

Chapter 9

Compositions During the Wagner Years

I believe that artists often do not know what they can do best, because they are too vain and have fixed their minds on something prouder than those small plants seem to be that really can grow on their soil to perfection and are new, strange, and beautiful.¹

As was earlier discussed, Nietzsche's rate of musical composition dropped off considerably after he began his university studies. After securing an academic post several years later and moving with Wagner's circle, he again turned to composition as a creative outlet. His return to composition hardly constituted a return to old compositional styles however, and his musical output from 1870-1873 exhibits significant differences from his earlier works. No longer considering a career in music, and faced with Wagner's incomparable works in a very immediate sense, his music took on a more personal characteristic. The experimentation that indicated an attempt to hone his musical skills in his lieder and short piano works was largely replaced with rhetoric in these later compositions. The increased attention to detail and proper musical notation found most notably in his *Zwölf Lieder* of 1864 seems to have been forgotten. As an active participant in Wagner's musical revolution and through the role of Wagner's academic ambassador, Nietzsche's musical priorities shifted from music's "nuts and bolts" to an attempt to portray through music these new ideals. This led to musical forms that were either achieved spontaneously or were dictated by rhetoric. Such rhetorically mandated compositions ballooned to lengths that dwarfed his earlier miniatures, and sharply highlighted Nietzsche's problems with large-scale compositions. If Nietzsche

¹ GS, 142-143: 87.

had only intended such compositions for his own enjoyment or for that of his friends and family, such excesses would be understandable. Unfortunately for Nietzsche, he chose to present these works to the greatest musical minds of his time, thereby significantly increasing the standards against which his works were measured and subjecting him to withering criticisms.

Before examining his “rhetorical works”² in detail, a bit of historical context must first be established. Throughout the late 1860’s, Otto von Bismarck—chancellor of Prussia—had been engaged in intense political maneuvering to unite the disparate German states. The romantic nationalism rampant in Europe was felt most strongly in the German speaking areas where a united nation had not existed since Charlemagne and the Holy Roman Empire of the high middle ages. Playing on both nationalism and race theory, as well as geopolitical struggles between the Hapsburgs and the French and English, Bismarck manipulated the suspicions and prejudices of nearby nobility to pull more and more states into the Prussian sphere. As Bismarck’s Prussia grew to encompass the majority of German speakers, the German’s themselves began to envision a powerful *Reich* that would finally represent German interests on the international stage. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the German-speaking world witnessed a cultural renaissance the magnitude of which compared only to that of the ancient Greeks. While such grand historical comparisons are certainly a matter of

² Nietzsche’s works from 1871 to 1874 exhibit such striking stylistic similarities that establishing a subset of his works is extremely applicable and convenient. Therefore, his works from that time – “Manfred Meditation,” “Nachklang einer Sylvesternacht, mit Prozessionslied, Bauerntanz und Glockengeläute,” “Monodie à deux,” – will be referred to as his “rhetorical works.”

debate,³ there was a strong feeling throughout modern-day Germany that the *Reich* was the natural evolution from cultural superiority to political superiority.

Nietzsche too had been caught up in the fervent nationalism surrounding Bismarck's successes and felt compelled to do his part to advance German ideals. Having given up his Prussian citizenship to take up Swiss citizenship for his post at Basel, Nietzsche entered the war as a volunteer. Due to his previous military injury, as well as his remarkably poor vision, he was assigned to assist the medical orderlies. The war was a short one—by September the Prussians had captured Emperor Napoleon III and by the following January Wilhelm had been crowned German Kaiser in the palace of Versailles—yet even shorter for Nietzsche. Shortly after reaching the front lines, Nietzsche took ill and had to return to Basel to recuperate. Whether he contracted a disease while administering to sick soldiers or the stresses of military service brought on a relapse of earlier maladies, Nietzsche would never truly recover his health. His records after his military service show repeated sabbaticals due to his poor health and his letters indicate a constant state of illness. His poor eyesight combined with his ravenous intellectual appetite for books led to chronic migraines that would leave him incapacitated for days on end, with such episodes sometimes occurred on a weekly basis. His poor digestion—the motivating factor for his ill-fated experiment with vegetarianism—limited his meals to only the blandest and simplest fare. All of these factors served to heighten Nietzsche's sense of the tragic, and in an interesting

³ The Italians, to mention just one culture, would certainly disagree with the oversight of the Renaissance, as would the Islamic world in reference to their centuries of cultural and scientific advancements.

psychological sidebar, contribute a likely motivation to his embrace of suffering as a means of spiritual growth.

