# 3
# Wagner, 1880–83

On the morning of Tuesday, 9 March 1880, Humperdinck completed the *Serenade* in C major for male chorus. He visited the Naples aquarium that afternoon. Then he made a fateful decision and, braving dust storms, walked to the Villa d'Angri which overlooks Posilipo.[1] This was the winter refuge of the ailing Richard Wagner, now at work on the orchestration of *Parsifal*. A knock at the door produced the inevitable answer:

> 'The Master is not at home to visitors…'
>
> I doffed my hat and gave the servant who had delivered this less than encouraging piece of information one of my cards, on which the resounding phrase 'Member, Order of the Holy Grail' was inscribed under my name. Then I wound my way back down Villa d'Angri's verdant garden path, half-disappointed and half-relieved, as if I'd managed to avoid a great danger. It had struck me as an audacious idea in the first place […]. With a sigh I took a last look at the achingly beautiful blue of the bay of Naples which lay spread before me. As I opened the iron gate, I suddenly heard hurried steps and laboured breathing.
>
> 'The Master asks that you come up'.
>
> Within half a minute I was at the door and in as much time again I stood in a dimly lit chamber scrutinised by a pair of large and pensive eyes. I bowed as well as my etiquette teacher at the Royal School of Music in Munich had taught me and the severity in the Master's face dissolved into an indulgent smile.
>
> 'What are you doing in Naples, Sir Knight of the Grail? How do you come to be in Italy, and so far from home?'
>
> I briefly explained the reasoning behind my Italian trip and the arrangement of the travel scholarship, of which he wanted to hear more.
>
> 'How curious', he exclaimed. 'What can a young musician possibly learn in Italy these days? Tempi passati! At home there is plenty to do and to learn.

[1] He had apparently considered visiting Wagner for a number of days previously. Hans Stich, one of his companions, later recalled: 'The usually calm Humperdinck had lately been somewhat excited. Even the question of which suit he should wear for the great Master occupied him. In the end I had to lend him a pair of black trousers': *cf.* 'Erinnerungen an Engelbert Humperdinck', *Münchener-Augsburger Abendzeitung*, No. 429, 12 October 1921.

> And how very, very much we need just such a scholarship – it could be better used to underwrite visits to my Festival!'[2]

The entrance of Cosima Wagner and her three eldest daughters brought the interview to a close, but not before Wagner invited Humperdinck for a return visit, as 'he might learn something quite new'.[3]

This narrative, intended for the readers of Vienna's *Die Zeit* almost a quarter-century after Wagner's death, is a selective account – the major part of the artistic discussion, which lasted thirty minutes,[4] does not appear. A letter written to Oskar Merz a month after the visit gives a different impression, one that was not tailored for posterity.

> Unfortunately he [Wagner] has not yet recovered from his last illness and this gave his thoughts a pessimistic cast. He said pointedly that he had given up hope of finding those who were called to succeed him after his death. It was interesting to hear his observations on the state of art today, concert life, conservatoires and especially the Royal School of Music in Munich, of which I have some experience. He does not think much of Rheinberger's talent. He said, 'Rheinberger? What can he actually do? Give him something to conduct, a Haydn symphony – then you will get an earful!' […]
>
> Apropos the expression 'pigsty' which he used in connection with the condition of music schools – this had better remain our secret. It is an accurate description in more than one case but could easily be misunderstood, so please keep it to yourself. R[ichard] W[agner]'s manner of conversation is certainly vastly different from Rheinberger's. But, after all, according to the B[ayreuther] Bl[ätter], R[ichard] W[agner] is a Master and the other only a 'Professor'.[5]

The reality of a Wagner capable of such pettiness softened over the years into the idealised, amiable Master of the *Die Zeit* article. In an interview given by Humperdinck in 1898 this process was still short of completion:

> 'How odd', he [Wagner] said, 'that we in Germany persist in the deluded belief that there is anything left in Italy for our young musicians to learn, whereas the Italians, as soon as they come of age, are packed off to the bosom of Germany, the mother of music.[6] If old Verdi, who could well afford it, would set up a fund to send young Italians to, for example, Bayreuth' – at the words

[2] Engelbert Humperdinck, 'Parsifal-Skizzen: persönliche Erinnerungen an Richard Wagner und die erste Aufführung des Bühnenweihfestspiels', *Die Zeit*, Nos. 1735, 1738 and 1744, 1907; republished Degen, Siegburg, 1947, p. 4.

[3] *Ibid*., p. 5.

[4] Letter to Johannes Degen, 27 March 1880: *cf.* Humperdinck, *Briefe*, Vol. I, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

[5] Letter to Oskar Merz, 3 April 1880: *cf. ibid.*, p. 112.

[6] The day before this conversation took place, a young boy in Posilipo celebrated his fifth birthday. Franco Alfano, best known for his completion of Puccini's *Turandot*, did indeed pursue his studies in Leipzig and Berlin.

> 'for example' he made a revealing grimace – 'it would not surprise me at all, I would think it quite appropriate'.[7]

Wagner would remain an enigma for a time. Sicily, the next station on Humperdinck's travels, was a salutary shock to his northern-honed senses. From Palermo he wrote Gertrud Humperdinck:

> In the distance the endlessly deep blue ocean, whose intense colour darkened everything else, then the friendly city, almost too bright for the eyes, on the left and right high, steep rock faces that plunge directly into the sea and between them the loveliest, most fruitful valley with forests of oranges and lemons, blooming almond trees, voluptuous grape arbours […].[8]

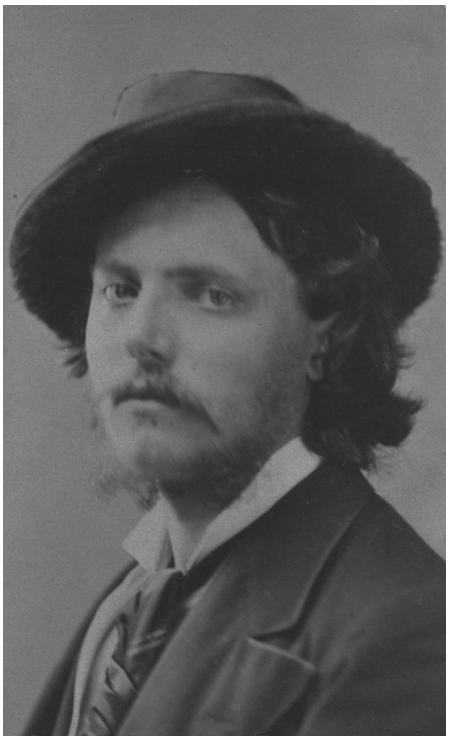
His interest in cultural relics grew. The progression and fusion of Hellenic, Roman, early Christian, Norman and Arabic influences stimulated him in a way that nothing on the mainland could match:

> In some churches Gothic is mixed with Arabian style, that is, they were mosques for a time and then later transformed back into churches. […] The striking mixture of dour northern strength and boldness with cheerful southern exuberance gave my powers of imagination no rest; as I viewed the porphyry sarcophagi of the Norman princes with their peculiar inscriptions, I swore that if I ever have the chance to study Sicilian history of the period, I might discover that once a Friedrich or a Roger had a beautiful blonde daughter who loved a fiery Sicilian or an even-more-fiery Saracen, and as punishment, was doomed to wander the operatic stages of nineteenth-century Germany forever.[9]

A journey to Catania, with a pilgrimage to Villa Bellini, involved a mule-driven post-coach replete with first- and second-class compartments. The terrain was desolate and danger from bandits so real that armed carabinieri rode behind. When approaching Syracuse, Humperdinck rejected the proffered hackney-carriage in order to experience his arrival in that ancient Greek city on foot. Soon he was hopelessly lost and crashing through the underbrush in the moonlight which had moments before seemed so picturesque. With luck he stumbled upon a friendly carabiniere. 'Upon reaching the hotel we ascertained that we had both spent the same amount – for the carabiniere as for the cab'.[10]

As expected of tourists in Syracuse, the young men descended into the catacombs where St Paul had once preached. Then they made the climb to the Theatre of Dionysus:

[7] Neitzel, *loc. cit.*, p. 78.
[8] Letter to Gertrud Humperdinck, 28 March 1880: *cf.* Wolfram Humperdinck, *op. cit.*, p. 90.
[9] *Ibid.*, *cf.* Wolfram Humperdinck, *op. cit.*, p. 91.
[10] *Ibid.*, *cf.* Wolfram Humperdinck, *op. cit.*, p. 93.



*Humperdinck photographed in Messina, Italy, 1880*

> This theatre is the largest and best-preserved of the Greek era. Hewn out of solid rock it ascends fifty steps in a half-circle. As it had lain a long while in disuse and grass has grown over everything, a clever magistrate of Syracuse had the whimsical idea to lease it as a donkey pasture. So these delightful creatures munch clover and thistles in the balcony, orchestra and even on stage, and generally comport themselves in donkey-like fashion.[11]

As the little band wound their way back to their starting point, the port of Taormina, the weather worsened. Sky and sea turned a uniform grey. Humperdinck sat in his hotel room sipping hot milk against a cold, his friends having all left for the mainland. A month was left in which to do the composing he had been unable to do in the busy tourist centres thus far. Lonely hillsides provided the privacy he needed to sketch out three movements of his incidental music to *The Frogs*:

> As he laboured diligently at the 'Muse-fugue' on the solitary Monte Ziretto, he experienced a sudden interruption: he glanced up to see himself surrounded by armed bandits that were approaching threateningly. He had enough presence of mind to shout 'artista!' whereupon the men moved on, leaving him, unmolested, to his reveries.[12]

[11] *Ibid*., *cf.* Wolfram Humperdinck, *op. cit*., p. 95.
[12] *Ibid*., p. 96.

