

Slightly Faster $\text{♩} = 50$
 Freely, quasi recitativo

Lute
 Jake
 Guitar 1
 Guitar 2
 Electric Bass
 Synthesizer 1
 Synthesizer 2

Diary

brought a-long some- one... some-one who knows you... he's the man that I love and I want-ed to show you... it's Jake from the fac- tory and now we're to- ge- ther... I want - ed you to... love you for- e - ver... you'd be back one day... and I al-ways knew

THE FITZSIMMONS DIARY

by David Wendell Nelson
 word count 19,907

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1

GRANDMA

A soft tapping comes from the front door. Emily Fitzsimmons stands in the entryway of her grandmother's house, eager to tell her the news. Eva, Emily's grandmother, is dozing in her favorite recliner and is slow to respond to the knocking. Emily impatiently knocks again.

“Grandma, it's me, Emily!”

Eva stirs from her recliner and slowly comes to life. Despite being in her 90s, she still possesses a keen mind, although arthritis has slowed her down over the last decade.

“I’ll be right there sweetheart,” Eva calls back in a husky voice.

Eva navigates to the front door and opens it slowly. An animated Emily charges through the door and embraces her grandmother.

“Hello my love,” Eva says, delighted to see her grandchild.

Emily takes her grandmother’s hands and proclaims proudly, “Oh Grandma, I’m so excited. Did Mom tell you?”

“She certainly did! We are all so proud of you.”

Emily is about to burst at the seams with pride and enthusiasm. Eva takes Emily by the arm and heads to the kitchen.

“Now tell me all about it over a pot of tea.”

Upon reaching the kitchen, Eva struggles to reach the tea pot and cups from the cupboard.

“Let me Grandma,” Emily says, trying to help.

“No, no. This is one of the few things I can still do,” she says with a smile.

“I’ve learned not to argue with you!” Emily teases.

The tea kettle is set on the stove and the cups are moved to the living room coffee table. They both settle into their chairs, Eva in her recliner and Emily in an overstuffed armchair.

“My, my, accepted to Juilliard. That is quite an accomplishment.”

“I’ll be right downtown at Lincoln Center with all that music and theatre! I can hardly wait.”

“You are indeed a lucky girl. Now tell me exactly what you will be studying.”

“Well, I’ll keep studying piano of course, but I’d like to spend more time composing. And even some conducting.”

“Conducting? Oh, that reminds me. I have something for you. In fact, that’s why I asked you to come over.”

Eva rises from the recliner to shuffle through the items in the drawer of the nearby desk.

“Here it is!” Eva exclaims as they both sit down again.

It is a small book, a diary actually. Torn and tattered, it is indeed very old. The word “Diary” has almost vanished from the cover. The pages are yellow and the metal clasp locking the diary shut is brown with oxidation.

“I expect you don’t know this, but my grandfather Wendell was a conductor too. And since you’re the first musical Fitzsimmons since then, I thought you should have it. I can’t make sense of all the musical jargon, and some of it is in German! I’m sure you can figure it all out.”

Eva hands the diary to Emily tenderly. Emily is not sure what to make of this unusual gift.

“He was a conductor?”

“Specializing in the works of Richard Wagner.”

“Wagner?” Emily exclaims, impressed with this bit of news.

“He conducted in the U.S. and in Europe and died young. He was only 34. And that’s about all we know of him. Even my father David never really knew him. It seems he died under some mysterious circumstances.”

“When did he die?” Emily asks, her curiosity piqued.

“In 1883. Somewhere in Europe.”

Emily opens the diary to the first page. She is captivated immediately, the first page titled “My first European conducting engagements-1881.”

She quickly thumbs through the pages. Eva pours the hot tea.

“Look at this! London. Paris. Vienna. Prague. He conducted everywhere!”

“I thought this might be of interest to you,” Eva clucks.

Emily pauses for a moment in astonishment and says, “Oh my God. I can’t believe it. He was there. He was actually there.”

“Where, child?” Eva asks in confusion.

“The Mecca for all Wagnerians. The holy grail of opera. Bayreuth!” exclaims Emily in reverent awe.

“What is Bayreuth?”



2

SEMINAR

A few months later Emily waits outside the classroom door for her first history class at Juilliard. Appropriately enough, it is a seminar on Wagner taught by one of the greatest living authorities on the subject, Karl Geiringer. At last, Geiringer appears at the end of the long hall in a worn, ill-fitting suit, his back bent and his hair white with age. With a thick German accent, he warmly greets the waiting students, “Good morning everyone.”

Emily stands up to introduce herself, "I'm Emily Fitzsimmons from Schenectady. Piano/composition major. I suppose my claim to fame is that my great great grandfather was Wendell Fitzsimmons, a conductor. Oh, and I'm a Wagner fan too."

Immediately intrigued by this information, Geiringer replies, "Oh yes, I have heard of this American. He was a conductor in Europe for a number of years. I believe he died very young. He was a very promising talent, especially with Wagner opera." He stops and smiles at Emily, "Just like you, I have heard, Miss Fitzsimmons."

Emily can only smile, slightly intimidated by a kind compliment from such a famous and influential scholar. The two hour seminar goes by in an instant, with Geiringer providing a plethora of fascinating facts and anecdotes concerning the larger than life figure of Richard Wagner. The professor gathers his materials as the students exit the seminar room. All except Emily.

With an armful of books, Geiringer turns to an apprehensive Emily, "Is there something I can help you with Miss Fitzsimmons?"

"Well, as a matter of fact there is," she bashfully admits. "I have something here that might interest you."

"Perhaps we should go to my office," Geiringer comments, observing the influx of new students.

"Sure," Emily says.

As they walk down the hall towards the professor's office, Geiringer says, "I understand you are a gifted pianist. Any conducting ambitions like your great great grandfather?"

"Yes. And composing too."

"Well, I'm sure you will excel at all you do."

"Thank you Professor."

Upon reaching his office door, Geiringer again fumbles for his keys.

"Here," says Emily, again taking his profusion of books.

She deposits the books on his desk as the professor settles into his office chair.

"Please sit. And what is this matter that is so interesting?"

Emily sits down quickly and slowly brings forth the diary of her great great grandfather from her handbag and lays it gently on the desk.

"It's his diary. I don't think anyone in my family has actually read it. Except me."

Geiringer's interest is increasing with this declaration. He gingerly opens the unlocked diary and begins to read.

"Ah, 1881. I am familiar with some of these performances. Especially in Prague."

"Go to the section that is marked 1883. Things get very interesting there."

The professor quickly turns to the proper page.

Geiringer begins to read the diary aloud, “I am ecstatic. At long last I have procured a conducting position at the master’s own opera house. Bayreuth. It will be the zenith of my career to work with the composer himself. The greatest artist perhaps of all time, Richard Wagner.”

A few moments pass before Geiringer can speak. He is stunned by this revelation. His face has a distant, faraway look.

He responds slowly and deliberately, “There is no mention of Fitzsimmons ever conducting at Bayreuth.”

Emily is quick to reply, “Oh, he was there alright. As sure as I stand here in front of you.”

The professor looks at Emily with incredulity at such a bold statement.

“Please, read on,” she exclaims.



3

LESSON

The lush greenery of spring surrounds the famous Wagner Festspielhaus this early May day in 1883. The small town of Bayreuth in beautiful Bavaria was selected by Wagner himself for his own personal opera house in order to eliminate any needless big city distractions. On stage today at the Festspielhaus, Richard Wagner circles around the grand piano, listening intently to what his daughter Isolde is playing.

“Good, good. Now stop for a moment.” Isolde stops and looks up at her father with adoring eyes. “Very French. I can see your study in Paris was well spent. But now tell me about this piece. Motivation and inspiration.”

“It’s for a dear friend. Someone I miss very much. A reverie of sorts I suppose.”

“Yes. The added sixth gives it a wonderful melancholy quality. Was it written for anyone I know?”

Isolde lowers her gaze and stares at the keyboard. She is uncomfortable lying to her father.

“No. A Paris friend.”

With her eyes still on the keyboard, Isolde responds by wistfully shaking her head.

Intent on improving her spirits, Wagner says, “Let’s begin where you left off and show me what you do with your theme.”

“Wonderful modulation! The half-step down is a dramatic touch. Good contrast for the second theme.”

Wagner listens attentively again.

As the first theme returns, Wagner exclaims, “Oh, the repeated notes and the half-step down again. Wonderful! I believe you borrowed that from me!”

Isolde smiles and nods as she continues playing.

“Now let’s see how you finish,” he says.

Isolde’s fingers flash across the keyboard in a rush of arpeggios.

“Oh yes! The flat six with the tritone appoggiatura. I couldn’t have done it better myself. And then the ascending motive disappearing into the air. Delightful.”

Isolde rushes to embrace her father, “Well, I’ve learned from the best!”

“You certainly are a better pianist than I am!” Wagner laughs.

Wagner approaches the piano bench. He sits down and studies the music for a moment.

“Let’s try it again. This time I will play the piano and you sing the melody line. It lies nicely in your range.”

Isolde sings the vocal line from memory. Wagner begins to play carefully and with great feeling while Isolde appears to go into a blissful state and sings with a beautiful and lyrical alto voice with her eyes closed.

As the last few notes slowly decay, Wagner says with affection, “This is not a piano piece, it is clearly for the voice. It is as if you were speaking to someone. Someone that you miss terribly.”

Isolde is amazed by the insightful comments of her father, since it is indeed exactly her musical intent. She is unwilling to disclose the very personal nature of the piece and the circumstances of its conception.

“Yes, you are absolutely right. How did you know?”

“You and I are not so different. You feel things so keenly and have the uncanny gift of being able to communicate emotion so well through your music.”

“I wonder where I got that from?” Isolde teases with a smile on her face.

They both laugh. Isolde is clearly the talent in the family next to her father. Tall and lithe like her mother, Isolde is young and beautiful with a long mane of waist length blond hair. Her talents go beyond the piano; she conducts, composes, and sings. Not to mention the fact that she was raised knowing every note of her father’s music. She is beaming with pride at her father’s approval of her piano work. Wagner motions for Isolde to join him on the piano bench.

“Sit down, my love,” he graciously asks.

There is something clearly on his mind. Something important.

“As you know, I’m almost 70 now. And I won’t always be here to run the festival.”

A concerned Isolde responds, “That is a long time off. Don’t say that.”

“Nonetheless, I need you to promise me something. Something that will be difficult I’m afraid.”

“Anything for you,” Isolde replies, her courage rising.

“When I’m gone, someone needs to take charge of this place. Musically. Your brother Siegfried is simply not up to the task. And no one else in the family is even a musician. I can’t let our family legacy be destroyed by those who don’t know a major from a minor.”

Isolde nods, as she anticipates what her father is about to ask.

“Only you have the ability to save Bayreuth from musical disaster. You know my music as well as any of the conductors coming through here. I have made my wishes known to your mother, but after I’m gone I don’t trust her judgement. In fact, I have just updated my will to stipulate that you, and only you, are to be in charge of the Festspielhaus.”

Isolde is speechless. She is overcome with pride and affection at her father’s declaration.

“However, when I’m gone I fear that Siegfried and your mother will not abide by my wishes. You must do this for me. Promise me, promise your father.”

Isolde is determined to help her father and declares courageously, “Of course. I promise. I would never let that happen here.”

“Good. I will rest more easily knowing that.” Wagner looks tenderly at his daughter. “You and I are very much alike. That Wagner stubborn streak!”

They both laugh as Wagner hugs his daughter tightly.

“On a happier note, you will be glad to know I have hired a new conductor for this summer season. He is an American but knows my music as well as I do and has conducted all over Europe.”

“Who is this American wunderkind?” Isolde asks with a smile.

“Wendell Fitzsimmons.”

Isolde’s face instantly is filled with apprehension. She can barely respond.

“He’s coming here?” she asks in a whisper, looking down at the keyboard again.

“Yes, next week, when we start rehearsals.”

“Next week?” she asks in alarm.

Sensing Isolde’s concern, Wagner asks, “Do you know this man?”

“No,” she replies, her eyes fixed on the keyboard.

Again, she is uncomfortable lying to her father.



4

ARRIVAL

Diary of Wendell Fitzsimmons. Entry date: Saturday May 12, 1883.

I am ecstatic. At long last I have procured a conducting position at the master's own opera house. Bayreuth. It will be the zenith of my career to work with the composer himself. The greatest artist perhaps of all time, Richard Wagner. My assistant and I, Basil O'Reilly, approached the Wagner Festspielhaus by horse-drawn coach. After a long and arduous trip from Paris, we were both relieved to have finally reached our destination. For the past few years, we have been traveling constantly due to my rigor-

ous conducting schedule. As a young and upcoming opera conductor, I am proud to say my skills are in high demand. My Paris Opera tenure received good reviews and the teaching residency at the Conservatoire de Paris was equally praised. The coach was drawn by a single white horse with a mustached driver, the luggage riding precariously on top. The opera house was invisible from the bottom of the lovely tree-lined drive, the cobblestone avenue revealing its destination in slow, dramatic fashion. As the Festspielhaus progressively came into view, I became more animated, very anxious to have finally arrived at this shrine to Wagnerian opera.

“Well, at least we don’t have to travel. We have all summer to settle in here. Get to know the people in this town,” Basil reflected.

“Thank you my friend. I couldn’t do it without your help.”

“I could use a raise. Or even a vacation.”

“A valid point, I concur.”

“I am a little worried about the nefarious Wagner clan. Especially after what happened with you and Solveig in Paris.”

“You’re overreacting.”

“Well, I’m just glad the whole affair is behind us.”

“I’m not. I’ve never met a woman like that in my entire life.”

