

MUSIC HISTORY AS REFLECTED IN THE WORKS OF HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

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Hans Christian Andersen (1805–75) was the most prominent Danish author of the 19th century. Now known primarily for his fairy tales, during his lifetime he was equally famous for his stage works, travelogues, and novels. It was through these genres that he most often reflected on the world around him. In 2005, the bicentennial of Andersen's birth, I published a book entitled *Hans Christian Andersen and music: The nightingale revealed*, that explored Andersen's observations of and participation in the musical culture of his age.¹ This article explores an important facet of Andersen's musical activities: his interest in music history and his use of it in his writing.

Why look to Andersen for information about music? To begin, Andersen had a musical background. He enjoyed a brief career as an opera singer and dancer at Det Kongelige Teater in Copenhagen, and in later years he went on to produce opera librettos for the Danish and German stage. Andersen was also an avid music devotee; he made 30 major European tours during his 70 years, and on each of these trips he regularly attended opera and concert performances, recording his impressions in a series of travel diaries. In short, Andersen was a well-informed listener, and his reflections on the music of his age serve as valuable sources for the study of music reception in the 19th century.

Over the course of his life Andersen embraced and then later rejected performers such as Maria Malibran, Franz Liszt, and Ole Bull, and his interest in opera and instrumental music underwent a series of dramatic transformations. In his final years Andersen promoted figures as disparate as Wagner and Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, while strongly objecting to Brahms. Although modern-day readers might interpret such changes in taste as indiscriminate, this study shows that such shifts in opinion were not contradictory, but rather quite logical given the social and cultural climate of the age.

In an effort to explain the development of Andersen's musical tastes and his relationship to music history, this article presents new interpretations of two of his lesser-known works: a stage piece entitled *Vandring gjennem Opera-Galleriet* (Wandering

¹ Anna Harwell Celenza, *Hans Christian Andersen and music: The nightingale revealed* (Aldershot; Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2005).



Hans Christian Andersen (1805–75)

through the opera gallery) and his last novel *Lykke Peer* (Lucky Peer). These works are not literary masterpieces equal to Andersen's most famous, universal fairy tales. Indeed, they are securely tied to the era in which they were written, and it is this time-bound quality that I find most intriguing, for it makes these works invaluable sources for examining perceptions of music history in the 19th century.

Until recently critical reconstruction of how 19th-century music was understood, performed, and heard was dismissed as either speculative or irrelevant. Such an attitude was often due, at least in part, to the phenomenon that 19th-century taste appears increasingly at odds with present-day sensibilities. This disconnect becomes all the more obvious when one begins to read excerpts from some of Andersen's works. Designed to reflect the specific tastes and interests of 19th-century adults, Andersen's larger works appealed to thousands of contemporary readers (including Heinrich

Heine, Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, and Clara and Robert Schumann). But they became less popular later when literary tastes changed, and the cultural references in the works became less applicable to later generations. As Leon Botstein has noted, the structure of meaning in 19th-century musical discourse can no longer be assumed to be continuous with our own.² Today's audiences have lost touch with the acoustic environment in which 19th-century music functioned. Also missing is the connection between musical life and the patterns of social and cultural meaning that dominated the period. By observing Andersen's reaction to the musical world around him and exploring the manner in which he explained his reactions in his fictional works, I hope to present a reflective consideration of how general audiences in Denmark might have conceived of music history in the 19th century.

There is not enough space here to discuss Andersen's lifelong preoccupation with music.³ Yet it is helpful to get a sense of how his tastes and interests changed over the decades. During Andersen's formative years—up to the early 1830s—he was primarily focused on his own activities as a singer, dancer, and librettist at Det Kongelige Teater in Copenhagen, and his interest in music history was limited to traditions in Denmark. In the mid 1830s Andersen took his first tours across Europe. These travels engendered in him a fascination with the virtuosity of Italian opera. In 1842 Andersen became enthralled with the “natural” singing style of the Swedish soprano Jenny Lind. From that point on his interest in virtuosity was transferred from vocal music to instrumental music, particularly as it was captured in performances by Ole Bull, Thalberg, and Liszt. In the 1850s and 1860s Andersen contemplated the impact nationalism had on the history of music across Europe, and in the last decades of his life, he constantly searched for the art of the future. His musings about the future of music and his influence on perceptions of music history in Denmark are perhaps best displayed in his final novel, *Lykke Peer*.

