



Event Date: Saturday, January 19, 2019 -
1:00pm to 3:30pm



Saturday January 19th, 2019 1:00 to 3:30 p.m.

JCC-SF 3200 California Street

San Francisco, CA

2nd Floor Gallanter Hall

The Wagner Society of Northern California is pleased to welcome scholar Claudia Stevens:

"But of course, the real villain is Wagner! - or, Wagner in the novels of E.M. Forster"

British and American authors of the nineteenth century, frustrated and annoyed by the perceived dullness, restraint and hypocrisy of their own cultures, were drawn to fanciful, passionate and rebellious elements in German literature and music. The young E. M. Forster carried this tradition into the early twentieth century, embracing German Romanticism literally with shouts of joy. Inspired by Schumann's fantastical musical and literary synaesthesia, and most particularly by Wagner's operas with their artistic synthesis and cult of the hero, Forster attempted to create a new kind of literature that would be infused by his own love for, and considerable knowledge of, music. What happens when the culture war between German passion and English restraint - epitomized ironically by British Wagner exponent Shaw, vs. Austrian anti-Wagnerian Hanslick - erupts onto the pages of Forster's novels? That is the subject of Claudia Stevens' presentation. She explores how Forster's early novel, *The Longest Journey*, not only extolled Wagner's operas but tried to BE one. That experiment was a major flop and an embarrassment. But in the two novels that followed - *A Room with a View* and *Howards End*, he arrived at a new, more successful way of infusing and depicting music: by describing and counterposing his characters' responses to it. Rather than attempting to encompass and incorporate the whole of Wagner, Forster converted the influence of Wagner into metaphor - a war waged between passion and restraint, imagination and banality. Claudia goes on to explore what this Forsterian dialectic meant for her creation with composer Allen Shearer of the new opera *Howards End, America*, which will premiere in San Francisco at Z Space Feb. 22-24, 2019. Her scholarly research on Classic-Romantic dualism in German music pours into her presentation, which also will include demonstration at the piano.

About Claudia Stevens:

Claudia Stevens, born in Redding, California to Czech and Austrian Jewish parents, has received many honors over her long career. As a pianist, her teachers included Leonard Shure, Martin Canin and Leon Fleischer, and she was awarded various fellowships, including the Alfred Hertz prize from UC, Berkeley. Among career highlights were sponsored solo recitals at Carnegie Recital Hall and the National Gallery, performances of dozens of world premieres, residencies at Tanglewood and several full "Performance Today" broadcasts on NPR. In her second career as a monologue artist and playwright, her work came to wider attention, recognized by a dozen grants from the Virginia Commission for the Arts and the NEA ("New Forms"), tour support from the International Theater Institute, residencies at theaters and art centers from Baltimore to Rangoon and Budapest, and numerous television appearances. A number of her solo plays appear in the avant-garde literary journal *Exquisite Corpse*. Now based in Oakland, Claudia's third career is as the librettist of seven chamber operas (an eighth is in progress) in collaboration with distinguished Bay Area composer Allen Shearer. All have been produced. Their one-act opera *The Dawn Makers* premiered at Herbst Theater in 2009 and was a finalist in the Dominick Argento Chamber Opera Competition. Their internationally acclaimed 2015 chamber opera *Middlemarch in Spring*, based on George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, was selected a top ten opera of the year by the *SF Chronicle* and has had two subsequent East Coast productions. Their newest full-length opera, *Howards End, America*, a production by San Francisco's Earplay, will premiere at Z Space Feb. 22-24, 2019, featuring an all-star cast. Also a scholar, her writings on nineteenth and twentieth century music are published in *Musical Quarterly* and *Perspectives of New*

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Music. More recent articles about adapting of the novel for the opera stage appear in journals including George Eliot/George Henry Lewes Studies (about her libretto on Middlemarch) and Polish Journal of English Studies, in association with the International E.M. Forster Society (about adapting Howards End). Claudia holds degrees in music from Vassar College (summa cum laude), UC, Berkeley, and the DMA from Boston University. Previously an Adjunct Associate Professor of Piano at the College of William & Mary and presently a Visiting Scholar there, she has been a guest performer and lecturer at over two hundred colleges and universities

JCC-SF - 2nd Floor Gallanter Hall

3200 California Street

San Francisco, CA

Free to members, A suggested \$10 donation for non-members

Person/Organization:

The Wagner Society of Northern California

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PO Box 590990 | San Francisco | CA 94159-0990
(415) 421-4412

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