On his way to the front lines to begin his service in August 1870, Nietzsche wrote *Ade! Ich muß nun gehen*, a brazenly patriotic vocal quartet. The style of the composition is an anomaly when compared to either his subsequent “rhetorical” style or his earlier lieder. The text itself is a formulaic restatement of a soldier’s farewell to his true love, including references to greater purposes and willing martyrdom for his country and ideals.

Farewell! I am now leaving
for war along the Rhine.
My German brother stand there,
I want to join their line.
I know you truly,
Will join with heart and soul,
To save the Fatherland.⁴

The sixteen measure piece is divided into two complimentary eight bar phrases, each of those comprised of two four bar sections. Harmonically it is far simpler than any of Nietzsche’s earlier pieces and is rhythmically rudimentary. Perhaps this piece can best be seen as a bit of musical pragmatism. Marked “Marschartig” (in a marching style) the simple rhythms and conventional harmonies would make it easily performed by soldiers with limited musical training. Nietzsche’s sister claims he and his fellow soldiers sang it on the train to the front line, a claim that - although not substantiated in Nietzsche’s own writings - remains probable.

It is difficult to simultaneously account for his views in “On Music and Words” and this blatantly clichéd music. In the former, Nietzsche attacks what he calls “dramatic

⁴ MN, 84-85.

music” that serves only to inspire feeling in wearied nerves and makes unfavorable comparisons between mnemonic music and horns that call armies to battle. Is *Ade* not merely a call to battle? Instead of achieving a communion with the unknown beyond, this march marks time for those marching to war. The very creation of pragmatic music seems to run counter to Nietzsche’s aesthetic views. The fact that he would go on to write “On Music and Words” only a few months later brings the apparent conflict into even greater relief.

Perhaps the best explanation is to attribute this to the extraordinary atmosphere in which Nietzsche found himself. Throughout his youth (and in some respects, all the years preceding his break with Wagner) Nietzsche was vulnerable to situations that gave him a sense of belonging. The calls for a united German people would have resonated with a young man finding himself socially and intellectually isolated. One needs look no further than Nietzsche's volunteer entry into the Prussian ranks to find proof of the Reich's allure. Composing marching songs for his newfound comrades on the train to the front line is a natural extension of his patriotic fervor. That it flew in the face of his carefully delineated aesthetic writings was of no concern to Nietzsche the soldier. Only a few years after the conclusion of the Franco-Prussian war, Nietzsche would begin his harsh criticisms of the new German state - the seeds of which can be found in his earlier works. The gulf between his ideals and his actions in this respect provides an excellent analogy to his musical discrepancies.

Many in Germany felt a strong connection to ancient Greek culture, due significantly to the sustained cultural accomplishments of the two societies. In the span of a few centuries, the Greeks laid down the foundations for virtually all our current

academic disciplines. The list of fundamental breakthroughs is astonishing: Hippocrates and medicine, Euclid and geometry, Socrates and logic, Plato and politics, Aristotle and the natural sciences, Homer and epic poetry, Aeschylus and drama, Pythagoras and music. Moreover, throughout the Greeks' golden years they were a relatively small political and military force - capable of defending themselves and maintaining their political integrity, but avoiding the expansionist policies of their contemporary rivals. The German culture of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had undergone a similar cultural breakthrough. Kant and Hegel revolutionized philosophy, Bach, Mozart and Beethoven embodied the pinnacle of western music, and Schiller and Goethe created some of the greatest prose and poetry in western culture. Similarly, the Germans during this time maintained relatively little political and military presence, existing in small principalities or under the auspices of larger, foreign empires. The similarities between the two societies led many academics to appeal to the Hegelian conception of historical evolution for an explanation of past German accomplishments and a prediction of future achievements. Among these was Wilhelm von Humboldt, a scholar of Greek antiquity. He proposed that the process of scholastic splintering into increasingly partitioned disciplines prevalent in the early and mid nineteenth century needed to be remedied in order to sustain the intellectual growth of the preceding century. The key to such a unification was to re-emphasize the study of ancient Greek culture, in which the only pre-existent model of unified intellectual growth could be found.