Ample time to reflect also led to more philosophical pursuits. Humperdinck wrote to Hermann Wette:

> As Goethe once felt himself moved to aesthetic speculation by the art and natural beauty of Italy (which influenced a not unimportant area of his spiritual creation), so have questions occurred to me, though in a wholly different area, the answers to which I have always for various reasons deferred to some later time.
>
> Today's solely, truly productive art, namely music, has hitherto lacked a universally valid and accepted aesthetic. This is no actual defect in itself, because the latter can only reasonably appear once the former has a certain phase of existence behind it and has ceased to be productive. Practice must necessarily precede theory. If a particular academic theorist cannot await the measured flow of artistic development, then he can cause only mischief and confusion: on one side the creative artist shows no desire to regulate himself according to such guidelines, on the other the dear public does not know to whom to turn, the learned theorist or the 'frivolous' practitioner.[13]

Humperdinck resolved that he would formulate his own answer to the 'particular academic theorist', Viennese critic and aesthetician Eduard Hanslick, whose popular treatise *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* had undergone five editions since its publication in 1854. The bare outlines of the literary proposal were sent to Wette:

> On 'Tone-Painting'
>
> An attempted solution to the problem posed by Prof Dr Ed. Hanslick of Vienna.
>
> Introduction: definition of tone-painting as the manufactured depiction by musical means in artificially arranged forms (tone-poems) which convey the inner poetry (either directly through hearing or indirectly through association of ideas) of externally perceptible models from humanity and from nature. Hanslick's contention of the impossibility or senselessness of this 'anti-art' (*On the Beautiful in Music*).
>
> Sensory reactions to light and sound, both physiological and psychological and the relation of one to the other. Sensory reactions to sound and light and their effect on the mind of the composer, first directly – through their action on the membrane of the ear, then indirectly – through association of ideas, the fashioning of these impressions into an artistically organised composition.
>
> Tone-painting in relation to visual art (their points of contact – through the association of ideas; their points of divergence – through natural differences of modes of perception and treatment). The difference of Classical from Romantic music, not depictive, beauty solely a product of form (from whence the expression: architecture – frozen music; music – fluid architecture) and

[13] Letter to Hermann Wette, 4 February 1880: *cf.* Humperdinck, *Briefe*, Vol. I, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

> therefore commended by Hanslick. History of tone-painting and instrumental music from Beethoven to Wagner (so-called Romanticism) and their future.[14]

Humperdinck would develop the outline (the scope of which was properly termed 'colossal'[15] by Wette) over the next two years, an artistic credo that did not grow beyond torso form. The particular importance of the short document is that it demonstrates that Humperdinck had now philosophically, if not yet musically, identified himself with Richard Wagner.

He embarked on 22 April bound for Naples. On 27 April Wagner was not to be disturbed. But on Sunday afternoon, 2 May, Humperdinck was given a warm reception and strolled through the villa gardens with the Wagners. A trip to the Naples Conservatory was planned for the next day. Afterwards he met Joseph Rubinstein, Wagner's loyal house-pianist.[16] Rubinstein's devotion to Wagner was so intense that it could alienate even other Wagnerians, as the composer Wilhelm Kienzl would experience.

> I visited Joseph Rubinstein. We took a stroll and talked about music, and Robert Schumann in particular. I was a warm admirer of this worthy Master and had no particular reason to hide the fact. Here I ran up against an unexpected wall, a passionate hatred that left me speechless. He described Schumann's emotions as 'counterfeit and deceitful', and I disagreed, citing the noble song-cycle 'Frauenliebe und Leben' […] and the most beautiful of the piano works. This only served to enrage him. His face turned purple and he spat, 'You are no sincere admirer of Master Wagner!'
>
> This I could not suffer quietly. 'I will not be influenced by this kind of browbeating', I replied, 'and am perfectly capable of formulating my own opinions. You, sir, neither feel nor understand the profundities of Schumann's art.' He answered, 'Do you not know that I have prepared a long article attacking your Robert Schumann for the next *Bayreuther Blätter?*' This, he apparently thought, would silence me, but I could not resist telling the bigot what I thought of his behaviour: 'Wagner may judge Schumann as he pleases – he certainly does not need anyone's help. But I advise you to beware of those artists whose admiration of Wagner has not blinded them to all other

[14] *Ibid.*: *cf.* Wolfram Humperdinck, *op. cit.*, p. 115. The description of architecture as 'frozen music' was originated by Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (*Zur Philosophie der Kunst*, 1802–3).

[15] Letter from Hermann Wette, 10 April 1880: *cf.* Humperdinck, *Briefe*, Vol. I, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

[16] Rubinstein (1847–84), a distant cousin of the composer Anton Rubinstein, had studied with Liszt in Weimar. A personal crisis occurred when he read Wagner's tract *Judaism in Music*. Arriving spiritually exhausted in Triebschen in 1872, he had been with the family ever since. The Wagners, for their part, vacillated between genuine affection and an uneasiness that the theoretical pariah should have ended up on their doorstep. But Rubinstein made himself invaluable. As copyist he helped with *Die Walküre* and *Götterdämmerung* and he was responsible for piano reductions of *Tannhäuser* (1876 version), the *Grosser Festmarsch* for the centenary of American independence (1876), *Siegfried-Idyll* (1878) and *Parsifal* (1882).

art; they might be tempted to stone you!' The deeply affronted Rubinstein then betrayed all this to Wagner.[17]

This extreme side of Rubinstein's nature, which would compel him to take his own life shortly after Wagner's death, was mercifully spared Humperdinck. Rubinstein began the friendship by helping the new arrival find rooms in Posilipo and introducing him to two further Wagnerian regulars, the painter Paul von Joukowsky[18] and the composer Martin Plüddemann.[19]

On Saturday, 8 May, Humperdinck was invited to dinner at Villa d'Angri. Wagner was in especially good spirits. After the meal he announced that festivities for his 67th birthday on 22 May would include the first performance of the closing scene of Act I of *Parsifal*. After parts were assigned and staging discussed, Wagner took his newest disciple aside.

'Young friend, what would you think of coming to Bayreuth? There is plenty for you to do and you might find it diverting'.

Who could be happier than I at that moment? Sooner than I dared hope, a dream had become reality. I joyfully answered yes; then the work to be done was discussed. Rubinstein would arrange the piano-vocal score of *Parsifal*, and I would prepare a copy of the full score for ready use and help organise the performance of the Sacred Play.

'You see, dear boy', added Wagner, 'the great old masters of painting had to begin by grinding colours before they were allowed to paint on their own'.

'Good', I rejoined, 'I'll come as a colour grinder', and said good night to Wagner and family. Then Plüddemann, Rubinstein and I went out into the moonlight, each full of impressions of the unforgettable evening and expectations of future pleasures. As we came to the gate, a well-known voice sang quietly from above:

'Drei Knäblein, jung, schön, hold und weise begleiten euch auf eurer Reise …'[20] It was the Master sending his last greeting of the evening from the top floor of the villa.

'Auf Wiedersehen', we chimed back in the same fashion. 'Auf Wiedersehen'![21]

[17] Wilhelm Kienzl, *Meine Lebenswanderung. Erlebtes und Erschautes*, Engelhorn, Stuttgart, 1926, pp. 88–89.

[18] Joukowsky (1845–1912) was the offspring of a German mother and a Russian father who was a former tutor to Czar Alexander II and a friend of Goethe. The younger Joukowsky's charm won him friends among even the most urbane of Europe's intellectuals, including Liszt, Renoir and Turgenev. Providentially, the studio he and Henry James shared was within walking distance to the Villa d'Angri. On 18 January 1880 he paid the Wagners a visit and was at once adopted into the family's closest circle. James, who was especially horrified by Cosima, decamped quickly, worried that his friend's slender talent would be crushed under the Wagnerian juggernaut.

[19] Plüddemann (1854–97) was a poet and composer who revered Karl Loewe, the master of the Ballade, and produced eight volumes of his own Ballades and Lieder. His texts, chosen from sagas and medieval sources, and his 'orchestral' piano accompaniments revealed a Wagnerian influence.

[20] *The Magic Flute*, Act 1, No. 5.

[21] Humperdinck, 'Parsifal-Skizzen', *loc. cit.*, pp. 6–7.

Another member of the household at this time was Siegfried Wagner's tutor, the 23-year-old philosopher Heinrich von Stein,[22] who filled a void in the Wagner entourage left empty by the departure of the disillusioned Friedrich Nietzsche. The woman who had brought him to Wagner's attention, Baroness Malwida von Meysenbug,[23] was also invited to the birthday festivities.

The next two weeks were characterised by frenzied activity. Rehearsals were sandwiched between a hectic programme of sightseeing, swimming expeditions and visits to the theatre. Humperdinck still found time to refine his grasp of Italian grammar (languages would always come easily to him) and begin reading the works of Schopenhauer.

On Monday, 17 May, another dinner was given at Villa d'Angri. New to the proceedings was sculptor Fritz Hartmann from Munich. Wagner was suffering from stomach trouble but before retiring early he played a favourite linguistic game with his guests, whom he had now taken to calling the Society of Grail Knights. Each surname in turn was examined for possible derivations and meanings. Humperdinck wrote his father:

> He [Wagner] asked me suddenly if I knew what the name Humperdinck meant. When I answered yes and told him what I knew, he said, 'That is correct, except Hubert does not stem from Huntbert, but from Hugbert. In Old German Hug means wit, understanding or spirit, and devolving further becomes Humberting, 'son of the famous spirit', which is a rather different thing than 'son of the famous dog' ['Sohn des Hundberühmten'].[24]

Nerves were frayed before the birthday. Cosima Wagner's diary records five rehearsals the previous day and a sleepless night due to the hammering and pounding of gardeners and decorators.[25] The morning of the appointed day was sunny. Lunch at 1.00 was followed in leisurely stages by coffee (serenaded by Pepino, Joukowsky's young Neapolitan ward), rest, a walk and an excursion to the sea. There five boats were waiting. Coloured flares were lit and the company rowed out into the bay under a full moon. The sky over Castellammare was lit by fireworks. Vesuvius belched smoke in dramatic fashion. Pepino sang folksongs to mandolin accompaniment, echoed by the young voices of Lulu, Boni, Lolch, Fidi (Daniela, Blandine, Isolde and Siegfried respectively) and Eva.[26]

[22] 1857–87.

[23] Journalist, feminist and democrat, Meysenbug (1816–1903) had known Wagner since they met in London in 1855, he in exile from Dresden, she from Berlin. Her circle of friends included Garibaldi, Liszt, Mazzini and Nietzsche.

[24] Letter to Gustav Humperdinck, 4 July 1880: *cf.* Humperdinck, *Briefe*, Vol. I, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

[25] Entries for 21 and 22 May 1880; *cf.* Cosima Wagner, *Die Tagebücher*, Vol. II (1878–1883), ed. Martin Gregor-Dellin and Dietrich Mack, Piper, Munich, 1977, p. 535.

