

Chapter 7

College Years in Bonn and Leipzig

*What does not destroy me, makes me stronger.*¹

After excelling at the Schulpforta, Nietzsche enrolled at the University of Bonn in 1864 to study theology and classical philology. His interest in philology stemmed from his study of Greek and Latin at the Schulpforta and his close association with Greek culture to which previous chapters alluded. In Bonn however, he had several negative experiences that led him to cut short his studies and transfer to Leipzig. One of these was the generally conservative bent of Bonn's faculty. As was the case at many schools of that time emphasis was placed on creating scholars in specific fields. Students enrolled in theology or philology, for example, were taught with the specific professions of classical philologist, cleric, or researcher as the ultimate end towards which the training prepared the students. Contrast this focused "job training" approach with Nietzsche's interdisciplinary interests at the time. In 1864, Nietzsche was composing a great deal of music including his twelve lieder and the "Sylvesternacht," a piece for violin and piano. He was also writing a number of poems and had immersed himself in the study of Byron and Shakespeare. Besides his varied interests, perhaps what most rankled his Bonn professors was his insistence on applying philology (historic and comparative linguistics) to contemporary culture and society. Attending school in the midst of Bismarck's Prussia and the corresponding rampant nationalism provided Nietzsche many such opportunities.²

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. and ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin, 1982), 463-563; 467: Maxims and Arrows, 8; (TI).

² From a letter to von Gersdorff in April of that year, "If the philosophers ruled, then ôü ðëçèð (mass of the people) would be lost; if the mass rules, as it does now, it still behoves the philosopher, *raro in gurgite*

When taken in combination with his dismissal of Christianity³ only two years earlier and the resulting deconstructionist approach to theology this dismissal engendered, the conflicts between Bonn's conservative academicians and the interdisciplinary interests of Nietzsche are apparent.

Secondly, and more importantly, Nietzsche felt deeply lonely and out of place in Bonn. Nietzsche was away from his close friends at Pforta, and further still from his family in Naumburg. This dislocation was heightened by the undisciplined social situation in Bonn. The large school had a very active social scene, replete with drunken parties and frequent trips to the town's brothels. Coming from a strict Lutheran upbringing and the disciplined atmosphere of Schulpforta, Nietzsche had little experience with the frequent Bacchanals, and his decision to join a fraternity in order to combat his feelings of isolation only increased such exposures. In a letter home, Nietzsche describes his loneliness and relates a particularly disturbing experience in which his fraternity brothers lured him to a brothel. According to his account, the lurid surroundings so astonished and disgusted him that he could not move or speak, and it was only upon seeing a piano in the corner that his trance was broken and he spent the remainder of the night alone with his music. Although the validity of this letter's account may be questioned upon considering its recipient, there are numerous other letters that corroborate his distaste for the Bonn social scene.

His studies there lasted only a year, and he transferred to the University of Leipzig in 1865, choosing to drop his theology studies and concentrate on philology.

vasto (from Virgil: "Only a few swimmers appear in the vast ocean"), like Aeschylus, ἀβ+áÜëëüð öñïðYáéð (from *Agamemnon*: "Separate from others, I think my own thoughts.") Middleton, 13.

³ See page 81.

Throughout his year in Bonn, his dissatisfaction with Christianity—already strong—increased to such a point that his feelings toward theology moved from rebellion to disgust. Not only had Christianity lost its appeal, but the entire sphere of discussion had also become tainted in Nietzsche's eyes. His professors taught the pros and cons of currently accepted issues, and had little patience for "thinking outside the box." As Nietzsche was to later reveal in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, his conception was of a complete revaluation of religion. His allusions to such a goal no doubt threatened his professors, who had little patience for the young, socially challenged upstart.

Although his stay in Bonn was brief and his dissatisfaction is well documented,⁴ it would be wrong to claim it had no effect on his development. Despite his complaints, the conservatism of his professors found some resonance with the young student who, only a few years earlier, had voiced his disdain for the "music of the future" and claimed to be firmly grounded on late eighteenth century German cultural ideals. His letters to his mother and sister reveal a continuity in his generally conservative musical tastes and include requests for the music of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Schumann.⁵ Although these same letters also display his first independent interest in Liszt's piano music, it seems to have come more from Nietzsche's need to study Liszt's new ideas rather than any love for the music.⁶ It was also during this time that Nietzsche participated in the large Lower Rhenish Music Festival. An avid chorist, Nietzsche performed the conservatively classical repertoire of the festival with enthusiasm.