The first work by Andersen that I would like to discuss dates from the end of his formative years in Copenhagen. In 1841 several singers from Det Kongelige Teater asked Andersen to collaborate with them on a new concert series they were organizing.⁴ One of these works was the three-act musical tableau entitled *Vandring gennem Opera-Galleriet*. As the narrator explains in the opening, this work presents scenes from a number of operas that had proven to be popular with Danish audiences over the years. In short, it is a concise history of opera reception in Denmark:

We see a picture gallery, but here every picture is a musical composition, its colors are melodies. Come let us wander together down the deep, long hall, from that which once delighted our grandfathers to that which we saw as children and the pictures we now hold dear. The pictures of music, they all hang here! From Gluck down to Hartmann, here is every painting. However, with this single visit we will have to skip many works, often even a masterpiece, painted in blazing tones. Only a few examples of what has pleased each age can be pointed out here today. And like the tones of music, these

² Leon Botstein, “Between aesthetics and history”, *19th-century music* 13 (1989) 168.

³ For a detailed overview of this topic, see my book *Hans Christian Andersen and music*.

⁴ The official regulations of the concert series stated that the leading actors/singers under contract at Det Kongelige Teater were allowed to put on private concerts, for personal profit, in the theater when no dramatic works were scheduled. No more than two singers could be featured in a single concert. In an effort to make these concerts appealing, and thus more profitable, the soloists employed Andersen to write a series of “narrative frames” that linked the various arias and songs and thus transformed the concerts into brief musical dramas.

works will also pass away. For even the music of the future will eventually become an old melody.⁵

Here the narrator is confronting the fact that the writing of history is a selective process, and the selections made by one generation may not be repeated by later generations. A study of the narrator's text suggests that the operas listed must have been well known to Copenhagen audiences, for the introduction to each scene is often presented in the form of a riddle. The narrator does not always tell the audience right away which work is to be presented. Instead he offers them a series of hints, allowing them to guess which opera might appear next. A good example of Andersen's riddle technique is displayed in the introduction to the final excerpt in act 1 of the program:

Sometimes his music sounds beautifully idyllic, sometimes patriarchal and grand, so good that even Cimarosa could have written it; then a great storm of tones sounds—how well it has been portrayed. He is the Raphael of music, and Germany gave him to Europe. He knew passion, and with his musical scepter he was even able to command the voices of spirits to rise up from the grave. He gave birth to melodies, and he created characters that show his mastery, even in his most minor works. Across all lands and oceans, from harbor to harbor, around the world his name blooms like a wreath of flowers. His name? I will not tell you; it lives in his work. As music's Raphael he is forever young and strong!⁶

The curtain rises, and the final scene from Mozart's *Don Giovanni* is performed.

With this use of riddle technique, Andersen takes on the role of both music historian and mediator of culture. He purposefully acknowledges the audience's confidence in their own musical heritage by defining his work as a historical exhibition of Denmark's opera history. He also makes a subtle statement about the cultural worth of Denmark's opera tradition: It has a recognizable history. That being said, it is interesting to note that the final opera presented in Andersen's production is his own *Ravnen* (The raven), set to music by Johan Peter Emilius Hartmann. Here Andersen clearly places his own name, and that of Hartmann, in the annals of Denmark's music history:

We have reached the gallery's end, and on the final wall are seen young Danish names, with strong traits one and all.... We see many pieces; each projects its own gloss of sound. Yet, we can only choose one flower from this crown. And he is called grandson by one whose name is tied fast to the ballad of "King Christian" who "stood by the high mast." He is the younger Hartmann, whose tone poetry, I believe, each heart will recognize in this painting.⁷

The curtain opens, and the audience is presented with act 3, scene two of Andersen's opera.⁸

