

Other Motives

There are five motives not located in the *Overture*, but found within the extracted scenes.

They appear to link a couple of events within the early part of the opera.

Scene Motive E: “Fäsula Motive” and Scene Motive F: “The Stranger Motive”

This motive is simply an *ostinato* triplet octave C pattern, beginning in mm. 257-260 and continues throughout the initial choral scene, *Die Ernte vorüber gewunden der Kranz*. Scharwenka employs the pattern in first and second sections of the chorus. In the third, he maintains the triplet movement, but changes the accompaniment to scales, perhaps suggesting that the peasant dance is winding down, and people are leaving, as the next scene unfolds.

³³⁴ Ibid., p. 108.

Example 23: *Mataswintha* Act I, Scene 1 First Statement “Fäsula Motive,” mm. 255-269.³³⁵

Ziemlich belebt. $\text{♩} = 69$. (Heimkehrende Schnitter und Hirten ziehen draussen vorüber.)

255

Die ersten acht Takte hinter der Scene.

CHOR.

Sopran. *p*

Alt. Die Ern - te vor - ü - ber, ge - wun - den der

p

260

Kranz; — lasst fei - ern den Tag uns mit Spiel und mit

265

poco a poco cresc.

Tanz!

poco a poco cresc.

Tenor. *mf* *poco a poco cresc.*

Bass. Die Ern - te vor - ü - ber, ge - wun - den der

mf *poco a poco cresc.*

269

³³⁵ Ibid., p. 10.

The motive returns in Act I, Scene 1, measure 336, as Rauthgundis sings of her unfulfilled yearning for Witichis. She sees a man riding a horse through the valley toward her Castle. Scharwenka scores a *staccato* quarter note motive in the bass at mm 340-343, which suggests the horseman may bring trouble to Fäsula. He repeats the motive again at mm 344-347, and then transposes the two motives, with the *ostinato* moving to the bass of the piano system and the quarter note motive in the treble.

Example 24: *Mataswintha* Act I, Scene 1 First Appearance of “Fäsula Motive,” and First Statement of “Stranger Motive,” mm. 333-352.”³³⁶

Antwort auf mein Fragen, das Echo selbst, des Thales Stimme, schweigt.

333

Schnell. d. = 96.

336

340

345

Doch horch! Ein Ross naht durch das Thal.

350

352

³³⁶ Ibid., p. 15.

In Act I, Scene 2, Rauthgundis is still curious about the unknown man. The “Fäsula Motive” continues from mm. 360-376, first in the treble and then the bass of the piano system. The “Unknown Man Motive” begins at measure 366 and continues through 376 in the treble staff of the piano system. At mm. 367-378, she sings the phrase “A stranger? Who may he be? Who let him approach the Queen?”³³⁷

Example 25: *Mataswintha* Act I, Scene 2 Second Appearance of “Fäsula Motive” and First Appearance of “Stranger Motive,” mm. 358-384.³³⁸

(Sie beugt sich spähend hinaus.)
Haus?

358

Zweiter Auftritt.
Rauthgundis. Totila.

(Totila tritt eilig ein) (dreitaktig) Rauthg.
Ein frem - der Mann?

365

(zweitaktig)
Wer mag es sein? Wer liess ihn

370

(dreitaktig)
zu - der Herrin ein?

375

380

384

³³⁷ The translation is the present author's.

³³⁸ Ibid., p. 16.

Scene Motive G: “Rauthgundis’ and Witichis’ Love Motive”

The critic of the *Weimarer Zeitung* wrote: “Scharwenka’s motifs are resonant and mostly melodic to the ear. Indescribable delicacy defines the melting motif of “conjugal love” that marks the great love scene of Act I.”³³⁹ I believe that the motive that follows is the one to which the critic referred. Rauthgundis learns that the stranger is actually her husband’s Brother in Arms, Totila, bringing news of King Witichis’ impending arrival. Witichis arrives to the strains of a large chorus. When Witichis and Rauthgundis are alone in Act I, Scene 3, this motive is stated in the piano reduction.

Example 26: *Mataswintha* Act I, Scene 3 First Statement “Conjugal Love Motive,” mm. 823-828.³⁴⁰

³³⁹ Review *Mataswintha* in *Mittheilungen der Musikalienhandlung*, translated by Dr. Mary-Bess Halford-Staffel (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, November, 1896) p. 1590.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

It appears in the Act III prelude in the treble staff of the keyboard system at mm. 11-14, as Mataswintha and Witichis prepare to marry. It calls to mind the wife King Witichis has left behind in order to marry Mataswintha.