⁴ See HKB I, 301-333 for numerous letters home, complaining of Bonn's provincial attitudes.

⁵ HKB I, 240.

⁶ Love, 29.

Such a return to classical tendencies is specifically apparent in his *Zwölf Lieder* written that same year. After experimenting with less structured forms in the preceding few years (i.e. *Ermanarich*), Nietzsche here returns to the well-established *lieder*. The nine of these that survive exhibit forms similar to his earlier *lieder*, but with less developmental material in the conclusions. They seem somewhat tempered by classical values of formal integrity and adhere more closely to a rounded binary or simple binary form. The *lied*, *Das Kind an die erloschene Kerze* displays the latter form and employs some interesting harmonic variants to enliven the short strophic song. Indicative of this is his insertion of an unexpected augmented chord to reflect a sudden expression of despair in the text (ex. 31). While Nietzsche had frequently used harmonic surprises in his earlier *lieder*, this particular instance shows significantly more sophistication. Unlike the earlier chromatic episodes that were truly surprises, Nietzsche works this chord into the surrounding fabric in a typographically coherent way. Following the V chord on the first beat of measure fourteen, the C⁺ chord initially appears to lack any deeper harmonic meaning than the mere “surprise” chords that fill Nietzsche’s earlier compositions. The next measure, however, reveals the C⁺ to be a partial V/ii over an anticipation. The bass C is revealed as the bass note of the subsequent ii 6/3 chord and the E and G# are the root and third of the E major chord (V/ii). This interpretation is reinforced in the last half of measure fifteen and the first half of measure seventeen, where the V/ii → ii progression is repeated over the same anticipation. In this passage, Nietzsche combines structure and affect in a way not found in his earlier *lieder*. In a passage that even Hanslick would have appreciated, Nietzsche appeals to the intellect and the emotions.

The attention to detail found in *Das Kind an die erloschene Kerze* can be found throughout these lieder and, taken in conjunction with their charm and pleasing proportions, make them worthy of performance. It should not be assumed, however, that in writing these pieces he abandoned the knowledge gleaned from his earlier experiments. In fact, of the nine surviving lieder from this group, five of them end in different keys than the keys in which they began. Only *Beschwörung*, *Nachspiel*, *Das Kind...*, and *Es winkt und neigt sich* maintain the same key throughout the piece. In the case of *Verwelkt*, Nietzsche completes the transition from one tonic to another within the span of only sixteen measures! The text of *Verwelkt* (“Wilting”) lends itself well to a melodramatic setting, and Nietzsche’s non-tonic ending contributes a good deal of melodrama. The text by Sandor Petöfi is as follows:

You, in truth, were my only flower.
 Now that you’ve withered, my life is bare.
 You were the radiant sun for me,
 you left-now night enfolds me.

You were my soul’s lightest pinion,
 you broke – and now I can never fly.
 You were my lifeblood’s warmth,
 you fled – the frost will surely kill me.⁷

Each line is set to a four bar phrase in which the first two measures contain an upward melodic contour and the last two measures move downward, ending on the dominant. Nietzsche’s setting of “Verwelkt” to this point is unsurprising given the established rhythm of contrasts within the text itself. Nietzsche makes a significant change in the final line however, inserting a subdominant pedal in the penultimate measure (ex. 32). In

⁷ Spencer, 34.

the previous three systems, the subdominant harmony had always continued to a dominant half-cadence. In the conclusion however, the subdominant “gets stuck” and pulls the harmonies towards itself, eventually ending without any sign of a cadence. In an ingenious bit of tone painting, the bass line “succumbs” to the frost while the overlying harmonies gradually lose momentum and fall into the subdominant tonality. The union of Nietzsche’s unique musical tendencies with a higher degree of musical refinement can be seen throughout this set of lieder, making them some of his best works. That Nietzsche himself realized the quality of these works is evidenced by his collection of the seven Petofi and Chamisso lieder into a bound volume. He presented the collection to his mother at Christmas, 1865, along with a copy of his own poem, “Es wingt und neigt sich.”⁸ In light of such musical successes, Nietzsche’s thoughts of abandoning philology and devoting himself to music seem less like delusions (as Earnest Newmann would later call them) and more like a valid career choice. If it were not for certain experiences shortly after the “Zwölf Lieder” were written that caused Nietzsche to take a sabbatical from composition, his life may have been radically different.