Andersen's *Vandring gjennem Opera-Galleriet* presents a summary of opera appreciation in Copenhagen generation by generation. Act 1 is dedicated to works premiered at Det Kongelige Teater from roughly 1790 to 1810; act 2 features works

⁵ Hans Christian Andersen, *Vandring gjennem Opera-Galleriet*, H.C. Andersens Samlede Skrifter (København: H.C. Reitzel, 1878) vol. 10, 85.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁸ For those unfamiliar with *Ravnen*, it is a rescue opera with vampires! In this scene the hero of the opera, Jenarro, works his way through the floor and fights with the vampires in order to save his brother's life.

from the 1820s; and act 3 reflects the changes in taste that occurred in the 1830s. As a whole, *Vandring gennem Opera-Galleriet* captures a snapshot of opera history as it was understood in Denmark in the early 1840s. At this moment in time, works by Danish composers dominated the stage, and Mozart held the position of most cherished foreign composer. Yet the winds of change were beginning to be felt. We can see that opera had begun to replace singspiel and vaudeville as the preferred genre at Det Kongelige Teater, and a growing interest in the works of Italian and French composers was emerging. German composers were also gaining a foothold in Det Kongelige Teater's repertoire, along with a new generation of local talent, as represented by J.P.E. Hartmann and Andersen himself.

OPERAS REPRESENTED IN
HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN'S *VANDRING GJENNEM OPERA-GALLERIET* (1841)

Part I

C.W. Gluck	<i>Iphigenie en Aulide</i>	overture
A.-E.-M. Grétry	<i>Les deux avarés</i>	act 2, scenes 3 & 4
J.G. Naumann	<i>Cora</i>	act 2, scene 1
J.E. Hartmann	<i>Balders Død</i>	aria "Et Egern som leger"
J.A.P. Schultz	<i>Peters Bryllup</i>	John Baadsman's congratulation song
F.L.Æ Kunzen	<i>Viihbøsten</i>	act 1, scene 3
W.A. Mozart	<i>Don Giovanni</i>	final act, final scene

Part II

C.N. Schall	<i>Lagertha</i>	overture
É. Du Puy	<i>Ungdom og Galskab</i>	unspecified aria
F. Paër	<i>Agnese</i>	act 1, scenes 3 & 4
F.-A. Boïeldieu	<i>Les deux nuits</i>	act 2, Servant's main aria
C.E.F. Weyse	<i>Ludlams Hule</i>	act 2, final scene
F. Kuhlau	<i>Hugo og Adelheid</i>	act 1, duet & final scene
G. Rossini	<i>Il barbiere di Siviglia</i>	act 3, Figaro's first aria
C.M. von Weber	<i>Oberon</i>	act 3, scenes 1 & 2

Part III

L. Zinck	<i>Alferne</i>	overture
V. Bellini	<i>Norma</i>	act 1, "Casta diva"
H.A. Marschner	<i>Hans Heiling</i>	act 3, final scene
J.-F.-F. Halévy	<i>La Juive</i>	act 2, Rachel's aria & closing duet
D.-F.-E. Auber	<i>Le maçon</i>	act 2, scene 6
J.P.E. Hartmann	<i>Ravnen</i>	act 3, scene 2

(libretto by H.C. Andersen)

Now we will fast-forward to the final decade of Andersen's life—a period dominated by works contemplating the future direction of art and literature. In the late 1860s Andersen became fascinated with the Danish philosopher Hans Christian Ørsted (1777–1851), the French writer Baudelaire, and the German composer Richard Wagner. What did these three have in common? They were all contemplating the future of art. As Baudelaire himself had noted, "In the very near future we might well come to see not only new authors but even men with established reputations profiting in some degree from the ideas expounded by Wagner and passing successfully through the breach opened by him." Andersen took this sentiment to heart, and in 1868 embraced the music of Wagner wholeheartedly.

