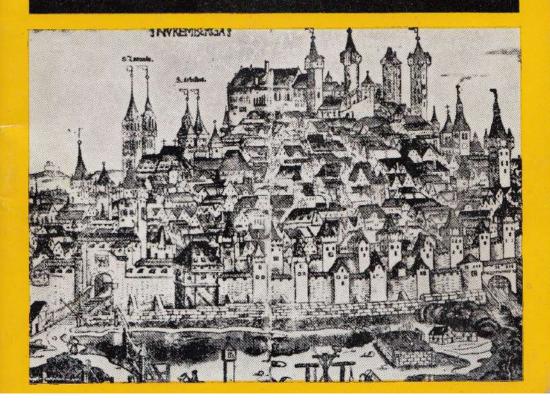
The Mastersingers of Nuremberg

Wagner



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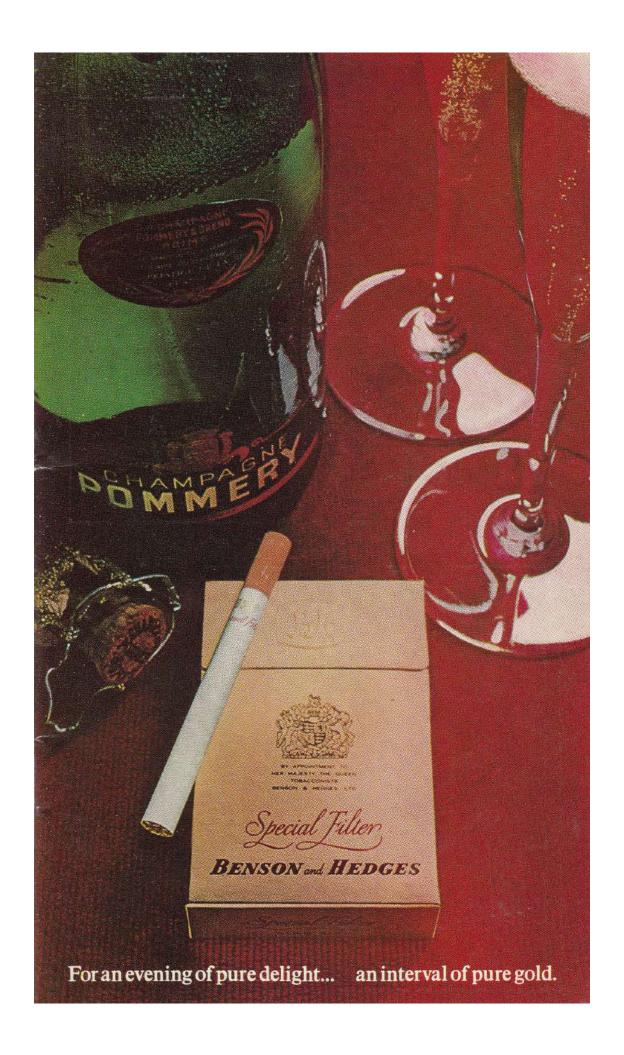
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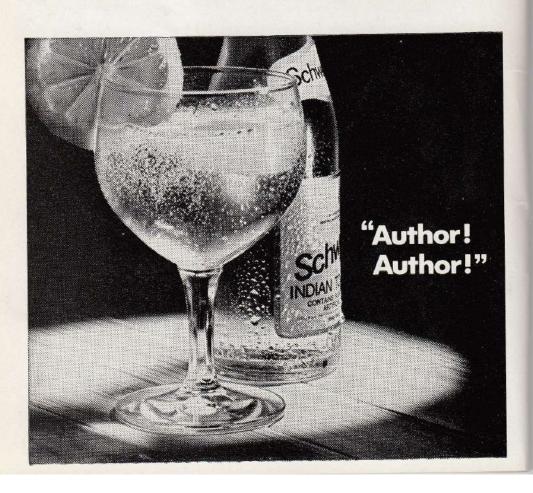
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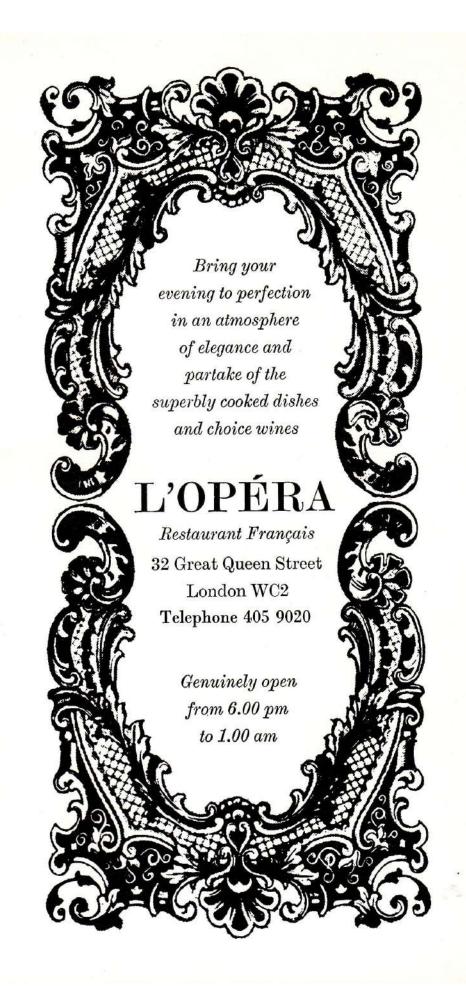
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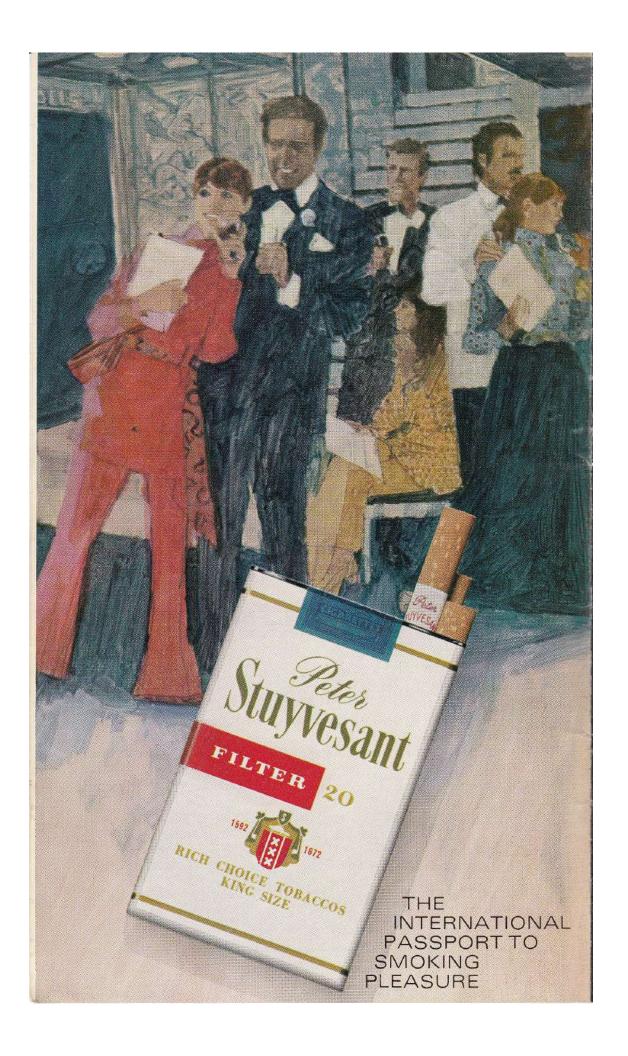
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The Mastersingers of Nuremberg

