

**Richard Wagner (1813-1883)
with his son Siegfried**

**17th International Congress of the
International Society of
Psychosomatic Obstetrics and
Gynaecology (ISPOG)
THE BRAIN – THE BODY – THE SOCIETY
Ceremonial address**

Prof. Dr. Susanne Vill

**„The Woman of the Future“ –
Effects of Richard Wagner’s
Vision on the Musical and
Social Culture**

Berlin, May 22, 2013, 7 pm

Richard Wagner

The Completed Operas

<i>TITLE</i>	<i>WORLD PREMIERE</i>
<i>Die Feen</i> (1833–1834)	1888
<i>Das Liebesverbot oder Die Novize von Palermo</i> (1834–1836)	1836
<i>Rienzi, der Letzte der Tribunen</i> (1837–1840)	1842
<i>Der Fliegende Holländer</i> (1840–1841, revised 1852 , 1864)	1843
<i>Tannhäuser und der Sängerkrieg auf Wartburg</i> (1842–1845, revised 1847, 1861, 1867,1875)	1845
<i>Lohengrin</i> (1845–1848)	1850

Richard Wagner

The Music Dramas

<i>TITLE</i>	<i>WORLD PREMIERE</i>
<i>Der Ring des Nibelungen:</i>	
<i>Das Rheingold</i> (1851–1854)	1869
<i>Die Walküre</i> (1851–1856)	1870
<i>Siegfried</i> (1851–1871)	1876
<i>Götterdämmerung</i> (1848–1874)	1876
<i>Tristan und Isolde</i> (1856–1859)	1865
<i>Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg</i> (1845–1867)	1868
<i>Parsifal</i> (1865–1882)	1882

Types of Female Characters

Goddesses: Venus, Erda, Fricka, Freia, Brünnhilde

Mythological elementary /nature spirits: Norns, Valkyries, Rhinemaidens

Fairies: Ada, Zemira, Farzana

Emanations of nature: bird in the forest, flower maidens

Innocent victims: Ada, Senta, Elisabeth, Elsa, Brünnhilde, Isolde

Lovers: women in Venus' mountain, Sieglinde, Isolde, Eva, Gutrune

Unselfish, self-sacrificing lovers: Senta, Elisabeth

Confidants, maids: Drolla, Dorella, Brangäne

Sisters: Lora (*Die Feen*), Isabella (*Liebesverbot*), Irene (*Rienzi*), Gutrune

Wives: Mariana (*Liebesverbot*), noblewomen (*Tannhäuser*), Ortrud, Fricka

Nurses: Mary, Magdalena

A schemer, greedy for power: Ortrud

A seductress in need of redemption: Kundry

A witch: (in a tale) Dilnovaz (*Feen*)



