

Chapter 1

Introduction

When one considers how much the energy of young men needs to explode, one is not surprised that they decide for this cause or that without being at all subtle or choosy. What attracts them is the sight of the zeal that surrounds a cause—as it were, the sight of the burning fuse...¹

The writings of Friedrich Nietzsche have had an immense impact on modern culture. Seen as a prophet of modernism, Nietzsche laid the groundwork for existentialism, served posthumously as a rallying point for the Nazi party, and eloquently described the end of romanticism. Countless books interpret and reinterpret Nietzsche's enigmatic epithets, and that number increases almost daily as scholars rush to investigate the rich depths of his literary output². Despite this abundance of research and his almost universal recognition as a thinker, a crucial aspect of his output is almost entirely overlooked: Nietzsche's music.³ This is true despite the fact that music in general, and his own compositions in particular, played a large role in Nietzsche's life. He summed up his feelings toward music in a letter to friend and fellow musician, Peter Gast, writing: "Life without music is simply an error, a pain, an exile."⁴

In his short span of musical output—from his maturity (about 1862) until his descent into insanity in 1889—he completed fifteen lieder, nine solo piano pieces, a piece for choir and orchestra, and several piano four-hands pieces, in addition to a large number of sketches and half-finished compositions. Yet the very fact that Nietzsche composed

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, transl. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974); 106: I, 38; (GS).

² A recent list includes over 4500 books or articles on the philosopher. See Bernd Magnus and Kathleen M. Higgins, *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 2.

³ See Appendix A for a complete list of compositions.

⁴ Cited in Ernst Bertram, *Versuch einer Mythologie* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1965), 130.

music comes as a surprise to most, and the musical community is even less aware of this music than the philosophical community. When Nietzsche's music is discussed, the analysis usually proceeds through a thick mist of disparaging irony, betraying the critic's lack of objectivity from the outset. In a review of Nietzsche's songs in *Musical Heritage*, for example, the author protests describing Nietzsche's lieder as an accomplishment, writing: "It may seem churlish to point out that the only respect in which that 'accomplishment' is not in dispute is in comparison with the even less accomplished works for piano duet."⁵ Yet the review in question evaluates a CD released by Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau—a respected musician who has repeatedly praised Nietzsche's musical output and willingly chose to record his music.⁶ This raises several questions that will form the core of this investigation. What does Nietzsche's music have to offer? Why is his music largely overlooked or, worse yet, summarily rejected? In what way is music a truly crucial aspect of Nietzsche's life and output? In short, why study Nietzsche's music?

To answer these questions, one must understand the unique position Nietzsche holds in western history and be able to appreciate the unique Nietzschean perspective that western culture has unwittingly adopted. Understanding this perspective requires the adoption of a tactic long used by commentators on his philosophical works, whereby Nietzsche's life and work are considered dynamically. The word "dynamic" has become the victim of its own success in contemporary parlance, and its application here must not be confused with pop culture associations. Rather than connoting excitement or a

⁵ *Music Heritage Society Online*, Internet: <http://www.musicalheritage.com/CLASSICAL/composerInfo.sp-?10288>, accessed October 23, 2002.

⁶ See later discussion of Fischer-Dieskau, p. 15.

vaguely positive evaluation, it is here used to describe the ever-evolving, ever-growing aspect of Nietzsche's life and works. As he personally matured, his thoughts and goals matured with him, and his output at different stages of his life shows considerable development. This tendency is exaggerated by his equally dynamic writing style. Approached from a German tradition of Kant, Hegel and Schopenhauer, Nietzsche's writing appears almost ludicrous at first sight. Whereas Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* remain true to the Socratic ideals of logical demonstration in conjunction with the German penchant for thoroughness and discipline, Nietzsche's *Also Sprach Zarathustra* presents us with an allegorical story of a grumpy old man who lives in the mountains. His *Genealogy of Morals* is comprised of over a hundred short aphorisms that do little to indicate a formal structure. In fact, many aphorisms appear to conflict with other aphorisms, or even with themselves! Let us compare, for example, a short passage from Kant with a passage from Nietzsche.

From Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* A118

This synthetic unity presupposes or includes a synthesis, and if the former is to be *a priori* necessary, the synthesis must also be *a priori*. The transcendental unity of apperception thus relates to the pure synthesis of imagination, as an *a priori* condition of the possibility of all combination of the manifold in one knowledge. But only the *productive* synthesis of the imagination can take place *a priori*; the reproductive rests upon empirical conditions. Thus the principle of the necessary unity of pure synthesis of imagination, prior to apperception, is the ground of the possibility of all knowledge, especially of experience.⁷

Without delving too deeply into Kantian metaphysics, all of the classical elements of deductive logic are here evident. In the first sentence, Kant makes a statement dictating the conditions needed to qualify a synthetic unity as necessary. In the second

⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), A118.

sentence he expands on the details that follow from such a relationship. Next he points out a definitional necessity that differentiates between two concepts. Finally, he draws a conclusion from the facts and relationships previously stated. It is of utmost importance to understand the value placed on this type of reasoning in the philosophical community. More than any other discipline, philosophy is defined by the method of inquiry rather than the subject, and by strictly following the dictates of logic Kant was in line with a tradition stretching back 2500 years. Now let us compare Kant's writing with that of Nietzsche.

“My friends, all of you,” said the ugliest man, “what do you think? For the sake of this day, I am for the first time satisfied that I have lived my whole life. And that I attest so much is still not enough for me. Living on earth is worth while: one day, one festival with Zarathustra, taught me to love the earth.”⁸

Compared to Kant's quote, one hesitates to label such a text “philosophy.” Where are the arguments? Where are the “thus's” and “therefore's” that indicate the structure? This is more poetry than a study of logic. Many critics accused him of practicing bad philosophy and his contemporaries, while easily recognizing his literary genius, discarded his philosophical platforms as the crude rantings of a mentally unstable philology professor.⁹ Even as late as the 1960s, the philosopher Arthur Danto had the following to say about Nietzsche's philosophy:

⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1966); (TSZ); 317: IV, The Drunken Song, 1.

⁹ An especially eloquent yet misguided and biased criticism sums up so well the overall criticism of Nietzsche that it warrants complete citation. “His (Nietzsche's) own method, in general, was not to collect facts and try out deductions from them but to indulge himself in intuitions and then look about for facts to support them. He himself, as was only to be expected, poured scorn on the thinkers who worked in the reverse way: a philosophy, he said, is primarily and properly the expression of a man. No doubt; but the trouble is that if we base our interpretation of the cosmos on our individual intuitions it is not long before we discover, to our annoyance, that other individuals have intuitions quite contrary but just as imperative; and then the only way to decide between the rival illuminations is by way of that marshalling of facts and

His thoughts are diffused through many loosely structured volumes, and his individual statements seem too clever and topical to sustain serious philosophical scrutiny.¹⁰

Those with whom Nietzsche sided tolerated but rarely understood his revolutionary ideas. After his descent into insanity, his writings--and with them the de facto role of Nietzsche interpreter--fell to his beloved sister, Elisabeth. Although well-intentioned and immensely devoted to her brother, much of the omnipresent subtlety and nuance of Nietzsche's writings were lost on her, and the fascist, proto-Nazi beliefs of her husband, Bernhard Förster, supplied her with a more readily accessible philosophical glue with which to piece together her brother's disparate tomes. This unfortunate turn of events led to the wholesale adoption of Nietzsche by the Nazis as fascist philosopher *par excellence*. Although this association culminated in the preservation of almost all Nietzsche's manuscripts – an archival achievement that never would have taken place without the Nazis given Nietzsche's small base of support—it also led to the close association of Nietzsche's name with Nazism. After World War II, Nietzsche's works were effectively blacklisted, and it was not until the post-war efforts of Walter Kaufmann and the adoption of Nietzsche by the French Deconstructionists of the 1960s that he was recognized as a true philosophical genius. Key to this rebirth of Nietzsche studies was a gradual shift in philosophical values predicted in Nietzsche's own works.

After the two world wars and the previously unimaginable horrors they produced, any sort of benign faith in humanity waned. In conjunction with western culture's

testing them by ratiocination which might just as well have been undertaken in the first place: either that, or to perform a trumpet solo on the theme of our own "genius," to retire to the mountain tops and megaphone from there that it is only *our* intuitions that have any value, none other being genuine." This criticism is especially interesting considering its source, the esteemed Wagner biographer, Ernest Newman, *Life of Wagner*, vol. 4, 1866-1883 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), 335-6.

