

ADVENTURES OF  
RICHARD WAGNER

*By*  
*Opal Wheeler*



ILLUSTRATED BY FLOYD WEBB

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# *Adventures of Richard Wagner*

Written by Opal Wheeler

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## CHAPTER ONE

BOOM. BOOM. BOOM.–BANG–BOOM–ZING!

The people in the Dresden theatre sat up, startled. Who would dream of pounding on the bass drums right in the middle of the play? Not a single word could anyone hear, and waves of angry buzzing darted from row to row.

“What a frightful noise! Dreadful! An evil monster at work somewhere!”

The poor actors on the stage could not believe their ears. How would anyone dare to play such a trick in the largest hall of the great city?

Ludwig Geyer shouted his lines above the din and strode from the platform, a stern gleam in his eyes. Frantically he darted through the dressing rooms, calling as he searched:

“Dicker! Dicker! Come out, I say!”

He came upon the small drummer suddenly. In a far corner of the storeroom under the stage, four-year-old Richard stood on a low box, his blue eyes glowing like stars. A stout stick was in each hand as he beat with all his strength on the giant drums, ending with a ringing crash on the golden cymbals.

BANG. BOOM. ZING!

“Dicker!”

The short arms stopped in mid-air, and bright laughter pealed through the dim room.

“Listen, father! I can play almost as loud as old Nels.”

Ludwig seized the sticks and swept the drummer boy from the stand.

“Enough! You have ruined the play with your pounding!” he cried. “Look—the audience is leaving the theatre. What a horrible day for us all!”

Two curious blue eyes were glued to the peephole. It was true. Long lines of people were moving through the aisles to the doors. But more terrible by far were the solemn words over the fair head.

“No playhouse for you for many a day, young man!”

The punishment was greater than he could bear. Choking



sobs filled his throat as Richard followed the tall figure through the darkening, snowy streets of Dresden.

No more bright lights and music and dancing? No trunks to explore, with wigs and funny shoes and strange masks that made chills of fright scamper up his spine? No romping with the actors and sitting in the orchestra pit with the men?

But above all, he would not be with his actor stepfather, whom he loved more than anyone in the whole world.

“Playhouse tomorrow?” The small voice behind the lean figure never stopped its pleading.

“NO playhouse!” The final answer cut still deeper into the heart of the weeping drummer boy.