

The Musician and Philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche – Sydney Conservatorium of Music (Series: Elective Affinities, March 27 2014)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening and welcome to our performance presentation of some of the music of Friedrich Nietzsche, the Nietzsche friend Gustav Krug and the Nietzsche friend-foe Richard Wagner. The program and its mode of conception and presentation are the result of an ongoing interest in “elective affinities” between music and philosophy. “Elective affinities” is originally the title of a novel by Goethe from 1809. In this book, human lives change and are changed as a result of intuitively articulated affinities. The relationship between the characters in this book is one of chemical or alchemistic attraction. It has experimental characteristics. It suggests that human life and human living is not understood by theoretical or arms-length reflection. Kierkegaard, the Danish philosopher reminds us of this, when he writes in his journal in 1843: “It is perfectly true, as philosophers say, that life must be understood backwards. But they forget the other proposition, that it must be lived forwards” and he continues..”And if one thinks over that proposition it becomes more and more evident that life can never really be understood in time simply because at no particular moment can I find the necessary resting place from which to understand it- backwards.”

Goethe’s “Elective Affinities” are an attempt to show the logic, the dynamic and “energeia”, the actuality in human lives and human relationships. His method is narrative and phenomenological – it tells the story of characters and naturally emerging “affinities” – chemical-like affinities which change people’s life, enlighten their understanding and existence either directly as a result of their decisions and actions or indirectly as a result of the decisions and action of others. At the same time it makes clear that the very context and possibility of life is not determined by what happens – it is determined by what we imagine can-, should or must happen and that such imagination is the function of our character and its immanent orientation.

The narrative of the “Elective Affinities” inspired thinkers following Goethe into the 20th century. People like Max Weber, the sociologist, who thought it could provide us with a clearer understanding and logic of social life. And also people like the 20th century philosopher Theodor Adorno who refers to it more abstractly to try to explain circumstances where our intuitions suggest that we encounter sympathy and connection, but where our theoretical understanding is yet to catch up with such intuition. The case in point here for Adorno and others is the relationship between music and philosophy... two activities provided according to classical understanding for us by the “muses” – peculiar beings in Greek mythology, daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne (memory). The muses provide the power variously of conviction, they “know enough to make up lies which are convincing, but... also have the skill... to speak the truth.” (Hesiod, *Theognis*) Music and philosophy have to do with truth, variously and in seemingly complex ways and we sense that they are somehow actively connected, that they can inform each other and that they may even provide each other with a sense of completion.

Philosophers have often recognised this connection. Plato famously so, in alleging that significant aspects of music and its practices lead to a corruption of truth. Others, particularly in the wake of late 18th, early 19th century Romanticism, in a way that emphasizes truth disclosure and even higher truth disclosure. The Romantic poet Novalis directs our attention to music in this way when he states “..wherof one speaks, one does not know” (*..wovon man spricht, man hat es nicht..*Novalis, *Schriften* II 671). Such declaration of the limits of language in truth-saying leads readily to a view that music and art, with their various capacities to gather truth in silence may reach beyond language in their articulation of truth- however that may be achieved. The 19th century becomes pre-occupied with this question, a direct result of what some considered to be the failure of enlightenment to tackle the question of the explanatory powers of our mind and its reason convincingly. The philosopher Immanuel Kant made the most intense foray into the important question of what and under what conditions we can know. Some thinkers following Kant will allege that Kant not only failed in his answers. He did not even conceive the question properly, because he

essentially ignored the phenomenon under investigation- the phenomenon of life with its incoherent and inconceivable “logic”, with its temporality and its rootedness in power, quest for survival and overcoming.

Indicative of this failure is our lack of understanding of the temporal and transient art of music. Music offers itself as a metaphor of life – however, the enlightenment’s aesthetic conclusion, Kant’s aesthetic conclusion at least positions music merely as a decorative art – the “beautiful play of sensations-purposeful without purpose”. It takes philosophers with an intense pathos and an intense interest in music itself to unleash the power of music back onto philosophy and to recognise its relevance to understand life itself.

