

## ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: Albert Pinkham Ryder's Two Wagnerian Paintings: The Flying Dutchman and Siegfried and the Rhine Maidens

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Albert Pinkham Ryder (1847-1917) has traditionally been regarded as an anomalous figure in the history of art. A small, but growing, body of scholarship has recently been devoted to correcting this view of the artist and to establishing his relationship to the aesthetic currents of his time. This study explores the influence on his art of Ryder's environment, late nineteenth-century New York. Two of Ryder's paintings, each based on an incident in an opera by Richard Wagner, are examined: Siegfried and the Rhine Maidens, drawn from Götterdämmerung; and The Flying Dutchman, inspired by Der fliegende Holländer. The history of opera in nineteenth-century New York helps to explain how an American painter came to be influenced by such distinctly German operatic themes. German immigration patterns are linked with changes in operatic taste, and the interest of native intellectuals in Wagner's music and ideas is discussed.

Wagnerian staging tradition is posited as a source for the compositions of both Siegfried and the Rhine Maidens and The Flying Dutchman. It is demonstrated that the set designed by Josef Hoffmann for the original Bayreuth production of Götterdämmerung, Act III, Scene I, served as the specific compositional basis for Ryder's Siegfried and the Rhine Maidens.

ALBERT PINKHAM RYDER'S TWO WAGNERIAN PAINTINGS:

THE FLYING DUTCHMAN AND SIEGFRIED AND

THE RHINE MAIDENS

by

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### Introduction

Albert Pinkham Ryder (1847-1917) has, until recently, been most often viewed as an eccentric genius, unrelated to the mainstream of the art and thought of his time and place.<sup>1</sup> Although Ryder's independence of spirit has been stressed in much of the literature on the artist, a small but growing body of scholarship has been dedicated to the questioning of the myth of Ryder's anomaly. The basic premise of such an approach is that no one, however "original," could have worked in the vacuum in which Ryder was supposed to have created his masterpieces. This paper will focus on two of his paintings taken from Wagnerian themes, The Flying Dutchman (Figure 1) and Siegfried and the Rhine Maidens (Figure 2), to explore the question of his choice and treatment of these themes within the

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<sup>1</sup>Dorinda Evans, "Albert Pinkham Ryder's Use of Visual Sources," Winterthur Portfolio 21 (Spring 1986): 21. She points out that this attitude was fostered by the noted Ryder scholar, Lloyd Goodrich, for example, in Albert P. Ryder (New York: George Braziller, 1959), p. 11, wherein he states "Ryder's art was a product of an intense inner life, little influenced by the world around him or the art of others."

Earlier expressions of a similar idea include the following:

"He has kept himself aloof from all the changing fashions which have come and gone . . . ." ("Recent Purchases Out of the Hearn Fund," Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin 10 [April 1915]: 81.)

". . . I think in the whole history of art Ryder stands a unique and impressive figure--single and alone . . . ."

broader cultural context of his environment.<sup>2</sup>

As background for an understanding of how an American painter, based in New York City and not of German lineage, came to be influenced in choosing such specifically German opera subjects for two of his major paintings, the history of changing operatic taste in nineteenth-century New York will be discussed. German immigration patterns will be related to the dominance of German influence in the musical world of New York. This influence, in conjunction with certain socio-economic conditions for opera production, will be shown as culmi-

(Charles Erskine Scott Wood, letter to John Gellatly, 22 November 1919, quoted in Thomas B. Brumbaugh, "Albert Pinkham Ryder to John Gellatly: A Correspondence," Gazette des Beaux Arts 80 [December 1972]: 369.)

"We are proud of Ryder's superb aloofness from time and place in the eternity of beauty, . . ." (Duncan Phillips, The Artist Sees Differently: Essays Based upon the Philosophy of a Collection in the Making, Phillips Publications, no. 6. [New York: F. Weyhe, 1931; Washington, D.C.: Phillips Memorial Gallery, 1931], p. 103.)

". . . Ryder was so intent on his vision that he was indifferent to the strident world about him; . . . He . . . [was] set by some divine accident in the midst of America's Gilded Age." (Holger Cahill and Alfred Barr, Jr., Art in America in Modern Times [New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1934; reprint ed., Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1969], p. 17.)

This attitude was reinforced by the artist himself, as indicated by Evans, p. 21; for Ryder's own statements, see Albert Pinkham Ryder, "Paragraphs from the Studio of a Recluse," Broadway Magazine 14 (September 1905): 10-11.

<sup>2</sup>The Flying Dutchman, ca. 1887, oil on canvas, 14 1/4 x 17 1/2 in. (36.1 x 43.8 cm.), unsigned. National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Gift of John Gellatly, 1929 (1929.6.95). Siegfried and the Rhine Maidens 1888-91, oil on canvas, 19 7/8 x 20 1/2 in.



nating in the first "golden age" of German opera in New York at precisely the period during which Ryder painted his two Wagnerian works. The interest in Wagner's music and ideas manifested by contemporary American intellectuals will also be posited as a further stimulus for the painter's involvement with Wagnerian themes.

German Immigration and Its Influence  
on Music in New York

German influence was a significant factor in the musical and cultural development of the United States during the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> Even if one cannot accept the exaggerated claims of some German-Americans of the time who contended that if not for them music in America "would have remained in the Dark Ages," it is undeniable that this group of immigrants supplied America, not only with an increased audience, but also with a growing number of highly trained musicians.<sup>4</sup> This musical influence was

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(50.5 x 52.0 cm.), signed lower left: A. P. Ryder.  
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Andrew W.  
Mellon Collection, 1946 (1946.1.1).

<sup>3</sup>See, for example, Joseph Mussulman, Music in the Cultured Generation: A Social History of Music in America, 1870-1900 (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1971), p. 76; Paul Nettl, "Immigration and American Music," American-German Review 9 (December 1942): 6; and Albert B. Faust, "German Gifts to America," Our World 3 (April 1923): 95.

<sup>4</sup>La Vern J. Rippley, The German Americans (Boston: Twayne, 1976), p. 133. Rippley points out that certain

further strengthened by the fact that a great number of middle-class Germans settled in the area of New York City, the largest cultural center in the United States.

Before the 1830s, German immigration to the United States was minimal.<sup>5</sup> During this period the performance of opera in America was relatively infrequent, but the little that was presented centered around New York.<sup>6</sup> By 1825, opera in New York began to reflect patterns estab-

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"Yankee" critics agreed with this claim. Ibid., n. 20, pp. 244-45. German immigration was continuous throughout the nineteenth century. This group was to become the second largest formative element of Europeans in America, second only to those from Great Britain, and exceeding those from Ireland and Scandinavia. During the nineteenth century itself, German immigration actually surpassed that of the English and is estimated at over five million. If one also takes into account the number of European immigrants who could be characterized as Germanic in culture, although not actually from Germany, the figure jumps to around seven million in America before World War I. These figures do not include the children of these immigrants, who would have retained knowledge of the language and a sense of cultural identity with their ethnic background. Nettl, p. 8; Faust (1923), pp. 89, 92; Theodore Huebener, The Germans in America (Philadelphia: Chilton Co., 1962), p. 134; and Carl Wittke, We Who Built America: The Saga of the Immigrant (Cleveland: Press of Western Reserve University, 1939), p. 187.

<sup>5</sup>It averaged between two hundred and two thousand a year. Huebener, p. 61.

<sup>6</sup>Some opera was presented in New York as early as 1750, and may have existed there even earlier. César Saerchinger, "Musical Landmarks in New York," Musical Quarterly 6 (January 1920): 77; and Henry E. Krehbiel, Review of the New York Musical Season, 1885-1886 (New York: Novello, Ewer & Co., 1886), p. xiii.

lished in Europe, where the Italian tradition dominated.<sup>7</sup> Unlike the later German operatic phenomenon, the popularity of Italian opera bore no relation to the city's ethnic composition. Although there were few Italians in New York at the time, New Yorkers, between 1825 and 1850, could see a growing number of Italian operas.<sup>8</sup>

German immigration began to show a marked increase during the 1830s.<sup>9</sup> A peak was reached between the mid-1840s and mid-1850s.<sup>10</sup> The German population of New York alone increased to over ninety-five thousand by 1855 and to approximately 100,000 by the close of the decade.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>In that year, Manuel Garcia arrived in New York and introduced the city to Italian opera, such as Rossini's Il Barbiere di Siviglia. The Garcia troupe did not remain for long, but they paved the way for a growing interest in Italian opera. Henry Charles Lahee, Annals of Music in America: A Chronological Record of Significant Musical Events, from 1640 to the Present Day, with Comments on the Various Periods into Which the Work is Divided (Boston: Marshall Jones Co., 1922), p. 23; and Wittke, p. 375.

<sup>8</sup>Lahee (1922), p. 23.

<sup>9</sup>Between 1831 and 1840, 152,000 German immigrants came to America. Huebener, p. 134.

<sup>10</sup>The number increased to approximately 900,000 with the greatest part of this group arriving after 1852. Faust (1923), p. 92.

<sup>11</sup>Census figures from Robert Ernest, Immigration Life in New York City, 1825-63 (New York: King's Crown Press, 1949, pp. 194-96, as cited by Michael Joseph Pisoni, "Operatic War in New York City, 1883-84: Colonel James H. Mapleson at the Academy of Music vs. Henry E. Abbey at the Metropolitan Opera House" (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1975), p. 12; and Wittke, p. 198.

These waves of immigration were significant for more than sheer quantity. As a result of the Revolution of 1848-49, many liberal, highly educated Germans fled to the United States, where they continued in their roles as cultural leaders.<sup>12</sup> Their concentration in New York intensified the Germanic quality of the city's musical culture, preparing the way for the kind of musical influence Ryder would be immersed in several decades later.

The group of political émigrés arriving in 1848 included a complete orchestra, the Germania.<sup>13</sup> One of its members, Carl Bergmann, who became director of the New York Philharmonic in 1866, was to play an important role in the introduction of Richard Wagner's music in the United States.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the seed was planted for the growth of interest in the composer, eventually shared by Ryder, as evinced in The Flying Dutchman and Siegfried and the Rhine Maidens.

The New York Philharmonic Society, too, had a strong German connection. Throughout the nineteenth century its major conductors and a good part of its ensemble were

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<sup>12</sup>Pisoni, p. 12; Huebener, p. 134; and Wittke, pp. 189-90.