As a philology student in Bonn, Nietzsche attended lectures by Otto Jahn and Friedrich Wilhelm Ritschl. Jahn was a biographer of Mozart and had studied at the University of Berlin under Karl Lachmann - a philologist known both for his studies of the Roman philosopher Lucretius and for having developed the genealogical method in textual recension. Ritschl was a classics scholar whose work centered on the Roman comic poet Plautus. Although Nietzsche claimed to have fled Bonn “like a fugitive,” his discussion of Lucretius in *The Birth of Tragedy* attests to the lasting impression made by

⁸ MN, 332-333.

his Bonn professors. One of these professors was Hermann Deiters, who was later to write an authoritative biography of Johannes Brahms. Through their interaction Nietzsche gained an appreciation of Brahms that would stay with him the rest of his life.⁹ In addition, Frederick Love suggests that it was through this association that Nietzsche first encountered the works of Eduard Hanslick. Hanslick was perhaps the most influential musical critic of the nineteenth century and is generally regarded as a staunch conservative. According to Peter Kivy, “Hanslick is famous, even infamous, for his view that expressive properties play no essential role in music...”¹⁰ A gifted writer, Hanslick was perhaps best known for his harsh critiques of Wagner’s music. Nietzsche first came across his book, *On the Musically Beautiful*, in the spring of 1865 and studied it as closely and carefully as he approached all of his intellectual acquisitions.¹¹ Based on Nietzsche’s genius for comprehending subtleties, it can be assumed that he went beyond the oversimplified evaluations of Hanslick that summarize his thought in the phrase, “music for music’s sake.”

Although Hanslick denies that music can express human emotion, it does not follow that he believes music cannot be expressive. His critiques address, rather, the misconception that composers should attempt to translate their emotions into their music. Musical genius exists in the ability to create intricate formal structures that delight not only our intellectual faculties, but create emotional responses as well.

⁹ See chapter 9 for Nietzsche and Wagner’s dispute over Brahms’ *Triumphlied*.

¹⁰ Peter Kivy, *In Music Alone: Philosophical Reflections on the Purely Musical Experience* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991), 185.

¹¹ A well-worn copy of the book - filled with copious notes – was found in Nietzsche’s library after his death.

... as the creation of a thinking and feeling mind, musical composition has in a high degree the capability to be itself full of ideality and feeling. This ideal content we demand of every musical artwork. It is to be found only in the tone-structure itself, however, and not in any other aspect of the work.¹²

Elsewhere Hanslick more directly states that, “the ultimate worth of the beautiful is always based on the immediate manifestation of feeling.”¹³ It is, therefore, not difficult to imagine that Nietzsche saw much in Hanslick’s writings that agreed with his own aesthetics. The idea of music as a mere vehicle for transmitting an individual’s passing moods reduced music’s inherently noble station and placed it on a par with a cheaply bought cliché or greeting card. While Hanslick would argue that music’s structure admits of no mere mapping of emotion to musical composition, Nietzsche would add that even if such a thing were possible, it would grossly misuse music’s nearly limitless expressive ability to convey ideas easily encoded in language. In any case, Hanslick’s harsh criticisms of formal and harmonic excess must have struck a chord with Nietzsche as far as his own music was concerned. Already made aware of his technical weakness through his exposure to Bonn’s musical society, Hanslick’s association of musical beauty with detail and precision further undermined Nietzsche’s musical confidence. In a discussion of his compositional skills he writes, “I will become a little more critical so that I may no longer deceive myself.”¹⁴ His critical attitude was heightened by the emotional gloom that settled over him during his year in Bonn. Nietzsche found himself alone and lonely in Bonn, and deeply missed his friends and family. Impatient for his transfer to Leipzig, he wrote “I am very much cheered by the idea of a completely different life in Leipzig,

¹² Eduard Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful*, trans. G. Payzant (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1986), 31.

¹³ *Ibid.*, xxii.