Nietzsche, due to his intricate knowledge of the ancient Greeks and familiarity with the works of such academics as Humboldt, was uniquely impacted by these theories, although in contrasting ways. His enthusiasm for all things Greek in combination with

his love for the German masterpieces of Bach, Beethoven, Goethe and Schiller made him sympathetic to the pan-historic allusions and patriotic speeches of Bismarck and his supporters. Simultaneously, Nietzsche knew that it was precisely the nationalism and politicization everywhere evident in 1870's Prussia/Germany that had led to Greece's fall from glory. Extravagant military expenditures coupled with several military fiascos drained much of the Greek's energies - energies that had previously been directed to the arts and sciences. From his notebooks from late 1870 he goes so far as to write, "A state that cannot attain its ultimate goal usually swells to an unnaturally large size. The worldwide empire of the Romans is nothing sublime compared to Athens. ... The strength that really should go into the flower here remains in the leaves and stem, which flourish."⁵ To compound the problem, the move from culture to politics involved not only a reallocation of resources, but also a shift in societal values. Even more than a lack of money and manpower, it was the latter that led to Athens' eventual descent.

These very same themes run throughout the *Birth of Tragedy*. Nietzsche repeatedly refers to the overflowing of Greek power and its discharge through the arts. The society's immense psycho-spiritual strength allowed it to come face to face with life's underlying chaos. Through these interactions, their Dionysian side was developed and allowed to mature. In "Homer's Contest" Nietzsche points to struggle and battle as the underlying motivation of all art and creation. The strength harnessed from life's trials was channeled into contests that spurred the combatants to greater and greater heights. It was only when they began to lose their strength—when their superfluity of power degenerated into impotence—that they turned to politics and the Apollonian for solace.

⁵ Cited in Kaufmann, 32.

In fact, the state can be seen as an Apollonian artifice par excellence. What is it if not a carefully constructed illusion intended to reassure and pacify an anxious populace? While such observations remain primarily within the context of ancient Greece in the *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche's subsequent books eagerly bridge the centuries long gap between ancient Greece and the young German state and excoriate the nationalism symptomatic of societal decline. The "plop and relapse into old loves and narrowness"⁶ associated with nationalism does nothing but advocate, "...race hatred and to be able to take pleasure in the national scabies of the heart and blood poisoning that now leads the nations of Europe to delimit and barricade themselves against each other."⁷ That this composition of *Ade* is best considered as proof of his momentary absorption by the nationalistic furor of his day is further supported by a letter written the next year in which he completely ignores the vocal quartet. In it, he discusses a piece he had just written and mentions, "I had composed nothing for six years, and *this* autumn stimulated me again."⁸

After returning to Basel, he began working on the first of his rhetorical works, the *Nachklang einer Sylvesternacht mit Prozessionlied, Bauerntanz und Glockengeläute*. The unwieldy length and odd specificity of the title was not lost on Nietzsche, writing to von Gersdorff, "That is a jolly title; one might well have expected even too much: 'With Punchbowl and Wishes for the New Year.' Overbeck and I play the piece - it is now our pièce de résistance - with which we outdo all four-handed people."⁹ From his letters, it is evident Nietzsche was very fond of this piece, and performed it for anyone who would listen. He and Overbeck - by this time Nietzsche's roommate in Basel - found occasion to

⁶ BGE, 171-172: Peoples and Fatherlands, 241.

⁷ GS, 339: V, 377.

⁸ Middleton, 82.

⁹ Ibid., 83.

perform it for several of their professorial acquaintances. Nietzsche's fondness for dedications here exceeded the norm, as two dedications emerge from his letters. In his Christmas letter to his family, he dedicated it to his mother and sister for New Year's Eve and asked them to have Gustav Krug perform it for them.¹⁰ Only a few days later however, he had written Rohde: "To Frau Wagner, whose birthday is on 25 December (and to whom I would write if I were you!), I have dedicated my *Nachklang*, and am excited as to what I shall hear about my musical work from there, for I have *never* heard a competent judgment."¹¹ True to both his words, he sent a specially prepared manuscript to his mother and sister, and had an additional copy prepared for delivery to Tribschen in lieu of his personal appearance. The details surrounding the *Nachklang's* reception by the latter are famous enough to warrant their inclusion here.

Although he had spent the previous Christmas with the Wagners, he had turned down their invitation in 1871 in order to stay in Basel and work on his lectures. This, in itself, irritated both Richard and Cosima, who felt that their invitation had been a gracious and generous gift in itself—a view that reflected their general lack of respect for Nietzsche's non-Wagnerian interests. Partially as an attempt to rectify these hurt feelings, Nietzsche sent Cosima the piece as a birthday/Christmas present¹². In doing so Nietzsche was following in a tradition established the previous year by Richard, when he had arranged for a small chamber group to awake the family Christmas morning with his *Siegfried Idyll*; dedicated to Cosima for her birthday. Having been there for Richard's gift the year before, Nietzsche felt justified in presenting his own musical gift the

¹⁰ Ibid., 86.

¹¹ Ibid., 85.