¹⁰ Arthur Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher*, (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 13.

concurrent embrace of secularism, nihilism emerged as a valid and popular philosophy. The French existentialists epitomized this shift, as can be seen dramatically in Jean Paul Sartre's *Nausea*, or more abstractly in Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Their acceptance and embrace of nihilism was hardly unique however; the first significant modern examination of its ramifications was espoused by Schopenhauer in his *magnum opus*, *The World as Will and Representation*. Nietzsche accepted much of Schopenhauer's framework, but refined the theory by applying it to contemporary society. It is this application that led Nietzsche to attack the hypocrisy of his era. One such attack against the Christian morality of secular Europe led Nietzsche to pen the now infamous statement, "God is dead."¹¹

The other significant shift in modern culture was psychology. When Sigmund Freud revolutionized individuals' conceptions of themselves, he put a spotlight on the individual character of existence. Here too, Nietzsche led the way, asking in his autobiography, *Ecce Homo*, "Who among philosophers before me has been a psychologist at all?"¹² and titling his book *Nietzsche Contra Wagner* "Aktenstücke eines Psychologen" or "Out of the Files of a Psychologist."¹³ His tactic throughout his works was to examine men's motivations, both conscious and unconscious, and admonish them to act according to their beliefs. The effect on modern culture was immense. When individual perceptions of reality had to be processed through numerous

¹¹ GS, 167: III, 108.

¹² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, in *Ecce Homo and On the Genealogy of Morals*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage, 1967); (EH); 331: Why I am Destiny, 6.

¹³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking, 1954); (NCW).

psychological filters, it became much more difficult to assert the existence of universal truths.

This shift from universal truths to individual existences comprises a large part of Nietzsche's philosophy. Universal truths had been the goal of philosophy from the ancient Greeks onward, and it is this fundamental shift in focus that gives Nietzsche's work its revolutionary character. What differentiates Kant's prose sharply from Nietzsche's is that Kant deals with abstractions in his pursuit for universal truths while Nietzsche examines individuals and addresses them as such. If the one's goal is to posit something that is true in every situation and at any time, any reference to individual circumstances poisons the process. Plato solved this dilemma by positing a realm of forms that existed outside time and space, and lent its perfection to the reality we encounter. Descartes addressed the issue by doubting everything, and affirming only those things that could be proven by appeal to abstract deductions.¹⁴

Nietzsche chose instead to *embrace* individual circumstances—a reversal of philosophical tradition that consequently led him to dismiss the idea of a universal truth. In his own words, “What therefore is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, metamorphosed, adorned, and after long usage seem to a nation fixed, canonic and binding...”¹⁵ At the heart of this appeal is a fundamentally

¹⁴ Take for instance his “I think, therefore I am” argument. Doubting all else, Descartes knows only that he is thinking, therefore there must be a thing thinking – himself. Despite the apparent individual character of such a proof, it is Descartes' use of it to ascertain universal truths (the existence of God, the existence of corporeal beings, the reality of others) that separates him from Nietzsche.

¹⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, “On Truth and Falsity in their Ultramoral Sense,” in *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870's*, trans. Maximilian A. Mügge (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), 171-192; 180.

aesthetic idea. To address the divergent situations in which individuals find themselves, Nietzsche appeals to art and beauty. Setting aside the earlier philosophical ideals that would universalize aesthetics and find the ultimate standards of beauty, he chooses aesthetics for the very diversity that the field of philosophical aesthetics had sought to homogenize. The old proverb “beauty is in the eye of the beholder” sums up much of the “problem” of aesthetics. Although everyone accepts that beauty exists, no one has ever agreed on the precise criteria by which beauty may be judged. Nietzsche uses this combination of universal acceptance and individual ambiguity to address the diversity of the human condition. As Nietzsche writes in his *Birth of Tragedy*, “for it is only as an aesthetic phenomenon that existence and the world are eternally justified.”¹⁶ Magnus interprets this remark by explaining, “Nietzsche urges us to attend to goals and truth in local contexts, and to make choices on aesthetic grounds, taking artistic decisions as a model for all choice.”¹⁷

Magnus’ use of the word “urges” warrants a second look as it indicates another unique characteristic of Nietzsche’s works. If universal truths are nonexistent (or at least inaccessible), then truth lies within each of us - a truth derived from our relation to our particular situation, a truth created by our willing and doing. Therefore, the task of a philosopher is not to plumb the heights of universalized concepts and carry them back to those of us in this world of contingencies, but to enable us to discover our own truths and admonish us when we do not. Essentially, philosophers should spawn more philosophers inasmuch as being a philosopher entails creating, willing and acting. The philosopher’s

¹⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, in *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1967); (BT); 52: 5.