[26] Martin Plüddemann, 'Eine Geburtstagsfeier in Neapel', Joseph Kürschner, *Wagner-Jahrbuch,* Vol. I,

On returning to the brilliantly lit salon where a buffet was prepared, the guests saw the gifts, among them a life-sized portrait of Cosima Wagner and 67 rose bushes, their pots decorated with depictions of events from each year of Wagner's life. The company then removed to the music room. Humperdinck wrote:

> The [sun's] departing rays bathed mountains and coast in a glory of drunken beauty as the first bars of the transformation music began. The girls, splendidly attired, sat in a row to the right of Rubinstein who was at the piano. Their young faces shone with anticipation and excitement. Across from them stood Plüddemann and your humble servant, each clutching their Grail Knight parts. In the background were the listeners; Frau Cosima Wagner with her son, Siegfried, and at her side Joukowsky and Hartmann. In the middle of the circle sat Wagner, a music stand with the *Parsifal* sketches in front of him, from which he sang and conducted – soloist, Kapellmeister and stage director in one person. In his not large but focused and penetrating voice (at home in all registers), he knew how to play each dramatic episode in the most effective manner; whether it be the admonition from Gurnemanz, Amfortas' lament for his lost holiness, or Titurel's sombre pronouncements from the grave. At intervals came the angelic sounding voices from above, alternating with the somewhat raw tones of the knights and pages. If a soprano missed an entrance, or a tenor was conspicuous by his absence, the Master came to the rescue and led us through to the end without any major disasters.
>
> The sky was dark as the last strains of 'blessed in faith' quietly faded. All were silent, carried away as if a higher plane had been revealed to them for a time. Then the hush dissolved into spontaneous enthusiasm.
>
> 'Well, children, you can be pleased with me', the gratified Master smiled, 'I was not entirely senile when I wrote that. Now, outside you go. We need fresh air.' We all streamed into the garden, where refreshments awaited, and the intoxicating, balsamic scents of the night commingled with lute songs from the faraway shore.[27]

Secure in the knowledge that he would find a welcome in Bayreuth in a little over six months' time, Humperdinck left Posilipo and spent eight days lingering in Capri, Pompeii and Sorrento with his Grail companions. On 6 June he entered Rome. The heat was excessive, and most of his former acquaintances had fled the city. He at once traded his attic room at the Caffè Greco for something cooler and, after renting a piano, settled into a routine to deal with the heat and the solitude. During the day he remained indoors and worked on the Act I of *The Frogs*, or sometimes visited a cool museum.

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Kürschner, Stuttgart, 1886, p. 91. *Cf.* Friedrich Glasenapp, *Das Leben Richard Wagners*, Vol. VI, Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig, 1911, p. 343, and Malwida von Meysenbug, *Der Lebensabend einer Idealistin*, Schuster & Loeffler, Berlin, 1898, p. 154.

[27] Humperdinck, 'Parsifal-Skizzen', *loc. cit.*, pp. 5–6.

Evenings were spent at the German Embassy, where Ambassador Keudell sponsored a series of ambitious musical soirees. But Humperdinck now found it difficult to concentrate on great art, or even his own work: the Italian stay had now lasted almost a year and he was homesick for familiar climes and faces.

> Last night I was at the Tiber. The sun was just setting and the sky was the bluest I have ever seen. Magnificent boughs were hung with bright lanterns, under which a colourful crowd jostled by or simply sat on their doorsteps and talked or jested. I leaned against the rampart of the bridge for over half an hour just enjoying the charming tableau. When I finally set off for home I had a rare feeling of absolute peace. But wait! One wish remains unfulfilled. […] Every time I come across something beautiful I think: Mama should be here, or this would please Papa, or Adelheid would have loved that![28]

As soon as Act I was fully sketched in early July, Humperdinck travelled homeward through Switzerland, crossing the Gotthard Pass on foot. At Lindau he entered Germany. He reached Munich on 25 July and was welcomed by the freshly minted Doctor of Medicine, Hermann Wette. The two spent a week hiking in the Black Forest, after which they headed north for the Rhineland, arriving in mid-August. The family celebrated the engagement of Adelheid and Hermann Wette and afterwards packed Wette off to Vienna to complete his studies. The appearance of Edmund van der Straeten, an acquaintance from the Cologne student days and presently cello teacher to fifteen-year-old Max Humperdinck, was providential. Though forced by realities to become a businessman, Edmund van der Straeten's keen interest in things musical provided Humperdinck with the valuable confidant he had lost on Wette's departure. In the evenings the two sat for hours at a corner table in a local tavern, discussing art, literature and aesthetics of composition, a subject that still occupied Humperdinck's thoughts. He noted 'Thoughts on Tone-Painting' in his diary.

> The essence of tone-painting consists of the depiction of models and situations in nature (including human life) according to musically valid parameters of style; on one hand through more or less authentically imitating particulars in sonic expression, on the other hand through association of reflective or even spontaneous ideas. In the first instance the composer follows his own observations (of storm, wind, waves, thunder, etc.) or certain tacit agreements that have gradually established themselves in the history of our art, especially in opera (forest ambience with horns, pastoral, etc.). The second case is not based on direct aural perception, but on certain stimuli to our inner lives through manifestations (of vision or feeling) from outside forces, whereby a transference of perception takes place from the outer to the

[28] Letter to Gertrud Humperdinck: *cf.* Besch, *op. cit.*, pp. 20–21.

> inner life (examples: lightning in the Pastoral Symphony, the looking-glass in Siegfried). […]
>
> Just as the painter does not slavishly depict surrounding nature in the manner of a photographer (but gives his artistic works far more of his own self), so the tone-painter avoids photography and, where possible, seeks to convey only the feelings which are awakened in him through his surroundings.[29]

The autumn stay in Xanten was not devoted exclusively to cranial pursuits. On 14 October Cologne celebrated the laying of the last stone of its celebrated cathedral, six centuries in the making and the largest Gothic structure in existence. Kaiser Wilhelm I was present for the festivities and Humperdinck was among the throngs of visitors.

The stipend from the Mozart Foundation ended that winter and Humperdinck gave much thought to new sources of income. He settled on trying his luck a third time in competition with other young composers. The Meyerbeer Prize of Berlin required three compositions from applicants: an overture for full orchestra, an eight-voiced vocal fugue on a given theme and a dramatic cantata on the text of Goethe's *Die Fischerin*. The first could be finished quickly. In Munich the production of *The Frogs* was delayed by the death of the director, Hermann von Schmid, who was the instigator of the project. This turn of events left Humperdinck with an overture in progress whose score, retitled *Der Zug des Dionysos* ('The Procession of Dionysus'), he gave to Edmund van der Straeten one evening to have the string-bowings properly marked. Inside the rolled pages Humperdinck had secreted an *Elegy* for cello and piano (now lost) subtitled 'in maudlin remembrance' – a joking reference to the cellist's use of the word 'maudlin' in an earlier disagreement over Mendelssohn.[30] Within three weeks the overture was finished. Though only six minutes long,[31] it was his most ambitious orchestral work to date, scored for strings, double woodwinds, two trumpets, four horns, three trombones, tuba, timpani and tambourine.

On 21 November Humperdinck began to compose the cantata. His diary notes the completion of sketches on 11 December and the beginning of the orchestration the next day.[32] After working through the holiday season he finished the piece on New Year's Day 1881 and upon receiving Wagner's permission for a short delay in taking up his new duties, began the eight-voiced fugue. On 4 January goodbyes were said to family and to Edmund

[29] Diary entries for 13 and 14 September 1880: *cf.* Humperdinck, *Briefe*, Vol. I, *op. cit.*, pp. 127–28.
[30] Besch, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
[31] Noted by Humperdinck on the manuscript (JCS Universitätsbibliothek Frankfurt, Humperdinck-Nachlass, Mus Hs 2079) after a later performance in Bonn.
[32] *Cf.* Humperdinck, *Briefe*, Vol. I, *op. cit.*, pp. 130–31.

van der Straeten, who was soon to exchange Germany and business for England and music.[33]

Humperdinck's journey took him through Cologne, where he visited Ferdinand Hiller, and Bonn, the new residence of Judge Degen. Saturday, 8 January, saw him in Bayreuth where he secured a room at the Black Horse Inn. Two days later he wrote his parents of his arrival:

> This may not be rose-coloured paper, but I write these lines in the rosiest of moods. My reception in Bayreuth has exceeded all my expectations. […] I landed at the 'Black Horse', the next morning left my card at Villa Wahnfried (Wagner's home), and spent the next while walking in the neighbourhood […]. At my return I found, as I expected, an invitation to dine with the Wagners. Now today, quite by accident, was a very important one in the history of the Bayreuth Patrons' Society and the entire board of directors was assembled from far and wide […].
>
> As I entered, Wagner received me with the words, 'Ah, here is our Siegfried from Xanten! My dear fellow, look at you! Where are your beard and curls?' Then he took me by the hand towards the assembled guests: 'Today you are the most important one here; these others I just called up from the street'. These others were Hans von Wolzogen [editor of the *Bayreuther Blätter*], the Mayor of Bayreuth, the banker [Friedrich] Feustel, […] in all some twenty people that he had 'called up from the street'.
>
> Then he pulled me to a sofa in the corner where he asked if all was well, etc., and then said there was something that weighed on his mind and had best be dealt with immediately. He had heard that I was not wealthy (from whom, I do not know) and that since I had come to Bayreuth expressly to help him, he wanted to make sure that I wanted for nothing. So, if I found myself in financial or any other difficulty, I need only come to him and he would approve more funds (though a luxuriant life-style was not exactly what he had in mind). All this he put in a very delicate manner to save me embarrassment. Soon afterwards, Feustel the banker came by and said the Patron's Fund would pay for my upkeep, I need only suggest an amount.
>
> The Master continued in this charming fashion all evening, though his usual penchant for teasing would not be denied. He introduced me to the mayor with the words, 'You know, he has already won thirty-seven prizes', and as I attempted to say, 'Only thirty-five', he said, 'Now, do not get over-excited!' Later, after being drawn into a serious discussion about Hector Berlioz, he left the topic with: 'Well, he cannot compare with two such famous composers as myself and Humperdinck'.[34]

[33] Edmund van der Straeten (1855–1934) moved to London in 1881 and studied at the Guildhall School of Music. In 1889 he began a study of the viola da gamba. He would be an influential cello pedagogue (North-East London Institute) and one of the founding writers of *The Strad* magazine. In addition, he was co-founder of both the Chamber Music Society and the Tonal Art Club, St John's Wood (later the London Musician's Club).