Example 27: *Mataswintha* Act III, Scene 1 First Appearance of “Conjugal Love Motive,” mm. 11-14.³⁴¹

Scharwenka continues the “Conjugal Love Motive” as the accompaniment to the Bridal Chorus, *Holde Blüthen*. The motive appears throughout the treble and bass staves as a Slave Girl and a women’s chorus sing about the lovely flowers that surround the Bride on her wedding day.

³⁴¹ Ibid., p. 118.

Example 28: *Mataswintha* Act III, Scene 1, Second Appearance “Conjugal Love Motive,” mm 22-28.³⁴²

Vorhang auf.

Eine Selavin. *p* Hol - de Blü - - then,

Sopr. I. Chor der Slavinnen. *p* Hol - de Blü - - then,

Sopr. II. *p* Hol - de Blü - - then,

Alt. *p* Hol - de Blü - - then,

poco cresc. blüh'n - de Lust, ath - met Won - ne hei - sser

poco cresc. blüh'n - de Lust, ath - met Won - ne hei - sser

poco cresc. blüh'n - de Lust, ath - met Won - ne hei - sser

poco cresc. blüh'n - de Lust, ath - met Won - ne hei - sser

³⁴² Ibid., p. 119.

Scene Motive H: “Fate Motive”

This first statement of this motive is in the bass staff of the keyboard system at measure 1182, the beginning of Rauthgundis’ aria, *That'st du den fürchterlichen Eid*, where she sings to Witichis of the fearful vow that he has made and that he is to be prepared to keep it. He is faced with a number of fateful vows, that of the King, that of husband to Rauthgundis, and that of husband to Mataswintha. The motive, reminiscent of the opening motive of Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 5* appears in measures 1188, and 1190, respectively, alluding to the fate Witichis faces.

Example 29: *Mataswintha* Act I, Scene 5, First Statement of the “Fate Motive” with two appearances, mm. 1177-1195³⁴³

The musical score for Example 29 is presented in four systems, each with a vocal line (soprano and alto) and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4.

- System 1 (measures 1177-1190):** The vocal parts sing "Weib und Wil - len, Leib und Le - ben!" and "Rache, Weib und Wil - len, Leib und Le - ben!". The piano accompaniment features a prominent bass line with the "Fate Motive" (a descending chromatic scale). Performance instructions include "Sehr langsam und schwer." and dynamic markings *pp*, *p*, and *molto cresc.*.
- System 2 (measures 1295-1305):** The vocal part begins with the instruction "(bedeutsam)" and sings "Stunde, so sei zu hal - ten ihn be - reit; weih' ein - zig dich dem". The piano accompaniment continues with the "Fate Motive". Performance instructions include "molto espr." and dynamic markings *pp* and *f*.
- System 3 (measures 1305-1315):** The vocal part sings "heil'gen Bun - de!". The piano accompaniment continues with the "Fate Motive". Performance instructions include "Ruhig, aber nicht schleppend." and dynamic markings *pp* and *f*.
- System 4 (measures 1315-1325):** The vocal part sings "Zieh' hin denn,". The piano accompaniment continues with the "Fate Motive". Performance instructions include "Zieh' hin denn," and dynamic markings *pp* and *f*.

³⁴³ Ibid., p. 66.

SCENE MOTIVE I: “Mataswintha”

This motive is stated in Act III Prelude, mm. 8-15, as Mataswintha prepares for her wedding.

It is linked to the “Conjugal Love Motive” in the Prelude at measure 11.

Example 30: *Mataswintha* Act III, Scene 1 First Statement, “Mataswintha Motive,” combined with “Conjugal Love Motive,” mm. 8-14.³⁴⁴

The image displays a musical score for piano, consisting of three systems of music. The key signature is D major (two sharps) and the time signature is 3/4. The first system, measures 8-10, is marked *pp* (pianissimo) and includes a circled '8' at the beginning. The second system, measures 11-13, begins with a circled '11'. The third system, measures 14-15, begins with a circled '14'. The notation includes treble and bass staves with various chords, arpeggios, and melodic lines.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 118.

The motive returns in Act III, Scene 2 at the start of Mataswintha's aria *Wie der Duft mir den Sinn umfängt*, where she is fearful of what is to come with Witichis

Example 31: *Mataswintha* Act III, Scene 2, Second Appearance of "Mataswintha Motive," mm. 116-123.³⁴⁵

Mataswintha wird von gothischen Edelfrauen über die Schwelle geleitet, diese verneigen sich vor ihr und entfernen sich dann. Aspa löst ihr das Diadem.

Etwas ruhiger ♩ = 80.

Harfe

sempre arpeggio

cresc.

Viol.

pp

cresc.