An Opera in Three Acts by Richard Wagner

English Translation by Frederick Jameson Revised by Norman Feasey and Gordon Kember

'Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg' was first produced at The Royal Court Theatre, Munich, on June 21, 1868. The first performance in England was at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane in 1882. This production was first performed at Sadler's Wells Theatre on January 31, 1968.

Ernest Newman on the background to The Mastersingers

The Opera-goer without any first-hand knowledge of the German Mastersingers must not take them at Wagner's valuation. He was writing a lusty comedy, not a specialist treatise, and he exercised to the full the comic dramatist's or novelist's right to use only so much of the historical material lying to his hand as suits his purpose, and occasionally to exaggerate the comicalities of it for his own ends. When he conceived the idea of an opera on the subject in 1845 he could have known not much more about the Mastersingers than he had derived from a reading of Gervinus's History of German National Literature (1826); and it is evident from his own account that what most interested him at that time in connection with them was the opportunities for fun they presented him with. They caught him on the rebound, as it were, from the deeply serious mood induced in him by his absorption in the ethical milieu of the Lohengrin and Parsifal epics: and just then he wanted nothing more from the Marker and the apprentices and the rest of the Nuremberg crew than material for kindly laughter.

But as the years went on, the subject struck deeper and deeper roots into him. The character of Sachs took on a graver tinge; a philosophy, if not of actual pessimism, at any rate of resignation, slowly spread its grey veil over the central motive of the action; so that just before the first performance of the work (in Munich in 1868), he could write to King Ludwig in this strain: 'It is impossible that you should not have sensed, under the opera's quaint superfices of popular humour, the profound melancholy, the lament, the cry of distress of poetry in chains, and its re-incarnation, its new birth, its irresistible magic power achieving mastery over the common and the base.' This was a vast expansion and a decided retinting of his own first feeling with regard to the work some twenty-three years earlier . . .