[34] Letter to Gustav and Gertrud Humperdinck; *cf.* Eva Humperdinck (ed.), *Engelbert Humperdinck in*

After moving to spacious new rooms with piano at Angermann's, site of the famous 'Nibelungen Chancellery' in 1876,[35] Humperdinck was ready to begin work. What this entailed is described in a diary entry for 12 January.[36] Starting the day with work on his fugue, he then visited the rehearsal hall of the Bayreuth Amateur Music Society. The conducting position with this orchestra (previously occupied by Anton Seidl, who went on to posts in Leipzig and at the Metropolitan) had been arranged by Wagner, and would give Humperdinck a good grounding in practical music-making (Humperdinck also expanded the society by establishing a mixed chorus). Then came the first of a series of piano lessons for Blandine von Bülow. In the evening he discussed Mozart with Wagner, as the Symphony in E flat major, K184, appeared on the first Amateur Society programme. A routine was established: Wagner coached the fledgling conductor on each new work, and they often played the pieces through together on the piano. Before Humperdinck set off for Angermann's and bed, the first pages of *Parsifal* score (Prelude to Act II) were delivered into his care. These he studied carefully before retiring.

The combination of a stimulating creative environment and hard work seemed to agree with Humperdinck, though living so close to Richard Wagner could also be unnerving. On 13 January Wagner and technical director Karl Brandt went through the Act I Transformation Music, where music and vast yardages of moving scenery had to be co-ordinated. Rubinstein's piano and Brandt's stop-watch were at odds; there was not enough music to last through the scene. Angered by the necessities of turning inspiration into practical theatre Wagner grumbled, 'Try H[umperdinck], he composes like the devil'.[37] Humperdinck, horrified by the impending clash of Master and master-technician, tried humour: 'Of course, we deliver music in bulk or by the yard'.[38] He then earnestly explained to Rubinstein how easily the excerpt could be lengthened by using the score directions 'swelling trombones'

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*seinen persönlichen Beziehungen zu Richard Wagner-Cosima Wagner-Siegfried Wagner dargestellt am Briefwechsel und anderen Aufzeichnungen*, Vol. I: 1880–1896, Görres, Coblenz, 1996, pp. 30–31. The repeated phrase, 'from the street', is first written 'von der Straße', and secondly 'van der straeten' (a play on the Dutch surname of his friend).

[35] Wagner had long depended on copyists, with Wendelin Weissheimer, Carl Tausig, Peter Cornelius, Hans Richter and even Johannes Brahms (*Meistersinger* excerpts for a 1863 concert in Vienna) serving in that function. Now the massive scope of the *Ring* operas made the assistance of copyists even more important. In the autumn of 1872 Anton Seidl, Herman Zumpe, Joseph Rubinstein and Demetrius Lalas began the task, and the 1876 arrivals Felix Mottl, Franz Fischer, and Heinrich Porges completed the roster of what came to be known as the Nibelungen Chancellery.

[36] *Cf.* Engelbert Humperdinck, *Briefe und Tagebücher*, Vol. II (1881–1883), ed. Hans-Josef Irmen, Beiträge zur rheinischen Musikgeschichte, Vol. CXIV, Volk, Cologne, 1976, p. 7.

[37] Diary entry for 13 January 1881, *cf. ibid.*

[38] *Ibid.*

and 'ever-nearing bells' as a basis. Rubinstein, ever alert for violation of the Master's prerogatives, reported this suggestion immediately. Wagner feigned rage: 'What, Humperdinck allows himself a point of view? That will not be tolerated, good sir, you are my slave!'[39]

The actual preparation of the finished score was at once fascinating and puzzling:

> From the Master's hand I received the first sheets of manuscript, lovely thirty-staved Parisian score paper, thickly strewn with lilac-coloured notes. Anyone who has seen an original Wagner score knows how gracefully, with what flair and accuracy (almost as if engraved), the rows of notes are arranged. There are no abbreviations, though that is the common practice. Nothing is left out, not instrumental cues, clefs, indications of mood, or keys: in short, not even the smallest detail is omitted. One would think that this intricate penmanship must be very time-consuming. However, few days went by without several sheets of music-paper – freshly written with the ink still wet – winding their way from Wahnfried to Angermann's in that familiar portfolio. Wagner devoted only a little time each day to the labour of making the full score, but try as I might, I could never keep up.
>
> Soon I found what I thought was the answer to this puzzle, and it lay in Wagner's sketchbook, which I was allowed to see from time to time. This was a sort of miniature score and contained in a nutshell the complete skeleton of the work, divided into two, three or more systems whose edges were covered with mysterious symbols and numbers only understandable to the initiated. These applied not just to details of orchestration, but also the arrangement of the score. The Master would calculate the required number of pages in advance and mark in every single bar-line before he set about writing down a passage of music that was already fully thought-out in his head.[40]

[39] *Ibid*. Several variations of this episode exist. Wolfram Humperdinck (*op. cit.*, p. 111) attributes the very different phrase, 'We do *not* compose music in bulk and by the yard' to Wagner rather than to Humperdinck. Glasenapp, *op. cit*., relates the tale without mentioning the participation of Brandt, Humperdinck or Rubinstein at all.

[40] Humperdinck, 'Parsifal-Skizzen', *loc. cit.*, pp. 7–8. Arthur Abell, an American journalist who lived in Europe from 1890 to 1916, related a discussion between Humperdinck and Wagner which reflects on Wagner's creative process (Arthur M. Abell, *Talks With Great Composers*, Philosophical Library, New York, 1955, pp. 184–86). It purportedly records an interview with Humperdinck in 1905, but the book first appeared fifty years later (reportedly a stipulation of Johannes Brahms, who had been previously interviewed for the collection). A number of disturbing errors give reason to question the accuracy of the quotes attributed to Wagner: Abell cites Humperdinck as saying he arrived in Bayreuth a year earlier than in actual fact, Wagner uses terminology he otherwise never employed ('music dramas' and 'leit-motives'), and the entire conversation is allegedly read verbatim from Humperdinck's 'old diary', which is not to be found in Hans-Josef Irmen's scrupulous compilation of diaries, letters, and documents relating to the Bayreuth period. In spite of its verifiable errors, it represents the longest recorded discussion between Humperdinck and Wagner. An excerpt:

> [Wagner:] One supreme fact which I have discovered is that it is not will-power, but fantasy-imagination that creates. I see in my mind's eye definite visions of the heros [*sic*] and heroines of my music dramas. I have clear mental pictures of them before they take form in my scores, and while I

Humperdinck's learning experience in Bayreuth extended beyond his daytime occupation with the *Parsifal* score:

> Evenings I often spent at Wahnfried, where the Master, surrounded by his intimates, sought recovery from the day's labours in company of the great spirits of the past. He was partial to giving readings from the works of Calderon, Lope de Vega, Shakespeare and Goethe, here and there also presenting a snippet from his substantial autobiography, which still awaits publication. On other evenings music was made. Bach's Preludes and Fugues and Beethoven's Quartets, played by Rubinstein on the piano, were his favourites. In between he might sit down at the piano himself and essay a Ballade by Loewe. Most interesting of all, however, was his performance of whole scenes from Mozart operas, 'Abduction' for example, with exquisite freshness and characterisation.[41]

Wagner attracted learned and often exotic visitors, including his father-in-law Franz Liszt and a corps of talented young conductors whose acquaintance would be useful to Humperdinck in the future. Discussions of Schopenhauer and Kant made an impression on Humperdinck, which he conveyed in letter form. 'I have attempted nothing less than overturning the whole philosophy of art from Aristotle onwards and am building a new system modelled on Kant'.[42] Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Idea* exerted a particular influence, although it was not grafted uncritically into Humperdinck's evolving aesthetic. Humperdinck, a student of ancient-Greek theatre and now involved intimately in the preparation of a

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am holding fast to those mental images, the music – the Leit-motives, themes, harmonies, rhythms, instrumentation – in short, the whole musical structure, occurs to me. […]

Believe me, Engelbert, imagination creates the reality. This is a great cosmic law. […]

In another realm, the greatest of all literary geniuses, Shakespeare, knew this law […]. You will find it in the fifth act, the first scene of *Midsummer Night's Dream*:

The poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.
Such tricks hath strong imagination. […]

When I commenced work on *Rheingold* in 1853, I was lying in bed. I felt suddenly as if I were immersed in a flood of flowing water. I imagined myself lying at the bottom of the Rhine. I could certainly feel and hear the moving, surging water sweeping over me. Musically this took form in the shape of the chord of E flat major, commencing with the low contra E flat in the double-basses. I felt the flowing of the Rhine as a figuration of that triad, surging incessantly with increasing motion, and never modulating through one hundred and thirty-six measures.

[41] Humperdinck, 'Parsifal-Skizzen', *loc. cit.*, p. 8.

[42] Letter to Johannes Degen dated 23 June 1881; *cf.* Humperdinck, *Briefe*, Vol. II, *op. cit*, p. 45.

*Wahnfried intimates, (from left) Richard and Cosima Wagner, Heinrich von Stein, Paul von Joukowsky, and Daniela and Blandine von Bülow. The last photo taken of Wagner in Wahnfried, by Adolf von Gross, 1881*

Wagnerian opera, rejected Schopenhauer's dissociation of music from the visual arts and dance:[43]

> While all other arts achieve an objectification of the will in Schopenhauer's view, music depicts the will itself. However, 'will' according to Schopenhauer is that which Kant calls 'the thing itself', and as such is to be seen as fully independent of our conception; that is without regard for form, namely time and space, and consequently less portrayable (the impersonal God, etc.). For there is no music that is autonomous from temporal succession, and the best one could assert is that it expresses the temporal aspect of the will – which would again be a type of objectification of the will. Therefore, the above Schopenhauerian differentiation between music and the other arts is untenable, as seductive as it may appear.[44]

[43] 'Music is by no means, as are the other arts, the image of a concept; rather an image of the will itself. […] That is the reason that the effect of music is so very much more powerful and pervading that of the other arts, which speak only from shadows while it [music] speaks from substance'. Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Vol. III, *Werke in zwei Bänden*, Vol. I, ed. Werner Brede, Hanser, Munich, 1977, p. 337.

[44] Bernhard Adamy, 'Schopenhauer und einige Komponisten. Rezeptionssätze bei Humperdinck, Schönberg und Webern', *Schopenhauer Jahrbuch*, Vol. LXI (1980), p. 72.