¹² Cosima's birthday was December 25th.

following year.¹³ Following his directions, Cosima played the duet with their friend, Hans Richter. After a disparaging remark by their servant - "that doesn't appear to be too good to me" - Cosima became overcome with laughter and had to stop playing.¹⁴ Wagner himself fidgeted through the first half of the piece before leaving. Cosima summed up the family's reaction in her remark, "here we are, having been in contact with this man for one and a half years without having any clue of this, and now he approaches us stealthily, with his score under his cloak."¹⁵ To Nietzsche, they were more polite, albeit patronizing. "You compose too well for a professor."¹⁶

In Nietzsche's defense, he also received several positive critiques for *Nachklang*. Cosima had sent the score to her father, Franz Liszt, and in a letter to his sister Nietzsche mentions the virtuoso's favorable evaluation of *Nachklang*. Gustav Krug, Nietzsche's old childhood friend and respectable musician in his own right, also spoke highly of Nietzsche's latest effort. "Where your first 'Sylvesternacht' was fantastic but somewhat disorderly, the new piece steps with firmness and certainty and with the correct distribution of colors. Therefore the first impression was much more favorable (than the first *Sylvesternacht*) and increased with each further listening."¹⁷ In a telling letter to Krug asking for his assistance in the above-mentioned "premiere," he explains the piece is intended to convey his feelings and memories. Although he believed he had captured the memories to which the title alludes, his concerns were that, "...what one can perceive

¹³ Much has been made of Nietzsche's affection for Cosima. Although Wagner was many years his senior, the much younger Cosima was only seven years older than Nietzsche. His many gifts and enthusiastic correspondence with her further supports the suspicion and a letter written after his collapse proclaims his love for her. The Oedipal connotations of this relationship are obvious and for a more detailed discussion see: Carl Pletsch, *Young Nietzsche: Becoming a Genius* (New York: Free Press, 1991).

¹⁴ Cited in Walther.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ MN, 336-337.

¹⁷ Ibid.

in this music *without* my feelings, God alone knows."¹⁸. The piece originated as an attempt by Nietzsche to rewrite his earlier work, *Sylvesternacht* - a work for violin and piano. While borrowing the thematic material and several rhythmic motives from the earlier work for use in the first section, the majority of the later work is original.

The piece's structure is built around rhetorical expressions of the various activities mentioned in the title. Subsequently, there is a Prozessionslied (processional song) section, a Bauerntanz (farmer's dance) section, and a Glockengeläute (Bell's Chimes) section. In reality, the piece begins with a lengthy introduction even before the processional begins; an introduction that is almost wholly derived from the earlier "Sylvesternacht." Dominated by a quarter note—half note pattern, the triple meter introduction rambles on for forty measures until the processional enters. While touching on themes that appear later in the various sections, the opening lacks direction and wanders thematically as well as tonally. In certain respects, Nietzsche seems to have modeled it after the beginning of the last movement of Beethoven's ninth symphony. That such a qualitative discrepancy can exist between two applications of a similar rhetorical device simultaneously attests to Beethoven's genius and Nietzsche's difficulty with large forms. Perhaps if "Nachklang" had been scored for orchestra (as Nietzsche hints he would have liked to have done) the lack of organization could have been disguised with orchestral color and contrast. With a piano four-hand scoring however, the thin texture only highlights the lack of structure.

The processional begins with a hesitant announcement that is closely followed by dotted rhythm in double thirds that comprises the motivic content of the section (ex. 38).

¹⁸ Middleton, 90.

This motive continues in one part or the other for the next forty-nine measures with only a few respites. Accompanying the thirds motive are long note values that meander through several harmonies as the intensity builds through a constant crescendo. The cessation of the thirds motive (most likely a welcome event for listeners) corresponds with a recollection of material from the introduction - material that is quickly married to an altered form of the thirds motive (ex. 39). The new combination of motives persists, without pause, for the next twenty-five measures until the entire section appears to wind down as the tempo slows (“Langsam”), the texture thins and the register drops. However, the section is *not* over; instead the thirds motive resumes and we are treated to another twenty-five measures of this, by now, all too familiar material.