¹⁴ HKB I, 333.

where I will be with dear friends and near Naumburg and in the middle of a city filled with music.”¹⁵ It was this same atmosphere that caused Nietzsche to swear off composition altogether in early 1865.¹⁶

While Nietzsche did, in fact, return to composition, the almost six month break represents the longest period of inactivity since he had begun composing in earnest. It was only on the occasion of his sister’s birthday that he began to compose again. In a letter accompanying his musical birthday present, he explains his loneliness in Bonn and the sweet memories he has of their familiar birthday celebrations. It was to assuage this nostalgia that he again turned to composing, although a distinct note of irony in this new composition attests to the strength of his earlier resolution and the continuance of his newly heightened critical sensibilities. In the song, *Junge Fischerin*, Nietzsche departs from his well-established lied-form and borrows a page from “Zukunftsmusik.” In the same letter, he explains, “It is a song in the highest futuristic style (Zukunftsstile) with the requisite crying-out (Aufschrei) and all the ingredients of similar foolishness.”¹⁷ In light of such an appraisal, *Junge Fischerin* can be seen variously as a caricature of new music or an attempt to understand it.

Perhaps the most striking difference to be found in *Junge Fischerin* is its mood. Nietzsche's own angst-ridden poem is accompanied by a jagged melody filled with chromatic alterations to create a work filled with emotion. The poem itself was written several years earlier in the summer of 1862. Its use of mythical figures reflects his

¹⁵ HKB, 323.

¹⁶ In a letter to von Gersdorff at the end of the summer Nietzsche writes, “Perhaps I wrote you around the new year that I would no longer compose music or poetry.” HKB I, 333.

¹⁷ HKB I, 331-332.

interests at that time, and can be seen as a poetic response to his research into Scandinavian and Slavic epics. Besides the subject matter, the poem sharply contrasts with his other works. The affirmation of life, replete with its miseries and ecstasies is here replaced with a longing for death and negation. In *Das Kind an die erloschene Kerze*, Nietzsche's characteristic embrace of all aspects of life is evident:

You poor, poor candle, you'll give no more light,
 so quickly has your flame
 gone out, your bright and cheerful flame!
 For so it had to be!
 You poor, poor candle, you'll give no more light!
 It's not because I now have to lie here in darkness!
 If only you still burned,
 and if only your dear light
 gave joy to others!
 It's not because I now have to lie here in darkness!
 You poor, poor candle, you'll give no more light!
 It's not because I'm all alone
 in the dark and crying.
 I like to be on my own!
 You poor, poor candle, you'll give no more light!¹⁸

Note especially the phrase, "It's not because I now have to lie here in darkness," and its background of contentment. While not denying the miseries of life, and in many instances actually glorifying them, Nietzsche chooses texts for his songs that explore the darker aspects of life in order to bring out its glories. Now compare this to the nihilism of "Junge Fischerin."

Of a morning I dream in silence
 and watch the clouds go by
 whenever the young day trembles
 gently through the trees.

The mists seethe and surge,
 over there lies the dawn.

¹⁸ Spencer, 36.

Oh, no one knows
how sad I am.

Coolly and softly the sea surges past,
restless and tireless,
and I shudder strangely.
I close my eyes.

I don't want to see the mist.
Does death lurk within it?
Ah, no one can understand
why I am so faint-hearted.

With tear-moistened eyes
I seek you.
In the bright red of dawn I see a light,
it is you that greets me.

You come through the veiling mists,
riding upon the wind,
you come to calm my heart
the heart of the poor fishermaid.¹⁹

The longing for death inherent in this poem can be compared to themes running throughout *Tristan und Isolde*, to which Nietzsche had been exposed only shortly before writing the text. That he would send his sister such an ironic inscription might indicate a recognition of the Wagnerian aspects of his poem.

Departing from this turbulent origin, the music also surges with late romantic angst. Although still based on eight bar phrases that approximately match the poetic lines, Nietzsche allows himself more freedom when balancing his phrases. In his "Zwolf Lieder," for example, eight measure phrases are composed of two balanced four-measure sections that frequently display the same or similar harmonic progressions and strikingly similar melodies. Now, however, the second four measure section departs further from

¹⁹ Spencer, 39-40.