Humperdinck now set down his longest consideration of the subject, entitled 'Transcendental and Aesthetical Principles of the Plastic Arts'. The outline is in four parts, beginning with a review of empirical observations on art from Aristotle to Kant. Second is an inquiry into the natural conditions under which art is made possible, with reference to Darwin. The crucial double role of human instinct and intellect is also examined. The embryonic artistic idea, commonality and specificity of various art forms are investigated in the third section: representative arts are likened to 'sculpture in space', dance is 'sculpture in time and space' and poetry is 'sculpture in causality and time'. This longest section of the outline closes with an examination of 'the three harmonically linked intuitive forms of space, time and causality (and including their mixed forms) in the operas of R. Wagner'.[45] The fourth part deals with music as 'sculpture in time' and proposes to treat 'tone-painting', form, melody and programme music. Humperdinck ends the torso by proposing a new (and prophetic) graphical notation system, with vertical and horizontal increments denoting pitch and duration, respectively.[46]

As evidenced by Cosima Wagner's diaries, the mood at Wahnfried could be whimsical as well as philosophical. After reciting from Goethe's *Egmont*, Wagner solemnly advised Humperdinck to rewrite the text as an opera – while retaining Beethoven's music.[47] When Rubinstein and Humperdinck attempted to sing the seductive tones of the Flower Maidens from Act II of *Parsifal*, the Master's comment was, 'we may not have Fl[ower] Maidens, but at least we have Radish Boys'.[48] In February, Humperdinck wrote to Oskar Merz in Munich:

> Dear Merz,
> I would like to ask a small favour. Perhaps you remember that before my trip to Italy I bought a large black artist's hat (from the shop at the corner of Maffaistrasse and Theaterstrasse). For the first time in a long while I began

[45] JCS Universitätsbibliothek Frankfurt, Humperdinck-Nachlass, B1, 3. A transcription exists in Hans-Josef Irmen, 'Engelbert Humperdinck und sein transzendental-ästhetisches System der Plastik', *Ars musica-Musica scientia. Festschrift Heinrich Hüschen*, ed. Detlef Altenburg, Verlag der Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Rheinische Musikgeschichte, Cologne, 1980, pp. 263–70.

[46] Graphical notation was only one of several progressive ideas that Humperdinck advocated. In 1876 he began a personal campaign to reform the written German language, henceforth in his own correspondence doing away with capitals on nouns and reserving them for proper names (a reform which has still not been adopted) as well as employing simplified spellings. In 1890 he would propose a decimal system for daily time-division (one day equal to ten hours equal to one hundred centi-hours) and the abandonment of the Gregorian Calendar for a year divided into four seasonal parts. It would begin at the shortest day (20 December), which he proposed to celebrate as a fusion of Christmas and New Year (JCS Universitätsbibliothek Frankfurt, Humperdinck-Nachlass, C 54).

[47] Diary entry for 16 March 1881; *cf.* Cosima Wagner, *Tagebücher*, Vol. II, *op. cit.*, p. 711.

[48] Diary entry for 31 March 1881; *cf. ibid.*, p. 720.

> wearing it again. The Master happened to see it yesterday and he suddenly grabbed it and put it on his head, saying that I would simply have to order one just like it for him – this is the hat that embodies his ideal of hatdom and in the future he would wear no other, etc., etc.
>
> Now I have a problem because I do not know the manufacturer: I would be much in your debt if you could either find out the name or go and order the hat for me. The following details will suffice. Type: artist. Size: 57. Colour: black. Material: velour (so stamped inside my hat). Address: Herr Richard Wagner, Bayreuth.[49]

Merz complied and Wagner was pleased.

In spring came the Berlin premiere of *The Ring* directed by Angelo Neumann. An opulent production and the presence of Wagner, Otto von Bismark and the Crown Prince ensured a major social event. Humperdinck made his first visit to the capital city, via Leipzig. After hearing *Die Walküre* and *Siegfried*, Humperdinck and two companions attempted to find a way into the sold-out performance of *Götterdämmerung*. They sought out Wagner backstage.

> When he saw us he cried, 'Ah, children, have you no seats?' and went with us towards the ticket window, where it was impossible to get through. He then motioned to us to follow him – to his reserved box. He went in first and called, 'Just step in here'. At that moment a mighty fanfare erupted from the orchestra and the public stood, waved their handkerchiefs and cheered. Naturally, we stayed in the background until this storm had subsided and the Master, standing at the railing, thanked them with a wave of his hand. Then, without ceremony, he dragged us from our hiding place: 'Come on out, lads, and make yourselves at home', all of which was seen by the public. It did not escape my notice that Cosima, in the next loge, was fixing her spouse with such a punitive glare that he was compelled to explain, 'But we couldn't find any other seats for them'. Minutes before he had coolly acknowledged the frenzied jubilation of the Berlin throng; now a stern look from his wife left him faint-hearted. After the prelude had begun and the public was absorbed in the sweeping mastery of the opening phrases, he collected himself and said to us, 'Well, boys, I see that it will not do. You cannot stand here the whole evening. I will see if I cannot find you some seats'. He went into the next loge and without waiting for an answer as to whether the seats were reserved, said 'You can sit here and make yourselves really comfortable'. We took our places and tried not to notice the half-astonished, half-respectful looks from the inhabitants of the box. We tried immersing ourselves in the music of Act I but could not help thinking thoughts that were at odds with the festival atmosphere. The Master came several times to check if we were comfortable. 'Are you well provided for, lads? How are you getting on?'

[49] Letter to Oskar Merz, 2 February 1881; *cf.* Humperdinck, *Briefe*, Vol. II, *op. cit*, p. 8.

> As I strolled in the garden during the intermission, in an ill-humour from the incident, the guilty conscience of the Master's wife, in the form of Joukowsky, stepped up and tapped me on the shoulder. 'Frau Wagner is crushed that you were forced to leave so abruptly; she would have been happy to have let you stay!' That straw broke the camel's back: it was not enough that I could not be seen at the Master's side in such high society – they also thought I was stupid enough to be fobbed off with this uninspired fairy-tale. Exactly how I replied I no longer remember; suffice it to say that afterwards the Russian count, his mission less than successful, slunk off with his tail between his legs.[50]

For nearly a week after his arrival back in Bayreuth Humperdinck heard nothing from the Wagners. His distaste for the pomp that was increasingly encrusting Wahnfried dated from Wagner's last birthday, when the wealthy guests in their finery were in stiff contrast to the Italian reverie of the year before. On Pentecost Sunday Wagner appeared on his doorstep. 'If you will not come to me, I am forced to come to you!'[51] After a beer downstairs in the pub, Wagner took the young prodigal to visit Wahnfried. The breach was closed.

For a time Humperdinck remained wary of Cosima Wagner. Regular contact with her nineteen-year-old daughter Blandine at piano lessons had, by contrast, engaged his affections: 'The icy cold that had earlier held us apart seems to have been displaced by a beneficial warmth … Well, well – after all, there is more than one way to take an invincible fortress! I was led to understand that the gift of a composition from me would not be amiss … and who could resist that?'[52] The next year saw Blandine's engagement to Count Biagio Gravina, second son of the Sicilian Prince of Ramacca, and Humperdinck would transfer his romantic attentions to the Cologne harpist Brunhilde Böhner.[53]

The arrival of Hermann Levi, the conductor of *Parsifal*, further enriched Humperdinck's circle of acquaintances. Levi looked to his young colleague to prepare the choral forces and help coach the soloists in their difficult roles. The professional relationship developed into friendship when they discovered the other's pleasure in lampooning the Order of the Grail and other sanctimonious worshippers of Wagner. Another arrival at Angermann's was the young lawyer Ernst Hausberg, who had volunteered to copy orchestra parts. A 'Parsifal Chancellery' was taking form.

[50] Letter to Oskar Merz, 13 June 1881; *cf. ibid.*, pp. 40–41.
[51] *Ibid.*, p. 42.
[52] *Ibid.*
[53] Humperdinck helped Böhner gain entry into the Bayreuth orchestra in summer 1882.

On 8 August a telegram from Gertrud Humperdinck arrived; 'Congratulations' was the cryptic message. 'For what?' Humperdinck telegraphed back. The answer came quickly: 'Meyerbeer Prize: 4,500 marks'. He had won his third competition, and celebrated by drinking wine punch until midnight.[54] Yet the prize was problematic: Wagner loathed the memory of Meyerbeer, holding him responsible for his own lack of success as a young composer in Paris some forty years before. Humperdinck later told journalist Otto Neitzel:

> Naturally I had not told Wagner that I had entered the competition, because I, unnecessarily, feared that the name Meyerbeer might anger him. So, as shame-faced as a poor young girl who has become engaged to a wealthy old man, I went to Wahnfried with the news that I had won yet another prize, the Meyerbeer.
>
> 'Non olet, non olet',[55] Wagner said as he lightly patted me on the cheek. 'You see, there are still good judges in Berlin'.[56]

The public had again been spared the petty side of Wagner's character, and Humperdinck's diary entry of 7 August relates the rest of the incident. After congratulations were extended, Wagner commented on Humperdinck's coat, which had been ripped by Wagner's over-eager dogs. The younger man limply suggested 'the dogs congratulated me' before concluding 'your dogs do not like me much'.[57] 'The boorishness of the prize-winner left him [Wagner] beside himself', wrote Cosima Wagner in her diary.[58] Humperdinck tactfully arranged a postponement of the period of travel that the Meyerbeer prize entailed. The next day anger had cooled to mere ridicule: 'At the table Humperdinck's case is still subject for consideration. R[ichard] thinks these prize winnings are sinister, [and] Westphalians a generally curious people […]'.[59]

Living at close distance to Wahnfried exposed Humperdinck to Wagner's personal beliefs. Some of these Humperdinck absorbed – he had considerable arguments with Dr Hermann Wette about vivisection. There is evidence that Humperdinck was also influenced by the anti-Semitism prevalent in Wahnfried (where racial theorist Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau was a welcome house-guest).[60] In several letters, notably those written to confirmed anti-Semites Cosima Wagner, Hans von Wolzogen and Oskar

[54] Diary entry for 5 August 1881; *cf.* Humperdinck, *Briefe*, Vol. II, *op. cit*, p. 48.
[55] 'It does not smell', from the phrase 'Pecunia non olet'; i.e., the value of money is not lessened by its origins.
[56] Neitzel, *loc. cit*., p. 79.
[57] Diary entry for 7 August 1881; *cf.* Humperdinck, *Briefe*, Vol. II, *op. cit*, p. 49.
[58] Diary entry for 7 August 1881; *cf.* Cosima Wagner, *Tagebücher*, Vol. II, *op. cit*., p. 776.
[59] Diary entry for 8 August 1881; *cf. ibid*.
[60] Wagner especially admired Gobineau's *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (1853–55).