¹⁷ Magnus, *Cambridge Companion*, 13.

proper project should be one of creating laws and subsequently applying their laws to their surroundings. The fact that most people do not want to acknowledge the truths of our existence or take responsibility for their experience comprises the main obstacle to this “new” philosopher. “Why does man not see things? He is himself standing in the way: he conceals things.”¹⁸ Therefore, this new project must not and cannot be held to the same rules as previous projects. Roger White aptly describes the divide between Nietzsche and traditional philosophical practice when he writes, “...given the rhetorical and polemical aspects of his work, to expect or require a strict consistency of thought is inappropriate and almost certainly doomed to failure. For Nietzsche just is not an analytical philosopher *manqué*.”¹⁹ Nietzsche himself best sums up his relationship to traditional philosophy:

How I understand the philosopher -- as a terrible explosive, endangering everything... my concept of the philosopher is worlds removed from any concept that would include even a Kant, not to speak of academic "ruminants" and other professors of philosophy...²⁰

Philosophy, for Nietzsche, cannot be abstracted away from the very act of living. Rather than existing in abstracted formulae, philosophy must be found in the day-to-day actions and decisions each one of us carries out. Instead of drawing its strength from complete objectivity and the removal of all circumstances that it entails, Nietzsche’s philosophy grows through experience, becoming fuller and more complete the more one experiences. His philosophical expressions therefore, take on a personal and highly stylized aspect. No longer is a philosophical text a disembodied system of thought; it is

¹⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, transl. R.J. Hollingdale, ed. Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997); (D); 199: 483.

¹⁹ Roger White, “Reading the Secondary Text,” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 20, 83.

²⁰ EH, 281: The Untimely Ones, 3.

instead a shadow cast in ink representing an individual *through* his thoughts. In a recent collaborative effort, Magnus, Stewart and Mileur insist that to understand Nietzsche's thought, "...it requires a certain relation to the text, one in which Nietzsche's polysemantic metaphors are not perceived as distractions but are instead thought to be required by his very thought itself, indeed may perhaps be said to *be* the thought itself."²¹

Many writers, including Gilles Deleuze, Alan Schrift, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida have written about Nietzsche as poet and author.²² These examinations cite the inextricable links between the writings and the content and the cognitive value of each. Drawing from the deconstructionist school he helped define, Michel Foucault repeatedly compares and contrasts the content of certain Nietzschean passages with the corresponding texts.²³ One example that Foucault did not choose, but is worthy of a deconstructionist interpretation, may be found in the second part of *Also Sprach Zarathustra* when Zarathustra declares:

"I led you away from these fables when I taught you, 'The will is a creator.' All 'it was' is a fragment, a riddle, a dreadful accident—until the creative will says to it, 'But thus I willed it.' Until the creative will says to it, 'But thus I will it; thus shall I will it.'" ²⁴

The content of this paragraph deals with the transformative nature of willing. On a deeper level, it examines the psychological effect of taking responsibility for one's surroundings, and on a metaphysical level, provides an example of Nietzsche's theory of

²¹ Bernd Magnus, Stanley Stewart and Jean-Pierre Mileur, *Nietzsche's Case: Philosophy as/and Literature* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 11.

²² See especially: Derrida's *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation*, ed. Christie V. McDonald (New York: Schocken Books, 1985); Michel Foucault's "Ecce Homo, or the Written Body," trans. Judith Still, *Oxford Literary Review* 7, 1-2 (1985): 3-24; Alan D. Schrift's *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction* (New York: Routledge, 1990);

²³ Foucault, Michel, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977).

²⁴ TSZ, 253.

the “will to power.” But one must not ignore the prose itself. This passage comes from Zarathustra as he is addressing his followers, and displays the imperative nature of Zarathustra’s exhortations and provides an example of someone exerting his will on his surroundings. This will is exerted through enthusiasm and rhetoric to convince both Zarathustra’s followers and Nietzsche’s readers. The use of short declarative sentences and the repetition of certain phrases create an atmosphere of insistence and great importance to the old man’s speech.