(I)

Friedrich Nietzsche was one such thinker. Born in 1844 in Roecken (near Leipzig) into the family of a protestant minister, theology and music became an early and decisive influence in his life. Nietzsche’s father is said to have improvised on the piano competently and sang “Lieder” by Robert Schumann. He dies when the young Fritz was merely five years old in 1849 as a result of a disease referred to by doctors as “softening of the brain”. The effects of the disease were horrifying and have a traumatic impact on the young Nietzsche: convulsions, blindness and finally dementia over the period of some months. His death is followed by that of Nietzsche’s younger brother Joseph only months later in 1850, a death the young Nietzsche is supposed to have foreseen in a dream according to his own reports some ten years later. Following the death of her husband, Franziska Nietzsche moved with her two remaining children, Elisabeth and Friedrich into the nearby town of Naumburg where Nietzsche eventually finds later admission to Schulpforta- one of Germany’s leading secondary schools. Naumburg provides the widow and her children with a degree of social support. Nietzsche establishes strong friendships there including with Gustav Krug and Wilhelm Pinder during his time at the Gymnasium in Naumburg. He also commences piano lessons and develops a strong attachment to- and preoccupation with music and poetry which will last a life-time. Together with his friends Pinder and Krug, the fourteen year old forms the “Germania” club to discuss music and literature. Krug particularly comes from a music loving family- while his father is a lawyer their house is a centre of musical life in Naumburg and hosts on occasion a number of well known musicians including Clara and Robert Schumann and Felix Mendelssohn who becomes Gustav (Clemens) Krug’s godfather. With Krug’s cousin Pinder a sensitive and somewhat introverted person Nietzsche shares a keen interest in literature. Through the correspondence with Pinder we know of Nietzsche’s character: Pinder suggests that the death of the father has imbued Nietzsche’s character with a sense of melancholy in which he prefers solitude and the communion with nature to the interaction with people. The Nietzsche biographer and editor of Nietzsche’s “Musikalischer Nachlass”, Curt Paul Janz suggests that Nietzsche’s separation and attachment to solitude is based on the intuitive realisation of a special role he must play in the history of modernity and culture.

In 1859 Nietzsche gains admission on scholarship from the city of Naumburg to Schulpforta, one of Germany’s most distinguished schools built on a classical educational model. Schulpforta had educated the likes of Klopstock and Fichte- leaders of Germany’s spiritual life. It also was a school of regimented discipline which Nietzsche will remember later with horror. Nevertheless, Nietzsche thrives in Schulpforta (after a slow start) and he develops his interest in music and classical studies and its consistent pre-occupations with mythology. He joins the school choir and continues to play piano and compose. He also meets one Ernst Ortlepp, a sixty year old translator of Byron and Shakespeare and a man of eccentric and – by all accounts- undisciplined conduct. Ortlepp becomes a father figure to Nietzsche and in return forms a passionate attachment to the young Nietzsche – “never did I think I would love again” he writes in Nietzsche’s poetry album. Ortlepp was a charismatic piano improviser in the taverns of Schulpforta. His performance of Byronesque “demonic ballades” are reported to have mesmerized his adolescent audiences, however, Ortlepp dies in 1864, Nietzsche’s final year at Schulpforta when he “fell into a ditch in a drunken stupor and broke his neck”. More importantly, Ortlepp had been a political progressive, who met Richard Wagner as early as 1830 and in these heydays of revolutionary and romantic fervour and

nationalistic sentiment had discussed with Wagner and the revolutionary Heinrich Laube the rebirth of antiquity and the emancipation of the flesh. Both Krug, Nietzsche's "oldest brother and friend in arte musica" who introduced an aesthetically reluctant Nietzsche to Wagner's Opera "Tristan" and Ortlepp would have been sources of Nietzsche's early engagement with Wagner.