“It’s possible you might meet someone here. You never know.”

“Unlikely.”

“Speaking of the Wagner family, here comes one now.”

As we approached the opera entrance plaza, Siegfried Wagner, maestro Richard Wagner’s son, appeared from the entrance foyer and advanced towards the coach. He walked slowly and wore a grim expression.

“Not a very happy looking chap,” Basil commented under his breath.

Siegfried stopped at the foot of the coach as Basil and I stepped down gingerly from our long ride.

“Welcome to Bayreuth Maestro Fitzsimmons,” Siegfried said without a smile.

“Thank you so much. We are honored to be here.” I motioned to Basil and said, “And this is my assistant, Basil O’Reilly.”

Everyone shook hands, after which there was an uncomfortable silence. Siegfried was obviously nervous and began to speak haltingly. His face betrayed his concern.

“Gentlemen, I have terrible news.”

I was immediately alarmed and replied quickly, “Oh dear, what has happened?”

Siegfried paused and looked at the ground. This obviously was difficult for him.

“My father has died.”

Both Basil and I were thunderstruck and could not respond for a moment as we attempted to comprehend what we had just heard. Stunned, we both contemplated the far-reaching consequences of this historic turn of events. With Richard Wagner gone, the future of the entire Bayreuth Festival was in jeopardy. Not to mention that my conducting services would almost certainly not be needed.

I was the first to speak, "Dear God."

In a soft and halting voice, Siegfried elaborated, "Just last night. His heart."

"Richard Wagner. Gone. Unbelievable," Basil gently replied in shock.

I recovered enough to quietly say, "Our most sincere condolences to you and the family."

"My mother has locked herself in her room and will see no one. She is devastated," Siegfried replied.

I responded, "We are both so sorry."

Siegfried attempted to rally his spirits and said, "Gentlemen, I am not sure what will happen with the festival. Or the fate of Bayreuth in general. In the mean time, please feel free to stay until the family makes a decision. I'm sorry to inconvenience you."

"Not at all. Again, our deepest sympathy," I replied.

Basil and I stood fixed to the ground in dismay as Siegfried turned to leave.

Siegfried approached the coach driver and said, "Please take the luggage to the guest quarters immediately."

He quickly disappeared behind the foyer doors. My dream of conducting at Wagner's Bayreuth opera house appeared to be going up in smoke. Basil was the first to break the uncomfortable silence.

"Well, let's have a look around I guess."

"I can't believe it. The colossus of Romantic opera. Gone," I stammered.

"I suppose we should start with the theater."

"Along with my hopes and dreams of working with the master himself," I lamented, starting to ramble.

Basil took me by the arm and guided me towards the entry doors to the opera house.

"Come my friend, I think it's this way."

Appearing to still be slightly dazed by this news, I continued to babble rather aimlessly, "So close. I was so close."

"Ah, this way I think," Basil commented.

We entered the theater. The stage was almost completely dark with only a single gas lamp burning. A lone grand piano rested at the center. We stood for a moment and gaped.

“Can’t see much in this light. Come on, let’s sit for a moment,” Basil suggested. We both sat down in the very last row.

“Quite a place. And such a unique design,” I commented.

After a few minutes of no conversation, a lone, dimly lit figure came onto the stage. Tall and thin with long hair, she meandered around the stage aimlessly in abstraction. We were immediately curious about this mysterious visitor. In silence we watched as she slowly approached the piano. After opening the lid to its highest point, she sat down on the bench to play. Without the help of any written music, she appeared to go into a trance as she improvised a melancholy, dirge-like piece. I was immediately struck by the power and austere beauty of the music.

“Let’s find out who this is,” I whispered.

Unobserved by the mysterious soloist, we slowly made our way in the darkness towards the front of the theater. As the music faded away, the unknown performer laid her head on the keyboard and began to cry. It was the weeping of someone in abject despair. A moment later there was screaming coming from the wings on stage left.

“No! Don’t touch that!”

A tall, thin figure dressed in black charged onto the stage in indignation.

“No one will ever play your father’s piano now! Move!”

The figure in black came over to the piano and continued to shout. We watched this tirade with silent curiosity, still completely unobserved.

“Isolde! Now!” Cosima screamed.

It was indeed Isolde and her mother shrieking at each other. Isolde was instantly on her feet. Her father had warned her about this. Her protective instincts quickly rose to protect her father’s wishes.

“No! He wanted me to have this. This is mine now,” Isolde replied in anger.

“Your father is gone. You listen to me now,” Cosima commanded.

“I knew this was going to happen. Dad warned me!”

“Listen. Siegfried and I will lead Bayreuth now. Not you,” Cosima dictated.

Isolde’s fury was now at its zenith, “I will never allow that to happen! It’s what Dad wanted. Don’t stand in the way of Germany’s greatest composer!”

As Isolde and Cosima continue to argued, we came closer to the front of the stage. I finally had a clear view of Isolde. I gasped in surprise.

“Oh my God. It’s her,” I whispered to Basil.

“Who? Who is her?” replied a mystified Basil.

“How is this possible?” I muttered in confusion.

“What are you talking about?”

Isolde fired off the next salvo, “It’s even in the will. Dad wanted me. Not you! You’re not even a musician! And Siegfried is not up to the challenge. You know that!”

“There is no will! And you’re a woman! No one will ever take you seriously!” Cosima ranted.

“Of course there is a will. I’ve seen it!”

Cosima looked sternly at Isolde and said in a deliberate and menacing manner, “There is no will! No will!”

“I don’t believe you.”

“If you can’t do what I say, then maybe you should go back to the music store in town.”

“Do really expect me to just give up because of what you say? I promised Dad!” Isolde protested.

“I know what your father wanted you to do. But it is impossible. The only way is with your brother. And me. Your father, God rest his soul, is not here now.”

Isolde recognized the impasse they now had reached. She paused for a moment and gathered all her energy.

With all her strength, she slowly and resolutely declaimed, “Listen to me. I will never betray my father’s wishes. I will never let Bayreuth fall into ruin at the hands of amateurs. The fate of this opera house rests on my shoulders. Mine alone. Not yours and not my brother’s.”

Isolde’s mother countered with a touch of malice, “I don’t think so. Don’t touch his piano ever again. And leave Bayreuth to me.”

Isolde was fuming and replied with equal enmity, “I warn you. Don’t get in my way and leave my brother out of this.”

Isolde slammed the keyboard cover closed with a resounding crash and stormed off the stage. Cosima watched her leave and then removed a small key from her dress pocket. She quickly locked the keyboard cover and produced a round bundle from her other pocket. With the lid still open, Cosima placed the bundle at the far end of the strings. She looked around suspiciously, lowered the lid, and locked it with the same small key. With a sinister smile she slowly walked off stage and back to her room. Both of us were dumbfounded by what we had just witnessed. We stood up slowly from our seats.

“I told you this was a villainous family,” Basil said.

“I tell you, it was her. From Paris,” I said, still rather shellshocked.

“Who? Are you talking about Isolde? Do you know her?” a confused Basil asked.

“You go to our room and unpack our things. I’ll be along in a while. I need to talk to her,” I said with great anticipation.

“Well, I’ve learned not to argue with you. But remember, this family is trouble.”



5

MUSIC STORE

Entry date: Saturday May 12, 1883, continued.

Basil swiftly left through the front doors of the theater while I leapt onto the stage to follow Isolde. In the darkness of the theater I fumbled to find my way. A side door was ajar, certainly through which Isolde had left. I charged through, almost blinded by the brilliant light of midday. I shaded my eyes to see. Isolde was already rounding the theater corner and heading down the hill back to town in her own coach. Judging by the speed and recklessness of her driving, she was clearly in a rage. I ran to the front of the

theater only to see Isolde disappear on the horizon. Fortunately, our driver from the train station was still tending to the horse but the coach had been detached from the stallion.

“Good sir, I need to get back to town this instant,” I said in a panic.

“Very well sir. Just need to hitch up old Bill here,” the driver replied.

“Thank you so much, it is rather important.”

I paced impatiently as the driver hitched up the coach. Isolde was certainly far ahead by now. I then remembered Cosima’s comment about the music store.

“My good man, is there a music store in town?” my impatience beginning to show.

“That there is, sir. And owned by the Wagner family themselves. Miss Isolde runs that shop I believe. She sure looked like she was in a hurry just now.”

“That she was. Take me there straight away. And there’s an extra mark in it for you if you hurry!”

“Yes sir!” a grateful coachman replied.

After witnessing the heated quarrel in the theater, I was unable to make any sense of what I had seen. And the seemingly impossible connection between Isolde and my tenure at the conservatoire in Paris. My mind was racing with any number of possible explanations. As we approached the town, the driver turned down a small side street, flying past the alarmed local residents. We abruptly came to a halt directly behind Isolde’s carriage, parked in front of the Wagner music store.

I was out of the coach in an instant, calling to the driver over my shoulder, “Wait here please!”

I tentatively walked to the shop door and peered through the glass. Isolde was seated at a piano and playing furiously, her hair flying.

I studied her intently to make sure there was no mistake. Satisfied, I gently opened the door and walked through. A small tinkling bell attached to the door signaled my arrival. Isolde immediately stopped playing. She looked up to find me staring at her in bewilderment. Without a word, Isolde was on her feet and rushed into my arms. We embraced as only lovers can, with eyes closed and Isolde’s head firmly pressed against my chest. A full minute went by before either of us could speak.

“It’s really you,” Isolde whispered.

As we finally separated, I could only look at her in amazement, shaking my head in disbelief. I took her by the hands and kissed her forehead.

“How?” is all I could manage.

“I’m sorry I couldn’t tell you,” she said with regret in her voice.

“Wagner is your father?” I asked incredulously.

Isolde simply nodded her head.

“Who is the Solveig Ansteensen I knew in Paris?”

“It’s bad enough being a woman, but as the daughter of Richard Wagner no one would ever take me seriously as a musician.”

“Unbelievable.” I took a moment to reflect on this new revelation. “I always wondered about the girl from Norway with a German accent.”

“I had to go by a different name.” Isolde put her arms around my waist and pulled me close and sweetly whispered, “But I didn’t lie about anything else. Or about the way I feel about you.”

“I thought I would never see you again. You just disappeared.”

“Our time in Paris was so special. I’m sorry I couldn’t tell you. I hope you understand.”

“We’re together now. That’s all that matters.”

“My father said you were coming. I could hardly believe it.”

“And now he’s gone. I always thought the master of Bayreuth would live forever. I’m so sorry.”

The elation of Isolde’s reunion with me was now tempered by the grim reminder of her father’s death. A shadow of sorrow crossed her face. I again held her close as her eyes filled with tears.

“He was my inspiration,” Isolde confessed. “But so are you,” she continued with a weak smile.

Not really expecting an answer, I asked softly, “I wonder what will happen now?”

Isolde separated from me and looked resolutely into my eyes, “I promised my father something. Something that I have to do.”

“I know. I have to confess something.” I paused briefly and said, “I was in the theater. I saw it all.”

“Then you know what I’m up against.”

I nodded slowly.

“I would like to ask you something,” Isolde said softly. “Make me a promise.”

I said, “Of course.”

“Promise that you’ll help me see this through. Fulfill my father’s last wish.”

“I promise. It is the least I can do: to honor the greatest opera composer of all time and to help the most wonderful woman I have ever known.”

Isolde smiled slightly, relieved to hear my willingness to assist.

“Remember our first advanced theory class?” I asked her, trying to take her mind off of things. “I had never seen anyone so beautiful and so incredibly talented.”

“And you were the dashing young American teacher. I always thought you were some kind of wild musical cowboy.”

We both laughed slightly.

“I always wondered how you knew Wagner’s music so well. It’s in your blood.”

“True.”

“I can see why your father trusted you with Bayreuth.”

Isolde smiled proudly. She took my hands again.

“Some of those private composition lessons were very personal. Very one on one,” she said with a twinkle in her eye.

“It’s a teacher’s obligation to help in any way he can,” I quipped.

“You were a *big* help.”

We both smiled knowingly.



6

MEMORIES OF PARIS

The Conservatoire de Paris was founded in 1795 and by 1800 the faculty included some of the most important names in music, notably François-Joseph Gossec, Luigi Cherubini, Rodolphe Kreutzer, Jean-François Le Sueur, and Pierre Baillot. It is here in April of 1883 that Wendell Fitzsimmons is teaching composition, conducting, and piano, along with his duties as conductor of the Paris Opera House. With a brilliant musical mind and impressive memory, he is a sought after conductor all over Europe, specializing in opera. Especially Wagnerian opera. His youthful good looks, affable person-

ality, and forthright American demeanor, make him popular with his students, especially the females. As his composition class concludes this beautiful April day, the ten or twelve students make their way towards the door, except for one.

“Remember, the overture to *Lohengrin*. We’ll discuss Wagner’s brilliant orchestration,” Wendell calls to them as they leave.

Professor Fitzsimmons busily gathers his materials together; his scores, notes, and sheet music. He quickly crams them all in his satchel. He is clearly anxious about something. Careful to not glance at the last remaining student until all the others have left the room, he turns to the student patiently waiting and smiles knowingly.

“Do you have some time after class today Professor? I have something I’d like to show you,” Solveig Ansteensen coyly says with a reserved smile.

“Certainly,” he replies, understanding her hidden meaning.

Solveig stands as they both leave the room and walk with anticipation to Wendell’s office. A native of Norway, Solveig is older than most of the other students with a vast knowledge of music, including opera. Especially Wagnerian opera. Professor Fitzsimmons has taken a special interest in this wunderkind from Scandinavia. Not only can Solveig compose, perform, and conduct, but she speaks a number of languages. Perhaps more importantly, especially to Wendell, is Solveig’s stunning beauty. The professor’s interest in Solveig is difficult to conceal, although he tries to appear detached when they are in public. He gazes straight ahead as they converse. With her high heels, Solveig is almost as tall as Wendell.

