

representation or expression of Aboriginality,' and the authors' post-colonial sensibilities discussed above. It not only fills the gap left since Marcus Breen's *Our Place, Our Music*, but also vividly illustrates the validity of his excitement about the 'scene' as it was developing at the end of the 1980s. *Deadly Sounds, Deadly Places* is, among other things, a rebuff to conservative white Australians who may like to think that they have 'won' the battle to reclaim control of 'their' space since the Mabo decision. The voices of those interviewed and quoted in this book, as well as the voices conveyed in the diverse musical styles and locations discussed, are inspirational in their articulation of identities, cultural geographies, self-determination, continuing resistance, and their strength to feel able to appropriate new globalised sounds such as hip-hop and make it their own. All these affirm the continuing strength and resilience of Indigenous peoples across Australia. The relationships between the authors of this book and the Indigenous musicians with whom they collaborated also powerfully suggest the possibilities of cross-cultural engagements.

Dieter Borchmeyer, *Drama and the World of Richard Wagner*
translated by Daphne Ellis
Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003
ISBN 0 691 11497 8. x + 391 pp.

Review by Warren Bebbington

Wagner, says Dieter Borchmeyer boldly, is 'the most controversial artist in the entire history of culture,' one whose works and personality provoke, even a century later, disagreements of a depth that still militate against his works ever becoming classics. One never speaks of 'Shakespeareans' or 'Mozartians' the way one speaks of Wagnerians. Faced with Wagner, he says, even otherwise serious scholars 'take leave of their senses ... and start to rant.' To be sure, these comments all ring true of a significant part of the Wagner literature; they are untrue of the book they preface, however. Borchmeyer confesses that his own work is fuelled by a passion for Wagner, but this book will not be consigned to the more irrational end of the Wagnerian spectrum: it is sober, thought provoking and refreshingly original.

Author of one of the few systematic accounts of Wagner's aesthetic theory (a study revised and published in English as *Richard Wagner: Theory and Theatre*, 1991), Borchmeyer first explored many of the ideas developed here in the engaging essays that he has contributed over a twenty-five year period as annotator to the expansive Bayreuth Festival program books. His principal interest is in Wagner's output as a librettist and Wagner's place in the world of letters, rather than as a musician. In Part I of his study, he sets forth studies of the texts not just of the mature and familiar Wagner music dramas, but also of the early works before *Rienzi*, and even the unfinished texts and those he never set to music: *Die hohe Braut*, *Männerlist grösser als Frauenlist*, *Die Sarazeni*, *Jesus von Nazareth*, and *Friedrich I*.

His fresh insights are many, and he finds hitherto unrecognised cultural and historical cross-references in all Wagner's stage works. In *Die Hochzeit*'s idea of a knight healed by a woman's love, Borchmeyer finds pre-echoes of *Tristan und Isolde* and the influence of the

writings of E.T.A. Hoffmann. In *Die Feen*, he traces the influence of the fairy-tale plays of Carlo Gozzi, and demonstrates how Wagner retained an enthusiasm for these throughout his life. He aptly reminds us that *Die Feen*, with its wholesome picture of married life, is the only work in Wagner's oeuvre in which love is not a disruptive force—a work not surprisingly repudiated in his later life. In *Das Liebersverbot*, he traces the influence of Wilhelm Heinse's novel *Ardinghello und die glückseligen Inseln* (1787), where the hero espouses ideals of hedonism and free love enamoured of the Young German movement of the time, with which Wagner had great affinity. In a long and engrossing study of *Rienzi*, he illuminates afresh its origins in history, in Bulwer's novel of the same name, and in the grand opera tradition. He traces the Ahasuerus myth in the *Der fliegende Holländer*. He finds and explains the presence of the complete *Tannhäuser* ballad in Heine's *Der Salon*, and traces many parallels between the story and the Young German movement. He finds parallels between *Lohengrin* and Schiller's *Semele*. He finds traces of the Bartered Bride idea in *Tristan und Isolde* and *Rheingold*. And, in a thought provoking chapter entitled 'Nuremberg as an Aesthetic State,' he traces in Grimms' fairy tale 'The Jew in the Thornbush' a basis for Beckmesser in *Die Meistersinger*.

After Deryck Cook and a host of others, it is difficult to imagine there could be more to say about the literary and mythological sources of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, and Borchmeyer's treatment of this, Wagner's major achievement, is one of the briefer in the book. Yet here too he plumbs deeper sources of the story in the world's mythical imagination, from Agamemnon's scepter in the *Iliad* to Ragnarök of Norse mythology. In a commentary on *Parsifal* he explains how Wagner's idiosyncratic view of Christianity focused on Good Friday rather than Easter, and explains Wagner's concept of regeneration and his idea of a 'true religion' blending Christianity and Buddhism.

In Part II, Borchmeyer describes Wagner's intersection with Bismarck as 'an epoch-making non relationship.' He separates carefully the later myth of Wagner's alleged kinship with Bismarck in forging German national identity from the humdrum reality of their inconclusive meeting in January 1871, which he illuminates from Bismarck's correspondence, and Wagner's hatred of everything the Iron Chancellor stood for, as revealed in his own correspondence. Borchmeyer characterises Wagner's dealings with Ludwig II as 'an encounter between two anomalies,' which he compares to the relationship between Tasso and the Duke of Ferrara in Goethe's drama. He analyses two critical responses to Wagner: first, those of Nietzsche, whose changing views of Wagner, he says, mask how central Wagner always remained to the philosopher's thinking. He finds Nietzsche's appeal to philology as a vital clue in approaching Wagner's texts. Finally, he discusses Thomas Mann, who he describes as 'this book's *spiritus rector*, a guiding light in this exploration of the fields that Wagner tilled and whose fruits were then garnered by others.' He finds parallels between *Der Ring* and Mann's novel *Joseph and his Brethren*. He finishes with a fascinating postlude describing the sad case of Franz Wilhelm Beidler, Wagner's lost eldest grandson, son of his daughter Isolde and the Swiss conductor Franz Beidler, who was effectively disinherited by Wagner's family.

Whether or not Wagner's works have become classics, Wagner is clearly the most written about figure in the history of music. Faced with so great a weight of previous writing, the temptation for one scholar to repeat the findings of the last is often overwhelming. Thus it is a pleasure to find a Wagner study which both illuminates works rarely addressed before and also brings fresh insight to the works familiar from the operatic repertoire.