

What did Wagner do in Sandvika at Borøy, in Tvedestrand

First of all, thank you very much for being invited here to tell you about the visit of **Richard Wagner** in Sandvika and the inspiration he got there to his great opera *The Flying Dutchman*. On behalf of the *The Flying Dutchman* Association I want to express how proud I am of this beautiful place in our community and its connection to Wagner. Perhaps you will, after my presentation, ponder what might have happened if the ship "Thetis" with Wagner onboard had met the storm earlier in the Baltic Sea, and then be obliged to seek a harbour of refuge in another nordic fiord, for example here in Turku? Would he then have got an inspiration to this great opera? "Yes, why not," I would say. This beautiful place here may give such inspiration as well as Sandvika, not exactly the same of course, but similar. Therefore I look forward to the big event in the harbour here tonight!

At first a little presentation of Sandvika, Borøya and Tvedestrand: Tvedestrand is the name of a local community at the coast in southern Norway, situated approx. 250 km from Oslo. Tvedestrand covers an area, that includes all from the sheltered skerry area with its characteristic outer harbours, the town of Tvedestrand and the inland with forests, rivers and lakes rich in fish. The coastline is sheltered from the open sea by the

skerries. The skerries create a space, in which it is safe to move. Earlier, however, they represented during storms a danger for many a sailing-ship. Within the skerries there are many sheltered bays with outer harbours. The outer harbours vary in size from just few houses to larger villages. One of these outer harbours, Lyngor, has been chosen to be 'Europe's best kept village' in 1992. Sandvika, too, is one of these outer harbours. It is situated on Borøy, an island in the fjord, which these days has a bridge connection to the main land. Sandvika lies sheltered within the skerries, however not that far within, that one cannot feel the powers of the sea during storms. Today the islands, outer harbours and skerries are favourite holiday targets for recreation. Sun, summer and southern Norway are the dream of a Norwegian summer. The landscape must have represented itself very differently in those days towards the end of July in 1839, when the little east Prussian schooner 'Thetis', with Richard Wagner on-board, had to seek for a harbour of refuge on its way from Riga to London. Shipping was the most important trade in that area during the last century. Ships were built in almost every bay, and most men in this area had their job tied to the sea. It is not strange, that the owner of the house, in which Wagner stayed, wasn't at home when

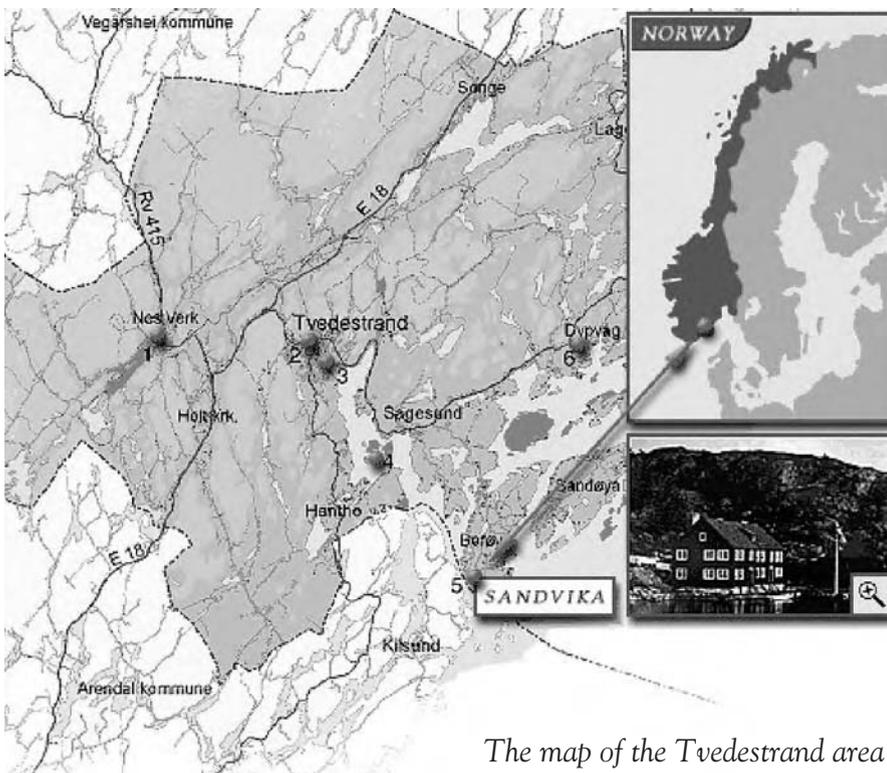


Torleif Haugland's presentation at the seminar on *Der fliegende Holländer* August 19, 2005