His first Prose Sketch for *The Mastersingers* is dated 'Marienbad, 16 July 1845': it is very detailed, running to some twelve pages in the modern imprint. A Second Sketch, equally rich in detail, was

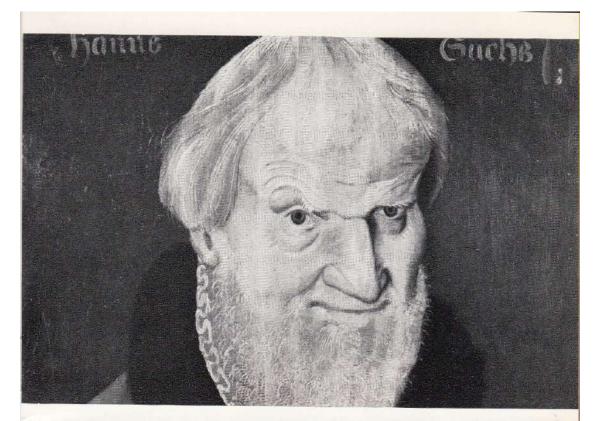
Opposite: Hans Sachs by Herneisen

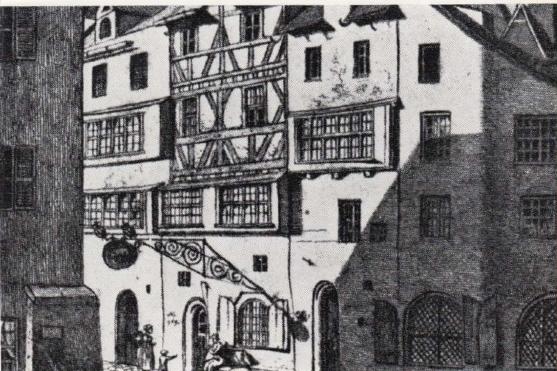


made in Vienna in October 1861. As there was no hope at that time of Tristan being produced in Vienna for at least another twelve months, Wagner told Bülow on the 17th December, he felt he ought to set to work at something new and different. He turned in horror from a 'passionate' subject of the Tristan type, with all that it would involve in the way of knocking his new ideas into the noddle of a tenor. But by good luck, he said, his thoughts had suddenly reverted to 'my old plan for a Mastersingers of Nuremberg'. He found his memories of that plan astonishingly fresh, and his imagination at once began to play upon it. He had already broached the scheme for 'a popular comic opera' to his publisher Schott on the 30th October. The 'jovial-poetic' hero of it was to be Hans Sachs; it would be full of drollery, light in style, and easily staged; he particularly congratulated himself on the fact that 'this time I shall need neither a so-called first tenor nor a great tragic soprano', the difficulty of finding which rare birds had been the main cause for the long delay in producing Tristan...

For the Second Sketch Wagner sought out more material than had been available to him in 1845. He made a close study of Jakob Grimm's Ueber den altdeutschen Meistergesang (1811), a book into which he had probably dipped, however, in the 1840's; and through Peter Cornelius he obtained the loan of Wagenseil's Nuremberg Chronicle from the Vienna Imperial Library. This curious old book was for a long time almost the only source of information about the Nuremberg Mastersingers and their school rules. The famous Chronicle was not published until 1697, by which time the art of Mastersong was well in decline in Nuremberg and elsewhere; Wagenseil based himself, however, on manuscripts of an earlier epoch, and his account of the mid-sixteenth century Masters and their rules is reliable. The bulk of his curious volume is devoted to a history and description (in Latin) of the ancient town of Nuremberg: it is only in the last hundredand-fifty pages or so that he settles down to set forth (in German) the 'Origins, Practice, Utility and Rules of the Gracious Art of the Mastersingers'.

From Wagenseil Wagner now made copious extracts, which are today printed in full at the end

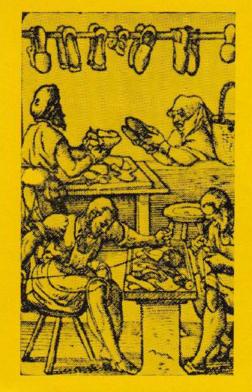




Above: Hans Sachs by Herneisen, 1576 Below: Hans Sachs's house by Klein

of his Second Sketch. He jotted down for his own use the names of twelve 'old Nuremberg Masters': the list agrees with that of the Masters who appear in the opera, except that there he changes the first name of the historic Fritz Zorn to Balthasar and dispenses with one Nikolaus Vogel, making up the intended round dozen, however, by including Sachs... He copied out with comic gusto the rules - the 'Tabulatur' - that governed the Mastersong, the list of the various 'faults' for which the Marker debited a candidate with this or that number of points, the list of the Mastersinger 'Tones', and the quaint definitions of the various types of rhymes. It was on the basis of all this that he constructed David's exposition of the rules of the Mastersong in the first act of the opera, the faults noted by Beckmesser's, and Kothner's formal reading of the Tabulatur to the young knight before he embarks on his 'Trial'.

