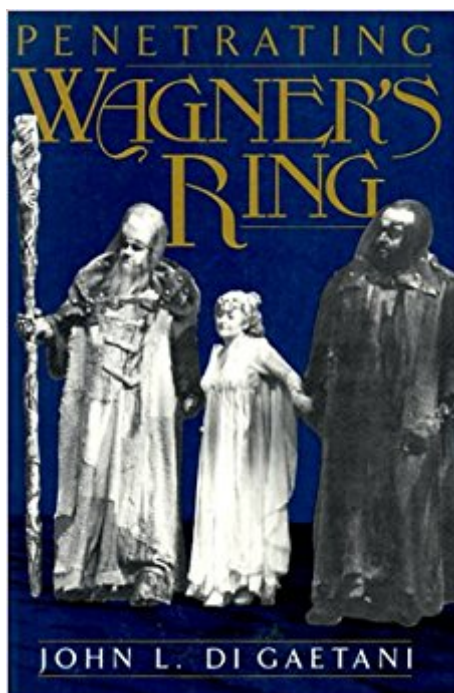


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Penetrating Wagner's Ring (Da Capo Paperback)



Synopsis

Wagner's Ring cycle - "The Ring of the Niebelung" - has been described as one of the most enduring of operatic spectacles. This collection has brought together writings on the Ring and includes articles by George Bernard Shaw, Georg Solti and Andrew Porter, excerpts from Wagner's own letters and works and discourses by over 30 other writers. Covered is the tetralogy of the Ring - "Das Rheingold", "Die Walkure", "Siegfried" and "Goetterdaemmerung" - in essays on Wagner's intention, the theory behind it, its interpretation, artistic backgrounds, historical influences, literary sources, musical architecture, modern stagings, the "Ring" in English and various styles of performance. The book is designed to serve as an introduction to the "Ring" as well as a companion to fans and performers of Wagner's operas.

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Customer Reviews

Until recently, Wagner's ring has been difficult for most of us to penetrate. Access to his darkest area has traditionally been restricted to those lucky few capable of maintaining strong, determined strokes of scholarly investigation. Happily, DiGaetani provides everyone - including the most intellectually well-endowed amongst us - with the tools needed to effortlessly prize apart Wagner's ring and plunder its forbidden contents. DiGaetani's main thrust shows that perseverance and a firm-hand are all that is needed to enter Wagner. Oiled with this literary lubricant, you will find yourself repeatedly sliding deep into Wagner's ring until a satisfying climax is reached.

Please, somebody change the title of this book

Wagner's Ring is, admittedly, not easy for the uninitiated to penetrate. The tight composition conceals its dark, primal secrets, sluiced with heroic blood. It is also exceedingly long, and the unwary explorer, even one mightily endowed with musician erudition, can become lost in its complex folds. However, Di Gaetani's treatment of this rare and sensitive circle provides ample intellectual lubrication for those who, in the words of the great philosopher Cobb, wish to "go deeper." After you have read this book, your resolve will stiffen, and you will find yourself plunging into the all-encompassing Ring again, and again, and again, and again, until the grand crescendo washes over you and you are entirely spent. As was true in the days when Germanic gods and heroes walked the earth, once you have possessed the Ring, you will feel ready to dominate the entire world.

I have to say I disagree with the reviews thus far. Having always been a big fan of the Ring, I felt this little escapade was a bit lacking in stimulation. For such an emotional work, this felt way too mechanical; I just didn't feel any of the romance, and quite frankly, it left a bad taste in my mouth. It was way too difficult to get into, for starters. There are just so many problems with the layout; it tries to do something the writer just wasn't flexible enough to convey and it made everything sort of painful and... just work instead of leisure. It's a very claustrophobic and tight read, bogged down with way too many little technical details, and there just wasn't any rhythm to it at all; it just sort of jumps around all over the place. As if the opera itself wasn't long enough, it took me forever to get anything out of "Penetrating Wagner's Ring" and it felt like I was doing all the work and that the author hadn't put much effort into it. I was the most disappointed with the ending, though. It just sort of fizzled and there was no climax at all! In the end I ended up tossing it off the bed and watching "The Whole Nine Yards" which destroys Wagner's Ring any day. All in all, I give it two out of five stars. I stuck it out til the very end, meaning there were at least some qualities about it I found endearing; if it was totally worthless I would have just quit half-way through. I think if Wagner was alive today he would be sorely disappointed with what people are doing to his Ring.

As a young lad more comfortable "shaking my booty" at a big club, I concede that I'm a bit tight when it comes to the fine points of opera. Fortunately my worldly wife has given me a foot up, and together I'm proud that we've managed to lick a few of the tougher ones. Alas, this bloated tome of

intellectual guff does little to spread Willy Wagner's Ringsicle (as my wife affectionately calls it) to a wider audience. And I had such big hopes that it would explode the famous preconceptions of the Ring as being accessible only to stiffs and boffins! I have been invited to the opera by Di Gaetani on previous occasions, and I can still feel how generous his endowment is to the Arts. There's no doubt that his love of the piece flows liberally through the book as he lets the authors show off their insides and analyses. Editorially, however, the strained effort to connect their diverging perspectives leaves me only with a meandering mess: and worst, a blown opportunity to crack the ADD generation. For instance, while out watching the spectacle with my wife I tried and failed to insert myself into the action using this guide as a kind of "theatrical lubricant". As a seasoned goer (to the opera), my missus quickly relieved herself of any responsibility, but I had to pull the plug early, leaving deflated -- thanks to this bumf! Although I couldn't put my finger on any particular offending article in this collection, the rub is that my head was sore from trying to absorb the highbrow material. At least comfort comes from knowing that I can get through the end of Tristan and Isolde without losing my bottle.

Ah yes, for years I have longed to penetrate Wagner's ring, and this book finally showed me how. I have now penetrated *very* deeply, and it certainly is a good feeling. As with any profound penetration (especially relating to the ring!) it was a little difficult at first, but with a little perseverance I was able to get really lost inside the incredible ring. I don't know how Wagner himself would feel if he were alive today, having his long-impregnable ring so thoroughly penetrated, but I have a feeling the old devil might be satisfied that his monumental ring finally got the treatment it deserves.

Never have I seen 'The Ring' better penetrated. I have read several books on this subject and I have to say that this is the definitive guide. Although long gone, Wagner's Ring will forever remain in memory, due in no small part to this text. It's a book you can definitely get stuck into! Joe Reaney

FOOTNOTE: Little confused as to why there is a Klingon on the front cover.

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