

In 1827 K.F.E. Trahndorff, a German writer and philosopher, used the word Gesamtkunstwerk in his *Ästhetik oder Lehre von Weltanschauung und Kunst* (*Aesthetic or Theory of Worldview and Art*). Although the first to coin the term, he built on the views of other philosophers such as Ludwig Trek and Gottfried Lessing who advocated for a synthesis of the arts. Adopting the idea theoretically and embodying it in his renowned operas, Richard Wagner popularized the term to the degree that, subsequently, it was often attributed to him. His essays, such as ["The Art Work of the Future"](#) (1849), argued that, since the [classical Greeks](#), the arts had been incoherently splintered from one another, and that the artwork of the future must return to creating a total work of art. Wagner felt that the 19th century was one of chaos, and wrote "It is for Art above all else, to teach this social impulse its noblest meaning, and guide it towards its true direction." His noted opera cycles, particularly *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (1876), made him the most famous and influential composer of his era, as he combined drama, poetry, music, and theatrical setting to create a single unified experience. In 1857 he also undertook the design and building of the Bayreuth Theatre in Bavaria, creating a complete environment for the performance of his opera cycles.

When [Wagner built his new theatre in Bayreuth](#), he began reforming all aspects of theatre including perceptions on the occasion of theatre itself. Through the institution of recurring festivals and events he modified his audience perceptions of attending the theatre, not as mere entertainment but as participation into an aesthetic pilgrimage.