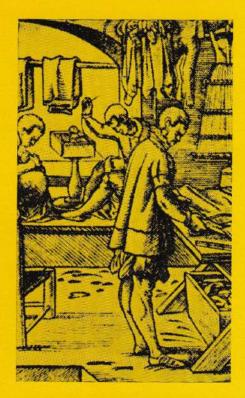
As we have just seen, the names of the Masters given in his list of dramatis personae are authentic enough; but the spectator of the opera must not take it for granted that the bearers of those names were in real life merely the uncouth figures of fun he sees on the stage. Wagner, for one thing, follows his own fancy in the trades he allots to them. Wagenseil gives only their names; but Adam Puschman (1532-1600) supplies us with the real occupations of some of them. Wagner makes Kothner a baker; actually he was a clasp or pin-maker. So was Hermann Ortel, who in the opera sinks to a soap-boiler. The historical Ulrich Eisslinger was not, as in the opera, a grocer but a timber merchant, and Friedrich Zorn not a pewterer but a nail-maker. These people were probably not artisans, in the sense in which Wagner employs that term, but well-to-do business men; for Nuremberg was a rich and handsome city, and there was a great demand in it for good building materials, fine metal work, handsome furniture, artistic pottery and so on. Wagner's 'tinsmith', 'coppersmith', 'tailor', 'stocking-weaver', etc. are pure fancy; nor is there any historical justification for his making Beckmesser the Town Clerk or for depicting him as a comic and stupid pedant. The melodies of his preserved for posterity by Puschman show him to have been no worse a





Woodcuts of German Crafts by Ammann, 1568







Above right: Tailor Below: Potter



The central market place of Nuremberg by Strauch, 1600

composer than the majority. (Wagner, following Wagenseil, gives him the forename of Sixtus; according to Puschman it was Sigismondus, abbreviated for ordinary purposes to Six). We possess also authentic specimens of the melodies of Nachtigall, Eisslinger, Kothner, Ortel, Vogelgesang, Zorn, Foltz, a certain Bogner, and, of course, Hans Sachs. Foltz and Nachtigall appear to have had a genuine melodic vein of their own; the former's setting of a poem on the theme of death is a really creditable piece of work.

As has just been pointed out, the Mastersingers were by no means the monsters of bourgeois absurdity which the spectators of Wagner's opera can too easily assume them to have been. They had done much good work throughout the generations, and their rules and faults and definitions were simply the codified results of long experience; it

goes without saying, indeed, that no Guild of mere pedantic dunderheads could have earned and kept the respect of the intelligent people all over Germany for so long a stretch of time. Their intentions, seen at their best, were a combination of those of, say, the French Academy, the prosodist, the grammarian, the musical Conservatoire, and the adjudicators at a competition festival ... Wagner had not been the first in the field with some of the elements of the plot of The Mastersingers. Sachs had already figured as the hero of a drama, Hans Sachs, by a now forgotten dramatist of the name of Johann Ludwig Ferdinand Deinhardstein (1794–1859): the play had been produced in 1827. It is to be presumed that Wagner had read it; but he could have obtained from it very little for his own purposes except the idea of showing the poetic cobbler in love and at variance with his fellow-poets ...

Wagner may have been indebted for a hint here and there to two or three other German plays and novels of the early nineteenth century. Although there must have been stories from time immemorial of the offering of a maiden's hand as prize in a contest of some kind or other, he may guite possibly have been influenced in the shaping of the central motive of his opera by E. T. A. Hoffmann's well-known tale of Master Martin the Cooper and his Men. From the same writer's Signor Formica he may have taken the idea of Beckmesser coming to grief through his overeagerness to pass off some one else's work as his own in order to make sure of winning a prize; and it is on the cards that he may have known Deinhardstein's bright little comedy Salvator Rosa (1823), which is a dramatised version of the Hoffmann tale. Deinhardstein's Hans Sachs was made into an opera for Lortzing by Philipp Reger and Philipp Düringer: the work was produced in 1840, and his Dresden period. All these odds and ends of fact, however, while necessary to complete the historical record, do not make the Mastersingers anyone's work but Wagner's. We are reminded of the research that has proved that this phrase and that of the Austrian national hymn is to be found in this or that popular melody of the period, and of a modern German writer's sensible summing up that

