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Wagner in Exile: Paris, Halévy and the *Queen*

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Fromental Halévy's five-act grand opera La Reine de Chypre *premiered in Paris in 1841. Many critics viewed the work as a great success and seen as a true rival to* La Juive *(1835). Wagner, who was in Paris at the time, even went so far as to claim the composition 'a new step forward' in the world of opera, evidenced in the many review articles and publications he wrote about the work. This article attempts to uncover what Wagner admired about Halévy's composition, especially within the context of the German composer's 'artistic exile' in France (1839–1842) and the completion of a new dramatic conception of German romantic opera in* Der Fliegende Holländer *(1843). The connections between the two works are explored, revealing an affinity for the exile and the desire for redemption.*

Wagner's first trip to Paris was not a success. From September 1839 to April 1842, the composer lived in Paris with his wife Minna and their Newfoundland dog Robber, who ran away soon after they arrived. From the start, Wagner existed well beyond his means, to such an extent that he was constantly borrowing money from friends and family, requesting meals from near strangers and demanding credit from lenders. There is even evidence that Wagner spent time in prison due to unpaid debts.[1]

Hoping perhaps to become the next German to find fame and fortune in Paris, as Meyerbeer had with *Robert le diable* in 1831, Wagner struggled to gain the interest of librettists, theatre directors, fellow composers and even audience members in the French capital.[2] The one area in which Wagner found success

[1] See the composer's own account of this period in *Mein Leben*, I, ed. Martin Gregor-Dellin (Munich: List, 1969): 180–220; see also commentary by Dieter David Scholz, *Richard Wagner: Eine europäische Biographie* (Berlin: Parthas, 2006): 87–106; William Ashton Ellis, *Life of Richard Wagner* (New York: Da Capo, 1977): I: 269–340 and Ernest Newman, *The Life of Richard Wagner*, I: 1813–1848 (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1933): 256–324.

[2] Wagner saw Paris entirely controlled by money, deceit, national interest and bourgeois tastes, as witnessed by his article 'Pariser Fatalitäten für Deutsche' ('Traps for Unwary Germans in Paris') for the journal *Europa* in 1841; see Robert Louis Jacobs and Geoffrey Skelton, *Wagner Writes from Paris: Stories, Essays, and Articles by the Young Composer* (New York: J. Day, 1973): 18–35. Although Meyerbeer introduced Wagner to many individuals of the French music establishment, including Léon Pillet, the director of the Paris Opéra, and Maurice Schlesinger, the influential music publisher, Wagner continued to blame Meyerbeer for his lack of success in the French capital. As is well known, Wagner's thoughts on what he perceived was a conspiracy against his artistic works, sabotaged by the French music industry, were projected into several essays of the late 1840s and early 1850s, most notably 'Die Kunst und die Revolution' (1849), 'Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft' (1849) and 'Das Judentum in der Musik' (1850).

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while in Paris, however, was working for the German-born French music publisher Maurice Schlesinger as both a critic and an arranger of French operas, most notably Donizetti's *La Favorite* (1840) and Halévy's *La Reine de Chypre* (1841). For both of these *grands opéras*, Wagner arranged a substantial amount of material for a public who wanted to hear these works again and again in their homes as the operas continued to do well at the theatre box office. See Table 1 for a list of the many arrangements Wagner made of the two works.[3]

Table 1 Complete list of arrangements by Richard Wagner while in Paris (1839–1842) for the music publisher Maurice Schlesinger[4]

Gaetano Donizetti's *La Favorite*	**Fromental Halévy's *La Reine de Chypre***
1.) Piano-vocal score	1.) Piano-vocal score
2.) Piano reduction without vocal parts or text	2.) Piano reduction without vocal parts or text
3.) Piano arrangement for four hands	3.) Selected pieces for voice and piano
4.) Selected pieces for voice and piano	4.) An arrangement for quartet (string quartet or flute and string trio)
5.) An arrangement for quartet (string quartet or flute and string trio)	5.) An arrangement for two violins
6.) An arrangement for two violins	6.) Corrections to the complete orchestral score
7.) An arrangement for cornet à pistons	
8.) Corrections to the complete orchestral score	

Although poverty may have forced Wagner to arrange these pieces while he lived in Paris,[5] there is no doubt his work as an arranger of popular French operas

[3] *La Favorite* was widely popular throughout the nineteenth century. By 1918, the work received over 690 performances at the Paris Opéra alone; see William Ashbrook, 'Favorite, La', *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1992): II: 140–43. While *La Reine de Chypre* did not enjoy the same level of success as *La Favorite*, the Halévy work did receive by 1876 its 118th performance at the Paris Opéra, over 30 years after the 1841 premiere; see Théodore Dufaure de Lajarte, *Bibliothèque musicale du Théâtre de l'Opéra* (Paris: Librairie des bibliophiles, 1878): 169.

[4] All of the arrangements listed here can be found in the critical editions by Egon Voss: Richard Wagner, *Sämtliche Werke*, XX.2B*: Opernbearbeitungen*, II: Gaetano Donizetti, 'La Favorite' (Mainz: Schott Music, 2009) and Richard Wagner, *Sämtliche Werke*, XX.2C*: Opernbearbeitungen*, III: Fromental Halévy, 'La Reine de Chypre' (Mainz: Schott Music, 2007). In addition, the arrangements are listed in Wagner's complete catalogue of works as WWV62B and WWV62E, respectively; see *Wagner Werk-Verzeichnis (WWV): Verzeichnis der musikalischen Werke Richard Wagners und ihrer Quellen* (Mainz: Schott Music, 1986), ed. John Deathridge, Martin Geck and Egon Voss.

[5] Wagner also arranged suites of various works for cornet à piston (WWV62A); *Grand fantaisie sur la Romanesca*, Op. 111 by Henri Herz for piano four hands (WWV62C); piano arrangements of Halévy's three-act opera *Le Guitarrero* (WWV62D); and a string quartet arrangement of Daniel Auber's three-act opera *Zanetta, ou, Jouer avec le feu* (WWV62F), which was completed in Dresden in 1842 but later published in Paris in 1843. For more information on all of the arrangements Wagner completed while in Paris, see Richard Wagner, *Sämtliche Werke*, XX.2A: *Opernbearbeitungen*, I: Bearbeitungen (Mainz: Schott Music, 1999), ed. Egon Voss, and Hans-Joachim Bauer, *Richard Wagner: Einführungen in sämtliche Kompositionen* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2004): 128–9.

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and salon pieces provided him the opportunity to study the compositional styles of the day and thus contributed to his vision as a revolutionary composer of dramatic music.

As evidenced in a letter to his benefactor, King Ludwig II of Bavaria, written some 25 years later in the idyllic surroundings of Lake Lucerne, Wagner confessed what the two and a half years in Paris meant to him:

> Paris occupied so important a place in the development of my relations with the outside world that, whenever I think of such things, I invariably find myself remembering my experiences there … As the world now is, Paris forms the culminating point: all other cities are simply stations along the way. It is the heart of modern civilization, drawing in the blood before sending it out again to the limbs. When I decided to become a famous opera composer, my good angel sent me straight to that heart: I was at the source, and there I was able to grasp at once *things*, which at the wayside stations would perhaps have taken me a half a lifetime to learn.[6]

I believe these 'things' that Wagner grasped while in Paris are partly found in the activity surrounding his arrangements of French opera premieres, most notably Halévy's opera, *La Reine de Chypre*. Unlike Donizetti's opera, which he thought was filled with 'pernicious fireworks and intolerable prima-donna-flourishes',[7] Wagner consistently praised the score of *La Reine de Chypre*, namely Halévy's use of colourful instrumentation, strong motivic development and a simplified vocal expression. The German composer published two articles on the opera in the *Dresdener Abend-Zeitung*,[8] four articles in Schlesinger's own Parisian journal, *La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*[9] and a short review in Schumann's *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*.[10] Beyond his admiration for the score,[11] I believe the young German composer was impressed with the subject matter itself: the redemption of a man in exile. This same dramatic theme is found in Wagner's *Der fliegende Holländer*, a three-act work written while the composer was living in Paris. The opera is the first of his so-called 'German Romantic operas',[12] and not

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[6] Letter from Wagner to King Ludwig II of Bavaria 18 July 1867, quoted and translated by Jacobs and Skelton, *Wagner Writes from Paris*, frontispiece.