“What is it that you have to show me? A new composition?” Wendell asks.

Solveig doesn’t reply, she only smiles while looking down at the ground in front of her. Entering Wendell’s office, Solveig immediately puts her book bag on the desk, goes to the window looking out on the courtyard and closes the blinds. As he turns around to face Solveig, she grabs Wendell around the waist and pulls him close for a long and profound kiss. Wendell stumbles backwards and lands on the desk, scattering books and scores on the floor. Neither of them care.

After a few minutes of stimulating affection, Solveig comments on the books strewn across the floor, “You’re making a mess.”

“You are so beautiful,” is all Wendell can manage.

“My father warned me about American men. I can see he wasn’t lying,” Solveig teases.

“They warned me to stay away from the young girls,” he counters with a laugh.

“I’m 31, remember? I’m not some starry-eyed coed. I know what I want.”

“And what is that?” Wendell responds with a smile.

“Well, let’s see,” she replies with feigned indecision.

Solveig pushes Wendell back onto the desk and begins to unbutton his shirt.

“I like a woman who knows what she wants,” he shoots back.

A sharp knock at the door interrupts their romantic moment. Wendell quickly buttons his shirt and goes to the piano and begins to play. Solveig stands up behind him, pretending to be listening. She quickly smooths his ruffled hair.

“Come in, it’s open,” he calls.

The door opens a few inches and a head pops through, surveying the room.

“Now listen to this modulation, up a minor third. So Wagnerian!” he says to Solveig in an overly loud voice, pretending to be giving a lesson.

“Oh, very nice,” Solveig replies.

With the closed blinds, clothing in disarray, scattered books and scores on the floor, it isn’t hard to decipher what exactly has been going on here. The bewildered visitor is finding it hard to speak.

“Oh, sorry to interrupt but I’m from the office and I have a message for Solveig Ansteensen. Someone said she might be here,” the befuddled messenger croaks.

Solveig is instantly concerned and replies, “I’m Solveig Ansteensen.”

The messenger quickly hands her the letter and departs, uncomfortable to be in such an awkward situation. Solveig rips the letter open in hurried anticipation.

Under her breath she mutters to herself, “You’re right, so Wagnerian.”

“Bad news?” Wendell asks tenderly.

“It’s from my father. I have to go home. Right away.”

“Now? But the semester is almost over! Is anything wrong?” Wendell pleads.

“No, it’s a family thing. They need me at home. I’m so sorry.”

Wendell stands up and faces Solveig with a look of desperation. She knows what he is trying to say. It is obvious to both of them that this past year together has not been some sophomore fling. Dismayed at such a rapid turn of events, Wendell is having trouble expressing how he feels.

“But then. You’ll be gone. And...”

“That doesn’t change how we feel about each other, does it?” she softly whispers.

Wendell can only shake his head.

“I love you so much,” Solveig softly sighs as she wraps her arms around his waist and pulls him close.

As she lays her head on his chest, Wendell replies, “You are the most beautiful, talented, and wonderful woman I have ever known. How can I not help but love you?”

“That’s what I wanted to hear,” Solveig murmurs.

After a long, pregnant pause, Wendell asks, "What will happen? To us?"

In a vain attempt at humor, Solveig replies, "Hey teacher, you can't get rid of me that easily!"

Both of them smile weakly. A look of mild panic crosses Wendell's face.

"Where is home for you? Where in Norway? Can I write you?"

"Uh, Oslo. I will be in touch. Maybe we can see each other over the summer," she stammers, uncomfortable having to lie.

"Okay," Wendell replies, unconvinced.

The conversation comes to an uncomfortable halt. It is a moment before Solveig can speak again. As the reality of her fate hits home, she begins to softly cry.

"I never got to play that piece. I wrote it just for you," she whispers between her tears.

"Can you play it for me now?" Wendell asks lovingly.

"I don't know. I'll try," she replies, slipping slowly into a more profound sorrow.

Wendell pulls the piano bench out for her. She sits down slowly, her tears flowing unabated.

Solveig begins to play haltingly. Only a few bars pass by before she begins to sob uncontrollably. Her delicate piano work comes to a grinding halt as she slams her hands down on the keyboard. She closes her eyes and hangs her head over the keyboard.

"It's not fair," she whispers. "You belong to me."

Wendell gingerly takes her by the shoulders and holds her in his arms, her tears quietly subsiding.

"Just like Tristan and Isolde," he replies, smiling gently.

Solveig looks up at his disconsolate face in amazement. What prophetic words!

"If you only knew," she murmurs.



7

MORE QUESTIONS

Emily and Professor Geiringer continue to pore over the diary. The professor is captivated by this yet unknown piece of musical history.

“There is no mention of Fitzsimmons even being in Bayreuth, let alone conducting. In fact, there was no outside conductor hired for that season’s festival,” he says with a quizzical look on his face.

“I have a feeling Cosima’s Bayreuth history is not entirely honest,” Emily speculates.

“Cosima was not honest about a number of things!” Geiringer laughs. “And the relationship between Fitzsimmons and Isolde has never been documented in any source that I am familiar with.”

“This diary has details that only a Bayreuth insider could possibly know. Its authenticity is genuine, I’m sure of it,” Emily responds.

“Agreed.”

Geiringer puts the diary down and leans back in his chair, pondering this new discovery. The history of the Wagner family and the Festspielhaus in Bayreuth has always been convoluted, especially with various Wagner family members embellishing the truth. But these new revelations only cloud the already distorted picture.

“I am at a loss to explain any of this. All this only raises more questions,” he says with dismay.

“I’ve read this entire thing,” she points to the diary. “And the next few entries explain a lot. Read on.”



8

VOICE OF REASON

Entry date: Saturday May 12, 1883, continued.

The excursion back up the hill to the opera house was far more leisurely than my earlier frantic pursuit of Isolde. With a distant and vacant expression I reflected on what had just happened: Solveig is really Isolde, Isolde is indeed Richard Wagner's daughter, Isolde's promise to her father, my own promise to Isolde, the issue of the will, the looming battle for control of the Festspielhaus, and perhaps most importantly, my re-

kindled love for Isolde. Stepping down from the coach gingerly, I still must have appeared to be slightly astonished by the earlier events.

“Thank you sir for your assistance. And here’s that mark I promised!” I remarked to the driver, pressing the coin firmly into his hand.

“Thank you sir! And good day to you too!” a grateful driver replied.

Basil had been waiting impatiently. He was not happy.

“You’re back I see,” Basil quipped with a touch of disdain.

Eager to explain all that had happened, I launched into a frantic and somewhat disjointed narrative of the latest events, “Dear God, where to begin? So, it is indeed Solveig. It is almost too good to be true.”

“Solveig? Why is she here?”

“She’s Isolde! Can you believe it?” I exhorted.

“Isolde? How can Solveig be Isolde? It’s just your imagination again! Solveig here, Solveig there. Just let it go.”

“No, my good fellow! Listen carefully. At the conservatoire Isolde, the girl we saw on stage, used a fictitious name. Solveig!”

“Why on earth would she do that?” Basil queried.

“Think about it man! First of all, she is a woman. That makes it difficult enough in this musical world. But as the daughter of Wagner, she would never be judged on her own merit. The shadow of her father would continually follow her.”

“Oh, I see. Quite right.”

“It seems Wagner has been grooming Isolde to guide Bayreuth into the future. That’s why she was in Paris. At the conservatoire.”

“Just when I thought that chapter of our lives was behind us,” Basil complained.

“No, au contraire mon ami! She still feels the same way about me. And I her. Despite the passing of her father, I feel compelled to help her. It is a great opportunity.”

“Certainly. A great opportunity to go off the deep end again.”

As if this was all too much, I navigated to an overstuffed chair and collapsed with an audible sigh.

“She is such a rare thing. A woman of unbelievable musical talent and such a beauty.”

“I have a bad feeling about this,” Basil said.

“I love a woman who knows what she wants,” I muttered under my breath.

Basil overheard this aside and said, “And I have a pretty good idea what it might be! And besides, how is a woman ever going to carry enough weight to manage this festival?”

Basil began to circle around my armchair, pacing with concern.

“You saw what happened in the theatre! Isolde certainly has the tenacity to make it happen.”

“It won’t be easy.”

“That’s why I have to help her,” I proclaimed.

“Oh dear, in love with the mistress of Bayreuth. You couldn’t make this kind of story up if you tried. Here we go again.”

My face was suddenly transformed as I was flooded with the thought of Isolde, “Isn’t she the most amazing and delightful creature you’ve ever seen?”

“She certainly is a beauty, no doubt. But consider this, if you cross the Wagner family, and I mean Cosima and Siegfried, you’ll be lucky to conduct Gilbert and Sullivan in Hoboken!”

“It is what Wagner wanted! I owe it to both Isolde and her father’s memory.”

“I hope you know what you’re getting us into,” Basil commented.

“Besides, you heard Isolde. It’s in the master’s will.”

“Not according to Cosima. Not that I believe anything that anti-Semite witch might say,” Basil warned.

“In good conscience, I cannot sit idly by and let Bayreuth go up in flames,” I proudly proclaimed.

“Nice Götterdämmerung metaphor. Let’s hope it doesn’t come to that.”

“Indeed. But still, I will be working with the greatest living authority on Wagner. And the most beautiful,” I said with a sigh.

“Yes, I suppose so. I know you won’t pay any attention to this, but please try to be careful. These are dangerous people.”

“Thank you for your concern my friend. I shall be as discreet as I can.”

Three sharp knocks came from the door. We both looked at each other in alarm. There was no good news that could come from these events. I went to the door and opened it slowly.

“Good afternoon Maestro Fitzsimmons. May I come in?” asked Siegfried Wagner.

“Of course. Please come in,” I replied cordially.

Basil came over to greet Siegfried and said, “Again, our deepest condolences.”

“Thank you so much. I appreciate that.”

Siegfried’s uneasy manner caused us to nervously glance at each other.

Siegfried took a deep breath and prepared to deliver his news, “I have conferred with my mother and we both are in agreement. The festival must go on. Therefore, the

opera calendar will remain the same with two notable exceptions. First, a memorial concert honoring my father is scheduled for this Friday the 18th. Secondly, I will assume all conducting duties. My deepest apologies Maestro Fitzsimmons, but I can offer you the assistant conductor position, if you are still interested.”

Basil and I glanced at each other knowingly. This was a serious breach of protocol. To break a contract so close to the first day of rehearsal was very rare indeed. And when it did occur, the fee was paid in full. There were scores of opera companies willing to pay me top dollar for my time and talent. To be cast aside like this was both unprofessional and insulting. Normally, I would not have considered such a shameless offer, but under the circumstances I needed an excuse to remain in Bayreuth and help Isolde.

“I would be grateful for the opportunity sir,” I said.

“I am happy to have your expertise. I look forward to working with you,” Siegfried replied.

“When do rehearsals start?” I asked.

“This Wednesday, followed by the memorial concert on Friday as I said. And my mother has extended an invitation to both of you to join the family at the funeral service Sunday evening, tomorrow.”

“Thank you so much. We would be honored to attend,” I replied.

“I will be in touch about rehearsal times and the cast,” Siegfried informed me.

“Thank you. And give our condolences to your mother as well,” I replied smoothly.

Siegfried nodded in affirmation then turned to go. I shut the door gently after him. Basil was the first to speak.

“That insolent fool! He is no more of a conductor than I am! And he didn’t even offer a severance fee!” Basil ranted.

“No matter. I need a reason to stay in Bayreuth and being his lackey is good enough.”

“The festival must go on. Ha! Everyone knows they are on the brink of bankruptcy! They must be desperate,” Basil says.

“With Siegfried at the helm, they are sure to fail,” I worried.

“Well, maybe it really is the end of the Wagner dynasty,” Basil commented.

“I won’t let that happen.”

“I wish I had your optimism. Of course, being in love with Wagner’s daughter might have something to do with it,” Basil said with a knowing smile.

“Perhaps.”



9

FUNERAL

Entry date: Sunday May 13, 1883.

As the news of Richard Wagner's death spread, the outpouring of grief and sorrow was tremendous, coming from every corner of the western world. Early in the evening on Sunday we dressed in funeral black and waited for the Wagnerian messenger to escort us to the gravesite, situated directly in front of the Wagner family villa. Wagner was to be buried only meters from his beloved Festspielhaus. There was a soft knocking on the door. Basil rose from his armchair to answer it.

“Good evening Mr. O’Reilly,” the messenger announced in a somber tone. “If you and Maestro Fitzsimmons would be so kind as to follow me.”

Both Basil and I put on overcoats to keep out the damp weather. A cold, wet evening seemed all too appropriate for such a mournful occasion. Wagner’s grave was illuminated by a myriad of lanterns, glimmering through the mist. The grave itself was open with a massive headstone resting to the side. At the far end of the grave was a string orchestra, playing excerpts from the maestro’s oeuvre. At the head of the grave stood the grieving widow, Cosima. She was propped up by her son Siegfried, and appeared to be on the verge of collapse. This melodramatic display did not sit well with Basil, who was not convinced of her sincerity.

Under his breath so only I could hear, he said, “She’s quite the prima donna, n’est-ce pa? She was in fine form the other day when she berated poor Isolde!”

I responded in a whisper, “We all have our roles to play.”