Characters

Hans Sachs Veit Pogner Kunz Vogelgesang Konrad Nachtigall Sixtus Beckmesser Fritz Kothner

Balthasar Zorn Ulrich Eisslinger Augustin Moser Hermann Ortel Hans Schwarz Hans Foltz Walther von Stolzing

David Eva Magdalene Night Watchman

Conductor **Producers**

Scenery Costumes Lighting Choreographer **Norman Bailey Clifford Grant** Robin Donald Julian Moyle

Derek Hammond Stroud

David Bowman John Brecknock Francis Egerton. Peter Bamber **James Singleton** Gerwyn Morgan Eric Stannard Alberto Remedios **Gregory Dempsey Margaret Curphey** Ann Robson

Reginald Goodall Glen Byam Shaw and

John Blatchley Motley

Stafford Dean

David Walker Charles Bristow Harry Haythorne

Reginald Goodall appears by permission of the General Administrator, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.

There will be two intervals, the first of fifteen minutes, the second of forty-five minutes.

The Company at the Coliseum

James Singleton

Old Fisherman and Gentilien, The Violins of St Jacques; Marcel, La Bohème; Ali, The Italian Girl in Algiers; Don Carlos, The Force of Destiny; Sharpless, Madam Butterfly; Morales, Carmen; Georges Germont, La Traviata.

Gerwyn Morgan

Count Ceprano, Rigoletto; Alcade, The Force of Destiny; Mountjoy, Gloriana.

Eric Stannard

Crespel, The Tales of Hoffmann; Leander, The Love of Three Oranges; Basilo, The Barber of Seville; Alcindoro, La Bohème; Blind Ballad Singer, Gloriana; Bartolo, The Marriage of Figaro; Marquis of Calatrava, The Force of Destiny; Major-domo, Ariadne on Naxos; Frosch, Die Fledermaus; Trulove, The Rake's Progress; Sarastro, The Speaker, and Second Priest, The Magic Flute; Count Monterone, Rigoletto; Rocco, Leonora.

Alberto Remedios

Faust, The Damnation of Faust; Siegmund, The Valkyrie.

Francis Egerton Ajax 1, La Belle Hélène; Basilo, The Marriage of Figaro; Frosch,

Die Pledermaus; Dancing Master, Ariadne on Naxos; Lindoro, The Italian Girl in Algiers; Title role, Count Ory; Captain Joubert, The Violins of St Jacques; Andreas, Cochenille, Franz, Pitichinaccio,

The Tales of Hoffmann.

Gregory Dempsey Eric, The Flying Dutchman; Tom Rakewell, The Rake's Progress;

Prince, The Love of Three Oranges.

Margaret Curphey Micaela, Carmen; Countess, The Marriage of Figaro; Violetta,

La Traviata; Ninette, The Thieving Magpie; Pamina, The Magic Flute; Marguerite, The Damnation of Faust; Gerhilde, The Valkyrie.

Ann Robson Baroness, La Vie Parisienne; Zulma, The Italian Girl in Algiers;

Speranza, Orfeo; Count Orlofsky, Die Fledermaus; Lucia, The Thieving Magpie; Suzuki, Madam Butterfly; Seigrune, The

Valkyrie; Madame Zelie, The Violins of St Jacques.

Stafford Dean Leporello, Don Giovanni; Pluto and Third Shepherd, Orfeo;

Truffaldino, Ariadne on Naxos; Sarastro, The Magic Flute; Sparafucile, Rigoletto; Daland, The Flying Dutchman.

Norman Bailey Dutchman, The Flying Dutchman; Speaker and Second Priest,

The Magic Flute; Wotan, The Valkyrie; Don Pizarro, Leonora.

Clifford Grant Sarastro, The Magic Flute; Father Guardiano, The Force of Destiny;

Bonze, Madam Butterfly; Hunding, The Valkyrie; Sparafucile, Rigoletto; Basilio, The Barber of Seville; Herald, The Love

of Three Oranges.

Robin Donald Doctor Blind, Die Fledermaus; Borsa, Rigoletto; Gaston, La

Traviata, Konrad Nachtigall, The Mastersingers of Nuremberg; Jacquino, Leonora; Steersman, The Flying Dutchman; Remendado,

Carmen; Nathaniel, The Tales of Hoffmann.

Julian Moyle Taddeo, The Italian Girl in Algiers; Harlequin, Ariadne on Naxos;

Count Oscar, Bluebeard and his Six Wives; Papageno, The Magic Flute; Pantaloon, The Love of Three Oranges; Figaro, The Barber of Seville; Doctor Falke, Die Fledermaus; Dancairo, Carmen.