However, while Nietzsche became increasingly familiar with Wagner during his time in Naumburg and Schulpforta, his own musical taste was significantly more conservative and rather indebted to the music of Schumann, perhaps Beethoven and more classical models. A performance of Handel's "Messiah" for example is often quoted as an inspiration to the fourteen year old to attempt to write oratorio like music and hymns. Be that as it may, Nietzsche had little formal guidance in composition and we would need to describe him as an autodidactic composer particularly in his formative years. He did play piano with some degree of competence and some have remarked on his ability to extemporise – he impressed his friend Deussen and his family during a visit in October 1864 with this ability. But other than that, his compositions would be largely experimental, frequently rhapsodic and challenged by the requirements of larger formal organisation. Remarkable in these are endings on chords other than the tonic, eg. the dominant in *Unendlich* or *Staendchen* and the finish on the subdominant in *Verwelkt*.

Let us hear seven of Nietzsche's songs from his Naumburg years – some of these sent to Marie Deussen, sister of one Nietzsche's school friends as a birthday present and preserved in a collection of 12 songs.

Ungewitter (likely composition in late (November/ December) 1864, to text by Chamisso)

This is a situational description: The old king views his land from the height of his castle to witness the coming thunderstorm – his lover craves his attention, but the king responds: here at this point I am not king with sword and crown- I am powerless, fearful son of tormented times

Nachspiel (late 1864, Petoefy)

An emphasis and affirmation of solitude – Nietzsche changes the text tellingly from "wild solitude of the forrest" to the "wild, beautiful solitude"

Staendchen (Petoefy)

An autumnal setting, a picture of decay – "it is late in time" – but despite the bleak conditions the nightingale sings – the poem finishes beautifully: Listen to what the nightingale sings, it is my love, which sings, it is my soul which rings" (verklingt...fades)

Aus der Jugendzeit (with a text by Friedrich Rueckert, composed likely in 1862, Nietzsche sets verses 1-3 and 8)

Nietzsche sets three stanzas of this poem with its peculiar poetic ambivalence or departure and return. Their experience is inverted in accordance with Rueckert's intention: the emphasis on departure is optimistic, the emphasis on return melancholy.

Verwelkt (Petoefy).. remarkable subdominant finish to emphasize the emptiness of the poem, perhaps. A very melancholy work which bemoans the emptiness of life in its determination through death. "You were my only flower- ... you departed- I am surrounded by night)

Unendlich (Petoefy)

The infinite referred to here by Petoefi is Love- driving hopes and dreams. There is pain in love and in the possibility that its hopes remain unfulfilled- infinite pain, by definition.

Es winkt und neigt sich (supposedly text by Petoefy, but more likely by Nietzsche himself as the poem is not found in any German/ Hungarian Petoefy edition) – the date appears uncertain (Janz)

This text is in all likelihood by Nietzsche himself. It is a metaphorical evocation of the “death of love” through the vine with its red fruit- symbolising blood and decay. The vine “greet” us in its dream-like up-down movement in the wind with a common understanding that all must decay.

Please welcome Dr. Michael Halliwell (baritone) and Dr. Jeanell Carrigan (piano)

(II) Friendship with Wagner

Following completion of his secondary schooling in Schulpforta, Nietzsche determines to study in Bonn initially theology changing shortly thereafter to philology. There is a continued pre-occupation with music, also as a result of Nietzsche’s discovery of Schopenhauer- he discovers the philosopher’s “World as will and Representation” in 1865 in a local bookstore and reads it in one sitting. The book had had a slow start: Published first in 1818 only the second edition in 1844 started to make some impact. In his work, Schopenhauer famously elevates music to metaphysical significance. The foundation of Schopenhauer’s philosophy is “will” - an abstract and transcendental conception of striving and infinite becoming which reflects the indifferent and undefined chaos of all encompassing being and implies that human life is essentially suffering. In a world of infinite and persistent becoming, the human attachment to achievement and closure can never be fulfilled. Standing still, achievements and fulfilments are at best illusions- phenomena of appearance. In truth, we and our world are subject to always pervasive “will” which propels being forward into a vortex of becoming – the ontological principle Schopenhauer has in mind is not a personal one but a metaphysical and ontological one. It is will... not “the” will!

