

Willa cather's a wagner matinee

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a musical or dramatic performance or social or public event held in the daytime and especially the afternoon pray that whatever your sacrifice may be, it be not that." Clark therefore concludes that Georgiana would enjoy going to the symphony to hear a performance of the music of Richard Wagner. She goes, in her black cotton dress, looking incongruous against the other women's opulent gowns in pastels and jewel tones. Yet she is moved much more deeply than any of the women who presumably form the symphony's regular " crowd." Cather describes each musical piece and the effect it has on Aunt Georgiana; Clark notices, for example, that during " The Flying Dutchman" -- the only piece Georgiana recognized by name -- she has started to move her fingers across her knee as if she is playing the piano, and by the intermission she has started to cry uncontrollably. When the concert ends at last, the other members of the audience applaud, murmur appreciatively, start to leave; the musicians rise from their seats, tapping the spit out of their woodwinds and brasses, putting their instruments into cases or slipjackets. Aunt Georgiana, however, does not move. Still sobbing, she tells Clark, " I don't want to go, Clark, I don't want to go!" It isn't merely that she doesn't want to leave the concert hall; she doesn't want to return to a gray and ugly world, where music has no part. Willa Cather's " A Wagner Matinee" Commentary by Karen Bernardo In " A Wagner Matinee," the narrator, a young Bostonian named Clark, is notified that his aunt is coming to visit from Nebraska. Clark tells us that his aunt Georgiana once lived in Boston herself, long before Clark's birth; in her youth she was a music teacher, but she married a farmer and has had a difficult life. As Georgiana emerges from the train, she looks so shabby Clark is almost ashamed of her;

but her shell-shocked expression evokes his pity. It becomes apparent that in her years on the prairie, Georgiana has put out of her mind all of the cosmopolitan things she loved, particularly classical music -- which, in these days before recordings, was completely inaccessible to her. Clark recalls an incident in his childhood when he was valiantly trying to "beat out" a classical piece on her little parlor organ; she told him that it was unwise to love anything