Isolde stood at the side of her brother and glanced briefly at me. Her tearstained face was truly heartrending. She appeared to be the only family member who was genuinely grief-stricken. I suppressed an almost irresistible impulse to rush to her side. At the stroke of 8PM the hearse, drawn by four magnificent black Freisian horses, could be heard bringing Wagner up the hill to the Festspielhaus for the last time. All eyes now turned to the approaching hearse. As Wagner’s body was slowly lowered into the ground, Cosima collapsed into Siegfried’s arms with exaggerated wailing. Isolde clutched her brother’s arm in anguish. I again fought the inclination to console her. The coffin came to a halt with a final metallic sound, as the winch was moved away to make way for the immense headstone. Cosima cried out in pain, burying her head in Siegfried’s chest. Tears rolled down Isolde’s lovely face. There was not a dry eye to be seen, even among the men. Siegfried turned to escort his weeping mother back to the villa. The music continued as the rest of the cortège turned to go, some reverently placing flowers on the headstone as they passed by. However, Isolde’s eyes continued to be focused intently on her father’s tomb. She did not move. I waited until all the others had moved off towards the villa and then approached the transfixed Isolde.

As I turned to Isolde, Basil whispered, “I can see you have your hands full here. I’m heading back to the room. Be careful.”

I quickly nodded as Isolde ran into my arms. With only the orchestra present, she wept openly and without constraint. She laid her head on my chest and held me close, eyes shut tightly. Neither of us spoke. The string orchestra was reluctant to conclude the music with a member of the Wagner family still present. Isolde slowly separated from me with a resolute countenance spreading across her grief-stricken face.

“There’s something I have to do,” she whispered to me. “Wait here.”

She walked over to the orchestra and motioned for them to stop. She talked quietly to the concertmaster. He nodded in agreement. Upon rejoining me, she nodded to the concertmaster and the music began again. This time with Isolde adding her own vocal line. She stood next to me at the foot of the grave and began to sing as if it were a father and daughter conversation. With her eyes closed, she was completely absorbed in her reverie. I was awestruck at this virtuosic display of musical improvisation and touched by Isolde’s absolute devotion to her father. As the music faded away, Isolde opened her eyes and emerged from her trancelike state. She nodded to the concertmaster in thanks as the orchestra members began to pack up. I was speechless for a moment, astonished by what I had just witnessed. I took Isolde by the hands. Her sorrow had now been transformed to resolve, as if Wagner himself had caused this miraculous metamorphosis. Perhaps not Wagner, but certainly his music.

“Amazing. Your vocal line and your father’s music. Wagner on Wagner. You are a devoted daughter, I must say.”

“He’s not the only man to whom I’m devoted.”

We embraced in the shimmering mist.

“Let’s get you out of this damp air,” I said. “I’ll walk you back to the villa.”

Isolde slowly turned from her father’s grave. Arm in arm, we said a final goodbye to one of the greatest composers of all time. She glanced over her shoulder as we walked in silence.

As we approached the villa, Isolde was first to speak, “I can still count on you for help in all this?”

“Of course.”

“Without the will, this will be difficult,” Isolde whispered.

I abruptly stopped walking. A distant look came across my face as I was seized by a sudden epiphany. Isolde was immediately concerned.

“Oh dear, that must be it!”

“What must be it?”

“I think I know what it is that Basil and I saw.”

“What do you mean?” asked Isolde, her interest growing.

“The day after your father died. When I first saw you and your mother arguing on stage at the Festspielhaus.”

Isolde nodded, not understanding my meaning.

“After you left, she took some papers from her dress pocket and put them inside your father’s piano. And then locked it! Remember how she said no one is to ever play the Maestro’s piano again?”

Isolde nodded again, finally understanding.

I continued, “I think we both know what’s inside that piano!”

“Only one way to find out!” she exclaimed.

Isolde’s keen mind was already at work formulating a plan.

“So, this is what I need from you. Some of your American ingenuity. Meet me on stage at midnight. Tonight. We need to get inside that piano.”

I nodded enthusiastically.

“I do have some expertise in that field,” I said with a knowing smile.

“You really are my musical cowboy,” she teased.

She took my hands and pulled me close for a long, tender kiss.

As she turned to go, she said, “Midnight.”



10

THE MASTER'S PIANO

Entry date: Monday May 14, 1883, about 2AM.

Basil was already asleep by the time I arrived back at the room. About ten minutes before midnight, I donned my overcoat and satchel, left the guest quarters, and stepped out into the still rainy evening. I took a lantern from a nearby pole and walked quickly to the rear of the opera house. Stepping inside tentatively, it was difficult to see, the low light of the lantern of little use.

“Over here,” someone whispered.

Isolde popped out from behind some Roman colonnades from the last rehearsals of *Rienzi*. With authority she took me by the arm and moved me to a more concealed spot. She too carried a small lantern.

“We can’t afford to turn on the gas lamps. Someone would notice.”

I didn’t respond, instead I pulled her close for a passionate kiss. We were both momentarily and wholly diverted from our task. At length and with obvious difficulty, Isolde tenderly separated from me.

“Well, good evening to you too Maestro Fitzsimmons,” Isolde sighed, trying to regain her composure.

I could only smile.

“Well then my amorous American, how do you propose we proceed?” Isolde asked.

With a knowing smile I quipped, “I was born in Brooklyn. This should be no problem.”

From my satchel I produced a variety of implements and displayed them to an amazed Isolde. There were knives, ice picks, a small ten inch steel bar, pins, pliers, and a small can of oil. Isolde smiled in astonishment.

“Courtesy of the Wagner guest quarters kitchen!” I laughed.

“Shush, you goof!” Isolde whispered, putting her finger to my lips.

We both set the lanterns on the piano top as I carefully laid out my tools and examined the keyboard cover lock.

“This should do it,” I said, selecting the ice pick.

From the north side of the stage, a door slammed and there was a soft nattering of voices. The north side door connected directly to the Wagner villa. Isolde and I were in an instant panic.

“The lanterns!” Isolde whispered, blowing both of them out rapidly.

With no time to collect my tools, we both bolted from the piano to the protection of the colonnades in total darkness. Isolde firmly grasped me by the arm, leading us towards the back of the stage, our now extinguished lanterns in hand. She fumbled to find her way. Once safely ensconced behind the *Rienzi* scenery, we both peered out, apprehensive about what was about to transpire. The voices increased in volume as they approached. There were two people, both softly bathed in their own lantern light. It seemed they too did not want to be discovered. Both dressed in sleepwear, the two males approached the piano and set their two lanterns down.

Looking at my burglary utensils, one of them said, “Hmm, the stage crew shouldn’t be leaving their tools all over my dad’s piano!”

I looked at Isolde incredulously and whispered, “Is that..?”

“Oh yes.”

Siegfried was attired in red long underwear with a rear trap door. His friend wore an oversize light blue nightshirt that fell almost to his knees. Siegfried’s friend began to massage his shoulders with affection.

Siegfried smiled in delight and said, “I will have to make you the official Festspielhaus masseuse.”

“These hands are only for you,” his friend replied. “So what will be your first official act maestro?”

Isolde bristled at the words.

“Easy, easy,” I whispered.

Siegfried marched to the edge of the orchestra pit and loudly proclaimed in a melodramatic fashion, “I will conduct *The Ring* from memory!”

He proceeded to conduct an imaginary orchestra in an outlandish and comical style. He flailed and gyrated in a failed attempt to appear like he knew what he was doing. The exaggerated conducting acrobatics caused Siegfried’s trap door bottoms to pop open, exposing his white Aryan buttocks. He was not hindered in the least with his wardrobe malfunction. Continuing to conduct, his posterior wobbled comically. Siegfried’s friend came up from behind him and smacked his buttocks with a loud whack.

“Better learn to conduct, Mommy’s boy!” Siegfried’s friend exclaimed.

Both Siegfried and his friend began to giggle.

“Give us a kiss maestro!”

“Yes, thank you so much. Thank you everyone!” Siegfried declaimed to the nonexistent audience.

Siegfried bowed repeatedly to the empty hall, imagining the adulation he believed he would receive.

“Thank you, thank you. I couldn’t have done it without my faithful friend, uh, uh...,” cried Siegfried pretending to forget his friend’s name.

“It’s Edgar. Edgar, you fool! But you were just doing that, weren’t you? Oh Lord, the Wagner family. In a world of their own!” cried Siegfried’s friend in exasperation.

As we both watched the farcical charade, I turned to Isolde.

“Is your brother, uh, let’s see, how would you say?” I whispered.

“Yes. Always has been. Mom does damage control, so not many people know. He has his little sleepover pals now and then. I don’t recognize this one.”

I just shook my head and whispered, “Can you imagine him at the helm of Bayreuth? A recipe for disaster.”

Siegfried took his last bow as Edgar applauded loudly.

“Well done mein Dirigent! Now conduct me back to the room and I’ll show you the true meaning of ‘col legno’, if you please,” Edgar seductively suggested.

Siegfried and Edgar gathered their lanterns and left the stage, plunging the entire theater back into darkness. Isolde and I waited a few minutes before resuming our efforts. Isolde reignited the two lanterns as we returned to the piano.

I surveyed the tools laid out on the piano and asked myself, “Let’s see. Where was I? Ah yes, the ice pick.”

I sat down on the piano bench and forced the ice pick into the lock.

Holding the lock with one hand, I quickly asked Isolde, “Hand me that fork, bitte.”

I forcibly jammed the tine of the fork into the lock and applied increasing pressure for a moment. It miraculously popped open.

“What is it exactly that you did in Brooklyn?” Isolde teased. “A man of many talents I see!”

I smiled knowingly and quickly retrieved my makeshift burglary tools from the piano lid and put them back into the satchel. I motioned for Isolde to open the lid. She did so with apprehension. And there it was, laying flat on the strings with the title in bold print for all to see, “Last will and testament of Richard Wagner.”

“I knew it!” Isolde exclaimed in relief.

“Hush, not so loud,” I whispered. “And besides, we’ve lingered here long enough. Back to my room now, quickly.”

Isolde clutched her father’s will as I lowered the lid and locked the piano. We silently moved to the rear stage door and stepped outside. I took both lanterns and extinguished the flames.

“We won’t need these now,” I said, setting them both down on the ground.

With anticipation we both walked expeditiously down the drive back to the guest quarters. Mission accomplished.



11

PLANS

Entry date: Monday May 14, 1883, about 2AM, continued.

Isolde and I burst into the room, our coats damp with rain. She eagerly spread the will out on the table for closer examination.

Basil swiftly removed his night cap and put on his robe saying, “Oh Miss Isolde, I apologize for my appearance. What on earth is the trouble?”

“No need to worry Basil,” Isolde replied.

“Over here, quickly my friend. Look what we have discovered!” I exclaimed. “Remember when we arrived? In the theater? Isolde and her mother were arguing. Then she put something inside the piano and locked it.”

Basil came over to the table, inspected the will, and declared, “Heavens. It is indeed the nonexistent will! And I actually believed that trickster. Oh, sorry Isolde, no offense.”

“None taken. My mother has always been a little loose with the truth, especially when it involves my father.”

With the fifteen page document spread out over the table, we scrutinized each page.

“Here it is, right here, just like my father said!” Isolde cried out in elation.

I read the page aloud, “Let’s see. Here it is. ‘The musical supervision of the Festspielhaus in every aspect is to be executed by Isolde Wagner and absolutely no one else. This includes rehearsals, hiring of artists, performance dates, opera selection, licensing of all Wagner operas for domestic and international performance, and all financial matters. No others, from outside or within the Wagner family, may abrogate this document or its intent.’ Well, I believe that pretty much sums it up!”

Isolde was elated. She grabbed me around the waist and kissed me passionately. Basil was uncomfortable with such a public display of affection. We both separated as Isolde took my hands.

Isolde looked gratefully into my eyes and said, “This is what my father wanted. We can really make this happen! And I never would have found it without you. I love you so.”

“You are the rightful heir to the throne. And the most beautiful as well,” I softly said as I embraced her again.

Basil turned away from the both of us as all this affection had made him increasingly nervous. He also realized that this would only lead to more conflict with Cosima. He sat down in the armchair.

“Maybe I should take a walk while you two sort this out,” Basil complained.

“No, no, not a this hour! Please stay, no need to leave,” Isolde replied as she released me.

Basil became more resolute and said, “Well, we all know that your mother and brother will never roll over on this one. We are most certainly in for a fight.”

“I know. It won’t be easy,” Isolde replied.

She smiled knowingly at me and said, “You know what would really help?”

I shook my head and looked at Basil, both of us wondering where Isolde was going with this idea.

She demurely continued, "I could use someone to help me on a more permanent basis. Someone who knows my father's music and maybe has some conducting skills perhaps." Isolde moved closer to me and looked directly into my eyes. "Someone I could work closely with. Very closely."

Basil was again uncomfortable with the conversation and muttered, "Oh dear."

Isolde continued in an amorous tone, "Of course this person would preferably be male and single. Handsome and dashing. Willing to put in long, hard hours. Very long and hard."

The double entendre was not lost on Basil, "Oh my. Definitely time for a walk."

"Where would you find such a wunderkind?" I asked, feigning ignorance.

Isolde now became more serious. She realized that a male ally would be a tremendous help, especially one that she loves. The prospect of sharing her newly acquired duties as the sovereign of Bayreuth with me was an exhilarating proposition. Both Isolde and I were elated at such a prospect.

Isolde continued passionately, "I'm serious about this. We could do this together. And not just because you're a man, although that does make things easier. But because we are perfect for this. Think of it! We could bring my father's work to the world as he really intended. You and I both know every inch of the music."

I was immediately thrilled with such a heady possibility. Isolde abruptly stopped and again pulled me close.

She whispered, "And we would be together. You, me, and Solveig."