the 'Thetis' came to seek for a harbour of refuge. It was probably the same with most of the other men of the houses in Sandvika: Women and children were at home and the men at sea. The 'Wagner-house' was ripped down already in 1885, however, parts of its foundation walls are visible to these days. After the middle of the last century, many new houses were built and prosperity was high. Today the situation is slightly different. Most of the houses are still standing. However, as in many other outer harbours, times have changed. Other trades have taken over from shipping, the population has moved and most of the houses in Sandvika are used as holiday houses today. While Sandvika remains well preserved and beautiful, it is swarmed during summer with life and the happy laughter of children rings across the fjord. The echo from Askerflu is as strong as at the time, when Wagner was inspired by it for his sailors' choir in *The Flying Dutchman*. Sandvika and the southern skerries give the inhabitants as well as the visitor a feeling of roots to long passed times, together with peace, quietness and inspiration within a hectic, modern everyday life.

'It's Sandvike!' – But which Sandvike?

'Sandvike ist's!' says Daland in the opening scene of Wagner's opera *The Flying*



The map of the Tvedestrand area.

Mitä Wagner teki Sandvikassa ja Tvedestrandissa?

Lyhennelmä Torleif Hauglandin esitelmästä
Lentävä hollantilainen -seminaarissa 19.9.2005

Tvedestrand on Etelä-Norjassa sijaitseva kunta noin 250 km päässä Oslosta. Sen alueella on useita satamia. Yksi niistä on Sandvika, mistä preussilainen kuunari Thetis, **Richard Wagner** matkustajanaan, etsi suojapaikkaa matkallaan Riistä Lontooseen heinäkuussa 1839.

Sandvika-nimisiä paikkoja on Norjassa useita, joten on ollut epävarmaa, missä niistä Wagner kävi. Kun Lentävä hollantilainen esitettiin vuonna 1901 ensimmäisen kerran Norjan kansallisteatterissa, nimimerkki "+" (**Assessor Sievers**) osoitti Morgenbladetin artikkelissaan yhteyden oopperan ja Wagnerin Norjan-käynnin välillä. Uskottiin, että Wagner oli käynyt Hisøen saarella sijaitsevassa Sandvikassa. Professori **Magnus Olsen** sanoi kuitenkin 1920-luvulla olevansa sitä mieltä, että todellinen paikka oli Borøyn saarella. Laulaja-professori **Gunnar Graarud** tutki asiaa. (Graarud lauloi Bayreuthissa vuosina 1927-31 ja levytti siellä Tristanin roolin Karl Elmenдорffin johdolla. Toim. huom.) Hän vertasi Borøyn Sandvikan satamalaituria Wagnerin kirjoituksiin ja julkaisi tutkimuksensa vuonna 1935 norjalaisissa ja ulkomaisissa lehdissä. Vuonna 1947 opettaja **Magnus Grønvold** löysi alkuperäisen lokikirjan. Tällöin varmistui, että Wagner oli ollut Borøyn saarella sijaitsevassa Sandvikassa.

Thetis oli pieni itäpreussilainen kuunari, joka kulki säännöllisesti Königsbergin ja Lontoon välillä. Se ei ollut matkustajalaiva, mutta kesällä 1839 tuntematon säveltäjä Richard Wagner matkusti kapteeni **R. Wulffin** hytissä vaimonsa **Minnan** ja koiransa Robberin kanssa. Pohjanmerellä kova länsituuli toi laivan vaarallisen lähelle Norjan



Kapteeni Jens Jensenin talo, missä Wagner oleskeli.

rannikko, ja kapteeni päätti etsiä satamaa. 29.7.1839 Wagner kirjoitti matkapäiväkirjaansa: "Myrskyn takia meidän oli rantauduttava norjalaiseen satamaan lähellä Arendalia. Illalla maissa Minnan kanssa. Meressä erikoisia kivikuutioita. Paikka: Sandwike." Myöhemmin Wagner kertoi omaelämäkerrallisissa kirjoituksissaan: "Jossain vaiheessa kapteenin oli pakko rantautua norjalaiseen satamaan. Matka norjalaisten luotojen välissä vaikuttii oudolla tavalla mielikuvitukseeni. Tarina Lentävästä hollantilaisesta ja se, millaisena kuulin sen merimiehiltä, sai mielessäni uudenlaisen värityksen, jota en olisi koskaan keksinyt ilman tätä meriseikkailua."