Such an examination of not only the content, but also the forum in which that content is presented, provides a clearer picture of Nietzsche’s thought. If this is applicable to the philosophical writings, why should it not be applicable to his musical writings as well? In an examination of Nietzsche’s technique of philosophizing, Richard Schacht notes that,

It is also undeniable that he often avails himself of notions having to do with arts *other* than literature, such as music, painting, architecture, and sculpture, along with the more general forms of human experience and phenomena to which *they* are related, as literature is to language. ‘Nietzsche’s aestheticism’ should properly be construed to refer to his tendency to think of life and the world on the models provided by the *various* arts—including but not uniquely privileging literature among them.²⁵

Schacht goes on to cite instances of Nietzsche’s alluding to Wagner operas and Beethoven symphonies, yet never mentions Nietzsche’s own music. In fact, only one significant article has been published examining Nietzsche’s music as anything other than a biographical curiosity, that by Frederick Love in the 1960s.²⁶ On the musical front, only a few reviews of recordings and published music have been undertaken, and these

²⁵ Richard Schacht, “Nietzsche’s kind of philosophy,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. Bernd Magnus and Kathleen M. Higgins (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 151-179.

²⁶ Frederick R. Love, *Young Nietzsche and the Wagnerian Experience* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina UP, 1963).

have all been generally superficial.²⁷ Typical of this is the patronizing tone of a recent review in *Time* magazine entitled, “The Melodies of Nietzsche: The great philosopher was also a nice little composer.”²⁸ Seldom going beyond a surprised announcement that Nietzsche wrote music, the more diligent accounts quickly turn to his relationship with Wagner and bypass the music itself. Although there has been a surge of interest in Nietzsche’s music recently as exemplified by the Nietzsche Music Project,²⁹ the subject still inhabits the periphery of musical and philosophical circles.

Realizing the importance of his music when examining such an idiomatic and rhetorical author as Nietzsche, the next step must be to examine what Nietzsche himself said about his music. When still a boy, Nietzsche wrote,

God gave us music so that we, *first and foremost*, will be guided upward by it. All qualities are united in music: it can lift us up, it can be capricious, it can cheer us up and delight us, nay, with its soft, melancholy tunes, it can even break the resistance of the toughest character. Its main purpose, however, is to lead our thoughts upward, so that it elevates us, even deeply moves us. ... Music also provides pleasant entertainment and saves everyone who is interested in it from boredom. All humans who despise it should be considered mindless, animal-like creatures. May this most glorious gift of God ever be my companion on my life's journey, and I can consider myself fortunate to have come to love it. Let us sing out in eternal praise to God who is offering us this beautiful enjoyment.³⁰

²⁷ While it is true that many experts weighed in on John Bell Young’s 1991 recording of Nietzsche’s music, without exception they avoided close musical examination, focusing instead on the academic rediscovery and the pianist’s individual interpretation. See a summary of these reviews at: [http://www.musiciansgallery.com/start/pianists/young\(john_bell\).html#reviews](http://www.musiciansgallery.com/start/pianists/young(john_bell).html#reviews)

²⁸ Elliot Ravetz, “The Melodies of Nietzsche: The great philosopher was also a nice little composer,” *Time Magazine*, 24 April 1995, 72.

²⁹ A project dedicated to spreading knowledge and appreciation of Nietzsche’s music, The Nietzsche Music Project has led to the recording of two compact discs and performances of his music at several scholarly meetings. Their webpage is: <http://www.nietzschemusicproject.org>.

³⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Friedrich Nietzsche: Werke und Briefe*, vol. 1, *Briefe: Schülerzeit und Bonnerstudentenzeit, 1850-1865*, ed. Hans Joachim Mette and Karl Schlechta (Munich: C.H. Beck’sche, 1940), 136; (HKB I).

One of his biographers, Werner Ross agrees that, “undoubtedly, Nietzsche had a natural musical talent.”³¹ His friend von Gersdorff wrote of their school years at the prestigious Schulpforta, “His improvisations are unforgettable to me; I almost think that even Beethoven could not have improvised more movingly than Nietzsche, particularly, when a thunderstorm was looming.”³² During this same time, Nietzsche frequently vacillated between being a musician, studying theology or philology³³. Later, while at the university in Leipzig, he was offered the opera review column in a local newspaper. As for his masterpiece, *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, Nietzsche asked, “Under which rubric do I hear this singular *Zarathustra*? I believe it is nearest to the symphony.”³⁴ He even felt his “Hymnus an die Freundschaft” was important enough to be published at the end of his autobiography, *Ecce Homo*. Around the same time, Nietzsche wrote to his close friend, Erwin Rohde, concerning continuity of his musical style. “... I have reviewed and ordered my youthful compositions. It struck me how the music reflected the consistency of the composer’s (Nietzsche’s) character; that which was expressed as a boy is so clearly the language of his entire being, the grown man could not wish to change it.”³⁵ All of these examples point to the importance Nietzsche himself placed on his music

Having established the biographical importance of examining Nietzsche’s music, the next challenge is to provide the musical justification for a close scrutiny of this overlooked music. This must be approached from two vantage points: the quality of the

³¹ Werner Ross, “Der ängstliche Adler,” in *Friedrich Nietzsches Leben* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1980), 404.