I embraced her tightly and said, "I could never say no to you!"

Again, Isolde became more thoughtful and said, "I know the odds are against us, but we have to do this for my father. We have to make this work!"

"How do you propose to accomplish this? What is your plan?" I asked in concern.

Isolde smiled, released me, and deliberately walked over to Basil and said, "I'm glad you asked. I have an idea. And it involves both of you."

Basil was clearly reluctant to be a part of yet another Fitzsimmons scheme. He sighed and began to mumble under his breath, his furrowed brow revealing his unease. Isolde came up from behind the seated Basil and kissed him on the top of his head in appreciation.

"Siegfried rehearses Wednesday and the memorial concert is Friday," she said deliberately, contemplating her course of action.

"What do you have in mind?" I asked.

“It’s a long shot, but I have faith in you two!” Isolde responded with a smile.
“Here we go again,” Basil complained.



12

REHEARSAL

Entry date: Wednesday May 16, 1883, late evening.

This morning Basil burst into the guest quarters room and bellowed, “Have you seen the paper today?”

I was studying a score and deeply engrossed. I was slow to respond.

“What?”

Basil unfolded the paper and showed me the headlines, “Siegfried to take control of Bayreuth. Festival to continue. Wagner’s son to conduct Friday’s memorial concert.”

I looked up in concern. I was expecting this. The battle for the ruler of Bayreuth was beginning. And this was only the opening salvo. Things were bound to get worse. With a careworn frown I read the headlines and sighed.

“And so it begins,” was all I could say.

“Cosima is pulling all the strings here. Siegfried is just her pawn. He certainly is no conductor!” Basil ranted. “I just wish I could have seen the conducting spectacle last Sunday night. I could use some comic relief.”

“Well, we didn’t expect them to roll over on this, did we?” I replied.

“I just hope you know what you’re doing. Both of you. This is a big gamble.”

“Only one way to find out. In fact, what time is it now?” I asked.

“Almost 10:30.”

“Rehearsal begins at 11. You remember what to do?”

“Yes, yes. I can’t believe I am a willing accomplice in all this. I don’t think this was in the job description. Conductor’s assistant wanted: must be able to read music and engage in criminal activity.”

I laughed and replied, “I can always count on you! And remember why we are doing all this.”

Basil muttered discontentedly, “I know, I know.”

We entered the opera house from the back door. The concertmaster approached me with a troubled look on his face.

“Excuse me Maestro Fitzsimmons, is it true that you will not be conducting?” the concertmaster asked.

“I’m afraid so. All we can do is hope for the best,” I replied.

The concertmaster lowered his voice and whispered, “You and I both know that this can only lead to disaster. And besides, Master Wagner himself, God rest his soul, told me that his daughter was to lead us.”

“Yes, that’s true but there are others who don’t share that opinion.”

The concertmaster continued in a more animated fashion, “And I’m not the only one who feels this way. The entire ensemble is in an uproar over this!”

Calculating an appropriate response, I simply said, “I’m glad you feel that way. Keep that in mind in the future.”

The concertmaster was puzzled by my cryptic response. At that moment Siegfried Wagner walked on stage. A hush instantly fell over the orchestra. His friend Ed-

gar followed with a contented look on his face carrying a brief case in one hand and a baton in the other. It appeared that Siegfried had his own assistant as well. Siegfried approached me tentatively.

“Good morning Maestro Fitzsimmons,” he said in a worried tone. “So, what do you think we should start with this morning?”

Siegfried was clearly fishing for information. Basil rolled his eyes at this lack of rehearsal technique.

I was quick to respond, “I would start with the overture. Most definitely the overture.”

Adding fuel to the fire, I couldn’t resist giving additional advice, “The tempo needs to be aggressive from the beginning. Allegro molto right away, almost presto.”

Basil again tried in vain to suppress a knowing smirk. All this advice was clearly a recipe for disaster.

“Go ahead. Let them know who is in charge,” I added.

Siegfried steeled himself and turned to Edgar, “Baton please!”

He stepped up onto the conductor’s stand and tapped his baton on the music stand.

“Gentlemen, gentlemen! Please take your seats.”

The back door of the theater opened quickly as someone entered unnoticed and vanished behind a Roman column. Opening the score, Siegfried stared at the tempo primo.

“Allegro. Yes, allegro ma non troppo. But still allegro. Very allegro,” Siegfried mumbled to himself, clearly in over his head.

Without any kind of indication to raise their instruments and prepare to play, Siegfried abruptly raised his baton and began to conduct in a frenzy. The orchestra was caught completely off guard and struggled to recover from such a poor start.

“Not quite so fast,” I suggested.

“Yes, yes. Quite right,” Siegfried replied nervously.

This time Siegfried raised his baton slowly and attempted to start again. The tempo was again far too fast as the players futilely attempted to keep up. Abruptly the baton flew from Siegfried’s hand, sailed over the heads of Edgar and Basil, and landed in the pit, a full twelve feet below.

“This is our chance, follow my lead,” I whispered to Basil.

Siegfried was completely mortified by this colossal blunder.

“In the pit,” Basil informed Siegfried.

“Do you have another?” Siegfried asked Edgar in desperation.

“How many do you need?” he snapped.

I now interceded, “Send both your friend and Basil to retrieve it. Quickly!”

“Yes, yes!” Siegfried shouted at Edgar.

Basil took Edgar by the arm and left the stage. They both took the stairs down to the pit and began their search.

“Do you have your baton, Maestro Fitzsimmons?”

“I’m sorry, no I don’t,” I replied, purposely lying.

Basil was first to enter the pit and immediately spotted the baton. Unnoticed by Edgar, he deftly picked it up and slipped it into his coat pocket. Basil continued to pretend to search frantically for the baton.

A few minutes went by after which Basil called to me on stage, “Still no luck no down here. We could use some help.”

I looked sternly at Siegfried and said, “We can’t afford to waste any more time like this. Quickly, follow me.”

Siegfried blindly followed me as we dashed down the stairs towards the pit. As soon as we were out of sight, Isolde rushed out from behind the scenery and quickly ascended the conductor’s podium.

“Shh! Quiet!” she said as they immediately settled down. “You know my father’s wishes. You know what I have to do,” she said in a hushed voice.

The players nodded in agreement, their smiling faces looking up in anticipation.

In almost a whisper she continued, “I have something I want you to do for me.”

Again more nodding as she delivered her request. She immediately dashed to the back of the stage and stepped behind the scenery. In the pit, all four men searched for the baton. I then nodded at Basil.

He placed the baton on the ground and exclaimed, “Oh here it is!”

Basil stood over the newly materialized baton in amazement. Edgar rushed over and snatched it up.

“Quickly now. Back to business,” I commanded everyone.

We quickly ascended the stairs and arrived back on stage.

“I’m so sorry for the delay, let’s try it again from the beginning please,” Siegfried announced to the orchestra.

He lifted his baton to signal the orchestra to prepare to play. No one responded. Siegfried stared out at the vast sea of faces in disbelief. The players stoically remained frozen with no intention of cooperating. They were obviously enjoying themselves.

“Please, from the beginning,” Siegfried pled.

With his baton still poised to begin, he abruptly began to conduct. There was no sound to be heard. He slammed his baton down on the music stand as his temper began to flare.

“You will play for me! Understand? I am the director of Bayreuth now!” he screamed.

He was met with icy silence. From behind the orchestra Isolde slowly walked towards her brother through the second violins. Siegfried stared in incredulity.

“I don’t think so. They play for me. *Only* for me!” she declaimed with authority.

The orchestra erupted into applause in enthusiastic confirmation. Edgar was quickly on his feet in defense of Siegfried.

“How dare you question him. You’re nothing but a woman and...” Edgar began to scream.

An exasperated Basil had had quite enough of these two amateurs. He angrily grasped Edgar by the collar and slammed him back down into his chair with a resounding crash. Edgar was now instantly silent, terrified of the looming and irate Basil.

“I would stay seated if I were you,” Basil warned Edgar.

I looked at Isolde and said with conspicuous satisfaction, “You were saying, mein Dirigent?”

Siegfried was still speechless. His questionable strength of character was becoming obvious. Forced into this position by his mother, he did not expect such outright opposition.

“You? You did this?” he squeaked.

Isolde nodded. I attempted to take him by the arm and remove him from the podium. He bristled instantly and snapped his arm away in protest.

“You’re a part of this too?” he exclaimed, staring at me.

I came closer to Siegfried and gently said, “Look, we have a problem here. The orchestra won’t play. Your own father wanted Isolde to do this, not you.”

Isolde came closer and said with sisterly concern to her brother, “He’s right. Father wanted me to do this. You may not be a conductor, but you’ve done lighting and staging before. You’re good at that. Work with me. Let’s do this together.”

Siegfried responded with unease, “You’re a woman! No one will take you seriously! And what about Mom?”

“Don’t pay any attention to her. She’s just using you.”

“I don’t know, she won’t be happy. There’s going to be hell to pay,” Siegfried responded.

At that point I interjected, “You can’t let Bayreuth fall into ruin. And despite being a woman, Isolde is more than capable.”

I turned to Isolde and sweetly said, “And I will be here to help. In any way.”

Siegfried turned to his sister, “Mom will never stand for this. You know her!”

I now became more insistent, “What choice is there? You have an orchestra that refuses to play for you and your conducting skills are not up to the challenge.”

Isolde said, “Let me show you.”

She took her brother by the arm and said, “Sit. Just for a moment.”

We both escorted Siegfried over to Edgar and Basil. But before we reached the chairs, I took Siegfried aside and talked in a hushed voice, making sure no one could hear.

“There’s another matter that you must consider. Your sexual indiscretions. Like Edgar over there. I know about the sleepovers. This kind of thing would devastate the festival and the family.”

Siegfried was again speechless. He simply stared at me in bewilderment. Isolde took the podium with authority, the orchestra eager to play.

Isolde addressed the orchestra, “Thank you all so much. This is truly a dream come true, for both my father and myself. Richard Wagner’s music, his opera house, the finest orchestral members personally selected by the master himself, and conducted by his daughter. As you know, this is what my father wanted. And you have made that possible. I am eternally in your debt. Let us honor my father’s memory by making the most beautiful music possible. To Richard Wagner!”

Isolde snatched up her brother’s baton and closed the score. She would conduct from memory.

The orchestra launched into the music with wild abandon and perfect execution.

Edgar attempted to leave his seat again and said, “We don’t have to listen to this girl...”

Before he could finish, Basil slammed him back down in his chair with even greater authority.

“Not polite to leave before the end,” Basil warned him.

Siegfried watched his sister in admiration but was clearly torn, having lived his entire life under the influence of his coercive mother.

As the music concluded, Isolde softly addressed the orchestra, “I don’t believe I have ever heard my father’s music played with such devotion. Vielen, vielen Dank.”

I walked over to the podium and slowly began to applaud. The orchestra joined in as well. I motioned for Basil to join us. It was a jubilant moment. The orchestra

stood up in appreciation. Isolde was ecstatic, her dream almost certain to become a reality.

Isolde again addressed the orchestra, “You are all so very kind. Thank you so much. But before we continue, I would like to remind you about tomorrow night. And remember, not a word to anyone.”

Everyone nodded in affirmation. Isolde smiled and turned to me.

Basil abruptly turned back towards Edgar and Siegfried and said, “Oh dear.”

They were both gone.



13

CHECKMATE

Entry date: Thursday May 17, 1883, about midnight.

The next evening, Thursday, Isolde sat alone at her father's keyboard on stage at the Festspielhaus. With a satisfied look, she began to play. It was wild, powerful music. Someone was sure to notice the lights and noisy music coming from the opera house. This was indeed Isolde's intent. It didn't take more than five minutes before Cosima came storming through the north stage entrance, reminiscent of the Saturday before. Cosima marched up to the piano and put her hands on her hips in outrage.

“What are you doing here? And take your hands off that piano!” she screamed.

Isolde was altogether unfazed by her mother’s outburst and replied calmly, “Oh, is this a problem?”

Cosima warily eyed the piano for the will as Isolde continued to play. There was a bundle of papers at the top end of the piano. Cosima picked it up gingerly, hoping that Isolde did not notice. She slipped it into her dress pocket. At that moment I stepped out from behind the backstage curtain and walked coolly over to the piano and sat down next to the still playing Isolde.

“Fitzsimmons! You shouldn’t be here, you have your walking papers. Now leave!” yelled Cosima.

I was truly enjoying the moment and replied, “What, and miss all the excitement? I don’t think so. Besides, I don’t recognize your authority over any of this business.”

“Listen to me. I run Bayreuth now. And Siegfried will conduct. Both of you have no business here,” Cosima said with cold authority.

“What about the will?” Isolde asked quietly, baiting her mother.

“There is no will! You have nothing!” Cosima screamed.

I turned to Isolde and commented, “Didn’t you see some papers in the piano earlier? I wonder what those were?”

Cosima was immediately concerned and put her hand in her dress pocket.

“Oh, those papers you put in your pocket? Don’t worry, they’re just letters from some of my friends. Not important,” I quipped.

Cosima began now to panic, retrieving the papers from her pocket in fear. Quickly she untied the papers and inspected the first few pages. They were indeed nothing but letters to my friends and relatives. She threw them on the floor in indignation.

“Yes. We know about the will. It’s good to know they are safely in the hands of the lawyers now,” Isolde announced.

Cosima had now been backed into a corner and responded with acrimony, “You’ll never get away with this. And besides, a woman will only bring Bayreuth down. You must see that! Siegfried is our only hope. Everyone answers to me here. I’m the master’s widow. They will do as I say, the hell with the will!”