This philosophical experience resonates with Nietzsche. Witnessing the meaningless and cruel death of his father had attuned Nietzsche to the possibility that this world, this life might be ultimately senseless and that our existence was suspended across a dreadful abyss of nothing- that in fact, as he will say later, God was dead. Schopenhauer extends his metaphysics to music. Music in fact reflects metaphorically or allegorically this notion of will. We can never know will directly as it is removed from our grasp of understanding that requires individuating and individuated reflection, but music by virtue of its constitutive dependency on time expresses in some perhaps metaphorical way “the inner essence, the as-such of all appearance, the will itself”. Music tears the “veil of Maya” from appearance. It suggests that beyond this veil of things, of presence and individuation lies only an entirely amorphous, unstructured and abysmal power- will. Music is – it seems – the most truthful of possibilities to relate to the unfathomable ground of our being.

Schopenhauer’s philosophy has initially a very decisive impact on Nietzsche. It is this attention and interest in Schopenhauer that brings Nietzsche together with Richard Wagner. In 1868 (Nietzsche had transferred to study in Leipzig as his teacher Ritschl had moved there) Nietzsche and Wagner meet at a social gathering facilitated by Ritschl at Wagner’s sister’s place in Leipzig. Ritschl, Krug and earlier Ortlepp had always directed Nietzsche to Wagner’s music, and over the past three or four years Nietzsche had succumbed and becomes quite infatuated with the music of Tristan in particular. At their first meeting in 1868 Wagner and Nietzsche, the young student of philology and classics, discover a common and sympathetic interest in Schopenhauer’s philosophy. Wagner’s interest, mind you, is somewhat differently motivated. While the pessimistic notion of will resonates with his experience of eros as the fundamental personal power of his life, his interest is with Schopenhauer’s compassion and the Buddhist notions of universal kinship – in other words with the possibility of a redemption, a redemption from the incessant, abysmal and meaningless chaos through a human realisation of sympathy, of compassion. This view and personal need will prove to be a decisive problem for Nietzsche very shortly.

In 1868 and at the time of their meeting Nietzsche is bound for Basel in Switzerland. Through the recommendation of his teacher Ritschl he had obtained a professorship at the *Paedagogikum* there. By coincidence, Wagner is living nearby in Tribschen near Lucerne with his mistress, Cosima von Buelow, later Cosima Wagner, daughter of Franz Liszt. Wagner had met Cosima in Munich but had to leave as their illicit affair was becoming scandalous in a predominantly catholic city– Cosima’s husband was music director there and the liaison between Wagner and Cosima von Buelow produced some illegitimate children. Von Buelow eventually agreed to a divorce, but in the meantime, Wagner was urged by the Bavarian King Ludwig II to bypass the scandal and move away – Ludwig II establishes Cosima and Wagner in a country house in Tribschen near Lucerne. Wagner invites the young Professor already in Leipzig to come and visit to “talk music and philosophy together”.

Nietzsche does so in 1869 (Whitsunday) and will repeatedly do so despite his moral qualms about the illicit relationship. Wagner and Cosima welcome Nietzsche warmly – there are some hidden agendas here and even outright exploitation as Nietzsche is asked to run errands (purchasing silk underwear on behalf of the master, or items for the Christmas puppet play and a lamp from Leipzig by the designer Semper, for example) and Wagner has in mind a vigorous contribution to the Bayreuther Blaetter. The hope is, that a professor of philology will add respectability to Wagner’s cause of establishing an opera house in Bayreuth. He contributes to the musical life of the household – Wagner is unable to play the piano reductions of the Ring cycle in the process of completion. Nietzsche can and does so, particularly to Cosima when she is alone and the master is out on walks. There is a developing infatuation tellingly revealed in his later notes of insanity from 1889, after his mental breakdown, in which he refers to Cosima as “Ariadne” and to himself as Dionysos. Earlier writings refer to Wagner as the “minotaur”. A fragment sent to his publisher in Leipzig only days before his well-known breakdown contains the perplexing comment: “...Madame Cosima is by far the most aristocratic nature there is and in relation to me I always interpreted her marriage to Wagner as an extramarital affair... the case of Tristan.”