Derek Hammond Stroud Farfarello, The Love of Three Oranges; Calchas, La Belle Hélène;

Brother Melitone, *The Force of Destiny*; Cecil, *Gloriana*; Lord Chancellor, *Iolanthe*; Papageno, *The Magic Flute*; Reginald

Bunthorne, Patience.

David Bowman Luther, The Tales of Hoffmann; Dancairo, Carmen; Ali, The

Italian Girl in Algiers; Doctor Falke, Die Fledermaus; Baron Duphol, La Traviata; Brother Melitone, The Force of Destiny; Marullo, Rigoletto; Prince Yeletsky, The Queen of Spades; Schaunard, La Bohème; Marcel Sciocca, The Violins of St Jacques; Popolani,

Bluebeard and his Six Wives.

John Brecknock Alfred, Die Fledermaus; Paris, La Belle Hélène; Earl Tolloler,

Iolanthe; First Priest and Armed Man, The Magic Flute; Scaramuccio, Ariadne on Naxos; Lindoro, The Italian Girl in Algiers; Ulrich Eisslinger, The Mastersingers of Nuremberg; Title Role, Count Ory; Captain Joubert, The Violins of St Jacques.

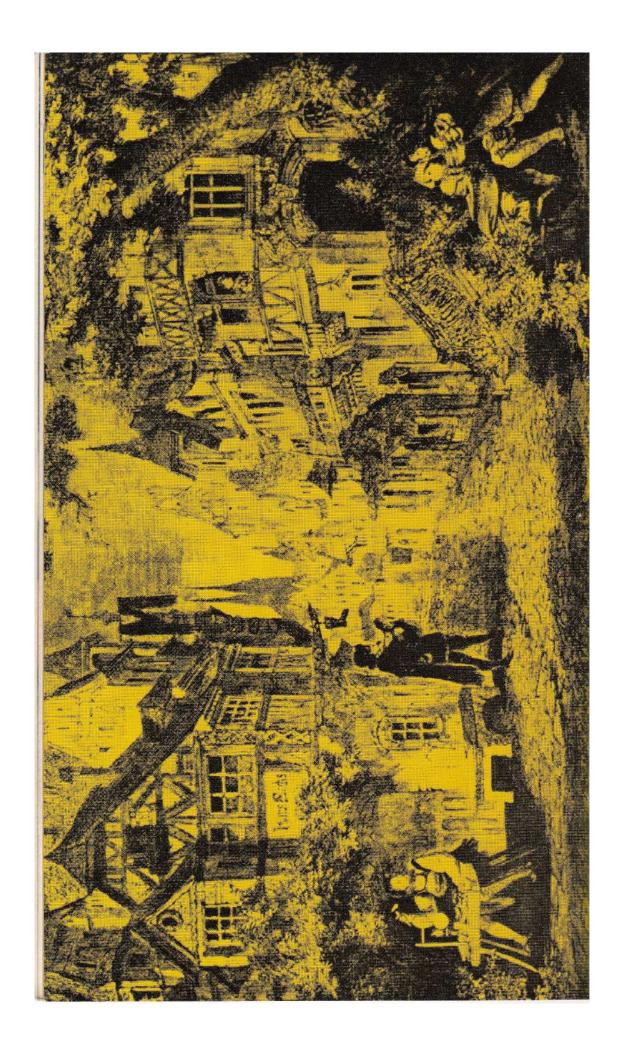




Haydn can be credited with the composition of nothing of the hymn except the whole of it.

The poem of the *Mastersingers* was written in thirty days and finished on the 25th January 1862. It was printed towards the end of that year. The prelude was completed by the third week of April 1862. Wagner set to work at the music to the opera about the same time, but often during the troubled years that followed he was either interrupted for long periods or temporarily lost heart for it. The final note of the full score was not written until the 24th October 1867. The first performance was given in Munich, under Bülow, on the 21st June 1868...

Opposite: Richard Wagner in 1868



. . . There remains Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg. It is difficult to foresee the time when the world will grow indifferent to this music, which conveys so rich a sense of the soundness and goodness of normal human life. To the whole-hearted anti-Wagnerians Meistersinger has always been a problem: the ordinary objections obviously don't apply, and one has the suspicion that, if only it were by somebody else, they too might capitulate. It is difficult for any musician to deny the beauty of workmanship and texture, the inexhaustible variety of invention and device, in a word the Haydn-ish ease of the composition. Wherever we open the score, however seemingly prosaic the stage action, we find a musical tissue, at once symphonic and dramatically relevant, effortlessly spinning itself. The scene in the first act when Kothner calls the roll and the masters severally answer might be expected to reduce any composer to a stretch of bald recitative; but Wagner has made out of it one of his most glowing musical periods, the opening phrase of Kothner's pronouncement blossoming and spreading into long tendrils of melody and counterpoint. As for the art with which these periods are built into musico-dramatic actstructures, it remains one of the marvels of our Western music . . .