[7] Richard Wagner, 'Bericht über eine neue Pariser Oper', *Dresdener Abend-Zeitung*, 26 January 1842; trans. William Ashton Ellis, *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, vol. VII (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1898): 220.

[8] Wagner, 'Bericht über eine neue Pariser Oper', *Dresdener Abend-Zeitung*, 26 and 29 January 1842; trans. Ellis, *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, VII, 206–22, and Jacobs and Skelton, Wagner Writes from Paris, 163–77.

[9] Richard Wagner, 'Halévy et *La Reine de Chypre*', *La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, 27 February 1842, 13 March 1842, 24 April 1842 and 1 May 1842; trans. Ellis, *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, VIII, (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1899): 175–200.

[10] Richard Wagner, 'Ein Pariser Bericht', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 22 February 1842; trans. Ellis, *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, VIII, 172.

[11] Several other critics reviewed the Halévy work, including Hector Berlioz, who thought very highly of the work, even going so far as to proclaim that the score rivalled that of Halévy's earlier triumph, *La Juive* (1835); see Hector Berlioz, *Journal des Débats: Politiques et Littéraires*, 30 January 1842, 2. For a reprint of the French reviews published soon after the premiere of the opera, see *La Reine de Chypre: Dossier de presse parisenne (1841)*, ed. Anne-Sophie Métérie (Weinsberg: Musik-Edition Lucie Galland, 2007).

[12] Following *Der fliegende Holländer* in 1843, Wagner's next two works – *Tannhäuser* (1845) and Lohengrin (1848) – were also designated as *romantische Oper*. Although *Die Feen* (1834) was

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only contains the seeds of his revolutionary dramatic concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk*[13] but also bears witness to the nineteenth-century fascination with the world of the exile, a subject that would persist throughout Wagner's life.[14]

The Queen

La Reine de Chypre by Fromental Halévy premiered at the Paris Opéra on 22 December 1841. With a libretto by Jules-Henri Vernoy de Saint-Georges, the opera focuses on the rise to power of the Venetian noblewoman Catarina Cornaro (1454–1510). According to historical accounts,[15] after the negotiations of her father Andréa Cornaro and the Venetian Senate Council, Catarina was betrothed at the age of 14 to James II Lusignan of Cyprus. The marriage was confirmed by an elaborate ceremony in Nicosia four years later in 1472. Upon James's death in 1473, a year after the marriage, Venetian rebels took possession of Catarina and her newborn son and attempted to force the teenage queen to hand over the throne to the Venetian Senate. Although Venetian herself, Catarina refused to bow to the wishes of the Venetian government and defended the independence of her newly adopted land and people by soliciting the help of the Ottoman Empire. After the death of her son in 1474, she ruled Cyprus as sole monarch for 15 years. She finally ceded her realm to Venice in 1489, retaining her royal title and an Italian estate in the Veneto region.

The addition Saint-Georges brings to the story is the invention of a French suitor, Gérard de Coucy, a knight in exile from France who abandons his search

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the first of Wagner's operas to be labelled as 'romantic' (that is to say, a *Grosse romantische Oper*), it was not performed until 1888, five years after the composer's death.

[13] The term was first coined by Wagner in the 1849 essay 'Art and Revolution'. For information on how *Der fliegende Holländer* fits within Wagner's overall dramatic concept as espoused in his later operatic works, see (to name a few) Stephen McClatchie, 'Canonizing the Dutchman: Bayreuth, Wagnerism, and *Der fliegende Holländer*', *Richard Wagner* Der fliegende Holländer, ed. Thomas Grey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 151–65; Arthur Gross, 'Back to the Future: Hermeneutic Fantasies in *Der fliegende Holländer*', *19th-Century Music*, 19 (1995–96): 191–211 and Carl Dahlhaus, 'The Flying Dutchman', in *Richard Wagner's Music Dramas*, English trans. Mary Whittall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979): 7–20.

[14] The motif of the exile, or, more accurately, the wanderer, is found throughout several German writings of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, collectively known as *Bildungsroman*. Publications such as Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (Berlin: J.F. Unger, 1795–6); Ludwig Tieck's *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* (Berlin: J.F. Unger, 1798) and Heinrich Heine's *Reisebilder*, I (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1826) and II (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1827) were extremely popular ever since their initial publications and encouraged many a young man to step wilfully out their door and into the wilderness, exiling themselves from hearth and home in order to achieve 'a new understanding of the self as the object of knowledge and of ameliorative action' (Andrew Cusack, *The Wanderer in Nineteenth-Century German Literature: Intellectual History and Cultural Criticism* (Rochester: Camden House, 2008), 4). Wagner was certainly familiar with Heine's *Reisebildern*, one of the source texts for *Der fliegende Holländer*, and Goethe's fantasy writings of travel and history.

[15] Published at the beginning of the libretto is a 'Notice historique sur Catarina Cornaro, Reine de Chypre', which is taken from Count Pierre-Antoine Daru, *Histoire de la République de Venise* (Paris: F. Didot, 1819); see Jules-Henri Vernoy de Saint-Georges, *La Reine de Chypre, opéra en cinq actes, paroles de M. de Saint-Georges* (Paris: Maurice Schlesinger, 1841): 5–6.

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for glory in order to marry Catarina. As Gérard and Catarina exchange wedding vows (early in Act 1), Andréa bursts into the church and cancels the ceremony upon the orders of the Venetian Senate. The Senate's commands thus set the drama into motion by introducing the conflict that Catarina and Gérard must conquer before they can marry. However, as we learn from the *Notice historique* published in the libretto, Catarina never marries Gérard, but remains true to Lusignan even after his death. Thus, the introduction of Gérard presents not only a chivalric romance that is destined to fail but also the sacrifice Catarina must make in order for the Cypriot people to gain their freedom.

In *La Juive* (1835), Halévy's first work for the Paris Opéra, sacred pieces, drinking songs, romances, large choruses and massive religious processions are intermixed to create a larger-than-life view of Christian–Jewish relations in the early fifteenth century.[16] *La Reine de Chypre* on the other hand presents a less varied approach to depicting the drama, by centring the listener's attention on simple and direct vocal writing and the use of a recurring dissonant motive. The motive – a diminished seventh chord in a rapid tremolo with an ascending figure in the bass line – is presented in the score whenever the sinister plans of the Venetian Senate are referred to in the libretto. In Act 1, for example, we hear the motive for the first time in the orchestra when Mocénigo (a member of the Venetian senate) enters the stage and demands that Andréa stop the wedding (Ex. 1).[17]

Referred to by Wagner as 'notable for a certain void in the harmony',[18] Halévy consistently places the motive in harmonic areas that reveal its dissonance – as in Ex. 1, where B major is suddenly proclaimed (bar 51) in the context of E-flat major by the strings; in this new harmonic context, the passage slowly progresses to a fully diminished seventh chord, E♯–G♯–B–D (bar 59),[19] while all along maintaining the tension with fast tremolo strings with *fortepiano* attacks on the downbeat – thus, highlighting the motive's dramatic presence. In fact, the work's 249-bar overture essentially presents a fantasy on the motive's main rhythmic elements of a rising semiquaver (Ex. 2a); note especially the near verbatim use of the motive starting at bar 38 (Ex. 2b).