Nietzsche had hoped to be able to develop his musical skills with Wagner’s help. He possessed no formal training in composition and certainly none in orchestration. He had written two and four-handed piano works – a Manfred Meditation after Byron, for example- with a clear orchestral purpose in mind, but lacked any understanding or ability to orchestrate these works. He hoped to gain access to musical advice through Wagner and to this effect he sent one of his works (the Manfred Meditation) to von Buelow only to receive a devastating response: Buelow suggests that the composition constitutes the rape of music by an incompetent dilettante, in fact the “most extreme in fantastic extravagance” and constitutes the “most unproductive and anti-musical” creation he had seen in a long time. He concludes his reply by asking why a “high and enlightened spirit” has plunged himself into such “piano cramps”. Cosima and Richard Wagner add oil to the fire and insinuate with characteristic manipulative cruelty to Nietzsche directly that in fact Wagner and she shared this assessment.

Friedrich Hegar, a violinist and later conductor of the Zuerich Opera House is more measured in his assessment suggesting that “naturally the execution of musical ideas is lacking in architectonic underpinnings so that the composition seems to be more like an evocative improvisation than a structured composition.” Von Buelow had clearly no patience for Nietzsche’s dabbling – Hegar seemed more sympathetic. Nietzsche in turn is impressively philosophical in receiving such views and defends his music on the grounds that it was always intended to merely contribute to his own spiritual diet. Much later in 1887 when he sends another composition (Hymnus) to the conductor Hermann Levi he defends his continued interest and engagement with music: “Perhaps there never was a philosopher who was in reality a musician to the degree that I am one. This does not mean that I could naturally be a completely failed musician.”

Back to Nietzsche in Tribschen: During his time in Basel and in exchange with Wagner Nietzsche develops himself as a philosopher. Let us not forget that his appointment there was as a classicist and philologist. Soon, Nietzsche’s health would dictate lengthy leave periods and eventual resignation. But almost from the

start in 1869 it became clear that Nietzsche's thinking was directed towards philosophy and that this direction was intimately related to music and to a reflection about music, its place in culture and modernity. Under the influence of Wagner (and their common hero Schopenhauer) and perhaps with an eye to paying homage to Wagner, Nietzsche conceives his first major book, "The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music" which is published in 1872. Here Nietzsche develops a criticism of reason (or Socratism) and a view of music which will continue to determine his thinking despite its many turns for his remaining life. Music is essentially Dionysian, Nietzsche argues. It restores an experience of primordial unity through the experience of spiritual intoxication. It sublates the separation established by Apollonian individuation, by reflective consciousness and the essentially visual principle of identifying this as that, thus isolating things and beings from their primordial ground and embedded-ness in all-encompassing being. Greek tragedy, the classics scholar argues, perished in its authentic form because the spirit of music, the Dionysian element, was expelled from Greek thinking and culture as a result of Socratic rationality and questioning. This was a plebeian move, Nietzsche argues and designed to elevate those without inspiration and direct intuition for truth to positions of power. Modernity is the end-point of this process of fragmentation. However, the work of Wagner, his mythological "Gesamtkunstwerk" restores the Dionysian element into our culture and effects a re-birth of Greek Tragedy.

Nietzsche's move to extend music towards "mousike" (the Greek term referring to culture and all arts granted by the muses is always more extensive than the modern one formed by notions of high art) is more than an attempt to restore cultural authority to the failed musician. It is an attempt to articulate a comprehensive diagnosis of modernity, its pre-occupation with critical discourse over intuition and its elevation of apparent formal perfection over truth-saying. Nietzsche senses that music as a cultural artefact may ultimately follow the path of a pre-occupation with appearance, with visually determined individuation and that it may become more and more alienated from its original Dionysian ground. In his *Untimely Meditations*, Nietzsche second book which presents an extension of the thoughts of the "Birth of Tragedy" Nietzsche puts it thus: "The phenomenon of modern man has altogether become semblance; he no longer is visible in what he represents to be- he is rather concealed; and the rest of cunning artistry...is used to create an art of disguise."

