Discussion
11

The German Empire & Wagner

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this discussion, you should be able to do the following:

- Explain how Germany's history in the nineteenth century contributed to its extreme nationalism in the twentieth century.
- Explain Wagner's concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk* and relate it to the art of today.
- Explain Wagner's use of the *leitmotiv*.
- Know the story of *The Ring of the Nibelung* and how Wagner tells it in his operas.

KEY TERMS

By the end of this discussion, you should understand the following terms:

- Nationalism
- Romanticism
- Demagoguery
- Gesamtkunstwerk
- Leitmotif

PREPARE

Study the following instructional material:

During medieval times, Germany had been one of the great empires. It dominated Central Europe, and each ruler claimed the title of Holy Roman Emperor. But this First Reich (empire) gradually deteriorated in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. North Germans embraced Protestantism and South Germans remained true to Catholicism. As a result, there were a series of religious conflicts that decimated the German countryside, population, and culture as local, mercenary, and foreign armies traipsed back and forth across German soil. By the 1700s, even though a German Emperor was still being elected, a unified nation no longer existed. The reality was a Germany divided into nearly 300 separate political entities ruled by a confusing of array of kings, dukes, bishops, and town councils.

This confused political state affected German culture. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Germans admired and imitated the music, art, and literature of bordering countries. German opera companies produced Italian operas, German symphonies employed Italian tempo and dynamic markings, and German instrumental suites used French names for their dances. Every petty German monarch emulated the greatness of the palace and gardens at Versailles, and French was the preferred language among educated Germans; the Prussian King, Frederick the Great, considered German the language of peasants and only spoke it to his soldiers. Nevertheless, German artists, musicians, and poets were among the finest in Europe during these two centuries. Although the German composers Bach and Handel wrote music in the styles of the surrounding countries, they were the finest producers of those works in their day. By the time of Haydn, Mozart, and

Beethoven in the late eighteenth century, the Germans were the acknowledged leaders in instrumental music and had made serious inroads into the Italian and French monopoly over opera.

But it was also during the careers of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven that Germany reached rock bottom politically. Northern Germany was largely dominated by Prussia, and Southern Germany was dominated by Austria. These two powers spent much of the eighteenth century at war with each other, but a new power entered to chasten both of these German states. In 1789, the French Revolution set in motion a chain of events that led to the overthrow and execution of the French monarch. This led to the subsequent rise of Napoleon Bonaparte to power. Throughout his career, Napoleon dealt with one coalition after the other of German states intending to remove him from power. Considered one of the greatest military geniuses of all time, Napoleon achieved his greatest victories over the Austrians and the Prussians. For the next several years, Germany lay prostrate before the French Emperor. Napoleon reorganized Germany into a group of satellite states that he exploited politically, militarily, and economically.

Because of this, Napoleon can be seen as the creator of German **nationalism**. Resentment against the occupying French turned into a spirit of resistance that brought about a renewed appreciation of and passion for all things German. Beethoven stubbornly began marking the tempo and dynamics of his compositions in German. Clemens Brentano and Ludwig Achim von Arnim began collecting German folk songs and poetry that would soon be imitated by the greatest poets and composers of Europe. At the same time, the Brothers Grimm started their great journey up and down the roads of Germany, collecting the tales and legends that had been forgotten by the wise and learned but that would soon revolutionize the art of a continent. Germany resisted politically, too, and when Napoleon suffered his great defeat in Russia, they wasted no time in rising up and throwing off the French yoke. Austria and Prussia were both at the table of victors at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 when the map of Europe was redrawn from the ashes of the defeated Napoleonic Empire.

Nevertheless, unity was still a long way off. There remained a powerful rivalry between the two greatest German powers: Prussia and Austria. Much of the difference between these two nations lay in two different ideas for an empire. Prussia believed in a powerful military. Austria, on the other hand, placed confidence in diplomacy. Although the two powers continued to vie for control, eventually the Prussians claimed victory. The Prussian chancellor, Otto von Bismark, manipulated Napoleon III (who was considerably less astute than his illustrious uncle) into declaring war on Prussia in 1870 in order to give Germany a common enemy. All the German states, save Austria, joined him. The French were routed at Sedan, Paris, becoming encircled, and a long siege reduced the Parisians to eating rats. As a result, the French emperor was overthrown, peace was made on German terms, and the German Empire was proclaimed on January 18, 1871.