Apart from its presence in the overture and the opening of Act 1, this same motive and its variants are heard in the finale to Act 1 when Andréa explains to Caterina that as her guardian it is his right (*droit*) to stop the wedding (Ex. 3a); the finale to Act 2, as Catarina sees the daggers of Mocénigo's men who are ready to strike Gérard if he does not leave Venice (Example 3b); and in Act 5 Scene 4, as

[16] Eugène Scribe (1791–1861) was the author of the libretto for *La Juive*, thus it contains the dramatic ingredients of the Frenchman's oft-imitated 'well-made play' (*pièce bien faite*) structure with its formulated system of plot twists, visual display, opposing social groups and dramatic climaxes; see Karin Pendle, *Eugène Scribe and French Opera of the Nineteenth Century* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1979).

[17] Unless otherwise stated, all music examples are taken from the piano-vocal score edited by Wagner as found in the critical edition by Egon Voss, Richard Wagner, *Sämtliche Werke*, XX.2C: *Opernbearbeitungen*, III: Fromental Halévy, 'La Reine de Chypre' (Mainz: Schott Music, 2007). Music examples are used by permission of European American Music Distributers Company, sole US and Canadian agent for Schott Music GmbH & Co. KG.

[18] Richard Wagner, 'Halévy et *La Reine de Chypre*', trans. Ellis, 195.

[19] The motive is first heard in the orchestra on Mocénigo's words '*cet hymen*' [this wedding]. Note that Halévy progresses the motive from a place of harmonic stability (bars 55–56, B–D♯–F♯), increasing the harmonic tension (bars 57–58, B–D♯–F–A) to a more dissonant region (bars 59–62, E♯–G♯–B–D) when Andréa realizes that he must break his word and stop the wedding.

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Ex. 1 Halévy, *La Reine de Chypre*, Act 1, No. 3: Duo, bars 49–66.



Catarina tells Gérard that she sacrificed her love for him in order to save his life (Ex. 3c). Thus, throughout the score, the 'Venetian Senate' motive is heard in places where the destiny of the couple is threatened, harmonically placed in areas removed from the surrounding tonal pallet. In the end, however, it is Catarina's constant sacrifice of her own will that remains the lasting legacy in the opera, for we see that her actions not only bring about the independence of Cyprus from Venetian control but also the salvation of a man in exile.

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Ex. 2 Halévy, *La Reine de Chypre*, Overture, (a) bars 1–9 (b) bars 35-43.



The Queen as Redeemer

We first learn of Gérard's 'wanderer' status in Act 1 Scene 2, when he proclaims to Catarina on the eve of their wedding day: 'Submitted to the laws of knighthood, I wandered through the world searching for honor! Fate has led my steps to thy country; instead of finding glory, here, I have found happiness'.[20] Gérard's confession of his love is presented in a slow moving cavatina with string and woodwind accompaniment, thus highlighting the sincerity of his position as he places his hopes for redemption on Catarina, whose hand will allow him to return to France with honour owing to the sincerity of their love.[21] After a failed attempt

[20] Saint-Georges, *La Reine de Chypre*, Act I Scene 2; English trans. Bénédict Henry Révoil, *La Reine de Chypre, Grand Opéra in Cing Actes, de M. de St.-Georges, Musique d'Halévy* (New Orleans: J. Schweitzer, 1857): 6.

[21] Wagner viewed this air as containing 'a tender, naïve buoyancy, and withal a stoutness of heart, that initiate us into the young man's character'. Wagner, 'Halévy et *La Reine de Chypre*', trans. Ellis, 194.

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in Act 2 to run away with Catarina, Gérard is forced to leave Venice and to continue his search for meaning and life fulfilment. Gérard now finds himself in Cyprus, strolling through the gardens of a casino in Nicosia. As he contemplates his misfortune, Mocénigo's men attack him. Coming to Gérard's aid is a fellow

Ex. 3 The 'Venetian Senate' motive in Halévy, *La Reine de Chypre*, (a) Act 1, No. 6: Final, bars 151–158; (b) Act 2, No. 9: Duo Final, bars 141–151; (c) Act 5, No. 21: Duo, bars 174–183.



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Ex. 3 continued.



French knight, who happens to be James II Lusignan in disguise. After fighting off Mocénigo's men, these two knights of France greet one another as friends and exchange stories of how each came to be so far from home. Halévy sets this important meeting between the two rivals for Catarina's hand in an extended number that serves to close the act, the grand tenor duet, 'Triste exilé sur la terre étrangère' (Ex. 4).[22]

The duet, described by Wagner as 'a precious pearl in the rich tiara of this score',[23] reflects the sentiments of two men in 'sad exile' from their homeland who both look to Catarina for salvation. Lusignan, who was once a citizen of France, is bound by the Cypriot people to find a queen, while Gérard, also a son of France, remains in exile not only from France but from his true love, Catarina, who is about to marry another. All of these dramatic concerns are explicitly expressed without vocal flourishes or virtuosic display, accompanied by pizzicato strings with flute, oboe, B-flat clarinet, bassoons and E-flat horns. More importantly, however, Halévy sets this duet to a 𝄋, *Andante* rhythm in a syllabic, ballad-like Bar Form of AAB, which not only serves to characterize the fifteenth-century historic setting but also creates a fraternal expression between the two men. Perhaps the use of this

[22] Curiously, the Act 3 duet remains the only selection from the opera that is commercially recorded; see *Jean Noté: Historical Recordings 1902* (Cypres Records, 1996) with Charles Fontaine and Jean Noté; and *Opera Encores* (CBC Records, 2000) with Benjamin Butterfield and Brett Polegato.

[23] Wagner, 'Halévy et *La Reine de Chypre*', trans. Ellis 198. Later in the same article, Wagner noted the importance of this duet to the entire drama: 'Enthusiastic chivalry and virile nobleness are painted in this piece, one of the most important in the score; for it is from this point that the tragic interest is given a definite direction … all that emotion has of most profound, all that chivalric courage has of most manly and exalted, are blent here in one single melody, with a matchless art whose simpleness of means but heightens its merit'. Ibid., 198.

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Ex. 4 Halévy, *La Reine de Chypre*, Act 3, No. 13: Duo Final, bars 198–228.



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historic form is what immediately spoke to Wagner when he singled it out in his review, for he uses the same form in *Der fliegende Holländer* (more on this below).[24]

Following their meeting in Act 4, Gérard is waiting outside the church in Nicosia, ready to kill the new husband of Catarina as soon as he appears (Gérard does not know that Catarina's husband is now Lusignan). Although Gérard is captured before he can strike, he is later set free by the jailer after learning of the knight's story. Gérard, a man in exile from France, Venice and now Cyprus, roams throughout the Mediterranean in search of a new destiny. This renewed search, which is brought to the fore owing to Catarina's sacrifice (unknown to Gérard) to save his life and to marry another, leads Gérard to join the Knights of Rhodes. After a few years have passed, Gérard returns to Cyprus in Act 5 as an ambassador of the holy order to inform the king of the Venetian plot against him. As Gérard enters the throne room to notify the king, he sees Catarina and immediately questions his motives. Gérard's newly found faith in his order and Catarina's status as Queen of Cyprus are now in jeopardy as they begin to suffer under the weight of a rekindled love. However, just when they are about to give in to their passions, Mocénigo, the Venetian senator, arrives and accuses Gérard and Catarina of killing the king. Although weak from the poison, the king bursts into the room and defends Catarina's honour by fighting side by side with Gérard against the approaching Venetian soldiers (earlier in the act, Lusignan admits to Catarina that he knew of her love for Gérard and praises her for her constancy in marriage and assures her that God will reward her).