His hope and conviction at the time is that Wagner will rebirth "tragedy from the spirit of music" restoring an immediacy of communication. Modern man, so Nietzsche is "gripped by the madness of universal concepts" and no longer able to truly communicate. Language, originally designed to achieve direct and immediate communication about needs by those suffering from them has become the vehicle of conceptual and conventional communication. Art has been severed from life – it is Wagner's achievement to restore this unity by re-connecting music and life, music and drama- his work is akin to a circumnavigation of the world, a discovery of art itself. Wagner restores an immediacy of communication. His music is a return to nature, Nietzsche alleges, in his art we hear "nature transformed into love". (UM, 388). Thus far, Nietzsche's inspiration reflected through his visits to Tribschen. He visits in fact in total 23 times, including in December 1870 where he is invited to attend an exclusive first performance of the "Siegfried Idyll" on Cosima's birthday, the 25th of December- a work written by Wagner for Cosima following the birth of their son Siegfried in 1869. The work was intended to remain private, but due to financial constraints Wagner published a version for orchestra which is the one usually performed. Tonight my wonderful colleagues and I will play the version that sounded in Tribschen on the 25th of December 1870.

Performance, Wagner – Siegfried Idyll

(III) Nietzsche's rejection of Wagner, Zarathustra

The publication of Nietzsche's "Fourth Untimely Meditation- Richard Wagner in Bayreuth" in 1876 coincides with the first Bayreuth Festival. Naturally, Nietzsche attends this momentous event– however, it provides a turning point in his relationship with Wagner and sharpens his view of music. Instead of finding an audience

which would understand Nietzsche's earnest cultural and philosophical concerns, an audience which shares his urgent concerns for the need of a rebirth of art he finds a philistine rabble of "emperors, other big-wigs and assorted riff-raff" who come to drink beer and smoke cigars. Cosima and Richard, pre-occupied with entertaining guests and dignitaries, ignore Nietzsche – his usefulness seemingly expired. On a personal level Nietzsche is profoundly disillusioned but he is still drawn to the intoxicating quality of Wagner's music, to the seductive appearance and charisma of the sensual, suggestive eroticism of Wagner's music. Nietzsche feels seduced and violated. Wagner, he now contends is in fact a magician, a conjurer, a "modern phenomenon", a phenomenon of pretence, a lie in the grand style. From 1876 onwards, Nietzsche attempts to come to terms with this turn of his thinking. It is, for a philosopher, a natural turn: we do not understand a phenomenon until we have worked through it from its opposite perspective. "War" – Heraclites affirms – "is the father of all things". Only in conceiving and working through radical opposition can we gather a comprehensive view and hope to explore the deepest furrows of our ignorance. Nietzsche uses music and Wagner as a fulcrum for his thinking. Truth and truthfulness require an ability to embrace the most fundamental clashes and affirm the most fundamental dissonances. Only those capable of "shedding their skins" like a snake, of rejecting their cherished beliefs and inventing new paths are ultimately capable of becoming free spirits. "Attack" Nietzsche writes in 1888 "is for me a proof of sympathy, in certain circumstances of gratitude". Nietzsche is starting to identify the dynamism of creative, of polyphonic thinking in his philosophy.

The attack on Wagner is "essential to the philosopher" because it identifies the "illness" which is hidden in every seductive art. This illness is related in Wagner's case to an incapacity to elevate his suffering towards affirmation. Instead he yearns for redemption – the familiar Schopenhauer theme. But Nietzsche contends that such redemption is a false, untruthful turn: "...there are two types of sufferers, one that suffers from an overflowing of life, who wish for Dionysian art and precisely a tragic insight and overview of life – and then those who suffer from a poverty of life, who demand calm, stillness, calm seas or intoxication, ecstasy, anaesthesia from art and philosophy." (NCW, 1047)

Nietzsche takes issue with Wagner because the latter denies life. Such a denial is for Nietzsche unacceptable and untruthful on philosophical grounds. It falls short of doing justice to the phenomenon. Ultimately the denial of life in Wagner's works undermines life itself. This is for Nietzsche most pronounced in Parsifal, a "work of cunning, of revenge of secret poisoning of the foundations of life, a bad work – the sermon of asceticism is a provocation to deny nature: I have contempt for anyone who does not regard Parsifal as an attack on morality." Parsifal for Nietzsche is the subject of an "operetta" in its blind and naive return to a Christian form of redemption that philosopher must recognise long as obsolete and untruthful.

