Richard Wagner for the New Millennium
Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of communism, the very meaning of Europe has been opened up and is in the process of being redefined. European states and societies are wrestling with the expansion of NATO and the European Union and with new streams of immigration, while a renewed and reinvigorated cultural engagement has emerged between East and West. But the fast-paced transformations of the last fifteen years also have deeper historical roots. The reconfiguring of contemporary Europe is entwined with the cataclysmic events of the twentieth century, two world wars and the Holocaust, and the processes of modernity that, since the eighteenth century, have shaped Europe and its engagement with the rest of the world.

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We wish to thank the many people and organizations who made this book possible for their generous gifts of time and resources.

Most of the essays in Richard Wagner for the New Millennium were born as papers written for “Lingering Dissonances,” an international conference held at the University of Minnesota in 2003. We had many sponsors. They include the Minnesota Opera, members of the Wagner Society of the Upper Midwest, and many units of the University of Minnesota: the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies; the Department of German, Scandinavian, and Dutch; the School of Music; the Center for German and European Studies; the Department of Cultural Studies and Comparative Literature; the Center for Jewish Studies; and the Humanities Institute.

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The success of Lingering Dissonances depended greatly on the industry, multiple talents, and the equanimity of musicology doctoral candidate C. Annett Richter, who also served as our copy editor and occasional translator. Composition doctoral student Seth Mulvihill set the musical and analytical examples. College of Liberal Arts freshman Janessa Macdonald assisted with proofreading and indexing.

Lingering Dissonances was highlighted by an evening concert, which doubtless nourished the intellectual climate for the paper presentations that preceded it that day. The many performers and conductors included Dwight Bigler, Anna Brandsoy, Margo Garrett, Jerry Luckhardt, Brian Rush-Williams, and Wendy Zaro-Mullins. We thank them all.

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INTRODUCTION:
LINGERING DISSONANCES IN WAGNER SCHOLARSHIP

Matthew Bribitzer-Stull and Alex Lubet

Friederich Nietzsche was correct—Wagner’s music is dangerous; and from Wagner’s day to the present, anecdotes have accumulated in support of this characterization. Performing Wagner, for instance, led to nineteenth-century singers Alois Ander and Malvina Schnorr losing their voices during rehearsals for Tristan und Isolde. The death of tenor Ludwig Schnorr barely three weeks after the premier run of Tristan, moreover, served to “confirm” the perils of Wagner’s art. Conductors have suffered as well—witness the abuse Daniel Barenboim and Zubin Mehta have endured for performing Wagner in Israel (and the criticism of Israeli institutions for their anti-Wagner resistance). Nor are those who remain off the stage and out of the pit immune; one need only read reactions to Wagner scholars, from Hans von Wolzogen to Deryck Cooke, to witness the viciousness of written excoriations by Wagner’s stalwarts, apologists, and critics alike. Most dangerous of all may be listening to Wagner’s music: it is natural to hypothesize upon the divergent paths Hitler’s career might have followed had he never heard Rienzi, Meistersinger, or Parsifal. Even the layman is not free from Wagner’s dangerous influences; those reading this introduction will, no doubt, sympathize with the hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars Wagner’s music demands from those of us who engage it from any perspective.

Wagner’s music is dangerous in another regard as well. More than any other composer in the history of Western art music, Wagner demands that we study him from the vantage points of multiple disciplines; his own work engaged not only music but also theater, literature, philosophy, religion, and politics, among others. In today’s climate of narrowly defined disciplines, it is dangerous for a
lone scholar to attempt research on all these facets of Wagner’s life and works because of the level of expertise contemporary scholarship demands. While no volume could hope to address all the ramifications of Wagner’s life, music, and prose, *Richard Wagner for the New Millennium* combines, as no previous volume has, articles from Cultural Studies and History with essays in Music Theory and Musicology, representing multiple perspectives on Wagner’s music and social impact in a single publication.

A central concern of *Richard Wagner for the New Millennium* is the relationship between Wagner the artist and Wagner the social phenomenon. In particular, many of the essays explore the most difficult yet most crucial issue in Wagner studies: the impact of the composer’s problematic worldview and complex personal life on his musical and dramatic creations. A wide variety of positions and perspectives are included, the goal being, as Gottfried Wagner’s lead essay so aptly states, to promote much-needed debate on the legacy of this controversial figure. We achieve this in a manner that acknowledges both the artist’s vast musical achievements and the troubling uses to which the achievements have often been put, recognizing that Wagner’s checkered history as a social force, even decades after his own death, was possible only in the context of a towering musical intellect.

Contributors include many leading authorities on Wagner’s life and works: historian Paul Rose, culture theorist Marc Weiner, music theorists Robert Gauldin and Warren Darcy, and musicologist Gottfried Wagner. Equally compelling pieces are offered by scholars whose views are becoming increasingly known: historian Na’ama Sheffi, musicologist Timothy Maloney, music theorists William Marvin and Matthew Bribitzer-Stull, and disability studies specialist Alex Lubet. Representatives from both sides of the “Wagner divide”—the socio-historical and the music analytical—provide a satisfying overview of current trends in Wagner scholarship.

Socio-historical scholars from various disciplines, while taking a variety of stances as regards Wagner’s artistic creations, have been principally interested in his political legacy. The primary focus continues to be the impact of Wagner’s anti-Semitic and nationalistic polemics seen in the context of the Nazi ascent to power in Germany, World War II, and the Holocaust. Recent work has also focused on Wagner’s relationship to women in his music, his writings, and his complex personal life. While the socio-historical