Since World War II the image of Wagner as a German nationalist has dominated our perceptions of him, but looking at Wagner's early reception in Denmark (a reception founded primarily on one opera, *Lohengrin*), we realize that in Andersen's day, a very different image of Wagner permeated parts of Europe. In the realm of music history, Wagner has been associated with aggressive German nationalism. But this was not the Wagner that Andersen and many of his contemporaries knew. Andersen never witnessed performances of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* or *Parsifal*, and he had no contact with the "nationalist" Wagner who later built a Mecca of German culture in the small town of Bayreuth. The Wagner Andersen knew was the composer of *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*; the Wagner who had not yet shown the influence of Schopenhauer; the Wagner who—in the treatise *Oper und Drama*—argued against the "nationalist trend", which he viewed as inimical to "the great human lot" (das Allgemeinschaftliche).⁹ In Andersen's mind Wagner was the first to realize in literature and music "the spirit in nature" proposed by Ørsted in 1850. Wagner was the artist of the future, and as such he served as a source of inspiration for Andersen and many others of his generation.

There are no specific references in Andersen's diaries and letters to Wagner's philosophical works, but references to various conversations Andersen had in the late 1860s reveal that he was cognizant of debates that had been fueled by some of Wagner's more controversial essays, specifically "Das Judentum in der Musik". Originally published in two installments of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* in September 1850 under the pen name "K. Freigedenk", "Das Judentum in der Musik" did not attract much attention initially;¹⁰ and if Andersen actually read the article, he obviously never associated it with Wagner. But such was not the case in 1869, when the article was republished as an individual pamphlet, this time with Wagner's name on it.¹¹ When "Das Judentum in der Musik" appeared in print the second time something of a firestorm ensued in the press. Wagner had interwoven his theory of the artwork of the future with offensive threads of anti-Semitism. He assailed Jews as being the cause of society's ills and claimed that they were incapable of creating true cultural works. In an attack on Mendelssohn-Bartholdy specifically, he stated that despite the composer's wealth, privilege, and musical skill, he was culturally inferior and did not possess the ability "to call forth in us the deep, heart-searching effect which we expect from Art".¹²

Such condemnation of the Jews would have greatly upset Andersen during the final decade of his life, if for no other reason than because his closest friends and patrons at the time, the Melchior and Henrique families, were prominent members of Copenhagen's Jewish elite.¹³ In 1868 an offensive article concerning the negative characteristics of Jews appeared in *Dagens Nyheder*, a daily paper that was then under the editorial control of

⁹ Richard Wagner, *Oper und Drama*. Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen, ed. by Wolfgang Golther (Berlin; Leipzig: Bong & Co., 1913) vol. 3, 259.

¹⁰ The only notable objection in 1850 came from 11 professors at the Leipzig Conservatory who wrote a letter of protest to the journal's editor, Franz Brendel. The general dismissal of the article was facilitated by the disclaimer attached to the title as a footnote: "However faulty her outward conformation, we have always considered it a preeminence of Germany's, a result of her great learning, that at least in the scientific sphere she possesses intellectual freedom. This freedom we now lay claim to and rely on, in printing the above essay, desirous that our readers may accept it in this sense. Whether one shares the views expressed therein, or not, the author's breadth of grasp (*Genialität der Anschauung*) will be disputed by no one."

¹¹ Richard Wagner, *Das Judentum in der Musik* (Leipzig: J.J. Weber, 1869).

¹² Richard Wagner, *Judaism in music and other essays* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1995) 93–94.

¹³ For an in-depth study of Andersen's relationship to the Melchior family, see Elith Reumert, *H.C. Andersen og det Melchiorske Hjem* (København: H. Hagerups Forlag, 1924).

one of Andersen's friends, Robert Watt. According to Andersen's diary, the issue was first brought to his attention on 10 October 1868: "Watt was in a bad mood because he had received a letter from Moritz Melchior saying that he was canceling his subscription to *Dagens Nyheder* on account of the contempt for the Jews that was printed therein."¹⁴ When Andersen visited the Melchiors at their summer home the following day, he saw that they were still noticeably upset. On 12 October, after dining again with the Melchiors, Andersen recorded the main topic of conversation: "Moses Melchior was especially angry about the article concerning the Jews in Watt's newspaper, and he thinks that everyone should boycott the paper. At the very least all Jews should cancel their subscriptions."¹⁵