With the realisation that he must reject - and even attack Wagner, Nietzsche is on the path towards the thoughts of "Zarathustra" - a metaphysically steamy mixture of mythology, philosophy, rhetoric and poetry. Richard Wagner and Cosima are bewildered by Nietzsche's attacks – for them the stance of the philosopher is incomprehensible and they lament the bewildering and hurtful invective that Nietzsche hurls against them in the years to come. Nietzsche has come to the view that for a philosopher a separation of life and thought must not be possible –while many philosophers have concluded from this that it in fact it is impossible to be a comprehensive philosopher, Nietzsche urges his life and his thinking to catch up with this intuition and raises the rhetorical temperature to force the issue. He is trying to articulate the thought of self-overcoming. He is attempting to gain a foothold in a perspective from which we could look at life itself. Nietzsche knows that such a perspective must be a moving one, the foothold is consistently dynamic and the philosopher may well disappear in this quick-sand of reflection and cognition. It includes engaged exercise of continued attention and thinking – it demands a philosophy in action. The "Zarathustra" is Nietzsche's philosophy in action and it articulates his most fundamental, abysmal thought- the thought of the eternal return. Facing the realisation of the death of God how can there be an affirmation of life? Nietzsche's answer demands that we must affirm life in an absolute way, in a way in which we will always wish to re-live it precisely and identically again. With his thought of the absolute affirmation of temporal

being and becoming, Nietzsche is trying to extract himself from the frightening dilemma of the death of God. However, he also knows that ultimately it is a thought which cannot be conceptual and transcends propositional language and the word. It is a thought which must soar above conceptual confines. At the end of the third part of Zarathustra his “bird wisdom” is articulated as follows: “Look, there is no up, no down. Throw yourself around, you light one! Sing! No longer speak! – are not all words made for the heavy? Do not all words lie to the light one! Sing! Speak no more.”

The demand to sing is heeded by Nietzsche himself- his last published book is a series of poems, of “Dionysian Dithyrambos” – Songs of Zarathustra published in 1888 which seek to articulate the ontological experience of the eternal return. With fine intuition, Nietzsche’s faithful friend Gustav Krug has set the third poem (“The sun sets”) to music. Krug had continued to write to Nietzsche notwithstanding his own consternation at the philosopher’s seemingly erratic rejection of Wagner. Evidently a competent musician, Krug worked in public administration. In his youthful friendship with Nietzsche Krug had played the violin, and they played together a work from Nietzsche’s hand which was to become transformed into a birthday present for Cosima Wagner in 1871 in a new version for piano four hands- “Eine Sylvesternacht.” According to Krug, the newer version for two pianos compared favourably to the “patchy, fanciful and somewhat disorganised” original model we will play shortly. The reception in 1871 of the “Sylvesternacht” in Tribschen was tepid: Wagner comments that for a professor “you compose rather well” – Cosima is rather more scathing and confesses to Felix Mottl that she was unable to play the work as she had to laugh too much.

The Dionysian Dithyramb which follows our performance of the “Sylvesternacht” articulates the particular philosophical experience and insight of being of the Zarathustra: The Nietzschean philosophical metaphors are all present in condensed succession. The mid-day sun as the most intense realisation of contrast and individuation and the most intense challenge to the thinking consciousness, the allure of the night in turn which sublates difference and provides forgetting – the night, this predominant and central motif in Wagner’s *Tristan* to which Nietzsche objected as a denial of life. The boat or bark, the human soul travelling on the unbounded high seas towards new shores.... It is the experience of twilight, the sinking of the sun with its premonition of eternal darkness, its retention of insight and its experience of temporal being itself that provides the philosopher with the polyphonic consciousness in which he pursues his search for truth. It is a polyphonic consciousness which Nietzsche remained unable to realise in his formal musical pursuits, perhaps, but it is a polyphonic consciousness which he articulates strikingly in a momentous life of urgent concentration and radical thinking nevertheless through his philosophy.

