

## **Bayreuth: A History of the Wagner Festival**

Frederic Spotts

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The operatic festival Richard Wagner founded at Bayreuth in 1876 is the oldest, most famous and most influential in the world. Its productions and musical standards have been a model for opera houses everywhere, and Bayreuth has become a place of pilgrimage for music lovers, and the ultimate objective for singers and conductors. The story of the festival is however not just about an opera house but about a family, a society and an art form. The creation of a fervent German chauvinist, Bayreuth came to epitomize the tortured development of the German nation after unification in 1871. The festival became a citadel of racism and reaction, and the cultural showpiece of the Third Reich and Hitler's artistic centre. Here for the first time is a full-scale, serious, narrative account of the festival, based on wide-ranging research and interviews, which explains the political, managerial, social and artistic context of the Festival. It provides candid, sharply-etched portraits of the members of the Wagner family, their friends, enemies and critics, and of the controversy that has characterised it for over a century.

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