When her new husband finally dies in her arms, Catarina boldly asks the people of Cyprus: '[People of Cyprus], will you swear revenge to the martyr of your independence'?[25] As the people cry for revenge, the queen takes hold of her son and presents him to the people, saying: 'Well then, I trust to your loyalty the last hope of Lusignan's race. You must vanquish or die for his banner, for his King, his God, his liberty'![26] The final curtain falls as the people crowd around their queen, including Gérard, who is on bended knee, bearing the red cross of his holy militant order, with his hands clasped, devoutly looking up at his once love, as Cypriot banners wave on all sides of the stage (Fig. 1).[27]

Catarina, the daughter of a Venetian senator, has thus led her adopted people in a rebellion against the Venetians in order to provide a new social order, one that

[24] Wagner would utilize the Bar Form (*Stollen*, *Stollen*, *Abgesang*) to great effect in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (1868) to establish the medieval setting of the opera and to characterize the actions of Walter; see Barry Millington, 'Meistersinger von Nürnberg, Die', *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, III: 312–16. Although the work premiered in 1868, Wagner already conceived the opera soon after *Der fliegende Holländer* in 1845 as 'a comic appendage to *Tannhäuser*' (Ibid., 312).

[25] Saint-Georges, *La Reine de Chypre*, Act 5 Scene 7; trans. Révoil, 36.

[26] Saint-Georges, *La Reine de Chypre*, Act 5 Scene 7; trans. Révoil, 36.

[27] Note the similarity of this final tableau to Eugène Delacroix's famous painting *La Liberté guidant le people* (1830). Ever since the popularity of Joan of Arc in the historical writings of the time (for example, Jules Michelet, *Histoire de France*, V (Paris, 1841)) female figures continued to serve as symbols of liberty and national unity in France. In addition, motherhood took on a greater symbolic reference for post-revolutionary France during a time of political rebirth. For a general discussion of the image and perception of women in nineteenth-century France, see James F. McMillan, *France and Women, 1789–1914: Gender, Society, and Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000) and Lisa Wood, *Modes of Discipline: Women, Conservatism, and the Novel after the French Revolution* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2003).

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Fig. 1 Eugène Delacroix, *La Liberté guidant le peuple*, 1830, 260cm x 325cm (Louvre Musée). Image obtained from Shutterstock.com.

replaces the current system of deceit and murder with a common liberty founded upon Catarina's self-sacrifice to marry Lusignan. As the opera ends, Catarina remains fixed on stage, like a 'statue of liberty' that calls the people to arms. Halévy shrouds this climactic moment with a large battery of instruments including woodwinds, strings, brass (with ophicleide and military trumpets or *grandes trompettes* in A-flat), crash cymbals, triangle, timpani, bass drum and side drum, all harmonized on a final plagal cadence as the full chorus proclaims the word 'liberté' (Ex. 5).

Wagner was impressed with Halévy's treatment of this final ensemble of the opera, remarking that 'the most sublime number in all the score is the quartet … Here, more than anywhere else, Halévy's talent shows itself in all its individuality; the grandiose is allied with the terrible, and an elegiac melancholy appears to spread a funeral veil above this solemn scene – a scene arranged moreover with that clearness, that simplicity, which marks great masters'.[28] The German composer's praise for the final scene, as Catarina is beatified in the score and on stage suggests an understanding of the opera that highlights Wagner's sensitivity to the inner world of the drama, namely the sacrifice that true love demands:

> If I have rightly grasped the poetic trend of the libretto, the drama is founded on a conflict between human passions and Nature … In the thick of this deadly conflict stands the noble nature of Man, trusting to the twin stars that guide him here below, of Love and Faith, courageously fighting the infernal power, and albeit sacrificed yet conqueror; that is how we apprehend this admirable Lusignan. What a magnificent and poetical subject![29]

[28] Wagner, 'Halévy et *La Reine de Chypre*', trans. Ellis, 200.

[29] Wagner, 'Halévy et *La Reine de Chypre*', trans. Ellis, 193. The revolutionary symbolism in this final scene was certainly not lost on Wagner, who was harbouring not only revolutionary musical concepts at this time but also political ones; see Mitchell Cohen, 'To the Dresden Barricades: The Genesis of Wagner's Political Ideas', *The Cambridge*

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Ex. 5 Halévy, *La Reine de Chypre*, Act 5, No. 28: Marche et Final, bars 101–107 (Paris: Maurice Schlesinger, 1842): 736.



Wagner's level of insight into Halévy's work goes far beyond the subject matter in his review, however, for we perceive in his writings on the opera a rather nuanced discussion on the current state of French and German music for the stage

Companion to Wagner, ed. Thomas S. Grey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 47–63.

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and what is needed to *redeem* the fortunes of both. As we shall see, Wagner defines Halévy and his new opera as forming a kinship with his own desires for a fresh and sustainable brand of theatre, one that upholds dramatic unity and thus presents a stronger sense of artistic truth.

A New 'Step Forward'

In reading Wagner's critical commentary on Halévy's *grand opéra*, one is struck by the high level of praise the German composer consistently places upon *La Reine de Chypre* and Halévy's style in general.[30] As mentioned above, Wagner wrote several articles about the opera while in Paris. Completed on 31 December 1841 for the Dresden daily, the *Dresdener Abend-Zeitung*, and published the following month in two parts on 26 and 29 January 1842, his first review of the opera begins not as a review *per se* but as a judgment upon the current state of opera in Germany.

Wagner begins his review by accusing German opera directors – 'earnest men in black suits and brown overcoats'[31] – who were at the premiere of *La Reine de Chypre* as usurpers of German culture owing to their embrace of foreign works rather than the German operas of the day (albeit the same can be said of Wagner who finds himself in Paris reviewing French operas). The reason for this, Wagner argues, is due to the simple fact that Germany lacks good librettos. Wagner then proceeds to instruct his German readers on what makes a good libretto:

> The main thing is to have poetry inside you and your heart in the right place. Since you are forever reading books both new and old, you are bound one day to come on a story or event which completely grips you: you are unable to read on, because you suddenly see wonderful flesh-and-blood figures moving before your eyes, you feel their pulses throbbing, you hear their hymns of joy and their sorrowful complaints. Having come this far, what else can you possibly do but seize your pen and write down a glowing drama that must excite and shatter the emotions of every human being?[32]

If, however, you do not have poetry within you to write a libretto, Wagner argues, then you can rely upon *skill*, 'for skill is indispensable to craftsmen such as cobblers and harness-makers, and consequently to makers of librettos too'.[33] He then describes the action of *La Reine de Chypre* (in a not so complimentary tone) as an example of how 'skill' (not poetry) is used by Saint-Georges:

> Break up a marriage here – let a lover elope with his sweetheart there – beat up a young cavalier – place a queen's crown on the head of a senator's daughter – and in

[30] Often hailed as 'the head of a new French school', Halévy was certainly one of the most celebrated French opera composers during the 1840s, second only to Meyerbeer. His detractors, however, frequently commented that his music was 'too learned' and composed in too much haste; see Katharine Ellis, *Music Criticism in Nineteenth-Century France:* La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, 1834–80* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 190–94.

[31] Richard Wagner, 'Bericht über eine neue Pariser Oper', *Dresdener Abend-Zeitung*, 26 January 1842; trans. by Jacobs and Skelton, *Wagner Writes from Paris*, 164.

[32] Wagner, 'Bericht über eine neue Pariser Oper', trans. Jacobs and Skelton, *Wagner Writes from Paris,* 166.

[33] Wagner, 'Bericht über eine neue Pariser Oper', trans. Jacobs and Skelton, *Wagner Writes from Paris*, 166.