Wotan calls Erda
Henri Fantin-Latour 1885

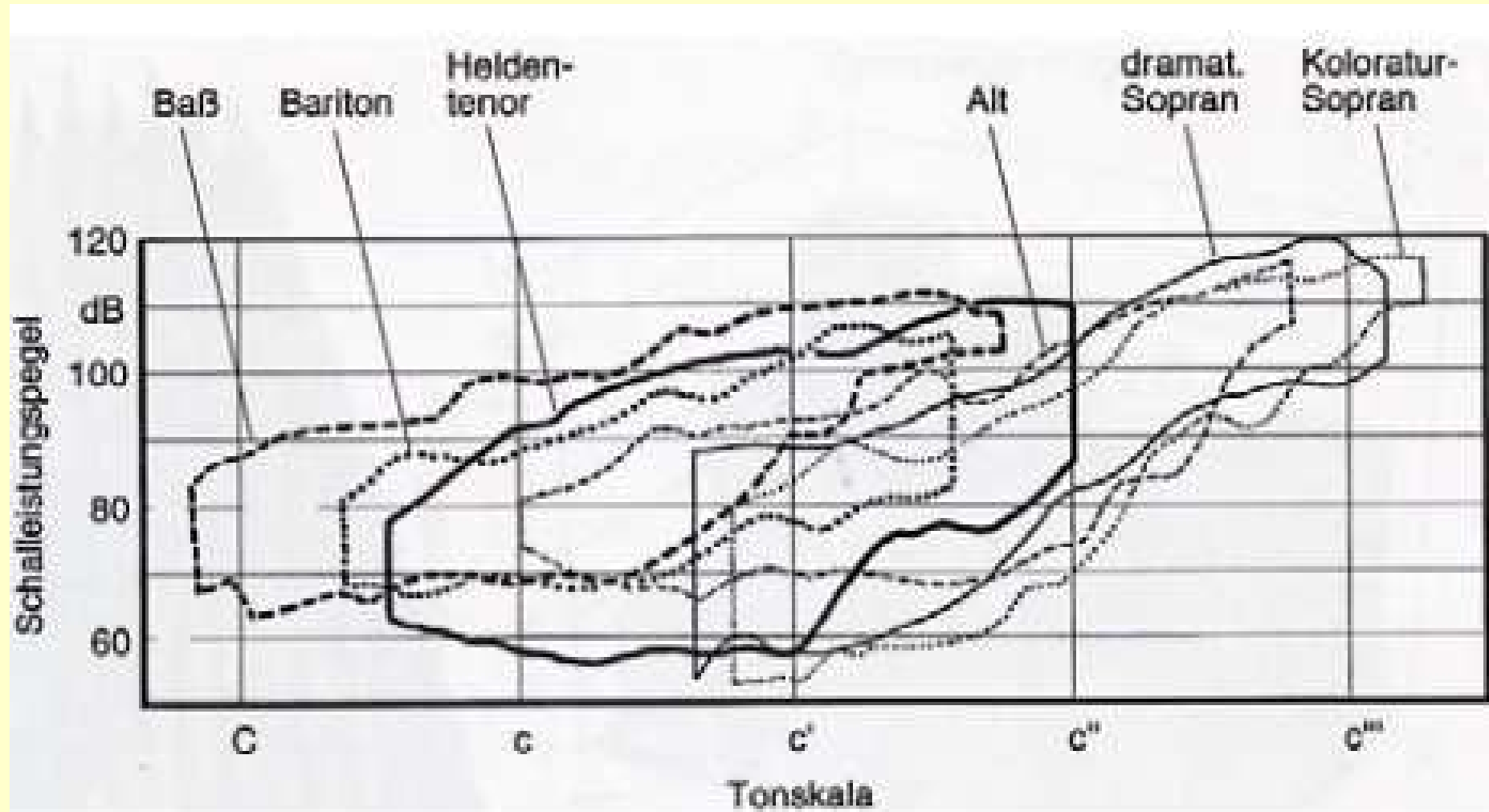


***The
Valkyries***



Richard Wagner, *Das Rheingold*: Director: La Fura dels Baus - Carlus Padrissa, Sets: Roland Olbeter, Costumes: Chu Uroz. Palau de les Arts de Valencia and Maggio Musicale Fiorentino 2007 (DVD 2009)

Dynamics of Singing Voices



In: Jürgen Meyer: Akustik und musikalische Aufführungspraxis, Berlin 41999

Western „High Culture“ Music -- Wagner

Western “high culture” music concentrated on perfection, not on the freedom of the musician’s expression:

- **control of the musical process**
- **fixation of the musical parameters**
- **loss of the potency of music to drive singers, players and listeners into ecstasy**

Wagner attempted to gain some of the power of music to evoke ecstasy back by choosing

- **mythical subjects**
- **through-composed acts without formal breaks**
- **dispensing with musical ornaments**
- **creating endless melodies**
- **impressionist soundscapes**
- **proposing the singer’s self-abandonment in singing**

Physical reactions to pleasant music in listening, playing and singing

Harmonization and synchronization of neuronal patterns of activities which are generated in different parts of the brain

“The more this effect of harmonization is extended on those subcortical parts which are responsible for the regulation of the integrative regulative system in the body (the limbic system, hypothalamus and the brainstem) the more effective is the reconstitution of functions (cardiovascular system, neuroendocrine system, vegetative system, immune system) which had been irritated by strain, restlessness and stress.”

Gerhard Hüther (neurobiologist): Ebenen salutogenetischer Wirkungen auf das Gehirn. Musiktheaterapeutische Umschau 2004, Bd. 25 H. 1, H. Göttingen S. 16-26

Physical reactions to pleasant music in listening, playing and singing II

Activation of emotions touches older structures of the brain

- **new ways for neurotransmission**
- **noradrenalin, dopamine, corticotrophin releasing hormones, vasopressin, beta-endorphin**
- **new regulations of emotions**
- **endorphin, oxytocin and dopamine prepare the integration of the new experiences in the singer's mind**
- **thrills → spill of endogenous opiates like endorphins**
- **similar effects like special food, sex or drugs**
- **thrills reduce anxiety and lift the disposition for learning**

A.J. Blood, R.J. Zatorre: Intensely pleasurable responses to music correlate with activity in brain regions implicated in reward and emotion. PNAE 98, S. 1181-1183

Reactions to music, especially to singing:

- touch the saccules in the ear, the frequency of the voices
- impulses to the nucleus accumbens
- feelings of joy, delight, thrills

Thrills: spill of endogenous opiates like endorphins

- effects like those of special food, sex or drugs
- thrills reduce anxiety and lift the disposition for learning

Altered states of consciousness through music:

- ergotropic induction leads to ecstasy
- trophotropic induction leads to self-absorption.

The Waves:

alertness - beta waves (14-40 waves per second)

rest - alpha waves (7-14 waves per second)

Reduction of exhaling of breath stimulates the baroreceptors

- theta or delta waves in intensive states of ecstasy or self-absorption
- the vibrato of human voices may also induce theta waves

A.J. Blood, R.J. Zatorre: Intensely pleasurable responses to music correlate with activity in brain regions implicated in reward and emotion. PNAE 98, p. 1181-1183

Music can :

- **reduce physical pain**
- **relieve mourning, give comfort and hope**
- **overcome depression**
- **loosen conscious and unconscious blocks to get back to hidden thoughts and emotions**
- **evoke feelings of openness and freedom**
- **provide an insight into one's own kind of living, relations and reality**
- **convey the feeling to be accepted by others and enhance self-confidence**
- **be used to confirm, intensify and change one's own state of mind**
- **produce a strong feeling of one's own identity, living conditions and existence.**

A. Gabrielson, S. Lindström: Can strong experiences of music have therapeutic implications? In R. Steinberg (Ed.), Music and the mind machine. 1995, p. 195-202



Der Ring Des Nibelungen

Director: Kasper Bech Holten

Conductor: Michael Schönwandt

Set and Costume Designers:

Marie í Dali and Steffen Aarfing

Royal Opera House Copenhagen 2006

***Götterdämmerung* (finale)**

Brünnhilde: Irene Theorin