³² Cited in Bertram, 113.

³³ Love, *Young Nietzsche*, 12.

³⁴ HKB III, 1.

³⁵ HKB IV, 138.

music itself, and the value of studying Nietzsche's music for musicians. When examining Beethoven or Mozart's works, little justification is needed to undertake such a study. The quality of their music is commonly accepted, and scholars may begin from this assumption. The obscurity of Nietzsche's music denies us this first assumption, and a preliminary justification must be found to support the quality of the music. Most obviously, the music itself can and must be examined; a process that comprises much of the body of this document. Additionally, pertinent reviews must be explored and the opinions of previous writers considered. As these are very few, an overview of the pertinent texts can be carried out with some thoroughness within the introduction.

Frederick R. Love wrote the first substantial scholarly work on Nietzsche's music in 1963. Writing from a philosophical perspective, he sought to use Nietzsche's music as an indicator of the depth of Wagner's influence on Nietzsche's thoughts. Since Nietzsche composed music from childhood throughout the period of his friendship with Wagner, Love used the compositions to act as a sort of barometer of Wagnerian influence.³⁶ Even more important than his findings was Love's critical consideration of Nietzsche's musical compositions, most of which had languished in uncatalogued boxes in the Nietzsche Archive. At the time of Love's research, only a few pieces had been published and were available to the public. Only his "Hymnus an die Freundschaft" had ever been published during Nietzsche's lifetime—at his request in 1887. After his death in 1900, Elisabeth Förster Nietzsche published two brief samples in her work, *Das Leben Friedrich Nietzsches, Vol. I*³⁷ and then in 1924 a group of his lieder were published in Georg

³⁶ Love, *Young Nietzsche*, 1-3.

³⁷ Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, *Das Leben Friedrich Nietzsches*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: C.G. Naumann, 1895-1904).

Göhler's *Nietzsches musikalische Werke*. In 1959, Nietzsche's "Der Tod der Könige" was rescued from obscurity for inclusion in a program for the Bayreuth festival.³⁸ But it was not until 1976 when Curt Paul Janz published the first ever complete volume of Nietzsche's music that the majority of these works were made available to the public.³⁹ The collection was gathered from the Nietzsche archive (housed in the Goethe-Schiller Archiv in Weimar) and a few private collections. In addition to compiling the works and fragments, Janz included a detailed index to the source manuscripts, and even carried out a significant amount of musical detective work to give indications of Nietzsche's intentions when puzzling fragments are encountered. It is due to Janz's compilation that this current study is possible and his efforts are greatly appreciated.

Considering Janz's considerable undertaking, it would be inappropriate to ignore his evaluations of Nietzsche's music. In his biography of Nietzsche, he explains that, "Nietzsche was at least, at times, able to reach his 'professional' musical counterparts in the depth and strength of his musical expression." And later, "These works should be considered as serious and seriously-meant works that are far-removed from a merely playful dilettantism."⁴⁰ The esteemed baritone, Dietrich Fischer Dieskau, wrote that,

Nietzsche's musical talent was, regardless of such opinions, extraordinary and that it was a distinctive part of his character, and that his psychological analysis of art must be seen analogous to his musical insights and to his enjoyment of polyphony, and that his drive to shed light into the deepest recesses of the human

³⁸ *Friedrich Nietzsche: Der musikalische Nachlaß*, ed. Curt Paul Janz (Basel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 1976), 187; (MN).