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> the end throw the villain out of the window. Embellish all this with gold beakers containing poison, secret doors, concealed spies and other entertaining things of that sort – and in the twinkling of an eye you will have produced a libretto every bit as good as those for whose sake German composers waylay Parisian writers. Certainly you will produce one just as admirable as the text of *La Reine de Chypre* … Yet all the same it would never occur to anybody to call this libretto a work of art. Above all, the author has most decidedly shown himself to be devoid of the gift we call *poetry:* there is nothing in this work that suggests some higher spiritual idea; no inner impulse gripped him; no burning enthusiasm carried him away.[34]

The contradiction between Wagner's comments on the libretto in April 1842, published in a French journal as having a 'poetical trend', and here in December 1841 (directly after the premiere) published in a German daily as lacking 'poetry' is rather telling of an individual who was constantly torn between his high artistic ideals and the practical matter of entertaining the public. In fact, in the translator's note in the English translation of the 24 April 1842 review, Ellis argues that in the handful of months that followed Wagner's first introduction to *La Reine de Chypre*, he 'would appear to have read into his impressions of the text a pretty large dose of his own idealism, owing to that more complete acquaintance with the music imposed by the necessity of studying it for the purpose of arrangements'.[35] Although it could be argued that the contradiction found in Wagner's view of the libretto stems from a desire to appeal to the sentiments of his readers, be they German or French, Wagner is consistent in his praise of the music. Believing the score to be unique and dramatically convincing, Wagner argues that the 'music is appropriate, full of feeling and in some places even impressive in effect. Gracefulness … is apparent in the many opportunities for song that the libretto so richly provides, and above all I was struck by a welcome tendency towards simplicity in the treatment as a whole'.[36] Wagner continues in this vein by arguing that what is new and novel in *La Reine de Chypre* is Halévy's 'historical' conception of dramatic music, which 'can in truth be regarded as a step forward rather than a step back, and what I might call its inherent historical tendency should provide a good basis to build further and to solve problems which have perhaps not yet even been posed'.[37]

The 'historic tendency' that Wagner perceived in the music of *La Reine de Chypre* is a move towards a simple, direct form of expression in relaying the sentiments of the characters, rather than an ornate sense of 'French luxury and pomp'.[38] Although Wagner was frustrated with Halévy's reluctance to use a more 'modern' form of instrumentation (such as valve trumpets) in the opening acts, he found the final two acts to be more effective, where '[m]oments of great beauty are to be found in every number, and particular mention must be made of the last act, to which the composer as distinct from the librettist, has managed to impart a truly

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[34] Wagner, 'Bericht über eine neue Pariser Oper', trans. Jacobs and Skelton, *Wagner Writes from Paris*, 166, 173–174.

[35] Wagner, 'Halévy et *La Reine de Chypre*', trans. Ellis, 193.

[36] Richard Wagner, 'Bericht über eine neue Pariser Oper', *Dresdener Abend-Zeitung*, 26 January 1842; trans. Jacobs and Skelton, *Wagner Writes from Paris*, 175.

[37] Wagner, 'Bericht über eine neue Pariser Oper', trans. Jacobs and Skelton, *Wagner Writes from Paris*, 175.

[38] Wagner, 'Bericht über eine neue Pariser Oper', trans. Jacobs and Skelton, *Wagner Writes from Paris*, 175.

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Ex. 6 **Fromental Halévy, *La Reine de Chypre*, Act 5, No. 23: Final, bars 58–73; Richard Wagner, *Sämtliche Werke*, XX.2C: *Opernbearbeitungen*, III: Fromental Halévy, 'La Reine de Chypre', ed. Egon Voss (Mainz: Schott Music, 2007): 408.**



poetic flavour'.[39] Here, Wagner refers to the music of the final scene that imparts the feelings and sentiments of the dying king, Lusignan, in a simple declamatory manner and the dramatic situation that arises from his death, creating, in Wagner's words, 'a truly shattering effect' (Ex. 6).[40] Thus, what Wagner appears to admire in *La Reine de Chypre* is Halévy's desire to present not the external matters of time, place or even fashion, but the internal dramatic world of the characters, the so-called 'poetic' musical voice.

After Wagner was contracted in January 1842 by Schlesinger to compose arrangements of *La Reine de Chypre*, the reviews that appeared the following month in *La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* present in greater detail his thoughts

[39] Wagner, 'Bericht über eine neue Pariser Oper', trans. Jacobs and Skelton, *Wagner Writes from Paris*, 176.

[40] Wagner, 'Bericht über eine neue Pariser Oper', trans. Jacobs and Skelton, *Wagner Writes from Paris*, 176.

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about Halévy and what his 'historic' and 'poetic' style present for the future of music in France and in Germany.[41] Similar to the start of the review for the Dresden evening newspaper, Wagner begins his four-part article on *La Reine de Chypre* by attempting to define how one writes a 'good' opera. He starts, 'To make a good opera, it not only needs a good poet and a good composer, but also a sympathetic accord between the talent of the one and that of the other'.[42] Wagner then asks the reader to 'let one imagine, for example, that the poet and the composer are friends from childhood', sharing the same thoughts when looking upon something with great 'enthusiasm'. He concludes that it is the poet who first experiences the spark of creativity for a new opera subject, 'but what weaves the charm of the ineffable around the poetic conception, what reconciles reality with the ideal – the task of seizing that belongs to the musician. The work elaborated by the talents of them both, in hours of calm reflection, might be justly called a perfect opera'.[43] The natural link and artistic affinity between composer and librettist are only ideals for Wagner, however, for he argues that it has nothing in common with the 'Artistic Industry' in Paris, which has established the royalty system (*droits d'auteurs*) in so far that certain alliances between librettists and composers hold the stage (for example, Scribe and Meyerbeer). According to Wagner, this system has created a poor model for others to follow and thus presents 'nothing but mediocre works appearing under the aegis of an illustrious name'.[44] Therefore, one may conclude that 'works conceived without enthusiasm, and elaborated in a spirit of blind routine, cannot kindle the public'. But from time to time, Wagner admits, it is sheer 'luck for art' that 'this method of procedure gives birth to creations which delight the parterre, and moreover stand the scrutiny of a rigorous criticism'.[45] In this latter camp, Wagner places Halévy and *La Reine de Chypre*:

> Halévy has twice been completely fortunate, and one can but admire the manner in which he has profited of this double favour to create two monuments[46] that will mark the history of musical art. Certainly Halévy's talent lacks neither grace nor freshness; nevertheless, through the predominance of passionate gravity in his character, it was upon our Grand Lyric stage that he was destined to develop all his force and volume. And it is worthy of remark, that in this respect, the talent of Halévy essentially differs from that of Auber and the generality of French composers, whose veritable home is decidedly the Opéra Comique.[47]

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[41] Between the Dresden and Paris reviews, Wagner wrote a short review for the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* on 5 February 1842; it was published a couple weeks later on 22 February. Similar to the Dresden review, Wagner consistently viewed the Halévy work as 'striving for simplicity … particularly in the instrumentation' (trans. Ellis, *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, VIII, 172).

[42] Wagner, 'Halévy et La Reine de Chypre', *La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, 27 February 1842, trans. Ellis, *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, VIII, 175.

[43] Wagner, 'Halévy et La Reine de Chypre', trans. Ellis, *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, VIII, 176. In many ways, Wagner is presenting here some self-flattery on his own process for writing 'perfect operas'.

[44] Wagner, 'Halévy et La Reine de Chypre', trans. Ellis, *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, VIII, 176.

[45] Wagner, 'Halévy et La Reine de Chypre', trans. Ellis, *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, VIII, 177.

[46] Wagner is also referring to *La Juive* (1835), which established Halévy's career as a first-rate composer of *grand opéra.*

[47] Wagner, 'Halévy et La Reine de Chypre', trans. Ellis, *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, VIII, 178.