As Andersen became more aware of the Jews' plight, he made a point of seeking out the monuments of Jewish composers he especially admired. For example, in May 1868 he visited the Jewish cemetery in Paris for no other reason than to see "Halévy's grave and monument."¹⁶ And in December 1869 he went to Nice to pay homage to Meyerbeer: "I climbed up to the cliff terrace, went all the way up to the great, round tower. Here Meyerbeer reportedly began composing his *African Queen*."¹⁷ Andersen always held a special place in his heart for Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, as is clearly shown in the descriptions of his encounters with the composer preserved in the various editions of Andersen's autobiography. But undoubtedly the clearest example of Andersen's changed attitude toward the Jews is found in his late literary works. Although Andersen had made use of negative Jewish stereotypes in some of his earlier novels and travelogues—most notably in *Kun en spillemand* (Only a fiddler) and *En Digtters Bazaar* (Poet's bazaar)—his growing respect for friends like the Melchiors and Henriques led to his abandonment of such practices in the 1870s. In fact, it was at the Melchior summer home that Andersen completed his sixth and final novel, *Lykke Peer*—an artistic novel that contemplates the music of the future and quotes the Talmud in an effort to explain the cultural significance and eventual fate of composers such as Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Wagner.

Andersen began writing *Lykke Peer* the evening before the Danish première of *Lohengrin*, and the influence this opera had on his novel is undeniable. Andersen saw *Lohengrin* on opening night, noting in his diary that it was "magnificently done and very well received."¹⁸ In his novel *Peer* represents Andersen's artistic ideal. The son of a poor warehouseman, *Peer* socially outdistances a wealthy boy named Felix by becoming an innovative composer of operas inspired by the works of Wagner.

Lykke Peer can be viewed as an example of music historiography, above all a meditation on the relationship between visions of the future and a respect for the past.¹⁹ Although Wagner's operas are presented as the model for a new age, *Peer* is also moved by the instrumental works of Beethoven and Mozart:

Once a week, there was quartet music. Ears, soul and thought were filled with the grand musical poems of Beethoven and Mozart.... It was as if a kiss of fire traveled

¹⁴ Hans Christian Andersen, *Dagbøger*. VIII: 1866–1870, ed. by Kirsten Weber (København: Gad, 1975) 134.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 8, 134.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 8, 134.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 303 (1 December 1869).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 362.

¹⁹ Another 19th-century author who used the idea of music historiography in the writing of novels was George Eliot. For an in-depth study of Eliot's references to music in *Daniel Deronda* see Ruth A. Solie, "'Tadpole pleasures': *Daniel Deronda* as music historiography," *Yearbook of comparative and general literature* 45–46 (1997–98) 87–104.

down [Peer's] spine and shot through all his nerves. His eyes filled with tears. Every musical evening here [in the salon] was a festive evening for him that made a deeper impression upon him than any opera in the theater, where ... imperfections are revealed. Sometimes the words do not come out right.... Sometimes the effect is weakened by faults in dramatic expression.... Lack of truthfulness in stage settings and costumes are also observed. But all this was absent from the quartet. The musical poems rose in all their grandeur ... here he was in the world of music that its masters had created.²⁰

As one discovers upon reading *Lykke Peer*, the significance of the hero's name is multifaceted. He is "lucky" for many reasons, some of which turn out to be quite surprising. Peer encounters the passing of time as well as his own relationship to a larger sense of history. In fact, the description of his music education serves as a rough narrative of the evolution of French opera in the 19th century. The first role Peer's singing master asks him to learn is that of John Brown in Boieldieu's *La Dame blanche*. The singing master then leads him to Gounod's *Faust*. Eventually Peer discovers the music of Wagner and, against the wishes of his teacher, sings the lead in *Lohengrin*, which sets him on a new artistic path.

The music of the future, as the new movement in opera is called, and for which Wagner in particular is a banner-bearer, had a defender and admirer in our young friend. He found here characters so clearly drawn, passages so full of thought, and the entire action characterized by forward movement, without any pause or frequent repetition of melodies.²¹

But the old singing master is not persuaded: "I bow to the ingenuity that lies in this new musical movement," he states, "but I do not dance with you before that golden calf."²² He would prefer to hear Peer sing the role of Don Ottavio in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.