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Cited in Helmut Walther, "Nietzsche as Composer" (lecture at a meeting of Gesellschaft für kritische Philosophie, Kottenheide, Germany, 15-17 October 2000), available from http://www.virtusens.de/walther/n_kom_e.htm; Internet; accessed 27 November 2001.

psyche is the equivalent to the will of a musician to bring psychological processes to light in a way that only music can.⁴¹

Even his harshest contemporary critic, Hans von Bülow, had a few positive things to say, praising his vocal compositions and recognizing Nietzsche's distinguished mind shining through his music.⁴²

Given these endorsements of the music's quality, the question of its value to musicians must now be considered. Surely the genres for which Nietzsche wrote, namely solo piano and accompanied voice, are not lacking for repertoire. In fact, the repertoire for both is so immense that many wonderful and inspired pieces are seldom if ever performed. The argument that the performance of new music aids in the continuing development of art music by familiarizing the public with new musical ideas hardly works to the advantage of a composer whose works date from the 1860s. Perhaps the best reason for a further examination of his music lays in the middle ground between Nietzsche's philosophy and his music.

Nietzsche held that the value of aesthetic experience increased insofar as it proved cognitive. This was especially true for music, which he believed communicated truths at a far more direct level than language.⁴³ In view of Nietzsche's organic and rhetorical style of communicating, it may be assumed that his music represents another rhetorical tool to express the same web of ideas comprising his literary works. Whether these ideas were carefully planned to bolster and coincide with his literary works or were more spontaneous expressions of his experiences is a point of debate. In Helmut Walther's

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Cited in Newman, 324. The remainder of this review was not complimentary in the least, its harshness leading Nietzsche to swear off composition for six years (an oath he did not keep). See chapter 9.

⁴³ This will be discussed at greater length in chapter 6.

lecture, “Nietzsche as Composer,” he suggests Nietzsche’s lack of musical training led his musical outbursts a more spontaneous air, while his long study of literature allowed him to go into more depth in his literary works.⁴⁴ This is supported by the occasional nature of many of his musical compositions. His “Sylvesternacht” was dedicated to Cosima Wagner on the occasion of her birthday. His piece for two pianos, “Monodie a deux” was composed for the marriage of his friends Olga Herzen and Gabriel Monod.⁴⁵

This viewpoint is further supported by Nietzsche’s own discussions of his music. Whereas his discussions of music in general and music of composers such as Beethoven, Schumann and Wagner deal with numerous musical issues, when addressing his own music, Nietzsche regularly describes individual moments of inspiration. When describing “Sylvesternacht” to Rohde, Nietzsche writes, “I am sure you will detect the warm, contemplative, and happy tone which sounds through the whole work and which denotes for me a transfigured memory of the joy I felt during our autumn vacation.”⁴⁶ In another letter to Hans von Bülow, Nietzsche comments on his writing process: “I now realize that the entire thing ... was absolutely reflecting a real mood and that I felt a kind of pleasure in writing it down that I never felt before.”⁴⁷ Even his choice of titles illustrates the momentary and spontaneous nature of the compositions; e.g. “Herbstlich sonnige Tage” (Sunny autumn day) and “Da geht ein Bach” (There flows a brook). In fact, several of Nietzsche’s musical compositions contain the subtitle, “*Dichtung*” or

⁴⁴ Walther.

⁴⁵ See the corresponding chapters for details of these compositions.

⁴⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Christopher Middleton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 85.

⁴⁷ HKB III, 174.

“Poem.”⁴⁸ While Nietzsche tried on occasion to compose longer and more complex works, these do not necessarily represent the best of his musical output; indeed it is in the longer works that his lack of musical training most comes to light.⁴⁹ But within his short character pieces and Lieder, Nietzsche is highly effective in capturing moments of experience. In a review of concert of Nietzsche’s songs, Fritz Schleicher described Nietzsche as “...able to render imaginative, melodically and harmoniously sensitive creations, and that in them, his musical language is direct...”⁵⁰

In this respect, his music is entirely in keeping with his philosophical outlook. If truth resides in context, and individuals can discover these truths through close, honest scrutiny of their own experiences, then music—the most direct of all forms of expression—is an ideal vehicle for capturing individual moments. “Musical chords reminded me today of a winter and a house and an extremely solitary life, as well as the feeling in which I lived at that time: I thought I might go on living that way forever.”⁵¹ In Nietzsche’s music we are given a wonderfully unique insight into his own coming to terms with experience. Instead of reading Nietzsche the admonisher, we *hear* Nietzsche the individual, the case study, the scientist experimenting on himself. He was, in essence, driven to compose by a sort of musical existentialism, wherein music either supplements or replaces language as the vehicle to combat the fleeting nature of experience. Within the void created by Nietzsche’s embrace of nihilism, existence is cut loose from the

⁴⁸ “Eine Sylvesternacht,” is subtitled “Musikalisches Dichtung” MN 36 and “Ermanarich” is subtitled “Symphonische Dichtung,” MN, 17.

