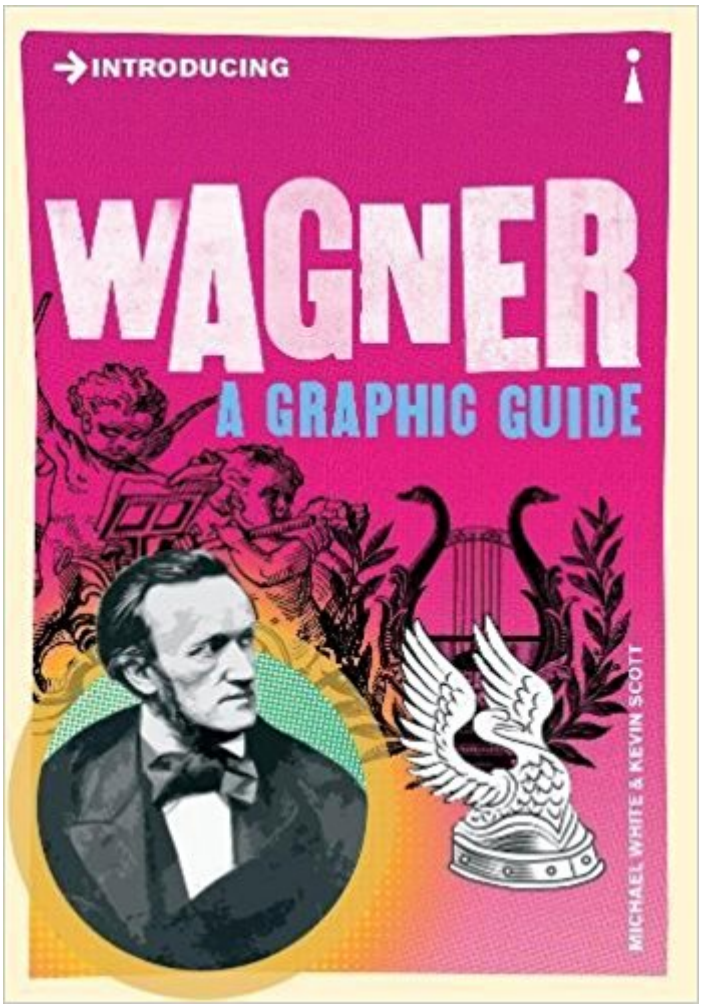
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Introducing Wagner: A Graphic Guide



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Synopsis

One of the most controversial figures in classical music, Richard Wagner's influence reaches as far as the film Apocalypse Now. Written by leading music critic Michael White, this graphic guide looks at Wagner's complex life, capturing his caprices, cruelties, and anti-semitism.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Michael White was voted BritainÃ¢â ¬â„¢s least boring music critic by listeners of Classic FM. He has made documentaries about Menotti, Britten and Nielsen and once attempted to explain Wagner's Ring Cycle on TV in half an hour. He's the author of two books: Introducing Wagner (Icon) and Opera & Operetta (HarperCollins).

interestingly arranged historical information, connecting Wagner to others of his times..

There are three unavoidable truths about Wagner: that he was one of the most repellent men who ever lived; that he was one of the greatest geniuses that ever lived; and that people either love him or hate him.Michael White's highly entertaining introduction to this horrifying figure concentrates mostly on the first 'fact' - it is, after all, easier to list someone's biographical failures than explain why the closing symphony of the Gotterdammerung sounds both like the terrible end of the world and the unaccountable essence of sublimity (I'm afraid he gets you talking this way).And so, amusingly, we

are told about Wagner's cruelties, caprices, infidelities, and, of course, his anti-Semitism; and given an interesting guide to some of the more sensible influences (eg Schopenhauer, Proudhon) on Wagner's loony philosophies, and a sound cultural and political background.This proper emphasis on the man rather neglects the artist, and while White quite rightly argues the impossibility of separating both, you don't get much sense of the sheer magnitude of Wagner's achievement (using the odd big word isn't enough), or what it means for us, the listener, to be entranced by the works of such an ogre.That said, the sheer readability and cheek of this book, as with all others in this series, is great fun, even if it doesn't achieve its aim (to make you master of the subject) as the book on Post-Modernism did.The chief joy of this series, however, is the illustration, and Kevin Scott keeps up the remarkably high standard, fusing dada, colage, pop art, with some astonishing pastiche and cartoon work, which means every page, even if you are dissatisfied with its contents, is a pleasure to read.

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