The other two sections—the farmer’s dance and the ringing of the bells—are not as redundant as the first but share many of the same problems. The farmer’s dance begins with a charming ländler that readily conjures up images of festive peasants stomping and dancing (ex. 40). But as his earlier works show, creating charming melodies was never Nietzsche’s problem. His greatest difficulty is prolonging the musical idea beyond the eight bar phrase—a difficulty that is evident throughout *Nachklang*. Throughout, Nietzsche’s answer is invariably repetition. Most often, the repetition is on such a small, motivic scale that it only serves to highlight the repetition itself rather than the material it is repeating. In the farmer’s dance, for example, he chooses to repeat the four eighth notes of the concluding measure (ex. 41). The final section is characterized by a return of all of the motives. Although they are occasionally layered on top of each other for an interesting result, all too often they appear singly and are repeated to build tension and excitement. The piece concludes with twelve soft B’s,

indicative of a clock striking twelve. Nietzsche's is a soft clock however, and the "pianissimo" and "pianississimo" marked in the conclusion create an anticlimactic ending and insinuate a rather strange New Year's Eve party wherein everyone leaves or falls asleep around midnight.

Nietzsche's other rhetorical pieces, *Monodie à deux*, and *Manfred-Meditation*, unfortunately share *Nachklang's* failings. With little skill for thematic development, Nietzsche invariably stoops to mere repetition to fill in the large gaps between rhetorical gestures. Exemplary of this is a fifty measure stretch of *Manfred Meditation* in which Nietzsche falls into his thirds motive from *Nachklang*. (ex. 42) The rhetorical gestures that border the vast expanses of redundancy themselves are all too obvious and predictable. Subsequently the whole works functions almost as a parody of itself. That Nietzsche wrote seriously flawed music is not surprising - the occasional appearance of such music is to be expected in light of his lack of training and experimental tendencies. What *is* surprising is his own enthusiasm towards these pieces. His letters are filled with requests for his friends and family to listen to his duets. Many of the faculty at Basel found themselves lured into performances of *Nachklang* or *Manfred Meditation* by Nietzsche and Overbeck. Perhaps this can be explained by his new social status resulting from his close friendship with Richard Wagner. Wagner's own confidence and optimism may have spilt over onto Nietzsche, particularly in respect to his musical abilities.

Regardless of what may have caused Nietzsche to have such a high opinion of his rhetorical works, by 1872 he felt confident enough to send a copy of his *Manfred Meditation* to Hans von Bülow for a critique. Although any professional musician to whom Nietzsche would have sent the score could not have been expected to return a

favorable verdict, extenuating circumstances made Bülow a particularly poor choice. Cosima, of whom Nietzsche was so fond, had been Bülow's wife and had taken up residence with Wagner long before officially divorcing Bülow. In fact, several of Bülow's children lived in the Wagner household, a situation that often required him to make the humiliating trek to Tribschen where he could visit his children in the home of his usurper. It was on one of these visits that Nietzsche, in fact, met Bülow. In combination with the poor quality of Nietzsche's submission, these factors led Bülow to write a scathing critique. As for the "Manfred Meditation" in particular, he found it,

“...the most fantastically extravagant, the most unedifying, the most anti-musical thing I have come across for a long time in the way of notes put on paper. Several times I had to ask myself whether it is all a joke, whether, perhaps, your object was to produce a parody of the so-called music of the future. Is it by intent that you persistently defy every rule of tonal connection, from the higher syntax down to the merest spelling? Apart from its psychological interest—for your musical fever suggests, for all its aberrations, an uncommon, a distinguished mind—your *Meditation*, looked at from a musical standpoint, is the precise equivalent of a crime in the moral sphere. ...

And as for Nietzsche's music in general, Bülow had the following comments:

You yourself, not without reason, describe your music as 'terrible'. It is indeed more terrible than you think—not detrimental to the common weal, of course, but something worse than that, detrimental to yourself, seeing that you can find no worse way of killing time than raping Euterpe in this fashion.”¹⁹

Nietzsche received Bülow's critique around July 1872 and took the criticisms, outwardly at least, with considerable aplomb. In a draft from a letter never sent, Nietzsche sets out a reply to Bülow that thanks him for his honesty and grasps at Bülow's suggestion that Nietzsche must have been overcome with some sort of fervor in order to commit such musical blasphemies. “Yet sometimes I have been overcome by such a

¹⁹ Cited in Newman, 324.

barbarically excessive urge [to compose], compounded of defiance and irony, that I have as much difficulty as you in perceiving sharply what is serious, what is caricature, and what is derisive mockery in my latest music.”²⁰ This outward appearance of grace and humor hid the fact that his pride had been hurt and, by realizing his compositional limitations, an important emotional outlet had been forever poisoned. As he confided to his old friend, Krug, in a letter later that July,

“...as I busied myself with my ridiculous fortissimi and tremoli always before me, I saw your wonderful voice leading and became ashamed [having recently read through a piece of Krug’s]... I have sworn off making music for at least six years. ‘The ocean has thrown me again on the land;’ last winter the name of that sandbank was that famous composition [Manfred Meditation].”²¹