Thus, German nationalism was both Prussian and militant. Bismark proclaimed that "Not through speeches and majority decisions will the great questions of the day be decided . . . but by iron and blood." By 1871, most male German citizens had spent a considerable portion of their lives in uniform, and parades, reviews, and marches were an integral part of German culture. German nationalism was also industrial. A modern army, Bismarck believed, did not run on courage alone; this was the iron part of Bismarck's formula. Germany had lagged behind the United Kingdom and France in the industrial revolution. They now made up for lost time with a vengeance. By 1900, the German industrial plant was

able to meet its rivals on considerably more than equal terms. However, most of this industrialization was for the express purpose of building a powerful military. Germany first built an army capable of tackling any other continental power, then built a navy intended to match the British.

Therefore, the year 1871 was incredibly important in the history of Europe. After a crushing defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, the French discarded their Second Empire by overthrowing Napoleon III and proclaiming the Third Republic. Thus, two centuries of French domination in Europe came to an end. George Bernard Shaw is reported to have said that it was a marvelous victory, for the most arrogant and warlike people on the continent had been defeated by the most gentle and peace-loving. A new day had dawned over Europe; the German hour had come. Long divided by religion and politics, the princes and diplomats of Germany now marched into the Hall of Mirrors in the Palace of Versailles and proclaimed their own Second Empire. It was a smugly appropriate place for such a transfer of power.

German Nationalism in the Arts

Yet, German nationalism was something more than drills and weaponry. It was an art, a nature, almost a religion. There was such a thing as "Germanness," summed up in the word "volk" (folk, people), which for Germans has a much richer context than any English equivalent. German art during the nineteenth century took inspiration from virtues it considered to be distinctly German. Before the nineteenth century, an artist was considered primarily an artisan who performed specialized tasks for an employer. Sometimes the employer was a noble patron of the arts, sometimes a group of businessmen, church officials, or town council. Regardless, the artist's primary task was to satisfy the tastes of those who paid his bills. However, in the nineteenth century, things changed. Much of the shift began with Beethoven. Within his lifetime, he outgrew the role of humble employee until he was recognized as a musical giant—not a satisfier of tastes, but their creator. By the end of his life, he was writing compositions that few in his day could begin to understand; nevertheless, the general attitude was that someday the world would catch up to Beethoven the Visionary, and meanwhile, it was society's responsibility to take care of his temporal needs so he could fulfill his spiritual quest. This became the typical nineteenth-century attitude toward artists: by some fortuitous combination of gifts and diligence, the artist sees things others cannot, and the only avenue to that hidden realm is through their prophetic eyes. This belief in a mysterious and indefinable essence, along with a deep and unfulfilled longing for it, is the most important element of the style that has come to be known as German **romanticism**.

This kind of attitude assumes that there is such a hidden realm, an invisible world standing behind the visible one that has a direct effect upon mortal creation but is not perceivable by the unenlightened. This world cannot be understood by the usual methods, but can only be felt, and art is the primary access to it. Much of the inspiration for this idea came from the German tales and legends that began to surface around the time of Napoleon. The world of the Brothers Grimm, for instance, is a world of hidden magic. Spirits, fairies, witches, elves, and giants are regular inhabitants of this universe, and the stories tell of their interactions with normal humans. Nature, too, is magical. The eighteenth century tended to see nature as either the orderly imitation of the mind of God or as the untamed wilderness put on earth

for man to conquer. But to the mind of the romantic, it was an entity—a living, breathing creature with its own personality and will. Sometimes this will is malevolent, as in Melville's *Moby Dick*; other times, it is rustic and peaceful, as in Mendelssohn's *Scottish Symphony*. It is always an adventure for the hero or heroine who might triumph over impossible odds or come crashing down in glorious flames. Frequently the artist identifies himself as the hero, triumphing over the limited tastes of his audience or starving to death in misunderstood but noble poverty.

Richard Wagner

The climax of the German Romantic Movement came with the career of the composer Richard Wagner. Perhaps no other composer has simultaneously produced such strong feelings of adoration and revulsion. In his lifetime, he was able to dominate everyone around him, seduce other men's wives and make the husbands feel it a privilege to be cheated, garner the resources of an entire kingdom for his artistic aims, and inspire a school of operatic composition that still resonates in works today. And yet, like that earlier romantic antihero, Napoleon, he also created his own opposition. There have been at least as many musicians, philosophers, and operagoers who detest everything Wagnerian as there are those that adore him.