Merz, Humperdinck speaks the language of anti-Semitism.[61] These isolated cases are jarring when seen in the context of Humperdinck's enduring friendships with Jews.[62] He never publically repudiated anti-Semitism, as did the Munich composer Max Zenger.[63] Nor did he distance himself from his Jewish friends. Humperdinck's strenuous efforts at keeping Oskar Merz and Hermann Levi from meeting face to face display the young composer's weakness in the face of entrenched prejudice.

The soloists now arrived in Bayreuth. Marianne Brandt and Amalie Materna (Kundry), Hermann Winkelmann, Ferdinand Jäger and Heinrich Gudehus (Parsifal), Emil Scaria (Gurnemanz) and Theodor Reichmann (Amfortas) were schooled in their roles by Humperdinck, Levi, Anton Seidl[64] and Heinrich Porges,[65] who noted of Humperdinck: 'This young musician belongs to the select group of people that I would describe as decent human beings'.[66] In September Humperdinck travelled to Munich and then Xanten for the wedding of Adelheid Humperdinck and Hermann Wette. Back in Bayreuth the next month, on 1 November he saw the Wagners off to Sicily. Just days later Hermann Levi wrote an appeal from Munich:

> All of my attempts to find a well-schooled boys choir for the chorus 'Der Glaube lebt' have foundered. But I do not want to give up hope that we could yet reach our goal. Might not it be possible to put together a choir (sopranos and altos) collected from the schools of Bayreuth [?]. […]
>
> Some girls could also be used, as long as the timbre of the boys' voices comes through. A total of 20–24 boys would do. The matter is very important.
>
> I have already written the Master that I would turn to you. […] Please help![67]

[61] Notifying Merz of his Meyerbeer prize Humperdinck maintained that it was 'fitting that "Wagnerians" always take the Jewish prizes': letter to Oskar Merz, 6 August 1881; *cf.* Humperdinck, *Briefe*, Vol. II, *op. cit*, p. 49.

[62] Favourable impressions of Humperdinck were left by many Jews, spanning roughly fifty years, beginning with Ferdinand Hiller. Three generations of the Porges family testified to Humperdinck's friendship – Heinrich, his daughter and Humperdinck's future librettist Elsa Bernstein-Porges, and granddaughter Eva Bernstein, a frequent chamber-music partner in Humperdinck's last years. Hermann Levi and Arnold Mendelssohn were intimate friends and Humperdinck pupils Oskar Fried, Leo Blech and Friedrich Hollaender each left accounts of Humperdinck's generous treatment.

[63] Zenger wrote: 'In my experience throughout a long life, I have found Jews often more trustworthy than their Christian counterparts' (*Geschichte der Münchener Oper*, ed. Theodor Kroyer, Weizinger, Munich, 1923, p. 459, footnote).

[64] A member of the 'Nibelungen Chancellery', Seidl (1850–98) conducted many Wagner works at the Metropolitan Opera beginning in 1885.

[65] Porges (1837–1900), former editor of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, was a critic (*Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*), a vocal coach at Bayreuth, beginning in 1876, and conductor of the Porges Choral Society in Munich.

[66] Ernst Rosmer, 'Erinnerungen an Engelbert Humperdinck', *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, Unterhaltungsbeilage (28 September 1924).

[67] Letter from Hermann Levi, early November 1881; *cf.* Humperdinck, *Briefe*, Vol. II, *op. cit*, pp. 59–60.

From Cologne came the news that the *Dionysus Overture* had been given its premiere by the Cologne Music Society Orchestra under Humperdinck's former teacher Isidor Seiss (Johannes Degen, Humperdinck's parents and the Wettes had attended). The *Kölnische Zeitung* described the new work as 'wholly in the Wagnerian style'.[68] Ferdinand Hiller had been present and, aware that his former pupil was now employed by Richard Wagner, conspicuously refused to applaud. In Bayreuth, Humperdinck was busily preparing the 100th concert of the Amateur Music Society, which included works by Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn and Mozart. The concert successfully past, he succumbed to a feverish cold that kept him in bed for two weeks.

In the four months that remained before Wagner's return, Humperdinck resolved to create the boys' choir that was required, though Wagner himself had lately approved the addition of women's voices:

> I have found the training of the boys' choir, which will charm the whole world this summer, to be devilishly hard work. It is not easy, what with 40 musically illiterate boys and the difficulty of *Parsifal*, to produce something worthy of a Sacred Festival Play. Things are progressing very slowly.[69]

The effort was soon rewarded. The Wagners arrived from Sicily on 1 May. Wagner was not informed of the boys' existence, a secret that was kept until his 69th birthday celebration on 22 May.

The day began inauspiciously. Pains in his chest kept Wagner in bed and the family was anxious (he had suffered his first major heart attack just two months before). The delay was extended by the surprise visit of Count Gravina, Blandine's fiancé (now referred to by Humperdinck as 'a likeable fellow'[70]). After Wagner had come downstairs and received congratulations and gifts the company removed to the dining table, with the exception of Humperdinck, who was engaged elsewhere:

> The throng [of boys] assembled in the court, from whence they entered Villa Wahnfried through a side door. Felt slippers on their feet, they were led through a suite of rooms up the back stairs to the gallery of the foyer, where they silently regrouped. At the moment the Master seemed ready to accept the felicitations of family and friends, a shower of full voices chorused down into the room: 'Der Glaube lebt, die Taube schwebt, des Heilands holder Bote'.

[68] *Kölnische Zeitung* (11 November 1881). In contrast, Cosima Wagner wrote to her daughter Daniela after Humperdinck played the *Dionysus Overture* at Wahnfried, observing that 'it seemed very Schumannesque': letter to Daniela von Bülow dated 10 February 1881; *cf. Cosima Wagners Briefe an ihre Tochter Daniela von Bülow, 1866–1885*, ed. Max von Waldberg, Cotta, Stuttgart, 1933, p. 137.

[69] Letter to Gertrud Humperdinck dated 1 February 1882; *cf.* Eva Humperdinck (ed.), *Beziehungen*, *op. cit*., Vol. I, p. 49.

[70] Letter to Oskar Merz, 27 May 1882; *cf.* Humperdinck, *Briefe*, Vol. II, *op. cit*, p. 86.

> The glorious tones were greeted with attentive silence. The Master was happily surprised and satisfied to the point that 'Hümpchen' received permission to lead his young troops into the field of coming rehearsals and performances.[71]

The evening entertainments were elaborate, beginning with a Spanish comedy[72] and a four-hand arrangement by Humperdinck of the Scherzo from Wagner's early Symphony in C major. Humperdinck wrote to his parents of the evening's conclusion, a pastiche by Cosima Wagner, acted primarily by the five children and set to a score by Humperdinck which consisted entirely of Wagnerian quotations – from the early *Das Liebesverbot* to the 'Porazzi Theme' which had been composed in Sicily just two months previously:

> Afterwards followed a piece by Frau Wagner called 'Liebesnoth', a dramatised episode from R. Wagner's life. Nine persons were involved, including – me. I have never done any theatre in my life and only consented because no one else in our circle was available for the role of the policeman. It went remarkably well, despite the last-minute notice and frenzied practice. I overacted my policeman so drastically that the entire company could barely contain their laughter when I came on stage and the Master spoke of nothing but the 'divine gendarme'. Then came my 'Fischerlied' sung by the Italian, Pepino, from Naples, who garbled the German text badly. I directed him to sing the 'Horiahoh' with his hands cupped to his mouth, which brought out a characteristic tone colour […]. The evening was the most relaxed and merry that I had ever spent at Wahnfried.[73]

In thanks for his contribution, Cosima Wagner gave Humperdinck a silver-sheathed conducting baton that Wagner had been awarded by the city of Palermo.

The *Parsifal* score had been finished in Sicily on 13 January, but only sent to Humperdinck in instalments for safety's sake (Cosima Wagner having

[71] Humperdinck, 'Parsifal-Skizzen', *loc. cit.*, pp. 9–10.

[72] The author was Calderón according to Humperdinck (letter to Gustav and Gertrud Humperdinck dated 24 May 1882; *cf.* Eva Humperdinck (ed.), *Beziehungen*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 55), but Cervantes as noted by Cosima Wagner (diary entry for 22 May 1882; *cf.* her *Tagebücher*, Vol. II, *op. cit.*, p. 946).

[73] Letter to Gustav and Gertrud Humperdinck, 24 May 1882; *cf.* Humperdinck, *Briefe*, Vol. II, *op. cit*, pp. 84–85. The 'Fischerlied' referred to has since been lost. Entries in Eberhard Thamm, *Der Bestand der lyrischen Werke Engelbert Humperdincks*, two vols., dissertation, Mainz, 1951 (p. 191), in Eva Humperdinck, *Der unbekannte Engelbert Humperdinck. Seine Werke. Engelbert Humperdinck Werkverzeichnis*, Görres, Coblenz, 1994 (p. 97), in Hans-Josef Irmen, *Thematisch-systematisches Verzeichnis der musikalischen Werke Engelbert Humperdincks*, Prisca, Zülpich, 2005 (p. 103), and in John Deathridge, Martin Geck and Egon Voss, *Wagner Werk-Verzeichnis*, Schott, Mainz, 1986 (pp. 564–565, under 'Doubtful Works') underscore the confusion about the piece. Norman Douglas, in *Looking Back*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1934, p. 332), writes about meeting Pepino, who claimed that the song was written for him by Wagner, and in describing it sings 'Ho-ja-Ho! and puts his two hands to his mouth'. That the singer, who had meanwhile forgotten most of the text – and did not read music in any case (Plüddemann, *op. cit.*, p. 90) – was mistaken about the composer of the song is probable.