Although Nietzsche did not follow through on his pact to foreswear composition for six years, his musical output from that point forward slowed to a trickle. From the summer of 1872 until his death in 1900—a span of twenty-eight years—he wrote only the *Monodie à deux* as a wedding gift to a friend, *Hymnus auf die Freundschaft*, three adaptations of the *Hymnus*, most of which are fragmentary, and a one or two uncompleted works, the dating of which is uncertain.²² To have his beloved music criticized so ferociously and by such a respected expert must have been far more painful than his letters would imply. As late as 1869, while finishing his studies in Leipzig, Nietzsche had considered abandoning philology and focusing entirely on music, writing: “...since my ninth year, music was what attracted me most of all; in that happy state in which one does not yet know the limits of one’s gifts and thinks that all objects of love are attainable, I had written countless compositions and had acquired a more than

²⁰ Middleton, 106.

²¹ HKB III, 235.

²² MN, 324-326.

amateurish knowledge of musical theory.”²³ In July 1872, Nietzsche was forced to learn of the “limits of one’s gifts” and discovered that all objects of love were, in fact, not attainable. Simultaneously, Nietzsche was being condemned by the philology community (see p.139-141) and his future as a philology professor had come into some doubt. Just as door after door seemed to be closing in Nietzsche’s face however, another path began to reveal itself—a path that would lead him to many of his greatest victories.

Shortly after that fateful summer, Nietzsche’s friendship with Wagner started to show signs of strain as the younger man began to exert his own individuality. Although signs of Nietzsche’s differences with Wagner could be seen as early as their argument over vegetarianism (see p. 127), Nietzsche had largely viewed Wagner as a sort of prophet whose absolute authority was justified by his artistic genius. This began to change as the preparations for Wagner’s theater at Bayreuth progressed and ideological disagreements that had previously been glossed over in the midst of ecstatic aesthetic discussions began to take on practical significance. An example of this can be found in a series of promotional pamphlets Wagner wanted written to raise financial support for his troubled project. He approached Nietzsche to write the “Call to the German People,” but received an unenthusiastic response. After several requests, Nietzsche agreed, although with considerable grumbling when out of Wagner’s earshot.²⁴ Upon submitting his pamphlet, the committee at Bayreuth promptly rejected it, choosing a different, less verbose appeal—a decision that netted them donations totaling all of twenty marks.

²³ Middleton, 47.

²⁴ He wrote to Rohde, “The request is also terrible... .Therefore I beg you , dear friend, with all urgency, to help me with this, in order to see if we can perhaps manage the monster together.” Middleton, 119.

When subsequently asked to submit a pamphlet entitled, “Call to the German Women,” Nietzsche flatly refused, causing some consternation in the Wagner household.

The situation surrounding Nietzsche’s rejection of the women’s pamphlet highlights a fundamental difference between him and Wagner that would grow through the next few years. Wagner’s womanizing is well known, and despite his glorification of female characters in his operas, he hardly believed in the equality of the sexes. Nietzsche is frequently placed in the same camp because of his oft-quoted attacks and derision of women,²⁵ yet a significant difference between their views exists. While Wagner considered women as a wholly different group, with a separate set of abilities and weaknesses from those of men, Nietzsche felt that qualitative differences between the genders were created by society. In fact, Nietzsche was a vociferous supporter of women’s admittance to Basel’s doctoral programs, not only voting for their admittance, but insisting that his dissenting vote (the measure failed miserably) be recorded. To understand this apparent contradiction, it is important to realize that his many criticisms of women pertained to the women of nineteenth century Europe, not the gender itself. He felt European society encouraged women to be accommodating, compassionate, compromising and non-confrontational—traits Nietzsche viewed as weaknesses and that he associated with “slave morality.” Whereas Wagner did not conceive of the possibility of meeting a woman he considered his equal, Nietzsche did, and was repeatedly disappointed that he could not find one.

²⁵ For example, “You are going to women? Do not forget the whip!” TSZ, 67: I, On the Little, Old and Young Women.

In a similar vein, Wagner's anti-semitism, vitriolic nationalism and racism began to weigh more heavily on Nietzsche's mind. Wagner's refined and articulate aesthetic views only brought his absolute, categorical dismissal of whole races and cultures into even sharper contrast. As Bayreuth preparations progressed, more and more of these prejudices began to take on practical significance, and Nietzsche's distaste for the whole affair continued to grow. In Nietzsche's journals from this time, he groups together "Wagner" and "the false 'German Spirit,'"²⁶ in one of his ubiquitous lists. Wagner's belief in German superiority clashed with Nietzsche's ideal of the "good European"²⁷ and his love for Voltaire and Bizet. Wagner's hatred towards Jews offended Nietzsche's dedication to treating humans as individuals. The Nietzsche presented by his sister, Elisabeth Förster Nietzsche, the one adopted by Hitler and the Nazis, is now understood to be a massive misrepresentation and oversimplification of a highly intricate philosophy.²⁸ Hypocrisy and ignorance, throughout Nietzsche's thought, is the victim of Nietzsche's most vicious attacks, and racism, nationalism and sexism - as manifestations of ignorance - are amongst the most roundly criticized of all Nietzsche's targets.