<sup>13</sup>The Germania disbanded after a short time and many of its former members became influential figures in the musical life of cities throughout the United States. Lahee (1922), pp. 21-22.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 283; and Rippley, p. 134.

German.<sup>15</sup> Quite naturally, its repertory also manifested German influence, to such an extent that by the 1850s some critics expressed their objections.<sup>16</sup> For the most part, however, German music triumphed along with a growing interest in Wagner. The New York Philharmonic is credited with beginning the great Wagner trend in the United States with its American premiere of the Tannhäuser Overture on 21 April 1855, at Niblo's Garden, with Carl Bergmann conducting.<sup>17</sup>

During this period, another German-American institution appeared that would also eventually contribute to America's involvement with the music of Wagner. This was the "singing society," a musical and social organization that had its origins in sixteenth-century Germany.<sup>18</sup> The

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<sup>15</sup>The orchestra was founded in 1842 by Uriah G. Hill with the assistance of a German, Henry C. Timm. Huebener, p. 139.

<sup>16</sup>Wittke, p. 366.

<sup>17</sup>Saerchinger (April 1920), p. 228; and Henry Edward Krehbiel, The Philharmonic Society of New York, A Memorial; Published on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Founding of the Philharmonic (New York: Novello, Ewer & Co., 1892); as reprinted in Henry Edward Krehbiel; James Gibbons Huneker; and John Erskine, Early Histories of the New York Philharmonic (New York: Da Capo Press, 1979), p. 112. Two months later, on 25 June 1855, Bergmann conducted the "Wedding March" from Wagner's Lohengrin at the Grand German Music Festival held at the Metropolitan Theatre. Julius Mattfeld, A Hundred Years of Grand Opera in New York, 1825-1925: A Record of Performances (New York: New York Public Library, 1927), p. 60.

<sup>18</sup>One such sixteenth-century singing society was the

two major singing societies in New York were the Liederkranz, founded in 1847, and its offshoot, the Arion, founded in 1854.<sup>19</sup> Both Bergmann and, later, Leopold Damrosch, another major figure in the history of Wagnerism in New York, were directors of the Arion.<sup>20</sup>

From the 1840s on, some German opera began to be staged in New York. German companies presented works by both German and non-German composers, all sung in German.<sup>21</sup> None of Wagner's operas were staged in New York, however, until 1859, when Tannhäuser was given at the Stadt Theater, on the fourth of April, under the auspices of the Arion Society, with Carl Bergmann conducting and the Arion chorus participating. This production was staged on a small budget and did not receive much

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subject of Wagner's Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg.

<sup>19</sup>Mary Jane Corry, "The Role of German Singing Societies in Nineteenth-Century America," in Germans in America: Aspects of German-American Relations in the Nineteenth Century, ed. E. Allen McCormick (New York: Brooklyn College Press and Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 156.

<sup>20</sup>Bergmann was director from 1855 to 1859 and again from 1867 to 1869; Damrosch was director from 1871 to 1873. Corry, p. 161.

<sup>21</sup>Lahee (1922), p. 45; and Pisoni, pp. 9-10. A short season of opera sung in German was given at Palmo's Opera House, December 1845 through January 1846. Operas sung in German were performed in 1855 at Niblo's Garden. Another short-lived attempt at opera sung in German took place at the old Broadway Theatre from late 1856 through early 1857, and once again at Niblo's Garden in September and October of 1857. Mattfeld, p. 36.

publicity.<sup>22</sup>

Although some German opera was now available to New Yorkers, opera in the city remained dominantly Italian.<sup>23</sup> This trend was reinforced in 1854, when the Academy of Music opened primarily as an Italian opera house.<sup>24</sup> The Wagnerian cause was carried forward in the concert halls, and the Philharmonic continued to program Wagnerian selections.<sup>25</sup>

The popularity of Wagner's music grew along with the increase of Germans, although it was by no means limited to them.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, Germany's increasing prestige as

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<sup>22</sup>Henry Charles Lahee, Grand Opera in America (Boston: L. C. Page & Co., 1902; reprint ed., New York: AMS Press, 1973), p. 227; and Alfred Loewenberg, comp., Annals of Opera, 1597-1940, 3rd ed. (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1978), col. 850.

<sup>23</sup>The repertory consisted mostly, but not exclusively, of works by Italian composers, all sung in Italian, regardless of the composer's nationality.

<sup>24</sup>Saerchinger (January 1920), p. 84.

<sup>25</sup>See Krehbiel, in Krehbiel et al., pp. 111-55.

<sup>26</sup>A great wave of German immigration occurred between 1866 and 1873, averaging about 100,000 a year. During the period between 1882 to 1885 even these figures were eclipsed. Faust (1923), p. 92. A relative decline followed, mainly due to improved economic conditions in the homeland. Howard B. Furer, comp. and ed., The Germans in America, 1607-1970: Chronology and Fact Book (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Oceana, 1973), p. 62. Nevertheless, in 1892 alone, over 119,000 Germans came to the United States. Ibid., p. 65. By the 1880s they were the second largest ethnic group in New York City, exceeded only by the Irish. George Manson, "The Foreign Element in New York City: The Germans," Harper's Weekly 32 (4 August 1888): 581. By

a world power in the later nineteenth century was a source of great pride for the émigrés and stimulated even stronger expression of their native culture in the United States.<sup>27</sup> Music, including Wagner's, was a significant expression of their cultural pride.

Although German opera was presented with growing frequency from 1855 on and, as stated, the first New York performance of Tannhäuser was given in 1859, the German companies' repertoires leaned heavily toward comic opera until the late 1870s.<sup>28</sup> The major disseminators of the "avant-garde" works of Wagner remained the symphony orchestras. A leading figure in the American Wagnerian movement from the mid-1860s on was the conductor, Theodore Thomas, who had come from Germany as a child.<sup>29</sup> In his popular Central Park Garden Concerts, Thomas mixed orchestral selections from Wagner's operas with lighter fare,

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1884 the German speaking immigrant population in New York approached 250,000; this amount was increased by another 100,000 over the next decade. Rippley, p. 137; and James M. Bergquist, "German-America in the 1890s: Illusions and Realities," in Germans in America: Aspects of German-American Relations in the Nineteenth Century, ed. E. Allen McCormick, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup>Wittke, p. 212.

<sup>28</sup>Pisoni, p. 10. Before then, performances of serious works, such as Beethoven's Fidelio, were rare occurrences. Lahee (1902), p. 227.

<sup>29</sup>George Martin, The Damrosch Dynasty: America's First Family of Music (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983), p. 26; and Saerchinger (April 1920), p. 231.



thus exposing a wider New York public to the master's work.<sup>30</sup> During his frequent tours, Thomas also introduced Wagner's music throughout the rest of the country.<sup>31</sup>

On 17 September 1872, at a semi-outdoor Central Park Garden Concert, Thomas gave one of his all-Wagner programs. At this concert, he conducted the American premiere of the "Ride of the Valkyries" from Die Walküre. Public reaction resembled that of a contemporary rock concert. "People jumped on chairs and shouted with joy."<sup>32</sup> Wagner had conquered the masses. Even if Ryder was not a member of the audience that night, he would at least have heard of the excitement generated by Wagner's music; by that time the painter had been in New York for approximately two years.<sup>33</sup>

Of even greater interest in relation to Wagner's subsequent influence on Ryder is the fact that Thomas con-

<sup>30</sup>Martin, p. 28. Programs given by Thomas at these Sunday night concerts, from 25 May 1868 through 16 September 1875, appear in Theodore Thomas, Theodore Thomas: A Musical Autobiography, 2 vols., ed. George P. Upton (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1905), 2:103-34.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 27. The first of Thomas' twenty-two annual tours took place in 1869. Lahee (1922), p. 57.

<sup>32</sup>Saerchinger (April 1920), p. 238.

<sup>33</sup>The exact year in which Ryder moved from his original home in New Bedford, Massachusetts to New York City is not firmly established. Lloyd Goodrich gives the date as ca. 1870 in Albert Pinkham Ryder (Washington, D.C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1961), p. 10.

ducted the Overture to Der fliegende Holländer in New York as early as 13 May 1862.<sup>34</sup> It is the overture, specifically, that has been posited as the musical stimulus for Ryder's The Flying Dutchman.<sup>35</sup> This overture was to remain a popular part of the orchestral repertory during the following decades, both with the Thomas Orchestra and with the Philharmonic, whose leadership Thomas assumed in 1877.<sup>36</sup> Thus, in his choice of this theme, Ryder was reflecting a taste shared by a large number of his fellow New Yorkers.

The first staged American performance of Der fliegende Holländer seems to have taken place on 8 November 1876, at the Philadelphia Academy of Music, where it was given in Italian under the title, Il Vascello Fantasma.<sup>37</sup> The next year it was presented in New York in

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<sup>34</sup>Lahee (1922), p. 50; Richard Aldrich, Musical Discourse: From The New York Times (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1967), p. 300; and Thomas, 2:51.

<sup>35</sup>Elizabeth Johns, "Albert Pinkham Ryder: Some Thoughts on His Subject Matter," Arts Magazine 54 (November 1979), p. 69.

<sup>36</sup>Lahee (1922), p. 283. For specific performances, see Krehbiel, in Krehbiel et al., pp. 141-63 passim; and Thomas, 2:51-137 passim.

<sup>37</sup>Loewenburg, col. 826; and Pisoni, p. 11. Lahee (1922), p. 40, refers to a performance of the opera presented in New York in 1862. Either he has confused Thomas' performance of the overture with a staged performance of the entire opera, or he had sources unavailable to later researchers.

two versions.<sup>38</sup> From that time on, Ryder could have experienced its music in the opera house as well as the concert hall.

The second Ryder painting on a Wagnerian theme, Siegfried and the Rhine Maidens, depicts a scene that corresponds to Act III, Scene I of Götterdämmerung, the concluding opera of Der Ring des Nibelungen cycle.<sup>39</sup> Although the staging of Wagner operas had begun earlier in New York, Götterdämmerung did not receive a staged performance there until the Metropolitan Opera production of 1888. As will be discussed, this production may have had a significant visual impact on Ryder's realization of the subject.