Performance: Nietzsche, Eine Sylvesternacht, (Goetz Richter, violin; Jeanell Carrigan, piano); Krug, Die Sonne Sinkt. (Michael Halliwell, baritone; Jeanell Carrigan, piano)

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Dionysian Dithyramb* ("Die Sonne Sinkt")

<p>Nicht lange durstest du noch, verbranntes Herz! Verheissung ist in der Luft, aus unbekanntem Mündern bläst mich's an — die grosse Kühle kommt ...</p> <p>Meine Sonne stand heiss über mir im Mittag: seid mir gegrüsst, dass ihr kommt ihr plötzlichen Winde ihr kühlen Geister des Nachmittags!</p> <p>Die Luft geht fremd und rein. Schielt nicht mit schiefem Verführerblick die Nacht mich an? ... Bleib stark, mein tapfres Herz! Frag nicht: warum? —</p>	<p>Not much longer will you thirst, Singed heart! A promise is in the air, From unknown mouths I feel the blow — A great coolness comes ...</p> <p>My sun stood hot over me at noon: I welcome you, that you arrive you sudden winds — You cool spirits of afternoon!</p> <p>The air passes by strange and pure. Does the night not cast a furtive Seductive glance Towards me? ... Remain strong, my brave heart! Do not ask: why? —</p>
<p>2</p> <p>Tag meines Lebens! die Sonne sinkt. Schon steht die glatte Fluth vergüldet. Warm athmet der Fels: schliefe wohl zu Mittag das Glück auf ihm seinen Mittagsschlaf? In grünen Lichtern spielt Glück noch der braune Abgrund herauf.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Day of my life! The sun sets. Already the smooth rising tide Stands gilded. The rock breathes warmly: Did happiness sleep well at noon on its midday slumber? In green lights Happiness still plays over the brown abyss.</p>
<p>Tag meines Lebens! gen Abend gehts! Schon glüht dein Auge halbgebrochen, schon quillt deines Thaus Thränengeträufel, schon läuft still über weisse Meere deiner Liebe Purpur, deine letzte zögernde Seligkeit ...</p>	<p>Day of my life! Towards evening it passes! Already your eye gleams Half-broken, Already your the trickle of your dew wells up as tears, Already flowing quietly over white seas Your crimson love, Your final hesitant bliss ...</p>
<p>3</p> <p>Heiterkeit, güldene, komm! du des Todes heimlichster süssester Vorgenuss! — Lief ich zu rasch meines Wegs? Jetzt erst, wo der Fuss müde ward, holt dein Blick mich noch ein, holt dein Glück mich noch ein.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Serenity, golden, come! You consecrated to death More secret, sweeter anticipation of pleasure! — Did I run too quickly along my path? Just now, when my foot becomes weary, Your glance catches up with me, Your happiness catches up with me.</p>
<p>Rings nur Welle und Spiel. Was je schwer war, sank in blaue Vergessenheit, müßig steht nun mein Kahn. Sturm und Fahrt—wie verlernt er das! Wunsch und Hoffen ertrank, glatt liegt Seele und Meer.</p>	<p>Around me nothing but waves and play. Whatever was hard, Sank into blue oblivion, Now my boat lies idle. Storms and voyages—how they've been forgotten! Desire and hope have drowned, Smooth lie soul and sea.</p>
<p>Siebente Einsamkeit! Nie empfand ich näher mir süsse Sicherheit, wärmer der Sonne Blick. — Glüht nicht das Eis meiner Gipfel noch? Silbern, leicht, ein Fisch schwimmt nun mein Nachen hinaus ...</p>	<p>Seventh solitude! I've never felt Closer to sweet safety, In the warmest glance of the sun. — Isn't the ice on my summit still white-hot? Silvery, light, like a fish my boat now swims out ...</p>