Edward Sackville-West and Desmond Shawe-Taylor in The Record Guide

Opposite: A set from the original Munich production of 1868

The Story

Act One

The interior of the Church of St. Catherine in Nuremberg. A young knight, Walther von Stolzing, manages to speak to Eva, with whom he has already fallen in love. He learns that her father, Pogner, the goldsmith, has offered her hand as a prize to the Master who shall prove the victor at the next day's Singing Contest. Eva's companion, Magdalene, is in love with David, apprentice to Hans Sachs, the cobbler-poet, and as she is leaving the church with Eva, she tells David to instruct Walther in the many complicated rules of Mastersinging, so that her mistress may win the man she loves.

The Mastersingers arrive, among them the fussy and pedantic Town Clerk, Sixtus Beckmesser, who also aspires to Eva's hand. He is overjoyed that he is to act as 'Marker' when Walther sings his trial song, for his duty is to mark down all violations of the official rules, and he plays a prominent part in securing the knight's rejection as a candidate for the Contest. The meeting breaks up in confusion and it is only Hans Sachs who discerns the beauties and genius of Walther's song.

Act Two

A street in Nuremberg, Midsummer Eve. As David and the other apprentices are putting up the shutters, Magdalene comes to ask for news of Walther's trial with the Mastersingers. She is dismayed to hear of his failure. Hans Sachs returns to his shop, dismisses David for the night and sets to work to finish a pair of shoes for Beckmesser. Meanwhile, Pogner and Eva have also returned to their own house, which is opposite that of Sachs; after her father has gone indoors, Eva learns the news of Walther's failure from Magdalene, who also tells her that Beckmesser is on his way to serenade her. It is agreed that Magdalene is to dress herself in Eva's cloak and take her place at the window. Walther comes to find Eva. determined to elope with her that evening. Before their plan (which has been overheard by Sachs) can be put into operation, the lovers hear the sound of approaching footsteps and they are compelled to hide. The newcomer is the importunate Beckmesser. As he begins his serenade, Sachs starts to sing a rollicking song from his work-bench. This does not suit

Beckmesser's plan and he invites Sachs to listen to his song and correct its faults. Sachs, acting both as cobbler and 'Marker', hammers on his last throughout Beckmesser's song. The noise wakes David, who begins to cudgel the serenader unmercifully and soon all the neighbours join in the riot. Suddenly the Night Watchman's horn is heard, the confusion subsides, and when the Watchman enters the street is empty.

Act Three

Inside Sachs's workshop the following morning. David sings his verses to his master. After he has gone, Sachs reflects gravely on human folly and the unruly proceedings of the previous night. Walther appears and tells Sachs of a beautiful dream from which he has just awakened, whereupon the cobbler entreats him to sing it to him in the form of a Mastersong. Sachs writes down the words, offering some technical advice from time to time, sensing that here is the song which will undoubtedly win the prize. Sachs and Walther go off to dress for the Festival. Beckmesser, still smarting from his beating the night before, enters and finds the paper on which Sachs has just written the words of Walther's Prize Song. Thinking that Sachs himself has decided to enter the contest, he steals the paper but is surprised by the sudden return of the cobbler, who, realising what has happened, gives him the words of the song. Beckmesser retires in triumph, thinking that with a poem by the great Sachs, he is sure to be the winner. Eva comes with the excuse that her new shoes are hurting her. Walther returns and, at the sight of Eva, is inspired to sing the final verse of his song. Magdalene and David appear, and after Sachs has formally promoted the latter from an apprentice to a journeyman, the five voices join in a quintet.

The scene changes to an open space on the banks of the river Pegnitz where all the Guilds are gathered together for the great Festival. Beckmesser is the first to sing, but as he has been quite unable to memorise the words correctly, he fails miserably. Sachs now calls upon Walther to step forward, and his impassioned and inspired performance completely wins the hearts of all his listeners. He is crowned by Eva as the victor of the contest and the opera ends with a jubilant chorus

in praise of Hans Sachs.

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Acknowledgments

The extracts are from Ernest Newman's The Life of Richard Wagner (Cassell Volume Three 1945 and Volume Four 1947), Newman's Wagner Nights (Putnam 1949), and The Record Guide by Edward Sackville-West and Desmond Shawe-Taylor (Collins 1955).

The portrait of Hans Sachs is in the German National Museum in Nuremberg. The picture of Nuremberg in 1867 is from the Radio Times Hulton Picture Library. The picture from Mazeppa is from the Mander and Mitchenson Collection.