Götterdämmerung received its world premiere at the

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<sup>38</sup>It was first given in English by Clara Louise Kellogg and the C. D. Hess Opera Company on 26 January. Shortly afterwards, on 12 and 16 March, it was staged in German as part of a short season of German opera given by the J. C. Fryer Company, also at the Academy. Pisoni, p. 11; Loewenberg, col. 826; Frank Granville Barker, The Flying Dutchman: A Guide to the Opera (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1979), p. 104; Mattfeld, p. 85; and Esther Singleton, "History of the Opera in New York from 1750 to 1898," Musical Courier 37 (7 December 1898): 21.

<sup>39</sup>The first three operas of the cycle are: Das Rheingold, Die Walküre and Siegfried. Synopses of the plot and analyses of the music of the Ring are innumerable; but the standard scholarly treatment remains that of Ernest Newman, The Wagner Operas, 2 vols. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981; reprint ed., New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1983), 2:393-634.

Festspielhaus, Bayreuth, on 17 August 1876.<sup>40</sup> Within less than four months, New Yorkers could at least hear selections from the culminating work of Der Ring des Nibelungen in concert form, when they were given by the New York Philharmonic, on the ninth of December, under the baton of Leopold Damrosch.<sup>41</sup>

Damrosch, who was later to organize the first German season at the Metropolitan Opera House in 1884, was a personal friend of Wagner and had attended the premiere of the complete Ring cycle in Bayreuth.<sup>42</sup> Along with Bergmann and Thomas, Damrosch was a seminal figure in the history of Wagnerism in America.

The Philharmonic again gave excerpts from Götterdämmerung on 6 April 1878, this time with vocal soloists.<sup>43</sup> Two years later, on 24 April 1880, Thomas presented a concert version with soloists of the first two scenes of the third act of Götterdämmerung at the Academy of Music.<sup>44</sup> The scene of Ryder's painting was now given a

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<sup>40</sup>Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson, The Wagner Companion (London: W. H. Allen, 1977), p. 147.

<sup>41</sup>Krehbiel, in Krehbiel et al., p. 143; and Martin, p. 44.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 141.

<sup>43</sup>Krehbiel, in Krehbiel et al., p. 146.

<sup>44</sup>Lahee (1902), p. 239; Krehbiel, in Krehbiel et al., p. 148.

musically complete, although unstaged, presentation before the New York public.

In April of 1884, the Liederkrantz Society sponsored a concert of selections from Götterdämmerung with soloists who would later that year take part in the Metropolitan's first German season. In the New York Times review of the concert it was noted that attendance was huge.<sup>45</sup> Despite the proven success of Götterdämmerung in the same year that the Metropolitan began its German seasons, New Yorkers would have to wait four years for its staged performance. Until then they were able to familiarize themselves with the music through concert selections.<sup>46</sup>

During the 1870s and into the 1880s Wagner festivals were frequently held, both in New York and Boston, with staged performances given in German.<sup>47</sup> The public's

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<sup>45</sup>New York Times (21 April 1884), p. 4, cited by Paul E. Eisler, The Metropolitan Opera: The First Twenty-Five Years, 1883-1908 (Croton-on-Hudson, N.Y.: North River Press, 1984), p. 79.

<sup>46</sup>Excerpts were presented by Thomas and the Philharmonic on 10 January 1885 and 13 February 1886. On 4 December 1886, he conducted the final scene with Lilli Lehmann as soprano soloist. Krehbiel, in Krehbiel et al., pp. 154-56.

<sup>47</sup>Lahee (1902), p. 233; Lahee (1922), pp. 72, 83; and Nathalie Dana, "Avant-Garde: A Minister's Daughter Recalls the Daring Wagnerism of Her Youth," Opera News 29 (13 February 1965): 8. During the 1887 festival, for example, both Der fliegende Holländer and Die Walküre were presented. Loewenburg, cols. 152, 1013; and Singleton, p. 21. Der fliegende Holländer was given on 12 March 1887 and Die Walküre on 2 April 1887, the latter in a

growing enthusiasm for Wagner, combined with a general boredom with Italian opera, prepared the way for the success of the Metropolitan German seasons.<sup>48</sup> Ryder, as a New Yorker, had increasing opportunity for exposure to Wagner's music; he could also read about it in the expanding corpus of available writings.

### Wagner and American Intellectuals

The role played by native intellectuals in the history of American Wagnerism is at least as significant as that of the German emigres. Despite the growing number of performances in New York, and, to a lesser extent, Boston and Philadelphia, most Americans still had little opportunity to hear much of Wagner's music. When they did, they tended to embrace it wholeheartedly. Moreover, even without the music as reinforcement, Wagner's ideas were found to be so stimulating that it was at least "conceivable that one could become a dedicated Wagnerite without necessarily experiencing any of the actual music, . . ."<sup>49</sup>

It was not necessary to read German to gain familiarity with Wagner's ideas. Both the British and

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performance that Krehbiel described as "maltreated."  
Review of the New York Musical Season, 1888-1889 (New York: Novello, Ewer & Co., 1889), p. 152.

<sup>48</sup>Pisoni, p. 12.

<sup>49</sup>Mussulman, p. 148.

Americans were industriously translating his writings. By the end of the century, 131 items from Wagner's literary corpus were available to readers of English, the bulk of these translations appearing from 1865 on.<sup>50</sup> A high point was reached in 1875, when thirteen of Wagner's essays were published in excellent English translations. Included were such important works as The Legend of the Nibelungen, The Music of the Future, and The Purpose of the Opera. According to one of America's leading music critics of the time, William Foster Apthorp, the two latter essays contained "all that is absolutely indispensable for the intelligent music-lover to know about Wagner's theories . . . ."<sup>51</sup> The opera texts were also translated, and the stories of works such as the Ring cycle stimulated a general interest in Northern mythology.<sup>52</sup> Some educated Americans were also capable of reading Wagner's literary

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<sup>50</sup>Wagner ranks fourth among the German writers most frequently translated into English during the greater part of the nineteenth century; he is surpassed only by Goethe, Schiller, and the Grimm brothers. Based on a chart given in Henry August Pochmann, German Culture in America: Philosophical and Literary Influences, 1600-1900 (Madison, WI.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1957; reprint ed., Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1978), p. 346.

<sup>51</sup>William F. Apthorp, "Burlingame's Art, Life and Theories of Richard Wagner," Atlantic Monthly 34 (August 1875), cited by Mussulman, p. 152.

<sup>52</sup>Pochmann, n. 96, p. 685.

works in the original.<sup>53</sup>

The rising quality of American musical criticism during the last decades of the century also affected the growing interest in Wagner. By the early 1880s, a number of leading writers on musical culture--such as Apthorp, Henry Krehbiel, William T. Henderson, and Henry T. Finck--had been engaged by major newspapers in New York and Boston.<sup>54</sup> Thus, Ryder would have had immediately available to him the most up-to-date discussions on Wagner appearing in the American press. In addition, as Joseph A. Mussulman has shown, the monthly magazines, containing articles by these writers and others, were a continuous source for "the serious, reflective treatment of musical topics of permanent import . . . ."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Wittke, p. 235, points out that "as early as 1850 a German Teachers' Association was formed in New York City, and German tutors seem to have been much in demand in well-to-do American families."

<sup>54</sup>Mussulman, p. 22.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 23. The most influential of these magazines were the Atlantic Monthly, founded 1857; Harper's New Monthly Magazine, founded 1850; Century Illustrated Monthly which was founded in 1870 and continued to be popularly called by this name even after it changed ownership in 1881, from which time its official name was Scribner's Monthly; and Scribner's Magazine, founded in 1887. The history and individual characteristics of these magazines are discussed by Mussulman, pp. 8-23. Although their influence was great among the segment of the public that considered itself "cultured," the actual number of readers, just as the actual number of that class, was not large relative to the population as a whole. Ibid.,



Many of the more serious discussions of Wagner's theories were closely connected with the concern of American intellectuals with Darwinism and dealt with his place in the "evolution" of music. During the latter decades of the nineteenth century the application of Darwinian theory to all questions regarded as meaningful was in full sway.<sup>56</sup> Although, as a distinct philosophical movement, American Darwinism was to be short-lived, "its effect on other fields . . . [was] extensive and profound."<sup>57</sup> Evolution-oriented music critics analyzed Wagner in the magazines endlessly, often coming to contradictory

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p. 24. The contributors to these magazines were by no means always pro-Wagner in their attitudes. One writer, for example, admitted Wagner's claim to be following principles "shared by Gluck, Mozart, Beethoven, and Weber," but accused him of doing so "in his own perverted and extravagant fashion" which she also characterized as "arrogant." (Alice Asbury, "Wagner and the Pianist Bulow," Atlantic Monthly 30 [August 1872], cited by Mussulman, p. 154.) Others went so far as to dismiss not just Wagner, but all opera as "agin nachure," concluding that "if one were to study long enough, one might learn to appreciate opera, but it hardly seemed worth the trouble." (Mussulman, p. 125) Most writers, however, were at least taking the art form, and Wagner's place in its development, seriously.

<sup>56</sup>A succinct account of the importance of Darwinism in nineteenth-century American thought is given by David F. Bowers, in Bowers, ed., Foreign Influences in American Life, Program of Study in American Civilization, Princeton University (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1944; reprint ed., New York: Peter Smith, 1952), pp. 247-49.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 248.

conclusions.<sup>58</sup> Their arguments centered around the question of whether Wagner's art was the ultimate product of an evolutionary chain of musical development; or whether it was a hybrid product, dismissible because it was not part of a "natural" line of development. The impression one now receives from reading their essays is that those critics who enjoyed Wagner's music used their version of evolutionary theory to argue for its acceptance; and those who did not, used the same theory to argue the reverse. Another group contributing to the literary ferment over Wagner was that which Mussulman has designated the American "culturalists." He says of this group:

. . . it looked toward the possibility of meliorating, according to humanistic principles, the rude effects of mindless nature, the demoralizing tendencies of materialism, and the degrading influences of democratic equalitarianism. . . .<sup>59</sup>

With Ralph Waldo Emerson as their most distinguished spokesman, they believed that through "disinterested" education the quality of human life could be raised by developing "the powers of reason, moral feeling and artistic taste." Through such means they hoped to do away with class antagonism by giving people of all classes shared thoughts, feelings and aims. The culturalists saw them-

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<sup>58</sup>For a selection of these writings, see Mussulman, pp. 155-62.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

selves as ". . . Culture-guardians of the Culturally underprivileged, economically overprivileged and the uncultured majority of the middle class; . . ." <sup>60</sup>

The culturalists embraced Wagner's music and ideas as part of their program. Since they were essentially idealistic moralists, they were forced to gloss over the shocking facts of his love affairs and make excuses for his "erratic political behavior." The known pettiness of Wagner, the man, was excused in Wagner, the artist, "as a symptom of ill health." Wagner fostered the image the culturalists projected onto him. In an essay published in the North American Review in 1879, Wagner's words, ". . . my earnest co-workers in the domain of ideal, spiritual progress," appear as if addressed directly to the culturalists. <sup>61</sup>

For the "cultured" critics, Wagner's ethical expression became more problematic with the revelation of his later works. <sup>62</sup> One writer, for example, was shocked by "the gross divinities and incestuous heroes" of the Ring cycle. <sup>63</sup> Others were upset by the sensuousness of some of

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., pp. 25-28.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., pp. 157-58.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., pp. 164-65.