In the first place, Wagner has the distinct disadvantage of having been Adolf Hitler's favorite composer, a kind of defamation by association. Anyone who has seen Leni Riefenstahl's film *Triumph of the Will* (*Triumph des Willens*) has a hard time forgetting the image of thousands of storm troopers goose-stepping to "Siegfried's Rhine Journey." Leading members of the Wagner family that gleefully leapt on the Nazi bandwagon when it came their way did nothing to help the Wagner reputation. Anti-Wagnerians hasten to point out the similarities between Wagner and Hitler: both were of uncertain parentage, both grew up warped and frustrated by their youthful experiences, and both soon learned that they had a special gift for dominating the people around them. Both were also capable of assuming the role of the great man and played the part so skillfully that almost everyone around them came under their spells. Finally, both were capable of almost unbelievable selfishness; to both Wagner and Hitler, the world existed for their exploitation.

Like Hitler, Wagner was both a German nationalist and an anti-Semite. And like most young Germans, Wagner was a revolutionary who wanted to see the creation of a unified, liberal, German state. From time to time, Wagner's writings, and occasionally his operas, assume the glorification of the German nation, sometimes to the detriment of other European peoples. This is most evident in Wagner's writings about Jews. Perhaps his most infamous act was the publication of a tract (an essay-like pamphlet) titled "Judaism in Music" ("Das Judentum in der Musik"). The main argument of this piece is that, since Jews were a foreign element grafted onto the German people, they neither had a culture of their own nor had yet had sufficient time to assimilate German culture. Until about the time of Wagner's birth, Jews were kept in ghettos, and it wasn't until the early to mid-nineteenth century that Jews were integrated into German culture. Wagner's objection to Jews, therefore, was neither religious nor racial. It was artistic. Since German music and art was not native to the Jews, all Jewish composers of classical art and music could do was imitate the German example. Hence, music by Jewish composers such as Meyerbeer or Mendelssohn (even though Mendelssohn was a Christian, the son of a man converted from Judaism) was somehow less authentic and less honest than the work of a native German composer.

Admittedly, this attitude is still a far cry from the Final Solution rhetoric of the Nazis, and most Jewish musicians of the day chose to overlook it. Nevertheless it is symptomatic of something much more sinister—the attitude that the Jews were somehow a foreign element, a cancer of sorts. They not only did not belong to the German nation, but they, in fact, interfered with its health and well-being and would someday need to be excised. This was the ugliest element of German nationalism and would be harped on over and over by its adherents until it became a truism in the German national consciousness, the kind of truism that made it easier for the Nazis to justify the mass deportations and isolation of the Jews.

Wagner's admirers often argue that Wagner would have been horrified at the Holocaust, and that his ideas of Jewish inferiority were just theories he never intended to be carried out to such a radical extent. But ideas are powerful things, and a bad idea propagated by an influential man can do an enormous amount of damage. There can be little doubt that Wagner's pamphlet, coupled with the many nasty racial slurs he uttered in the course of his life, was a powerful contribution to the twentieth-century German attitude toward the Jews.

To some critics, Wagner's unsavory character alone is enough to reject his music out of hand. As far as they are concerned, someone as ethically distorted as Wagner could not have been capable of creating works of artistic merit. His work can only be seductive, at best, with all its pretensions of ennoblement nothing but "sounding brass and tinkling cymbals" (1 Corinthians 13:1).

Wagner is reminiscent of Hitler in yet another, perhaps more important way: his propensity for **demagoguery**. In his public speeches, Hitler was capable of swaying the masses to do his bidding in ways that are unthinkable to us in retrospect; it is still one of the great mysteries of human civilization how this Austrian corporal with his wild eyes and Charlie Chaplin mustache could persuade one of the most civilized nations in the world to descend into the barbaric abyss of National Socialism, the Second World War, and the Holocaust, either eagerly participating or silently submitting. To some, Wagner's music, with its pretentiousness, intricate musico-dramatic (music drama) theories, enormous resources, and sheer scale, is another manifestation of that same mass manipulation—an operatic incarnation of the theatrics, marches, pillars of light, and swastika banners of the Nazis.