"Miehistön kovaääniset huudot kai-kuivat valtavista graniittiseinämistä heidän laskeessaan ankkuria ja nostaessaan

purjeita. Näiden huutojen rytmi rauhoitti minua kuin hyvä enne. Lyhyen ajan sisällä huudoista muotoutui miehistön laulun teema *Lentävään hollantilaiseen*."

Sandvikassa oli kahdeksan taloa. Wagner vietti kaksi päivää kapteeni **Jens Jensenin** talossa isännän ollessa merillä. Talo purettiin vuonna 1885, mutta siitä on olemassa valokuvia. Dalandin talo on oopperassa kuvattu täsmälleen tämän talon mukaisesti.

Torleif Haugland on "Lentävä hollantilainen" -säätien puheenjohtaja ja toimi Tvedestrandin kunnanjohtajana vuosina 1995-2003.

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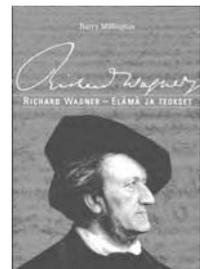
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Commemorative plaques about Richard Wagner in Sandvika.

Dutchman. Naturally, Norwegians took it as an honour, that the poet and composer chose the Norwegian coast as the setting for the musical work, which became the break-through piece for a new epoch in the world opera. It's true enough that it took a while, before the local music circles became aware of the honour being based on a real background: The impression of the southern coast had really been a decisive source for Richard Wagner's inspiration in that respect. There are many places in Norway called Sandvika or in English Sandvike. "Near the town Arendal," as mentioned by Wagner, there are at least three places with the name Sandvika. Earlier on there were already heated discussions about the question which Sandvika Wagner really had visited. In an article in "Aust-Agder Arv" **Ole A. Aalholm** writes that the first performance of *The Flying Dutchman* at the National Theatre in Oslo in 1901 was preceded by background information in the "Morgenbladet", signed by Assessor Siewers. He established the connection between the opera and the fact that Wagner 'had to seek harbour of refuge in the Sandviken bay on Tromøy near Arendal' in 1839. These words caught fire in the local patriotic and music loving circles in Arendal. The fact that the highly respected music-critic of the reliable 'Morgenbladet' had mentioned 'Tromøy' accidentally is, of course, lamentable, but however pardonable. The name of the place was instantly corrected to 'Hisø'. Speculations and Arendal's Wagner traditions were created on this basis. However, let us not disregard the shipping-town, that not only had a good sense for trade, but also for music. Naturally enough, Wagner was a popular topic in the music society as well as at tea-parties, in the clubs and many homes at Arendal. It did not occur to anyone to doubt what stood in black on white: that Wagner had been in Sandvigen near Arendal.

It was left unnoticed, that in the

1920'ies the Norwegian professor **Magnus Olsen** had expressed some humble words that in his opinion Wagner had been in Sandvigen on the island of Borøy, and not on the island of Hisø. Nevertheless, a Borøy-man and photographer **Gustav Norbert Norberg** (1870 – c. 1954) gave additional information on the matter to Alf Due, who wrote about it in the Norwegian as well as in the German press in the 1930'ies. The decisive words were spoken by the famous Norwegian Wagner interpreter, the Kammer-singer, professor **Gunnar Graarud**. In 1934 he found, with local help, the right ship quay on the island of Borøy. In an article in 'De vestlandske Tidene' he tells how he compared this information with Wagner's papers, where the name of the vessel was mentioned. Graarud published his interim and final results in the Norwegian and foreign press in the 1930'ies. In 1947 Norwegian teacher **Magnus Grønvold** succeeded in finding the original pilot-report. Grønvold's papers are based on the music archives of the University library. It is now undisputable that it's not the island of Hisø, but the island of Borøy in the parish of Dypvåg that is able to proclaim: It's Sandviken!

