



# Bayreuth: A History of the Wagner Festival

*Frederic Spotts*

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

The operatic festival Richard Wagner founded in 1876 is the oldest and most famous in the world. It is also the most controversial, for it became the cultural showcase of the Third Reich. In this prize-winning and generously-illustrated book - the first to provide a frank and fully rounded history of Bayreuth - Frederic Spotts describes the festival's performances and productions, the Wagner family who have run it, its debasement into 'Hitler's court theatre', and its postwar liberation from its chauvinistic, anti-Semitic past. Provocative and compelling, the book will fascinate all Wagner enthusiasts as well as those interested in European cultural and intellectual history since 1876. 'A vast body of historic data - musical, personal, political, and generally artistic - presented in smooth, witty prose ... Spotts tells in absorbing detail the complex story of the relationship between the Third Reich and Bayreuth ... As reliable a guide to Bayreuth as we shall ever have.' Michael Tanner, 'The New York Times Book Review' 'Bayreuth is not just a spiritual and political history of the Festival but a sustained attempt to explain the place, uniquely emblematic, that it holds, and has always held, in German cultural life.' Richard Law, 'Opera' 'A readable, authoritative account of the Wagner festival that is compelling and chilling, sketching the cult's evolution and surveying its achievements ... Definitive.' Edward Rothstein, 'The New York Times' 'Spotts knows his Wagner as well as any professional musician ... he writes illuminatingly about the political as well as the musical context of the Bayreuth phenomenon.' David Mellor, 'The Daily Telegraph' 'Music history, cultural comment, and such issues as the family's embrace of Nazism are all deftly combined.' 'Time' Winner of the Royal Philharmonic Society Award for the best music book of 1994. Frederic Spotts is an Associate of the Center for European Studies at Harvard University, and a former member of the American Foreign Service.

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