Gesamtkunstwerk

Hitler notwithstanding, one of the most influential aspects of Wagner's works has to do with the relationship between music and the other arts. While Wagner was in exile in Switzerland, he wrote numerous political and artistic tracts including one called "The Artwork of the Future" ("Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft"). The basic premise of this work was that, by the mid-nineteenth century, all the possibilities of each individual art form—music, drama, painting, sculpture, literature, and architecture—had been thoroughly explored and were on the verge of exhaustion. Hence, the future of art lay in its combinable possibilities.

The artwork of the future was something Wagner called a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, (total art form), which would combine all the arts into a single, unified composition, be they musical, visual, or verbal. All aspects of this art form were to be created and controlled by a single individual, for only through the guidance of this ultimate genius could the work be unified toward a common end—anything else would just be a collaborative hodgepodge of unrelated ideas. From this time on, Wagner stopped referring to his works as operas and started calling them music dramas to show that they were a new type of art work where all

the elements existed on equal grounds. Of course, it took someone of Wagner's talent and energy to pull all this off. Wagner himself wrote the music and libretti (operatic text), designed the sets and costumes, coached the singers, conducted the orchestra, and even designed and built a theater for his works.

Another influential Wagnerian concept is that of the *leitmotiv* (leading motif), known in English as the leitmotif. This is a musical idea or theme that returns throughout the opera and identifies with a particular character, object, or idea. Every time the leitmotif returns, someone on the stage is thinking of that particular character, object, or idea. Wagner uses these motifs as the primary building blocks of the opera, weaving a symphonic web in the orchestra while the singers declaim the words of the libretto.

The Ring of the Nibelung

Wagner also came up with the idea for a massive Germanic musico-dramatic event. At first, he envisioned an opera drawn from old German mythology and based on the medieval *Saga of the Völsungs* (*Völsungasaga*), a thirteen-century Icelandic saga. He called the scenario for this opera *Siegfried's Death* (*Siegfried's Tod*), but soon discovered that the story was far too large for a single work. So, he conceived of a prequel, *The Young Siegfried* (*Der junge Siegfried*), but this also required too much backstory, and soon the work evolved into a trilogy of three-act operas plus a one-act prologue. By this time, the subject matter had grown to include the medieval epic poem *The Song of the Nibelungs* (*Nibelungenlied*) and the myth of the *Twilight of the Gods* (*Götterdämmerung*), and the project had achieved an almost religious status, at least in Wagner's mind. Before setting out to write this ambitious work, he published a tract in which he glibly said that it may take over five years to complete such a project (it took over two decades) and called upon a German monarch to bankroll the entire project, which would then become an annual German festival.

The result, a cycle of four operas called *The Ring of the Nibelung* (*Der Ring des Nibelungen*, often referred to as the Ring Cycle)*,* is remarkable on a number of levels. Its sheer size sets it apart as the largest single musical work in history. The prologue, *The Rhine Gold* (*Das Rheingold*), is three hours long, and each of the succeeding three-act music dramas—*The Valkyrie* (*Die Walküre*), *Siegfried*, and *Twilight of the Gods*—are well over four hours each. Wagner intended that they should be performed in four consecutive evenings and only be presented at a theater constructed especially for them. This last stipulation was calculated to create a national German festival out of the work and because the conventional theaters of the day simply were not up to its demands. The monarch who came to Wagner's rescue was King Ludwig II of Bavaria, who was always somewhat unstable and eventually went mad. He put the entire Bavarian treasury at Wagner's disposal, which almost bankrupted the nation and nearly led to a coup against Ludwig. Wagner selected the little backwater town of Bayreuth for the festival, and there he built his *Festspielhaus* (festival play house) and a lavish mansion for himself. Ludwig pressured Wagner into performing the operas individually before the theater was finished, but the first complete Bayreuth Festival was held in August of 1876; by then, Germany was a united nation, and the emperor himself, Wilhelm I, was in attendance.