<sup>63</sup>J.R.G. Hassard, "How Wagner Makes Operas," Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine 24 (August 1882), cited by Mussulman, p. 165.

the music, particularly in such a religious work as Parsifal. But these reservations were overshadowed by others who, after Parsifal, could "look upon Wagner as a priest and paladin of super-Christianity."<sup>64</sup>

All such opinions, ranging from the intellectually rigorous to the ridiculous, added to the American intellectuals' fascination with Wagner. Moreover, by the 1880s Italian opera was regarded as in decline. Verdi had not produced a new work in many years and the verismo school had not yet come into being.<sup>65</sup> Not only did many intellectuals consider German opera, as represented by Wagner, better art in itself, they also believed that the rejection of the Italian tradition in favor of the Wagnerian would ultimately benefit the development of American musical art.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid. Mussulman is here describing the reaction of the essayist and editor, Charles Dudley Warner, upon attending a performance of Parsifal at Bayreuth.

<sup>65</sup>Henry E. Krehbiel, Chapters of Opera, Being Historical and Critical Observations and Records Concerning the Lyric Drama in New York from Its Earliest Days Down to the Present Time (New York: Henry Holt Co., 1909; reprint ed., New York: Da Capo Press, 1980), p. 114.

<sup>66</sup>The eminent critic and Wagnerite, Henry Krehbiel, stated: "Gluck, Weber, and Wagner, all Germans, had pointed the way. . . . There were many . . . who believed that if America was ever to have a musical art of its own the way could best be paved by supplanting Italian performances by German at the principle home of opera in the United States. We should, it is true, still have foreign artists singing foreign works in a foreign tongue, but the change in repertory would promote an appreciation and an

For many cultured Americans, Wagner had become "a symbol of the present and a guide to the future."<sup>67</sup> His music and ideas presented an intellectual challenge they were ready to meet. Wagnerism was triumphing in the United States even more completely than in Europe, where conservative taste was more firmly entrenched.<sup>68</sup>

Wagner was pleased with this situation. John P. Jackson, his friend and translator, recorded the contents of a conversation he once had with the master concerning the United States:

He believed, . . . that his music would eventually find its warmest welcome in America, where, he said, the operatic audiences had not yet become sated with the old operas, but were still open to the reception of the new and beautiful in art and in music. . . . Wagner . . . expressed his gratefulness for the work done [in the United States], especially in the concert-rooms in his cause, by Theodore Thomas and by Dr. Leopold Damrosch, the then leaders of the Wagner crusade.<sup>69</sup>

Damrosch not only contributed to this "crusade" from the podium, but also in print. In 1876, he was engaged by the New York Sun to report on the premiere of the Ring

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understanding of truthful, dramatic expression in a form which claimed close relationship with the drama" (Ibid., pp. 114-15).

<sup>67</sup>Mussulman, p. 142.

<sup>68</sup>Joseph Gilbert Holland, "Wagner at Bayreuth," Century Illustrated Magazine 13 (November 1876), cited by Mussulman, pp. 147-48.

<sup>69</sup>John P. Jackson, "The Ring of the Nibelung," Cosmopolitan 6 (March 1889): 416, 418.

cycle at Bayreuth.<sup>70</sup> His articles are filled with the highest praise for Wagner's achievements and are of such a nature that anyone with the slightest interest in the subject would, upon reading them, be stimulated to wish to hear and see the works.

There is no direct evidence that Ryder was familiar with the ever increasing body of writings on Wagner in America, but it is likely that he was so. Based on the artist's letters and a personal acquaintanceship with Ryder's relatives and friends, one writer has concluded that Ryder was "conversant with the topics of the day, well read . . . , a deep thinker . . . ." <sup>71</sup> This evaluation is confirmed in another contemporary source, in which it is stated that Ryder ". . . seems to know something on every topic of importance and pretty well all that this mad world is interested in . . . ." <sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>Damrosch's articles appeared in the New York Sun on 13, 18, 23, 26 August, and 3 September 1876, respectively.

<sup>71</sup>Frederic Fairchild Sherman, "Notes on the Art of Albert Pinkham Ryder," Art in America 25 (October 1937): 168. For Sherman's direct acquaintanceship with members of Ryder's circle, see *ibid.*, p. 167; and Sherman, Albert Pinkham Ryder (New York: By the Author, 1922), preface n., unpaginated.

<sup>72</sup>Joseph French, "A Painter of Dreams," Broadway Magazine 14 (September 1905): 4.

The "Golden Age" of Wagnerian Opera  
in New York

As has been described, New Yorkers soon were able to hear at least selections from the music dramas in the same year as the Bayreuth premieres. But they would have to wait over a decade before seeing all the operas of the Ring staged. The staging of Götterdämmerung in 1888, as will be discussed, appears to have had an effect on the creation of Ryder's Siegfried and the Rhine Maidens.

Despite intense interest in Wagner among German-Americans and native intellectuals, it was impossible for crusaders such as Damrosch to mount the Ring in New York immediately after its premiere at Bayreuth. The crux of the problem was financial. Then, as now, opera production was a risky economic venture. Some form of subsidy was needed for an adequate staging of the Ring. Wagner's Festspielhaus in Bayreuth was financed by his great patron, Ludwig II of Bavaria. But in America there was, of course, no king to subsidize the productions and the government did not sponsor opera. Opera seasons, even when successful, rarely showed a profit. The financial losses had to be absorbed by patronage, which in America was the province of the great millionaires--the class that Mussulman's pro-Wagner "cultured generation" saw as "over-privileged" philistines.

The upper class regarded opera as a splendid background for social display. To be seen in one's own box at the opera was more important than seeing and hearing the opera itself. The Italian repertory suited their social requirements much better than did Wagner's; the intermissions were more frequent, and people could chat between the set musical pieces, pausing only for the vocal display of an aria or duet. Neither study prior to, nor total concentration during a performance were necessary, as they were for Wagner's music.

Beginning in 1878, the operatic center for New York's upper class was the Academy of Music, where Colonel James H. Mapleson regularly presented "Italian seasons," consisting mostly of operas by Italian composers, and with those by Frenchmen or Germans also sung in Italian. Most of the boxes at the Academy were the territory of New York's old guard society and there was insufficient room for the city's new rich.<sup>73</sup> When Mrs. William H. Vanderbilt discovered she could not obtain a box at the Academy, her husband, and such personages as John Jacob Astor, James A. Roosevelt, and J. P. Morgan decided to have their own opera. Under their patronage, construction of the Metropolitan Opera House was begun.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>Pisoni, p. 91.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid. For a general discussion of the founding of



The boxholders, who were also the stockholders, decided the character of the new house. They engaged Henry E. Abbey to organize the first opera season at the Metropolitan. Their goal was to rival and eclipse the Academy, and, of course, the first season at the Metropolitan was to be Italian.<sup>75</sup> The tastes of the German-Americans and the native intelligentsia were ignored.

The Metropolitan's first season, from 1883 to 1884, was a social success and, in many ways, even an artistic one, despite the general public's growing dissatisfaction with "old-fashioned" opera; but financially it was a disaster. The productions had been costly and the star performers had demanded and received astronomical salaries.<sup>76</sup> The stockholders decided that the losses went beyond what even they were willing to absorb.<sup>77</sup> A solution was needed if the opera was to survive. The "over-

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the Metropolitan, see Krehbiel (1909), pp. 85-91; for a study of the "opera war" between the Academy and the Metropolitan, see John Frederick Cone, First Rival of the Metropolitan Opera (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

<sup>75</sup>The first season of the Metropolitan was officially presented as under the auspices of the Abbey Italian Opera Company. Eisler, p. xviii.

<sup>76</sup>Stars, such as Christine Nilsson, received one thousand dollars a performance. Irving Kolodin, The Metropolitan Opera, 1883-1966: A Candid History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), p. 84.

<sup>77</sup>The deficit at the end of the season amounted to over five hundred thousand dollars. Ibid., p. 85.

privileged" decided that it was no longer feasible to ignore either the objections of the cultured critics or the tastes of the vast number of Germans in New York.

Even during the Metropolitan's initial "Italian" season, Wagner's popularity with the general public had been confirmed. The only Wagnerian work scheduled for performance at that time was Lohengrin, one of Wagner's earlier operas. It was presented for the first time at the Metropolitan, in Italian, on 7 November 1883. This performance attracted larger crowds than any since opening night, when Faust was given.<sup>78</sup> And that, of course, was as much a social as a musical event. Lohengrin was so successful that it was then decided to repeat this opera four more times during the season. All these performances were equally well received by the critics and general public.<sup>79</sup>

Although the stockholders may have preferred to ignore this manifestation of public taste, they may have recalled it, as well as the judgment of the critics, when the financial failure of the season became apparent. The Daily Graphic, for example, contained the following statement in its review of the Metropolitan's first presentation of Lohengrin:

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<sup>78</sup>Pisoni, p. 231.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 234.

All must appreciate Wagner. It is indispensable to appreciate him. We show it in the expression of our faces which say, "This now--this is music, real, genuine, scientific music; this is Wagner, and we comprehend it; we follow it; we understand it." Poor souls, deficient in ear and scientific musical acumen, are tickled with the straw of Verdi's "Trovatore" and the like. Verdi? Verdi is common, Verdi is trash, Verdi is hurdy-gurdy, Verdi is a superficial ballad monger as compared with Wagner.<sup>80</sup>

The Metropolitan's stockholders proceeded to engage Leopold Damrosch as director for the second season, which would be German.<sup>81</sup> Damrosch was able to offer the Metropolitan the facilities of both the New York Philharmonic and the Oratorio Society ready-made for the new season.<sup>82</sup> He then engaged a number of important singers to come from

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<sup>80</sup>Daily Graphic (8 November 1883), cited in Pisoni, p. 231. The review on p. 2 of the Evening Post, of the same date, was similar in content, making disparaging reference to "Italian macaroni arias." Ibid., p. 234. See Lahee (1902), pp. 242-43, for similar attitudes as expressed in the magazines. After the close of the Italian season, Theodore Thomas gave a series of six Wagner concerts, with vocal soloists, at the Metropolitan Opera House. These, too, drew capacity audiences. Eisler, p. 79; and Pisoni, p. 446.