The Skerry – Background to Wagner's opera

Thetis is a little East Prussian schooner with a weight of 106 tons, which was built in 1831 in Pillau. It sailed somewhat regularly between its hometown, the harbour town of Königsberg, and London. The draught was 8 feet and 9 inches. On the 19th July 1839 Thetis sailed, with 99 loads of oats and 2 loads of peas, away from home-port. However, this time it did not reach London on the 12th August 1839. Apart from the captain, **R. Wulff**, there was a crew of six men on board. Although the schooner was everything but a passenger boat, this time the captain's cabin was occupied by a married couple with an enormous Newfoundland dog called Robber. The

husband was out of work and penniless, a pale and brilliant German bandmaster and composer with an at the time unknown name, Richard Wagner (1813-1883). His beautiful and indigenous wife was an actress. Her name was **Minna Wagner**, born Planer (1809-1866). The couple had just left behind a difficult period in the Latvian town of Riga, failed plans, disappointed creditors and a dramatic escape across the border. However, Wagner only needed to close his eyes, and he could see Paris, the cosmopolitan centre of music, that welcomed him with gold and world-fame. If he then again opened his eyes, he once more awoke to the shameful misery of seasickness. In the meantime a terrible west wind had knocked the schooner from its course and brought it dangerously near the Norwegian coast with its storm ruffled furrows. Finally, when according to their plan they should already have been in London, the captain decided to seek harbour of refuge. Shortly afterwards the emergency flag was being spotted by pilot **Niels Tallaksen** (1789-1865) from his house in Holmesund in Flotsa. It did not take him long to get over to the schooner in his big fishing boat with one of his sons as pilot. However, now Wagner shall take the word, and here's what he wrote on 29th July 1839 in his travel diary: '29 due to storm from the west we had to enter a Norwegian port close to Arendal. Towards evening on land with Minna. Strange dices of stone in the sea. Place: Sand-wike'. Later, Wagner used a few more words in his 'autobiographic accounts': 'At one point the captain was forced to enter a Norwegian harbour. The journey through the Norwegian skerries made a strange impression onto my fantasy; the saga about the Flying Dutchman and the way I got it confirmed from the lips of the sailors, became in my mind of specific personal colouring, which it would never have got without the sea adventure I just had experienced.' In his old age, during his second marriage when he was able to dictate to his inspiring wife **Cosima Wagner**, born Liszt (1837-1930), Wagner told in more detail: 'Finally, on 29 July, the captain was forced by the strongly storming westerly gales to seek harbour on the Norwegian coast. With a feeling encouraging me, I saw the stony harbour bay, extending on and on, towards which we were drifting at high speed. After a Norwegian pilot, who had met us in a small boat, had taken over the helm of Thetis, I should soon experience one of the most remarkable and beautiful impressions of my life. What I had taken for a continuous chain of rocks across the beach, dissolved itself - the closer we got - and a row of small rocky islands and skerries projecting cone-shaped from the sea. After we had passed them we noticed, that we were not only surrounded by these riffs from the front and sides, but also from behind. Behind us they closed tightly together again, so that once again they gave the impression of



Wolfgang Wagner in Tvedestrand with Bjørn Simensen, the artistic director of Den Norske Opera.

a connected chain. However, these masses of rock broke the gales, and the more we penetrated into this permanently changing maze of stone cubes, the calmer the sea got. At the end, when we were driving into a long street of water between a gigantic rock-valley – this was how a Norwegian fjord appeared to me – the sea was totally flat and calm around the ship. An unspeakable sense of well-being came over me when the immense walls of granite threw back the echo of the crew's strong calls while dropping the anchor and hoisting in the sails. The short rhythm of these calls set itself fast within myself and in a way comforted me like a good sign. Thus, within a short period of time the theme for my crew-song in *The Flying Dutchman* had formed. I had long been wandering with the idea itself and thanks to my new impressions it now had reached a new concrete poetic musical colouring. Here we also went on land. I got to know, that the little fishing-channel, which had taken us in, was called Sandwike and was situated some 10 km away from the bigger place of Arendal. We could recover in a house which belonged to a sea-captain who was out sailing. Meanwhile the gale continued on the open sea and kept us for two days, which we indeed needed to recover our strength'. These are Wagner's own words, and he was so precise, that he, when Mrs. Cosima in agreement with her husband's soft pronunciation of consonants wrote the name of the place with 'g' -Sandwige-, corrected this with pencil to Sandwike, which was closer to the local Norwegian pronunciation and which he still had fresh in his memory! Askeflu is the name of the immense granite walls with the echo resounding in Wagner's music.