By 1874 Nietzsche began to address these differences even more directly. While attending a concert of the Basel Gesangsverein on 9 June, he heard Brahms' *Triumphlied* for the first time. He was so taken by the piece he traveled to Romundt and Zurich to hear it again and subsequently purchased the piano reduction. Despite knowing of

²⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Unpublished Writings: From the period of Unfashionable Observations*, transl. Richard T. Gray, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazino Montinari (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995); 108; (UW).

²⁷ BGE, 171: Peoples and Fatherlands, 241.

²⁸ Nietzsche's early misrepresentation and his anti-racist beliefs have been extensively documented. See Walter Kaufmann's preface to *The Portable Nietzsche*, Alan D. Schrift's *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction* or Rüdiger Safranski's, *Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography*.

Wagner's feelings toward Brahms and his music, Nietzsche decided to bring a copy of the *Triumphlied* to Bayreuth (the Wagners' new home as of April of that year) and surprised Wagner by following the composer's own rendition of "Rheintöchter" with the Brahms song. Wagner, of course, ridiculed the piece as inadequate and laughed at the hypocrisy of constructing music around the concept of justice. Nietzsche refused to relent, and the conversation became heated. Only through Cosima's diplomacy did the evening regain its equanimity, although Nietzsche later exacerbated the situation by proclaiming his conviction in Latin's superiority over German.

Further evidence of the growing gulf between the two men can be found in Nietzsche's voluminous notebooks from that same year. For the first time, lengthy critiques of Wagner the man and Wagner the artist appear, indicating Nietzsche's first recorded deconstruction of the components comprising his friendship with Wagner. As for Wagner the man, he writes: "Wagner has a domineering character, only then is he in his element, only then is he secure, moderate, and stable: the inhibition of this drive makes him immoderate, eccentric, obstreperous," and - in a monumental understatement - criticizes "...his tendency to arouse consternation."²⁹ His evaluations of Wagner the artist are even more interesting. Perhaps after his own musical-rhetorical failings, Nietzsche had become keenly aware of the devices intended to affect the listener, for in these notebooks he began to view Wagner as a *manipulator* of affects.

Wagner wanted to create whatever had a powerful effect on him. He never understood anything about his models other than what he also was able to imitate. Character of the actor. ... The music does not have much value, nor does the

²⁹ UW, 319.

poetry, nor does the drama; the acting is often mere rhetoric—but everything forms a totality on a large scale and at the same level.³⁰

In reference to his “endless melody” he explains that “...it is an artistic trick, not the regular law Wagner would like to make it out to be. First we chase after them, seek out periods, constantly are deceived, and ultimately we throw ourselves into the waves.”³¹

This foreshadows Nietzsche’s later criticisms that point out the unsustainability of Wagner’s musical revolution. Nietzsche had begun to see Wagner as hypocritical, as a musician who would use any weapon in his considerable arsenal to create any effect on the audience. His criticisms of a mnemonic music intended for “dull and wearied nerves” that appeared several years earlier while writing “On Words and Music” reappear in reference to Wagner. Nietzsche hid these notes away at the time, and begged Rohde, the only other person to see them, to help keep his secret.

Nietzsche’s final original work, *Hymnus auf die Freundschaft*,³² also dates from this period. The earliest sketches of the piece date from April 1873, although the final revisions and arrangements continued until December 1874. The first manuscript that, for all intents and purposes, represents the completed work, is dated Easter 1874, and as such coincides with his Wagner critiques. The most complete version is scored for solo piano, although large portions of a piano four-hands arrangement exist, as do fragments of a canon based loosely on the chorale theme. In the completed piano solo version, “Hymnus” consists of a prelude, three strophes and two interludes. Written in the key of D, the piece exhibits a tonal center far stronger and consistent than his meandering “Nachklang” or “Monodie.” The prelude and two interludes all conclude with cadences

³⁰ Ibid., 315.

³¹ Ibid., 325.