the first section while maintaining enough similarities to tie together the eight measure phrase. In the opening stanza, the first five measures (including a measure of introduction) lay out a melodic motif and a harmonic expansion of I (F major). The second four measures include a similar melodic contour, but with significant melodic and rhythmic embellishments. The underlying harmonies also depart from the earlier statement, moving from the tonic to the relative minor. Employing this level of alteration so early in the lied distinguishes *Junge Fischerin* from his earlier lieder and perhaps this is what he meant in the letter to his sister when he referred to its "Zukunftsmusik" characteristics. Despite a change of degree in strophic embellishments, the overall form and harmonic vocabulary remains very similar to his earlier works. This similarity, however, is hidden under a layer of heretofore unseen affects that easily mask more familiar structures. It is this surface appearance of a change in compositional techniques that prompted Love to refer to *Junge Fischerin* as "...an extravagant departure from ... his 'serious' Lieder."²⁰ The mini-developments of earlier works is also evident here in the form of an instrumental interlude with a quasi-improvisational vocal cadenza (ex. 33). The piece ends with the requisite recollection of the opening material and comes to a surprisingly traditional conclusion in the tonic. Behind the chromaticism and rhythmic adventurousness however, it remains a characteristically Nietzschean lied. Through an examination of this "aberrant" lied, several Nietzschean characteristics come into focus. Beyond his formal idiosyncracies and harmonic vocabulary, his works can be seen as fundamentally rhetorical. The underlying theme of the text dictates the choice of musical material within the lied form. A mood of uncertainty in the text is mirrored in

²⁰ Love, 29.

corresponding harmonic or melodic alterations, and the macroscopic structure is derived from the text's content. A text describing a dynamic emotional state will spawn a musical accompaniment with a dynamic tonal atmosphere and a text that delves into a single facet will be accompanied by music that explores a narrower harmonic region. Upon realizing the inherently rhetorical structure of Nietzsche's music, it becomes easier to evaluate such wide-ranging genres as the oratorio, lied, and symphonic poem under a unified rubric.

Upon transferring to the University of Leipzig later that year, Nietzsche discarded his theology studies altogether and devoted his time—academically at least—to philology. His choice of Leipzig had much to do with Ritschl's disillusionment in Bonn and subsequent move to Leipzig.²¹ Following his teacher, Nietzsche unknowingly transferred to Wagner's alma mater and placed himself in close proximity to Wagner's family—a circumstance that would shortly lead to the two men's meeting. Once in Leipzig, Nietzsche quickly established his own academic reputation through his published essays on Aristotle, Theognis and Simonides. Through studying these writers, Nietzsche developed a keen interest in Greek and Roman conceptions of rhythm and meter.²² In fact, he would write an article a few years later on the Danae fragment by Simonides and attribute the beginnings of his interest in the subject to his time in Bonn²³. What he discovered was a system of rhythm (both spoken and musical) completely alien to western tradition. While western rhythm is organized around uniform collections of temporal units, with an internal hierarchy of emphasis within each collection, the Greek system is characterized by *lack* of accents and metric regularity. Instead of indicating an

²¹ HK V, 255.

²² James Porter, *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000); 127-131.

²³ HKB II, 102-103.

organizational hierarchy through volume or timbre, it is indicated by duration. Certain notes are held longer than others (frequently associated with spoken habit), and all the tones represent various integer accumulations of an underlying pulse or *chrono*.

Aristoxenus describes this “atomistic” system as follows: “...*chronoi* are the minima of rhythmical *synthesis*, or composition, that get thrown into complex interrelations, the perceptual effect of which is rhythm. They are, in effect, *atoms of rhythm*.”²⁴ Therefore while modern western rhythm is *metric*, ancient Greek rhythm was *quantitative*.

In the midst of his rhythmic studies, Nietzsche composed two short works setting texts by Lord Byron. Nietzsche’s “Sonnet des Schlaflosen” and “O weint um sie” were composed in December 1865 and January 1866; both unfinished, the former was scored for voice and piano, and the latter for accompanied choir. Though incomplete, both pieces exhibit enough continuity and detail to establish certain unique traits; in fact, the second of these was deemed complete enough for performance at Concordia University in Montreal in 1992-1993 under the watchful eye of Mr. Janz. Both pieces display an unusual rhythmic pattern in which a persistent eighth note pulse appears and reappears throughout the works. In itself, an eighth note ostinato is not unusual and can be found in many of Schubert’s lieder and Beethoven’s piano sonatas. Two aspects of this application, however, make it worthy of note: the unusual juxtaposition of the ostinato with the melodic material, and its odd, inconsistent appearance. In both cases, they represent significant departures from Nietzsche’s earlier works that - although also employing eighth note ostinati—do so in a highly conventional, if not clichéd, manner.

²⁴ Cited in Porter, *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future*, 132.

Compare, for example, measures 10-12 of *Sonne des Schlaflosen* with any measure in *Ständchen* (ex. 34). In the latter song, the eighth notes are used to create an accompanimental pattern and have a rhythmic and harmonic shape that emphasizes the meter. In the former, the eighth notes do little to establish the harmony and change their melodic pattern frequently.