“Since you are reluctant to abide by your own husband’s legal document, perhaps you will respond to an alternative form of persuasion,” I said calmly.

“What do you mean?” Cosima said with worry in her voice.

I continued, "Let's see. First of all, the lawyers will no doubt issue an injunction when we inform them of your inability to comply. That will of course delay the start of the festival and the revenue that it generates, which everyone knows you desperately need. Your dire financial straits are common knowledge. Bayreuth will certainly fall into fiscal ruin with a protracted legal battle. And then we all know you control Siegfried. Putting him at the helm would certainly create the same disastrous fate. And speaking of Siegfried, it would be a pity to expose his indiscretions. Those so-called sleepovers, the special friends."

Cosima's anxiety was clearly showing. She crossed her arms abruptly and scowled.

Isolde now stood up and addressed her mother, "Furthermore, you have no orchestra."

"Don't be absurd. Of course I do!" she yelled.

"Perhaps you should ask my brother." Isolde motioned to the wings and said, "Now Basil."

Basil drew open the black curtain directly behind the piano. There were over ninety people waiting to make their presence known. They walked slowly forward and encircled the piano. It was a massive show of solidarity.

"They play for me, only me," Isolde said with pride.

The orchestra members nodded in agreement. Cosima was reaching the boiling point. Despite being boxed in legally, she refused to capitulate.

"Only I know what Richard really wanted. Not you! He trusted me. No woman can run Bayreuth! It's madness and just your own ego!"

I now interceded, "If you don't reinstate Isolde for tomorrow's memorial concert, I will be forced to start legal proceedings, starting with the press and then the issue of the will and Siegfried's dalliances."

"How dare you threaten me!" Cosima screamed.

"Your choice," I calmly replied.

Being threatened by an outsider was more than she could bear. Her face turned red with fury.

Like her mother, Isolde had now reached her limit as well and screamed, "Who are you to stand in the way of the greatest musical mind in Germany? Dad warned me this would happen. You will destroy Bayreuth. I will never let that happen!"

In a rage, Cosima replied, "We'll see about that!"

She stormed off stage and back to the family villa, seething. Isolde took a deep breath and tried to relax. I took her in my arms, attempting to mollify her anger. The orchestra members began to applaud softly.

Many called out, “Well done, well done.”

Isolde separated from me and turned to the orchestra members as they began to disperse, “Thank you everyone. Thank you so much. See you tomorrow at the memorial concert at 8PM.”



14

REVOLT

“Absolutely amazing,” says a stunned Professor Geiringer.

He sits up straight in his chair and pushes the diary away from him, lost in thought. Emily nods in agreement. The professor stands up, takes off his tweed coat, and begins to slowly pace around the small office. He is deep in thought.

Geiringer continues with a distant look on his face, “Revolt at Bayreuth! Who would have thought? And no mention of this in any of the records of the day.”

“Well, I think we know who was editing the truth after Wagner died,” Emily adds.

“No doubt. According to Cosima and the Wagner version of Bayreuth’s history, Isolde inherited control without any resistance, as brief as it was,” Geiringer marvels.

“Isolde must have been a true musical wonder,” Emily adds with admiration.

“Well, your great great grandfather certainly thought so!” he says, pointing to the diary.

“The mere fact she stood up to her mother is astonishing. And the gender bias in those days was terrible. I wish I could have been there. And witnessed everything. They were very much in love,” Emily replies with a pensive look on her face.

“Well, you certainly have inherited your great great grandfather’s musical talent. There’s no doubt about that,” Geiringer says to Emily with a smile.

Emily is slow to respond, not sure how much to divulge. She has read the complete diary but wants the professor to read it for himself. He would most certainly not believe her if she told him.

“Thank you professor, but I think there is even more to it than that,” she replies cryptically.

Geiringer turns to Emily with a smile and says, “I have a feeling you’re keeping something from me. I think there is more to this story than meets the eye. And you have me at a disadvantage since I haven’t read the entire diary!”

They both laugh. Clearly, Emily is having a hard time not revealing the entire contents of the diary.

“I suppose you want me to read all this for myself?” the professor adds.

Emily nods enthusiastically and says, “You won’t be disappointed. I could hardly believe it myself.”

Geiringer laughs, sits down at his desk, and picks up the diary in anticipation.

“Well, only one way to find out!”



15

RENDEZVOUS

Entry date: Thursday May 17, 1883, about midnight, continued.

The night air was cool as the orchestra members put on their overcoats and began to file out the backstage door.

I turned to Basil and said softly with approbation, “She is an amazing woman, isn’t she?”

“I have a bad feeling about this,” Basil said.

Isolde turned around abruptly with a blissful smile and pulled me close for an extended kiss.

Uncomfortable with our overt display of affection, Basil grumbled, “Well, I can see you don’t need me here anymore. I’m heading back to the room.”

Basil hurriedly donned his overcoat and moved towards the backstage door.

“Don’t get your hopes too high. This is far from over.”

We both could only nod, our fervor still undiminished. My face abruptly clouded over as I took Isolde’s hands.

“There’s something I need to tell you. I hope you weren’t offended by what I said just now.”

“What do you mean?”

I continued with genuine concern, “I would never go to the press about your brother. That was just a bluff. I would never do something that malicious.”

Isolde smiled and said, “I know you better than you think. It’s just not in you. I love my brother and he can still be a part of all this. He’s brilliant with stagecraft and lighting. But we will have to get him out from underneath my mother’s thumb.”

I nodded and said, “Well, I have faith in you. And so does your orchestra!”

Isolde dropped my hands and moved towards the piano. She picked up the piano keyboard lock and promptly threw it into the orchestra pit.

“No need for that now,” she laughed.

I came over to the piano, sat down next to her and said, “Remember all those piano duets in Paris?”

“They were wonderful. Remember how sometimes we couldn’t finish? And then we’d add our own stimulating coda?” Isolde responded as she put her arms around my waist.

“How could I forget? It’s amazing we never got caught! Remember when the letter from your father arrived? That was close.”

“Well, there’s no one here now,” Isolde said with a seductive smile.

I needed no further encouragement, as I tenderly began to kiss Isolde’s neck. She closed her eyes in rapture and began to smile. She turned to face me on the piano bench and slowly began to unbutton my white shirt. I stared with adoring eyes at this wondrous beauty, my hands on her waist.

“I could never resist you. Even when you weren’t a Wagner in Paris,” I whispered tenderly.

“I certainly hope so. I wasn’t just after a better grade,” she teased.

“Perhaps a little extra credit, mein Schatz?” I laughed.

I slipped off my jacket as Isolde unbuttoned the last shirt button.

“What did you have in mind, mein Dirigent?” Isolde retorted with a laugh.

“The Liebestod would be appropriate in this hall, don’t you think?” I quipped, now shirtless.

No longer able to resist, we fell together in a passionate kiss. Pressed tightly against my chest, I’m sure Isolde could feel my beating heart. I fumbled in a vain attempt to remove her blouse. She released me, smiled, and deftly removed her blouse in an instant. We smiled euphorically as we held each other tightly. As our passion began to rise, the remaining clothes fell to the floor at an ever increasing pace until there was nothing left to remove. She straddled me, sitting in my lap with her back to the piano. Only an inch or two separated our faces, both of us moving in unison and breathing heavily in erotic bliss. I had never experienced such sensual ecstasy.

“Play,” she said breathlessly, her eyes still closed.

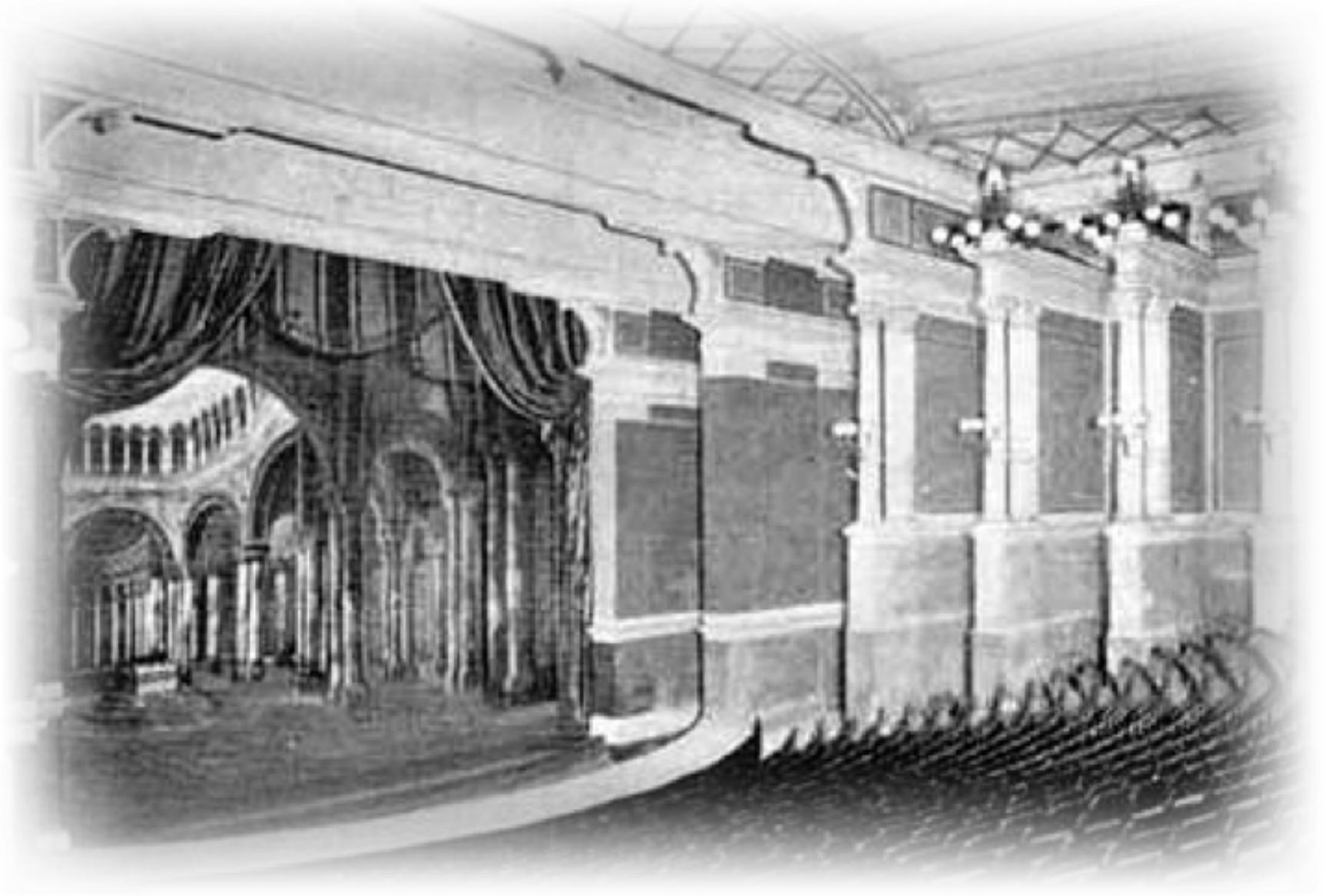
I stared at her uncomprehendingly.

“Play the piano,” she whispered, barely able to get the words out.

“Now?” I asked, unable to fathom her intent.

Isolde pulled me even closer, ran her hands through my hair, and tenderly replied, “Now. And close your eyes. Just feel. Feel it all.”

With my eyes now closed, I reached around Isolde, one hand on either side, and touched the keyboard. I oriented my hands and began to improvise. Slowly at first and then gradually intensifying. The effect was immediate, as we both became rigid with ecstasy, Isolde arching her back and pressing my face tightly between her breasts. The festspielhaus had never seen this kind of sensual bacchanal, even in the first act of *Tannhäuser*. As the music tenderly faded away, neither one of us could speak, our eyes still tightly shut. We were both unwilling to let the sublime moment come to an end, still holding each other tightly. The *Liebestod* pales by comparison to what had just transpired on the Festspielhaus stage.



16

MOMENT OF TRUTH

Entry date: Friday May 18, 1883, 9:30 A.M.

Tonight is the memorial for the master. All my hopes hang in the balance, although I have complete confidence in my lovely conductor. The orchestra and staff are with us but so many are still controlled by Cosima. I am trying to resist being completely overcome with the unbelievable opportunity to be part of Bayreuth and work with the most amazing woman I've ever know. It is an intoxicating concept. Yet I must temper my intoxication with the knowledge that there are people who will stand in our way. Danger-

ous, vindictive people. Yet our path is clearly set before us. I owe it to lovely Isolde and the memory of the greatest musical mind I have ever witnessed. We have conceived of a good plan and with some luck it will work. I believe all the pieces are in place but I have a strange feeling about all of this. Still, I must admit I often drift off into the seductive world of that blissful notion: Bayreuth, Wagner opera, and Isolde. It's like I am under some musical spell. I would never confess this to anyone, especially my faithful Basil, but I can't help feeling like Tristan, completely entranced with my Isolde, willing to do anything for love. She has promised me a special musical surprise tonight, one of her own compositions. I am sure it will be superb, she is so much like her father. We are both so consumed by music. It is like we are drawn together by some divine force compelling us to devote our lives to music and each other. I suppose I will always be a hopeless romantic. I am both elated and filled with trepidation. Isolde will meet us tonight at 7:30 PM and will put our plan into action. I will continue this tonight after our success or failure. May God help us.



17

GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG

Entry date: August 13, 1883. London, England

(This last entry was written by Isolde Wagner three months later in August of 1883. It has been translated from the original German)

I complete the final chapter in this diary with a heavy heart in hopes that future generations will know the true story of how all these events transpired. I know my mother will be inclined to distort the truth as she has done in the past, but I vow on my father's grave that all I am about to reveal is absolutely accurate despite what oth-

ers may say. The events I did not personally witness have been related to me by my dear friends and colleagues. I have no doubt of their authenticity.