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The Opéra-Comique for Wagner is a place where music is presented with little to no dramatic weight or substance, only 'obligatory cut of *airs-de-danse*, with its eight-bar period returning periodically, their cadences on the dominant or relative minor'.[48] He believes this institution and its music have kept the true talents of French composers at bay by convincing them to mimic the style of Auber, whose music presents a 'stamp of nationality to the point of becoming monotonous'.[49] Halévy's music, on the other hand, presents 'the pathos of high Lyric Tragedy', where 'a general and independent character' dominates and a so-called 'dramatic type of melody' comes forth.[50] Only then, Wagner argues, 'is it possible for the musician to give his pictures a colouring whose elements are drawn from elsewhere than his epoch and the world in which he lives'.[51] Wagner, thus concludes his February article by stating:

> Abruptly breaking with the system of Auber, Halévy boldly sprang out of the rut of conventional turns and rhythms, to enter the career of free, unlimited creation, recognising no other law than that of truth. Indeed it needed a very resolute confidence in his own strength and the resources of his talent, for a musician thus voluntarily to desert the beaten track, which could but lead him sooner and more surely to popularity; it needed high courage and dauntless faith in the power of truth; and to succeed in this adventurous attempt, it needed all the concentrated energy of Halévy's talent.[52]

This same line of thought continues in the 13 March article, where once again Wagner hails Halévy as the start of something new in France, distinct from 'that race of pygmies, to whom Music appears to have revealed herself in no form save that of 3/8 time, of couplets and quadrilles'.[53] Owing to the artistic situation in France, Wagner instructs Halévy to turn his talents toward Germany for the full appreciation of his skills. Wagner even goes so far as to compare Halévy's style to Beethoven in its ability to move German hearts, as he first witnessed in the score of *La Juive*. He thus concludes that Halévy presents a fresh path for German musicians, which can only serve to 'vivify dramatic music once again in Germany':

> The passionate energy revealed in [Halévy's] music, appeals most keenly to [German] musical faculties. This sympathetic tie has shown them how they may appear again in the province of Musical Drama – which they seemed to have completely abandoned – without renouncing their individuality, without offending the national genius, or effacing its character by imitation of a foreign mode. Things ripen slowly in Germany … Nevertheless in more than one work published recently

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[48] Wagner, 'Halévy et La Reine de Chypre', trans. Ellis, *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, VIII, 183.

[49] Wagner, 'Halévy et La Reine de Chypre', trans. Ellis, *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, VIII, 181.

[50] Wagner is referring to Halévy's simple or declamatory writing for the voice; see Diana R. Hallman, 'The grand operas of Fromental Halévy', *The Cambridge Companion to Grand Opera*, ed. David Charlton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 240–45.

[51] Wagner, 'Halévy et La Reine de Chypre', trans. Ellis, *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, VIII, 182.

[52] Wagner, 'Halévy et La Reine de Chypre', trans. Ellis, *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, VIII, 184.

[53] Wagner, 'Halévy et La Reine de Chypre', trans. Ellis, *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, VIII, 187.

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> it already is recognizable that a new era is dawning for the dramatic music of our neighbours. When the time shall have come we will show in what degree the influence exerted by Halévy has contributed thereto … The impulse given by Halévy coming from a talent which, though foreign, has an intimate affinity with the German spirit, will have results far more decisive [than Mendelssohn].[54]

This is high praise for a French composer, indeed. Wagner is in fact stating in his review that Halévy's compositional talents contain the spark to reignite German music drama. Perhaps it was upon hearing Halévy's *La Juive* that Wagner decided to come to Paris in the first place[55] in order to emulate the style of the French composer he found so engaging. Nevertheless, it is clear from the first two articles in *La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* that Wagner was profoundly impressed with Halévy's music. One may argue that Wagner is simply presenting in the reviews an overt form of flattery for his own vision of opera, for which there is certainly evidence, or that he is presenting these ideas so that the public will purchase more of his arrangements of *La Reine*. But use of Halévy's overall style and his latest dramatic work for the German composer's own ends, is not supported by the consistent tone of praise and respect Wagner heaps upon the work in three different periodicals for three different audiences. There were certainly other works that Wagner viewed in Paris that he did not care for that would have served to highlight his talents, including Donizetti's more successful opera *La Favorite.* Furthermore, one needs only to read a few of the several articles written by Wagner while in Paris that tell of his overall dissatisfaction with the music industry in France to discover how unique was his admiration for Halévy.[56]

After taking on the task of articulating what sets Halévy apart from his French and German contemporaries, Wagner presents in his final two articles for *La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* (24 April and 1 May) the particularities within *La Reine de Chypre* that are fitting to this new compositional path. He breaks down each of the five acts and discusses how well Halévy succeeds with each vocal number and orchestral passage. Wagner thus concludes his review of Halévy's new opera with no less than the same level of unqualified praise and admiration as found in his previously published reviews on the opera:

> To cast one parting glance on the whole of *La Reine de Chypre*, to carefully sum up its salient qualities: we find its author still advancing on the road he struck-out in *La Juive*, for he pays more and more attention to simplifying his means … It is indeed a fine sight to see how Halévy, while purposely and palpably delimiting his means, has succeeded in obtaining so great a variety of effects; to say nothing of his having thereby made his ends more clear and intelligible. For the rest, the method employed by Halévy, and its indubitable influence on contemporary art, are too important to be

[54] Wagner, 'Halévy et La Reine de Chypre', trans. Ellis, *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, VIII, 189–90. Although Wagner viewed Mendelssohn's instrumental music as 'profoundly German', he thought this current leader of the German school could not write dramatic music, where one 'needs passions strong and deep, and further must possess the faculty of painting them vigorously and with breadth of stroke'. Wagner, 'Halévy et La Reine de Chypre', trans. Ellis, *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, VIII, 189.

[55] Wagner most likely heard *La Juive* for the first time in Königsberg in 1836. Along with Bellini's *Norma* and *Il Puritani*, *La Juive* was part of the repertoire of the 1836–37 opera season at the Königsberg Theatre; see Ellis, *Life of Richard Wagner*, I: 219–20.

[56] See Jacobs and Skelton, *Wagner Writes from Paris*, 122–3, 163–77.

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> merely touched in passing. We therefore reserve to ourselves the right of returning to this subject at some other time, and treating it with the study it deserves.[57]

Artistic Kinship

The way 'forward', as represented by Halévy and argued for by Wagner, is made all the more striking by the German composer's own stylistic advance from *Rienzi*, *Der Letzte der Tribunen* (1842), a five-act *grand opéra*,[58] to *Der fliegende Holländer*, a three-act *romantische oper*. Wagner made this point several times in his published writings and correspondence, nowhere more famously expressed than in the composer's introduction to his *Gesammelte Schriften Dichtungen*:[59]

> As far as my knowledge, I can in the life of no other artist discover such a striking transformation, accomplished in so short a time, than here [between the composition of *Rienzi* and *Der fliegende Holländer*] … it turns out, the first of which was scarcely finished when the second one, too, was nearly complete. Certainly, owing to a kindred spirit both works did not escape the attention of examiners … [Suffice it to say,] that something significant took place within the author, perhaps a profound shock, certainly a violent reversal.[60]

The libretto of *The Dutchman* was written by Wagner in Paris in May 1840; the orchestral score was completed in the fall of 1841.[61] Although it was originally conceived for Paris and then Berlin, the opera had its premiere in Dresden on 2 January 1843.[62] From the very start of Wagner's work on the opera, he desired a

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[57] Richard Wagner, 'Halévy et La Reine de Chypre', *La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, 1 May 1842; see Ellis, *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, VIII, 200.

[58] Although it was first performed in Dresden in 1842, *Rienzi* was composed between the summer of 1837 and the fall of 1840.

[59] Although Wagner would often 'edit' his remembrances so as to make the events and acts of the past coincide with his current thoughts and visions, he was remarkably consistent with his self-evaluation of the dramatic works before and after *Der fliegende Holländer*, see Thomas Grey, 'The Return of the Prodigal Son: Wagner and *Der fliegende Holländer*', in *Richard Wagner* Der fliegende Holländer, 3–5.