The melodies of both pieces exhibit a rhythmic complexity that weakens the meter. The pick up notes and frequent syncopations of the opening to *O weint um sie* make any identification of a triple meter difficult and imply, if anything, a sort of alternating meter between duple and quadruple (ex. 35). The opening of *Sonne des Schlaflosen* presents an even greater challenge to the listener with its pentuplet, overlapping quarter and dotted quarter notes, and tie across the bar line (ex. 36). Throughout both works conventionally emphasized beats are de-emphasized and flourishes are placed on conventionally weak beats. After such rhythmically ambiguous introductions, the intermittent eighth note pulse acts as a measure of durations and provides proportions between melodic notes. In this unique setting, traditional notational implications are deconstructed and shown in a new light. Traditionally, a note with a duration of two and a half beats is most frequently notated as a half note tied to an eighth note. The implication of this is that a syncopation is involved and the eighth note becomes a rhythmic anticipation or suspension. The half note almost always appears on the first or the third beat of the measure (the strong beats in common time) and the eighth note represents the syncopation of that beat. When the system of metric emphases is weakened however, so are the implications of rhythmic notation. The performer may still react to such nomenclature by stressing notes as if a syncopation existed, but the

framework of expectation that creates the surprise and rhythmic interest inherent in syncopation is absent.

In both Byron fragments, Nietzsche repaints individual rhythmic values as durations, rather than metric indicators. The half note tied to an eighth note is therefore reduced to a note lasting the equivalent of five eighth note pulses (an eighth note receiving half a beat in common time). The rhythmic emphasis of *placement* is here replaced with an emphasis of *duration*. In the short phrase, “ihr Tempel wüst, ein Traum ihr Land,” “Traum” and “Land” are emphasized by having the longest durations (four beats) despite their appearances on the second beat and the third beat, respectively (ex. 37). Highly unusual for mid-eighteenth century composition, Nietzsche’s use of quantitative rhythm is more comparable to that of Steve Reich’s than to most of his contemporaries. Lest Nietzsche’s use of quantitative rhythm be overstated however, the inconsistent and brief manner in which he applies the technique in these works must be stressed. Alternating with the above mentioned passages one finds traditional metrically oriented passages. But despite the limited use of quantitative rhythms, the probability of a connection between this unusual musical experiment and his simultaneous study of ancient Greek and Roman texts on meter and rhythm is difficult to refute.

Shortly after composing the Byron lieder came Nietzsche’s momentous yet accidental discovery of Arthur Schopenhauer’s *The World as Will and Representation* in a local bookstore owned by Rohde’s father. Much has been made of this event, so much so, in fact, that it has taken on mythic proportions. It does not help that Nietzsche himself is quoted as saying he heard a demon whisper in his ear, “Take this book home with

you.”²⁵ Despite the fact that Nietzsche quickly read and absorbed the work and made numerous references to Schopenhauer throughout his life, one must not assume Nietzsche’s philosophical output is a mere *revision* of Schopenhauer’s thought. As was discussed earlier, Nietzsche absorbed Schopenhauer’s language and concepts in order to enrich his own, highly unique and highly rhetorical philosophy. In the “Critique of Schopenhauer,” from 1867, he summed up this dualistic evaluation when he wrote, “The errors of great men are venerable because they are more fruitful than the truths of little men...”²⁶ Schopenhauer’s impact can best be seen as a catalyst that throughout Nietzsche’s life repeatedly engendered critiques and observations.

In addition to Leipzig’s academic benefits, Nietzsche also saw Leipzig as an opportunity to further his musical knowledge. As his investigation of Liszt’s music showed, Nietzsche was not content with his limited understanding and exposure to contemporary music. Although Germania had broadened his horizons considerably, he still lacked first-hand experience of the “Zukunftsmusik.” The conservative attitudes of the University of Bonn had been echoed in the town itself, and the music performed there was rarely more recent than Schumann. In a letter from 1865, he states his hopes that he will be able to hear more modern music in cosmopolitan Leipzig.²⁷ When Nietzsche first arrived in Leipzig, it appeared as if he would get his chance to hear the music of Wagner and Liszt performed. A series of ten “Zukunftsmatineeën” were to be performed in Leipzig that school year and were to include concert settings of several Wagner operas.

²⁵ Cited in “Nietzsche” by Paul Elmer More; found in <http://www.execpc.com/~berrestr/mornie.html>; accessed January 29, 2002.