I arrived at Wendell's guest quarters at about 7:30 PM on the evening of my father's memorial concert. Wendell and I embraced tenderly as I entered the room, Basil pretending not to notice. Wendell was instantly aware of my nervous state and took my hands.

"Now remember, we have everything ready to go. No need to worry," he told me calmly.

I could not reply but only embrace him again more tightly.

Looking directly into my eyes and in an effort to allay my fears, he reiterated the plan, "The orchestra is with us. Basil will deal with your mother. You and I will stay out of sight backstage until Siegfried takes the podium. Then we go into action. What can happen?"

"I suppose you're right," I whispered.

Wendell then sent Basil over to the Festspielhaus to clandestinely check on the orchestra. We had a few tender moments alone before he returned, wrapped in each other's arms. I remember these most keenly for reasons you will soon understand. Basil returned shortly, reassuring us that all was ready.

Wendell again took my hands as we slowly stood up and said, "Are we ready?"

I could only nod. Basil opened the door and we stepped out into the cool spring night air. We entered the backstage door unnoticed and took our places behind the Risenzi columns again.

"Where's your score?" Wendell whispered in a panic, looking around in alarm.

"From memory my dear teacher!" I quipped with a smile.

Relieved, Wendell tenderly replied, "I should have known."

As the crowd silently entered my father's musical shrine to opera, a palpable sense of concern and love filled the air. My nervousness disappeared as the aura of love and affection washed over me. At long last the house lights came down as a hush fell over the audience. Wendell quickly pulled me to my feet and kissed me passionately.

"You can do this, just remember your father," he whispered animatedly.

"I will remember both my father *and* you," I replied.

In the low light Wendell quickly moved unnoticed to the stage left wings, while Basil navigated undetected to the back of the theater, standing guard just outside my mother's box. I remained at the back of the orchestra, directly behind the timpanist, waiting. With that, my poor brother strode to center stage with what can only be de-

scribed as ludicrous overconfidence. I'm sure he was doing his best to put on a confident face but it only made things more pitiful. The scant applause from the audience revealed where their true allegiance in fact did lie.

"Thank you all for coming here tonight to honor one of the greatest musical minds of all time, Richard Wagner," my brother began in a overly declamatory, exaggerated voice.

This was followed by heavy applause, even from the orchestra members.

Siegfried continued, "It was my father's ardent wish that the festival continue after his passing and that I lead Bayreuth into a glorious new future."

I was immediately incensed at such an audacious lie. Incensed more at my mother than my poor pawn of a brother. After this fallacious declamation, no applause at all followed, only muffled grumbling.

Over the low grumbling my brother continued, "My family will therefore adhere to the current schedule starting in June with *Rienzi*. I will personally serve as conductor and musical director for the upcoming season as per my father's wishes."

As the grumbling continued, and according to our plan, a lone voice called out, "Isolde ist mein dirigent!" As we had hoped, Basil's prompting set off a cascade of cat calls and complaining that grew progressively louder and more emphatic.

"Ja, ja. Isolde!" I heard repeatedly, my heart filling with appreciation and gratitude. With the audience in upheaval, my brother became increasingly confounded and abruptly turned to the orchestra and ascended the podium. This was the moment of truth, the moment about which I was most concerned. Siegfried opened the score and raised his baton. Not a single orchestra member moved an inch to my absolute relief! The elation I felt defies description. My brother slammed his baton down on the podium in frustration, his face turning red with embarrassment.

"Gentlemen, if you please. This is my father's music," he whispered animatedly, raising his baton again.

With an exaggerated downbeat he began to conduct. For a full two bars he flailed in utter desperation while the orchestra produced nary a sound, their determined faces glaring in defiance. Embarrassed in front of some of the most preeminent musical dignitaries in Europe was more than he could stand. Slamming his baton down on the podium again, he glared at the orchestra and whispered in vexation, "If you ever want to work in this town again, I suggest you pick up your damn instruments!"

To make matters worse, Basil started up the "Isolde" chant again. I felt terrible for my poor brother as I cringed in empathy. Again, he raised his baton. And again, no response.

“How dare you! I’m the son of Richard Wagner!” he screamed for all the orchestra and audience to hear. Siegfried was now in a furor, the chanting continuing to grow. He stared at the orchestra in complete exasperation, his body trembling with indignation. After almost thirty seconds, he threw his baton at the brass section, screamed out “Verräter”, and stormed off the stage into the stage left wings! This was now my cue. I raced from my hiding place, past the smiling timpanist, and through the center of the orchestra that parted for me like the Red Sea. I cannot describe how I felt at that moment. As I arrived at the podium the audience rose to their feet and erupted into deafening applause. I could feel my father’s presence. And Wendell’s love. The applause went on for minutes! My miraculous appearance only enraged my poor brother to a greater degree.

“No! Not Isolde! She can’t do this!” he screamed from the wings.

My brother was about to charge back onto the stage in a fury, but Wendell quickly stepped out from behind the curtains and firmly took him by the arms and maneuvered him back to the wings.

“We both know Isolde should be doing this. Relax, this is what your father wanted. Do what’s right,” Wendell gently spoke to Siegfried.

Siegfried was not so easily placated. My mother had put the fear of God into his poor soul. Wendell continued to restrain him as he attempted to retake the stage. Of course, my mother was instantly enraged at this direct challenge to her authority and flew out of her chair towards the box seat exit door. With a mischievous smile Basil held the door tightly shut as my mother struggled to pry it open. Now aware of what was happening, my mother became completely incensed and began pulling and shouting with greater intensity. I believe Basil thoroughly enjoyed this part of the plan. Back on stage I instantly ascended the podium and looked out at the sea of smiling faces, each and every one eager to play.

“For my father,” I tenderly said to the orchestra, their faces beaming.

I launched full tilt into the prelude, the orchestra playing like never before. My fears fell away with each passing bar, the music carrying me along in melodic rapture. The orchestra played with such nuance, passion, and intensity; it was unlike anything I had ever heard before. But there was something else, something that can only be described as a kind of reverence for my father and his exquisite music. Thankfully my mother’s protests were unheard, lost under the thundering orchestra. But it is here that things began to unravel. It is here that my life changed forever. Only now, more than three months later, can I bear to think of what happened and complete this diary. These memories are a torment to my soul, a daily reminder of a life that I could not

have and the privation of almost everything I loved and held dear. However painful these events may be, I am steadfast in my desire to disclose the truth.

There was a variable in our plan we had not anticipated. We were aware of this but thought it of no consequence. Yet this variable precipitated a cascade of unforeseen events that no one could have possibly imagined. That variable was Edgar. Seated in the front row, he could hardly contain himself as I took the podium. His displeasure only increased with every bar of music that went by. Finally, his wrath wholly consumed him as he charged out the rear exit doors and into the hall leading to the stage left wings. Everything began to happen very quickly. Upon entering the stage left wings unseen, Edgar came across my brother being forcibly restrained by Wendell. He stopped short at the sight, standing for a moment while his wrath only intensified. Both Siegfried and Wendell were entirely unaware of his presence. I'm sure he was jealous as well as enraged, with Wendell's hands grasping Siegfried's shoulders tightly. After standing for a moment in a catatonic furor, Edgar charged straight at Wendell's back, catching both my brother and Wendell by complete surprise. The force of the collision pushed all three men onto the stage. Trying to regain their balance, both Siegfried and Wendell stumbled and lurched forward only to collide with the principal double bass player. Siegfried crashed into the double bassist's chair with a tremendous blast, sending both the instrument and the player towards the audience. It was instant pandemonium. The orchestra stopped immediately as I stared in complete disbelief at the spectacle. I was unable to comprehend exactly what had transpired, especially after being so enveloped by the music. There were gasps of horror from the audience. The double bass fell to the ground with a clatter and careened into the gas lamps, immediately setting it on fire. Edgar was on his feet again and shouting at both Wendell and me, most of which cannot be repeated. With Wendell still on the stage floor, Edgar continued shouting and began to violently kick him. I was in complete shock, but the sight of Wendell being viciously attacked was more than I could bear, as I flew from the podium to his defense. The double bass had now lodged against the curtain and all hope of containing the gas lamps was now lost as the fire ignited the velvet red fabric. The fire raced up the curtain growing into a crackling flame almost fifteen feet high. I collided with Edgar at a full run, sending him back into the wings. The sight of the burning curtain sent the audience into a complete panic as people began to scream and race for the exits. The only Festspielhaus exit doors were located in the very back of the theater and can only be accessed via two aisles at the sides of the hall. People pressed together in alarm as they rushed towards the exits, but to get all 1,900 attendees out would take a considerable amount of time. Obviously, this lead to only

more hysteria and screaming. There were people who had fallen and were in danger of being trampled. Basil abandoned his post and managed to get to the stage by walking on the seat backs, row by row. I instantly got Wendell to his feet, his ribs having been badly bruised. The fire was quickly moving into the fly space. As we stared at the flames, both Wendell and I now realized that the theater was lost and saving as many people as possible was now paramount.

“Get all the orchestra out the back stage door,” Wendell yelled over the screaming audience.

Basil was now coming up the stairs to the stage.

“Glad to see you are alright,” Wendell cried.

Basil nodded as I set to rounding up the orchestra members.

“You and I will make sure that all the audience gets out safely. You take the right aisle and I’ll take the left. Check that no one is left behind,” Wendell barked at Basil.

“Right!” bellowed Basil, the noise of the fire increasing.

It would only be a matter of minutes before the theater would begin to collapse, something both Wendell and I knew only too well. The entire fly space was now engulfed with flames leaping through the roof. Debris was beginning to fall. The theater was now still only half empty and the orchestra had not completely exited out the back. Many of the orchestra personnel were bravely searching for their instrument cases in the adjacent rooms, adding to the delay. I gathered as many cases as I could see and moved towards the back door.

“Everyone out as quickly as you can. Just your instruments, no time for cases! Now!” I screamed over and over.

As the audience stampeded out the lobby doors, they all turned to watch my father’s theater consumed by huge thirty foot flames. It was surreal. Only moments ago I was conducting a magnificent ninety-piece orchestra. The theater was beginning to collapse with a sickening groan.

The timpanist and I ushered the last of the orchestra out the back stage door. Embers fell from above like rain.

“Everyone to the front of the theater and away from the building. Quickly now!” I screamed.

The night sky was ablaze as the town fire crew arrived, but everyone knew it was beyond any hope. I corralled all the orchestra members towards the front of the theater and out of harm’s way as Basil emerged from the lobby doors with the last of the stragglers and an armful of coats and purses. At the front of the theater my brother and mother stood in stunned silence as the work of a lifetime went up in flames, my

mother holding tightly to Siegfried. People cried and sobbed. The fire raged in ever increasing fury, the structure on the verge of collapse.

“Where is Wendell?” I screamed to Basil.

“He’s not here?” Basil responded.

Indeed, Wendell was still inside the theater. Like Basil and despite the increasing danger, he had collected a number of coats and hats from the seats and had gone back to the stage left wings to collect Siegfried’s score. Unnoticed, Wendell observed Edgar pilfering through the orchestral members’ cases and personal effects hoping to find something of value.

With his arms still full of coats Wendell screamed at Edgar over the ever increasing noise of the fire, “Hey, what are you doing here?”

Edgar turned in shock towards Wendell, his face slowly changing from surprise to contempt, “You’re the reason all this has happened!”

Edgar’s pockets were jammed with stolen items.

“You’re stealing? Put all that down! Now!” screamed Wendell.

“I don’t think so,” Edgar said approaching Wendell.

Wendell dropped his coats as Edgar charged in a fury. Running at full speed, Edgar caught Wendell directly in the chest, causing him to stagger backwards and stumble over the coats on the floor. Wendell faltered and fell to the ground. Edgar continued the assault, kicking Wendell and screaming in violent contempt. Wendell struggled to his knees as Edgar lunged one last time. Their collision forced Wendell backwards towards the orchestra pit. He fell twelve feet to the floor of the pit with a terrible clatter, unconscious. Edgar peered malevolently over the edge, smiled and then raced towards the north exit.

Outside of the front entry both Basil and I searched in vain for Wendell, screaming out his name over the incredible roar of the fire. The flames were leaping over thirty feet above the top of the theater while the heat caused the windows to shatter.

“He must still be inside,” I shouted.

Without a word, we both ran towards the lobby entrance doors. Only a few steps from the entry, the entire fly space collapsed inward upon itself with a tremendous, painful roar. The compressed air from the interior of the theater rushed out the front entry, flinging the doors wide open and shattering the remaining windows. Both of us were knocked down by the fiery blast. Burning embers rained down from above, sending both of us back in fear.

“No!” I cried in horror.

I struggled to my feet, shielded my face from the searing heat, and attempted to enter the lobby again.

“No, it’s suicide,” cried Basil as he seized my arm and held me close. “He may still be somewhere out here.”

We both knew that to be untrue. Basil navigated both us a good fifty yards from the lobby to relative safety. I resisted, not willing to give up hope.

“Please, let me go. I have to try,” I screamed over and over.

Basil never spoke but held me even more tightly. A wave of hysteria came over me as I began to cry uncontrollably. The realization that Wendell was probably still in the theater and I was unable to do anything to save him was more than I could bear. In despair I flailed against Basil in utter hopelessness.

“Let me go!” I screamed again and again.