<sup>81</sup>Paralleling the case of the first Italian season, this does not mean that the repertory would be exclusively operas by German composers; these would, however, dominate, with any works by French or Italian composers sung in German. The company would officially be known as the "Damrosch German Opera Company." For this designation, see Eisler, p. xviii. The decision to choose Damrosch was praised in a New York Times editorial on 17 August 1884, p. 6. His efforts in organizing the coming season were also covered steadily by the New York newspapers. Ibid., pp. 82, 85.

<sup>82</sup>Martin, p. 75.

Germany to New York. This group, some of whom were connected with Bayreuth, did not demand the exorbitant fees insisted upon by the stars of Italian opera, having, "of its own volition . . . disallied itself from the star system" in its dedication to art.<sup>83</sup>

The first of its German seasons opened at the Metropolitan Opera House on 17 November 1884, with Wagner's Tannhäuser presented under the baton of Leopold Damrosch. The concession to prevailing taste proved to be a success both artistically and financially. The boxholders remained dissatisfied with the German, and especially the Wagnerian repertory, but for financial reasons they allowed German opera to continue for six more seasons.<sup>84</sup>

Leopold Damrosch died just before the end of the Metropolitan's first German season. Anton Seidl, who had worked directly under Wagner and had conducted Wagnerian premieres throughout Europe, was engaged for the next.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup>The only exception was the Bayreuth soprano, Amalia Materna, who was already well-known in America. She received a salary of one thousand dollars, a sum comparable to the stars of the first Metropolitan season. Ibid., p. 84; and Walter Damrosch, My Musical Life (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), p. 53.

<sup>84</sup>For the attitude of the boxholders, see Henry Pleasants, "The Golden Era: When the 'Met' was a German Opera House," American-German Review 33 (1966): 20; and Krehbiel (1909), pp. 176, 205, 221.

<sup>85</sup>Anton Seidl's career before coming to America is discussed by Lahee (1902), pp. 249-50.

With the addition of Seidl to the roster of artists, it was truly as if Bayreuth had come to New York. What would come to be thought of as the "golden age" of German opera at the Metropolitan had now begun.<sup>86</sup>

Of the over four hundred performances during the German seasons from 1884 to 1891, over half were devoted to Wagner, with the greater part of these coming from the Ring.<sup>87</sup> Ryder could have seen Götterdämmerung during any of its twenty presentations during these seasons, beginning with its American premiere at the Metropolitan on 25 January 1888.<sup>88</sup> Although the Metropolitan did not perform Der fliegende Holländer until the 1889-1890 season, it was well-known in New York before this time through concerts and staging by other opera companies.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>Pleasants, p. 18; and Kolodin, p. 105.

<sup>87</sup>Eisler, p. 166.

<sup>88</sup>Based on statistics drawn from William H. Seltsam, comp., Metropolitan Opera Annals, A Chronicle of Artists and Performances (New York: H. W. Wilson Co. for the Metropolitan Opera Guild, 1947), p. 7.

<sup>89</sup>Theodore Thomas and the American Opera Company gave this work in English at the Academy of Music, New York on 17, 22, 27, and 31 March; and on 1, 7, and 17 April 1886. In 1887--the year to which Ryder's The Flying Dutchman is attributed--it was performed by Thomas and the National Opera Company in Brooklyn on 1 January and 17 March 1887; and in New York at the Metropolitan Opera House on 28 February and 12 March 1887. Krehbiel (1886), pp. 170, 177, 186, 188, 190, 204, 214; and Krehbiel, Review of the New York Musical Season, 1886-1887 (New York: Novello, Ewer & Co., 1887), pp. 79, 131, 151, 163.

Ryder could have been exposed to the music and ideas of Wagner in yet another way. From the late 1880s on, Walter Damrosch, Leopold's son, gave lectures in New York on the Ring cycle, with musical illustrations performed on the piano.<sup>90</sup> As described by a contemporary, these extremely popular lectures were regarded by New York Wagnerites as a "ritual preparation" for the quasi-religious experiencing of Wagner's music, and "Walter Damrosch was the prophet of this cause . . . ." <sup>91</sup>

#### Albert Pinkham Ryder's Two Wagnerian Paintings

Evidence for Ryder's interest in music, and in Wagner especially, exists separate from his actual execution of the Wagnerian paintings. In a letter to the collector John Gellatly, who was a patron of the artist and owner of The Flying Dutchman, Ryder describes his attendance at a private musicale:

I spent a delightful evening Thursday. Mr. Arthur Beaupre was kind enough to play some selections from Chopin. And Miss Inez Sanders played a beautiful composition of Schumann beautifully. Mr. Beaupre has a great love for pictures: and is anxious particularly to see the "Flying Dutchman." I was sure you would be pleased to show him your gallery. While not a professional musician he plays with rare feeling and

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For Thomas' short-lived American and National Opera Company, see Mussulman, pp. 138-41.

<sup>90</sup>Martin, p. 96.

<sup>91</sup>Dana, pp. 8-9.

appreciation and brings the same qualities into the picture world making of course a great pleasure in the showing of them.<sup>92</sup>

This passage is not only significant as a manifestation of his interest in music; it also makes clear that Ryder believed that sensitivity to one art form carries over into another.

Ryder's deep passion for specifically Wagnerian music is well illustrated in an anecdote recorded by Marsden Hartley. The younger artist describes Ryder as "inviolably romantic" in his reaction to both a Wagnerian opera and a Wagnerian soprano. Upon attending a performance of Tristan und Isolde, Ryder "became ill with the sight of Nordica and the sound of Wagner, . . . and he was ill for a period of weeks afterward."<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup>Ryder's letter to Gellatly, dated 12 March 1910, as quoted in Brumbaugh, p. 368.

<sup>93</sup>Marsden Hartley, "The Spangle of Existence, Casual Existence, Casual Dissertations," unpublished MS, Library of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, pp. 91-92. Hartley was one of a small group of young artists who were attracted to Ryder's art and became the older master's friends in his later years. See Goodrich (1959), p. 29. Lillian Nordica, the great American Wagnerian soprano, first sang Isolde at the Metropolitan on 27 November 1895. Seltsam, p. 72. Therefore Hartley is describing a reaction to Wagner's music at a late point in Ryder's life, although it undoubtedly was a manifestation of an attitude going back many years. Ryder was not alone in his appreciation of Nordica's performance. The New York Times review, 28 November 1895, accords her the highest praise. Cited by Eisler, p. 203.

A description is also extant of Ryder's purported reaction to a performance of Götterdämmerung, and his immediate response to it in the painting of Siegfried and the Rhine Maidens. Elliott Daingerfield recorded a conversation he had with Ryder in which the latter said:

I had been to hear the opera and went home about twelve o'clock and began this picture. I worked forty-eight hours without sleep or food, and the picture was the result.<sup>94</sup>

This statement raises certain problems. After a radiographic analysis made in 1947, Lloyd Goodrich concluded:

The paint is fairly thick and even over the whole surface. . . . Daingerfield's story of what Ryder said

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<sup>94</sup>Elliott Daingerfield, "Albert Pinkham Ryder, Artist and Dreamer," Scribner's Magazine 63 (March 1918): 380. Ryder's supposed poverty would not have ruled out his attendance at the opera. During the German seasons a ticket could be purchased for as little as fifty cents, half the cost of the lowest price ticket for the inaugural, Italian, season. See Krehbiel (1887), p. 196; Kolodin, p. 90. Hartley suggests that Ryder was not really poor, but negligent about money matters. Hartley, pp. 87-88. Ryder could also have gone to the opera as a guest. The many acquaintances of this supposed recluse appear to have included the Vanderbilts, who were patrons of the Metropolitan. For Ryder's connection with the Vanderbilts, see David M. Cheney, "New Bedford's Painter of Dreams," New Bedford (Mass.) Sunday Standard (10 June 1917) sec. 2, p. 17. This article is the only source, to my knowledge, in which such a connection is made. It appears in a newspaper published in Ryder's place of birth, and the author cites Ryder's sister-in-law as his authority, leading one to suspect the possibility of exaggeration due to a combination of civic and family pride. For qualifications regarding the degree of his reclusiveness, see John Robinson, "Personal Reminiscences of Albert Pinkham Ryder," Art in America 13 (June 1925): 180; and Goodrich (1959), p. 29.



to him about painting the picture in forty-eight hours can scarcely by [sic] reconciled with the body of pigment or its heaviness; nor with the numerous changes shown in the radiographs. . . . the painting had been worked on a long time, although the picture on the surface is very free and even spontaneous.<sup>95</sup>

Ryder, therefore, did not actually complete the picture in forty-eight hours, as one might be led to believe from Daingerfield's quotation of the artist's words. Not only is the evidence of the condition report contradictory with such a conclusion, but everything known about Ryder's practice of working and reworking his canvases over many years makes it doubtful.<sup>96</sup> The expression of romantic frenzy implicit in the statement is, however, in keeping with the emotional tenor of Ryder's later paintings and his reactions to Wagner's music.

Strong emotional response to Wagner's operas was by no means uncommon in late nineteenth-century New York. To

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<sup>95</sup>Lloyd Goodrich, "Whitney Museum of American Art, Ryder Centenary Exhibition Examination Report," 1947, Curatorial Records, File No. 886, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., p. 3.

<sup>96</sup>Ryder's slow process of reworking, in a technique that led to early deterioration, has been described by numerous writers. See, for example, Lloyd Goodrich, "Ryder Rediscovered," Art in America 56 (November-December 1968): 45. Landscape Sketch (Ione and Hudson Walker Coll.) was identified by Goodrich as a rare oil study for Siegfried and the Rhine Maidens, thus substantiating the idea that Ryder could not have painted the National Gallery work in forty-eight hours. Goodrich to Hudson D. Walker, 16 May 1961. This letter, and a photograph of the oil sketch, may be found in Curatorial Records, File No. 886, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. The tree in the sketch also resembles, in mirror image, one that

be a Wagnerite in New York during this period was to partake of an intense aesthetic, emotional, and intellectual experience which the artist shared with many others. As described by a contemporary, lovers of Wagner's music "came out of each performance in a trance."<sup>97</sup> Ultimately, what distinguishes Ryder from his fellow New York Wagnerites is not the intensity of his reactions, but his ability to embody them in an equally intense visual form.