²⁶ Cited in Kaufmann, 30.

²⁷ HKB I, 333.

As was frequently the case with performances of Wagner's works, the ambitious plans resulted in modest performances, and only four of the ten are recorded to have been held.²⁸ From a lack of correspondence concerning the concerts, it can be assumed Nietzsche did not attend any of these performances. In spite of his increased exposure to contemporary music, by his second semester at Leipzig Nietzsche could still write, "Three things allow me to convalesce, albeit rarely, my Schopenhauer, Schumann's music, and endless hikes."²⁹ Attention should be paid, however, to Nietzsche's use of the term "convalesce." It has been well-documented that he had, by this time, located several flaws in Schopenhauer's system and was aware of his own divergence from the author of *Will and Representation*. Calling his works a means to "convalesce" (otherwise translated as "relaxation" or "rest") points to a sort of guilty pleasure. It can be reasoned, therefore, that Nietzsche's attitudes toward Schumann had begun to reflect his new aesthetics. Listening to music that did not directly engage the aesthetic principles he intricately investigated, although surely pleasurable, had begun to produce the devout intellectual pangs of guilt.

That spring Nietzsche had the opportunity to study the piano reduction of Wagner's *Die Walküre*. It is unclear if he purchased the book or borrowed a friend's copy, but his detailed critique attests to his study of the work.³⁰ Nietzsche's exposure to Hanslick's detachment and abstraction can be seen as he takes on the air of professional critic. He begins by pointing out Wagner's unique aesthetic and the unusual position in

²⁸ From the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, cited in Love, 35.

²⁹ HKB II, 45.

³⁰ HKB II, 97-98.

which it places the critic. “Because the purported education of R. Wagner is not yet completed and the last fruits to be ripened by these new principles are not yet harvested, each judgement over his output as a whole is necessarily prejudiced.” Showing an objectivity to Wagner’s art that he would never again demonstrate, Nietzsche claims the principles behind “Wagner’s singular art” to be filled with both “virtues and mistakes,” and claiming, rightfully, that the attribution of either valuation would vary with the critic. In true Hanslickian fashion, Nietzsche then goes on to criticize Wagner’s indication of “Stürmisch” for the overture. An orchestra can not play “stormily,” nor can the conductor encourage “storminess,” if anything, the label can only apply to the composition itself. In any case, claims Nietzsche, “only the reader would know it describes a storm.” He goes on to criticize other programmatic indications, holding to the irreconcilability of music and literal programs.

Although Nietzsche would have most likely given a different critique had he *heard* the overture rather than reading a piano reduction of it³¹, his critique highlights several important distinctions between Nietzsche and Wagner’s views toward music in general and opera in particular. The next few years witnessed a sharp decline in Nietzsche’s musical output. It seems that his composition of “Junge Fischerin” truly *had* been an individual response to an emotional circumstance, and that the factors behind his resolution to cease composing remained strong. While the years from 1860-1864 included dozens of compositions and sketches, he worked on only four pieces from 1865-1870, completing only one. His notebooks and letters from these years still indicate a

³¹ It would not be until October of 1868 that Nietzsche first heard Wagner’s music performed. He heard, and fell in love with, *Der Meistersinger*.

passion for music, and continue to mention his continued improvisation at the piano, but he rarely attempted notating them. His study of Hanslick, as well as lectures by Deiters must have given him a greater appreciation for the intricacies of musical composition. Perhaps in response to this, Nietzsche seems to have begun learning more music written by others. In contrast to his earlier letters in which he writes of improvising with friends or performing his own compositions at social gatherings, his letters from Leipzig allude to the increasing number of Liszt and Wagner pieces in his performance repertoire. In one letter to Rohde, Nietzsche mentions a song from *Der Meistersinger* that he had previously played for him, and in other letters to Sophie Ritschl mentions piano “concerts” he had given her.³² Characteristic of Nietzsche is his life-long habit of completely immersing himself in any topic in which he was interested. His earlier absorption of Nordic and Slavic epics is mirrored repeatedly in his academic studies as well. His studies of Lucretius’ works, for example, entailed reading every scrap of material available to him at the time. It is, therefore, fitting that he would attempt to ingest as much music as possible to append any compositional weaknesses he felt. That he was addressing these weaknesses by absorbing Wagner’s music would reap unforeseen benefits only a few months later when he met the composer in person.

³² HKB II, 265.