I sank to my knees, weeping in delirium. Poor Basil continued to silently hold me, he too, on his knees. Then it all truly began to hit me: the death of my father, the destruction of his beloved Festspielhaus, the extermination of my dreams of leading Bayreuth into the future, and the loss of the only man I had ever loved. I would no longer be able to keep my promise to my father. I would have to face the reality that Wendell was probably not alive. I could not face it. I refused to face it. I simply buried my head in Basil’s coat and sobbed in a daze, completely unaware of the spectacle around me. The timpanist, concert master, and a few others gathered around me in silent support, their hands on my shoulder.

Over two thousand people stood in speechless horror as my father’s theater was burned to the ground. The scene was beyond comprehension. The attendees in their finest attire were juxtaposed with the appalling destruction. The orchestra members held their instruments in the cold night air, unable to fathom what had just happened. The fire raged on for over two more hours, the efforts of the fire department being entirely ineffective. People slowly dispersed, only a few of the orchestra personnel and family members remaining behind. As I slowly emerged from my catatonic state, I continued to look for Wendell in desperation but both Basil and I knew it was hopeless. I refused to give up. Basil kindly indulged my desperate searching as we poked through the now smoking rubble, but the destruction was absolute. Almost nothing remained. The incredible heat had consumed everything. Only bits and pieces were left. My brother and mother wandered through the rubble searching for anything that could be salvaged. But there was nothing. The dreadful ruin around all of us rendered even my mother thunderstruck and unable to speak.

As the fire crew mopped up the smoking rubble, I continued my search well past two in the morning. I was unwilling to give up hope. I half expected Wendell to suddenly appear and sweep me off my feet, but I was delirious with grief and frustration.

Just before three in the morning Basil approached me tenderly and said, "I think that is enough for tonight."

He had tears in his eyes as he slowly shook his head in defeat. We both began to openly weep. Arm in arm we slowly walked back to the guest quarters. I was emotionally and physically spent.

The next morning both Basil and I left for London. In the intervening months between that fateful day and the completion of this diary I have not seen or spoken to Siegfried or my mother. The despair I feel continues on unabated, along with a newly found anger for my family whose greed and misguided behavior fostered these events. It was my mother who set these events in motion! It was my mother whose actions denied me the life I was destined to lead. It was my mother's obstinance that took Wendell from me. I am at a loss as how to proceed even now. Yet despite my sorrow and misfortune, there is a wonderful light in my life. Something that keeps me from descending into complete hopelessness, as if Wendell were somehow with me even now. I now carry his child. He will live on in my heart and through the birth of our child. For his own benefit, I have decided to place him the care of a foster family, far from the aberrant Wagner clan. I am resolved that he have a normal life, full of love and happiness, something that I sadly cannot give him. If only Wendell were alive. All I seem to think of is how I would change the past. I am haunted by the vision of a life I couldn't have. Basil has arranged for me to meet this family next week. I will, however, insist that our child take the Fitzsimmons last name and, if a boy, be named David. If a girl, her name shall be Elsa. As for me, I am content with the knowledge that Wendell's child shall be safe with a loving family, but I hold no hope for myself. My anguish and dashed hopes have rendered me, for now, useless and without a star to steer by. My life will unfold I know not how, but I have the consolation of knowing that this diary will someday serve to reveal the true nature of these events and provide an accurate history for generations to come. I regret that Wendell never had the opportunity to hear his musical present from that May evening. It was a kind of love letter. I had orchestrated my *Reverie* from our Paris days and was planning on performing it at the memorial concert. Alas, it was not meant to be. I have therefore enclosed a study score of the *Reverie* in the back flap of this diary if anyone in the future ever has an interest

in its performance. All I ask is that it be played with reverence and love, the very things it was written to convey. And think of Wendell and Isolde.

In loving memory of Wendell Fitzsimmons,

Isolde Wagner

August 13, 1883, London

April 7, 2017

(Completed by Emily Fitzsimmons, Schenectady, New York)

After reading my great great grandfather's diary, I provide the following genealogy. And yes, there is music in my blood, both literally and figuratively. Now, more than ever, I vow to devote my life to music and the memory of my musical predecessors: Richard Wagner, Isolde Wagner, and Wendell Fitzsimmons. I only hope I live up to their musical genius. I only hope I find my own Tristan, as my great great grandmother did hers.

With love and devotion,

Emily Fitzsimmons

April 7, 2015, Schenectady, New York

Fitzsimmons Family Genealogy

Richard Wagner (1813-1883) and Cosima Liszt

|

Isolde Wagner

Wendell Fitzsimmons (1850-1883) and Isolde Wagner

|

David Fitzsimmons

David Fitzsimmons (1884-1970) and Lydia Harcourt

|

Eva Fitzsimmons

Eva Fitzsimmons (1922 to present) and Norbert Fisher

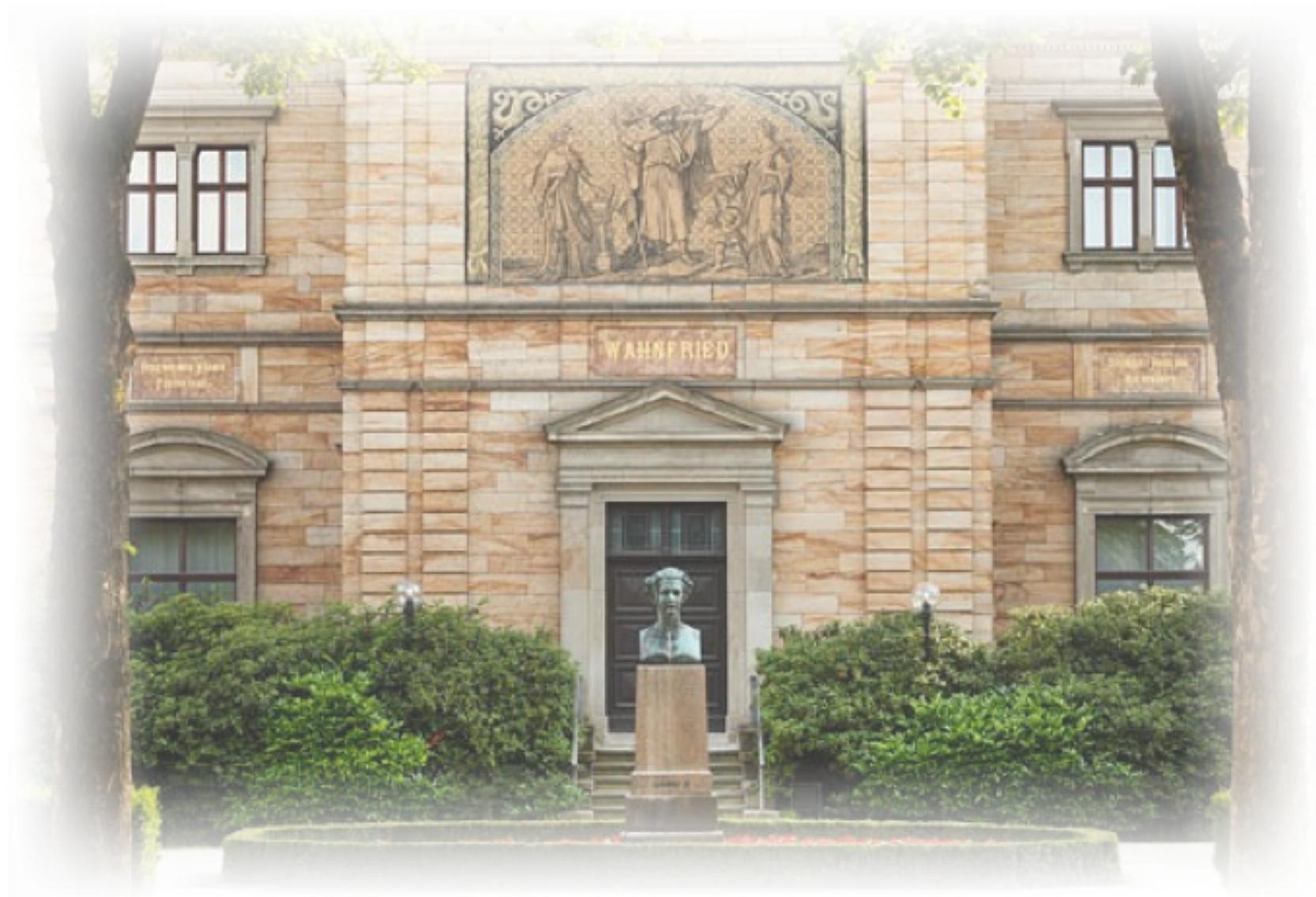
|

Alfred Fitzsimmons

Alfred Fitzsimmons (1961 to present) and Veronica Ash

|

Emily Fitzsimmons (1995 to present)



18

REVELATION

Geiringer reads through the final pages with increasing speed and interest, his astonished face reflecting his fascination with this previously unknown piece of Wagnerian history. He abruptly stands up from his desk, grasps the diary with both hands as if it were the holy grail itself, and begins to wander about the room softly reading aloud from the diary. He occasionally mutters to himself in amazement.

“Unbelievable!” he whispers.

Emily nods in agreement, gratified that Geiringer is finally grasping the entire chain of events and their significance.

“It all makes perfect sense now!”

“I could hardly believe it myself,” Emily replies.

The professor suddenly stops in his tracks, dumbstruck by what he has just read.

“The fire. Oh my God, it was Edgar!” he stammers.

“It certainly was, but there’s more. Much more. Read on professor.”

“Yes, yes!” Geiringer replies, beginning to pace once more.

Utterly consumed with the diary, Geiringer puts his hand to his head and strokes his white Van Dyke. Emily stands up quietly, anticipating the professor’s response to the diary’s next devastating disclosure.

Again Geiringer abruptly stops his pacing, “Dear God, not Wendell!”

“You won’t find that in any of the Wagner family biographies!” Emily responds.

“Certainly not.”

Emily then approaches Geiringer, gently takes the diary from his hands, and sets it reverently on the desk. Geiringer looks on in confusion, unaware of Emily’s intent.

“Please, I think we should read this next section together. Sit, professor,” Emily tenderly asks.

“Of course, of course,” the professor replies, eager to ascertain the next salient piece of history.

Geiringer quickly sits down at his desk while Emily pulls a chair close and sits down as well. She opens the diary to the last pages. They both slowly read Isolde’s last paragraph in the diary.

“Dear God, their child. A Fitzsimmons, just like you!”

Emily calmly nods in affirmation, “I’ve made an entry myself.”

“What is this? Your family genealogy I see.”

Geiringer’s eyes follow the family tree from top to bottom, starting with Richard Wagner himself.

“Isolde and Wendell. To David then Eva. Then Alfred and then...”

Geiringer stops immediately and lifts his eyes slowly to observe Emily. He is thunderstruck, his mouth open in astonishment. As their eyes meet, she nods in agreement.

“That means,” Geiringer stammers, not being able to complete the sentence.

“Yes, it does,” she whispers.

“Dear God, Wagner is your great great great grandfather!”

“Yes he is. And this is my family’s diary, Wendell’s and Isolde’s,” adds Emily, putting her hands on the diminutive journal in a reverent fashion.

Emily gently removes a small handwritten score from the back cover pocket. Its pages are yellow with age, the brittle paper cracked along the lines where it has been folded. Yet it is intact and entirely legible. The professor stares in awe as Emily places the score flat on the desk.

“Oh my,” is all Geiringer can muster.

“It’s like what Wendell said in the diary, Isolde is still alive in this music. It’s a kind of musical immortality. I only wish she could have heard this,” Emily reflects tenderly.

“Imagine what this little book has witnessed,” Geiringer marvels. “It’s true, you have music in your blood, but you have something far more precious. Wagner blood.”

“Wagner *and* Fitzsimmons blood.”

THE END

Allegro

Fast (Italian)

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Index

Find Term

Allegro ma non troppo

Fast, but not too much (Italian)

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Allegro Molto

Very fast (Italian)

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Bitte

Please

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Cadence

A sequence of notes or chords comprising the close of a musical phrase

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Chromatic

Relating to the notes not belonging to the diatonic scale of the key in which the music is written. Music that is more colorful and dissonant.

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Coda

The concluding passage of a piece or movement, typically forming an a the basic structure.

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Col legno

From Italian meaning literally “with wood.” Used as a musical term for
ers to play with the wood part of the bow. In this instance it is a sexual

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Das ist ausgezeichnet

That is excellent

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Götterdämmerung

In German, twilight of the gods. Referring to the last opera of Richard Wagner's four opera cycle *The Ring of the Nibelung*.

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Isolde ist mein dirigent

Isolde is my conductor

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

King Ludwig

Ludwig II or Ludwig Otto Friedrich Wilhelm, (25 August 1845 – 13 June 1886) was King of Bavaria from 1864 until his death. He succeeded to the throne in 1864. He commissioned the construction of two lavish palaces and the Neuschwanstein Castle, and was a devoted patron of the composer Richard Wagner.

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Liebestod

German for "love death". It is the title of the final, dramatic music from the opera *Tristan und Isolde* by Richard Wagner. When used as a literary term, Liebestod (from German *Liebe*, love and *Tod*, death) refers to the theme of death or "love death" meaning the two lovers' consummation of their love, often leading to death or after death.

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Mehr als ausgezeichnet

More than excellent

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Mein Dirigent

From German meaning “my conductor.”

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Mein Schatz

My sweetheart

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Point d'appui

A support or prop; a strategic point

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Presto

Extremely fast (Italian)

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Sixteenth notes

Division of the musical pulse into four subdivisions.

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Tempo Primo

First tempo

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Triplets

Division of the musical pulse into three equal subdivisions.

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Verräter

Traitors

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Vielen, vielen Dank

Thank you every so much

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

Wunderkind

Prodigy or genius

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here