116

120

123

³⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 134.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this document has been to provide a brief biographical account of the life of Franz Xaver Scharwenka with regard to his only opera *Mataswintha*, to include a brief biographical account of the life of Felix Dahn with regard to *Ein Kampf um Rom* (the source for the libretto), and to present a brief biographical account of the life of Walter Damrosch with regard to the Damrosch Opera Company and the repertoire performed by the company during its short existence. The purpose of this document has been to examine the 1896-1897 season of the Damrosch Opera Company, which went on during the Metropolitan's reorganization after the death of Henry Abbey, noting performances and cast members, and investigate the Weimar and New York premieres of *Mataswintha*. A final purpose was to review the score of *Mataswintha*, focusing attention on the excerpts that Breitkopf und Härtel made available for separate performance in their 1894, 1896, and 1897 catalogs.

There is no dispute that Xaver Scharwenka was well respected on the international stage. "The Musical World," an article in *Peterson Magazine*, that appeared scarcely a month after *Mataswintha*'s New York performance stated:

The new opera, *Mataswintha*, which was one of the few grand opera novelties presented by any of the companies this season, is the work of a man of remarkable interest and greatness, who has been in our midst for about six years. Being of a naturally retiring disposition, Xaver Scharwenka has not made his presence as prominently felt as musicians of more bombastic tendencies might have. Nevertheless, his genius, temperament, and musical energy have placed him on a firm musical pedestal.³⁴⁶

Scharwenka was a gifted teacher, an appealing performer, a credible editor of musical scores, and an active composer whose works were enthusiastically received by conductors, audiences, and reviewers. The evidence of twenty-six Atlantic Ocean crossings is a small sign of Scharwenka's popularity and marketability as a performer. His concert career climbed upward, playing in larger

³⁴⁶ "The Musical World" in *Peterson Magazine* (Vol. VII, No. May 5, 1897), pp. 497-498.

venues in Europe, and then the United States, with the first recital on tour held at the Metropolitan Opera House with Anton Seidl conducting. His reputation as a musician is also solid, if one observes that Scharwenka counted among his friends and associates luminaries of the musical world like Anton Seidl, Joseph Joachim, Walter Damrosch, William Steinway, and as noted in *Peterson Magazine*:

Herr Scharwenka belongs to a noted musical family, his brother Philipp, three years his senior, being a distinguished composer and teacher. They are natives of Samter, Prussia, but were educated in Berlin. Early in Xaver Scharwenka's career as composer and musician he founded, and still directs, the famous conservatory of music in Berlin, also one here conducted on the European system. Both have been eminently successful. He holds the appointment of court pianist to the Emperor of Austria, and the title of "Royal Prussian Professor." Scharwenka is considered one of the modern school of German musicians. Among his compositions is found a most effective symphony which has been heard here with the New York Philharmonic Society, when under the direction of Theodore Thomas; many quartets, trios, concertos, a violin sonata, 'cello sonata, and many piano pieces.³⁴⁷

Scharwenka's connection to musical life in Europe and New York, and the number of accomplished piano students who studied with him would seem to assure his success and his longevity. Yet, this was not the case. Beside the performance of excerpts in Scharwenka's concerts, *Mataswintha* received only one orchestral reading in Berlin, a premiere in Weimar, an orchestral reading in New York and a single performance at the Metropolitan Opera. Other performances announced in the reviews did not occur. While the music dramas of Richard Wagner were gradually established in the canon of works undertaken by the major opera houses, *Mataswintha*, grounded in Wagnerian tradition, failed to take hold.

The highly respected conductor, Walter Damrosch, whose father Leopold brought authentic interpretations of Wagner's music dramas to the Metropolitan Opera, and who, himself, was a constant interpreter of Wagner in his own short lived opera company, could not engender public enthusiasm for *Mataswintha*. Given the success of the initial performance, it would follow as a matter of course that the opera could be given on a tour that included Wagner's works. Anton

³⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 497-498.

Seidl, a “direct descendent” of Wagner, who led his own authentic Wagner performances, had warmly welcomed Scharwenka into New York’s musical society, and had conducted Scharwenka’s debut concert on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera, died in 1898, scarcely a year after the New York performance of *Mataswintha*. In spite of Scharwenka’s association with Seidl, *Mataswintha* fell by the wayside.

During Scharwenka’s lifetime, he was known as a successful composer, as noted in *Peterson Magazine*:

Herr Scharwenka first became known from Maine to California through his *Polish Dances*, long before he visited this country. They were universally played on every conceivable instrument, and no piano student’s repertory was considered complete without the *Polish Dances*. This may be easily credited since there are said to have been no less than a million and a half copies sold in the United States alone.³⁴⁸

After the New York performance, and the initial buzz surrounding the event, Scharwenka let *Mataswintha* run its course, with performances of the *Overture* in a concert arrangement, and scenes, as he could present them. It would seem that he was happy with the concert performances of the excerpts, and never wished to revise the opera to see if it would be better received a second time. With Scharwenka’s death in 1924, the opera fell into obscurity.