Ryder's painting of Siegfried and the Rhine Maidens was not, however, stimulated by the music alone. The visual aspects of the performance may have played a significant role as a point of departure for the artist's composition. As early as 1920, it was noted:

A few of Ryder's pictures are in a sense a stage brought down to inches; the life, the scene, the acting in a stage area eighty feet wide and proportionately high have been reduced by him to a miniature with nothing lost in the reduction. The action is kept, the story clear, the impression intensified, the art fascinating.<sup>98</sup>

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appears in The Forest of Arden (Metropolitan Museum of Art). It is therefore possible that Ryder made use of it in both paintings. The exact date of the Metropolitan painting has not been firmly established. For the possibility of Ryder having worked on The Forest of Arden from 1888 to 1908, see Doreen Bolger Burke, American Painting in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, vol. 3: A Catalogue of Works by Artists Born between 1846 and 1964. ed. Kathleen Luhrs (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1980), p. 24.

<sup>97</sup>Dana, p. 8.

<sup>98</sup>Walter S. de Beck, "Albert Pinkham Ryder: An Appreciation," International Studio 70 (April 1920): xlii.

More recently, both Barbara Novak and Elizabeth Johns have conjectured that the visual qualities of the opera in Ryder's time influenced his composition. Novak suggests:

There may be some connection between Ryder's exposure to the baroque conventions of the operas he saw in New York and the centrifugal explosiveness of the Jonah and those pictures directly inspired by Wagner--Flying Dutchman and Siegfried and The Rhine Maidens.<sup>99</sup>

Johns, in reference to Siegfried and the Rhine Maidens, suggests that "the total scheme may well derive from the lurid stage lighting . . . [in] the opera that Ryder saw . . . ."100

There is a yet more specific way in which Ryder was influenced by Wagnerian mis-en-scène--either through witnessing a performance, or from the study of two-dimensional reproductions. The Viennese painter, Josef Hoffmann, was the set designer for the first complete cycle of Der Ring des Nibelungen given at Bayreuth in 1876. Wagner himself chose Hoffmann, who was not primarily a scenic artist, but a landscape painter.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>Barbara Novak, American Painting of the Nineteenth Century: Realism, Idealism, and the American Experience (New York: Praeger, 1969), p. 218.

<sup>100</sup>Johns, p. 169. Neither Novak nor Johns were here primarily concerned with the relationship between the sets and the compositions and did not pursue this question further.

<sup>101</sup>Oswald Georg Bauer, Richard Wagner: The Stage Designs and Productions from the Premieres to the Present (New York: Rizzoli, 1983), p. 227. A short biography of

Hoffmann's rendering of Act III, Scene I of Götterdämmerung (Figure 3)--the same scene depicted by Ryder in Siegfried and the Rhine Maidens--shares too many compositional features with Ryder's painting for their resemblance to be dismissed as merely coincidental.

Hoffmann's stage design is contained within a horizontally oriented rectangle, cropped by Ryder into an almost perfect square.<sup>102</sup> In both works Siegfried, descending toward the maidens, is located in the middle-ground of the right third of the composition. Hoffmann reveals Siegfried standing on a rocky promontory just above the water. Ryder repeats this placement of the hero, but puts him on horseback, on a narrow forest path that occupies the same position as Hoffmann's promontory. Hoffmann merely shows Siegfried and the Rhine maidens in the midst of their dialogue; Ryder intensifies the drama by indicating, through Siegfried's gesture and, even more, by the turning of the horse's head, that this is Siegfried's first moment of awareness of the maidens' presence.

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Josef Hoffmann (1831-1904) appears in Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart, 1924 ed., s.v. "Hoffmann, Josef."

<sup>102</sup>The square, or almost square, canvas as an innovative painting format, used by Ryder and a number of other American painters in the late nineteenth century, is treated by William H. Gerdts in "The Square Format and Proto-Modernism in American Painting," Arts Magazine 50

Ryder's painting echoes Hoffmann's in the silhouetting of Siegfried against a large dark mass that creates a strong diagonal axis from upper right to lower center. In Hoffmann's design this mass is an obvious stage flat rendering of tangled trees and boulders. Ryder retains the mass, but transposes it into the foot of a mountain abutting the narrow path on which Siegfried rides. He simplifies and strengthens the basically triangular shape, less articulately presented in the Hoffmann design. By doing so, Ryder achieves a better integration of this passage into the overall two-dimensional arrangement of his painting, where it becomes one of a series of such shapes. In blocking out any direct view of the far distance behind Siegfried, Ryder also follows Hoffmann; but the American painter suggests greater recession by means of the forest path, which must be understood as encircling the mountain base.

The Rhine maidens in both designs appear to Siegfried's right, and Ryder follows Hoffmann in the manner by which Siegfried and the maidens are contrasted. In both works, Siegfried is set against a dark ground, in opposition to the Rhine maidens, who occupy the largest high-keyed area. This area in the set design is centrally placed, in the middle-ground, with the water partially

concealed by foreground rocks--a practical solution in terms of staging. Ryder extends the river, together with its Rhine maidens, to the very bottom of his composition, eliminates Hoffmann's foreground rocks, and brings the viewer much closer to the action of the drama. Although Ryder has dramatically shifted the physical elements, he has maintained the general value pattern of Hoffmann's foreground. The distribution of darks and lights in the lower third of Ryder's painting follows those in the foreground of the stage set. The highlighted areas in the stage design--the rocks on the left and a small patch of forest clearing on the right--become, in Ryder's composition, the highlighted undulations of the Rhine.

Ryder follows Hoffmann in his use of the tree motif twisting upward to divide the composition into two parts. In the Hoffmann set this tree is somewhat left of center, which is dominated by the Rhine maidens. Ryder moves the tree closer to true center, enlarges it, and elaborates its form, turning it into the focal point of his entire composition--the center from which there springs a series of vortical rhythms restated throughout the painting--in the other trees, the clouds, the path, the river, and even in the gestures of the Rhine maidens. Hoffmann's tree is merely a conventional space divider, whereas Ryder transforms it, with somber, agitated rhythms, into an expres-

sive force. Yet, in doing so he has in no way sacrificed the significance of the figures, despite their relative smallness in relationship to the tree; for the tree serves to link the figures compositionally by embracing them within its rhythms, while simultaneously dramatizing their conflict by dividing them into two opposed groupings.<sup>103</sup>

For all of its quotations from Hoffmann, Ryder's painting is, of course, a recreation on a higher level of design and expressiveness than that of his source. One obvious way in which the two works differ, in addition to those already discussed, is Ryder's suppression of detail in favor of bold masses, the very opposite of Hoffmann's academic lingering over detail. Ryder described his early artistic enlightenment in this respect:

Nature is a teacher who never deceives. When I grew weary with the futile struggle to imitate the canvases of the past, I went out into the fields, determined to serve nature as faithfully as I had served art. In my

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<sup>103</sup>I first presented my argument for Joseph Hoffmann's stage design as the source for Ryder's Siegfried and the Rhine Maidens during the Spring of 1983, in a research paper presented to Dr. Elizabeth Johns for her seminar, "Nineteenth Century Art and Music," at the University of Maryland, College Park. In February of the following year, Diane Chalmers Johnson delivered a lecture at the Seventy-Second Annual Meeting of the College Art Association, entitled "Art, Nature, and Imagination in the Paintings of Albert Pinkham Ryder: Visual Sources," in which she came to the same conclusion independently. Unfortunately, I did not hear her lecture, it has not been published, and I have only had access to a precis. This appears in College Art Association of America, Abstracts and Program Statements for Art History: Seventy-Second Annual Meeting (Toronto, Can.: n.p., 1984), p. 61.

desire to be accurate I became lost in a maze of detail. Try as I would, my colors were not those of nature. My leaves were infinitely below the standard of a leaf, my finest strokes were coarse and crude. The old scene presented itself one day before my eyes framed in an opening between two trees . . . . It stood out like a painted canvas--the deep blue of a midday sky--a solitary tree, brilliant with the green of early summer, a foundation of brown earth and gnarled roots. There was no detail to vex the eye. Three solid masses of form and color--sky, foliage and earth--the whole bathed in an atmosphere of golden luminosity. I threw my brushes aside; they were too small for the work in hand. I squeezed out big chunks of pure, moist color and taking my palette knife, I laid on blue, green, white and brown in great sweeping strokes. As I worked I saw that it was good and clean and strong. I saw nature springing into life upon my dead canvas. It was better than nature, for it was vibrating with the thrill of a new creation. Exultantly I painted until the sun sank below the horizon, then I raced around the fields like a colt let loose, and literally bellowed for joy.<sup>104</sup>

The Hoffmann rendering served Ryder as no more than a starting point for aesthetic transformation. In his bold, dramatic simplification, he actually came closer than Hoffmann to a realization of Wagner's original intent. Although generally pleased with Hoffmann's designs for the Bayreuth Ring cycle, the composer criticized the designer for his "neglect of the dramatic intentions in favour of his regard for arbitrary details of landscape scenery."<sup>105</sup>

Ryder's use of Hoffmann's designs in Siegfried and

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<sup>104</sup>Ryder, pp. 10-11.

<sup>105</sup>Bauer, p. 227.



the Rhine Maidens is undeniable, but precisely how he came to know Hoffmann's work is problematic. Examination of contemporary sources for an answer to this question has proven unrewarding.<sup>106</sup> One notable exception is to be found in the writings of Henry Krehbiel, who states that for the first Metropolitan Opera production of Die Walküre in 1885, "the original scenery and costumes were faithfully copied" from the first Bayreuth production, with only minor changes "for the sake of increased picturesque . . . ." <sup>107</sup>

There is no absolute proof that the Bayreuth designs were also copied for the Metropolitan's first production of Götterdämmerung in 1888. The Metropolitan's designs are credited to Hans Kautsky.<sup>108</sup> According to at least one specialist in the history of the Metropolitan Opera, Kautsky's sets may have been based on Hoffmann's original designs for Bayreuth.<sup>109</sup> Kautsky was, however, known as a

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<sup>106</sup>Contemporary writers were primarily concerned with discussing the music and the performers. They also, on occasion, discussed scenic effects, but only rarely seem to have commented on the scenic designs themselves.