³² The indication of “original” alludes to later re-settings of the music with different texts.

on the dominant, with each leading convincingly to the subsequent chorale. The first two chorales are virtually identical (Nietzsche indicates two chords in the first chorale to be rolled while omitting the indication in the second) while the third deviates only slightly in its register, voicing changes, and the length of the closing.

As might be expected, the chorale melody is charming and memorable.

Unexpectedly, Nietzsche maintains a balance between unexpected harmonies and structural continuity that convincingly holds the chorale together. The opening eight-bar phrase exhibits the counterpoint and long note values associated with the chorale and unfolds a striking harmonic progression (ex. 43). At phrase-end however, the expected authentic cadence is replaced with a plagal cadence on the major mediant. The delayed return to the tonic provides the impetus for the remainder of the section, ending with a condensed version of the opening phrase and a grandiose closing that reaffirms the tonic. The third strophe adds a momentous plagal cadence that grandly concludes the whole piece. The effectiveness of the stirring ending comes, in part, from the pacing Nietzsche follows up to that point. Unlike his more bombastic works that repeatedly indicate dynamic levels of *fff* and *ffff*, *Hymnus* includes only two indications of *fff*: one at the end of the second interlude (immediately preceding the final chorale) and one during the concluding plagal cadence.

Admittedly, the work contains some questionable passages. The redundant and derivative use of rhythmic motives found in “Nachklang” occur in the more far-flung interludes and prelude. In the first interlude, for example, he writes a sequence containing a triplet pattern that is unappealing enough heard once, and far worse the fourth time. Overall, however, such passages are kept to a minimum and more

substantive, developmental material abounds. The non-chorale movements are based on variation—a form well-suited to Nietzsche’s improvisational style—and frequently incorporate segments of the chorale theme. The prelude is based on a descending line with syncopated triplet figures derived from the descending line of the chorale.

Nietzsche makes the most of the line’s re-registration by setting the leap of a tenth with the triplet figure (ex. 44). When the opening material recurs, Nietzsche avoids the redundancy of his earlier works by altering the harmonies and melodic intervals to give direction and character to the largely derivative material (ex. 45). The second interlude contains a section marked “Blick in die Ferne” (Glance into the distance) that quietly recalls (or foreshadows) the chorale theme in a more personal and lyrical setting. The refreshing interlude in the midst of an interlude gradually increases in activity and lowers its register to provide further variation on the chorale theme.

In its refinement and subtlety, *Hymnus* exhibits some of Nietzsche’s finest writing and represents his only effective large-scale work. His own evaluation of the work was extremely positive, as his frequent re-scorings of the piece would indicate. Notable amongst these was an 1882 setting of one of Lou Salomè’s poems. Based primarily on *Hymnus*’s chorale, *Gebet an das Leben* also utilizes aspects of the variation material from the interludes. When one considers Nietzsche’s deep love for Lou Salomè, the supposition that Nietzsche held the original *Hymnus* in high esteem is further supported. Then in 1887, only a year before his collapse, Nietzsche collaborated with composer Peter Gast to score *Gebet* for choir and orchestra, entitling the third re-scoring *Hymnus an das Leben* in a confusing combination of the previous titles. While *Gebet* is a somewhat awkward compromise between the poem and the music, and *Hymnus an das*

Leben shows enough of Gast's hand to preclude its inclusion in a discussion of Nietzsche's compositions, the original *Hymnus an die Freundschaft* is a generally well-written and delightful work, worthy of inclusion in the piano repertoire.

Not only does Nietzsche's final composition represent some of his best writing, it also reflects his distance from Wagner by way of its rejection of intense chromaticism and its stylistic similarities to the music of Brahms. Although Nietzsche no longer visited the Wagner's at Bayreuth as frequently as he had at Tribschen, Nietzsche still sent a copy of his *Hymnus* to Wagner. Cosima recalled that its arrival at Bayreuth signaled the beginning of the end of the Wagners' friendship with Nietzsche.³³ Whether the Wagners recognized this at the time or, more likely, only upon reflection, they no doubt saw a shift in Nietzsche's writing. Exhibiting uniquely Nietzschean characteristics, few if any references or similarities to the "music of the future" can be found in *Hymnus*. Unlike his *Manfred Meditation* that Bülow derided for its pathetic imitation of Wagner's music, his last work could be more adequately compared to Brahms' music, both in its harmonies and its counterpoint. Whereas Nietzsche felt obliged to hide his written critiques of Wagner, his musical output represented the separation Nietzsche was increasingly anxious to impose between Wagner and himself. *Hymnus an die Freundschaft* represents yet another example of Nietzsche turning to music to express what he is unready to put into words.

³³ Love, 95-96.