The Ring of the Nibelung also features the most complex leitmotif structure of any of Wagner's works—anywhere from 50 to 200 leitmotifs have been counted by various experts, depending on how they interpret the development of the motifs. Some motifs are associated with characters, places, or things, but most have a psycho-mythological association. For instance, one motif represents the *rheingold* (the hoard of gold guarded by the Rhine

maidens), but by extension, it also represents the desire for worldly wealth. Another represents the ring, but it also represents power and all things associated with it. Another motif is the sword, *Nothung*, which also symbolizes heroism, valor, and conquest. One motif simultaneously represents a person, the god Loge; a thing, fire; and a concept, energy and vigor. Many motifs have no concrete association at all but immediately skip to the abstract, such as the "Renunciation of Love" or the "Resignation" motifs. Each of these motifs comes to represent the thoughts of the characters on stage, and we hear these thoughts in a web created by the orchestra as the singer sings the words the characters are speaking. All the music of *The Ring of the Nibelung* is constructed out of these leitmotifs, and Wagner develops and combines them in ingenious ways.

The Ring of the Nibelung tells the story of a struggle to possess a ring of power, similar to the ring in Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. Wagner and Tolkien both used Nordic mythology as inspiration for their works. In Wagner's work, the dwarves are called Nibelungs, and one of them, Alberich, makes a magic ring from gold he stole from the Rhine maidens, beautiful nymphs living beneath the surface of the Rhine River. The ring gives its owner the power to rule the world, but in order to craft it, Alberich has to renounce love for all time.

[WATCH THE CLIP FROM *THE RHINE GOLD*]

But Wotan, the king of the gods, tricks Alberich and steals his ring, then uses it to pay the giants, Fafner and Fasolt, for building the fortress Valhalla. In Wagner's mythology, the gods are limited in their power, and Wotan must abide by the contracts he makes.

The rest of the Ring Cycle centers around Wotan's attempts to get the ring back from Fafner. Fafner has quarreled with his brother, Fasolt, over the ring, killed him, and turned himself into a fierce dragon. Wotan roams the earth looking for a way to have Fafner killed because killing Fafner himself would break his contract with the giants.

In an attempt to create a hero capable of killing Fafner for him, Wotan sires a number of children, such as the male and female twins Siegmund and Sieglinde he has with a mortal woman. He also sires the nine female Valkyries by the earth goddess. He teaches Siegmund to be a great warrior and sends his Valkyries forth on winged horses to collect the heroes of the earth who have died in battle. The Valkyries bring them back to Valhalla to form an army to defend it from Alberich, who is also plotting to get the ring. Wotan sends Siegmund to kill Fafner, but Wotan's wife, the goddess of marriage, jealously points out that Siegmund is nothing more than an extension of Wotan's will, so if Siegmund kills the dragon, it will be the same as if Wotan killed it himself.

Wotan relents and commands his favorite Valkyrie, Brünnhilde, to make sure that Siegmund is killed in battle. Siegmund is killed, but Brünnhilde rescues Sieglinde, who is pregnant with Siegmund's child. Wotan punishes Brünnhilde for her rebellion by taking away her immortality and putting her to sleep on a rock where she can be found by any man and forced to become his bride. However, in the end, he puts a curtain of magic fire around the rock so that only the greatest of heroes can penetrate it and claim her as his bride.

[WATCH THE CLIP FROM *THE VALKYRIE*]

Sieglinde gives birth to Siegfried, a boy who knows no fear. Siegfried grows up, kills the dragon, and claims the ring.

[WATCH THE CLIP FROM *SIEGFRIED*]

Siegfried then penetrates the fire and takes Brünnhilde as his bride. To someone steeped in the Judeo-Christian tradition, all the adultery and incest in the Ring Cycle is rather disturbing. Wotan, the king of the gods, makes love to a dizzying array of women in an attempt to father someone who can get the ring back for him. Siegmund and Sieglinde are brother and sister, but even though Sieglinde is already married to another man, she and Siegfried have both a romance and a child. And while it seems mild by comparison, Brünnhilde is Siegfried's aunt. None of this seemed to bother Wagner in the slightest. To him, the important thing was that Siegfried was born a free hero with all of Wotan's powers and none of his limitations. This reflects a philosophical attitude, current in Wagner's day, that great things can only be accomplished by one who is not bound by the habits and norms of everyday society. To an extent, this was the concept of the romantic hero, be it Napoleon, Faust, or Wagner himself. In order for society to evolve, it needed people who could break the rules.