⁴⁹ Again, refer to later discussions of “Sylvesternacht,” “Monodie a deux,” and “Ermanarich” for treatments of his larger works.

⁵⁰ Cited in Walther, 3.

⁵¹ GS, 252: IV, 317.

firmaments of universal truths and one is left with only experiences, and even these are constantly snatched away by the hands of time. Through language and music one can reclaim these experiences and claim ownership, therefore creating stability and meaning from within.

At this point, our “musical existentialism” appears little different from romanticism. Their difference will be explored in more detail in subsequent, and so will be discussed only briefly at this juncture. It is only upon examining the *content* of such captured experiences that Nietzsche distinguishes himself from the romantics and their music of decay and decadence that he so detested. Above all else, he insists that one must be true and honest. Much of Nietzsche’s most scorching invective attacks music that is merely nostalgic and hearkens back to romanticized, inaccurate versions of the past. In several works, Nietzsche ascribes his break with Wagner to the realization of Wagner’s romantic failings. Throughout his life, Nietzsche always acknowledged Wagner’s musical gifts. What caused Nietzsche to shift from enthusiast to critic was the content Wagner employed. Nietzsche came to see Wagner’s music not as affirming and owning one’s experiences, but as a vehicle of escapism and hypocrisy. In Nietzsche’s words, “We are all afraid of truth,”⁵² and the worst manifestation of such a fear is to use music - the essence of purity and truth - to flee truth. He grew to despise Wagner because his music *lied* to people and encouraged them to lie to themselves. Great music - and great art in general - had the ability to lead people to truth and their potential nobility, but it also had the power to confuse and weaken. Instead of helping individuals cross the

⁵² EH, 246: Why I am so Clever, 4.

bridge between man and *übermensch*, Wagner's music produced pity and weakness, effectively undermining his yearning listeners' ability to grow and develop.

This brings to light a key concept in Nietzsche's thought: redemption through the aesthetic experience. Contrary to religious applications of the term, here it does not imply freedom from the sufferings of life; rather it is an embrace of all suffering, along with the rare moments of ecstasy. That suffering is a component of all human lives is all too well known. Nietzsche's revolutionary approach to this "problem" was to eliminate the negative value placed on suffering. Instead of establishing the presence of positive counterweights to offset suffering as traditional religions do, or deriving means to eliminate human suffering in the manner of humanism and liberalism, Nietzsche embraces suffering as an integral and valuable part of human existence. To eliminate suffering would be a deprivation of part of the richness of human existence, and to explain it away as payment for a heavenly afterlife a misinterpretation of its role. It is only in moments of aesthetic ecstasy that we embrace *all* of our experience truthfully and honestly. As Zarathustra says to his followers:

Have you ever said Yes to a single joy? O my friends, then you have said Yes too to *all* woe. All things are entangled, ensnared, enamored; if ever you wanted one thing twice, if ever you said, 'You please me, happiness! Abide, moment!' then you wanted *all* back. All anew, all eternally, all entangled, ensnared, enamored—oh, then you *loved* the world. Eternal ones, love it eternally and evermore; and to woe too, you say: go, but return! *For all joy wants—eternity.*⁵³

In studying and performing Nietzsche's music, one comes face to face with the application of this desire. As previous quotations have implied, Nietzsche wrote his music intending to express these redemptive moments in the most direct and truthful way

⁵³ TSZ, 323: IV, The Drunken Song, 10.

possible. When performing his music or reading his works, one is confronted with more than a mere argument - one is confronted with a force that demands action. That music can deeply affect an individual is well established. In Nietzsche's music we are given the opportunity to feel the effects of one of the most influential thinkers of modernity. Such a combination of philosophical and literary genius with musical ability is extraordinary, and musicians and philosophers alike have much to gain from examining the output of such a man. In this essay, that state of affairs will begin to be remedied through a survey of Nietzsche's music, an examination of literary, musical and biographical connections, and recommendations for the integration of this music into the archive of common repertoire. Once given a glimpse of Nietzsche's music, his love for music and belief in its powers "...to lead our thoughts upward, so that it elevates us, even deeply moves us" can find resonance in our own souls and elevate our appreciation of this "most glorious art form."