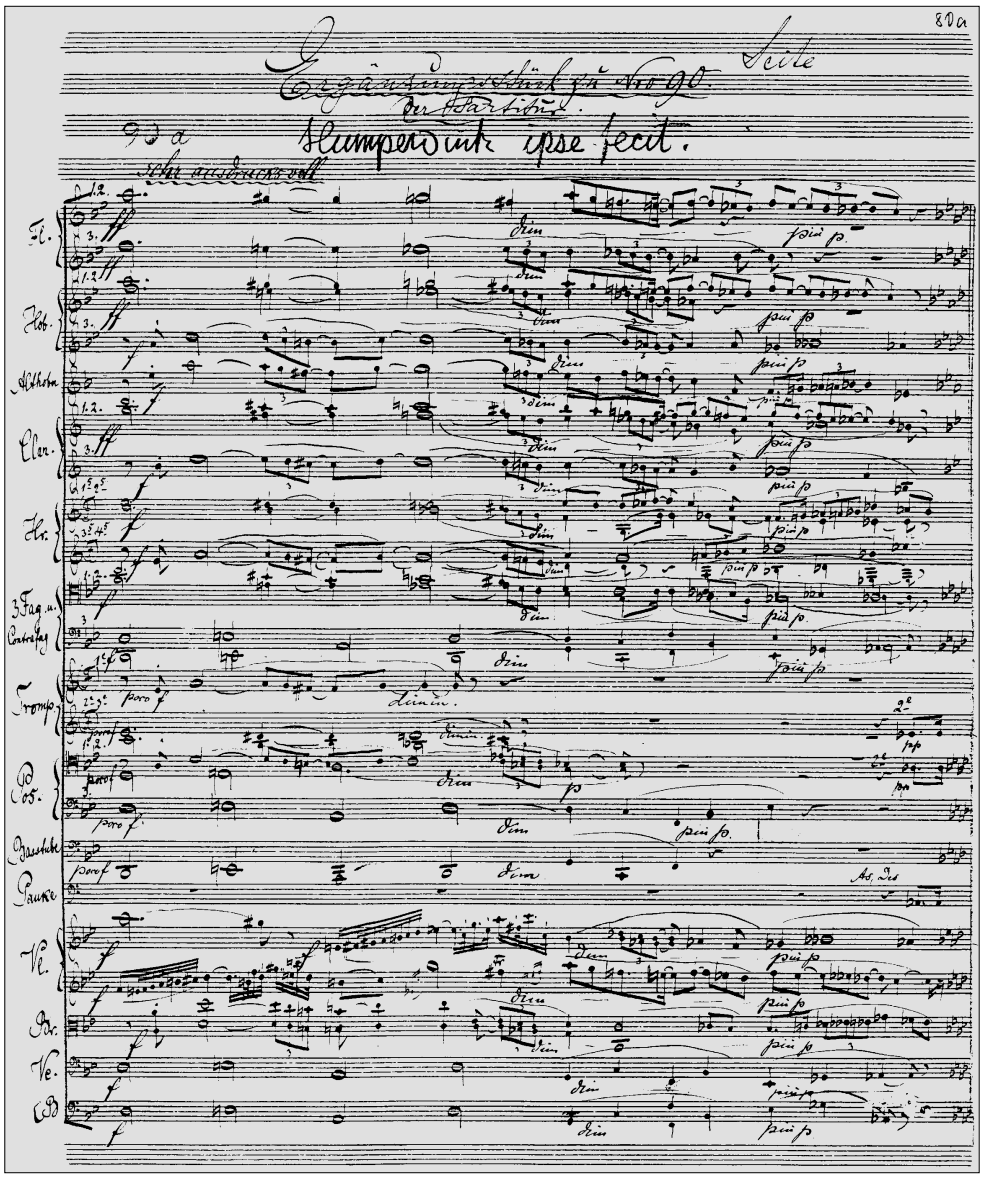
written that 'the mails here are unchanged since Odysseus' time'[74]). Now that the score was complete the technical rehearsals resumed. Complicating these was the death of technical director Karl Brandt, though his place was ably filled by his son Fritz. The impending arrival of orchestra and chorus on 1 July lent an atmosphere of urgency whose peak was reached between 20 and 22 June at exactly the point where Wagner's temper was most volatile. The Transformation Music of Act I was still too short. Wagner's reaction was not anger, as the year before. He simply refused to compose another note. The score was finished and his lieutenants were left to their own devices. Humperdinck wrote:

> I ran home, sketched out some transitional bars, set them into the score and grafted them to the original. Then, full of anticipation, I took the manuscript to the Master. He looked through the pages, gave a friendly nod of his head and said, 'Well, why not?'[75]

The additional bars worked without complication and were played at all sixteen performances of that first summer season. Then Levi lovingly pencilled 'Humperdink [*sic*] ipse fecit' on the insert (*cf.* the facsimile overleaf) and it was retired to the Wahnfried Archives.[76] The necessary adjustments in the scrolling scenery were made before the next festival,[77] but Humperdinck remained justifiably proud of what he maintained was his 'fourth and highest prize' for composition.[78]

On 1 July over a hundred musicians (largely from Levi's Munich Court Orchestra) and choristers arrived in Bayreuth by special train. Angermann's and other establishments were crowded with the new arrivals. The chancellery was also reinforced: Julius Kniese faithfully trailed Wagner writing down his every stage direction and Oskar Merz played one of the

[74] Letter from Cosima Wagner, 28 December 1881; *cf.* Humperdinck, *Briefe*, Vol. II, *op. cit*, p. 63.
[75] Humperdinck, 'Parsifal-Skizzen', *loc. cit.*, p. 11.
[76] The myth that Humperdinck's contribution to *Parsifal* is still in general use has had a long and hardy existence. The facts remain that Humperdinck's own copy of the score was finished in April 1882, sent to Schott and was the basis for the score printed in December of that year. The score used by Levi for the first performances was one copied by Ernst Hausberg. Into this score was placed the extra page that Humperdinck had composed. It was consigned to the Wahnfried Archives when Levi received his copy of the newly printed score from Schott (*cf.* Deathridge, Geck and Voss, *Wagner Werk-Verzeichnis*, *op. cit.*, pp. 545–47). A similar event has added to subsequent confusion. On 28 June the Transformation Music in Act III was also found to be too short. Humperdinck suggested a repetition of Titurel's mourning music, but a simpler remedy was adopted before the premiere as the curtains were closed after the first scene.
[77] It was Wagner's own instruction that the scrolling scenery for the scene be trimmed to a quarter of its former length after the performances of 1882 (*cf.* Julie Kniese, *Der Kampf zweier Welten um das Bayreuther Erbe. Julius Knieses Tagebuchblätter aus dem Jahre 1883*, Weicher, Leipzig, 1931, p. 61).
[78] Hans-Josef Irmen, *Die Odyssee des Engelbert Humperdinck*, Salvator, Kall, 1975, p. 51.




*Humperdinck's* Parsifal *insert in Ernst Hausberg's hand*

offstage bells. Heinrich Porges, titled the 'Flower Father'[79] by Wagner, had the task of training the Chorus of Flower Maidens. Humperdinck, who assisted, found these 'Merry Wives of Klingsor'[80] more congenial than his chorus of boys:

> What I find gives me the most pleasure, though, are the Flower Maidens, with whom I also work. When the highly refined choristers, thirty of the prettiest

[79] Humperdinck, 'Parsifal-Skizzen', *loc. cit.*, p. 10.
[80] Besch, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

> soubrettes, sing 'komm, komm, holder Knabe' in their fresh young voices, I fairly swim in rapture and bliss.[81]

He was also responsible for the off-stage band, and the first general rehearsal revealed the difficulty of making the disparate groups work together:

> That was a chore! As simple as it may look to the uninitiated, the whole thing is quite complex when you look closer. Below, in the bowels of the earth, is the invisible orchestra, a hundred strong. On stage are the Grail Knights, moving in intricate processions, up in the first balcony the middle Chorus of Youths (invisible), five or six balconies higher the boys' choir and up at the top the stage musicians (six trumpets and six trombones) and four bells. All that has to fit into one unified tapestry.[82]

The small town was swollen with visitors by the time of the first performance on 26 July.

> At 4.00 in the afternoon trombone chords announced the beginning of the first performance of *Parsifal*. The public listened to the exalted sounds – the last legacy revealed by the Master to the world, his portrait of a religion of compassion – with solemn emotion. When the curtains opened after the last bars had been played, once more showing the dreamlike, transfigured final tableau to the intoxicated gaze, a storm of enthusiasm broke as has rarely been heard. All called for the creator of the wondrous work, to see him face to face. He did not come.[83]

Wagner was exhausted and ailing. Humperdinck also found the crowds, dignitaries and subsequent fifteen performances wearying (the choristers and brass band were not always up to the high standard of orchestra and soloists). After the final performance, at which Wagner himself took up the baton in the last scene, Humperdinck was ready to leave Bayreuth behind him for a time and take his parents to Italy:

> I went to Wahnfried to say my farewells. There I found the Master surrounded by his artists, who had come for the same reason. Each received a souvenir photograph with a hand-written dedication. When he saw me he hesitated and called, 'You are here, too? You do not get a picture; we will be seeing each other again, soon'.[84]

Humperdinck and his parents left Bayreuth on the last day of August and journeyed southwards through Milan, Verona, Venice, Bologna and Florence to Rome. The ancient and holy city made a deep impression on

[81] Letter to Gustav and Gertrud Humperdinck, 4 July 1882; *cf*. Eva Humperdinck (ed.), *Beziehungen*, *op. cit*., Vol. I, p. 63.
[82] Letter to Gustav and Gertrud Humperdinck, 5 July 1882; *cf.* Humperdinck, *Briefe*, Vol. II, *op. cit*, p. 93.
[83] Humperdinck, 'Parsifal-Skizzen', *loc. cit.*, pp. 11–12.
[84] *Ibid*., p. 12.

Gertrud and Gustav Humperdinck – although bad standards of music and worse weather drove the trio northwards to Genoa at the end of September. From there they travelled through Switzerland and up the Rhine, arriving at Cologne on 8 October. After seeing his parents off to Xanten, Humperdinck left Cologne for the first city in which he planned to reside during the years of his Meyerbeer Scholarship – Paris.

A room was found at the small Hôtel d'Élysée on the Left Bank across from the Jardin des Tuileries. Humperdinck's first impressions of the city were positive. A trip to the Opéra for *Aida*, though, left him disappointed: 'Absolutely everything that money can buy was excellently done; the spirit of the performance, however, was too crass – superficial and publicity-minded'.[85] The city became oppressive to him and homesickness grew. When he encountered an old comrade from his earlier Roman stay, the painter Karl Müller-Coburg, the latter's plan of travelling to Spain seemed like a welcome escape.