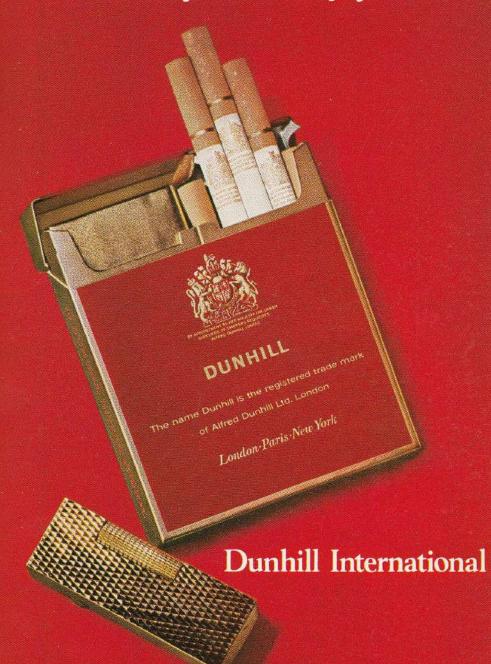
The cover is a woodcut of Nuremberg in 1493.

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- 1 The public may leave at the end of the performance by all exit doors and such doors must at that time be open.
- 2 All gangways, passages and staircases must be kept entirely free from chairs or any other obstruction.
- 3 Persons shall not under any circumstances be permitted to stand or sit in any of the gangways. If standing be permitted, in the gangways at the sides and rear of the seating, it shall be strictly limited to the number indicated in the notices exhibited in those positions.
- 4 The safety curtain must be lowered and raised in the presence of each audience.

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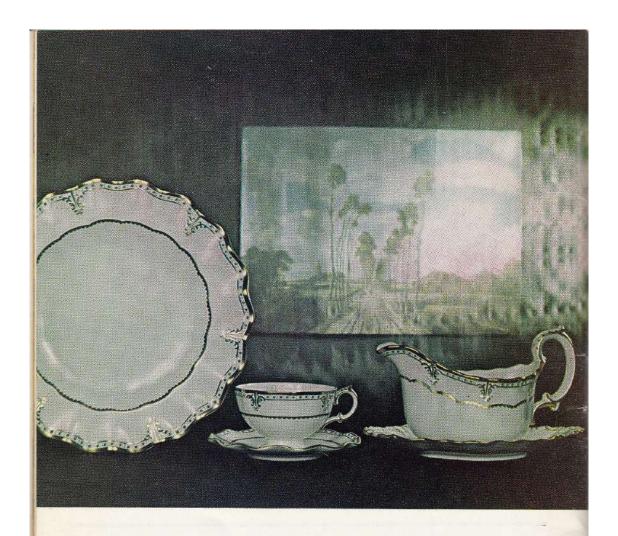


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How Crown Derby became Royal

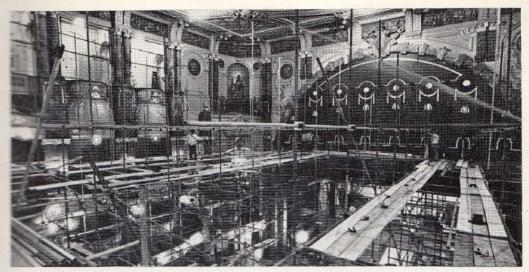
Two hundred years ago, when bone china began to grace the finest tables, King George III granted William Duesbury, the creator of Derby China, the distinction of his patronage and, in 1773, Derby China was marked with his crown.

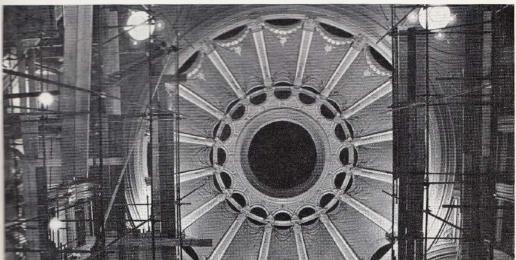
Over a hundred years later, Queen Victoria fell in love with this exquisite china whose unrivalled beauty she so admired. Her Majesty commanded that it should be known as Royal Crown Derby... and so it has been from that day on.

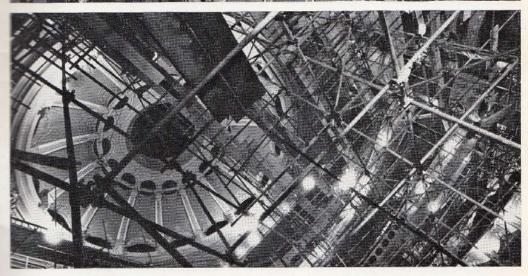
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