As quoted in *The Neue Berliner Musikzeitung*, *Mataswintha* “follows along Wagnerian lines and while not expanding on them does continue them in a highly flattering manner in as far as the composer does not fall into a creative swoon and force out unmelodic floods of sound, but truly engulfs the ear with waves of beautiful melodies that can even touch the heart.”³⁴⁹ William James Henderson’s commentary from the *New York Times* was to the point when he wrote that:

... There are no places in *Mataswintha* where the imagination may pause in the contemplation of pure, sculpturesque beauty, as in the love song of Siegmund... the essentially lyric element is deficient in this score. It is all musical bustle, hurry, push, aggression. It lacks contrast; it lacks broad elementary tints... The technique [sic] of his art Mr. Scharwenka knows thoroughly, and he handles the orchestra with a firm hand. But, if the truth must be told... *Mataswintha* is not an inspiration. There is no echo in it of an overflowing imagination. It is admirably made, and it

³⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 497-498.

³⁴⁹ “Xaver Scharwenka” in *Mittheilungen der Musikalienhandlung* (October 1894), pp. 1262-1263.

commands respect. But it does not melt or thrill, and one goes away from the opera house with only the conviction that he has heard the result of earnest effort on the part of an aspiring composer.³⁵⁰

Scharwenka wholeheartedly embraced Wagner's style and used it as a template for his own work, as Wagner had embraced the styles of composers who preceded him. Wagner composed *Rienzi* in the mold of Meyerbeer's work, and *Der fliegende Holländer* in the tradition of Weber before he solidified the music drama genre for which he would be remembered.³⁵¹

Simply stated, the style of music drama that Wagner brought to the stage included the adaptation of Germanic legend, epic poems or historical accounts set to continuous music. Wagner uses *Leitmotifs*, musical motives representing characters, situations, and plot elements, composed in a manner that allows them to be easily combined as the dramatic action unfolds.

Scharwenka adopted this plan of attack, and given the model, it should have been more successful. He chose an historical topic, related in a highly respected historical novel, set to a solid *libretto*. He composed continuous music with the use of leitmotifs to show interaction and reflect the dramatic development of the plot. But it wasn't Wagner. It was more of what the public was used to, and in the case of the burgeoning supply of new works, the public wanted innovation. If they wanted to see a Wagnerian music drama, they would go to a production of *Die Walküre*, or any other work composed by the master. The public seemed content with what they had and didn't necessarily want more of the same. Henry Edward Krehbiel wrote in his book *Chapters of Opera*:

Under the circumstances it may be the course of wisdom to avoid an estimation of the opera's merits and defects and to record merely that it proved to be an extremely interesting work and well worth the trouble spent upon the production. Under different circumstances it might have lived the allotted time upon the stage, which, as the knowing know, is very brief in the majority of cases.³⁵²

³⁵⁰ Henderson, Review "Mataswintha," p. 8.

³⁵¹ J. Peter Bukholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music* eighth edition (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010, p. 693.

³⁵² Krehbiel, *Chapters of Opera*, p. 263-264.

In reviewing Scharwenka's work in *Mataswintha*, his songs, and his church music, one can observe that his style follows the conventions of the period. His work is accessible to the ear and the mindset of the listener, but that's where it ends.

His obituary in *The Musical Times* reads:

Xaver Scharwenka, who died in December 1924, at the age of seventy-four. He was universally considered one of the leading pianists of his time. His tone, it is said, was beautiful and his interpretations in every school of pianoforte music were those of a musician. As a composer he won prominence with his four Concertos, and his opera *Mataswintha*, but the public knew him by his *Polish Dances*, which could be described as the *C sharp minor Prelude* of their day. To pianoforte students his name is everywhere familiar on the covers of 'editions' and books of studies.³⁵³

Is the course *Mataswintha* took after its premiere a loss to the musical community? I think not. Scharwenka provided a work that was enthusiastically received, decidedly a successful first effort, but it was obvious that it was not a work that bore repetition. It serves as a work that shows a fine composer's versatility and ability to work in the compositional footprint of Wagnerian music drama, but not with the same results. In his research document, Michael Mihalyo quotes Charles Rosen stating that, 'the history of music proceeds by revaluation.'³⁵⁴ I believe that *Mataswintha* is a work with some merit, a curiosity, perhaps, certainly worthy of study and perhaps exploration for an historical performance, especially by the Scharwenka enthusiasts in Germany, but not worthy of inclusion into the standard repertory.

³⁵³ Xaver Scharwenka, Obituary in *The Musical Times*, Volume 66, No. 985 (March 1, 1925), p. 268.

³⁵⁴ Michael P. Mihalyo, Jr., *The Life and Keyboard Works of Franz Xaver Scharwenka*, p. 117.

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