It should be noted that in addition to being a strong promoter of music's glorious past, Peer's singing master is a Jew. Andersen took great care in developing this character. After witnessing the effect that anti-Semitism had on friends like the Melchior and the Henriques, Andersen made every effort to learn as much as he could about the Talmud and Judaism in an effort to present the character of the singing master in a respectful manner.²³ We first learn of the singing master's religion in chapter 11, when Peer and his teacher are having a conversation about the benefits of being generous:

One evening [the singing master] read aloud from the newspaper about the beneficence of two men, which then led him to speak about good deeds and their reward.

"When one does not think about it, it is sure to come. The rewards for good deeds are like the dates spoken of in the Talmud: they ripen late and only then are they sweet."

"Talmud?" asked Peer. "What sort of book is that?"

²⁰ Hans Christian Andersen, *Lykke Peer* (Borgen: Danske Sprog- og Litteraturselskab, 2000) 57.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 57.

²² *Ibid.*, 76.

²³ Andersen apparently read a Danish translation of the *Talmud*, and on 15 May 1879 he recorded in his diary that he had read Goldschmidt's study on "Jewish sagas". Andersen, *Dagbøger*, vol. 8, 368. For more information on Andersen's interest in Judaism, see: W. Glyn Jones, "Andersen and those of other faiths", *Hans Christian Andersen: A poet in time. Papers from the Second International Hans Christian Andersen Conference, 29 July to 2 August 1996*, ed. by Johan de Mylius, Aage Jørgensen, and Viggo Hjørnager Pedersen (Odense: Odense University Press, 1999) 259–70.

“A book from which more than one seed of thought has been implanted in Christianity,” was the answer.

“Who wrote the book?”

“Wise men in ancient times—wise men from various nations and religions. Here wisdom is preserved in a few words, as in Solomon’s Proverbs. What kernels of truth! One reads here that men from all over the world, for many centuries, have remained the same. ‘Your friend has a friend, and your friend’s friend has a friend; be discreet in what you say!’ is found here. It is a piece of wisdom for all times. ‘No one can jump over his own shadow!’ is here also, and ‘Wear shoes when you tread on thorns!’ You ought to read this book. You will find in it the proof of culture more clearly than you will find in the layers of soil. For me as a Jew, moreover, it is an inheritance from my forefathers.”

“Jew?” said Peer. “Are you a Jew?”

“You didn’t know that? How strange that we have never spoken about it before today!”

[Peer’s] mother and grandmother didn’t know anything about it either. They had never thought about it, but had always known that the singing master was an honorable, wonderful man.²⁴

This excerpt tells us much about Andersen’s image of the Jewish singing master. It also refutes the racial slurs made in Wagner’s “Das Judentum in der Music”. As this excerpt reveals, one cannot tell by any physical attributes or specific Semitic characteristics that the singing master is any different from Peer and his Christian relatives. The singing master’s religion is also of little consequence to Peer, who believes that music is the new universal religion. As Peer explains during a conversation with Felix’s mother, the opera house and theater have become the new pulpits of the Lord, and “most people listen more there than in church”.²⁵ Most importantly, Andersen tries to show, through the virtuous character of the singing master, that a good citizen should be judged by his actions and benevolent nature, not according to his race or choice of religion. In *Lykke Peer* Andersen goes to great lengths to show that the singing master’s Jewish heritage is as culturally valid and respectable as his love of Mozart’s opera. In this way, Andersen effectively rewrites Wagner’s vision of the Jews’ role in music history.

But back to the story: When Peer finally makes his *début* in *Lohengrin*, his talent is celebrated with great acclaim. Yet he is still unsatisfied. Inspired by Wagner’s ability to write both libretto and score, Peer decides to write an opera himself based on the story of Aladdin. In fact, he surpasses Wagner, for he also sings the leading role in his new opera. When Peer’s opera is finally performed, the audience is mesmerized.