This idea was best articulated by the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, an ardent admirer of Wagner in his younger days. In his work *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (*Jenseits von Gut und Böse: Vorspiel einer Philosophie der Zukunft*), Nietzsche expounds the concept of the *Übermensch* (Superman) who, by his exceptional gifts and vigor, earns the right to disregard the conventions of society, and who can thus bring about the revolutions that society needs. This idea bore bitter fruit in the century ahead, serving as justification for atrocities that Wagner and Nietzsche could not have dreamed of in their most feverish nightmares.

As the Ring Cycle continues, Brünnhilde fortifies Siegfried with spells for his upcoming foray into the world, leaving only his back unprotected, for she knows he will never turn it to an enemy. Siegfried gives the ring to Brünnhilde as a wedding gift and then leaves to seek his fortune. Along the way, he encounters the Gibichungs, Günther and Gutrune, the son and daughter of a human king named Gibech, and their half-brother Hagen, who turns out to be the son of Alberich. Günther is king over the land but has been unable to find a suitable wife. Hagen tells him of Brünnhilde, the most glorious of all mortal women. When Günther despairs of ever winning her, Hagen says that the greatest of all heroes, Siegfried, is on the way to the castle, and he will win the fair maiden for Gibech.

Hagen greets Siegfried with a magic potion that makes him fall in love with Gutrune and forget everything else in his life. Siegfried then fetches Brünnhilde from the fire and presents her to Günther. Accusing him of infidelity, Brünnhilde gives him back the ring, but Siegfried swears on Hagen's spear that he has never before met the woman. The men then go hunting, and Hagen gives Siegfried another drink, this one to refresh his memory. Siegfried begins to tell his life story, and when he gets to the part about Brünnhilde, he remembers everything. Hagen drives his spear into Siegfried's back, exclaiming that since Siegfried admitted knowing Brünnhilde, the oath he swore on Hagen's spear was false; therefore, it was Hagen's duty to kill him with it. As Siegfried dies, he sings a greeting to Brünnhilde. As is so often the case in Wagner, death is seen as a blessing and an awakening from delusion.

Siegfried's body is taken back to the castle accompanied by "Siegfried's Funeral March," one of the great instrumental interludes of *The Ring of the Nibelung*. Hagen tries to remove the ring from Siegfried's hand, but the corpse makes a threatening gesture, and Hagen fearfully

withdraws. Brünnhilde then comes forward, takes the ring from Siegfried's finger, and orders that a funeral pyre be built. She tells the audience that she now knows everything; the libretto does not explain what she knows, but she has evidently achieved some kind of enlightenment. So, as the flames of Siegfried's pyre lick the sky, Brünnhilde dons her Valkyrie costume, mounts her horse, and rides into the fire. Her last act of will is her own annihilation. The Rhine River overflows its banks and reclaims the ring, Hagen is drowned trying to reclaim it, and the Rhine Maidens are seen swimming off with it. In the distance, Valhalla too is in flames, and we hear one final stirring reprise of the Valhalla theme in all its grandeur. But this too comes to an end, and the last thing we hear is the "Redemption through Love" theme hovering over all the destruction like the promise of a new and perfect world.

[WATCH THE CLIP FROM *TWILIGHT OF THE GODS*]

TEACH ONE ANOTHER

Discussion Questions:

1. In what ways did Germany's history contribute to its extreme nationalism in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries?
2. Compare Wagner and Hitler. Does Wagner's personality and beliefs invalidate his art? Why or why not?
3. Discuss Wagner's concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Is art improved by combining it? What is lost in the mixture? How were Wagner's music dramas different in this respect from other operas? What are some applications of this technique in today's art and entertainment?
4. Discuss Wagner's *leitmotiv* structure. What are the advantages of this kind of technique? Can you think of any disadvantages?
5. Why must Alberich renounce love to craft the ring? What does this symbolize?
6. Why does Wotan put Brünnhilde to sleep? Why does he place magic fire around the rock? What musical elements does Wagner use to portray the fire?
7. Note the leitmotifs for the bird, Siegfried, and the dragon. How do they each characterize their subject?
8. Discuss the ending of *The Ring of the Nibelung*. Is it happy or sad? What ends? What is born? What changes?

PONDER AND PROVE

Prepare and submit the following creative assignment:

Write a brief scenario for a music drama on a Book of Mormon story. Include a discussion of costumes, scenery, music, and other elements. Make it a *Gesamtkunstwerk*.