A Knight at the Opera

Garrett, Leah

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Acknowledgments

The legacy of Tannhäuser in my own life has taken almost as many twists and turns as the story I discuss in this book. This book grew out of an essay I published in the journal *Jewish Social Studies* that sought to account for the influence of Tannhäuser on Heinrich Heine, Theodor Herzl and I. L. Peretz. Writing the essay merely piqued my interest in the story, and a few years later I returned to the project to try and fill in some of the missing pieces. In the first version of the manuscript I chose only to write about the legacy in Jewish life and to skip over a full consideration of Richard Wagner’s opera. However, in due time I realized that like it or not, Wagner was a central figure in the evolution of the Tannhäuser meme, and in order to do full justice to the story, he needed to be included.

In the years it has taken to write this book I have pestered many of the most important scholars working in Heine, Wagner, Herzl, and Peretz studies. Profound thanks to Jeffrey Sammons, Dieter Borchmeyer, and Jacques Kornberg. I also am grateful for suggestions I received from Ken Frieden, Paul Lawrence Rose, Daniel Jütte, and Michael Hau over aspects of this book. Needless to say, I am completely responsible for any and all flaws. I also wish to give my deepest thanks to Richard Libowitz for his careful and considered line reading of the manuscript, and to the editor of the Shofar Supplements in Jewish Studies, Zev Garber, for his enthusiasm for the project. I also wish to thank Rebecca Corbin, Dianna Gilroy, and Charles Watkinson of Purdue University Press, who have made me feel that my book is in extremely capable hands.

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My daughters, Sophie and Arwynn, have been raised under the shadow of Tannhäuser, and to them I am deeply grateful for always reminding me to have fun. And to Adrian, thank you for reading and rereading the manuscript, and for being my best friend and best partner in crime.