A few chords sounded from the orchestra, and the curtain rose.... The strains of music arrested the attention of everyone as the scene was revealed, the scene in which Aladdin stood in a wondrous garden. Soft, subdued music sounded from flowers and stones, from streams and deep caverns, various melodies blending into one great harmony. An air of spirits was heard in the chorus. It was now far away, now near, swelling in might and then dying away. Arising from this harmony was the song of Aladdin.... The resonant, sympathetic voice, the intense music of the heart subdued all listeners

²⁴ Andersen, *Lykke Peer*, 59–60.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 72.

and seized them with such rapture that it could not rise higher when he reached for the lamp of fortune that was embraced by the song of spirits.²⁶

Notice that when Andersen described Peer's performance, he replicated the dream states described by writers such as Baudelaire in reaction to Wagner's music.²⁷ This implementation of a dream-inspired mood effectively sets the stage for the novel's final scene. After singing the lead role in *Aladdin*, Peer returns to the stage and greets the audience:

Bouquets rained down from all sides; a carpet of living flowers was spread out before his feet. What a moment of life for the young artist – the highest, the greatest! A mightier one could never again be granted him, he felt. A wreath of laurel touched his breast and fell down in front of him.... A fire rushed through him; his heart swelled as never before; he bowed, took the wreath, pressed it against his heart, and at the same time fell backward. Fainted? Dead? What was it? The curtain fell.

"Dead!" resounded through the house. Dead in the moment of his triumph – like Sophocles at the Olympic Games, like Thorvaldsen in the theater during Beethoven's symphony. An artery in his heart had burst, and like a flash of lightning, his days here were ended; ended without pain, ended in an earthly triumph, in the fulfillment of his mission on earth. Lykke Peer! More fortunate than millions!²⁸

This is the final paragraph of the novel. It is a subtle reflection on the artist's connection to society. Peer is lucky, because he won't know the pain of a biting critique. He will never know his place in music history. Looking at the novel as a whole, we see that Andersen used the musical development of young Peer as a means of highlighting the generation gap he noticed developing among Danish audiences. In the characters of Peer and the singing master, the reader not only recognizes a contrast between Christian and Jew, modern and traditional, but also the impetuosity of youth versus the reliable foundation offered by maturity and tradition. Peer and the singing master stand as the ideals of music's future. While Peer pushes forward, striving eternally for the inventive and new, the singing master preserves the treasures of the past, ensuring that their beauty is passed on to the next generation.

Many of Andersen's friends and colleagues reacted strongly to the ideas about music presented in *Lykke Peer*. Although they recognized that Peer and the singing master were not to be interpreted as exact copies of Wagner and Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, they nonetheless understood that some parallels could be made. Influenced by the music of Wagner, Peer stood as the antithesis of his wealthy friend Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, just as the Jewish singing master was meant to be interpreted as the musical opposite of Wagner. Constructing his cast of characters in this manner enabled Andersen both to praise the music of Wagner and separate himself from the composer's distasteful anti-Semitism.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 89–90.

²⁷ For a more in-depth look at the reception of Wagner in Paris by writers such as Baudelaire, see Katherine Ellis, *Music criticism in nineteenth-century France: "La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris", 1834–80* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Jocelyne Loncke, *Baudelaire et la musique* (Paris: A.G. Nizet, 1975); and Margaret Miner, *Resonant gaps between Baudelaire & Wagner* (Athens, Ga.: The University of Georgia Press, 1995).

²⁸ Andersen, *Lykke Peer*, 90. For a discussion of this unusual ending, see Frank Hugus, "The ironic inevitability of death: Hans Christian Andersen's *Lykke Peer*," *Hans Christian Andersen: A poet in time*, 527–40.

When Andersen died in 1875, *Lykke Peer* was embraced as his last great opus—his ultimate statement on the role of music in society. Combining the ideas of figures as diverse as Ørsted, Baudelaire, and Wagner with his own quest for immortality, Andersen offered younger generations a view of the future that embraced both innovation and tradition. Indeed the future of the arts would be a careful balance of old and new. As the plot of *Lykke Peer* subtly explains, figures such as Mozart and Beethoven would no doubt live forever, but each age would also have its own temporary Wagner, Andersen, or Peer.