Humperdinck's disappointment found its way into a letter to the Wagners, who were wintering in Venice. 'In the evening', Cosima wrote in her diary, 'I read my letters from Rub[instein] and Humperdinck; as to the first R[ichard] remarks on the extraordinary level of culture; the latter, which pleases him very much, makes him reflective'.[86] She wrote Humperdinck the same night:

> Your letter greatly pleased and moved not only me but particularly my husband. […] We have often spoken of you and my husband emphasised how completely and at every point he was satisfied with your accomplishments: musical score, parts, choruses. You brought them all off splendidly. One recollects with pleasure your suggestions for the Transformation Music, and it is self-explanatory that you will be an important part of future performances. […] I understand your feelings about the Opéra perfectly; there is almost nothing as sad as the squandering of great means towards unworthy ends […].
>
> I do not recall if you have met Frl. von Meysenbug: but even if you have not – I will enclose a few lines to her that in case she is away you can deliver to her foster daughter. You will be received in good Wagnerian style.[87]

Through Malwida von Meysenbug, Humperdinck was introduced to the members of the Cercle St Simon, an influential association of writers, artists, politicians and scholars. The club's president Gabriel Monod and the music-loving Russian Prince Alexander Meschersky took Humperdinck in hand,

[85] Card to Gustav and Gertrud Humperdinck, 5 November 1882; *cf.* Humperdinck, *Briefe*, Vol. II, *op. cit*, p. 107.
[86] Diary entry for 18 November 1882; *cf.* Cosima Wagner, *Tagebücher*, Vol. II, *op. cit.*, p. 1052.
[87] Letter from Cosima Wagner dated 11 November 1882; *cf.* Eva Humperdinck (ed.), *Beziehungen*, Vol. I, *op. cit.*, pp. 66–67.

introducing him to Parisian musical life. On 14 December came a telegram from Wagner. Humperdinck was to come at once to Venice to conduct the Conservatoire orchestra in Wagner's early Symphony in C major.[88] With some misgivings, he left Paris on the night of 16 December.

In the early morning of the 18 December he arrived in Venice and 'travelled on the canal to the Hotel San Marco under a clear, starry sky'.[89] Ernst Hausberg, now Siegfried's tutor, escorted him to the Palazzo Vendramin, which Humperdinck would nickname 'Wahnfriedamini'.[90] The atmosphere there was tense as Wagner's depression had made him disagreeable; the newcomer was nonetheless received cordially. The first rehearsal of the Symphony, now exactly 50 years old, was held that day. Wagner had initially tried to interest Anton Seidl in conducting so that the project might be kept a surprise for Cosima. He then contacted Humperdinck, but as time grew shorter he simply took up the baton himself and all pretence of surprise was dropped. Humperdinck, told of the new arrangement on arrival, was consoled with the offer of a later concert of Wagner and Liszt and a conducting position at the Conservatoire. The intervening days were divided amongst further rehearsals, rounds of whist, music-making and conversation with Liszt and Wagner.

Christmas Eve was the appointed time of the concert, and Wagner had gone to considerable lengths to recreate a German Yule atmosphere, the centre of which was a huge evergreen. Even Liszt, whose life as a travelling soloist had precluded such commonplace family pleasures, caught the mood and spent the afternoon busily shopping for presents. Cosima Wagner chronicled the evening in her diary:

> At about 6.00 the tree is lit in the Sala, and there is a very merry distribution of gifts in which our Italian personnel [household servants, porter and two gondoliers] participate with the greatest gusto. My father, also, whom we thought to be aloof from such things, is wholeheartedly involved. About 7.30 we leave in three gondolas for La Fenice, with the most superb moonlight and with bells chiming. […] The hall is festively lit; father, the children and I, the first to go in, get a friendly reception. Somewhat later R[ichard] is jubilantly greeted. The first two movements are played rather quickly one after the other. Then an interval; R[ichard] comes to me and my father and talks cheerfully with me. I thank the orchestra members, which earns me an 'Evivva'. At the end the musicians come to us and raise a drink to my health. Then R[ichard] whispers to my father, 'Do you love your daughter?' He [Liszt] is startled. 'Then sit at the piano and play'. To general and vocal approval, my father does

[88] Telegram sent 11 December 1882; *cf.* Humperdinck, *Briefe*, Vol. II, *op. cit*, p. 116.
[89] Diary entry for 18 December 1882; *cf. ibid*., p. 118.
[90] Diary entry for 30 December 1882; *cf. ibid*., p. 118.

> just this. Then R[ichard] tells the history of his symphony in French; we go home at about 11.00, Venice transfigured in blue.[91]

Christmas day brought Humperdinck a meeting with Count Giuseppe Contini, the director of the Liceo Marcello. Humperdinck was informed of political events that prevented his employment at the conservatoire. On 20 December an irredentist with the improbable name of Wilhelm Oberdank had been executed in Trieste for plotting to assassinate Kaiser Franz Joseph I of Austria. Anti-Austrian feeling in Venice was inflamed, and the appointment of a German to such a visible post was out of the question. The unfortunate similarity of the names Oberdank and Humperdinck only made the matter worse.

The failure of his attempt to secure a position for Humperdinck disturbed Wagner a good deal, Cosima Wagner noting 'In the afternoon R[ichard] and I stroll in the Piazza and meet Fidi [Siegfried], Hausburg and Humperdinck, the latter extremely embarrassing to R[ichard] due to the failure of his appointment'.[92] Two days later Wagner insisted that Humperdinck accept an over-generous 400 lire against his travel costs.

Tuesday, 2 January, was the day of Humperdinck's departure. He said good-bye to Wagner last of all:

> It seemed as if the setting sun of his life had covered the Master's face with radiance. That which had been austere and harsh had changed into something gentle and kind. The hour of farewell was upon us; the gondola awaited me. 'Auf Wiedersehen, dear Master', I called. He regarded me seriously and said quietly, 'Have a blessed journey, my friend'. Then, deeply moved, I plunged out into the black night. This time he had not said 'Auf Wiedersehen'.[93]

After a short sojourn in Munich, Humperdinck returned to Paris on 22 January. Franz Liszt had furnished him with two letters of introduction. The first was to Camille Saint-Saëns:

> As Lord Byron wrote […] of Grillparzer: a disagreeable name, but posterity will remember it. Humperdinck does not sound any better, and I do not know whether its owner is concerned with posterity, but he is a distinguished young musician who has been awarded three prizes from the Mozart, Meyerbeer and Mendelssohn Foundations. Please bid him welcome![94]

This testimony opened further doors and he met the French Wagnerians Chabrier and d'Indy. The second letter ('His name – hardly French –

[91] Diary entry for 24 December 1882; *cf.* Cosima Wagner, *Tagebücher*, Vol. II, *op. cit.*, p. 1079.
[92] Diary entry for 30 December 1882; *cf. ibid.*, p. 1082.
[93] Humperdinck, 'Parsifal-Skizzen', *loc. cit.*, p. 13.
[94] Letter from Franz Liszt to Camille Saint-Saëns; *cf.* Humperdinck, *Briefe*, Vol. II, *op. cit*, p. 120.

Humperdinck. Graciously grant him your hospitality')[95] was addressed to Pauline Viardot.[96] The ailing Ivan Turgenev, who lived in Viardot's house (they had been intimate friends for four decades), conversed at length with Humperdinck. The young composer's suggestion that Wagner be allowed to become the fourth star in Turgenev's firmament of Homer, Shakespeare and Goethe found no resonance.

Hermann Levi had furnished introductions to the conductor Charles Lamoureux, the Belgian composer Peter Benoit[97] and Antoine Lascoux, a justice of the Tribunal de la Seine and an enthusiastic aficionado of music. Lascoux escorted Humperdinck to events of interest, notably the Colonne, Lamoureux and Pasdeloup concerts. To exchange views with an apprentice of Wagner was very gratifying to Lascoux, a member of the Bayreuth Patrons Society and a veteran of Festivals and Wahnfried visits. In spite of the virulent chauvinism of the time, he was willing to befriend a German visitor.[98] It was on one of his habitual morning visits to Humperdinck, on 14 February, that he brought news of Wagner's death. Humperdinck telegraphed Venice, hoping for some mistake. Joukowsky's answer confirmed the news.

To Hermann Wette, Humperdinck wrote:

> I have great cause to mourn. I belong to the select few that never experienced anything but decent, even loving treatment from him, apart from the odd episode where he, probably due to physical causes, would strike out angrily only to become amiable again afterwards.[99]

A letter to his parents confided a more personal grief. At their first meeting in Naples three years before, Wagner had told Humperdinck that he had not yet found his artistic successor. Humperdinck had aspired to that title, but the hoped-for anointment at the hand of the Master would now never come to pass:

[95] Letter from Franz Liszt to Pauline Viardot, 10 January 1883; *cf.* Klára Hamburger, 'Liszt et Pauline Viardot-Garcìa (dans l'optique de sept lettres inédites)', *Studia musicologia Academiae Scientarum Hungaricae*, Vol. XXXIV, Nos. 1–2, 1992, p. 202.

[96] Daughter of the Spanish tenor Manuel del Pópolo García and sister of mezzo-soprano Maria Malibran and of the vocal pedagogue Manuel Patricio García, Viardot (1821–1910), had been one of the most important singing actors of the century, as well as a gifted composer, pianist, painter and linguist. Schumann, Saint-Saëns and Fauré dedicated works to her, and Meyerbeer, Gounod and Massenet composed operatic roles for her expressly (Brahms' 'Alto Rhapsody' was also written for and premiered by Viardot).

[97] A student of François-Joseph Fétis at the Brussels Conservatoire, Benoit (1834-1901) became an active and articulate proponent of a Flemish school of composition. The opera *Het Dorp in 't Gebergte* (Brussels, 1856), written at the age of 22, was the first of his many stage and choral works in that language, some of which saw performance in Paris and London.

[98] The later part of the decade saw the rise of the Boulangists, and the Dreyfus trial in the mid-1890s would bring tensions between France and Germany into the open.

[99] Letter dated 16 February 1883; *cf.* Eva Humperdinck (ed.), *Beziehungen*, Vol. I, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

*Paul von Joukowsky's sketch of Wagner made a day before the composer's death*

It would have been made clear, within the next few years, to what purpose he [Wagner] had called me; his death has precluded a public announcement of this. The world and history will record that Wagner died at the right moment, after his life's work was finished […]. Only for me did his death come too soon.[100]

[100] Letter to Gustav and Gertrud Humperdinck dated 15 February 1883; *cf.* Humperdinck, *Briefe*, Vol. II, *op. cit*, p. 123.