[60] Richard Wagner, *Gesammelte Schriften Dichtungen*, I (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1887): 3.

[61] The libretto was first sketched in French in May of 1840 as a single undivided act, while the German version was completed in May of 1841 as a three-scene, one act 'Romantische Oper' to eventually become a three-act opera a month or so later; see Barry Millington, 'The Sources and Genesis of the Text', *Richard Wagner* Der fliegende Holländer, 32. In the original Paris version of the text, the opera takes place off the coast of Scotland (not Norway as in later versions), which is similar to the location found in Heinrich Heine's 1834 publication of the legend in *Aus den Memoiren des Herrn von Schnabelewopski* (Hamburg, 1834), the main source for Wagner's opera. Other alterations include changing the name of the huntsman Georg to Erik and the sailor Donald to Daland. It is interesting to note that no other work by Wagner (except for *Tannhäuser*, his next opera) went through so many revisions as *Der fliegende Holländer*; see Richard Wagner, *Sämtliche Werke*, IV.1: *Der fliegende Holländer*, ed. Isolde Vetter (Mainz: Schott Music, 1983): vii–ix.

[62] Wagner discusses his initial inspiration for the drama in his autobiography, where he recounts a three-week sea voyage from Riga to London on his way to Paris; see Wagner, *Mein Leben*, ed. Martin Gregor-Dellin, English trans. Andrew Gray (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983): 160–63. Nothing ever came of the Parisian premiere of *The Dutchman*. Wagner was eventually forced to sell the scenario to Léon Pillet, the director of

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'backward-looking' style for *The Dutchman* rather than the modern panoramic display of history found in *Rienzi*. He even referred to *The Dutchman* as part of an older form of drama, a 'dramatic ballad', which would recall the Gothic works of a generation before with their mythic legendary figures, rich tonal texture, and folk-like *Männerchöre*.[63] By returning to an earlier, German-conceived dramatic style, Wagner was able to present a tightly knit opera that presented none of the sub-plots or sudden changes of fortune that are often found in French *grand opéra* (for example, note the many changes of fortune in *La Reine de Chypre*, namely the sudden break of the marriage between Gérard and Caterina in Act 1, as well as the miraculous appearance of a near-dead Lusignan to fight on the battlefield in Act 5). Although Wagner argued that his new 'dramatic ballad' was a return to an earlier style of opera, it still contained many of the modern elements of French *grand opéra*, including a large number of 'tableaux vivants' (for example, the choral-ensemble introduction on Donald's ship in Act 1 and the choruses of Scottish and Dutch sailors in Act 3), the modern use of the brass (for example, off-stage brass, use of valve horns and natural horns, valve trumpets, trombones and ophicleide) and a mixture of Italian and French vocal forms (for example, extensive entrance arias or cavatinas, large choral numbers, *scena, romance* and ariosos).[64]

Wagner departs from the elements in *grand opéra* (as listed above) precisely in his setting for the voice, where a more pronounced sense of declamatory writing is presented; for example, we see this stripped-down vocal style in the Helmsman's song at the end of Act I (Ex. 7) and Senta's ballad in Act 2 (Ex. 8). Here, in both of these examples from the 1841 orchestral score, the characters sing a highly syllabic setting of the text, which, as in the Halévy duet of Act 3 between Gérard and Lusignan (see Ex. 4), is in the context of a memory composed in simple bar form with an extended third section (the *Abgesang*). Similar to what Wagner pointed to in the score of *La Reine de Chypre*, the highly syllabic vocal writing emphasizes the drama and not the vocal display of the singer, so that, in Wagner's words, 'a general and independent character dominates' and a so-called 'dramatic type of melody' comes forth.[65] In addition to the vocal writing, a consistent characterization of the dramatic legend is heard in the numerous appearances of the Dutchman motive and the persistent use of material from Senta's Ballad aria, the theme that Wagner would cite as the musical origins of the entire work.[66] All this, of course, flies in the face of conventional wisdom in Paris, the capital of the so-called 'artistic industry' in Europe with its penchant for eclectic dramatic styles in order to present an opera for all.

Thus, what one reads into Wagner's review articles on *La Reine de Chypre* is his affinity for a work that in part broke free from the mechanizations of the music industry in Paris (the music of Auber for example) and presents a singular vision for simplicity and organic unity through a more predominant use of declamatory writing

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the Paris Opéra, in the summer of 1841 to settle debts he accumulated while in Paris; see Grey, 'The Return of the Prodigal Son', 3–11.

[63] See Grey, 'Romantic Opera as *dramatic ballad*': *Der fliegende Holländer* and its Generic Contexts', *Richard Wagner* Der fliegende Holländer, 65–91.

[64] See Grey, 'Richard Wagner and the Legacy of French Grand Opera', *Cambridge Companion to Grand Opera*, 321–43.

[65] Wagner, 'Halévy et La Reine de Chypre', trans. Ellis, *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, VIII, 182.

[66] See Richard Wagner, *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*, IV, (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1887): 323, trans. Grey, 'Romantic Opera as *dramatic ballad*', 65.

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for the voice, characteristic orchestration, and a consistent dramatic motive to highlight the main action.[67] Notwithstanding the fact that *La Reine de Chypre* still conformed to

Ex. 7 Richard Wagner, *Der fliegende Holländer*, Act 1, No. 1: Introduction, bars 179–205; Richard Wagner, *Sämtliche Werke*, IV.1: Urfassung 1841, ed. Isolde Vetter (Mainz: Schott Music, 1983): 72–3.



[67] Halévy, of course, is not the only French composer who used characteristic orchestration or a dramatic motive throughout the score in the early nineteenth century (for

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Ex. 7 continued.



example, the 'Ein Feste Burg' motive in Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenonts*, 1836), but I believe the simple (that is to say, non-virtuosic) vocal writing at places where long and elaborate arias and duets would traditionally be heard in Italian or French opera at this time (for example, entrance arias and climatic solo or duet numbers) helped Wagner to perceive the merits of Halévy's 'dramatic melody' more clearly.

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the genre of a five-act historic *grand opéra*, which Wagner of course rejected in favour of a one-act, later three-act drama for *Der fliegende Holländer*, the artistic kinship shared by the two works still lay in the dramatic emphasis in the score of the redemptive power of a woman's love – the very subject of Wagner's new artistic path.

Ex. 8 **Richard Wagner, *Der fliegende Holländer*, Act 2, No. 4: Ballade, bars 321–339; Richard Wagner, *Sämtliche Werke*, IV.1: Urfassung 1841, ed. Isolde Vetter (Mainz: Schott Music, 1983): 218–20.**



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Ex. 8 continued.



An Exile in Paris

Wagner described the main narrative of *Der fliegende Holländer* in a letter written while in forced exile in Zurich in 1851:[68]

> For his temerity this Dutch seaman is condemned by the devil … to navigate the seas aimlessly throughout all eternity. Just as Ahasuerus, he yearns for an end of his

[68] Wagner went to Switzerland in 1849 to escape the Dresden authorities, who issued a warrant for his arrest due to his insurrectionist activity.