<sup>107</sup>Krehbiel (1909), p. 133.

<sup>108</sup>Mander and Mitchenson, p. 149. Hans Kautsky is discussed briefly in Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart, under the entry for his father, s.v. "Katusky, Johann."

<sup>109</sup>Oral communication, Robert Tuggle, Director, Archives of the Metropolitan Opera Association, New York, 28 March 1983.

designer and not just as an executor of stage sets.<sup>110</sup> Since no reproductions of the Kautsky sets seem to be extant, the relationship between his designs and those of Hoffmann remains questionable.

Whatever Ryder may have seen on the stage of the Metropolitan, Hoffmann's designs were available in reproduction. A portfolio of photographic reproductions of his renderings of the Bayreuth sets was published in Vienna circa 1878, and became a source for Wagnerian illustrations in magazines and programs.<sup>111</sup> The leaf depicting Act III, Scene I of Götterdämmerung appeared in Scribner's Magazine in November of 1887, just two months before the Metropolitan's first production of the opera. Thus, regardless of whether Kautsky's sets were derived from Hoffmann's, Ryder had access to a rendering of the Bayreuth design for the scene between Siegfried and the Rhine maidens--either directly from the portfolio or, more likely, from a magazine such as Scribner's November issue.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup>Dr. Manfred Eger, Director, Richard Wagner Museum, Bayreuth, letter of 29 June 1988.

<sup>111</sup>Josef Hoffmann, Der Ring des Nibelungen; Photographien nach den Scenischen original-entwürfen zu R. Wagner's Bühnenfestspiel von Josef Hoffmann (Vienna: V. Angerer, 1878[?]).

<sup>112</sup>It is known that Ryder visited the library to study reproductions of the works of other artists. See "Artists at the Alcove: Painters and Draughtsmen at the

Ryder once made an ambiguous statement regarding the use of photographic aids by painters. When asked his opinion on the subject, he commented: "I don't think it is wrong [to use photographs], but it will spoil your painting."<sup>113</sup> His terse response suggests that he did not object to some use of photographs, although too great a dependence on them was to be avoided. Just such an attitude is reflected in his borrowings from, and transformation of, the Hoffmann design.

Ryder may have used photographic material other than a reproduction of the Hoffmann composition in his treatment of the Rhine maidens. Sophie Traubmann, who played the Rhine maiden Woglinde in the 1888 and 1889 Metropolitan

Astor Library," New York Times (26 February 1893): 20; Evans, n. 23, p. 36, calls attention to this article in her study on Ryder. Hoffmann's design for Götterdämmerung, act 3, sc. 1, appeared in William F. Apthorp, "Wagner and Scenic Art," Scribner's Magazine 2 (November 1887): 517. This magazine is precisely one of the monthly magazines which Mussulman describes as supplying "cultured" Americans, who were not specialists, with important musical information. Even earlier, in 1884, an American critic wrote, somewhat vaguely, as if he expected his readers to be familiar with the photographs of the Hoffmann designs; see Henry T. Finck, Wagner Handbook for the Festival Concerts Given in 1884 under the Direction of Theodore Thomas: Analytic Programmes with English Texts, Biographic and Critical Essays (Cambridge, Mass.: John Wilson & Son, 1884), p. 19. The same illustration that appeared in Scribner's was later reproduced in Metropolitan Opera House, Souvenir Season of Wagner Opera in German, 1895 (New York: Musical News Publishing Co., 1895), p. 129. [Special Collections, Music Division, New York Public Library, Astor, Lennox, Tilden Foundations.]

<sup>113</sup>William H. Hyde, "Albert Ryder As I Knew Him," Arts, 16 (May 1930): 598.

Opera productions of Götterdämmerung, is shown exhibiting her seductive charms in a photograph that is a late nineteenth-century equivalent of the more recent pin-up (Figure 4).<sup>114</sup> The gesture of her arms and angle of her body are echoed in the pose of the Rhine maiden on the left of the painting. The Rhine maiden depicted by Ryder as turning toward Siegfried is very close to Hoffmann's central maiden--both raise their right hand in the same manner, are in three-quarter view, and are cut-off just below the hips. The same pose is repeated in another photograph, of all three Rhine maidens, as they appeared at Bayreuth in Das Rheingold in 1876 (Figure 5). In this photograph the Rhine maiden on the left extends her arm in the same gesture as Ryder's central maiden, with her back to the viewer.

Although these similarities of pose might be dismissed as trivial, they take on significance when viewed in the context of Ryder's overall borrowings from Hoffmann's scenic design. It is known from radiographic analysis that the Rhine maidens were blocked into their place in Ryder's composition at an early stage, but that

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<sup>114</sup>Seltsam, pp. 27, 33, 38-39. Public relations photographs of this type must have been produced in large quantities during this period. Several photographs of a similar kind, but of vaudeville performers, are rendered in John Haberle's trompe l'oeil painting, A Bachelor's Drawer, dated 1890-94, in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

they probably did not receive their present, more detailed form until much later.<sup>115</sup> Ryder must have first indicated their position, based on his general transformation of the Hoffmann design, and then experimented with their forms using the latter two photographs as working material, until he established their present arrangement in the painting.

The radiographic analysis serves in yet another way as a means for understanding Ryder's transformation of his visual sources. As described, the central tree motif in the Hoffmann design is much less dominant than in the Ryder painting. During its early stages, as revealed in the radiographs, Ryder's tree, too, was not a dominant form, "indicating that it was not . . . settled on at the beginning and then laboriously and meticulously built up, but probably the result of many experiments, alterations, rehearsals . . . ." <sup>116</sup>

A visual source of a different kind has recently been proposed for Ryder's other Wagnerian painting, The Flying Dutchman. Dorinda Evans has presented, as a basis for Ryder's composition, Joseph M.W. Turner's 1840 painting, Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying.

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<sup>115</sup>See Goodrich (1947), p. 4.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., p. 3. According to this report there is some restoration, but it is minor and does not affect the analysis of the painting presented in this paper.

Typhoon Coming On, more commonly known as The Slave Ship (Figure 6). She has also demonstrated that Ryder could have seen the original Turner, which was exhibited several times at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and that he definitely knew of other works by the English artist, as well.<sup>117</sup> In her analysis of Ryder's borrowings from Turner's picture, Evans states:

A dying sun dominates the center in each, and a large, single ship just left of it, heading away from the spectator, is placed against the vibrant contrast of the sun's rays breaking through clouds. The ship in each is balanced by activity in the right foreground, but all resemblance ends here. Guided by his own vision of the scene from Wagner's opera, Ryder develops quite a different picture.<sup>118</sup>

The degree to which Ryder was guided by his own vision, or by observation of a stage set or illustration, is not as clear as it was for Siegfried and the Rhine

Repainting appears in Siegfried's head, his helmet, in part of the Rhine maidens, the horse's head, and some of the foliage. There is no indication that these additions have altered the composition in any significant way, and the restorer "followed Ryder's style very well . . . ." Ibid., pp. 2-3.

<sup>117</sup>Evans, pp. 35-36, cites the New York Times article, "Artists in the Alcoves: Painters and Draughtsmen at the Astor Library," in which it is mentioned that Ryder studied Turner's Liber Studiorum.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid., p. 35. Evans' study also deals with the influence on Ryder of the Barbizon School and Japanese art. Her treatment of the relationship between Corot's Dance of Cupids, 1866, and Ryder's Temple of the Mind, 1885; and Ryder's Lorelei, ca. 1896, and an 1837 engraving after Turner, demonstrates that his borrowings for the two Wagnerian paintings were in no way unusual for him.

Maidens. In The Flying Dutchman, Ryder definitely depicts an action that is part of the opera, but not so literally as in his other Wagnerian painting. This work is a pure seascape with two boats in a storm. The foreground boat is that of the Norwegian captain, Daland. He and his men look upward toward a ghostly ship--that of the Dutchman, doomed to sail forever, unless he can find redemption through a woman's love.<sup>119</sup>

In the opera, the storm begins in the overture, which has been described as "the first real sea-picture in music . . . ," filled with "the expression of horror and terror . . . ."<sup>120</sup> Ryder has taken Wagner's pictorial music and given it substance in a design that, in its surging rhythms, is analogous to the music that inspired it.<sup>121</sup> The manner in which Ryder incorporated what he

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<sup>119</sup>See Newman, 1:3-49 for synopses and analyses of Wagner's Flying Dutchman.

<sup>120</sup>*Ibid.*, 1:24-25. An earlier critic similarly states: "Never before had a composer succeeded in making such a terribly vivid translation into artistic tones of raging ocean storms . . . ." (Finck [1884], p. 75.)

<sup>121</sup>The musical quality of Ryder's work in general has often been commented upon, from as early as 1890 to as recently as 1968. See, for example, Charles de Kay [Henry Eckford], "A Modern Colorist, Albert Pinkham Ryder," Century Magazine 40 (June 1890): 254; and Goodrich (1968): 41. Charles C. Eldridge has pointed out in American Imagination and Symbolist Painting (New York: Grey Art Gallery and Study Center, New York University, 1979), pp. 29-30, that musical "jargon" became common among American art critics, due to the influence of Whistler, from the late nineteenth century onward, and represents a "subjective

saw, as well as heard, of Der fliegende Holländer into his visual recreation of the music is, however, less obvious. The storm continues into the first scene of the opera. Daland's ship is revealed anchored along a rocky coast, where the Dutchman, who may only leave the sea once every seven years, soon appears. Wagner's scenic requirements here include the sea as the background, with the foreground as the rocky coast. The sides of the stage, in traditional nineteenth-century manner, would be screened by an arrangement of stage flats, as may be seen in old illustrations of the sets.<sup>122</sup>

Ryder's painting shows no land whatsoever, and no single set design is here posited as the source for his composition. Nevertheless, he appears to have been influenced by the general staging arrangements of the opera in his time. The triangular wave forms that descend toward the lower center of the painting are much like stage flats in the way they screen the action behind them. Just as he transformed Hoffmann's forest rocks into a continuation of

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response" on their part. But such response, however subjective or even merely fashionable, was certainly not applied to all artists or all paintings. That Ryder's work appears to have been especially amenable to such interpretation should not be lightly dismissed, as it at least reflects an attitude towards his work of persons closer to his own world than ourselves.