'The Norwegian ship' in the Wagner opera, the southern Norwegian brig Anne Birgithe Marie

No reasonable arguments exist to doubt that it was totally natural to Wagner to reconstruct the sensation that stood in front of his eyes from his stay from 29th

July to 30th July 1839 in Sandviken, Borøy, when he gives his instructions for the stage setting of *The Flying Dutchman*. Isn't it his voice too, that resounds in the libretto about the Sandviken known to him: In exactly that way do I know the bay. Three further vessels that had sought shelter by Borøy, were lying there during his stay. There were two German ships, Thetis and a hannoverish merchant ship Anna, indigenous to Papenburg. The third was a Norwegian brig, Anne Birgithe Marie. It was correct as well as possible to let the picturesque southern Norwegian brig Anne Birgithe Marie sail on the opera-stage of *The Flying Dutchman* as the almost authentic Wagner vessel: 'The Norwegian ship'.

The skipper-house in Sandviken and in Wagner's opera

Richard Wagner himself wrote that he stayed in Sandviken from 29th - 30th July 1839 in the house of a ship-captain who was away. At the time the Wagners came to Sandviken, they must have been enraptured by the prospect of being able to rest in a properly erected four-poster bed. All in all there must have been eight houses in Sandviken at the time. Amongst them were two large skipper-befitting houses, with a stone-landing-stage directly at the water-line. It was cleared up that captain **Jens Jensen** (1791-1842), the owner of the house, had been home in the middle of July 1839, but that he had been as usual towards the end of the month been at sea with *Ceres*, a sloop he himself owned. This emerges from the ship-lists. From madam **Marthe Dorothea Jensen** (1790-1854) it is said that she was extremely effective, and that she neither lacked place in her house nor in her heart. She told many stories to her daughter-in-law, **Evine Amalie Jensen** (1823-1905). The daughter-in-law went on living in the same house, as well as her grandchildren, and especially her eldest granddaughter remembered a lot of what the old woman had told them. Amongst that was, as she had heard from

Marthe Jensen's own lips, that among the many guests that had been in the house had been the Wagners- there was not the smallest hint of a doubt about the identity. 'They were well received, and they took a tour inland to have a look around'. Accordingly it has been totally cleared that it was Jensen's house that received Wagner. The house does not exist any longer. However, there remain some excellent photographs of it. The house was built by captain **Eyner Bjørnsen** (1737-1789), who settled there in 1762. Because he was one of those who were better off and liked to live on a grand scale, the house was 'tolvlaftet', which means it had three times four corners or log-house-units, and three new houses were built out of its materials when the house was pulled down in 1885. When Wagner takes into his opera a 'sea-bay with stony coast' and 'to the side in the foreground' 'the house of captain Daland' - 'a Norwegian skipper', then there is barely a word that does not fit Jensen's house and its surroundings. Yes, if it now is 'a rocky reef sticking out', from which the daughter of the house is throwing herself into the sea, so the stones on land or the ledge of the Digernes-fell will have to be used for this purpose. In his opera, Wagner also takes us into the spacious living-room of the skipper-house with its grandfather-chair, portraits on the walls in the back-ground, maps and paintings on the walls to the sides, and an open fireplace by which the women sit at their spinning-wheels. One does not need a magnificent fantasy to imagine a madam Jensen, sitting together with her grown-up daughter, maiden **Vilhelmine Sophie Jensen** (1820-1863), having the same first name as Wagner's wife, and the young maid servant, 'the girl', in the large corner-parlour with all four windows, while spinning so that the spinning-wheels were humming and whirring, while 'he' was out and could be awaited home:

'My boy, he is on waves so blue. - Oh spinning-wheel, now you have to spin, So that you give wind So that he flies in! Spin! Spin! Carry on, girls! Hum! Whirr! Dear Spinning-wheel!

Opera on original site: The Flying Dutchman at Sandvika?

We hope, and we are working on it; A full-scale production of this opera in Sandvika, but of financial reasons, we have not managed it yet. In the meantime, we produce smaller parts of it outdoors in Sandvika and indoors in Dypvåg church. We, together with all Wagner-fans, have a dream!

But again: Our congratulations for your production here in Turku! I look forward to seeing it!

Thank you very much!

By Torleif Haugland, mayor of Tvedestrand 1995-2003 and chairman of The Flying Dutchman Association.