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Ex. 8 continued.



sorrows through death. But this redemption withheld from the Wandering Jew, is put within reach of the Dutchman in the form of – a woman who will sacrifice herself for love. The longing for death drives him to seek out a woman. But that woman is no longer the domestic paragon Penelope, as courted by Ancient times by Odysseus; it is now the epitome of woman, woman as yet unmanifest, only longed-for, dimly intuited, an infinitely feminine being – let me just say it outright: the woman of the future.[69]

[69] Wagner, *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*, IV, 266; trans. Grey, *Richard Wagner:* Der Fliegende Höllander, Appendix B, 182. The symbol of the Wandering Jew ('der ewige Jude') is a common one throughout European literature of the nineteenth century and

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In the opera, Wagner presents this 'infinitely feminine being' in such a musical style that one is made aware early in the score (Act 2 in her ballad aria) that there is something special and unique about Senta, the woman who redeems the Dutchman from endless wandering at the end of the opera by throwing herself into the sea (Ex. 9). Wagner even depicts her climactic end in a later revision of the opera in 1860 with cascading harps, rolling horns and strings, and ascending woodwinds in what Thomas Grey refers to as an extended plagal cadence on the 'transfigured' recollection of Senta's ballad aria from Act 2, where she tells her female companions of the Dutchman legend.[70] Similar to what we see in Halévy's *La Reine De Chypre*, the use of the plagal cadence at the end of the opera highlights the sacred in Senta's sacrificial act, which one forgives only due to her unquestionable loyalty to the Dutchman (Ex. 10).[71] The changes made to the 1860 version notwithstanding, to return to the original 1841 score of *Der fliegende Holländer*, the final tableau of Wagner's opera shares similarities with *La Reine de Chypre* in that the sacrificial acts of a woman are highlighted in order to redeem the fortunes of a man in exile (Fig. 2).

Throughout Wagner scholarship, researchers have noted Wagner's predilection for women of unwavering loyalty to serve as a redemptive force for the wandering hero, from *Der fliegende Holländer* to his final dramatic work *Parsifal*:

> The first work of Wagner's maturity, *Der fliegende Holländer* brings together several ingredients characteristic of the later works, notably the single-minded attention given to the mood and colour of the drama, and the themes of suffering by a Romantic outsider and of redemption by a faithful woman.[72]

> Wagner's heroines in the music dramas (that is from *The Flying Dutchman* onwards) are the most obvious site on which the perpetual battle between conflicting claims of sensuality and spirituality takes place … In [Senta] the Dutchman has found the loving archetypal female he needed in order to be released from the curse that has kept him at sea … and in him, Senta has quite literally found the man of her perpetual and overheated longings and (day)dreams … Senta is therefore the first Wagnerian female expression of redemption; the redemption, that is, that the chosen female engineers in the interest of the male.[73]

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earlier, appearing in Gothic novels (for example, Matthew G. Lewis's 'The Monk' (London, 1796)), epic poems (for example, Edgar Quinet's *Ahasverus* (Paris, 1833)), and operas (for example, Halévy, *Le Juif errant*, 1852; a *grand opéra* based on Eugène Sue's 1844 novel of the same name). In Heine's version of the legend in *Aus den Memoiren des Herrn von Schnabelewopski*, the Dutchman is referred to as 'that Wandering Jew of the ocean'; see Grey, *Richard Wagner:* Der Fliegende Höllander, Appendix A, 167. Wagner was certainly familiar with Heine's use of the character when writing the opera in Paris, as well as with the romantic archetype in general.

[70] Grey, 'Text, Action, and Music', *Richard Wagner* Der fliegende Holländer, 41. The major difference between the original 1841 score and later versions is the use of the 'motif of redemption' in the coda of the overture to foreshadow the 'transfigured' climax at the end of Act 3.

[71] Richard Wagner, *Sämtliche Werke*, IV. 4: Der fliegende Holländer, *Romantische Oper in Drei Aufzügen (Fassung 1841–1880)*, ed. Isolde Vetter (Mainz: Schott Music, 2001).

[72] Millington, 'Fliegende Holländer, Der', 231.

[73] Barry Emslie, *Richard Wagner and the Centrality of Love* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010): 8–9.

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Ex. 9 **Richard Wagner, *Der fliegende Holländer*, Act 3, No. 8: Finale, bars 414–429; Richard Wagner, *Sämtliche Werke*, IV.2: Urfassung 1841, ed. Isolde Vetter (Mainz: Schott Music, 1983), 263–4.**



Perhaps it was in Wagner's desperate state while in Paris that he perceived the need for a female partner who did not question his resolve, no matter where such determination might take their collective fortunes – for example, Paris in 1839 (Minna) or Zurich in 1849 (Cosima) – hence the continual appearance of the character type throughout his remaining operatic *œuvre*. As a letter collected in the *Gesammelte Schriften und Dictungen* suggests, however, it was because of his feelings of artistic alienation in Paris that Wagner's desire to return to the people, language and culture of Germany arose in him:

> It was the feeling of utter homelessness in Paris that awoke in me a longing for my German homeland. Yet this longing was not directed toward some old familiar

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Ex. 9 continued.



> thing that was to be regained; rather, its object was something new, as yet unknown, which I intuitively desired, but of which I only knew one thing for sure: that I would certainly never find it here in Paris. It was the longing of my Flying Dutchman for a woman … the redeeming woman whose features I held as yet only indistinctly, but which hovered before me only as the feminine element in general. And now this element expressed itself to me in terms of the homeland, that is to say, the sensation of being embraced by some intimately familiar community, although a community I did not truly know, but only longed for, as the realization of the idea of a 'homeland'.[74]

The reason for Wagner to change the ending of the opera in 1860 now becomes clear, for as mentioned above, Wagner imparts Senta with a 'musical halo' just as the curse of the Dutchman is broken. Furthermore, such an ending highlights the

[74] Wagner, *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*, IV, 268, trans. Grey, 'The Return of the Prodigal Son', 10.

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Ex. 10 **Richard Wagner, *Der fliegende Holländer*, Act 3, No. 8: Finale, bars 423–437; Richard Wagner, *Sämtliche Werke*, IV.4: Fassung, 1842–1880, ed. Egon Voss (Mainz: Schott Music, 1986): 163–4.**



divine act of the 'infinitely feminine being' and reveals Wagner's own desire for such a woman.[75]

[75] Wagner was undoubtedly influenced by Goethe's symbolic description of such a woman in the second book of *Faust* (Weimar, 1832), where in Act 5 Faust is taken before the

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Ex. 10 continued.



Virgin Mary in heaven so that his soul can be at rest. Here, in Goethe's prose, women are seen to have virtues (for example, chastity, modesty, grace) that lead men to a higher calling for themselves and thus *das ewig Weibliche* ('the eternal feminine') works to redeem the destructive acts of man; see Christoph E. Schweitzer, 'Tracking the Eternal-Feminine in Goethe's *Faust. II*', *Interpreting Faust Today*, ed. Jane K. Brown, Meredith Lee and Thomas Saine (Columbia: Camden House, 1994): 142–57.

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Fig. 2 Final scene of *Der fliegende Holländer*, *Leipziger Illustrirte Zeitung*, I, No. 15, 7 October 1843, 236.

To conclude, more than just a convenient location for Wagner to compose in an older, ballad-inspired dramatic form Paris was the very place that allowed him to project himself into his own artistic creations, where the desires of his characters became his longings and their loves became his ideals. To be sure, this connection between art and life was centred on the young German composer's desire for the artistic communities in France and Germany to respect and embrace his talents. Thus, starting in Paris, Wagner's dramatic works begin to represent the composer's socio-psychological needs and ideals as well as his artistic will to dominate the operatic stages of Europe. Wagner became familiar with *La Reine de Chypre* during this very time when he was reflecting upon his own artistic exile from Germany and the operatic world in general. Furthermore, Halévy's opera presented to Wagner a musical work that embodied an operatic vision that Wagner believed would establish a 'new step forward' in dramatic unity. Wagner's positive assessment of *La Reine de Chypre* as the future for dramatic music (in light of his negative opinion of popular French opera of the time) serves as evidence not only of the kinship this opera shares with Wagner's new conception of the dramatic and psychological unity found in *Der fliegende Holländer* but also the artistic legacy of Halévy as presented in a work largely forgotten today.

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