<sup>122</sup>A selection of early scenic designs for Wagner's Flying Dutchman is illustrated in Bauer, pp. 41-42, 47.



the river in Siegfried and the Rhine Maidens, Ryder here may have transformed a stage flat representation of a rocky coast into a continuation of the sea.

Ryder's depiction of the contrast between the solidity of Daland's vessel and the insubstantiality of the Dutchman's has received justifiable praise. Goodrich, for example, speaks of the latter's "unearthly imagery," and Daingerfield describes "the wraithlike spectral ship [as] . . . the mystery of the picture."<sup>123</sup> In his realization of the phantom ship, Ryder again comes close to Wagner's original intentions. The composer stressed the importance of "the sharpest differentiation between the appearance of the Dutchman's ghostly ship and that of Daland, . . ."<sup>124</sup> This effect was to be achieved by the use of "gauzes and lighting changes."<sup>125</sup>

One further detail in Ryder's painting may be due to the influence of the Wagnerian mis-en-scène. In the Munich production of the opera in 1864, the phantom ship was placed on the left and Daland's on the right, just as they are in Ryder's composition. In all likelihood, exactly the same arrangement would have been used in the New York productions Ryder would have attended, as this

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<sup>123</sup>Goodrich (1968), p. 41; and Daingerfield, p. 381.

<sup>124</sup>Newman, 1:23.

<sup>125</sup>Bauer, p. 52.

placement of the ships "created a pattern which remained valid for decades and which was frequently imitated elsewhere."<sup>126</sup> One may, therefore, reasonably conclude that in his composition for The Flying Dutchman, Ryder's borrowings from Turner were enriched by impressions of a Germanic stage tradition maintained in the opera houses of New York.

In his choice of Wagnerian subjects for The Flying Dutchman and Siegfried and the Rhine Maidens, Ryder was not only responding to the general cultural currents of his time; he was also responding to the specific cultural ambience of his adopted city. His interest in Wagner and his visual borrowings from theatre sources are manifestations of his participation in the cultural life of late nineteenth-century New York with its special relationship to German traditions. No claim is made that the aspects of Ryder's art treated in this study are in any way sufficient to explain the intellectual or emotional significance of his choice of themes or his treatment of them.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>126</sup>Ibid. Bauer further points out that this Munich production, which was given at the Court Opera of Wagner's patron, Ludwig II, established the opera's standard visual form: "All new productions . . . have been conceived on the whole with technical improvements, while the old scheme of production has generally been left unaltered." (Ibid., p. 53.)

<sup>127</sup>For the broader aspects of Ryder's art as reflective of his time, the following studies, not previously cited, are of special interest: Albert Boime,

It is, however, hoped that the information presented here may contribute toward the clarification of Ryder's art, not only as the product of a man of his time, but as that of an artist intimately linked with, and reflective of, his specific cultural environment.

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"Newman, Ryder, Couture and Hero-Worship in Art History," American Art Journal 3 (Fall 1971): 5-22; Gaye L. Brown, "Albert Pinkham Ryder's Joan of Arc: The Damsel in Distress," Worcester Art Journal 7 (1979-80): 37-51; and Lorenz Eitner, "The Open Window and the Storm-tossed Boat: An Essay in the Iconography of Romanticism," Art Bulletin 37 (December 1957): 281-90.

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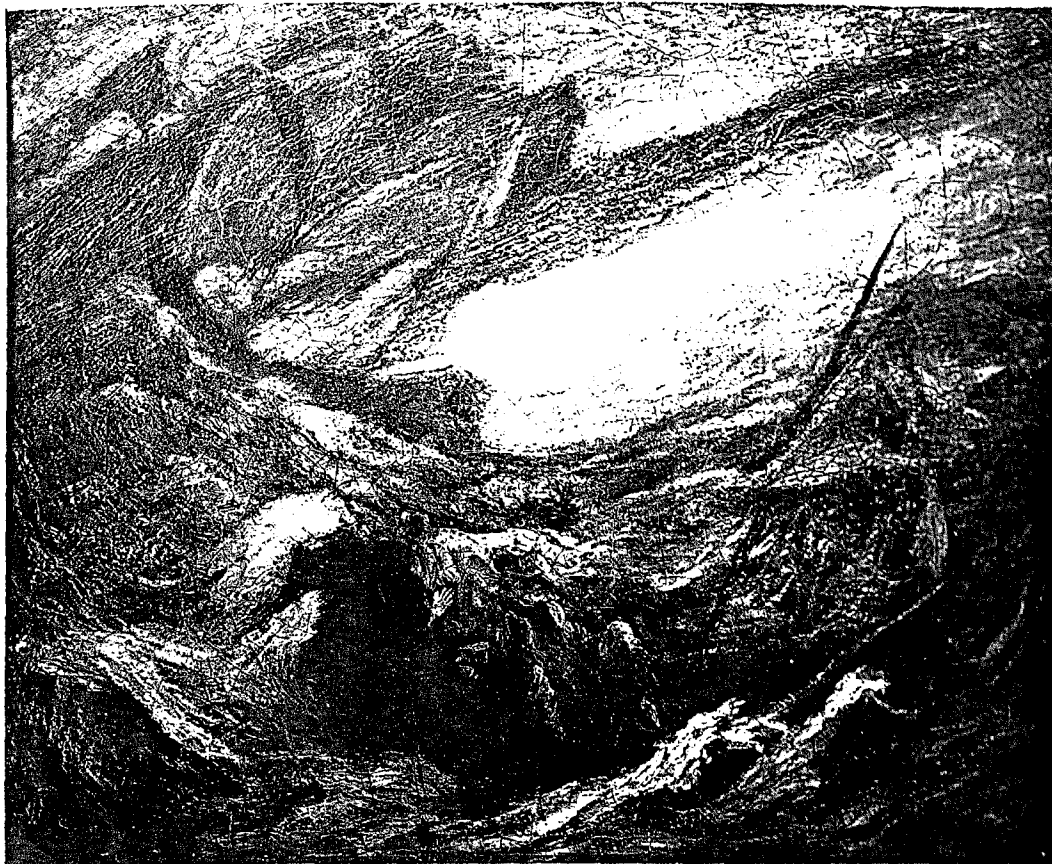


Fig. 1. Albert Pinkham Ryder, The Flying Dutchman, ca. 1887. Oil on canvas, 14 1/4 x 17 1/2 in. (36.1 x 43.8 cm.). National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Gift of John Gellatly.



Fig 2. Albert Pinkham Ryder, Siegfried and the Rhine Maidens, 1888-91. Oil on canvas, 19 7/8 x 21 1/2 in. (50.5 x 52.0 cm.). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Andrew W. Mellon Collection.

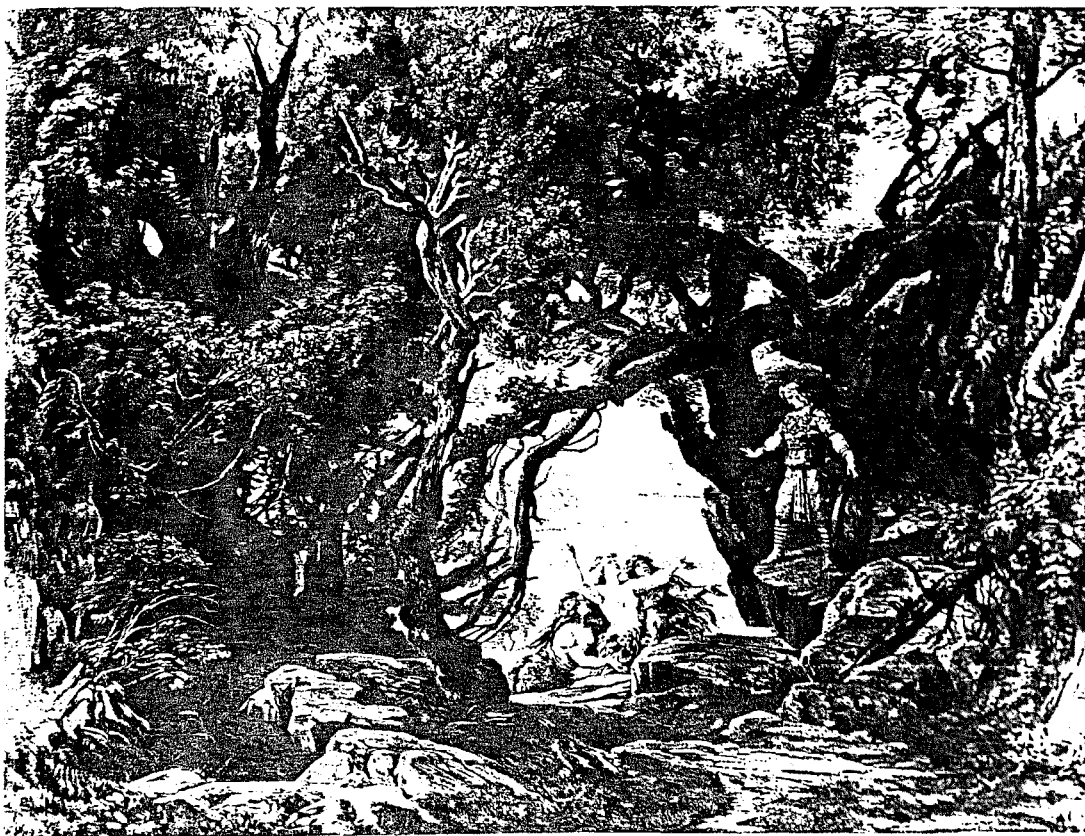


Fig. 3. Josef Hoffmann, Design for 1876 Bayreuth production of Götterdämmerung, Act III, Scene I. Photographic reproduction, ca. 1878. 13 x 17 3/4 in. (33 x 45 cm.).



Fig. 4. Sophie Traubmann as Woglinde in Götterdämmerung,  
ca. 1888. Metropolitan Opera House, New York.



Fig. 5. Lilli Lehmann, Marie Lehmann, and Minna Lammert as the Rhine maidens in Das Rheingold, 1876. Festspielhaus, Bayreuth.



Fig. 6. Joseph M.W. Turner, Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying: Typhoon Coming On, 1840.  
Oil on canvas 35 3/4 x 48 in. (90.8 x 122 cm.).  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Henry Lillie  
Pierce Fund.